

The World's Sixth Microsoft AI Co-Innovation Lab Opened in Kobe to Drive Innovation

Microsoft Japan opened the sixth [Microsoft AI Co-Innovation Lab](#) worldwide in Kobe on October 11 with an opening ceremony at the Kobe Commerce, Industry, and Trade Center where the Lab is located. Miki Tsusaka, President of Microsoft Japan Co., Ltd. was joined by Masahito Moriyama, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Yasuhiko Hashimoto, President and CEO of Kawasaki Heavy Industries Ltd. (KHI), Kizo Hisamoto, Mayor of Kobe, and other ceremony guests to cut the ribbon.

Microsoft worked with KHI and the city of Kobe to establish the Microsoft AI Co-Innovation Lab in Kobe. The Lab is a facility for driving AI- and IoT-powered innovation and developing industry through supporting the endeavors of startups and other companies exploring new possibilities for products and services that leverage AI.

“Through this Lab, we hope to support customers throughout Japan by discussing with them how they can safely put AI to use in their business to accelerate their growth,” Microsoft Japan President Miki Tsusaka said to kick off the ceremony.

She was followed by Jun Yamasaki, Head of Microsoft AI Co-Innovation Labs globally, who provided an overview of the initiative.

Microsoft AI Co-Innovation Lab Overview

Jun Yamasaki, Microsoft Corporation Head of Microsoft AI Co-Innovation Labs and Director, Data & AI Business Development

Organizations are turning to AI in increasing numbers to streamline their operations, but people frequently say that researching the right AI solutions and how they should be combined to fit today's complex manufacturing demands takes an inordinate amount of time. Microsoft AI Co-Innovation Lab is a place where people can come to minimize such time and learn about the kind of AI they need to optimize their manufacturing. In some cases, the help they receive can speed up their projects by months.

Since opening in Redmond, USA in 2017, Microsoft AI Co-Innovation Labs have engaged with over 800 companies in Germany (Munich), China (Shanghai), USA (San Francisco), and Uruguay (Montevideo). We believe that Kobe, which will be the sixth lab worldwide, will become an innovation hub for AI and the industrial metaverse not only in Japan but throughout Asia.

Microsoft experts will be on hand at the Kobe Lab to provide customers with one-on-one support for their manufacturing and business needs by exploring how they can incorporate AI to best effect according to their particular circumstances. The Lab will also support companies of any size including startups if they are already using, or thinking of using [Microsoft Azure](#). In line with the principle of co-innovation, projects with customers are contingent on client engineers involved in the project committing themselves to a development period of about one month, one week of which is to be spent at the Lab participating in development work.

In addition to functioning as a facility for carrying out projects with customers, the Lab will also showcase solutions co-created with partner companies and serve as a place for people to experience innovation. We will

be focusing on demonstration booths, but are planning to also hold seminars, hackathons and provide other experiences that will further enhance the Lab's value as a place to learn.

The Lab will perform multiple roles, including driving AI/IoT-powered innovation, promoting open, cross-industry innovation, building engineer networks, developing tech talent through collaboration with government and academia as well as the private sector, and helping to breathe new life into regional industries and energize regional communities.

The Japan Lab's services will in principle be free of charge to companies recommended by Kobe City and Microsoft, but clients may be charged expenses for use of the Lab for intensive engagement, exhibiting in the demonstration area, holding events, collaborating on regional open innovation, and such like.

Special guests at the opening ceremony voiced high expectations for the Lab.

"The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) is putting much effort into promoting AI research and development in various fields, and we are delighted that Microsoft chose to establish its first co-innovation lab in Japan here in Kobe. We have high hopes that the Lab will, by working with companies and educational institutions, help generate innovation to solve social issues and create a better society." (Masahito Moriyama, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology)

"From now on, more and more products will connect to networks and digital technologies, greatly expanding their value and creating new value. This Lab will be a magnet for businesses to meet and create new opportunities. As the company that led the effort to bring the Lab to Kobe, we are confident that it will become a major force in driving the city's further development." (Yasuhiko Hashimoto, President and CEO, Kawasaki Heavy Industries, Ltd.)

"Last October, I visited Microsoft's headquarters near Seattle, Kobe's sister city. I never dreamed that we could get Microsoft to establish a facility like this in Kobe, but as the city's government, we fervently hope that the Lab will contribute to the local community and give birth to ideas that will help solve both local and global problems." (Kizo Hisamoto, Mayor of Kobe)

"I am looking forward to a future in which manufacturing and AI are connected to create better products that can be used from all over Asia as well as Japan. I also have high expectations for joint development between industries regardless of scale and type, collaboration with universities on human resource development, and utilization of the Lab's open space." (Tadakazu Kawanami, Vice President, Kobe City Assembly)

"Kobe University has long pursued collaboration with industry and government, and is in the process of establishing a College of Systems Informatics for nurturing people capable of developing AI technology, so we very much welcome the opening of this facility. Taking advantage of the opportunities the Lab offers for internships and education, we will work with local companies to focus on nurturing people with outstanding talent to support the development of AI technology." (Masato Fujisawa, President, Kobe University)

We also received the following video message from Yasutoshi Nishimura, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry.

"We very much welcome Microsoft's support for AI utilization by various organizations. Kobe is home to some of Japan's leading manufacturers and healthcare-related companies, as well as many startups, making it an ideal location for developing usage examples. I have high hopes for the role the Lab will play in driving the development of new industry both in Kobe and throughout Japan."

Microsoft will use the Lab to support AI-powered business transformation in Japan and the Asian region.

