
The 2025 AI for Humanity Report

fastforward

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Introduction

AI is reshaping industries, daily life, and the global economy at unprecedented speed. With few regulatory barriers, companies are pouring billions into AI and it’s raising big questions about every aspect of society — from job security to education to misinformation. The big question right now is whether advances in AI will be a force for harm or for good.

Meanwhile nonprofits — the first line of defense for communities — are at risk of being left behind. The social sector often lacks the funding, infrastructure, and tools to keep pace with this transformation. Fast Forward exists to change that. For more than a decade, we’ve backed builders reimagining how technology can serve humanity. We have seen firsthand how a single nonprofit can leverage AI to unlock opportunity for millions: from helping refugees access translation services, to scaling personalized learning, to strengthening climate resilience.

This report grounds those stories in data. It offers a snapshot of how nonprofits are using AI today, dives into the emerging sector of AI-powered nonprofits (APNs), and provides takeaways for nonprofits and funders. The 2025 AI for Humanity Report was created with support from Google.org, and the research and analysis was led by faculty at Indiana University, University of Minnesota, and Wayne State University.

Respondent Breakdown



Methodology

In April 2025, Fast Forward launched a survey through our network to better understand how nonprofits are adopting and applying artificial intelligence. Over the course of two months, nearly 200 nonprofits responded. **All respondents were already using AI in some form.** To capture the breadth of adoption, we focused on the following categories of nonprofit AI use:

AI-Powered Nonprofits Organizations that develop AI solutions as a core part of their social impact work. Examples include AI-powered chatbots, recommendation engines, or systems that organize resources for end users. Importantly, end users may not always interact with the AI directly, but it is central to the nonprofit’s impact.

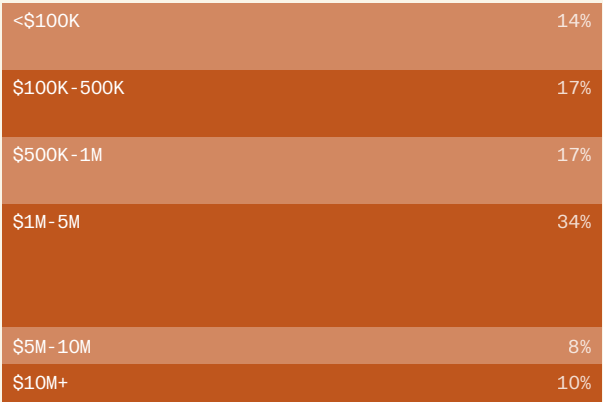
AI-Assisted Nonprofits Organizations that leverage AI behind the scenes to improve efficiency. Common use cases include marketing, grant writing, and automated workflows. While these applications do not directly change the product or service an end user receives, they free up capacity and indirectly enhance outcomes.

Both A subset of nonprofits reported using AI in both ways and are included in both categories above.

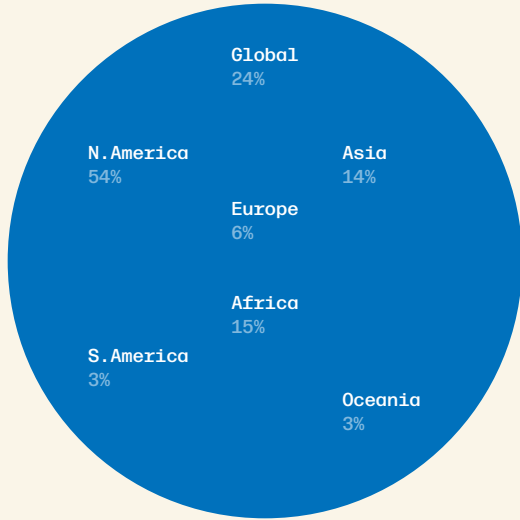
In addition to survey responses, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 12 nonprofit leaders and six funders to deepen our understanding of sector-wide opportunities and challenges. Nonprofit participants represented a range of sizes and stages of AI adoption. Funder participants have all supported at least one AI-powered nonprofit. Case studies featured in this report were selected directly from survey participants. While all quantitative findings come from the survey, analysis and predictions are informed by these interviews as well as Fast Forward’s decade of experience supporting tech nonprofits.

Limitations Because the survey focused exclusively on nonprofits already using AI, the findings reflect some of the most tech-forward organizations in the sector. Participation was voluntary and self-selected. As such, the sample may not be representative of the entire sector; the results focus on the nonprofits who chose to participate. Not all respondents completed every question, so response counts vary across findings.

