


# Glossary of terms

Learning about AI can feel overwhelming with all the technical jargon and industry-specific terms. This glossary breaks down the key AI concepts and terminology you'll encounter when exploring how artificial intelligence can benefit your charity or community organisation.

Term	Description
AI agent	An AI system that can autonomously perform tasks and make decisions on behalf of users. Unlike simple chatbots that just respond to questions, AI agents can take actions, use tools, and complete multi-step processes with minimal human supervision.
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Computer systems that can perform tasks that would usually require human intelligence, such as understanding language, recognising images, making decisions and learning from data.
Bias in Data	When AI models unintentionally reflect or amplify stereotypes or inequalities because they learned from training data that contained real-world biases. This can result in unfair or discriminatory outputs.
Chat Assistant	An AI tool that you interact with through a chat interface, similar to sending text messages. You can ask questions, give instructions, and upload files through a conversation window.
Context	The background information, purpose, and relevant details you provide to help the AI understand what you want it to do. Without context, AI responses tend to be generic.
Context Loss	When AI models "forget" earlier parts of a long conversation, leading to responses that seem disconnected from what was discussed before.
Generative AI	AI technology that can create new content such as text, images, or other media based on prompts or instructions. Rather than just analysing existing data, generative AI produces original outputs tailored to your requests.
GDPR	A European Union law focused on data privacy and security. It aims to give individuals more control over their personal data and streamline regulations for international businesses. AI tools must comply with this when processing sensitive data.
Hallucinations	When AI models generate incorrect, fabricated, or made-up information that sounds confident and plausible but is actually false. This happens because AI predicts likely responses rather than knowing facts.
Large language model	A type of AI model specifically designed to understand and generate human-like text. These models are trained on vast amounts of written content and can perform tasks like writing, summarising, and answering questions in natural language.
Learning	The process by which AI identifies patterns in training data, such as what makes a sentence sound polite or how to recognise images.
Making Predictions	When AI uses the patterns it learned during training to provide outputs like answers, suggestions, or generated text when given new input.
Personally Identifiable Information (PII)	Any data that can be used to identify a specific individual, such as names, email addresses, phone numbers, or financial details. This type of data requires special protection.
Prompt	The instruction, question, or request you type in to guide the AI. A well-crafted prompt includes clear instructions, context, and specific requirements for the desired output.
Sentiment Analysis	AI technology that can analyse text (like social media posts) to determine the emotional tone or opinion expressed, helping identify community needs or concerns
Sentient	Having feelings, consciousness, or self-awareness. AI is not sentient – it doesn't have emotions, intentions, or understanding like humans do.
Training	The process of feeding an AI model large amounts of data so it can learn patterns. For example, training a chatbot involves showing it many conversations.
Training Data	The large collection of information used to teach an AI model. The quality and content of this data directly affects how the AI will behave and what biases it might have.


# What is AI?

Understand the basics of AI, how it works and some of its limitations and risks



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AI, or Artificial Intelligence, refers to computer systems that can perform tasks that would usually require human intelligence. These tasks include understanding language, recognising images, making decisions and learning from data.

For charities and community causes, AI can help enormously with things like copywriting, analysing data, creating reports, creating donor pitches and generating content for social media.

The AI models you are likely most come as chat assistants – you access a website or download an app and communicate with the AI through words, just like sending a text to a friend. You can upload files or send it links to websites, but most of the time you will be instructing the AI to do things through a chat window.

## Examples of AI in everyday life:

- Virtual assistants like Siri or Alexa.
- Social media algorithms recommending posts.
- Translation tools like Google Translate.



AI models are programmes trained to perform specific tasks by learning patterns from data. For example, an AI model trained on thousands of images of cats can recognise a cat in a new picture.

## Here’s a simple analogy:

Think of an AI model as a very smart apprentice. You train the apprentice by showing them examples (data) and teaching them to recognise patterns (training). Over time, the apprentice learns to apply this knowledge to new situations.

## How AI models work:

**Training:** The model is fed large amounts of data. For example, to build a chatbot, the AI is trained on conversations.

**Learning:** The AI identifies patterns in the data (e.g. what makes a sentence sound polite or helpful).

**Making Predictions:** When given new input, the AI uses its learned patterns to provide an output (e.g. answering a question or generating a piece of text).

## Important to Understand

AI is not sentient. This means it does not have feelings, intentions or understanding like a human person does. It cannot think or make decisions on its own—it only responds based on the patterns it has learned from data. When an AI gives an answer or makes a suggestion, it’s not because it “cares” or has “opinions,” but because it has calculated the most likely response based on its training.

