

KICKSTART ACCELERATOR 2018: SWITZERLAND IS ON ITS WAY TO BECOME AN INTERNATIONAL HUB FOR DEEP TECHNOLOGIES

Switzerland's largest innovation acceleration program, Kickstart Accelerator, brings together startups with established companies, universities, cities and foundations in Zurich to promote deep tech innovation and its impact on the future of humanity.

Zurich, April 3, 2018 – [Kickstart Accelerator](#) opens the application phase for the third edition of its program. Switzerland's largest innovation acceleration program focuses on deep technologies – science and engineering driven technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Blockchain and others – across different sectors, bringing together key actors in these fields. Promising later-stage startups will meet with partners such as [Credit Suisse](#) and [Swisscom](#) in the area of financial technology. Retailers [Coop](#) and [Migros](#) aim to work with startups in the area of food and retail; while universities such as [ETH Zurich](#) and [University of Zurich](#) will focus on education and learning technology. The [City of Zurich](#) and [AXA Winterthur](#) will seek out and support pilot projects and proof of concepts in the area of Smart Cities.

Collaboration between civil society, industry, government and science as key to innovation

Kickstart Accelerator aims to initiate successful partnerships and pilot projects between the participating startups and the partner companies and institutions. *"The first two programs resulted in over 30 ambitious proof-of-concepts (PoCs) and collaborations,"* says Kickstart Co-Lead Katka Letzing. *"In our view, genuine and sustainable innovation is only possible through cooperation across sector and company boundaries. That's why we are focusing even more on these partnerships this year".*

Later-stage startups preparing to accelerate their technologies, business models and market access with the help of such collaborations can now [apply](#) for the program. The application period will close on 27th May. 30 startups and intrapreneur teams (innovation teams from companies, cities and universities) will have the opportunity to take their products or technologies in the areas of [EdTech & Learning](#), [FinTech & Crypto](#), [Food & Retail Tech](#) as well as [Smart Cities & Infrastructure](#) to the next level in Zurich this fall.

Internationally connected and widely supported

Kickstart Accelerator is run by [Impact Hub Zürich](#), which is part of a wide international network of entrepreneurship and innovation centers. The program was initiated by the cross-sector association [digitalswitzerland](#) in 2015 and counts on key partners such as [Coop](#), [Credit Suisse](#), [Migros](#) and [Swisscom](#) as well as [AXA Winterthur](#), [City of Zurich](#), [ETH Zürich](#), [EY](#), [Gebert-Rüf-Stiftung](#), [Mercator Foundation Switzerland](#), [Stäubli](#), [Swisslinx](#) and [University of Zurich](#). The commitment of and value for these partners has increased since Kickstart's launch: *"Looking back at the success of the past two years of Kickstart Accelerator, Credit Suisse has benefited tremendously from the ideas and technologies generated through this program",* says Thomas Saler, Digital Solutions – Head of Fintech Partnerships at Credit Suisse (Switzerland) Ltd. *"This year, we are excited to commit again to continue our support to the innovation ecosystem."*

Coop, one of Switzerland's leading retailers, will again be a partner in the Food vertical: *"Being a Global Partner for three consecutive years, we have come to appreciate the work with the startup teams"*, says Benedikt Pachlatko, Project Manager Kickstart Accelerator at Coop. *"We look forward to gathering new ideas for innovative projects and to collaborating on concrete Proof-of-Concepts with some of the startups."*

New program structure with focus on Proof-of-Concepts and collaborative projects

The kickoff for the four-month program will be a two-day Selection Bootcamp on 9th and 10th of July 2018: The 60 most promising startups out of the applicant pool are invited to pitch in front of a jury of experts. 30 of them will make it into the program, which consists of a one-week Planning Sprint in September and an intense six-week Collaboration Sprint from October 1st to November 9th in the innovation and collaboration space [Kraftwerk](#) located in the centre of Zurich.

Key Dates Kickstart Accelerator 2018:

- July 9-10: **Startup Selection (Zurich)**
- Sept. 3-7: **Collaboration Planning Sprint (Zurich)**
Together, the startups and partner organizations explore ways of possible cooperation and pilot projects.
- Sept. 8-30: **Virtual Sprint (remote)**
The startups as well as the partners internally undertake the necessary preparations to carry out joint projects during Collaboration Sprint.
- Oct. 1 - Nov. 9: **Collaboration Sprint (Zurich)**
During six weeks, the entrepreneurs live and work in Zurich with the goal of implementing the collaborative projects with the partners. They receive support by mentors and experts out of the Swiss innovation ecosystem, get in touch with investors and take part in collaboration workshops. Additionally, each startup will receive up to 10'000 CHF of program stipends.

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About Kickstart:

Kickstart Accelerator bridges the gap between startups, corporates, cities, foundations and universities to accelerate deep tech innovation. Science and engineering driven technologies have the potential to transform humanity's biggest challenges into solvable problems. They require unprecedented collaboration between powerful established organizations and audacious entrepreneurs. Each year, Kickstart brings around 100 such entrepreneurs to Switzerland to collaborate with key players for proof-of-concepts, pilot projects and other innovation partnerships. The program is free of charge (no fees, no equity) for selected growth ventures and provides access to the executives and decision-makers of Kickstart's partners.

Kickstart Accelerator is an initiative of Impact Hub Zürich and was launched 2015 by digitalswitzerland. In 2018, Kickstart runs four verticals (EdTech & Learning, FinTech & Crypto, Food & Retail Tech and Smart Cities & Infrastructure) together with established partner organizations across industries and the private and public domain: Coop, Credit Suisse, Migros and Swisscom as well as AXA Winterthur, City of Zurich, ETH Zürich, EY, Gebert-Rüf-Stiftung, Mercator Foundation Switzerland, Stäubli, Swisslinx and University of Zurich.