

Information and conditions of participation to the Hessen Ideen Competition 2025

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1. The Hessen Ideen Competition

In the state-wide university start-up competition, the best entrepreneurial ideas from all Hessian universities compete against each other. The aim of the competition is to expand the start-up culture at Hessian universities, to network the universities more closely with each other and to support the ideas of university members and publicise them beyond the borders of Hesse. The competition aims to provide ideas providers and participants interested in founding a company with an impetus to further develop and realise their ideas. The Hessen Ideen initiative is coordinated by UniKasselTransfer at the University of Kassel in cooperation with HIGHEST at the Technical University of Darmstadt.

All state universities and state-recognised, non-profit, privately-run universities in Hessian can nominate up to three ideas from their university to take part in the Hessian-wide ideas competition. The form in which this nomination is made is left to the respective universities.

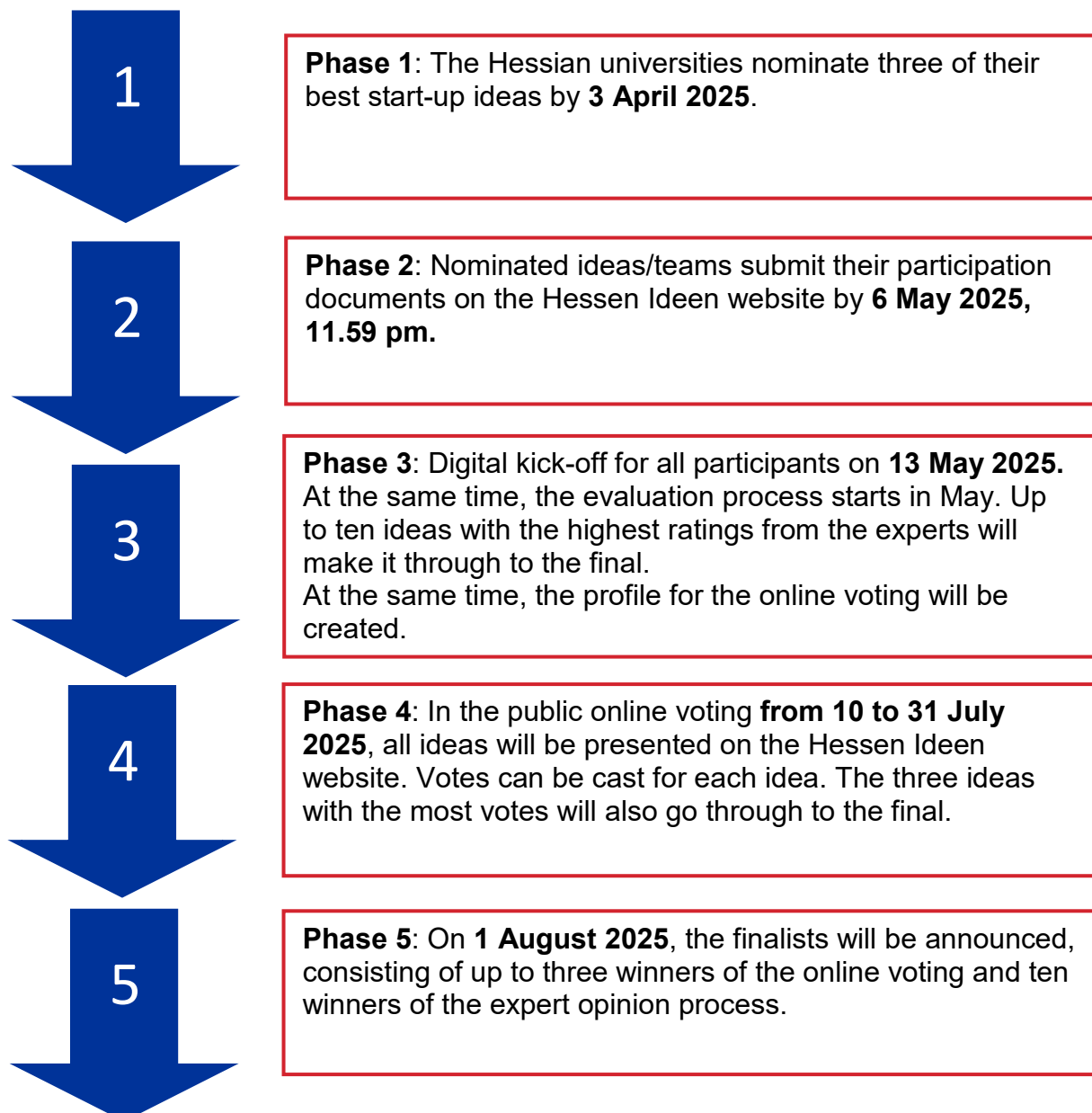
The universities eligible to participate can be [found here on our website](#) or on page 7 and 8 onwards.

