

منصة أبوظبي للأعمال
ABU DHABI SME HUB

Abu Dhabi Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Map Out Report 2021



مندوق خايفة التطوير المشاريع
Khaila Fund for Enterprise Development

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Foreword

The Government of Abu Dhabi, the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development (ADDED), and other associated entities have centered their focus on strengthening the economy of Abu Dhabi, driving innovation and sustainable economic development, guided by the vision of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, and Ruler of Abu Dhabi, and mandated by His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Chairman of the Executive Council.

Produced by the Abu Dhabi SME Hub, one of the Khalifa Fund for Enterprise and Development's (KFED) latest initiatives, this report maps out Abu Dhabi's business ecosystem.



In conversation with different stakeholders, the report collects their insights on opportunities for growth and notable trends shaping the SME ecosystem of Abu Dhabi.



متموكة خليفة
Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development

Through the report, the Abu Dhabi SME Hub explores the evolving business environment and the new transformative regulations Abu Dhabi and the greater UAE have been adopting, including the recently updated Commercial Companies Law, which permits foreign investors to fully own a company.

It furthermore scopes out the most prominent stakeholders serving mSMEs, as the backbone and engine for the emirate's economic growth and sustainable development.

By presenting entities including government offices, free zones & regulators, funds, accelerators, incubators and beyond, the Abu Dhabi SME Hub explores the active role they play in driving entrepreneurship across the Emirate, shedding light on the value they offer to startups and mSMEs.

In conversation with different stakeholders, the report collects their insights on opportunities for growth and notable trends shaping the SME ecosystem of Abu Dhabi.

Whether you are an entrepreneur looking for the right location to launch your enterprise, an existing business looking for growth opportunities, or a foreign investor considering starting a business in Abu Dhabi, we hope you find this report useful, and we look forward to working with you in our emirate.

**H.E. Mohamed Ali
Al Shorafa Al Hammadi**

**Chairman, Abu Dhabi Department
of Economic Development
& Khalifa Fund for
Enterprise Development**



About us

منصة أبوظبي للأعمال
ABU DHABI SME HUB



www.adsmehub.ae

The Abu Dhabi SME Hub is among the latest initiatives from the Khalifa Fund. An interactive digital platform, the Abu Dhabi SME Hub is dedicated to informing and educating entrepreneurs, leading startups and small and medium enterprises alike in the United Arab Emirates.

By connecting the dots of Abu Dhabi's ecosystem, the Hub aims to to empower and provide value to entrepreneurs and the emirate's stakeholders alike. The platform brings the business community together under one platform to ensure resources are made available to startup and SME entrepreneurs across the emirate and beyond.

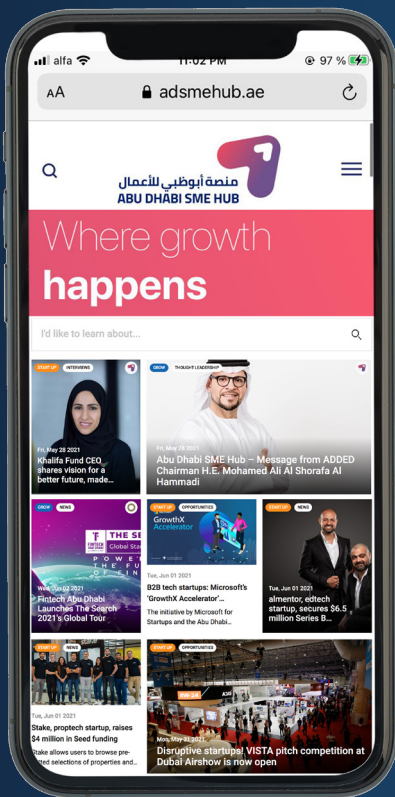
In partnerships with ecosystem stakeholder and industry entities, the Abu Dhabi SME Hub will support SMEs of all stages, providing the tools they need to navigate the local UAE ecosystem, as well as to grow, thrive and innovate both in the context of best business practices and new technologies.

Ecosystem Map Out

Published by the Khalifa Fund and digitalized on the platform, the Abu Dhabi 'Ecosystem Map Out' will provide an overview of major startup and MSME-focused stakeholders in Abu Dhabi, presenting their initiatives, and sharing their insights and stories.

Updated on an annual basis, we invite all stakeholders contributing to the growth of the startup and MSME sector to share information that will enrich this document, so as to offer entrepreneurs a practical guide to understand Abu Dhabi's business environment.

In parallel, we also look forward to highlighting the emirate's most notable entrepreneurs, and we also invite business leaders to share their growth and success stories with us.



1 Navigating Abu Dhabi: Economic Landscape

In the past couple of decades, the UAE economy has undergone a complete metamorphosis, with a prioritized shift away from oil dependence. To actualize this transformation, the UAE government enacted several initiatives, focusing on the transition to a knowledge-based economy, one that is mainly driven by technological advancement, innovation and forward-looking investments. Abu Dhabi, the capital of the UAE, has been at the heart of this evolution.

Today, Abu Dhabi serves as a highly strategic destination for business owners and investors, ranked number one in the region for ease of doing business, while offering unrivalled connectivity to the business world, with 80 percent of the world's population within an eight-hour flight.

Coupled with one of the world's most accommodating tax environments (0% corporation tax and 0% income tax), a world-class talent pool and a quality of life unmatched anywhere else in the region, Abu Dhabi has cemented itself as the place to do business in the GCC.

Many of Abu Dhabi's latest developments have been spurred by its Ghadan 21 initiative, a AED 50 billion, three-year accelerator programme envisioned and launched by HH Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces and Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council, in 2019.

Ghadan 21 was introduced with four pillars in mind: business and investment, society, knowledge and innovation, and lifestyle. It will be concluding this year, having bestowed upon the emirate, its business ecosystem, and its people, countless advancements and improvements.

The recently unveiled "Thrive in Abu Dhabi" programme, which offers long-term Creative Visas and a pathway to citizenship for international talent working, creating, studying, excelling and investing in key sectors and specialties in the Emirate, makes Abu Dhabi a viable destination to live, work, invest and innovate for years to come.

Supported by leading entities such as Abu Dhabi Global Market, Abu Dhabi Investment Office (ADIO), the Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development (KFED), Hub71, diverse Free Zones, and the Mubadala sovereign wealth fund, among others, the business ecosystem in the Emirate has been thriving.

A leading business destination

Pre and post COVID-19, the UAE maintains a prominent economic position on the world stage. Ranking 9th in the world among the most competitive countries, the country came first for the fourth consecutive year among MENA countries in the World Competitiveness Yearbook 2020 report. It ranked 16th globally in the World Bank's "Doing Business" report and ranked first in the Arab world for the seventh year in a row.

Abu Dhabi's enabling business environment

Abu Dhabi is a proven expansion ground and a gateway to the world's fastest growing economies

A strong and stable economy

GDP of **\$249B** in 2019¹

30 UAE's economy is among the top globally²

60% Abu Dhabi's contribution to the UAE's GDP³

1 2019, SCAD Yearbook GDP at Current Prices (AED 915bn)

2 2018, World Bank GDP rankings

3 2018, UAE MoE Annual Economic Report

Established infrastructure

80% of the world within an 8-hour flight

1st capital in the world to have 100% fiber-to-the-home connection⁴

#1 smartest city in MENA in terms of Smart City Development⁵

4 2016, Abu Dhabi Competitiveness Report 2016

5 2020, IMD Smart City Index

Business friendly

12th globally for ease of doing business⁶
#1 in the region

100% foreign ownership across locations and activities⁷

0% income tax

6 2020, World Bank Doing Business Subnational Report

7 2020, Federal Decree Law No. 26 of 2020, except strategic sectors

A place residents love to call home

#1 happiest city in the Arab Region⁸

15th best city for expats globally⁹
most liveable city in the Gulf region¹⁰

#1 safest city in the world¹¹

8 2020, World Happiness Report

9 2019, InterNations

10 EIU Global Liveability Index 2021

11 2019, Numbeo

Abu Dhabi offers an ideal testbed for innovation and a regional platform for growth

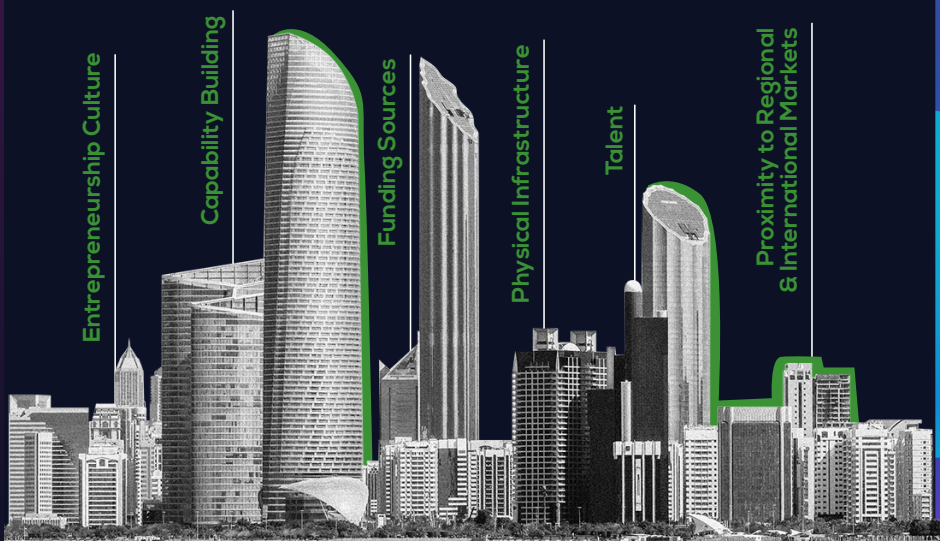
With well-established, quality infrastructure, a strong banking system and a stable political system, Abu Dhabi also offers 5 specialised free zones, 5G internet, 100% fiber-to-the-home connection, and an international airport that connects to over a 100 global cities.

Overall, the UAE attracts a highly skilled workforce, working for a growing number of international companies, professional service firms and financial institutions. The country is also in the process of adopting a new strategy for talent attraction and retention, a move that will contribute to strengthening the country's leading position as a preferred destination for living, working and investing.

The UAE is a global hub for trade and export and offers SMEs access to international markets, where they can trade safely and confidently. Abu Dhabi's strong economic and trade relations with countries in the MENA region and the rest of the world has resulted in a rising demand for non-oil products, highlighting the regional and global competitiveness of local goods.

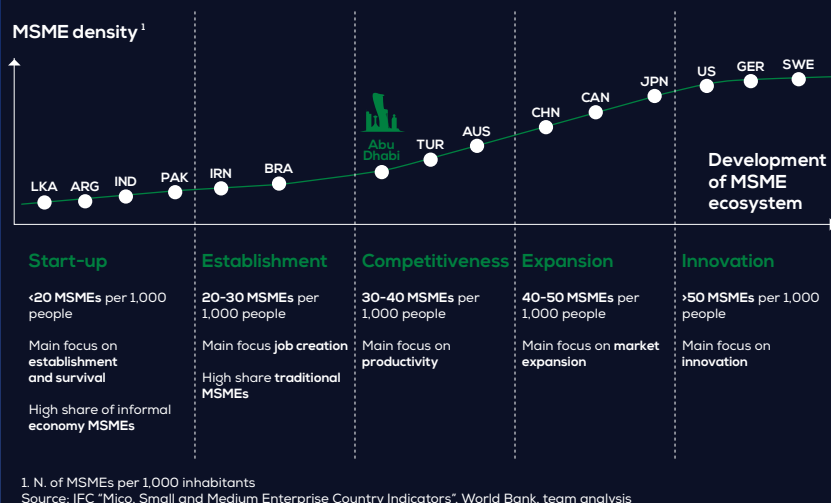
Ranked 5th globally in terms of attractive work environment, and 12th globally for ease of doing business, Abu Dhabi offers an entrepreneur-centric environment: it has no restriction on repatriation of capital, 0% income tax, and offers 2-year fee waiver for new licenses.

ADIO's Incentive Programme, ADQ, Mubadala Ventures, the region's second largest bank (FAB), and an established capital markets (ADX) all combine to offer an increasing variety of funding sources to support company growth.



2 The role of MSMEs for the Economy

2.1 Where does Abu Dhabi fall on the MSME development curve?



Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a major role in global economies: they account for the majority of businesses worldwide and are important contributors to job creation and global economic development.

Their importance to the UAE cannot be understated: in Abu Dhabi, MSMEs make up about 98% of the emirate's businesses and employ some 43% of the workforce. In 2017, they made up approximately 29% of the Abu Dhabi economy (44% in the non-oil economy.)¹

Startups and MSMEs, with different characteristics and across many sectors, can gear for high growth and become 'scaleups' – companies with a proven business model undergoing a rapid growth phase in order to seize new opportunities in markets, strengthen their competitive position, or respond to an increase in demand.

1. Abu Dhabi Chamber: Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Abu Dhabi (October 2019)

The right business environment is critical for a company's high growth towards becoming a scaleup: key factors weighing in on this transition include institutional and regulatory settings; or policies to ease access to markets and strategic resources for scaling up, such as growth capital, workers and management skills, as well as knowledge and technology to enable an entrepreneur's ambitions.

Today, given its increased competitiveness and renewed focus on providing a supportive environment for business leaders of small and medium enterprises across the spectrum, Abu Dhabi offers a fertile ground for local, regional and international startups and MSMEs to grow into major, large-scale enterprises, and become scaleups.

2.2 Defining MSMEs in the UAE

The size of an enterprise can be determined as small or medium based on the number of employees, annual revenues generated, total assets, or any combination of these. The definition also varies from industry to industry.

Through Cabinet Resolution No. 22 of 2016, the UAE Cabinet has issued a unified definition of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and (MSMEs) for the purposes of UAE law.

	 Service Sector	 Trading Sector	 Manufacturing Sector
Micro Enterprise	≤5 employees Or ≤ AED 2M annual revenues 	≤5 employees Or ≤ AED 3M annual revenues	≤9 employees Or ≤ AED 3M annual revenues
Small Enterprise	≤6-50 employees Or ≤ AED 20M annual revenues	≤6-50 employees Or ≤ AED 50M annual revenues 	≤10-100 employees Or ≤ AED 50M annual revenues
Medium Enterprise	≤51-200 employees Or ≤ AED 200M annual revenues	≤51-200 employees Or ≤ AED 250M annual revenues	≤101-250 employees Or ≤ AED 250M annual revenues 
Large Enterprise	≥ 200 employees Or ≥ AED 200M annual revenues	≥ 200 employees Or ≥ AED 250M annual revenues	≥ 250 employees Or ≥ AED 250M annual revenues 

UAE Cabinet's unified definition of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
(Cabinet Resolution No. 22 of 2016)

2.3 From a Startup & SME into a Scaleup

Startups and SMEs, with different characteristics and across many sectors, can scale up towards high growth.

This scaleup represents a transitory stage in the life of firms: it may be undertaken by business leaders right after the start-up phase, but also at any other stage of an enterprise's life cycle.

Startup

SME

Scaleup

Goals & Strategy

A startup's primary goal is to search for a repeatable and scalable business model via a process of testing, pivoting and validating innovative hypotheses. They tend to be focused on top-end revenue volume and growth potential.

Once the business model is proven, a startup focuses on the execution and changes from an agile innovative temporary organisation to a more structured delivery.

SMEs are driven by making a profit and developing their business offerings & stable long-term value.

They seek to build a sustainable position in a local market for themselves.

Scaleups are SMEs with a proven business model undergoing a rapid growth phase.

As high-growth companies, scaleups are ready to use their proven success to scale and grow their offerings.

The scaleup phase is typically the quickest and most significant stage of growth, and one that can bring the most challenges.

Organization & Management

A startup aims to grow into a large, disruptive company that has a significant impact on the existing market and may even be intent on creating new markets.

A startup will tend to have a spread of staff that can perform various roles and wear different hats in the workplace, and are more likely to have a 'hit the ground running' culture for their new starters.

An SME is a structured organisation that is focused on the delivery of value to known customers.

Relatively small, they are often more flexible and quicker to innovate than larger companies.

Their lean nature positions them well to embrace new trends and technologies.

Scaleups generally have a validated product with a demonstrated market-fit and sustainable unit economics.

With the transition into scaleups, organized systems help maintain quality control and deliver projects on time.

Scaleups tend to have a more focused workforce with concentrated specialisms, afforded by a bigger headcount.

Funding

In order to grow into a large disruptive enterprise, startups can raise money by way of equity funding.

By obtaining funds from external investors, entrepreneurs will agree to share profits with them and to give away a measure of control.

Common sources of finance for SMEs include owner financing, family and friends, business angels, trade credit, bank finance, factoring and invoice discounting, and potentially VC & PE if appropriate.

Scale ups have the option of continuing to raise equity funding from private investors, until they eventually decide to go public or to get acquired by another company.

The choice of funding has far-reaching implications for the strategy, governance and financing of the company, as they fundamentally reshape the company and the way it grows.

3 Abu Dhabi Covid Response

Since 2020 and the onset of COVID-19, the economy of Abu Dhabi has had to endure tremendous pressure. In light of this, the Emirate's leadership reacted swiftly to counter the effects of the pandemic on the country's open economy.

The combination of monetary stimuli, changes in regulatory framework, and measures on business costs are bringing about sizable gains in competitiveness.

In fact, London based analytics consortium, Deep Knowledge Group, ranked Abu Dhabi first for its response to the COVID-19 pandemic this year, topping a list of the world's 25 leading cities for their response to the virus including Seoul, Sydney, Singapore, Ottawa and Berlin.

Abu Dhabi led the world through its rapid and robust response, protecting the health and safety of its community with proactive and stringent precautionary measures, while supporting the economy with stimulus packages that provided critical and ongoing support to all sectors of the local economy.

COVID-19 countermeasures

Early in the pandemic crisis, the Central Bank of the UAE launched an AED 256 billion (US\$70 billion) monetary stimulus, relaxing a number of regulatory requirements for banks to ease repayment pressures for the private sector and boost domestic credit growth.

The introduction of a new Commercial Companies Law in December 2020, which permits foreign nationals 100% ownership in most industries, among others, marks a turning point for the business environment of the country.

In response to global economic challenges in 2020, the Abu Dhabi Executive Council launched an economic stimulus package, fast-tracking the implementation of key Ghadan 21 initiatives to mitigate the impact on the Emirate's economy, businesses and individuals of the global COVID-19 health crisis, ensuring continuous fiscal growth and preserving economic gains, lowering the cost of living and providing financial relief.



حكومة أبوظبي
GOVERNMENT OF ABU DHABI

Ghadan 21 initiatives

16 Economic Stimulus Package

Under the package, 16 initiatives have been announced to improve the ease of doing business and reduce the cost of living in the Emirate.

Its key aims are to ensure continuous growth of the economy and preserve economic gains, lower cost of living and provide financial relief.

17 Financial Initiatives

The Financial Initiatives programme was developed with FAB, ADIB and ADCB in coordination with the Department of Finance and the Department of Economic Development.

Collectively, these 17 initiatives seek to reduce finance-related costs and improve ease of access to financing for individuals and small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

To learn more: www.ghadan.abudhabi

3.1 7 initiatives for SMEs

For those impacted by COVID-19

- 1 Deferred instalments (principal & interest) on existing borrowing for up to 3 months for eligible customers until 30 Jun 2020 with no additional bank charges
- 2 Reduced bank's merchant service fees (credit card transactions) by 50% for eligible SME customers with usage below AED 5m per annum until 30 Jun 2020
- 3 Reduced banking fees and charges on Zero Balance accounts by up to 50% for eligible customers
- 4 Reduced Min. Average Balance requirements for all SME account categories to up to AED 10,000 per month for eligible customers

For all

- 5 Deferred instalments (principal & interest) on new borrowing for up to 3 months for eligible customers until 30 Jun 2020 with 50% reduction in associated bank charges
- 6 Reduced interest charges on new borrowing based on new prevailing interest rates for eligible customers
- 7 Reduced bank charges by 50% on early settlement of existing borrowing for eligible customers until 30 Jun 2020



3.2 e-Empower tools & services to accelerate Digital Transformation for Abu Dhabi Businesses



e-EMPOWER

Promoting Abu Dhabi SMEs

A Khalifa Fund Initiative

To learn more about how you can benefit from e-Empower webinars, workshops, preferential rates, digital support and more for your business:

www.adsmehub.ae/en/e-empower

In partnership with industry leaders, the Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development offers Abu Dhabi entrepreneurs & SME leaders the resources to transform digitally & innovate. They can leverage e-Empower webinars, workshops, preferential rates, digital support and more for their business.

e-commerce



noon



أكشاك
AKSHAAK

In partnership with Noon, Amazon and Akshaak, the e-Empower programme provides interactive eLearning content that will help small businesses thrive in the digital economy. The new programme will offer tools and insights to SMEs on how they can expand their businesses to reach millions of customers via **Noon**, **Amazon** and **Akshaak**.

Abu Dhabi based companies will furthermore be able to sign up on the e-commerce platforms. To be eligible for **Amazon** or **Noon**, companies should be based in Abu Dhabi and operating in manufacturing, wholesaling or retail. For listing on **Akshaak**, businesses should offer products including homemade food, fashion, jewelry, creative event ideas, creative artworks and more.

