

# BEYOND THE “FRIENDS & FAMILY ROUND”



## How to Help Diverse Founders Build Social Capital

**VC PATHWAYS**

A Village Capital & UBS Initiative  
AUGUST 2018

 VillageCapital

 **UBS**

# ABOUT VC PATHWAYS

VC Pathways is a national initiative to help African American, Latinx and female entrepreneurs increase their competitiveness for seed-stage venture investment and provide access to the resources they need to influence the future direction of their business.

UBS and Village Capital piloted the VC Pathways program in three cities in 2018: Atlanta, Chicago and Philadelphia. The cities were chosen based on a number of criteria, including their potential to support early-stage ventures based on their strong networks of local angel investors, pipeline of high potential early-stage companies, and the presence of a local entrepreneur support system.

Key to the programs were partnerships with local entrepreneur support organizations in each city:



## Philadelphia - Ben Franklin Technology Partners

Ben Franklin is the most active early stage capital provider for Greater Philadelphia's technology sectors. Ben Franklin combines best practices of venture capital with a public-spirited purpose: leading the region's technology community to new heights, creating jobs and changing lives for the better.



## Atlanta - Goodie Nation

Goodie Nation is a community of good people using innovation to reduce some of the world's largest gaps in economic development, education, health, and public safety.



## Chicago - ImBlackInTech

Chicago-based ImBlackInTech Membership Network is a global membership organization for Black & Latinx founders of emerging tech startups. ImBlackInTech members, who represent some of the top founders of color across 40+ states and 11 countries, have raised and generated over \$415MM to date.



## Chicago - Blue 1647

BLUE1647(TM) is an entrepreneurship and technology innovation center that fosters economic development in technology and 21st Century skills through people development, workforce development and Business Acceleration.

## Contributors to this report:

- Allie Burns, Managing Director, Village Capital
- Ebony Pope, Director, US Ventures, Village Capital
- Ben Wrobel, Marketing Manager, Village Capital
- Emily O'Hara, Communications Associate, Village Capital
- Jamie Sears, Head of Community Affairs & Corporate Responsibility – UBS Americas
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## INTRODUCTION: VILLAGE CAPITAL

The typical Forbes or Fast Company profile of a successful, venture-backed startup founder that has ridden the hockey stick up to the top of the graph goes something like this:

- They have an idea that they're convinced will make a great business.
- They scrape together enough money from friends, family, or anyone close enough to listen, so that they can work on the idea full time.
- Their friends, family, or people from their college network introduce them to investors who provide initial feedback and poke holes in their idea.
- Some of those investors ultimately make an angel investment in the company, and the rest is history.

But let's say that you, or your friends and family, don't have access to the roughly \$30,000<sup>1</sup> it takes to start a business—or a network of people who are connected to experienced investors. Should the ability to build a great idea into a successful business be limited to people who have this kind of “social capital”?

Many entrepreneurs who don't have access to these networks and “friends and family” money come from underrepresented backgrounds. At Village Capital, we often say that “talent is everywhere, but power is not,” and if we're going to change the ratio of venture investment going into companies founded by women, African Americans and Latinx, we believe that changing the social capital dynamic at the earliest stages is an important place to start.

We created VC Pathways to do just that: use Village Capital's milestone-based investment framework and partnerships with local organizations to help founders from diverse backgrounds build social capital and establish and progress toward key milestones.

We were fortunate to partner with UBS, which has a long history of advancing inclusive entrepreneurship. Their local teams brought their knowledge and networks to the table to the benefit of the entrepreneurs.

Six months, three cities, 30 companies, over 200 mentors, and more than 70 completed milestones later, we're excited to share the stories and lessons learned from our three-city pilot. We hope it will inspire more critical thinking about how to build social capital for entrepreneurs who are currently overlooked by the early-stage financing system.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

**Allie Burns**  
Managing Director, Village Capital

## INTRODUCTION: UBS

The United States is an incredibly entrepreneurial country. About 543,000 new businesses get started in this country each month.<sup>2</sup> It's inspiring.

