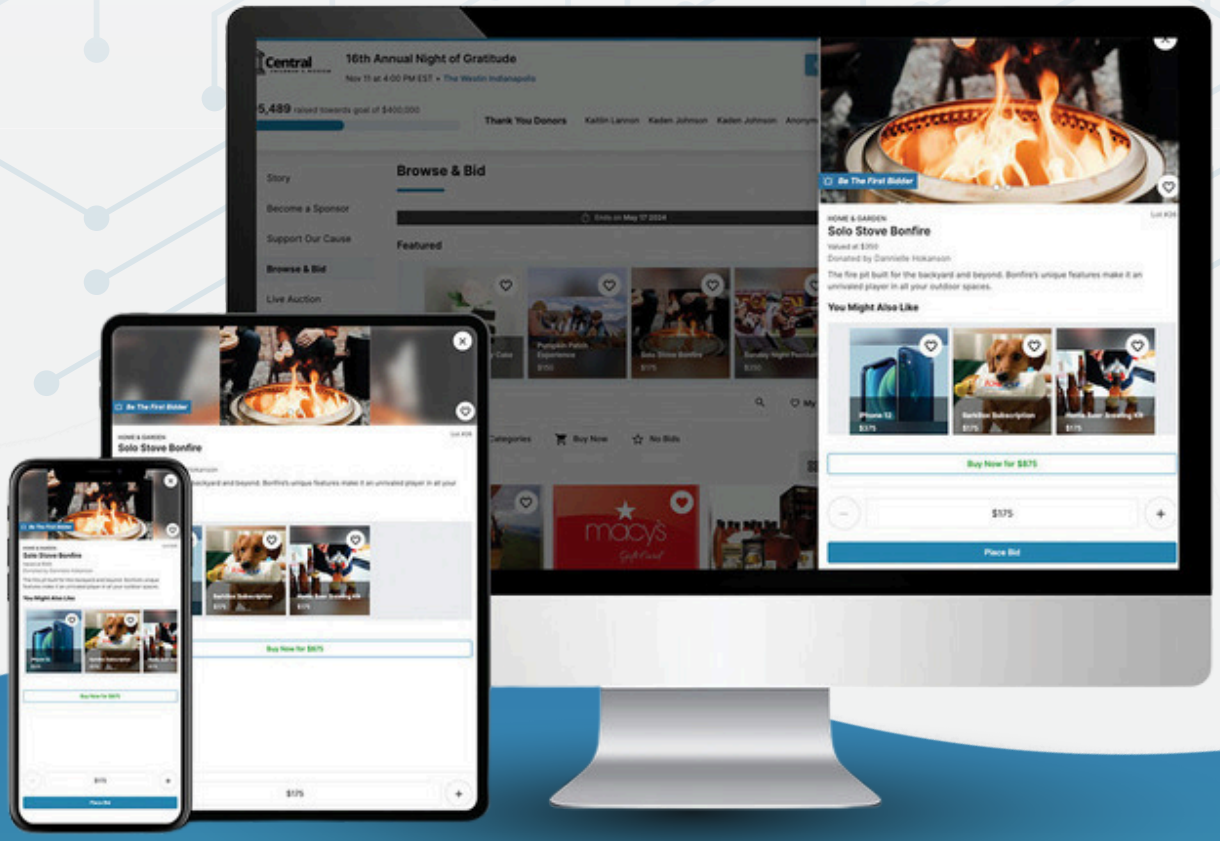
onecause®



COMPLETE GUIDE TO

AI Adoption for Nonprofits

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Understanding the Basics of Artificial Intelligence 4

