



Indie Game Studio/Startup Growth Programme for Europe

Application Deadline: July 26, 11:59 PM (JST)

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01 OUTLINE | コース概要

Objective

This is a practical program designed to help Japanese indie game studios/startups secure publishing deals and investment in the European market. Through Games London's powerful network, we provide comprehensive support—from refining your product to pitching to key partners and participating in major European game events.

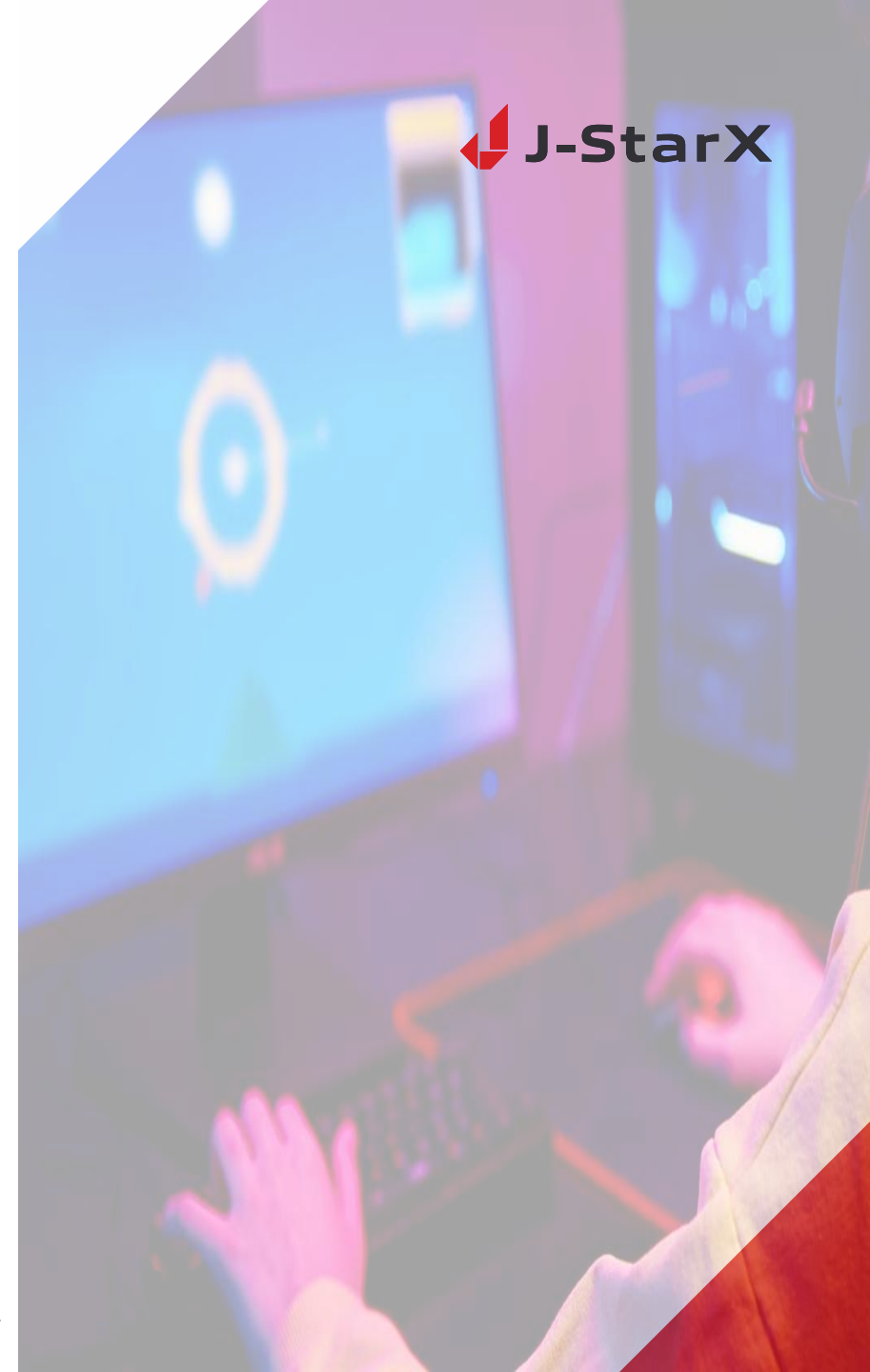
1	Optimization for the European Market: PMF Validation and Product Refinement
2	Connections with Key Partners: Direct Negotiations with Publishers and Investors
3	Participation in Major European Game Events: Opportunities for Demos and Negotiations with Publishers and Investors

