SDI ScienceDocs Inc.
Research • Funding • AI Strategy • Est. 2004

# Funding Readiness Checklist

*A practical ScienceDocs worksheet for evaluating whether a commercialization idea, research innovation, startup, spinout, or technology program is ready to pursue grant, investor, partner, or pilot funding.*

## How to Use This Checklist

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | Use this tool before starting a proposal, pitch deck, investor outreach campaign, pilot request, commercialization plan, or internal funding request. It helps determine whether the idea is fundable now, needs more evidence, or should be redirected to a better pathway. |
| **Recommended users** | Founders, scientific teams, university spinouts, technology transfer teams, SBIR/STTR applicants, commercialization leaders, AI/technology organizations, and operational improvement teams. |
| **Suggested timebox** | Complete a first pass in 60-90 minutes, then assign evidence-gathering tasks for the highest-risk gaps. |
| **Output** | A readiness score, pathway fit view, missing-evidence list, and near-term action plan for funding pursuit. |

## 1. Funding Candidate Snapshot

| | |
|---|---|
| **Idea / project / technology name** | |
| **Lead organization / team** | |
| **Primary product, service, platform, research program, or operational solution** | |
| **Current stage** | [ ] Concept [ ] Research result [ ] Prototype [ ] Pilot ready [ ] Early customer use [ ] Scaling |
| **Primary funding goal** | [ ] R&D [ ] Prototype [ ] Validation [ ] Pilot [ ] Commercial launch [ ] Scale-up [ ] Other: |
| **Approximate amount needed** | |
| **Target timing / deadline pressure** | |
| **Prepared by / date** | |

## 2. Core Funding Readiness Checklist

| Done? | Readiness Item / Prompt | Status | Notes / Evidence Gap |
|---|---|---|---|
| [ ] | The problem or opportunity is clearly defined in plain language and is not described only in technical terms. | [ ] Ready [ ] Needs work [ ] N/A | |
| [ ] | The team can identify who benefits, who pays, who approves, and who influences adoption. | [ ] Ready [ ] Needs work [ ] N/A | |
| [ ] | There is credible evidence that the problem matters, such as customer interviews, publications, market signals, regulatory pressure, operational cost, safety risk, or documented demand. | [ ] Ready [ ] Needs work [ ] N/A | |
| [ ] | The proposed solution has a clear value proposition compared with current alternatives, workarounds, or the status quo. | [ ] Ready [ ] Needs work [ ] N/A | |
| [ ] | The scientific, technical, clinical, data, operational, or engineering basis is specific enough for reviewers, investors, partners, or sponsors to understand. | [ ] Ready [ ] Needs work [ ] N/A | |
| [ ] | The project has a realistic next milestone that funding | [ ] Ready [ ] Needs work | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | could reasonably support. | [ ] N/A | |
| [ ] | The team understands the most important technical, market, regulatory, adoption, or implementation risks. | [ ] Ready<br>[ ] Needs work<br>[ ] N/A | |
| [ ] | The team can explain why funding is needed now and what will change if the funding is secured. | [ ] Ready<br>[ ] Needs work<br>[ ] N/A | |

## 3. Evidence Inventory

*List the evidence you already have and the evidence that must be gathered before pursuing funding.*

| Evidence type | What we have now | Strength: H/M/L | Missing evidence / next step |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Customer / user need** | | | |
| **Market or sector demand** | | | |
| **Technical feasibility** | | | |
| **Prototype or demonstration** | | | |
| **Competitive differentiation** | | | |
| **Budget or cost logic** | | | |
| **Regulatory / compliance path** | | | |
| **Team capability** | | | |

## 4. Funding Pathway Fit

*Rate each pathway for fit. A strong funding path should match the project stage, evidence base, team capacity, timeline, and funder expectations.*

| Pathway | Fit level | Best suited for | Current fit rationale | Gaps before pursuing |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **SBIR/STTR** | [ ] High<br>[ ] Medium<br>[ ] Low<br>[ ] Not sure | Novel R&D, technical risk reduction, commercialization-focused innovation, startup or small business development. | | |
| **Federal contracts / OTA** | [ ] High<br>[ ] Medium<br>[ ] Low<br>[ ] Not sure | Government mission needs, defense/health/security/energy applications, prototypes, operational solutions, or urgent procurement-aligned problems. | | |
| **Foundation / nonprofit grant** | [ ] High<br>[ ] Medium<br>[ ] Low<br>[ ] Not sure | Mission-driven research, public health, education, social impact, climate, community, or disease-area priorities. | | |
| **University licensing / translational support** | [ ] High<br>[ ] Medium<br>[ ] Low<br>[ ] Not sure | University-origin technologies, invention disclosures, translational milestones, spinout formation, and proof-of-concept work. | | |
| **Strategic partner /** | [ ] High<br>[ ] Medium | Industry validation, workflow fit, data access, | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **corporate pilot** | [ ] Low<br>[ ] Not sure | field testing, distribution partnerships, and co-development. | | |
| **Investor funding** | [ ] High<br>[ ] Medium<br>[ ] Low<br>[ ] Not sure | Scalable venture opportunity, large market, defensible advantage, commercial team, traction, and return potential. | | |
| **Internal innovation budget** | [ ] High<br>[ ] Medium<br>[ ] Low<br>[ ] Not sure | Operational improvement, AI adoption, process redesign, data systems, optimization, or technology implementation inside an existing organization. | | |

