



September 16th, 2025

Navigating AI in Fundraising: From Fear to Function

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Maritime Fundraising Conference 2025



Agenda

*What We're
Covering Today*

Welcome & Check-In *(5 minutes)*

AI 101: What it is (and isn't) *(10 minutes)*

Addressing the Elephants in the Room *(10 minutes)*

From Personal Fears to Personal Action *(10 minutes)*

Practical AI Tools & Live Demonstrations *(12 minutes)*

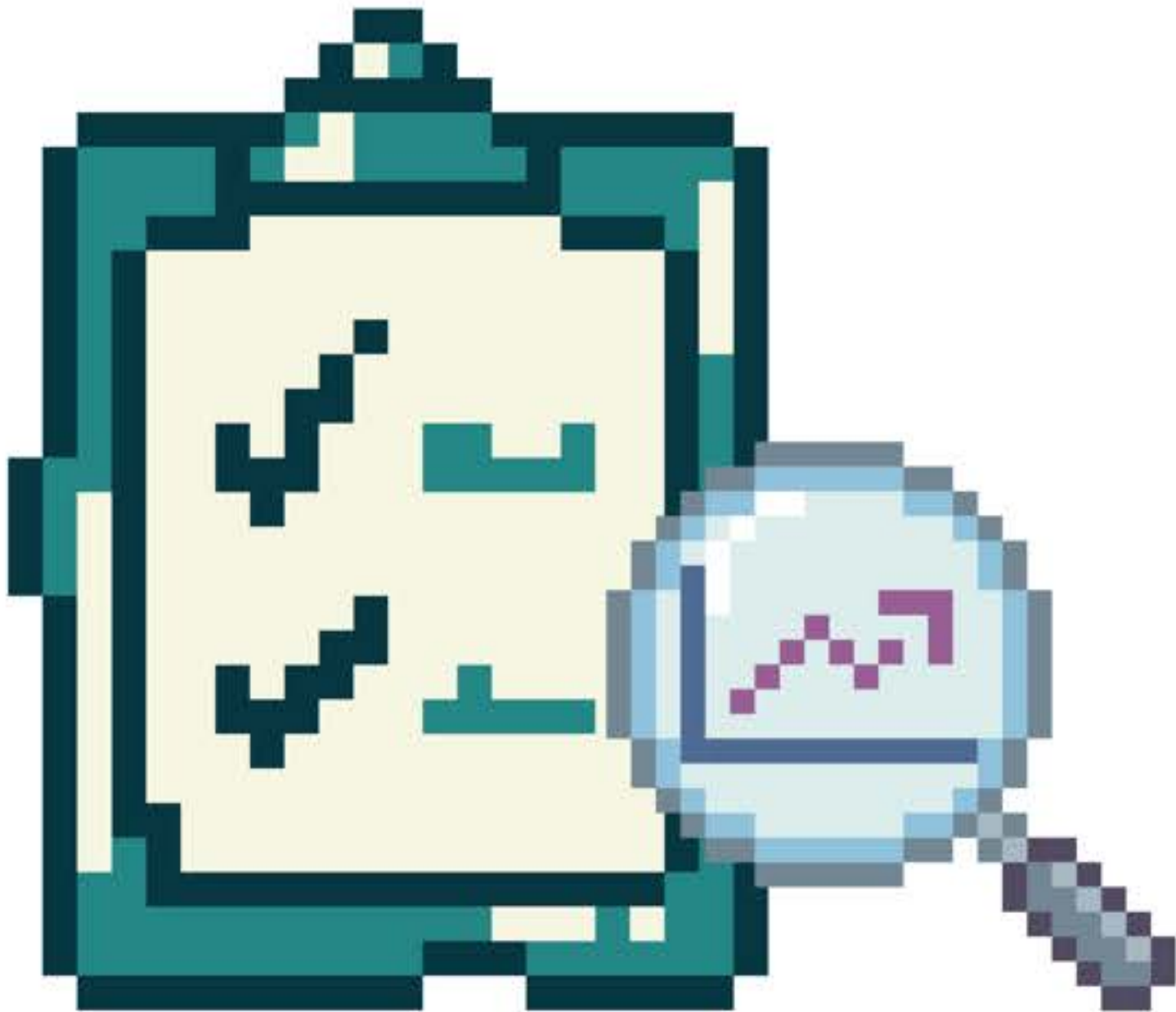
Questions & Discussion *(10 minutes)*

Wrap Up *(3 minutes)*



AI Poll

Where Are You With AI Today?



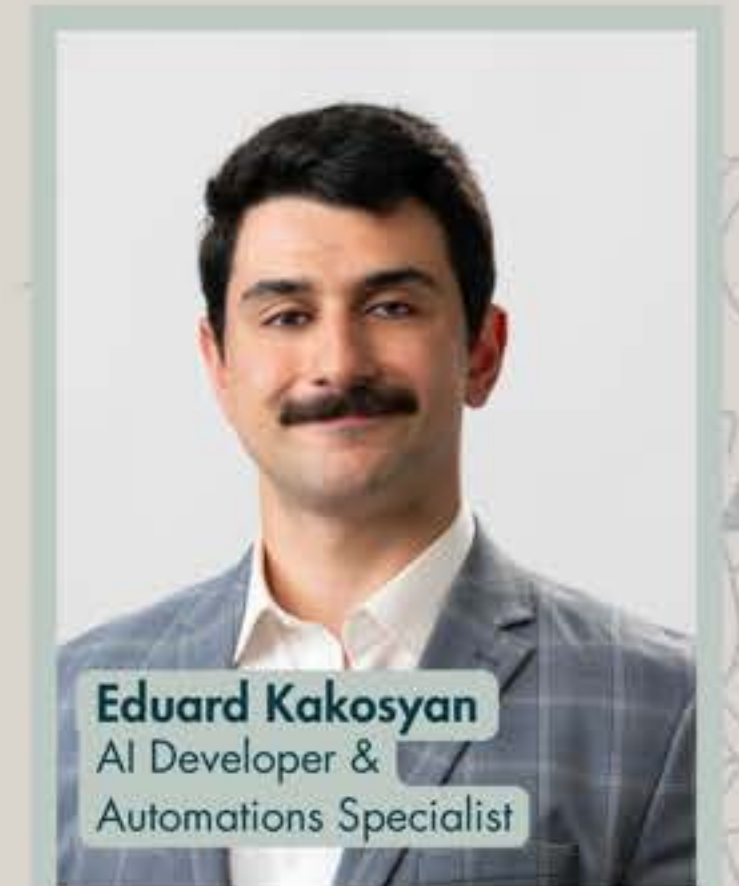
Join at Menti.com

Use Code: 8388 6387



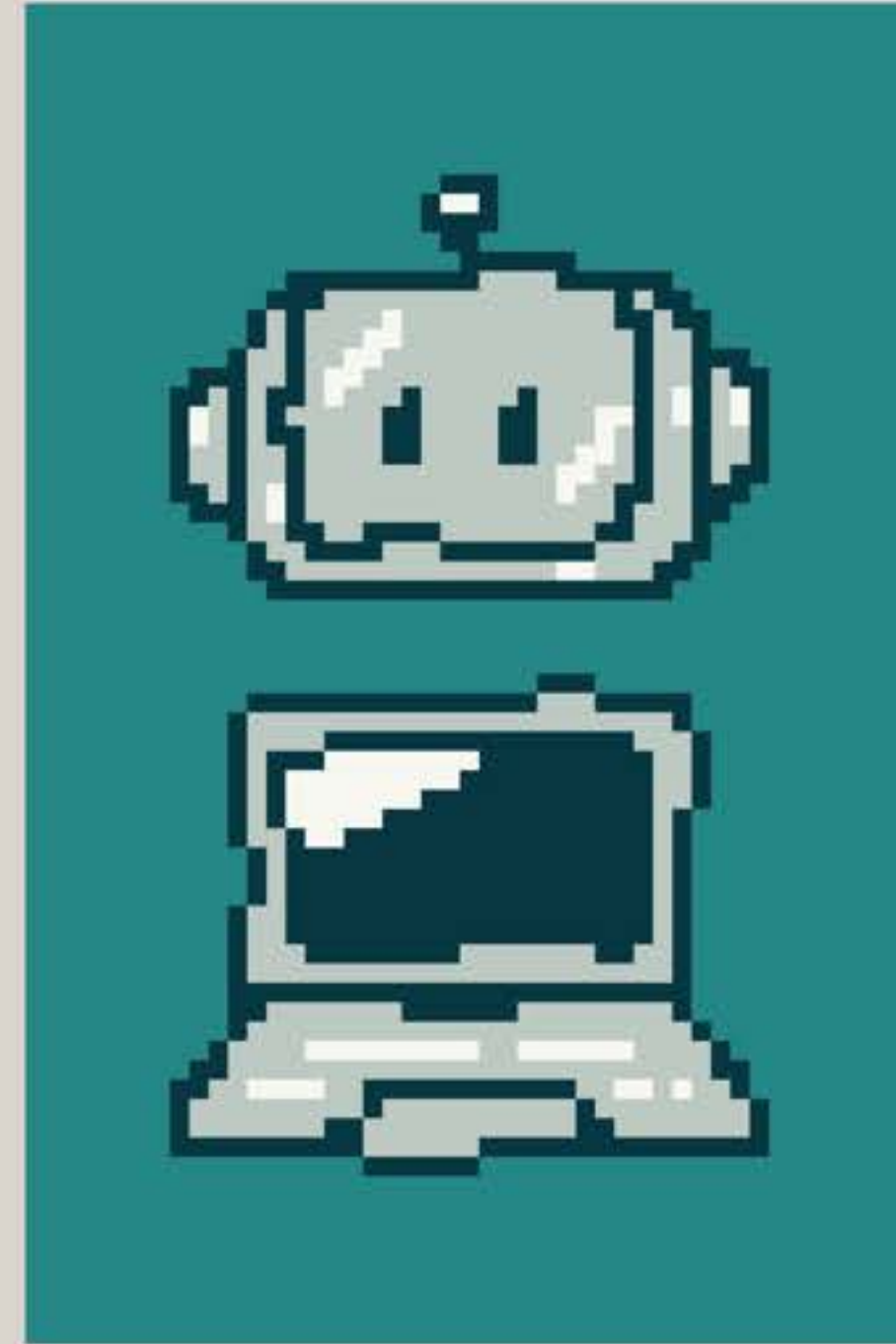
The Only Atlantic Canadian Firm 100% Focused on AI Integration

- Dozens of live AI speaking engagements
- Dozens of AI projects and workshops
- Hundreds of AI training participants
- Thousands of people helped with AI
- Hundreds of Thousands of LinkedIn impressions



AI 101:

What it is (and isn't)



What is AI, Really?

