

Evaluating AI Tools for Community Engagement

Key Questions for Practitioners

As AI becomes more integrated into community engagement work, practitioners must ensure tools are used **responsibly, ethically, and in alignment with professional standards**. Use the questions below to assess whether a tool is appropriate — especially for **higher-risk activities** like planning, analysis, and reporting.

1 Data Security & Privacy

- › Where is data stored, and does it meet our legal and regulatory requirements?
- › Who owns and controls the data we input?
- › What are the data retention and deletion policies?
- › Is our data used to train external models?
- › How is sensitive information protected, and what happens in the event of a breach?

3 Transparency, Accuracy & Reliability

- › How does the tool prevent inaccurate or fabricated information?
- › Can outputs be traced back to source material?
- › Are confidence scores, citations, or audit trails provided?
- › What are the system's known limitations or failure modes?
- › What quality assurance processes exist for outputs?

5 Professional & Ethical Alignment

- › Does the tool align with professional standards (e.g., IAP2 principles)?
- › Does it align with your organization's AI policy and governance framework?
- › What guardrails ensure outputs reflect best practices?
- › Can the AI's reasoning be understood and explained?
- › How do we maintain accountability for decisions supported by AI?

7 Accountability & Risk

- › Who is accountable if the system produces misleading or non-compliant content?
- › What risks are associated with using this tool in high-stakes contexts?
- › Is this tool appropriate for planning and decision-support, or only for low-risk tasks?

2 Model Type & Data Sources

- › Is this a general-purpose LLM or a system grounded in trusted sources (e.g., RAG)?
- › What data sources does the system rely on?
- › Are those sources current, authoritative, and relevant to our context?
- › Has the system been validated for community engagement use?

4 Bias, Equity & Accessibility

- › What biases may exist in the model or its training data?
- › How might those biases affect different communities?
- › How does the system account for equity and inclusion considerations?
- › Are accessibility needs reflected in outputs and recommendations?

6 Human Oversight & Control

- › What level of human review is required before outputs are shared publicly?
- › Can practitioners override or modify AI recommendations?
- › How do we ensure human judgment remains central?
- › What training or expertise is required to use this tool responsibly?

Why This Matters

AI tools can enhance efficiency — but without proper governance, they can introduce risks to accuracy, transparency, and public trust. These questions help determine whether a tool is suitable for:

■ Higher-Risk Activities

Planning, reporting, decision support — require governed, validated AI tools.

■ Lower-Risk Tasks

Drafting, summarizing, internal support — suitable for general-purpose tools with human review.

Bottom Line: AI should support professional judgment — not replace it.