Destinations

Europe (scheduled for Berlin, Germany; Helsinki, Finland; or London)

Main Target Audience

Target Companies	Japanese indie game studios (corporations or individuals)/startups seeking to expand overseas
Stage	Pre-seed to Series A studios/startups with a prototype.
Milestone Categories	Validator / Scaler / Connector
Sectors	PC, console, and mobile games in general, including game-related solutions
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes foreign founders residing in Japan• Must possess business-level or higher English proficiency



02 PROGRAM STRUCTURE | プログラム構成 – 全体像

*Please note that the program content and format are subject to change

*The program will be conducted entirely in English



1 Online Program



August–September 2026 (Subject to extension)

We will conduct a total of 10 workshops covering topics such as European market analysis, legal guidance, pitch training, and publishing strategies. We will also provide customized online mentoring tailored to each company (totaling over 15 hours).

4

2 Domestic Program (in Tokyo)



September 2026

European mentors will visit Japan to conduct in-person pitch reviews and provide feedback around the time of the Tokyo Game Show (TGS, September 17–21). We will create opportunities for business meetings and networking with participating European publishers and investors.

3 On-site Program (Europe Mission)



September–November 2026 or January 2027

Participants will be sent to major European game events (such as Games Ground Berlin, Slush, and Techarena). They will conduct one-on-one pitches with publishers and investors and network directly with local industry professionals.

4 Invitation to the London Games Festival (Optional)



April 2027

We will provide free showcase space at the UK's largest event, the "London Games Festival." Through participation in B2B events, participants will conduct final pitches and business negotiations as the culmination of the program.

※This program is optional and falls outside JETRO's responsibility)

1 Online Program & Individual Mentoring

Building a foundation for full-scale entry into the European market and standardizing pitches for investors and publishers to European standards

Capacity 8 companies (up to 2 representatives per company)

Schedule July–September 2026 (may be extended until February 2027)

Overview

- Specialized Workshops (twice a month; 10 sessions planned)

Business model development, financing, analysis of the European game market, publishing strategies, creating pitch decks to European standards, guidance on legal and contractual matters, marketing and PR strategies, game vision development, trailer and digital asset creation, influencer marketing, etc.

- Individual 1-on-1 Mentoring (15+ hours per company)

Proven senior-level European mentors (at least 5 appointed) will provide direct guidance tailored to each studio's needs

- Instructors and Mentors (Tentative)

Led by experts active at the forefront of the industry, including Fireshine Games (Game Scout), Future Friends Games (Publisher), Mishcon de Reya (Legal), Indigo Pearl (PR Agency), and others

2 Domestic Program (@Tokyo)

Present the pitches and products developed online directly to European mentors and industry professionals visiting Japan for the Tokyo Game Show, and gain practical feedback and networking opportunities

Capacity 8 companies (up to 2 representatives per company)

Schedule September 2026
Tokyo Game Show: September 17–21 *Workshops, mentoring sessions, and networking events will be held in Tokyo before and after this week

Overview

- **In-Person Sessions with Mentors**
The mentors leading this program (5 or more) will visit Japan for the Tokyo Game Show (TGS). They will provide direct reviews of participating studios' pitches and game builds, along with in-person feedback
- **Networking**
We will host networking sessions between industry delegates from Europe attending TGS and the Japanese participating cohort
- **Business Matchmaking**
We will create in-person business meeting opportunities to directly connect program participants (the cohort) with leading European publishers and investors

3 Overseas Travel Program (Europe)

Experience the energy and standards of the European market firsthand on-site, and showcase your product at local gaming events. This will lead to concrete contracts and fundraising with local investors and publishers

Capacity 8 companies (up to 2 representatives per company)

Schedule October–November or February 2026
Planned for Games Ground Berlin (Germany) in November, Slush (Finland), or Techarena (Sweden) in February of next year

