

2026
3rd Social Change Challenge Award

Application Guidelines (tentative translation)

April, 2026

Center for Innovation Design
Institute of Science Tokyo

1. Overview and Purpose of the Program

The “Social Change Challenge Award” is a program established by the Center for Innovation Design to support young researchers with promising technological ideas, in the hope that the creation of startups will serve as the first step toward solving social issues. It shines a spotlight on ambitious young researchers who are eager to “change society through their research findings” and helps propel them to the next stage of social implementation. As a supplementary prize, we award prize money to be used as research and development funds and business development funds to connect their technological seeds to the resolution of social issues, while also providing comprehensive support for the various steps toward commercialization.

Furthermore, our university has adopted the “Visionary Initiative (VI)” as a university-wide research framework aimed at realizing our vision of a “Better Future.” VI is a framework introduced to concretely advance the university’s mission and the vision defining the social transformation it seeks to achieve, promoting interdisciplinary research that transcends research fields and stages.

Collaboration with industry is essential to translate researchers’ pioneering spirit and research outcomes into societal implementation. Pioneering new markets through the creation of startups to adapt to this rapidly changing era differs from existing industry-academia collaboration models centered on traditional joint research; it is an initiative aimed at solving societal challenges and is expected to become even more important in the future.

We sincerely hope that this award will spark a new movement among young researchers and, in turn, contribute to the advancement of the VI.

2. Program Details

Eligibility : Young researchers who possess technological seeds¹ they hope to commercialize in the future, who are committed to exploring how their research findings can address societal challenges, and who are motivated to pursue business development alongside research and development with a view to future commercialization.² However, applications for research not aimed at commercialization or for preparations related to establishing a company (such as registration)

¹ “Technology seeds” refer to patents (including those pending or planned for filing) and software programs, among other things. Furthermore, the term “technology seeds” as used here refers to those developed or invented in the course of university duties and for which the University holds rights (including prospective rights).

² Awardees are required to participate in a program in which they advance research and development as well as business development alongside a mentor who provides ongoing support.

are not eligible.

Application Period : April 23, 2026 (Fri.) – May 29, 2026 (Fri.) 12:00 p.m.

Prize : Max 2 million yen, per researcher

Number of Awards : 10³

The prize money is treated in the same manner as expenses under the university's accounting categories and may be used for research and development and business development.

e.g.,

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Materials Cost: | Expenses for purchasing new equipment, supplies, consumables, etc. |
| Business Trip Expenses: | Travel costs for the research leader and research participants mentioned in the proposal. |
| Personnel Costs & Honorariums: | Personnel expenses and honorariums for research participants and supporters, excluding the research leader. |
| Other: | Other expenses necessary for conducting research and development (e.g., patent acquisition, investigations, etc.). |

3. Application Eligibility

Applicants must meet all the following conditions:

1. Young researchers who possess technological seeds they hope to commercialize in the future, who are committed to exploring how their research findings can solve societal challenges, and who are motivated to pursue business development alongside research and development with a view to future commercialization.
2. Applicants must be faculty members or researchers at this university at the time of application and throughout the duration of the support program following selection.⁴
3. There is no age limit, but priority will be given to young researchers (generally under 40 years of age).
4. The applicant must be the inventor of the technological seed described in the application form, or must have been involved in its invention. (While it is desirable to have obtained a patent for the relevant technological seed at the time of application, applications are also accepted if a patent is pending or planned. Applications based on research results—such as software programs—for which no patent application has been filed are also

³ The number of applications may increase or decrease depending on the status of applications and selection.

⁴ Students are not eligible for this program.

permitted.)

5. The applicant must be willing to apply for a GAP fund, such as the Science Tokyo Gap Fund Program⁵, during or after the program period.
6. The applicant must be interested in establishing a startup or commercializing the technological seed. Note that the applicant does not necessarily need to aim to become a founder or CEO.
7. Research proposals that have previously been selected for this award or for the GAP Fund or GTIE GAP Fund⁶ administered by the Center for Innovation Design or the Center for Medical Innovation cannot be selected for this award at the same time. In such cases, please be aware that you will be required to decline one of the offers. (This does not preclude applications that meet requirements (1) through (6) and utilize technology different from that of previously selected proposals.)

If you have any questions regarding the eligibility requirements, please contact the person listed in “**10. Contact Information**”.

