2026 JICA Co-Creation × Innovation Program "QUEST"
Co-Creation Idea Competition Guidelines

March 2026

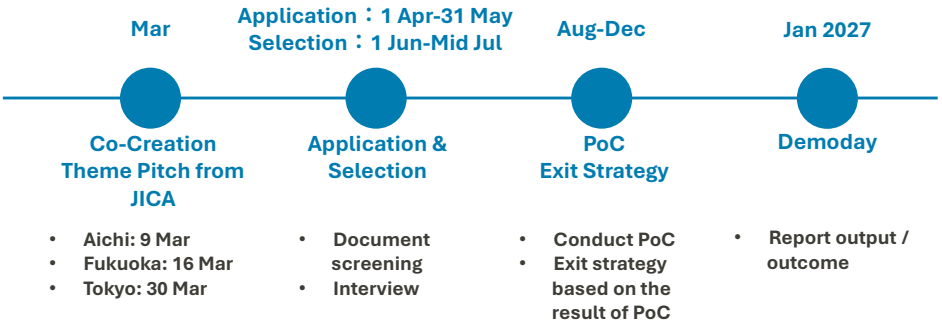
QUEST Program Office: quest-info@tohmatsu.co.jp

1. Background of the Program

In a world where many challenges lack clear solutions and crises intersect and compound, the need for collaboration among public institutions, business, academia, and civil society organizations to address social issues is growing. Achieving collective impact through unprecedented, innovative initiatives and the participation and collaboration of diverse players is essential. To advance these aims, we are implementing the "QUEST" Co-creation × Innovation Program (hereinafter, "the Program").

2. Program Content and Schedule

In collaboration with partners endorsing the co-creation themes set by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), JICA and its contractor, the Deloitte Tohmatsu Group, will support the formulation of co-creation project plans.
At the launch event in March 2026, JICA will present the co-creation themes.
Participants are invited to submit co-creation ideas addressing the themes. Following review, selected proof-of-concept projects (PoCs) will receive support from JICA and the Deloitte Tohmatsu Group for planning and operations, as well as for exit strategy development (e.g., deployment into JICA programs and fundraising)



Launch Event Co-creation Theme Pitch from JICA	Aichi	March 9, 2026
	Fukuoka	March 16, 2026
	Tokyo	March 30, 2026
Application & Selection		Wednesday, April 1–Sunday, May 31, 2026 Note: "Co-creative Dialogue" is available until Friday, May 15. (See "9. Co-creative Dialogue.")
Notification of First Screening Results (Documents[1])		Around Saturday, June 20, 2026
Second Screening[2] (In-person or Online Interviews)		Around Monday, June 29–Friday, July 3, 2026
Selection Notification		Around Friday, July 10, 2026
PoC Plan Formulation and Execution of Contracts and Related Agreements		Around August 2026
PoC Execution and Exit Strategy Planning (Hypothesis Validation through Proof-of-Concept Experiments)		August ~ December 2026
Demo day		January 2027

3. Eligibility Criteria

Eligible applicants are legal entities located in and out of Japan that meet all of the following conditions.

- The applicant must be an entity[3] with one of the following legal forms:
  - Private company (large enterprises, SMEs, startups)
  - Academia (universities, technical colleges, research institutes)
  - Civil society organization (NGOs, NPOs, etc.)
  - Public institution (government agencies in developing countries, local governments)

- The applicant must aim to address social issues through co-creation with JICA

[1] For the first screening, the application form is evaluated.

[2] For the second screening, interviews are planned with approximately 1–2 organizations per theme.

[3] Having legal personality means having the legal capacity to be the subject of rights and obligations in the same way as a natural person.

and/or other companies/organizations.

- The applicant must be able to participate in the program as a legal entity. Proposals submitted by organizations without legal personality or by individuals will not be accepted, whether as the proposing entity or a co-proposing entity.
- After selection, the applicant must have the commitment, capability, and organizational structure to complete the selected co-creation project by Demo Day.

4. Application Form

- Please submit your proposal through the application form during the period below.
  JICA Co-creation & Innovation Program "QUEST" 2026 – Application Form
- Submission period: Wednesday, April 1, 2026 – Sunday, May 31, 2026.

5. Expected number of selections

Approximately 15 projects. However, the final number of selected projects may change depending on the screening results.

