



SMBC日興証券



Fracton



UTokyoIPC

Innovation Platform  
for The University of Tokyo

PrimeBeat

April 6, 2026

SMBC Nikko Securities Inc.  
Fracton Ventures Inc.  
Next Finance Tech Co., Ltd.  
UTokyo Innovation Platform Co., Ltd.  
Prime Beat Inc.

## **AUTON: Acceleration Program for Agentic Innovation in DeFi with AI Talent** **Applications Now Open**

SMBC Nikko Securities Inc., Fracton Ventures Inc., Next Finance Tech Co., Ltd., UTokyo Innovation Platform Co., Ltd., and Prime Beat Inc. have joined forces to launch AUTON, a new initiative designed to encourage more interaction between Artificial Intelligence (AI) talent and decentralized finance (DeFi) talent, and invigorate collaborative new venture creation. The program is now open for applications from emerging AI students, researchers and engineers who are motivated to explore decentralized finance.

With the increasing adoption of stablecoins and the emergence of payment rails that enable AI agents to execute transactions autonomously, AI is set to become an increasingly important tool in DeFi markets. While AI is already applied across many industries, this program aims to introduce rising talent to the unique challenges and possibilities of decentralized finance and inspire them to continue innovating in this emerging sector.

AUTON is an acceleration program that brings together young AI researchers and engineers to learn from leading experts in the DeFi space and provides the support they need to build innovative solutions using AI, through a hybrid offline and online course. Over the course of three months, selected participants will receive training in foundational DeFi concepts, technical support from technology partners, mentoring to refine their solutions, and access to a network of global DeFi companies and investors. Outstanding presentations in the final demo day may also receive go-to-market support to launch globally.

The inaugural program is supported by Jupiter, a decentralized exchange and liquidity aggregator<sup>\*1</sup> boasting the highest TVL<sup>\*2</sup> on the Solana blockchain; Jito, a leading staking service provider<sup>\*3</sup> on the same chain; and Reactive Network, an on-chain data automation layer that enables reactive smart contract execution triggered by events with only gas fees<sup>\*4</sup>. AUTON also collaborates with partners such as The Frontier Technologies Laboratory, University of Cambridge (FTL)<sup>\*5</sup> and Asia Web3 Alliance Japan<sup>\*6</sup> to leverage global networks and sandbox<sup>\*7</sup> opportunities across research, business, and regulatory fields.

\*1 Liquidity aggregators consolidate price feeds from multiple decentralized exchanges (DEXs) and liquidity pools into one interface to optimize trading.

\*2 TVL (Total Value Locked) refers to the total value of assets deposited in a DeFi protocol. It is often used as an indicator of user engagement, liquidity, user engagement, and overall health of the DeFi project.

\*3 Staking is the process of locking up cryptocurrencies to support a blockchain network's security and operations, participants earn rewards much like interest. Staking service providers manage the technical complexities for users.

\*4 Transaction fees on the blockchain paid to process operations such as transferring tokens or executing other transactions.

\*5 The Frontier Technologies Laboratory at the University of Cambridge is collaborating with the University of Oxford, Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to develop an 'Open Innovation Ecosystem'.

\*6 Asia Web3 Alliance Japan promotes collaboration and growth among companies, talent, and innovation in the Web3 sector across Japan and Asia, while also supporting startups with regulatory compliance, international expansion, and go-to-market strategies.

This translation is based on the press release in Japanese announced on April 6, 2026. The content of the translation may not be coincident with the original.

\*7 A controlled environment overseen by regulators where firms can live-test innovative products, services, or business models with real consumers without immediately complying with all standard regulatory requirements.

**【Outline of the Program】**

Program Title	AUTON
Eligibility Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prior experience implementing machine learning models or contributing to AI related projects (coursework, research, or personal projects are accepted).</li> <li>- Motivation to learn the basics of blockchain, smart contracts, and DeFi protocols.</li> <li>- Able to participate in the final demo day in Tokyo, July 2026 in-person.</li> <li>- Able to commit 6 – 8 hours per week during the course of the program.</li> </ul>
Main Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intelligent Yield Farming</li> <li>- DeFi Agent Generator</li> <li>- DeFi Protocol Auditor</li> <li>- Copy Trading agents</li> <li>- AI agent Credit Scoring</li> <li>- Agent2Agent Crypto Payment Systems</li> </ul>
Program Schedule	<p>April 2026 – July 2026</p> <p>Opening Ceremony will be held on May 17, 2026 in person.</p>
Application Period	April 6, 2026 – April 19, 2026
Official Website	<a href="https://auton-program.xyz/">https://auton-program.xyz/</a>
Contact	kazuya@fracton.ventures

**Company Profiles**

Company Name : SMBC Nikko Securities Inc.

Representative: Shuji Yoshioka, President & CEO

Headquarters : Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo

Business: A comprehensive securities company that offers investment portfolio consulting services through its retail operations, as well as wholesale services for listed companies and institutional investors. Through both its retail and wholesale operations, the company provides a wide range of financial services to clients in both Japan and overseas. Additionally, the company supports clients’ investment activities through sales and trading, product development and provision, as well as research and information dissemination based on market analyses.

Website: <http://smbcnikko.co.jp/en/>

Company Name: Fracton Ventures Inc.

Representative: Yudai Suzuki / Toshi Kamei, Co-founders

Headquarters : Shinagawa-ku Tokyo

Business: As Japan’s first crypto-focused incubator and venture studio, we specialize in incubation activities centered on the Ethereum ecosystem. We also promote the utilization and on-chain integration of digital assets by companies and projects, supporting the creation of a new digital asset economy built on Ethereum.

Website: <https://fracton.ventures/>

Company Name: Next Finance Tech Co., Ltd.

Representative: Soichiro Tokuriki, Co-founder CEO

Headquarters : Minato-ku Tokyo

Business: Next Finance Tech Inc. is a blockchain infrastructure company based in Japan, providing staking services to both domestic and global corporate clients as a node operator. Leveraging its proven track record, the company offers a wide range of solutions, including the development of crypto asset management systems and consulting services.

Website: <https://nxt-fintech.com/en/>

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Company Name : UTokyo Innovation Platform Co., Ltd.

Representative: Kosuke Ueda, Representative Director

Headquarters : Bunkyo-ku Tokyo

Business: UTokyo IPC is an investment company established with 100% funding from the University of Tokyo. Focused on investment and commercialization support for academia-originated startups, Todai IPC manages multiple funds totaling nearly 60 billion yen. The company also operates “1stRound,” one of Japan’s largest cross-academia startup growth support programs, in collaboration with 22 universities and 5 research institutes. Through the creation of globally competitive startups and ecosystem building, UTokyo IPC is dedicated to strengthening Japan’s industrial competitiveness on the world stage.

Website: <https://www.utokyo-ipc.co.jp/en/>

Company Name: Prime Beat Inc.

Representative: Tatsunari Shibuya, CEO

Headquarters : Shibuya-ku Tokyo

Business: As a blockchain startup originating from the University of Tokyo, Prime Beat Inc. offers comprehensive services for enterprises, including token design, protocol architecture, implementation, development support, and connections to overseas markets. The company supports the development of economic systems and platforms where people, AI, and machines create and exchange value.

Website: <https://www.prime-beat.com/>