Cutting through the hype

“Generative AI is a type of artificial intelligence tool that generates images, text, videos, and other media in response to inputted prompts from a user.”

Coursera Staff “AI and Machine Learning”, 2025





What Can AI Do?

Current Realistic Capabilities



Content Creation & Personalization



Research & Analysis



Administrative Efficiency



Strategic Planning Support



Training & Knowledge Management



Creative Problem-Solving

What AI Cannot Do

Important limitations to remember

AI is like GPS for text - usually helpful, sometimes spectacularly wrong:

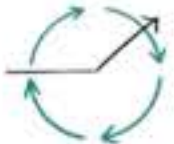
- Great for getting you 90% of the way there
- Always needs a human to verify the final destination
- Can confidently lead you off a cliff if you're not paying attention



AI In Context

Where we are right now

- Lots of excitement and fear
- Wild predictions (some right, many wrong)
- Eventually became an essential tool we use thoughtfully



Headlines / Quotes from coverage of the Internet in the 1990s

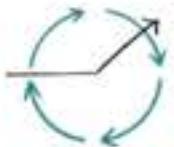


Headlines / Quotes from coverage of AI today

Think of AI as...

Simple analogies that help

- Your research assistant who never sleeps but needs fact-checking
- A very smart autocomplete that can write paragraphs
- A helpful colleague who's read everything but sometimes misunderstands context



*The Good Place - Michael Shur for NBC
Season 1, Episode 8 "Most Improved Player"*

Let's Address The Elephants in the Room



The Fears We're All Thinking About

Common concerns we hear about AI use

"AI will take my job"

"Our donors will know we're using AI and lose trust"

"AI will make fundraising feel fake and impersonal"

"I don't understand the technology well enough to use it safely"

"AI exploits people and harms the environment"



"AI will take my job"

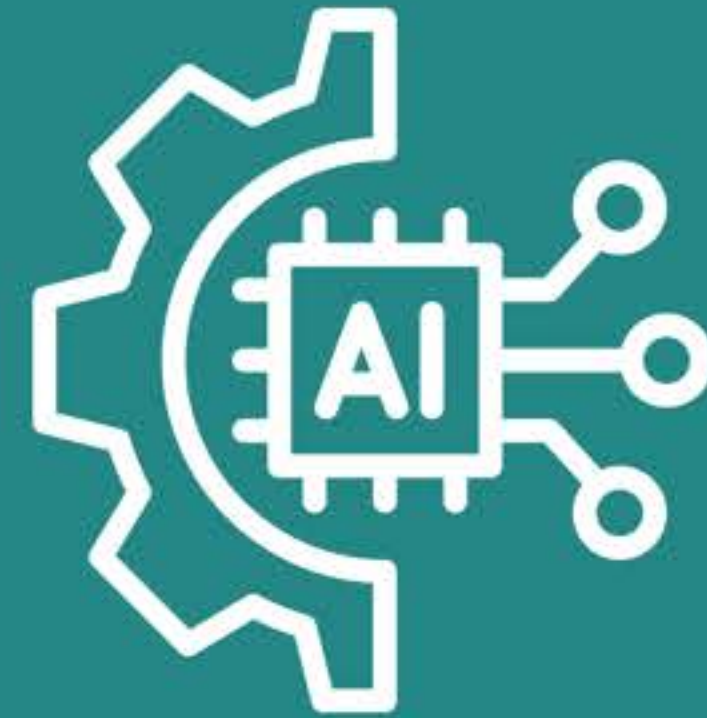
Job Augmentation vs Displacement

The Fear: If AI can write, research, and analyze data, what's left for humans?

The Reality: AI handles routine tasks so you can focus on what only humans do well

- **AI:** Data compilation and draft writing
- **You:** Relationship building and strategic thinking
- **AI:** Research and analysis
- **You:** Authentic connection and ethical decisions

Think of it as getting a research assistant, not a replacement



AI Tasks

Human Tasks



"Our donors will know we're using AI and lose trust"

Data Privacy & Security

The Fear: Donors will think we're being manipulative or careless with their information

The Reality: Donors care about authentic relationships, not the tools you use

- Be transparent when appropriate: "I used AI to research foundation priorities"
- Never put donor personal data into public AI tools
- Use AI for preparation, not for the actual relationship building
- Focus on how AI helps you be MORE thoughtful, not less

Using spell-check doesn't make your letter less sincere



AI: Research & Prep



You: Relationships & Connection

"AI will make fundraising feel fake and impersonal"

Authenticity and Manipulation

The Fear: Machine-written communications aren't genuine connections

The Reality: Authenticity comes from intent and personalization, not the writing tool

- A generic human-written email is less personal than a thoughtful AI-assisted one
- AI helps you customize at scale - more personalization, not less
- You still add the personal touches, stories, and final edits
- Goal: Use AI to enhance your genuine care, not replace it

The test: Would this help me connect better with this specific donor?



Generic Thank you



Personalized Thank You



"I don't understand the technology well enough to use it safely"

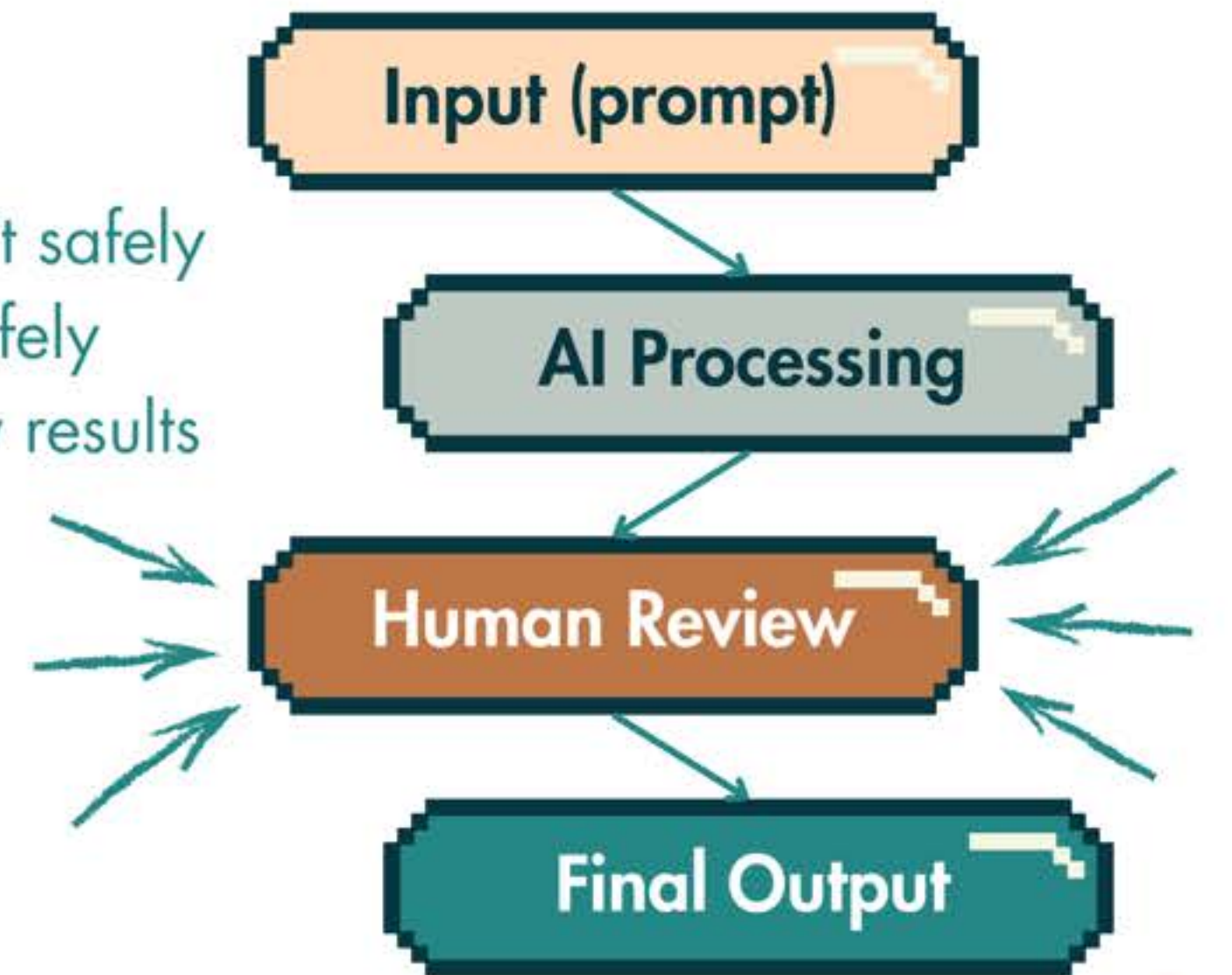
Transparency & Accountability

The Fear: AI is too complex and I might make a mistake

The Reality: You don't need to understand how it works to use it safely

- You don't need to understand your car's engine to drive safely
- Start with simple, low-risk tasks where you can easily verify results
- Use AI as a draft generator, always with human review
- Begin with free tools and basic prompts
- Learn as you go, one small experiment at a time

