

# Amplify your Impact

## How Australian NFPs are putting AI to work for their mission

For not-for-profit (NFP) leaders, AI is irresistible for its promise to help you do more for the communities you serve without stretching lean teams and tight budgets.

Some Australian NFPs are already there, reaching more people, delivering better care and freeing staff to focus on the work that matters.



# A sector under pressure, and a genuine opportunity

Australia's not-for-profit sector employs 1.54 million people – more than 10% of the national workforce – and relies on 2.4 volunteers for every paid staff member.<sup>1</sup>

According to the Australian Charities Report, total sector expenses exceeded \$212 billion – up \$17 billion in a single year – as the cost of delivering services outpaced revenue growth.<sup>1</sup>

The organisations doing this work are built for efficiency by necessity. Every hour saved on administration is an hour returned to the mission, and every dollar freed from back-office complexity is one more that reaches the people who need it.

That logic makes AI particularly compelling for NFPs. In commercial organisations, productivity gains often translate to cost reduction. For NFPs, demand is unlimited. There are always more people to reach, cases to support and calls to answer. All efficiencies gained through technology amplify your impact.

This is the promise AI holds for the sector, and NFP leaders can see it clearly. Research from TechSoup found that while 86% of NFPs are already exploring generative AI tools, 76% have no formal AI strategy and just 6% consider themselves AI experts.<sup>2</sup>

Looking further ahead, new research commissioned by Nexon found that 75% of NFP leaders remain at the earliest stage of agentic AI maturity, compared to just 34% of organisations across the broader market.<sup>3</sup> For most NFPs, the foundations aren't ready yet.

**This guide explores what those foundations look like and how Australian NFPs are already putting them to work.**

<sup>1</sup> Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC), [Australian Charities Report, 11th edition, 2025](#)

<sup>2</sup> TechSoup / Tapp Network, [The State of AI in Nonprofits, 2025](#)

<sup>3</sup> ADAPT CIO Edge Survey, commissioned by Nexon, 2026





## Lifeline Australia

# Built a digital platform for human connection: The conversation is the service.

Every 30 seconds, someone in Australia reaches out to Lifeline for support. That's over one million conversations per year over voice, text and chat. 13YARN, Lifeline's specialised crisis line for First Nations people, demonstrates what's possible with the right technology foundation.

The service achieved an exceptional 99% call answer rate while supporting 24,216 help seekers in one year.



At the heart of our service is the connection formed in the conversation. While technology is a critical enabler of our service, it should work invisibly in the background, getting out of the way so two people can listen, talk and communicate deeply.

**Dominic Geraghty**

Head of Strategic Delivery and Implementation  
Lifeline Australia

# Getting the foundations right

While most Australian NFPs have moved quickly on cloud adoption over the past five years, many did so without a clear plan. Fragmented data, disconnected systems and inconsistent processes often migrated with them.

ADAPT research commissioned by Nexon found that data foundations are the single biggest barrier to scaling AI for 58% of NFP technology leaders – higher than any other constraint, and higher than the 40% figure recorded across the broader market.<sup>3</sup>

The tools are available and the ambition is there, but the organisations getting real value have worked through four foundational elements first.

## **Consolidated platforms: Fewer systems, clearer picture**

Running services across separate databases and legacy case management software with spreadsheets filling the gaps creates fragmentation that’s hard to query, govern and build on. For NFPs that have grown organically or absorbed state-based entities over time, this is often the norm rather than the exception.

A unified platform that consolidates client management, service delivery and operational data gives AI something coherent to work with, and your team a single source of truth.

## **Clean, connected data: Good data is built, not found**

Incomplete records, duplicate entries and inconsistent formats don’t fix themselves in the cloud. Standardising and connecting data across programs, locations and teams is unglamorous work, but it’s what separates reliable AI outputs from noise.

Done well, this process typically delivers improvements well before any AI tool is deployed, such as better reporting, cleaner client records and faster onboarding of new staff, contractors or volunteers. Data quality is an ongoing discipline too, as records and systems evolve.

## **Governance: Confident, not cautious**

NFPs hold sensitive information such as client health data, family circumstances and financial hardship details. ADAPT research found that 55% of NFP organisations are still operating with ad hoc policies or draft principles on AI governance, well behind where they need to be to maintain compliance and deploy AI with confidence.<sup>3</sup>

Clear frameworks defining who can access what, how data is stored and how AI tools interact with it make AI progress secure and sustainable.

## **People and process: The part technology can’t do for you**

The ADAPT research found that while most NFPs have AI usage guidelines in place, none reported having dedicated AI champions or a Centre of Excellence, and fewer than one in ten have mandatory AI awareness training for staff.<sup>3</sup>

Those seeing the best results have invested equally in their platforms and their people: data literacy, clear ownership and leadership backing.

None of this requires a large IT team or an enterprise budget. The cloud platforms available to NFPs today, particularly through Microsoft’s NFP program, are designed to support a structured, phased approach.



