

SDGs CHALLENGE 2023

# Application Requirements

June 2023

Hyogo Prefecture and Kobe City  
(Program Operator: CommunityLink)

# SDGs CHALLENGE 2023

## 1. Program Background

Startups have become crucial entities in driving economic growth and addressing societal challenges through innovative business approaches. They play a significant role not only in the global market but also in promoting innovation within local communities.

In Hyogo and Kobe, we have been actively working on creating opportunities for entrepreneurs to gather, providing funding support, business growth support, and personnel development. Especially since being selected as J-Global Startup Cities in Kansai along with Osaka and Kyoto in July 2020 by the Japanese government, Hyogo and Kobe have been making continuous efforts to foster a diverse startup ecosystem capable of global competition and to promote the development and support of startups.

In addition, the urgent response to the escalating severity of climate change has become a global imperative. Recognizing this, Hyogo, in its revised "Hyogo Prefecture Climate Change Mitigation Plan"\* issued in March 2022, emphasizes the crucial need to foster innovation for the implementation of technologies that enable sustainable growth, while also striving to generate cutting-edge innovations that contribute to achieving a decarbonized society.

Based on the aforementioned context, this program organized by Hyogo and Kobe aims to strengthen the startup ecosystem by supporting startups and innovative small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are dedicated to pursuing the globally shared Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The program further focuses on facilitating the development, growth, and international expansion of system and product solutions that foster global social transformation.

Its primary objective is to foster innovation and promote the creation of startups that contribute to the advancement of cutting-edge products and solutions while strengthening the overall startup ecosystem.

\* [https://www.kankyo.pref.hyogo.lg.jp/ip/warming/leg\\_255/leg\\_394](https://www.kankyo.pref.hyogo.lg.jp/ip/warming/leg_255/leg_394)

## **2.Targeted Startups, SMEs and Themes**

We are looking for startups or SMEs that are developing and commercializing products or services\*\* related to the following themes.

- Themes

Products or services that contribute to the SDGs\*\*\*

\*\* The target is products that are already commercially available or have completed prototype development and will be commercially available in the near future.

\*\*\* We plan to prioritize the selection of startups and SMEs that are actively working on developing products or services in Climate tech, such as decarbonization and carbon neutrality.

## **3.Program Outline**

### **(1) Business development support**

We provide support for business development and international expansion of startups and innovative SMEs through three activities: REFINE, EXPOSURE, and ENGAGEMENT.

#### **[REFINE]**

The following programmes are designed to strengthen the business strategy, development and deployment of each company.

- **BootCamp in Kobe**
  - Scheduled for a three-day period from October 4th to 6th during the intensive support period (October to December)
  - Quantitative evaluation of the level of social problem-solving and the social impact targeted
  - Setting of Objectives and Key Results (OKR) methodology
  - Leadership and team-building workshop
- **Founders Online Meeting**
  - Regular meetings aimed at fostering mutual exchange, support, and learning among entrepreneurs
  - Weekly meetings held every Friday evening from 16:00 to 17:30 throughout the intensive support period

- Participants report on their business progress and challenges, engage in mutual consultation, share opinions, and provide feedback to each other
- **Online Mentoring**
  - Individual consultation with a team of entrepreneurs and executive mentors regarding business strategy, management, development, and sales.
- **Online Coaching**
  - English pitch training
  - Support creating English materials

### **[EXPOSURE]**

We provide opportunities for appealing to and communicating with various markets and domestic and international stakeholders.

- Introduction and information dissemination through Hyogo and Kobe's startup-related social media channels
- Introduction to domestic and international organizations and institutions, such as local government, private sector and non-profit organizations
- Promotion at relevant events
  - Booth exhibition at global events featuring Climate Tech scheduled for February 2, 2024
- Pitch at citizen-participatory Demo Day: SDGsDay2024 (scheduled for February 3, 2024)

### **[ENGAGEMENT]**

We provide networking and matching opportunities that contribute to business development in the following areas:

- Business matching
  - With companies based in the Kansai region
  - With governmental organizations in Hyogo, Kobe, and other relevant entities
- Support for overseas expansion and global business development
  - Provision of local information and resources related to international expansion
  - Networking with overseas startup ecosystems

## **(2) Financial support for Exploring Expansion into the Global Market**

**(Note: Applicants only, subject to screening)**

We will support the necessary expenses for startups and SMEs that wish to conduct overseas demonstration and research projects.

