



DRIVING IMPACT: 2024 HIGHLIGHTS



Table of Content

03 | Message to our Community

08 | Validation Sprints

04 | 2024 at a Glance

12 | Incubation

05 | Our Approach

16 | Entrepreneurship at USEK

06 | Mindset Building

18 | Partnerships

20 | The Team

MESSAGE TO OUR COMMUNITY

Reflecting on 2024, we are filled with pride for the determination and innovation demonstrated by our community of entrepreneurs, partners, and team members. This year, we faced a period of profound uncertainty and adversity, yet we remained steadfast in our mission to support entrepreneurs and foster impactful change. The resilience, creativity, and commitment of our community have been nothing short of inspiring, driving us to overcome obstacles and seize new opportunities.

This year, we launched our 6-month incubation program, PowerUp, providing essential support for tech startups to open up new markets. PowerUp offers 12 startups with the tools, mentorship, and resources needed to thrive in a rapidly changing environment.

Another milestone over the past year is the success of two other rounds of IdeaLab, our validation sprint program, graduating 20 innovative projects in 2024.

Additionally, our support through the Startup10, a 6-month incubation program have also created cross-border opportunities, linking Lebanese startups with the Italian market and opening new pathways for growth and expansion.

Furthermore, the ACIE team has supported 45+ innovative projects through various programs, grants, technical assistance, and access to industry experts. Our extensive mentor network, spanning across the globe, has played a critical role in guiding startups toward growth and sustainability. These milestones highlight the transformative power of collective effort and the importance of perseverance during challenging times.

As we look to 2025, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to USEK, our dedicated faculty members, talented students, and vibrant community of innovators for their unwavering commitment. Together, we are shaping a future filled with possibilities, proving that creativity and collaboration can drive meaningful progress even in the toughest times.

Our shared vision for the year ahead is one of hope, innovation, and expanded impact as we continue to push the boundaries of what's possible.

The ACIE team

2024 AT A GLANCE

46
Startups enrolled in
6 Programs

85+
Co-founders

54% Female Founders **46%** Male Founders



35 Total Activities

12 Workshops	3 Talks
11 Mindset Building Activities	2 Ideathons
6 Demo Days	1 Hackathon

Our Support Network

17 Trainers	13 Experts	25 Mentors	4 Coaches
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<p>Unique Ideas Supported 37</p>	<p>Grants for Startups \$36.5 K</p>	<p>Participants in Events 1143</p>
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OUR APPROACH

Our three flagship programs are strategically designed to offer tailored support at every stage of the entrepreneurial journey. Through **Mindset Building**, we equip students with entrepreneurial skills and critical thinking, inspiring them to become future leaders. **Validation Sprints** transform ideas into market-ready prototypes with defined business models, while **Incubation Programs** provide coaching, cash grants, and technical assistance, enabling startups to successfully launch their ventures. This holistic approach empowers founders and students to transform innovative ideas into impactful solutions, creating cycle of continuous growth and leadership.

1

Mindset Building

Equipping students with entrepreneurial skills and mindset through collaborations and partnerships while fostering critical thinking and inspiring them to become future leaders.



2

Validation Sprints

Intensive bootcamps designed to transform ideas into market-ready prototypes with defined business models.



International Symposium
**Unleashing Entrepreneurial Brilliance:
 Navigating Success in a Dynamic World**

April 25 – 26 | 10:00 am – 5:00 pm | John Paul II Amphitheater

3

Incubation

Adapted yearly incubation programs tailored to the startups needs, providing coaching, cash grants, and technical assistance vouchers enabling to start their ventures.



1 MINDSET BUILDING

This vertical aims to cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset among the younger generation and the student community at the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik. Through challenge-based activities, active training, and skills development programs, students are guided from the ideation phase to implementation, empowering them to think critically, innovate, and develop real-world solutions.

Talks

Fireside Chats with entrepreneurs and industry leaders to spark curiosity and share real-world insights.

Workshops

Interactive sessions focused on developing skills such as negotiation, emotional intelligence, and critical thinking.

