**TAKEOFF**

**TAKEOFF** is Malta’s first technology business incubator based within the CEBI Enterprise Campus at the University of Malta.  TAKEOFF is specifically modelled to help incubatees create successful STEAM – science, technology, engineering, creative media and knowledge-based, start-up enterprise.

The incubator is situated at Dar Guzeppi Zahra within the University complex, and is a start-up development space that helps innovators and aspiring entrepreneurs create thriving technology and knowledge-based ventures. It provides fledgling start-up companies with private and shared work spaces and most importantly business support, advice and vital connections.

The TakeOff Seed Fund Award (TOFSA) is Malta’s first funding programme designed to support early-stage technology and start-up company development. The award supports researchers and entrepreneurs with their innovative technologies and business concepts. A total of €100,000 is awarded through a competitive process whereby the best written applications are shortlisted for a live pitch in front of a panel of judges, with the top applicants receiving funding.

Takeoff Seed Fund Award is supported by the Ministry for The Economy, Investment and Small Businesses (MEIB), the University’s Knowledge Transfer Office (KTO), TAKEOFF Business Incubator, and the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Business Incubation (CEBI).

Entrepreneurs and start-ups working on ideas for innovative products and services are encouraged to apply for up to €20,000 in Seed funds, intended to take them a step closer to their first customer or investment. Researchers working on innovations developed through University R&D may apply for Proof of Concept funds to take their technology closer to commercialisation. Award winners will also receive mentoring and support for their endeavours through TAKEOFF and the Knowledge Transfer Office.

The past four cycles of the TAKEOFF Seed Fund Award have aided 21 start-ups and 12 proof of concept projects to bring their ventures closer to commercialisation.

Take Off also provides a seamless transition through its incubator, accelerator and catapult programmes, making it the only truly comprehensive enterprise growth facility in Malta.

The programmes offered are:

* The ***Incubator programme***, for anyone new to business irrespective of the business sector.
* The ***Accelerator programme***, for businesses looking to develop and grow an enterprise rapidly.
* The ***Catapult programme***, for businesses seeking significant finance and international growth.

The whole swathe of programmes allow fledgling enterprises transit from the idea nucleation phase to investment round readiness, while providing the necessary guidance and formation for healthy enterprise growth.

The programmes are drawn from over 20 years of research with enterprise and have proven to work both in terms of business funding and business sustainability with survival rate of 70% after 5 years. Take Off brings together innovators, entrepreneurs, mentors and investors, and aims to close the skills and resources gap experienced by new entrepreneurs as they embark on their start-up projects. Take Off delivers a customised package of benefits and guidance to entrepreneurs from inside and outside of the University of Malta together with mentoring through the CEBI MEnt graduates. The programme aims to help entrepreneurs transform their ideas into market- and investor-ready ventures.

**MALTA COMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY**

The Authority was set up in 2001 with the mandate of fostering competition in the various electronic communications markets, including fixed and mobile telephony, internet access and television distribution services. Increased competition has spearheaded the robust and efficient deployment of modern telecommunication networks with sustained investment coming from the private sector.

Along the years, MCA’s mandate has grown to include greater responsibilities: apart from being entrusted with the regulation of electronic communications, postal services and eCommerce, the MCA was tasked with facilitating and promoting the development of a digital society spurred by innovation in ICT.

Despite the increasing levels of digital business activity, Malta’s startup community is still at an emerging state, and is not as closely-knit as communities in more mature ecosystems. Such community formation and growth is critical to the ecosystem’s effectiveness, and this therefore constitutes an area where the MCA seeks to intervene.

The MCA thus undertakes initiatives aimed at supporting and measuring the growth of Malta’s digital business community. Through the organisation and support of community networking events, the Authority contributes towards bringing Malta’s digital businesses closer to each other as well as to bridge the community with Government and other support stakeholders.

The flagship initiative within MCA is ZEST Malta, a two-day conference and networking event held for the first time in 2016. ZEST is now organised on a yearly basis and serves as an excellent platform to bring together the tech startup community, providing the perfect opportunity for members to meet, discuss and connect.

ZEST offers a sterling speaker line-up that delivers valuable content through talks, panels and workshops on technology, disruption and all things startups. ZEST contributes to educating newcomers, especially youths attracted to tech entrepreneurship, and enabled them to link up with others, propose ideas and gain feedback. ZEST also serves as a showcase for home-grown success stories, giving Malta an opportunity to present itself as a startup-friendly place, to attract more activity and talent to base operations here.

The MCA activity includes also a number of initiatives aimed at fostering an innovation culture in Malta. Initiatives focus on encouraging and promoting home-grown tech entrepreneurship, as well as the granting of official recognition to Malta’s success stories. To address its innovation mandate, the Authority channels significant effort towards promoting a culture that favours home-grown tech entrepreneurship. In 2014, the MCA forged an alliance with [TAKEOFF Business Incubator](http://www.takeoff.org.mt/) at the University of Malta and oversaw the granting of a €20,000 seed fund to a promising tech startup.

MCA organises [Budding Rockstars](https://www.facebook.com/buddingrockstars/?fref=ts) to raise awareness on tech entrepreneurship amongst Secondary school students. These events are attended by students and their accompanying teachers and career guidance staff from across all schools in Malta and Gozo. By drawing on the students’ academic performance in the preceding year, the event successfully targets Malta’s brightest young minds, seeking to instil in them an entrepreneurial mindset.

**Startups**

**Lord Chambray Beers**

Lord Chambray Brewery is a craft brewery on the island of Gozo, the first one of its kind in Malta’s history. The brewery was founded in 2014 by the D’Imperio family who first visited Gozo in the late ‘90s and immediately fell in love with it. At Lord Chambray, a quality approach has been taken in every single aspect of the business, from the ingredients chosen to the brewing process, including the brewery and bottling equipment. With the help of an architect and interior designer [Marco Preti](http://www.marcopretidesigner.com/), the iconic “LC” logo of Lord Chambray was designed and finally dream came true.

http://www.lordchambray.com.mt/

**LOOP Digital**

Loop Digital is a multinational digital agency offering holistic solutions. Committed to take businesses to the next level, LOOP is constantly trying to deliver platforms that attract and encourage users to engage with.

http://loop.com.mt/company/

**Desiree Design Works**

By profession, Désirée Azzopardi is a fully qualified interior designer. Having studied in Spain, the UK and Malta, she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 3D Design & Interiors, and has been running her own practice since 2010. Her work is a culmination of her love for product design, fashion and interiors. Developing from an ongoing passion for the arts, fashion, and all things beautiful, Désirée designer shoes and bags are nothing like anything mass-produced, but rather, like what you would expect to see at an art gallery.

http://www.desireedesignworks.com/

**Headstart Technologies**

Headstart Technology Ltd was recently shortlisted as one of the finalists for ‘Ideas from Malta’. The company was recognised for the work it has been doing through its EasyPeasyCoding brand to rethink the way coding is taught and learned. Since its inception which started a year ago at the TakeOff Incubator of the University of Malta, Headstart Technology has rolled out EasyPeasyCoding courses to seven​ schools in Malta and ​two ​in Paris, trained hundreds of students, and networked with thousands more at events promoting the importance of coding for children of all ages.

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