FOR NONPROFITS AND SMALL BUSINESSES

THE MCS AGENCY

WEBSITES AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

Mission Ready AI Field Guide™

MISSION READY / THE MCS AGENCY



An AI Confidence Playbook for organizations that keep people in charge and communities respected.

What is inside

- Seven field rules for using AI with people in charge
- A policy builder, risk tiers, and vendor questions
- A 90-day roadmap, a pilot plan, and ready-to-use prompts

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AI-generated illustration

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AN AI CONFIDENCE PLAYBOOK FOR NONPROFITS AND SMALL BUSINESSES

Mission Ready AI Field Guide™

A practical system for adopting AI with people in charge, communities respected, and your voice intact.

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Created by The MCS Agency

Last reviewed October 2026

Ten minutes

Read the seven field rules, study the review loop, and take the readiness assessment.

Building a policy

Use the policy builder and the vendor questions.

Briefing a board or funder

Use the measures, scripts, and capacity calculator.

Planning a pilot

Build a one-page pilot plan to take back to your team.

Built to outlast the tools. This guide names categories of tools and leaves out product names, prices, and version numbers, since those change monthly. Anything that depends on a vendor's current terms is worth rechecking before you act.

Seven field rules

Every chapter that follows applies these rules. If you remember nothing else from this guide, remember them.

01 **Think before you prompt**

Form your own view first. The tool drafts from your thinking, which keeps the thinking yours.

02 **Supply the facts**

Tools write fluently whether or not they are right, so hand them the names, numbers, and quotations you want used.

03 **Mark the gaps**

Tell the tool to write [NEEDED] wherever information is missing, and fill those gaps yourself.

04 **A person approves everything**

One named reviewer owns each output and answers for its accuracy and tone.

05 **Protect confidential information**

Use approved tools only, and read each tool's current data terms before anything sensitive goes in.

06 **Portray people with dignity**

Rewrite any line that casts the people you serve as helpless or voiceless. Name what they bring.

07 **Review on a schedule**

Each quarter, recheck your tools, their terms, your prompts, and your practice.



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The review loop

1

YOU

Think

Decide the purpose. Gather real facts.

2

YOU

Prompt

Facts, tone, and a [NEEDED] gap rule.

3

THE TOOL

Draft

Builds a first version quickly.

4

YOU

Review

Check facts, voice, and dignity.

5

A NAMED PERSON

Release

Approves, sends, and logs the result.

Send back when a check fails

Four of the five stations belong to people. The tool drafts. People decide the purpose, supply the facts, check the result, and release it. The return paths show where work goes back when a check fails or when you learn something worth keeping.

Log what worked, then update prompts and policy



The MCS Agency | AI-illustrated guide mockup

A NOTE FROM CLARA

Why this guide exists

My work on nonprofit teams helped shape my decision to become a fractional CMO. I saw what limited capacity looks like up close. And if I'm honest, I see it in my own business: we are a team of three doing work that needs six people. Staff wear five hats. Volunteers carry more than they signed up for. Budgets hold steady while programs grow.

That is why I take AI seriously. Used carefully, it can give small teams some time back. Getting started takes a clear purpose, a manageable task, and firm rules about how people's information is handled. You can begin with the team and resources you have.

My own practice has also made me cautious. When a tool can produce a polished draft in seconds, it is easy to accept its wording before deciding whether it says what you mean. Over time, you can lose the habit of working through an idea yourself. This guide asks you to pause: do your own thinking first, give the tool clear instructions, and question what comes back. Your name is on the finished work. You need to stand behind it.

In the Ubuntu tradition, I am because we are. Our decisions about technology affect staff, volunteers, and the people our organizations serve. They deserve a say in those decisions, especially when their information, their stories, or their access to services is involved.

With respect and Ubuntu,
Clara Matonhodze

CHAPTER I

The AI reality check

I

What AI is

In this guide, AI means software that takes instructions written in everyday language and produces text, images, summaries, translations, or analysis in response. It predicts likely output from patterns in the material it learned from. That makes it fast and fluent, and it also makes it capable of confident mistakes.

AI carries the biases of its sources. It knows nothing about your community unless you supply that knowledge, and it holds no accountability for what it produces. Your team holds that accountability, which is why every chapter returns to human review.

Seven ways it goes wrong, and your control for each

FAILURE	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	YOUR CONTROL
Invented facts	Statistics, quotations, or citations that sound right and have no source.	Supply the facts. Require [NEEDED] for gaps. Verify against the original.
Embedded bias	Deficit framing of communities, stereotyped examples, uneven translation quality.	Run a dignity check in review. Use a community reviewer for public-facing work.
Data exposure	Confidential details entered into a tool whose data terms nobody read.	Keep an approved-tools list. Remove identifying details. Verify the terms.
Voice erosion	Writing drifts toward generic phrasing, and staff stop forming a first draft of their own.	Think first. Supply voice samples. Edit the draft and keep your own phrasing.
Workload creep	Recovered hours get absorbed by new demands before anyone notices.	Decide in advance what the time is for. Track it in your log.
Tool dependence	Your work lives in one vendor's account, and a price or terms change disrupts it.	Keep prompts, policy, and key outputs in files your organization owns.
Unsanctioned use	Staff already experiment on personal accounts, with no shared rules.	Ask openly. Publish clear permitted uses so experimentation happens in view.