Overview

- **Game Showcase (Exhibition)**
Exhibit your company's games at the European events and directly promote them to local industry professionals
- **1-on-1 Pitches & Formal Business Meetings**
Conduct formal "one-on-one pitches" to pre-matched major European publishers, investors, and platform holders
- **Industry Networking**
Build long-term connections for future business expansion through informal interactions with local industry professionals

4 Invitation to the London Games Festival (optional)

Exhibiting at the "London Game Festival," a conference for indie games held in London, and meeting with various publishers. **This is an optional program managed by our partner, London Games; JETRO is not involved in its administration and not responsible for the program.**

Capacity 8 companies (up to 2 representatives per company)

Schedule April 2027

Overview

- Free provision of a special exhibition space (valued at approximately 4 million yen)
Free showcase space dedicated to 8 selected Japanese studios (valued at approximately £20,000 + VAT)
- Full access to B2B events
Free participation in "Games Finance Market," a business matchmaking event bringing together investors and publishers from around the world, as well as various conferences
- Flexible Participation Options (On-site or Remote)
In addition to traveling to London to participate in business meetings in person, if you are unable to travel, the organizer (Games London) will manage and operate your exhibition space and support your remote participation in the showcase

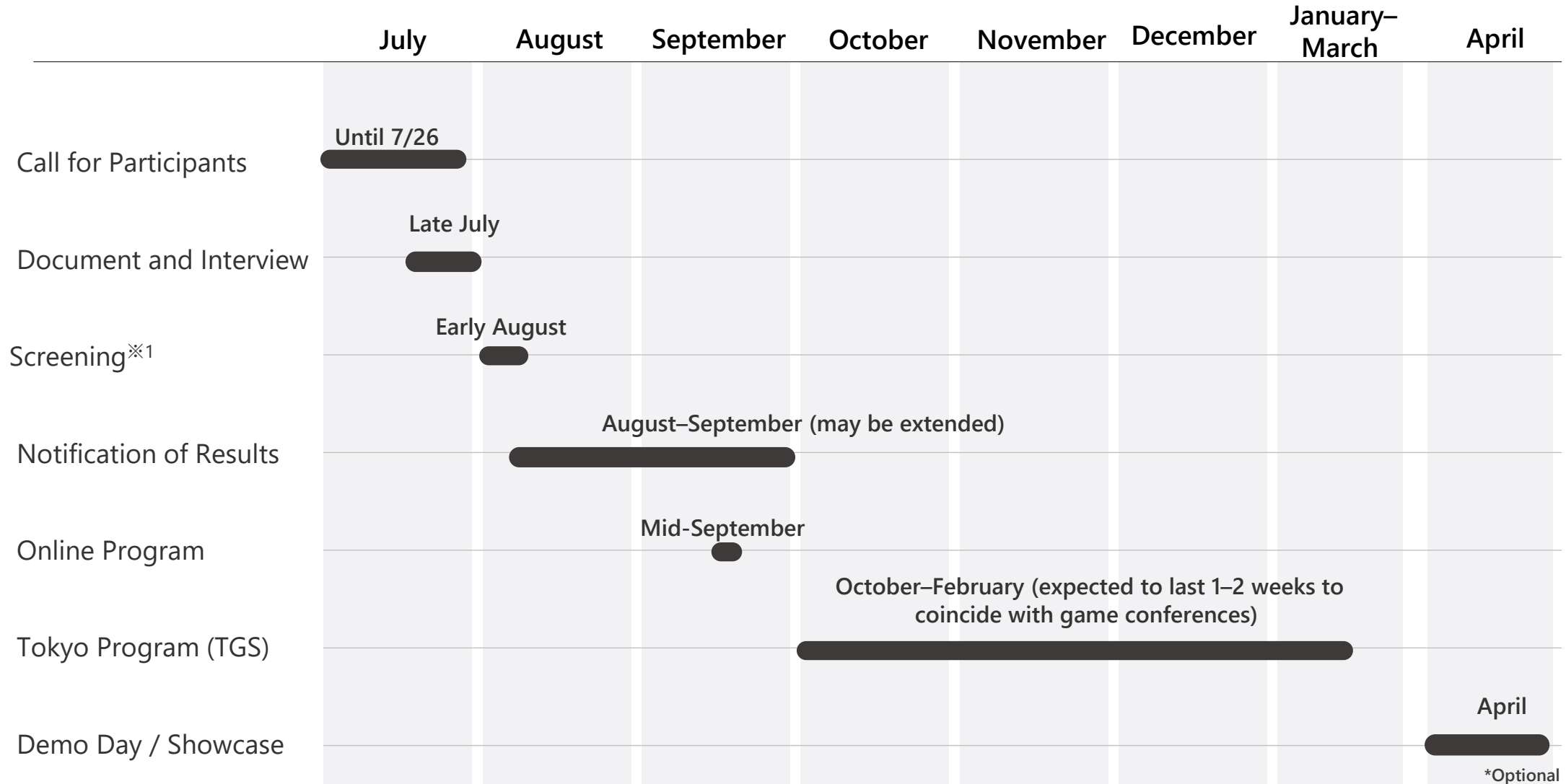
Games London Accelerator

URL: <https://games.london/accelerator/>



Games London is a gaming industry promotion agency established in 2015 with funding from the Mayor of London and the UK government. Through major events such as the annual “London Games Festival” and its incubation programs, it provides strong support to help indie game studios expand their businesses. Since its inception, the organization has supported over 250 game-related startups. As a result, it has contributed to securing over £110 million in investment deals and software sales since 2016, leading to the creation of nearly 1,000 jobs. The “Game Changer” program alone, launched in recent years, has positively impacted 100 businesses, demonstrating a proven track record of propelling London to become Europe’s number one gaming hub.