Socratic Seminars

Discussion-based sessions fostering collaboration and deep reflection on real-world challenges.

Program Highlights



The Power of Purpose Talk - Omar Itani

This event showcased the transformative potential of social entrepreneurship. Industry leaders shared innovative solutions to pressing societal challenges, inspiring students and attendees to drive meaningful change and create lasting impact.

Emotional Intelligence Workshop - Romy Melhem

A hands-on workshop introduced university students to emotional intelligence through interactive exercises and expert-led discussions. Participants gained valuable skills in self-awareness, emotion regulation, and effective communication to navigate challenges with resilience.



Innovation Vs Imitation Debate - ACIE Team

This engaging debate explored whether entrepreneurs should innovate or imitate successful business models. Students participated in thought-provoking discussions, critically evaluating both approaches and sharpening their entrepreneurial thinking skills.



The Youth Community Entrepreneurs - YCE program, initiated by the Federation of Municipalities of Kesrouan Ftouh, fosters youth entrepreneurship by encouraging innovative projects tailored to local challenges. It aims to cultivate not just business creation but also an entrepreneurial culture, enabling young individuals to share and develop their ideas within the regional ecosystem.

Prize

One week's support for 5 winning teams at PEEL, the university incubator of Université de Lorraine in France.

Winning teams

Nazar: Redefining eyewear with durable, customizable 3D-printed frames.

Small Steps: Virtual reality first aid training for enterprise and education.

Sip: Healthy instant coffee with delicious flavors (e.g., peanut, pistachio).

G alGae: Cultivating the health benefits of spirulina algae.

Argentum: Give wasted silver in X-rays a second chance.

Project Outcomes:

- Empowered youth with entrepreneurial skills, resources, and confidence to address local challenges.
- Strengthened community engagement with active participation from municipalities, academic institutions, and industry experts.
- Expanded Keserwan's entrepreneurial ecosystem with mentorship, resources, and sustainability-focused networks.
- Encouraged innovation and creative problem-solving among participants.

Partners



Timeline

- January 15, 2024
Launch of the application
- March 7, 2024
Workshop 1: Communicating your idea
- March 14, 2024
Workshop 2: Business Model Canvas
- March 23, 2024
Final Pitch Competition: at the Municipality

2 VALIDATION SPRINTS

The USEK Entrepreneurship Challenge (UEC) is a pre-incubation program crowned by a competition designed under the "Babson Collaborative Student Challenge." This annual competition fosters entrepreneurship and innovation exclusively within the USEK community. Integrated into academic courses and university faculties, UEC inspires an entrepreneurial mindset, with many projects emerging from classes on entrepreneurship and innovation. Participants receive workshops, mentorship, and comprehensive support to validate their ideas, build business models, and develop prototypes. Deans and faculty members serve as judges, evaluating students' pitches and models, culminating in a final competition that showcases their growth, creativity, and readiness for future success.

Key Numbers

12

Startup teams

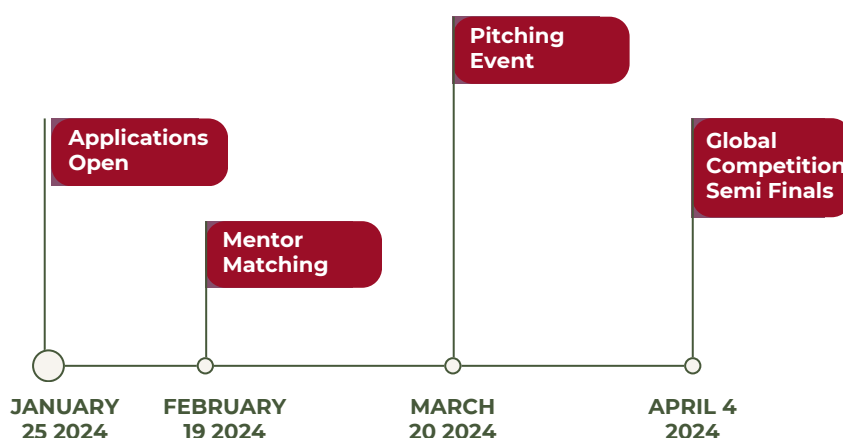
46+

Mentoring sessions

8

Mentors

Timeline



Students' Expectations

This competition is endorsed by the renowned **Babson Collaborative Student Challenge**, an initiative affiliated with **Babson College**, the world's leading entrepreneurial institution.

