

Policy on use of generative and agentic AI in the grant application process

We recognise that embracing innovative technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), can help us enhance our effectiveness and assist those applying for our grants. By generative AI, we refer to the type of AI that identifies patterns and structures in data which can be used to create new content / outputs (e.g. text, code, images, etc.) from instructions (known as “prompts”). Agentic AI refers to AI systems that operate autonomously to achieve complex goals, choosing actions and reasoning without continuous human oversight. We aim to promote the responsible use of these tools alongside support and guidance for our applicants, assessors and observers.

Vivensa Foundation’s use of AI tools when managing grant applications and awards

The Foundation utilises Microsoft 365 Copilot with Enterprise Data Protection, which follows the same data protection standards and privacy commitments as other Microsoft 365 services.

Whilst the Foundation may use approved AI tools to support certain internal processes, AI tools are not used to assess the merits of grant applications or to make funding recommendations. Foundation staff may use approved AI tools for administrative purposes, such as drafting correspondence, supporting the preparation of meeting papers and minutes, producing newsletters, creating promotional content for funded grants, and providing a secondary check on applications already identified by staff as potentially ineligible. Where AI tools are used, information from grant applications will be processed only through the Foundation’s approved IT systems, in accordance with applicable data protection requirements and the Foundation’s internal policies. The Foundation does not permit grant application information to be used to train external AI models. Outputs generated with the assistance of AI tools are subject to appropriate human review and validation before use.

For applicants

In applications to us, you must disclose any use of AI tools, the tool(s) you used and for what purpose. Where possible, you must name the specific model(s) and software used and specify how the content was generated (including the prompts used). This information is used for transparency and monitoring purposes and will not be used in the assessment process.

We acknowledge that AI tools offer significant potential to enhance productivity and innovation. However, these should be used responsibly and in accordance with relevant legal and ethical standards, including data privacy, where these exist or as they develop. **You should never input sensitive or personal data of others (i.e. third parties) into AI tools without consent.**

The use of AI tools requires careful consideration to maintain integrity, quality and ethical standards. **You, as an applicant, remain responsible for all ideas and content.** When using AI tools in grant applications, you must apply caution and maintain integrity by:

- **Verifying all outputs:** AI can generate plausible but incorrect information. You must ensure the outputs from any AI tools used are valid. This includes removing any false, misleading or “hallucinated” information. Hallucinated information refers to outputs which may initially appear to be believable but are in fact highly inaccurate or fabricated, including, but not limited to, references that seem plausible but don’t exist.
- **Enhancing, not replacing:** AI should enhance, not substitute, critical thinking.
- **Respecting the intellectual property rights of third parties:** Only use information from third party sources with consent.
- **Considering and mitigating the risk of bias:** AI tools and models can only be as good as the data used in their development. Understand the risk of bias and consider mitigations.

Therefore, applicants must **not** use AI tools:

- Without disclosing their use on the application form.
- To generate / submit an entire application, or sections of an application, without meaningful human involvement / contribution.
- For uses that would breach the accepted standards of integrity, such as:
 - Fabricating, falsifying, manipulating, duplicating, altering original data, images or results.
 - Plagiarising ideas, intellectual property or work without appropriate acknowledgement or permission.
 - Breaching data protection regulations or infringing intellectual property rights.
 - Misrepresenting or falsifying information.
 - Falsifying citations or references.

Please note: **applicants will not be permitted to use AI tools during online or in-person interviews**, where this forms part of the assessment process.

For assessors

Applications submitted to us are confidential. The release of confidential material into AI tools constitutes a breach of the confidentiality and integrity that our applicants and partners expect from

us as an organisation. **Assessors must not input any content from our grant applications or associated reviews into, or otherwise use, AI tools to develop their expert review feedback.** Doing this breaches the confidentiality agreement to which assessors sign up to when they agree to review an application for us.

Therefore, assessors, including external peer reviewers, committee members and expert panellists, must:

- Not use AI tools as part of their assessment activities.
- Comply with relevant intellectual property and data protection legislation.
- Not speculate within their assessment whether AI tools have been used to develop the application, or allow this to influence their judgement of the quality of an application.

Reviewers may use AI tools only for limited purposes that do not involve assessing, summarising, analysing or otherwise processing the content of grant applications or associated reviews. Reviewers must not input any confidential, personal or application-specific information from grant applications, reviews or assessment discussions into AI tools. Permitted uses are limited to:

- Checking whether relevant work has previously been carried out.
- Identifying existing knowledge, methods or techniques.
- Refining the language of text drafted, provided that no confidential, personal or application-specific information is included.

Reviewers are responsible for checking the accuracy and reliability of any outputs from AI tools before relying on them. This includes identifying and discounting / removing any false, misleading, fabricated or otherwise inaccurate information.

For observers

Anyone invited to observe a committee or panel meeting must not input any content from grant applications or reviews into AI tools (e.g. to summarise information). Doing this breaches the confidentiality agreement to which observers sign up when they agree to attend a meeting.

Upholding the policy

We recognise this is a fast-evolving field and wish to work with and support our applicants, assessors and observers and learn from any issues raised. However, this section outlines how we intend to uphold the policy.

During application assessment

If an assessor informs us that they have used AI tools to develop their assessment (beyond the specific permitted uses listed in this policy), or we have reason to believe that this has been the case,

we will not use the review and any comments provided will not be used to inform the funding decision.

In cases of misconduct

We expect individuals to adhere to their organisational policies on the use of AI tools, particularly those concerning plagiarism and fabrication. If we have reason to suspect, or are informed of an allegation of, misconduct arising from the use of AI tools during the application and/or assessment process and this is found to be partially or wholly upheld, we reserve the right to:

- Reject any grant application under consideration on which the individual is a named applicant or researcher.
- Prevent the individual from submitting any further grant applications to us for a period of time, including indefinitely.
- Prevent the individual from being an expert reviewer or member of an advisory committee for us for a period of time, including indefinitely.

We also reserve the right to require the removal of the individual from any Vivensa Foundation-funded project or its oversight, terminate any funding which the grant-holding organisation is receiving from us in connection with and/or being carried out by the individual, and/or reclaim from the grant-holding organisation any and all unspent money awarded by us for projects involving that individual.