

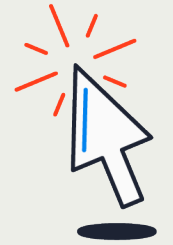


The following text is provided for informational purposes for applicants.

We emphasize that only the German version of the tender conditions (Ausschreibungsbedingungen) is legally binding.



Press Start: Games Founding Grant Webinar



We're looking forward to your **questions** – but please wait until the end of webinar to ask them via the Q&A tool 😊



Team of Press Start

- Your hosts: Vanessa (game) and Niels (Stiftung)
- Mod team: Nadja, Clara, Benny, Tobias
- Further contact: stipendium@stiftung-digitale-spielekultur.de





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Procedure

- Modus operandi
 - Webinar will be held in English to include everyone. Questions can be asked in German though.
 - Due to size of the audience, this is a rather frontal presentation
 - You can ask your question via the Q&A tool of zoom at the end of the webinar. Our mod team will cluster and gather questions.
- Goal of this webinar is to help applicants with the process
- For press related questions, quotes, interview requests please reach out to our PR colleagues Benjamin Hillmann from Stiftung and Martin Puppe from game



At a glance

- Funded by BKM, organised by *game* in cooperation with *Stiftung*
- The program is designed to support
 - **individuals** who are founding a company, not the company itself
 - **you** in establishing a lasting and sustainable presence in the games industry
- Funding includes a stipend program with **financial support** and a series of **mandatory educational workshops and coaching sessions**
- Duration: 18 months, 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,



Eligibility requirements

- Natural persons with primary residence in Germany
 - Not a project or company funding but a stipend for a person (game creator / founder)
 - German citizenship not required
- Apply solo or as a team up to three members
- In case of team: every single member may receive an individual stipend
- Applicants must have an active role in the founding process. Ineligible team members include mere employees, supporting freelancers, external contractors, and silent partners.



Eligibility requirements

I am part of a team of game developers; Can I apply solo / can only some team members apply?

- Applications are also allowed if the applicant is part of an existing team/project and/or not all team members are eligible to apply.

How can I prove my qualifications?

- Game creators can demonstrate their qualifications by providing proof of studies or training in the field of games or a related area, involvement in game development, and/or relevant experience in game development. The jury will decide on sufficient qualifications



Eligibility requirements

Will career changers ('Quereinsteiger*innen') in software engineering from other non-gaming industries be considered?

- Case-by-case depending on the individual resume and the project with which you apply/the needs and scope of the project.



Eligibility requirements



Our team consists of 3+ founders

- If there are more than three founders in the team, a selection must be made independently by the applying team which (up to 3) persons should apply.

I'm currently employed, my notice period ends after Dec 15, 2024. Is it possible to apply?

- Decision pending, please check the website for updates on this!
- We recommend talking to your employer, maybe it's possible to reduce your weekly hours to 10, or agree on a dissolution contract



Eligibility requirements

- Applying students need to finish their studies by the summer semester 2025
- You need to have at least a concept or a game in an early development stage (unreleased) that you 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
- Modifications of previously developed applications without significant changes or unique features are not sufficient



Eligibility requirements

When is a game considered published?

- Anything that has been monetized is generally considered published
- Early Access, such as on Steam, is considered published
- Playtesting within a closed group does not count as publication
- Non-commercial releases in early development phases on commonly used platforms like itch.io are, however, permitted



Eligibility requirements

- You 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)
- Company HQ present and future must be located in Germany
- All legal forms of businesses according to German law are allowed





Eligibility requirements

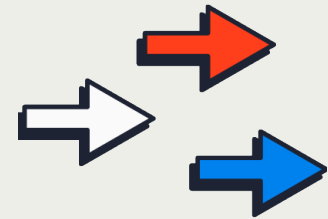
- Parallel **application** for other fundings is allowed
- BUT: Concurrent **participation** in another grant, an **active employment relationship over 10 hours per week**, or a support program covering the founders' living expenses is excluded
- A dormant employment relationship (founding sabbatical) is permissible





Eligibility requirements

- Jurors of this program are also ineligible for application





Eligibility requirements



I am receiving game development funding from a federal state, e.g. Medienboard

- Has the funding already been completed -> no problem, you can apply
- Is the funding ongoing -> this would be double funding, as e.g. living expenses would be covered by both the grant and the funded salary, which means this is not allowed
- If you apply for and receive games funding during the program: That is okay, but you need to terminate your participation, the grant amount must be payed back partially



Eligibility requirements



We would like to expand our team over the course of the process and, if necessary, apply for additional funding specifically for the new team for a different project phase. Would this be permitted as long as the founders are excluded?

