

Activities of JAPIA, The 22nd report by Open Innovation Study Group

Facilitating encounters between JAPIA Member Companies and Startups through platforms such as JMS, and supporting opportunities for collaboration

At the Japan Auto Parts Industries Association (JAPIA), the Open Innovation Study Group (OISG) is established as a forum where automotive parts manufacturers can explore new possibilities through collaboration with external partners. This article provides an overview of the OISG, its objectives and activities, initiatives carried out through its working groups (WGs), and efforts that have been advanced by leveraging the Japan Mobility Show (JMS) as a practical venue for open innovation.

Initiatives of the Open Innovation Study Group to support the self-reliance of small and medium-sized enterprises

The business environment surrounding the automotive parts industry is undergoing a major transformation driven by the advancement of electrification and digitalization. As technologies become more sophisticated and development cycles accelerate, it is increasingly difficult for individual companies to respond to these changes on their own. Traditionally, roles within the industry have been divided in a manner whereby the customer side took the lead in defining designs and specifications. In recent years, however, there has been a growing expectation for suppliers to expand their involvement and engage more actively as partners. In response to these changes in the business environment, moving away from everything in-house approach and a passive, order-taking mindset toward exploring new possibilities through collaboration with external partners has become a shared challenge for the industry as a whole.

The OISG was established to cope with this change. Launched in February 2024 under the auspices of the Japan Auto Parts Industries Association (JAPIA), the OISG aims to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in taking their first steps toward open innovation and, ultimately, enabling them to advance external collaboration in a self-reliant and sustainable manner. Through these initiatives, the Study Group seeks to strengthen the resilience of the automotive parts industry's supply chain as a whole. Currently, nine major automotive parts manufacturers participate in the OISG, forming a framework to support the efforts of SMEs.

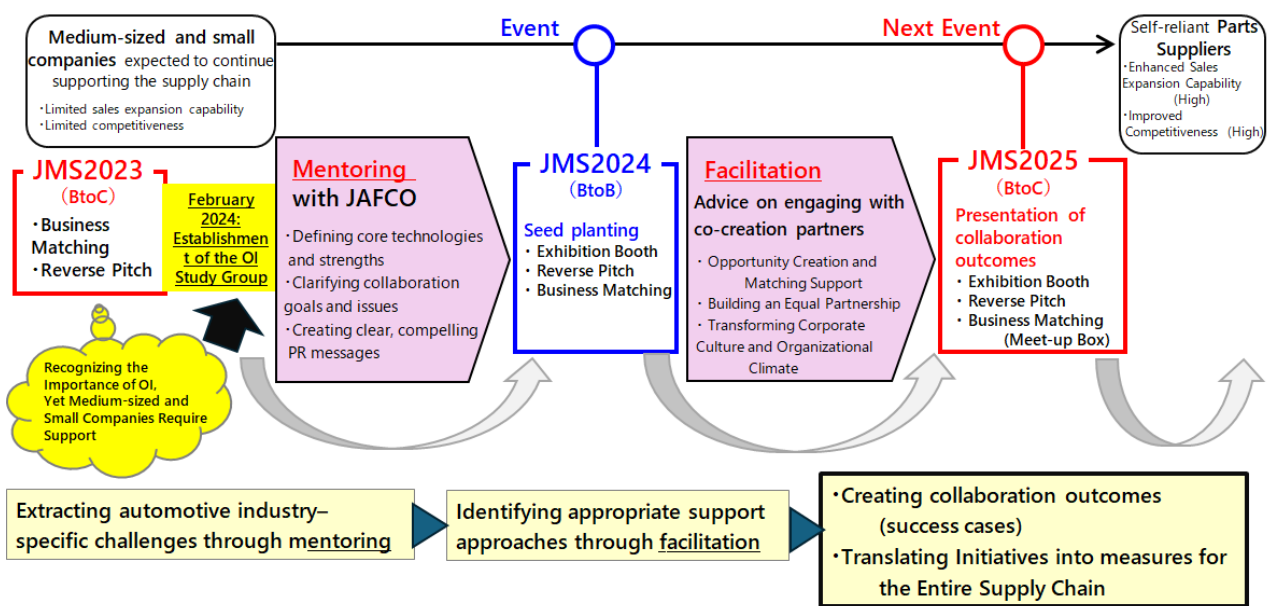
The OISG provides opportunities for SMEs with an interest in external collaboration to engage in discussions and deliberations aimed at advancing open innovation. Participating companies first organize and clarify their business activities, core strengths, objectives for external collaboration, and key challenges. They then position companies from other industries and startup enterprises as potential co-creation partners

and engage in repeated dialogue and examination. In this process, the OISG also explores collaboration opportunities with the support of JAFCO Group Co., Ltd., an independent venture capital firm with extensive expertise in startups and co-creation partners.