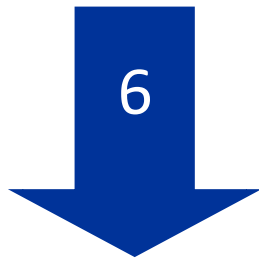
2. Why should you take part in the Hessen Ideen Competition?

The Hessen Ideen Competition...

- start-up ideas are given a public stage.
- founders can win prize money.
- founders have access to networking events, can expand their network and gain partners for their start-up.
- founders can get to know other start-ups and share their experiences.

3. Programme of the Hessen Ideen Competition 2025





Phase 6: The up to 13 finalists - determined from the review process and online voting - will be invited to the jury meeting on **10 September 2025**, which will take place before the award ceremony.
Finalists will receive pitch training on **21 August 2025**.



Phase 7: The award ceremony takes place on **16 September 2025** in the Lokschuppen in Marburg.

Phase 1 - Nomination by the Hessian universities

Each eligible Hessian university nominates up to three ideas to take part in the competition. The universities will send the contact details of the nominated participants to wettbewerb@hessen-ideen.de by **3 April 2025**. The nominees will then receive detailed information on the further procedure and submission of the participation documents.

Phase 2 - Submission of participation documents

In order to enter the Hessen Ideen Competition, nominees must complete a form on the website www.hessen-ideen.de by **11.59 pm on 6 May 2025**, for which they will receive an access link from Hessen Ideen, and upload an idea sketch there. The idea sketches will be forwarded confidentially to the reviewers.

The following information must be submitted via the form:

- ✓ Contact information
- ✓ Information on the founding team
- ✓ Name of the idea
- ✓ Idea sketch
- ✓ Additional: Graphic (JPEG) or 3-Page PDF with only images.

Idea sketch and additional information

When submitting the documents on the Hessen Ideen website, participants must complete and upload an idea sketch, which will be sent to them in advance. To elaborate and describe the idea, the idea sketch contains explanations and comments that participants can use as a guide. Each of the fields **1 to 4** to be completed **may only contain a maximum of 3000 characters (including spaces)**.

In addition, **a graphic (in JPEG or PNG format) or a PDF (up to three pages) only with images (each max. 2 MB)** can be uploaded to illustrate the idea for the reviewers.

A special rule applies to participants from universities that are already organising an internal ideas competition. Participants from these universities may submit their idea sketch that was created as part of the internal competition.

The idea sketch as well as the additional document will be uploaded to the secure area of the Hessen Ideen website and are not publicly accessible.

Phase 3 - Kickoff for participating ideas and creation of online profile

A kick-off **event will be held online** for participants in the competition on **13 May 2025**, at which the competition procedure and online voting will be presented. Following the online event, participants must also upload the information relevant for the online voting, which was previously explained in the kickoff, by **30 May 2025, 11.59 p.m.** via the access link already received.