Companies will be filtered and verified by the platforms and the Khalifa Fund.

Technology & Services



Microsoft

The Khalifa Fund's strategic partnership with Etisalat and Microsoft focuses on helping Abu Dhabi mSMEs with Digital Transformation.

The program provides interactive eLearning content, online resources and preferential rates to help mSMEs and entrepreneurs start their business, upskill, reach new customers, learn new trends and succeed in their digital journey.

Additionally, Abu Dhabi mSMEs will be able to avail additional benefits, including special offers, eStore, Business edge, Office 365, and Hello Business Hub.

3.3 SME Credit Guarantee Scheme available via ADCB, ADIB and FAB in partnership with the Department of Finance

Available to all businesses in Abu Dhabi.

In the context of Abu Dhabi's Economic Stimulus Package, and as part of Ghadan 21, the Abu Dhabi Department of Finance initiated a new partnership with three major Abu Dhabi banks to provide more financing options for SMEs:



SME Growth Loan

www.adcb.com

SME Credit Guarantee Program

www.bankfab.com

SME credit guarantee scheme

www.adib.ae

Beneficiaries

Credit guarantees and growth loans are available to:

- All SMEs in Abu Dhabi (onshore and offshore), including National-owned and expatriate-owned SMEs
- SMEs registered as LLC, FZEs, Sole Proprietorship, Partnerships & Branches of foreign companies
- Small and medium enterprises in trading, manufacturing and services

Offerings


Types of facilities available under this scheme:


- Working capital facilities of up to 3 months
- Refinancing of current facilities with a tenure of more than 3 months and up to 4 years for working capital, guarantees, capex and growth capital
- Subject to the lending policies and terms and conditions of the respective banks

4 Bank account offerings for SMEs, startups and Tاجر license holders

Opening a bank account has recurrently been identified as a challenge by UAE-based business owners. Banks have however started introducing offerings that make it easier for Startups, SMEs, and Tاجر license holders to do so.

Are you an entrepreneur launching a business in the UAE? Here are some of the options you can consider when setting up your bank account (as of March 2021).

Smart Start			
 www.adcb.com			
Minimum Balance	Address Proof	Existing bank account for shareholder (with bank or in UAE)	Key charges & fees
No	Required (Home address accepted* Co-working space address accepted)	Not required	Monthly maintenance: AED 100 Local AED transfer fee (Online): free International transfers: N/A
Cross border transactions	Average opening time	Comment	Key documents required (other than address proof)
Not allowed (even in AED)	4 - 9 working days (delays can be due to nature of activity or for background check reasons)	AED Account only Non-digital application only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade license • Memorandum of Understanding • Commercial Registration • Chamber of Commerce Membership Certificate • Visa and Emirates ID of Signatory

Business One			
 www.adib.com			
Minimum Balance	Address Proof	Existing bank account for shareholder (with bank or in UAE)	Key charges & fees
AED 5,000	Required (Home address accepted* Co-working space address accepted)	Not required	Monthly maintenance: AED 300 Local AED transfer fee: AED 10 International & local non-AED transfer fee: AED 30
Cross border transactions	Average opening time	Comment	Key documents required (other than address proof)
Not allowed (even in AED)	~5 working days (delays can be due to nature of activity or for background check reasons)	Non-digital application only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade license • Memorandum of Understanding • Commercial Registration • Chamber of Commerce Membership Certificate • Visa and Emirates ID of Signatory


www.e20.ae

Minimum Balance	Address Proof	Existing bank account for shareholder (with bank or in UAE)	Key charges & fees
No	Required (Home address accepted* Co-working space address accepted)	Not required	Monthly maintenance: None (goes up to AED 150 for higher category accounts) Local transfer fee (Online): AED 5 (free for higher category accounts) International transfers: AED 50
Cross border transactions	Average opening time	Comment	Key documents required (other than address proof)
Allowed	Step 1: 10 min (obtain inactive acc. #) Step 2: 2 - 3 days (Activation & local transactions) Step 3: 6 days (Int'l transaction)	AED Account only (Foreign currencies possible in higher category accounts) Fully digital application only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade license • Memorandum of Understanding • Visa and Emirates ID of Signatory (Not requested again if provided directly by licensing authority)


www.mashreqneo.com

Minimum Balance	Address Proof	Existing bank account for shareholder (with bank or in UAE)	Key charges & fees
No	Required (Home address accepted* Co-working space address accepted)	Not required	Monthly maintenance: AED 200 (waived if min. balance is AED 50K) Local AED Fund transfer fee: AED 2 (after first 10 free transfers) International & local non-AED transfer fee: AED 20
Cross border transactions	Average opening time	Comment	Key documents required (other than address proof)
Allowed	3 - 5 working days (delays can be due to nature of activity or for background check reasons)	Fully digital application only (Speeds up KYC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade license • Memorandum of Understanding • Bank statements (international statements accepted) • Visa and Emirates ID of Signatory


www.rakbank.ae

Minimum Balance	Address Proof	Existing bank account for shareholder (with bank or in UAE)	Key charges & fees
No	Required (Home address accepted* Co-working space address accepted)	Not required	Monthly maintenance: AED 149 Local transfer fee (Online): AED 1 International transfers: AED 30 (after first 4 transfers)
Cross border transactions	Average opening time	Comment	Key documents required (other than address proof)
Allowed	4 - 7 working days (delays can be due to nature of activity or for background check reasons)	Fully digital application only (Speeds up KYC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade license • Memorandum of Understanding • Bank statements (international statements accepted) • Visa and Emirates ID of Signatory

5 New UAE regulations for a more forgiving business environment

التميمي و مستشاركوه
AL TAMIMI & CO.

Al Tamimi & Company Legal insights on new UAE regulations

The UAE has recently implemented some legislative texts that may facilitate the business environment and SMEs day-to-day operations. These include a new **Bankruptcy Law; Assets-backed Financing Law and the UAE Central Bank Market Conduct Regulation.**

5.1 Bankruptcy Law Federal Law No. 9 of 2016

Issued under Federal Decree No. 9 of 2016, the Federal Bankruptcy Law provides a number of options to prevent bankruptcy.

While civil and criminal charges previously applied in the event of dishonored or bounced cheques, the Bankruptcy Law is more debtor-friendly, and encourages a business to restructure so it can continue operations and repay creditors, instead of stopping operations completely as soon as it faces any form of financial difficulty.

The law improves prospects for credit rights and provides a more supportive environment for SMEs.

5.2 'Emergency Financial Crisis' Amendment to Federal Law Decree No. 9 of 2016

The UAE Cabinet approved amendments to the provisions of the Federal Law by Decree No. 9 of 2016 (Bankruptcy Law).

The amendments add provisions in response to emergency situations impacting trade or investment, and allow businesses to overcome credit challenges in times of hardship.

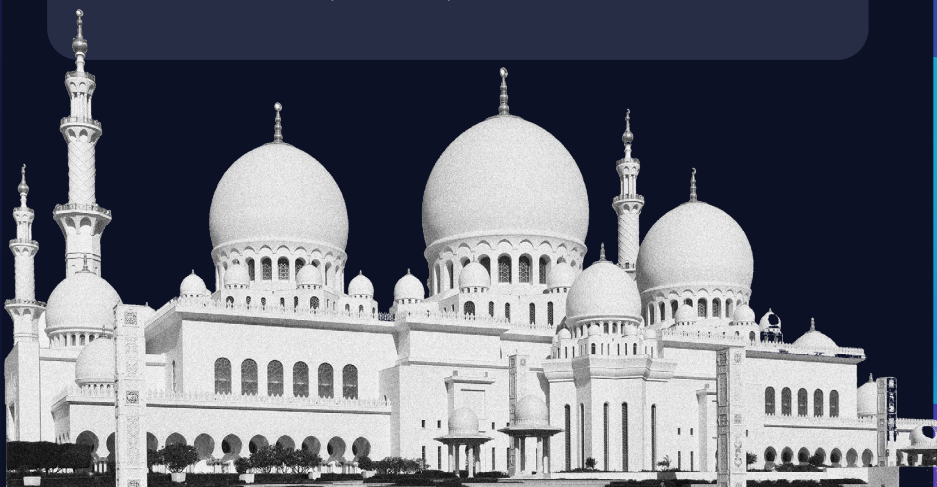
Key amendments specifically:

- i) Extend the 'stay' on judicial proceedings under either Protective Composition Proceedings (PCP); or Restructuring-in-Bankruptcy (RIB) proceedings; and
- ii) introduce unique provisions under Part 4 of Chapter 5 allowing to defer the debtor's obligation to file for bankruptcy in case of an 'Emergency Financial Crisis' (EFC), defined as a 'public condition that affects trade or investment in the state such as the outbreak of epidemic, natural or environmental disaster, war or other,' as determined by Cabinet resolution.

Suspension to file for bankruptcy as a result of an EFC

A new mechanism has been put in place to provide grace periods to SMEs facing financial difficulties, and prohibiting creditors from filing for bankruptcy. During a grace period, both the debtor SMEs and creditors would have to engage in good faith negotiations to, among other things, defer payments and financial fines.

By submitting an application at a competent court, a debtor may reach a settlement with creditors and request such a grace period or negotiate a debt settlement within a period of up to 12 months.



5.3 Asset-backed Financing Securing Interest with Movable Property Federal Law no. (4) of 2020

SMEs will now be allowed to use their assets (including tools and raw materials) as collateral to back their lending needs.

Federal Law no. (4) of 2020 on Securing Interest with Movable Property was promulgated to facilitate this process with the view of providing additional comfort to lending banks when dealing with such entities.

Examples of funds that may be pledged include:

Accounts
receivable

Credit Accounts
With Banks

Bonds and documents
transferable through
delivery or endorsement

Equipment
and work tools

Material and
moral elements
of the business

Goods intended
for sale or renting,
raw material and under
manufacturing or
transformation

Crop yields,
animals and their
products

Property
by Allocation



5.4 Market Conduct Regulation when dealing with SMEs – UAE Central Bank Circular No. 1/2021 of 26/01/2021

Through the Market Conduct regulation, the Central Bank encourages Licensed Financial Institutions to provide SME customers in the UAE with enhanced access to financial products or services.

Objectives:

The regulation aims to redefine the obligations of such Licensed Financial Institutions when dealing with SME customers. Obligations include:

Promoting responsible financing practices;

Ensuring the quality and timing of effective disclosure to SME Customers by Licensed Financial Institutions regarding matters and/or risks that may affect their decision to purchase a Financial Product and/or Service;

Providing SME Customers with the access to the right information at the right time to make informed decisions;

Promoting access to banking facilities for SMEs;

Implementing clear and reasonable mechanisms by Licensed Financial Institutions for redress of SME Customer Complaints;

Implementing appropriate debt counselling for SME Customers.



Overview

Al Tamimi & Company is a full-service law firm with 18 offices and more than 850 employees, operating across nine countries within the Middle East and North Africa region.

With over 30 years of operation in the region, Al Tamimi & Company advises and supports major international corporations, banks and financial institutions, government organisations, and local, regional and international companies on all aspects of the law.

Al Tamimi & Company addresses issues on international and local business customs across core industries including: Defence & Security, Education, Energy & Utilities, Financial Services, Healthcare & Life Sciences, Hotels & Leisure, Industrial Manufacturing, Public Sector, Real Estate & Construction, Retail & Consumer, Sports & Events, Technology, Media & Telecom and Transport & Logistics.

The firm's diverse pool of lawyers combines international experience and qualifications with expert regional knowledge and understanding to provide sound, strategic, legal and commercial advice –providing integrated solutions answering legal and commercial issues across the MENA region.



Alex Ghazi
Partner & Head of Office, Abu Dhabi.

5.5 New UAE Companies Law Investing In Mainland UAE with 100% foreign investment ownership

An 'Onshore' Limited Liability Company (LLC) established pursuant to the new UAE Companies Law now permits foreign investors to hold up to 100% of the legal interest in such LLCs incorporated 'onshore'.

The new UAE Companies Law (comprising amendments to the UAE Commercial Companies Law No. 2 of 2015) removes the specific requirement that a minimum of 51% of the shareholding in onshore entities be held by UAE nationals (cancelling the old FDI positive list in place since 2018).

Abu Dhabi released a list of specific 1,105 commercial and industrial business activities allowing 100% foreign investor ownership. Activities deemed of 'strategic impact' (such as banking and finance, utilities and telecom) will continue to be excluded from 100% foreign ownership.



مكتب أبوظبي للاستثمار
ABU DHABI INVESTMENT OFFICE

The Abu Dhabi Investor Guide

ADIO created the Abu Dhabi Investor Guide to provide businesses of all sizes with everything to know about starting or expanding in Abu Dhabi.

**Download the complete Abu Dhabi Investor Guide
on ADIO's website:**

www.investinabudhabi.gov.ae/en/Why-Abu-Dhabi



1,105 commercial and industrial activities available for 100% Foreign Ownership

Abu Dhabi's Department of Economic Development has announced an expanded list of 1,105 commercial and industrial activities available for foreign ownership across Abu Dhabi's strategic economic sectors.

The activities are available for full or partial foreign ownership by licensed companies and existing companies can amend their status.

The amended Commercial Companies Law came into effect on June 1st, 2021, allowing foreign investors and entrepreneurs to establish and fully own onshore companies.



June 1st, 2021

Download the full
list of activities on:

www.adsmehub.ae/en/learn/post-details/full-list-of-activities-for-100-foreign-ownership-ADDED

منصة أبوظبي للأعمال
ABU DHABI SME HUB

Ecosystem Map Out



I. Government

Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development

www.added.gov.ae

دائرة التنمية الاقتصادية
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Overview

The Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development (ADDED) regulates the business sector and leads the economic agenda to achieve a knowledge-based, diversified and sustainable economic growth.

Moreover, ADDED develops policies and initiatives, based on the latest research and statistical data from local, regional, and global indicators, to attain targeted growth across various sectors in line with Abu Dhabi's Economic Vision 2030.

The Department, in close cooperation with regional and international partners, develops strategic programs that will generate the envisioned paradigm shift of the local economy by integrating transparency and innovation and ensuring continuous exchange of knowledge.

Finally, ADDED fosters a competitive investment climate that benefits the Emirate's ecosystem by adopting excellence in economic and administrative practices, employing the best human resources and using the latest global technology and expertise.

Takamul
www.takamul.gov.ae



Launched in 2011, Takamul is a UAE innovation program to support inventors and promote innovation across the country. Takamul focuses on making UAE one of the most innovative countries in the world by promoting the innovation cycle, from the generation of ideas to the practical implementation of these ideas that support the country economically and socially.

The program support inventors from different categories and level, including individuals and corporates. Since its first launch, Takamul achieves an annual increasing number of registered patents, and spreads awareness on key aspects of innovation, particularly the legal aspects that protect the inventors' Intellectual Property.

In addition, TAKAMUL as part of the Competitiveness Office of Abu Dhabi (COAD), involves creating and managing an outreach program to attract, evaluate and manage applications of the innovation services in DED through conducting info sessions, meetings, and participating in events and conferences. Takamul has supported 50 startups in their application process.

For more information: Takamul@ded.abudhabi.ae

Abu Dhabi Business Center
www.adbc.gov.ae

مركز أبوظبي للأعمال
Abu Dhabi Business Center

The Abu Dhabi Business Center (ADBC) was established in March 2013 to offer an effective and smart point of contact with governmental establishment, allowing investors and businessmen to obtain all approvals and services related to economic licensing.

ADBC works in coordination with all relevant authorities to offer smart, time-saving, and cost-effective procedures for granting licenses for economic activities. It has established and operates a world-class organisation that delivers the full range of business facilitation services to clients in an efficient manner, facilitating clients' access to information and providing practical support across the business cycle.

Refer to www.adbc.gov.ae for more information

Industrial Development Bureau (IDB)
<https://idb.added.gov.ae/>

مكتب تنمية الصناعة
Industrial Development Bureau




The Industrial Development Bureau (IDB) was established to develop and regulate the manufacturing sector in Abu Dhabi. The roles and responsibilities of the IDB include developing the overall Emirate manufacturing strategy and follow up on its implementation; developing policies for the manufacturing sector based on best practices; ensuring a competitive manufacturing environment in the emirate; issuing and renewing licenses allowing the industrial facility to operate in the emirate.

For more information: Info-IDB@ded.abudhabi.ae
IDBDGOffice@ded.abudhabi.ae

Sharakawww.sharaka.added.gov.ae/en/About-Sharaka

Owned by the Abu Dhabi Government and managed by the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development (ADDED), the Sharaka initiative was launched in July 2018 as part of the Abu Dhabi Government Accelerators Programme "Ghadan 21" to support and enhance the private sector's development and the ease of doing business in Abu Dhabi.

The online government platform encourages cooperation with the private sector companies operating in the emirate by addressing their disputes with government entities over outstanding dues via a trusted communication mechanism based on transparency, responsiveness, and constructive dialogue.

To raise your challenges:
 www.sharaka.added.gov.ae/en/About-Sharaka/Form

The Logistics and Trade Facilitation Sector

The Logistics and Trade Facilitation Sector (LTFS) was established in 2021 to build a sustainable future for Abu Dhabi by developing and improving trade facilitation in the emirate by. It aims to develop a multi-modal single trade platform (ATLP); improve trade facilitation competitiveness (time/cost); improve Abu Dhabi's global rankings; create transparency in trade facilitation policy and processes; and improve local export capability and international outreach.

LTFS has worked with several companies to date to overcome their barriers and streamline their supply chains by bringing together the relevant government stakeholders to provide solutions.

Advanced Trade & Logistics Platform (ATLP)www.atlp.ae

Through the Advanced Trade & Logistics Platform ATLP, ADDED works on digitally facilitating trade through sea, land, air, industrial and free zones. Enabling transparency, predictability, simplified procedures and efficiency, contribute towards Abu Dhabi's vision to be a leading global trade and logistics hub.

Abu Dhabi Export Gateway
www.abudhabiexporters.com


Abu Dhabi Export Gateway offers a guide supporting companies in their business expansion and move towards global competition. Covering 100+ products, 13 sectors and 60 markets, it provides essential information on potential export markets including opportunities, trade statistics and rules and regulations.



Companies facing any challenges related to logistics and trade facilitation can contact:

LTFS@ded.abudhabi.ae

Services	Overview	Sub-Services	Description
Economic Licensing	The service aims at enabling customers to obtain an economic name, economic licence, amend/renew/cancel an economic licence, pay fines on a licence, and get a certificate of "to whom it may concern" for the economic licence.	Request for Reserving Economic Name	Through this service, you can reserve the economic name for a definite period (3,6,9,12) months
		Request for Issuing Economic Licence	Through this service, you can apply for issuing new economic licence
		Request for Renewal of Economic Licence	Through this service, you can renew your economic licences
		Request for Amending Economic Licence	Through this service, you can request to amend your economic licence based on the terms and conditions
		Request for Economic Licence Cancellation	Through this service, you can request to cancel your economic licence
		Pay Economic Licence Fines	Through this service enables the user to pay the economic license violations charges
		Economic Record Certificate Request	Through this service, you can request to issue a certificate of economic licence data in terms of the changes introduced to the economic licence
		Request for a List of Economic Licences	This service enables the user to obtain a list of economic licences owned by the investor
		Request for a True Copy of Economic Licence	This service enables the user to obtain a stamped true copy of the economic licence
Economic Permits	The service aims at enabling customers to get advertising permissions for the economic licences.	Request for Manufacturing Inputs Duty Exemption	Through this service, the user can get duty exemption for industry inputs (raw materials, machinery, spare parts), based on the licence status.
		Request for Issuing Advertisements on Vehicles	Through this service, you can request permits for vehicle advertising posters displaying the economic name and logo
		Request for Issuing Permit for Advertising Banners	Through this service, you can obtain a permit for advertising banners displaying the economic name and logo
		Request for Issuing Permit for ATM, Payment and Self-Service Machines	Through this service, you can request for a permit for any machine or digital platform set up outside the retail outlet mentioned in the economic licence, either in a public or private place, to facilitate purchasing, payment, and requesting or offering any service without the need for human intervention
		Request for Issuing Permit for Flags and Banners	Through this service, you can obtain a permit for the banners or flags placed on the sidewalk in front of the company's premise being the flag of the company or the flag of the UAE
		Request for Sunshade Advertisement Permit	Through this service, you can obtain a permit for the sunshade advertisement carrying the economic logo
		Request for Issuing Vehicle Permit for Abu Dhabi Trader Licence	Through this service, you can obtain a permit for the vehicle of "Tajer Abu Dhabi" licence based on the commercial activity mentioned in the economic licence "Tajer Abu Dhabi".
		Request for Issuing Food-Advertising Vehicles Permit	This service enables the user to obtain a permit for advertising mobile vehicles or trucks offering the food-selling service in public places or during festivals and events.

