Request For Proposal

KIC DC's Tech Frontier Program

March 5, 2026

Released by KIC Washington, D.C.

Section 1. Letter of Invitation

March 5, 2026

Dear Sirs/Madams,

1.1. Korea Innovation Center Washington, D.C. ("KIC DC") is inviting proposals from innovation, entrepreneurship, and technology commercialization institutions ("Institution") with demonstrated knowledge and expertise in the tech startup industry in the United States.

1.2. KIC DC is a government agency of South Korea, operating under the Ministry of Science and ICT, dedicated to facilitating global market access and investment through its branches worldwide. Among its initiatives, KIC DC manages Tech Frontier Program ("Program") under TeX-Corps, a lean startup–based technology commercialization and entrepreneurship education program in Korea. Tech Frontier program supports selected young Korean entrepreneurs from universities and research labs in Korea to explore U.S. market using lean startup methodology.

1.3. The objective of this RFP is to seek competitive proposals and engage experienced professionals capable of effectively guiding a group of Korean Startups through the entire Program cycle. Further details regarding **the Scope of Services are available in Section 5 of this document.**

1.4. The RFP includes the following documents:

Section 1 – Letter of Invitation
Section 2 – Information to Institution
Section 3 – Institution Qualification
Section 4 – Program Plan
Section 5 – Scope of Services
Section 6 – Selection Criteria

1.5. Upon receiving this RFP, **please notify us of your intention to submit a proposal no later than March 27, 2026** by sending an email to the point of contact at KIC DC provided below. KIC DC will only consider proposals from accelerators that confirm their intent to respond via email.

ATTN: Sanghyun Park, Program Manager
Email: spark@kicdc.org
Phone: (202) 655 8877

Yours sincerely,

Chang Hee Kim
President
KIC Washington, D.C.

Section 2. Information for the Institution

2.1. General Information

2.1.1. KIC DC may select one or multiple Institutions with comprehensive expertise in Lean Startup Business Model for the tech startup, based on the competence and evaluation procedures described in this RFP. Institutions are invited to submit a proposal.

2.1.2 Please note that:
(i) Costs for preparing the proposal and negotiating the contract are not reimbursable.
(ii) KIC DC reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals, waives any anomalies in submitted proposals, negotiate with any or all Institutions, and modify or cancel the RFP.
(iii) Any reports, proposals and studies prepared by Institutions specifically for the Program shall become the property of KIC DC.
(iv) Institutions shall indemnify KIC DC for any losses and expenses incurred as a result of Institutions' negligent or willful acts or omissions, and KIC DC will not indemnify or agree to limit the liability of the Consultant for Institutions' negligent or willful acts or omissions in connection with this engagement.

2.2. The Program Overview

2.2.1. **The Objective:**
The primary objective of the Program is to instruct startups in the Lean Startup Methodology and Customer Discovery techniques, as well as to facilitate the execution of customer discovery interviews during the Program. Through these activities, startups are expected to validate the needs for their product/service in the U.S. market and improve their business model, pivoting if necessary. The Program aims to assist young entrepreneurs in launching their startups successfully while reducing the risk of failure.

2.2.2. **Duration of Services:** May 20, 2026 – August 31, 2026

2.2.3. For detailed services, please read **Section 5. Scope of Services**.

2.2.4. **Selection Process:** The following procedure outlines the selection process for the Institution. Please note that this process is subject to potential changes deemed necessary by KIC DC.

§ The First Evaluation is based on the submitted proposals. Institutions that have submitted proposals but are not selected to proceed to the Second Evaluation will be notified accordingly.

§ The Second Evaluation will take place if further assessment is considered necessary. This phase involves interviews, and presentations might be requested.

§   Once the finalists are determined, an announcement will be made to all Institutions that participated in the evaluation process.

§   Details of the final agreement will be negotiated between the finalists and KIC DC.

2.2.5. **Selection Schedule:** The proposal submission and selection will follow the schedule below. Please note that KIC DC reserves the right to modify this schedule and procedure if required.

