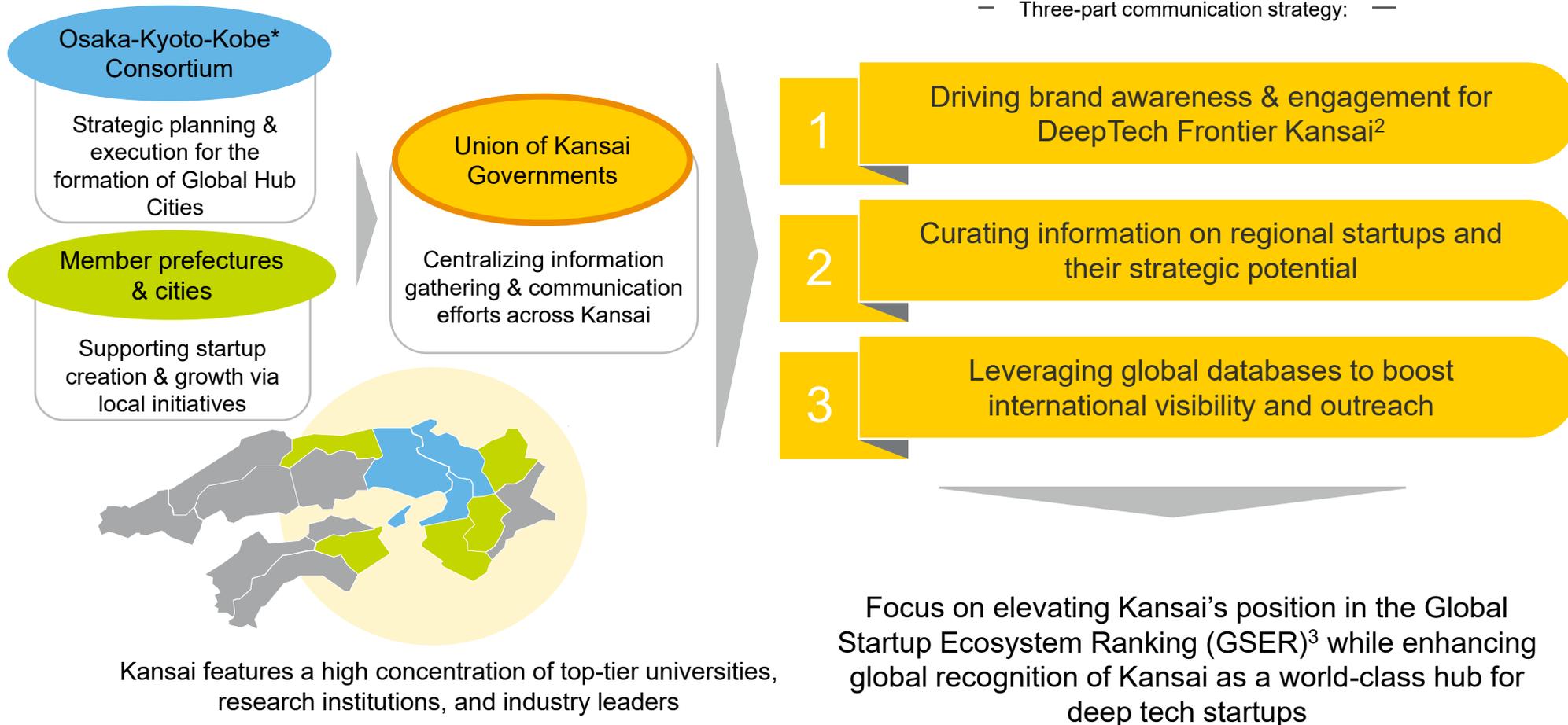Union of Kansai Governments
Kansai Startup Ecosystem Communications Project
Communications Strategy (2025–2029)

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Communication strategy overview

Leveraging the selection process for the Second Phase Startup Ecosystem Hub Cities, we will promote Kansai's high potential for creating deep tech startups[1] and enhance the region's global presence.