03 SCHEDULE | スケジュール



*Optional @ London

Interviews will be conducted as needed. We will contact you at a later date regarding interview schedules, etc.

02 PROGRAM STRUCTURE | プログラム構成 – 支援機関の紹介



★List of Key Mentors (Examples; over 9 other mentors will support the program) ※TBD



Bobby Wertheim
(Founder of Kando Factory)

Bobby has over 17 years of experience in the gaming industry, having worked across QA, Production, Business Planning, and A&R at companies including PlayStation, SEGA, Curve Games, Nocturne Games, and his own venture, Kando Factory.

Throughout his career, Bobby has evaluated more than 20,000 game pitches, contributed to over 70 titles, and worked on major franchises such as Heavy Rain, Gran Turismo, Sonic the Hedgehog, and Bayonetta. He remains actively involved in the industry as a mentor, speaker, lecturer, awards juror, and member of BAFTA.



Patrick Johnson
(Playstack)

Patrick is the Head of Discovery at Playstack and, since joining in 2022, has become a key force behind some of the company's biggest successes, including the breakout hit Balatro. With a sharp eye for quality and a deep respect for games as an art form, Patrick spends his time scouting Steam, attending industry events, and building relationships with developers to identify and champion standout indie titles.

At a time when discoverability remains one of the biggest challenges for developers, Patrick is committed to helping unique games reach players. His growing presence in the indie games scene reflects both his industry insight and his dedication to fostering a more supportive and sustainable games ecosystem.



Marc Melton
(Executive Vice president, Marvelous Europe)

Marc has over 25 years of experience working with entertainment brands, media companies, and investors. He is currently Managing Director of Marvelous Europe, the EMEA subsidiary of Marvelous Inc., known for franchises such as Story of Seasons, Rune Factory, Daemon X Machina, Sakuna: Of Rice and Ruin, and Moonlight Peaks.

Prior to joining Marvelous, Marc held international marketing, commercial, and leadership roles at Konami, Cartoon Network / WarnerMedia, and Universal Pictures. Throughout his career, he has developed deep expertise in connecting entertainment content with local communities, regional partners, and global platforms, helping drive success in an evolving entertainment landscape.