Remember: Every expert was once a beginner



"AI exploits people and harms the environment"

Exploitation of Humans and Environmental Impact



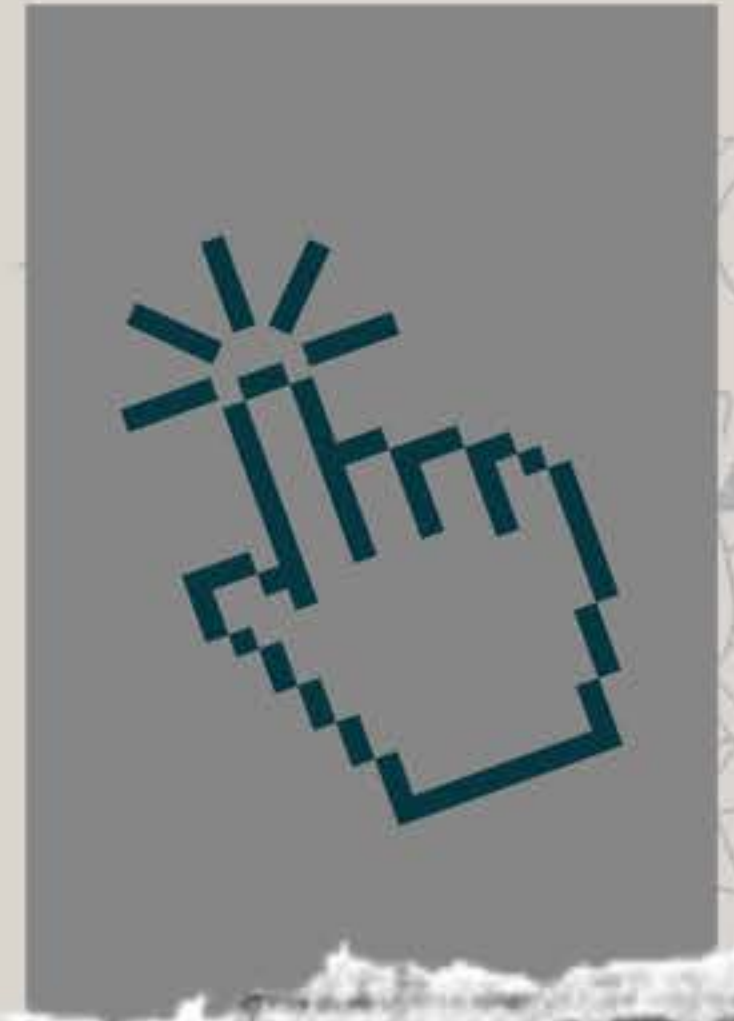
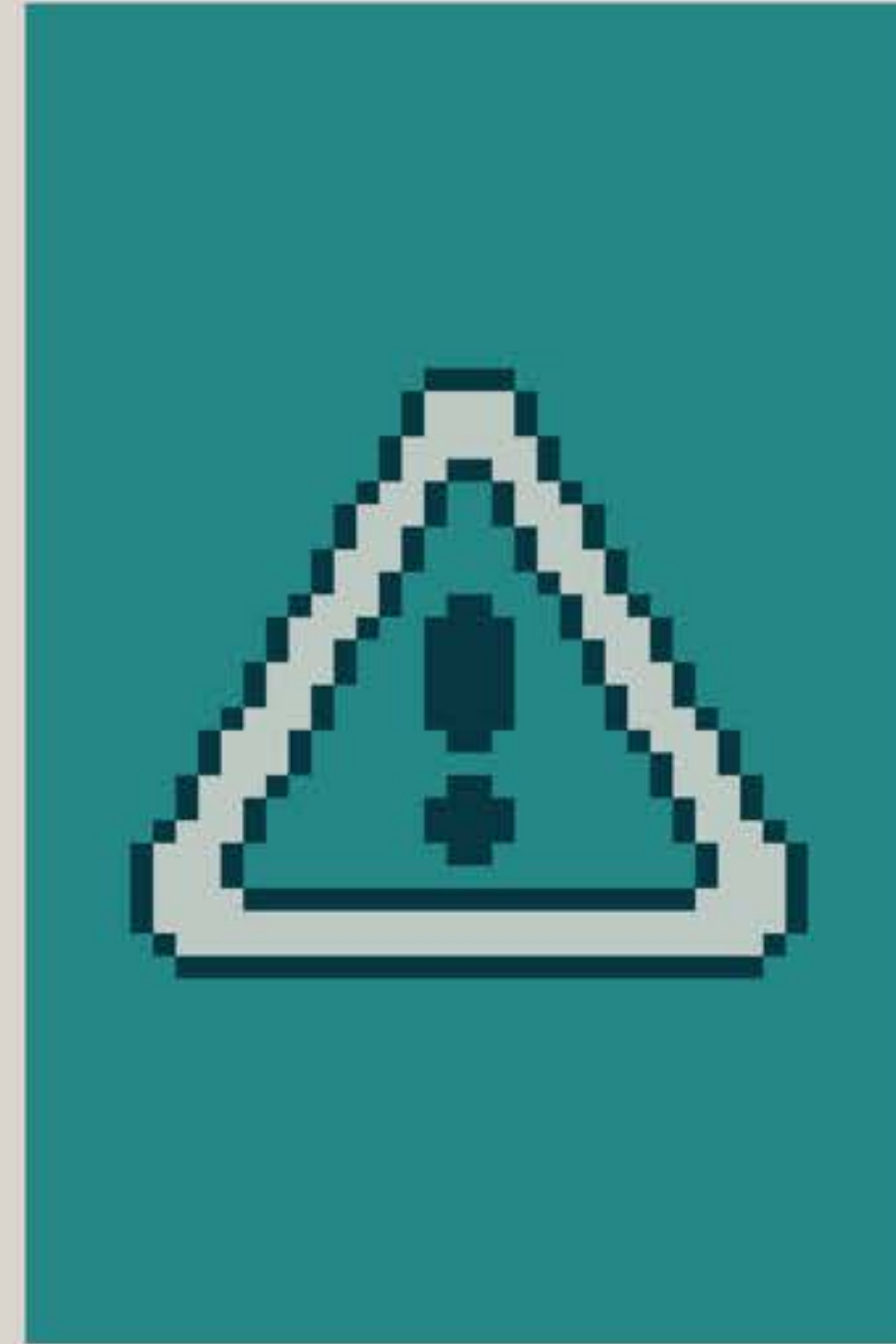
Values-Based Decisions

The Fear: AI models are trained on copyrighted works without permission, and they consume massive amounts of energy, which goes against our values as an organization.

The Reframe: These are legitimate and serious concerns that must be addressed with a values-based approach. The problems lie in the irresponsible use of AI, not the technology itself.