Osaka-Kyoto-Kobe* Consortium

Strategic planning & execution for the formation of Global Hub Cities

Member prefectures & cities

Supporting startup creation & growth via local initiatives

Union of Kansai Governments

Centralizing information gathering & communication efforts across Kansai

Kansai features a high concentration of top-tier universities, research institutions, and industry leaders

Three-part communication strategy:

1 Driving brand awareness & engagement for DeepTech Frontier Kansai[2]

2 Curating information on regional startups and their strategic potential

3 Leveraging global databases to boost international visibility and outreach

Focus on elevating Kansai's position in the Global Startup Ecosystem Ranking (GSER)[3] while enhancing global recognition of Kansai as a world-class hub for deep tech startups

*All designated as Second Phase Startup Ecosystem Hub Cities

Communication strategy review for 2021–2024

Kansai's ranking remains disproportionately low compared to cities of similar economic scale, suggesting that regional achievements and track records lack sufficient international visibility due to a shortfall in strategic communication.

—— Previous communication strategy ——   ——— Startup ecosystem rankings: ———
Kansai vs. other locations

Primary activities

- Listing on global & local startup databases
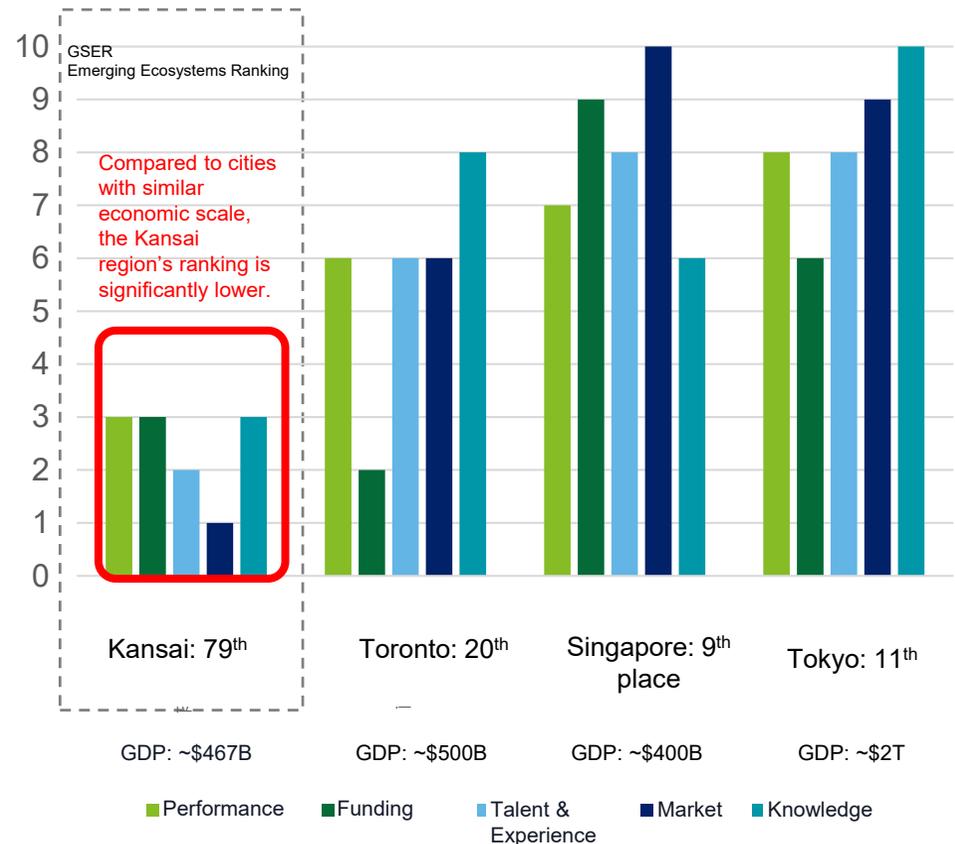- Promotional activities through the Kansai Startup Ecosystem portal & domestic startup events

Main results

- Enhanced ecosystem value
- Improved GSER Emerging Ecosystems ranking

2023: $2.68B
2024: $3.22B
2025: $3.23B

2023: 99th
2024: 84th
2025: 79th

Key issues

- Kansai's GSER ranking remains notably low relative to cities of a comparable economic size (see right), indicating that its initiatives and results are not widely known globally and its capabilities may be undervalued

As compared with Tokyo and other similar scale cities in the GESR top 30:

GSER Emerging Ecosystems Ranking

Compared to cities with similar economic scale, the Kansai region's ranking is significantly lower.

Kansai: 79th   Toronto: 20th   Singapore: 9th place   Tokyo: 11th

GDP: ~$467B   GDP: ~$500B   GDP: ~$400B   GDP: ~$2T

■ Performance   ■ Funding   ■ Talent & Experience   ■ Market   ■ Knowledge

Communication strategy review for 2021–2024

Analyzing the GSER evaluation metrics used as KGIs for the former communication strategy reveals that the region is primarily assessed on performance, funding, talent & experience, market, knowledge, and AI.

