NP LAB

From Website to Welcome Desk

An NP Lab case study examining North Parade Guide, an in-development adaptation of the Deckhand Dave platform for nonprofits and other mission-driven organizations

Development status: North Parade Guide is in development as a separate, branched version of North Parade LLC's Deckhand Dave software. The proposed product name and its visitor-facing guide, Avery, are tentative. This study describes the intended direction and operating model. It does not represent a completed deployment, proven outcomes, or a commitment that every feature discussed here will appear in the finished product.

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The gap between a website and a person

Nonprofit organizations often have far more to explain than their staffing allows. Their websites may contain the mission, programs, eligibility requirements, events, volunteer opportunities, donation options, annual reports, success stories, and contact information. That content is available, but it is not always easy to use when someone is standing in the organization's lobby, attending an event, visiting a community center, or deciding whether to get involved.

A website waits for the visitor to know what page to open. An employee can ask why the person came in, translate organizational language, connect one question to another, and explain why the work matters. The problem is that the employee may also be answering phones, serving participants, preparing an event, handling intake, or performing the work that keeps the organization operating.

The proposed system sits between those two experiences. North Parade Guide would bring an organization's approved public information into its physical space through a conversational kiosk. It would act as an extension of the website, a first point of contact, and an enthusiastic advocate for the mission. It would not become a substitute for caseworkers, program specialists, reception staff, fundraisers, or volunteers.

The useful version of this idea is not an artificial employee who can do anything. It is a controlled guide that can explain what the organization has chosen to say, help visitors find the right path, and bring a person into the interaction when human judgment or authority is required.

North Parade Guide and Avery

North Parade Guide is being developed as a separate branch of the existing Deckhand Dave software. The branch allows North Parade to reuse the platform's practical foundation while giving Guide its own identity, workflows, content model, and long-term direction.

Deckhand Dave was designed for marine dealerships. Guide is intended for broader public-facing operations, especially nonprofits, associations, community organizations, visitor centers, foundations, and similar mission-driven environments. The products may continue to share selected platform improvements, but Guide should not carry marine terminology, dealership assumptions, or Dave's character into unrelated settings.

Avery is the tentative visual guide inside North Parade Guide. Avery gives visitors a recognizable place to begin and makes the kiosk feel more approachable than a search box. The character can welcome visitors, ask what brought them in, explain programs, highlight current work, and encourage involvement.

Avery should be a guide, not a fictional employee presented as human. The interface should disclose that responses are generated by an AI-supported system using information approved by the organization. Avery should not claim personal experience,

emotions, employment, professional credentials, or firsthand knowledge of the people served.

More than a digital brochure

Simply putting a website into kiosk mode would add little value. Most websites are designed for personal devices, assume scrolling and navigation habits that do not translate well to a public touchscreen, and provide the same path regardless of why someone arrived.

Guide would instead organize the interaction around visitor intent. Possible starting points include:

- **What does this organization do?** Explain the mission and current work in plain language.
- **Can you help me?** Describe available programs, public eligibility information, and the correct next step without determining eligibility.
- **How can I get involved?** Present volunteer roles, events, memberships, partnerships, or other approved opportunities.
- **Show me the impact.** Share reviewed outcomes, stories, current initiatives, and financial or program reports without embellishment.
- **I want to support the work.** Explain donation options, sponsorships, wish lists, or in-kind needs and direct the visitor to an approved transaction method.
- **What is happening today?** Display current events, schedules, closures, check-in instructions, and location information.
- **I need a person.** Identify the right department or request assistance when a staffed handoff is actually available.

The same content may appear on the organization's website, but the kiosk can make it situational. A volunteer candidate does not need to search through donor information. A person looking for services should not have to understand the organization's internal department names. A potential donor may want a short explanation of the current priority before deciding whether to scan a code or take a brochure.

A fictional use scenario

Harbor Community Alliance is a fictional nonprofit operating a food pantry, youth mentoring program, veterans resource clinic, and seasonal housing-assistance program. Its small office has two employees at the front desk, but both regularly step away to assist participants and coordinate deliveries.

Jordan enters after seeing a social media post about volunteering. No one is at the desk. The North Parade Guide kiosk displays Avery and offers several clear choices. Jordan selects **I want to help** and says that weekday availability is limited.