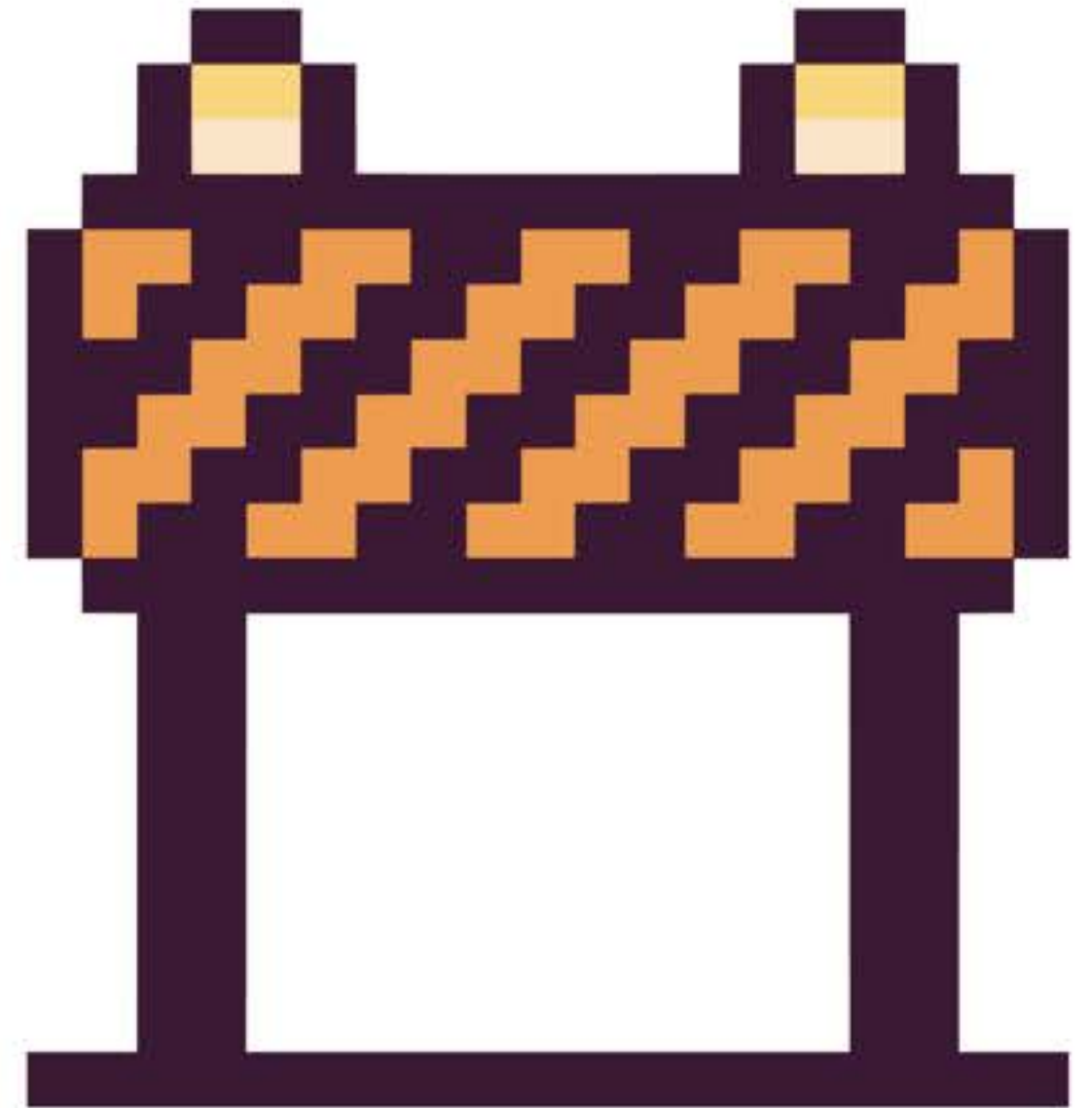
From Personal Fears To Personal Action



Your Personal AI Concerns

Individual barriers keeping you from using AI

- Pick ONE time-consuming admin task
 - *(research, drafts, summaries)*
- Use free AI tool for initial draft
 - *(ChatGPT, Claude, Perplexity)*
- Always fact-check and personalize the output
 - *Track: time saved, quality (1-10), concerns that arise*
- Set 2-week experiment timeline
- **Start small, learn as you go**



Starting Solo

What you can try today

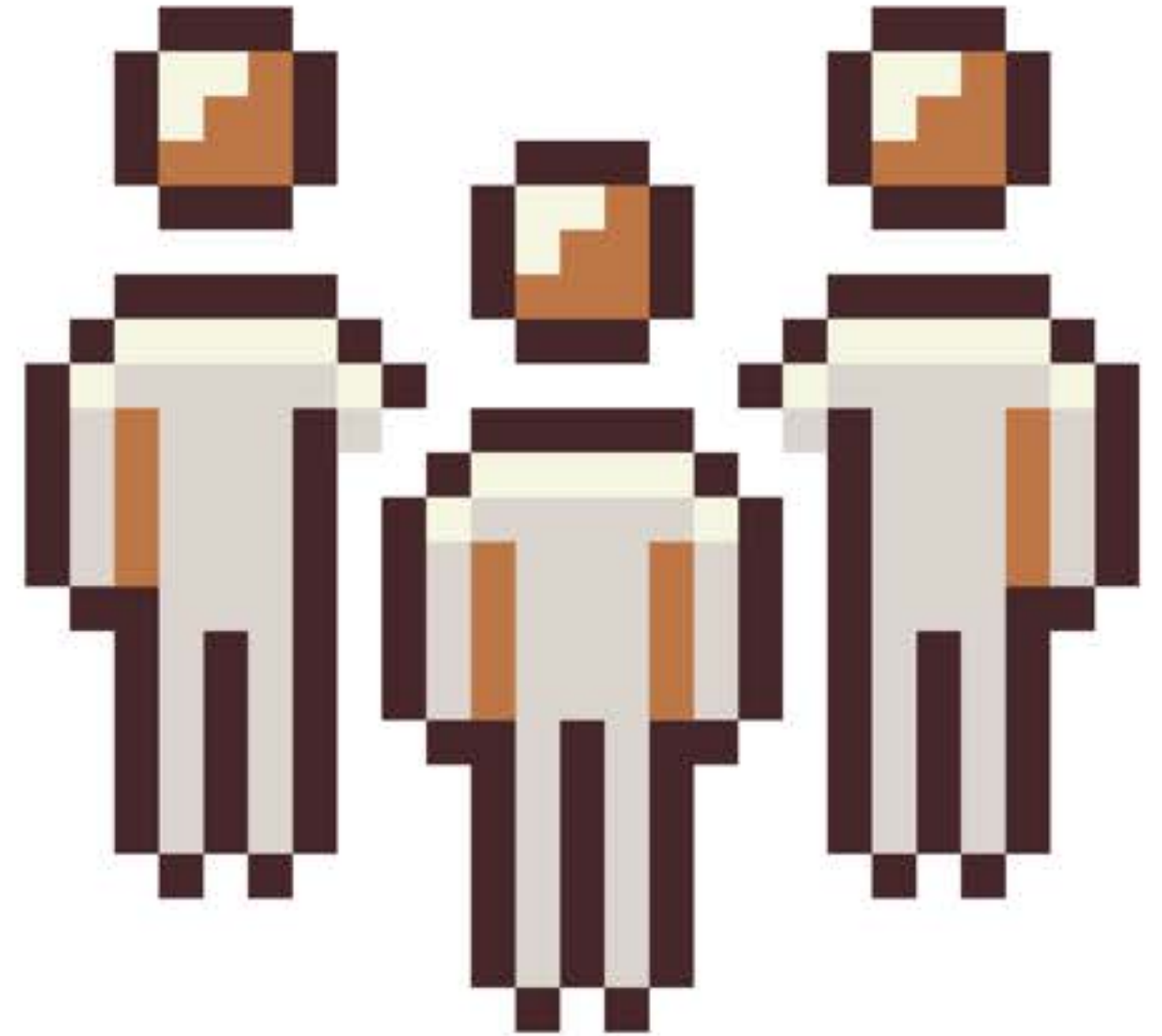
- Pick ONE time-consuming admin task (research, drafts, summaries)
- Use free AI tool (ChatGPT, Claude, Perplexity) for initial draft
- Always fact-check and personalize the output - Track: time saved, quality (1-10), concerns that arise
- Set 2-week experiment timeline
- Start small, learn as you go



When to Loop in Your Team

Light-touch Collaboration Approach

- Share results, not requirements:
 - "I tried X and saved 3 hours"
- Offer to pilot something if there's interest
- Focus on benefits to donor relationships, not cool technology
- Let curiosity drive adoption, never mandate
- Simple leadership conversation:
 - "Would you like me to explore if this could help our team?"



