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RECREATION STUDIES

EXPLORING HOW AI / LLM / CHATGPT IS CURRENTLY BEING USED IN THE RECREATION FIELD

A Recreation Studies Department
Applied Research Report

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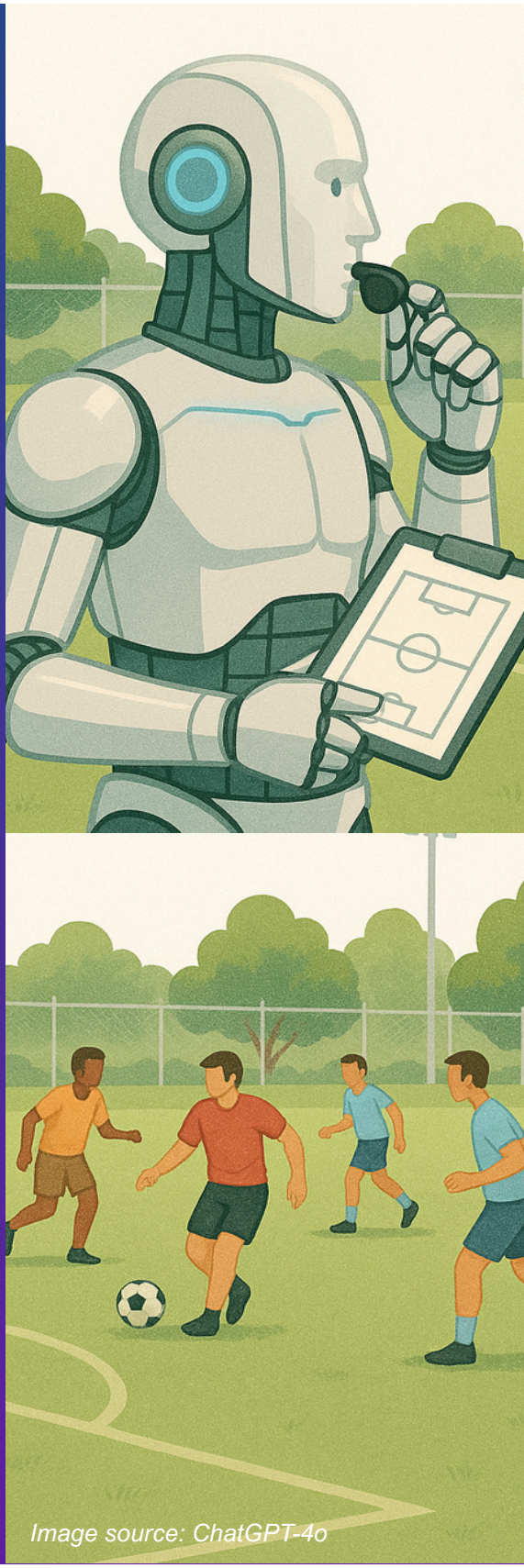

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This applied research project explored the question 'How is Artificial Intelligence currently being used in Recreation organizations and what are the possibilities of future use to enhance Municipal Parks and Recreation services?'. On-line surveys were distributed through British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association and Recreation Foundation of BC member networks. The research was focused within British Columbia municipal Recreation organizations and some not-for-profit sport organizations. Interviews were conducted with survey respondents who agreed to be interviewed on the survey.

The intent for this research was to capture a snapshot of how Recreation organizations were using AI and share this information within the Recreation field. Another goal of the research was to share this knowledge with Recreation Studies faculty at Langara College so they could bring that knowledge into the classroom and guide how Recreation students could use AI in ways that they would be using it in their work in the Recreation sector.

Image source: ChatGPT-4o

Results from the online survey and interviews showed that many Recreation staff are authorized to use AI but are operating without guidelines, policies or education. The most used AI platform was ChatGPT and overall, data showed a mix of curiosity, caution, and optimism, with interest in more training and tools to help staff use AI effectively and responsibly.

Image source: ChatGPT-4o

In addition to the data analysis of how Recreation organizations are using AI, three areas emerged that were discussed as key findings: 1) Awareness, education and guidelines are needed within Recreation organizations to support staff, 2) Knowledge of Recreation, community and critical thinking is Important, and 3) Ethical Considerations of using AI within a Recreation and Culture organization need to be considered.

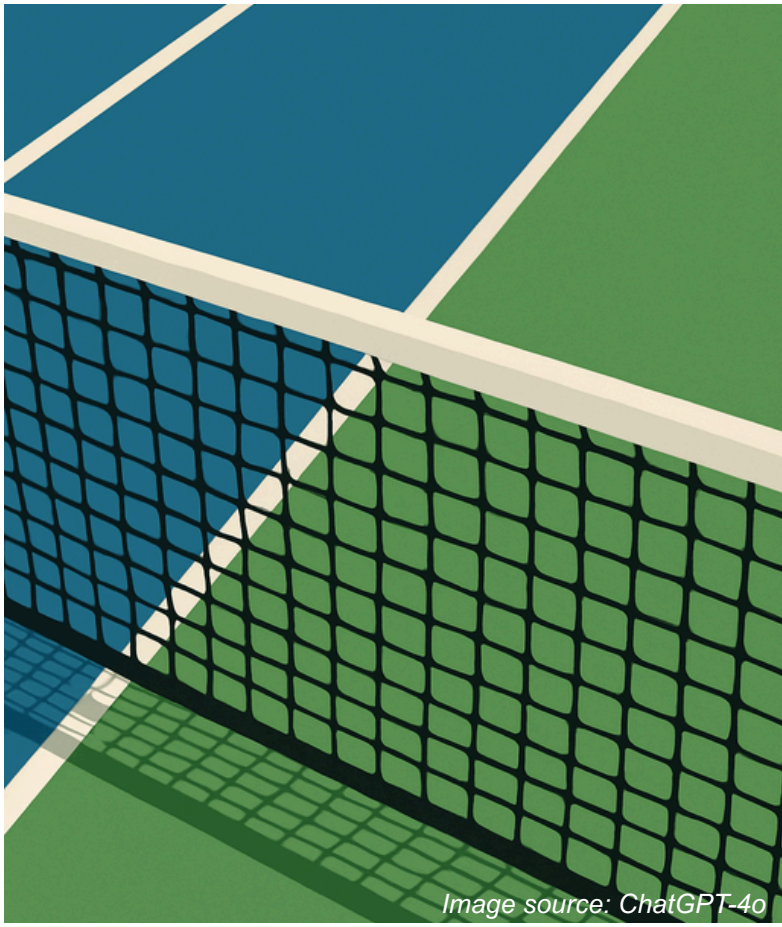
Further research was identified in specific areas that build on this project and help to address the use of AI in Recreation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was written on the ancestral, unceded and occupied territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səl̓ílwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) nations of the Coast Salish peoples - whose relationship with the land is ancient, primary and enduring. We would like to acknowledge our privilege and responsibility to be here learning, living and working on these lands.

The researchers would like to thank Jennifer Mallari, Langara student and research assistant for her work creating the MS forms on-line survey and Manraj Singh, Langara student and research assistant for his work analyzing the data from the Survey responses.

Thank you to Dan Ostrov, Department Instructional Assistant, Langara Recreation Studies Department for formatting the final report.



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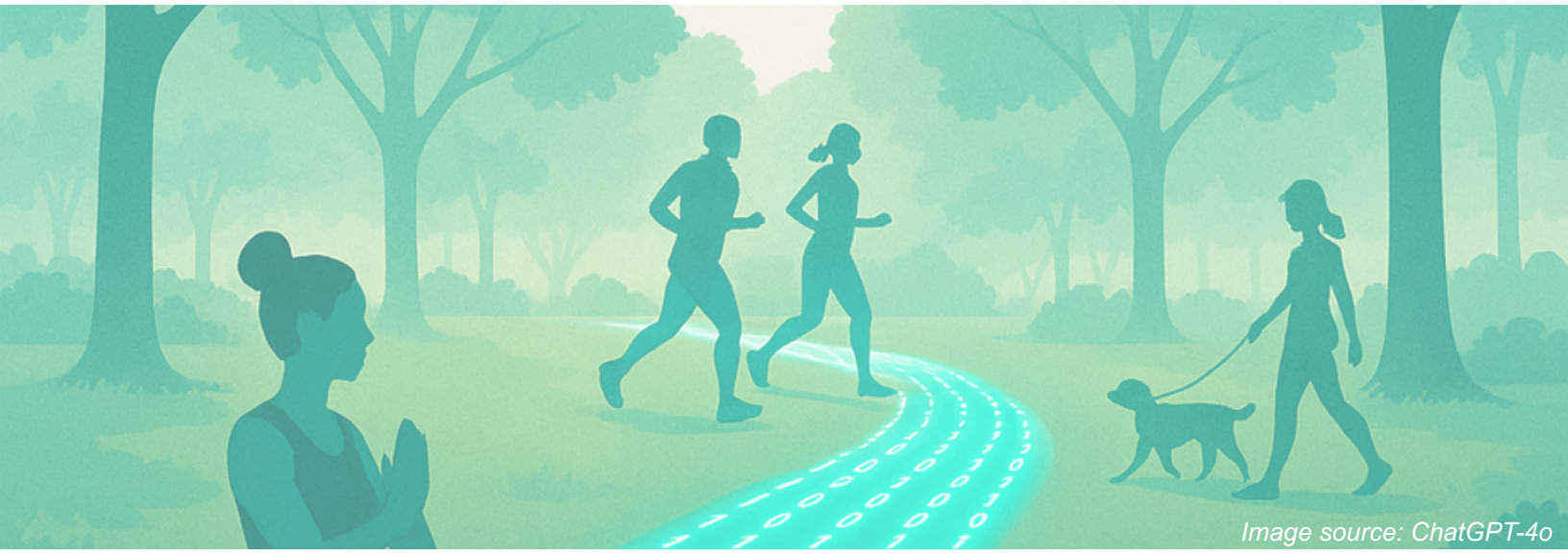

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research project was to gather information from Recreation professionals in BC to discover how Artificial Intelligence (AI) such as Chat GPT/LLMs are being used responsibly and ethically in the Recreation field, in addition to learning how Recreation staff use AI in their work.

> ***How is Artificial Intelligence currently being used in Recreation organizations and what are the possibilities of future use to enhance Municipal Parks and Recreation services?***

AI continues to evolve rapidly within workplaces and Post Secondary Institutions. This Applied Research project took a current environmental scan of how it is being used within the Recreation workplace (public and not for profit). Understanding how AI is being used and the guidelines and policies that are currently in place will better inform teaching practices in the Recreation Studies courses. Faculty will be able to use the information from this research project to inform their own pedagogy and ensure students understand how they will be using AI in their careers. This knowledge will also provide more clarity about the Recreation Studies Departments' own mandate of using AI within Post Secondary learning.

The intent of this research project was to provide an environmental scan of the Recreation field to show how AI/LLMs/ChatGPT are currently being used in authorized ways, and guidelines or policies around AI that are presently in place. The researchers were very clear that they were only interested in information about authorized use of AI and asked participants not to disclose information about unauthorized use that would put them at risk.

Prioritizing authorized use proved most effective for gathering the information needed to better understand how AI is being utilized in Recreation organizations. With this insight, Langara Recreation Studies faculty can now identify opportunities to integrate this knowledge into courses, helping students understand how they might apply AI in their future roles within Recreation organizations.