# Writing Prompts for AI

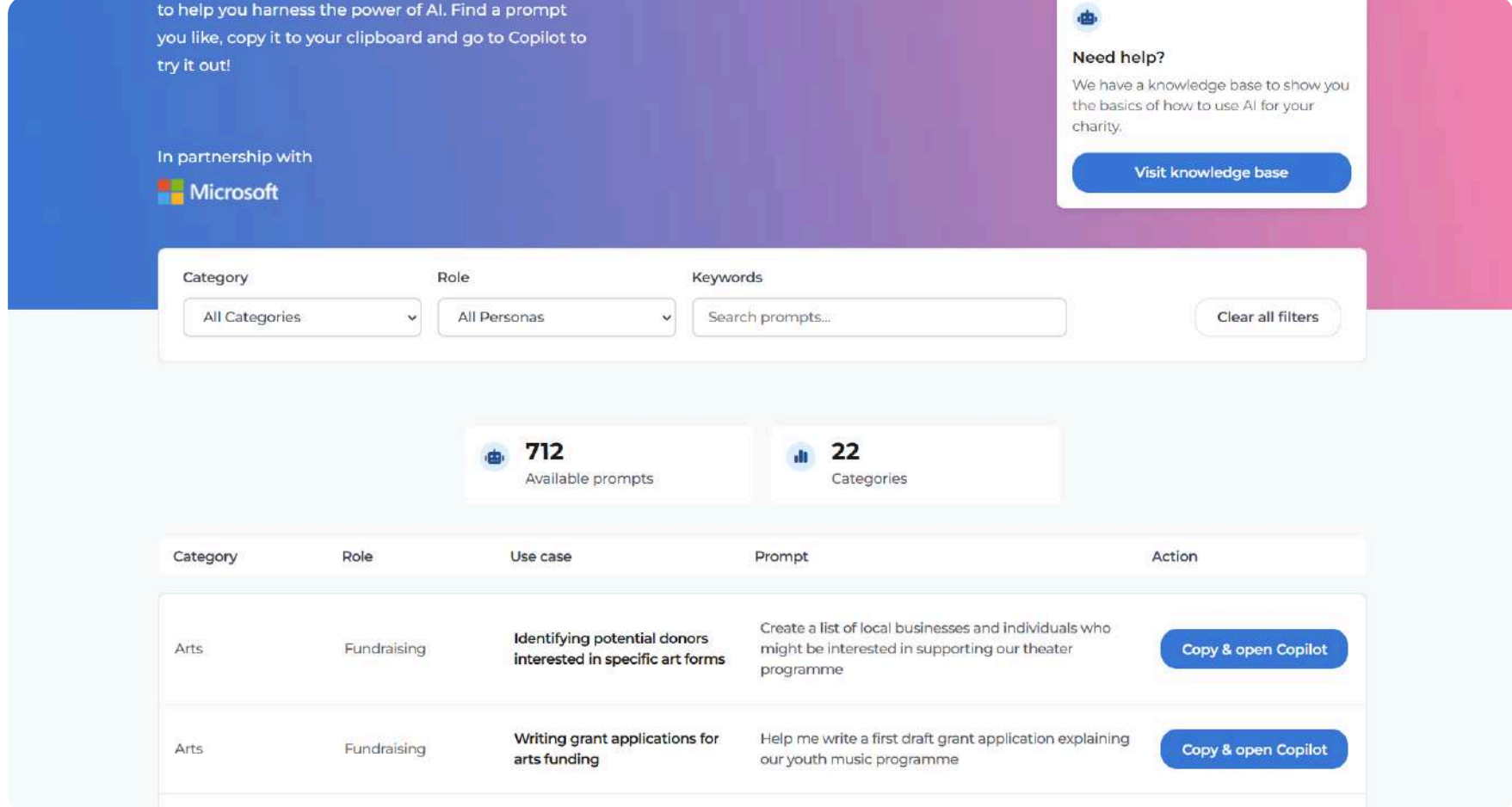
AI tools rely on prompts to understand what you want them to do. A prompt is just the instruction or question you type in to guide the AI.