Avery retrieves the organization's current volunteer information and explains three options: a Saturday food distribution shift, evening mentoring orientation, and a flexible donation-sorting role. Jordan asks whether mentoring requires a background check. The system answers from the approved volunteer policy, states that screening is required, and links the question to the next scheduled orientation.

Jordan then asks what difference the food program makes. Avery presents the organization's reviewed annual figures, identifies the reporting period, and briefly explains its current pantry expansion. It does not invent a personal success story or imply that a specific donation guarantees a specific outcome.

Jordan chooses to receive the volunteer application. The kiosk displays a QR code for the organization's existing application page and offers a printed information card if that option is installed. It does not collect sensitive application data on the public kiosk. Before Jordan leaves, a staff member returns and can continue the conversation with context Jordan chooses to share.

The kiosk did not perform volunteer screening, accept Jordan, or replace the coordinator. It prevented an unattended lobby from becoming a dead end and helped a motivated visitor reach an appropriate next step.

What carries forward from Deckhand Dave

Guide does not need to begin as an entirely new technical system. Several existing platform capabilities remain useful:

Deckhand Dave foundation	North Parade Guide adaptation
Local-first touchscreen application	Reliable in-person guide that can retain core functions during an internet outage
Dealer-controlled information	Organization-approved mission, program, event, impact, and visitor information
Questions about products and services	Questions about programs, support, volunteering, donations, events, and organizational work
Staff assistance request	Department-specific handoff with honest availability and response expectations
Dealer branding and Dave character	Organization branding within the Guide interface, supported by Avery as the product's visual guide
Administrative content and system controls	Governed content updates, publishing review, expiration dates, and deployment health
Site-specific knowledge retrieval	Organization-specific answers grounded in approved sources rather than unrestricted

Deckhand Dave foundation	North Parade Guide adaptation
	web results

Branching the software creates an important boundary. Shared infrastructure can continue to improve across both systems, while nonprofit-specific decisions do not distort the dealership product. Guide can develop its own program taxonomy, content governance, consent rules, calls to action, accessibility patterns, and integrations.

The organization must remain the authority

Nonprofit information can be sensitive even when it is public. Program availability changes. Eligibility descriptions require careful wording. Impact statistics belong to a reporting period and methodology. Client stories may be anonymized, licensed for limited use, or inappropriate outside their original context. Partner relationships and funding restrictions can also change what the organization is permitted to say.

Guide should answer from an approved knowledge package rather than treating the general internet or a language model's training data as authoritative. Each content item should identify:

- The owning program or department.
- The approved public wording and source.
- The intended audience and permitted use.
- Effective, review, and expiration dates.
- Geographic, scheduling, capacity, or eligibility limits.
- Required disclaimers or human-review conditions.
- Related actions, pages, forms, contacts, and locations.
- Whether the content can be summarized, translated, or quoted.

The system may use a language model to make the information conversational, but it should not silently expand the organization's claims. If the approved sources do not answer a question, Avery should say that clearly and offer the correct next step.

This is especially important for organizations working in healthcare, housing, legal assistance, immigration, domestic violence, substance use, financial support, disability services, or benefits navigation. In those environments, Guide may explain public program information and direct visitors to trained staff. It should not diagnose, determine eligibility, promise confidentiality beyond the actual policy, interpret an individual case, or provide professional advice.

An advocate without becoming a sales machine

The “hype” function has legitimate value. Nonprofits need people to understand why their work matters. A flat recitation of a mission statement rarely creates that understanding. Guide can highlight progress, connect programs to the larger mission, surface stories the visitor might otherwise miss, and make it easy to act while interest is high.

That enthusiasm needs a factual boundary. Avery should never:

- Inflate the number of people served or the effectiveness of a program.
- Present an old result as current.
- Imply that every donated dollar goes directly to one visible service unless that is accurate.
- Invent testimonials, quotes, client experiences, endorsements, or partnerships.
- Use guilt, urgency, or emotional pressure that the organization has not approved.
- Describe a program as available when it is full, paused, geographically limited, or subject to screening.
- Promise that a volunteer, donor, applicant, or participant will receive a particular result.

The strongest advocate is credible. Guide should make the organization's approved evidence easier to understand, not manufacture a more impressive story than the evidence supports.