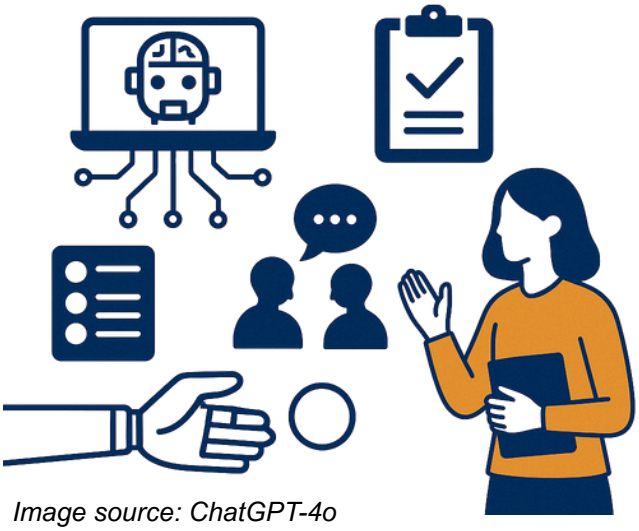


Image source: ChatGPT-4o

The research methodology included surveys and interviews. Surveys were distributed to municipal Recreation departments and nonprofit Recreation organizations, followed by interviews with Recreation professionals were conducted to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the findings.

CONNECTION TO LANGARA'S ACADEMIC PLAN

This applied research project connects strongly to two of the four lenses in Langara's Academic Plan.

CURIOSITY, CREATIVITY, AND INNOVATION: CREATE THE FUTURE TOGETHER

"A community animated by inquisitiveness, imagination, and the intentional seeking of the unknown, Langara College offers opportunities to explore, ideate, and challenge through original, innovative programming, evolving and intrepid pedagogy, and meaningful technology integration. Together we create opportunities for intellectual discovery, work, and play through applied research, interdisciplinary approaches, and honest reflective practice." (p. 10, Langara Academic Plan)

This research project is being driven by curiosity about how AI is being currently used in Recreation work and how that connects to students in the Recreation Studies programs. Learning and sharing this knowledge helps to inform a relevant and responsive pedagogy. Increasing faculty understanding of how AI is evolving in Recreation models curiosity, and a scholarly approach to learning more about new technologies in a critical and openminded approach.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

"We, at Langara College, celebrate our vital role in inspiring and nurturing the growth of students, one another, and our society. We commit to serving our communities by teaching and modeling our social duty to focus on social justice, to provide equity of access and opportunity, to embrace diversity and to intentionally foster inclusion. We commit to caring for our environment in all we do, from pedagogy to infrastructure, and to looking for sustainable solutions in all contexts." (p. 11, Langara Academic Plan)

Through this Applied Research project, researchers built on existing relationships with and connected to professionals in the Recreation field. Valuing the experience and knowledge of Recreation professionals helps strengthen the connections between the Recreation Studies faculty and department and the Recreation field. This research project demonstrates the need to look for sustainable ideas and solutions in working with AI as it evolves.

This Applied Research project also connects to a key desired future state category of Langara's Strategic Plan, "**Relevant, Innovative, High-Quality Programming**" This is described as:

Continuous and steadfast focus on student success drives our actions. A spirit of continuous improvement, supported by well-established program reviews, ensures the high quality of Langara's academic and continuing studies programs.

Programs provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to contribute to our economy and community, and students can access the courses they need for timely completion of their studies.

Within this category, this research project clearly supports the priority of "Create, implement, and embrace a continuous quality improvement process aligned to the curriculum life cycle." (Weaving a Shared Future, Langara Strategic Plan)

BENEFIT OF THIS RESEARCH TO FACULTY, RECREATION STUDIES DEPARTMENT AND THE RECREATION FIELD

AI is creating a disruption in how students are learning and how they are applying that learning. Recreation instructors are struggling to see where this technology can be used and how it is relevant to students in their Recreation work....and with that knowledge, be more informed about how to create space for learning with and without AI in Recreation courses. This is timely work for faculty in the continued conversation about how to use/ not use AI in teaching and learning.

This applied research project created an opportunity to work with different faculty, stay relevant in the challenges and learning for doing research. It also increases the integrity of faculty to participate in applied research to reflect what students are asked to do in their assignments.

This research builds on existing relationships between Langara Recreation Studies Faculty and the Recreation field and continue to positively grow Langara Recreation Studies' reputation of valuing the knowledge and experience from the Recreation field and contributing to that knowledge.

Image source: ChatGPT-4o

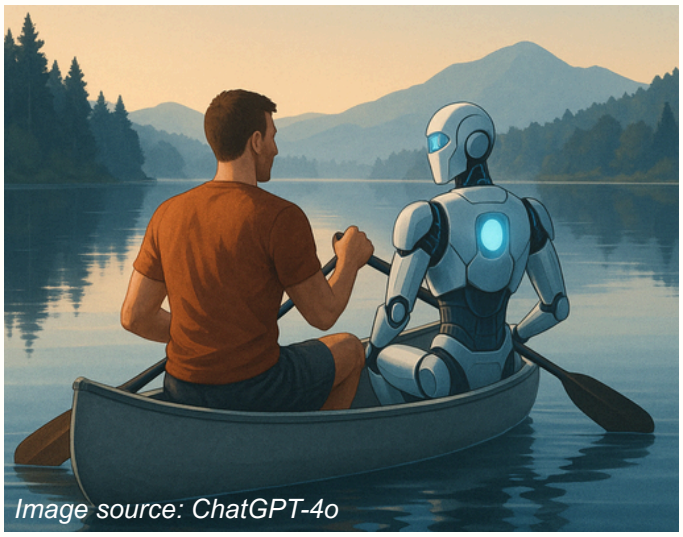
LITERATURE REVIEW

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is playing a growing role in many industries—such as healthcare, finance, education, technology, and transportation—and is beginning to influence the Recreation field as well. It supports more efficient operations, enhances visitor experiences, automates routine tasks, applies advanced technology, and helps organizations gain insights from the data it collects.

The objective of this research is to determine how artificial intelligence (AI) is currently being used responsibly and ethically in the Recreation field and what the possibilities of future use are to enhance municipal Parks and Recreation services. Looking to the future, the possibilities for AI in Parks and Recreation could be significant. This research drew on existing literature to explore the use of AI in event planning, user experiences, Recreation programming and evaluations, marketing and communication, preventative maintenance, facility scheduling and employee services.

Although numerous professionals in the municipal Parks and Recreation sector are starting to use and are recognizing the potential of AI, is it important to remain mindful of the associated considerations and risks. This research highlighted some of the risks municipal Parks and Recreation staff could encounter as they consider its implementation.

Image source: ChatGPT-4o



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The terms within the research question have been defined and described in the context of this research project. The areas that were explored include, current use of artificial intelligence in Recreation, the considerations and risks of using AI in the workplace, the possibilities and opportunities of using AI in Parks and Recreation and the scope and limitations of the study.

Terminology

There is a vast amount of lingo in relation to artificial intelligence that can cause confusion. To provide clarity and consistency throughout this research, the following terms have been operationalized/defined: Artificial intelligence (AI), Municipal Parks and Recreation, Possibilities, and Enhance.

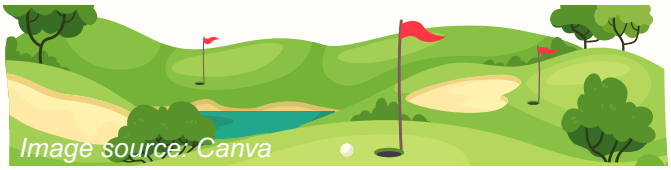
While some scholarly sources were cited, field-based literature was used to provide the most relevant and current definitions of key concepts.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

To provide context, AI was explained in comparison to human intelligence, which refers to the ability of a person to learn, understand, and make judgments or have opinions that are based on reason (Cambridge, n.d.). Artificial intelligence (AI) platforms gather information from individuals that input it into their systems, and then on their own, or combined with other technologies (e.g., sensors, geolocation, robotics) perform tasks that would otherwise require human intelligence or intervention. AI does not think in the way humans do; instead, it carries out tasks based on pre-set algorithms, instructions, and the data it processes, making decisions or actions based on patterns and inputted information. AI is technology that enables computers and machines to perform tasks that are human-like, such as recognizing patterns, comprehending language and solving problems (IBM, n,d,). One of the more recognized generative AI programs is OpenAI's ChatGPT, which is an AI chatbot that communicates through conversational dialogue to provide detailed responses to instruction prompts (Collins, 2023). It was released in November 2022 and has an estimated 100 million active users (Robert & Cai, 2024). In addition to generative AI programs like ChatGPT and others, artificial intelligence is currently widely used in various sectors; healthcare, finance, transportation, education and entertainment (Open AI, 2024).

Municipal Parks and Recreation

Municipal Parks and Recreation services provide opportunities for people to be physically active, socially connected, and culturally creative, which in turn enhances individual and community wellbeing (CPRA, 2015). These services are provided by local governments through the adoption of bylaws (Government of British Columbia). Municipal governments' role is to provide services in a fiscally responsible manner, not to make a profit, like private Recreation service providers. Funding for local government services is generated primarily through business and residential property taxes, as well as fees for services. These services that are provided for everyone in the community are referred to as 'public good'. A public good is a product or service that every member of a society uses freely without reducing its availability to others (Fernando, 2024). The same as the way we all pay for services like police and fire protection, access to Parks and Recreation benefits everyone in the community by providing green spaces, as well as sports, Recreation, and cultural facilities for all.



Possibilities

The Cambridge Dictionary defines 'possibilities' as, "something that can be done or achieved, or that can exist" (Cambridge, 2024, n.d.). In the context of this research, 'possibilities' explored the 'potential uses and opportunities' of using artificial intelligence in municipal Parks and Recreation. Joe Pitti, deputy director of health and community services for Town of Easton (Massachusetts), said originally, he thought AI would only affect people in certain fields, such as technology or higher education, not Parks and Recreation. However, after trying ChatGPT he realized, "This is something that probably does not have boundaries in terms of the fields that it's going to impact." He wondered about Parks and Recreation. "How can we leverage this and find ways to create efficiencies?" (Collins, 2023 para. 3).

Enhance

Enhance can be defined as the opportunity "to improve the quality, amount, or strength of something" (Cambridge, 2024, n.d.). Municipal Parks and Recreation services are people-centered, meaning that while participating, relationships are developing. The services offered through local Parks and Recreation departments are in high demand and staff are often stretched to meet the needs of the community. Artificial intelligence could be used in ways that could free up staff to spend more time with the participants/customers. Ryan Hegreness, the Deputy Director of Business Services at South Suburban Parks and Recreation in Colorado agrees that AI is currently aiding local government with tasks such as marketing, communication, and program management in Parks and Recreation (Hegreness, 2023).

Image source: ChatGPT-4o

Municipal Recreation and Artificial Intelligence

The benefits of participating in Recreation are endless. Public Parks and Recreation provide individuals with opportunities to improve their overall health and wellbeing, as well as positively impacting the environment. People that participate in public Parks and Recreation reap the benefits of being more connected to each other and their community (City of North Vancouver, 2020).

"Community Recreation is essential to personal health and wellbeing and has been proven to reduce health care, social service and police/justice costs. Community Recreation provides opportunities for positive and healthy behaviours. Parks and green spaces have a positive impact on individual wellness and on the natural environment. Community Recreation is integral to providing opportunities for residents of all ages, ethnicities, abilities and interests to live happy, active and connected lives" (City of North Vancouver, 2020, p. 1). People that work in municipal Parks and Recreation hold jobs that are multi-faceted. They are often stretched in many different directions, making it difficult to complete all the tasks required each day. As those in other sectors have discovered, artificial intelligence (AI) can be used to make people more efficient in their jobs.

While industries such as healthcare, finance, transportation, education and entertainment have been actively using AI for diagnosing diseases, fraud detection, self-driving cars, research, and personalized recommendations (Open AI, 2024), municipal Recreation professionals may not be aware of how AI can assist them to do their job more efficiently.

Indeed, AI provides an innovation that in the past, people could only dream of. Technology has come such a long way in such a short amount of time and Recreation software has changed the way many work. Today, Parks and Recreation professionals are presented with an innovation that in a few years could revolutionize the way services are provided to their communities.

Although there may be concerns about using AI in the workplace, this research examined ways to address these issues, so that staff can be more customer focused, while improving existing services and efficiency. This could free staff up to address the 'more human parts' of the job - and time to become more creative and innovative.