Your Personal AI Framework

Three Simple Steps



Step 1:
Establish Your Values &
Boundaries

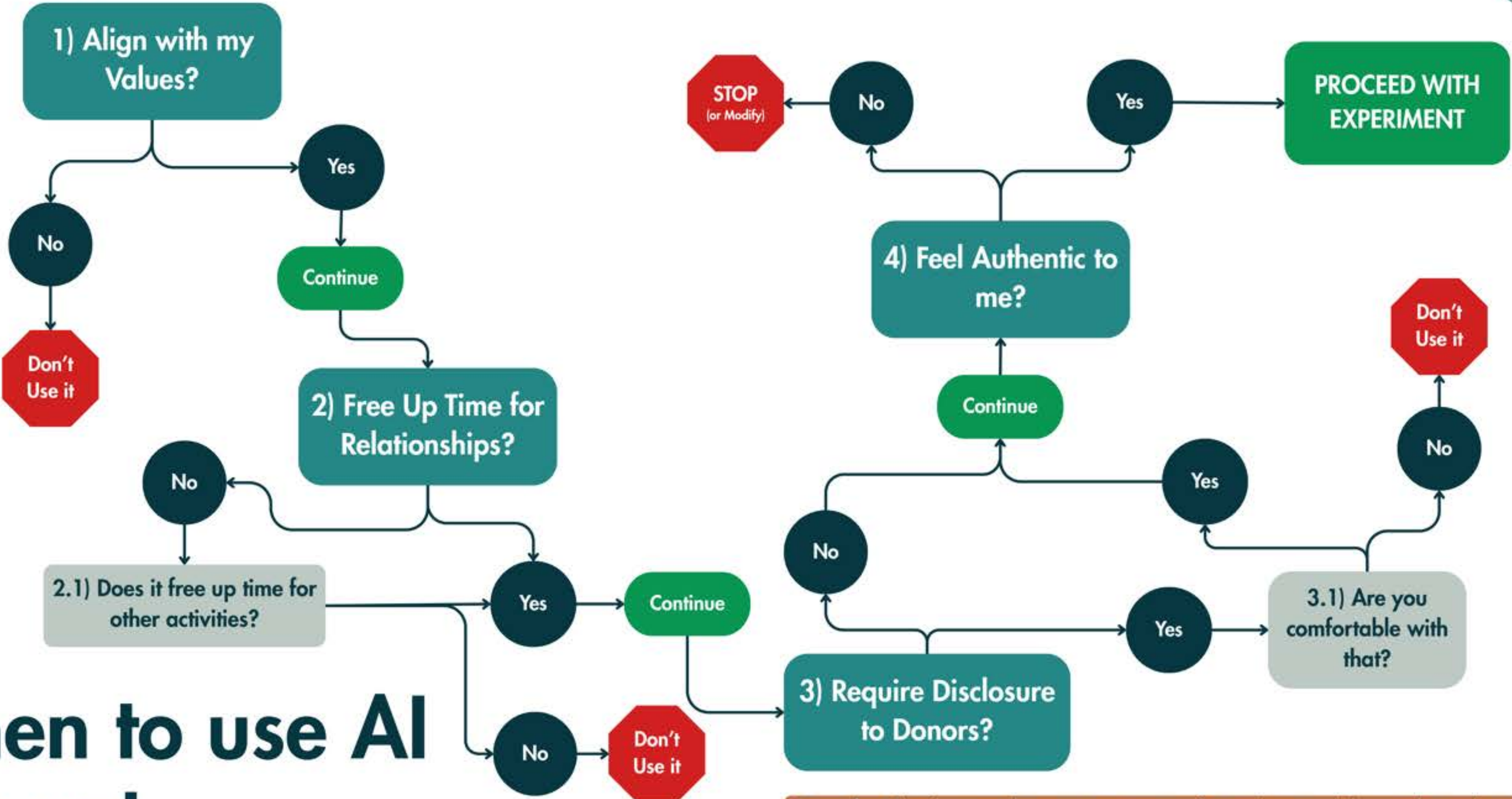
Step 2:
Start Small & Safe

Step 3:
Evaluate Impact on
Relationships

Remember: It's ok to say no to AI entirely



Does this application...

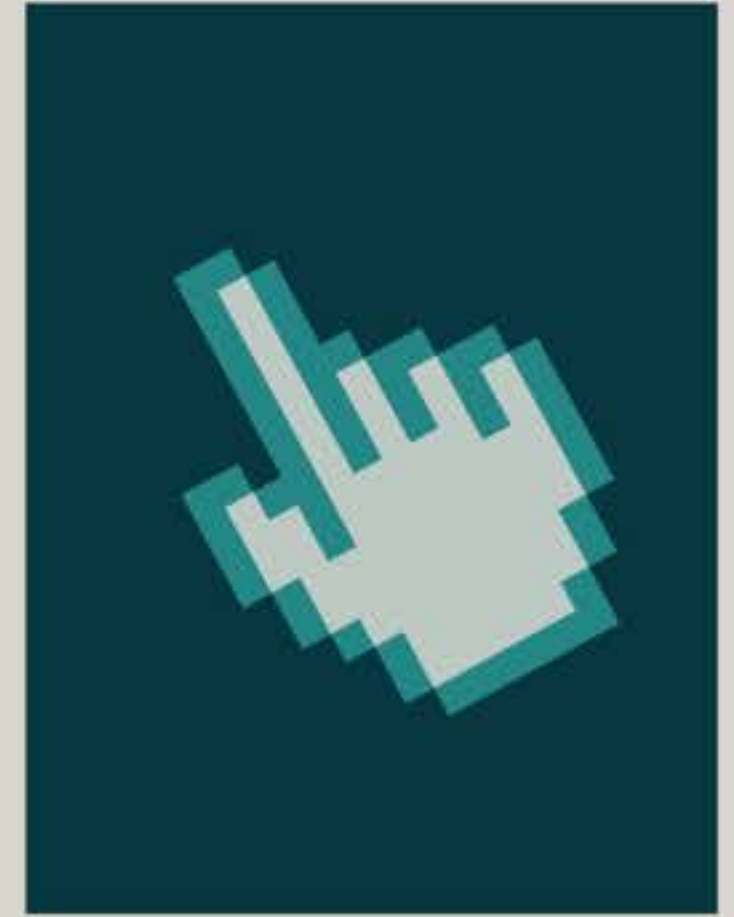
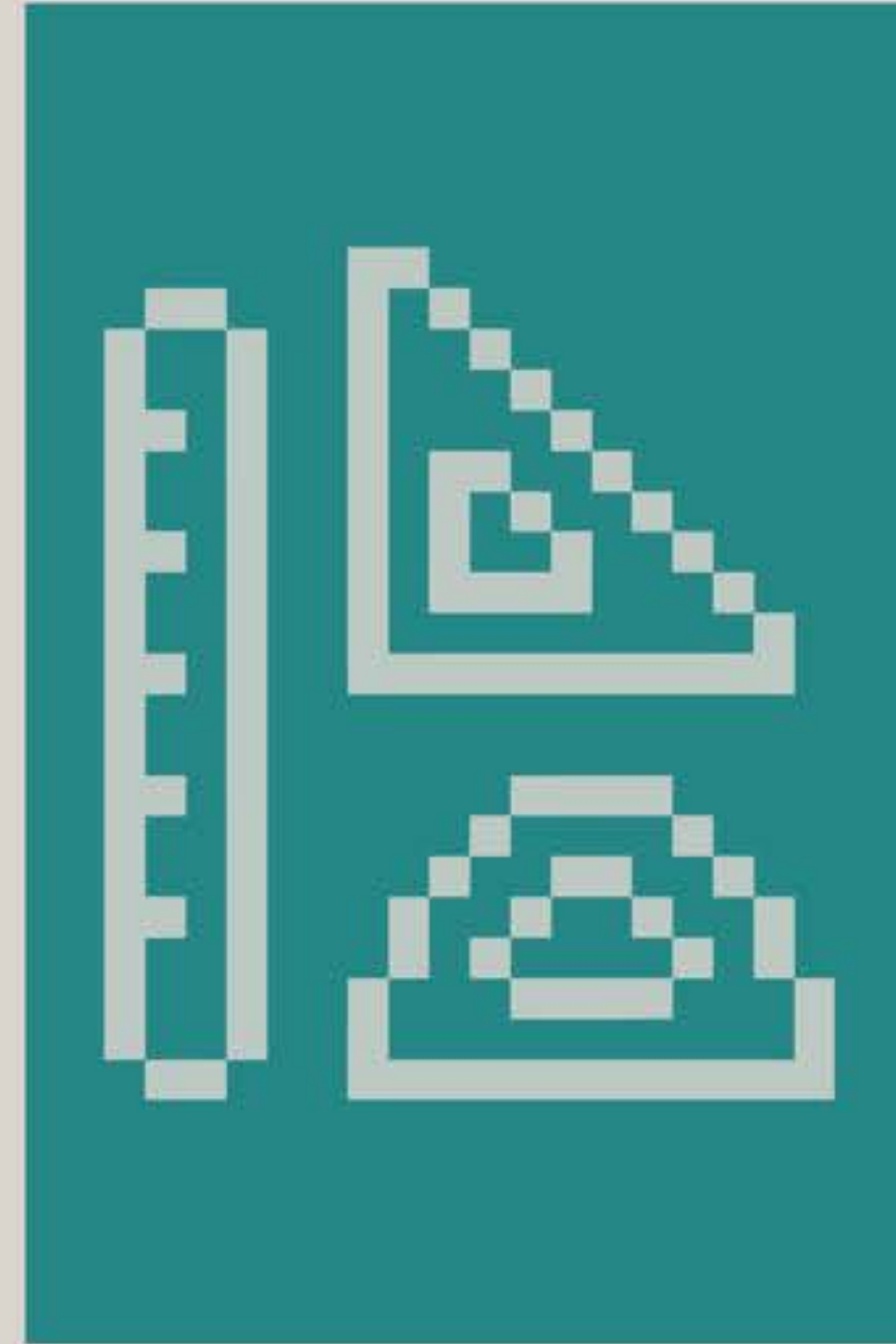


When to use AI
- or not.

Remember: This framework prioritizes your comfort, values, and donor relationships over efficiency or keeping up with trends. It's okay to move slowly or say no to AI entirely.

Practical AI Tools

Let's try some things!



