

# MIT News

ON CAMPUS AND AROUND THE WORLD



## playlabs

Play Labs, a playful tech accelerator for MIT students and alumni, launches

MIT Game Lab, Bayview Labs, and Seraph Group announce funding, facilities, and mentorship for startups focusing on virtual, augmented, and mixed reality.

**Rik Eberhardt | MIT Game Lab**  
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Bayview Labs and Seraph Group, in coordination with the MIT Game Lab, has announced Play Labs, a startup accelerator for MIT students and alumni to launch companies that utilize playful technologies. The first round of projects at Play Labs will run from June through August on the MIT campus in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The initial batch of projects will be virtual reality and augmented reality technologies and applications, though the incubator will also consider startups using other playful tech, including 3-D modeling, rendering, streaming, gamification, artificial intelligence, and machine vision. Applications of playful technology can be within any industry, including online/mobile/VR gaming, e-sports, entertainment, education, health care, or finance.

Startups that are accepted into Play Labs will each receive an initial investment of \$20,000 from the Play Labs Fund in return for common stock. Startups that graduate from the program and meet certain criteria will be eligible for up to \$80,000 in additional funding from Play Labs and its investment partners.

The deadline for applying to the first round is Feb. 20. Full information on the program, eligibility, and benefits can be found at [playlabs.tv](http://playlabs.tv).

The Play Labs program will be run by Bayview Labs and its executive director, Rizwan Virk '92, an MIT alumnus in computer science and engineering and a prolific Silicon Valley angel investor, advisor, and mentor, in conjunction with the Seraph Group, a seed-stage venture capital investment firm founded by Tuff Yen.

The MIT Game Lab, a research group in MIT's Department of Comparative Media Studies/Writing, and Ludus, the MIT Center for Games, Learning, and Playful Media, will host and conduct the educational program for MIT-related startup companies employing playful

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technology. Teams will be given workspace on the MIT campus for the duration of the program.

Also participating is VR@MIT, a student organization dedicated to fostering virtual/augmented/mixed reality entrepreneurship at MIT.

During the program, startup teams will be mentored by the executive director, and by faculty and staff from the MIT Game Lab. Additional speakers and mentors for the accelerator will include many successful entrepreneurs and experts in product design, sales and marketing, and fundraising, drawn from MIT alumni and Seraph Group.

Virk, the executive director of Play Labs, has been a co-ounder, angel investor, and mentor to many successful startups using playful tech, including Gameview Studios (makers of Tap Fish, sold to DeNA); Funzio (sold to GREE); Tapjoy; SLIVER.tv; and Telltale games. Virk did his undergraduate thesis at the MIT Media Lab in the Interactive Cinema group, was in one of the first group of finalists in the MIT \$100k competition (which was then called the MIT \$10k Competition). After graduating from MIT, Virk worked DiVA, at one of the first startups spun out from the MIT Media Lab.

“MIT has been the starting point for many successful startups over the years,” Virk says.

“Recently, a lot of focus on playful and gaming technologies, particularly virtual/augmented reality, has been on the West Coast, but I believe that the eco-system around MIT in Boston has great talent and startup ideas in these areas. When I graduated from MIT and thought of doing my first startup, I wish I had this kind of accelerator program, with support from both MIT staff and industry entrepreneurs and mentors. That’s why I designed the program in this way.”

“MIT students thrive on innovation and creative exploration,” says Scot Osterweil, managing director for Ludus. “We are pleased that through Play Labs we will help them move their most imaginative ideas into the realm of the possible.”

“We see tremendous opportunity to invest, support and partner with the MIT community of outstanding people,” says Yen. “Our network of successful investors will bring valuable experience, access and resources to startups.”

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