The self-reliant and sustainable growth of SMEs not only contributes to the stability of the entire supply chain but also provides major automotive parts manufacturers with opportunities to gain new perspectives and explore potential avenues for collaboration. The OISG seeks to build relationships in which all parties mutually enhance their value through such interactions.

Open Innovation Study Group (OI Study Group) and Japan Mobility Show (JMS)

The OI Study Group supports medium-sized and small companies in leveraging open innovation through the utilization of the Japan Mobility Show (JMS)



From mindset transformation to practical action: A three-step growth path envisioned by the Working Groups

To bridge understanding and practical implementation of open innovation in a step-by-step manner, the OISG has established three WGs. These WGs do not operate independently; rather, they share a common axis of ultimately leading participants toward hands-on practice through venues such as JMS and various business-matching opportunities. Together, they play a comprehensive role in supporting a continuous process that runs from mindset transformation to the creation of concrete collaborative initiatives.

Serving as the foundation is the Mindset Transformation Working Group. This WG focuses on sharing the necessity and core concepts of open innovation, deepening participants' understanding of the value of collaboration with external partners. Through seminars, participating companies are encouraged to reassess their current situations and to lay the groundwork necessary for engaging in open innovation initiatives. This stage can

be regarded as the phase in which a shared awareness and basic readiness for open innovation are cultivated.

Positioned above the Mindset Transformation WG is the Hands-On Support Working Group. One of its primary objectives is to ensure the success of reverse pitches at JMS. To that end, members of the OISG provide individualized, company-by-company support to firms participating in reverse pitch sessions. In terms of track record, the WG supported ten companies in fiscal 2024, and a total of fifteen companies in fiscal 2025, consisting of five continuing participants from the previous year and ten newly participating companies.

Reverse pitches serve as presentation opportunities where companies communicate their technologies, strengths, and assets, as well as what they aim to achieve through external collaboration and the needs they seek from partners. Preparing for such presentations requires companies to first take an objective, introspective look at themselves. The Hands-On Support WG places particular emphasis on this self-analysis process and offers close, tailored support in preparing presentation materials.

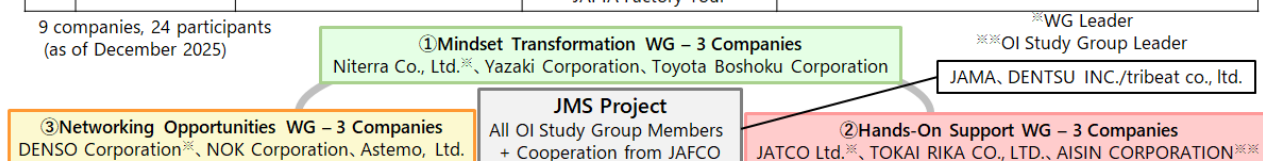
Specifically, the WG works with participating companies to reorganize and articulate their strengths, analyze how those strengths are positioned within the broader industry, and identify distinguishing features in comparison with competitors and industry averages. At the same time, the WG focuses on how these strengths can be expressed in clear and compelling terms, and how they can be communicated in a way that resonates with third parties in exhibition and presentation settings.

At the top of the structure is the Networking Opportunities Working Group. This WG is responsible for providing “places of encounter” where automotive parts companies can meet a wide range of potential partners. Although many such networking opportunities already exist, small and medium-sized enterprises in the automotive parts industry often lack experience in engaging with startups and companies from other industries, resulting in relatively high participation barriers. In fiscal 2025, the Networking Opportunities WG addressed this challenge by organizing events designed to be accessible even to companies new to open innovation, thereby encouraging practical utilization of open innovation among SMEs. Looking ahead to fiscal 2026, in addition to JMS-related initiatives, the WG plans to offer venues specifically designed to facilitate matching with startups and business companies from other industries. Through these three WGs, the OISG views the process from mindset transformation to practical action as an integrated continuum and aims to support companies in advancing step by step toward external collaboration.