Services	Overview	Sub-Services	Description
Economic Permits	The service aims at enabling customers to get advertising permissions for the economic licences.	Request for Issuing Promotional Campaigns Permit	Through this service, you can obtain a permit for the promotional campaigns
		Request for Issuing Pamphlet Advertisements Permit	Through this service, you can obtain a permit for printed-out leaflets advertisements that promote products and services.
		Request for Issuing Booth Permit	Through this service, you can obtain a permit to display a product or provide a service through a temporary booth.
		Request for Issuing Prize Display Platform	Through this service, you can obtain a permit for the promotion of a prize by displaying it in public places or commercial centers
		Request for Issuing Aerial Ads Permit	Through this service, you can obtain a permit for aerial inflatables, balloons and other aerial ads.
MAAK	MAAK provides economic, legal and business development assistance, supporting investors in their journey and commercial activity in the Emirate.		

For more information: maak@ded.abudhabi.ae

The Abu Dhabi Investment Office (ADIO)

www.investinabudhabi.gov.ae



مكتب أبوظبي للاستثمار
ABU DHABI INVESTMENT OFFICE

Overview

The Abu Dhabi Investment Office (ADIO) is the government entity responsible for attracting and facilitating investment in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. It supports companies to achieve long-term, sustainable success in the emirate and across the region, facilitating their expansion and setting them up for regional growth opportunities.

With a comprehensive range of tailored services and incentives, ADIO enables opportunities for innovative investors and entrepreneurs. It connects companies to relevant stakeholders in Abu Dhabi's innovation ecosystem, bringing together the right partnerships to help businesses of all sizes make the most of Abu Dhabi and identify the right opportunities.

Through its Investor Care services, ADIO manages the end-to-end investor journey, ensuring the seamless establishment of new legal entities, the mobilisation of employees and the efficient start of companies' journeys in Abu Dhabi.

Through incentive instruments, it supports eligible businesses with innovation at the core to help ensure long-term, sustainable success in the market and across the region.

Financial incentives include rebates and grants to support investments in innovation. ADIO also works with ecosystem partners to provide equity investments and other incentives.

Non-financial incentives include assistance to access land, office space and other facilities; regulatory assistance including visas, select trial licences and more; and potential exemptions for select government fees and requirements.

Explore ADIO's programmes to help you grow in Abu Dhabi. For any questions, contact ADIO directly by filling the form on its website:



www.investinabudhabi.gov.ae/en/Get-In-Touch

Innovation Programme

Through ADIO's innovation program, ADIO provides financial and non-financial incentives to eligible companies in high-growth areas, including financial services, information and communications technology (ICT), health services and biopharma, tourism and AgTech, among others.

Financial incentives include rebates and grants to support investments in innovation. Non-financial incentives include assistance to access land, office space and other facilities; regulatory assistance including visas, select trial licences and more; and potential exemptions for select government fees and requirements.

ADIO has provided incentives to global innovators including AgTech firms like Pure Harvest, Madar Farms and AeroFarms, and ICT companies including Anghami and Bspin, helping them establish a local presence and supporting their regional expansion.

Investor Care Services

ADIO supports businesses of all sizes through its Investor Care services, assisting them with information on data, networks, licensing, real estate, visas, banking and more.

During COVID-19, ADIO's team has continued to work remotely with investors looking to establish in or expand to Abu Dhabi, helping them navigate the landscape and understand the opportunities available to them in the emirate.



مكتب أبوظبي للاستثمار
ABU DHABI INVESTMENT OFFICE

Nurturing the AgTech Sector

As part of its Innovation Programme, ADIO has provided incentives to a number of AgTech startups to support their growth in Abu Dhabi.

Locally, it has supported AgTech firms including Pure Harvest and Madar Farms, providing them with grants and rebates to build R&D and production facilities. Pure Harvest will invest in smart farming and infrastructure technologies at its new farms, while Madar Farms will build the world's first commercial-scale indoor tomato farm using only LED lights in KIZAD.

Nanoracks is building the first-ever commercial AgTech space research programme in Abu Dhabi, while AeroFarms is building the world's largest R&D indoor vertical farm.

ADIO supports AgTech innovators that are pioneering solutions with the potential to create desert agriculture solutions that improve the food production value chain worldwide.



H.E. Dr. Tariq Bin Hendi
Director General, ADIO

How does ADIO enable opportunities for domestic and foreign investors in Abu Dhabi?

ADIO is the government hub enabling investment opportunities in Abu Dhabi. Our role is to help companies set up for long-term success and to understand the opportunities the Abu Dhabi market has to offer. We connect investors with relevant stakeholders in Abu Dhabi's innovation ecosystem, bringing together the right partnerships to help them grow and expand in the emirate, while setting them up for regional growth opportunities.

We support companies through our Investor Care services that assist investors with information on data, networks, licensing, real estate, visas, banking and more. We also provide financial and non-financial incentives to eligible companies through our AED 2 billion Innovation Programme to help them expand to Abu Dhabi. Additionally, ADIO recently established eight international offices to facilitate better support for investors in those markets and introduce them to the advantages of expanding to the emirate.



The UAE continues to dominate in the region in terms of funding secured for startups. What makes the UAE, and Abu Dhabi specifically, such an enticing location for these companies?

Some of the key advantages of Abu Dhabi as an investment destination include our strategic location, access to talent, liveability, cutting-edge infrastructure, connectivity and ease of doing business.

Building on this, Abu Dhabi is focused on developing an innovation hub and supporting like-minded companies to establish here. The emirate has invested capital, time, effort, knowledge and resources into building an ecosystem where businesses of all sizes can confidently take commercial risks to innovate and develop cutting-edge solutions.

Across the ecosystem, Abu Dhabi offers a range of support and incentives to help businesses from around the world succeed in the emirate. Startups can access financial support through grants and rebates from ADIO through the Innovation Programme, which provides incentives to innovation-focused companies in high-growth areas. Companies may also access equity investments through ecosystem players such as Mubadala and ADQ through its DisruptAD platform.

Financial support is but one facet of a much bigger investment by the government that includes fostering a talent pool, establishing research universities, building integrated ICT infrastructure and creating an enabling business environment that makes Abu Dhabi one of the best places to do business globally.

What can be done to bring in more international VC & PE funds into the Abu Dhabi ecosystem?

Abu Dhabi is actively building our own capital market by attracting the right funders and founders to the ecosystem. We attract asset managers and international investors to establish local offices here to provide financing, alternative expansion plans and exit options for startups.

The emirate simultaneously nurtures and sows into regional founders, providing an opportunity for international investors to tap into a competitive pool of young and ambitious talent, and a growing ecosystem at reasonable valuations compared to other global hubs.

To attract both funders and founders, tremendous effort has been put into supporting the growth and development of the emirate as a global investment hub over the past few years. Abu Dhabi provides enabling regulatory frameworks and a legal environment that promotes sustainable business growth across the wider region, such as through the Abu Dhabi Global Market's regulations and court system. Abu Dhabi stresses world-class corporate governance to make local firms investable for global investors. The emirate also provides a broad range of business activities and legal structures that improve direct access to the market and increase ease of doing business.

ADIO recently launched an AED 2 billion Innovation Programme, as part of Ghadan 21, to foster innovation in Abu Dhabi's high-growth sectors. What will this Programme's first strategic actions be?

ADIO's Innovation Programme builds on the success of the AgTech incentive programme to include support for innovative companies in other high-growth areas, including financial services, ICT, health services and biopharma, tourism and AgTech, among others. It has an increased incentive pool totalling AED 2 billion to accelerate opportunities for investors in the emirate. The programme reinforces Abu Dhabi's efforts to invest in high-growth areas while supporting businesses and ideas that drive positive impact.

The Innovation Programme offers companies globally competitive rebates and grants, in addition to other non-financial incentives, to support their investment journey in Abu Dhabi. The expanded programme will create thousands of high-skilled jobs, drive innovation in key sectors and spur the development of impactful solutions that have the potential to be beneficial to the region and across the globe.

Thus far, ADIO has partnered with seven local and international AgTech companies as part of the programme. ADIO is supporting them in developing cutting-edge technologies that can contribute to expanding the supply of local produce and addressing global food security challenges. We have also partnered with ICT leaders Anghami and Bspin, helping them to establish their respective headquarters in Abu Dhabi.

We will continue to work closely with innovators developing impactful solutions and technologies in the emirate, helping them achieve long-term, sustainable success.

How has the Abu Dhabi investment landscape changed in the wake of COVID-19, and what is being done to mitigate the pandemic's effects?

The global economic slowdown has affected the business and investment sentiment worldwide. We are seeing a more subdued business environment. However, the Abu Dhabi economy is built on solid foundations and is poised for recovery. According to the Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development, the emirate's economy could grow up to 8% over the next two years, bolstered by the crude oil sector, government spending and FDIs.

During the early stages of the pandemic, the Abu Dhabi government was swift in announcing relief measures under the Ghadan 21 accelerator programme to bolster Abu Dhabi's economy and support the business community. Other business and government entities across the emirate also pitched in, launching support initiatives to minimise the impact on businesses. For this, Abu Dhabi was ranked the safest city in the world for our response to the COVID-19 pandemic by Deep Knowledge Group.

ADIO saw an increase in interest from companies all around the world, due in large part to how the Abu Dhabi government's handling of COVID-19 was viewed by the global business community. It sent a strong signal to the world that Abu Dhabi is serious about protecting people and supporting the private sector. ADIO has continued, remotely, aiding businesses looking to establish or grow in Abu Dhabi, connecting them to the right partners and ensuring they receive the support they need to grow during this time.

What are the next key steps that will be essential to the evolution of Abu Dhabi as the place to do business?

Abu Dhabi is looking to build a modern, diversified and sustainable economy with innovation at its heart. The Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030 is the government's long-term plan for the transformation of the emirate's economy, including a reduced reliance on the oil sector and a greater focus on knowledge-based industries in the future.

Much has been done to make Abu Dhabi a welcoming and supportive environment for business to thrive. Our business-friendly environment is supported by a favourable tax regime, established infrastructure and financial and political stability. The government has also established numerous business enablement entities to support companies at every step of their journey.

Public engagement is crucial to build Abu Dhabi's future collaboratively. H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan declared 2021 the 'Year of the 50th' in the UAE to celebrate the nation's milestone Golden Jubilee while inviting the public to co-create the UAE's future as it continues to shape new frontiers. ADIO will continue engaging businesses and investors to better understand their needs and ensure we are providing relevant support to help them make their ideas a reality.

Department of Government Support - Abu Dhabi (DGS)

www.dgs.gov.ae

دائرة الإسناد الحكومي
DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT SUPPORT



Overview

The Department of Government Support - Abu Dhabi (DGS) was established in accordance with the Emiri Decree issued by H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, in his capacity as Ruler of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in October 2019. The DGS is chaired by Ali Rashed Al Ketbi.

The Department of Government Support works closely with the government entities under its umbrella to implement initiatives and projects that fall within its main areas of competence, ensuring the fulfillment of its strategic objectives, priorities and core action plan, which can be summed up as follows:

- Developing human capital through the development of an integrated, efficient, effective and competitively productive human resources system for the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.
- Providing government services and solutions through the introduction of a specialized, proactive, integrated and secure digital government system, by adopting innovation, developing partnerships, instigating strategies, policies and standards, and upgrading the digital infrastructure to enhance the effectiveness of government performance.
- Providing world-class training and professional development to all Abu Dhabi Government employees, based on international best practices in line with the priorities and requirements of Abu Dhabi.
- Providing procurement services and solutions through the introduction of a reliable procurement system, providing the best value for cost, introducing integrated digital purchasing processes and supporting partnership-based procurement systems.

In line with the directives of the wise leadership in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi to stimulate economic growth and support MSMEs, a package of encouraging economic incentives in government procurement has been issued by the Department of Government Support as stipulated by Circular No. (6) for the year 2020 regarding economic incentives for MSMEs.

To learn more about
the Government Procurement Office:



[www.dgs.gov.ae/GovernmentProcurementOffice/
The-Government-Procurement-Office](http://www.dgs.gov.ae/GovernmentProcurementOffice/The-Government-Procurement-Office)

Allocating 15% of procurement spending and annual contracts to mSMEs

The government of Abu Dhabi allocated 15% of government procurement spending and annual contracts to micro-Small and Medium Enterprises (mSMEs) from 2020 onwards to drive growth for small businesses, in line with its economic stimulus package.

Suspension of Bid Bonds

Suspension of bid bonds and exempting startups from performance guarantees for projects up to AED 50 million. This is applicable to mSMEs and Emirati entrepreneurs from 2020 onwards, and applicable to all other companies until the end of 2020. DGS is overseeing implementation through close coordination with all relevant government entities.

Bank Guarantee Exemption

Exemption of mSMEs from providing a bank guarantee to ensure a performance bond, provided that the ADGE reserves 5% of the value of each invoice due for a period of 3 months after the final delivery.

Settling approved government invoices

All companies to have approved invoices settled within 15 working days of invoice date. Companies can escalate outstanding invoices due from government entities on Sharaka: sharaka.adced.gov.ae



Waleed Saeed AlSaeedi
Executive Director Governmental Procurement Office

The Abu Dhabi government believes that mSMEs are the backbone of the country's economy, an engine for economic growth towards reduced unemployment rate, in addition to being key drivers in the country's efforts towards sustainable development.

In the past, mSMEs faced challenges accessing the government procurement system, and tenders were largely outsourced to larger and more established organizations. As a response to these challenges, the government committed to creating new opportunities for this segment of enterprises, encouraging emerging mSMEs to respond and deliver services within its procurement system.



Starting 2020, the government of Abu Dhabi allocated 15% of government procurement spending and annual contracts to mSMEs, in line with its economic stimulus package. The new initiative aimed to provide procurement opportunities to a multitude of suppliers ranging from freelancers, early-stage startup, growth-stage startups and SMEs, and over the first quarter of 2021, the government already witnessed higher levels of government procurement by mSMEs than its initial allocation target of 15%.

Most startups and mSMEs also face challenges with appropriate internal resourcing such as administration, HR, accounting, finance, and beyond. In response to such challenges, and in coordination with ADGES' initiatives and efforts, the DGS aims to support these enterprises with secondary business functions and general upskilling, so they can focus on their core value-added deliverables, and notably through:

- Building capacities and strategic, operational, and marketing capabilities;
- Encouraging productivity and competitiveness;
- Stimulating enterprises to access government procurement.

The upcoming launch of a central Procurement Platform and procurement innovation hub will further avail opportunities for mSMEs. The platform will be used by the government to upload all available procurement opportunities; and in parallel, mSMEs will be able to register and get approval to respond to relevant procurement opportunities. The platform will also analyze and assess the needs of mSMEs on support they require in terms of upskilling so that they can seamlessly deliver their services.

Ultimately, by pushing mSMEs to innovate, opening new markets for national products, and enhancing their competitiveness locally and internationally, the DGS aims to drive the creation of new mSMEs their contribution to Abu Dhabi's GDP.

II. Free Zones & Regulators

Abu Dhabi Global Market (ADGM)

An award-winning international financial centre located on Al Maryah Island, ADGM plays a pivotal role in positioning Abu Dhabi as a global hub for business and finance.

www.adgm.com

Khalifa Industrial Zone Abu Dhabi (KIZAD)

Located in the Al Taweela area between Abu Dhabi and Dubai, KIZAD offers a world-class transportation infrastructure including sea, air, road and rail networks.

www.kizad.ae

Twofour54

Set up in 2008, this dynamic media zone provides the infrastructure and services for international, regional and local media and creative businesses.

www.twofour54.com

Masdar City

Masdar City operates as a special economic zone with a focus on clean technology and renewable energy, and is one of the world's most sustainable urban communities.

www.masdarcityfreezone.com

Abu Dhabi Airport Free Zone (ADAFZ)

ADAFZ is a comprehensive business park in the vicinity of Abu Dhabi International Airport, offering facilities and infrastructure such as commercial offices, plots of land for development, warehousing units and logistics services.

www.adafz.ae





ADGM is Abu Dhabi's International Financial Centre and the first jurisdiction in the region with direct application of English Common Law. The centre has developed attractive legal structures and initiatives to support market access, ease of doing business and business growth.

Through ADGM, Tech startups and investors alike can notably benefit from robust and globally recognized legal and regulatory frameworks, with the additional benefits of full foreign ownership, capital expatriation and a 0% tax environment for all businesses across growth stages.

Since its launch in 2015, ADGM has grown a vibrant business and investment environment, including many firsts in the MENA region including the first-regional digital regulatory sandbox; first sector agnostic tech startup licence; and the first VC framework to the World's First Comprehensive Crypto-Asset Regulatory Framework, to name a few.

ADGM's sector agnostic tech-startup friendly licence enables entrepreneurs to set up and rapidly scale their businesses from Abu Dhabi through access to a thriving tech community, investors and strong network of government entities, corporates and leading industry partners supporting the growth of startups.

Today, ADGM is home to almost 3,000 companies across sectors, ranging from tech startups to large corporations and financial institutions.

ADGM's strategic partnership with Hub71 and ADIO has created a powerful value proposition for Abu Dhabi, offering progressive regulations, ease of doing business, access to capital, talent and market to support a thriving tech ecosystem of over 300 tech startups based out of ADGM.

For questions regarding business setup options at ADGM, send your general inquiry by email: info@adgm.com or find more details on the right contact point below:



www.adgm.com/contact-us

Tech Startup Licence

ADGM's Tech Startup License enables entrepreneurs to set up in the UAE quickly and easily.

The licence is competitively priced and categorized in two stages; seed and emergent, providing founders with access to financial incentives, funding and the opportunity to join a thriving tech community at Hub71, which provides up to 100% subsidies on housing, office space and health insurance for up to 25 employees, for up to three years.

The FinTech Abu Dhabi (FinTech AD) Festival

ADGM launched FinTech AD in 2016 to provide a conducive collaborative platform for global thought leaders and policy makers, financial and technology institutions, founders and investors, academia and innovators to deep-dive into trending topics and business issues that will shape the digital economy of the future.

An ADGM flagship initiative, FinTech AD attracts thousands of the world's foremost innovators, entrepreneurs and investors each year, and showcases the latest emerging talent in the FinTech space alongside a host of prominent government authorities, financial institutions and progressive organisations.

FinTech AD Innovation Challenge

The annual FinTech AD Innovation Challenge invites some of the world's most disruptive emerging FinTech talent to address problem statements created in collaboration with UAE-based institutions (Corporate Champions).

Short-listed candidates then pitch their solutions to an audience of financial institutions, regulators, corporates and media in Start-up Battles on the Main Stage of FinTech Abu Dhabi.

In taking part in the Innovation Challenge, start-ups will have the opportunity to create long-term relationships with the Corporate Champions and will be invited to set up their base on Abu Dhabi's Al Maryah Island.

FinTech AD Awards

Showcasing and celebrating the very best in global FinTech innovation across ten inspirational categories in the MENA region, the prestigious FinTech AD Awards serve to highlight talent and celebrate the boldest ideas and initiatives driving the industry.

Entries are judged by an expert panel of global FinTech luminaries and bolstered by corporate champions.

FinTech 100

FinTech 100 showcases the world's most exciting and innovative new FinTech businesses offering a unique networking opportunity to connect with potential partners. The platform provides opportunities to connect with government, corporate partners and investors to collaborate and unlock growth.

Digital Lab

The ADGM Digital Lab provides a virtual environment where Fintechs, financial institutions and a financial services regulator, represented by ADGM's FSRA, seamlessly connect and safely collaborate, experiment and develop innovative solutions creating new products and testing prototypes. The ADGM Digital Lab enables key industry stakeholders to identify and address shared challenges and provide solutions collectively



ABU DHABI GLOBAL MARKET
سوق أبوظبي العالمي
AN INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL CENTRE

Tarabut Gateway

Learn more: www.tarabutgateway.com



Tarabut Gateway is an open banking platform. Since its establishment in 2017, the company has developed an open banking API (application programming interface) that allows third-party financial services providers to securely access financial data and develop new apps and services. It offers tools that allow the facilitation and distribution of personalized financial services and ensures all partner banks accelerate their technological partnerships at significantly reduced costs.

In September 2020, Tarabut Gateway expanded to ADGM to further grow the company and its technology department. Abdulla Almoayed, CEO and Founder of Tarabut Gateway found Abu Dhabi to be an ideal location, given the Emirate rapidly growing fintech ecosystem and regulatory framework: "The open banking industry is a catalyst for transforming the way banks and fintechs in the region interact with one another. With regional regulators quickly adopting open banking in their strategies, Tarabut Gateway provides the infrastructure which enables enhanced collaborations between financial institutions and an increasingly agile and flourishing regional fintech sector. Through diligent regulation, this is a once-in-a-lifetime moment for the MENA region to gain a leading position in the global fintech arena."

In February 2021, the open banking platform secured \$13M in seed funding, led by Target Global. Other investors included Kingsway, CE Ventures, Entrée Capital, Zamil Investment Group, Global Ventures, Almoayed Technologies and Mad'a Investment.

This funding marks the largest fintech seed round in the MENA region and follows Tarabut Gateway's recent expansion into the UAE.

As part of Tarabut Gateway's growth plan for the next year, the business aims to hire 40 additional team members across the MENA region by the end of 2021, using its new funding to support with expanding regionally and developing current product offerings.



Vishal Sacheendran
Manager, Capital Markets
Authorisation

Miriam Kiwan
Head of Strategic
Partnerships

Abdulla Al Mheiri
Market Development

Where does the AD Startup/SME ecosystem stand today? In your opinion, what are the benefits and challenges for startups and SMEs doing business in Abu Dhabi?