Demos

Demo 1: Grant Writing with ChatGPT

- Let's use ChatGPT to draft a Grant Application

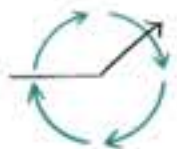
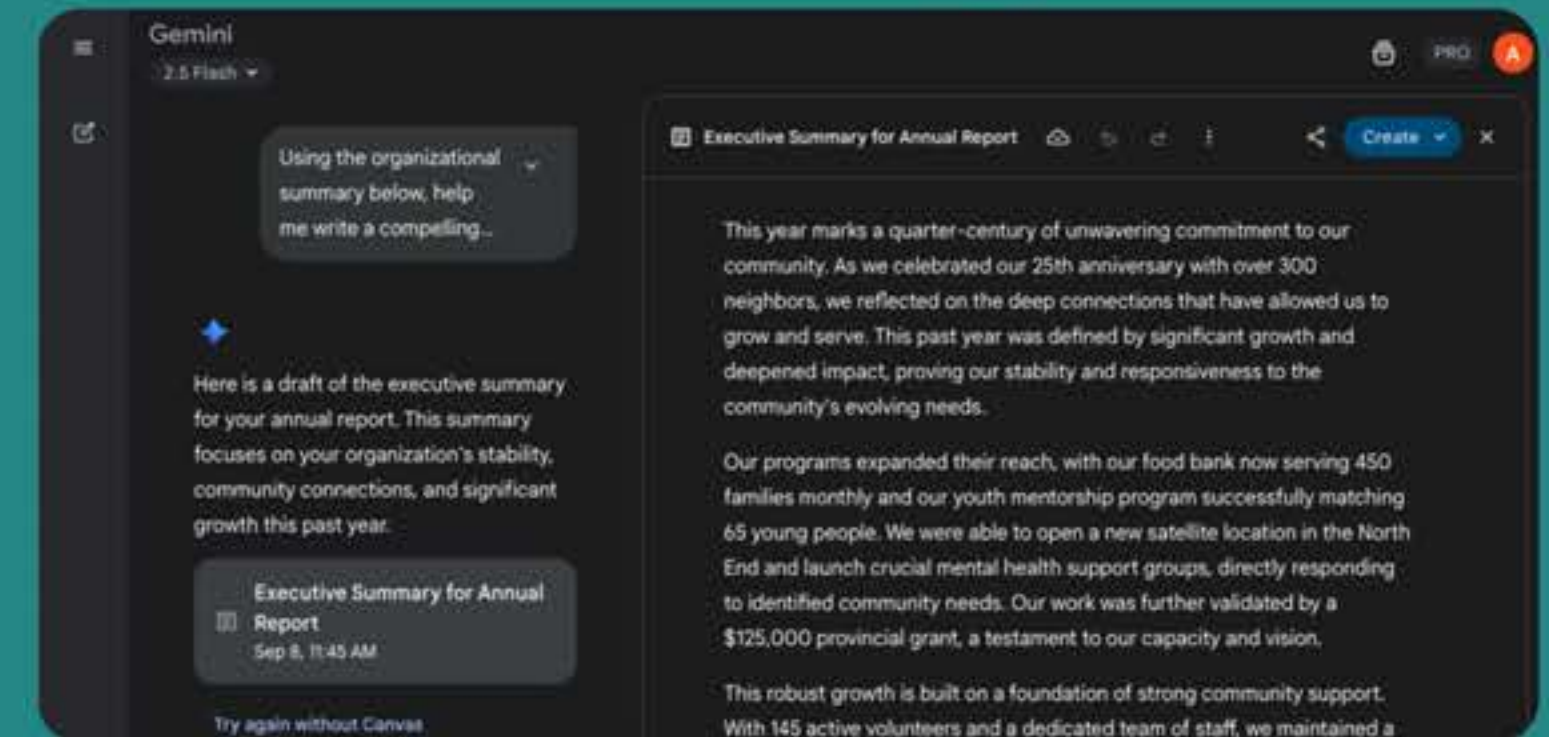
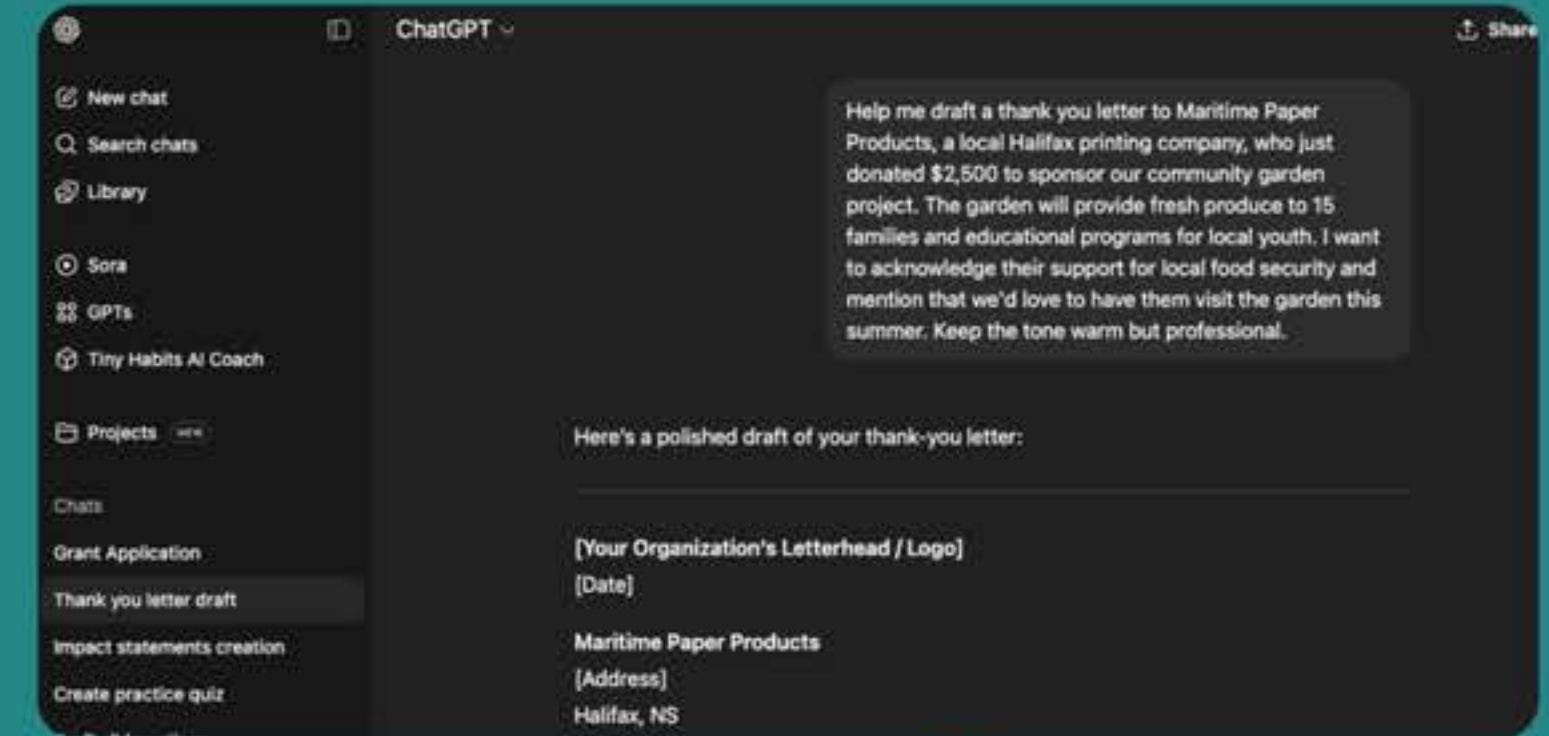
Demo 2: Impact Report Analysis with ChatGPT