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Five myths that stall organizations

“We can't afford it.”

Costs vary widely by tool and change often, and many tools offer free or low-cost plans. Your larger investment is staff time for learning and review, so build that time into the pilot. Check current pricing before you budget.

“It will replace our people.”

AI takes on tasks within a role. In a small organization, the realistic risk is that recovered time gets quietly filled with more work. Decide what the saved hours are for before you begin, and tell your team.

“We need a technical person.”

The tools respond to plain language. The skill that matters most is editorial judgment: someone who can tell when a draft is wrong, thin, or off in tone. A strong editor on your team is a better starting point than a developer.

“It will embarrass us.”

It can. Invented facts, statistics, and quotations are the most common failures, and a review step catches them. Treat human review as a standing rule and you have addressed this fear directly.

“Our community will reject it.”

Reactions vary by community and by how you use the tools. Explain your approach plainly and show how you review the result. Prepare an answer for anyone who asks, and consider asking a few community members what they would want to know.



AI-generated illustration

The readiness assessment

Check each statement that is true for your organization today. Count your checks and read the key below. Note your score for the pilot plan later in this guide.

- ☐ At least one person on the team wants to experiment and has some time to do it.
- ☐ We have a regular meeting where a new practice could be discussed.
- ☐ Our donor, client, and financial records sit in systems with controlled access.
- ☐ Leadership is open to a small pilot, even without certainty about the outcome.
- ☐ Someone can set aside about two hours a week for eight weeks.
- ☐ We have a written policy for at least one other technology, such as social media or data privacy.
- ☐ Staff have reliable devices and internet access during work hours.
- ☐ Someone can explain a new process to the team and bring people along.
- ☐ We produce written or visual communications every week.
- ☐ We will change a routine when the evidence shows a better way.

Scoring key

8 to 10: ready to pilot. Move to the roadmap and begin with your policy and your pilot task.

5 to 7: build a base first. Close the gaps you left unchecked during the first two weeks of the roadmap.

0 to 4: begin with governance. Start with Chapter III and write your policy and data practice first.

This checklist counts checks out of 10. The separate online assessment uses a different scoring system; the scores are not interchangeable.



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CHAPTER II

Safe quick wins

II

Confidence grows fastest when a team wins small and wins visibly. A staff member who gets two hours back from a task they dreaded becomes your most credible advocate. Quick wins carry low risk, return a clear payoff, and keep a person in charge of the result.

Five places to start

01

First drafts

GOOD FOR Grant narratives, thank-you letters, event descriptions, volunteer recruitment posts, board summaries.

YOUR STEP Add what only you know: names, program details, real numbers, and the voice your community recognizes.

WATCH FOR Invented statistics. Supply the facts yourself and tell the tool to mark any gap it finds.

02

Social content

GOOD FOR Turning one program update into versions for each platform you use.

YOUR STEP Choose the version that sounds like you, then check every name, date, and link.

WATCH FOR Language that casts the people you serve as passive. Rewrite those lines to name what people bring.

03

Internal communication

GOOD FOR Meeting recaps, process documentation, onboarding materials, staff updates.

YOUR STEP Confirm each action item and its owner before the summary goes out.

WATCH FOR Sensitive discussions. Keep confidential board or personnel matters out of tools you have not approved.

04

Research and summaries

GOOD FOR Plain-language briefs of long reports, policies, and articles for staff or board members.

YOUR STEP Check the summary against the source for anything you plan to quote, cite, or act on.

WATCH FOR Dropped nuance and wrong figures. A summary shortens a document and can also distort it.



AI-generated illustration

05

Translation and accessibility

GOOD FOR First-pass translation, reading-level adjustments, and draft alt text for images.

YOUR STEP Ask a fluent community member to review before anything is published.

WATCH FOR Cultural nuance, idiom, and tone, which tools handle unevenly.

An illustrative walk-through

This scenario shows how work divides between people and tool. It describes a typical process and reports no client results.

A three-person food pantry wants to turn one program update into a month of communications.

1. The director writes five rough lines from memory and includes a volunteer's own words, with the volunteer's permission.
2. She gives the tool those lines, the audience, the tone she wants, and one instruction: use only the facts supplied and mark any gap.
3. The tool returns a newsletter draft and three short social versions.
4. She cuts a line that reads like a brochure, restores the volunteer's wording, and rewrites a sentence that described clients by what they lack so that it names what they contribute.
5. She checks every name and number, and a second staff member proofreads before anything is sent.

The tool shaped the structure, and the people supplied the facts, the voice, and the judgment.



AI-generated illustration

Should I use AI for this task?

Think of one specific task. Check each statement that applies to it.

- [ ] A mistake would be easy to catch and fix before anything goes out.
- [ ] A person will review the result before anyone outside the team sees it.
- [ ] The task takes at least 30 minutes a week.
- [ ] The task involves no confidential personal or financial information, or we have verified and approved the tool's data terms.
- [ ] A capable new colleague could do the task from written instructions.

Reading your checks

Statement 4 unchecked: hold, even if 1, 3 and 5 are checked. Settle the data question first.