- No. The grant covers living expenses and, if applicable, material costs. The latter cannot be reliably and clearly separated from other funding sources, especially since other funding may also partially support the managing director/shareholders. This is relevant to the issue of double funding.



Eligibility requirements



The FFF Bayern funds games using repayable loans for concepts/prototypes, meaning it is money that has to be paid back, is that something that counts as a grant for the purposes of this?

- No. The state funding providers offer conditionally repayable loans, meaning repayment is only required in the event of success. Therefore, it still counts as double funding.



Eligibility requirements

I'm receiving another grant (e.g. InnoStartBonus) but would like to switch

- you can apply for the grant
- In case of approval, the other program needs to be terminated until Dec 15, 2024

My company has been founded before 15 June, 2023. Can I apply?

- No.

Can we look for a publisher during the grant phase?

- Yes of course! But if you sign a contract with a publisher, you might have to exit the program.



Eligibility requirements

Are you allowed to be a shareholder of another company when applying for this grant?

- you can apply for the grant, but you need to make it plausible that you can profit from the workshops and coaching

Are the 10 hours/week billed weekly, or accumulated over a longer period?

- It's fine as a transitional period at the beginning. It just needs to balance out over the first two months.



Eligibility requirements

Can mixed international teams apply? Is there any criteria on how many German residents should be in the team?

- Mixed teams are okay, but the founders must have residency in Germany, company HQ must be in Germany as well. Turning mere employees into ad hoc founders is considered fraudulent.

Is it allowed for non-funded team members to join the coachings?

- No.



Eligibility requirements

If I'm in a team of 10 people, but only 2 or 3 are applying for the funding, should we still introduce the entire team?

If my team colleague is not eligible but has very good qualifications, is his expertise still considered in my application for the company he will be a part of, even if he is not a founder?

- Yes!



Application process

- Apply until November 17, 2024, at 11:59 PM
- Submit through the online form at <https://games-stipendium.de/>
- German or English
 - All legal documents will be in German (eg. stipend agreement)
- Only complete applications will be considered
- Paper of consent must be signed by all applicants and uploaded through the portal



Application process

- A. Resume(s) of the applicants (*max. 3 A4 pages*)
 - B. Motivation letter of the applicants (*max. 800 characters incl. 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)
- Optional:** video material introducing the founding project (game and/or team presentation) can be submitted as a link, with a maximum duration of 7 minutes.



Application process

I have a question regarding the CV and qualifications: It says that no personal data should be included, but, for example, the certificate proving my degree contains my date of birth. How should that be handled? Should it be redacted?

- We ask you to refrain from submitting personal data via the PDFs because these files will be handed out to third party (jury members). They sign NDAs but in the interest of your own data security you should consider blacking out those pieces of data in your PDFs.



Selection criteria and process

- Founders
 - Up to three founders per team can apply. Details of each person must be entered in the application form and individual CVs uploaded
- Team profile
 - company's vision, team synergies, and roles
 - Have any of your games and projects already been realized?
- Pitch deck
 - description of the project you will be working on



Selection criteria and process

- Selection focuses on the **overall potential** of the founders
 - What is your vision for your company?
 - What kind of skills do you/does your team bring to the table?
 - Is there an audience for the kind of games you want to make?
 - Feasibility of realizing the project regarding your resources and your skills
- Also: How good is your games project?
 - Shiny graphics, interesting story, cool gameplay, sweet mechanics?
 - Is your games idea economically viable, does it have market potential?





Selection criteria and process

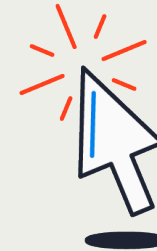
Cultural criteria

- **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.)