But behind that number are some caveats, and a myth of meritocracy that permeates the entrepreneurship and funding ecosystem in our country.

The current model isn't working if 80% of investment capital is concentrated in San Francisco, New York and Boston.<sup>3</sup> The model isn't working if women are receiving well under 10% of venture capital investment, and founders of color appallingly less – closer to 1%.<sup>4</sup> Some of the best ideas are not making it to market. Talent is not being realized across the board.

The issue of social capital and access to the networks in the investment community underpins this myth of meritocracy. The age old adage, it's not what you know but who you know, is unfortunately all too true for the female founders and founders of color hoping to start ventures across the country.

If we are serious about changing this dynamic and challenging the status quo, partnership programs like the one we formed with Village Capital can be a catalyst.

UBS is the world's largest global wealth manager<sup>5</sup> with a local presence in nearly 300 cities and towns across the country where our colleagues and clients live and work. We are on a mission to level the playing field for underrepresented founders by building bridges between the communities and networks that can make a big difference for early-stage companies.

We believe that programs like VC Pathways represent one of the best ways to help young companies become investment-ready and open up the flow of capital by connecting them with angel investors, successful entrepreneurs and business leaders like our UBS colleagues who served as mentors in the program.

This report shows what we learned. We hope it can be a tool for investors, economic development leaders, policymakers, ecosystem quarterbacks, and business leaders looking to support diverse founders in their city.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jamie Sears".

Jamie Sears  
UBS Head of Community Affairs, Americas



## GETTING PAST THE “FRIENDS AND FAMILY” ROUND

Many entrepreneurs raise initial funding from friends and family. But in order to do that, you need to have friends and family with money. For diverse founders that isn't always the case.

In 2016, white family wealth was seven times greater than black family wealth and five times greater than Hispanic family wealth across the United States.<sup>6</sup> There are similar gaps in the cities where we're working. In Philadelphia, the median home value for a Black or Latinx family is just 59% the number for white families.<sup>7</sup> In Chicago, 65% of African-American, Latino and Asian households have so little savings and other assets that a sudden job loss or medical emergency would throw them into poverty within three months.<sup>8</sup> These are not ideal conditions for being able to offer a loan to a friend or nephew, or invest in a growing business.

As one founder in our VC Pathways program told us: “My co-founder and I are hard-working, but we don't come from circles where there's a lot of investment capital waiting to be given out to friends and family. So it's been a hard road for us to get our concept off the ground. I don't begrudge any founder that has the network to support their dreams, but it does stack the deck against entrepreneurs that don't come from a world of generational wealth.”

Or as one Chicago entrepreneur, whose parents emigrated from Nigeria in the 1970s, said in a profile earlier this year, “I'm one of the first people among my friends and family to even endeavor to do what I'm doing...I can't go to my mom and say, ‘Hey Mom, can I get a check for \$50,000?’”<sup>9</sup>

Ironically, entrepreneurship has the potential to close the racial unemployment gap. According to a recent study, if every Black-owned business with employees added two Black workers and 15% of those with no employees hired just one Black worker, the racial unemployment gap in the United States would be virtually eliminated.<sup>10</sup>





# LESSONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

We took away several lessons from working with 30 startups and 202 mentors in three cities. We have distilled those lessons into recommendations for policymakers, economic development leaders, ecosystem quarterbacks, or established business leaders looking to support diverse early-stage founders in their city or state.

## Lesson 1:

# BUILD SOCIAL CAPITAL FOR ENTREPRENEURS - EARLY AND OFTEN.

Angel investors are — or should be — the most reliable source of funding for diverse entrepreneurs who don't have family and friends who can invest \$30,000 to help get their business off the ground.

Angels fund 70,000 companies a year, far more than venture capital firms.<sup>11</sup> They're more geographically spread out across the United States, with well-organized angel networks in every state and at hundreds of universities. Angels also have higher "local loyalty" than other investors, investing in the state where they live two-thirds of the time - often out of convenience or as a way support the local economy.