Statement 2 unchecked: name a reviewer first, regardless of the other checks.

Only with 2 and 4 checked: all of 1, 3 and 5 checked means a strong pilot candidate.

With 2 and 4 checked, anything else: try a small experiment. Time the usual way and the new way for two weeks, review included.



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CHAPTER III

Governance people follow

Most AI policy conversations begin with fear: what could go wrong, and who gets blamed. Policies written from fear tend to be ignored or followed so rigidly that nobody uses the tools. Good governance begins with the question your staff are asking, which is what they may do with AI at work. Answer that clearly and you earn compliance.

Five principles

1. **A person owns every output.** Nothing generated by AI leaves the organization without a human who reviewed, edited, and approved it. That person answers for its accuracy and tone.

2. **Confidential information stays protected.** Keep client, donor, patient, and financial details out of any tool until you have confirmed how that tool stores and uses what you enter. Terms and settings change and often differ between free and paid plans, so read the current data terms for each tool your team uses.

3. **Be ready to explain.** Answer honestly whenever someone asks how your team uses AI. Agree on one sentence your whole team can say, such as: “We use AI tools for drafts and research, and a person reviews everything before it goes out.”

4. **Check for dignity and accuracy.** Tools often default to deficit language about the communities you serve and may state invented facts with confidence. Reviewers look for both, and they rewrite any line that portrays people as helpless or voiceless.

5. **Review on a schedule.** Tools and norms shift quickly. A thirty-minute check-in each quarter keeps your policy current. Chapter VI includes a checklist.

Build your AI use policy

Fill in the fields and adjust the choices. Use the fields and choices as a guide, then copy the policy text below into your own document and complete it there. Have your leadership and, where appropriate, legal counsel review it before adoption. Rules differ by country, state, and funder, so confirm what applies to you.

Organization name

Your organization

Who approves AI-assisted work

e.g. the communications lead

Policy review

every quarter

Approved uses

- [ ] Drafting written content for review
- [ ] Summarizing research and long documents
- [ ] Internal communication drafts
- [ ] Social media ideas and drafts
- [ ] Translation help, with review by a fluent community member
- [ ] Data analysis on information with all identifying details removed

Not permitted

- [ ] Entering confidential client, donor, or patient information into unapproved tools
- [ ] Producing final financial or legal documents without professional review
- [ ] Making decisions about program participants without human review
- [ ] Publishing or sending anything without human approval
- [ ] Presenting AI-generated images or quotations as real people or real events

Our standard answer when someone asks

> We use AI tools to help with drafts and research. A person reviews everything before it goes out.



AI-generated illustration

[ORGANIZATION NAME] AI USE POLICY

Purpose

We use AI tools to reduce administrative load and improve the quality of our communications. This policy gives staff shared expectations and names who is accountable.

Approved uses

- Drafting written content for review
- Summarizing research and long documents
- Internal communication drafts
- Social media ideas and drafts
- Translation help, with review by a fluent community member

Not permitted

- Entering confidential client, donor, or patient information into unapproved tools
- Producing final financial or legal documents without professional review
- Making decisions about program participants without human review
- Publishing or sending anything without human approval
- Presenting AI-generated images or quotations as real people or real events

Review and accountability

Every piece of AI-assisted work is reviewed and approved by [role] before use. The approving person answers for its accuracy, tone, and respectful portrayal of the people we serve.

Confidential information

Staff enter confidential information only into tools the organization has approved after reviewing their current data terms.

When someone asks

We use AI tools to help with drafts and research. A person reviews everything before it goes out.

Policy review

We review this policy every quarter and whenever we adopt a new tool.

Approved by: _____ Date: _____



AI-generated illustration

Risk tiers

Not every task carries the same risk. Sort your work into three tiers and match the review to the tier.

TIER	EXAMPLES	REVIEW
Lower	Social posts, internal memos, event descriptions, thank-you drafts, research summaries for internal use	Any trained staff member
Medium	Grant narratives, donor communications, board reports, translated public-facing content	Supervisor or communications lead, plus a fluent reviewer for translations
Higher	Anything involving personal data, financial or legal content, crisis communications, public statements on sensitive topics	Leadership and, where needed, legal counsel. Many organizations keep this tier manual.

What stands behind a badge

Pledges, badges, and certifications keep multiplying, and they differ in how much outside checking sits behind them. Before you sign one, display one, or trust a vendor's, find where it sits on this ladder. Each step up adds outside verification and usually adds cost.

LEVEL	WHAT IT IS	WHO CHECKS	WHAT IT TELLS YOU
Pledge	A public promise to follow stated principles.	The signer	Intent. It carries weight once the signer publishes the policy and practice behind it.
Framework	Voluntary guidance an organization applies on its own, such as NIST's AI Risk Management Framework.	The organization itself	A shared method and vocabulary. NIST presents its framework for voluntary use.
Certification	An outside audit against a published standard, such as ISO/IEC 42001, which sets requirements for an AI management system.	An independent auditor	Evidence that someone other than you checked. Confirm what the audit covered and who accredited the auditor.
Recognized assurance	A funder, insurer, or regulator treats the credential as meeting its own requirements.	The party that relies on it	Real consequences. Ask that party what it accepts, and get the answer in writing.



