

Press release: Firms urged to apply for groundbreaking cyber startup scheme

- Programme will be an integral part of developing UK cyber security capability
- UK cyber security sector is now worth more than £22bn

A groundbreaking initiative bringing together GCHQ and industry expertise to develop new cyber security technology is to be extended.

Cutting-edge cyber security entrepreneurs and start-up firms are now being invited to apply to join the second programme in the GCHQ Cyber Accelerator which will be extended from three to nine months.

The expanded programme will give start-ups more time with the world-class personnel and technological expertise of staff from across GCHQ, including the National Cyber Security Centre, enabling them to expand their capability, improve their ideas, and devise cutting-edge products.

The programme will be delivered by Wayra UK, part of Telefónica, and the selected startups will receive benefits to help them scale all aspects of their businesses, including office space, mentoring and contact with an extensive investor network.

The facility will specifically help new firms turn their ideas into commercial products and services and contribute to the booming UK cyber security sector which grew from £17.6 billion in 2014 to almost £22 billion in 2015.

The accelerator programme is a collaboration between the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), GCHQ, the NCSC, and Wayra UK.

Minister for Digital Matt Hancock said:

We are working hard to make Britain the best place to start and grow a digital business and the safest place to be online.

The GCHQ Cyber Accelerator is a vital part of this work and has already helped some of the most innovative cyber security startups develop cutting-edge new products and services.

I'm pleased to announce the programme is being extended and encourage the nation's talented entrepreneurs to apply.

The accelerator is an important element of the Cheltenham Innovation Centre and a key commitment in the Government's five-year, £1.9 billion National Cyber Security Strategy which aims to defend the UK in cyberspace, deter our adversaries and develop our cyber security skills and capabilities. DCMS is also planning to launch a second innovation centre – in London – at the end of the year.

The facility brings together experts in this field from government, academia and industry, and is a partnership which is vital to achieving the government's aim of making the UK the best place to start and grow a modern digital business.

Earlier this year, seven start-ups graduated from the accelerator's first programme and to date they have collectively raised more than £2.7m in investment, including follow-on contracts with major companies such as Cisco.

The firms which took part were CounterCraft, CyberOwl, CyberSmart, Elemendar, Spherical Defence, StatusToday and Verimuchme.

Chris Ensor, NCSC Deputy Director of Cyber Skills and Growth, said:

Cyber Accelerator represents a massive opportunity to collaborate with cutting edge companies to drive forward the government's ambitious programme of innovation that is helping to protect the UK from evolving cyber threats.

Gary Stewart, Director of Wayra UK, said:

Improving cyber security is one of the most important challenges that we face, whether as large corporates, SMEs or individual citizens. We are eager to accelerate the growth of the next generation of cybersecurity startups, in partnership with GCHQ, DCMS and our colleagues at Telefónica. The goal is that the start-ups will scale up and we will all be more secure online.

Notes to editors

Wayra UK will deliver the accelerator programme.

Start-ups can apply via wayra.co.uk/gchq today. The closing date for entries is 9 August 2017. Successful start-ups will begin work in the accelerator in October 2017.

The accelerator programme will help start-ups boost and scale initial sales and business development with relevant partners and secure follow-on third-party investment. Start-ups will be given a grant by Wayra UK as well as a physical space to work in. Members will also have the opportunity to learn first-hand about cyber security best practices and gain Cyber Essentials accreditation.

The programme will include insights to Government procurement processes, IP management, export controls and information assurance architecture. There will be opportunities to pitch products and services to Government departments and GCHQ will also offer access to its national and international commercial partners across the cyber security sector.