



Grant Writing 101 Worksheet: Red Flags → Fundable Rewrites

Activity: Identify “red flag” language and rewrite it into ethical, specific, reviewer-friendly statements.

Use this when drafting narratives, budgets, match, and partner commitments. The goal is clarity + credibility + compliance.

1) The 30-Second Rewrite Formula

Element	Prompt
Template	We will [do what] for [who/where] by [when], using [resources/partners], and we will measure/report with [indicator].
Checklist	☐ Truthful ☐ Specific ☐ Measurable ☐ Deliverable-focused ☐ Match/compliance aligned
Red-flag test	If it sounds like a promise you can’t document or deliver → rewrite.

2) Common Red Flags (with answer key) + Your Rewrite Practice

In the “Your rewrite” column, rewrite again in your own project context (swap in your timeline, staffing, partners, and measures).

Red flag statement	Why a reviewer flags it	Fundable rewrite (answer key)	Your rewrite (project-specific)
“We’ll figure it out after we win.”	Signals lack of readiness and increases implementation/compliance risk.	We will complete final design and permitting in months 1–6, then begin implementation in month 7; a grant manager and finance lead are assigned and reporting/compliance costs are included in the budget.	
“Just make it sound competitive.”	Suggests exaggeration or misalignment with scoring criteria.	We will strengthen competitiveness by aligning to the program’s priorities, using verified local data, and committing only to measurable outcomes we can deliver within the grant period.	
“Can you guarantee funding?”	Indicates unrealistic expectations; reviewers care about process and compliance, not guarantees.	No one can guarantee an award; we can guarantee a compliant application that directly answers the scoring criteria, with a realistic scope, budget, and deliverables.	

“Use this partner letter—they’ll probably support it.”	Implies uncertain partnerships and weak documentation.	Partner X has confirmed participation and will provide [specific role]; their signed letter/MOU will be included, and responsibilities are reflected in the workplan and budget.	
“Count that match twice.”	Double-dipping is disallowed and creates audit risk.	We will document match from a single allowable source, track it separately, and ensure it is not used as match for any other project (no double-dipping).	

3) Where to Put the Rewrite (so it improves your score)

Use these cues to apply the rewrite in the draft you’re building.

If the risk is about...	Strengthen it by adding... (what reviewers want)
Readiness / “we’ll figure it out.”	Milestones + dates + completed planning + permitting/design status + roles assigned
Competitiveness / “make it sound good.”	Priority alignment + evidence/data + rubric language + realistic outcomes
Partners / “probably support it.”	Defined roles + specific commitments + documentation (LOS/MOU) + match to workplan/budget
Match/costs	Allowable source + documentation plan + tracking method + no double-dipping
Administration/compliance	Reporting cadence + procurement/timekeeping approach + admin costs included (if allowed)

4) Quick Practice (2 minutes)

Choose one sentence from your draft that feels vague or risky and rewrite it using the template.

Original sentence (from your drafts above)	Rewritten (ethical + fundable)
What proof supports your rewrite? (data, plan, letter, budget line item, role assignment)	