



INTERNATIONAL
SCHOLARSHIP &
TUITION SERVICES

Scholarship Program Transition Readiness Guide



This guide helps program administrators, employee benefits leaders and foundation directors determine whether their scholarship program has outgrown its current administrative setup.

It covers the operational signals that indicate a program is ready for change, a straightforward readiness assessment and a clear picture of what transition actually involves.

Work through it in order. By the last page, you'll know where you stand.

SECTION 01: DO THESE SOUND FAMILIAR?

These are the operational signals that appear when a program has outgrown its administrative setup.

1. **Your team manages what a system should own.** Spreadsheets for application tracking. Email for reviewer coordination. Manual reconciliation after disbursement. Each one is a symptom of the same structural problem.
2. **Compliance depends on institutional memory, not documentation.** Selection criteria live in someone's head. Audit trails depend on who managed them. Regulatory changes, like OBBBA's Section 127 permanence, arrive late or not at all.
3. **Reporting shows what you spent, not what you achieved.** When leadership asks what the program is delivering for persistence and graduation rates, you can give headcounts, not outcomes. That gap matters at budget review time.

- 4. **Applicant experience is creating friction, not confidence.** A clunky portal, paper submissions or slow status communication doesn't just frustrate applicants. It suppresses participation, which erodes the program's ROI case over time.
- 5. **The post-cycle friction list is identical to last year's.** When the same problems reappear cycle after cycle, they are built into the current setup. Doing the same thing each cycle and expecting different results will not fix them.

SECTION 02: ARE YOU READY TO TRANSITION?

Answer honestly. These are the signals that suggest your program will benefit from a transition.

You're ready to transition if...	Revisit next cycle if...
• Three or more signals above describe your last cycle • Your administrator doesn't surface regulatory changes that may impact your program • Application volume or award acceptance rates are flat or declining and your administrator hasn't offered insight into why • You wouldn't recommend your current administrator to a peer • The same problems appeared in last year's post-cycle review	• Only 1–2 signals apply and they are minor friction, not structural issues • Compliance monitoring is proactive and well-documented • Award acceptance and application rates are growing and your administrator explains the drivers • You would recommend your administrator without hesitation

If you're in the "ready" column: Every program year you run on an underperforming setup is another year of staff capacity absorbed, compliance risk accumulated and applicant experience eroded. The window between your award close and your next open date is the highest-leverage planning period you have.

SECTION 03: SWITCHING IS EASIER THAN YOU THINK

The most common reason programs don't transition isn't urgency or budget. It's fear of the process itself. This is how ISTS manages a program transition, phase by phase:

Step 1: Discovery & Contracting

You share your program guidelines, award structure, eligibility criteria and historical volume. ISTS produces a written requirements summary and a transition timeline with clear milestone owners. No technical work required from your team at this stage.

Step 2: Configuration

ISTS designs and configures your application: eligibility rules, required uploads, branding, language preferences and notification templates. Your team reviews and approves. You do not build anything.

Step 3: Data Migration

You export historical data from your current system. ISTS handles mapping, conversion and validation. Your critical program history transfers intact, fully documented and accessible from day one.

Step 4: Testing

Your team tests the full applicant experience, reporting interface and reviewer portal. No cycle opens until you sign off.

Step 5: Launch

ISTS manages all application processing, helpdesk inquiries, reviewer coordination, applicant communications and disbursement. You access real-time reporting and meet regularly with your dedicated Program Administrator. Your team manages strategy and oversight. ISTS handles the rest.

SECTION 04: THE THREE FEARS, ANSWERED DIRECTLY



“Transition will disrupt our current cycle.”

Timing a transition is straightforward when it is planned around your cycle dates. ISTS does this by initiating scoping in the window between cycle close and your next open date, so the new application experience is fully configured, tested and ready before a single applicant interacts with it.

“We’ll lose access to years of program records we can’t recreate.”

Your program history belongs to you. Before anything migrates, ISTS conducts a full data inventory and confirms your complete records, award history, applicant documentation and audit trails transfer intact. We’ll even work directly with your previous administrator on a migration plan if needed. Your team has access from day one of the new setup.

“Our program is too customized for a standard platform.”

Customization is an implementation input, not a barrier. Every program ISTS manages is configured to its specific eligibility criteria, intended audiences, award structure, reviewer model and branding. With decades of experience and 335+ active client organizations across program types, we design to what your program requires, not what a standard template allows.

WHO IS ISTS?

ISTS is a 100% women-owned, full-service educational assistance program management company founded in 1985. We are not a software platform. We are a strategic partner who handles everything from application intake to fund disbursement, compliance and outcome reporting for scholarships and other educational assistance programs.

40+ years
Industry
experience

335+
Active client
organizations

\$147M+
Distributed
annually

NPS 9
Client satisfaction
score

LET'S LOOK AT YOUR PROGRAM TOGETHER.

We start with a 30-minute scoping session with an ISTS program expert. We review your current setup, surface the gaps and outline a realistic transition pathway. You'll leave knowing exactly whether a transition makes sense and what it would involve.

**REQUEST YOUR PERSONALIZED
PROGRAM REVIEW**

