

J-StarX UK Impact Accelerator Programme - Specifications

1. Background

“J-StarX” is a Japanese government-backed (METI) series of accelerator programs operated by JETRO to foster entrepreneurship and accelerate the global expansion of Japanese startups.

This J-StarX Impact Accelerator Programme in the UK aims to support the global expansion of Japanese “tech for good” and impact driven startups in formulating strategies for overseas expansion (Go-to-Market Strategy), overseas market development, and fundraising from overseas investors, with a particular focus on demonstrating the synergy of achieving profitability through social impact products and services.

The following services are outsourced to the Contractor, who shall be firmly rooted in the local ecosystem to ensure the effective delivery of the project.

2. Programme Outline

The programme consists of two phases:

- Phase 1: Preparation
 - Approximate two-month hybrid course (online) for startups to build a strong international business foundation by understanding the UK and European market landscape for impact-led startups, prepare them for discussions with impact investors and understand the key questions those investors might ask.
 - Phase 1 will consist of several group online sessions.
 - By the end of Phase 1, startups are expected to have developed a business plan for entering the UK or European market, with the right skills to pitch to impact investors. They will understand concepts such as “impact as a source of value” and developed an outline “theory of change”. This will give them a clear understanding of how to achieve profitability through social impact products and services.

- After Phase 1, the Accelerator will form a judging committee with partner(s) to evaluate and select Phase 1 participants to proceed to Phase 2.

- Phase 2: Intensive Mentoring/Onsite Execution
 - Approximate four-month hybrid course (online/onsite) for startups to refine their pitch to impact investors, discover customers and investors and PoC via mentoring, in-person workshops, attendance at conferences, industrial tours and business matching.
 - Phase 2 will feature a three-month online mentoring course, combined with an overseas in-person programme of at least one week*.

- By the end of Phase 2, startups are expected to be in a position where they can execute their UK market entry and pitch to UK and European impact investors:
 - All critical validations are identified.
 - Key areas such as the Theory of Change and Impact KPIs are in place
 - Initial networks introductions are established.
 - A clear roadmap and immediate next steps for market entry strategy are clearly defined.

*The exact duration of the overseas programme may be subject to change through consultation between the contractor and JETRO, to ensure that the support content and structure are optimal for the startups.

** (Optional but highly recommended)

The programme shall include one onsite kick-off session in Tokyo at the commencement of either Phase 1 or Phase 2.

Additionally, the Contractor shall facilitate a Tokyo-based wrap-up session for the startups to reflect on their key learnings and progress following the conclusion of Phase 1.

3. Startups to be Supported

- Eligibility: Japanese startups or founders/ C-suite executives.
- Target sector: Impact Tech
- Target stages: Seed to Early (TBD after discussion with the Contractor)
- Number of startups:
 - (Phase 1) 10-15
 - (Phase 2) 6-8 (selected from Phase 1 participants)

4. Estimated Schedule

April 2026	Contract Execution
Late April to August	Application opens
September	Participants selection for Phase 1
Late October – Early March 2027	Programme delivery
- Late October -Middle November	Preparation programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tokyo onsite kick-off - Group Online Sessions - Tokyo wrap-up
- Late November	Participants Selection for Phase 2 *the Tokyo onsite kick-off may be conducted at the beginning of phase 2
- December – February 2027	-Mentoring
- Late February – Early March	UK onsite programme

Late March	Final report submission
End of March	Completion of contract

5. Outsourced Tasks

(1) Promotional material creation

The Contractor shall provide JETRO with the following information or slides for the promotional materials to recruit participants:

- Detailed introduction of the Contractor including its strength and values offered in the programme
- Profiles of potential industry mentors and their areas of expertise. It is understood that the actual mentors chosen for the programme will depend on the participant companies, and the Contractor is expected to ensure appropriate matching of mentors and startups.
- Value proposition and curriculum outline

(2) Application screening & Participant Selection

- a. The Contractor, in consultation with JETRO, shall determine the criteria for the selection of the startups.
- b. Conduct document screening followed by video interviews for applicants who pass the document screening.
- c. Based on the application documents and video interviews, the Contractor will evaluate the applicants according to the selected criteria and report its evaluations with comments to JETRO and finalise the list of companies to participate in the course.