## 5. Review-Ready Story Check

| Done? | Story / Proposal Readiness Item | Status | Notes / Evidence Gap |
|---|---|---|---|
| [ ] | The narrative connects the problem, solution, evidence, team, milestones, budget, and impact into one coherent story. | [ ] Ready<br>[ ] Needs work<br>[ ] N/A | |
| [ ] | The project can be explained to a non-specialist without losing technical credibility. | [ ] Ready<br>[ ] Needs work<br>[ ] N/A | |
| [ ] | The team can describe what will be proven, built, tested, validated, or de-risked during the funded period. | [ ] Ready<br>[ ] Needs work<br>[ ] N/A | |
| [ ] | The expected outcome is measurable and linked to a clear next decision point. | [ ] Ready<br>[ ] Needs work<br>[ ] N/A | |
| [ ] | The commercialization, adoption, implementation, or use pathway is credible for the current stage. | [ ] Ready<br>[ ] Needs work<br>[ ] N/A | |
| [ ] | The requested funding amount appears proportional to the proposed work and expected outcome. | [ ] Ready<br>[ ] Needs work<br>[ ] N/A | |
| [ ] | The team can explain why it is qualified to complete the work and manage the next stage. | [ ] Ready<br>[ ] Needs work<br>[ ] N/A | |

## 6. Budget and Milestone Readiness

| Milestone | Purpose | Estimated cost | Evidence / deliverable | Risk if underfunded |
|---|---|---|---|---|
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## 7. Team, Partner, and Capacity Check

| Done? | Team / Capacity Item | Status | Notes / Evidence Gap |
|---|---|---|---|
| [ ] | The team has identified the scientific, technical, business, regulatory, commercialization, finance, and project management roles needed for the funding path. | [ ] Ready<br>[ ] Needs work<br>[ ] N/A | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| [ ] | Key personnel can show relevant experience, publications, prior grants, prototypes, industry knowledge, commercialization experience, or implementation capacity. | [ ] Ready<br>[ ] Needs work<br>[ ] N/A | |
| [ ] | External partners, consultants, university offices, mentors, clinical collaborators, data owners, pilot sites, or customers are identified where needed. | [ ] Ready<br>[ ] Needs work<br>[ ] N/A | |
| [ ] | Letters of support, partner commitments, facilities access, datasets, IP permissions, or pilot participation can be secured if required. | [ ] Ready<br>[ ] Needs work<br>[ ] N/A | |
| [ ] | The team has a realistic plan to manage reporting, deliverables, budget tracking, compliance, and stakeholder communication during the funded project. | [ ] Ready<br>[ ] Needs work<br>[ ] N/A | |

## 8. Compliance, Eligibility, and Practical Barriers

| Done? | Eligibility / Compliance Item | Status | Notes / Evidence Gap |
|---|---|---|---|
| [ ] | Confirm organization eligibility for the target funding path, including small business status, university role, nonprofit eligibility, or partner requirements. | [ ] Ready<br>[ ] Needs work<br>[ ] N/A | |
| [ ] | Check whether registrations, accounts, certifications, financial documents, indirect rates, institutional approvals, or sponsor portals are required. | [ ] Ready<br>[ ] Needs work<br>[ ] N/A | |
| [ ] | Identify human subjects, animal subjects, data security, privacy, export control, regulatory, IP, conflict-of-interest, or subaward considerations. | [ ] Ready<br>[ ] Needs work<br>[ ] N/A | |
| [ ] | Confirm whether the proposal or funding mechanism requires matching funds, letters, cost share, commercialization plans, data management plans, facilities descriptions, or financial projections. | [ ] Ready<br>[ ] Needs work<br>[ ] N/A | |
| [ ] | Identify any deadline, internal review, board approval, university approval, legal review, or partner review that could delay submission or funding acceptance. | [ ] Ready<br>[ ] Needs work<br>[ ] N/A | |

