OPEN CALL GUIDE

Application information and conditions of participation

AI Festival Heilbronn 2026

The AI Festival Heilbronn is a non-profit educational festival with the aim of bringing artificial intelligence to life for everyone - with interactive exhibitions, inspiring talks, artistic performances, workshops and a varied supporting program. Visitors from all age groups discover free of charge what AI can already do today and what opportunities and questions arise for the future.
We invite you to be part of the 5th anniversary edition of the AI Festival!

Who we are looking for

We are looking forward to submissions from:
- Exhibitors: Companies & research institutions with use cases, prototypes or pilot projects
- Speakers: with keynotes, talks or panels
- Workshops: who design practical formats
- Artists: artists & performers who make AI a creative experience
- Supporting program: contributions not related to AI (music, performance, family & sports) for more festival vibes

Please submit a separate form for each entry, this makes it easier for us to evaluate and assign them. You can find the application forms at www.ki-festival.de

Content focus 2026

For the 5th anniversary edition, we have given the AI Festival 2026 an overarching theme:

READY?!

By this we mean the question of how well we as a society, organization or individual are prepared for the AI transformation and what it will take to actively shape it.
The speed of AI development is breathtaking. The key question is: how can we keep pace?
READY?! asks whether we are socially, politically, ethically and educationally prepared.
Do we have the necessary skills, attitudes and structures to actively shape AI instead of just reacting to it?
The AI Festival sees itself as a place of active preparation: not passive waiting, but thinking along, trying things out, learning, questioning and shaping.
READY?! is deliberately kept open as:
a personal approach (Are you ready?)
social question (Are we ready?)
Call to action (Get ready!)
In the application form, you can briefly describe how your contribution addresses the „READY?!" theme.

Criteria for selection

We cordially invite you to present your innovative and responsible AI applications to us! Our aim is to discuss artificial intelligence in a tangible, understandable and critical way.
Your contribution will be evaluated according to the following criteria. They will show you which aspects are particularly important to us in the selection process.

Content & experience
- *Interactivity:* Your exhibit must invite visitors to actively **participate** and try things out.
- *Degree of innovation*: We are looking for **novel and original** AI applications.
- *Added value*: Offer the audience a **special experience**, inspiration or practical benefit.
- *Educational mission*: Your contribution should convey AI in an **understandable and low-threshold way**.
- *Thematic fit*: The content must **fit in with the festival themes**.

Responsibility & transparency
- *Responsible use*: The technology must be **ethically justifiable** and offer social added value.
- *Data transparency*: The handling of data must be explained in a **comprehensible, fair and transparent** manner.

Formal
- *Non-profit status*: The use case must be compatible with **our non-profit objectives** of the IPAI Foundation (no primary marketing).
- Feasibility: The **setup and technology** must be realistically implementable in a festival setting.

Your contribution should therefore ...
- ✅ be innovative and interactive
- ✅ have a clear AI reference
- ✅ fulfill educational and mediation requirements
- ✅ Create added value for the audience
- ✅ Be responsible and ethically justifiable
- ❌ Not permitted: pure product marketing, recruiting, discriminatory content.

As we have already received many applications from food trucks, please refrain from applying for the Food & Beverage category.

How to apply

You can apply via our online forms on the ki-festival.de website.

Please submit a separate form for each entry, this makes it easier for us to evaluate and allocation.

Fill out the form to describe your contribution to the KI Festival. Answer the questions as specifically as possible. Your answers will help us to select and put together a varied program.

Apply with your contributions by 15.2.2026. Contributions after 15.2.2026 can no longer be considered.

Next steps

- You will receive an acceptance* or rejection by e-mail by **31.03.2026** at the latest.
- If you are accepted, you will also receive a contract and further information on detailed planning such as set-up/dismantling times, social media kits, program announcements and accreditation.
- In the event of a rejection, we will delete your data unless you agree in the form that we can include you in the IPAI Foundation's applicant pool. We may then contact you for another suitable format.

Application deadline for the 2026 festival: 15.02.2026
Questions? Write to us: ki-festival@ipai-foundation.ai

Important notes on participation

The AI Festival differs significantly from traditional trade or tech fairs in terms of its basic principles and objectives, resulting in the following notes:

- *Educational festival*: The event is explicitly designed as a non-profit educational festival. The focus is on explaining, illustrating and discussing AI topics and their social relevance, not on commercial exchange.
- *Exclusion of recruiting and product placement*: The event may expressly not be used for the direct purposes of personnel recruitment or direct product placement and sales promotion. This serves to preserve the non-profit and educational character of the festival.
- *Focus on AI use cases*: Commercial-oriented companies are welcome to actively participate. However, their participation is limited to the presentation of *concrete AI use cases* that contribute to the explanation and illustration of AI technology. The aim is to make the functioning, possibilities and challenges of AI transparent and understandable for the general public.
- *No promotion of own products*: Direct advertising or promotional advertising of own products or services is prohibited at the exhibition stands.
- *Restriction on advertising and promotional items*: For legal reasons arising from the non-profit nature of the sponsoring structure, classic advertising and promotional items (giveaways with a direct company reference) are *not permitted*. In order to ensure an appealing and informative presentation, we encourage all exhibitors to seek dialogue with the organization team at an early stage. *We will be happy to develop ideas together for a great, informative and statute-compliant presentation of your use case* that optimally supports the educational mission of the festival.
- *Limited places*: Please note that places are limited and selection will be based solely on the above criteria. *Membership in the IPAI ecosystem does not automatically guarantee a place or preferential treatment*. We review each submission with the same neutral criteria to ensure the best experience for our visitors.

*The acceptance is subject to the condition that a written contract is concluded.

Basic technical equipment:

Exhibition Use Cases	1x pagoda 3x3m (two pagodas also possible depending on the use case) Power & WLAN
Speaker:in	Sound, image and lighting technology (including microphone, loudspeaker system, screen/LED wall for possible presentation and sound technician on site) Desk/table for laptop storage Retreat room for checkroom and preparation To be brought by the speaker: Laptop & adapter.
Artist:in	Stage (size approx. 6x9m) Sound and lighting equipment Sound technician on site Artist retreat Early provision of the technical rider desirable!
Workshop	Workshop stage with appropriate sound, image and lighting technology Please bring your own workshop materials.

FAQ

Until when can I apply?
The application phase starts on 15.01.2026, then you can apply until 15.02.2026.

When will I receive an acceptance/rejection?
After the application phase, we will review all the content and decide on the most suitable contributions. We will send out the acceptances/rejections by the end of March.

Why did I get a rejection even though I fit so well into the program?
We receive a large number of excellent submissions every year. Unfortunately, we can only include a limited number of entries in the program, as our capacities are limited in terms of time and space. The selection is made by a jury, which decides according to the above-mentioned criteria and the thematic focus of the festival. A rejection in no way means a devaluation of the contribution, but merely reflects the great competition and the need for a clear program structure..

Can I apply with the same entry as last year?
No. The Open Call is aimed at new or significantly further developed entries. In justified exceptional cases, it may be possible to reapply with the same entry - for example, if the content, format or context have changed significantly. Please make this transparent in your application.

My entry is still in the conception phase at the time of application, can I still apply?
Yes, an application is possible. Applications for entries that are still in the conception phase are possible, but will only be considered if they show a realistic and comprehensible plan for implementation by the start of the festival. In addition, a concept can be convincing if it clearly conveys the desired learning and participatory character of the festival at this early stage.
Example: An application for an interactive installation that only exists as a sketch should contain a detailed schedule for the procurement of materials, the construction and the required resources (realism). The concept must also clearly explain how visitors will be actively involved and what skills or knowledge they can acquire in the process (learning and participatory character).

I can't access the form for technical reasons?
If you have technical problems accessing the form, please contact ki-festival@ipai-foundation.ai

What happens after confirmation?
Positive confirmation: You will first receive confirmation by e-mail. The acceptance is subject to the condition that a written contract is concluded.
Detailed agreements & contracts: This is followed by concrete agreements on your contribution and the sending of contracts.
Material for the public: We collect and coordinate the necessary information (photos, videos, texts) for our public relations work (website, program booklet, social media).
Preparation for the festival: In good time before the event, our event team will provide you with all the relevant logistical information (directions, set-up/dismantling, timeslots).
Then the festival can begin!

Is there an exhibitor fee?
As a non-profit educational festival, the primary aim of the AI Festival is to impart knowledge about artificial intelligence and make this technology accessible to a broad audience. In line with this non-profit character, the AI Festival ***does not charge exhibitor fees***. Participation and presentation are characterized by education and social dialogue about AI.

How are fees handled?

The AI Festival, initiated by the IPAI Foundation, is a non-profit educational festival whose aim is to make AI accessible to a wide audience. To make this possible, the event relies on donations and grants (and is supported by the Dieter Schwarz Foundation).

Many participants, including exhibitors and speakers, support the non-profit nature of the festival by waiving their fees.

For productions or contributions with higher expenditure, a fair fee or an appropriate expense allowance will be determined in consultation. The exact amount will be agreed individually. In exceptional cases, costs for hotel and travel may also be covered

Contact us

If you have any questions about the application, please contact
ki-festival@ipai-foundation.ai

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