Capacity

- 8 companies (2 participants per company)

Main Target Audience

Eligible Companies	Japanese indie game studios (corporations or individuals)/startups seeking to expand overseas
Stage	Pre-seed to Series A studios/startups that have a prototype.
Milestone Categories	Validator / Scaler / Connector
Fields	PC, console, and mobile games in general, including game-related solutions
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes foreign founders residing in Japan • Must possess business-level or higher English proficiency

Application Requirements

Program participants must meet all of the following conditions

- CXO-level executives at Japanese startups based in Japan or those responsible for overseas operations
Nationality is not a factor as long as the applicant is affiliated with a Japanese startup
 - Must possess English proficiency sufficient to present proposals and conduct business negotiations
 - Must have a prototype to present to potential partners
 - Must have responded to interviews and surveys during and after previous program periods. Must also be willing to cooperate in the future.
 - You must be able to prepare the necessary facilities and environment
You must be able to prepare the necessary equipment and environment
- ※ This program is a joint project between the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and JETRO.
and we will conduct follow-up surveys and interviews throughout the implementation process

05 COST-BEARING | 費用負担



Expenses to be borne by participants

- Domestic travel expenses
- Travel Expenses (Airfare)
- Accomodation Fee
- Other expenses incurred overseas, such as transportation, meals, communication, visa fees, and overseas travel insurance
- All expenses other than those covered by the organizer (JETRO)

Expenses Covered by JETRO (Provided in Kind)

- Fees for various programs, such as online and on-site mentoring, workshops, and events

*The above, including tickets for domestic and international exhibitions such as the Tokyo Game Show, will be arranged directly by JETRO. Participants will not be required to cover these costs.



*1 Applicants will be notified of the interview schedule (online) at a later date, as necessary.

Selection Criteria

- The significance of participation must be recognized based on the applicant's participation in other JETRO programs, application details, and the objectives and status of their overseas expansion. *See next page for details
- The mentor and JETRO must be able to provide support
- Participation in this program is expected to lead to scaling up
- The business must be technology-driven, and the product, technology, or service idea must demonstrate novelty and competitive advantage
- The value proposition must be clear
- The business model is highly profitable and sustainable growth is expected
- There is traction demonstrating market demand
- The team composition is suitable for overseas expansion
- Methods and conditions for collaboration and cooperation with partners must be clearly defined

Selection Criteria: This time, we are targeting game studios that have received an MVP award or higher

■ Approach to Program Selection

For each program, one of the selection criteria is ensuring that participating companies **choose the appropriate course based on their business stage and objectives**, so they can achieve maximum results.

Since the challenges and needs related to overseas expansion vary by company, we recommend selecting a course **by working backward from what your company “wants to achieve right now.”**

Examples of Primary Participation Objectives

- Validating Product-Market Fit (PMF) in overseas markets
- Refining Go-to-Market Strategy
- Gaining initial traction
- Building an overseas network

Participating in multiple programs without a clear objective can lead to a dispersion of time and resources. To make the most effective use of “time”—the most critical resource for startups—please ensure you understand the purpose of the program before applying.

■ We recommend consulting with us before applying

The JETRO Startup Team offers consultations to help you select the optimal course based on your business stage and strategic direction. **to help you select the most suitable course.**

- If you have been accepted into another acceleration program this fiscal year
- are unsure about which course to choose

In any of these cases, please feel free to consult with us before applying

Milestone Type	Purpose of Participation	Expected Eligibility
Explorer	Validating direction and understanding the market at the idea stage	Not yet at the MVP stage, but interested in expanding overseas
Validator	Market validation and user interviews at the PoC/MVP stage	Product exists; hypothesis validation stage
Scaler (Growth)	Acquiring customers and investors, executing international expansion	Product has reached a certain level of maturity; planning for international expansion
Connector (Specialization)	Focus on Investor and Partner Collaboration	Goal-oriented (fundraising, partnerships, etc.)

Target Companies for This Round

Selection Criteria: Determined based on five evaluation criteria

① Originality and Appeal of the Game Concept/IP

Evaluation Criteria: Does the game's core idea, art style, world-building, story, or mechanics possess unique strengths or novelty (originality) not found in existing works? Does it have the appeal to attract European players and publishers?

② Development Progress & Product Readiness

Evaluation Criteria: Is a playable demo (build) or prototype ready to be presented to local publishers and investors during the program (or immediately after its conclusion) to facilitate business negotiations? Is the development schedule realistic?

③ Team Capabilities & Passion for Innovation

Evaluation Criteria: Does the team possess the technical expertise and management structure (team strength) necessary to complete the game and deliver it globally? Does the team demonstrate a strong passion for taking on new markets and business models?

