

# THE YEAR IN REVIEW

2024 - 2025



# Reflections on the year

Japanese startups entered 2024 propelled by Japan’s unprecedented five-year plan announced in 2022, aimed at fueling the growth of the Japanese innovation ecosystem.

In 2024 alone, over 2,800 startups in Japan received funding, raising over 779 billion Japanese yen (approximately 5 billion USD). Further, the number of startups in Japan increased remarkably from 16,000 in 2021 to 24,000 in 2024. However, economic slowdown posed new challenges for startups around the world, including those in Japan.

CIC Japan Desk joined the community of tenacious Japanese innovators to push forward despite the tough times.

Our team expanded our scope to Philadelphia, providing five cell and gene therapy startups the opportunity to tap into Philadelphia’s thriving regenerative medicine ecosystem. Local biotech founders, government officials, clinicians, and others warmly welcomed us to the city, opening a new global landing spot for our ambitious startups.

CIC Japan Desk also launched programming in New York, organizing a student program to immerse 20 aspiring biomedical entrepreneurs in the innovation ecosystems of Boston and New York City. We were energized by these students, who represent Japan’s next generation of globally minded startup founders.

We look to next year optimistic for the future success of these determined Japanese innovators.

**Jessy LeClair**, Director, CIC Japan Desk



## MEET THE TEAM

**Jessy LeClair**  
Director

**Hayley Valk**  
Assistant Director

**Sayumi Suzuki**  
Program Manager

**Namika Maki**  
Program Manager

**Zachary Metz**  
Project Associate

**Yumi Jane Kaplan**  
Project Associate

**Amelia Devine**  
Administrative Coordinator / Analyst

# OUR IMPACT

*“This is my first experience as an entrepreneur in the US, and initially I wasn’t familiar with startup culture here. **Mentoring and business matching through CIC has helped me in many ways**—for example, I’ve successfully onboarded a fractional CFO, learned about hiring processes, and been introduced to legal and IP specialists. Networking with other companies at CIC has also been valuable.”*

YUICHI HIKICHI | CEO | TUNING FORK BIO



**60**  
STARTUPS



**230**  
STUDENTS



**28**  
CORPORATES



## MILESTONES

- **Biomy** (Global Acceleration Hub) partnered with NEC to develop and expand AI-based analytical platforms in the digital pathology field.
- **Heartseed** (JETRO Innovation Program 2020), a leader in cardiac regeneration therapy, was listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange Growth Market.
- **Kyoto Fusioneering** (J-StarX Cleantech 2023, Global Acceleration Hub) was awarded an INFUSE grant from the US Department of Energy to be used toward the commercialization of fusion energy.
- **MUSE** (J-StarX Boston Robotics Program 2024) was the first-ever Japanese company selected as a finalist in the Robotics category at SXSW Pitch 2025, showcasing its retail automation technology.

# ACCELERATION PROGRAMS

CIC Japan Desk partnered with Japanese government organizations to provide multi-month accelerator programs that equipped early-stage Japanese startups and aspiring founders with the knowledge, skills, and networks to kick-start business in the US. After foundational training in Japan, participants engaged with local ecosystems through hands-on workshops, expert mentoring, strategic business introductions, and demo days. This year, CIC Japan Desk extended beyond Greater Boston to run programs in Philadelphia and New York City, expanding access to vibrant innovation hubs across the East Coast.

## Key programs:

- J-StarX Boston Robotics Program
- J-StarX Biomedical Student Entrepreneurship Program
- JETRO Global Acceleration Hub
- Direct Flight Philadelphia powered by MEDISO



19 SITE VISITS



38 BUSINESS INTRODUCTIONS

267 HOURS OF MENTORING



141 EXPERTS ENGAGED



47 SEMINARS & WORKSHOPS



# CONNECTOR EVENTS

## DEMO DAYS

CIC Japan Desk partnered with Venture Café Cambridge and Venture Café Philadelphia to host three demo days, showcasing innovative technologies and solutions from Japan's most promising startups. Through pitches and poster sessions, startups connected with hundreds of potential collaborators in the local ecosystem.

## FRIENDLY NETWORKING

This year, we expanded our lineup of casual networking events with "The Roaming Nomikai," bringing together a broad cross-section of the Japan-connected community in Greater Boston. Our monthly lunch meetup, "Bring Your Own Bento," continued with record attendance as another opportunity for community-building among CIC space clients.

## COMMUNITY APPRECIATION

We brought our rich network of experts together for the second annual "Summer Bash" to show our gratitude for their collaboration and generous support of Japanese innovators over the past year.

25  
EVENTS



1,313  
PARTICIPANTS

*"Participating in Japan Desk's events has helped me expand my network of professionals across industries. I have also had the chance to meet startups and students visiting Boston from Japan, which has inspired me with new business ideas. I'm grateful for the Japan Desk team's warm support."*

ATSUSHI SHIOMI | ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR | NS PHARMA

# INNOVATION LINK

CIC Japan Desk served as an entry point into the Greater Boston innovation ecosystem for corporate, academic, and government delegations from Japan, introducing the latest trends and providing hands-on opportunities to engage.



## FOR COMPANIES

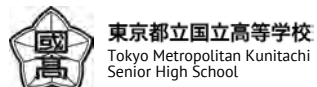
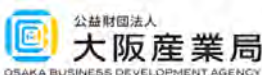
We helped Japanese corporates and startups explore new business opportunities and network with local stakeholders through short-term programs of curated presentations and expert meetings, designed to provide an initial foothold for expansion to the Boston area.



## FOR STUDENTS

We provided interactive workshops to inspire the next generation of founders, in collaboration with universities, high schools, and other educational organizations. Students explored the Boston ecosystem and practiced the core skills and mindset for entrepreneurship with guidance from local founders.

## OUR CLIENTS





# CAMPUS COMMUNITY

CIC Japan Desk provided bilingual support and community gatherings exclusively for Japan-connected companies with office space at CIC. We helped Japanese companies make the most of their presence in Greater Boston with bespoke market research and networking support. We also hosted regular events, including our popular monthly lunch gathering “Bring Your Own Bento” and a special *onigiri* edition of Weekly Wakeup.



**51**  
JAPANESE SPACE  
CLIENTS IN BOSTON  
& CAMBRIDGE



***Thank you!***

**CIC Japan Desk extends our heartfelt appreciation to all of the partners, mentors, speakers, and supporters** who contributed to our programs this year. Your generosity and commitment to entrepreneurship and innovation make our programs successful and empower innovators to thrive. Thank you for your involvement in 2024-2025, and we look forward to working together again in the coming year!

**With gratitude,** the CIC Japan Desk team



**LEARN MORE**

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**CONTACT US**

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