

# Artificial Intelligence (AI) Adoption by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Zambia

## A Survey Report

Project developed, led, and coordinated by Internews Network Zambia

USAID OPEN SPACES (OS) PROJECT



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**01** Background

---

**03** Demographic  
overview

---

**05** AI tools used by CSOs

---

**07** Integration, Perception &  
Training

---

**09** Highlights from Focus Group  
Discussions

---

**11** Research  
Recommendations

---

**02** Survey Overview

---

**04** Artificial Intelligence  
and Regulation

---

**06** Outlook and Job  
Security

---

**08** Challenges identified  
during focus groups

---

**10** Focus Groups  
Takeaways

---

**12** Conclusion

---

# Background

The USAID Open Spaces (OS) is a USAID-funded consortium of FHI360, Internews, PANOS Institute Southern Africa, MISA Zambia and Bloggers of Zambia that is currently implementing a project aimed at strengthening the democratic foundations of freedom of speech and assembly, build independent and new media by safeguarding spaces for activists, human rights defenders to promote democratic spaces in Zambia. The project leverages on partners' experience of working with independent media and existing civil society actors who advocate for rights both online and offline. The project is also supporting the production of quality, relevant content, strengthening the enabling environment for independent media and advancing social and online platforms that allow for free expression and access to information.

## Research Background

USAID Open Spaces (OS) project, has undertaken a study to assess the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Zambia. This survey, conducted between March and May 2024, is part of a broader initiative to examine and understand how emerging technology is shaping Zambia's civic space.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are a vital part of Zambian society, significantly contributing to Democracy, Rights, and Governance (DRG). Zambia is home to a substantial number of CSOs, creating a diverse and vibrant civic space. However, it is important to note that many of these organizations may be inactive. This distinction is crucial as it highlights the potential impact of AI adoption on a wide range of societal activities and initiatives, especially those dealing with Democracy, Rights, and Governance. This survey report is particularly timely as the civic space is currently deliberating on the future of the AI landscape, especially within the DRG sector. Consequently, this survey exclusively gathered data from CSOs engaged in DRG.

The survey's objective is to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of AI integration within these organizations and to explore the potential benefits and challenges associated with its adoption. The insights gained from this study will inform strategies for capacity building, policy development, and the ethical implementation of AI technologies in the civil society sector.

## Methodology

The methodological framework of this study was designed to be both inclusive and comprehensive. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative and qualitative research techniques to ensure a holistic view of AI adoption across the civil society sector.

The quantitative component consisted of a structured survey distributed to over 60 CSOs from three provinces: Copperbelt, Lusaka, and Southern Province. This method was crafted to capture data on the prevalence, types, and perceptions of AI tools in use among the selected CSOs in Zambia. To complement the quantitative data, qualitative insights were collected from focus group discussions held in these three provinces namely: Southern Province (Livingstone), Lusaka, and the Copperbelt (Kitwe). These discussions facilitated a deeper dive into the experiences and viewpoints of CSO members regarding AI, allowing for rich, narrative data that could be thematically analyzed. This entire process, including survey design, mapping of CSOs, focus group discussions, data analysis, and validation, was conducted from March to September 2024. The analysis process was two-fold: Descriptive analysis and data visualization was utilized to interpret the quantitative data, while thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative data. This dual approach enabled the research team to identify patterns and trends in AI adoption and to understand the nuanced experiences of CSO with emerging technologies.

### References

*1 Civil Society Organizations in Zambia: An Analysis of External Funding in a Volatile Market. (2019). Southern African Institute for Policy and Research.*

# Survey Overview

The findings reveal that 44% of CSOs are currently utilizing AI tools, with generative AI being the most popular, while 96% of non-users are considering future integration. However, 54% have not yet adopted AI. Perceptions of AI's impact on job security vary, with 48% seeing no threat, 13% perceiving a low threat, 26% considering it a moderate threat, 9% viewing it as significant, and 4% regarding it as extreme.