AI-generated illustration

The badge check

Check the cost question with care. Criteria written for organizations with compliance departments can shut out small, AI-reliant organizations, the same ones that most need credible guardrails. Ask whether the process scales to your size.

When you sign a pledge, publish the policy and review dates that back it, so readers can see the practice behind the promise.

Think of one pledge, badge, or certification you are considering. Check each statement that is true for it.

- [ ] We can read everything it requires before we apply or rely on it.
- [ ] Someone outside the issuer verifies compliance, and we know who.
- [ ] The verifier is accredited or otherwise independent of the issuer.
- [ ] The cost and effort fit an organization our size.
- [ ] We know what happens when a holder breaks the rules, such as removal or public notice.
- [ ] A funder, insurer, or customer we care about says it recognizes the credential.

Scoring key

5 to 6 checked:

substantial backing. Confirm the details in writing and review them each year.

3 to 4 checked:

partial backing. Treat it as one signal among several, and ask the issuer about each open item.

0 to 2 checked:

mostly a signal. Read it as a statement of commitment and check the practice yourself.



AI-generated illustration

Nine questions to ask any vendor

Ask before you adopt a tool, and again at renewal. Answers change over time, so record the date you asked.

01

Does the tool use what we enter, or what it produces for us, to train its models, and can we switch that off?

02

How long does it keep our content, and can we delete it on request?

03

Who can see our content, including the vendor's staff and any outside processors?

04

Does our plan include admin controls for accounts and settings?

05

Can we export our work and prompts if we leave?

06

What happens to price and terms at renewal, and how much notice do we receive?

07

Does it work with assistive technology and in the languages our community uses?

08

Where is our data stored, and does that matter to our funders or the regions we serve?

09

Who handles support when the tool produces harmful or wrong output?



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CHAPTER IV

Your 90-day roadmap

IV

Ninety days can carry a team from curious to competent. Competent means at least one tool is in regular use, it produces real value, and people no longer fear it. A smaller team can stretch the timeline, and a team with more capacity can move faster.

Phase 1: Foundation Days 1 to 30

Prepare the organization. Nothing gets implemented yet.

WEEKS 1 AND 2

- [ ] Complete the readiness assessment together as a team.
- [ ] Name a pilot lead, chosen for curiosity and good editorial judgment. Seniority matters less.
- [ ] Pick one recurring task that takes more than two hours a week and produces written output.
- [ ] Compare two or three tools in that category using the vendor questions in Chapter III.

WEEKS 3 AND 4

- [ ] Draft your policy with the builder in Chapter III and have leadership approve it.
- [ ] Hold a 30-minute team meeting that covers what you are piloting, why, and what the saved time is for.

LEADERSHIP NOTE Your staff are listening to how you frame this. Framing AI as an answer to understaffing sounds like a threat to the people who hear it. Ask your team which parts of their work they would gladly hand off, and present the tool as help with those. Their answers will teach you something.

Phase 2: Pilot Days 31 to 60

One tool, one task, a small group, and a simple log.

WEEKS 5 AND 6

- [ ] The pilot lead begins using the tool on the chosen task.
- [ ] Keep a log of the task, minutes with the tool including review, minutes the usual way, and a note on quality.
- [ ] Share one early result with the team, however small.

WEEKS 7 AND 8

- [ ] Add a second person to the pilot.
- [ ] Test one additional task type.
- [ ] Hold a 20-minute debrief on what worked, what felt awkward, and what needs a rule. Update the policy to match.

Phase 3: Embed Days 61 to 90

Turn what worked into a lasting practice.

WEEKS 9 AND 10

- [ ] Write step-by-step instructions for your top two or three use cases.
- [ ] Build a prompt library of three to five prompts that produced reliable results, and store it in a file your organization owns.
- [ ] Add your AI practices to staff onboarding.

WEEKS 11 AND 12

- [ ] Calculate net time recovered from your log using the calculator in Chapter V.
- [ ] Report to leadership or your board on what you did, what happened, and what comes next.
- [ ] Schedule your first quarterly review.



