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SYCF Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Introduction

This policy outlines the responsible and ethical use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) by the South Yorkshire Community Foundation (SYCF) in fulfilling its grant-making and operational objectives. AI offers significant potential to enhance efficiency, decision-making, and innovation, but its use must be carefully managed to align with the charity's values, legal obligations, and societal expectations. This document ensures that AI is used in a way that supports the charity's mission, protects beneficiaries, and upholds high ethical standards.

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, contractors, and partners who use AI tools or systems in any capacity on behalf of SYCF.

Guidance for applicants about their use of AI within their correspondence with SYCF is also outlined on our website (see Appendix 1)

Definition of AI

For the purposes of this policy, "Artificial Intelligence" (AI) refers to systems that can perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, including but not limited to machine learning, natural language processing, image recognition, and decision-making systems. 'Generative AI is used in represents a more specific subfield of AI focused entirely on content creation.

Guiding Principles

1. Ethical Use of AI

- **Fairness and Equity:** AI systems must be designed to promote equity and fairness, avoiding biases that could disadvantage any groups or individuals in South Yorkshire. This is especially critical given SYCF's role in supporting diverse communities.
- **Transparency:** The purpose, function, and impact of AI systems should be clear to all stakeholders. SYCF will ensure that AI use is communicated openly, particularly to those affected by its decisions.
- **Social Responsibility:** AI must be used in ways that align with the Foundation's core values of compassion, inclusivity, and community support. AI should enhance, not replace, the human relationships at the heart of our work.

2. Scope and Access

AI tools available to staff include Microsoft Copilot as part of Office 365 to assist with tasks such as report summarisation, social media content creation, and more. Access to AI tools is provided to staff based on their role and the needs of their team. You can find some useful guidance on how to use CoPilot here:

<https://support.microsoft.com/en-US/Microsoft-365-Copilot/microsoft-365copilot-video-tutorials>

In addition, we currently use the Plinth Platform to support some aspects of our grant making and reporting. Workshops and training are provided to ensure that staff understand how to leverage AI effectively. As AI use develops within the organisation, this policy will evolve to reflect new tools, functionalities, and regulations.

3. Responsible Use and Best Practices

The following are examples of how AI may be used within SYCF:

- Automate repetitive tasks (e.g., scheduling, data entry)
- Assist in content creation (e.g., drafting emails, social media posts, tweets)
- Streamline some aspects of our grant making; specifically included within our due diligence, governance and financial assessment and the creation of our panel papers.
Project assessment and decisions on where money is spent will not be covered by AI tools.
- Streamline some aspects of our impact reporting
- Streamline our financial processes, where appropriate
- Enhance communication and collaboration
- Support research and insight/information gathering

Employees are expected to use AI to work smarter, not harder, while maintaining high standards of quality and integrity.

4. Data Privacy & Security

- Data Protection: AI systems must comply with data privacy regulations, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Any personal data used must be anonymised or securely protected, respecting the privacy of our donors, beneficiaries, and partners.
- Consent: Individuals should be informed if AI is used to process their data, and their consent obtained where appropriate. At this time SYCF will not be using AI in decision-making related to grant-making or donor relations.
- Cybersecurity: AI systems will be protected against misuse, hacking, or unauthorised access. Regular security assessments will be conducted to safeguard sensitive information.

5. Human Oversight

- Human-centred Approach: AI tools may be used to process and present data in support of decision-making. However, AI should support human decision-making rather than replace it. Key decisions, such as grant quantity or allocations, will always involve human oversight to ensure fairness, empathy, and consideration of local context.
- Appeals Process: Should AI play a role in decision-making that affects individuals or organisations, they must have the right to request a human review of those decisions. Currently SYCF does not intend to use AI in decision-making other than as a tool to process and present data.

6. Bias and Non-Discrimination

- **Bias Prevention:** SYCF will take steps to minimise bias in AI systems by using diverse datasets and regularly testing for potential discrimination. We are committed to ensuring that no community or individual is unfairly treated due to AI-influenced processes.
- **Inclusivity:** AI systems will be developed to reflect South Yorkshire's diverse communities. Special care will be taken to ensure that minority and underrepresented groups are not excluded or disadvantaged by automated systems.

7. Compliance with Legal and Ethical Standards

- **Legal Compliance:** All AI activities must comply with applicable laws, regulations, and standards, particularly those around data protection, discrimination, and charity regulations.
- **Ethical Governance:** SYCF will maintain an ethical framework for AI use, ensuring that AI systems are regularly reviewed for alignment with our values and ethical obligations to the South Yorkshire community.

