

We interviewed Jeevan Ramapriya, the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Office of International Trade and Investment (MOITI). As the international business development agency for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, MOITI plays a key role in positioning the state as a global leader in innovation. Jeevan shares insights into the initiatives supporting entrepreneurship, Massachusetts' partnerships with Japan, and the resources available for international startups looking to expand into the state.



Jeevan Ramapriya

Executive Director, Massachusetts Office of International Trade and Investment (MOITI)

Executive Office of Economic Development

Could you tell us about your role as an Executive Director at the Massachusetts Office of International Trade and Investment?

MOITI is the international business development agency of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. I talk to foreign investors and businesses to promote Massachusetts as an innovation hub and as a destination for those businesses to start and grow.

What policies or initiatives has the Massachusetts government implemented to support innovation and entrepreneurship?

MOITI administers a program called STEP, the State Trade Expansion Program. It's funded by the U.S. Small Business Administration, and we work closely with the Massachusetts Export Center to help identify small and medium sized enterprises in Massachusetts that are looking to access the export market. I would say that it's similar to how JETRO works with Japanese companies.

How is the state fostering international collaborations, particularly with Japan, to drive innovation?

Within the past year, Governor Healey met with the then-Japanese ambassador to the United States, Tomita, and we hosted Governor Hattori and his delegation from Fukuoka prefecture. Regarding our work with Japanese corporations that have a presence in Massachusetts, I would say one collaboration of note is Takeda Pharmaceuticals. Their U.S. presence has grown significantly, with over 6,000 of their employees here in Massachusetts. Their U.S. president is active in working with the Governor and Secretary of Economic Development to help us strategize and make Massachusetts competitive by providing effective support for companies both large and small. In the pipeline, I'm working directly with two smaller Japanese companies. One is in the life science sector and they're looking to access the U.S. market. We connected them with a variety of partners in our ecosystem and we're looking forward to them making a splash in the local market soon. The other is an advanced agriculture manufacturing company that's developed a new technology and they're looking to have a

presence here due to the local technological talent that's available.

Are there any specific industries that Massachusetts focuses on?

With 18 of the largest biopharma companies having a presence here in Massachusetts, we have become the global epicenter for the life sciences and healthcare industries. This success was a part of a government initiative from around two decades ago that provided a billion-dollar investment dedicated to supporting the growth of a local ecosystem. We want to replicate this success in other sectors, like climate technology. From a forward-thinking standpoint, because all of the industries that we support are utilizing AI, the governor has established a task force aimed at understanding the impact of generative AI on our government, industry and workforce. The Healey-Driscoll Administration wants to ensure that the state is ahead of any incoming change and that we're able to proactively upskill our workforce.

What infrastructure or resources are available for startups from Japan trying to expand their business to Massachusetts?

We have our strong, diverse ecosystem with incredible access to talent and institutional knowledge from research institutions, nonprofits and universities. For those looking for funding, we are the state with the highest amount of investment funding per capita with additional access to risk capital. We're fortunate to have several quasi-public agencies in Massachusetts. One of the biggest is the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center; they provide grant funding, workforce development funding, as well as networking and ecosystem building. Likewise, we have the Mass Growth Capital Corporation that provides technical assistance loans and grants to small businesses and MassVentures that provides support for early-stage deep tech startups that are spun out of universities. We welcome international startups, including those from Japan, to access these resources. As long as they have a subsidiary or some form of legal entity within the state and are looking to create jobs, they can utilize the state-funded resources.