How Does Artificial Intelligence Affect Work for Nonprofits? 5

Adopting AI to your Nonprofit 6

Popular AI Tools for Nonprofits 8

AI in Fundraising: How OneCause Can Help 9

AI Uses for Nonprofits 12

Frequently Asked Questions about Adopting AI 13

Introduction

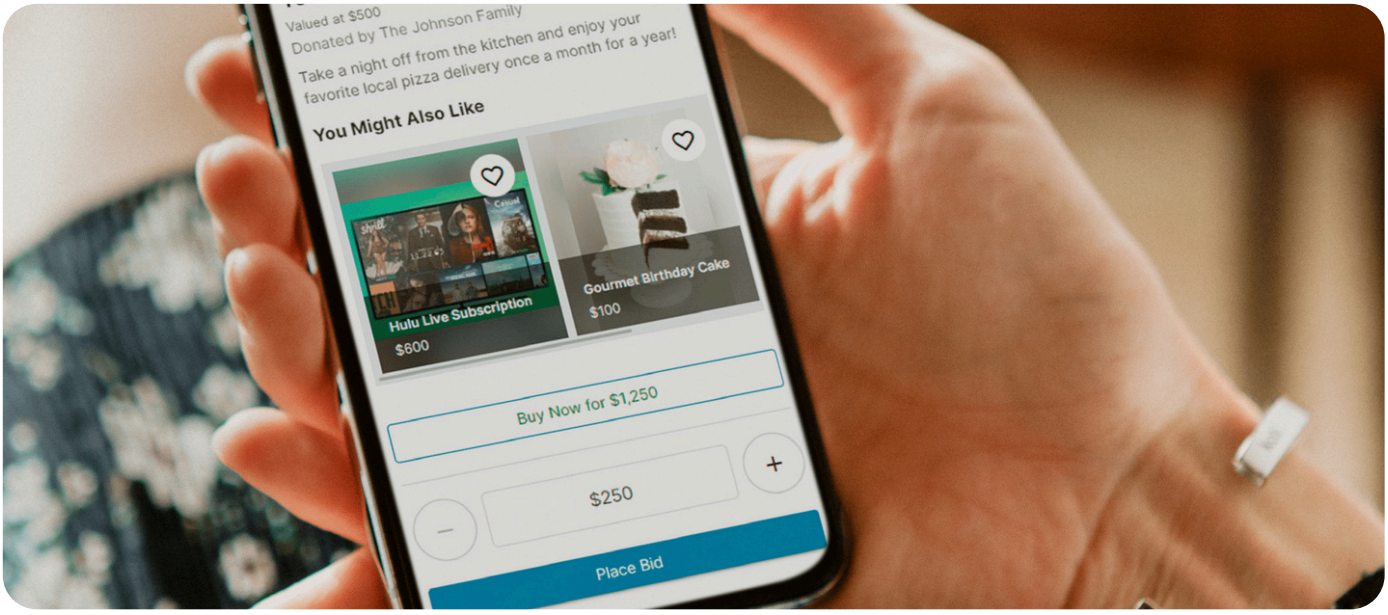
Artificial intelligence (AI) continues to be a trending topic for nonprofits across the country, generating lots of buzz and curiosity on how it can be implemented into daily tasks.

The truth of the matter is AI isn't just a buzzword – it's a valuable tool that can help nonprofits do more for their mission. According to the **2025 Fundraising Outlook Report**, 60% of nonprofits surveyed agreed that AI would greatly benefit them, and 48% agreed that AI would directly impact their fundraising strategies.

While nonprofits recognize the advantage of using AI, with 43% of nonprofits planning to adopt it in the future, many don't feel prepared to use it quite yet. Data shows that 32% of nonprofits lack time and resources for implementation, and 46% are not sure how to use it or how to get started.

We're here to say there's no reason to wait on learning about AI! This guide will pull back the curtain to what AI is, steps to safe and ethical adoption, and tips on using it in your day-to-day work to maximize efforts and leverage today's technology.

Let's dive in!



Understanding the Basics of Artificial Intelligence

In the modern world, artificial intelligence touches almost every part of our lives. You're probably using it in your daily tasks right now. Things such as predictive text, excel sheet prompts, and text-to-read apps are all types of AI that are designed to make our lives easier.

AI is the technology that enables digital devices to learn, read, write, create, & analyze.

What is Machine Learning?

Machine learning is a traditional type of artificial intelligence focused on building patterns from the data you give it. Think about your social media feed or the shows a streaming service like Netflix suggests to you. This is a type of predictive intelligence that, as it gets to recognize your patterns and interests, can use its knowledge to anticipate what you'll enjoy next.

What is Generative AI?

Another popular form of artificial intelligence is generative AI, which focuses on creating something new from the information you give it. Rather than offering recommendations or predictions on the data given, generative AI can provide text outputs, images, music, and even computer code. An example would be large language models (LLMs), such as Google Gemini and ChatGPT.

How Does Artificial Intelligence Affect Nonprofits' Work?

A comprehensive AI tool needs two major things: data and a strong algorithm. Data is the information you feed it, and the algorithm is what operates on that data. Think of it as a feedback loop - the more information you give it, the stronger output it can create.

For nonprofits, the start of this feedback loop is your fundraising data. After all, it is the driving force behind all your crucial decisions regarding your events and campaigns! With every donation form, social media sign-up, and payment processor, you are collecting data that can be used to inform a future fundraiser. Why not leverage AI to help maximize those efforts?

