

Acceleration Program for Japanese Healthcare startups in Boston

Request for Proposal (RFP) / Statement of Work

1. Background

JETRO is a Japanese governmental organization that promotes trade and investment between Japan and other countries. One of our current core activities is to facilitate innovation. As part of this, JETRO supports the global expansion of Japanese startups. Sendai City has been selected by the Government of Japan (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry) as a Healthcare Startup Social Implementation Hub. JETRO Sendai and the Sendai City Government focus on supporting healthcare and medical startups in expanding their businesses globally.

Accordingly, JETRO Sendai and JETRO New York will organize an acceleration program for Japanese healthcare startups and founders based in the Sendai and Tohoku regions to expand their business in North America (especially Boston area), focusing on the areas of **Medtech, Medical devices, Digital Health, and HealthTech**, which will be outsourced to a contractor in the USA.

2. Program Outline

The program consists of two courses.

- A) Research Course
- B) Network Construction Course

A) Research Course

The Research Course aims to help startups and founders to assess the potentials of their businesses in the North American market, particularly in the Boston area, by gaining and understanding of the market landscape, business models, financing environment, intellectual property, and regulatory requirements. Participants will assess the feasibility of market entry through activities such as regulatory research, competitive analysis, and gathering insights from local stakeholders. By the end of this course, participants are expected to have a developed business plan for entering the North American market.

B) Network Construction Course

Network Construction Course aims to support startups and founders in expanding their businesses in North America, particularly in the Boston area, by developing strategic approaches. Participants will accelerate their entry into the North American market through intensive mentoring and meetings with prospective customers.

By the end of this course, startups and founders are expected to have established meaningful connections within the Boston healthcare ecosystem and built a sustainable network.

3. Courses and Startups to be Supported

	A) Research Course	B) Network Construction Course
Language	English	
Target	Japanese startups or founders in Sendai and Tohoku area	
Target area	Medtech, Medical devices, Digital Health and HealthTech	
The number of participating startups/Founders (*)	2 startups or founders	2 startups or founders
Course Goal	•Understanding the U.S. Healthcare Market •Regulatory Landscape Assessment •Customer Discovery and Validation •Development of a North American Market Entry Strategy	•Customer Acquisition and Business Development •Strategic Partner Identification •Identification of Pilot Sites and Clinical Collaboration Opportunities •Building Relationships with Investors and Healthcare Institutions
Target participants	•Startups in the pre-funding stage •Are beginning to explore the applicability of their technologies and services in overseas markets. •With the primary objective being to clarify the direction for North American market expansion. •Interested in assessing feasibility through activities such as regulatory research, competitive analysis, and gathering insights from local stakeholders.	•Have entered a concrete planning stage for expansion into the North American market •Have prepared initial pitch decks and market entry strategies •Have participated in overseas accelerator programs and/or business matching events • Have accumulated a certain level of practical experience and organizational maturity

(*)

- Possible to select between 1 - 3 startups or founders for each course
- If there are no applicants for one of the courses, that course will not be held.
- Select a maximum total of five startups or founders across both courses

4. Drafted Schedule

	A) Research Course	B) Network Construction Course
July - August 2026	Contractor selection	
September 2026	Call for Participants and Participants selection	
October – November 2026 (2 months)	<Domestic Program in Japan> Program Kick-off (online / onsite)	
	Preparatory Program ▸Basic Lecture ▸Basic Training ▸Mentoring ▸Pitch training ▸Planning for the Boston Program	Preparatory Program ▸Mentoring ▸Pitch training ▸Refinement of the business model ▸ Identification of potential customers
December 2026 (expected to take place during the second and third weeks*)	<Boston Program> Intensive Program (day 1 – day 3) ▸Workshop / ▸Learning Session / ▸Site visit to the startup ecosystem facilities or medical research institute / ▸Participation in a networking event	
	(day 4 – day 14) ▸Individual research / ▸business meetings with potential customers	(day 4 – day 14) ▸Individual research / ▸business meetings with potential customers
January - February 2027	<Wrap-up Program> ▸Follow up mentoring / ▸Develop Action Plans	
-10 th March 2027	Submission of work completion report, Completion of contract	

*The exact duration of the overseas program is adjusted through consultation between the contractor and JETRO, considering the support contents and structures to be optimal for the startups.

*The Boston program is planned to be conducted for both courses simultaneously.