In less than three years, Abu Dhabi's tech ecosystem has established itself as a leading tech hub in the MEASA region, offering unparalleled opportunities for tech startups to launch and scale regionally and globally from Abu Dhabi.

ADGM will continue to collaborate with the business community, regulators and strategic partners to improve ease of doing business while serving the needs of its community.

How are you contributing to the local startup/SME ecosystem growth? How do you see this evolving over the next year?

As a key enabler, ADGM is supporting the growth of innovators and tech founders by providing a unique business environment and regulatory infrastructure that bring together startups, investors and other ecosystem developers under one holistic tech-ecosystem.

As an emerging ecosystem, ADGM together with other Abu Dhabi entities continues to close the remaining gaps that will allow founders to accelerate their expansion both locally and internationally:

- solving the complexities around setting up, to support start-ups in their initial launch or expansion to the region;
- expanding funding solutions to help startups scale, go public or exit through other alternative routes;
- engage the private sector through corporate innovation programs to boost innovation and access to market.

What opportunities should entrepreneurs pay attention to in Abu Dhabi? What kind of business growth opportunities are you encouraging or expect will be developing in the coming years? (sectors/ industries..)

Abu Dhabi offers a real opportunity for startups that are seriously considering the MENA region as a strategic location as part of their global growth. With over 300 million consumers in the MENA region, and one of the highest GDP per capita in the GCC, Abu Dhabi is a strategic location for global startups looking to have access to a large addressable market in the MEASA region and beyond.

Abu Dhabi is uniquely positioned to support the growth of innovative tech startups by providing access to an end to end ecosystem support system. Through collective efforts of key government and ecosystem enablers such as ADGM, Hub71, ADIO, ADQ, tech startups can have direct access to funding, market and talent in one location.

Whether a startup is looking to test a fintech idea through ADGM's leading reglab/sandbox, raise funds or accelerate their growth through our global accelerator programs, ADGM and Abu Dhabi is the ideal catalyst for tech founders with global aspirations.

Wai Lum Kwok

Senior Executive Director, Capital Markets

Financial Services Regulatory Authority, Abu Dhabi Global Market

You recently launched Digital Lab, through which fintechs, financial institutions and regulators can seamlessly connect, experiment and develop innovative solutions. What ecosystem challenges led the creation of this initiative?

As a regulator, we have a bird's eye vision of the financial services industry, interacting with licensed firms and institutions as well as the wider ecosystem and we are keenly aware that innovating is fraught with hurdles. We've identified a number of roadblocks such as:

- Extensive procurement processes for simple proofs of concept (POCs). There remain far too many hoops for startups and SMEs to jump through in order to work with financial institutions, which are oftentimes challenging for minimal to low risk endeavours.
- Difficulty accessing and engaging with the appropriate stakeholders. Organizations can be vast and confusing to navigate, and identifying the right person remains an opaque endeavor for SMEs. On the flip side, organizations also struggle with validating the best startups on the market to fill the gap in their processes and offerings.
- Implementation of new products remains a systemic issue due to legacy infrastructure, as fundamental processes are maintained with a number of different technology stacks. New additions need to be interoperable, and that requires initial involvement from IT teams adding to the complexity of the project.
- Finally, regulatory uncertainty. Some new solutions or business models don't fit into pre-existing regulatory frameworks leading to caution on the part of financial institutions as they navigate regulatory gray zones.

Where others see impossible hurdles to navigate, we see the opportunity to facilitate collaboration.



Fintech startups continue to be among the most funded in the UAE. Why is there such a need for Fintech in the region right now, and how is ADGM supporting this?

Fintech startups have sought to put people first with easy to use and intuitive solutions. They've addressed gaps in the market, promoting financial inclusion and placed pressure on incumbents to better service their clients. A diverse ecosystem is key to enabling novel products to emerge and if investors keep funding fintech startups it is because it's an industry with huge growth potential. The financial services sector touches everyone across the UAE, providing them with digital banking solutions, personal finance applications or methods of remittances. The UAE's young, digitally savvy population make it a perfect market for launching new applications and products. ADGM supports all of its licensed firms, whether they're startups, SMEs or banking institutions and is committed to building a level playing field that will allow innovative services to develop.

Why is it important to create a collaborative sandbox platform like Digital Lab?

The Digital Lab is a first of its kind regulator-led initiative to accelerate the growth and scale of startups. It is made up of two parts:

1. A marketplace where financial institutions, fintech startups, venture capitalists, governments and academic interest groups can create profiles to signal their interest in collaborating and can connect with one another to exchange and map out synergies. Startups can expose and certify their APIs as well as showcase their solutions and products for financial institutions to browse.
2. A digital sandbox environment that is populated with toolkits to generate synthetic data and system images simulating core banking functions and IT operating systems. This will enable financial institutions to trial fintech solutions in a secure and neutral digital environment, separate from their core production interfaces. This allows financial processes to accelerate procurement and IT processes by proving a business use case to internal stakeholders.

What kind of challenges can the Digital Lab help solve for the local SME sector? Are there specific products or solutions that can remedy these issues?

The Digital Lab aims to provide a visible and vibrant ecosystem where startups and SMEs can showcase their product offerings and solutions to a global network of local and international financial players and investors.

As part of our commitment to enabling growth we provide a number of tools to allow startups and SMEs to prove their value-add to potential partners. SMEs can list their APIs and connect to synthetic data to prove the efficacy of their solutions within the Digital Lab. Our certification tool will validate those APIs as a signal to financial institutions that the solution is plug-in ready.

In addition, the sandbox testing environment allows SMEs and startups to invite financial institutions to conduct POCs in one secure location. In addition, the Digital Lab also allows financial institutions to broadcast innovation challenges to the community, specifying problem statements they are looking to solve and inviting SMEs and startups to propose their products. This is a means of rapidly engaging with the market and creating relationships between financial institutions and fintechs.

From the perspective of an SME seeking solutions to digitalise and automate their processes, the Digital Lab serves as an effective marketplace to source for solutions and collaborators.

There is a growing need for collaboration between traditional banks and fintech innovators, and we are already seeing signs of this regionally. How is ADGM helping bridge the gap between these two stakeholders in Abu Dhabi in a way that supports and revolutionizes the financial sector?

In the past there was speculation on whether fintechs were out to disrupt banks as we knew them. We now know that fintechs are key enablers of change in the industry, promoting competition and lowering costs. Traditional banks are in an excellent position to collaborate with fintech startups, as they can leverage open innovation in order to get the best financial products out to consumers without limiting themselves to building everything in-house. Partnerships are a means of accelerating digital banking and benefitting from the widest possible pool of talent and innovative solutions possible.

Partnering with banks allows fintechs to benefit from a strong and recognized financial brand as well as access to a ready-made market of clients. In order to help banks and fintechs navigate the innovation ecosystem and find the right fit to enable synergies, ADGM launched the Digital Lab marketplace to allow fintechs to list their solutions on a one-stop-shop platform. This allows them to be visible to external stakeholders, open to opportunities for commercial collaboration or investment and also seamlessly be able to prove their value-add within a dedicated digital testing environment.

What has been the traction so far for the Digital Lab: tell us more about the process, how can entrepreneurs apply and join in the program? What has been the engagement so far?

We officially launched in early April 2021 and have seen an enthusiastic response from the ecosystem with 40-odd entities that have joined the platform, including leading financial institutions such as ADCB and FAB as well as fintechs and venture capital firms.

The Digital Lab is open to all participants, irrespective of where they are based and firms and financial institutions are invited to sign up as an entity in order to have access to the digital tools, datasets and products available. Once onboard, the person that has signed up has access to their own user management interface where different access controls can be set up for other members of the organization. Users can use the orchestration tools to build their very own no-code financial products using the drag-and-drop components. Finally, financial institutions can invite fintech firms as participants into their workspaces to conduct proof of concepts in a secure and private environment.

Overview

Named after the geographical coordinates of Abu Dhabi, twofour54 plays a central role in the sustainable development of Abu Dhabi's media and entertainment industry, empowering a new generation of creative leaders. It enables Abu Dhabi to position itself as the region's hub for content creation, media, entertainment, and gaming, by providing products and services to attract local, regional, and international businesses in these sectors to the Emirate.

Its community includes more than 600 media businesses and 6000+ individuals, including Sky News Arabia, Image Nation Abu Dhabi, Unity Technologies, CNN, Fox, Flash Entertainment and M&C Saatchi, and an extensive pool of freelance professionals and aspiring talent.

The freelancer community at twofour54 has grown to over 1000 creative professionals. Freelancers are supported through the twofour54 briefing room, which provides them with access to government projects and RFPs from the twofour54 business community.

twofour54 has also brought major Hollywood, Bollywood and local productions to Abu Dhabi, creating opportunities for freelancers, SMEs and the next generation of media talent.

Abu Dhabi's media sector has seen significant growth over the last decade. To accommodate this growth, twofour54 will be moving its community to a new home on Yas Island. Yas Creative Hub, by twofour54, will provide a home for Abu Dhabi's media and entertainment industry. It is a purpose-built 270,000 sqm, fully-integrated and connected campus that brings the creative community together and offers world-class production facilities, talent development initiatives and business support services.

On its end, twofour54 views SMEs as the engine of creativity, job creation and innovation in media. The company provides hundreds of SME partners with the support they need to kick-start and scale-up their operations. This support was particularly evident during the start of the global pandemic, with twofour54 suspending rent for up to six months for SMEs.

twofour54 is part of ADQ, one of the region's largest holding companies with a diverse portfolio of major enterprises spanning key sectors of Abu Dhabi's non-oil economy.

If you have any questions on business setup options at twofour54, reach out to the business development team by email: info@twofour54.com or by filling the contact form directly on the website:



www.twofour54.com/en/contact-us/

Entrepreneurship Scheme

The scheme is initially targeted at Emirati entrepreneurs, allowing them to obtain a license in the media zone without the need to rent office space. The company is also provided with two visas for staff and provided assistance in developing and growing its business.

Abu Dhabi Gaming



As part of the AD Gaming initiative, SMEs working within the twofour54 Gaming Hub at Yas Creative Hub will have access to the tools they need to succeed including incentives such as the waiver of MZA license fees for companies and freelancers for the first 2 years of incorporation and mentorship and training provided by Unity Technologies, one of the biggest global names in game development.

twofour54 Briefing Room

A place where freelancers and SMEs can access government projects and receive RFPs from the twofour54 business community.

Gaming & esports Licenses

twofour54 offers over 57 dedicated licenses for gaming and esports companies and freelancers to set up business in Abu Dhabi.

Sardal Production

Learn more: www.sardal.tv

ساردال sardal

For Saudi production executive, Ahmed Al Helo, setting up his own production company was always the aspiration. At the height of an illustrious media career that spanned 12 years, Al Helo, an industry veteran who worked with local and regional media powerhouses, including Rotana Media Group, decided to set up his own private production company, right here in Abu Dhabi at twofour54, the Capital for Content Creators.

In 2016, Sardal Production (Sardal meaning marine commander in the old Emirati dialect) opened its doors. "The decision on where to go in the region was not an easy one; but I was immediately drawn to twofour54," says Al Helo.

"The credibility that comes with being a twofour54 partner was valuable to me and many of my prospective clients, who work in the industry regionally. I was delighted to discover the advantages and support services twofour54 provides once you actually become a partner."

Twofour54 managed all the government interface to support the establishment of Sardal Production, which as a start-up, did not have in-house administration or PRO support, so Al Helo turned to twofour54's customer care to finalize the company's paperwork and his own, while he focused on growing his business and reaching out to new clients.

The company initially started producing original content for briefs issued by TV networks, and then evolved to developing new concepts, programs, and authentic local content, which was proactively pitched to broadcasters. Sardal Production currently works with several leading media organizations in the region, such as Abu Dhabi TV, Jawwy TV (STC) and other corporate clients. It relies on its core team of experienced producers and leverages twofour54's established freelancer pool which is part of this thriving, young and multicultural community.

And while 2020 was an exceptional year for most, it was transformational for Sardal. Al Helo saw an opportunity in proactively creating educational, health and awareness programs for the public and started developing these programs and pitching them to Abu Dhabi TV and other broadcasters. The quality and uniqueness of Sardal's content and Al Helo's vision, speed and quality of execution took his relationships with his clients to the next level. And while the world rides out of the COVID-19 crisis, the trust he has built with his clients is surely here to stay.



Katrina Anderson
Director – Commercial Services

Where does Abu Dhabi's Media landscape stand today? How is Twofour54 contributing to the local startup/SME growth within that sector?

Abu Dhabi's media and entertainment sector has gone from strength to strength over the last decade. We have established a prime destination for local and international film and TV productions, from blockbusters to independent films. Abu Dhabi is also already home to international and regional news broadcasters including CNN and Sky News Arabia.

It also has a growing profile in gaming and esports which is accelerated through global partnerships, such as our longstanding relationship with Unity Technologies, which is establishing its first regional Centre of Excellence at our flagship development, Yas Creative Hub. This enables us to attract a solid roster of gaming and esports businesses from across the region, that will utilize the Unity Centre of Excellence and Gaming Hub when they open there later in 2021.

We are absolutely committed to supporting start-ups and SMEs who make up a significant proportion of our existing partners. We have a range of initiatives, from talent development and business strategy mentorship programmes to networking opportunities and platforms to help SMEs thrive as a core twofour54 stakeholder group.



What challenges do you see startups and SMEs face in the media and digital industry? How is twofour54 helping in overcoming these challenges and boosting the sector?

SMEs are innovative and agile. They are more likely to think outside the box and challenge the status quo, and this innovation is valuable in our sector. Their success is crucial, but achieving growth is not always easy and it becomes an even bigger challenge when the economy slows. With this understanding, we have consistently supported SMEs, whether through subsidies, waivers, or business development support.

Media and entertainment SMEs also rely heavily on their employees. Talent development is a core area for twofour54, with numerous initiatives in place to ensure the next generation of media professionals are entering the workforce with the required skills to thrive.

As an example of this, we are working with Unity Technologies to offer university students across the UAE training and certifications in video game development.

In the film and TV space, we work with a number of productions to offer internship opportunities. This has proven to be invaluable, as interns who worked in Abu Dhabi for franchises such as Mission Impossible, Star Wars and Fast and Furious have gone on to be valuable members of the twofour54 business and freelancer communities and this helps in building a sustainable industry in Abu Dhabi.

What kind of sector opportunities does twofour54 recommend entrepreneurs pay attention to? What specific trends and business growth opportunities are you encouraging or foresee will be develop in the coming years?

A particularly exciting segment of the media and entertainment industry is gaming and esports. It is growing faster in MENA than anywhere else in the world, and global gaming revenues are predicted to surpass \$300 billion by 2026. Putting things in perspective, that's more than all other entertainment sectors combined.

Additionally, we are seeing a strong increase in demand for high-quality Arabic content in a range of mediums. From Arabic games to TV shows, films and comics, there are plenty of opportunities for entrepreneurs and SMEs within this space. Being at Yas Creative Hub will perfectly position them to make the most out of the opportunities available in these sectors.



III. Funding

The Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development (KFED)

www.khalifafund.ae



مندوق خليفة لتطوير المشاريع
Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development

Overview

The Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development (KFED) is an independent, not-for-profit development organisation of the Abu Dhabi Government. Khalifa Fund's mandate is to develop and empower the culture of entrepreneurship, encourage innovation, and aid and support the UAE's SME ecosystem.

The Khalifa Fund has provided this support to its beneficiaries in a multitude of ways, including: workshops, training, initiatives, and a variety of funding schemes.

KFED was founded in 2007 with a total capital of AED 300 million, which gradually increased to AED 1 billion in 2008, in order to meet the growing demand for the Fund's services. In 2011, the Fund's total capital was increased to AED 2 billion, and the Fund covered all of the UAE through a network of branches.



e-Empower

In partnership with Amazon, noon, Akshaak, Etisalat and Microsoft, e-Empower is an initiative that aims to support and develop Abu Dhabi-based small and medium-sized enterprises by providing interactive eLearning content, online resources and preferential rates, that will help them thrive in the digital economy.

SME Rating

A digital classification system that provides a comprehensive overview of the logistics, operations and overall performance of SMEs. The SME Rating measures the SMEs through a key set of financial and operational evaluation criteria including financial and productivity management, business sustainability, and human resources.

AI Mentor

A ground-breaking platform with a diverse range of digital tools and resources for entrepreneurs during the business planning phase, 'AI Mentor' supports businesses by thoroughly explaining how artificial intelligence can be successfully implemented to help drive business growth.

Abu Dhabi SME Hub

Launched in 2021, the 'Abu Dhabi SME Hub' functions as a central resource of critical information for entrepreneurs and SMEs; all within one innovative and locally relevant platform. Through new resources such as these, as well as vast and varied support services, Khalifa Fund will continue to educate, empower and support the SME ecosystem in the UAE.

COVID-19 Response:

In line with COVID-19 countermeasures launched by the UAE and Abu Dhabi governments, the Khalifa Fund has committed itself to combating the pandemic by providing:

Financial Support

- Loan Instalment Deferrals: 3 months
- Loan Restructuring: Changes in loan and repayment period
- Loan Reallocation: Transfer of funds from one financial item to another

Non-Financial Support

- Negotiation with landlords to support rent payments
- Online training services, workshops and webinars
- Online business counselling
- Online group consultancy sessions
- Virtual business monitoring
- Directories to all federal and local government support incentives



Marine Hub

Learn more: www.emarinehub.com



Marine hub is the first e-commerce marketplace with wide range of products focusing on fishing gear and marine products. Founding partners Abdulla Al Mazrouei & Abdul Rahman Al Mazrouei share their entrepreneurial journey.

What was the driving force behind your business idea, and what market need were you trying to address?

Marine Hub was born out of the very own needs and struggles of fishing enthusiasts and sea lovers like myself and many others. Abdul Rahman and I always struggled to find the latest [fishing and] marine gear, and we had to research for days usually to collect what we needed.

Speaking with other friends who have gone through the same struggle, Marine Hub came to mind: Why not launch our own marine-related gear e-commerce platform? It's easy, efficient, and being situated locally means faster delivery and support that would be more tailored to the needs of the local market.

What specific challenges have you faced on your entrepreneurial journey so far - any unique to your industry or business model?

It hasn't always been an easy ride. Talking to the main suppliers in the market, we found that they weren't fully aware of the full potential of having an online presence for their products. They were hesitant, and sometimes even skeptical, about the feasibility of changing/adjusting their business model and getting on board with us.

Most providers had already established their loyal customer base using existing and traditional approaches, so the question then was "Why change?" As Marine Hub grew, the answer to this question became evident: the world is changing. Especially after COVID-19, the switch to online shopping became inevitable. Customers were no longer willing to take long trips to different shops to peruse products - they wanted to stay safe while still being able to enjoy their marine hobby, and this is how Marine Hub became even a more convenient solution for more providers to jump on board with us.

How has the Khalifa Fund supported your company?

The Khalifa Fund was not only a simple push to the right track, it was a huge leap that the Marine Hub team would always be grateful for. Their trust, support, and consultancy allowed us in a little over a year from launching our business to have a strong enough presence in the GCC countries that encouraged us to launch International Shipping as well. Now we have +150 brands on our website, +15,000 products and a strong customer relationship that is getting our customers coming back, and a solid team to maintain our growing workflow.

In your opinion, what were the unique benefits of setting up your business in Abu Dhabi?

Reflecting on our journey, we feel grateful that Abu Dhabi is Marine Hub's home. It opened doors for our brands to grow by collaborating with different logistics providers with good prices that allowed us to provide our customers with a premium shopping and delivery experience without compromising our price range.

Abu Dhabi's smooth banking regulations and rich pool of logistics providers with smooth regulations and processes were a key contributor to how fast Marine Hub's growth has been throughout the past year.

What are the most important lessons you've learned so far as an entrepreneur?

The journey hasn't been easy, but it was worth it. We have grown with Marine Hub. It was just an idea less than two years ago, but we had faith, did the work, and put the effort to study and evolve and it paid off.

I feel that the highlight lesson Marine Hub has taught us is the importance of having faith in your dreams and capabilities. Always seize the opportunities life lays in your way - with enough work and effort it will pay off in ways beyond your wildest dreams, on both professional and personal levels.

What are your plans for the future of your business?

Given that we recently launched international shipping, our plans for Marine Hub as of right now are to focus on establishing a strong presence in the international market. We want to grow even more in the GCC market and have strong affiliations with the local marine communities, and truly make a positive impact on both our customers and suppliers. We are looking forward to the day Marine Hub is a known brand to every marine life enthusiast worldwide, and a go-to shop for all GCC water sports hobbyists and professionals.

Ms Mouza Al Nasri
Acting CEO

When the Khalifa Fund set out to first support entrepreneurs in 2007, what was the SME landscape in Abu Dhabi like? How would you describe this same landscape today?

Khalifa Fund was established in 2007 to fill a gap in the market, with a mandate to provide support services to the many ambitious entrepreneurs in the Abu Dhabi who needed assistance navigating the SME landscape. We're proud to report that we have successfully filled that gap and now work alongside and support a diverse range of entrepreneurs; from micro to small and medium sized businesses.