Tip	Description
<p><b>Be Clear and Specific</b></p>	<p>AI works best when it has clear and precise instructions. Vague prompts can lead to generic or irrelevant outputs. The more detail you include, the better the AI can tailor its response to meet your needs.</p> <p>Specify the type of output you want (e.g. a blog, a list, a headline or an email) and include relevant details like tone (formal, casual, friendly), target audience (donors, beneficiaries, volunteers), and purpose (inform, persuade, inspire). You can also tell it the type of role that you would like it to be acting as, for example a trustee or senior communications manager.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Too vague:</b> “Write a blog post.”</li> <li>• <b>Better:</b> “Write a 300-word blog post about the benefits of volunteering for mental health. Focus on how volunteering helps both the individual and the community.”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Provide Context</b></p>	<p>AI doesn’t “know” your goals unless you share them. Adding context to your prompt helps the AI understand the bigger picture and produce a more useful response.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is the audience? (e.g. potential donors, families in need, volunteers)</li> <li>• What is the purpose? (e.g. raise funds, raise awareness, encourage action)</li> <li>• What tone or style should the output have? (e.g. professional, empathetic, uplifting)</li> </ul> <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Without context:</b> “Write an email asking for donations.”</li> <li>• <b>With context:</b> “Write an email to our existing donors asking for support to fund school supplies for underprivileged children. Make it warm, heartfelt, and emphasise the tangible impact of their donation.”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Experiment and Refine</b></p>	<p>AI doesn’t always get it right on the first try. If the response isn’t what you expected, try rephrasing or adding more detail. Experimenting with different wording can help you unlock the best results.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the AI’s tone feels off, adjust your prompt to specify the tone: “Make the tone friendly and conversational.”</li> <li>• If the output is too long or too short, adjust by saying: “Summarise this in 100 words” or “Expand this to 500 words” or even “make this shorter”.</li> <li>• You can experiment with tone, content, length, complexity and lots of other things.</li> </ul> <p>AI can also refine its own outputs. If you get a response that’s close to what you need, you can ask it to adjust:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Make this more concise.”</li> <li>• “Rewrite this to appeal to a younger audience.”</li> <li>• “Add three examples to this.”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Use Examples and Templates</b></p>	<p>If you have a specific format or example in mind, include it in your prompt. AI can follow patterns you provide. For instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Template-based prompt: “Write a thank-you email to donors. Include: (1) A warm opening, (2) A summary of how their donations helped, (3) A call to action to encourage future donations.”</li> <li>• Example-based prompt: “Write a social media post like this: ‘Thanks to your support, we’ve reached 1,000 meals delivered this month! Let’s keep the momentum going. Donate today to help even more families.’ Now write a similar post about providing winter coats to children.”</li> <li>• Asset-based prompt: Upload a document or copy and paste a social media post you like and ask the AI to create a new post, tailored to your charity but using the same template and tone.</li> </ul>

## Ready to try out some prompts?

Neighbourly has developed an AI prompt library where you can browse prompts that would be useful for your a specific theme or role, and try them out in Microsoft Copilot



[Visit prompt library](#)

# Security for AI

You can protect your charity's data, donors, and beneficiaries by being careful about security, while still reaping the benefits of AI



AI tools often require you to input data for them to work effectively. However, sharing sensitive or confidential information with AI tools can pose significant security risks. Some tools store user input, which could potentially lead to data breaches or misuse.

As a charity or community organisation, if you store personally identifiable information (PII), it is essential to comply with GDPR and other relevant regulations. Ensuring your organisation meets these standards is your responsibility. Like any other tool, AI carries inherent risks, especially when handling sensitive data. Always verify outputs carefully when sensitive information is involved to maintain compliance and protect privacy.

**Example:** If you input donor names, contact details, or sensitive financial data into an AI platform, that data might not be secure or private.

## What to do:

- **Avoid sharing sensitive information:** Never input confidential data into AI tools unless they explicitly guarantee compliance with data protection laws.
- **Use secure platforms:** Choose AI tools from trusted providers that have clear data privacy policies and strong security measures.
- **Educate your team:** Ensure staff and volunteers understand the risks of sharing sensitive information and know how to use AI responsibly.
- **Review privacy policies:** Check how AI tools store and use your data before integrating them into your processes. You can usually find these on their website.

# Limitations for AI

While AI is a powerful tool, it’s not perfect. You should be aware of its limitations so you can use it effectively and responsibly.