Selection criteria and process

- Independent expert jury
- 20 people
- Appointed by *game* and *Stiftung* in consultation with BKM
- consisting of games industry professionals
 - Devs, publishers and founders
 - Professionals from game science and education fields
 - Journalists and content creators





Selection criteria and process

- *Stiftung* reviews the applications to ensure they meet formal criteria
- If everything is okay the applications are submitted to the jury
- the jury deliberates in closed sessions
- All applicants will receive notification by email regarding the jury's decision - decisions are generally not explained
- If the jury votes positively, a stipend contract is made with the selected applicant
- **Important:** this contract must be signed by the applicant and returned within one week, otherwise the jury's positive decision expires



Selection criteria and process

- The grant duration is 18 months
- disbursements are made in instalments, details in contract
- First instalment will be made by game at the start of the program (December 2024)
- this grant is considered a de minimis aid according to EU Regulations
 - The grant can only be awarded if the recipient hasn't exceeded the maximum limit of the de minimis regulation (300.000 EUR in three years)
 - A de minimis declaration is part of the grant agreement.
- Tax info
 - We cannot and are not permitted to assess the individual tax liability of each person
 - Every tax authority decides for themselves
 - Please discuss your personal situation with your local tax authority or your tax advisor



Selection criteria and process

Can we submit a playable build, and will it be played through in its entirety?

- No. But you can submit up to 7 minutes of video footage.

Is it possible to pitch multiple projects in the application? Can I apply multiple times?

- No.



Further grant criteria

Responsibilities of the grantee

the program includes professional workshops (online, 10-14 topics) and individual coaching sessions (online, 3-5 hrs per month)

Additionally, there will be a kick-off, a mid-term, and a final event (in-person events)

These appointments **must be attended** to the following extent:

- Founder teams must attend 75% of the professional workshops (not all team members need to attend each session).
- Solo founders must attend at least 65% of the offered workshops.
- teams and solo founders must use at least 50% of the coaching hours
- Attendance at the three in-person events (kick-off, mid-term and final event) is mandatory, with exceptions only in justified cases.

A website must be created for the existing or to-be-founded company within the first year of the grant.



Further grant criteria

- Proof of company founding must be provided no later than December 15, 2025 (pre-condition for final instalment)
- Periodical questionnaire
- Within the final (eighteenth) month of the grant period, you must submit a project report detailing the implementation of the startup project, including materials developed during the process
- If the obligations are violated by you, the grant amount may be reclaimed proportionally (individual case decision)



Further grant criteria

When will the grant be terminated or discontinued?

- Voluntary withdrawal of the grantee(s)
- Taking up a paid part-time job exceeding 10 hours per week
- Violation of the obligations outlined in the grant agreement, including:
 - Not meeting attendance quota
 - Negative feedback from founding coaches, lack of continuity in team development
 - Disregard of the Safe Space Policy
 - Failure to submit the progress reports on time
 - No clear intention to found a company after one year of the grant



if the grant program is prematurely terminated, the grant amount must be fully or partially repaid

this decision will be made on a case-by-case basis by the project sponsor, considering the individual situation of the grantee



Further grant criteria

Regulations in case of illness, parental leave or maternity protection

- As grantees are not employees, they are not entitled to compensation during pregnancy, maternity leave, or illness
- It's possible to continue the program during pregnancy, maternity leave, or illness if the founder fulfils the grant agreement obligations
- If not, a portion of the grant may be reclaimed
- That decision will be made on a case-by-case basis by the project sponsor, taking the grantee's individual situation into account



Further grant criteria

Does the game have to be finished and released within the 18 months of the stipendium?

- No.

If we realize during the grant period that we'd like to finalize a different prototype than the one submitted, is that possible with the grant, or is it specifically tied to one project?

- Case-by-case decision



Other questions

When can we expect a definite yes or no answer the latest?

- Dec 6, 2024 (waitlist candidates possibly later)

In the case of an approval, will the contract be sent by email?

- Yes.

Will we need to pay travel and stay for the in-person events ourselves?

- Yes, you should use the grant money for that. There are only 3 in-person-events to attend, likely in Berlin, Cologne (gamescom) and again in Berlin



Other questions

Do coaches have any influence over the design decisions of the game?

- No. The coaches support in business decisions, but all decisions are made by the team.

Are our ideas protected when we submit them to you? So, we don't need to worry about someone else implementing our idea?

- All jury members sign an NDA, which includes the protection of your rights.



Questions from the audience



We will now answer your questions provided by you via the Q&A tool





Next steps

- We will collect your questions
- If they are applicable to a lot of people, we will answer them in the FAQs/application information section on the website
- for individual questions please contact stipendium@stiftung-digitale-spielekultur.de

THANK YOU!