Consideration and Risks

While many in the Parks and Recreation field are realizing the potential of using AI, there are considerations and risks that users need to be aware of. These include, but are not limited to authenticity, accuracy, privacy, biased information and fear of job loss. "Unlike most tools, the landscape of AI is changing so rapidly that it can be difficult to anticipate issues, and many outcomes of the widespread use of AI remain yet to be seen - potentially leading to unpredictable and far-reaching consequences" (Collins, 2024, para.9).

Authenticity

OpenAI software and its cutting-edge technology ChatGPT is currently capable of producing content that sounds conversational and realistic, so it is difficult to determine if something has been generated through AI or if a 'real person' wrote it. Canadian Heritage carried out an experiment using generative AI to improve the efficiency of ministerial correspondence.

> ***The AI-produced responses were quicker, more grammatically precise, and frequently hard to tell apart from those written by humans. (Public Sector Network, 2025)***

According to current ChatGPT statistics, "an average of 53 percent of people can't tell that ChatGPT content was generated by AI" (Robert & Cai, 2024, para. 15). However, since the output is based on artificial intelligence rather than human intelligence, the absence of an auto control system causes ChatGPT to provide meaningless answers in some cases (Barakazı, 2023). This could lead people to be sceptical of the information generated within their organization, wondering if was generated by AI or written by a person.

Accuracy

In a survey commissioned by National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA), the majority of park and Recreation professionals are concerned that the risk of information being inaccurate keeps them from using AI in their work (Collins, 2024). Information generated by AI may look correct, however it is not always accurate. ChatGPT and other AI platforms can occasionally produce inaccurate information, so Parks and Recreation professionals need to validate the facts prior to using them. Ryan Hegreness, an experienced Parks and Recreation professional concurs. He asked ChatGPT some budget questions about a Parks and Recreation Department; "tell me how many staff this agency has, what their budget

for staffing is, and the cost recovery" (Hegreness, 2023, 13:22/1:01:42). He was surprised how quickly the software generated the information. At first glance, it looked correct, citing agency documents and page numbers, however, checking the information more closely, he reviewed the cited documents, realized that it gave him information that looked right, but it was not actually factual information.

> ***Generative AI is basically just math and algorithms providing users with information, so it offers them the best probable answer, not necessarily the right answer. (Hegreness, 2023)***

Privacy and Public Trust

AI cannot detect confidential information from information that is unrestricted. "AI is shaped by data collected from its users and others. While many companies take steps to protect privacy, it's no secret that some are not as careful and that breaches can happen even when security measures are put in place" (Collins 2023). Staff could inadvertently include information in their reports or presentations that is sensitive to their agencies or organizations. As municipal Parks and Recreation staff continue to use AI and as municipalities develop AI policies, there will need to be a balance between technological innovation and privacy considerations (OVIC, n.d.), so that the public can be assured that the personal information they provide and the information they receive is protected.

Biases

While AI is sometimes portrayed as being 'more than human', it is in fact, created by humans, learning from humans and utilized by humans. "As people are inputting information into AI platforms, AI is inheriting our human biases" (Collins, 2024, para. 20). University of Calgary, Law Professor, Gideon Christian agrees, "Technology has been shown (to) have the capacity to replicate human bias. In some facial recognition technology, there is over 99 per cent accuracy rate in recognizing white male faces. But unfortunately, when it comes to recognizing faces of colour, especially the faces of Black women, the technology seems to manifest its highest error rate, which is about 35 per cent." (Christian, 2023, para. 4). This means the information being input into AI by people who have biases reflects the information Parks and Recreation professionals can retrieve from the various AI platforms. More companies are considering the use of AI in their daily work and are recognizing the risks. As such, they are working to address them, by establishing responsible processes that can mitigate bias, such as incorporating regular audits or researching and engaging in fact-based conversations about potential human biases (Manyika, Silberg & Presten, 2019).

Developers of artificial intelligence are well aware, and share the concern that their large language models, such as ChatGPT, and other platforms could perpetuate racial and cultural biases. (Piers, 2024). Meagan Collins from the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, emphasizes that in the public sector, "We need to be stewards of the data we collect. Historical data can carry systemic biases, and we must be mindful of the ethical implications." (para. 14, Public Sector Network)

Image source: Canva

Lack of Human Interaction

Municipal Parks and Recreation offers people-centered services. People that participate in municipal Parks and Recreation services do so for a variety of reasons; to learn a new skill, to improve and maintain their physical health and mental health, to interact with others, to have fun, to give back to their community, and to provide opportunities for their families to meet and learn from people from different cultures. All of these factors require human interaction.

> ***By implementing AI into municipal Parks and Recreation services, people will be interacting with machines to obtain information, to register for programs and to provide feedback about their experiences. Without careful consideration of guidelines and policies, departments run the risk of losing the warmth and depth that only genuine human interactions can provide. (Mottern, 2023)***

If a parent encounters a problem with deciding on which program to register their child with special needs in, AI can provide the choices through programmed responses, but it lacks the personal touch, the comfort and support that only people can provide. "We must recognize that AI is a tool meant to enhance our capabilities, not replace human connections" (Mottern, 2023, para. 15).

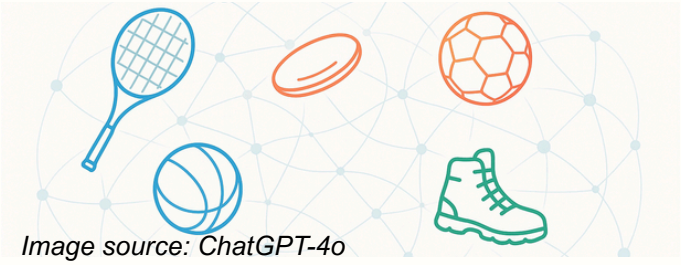


Image source: ChatGPT-4o

Fear of Job Loss

As AI is being incorporated into more Parks and Recreation Departments, some fear that their jobs will be replaced or changed by AI, reasoning that automation and intelligent systems could make many jobs redundant (Kaskade, 2024), especially those that are not direct service jobs. "AI will eliminate some jobs, but it's going to change every job: those who can work with AI will replace those who can't." (Bowen & Watson, p. 29,30). To address these concerns, organizations need to clearly communicate why and how AI is being used, demonstrating the success through examples and stories. They need establish transparent criteria for AI integration and commit to retrain and reskill employees, including them in the decision-making process to address the job security concerns (Kaskade, 2024). Providing Recreation services will always require employees to interact with participants and to respond to community need. The key will be for employees to learn how to give effective prompts to AI to achieve desired outcomes (Collins, 2023) and use it in a way that enhances service without causing harm to people.

Need for AI Training

Like any new software, employees need training, not only on how to use the tools, but to be aware of the risks of imputing information about their organizations into the AI platforms. Artificial intelligence can be useful to Parks and Recreation organizations by allowing them to process vast amounts of data, identify patterns, and make informed decisions based on that data. In addition to generative AI programs, like Chat GPT and Co-Pilot, there is an evolving landscape of artificial intelligence, such as predictive analytics which is a type of data analysis that uses past information to try to

guess what might happen in the future (Public Sector Network, 2025). These platforms are constantly changing and becoming more available to employees.

As with any new technology, employees require training—not just in how to use AI tools effectively, but also in understanding the risks of entering personal and/or organizational information into these platforms. To support this, post-secondary institutions are offering courses tailored for experienced leaders, focusing on how AI can enhance strategic decision-making, improve service delivery, and support long-term planning within municipalities. (SFU Digital Innovation and Leadership, 2025). Employees receive ongoing feedback, which support their gradual improvement in using AI. This highlights the importance of cultivating a culture that promotes experimentation and continuous learning. (Public Sector Network, 2025).

Image source: ChatGPT-4o

Opportunities & Possibilities

While there are some negative consequences of using AI that need to be considered, Parks and Recreation professionals can address the risks and realize some extraordinary advantages of using the various AI platforms. Today, electronic tools are available that in a few years could revolutionize the Parks and Recreation industry (Pitti, 2023). Some of the possibilities of using AI in Parks and Recreation include event planning, enhanced user experience, Recreation programming and evaluations, marketing and communication, preventative maintenance, facility scheduling and employee services.

Event Planning

AI can be a valuable tool for planners of community events, making them easier to organize and implement. According to a digital magazine for special event professionals, AI is already being used to enhance efficiency and accuracy by automating repetitive tasks, such as handling registrations and scheduling. AI can also analyze participant profiles and behaviours and recommend sessions, and individual events that are targeted to individual interests (Dam, 2024). When prompted with a question about event planning, AI platforms like ChatGPT can generate a well-organized list of tasks that can be used as a starting point for planning.

Enhanced User Experience

With the use of social media, AI can provide enhanced customer service. “AI-powered chatbots provide instant support and information, handling a wide range of inquiries from event logistics to general information and recommendations” (P+ Studios Egypt, 2023, para.8). AI software allows users to make

inquires that are custom to their needs, such as filtering Recreation program offerings on a specific day for a specific age. This alleviates the need for parents to leaf through the entire leisure guide for targeted pieces of information.

"Another platform at the forefront for Parks and Recreation is Placer.ai, which uses location analytics to provide data on the movement of people, such as where they travel to/from and how long they stay at a given location" (Collins, 2023. para. 7). Parks and Recreation professionals currently using this software are discovering who is using their park systems and Recreation spaces, and how they are interacting with the services. AI could help Recreation managers and programmers make better customer decisions by collecting user input and then making actionable decisions based on their customers' wants and needs. (Hegreness, 2023).

Recreation Programming

AI tools can be used to generate Recreation program ideas, saving time on creating initial drafts and concepts (Hegreness, 2023). Using artificial intelligence to create ideas for Recreation programs can help staff by providing a starting point. This approach makes it easier to think about suggestions, include diversification, adjust and improve ideas, encouraging more variety in programming and saving time compared to creating plans from scratch. Artificial intelligence can generate different types of unique programs that might work in their community based on the unique and diverse demographics (Hegreness, 2023). One American Recreation professional found it difficult to imagine how AI could impact their work. After experimenting with ChatGPT, he realized that AI could save him and his team of staff hours of time and effort and "was able to generate recommended rules for our town pool and etiquette for our new pickleball courts" (Pitti, 2023, para. 10).

> ***Artificial intelligence platforms can also be used to organize and manage the various aspects of scheduling for sports leagues, as well as for courts, fields, and gymnasiums.***

Recreation Program Evaluations

Municipal Parks and Recreation departments regularly conduct evaluations of programs, however collecting the data, analyzing the information, and determining changes based on participant feedback can be cumbersome and time-consuming. Given the other priorities that Parks and Recreation staff have, program evaluations may not be done as frequently as possible to make them beneficial. Artificial intelligence has the potential to take data from registration systems and customer surveys, help analyze what is currently being done and make recommendations of how it could be done better (Hegreness, 2023). Nevertheless, there is still significant progress to be made. According to research conducted by American Digital Government: Research and Practice, currently "we lack an overview of which specific technologies have been used to analyze citizen contributions and how these perform in comparison to established human evaluation" (Romberg & Escher, 2024, sec. 3, para. 2).

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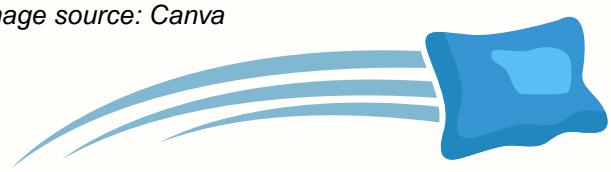

Marketing and Communication

Recreation programmers are tasked with not only creating quality Recreation programs but promoting and marketing these programs to the community. Successful programs are often carried over year after year, and program descriptions often stay the same. This can lead to complacency, making the programs less than attractive over time.