## Findings Overview

The findings indicate that 44% of CSOs are utilizing AI tools, with generative AI being the most widely used tool. Additionally, 96% of non-users are considering AI integration in their work. Among the CSOs using AI, chatbots and conversational AI like ChatGPT are the most popular, used by 25% of these organizations. Image and video analysis tools are used by 15%, text analytics by 13%, and social media management tools by 20%. However, a majority of 54% of CSOs have not integrated AI into their operations and a small fraction, 2%, remains uncertain about their use of AI tools.

Perceptions of AI's impact on job security vary significantly. When asked to rate the threat level from 1 (no threat) to 5 (extreme threat), 48% of respondents do not see AI as a threat (level 1). Meanwhile, 13% perceive AI as a low threat (level 2), 26% consider it a moderate threat (level 3), 9% view it as a significant threat (level 4), and 4% regard it as an extreme threat (level 5). These diverse views underscore the need for further dialogue on AI's role in the workplace.

Only 18% of organizations offer training to their staff on AI tool usage, highlighting a significant gap in AI literacy. The survey also highlights the ease of AI integration: 44% find it easy, 49% rate the experience as moderate, and 7% find it difficult or very difficult. These figures suggest that while some CSOs are integrating AI tools, they still face challenges that may require additional support. Furthermore, CSOs noted AI biases, particularly in its failure to adequately address the needs of regions like Zambia and Africa, including the representation of Africans in tech companies, lack of accurate data, and funding.

Some CSOs cited that the AI tools they are utilizing do not have correct or ample information on Zambia and most of the AI tools are not tailored to suit the unique circumstances of their communities; "It's not made for us," says a participant from Livingstone. This highlights the need for more inclusive and representative AI development practices that consider the specific needs and contexts of different regions.

The challenges associated with AI adoption in Zambian CSOs are multifaceted. Ethical considerations, such as data privacy and choice, are significant concerns. Technical challenges include integrating AI with existing legacy systems. Financial constraints also pose a significant barrier, as the implementation and maintenance of AI systems require substantial investment. Data quality and bias are identified as critical issues that need to be addressed to ensure the ethical and effective operation of AI systems. Additionally, language barriers present a unique challenge.

CSOs feel pressured to train AI chatbots to understand their local languages for free, while most of these chatbots are for-profit. The survey responses indicate a lack of resources and training as major obstacles, alongside infrastructural issues like internet connectivity. It serves as a valuable resource for stakeholders looking to understand the landscape of AI adoption in Zambia and offers actionable insights for driving positive change

# Demographic overview

## CSOs Surveyed

A total of 61 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) from three provinces in Zambia participated in the survey and contributed to the focus group discussions. These provinces include the Copperbelt, Lusaka, and Southern Province. The report specifically examines CSOs engaged in democracy, rights, and governance (DRG). Its purpose is to analyze the effects of AI adoption on these organizations and their activities in Zambia.

### Focus group discussions in three (3) provinces



Copperbelt



Lusaka



Southern

## Persons with Disability



Among the respondents, five individuals have identified as persons with disability. Within this group, three are females, and two are under the age of 35. This data highlights the importance of recognizing and addressing the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities.

## Gender



Male 59%

Female 41%

Respondents identifying as male make up 59% of the survey, while those identifying as female account for 41%. Understanding which gender groups are more likely to engage with specific products or services can enhance efforts in adopting AI responsibly. Additionally, recognizing the diversity within the respondent pool underscores the importance of inclusivity in research and decision-making.

## Age group



Above 35

52%

Under 35

48%

In Zambia, where the youth age limit is 35, respondents chose between 'above 35 years' and 'below 35 years'. Approximately 52% of the respondents indicated they were above 35 years old, while 48% reported being below 35.

# Artificial Intelligence and Regulation

Most of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) lack AI policies, with 75% reporting no such policy, 10% having one, and 15% unsure. There's a strong call for AI regulations, as 73% of individuals surveyed support it, while 16% oppose and 11% are undecided. Collaboration with external entities on AI is minimal, with only 2% of non-users and 16% of users are engaged in partnerships with other CSOs or stakeholders in tech. This data underscores the need for comprehensive AI governance and collaborative efforts to guide ethical AI integration.

