

Maritime Seed Award
PARTICIPANT GUIDELINES

Introduction

The Maritime Seed Award (MarSA) is a joint initiative between Transport Malta (TM) and the University of Malta supported by the TAKEOFF Business Incubator, Knowledge Transfer Office, and the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Business Incubation (CEBI) at the University of Malta.

The sixth call of this programme aims to help move promising ideas from the Maritime Field forward toward commercialization. Award funding totaling €75,000 will help to bring the innovative early-stage idea/technology from the lab to life and provides support to researchers and entrepreneurs when they need it most to increase the likelihood of success.

The TAKEOFF Business Incubator and the Knowledge Transfer Office at the University of Malta support entrepreneurs and academics to convert good ideas into successful commercial ventures, based around innovative products and services. Through the MarSA, the most promising applicants will receive funding to enable a step-change along their development path toward the first investor or commercial partner.

Eligibility

The MarSA will support applications in the Maritime Field. The term shall be interpreted in a broad sense to include, amongst others:

- Maritime Commercial – Legal, Financial, Insurance, Broking, Chartering, Ship Ownership, Surveying, Adjusting, Crew Management;
- Logistics – Freight Forwarding, Terminal Operation, Ship agency, Warehouse Operations, Bunkering;
- Marine Engineering – Marine Engineering, ICT, Ship Repair, Mechanical and Electrical Technical Services;
- Products and services related to Sailing and Motorboat clubs, Marinas, Boat Sales/Chartering;
- Fisheries and Aquaculture – Fishing and Fish farming, Aquaculture, Fish Processing, Fisheries Management;
- Blue Bio-economy and Blue Biotechnology;
- Energy and Desalination – Oil & Gas exploitation and servicing, Offshore renewable, Emissions, Desalination.

Beneficiaries of the TAKEOFF Seed Fund Award are not eligible for the Maritime Seed Award unless they can clearly show a step-change in their proposal. It is not possible to apply for numerous funding programmes for the same proposal simultaneously. Applicants who had previously applied for MarSA or any other fund but were unsuccessful in obtaining a grant are eligible to apply for MarSA.

The Award will fund two types of initiatives:

- University of Malta academic staff may apply for **Proof of Concept** funds, which will enable a step-change in taking an innovation developed through research at the University closer to being commercialised. If students or research support officers have generated work in the course of their studies or employment with the UM which would benefit from Proof of Concept Funds, they may apply through their supervisor or mentor;
- Entrepreneurs from within or outside the University, as well as students currently enrolled in the Master in Knowledge-Based Entrepreneurship course offered by the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Business Incubation (CEBI)¹, may apply for **Seed** funds, which will enable a step-change in taking their independent technology or knowledge-based start-up closer to the first customer or investment. In order to receive their award, Maritime Seed Fund beneficiaries shall be required to be or to become TAKEOFF members.²

¹ Contact Prof. Russell Smith, CEBI Director, on 2340 3249 or russell.smith@um.edu.mt

² To apply for TAKEOFF membership please contact TAKEOFF Manager, Joseph Bartolo, on Joseph.a.bartolo@um.edu.mt

New applicants shall be given preference over previous beneficiaries of the MarSA. However previous beneficiaries are not excluded from reapplying, as long as they demonstrate that they have met the goals for their previous award, and the additional funding requested will enable them to make significant further progress beyond this point. Potential applicants who may have a potential conflict of interest³ or any relation⁴ with members of the Adjudication Team must bring this up with the Management Committee and may be excluded from participating.

Value of the Fund

The Maritime Seed Award has an allocation of €75,000 to be awarded. Grants between €2,500 and €25,000 will be awarded to the selected projects. 30% of the funds have been allocated to Proof of Concept type applications and the remaining 70% have been allocated to Seed Fund type applications, although the Management Committee may alter this ratio depending on the demand and quality of the applications.

