

A Joint Initiative by the Inclusive Philanthropy Institute and Justice Al



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BIAS NAVIGATION STRATEGY

In an era where AI-driven tools are transforming fundraising and philanthropy, fundraisers and advancement professionals must engage critically with technology's underlying assumptions and data infrastructures.

A key strategy is demanding algorithmic transparency from vendors.

Advancement teams can no longer afford to adopt black-box technologies without scrutinizing who built the models, what datasets were used to train them, and whether diverse, community-led giving patterns were included. This transparency ensures that the systems used to assess donor potential do not invisibly replicate colonial legacies and white-centered definitions of generosity.

To further disrupt embedded biases, **fundraisers and advancement teams must decenter wealth as the singular metric of donor value.** Traditional key performance indicators (KPIs) that prioritize major gifts and asset-based capacity often overlook the deep, sustained contributions from communities historically excluded from institutional giving. Instead, fundraisers and advancement teams should measure success through indicators like *community trust*, *multigenerational engagement*, and *participation in collective giving models*. These forms of generosity reflect relational wealth, not just financial capital, and they speak directly to reparative, justice-oriented philanthropy.

Integral to this shift is the need for **ethical data governance frameworks.**

Fundraisers and advancement teams should routinely audit AI tools for bias across race, class, gender, ability, and geography. This work requires more than technical oversight—it demands the leadership of trained staff who understand how inequities are coded into data systems. By embedding cultural competency and justice literacy into AI implementation, institutions and organizations can mitigate harm while aligning technology with their equity and inclusion goals.

Lastly, fundraising and advancement professionals must **reject extractive models of philanthropy.** Rather than treating donors as financial pipelines to be optimized, institutions and organizations should embrace reciprocal relationships that honor a wide spectrum of cultural and spiritual giving traditions. This means moving beyond donor-centric strategies that center on prestige and transactional recognition and instead focus on community-driven narratives where generosity is measured in care, trust, and mutual benefit. In this paradigm, fundraising becomes not just a strategy for institutions and organizations but a vehicle for redistributing power and building collective futures.



THE MYTH OF NEUTRALITY

How AI-Powered Fundraising Tools Reproduce Bias and Exclusion – And What Fundraisers and Advancement Professionals Must Do About It

AI-powered tools in higher education and non-profit fundraising—often branded as “smart,” “efficient,” or “objective”—have quietly embedded the logics of exclusion, surveillance, and capitalism into advancement strategies.

Vendors promise optimized prospecting, automated donor scoring, and “predictive giving potential”—but rarely disclose that these tools are trained on historically biased datasets rooted in white wealth accumulation, settler philanthropy, and legacy exclusion of people of the global majority.*



Why is this an issue?

- **Prospect scoring algorithms** disproportionately privilege white, male, cis, able-bodied, heteronormative donors because they are trained on past giving trends, which reflect centuries of colonial wealth hoarding and exclusion from access to capital.
- **Donor segmentation** reinforces redlining when tied to ZIP code analysis, reinforcing geographic and racial disparities.
- **AI-based wealth screening** often taps into real estate records and stock portfolios, systematically ignoring non-traditional wealth expressions found in BIPGM (Black, Indigenous, People of the Global Majority) communities — like collective economic models, informal networks, or cultural assets. As Ruha Benjamin notes, the ‘New Jim Code’ embeds existing racial hierarchies into supposedly neutral technologies. In fundraising, this manifests as AI models trained on exclusionary donor data that invisibilize BIPGM giving patterns.
- **Predictive analytics** fail to account for historic disenfranchisement or systemic philanthropic neglect.

In short, “smart fundraising” is only as ethical as the systems it upholds.

**The Inclusive Philanthropy Institute (IPI) uses the term “people of the global majority” rather than “BIPOC” (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), as this grouping contributes to invisibility. “People of the Global Majority” more accurately reflects the reality that Black, Brown, Indigenous, Native American, Latino and Asian collectively represent more than 92% of the world’s population.*

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR FUNDRAISERS, ADVANCEMENT PROFESSIONALS & PROSPECT RESEARCHERS

Core truths:

Data isn't neutral—it's historical.

Most AI fundraising tools are trained on Eurocentric philanthropic histories that valorize elite institutions and reinforce donor colonialism.

Efficiency often equals erasure.

When automation prioritizes speed and scalability, it erases the nuance, cultural context, and relationality required to build equitable giving ecosystems.

Risk scoring is racialized.

Many platforms assign “likelihood to give” based on factors that penalize communities harmed by racial capitalism—from housing precarity to non-linear wealth accumulation to absence from legacy donor records.