**75%**

**CSOs do not have in-house AI Policies**

When surveyed about the presence of an AI policy within their organizations, the participants' responses were as follows: 10% confirmed that their organization have policies, 15% were unsure, and a significant 75% reported the absence of such a policy.

**73%**

**Call for AI Regulations**

In a survey of 61 CSOs on the regulation of AI, the responses were quantified as follows: 73% were in favor of regulation, 11% were uncertain, and 16% opposed it. These percentages reflect a diverse range of opinions on the governance of AI, highlighting the importance of considering multiple perspectives in the development of national regulatory policies.

**69%**

**No collaboration with other organizations**

Regarding collaboration with external entities for AI implementation, the responses were divided into two groups based on their AI usage:

**For those not using AI:**

Approximately 2% are collaborating with other organizations. About 8% are not sure, while 28% are not collaborating

**For those using AI:**

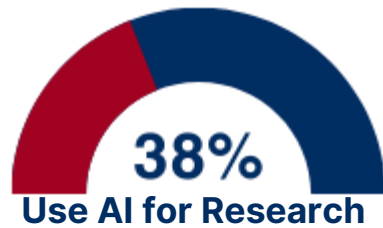
Around 16% are collaborating, nearly 5% are not sure and approximately 41% are not collaborating with any external stakeholders.

# AI tools used by CSOs

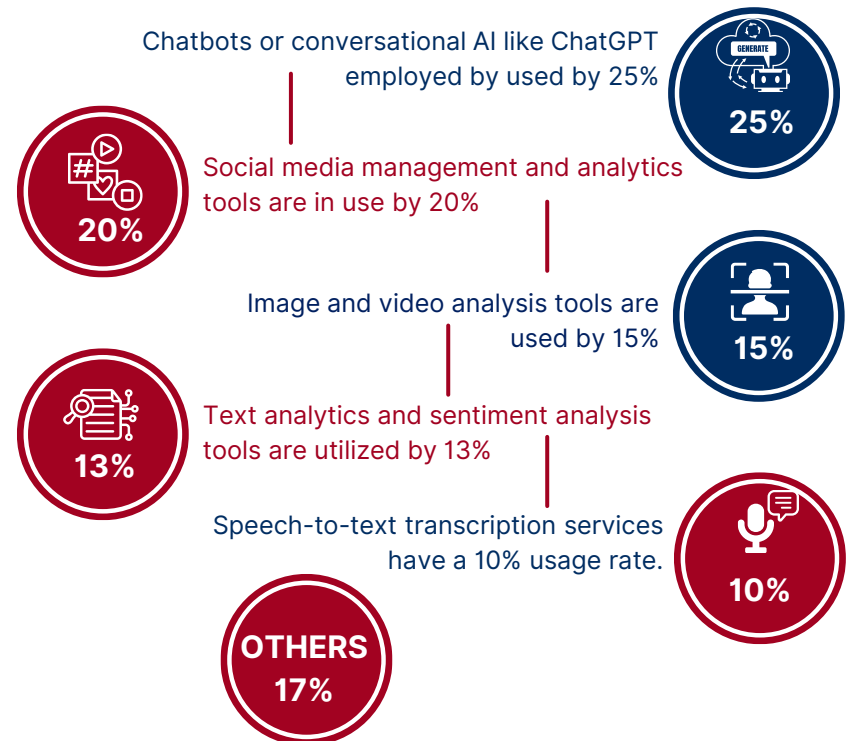
Automated content generation tools, such as Narrative Science's Quill and Jasper.ai, are used by approximately 8% of the respondents. Automated content curation tools are slightly less common, with 6% adoption. Text analytics and sentiment analysis tools are utilized by 13%. Chatbots or conversational AI like ChatGPT are the most popular, with 25% of organizations employing them. Image and video analysis tools are used by 15%. Despite the potential for efficiency, automated ad placement and optimization tools have not been adopted by any of the surveyed organizations. Social media management and analytics tools are in use by 20%, highlighting the importance of social media presence in Zambia. Speech-to-text transcription services have a 10% usage rate. Lastly, Other AI tools account for 6%, indicating a small but diverse set of additional AI applications within these organizations.