Benefits for the winning teams at the **global level**:

1. Babson Build Scholarship for each member
2. \$2500 cash prize sponsored by Social Impact Patrons
3. Valuable feedback from esteemed judges at Babson College
4. Exclusive opportunities such as a webinar with Babson Professor Heidi Neck, certificates, and free Babson EdX courses.



Judges



Dr. Pascal Damien
Dean
School of Arts and Sciences



Dr. Jeanne Mawad
Head of Management and
Entrepreneurship Program
School of Business



Prof. Tilda Karkour
Associate Dean
School of Engineering



Prof. Ranya Salameh
Dean of the College of
Doctoral Studies & Associate
Provost for Graduate
Studies



Dr. Nancy Saliba
Director
Asher Center for Innovation
and Entrepreneurship
(ACIE-USEK)



Ms. Dalida Sneifer
Coordinator
Green USEK

Mentors



Margot Wehbe
Founder of UWYTA



Adib Abboud
Founder of GI-TECH



Cendrella Antoun
Founder of Toyswap



Georgy Kassab
Co-founder of LUXEED
Robotics



Reda Helbawi
ACIE Team



Romy Massaad
ACIE Team

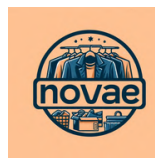
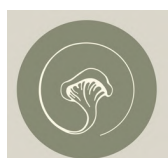


Jad Akl
ACIE Team



Melanie El Kadi
ACIE Team

Teams





A 3-month validation program for startups in the agrifoodtech and cleantech sectors, hosted by ACIE-USEK in collaboration with Berytech and co-funded by the Embassy of the Netherlands in Lebanon. In 2024, two successful batches were implemented, empowering startups to validate and refine their ideas.

Startups Validated
20

Trainers
13

Clinics
102

Experts
12

Total Grants
\$30 K

Prototypes
20

Expert Sessions
40

Business Follow-Ups
160

Program Outcomes

A total of 48 individuals gained foundational knowledge in entrepreneurship, developing critical skills in concept initiation, market validation, prototyping, business modeling, and pitching. The program fostered a transformative shift in mindset, equipping participants with tools to refine their ideas. They pitched their concepts to an audience of 200+ professionals, including stakeholders, business coaches, and peers.



Feedback from the Startups

Feedback 1

Everything was interesting and there was a lot of communication between the expert and us" (Concept Initiation)

Feedback 2

"It was very nice, interactive, tangible and very useful. Fluidity of delivering contents" (Prototyping)

Feedback 3

The discussion is incredibly fascinating and presents a fresh and challenging perspective for me. I find the challenges and debates involved in this topic particularly engaging, and I'm enthusiastic about navigating through them." (Market Validation)

Batch 2 Startups



BeanBurners

Develops eco-friendly heating logs made from recycled coffee grounds, offering sustainable energy solutions.



EVX

A comprehensive platform for electric vehicles, catering to users in Lebanon and the MENA region.



HydroCarbX

Innovates in hydrogen systems for vehicles, promoting cleaner and more sustainable transportation.



Lebanese Agri-Connect (LAC)

A consulting and e-commerce platform connecting farmers to international markets and tackling export challenges.



Lion's Mane

Focuses on addressing lionfish overpopulation by creating sustainable products, including food and jewelry.



LouMushrooms

Cultivates mushrooms using innovative methods to promote sustainability and reduce waste.



Mediterranean Farms (Honeylicious Treats)

Specializes in honey-based protein bars, supporting nutrition through sustainable practices.



REMOLD

Produces affordable prosthetics using recycled materials, combining sustainability with healthcare innovation.



