

EFAIRA METHODOLOGY SUMMARY

# The 30-point methodology for federal AI software readiness assessment.

A reference document covering the 30 evaluation points and 8 domains of the Encore Federal AI Readiness Audit. Published for the federal acquisition workforce and private-sector contractors pursuing federal AI awards.

LIBRARY REFERENCE	ISSUED	VERSION	DISTRIBUTION
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## A. Purpose and Scope

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The Encore Federal AI Readiness Audit, referred to throughout this document as EFAIRA, is a defensible third-party assessment methodology for AI-enabled software offered to United States federal agencies. It produces a citable readiness receipt that a contractor may include in a federal proposal volume and that a federal customer may rely on as an independent signal of pre-award readiness.

The methodology evaluates a software offering across thirty discrete points organized into eight domains. Each point is scored against a published evidence standard. The result is a single readiness score, a domain-level breakdown, and a written receipt that documents the scope of the evaluation, the evidence relied on, and the limitations of the assessment.

**What the methodology produces.** A written receipt with a single readiness score from zero to one hundred, a domain-level score breakdown across the eight domains below, an evidence summary, a scope boundary statement, and pre-approved citation language for use in contractor proposal volumes.

## B. The 8 Domains

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EFAIRA evaluates each software offering against eight domains, listed below. The 30 evaluation points are distributed across these domains based on the federal frameworks, statutes, and acquisition practices that govern AI procurement.

- **Domain 1.** Technical Architecture and AI Model Integrity
- **Domain 2.** Security and Federal Compliance Posture
- **Domain 3.** AI-Specific Risk Management and NIST AI RMF Alignment
- **Domain 4.** Bias, Fairness, and Disparate Impact
- **Domain 5.** Transparency, Explainability, and Auditability
- **Domain 6.** Procurement Vehicle and Acquisition Fit
- **Domain 7.** Operational Sustainment and Support
- **Domain 8.** Independent Verification and Citation Readiness

## C. The 30 Evaluation Points

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### Domain 1. Technical Architecture and AI Model Integrity

Whether the software does what it claims, whether its AI components are real and not marketing scaffolding, and whether the architecture can survive federal-scale operation.

### **1.1 Model Provenance and Composition**

Confirm the actual AI model or models in use, the model family, the training approach, and whether the model is foundation, fine-tuned, retrieval-augmented, or a thin wrapper over a third-party API. Recorded as a model card or equivalent evidence package.

### **1.2 Architecture Documentation**

Verify the existence and accuracy of system architecture documentation describing data flows, integration points, inference paths, and dependency boundaries. Documentation must reflect the deployed system, not an aspirational future state.

### **1.3 Performance Under Federal-Scale Load**

Evidence of load testing or production telemetry at concurrency levels representative of the target federal use case. Synthetic benchmarks alone are insufficient where real production telemetry is feasible.

### **1.4 Failure Modes and Graceful Degradation**

Documentation of known failure modes, recovery paths, and the behavior of the system when AI inference is unavailable, slow, or returning low-confidence output.

### **1.5 Third-Party AI Dependency Disclosure**

Identification of all third-party AI services, foundation model providers, embedding services, and inference endpoints in the dependency chain. Includes provider name, hosting location, and data-handling boundary.

## **Domain 2. Security and Federal Compliance Posture**

Whether the system meets the security baseline federal customers are required to enforce on the software they buy.

### **2.1 FedRAMP Authorization Status**

Current FedRAMP authorization level, sponsoring agency, ATO date, continuous monitoring posture, and any open Plan of Action and Milestones items. Includes path forward for unauthorized systems.

### **2.2 Data Residency and Sovereignty**

Geographic location of data at rest, data in transit boundaries, and identification of any data that crosses outside U.S. borders or U.S. federal cloud boundaries during normal operation.

### **2.3 Identity, Access, and Auditability**

Authentication and authorization model, support for federal identity standards including PIV and CAC where applicable, audit log coverage, retention, and tamper-evidence.

## 2.4 Vulnerability Management and Patch Cadence

Documented vulnerability management program, dependency scanning coverage, mean time to patch for critical CVEs in the dependency chain, and disclosure of any unpatched high-severity issues.

## Domain 3. AI-Specific Risk Management and NIST AI RMF Alignment

Whether the software demonstrably implements the AI-specific risk management practices the federal government has adopted as its reference framework.

### 3.1 Govern Function Coverage

Documentation of AI governance roles, accountability, policies, and oversight aligned with NIST AI RMF Govern function categories. Includes board, executive, and operational owner identification.

### 3.2 Map Function Coverage

Documentation of the context, intended use, deployment environment, and known limitations of the AI system as required by NIST AI RMF Map function categories.

### 3.3 Measure Function Coverage

Quantitative and qualitative measurement of system performance, including accuracy, robustness, fairness where applicable, and security testing aligned with NIST AI RMF Measure function categories.

### 3.4 Manage Function Coverage

Documented procedures for ongoing monitoring, incident response, decommissioning, and lifecycle management aligned with NIST AI RMF Manage function categories.