Although angel investors seem like a natural source of funding for diverse founders, there's one big hitch: angel investing is more relationship-oriented than venture capital investing, and angels tend to "invest in what they know": in other words, people who look like them, come from similar backgrounds, and run in the same social circles. There are a few likely reasons for this:

- **Angels are busy.** Angel investing is rarely a full-time job. Many angels are wealthy individuals who invest as a hobby or as a way to stay involved in entrepreneurship, but they often have other projects in the works. This means they often have far less time to source deals than VC firms, which will on average review 1,200 companies in order to make 10 investments).<sup>12</sup> It is simply easier for an angel to meet with people who they know or have met through a warm introduction.
- **Angels have a lower public profile than other investors.** Many angels invest infrequently and for personal reasons - a founder who inspires them, or a cause that they care about. Angels will rarely have a website to advertise the fact that they are investors. Core Ventures co-founder Anthony Gee, who served as a mentor at VC Pathways Atlanta, told us that "Angels are not necessarily as well known in their community. As an angel you're not out there all the time; it's not all you do."
- **Angels aren't necessarily experts.** Angel investing is risky: seven out of ten investments fail to generate a return.<sup>13</sup> While some angels are former entrepreneurs who have business expertise in a particular sector, that doesn't make them expert investors. Many angel networks exist for the express purpose of helping angels "vet" companies through the wisdom of the crowd. As one angel told us, this lack of expertise makes it more likely that an angel will invest in someone they know, or put more of an emphasis on a founder's pedigree - their education or their career history.

## A FEW FACTS ABOUT ANGEL INVESTORS

- An angel investor is a wealthy individual who invests in a startup in exchange for convertible debt or equity.
- Angels often provide funding for the third or fourth hire at a new company, and are generally willing to **put money into an idea earlier** than most venture capital investors.
- Angels provide 90% of startup funding after friends and family investments.<sup>14</sup> In 2015 angels invested in **71,000 companies**, compared to just 8,000 for venture capital firms.
- Angels are more geographically diverse than venture capital firms (63% percent of angels are located outside of Boston, Silicon Valley, and New York) and have higher local loyalty (they will invest in-state 66% of the time)
- Angels generate an average 2.6 return on their investments, but on average they also see seven out of ten investments totally fail.<sup>15</sup>
- The median size of a first angel investment is \$25,000.<sup>16</sup>



This all adds up to a challenge for diverse founders. Data shows that angels invest according to patterns of race and gender. The American Angel Study, completed in January 2018 after interviews with 13,000 angel investors, found conclusively that women angel investors are more likely to support other women. And according to the latest data, 87.6% of angels are white, and 78% of angels are men.<sup>17</sup>

VC Pathways was organized to **capitalize on “local loyalty” by facilitating warm introductions between diverse founders and angels** in their community - helping disparate networks collide. Local investors and mentors were individually matched with each company to track their progress and provide insight and connections. Additionally, we hosted a series of dinners, where founders and angel investors were able to connect in a more personal, informal setting. This resulted in introductions and conversations that we hope can pave the way for a stronger foundation of social capital.

We received positive feedback on these meetings. Shantanu Sharma, co-founder of STEM Lending, was in our VC Pathways Philadelphia program. He told us about his experience: “As a startup who’s not in Silicon Valley, one of the biggest challenges is connecting with the right people. At the dinner we were introduced to a mentor who worked literally one block from us—we’re at 1635 Market Street, he’s at 1735 Market Street, literally the next building. **But just because he was one building over doesn’t mean we would have been able to get introduced to him without someone making the connection.**”

“A common problem for underrepresented founders is that they’re not part of the right networks. If someone else has a connection because of the school they went to, they have an advantage. If I don’t have an in, then I’m just another stranger knocking on your door.”