Activities of the Open Innovation Study Group in FY2025

	WG / Project	Activity Overview	FY2024	FY2025
①	Mindset Transformation WG	Examination and implementation of seminars to foster an open-innovation mindset	Basic seminar: "What is OI?" and case studies	First-Step Seminar: Awareness, frameworks, and case studies Next-Step Seminar: How to organize in-house initiatives
②	Hands-On Support WG	Examination and implementation of support measures necessary for SMEs	Support provided to 10 companies through JMS	Support provided to 15 companies through JMS OI Utilization Guidelines
③	Networking Opportunities WG	Providing opportunities for networking	JMS only	Meet-up event for component manufacturers Reciprocal study sessions among JMS participants
④	JMS Project (All OI Study Group Members)	Close support for companies participating in JMS	Reverse Pitch: 10 companies Booth Exhibitions: 25 companies JAPIA Factory Tour	Reverse Pitch: 15 companies Booth Exhibitions: 15 companies

9 companies, 24 participants
(as of December 2025)



In FY2025, the second year of the initiative, we will leverage the learnings gained through JMS to roll out measures aimed at the entire supply chain.

Tangible outcomes generated through the development of guidelines and the creation of practical venues

Based on the activities undertaken in fiscal 2024, the fundamental pillars of the OISG's initiatives remained largely unchanged in fiscal 2025. At the same time, as activities progressed, several new initiatives also emerged.

One such initiative was the development of the Open Innovation Utilization Guidelines. These guidelines were created with the aim of supporting small and medium-sized enterprises in taking their first step toward utilizing open innovation. In addition to outlining the necessity and basic concepts of open innovation, the guidelines introduce actual case examples of open innovation initiatives. They are positioned as a resource to help companies that have an interest in external collaboration but are unsure where to begin to develop a concrete image of practical implementation. Going forward, the OISG intends to further enrich the content by adding more accessible and relatable case studies.

Another notable outcome was the implementation of a Mutual Learning Session for companies participating in JMS. This session was held on October 9, 2025, approximately one month prior to the opening of JMS, and brought together companies conducting reverse pitches for the first time in fiscal 2025, as well as companies that had continued their participation from fiscal 2024. By listening to presentations from other companies, participants were able to objectively reassess their own content. In particular, the highly polished presentations delivered by companies that had been participating since fiscal 2024 served as a strong source of motivation for first-time participants. The timing—immediately before the actual event—was especially effective, allowing companies to use the session as a forum for final refinements to both content and presentation style. As a

result, the session received high praise from participating companies.

Meanwhile, at the Startup Future Factory within JMS, fifteen small and medium-sized enterprises that had received support from the OISG in fiscal 2025 exhibited their technologies and initiatives. Of these, Komatsu Seiki Kosakusho Co., Ltd., Aisin Corporation, Sanwa Needle Bearing Co., Ltd., Beyonz Co., Ltd., and Matsuda Denki Kogyosho Co., Ltd. are companies that have continuously participated in OISG activities since fiscal 2024. Through their efforts in fiscal 2024, these companies had already achieved tangible collaboration outcomes and leveraged those experiences and results in preparing for their exhibits at JMS.

Some companies also became newly aware of the importance of effective communication through their exhibition experience. By carefully refining both the content and presentation of its exhibit, Beyonz Co., Ltd. attracted significant attention from visitors, and photos of its booth taken at the venue spread widely on social media, generating strong public response. At Matsuda Denki Kogyosho Co., Ltd., the booth was visited by a diverse range of attendees, including government officials and OEM representatives, while the exhibit of Aisin Corporation attracted dozens of visitors from unexpected fields, including those related to agriculture. These developments indicate growing interest from sectors beyond those originally anticipated. Moreover, these companies have not limited their activities to JMS, a venue provided by JAPIA, but have taken proactive steps to engage independently in other exhibitions, business negotiations, and related opportunities. A notable characteristic is the manner in which participating companies, drawing on their experiences at JMS, have begun to actively expand their own points of contact with external partners.

From a “Trigger” to Self-Driven Action

Within the OISG, support provided through the working groups and participation in JMS are positioned merely as a “trigger.” The ultimate goal is for small and medium-sized enterprises to think independently, take initiative, and expand their external collaborations on their own, while steadily increasing the number of companies that take their first step forward by leveraging open innovation. The fact that companies that participated in JMS have continued to proactively broaden the scope of their activities thereafter demonstrates that the direction pursued by the OISG is beginning to take tangible shape on the ground.