C) Outsourced Tasks

(1) Promotional material creation

The Contractor will provide JETRO with some information or slides for the promotional materials to recruit participants, such as a brief introduction of the Contractor including the Contractor's strength, value proposition of the program, candidate mentors, the program outline, and other relevant information.

(2) Application screening

- a. The Contractor, in consultation with JETRO and Sendai city government, shall determine the criteria for the selection of the startups.
- b. Selection interview

- c. Based on the application documents and interview, the Contractor will evaluate the applicants according to the selected criteria and report its evaluations with comments to JETRO and Sendai city government and finalize

(3) Domestic Program in Japan

The program consists of a kick-off meeting, course-specific sessions, and individual mentoring sessions.

*Programs that are deemed suitable for implementation across both courses may be conducted jointly.

① <Joint implementation> Kick-off Meeting (Online or On-site)

The contractor will run a kick-off Meeting to explain the details of the course. The kick-off meeting may be held in person in Sendai City, online, or in a hybrid format, depending on circumstances and participant needs.

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 Sendai venues should be excluded from the contract amount, as JETRO Sendai prepares.

② -A < Research Course > Preparatory Program (online)

The program will consist of Workshop/Learning session and One-on-One Mentoring. In addition, the Contractor may also propose some ideas on how to support the startups more effectively.

a. Workshop/Learning session

The contractor will hold lectures or interactive group coaching sessions. Workshop or Learning will be conducted twice per month in October and November, excluding the holiday period.

It may cover the following items:

- Introduction to U.S. Healthcare Markets
- Regulatory Compliance
- Market Entry Pathways
- Market Research
- Investment & Fundraising
- Pitching Skills

b. One-on-One Mentoring

The Contractor will match mentors to each startup or founder based on the startup's business area, situation and needs. The Contractor will arrange an initial introductory meeting between a mentor and a startup or founder. One-on-one mentoring will take place regularly twice per month during October and November, excluding the holiday period. The mentor provides

practical guidance and helps participants develop an action plan for Boston program.

The Contractor will monitor the individual mentoring situation and report it to JETRO. In case the mentoring is not working well or if the startup wishes to change the mentor, the Contractor will replace the mentor as soon as possible

② -B < Network Construction Course > Preparatory Program (online)

The program will consist of One-on-One Mentoring. In addition, the Contractor may also propose some ideas on how to support the startups more effectively.

a. One-on-One Mentoring

The Contractor will match mentors to each startup or founder based on the startup's business area, situation and needs. The Contractor will arrange an initial introductory meeting between a mentor and a startup or founder.

One-on-one mentoring will take place regularly three times per month during October and November, excluding the holiday period. Mentors will support participants in identifying and prioritizing key stakeholders, evaluating strategic approaches to accelerate North American market entry, and developing a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan. The mentor provides practical guidance and helps participants develop an action plan for Boston program.

The Contractor will monitor the individual mentoring situation and report it to JETRO. In case the mentoring is not working well or if the startup wishes to change the mentor, the Contractor will replace the mentor as soon as possible

(4) **Boston Program (on-site)**

The Boston program will consist of two components: a shared on-site intensive program and an individual survey period, during which participating companies will conduct customized research activities and meet with potential partners in accordance with their business needs and objectives.

For the individual research period, support will be provided to help participating startups develop action plans through online mentoring and mentoring sessions during the Boston program. In addition, ongoing assistance will be offered throughout the individual research period on an as-needed basis.

The program contents are expected to include the following components.

In addition, the Contractor may also propose some ideas on how to support the startups more effectively.

*Programs that are deemed suitable for implementation across both courses may be conducted jointly.

Note: Any other expenses mentioned below should be included in the contract amount:

- Venue for all activities (including office space during individual survey period)
- Travel expenses of the contractor during the onsite program

① -A <Research Course> Intensive Program (day 1 - day 3)

The Contractor will support the startups or founders to understand the Boston healthcare ecosystem and market, while building connections with relevant stakeholders to help participants evaluate whether the U.S. market is an appropriate target for expansion.

a. Workshop / Learning Session

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

b. Site visit to the startup ecosystem facilities or medical research institutes

The contractor will arrange a site visit to at least 2 startup ecosystem facilities or medical research institutes.

c. One-on-One Mentoring

The contractor and mentor will arrange face-to-face mentoring opportunities for the startups and their mentors. The Contractor and mentor support participants to refine and enhance their business and to develop an action plan for individual survey. Depending on startups' needs, the contractor will arrange a minimum of 3 business meetings and/or interviews for each startup with potential research partners, users, investors and so on.