> ***Artificial intelligence can be used to freshen up Recreation program descriptions that get rolled over from one program cycle to the next, identifying new ways to re-theme or rethink the program and creating more creative descriptions for existing programs.***

Recreation staff can ask artificial intelligence programs like ChatGPT for a better way to describe something or a more playful way to communicate the message (Hegreness, 2023). Additionally, AI can customize responses to inquiries from the public. "AI-powered tools are transforming marketing communications by creating targeted and personalized content that resonates with customers. AI-powered tools can automate repetitive tasks and free up time for more strategic marketing activities" (Ben-Seth, para. 15, 16).

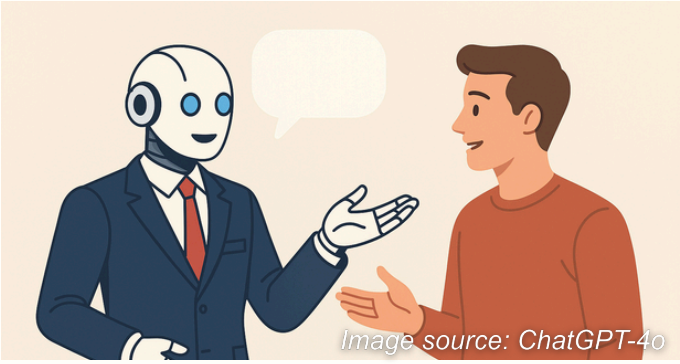

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Image source: ChatGPT-4o

Preventative Maintenance

Artificial intelligence is currently being used in the private sector to assess the mechanics of systems used in Recreation facilities, such as HVAC, refrigeration (ice quality in arenas), aquatics (chemicals and measuring and balancing) and more. Based on information from hundreds or thousands of the same mechanical device, AI can predict the kind of maintenance it may need before a human might and be able to flag that for preventative maintenance (Hegreness, 2023). "AI will track changes in the facility and equipment use and adjust operations to maximize energy savings while developing maintenance plans in real time" (Piche, 2024, para. 1). The Ontario Recreation Facilities Association suggests that since the use of AI in Recreation facilities is in its infancy, it is critical for municipal Parks and Recreation departments to anticipate and understand how governing authorities and insurance carriers will support or constraint the use of AI in these early days (Piche, 2024). They also recognize that AI technology will only be accepted in the public Recreation sector by working alongside the human personal with the goal of reaching more efficient facilities. "AI will help to automate dirty, dull, and dangerous tasks with automation playing a crucial role in addressing workforce gaps that will allow future growth in the industry. But only if facility staff remain educated and well informed to leverage this power" (Piche, 2024, para. 10).

Facility scheduling

With today's technology, a person's smartphone tells a great deal about them and their behavior. It collects data based on their location (GPS and Wi-Fi), it monitors how they interact with different apps and websites, building a profile of their preferences and routines, it detects their social media interactions that assists in understanding their interests and social connections and for those who use their phone to purchase goods, this data can be used to understand their shopping habits and preferences. This data is shared with companies who use it for target marketing (Open AI, 2024). One AI platform, Placer.ai can use this type of data to understand which facilities/spaces have the highest visitation rates, or even within the facility what rooms are underutilized (Hegreness, 2023). Having this information readily available would allow Recreation programmers to better program and better utilize Recreation facility spaces.

Employee Services

Municipal Parks and Recreation managers spend an enormous amount of time on human resources issues from recruitment to training, to scheduling and to evaluation of staff. Due to the nature of the services, there is a combination of full-time staff, part-time staff, seasonal staff, auxiliary staff and contract staff. The sheer number of staff makes employee management complex and challenging. Artificial intelligence can assist with the diversity of tasks including recruitment (shortlisting an ideal candidate for the vacant positions), employee evaluation (performance, plans and accomplishment) (Abdelhay, 2022). Training staff can be time consuming and when delivered by people that have other responsibilities, can be inconsistent making AI

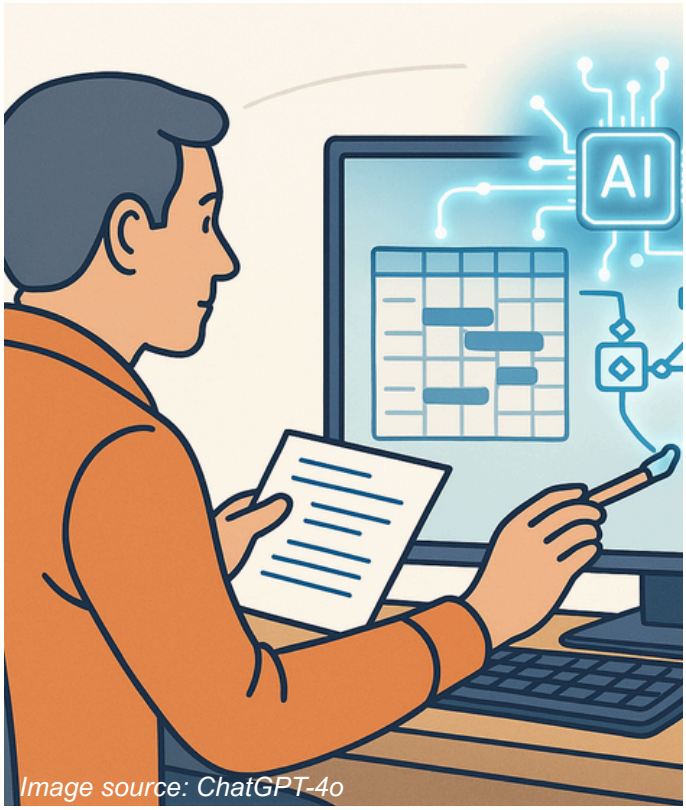

Image source: ChatGPT-4o

a useful tool to consider. There are several ways managers could use artificial intelligence to assist with employee training, including creating training content and keeping it updated; offering around-the-clock assistance through a conversational AI chatbot (Open AI, 2024). AI can also create testing material to assist employees with retention of training, identifying employee skill gaps and where they need more training, and creating personalized, adaptive training programs by identify their needs, style, existing knowledge, and building personalized training programs (Bersin, 2024). Due to the complexity of scheduling a large number of staff, many of whom (part-time, auxiliary and contract staff) have other commitments, "AI-powered scheduling software can quickly generate schedules based on employee availability, skill sets, preferences as well as other key factors such as qualifications" (Planday, 2023, sec. 02. para. 1).

Scope and Limitations of the Study

Due to AI being so new to everyday users, much of the literature has been taken from journals, articles, blogs and podcasts. The researchers found limited scholarly research about artificial intelligence in municipal Parks and Recreation. Consequently, much of the literature is from sources that are either about generic artificial intelligence or adapted from other sectors. It is recognized that due to the rapid changing of AI, this research will be a 'snap in time' and could be redundant upon publication of the project.

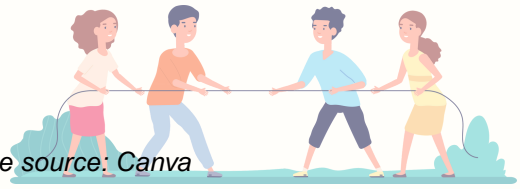

Image source: Canva

> ***While AI can simulate empathy through programmed responses, it lacks the ability to manage both personal emotions and understand the emotions of others, feelings that come naturally to humans. (Mottern, 2023)***

Municipal Parks and Recreation build communities and provide opportunities for people to stay socially connected, physically active, and cognitively fit. Building relationships with family, friends and members of one's community play a critical role in the development and personal growth of children and youth and maintaining social connections leads to healthy aging in later life. AI cannot build relationships and cannot replace the human connections.

METHODOLOGY

Primary research for this project was completed using on-line surveys distributed through British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association and Recreation Foundation of British Columbia member networks. Follow up interviews were completed by researchers on zoom for members who identified on the survey they would be interested in being interviewed.

Surveys

A pilot survey was distributed to Langara Recreation Studies Program Advisory Group and Recreation Studies Faculty Oct. 2025 to gather feedback. Six people responded and their feedback was reviewed and incorporated into the final survey. The on-line survey was completed on MS Forms (Survey questions located in Appendix A).

The survey was published in BCRPA's on-line member regularly scheduled newsletter Oct. 16 – with a completion deadline of October 31. Three people responded to the survey by deadline. Researchers then contacted BCRPA to ask if they could re-publish the survey in a stand-alone newsletter for more attention. In November, the survey was published by BCRPA in a stand-alone email focusing just on this survey with a deadline of Dec. 6.

Researchers also contacted the Recreation Foundation of BC and the on-line survey was sent out through an email to members. This distribution through BCRPA and the Recreation Foundation resulted in 57 completed surveys. Initial data analysis of the surveys was completed by Manraj Singh, research assistant.

Interviews

From the survey, 18 people identified that they would be interested in a follow up interview by the researchers. 14 people were interviewed on Zoom by the researchers in January/February 2025 with the Interview Question Framework located in Appendix B.

The 14 people interviewed were from municipal Parks and Recreation departments and not-for-profit sport organizations. Interviews were conducted on Zoom software and were recorded with the interviewee's permission. Transcripts from the interviews were coded and analysed for themes and stories/examples that amplified the data collected in the surveys.

Langara Research Ethics Board

The research project focused on authorized uses of AI/ChatGPT/LLM in Recreation. In addition to learning how Recreation staff use AI in their work researchers were hoping to learn about guidelines and policies that are being used for AI. Methodology for this research were an on-line survey and zoom interviews. The researchers made it very clear that they were only interested in information about authorized use of AI and asked participants not to disclose information about unauthorized use that would put them at risk. The researchers believed focusing on authorized use was the most beneficial to collecting the information needed to learn more about how it is being used in Recreation.
Focusing the research on authorized use only aligned with the category of "not a human participant" from the TCPS-2: Core2022 course from the Government of Canada Panel on Research and did not require an application to Langara Research Ethics Board.

DATA ANALYSIS FROM SURVEYS

A total of 57 survey responses were collected from Recreation professionals working in Municipal Parks, Recreation, and Culture Departments across BC. During the analysis, there were many missing answers in different survey questions. These missing answers were replaced with 'None' or 'Empty', so they would not affect the overall percentages.