Application Process

Applicants for Proof of Concept funds may get assistance in preparing their application form by contacting the Knowledge Transfer Office on knowledgetransfer@um.edu.mt, whereas applicants for the Seed funds may contact TAKEOFF Manager, Joseph Bartolo, on joseph.a.bartolo@um.edu.mt. The completed application form should be submitted by email as an attachment in PDF format to maritimeseedaward@um.edu.mt by **Thursday 22nd June 2023 at 12:00 noon**. The application form file should be named 'MarSA_POC_Project Title.pdf' in the case of the applications for the Proof of Concept fund, or 'MarSA_SF_Project Title.pdf' in the case of the applications for the Seed Fund.

All potential applicants for the MarSA must attend the relevant online workshop which will provide skills and tools for creating a competitive proposal. The final application form will only be accepted if applicants or their representatives register and attend their respective workshop. This will only be waived in extenuating circumstances. Potential Seed Fund applicants must attend the workshop organised by TAKEOFF while all potential applicants for the Proof of Concept Fund must attend the workshop being organised by the Knowledge Transfer Office. Should applicants be unable to attend their respective workshop, then they should contact Ing. Joseph Bartolo (joseph.a.bartolo@um.edu.mt) in the case of the Seed Fund applications, or Dr. Valeria Scuderi (maritimeseedaward@um.edu.mt) in the case of the Proof of Concept Fund applications, prior to the date of the workshop, to try to make alternative arrangements. For more information and to register for the event visit <https://takeoff.org.mt/seedfundawards/marsa-2023/>

The initial written applications will be evaluated and scored by an Adjudication Team that may include successful entrepreneurs, technical experts, technology commercialization professionals and investors. The panel will evaluate the written proposals in line with the Judging Scorecard and will consider:

- The understanding of the problem/solution/benefits being addressed and the market opportunity of the proposed solution/technology;
- How well the target customers/users/technology beneficiaries have been identified, how they will benefit, and how they will be acquired;
- Whether the competition and the competitive advantages have been adequately identified;
- Whether the necessary resources have been identified, and whether plans to obtain these resources and the required revenues are in place;
- The capability of the team to articulate and execute the proposed plan;
- Whether issues related to intellectual property have been given due consideration;
- The likelihood of success, including risk identification and mitigation;

³ Conflict of interest shall be defined as: "Any event that may influence the capacity of a person in the Adjudication Team to give an objective and impartial professional opinion, or preventing him, at any moment, from giving priority to the interests of the University and/or Transport Malta and/or the Programme (MarSA)."

⁴ This shall include relations by consanguinity or by affinity to the third degree (please contact the University Knowledge Transfer Office on maritimeseedaward@um.edu.mt if in doubt).

- The extent of the step-change that will be achieved through the funding, the clarity and credibility of the proposed plan, and how effectively the requested budget is being used to achieve this;
- The quality of the written application and the oral presentation.

The Adjudication Team will rank all written applications, and shortlist proposals to progress to the second 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 Adjudication Team in the final competition.

The presentations will be strictly limited to 10 minutes, followed by 10 minutes of questions and answers. Shortlisted applicants will be given a time slot for their presentation. The format of the presentation (virtual/ in person) will be confirmed closer to the date, however, applicants will need to arrive 30 minutes before their allotted time should they be held in person. Any slides that will be used for the presentations must be sent to maritimeseedaward@um.edu.mt as an attachment in PowerPoint the day before the presentation, using the same file name as the written application (i.e. MarSA_PoC_Project Title.pptx or MarSA_SF_Project Title.pptx).

After the presentations, the Adjudication Team 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 the capability of the researcher/entrepreneur/team. In certain cases, the Adjudication Team may decide to make an award conditional on the applicant making specific adjustments to their proposed plan. The Adjudication Team shall then submit their proposals to the Management Committee with whom the final decision stands.

The best-ranked proposals shall be selected for an award and applicants will be required to sign the Grant Agreement and a State Aid Declaration Form. Maritime Seed Fund beneficiaries who are not TAKEOFF members shall be required to become members.

The Management Committee shall take reasonable precautions to treat written submissions and presentations as confidential, with the exception of the non-confidential Executive Summary 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 competition⁵.