Applicants are required to submit an overseas demonstration/research project plan (by Google form). If there is a potential fit, we will reach out to schedule an interview.

- We support business activities that fall into one of the following categories.
  - **Category-A:** Overseas customer and market research, a survey of potential development partners, and demonstration projects (prototype production, etc.)
    - \* maximum 1 million yen per company (tax included))
  - **Category-B:** Expenses for exhibiting at overseas exhibitions, participation in overseas support programs
    - \* maximum 500K yen per company (tax included))
- Terms and Conditions for eligibility for financial assistance
  - The submitted project plan will be examined and evaluated through an interview to determine its suitability.
  - Priority will be given to projects from companies based in Hyogo or companies with plans to expand into Hyogo. \*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\* A “base” refers to a physical presence such as a branch office, liaison office, or utilization of coworking facilities, indicating ongoing business activities. Registration is not mandatory.

- Conditions for the provision of financial assistance
  - Please refer to Appendix 3 for detailed information on eligible expenses.
  - Attendance at the Founders Meeting is mandatory. Additionally, participation in the following events scheduled to take place in Kobe is a requirement:
    - BootCamp (October 4th to 6th, 2023)
    - Booth exhibition at event involving overseas Climate Tech participants (February 2nd, 2024)
    - Citizen-participatory Demo Day- SDGsDay2024 (February 3rd, 2024)

## 4.Launauge

The activities of this program, such as meetings and mentoring, are conducted in Japanese.

However, since this program aims to support overseas development, activities and exchanges will be conducted in English.

## 5.Number of companies to be selected

About 20 companies.

However, the financial support for the demonstration and research projects in 3(2) is available for about 10 out of 20 companies.

## 6.Program Fee

Free of Charge.

NOTE: Travel, accommodation, and other expenses necessary for participation in the program, including a trip to the Kobe venue, are to be borne by the participants.

## 7.Venue

It will be conducted both in-person and online (e.g. ZOOM). The venues for in-person implementation are listed below. However, this is subject to change and addition.

- Kobe-Hyogo innovation Port (KiP)

Address:

SMBC KOBE headquarter building 2F,  
Naniwa-cho 56, Chuou-ku, Kobe, Hyogo

<https://www.kigyoplaza-hyogo.jp>

- KIITO

Address:

1-4 Onohamacho, Chuo-ku, Kobe, Hyogo

<https://kiito.jp>

## 8.Program Schedule

**Friday, September 1, 2023 - Thursday, February 29, 2024\***

\*September will be a period of preliminary study on your own

BootCamp	Wednesday, 4 October to Friday, 6
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	October, 2023 *Face-to-face participation is required
Founders Online Meeting	16:00-17:30, Friday on the following dates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● October 13</li> <li>● October 20</li> <li>● October 27</li> <li>● November 10</li> <li>● November 17</li> <li>● November 24</li> <li>● December 1</li> <li>● December 8</li> <li>● December 15</li> </ul>
Booth exhibition at event involving overseas Climate Tech participants	Friday, February 2, 2024 *Face-to-face participation is required
Citizen-participatory Demo Day-SDGsDay2024	Saturday, February 3, 2024 *Face-to-face participation is required

In addition to the above, we will provide individual support through business development assistance such as mentoring and business matching, and international expansion support.

Furthermore, we plan to hold several face-to-face events and workshops in Kobe involving startup communities, to facilitate networking and collaboration.

## 9.How to apply & Application Period

Applications opened on **Wednesday, June 7, 2023. The deadline to apply is 18:00 (JST), Friday, July 7, 2023.**

If you want to apply, please submit your application online **as soon as possible** from the following website.

<https://sdgs-challenge.jp/>

\* Regarding required information to apply, please refer to the Appendix-1.

## 10.Screening Method and Selection Criteria

Applicants will be screened through document screening and interviews on a rolling basis. The results of the evaluation will be communicated via email.

Screening Process:

- First round: Document Screening
  - Second round: Online Interview
  - Third round: Online Interview
- \* However the third round is only applicants seeking financial support for overseas demonstration and research projects.

