



The Federal Grant *Readiness Checklist*

Twenty-four questions to answer before your organization pursues its first — or next — federal award. The most common reason strong proposals fail isn't weak writing; it's technical non-compliance and unready systems.

01 Registrations & Access

- Active **SAM.gov registration** with a Unique Entity ID (UEI) — renewal date calendared (it lapses annually)
- Grants.gov Workspace** account created, with the right staff assigned AOR (Authorized Organization Representative) roles
- Login.gov credentials** established for staff who will submit or report
- State e-grant portal accounts created for your state's education, health, or justice agencies as relevant

02 Organizational Capacity

- Mission, programs, and service data documented and current (you'll reuse this in every needs statement)
- Board authorization process for grant applications defined — who signs, and how fast can they?
- A named **project lead** with time actually available if the award lands
- Job descriptions and an org chart current enough to attach to an application
- Letters-of-support relationships identified (partners, officials, community organizations)

03 Financial Systems

- Accounting system can track revenue and expenses **by individual grant** (fund/class accounting)
- Most recent financial statements or audit available — and clean, or with a plan for findings
- Awareness of the **Single Audit threshold**: \$1,000,000 in federal expenditures in a fiscal year triggers one (Uniform Guidance, 2024 revision)
- Indirect cost approach decided: negotiated rate, or the **de minimis rate of up to 15% of MTDC**
- Timekeeping practices can document personnel effort charged to awards
- Written financial policies: procurement, allowability review, and equipment tracking (federal equipment threshold: **\$10,000**)

Where organizations stumble first: applying with financial systems that can't separate grant dollars from general operating funds. Fix this before you apply — retrofitting fund accounting mid-award is painful and puts the award at risk.

04 Past Performance & Track Record

- Prior grants (any size) documented: funder, amount, outcomes, and clean closeout
- Program outcome data collected — numbers served, results achieved, evaluation findings
- No unresolved findings, late reports, or disallowed costs on past awards (or a candid explanation ready)

05 Proposal Readiness

- Boilerplate library drafted: organizational history, mission, capacity statements
- Community need documented with **current data** (census, local health/education indicators)
- A logic model exists — or you know what your inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes actually are
- Realistic budget assumptions: salaries, fringe, and costs benchmarked, not guessed

06 Post-Award Readiness

- Someone owns the **compliance calendar**: reporting deadlines, drawdown schedules, deliverables
- Capacity to prepare federal financial reports (e.g., SF-425) and program performance reports
- If you'll pass funds to partners: a **subrecipient monitoring** approach exists on paper

Scoring yourself: 20+ checked — you're ready to compete; focus on opportunity selection. 14-19 — address the gaps in Sections 1 and 3 first; they're disqualifying. Under 14 — a readiness engagement will save you from an expensive, unfundable application.

Want a second set of eyes? Starling Grant Partners offers a formal grant readiness assessment covering all six areas — with a written roadmap of exactly what to fix before you apply. Free 30-minute discovery calls at ayla.grantconsult@outlook.com.