STRATEGIES FOR NAVIGATING AI BIAS IN FUNDRAISING AND PHILANTHROPY

Justice-Centered Strategies for Ethical AI

Require algorithmic transparency

Demand clarity from vendors: *Who built your models? What training data was used? Were community-led giving models included?*

Decenter wealth as the only indicator of value

Shift your KPIs beyond major gifts. Include metrics like *community trust, collective giving circles, or intergenerational engagement*. Community-centric fundraising has long challenged the centrality of wealth in donor valuation, instead uplifting trust, solidarity, and mutual aid as legitimate indicators of philanthropic power.

Invest in ethical data governance

Establish internal policies to audit predictive tools for racial, ableist, and class bias quarterly. Include culturally competent trained data stewards in every AI implementation.

Refuse extractive philanthropy

Center donor experiences around reciprocity, not extraction. Honor giving is rooted in cultural, spiritual, or grassroots traditions.



For Prospect Researchers

Reject wealth scores as truth

Use them as starting points, not definitive evaluations. Always apply critical judgment—especially when assessing donors from historically excluded backgrounds and communities.

Diversify data inputs

Seek narratives beyond LinkedIn and Zillow: grassroots leadership, mutual aid participation, community stewardship, and collective economic activity all matter.

Audit your research practices

Ask yourself: *Whose wealth am I trained to value? Whose generosity do I overlook?* Challenge Eurocentric norms in fundraising and philanthropy.

Advocate for representation in model training

Collaborate with tech teams or vendors to include culturally diverse donor behaviors, informal giving models, and multilingual data points.



LIBERATORY FUNDRAISING

Reimagining Power, Not Just Process

AI in fundraising and philanthropy is not inherently harmful, but without intentional disruption, it will reproduce the very hierarchies we claim to dismantle.

Justice-centered fundraising:

- Rejects technocratic saviorism
- Reclaims relational intelligence
- Centers the global majority as both givers and visionaries

Let us not just diversify who gives but decolonize how we define value. In a future rooted in justice, fundraising won't be about scoring prospects. It will be about redistributing power.



CALL TO ACTION

If you're an advancement leader, prospect researcher, or fundraising strategist:

- Audit your AI systems today.
- Partner with ethical technologists who align with decolonial values.
- Elevate community-defined metrics of generosity.
- Stop asking "Who can give the most?"

Start asking: **"Who has been systematically excluded, and how do we repair it?"**

Equity isn't just a donation goal. It's a design principle.



FOR PROSPECT RESEARCHERS

Additional Points for Consideration

Expanding and diversifying data inputs in fundraising AI systems is one of the most urgent imperatives for advancement teams who seek to build ethical and inclusive donor pipelines.

Traditionally, prospect research relies heavily on sources like **LinkedIn, Zillow, stock ownership databases, and real estate portfolios**—tools that center on Eurocentric, individualistic, and capital-based notions of wealth.

These sources inherently favor white, upper-class donors who have historically been more likely to accumulate wealth in ways visible to conventional systems. In doing so, they invisibilize the rich giving potential of people of the global majority, working-class communities, and those whose wealth is expressed through **communal, cultural, or informal systems**.

To correct this, prospect researchers must begin sourcing data from **non-traditional indicators of generosity**. These include participation in **mutual aid networks**, documented community leadership (such as in neighborhood councils, cultural organizations, or food justice coalitions), and engagement with cooperatives, bartering economies, and solidarity-based enterprises.

For example, a 2025 study published by the Institute for Community Economies found that **over 63% of Black and Indigenous households in urban centers participate in some form of collective economic activity**—such as pooling funds for rent, groceries, or childcare—data not captured by traditional wealth metrics. Ignoring these networks not only skews data but also reinforces racialized assumptions about who can give.



FOR PROSPECT RESEARCHERS

Additional Points for Consideration (Cont'd)

Furthermore, incorporating data from crowdfunding platforms like GoFundMe, Givebutter, or community-giving portals like Grapevine and ioby can offer valuable insight into donors who are consistently giving in small but meaningful ways. These micro-donors often go unrecognized by AI models that prioritize large transactions, yet they represent a massive untapped pool of sustainable support.

The 2025 Crowdfunding Equity Report noted that **Latinx and Southeast Asian donors were overrepresented in grassroots fundraising campaigns**, despite being underrepresented in major gift databases—illustrating the profound mismatch between conventional data inputs and real-world generosity patterns.

Finally, prospect researchers should seek to integrate **qualitative data** from oral histories, public community forums, and local journalism to understand how donors are perceived within their networks.

For example, a donor may not appear affluent on Zillow or Bloomberg but may be a matriarch in a cultural giving circle or a consistent backer of local mutual aid efforts.

AI models need to be trained to **weigh cultural stewardship, relational trust, and historical giving within historically excluded communities** just as heavily as capital accumulation.

In doing so, prospect researchers not only build more equitable pipelines—they also reflect a more accurate and holistic understanding of generosity in 2025 and beyond.





As you focus on centering equity, ask the following:

*What does fundraising look like when the community owns the mission, not just funds it?
What does it mean to raise resources for community power, not institutional survival?*

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