(3) Preparation Programme (Phase 1)

The preparation programme will consist of the following contents. In addition, the Contractor may also propose some ideas on how to support the startups more effectively.

- a. Workshop/Learning session (Online)

The contractor will hold lectures or interactive group coaching online sessions once every week in Phase 1. The Workshop/Learning sessions should cover the following items:

 - i. Introduction to UK & EU Impact Investing sector: Market size (amount of investment raised), key players, key sectors customer demographics, business models
 - ii. Impact as a source of value
 - How investors view impact driven startups
 - Why impact can help drive competitive advantage and profitability
 - iii. Theory of Change: How to explain your impact story and what broader societal improvement it helps achieve
 - iv. Impact KPIs: What KPIs should startups be measuring and how do these demonstrate delivery of impact
 - v. Impact as a source of value: Distribution channels and partnership strategies in the UK and EU

(4) Selection for Phase 2

The Contractor will select startups who will participate in phase 2 programme from phase 1 participants who apply for phase 2 programme.

- a. The Contractor, in consultation with JETRO, shall determine the criteria for the selection of the startups.
- b. Conduct document screening and video interviews with applicants as necessary.
- c. Based on the phase 1 results, application documents and video interviews, the Contractor will evaluate the applicants according to the selected criteria and report its evaluations with comments to JETRO and finalise the list of companies to participate.

(5) Intensive Mentoring/Onsite Execution (Phase 2)

Phase 2 will go into more depth on the subjects covered in Phase 1, as well as helping develop the market entry strategy and facilitating in-person meetings with investors and potential customers.

The contractor will provide necessary contents and customised mentoring by assigning industry experts, experienced startup executives and advisors, and other professionals as mentors to each startup. Mentors will work with the startups to refine their business plan and go to market strategy, review and refine the pitch to investors and, where appropriate, provide feedback on product (e.g. product market fit), appropriate market validation or other elements to both validate the commercial plan and prepare the startups for discussions with potential investors and customers.

Phase 2 programme will consist of the following content. In addition, the Contractor may also propose some ideas on how to support the startups more effectively.

- a. One-on-One Mentoring (Online)

The Contractor shall assign mentors best suited to each startup. The Contractor will facilitate an initial introductory meeting, followed by mentoring sessions to be held at least once every two weeks.

The Contractor will provide reports about the progress of mentoring with comments from each mentor after each mentoring session. The Contractor or JETRO will use this reporting to adjust the mentoring or suggest key topics to explore as necessary (e.g. when the mentoring is not yielding expected results).
- b. Pitch Coaching (Online)

The Contractor shall provide pitch coaching, especially for impact fundraising.
- c. Meeting arrangements with relevant people (Online)

The Contractor will arrange an average of 5 business meetings per startup with local KOLs, potential research partners, users, investors and so on.

(6) Tokyo Onsite Programme (Optional but highly recommended)

The Contractor shall deliver a face-to-face programme in Tokyo. While typically scheduled for Phase 1, the Tokyo onsite kick-off session may be conducted at the commencement of Phase 2. The content of kick-off session may

cover and build upon the topics outlined in section (3)a (Workshop/Learning sessions).

Additionally, the Contractor shall facilitate a Tokyo-based wrap-up session to allow startups to reflect on Phase 1 progress. The Contractor may consolidate the Phase 1 wrap-up session with the Phase 2 kick-off session. The specific timing for both sessions **shall** be determined in consultation with JETRO.

Note: All travel expenses to Japan such as flight tickets and accommodation fees, must be included in the contract amount and should be covered by the contractor. However, the cost of the Tokyo venues should be **excluded** from the contract amount, as JETRO's office facilities will be available.

(7) UK onsite programme

Phase 2 will go into more depth on the subjects covered in Phase 1, as well as helping develop the market entry strategy and facilitating in-person meetings with investors and potential customers.