## HOW ORGANIZATION USE THESE AI TOOLS

Content generation is leveraged by approximately 25% of the organizations, indicating a significant reliance on AI for creating material. Audience analytics are utilized by around 8%, suggesting a more targeted approach to understanding and engaging stakeholders. Social media management is adopted by nearly 18%, reflecting the importance of digital presence. Advocacy efforts are enhanced with AI tools by about 20%. A notable 38% employ AI for research purposes, underscoring its role in data analysis and information gathering. Lastly, a small fraction of 5% reported 'Other' uses, indicating niche applications of AI within these entities.



## AI TOOLS USED BY CSOS IN ZAMBIA

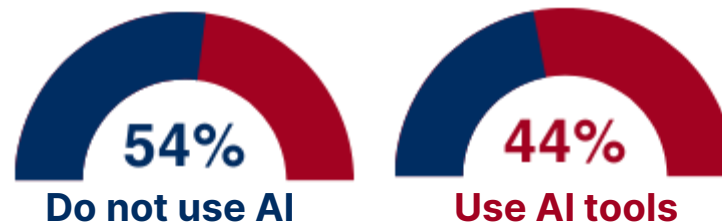


# Outlook and Job Security

The survey reveals that 54% of CSOs in Zambia do not currently use AI, while 44% have adopted AI tools. However, the findings show a strong openness to future AI integration, with 96% of non-users considering its adoption. Opinions on AI's impact on jobs vary: 11% see no threat, 13% have low concern, 26% view it as a moderate threat, 9% see it as significant, and 4% perceive it as an extreme threat.

## HOW MANY ORGANIZATIONS USE AI?

The survey of CSOs regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools reveals that a majority, 54%, do not currently use AI tools within their operations. Meanwhile, a significant minority, 44%, have adopted AI tools, indicating a growing trend towards technological integration in the sector. A small fraction, 2%, remains uncertain about their use of AI tools, reflecting a degree of indecision or lack of clarity on the matter.



## WANT TO USE AI IN THE FUTURE

An overwhelming 96% of respondents who are not currently using AI tools expressed a willingness to consider incorporating them in the future. During focus group discussions, it was revealed that non-users felt left behind and recognized the need to keep up with technology. When asked if they had a choice in adopting AI, most felt it was more of a necessity than an option.

**96%**

Willing to use AI in the future

## PERCEPTIONS ON AI AND JOB SECURITY

Perceptions of AI's impact on job security vary significantly. When asked to rate the threat level from 1 (no threat) to 5 (extreme threat), 48% of respondents do not see AI as a threat (level 1). Meanwhile, 13% perceive AI as a low threat (level 2), 26% consider it a moderate threat (level 3), 9% view it as a significant threat (level 4), and 4% regard it as an extreme threat (level 5). These diverse views underscore the need for further dialogue on AI's role in the workplace.

**26%**

Rate AI as a moderate threat



# Integration, Perception & Training

## EASE OF USING AI TOOLS

Amongst the CSOs that have adopted AI tools, representing 44% of the surveyed group, the ease of AI integration are varied. Almost 27 organizations, none reported the integration process as extremely easy, however, a significant 44% found it easy. The majority, 52%, rated the experience as moderate, indicating a fair level of challenge in assimilating AI into their operations. A minority of 7% each found the process to be either difficult or very difficult, pointing to substantial obstacles that could impede effective integration. These figures highlight the diverse experiences of CSOs with AI tools, emphasizing the need for context-specific support to navigate the complexities of technological adoption.



