



Federal Agency AI Readiness Checklist

A Structured Self-Assessment for AI Enablement Readiness

About This Checklist

This self-assessment is designed to help federal agency leaders gauge their organization's readiness to adopt, govern, and scale artificial intelligence. It is structured across six dimensions drawn from leading enterprise AI readiness frameworks and grounded in the advisory services The Sainth delivers to public sector clients.

This is not a compliance document. It is a strategic mirror — designed to surface gaps, prompt honest leadership conversations, and identify where focused advisory support can accelerate your agency's AI journey.

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

- ◆ Review each dimension independently with key leaders across your agency.
- ◆ Mark each item: **✓ In Place** / **● In Progress** / **X Not Yet Addressed**
- ◆ Note gaps honestly — this assessment is most valuable when candid.
- ◆ Use your results to prioritize and scope a discovery conversation with The Sainth.

READINESS LEVELS AT A GLANCE

Level	Score	Description
Initiating	0–25%	AI awareness exists but no formal strategy, governance, or enabling structures are in place.
Developing	26–50%	Early efforts underway — pilots launched, some governance drafted, literacy beginning.
Advancing	51–75%	Strategy and governance defined; workforce enablement active; scaling AI from pilots to programs.
Leading	76–100%	AI embedded as a strategic operating capability with mature governance, culture, and outcomes.

01

Strategic Alignment & Executive Vision

Does your agency have a clear, mission-connected AI strategy with leadership ownership?

The Sainth delivers: AI Strategy & Vision — Executive Alignment, Opportunity Mapping, Roadmap Development

✓	Readiness Indicator	Federal Context / Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Agency leadership has articulated a formal AI vision connected to mission priorities.	<i>Aligns with EO 14110 and OMB M-24-10 AI governance mandates</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	An AI strategy or roadmap exists that defines priorities, timelines, and success metrics.	<i>Should reference agency GPRA/strategic planning cycles</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Executive sponsors are identified and actively championing AI across leadership teams.	<i>CAIO or AI governance lead typically holds this role</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	AI investment decisions are tied to measurable mission outcomes, not technology trends.	<i>Avoids 'pilot purgatory' — a common federal AI failure mode</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	A use-case prioritization framework exists to evaluate and rank AI opportunities.	<i>Prevents scattered, low-ROI AI experimentation</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	AI strategy is reviewed and updated at least annually against shifting agency priorities.	<i>Frequency matters — AI landscape changes faster than budget cycles</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cross-functional leadership alignment exists on AI's role in the operating model.	<i>Fragmented ownership stalls enterprise AI adoption</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	A budget and investment framework is in place to sustain AI beyond pilot phases.	<i>Congressional justifications often require documented AI ROI methodology</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Leadership understands the distinction between AI tools, AI strategy, and AI capability.	<i>Vendor-purchased tools are not a substitute for strategic positioning</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Agency AI strategy is visible and communicated to the broader workforce.	<i>Adoption requires organizational trust in leadership direction</i>

Strategic Alignment Score: _____ / 10 Readiness Level: _____	Priority gaps identified: _____
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02

Governance, Policy & Oversight

Are structures, policies, and accountability mechanisms in place to govern AI responsibly at scale?

The Sainth delivers: AI Office & Governance — Charter, Operating Model, Policy & Framework Development

✓	Readiness Indicator	Federal Context / Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	A Chief AI Officer (CAIO) or equivalent AI governance role is formally designated.	<i>Required by the Executive Order on AI; OMB M-24-10 mandates CAIO designation</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	An AI governance committee or board reviews and approves AI initiatives agency-wide.	<i>Prevents siloed, ungoverned AI deployment across program offices</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Documented AI use-case inventory exists, including risk classification for each system.	<i>OMB requires agencies to inventory and assess AI use cases for rights/safety impact</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	AI policies address procurement, third-party vendor oversight, and tool approval.	<i>FedRAMP authorization and FISMA compliance must extend to AI platforms</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Decision rights are clearly defined: who can approve, deploy, pause, or terminate AI systems.	<i>Ambiguous authority structures are a leading cause of federal AI governance failures</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	A policy framework addresses responsible use, bias mitigation, and human oversight.	<i>NIST AI RMF alignment is increasingly expected by inspectors general and oversight bodies</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mechanisms are in place for employees to report AI concerns or flag unexpected outputs.	<i>Workforce trust requires visible accountability channels</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	AI governance policies are reviewed in response to new executive orders or OMB guidance.	<i>Federal AI policy environment is active — governance must be adaptive</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	An AI Office charter or equivalent mandate defines scope, authority, and operating principles.	<i>Absence of a formal mandate limits organizational influence of the AI function</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Governance structures include representation from legal, privacy, security, and mission leads.	<i>AI risk cuts across functions — single-office governance creates blind spots</i>

Governance & Policy Score: _____ / 10	Priority gaps identified: _____
Readiness Level: _____	_____

03

Workforce Readiness & AI Literacy

Do your leaders and employees have the knowledge, confidence, and skills to engage AI effectively?

