



## **MCA TAKEOFF Award PARTICIPANT GUIDELINES**

### **Introduction**

The MCA TAKEOFF Award is a joint initiative between the Malta Communications Authority (MCA) and the TAKEOFF Business Incubator at the University of Malta.

TAKEOFF, the business incubator of the University of Malta, has been set up to support entrepreneurs along their way to a successful venture. The goal of the incubator is to provide the practical support necessary to enable start-up entrepreneurs to take good ideas for innovative products and services to market. Apart from this practical support, these new entrepreneurs often need an amount of initial funding to enable them to take their innovations to a stage where they can attract investment or the first commercial partner. Through the MCA TAKEOFF Award, the MCA has committed to support two successful applicants with this initial funding. The Award will allow them to bridge the initial gap between idea and market development, and provides funds when they are most needed to increase the likelihood of success.

The MCA TAKEOFF Award is set to focus on start-up development in the areas of ICT, e-Commerce and Communications, and ultimately support the creation of high-growth businesses in Malta in these areas.

### **Eligibility**

Applications for the MCA TAKEOFF Award must be in the areas of ICT, e-Commerce and Communications.

The Award will fund the following initiatives:

- Entrepreneurs who are members of TAKEOFF<sup>1</sup> may apply for seed funding which will enable a step-change in taking their independent technology or knowledge-based start-up closer to the first customer or investment;
- Students of the ITP or Master in Knowledge Based Entrepreneurship<sup>2</sup> run by the CEBI, may apply for seed funding which will enable a step-change in taking their independent technology or knowledge-based start-up closer to the first customer or investment.

Ventures which have benefitted from other funds through TAKEOFF will not be excluded but must provide a valid justification as to why they should receive a second round of seed funding.

### **Value of the Fund**

The MCA TAKEOFF Award has an allocation of €40,000 to be disbursed in 2014. Two projects will be awarded grants of up to €20,000 each.

### **Application Process**

Applicants should contact the Knowledge Transfer Office on [knowledgetransfer@um.edu.mt](mailto:knowledgetransfer@um.edu.mt) in order to get assistance in preparing the application form. The completed application form should be submitted by email to as an attachment in PDF format to [knowledgetransfer@um.edu.mt](mailto:knowledgetransfer@um.edu.mt) by **Monday, November 3, at noon**. The application form file should be named *MCATA\_Project Title.pdf*.

We strongly encourage potential applicants to attend a scheduled workshop session hosted by TAKEOFF, which will provide skills and tools for creating a competitive proposal. For more information and to register for the event visit: [www.um.edu.mt/knowledgetransfer/events](http://www.um.edu.mt/knowledgetransfer/events).

<sup>1</sup> To become a member of TAKEOFF, contact the Business Incubation Manager, Andy Linnas on [info@takeoff.org.mt](mailto:info@takeoff.org.mt)

<sup>2</sup> Contact Dr. Ing. Saviour Zammit, CEBI Director, on 2340 3051 or [saviour.zammit@um.edu.mt](mailto:saviour.zammit@um.edu.mt)





The initial written applications will be evaluated and scored by a judging panel that may include entrepreneurs, technical experts, technology commercialization professionals and investors. The panel will evaluate the written proposals in line with the judging scorecard that includes:

- The market opportunity of the proposed technology or business plan;
- The benefits presented in relation to the competition;
- The potential and feasibility of the overall business plan;
- The capability of the entrepreneur/team to execute the proposed plan;
- The extent of the step-change that will be achieved through the funding with respect to the overall business plan, and how effectively of the requested budget is being used to achieve this;
- The likelihood that the requested funds will achieve the proposed outcome, including risk identification and mitigation;
- Quality of the written application and the oral presentation.

The panel will rank all applications and shortlist the ones to progress to the next stage. Shortlisted applicants may work with coaches and mentors to prepare a more detailed proposal which will be presented through a live pitch to the judging panel in the final competition. The panel will be able to revise their scores during the oral presentations.

The presentations will be strictly limited to 10 minutes, followed by 15 minutes of questions and answers. Shortlisted applicants will be given a time slot for their presentation and will need to arrive 30 minutes before. Any slides that will be used for the presentations must be sent to [knowledgetransfer@um.edu.mt](mailto:knowledgetransfer@um.edu.mt) as an attachment in version 2010 PowerPoint the day before the presentation, using the same file name as the written application (i.e. MCATA\_*Project Title*.pptx).

