

- Korea-ASEAN AI Development/Startup Competition -

「AI Youth Festa 2026」 Startup Application Notice

The National IT Industry Promotion Agency (NIPA) is pleased to invite AI startups from the Republic of Korea and ASEAN Member States to participate in the AI Youth Festa 2026. This initiative aims to strengthen the AI startup ecosystem across Korea and ASEAN, foster cross-border collaboration, and support innovative AI solutions that contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We sincerely look forward to your interest and participation.

28 July 2026

President, National IT Industry Promotion Agency (NIPA)

1. Introduction

- ☐ **(Program Overview)** AI Youth Festa 2026 is supported by the Government of the Republic of Korea through the ASEAN-Korea Cooperation Fund (AKCF) and organized by the National IT Industry Promotion Agency (NIPA) of the Republic of Korea.
- ☐ **(Objectives)** Promote the growth of the AI startup ecosystem across ASEAN and the Republic of Korea, strengthen cross-border collaboration, and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- ☐ **(Target Applicants)** A total of 24 startups will be selected, with two (2) startups representing each participating country*. Eligible applicants are startups (less than seven (7) years old) or pre-startups. The representative must be a national of the

participating country, and the applicant startup must be legally incorporated and headquartered in the same participating country.**

- Each startup may apply through only one participating country. The country of application must match the startup's country of incorporation and headquarters.

* Participating countries: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam, and the Republic of Korea.

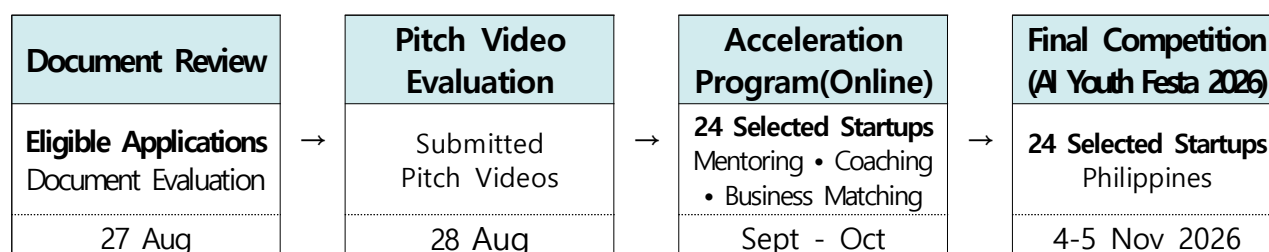
** The applicant startup must be legally incorporated and headquartered in the participating country through which it applies.

*** Startups: Startups established (sole proprietorship or corporation) on or after 29 July 2019.

**** Pre-startups: Individuals who have not been registered as business proprietors (regardless of business type) as of the date of the recruitment announcement.

- ☐ **(Application Sector)** AI-based technologies aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

☐ Program Components and Schedule



2. Application Details

- ☐ **Participation Benefits (24 Selected Startups | September - November 2026)**

- ① **(Online Acceleration Program)** The 24 selected startups will participate in a customized online acceleration program operated by PEN Ventures Korea to strengthen their global market readiness and investment capabilities.

- ▶ **(Program Orientation)** Provide an online orientation for the selected startups covering the acceleration program schedule, program components, participation procedures, operational guidelines, and a Q&A session to ensure smooth participation throughout the program.
- ▶ **(1:1 Expert Mentoring)** Provide tailored one-on-one expert mentoring based on each startup's growth stage and business needs, covering business strategy, AI technology, legal, tax, intellectual property (IP), and global market expansion.
- ▶ **(IR & Pitch Coaching)** Strengthen startups' investment readiness and global IR capabilities through pitch deck refinement, expert feedback, presentation coaching, and mock pitching sessions.
- ▶ **(Korea-ASEAN Seminar)** Organize online seminars featuring international organizations, venture capital firms, and industry experts on topics including AI for SDGs, ASEAN Market Access, global investment trends, and overseas market expansion strategies.
- ▶ **(Business Matching & Networking)** Facilitate one-to-one business matching and networking opportunities with venture capital firms, accelerators, global corporations, and key ecosystem stakeholders to expand investment opportunities and cross-border collaboration.
- ▶ **(Post-Award Support)** Provide follow-up support for winning startups by connecting them with global investors and strategic partners, facilitating follow-up business meetings, recommending overseas market expansion programs, and supporting investment opportunities.

