



واحة دبي للسيليكون  
Dubai Silicon Oasis

2024

# Business setup guide in Dubai Silicon Oasis



dso.ae

Where Forward-Thinking Business  
Fosters Future-Ready Community





# Contents



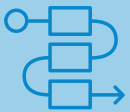
03

- Starting your business in Dubai
  - The #1 city for Doing Business
  - Mainland vs Free Zone
  - Doing Business in Dubai Silicon Oasis



10

- Choosing the right business environment
  - Join DSO Industry Cluster Expansion Projects
  - Living in Dubai Silicon Oasis



17

- Business setup process
  - Choose Legal Entity
  - Choose License Options
  - Name Your Business
  - Choose Your Business Activity
  - Select Business Space
  - Submit Application
  - Fees



26

- Grow your business
  - Market Exploration Programmes
  - Technology Testing & Piloting
  - Accelerators, VCs and Financing
  - Events & Community

# Starting your business in Dubai



- The #1 city for doing business
- Mainland vs Free zone
- Doing business in Dubai Silicon Oasis





# Dubai #1 City for Doing Business



## Trusted reputation as a safe haven for foreign capital

### Emergence of globally recognised smart city

1st City Globally for Greenfield FDI attraction since 2021 <sup>1</sup>

1 of 7 designated Alpha+ Cities by the GaWC <sup>2</sup>

3rd in the Middle East for R&D in the Global Power City Index 2023 <sup>3</sup>

8th overall in the Global Power City Index 2023 <sup>4</sup>

17th in the IMD Smart City Index 2023 <sup>5</sup>

23rd in the Kearney Global Cities Index 2023 <sup>6</sup>

## Fastest-growing destination for entrepreneurs, families and High Net Worth Individuals

### The best city to live, work & do business globally

Dubai's population almost doubled from 1.9 million in 2010, to over 3.5 million in 2023 <sup>1</sup>

2nd in Euromonitor's Top 100 City Destinations Index 2023

GDP totaled US\$126 billion in 2022, with non-oil GDP representing 98% of economic activity <sup>2</sup>

2.7 million (75%) of Dubai's population is made up of expats, representing one of the most culturally diverse cities globally

Sources: <sup>1</sup> fDi Markets, <sup>2</sup> GaWC, <sup>3-4</sup> Institute for Urban Strategies, <sup>5</sup> IMD, and <sup>6</sup> Kearney





D33

# Dubai Economic Agenda 2033

The 'D33' Agenda includes the launch of innovative projects that will drive sustainable economic growth through innovative approaches and double GDP by 2033, making Dubai the fastest, safest and most connected city in the world.

To achieve these goals, Dubai will accelerate growth by investing in human development and advanced technology. The city will also focus on consolidating its global competitiveness, fostering innovation, and nurturing a knowledge-based economy.

01

Dubai

The fastest, safest and most connected city in the world.

02

Economic Hub

A sustainable, diverse and productive economy.

03

Investment

The conducive business environment for direct investment.

04

Global leader

A city at the forefront of the digital economy.

05

Talents

An enhanced ecosystem to develop and nurture local talent.

