Association for Project Management

Ethical and Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence in Project Management

October 2026



Because when projects succeed, society benefits

Definition

Ethical and responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in project management means applying AI to support project outcomes in a way that is transparent, accountable, fair, safe and lawful, and subject to human judgement. AI should enhance the capability of project professionals rather than replace their responsibility for decisions and outcomes, while protecting people, data, organisations and society from harm.

Core principles

1. Human accountability remains paramount

Tasks may be delegated to AI tools, but accountability cannot be delegated. The project professional, sponsor, project board and organisation remain responsible for decisions, outputs and consequences arising from AI use. Human responsibility should remain visible throughout the AI life cycle through clear ownership, governance and auditability. “You can delegate the task, but you can't delegate the accountability for the task.” (Data and AI Advisory Group).

2. Maintain meaningful human oversight

AI should augment human capability rather than replace human judgement. Humans should remain the final decision-makers, particularly for high-risk or high-impact decisions. Review, challenge and approval should be maintained throughout project delivery, especially where AI may influence governance, recruitment, resource allocation, safety, investment choices or other consequential decisions. This is often called keeping the "Human in the Loop".

3. Be transparent about AI use

It should always be clear when AI has been used to create content, analyse information or support decision-making. Transparency helps establish trust, allows challenge and ensures stakeholders can make informed decisions.

Stakeholders, leaders and project teams should know whether outputs are AI-assisted or AI-generated and when AI has contributed to project artefacts.

4. Validate and verify outputs

AI can produce inaccurate information, misleading or biased recommendations and fabricated content. Project professionals must be able to critically assess outputs rather than accept them without question. All outputs validated against trusted sources and fact-checked before use.

5. Protect data, privacy and confidentiality

Responsible AI use requires safeguarding confidential, commercial, personal and sensitive information. Project professionals must understand where data is stored, who can access it, what permissions are required and whether an AI tool has been approved for use. Such information should not be shared with unapproved systems. Data sovereignty, client confidentiality, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance and the risks associated with “shadow AI” are critical professional concerns.

6. Promote fairness and avoid bias

AI systems can perpetuate or amplify human bias. Responsible practice requires checking for discrimination, testing outputs for fairness and ensuring decisions do not disadvantage individuals or groups. Special care is required when AI is used in recruitment, performance-related decisions or any activity relating to people.

7. Use risk-based governance

Not all AI uses carry the same level of risk. Drafting notes or organising information presents different risks from automating safety-critical decisions, assessing structural integrity or making decisions that significantly affect people. Governance, assurance and approval should therefore be proportionate to risk. AI Risk Matrix categorises can be used to understand low, medium, high or unacceptable risks. Applications involving safety, critical infrastructure, significant impacts on people, autonomous decision-making or sensitive personal data require robust governance and oversight.

8. Respect intellectual property and legal obligations

Users must ensure that AI-generated content does not breach copyright, contractual obligations or intellectual property rights. Organisations should also consider ownership of prompts, outputs and project information.

9. Consider social and environmental impacts

Responsible AI extends beyond technical performance. Project professionals should consider broader societal impacts, including sustainability, energy consumption, ethics, stakeholder trust and public benefit. Links to sustainability are a particular concern; organisations should be transparent about AI's environmental impacts as well as its operational benefits.

Link to ethics and professionalism

Responsible use of AI is closely linked to APM's Code of Professional Conduct and its ethics and professionalism Competence in the *APM Competence Framework*. This provides the foundation for responsible AI use, requiring project professionals to apply established professional principles consciously and explicitly to a new technology.

They should:

- act with honesty, integrity and transparency
- maintain confidentiality and manage conflicts of interest
- balance organisational, client and societal interests
- exercise professional judgement
- identify and address ethical concerns
- take responsibility for their actions
- treat people fairly and respectfully.

Sources

Produced in consultation with the APM Data and AI Advisory Group:

- APM Code of Professional Conduct
- *APM Competence Framework* – ethics and professionalism competence
- *APM Body of Knowledge 8th edition*
- Artificial Intelligence Playbook for the UK Government
- WSP Artificial Intelligence Policy