ReadinessIQ
Know More. Plan Smarter. Move Forward.

USER MANUAL | VERSION 1.0 | 2026 EDITION

How to Use the ReadinessIQ Down Payment Assistance Finder

A plain-English manual for the Down Payment Assistance Finder: what it does, what it cannot do, how each result is scored, and how buyers, loan officers, Realtors, and housing agencies should each use it.

> **WHO THIS MANUAL IS FOR**
> Homebuyers: You are buying a home and want to know what help exists. | Loan Officers: You are screening a borrower and need an educational starting point. | Realtors & Partners: You are guiding a client and need to stay in your lane. | DPA Program Administrators: You run a program and want to verify how it is described here.

> **THE ONE RULE**
> The Finder screens. Agencies and lenders approve. Nothing in this manual is an approval, a pre-qualification, or a commitment to lend.

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Live guide: readinessiq.ai/guides/how-to-use-the-down-payment-assistance-finder

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What the Finder actually is

The Down Payment Assistance Finder is a ten-question screening tool that compares your answers against a national library of down payment and closing cost assistance programs - state housing finance agency programs, county and city programs, employer and profession programs, and national programs offered through participating lenders.

It reads the published rules for each program: which counties it serves, the household income limit for your family size, the credit guidance the agency publishes, whether the home has to be your primary residence, whether you must be a first-time buyer, how much assistance is offered, and whether the money is a grant, a forgivable loan, a deferred second mortgage, or a repayable second mortgage.

What it does not do is decide anything. The Finder has no access to your credit report, your tax returns, or the agency's underwriting queue. It reads published rules and tells you where you appear to fit. Every program listed carries a link to the agency that runs it and the date we last verified the information.

> **REMEMBER**
> The Finder screens. Agencies and lenders approve. Nothing on this site is a commitment to lend or an award of assistance.

Section 1 - For homebuyers

Start at the Finder and answer the questions honestly - estimates are fine, and nothing you enter is shared with a lender unless you ask us to.

You will be asked for your state and county, roughly what you earn per year before taxes, how many people live in your household, whether you have owned a home in the last three years, an estimate of your credit score, whether the home will be your primary residence, your line of work, and whether anyone in the household has served in the military. That is all the Finder needs.

- State and county decide which programs can even consider you. Most assistance is local.
- Household income before taxes is what agencies use - not your take-home pay.
- Household size matters because most income limits go up with each additional person.
- First-time buyer status usually means you have not owned a home in the last three years, not that you have never owned one.
- Credit score is an estimate. The Finder uses it to filter programs whose published minimums you clearly cannot meet.
- Occupation and military service unlock teacher, nurse, first responder, tribal, farmworker, and veteran programs.

TIP
Answer for the household that will be on the loan. If you are buying with a partner, combine the income.

What each result means

LIKELY MATCH
Every rule the Finder can check from your answers lines up: the program serves your state or county, your income appears to be under the published limit, the property type and occupancy fit, and the program is currently accepting applications. What to do: Call the agency or an approved lender for this program first. Bring your income documents. A Likely Match is a strong lead, not an approval.

WORTH A CALL
Most rules fit, but at least one thing is unknown or borderline - the income limit is close, the program has a waitlist, eligibility depends on a class or certificate, or the agency publishes rules the Finder cannot evaluate from ten questions. What to do: Ask the agency the specific question the Finder flagged. Many buyers who see Worth a Call end up qualifying once a human reviews the details.

PROBABLY NOT
A published rule appears to rule you out - wrong geography, income over the limit, the program is closed or out of funds, or the program only serves a group you did not select. What to do: Do not spend time here unless something in your situation changed. If you think the Finder got it wrong, tell us and we will re-verify the program.

Why you still have to verify

Assistance programs change constantly. Funding rounds open and close, income limits are re-published every year, and agencies add or retire programs without notice. We re-verify the library on a schedule and print the date on every page, but the agency's own page is always the authority.

Before you write an offer that depends on assistance, confirm three things with the agency or an approved lender: that the program is currently funded, that your income is under the current limit, and that the property you are considering is eligible. Ask what happens if funding runs out between your offer and your closing.

IMPORTANT
Never write an offer assuming assistance you have not confirmed in writing with the agency or an approved lender.

How RED explains each program

RED is the teaching assistant built into ReadinessIQ. Ask about any program the Finder returned and RED explains it from the published material on this site - what the program is, how the money works, and what question to ask the agency next.

RED will not guess. If the answer is not in published, verified material, RED says so and points you to the agency instead of inventing a number.

Moving into your Readiness Score

Finding assistance is one half of the picture. The other half is whether you are ready to be approved at all - your credit, your debt payments as a percentage of your income, your savings, and how long your income has been stable.

Run the Readiness Score after the Finder. It uses the same information and tells you which single factor is holding you back and what to do about it. Buyers who fix that one factor first tend to qualify for better programs, not just more of them.

Section 2 - For loan officers

Use the Finder as an educational screening tool at the front of a conversation, not as an eligibility engine. It surfaces the programs worth researching for a borrower and gives you a shared reference to talk through with them.

