

# Navigating the AI Landscape in Philanthropy

Initial Insights from a Survey by the Technology Association of Grantmakers

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## Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its applications in philanthropy, the Technology Association of Grantmakers (TAG) conducted a preliminary survey in July-August 2023 to gauge the sector's perspectives, concerns, and aspirations. Survey participants were asked two questions:

1. *What is the #1 question you're being asked about AI at your organization?*
2. *What would be most helpful for you right now in navigating the AI hype cycle?*

While answers were collected from a smaller group of 54 respondents, all responsible for the technology function within their organizations, these initial findings offer valuable insights into the most pressing questions and needs of the philanthropic community relating to AI. These results might not fully represent the broader perspectives of the entire philanthropic community, so readers are encouraged to view the results as a starting point for discussions rather than definitive conclusions.

## Top Themes from Initial Responses

Though the respondent pool was modest, significant themes emerged, offering insights into the prevailing sentiment within this segment of the philanthropic sector. Responses can be grouped into five key thematic areas:

1. **Understanding and Education:**
  - What is AI, and should we care about it?
  - What are the pros and cons of AI in society?
  - How can we leverage AI internally and externally while addressing concerns such as security, transparency, and ethics?
  - What are the top ways philanthropic organizations currently use AI?
2. **Application and Integration:**
  - How can AI be infused into our organization's operations?
  - How do we conduct due diligence on AI tools under consideration?
  - When can we start using AI in our daily work?
  - How can AI make our organization more efficient?

- How do we integrate AI into grant application processes to reduce burden and increase efficiency?
  - How can AI be used to assess program impact while ensuring accuracy?
3. **Security and Risk**
    - What security concerns should we consider when using AI? Can AI be used without compromising data security?
    - What are the unique risks of using AI in foundations?
  4. **Ethics and Equity:**
    - What are the ethical risks associated with AI, and how can they be managed?
    - What does an ethical AI policy look like in philanthropy?
    - How can we ensure AI adoption does not worsen existing inequities?
  5. **Strategic Considerations:**
    - What are the strategic questions foundations should consider about AI?
    - How will AI impact Donor-Advised Funds (DAFs)?
    - In what ways can AI be strategically employed to augment our overall impact?

It is important to note that these findings are based on a preliminary survey with 54 respondents and may not fully represent the broader perspectives of the entire philanthropic community.

## Key Considerations for Philanthropy

The survey results also underscore several key areas where the philanthropic community can benefit from focused attention and strategic approaches. These recommendations, drawn directly from the initial survey insights, provide a roadmap for philanthropic organizations seeking to navigate the AI landscape effectively:

1. **Education and Transparency:**
  - Educate stakeholders on the nature of AI and its capabilities while addressing risks, challenges, and misconceptions.
  - Enhance understanding by offering insight into AI methodologies.
  - Spotlight practical and low-risk AI applications that can be easily integrated.
2. **Ethics and Equity:**
  - Lead conversations about the ethical dimensions of AI, particularly in terms of equity.
  - Explore ways to leverage AI as a tool for promoting fairness.
  - Develop and implement ethical AI policies that guide usage within daily operations.
3. **Practical Applications and Case Studies:**
  - Provide tangible examples of AI technologies successfully enhancing Foundation and nonprofit operations while remaining aligned with organizational values.
  - Share instances where AI reduces the burden on grantees and staff while adhering to ethical standards.
4. **Strategic Conversations and Partner Roadmaps:**
  - Foster dialogue on AI's implications for the philanthropic sector.
  - Understand technology partners' AI integration roadmaps.

- Share experiences and outcomes within peer communities to foster shared insight.
5. **Risk Analysis:**
- Provide an assessment of security risk, liability, and protection of confidential information.
  - Offer a balanced analysis of potential AI impacts on the communities served by grantmakers.
  - Encourage a grounded approach, differentiating between genuine AI benefits and inflated expectations.

These considerations underscore the significance of education, ethical considerations, practical implementation, and strategic awareness as keys to the responsible adoption of AI within the philanthropic sector.

While the response count is modest, these initial findings can serve as a starting point for further exploration and discussions among philanthropic organizations looking to navigate the AI landscape thoughtfully and responsibly.

## On the Horizon: A Framework for AI Adoption

Addressing the need for deeper guidance on incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) into grantmaking organizations, the Technology Association of Grantmakers (TAG) and Project Evident have entered a partnership designed to provide helpful insight for the sector. This collaborative effort is devoted to crafting an AI Adoption Framework tailored specifically for grantmakers. With active development already in progress, the initiative is slated to unveil a draft framework in December 2023. This joint initiative reflects both organizations' commitment to exploring the potential of AI to enhance grantmakers' impact, optimize their operational efficiency, and foster inclusivity and equity.

For more information, visit <https://www.tagtech.org/page/AI>.

## Contact

For additional inquiries regarding these survey findings, please contact [info@tagtech.org](mailto:info@tagtech.org).