GSER metrics & expected primary evaluation criteria

Performance
- Number of exits[5] over $50M and $1B; exit growth rate
- Total exit valuation and total startup valuation
- Number of successful startups within the ecosystem
- Number of early-stage and late-stage[6] active unicorns[7]

Market
- Number of startups valued at $1B and ratio to GDP
- Ratio of $50M+ exits to GDP
- Ratio of $50M+ exits to Series A[9] funding volume
- Logarithmic value of national GDP
- Average duration to commercialize IP assets
- Percentage and no. of entities with overseas offices
- Number of international investors in Series A rounds

Funding
- Early-stage investment volume and growth
- Number of local investors
- Investor track record (avg. investing years and exit ratio)
- Activity level (investor ratio and no. of new investors)

Knowledge
- Number of patents generated within the ecosystem and potential value of the technologies

Talent & experience
- Tech talent
  - Prevalence of top-tier developers on GitHub[8], English proficiency, and exit track record
  - Cost efficiency based on average software engineer salaries
- Life sciences talent
  - Student and graduate counts in STEM disciplines
  - Number of life science-specific universities and degree programs
  - Quality of life science education and research at local universities
- Scale up and startup experience

AI
(Added in 2025)
- Proportion of AI & big data startups relative to all technology startups
- Proportion of AI-native startups relative to all technology startups
- Share of AI-native venture capital funding relative to total funding across all technology sectors

Communication strategy review for 2021–2024

Analysis based on GSER metrics identifies two primary strategic pathways for the Kansai ecosystem: increasing the activity levels and track record of the global hub cities, and enhancing the Union of Kansai Governments' external reach and recognition.

Key characteristics and challenges for Kansai relative to GSER evaluation metrics
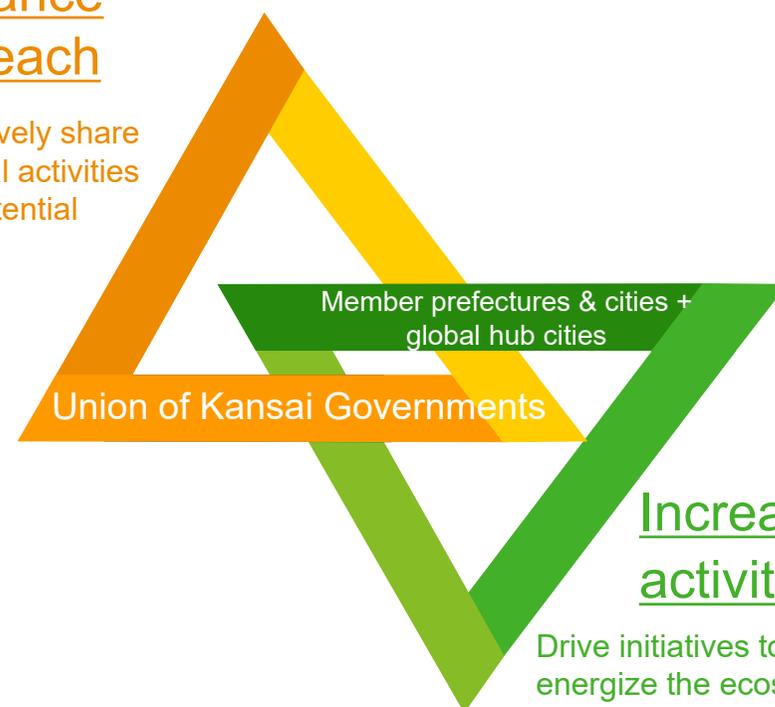
——— Main challenges ———

Performance
- Exit volume and scale remain constrained, preventing the ecosystem's growth cycle from gaining sufficient momentum

Funding
- Kansai's startup ecosystem impact ($3.22B) and early-stage funding ($124M) are markedly lower than those of top-30 ranked cities, underscoring the region's limited ability to attract capital
- Mean and median funding for deep-tech startups lags behind the Tokyo area and leading global hubs
- Kansai lacks sufficient lead VCs to lead investment rounds, and high-profile Tokyo investors rarely gather for events in Osaka
- Insufficient investor networking

