

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)  
Enabling the Future - Developing the Space Workforce (5)

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THE GEOTECH INNOVATION PROGRAM

**Abstract**

The UAE Space Agency (UAESA) promotes Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) to inspire UAE youth about space since its foundation. The result: the UAE received enormous number of applicants for the UAE astronaut program. Also, with an unparalleled foresight in the MENA region, the UAESA believes that the private sector will progress the space industry. To continue with the ongoing efforts for improving STEM applications in space, the UAESA partnered with a global innovation hub, Krypto Labs, towards contributing to the UAE National Innovation Strategy 2021 via the GeoTech Innovation Program. This program was launched to introduce a new paradigm of entrepreneurship catering to the knowledge-based economy of the UAE in the space sector. Several examples exist where the space sector greatly benefited from the private sector outside UAE. Famous examples include private entities such as SpaceX, Blue Origin, Virgin Galactic, Amazon, all of which are incrementally contributing to the new space race. It is always the private profit-driven sector which pushes the frontiers of technology. Therefore, the UAE Space Agency is venturing into tapping the entrepreneurial mindset of UAE citizens in a nationwide program which is the first of its kind: The Geotech Innovation. With this, the UAESA encourages the private sector to develop innovative solutions in the field of Geographic Information Systems (GIS). The Geotech Innovation Program is aimed at encouraging and engaging entrepreneurs and key government entities of the UAE to start business startups catering to the growing demand of big data analytics and earth observation using satellite data especially in the following areas: 1. Urban and Rural Management (URM) 2. Disaster and Crisis Management (DCM) 3. Coastal Border Security (CBS) This paper delineates the objectives, phases, and the outcomes of executing this program. Through a thorough screening process, three Emirati companies were incubated with this program.