- Let's use ChatGPT to analyze the impact of a program for reporting

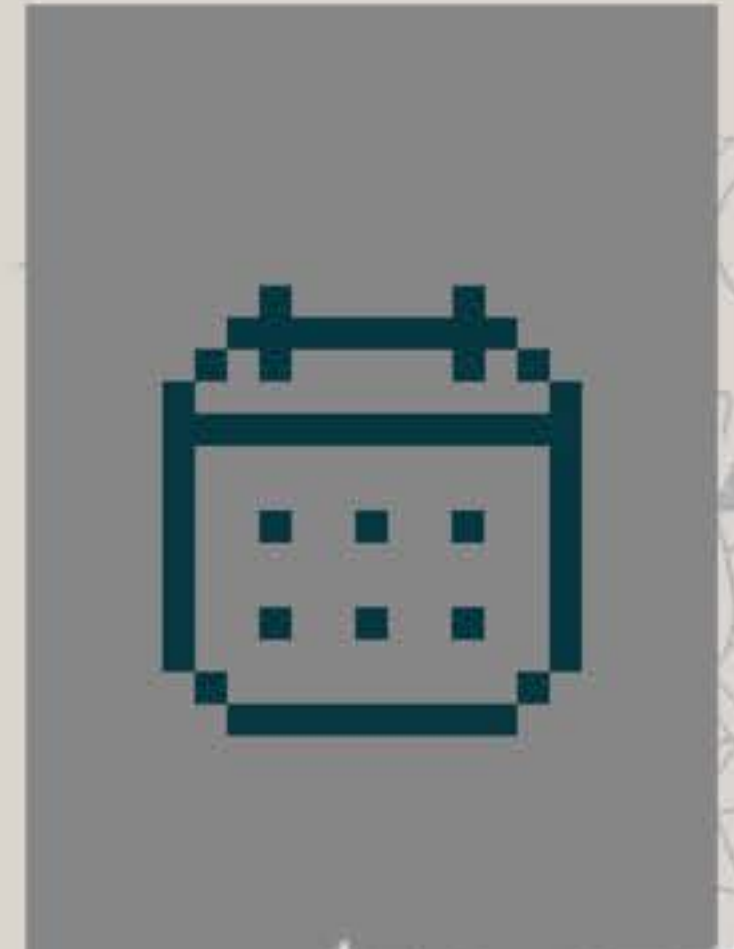
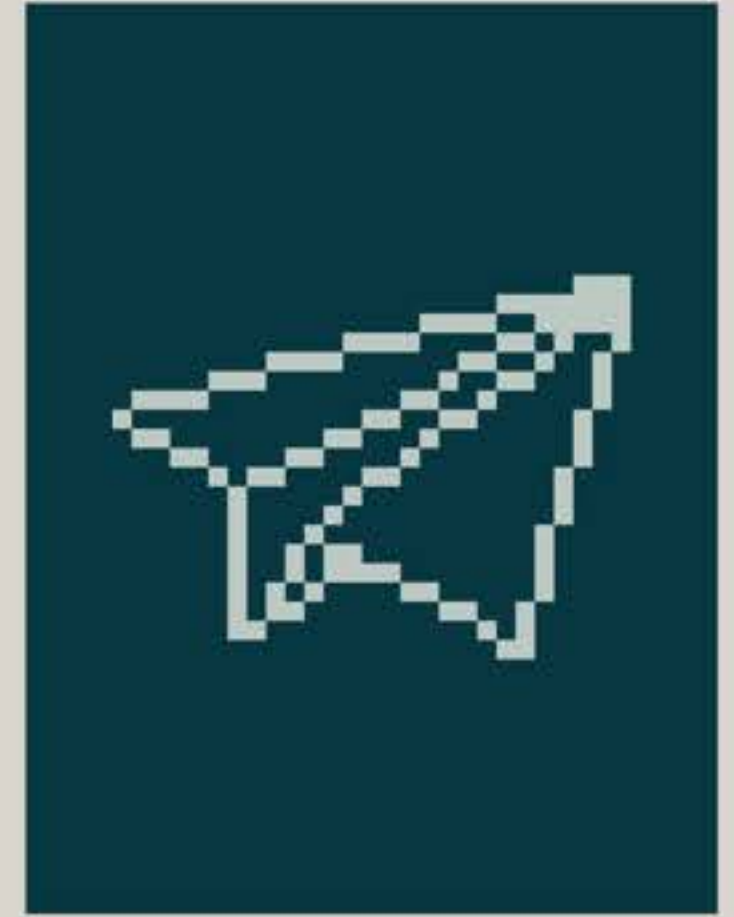
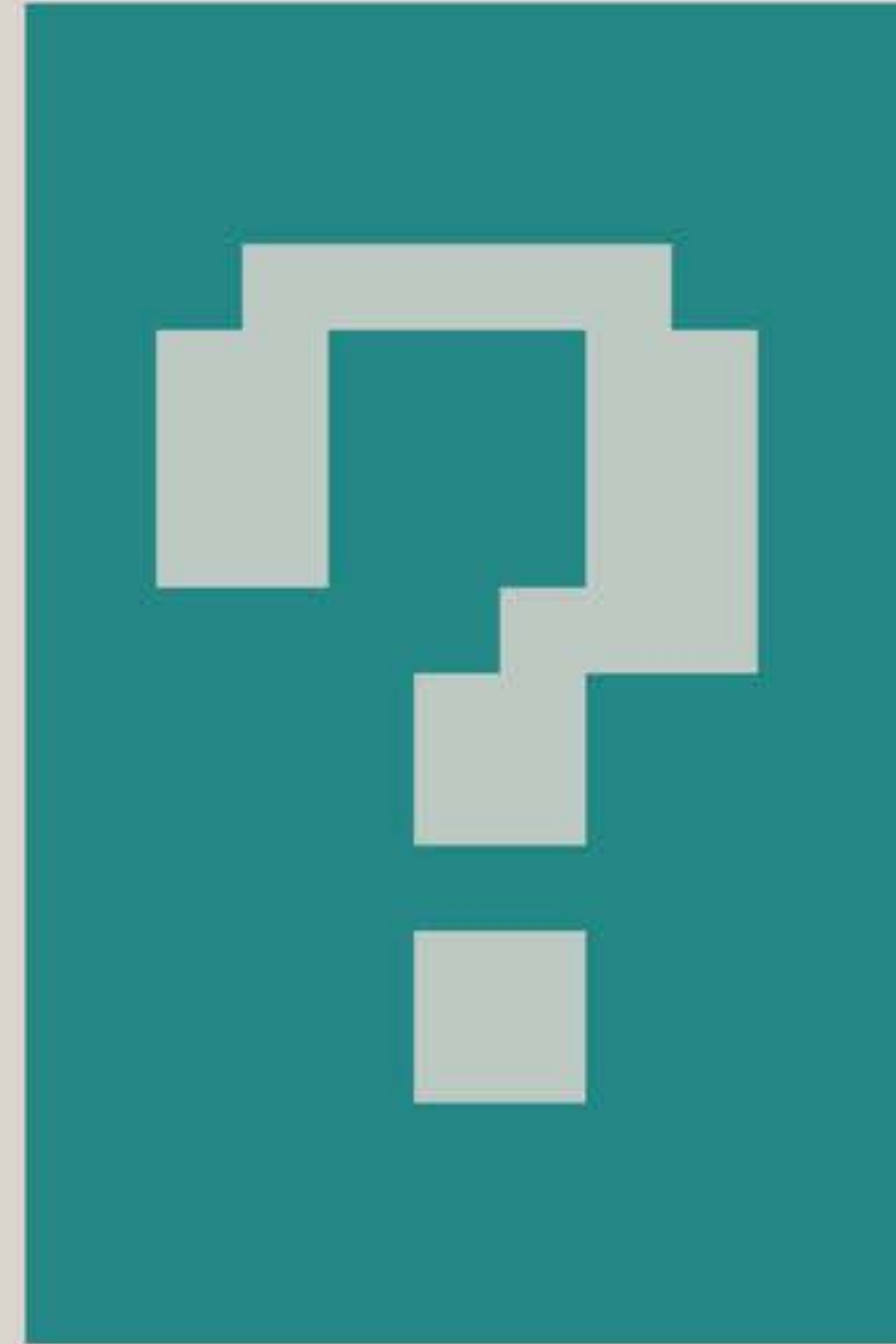
Demo 3: Annual Report Content with Gemini

