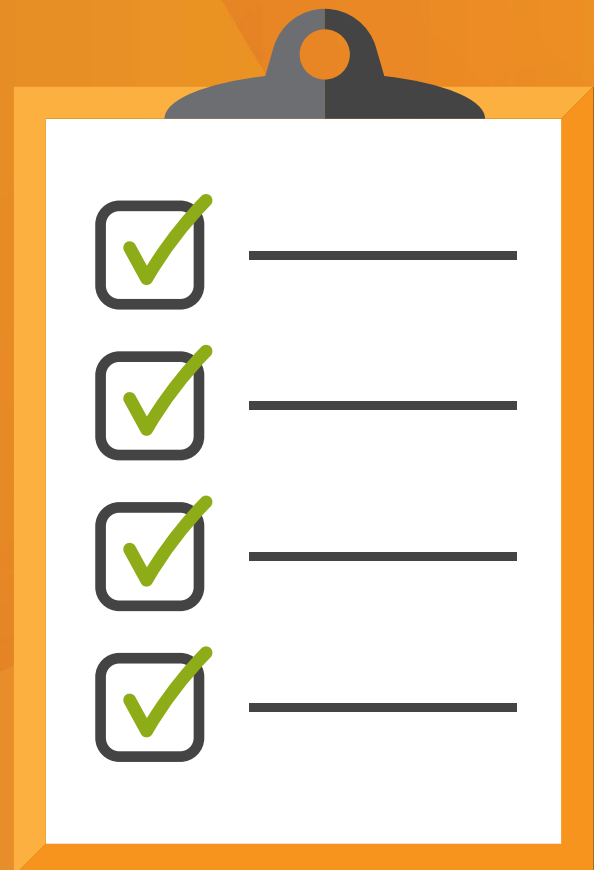


# IPO Readiness Checklist: Key Steps for CFOs

As a CFO, preparing your company to go public can feel like a daunting endeavor. Finance leaders often say it's the hardest 12-18 months of their careers, marked by a firehose of meetings and aggressive filing and reporting deadlines.

The initial public offering (IPO) journey spans six phases. All introduce clear priority areas and actions that CFOs must take to successfully navigate the process. This end-to-end checklist shows you what to start working on in each phase to help you sidestep hurdles and stay on track.



## Phase 1 (Months 1-4): Lay the Groundwork

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This phase of the IPO process is all about building a solid foundation. During these initial months, your company should establish a clear reporting mechanism to both the board and shareholders. You also must start considering any governance or legal hurdles, to ensure the company complies with the necessary regulatory frameworks before you proceed with public filings.

- Create an IPO steering committee
- Establish a project management structure
- Conduct an IPO organizational readiness assessment
- Upgrade financial statements for SEC compliance
- Evaluate and start addressing priority tax accounting issues
- Establish public company interim and local tax reporting
- Enhance monthly, quarterly, and annual closing processes
- Review, analyze, and educate the company on new or proposed equity plans
- Evaluate tech infrastructure
- Identify key environmental, social and governance (ESG) topics and listing requirements
- Establish talent strategy
- Refine your equity story and identify relevant metrics
- Enhance Human Resources (HR) protocols

## Phase 2 (Months 5–8): Strengthen Finance and Accounting Operations

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This phase is often viewed as the backbone of IPO readiness. As a public company, you'll need to report quarterly financial results, including metrics that help tell a compelling story about your performance and opportunities. To smooth the transition, the finance team should practice the steps involved in preparing and releasing quarterly financial statements, as if you were already public.

- Coordinate Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (PCAOB) audit activities
- Coordinate quarterly reviews using Statement on Auditing Standards (SAS) 100 guidance
- Get valuations
- Create and distribute regular employee communications
- Evaluate and fill Board gaps
- Define roadmap for new technology needs
- Execute tech implementations and improvements
- Upgrade to a public company equity administration system
- Formalize ESG strategy and roadmap
- Conduct financial modeling

## Phase 3 (Months 9–11): Prepare for Public Company Requirements

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In phase three, shift your focus to the operational aspects of being a public company. As you edge closer to your target IPO date, investor relations and capital markets strategies become more important. It's also critical to put in place the mechanisms that help guarantee your organization will be well-positioned to attract the right kind of investors and media attention.

- Assist in preparing SEC filings and support responses to SEC comment letters
- Enhance budgeting and forecasting capabilities
- Establish an internal audit and Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX) compliance roadmap and assess gaps
- Formalize IT and cyber policies, assessments and SEC disclosures
- Finalize external communications policies
- Develop investor relations and marketing
- Build a virtual roadshow

## Phase 4 (Months 11–14): Finalize the IPO Strategy

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While you continue to work on previous checklist items, it's now time to turn your attention to ESG. Investors increasingly prioritize sustainability when making investment decisions. Demonstrating strong ESG performance can help you enhance your company's reputation, attract investment, mitigate risks and comply with regulatory requirements, ultimately supporting long-term value and sustainable growth.

- Execute ESG roadmap and measure performance

## Phase 5 (Months 15–18): Complete Final Preparations

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In this final pre-IPO phase, work with your organization to wrap up all outstanding tasks in the previous phases and prepare for launch. Work closely with your executive team to guarantee all financial models, projections and public communications are polished and ready to be scrutinized by potential investors.

- Outsource internal audit (including IT testing)**

## Phase 6 (Post-Transaction): Manage the Transition

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It's not just about getting to the IPO; it's about setting your organization up for long-term success as a public company. While you'll face heightened scrutiny and be tied to ongoing reporting obligations, all the thoughtful preparation you complete beforehand will help the company continue to evolve and grow.

Ultimately, going public marks the beginning of a new phase of responsibility and opportunity. The post-transaction period is vital for solidifying operational and financial processes, ensuring that the company can deliver on the promises made.

- Maximize shareholder value**
- Prepare ESG report and integrate into financial reporting**
- Implement new HR policies for public company employees**
- Provide continuous modeling**
- Manage equity and share-based compensation accounting**

## Streamline Your Path to Going Public

Ready to begin the process of going public or want to better understand what the next moves for your business should look like? We can guide you every step of the way. [Schedule a free strategy session](#) to explore how our [IPO Readiness](#) experts can help you assess your readiness, outline your goals and determine your most efficient path to the public markets.