The Sainth delivers: AI Literacy & Workforce Enablement — Executive Briefings, Workforce Programs, Change & Adoption Support

✓	Readiness Indicator	Federal Context / Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Senior leaders can articulate AI's strategic relevance to their mission area — not just its technical definition.	<i>Executive literacy is prerequisite to informed AI investment decisions</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	A workforce AI literacy baseline assessment has been conducted across roles and functions.	<i>Enables targeted enablement rather than one-size-fits-all training</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Role-based AI training programs exist or are in development for frontline, management, and leadership tiers.	<i>Effective programs differentiate by function — not just seniority</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Employees understand how to use AI tools responsibly, including data handling and output validation.	<i>Misuse of AI tools is an increasing source of federal compliance risk</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Leaders are equipped to communicate AI changes in a way that builds trust rather than resistance.	<i>Change communication is the most underinvested element of federal AI adoption</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	A structured change management approach exists to support AI-driven process transitions.	<i>Without it, workforce resistance undermines adoption regardless of tool quality</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	AI champions or power users are identified and supported across key program offices.	<i>Distributed literacy accelerators outperform centralized training programs</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Workforce AI skills gaps are formally tracked and addressed through HR/workforce planning.	<i>OPM guidance encourages agencies to build AI competencies into workforce planning</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Executive AI briefing sessions are conducted at least semi-annually for senior leadership.	<i>Frequent cadence is critical as AI capabilities and risks evolve rapidly</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Onboarding processes for new staff include AI literacy as a core component.	<i>Cultural normalization of AI begins at entry — not after years of service</i>

Workforce Readiness Score: _____ / 10 Readiness Level: _____	Priority gaps identified: _____
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04

Ethics, Trust & Responsible AI

Is your agency equipped to deploy AI that is equitable, transparent, explainable, and trustworthy?

The Sainth delivers: Ethical AI & Security — Responsible AI frameworks, bias review, human oversight design

✓	Readiness Indicator	Federal Context / Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Agency AI policy explicitly addresses fairness, equity, and non-discrimination in AI outputs.	<i>Title VI, Section 508, and EO 13985 equity requirements apply to AI-driven decisions</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	A process exists to assess and mitigate bias in AI training data, models, and outputs.	<i>High-stakes federal decisions (benefits, enforcement, hiring) require bias audit trails</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	AI systems impacting public-facing services or benefits include meaningful human review.	<i>OMB M-24-10 requires human oversight for rights- and safety-impacting AI</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Explainability standards are defined for AI systems used in consequential decisions.	<i>Black-box AI in regulatory or adjudicatory contexts creates due process risk</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Privacy Impact Assessments (PIAs) are conducted before AI systems access PII.	<i>Required under the Privacy Act and OMB Circular A-130 for federal AI systems</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	AI security requirements are integrated into system development and ATO processes.	<i>AI systems introduce novel attack surfaces — traditional ATO frameworks must adapt</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	A process exists to monitor AI systems post-deployment for drift, degradation, or unintended outputs.	<i>AI performance degrades over time without active monitoring and recalibration</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Third-party AI vendors are evaluated for responsible AI practices as part of procurement.	<i>Agency accountability does not transfer to vendors — oversight obligations remain</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	An AI incident response protocol exists for failures, biased outputs, or public-facing errors.	<i>Without defined protocols, agencies improvise under pressure — increasing reputational risk</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Leadership can clearly communicate AI ethics commitments to Congress, OIG, and the public.	<i>Transparency and accountability are table stakes in federal AI governance</i>

Ethics & Trust Score: _____ / 10 Readiness Level: _____	Priority gaps identified: _____
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05

Organizational Culture & Change Readiness

Is your agency's culture positioned to embrace AI as a strategic capability — not a threat or a trend?