2023 Timeline*

Call for Applications	Monday 15 th May 2023
Orientation / Proposal Workshop for Applications	SF: Monday 29 th May 2023 at 1400hrs PoC: Monday 5 th June 2023 at 1130hrs
Written Applications Submission Deadline	Thursday 22 nd June 2023 at 12:00 noon
Initial Adjudication	Monday 10 th July 2023
Announcement of Shortlisted Applications	Wednesday 12 th July 2023
Coaching for Shortlisted Applicants (if required)	Wednesday 12 th to Thursday 20 th July 2023
Live Pitches to Judges	Friday 21 st July 2023
Announcement to applicants	Week commencing on 24 th July 2023
Signing of Grant Agreement & Disbursement of Funds	Week of 25 th September 2023
Progress Report	Monday 22 nd January 2024 Monday 20 th May 2024
Deadline for Spending Funds	Monday 23 rd September 2024

⁵ Each applicant shall hold harmless Transport Malta and University of Malta from any claims relating to the applicant's participation in this competition.

* Subject to change for whatever reason/cause.

Award

Successful applicants must complete the necessary paperwork prior to receiving the awarded funds. In the case of Seed Funds, 90% of the funds will be transferred once all the required documentation has been submitted and approved by the Management Committee. The final 10% of the awarded value will only be disbursed once the final report and supporting documentation are submitted and approved. All expenses pertaining to the beneficiary's TAKEOFF membership must also be settled. Proof of Concept beneficiaries will receive the awarded value following submission and approval of all documentation. Beneficiaries will be expected to abide by their stated milestones and move forward with their proposed plan during the grant period, over a six to twelve-month period running between September 2023 and September 2024. Seed Fund recipients are expected to work closely with the TAKEOFF Manager, whereas Proof of Concept fund recipients are expected to work closely with the Knowledge Transfer Office. Beneficiaries are not permitted to emigrate out of Malta during the duration of the fund.

Beneficiaries will be required to submit an interim report every 4 months and a final report, detailing their progress against the proposed milestones, at the end of their grant period. Each report must be supported by the accepted proof of payment relating to expenses incurred during the respective reporting period. All required documentation including proof of purchases must be retained. Should a project be delayed, beneficiaries may request an extension by writing to the Management Committee in a timely manner (at least one week prior to the respective deadline) providing justification for the request. It shall be up to the Management Committee to accept or decline such a request.

The Management Committee maintains the right to request a refund, in full or in part, 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 Management Committee.

In the event that not all the funds are disbursed following the first call, a second call may be issued later in 2023.

State Aid

The Maritime Seed Award operates under the *de minimis* State Aid regime, which allows a single undertaking⁶ to receive an aggregate maximum amount of *de minimis* aid of €200,000 under all *de minimis* aid measures, over a period of three fiscal years.

A 'single undertaking' active in the fishery and aquaculture sector is permitted to receive an aggregate maximum amount of *de minimis* aid of €30,000 under all *de minimis* aid measures, over a period of three fiscal years.

All applicants are required to ensure they are eligible for the requested grant under State Aid rules before submitting an application.

News and information

All news and information about the fund will be posted on <https://takeoff.org.mt/seedfundawards/marsa-2023/>

⁶ For the purpose of this declaration the term 'single undertaking' shall have the meaning as established in Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1407/2013.

Contact Details

Seed Fund

TAKEOFF Manager – Joseph Bartolo
joseph.a.bartolo@um.edu.mt

Proof of Concept Fund

Knowledge Transfer Office
knowledgetransfer@um.edu.mt

Management Committee

Dr Valeria Scuderi
maritimeseedaward@um.edu.mt
Maritime Seed Award
Knowledge Transfer Office
Dar Ġużeppi Żahra
University of Malta
Msida MSD 2080
Malta

Events Location

TAKEOFF Business Incubator
Dar Ġużeppi Żahra
University of Malta
Msida MSD 2080
Malta

(Point 28 on the [campus map](#))