AI-generated illustration

CHAPTER V

Measuring what matters, and saying it well

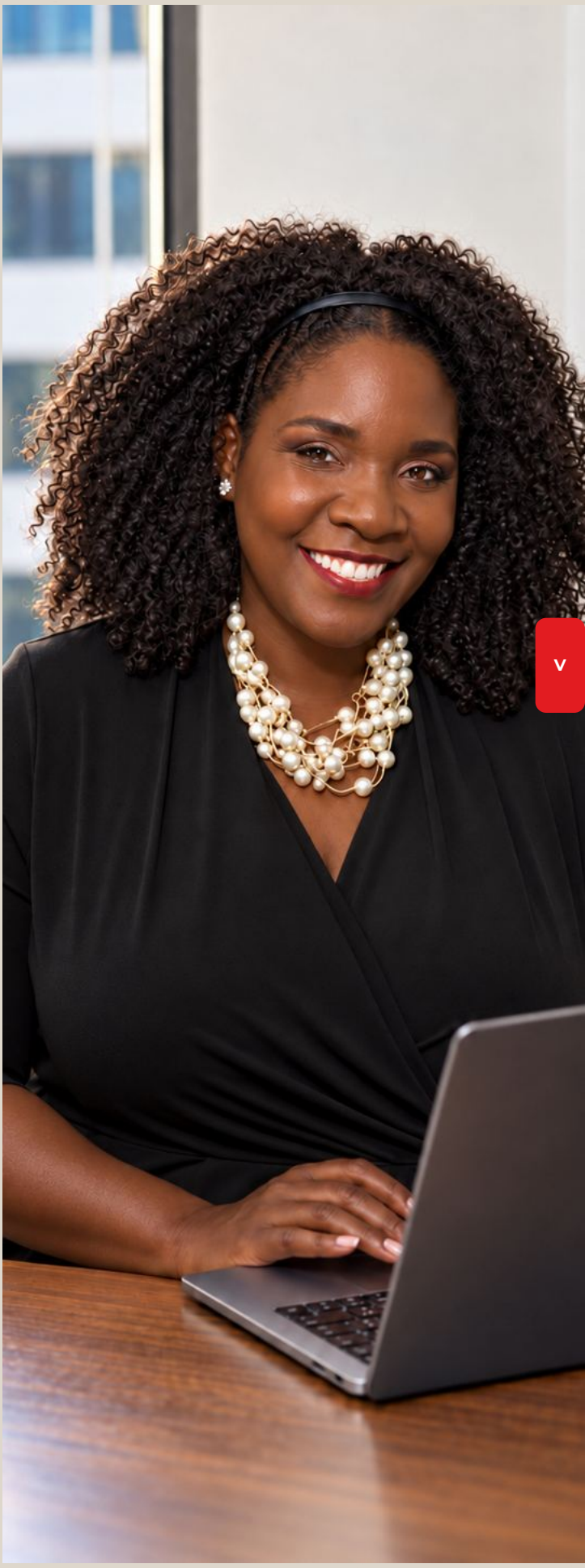
Measure what changed: the time your team recovered, the quality of the work, and the experience of the people doing it. Counting tools adopted or staff trained tells you about activity and little about results.

Three measures

Time recovered, net. Log the minutes a task takes the usual way and the minutes it takes with the tool, review included. Two weeks of each is enough to see a pattern. Estimates from memory run optimistic, so rely on the log.

Output quality. Choose indicators you already track, such as grant outcomes, email response, attendance, or board feedback, and compare them with a similar earlier period. Other factors move these numbers too, so one season rarely proves cause. Some tasks improve, some hold level, and a few decline when review slips.

Staff experience. At the end of the pilot, ask three questions: what got easier, what got harder, and whether people would keep using the tool. A tool that returns hours and drains morale has not succeeded.



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Capacity calculator

The result expresses staff capacity you can redirect to mission work. A budget line changes only if you decide it should. The starting values are examples, so replace them with figures from your own log.

Hours per week, usual way **5**	Hours per week with the tool, review included **3.5**
Fully loaded hourly cost of the staff time **30**	Working weeks per year **48**
Tool cost per month **$20**	Setup + learning hours, first year **12**

How to calculate

1. Weekly hours saved = usual weekly hours minus tool-assisted hours, review included.
2. First-year net hours = weekly hours saved x working weeks, minus setup and learning hours.
3. First-year workdays recovered = first-year net hours / 8.
4. First-year capacity value = net hours x hourly staff cost, minus annual tool cost.

EXAMPLE - FIRST YEAR. Includes 12 hours of setup and learning. Replace all inputs with your own.

Example: (5 - 3.5) x 48 = 72 hours. Less 12 setup and learning hours = 60 net hours in year one. 60 / 8 = 7.5 workdays. 60 x $30 - ($20 x 12) = $1,560 in first-year capacity value.

EXAMPLE	EXAMPLE	EXAMPLE	EXAMPLE
1.5	**60**	**7.5**	**$1,560**
ongoing hours saved per week	first-year net hours after setup + learning	first-year eight-hour workdays recovered	first-year capacity value, after setup + tool cost



AI-generated illustration

What to say to each audience

Each script is a starting point. Fill the brackets with facts you can support, and cut any sentence that is not yet true for your organization.

YOUR BOARD

We are running a small, time-limited pilot of AI writing assistance for [task]. A named staff member reviews every output, and a written policy covers confidential information. We will report net time recovered, plus any quality or risk issues, by [date]. The board is asked to [approve the pilot / review the draft policy].

YOUR STAFF

We want to take [task] off your plate where we can, and you decide which parts. A person reviews everything before it goes out. [Confirm before saying this: no role or hours will change because of this pilot.] Tell us what works and what does not, and we will adjust.

YOUR FUNDERS

We use AI tools for drafts and research under a written policy. A staff member reviews all content, and we keep confidential participant and donor information out of unapproved tools. We are glad to share the policy on request.

YOUR COMMUNITY

We use tools that help us draft and organize our communications so staff have more time with you. People review everything we publish. If you have questions or concerns, please contact [name] at [contact].

Reporting language for boards and funders

Fill the brackets with your own figures and leave out any claim your log cannot support.

What we did: Beginning in [month], we piloted AI writing assistance with our [team] for [task type].

