DemocracyNext AI Policy

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Another Democratic Future *is* Possible.

1. Purpose and scope

This policy sets out how DemocracyNext team members are expected to use artificial intelligence (AI) tools in their work. It reflects our organisational values — rigour, curiosity, collaboration, and ambition to be visionary — and aims to enable us to use AI effectively and responsibly, without compromising the quality, authenticity, or credibility of our work.

This policy applies to all DemocracyNext staff as well as DemocracyNext-hired contractors and associates. It covers internal use of AI tools as well as any AI-assisted outputs that are shared externally. AI skills and use will be expected for all future DemocracyNext staff and this policy will also be included as a reference in our recruitment documents.

As testing out and experimenting with different AI tools and applications to enhance deliberative processes is part of our strategic goals, this document helps to share transparently how our team is thinking about and using AI ourselves.

2. Guiding principles

Our approach to AI is grounded in the following principles:

1 Continuous learning

We approach AI with curiosity and share what we learn. Innovation takes time; we support each other in developing AI literacy and building shared practices.

2 Human judgement remains central

AI is a tool to support our thinking and work — not a replacement for it. All outputs must be reviewed, verified, and owned by a team member before use.

3 Transparency and honesty

We are open about how we use AI, with each other and — where relevant — with partners and funders. We do not pass off AI-generated content as unassisted human work in contexts where that distinction matters.

4 Voice and quality

DemocracyNext has a distinctive voice: direct, values-led, and practitioner-grounded. AI use must not dilute that voice. Content that 'feels like AI soup' is not acceptable for external publication.

5 Data responsibility

We handle information responsibly — particularly that of partners, participants, and funders. We apply caution and judgement before uploading any external files or personal data to AI tools.

6 Ethical awareness

We pay attention to the ethics of the AI tools we use — including their data practices, political implications, and broader social effects — and take these into account when choosing tools.

3. Team learning and development

3.1 Time allocation

All staff - including new staff members - are required to have a minimum level of AI training and knowledge. A few hours per week dedicated to learning and experimenting with AI tools is actively encouraged. Time invested now in building skills is time saved later.

3.2 Sharing and collective knowledge

- A dedicated AI project space has been set up in Basecamp where all team members should share useful articles, prompts, and updates.
- Do not assume colleagues will have seen updates relevant to your area — share them even if they seem field-specific (e.g. marketing, fundraising, comms).
- A shared prompts library will be developed and pinned in Basecamp.

3.3 Recommended training resources

- The Data Literacy Project: thedataliteracyproject.org
- Anthropic Skilljar training
- AI Playbook for Charities 2026: aiplaybookforcharities.com/2026

4. Approved tools and governance

4.1 Approved tools

The following tools are currently in use or approved for use by the team:

- Claude (claude.ai) — general research, writing assistance, ideation, editing, analysis
- Claude Cowork — agentic tasks including document development and data work
- NotebookLM — deep research, testing structure and thinking, asset development
- Dembrane — workshop support, generating and sharing back summaries
- Elicit / Consensus — research, finding relevant academic papers
- Airtable (AI functions) — data analysis, feedback forms, database work
- Perplexity — search-style queries (less active use as Claude takes precedence)
- DeepL — translation (recommended for accuracy; a paid subscription may be considered)
- Veed / Canva — video editing and subtitling
- Suno — generative music (currently personal/creative use only)

4.2 Tool approval and budget

Each team member has access to one paid tool subscription. Team subscriptions for Claude (including Cowork) are provided centrally. The following process applies for any new tools:

- Seek light-touch approval before using any new AI tool not listed above.
- New Airtable bases should be approved before set-up.
- Additional tools may be budgeted with permission, and you are encouraged to be open to finding new tools not in our repertoire — bring requests to Claudia and Lucy.

5. Content guidelines

5.1 External-facing written content

Research, papers, reports, and newsletters:

- AI should not be used to produce first drafts of substantive research or thought-leadership content.
- AI may be used to assist with refinement, gap analysis, word count reduction, structural feedback, and editing of human-written drafts.
- AI may be used for ideation and to identify blind spots or missing arguments.

LinkedIn and social media posts:

- AI may assist with ideation and initial structure, but posts should not feel AI-generated. DemocracyNext's social voice must remain authentic.

5.2 Internal written content

AI may be used more freely for internal purposes, including:

- Session planning and workshop design
- Policy drafting and structural development
- Data research and horizon scanning

- Comms data analysis
- Identifying gaps in draft documents

Expectations for internal use:

- Be transparent with colleagues about your use of AI in shared documents.
- Always apply your own judgement before finalising or acting on AI outputs.
- A shared prompts library (pinned in Basecamp) will be developed for team use — please contribute prompts that work well.

