



**Please note:** The following text is provided for informational purposes. We emphasize that only the German text („Ausschreibungsbedingungen“) is legally binding.

## TENDER CONDITIONS

### PRESS START: Games Founding Grant

As of October 28, 2024

#### 1. Preamble and Funding Objectives

Through the program *Press Start: Games Founding Grant*, funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media and conducted by *game – the German Games Industry Association* in cooperation with the *Foundation for Digital Games Culture (Stiftung Digitale Spielekultur gGmbH)*, grants are awarded to support new game startups.

The German games market is generating record revenues, yet domestic creators see limited benefits, as their market share remains below five percent. To promote growth and strengthen the culturally and creatively significant gaming sector in Germany, especially its emerging talents, further support for game industry startups is essential.

The new founding grant for games aims to foster the development of new game production structures. Over an 18-month period, founders—either individually or in teams—will receive a monthly grant to help them focus on the founding phase and on developing their own games. They will also participate in a comprehensive education and networking program, along with accompanying coaching to support their launch. The professional workshops and coaching are a mandatory component of the grant.

The program aims to promote cultural, artistic, technological, social, and gameplay-based innovation and creativity in the games sector, with a particular focus on emerging talents. Additionally, the program contributes to establishing the foundation for new development studios and creating jobs within the games industry, reinforcing Germany's national and international relevance in the gaming landscape as an integral part of the cultural and creative economy. The program supports a games culture founded on recognition and appreciation, respecting



individual identities and the diversity they create. Applications that contribute to an inclusive and diverse gaming landscape are especially encouraged.

## 2. Objective of funding

The program is designed to support grant recipients in establishing a lasting and sustainable presence in the games sector. The funding includes a grant program comprising financial support and a series of educational workshops and coaching sessions.

Through financial assistance in the form of a grant, participants can fully focus on founding their company and developing their game. Industry-specific know-how in topics such as business model development, funding, legal foundations, marketing, and sales provides a foundation for preparing founders for the challenges of starting and managing a company. The accompanying program also offers opportunities to connect with creatives, industry experts, potential partners, investors, and other developers to foster long-term collaborations, cultural and artistic exchange, and business relationships. This targeted, industry-specific support enables grant recipients to develop market-ready products and compete on both national and international levels.

The duration of the grant program is 18 months, starting on December 15, 2024, and ending on June 15, 2026. The monthly grant of EUR 2,750 has a total maximum amount of EUR 49,500, covering the recipients' expenses, including living costs, during the program period. A grant agreement will be signed for this purpose.

In the case of team funding, a grant agreement is made with each founding member individually. The grant amount applies per person, even in team settings.

This grant is considered a de minimis aid according to EU Regulation 2023/2831 of December 13, 2023, on applying Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to de minimis aid.

The grant can only be awarded if the recipient confirms that the total amount of de minimis aid received does not exceed the maximum limit set by Article 3(2) of the de minimis regulation and that all other conditions of the regulation are met. The de minimis declaration is part of the grant agreement.

## 3. Eligibility Criteria

- Eligible applicants are natural persons with a primary residence in Germany: game creators and/or students in game development who wish



to assume entrepreneurial responsibility or professionalize their business activities.

- Eligible applicants may form founding teams of up to three members. Team members in founding teams must have a legally secure share in the company to be founded or already established and play an active role in the founding process.
- When applying as a team, the individual, selected members—not the team as a whole—become grant recipients. This means that grant agreements are signed with individual applicants (natural persons).
- Individuals who are still studying at the time of application must complete their studies by the summer semester of 2025.
- The individual/team must have at least a concept or a game in an early development stage that they wish to further develop.
  - The term "game" also includes projects that broadly utilize game-based mechanics and technologies (gamification, serious games, VR/AR/MR, etc.). Purely analogue applications and gambling are excluded.
  - The submitted project (game/application) must be at least in the conceptual stage and represent an unpublished game. Modifications of previously developed applications without significant changes or unique features are not sufficient.
- Applicants must have their primary residence in Germany. Non-EU citizens must additionally provide a copy of their residence permit along with a passport copy.
- The individual/team must have either founded a games company after June 15, 2023, or plan to do so within the first grant year (by December 15, 2025).
- The planned company headquarters must be located in Germany.
- Concurrent participation in another grant, an active employment relationship over 10 hours per week, or a support program covering the founders' living expenses is excluded. A dormant employment relationship (founding sabbatical) is permissible.
- Each applicant must have their own bank account with an IBAN and their own email address.
- Active participation in the workshop and coaching program is a mandatory part of the grant program.