- Margaret Bradley, Director of Investment Partnerships, Ben Franklin Technology Partners (Organizer, VC Pathways Philly)



“Fundraising in Atlanta is difficult for anybody, but especially for entrepreneurs who don’t live in the same parts of the city as investors. Atlanta is separated on a number of different fronts, by ethnicity but also geography. It makes it difficult for angel investors to know a different type of person”

- Joey Womack, founder of Goodie Nation (Organizer, VC Pathways Atlanta)



## Lesson 2:

# Create a common language for investors and entrepreneurs

The VC Pathways program utilized Village Capital's VIRAL Pathway to guide the conversations between entrepreneurs and mentors.

VIRAL, short for "Venture Investment-Readiness and Awareness Levels," is a **rubric to help entrepreneurs and investors use the same language** around key milestones that the entrepreneur needs to reach with their business. Feedback from the program was positive: we heard that entrepreneurs found VIRAL helpful as a way to explain their progress and pain points, investors found it helpful as a way to provide quick and clear feedback around where the entrepreneurs should focus efforts.

The most common piece of feedback we received: **VIRAL helped entrepreneurs get a much-needed "gut check" on the state of their business.** This gut check sometimes came as a surprise. As Joey Womack, founder of Goodie Nation and organizer of VC Pathways Atlanta, told us, "VIRAL reminds me of that Facebook meme from a few years back - one panel shows how your friends see you, another panel shows how you see yourself, and they're entirely different. You might think you're a Level 5. But an investor who looks at deals every day will tell you to your face that you're a Level 2. The entrepreneurs had never seen things broken down like this. In the past, they never knew why they were getting turned down, and, more importantly how to correct it."

We also learned that **it is important to facilitate repeat interactions between entrepreneurs and investors** so that entrepreneurs can demonstrate how they respond to feedback. This is especially important for early-stage businesses. When an investor evaluates a company for Series B or Series C funding, they are able to review hundreds of pages of data on customers, traction and overall progress. An early-stage investor, on the other hand, is essentially taking a bet on the founder and their ability to execute on their vision.

