Open Call Innovation Sprint – Information on application and participation requirements

The Innovation Sprint provides start-up teams with the financial resources they need to effectively and rapidly validate the commercial viability of their research results at an early stage of development. The goal of this step is to make the targeted product tangible and/or optimise it through the production or further development of an initial prototype in order to increase the Technological Readiness Level (TRL) of the project.

1) Who will be funded?

The Innovation Sprint addresses future start-up teams, which aim to develop a prototype in cooperation with a chair/institute in order to validate their start-up project. We appreciate applications from diverse and interdisciplinary teams wanting to bring in their potential and competences into new technological start-up projects.

2) Participation requirements

- The start-up project must be accompanied by a chair/institute of the RWTH Aachen University/Uniklinikum of the RWTH Aachen University as a formal applicant and mentor and must be supported in the administrative processing, in particular in procurements.
- The start-up project must be technology-based and should promote sustainable social developments as far as possible.
- A Proof of Principle has been provided.
- The project must demonstrate a clear founding intention and has to be clearly distinguished from a mere research project.
- No company may have been set up yet in the context of the project which has already started an economic activity.
- The foundation of the intended start-up may only take place after the completion of the Innovation Sprint.

- Simultaneous use of funding programmes should be avoided. The Innovation Sprint should be planned as a **pre-step** to other funding programs as EXIST.
- The Application for the Ideation Program is required for participation in the Innovation Sprint. Registration for the Ideation Program must be done here by the end of the application period at the latest (find more information about the program and the registration in our FAQ).

3) Which documents have to be handed in?

I. **Executive Summary** (max. one page, German or English)
II. **Application/project description**
- max. five DINA4 pages (incl. pictures and diagrams), Arial in font size 11 pt., line spacing 1.5
- for details on content, see below: *Which points of content must be described in the application?*
III. **Video pitch,** introduction of the founding team and plans in video format
- 60 to max.90 seconds, possible formats: mov., mpeg4, avi., wmv or similar
IV. **Detailed financial plan with current indicative price quotations**
- Indicative price quotations matching the details in the financial plan
- Provide indicative price quotations in Portable Document Format (pdf) or as screenshot (e.g., png, jpeg). Website links will <u>not</u> be accepted.
- Further information can be found in the financial plan template.
V. **Declaration of the RWTH institute/chair**
VI. Optional: **Letter of Interest** of third parties in the project

All forms to be filled out are available for download here.

<u>Please note:</u>

- Incomplete and unsigned documents, non-compliance with formal requirements as well as exceeding the specified number of pages will lead to the application being excluded from the review process.
- Incomplete or unsupplied indicative price quotations may lead to a reduction of the requested budget.
- The indicative price quotations must not be related to the applicant.
- An approval already granted under another funding programme could lead to exclusion after review.
- The specified number of pages of the application of five pages includes text, images and/or diagrams. Financial plan, executive summary as well as the signed declaration of the RWTH institute/chair in the context of the Innovation Sprint are not included in the given number of pages.

4) Which points of content must be set out in the application?

- Description of the technology (advantages over state of the art, current Technology Readiness Level, existing Intellectual Property)
- Description of the start-up project (What is planned?)
- Team composition (qualifications, expertise)
- Description of the planned business model (product, customer, market, demand/need)

- Timing and financial planning up to the foundation and expected leverage through participation in the Innovation Sprint
- Explanation of the necessary expenditure (based on the financial plan)
- Degree of innovation
- Social benefits

5) What should the video pitch contain?

In the video pitch, an introduction to the project and the people involved is to be given in a brief but lively style. The viewer should be made aware of the problem that is addressed by the innovation, the basic features of the technology, the unique selling propositions and the potential for social benefit through the solution of the problem. In addition, it should become clear which validation progress can be achieved by participating in the Innovation Sprint. At the same time, the motivation and long-term vision of the team with regard to setting up a new enterprise should be communicated. Please ensure a clear pronunciation and easy comprehensibility of the content.

6) How and to what extent is funding provided?

A grant of **up to €90,000** per application or founding team can be approved. The amount of funding corresponds at most to the amount applied for in the financial plan, i.e. only funding that is specified in the financial plan will be granted. The approved funds may be spent exclusively on the items listed in the financial plan within the framework of the founding project. In addition, the financial plan must be supplemented with supporting benchmark price quotations. The amount in the financial plan must correspond exactly to the amount of funding applied for. Ineligible costs can be excluded, and therefore the amount of funding requested can be reduced.

7) How are the approved funds made available?

A separate account (PSP element) is set up at the cooperating RWTH chair/institute. The account will be initiated by Department 4.2 - Third-Party Funding Management of RWTH Aachen University. The team must also document the procurement procedure and the use of the funds. The teams receive further information in this regard upon approval. All procurements are carried out in accordance with the university's guidelines. Accordingly, the connection to the RWTH chair/institute is essential. At least one team member should be familiar with the procurement processes of RWTH and the respective RWTH institute so that the procurement processes can be handled properly.

8) Which expenses are possible?

- Project-related expenses and investments
- Special technical devices and equipment, e.g., measuring instruments, test facilities, components for the prototype or comparable elements
- Material expenses: all consumables required for the realization of the prototype
- Project-related orders to external companies for prototype construction
- Consulting services related to prototype development or start-up projects not covered by the RWTH's portfolio

9) Which expenses are <u>not</u> possible?

- Personnel expenses and operating costs (e.g., maintenance costs)
- Use of the facilities and equipment of the RWTH (chair/institute internal services
- Basic equipment of a chair/an institute or team (office furniture or similar)

10) How is the application and selection process organised?

Upon timely receipt of the application, a formal examination will be conducted by employees of RWTH Innovation with regard to the fulfilment of the conditions of participation and the completeness and correctness of the documents. The checked applications will then be reviewed and evaluated. The assessment and evaluation will be conducted by a university-external honorary jury of experts, who on the basis of their evaluation will propose the teams to be funded. In all cases, the final approval is given by the Rectorate of RWTH Aachen University.

The approved projects will be notified by email after the final evaluation. The project can be started as soon as the funds have been allocated and notification has been given.

Funds must be spent no later than **01. December 2024.** All deliveries for the prototype construction must have been made and invoices paid by this date. Accordingly, a realistic estimate of the prototype construction and planning of delivery times should be taken into account in the financial planning. At the end of the project (end of January), a project report must be prepared and a review meeting will be held to evaluate the project.

Confidentiality

All applications and related data, knowledge and documents are treated confidentially.

Legal basis

The number of teams to be funded is limited. There is no legal entitlement to the grant. The selection is made by the external jury of experts as well as the Rectorate of RWTH Aachen University with due discretion and evaluation of the criteria listed above. The decisions made are final. The funds made available are part of the grant within the framework of the "Exzellenz Start-up Center.NRW" initiative. Accordingly, the "Landeshaushaltsordnung (LHO)" and "Zuwendungsbestimmungen" must be complied with.

Further information and application

For more information on how to apply, please refer to our [FAQs](#) and our [website](#). There you can also download all the necessary application forms.

The documents projects must be submitted by no later than

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in **electronic form** via the **[application form](#)**.

Contact for further enquiries:

Begüm Guse, M. Sc.	**RWTH Innovation GmbH**
Project Manager	Campus Boulevard 57
+49 241 80 92807	52074 Aachen
innovationsprint@rwth-innovation.de	