Sip

Reimagines instant coffee with healthier, flavor-rich packets free of oils and additives.



Wiggles

Pioneers the use of worm protein in food products, offering eco-friendly protein alternatives.

Batch 3 Startups



Byssus

Repurposes sustainable fabrics using collection bins and shredding machines for material transformation.



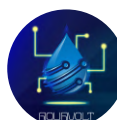
Battelife

Designs sand batteries for efficient water heating and sustainable energy management.



ReSource

ReSource Transforming plastic waste into sustainable fuel for a cleaner future



Aquavolt

Specializes in innovative water systems, securing partnerships for implementation.



Agrismart

Instant agricultural expertise through an AI-powered chatbot on WhatsApp.



Nazar

Creates durable, customizable 3D-printed glasses with interchangeable designs.



Vitaminer

Revitalizing the world with Vitamin B3 production from nicotine plant waste.



MushCo

Produces mushroom chips, focusing on sustainable sourcing and innovative processing methods.



De Casa

Transforming local dairy into premium, eco-friendly artisanal cheeses and whey protein, blending tradition with innovation.



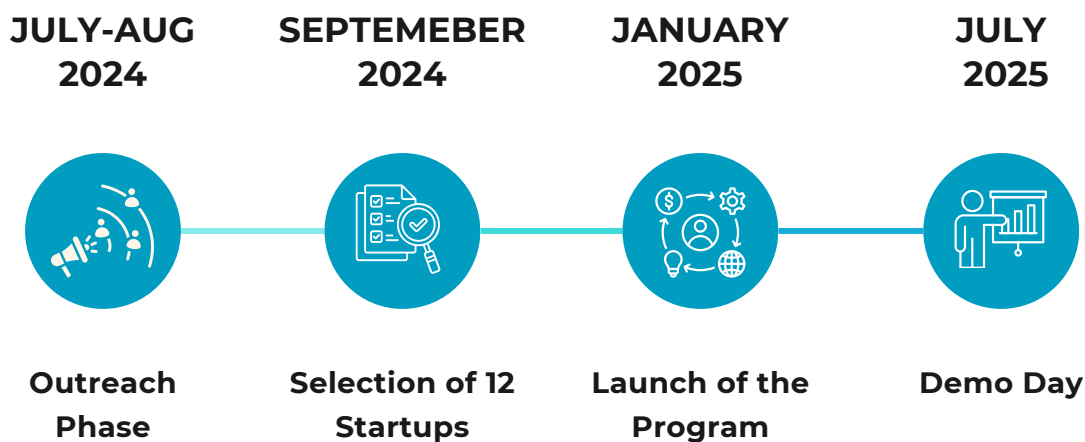
FitFood Innovators

Provides personalized meal plans through a health-focused digital platform.

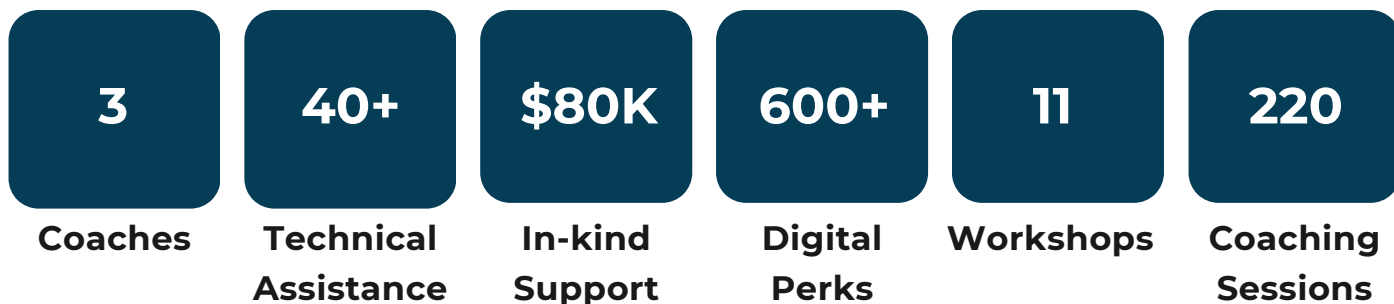
3 INCUBATION



PowerUp is a six-month adapted incubation program that offers 12 tech-oriented startups the resources to launch their businesses. It includes a boot camp, individual and group coaching, technical assistance vouchers, mentor match-ups, and a cash grant of \$2000 to turn their prototypes into ready-to-market products. Additionally, participants can choose from 600+ tech perks and development tools to support their startup's growth.