## AI SKILLS AMONG EMPLOYEES

The survey indicates that 18% of the organizations have provided their staff with some form of training or resources to facilitate the use of AI technologies. Conversely, a significant 79% have not offered such support, pointing to a potential area for development in enhancing AI capabilities within these organizations. Additionally, 3% of the respondents were uncertain about the availability of training or resources, which may suggest a communication gap within some organizations regarding the adoption and support for AI tools. This data underscores the importance of training and resource allocation in the successful integration of AI into organizational operations.



## THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE OR REFUSE ADOPTING AI TOOLS

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Zambia feel that AI is being forced upon them, leaving them with no choice but to adopt these technologies. They emphasize that many AI tools do not understand the local languages used in Zambia and lack information relevant to their communities. As one participant put it, "It's like we are expected to teach machines how to treat us Zambians and Africans like people, and we are doing it for free." Additionally, some participants expressed that they do not fully understand the dangers associated with certain AI systems and question the hype surrounding AI without adequate education. These challenges highlight the need for responsible AI use, capacity building, and localized solutions to address the unique context of Zambia.

→ **CAN'T OPT-OUT**

→ **LACKS ZAMBIAN LANGUAGES**

# Challenges identified during focus groups

The survey reveals a multifaceted landscape of challenges in adopting AI technologies. During the focus group discussions, most CSOs noted that they were still in the early stages of understanding AI, while others have not yet initiated discussions or taken organizational stands on its adoption. The rapid influx of new AI tools further complicates the decision-making process, making it challenging to discern which tools are trustworthy and ethical. Moreover, the participants noted a perceived risk of AI promoting “laziness” within organizations and its evident biases that fails to address the unique needs of Zambia. Some other challenges addressed include:

- Ethical considerations: such as ensuring privacy and transparency in AI decision-making, emerge as a primary concern, necessitating comprehensive training for responsible use.
- Financial constraints: This was highlighted as a major barrier in the development, implementation and maintenance of AI systems. Most CSOs lack necessary hardware, software, and specialized personnel.
- Data Bias: This was discussed as a major challenge with CSOs calling for diverse and representative data sets to mitigate biases.
- Resource Limitations: The lack of resources, training, and up-to-date information further worsens the challenges faced by CSOs. Most organizations struggle to keep pace with the rapid changing AI landscape.
- Infrastructural Issues: Challenges such as internet failures and unreliable connectivity, pose significant obstacles to the effective use of AI.

Collectively, these challenges underscore the need for a strategic approach to AI integration that addresses ethical, technical, financial, and educational aspects within Zambian CSOs.

“

*“Training is necessary to ensure responsible and ethical use of AI by employees. This includes considerations around privacy concerns and transparency in AI”*

“

*“The bias in AI technology is clear when it fails to meet the needs of places like Zambia and Africa. Many AI tools are not designed for us.”*

“

*“New AI tools keeping joining the space making it difficult for us to know which tool to trust. Only few members have knowledge of AI technology hence it becomes a challenge to adopt this, still need to train many members”*

# Highlights from Focus Group Discussions



# Focus Groups Takeaways

This section captures the varied perspectives and insights collected from the focus group discussions held in Livingstone, Lusaka, and Kitwe. Prior to the focus group discussions, all participants completed the survey. It is important to note that USAID Open Spaces did not offer training to participants before the administration of the survey or the focus groups. This was pivotal in gaining an understanding of the nuanced experiences, expectations, and concerns of CSO members with respect to AI.

## **AI as a Cultural Fit**

Participants expressed a desire for AI that is not only technologically advanced but also culturally attuned to the needs of Zambia. There was a consensus on the need for AI solutions that are customized to the region's unique challenges, rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach. The focus groups called for AI that empowers communities, enhances local capacities, and respects cultural nuances. This approach to AI development would ensure that technology serves as a tool for empowerment rather than a source of disruption.

