AN AGLOANS.COM EDUCATIONAL GUIDE

The Ag Loan Approval Playbook

How to prepare your documents and information so your loan moves faster.

Free educational guide · 2026 edition

AgLoans.com | Helping agricultural borrowers get lender-ready.

Approval is won before you apply

The fastest loan applications aren't always the ones with the strongest operations — they're the ones with the best-prepared files.

Most delays, and many declines, trace back to information that's missing, inconsistent, or hard to follow. This playbook is the preparation checklist that helps a lender's underwriter get to a decision faster. (AgLoans.com is not a lender; we help you assemble a complete, consistent file and connect you with lender partners, who make all credit decisions.)

Why preparation matters right now

Ag credit conditions have tightened heading into 2026, and lenders are reviewing applications more closely than they did a few years ago. In that environment, how well you prepare is one of the few things fully within your control.

93%
Of ag lenders expect farm debt to rise over the next year.

< 50%
Share of farms projected profitable in 2026 — the lowest since 2020.

$624.7B
Projected U.S. farm sector debt in 2026 — up 5.2%.

Sources: American Bankers Association / Farmer Mac 2025 Agricultural Lender Survey; USDA Economic Research Service, Farm Sector Income & Finances (2026 forecast).

The takeaway: A complete file is reviewed faster and presents your operation at its strongest. An incomplete one stalls — for you and for the lender.

What a lender's underwriter looks for

Every lender is different, but most credit reviews come down to three questions about your operation:

- **Repayment capacity & cash flow** — can the operation comfortably service the payment? This is usually the heart of the decision.
- **Collateral & balance-sheet strength** — the assets securing the loan, and your overall equity position.
- **Character & track record** — your credit history and experience managing the operation.

The document checklist

Gather these before you apply. Having them ready, consistent, and organized is what keeps a file moving:

- [ ] Personal and business financial statements
- [ ] Federal tax returns — typically the last three years
- [ ] A current balance sheet — a schedule of your assets and liabilities
- [ ] Production records and a forward cash-flow projection
- [ ] Entity documents (LLC or partnership agreements), as applicable
- [ ] The purchase agreement, if you're buying land or equipment
- [ ] Any existing appraisal or survey for the property

Tip: You don't need every item perfect to start — but the more complete the package, the fewer rounds of questions later.

Top tips: give the underwriter accurate, complete information

1. **Reconcile your numbers first.**
   Make sure your application, tax returns, and balance sheet tell the same story before anyone else reads them.

2. **Explain anomalies up front.**
   A tough year or an unusual entry isn't a problem with context — left unexplained, it becomes a question that slows the file.

3. **Be consistent everywhere.**
   The same figures, names, and entities across every document. Inconsistencies create doubt, even when the operation is sound.

4. **Organize once, reuse.**
   A clean, complete package can go to more than one lender without starting over — so you can explore your options efficiently.

Common reasons files stall

Q: Missing or outdated financials.
An old balance sheet or a missing tax return is the most common cause of delay. Refresh your documents before you apply.

Q: Numbers that don't match across documents.
When figures disagree, every reviewer has to stop and ask why. Reconcile first, and note anything unusual.

Q: Starting too late.
Waiting to gather records until you've found a property puts a time-sensitive deal at risk. Get organized early.

Let us help you get lender-ready.

AgLoans.com organizes your information into a clear, Lender-Ready™ summary and connects you with lender partners — at no cost for the preparation. You keep the summary regardless of where you go next.

Start your free application