Budgets Across All Respondents



Impact Regions Across All Respondents



*Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

AI-Powered Nonprofits (APNs)

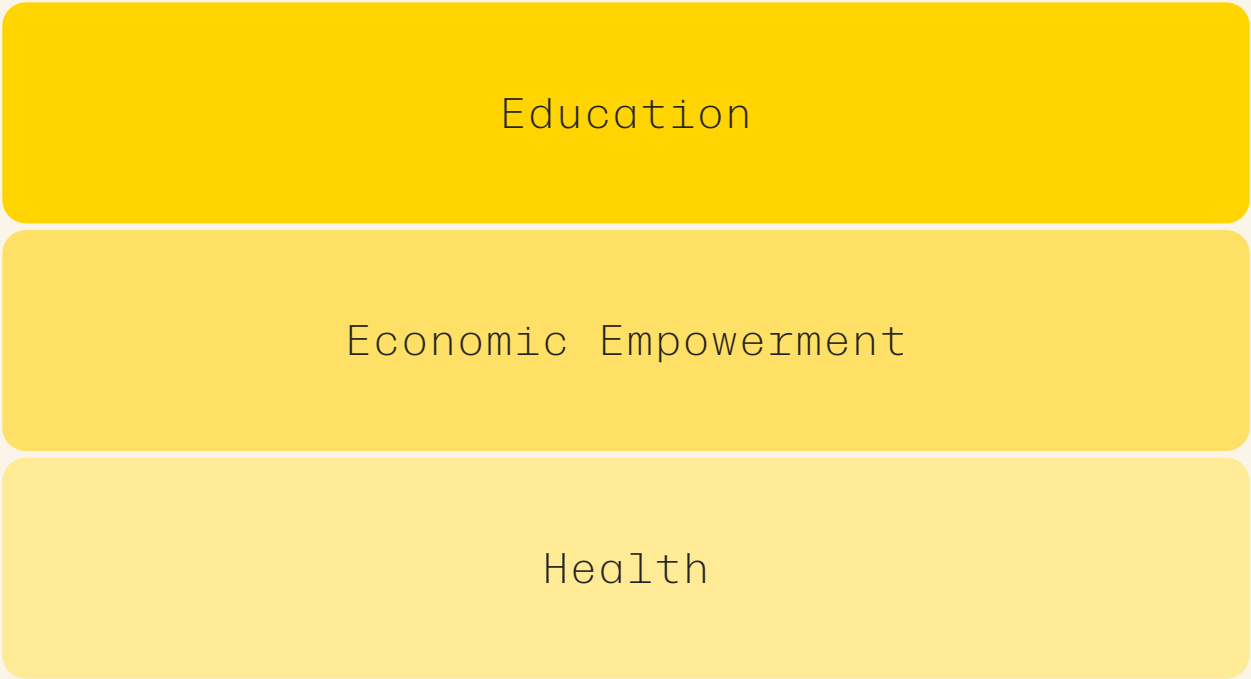
Key Finding 1 Nonprofits are building AI solutions at every size and stage.
Key Finding 2 More funding is critical to unlock AI's potential.
Key Finding 3 APNs are embedding community voice into AI design.
Key Finding 4 APNs need technical expertise to match their ethical ambitions.
Key Finding 5 Most APNs start with chatbots, but time and experimentation will unlock bigger opportunities.
Key Finding 6 Collaboration among nonprofits could multiply AI's impact.

AI-powered nonprofits (APNs) represent one of the most promising fronts in social impact. APNs build AI into the core of their programs, developing tools like chatbots, recommendation engines, and translation services to directly serve beneficiaries. In other words, AI isn't just an efficiency layer for these organizations; it is the mechanism through which impact is achieved.