Applicants who wish to receive financial support for overseas demonstration/research projects are required to submit a separate detailed project plan. Please refer to the Appendix-2. We will schedule an interview after screening it.

We will qualify all applications by the following guideline:

1. That has already started to develop and market a concrete business (R&D) (not at the level of an idea)
2. That has a clear target issue, customer, business goal or vision, and an activity policy that matches the application's theme based on the SDGs.
3. Whose business activities are expected to impact the regional economy of Hyogo/Kobe positively and can serve as a catalyst for change in the market as a whole.
4. The founder or managing director must be able to participate in the program on their initiative.
5. Availability for face-to-face participation in the program is required.
6. Willingness to actively participate in and contribute to the startup community in Hyogo and Kobe, including the SDGsCHALLENGE

\*note: Priority will be given to companies that have a base\*\* in Hyogo or have plans to expand into Hyogo during the selection process.

\*\*A “base” refers to a physical presence such as a branch office, liaison office, or utilization of coworking facilities, indicating ongoing business activities. Registration is not mandatory

## **11.Notification of Acceptance**

The results of the selection will be notified via email.



Please note that in the case of non-selection, we will not disclose the reasons for the decision.

All selected teams will be announced on our web site: <https://sdgs-challenge.jp/>

## **12.Requests for cooperation in surveys and follow-up**

We will ask all applicants to cooperate in surveys and hearings to improve our SDGs CHALLENGE program.

## **13.Other Notes**

- A. We will implement this program at KiP and KIITO. When you join the program and use our facilities, please comply with the facilities' terms and conditions of use. The proposer has intellectual property rights to the business plan and other information.
- B. However, the proposer is responsible for taking measures to legally protect information such as patents, utility models, trade secrets, and know-how and is requested to submit proposals to the extent that it is acceptable to make them public.
- C. The contents of the submitted documents, including personal information, will be shared with Hyogo, Kobe, and the contracted operators, Community Link the NPO and Yamashita Project, Inc. The information will also be shared and used to the extent necessary for this program's cooperating and sponsoring organizations.
- D. The submitted personal information will not be used for any other purpose or provided to any third party, except for related parties unless otherwise stipulated by law or agreed to by the applicant.
- E. Suppose we find any misrepresentation or failure to meet the requirements after the qualified or launched program. In that case, the applicant will be disqualified or asked to withdraw from the program during the program.

## **14.Contact**

If you have any questions, please contact to the contracted operators, Community Link the NPO via email : [sdgs-challenge@communitylink.jp](mailto:sdgs-challenge@communitylink.jp)

## **LEGAL DISCLAIMER**

*This program is operated by CommunityLink commissioned by Hyogo Prefecture and Kobe City.*

*Such programs and services are provided for educational and informational purposes only and under no circumstances should any content provided as part of any such program, services or events be construed as investment, legal, tax or accounting advice by us or any of its affiliates.*

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### **Appendix-1**

#### **Application Form / List of Entry Items**

1. Please select one of the 17 SDG targets that your business is most primarily targeting
2. Is the application for products or services that contribute to decarbonization or carbon neutrality? (Yes or No)
3. Corporate or organization name
4. Location of your office (headquarters)
5. base in Hyogo
6. Your current business situation in Hyogo
7. Date of incorporation of the company

8. Capital

9. Name of representative

10. Title of Representative

11. Representative's email address

12. Contact telephone number

13. Do you wish to receive financial support for demonstration/research projects for overseas expansion? Yes or No

If "Yes," please select the category below :

- Category-A: Overseas customer and market research, a survey of potential development partners, and demonstration projects (prototype production, etc.)

- \* maximum million yen per company (tax included))

- Category-B: Exhibition in overseas showcases

- \* maximum 500K yen per company (tax included))

\* Applicants who wish to apply for this support should complete Appendix-2 and apply. If there is a potential fit, we will reach out to schedule an interview.

14. Outline the issue(s) you wish to resolve (200 words or less regarding the target customer(s) and the nature of the problem (s))

15. Countries/regions where you are interested in overseas expansion

16. Outline the business you are developing or deploying (200 words or less describing the specific method and effect of solving the issue and its impact on society)

17. URL of the prototype or product

18. Current status of the applied your business (within 200 characters)

(Development and prototyping in progress, PMF (Product Market Fit(\*)) trials, sales, deployment in progress, etc.)