Keep in mind, once you begin tapping into these tools, it's important to be aware of how you're incorporating AI.

> AI is best used when it's helping with day-to-day, time-consuming tasks, and should not be intended to replace a human's authenticity or connection.

Poorly trained AI can cause real harm, especially when replacing human support. For example, in 2024, following the death of a family member, a passenger asked Air Canada's virtual assistant about bereavement fares. The chatbot advised purchasing tickets first and then applying for a discount later. The passenger took the chatbot's advice, but was denied the refund because the fare had to be arranged in advance.

This case is a clear reminder of why AI tools must be trained carefully to reflect an organization's mission, standards, and commitment. If Air Canada had properly trained, tested, and supervised its virtual assistant, the error and harm it might have caused might have been avoided.

As with any new technology, your organization should take the proper steps and training to understand how to best use these modern tools to support your team rather than replace them.

Adopting AI to Your Nonprofit

Incorporating AI tools into your nonprofit's work should be similar to how you train and onboard incoming team members. They have all the right skills to bring value to the team; now they just need to get to know your organization!

Letting AI get to know your mission is just as important as learning how to work and leverage it. Once your AI tools understand your brand and goals, it can begin organizing data, drafting campaigns, and creating content.

Below are a few ways to train your AI tools:

Input your organization's annual report to teach the AI tool about your fundraising goals, appeals, and your donors' giving patterns. To increase the accuracy, provide the past few years of reports so that it gains a broader scope.

Utilize past appeal letters for AI models to learn your organization's voice and tone. Appeal letters are an excellent way to showcase your mission and approach to donor support.

Share past newsletters or email campaigns to give an example of your short-form content. Doing so helps AI recognize how you connect to donors and a better understanding of your choice of words.

Remember to test, test, and test your AI tools before you use it for any donor-facing tasks! If you're using generative AI tools, try asking it to write an email that's optimized for open rates and potential giving.

Check the output for your organization's tone, brand voice, and, of course, a worthy donation ask. If it sounds off, give AI feedback and test again! It may take a few tries before your AI nails the right tone.

AI and Ethics: How to Adopt with Intentions

As we navigate this era of AI usage, learning how to safely adopt is key. Before you get started with AI, your organization needs to understand what key elements you're trying to get out of it. Think about the areas on your team that need the most help. Are you trying to...

- Save your team time?
- Stay more organized?
- Create more effective fundraising campaigns?

No two nonprofits are the same, so take the time to decide what your team needs help with the most. Once you identify where AI can offer value, begin creating a data usage policy for your team to follow.

A data usage policy is a description of how you plan to collect, retain, and share donor information with AI. If you're unsure of what information is okay to share with AI, consider whether it would be okay to share on the internet. For example, if you aren't sharing your donors' phone numbers or emails on your website, then you shouldn't give AI that information either!

Steps to Adopting AI Responsibly

Step 1 Think through potential rewards and risks before diving in.

Step 2 Address any concerns or fears surrounding AI with your team. Be open and transparent about how you plan to use it and the time it will save you.

Step 3 Be responsible with your data adaptation. Create an AI usage policy to follow.

Step 4 Plan on risks and biases and prepare to adapt to them. Test your AI tools thoroughly before you start using it on any donor-facing tasks.

Step 5 Identify where AI can save time vs where you want to keep a human touch.

Step 6 Continue to test and adjust even after you start using AI. Keep it up to date with your brand and your organization's initiatives.

Popular AI Tools for Nonprofits

Artificial intelligence can serve as a writing assistant for nonprofits, helping draft an email or create an outline for an appeal letter. If you're not ready for AI to start creating content for you, that's okay, too. There are plenty of other ways to leverage technology, consider using AI to...

- Organize thoughts and brainstorm fundraising ideas for your next event.
- Suggest ways to optimize your already-written grant proposal.
- Raise more with AI-powered fundraising tools to engage donors.

Fully integrating AI into the workplace will take time, but saving your team time can start now.

The following are time-saving AI tools for content support:

Chat GPT: Leading the pack as one of the most popular generative AI tools, Chat GPT helps you with a wide variety of tasks. It is the strongest in assisting both in content creation and campaign brainstorming.

Grammarly: Who wouldn't want a professional editor to review their writing? Grammarly does just that; it edits your grammar, spelling, and clarity, and ultimately helps you construct stronger sentences.

