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Accelerating nonprofit mission success with transformative technology

How to use responsible and safe AI to empower people and realize your organization's potential

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It's time for nonprofits to benefit from AI

AI is here, evolving and maturing quickly, and it will be more and more a part of how we live and work. The terms "AI" and "artificial intelligence" have been in use for many years. Recently, however, AI and related terms have found more widespread use because of remarkable technological advances that could transform many aspects of our lives. Worldwide, the interest in AI is skyrocketing. The adoption of generative AI is outpacing that of smartphones and tablets.[1]

For large and small nonprofit organizations, AI can be a powerful tool for good that can enhance workflows and operations to help people focus on what matters most as they drive mission success. Beyond the hype, there are lots of reasons for hope because AI is already proving its value to nonprofits. By using AI, you can streamline processes, achieve greater results with limited funds and resources, and revitalize your teams' inspiration and mission commitment.

Your organization can comfortably and safely explore AI and chart its own path in realizing the benefits of technology innovation. The Microsoft Tech for Social Impact (TSI) team knows how to design and deliver AI and advanced technology in an efficient, results-driven manner that keeps your organization's unique goals and working environment front and center. Below, we highlight our findings from nonprofit surveys that investigated AI concerns and hopes, make recommendations for steps you can take toward mission-driven AI today, and underline responsible and safe AI practices at Microsoft.

1. Insider Intelligence, Generative AI adoption climbed faster than smartphones, tablets, August 11, 2023.

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## Delivering AI that makes a difference

Microsoft is at the forefront of creating innovative AI solutions that enable organizations to drive progress toward their goals and help people do their best work. Across industries, Microsoft offers an integrated, streamlined experience that enables data-driven decision making and innovation across digital assets and scenarios.

Microsoft engages in a strategic partnership with OpenAI. The two organizations are committed to responsibly advancing AI and democratizing it as a technology platform. One example of this democratization is the integration of ChatGPT, the generative AI application from OpenAI, into software tools people use to work, learn, collaborate, and search.

Overcoming productivity hurdles and restoring mission focus

Every day, Microsoft hears from nonprofits about their successes, roadblocks, opportunities, and hopes for technology. We are learning a lot about their experiences and what is top-of-mind for leaders and team members in organizations like yours. More formally, Microsoft recently conducted a survey with nonprofit leaders and team contributors to better understand their everyday concerns and challenges in such areas as the working climate, productivity, and their expectations and concerns regarding AI.[2]

In many nonprofits, the working environment is strained. For example:
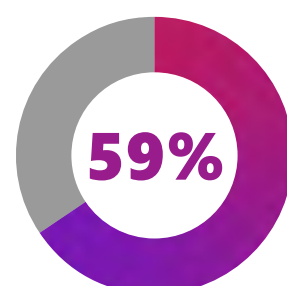
59% of the survey respondents said they are concerned about the lack of innovation or breakthrough ideas on their teams.
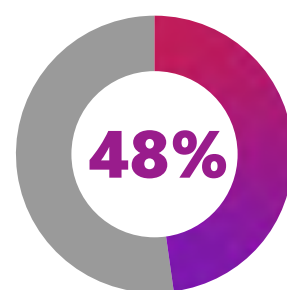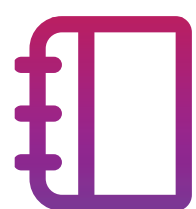
48% stated that they are burned out in their jobs.

Many respondents mentioned that their personal productivity and their organization's productivity aren't high enough to effectively drive mission success.

The most common productivity disruptions include:

Inefficient meetings or too many of them

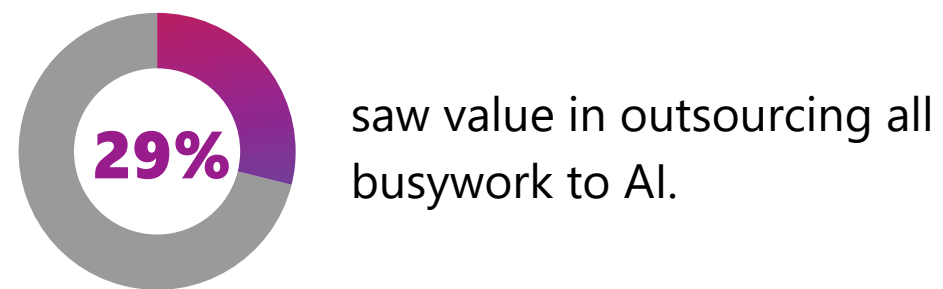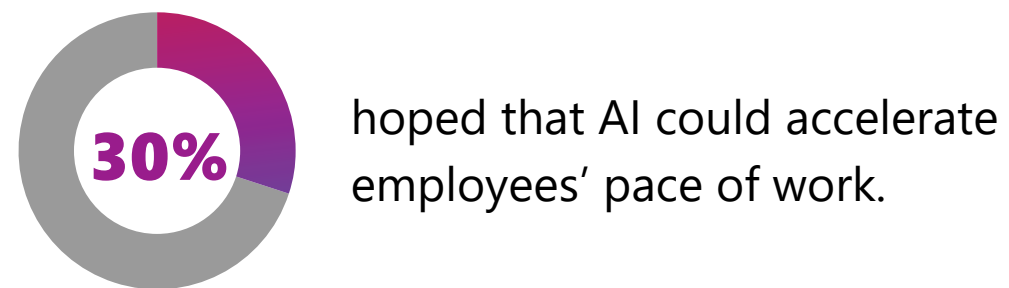Rote tasks like note-taking, data entry, scheduling, and planning

Feeling uninspired and not knowing how to get started on a project or task

Nonprofit leaders and workers have high hopes for AI. At high percentages, they feel that AI can help them accomplish more with limited resources, find useful information, summarize meetings and action items, plan the working day, and create or edit written drafts. Nonprofit leaders expect that AI can lighten employees' burden of repetitive and low-value tasks and increase their productivity.

2. Microsoft Work Index Study, September 2023.

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When the survey team asked how AI could add the most value to their organization, they found that:

69% of respondents mentioned assisting employees with necessary but repetitive tasks.

30% volunteered that AI might help reduce employee time spent on low-value activities.

29% indicated boosting employee productivity.

30% hoped that AI could accelerate employees' pace of work.

29% saw value in outsourcing all busywork to AI.
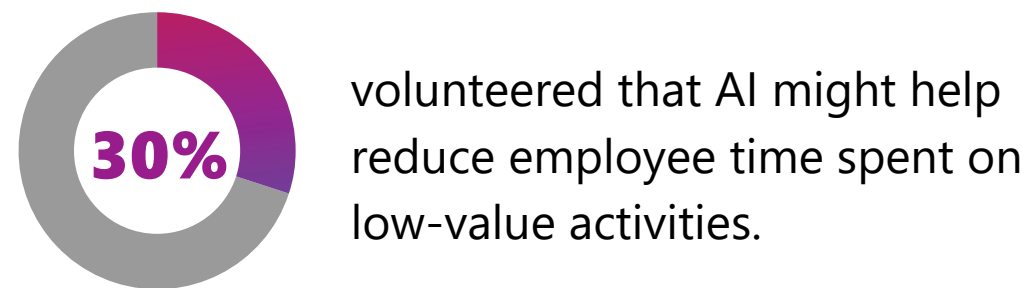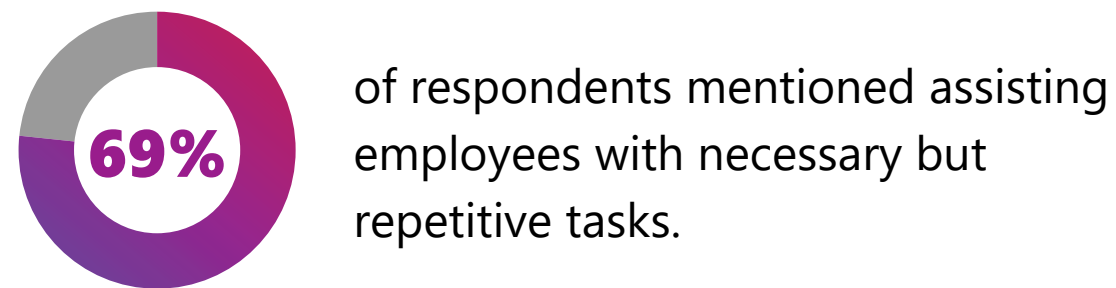
However, they also voiced important concerns:

63% are worried about AI security risks.

60% are concerned about the AI learning curve.

