

# 2025 ORBITAL EDGE ACCELERATOR

## ADVANCING COMMERCIAL SPACE TECHNOLOGIES FROM CONCEPT TO ORBIT

### OVERVIEW:

The Orbital Edge Accelerator is a premier commercialization program designed to accelerate early-stage U.S. space ventures developing technologies for low Earth orbit (LEO) and beyond. Delivered by TechConnect in partnership with the International Space Station National Laboratory® (ISS National Lab) and leading venture investors, the Accelerator provides founders with a rare combination of capital, mentorship, and direct pathways to space-based validation.

In 2025, Orbital Edge supported six high-potential companies through a structured, hybrid program that blended intensive mentorship, investor engagement, technical curriculum, and exposure to national-stage audiences—positioning participants to advance both commercial readiness and spaceflight feasibility.

### THE CHALLENGE:

Commercial space startups face a uniquely complex path to market. Long development timelines, capital intensity, regulatory hurdles, and limited access to orbital infrastructure can stall even the most promising technologies. While many accelerators focus on business fundamentals alone, few are equipped to help companies bridge the gap between terrestrial validation and on-orbit deployment.

The Orbital Edge Accelerator was designed to address this gap—reducing barriers to orbital access while aligning private investment, technical expertise, and national laboratory resources into a single, integrated commercialization pathway.

### THE OPPORTUNITY:

With the International Space Station approaching its transition and commercial LEO destinations on the horizon, the demand for flight-ready, space-qualified technologies is accelerating. Orbital Edge capitalizes on this moment by identifying early-stage companies with strong technical foundations and helping them mature into credible candidates for orbital testing, investment, and long-term market adoption.

By combining investor capital, deep technical mentorship, and direct engagement with ISS National Lab stakeholders, the program creates a launchpad for companies seeking to move from concept to orbit—while strengthening the broader U.S. commercial space ecosystem.

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### THE PROGRAM:

The 2025 Orbital Edge Accelerator cohort was selected through a competitive national application process evaluating technical merit, business viability, readiness for space-based testing, and commercialization potential. Over several months, participants engaged in a rigorous hybrid program that included:

- » 84 mentors spanning industry, investment, academia, and government
- » 500+ one-on-one mentor meetings delivering tailored technical and business guidance
- » 16 virtual curriculum sessions led by 26 expert instructors
- » Three in-person mentor sessions and one virtual session across key innovation hubs
- » National-stage visibility, including conference-level speaking opportunities and Demo Day

Curriculum topics ranged from orbital manufacturing and regulatory pathways to capital strategy, go-to-market planning, and investor readiness—ensuring companies advanced holistically across technical and commercial dimensions.

### INVESTMENT AND SUPPORT:

Each selected company received \$500,000 in investment, provided by Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI), E2MC Ventures, and Stellar Ventures, enabling participants to advance prototypes, expand teams, and prepare for commercial growth. In addition, cohort members were granted \$100,000 in Amazon Web Services (AWS) credits to support data processing, simulation, and mission-design capabilities.

Operational costs were supported by ISS National Lab and program partners, allowing companies to participate at no cost—making Orbital Edge one of the only accelerators to combine investor funding, deep mentorship, and direct access to orbital infrastructure in a single program.

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### OUTCOMES AND IMPACT:

The 2025 Orbital Edge Accelerator attracted 193 applicants from 38 states, with 153 qualified leads advancing through the review process. The final cohort reflected strong diversity and technical readiness:

- » 100% early-stage startups
- » 50% minority-owned
- » 33% veteran-owned
- » TRL distribution concentrated at TRL 4–6, signaling readiness for space-based testing

Beyond the cohort, Orbital Edge generated significant ecosystem engagement through public events and outreach:

- » 127 Demo Day registrants
- » 395 webinar registrants
- » 200+ participants across application-stage networking receptions
- » A multi-channel marketing campaign reaching an average audience of 120,000+, supported by partners including AWS, BAE Systems, BCG, Greenberg Traurig, and J.P. Morgan

### LASTING VALUE:

By aligning early-stage companies with investors, national laboratories, and commercial partners, the Orbital Edge Accelerator delivers durable value beyond the program timeline. Participants leave with clearer commercialization pathways, stronger investor positioning, and credible routes to orbital validation—while partners gain early visibility into the next generation of space-ready technologies.

The 2025 program reinforced Orbital Edge's role as a catalyst for the U.S. commercial space economy, demonstrating how targeted acceleration can translate innovation into real-world impact—on Earth and in orbit.