

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EMAIL: rachelmchun@korea.kr**Challenge! K-Startup 2025 Kicks Off**

SEJONG – The Ministry of SMEs and Startups (MSS); the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Science and ICT; the Ministry of National Defense; the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism; the Ministry of Environment; the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family; the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport; the Defense Acquisition Program Administration; and the Korean Intellectual Property Office is officially launching the nationwide multi-ministerial startup competition, 'Challenge! K-Startup 2025,' the largest of its kind in the country.

'Challenge! K-Startup 2025' will kick off with a comprehensive announcement on Tuesday, February 4, followed by ministry-specific preliminary leagues running until August. Afterward, the successful entrepreneurs or potential entrepreneurs will compete in the main competition involving 225 teams, which will determine the 30 teams that will advance to the December grand finals. Through the grand finals, the top 10 startup companies and 10 aspiring entrepreneurs of 2025 will be selected and awarded a total prize of KRW 1.4 billion (up to KRW 300 million), along with the President's Award and the Prime Minister's Award, concluding the journey.

In 2025, a new Content League (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism) will be established to discover promising startups in the content industry, bringing the total number of leagues to 12. As a result, the number of teams advancing to the main competition will increase from 210 to 225.

To enhance follow-up support, MSS has broadened the selection criteria for startup support projects. Now, in addition to award-winning teams, Grand Prize winners will also be prioritized. This expansion allows these teams to participate in startup support initiatives, including the

2026 Prospective Startup Package. Furthermore, teams advancing to the grand finals will be exempt from the document evaluation process.

Minister OH Youngju stated, “Challenge! K-Startup is the largest scale startup competition at the pan-government level, and we anticipate the challenges from creative entrepreneurs or potential entrepreneurs.” She emphasized, “ MSS will actively support these startups to revitalize our economy and enable them to grow into global companies.

Entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs interested in participating in ‘Challenge! K-Startup 2025’ should refer to the comprehensive announcement on the K-Startup website (www.k-startup.go.kr) and review the detailed notices for each preliminary league issued by the respective operating departments. Applications must be submitted within the designated registration periods for each league.

‘Challenge! K-Startup’ has been a collaborative project initiated in 2016 by the Ministry of SMEs and Startups, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Science and ICT, and the Ministry of National Defense. Since then, the number of collaborating ministries and preliminary leagues has gradually increased, making it the largest startup competition in South Korea, with an average participation of approximately 5,700 teams each year (6,238 teams in 2024). It has become a platform for promising and potential entrepreneurs to showcase their creative and challenging startup ideas.