

DARING TO USE AI: 3 nonprofits take the leap

Dynamo, Skills for Change and AGAC
share their approach to adopting artificial intelligence and
what they have learned in a panel discussion.

Here is a summary of the discussions.

An event organised by the J. Armand Bombardier Foundation, the
Chamandy Foundation, the Counselling Foundation of Canada and
the Morris and Rosalind Goodman Family Foundation.
November 18, 2025



SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS

THE PANELISTS



**Valeria
Velandia**

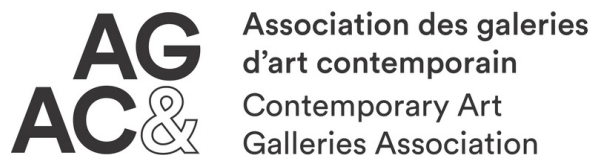
is responsible for communications, marketing, and the artificial intelligence project at Dynamo. She is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame in Australia and HEC Montréal. An entrepreneur with a passion for social impact organisations, she works with the Dynamo team to explore how AI can strengthen the organisation's impact.



**Surranna
Sandy**

Building Welcoming and Equitable Communities

is the Chief Executive Officer of Skills for Change. She holds multiple degrees in leadership, management, human resources, and development practice. She also serves on different boards. Her leadership has been recognized with the Canada 150 Good Neighbour Award and her inclusion among the 100 Accomplished Black Canadian Women.



**Laurianne
Lalonde**

is a digital cultural development officer at The Contemporary Art Galleries Association (AGAC). Laurianne is passionate about digital innovation and culture. They have a background in archival science, digital information management, and digital humanities. They are a member of the network of digital cultural development officers (RADN).

Context



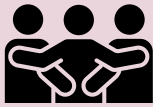
A social economy enterprise that supports social change actors in their ability to collaborate, learn, and act together for inclusive and thriving communities. A team of 21 people.

Challenge



Uncoordinated use of AI by staff created risks and apprehensions (privacy, ethics, energy consumption).

Solution



A dedicated project team created a formal AI charter, coordinated training, and implemented AI agents.

Guiding principles



Privacy, transparency, human values, environmental impact, bias awareness, time reallocation, skills development.

Tool selection



Choice of a Quebec platform (QP Notes) rather than major tools to ensure alignment with organisational values and address privacy concerns. Support from supplier Écohesia.

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A HUMAN-CENTERED AI

Examples of use



- Exploratory meetings: An AI agent automates note-taking and report generation, saving $\approx 60\%$ of preparation time.
- Collective intelligence analysis: An AI agent processes photos of workshop notes (e.g., 250 post-it notes), instantly categorizing them for analysis.

Results



The time saved is reinvested in deeper customer engagement, more creative workshop materials, and a new AI training offering for collaborative processes.

Next steps



- Integrate its methodology library into the AI system.
- Develop more specialized agents (e.g., for qualitative assessment).
- Launch a new AI training program for collaborative processes in January 2026.

 To read the full presentation, [click here](#).

Context



A national charity with over 130 employees that annually assists more than 20,000 immigrants, refugees, and disadvantaged groups through programs that support skills, create opportunities, and facilitate access to quality jobs across Canada.

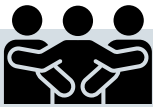
AI TO STRENGTHEN THE SKILLS OF THE TEAM AND THE CLIENTS

Double challenge



Prepare the clients for an AI-driven job market and ensure responsible internal adoption.

Solution



A grant from the Google AI Opportunity Fund enabled a two-part initiative.

- Part 1 - AI Skills Building Program: aims to train 20,000 Canadians over two years.
 - Impact (first 4 months): 287 participants completed the training.
 - Key indicator: Reduction in wait time for clients from 6 weeks to 48 hours through automated registration.
- Part 2 - Drafting of an organisational policy on AI: A 45-page document accompanied by training workshops and the creation of a network of AI champions within the team.
 - Risk management: A data classification system (green/yellow/red) prohibits the use of confidential data from clients in AI tools.
 - Adoption strategy: A 90-day amnesty period encouraged staff experimentation, and a browser extension gently nudges users to review the policy when they visit unapproved AI tools.

Résultats



The policy provides clarity, builds trust, and fosters a culture of “thoughtful innovation,” enabling staff to grow and better serve the clients.

Next steps



- Expand the AI skills development program to train 10,000 people in the first year.
- Continue to monitor and adapt the organisational policy on AI.

 [To read the full presentation, click here.](#)

Context

AGAC is a non-profit organisation based in Montreal whose main mission is to ensure the recognition and prosperity of the contemporary art market in Canada. AGAC currently represents 34 galleries in Montreal, Quebec City, Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver. It has a team of 8 people and a strategic plan aimed at digital leadership.

Challenge

Improve internal efficiency (document management, data analysis) with limited resources and expertise.

Solution

Drafting a Strategic Digital Development Plan and participating in the ArtIA project, a pilot program offering technical support from Sporobole and Hub01.

