A logo with a bear and a star

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

**AI Do’s and Don’ts for Employment Social Enterprises (ESEs)**

Guidelines to Ensure Responsible, Effective AI Use in Employment Social Enterprises

**What it is:**  
A guide outlining practical, responsible, and ethical AI usage in ESEs, including common pitfalls to avoid and tips for safe experimentation. Comes with a customizable policy template for your organization.

**How to use it:**  
Share with staff to align expectations on how AI should (and shouldn’t) be used across your organization. Use this guide to shape internal trainings, define ground rules, and build confidence in trying AI tools while staying mission aligned.

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# **Introduction**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a powerful tool that can save time, enhance decision-making, and expand the reach and impact of Employment Social Enterprises (ESEs). However, like any tool, it comes with risks. This guide provides easy-to-follow “**Do’s and Don’ts”** to help ESEs harness AI effectively, responsibly, and ethically. These guidelines apply across all organizational functions and aim to build **AI literacy, confidence, and accountability.**

ESEs have a unique mission that combines business operations with social impact, often serving vulnerable populations through workforce development and supportive services. Unlike traditional businesses or nonprofits, ESEs must consider how AI aligns with this dual mission, enhancing efficiency while prioritizing equity, trust, and community engagement. This guide is designed for ESE leaders to share with their staff, ensuring alignment on responsible AI use across the organization and helping team members make informed decisions about AI in day-to-day work.

# **Key Definitions**

* **Artificial Intelligence (AI): “The Smart Assistant”** – A broad field of computer science that enables machines to perform tasks that normally need a human brain (e.g., automating interview scheduling, filtering job applicants, summarizing training materials). It’s a super-powered assistant that can learn, make decisions, and solve problems.
* **Machine Learning: “The Perfectionist”** – A subset of AI that gets better over time by learning patterns (e.g., predicting which job placements will be most successful based on past data, analyzing workforce retention trends, identifying patterns in program attendance).
* **Large Language Models (LLMs): “The Bookworm”** – Advanced AI systems trained on vast amounts of text data (e.g., books, articles, online content) to understand and generate human-like language. They can be used for drafting personalized job coaching emails, creating structured case notes, and summarizing lengthy reports.
* **Generative AI: “The Creative”** – A type of AI that creates entirely original content (e.g., drafting grant applications, creating marketing materials for recruitment campaigns, writing job descriptions, generating outreach templates for employer partnerships).

# ✅ **AI Do’s – General Best Practices**

1. **Do Use with Clear, Simple Prompts**

* Use plain English and state your goal upfront (e.g., “Draft a 200-word blog post highlighting our latest employment program success story”).
* Use the **aiSPIRE model**: Be **S**imple, define a **P**ersona (like a grant writer), **I**nform context, **R**efine your question, and **E**ncourage a conversation.

1. **Do Use AI as a Skilled Intern, Not a Final Decision-Maker**

* Treat AI like a helpful assistant who needs supervision.
* AI can draft, summarize, brainstorm - but all outputs need **human review and approval**.

1. **Do Be Transparent About AI Use Internally and Externally**

* Internal transparency is critical for maintaining trust especially among staff with lived experience. Ensure leadership sets the tone for when and how AI is used to avoid distrust (e.g., staff receiving AI-generated feedback without knowing it was drafted by AI can feel dehumanizing).
* Clearly disclose AI-assisted content generation in grant applications, donor communications, and public reports when appropriate (e.g., "This report includes AI-supported analysis, reviewed and refined by our team.").
* When AI tools contribute to decision-making, data analysis, or program insights, acknowledge their role while emphasizing human oversight.
* If AI significantly contributed to a grant proposal, **consider noting this** in the process documentation.
* Be ready to explain how you ensured accuracy and ethical use.

1. **Do Protect Data and Privacy**

* **Do not upload Personally Identifiable Information (PII)** - no client names, addresses, or sensitive financial data. AI outputs and inputs can still contain internal knowledge, tone, and workflows even if PII is removed.
* Avoid uploading proprietary program models or SOPs into public tools unless anonymized or using secure enterprise tools.
* Replace real names with placeholders (e.g., [Participant A]) before using AI tools.
  + **Check the data privacy policies** of any tool you use. Prefer tools with strong user protections (like Claude and Microsoft Copilot).

1. **Do Document and Track AI Use**

* Consider keeping a **simple log** of when AI was used and for what purpose for use cases across the organization.
* Foster internal learning by openly discussing AI use, sharing effective prompts, and refining best practices collaboratively.
* Use a **shared prompt library** to capture effective prompts for common tasks (e.g., emails, postings).
* Archive key prompts and outputs for transparency and learning.

1. **Do Fact-Check, Edit, and Review for Bias**

* Review all AI outputs for **accuracy, cultural sensitivity, and inclusivity**.
* Cross-check facts, especially for grant applications, proposals, and public-facing content.

