

J-starX Game: Indie Game Studio Growth Programme for Europe

Purpose

The "J-starX Game: Indie Game Studio Growth Programme for Europe" aims to foster the international growth of Japanese indie game studios, facilitating their expansion into European markets. This programme will provide specialized game industry mentors, facilitate participation in key European gaming events, and support participants in establishing connections with publishers, investors, platforms, and potential partners (hereafter referred to as **Partners**) to achieve product-market fit and sustainable business development in global markets.

Target Participants

The programme is open to up to 8 Japanese indie game studios and gaming startups from seed to early stage, focusing on teams that:

- Have developed or are developing original game IPs
 - Demonstrate ambition for international expansion beyond the Japanese market
 - Show potential for creating globally appealing gaming experiences or solutions
 - Possess basic English communication capabilities or willingness to improve
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Target Market

The programme focuses on European markets. **The contractor is expected to propose and utilize a major European gaming ecosystem (e.g. United Kingdom, Germany, Spain, France, or Nordic countries) as the primary hub and gateway for broader European expansion.** The proposal should clearly justify how the selected ecosystem's unique strengths, publisher networks, and investor access will benefit Japanese indie studios.

Contract Term

The programme's service term will begin upon execution of the contract and end on March 31, 2027.

Service Description

a. Participant Recruitment & Selection Support (May – June 2026)

- **BitSummit 2026 Cooperation (May 22-24, 2026):** The contractor shall support JETRO's recruitment and PR activities during BitSummit 2026 in Kyoto, Japan. Cooperation includes online participation (or on-site attendance by at least one

representative, if feasible) for info sessions, panel discussions, or PR events to attract high-quality applicants from the Japanese indie game community.

- **Initial Screening:** JETRO will organize and collect application materials (pitch decks, game demos/prototypes, trailers, business plans). The contractor and JETRO will conduct a screening process to select up to 8 participants.
- **Evaluation Criteria:**
 - Originality and appeal of game concept/IP.
 - Development progress and product readiness.
 - Team capabilities and passion for innovation.
 - International market potential and scalability (specifically for the European market).
 - English communication capability and willingness to engage internationally.
- **Finalization:** The contractor will provide expert feedback to JETRO to finalize the selection by early June 2026.

b. Online Acceleration Programme (June – November 2026) - For up to 8 participants

Following the selection, participants will engage in an intensive online acceleration programme. The contractor will deliver:

- **Workshop Series (Online):** A series of workshops covering essential topics for European market expansion, including:
 - European gaming market analysis (specific to the proposed hub and broader Europe).
 - Publishing strategies, legalities of contracts, and partnership models.
 - Pitch development and investor relations tailored to Western standards.
 - Marketing, community building, and PR strategies for global audiences.
- **Individualized Online Mentoring:**
 - Each participant will receive a minimum of 15 hours of 1-on-1 mentoring.
 - The contractor will assign mentors with specific expertise in the participants' game genres and target European territories.
 - Focus: Refining go-to-market strategies, identifying suitable Partners, and preparing for upcoming in-person missions.

c. Domestic In-Person Programme in Japan: TGS Inbound Mission (September 2026)

The contractor will organize a high-impact in-person programme in Tokyo, aligned with Tokyo Game Show (TGS) 2026.

- **Inbound Mentor Delegation:** The contractor **must invite and bring at least five (5)**

high-level representatives (e.g., decision-makers from Tier-1/Tier-2 publishers, VCs, or senior scouts) from the European gaming industry to Japan.

- **Activities:**
 - Intensive face-to-face pitch reviews and feedback sessions.
 - Networking events bridging European delegates with Japanese participants.
 - Business matching sessions to establish early-stage interest before the European mission.

d. European Gaming Event Trade Mission & Pitch (August – November 2026)

Participants will travel to Europe during the programme to participate in a major gaming event and conduct business development activities, including pitch opportunities.

- **Event Selection:** The contractor will select the most strategic event in consultation with JETRO based on timing and participant readiness. Examples include:
 - **Gamescom (Cologne, Germany) - August 2026**
 - **Barcelona Games Festival / IndieDevDay (Spain) - October 2026**
 - **Games Ground Berlin (Germany) - November 2026**
- **Mission Activities & Pitching:**
 - Facilitation of one-on-one meetings with publishers, platforms, and investors.
 - Organization of a dedicated pitch opportunity (e.g., a formal pitch session or a Demo Day event) within the framework of the selected event.
 - Networking opportunities with key European gaming ecosystem stakeholders.
 - Post-event debriefs and individual feedback sessions.

e. Travel and Logistics Arrangements

- **Contractor Responsibilities:**
 - Coordinate logistics for invited European mentors/instructors (travel to Japan for TGS. European gaming event etc.).
 - Coordinate with European event organizers for pitch slots, booth arrangements (if necessary), and venue logistics.
 - Provide travel arrangements for their own staff and necessary support personnel.
 - Programme/side event venue arrangements and coordination with event organizers
- **Participant/JETRO Financial Structure:**

- **International Flights:** Participants are responsible for their own flight costs.
- **Accommodation:** JETRO might cover accommodation costs for participants during the primary mission in Europe (up to 7 nights/ TBD).

f. Outcome Tracking & Final Reporting (December 2026 – March 2027)

- The contractor will provide continuous follow-up to track business leads (LOIs, contracts, or investments).
- A final performance report summarizing participant progress and tangible outcomes must be submitted to JETRO by March 15, 2027.