- ② **(Travel Support)** Round-trip airfare and hotel accommodation will be provided for selected startups participating in the Final Competition.
- ③ **(Networking Opportunities)** Selected startups will have opportunities to participate in business networking sessions, 1:1 investor meetings, and networking events with venture capital firms, accelerators, corporate partners, and ecosystem stakeholders.
- ④ **(Prize Awards)** Prizes will be awarded to the top three (3) startups selected as the winners of the Final Competition.
 - 1st Place USD 20,000 (approx. KRW 29 million)
 - 2nd Place USD 10,000 (approx. KRW 14 million)
 - 3rd Place USD 5,000 (approx. KRW 7 million)

3. Ineligibility and Disqualification

☐ Applicants may be disqualified if:

- The applicant submits false, misleading, or fraudulent information.
- The application infringes upon the intellectual property rights of a third party.
- The applicant is subject to participation restrictions imposed by NIPA or other relevant authorities.
- The applicant is unable to participate in the Final Competition in the Philippines due to visa issues or other travel restrictions.

4. Evaluation Process and Criteria

☐ Evaluation Process

- **Selection Process:** A two-stage evaluation process consisting of a Document Review and a Pitch Video Evaluation will be conducted.
 - Applicants shall submit a pre-recorded pitch video (5 - 10 minutes) together with their application.
 - The Pitch Video Evaluation will be conducted by country based on the submitted pitch videos. The top two (2) startups from each participating country will be selected based on their ranking within that country, rather than the overall ranking across all applicants.

Document Review
Eligible applicants (AI Technology, Business Model, SDGs)
27 Aug



Pitch Video Evaluation (5–10 min Pre-recorded Pitch Video)
24 Selected Startups (2 Startups per Participating Country)
28 Aug

- **Evaluation Committee:** The evaluation committee will consist of experts from venture capital firms (VCs), accelerators (ACs), corporations, academia, and relevant public organizations with extensive experience in AI technologies, startup investment, and global market expansion.
- ※ Applicants who successfully pass the Document Review will proceed to the Pitch Video Evaluation, which will be conducted based on the pre-recorded pitch video (5 - 10 minutes) submitted during the application process.
- ※ Final selection will be determined based on the combined scores from the Document Review and the Pitch Video Evaluation, in accordance with the program's evaluation criteria.
- ※ **A total of 24 startups (two startups from each participating country)** will be selected for the Final Competition.
- ※ NIPA reserves the right to cancel a startup's selection if any eligibility requirements are found to be unmet after the final selection or if false information is discovered during the evaluation process.
- ※ Selected startups must be able to participate in the Final Competition in the Philippines. If a selected startup is unable to participate due to visa issues or other unavoidable travel restrictions, the organizer reserves the right to cancel its selection and select an alternate applicant.

□ **Evaluation Criteria**

- In the event of a tie, the ranking will be determined by the higher score in the following order: ① AI Technology & Innovation → ② Business Viability & Commercial Potential → ③ ASEAN Market Readiness & Global Scalability → ④ SDG Contribution & Social Impact → ⑤ Team Capability & Execution.
- ※ If a tie still remains after applying the above criteria, the final ranking will be determined based on the Evaluation Committee's comprehensive assessment.

○ Document Review

Evaluation Criteria	Key Evaluation Points	Weight
AI Technology & Innovation	Novelty of AI technology, technical differentiation, innovation, and ability to solve real-world problems	30
Business Viability & Commercial Potential	Business model, product-market fit, revenue potential, and long-term sustainability	20
SDG Contribution & Social Impact	Alignment with the UN SDGs and potential social and environmental impact	20
ASEAN Market Readiness & Global Scalability	Market readiness, localization strategy, ASEAN market potential, and global scalability	20
Team & Execution Capability	Founding team expertise, execution capability, and growth potential	10
Total		100