Nothing the Finder returns is an approval, a pre-qualification, or a commitment to lend. Say that out loud with the borrower and put it in writing when you send results.

- Income limits - the Finder shows the limit that applied to the household size entered. Re-check it against the agency's current chart before you quote it.
- Credit guidance - published agency minimums, not your investor overlays. Your overlays still control.
- Occupancy - nearly every assistance program requires the home to be a primary residence, and many add a minimum occupancy period.
- Program status - active, limited, waitlist, or closed, as of the printed verification date.
- Assistance amount - the published maximum or formula. Actual awards vary by borrower and by funding round.
- Repayment terms - grant, forgivable over a term, deferred until sale or refinance, or amortizing second lien. This changes the borrower's real cost more than the headline amount does.

> **COMPLIANCE**
> Results are educational, not approvals. Confirm every program with the administering agency and your own underwriting before advising a borrower to rely on it.

Section 3 - For Realtors and partners

Assistance is one of the biggest reasons a qualified buyer thinks they cannot buy. Sharing the Finder is a way to open that door without stepping into lending advice.

The safest and most useful thing you can do is hand your client the tool and the state guide, then let a licensed loan officer and the housing agency handle eligibility. Discussing whether a specific buyer qualifies - or steering them toward or away from programs - is lending advice and, depending on how it is framed, can raise fair housing concerns.

- Share the Finder so your client can screen programs privately, at their own pace.
- Share the state guide for loan limits, closing customs, taxes, and the local assistance landscape.
- Help them prepare questions for the lender and the agency rather than answering those questions yourself.
- Avoid discussing eligibility - do not tell a buyer they qualify, do not tell them they do not, and do not estimate their income limit.
- Set expectations on timing - some assistance programs add days to underwriting and require agency sign-off before closing.

> **STAY IN YOUR LANE**
> Share the tool, not a verdict. Eligibility conversations belong to the lender and the housing agency.

Section 4 - For DPA program administrators

If you administer a program listed in this library, everything we publish about it comes from your own public materials, and we would rather be corrected than be wrong.

Each program page shows exactly what we believe about your program and the date we last checked. Review those fields and tell us about anything that is out of date - including programs that have closed, so we can stop sending buyers to them.

- Program information - name, administering agency, program type, and description.
- Assistance amount - the maximum or the formula as published.
- Status - active, limited, waitlist, or closed.
- Income limits - the limits and how they scale with household size.
- Geography - the states, counties, or cities served.
- Official links - the page you want buyers to land on.

> **CORRECTIONS**
> Corrections from administering agencies are prioritized and applied ahead of our normal re-verification cycle.

Verify or update a program: brian@readinessiq.ai

Section 5 - Integrity testing checklist

Print this page and walk any program listing against it. Every item is something a buyer, a loan officer, or an agency can confirm independently.

- [ ] **Program exists**
  The program appears on the administering agency's own website today.
- [ ] **Status**
  Active, limited, waitlist, or closed matches what the agency publishes.
- [ ] **Amount**
  The assistance maximum or formula matches the agency's current materials.
- [ ] **Repayment**
  Grant, forgivable, deferred, or repayable is stated correctly, with the term.
- [ ] **Income**
  Income limits match the agency's current chart for the relevant household size.
- [ ] **Geography**
  The states, counties, or cities served are correct and complete.
- [ ] **Credit guidance**
  Published credit minimums are the agency's, not a lender overlay.
- [ ] **Official URL**
  The link resolves to a live agency page about this specific program.
- [ ] **Last Verified**
  The verification date is printed and is within the current review cycle.
- [ ] **RED explanation**
  RED's explanation cites published material and adds no unverified numbers.

Section 6 - Ask RED

RED teaches from published, verified material on this site. Ask in plain English - these four shapes of question work best.

- "What grants exist in Arizona?" - Geography-first. RED lists the state's programs and links the state library page.
- "What programs help teachers?" - Profession-first. RED surfaces educator programs across states.
- "What is a forgivable loan?" - Concept-first. RED teaches the term before showing programs that use it.
- "What programs fit my situation?" - RED asks for the few details the Finder needs, then hands you a pre-filled Finder link.

Section 7 - Help us keep this accurate

This library is only as good as the corrections we get. If you are a Housing agency, Program administrator, Loan officer, Realtor, please report:

- Incorrect information

- A new program we are missing
- A program that has closed
- Updated income or purchase price limits

> **SUBMIT A CORRECTION**
> Email brian@readinessiq.ai. Corrections from housing agencies and program administrators are prioritized and applied ahead of the normal re-verification cycle.

Where to go next

- Down Payment Assistance Finder - /tools/down-payment-assistance
- National assistance library - /down-payment-assistance
- State homebuyer guides - /guides
- First-Time Homebuyer's Guide - /guides/first-time-homebuyer-readiness-guide
- How much down payment do I need? - /guides/how-much-down-payment-do-i-need
- Affordability - /affordability
- Readiness Score - /get-ready
- Ask RED - /ask

ReadinessIQ

Know More. Plan Smarter. Move Forward.

Screening is free. Verification is everything.

Scan the code to open the live guide, launch the Finder, and confirm every program with the agency that runs it.

Scan to view the live guide

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