Language

All services will be conducted in English.

Programme Schedule (Proposed Timeline)

Month	Phase	Major Events / Activities
April 2026	Preparation	Contractor selection and contract execution
May 2026	Recruitment	PR/Recruitment support around BitSummit (May 22-24)
June 2026	Selection	Participant selection & Programme Kick-off (Online)
June - Sept	Training	Online workshops and individualized mentoring
Sept 2026	Domestic Programme	Inbound Mission (5+ Mentors) at TGS 2026
Aug - Novme	European Mission	Mission to Hub City & Demo Day (scomescom / BCN / Berlin etc.) aligning with gaming event (Gamescom, Game BCN, or Games Ground Berlin etc.)
Dec - Mar 2027	Tracking	Follow-up support (online mentoring etc.) and final reporting

The contractor will work with JETRO to finalize the detailed schedule and select the optimal events upon contract execution.

Performance Reporting

The contractor must provide a comprehensive tracking mechanism for:

- Workshop attendance and participant engagement metrics
- Mentoring hours delivered per participant
- Number and quality of Partner meetings/connections facilitated
- Progress tracking for all 8 participants throughout the programme
- Event participation outcomes
- Progress on key milestones in each participant's business development

The contractor will be responsible for:

- Managing mentors and coordinating programme schedules
- Tracking deliverables and maintaining communication logs
- Submitting quarterly progress updates to JETRO
- Collecting participant feedback and programme improvement suggestions
- Submitting a final performance report to JETRO by March 15, 2027

The final report format will be provided by JETRO and should include:

- Summary of each participant's journey and achievements (all 8 participants)
 - List of Partners connected and outcomes (LOIs, contracts, investments, etc.)
 - Analysis of programme effectiveness and recommendations for future iterations
 - Financial accounting of actual services delivered
 - Case studies of notable successes or learnings
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Compensation

JETRO will make payments based on the following 2-milestone structure:

1. First Milestone Payment: 50% of the proposed price

- Payable upon contract execution

2. Final Milestone Payment: 50% of the proposed price

- Payable upon submission and approval of the final performance report

The final milestone payment will be calculated based on the actual services provided, considering any adjustments for unmet commitments, changes in the number of participating studios/startups, or modifications in service delivery.

The contractor will submit a detailed performance report with the final billing statement, outlining:

- All services provided, workshops delivered, and mentoring hours completed
- Mentors and instructors engaged and their contributions
- Partner connections facilitated and documented outcomes
- Demo Day selection process and rationale
- Accommodation arrangements and costs for Demo Day participants
- Any deviations from the original plan with justifications and impact analysis

If there are significant deviations from the planned number of participants, workshop sessions, mentoring hours, or event participation, the contractor and JETRO will discuss potential adjustments to the final payment. Any adjustments must be agreed upon by both parties in writing.

Payment Terms:

- The contractor will submit an invoice for each milestone payment. The final invoice shall be submitted by 31 March, 2027.
- JETRO will pay the requested payment amount within 40 days after receiving and approving each billing statement.

This payment structure provides front-loaded funding to enable programme launch and execution while allowing for adjustments based on actual programme delivery and outcomes. It aligns payments with key programme milestones, ensuring that compensation corresponds with significant phases of the programme.

Cultural Bridge-Building:

This programme addresses challenges unique to Japanese indie game studios and gaming startups entering European markets, including language barriers, closed development culture, domestic market focus, and risk aversion.

Partnership Opportunities:

The contractor is encouraged to establish partnerships with relevant European gaming organizations, publishers, platforms, accelerators, and industry associations to enhance programme delivery and participant outcomes.

Conditions for the Contractor(s) engaged in the programme

- a. 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.
- b. Has effective experience of implementation of acceleration programmes specifically

tailored to, and focused on, scaling up within Europe.

- c. Ideally has experience building up unicorns in the past years.
- d. Has investment arms and has close connections with European top tier VCs.
- e. Has proven track-record in various European countries and experience working with the European Union.
- f. 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.
- g. Has knowledge and systems/tools for handling confidential and/or personal information accordingly.

Other

- a. 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.
- b. 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.
- c. Personal information collected will only be used within the programme for the purposes defined prior and will be shared within JETRO.