Proposed technical model

The visitor interface would send a question or selected intent to a local service. That service would retrieve permitted content, apply organizational rules, assemble a bounded model request, and check the response before display.

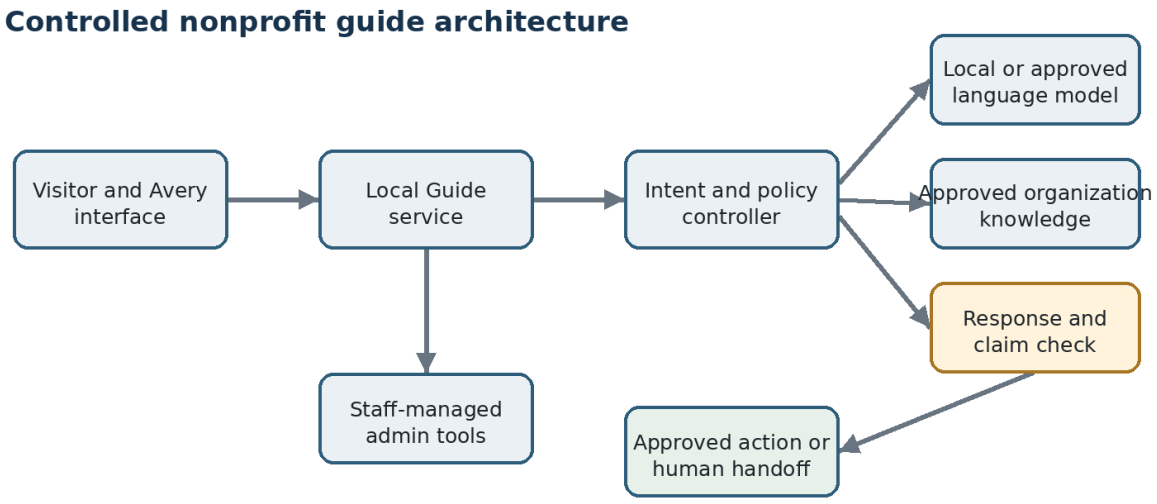

Figure 1. Controlled nonprofit guide architecture

The knowledge layer should remain separate from the model. Authorized staff could update hours, events, capacity notices, volunteer needs, donation priorities, program descriptions, and contacts without retraining it. Published content should be versioned so the organization can review what changed and roll back an error.

Core questions and local content could remain available during an internet interruption. External actions such as submitting a form, processing a donation, sending an email, checking live capacity, or connecting to a constituent-management system require a network and should show their actual status.

Guide should prefer linking to the organization's existing systems rather than becoming a second database for every business function. A public kiosk is usually the wrong place to enter medical, financial, legal, identity, or detailed case information. The system can explain a process and direct the visitor to a secure channel without collecting the underlying sensitive data.

Privacy and public-space design

Public kiosks are shared devices. Someone may stand behind the visitor, touch the screen after a session, photograph it, or watch the interaction from across a lobby. The safest default is anonymous use with minimal retention.

Guide should clear visible session data after inactivity and begin each session without exposing the previous visitor's questions. It should avoid asking for names, birth dates, account information, case details, or contact information unless a specific, reviewed workflow requires them. Sensitive workflows should usually move to a private staff conversation or the visitor's own device.

Operational analytics can still be useful. The organization may count sessions, selected topics, unanswered questions, handoff requests, link or QR-code use, and system errors. Full transcripts should not be retained by default. If a pilot temporarily records

conversations for evaluation, the notice, purpose, access, retention period, and deletion process must be explicit.

Guide should not combine kiosk interactions with donor, client, volunteer, membership, surveillance, or website-tracking profiles unless the visitor knowingly initiates a clearly explained process. Nonprofit trust is difficult to earn and easy to damage.

Accessibility is part of the product

An in-person guide is only useful if visitors can operate it. The interface and physical installation need to account for seated reach, wheelchair approach, glare, screen height, type size, contrast, touch targets, motor control, hearing, vision, cognitive load, language, and assistive technology.

Useful capabilities may include keyboard navigation, visible focus, adjustable text, high contrast, plain-language answers, captions, controlled audio, headphone support, multiple interaction methods, and a consistent path back to the beginning. Automated translation can expand basic access, but important program, eligibility, safety, or legal content should be reviewed by qualified people before the organization treats it as authoritative.