What happened: Over [number] days, the team recovered an average of [X] net hours per week on [task], after accounting for review time. [Add one quality indicator you tracked and how it compared with a similar earlier period.]

How we kept it accountable: A staff member reviewed and approved every AI-assisted draft before use. Our AI use policy governs the work and is available on request.



AI-generated illustration



Photograph: The MCS Agency | AI-retouched

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CHAPTER VI

Future-proofing your organization

VI

Tools that lead today become routine within a year, and pricing, features, and expectations keep shifting. This chapter focuses on building an organization that adapts well, since no prediction will stay accurate for long.

Skills that stay useful

- Judgment to recognize output that is wrong, thin, or off-brand.
- Relationships with your community, which no tool can build for you.
- Mission clarity, meaning a firm grasp of why you exist and who you serve.
- Prompt fluency, the ability to give clear, specific, contextual instructions. Build this skill through practice and review.
- Critical reading of AI output with the rigor you would give a first draft from a new writer.

The adoption filter

When a new tool or capability arrives, answer these five questions before acting.

1. Does it solve a problem we have right now?
2. Can one person pilot it on one task first?
3. Does it fit our current policy, or does the policy need updating before we begin?
4. What does failure cost us, and can we absorb it?
5. Who on the team would benefit most, and have we asked them?

If you can answer all five clearly, you are ready to evaluate the tool. Any question you cannot answer is the work to do first.



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Quarterly review checklist

Thirty minutes each quarter keeps your practice current. Tick each item at your review, and use a fresh copy each quarter.

- [ ] Re-read the data terms for every tool in use.
- [ ] Confirm current pricing and any plan changes.
- [ ] Check whether new features touch your data or change what staff can do.
- [ ] Compare actual practice with the written policy and update whichever is out of date.
- [ ] Retest the prompt library and retire prompts that no longer perform.
- [ ] Review any errors or near misses and decide what rule they suggest.
- [ ] Ask staff what got easier and what got harder.
- [ ] Confirm your prompts, policy, and key outputs live in files your organization owns.

That last item protects you when a tool changes or disappears. Keep your prompt library, policy, and best outputs in files you control, and you can swap any tool without losing the work.

Community trust

Your community's trust took years to build. Use AI to support communication while keeping people responsible for accuracy, voice, and dignity. Generic or careless output can weaken the connection you want to build. Keep your organization's values and community relationships at the center of decisions about how to use these tools.

TAKE IT WITH YOU

Your one-page pilot plan

Fill in the seven fields, then copy the plan text into an email, a notes app, or a team document. Count 30, 60 and 90 days forward from your start date for the timeline.

1 Organization

Your organization

2 Pilot lead

Name and role

3 Approves every output

Name and role

4 Pilot task

e.g. monthly donor newsletter first drafts

5 Tool category

Writing assistant

6 Policy status

Not started

7 Start date

mm/dd/yyyy

[ORGANIZATION] AI PILOT PLAN

Readiness: [Take the readiness assessment in Chapter I]
Pilot task: [Recurring task that takes over two hours a week]
Tool category: Writing assistant
Pilot lead: [Name and role]
Approves every output: [Name and role]
Policy status: Not started
Start date: [date]

Timeline
- Day 30 ([date]): policy approved and pilot tool chosen after reviewing its current data terms
- Day 60 ([date]): pilot debrief held and a second user added
- Day 90 ([date]): net time recovered reported to leadership and a quarterly review scheduled

How we will measure
- Net hours recovered per week, review time included
- One quality indicator we already track
- Staff answers to three questions: what got easier, what got harder, would you keep using it

Ground rules
- A person reviews and approves everything before use
- Confidential information stays out of unapproved tools



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TOOLKIT

Prompts, anatomy, and terms

The anatomy of a good prompt

Strong prompts share six parts. The order can vary. Include all six and results improve.

01	**Audience and role**	Who the writing is for and what job the tool is doing.
02	**Context**	The organization, program, and community, described the way you would want them described.
03	**Task**	One clear request, with the length and format you want.
04	**Facts supplied**	Every figure, name, and quotation the tool may use.
05	**Constraints**	Tone, words to avoid, and the dignity standard for how people are portrayed.
06	**Gap rule**	An instruction to write [NEEDED] when information is missing, so the tool does not guess.



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Prompt library

Replace each bracket with your own details. Paste confidential information only into tools you have approved.

Grant narrative

A three-paragraph narrative section for a funder.

> You are helping a small organization write a grant narrative.
>
> Organization: [name] Community we serve: [who they are, described by what they bring as well as what they need] Program: [what it does and how] Funder priorities: [paste from the guidelines] Facts and figures you may use: [list each one]
>
> Write three paragraphs in a warm, direct voice that treats the people we serve as partners. Avoid jargon. Do not describe anyone as helpless or voiceless.
>
> Use only the facts I provide. If you need something I have not given you, write [NEEDED] instead of guessing.

Donor thank-you

A personal thank-you letter of about 250 words.

> Write a thank-you letter to a donor who gave [amount] to support [program]. Our mission: [mission statement]. One specific example of what the gift made possible: [example, using only details we can verify].
>
> The letter should read like a note from a person. Keep it under 250 words and sign it from [name, title].
>
> Use only the facts I provide. If you need something I have not given you, write [NEEDED] instead of guessing.