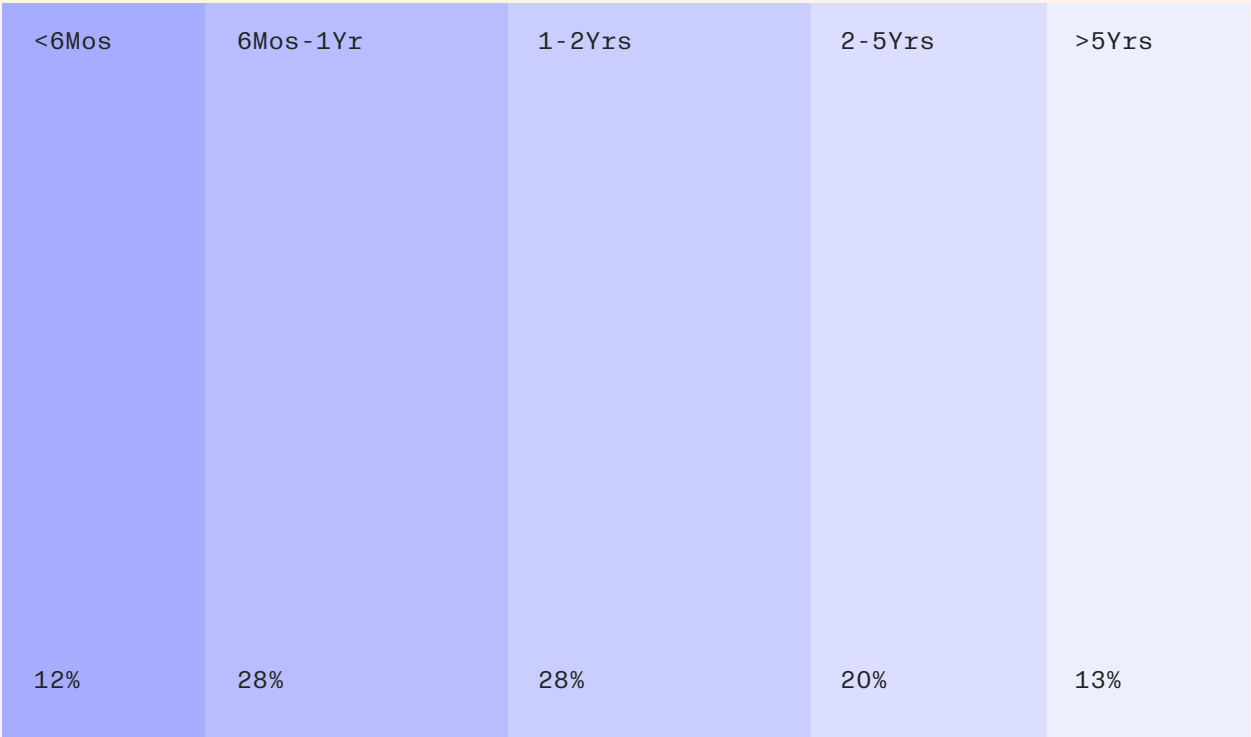
Because the field is still emerging, much of this work is early-stage. In fact, 40% of APNs surveyed have been using AI for a year or less. Behind every launch are unseen but critical phases, like sourcing and cleaning data, developing benchmarks, fine-tuning models, and running countless experiments. The costs of these early efforts are steep: nearly half (48%) of APNs cited cost of implementation as their biggest barrier. Yet with many funders waiting to see measurable outcomes before investing, APNs often face a catch-22: needing capital to prove impact, but needing proven impact to unlock capital.

Despite these headwinds, the results are already remarkable. One respondent reported that AI enabled them to quadruple their annual capacity for translations. Another saw response times for end users decrease by more than 75%. These stories illustrate how, when funders support experimentation, the payoff for communities can be transformative.

