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Community Works AGM: Using AI to write bids that stand out

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Agenda

- 01 Introductions
- 02 What AI can help with
- 03 How to use AI to get the most out of it
- 04 Common Pitfalls + Funder update
- 05 Plinth Demo
- 06 Questions

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An AI end-to-end platform connecting commissioners, funders, delivery organisations and individuals.

- Enables the voluntary sector to expand their capacity.
- Helps to understand the changing demand that is on the VCS.
- Provides the tools to reach and support marginalised residents.

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Grants wastes time and money

To connect all these different systems and data sources, each group has to invest administrative time and money into joining them up.

This can affect the value-for-money of the entire project, but the full cost can often be hidden, as the admin burden usually falls to people least able to afford it.

Individuals

Can't manage their own care or support, and so have to rely on professionals to manage for them.

Delivery organisations

Need to spend hours collecting details and compiling progress reports for their funders or commissioners. This is multiplied across all the different projects a single organisation will run, and across all organisations involved.

Commissioners/Funders

Need to painstakingly join together data exports in Excel or other tools, to get a sense of what's going on across the whole programme.

46%

Of grants cost more than they're worth

15.8m

Hours are spent on monitoring and reporting just for grants each year.

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Vibes

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Temperature check:

- 1 When you hear 'AI for grant writing,' what's your first reaction?

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Vibes

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Temperature check:

- 2 How many of you have actually used an AI tool—like ChatGPT or Grammarly—to help with writing?

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Vibes

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Temperature check:

- 3 What's your biggest barrier when it comes to writing grant applications?

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Quick Safety Check!

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Process

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AI can help at every stage of the process

- 1 Idea generation
- 2 Project Planning
- 3 Fund matching
- 4 Feedback

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1 Idea generation

✓ Suggest innovative project ideas that address [specific issue, e.g., youth mental health] for a community-based charity. Focus on low-cost, high-impact solutions.

2 Project Planning

✓ Outline a risk management strategy for a community project aimed at [goal]. Include potential risks, mitigation strategies, and contingency plans.

3 Fund matching

✓ Please review the attached eligibility criteria and our current impact report and let me know if my charity (charity number) is eligible for the grant listed

4 Feedback

✓ Review this draft grant application for clarity, tone, and impact. Suggest improvements to make it more compelling to funders.

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Common Pitfalls

1. **Relying Too Heavily on AI-Generated Text**
2. **Lack of Clear Instructions**
3. **Ignoring Tone and Style**
4. **Skipping the Review Process**

What about the environment?

How does the electricity use of ChatGPT compare to the daily average footprint in the UK and the US?

Measured in watt-hours. Electricity consumption for the US and UK includes household use plus services and industry within the economy.



Source: Ember Energy, Alex de Vries, and Andy Massley • This assumes that one ChatGPT query uses 3 watt-hours of electricity. More recent data suggests this could now be as low as 0.3 Wh.

Funder views

Cautious Optimism: Many UK funders see the potential of AI to improve efficiency, especially in grant assessment and reporting, but are proceeding carefully due to concerns about bias, transparency, and impact on trust.

Interest in Experimentation: Some progressive funders (e.g., the National Lottery Community Fund, Paul Hamlyn Foundation) are piloting AI tools for internal processes or funding research into AI ethics and applications for civil society.

Equity and Inclusion Concerns: There is a shared anxiety about how AI might exacerbate existing inequalities in funding access, particularly for smaller or grassroots organisations without tech capacity.

Lack of Policy Clarity: Few funders have developed formal strategies or ethical guidelines for AI, leading to ad hoc use and a desire for more sector-wide frameworks and shared learning.