\* It means you have confirmed the product or service fits within a specific market or the existence of customers and their needs.

19. Details of the applied your business (within 800 characters)

Please describe the current business phase as concretely as possible, such as under designing, development/trial production, sales development, etc. (number of customers, sales amount, forecast, etc.)

In particular, if you are in the process of prototyping or conducting test sales/demonstration experiments, please explain based on data such as verification results.

20. Business model (revenue model)

21. Please describe any similar products or similar/competing/referenced services. Please provide the names and URLs of competitors.

22. Please tell us your expectations from participating in this program?

23. How did you know about this program?

- a. Introduction from participating companies in this program before
- b. Internet search
- c. Social media
- d. Introduction from program organizers
- e. newsletter
- f. Venture capitalists
- g. Other (please specify)

24. Please let us know any additional requests or queries.

## **(Appendix-2)**

### **Research & Trial Plan in the overseas market**

Applicants who wish to conduct overseas demonstration and research projects must fill out the following items on the Google Form. We will review the document and schedule an interview.

Applicants will be required to submit the detailed implementation plan and itinerary before launch.

After completing the project, you have to submit the implementation result report.

1. Company Name/Representative
2. Organization
3. Number of people planned to travel and their roles
4. Target country/region
5. Reason and strategy for global expansion and selecting the target country/region (about 200 words)
6. Issues in the target country/region to be solved through your business deployment (about 200 words)
7. Purpose and outline of the demonstration project (or research project/exhibition) (about 200 words)
8. Details of the new demonstration project (or research project/exhibition) to be attempted (about 1 A4 sheet)
9. Expected results from the implementation of the project
10. Period of implementation
11. Details of Estimated Expenses

### **(Attachment 3)**

## **Expenses for overseas demonstration and research projects eligible for support**

### **1. Eligible Expenses**

Expenses incurred from the date of adoption of the overseas demonstration/research project plan to the end of February, 2024, including the following

- Airline tickets (including airport fees, fuel surcharges, and other necessary expenses)  
Note:
  - Domestic travel expenses for overseas travel are not covered.
  - This program is limited to Economy Class(Y)
  - Higher classes, including Premium Economy(W), are not eligible
- Accommodation expenses (\*maximum 25K yen per night)
- Local transportation fee
- Exhibit fees
- Event participation fee
- Incorporation costs in the overseas country
- Visa fee including ESTA
- Communication expenses such as global Wi-Fi
- Shipping costs for exhibitions
- Commission fee (to be determined after screening based on the specificity of the application/plan and the method of acceptance inspection/confirmation)

Note: Airfare and accommodation expenses are limited to a maximum of three individuals per company.

### **2. Ineligible Expenses**

- Personnel expenses for employees of participating companies (including in-house engineers, subsidiaries, etc.)
- Outsourcing expenses for service development
- Domestic travel expenses (including domestic travel for overseas travel and travel to the venue in Kobe)
- Equipment purchase expenses (equipment, etc. that will become company assets, including data, etc.) Including data, etc.)\*Fixtures should be 100,000 yen (excluding tax).

### 3. **Period of eligibility**

From the date of adoption to the end of February, 2024  
(the period during which expenses are incurred)

### 4. **Eligible countries**

Worldwide, multiple countries are acceptable.

If you travel to a country with an Overseas Danger Information Level or Overseas Infectious Disease Risk Information Level 2 or higher based on the "Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Overseas Safety Website" involved, please use your judgment and take necessary safety measures.

### 5. **method of reimbursement and documents required for reimbursement**

- Refunds will be made by advance payment (submit an invoice with the necessary documents for the refund to NPO Community Link).
- As soon as it is confirmed that the documents are complete, the funds will be transferred to the corporate account.
- Documents required for reimbursement
- Documents that show that you used an aircraft (boarding pass stub, boarding pass certificate, etc.)

If a credit card was used

- Credit card statement and documents showing bank account debit (passbook statement, etc.)
- In case of bank transfer, submit the invoice and bank statement.
- In case of cash, submit original receipts.
- In the case of local currency, convert it into Japanese yen by the rules specified by Hyogo Prefecture.

Other detailed information will be provided separately through an orientation session for the selected applicants. The necessary expenses applied for will be examined from an economic rationality perspective, and the approved expenses will be reimbursed.