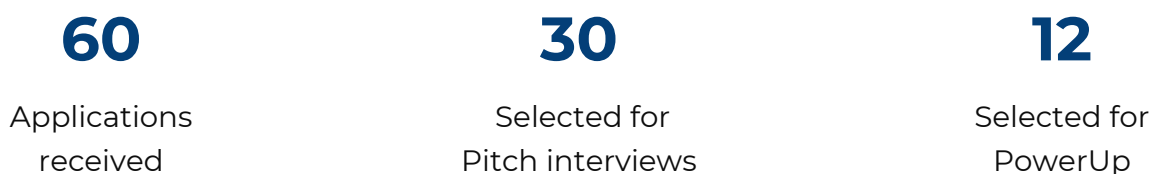


Key Numbers



Program Outcomes

Upon completing the PowerUp program, startups will be ready to register as official businesses, having refined their prototypes into market-ready products. They will reach the go-to-market stage, equipped with the necessary tools, guidance, and support to successfully launch. Additionally, they will be well-prepared for the acceleration phase, positioning them for sustained growth and future investment opportunities.



POWER UP

YOUR INNOVATION

Selected Startups



High-quality eco friendly dog food kibbles made from sustainable ingredient.



Turns coffee waste into protein-rich mushroom snacks, supporting zero-waste, sustainable food production.



Manufactures machines using pyrolysis technology to convert plastic waste into fuel and gas.



Eco-friendly facial cleanser tablets offering a skin-friendly and time-saving skincare solution.



A one-stop platform for all electric vehicle needs.



Revolutionizing the eyewear industry with customizable frames that detach into multiple pieces.



Producing alternative protein from worms for human consumption.



A cheese artisan transforming whey, a by-product of cheese-making, into premium whey protein for sustainability.



Empowers gardeners and small-scale farmers with digital tools and smart solutions to enhance productivity and sustainability.



Provides Lebanese farmers with agricultural advice through a WhatsApp bot in Arabic or Latin, offering a freemium model for affordable consultations.



A safety system sold to car rental companies, insurance firms, and shipment trucks to prevent drunk driving incidents.



An AI-powered dental management software for streamlined practice operations.



Startup10 is an initiative funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), managed by CIHEAM Bari, and implemented by the Asher Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (ACIE) at USEK. Launched in October 2023, the program aims to promote food security and youth employment in 10 partner countries by supporting startups in the green and blue economy sectors.

Program Objectives

- **Promote Food Security:** Encouraging innovative solutions in agriculture and related sectors to enhance food production and distribution.
- **Enhance Youth Employment:** Providing opportunities for young entrepreneurs to develop sustainable businesses, thereby creating job opportunities.
- **Support Green and Blue Economies:** Focusing on sectors that contribute to environmental sustainability and marine resources.

ACIE Coaching Team

International Coach



Dany Frenn



Romy Massaad



Reda Helbawi



Melanie Kadi



Peter Kruger

Program Numbers

Local Impact

<p>600 Coaching Sessions</p>	<p>Tailored coaching and guidance for participating startups.</p>	<p>€ 15.000 Prize Awarded</p>	<p>Granted to the winning startup after the 6 month coaching period</p>
<p>21 Startups Supported</p>	<p>Empowered through resources, expert coaching, and market access.</p>	<p>3 Soft Landings Facilitated</p>	<p>Enabled a three-month collaboration with an Italian company.</p>

Global Numbers

<p>10 Countries</p>	<p>Collaboration between 22 incubators to foster innovation and sustainability.</p>
<p>140 Startups</p>	<p>Engaged in a 6-month intensive program to develop and scale their solutions.</p>
<p>3-month Support</p>	<p>Open innovation program with a partnering Italian company.</p>

Implementing incubators in Lebanon



International Partners



ACIE Selected Startups



Assaf Biogarden

Produces organic essential oils and dried herbs, targeting health-conscious individuals and businesses in cosmetics and aromatherapy.