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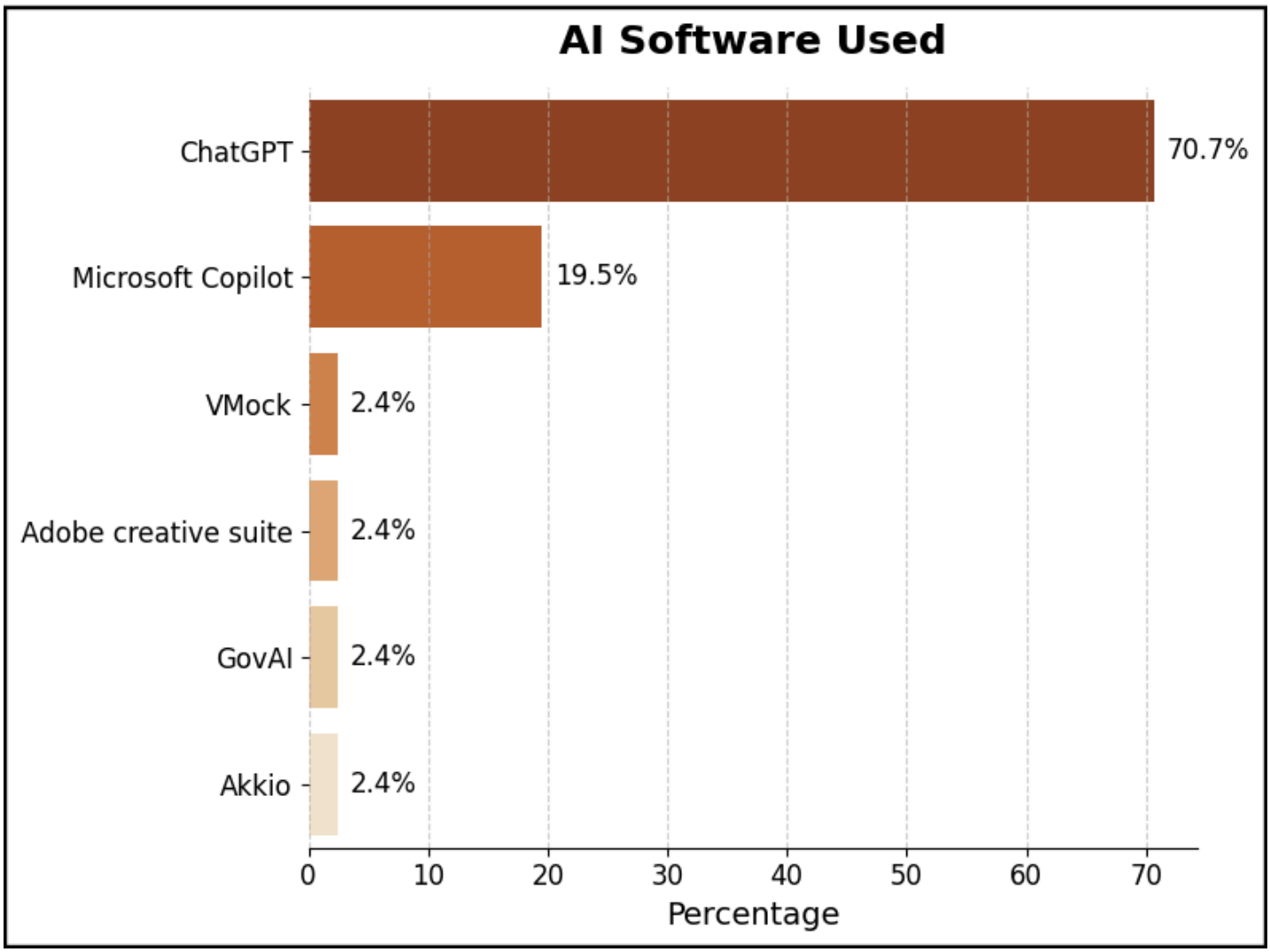
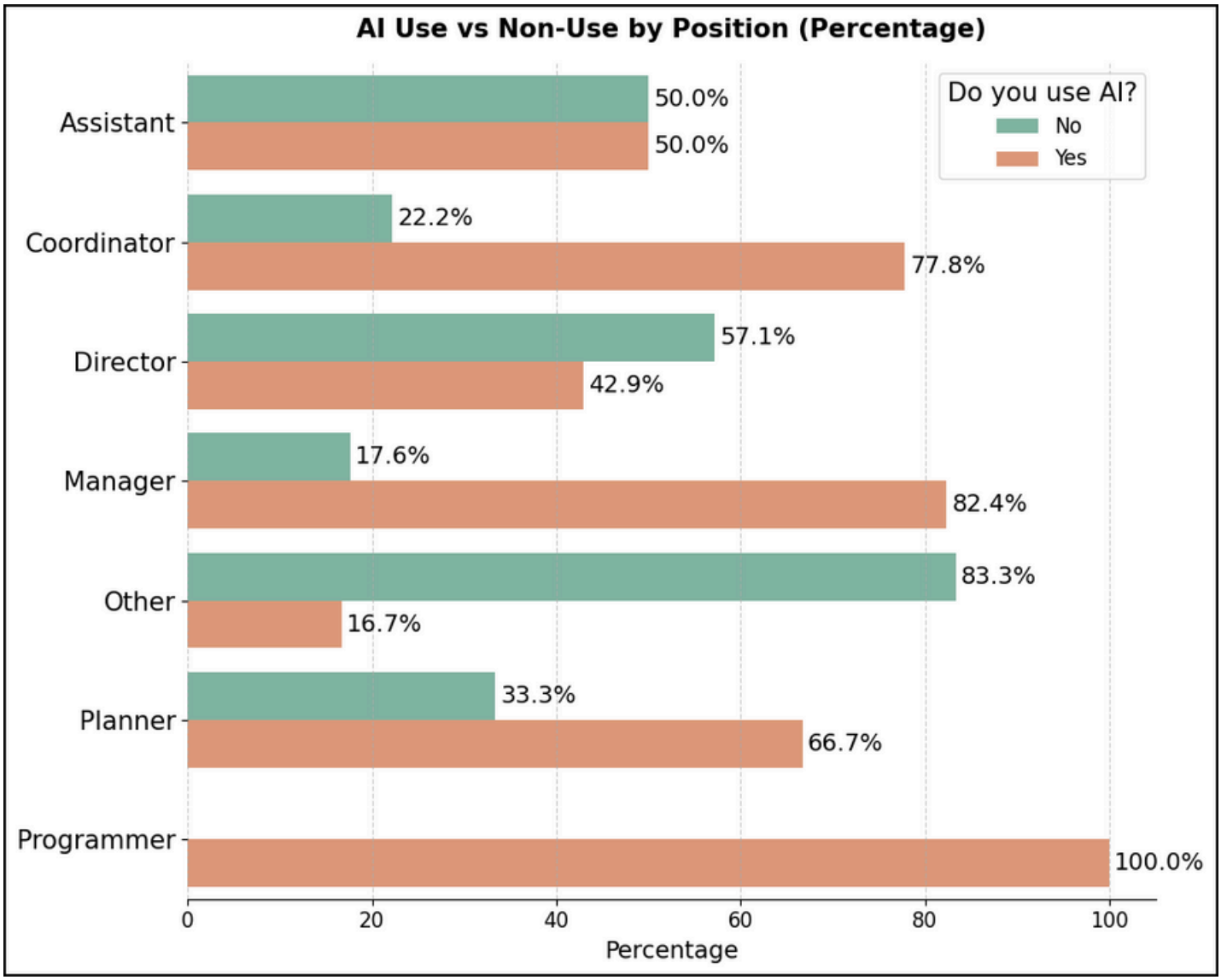


The most common AI tool used by Recreation professionals was ChatGPT, with 70.7% of respondents mentioning it. This was followed by Microsoft Copilot (19.5%). A few other tools were mentioned, but they were much less common, including VMock, Adobe Creative Suite, GovAI, and Akkio, each used by 2.4% of respondents.

This shows that large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT are currently the most popular and accessible AI tools used in the Recreation sector. Most staff seem to rely on AI for general writing support, content generation, and brainstorming ideas.

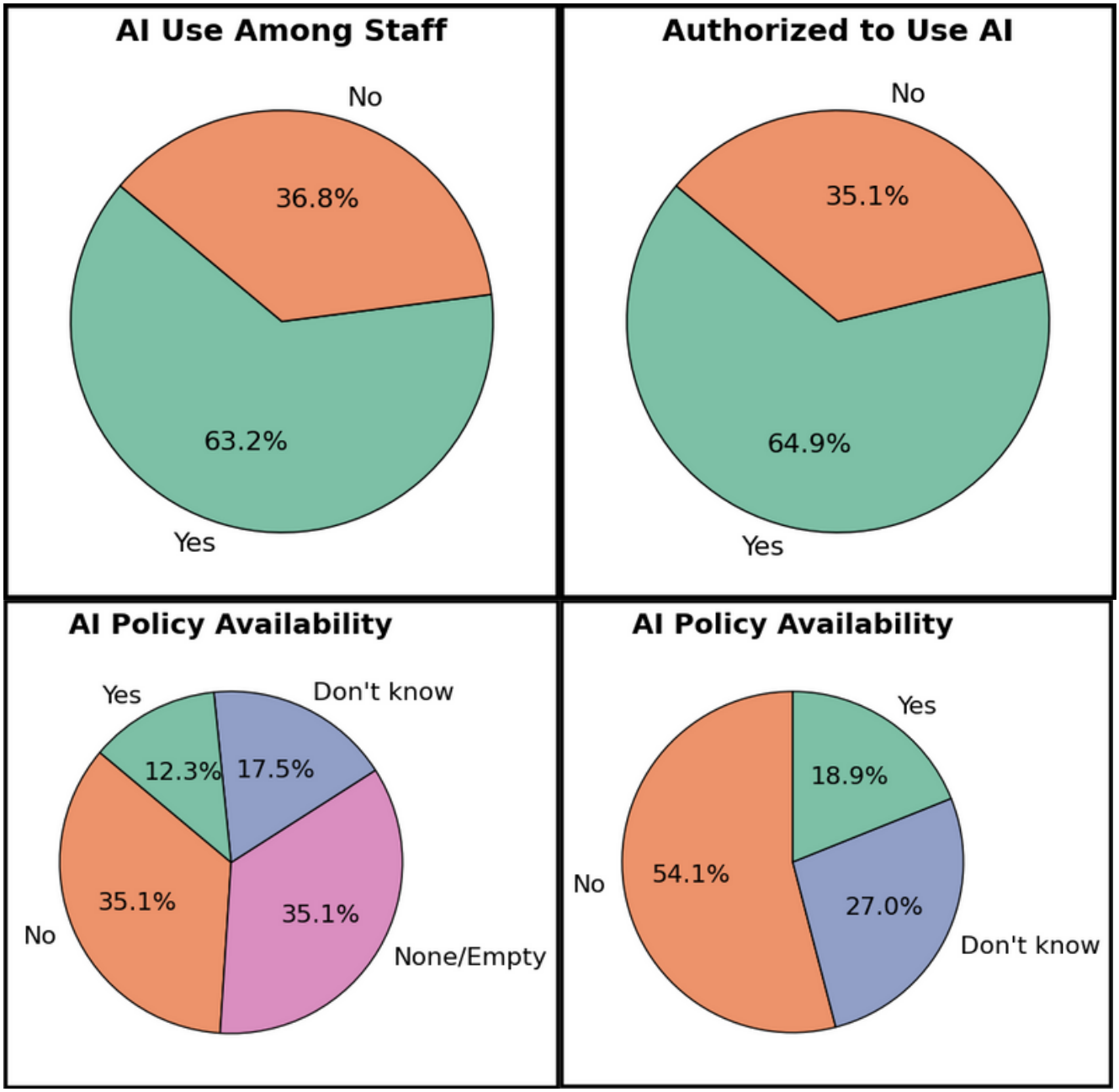
To better understand how different types of Recreation staff use AI, the positions of respondents were grouped into categories, such as: Manager, Coordinator, Programmer, Director, Assistant, Planner and Other.

This step helped identify whether managers use AI differently compared to programmers or assistants. This type of analysis can show if some positions are more likely to use AI or if certain roles depend on AI more often for their tasks.

