

Sakana AI raises about \$200m in a Series A round that includes NVIDIA and Japan's three megabanks

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Source: <https://sakana.ai/series-a/>

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Updated on Sept 17, 2024 with additional details.

Sakana AI is a new AI R&D company based in Tokyo, Japan. Our team has proven track records of developing breakthroughs in AI, where we take pride in setting the trend in AI development. We aim to develop transformative AI that will bring us into the next paradigm. The main focus of our research and development of new kinds of foundation models is based on nature-inspired intelligence.

The name sakana is derived from the Japanese word さかな (sa-ka-na) which means fish. Our logo is meant to invoke the idea of a school of fish coming together and forming a coherent entity from simple rules as we want to make use of ideas from nature such as evolution and collective intelligence in our research. The red fish swimming away represents our desire to not simply do what everyone else does, but to pursue what we believe is coming next!

Series A Funding Round

We are thrilled to announce our Series A Funding Round, where we are proud to raise approximately \$200M from key investors and partners who believe in our mission. Our Series A round is led by New Enterprise Associates , Khosla Ventures and Lux Capital , with participation from Translink Capital , 500 Global and NVIDIA . We are also excited to announce a new collaboration with NVIDIA around research, infrastructure and AI community building in Japan!

We have also received investments from leading Japanese companies. We are very honored and humbled by the addition of leading Japanese banking groups: Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group (MUFG), Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation (SMBC) and Mizuho Financial Group , as well as industry leaders: NEC , SBI Group , Dai-ichi Life Insurance , ITOCHU , KDDI , Fujitsu , Nomura Holdings , ANA Holdings , and Tokio Marine Group , among others, as our strategic investors. From the Japanese VC community, we received investments from Global Brain , JAFCO and Miyako Capital . We are honored and humbled by their participation in our Series A.

NVIDIA Collaboration

Our collaboration with NVIDIA is built on three key pillars:

Research Collaboration

Sakana AI continues to push the frontiers of AI innovation, devising new techniques for more efficient foundation model development. Access to NVIDIA's GPU technologies will help us in our current pursuits towards scaling evolutionary optimization methods or utilizing sparsity, to name just a few use cases.

Data Centers in Japan

Sakana AI brings experience in conducting AI research to the table, in addition to an acute understanding of Japan's unique domestic needs to enhance model development. Our early access to data centers supported by NVIDIA will allow us to help run experiments during the initial testing phases to ensure Japan has a competitive advantage in AI development leveraging NVIDIA's latest technologies.

Developing Japan's AI Community

The current AI talent landscape in Japan is technically limited compared with those found in leading cities in China

and the US. However, this relationship offers possibilities to change that: Sakana AI's advanced AI capabilities, with support from NVIDIA, has the potential to raise the profile of Japan's AI community. We hope to increase activities in the AI community in Japan, including event hosting, hackathons and university outreach.

Llion Jones (CTO) at GTC24's "Transforming AI" session, hosted by Jensen Huang. (Source: NVIDIA GTC)

Why did our partners invest in Sakana AI?

"Countries are embracing Sovereign AI to capture and codify their data, culture and language through their own unique large language models. The team at Sakana AI is helping spur the democratization of AI in Japan by developing cutting-edge foundation models to automate and speed up scientific discovery with NVIDIA's accelerated computing platform."

— Jensen Huang , Founder and CEO of NVIDIA

"While many labs globally are trying to catch up, and train foundation models by using the same techniques as everyone else, Japan's Sakana AI is showing the path to innovation. We have been early investors and are thrilled to have NVIDIA join us on this journey."

— Vinod Khosla , Founder of Khosla Ventures

What's next for Sakana AI?

Japan, being one of the most advanced and culturally significant countries in the world, is facing many crucial challenges this century. These challenges include facing a declining population, decreased competitiveness and increasing geopolitical tensions.

While AI alone will certainly not solve all of Japan's problems, we believe AI can help! We want to take a longer-term approach. We aim to build a world-class AI lab in Japan, to produce technologies that can help Japan and its allies cope with challenges that Japan will face for the rest of the 21st century. This is a daunting task, especially for a small startup company, which will require years of R&D and building long-term relationships with key stakeholders in the nation.

With the resources gathered from our Series A, we aim to continue to invest in talent and build one of the highest talent-dense AI companies. We will also continue to invest heavily in developing our infrastructure which will be critical in our mission to advancing nature-inspired, sustainable and energy-efficient AI technologies.

We believe our technology will help Japan regain a technological edge in AI, and increase its global competitiveness. We also aim to deploy our technology to assist Japan, its institutions and its citizens overcome its challenges in the road ahead.

We're Hiring!

Interested in joining us? Please see our career opportunities for more information.

Preparing for the road ahead.