○ Pitch Video Evaluation

Evaluation Criteria	Key Evaluation Points	Weight
AI Technology & Innovation	Technical differentiation, innovation, and the clarity of the AI solution presented in the pitch video	30
Business Viability & Commercial Potential	Business model, commercialization strategy, market validation, and growth potential	20
SDG Contribution & Social Impact	Contribution to the UN SDGs and potential impact on addressing ASEAN regional challenges	20
ASEAN Market Readiness & Global Scalability	Market entry strategy, localization plan, and scalability across ASEAN and global markets	20
Team Capability & Execution	Team capability, execution plan, clarity and completeness of the pitch video, and commitment to growth	10
Total		100

5. Application and Schedule

☐ How to Apply

- (Program Announcement) Please refer to the www.aiyouthfesta2026.com for the application guidelines, required forms, and program information.

- Application Period : **28 July 2026 (Mon) - 21 August 2026 (Fri), 16:00 (PHT)**

※ Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit their applications at least 2 - 3 days before the deadline to avoid possible delays caused by network congestion. Only

applications received before the deadline will be accepted.

- **(Application Procedure)** Download the application form and related documents from the official program website, complete all required forms, and submit the application package by email to the official Korea-ASEAN Program email address.

- **(Official Program Website)** www.aiyouthfesta2026.com

(① Visit the official program website → ② Download the application form and related documents → ③ Complete the application form → ④ Prepare all required documents, including the application form, pre-recorded pitch video (5 - 10 minutes), and other supporting documents. → ⑤ Attach all required documents to an email(aiyouthfesta.info@gmail.com) → ⑥ Submit the application package to the official program email before the application deadline)

※ Please refer to the official program website for detailed application guidelines.

※ The pre-recorded pitch video must be between 5 and 10 minutes in length and submitted together with the application package.

※ The organizer may request additional supporting documents or clarifications during the evaluation process, if necessary.

※ By submitting an application, applicants are deemed to have fully understood and accepted all information provided in this announcement and on the official program website.

☐ **Important Dates**

※ The following schedule is subject to change depending on program operations and unforeseen circumstances.

- Application Period: 28 July 2026 (Mon) - 21 August 2026 (Fri), 16:00 (PHIT)
- Document Review: 27 August 2026
- Pitch Video Evaluation: 28 August 2026
- Final Announcement: 1 September 2026
- Online Acceleration Program: September - October 2026
- Final Competition & Demo Day: 4 - 5 November 2026 (Philippines)

6. Notice

- ☐ Applicants are responsible for carefully reviewing this Application Notice, the official program website, and any additional announcements issued by the Program Secretariat before submitting their applications.
- ☐ Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all required documents, including the pitch video, are submitted by the application deadline. Incomplete applications or applications submitted after the deadline may not be considered for evaluation.
- ☐ The submitted pitch video must be between 5 and 10 minutes in length. Videos exceeding 10 minutes may be excluded from the Pitch Video Evaluation.
- ☐ If any false information, forged documents, or other grounds for disqualification are identified during the evaluation process or after the final selection, NIPA reserves the right to cancel the applicant's selection or participation.
- ☐ All selected startups are expected to participate in the program in good faith and actively engage in all scheduled activities, including the **Online Acceleration Program** and the **Final Competition & Demo Day**.
- ☐ Selected startups shall cooperate with requests from NIPA and the Program Secretariat related to program monitoring, performance evaluation, surveys, interviews, and other activities necessary for program management during and after the program.
- ☐ Program details, schedules, and operational procedures are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances, including natural disasters, public health emergencies, government policies, or other force majeure events. Any changes will be announced on the official program website.

7. Related Regulations and Contact Information

☐ **Applicable Regulations**

- This program shall be implemented in accordance with the following regulations and guidelines:
 - ASEAN-Korea Cooperation Fund (AKCF) Operational Guidelines
 - Relevant regulations, guidelines, and operational policies of the National IT Industry Promotion Agency (NIPA)
 - Applicable laws and regulations of the Republic of Korea governing the management of public funds and government-supported programs

☐ **Contact Information**

- Program Inquiries
 - * Office Hours: 09:00 - 18:00 (KST), Monday - Friday
 - Email: aiyouthfesta.info@gmail.com
 - Tel: +82-2-6956-2043