We've seen tremendous growth in both the number of small and medium enterprises as well as the industries they represent; this has resulted in a greater contribution to the national economy of the UAE through these innovative and hardworking entrepreneurs.

In 2021, SMEs are projected to contribute over 60% to the country's non-oil GDP, a significant growth from when Khalifa Fund was established in 2007. We're honoured to play an active role in the growth and development of this landscape, and will continue to provide valuable means of support for entrepreneurs.



What gaps is the Khalifa Fund filling to support SME growth?

In brief, the Khalifa Fund provides a wide range of support services including capability building and training, counselling and project funding. However, I would like to provide a recent example of how Khalifa Fund identified opportunities to support entrepreneurs from the offset for the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, which dramatically altered the business landscape.

Khalifa Fund was determined from the beginning of the pandemic to equip entrepreneurs with the right tools to overcome new market challenges with minimal losses. This was achieved through programmes and initiatives that supported entrepreneurs in their digital transformation journeys.

For example, e-Empower was launched in partnership with Amazon in September 2020, an ongoing education and developmental initiative that has continued to grow and bring on-board other leading e-commerce partners including noon.com and Akshaak, Microsoft and Etisalat. This initiative offers entrepreneurs an opportunity to expand their e-commerce offering, and further develop their businesses in the digital sphere.

Have you identified any consistent business / entrepreneurial pain points or challenges among Emirati entrepreneurs over the years? How do you help them overcome those?

The innovative entrepreneurs we continually support are always interested in staying up-to-date on the latest industry trends and advances with the SME ecosystem. We're able to support these entrepreneurs consistently through our capability building training programmes and one-on-one counselling sessions; both of which are frequently revised and updated according to international best practices. Additionally, the Khalifa Fund has a very ambitious and proactive stakeholder engagement strategy which allows us to engage leading partners who provide additional support through the development and implementation of progressive programmes and initiatives for entrepreneurs and SMEs.

We have seen a notable increase in female entrepreneurs in Abu Dhabi and the overall region. What, in your opinion, are the greatest obstacles for these individuals?

The exponential growth of female entrepreneurs is one of the greatest achievements of Khalifa Fun. We're honoured to have played a part in supporting the growth of participation in the private sector amongst females. We are forecasting additional growth among females, as we've seen increased awareness about opportunities for female entrepreneurs and SMEs. The barriers to entry have been lowered, enabling those that would not have previously considered starting their own business the ability to receive support from Khalifa Fund.

One such example I would like to draw attention to is the 'Empowering Female Entrepreneurs' initiative which was launched on Emirati Women's Day in August 2020. The initiative was developed in partnership with Al Bayt Mitwahid Association and the Social Care & Minors Affairs Foundation. Through the initiative, a group of upcoming female entrepreneurs in Abu Dhabi received comprehensive mentorship and participated in training workshops over four months; with the winning entrepreneurs receiving a share of the AED 250,000 funding grant provided by Al Bayt Mitwahid Association.

Another prime example is our initiative, 'She Means Business', which was in collaboration with Facebook. She Means Business supported and trained over 1,300 women entrepreneurs, through a series of virtual training sessions, with the overarching aim of equipping them with a versatile range of skills that would help advance the marketing and e-commerce aspects of their respective businesses.

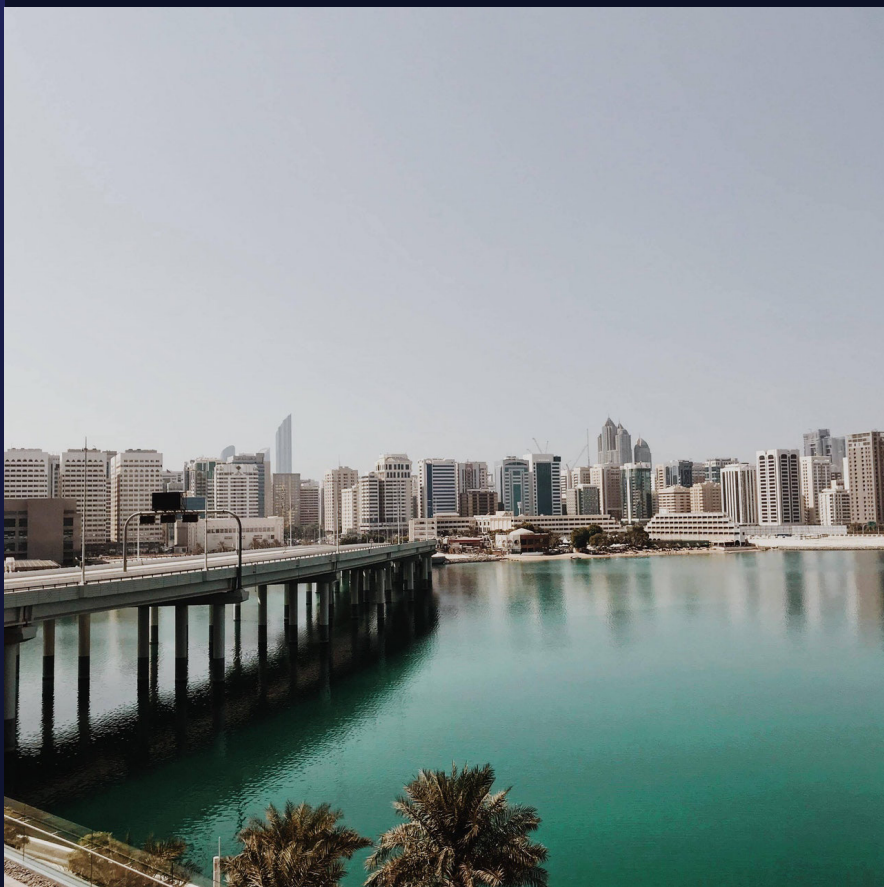
In which industries/sectors have local SMEs exhibited the most promising growth, and in which are they struggling?

The dramatic shift in the business landscape due to the COVID-19 pandemic created many challenges for entrepreneurs and SMEs, but it also allowed for significant opportunities. It goes without saying, businesses that were primarily focused on tourism and hospitality services were most hard-hit. However, we saw significant growth in the e-commerce sphere. This allowed for tech focused business to grow as well as retail businesses that were able to adapt and implement a digital transformation strategy to take advantage of the increased use of e-commerce shopping amongst consumers.

Over the years, you have developed many tools. You recently unveiled the "AI Mentor" platform; and are now launching the "Abu Dhabi SME Hub" to support Emirati entrepreneurs. What kind of actionable change would you like to see coming from these initiatives?

One of the primary objectives of Khalifa Fund is to provide support services to entrepreneurs and SMEs that are current, relevant and strongly rooted in international best practices. Part of achieving this objective is to meet entrepreneurs and SMEs where they are and support them in their progressive growth.

'AI Mentor' achieves this by thoroughly explaining how artificial intelligence can be successfully implemented to help drive business growth. Additionally, we're very proud of the 'Abu Dhabi SME Hub' as it functions as a central resource of critical information for entrepreneurs and SMEs; all within one innovative and locally relevant platform. Through new resources such as these, as well as our vast and varied support services, Khalifa Fund will continue to educate, empower and support the SME ecosystem in the UAE.



Overview

Sandooq Al Watan is a community initiative launched by a group of prominent Emirati businessmen that seeks to promote a sense of social cohesion in Emirati society. The initiative is in line with the UAE leadership's vision of a sustainable future for the country and its citizens. It also reflects the private sector's commitment to social responsibility and the positive role that Emirati businessmen and women play in supporting social development projects and plans.

The projects and initiatives of the Fund focus on vital sectors that directly impact the nation and its citizens. As such, the Fund supports four key areas: sponsoring talented individuals, providing professional guidance to develop young local talents, encouraging start-up commercial projects that have a social impact, and supporting applied research and innovations.

Sandooq Al Watan's mission is to attract investments and community contributions in order to utilise them for the benefit of the Emirati society via diverse projects that serve strategic economic and social sectors.

Initiatives

Emirati Innovator

Sandooq Al Watan launched the "Emirati Innovator" to empower and support Emirati innovators and tech entrepreneurs. The program helps transform their inventions into successful companies capable of competing on a local, regional, and global level. Within this initiative, Sandooq Al Watan has collaborated with multiple entities to support entrepreneurs and their startups, including 15 startups that were awarded pre-seed funding as well as other forms of non-financial support.

Khalifa Innovation Center (KIC)

Sandooq Al Watan has partnered with strategic stakeholders to launch Khalifa Innovation Center (KIC) which runs incubation and accelerator programs. These programs provide participants with the necessary entrepreneurial skills and knowledge to push research discoveries from their labs into different markets. Currently the center is supporting 9 startups.

Hind Baker
Director General, Sandooq Al Watan

Where does the business ecosystem stand today? In your opinion, what are the benefits and challenges for startups and SMEs doing business in Abu Dhabi?

The Emirate of Abu Dhabi has transformed itself into a haven for entrepreneurs as well as an incubator for their ideas and ventures. It has launched several programmes and initiatives that support startups from inception to completion and beyond.

Ghadan 21, Abu Dhabi's flagship accelerator programme, aims to drive the Emirate's development by investing in business, innovation, and people. Launched in 2019 by H.H. Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, and Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council, Ghadan 21 is a AED50 billion three-year programme.

The Abu Dhabi Investment Office's 'Ventures Fund' is a notable initiative of the Ghadan 21 programme. The AED535 million Fund expanded its scope in 2020 to offer more support to innovation-focused companies and back later-stage businesses that are in expansion mode and ready to scale.

We can also mention the Hub71 programme, which forms part of the government's efforts to diversify the economy and catalyse Abu Dhabi's digital transformation. Hub71 provides startup founders with access to top investors, world-class customers, expert mentorship, and lucrative market opportunities.

With these initiatives and many others in place, the Emirate of Abu Dhabi has established a robust infrastructure that supports entrepreneurs while creating an environment where they can experiment with their ideas, implement them, and see them achieve success.



Wasla

A refrigerated delivery aggregator and management platform that allows merchants to seamlessly connect with a multitude of delivery companies to best serve their needs. Sandooq Al Watan awarded the startup a pre-seed funding and collaborated with Sheraa to offer the startup access to different programs to support development.

How are you contributing to the local startup and SME ecosystem growth? How do you see this evolving over the next year?

Sandoog Al Watan has launched its share of initiatives and programmes to support entrepreneurship in the Emirate.

A notable example is the Khalifa Innovation Center, launched in partnership with Khalifa Fund, Tawazun, Mubadala, and Khalifa University where the centre is located. The 1,200 square-meter space incubates promising, homegrown Emirati tech startups. The programme provides financing, training, and office space, among many other forms of support.

Furthermore, Sandoog Al Watan supported the Khalifa Fund in launching the 'Pitch@Palace' annual event where innovative local entrepreneurs were given the opportunity to access mentors, advisers, distribution systems, supply chains, connections, and investment opportunities. 'The Emirati Innovator' programme, which extends support for tech entrepreneurs in partnership with multiple entities, has already supported 14 promising tech startups to date.

Sandoog Al Watan's ultimate goal is to support the UAE's vision of a diversified, post-oil knowledge-based economy driven by successful Emirati companies. We expect to continue making progress towards that goal in the year ahead and for the foreseeable future.

This vision drives our commitment to building strong partnerships with both government and private entities. Large corporations are perfectly poised to support new ventures, and government entities have the power to create the necessary infrastructure for a startup economy. It is imperative that the two sectors work together to support entrepreneurship in the UAE and take Emirati companies to the next level.

What opportunities should entrepreneurs pay attention to in Abu Dhabi? What kind of business growth opportunities are you encouraging or expect will be developing in the coming years?

As Abu Dhabi increasingly looks towards diversifying its economy and sources of income, the spotlight is on technology and tech startups; and following the COVID-19 pandemic, innovation and technology are brought to the fore even further.

As mentioned earlier, Sandoog Al Watan has launched various initiatives and programmes to support entrepreneurship and startups, particularly in the technology sector, which we consider to be our best bet to build a resilient post-oil economy. In addition to supporting tech ventures, we have also introduced programmes to develop skills among talented Emiratis in sectors we consider to be essential for our country's future economy.

Research is one of those sectors. Therefore, we launched 'Researcherae' – the first national platform that empowers researchers in the country by providing them with funding and networking opportunities. The platform aims to support over 50 student-led research projects and 10 major co-funded applied research programmes in priority sectors.

On a similar note, our 'UAE Coder Programme' teaches Emirati children aged 7 to 14 the basics of coding. The programme aims to teach 10,000 children by 2030 – with 3,000 of them enrolling in advanced coding programmes.

The UAE economy stands to benefit from these programmes as they create the foundations for the UAE to become a hub for technology and sought-after talent. This will be of great value for the local tech scene, as it will provide nascent startups, as well as more established companies, with gifted coders, researchers, and other tech experts. These professionals will allow companies to meet the tech-related requirements they need to continue growing, until they reach the coveted global top 10 positions we aspire to.

Established in Abu Dhabi in 2018, ADQ is one of the region's largest holding companies with direct and indirect investments in more than 90 companies. Its portfolio of major enterprises span key sectors across Abu Dhabi's economy, including food and agriculture, aviation, financial services, healthcare, industries, logistics, media, real estate, tourism and hospitality, transport and utilities.

As a strategic partner of the Government, ADQ is committed to accelerating the transformation of the emirate into a globally competitive and knowledge-based economy. It is both an asset owner and investor in target sectors, locally and internationally, which align with Abu Dhabi leadership's vision.

DisruptAD

DisruptAD aims to consolidate ADQ's venture capital efforts under a unified platform.

DisruptAD's activities will include investments in start-ups and venture capital funds, as well as the creation of new incubators and accelerators to support Abu Dhabi's evolution as a global start-up destination and accelerate the development of its innovation ecosystem.

DisruptAD aims to support and nurture over 1,000 start-ups over the next five years to create a thriving local community of founders, fund managers, incubators and accelerators. This will cement Abu Dhabi's position as a world-class technology hub where new ideas are born and transformative companies get created, maximizing value creation and delivering long-term economic benefits for the UAE.

Beyond the UAE, DisruptAD will target global innovators across other markets including the broader Middle East and North Africa region, India, China, South East Asia and the United States.

The platform will partner with companies and funds that can benefit from ADQ's commitment to the development of clusters including Healthcare and Pharma, Food and Agriculture, Mobility and Logistics, and Energy and Utilities.

DisruptAD will also be responsible for the Alpha Wave Incubation (AWI) Fund, the AED 1.1 billion venture fund that focuses on Indian and South East Asian start-ups, and will manage the AED 535 million Ventures Fund, a flagship initiative of the Ghadan 21 programme.

Emirates Angels

www.emiratesangels.org

EMIRATES ANGELS
INVESTORS ASSOCIATION



جمعية الإمارات
للمستثمرين الملائكة

Overview

The Emirates Angels investors association is a non-profit association, socially registered under the Ministry of Social Development in the UAE, with the support from the Ministry of Economy.

Founded on the 25th February 2020, as a registered NGO in the United Arab Emirates (Registration# 200), the association's objective is to accelerate the startup scene by forming a network of passionate and active investors that can contribute to the early investment stage in the region.

It supports the local application of global best practices and methodologies in the field of angel investing, providing education for angel investors and startups, and connecting investors and startups in the region and beyond.

More broadly, it also seeks to educate investors, entrepreneurs on the fundamentals of startups, angel investing and VC by providing educational resources, coaching and mentorship programs.

As a non-profit entity, the association does not invest in startups. Members can however invest through a fund, side vehicle or individually as they please. Members include the elite youth UAE national angel investors and expert board members.

Emirates Angels aims to be the voice of angel investors to the government and to ecosystem partners: it brings up any issue that hinders the development of startups, lobbies on laws and regulations and communicates the importance of supporting early-stage startups.



For general inquiries regarding Emirates Angels:
info@emiratesangels.org

Mr. Tariq Al-Saman
Association's secretary of the board

Although angel investing is relatively new in the region, the United Arab Emirates has taken pioneering steps in this field: according to recent reports, the UAE ranked first in the Middle East and North Africa with 26% of total deals.

Emirates Angels is the first of its kind in the Middle East, as it works to bring together angel investors under an official umbrella and provides them with services of interest to the sector.

The association also works side by side with startups as well as authorities in the UAE to create the best investment environment.

The Emirates Angel Investors Association recently announced that it has joined Europe's leading early-stage investors network (EBAN), the largest angel investors network in the world, highlighting the country's position in early stage investment and its commitment to attract angel investors and startups from around the world.



IV. Acceleration & Incubation

Hub71

www.hub71.com

HUB71

Overview

A flagship initiative of the Ghadan 21 accelerator program, Hub71 is Abu Dhabi's global tech ecosystem, enabling founders to build globally enduring homegrown tech companies by providing access to global markets, a capital ecosystem, a global network of partners, and a vibrant community.

Backed by the government of Abu Dhabi and Mubadala Investment Company, Hub71 works alongside strategic partners Microsoft, Abu Dhabi Global Market and SoftBank's Vision Fund, to create the optimal environment for tech startups from around the world seeking to build outstanding tech innovations, and scale globally. Hub71 is on a mission to introduce new minds and technologies to Abu Dhabi, finding new ways to build globally enduring technology companies and sustain the nation's continuous economic development.

Hub71 is a key cornerstone in the UAE's strategy for the next 50 years, stimulating entrepreneurship, innovation, and accelerating the digital economy.

Join Hub71's Community by filling the form online:



www.hub71.com/en/contact-us/

or contacting the team for more information:

info@hub71.com



HealthTech and EdTech startups for Covid-19 Relief

Amid the global pandemic, the Hub71 Selection Committee prioritized selecting HealthTech and EdTech startups to develop essential technologies that can support vital sectors heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Value Creation Program - The Outliers

Hub71's Value Creation Program - The Outliers, gives startups and mSMEs the opportunity to work closely with major corporations, including Thales, Department of Health - Abu Dhabi, ADCB, Mashreq Bank, Mastercard and Etihad Airways - to solve important challenges they face. Through this program, Hub71 is facilitating market access for startups and mSMEs to leading private and public sector organizations in the UAE, while helping corporates broaden their digital capabilities to streamline processes, enhance their sectors and become more efficient.

United Arab Emirates University's Science and Innovation Park (UAEU SIP) and INSEAD Middle East Partnerships

Hub71's partnerships with the United Arab Emirates University's Science and Innovation Park (UAEU SIP) and INSEAD Middle East are designed to boost talent development in the UAE.

Etihad Airways Partnership

Hub71 forged a partnership with Etihad Airways to give its community access to the airline's award-winning products and services, at special rates, enabling founders and entrepreneurs to export their innovative products and services to new markets.

The Concept: NEOS Fly+

Learn more: www.the-concept.co



Hub71-based startup, The Concept, partnered with Etihad Airways to develop NEOS Fly+, the world's first smart IoT in-flight food tray. The startup creates hardware and software solutions that embody sustainability, technology and innovation for the aviation industry.

Through Hub71's commitment to nurturing startups and forging partnerships with leading organizations, it led to The Concept securing this partnership which could lead to commercializing a proof of concept and further bolster the company's business growth. More widely, facilitating their collaboration further demonstrates Abu Dhabi's enabling environment to foster innovation.



Mohamed Al-Binali,
Product & Business Development

Technology is at the heart of innovation across all fields of business. How is Hub71 catalyzing Abu Dhabi's digital transformation efforts?

Ghadan 21 has been the catalyst for accelerating the digital transformation of Abu Dhabi. The government program supports our mission of generating economic impact across our nation, and we are proud to be part of this driving force.

By attracting global startups from all sectors, Hub71 is harnessing technology and innovation, providing mSMEs and startups with greater access to market opportunities through its collaborations with world-leading corporates and government entities.

Our community has grown substantially since we launched in 2019, attracting and selecting 100+ high-growth tech startups from around the world in 16 different sectors, each with a mission to shape the future. We believe partnerships have accelerated our reach to our startups; especially given the importance of tech and innovation to any organization. Part of our strategy was to double down our efforts in forming strategic partnerships with local and international corporations and government agencies to facilitate market access to our startups. This is supported by our Annual Partner Challenge Program, The Outliers, that provides startups and mSMEs the opportunity to work closely with renowned organizations, including ADCB, Mastercard, Etihad Airways, Department of Health Abu Dhabi and Thales - to solve their operational challenges.

We will continue to provide startups from around the world with the ideal environment to grow, helping them raise funding and build successful ventures. As Hub71's community expands into new markets, we will be in a stronger position to attract founders who may be considering the Middle East as their next market of growth. These efforts will further energize Abu Dhabi's digital transformation and innovation hub, helping to future-proof its economy.



Hub71 has been instrumental in the growth and success of many tech startups in Abu Dhabi. Which niches of the tech sector do you believe still hold untapped potential for innovation and investment?

Technology and innovation will shape a better and more sustainable future for our generations. Particularly, the surge of Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Blockchain, Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality and Machine Learning that enhance business processes and services, and still hold untapped potential for innovation and investment.