Tip	Description
Hallucinations	<p>AI models sometimes generate incorrect or fabricated information, often referred to as "hallucinations." This happens because the model doesn't know the truth—it only predicts what seems likely based on patterns in its training data.</p> <p>It may also have been trained on source materials that were incorrect, or unverified or it is missing critical context with new data it doesn’t have access to.</p> <p>Example: You might ask the AI to write a historical overview of your charity's founding year, and it could confidently state inaccurate dates or made up events.</p> <p><b>What to do:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Verify information:</b> Always double-check facts, especially for content like donor reports, press releases or grant applications.</li><li>• <b>Be cautious with sensitive tasks:</b> Don’t rely on AI for critical areas like legal or medical advice without expert review.</li><li>• <b>Start with trusted content:</b> Find trusted, verified source material first, show it to the AI then ask it to complete tasks using the data as a base point.</li></ul>
Context Loss	<p>In conversations, AI models may "forget" earlier parts of the discussion, especially as the conversation gets longer. This can lead to irrelevant or repetitive answers.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> You might explain your charity’s mission early in a session, but later the AI might act as though it doesn’t remember, giving generic advice instead of tailored responses.</p> <p>What to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Provide reminders:</b> If the AI seems to lose track, restate the key points or reintroduce the context. Copy and pasting the last prompt response you were happy with can help.</li><li>• <b>Break tasks into smaller parts:</b> Instead of asking for a long report in one go, split it into sections. For instance, “Can you write the introduction? Now move on to the conclusion.”</li></ul>
Bias in Data	<p>AI models learn from the data they are trained on, which can include biases from the real world. This means the AI might unintentionally reflect or even amplify stereotypes or inequalities.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> When generating outreach material, the AI might use language or images that favor one demographic over others if its training data reflects similar biases.</p> <p>What to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Be inclusive in prompts:</b> Specify inclusivity when crafting content. For example, “Write a volunteer recruitment ad that appeals to people of all ages, genders and cultural backgrounds.”</li><li>• <b>Audit outputs:</b> Review AI-generated materials for fairness and appropriateness before using them publicly.</li><li>• <b>Stay aware:</b> Understand that biases may exist, and seek input from diverse team members to ensure outputs align with your charity’s values.</li></ul>
Lack of Real-Time Knowledge	<p>Most AI models are trained on data that may not include the most recent events, developments or trends. This can limit their usefulness for time-sensitive tasks.</p> <p>Example: If your charity wants to reference a recent disaster in a fundraising email, the AI might not know about it.</p> <p>What to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Provide the latest context:</b> Share up-to-date information in your prompt. For example, “A recent weather event affected 5,000 families in our region. Can you help us write an appeal to support them?”</li><li>• <b>Supplement with research:</b> Combine AI-generated content with your own research to ensure accuracy and timeliness.</li></ul>

# Use cases for AI

AI models can help charities and community organisations in lots of different ways – from generating content for social media, optimising processes, updating spreadsheets, writing proposals and more.



Tip	Description
Grant Applications	AI-powered grant writing assistants could help charities identify relevant funding opportunities, optimise applications for specific criteria and even generate compelling narratives that resonate with funders.
Compliance and Legal/ GDPR/Data Privacy	AI-driven compliance tools could automate data anonymisation, ensure adherence to data protection regulations and flag potential legal risks, freeing up valuable time and resources.
Sourcing Volunteers/ Volunteer Management	AI-powered matching platforms could connect volunteers with charities based on skills, interests and availability, leading to more fulfilling volunteer experiences and greater impact for charities.  AI-driven volunteer management systems could automate scheduling, communication and recognition, streamlining operations and improving volunteer retention.
Analysing data	Predictive AI models could analyse historical data and identify potential risks, helping charities proactively mitigate challenges and safeguard operations.
Data Control	AI-powered data governance tools could help charities manage and protect their data, ensuring compliance with regulations and ethical guidelines.
Cashflow	AI-driven forecasting tools could predict future cash flow based on historical data and trends, enabling charities to make informed financial decisions and ensure long-term sustainability.
Product Surplus/ Sourcing Product Surplus Donors	AI-powered platforms could connect charities with businesses that have surplus products, facilitating efficient distribution and reducing waste.  AI algorithms could identify potential donors based on their giving history, interests and location, increasing the effectiveness of outreach efforts.
Social Impact Calculations	AI-driven impact measurement tools could quantify the social impact of charity programs, providing valuable data for reporting, fundraising, and continuous improvement.
Generating Social Media Content	AI content creation tools could generate engaging social media posts, stories, and even videos, helping charities reach wider audiences and amplify their message.
Data-Driven Decision Making	AI-powered analytics dashboards could provide real-time insights into key performance indicators, empowering charities to make data-driven decisions and optimise their strategies.
Identifying Community Problems	AI-driven sentiment analysis tools could analyse social media and online conversations to identify emerging community needs and concerns, enabling charities to respond proactively and effectively.
Personalized Fundraising	AI could analyse donor data to create personalised fundraising appeals, increasing engagement and donations.
Program Optimization	AI could analyse programme data to identify areas for improvement and optimise service delivery.
Beneficiary Identification	AI could analyse data to identify individuals or communities most in need of support, enabling charities to target their resources effectively.
Accessibility	AI-powered tools could make charity services more accessible to people with disabilities, such as through real-time language translation or image recognition.