Ministry of SMEs and Startups

Press Release

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Pursuing Joint R&D with Leading Global Research Institutions

Selected 52 projects for phase 1 (preliminary research) of global cooperative R&D with world-class research institutions including Purdue University (U.S.), Fraunhofer Institute (Germany), and Steinbeis Foundation (Germany)

Providing KRW 110 million for phase 1 preliminary research, proceeding to phase 2 main research for outstanding projects

The Ministry of SMEs and Startups (MSS, Minister HAN Seongsook) announced on Sunday, August 10, 2025, that it had selected a total of 52 preliminary research projects for Phase 1 of the “2025 Global Cooperative R&D,” which will be conducted jointly with three leading global research institutions — Purdue University (U.S.), the Fraunhofer Institute (Germany), and the Steinbeis Foundation (Germany).

The Global Cooperative R&D is an R&D program introduced in 2025 for the first time to help SMEs and startups secure global technological competitiveness and promote entry into overseas markets. The Korea Technology and Information Promotion Agency for SMEs, the specialized R&D agency under MSS, has signed agreements for joint R&D cooperation with world-renowned research institutions, including Purdue University (U.S.), which has five of America’s top engineering schools; the Fraunhofer Institute (Germany), the largest applied research organization in Europe; and the Steinbeis Foundation (Germany), which supports demand-driven R&D to address corporate challenges.

* Purdue University (LOI, August 2024), Fraunhofer Institute (MOU, March 2025), Steinbeis Foundation (MOU, March 2025)

To ensure effective matching of global R&D needs, requests for proposals (RFPs) were developed for projects with a high necessity for joint R&D, focusing on the strengths of each global research institution. A comprehensive evaluation was then conducted, taking into account the R&D needs of domestic SMEs, the cooperation potential of each institution, and other relevant opinions. As a result, a total of 52* projects were selected across 10 super gap sectors, including AI, bio, and

semiconductors.

* Purdue University (17 projects), Fraunhofer Institute (29 projects), Steinbeis Foundation (6 projects)

The selected projects will undergo a six-month Phase 1 preliminary research process, during which detailed research plans will be developed, including the establishment of strategic cooperation plans with overseas partner institutions, the creation of R&D roadmaps, and the setting of phased development goals. Moving forward, MSS plans to support Phase 2 main research starting in 2026 for projects that demonstrate outstanding results and strong cooperation potential during the preliminary research stage, through a competitive selection process.

In addition, MSS held an information session on the Global Cooperative R&D on August 5, in collaboration with IP-specialized institutions such as Lee & Ko, to address potential legal issues related to intellectual property (IP) that may arise during the implementation of the program and to strengthen rights protection.

PARK Yong-soon, Director General for Technology Innovation Policy, stated, “The Global Cooperative R&D is an opportunity for SMEs and startups to secure global-level technological competitiveness in collaboration with world-class research institutions.” He added, “We will actively support our innovative SMEs and startups in entering the global market by expanding cooperation networks with leading research institutions to regions such as Europe and Asia.”