Top Issue Areas of AI-Powered Nonprofit Respondents

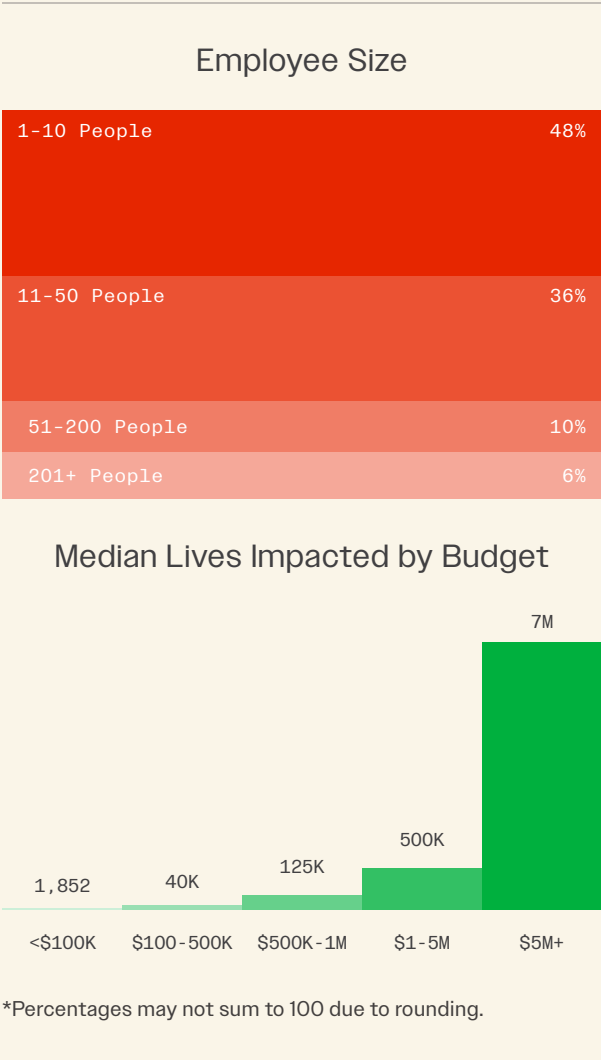


AI Tenure: How Long APN Respondents Have Been Using AI at Core of Solution



*Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Key Findings



Key Finding 3
APNs are embedding community voices into AI design.

With government regulation lagging, AI-powered nonprofits are stepping up to model what responsible AI can look like. Their practices go beyond compliance: 61% of surveyed nonprofits customize large language models (LLMs) with their own data — a step that can help them tailor tools for the specific communities they serve. Plus, 70% regularly incorporate community feedback into system updates. By centering community voices in development, APNs ensure their tech reflects lived realities and builds trust with the people they serve.

Key Finding 1
Nonprofits are building AI solutions at every size and stage.

AI-powered nonprofits are showing that innovation isn’t confined to well-resourced Silicon Valley startups or large R&D labs. Half of surveyed APNs have 10 or fewer employees, well below the [U.S. national average of 42 employees per nonprofit](#). Nearly a third (30%) of APNs have budgets of \$500K or less. These lean teams are nonetheless building and deploying AI solutions that reach thousands — even millions — of people.

Key Finding 2
More funding is critical to unlock AI’s potential.

Nearly half (48%) of APNs report that adopting AI has raised their expenses, and 84% say additional funding is most needed to continue developing and scaling their work. Building effective AI requires upfront investment in staff, infrastructure, and validation, long before the benefits show up for beneficiaries.

But that investment can pay off. At the smallest budgets, APNs are serving thousands, a median of just under 2,000 lives. At \$1M budgets, median reach jumps to half a million people. And at \$5M+, APNs are reaching millions, with a median impact of 7M lives. With resources, pilots can become sector-shaping tools.

Key Finding 4
APNs need technical expertise to match their ethical ambitions.

Even with these proactive measures, concerns remain about safety and responsible use — a tension that shapes the way APNs approach adoption. Data privacy is a top challenge in adopting AI, cited by 48% of respondents. Another 41% pointed to the lack of in-house technical expertise, underscoring that without dedicated experts, it can be daunting for nonprofits to confidently assess whether their systems are truly ethical or secure. To close this gap, nonprofits must prioritize technical expertise as part of their AI strategy, and philanthropy should step up to make those hires and capacity-building efforts possible.

The Good News?

71% of APNs already have processes in place to assess and mitigate risks. Still, the message is clear: nonprofits know the potential AI holds, but they are equally focused on ensuring it is deployed safely, equitably, and without exacerbating existing inequities.

Case Study

Bayes Impact + Google.org

[Bayes Impact](#) builds open-source, AI-powered tools to support social workers and care professionals around the world. Their latest innovation, [CaseAI](#), launched from the Google.org GenAI Accelerator, brings generative AI directly into case management workflows, providing real-time recommendations that help caseworkers deliver more focused support.

Powered by Gemini, CaseAI augments human capacity. It flags urgent cases, summarizes key events, recommends tailored interventions, and analyzes communications to ensure nothing slips through the cracks. The platform is customizable, so organizations can adapt recommendations to match their own approaches and needs of their client beneficiaries. Bayes Impact incorporates community feedback into ongoing AI system updates, ensuring CaseAI evolves in step with the needs of the people it serves.

The impact is clear: CaseAI has enabled social and case workers to spend [25% more time](#) in direct engagement with beneficiaries. As Maggie Lin, Executive Director at Foster Nation and user of CaseAI, explains: “CaseAI is revolutionizing how we provide personalized support at scale... so that people can show up for each other and provide solutions to the individual, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.” The outcome isn’t just efficiency — it’s stronger relationships between social workers and the people they serve.



Case Study

Visilant

Visilant is working to eliminate avoidable blindness, which affects more than one billion people worldwide. In many low-resource regions, there is just one ophthalmologist for every 100,000 people. The majority of blindness is preventable or treatable, but only if patients can be screened and connected to care in time.