AI-generated illustration

Prompt library

Social posts

One update turned into versions for each platform.

> Turn this program update into three posts: one for [platform A] in a conversational tone, one for [platform B] as a single sentence with [number] hashtags, and one for [platform C] in a professional tone of four or five sentences.
>
> Update: [paste the update] Our voice: [for example warm, direct, community-centered]
>
> Use only the facts I provide. If you need something I have not given you, write [NEEDED] instead of guessing.

Board summary

A plain-language brief of a long document.

> Summarize the document below for a board of community leaders who are not subject-matter experts. List the five most important points, explain technical terms in plain language, and note any recommendations that apply to an organization like ours. Flag any passage you are unsure about.
>
> Document: [paste or attach]
>
> Use only the facts I provide. If you need something I have not given you, write [NEEDED] instead of guessing.

Meeting notes

Decisions, actions, and open questions from rough notes.

> Turn these meeting notes into three sections: decisions made, action items with owner and due date, and open questions. If an owner or date was not stated, write [NEEDED].
>
> Notes: [paste notes with confidential details removed]



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Prompt library

Plain-language rewrite

Lower the reading level without losing meaning.

> Rewrite the text below for a general audience at roughly an eighth-grade reading level. Keep every fact. Replace jargon with everyday words, shorten long sentences, and keep the tone respectful. List any term you could not simplify.
>
> Text: [paste]

Voice check

Edit a draft while keeping your own voice.

> Below are two samples of my own writing and a draft I wrote. Edit the draft for clarity and flow while keeping my voice, my sentence rhythms, and my word choices. Make the smallest changes that help. Then list every change you made and why, so I can accept or reject each one.
>
> Sample 1: [paste] Sample 2: [paste] Draft: [paste]

Dignity review

Check a draft for deficit language about the people you serve.

> Review the draft below as an editor who cares about how communities are portrayed. Find every phrase that casts the people we serve as helpless, voiceless, dependent, or defined by what they lack. For each one, quote the phrase, explain the concern, and suggest a rewrite that names what those people bring and what they are doing. Do not add facts.
>
> Draft: [paste]



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Glossary

AI

Software that uses patterns in data to perform tasks that usually take human intelligence, such as writing, summarizing, and translating.

Large language model

The technology behind most AI writing tools. It predicts likely next words from patterns in very large collections of text.

Prompt

The instruction you give a tool. Clearer prompts produce more useful output.

Hallucination

Output that sounds true and is false. Verify every fact, figure, quotation, and citation.

Training data

The material a model learned from. It shapes what the model knows and which biases it carries.

Data terms

A vendor's published rules for storing and using what you enter. They change, and they differ by plan.

Human in the loop

A process in which a person reviews and approves AI output before anyone relies on it.

Governance

The policies, roles, and routines that determine how AI gets used in your organization.

Prompt library

A collection of tested prompts your team can reuse for common tasks.

Deficit language

Wording that describes people by what they lack instead of what they contribute. The "Check for dignity and accuracy" principle in Chapter III looks for it.

[NEEDED] gap rule

A prompt instruction that tells the tool to write [NEEDED] wherever information is missing, so a person fills each gap with a real fact.

Fully loaded hourly cost

What an hour of staff time costs the organization, counting benefits and overhead as well as pay. The capacity calculator uses it.

Ubuntu

A Southern African philosophy. It shapes this guide's view that tools serve the people an organization serves.



The MCS Agency | AI-edited portrait

GROUNDING

Where this guide stands

This guide draws on my experience working with nonprofits and small businesses. Examples drawn from client work have been generalized to protect confidentiality. Hypothetical examples are identified as illustrative. The public frameworks below shaped its principles. It contains no outcome statistics, and the walk-through is illustrative. Each framework goes much deeper than a field guide can, which makes them good next reading for your board and leadership team.

NIST, Artificial Intelligence Risk Management Framework: Generative Artificial Intelligence Profile (NIST AI 600-1) Published July 26, 2024 as a companion to the AI Risk Management Framework 1.0 from January 2023, for voluntary use. NIST publication page (https://www.nist.gov/publications/artificial-intelligence-risk-management-framework-generative-artificial-intelligence)

OECD, AI Principles, 2024 revision Revised to address general-purpose and generative AI, including privacy, intellectual property, safety, and information integrity. OECD announcement (https://www.oecd.org/en/about/news/press-releases/2024/05/oecd-updates-ai-principles-to-stay-abreast-of-rapid-technological-developments.html)