Items	Date
RFP Release	March 5, 2026
Proposal Due	March 27, 2026
Selection Announcement	March 31, 2026
Negotiation and Signing	April 1 – 10, 2026

*Dates are subject to change

2.3. Response Submission and Deadline:

Please adhere to the following file naming convention:
AcceleratorName_RFP_Firstinitial_Lastname.doc
For example: KIC_RFP_J_Doe.doc

2.4. Submission Requirements:

2.4.1. The proposal must include the following contents:
  (i)   Program Curriculum, description and operation plan including the summary of program syllabus
  (ii)   Expertise of the Institution
  (iii)   Program Summary including the purpose, focus, and management structure
  (iv)   Budget

2.4.2. **Responses to this RFP must be submitted no later than 17:00 Eastern Time, on Friday, March 27, 2026.** Response submissions will only be accepted as email attachments. All responses must be sent to spark@kicdc.org with "[KIC] Proposal: Institution name" in the subject line. A confirmation email of receipt from KIC will be sent to the designated point of contact.

Disclaimer:
KIC will not publicly disclose proprietary information obtained as a result of this RFP.

Section 3. Institution Qualification

The Institution submitting a proposal for this program must meet the following qualifications:

3.1. Specialization in Lean Business Model education and mentorship, particularly focused on Customer Discovery activities. This specialization should optimize tech commercialization opportunities for international startups in the U.S. territories.

3.2. Demonstrated experience and a track record in supporting startups entering and scaling in the U.S. market, with a preference for Institutions that possess specialized expertise and strong industry ecosystems in specific sectors such as ICT, biotechnology, healthcare, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, or environmental technologies etc. The Institution's mentorship and guidance are expected to support a range of potential outcomes, such as:

- Direct commercialization of startup projects
- Establishment of new startup businesses
- Formation of Licensing agreements
- Development of business plans suitable for review by third-party investors

3.3. Demonstrated experience in supporting faculty, students, and other academic personnel in entrepreneurial engagement and the commercialization of scientific and technological innovations. Preference will be given to Institutions that can provide, facilitate access to, or coordinate resources—such as entrepreneurial mentoring, educational programs, workspace, seed funding, or other relevant assets—to support the transition of research-based technologies into the marketplace.

3.4. Proven network and proficiency in organizing teaching teams to accommodate international startups. This network should include Program Directors, instructors and mentors well-versed and experienced in Lean Startup Methodology, industry experts, administrative staff, and other human resources required to assist startups in conducting Customer Discovery activities and effectively pivoting their business models within a learning environment.

3.5. Demonstrated understanding of Korean startups' strengths, weaknesses, and business practices, with the ability to assess, develop, and implement effective business strategies to support their entry into the U.S. market.

Section 4. Program Plan

4.1. Program Period:
- Pre-Sessions(Online) : Last week of May 2026
- Office Hours(Online / In-Person) : June (Online) and July (In-Person or Hybrid)
- Lessons Learned / Closing Ceremony : July 6 – July 25, 2026 (In-Person)
  *Dates are subject to change

4.2. Participants: 190 teams (Startups) of a maximum 2 persons each. One team may consist of an Entrepreneurial Leader, Entrepreneurial Member(s), Principal Investigator, or Project Manager.

4.3. Cohorts: 190 teams will be divided into multiple cohorts. Each cohort may consist of 30 to 35 teams, ensuring effective facilitation and personalized attention. Institutions may be assigned with one or multiple cohorts, hence Institution must clearly state its capacity in its proposal.

4.4. Format of Delivery: The program consists of 2 online pre-sessions prior to 3 Lessons Learned sessions which will be conducted over the course of 3 weeks while teams visit the United States, complemented by four scheduled Office Hours sessions which spread out in June/July timeline.

- Pre-Sessions (Online): Each cohort will engage in two online pre-sessions prior to the commencement of the three-week, in person program. Pre-Sessions serve as introduction to the Lean Startup Methodology and the in-person program in July. KIC will provide the list of items needs to be covered in pre-sessions.

- Lessons Learned Sessions: Each cohort will have three (3) sessions, including an opening session and a closing session. **Presentation and feedback time for each team will be set at a minimum of 30 minutes per Lessons Learned session. Agreed-upon time will be strictly adhered to.**

- Office Hours: All teams will be assigned mentors and will hold Office Hours at least once a week. **Each team will be allocated four (4) 30-minute online Office Hours with an assigned mentor. First two (2) sessions are to be held prior to the teams' arrival to the States, and the other two (2) to be held over the course of 3 weeks of their visit.** Office Hours prior to teams' arrival to the States will be held online, and after the arrival the team and the mentor are to independently decide the format that meets their needs.