6. PoC scope and deliverables for selected co-creation projects

The selected corporation (hereinafter, the "Selected Organization") shall prepare a PoC activity plan and budget plan using forms specified by JICA and enter into an outsourcing services agreement with the Deloitte Tohmatsu Group. Based on the agreed PoC activity plan, the Selected Organization will implement the selected co-creation project jointly with JICA and conduct activities and analyses aimed at achieving the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set in the PoC activity plan. As deliverables, the Selected Organization must prepare and submit a PoC completion report and present the results at Demo Day.

7. Support Provided:

This program aims to foster co-creation and innovation by diverse players, and selected organizations are expected to autonomously implement PoCs in collaboration with JICA. JICA and/or its contractor, the Deloitte Tohmatsu Group, will provide the following support, which may vary depending on the PoC:

- Professional advice and leveraging of relationships to refine the selected co-creation project proposal
- Professional advice on PoC planning and operations, plus coverage of necessary expenses (up to 3 million JPY per project, excluding tax)
- Professional advice on on-site travel planning and accompaniment as needed.
- Professional advice on exit strategies, including deployment into JICA schemes and

fundraising

The Selected Organization is required to enter into an outsourcing services agreement with the Deloitte Tohmatsu Group. Through regular co-creative discussions with JICA and Deloitte Tohmatsu Group personnel, the Selected Organization will develop and implement the PoC plan. The categories of expenses that may be included in the outsourcing services agreement are expected to be as follows:

- Travel and transportation costs[4] (domestic and international airfare)
- Personnel costs for the design and development of systems/services
- Per diem and lodging
- Domestic transportation within Japan
- Vehicle-related costs[5]
- Special hired labor costs[6]
- Equipment costs[7] (limited to equipment rental/hire fees and equipment shipping costs)
- Miscellaneous expenses (visa fees, vaccination costs, overseas travel insurance, purchase of consumables, postage and handling/shipping costs, and other expenses necessary for the PoC that are not appropriately categorized under other items)
- Indirect costs

Per diem and lodging will be paid at fixed rates according to the number of days[8] as follows:

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[4] As a general rule, only economy class may be used. If the trip is combined with your company's own business, the airfare will be split equally (50/50) in accordance with the scope of chargeable airfare specified in JICA's "Guidelines for Accounting Treatment in Consultant and Other Contracts" (October 2023, with October 2024 addendum), Part I, III. Direct Costs, 1. Travel Expenses (Airfare), (1).

[5] Rental car fees, fuel costs, etc.

[6] Wages for local technicians, etc. (including interpreters). Payment of Special Hired Labor Costs to personnel belonging to the proposing organization or the joint proposing organization is not permitted.

[7] Costs for purchasing equipment, including your own company's products, are not eligible for payment. Fees for borrowing equipment from external sources (rental fees) and equipment consumption costs (wear-and-tear fees) are eligible for reimbursement.

[8] The number of lodging nights is calculated by subtracting two days from the total number of days from the departure date to the return date, on the premise of in-flight overnights. For overseas business trips, the start date is the calendar day that includes the departure time of the boarded international flight, and the end date is the calendar day that includes the arrival time of the boarded international flight. When travel costs are shared with other work, the lodging nights are the total days from departure to return minus two days and minus the number of days engaged in the other work. Per diem is the number of lodging nights plus one day. However, for travel to the seven countries of China, South Korea, Mongolia, the Philippines, Brunei, Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands, since no overnight flights operate, calculate the number of nights assuming no in-flight overnight.

- For overseas travel[9]: per diem JPY 3,800 per day; lodging JPY 11,600 per night.
- For domestic travel[10]: per diem JPY 1,100 per day; lodging JPY 10,300 per night.

Selection alone does not constitute approval or a commitment to execute the outsourcing agreement. After selection, the PoC activity plan and budet must be submittedin the format specified by JICA, mutually agreed upon, and the contract executed. Furthermore, not all proposed budget items will necessarily be approved; following selection, only those items agreed upon by JICA through the accompanying support process will be accepted.

8. Co-Creation Themes

   Please select from the co-creation themes set forth by JICA in the attached document that you can endorse, and submit your proposal. If none are suitable, please select "Other" and submit your proposal.

9. Co-creative Dialogue

   Through Friday, May 15, 2026, using the method designated by JICA, the PoC proposal will be refined through co-creative dialogue with the theme owner(JICA staff), including Q&A, technology briefings, and idea refinement.

To ensure fairness and transparency, we cannot respond to questions seeking evaluation of co-creation business ideas under consideration. In addition, no dialogue will take place on or after Saturday, May 16, 2026.

