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

Investor Readiness Checklist

A practical planning tool for scientific startups, technology ventures, and commercialization teams

This checklist helps leadership teams assess whether they are prepared to approach investors, strategic partners, or non-dilutive funding stakeholders with a coherent and credible investment story. It is designed for startups and innovation-driven organizations that are translating research, grant-funded development, university IP, AI-enabled products, or operational technology into a fundable growth pathway.

How to use this checklist
Review each item and mark Ready, Needs Work, or Not Ready. Use the Notes / Evidence column to identify existing materials, missing documents, unresolved questions, or responsible team members. The goal is not to appear perfect; the goal is to understand what must be strengthened before serious investor conversations begin.

Quick Investor Readiness Snapshot

Readiness Area	Current Status	Primary Gap	Owner / Next Step
Market and customer validation	☐ Strong ☐ Moderate ☐ Weak		
Product or technology status	☐ Strong ☐ Moderate ☐ Weak		
Business model and revenue logic	☐ Strong ☐ Moderate ☐ Weak		
Financial model and funding need	☐ Strong ☐ Moderate ☐ Weak		
Team, advisors, and governance	☐ Strong ☐ Moderate ☐ Weak		
IP, regulatory, and risk position	☐ Strong ☐ Moderate ☐ Weak		
Investor materials and data room	☐ Strong ☐ Moderate ☐ Weak		

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Checklist Sections

1. Market Need and Customer Validation

Readiness Item	Ready	Needs Work	Not Ready	Notes / Evidence
The target customer or user group is clearly defined.	☐	☐	☐	
The pain point is specific, urgent, and supported by real conversations or evidence.	☐	☐	☐	
The team can explain why current alternatives are inadequate.	☐	☐	☐	
Customer discovery interviews or equivalent market research have been documented.	☐	☐	☐	
The team has identified early adopters, buyer personas, or pilot partners.	☐	☐	☐	
Market size assumptions are reasonable and tied to a defined customer segment.	☐	☐	☐	
The go-to-market pathway is plausible for the company's stage and budget.	☐	☐	☐	

2. Product, Technology, and Evidence Base

Readiness Item	Ready	Needs Work	Not Ready	Notes / Evidence
The product, platform, service, or technology is described in plain language.	☐	☐	☐	
The team can explain what has been validated and what remains unproven.	☐	☐	☐	
Technical milestones are documented and connected to business milestones.	☐	☐	☐	
Prototype, proof-of-concept, MVP, or pilot evidence is available where applicable.	☐	☐	☐	
Performance claims are supported by data, testing, publications, or credible analysis.	☐	☐	☐	
Product development risks are identified with mitigation plans.	☐	☐	☐	

Readiness Item	Ready	Needs Work	Not Ready	Notes / Evidence
The next technical milestones are realistic given funding, staffing, and time constraints.	☐	☐	☐	

3. Business Model and Revenue Strategy

Readiness Item	Ready	Needs Work	Not Ready	Notes / Evidence
The company can explain how it will generate revenue.	☐	☐	☐	
Pricing assumptions are based on customer value, comparable products, or market evidence.	☐	☐	☐	
Sales channels and partnership models are defined at a practical level.	☐	☐	☐	
The company understands whether it is selling to customers, institutions, governments, enterprises, or strategic partners.	☐	☐	☐	
Unit economics, margins, or cost drivers are understood at least directionally.	☐	☐	☐	
The business model aligns with the commercialization stage and regulatory pathway.	☐	☐	☐	
The team can explain how funding will accelerate revenue, adoption, or technical validation.	☐	☐	☐	

4. Competitive Position and Differentiation

Readiness Item	Ready	Needs Work	Not Ready	Notes / Evidence
The competitive landscape has been reviewed and summarized.	☐	☐	☐	
Direct and indirect competitors are identified.	☐	☐	☐	
The team can explain its differentiation clearly and credibly.	☐	☐	☐	
The company understands why competitors have not already solved the problem.	☐	☐	☐	
Defensibility is supported by IP, data, expertise, partnerships, speed, regulatory knowledge, or technical advantage.	☐	☐	☐	

Readiness Item	Ready	Needs Work	Not Ready	Notes / Evidence
Claims about superiority are supported rather than overstated.	☐	☐	☐	
Competitive risks are acknowledged and incorporated into the strategy.	☐	☐	☐	

