

Call for Applications: Scale-Up TIPS Operators

A new round of Scale-Up TIPS operators is being launched to strengthen private-sector support for high-growth technology companies preparing to expand globally. Under the latest call, the Ministry of SMEs and Startups (MSS) will select around 50 investment firms to take part as general operators, working with startups through private investment and linked R&D support. Applications will be accepted from 29 December 2025 to 30 January 2026.

TIPS (Tech Incubator Program for Startups) is designed as a market-driven innovation platform in which private investors take the lead. Accredited operators – such as accelerators and venture capital firms – first invest in technology-based startups they have assessed for commercial viability. Public support, including R&D funding, is then provided to scale promising technologies more rapidly. The program currently includes 149 TIPS operators and 24 Scale-Up TIPS operators nationwide.

Since its launch in 2013, TIPS has demonstrated strong performance through sustained private-sector participation. The program has supported approximately 5,000 startups, mobilizing KRW 21.3 trillion in private investment, nearly ten times the KRW 2.2 trillion committed through public R&D funding. It has also contributed to the growth of 48 companies that have gone on to list on public markets.

From 2026, MSS plans to reposition TIPS as an integrated, end-to-end support framework covering company formation, scale-up, and global expansion, alongside a significant increase in program capacity. The number of Scale-Up TIPS slots will rise from 152 to 300, while a new Global TIPS track, comprising 100 slots, will be introduced to support overseas market entry.

As the program expands across the full growth cycle, private investment is expected to play a more central role in linking early-stage innovation with large-scale commercialization. In response, the number of Scale-Up TIPS operators will be increased from 24 to around 80 by 2026. At the same time, the operator structure will be diversified to balance speed of company selection with depth of technical support.

Under this framework, operators will be categorized into two types:

- General operators are individual private investment firms – such as accelerators and venture capital funds – that identify and invest in a wide range of growth-stage companies and support them in collaboration with R&D institutions.
- Specialized operators are consortium-based groups that bring together investors, universities or research institutes, and consultants to provide close, technically focused R&D support in specific strategic sectors.

The current call applies only to general operators. Applicants will be assessed comprehensively based on their investment track records, available capital, and capacity to support portfolio companies, including organizational structure, professional staffing, and networks. Around 50 operators will be selected.

**A separate call for specialized operators will be announced at a later date.*

Regional investment capability will be a key consideration in the selection process. Firms headquartered and actively operating outside the capital area will be eligible for additional evaluation points, with particular attention given to regional fund management, prior investments in regional companies, and future regional investment plans. Through this approach, half of the 2026 support quota will be allocated to regional enterprises.

Selected operators will be eligible to participate in Scale-Up TIPS and Global TIPS for up to six years. They will also

receive financial and administrative support to cover costs associated with startup assistance, including commercialization strategy development, patent analysis, and market research.

Applications must be submitted between 29 December 2025 and 30 January 2026 via the SME Technology Development Management Portal (www.smtech.go.kr). Briefing sessions for interested investment firms will be held on 6 and 14 January 2026, both at TIPS Town S1 in Yeoksam and online.

For more news and updates on Korea's SME and startup policies, follow the Ministry's official **LinkedIn** page:
Ministry of SMEs and Startups, Republic of Korea, 대한민국 중소벤처기업부