59% won't trust AI decisions regarding their work.
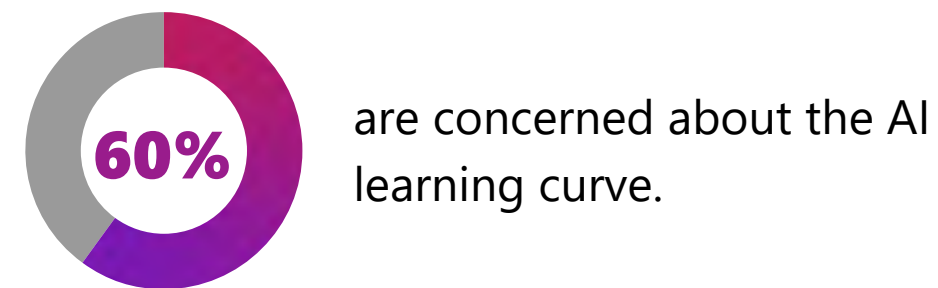
Both executives and employees shared their perception of AI. Many are ready to embrace AI solutions:

69% would be comfortable with AI taking on more administrative aspects of their work.

63% believe AI tools can be trusted in the workplace.
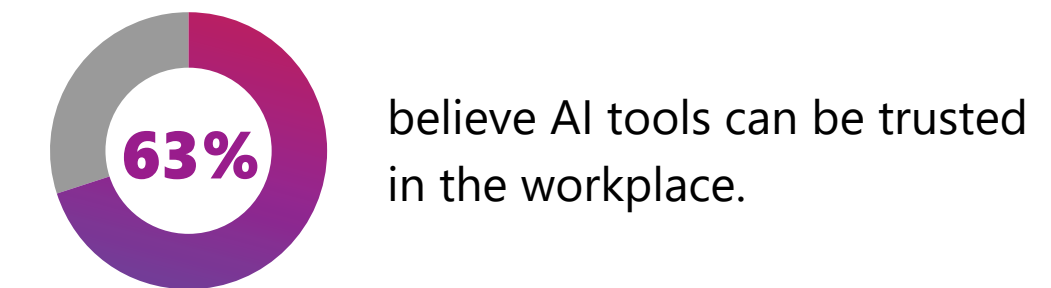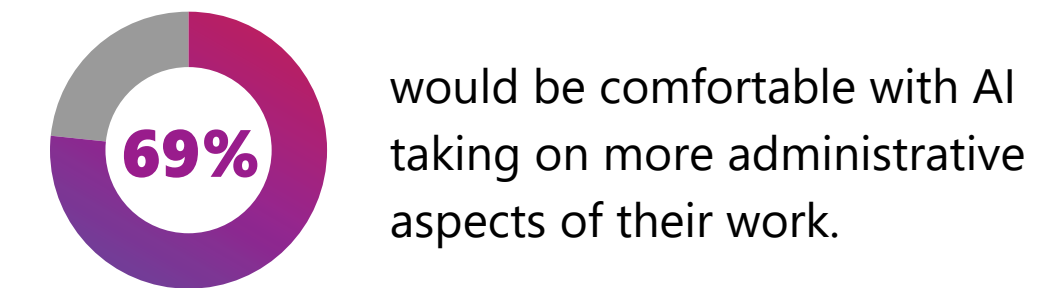
What you can do right now to take advantage of AI

You can immediately take one or all of the steps we describe below to get your organization's AI journey underway. If you would like help as you think through this, feel free to contact us.

Please note these general considerations as you consider AI for your organization:

- AI should reflect your unique nonprofit. Every organization needs to chart its own AI path. Your nonprofit's specific goals and priorities, the concerns of constituents and stakeholders, and the challenges and interests of team members have to determine the pace and scale of your AI experience.

- AI can be safe and responsible. When you explore AI and nonprofit solutions from Microsoft, you can do so in a low-risk, safe, and efficient manner that fits your organization's culture—no matter which particular AI tool you prefer or what concerns you tackle with it.

- AI effectiveness is unrelated to your nonprofit's size. Your organization doesn't need to operate at a certain scale of contributors, donors, funding volumes, services, or projects to benefit from AI and use the AI tools available today. As AI becomes pervasive across Microsoft solutions, AI capabilities in the apps you already use may give you the most convenient starting point for AI exploration.

