

# Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority and 1776 Announce Startup Challenge powered by UNION to Advance Airport Innovation

Major innovation program will explore startup solutions to transform the passenger journey and shape the future for Dulles International and Reagan National airports.

**Arlington, Va.** —Today, Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) and 1776 announced a partnership to find and incubate startups by issuing a challenge powered by UNION's global startup network.

Competing startups will pitch their ideas in January in response to the Airport Innovation Challenge. The winning startups will receive \$15,000 in prizes and travel to Northern Virginia. They will spend three months starting in February 2018, at the MWAA Innovation Lab based on 1776's Crystal City campus. Throughout the program they will test their business models and products, working with airport authority experts as well as mentors from 1776 and UNION's global network. This location also gives participating startups proximity to the Nation's Airports (IAD and DCA), which serve over 40 million passengers a year.

"Technology and innovation are reshaping the expectations and experience of the millions of travelers who pass through airports every year," said Jerome Davis, EVP and Chief Revenue Officer of MWAA. "Through this partnership, MWAA, 1776 and UNION are connecting startups to shape the passenger journey and create outcomes that benefit their experience and our economy."

MWAA plans, provides and actively manages world class access to the global aviation system in a way that anticipates and serves the needs of the National Capital area. Their team is dedicated to continually improving efficiency, customer orientation, and the level of air service offered at Reagan National and Dulles International for passengers to have the best experience.

"MWAA has always been a leader in airport operations and passenger experience, employing innovative ideas to transform air travel," said Evan Burfield, Executive Chairman at 1776 and CEO at UNION. "This partnership combines their expertise with the global startup network to accelerate the use of technology in preparing the Airports to meet the needs of customers in a digital economy."

"Our goal is to create a differentiated experience for our passengers that addresses their unique preferences," added Chryssa Westerlund, Vice President of Marketing and Consumer Strategy for MWAA. "Satisfied and loyal customers help us to grow revenue which in turn keeps the costs lower for the airlines and ultimately flows back to the customer through lower airfares and more destinations."

More information about the challenge, including the related application, is available on the 1776 website here. Participants will be selected in January, and the innovation lab will kick off in February.

###

### **About Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority**

The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority operates Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, Washington Dulles International Airport, the Dulles Airport Access Highway and the Dulles Toll Road and also manages construction of the Silver Line project, a 23-mile extension of the Washington region's Metrorail public transit system through Fairfax County and into Loudoun County, Virginia. More than 45 million passengers a year pass through the two airports. The Airports Authority generates more than 387,000 jobs in the National Capital Region.

### **About 1776**

1776 is a community of entrepreneurs passionate about solving complex problems and unlocking the potential of the communities we serve. We have 11 campuses across 4 states and the District of Columbia making us the largest network of entrepreneurial incubators in the Northeast Corridor. By joining 1776, our members can access the knowledge, mentorship, capital, markets, and talent they need in order to scale. Along with offering coworking space, we also offer focused programming, curriculum, community, and expertise to help entrepreneurs grow their business. For more information, please visit [www.1776.vc](http://www.1776.vc) and follow @1776 on Twitter and @1776vc on Instagram.

## About UNION

UNION empowers startup ecosystems around the world. Our platform provides entrepreneurs, startup hubs and innovation teams with the best resources, networks and data architecture to transform their operations regardless of location. To learn more, visit [UNION.vc](https://UNION.vc).

---

## ABOUT BENJAMIN'S DESK

Benjamin's Desk provides physical resources, insightful programming, and a coworking community to help small companies grow. Our state-of-the-art workspaces, conference rooms, and corporate partnerships offer solo entrepreneurs and early stage startups the building blocks to scale in high-density urban business centers.

---



Benjamin's Desknewsroom