VILLAGE CAPITAL VIRAL PATHWAY © Village Capital 2016-18

| Level | Name                                | Team   | Problem & Vision   | Value Prop  | Product  | Market   | Business Model  | Scale  | Exit   | Type of funding typically closed at this level         |
|-------|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|--|--|---|--|--|--|
| 9     | Exit in Sight                       | Team positioned to navigate M&A, IPO.  | Global leader in stated vision.  | Cited as the top solution in the industry solving this problem.   | Product recognized as top in industry.   | Clear line-of-sight to industry dominance.   | Minimum 2x revenue growth for multiple years.   | Strong unit economics for multiple customer segments.  | Growth with exit.  | Acquirers  |
| 8     | Scaling Up                          | Team is recognized as market leaders in the industry.  | Systems-Level Change validated.  | Multiple renewals with low sales effort. Customers in multiple markets love the product.  | Strong customer product feedback in multiple markets.  | Brand established. Hard-to-beat partnerships for distribution, marketing, and growth.                              | Month-over-month revenue meets industry standard.   | Growth of customer base accelerates month-on-month.  | Team has turned down acquisition offer.  | Close Institutional VC for Recurring Revenue + Growth  |
| 7     | Hitting Product-Market Fit          | C-suite as good or better than founding CEO and can stay with company through its growth and exit phases.  | Impact is successfully validated.  | Majority of first sales in target market are inbound.   | Product is built for target customers.   | Sales cycles meet or exceed industry standard.   | Business model validated - Validation of strong unit economics.   | Evidence of strong unit economics across multiple markets.   | Team has strong relationships with multiple acquirers.   | Close Institutional VC for 1st Sales, Market Expansion |
| 6     | Moving Beyond Early Adopters        | Team has proven sales, product dev skills, and management ability to support a growing team for scale.   | Sales validate impact tied to solution and grow as solution scales.  | Sales beyond initial target customers. Customers love it and are referring the product to others.   | Complete product with strong user experience feedback  | Supply/distribution partners see their success aligned with the company's success.                                 | Sales begin to map to projections. Evidence of decreasing CAC with growing customer base buying at target price.                              | Company has cleared regulatory challenges and (if applicable) is implementing a strong IP strategy.  | Team has identified specific acquirers) or other exit environment.   | Close Round with Angel and Early VC                    |
| 5     | Proving a Profitable Business Model | Team has clear sales ops understanding and strategy.   | Evidence of impact tied to solution-the company has evidence that by growing the business, company solves the problem. | Target customers love the product and want to keep using it.  | Fully functional prototype with completion of product for wide commercial distribution in sight.                 | Team is having conversations with strategic partners to capture their market faster/cheaper than the competition.  | Financial model with evidence of valid projections to reach positive unit economics.  | Vision and initial evidence of positive unit economics in two markets.   | Inbound interest from large strategics.  | Angel/Seed Funding Starts                              |
| 4     | Validating an Investable Market     | Team has clear understanding of how their target market operates and has strong industry contacts in this market.                                    | The company can articulate system-level change - how this solution would transform the industry.                       | Evidence of differentiation through initial target customer feedback that the solution solves their problem significantly better than others in the market. | Team has clear understanding of product development costs and how to build the initial product cost-effectively. | Evidence of \$1B+ total addressable market   | Team has financial model with cost and revenue projections articulated and a strategy for hitting these projections.                          | Initial evidence that multiple types of customers find value in the solution or in an extension of the product that the company is well-positioned to develop. | Evidence of growth trajectory that could lead to IPO, acquisition, or self-liquidating exit.                         | Friends and Family, Bootstrap                          |
| 3     | Solidifying the Value Proposition   | Team has technical ability to build fully functional product and has a clear understanding of the value chain and cost structures in their industry. | The company can articulate why they're the best ones to solve this problem.  | Evidence that customers will pay the target price. For B2C - 100 customers, for B2B - 5 customers and conversations with multiple stakeholders in each.     | Team has built a working prototype and a product roadmap.  | Initial evidence through sales that team can capture initial target market.  | Team can articulate projected costs along the value chain and target cost points to reach positive unit economics.                            | Clear strategy to move to multiple markets.  | Initial evidence that the solution already solves the problem better than any incumbents.                            | Grants for R&D (Hardware)                              |
| 2     | Setting the Vision                  | Team has senior members with lived experience of the problem and/or deep understanding of their target customer's problem.                           | The team can solve the problem and can articulate its vision at scale - what does the world look like if they succeed? | The team has potential customers who provide evidence that solution solves key pain point - product is a painkiller, not vitamin.                           | Team has a basic low-fidelity prototype that solves the problem.   | Team understands all regulatory hurdles to entering the market and has a strategy to overcome them                 | Company can point to pricing and business models of similar products in the industry as further evidence that their revenue assumptions hold. | Initial evidence that multiple markets experience this problem.  | Vision for growth has company solving a large piece of the global problem in 10 years.                               |  |
| 1     | Establishing the Founding Team      | Strong founding team - at least 2 people with differentiated skillsets.  | Team has identified a specific, important, and large problem.  | Team has identified their hypothesis of their target customer - the specific type of person whose problem they are solving.                                 | Team has ability to develop low-fidelity prototype and has freedom to operate - not blocked by other patents.    | Team can clearly articulate total addressable market, the percentage they will capture, and initial target market. | Team has identified an outline of revenue model.  | Team has identified multiple possible markets or customer segments and has aspiration to scale.  | Team understands what an exit is and has a vision for how they will ultimately provide a return for their investors. |  |
|       |                                     | Team   | Problem & Vision   | Value Prop  | Product  | Market   | Business Model  | Scale  | Exit   | Type of funding typically closed at this level         |

We organized VC Pathways to feature multiple interactions between entrepreneurs and investors, over time. Founders met with investors and other mentors on the first night of the program, and then again at a final dinner several weeks later. This yielded a few benefits:

- Investors were able to track the progress of the company and learn how the founder responded to their feedback. We heard from multiple investors that a founder's ability to take constructive criticism and show humility is an important trait.
- Investors were able to provide more targeted advice during the second meeting. Katherine O'Neill, Executive Director of JumpStart New Jersey Angel Network and a mentor in Philadelphia, reflected on this: "One of the ways [investors] can be most useful is by telling the founders who to talk to. We can make introductions when we first meet them, but they will likely change direction after that first meeting. At the dinner several weeks later, we were able to see how they had evolved and recommend new people to talk to."

"It's important that investors have multiple touch-points with a company. Investors are super busy, so what worked well for us in Chicago was to get several investors to commit 'one hour, one time' meetings, and once they saw that there was a very streamlined, well-organized meeting, the soft commitment worked really well."

- Thomas K.R. Stovall, Founder, ImBlackInTech (Organizer, VC Pathways Chicago)



"One of the biggest takeaways from the program was that using VIRAL really gave us a sense of self-awareness; it allowed us to have a rubric and a framework that we could accurately and objectively examine our overall performance when it comes to investment. For example, Nakia of ATDC really helped us map out how we could turn Speakalytics into a \$1B company."

- James Knowles, Speakalytics Founder & CEO (Atlanta Entrepreneur)



### Lesson 3:

## Empower local organizations to create meaningful connections for entrepreneurs in their communities.

Village Capital is a global organization that has run programs for entrepreneurs in 50 cities and 30 countries. We bring a certain perspective on what works and what doesn't in entrepreneur support, but we have also learned that every city and every entrepreneur ecosystem is different - which means that the pathway to success for entrepreneurs varies from city to city.

We intentionally structured the VC Pathways program to give decision-making power to a local entrepreneur support organization (ESO) as well as the local UBS office in each city.

The ESO's helped design the workshops, structure the dinners, and activate their local networks, which **resulted in more tailored and locally-suited programs than we could have created on our own**—and also a more diverse cohort than we would have been able to find without the support of local leaders.

UBS engaged advisors from their Wealth Management business, who have deep local connections and knowledge of the local entrepreneurial ecosystem, as mentors in each city. The entrepreneurs found them to be very helpful. Keith Carter, co-founder and CTO of Aquagenuity, one of the companies from the Atlanta cohort, said that hearing from an experienced mentor was key: "One of the best ways to open doors to entrepreneurs is connecting companies with people and corporations that have already done it."



"Local partners are the backbone of this initiative—their extensive local networks, and deep understanding of the pulse of their communities was critical to enabling these entrepreneurs to make meaningful connections with new mentors, and potential future investors."

- Ebony Pope, Director, US Ventures, Village Capital



"In partnership with a strong group of entrepreneur support organizations in each city, VC Pathways was able to galvanize our mutual networks of investors and mentors, along with senior managers from our wealth management business given our long-established presence in these emerging tech hubs."

- Xavier Stewart, Program Manager, UBS Elevating Entrepreneurs



# ABOUT THE VC PATHWAYS PROGRAM

The VC Pathways was created by Village Capital's US Ventures Director, Ebony Pope. We selected a cohort of founders in each city to participate in a three-month program that provided them with hands-on training, advice, and tailored engagements from local mentors and investors, including UBS executives and Financial Advisors.



## We set out to:

- Blend a place-based approach with Village Capital's robust and proven national programs;
- Help entrepreneurs understand venture capital-backable business models and provide a framework to continually evaluate and communicate progress via milestone setting;
- Help entrepreneurs build social capital with local investors to build pipeline for future fundraising needs;
- Leverage the local networks and technical expertise of UBS to support budding entrepreneurs in their communities.



Companies  
Applied



Companies  
Supported



of Milestones  
Reached



Mentor  
Connections



UBS Employees  
Engaged



Hours ESO  
Support

"At the conclusion of demo day, we were connected with Venture Atlanta and since then, we've been invited to apply to their conference, which is an opportunity to pitch in front of 250 venture capitalist groups."