Frase: Incorporate keywords into your donation pages to make sure they're seen by a wider audience with the help of Frase. This tool can create search engine optimized (SEO) blog outlines, suggest keywords, and optimize existing content.

Krisp: Tired of taking notes during your board meetings? Consider using Krisp, an AI-powered meeting assistant tool that will help take notes and summarize action items and key points of discussion.

OwlyWriter: With many fundraising initiatives happening at once, it can become difficult to find time for social media. OwlyWriter helps draft engaging post captions with your audience in mind and generates ideas to keep your feed looking fresh.

Auction AI®: Powered by OneCause, this AI tool uses generative text to craft engaging auction item descriptions, saving your organization up to 8 hours of prep time.

If you're looking for design assistance, check out:

Canva: A picture is worth a thousand words, but sometimes the right one is hard to find. By using Canva's AI image generator, it's easy to create the best images for you to use in your marketing materials.

Gamma: Prepping for your next board presentation or annual reporting? Try out Gamma, a tool that uses AI to create wow-worthy presentation decks. Just type away and let it handle the formatting and design.

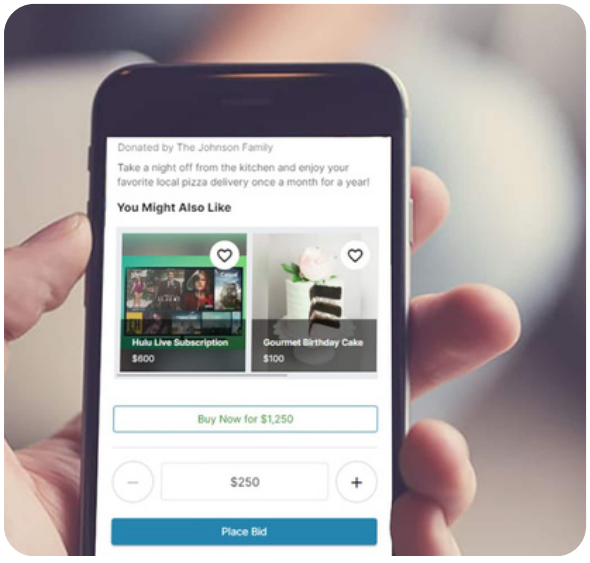
Generative Fill: Have you ever captured the perfect photo at your fundraising event, but noticed a thumb in the frame? Generative Fill in Adobe Photoshop assists in removing, editing, or creating image elements so you can get the winning shot.

Stockim.AI: The right branding can catch a donor's attention, even down to engaging logos and design elements. This tool helps you generate logos, art, and illustrations for your next campaign or themed event.

AI in Fundraising: How OneCause Can Help

You've seen what's possible with AI in fundraising—now let's explore how OneCause AI™ brings those possibilities to life.

As the first-to-market innovation of its kind, OneCause AI is designed to help nonprofits fundraise smarter, faster, and more efficiently. From planning your event to boosting auction performance, here's how AI can elevate your entire fundraising experience.

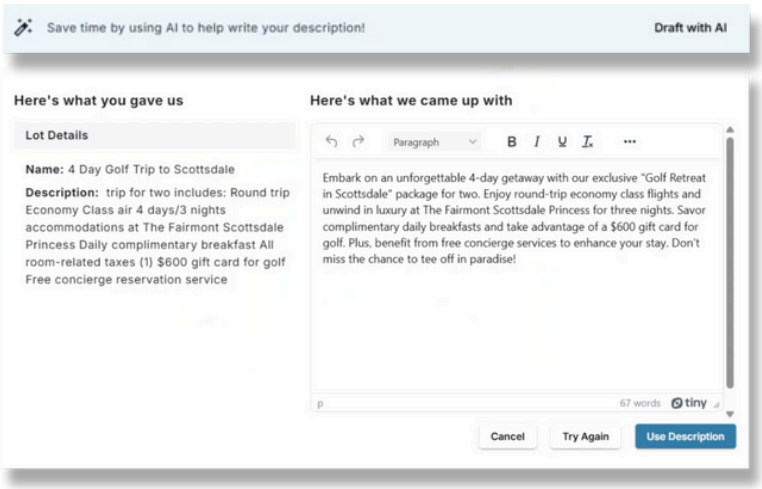


Save Time with AI-Powered Description Generators

Imagine if you had a powerful tool that saved you up to 8 hours of auction planning.
The good news is... it exists!