5. IP, Regulatory, Data, and Compliance Position

Readiness Item	Ready	Needs Work	Not Ready	Notes / Evidence
Ownership or licensing status of core intellectual property is clear.	☐	☐	☐	
Patent, trade secret, copyright, data, or know-how protections have been considered.	☐	☐	☐	
University licensing obligations, if any, are understood.	☐	☐	☐	
Regulatory pathway or compliance requirements have been identified where relevant.	☐	☐	☐	
Data privacy, security, AI governance, or customer data obligations have been reviewed where applicable.	☐	☐	☐	
Material legal or compliance risks are documented for leadership review.	☐	☐	☐	
Investor-facing statements about IP and regulatory status are accurate and not exaggerated.	☐	☐	☐	

6. Team, Advisors, and Operating Capacity

Readiness Item	Ready	Needs Work	Not Ready	Notes / Evidence
Key leadership roles are defined.	☐	☐	☐	
Technical, commercial, regulatory, operational, and financial responsibilities are assigned.	☐	☐	☐	
The team has identified important capability gaps.	☐	☐	☐	
Advisors, consultants, or partners strengthen areas where the internal team is limited.	☐	☐	☐	

Readiness Item	Ready	Needs Work	Not Ready	Notes / Evidence
The company has a realistic hiring or outsourcing plan for the next stage.	☐	☐	☐	
Governance, decision-making, and founder responsibilities are sufficiently clear.	☐	☐	☐	
The team can explain why it is capable of executing the plan.	☐	☐	☐	

7. Financial Model and Funding Ask

Readiness Item	Ready	Needs Work	Not Ready	Notes / Evidence
The company has a basic financial model with defensible assumptions.	☐	☐	☐	
The amount of funding being requested is clearly defined.	☐	☐	☐	
Use of funds is specific and connected to milestones.	☐	☐	☐	
Non-dilutive funding, grants, contracts, customer revenue, and equity funding are considered together.	☐	☐	☐	
Cash runway and timing of next milestones are understood.	☐	☐	☐	
The team can explain what value will be created by the next round of funding.	☐	☐	☐	
Financial projections are ambitious enough to interest investors but not disconnected from operational reality.	☐	☐	☐	

8. Investor Materials and Data Room

Readiness Item	Ready	Needs Work	Not Ready	Notes / Evidence
Pitch deck is clear, concise, and visually professional.	☐	☐	☐	
Executive summary or one-page overview is available.	☐	☐	☐	
Team bios and advisor descriptions are current.	☐	☐	☐	
Evidence documents, grant awards, publications, customer notes, IP documents, or technical summaries are organized.	☐	☐	☐	

Readiness Item	Ready	Needs Work	Not Ready	Notes / Evidence
Financial model, cap table, and use-of-funds materials are ready for review where appropriate.	☐	☐	☐	
FAQs and likely investor objections have been anticipated.	☐	☐	☐	
Materials tell a coherent story across problem, solution, market, traction, team, funding, and milestones.	☐	☐	☐	

Score Summary

Section	Ready Count	Needs Work Count	Not Ready Count	Priority Level
Market Need and Customer Validation				☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low
Product, Technology, and Evidence Base				☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low
Business Model and Revenue Strategy				☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low
Competitive Position and Differentiation				☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low
IP, Regulatory, Data, and Compliance Position				☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low
Team, Advisors, and Operating Capacity				☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low
Financial Model and Funding Ask				☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low
Investor Materials and Data Room				☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low

Interpretation guide

If several sections include multiple Not Ready responses, the company may benefit from strengthening strategy and materials before investor outreach. If most items are Ready but a few areas remain weak, leadership may be close to investor-readiness but should resolve priority gaps before serious diligence discussions.

Priority Action Plan

Priority Gap	Why It Matters	Action Needed	Owner	Target Date

Priority Gap	Why It Matters	Action Needed	Owner	Target Date

Investor Conversation Preparation

Investor Question	Current Answer / Evidence Needed
Why is this the right time for this company or technology?	
What has already been validated with customers, users, partners, or funders?	
What makes this opportunity defensible?	
What will the requested funding accomplish?	
What are the biggest technical, market, regulatory, or operational risks?	
Why is this team capable of executing the plan?	
What milestone will create the next major increase in company value?	

ScienceDocs Support

ScienceDocs helps scientific startups, university spinouts, and innovation-focused companies strengthen investor readiness by connecting commercialization planning, grant strategy, AI and optimization engineering, market transition, and operational change management. This checklist can be used internally or as a starting point for a more detailed investor-readiness review.

Ready to strengthen your investor readiness and commercialization strategy? Contact ScienceDocs to discuss how we can help your team prepare for funding, growth, and market transition.