- Closing Ceremony: Startups will participate in the closing ceremony on the same day as the third lessons learned session, which will include teams' final presentations, recognition of the best teams, and distribution of program certificates.

4.5. Program KPIs (Key Performance Indicators)

#	Objectives	Description
1	Number of Graduating teams	All Startups are expected to complete the program, unless circumstances prevent their participation and are approved by KIC.

2	Number of Customer Discovery interviews	Each startup with a B2C business model is expected to conduct 50 interviews, while startups with B2B or B2G business models should conduct 30 interviews over the duration of 3 weeks, leading up to the closing ceremony.
3	Satisfaction	Overall Program satisfaction as assessed by participating teams should surpass 4.4 out of 5.0, equivalent to 88 out of 100.

Section 5. Scope of Services

5.1. Selected Institution, after submitting the program curriculum, program description and operation plan including program syllabus, may revise the abovementioned content with consultation with KIC DC, if needed.

5.2. The selected Institution is required to submit the list and bios of all the instructors and mentors prior to the program. This may be included in the proposal or submitted separately after the selection.

5.3. Office Hours with instructors/mentors must be incorporated into the program. Four (4) 30-minute online Office Hours are required for each team with an assigned mentor. **Following each Office Hours session, mentors must provide a memo summarizing the discussion and any action points within three days of the Office Hours session.**

5.4. A low ratio of instructors per team for Lessons Learned sessions is preferred. Mentors must be present during the Lessons Learned sessions and provide their impressions and feedback as required.

5.5. Program materials, including lecture materials, must be submitted before the program begins. The selected Institution is responsible for preparing the program brochure.

5.6. Upon the completion of each week of the Lessons Learned sessions, **weekly reports written by instructors and mentors should be submitted within three days of the Lessons Learned sessions.** For example, if the Lessons Learned session is on Monday, the weekly report must be submitted by midnight on Wednesday.

5.7. **The Weekly report by the instructors must be accompanied by the 10-point scale score for each team**. Each score after lessons learned session will be added up at the end of the program, and the total score will be used to rank the teams. The rubric will be provided by KIC DC.

5.8. The selected Institution must conduct surveys in the beginning and upon the completion of the program and include the result and the progress in its final report stated on 5.9. In order to ensure the cohesiveness of the program, the Institutions are to use the survey questions provided by KIC DC.

5.9. Upon completing the entire program, **a comprehensive final report is required to be submitted to KIC DC no later than August 31, 2026**.

Section 6. Selection Criteria

The winning proposal will be selected at the discretion of the KIC DC. KIC DC may consider the following factors in making its selection, with each category having a different level of importance:

6.1. Capabilities of the Institution (30%)
- Demonstrated experience in guiding participating international teams or companies to pursue tech commercialization in the U.S., coupled with sufficient and appropriate leadership, capability, and a well-defined plan to manage the entire program.

- Established a robust network of business, industry, governmental, and community connections and can effectively leverage these networks to benefit the people and program served by the Accelerator.

- Possesses additional characteristics and capabilities that differentiate the Institution's service in tech commercialization and Lean Startup Methodology training from others in the field.

6.2. Commitment (25%)
- Demonstrate clearly defined goals and a proven track record of assisting in transitioning academic projects into the marketplace.
- Exhibit a willingness to apply distinctive and competitive methodologies to help startup teams to achieve their goals in the Program as quickly as possible, considering the time constraints.
- Committed to directly assisting startups in conducting their Customer Discovery activities, connecting them with industry-specific experts, providing well-organized mentorship, and helping them overcome any challenges they may face (e.g., language barrier, networking, U.S. business etiquette, cultural differences, etc.).

6.3. Competitive Fee Structure (25%)
- Ability to propose competitive and reasonable fee while ensuring that the majority of the Institution's proposed budget is allocated towards services for and direct support to teams.

6.4. Experienced Professional Staff (20%)
- Ability to allocate a sufficient number of professionals with relevant expertise and experience to provide services for the participating startups and KIC DC, taking into account the nature of the Program and the needs of the startups.

- Ratio of mentor/instructor per startups for the Program.

- Support for teams, including administrative employees, interns, and any other necessary staff.