Examples of use

- Document management: Using ChatGPT+ to analyze the structure of Google Drive and recommend a flatter, more efficient file organisation (goal: fewer than four clicks to access any document).
- Data analysis: Using ChatGPT+ to categorize unstructured feedback from 40 survey respondents, significantly reducing analysis time.
- Automation: Use of the tool N8N to automate data transfer from Weezevent (ticketing) to MailChimp (newsletter), eliminating a manual task.



Association des galeries
d'art contemporain
Contemporary Art
Galleries Association


AI TO INCREASE THE EFFICIENCY OF INTERNAL PROCESSES

Results

The pilot provided practical experience and knowledge transfer through weekly meetings, leading to the permanent adoption of Notion, N8N, and Claude for continuous efficiency gains.

Next steps

- Finalize Weezevent-to-MailChimp automation with Hub01.
- Set up Notion as the central internal wiki.
- Continue developing the team's skills.

 To read the full presentation, [click here](#).

SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Unexpected outcomes

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There was initially resistance and fear from the team about integrating AI. However, after properly framing its use, listening to concerns, and establishing an ethics charter, the team ultimately saw the possibilities offered by AI, and its integration went more smoothly than expected.

The rollout of the AI policy sparked curiosity and important conversations within the team about ethics, data use, and the role of humans. This helped create a culture of thoughtful innovation rather than resistance.

The experiment revealed a need for digital literacy within the team. This allowed them to better understand the potential of AI beyond simple text generation and to no longer see it solely as a writing assistant.

Costs and time

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The costs depend on the needs and size of the organisation. In Dynamo's case, the process began with a three-hour AI demystification session at a cost of \$1,500.

Then, the full integration varies depending on the consultants, the set-up and development, and the tool subscriptions.

Dynamo chose Écohesia for its focus on making AI accessible to small organisations.

In terms of time, in Dynamo's case, each member of the project team spent around 20 hours on the first deliverable: creating the governance and ethics framework. The person responsible for integration had to devote around 30% of their time to the project.



Recommendations :

- Use tools with local data storage (e.g., Microsoft Copilot in Canada) to comply with Canadian privacy laws.
- Avoid tools such as ChatGPT, as OpenAI's data storage location is unconfirmed, creating uncertainty around compliance.

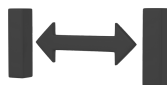
Implement internal controls:

- An AI policy that provides clear guidelines.
- Data rules: A “red, green, yellow” system that limits sensitive information about the people being supported.
- Be clear about decision-making: AI cannot be used to make decisions about individuals receiving support.

Implement technical safeguards:

- A custom browser extension blocks unapproved AI sites on company devices.
- Have equipment that is controlled and approved by the organisation (laptops provided by the organisation).


Generational gaps



At the beginning of the implementation, Dynamo noticed differences – which could be identified as generational – but mainly differences due to lack of knowledge and mistrust.

Dynamo set up spaces for learning and sharing experiences to bring different generations closer together and facilitate the adoption of the tools. Over time, and with the concrete benefits observed, the differences have diminished.

Beware of stereotypes: some young employees resist for ethical reasons (e.g. energy consumption, bias).



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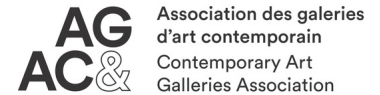
Although the AGAC team is relatively young (30-40 years old), there are still differences in levels of digital literacy.

The Strategic Digital Development plan has really helped to create cohesion and a common understanding of the importance of taking action.

AGAC has set up a digital transformation committee that meets regularly to discuss progress and concerns.

Dedicated communication channels also allow employees to ask questions and take ownership of the new tools.

Navigating ethical and environmental impacts



Dynamo recognizes the ethical and environmental concerns associated with AI, but believes that these tools can also bring significant benefits.

Their approach is to strike a balance between these considerations and access to the opportunities offered by AI for their stakeholders.

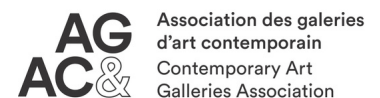
Skills for Change recognizes the risks of bias and reinforcement of inequalities with AI. However, they believe that not using these tools would deprive their clients of important opportunities and contribute to widening the digital divide for their clients.

Their approach is therefore to implement rigorous policies and controls for the responsible and ethical use of AI.

AGAC is working on a sustainable development policy that includes digital sobriety, in order to raise awareness of these issues among its team and partners.

Their Strategic Digital Development Plan aims to integrate these aspects across the board.

Final tips



Involve the whole team, set clear goals, and establish a basic framework.

- Start small: Focus on safe and relevant use cases (e.g., content writing).
- Create a culture of learning: Use an amnesty period for initial mistakes and focus on education rather than punishment.
- Connect to the mission: Ensure that each AI experiment serves the organisation's mission.

Lean on communities of practice and peer networks for advice.



A huge thank you to
Dynamo, Skills for Change and AGAC
for their generosity in sharing.



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