- AI is multifaceted. AI comprises several disciplines and specializations. The better you understand the strengths and advantages of generative AI, deep learning, and machine learning, the easier you can put them to work. For example, generative AI can be great at supporting innovative, creative efforts, while other AI capabilities may contribute more to processing efficiencies and making routine tasks easier.

- AI efforts benefit from organizational alignment. It's best if nonprofit employees, leadership, and the board agree on the goals for your AI and technology initiatives and know how they can best support them. Proactive communication and sharing experiences will be important in the effectiveness of these undertakings.

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Become AI-proficient and spur your imagination

Before your nonprofit's first forays in putting AI to work, the employees and contributors who will be involved in this undertaking should familiarize themselves with the AI landscape. They need to understand the breadth of AI technologies and emerging trends and how they can harness them for the purposes of your mission. With a sound educational foundation, they can tailor AI to your nonprofit's specific needs and take advantage of the tools that will be most helpful.

Several resources—designed for efficient, practical learning that doesn't require participants to take time away from their work—can help your team understand AI opportunities and acquire the skills and confidence to act on them:

- The Microsoft Digital Skills Center for Nonprofits is a collaboration between Microsoft and TechSoup, a global organization that aims to furnish change agents with technology tools to help them improve people's lives. It offers skills-building materials with content developed by subject matter experts at Microsoft, bolstered by TechSoup's insight into how nonprofits can benefit from technology. The AI track of the Microsoft Digital Skills Center for Nonprofits enables your learners to understand the capabilities and uses of AI, find grounding in responsible AI practices, and start working with AI tools.

- LinkedIn offers free courses and learning paths for technology-fueled jobs. From training programs and certifications—including a new Career Essentials in Generative AI program—you can go on to augment your business and technical skills for specific organizational roles. Microsoft and LinkedIn offer eight professional certificates and numerous courses through this training channel.

Learn about AI at the Microsoft Digital Skills Center for Nonprofits and on the LinkedIn digital economy skills-building page.

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Drive innovation with generative AI

Start exploring AI whenever you're ready. For many nonprofits, generative AI will be the most exciting and promising AI technology. It's also one you can easily put into practice.

There are good reasons that generative AI has garnered so much attention and enthusiasm in the media and public conversation. It can simplify and assist your nonprofit work in many ways. For instance, it can write the first drafts of content and communications, stimulate new ideas, conduct research, and summarize books, transcripts, blog posts, or webpages. It can also support you with ideas and contextual validation as you explore new approaches in your work. Large language models (LLMs) allow AI to make use of neural networks, machine learning, and deep learning to produce verbal content and answers to queries. Microsoft AI solutions like Microsoft 365 Copilot incorporate and build on LLMs from our partner OpenAI.

Today's generative AI excels when it comes to tasks that involve creativity, innovation, and authoring. However, it is not as good a fit for numbers-focused analysis. For example, a landmark study finds that in a task involving product innovation, generative AI increased participants' performance by more than 40 percent[3], and 90 percent of the participants achieved results with better quality. On the other hand, performance declined by 23 percent when they used generative AI to solve a quantifiable business problem.[4] The effectiveness of generative AI depends to a large extent on how you write prompts, a skill you can develop with the learning resources mentioned above.

With generative AI, developers in your organization can more quickly make an impact to advance mission success. In Azure AI Studio and Microsoft Copilot Studio, they can create copilots as AI-powered assistants or other generative AI solutions. Azure AI Studio includes OpenAI models as well as other cutting-edge models and services to enable developers to explore, build, test, and deploy AI tools at a fast pace.

Customer spotlight

⚡ Seguro Project

Seguro Project (Seguro) is a nonprofit organization and grantee of the Microsoft AI for Good Humanitarian Action program. Seguro provides domestic violence support organizations with an AI-powered chatbot, built with Microsoft Power Virtual Agents (now called Microsoft Copilot Studio).

• The organization took note of the rise in domestic violence and nonprofits' and government agencies' inability to meet this demand, at the beginning of the pandemic. Seguro discovered that there was an opportunity for technology to address this growing problem. This led Seguro to take charge and to build a cost-effective chatbot to respond to frequently asked questions 24/7.

• Seguro customizes and deploys this chatbot to domestic violence support organizations to provide assistance to individuals seeking resources and support.

