

Taking K-Culture to the World: A New Path for Small Businesses Ready to Go Global

The Ministry of SMEs and Startups (MSS) has opened applications for the 2026 Global Micro-Enterprise Development Program – known as the K-Micro-Enterprise Initiative – a new program designed to help promising micro-enterprises with existing export capacity grow into full-fledged export businesses.

Launched for the first time this year, the program provides end-to-end support across export capability building, product development, and overseas market access – structured to move participating companies from potential to performance.

The initiative targets micro-enterprises with demonstrable export potential. To be eligible, applicants must meet at least one of the following: recorded annual export sales of at least USD 30,000 in any one year between 2023 and 2025; prior participation in MSS-affiliated development programs including the Strong Small Business, New Business Startup Academy, or Local Creator initiatives; or early-stage investment from a government-linked private operator within the past three years.

From the applicant pool, roughly 100 companies will be selected across two tracks aligned to their business model:

- Local Track (60 companies): Businesses whose products draw on distinctly Korean regional identity, resources, or cultural heritage
- Innovation Track (40 companies): Businesses offering differentiated lifestyle products shaped by individual tastes personal aesthetics

A Program Built Around Real Export Outcomes

Support is structured in stages, moving from preparation through to active market entry – with the emphasis squarely on generating tangible export results rather than participation for its own sake.

Selected companies begin with an export capability assessment and investor relations pitch training, followed by one-on-one mentoring from a dedicated expert matched to each business. From there, the program delivers:

- Specialized education and strategy: Customs procedures, export logistics, and market-entry know-how across four core consumer categories – food, cosmetics, fashion, and lifestyle goods – alongside product localization guidance tailored to target markets
- Commercialization funding: Up to KRW 100 million per company to support product development, export brand identity design, and the acquisition of certifications and intellectual property rights
- Global market access: Hands-on support for entering major international e-commerce platforms, as well as participation in overseas trade fairs to open both online and offline sales channels

An initial document review for the selection will narrow the field to 150-200 companies, evaluated on the distinctiveness of their export items. Those who advance will present at a Global Audition, where panels assess export strategy, market viability, and commercialization readiness before the final 100 companies are confirmed.

How to Apply

The full program announcement is available today through the Micro-Enterprise Portal (www.sbiz24.kr) and the MSS website (www.mss.go.kr). Applications are accepted online via the Micro-Enterprise Portal from today, Monday April 20, through Friday, May 15, 2026.

For more news and updates on Korea's SME and startup policies, follow the Ministry's official **LinkedIn** page:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/mss1357>

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