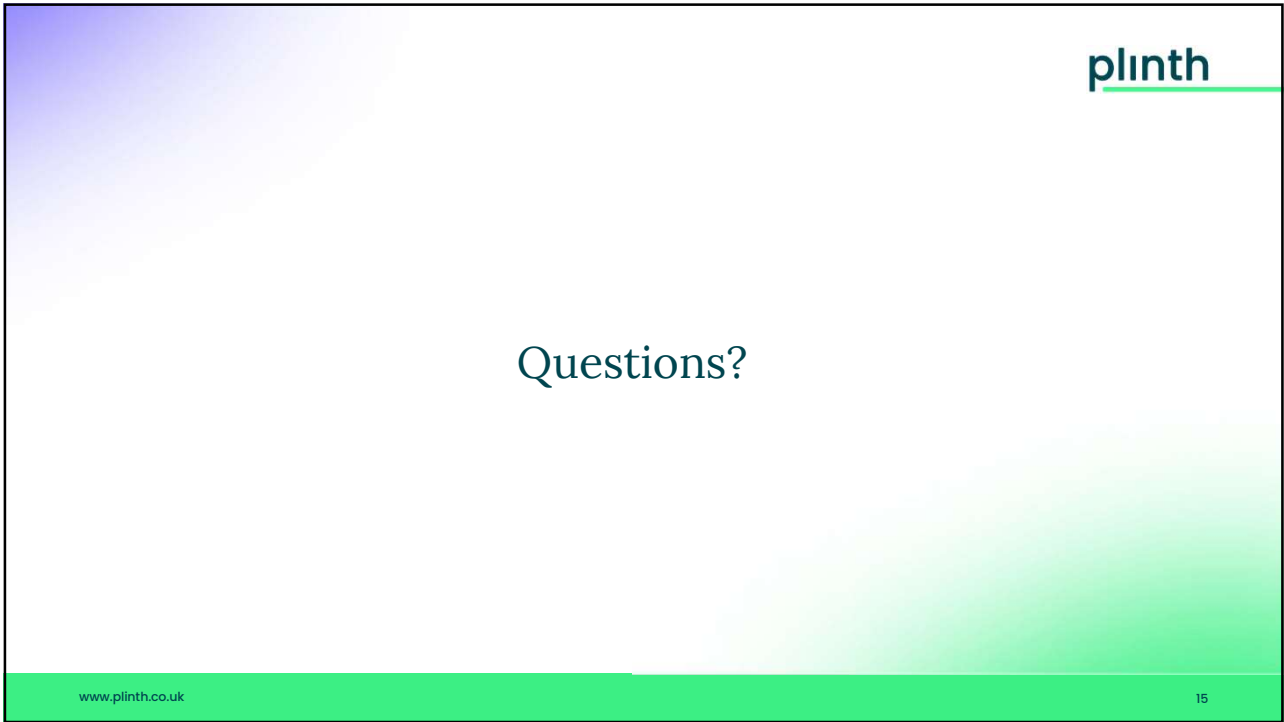
National Lottery Example

AI as a force for good: The Fund promotes AI as a powerful tool that—if used ethically and inclusively—can benefit people and communities.

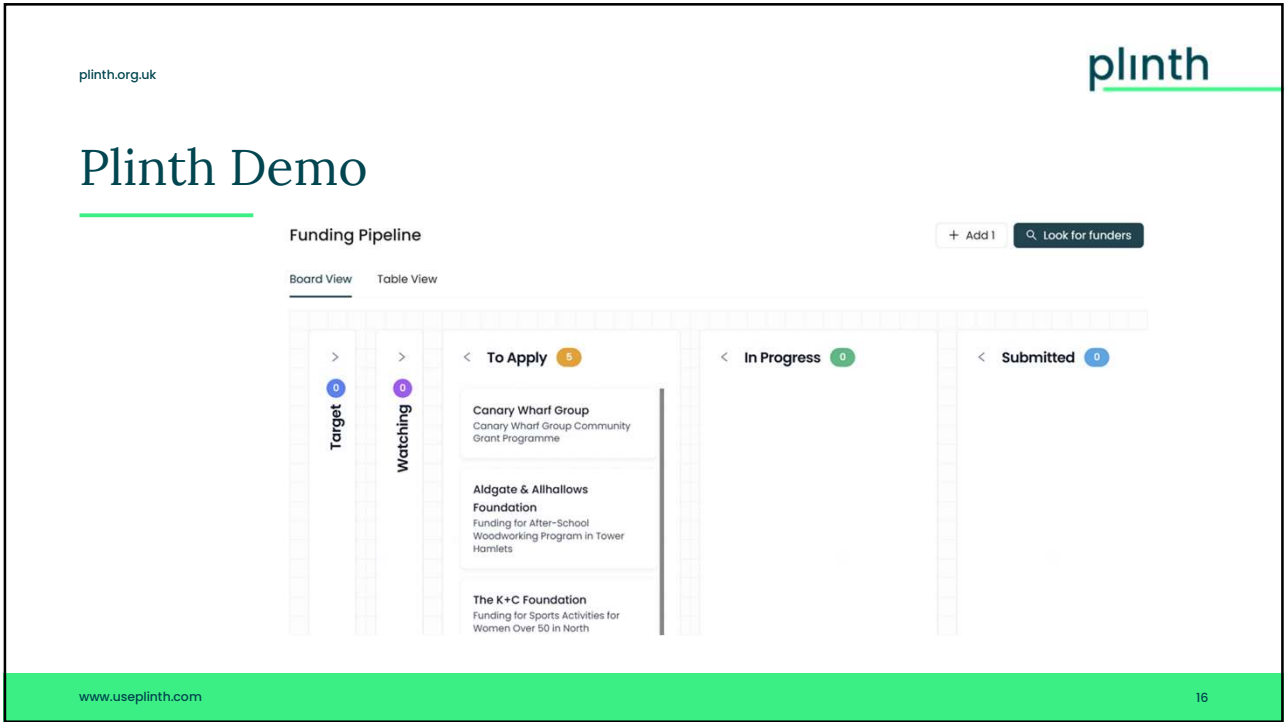
Guidance and encouragement for applicants: They published guidance allowing applicants to use tools like ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, and Claude to draft funding applications—stating applications won't be penalised for AI use.

10 ethical AI principles: The Fund has defined ten core principles—such as keeping humans in the loop, ensuring transparency, inclusivity, privacy by design, accountability, environmental awareness, and continuous monitoring.

Pilot projects supporting vulnerable communities: Their support includes AI-powered initiatives like “Cecil from WECIL,” a chatbot built for and by disabled people to improve accessibility.



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Questions?

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[Don't hesitate to get in touch.](#)

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