AYKI

A mobile app offering smart, sustainable gardening solutions to boost productivity and eco-friendly practices.



De Casa

Crafts premium, locally sourced cheeses using traditional methods with a focus on quality and sustainability.



Lion's Mane

Mitigates lionfish invasion by selling lionfish-based products and promoting marine protection.



UWYTA

Upcycles chip and chocolate wrappers into reusable items, reducing waste and empowering women tailors.



Wasted Treasures

Converts organic waste into eco-friendly biomass fuels, providing sustainable heating solutions and reducing deforestation.



SunCode

Develops eco-friendly solar dryers for farmers and food processors, reducing energy costs and promoting sustainability.

During the Mediterranean Innovation Agrifood Week, Suncode secured a potential partnership with CIHEAM and i-Pergola to integrate its solar drying machine alongside sustainable solar panel projects.



ENTREPRENEURSHIP AT THE HEART OF USEK



Driving Innovation and Impact



15
Student-Led
Projects



35
Student Co-
Founders



11
Faculty
Involvement as
evaluators



17
Faculty
involvement as
technical experts

Impact Across USEK's Community

Roundtable Discussion on Startup Challenges

ACIE hosted MP Halimeh El Kaakour and Finnish Ambassador Anne Meskanen to address barriers for startups in Lebanon, focusing on legislative amendments and solutions.

AUF Delegation Visit

A delegation from Djibouti's AUF met with ACIE and the Careers Service Office to exchange best practices and learn about USEK's entrepreneurial initiatives.

Babson Research Group Webinar

Jeanne Mawad, Head of Entrepreneurship at the Business School, presented her research on Entrepreneurship Education in collaboration with ACIE.

International Coaching Week Collaboration

ACIE partnered with ICF to deliver a general coaching session and individual career coaching for ACIE team members, Careers Service Unit staff, and USEK faculty, focusing on aligning personal values with career goals.

Babson Collaborative Global Summit 2024

USEK representatives attended the summit in Mumbai, India, which featured professional development, global ecosystem insights, and networking opportunities with global entrepreneurship educators.

LSE Panel Discussion

ACIE highlighted its role in supporting social and green initiatives through entrepreneurship, aligning with the UN SDGs.

RAWMEC Participation

ACIE participated in the Waste Management Conference and Exhibition, presenting in a panel on "Collaboration and Innovation" to unlock Lebanon's waste management potential.

Business Model Canvas Workshop

ACIE provided workshops at Champville as part of a collaboration with AUB iPark and Champville. ACIE team members also served as judges during the final pitching competition.

International Symposium on Entrepreneurship

The USEK Business School organized the third edition of the International Symposium on Entrepreneurship. This event was held in partnership with AUC and CSU, along with their respective entrepreneurship centers. ACIE played a pivotal role in shaping the event by leading efforts in panel curation, speaker outreach, panel moderation, guest invitations, organizing an investment activity, and connecting startups from various Lebanese universities with investors.



YCE Final Competition

In collaboration with Jounieh Municipality, USEK, NDU, and the University of Lorraine, ACIE developed the program, trained teams, conducted pre-selections, and coordinated the final event during "Semaine de la Francophonie." Five teams won a trip to the PEEL Incubator in France, with three teams being USEK students and one ACIE supported startup.

Impact Week 2024 in Bilbao

Nancy Saliba, Director of ACIE, attended ImpactWeek2024 in Bilbao, Spain, organized by Impact Europe. This event provided an incredible opportunity to connect with peers and experts, exchange with impact innovators, and explore topics such as impact finance, corporate impact, venture philanthropy, and enabling policies for a more impact-friendly future.