This is expected to be deeper/more advanced mentoring compared with online mentoring.

d. Providing opportunities of networking

The contractor shall either host at least one networking event or arrange for the startups to attend at least one existing networking event, thereby providing opportunities to deliver pitches and engage in networking with relevant stakeholders and healthcare ecosystem players.

e. Support for Individual survey planning

The Contractor and mentor support participants to develop an action plan during individual survey.

① -B<Network Construction Course> Intensive Program (day 1 - day 3)

The contractor will provide comprehensive on-site guidance to help startups achieve critical objectives, including designing products compliant with local regulations, validating commercial plans, and developing strategies for clinical trials and intellectual property. The Contractor will also facilitate connections with potential partners for evidence generation and collaborative research.

- a. Workshop / Learning Session
Workshops and presentations will be held on topics of common interest to the participating startups and founders, based on their needs for support in developing their USA operations.
- b. Site visit to the startup ecosystem facilities or medical research institute
The contractor will arrange a site visit to at least 2 startup ecosystem facilities or medical research institute.
- c. One-on-One Mentoring
The contractor will arrange face to face mentoring opportunities for the startups and their mentors. This is expected to be deeper/one step further mentoring compared with online mentoring. The Contractor supports the improvement of pitch decks and presentations to maximize effectiveness in upcoming pitching opportunities.
- d. Support for Individual survey planning
The Contractor and mentor support participants to develop an action plan during individual survey.
- e. Arrangement of Business Meetings and Stakeholder Interviews
The Contractor will arrange a minimum of 5 business meetings and/or stakeholder interviews for each startup with potential partners, customers, healthcare providers, investors, or other relevant stakeholders.
- f. Providing opportunities of pitching and networking
The contractor shall either host networking events or arrange for the startups to attend existing networking events, thereby providing opportunities to deliver pitches and engage in networking with relevant stakeholders and healthcare ecosystem players.

- ② <Both Course> Individual research (day 4 - day 14)
The contractor will support startups conducting individual market research by facilitating introductions to relevant organizations, arranging meetings and interviews, and providing information on relevant events based on the plans developed throughout the program.

* The duration of the research period will be tailored to the needs and schedules of individual startups and is expected to range from 4 to 11 days. The specific number of days will be determined during the period from November through December.

(5) Wrap-up Program (online)

The contractor will run a wrap-up session as the final content where startups can be given feedback and confirm their next step.

After the Boston program concludes an individual online wrap-up session will be held to provide feedback and develop an action plan for future activities in the North American market.

D) Submission of the Project Report

- a. The Contractor shall submit a report to JETRO (due by 10 March 2027) summarizing the results of all activities conducted under this contract.
- b. The report should include suggestions to assist JETRO in hosting similar programs in the future.

E) Payment Terms

Total payment amount depends on the number of the participating startups. Once the number of participating startups has been confirmed, 50% of the total contract amount, including VAT and other taxes, shall be paid within 20 days of receipt of the invoice.

The remaining amount shall be paid within 20 days of receipt of the invoice after confirming the completion of the work.

F) Conditions for the Contractor(s) engaged in the program

- a. Has an established organizational structure and the capability to manage and complete the project effectively. Has a global network, and knowledge necessary for implementing the project as an Accelerator, Venture Capital, or any other related organization.
- b. Has substantial experience designing and implementing accelerator programs focused on supporting startup scale-up in the Boston area.
- c. Preferably has experience supporting startups that have achieved significant growth, including unicorn status.
- d. Can respond to JETRO's requests and maintain regular communication, reporting, and consultation with JETRO and relevant stakeholders throughout the program.
- e. Can provide appropriate data and performance metrics for program evaluation.
- f. Has knowledge and systems/tools for handling confidential and/or personal information accordingly.
- g. Can continue to facilitate collaboration and connections between the healthcare ecosystem in the Boston area and the startup ecosystem in Sendai and the Tohoku region.

G) Other

- a. If any matter not described in this specification arises during the program, it shall be discussed with a person in charge, and a response shall be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- b. Personal information collected will only be used within the program for the purposes defined prior and will be shared within JETRO.