Learn more: <https://www.investindubai.gov.ae/en/why-dubai/d33-agenda>



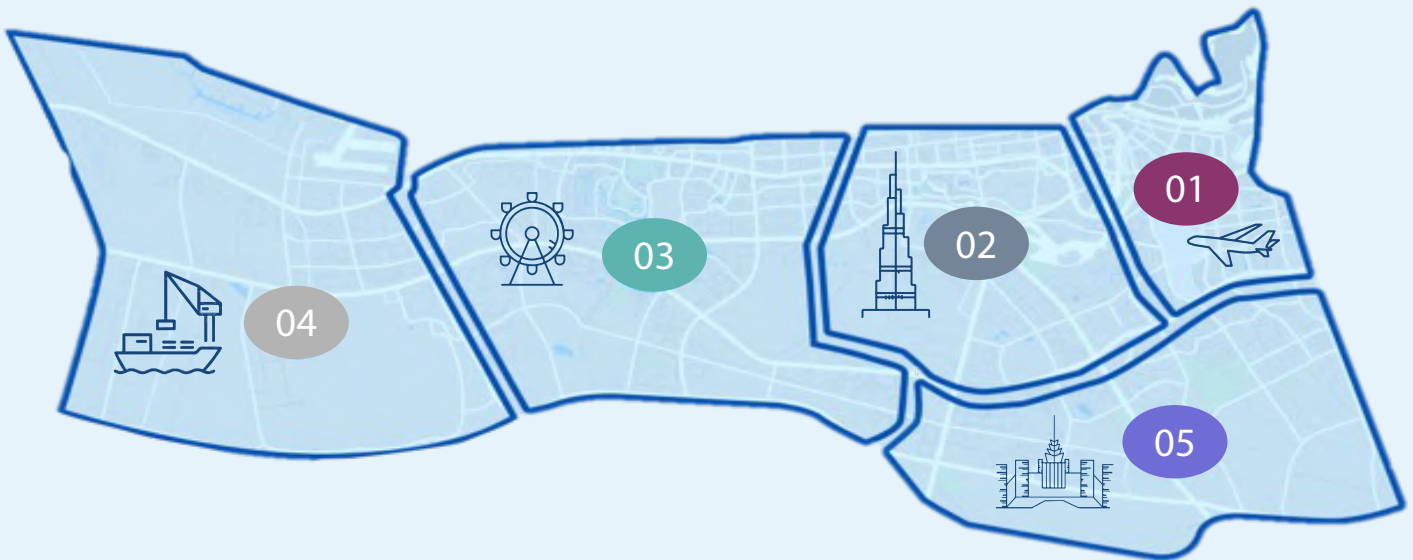


# Dubai Urban Masterplan 2040

The plan aims to develop a strategic master-planning framework for the Emirate and achieve various objectives which serve its futuristic vision of prosperity over the next 20 years.

The plan projects an increase in population by the year 2040 (from 3.3 million now to 7.8 million) and features includes 5 key urban centers.

Dubai Silicon Oasis is one of the five chosen districts of Dubai Urban Master Plan 2040 and will be the focus of development and Investment as an international centre for knowledge and innovation that attracts talents and minds, contributing to the global growth and leadership of Dubai.



- 01 Deira/Bur Dubai  
Historical City, Dubai International Airport
- 02 Downtown/Business Bay  
Global Financial Hub, Burj Khalifa
- 03 Dubai Marina/JBR  
Tourism & Entertainment Hub,  
Burj Al Arab, Palm Jumeirah

- 04 Expo 2020  
Exhibition & Event Complex, Al Maktoum  
International Airport
- 05 Dubai Silicon Oasis  
Knowledge & Innovation Centre





# Mainland vs. Free Zone

As a global business hub and a gateway to growth markets, Dubai is the preferred location for global investors and entrepreneurs shaping the future and transcending geographical barriers. Dubai is a hyper-connected, pro-business hub, with a focus on innovation and forward-thinking that empowers businesses both large and small.



## Mainland Dubai

Mainland Dubai refers to areas outside the free zones, governed by the Dubai Department of Economy & Tourism (DET). The businesses on the Mainland operate both within and outside the UAE. Mainland companies are required to ensure that at least 2% of their skilled workforce consists of Emirati nationals. Additionally, businesses must have a physical workspace with a minimum size of 100 sq. ft.

## Free Zones

Free Zones, or special economic zones, are strategically placed hubs across Dubai that offer special benefits, incentives and tax concessions to investors. Each free zone operates under a unique framework of rules and regulations, offers support and centralized business communities and clusters designed to facilitate foreign investment and economic growth.





# Mainland vs. Free zone

When setting up a company in Dubai, the first major decision you have to make is where to establish your business: within one of Dubai's 28 free zones or on the mainland.