Website accessibility guidance provides a useful foundation, but a fixed public kiosk also has hardware and environmental concerns that web testing alone does not cover. Real evaluation should include people with disabilities and the actual cabinet, screen, room, noise, lighting, and traffic pattern.

Human handoff must be real

“Talk to someone” cannot be a decorative button. Each deployment needs clear rules about who receives a request, during what hours, by what method, and within what expected time. If no one is available, the kiosk should say so and provide an honest alternative.

Different requests may need different paths. A program question may go to reception. A visitor in distress may need a clearly posted emergency or crisis resource. A media inquiry may go to communications. A donation question may go to development. A complaint should not disappear into the same queue as a brochure request.

Guide can collect the visitor's chosen topic and location to help staff respond. It should not send a model-generated judgment about the visitor's motives, emotional state, eligibility, credibility, or risk.

A responsible first deployment

The first deployment should be narrow enough to operate and evaluate honestly. A practical pilot could include:

- One organization and one public location.
- A defined set of mission, program, event, volunteer, donation, and visitor content.
- Fixed software, model, prompt, and knowledge-package versions during the evaluation period.
- Four to eight weeks of public use.
- Anonymous sessions by default.
- A visible explanation of Avery and the system's AI-supported operation.
- Named content, operational, and technical owners.
- Accessibility review using the installed hardware.
- A working staff handoff during published hours.
- Daily health checks and a simple way for staff to disable conversation while preserving basic information.

The pilot should measure useful outcomes rather than novelty:

- Can visitors tell what Guide is and what it is not?
- Do they reach the correct program, form, event, volunteer role, or staff contact?
- Which questions cannot be answered from approved content?
- How often are answers wrong, outdated, unsupported, or misleading?
- Does Guide reduce dead-end visits without creating unreasonable staff work?
- Are impact claims and calls to action understood accurately?
- Can visitors with different access needs use the installed system?
- Are handoff expectations met?
- How much staff time is required to review and maintain the content?
- Does the organization have the budget and ownership needed to sustain the system?

Conversation length should not be the primary success measure. Guide succeeds when it helps someone understand the organization and move toward an appropriate real-world action.

Major risks and stopping conditions

The primary risks include outdated program information, invented claims, misleading fundraising language, exposure of visitor information, inaccessible installation, staff overreliance, failed handoffs, biased or inappropriate responses, maintenance burden, and a kiosk that becomes a substitute for human presence rather than a support for it.

A pilot should stop or be materially redesigned if it produces:

- Repeated unsupported claims about programs, impact, eligibility, partners, or funding.
- Requests for sensitive information that the approved workflow does not require.
- False expectations that help, enrollment, funding, or staff response is guaranteed.
- Donation language that is inaccurate, manipulative, or inconsistent with approved materials.
- Visitors who regularly believe Avery is a human employee or professional advisor.
- Handoff requests without an assigned and responsive human owner.
- Accessibility barriers that exclude intended visitors.
- Conversation retention beyond the disclosed purpose.
- Content-review demands the organization cannot sustain.
- Evidence that the kiosk discourages people from approaching available staff or participating in the physical environment.

An unsuccessful deployment would not necessarily mean that every part of Guide failed. It may show that the organization needs a simpler directory, better signs, a staffed reception schedule, improved website structure, or a narrower kiosk without open-ended conversation.

Conclusion

North Parade Guide extends a practical idea already present in Deckhand Dave: people should be able to get useful, site-specific answers even when an employee cannot stand beside them. The nonprofit adaptation broadens that role. It brings the organization's public knowledge into the room, gives visitors a conversational starting point through Avery, and helps translate interest into a real next step.

The platform's value would not come from pretending Avery is an employee. It would come from combining the reach of a website, the approachability of a guided conversation, and the operational controls of a managed on-site system. The organization would remain the source of truth. Humans would retain decisions, professional judgment, sensitive conversations, and responsibility for promised follow-up.

Guide is in development, but the broader deployment model remains a concept that must be tested. The questions are not only whether the software can answer, but whether the organization can keep those answers accurate, accessible, private, and connected to real people and real work.

If those conditions can be met, North Parade Guide could make an unattended lobby, busy event, community center, or nonprofit office more useful without turning the mission into a sales script or the kiosk into a replacement for the people carrying it out.

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