Mediterranean Innovation Agrifood Week 2024

Reda Helbawi, Programs Manager at ACIE, represented the center at the Mediterranean Innovation Agrifood Week 2024, held at CIHEAM Bari in Italy.

Entrepreneurship Seminar and Panel for PhD candidates

ACIE collaborated with the Doctoral College and AUF to moderate a panel discussion with three entrepreneurs who shared their entrepreneurial journey to USEK professors and PhD candidates.

KICs - Lebanon Innovate Program

USEK's TTO and ACIE are part of the Lebanon Innovate program by Berytech. Through Knowledge & Innovation Communities (KICs), the program bridges research and industry. ACIE-USEK actively contributes to the Agriculture and Food community through knowledge-sharing and discussions.

Contribution to Research

Romy Massaad, ACIE Programs Officer, contributed a chapter to Developing Entrepreneurial Mindsets, Ideas, and Opportunities: A Guide for Educators (Edward Elgar Publishing), under the Babson University Collaborative, presenting Opposite Thinking, an ideation tool for generating entrepreneurial solutions to real-life problems.

PARTNERSHIPS



The EcoSwitch Coalition, a partnership of well-established institutions, was created to strengthen support for eco-entrepreneurs in Lebanon. This collaboration is enabled through SwitchMed, a program funded by the European Union, fostering sustainable and green entrepreneurship.



Berytech launched its Partner Growth Program under the ACT Smart Innovation Hub Initiative, featuring five-day capacity-building sessions. The program aims to support Lebanese entrepreneurs by empowering business support organizations across Lebanon over three years. The five support organizations are Asher Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (ACIE-USEK), Farah Social Foundation (FSF), INJAZ Lebanon, Michel Daher Foundation (MDF), and Park Innovation.



The Mediterranean Innovation Partnership (MIP) Network, established in 2016 and coordinated by CIHEAM Bari, is a pioneering initiative focused on fostering youth entrepreneurship and technology transfer in the agrifood sector across Mediterranean countries. This network creates opportunities for collaboration and innovation in agrifood systems.



The Youth Community Entrepreneurs (YCE) initiative, aligned with the goals of the Mediterranean Innovation Partnership (MIP) Network, promotes youth-driven solutions in the agrifood sector. Coordinated by CIHEAM Bari, YCE supports young entrepreneurs by facilitating access to training, mentorship, and technology transfer opportunities across Mediterranean regions.

PARTNERSHIPS



Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW) is a massive campaign to celebrate and empower entrepreneurs in every country and community worldwide, especially those individuals who face structural barriers or may have never considered launching a startup. Every November 10th, million people participate in tens of thousands of activities, competitions, and events that inspire them to act and provide them with the knowledge, experience, and connections they need to succeed.



The Weston Ideation Lab is a dedicated space where ideas are tested, validated, and transformed into reality. Designed as a collaborative, interdisciplinary learning laboratory, the Lab fosters creative thinking, entrepreneurship, and access to resources across Cleveland State University's campus. It hosts academic courses, workshops, guest speakers, and various activities to nurture entrepreneurial innovation.

BABSON COLLEGE

Babson Collaborative for
Entrepreneurship Education

Member Institution

The Babson Academy's Babson Collaborative for Entrepreneurship Education is a global entrepreneurship education membership organization connecting universities around the world that are building and expanding their entrepreneurship ecosystems.

