

The Robertson Trust

Change takes trust

We know that many of our funding applicants are now using generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot and Gemini to support their applications. This short guide provides clarity on our position around AI use and tips for ensuring these tools do not compromise the integrity or quality of an application.

The first and most important point is that we will not reject an application because AI was used. We see potential benefits, especially around accessibility. However, we encourage you to use AI thoughtfully and keep your own voice at the centre.



AI can carry a significant environmental footprint due to the energy needed to run these tools. It's worth keeping this in mind when deciding how much to use them.



Our funding team assesses all applications. We do not use AI for assessment or decision-making.

Things to watch out for



Sounding too generic

Funders want to hear your voice - the personality, values and experiences that make your organisation distinctive - not something that feels overly polished. With more applicants using AI, we are noticing similarities in tone and language. While AI can make text look neat, it can also dilute the heart of your organisation. What makes the difference are real stories, the experiences of your community, the challenges you've faced, and the change you're striving for. This is the kind of authenticity funders remember.



Mistakes in facts or details

AI can make mistakes. Proofread your application carefully - even a small factual error can impact its credibility.



Aligning with priorities

Depending on what you are applying for, AI may struggle to understand the finer details of the criteria for a particular fund. This risks your answers sounding vague or too broad. We also see applications that quote our funding guidelines almost directly. This can appear generic and dilute the substance of your work.



Over-reliance on AI

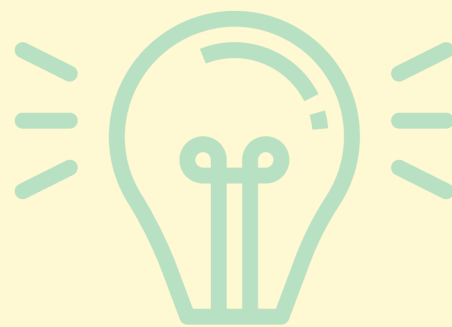
We understand the time pressures many organisations face, but the ability to clearly describe your work and share stories that bring it to life remains an important skill. Relying too heavily on AI could undermine this, with longer-term consequences.



Data privacy risks

Not all public AI tools are secure. Be very cautious about sharing sensitive information, and never share private or confidential details with a public tool.

Tips for using AI well



Think of it as support, not a replacement

Use AI to spark ideas or tidy up text, but always make sure the final words are yours.

Keep your voice in charge

Nobody knows your organisation better than you - funders want to hear your passion and perspective.

Check everything twice

Double-check facts, dates, budgets, names etc. Even a small mistake can have a big impact.

Protect sensitive info

Avoid sharing private or confidential details with public AI tools.

Keep building your own skills

AI can be a learning tool, but don't let it replace your confidence in writing proposals.

Useful resources

Guide to generative AI for Scotland's voluntary sector (SCVO)

<https://scvo.scot/support/digital/guides/ai>

Using AI in fundraising

<https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/about-fundraising/resources/guidance-using-artificial-intelligence-fundraising>