Talent & experience
- Kansai enjoys a wealth of academic talent from its many universities and research centers, but the low number of startups has resulted in a shortage of personnel with experience in starting or scaling businesses

Market
- The ratio of unicorns and large-scale exits to GDP is low, resulting in a limited impact on the regional economy

Knowledge
- While the region boasts world-class patents and research findings, these are underutilized within the local startup ecosystem

AI
(Added in 2025)
- Limited number of AI & Big Data and AI-native startups; low share of total regional investment directed towards these sectors

——— Proposed solutions ———

Enhance outreach

Proactively share regional activities and potential

Member prefectures & cities + global hub cities

Union of Kansai Governments

Increase activities

Drive initiatives to further energize the ecosystem, such as supporting startup creation and growth

Phase 2 communication strategy

This strategy aims to maintain and improve GSER rankings through three primary approaches:
1. Building and promoting the DeepTech Frontier Kansai brand
2. Curating and sharing information about local startups through our portal site
3. Leveraging global databases to boost international visibility and outreach

──────── Where we are now ────────

- With its cluster of academic and research entities and an ecosystem bolstered by industry-university-government cooperation, Kansai shows strong promise for substantial growth moving forward.

- Through the phase 1 communication strategy, the selection of hub cities, and the initiatives of member prefectures and cities, results such as an improvement in the GSER rankings have already begun to emerge.

- However, both the number of startups and unicorns are fewer relative to cities of comparable economic size, resulting in a lower GSER ranking.

Centering on the region's strength in deep tech, we can expect to maintain and elevate Kansai's global ranking by bolstering local initiatives and strategically communicating its potential and achievements to a global audience.

Strategic direction
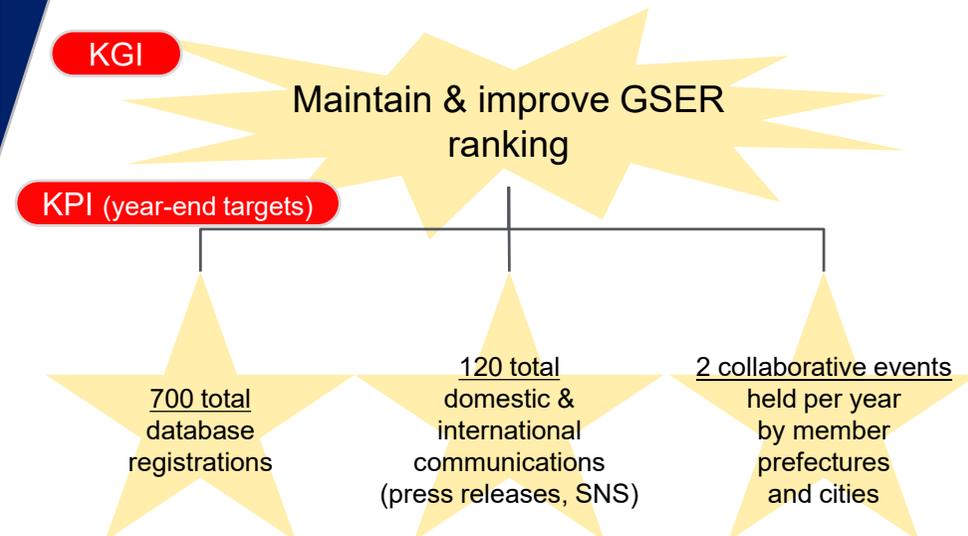
1 Driving brand awareness & engagement for DeepTech Frontier Kansai

2 Curating information on regional startups and their strategic potential

3 Leveraging global databases to boost international visibility and outreach

KGI

Maintain & improve GSER ranking

KPI (year-end targets)

- 700 total database registrations
- 120 total domestic & international communications (press releases, SNS)
- 2 collaborative events held per year by member prefectures and cities

Union of Kansai Governments: Communications Strategy

Strategy overview | Present analysis | Goal setting & action plan

1 Driving brand awareness & engagement for DeepTech Frontier Kansai
2 Curating information on regional startups and their strategic potential
3 Leveraging global databases to boost international visibility and outreach

Driving brand awareness & engagement for DeepTech Frontier Kansai

By collaborating with the activities of the Union of Kansai Governments' member prefectures and cities and global hub cities, we will strengthen deep tech support and communications within the region under the unified DeepTech Frontier Kansai brand.

DeepTech Frontier Kansai

With a concentration of universities, research institutions, and industrial hubs possessing compelling and highly commercializable research, Kansai has immense potential for growth in the globally recognized deep tech sector.

