



AI – Barking Owl – February 2026

The Barking Owl network, run by NAVCA for communications professionals, met to discuss AI usage and policies in the VCSE sector. Participants shared their experiences using AI tools like ChatGPT, Copilot, and Canva for tasks ranging from social media posts to meeting notes and report writing. The group explored challenges around AI policies, including data privacy concerns, environmental impacts, and maintaining authentic organisational voices. Participants discussed the need for clear guidelines on AI usage, particularly regarding confidential information and content creation, while acknowledging the rapid evolution of AI technology and its various applications in communications work.

What are members using AI for?

NAVCA members are finding AI useful for a range of tasks, including: reducing Word count, blog layouts/structures, Canva, meeting notes, formatting, general admin, images, press releases, hashtags, graphs and figures, podcast transcriptions and more.

AI policies

The group discussed developing an AI policy, and highlighted concerns about data security, environmental impact, and GDPR concerns (e.g. putting sensitive or confidential information into AI). Some members noted challenges in restricting AI usage.

The team debated whether AI disclaimers are necessary, with one member mentioning that early AI policies included disclaimers but these are now less common. Emily invited colleagues to share any existing AI policies or resources, and mentioned available NAVCA website resources and workshops on AI usage. (Member Hub: <https://www.navca.org.uk/members-area-resources>)

We also noted that it is difficult to write policies as the technology is evolving so quickly. The conversation highlighted the uncertainty surrounding AI usage in the sector and the need to adapt quickly to stay relevant.

Ethical concerns

Some members expressed concerns about the use of AI agents, noting potential GDPR implications and the need for strict programming and disclaimers. We highlighted the issue of AI bias in content creation, while one member shared challenges with colleagues using AI to write blog posts, leading to additional work for review. The group agreed on the importance of using AI responsibly with clear guidelines and caveats.



Challenges around using AI for content creation

The group discussed their use of AI in content creation, with one member sharing their experience of using AI to edit blog posts in a local dialect and emphasising the importance of maintaining authenticity. Some members expressed concerns about AI-generated content losing personal voice and creativity, while one member shared a positive experience using AI to convert meeting notes into a blog post. The group agreed that while AI can be useful for time-saving and editing, careful human oversight is necessary to ensure content remains authentic and appropriate.

AI in Grant Applications Debate

The group discussed concerns about using AI tools for writing funding bids. We explored how funders are addressing AI-generated content in applications, noting that some funders have guidelines accepting AI use while prioritising authentic organisational voice and content. One member mentioned that the National Lottery is developing an AI tool to detect AI-generated applications, raising questions about the future of AI in grant applications and the potential for AI systems to interact with each other (i.e. using AI to assess an AI-written bid!).

Useful resources

Charity Excellence: <https://www.charityexcellence.co.uk/ai-for-charities-and-non-profits/>

Charity Digital: <https://charitydigital.org.uk/conscious-ai>

Media Trust AI Charity Academy: <https://mediatrust.org/communications-support/training-courses/ai-charity-academy/> (paid for)

NAVCA member hub: <https://www.navca.org.uk/members-area-resources> (search for AI)

CharityComms AI Hub: <https://www.charitycomms.org.uk/ai-hub>

The Saltways AI Imagery Guidelines: <https://www.kcsc.org.uk/noticeboard/ai-generated-imagery-guidelines-charities>