• Paz para las Mujeres, a coalition of nonprofits in Puerto Rico, is a partner of Seguro. To help respond to the surge of gender-based violence because of the stay-at-home orders during the COVID pandemic, Seguro adapted its chatbot template to help Paz para las Mujeres support its community.

"The platform is very powerful and easy to use. We can set up a chatbot, deploy, and teach a partner organization to self-serve in several weeks."

– Jan Choy: Founder, Seguro Project

Learn more

3. BCG, How People Can Create—and Destroy—Value with Generative AI, September 21, 2023.

4. Harvard Business School, Navigating the Jagged Technological Frontier: Field Experimental Evidence of the Effects of AI on Knowledge Worker Productivity and Quality, September 2023.

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Chart your AI journey with Microsoft Copilot

Microsoft Copilot uses LLM-powered generative AI to help you empower your workforce with better answers, new efficiency, and instant creativity. As facilitated by the many different variants of Microsoft Copilot, AI serves your purposes within the context of your tasks. Microsoft is making Microsoft Copilot broadly available across its solution portfolio, transforming processes and productivity for various organizational roles and enabling users to benefit from generative AI to reduce busywork and focus on the tasks where they can make a real difference.

When you use Bing, you have an opportunity to experience Microsoft Copilot (which replaces what used to be called Bing

Chat and Bing Chat Enterprise) and to get an idea of its range and power. As a stimulating, free entry to AI, see what Microsoft Copilot in Bing delivers immediately when you ask questions, make requests, and create images, a task which draws on Microsoft Designer and DALLE-3. Microsoft Copilot responses can simplify your research, help you brainstorm and plan, and provide solid first drafts of content.

Going deeper, you can explore Microsoft Copilot with enterprise data protection to unleash your creativity as you formulate questions and pursue in-depth inquiries. At a moment's notice, Microsoft Copilot can offer inspiration, new ideas, and practical insights from humanitarian and industry thinkers and leaders.

It offers relevant answers with source citations to your queries and can provide much more to help you address your concerns and work creatively. Going beyond search, Microsoft Copilot can efficiently summarize webpages and prepare first drafts of your communications and content. It may include charts, graphs, and images in your answers, and, in turn, you can use images as well as verbal cues to interact with Microsoft Copilot.

Access Microsoft Copilot from copilot.microsoft.com, bing.com/chat, Edge, and Windows.

Preparing for the era of AI

Before embarking on the path to AI, it is important for every organization to pause and reflect on six key questions, as no two AI journeys are the same.
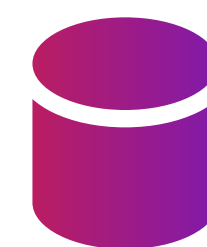
What are your organization's **goals** for using AI?

What are your organization's **pain points** that AI can address?

What are your organization's **current capabilities** in terms of AI?

Does your organization have a **data strategy** in place?

Does your organization have the necessary **infrastructure and resources** to support AI initiatives?

Does your organization have a plan to **measure AI impact and upskill** its workforce in AI?
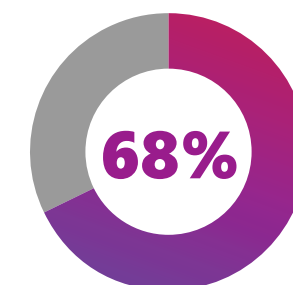
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Make technology users' lives easier with Microsoft 365 Copilot

For many nonprofits, Microsoft 365 Copilot will be a practical, productivity-boosting technology that can help team members serve constituents and advance their mission more efficiently and creatively. In apps like Microsoft Teams, Word, Outlook, or PowerPoint—which are used by hundreds of millions of people around the world—Copilot helps individuals and teams work more productively.
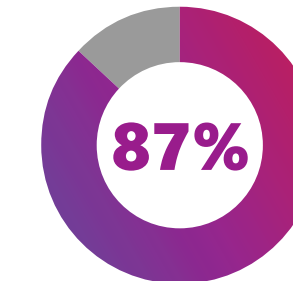
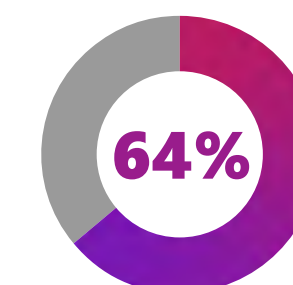**Recent Microsoft research[5] shows that with Microsoft 365 Copilot:**
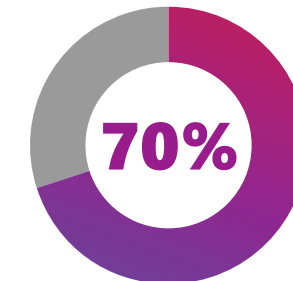
70% of surveyed users say that they are more productive.