Strong presence in advanced deep tech fields providing solutions for global issues:
- Bio/life sciences: Regenerative medicine, drug discovery, medical devices, etc.
- Green tech: Nuclear fusion, renewables, carbon capture, etc.
- Digital: AI/Web 3.0, quantum computing, robotics, etc.

Collaboration

Support local initiatives within member prefectures and cities through use of DeepTech Frontier Kansai branding

Events

Host DeepTech Frontier Kansai events aimed at attracting a wide range of domestic and global resources to the Union of Kansai Governments

Outreach

Enhance outreach for DeepTech Frontier Kansai through utilization of the official website and social media platforms of the Union of Kansai Governments

Union of Kansai Governments: Communications Strategy

Curating information on local deep tech startups and their strategic potential

1 Driving brand awareness & engagement for DeepTech Frontier Kansai
2 Curating information on regional startups and their strategic potential
3 Leveraging global databases to boost international visibility and outreach

Organize information on regional strengths and potential for domestic and international outreach, focusing on deep tech in alignment with GSER evaluation criteria.

	Current outreach efforts on key websites providing information on the Kansai startup ecosystem									
Communication standpoint	DeepTech Frontier Kansai	Kansai Startup Mashups	KSAC[4]	KSII	KIDOU	Cities/ prefectures	Osaka/Kyoto/ Kobe Chambers of Commerce and Industry projects	Osaka Startup Ecosystem	Kyoto Startup Ecosystem	Hyogo-Kobe Startup Ecosystem
Startup/ ecosystem branding	High priority core brand	-			High priority core brand	-		Consortium initiatives focused on boosting local startup ecosystem recognition within the region		
Case studies/ program overviews	-	Kyoto-Osaka-Kobe support program showcase	University research breakthroughs and GAP funds showcase	Public-industry collaboration	Incubation programs	Part of broader communication activities		Event & program information		
Startup resources/ ecosystem	Deep tech startup database	Ecosystem showcase	-	Event information	-			Startup & ecosystem showcase		

Focus on topic-based outreach for deep tech startups, aligned with Startup Genome's assessment categories

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Proposed topics

- Global events & programs
- University research potential
- Success case studies
- Regional infrastructure
- Kansai in numbers: fundraising, startup numbers, etc.
- Support center & program listings

…

Specific outreach actions

- Consolidating and sharing data regarding startup valuations and funding achievements
- Gathering efforts from relevant regional organizations to establish deep tech as a core focus brand
- Interviewing and creating content focused on the deep tech capabilities of local municipalities and startups targeting international markets
- Collecting data on IP and talent-related assessment metrics
- ...And more!

Strategy overview | Present analysis | **Goal setting & action plan**

1 Driving brand awareness & engagement for DeepTech Frontier Kansai
2 Curating information on regional startups and their strategic potential
3 Leveraging global databases to boost international visibility and outreach

Leveraging global databases to boost international visibility and outreach

Enhance communication efforts by consistently updating databases, producing startup feature articles in both Japanese and English, and maintaining an active presence across websites, social media, events, and media outlets.