## Domain 4. Bias, Fairness, and Disparate Impact

Whether the system has been evaluated for bias and disparate impact at the level federal use cases require.

### 4.1 Bias Testing Methodology

Disclosure of the bias testing methodology applied, the populations evaluated, the metrics used, and the results obtained. Includes scope limitations and untested populations.

### 4.2 Disparate Impact Analysis

Statistical analysis of system outputs across protected classes relevant to the federal use case. Includes mitigation steps where disparate impact was identified.

### 4.3 Human Oversight and Adjudication Path

Documentation of the human review path for adverse or consequential AI outputs, including the authority of the human reviewer to override the AI determination.

## Domain 5. Transparency, Explainability, and Auditability

Whether federal users, oversight bodies, and affected parties can understand and audit AI-driven decisions made by the system.

### 5.1 Explainability Capability

Disclosure of the system's explainability features, the audience for which explanations are designed, and the technical limitations of those explanations.

### 5.2 Decision Log Capture

Capture of decision logs sufficient to reconstruct the AI inputs, model state, and outputs for any individual determination subject to challenge or audit.

### 5.3 Model Update Disclosure

Procedure for disclosing material changes to the AI model, model weights, or system behavior to federal customers and affected parties.

## Domain 6. Procurement Vehicle and Acquisition Fit

Whether the software can actually be procured by the target federal customer through an available acquisition vehicle.

### 6.1 Vehicle Availability

Identification of available contracting vehicles for the target customer, including GSA Schedule, agency BPA, IDIQ, OTA, and SBIR pathways.

### 6.2 Socioeconomic Set-Aside Eligibility

Documentation of any small business, SDVOSB, WOSB, or HUBZone status applicable to the prime or relevant teaming partners, with current SAM.gov registration verification.

### 6.3 Pricing Defensibility

Defensibility of pricing under federal price reasonableness analysis, including commercial sales practices disclosure where required.

## Domain 7. Operational Sustainment and Support

Whether the system can be sustained through a multi-year federal contract without unacceptable risk to the customer.

### 7.1 Vendor Financial Viability

Evidence of vendor financial viability sufficient to sustain a multi-year federal commitment. Includes alternative sustainment pathways for early-stage vendors.

## 7.2 Customer Support Coverage

Documented customer support coverage including hours, response time, escalation path, and U.S. citizen support staffing where federal requirements apply.

## 7.3 Source Code and Continuity Protections

Source code escrow, exit and transition provisions, and continuity protections sufficient to manage vendor failure or acquisition events.

# Domain 8. Independent Verification and Citation Readiness

Whether the assessment itself can withstand scrutiny and whether the contractor can cite it in a federal proposal volume.

## 8.1 Evidence Package Completeness

Completeness of the underlying evidence package supporting each scored point, sufficient for independent re-verification.

## 8.2 Scope Boundary Documentation

Clear documentation of the scope of the assessment, including what was evaluated, what was not, and the date and version of the system as evaluated.

## 8.3 Receipt Hash and Verification Path

Cryptographic hash of the assessment receipt and the public verification path by which a federal customer can confirm the receipt was issued by Encore.

## 8.4 Citation Language and Limitations

Pre-approved citation language a contractor may include in a federal proposal volume, including the explicit limitations of the receipt relative to source selection criteria.

## D. Scoring and Receipt Structure

Each of the 30 points is scored on a defined scale anchored to a published evidence standard. Domain scores roll up from point scores. The overall readiness score rolls up from the domain scores under a published weighting. Both the per-point scoring rubric and the weighting are documented in the Encore evidence handbook, which is provided to commercial engagement clients and is available on request for federal acquisition workforce reference.

Every issued receipt includes the scope of evaluation, the evaluation date and system version, the evidence sources relied on, the limitations of the assessment, and a cryptographic hash of the receipt content for independent verification. A federal customer may verify any receipt through the public verification path published at [encoresvcslc.com/verify](https://encoresvcslc.com/verify).

## E. Citation and Use

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An issued Encore Readiness Receipt may be cited by the contractor in a federal proposal technical volume using pre-approved language documented in the receipt itself. The receipt is not a source-selection determination, a federal certification, or a substitute for the agency's own evaluation. It is an independent third-party readiness signal that the agency may consider alongside its own assessment.

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### CURRENCY AND VERIFICATION

This material reflects the federal AI policy, regulatory, and acquisition landscape as of the date shown on the cover page. Federal AI policy and guidance change continuously. New executive orders, OMB memoranda, NIST framework revisions, agency-specific implementation guidance, GAO and Inspector General reports, FedRAMP and CMMC updates, and judicial decisions can supersede or materially alter the references in this document. Before applying any cited authority to a live procurement, contractor proposal, or agency acquisition decision, verify the current text of the authority against the original publishing body and confirm that no superseding guidance has been issued. Encore updates this library on a published cadence; consult the current version at [encoresvcslc.com/methodology](https://encoresvcslc.com/methodology) before relying on any specific reference.

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