	Company in the Mainland	Company in the Free Zone
Foreign ownership	100% foreign ownership on selected business activities	100% foreign ownership on all business activities
Repatriation of profits	10% of profits every year (subject to a maximum of 50% of capital) to be transferred to a Statutory Reserve	100% repatriation of profits
Import duty	5% on most products; however, many are exempt	Exemption from all import and export duties within the free zone
Trade restrictions	Allowed to trade throughout the UAE and internationally	Allowed to trade within the free zone and internationally. Trade within the UAE is possible through a local agent/distributor
Employee laws	Legally obliged to possess a minimum 2% of UAE nationals to comprise the workforce of companies with 50+ employees	No restrictions on hiring foreign employees
Visa requirements	The local service agent must apply for the visa	Automatic eligibility for a visa. Visa costs differ per free zone
Centralised community	Various stakeholders	Centralised community and support; one-stop-shop for all services





# Doing business in Dubai Silicon Oasis

Dubai Silicon Oasis offers unparalleled opportunities for startups, scaleups, SMEs and multinational companies aiming to thrive in a dynamic, innovation-driven environment.

DSO ecosystem is focused on efficient business operations, support, piloting and scaling emerging technology and a holistic community of like-minded entrepreneurs and leaders.



Business-first Environment



Technology-centered community



Networking and Thought Leadership



Easy setup, Easy operations



Events, workshops, masterclasses



Sustainability at the forefront

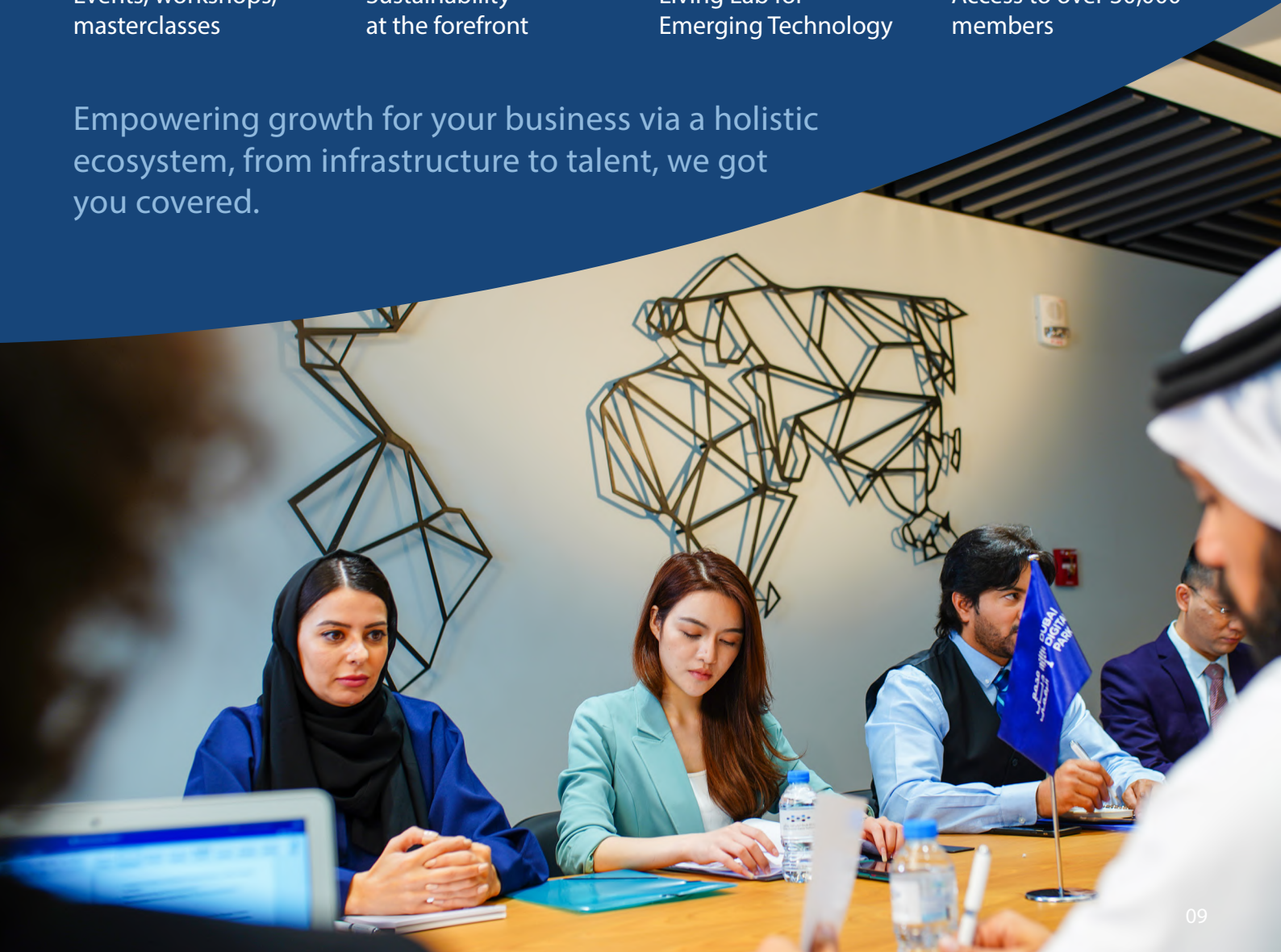


Living Lab for Emerging Technology



Access to over 30,000 members

Empowering growth for your business via a holistic ecosystem, from infrastructure to talent, we got you covered.





# Choosing the right business environment



- Join DSO Industry Cluster
- Expansion Projects
- Living in Dubai Silicon Oasis



# Join DSO Industry Cluster

Each designed to foster innovation, economic growth, talent and the knowledge exchange – become an active participant of Dubai Economic Agenda D33.