Visilant’s AI-powered platform makes that possible. A low-cost smartphone adapter lets community health workers capture clinical-grade eye images. AI then analyzes the images and patient history to diagnose conditions like cataracts and infections with near-clinical accuracy. From there, it provides multilingual counseling and referral instructions. Patients who once traveled hours for an exam can now be screened in their own villages, reducing delays, unnecessary referrals, and lost wages. Visilant has already screened more than 30,000 patients and expects to reach more than one million within three years.

Key Finding 5
Most APNs start with chatbots, but time and experimentation will unlock bigger opportunities.
Chatbots are the entry point for many AI-powered nonprofits — 67% use them today. But experimentation is quickly expanding into areas like content personalization (51%) and research assistance (32%). Tenure also shapes the depth of adoption: 65% of APNs with under two years of experience rely on ready-made or lightly customized tools, while 63% of more seasoned APNs have moved on to developing fully in-house solutions. Today’s early experiments are only the beginning.

Chatbots:	67%
Content Personalization:	51%
Research Assistant:	32%
Translation Services:	29%
Monitoring & Analytics:	28%
Other:	28%
Image/Voice Recognition:	26%

*Totals >100% due to multiple selections.

Key Finding 6
Collaboration among nonprofits could multiply AI’s impact.
Collaboration is emerging as a powerful force among AI-powered nonprofits. Today, 43% of APNs have already made their tools fully or partially open, signaling a strong culture of sharing. Maturity also matters: organizations with more than two years of AI tenure are significantly more likely to open source or share their tools (53%) compared to newer APNs (38%).

This willingness to share tools, data, and practices reduces duplication and accelerates collective learning across the sector. By building on each other’s progress, nonprofits can avoid reinventing the wheel and move faster toward scalable, community-driven solutions.

Emerging Risk

AI-powered nonprofits rely heavily on public data to train models and scale tools affordably. 77% of APNs rely on public datasets, making them the most-used source overall. But in the U.S. specifically, many of the public datasets nonprofits depend on are at risk of disappearing.

Without sustained access to high-quality, open data, the progress of the APN sector could stall, undermining the tools communities rely on. Public data must be treated as essential digital infrastructure: protected, maintained, and expanded to ensure that nonprofits can continue to build equitable, impactful AI solutions.

AI-Assisted Nonprofits

- Key Finding 1**

AI-assisted nonprofits are using AI to reclaim time for what matters most.
- Key Finding 2**

Smaller nonprofits are leading on back-office AI adoption.
- Key Finding 3**

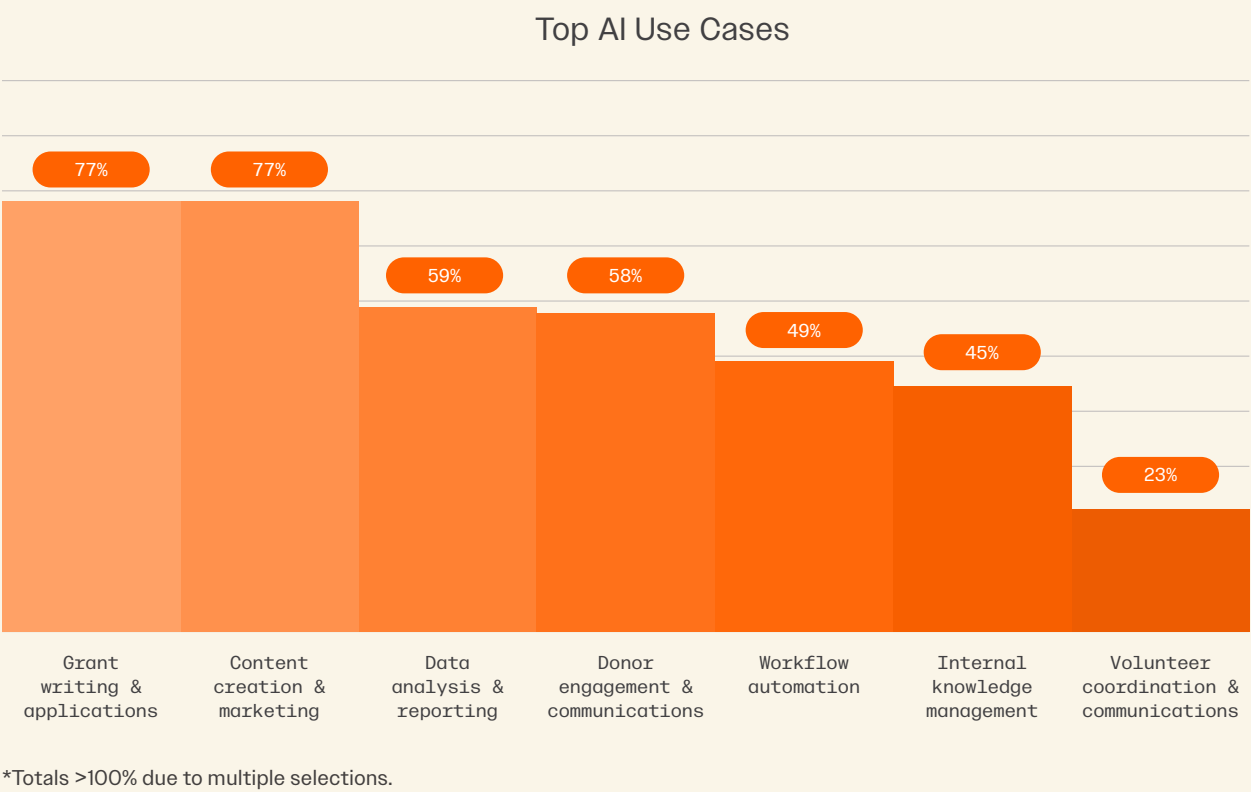
Internal AI use starts simple, but is poised to deepen.
- Key Finding 4**

