

SMU launches global deep-tech accelerator, welcomes 60 new-gen startups to Singapore

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THE Singapore Management University's Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (SMU IIE) on Monday (Sep 29) announced the launch of a new accelerator programme set to scale and anchor solutions in the urban solutions and sustainability (USS) space.

This is the first global accelerator in Singapore focused on addressing USS-related issues; the 12-month hybrid, non-residential programme, hosted by SMU IIE, is open to eligible startups globally.

The programme, Urban Sustain-novator (USI), was conceived as the

flagship initiative of the 12th Lee Kuan Yew Global Business Plan Competition, a biennial university startup competition, which will serve as a key talent pipeline for the USI.

The competition has attracted 1,572 applications from 91 countries this year. From this pool, 60 global finalists are competing for S\$2.5 million in cash from leading partners such as Antler and Indorama Ventures, as well as returning partners such as Sino Group.

The zero-equity and zero-fee programme is supported by a consortium of public and private institutions, including the Agency for Science, Technology and Research,

Antler, Building and Construction Authority, ST Engineering and The Gear by Kajima.

How it works

Each startup in the USI will receive dedicated one-to-one mentorship, with a lead mentor assigned from a consortium of business, scientific and government leaders, ensuring continuity and tailored guidance.

SMU IIE works closely with the lead mentor to curate advisory panel sessions that address the unique needs of each startup.

The startups will also benefit from "close peer learning" through a community that connects founders, mentors and partners, fostering

knowledge sharing and collaboration, according to a Monday release from SMU.

The programme provides practical support for growth, including fundraising guidance, industry introductions and hiring assistance, as well as pathways for lab validation and accreditation for fast-tracked commercialisation.

Participants can expand their networks across Asia via SMU's Overseas Centres and events such as mixers, social gatherings and an annual signature meet, for greater exposure.

The USI is said to establish a circle of high-potential deep-tech startups with solutions at the intersection of

urban sustainability, technology and business from universities around the world, according to Professor Lim Sun Sun, SMU's vice-president for partnerships and engagement, who is also chair of the USI Programme Management Council.

She noted that the USI complements national initiatives such as the National Graduate Research Innovation Programme.

"Bridging global startup talent to Singapore's ecosystem can both catalyse revolutionary solutions for a more equitable, sustainable future, and greatly boost knowledge and skills transfer for our local workforce," she added.

Singapore ranked fourth in the 2025 Global Startup Ecosystem Index by StartupBlink, moving up 12 places since 2020. The Republic also commands nearly 60 per cent of South-east Asia's venture capital deal flow.