## Industries of the future

- Emerging Tech & Industry 4.0
- Cybersecurity
- Robotics
- WEB3
- 3D Printing
- AI & Quantum

## Integrating Industries

- R&D and Education
- Entrepreneurship & Investments
- Mobility
- ESG & Sustainability
- Professional Services & Creative







# Join DSO Industry Cluster

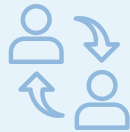
Dubai Silicon Oasis is dynamic hub of over 30,000 companies and 90,000 residents.

Dubai Economic Agenda (D33) aims to consolidate Dubai's position among the top 3 cities around the world and double the current size of the economy by 2033. To achieve this vision and facilitate the transition to a resilient and sustainable economy, Dubai Silicon Oasis has formed Future Industry Clusters and invites all members to contribute to the development of our ecosystem.

By becoming a member of the cluster, you can take advantage of the following opportunities:



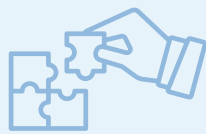
Access Specialised Talent



Exchange Knowledge and Build Business Opportunities



Connect with Peers, Partners, Potential Clients and Ecosystem Enablers



Contribute to Industry Associations and Research Outputs



Participate in industry-led events, forums, master classes and networking sessions



Join Thought Leadership initiatives and advocate change



Automate Sustainability Reporting



Interested in our cluster membership? Reach out to us on [hello@dso.ae](mailto:hello@dso.ae)



# Expansion Projects

Dubai Silicon Oasis is rapidly growing to cater to the needs of businesses and residents.



## Dubai Metro Network

Dubai Metro Blue Line will expand Dubai's railway network to 131 kilometers, encompassing 78 stations and 168 trains, which will connect DSO to Dubai Downtown by 2029.



## TechnoHub 4

Expansions to this unique Plug and Play flexible office solution with fully fitted open plan office facilities able to accommodate up to 500 employees.



## Expansion of LIUs

Expansions of our signature light industrial units 7 and 8 which include dedicated offices, mezzanine, and operational warehousing space for advanced tech manufacturing and assembly lines.