Responsible AI practices lag among AI-assisted nonprofits as opposed to AI-powered nonprofits.

AI isn't just powering nonprofit programs — it's also reshaping how nonprofits run behind the scenes. The majority of organizations in our survey (82%) are using AI for internal operations, applying it to everything from grant writing to content creation to workflow automation.

For lean teams, AI tools can be game-changing. Smaller nonprofits report the highest rates of staff-wide adoption of AI, a reflection of how much efficiency matters when every person wears multiple hats. Across the board, AI is helping nonprofits reclaim hours and free up staff to focus on mission delivery.

Still, adoption remains early-stage. Most AI-assisted nonprofits are starting with off-the-shelf LLM tools, and few have formal policies to guide responsible use. As internal AI use grows deeper, the sector will need more than efficiency. Organizations will need investment, training, and shared standards to ensure AI is used responsibly and equitably.



Percentage of Nonprofit Staff Regularly Using AI in Their Work	
81-100% of staff use AI	48%
61-80% of staff use AI	17%
41-60% of staff use AI	10%
21-40% of staff use AI	16%
0-20% of staff use AI	9%

Key Findings

We Asked

Which best describes how the AI tools your organization uses for operations are built or sourced?

89%

Off-the-Shelf LLM AI tools
(e.g., ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Anthropic’s Claude)

57%

AI add-ons to existing tools
(e.g., Canva Magic Studio, Notion AI, HubSpot Breeze)

40%

Customized versions of LLM tools using our own data
(e.g., Gemini Gems, custom GPTs, Claude Projects)

19%

Tools developed completely in-house
(i.e., no reliance on off-the-shelf AI platforms like ChatGPT or Gemini or other pre-existing models)

Our Analysis

Most AI-assisted nonprofits rely on ready-made tools.

*Totals >100% due to multiple selections.

Key Finding 1

AI-assisted nonprofits are using AI to reclaim time for what matters most.

Nonprofits are putting AI to work on the tasks that once consumed staff time: content creation and marketing (77%), grant writing (77%), and data analysis (59%) top the list, followed by donor engagement (58%), workflow automation (49%), and knowledge management (45%).

What makes this significant isn’t efficiency for its own sake, but what it makes possible. Teams report drafting entire grant proposals in a fraction of the time, using AI to turn bullet points into first drafts, or summarizing complex documents in minutes instead of hours. One leader described saving “two or three hours just with document translation,” while another shared that building a web app that used to take three months now takes just an afternoon. These shifts free up staff to focus on what matters most: serving their communities.

Key Finding 2

Smaller nonprofits are leading on back-office AI adoption.

The smallest orgs are moving fastest when it comes to AI for internal operations. Nonprofits with budgets under \$100K report the highest rates of staff-wide adoption, with an average of 82% of employees using AI regularly. Among mid-sized groups (\$100K–\$5M), about 67% of employees use AI, compared to 59% at large organizations (\$5M+).