The Sainth delivers: AI Literacy & Enablement — Change & Adoption Support, Custom Learning Design, Internal Alignment

✓	Readiness Indicator	Federal Context / Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Leadership models a growth mindset toward AI — openly engaging rather than deferring or resisting.	<i>Executive posture is the single strongest predictor of workforce adoption</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Internal AI narratives reinforce opportunity and mission impact — not displacement or surveillance.	<i>Fear-based messaging is the most common cause of workforce AI resistance in the public sector</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Employees have safe channels to ask questions, raise concerns, or flag misuse of AI tools.	<i>Psychological safety accelerates adoption and surfaces risks before they escalate</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	AI adoption progress is tracked and reported to leadership with transparency.	<i>What gets measured gets managed — accountability drives culture</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	AI initiatives are framed in terms of mission impact, not cost savings or efficiency alone.	<i>Federal workers are mission-motivated — strategy framing matters</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cross-agency collaboration opportunities around AI are actively explored.	<i>Many agencies are solving the same AI challenges in isolation — unnecessary duplication</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	The agency has a defined approach for managing workforce transitions driven by AI automation.	<i>Workforce reskilling and role evolution planning reduces resistance and protects talent</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Internal communications about AI are consistent, accurate, and leadership-endorsed.	<i>Inconsistent messaging fuels confusion and erodes trust in AI programs</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lessons learned from AI pilots are shared across program offices — not siloed.	<i>Organizational learning from AI experiments is a competitive and mission advantage</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	A formal AI adoption roadmap addresses culture, not just technology deployment timelines.	<i>Technology-only roadmaps consistently underperform — culture is the implementation layer</i>

Culture & Change Readiness Score: _____ / 10 Readiness Level: _____	Priority gaps identified: _____
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06

Strategic Narrative & External Positioning

Can your agency clearly communicate its AI posture to oversight bodies, partners, and the public?

The Sainth delivers: Go-to-Market Strategy — AI narrative, stakeholder communications, congressional and IG positioning

✓	Readiness Indicator	Federal Context / Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Agency AI strategy is documented in a form suitable for congressional briefings or oversight review.	<i>Increasingly, appropriations and oversight committees require AI accountability artifacts</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public-facing AI use cases are communicated transparently, including what AI is and is not doing.	<i>Public trust in government AI depends on proactive disclosure — not reactive defense</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	The agency can clearly articulate its AI governance posture in response to IG or GAO inquiries.	<i>OIG AI audits are increasing — agencies must articulate governance, not just describe tools</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	AI program updates are proactively shared with relevant oversight bodies and stakeholders.	<i>Proactive briefing builds credibility and reduces adversarial oversight dynamics</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Internal AI communications (town halls, leadership messaging) are strategic and consistent.	<i>Internal narrative shapes workforce adoption — inconsistency breeds uncertainty</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	The agency's AI story is connected to mission outcomes the public can understand and value.	<i>Abstract AI messaging alienates — mission-connected narrative builds trust</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	AI partnership and vendor relationships are disclosed appropriately and managed with accountability.	<i>Transparency about commercial AI relationships is increasingly expected by oversight bodies</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	The agency has a communications response plan for AI-related incidents or media inquiries.	<i>Unprepared agencies fare poorly in public AI controversies — preparation is reputation management</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Leadership can clearly differentiate the agency's AI posture from adjacent agency efforts.	<i>Unique positioning matters in a constrained congressional funding environment</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	AI program branding and framing align with the agency's broader mission and values narrative.	<i>Disconnected AI messaging undermines organizational identity and workforce alignment</i>

Strategic Narrative Score: _____ / 10 Readiness Level: _____	Priority gaps identified: _____
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READINESS SUMMARY & PRIORITY ACTION PLANNER

Transfer your dimension scores below to identify your agency's highest-priority readiness gaps and align next steps.

#	Dimension	Score /10	Level	Top Priority Gap
01	Strategic Alignment & Executive Vision	___ / 10	_____	
02	Governance, Policy & Oversight	___ / 10	_____	
03	Workforce Readiness & AI Literacy	___ / 10	_____	
04	Ethics, Trust & Responsible AI	___ / 10	_____	
05	Organizational Culture & Change Readiness	___ / 10	_____	
06	Strategic Narrative & External Positioning	___ / 10	_____	
Σ	TOTAL READINESS SCORE	___ / 60		

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS FOR LEADERSHIP

1. Which dimension gap, if unaddressed, poses the greatest risk to mission delivery in the next 12 months?
2. Where does leadership alignment most need to be strengthened before AI investments scale?
3. Which workforce groups are most underserved by current AI literacy and change readiness efforts?
4. What AI governance gaps would most concern your Inspector General or congressional oversight committee?
5. Is your agency's AI narrative ready for public scrutiny, congressional testimony, or an audit?

Ready to discuss your results?

The Sainth offers confidential discovery conversations for federal agency leaders ready to move from assessment to action. Our engagements are senior-led, selective, and designed to elevate how your agency operates, leads, and competes in the age of AI.

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