## **Crafting AI Policies for Zambia**

The focus group participants unanimously recognized the need for ethical guidelines in the development and implementation of AI. They called for policies that not only address the technical aspects of AI but also its social implications, ensuring that technology is used to enhance rather than undermine societal values. The groups highlighted the importance of creating AI that is sensitive to the socio-economic realities of Zambia, advocating for solutions that are not just imported but are thoughtfully adapted to local contexts. This approach would help mitigate the risks associated with AI, such as job displacement and cultural erosion. The participants' insights served as a valuable input to the ongoing discourse on AI governance, emphasizing that ethical considerations must be at the forefront of Zambia's AI strategies and policies. Ultimately, the goal should be to establish a framework that fosters innovation while protecting the rights and dignity of every citizen.

## **AI Through an Inclusive Lens**

The focus group discussions in Livingstone emphasized the importance of CSOs viewing AI through multiple lenses. For instance, while AI can provide benefits for visually impaired individuals by enhancing their personal space privacy, it can also lead to privacy abuses through data collection by tech companies. A visually impaired participant shared how AI enabled them to read private messages and enjoy entertainment without assistance, demonstrating the need for inclusive privacy and access. The discussions also discussed how AI impacts communities differently, stressing the importance of inclusive policies. The broader implications of AI on accessibility and the necessity of involving diverse voices in AI development was highly emphasized.

## **Generational Perspectives on AI**

The age dynamics within the Livingstone group revealed a generational divide in attitudes towards AI. Younger participants were vocal advocates for the ethical use of AI, stressing the importance of developing technology that aligns with societal values. In contrast, some community elders viewed AI with skepticism, concerned that it might lead to a loss of cultural heritage and work ethic. One elder suggested that AI could contribute to a decline in industriousness among the youth, prompting a need for region-specific innovations. These discussions highlight the necessity for intergenerational dialogue to harmonize diverse viewpoints.

# Research Recommendations

## Support Research and Development

Fund research initiatives that explore the unique challenges and opportunities of AI adoption in Zambia and similar contexts. Promote the development of AI tools that are specifically designed to address the needs of CSOs in the global majority.

## Facilitate Policy Development

Assist in the creation of AI policies that are tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of Zambian CSOs. These policies should address ethical considerations, data privacy, and the integration of AI with legacy systems. Ensure these policies are inclusive and consider the local context, including language and cultural nuances.

## Promote Ethical AI Practices

Establish guidelines and best practices for ethical AI use, focusing on data privacy, transparency, and accountability. Encourage CSOs to adopt these practices and regularly review their AI systems to ensure they align with ethical standards.

## AI in Zambian CSOs

## Provide Financial Support and Resources

Offer grants, funding, and in-kind support to help CSOs overcome financial barriers to AI adoption. This can include providing hardware, software, and technical expertise. Create programs that specifically target under-resourced CSOs, ensuring they have access to the tools and support needed to integrate AI into their operations.

## Foster International Collaboration

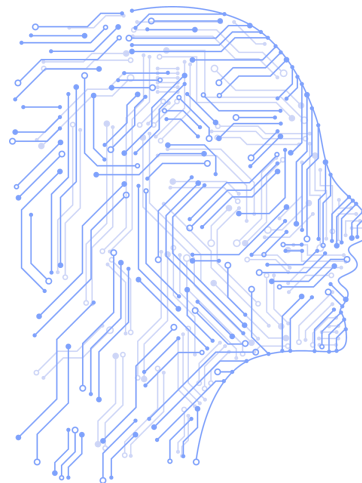
Facilitate partnerships between global tech companies and local Zambian CSOs to promote knowledge sharing and resource. Encourage international organizations to invest in the local based AI ecosystem, providing funding and technical support to help CSOs overcome financial and technical barriers.