Just input a few details, and the AI generator creates compelling descriptions for your:

- **Silent and live auctions:** Generate item descriptions based on item name, category, and any additional details when auction planning.
- **Fixed prices and raffles:** Drive sales by creating descriptions on name, price, and any item details entered.
- **Targeted achievement and impact levels:** Hit your fundraising goals with descriptions that inspire giving and show the impact of their contribution.
- **Fundraising and event page stories:** Craft a compelling message for your fundraising campaign to generate more donations.
- **Event and online campaign stories:** Ignite anticipation for your upcoming event with captivating content and key event details.



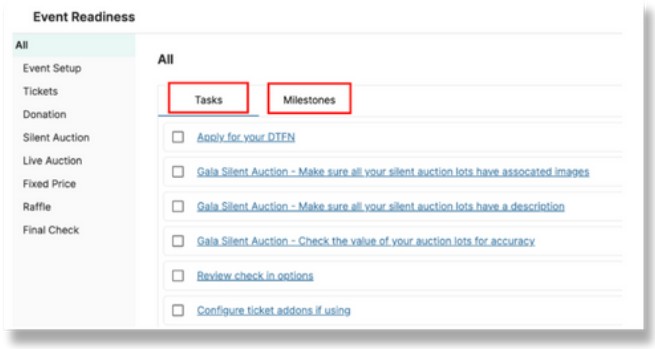
Stay On Track with Event Readiness

Plan, develop, and execute successful events with Event Readiness tools that help your organization prioritize tasks to maximize donations.

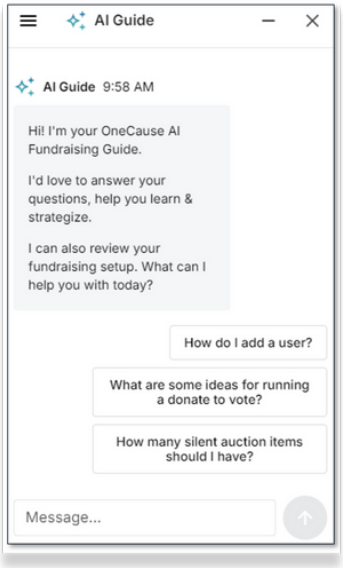
Using data and predictive modeling, Event Readiness lays out a personalized roadmap with:

- Milestones to keep you on schedule
- Tasks to help you prioritize what matters most
- Insights to maximize donations

Think of it as your AI-powered project manager for a successful, stress-free event.



Get 24/7 Support with AI Guide



Having trouble figuring out how to maximize your fundraising software? Our AI Guide is the newest enhancement to the customer support experience at OneCause.

Available 24/7, the AI Guide:

- Answers your questions in real time
- Helps with troubleshooting issues on the stop
- Offers tips and guidance anytime you need it

Boost Revenue with Auction AI® Tools

To increase your auction revenue, the OneCause Fundraising Platform provides you with the following Auction AI features and capabilities:

- **AI Recommended Items:** When a supporter clicks on an item, OneCause AI™ suggests three similar items based on browsing patterns. This creates a personalized browsing experience that meets today's shoppers' expectations for easy and relevant recommendations.
- **Suggested Sort:** AI tailors the auction experience for each guest by reordering items based on their interests. The more they browse, the more personalized the auction becomes – keeping them engaged and increasing bids.

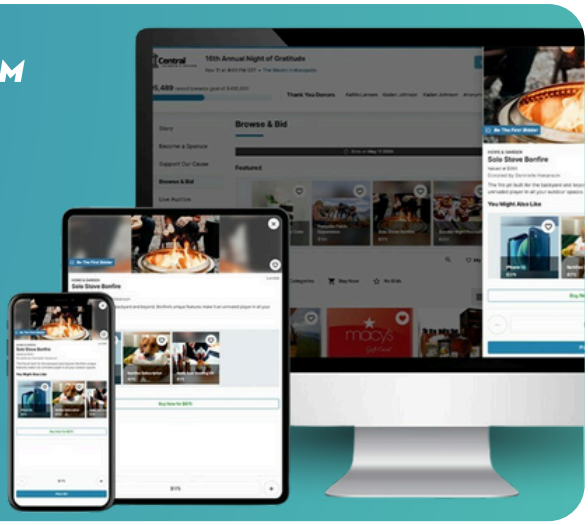
Auction AI is an innovative toolset that leverages the power of artificial intelligence to increase fundraising revenue and save time.

Want to see OneCause AI™ in action?