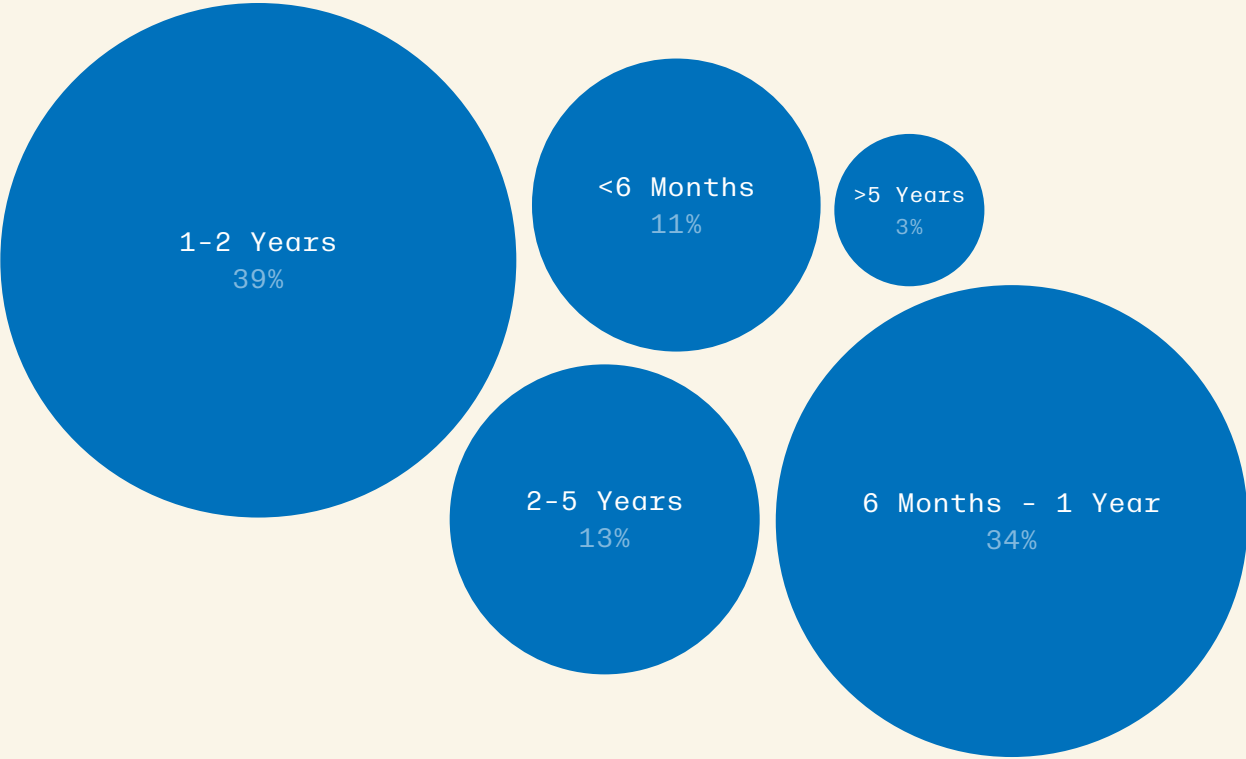
Their flexibility and urgency to save time mean small nonprofits are often quicker to bring AI into daily work. With every staff member wearing multiple hats, AI becomes a daily copilot that helps with tasks and frees up precious time for mission delivery.

Key Finding 3

Internal AI use starts simple, but is poised to deepen.

For now, nonprofits are leaning on off-the-shelf AI tools (89%) to save time on everyday tasks. Few are customizing or building in-house, and that’s appropriate for back-office work. But with training and resources, today’s convenience tools could evolve into deeper integrations that help reshape how nonprofits run.

AI Tenure: How Long Respondents Have Been Using AI for Operational Support



Key Finding 4

Responsible AI practices lag among AI-assisted nonprofits as opposed to AI-powered nonprofits.

When it comes to responsible AI, nonprofits using AI only for internal operations are well behind their AI-powered peers. Just 35% have a public AI policy or one in progress (vs. 69% of nonprofits that are AI-powered only), 39% have risk mitigation processes (vs. 75%), and 44% use privacy controls like anonymization (vs. 69%).

Part of the gap is perception: back-office uses like content creation and marketing may feel “low risk.” But as tools advance and nonprofits apply AI more broadly, the risks — from data privacy to bias — grow too. Establishing simple templates for policies, privacy practices, and risk mitigation could help raise the baseline of responsible AI across the sector.

Takeaways for Nonprofits

AI can feel overwhelming, but nonprofits are already proving it doesn't take massive budgets or deep tech teams to get started. The key is to begin with what matters most to your mission, and build responsibly from there. These takeaways highlight the moves that set nonprofits up for lasting impact. Start with AI for operations, but start responsibly.

For more actionable tips, how-tos, and case studies, visit our [Playbook on AI for Humanity](#).

[Visit the Playbook](#)

Start with AI for operations, but start responsibly.