After the presentations, the panel will reach a consensus on the score of each application and the applications will be ranked. In the event that two or more proposals have the same score, they will be ranked according to commercial potential, then capability of the entrepreneur/team. In certain cases the panel may decide to make an award conditional on the applicant making specific adjustments to their proposed plan.

The best ranked proposals shall be selected for an award and will be required to sign the Grant Agreement and a State Aid Declaration Form.

The Management Committee shall take reasonable precautions to treat written submissions and presentations as confidential<sup>3</sup>, with the exception of the non-confidential description of the Business/Technology provided in the written application. However, it is the duty of the applicant to ensure that the intellectual property being presented is sufficiently protected and/or not prejudiced by entry into this competition.

#### 2014 Timeline\*

Press Launch and Call for Applications	Monday, October 20
Orientation / Proposal Workshop for Seed Fund Applications	Tuesday, October 28 at 16:00 – 18:00
Written Applications Submission Deadline	Monday, November 3 at 12:00 noon
Announcement of Shortlisted Applications	Friday, November 7
Coaching for Shortlisted Applicants (if required)	Monday, November 10 – Thursday, November 20
Live Pitches to Judges	Friday, November 21
Announcement of Beneficiaries	Monday, November 24
Signing of Grant Agreement & Disbursement of Funds	Week of December 1
Progress Report	Friday, February 27

<sup>3</sup> Each applicant shall hold harmless the MCA and University of Malta from any claims relating to the applicant's participation in this competition.



*\* subject to change for whatever reason/cause.*

## Award

Once the successful applicants have signed the Grant Agreement and State Aid Declaration they will receive funds within 2 weeks of being notified of the award. They will be expected to deliver on their milestones and work closely with the TAKEOFF team to move forward with their proposed plan during the grant period, between week of December 15, 2014 and June 15, 2015.

Beneficiaries will be required to submit an interim report after 3 months and a final report detailing their progress against the proposed milestones. The Managing Committee maintains the right to request a refund of the funds awarded if the beneficiaries fail to submit the reports, if they fail to show adequate commitment to the implementation of the proposed plan, or if they use the funds for purposes that are clearly outside the scope of the proposed plans without justification and without prior consent obtained in writing from the Managing Committee.

In the event that not all the funds are disbursed following the first call, a second call may be issued later in 2015.

## State Aid

The MCA TAKEOFF Award operates under the *de minimis* State Aid regime, which stipulates that a commercial organisation cannot receive more than €200,000 in aid over any 3-year period through schemes operating under this regime. Applicants are required to ensure they are eligible for the requested grant under State Aid rules before submitting an application.

For the purposes of this Section, a “Commercial Activity” shall mean the provision of goods or services involving financial, commercial and industrial aspects and a “Commercial Entity” shall mean an entity involved in the provision of a Commercial Activity, even if a company has not been formally registered.

The threshold referred to above, shall be computed by aggregating all aid received by a Commercial Entity together with its

- subsidiary entities: any Commercial Entity in which the participant’s organisation holds 25% of the capital or voting rights (whichever is the higher); and
- holding entities: any commercial entity which holds 25% or more of the capital or voting rights (whichever is the higher) in the participants’ organisation.





## Contacts

All information about the fund and news will be posted on [www.takeoff.org.mt/mcatakeoffaward](http://www.takeoff.org.mt/mcatakeoffaward)

TAKEOFF Business Incubator:  
[info@takeoff.org.mt](mailto:info@takeoff.org.mt)

University Knowledge Transfer Office:  
[knowledgetransfer@um.edu.mt](mailto:knowledgetransfer@um.edu.mt)

Managing Committee:  
Dr Ing. Anton Bartolo  
MCA TAKEOFF Award  
TAKEOFF Business Incubator  
*Dar Ġużeppi Żahra*  
University of Malta  
Msida MSD 2080  
Malta

All events will be held at:  
TAKEOFF Business Incubator  
*Dar Ġużeppi Żahra*  
University of Malta  
Msida MSD 2080  
Malta



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