10. Evaluation Criteria

    Evaluation will be conducted based on the following criteria:

- Development Impact
  - Is the target challenge clearly defined?
  - To what extent would the co-creation project proposal contribute to addressing that development challenge?
  - Are the approaches and methods effective for addressing the challenge?
  - Does the idea appropriately benefit vulnerable groups, including women?

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[9] The determination of overseas versus domestic travel is based on the traveler's country of residence. If a person residing outside Japan travels to Japan, overseas travel expense rates apply.

[10] Domestic travel rules apply when the itinerary exceeds 100 km in a single day; if it is 100 km or less, only transportation costs are reimbursed.

- Innovativeness[11]
  - How innovative is the co-creation project proposal?
  - Does it have the potential to create new value that has not been realized to date?
- Co-creativity
  - How significant are the synergies created through co-creation between JICA and the selected organization?
  - Note: Additional points may be awarded for joint proposals by two or more organizations if the combination and content are expected to generate greater synergies.
- Post-PoC Plan
  - Are the exit strategy and the pathway to achieve it clearly defined after the PoC?
  - Are the planned PoC activities and methods effective with the exit strategy in mind?
- Execution Capability
  - What level of resources can be allocated to this program?
  - What relevant quantitative and qualitative track record does the applicant have?

11. Important Notes

＜Proposals and Evaluation＞

- To encourage co-creation, joint proposals by multiple organizations are welcome. For joint proposals by two or more organizations, please designate a primary contact as the representative and clearly list the other co-proposing organizations in the proposal form. In joint proposals, the co-proposing entities will bear joint and several liability.
- Multiple proposals from a single company or organization are permitted.
- Organizations previously selected under the same program may not submit proposals with content identical to their previous selected proposals. Proposals will be accepted if they are recognized as having different business content.
- Participation in events and proposal submission are free of charge. Any costs incurred in preparing the proposal must be borne by the proposing organization.
- Evaluation will be conducted by JICA and external experts designated by JICA for this program. Proposal materials will be shared with the external experts for evaluation purposes.
- Evaluation results will be communicated to all proposing organizations through their designated representative. Submitted proposal forms and other related materials will not

[11] Something that, by applying the relevant technology or service, is expected to deliver results that far surpass the development effects, impact, and sustainability achieved by conventional methods.

be returned.

- The rights to the proposed co-creation project plan belong to the proposing organization(s), including co-proposing organizations. JICA assumes no responsibility regarding intellectual property rights. Proposing organizations are responsible for taking appropriate measures (e.g., not infringing third-party IP rights, not violating trade secrets protected under the Unfair Competition Prevention Act, and protecting their own ideas). JICA and the Deloitte Tohmatsu Group will bear no liability, including damages, for any losses arising from failure to comply with these requirements.
- If any activities to be conducted by personnel—whether from the proposing organization, co-proposing organizations, or external contractors—include medical procedures, clinical trials, or similar actions, you must, prior to commencement, consult with and obtain the counterpart country's responsible authority's agreement on liability/waiver provisions and related matters [1]. If you are considering a proposal that includes medical procedures or clinical trials, please contact the Secretariat by email before submitting your proposal.

＜PoC Deliverables＞

- The intellectual property rights to deliverables, including the verification results created by the Selected Organization in connection with the PoC, will belong to the Selected Organization. However, regardless of such ownership, JICA may use the deliverables, including the verification results, free of charge even after the PoC.

＜Publicity＞

- For publicity and record-keeping purposes, the program may photograph and/or record implementation activities (e.g., program briefings and outreach initiatives) and publish them on the program website and other channels. Your cooperation with such publicity activities is requested.
- The debriefing sessions and report contents are intended to be publicly disclosed. However, if JICA agrees that certain information should not be disclosed in order to facilitate subsequent development of PoC outcomes, disclosure will be limited to a level that does not cause issues.

＜Reasonable Accommodation＞

- If you plan to attend the event with your child(ren), please consult the Program Secretariat.
- If you require other reasonable accommodations, please contact the Secretariat at least two weeks prior to the event for event-related matters, and at any time for other matters.
- After your request is submitted, we will review and coordinate possible accommodations; however, please understand that we may not be able to meet all requests.

＜Personal Information＞

- Purpose of use: Personal information collected via the proposal form will be used to ensure the smooth implementation of this program and to serve as a reference for JICA's operations.
- Specifically, it may be used to distribute and send announcements, e-newsletters, and direct mail regarding: events and activities under this program; information on private-sector partnership initiatives related to JICA; and business support activities for private companies conducted by other organizations.
- Depending on the content, collected personal information may be shared with the relevant departments within JICA.
- Proposal content collected through the proposal form will be shared with JICA (the organizer) and the Deloitte Tohmatsu Group (the program contractor).

