

AI Policy Starter for Foundations

A one-page starting framework your team can adopt this quarter and refine later. Don't aim for a perfect, permanent policy — aim for a **written** one. Adapt the language to your foundation's values and governance.

Guiding philosophy. Treat AI like any shared resource: use it consciously, not reflexively, and never without human judgment. Before using AI for any task, ask three questions:

1. Does this use align with our values and our duty to grantees and community?
2. Could it displace people whose work we rely on, or whose voice we exist to support?
3. Are we being honest about how the work was created?

1 TIERED USE FRAMEWORK

✓ Permitted — Routine & operational

Meeting summaries, internal drafts, plain-language translation, proofreading, scheduling, first-pass research. Use freely; no disclosure required.

▲ Caution — External & substantive

Public communications, reports, board materials, website copy. A human must author and fact-check the final version. Verify every figure and citation independently.

✗ Not permitted — Decisions & integrity

Scoring, ranking, or advancing grant applications; decline rationales; anything where AI substitutes for human judgment about people or funding.

❑ Restricted — AI-generated images

Strongly discouraged for images of the communities you serve. Prefer real photography. If used, disclose clearly and never depict real people or places misleadingly.

2 NON-NEGOTIABLE GUARDRAILS

Protect grantee IP & sensitive data

Never paste unfunded proposals, grantee PII, donor records, financials, or pre-decisional board material into consumer AI tools. Treat any AI tool as a public channel.

Free vs. enterprise tier

Consumer tiers may train on your inputs. For any sensitive work, use a paid/enterprise tier with a data agreement and training opt-out — confirmed in writing.

Human review & ownership

A named person reviews everything before it leaves the building, verifies all facts, and owns the content. AI is never the author of record.

Transparency when it matters

No need to label every AI-assisted email. But don't present AI-generated work as original authorship, and disclose for formal or published material.

3 ROLES & ACCOUNTABILITY

WHO	RESPONSIBILITY
All staff	Follow the tiered framework; fact-check AI-assisted work; keep sensitive data out of consumer tools; disclose AI-generated images.
Executive / Program leads	Approve new AI use cases and exceptions; field staff questions; ensure enterprise-tier access for sensitive work.
Board of Directors	Review and ratify this policy annually; model responsible use; weigh in on evolving ethical questions.

This is a living document. The field moves fast. Review at least annually, keep an open feedback loop for staff to flag uncovered situations, and revise as norms — and your own experience — evolve. A written policy you improve beats a perfect one you never publish.

Ready to turn this starter into your foundation's real policy? Adapting it to your governance, values, and board is exactly the work we help with.

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