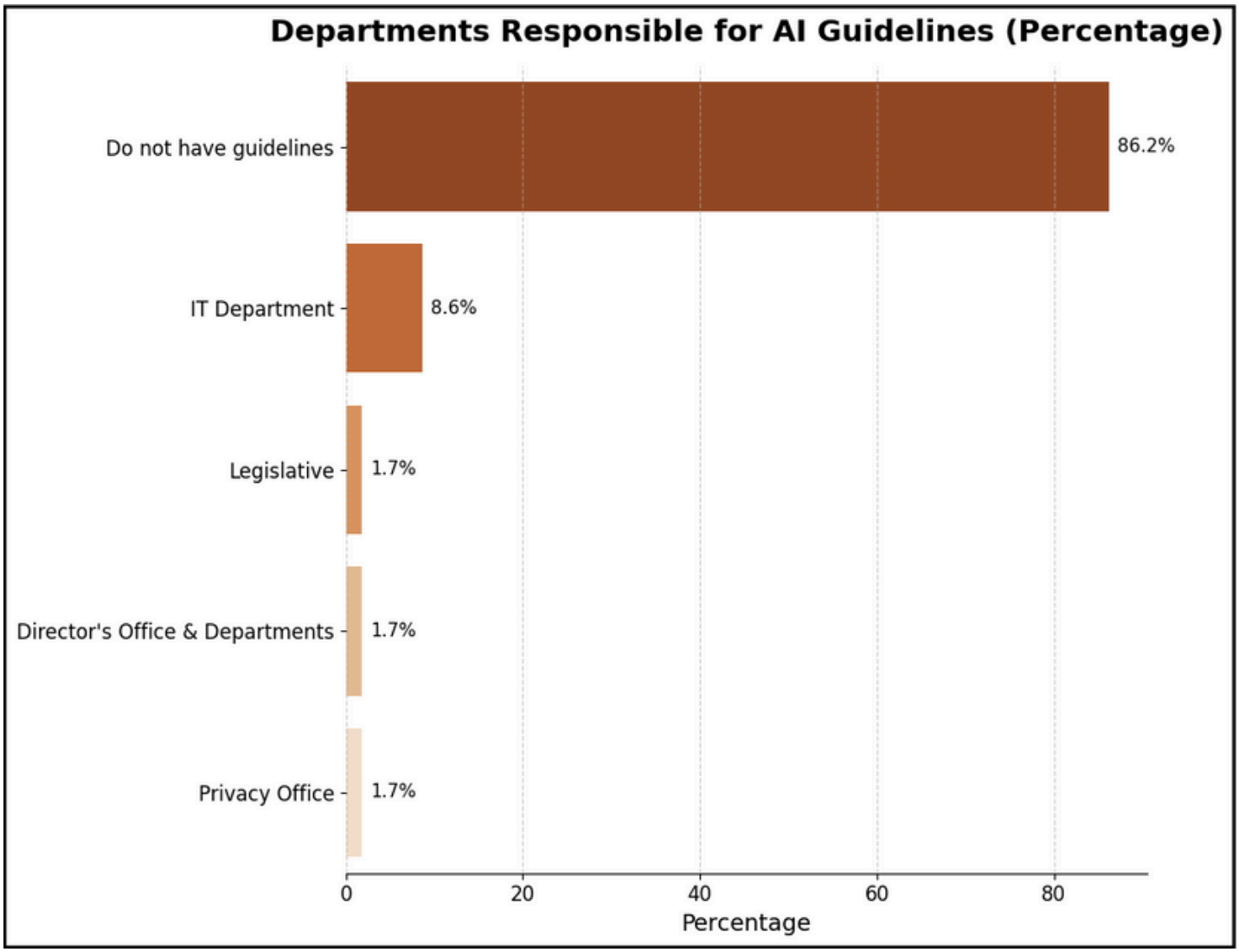


The data also showed differences in AI use by job position. All programmers (100%) said they use AI in their work. Managers (82.4%) and Coordinators (77.8%) also showed high AI adoption rates. Planners (66.7%) and Directors (42.9%) were less likely to use AI, and Assistants were split evenly (50% use AI, 50% do not). Staff in the "Other" category had the lowest AI use (16.7%).

This shows that programming and coordination roles rely more on AI, possibly because they need to create content, plans, and documents regularly. Higher-level positions like Directors may rely less on AI, while assistants and other support staff may not see AI as directly useful to their day-to-day tasks.



The survey results show that 63.2% of Recreation staff use AI in their work, while 36.8% do not. This indicates that a majority of staff have already started using AI tools, but a large group still has not, which could be due to lack of knowledge, training, or comfort with these tools. When asked if they were officially authorized to use AI at work, 64.9% said yes, while 35.1% said no. This shows that some staff are using AI even though there are no clear rules or policies in place in their organizations. The survey also asked about AI policies in Recreation departments. Only 12.3% of staff knew their organization had a policy, while 35.1% said no policy exists, and 17.5% were unsure. When missing values were removed, 54.1% said there was no policy, 18.9% said yes, and 27% were unsure. These results show many organizations either lack clear AI policies or have not effectively communicated them to staff, leaving most employees unsure about proper AI use.



When asked which department is responsible for creating AI guidelines, 86.2% of respondents said no guidelines exist at all. Only a small number of staff said that their IT department (8.6%) or other departments like the Legislative team, Director's Office, or Privacy Office (each 1.7%) were responsible for AI policies. This highlights a major gap in leadership and responsibility, leaving most staff unsure who to ask for help when using AI tools.

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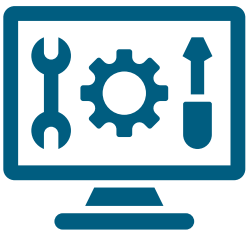

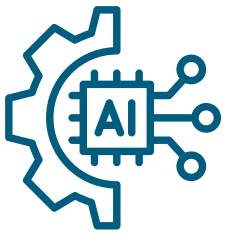

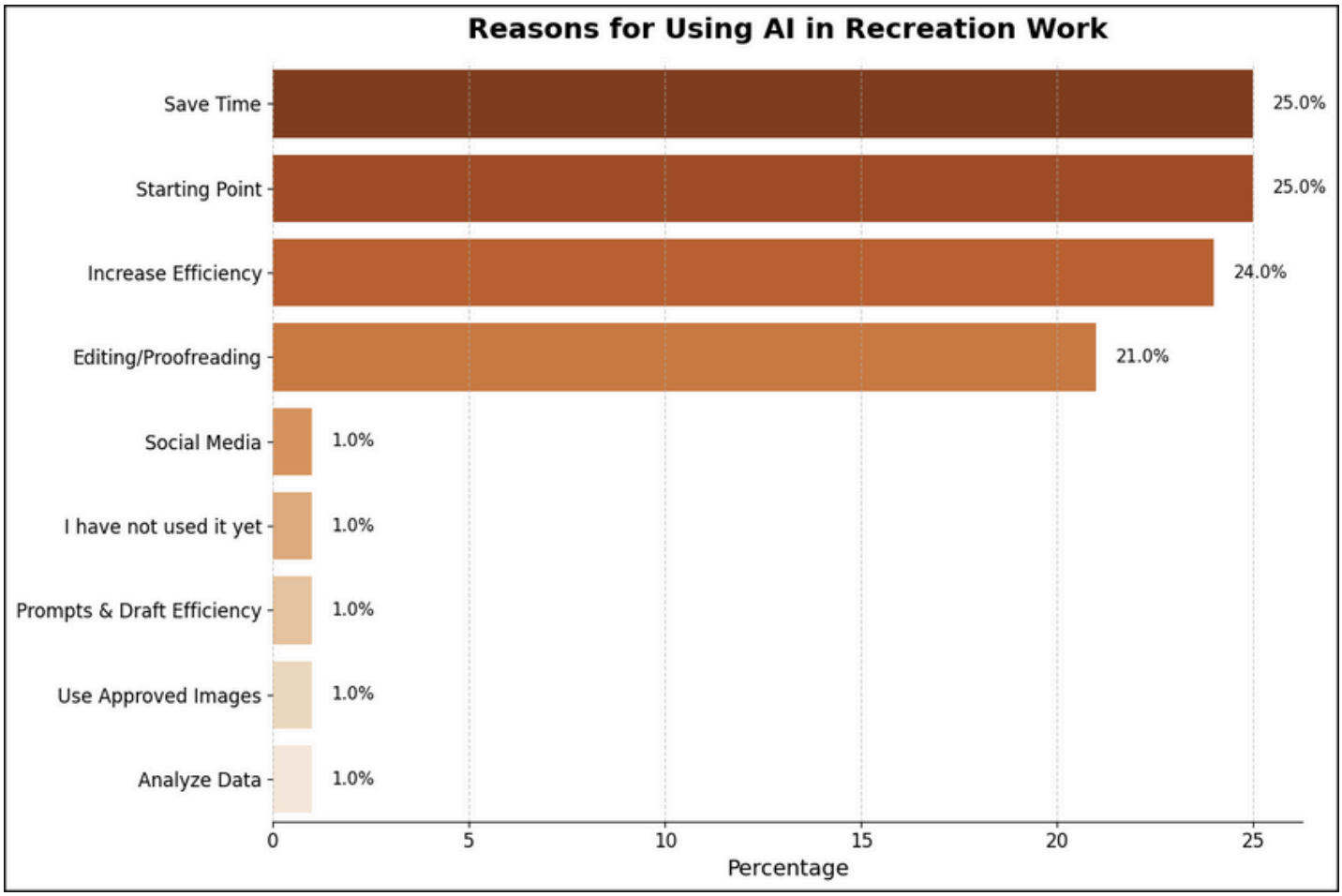

> ***When asked why they use AI in their Recreation work, the most common reasons were to save time (25%) and to help start projects (25%).***

This shows that staff see AI as a helpful tool to speed up their work and get ideas quickly when they are starting new tasks.

Another 24% of respondents said they use AI to increase efficiency, meaning they find it useful to complete work faster and reduce manual effort. In addition, 21% said they use AI for editing and proofreading, especially for writing documents, reports, and emails.

Only a small number of respondents (1% each) said they use AI for creating social media content, generating drafts and prompts, analyzing data, or using pre-approved images. These responses show that most staff currently use AI for simple, time-saving tasks related to writing and content creation, rather than more advanced uses like data analysis or creative design. This highlights that AI is seen mainly as a support tool to make administrative and communication tasks easier, rather than a tool for complex decision-making or innovation at this stage.

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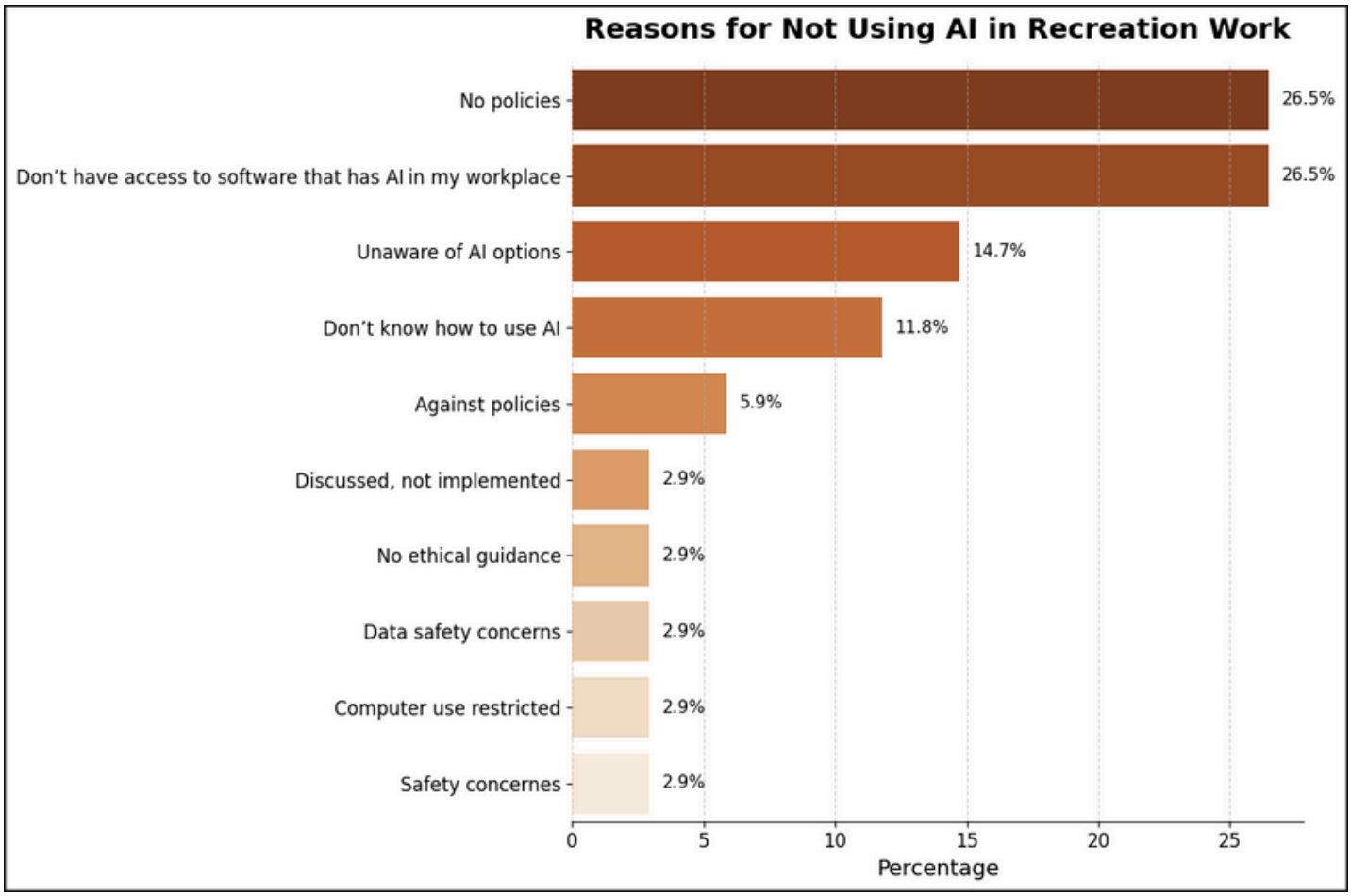


When asked why they do not use AI in their Recreation work, the top two reasons were "No policies in place" (26.5%) and "No access to software with AI tools" (26.5%). This shows that the biggest barriers are the lack of clear AI guidelines and the absence of available tools in the workplace.