- Each team member must complete the required fields of the electronic application form, upload all required documents electronically, and submit the application via the designated electronic method to *game / Foundation for Digital Games Culture*.
- Applicants not eligible include, as of the grant start date, individuals employed full-time in the gaming industry or already engaged in full-time employment. Ineligible team members include mere employees, supporting freelancers, external contractors, and silent partners.
- Jurors of this program are also ineligible for application.

#### 4. Application Process

The application period begins on October 28, 2024, and ends on November 17, 2024, at 11:59 PM.

Applications must be submitted through the online form at <https://games-stipendium.de/> between October 28 and November 17, 2024, in either German or English. Incorrect information in the application process or form may lead to repayment demands of the grant funds.

The following documents are required for the application:

- A. Resume(s) (max. 3 A4 pages) of the applicants
- B. Motivation letter of the applicants (max. 800 characters including spaces)
- C. Pitch deck (max. 15 A4 pages) including at least the following information:
  - Introduction of teams or solo developer
  - Concept, game, or application presentation (main section)
  - What is the USP of the project?
  - Economic potential (at least 1 page)

Optionally, video material introducing the founding project (game and team presentation) can be submitted as a link, with a maximum duration of 7 minutes.

Additionally, the submitted concept will be reviewed by the jury based on the following criteria. Not every criterion applies to all game ideas, but the pitch deck must provide information on at least one of these areas:

- Topic choice and cultural, social, or political relevance



- Originality and innovation in gameplay, storytelling, or mechanics
- Potential to initiate cultural discourse
- Narrative depth and emotional resonance
- Diversity and representation of various perspectives and lifestyles
- Use of innovative technologies to foster cultural expression and social interaction
- Aesthetic and artistic vision
- Accessibility and inclusion
- Potential for community building (including fan art, modding, etc.)

Applications are evaluated, awarded, and disbursed by *game – the German Games Industry Association* in cooperation with the *Foundation for Digital Games Culture*. Grants are awarded as a one-time, non-repayable contribution in accordance with sections 23 and 33 of the Federal Budget Code, including the associated administrative regulations, through a private law funding agreement (grant contract). Sections 48 and 49a of the Administrative Procedures Act apply analogously to potential revocation and repayment of the funding provided.

## 5. Selection Process

The *Foundation for Digital Games Culture* first reviews the applications to ensure they meet formal criteria. If applicants fulfil these formal criteria, the applications are submitted to an independent expert jury. The jury, appointed in consultation with the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media (BKM) by *game* and the *Foundation for Digital Games Culture*, decides on the grant awards. The jury deliberates in closed sessions, and decisions are generally not explained. There is no entitlement to a grant.

All applicants will receive notification by email regarding the jury's decision.

Upon a positive jury decision, a grant contract is made with the selected applicant. This contract must be signed by the applicant and returned within one week of receipt. Otherwise, the jury's positive decision expires.

The grant duration is 18 months, and disbursements are made in instalments. After the signed grant contract is received, *game – the German Games Industry Association* transfers the first instalment to the applicant's bank account indicated in the funding application.



## 6. Reporting Requirements

Grant recipients must actively participate in the accompanying coaching and networking program during the grant period. Proof of company founding must be provided no later than December 15, 2025. In justified individual cases, the project sponsor may extend the deadline for proof submission.

Within the final (eighteenth) month of the grant period, the grant recipient must submit a project report detailing the implementation of the startup project, including materials developed during the process. Part of the project report is the completion of a form-based questionnaire. Upon receipt and positive evaluation of the project report, the final instalment will be disbursed. Specific conditions are governed by the grant contract.

If the obligations outlined in the tender and/or the grant agreement are violated by the grant recipient, the grant amount may be reclaimed proportionally. Incorrect information or incorrect documentation in the application process and/or in the funding agreement may also result in the repayment of the grant funds.

## 7. Effective Date

These funding guidelines are valid until June 30, 2027.