



# The complete guide to UAE entrepreneurship: A collection of essential FAQs

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I am certain from what I have witnessed from my simple interaction with bright minds and hopeful, optimistic faces that we are betting on the right people and the right generation for the future of the UAE.

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Abu Dhabi



The UAE has earned a reputation for taking proactive steps to mould and restructure its legal frameworks, as well as develop diverse economic strategies to establish itself as a centre for business activities. For this reason, it has attracted a plethora of global entrepreneurs enticed by the possibility of high returns on investment, the innovation-focused sandbox of creativity, and the chance to collaborate with like-minded individuals and business entities.

Given the nation's stable and dynamic business sector, it's also unsurprising that conducting effective market placement has become challenging. As such, understanding the business environment is integral. If you're looking to build your foothold or broaden your existing operations in the UAE, this article is your go-to guide — providing answers to your most pressing questions. It covers numerous aspects, such as legal structures, economic prospects, funding pathways, and technological advancements, to help you make informed decisions for sustainable market positioning and growth in a competitive market.



# Part I

## UAE's business setup and legal framework





As you consider starting a business in Dubai, understanding the various visa options serves as a crucial entry point for treading the legal and operational sectors.

## 1. What are the different types of visas in the UAE?

Among the primary factors that entice global entrepreneurs — or investors — to the UAE is its business-friendly regulatory environment. The questions below specifically offer guidance for efficient business setup.

### Golden Visa

- Investors are eligible if they (1) buy real estate, (2) invest in public funds, (3) establish a company, or (4) become a partner of a company, all with a capital or share value of at least AED2 million;
- Entrepreneurs must either lead (1) groundbreaking projects, (2) own small to medium-sized enterprises, or (3) have sold a project for at least AED7 million;
- Innovative and specialised talents include professionals in fields such as medicine, science, culture, art, engineering, sports, and individuals with doctoral degrees;

- Humanitarian pioneers are honoured for their outstanding contributions to humanitarian causes; and,
- Frontline heroes are acknowledged for demonstrating their commitment during crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Remote Work Visa

A visa valid for one (1) year is available for business owners and employees, specifically;

- Business owners are required to demonstrate ownership of a company for a minimum of 1 year, a minimum monthly income of \$5,000, and provide bank statements for the past three (3) months.
- Employees must submit a 1-year employment contract, a minimum monthly income of \$3,500, and proof that their work is conducted remotely.

### Green Visa

- Freelancers and self-employed individuals require a permit issued by MOHRE, a bachelor's degree that is fully attested, a minimum annual income of AED 360,000, and evidence of financial stability in the UAE.

- Skilled professionals need a valid employment agreement, a fully attested bachelor's degree, a minimum monthly income of AED 15,000, and an occupational level — categorised as first, second, or third by MOHRE.

## Blue Visa

A new 10-year residency programme for individuals who have contributed to environmental protection and sustainability globally, regardless of their nationality. They must be:

- Global award winners in environmental fields; and, fulfilled by two important public organisations:
- Distinguished activists and researchers in environmental work from international companies and NGOs.

[Discover the different visa opportunities available to start your business in the UAE.](#)

## 2. What are the costs of starting a business in the UAE?

### Mainland company structure

The initial costs for establishing a business through the Mainland company structure include approvals from the Department of Economic Development (DED), trade name registration, office rental, and various legal and administrative fees. In general, the total setup costs can range from AED 14,500 to AED 25,000.

### Free Zone company structure

Free zones offer cost-effective solutions with setup costs starting around AED 5,500 for basic licenses. Notably, Free Zones like Sharjah Media City or Dubai Free Zone typically offer more economical prices but may come with specific operational restrictions as compared to Mainland setups.

[Gain insights into the costs involved in setting up a business in Dubai.](#)

## 3. What Is the new Corporate Tax Law?

The Corporate Tax Law is a direct tax levied on the net income or profit of corporations and other entities. Deemed an enormous shift in the country's tax regime, this law falls under the UAE's strategy to meet international standards and enhance its status as the epicentre for business globally.