Some staff also mentioned that they are unaware of AI options (14.7%) or do not know how to use AI (11.8%), showing that a lack of training and awareness also prevents them from trying AI tools. A smaller group (5.9%) said they are against AI use in general.

Other less common reasons, each mentioned by 2.9% of respondents, included; AI was discussed but not implemented yet, there is no ethical guidance, they have concerns about data safety, Computer use is restricted, preventing AI use and General safety concerns about using AI technology.

Overall, this data shows that most staff who are not using AI face external barriers, like no policies, no tools, or no training, rather than personal resistance to AI. Providing clear policies, access to tools, and training sessions could help address many of these issues and encourage more staff to start using AI in their work.

HOW RECREATION STAFF USE AI

Some Recreation staff have already seen positive results from using AI at work, though in the survey many (26 respondents) either left the question blank or said they had no stories to share. This shows that AI use is still new in many workplaces, and some departments have not yet used AI enough to see major benefits.

> ***Among those who shared how they use AI, writing and communication tasks were the most frequently mentioned.***

ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot emerged as the most commonly used AI tools. Recreation staff are applying AI to a wide range of tasks, primarily focused on writing, editing, and idea generation. Common uses include drafting or refining emails, grant applications, and program descriptions.

Several staff said they use AI to get creative ideas, such as program names, event themes, or ways to make programs more inclusive and accessible. This is supported by the literature that found that Recreation staff can use artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT to find improved descriptions for programs or to communicate messages in a more engaging and playful way. (Hegreness, 2023).

AI is also being used to summarize feedback from community engagement efforts. One organization, which uses Copilot, distributes surveys at the end of each program set. They partnered with Microsoft to use AI in generating summaries of the feedback. They receive an

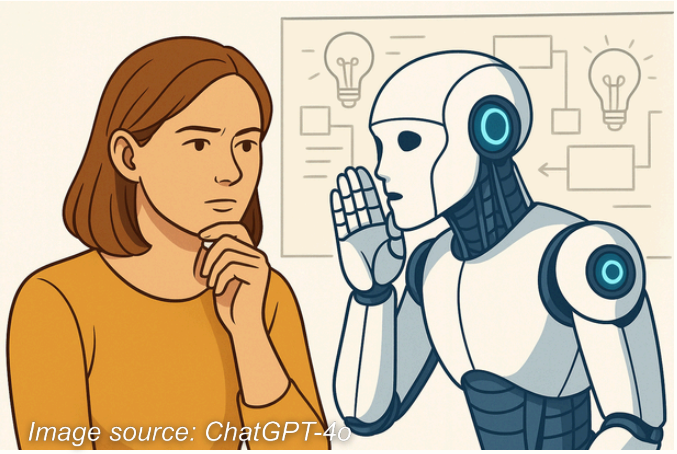


Image source: ChatGPT-4o

average of 400 survey responses each month, with the process running continuously (Interview 'K' personal communication, March 25, 2025). The literature revealed two differing perspectives on this topic. One article supports the idea, highlighting the practical applications of AI in Parks and Recreation. The article noted that artificial intelligence can utilize data from registration systems and customer surveys to assess current practices and suggest ways to improve them. (Hegreness, 2023). However, according to research conducted by American Digital Government: Research and Practice, currently there is limited insight into which technologies can been applied to evaluate feedback from evaluations and surveys and how their effectiveness compares to that of human analysis. (Romberg & Escher, 2024).

One respondent shared that AI can be a powerful equalizer for individuals with learning disabilities like dyslexia, especially those who struggle with spelling. They pointed out that some people cannot even use a dictionary because their spelling is so off that they cannot find the word (Interview 'E', personal

communication, February 27, 2025). With AI, these individuals can create and express ideas in ways that would not have been possible otherwise. Other respondents shared similar experiences where AI helps them make their writing clearer and more concise as well as correcting spelling and grammar errors. Recreation staff who do not have strong writing skills could be encouraged to use AI to improve their writing.

Some staff use AI to help with policy writing, creating standard operating procedures, and drafting council reports. AI also supports them in adjusting tone to suit different audiences, such as council members, the public, or internal teams. AI is also being used to write content for social media, newsletters, and public engagement materials, a practice that is supported by the literature stating that AI can look at customer data and help create marketing campaigns that are personalized for different groups of people (Ben-Seth, 2023).

In some cases, AI generates creative visual concepts and design ideas to enhance the quality and clarity of presentations. Many Parks and Recreation departments include Culture and one of the interviewees cautioned that as a sector, we should think carefully about the ethics of using AI generated art within their work as they work with artists and felt their organizations needed to support authenticity in work and not use AI. “We have a responsibility to support artists in our communities” (Interview ’A’,‘O’ personal communication, March 2025)

One organization launched a pilot group made up of staff from different departments, including Parks, Recreation and Culture, to explore AI use and exchange their experiences. As a result of this initiative, the organization developed AI guidelines, hosted workshops, and set up an internal communication system to help staff share their stories, articles, and tips. (Interview ’K’, personal communication, March 25, 2025).

Another involved the use of AI to quickly draft a sponsorship contract. AI was also utilized to generate Excel formulas, enabling staff to analyze data they previously could not manage. One interviewee said that AI assistance reduces time spent on mundane tasks and creates more time for strategic thinking, board development and building partnerships within the community. (Interview ‘N’ personal communication, February 6, 2025).

Image source: ChatGPT-4o

Overall, most staff are using AI as a support tool to help with writing, editing, and brainstorming which in turn saves time, reduces stress, and improves work quality. At this point in time the majority of Parks and Recreation staff that completed the survey or participated in the interviews are not using AI for advanced data analysis or decision-making, but mainly for day-to-day communication and creative tasks. This shows that AI is helping staff save time and improve their work, but it is mostly used for simple tasks rather than complex projects.

Image source: Canva

ORGANIZATIONAL INSIGHTS ON AI: RISKS, CHALLENGES, AND NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

The survey indicated that so far, major negative outcomes from using AI have been uncommon among Recreation staff. Thirty-four respondents either left the question blank or indicated they had nothing negative to report. This suggests that AI use remains fairly limited in many Recreation workplaces, which may explain the lack of serious issues to date.

Image source: ChatGPT-4o

Among those who did share negative experiences, many said AI-generated content sometimes has errors. For example, AI summaries of meeting notes were inaccurate and needed careful proofreading. In one case, an AI-edited email included a broken hyperlink, which was only noticed after it was sent to clients. (Interview 'M', personal communication, February 4, 2025) This aligns with existing literature; when a Recreation professional inputted budget information, AI provided an inaccurate response. Since generative AI relies on mathematical models and algorithms, it generates the most probable answer, which is not always the correct one (Hegreness, 2023).

Some respondents said that AI-generated images sometimes had visual errors, like blurry details or extra arms and legs, making them unusable for marketing materials. (Interview 'E', personal communication, February 27, 2025). During the interviews, it was reported that AI can 'hallucinate', meaning it can make up incorrect information, so staff are encouraged to always review and fact-check before using AI-generated content. (Interview 'I', personal communication, February 27, 2025) Others echoed this point, noting that some organizations caution staff about AI's potential inaccuracies and advise them to carefully verify any AI-generated content before using it. (Interview 'O', personal communication, March 3, 2025) As the literature indicated, some Recreation professionals are hesitant to use AI in their work due to concerns about the accuracy of the information it provides (Collins, 2024).

A few of the respondents raised the concern of the amount of energy that AI uses to generate responses in comparison to a Google search. One interviewee cited that AI uses ten times more energy (Interview 'A', personal communication, March 4, 2025). While the researchers could not confirm the actual amount, the research identified it as a concern (Interview 'G', personal communication, February 18, 2025). As a sector that prioritizes environmental protection, it is important to ensure Parks and Recreation organizations act as good stewards of natural resources.

One of the interviewees relayed a unique concern that was raised during a hiring process, where a candidate used AI to create a press release during a writing test. (Interview 'D', personal communication, February 6, 2025) This raised questions about how much of the work was the candidate's own, showing that some hiring practices may need to change to account for AI use. This relates to what the literature said about authenticity. Content that sounds too polished could make people skeptical, leading them to question whether the information was genuinely written by a person or generated by AI.

Survey responses indicate that most organizations have provided little information or education on the risks associated with using AI. Out of all responses, 36 people either left the answer blank or said nothing has been shared so far. This shows that many Recreation staff are using AI without any formal training or guidance on potential risks.

Concerns about equal access to AI came up in some of the interviews and the acknowledgement that different levels of access to AI software like ChatGPT require different payment options or subscriptions. (Interviews 'I, M, N, O' personal communication, March 2025). It is not clear what this will look like in the future, but this may be an important consideration in conversations about AI within Municipal Recreation organizations.

A few staff noted that their organization offered basic cautions, including reminders to avoid entering personal or confidential information into AI tools. Some organizations have begun guiding employees toward more secure AI platforms like Microsoft Copilot, which works within their internal systems and offers better data protection compared to public tools like ChatGPT (Interview 'K' personal communication, March 25, 2025). During the interviews, the researchers learned that some larger organizations have already developed guidance documents for using generative AI, explaining how these tools work, what risks they pose, and how staff should use them alongside human judgment, not as a replacement for it. These documents also highlight risks like bias, misinformation, and copyright issues. (Interview 'J' personal communication, February 21, 2025).

> ***Overall, the responses show that most Recreation departments have not yet developed clear education or training programs about AI risks, leaving staff to figure things out on their own.***

Where information does exist, it usually focuses on basic privacy rules, the importance of human oversight, and warnings about AI errors. To support safe and responsible AI use, it would be beneficial for organizations to provide formal education, clear policies, and training specifically designed for Recreation staff.

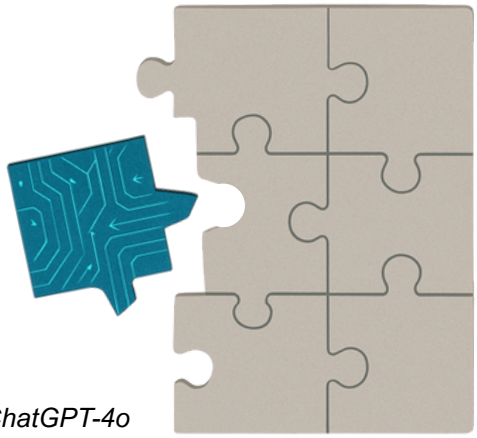


Image source: ChatGPT-4o

DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS

Awareness, Education and Guidelines are needed

One of the key findings of this research was that although 63% of survey respondents said that they are authorized to use AI in their Recreation work, 54% said there was no policy in their organization about it and 27% said they did not know if there was a policy in place. This shows a need for Recreation organizations to create awareness, educate and develop guidelines around staff use of AI. This would increase discussions about AI, increase positive use of AI and mitigate risks of use.