- Atlanta entrepreneur

"The program was focused on the entrepreneur and our goals. By focusing on three specific goals, it allowed me to be hyper-focused on achieving them."

- Chicago entrepreneur

# ATLANTA



**Aquagenuity** digitizes and aggregates water quality data and uses predictive analytics and artificial intelligence to make that data easy-to-access to make safer decisions, protect public health, and build smarter cities.



Doll Avant  
*Co-Founder and CEO*



Keith Carter  
*Co-Founder and CTO*



**BOOP (Built Out Of Paper)** makes corrugated cardboard furniture that's lightweight, easy and sustainable.



Dara Schaier  
*Founder and CEO*



**DisputeDoc, Inc** is an automated platform to increase consumer credit scores.



Ronnie Cropper  
*Founder and CEO*



**Exception-ALLY** simplifies life for parents of children with special needs; the first product is like TurboTax for special education.



Rayford Davis  
*Founder and CEO*



Dana Lee  
*Founder and Head of Product*



**Goodr** is a sustainable food waste management company leveraging technology to combat hunger and reduce food waste.



Jasmine Crowe  
*Founder and CEO*



**Qoins** is an automated micro-payment solution that helps consumers pay off credit card and other forms of debt through everyday purchases.



Christian Zimmerman  
*Co-Founder and CEO*



Nate Washington  
*CTO*



**RaceIQ** is an automotive engineering firm that specializes in security, diagnostics and performance software for the automotive market.



James T. Jones  
*Founder*



**Speakalytics** uses speech analytics to drive customer experiences for contact centers.



James Knowles  
*Founder and CEO*



Ryan Johnson  
*Co-Founder and Business Development*



**SynsorMed** is a patient home monitoring platform that automates patient care after discharge for healthcare systems.



Theo Harvey  
*Co-Founder and CEO*



Amin Holmes  
*Co-Founder and President*



**Zyrobotics** makes AI-powered STEM games and learning tools for early childhood education.



Ayanna Howard  
*Founder and CTO*



# CHICAGO



**Apps Without Code** offers 12-week tactical entrepreneurship training programs & accompanying learning management software. Their programs are sold directly to students and also white-labeled for corporations.



Tara Reed  
*Founder and CEO*



**besafemeds** is a HIPAA-compliant telemedicine technology platform, where sexually active individuals can get a discrete, over-the-phone consultation and prescription (when necessary) from a qualified medical professional -- anytime, anyplace, anywhere. All for the cost of a copay.



Olusegun Ishmael  
*Founder and CEO*



**Chore Check** is an iOS app for families to keep track of kids' household chores and pay them allowance. Built to help busy parents



Ada Vaughan  
*Founder and CEO*



**CurlMix Inc.** makes homemade hair care easy with do-it-yourself kits and ready-to-use solutions for women with curly hair.



Kimberly Lewis  
*Co-Founder and CEO*



Tim Lewis  
*Co-Founder*



**Mighty** is a platform to grow relationships between banks and customers around shared values. Mighty brings transparency of impact reporting to the bank account to help you manage your banking portfolio for impact.



Megan Hryndza  
*Founder and CEO*

# CHICAGO



**OjaExpress** is an e-commerce solution for small ethnic grocers. OjaExpress offers ethnic grocery stores an unique opportunity to engage their customers while attracting new customers.



Boyede Sobitan  
*Co-Founder and CEO*



**OpExApps** combines Lean/6Sigma methodology with app technology to enable you to reduce cost, build workforce capability, and eliminate risk.



Patrick T. Anderson  
*Founder*



Paydatum Co. is an interactive receipt PAAS that enable retailers to gradually migrate away from on-premise receipt generation, validation and bookkeeping.

