

Checklist for Assessing Eligibility for the EXIST Startup Grant or EXIST Research Transfer

1. General Suitability of the Founding Team

- ☐ Does the team have an academic background? (At least a master's degree or equivalent for EXIST Research Transfer)
- ☐ Does the team possess business or entrepreneurial skills?
- ☐ Are a maximum of 3 people (Startup Grant) or 4 people (Research Transfer) involved?
- ☐ **EXIST Startup Grant:** Is only one team member still a student? If so, they must have completed at least half of their studies.
- ☐ **EXIST Startup Grant:** Is only one team member more than 5 years out of university?
- ☐ **EXIST Startup Grant:** Has any team member previously received the Startup Grant? (This is an exclusion criterion.)
- ☐ Do international students have a degree recognized in Germany?
- ☐ Is any team member a shareholder or managing director in another company? This needs to be clarified on a case-by-case basis to determine if an application is possible.
- ☐ Are all team members aware that they can only work a maximum of 5 hours per week outside of EXIST?
- ☐ Does the team's skillset cover business administration, application, and technical aspects? For example, if the core of the idea involves AI, a developer must be part of the core team and able to describe the innovation in detail (e.g., data sources, type of AI, risks).

2. Business Idea and Innovation

- ☐ Is the business idea innovative, and does it differ from existing solutions? Has the competitive landscape been thoroughly researched?
- ☐ Is there a proof of principle? Prior work should exist, which is especially critical for Research Transfer (required: TRL 3). However, feasibility should also be adequately validated for the Startup Grant.

- ☐ Does the idea fit into one of the EXIST funding lines? (e.g., AI, sustainable technologies, innovative services)

3. Marketability and Development Potential

- ☐ Is there already a strategy for developing a marketable product or service?
- ☐ What is the technical and economic development effort? (For Research Transfer: high risk and very resource-intensive)
- ☐ Has a clear market need been identified? *Often, support is needed here, such as customer surveys or letters of intent (LOIs).*

4. Compatibility of Funding Volume and Duration

- ☐ Is the team capable of effectively utilizing the financial resources? (€30,000 for the Startup Grant, up to €250,000 for Research Transfer)
- ☐ Is there a clear plan for the funding period? (12 months for the Startup Grant, 18–36 months for Research Transfer) Can it be convincingly demonstrated that the development timeline fits within the funding period? *Please check Technology Readiness Level (TRL).*

5. Institutional Support

- ☐ Is the team supported by a professor, group leader, or another senior member of the university or research institution? Formal support is particularly important for the EXIST Research Transfer, as the team must have access to necessary resources, such as laboratories and technical equipment at departments or institutes.

6. Application Formalities

- ☐ Is the team aware of deadlines and submission dates? (EXIST Research Transfer: March, August, November; EXIST Startup Grant: applications accepted anytime)
- ☐ Has the team read and understood the funding guidelines? *Please read before our next meeting*

7. Intellectual Property Rights

- ☐ Has the team been informed about the intellectual property rights situation for the EXIST Research Transfer, in collaboration with the Technology Transfer Office (TTO)?
- ☐ Has the mentor, if they are deeply involved in the project, discussed the future company formation and the distribution of shares with the team? Clarity about the future intentions of all parties is essential, especially regarding existing intellectual property rights.