Based on this information, the online voting profile is set up for you by Hessen Ideen:

- ✓ Short text for online voting and public relations that describes the idea in general terms (300 words or 2,000 characters including spaces)
- ✓ 4 images (max. 2 MB, landscape and portrait format without text in the image)
- ✓ Cover image/main image that is named as such

Before the information is made public, it is checked by the participants.

After the kick-off, the participants also prepare their own campaigns for the online voting. This can be done, for example, through social media activities, newspaper adverts, etc.

Expert opinion procedure

In May / June, the idea sketches are reviewed and evaluated by selected experts. The experts are bound to secrecy by a confidentiality agreement.

The evaluation of the idea sketch is based on the following five criteria: *Degree of innovation, impact, customer benefit, market opportunities and feasibility*

The experts are selected on the recommendation of all participating universities and are made up of entrepreneurs from various disciplines.

The participants in the Hessen Ideen Competition and their contact persons from the nominating university (i.e. the university coaches from the start-up advisory services) will receive the content evaluation from the anonymised expert reports after the end of the review process.

Up to ten ideas will be selected for the final of the Hessen Ideen Competition via the expert opinion process.

Phase 4 - Public online voting

The public online voting of the ideas will take place **from 10 to 31 July 2025**. Participants will receive their online profile (see phase 3) on the Hessen Ideen website in advance and can now advertise their campaign.

The **three ideas** that receive the most votes in the online voting will receive a wild card and will definitely be represented among the finalists later on.

The votes submitted during online voting will be checked for attempted fraud during the voting process and afterwards. If it is found that ideas providers have deliberately cheated in the online voting, e.g. by deliberately using fake email addresses, they will be excluded from the competition

Phase 5 - Announcement of the finalists

The finalists will be announced on **1 August 2025**.

The finalists are determined in two ways (see previous phases):

- a) Up to ten of the top-rated ideas from the **expert assessment** will go through to the final.
- b) The three ideas with the most votes from the **online voting** will go through to the final.

This means that between 10 and 13 participants or teams will present their projects in the final of the competition. Those who are not among the finalists will still benefit from the reviewers' feedback.

Phase 6 - Pitch training and jury presentation of the finalists

On **21 August 2025**, all finalists will attend a full-day pitch training session (probably in Frankfurt am Main) to prepare them for their presentation in front of the jury and the audience.

On **10 September 2025**, the finalists will present their ideas behind closed doors to a selected jury, which will evaluate the ideas and decide on the winners. The criteria of *degree of innovation, impact, customer benefit, market opportunities* and *feasibility* are also evaluated in this process. The *connection to the university* is also taken into account.

Please note: **We request that the entire founding team attends the jury presentation if possible. If individual team members are unable to attend, written notification is required.**

Phase 7 - Award ceremony

The award ceremony will take place on **16 September 2025** in the Lokschuppen in Marburg. The winners of the Hessen Ideen Competition will be announced there and receive their prizes.

Prices

- | | |
|----------|-------------|
| 1. Price | 10.000 Euro |
| 2. Price | 7.000 Euro |
| 3. Price | 4.000 Euro |

Please note: **We ask that the entire founding team attends the award ceremony if possible. If individual team members are unable to attend, written notification is required.**