## The New Headquarters

Planned expansion of 190,000 square feet, aiming to host over 500 leading multinational companies, and provide dedicated spaces for regional headquarters and R&D facilities.





# Living in Dubai Silicon Oasis

Living in Dubai Silicon Oasis offers the convenience and efficiency of a 15 minute city, where essential facilities are always within easy reach.

The Cedre and Semmer villa communities, set amidst lush greenery, offer family-friendly amenities including shopping centres, pools, and fitness clubs.

The area is well-equipped with top-tier international schools, nurseries, universities, healthcare facilities, and a variety of shopping destinations, promoting a lifestyle that is both green and sustainable.

This vibrant community spirit ensures a welcoming environment where neighbours become friends.

Many teams of our corporate members chose to work and live in Dubai Silicon Oasis for many reasons, from efficiency, a convenient and traffic-free commute or an integrated lifestyle in one of the greenest communities in Dubai.

Residents receive special offers from local retailers and are engaged with initiatives like the community farm that aim to boost the circular economy. They also experience first-hand the piloting of the new and emerging technologies on-site at Dubai Silicon Oasis.

By choosing to work and live in DSO, you are becoming a part of a future-forward community dedicated to fostering Knowledge and Innovation.





# Living in Dubai Silicon Oasis



## Cedre Villas

A gated community of modern villas, available in four models: Luxury, Twin, Town, and Executive.



## Semmer Villas

An exclusive collection of family-friendly, four-bedroom homes.



## Silicon Residences

A gated residential complex of one or two-bedroom apartments, ideal for staff accommodation.



## University Residences

Fully-furnished, serviced apartments, designed to provide students with a safe and secure living environment.



## Residences @ Dubai Digital Park

Modern low-rise accessible apartments are in the heart of Dubai Digital Park's vibrant community. Ideal for teams of businesses established in DDP.



# Business setup process



- Choose Legal Entity
- Choose License Options
- Name Your Business
- Select Business Space
- Submit Application
- Fees



# Choose Legal Entity

## Existing Business

### Branch of the existing entity

- Any company established in the UAE or abroad can register its branch in DSO.
- The branch's activity must match or be within the scope of the parent company's licensed activity.
- The trade name must match the parent company's name with "Branch" added.
- No minimum share capital is required.

### Business Operation Permit (BOP)

- This type of license is a special permit for companies operating in the Administrative Zone of Dubai Silicon Oasis (areas within Dubai Silicon Oasis operated by private developers) using a license issued by Dubai Economic Department (DED).
- No share capital is required for this type of licence.
- This permit excludes retail units.

## New Business

### Free Zone Company (FZCO)

- A legal entity with limited liability and with at least one shareholder, which can be an individual, a nonindividual, or a mix of both.
- Minimum required share capital is AED 1, with shares valued in multiples of AED 1 up to AED 10.
- A Company may operate in a jurisdiction other than the Free Zone subject to the laws of such jurisdiction.

### Public Limited Company (PLC)

- A PLC may list its Shares on one or more stock exchanges in accordance with the applicable Markets Laws
- A PLC may invite the public to subscribe to its Shares in accordance with the applicable Markets Laws
- Minimum required issued and allotted Share capital (excluding treasury Shares) of no less than AED 250,000
- Shall not allot a Share except as Paid Up at least to 25% of its value





# Choose License Options

When setting up a business in Dubai Silicon Oasis, selecting the right license is crucial to align with your business activities and goals.

There are three main license types:

## Trade

Allows activities related to import, export, and distribution of items as specified in the license.

## Service

Allows the registered entity to carry out specified services.

## Industrial

Allows import of raw materials, manufacturing, processing, assembly, packaging, and export of finished products. Requires leasing suitable space like land or warehouse facilities.

Each license type caters to specific business needs, ensuring compliance and operational efficiency.





# Name Your Business

Choosing the right name for your business in Dubai Silicon Oasis is a critical step in the setup process. The name should reflect the nature of your business, be unique, and comply with the UAE's naming conventions.