As a technology community focused on creating a prosperous future for society, we select startups from all sectors to join our mission. The diverse mix of startups we support are the government's national priority sectors such as FinTech, HealthTech, AgTech and EdTech, in addition to advancing more niche and emerging sectors including CleanTech, FoodTech and RegTech.

The rapid digitalization taking place today will effectively shape how our industries operate tomorrow and maybe create new industries all together. There is great potential for mSMEs and startups to make a real impact and it is Hub71's commitment to provide hand-in-hand support throughout their journeys of growth.

Anghami, the first Arab technology company to list on Nasdaq, chose Hub71 for its new headquarters. What makes Hub71 such an attractive tech ecosystem?

Anghami's listing on Nasdaq was a major milestone for Abu Dhabi's tech industry, and highlights the key role played by Hub71 and our strategic partners Abu Dhabi Investment Office (ADIO) and Abu Dhabi Global Market (ADGM) in enabling tech companies to thrive.

It puts into perspective what Hub71, with its regional and influential partner ADIO, are doing to attract the highest quality startups. We have already demonstrated an ability to attract venture capital and accelerator funding, building a growing capital community. In under nine months, we helped raise AED 185 million for 29 of our startups seeking funding. This demonstrates the startups we select have a higher chance of succeeding and can gain opportunities to raise capital that is fundamentally important to their early phases of growth.

Founders around the world are confident in Hub71 and Abu Dhabi's attractiveness as an international business center because it offers plenty of opportunities to scale. Not only is Hub71 strategically located in Abu Dhabi's vibrant financial center, but the Emirate offers founders seamless connectivity to new markets across the Middle East and farther afield. Abu Dhabi's stable, flexible, and open business environment is driven by innovation, knowledge sharing and technology, underpinned by a supportive government that is actively promoting entrepreneurship.

Additionally, we are backed by some of the world's most powerful technology investors and companies including Mubadala Investment Company, Microsoft, SoftBank's Vision Fund and an award winning international financial center - Abu Dhabi Global Market - that amplifies our proposition to startups globally. Through the combined strength and support of our strategic partners of corporates, government agencies, investors, and tech organizations around the world, Hub71 helps promote access to capital, market opportunities and talent, which are elements that founders are looking for.



Most of the funds that operate in the UAE and in the region are focused on early-stage, Pre-Series A, and Series A stage funding rounds. How can funding for later-stage scale up efforts be made more available in Abu Dhabi's tech sector?

We are focused on facilitating faster access to capital for all our startups through our global network of strategic partners. Driven by the chance to secure capital, founders have access to global and regional investors from Abu Dhabi. One of which is Mubadala Investment Company, our strategic partner and a sovereign fund that is actively focusing on disruptive investments in technology that have launched their USD 250 million MENA Tech fund in late 2019. We are also increasing the number of VC funds with 17 actively deploying capital within our community (current assets under management over \$1.72 billion), and UK investment firm, Hambro Perks, recently launched a \$50 million fund managed by a team based at Hub71.

The opportunities are there, demonstrated by Hub71 startup Securrency, a global financial services technology infrastructure and products company, which raised \$30 million through its Series B investment round, which saw participation from WisdomTree Investments, Abu Dhabi Catalyst Partners Limited (ADCP), State Street, and U.S. Bank.

Tarabut Gateway, also a Hub71 startup, and the MENA region's largest open banking platform, recently raised \$13 million in funding, demonstrating that funding is also growing for later-stage startups. We will continue to expand our capital platform that enables more startups of any stage to raise funding. These efforts are important to supporting the growth journeys of startups and generating strong financial returns for investors.

How is Hub71's tech ecosystem bringing value to Abu Dhabi and helping drive innovation and economic diversification?

As Abu Dhabi's global tech ecosystem, we are committed to delivering on our mandate to enable and support founders, regardless of their nationality or idea. We are driving the development of an innovation hub, promoting entrepreneurship that contributes to the Emirate's economic diversification plan.

We are working to generate real impact for our startup community and Abu Dhabi. Since Hub71 launched in 2019, its community has facilitated the creation of jobs, with startups having onboarded 250 team members with further plans to hire 340 people over the next 12 months.

A knowledge-based economy is at the core of it, driven by exceptional tech savvy talent. That is why we offer upskilling services for the youth and tech enthusiasts to develop founders' teams. Over 150 hours of mentorship and 51 internship opportunities were delivered in 2020 at Hub71, and through our academic partnerships, we are fostering knowledge exchange and mentorship opportunities between students and alumni at higher education institutions and our growing tech community.

Ultimately, our aim is to attract the most promising startups from around the world to Abu Dhabi and enable them to build their innovative solutions and capture opportunities that the market presents.

Plug and Play

www.plugandplaytechcenter.com/abu-dhabi

PLUGANDPLAY ABU DHABI

Powered by  مكتب أبوظبي للاستثمار
ABU DHABI INVESTMENT OFFICE

Overview

Plug and Play is a global innovation platform headquartered in Silicon Valley. With the support of ADIO, it opened its GCC headquarters in Abu Dhabi. Plug and Play leverages accelerator programs, corporate innovation services, and its independent venture capital arm to make technological advancement progress faster than ever before.

Since its inception in 2006, Plug and Play's programs have expanded worldwide to include a presence in over 30 locations globally, giving startups the necessary resources to find mentorship, funding and business development opportunities almost anywhere without cost or equity taken.

With the world's largest tech startup/scale-up network and 450+ official corporate and government partners, Plug and Play has created a comprehensive, all-encompassing innovation ecosystem in over 18 industries. Startups from its independent venture capital arm have raised over \$9 billion in funding, with over a dozen successful unicorn portfolio exits including Dropbox, PayPal, Guardant Health, Honey and Lending Club.

Plug and Play has accelerated 65 startups in Abu Dhabi through its accelerator programs. 86% of these startups have attained business, and 57% of these startups have now established in the UAE.

If you're a corporation or startup looking to innovate in the Middle East, join Plug and Play's platform:



www.plugandplaytechcenter.com/abu-dhabi/

Alliance to fight COVID-19 (AFC-19)

Throughout the pandemic, Plug and Play, Abu Dhabi and Department of Health Abu Dhabi provided a range of emergency response services, in addition to supporting the AFC-19 Members: Daman - National Health Insurance Company, Etihad Airways and Abu Dhabi Global Market. The "Alliance to fight COVID-19" accelerator program in 2020 brought some of the best regional and international startups to collaborate in the fight against the healthcare challenges.

During May 2020, the Department of Health-Abu Dhabi, National Health Insurance Company - Daman, The Authority of Social Contribution - Ma'an, Etihad Airways and seven large public and private Healthcare Providers (overseeing more than 90% of patient care in Abu Dhabi) combined their efforts with Plug and Play ADGM to form the "Alliance to fight COVID-19" ("AFC-19") to bring some of the best startups from across the globe to collaborate in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic across the region.

AFC-19 is part of the Abu Dhabi Health Tech Accelerator.

Abu Dhabi Investment Office Partnership

Plug and Play's newly formed partnership with ADIO in 2021 will allow it to support exceptional tech startups and talent to grow across the UAE and GCC — not only by expanding the existing FinTech and HealthTech accelerators, but also by launching a new program in 2021.



Etihaad Airways partners with Medicus AI and Sitata, startups from the Plug and Play global ecosystem

Learn more:

www.medicus.ai

medicus.ai

www.sitata.com

SITATA

As the pandemic disrupted the Travel & Hospitality industry, Plug and Play Abu Dhabi supported Etihad Airways in identifying new technologies and initiatives to help the airline thrive given new norms of traveler's safety.

Etihad Airways notably partnered with Sitata, a Canadian travel risk management company, and startup from the Plug and Play global ecosystem, to launch an interactive travel map on etihad.com, the airline's official website.

The travel map uses advanced computer algorithms to detect new travel information globally, which is swiftly updated on its portal. The system also relies on announcements and updates published on official government websites and reputable media channels.

The information is vetted by Sitata's team of editors and continuously updated, providing important information that can impact travel arrangements including border restrictions, curfew timings, mandatory precautionary measures, quarantine rules, airport and flight operations, and the number of current active COVID-19 cases in each destination.

Etihad Airways furthermore partnered with Medicus AI to launch a COVID-19 risk assessment tool across digital platforms. Powered by Medicus AI's technology, the risk-assessment tool guides Etihad's guests in evaluating the probability of having contracted the COVID-19 coronavirus by responding to a set of 22 questions.

The self-administered assessment takes less than five minutes to complete, and is based on World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines that are updated daily. It helps guests understand the probability of having contracted the virus and offers advice and recommendations, allowing them to make informed decisions about travelling.

الإتحاد
ETIHAD Choose Well.

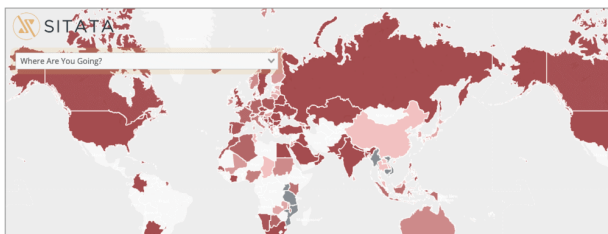
Book Fly Etihad Manage Destinations Help Etihad Guest

Travel guidelines and regulations

More information about your destination

Powered by Sitata, use this interactive map to check the latest travel restrictions, guidelines and COVID-19 risk rating for destinations around the world. Simply hover over the map for quick-reference facts or enter the name of the country to find out more.

Etihad Airways is not responsible for any information provided by Sitata. This information should be used for reference only. Always check the latest travel advice and guidelines before you fly.



Babak Ahmadzadeh,
Director, Plug and Play Abu Dhabi

Where does the AD Startup/SME ecosystem stand today?

The Abu Dhabi startup ecosystem is going through an exponential growth with exceptional local, regional and global startups establishing and scaling more rapidly, even during this “New Norm”.

We have been witnessing this firsthand over the last three years through our Abu Dhabi Hub, which stands as our GCC HQ. We strongly believe that Abu Dhabi has the potential to become the Silicon Valley of the Middle East, and we are proud to have extended our commitment to Abu Dhabi for another 3 years through our strategic partnership with the Abu Dhabi Investment Office.



What are the benefits of doing business in Abu Dhabi for startups?

Emirate and Federal efforts have, and continue to, offer support to startups in 4 main ways: access to business and product development support; access to incentives and funding; access to knowledgeable talent; and accommodating infrastructure.

Today, we can see many accelerators, incubators, venture studios, and tech-based programs helping aspiring entrepreneurs and current startup founders to better launch, navigate, and scale their startups. On the B2B side, we see many of the major corporations and government entities of Abu Dhabi taking increasingly proactive and bold measures to engage, empower and do business with startups.

Equity-based funding, startup grants, subsidies and cheaper licensing packages have all become more and more prevalent and accessible for startups looking to call Abu Dhabi and the UAE their home. Access to capital is growing for early, growth and late-stage startups as the private and public sectors are following the momentum of the growth of Abu Dhabi startups.

Schools, universities and other educational/vocational institutions and programs have shifted their focus to initiatives that develop the entrepreneurial mindset and educate aspiring entrepreneurs with the skills needed to launch startups or support current and future tech startups. As tech leaders, investors, academics and other ecosystem players cluster more and more in key areas like ADGM and Hub71, this is giving more reasons for high-skill talent to come to Abu Dhabi to learn, exchange and co-create.

With the UAE's bold leadership, innovation and digital transformation are becoming much more than mere buzzword. A big factor in that is the public sector's willingness and ability to listen to startups and provide better policies and regulations to lower the costs of doing business, while improving access to business and ease of doing business.

How can startups and mSMEs in the Emirate further be supported in their growth?

We are just at the tip of the iceberg; more initiatives can be started and connected to generate new opportunities for startups. Plug and Play is excited to see development here in Abu Dhabi around access to Business.

Access and ease of doing business fundamentally underpin all startups' needs. Funding, talent and smart policies can only go so far if entrepreneurs can only access a limited market or if it is too slow/costly to access it.

Given that Abu Dhabi and the UAE's population can only grow so fast, we see two key channels that can really help develop Abu Dhabi as a startup business hub.

First, increased connections and integration with the nearby market, for example with other Emirates, GCC, MENA and Asian markets. Secondly, gathering and activating the B2B market: there are many major corporations and government entities in Abu Dhabi that are forward-thinking and ripe for innovation through startup collaborations.

This is what we at Plug and Play focus on heavily as we have seen it in more than 40+ countries be one of the key drivers to building innovative ecosystems. When startups collaborate with these large private and public sector entities, this can be invaluable for their product and business development.

This is the win-win we try to catalyse as Plug and Play: startups are able to create and scale solutions that meet market needs; and major corporations and government entities can gain huge ROI by testing, co-creating and/or commercializing exceptional startups solutions through cost optimizations and/or new revenue generation.

How is Plug and Play contributing to the growth of the local startup ecosystem?

For the past 3 years, Plug and Play Abu Dhabi has been a dedicated supporter of the local tech startup ecosystem in Abu Dhabi, UAE and MENA. We achieved that through our Venture Capital investments; tech accelerator programs; corporate & government innovation services; inspiration and education, and general tech ecosystem enablement.

As one of the most active VCs in the world, Plug and Play is actively and increasingly investing in tech startups in the UAE and the region. We focus on early-stage business, usually up to the Series A round of funding.

We have three active annual tech accelerator programs focused on enabling exceptional, local, regional and international startups to discover and attain real business and collaboration opportunities through our network of future-forward corporates and government partners and friends. Our priority sectors/verticals of focus in Abu Dhabi are HealthTech, FinTech and, most recently Industry 4.0. Our accelerators are 100% free-for-startups with no hidden terms or catches.

We are excited for a long and impactful future of fostering innovations and startups in Abu Dhabi. We make this possible by bringing together the largest and richest dataset and network of tech startups globally, and strongest track record of creating consistent value for startups, corporations and government entities through meaningful collaborations through our dedicated 700+ team.

Plug and Play works closely across many of the key pillars of the Abu Dhabi tech community to best create and align value for current and new startups that may seek to start or grow their ventures in Abu Dhabi. We typically do this by actively participating in policy/incentive discussions with key government entities; and create or support a range of events, workshops and seminars to inspire and equip tech entrepreneurs and corporate/government innovators to better innovate and collaborate together.

As a global company and the largest open innovation platform in the world, we try to leverage our 42 global offices and wide network of corporate partners, government partners, startups, investors, mentors and academic bodies to enable knowledge and tech exchange at scale and speed internationally for the Abu Dhabi and wider tech ecosystem.

How does Plug and Play support startup entrepreneurs in connecting them to business opportunities aligned with local market needs?

We typically focus on active outreach rather than open applications to find the startups most suitable to meet the tech challenges and business opportunities in our verticals of operations here, with and for our private and public partners such as ADIO, Department of Health, Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank (ADCB), First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB), Etisalat, Daman, UEMedical, Philips etc.

Our corporate/government-led tech accelerator programs become truly impactful when key industry influencers become more able and willing to innovate through startup collaboration.

Much of our work at Plug and Play Abu Dhabi is to support our local accelerator partners 1-on-1 in a hands-on way to support their effort to create the culture, strategies, processes and internal buy-ins they need to initiate innovative tech challenges with the hope of finding the right tech startups with whom they can collaborate, meet or excel together.

Our main corporate innovation services are based on advisory activities, workshops and other internal engagements to help leadership and innovation champions bring the rest of their organizations with them on their vision of digital transformation and growth.

How do you see the Abu Dhabi ecosystem evolving over the next year?

We have incredible belief in the future of Abu Dhabi and Arab Nations to go through a miraculous growth as a center of tech innovation and startups. We could not be more bullish and our vision of supporting Abu Dhabi to be a real global leader as a tech hub is as clear as ever.

That being said, we aim to take even bolder steps to support the ecosystem, such as scaling and consolidating a fluid B2B marketplace for startups.

Our focus will be Abu Dhabi, but we want to support more across the UAE and MENA region. This is very important as startups need markets to scale and aspire to grow into. This means that we seek to broaden and deepen our corporate and government partnerships across our existing verticals and new ones, to create a larger and more connected open innovation platform.

We would like to see real industry/national innovation and tech start growth within and, uniquely, across sectors/verticals. There are many great startups and industry leaders that can pioneer innovation opportunities, break barriers and also shape a brighter future for all.

We also aim to make more Investments and are considering a VC Fund: as a private investor, our goal is to find, invest and enable the next unicorns. With companies under our belt including Google, DropBox, PayPal and Logitech from the US, and others closer to the region, such as Flutterwave, Guardant Health, N26 and Rappi, we know we can support many more in the MENA region. Our VC arm has typically been closed to only the capital of our founder and his/her family. We are considering launching funds in certain key geographies and/or verticals in collaboration with strategic investors and/or corporate/government partners.



Health Plug and Play MENA

Department of Health

www.doh.gov.ae

دائرة الصحة
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



Overview

Health Plug and Play MENA is the region's first healthtech startup accelerator, a joint program between the Abu Dhabi Department of Health and Plug and Play Abu Dhabi.

The MENA HealthTech Accelerator (Health Plug and Play MENA) was launched in 2019, and the program launched its second cohort of startups this April.

Through their first full program in 2020, "Alliance to Fight COVID-19" (AFC-19), Plug and Play and DOH contacted 120+ startups, evaluating 60+ startups, selecting 12 companies before successfully accelerating 8 of them. AFC-19 was also joined by non-healthcare partners like Etihad Airways and Ma'an.

Last year, the first cohort of accelerated startups were supported to test and deploy cutting-edge technology solutions to support the community and address the COVID-19 challenges from telemedicine to e-triage, remote monitoring, and innovative diagnostics solutions. The accelerator provided these selected innovators a soft-landing and accessible platform to explore collaborations with local hospitals, health insurers, and industry players to help them develop and scale their solutions.

The Department of Health is the healthcare regulator for the Emirate of Abu Dhabi but also proactively promotes innovation in HealthTech in Abu Dhabi through its HealthTechHub in HUB71.



If you are interested to discover cutting-edge technology solutions in the healthcare industry and network with like-minded organizations, please reach out to Plug and Play's Regional HealthTech Program Manager, Louiza Chitour at louiza@pnptc.com

Dr. Asma Ibrahim Al Mannaei
DoH Executive Director Research & Innovation

Abu Dhabi has progressed a lot in terms of supporting startups by helping to establish and scale these businesses.

For example, the creation of entities like Hub71 offers new, unique opportunities. However, startups continue to face major challenges, such as early stage funding and opportunities to develop and test products.

The DoH established a partnership with Plug and Play Abu Dhabi to attract international startups to Abu Dhabi and grow the local HealthTech ecosystem. It has dedicated a full team to work with HealthTech innovators at Hub71.

It aims to grow the ecosystem by supporting more startups and SMEs to land in Abu Dhabi and help scale such sector-focused businesses, but also by inviting more corporate partners to Abu Dhabi.



Overview

startAD is an Abu Dhabi-based accelerator advancing startups to scale and success in the UAE and beyond. Powered by Tamkeen LLC and anchored at NYU Abu Dhabi, startAD is a new model for innovation that creates customized and impact-driven programs in partnership with government, corporations, investors and others to further the UAE's knowledge-based economy.

startAD offers unparalleled business advancement opportunities to local and global tech startups, SMEs, researchers and investors through an extensive range of programs, state-of-the-art facilities, and a strong global network. startAD drives innovation in multiple priority industries in the UAE, from finance to construction, and more.



Hana Barakat
Associate Director, startAD

The AD startup ecosystem has become richer in the last years in terms of funding opportunities, programmatic support and even ease of incorporation with the latest regulatory changes. However, SMEs still face big challenges with access to necessary capital for growth and programmatic support (coaching and mentorship). startAD is contributing to the local ecosystem's growth by designing and running impact driven programs aimed at upskilling the local entrepreneurs, de-risking their businesses (Startup/SME) and equipping them with the necessary tools to scale.



For general inquiries regarding startAD's program:

startad@nyu.edu

Academy for Women Entrepreneurs



Organized by the US Embassy Abu Dhabi and in partnership with startAD, AWE is a 6-month incubation program designed to empower women entrepreneurs to fulfill their economic potential and, in doing so, create conditions for increased stability, security, and prosperity for all. The program supports UAE-founded women-owned businesses (SMEs) to focus on business resilience with a view to survive, thrive, and then grow in these new market conditions. The AWE UAE entrepreneurs, get a chance to refocus their ventures, re-explore their core value to customers, and rebuild their businesses to suit the new market conditions.

Manassah 2.0

منصة
MANASSAH



Manassah was designed to seek out and kickstart the best retail business ideas from the UAE's most ambitious entrepreneurs and global innovative Retail Tech solutions. Supported by ALDAR Properties and run by startAD, Manassah nurtures the exceptional entrepreneurial spirit thriving in the UAE, and partners with unique retail SMEs that elevate offerings at ALDAR's developments.

NextGen Incubator Program

NEXTGEN

The startAD NextGen Incubator, is the 4th edition of the flagship Youth Entrepreneurship Program of startAD. This program activates university students of the UAE to take advantage of the favorable entrepreneurial environment in the region, and equips them with future-ready social, digital, entrepreneurial and business skills that spark curiosity, enhance employability, and encourage innovation. This program is for young innovators in the UAE passionate about developing tech-enabled solutions for some of the greatest global challenges outlined in UNDP's Sustainable Development Goals - primarily Waste Management, Quality Education, Climate action and Good Health & Well-being.