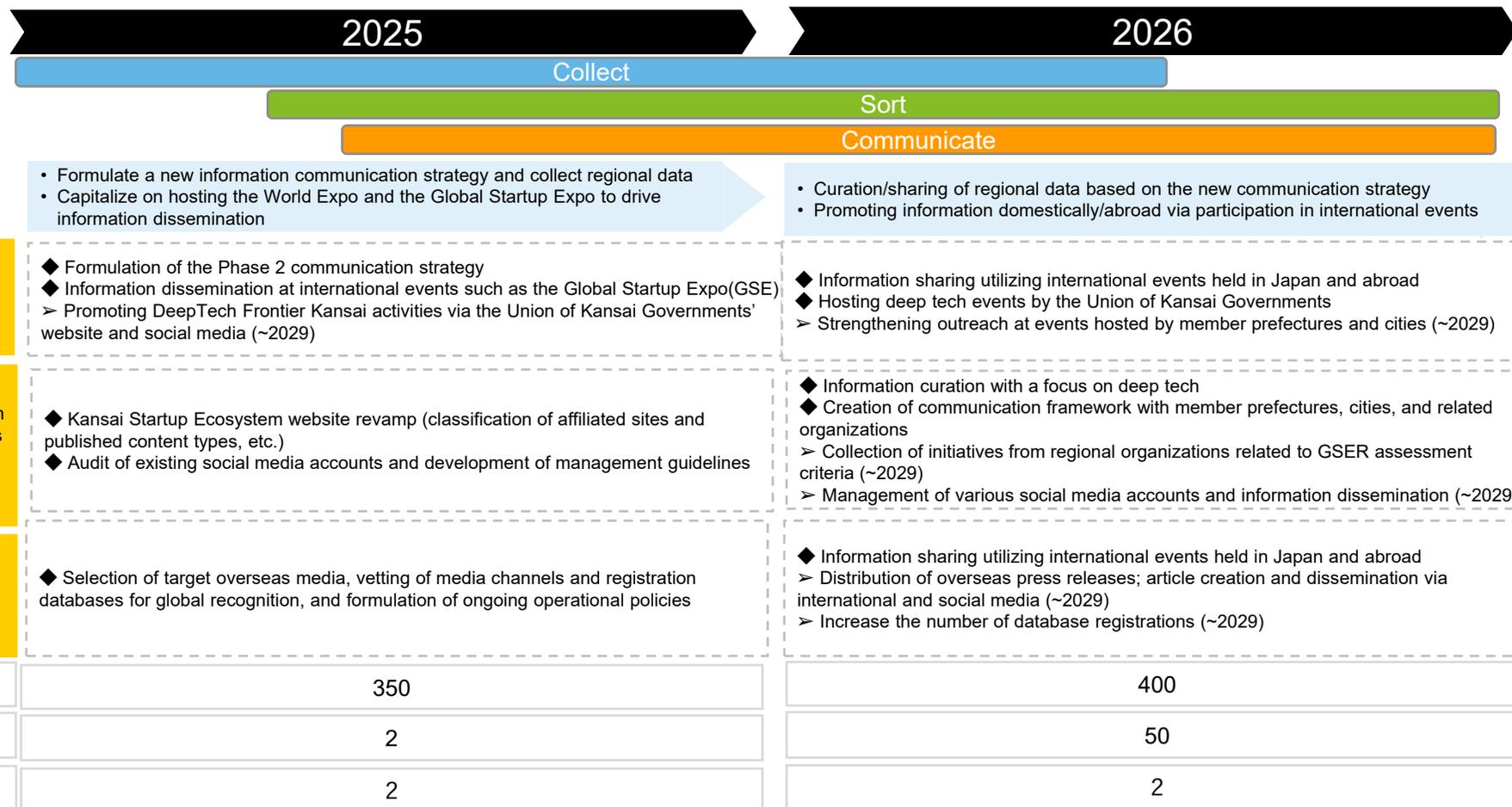| **Registration on overseas databases**	**Article creation**	**Press coverage**	**Promotion on websites & social media**	**Promotion at events**
Drive registrations on international databases like Crunchbase, with specific platforms to be selected on an ongoing basis	Produce English content aimed at building international awareness of deep tech capabilities and startup ecosystems within the member cities and prefectures	Secure direct coverage and feature placements in global media	Ongoing dissemination of startup-related information across websites and social media platforms	Share information and promote visibility through participation in international events

Roadmap to 2029

Strengthen regional partnerships and global visibility through the systematic collection of data from local stakeholders and synchronized information sharing at various international events.

2025 | **2026**

Collect

Sort

Communicate

◆ Single year
➢ Ongoing/until ~

2025
- Formulate a new information communication strategy and collect regional data
- Capitalize on hosting the World Expo and the Global Startup Expo to drive information dissemination

2026
- Curation/sharing of regional data based on the new communication strategy
- Promoting information domestically/abroad via participation in international events

1 Driving brand awareness & engagement for DeepTech Frontier Kansai

2025:
◆ Formulation of the Phase 2 communication strategy
◆ Information dissemination at international events such as the Global Startup Expo(GSE)
➢ Promoting DeepTech Frontier Kansai activities via the Union of Kansai Governments' website and social media (~2029)

2026:
◆ Information sharing utilizing international events held in Japan and abroad
◆ Hosting deep tech events by the Union of Kansai Governments
➢ Strengthening outreach at events hosted by member prefectures and cities (~2029)

2 Curating information on regional startups and their strategic potential

2025:
◆ Kansai Startup Ecosystem website revamp (classification of affiliated sites and published content types, etc.)
◆ Audit of existing social media accounts and development of management guidelines