Some survey respondents noted that opinions on AI are divided within their workplaces. Some staff see it as helpful, while others are more skeptical, leading to inconsistent use across teams. These examples show why clear guidelines, better training, and proper oversight will be important as AI use grows in Recreation departments. Like any new software, employees need training, not only on how to use the tools, but to be aware of the risks of imputing information about their organizations into the AI platforms. A local university offers an on-line training course designed to help experienced leaders explore how AI can enhance strategic decision-making, service delivery, and long-term planning in municipalities (SFU Digital Innovation and Leadership, 2025).

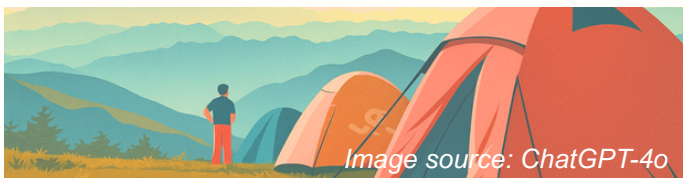
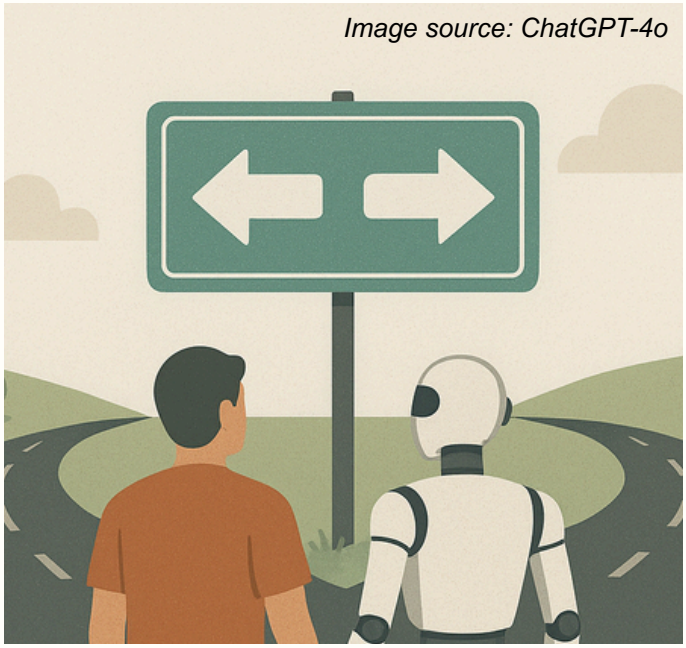


Image source: ChatGPT-4o

Data collected from the survey and interviews show that the emergence of AI models such as ChatGPT and the speed that they are evolving have created a situation where organizations have early adopters who are using but they are ahead of the guidelines and education. Creating awareness, education and training for AI within Recreation organizations would encourage a clear philosophical approach that is aligned with the values and mission of the Recreation organization.

AI is an emerging technology, and in some organizations, it is not clear which department is responsible for education, training and policies. IT Departments, Finance and Recreation could all be potential leaders within organizations for AI use. This confusion makes it difficult to have clear direction with a community Recreation lens as to how to use AI in ways that can positively support Recreation staff and vision and how it can be used in Recreation in the future.

Image source: ChatGPT-4o



One Recreation organization that was interviewed has taken responsibility for leading AI and created a structure for how to use it in Recreation. This has led to innovative thinking, clear policies and guidelines for staff. This organization took a top-down approach to integrating artificial intelligence into their workplace. They started out by establishing a pilot group made up of senior staff from various departments that met on a regular basis to explore the use of AI and to establish guidelines for organizational staff. To address the risks of privacy and public trust, the team recommended the adoption of Microsoft Copilot as the standard software. This required a financial commitment from the organization to purchase a license with a higher level of security. They conduct workshops and meet with Recreation clerks on a bi-weekly basis. During these sessions, they explore the benefits of using AI, its potential impact, and the associated risks. They create and distribute articles for staff through their internal intranet, that include tips and tricks – this is an ongoing practice.

Knowledge of Recreation, Community and Critical Thinking are important

Information that came out during the interviews showed that AI users need to have a strong understanding of Recreation and their community to use AI in a way that can be helpful and eliminate biased and misinformation. Knowledge and critical thinking are important to discerning results from AI and in creating prompts and context that can help AI be used as an effective tool. This required knowledge and need for critical thinking connects to students in the Recreation Studies programs at Langara College and creates an opportunity for faculty to think about how they can continue to grow these skills with students to create informed users of these AI tools.

Ethical Considerations of using AI within a Recreation and Culture organization

An area that emerged in some of the interviews focused on the ethical considerations of using AI with Parks Recreation and Culture with a specific focus on supporting authenticity in art, (visual, spoken, written) and artists. Some organizations were hesitant to use AI because they felt that it was not supporting artists or valuing authenticity. This is an important consideration within Recreation organizations as many include culture that support and showcase artists in the community. Ethical considerations also included privacy issues with individual and organizational data and the understanding of biases within AI data. Access to AI was another consideration brought up in the interviews. Many Recreation organizations value access and the inequitable access to AI due to payment options may be something to explore in how it aligns with organizational values.

Image source: ChatGPT-4o

FURTHER RESEARCH

This research project has highlighted some areas where further research would be beneficial to understanding more about how Recreation organizations are currently using AI and how it could be used in positive ways in the future.

The following points outline some next steps for future research in this area:

- This research has assisted in starting conversations about AI in Recreation Organizations. The researchers presented a session at the BCRPA symposium May 2025 with the hope that Recreation staff will start sharing practices and experiences within their Recreation organizations and with other community Recreation organizations. Further research could track the use of AI within Recreation organizations as it continues to evolve building on this specific research project.

- Investigating current best practices for educating Recreation staff on AI use, as well as examining existing policies, would provide valuable guidance for implementation.

- Exploring the ethical implications of AI use in cultural contexts - particularly its impact on artists and the preservation of authentic work - could help shape responsible approaches and support local artists

- Identifying which departments within organizations are spearheading AI education, training, and policy development - such as IT, Recreation, and Finance. This can offer insights into effective leadership models for municipalities.

CONCLUSION

The use of AI in municipal Parks and Recreation is in an infancy stage of development in the digital world. At the same time, AI and its use in post-secondary learning and Recreation organizations has been gaining momentum. ChatGPT became public in November 2022 and since then has continued to evolve quickly, user application and knowledge continues to move at a rapid speed.

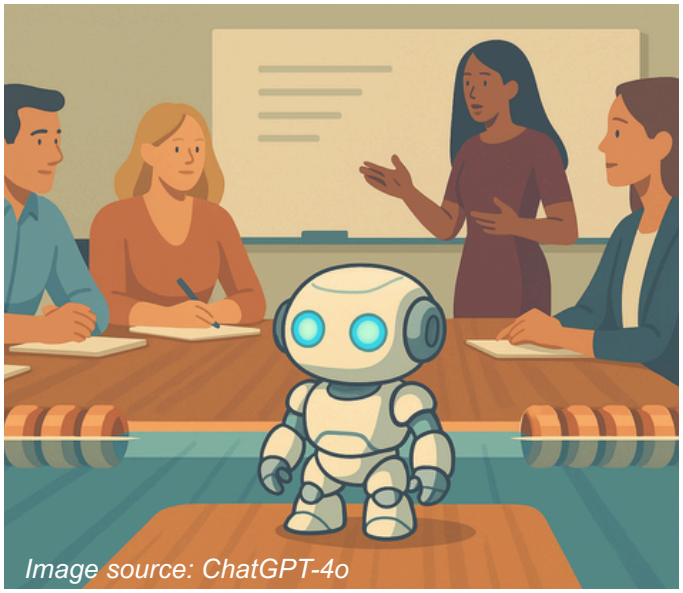


Image source: ChatGPT-4o

It is here to stay, and the early adaptors of this technology may benefit in ways that are outlined in this report and in applications that are only being thought of.

This applied research project aimed to capture a snapshot of how Recreation organizations are using AI. The intent was in learning this, the researchers could then share this knowledge with Recreation students and faculty to guide how they could use it in the classroom to prepare them for their work in the Recreation sector.

By exploring both the current uses and future potential of AI, municipalities can better explore and understand how to leverage this technology to enhance the quality and accessibility of Parks and Recreation services, ultimately creating more vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive community spaces and services.


Image source: ChatGPT-4o

Results from the online survey and interviews revealed that many Recreation organizations lack sufficient education, guidelines, or policies for their staff regarding the use of AI, such as ChatGPT (which is currently the most used AI within Recreation organizations). Overall, the comments show a mix of curiosity, caution, and optimism, with interest in more training and tools to help staff use AI effectively and responsibly.

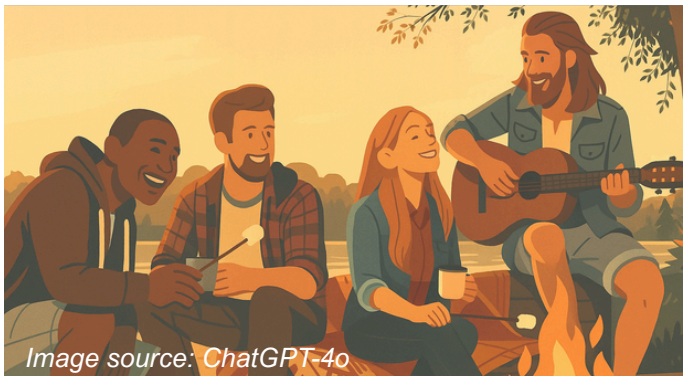


Image source: ChatGPT-4o

While AI has the potential to enhance municipal Parks and Recreation services for individuals and positively impact communities, through improved efficiencies, cost savings, improved productivity, and improved customer services, the challenges highlight the need for consideration of guidelines and policies to be established for the successful integration of AI. AI has also sparked a number of controversies, some of which have been covered in this research; authenticity of information, accuracy, privacy, biased information, lack of human interaction and fear of job loss.

Municipal Parks and Recreation professionals considering its use would need to weigh the risk to reward ratio. By being aware of the various AI platforms, investing in training and being ethical stewards of public information, municipal Parks and Recreation departments can take advantage of the benefits of AI and improve service delivery to their communities.

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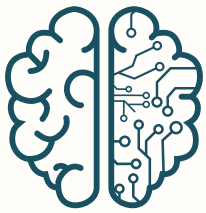

APPENDIX A

Online Survey Questions

1. What is your position in your Recreation Organization?

2. Are you currently authorized to use AI in your work in Recreation? (if yes, continued the survey, if no went to Question 10)

3. What software do you use?

4. How do you use AI in your work in Recreation?

5. Why do you use AI in your work in Recreation?

6. Describe any information or education your organization has shared about the risks of using AI.

7. Can you share a specific success story or positive outcome resulting from the use of AI in your department or workplace?

8. Conversely, can you share a specific negative outcome resulting from the use of AI in your department or workplace?

9. Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience with AI in Parks and Recreation?

10. Why don't you use AI in your work? (This is the end of the survey as we are only collecting data from people in Recreation organizations that are authorized to use AI).

11. Does your organization have policy guides for AI use in your work?

12. What department is responsible for creating the guidelines?

13. All survey participants: If you would be interested in participating in a focus group or individual interviews with the researchers to talk more about this, please share your contact information.

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

1. (How did you find out about AI? (did it come from outside/inside org)? Who is driving the use of AI in your organization?

2. How are you talking about the use of AI? - what are we looking for here? Eg. Staff meetings, informally,..... what AI software are you using / is your org using?

3. How are you using/seeing AI/LLM/ChatGPT used in your work in Recreation?

4. Do you or does your organization have any concerns about using AI? If yes, please elaborate. What are the questions you/people in your organization are asking about it?

5. Based on your experience, what do you see as the future role of AI in enhancing the services and operations of Parks and Recreation departments?

6. Do you have anything else that we haven't asked your about using AI in municipal Recreation that you'd like to share?

(Note: highlighted areas are prompts used by researchers)

END REPORT