Scale Up by ALDAR

SCALE UP
By Aldar



The Aldar Scale Up program is a market access accelerator delivered by startAD. It helps global mature startups delivering the latest cutting-edge real estate technology to enter and grow in the GCC market, offering them a gateway to tangible growth opportunities and mentorship, and support for building strong networks.

The Conscious Investor Fellowship Program

startAD, and VentureSouq have pioneered investor education in the UAE. The Conscious Investor Fellowship (CIF) is the first pan-regional investor program focused on the impact space. The 8-week invite-only program nurtures the next generation of mission-driven investors from the GCC with the tools, skills, and network to build financial returns while driving social change. The program culminates with the 7th annual Angel Rising Symposium, convening global thought leaders furthering conversations on the future of the conscious investment sector and how it can power regional and global innovation.

Coffee Architecture

Learn more: www.thecoffeearchitecture.com



Nooran Al Bannay CEO and Owner

Founded by Nooran AlBannay, Coffee Architecture is a modern coffee shop that champions craftsmanship and guest experience over bells and whistles.

An architect in the Abu Dhabi police for 5 years and then as a Senior Quality Engineer at ADNOC for 7 years, Nooran quit her government job in 2020 to focus on growing her business.



2018

**Opened Cafe
in Reem**



*Undeveloped,
weak sales*

2019

**Accepted to
Manassah**



*Business
potential
identified*

August 2020

**Graduated from
Incubator**



*Operation
manual
developed*

December 2020

**Opened in
Mamsha Saadiyat**



*De-risked and
ready for success*

April 2021

**Planning for
new Branch**



The startAD program de-risked the business, increasing the CEO's chance for future success by helping her develop solid financials, including a realistic 5 year P&L statement based on a custom built sales scenario planning tool; building a stronger business identity and owner's personal brand; identifying a strategic offering and pricing, with a unique market positioning based on detailed market analysis; and ultimately, supporting the founder in strengthening her understanding of operations, customer experience, team management and growth to succeed.



Overview

innovaMENA is a UAE-based innovation enabler that aims to unleash the potential of MENA's entrepreneurs and startups to create a better future for next generations. It supports startups in meeting global challenges by providing tailor-made programs for every stage of the entrepreneurial journey, in addition to access to funding and innovaMENA's ever-growing network.

Although innovaMENA was only recently launched, the team has been working in the UAE innovation ecosystem for over 5 years, and incubated many local and international startups. It created the first 6 Emirate space-tech startups with the UAE Space Agency and completed a 3-year global drone challenge culminating in drones developing commercial technology that was non-existent in the commercial market. It has brought international EdTech startups and supported them in their setup in the UAE and in receiving various funding and grants.

innovaMENA offers business incubation and acceleration programs; startup competitions and challenges; soft-landing programs; corporate innovation programs; startup ecosystem development programs; and entrepreneurship training programs.

InnovaMENA provides innovation and entrepreneurship awareness programs to local universities and governmental entities, empowering over 1000 university students through entrepreneurship awareness training since its start. It also helps governments and corporations to build sustainable startup ecosystems that accelerate the growth of their economies.



For more information on how you can collaborate with InnovaMENA:
info@innovamena.com

F&B Innovation Lab

A unique first-of-its-kind program that helps F&B entrepreneurs transform their idea into a product through incubation and by partnering directly with manufacturers, supporting overall national food security initiatives.

Social Innovation Lab

The Social Innovation Lab works with local community development organizations on fostering an innovative social community by creating unique programs for empowering the social structure at various levels (students, graduates, professionals, retirees).

**Anas Zeineddine,
Founder**

Where does the AD Startup/SME ecosystem stand today? In your opinion, what are the benefits and challenges for startups and SMEs doing business in Abu Dhabi?

The Abu Dhabi ecosystem is still considered in its early stages, although it has accelerated its growth and has been maturing extensively over the past few years thanks to strong governmental initiatives aiming to transform Abu Dhabi into a global innovation hub.

In 2020, startAD, VentureSouq, KAUST, Sheraa & Hub71 joined forces to launch the first pan-regional investor program focused on the impact space: The Conscious Investor Fellowship (CIF). The Fellowship nurtures the next generation of mission-driven investors from the GCC. It culminated with the 6th annual Angel Rising Symposium, which convened global thought leaders and powered education and conversations on the future of the conscious investment sector and how it can power regional and global innovation.

Entrepreneurs should mainly focus on how they can capitalize on what the Abu Dhabi innovation ecosystem has to offer (innovation programs, access to capital and funding, use of co-work spaces, partnerships with other startups and local entities). Over the coming years, we expect there will be more international startups that can conduct R&D in Abu Dhabi as there are appropriate initiatives on offer, so that startups can actually do their work here as opposed to only having a minimal presence.





Overview

Flat6Labs is a prominent seed and early-stage venture capital firm, running numerous startup programs across the MENA region.

Annually, Flat6Labs invests in more than 100 innovative and technology-driven startups, enabling thousands of passionate entrepreneurs to achieve their daring ambitions and ultimately becoming their institutional co-founders.

Flat6Labs manages a number of seed funds with a total assets under management in excess of \$85 million. More than 25 leading institutions have invested into the Flat6Labs managed funds; believing in the asset class and Flat6Labs' proven track record as the market leader.

Flat6Labs provides a wide range of investment ticket sizes ranging from \$50K to \$500k.

For general inquiries regarding the program:
info@flat6labs.com

Apply for Flat6Labs Ignite's next cycle:
➔ www.flat6labs.com/program/ignite/

Initiatives

Flat6Labs Ignite

FLAT6LABS **IGNITE**

In 2021, Flat6Labs partnered with ADQ, one of MENA's largest holding companies, for the launch of a seed and early stage funding opportunity for startups: the 'Flat6Labs Ignite' Program.

Flat6Labs Ignite offers cash-funding (\$100k-150k), strategic mentorship, office-space, entrepreneurship-focused business training, subject matter one-to-one sessions and a multitude of perks and services provided by partner entities. Select startups are eligible for follow-on funding (\$200k-500k).

**Ryaan Sharif, General Manager,
Flat6Labs Abu Dhabi**

Why is Abu Dhabi the right location for global tech companies?

The Abu Dhabi Government has shown a strong commitment to building the technology ecosystem in the emirate, prompting the increased entrance of private sector businesses and improved technology adoption.

The emirate has also made it easy to open a business, while providing support to entrepreneurs from idea to Series C funding and beyond, all within a safe and sophisticated legal environment.

Additionally, Abu Dhabi's cosmopolitan location provides access to a strong, diverse talent pool. Its population is very young, dominated by Gen Zers who are known to be heavy technology adopters with a moderate risk appetite, making them more prone to becoming entrepreneurs.

Looking at the bigger picture, we can see that 60% of investment funding for startups in the MENA region was given to projects based in the UAE in 2019. Moreover, the UAE has had plenty of success stories, from ride-hailing app Careem, which was acquired by Uber for \$3.1bn, to online retailer Souq.com, purchased in 2018 by Amazon for \$560million.



How will Flat6Labs contribute to Abu Dhabi's startup ecosystem growth?

Flat6Labs aims to be a leader in both providing seed/pre-series A funding, while building a robust, fully inclusive seed stage program that will guide the entrepreneur in their development journey.

We are also working to bridge the gap between Ideation and Venture Rounds. Today, we are seeing a lot of established venture capital with series A/B ticket sizes but not much funding at a larger seed ticket size/pre-series A.

Flat6Labs will also bridge into the corporate sector. With the Flat6Labs Ignite initiative, we aim to leverage ADQ's portfolio to identify synergistic value for both the startups and corporates in the portfolio. Through the initiative, we also aim to work with other private sector players to collaborate in terms of championing PoCs and Projects with the startups that we invest in.

How will Flat6Labs foster new opportunities for entrepreneurs, and open doors to entrepreneurs in Abu Dhabi?

Flat6Labs will leverage its regional footprint, track record and global network in securing opportunities abroad and will do the same locally in collaboration with ADQ and their associated portfolio companies of which they are a holding company to over 80+ entities that play a pivotal role in driving the Abu Dhabi economy. A Champion will be identified for each corporate, to promote and find opportunities within the company's portfolio.

Collaboration with other supporting entities is always key to building any startup ecosystem, therefore we aim to build bridges with the entities that are already supporting the ecosystem such as the Khalifa Fund, StartAD, Plug&Play etc.

What kind of business growth opportunities will you encourage or expect will be developing in the coming years?

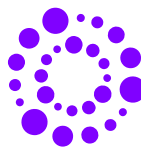
Our ability to invest, to begin with, will be fairly sector agnostic. Nevertheless, we will look to develop the following areas of interest as we progress from cohort to cohort in the following sectors:

- Energy & Green Tech
- HealthTech
- Logistics and Transportation
- Food & AgriTech
- Other sectors:
- Fintech & Payments
- ICT & Software solutions
- Sustainability Solutions
- Online media
- Gaming & Entertainment
- Travel tech & hospitality

V. Education, R&D, Innovation Support

Advanced Technology Research Council (ATRC)

www.atrc.ae



**ADVANCED
TECHNOLOGY
RESEARCH
COUNCIL**

Overview

Created in May 2020 to strengthen Abu Dhabi and the broader UAE's position as a research and development hub for technology and innovation, the Advanced Technology Research Council (ATRC) shapes research and development for transformative technology outcomes.

ATRC is responsible for defining Abu Dhabi's research strategy across academia and industry, consolidating funds for efficient investment, and driving policy and regulation for agile decision-making. Bringing together cross-disciplinary leaders in research and technology, ATRC cultivates a collaborative research community through nurturing local talent and attracting global talent; and accelerating innovation and discovery through seven initial centres of research under its applied research pillar, Technology Innovation Institute (TII).

Today, ATRC and its entities counts a total of over 300 employees, including local and international researchers, scientists, and engineers at research centres in the fields of quantum, autonomous robotics, cryptography, advanced materials, digital security, directed energy and secure systems, developing innovative products such as the National Crypto Library, the UAE's first quantum computer, and a Post-Quantum Crypto (PQC) library.

ATRC fosters a culture of inquiry by partnering with local pioneers and internationally renowned organisations and universities, funding groundbreaking research, and launching grand challenges that address vital global issues through its technology project management pillar, ASPIRE.

By leading on breakthrough technologies, ATRC plays a strategic role in directing, funding and leading emerging fields of research and technology, while stimulating a knowledge-based economy that reinforces Abu Dhabi and the broader UAE's position as a global innovation hub.

For more information, visit www.atrc.ae
or connect with ATRC on social media:



ATRCuae



Aspire
www.aspireuae.ae



ASPIRE drives the creation of future transformative technologies as the technology programme management pillar of Abu Dhabi's Advanced Technology Research Council (ATRC). ASPIRE works in consultation with cross-sector industry stakeholders, universities, and research institutes to frame problem statements. It launches grand challenges and international competitions to solve some of the world's most pressing issues.

ASPIRE also focuses on commissioning research that leads to pioneering advances and future transformative technologies. It works in close consultation with researchers, innovators, and cross-sector industry stakeholders from all levels of the local and international R&D ecosystem to ensure research projects have a clear path to successful application.

ASPIRE's current focus is on challenges in the fields of healthcare; sustainability, environment & energy; food & agriculture; aerospace & space; safety & security; and transport. It is currently partnering with U.S.-based non-profit organisation XPRIZE on "XPRIZE Feed the Next Billion", an international competition that aims to revolutionise the global food supply chain and its impact on communities around the world.

The competition seeks to find innovative ways to provide sufficient and nutritious food to feed the next billion people on our planet, through a four-year US\$15 million competition that challenges teams of global innovators to develop chicken and fish alternatives.

Technology Innovation Institute
www.tii.ae



Launched in November 2020, the Technology Innovation Institute (TII) is the dedicated 'applied research' pillar of Abu Dhabi's Advanced Technology Research Council (ATRC). It is a pioneering global research and development institute that focuses on applied research and new-age technology capabilities.

TII has seven initial dedicated research centres in quantum, autonomous robotics, cryptography, advanced materials, digital security, directed energy and secure systems. By working with exceptional global talent, universities, research institutions and industry partners, the Institute connects an intellectual community and contributes to building an R&D ecosystem in the UAE. TII has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Virgin Hyperloop for a research and development partnership to advance future transport and logistics.

TII has also signed an MoU with Mohamed Bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI) to form a strategic collaboration to establish a collaborative framework to enable joint fundamental and applied research in AI. Such partnerships will bolster the local R&D ecosystem in the UAE.

TII is currently working on more than 31 long-term collaborative research projects in partnership with 23 world-leading universities and research centres in the United States, United Kingdom, Europe, and South America, with the most recent collaborations involving Yale University, Purdue University, Georgia Institute of Technology, Tampere University, and University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI).

NexTech

NexTech is an ATRC-led programme that aims to nurture talent and encourage UAE youth to explore careers in advanced technology in line with the Abu Dhabi's ongoing investment in knowledge development. ATRC is executing three core initiatives to empower UAE national talent under the NexTech programme, including:

1. Outreach and engagement drive in partnership with the Ministry of Education, the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK), and local universities, to inspire UAE national youth in the domains of science and advanced technology and to ensure a pipeline of aspiring next generation talent.
2. Established a rigorous talent scouting initiative, where exceptional talent will be fast-tracked or supported into an R&D career path to push the boundaries of advanced technology exploration. Shortlisted candidates will then undergo assessment and a highly competitive selection process. Selected candidates will be hired by the Technology Innovation Institute (TII), ATRC's applied research pillar.
3. Created an empowerment initiative, where selected talent is directed towards TII's proprietary or collaborative research projects. More than 45 UAE nationals have been selected to join the programme, the first of a total of 125 in the initial phase. They are working across collaborative projects in partnership with world-leading universities and research centres



**ADVANCED
TECHNOLOGY
RESEARCH
COUNCIL**

TII has launched many initiatives boosting the development of cryptography, quantum computing, and directed energy in the UAE.

TII's specialised research centres launch key initiatives to boost cryptography, quantum computing, and directed energy advances in the UAE.

In December 2020, the Cryptography Research Centre (CRC) at the Technology Innovation Institute (TII) built the UAE's first national and sovereign crypto library. The milestone enables the country to safeguard vital and confidential sources of information. Researchers at CRC, one of TII's initial seven dedicated research centres, have released multiple versions of the crypto library and are working on its seamless integration into the UAE's critical digital infrastructure. The integration of the National Crypto Library – a collection of algorithms that cryptographers use in specific order to safeguard confidential, high-security information, with live systems will enable a more fluid security strategy across critical data-sensitive sectors such as finance, healthcare, and telecommunications.

In March 2021, the Quantum Research Centre (QRC) at TII announced its plans to build the UAE's first quantum computer in Abu Dhabi. Through leveraging quantum mechanics phenomena such as 'superposition' and 'entanglement' to generate and manipulate subatomic particles like electrons or photons - quantum bits also known as 'qubits', enable the quantum computer to create exponentially stronger processing powers to perform complex calculations in minutes that would take the most powerful supercomputers inordinately long to solve. In line with that announcement, CRC also launched the first Post-Quantum Cryptography (PQC) software library in the UAE, to advance the country's cryptographic and security capabilities. Designed to safeguard confidential data and information against attacks by quantum computers, the library is a collection of sophisticated algorithms. To ensure an even more advanced level of security, cryptographers are now engaged in developing PQC algorithms.

In April 2021, QRC developed the first simulation version of 'Qibo', a versatile open-source quantum computing programming framework. Qibo is designed to support quantum algorithms across different computer systems, including support to hardware accelerators such as graphics processing units (GPUs) and multiple quantum devices. Qibo is the entry point for a full stack programming platform, able to run quantum algorithms across different quantum computers and simulators. During the same month, CRC launched the UAE's first secure cloud technologies programme that aims to advance Privacy Enhancing Technologies (PETs), including fully homomorphic encryption (FHE), a form of encryption that permits users to perform computations on encrypted data without first decrypting it.

In May 2021, the Directed Energy Research Centre (DERC) at TII unveiled the Arab world's first and largest Electromagnetic Compatibility (EMC) Lab in Abu Dhabi. The first-of-its-kind facility comprises three labs - an EMC semi-anechoic chamber, a pulsed power laboratory, and a low-noise emanation laboratory. EMC allows different electronic devices in proximity to one another to operate without mutual interference, known as Electromagnetic Interference, or EMI. This DERC facility enables key technologies to be evaluated against electromagnetic compatibility and interference by reproducing man-made and natural electromagnetic hazards in the pulsed power and semi-anechoic chambers. Designed to host different categories of equipment such as connected objects of the Internet of Things, drones and autonomous cars, telecommunications equipment, medical devices, automotive equipment, and IT equipment, the laboratory is fully automated for tests and measurements. The unique low-noise emanation lab has been built on DERC specifications that allow for the study of very low noises emitted by electronic systems.

His Excellency Faisal Al Bannai
Secretary General, Advanced Technology
Research Council

What are the R&D opportunities the ATRC is currently focusing on? What kind of business growth opportunities are you encouraging or expect will be developing in the coming years?

As catalysts of growth, the ATRC, and its two pillars, the Technology Innovation Institute (TII) and ASPIRE, will introduce many 'firsts' both regionally and globally. We are aligned with the UAE's national priorities such as exploring innovative technology, harnessing the power of data, developing robust digital security infrastructure, and the deployment of autonomous capabilities.

That's why we started with seven initial research centres under TII in quantum, autonomous robotics, cryptography, advanced materials, digital security, directed energy and secure systems. Our alignment with broader development goals in alternative energy, sustainability, food security, logistics, petrochemical development, and industrial manufacturing will be addressed in the coming years.



How does the ATRC ensure R&D projects find a clear innovation path from 'lab to market' and what has the impact so far been in terms of company creation in Abu Dhabi and the UAE?

ASPIRE, our technology project management pillar, focuses on commissioning research that leads to pioneering advances, helping deliver new technologies with practical applications. It frames research statements with clear benefits and practical, 'real world' applications in mind. Working in close consultation with researchers, innovators, and cross-sector industry stakeholders from all levels of the local and international R&D ecosystem, we ensure that our research projects have a clear path to successful application.

Seeking to solve tomorrow's issues today, ASPIRE launches and manages high profile competitions and grand challenges to engage innovators and talented research teams from around the globe to develop ground-breaking solutions to the world's most pressing problems.

What kind of synergies is the ATRC creating with the startup/SME sector and how can entrepreneurs leverage and benefit from the innovation that comes out of the ATRC?

As the organisation defining Abu Dhabi's research strategy across academia and industry, our objectives align with the objectives of the Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technology's (MoIAT) industrial strategy 'Operation 300bn': to create an attractive business environment for investors in the industrial sector; catalyse industrial development and stimulate the national economy; encourage innovation, adopt advanced technology; and create strong foundations to enhance the UAE's position as a leading global business and technology hub for future industries.

We aim to enable the local industry to leverage our know-how through MoIAT. This will help establish a world-leading industrial ecosystem that fosters our advanced technology breakthroughs, ensures their commercial viability, and secures long-term economic sustainability for Abu Dhabi and the broader UAE.

Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT)

www.hct.ac.ae



كليات التقنية العليا
HIGHER COLLEGES OF TECHNOLOGY



Overview

Founded in 1988, the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) is the UAE's largest applied higher educational institution, and the nation's first approved university economic free zone, empowering it to graduate companies in alignment with the directives of the UAE's wise leadership.

The HCT InnCuVation Spaces (in Dubai, Ras Al Khaimah, Sharjah and soon Abu Dhabi), inaugurated in March 2019, are high-tech innovation and entrepreneurial incubators supporting students and faculty in undertaking innovative and entrepreneurial ventures. The name "InnCuVation Space" itself expresses the breadth of activities that take place in such centers - Innovation, Incubation, and Venturing.

The HCT InnCuVation Spaces provide few essential areas of support to startups: design & media; programming & computing; intelligence augmentation; fabrication; co-working space and office & lab/workshop space.

Most recently, the InnCuVation Spaces' capabilities have been strengthened, with a "hub-and-spoke" model being developed to expand the range of services. Office and co-working spaces will be provided to startups at the 14 HCT campuses. A centralized "Fablab", providing 3D printing/CNC, fast prototyping, electronics and media production, will support across the HCT campuses through the existing InnCuVation Spaces.



HCT Startup Development Program

In November 2019, the HCT Startup Development Program was launched and, to date, fifteen Inspire & Ideate workshops, eight 3-day Startup Bootcamps, one 8-week Startup Accelerator cycle and intensive support workshops have enabled 98 startups, involving more than 400 students, to be established. In the space of a few months, more than 20 startups have acquired a trade license. The startups cover a range of sectors such as autonomous delivery systems, online marketplaces, smart home services, cyber-security, agri-tech, 3D-printed healthcare solutions, and professional services.

Entrepreneurship Talks

An ongoing series of talks, fireside chats, founder stories and meetups with inspirational entrepreneurs and experts from the UAE and the region. These sessions take place on a monthly basis and will rotate across all HCT campuses or held online as the case may be. Up to 100 attendees per session.