Guidelines to Consider:

## 01

**Avoid Restricted Words:** Names cannot include any offensive language, religious references, or references to political groups.

## 02

**Match Activity:** The name should align with your business activities.

## 03

**Uniqueness:** Ensure the name is not already registered or trademarked in the UAE.

Once selected, the name must be approved by the relevant authorities before proceeding with the business setup.





# Choose Business Activity

Selecting the appropriate business activity is essential for aligning your operations with regulatory requirements. Dubai Silicon Oasis follows the International Standard Industrial

Classification (ISIC) to categorize business activities. Each activity is associated with a specific license type, ensuring compliance and clarity.

Steps to Choose Business Activity:

## 01

Refer to ISIC Codes  
Match your business idea with the appropriate ISIC code for clear classification.

Ensuring the correct business activity classification helps in a smooth setup process and compliance.

## 02

Use DED e-Services Portal  
Visit [DED e-Services] ([eservices.dubaided.gov.ae](https://eservices.dubaided.gov.ae)) to search for and select the suitable business activity for your license.







# Select Your Business Space

Establish and grow your business at Dubai Silicon Oasis (DSO), a dynamic hub strategically located to connect you with the world's key markets. Whether you're

a startup, SME, or a global corporation, DSO offers a diverse range of business spaces designed to support growth and innovation.

## Spaces Available:

### Flexi-Desks & Fixed Desks

Flexible and dedicated workspaces for startups and small teams.

### Dedicated Offices

Fully equipped spaces ideal for SMEs.

### Boutique Buildings

Customizable standalone buildings for unique business needs.

### Warehouses & Industrial Units

For logistics and manufacturing operations.

### Land for Development

Tailored land solutions for large-scale projects.

DSO provides a comprehensive business environment, integrating modern infrastructure with access to an innovation-driven community, making it the ideal platform for businesses looking to scale and innovate.



# Submit Application

## Steps to Apply

To start your business journey in Dubai Silicon Oasis, you can conveniently submit your application through the DSO online portal. The portal provides a streamlined process for setting up your business, including choosing your business activity, legal structure, and submitting the necessary documents.

# 01

Register on the DSO Portal: Create an account to access the application services.

# 02

Fill in Business Details: Provide information about your business activity, license type, and company structure.

# 03

Upload Required Documents: Submit the necessary documentation, including identification and business plans.

# 04

Application Review & Payment: The DSO team will review your submission, and you can pay the relevant fees online.

The DSO portal ensures a smooth and efficient setup process, allowing you to focus on your business growth and innovation.





# Fees – Dtec

	Annual Rent	Annual Establishment License Fee*	Annual Card Fee*
<b>Service license</b> Total cost Year 1: AED 24,675 Succeeding 4 years: AED 21,375	AED 13,500	1st year = AED 2,000 Succeeding Years = AED 2,200	AED 5,000
<b>Trade license</b> Total cost Year 1: AED 27,675 Succeeding 4 years: AED 24,375	AED 13,500	1st year = AED 2,000 Succeeding Years = AED 2,200	AED 8,000

Dubai Technology Entrepreneur Campus offers subsidised membership packages, which include visa, co-working space access, license, access to events, community and more.

As the leading Hub for tech entrepreneurs, Dtec members are an integral part of Dubai Silicon Oasis and contribute to value chains of many of its members.