The Corporate Tax Law stipulates a 0% rate on taxable income up to AED375,000 and a 9% rate on income exceeding this threshold. It's vital to note that the law provides exemptions for certain sectors, such as natural resource extraction, and maintains existing incentives for Free Zone businesses that comply with regulations.

Indeed, this new tax regime emphasises the significance of proper financial planning and tax compliance for businesses in the country. Understanding how these costs integrate with your overall business strategy — including visa and setup expenses — is imperative for effective business management and long-term success.

[Learn about the latest corporate tax regulation.](#)

## Part II

# Economic and industry-specific opportunities







The series of questions in this section focuses on the fully established as well as up-and-coming infrastructure developments in the UAE that are projected to inject significant investments. They are expected to enrich their respective industry of focus and, in turn, benefit your business activities.

#### **4. How lucrative is the UAE's transportation and storage sector?**

In 2023, the UAE registered a GDP of AED1.68 trillion at constant prices, with the non-oil GDP generating AED1.25 trillion. The transportation and storage sector specifically yielded an aggregate value of AED49.3 billion, which is why it's safe to state that the field is a significant contributor to the economy. These values were subsequently enhanced by increased demand for national carriers' services. Notably, the UAE is home to some of the world's most prominent airlines, such as Emirates Airlines, Air Arabia, and Etihad Airways — and many others.

It's also worth highlighting that the Emirate of Dubai has a primarily technology-powered transportation network, including the world's longest driverless metro line, that transports nearly 2 million daily commuters.

[Developments concerning the transportation and storage sector.](#)



## 5. What large-scale projects are there in the UAE that can help my business?

A palm-shaped island in Dubai, covering 13.4 square kilometres with over 80 hotels, resorts, and amenities. It is expected to enhance Dubai's tourism appeal and attract substantial visitor traffic. These large-scale developments, currently in progress, are spread across different sectors to foster innovation and business collaboration to, thereafter, stimulate overall economic growth.

### Tourism

- **Palm Jebel Ali**

the UAE has embraced digital transformation as a core element of its economic strategy. These tech-driven initiatives in the country back strategic plans to conceptualise and produce emerging technologies to actively shape its digital infrastructure; thus, ensuring the nation remains at the forefront of technological advancements. These strides have also boosted the UAE's service exports.

### Transportation

- **Dubai-Abu Dhabi Hyperloop**

It is an up-and-coming high-speed transport system developed to carry 10,000 passengers per hour to enhance travel time between Dubai and Abu Dhabi to just 12 minutes. It seeks to streamline regional connectivity and improve logistics for businesses.

- **Etihad Rail**

A 1,200 km rail network that facilitates efficient transportation of cargo to regional market points and passenger connectivity to all seven emirates.

### Culture

- **Guggenheim Abu Dhabi**

Set to open in 2025, this museum is located at Saadiyat Island and designed by world-famous architect Frank Gehry. It is set to feature art galleries, centre for art and technology, educational facilities, and it will promote cultural exchange and support the global art community.

- **Zayed National Museum**

This museum is a tribute to the UAE's founding president, His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, and reflects the nation's impressive endeavour to preserve and celebrate its heritage.

## **Technology**

- **Dubai Urban Tech District**

An innovation hub located in Al Jaddaf, Dubai, designed to foster technology and education through training, research, and business programmes. It is set to promote effective energy and water management while promoting a net-zero carbon footprint.

## **Mixed-use developments**

- **RAK Central**

It is a mixed-use project set to open in 2026, including Grade-A office spaces, 4,000+ residential apartments, hotels, and entertainment venues. When officially available for use, it should promote business and tourism in Ras Al Khaimah.

- **Aljada**

Proposed to transform Sharjah's real estate market and create a vibrant community, this large-scale, mixed-use development will feature schools, hotels, parks, and a business district.

[Explore key infrastructure developments](#)

## Part III

# Funding and support for global businesses



There are a plethora of funding options and support mechanisms in the UAE, mainly developed to help you establish your commercial footing without having to worry about funding or even networking resources.