Inspire & Ideate Workshops

One-day program taking participants through the basics of what makes good ideas succeed and helps them to structure a startup concept. The workshop prepares participants with the fundamental knowledge and pre-validation necessary for their qualification to the Bootcamps. Up to 100 participants per workshop.

Startup Bootcamps

Three-day validation Bootcamps provide participating teams an intensive program with hands-on validation and customer discovery activities leading to product-market fit and early business model definition. The Bootcamps also initiate participants to the fundamentals of financial modeling, team building and pitching. Up to 12 teams per Bootcamp.

Startup Accelerator (two cohorts of 10 startups per year)

Teams that graduate from the Bootcamps will pitch for admission to the Accelerator program, a 10-week part-time program which will help participating teams through the entire journey of user discovery, product-market fit, business model validation, early traction generation, iteration, and fundraising/pitching fundamentals. Up to 12 teams per cycle.

**Nicola Bettio,
Executive Director Applied Research,
Innovation and Entrepreneurship**

The HCT Startup Development Program focuses on the creation of sustainable businesses launched by Emirati students in a vast range of industries and sectors. We privilege technology-based business models, but we do not neglect any robust and scalable startups in less tech-intensive sectors, such as fashion, media, e-commerce, etc.

HCT offers a comprehensive program catered to the needs of our student entrepreneur audience. This program is one of the largest in the UAE and the region and involves more than 1,400 students per year and facilitates the launch of more than 100 startups on an annual basis. Since July 2020, we have successfully launched around 100 startups across the UAE, 15 of which are from the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.



A significant part of our program is focused on the establishment of solid networking and the search for commercial and other cooperation opportunities with the private sectors and government institutions. We have a special post-Accelerator program to support “growth/scale up” startups to develop commercially and boost their sales. Additionally we partner with organizations such Young Arab Leaders or the Emirates Angels Investors Association to have our startups benefit from highly qualified mentoring and angel investing.



Khalifa Innovation Center

www.khalifainnovation.ae



مركز خليفة للابتكار
khalifa INNOVATION CENTER

Overview

The Khalifa Innovation Center (KIC) is a deep-tech incubator, running tailored incubation and scale-up educational and mentorship programs and activities to provide participants with the necessary innovation and entrepreneurial skills to accelerate transformation of locally-created science and engineering discoveries from laboratory to market.

KIC aims to support entrepreneurs across their journey, by: providing entrepreneurship & mentorship training programs (bootcamp, incubation & acceleration); supporting with business model validation; reviewing intellectual property; allocating office space; developing prototypes & proof of concept; and organizing investment & pitching events.

To date, out of a total 189 Applications, 14 projects were selected for the bootcamp programs and joined KIC's incubation program, and 3 startups are undertaking the acceleration program.



For general enquiries regarding
KIC's program or booking space:
info@khalifainnovation.ae





Dr. Sami Bashir
Director, Technology Management & Innovation
Technology Management and Innovation

Through tailored programs and activities, we at the Khalifa Innovation Center equip scientists and engineers with the necessary skills, tools and resources; support in the commercialization of research discoveries and ideas; and transform those into viable and impactful businesses.

KIC Bootcamp

The Bootcamp is a KIC proprietary program designed with the understanding of how science- and engineering-driven ideas can be transformed into successful startups and products in the Abu Dhabi and UAE innovation ecosystem.

When leaving the bootcamp, participants can explore different commercialization paths and options, such as market needs, prototype performance specifications, product competitiveness, to validate as entrepreneurs, how best to take forward their ideas through the startup creation process. Anyone can participate as long as their idea is based on scientific or engineering concept (deep tech) and they are residing in the UAE.

Incubation

The Incubation Program is ideally suited to those that passed and have been selected through the KIC Bootcamp. It is targeted for ideas and projects or startups that have shown validated business models and clear go-to-market milestones and financial projections. The program is designed on the basis of mentorship and it also includes educational sessions to support entrepreneurs with skills in pitching, market assessment, product testing, negotiation skills, legal support, office space allocation and prototype development as well as customer engagement. Also, in partnership with DED, the KIC is capable through this program, and based on certain diligence criteria, to issue an innovation permit. This permit gives the startup the ability to go into direct engagement with customers and investors or partners.

Scale-up Acceleration

The participants for this program must have at least progressed through the incubation program. Participant are initially expected to pitch to the KIC Investment Committee. If approved, the startup receives initial fund based on agreed milestones. The startup will benefit from the support that can be provided by KIC in terms of office space allocation, access to partners, laboratories and other resources such as intellectual property and other legal support.

UAEU – SIP Science & Innovation Park

www.uaeusip.uaeu.ac.ae



Overview

The United Arab Emirates University's Science and Innovation Park (UAEU-SIP) was launched in November 2016 with the aim to become a global hub for innovation and entrepreneurship and ensure the UAE's smooth transition into a knowledge economy.

The UAEU-SIP is an ecosystem for innovation that offers programs using a design thinking approach that leads to translating academic knowledge and scientific research into commercially viable applications. Moreover, the Park has recently announced the establishment of a hub of design thinking called 'The HPI Middle East Hub of Design Thinking', with the aim to become the first design thinking school (D-School) in the region, in partnership with the Hasso Plattner Institute Academy (HPIA).

Additionally, the Science and Innovation Park is spear-heading the UAEU pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai to pioneer a new role of education by offering a new model of higher education that is currently incubated in the UAEU-SIP, which aims at graduating job creators instead of job seekers. The Curriculum of the Future, which was designed using Design Thinking, is currently piloted through the 'Pathfinders Program 1.0', a pre-pilot of the 'University of the Future' - and will continue to be tested during Expo 2020.

The UAEU-SIP facilities exclusively include the Innovation Hub powered by Google, Expo Hub and private designated offices for tenants where the community can meet to co-create, discuss, and innovate.

The UAEU-SIP steadily grew and afforded the startups with securing funding from both national and international organizations. Not before long, the startups based in the UAEU-SIP won grant prizes including a trip to Silicon Valley, grants from ICT fund – Seeds for the Future Competition, and AjmanX Competition.

The UAEU-SIP has grown its partnerships and collaborations and has inked over 25 agreements, partnerships and MOUs, in addition to organizing activities and events, alongside launching multiple programs and initiatives. Among these is the strategic partnership UAEU SIP established with Abu Dhabi Global Market, where it is preparing to launch 'The SIP Hub and Accelerator Programme' that welcomes startups fostered and grown under UAEU SIP, as well as global companies attracted to establish their presence in the UAE.

Extending the existing partnership with the Ministry of Economy, the UAEU-SIP also provides the UAE Government with a new index developed by Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, the largest observatory of entrepreneurship in the world, to be used during the next ten years as an indicator of the National Agenda entrepreneurship goal. GEM UAE has also produced national and special reports on the state of entrepreneurship in the country but also on social entrepreneurship in partnership with HSBC and Authority of Social Contribution Ma'an, and on the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Abu Dhabi, in partnership with the Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development.



COVID-19 Response Accelerator

The first program of its kind to run as part of the university's Industry Liaison Program, the initiative was meant as an opportunity for SEHA (Abu Dhabi Health Services) to submit the challenges faced by healthcare professionals and their patients at the peak of the pandemic, to co-create solutions to improve UAE's response to the COVID-19 type of pandemics.

Eighty-two innovators including SEHA company professionals, mentors, technology providers, researchers, and students came together for the first accelerator Bootcamp. The tech transfer program utilized design thinking, research, and accelerator bootcamps to find solutions that could be transformed into high-impact innovations for the challenges submitted. Players of the quadruple innovation helix framework (business, community, government, and academia) worked on the challenges to ensure comprehensive inclusive solutions. The innovators developed 5 pilot-ready solutions at the end of the accelerator bootcamp.

UAEU Science and Innovation Park "Coronavirus Awareness Contest"

The UAEU-SIP organized the "Coronavirus Awareness Contest" which virtually gathered 20 participants, students, faculty and staff from different countries and backgrounds, to collaborate and co-create various media products to raise awareness on the pandemic and best practices to prevent the spread of the virus.

Multiple Design Thinking workshops were offered, and participants identified solutions to address the challenges faced by a hypothetical character (Amal) created by the contest facilitators. The participants were split into teams based on the nature of products they would like to produce to address Amal's challenges. After having been given tools to help them prototype their products, participants were trained to test and iterate their prototypes to include user feedback.

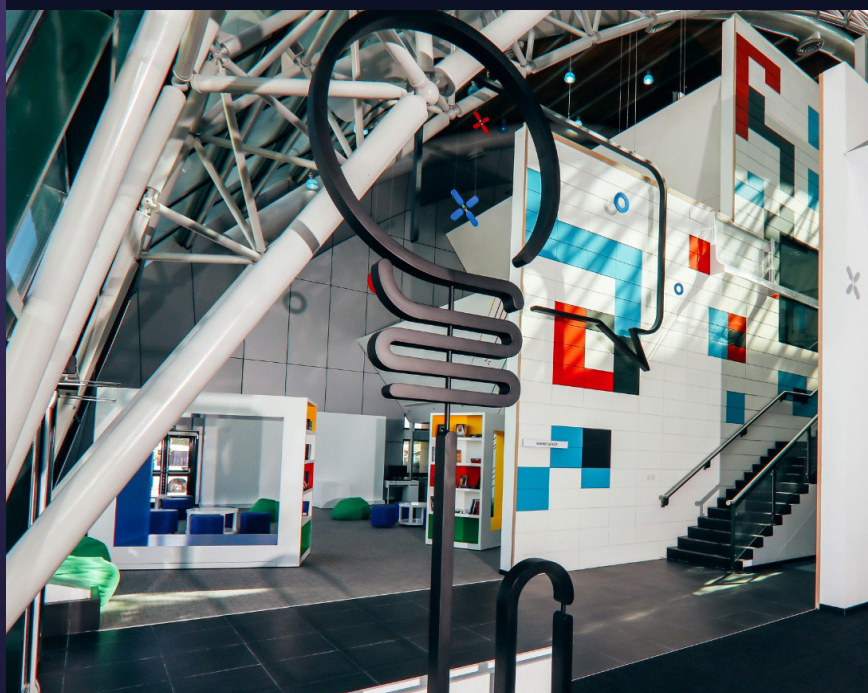
In conclusion, participants successfully delivered nine awareness products based on COVID-19, including videos, posters, apps, and a website. All products were finally pitched to the Judges for evaluation, and selected products are being published on the UAEU-SIP's social media channels as well as the university's partner channels.

UAEU-SIP Tenancy program

The UAEU Science and Innovation Park has developed a multifaceted value proposition that reflects an interwoven strategy to ensure competitiveness for its tenants, partners and other key players in its ecosystem.

It leverages UAEU and the SIP's economic, physical and networking assets to (1) stimulate and manage the flow of knowledge and technology and support the cross-fertilization of capabilities developed within the university's ecosystem for innovation, (2) provide value-added services, (3) give access to high-quality spaces, facilities, IT services, intellectual resources and equipment, and (4) provide seed funding.

The packages of services are tailored to be offered to tenants ranging from students who are curious about entrepreneurship; Potential entrepreneurs who have ideas but not yet a proof of concept; Emerging startups without traction, and still in the phase of business model refinement and product testing; Nascent businesses (startups with traction); New businesses (scale-ups) and Established businesses.



منتزه جامعة الإمارات للعلوم والابتكار
UAEU SCIENCE & INNOVATION PARK
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Meta Touch Technologies

Learn more:
www.metatouchtechcom.wordpress.com

META (∞) TOUCH
 BEYOND INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY

As a home-grown startup based at the UAEU Science & Innovation Park, and co-founded by a passionate multidisciplinary team with backgrounds in engineering, robotics, business and marketing, Meta Touch has pursued innovative ways to make public places more convenient and more hygienic for years.

The startup designed Tchk, an innovative touch-less keypad patented technology in response to the fight against the global pandemic, COVID-19.

The UAEU-SIP supported Meta Touch in the design, development and deployment of technologies that would enable people to go about their daily lives and interact with devices such as elevators, ATM Machines or Vending Machines without touching them.

Today, the startup has successfully reached the market with major clients including Abu Dhabi Airport, Abu Dhabi government entities and other key agencies.

A UAEU-SIP success story, Meta Touch Technologies highlights the importance of collaboration between industry and academia. The significant support of industry players such as Tawazun was instrumental to support the efforts deployed by the university to bring this invention to market.



**Prof. Nihel Chabrak – CEO, UAEU
Science & Innovation Park Executive Director,
UAEU Expo 2020**

How accessible to students is the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the UAE today? Are you seeing a lot of students becoming entrepreneurs directly out of university?

The UAE's governance and farsighted strategic planning have created a significant shift in the ecosystem. Students are curious by nature and career-driven, and with the recent boom in innovation and entrepreneurship around the world and the MENA region, students now have more access than ever to the ecosystem. There are numerous business incubators, fab labs, designed programs, and exhibitions tailored specially to the students to engage them and encourage the entrepreneurial mindset.



At UAE University, students are eager to grow their own businesses in a creative and impactful way. Since 2016, UAEU-SIP has been a home to 57 startups from the UAEU community.

How are you contributing to growing the entrepreneurship culture among your student body? What gaps are you trying to fill in terms of knowledge or skills to prepare them for entrepreneurship?

The UAEU-SIP is going at every length and breadth to support the young generation of the country in harnessing the energy, creativity and entrepreneurial spirit with innovative initiatives. All of our programs are designed to support the student body to start their entrepreneurial journey by providing them with skills and services that enable them to transform their ideas into well established businesses and provide access to a supportive ecosystem of coaches, business experts, legal advice, and much more, allowing them to work efficiently.

To list a few, the UAEU SIP has launched 27 programs and initiatives since 2020, of which 22 were new, and 5 were extended. For instance, the UAEU-SIP, in collaboration with the DO School, launched the 'Digital Venture Incubation Program', a virtual program among the first in the whole region to support UAE-based ventures and innovative entrepreneurs. Also, UAEU SIP launched its 'Industry Liaison Program', a tech transfer program that brings together innovation champions from the quadruple helix model players (business, community, government, and academia) and uses design thinking, research, storytelling, and accelerator bootcamps to help them develop high impact innovations addressing real needs submitted by 'challenge holders'. Additionally, we have partnered with the Hasso Plattner Institute Academy (HPIA), a global education and training company, to establish an HPI approved, full-sized School of Design Thinking (D-School) at UAEU-SIP, one that follows the model of the D-Schools in Stanford and The Hasso Plattner Institute (HPI) in Potsdam, Germany.

To further prepare our students for entrepreneurship, UAEU-SIP has launched the 'Pathfinders Program 1.0', a pre-pilot of the 'University of the Future' - a model of higher education that is currently incubated in the Park. It is a transdisciplinary curriculum for lifelong learning that rewires the attitude of young generations towards their future and fosters job creators, as opposed to job seekers.

The entire focus is continuous learning, upskilling, and upscaling, eventually creating a pipeline of talent, and growing and attracting new knowledge-intensive businesses, which in turn will support creating new jobs and learning opportunities for students, and new R&D projects for faculty and researchers.

What opportunities should students/entrepreneurs pay attention to in Abu Dhabi? What kind of business growth opportunities are you encouraging or expect will be developing in the coming years?

With the proper guidance, students should be encouraged to pay attention to the upcoming events that directly pour into the 2021-2030 roadmap vision that the Abu Dhabi government has put into place to further advance the welfare of the ecosystem, in addition to seeking opportunities that support economic development to diversify the resources of the economy. The UAEU-SIP, through its new strategic plan, has identified the focus areas in alignment with the national priorities and the global challenges, as well as the university's innovation and research strengths. The four prime focus areas are extending life, expanding life, enhancing life, and sustaining life.

Extending life basically means healthcare and how we might make it more affordable, personalized, and effective. The second focus area is encouraging students to explore opportunities in space exploration to advance sustainable development as a global society. Thirdly, to enhance life, we encourage the youth to bring ideas that enhance life by providing quality education, jobs & inclusiveness: how might we create opportunities for inclusive economic growth and sustainable job creation in an era of AI and automation, or how the emerging technologies help eliminate extreme poverty.

And lastly, sustaining life focuses on the environment, reducing our societies' carbon footprint to accelerate the shift towards sustainable living and ways to access healthy, nutritious food and clean water.



Overview

Stratecis is an Abu Dhabi-based company founded in 2018. Alongside its partners, it is specialized in designing and co-creating innovation marketplaces, specialist content, entrepreneurial initiatives, and experiences, to bring the ecosystem together and connect youth entrepreneurs, young talents and early-stage businesses in sustainability with resources being knowledge, business opportunities, capital, and market access.



For more information on how
you can collaborate with Stratecis
info@stratecis.com

Initiatives

Youth4Sustainability Platform



Owned by Masdar. Appointed since 2019 as a strategic consultant, Stratecis serves as the content co-producer and partnership co-management for Masdar's year-long youth empowerment program Youth4Sustainability Platform, under the patronage of HH Shaikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed.

The platform aims to empower youth to become the next generation of sustainability leaders through blended year-long initiatives, forums, learning and hands-on experiences in future skills, innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainability.

Impact Investment Forum (IIF) & Impact Pitch Day



Owned by Stratecis, launched in Jan 2021 and organised in collaboration with ADGM and MEVCA. The purpose of this forum is to create a platform to bring together local and international like-minded, socially responsible, and impact-driven policymakers, investors, family businesses and entrepreneurs to discuss the MENA region's opportunities in impact & ESG investing; and inspire the private sector to be more involved in investing in impact-driven startups to help accelerate MEA's impact entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem in ways that can change the landscape of investing and enable positive growth.

CovHack – Circular Food Economy Innovation Challenge

Owned by Stratecis. In collaboration with UN75, the UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development (KFED), Catalyst, Youth 4 Sustainability and STRATECIS, the challenge welcomed applications from agtech and foodtech startups, entrepreneurs, SMEs, young professionals, tech talent and individual innovators under two categories: early-stage startups and teams. The Demo Day was organised on July 20-21, 2020.

Innovate4Good (I4G) Sustainability Innovation Platform INNOVATE GOOD

Owned by Stratecis. Founded in 2019, in collaboration with Masdar, UAE Ministry of Climate Change & Abu Dhabi Digital Authority, Innovate4Good Innovation is a purpose-driven platform that aims at matching and connecting young entrepreneurs and youth with resources (capital, knowledge and business) to co-create a sustainable future.

CLIX – Climate Innovation Exchange

Owned by Masdar & Reed Exhibitions. Stratecis curated and managed Reed's Climate Innovation Exchange (CLIX), part of Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week that aims at matching sustainable entrepreneurs with investors to enable climate change solutions in three areas: air pollution, clean mobility and innovation in agriculture.

FutureSkills2030 report

Owned by Masdar. Stratecis was commissioned to produce and manage ADSW's Report which aims at identifying the youth skills needed to adapt to climate change and future of green jobs.

Sustainable Finance Forum

Owned by ADGM. Stratecis co-designed and managed ADGM's inaugural edition of Sustainable Finance Forum to help create a vibrant sustainable finance hub in the region.

Ara Fernezian
Founder & CEO, Stratecis

Where does the AD Startup/SME ecosystem stand today? In your opinion, what are the benefits and challenges for startups and SMEs doing business in Abu Dhabi?

The AD startup/SME ecosystem is in its foundation stage and the pace of progress that took place since 2018 is massive if we compare it with most successful startup hubs in the world.

What is unique in Abu Dhabi is that we have the leadership, stewardship, and government support in advancing the knowledge-based economy and the desire to grow the next generation of homegrown talents and brands – and we just need the industry (private sector) to be more involved to accelerate the process.



We are still behind in policies to encourage startups to launch their ventures. Startup ventures are high risk ventures, so we need an effective ecosystem and enabling policies; with more partnership programs between industry/colleges/startups to open new doors.

Today, the ultimate priority for entrepreneurs is to start looking at creating jobs instead of applying for them – and most importantly to learn how to fail with minimum cost. Innovation and entrepreneurship culture should be taught as early as high-school.

Another important challenge to note is that the cost of living and establishing a business is high compared to the rest of the region, with limited access to capital and tenders. This is maybe the main roadblock. We need more co-working spaces in various locations in Abu Dhabi to save startups expensive office setup costs.

Stratecis' main contribution so far has focused on creating an effective ecosystem to enable startup growth with special focus on sustainability; growing local solvers (entrepreneurs and innovators); connecting startups and young entrepreneurs with resources; driving conversation to influence the industry and bridge gaps; and promoting Abu Dhabi as a regional hub for sustainability, startups and young talents.

In the next 3 years, our aim is to contribute to enabling 1000 local solvers (starting from colleges); accelerating 26 new ventures (from ideas to action); engaging 26 local industry partners and 37 enablers (academia, ecosystems, corporations, etc.) to support the growth of local ventures; and ultimately enabling +500 low fidelity prototypes (to lower the minimum cost of failures).

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منصة أبوظبي للأعمال ABU DHABI SME HUB

Are you contributing to the growth of the Abu Dhabi startup and mSME ecosystem?

Contact us to add your profile and present your initiatives as part of this guide:

Contact us

info@adsmehub.ae



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