(not pictured)  
Hani Raouda El-Balah  
*Co-Founder and CEO*



Dujon Smith  
*Co-Founder*



Provide offers a digital assistant that helps providers navigate government programs so they can increase their revenue and spend less time on administrative work.



Chelsea Sprayregen  
*Founder and CEO*



**WeSolv** connects diverse candidates to each other and to top companies to solve real business challenges.



Stella Ashaolu  
*Founder and CTO*

# PHILADELPHIA



**Activest** creates tools in the municipal bond market to advance racial equity for investors and communities.



Ryan Bowers  
*Founder and CEO*



**LOCOMeX**, Inc. offers the first integrated AI powered marketplace platform for matching small businesses with actual contract opportunities to increase earnings.



Ayo Jemiri  
*Founder and CEO*



**NaturAll Club** makes hair products using food technology to help the 17 million curly haired women in the U.S. get the nutrients their hair needs for less frizz and tangles.



Muhga Eltigani  
*Founder and CEO*



**Raise the Barr** uses artificial intelligence for enterprise diversity and inclusion training.



Zeina Barr  
*Founder and CEO*



**STEM Lending** is an online loan broker empowering millennials with a competitive, transparent marketplace to shop & compare their mortgage loan options as they buy their first home.



Hakim Thompson  
*CEO*



Shantanu Sharma  
*Founder, President, and CTO*



# PHILADELPHIA



Strados Labs

Strados Labs harnesses the power of technology and data to help asthmatics better manage their respiratory health and to breathe easy.



Tanziyah Muqem  
*Founder*



Nick Delmonico  
*Founder and CEO*



Tozuda, LLC manufactures head impact sensors for concussion awareness.



Jessica Garcia  
*Founder*



John Pettit  
*Business Development Manager*



Vifant LLC develops solutions for the identification of impaired vision without the need of communication between the tester and the patient.



Elizabeth DeSouza  
*CEO*



Vital Start provides smart, safe, superior care for newborn babies across the continuum.



Kirthika Parmeswaran  
*CEO*



WeGardn connects local organic food suppliers directly to businesses and consumers.



Katie DeLorenzo  
*Co-Founder and CEO*



Greg Donworth  
*Co-Founder and COO*



Village Capital is a global venture capital firm that helps entrepreneurs bring big ideas from vision to scale. Our mission is to reinvent the system to back the entrepreneurs of the future. Our vision is a future where business creates equity and long-term prosperity. Since 2009, we have supported more than 1,000 early-stage entrepreneurs through our investment readiness programs. Our affiliated fund, VilCap Investments, has provided seed funding to more than 90 program graduates.



UBS provides financial advice and solutions to wealthy, institutional and corporate clients worldwide, as well as private clients in Switzerland. UBS' strategy is centered on our leading global wealth management business and our premier universal bank in Switzerland, enhanced by Asset Management and the Investment Bank. The bank focuses on businesses that have a strong competitive position in their targeted markets, are capital efficient, and have an attractive long-term structural growth or profitability outlook.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 [https://www.kauffman.org/-/media/kauffman\\_org/research-reports-and-covers/2009/08/kfs\\_credit\\_card\\_debt\\_report.pdf](https://www.kauffman.org/-/media/kauffman_org/research-reports-and-covers/2009/08/kfs_credit_card_debt_report.pdf)
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- 4 <http://fortune.com/2018/01/31/female-founders-venture-capital-2017/>
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- 13 <https://venturebeat.com/2014/04/19/heres-a-look-inside-a-typical-vcs-pipeline-a-must-read-for-entrepreneurs/>
- 14 <https://www.wraltechwire.com/2018/01/11/american-angel-study-who-are-the-angel-investors-pumping-25b-into-startups-every-year/>
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 [http://www.angelblog.net/Angel\\_Returns.html](http://www.angelblog.net/Angel_Returns.html)
- 17 <https://www.wraltechwire.com/2018/01/11/american-angel-study-who-are-the-angel-investors-pumping-25b-into-startups-every-year/>
- 18 Ibid.

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