- Using Gemini, let's draft the executive summary for an annual report

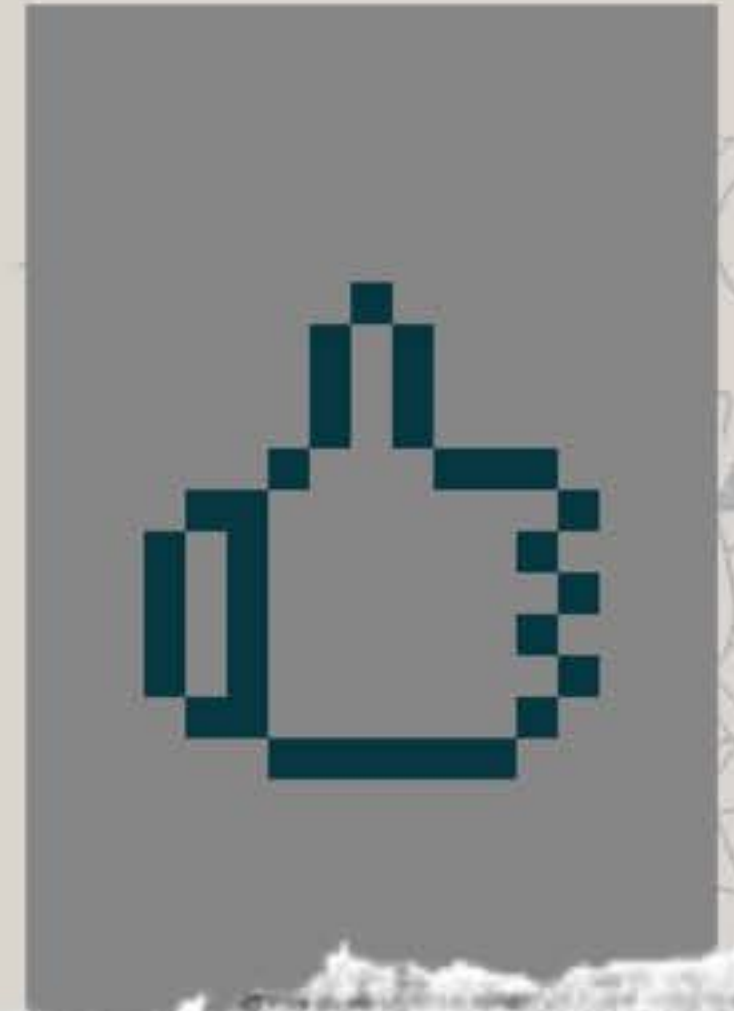
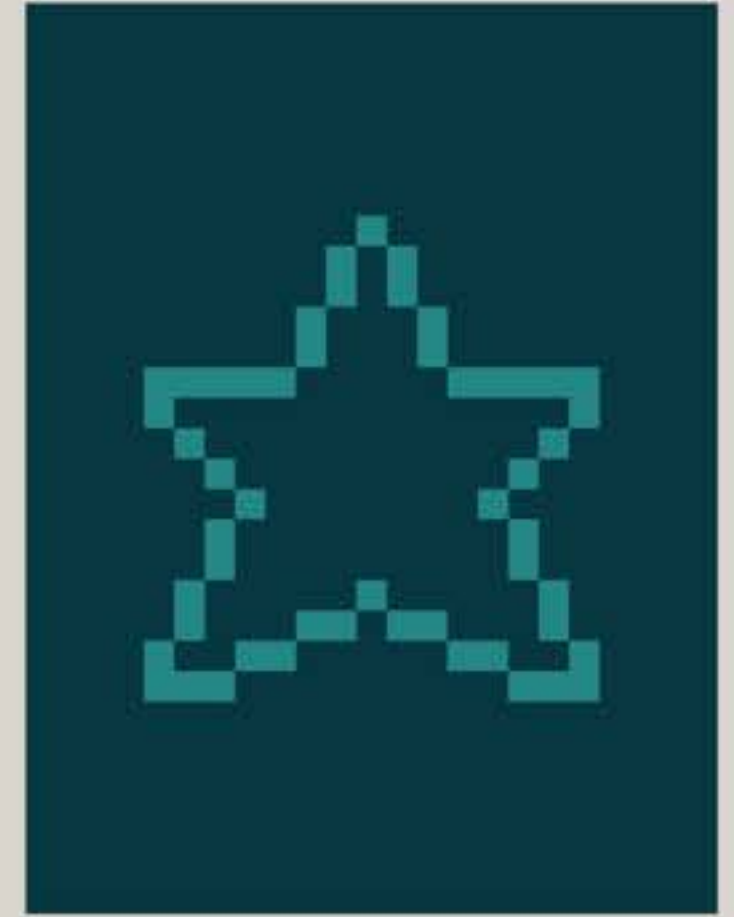
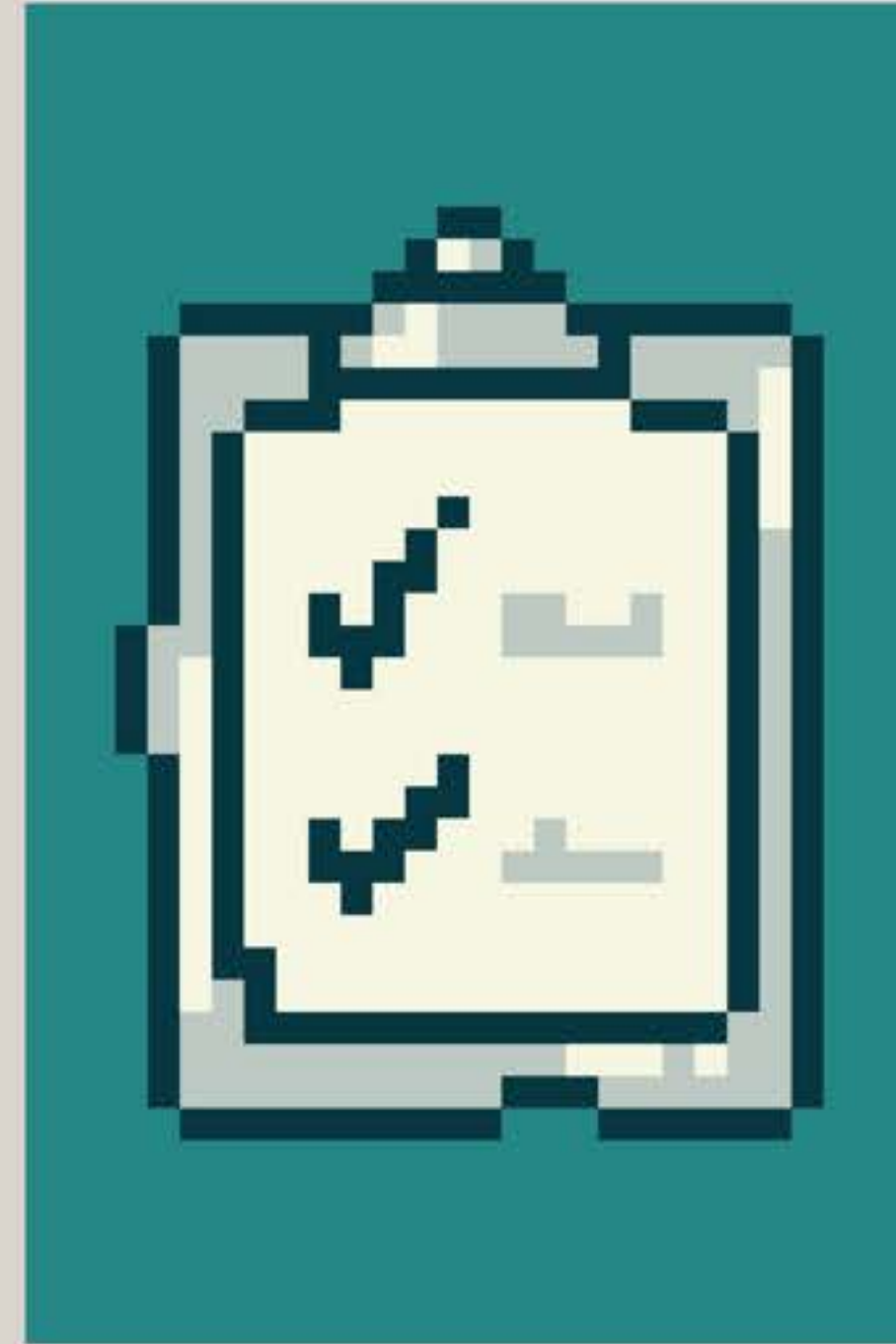
Bonus: Thank you letter draft with ChatGPT



Questions & Discussion



Wrap Up: Key Takeaways



Key Takeaways

What to Remember + What to Do

Key Insights:

- AI supports admin work so you can focus on relationships
- Your values should guide every AI decision
- Start small, evaluate honestly, move at your own pace

Your Next Steps:

- Define your personal AI boundaries (this week)
- Try one small experiment if you're curious (next 2 weeks)
- Connect with colleagues who share your questions (ongoing)



*The Good Place - Michael Shur for NBC
Season 1, Episode 7 "The Eternal Shriek"*



Your Personal AI Framework

VALUES

Step 1: Establish Your Values & Boundaries

Before touching any tools, ask these Core Questions:

- What aspects of my work feel most human and meaningful to me?
- What would feel like "crossing a line" in terms of authenticity with donors?
- What are my concerns about AI's impact on people and the planet?

EXPERIMENT

Step 2: Start Small & Safe

Pick ONE THING to try for 2 weeks:

- Low risk: Something you can easily fact-check or customize
- High impact: A task that currently takes significant time
- Aligned with values: Fits within your established boundaries

EVALUATE

Step 3: Evaluate Impact on Relationships

Key Questions After 2 Weeks:

- Did this free up time for donor interactions? How much?
- Did the quality of my work improve, stay the same, or decline?
- Do I feel more or less authentic in my donor relationships?
- What would donors think if they knew I used this tool?
- Am I staying true to my values and boundaries?



Remember What Matters Most

Technology changes, your mission doesn't.

- Your donors chose you for your heart and values - that's irreplaceable
- The best AI strategy feels authentic to YOU
- Trust your instincts, move at your own pace

Whether you embrace AI or approach it cautiously -
stay true to who you are as an organization



Resources for Continued Learning



Tools, Reading, and Connections

AI TOOLS

AI Tools with Confirmed Nonprofit Discounts:

- Microsoft 365 Copilot
- ChatGPT Team & Enterprise (OpenAI)
- Claude (Anthropic)

Free Tools to Start With:

- ChatGPT (Free) - No daily limits, good for basic writing and research
- Google Gemini - Free with Google account
- Claude (Free tier) - Limited daily usage, good for trying out

ESSENTIAL AI ETHICS & NONPROFIT BOOKS

- **Nonprofit AI: A Comprehensive Guide to Implementing Artificial Intelligence for Social Good** - Nathan Chappell & Scott Rosenkrans (2025)
- **AI for Nonprofits: Putting Artificial Intelligence to Work for Your Cause** - Darian Rodriguez Heyman & Cheryl Contee (2024)
- **Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy** - Cathy O'Neil (2016)
- **Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code** - Ruha Benjamin (2019)
- **The Responsible AI Framework for Fundraising** - Fundraising.AI Collaborative (2023)

Bonus Resource:

- **NetHope's "Artificial Intelligence (AI) Ethics for Nonprofits - Toolkit"** - Practical toolkit specifically designed for nonprofit organizations navigating AI ethics

LINKEDIN PROFESSIONALS & ORGANIZATIONS TO FOLLOW

AI + Fundraising Thought Leaders

- **Nathan Chappell**, MBA, MNA, CFRE, AIGP - Senior Vice President at DonorSearch AI and Co-Founder of Fundraising.AI
 - LinkedIn: nathanchappell
- **Darian Rodriguez Heyman** - Nonprofit Author & Mission-Led Consultant, Co-author of "AI for Nonprofits"
 - LinkedIn: dheyman
- **Cheryl Contee** - CEO at Change Agent AI, Co-author of "AI for Nonprofits"
 - LinkedIn: cherylcontee
- **Tim Sarrantonio** - Director of Corporate Brand at Neon One, Steering Committee Member for Fundraising.AI
 - LinkedIn: timsarrantonio

Organizations & Companies

- **Fundraising.AI** - Independent collaborative focused on responsible AI for nonprofit fundraising
- **Neon One** - Nonprofit technology platform with strong focus on AI integration
- **DonorSearch AI** - Nathan Chappell's company
- **Virtuous** - Nonprofit CRM with AI features

Broader AI Ethics & Social Impact

- **Microsoft for Nonprofits**
- **TechSoup**
- **NetHope**



Thank You!

If you have questions, want to share feedback, or are interested in exploring next steps, **we'd love to hear from you**

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 Alexandra Theroux
AI-First Consulting

Complete this brief feedback survey
to get a copy of our CO-CREATOR
prompting framework