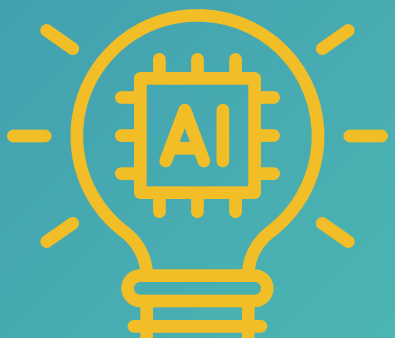
With OneCause AI, you get more than smart features – you get smarter fundraising.

Save time. Increase revenue. Deliver a better donor experience. And most importantly: reach your goals faster.

REQUEST A DEMO



AI Uses for Nonprofits



Personalization at Scale

Every donor deserves to feel valued, and there's no better way to show that appreciation than by personalizing your messaging. While your team may not be able to personally address every donor on your own, AI allows for mass customization of communications to make each one of your donors feel recognized and empowered to continue giving.

Predictive Data Insights

Take the guesswork out of timing your campaigns! AI can predict donor behavior and preferences through data, letting you plan more timely fundraisers. For example, if your supporters tend to give more in back-to-school campaigns, you'd host a fundraising appeal around August when interest is high.

Enhanced Donor Understanding

AI-driven data analysis also provides deeper insights into donor motivations and engagement patterns. Do your donors give more online during the winter, but donate more in person in the summer? AI can help outline a well-rounded fundraising calendar for impactful year-round campaigns.

Engaging Social Media Efforts

Your social media page may be the first place a potential donor learns about your mission, but posting consistently can be a challenge, especially if you're shortstaffed. With AI, your team can quickly generate and schedule exciting and relevant content to keep your supporters engaged in your efforts.

Effective Email Campaigns

Tailoring your emails to specific audiences will easily elevate your outreach. For example, an appeal to a one-time donor may read differently than one to a monthly donor. AI can remove the burden of writing multiple email campaigns and draft personalized emails for varying segments to save you tons of time!

Frequently Asked Questions about Adopting AI

Are nonprofits adopting AI yet?

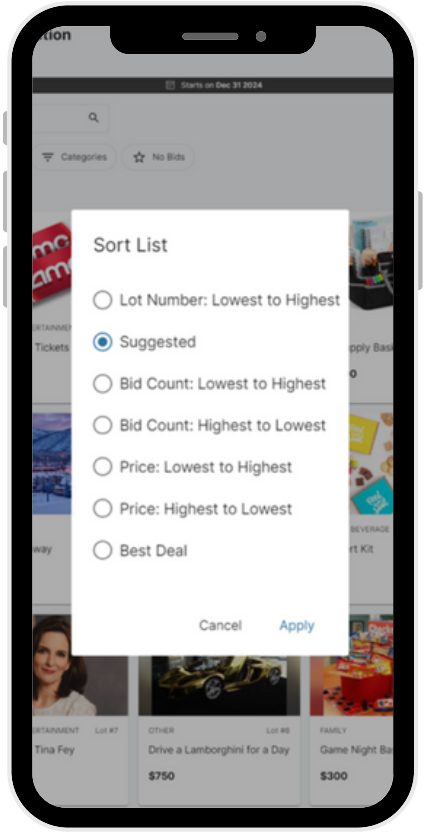
Absolutely! According to the **2025 Fundraising Outlook**, nonprofits are increasingly adopting it to enhance operations, with 49% of them using or planning to use AI for donor management.

Can AI help with auction preparation and execution?

Of course, choosing an auction platform that cludes built-in AI capabilities means nonprofits like yours can save time, enhance the donor experience, and drive greater revenue.

Is adopting AI worth it?

Yes, data shows an increase in the belief that AI will create great benefits for the sector with 60% of nonprofits agreeing or strongly agreeing that AI will be beneficial to them.



How can I reduce the risk of AI misuse at my nonprofit?

Consider creating a usage policy to help guide your team members on which tasks are okay to use AI for, along with what information is acceptable to share with AI tools.

Conclusion

As AI continues to transform the nonprofit sector, the path forward is clear: embrace innovation to fundraise smarter, connect deeper, and drive greater impact. OneCause equips you with cutting-edge technology—like Auction AI®—designed to help you do more with less and maximize every opportunity.

Two-thirds of nonprofits raise more with OneCause. With intuitive tools, AI-powered innovation, and a platform built for modern fundraising, OneCause empowers your team to engage supporters, streamline operations, and accelerate your impact.

REQUEST A DEMO

TAKE A TOUR