4. Conditions of participation

- All Hessian universities can nominate **up to three ideas** to compete against each other.
- Ideas that were previously nominated for the Hessen Ideen Competition in previous years are not allowed to be nominated again.
- It is up to the universities to decide how they make their nominations.
- **Ideas** may be nominated **by members of the** respective university. This means that at least one active team member must be a student, employee, professor, or alumnus (who completed their degree within the past five years). The deadline is **3 April 2025**.
- The nominated ideas must demonstrate a concrete interest in founding a company.
- Participants could have founded a company in the calendar years 2023/2024 (**excluding capital company**) and/or be in possession of an EXIST start-up grant. This excludes start-ups that were founded before the calendar year 2023.
- The formation of a capital company and the commencement of business activities must not have taken place by the cut-off date (3 April 2025). The registration in the commercial register (also on an international level) is considered the founding of the capital company. The commencement of business activities means generating sales and operating on the market with the intention of generating sales.
- Excluded from participation are ideas/teams that have already taken part in a completed business plan competition.
- Participation is possible as an individual or as a team. **Only one idea proposal** per participant/team is permitted.
- All online profiles and idea sketches uploaded in full by **11.59 pm on 6 May 2025** will be considered.
- The idea may already have received an award from your own university.
- The ideas must have been developed independently by the participants or the team and must not infringe the rights of third parties.
- Participants who are employed at a university (including student assistants) must clarify the release of the patent-relevant idea with their university.
- The copyrights and legal property rights of the university remain unaffected.
- The participants indemnify the organiser against all conceivable claims by third parties that could be derived from the infringement of any copyrights, statutory property rights, trade secrets and other rights by the submitted documents.
- The organiser accepts no liability for the statements made by reviewers, jurors and other persons involved in the competition.
- Participation in the competition implies acceptance of the above conditions.

5. Participating universities

The following universities can nominate their best three ideas as part of the competition:

State universities:

- Philipps University Marburg
- Justus Liebig University Giessen
- THM - Central Hesse University of Applied Sciences
- RheinMain University of Applied Sciences
- Geisenheim University
- Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences
- Darmstadt University of Technology
- Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences
- Goethe University Frankfurt am Main
- Offenbach University of Art and Design
- Fulda University of Applied Sciences
- University of Kassel
- Städelschule
- University of Music and Performing Arts

State-recognised, non-profit universities under private sponsorship in Hesse:

- YMCA University
- EBS University of Business and Law
- Protestant University of Applied Sciences Darmstadt
- accadis University with the accadis Institute of Entrepreneurship
- Frankfurt School of Finance & Management
- Free Theological University Giessen
- Tabor Protestant University
- Fresenius University of Applied Sciences (applicants must provide proof of their connection to the Wiesbaden location)
- Ewersbach Theological College
- University of Labour
- Tomorrow University of Applied Sciences

The following have a special status according to § 97 HHG

- the Lutheran theological college in Oberursel,
- the Philosophical-Theological University of Sankt Georgen and
- the Faculty of Theology in Fulda,

who can also nominate up to three ideas to take part in the competition.

6. Protection of ideas

The coordinator of the Hessen Ideen competition - UniKasselTransfer Incubator - guarantees that the ideas submitted will be treated confidentially. All reviewers and jury members sign a non-disclosure agreement before viewing the idea sketches and ensure confidential cooperation not only during the competition, but especially after it has ended. The personal data of the participants will not be passed on to unauthorised third parties by the organiser.

Participants are advised to have their idea examined under patent law. It is their own responsibility to protect their idea under patent law and not to infringe the rights of third parties. The first point of contact for counselling is the participant's respective university. If no counselling is offered at their own university or if there are any unanswered questions, participants are welcome to contact the competition coordinator.

7. Public relations

After prior consultation, the participants in the competition agree to present the idea as part of the award ceremony and press work (social media/website etc.).

Each participant agrees that his/her name and a short description of his/her idea as well as images may be used in press, media and social network coverage.

The participants also agree that contact details (name/telephone number/email address) of the participants may be passed on in the event of **enquiries from press representatives** addressed to Hessen Ideen concerning the ideas/teams. The participants can thus be contacted by press representatives.

8. Data protection

Each participant agrees that his/her data may be stored and used for the purpose of processing and organising the competition and beyond (e.g. for alumni work). The latter can be revoked at any time after the end of the respective competition phase by sending a short message to wettbewerb@hessen-ideen.de.

9. Competition coordination

The following contact person is available to answer any questions and provide assistance regarding the Hessen Ideen Competition and the entire process:

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