5.3 External-facing visual content

Approved uses:

- Flowcharts, data visualisations, infographics, and diagrams — yes, provided they align with our brand guidelines.

Not permitted:

- Creating or modifying photographs using AI.
- Generating AI-style illustrations or imagery that does not reflect our brand.

General principle: DemocracyNext uses illustrations and photographs from named, consented sources. When in doubt, check with the team. Additional icons and infographics may be commissioned from Adele.

5.4 Internal visual content

AI-generated visuals may be used internally where helpful (e.g. diagrams for internal presentations, data summaries). These should not be used externally without explicit approval.

6. Meetings and note-taking

6.1 Team and internal meetings

- Dembrane may be used to support workshops and generate summaries where this has been set up in advance.
- AI note-takers are not used for standard internal meetings, unless requested for accessibility reasons.
- If a Zoom session is recorded, be clear with participants about when and how the recording will be deleted.

6.2 External meetings

- Always ask permission before recording or using any AI tool to capture meeting content.
- We do not allow third-party AI note-takers (e.g. Otter.ai, Fireflies) into group meetings by default.
- If a participant requests use of an AI note-taker for accessibility reasons, they should notify us in advance so we can request consent from the group.

7. Translation

Internal use: AI translation tools (Google Translate, DeepL) are permitted for internal documents. DeepL is recommended for quality.

External publications: AI translation may be used as a first step, but should be reviewed by a qualified translator before publication.

8. Data protection and file uploads

8.1 What may be uploaded

- Only upload the minimum information necessary for the task.
- Do not upload files containing personal data (names, email addresses, phone numbers) without first removing this information.
- CSVs exported from Airtable should be reviewed and personal data removed before upload.
- Exercise case-by-case judgement when uploading materials produced by or about partner organisations. When in doubt, do not upload.
- Create a designated folder structure for files shared with AI tools to make this manageable and auditable.

8.2 Sensitive data — never upload

- Personal data of citizens' assembly participants or research participants
- Confidential funder communications or due diligence materials
- Personal health or financial information
- Information shared under NDA or explicit confidentiality

8.3 Settings and configuration

Before activating any AI tool that requests access to files or systems (e.g. Claude Cowork), check and configure the permission settings carefully. Do not grant blanket read/write/delete access without understanding what this enables. Share learnings with the team.

9. Research and analysis

AI may be used to support research processes in the following ways:

- Identifying relevant papers and sources (Elicit, Consensus, NotebookLM)
- Exploring and stress-testing arguments and structures
- Horizon scanning and trend analysis
- Analysing quantitative data (e.g. comms metrics) — all AI outputs should be checked and supplemented by human analysis

AI should not be used as a primary or sole source for factual claims in published work. All AI-assisted research should be verified against original sources.

10. Governance and roles

10.1 Internal AI Lead

Claudia serves as DemocracyNext's internal AI Lead. Her responsibilities include:

- Overseeing the development and implementation of this policy
- Keeping the team informed of relevant developments in AI tools and practices
- Facilitating regular team learning sessions on AI
- Reviewing and updating this policy at least annually

10.2 Board oversight

- The Board will be asked to review and comment on this AI policy.
- Robbie and Matt (and potentially Eugene and Sammy) will be invited to participate in regular AI team learning sessions.

10.3 Policy review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, or sooner in the event of significant changes to AI tools, regulations, or organisational practices.

11. External visibility

11.1 Sharing this policy

DemocracyNext is committed to transparency about our AI use. The following groups should have access to this policy:

- All staff (mandatory)
- Researchers and contractors involved in content production
- Future partners — shared as part of onboarding, with openness to discussion
- Funders — include relevant elements in privacy policy and grant applications

This policy is accessible on DemocracyNext's website.

11.2 Grant applications and funder communications

When AI tools have assisted in the preparation of funding applications, this should be disclosed where funders ask for it. Our position is that AI supports human-led work — it does not replace our expertise, our relationships, or our values.

12. AI agents — Future considerations

The team is beginning to explore the potential of agentic AI tools (such as Claude Cowork) for more complex workflows — for example, automated morning briefings, the New Institutions Guide, and institutionalisation database support.

Before deploying agentic tools at scale, the team will:

- Review and document what permissions are granted to each agent
- Test in a limited scope before full deployment
- Ensure there are clear recovery options if something goes wrong (e.g. accidental file deletion)
- Share learnings and recommended configurations with the team

We will be developing a fuller mapping of AI agent potential and use cases, as well as developing an energy policy section to our AI policy.