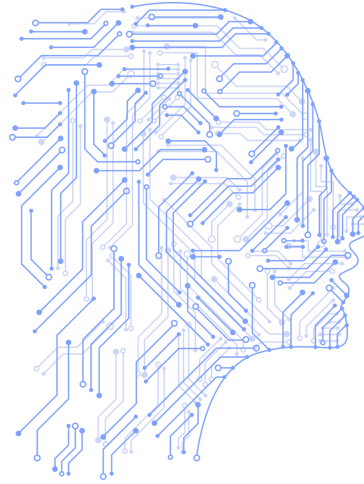
## Promote Communication Freedom in AI Integration

During focus group discussions, CSOs highlighted the critical need for the ability to refuse or opt-out of using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools. This stance is rooted in the principle of freedom of expression and the recognition that AI may not be suitable or desired by everyone. The decision to use AI should always be respected by all stakeholders, recognizing it as just one of many communication tools rather than a transformative force. Thus, CSOs should encourage the respect for human rights and the freedom to choose.

# Conclusion

This survey conducted by Internews Network Zambia under the USAID Open Spaces (OS) project, has provided a detailed account of the current state of AI adoption among Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Zambia. The survey is instrumental in shedding insight on the current state of AI adoption among CSOs in Zambia. It provides insights into the benefits, challenges, and strategic considerations necessary for the ethical and effective use of AI technologies. Furthermore, the recommendations in this survey report aim to guide CSOs, funders, tech companies, policymakers, governments, and the private sector to nurture an informed digital landscape that is ethical, inclusive and responsible. The collective efforts of all stakeholders will be key in ensuring that emerging technologies are implemented in a way that respects the needs of the civic space.





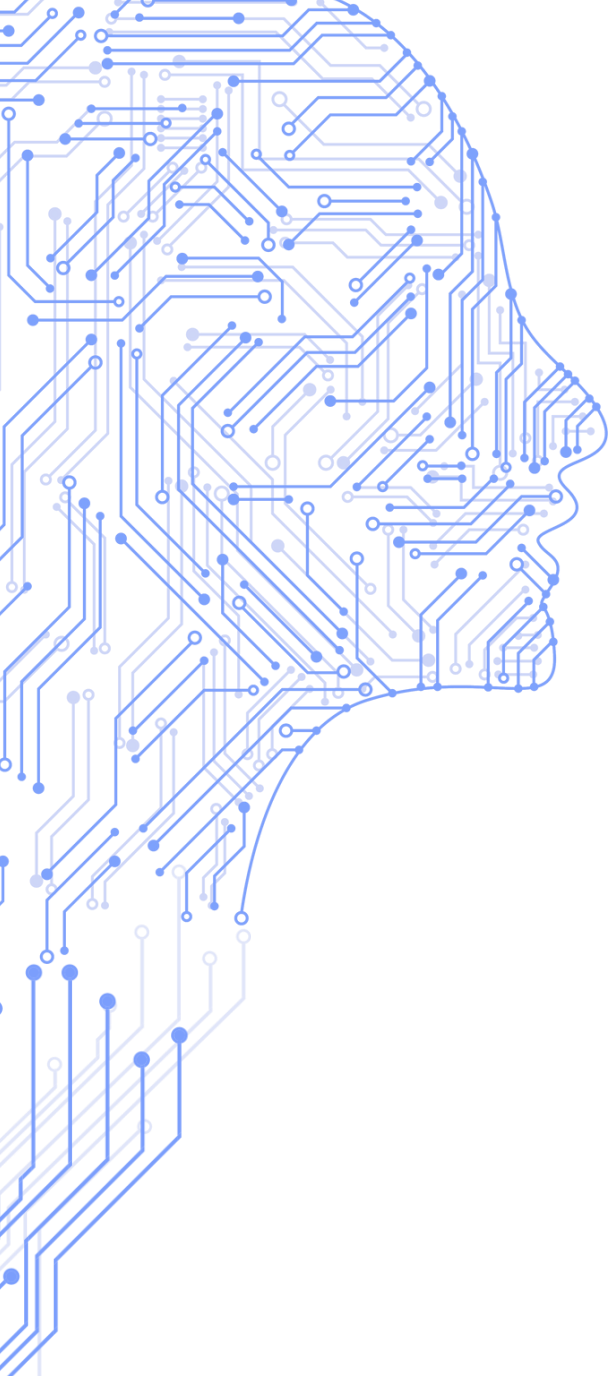
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