2026:
◆ Information curation with a focus on deep tech
◆ Creation of communication framework with member prefectures, cities, and related organizations
➢ Collection of initiatives from regional organizations related to GSER assessment criteria (~2029)
➢ Management of various social media accounts and information dissemination (~2029)

3 Leveraging global databases to boost international visibility and outreach

2025:
◆ Selection of target overseas media, vetting of media channels and registration databases for global recognition, and formulation of ongoing operational policies

2026:
◆ Information sharing utilizing international events held in Japan and abroad
➢ Distribution of overseas press releases; article creation and dissemination via international and social media (~2029)
➢ Increase the number of database registrations (~2029)

KPI	2025	2026
Database registrations	350	400
Published posts	2	50
Hosted events	2	2

(Planned initiatives may be revised based on ongoing circumstances. Please be aware that descriptions represent projections as of the present date.)

Database registrations: Based on the number of Kansai-based startups listed on Dealroom (https://kansai.dealroom.co/intro).
Note: Dealroom includes public companies founded more than 10 years ago, so listings are filtered and reviewed for inclusion.
Published posts: Combined total of posts on official Kansai Startup Ecosystem social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.) and press releases issued by the Union of Kansai Governments.
Media coverage: Searches for terms like "Kansai startup" on Google News, PR TIMES, and international startup media. Total appearances in newspapers, trade journals, and web media.
Note: Due to a lack of precise official data, estimates are calculated based on the publicity efforts of key organizations and events.

Roadmap to 2029

Enhance regional synergy and communication impact through the collection and systematization of data from local stakeholders and collaborative promotion at international events.

2027	2028	2029

Enhanced communications

◆ Single year
➢ Ongoing/until ~

- Strengthen information sharing within Kansai based on the new information communication strategy
- Promote communications at home and abroad, leveraging hosting opportunities for international events and the resulting networks

- Enhance sharing of regional data based on the new communication strategy
- Strengthen global and domestic outreach aimed at elevating GSER

1 Driving brand awareness & engagement for DeepTech Frontier Kansai

➢ Global outreach in coordination with international events held within Japan
➢ Overseas information sharing/networking events in collaboration with member prefectures/cities, JETRO, KSAC, The Osaka-Kyoto-Kobe Consortium, and other parties

2 Curating information on regional startups and their strategic potential

➢ Interviewing, producing, and publishing articles on the deep tech potential of member prefectures and cities and startups targeting global markets
➢ Gathering and sharing data relevant to GSER assessment criteria
➢ Publicizing integrated data regarding startup valuations and fundraising achievements
➢ Joint information sharing with major cities, JETRO, KSAC, The Osaka-Kyoto-Kobe Consortium, and other partners
➢ Global and domestic communications regarding businesses, facilities, and events in the life science/digital (AI & Web 3.0)/GX sectors

3 Leveraging global databases to boost international visibility and outreach

➢ International and domestic outreach in accordance with the assessment metrics of the Global Startup Ecosystem Ranking
➢ Enhancing procedures and building mechanisms for recommending startups for new registration across participating prefectures and cities
　*Decisions on media-related expenditures, including database fees, will be made based on ongoing cost-performance assessments

KPI	2027	2028	2029
Database registrations	500	600	700
Published posts	75	100	120
Hosted events	2	2	2

(Planned initiatives may be revised based on ongoing circumstances. Please be aware that descriptions represent projections as of the present date.)