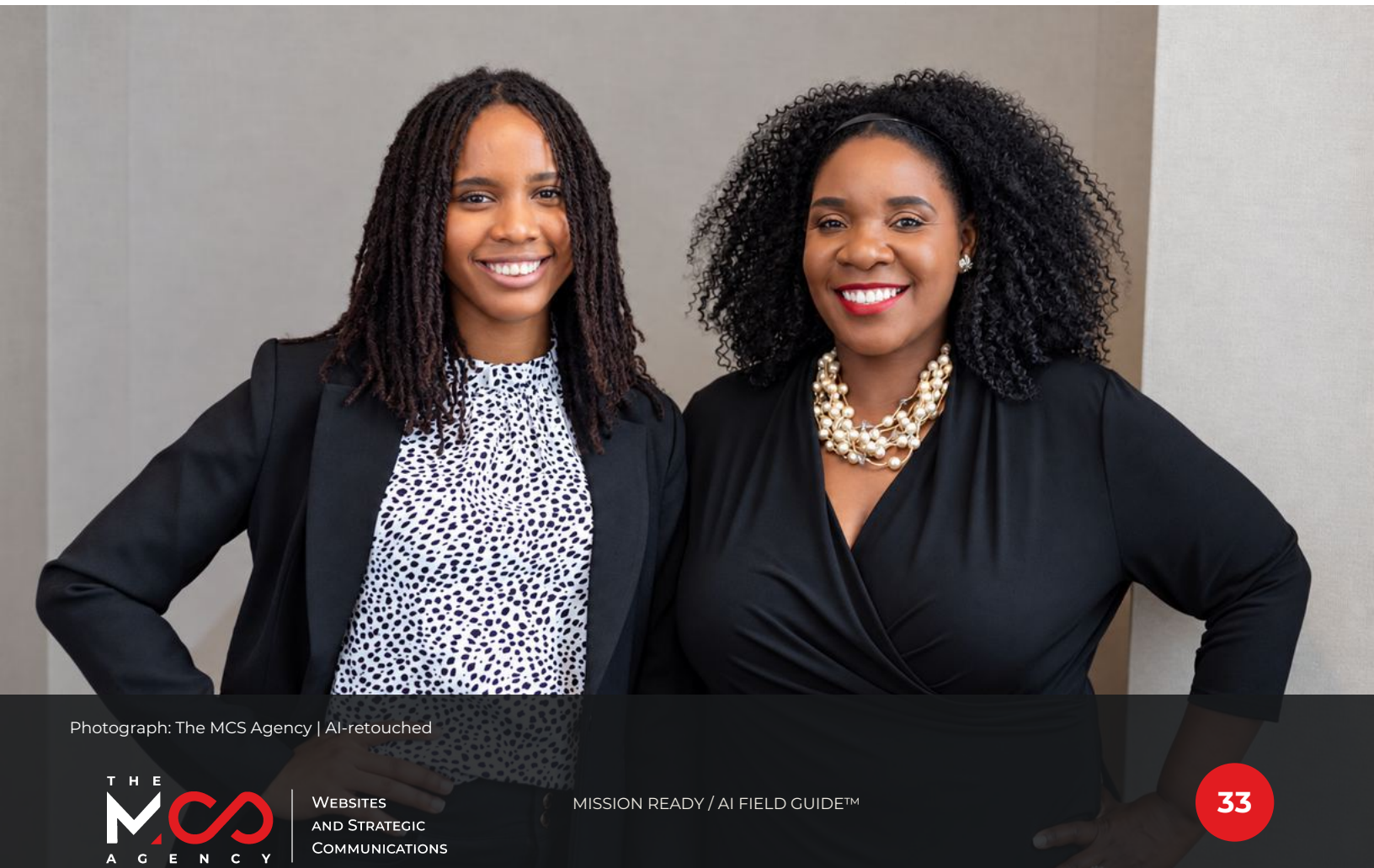
ISO/IEC 42001:2023, Artificial intelligence management system Published December 18, 2023. Sets requirements for establishing, implementing, maintaining, and improving an AI management system. ISO standard page (https://www.iso.org/standard/42001)

UNESCO, Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence Adopted November 23, 2021 by UNESCO's General Conference, covering 193 member states. UNESCO, Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (https://www.unesco.org/en/artificial-intelligence/recommendation-ethics)

African Union, Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy Endorsed by the AU Executive Council in July 2024, with an Africa-centric, development-focused approach to ethical, responsible, and equitable AI. African Union statement (https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20240828/african-union-committed-developing-ai-capabilities-africa)

Rules and expectations keep changing across countries, states, and funders. Check what applies where you work.

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The MCS Agency team | AI-retouched portraits

About The MCS Agency

The MCS Agency helps nonprofits and small businesses connect communications strategy with practical delivery. Services include content, public relations, websites, training, and responsible AI adoption.

About the author
Clara Matonhodze is the founder and principal consultant of The MCS Agency, a Cincinnati marketing and communications consultancy serving nonprofits and small businesses. Clara brings more than 26 years of communications experience, beginning in media and journalism in Africa and continuing in nonprofit and civic work in Cincinnati. Her work connects strategy with practical delivery across content, public relations, websites, digital communications, and staff training. Through Mission Ready AI Field Guide™ and Digital for the Rest of Us™, she helps organizations explore technology while keeping human judgment, community relationships, and mission at the center.

Digital for the Rest of Us™

Articles, insights, and ideas across marketing, communications, and technology.
For nonprofits and small businesses.

Start with one task. Use the assessment to identify your next step.

Take the AI readiness assessment

Book a conversation Newsletter (513) 432-7944
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How this guide was made. Clara Matonhodze directed and edited it. AI tools assisted with drafting, structure, and layout. Clara reviewed and revised the result. It follows the disclosure practice it recommends.

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