87% have an easier time starting a first draft of their content.

68% find that Copilot helps accelerate their creative process.

64% spend less time processing email.

Try out AI in Microsoft Copilot and Microsoft 365 Copilot.

5. Official Microsoft Blog, Microsoft Ignite 2023: AI transformation and the technology driving change, November 15, 2023.

Enhance your processes with AI across the Microsoft solutions portfolio

Microsoft is integrating AI across its solutions to help you streamline operations and enable people to realize your organization's goals.

AI-enhanced products include:

- Microsoft Copilot offers concise, helpful answers to your questions on the web, assists with your writing, and turns inspiration into original images.

- Microsoft 365 Copilot brings AI-powered suggestions, data analysis, content and email drafting, collaboration experiences, and lots more to everyday work in your nonprofit.

- Copilot for Dynamics 365 and automation allow people in every line of business to be more productive, save time, and accomplish more with their attention and skills.

- Microsoft 365 Copilot for Sales enables fundraisers to save time, make meaningful connections, and personalize constituent engagements.

- Microsoft 365 Copilot for Service allows agents in your contact center to serve constituents more effectively and provide better experiences.

- Microsoft Security Copilot amplifies the impact and efficiency of your cybersecurity team with guidance and visibility delivered by generative AI.

- Microsoft 365 Copilot in Power Apps makes it possible for developers to address business issues more effectively with low-code technology.

- GitHub Copilot offers AI-generated code suggestions in dozens of programming languages—in real time and in your code editor.

- Microsoft Copilot Studio allows you to transform team member and constituent experiences by extending and customizing Microsoft 365 Copilot or by creating your own copilot in a low-code or even no-code manner.

- Microsoft 365 Copilot in Azure is your AI assistant for simplifying cloud operations and management from cloud to storage.

- A comprehensive portfolio of AI tools and services on the Azure platform, including Azure AI, Azure AI Studio, Azure AI Services, and Azure OpenAI Service, helps developers and data scientists at any skill level create and deploy copilots and AI solutions that suit your organization's goals and culture.

- Azure AI Studio serves as your unified, flexible platform for developing generative AI solutions and custom copilots.

- Azure AI Services lets you deliver innovative solutions and add cognitive capabilities to apps with application programming interfaces (APIs) and AI services.

- Azure OpenAI Service allows you to build your own copilots and generative AI solutions.

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Responsible, highly secure AI you can trust

The ethical principles of nonprofits and the importance of protecting their constituents' privacy demand that they use AI in a responsible and safe manner in their processes. Both the survey cited above and another recent study identify trust and data security as key concerns to leverage AI.[6]

Since 2017, Microsoft has evolved and set benchmarks for responsible AI. We're committed to practicing responsible AI that empowers human agency. The Microsoft Responsible AI Standard crystallizes the strategies and goals that aim to ensure the fairness, reliability and safety, privacy and security, inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability of AI initiatives and solutions. Within the company and in collaboration with our partners, we empower responsible AI practices through research, engineering, and policy development.

When Microsoft creates nonprofit solutions, we aim to enable trust for your organization and its constituents, stakeholders, donors, team members, and volunteers. In working with Microsoft or one of our partners, you always retain ownership and control of your data. Only your nonprofit's data will be used if you work with Microsoft or a partner to create, train, and refine AI models. No other organization or business will benefit from the use of your data. Review our customer commitments for responsible AI to see how we help businesses and organizations benefit from good AI governance.

6. Connect Sparks Advisors and AI4SP.org, AI in US Small Nonprofits, prepared for Microsoft, October 2023.

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Next steps

Connect with the Microsoft Tech for Social Impact team

Find out about Microsoft solutions, grants, and offers for nonprofits. Contact us to set up time to talk with our team and learn how you can best deploy and use today's AI-infused solutions and find out which AI capabilities might be most effective in helping your nonprofit achieve its mission.

Contact us

Talk to Professional Advantage.

1800 126 499 | enquiries@pa.com.au | pa.com.au

Learn more

aka.ms/TransformEngagement

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