## 6. What are the funding options available for SMEs?

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are an integral component in diversifying the national economy. As such, the government actively supports SMEs through various initiatives such as the National SME Programme, UAE SME Council, and Operation 300bn, in addition to funding sources like the Khalifa Fund.

Dubai complements this variety of programmes to make an improved business field that's suitable for accelerated and sustainable growth globally.

- **Government Support** - Dubai SME provides financial incentives, training, and consultancy. The Mohammed Bin Rashid Fund offers funding for innovative SME projects in key sectors;
- **Incubators and Accelerators** - platforms like in5 and DIFC FinTech Hive offer funding, mentorship, and networking opportunities; and,
- **Venture Capital** - Dubai hosts over 140 venture capital funds, supporting start-ups through early-stage and growth-phase funding.

[Find out about the different funding options available for SMEs.](#)



# Part IV

## Technology and innovation





Below are the latest technological advancements and innovative practices that can give your business a competitive edge in the UAE's fast-paced environment.

## **7. How is the UAE advancing its Artificial Intelligence ecosystem?**

The UAE has quickly progressed within its AI ecosystem and has placed itself as a global figure in this flourishing field. The country's AI-centric pursuits are apparent through its early adoption and huge funding commitments, such as the \$1.5 billion investment by Microsoft in the UAE's AI firm, G42. Interestingly, being the first nation to appoint an AI minister aptly underscores the UAE's solid commitment to spearheading global discussions that revolve around AI.

Dubai has particularly served a fundamental role in this AI-driven adoption. The emirate has integrated AI across various sectors, from healthcare to transportation, to streamline operations and make way for disruptive solutions. Dubai's ambitious plans, such as the Dubai Universal Blueprint for Artificial Intelligence (DUB.AI) and the Smart Dubai strategy, demonstrate its goal of utilising AI for economic advancement and societal well-being.

The following section will now place a figurative spotlight on Dubai's unyielding efforts to bring about revolutionary change by maximising technological advancements or use.

[See how your business can thrive in the UAE's growing AI ecosystem.](#)

## 8. What is the role of VARA in Dubai's fintech ecosystem?

This The Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority (VARA) is the world's first independent regulator for virtual assets and was established in March 2022 under the Dubai Virtual Asset Regulation Law. The law fundamentally provides a legal structure for the operation or utilisation of virtual assets in the country to balance and protect the ideation and production of fintech-related projects, or usage of virtual assets, that generally align with global standards.

VARA aligns with align with global standards when it comes to regulating digital currencies and generally seeks to position Dubai as a global hub for virtual assets.

[Understand how Dubai's Digital Assets Law fosters fintech growth.](#)

## 9. How does the Digital Assets Law boost fintech innovation?

In March 2024, the leading global financial centre in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia (MEASA) region, Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), implemented the Digital Assets Law to provide an all-encompassing legal framework for digital assets. The following are true about the newly enacted law:

- It defines the legal characteristics of digital assets by facilitating their control, transfer, and use within Dubai's fintech sector;
- Modelled on international best practices, the law guarantees that Dubai remains at the forefront of global financial practices — as such, enhances its securities regime; and,

- This new rule is complemented by VARA, which improves regulatory clarity even further, subsequently driving an influx of investment in digital assets.

[Learn how VARA is shaping Dubai's position as a fintech leader.](#)





## Key takeaways

As a global entrepreneur, it's important to master innovative methods for entering the UAE market to establish a strategic stronghold. Start by immersing yourself fully in the local culture and integrating this knowledge into your business strategies. Meeting with local business networks, especially leaders in their fields, to present your comprehensive business model for investments or strategic partnerships will undoubtedly help build your credibility. Finally, learn how to leverage the country's business-friendly environment, including tax incentives, to achieve your business goals efficiently.

### Additional information and resources



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- Company Name \***: Text input field.
- Type of Business (B2B/B2C/B2G) \***: Text input field.
- Company Website \***: Text input field.
- Company Location \***: Text input field.
- If not applicable, please type N/A
- Company Industry \***: Dropdown menu with "Please Select" and a downward arrow.
- Product/Service \***: Text input field.
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