④ International Market Potential & Scalability

Evaluation Criteria: Does the project have the potential (marketability) to achieve commercial success not only in Japan but also in global markets, including Europe? Furthermore, is scalability (scale-up) expected, such as future DLC releases, localization into multiple languages, and porting to other platforms?

⑤ English Communication Skills and Proactive Attitude

Evaluation Criteria: Do you have the mindset to proactively participate in all-English workshops and one-on-one sessions led by European mentors? Additionally, do you possess the initiative and basic conversational skills to pitch your project and conduct negotiations at local business meetings (such as the Games Finance Market)?

The selection process consists of two stages. Please prepare the necessary documents and materials as appropriate.

■ Step 1: Document and Material Review (Initial Screening)

Based on the following “three required materials” submitted at the time of application, Games London’s specialized team and JETRO will conduct an initial screening.

Required Materials:

- ①【★Mandatory】 Pitch Decks: Presentation materials for your studio and project, as well as documents regarding your business plan (future release plans, monetization strategies, etc.)
- ②【Optional】 Game Demos / Prototypes: A playable build
- ③【Optional】 Trailers: Videos that convey the game’s appeal and world-building

■ Step 2: Interview Screening (Second Round)

Online interviews will be conducted with studios that pass the first round. We will assess the team’s enthusiasm, commitment to expanding overseas, and willingness to communicate in English, and we will ultimately select 8 companies.

*Please note that interviews may not be conducted in some cases.

Application Form

Deadline: July 26th, 2026 (Sun) 23:59 (JST)

■ Important Notes Regarding Applications

- Applications submitted after the deadline will not be accepted under any circumstances.
- Due to high traffic immediately before the deadline, you may be unable to apply, so please apply well in advance
- No revisions or replacements to the pitch content will be permitted after submission.

■ Application Process

- Separate submission of your company logo, pitch deck, and other materials (in English) is required (see the following pages for details on formats and submission methods).
- We will review the application materials and notify you of the selection results
- In addition to the document review, we will conduct an interview (online)
- Please note that we cannot respond to any inquiries regarding the screening results
- Please have a copy of your passport photo page and the signed declaration form ready, as these will be required. Details will be provided separately to selected applicants

Points to Consider When Creating an English Pitch Deck

Please note that if the following guidelines are not followed, your submission may be excluded from consideration

■ Key Considerations for Creating an English Pitch Deck

- Please create your materials to include the information listed in the right-hand column
- No cover page is required; please limit the document to a maximum of 6 pages
- As a general rule, create the file in PowerPoint and convert it to PDF format
(The deck file size must be 3MB or less)
- Please name the file “Course **Name_Company Name_Your Name.pdf**”
(Please enter your own name in the "Name" field)
- Please submit by **23:59 JST on July 31st, 2026 (Sun)**

■ Content to be included in the English pitch deck

Please include the following four mandatory items regarding your prototype on the slides. Also, please write your name in the upper-left corner of the first page

1. Social issue to be addressed and proposed solution
2. Overview and technology of the prototype (using photos, diagrams, and text)
3. Business expansion strategy
4. Key Selling Points and Strengths of the Prototype

*Please prepare your materials in **English**

*There are no restrictions on slide design or format

1. If necessary, mentors and JETRO staff may accompany participants to meetings with local partners. We also ask for your cooperation in assessing results and confirming progress after your return.
2. Please note that after being selected for this program, your company may be featured in public communications regarding JETRO projects and results reports. (We will review the content to be published in advance.)
3. Participation must be deemed meaningful, taking into account the applicant's participation status in other JETRO programs, application details, and the objectives and stage of their overseas expansion. (See p. 15)

Disclaimer

Please read [the J-StarX Terms of Use and Disclaimer](#) carefully before applying

Cancellation Policy

Cancellations are not permitted for any reason once the travel schedule has been finalized.

Date cancellation fees apply: The exact deadline will be announced to participants at a later date.

09 CONTACT | お問い合わせ



Program Name: J-starX Indie Game Studio/Startup Growth Programme for Europe

Organizer: JETRO Innovation Department / Startup Division, Madrid Office, London Office

Contact: Kaga, Suzuki (E), Nishiyama, Nagao

Inquiries [Inquiry Form](#) Link