1. **Do Use AI for Incremental Gains (Efficiency + Learning)**

* Focus on **time-saving and brainstorming tasks** (e.g., summarizing research, drafting first drafts).
* **Encourage experimentation to improve AI literacy across your organization. Use AI to help participants and junior staff upskill in tools like Excel, PowerPoint, or business writing. AI can scaffold skills in a nonjudgmental way and build confidence for employees moving into office-based roles.**
* **As nonprofit leaders, you are not just stewards of data but of time. Use AI to return valuable minutes back to your day so you can focus on mission-critical work.**

1. **Do Build Staff AI Confidence with Training & Peer Learning**

* Host **AI learning sessions** where staff share their best prompts and lessons learned with each other.

1. **Do Ensure Accessibility and Equity in AI Use**

* Make sure all staff, not just tech-savvy employees, can access and learn about AI.
* Provide training that connects AI tools to **real ESE use cases**, not abstract theory.

1. **Do Align any AI Use with Your Mission and Values**

* AI should **support, not replace** your mission to serve vulnerable populations.
* Use AI to **free up staff time for client work and innovation**, not to cut corners or jobs.

# **❌ Don’ts - Common Pitfalls to Avoid**

1. **Don’t Use Real Names or Sensitive Client Data**

* Never input participant names, addresses, case notes, or financial data into AI tools.
* Replace identifying information with placeholders (e.g., [Participant A], [Organization X]).
* Assume all AI tools store data unless proven otherwise.

1. **Don’t Assume AI’s Output Is Always Right**

* AI tools often **hallucinate (make up facts)**. Don’t copy-paste without careful review. Review outputs for accuracy, logic, and appropriateness.
* Ask AI: “What are your assumptions?” or “Where did you get this information?”

1. **Don’t Use AI to Replace Human Judgment for Sensitive Decisions**

* **Hiring, firing, client service plans, or disciplinary action must remain human-led.**
* **AI can draft options or summaries but should not replace discretion and empathy.**
* **Flag all AI-generated decisions for human review and override.**

1. **Don’t Let AI Undermine Human Connection**

* **Avoid using AI for emotionally complex conversations.**
* **Maintain space for human intuition, relationship-building, and trust.**
* **Use AI to support, not replace, the relational aspects of your work, such as development, coaching, and community care.**

1. **Don’t Use Unvetted Tools or Upload Confidential Data**

* Avoid using tools without clear data privacy protections.
* Check if your data is being stored, shared, ore used to train models.

1. **Don’t Ignore Bias and Inclusion Concerns**

* AI can reinforce **stereotypes or miss cultural nuance** especially around race, gender, or income.
* Regularly review outputs with a **DEI lens**.
* Don’t assume fairness – build in steps to question and validate equity.

1. **Don’t Ignore the Emotional Context of AI Use**

* **AI-generated content can feel impersonal or robotic.**
* **Avoid using AI to communicate sensitive feedback, grief, or values-aligned messaging.**
* **Tone-check messages, especially when dealing with community-facing or staff-wide communications.**

1. **Don’t Over-Rely on AI for All Content**

* AI can’t replace **deep organizational knowledge** – balance AI’s convenience with the value of institutional memory and voice.
* Use AI for brainstorming and drafts and build in human review.

1. **Don’t Lock AI Knowledge in Silos**

* Encourage cross-team sharing and experimentation - if marketing finds a great prompt for social posts, **share it with everyone**.
* Build a culture where **AI learning is continuous and collaborative**.

1. **Don’t Ignore Evolving Best Practices and AI policies**

* AI governance is changing fast - **stay informed about evolving laws and ethical guidelines**.
* Assign someone to **monitor new AI policies (e.g., EU AI Act, NIST AI Risk Management Framework)** and **update your policy annually**.

# **AI Policy for [Organization Name]**

**Purpose**

At [Organization Name], we will use AI tools to improve operations, save time, and enhance our services. This policy ensures AI is used responsibly and ethically to protect our mission, clients, and staff.

**Key Principles**

* **AI Supports, Humans Decide:** AI can assist with tasks, but final decisions must be made by staff.
* **Protect Data:** Do not enter client names, personal details, or confidential information into AI tools.
* **Be Transparent:** Share when AI is used for external materials (e.g., grant applications).
* **Review & Edit:** All AI outputs must be reviewed for accuracy, bias, and cultural sensitivity.
* **Stay Ethical:** AI should align with our values of equity, inclusion, and transparency.
* **Stay Accountable:** Staff must document significant AI use in [Insert Tracking Method, e.g., AI Usage Log or Shared Document].

**Examples of Common AI Uses**

*The examples below are suggestions. Each ESE should customize this section to reflect the specific ways your organization chooses to use AI.*

At [Organization Name], AI can be used for:

* Drafting emails, grant proposals, and marketing materials.
* Summarizing research or internal reports.
* Brainstorming ideas for programs or fundraising.

**Prohibited Uses**

*The examples below are suggestions. Each ESE should customize this section to reflect the specific AI uses your organization wants to avoid.*

At [Organization Name], AI cannot be used for:

* Making final decisions on hiring, firing, or client services.
* Entering personal data (PII) or financial records.
* Creating misleading or false content.

**Staff Acknowledgment**

I have read and agree to follow the AI Policy.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
Position: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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