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Spinout Planning Worksheet

A practical ScienceDocs resource for planning university spinouts, founder-led startups, and research-based venture formation.

This worksheet helps founders, researchers, university spinout teams, commercialization leads, and early-stage advisors evaluate whether a research-based opportunity is ready to become a company. It is designed to organize the technology, IP, market, team, funding, and execution assumptions that must be clarified before moving from promising invention to operating venture.

How to use this worksheet: Complete the sections in sequence. Unknown answers are not failures; they are planning gaps. Use the final action plan to convert those gaps into concrete next steps before committing heavily to formation, licensing, fundraising, or pilot execution.

1. Spinout Opportunity Snapshot

Proposed company / project name	
University / institution / lab	
Lead founder or project sponsor	
Inventor(s) / contributors	
Core technology or invention	
Primary application / use case	
Target customer or stakeholder	
Current stage	☐ Concept ☐ Disclosure filed ☐ Patent pending ☐ Prototype ☐ Pilot-ready ☐ Revenue / partnerships
Desired spinout outcome	☐ License and form company ☐ Option period ☐ Sponsored research ☐ Joint development ☐ Other:

2. Spinout Readiness Checklist

Planning Area	Readiness / Decision Question	Status	Notes / Action Needed
Problem	Is the customer or stakeholder problem clearly defined in business terms?	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No	
Problem	Has the team collected direct evidence that the problem matters?	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No	
Technology	Can the technology be explained without relying only on technical jargon?	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No	
Technology	Is there evidence that the technology performs better, faster, cheaper, safer, or more effectively than alternatives?	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No	
IP	Has an invention disclosure, patent application, copyright, data asset, or software ownership issue been identified?	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No	
IP	Are university ownership, sponsor obligations, government rights, and background rights understood at a practical level?	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No	
Market	Is there a defined initial market segment rather than a broad market label?	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No	
Customer	Are likely users, buyers, economic decision-makers, and adoption blockers identified?	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No	

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Planning Area	Readiness / Decision Question	Status	Notes / Action Needed
Team	Are founder roles, operating leadership, advisor gaps, and potential conflicts of interest clear?	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No	
Funding	Is there a realistic first funding path such as SBIR/STTR, translational funding, angel investment, licensing partner, or sponsored research?	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No	
Execution	Can the team describe the next 6-12 months of milestones?	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No	

3. Founder and Team Role Map

Spinouts often fail because the technology is promising but operating roles are unclear. Use this section to identify who will lead scientific development, business execution, customer discovery, fundraising, university coordination, and regulatory or operational planning.

Role / Function	Proposed Person	Current Commitment	Gap / Risk	Next Step

4. University, IP, and Licensing Planning

Issue	Current Status	Risk Level	Questions for TTO / Counsel	Owner

Issues to consider include invention disclosure status, option versus license timing, field of use, patent expenses, equity or royalty expectations, sponsor rights, Bayh-Dole obligations, inventor consulting, conflict-of-interest requirements, and publication or data restrictions.

5. Customer, Buyer, and Adoption Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Initial Answer	Evidence Already Available	Evidence Needed	Priority

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6. Business Model and Commercialization Pathway

Likely revenue model	☐ Product sale ☐ SaaS/subscription ☐ Service ☐ Licensing ☐ Data/API ☐ Platform ☐ Other:
Primary buyer or payer	
Initial channel or route to market	
Expected adoption barrier	
Pricing or value hypothesis	
Potential strategic partners	
Regulatory / reimbursement considerations	
First beachhead market	

7. Technical and Product Development Roadmap

Milestone	Purpose	Technical / Product Work	Evidence Produced	Target Date

8. Funding Pathway Planner

Funding Source	Fit for This Spinout	Amount / Range	Timing	Materials Needed	Owner

Potential funding pathways may include university proof-of-concept funds, SBIR/STTR, state innovation grants, translational research awards, angel investment, venture studios, strategic partners, customer-funded pilots, or sponsored research agreements.

9. Conflict, Commitment, and Governance Questions

Question	Current Answer	Risk / Constraint	Follow-Up Needed

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Questions to evaluate include: Who can legally and practically serve as founder, officer, consultant, board member, or scientific advisor? Are university approvals required? Can faculty time be committed? Who owns company decisions? How will equity, advisory roles, and inventor compensation be handled?

10. Risk Register for Spinout Formation

Risk	Category	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Plan	Owner

11. Spinout Readiness Scorecard

Score each dimension from 1 to 3. A higher score suggests that the opportunity is ready for deeper licensing, formation, funding, or pilot planning. A lower score means the team should resolve specific gaps before committing significant time or capital.

Dimension	1 = Not ready	2 = Partially ready	3 = Ready to advance	Score
Technology/IP	IP and rights unclear	TTO process started but key rights unknown	Rights, disclosure, and licensing path are understood	
Market problem	Customer/problem not validated	Some interviews or market signals exist	Specific customer problem and early evidence are documented	
Founder/team	No operating lead or role clarity	Partial team/advisor coverage	Founding team and advisor gaps are clearly defined	
Business model	Revenue model speculative	Business model hypotheses drafted	Initial pricing, buyer, channel, and adoption logic are credible	
Funding path	No realistic funding plan	Potential grants/investors identified	Near-term grant, investor, or partner path is actionable	
Conflict/commitment	Institutional conflicts unknown	Conflict issues identified but unresolved	Conflict, appointment, and commitment issues have a plan	
Execution roadmap	No staged plan	Draft milestones exist	Spinout milestones, owners, and timing are organized	

12. 30-60-90 Day Spinout Action Plan

Timeframe	Priority Action	Owner	Decision / Evidence Needed	Status

ScienceDocs Support

Need help applying this tool? ScienceDocs supports commercialization, change management, AI adoption, grant strategy, and operational optimization. We help research teams, startups, and university spinouts evaluate technology opportunities, organize commercialization evidence, prepare funding strategies, and build practical roadmaps from idea to market.