The organisations succeeding with AI aren’t necessarily the ones with the biggest budgets – they’re the ones that planned their data foundations so they can adapt, deploy and scale fast.

**Himanshu Soni**  
Analytics & AI Practice Manager  
Nexon

<sup>3</sup> ADAPT CIO Edge Survey, commissioned by Nexon, 2026





## The Epilepsy Foundation

# Embraces technology to unite its care network across Australia

By uniting six state-based organisations on a single platform, Nexon helped create a national support network for people living with epilepsy and their families. It's a technology solution with a profoundly human impact.

This transformation not only improved service delivery but enabled them to implement AI-powered chatbots and predictive analytics, something that would have been impossible with their previous fragmented data approach.



We needed a solution that could unite our organisations and allow us to provide equitable services to everyone, regardless of where they live. One of the key benefits is that we can now provide continuity of care across state borders and reach underserved remote and rural communities.

**Sharmila Lakshmanan**  
Chief Information Officer  
Epilepsy Foundation

# Putting AI into practice

## Step 1 Take an honest look at your data

What do you hold, where does it live and how consistent is it across programs and locations? Most organisations discover that what they assumed was a technology problem is actually a data quality and governance issue.

- Who owns your data and is that clearly defined?
- Where are the quality gaps and inconsistencies?
- What governance practices are currently in place?

## Step 2 Anchor the work in mission outcomes

Define what you want AI to help you achieve - whether that's reaching more people, resolving cases faster or spending less time on administration - then work backwards from there. Boards and funders respond better to mission outcomes than technology budgets.

- Identify two or three priority use cases
- Define what success looks like before you start
- Set realistic timeframes for each stage

## Step 3 Build in sequence

Platform consolidation comes before data cleanup and they both come before AI deployment. Each step makes the next one more effective and less costly. Organisations that try to deploy AI tools before cleaning and connecting the underlying data often find themselves rebuilding foundations anyway, just at greater expense and with less momentum.

- Start by targeting high-impact, manageable projects
- Build security and governance in from the start
- Plan for integration before committing to new platforms

## Step 4 Measure what changes

Track outcomes that matter to the mission alongside the technical metrics. Staff hours recovered, client response times and service reach are the numbers that build internal momentum and external confidence. They also make board conversations straightforward, because AI investment tied directly to mission impact is a stronger case than a technology upgrade.

- Define your key performance indicators upfront
- Track mission outcomes alongside technical metrics
- Review and adjust as momentum builds

## Not sure where to start?

Nexon's data foundations assessment maps your current state and outlines a realistic path forward for your team and mission — at no cost or obligation.



While every organisation is different, we typically help clients establish their core data foundations within six to eight weeks, which positions them to tackle specific use cases quickly. The key is balancing your long-term vision with quick wins that demonstrate value and build executive support.

**Himanshu Soni**  
Analytics & AI Practice Manager  
Nexon

# The Microsoft and Nexon advantage for Australian NFPs

Microsoft runs a dedicated program for the NFP sector, giving eligible organisations access to Microsoft solutions, along with training, resources and comprehensive support.

The platform covers the full stack. Microsoft 365 and Copilot power productivity and AI across the organisation. Azure provides unified cloud infrastructure. Dynamics 365 connects client management, fundraising and service delivery. Microsoft Fabric and Power BI turn data into something the whole organisation can use. Microsoft Purview handles governance and compliance for organisations managing sensitive client information.

As a Microsoft Solutions Partner across Business Applications, Data and AI, Modern Work, Security and Infrastructure, Nexon has worked with NFP organisations across Australia to assess where they're starting from, build the right foundations and implement AI that delivers practical outcomes.



## Children's Cancer Institute

### Boosts research funds through strategic IT partnership

For Children's Cancer Institute (CCI), every dollar saved on operations means more funds for childhood cancer research. By partnering with Nexon to outsource IT, CCI redirected budget to life-saving research while upgrading digital performance.

Nexon supports AI deployment across the institute, from Microsoft Copilot for productivity to specialised AI tools for researchers.



Our computational biology group is building an internal large language model for patient data. We're creating a platform where global researchers can query six petabytes of genomic data while maintaining privacy.

Every dollar Nexon helps us save goes directly to cancer research. It's all about accelerating a cure for childhood cancer and supporting our families at the end of the day.

**Elaine Neeson**  
Chief Information Officer  
Children's Cancer Institute



## Where to start?

Start with an honest picture of where things are. What data do you hold, where does it live, and how consistent is it across your programs and locations?

Once the data picture is clear, the technology questions tend to follow. From there, we typically find a clear sequence of quick wins alongside longer-term work, and the foundations built in the process keep paying off well beyond the initial project.

Nexon's data foundations assessment is a structured conversation that maps your current state and outlines a realistic path forward for your team and mission.

## Ready to put AI to work for your mission?

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