The UK onsite programme will be conducted in London, Oxford, or Cambridge for about 10 Business days. The programme will consist of the following content. In addition, the Contractor may also propose some ideas on how to support the startups more effectively.

a. Workshop/Learning Session

Workshops and presentations will be held on topics of common interest to the participating companies, based on their needs for support in developing their UK operations.

b. One-on-One Mentoring

The Contractor will arrange Face-to-face mentoring during the on-site course.

c. Pitch Coaching

The Contractor will arrange Face-to-face pitch coaching during the on-site course.

d. Business Meeting Arrangements

The Contractor will facilitate the arrangement of approximately 5 business meetings for each startup with potential clients, strategic partners such as academics and investors. While virtual meetings are permitted, in-person engagement during the UK onsite programme is strongly preferred. Should in-person meetings prove unfeasible during the participants' scheduled stay in the UK, the Contractor shall ensure these engagements are conducted virtually before the conclusion of the programme.

e. Pitching Opportunities

Providing opportunities of pitching and networking with key stakeholders in the local impact investment ecosystem

f. Wrap-up session (final day of the UK onsite programme)

The Contractor will run a wrap-up session as the final content of the course where startups can be given feedback and confirm their next steps.

Note:

- any expenses mentioned below should be **included** in the contract amount:

- Venue for all activities. However, if requested in advance, it may be possible to use JETRO London's meeting rooms (seminar style, capacity approximately 30 people) for part of the programme, subject to coordination with other JETRO London activities.
- Travel expenses of the Contractor during the onsite programme
- UK on-site programme needs to be designed to allow participants time for personal work, individual business meetings, and individual participation with external events.

(8) Global Startup Ecosystem (GSE) session (optional)

At the request and discretion of JETRO, the Contractor shall support the planning, coordination, and on-site execution of a session at the Global Startup Ecosystem (GSE), a global deep tech conference to be held in early October 2026 in Osaka, Japan.

The session is expected to be a panel discussion featuring four participants: one JETRO representative as moderator, two invited experts, and one representative of the Contractor. Thus, the Contractor shall arrange up to three (3) panellists (two external experts and one Contractor representative). However, the composition and number of participants may be subject to change.

The scope of work may include, but is not limited to, programme design, speaker selection and invitation, and logistics (including travel and accommodation for three (3) panellists for three (3) days and four (4) nights).

The invited experts are expected to be either (i) international investors specializing in Impact Investing or ESG-integrated Venture Capital. These experts should meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Possess a proven track record or clear mandate to invest in Japanese impact-driven or deep-tech startups;
- Demonstrate a strategic interest in establishing a Japan-focused impact fund or expanding their impact portfolio into the Japanese market; or
- Be affiliated with a Tier 1 international venture capital firm or impact-focused financial institution.

In all cases, invited investors should preferably hold Partner or General Partner level positions with investment decision-making authority. For public sector participants, seniority such as Director, Head of Unit, or Senior Policy Officer is required. All potential candidates must be proposed to and approved by JETRO prior to formal invitation.

6. Final Report submission

- (1) The Contractor must submit a report to JETRO by 25th March, 2027, summarizing the results of all the activities for the outsourced related content.
- (2) The report should include suggestions to assist JETRO with hosting similar programmes in the future.

7. Term of contract

The term of the contract is from the contract start date to March 31, 2027.

8. Payment Terms

After the start of the contract, 50% of the total contract amount, including VAT and other taxes, shall be paid within 40 days of receipt of the invoice. The remaining

amount shall be paid within 40 days of receipt of the invoice after confirming the completion of the work.

9. Conditions for the Contractor(s) engaged in the programme

- (1) Has an established organizational structure and capabilities to manage and complete the project properly. Has a global network, and knowledge necessary for implementing the project as an Accelerator, Venture Capital, or any other related organization.
- (2) Has effective experience of implementation of acceleration programmes specifically tailored to, and focused on, scaling up within Europe.
- (3) Ideally has experience building up unicorns in the past years.
- (4) Has investment arms and has close connections with European top tier VCs.
- (5) Has proven track-record in various European countries and experience working with the European Union.
- (6) Can adhere to JETRO's requests, as well as report to, communicate with, and consult with JETRO and outsourcing partner to support this programme in an adequate manner. Can present efficient data for programme evaluation.
- (7) Has knowledge and systems/tools for handling confidential and/or personal information accordingly.

10. Other

- (1) If any matter not described in this specification arises during the programme, it shall be discussed with a person in charge and a response shall be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- (2) Your proposal needs to include your mentor list who may be mentors for the programme participants, and industry (sector) list you have experience in. It is recognised that this initial list of potential mentors will be indicative and that the actual mentors chosen will depend on the startups participating in the programme and their specific needs.
- (3) Personal information collected will only be used within the programme for the purposes defined prior and will be shared within JETRO.