The ACIE Team



Nancy Saliba
Director



Reda Helbawi
Programs
Manager



Tracey Mansell
Senior
Communications and
Outreach Coordinator



Jad Akl
Administrative &
Financial Officer



Romy Massaad
Senior Programs
Officer



Nare Manouchian
Communication and
Outreach Officer



Melanie Kadi
Program Officer

Interns



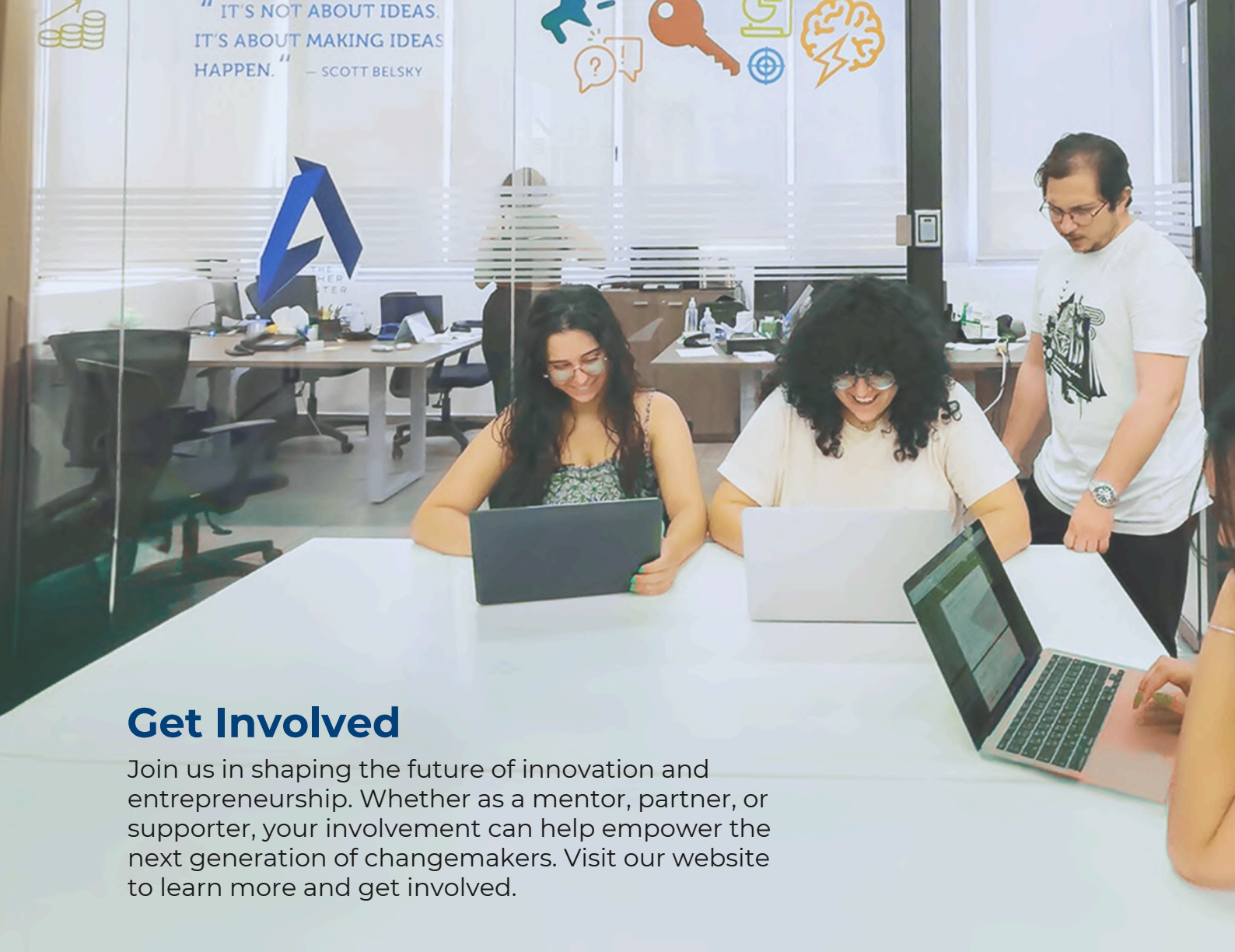
Joy Khalifeh
Communication and
Outreach



Jana Hamzeh
Administrative
Assistant



"IT'S NOT ABOUT IDEAS.
IT'S ABOUT MAKING IDEAS
HAPPEN." — SCOTT BELSKY



Get Involved

Join us in shaping the future of innovation and entrepreneurship. Whether as a mentor, partner, or supporter, your involvement can help empower the next generation of changemakers. Visit our website to learn more and get involved.

STAY CONNECTED



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