Database registrations: Based on the number of Kansai-based startups listed on Dealroom (https://kansai.dealroom.co/intro).
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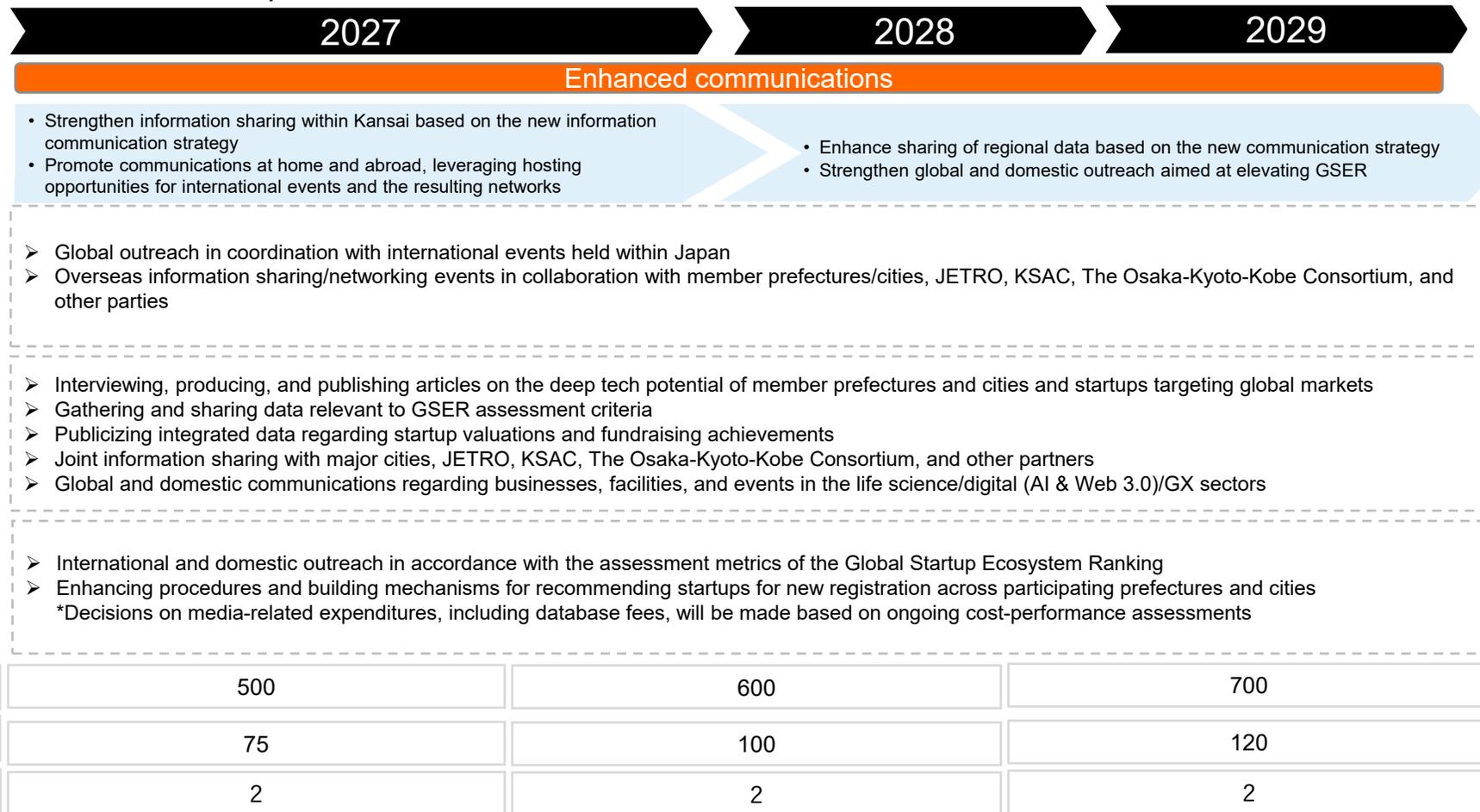Published posts: Combined total of posts on official Kansai Startup Ecosystem social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.) and press releases issued by the Union of Kansai Governments.
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Explanation of terms

E	Term	Explanation
1	Deep tech startup	Startups founded on advanced technologies and R&D, including AI, biotechnology, robotics, and quantum computing, which frequently originate from research conducted at universities and research organizations.
2	DeepTech Frontier Kansai	Branding for Kansai-based deep tech startups to enhance their visibility both in Japan and overseas.
3	Global Startup Ecosystem Ranking (GSER)	Global startup ecosystem ranking, based on indicators such as funding, growth potential, and innovation power.
4	KSAC	Kansai Startup Academia Coalition, a collaborative consortium of Kansai-based universities and research institutes dedicated to driving startup creation and enhancing support systems.
5	Exit	The process of startups and investors gaining returns from a business via an initial public offering or merger/acquisition.
6	Early-stage, late-stage	"Early-stage" refers to the initial growth stage of a startup, during which product or service development, market entry, and initial customer acquisition take place. "Late-stage" refers to the stage after growth has accelerated and the business model is established, involving scaling, monetization, and large-scale funding.
7	Unicorn	A fast-growing, unlisted startup founded within the last 10 years with an estimated valuation of $1 billion or more.
8	GitHub	A code-sharing and management platform for software developers.
9	Series A	A startup's first major round of financing targeted at scaling operations and achieving significant growth.

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