＜Evaluation and Ineligibility Criteria＞

- If JICA determines that the proposing organization or the co-creation proposal falls under any of the following, it will be deemed ineligible for screening; if discovered after selection, the selection will be revoked:
  - Violates, or is likely to violate, laws and regulations or public order and morals
  - Has had, or currently has, relationships with organized crime groups or other anti-social forces
  - Contains deficiencies or incompleteness in the proposal content
  - Includes false information in the proposal or otherwise makes false declarations

  Is subject to measures excluding it from JICA's competitive bidding
- Please note that even after a notice of selection, JICA may require suspension or withdrawal if it determines that continued implementation is inappropriate or impossible due to violations of the application guidelines or the agreements to be executed after selection, or due to force majeure, such as deterioration in public security.

＜Disclaimer

- In this program, JICA and the Deloitte Tohmatsu Group will strive, to the extent practicable, to provide reliable information and useful advice; however, the Selected Organization is solely responsible for verifying the accuracy, completeness, fitness for purpose, and timeliness of the information and the usefulness of any advice, as well as for deciding whether to adopt such advice.
- JICA and the Deloitte Tohmatsu Group accept no liability for any direct or indirect damages incurred by the Selected Organization in the course from proposal submission through implementation under this program.

Annex: Co-Creation Themes

12. Contact Information

    QUEST Program Secretariat: quest-info@tohmatsu.co.jp

    Office hours: 9:30–18:30, weekdays only; support available in Japanese and English.

Annex: List of Co-Creation Themes

Theme	Co-creation Theme	Target Country/Region
Digital Health	Development of a model for new industry creation in Bhutan leveraging digital health platform	Bhutan
	Establishing a local production and supply system for medical and assistive devices using 3D printing	Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
	Utilizing AI and Smart Solutions for NCDs Surveillance and Risk Identification in Laos	Lao PDR (Southeast Asia and the Pacific)
	Improving Access to Continuum of Maternal and Child Care Services in Pakistan through Digital Transformation	Pakistan
	Improving access to continuous care services for patients at risk of chronic kidney disease (CKD) in El Salvador through digital transformation (DX)	Central America, El Salvador.
Private Sector	Waste to Fine Chemicals: The Black Soldier Fly Bio-Engine	Malaysia
	Mina Connect Open Data & AI-Driven Labour Intelligence for Gabon	Gabon
	Sustainable Use of Fishery Resources towards the promotion of Blue-Economy	Papua New Guinea (PNG)
	Linking frontier technologies from academia with the business challenges that matter	India
	Strengthening Value Chain between Central Asia and Japan Aiming to Promote the Distribution of Developed and improved Products	Kyrgyzstan; Central Asia and the Caucasus (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Georgia)
Environmental Management	City of Lusaka, Zambia: Open call for ideas on low-cost waste recycling and valorization, and on simple fecal sludge treatment and utilization technologies	City of Lusaka, Zambia
	Leveraging technologies and know-how to reduce environmental impacts associated with mine development	Copperbelt Province, Zambia

	Building a fun waste sorting system through game-like approach	Havana Province, Cuba
	No littering campaign	Tunisia
	Sanitary Toilets for Healthier People and Vibrant Cities	City of Lilongwe, Malawi
Urban Development	Advancing Sustainable Smart Cities in Developing Countries Through Satellite Data Utilization	All developing countries (particularly in Southeast and South Asia)
Gender	Promoting Women's Health in Pakistan through Japan–Pakistan Gender-Smart Business Co-creation	Punjab Province, Pakistan
Health	Patient- and family-friendly hospital space	India
Water Resources Development	Toward solving common issues in domestic and international water supply	Worldwide
Peacebuilding	Utilizing Cultural Heritage /Cultural Resources in Peacebuilding Cooperation	Sudan
Refugees	Digital Solutions for Asia's Forgotten Refugee Crisis	Refugee- and displaced-person–hosting areas in Thailand and Bangladesh
Tourism	Mongolian Dinosaur Revival —Transforming the Dormant Resources of the South Gobi into Drivers of Tourism and Regional Economic Growth	Mongolia (targeting Umnugovi Province)
Education	Learning Design Lab for Foundational Math & Science	Bangladesh
Environmental Conservation	Demonstrating a Community-Driven Model for Sustainable Natural Resource Management and Upgrading Local Value Chains	Republic of Madagascar
Sports	Measuring the Social Impact of Sport and Development	Worldwide