4. Application Procedure

1. Application Documents

I. **Entry Sheet:**

Please use the designated application form and complete the questions listed therein.

II. **supplemental documents** in PDF (Optional):

If additional information is needed in the form of charts or diagrams, you may submit supplementary materials in slide format to explain the technical details. Please note that there is no specific format required for these supplementary materials.

2. Submit

Please fill out the basic information in the form below and upload the Application documents listed above in PDF format. Please note that you do not need to include your name in the file name when uploading.

For Submit forms (Center for Innovation Design):

<https://forms.cloud.microsoft/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=IbgL9w4edUa->

⁵ Science Tokyo Gap Fund Program (STGF)

<https://www.idp.ori.titech.ac.jp/be-a-successful-entrepreneur/funding-support/>

⁶ Greater Tokyo Innovation Ecosystem (GTIE)

<https://gtie.jp/>

[MyJ2PTalPa9ZW8cHCFIPvbfemRxLinLUOVc2TzVNNTI3N0RUUFc1RzFBWUdJTFdJQS4u&route=shorturl](https://myj2ptalpa9zw8chcfipvbfemrxlinluovc2tzvnnti3n0ruufc1rzfbwudjtfjdjqS4u&route=shorturl)

3. Deadline: May 29, 2026, at noon

5. Evaluation

The Evaluation consists of two stages: a document review and an interview. Candidates will be selected based on the following criteria.

[Selection Criteria]

- Originality and novelty of the technological concept
- The scale and significance of the social issue addressed by the technological concept
- The applicant's motivation to commercialize the technology, driven by a desire to "change the world through research"

6. The evaluation process

The evaluation process is scheduled to proceed according to the timeline below. Since the dates for the interview review have been set, candidates who pass the document review are asked to ensure they are available during this period.

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|---|--|
| Document Review: | June 2, 2026 |
| Notification of Document Review Results: | June 4, 2026 (tentative), Notification via email |
| Submission of Interview Review Documents: | June 8 – 10, 2026 |
| Interview Screening: | June 15 – 16, 2026 (tentative) |
| Notification of Selection Results: | June 18 – 19, 2026 (tentative), Notification via email |

7. Awards Ceremony

Selected applicants are required to attend the awards ceremony and kickoff event. The awards ceremony is scheduled for the date and time listed below. Selected applicants are asked to make sure they are available on those dates.

The Award Ceremony is scheduled for July 6, 2026, from 14:30 to 16:00 at INDEST

4F Lounge in Tamachi Campus.

Contents :

- Awards Ceremony
- Presentation on initiatives for research and development and business development following selection
- Introduction of mentors providing ongoing support, and other announcements

8. During the Program Implementation

1. Following the kickoff, from July 2026 through the end of March 2027 of the following year, mentors will provide ongoing support to help you commercialize your project, including monthly mentoring sessions (approximately one hour each).
2. Around October 2026, we plan to accept applications for the "Game Changer Award," designed to promote research and development as well as business development in preparation for the STGF application. We will contact selected applicants with details regarding the application process as soon as they are finalized.
3. Selected participants will be asked to present the results of their activities at the final report session scheduled for the end of March 2027 of the following year. We will contact you with details as soon as they are finalized.
4. In addition, as part of the Innovation Design Organization's initiatives, we may hold events such as networking sessions and training programs both on and off campus. We may ask for your participation in these events, and we appreciate your cooperation.

9. Other Considerations

1. Please note that the contents of your application may be disclosed to external reviewers. While reviewers are bound by confidentiality obligations, please exercise due caution when preparing your application.
2. We plan to begin accepting applications for the "Game Changer Award" around October to promote research and development as well as business development in preparation for the STGF application. We will contact selected applicants with details regarding the application process as soon as they are finalized.
3. Please be aware that for selected projects, the Innovation Design Organization may publish the principal investigator's name, project title, and summary on its website and other platforms.
4. These application guidelines are subject to revision without prior notice. In the event of a revision, the version number in the upper right corner of these guidelines will be updated, and a summary of the revisions will be posted on the Innovation Design

Organization's website.

10. Contact Information

For Inquiries, contact Center for Innovation Design

Responsible persons: Fujii, Totsuka

E-mail: venture@cim.isct.ac.jp

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