## 9. Key Funding Assumptions to Test

| Assumption | Category | Confidence | How to test it | Owner / due date |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | [ ] Funder fit<br>[ ] Budget<br>[ ] Evidence<br>[ ] Market<br>[ ] Tech<br>[ ] Compliance | [ ] High<br>[ ] Medium<br>[ ] Low | | |
| | [ ] Funder fit<br>[ ] Budget<br>[ ] Evidence<br>[ ] Market<br>[ ] Tech<br>[ ] Compliance | [ ] High<br>[ ] Medium<br>[ ] Low | | |
| | [ ] Funder fit<br>[ ] Budget<br>[ ] Evidence<br>[ ] Market<br>[ ] Tech<br>[ ] Compliance | [ ] High<br>[ ] Medium<br>[ ] Low | | |
| | [ ] Funder fit<br>[ ] Budget<br>[ ] Evidence<br>[ ] Market<br>[ ] Tech | [ ] High<br>[ ] Medium<br>[ ] Low | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | [ ] Compliance | | | |
| | [ ] Funder fit<br>[ ] Budget<br>[ ] Evidence<br>[ ] Market<br>[ ] Tech<br>[ ] Compliance | [ ] High<br>[ ] Medium<br>[ ] Low | | |
| | [ ] Funder fit<br>[ ] Budget<br>[ ] Evidence<br>[ ] Market<br>[ ] Tech<br>[ ] Compliance | [ ] High<br>[ ] Medium<br>[ ] Low | | |
| | [ ] Funder fit<br>[ ] Budget<br>[ ] Evidence<br>[ ] Market<br>[ ] Tech<br>[ ] Compliance | [ ] High<br>[ ] Medium<br>[ ] Low | | |
| | [ ] Funder fit<br>[ ] Budget<br>[ ] Evidence<br>[ ] Market<br>[ ] Tech<br>[ ] Compliance | [ ] High<br>[ ] Medium<br>[ ] Low | | |

## 10. Funding Readiness Scorecard

| Readiness area | Score 1-5 | Strong score indicates | Notes / evidence gaps |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Problem clarity** | 1 2 3 4 5 | The need is specific, important, and understandable to the target funder or sponsor. | |
| **User / customer evidence** | 1 2 3 4 5 | The team has credible evidence that stakeholders care about the problem and potential solution. | |
| **Technical basis** | 1 2 3 4 5 | The scientific, engineering, data, clinical, operational, or AI basis is credible for the proposed stage. | |
| **Differentiation** | 1 2 3 4 5 | The idea offers a meaningful advantage over alternatives, workarounds, or the status quo. | |
| **Milestone clarity** | 1 2 3 4 5 | Funding would support clear, measurable, stage-appropriate milestones. | |
| **Budget logic** | 1 2 3 4 5 | The amount requested is tied to realistic activities, personnel, timeline, and deliverables. | |
| **Team capacity** | 1 2 3 4 5 | The team and partners can plausibly execute the funded work. | |
| **Pathway fit** | 1 2 3 4 5 | The chosen funding path matches the project stage, evidence base, and next commercialization step. | |
| **Compliance readiness** | 1 2 3 4 5 | Eligibility, registrations, approvals, and risk issues are known or manageable. | |
| **Commercialization /** | 1 2 3 4 5 | There is a credible path | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **adoption case** | | beyond the funded project. | |

**Suggested interpretation:** 40-50 = pursue a defined funding path; 28-39 = promising but fill specific gaps first; below 28 = clarify problem, evidence, pathway, team, or budget before major submission effort.

## 11. Funding Readiness Decision

| Decision | When to choose this | Required next move |
|---|---|---|
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| | | |
| **READY - begin funding pursuit** | The project has a clear story, evidence base, pathway fit, budget logic, and team capacity. | Select target opportunity, confirm deadline, and begin proposal/pitch package development. |
| **NEEDS GAP WORK - prepare before pursuing** | The project is promising, but missing evidence, partner commitments, budget detail, eligibility checks, or milestone clarity. | Assign gap-closing tasks and set a date for a second readiness review. |
| **REDIRECT - choose a different path** | The funding pathway does not match the project stage, evidence level, or organizational position. | Reassess whether a pilot, partner, internal budget, licensing path, or different grant mechanism is more appropriate. |

## 12. Next-Step Action Plan

| Action item | Purpose | Owner | Due date | Status |
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## ScienceDocs Support

**Need help applying this tool? ScienceDocs supports commercialization, change management, AI adoption, grant strategy, and operational optimization.**