8. Training & Awareness

- **Staff Training:** All staff and volunteers involved with AI will receive training on its ethical use, data security, and the risks of bias. This will ensure a responsible approach to AI across the organisation.
- **Beneficiary and Partner Awareness:** SYCF will ensure that its use of AI is clearly communicated to the public, partners, and donors. Transparent practices will allow stakeholders to understand how AI contributes to SYCF's operations.

9. Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

- **Performance Monitoring:** AI systems will be monitored for effectiveness and fairness. SYCF will regularly review AI processes to ensure they meet the highest ethical standards and remain fit for purpose.
- **Feedback Mechanism:** A formal process will be established to gather feedback from staff, beneficiaries, and partners on the impact of AI. This feedback will help guide future improvements and refinements to our AI systems.

10. Sustainability and Environmental Considerations

- **Energy Efficiency:** SYCF recognises the environmental impact of AI technologies. We will strive to minimise this by using energy-efficient systems and promoting sustainability in AI development and deployment.
- **Resource Use:** The use of AI will be balanced with resource considerations, ensuring that it contributes meaningfully to SYCF's goals without unnecessary consumption of computational or financial resources.

11. Consequences for Policy Violations

- **Internal Accountability:** Any staff member or partner found to be in breach of this policy may face disciplinary action, which could include termination of employment or partnership contracts.
- **External Responsibility:** Contractors or third-party partners must adhere to this policy. Failure to comply could result in the termination of contracts and the pursuit of appropriate legal remedies.

Training and Awareness

All staff, volunteers, and partners involved in the use of AI tools must receive adequate training to understand:

- The ethical implications of AI use.
- How to properly manage, monitor, and interpret the outputs of AI systems.
- The risks associated with bias, data privacy, and security when using AI.

Continuous Monitoring and Review

This policy and SYCF's use of AI must be regularly reviewed to adapt to new technologies, ethical concerns, and legal regulations.

- AI systems must be monitored continuously to ensure they perform as expected, do not introduce bias, and maintain data privacy.
- The policy will be reviewed annually or when significant changes in AI technologies or related legislation occur.

Reporting Concerns

If any staff, volunteers, or partners have concerns regarding the use of AI, they should report these concerns to Martin Singer, CEO.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or as necessary to ensure compliance with evolving AI Technologies, ethical standards, and regulatory requirements.

By adhering to this policy, SYCF ensures that AI is used responsibly and ethically, supporting its mission to create positive social impact while safeguarding the rights and interests of all stakeholders.

Use of AI to support funding applications

SYCF is committed to supporting communities, driving inclusion, improving well-being, and transforming our approach to funding practice.

Artificial Intelligence tools are becoming increasingly popular, particularly when it comes to research and communications and streamlining administrative processes. AI enables people to save time on many tasks and could enable us all to focus on other things, particularly those that require, and need, a more relational approach.

As part of our ongoing efforts to better serve our mission and vision, we are embracing the power of artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance our impact, improve efficiency, and build even better connections with our applicants, grantees, donors and funders. We see the value in using digital technology to enable us, and others, to do other things better.

AI has many benefits, as well as some concerns and challenges. For this reason, we have developed this statement to help provide some guidance around availing of AI if groups are using AI to complete our funding applications.

We are not experts, and we know how fast this space is evolving. We will continue to be mindful of the pace of change and update our position as and when appropriate.

Our position on the use of AI to write funding and/or job applications

If groups are using AI to support applications, we recommend that groups do not over rely on this when forming responses to our questions. We suggest that the following is considered:

- Use carefully and mindfully
- Do not upload any personal data through any AI tools
- Always ensure responses are in your own words
- Ensure you have locally based evidence and/or case studies to support your requests – everything we fund should come from a locally based perspective and/or need
- Ensure accuracy of anything generated by AI. Check websites and review data in more detail – do not assume everything is accurate as it may not be
- Bear in mind the energy costs and environmental impact in using AI
- Read and check what is in your application before submitting to ensure it makes sense, you can deliver what is stated, and that responses fully meet the eligibility requirements for the fund.

We are excited to see what opportunities that may arise from the use of AI, and we hope to further develop activities that can help communities to avail of these opportunities, as well as mitigate any risks or challenges there may be.