# Fees – Commercial Offices in DSO

	Annual Rent	License Fee	Annual Card Fee
<p><b>Service and Trade License</b> For companies with commercial office spaces operating in DSO HQ, Dubai Digital Park, Technohub, and other business locations within DSO.</p> <p>The license includes 5 business activities</p>	<p>Starting from AED 1,580 - AED 2,500 per sqm per annum, including service charge</p> <p>+ 5% VAT</p>	<p>License fee - AED 12,000 per annum</p> <p>Registration fee and legal documents - AED 6,900 (one time fee)</p> <p>Security deposit - 10% of annual rent (one time payment)</p> <p>3rd party insurance - from AED 480 per annum</p>	<p>AED 2,200</p>
<p><b>Industrial License</b> For companies operating in Light Industrial Units</p> <p>The license includes 5 business activities</p>	<p>Starting from AED 480 / sqm per annum, including service charge</p> <p>+5% VAT</p>	<p>License fee - AED 12,000 per annum</p> <p>Registration fee and legal documents - AED 6,900 (one time fee)</p> <p>Security deposit - 10% of annual rent (one time payment)</p> <p>3rd party insurance - from AED 1,150 per annum</p>	<p>AED 2,200</p>

Please contact our sales team for space selection, available options and customized offer at [hello@dso.ae](mailto:hello@dso.ae)

# Grow your business



- Market Exploration Programmes
- Technology Testing & Piloting
- Accelerators, VCs and Financing
- Events & Community



# Market Exploration Programme

The Market Exploration Programme at Dubai Silicon Oasis (DSO) is designed to help businesses expand into new markets by providing comprehensive market research, strategic insights, and business matchmaking services.

This program enables companies to gain a deeper understanding of the regional market dynamics, consumer behavior, and competitive landscape. Participants

benefit from tailored workshops, industry networking events, and access to local business communities, which facilitate the identification of potential partners and customers.

The program is an ideal platform for companies looking to establish a foothold in the UAE and the wider Middle East region, ensuring they are well-prepared for successful market entry and growth.





# Technology Testing & Piloting

Dubai Silicon Oasis (DSO) offers a unique platform for businesses to test and pilot innovative technologies within a supportive and collaborative environment.

Companies can utilize state-of-the-art facilities such as specialized labs, research centers, and smart infrastructure to validate their products and solutions. This allows for real-world testing in a controlled, technologically advanced ecosystem.

DSO's infrastructure is designed to support technologies in areas like IoT, AI, blockchain, and smart city solutions, providing a valuable

opportunity for tech companies to refine their offerings before launching them in larger markets.

With partnerships across academia, industry, and government, DSO facilitates collaborations that can significantly accelerate the innovation cycle.

Companies participating in these programs can also benefit from mentorship, access to funding, and potential partnerships, making DSO an ideal launchpad for pioneering technologies aimed at transforming industries and urban living.





# Accelerators, VCs and Financing

Dubai Silicon Oasis (DSO) offers an integrated ecosystem that supports startups and growth-stage companies through a range of accelerator programs and access to venture capital.

These programs are tailored to help innovative businesses scale by providing mentorship, resources, and networking opportunities with industry leaders.

Participants can gain exposure to a global network of investors and strategic partners, helping them secure the funding necessary for growth.

DSO also hosts pitch events and demo days, allowing startups to showcase their innovations to potential investors. With a focus on technology-driven businesses, DSO's financing support is aimed at fostering entrepreneurship and driving economic growth within the region.







# Events & Community

Dubai Silicon Oasis (DSO) is vibrant with a diverse range of events and activities that cater to both business and community members throughout the year.

From high-profile conferences and industry-specific cluster events to lifestyle festivals and sports activities, DSO fosters a dynamic ecosystem.

## 01

**Cluster Events:** Engage with regional leaders at flagship conferences and panel discussions focused on innovation.

## 02

**Networking & Matchmaking:** Participate in B2B sessions designed to connect businesses and facilitate growth.

## 03

**Community & Cultural Events:** Enjoy outdoor movie nights, fitness challenges, and cultural celebrations that bring the community together in a lively atmosphere.

You can host your own event at the premises of Dubai Silicon Oasis.  
Reach out to our Marketing and Events team to know more: [hello@dso.ae](mailto:hello@dso.ae)





واحة دبي للسيليكون  
Dubai Silicon Oasis

# Where Forward-Thinking Business Fosters Future-Ready Community



To know more, contact:  
[hello@dso.ae](mailto:hello@dso.ae)

[dso.ae](http://dso.ae)