Many nonprofits with small budgets and teams are already improving operations with AI. Begin with ready-made tools for tasks like writing, reporting, or donor engagement. But even at this early stage, set simple guardrails, like privacy practices, transparency with staff, and basic policies, so that as your AI use grows, you're building on a responsible foundation.

Plan for growth and its costs.

Building AI into the core of your solution can help you reach more people, but scaling requires investment in staff, systems, and infrastructure. Factor in rising expenses early, and communicate clearly with funders about the support you'll need to expand responsibly.

Put your community at the center.

No off-the-shelf model will know your beneficiaries as well as you do. The most impactful nonprofits customize AI with their own data and regularly incorporate community feedback. Building with your community – not just for them – ensures your tools are trusted, equitable, and reflect lived realities.

Build skills as you go.

As your use deepens, prioritize investing in technical expertise, whether through new hires, fellows, or upskilling your existing team, so you can confidently assess risks and shape AI to your mission. Consider also building tech capacity into your board or advisory structures, ensuring you have trusted guidance as the technology and your adoption evolve.

Share, learn, and experiment.

AI is moving fast, and no nonprofit should go it alone. Many APNs are already open-sourcing tools or sharing practices, creating a culture of collaboration. By experimenting, sharing lessons, and adapting ideas from others, you not only accelerate your own learning but also multiply impact across the sector.

Takeaways for Funders

“Nonprofits are taking bold steps to reimagine their work with AI. Philanthropy needs to match that ambition with flexible funding, new approaches to measurement and evaluation, and creative collaborations.”

Nick Cain VP, Strategy and Innovation, Patrick J. McGovern Foundation

AI-powered nonprofits are proving that AI can help dramatically expand reach, from thousands of lives on the smallest budgets to millions at scale. But funding alone isn’t enough. Building effective, responsible AI solutions requires upfront investment in data, validation, and technical talent, often before impact can be measured. It also requires flexibility, since the AI landscape evolves quickly and nonprofits must experiment, pivot, and adapt along the way. Philanthropy has a unique opportunity: by resourcing early-stage development, prioritizing responsible use, and backing collaboration, funders can help nonprofits unlock AI’s full potential for social impact.

Read the “The Philanthropic Reset: How Philanthropy Can Lead in the Age of AI” to learn where your dollars can have the greatest multiplier effect.

[Read the Whitepaper](#)

Fund early, not just at the finish line.

AI adoption in AI-powered nonprofits follows a startup-like path: costly data prep, validation, and piloting long before “impact at scale” is visible. Nearly half of surveyed APNs report higher costs since adopting AI, and 84% say additional funding is needed. If philanthropy only funds proven results, then most promising solutions stall. The biggest unlock you can provide is unrestricted, upfront capital that allows teams to experiment, learn, and build the infrastructure that makes scale possible.

Spot the hidden innovators.

Some of the most forward-thinking APNs are also the leanest, operating on tight budgets yet impacting thousands of lives. At the other end of the spectrum, organizations with \$5M+ budgets impact a median of 7 million lives. The curve is steep: when resources grow, so do impacted lives. By spotting and funding these early innovators, funders can help pilots mature into sector-shaping tools.

Invest in technical and human capacity.

APNs cite lack of in-house expertise as a major barrier when adopting AI, and without engineers, product leads, and data staff, they can’t ensure tools reach their full potential. Funding technical talent is as vital as program dollars. Just as importantly, nonprofits need time and training to integrate AI into workflows responsibly, so people – not just tools – are ready to sustain impact. Funders should also encourage nonprofits to build technical literacy at the board level, since AI strategy is ultimately organizational strategy. Treating tech as a core governance and funding priority, not a side project, is essential for long-term impact.

Make equity and accountability non-negotiable.

AI carries risks of bias, data misuse, and loss of trust if deployed without safeguards. While 75% of AI-powered nonprofits already have processes to mitigate these risks, only 39% of AI-assisted nonprofits do. Funders can raise the bar by encouraging transparent policies, supporting ethics training, and offering governance templates. By tying dollars to responsible practices, you signal that equity and accountability are as important as innovation.

Fuel collaboration, not duplication.

Already, 43% of AI-powered nonprofits share their tools openly, a culture of collaboration rare in other tech sectors. With funder support, these efforts can grow into shared infrastructure, sector-wide data resources, or open models where one build benefits many. Accelerate progress by backing coalitions and encouraging open ecosystems.

Acknowledgments

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Finally, thank you to our partners for championing this work and helping us push the boundaries of what's possible when technology is built for impact.

This report was designed by [Two Are](#).

