

The Ultimate InvestHER VC Resource Guide

IT'S HER TURN.



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I. WELCOME

Welcome to *Her Turn*, a resource guide for women passionate about entering the venture capital industry and making a tangible impact on gender equity.

The world of venture capital can seem daunting, but it's an incredibly powerful field for driving innovation, shaping industries, and facilitating economic growth. Yet, despite its potential, venture capital remains an industry where women are severely underrepresented—both as investors and as entrepreneurs.

This guide is designed to provide you with the tools, insights, and processes to navigate this space and bring your unique perspective to VC, where it's needed more than ever.

We believe that more women in venture capital not only helps close the gender gap but also leads to more diverse leadership and more inclusive investment decisions.

In this guide, you'll find practical steps to break into VC, stories and resources to build your network and skills.

Let's get started on your journey toward making meaningful change in venture capital!

Gratefully yours,

Rasya Ramakrishnan

Founder, Girls Fund the World

II. WHY VC NEEDS WOMEN

Venture capital is a powerful tool for influencing the future. By deciding which startups get funded, VCs directly shape industries, technologies, and economic trends. Yet, despite its influence, the industry suffers from a significant gender imbalance:

- 1 Only **2.4%** of VC funding went to women-led startups in 2023, according to a Crunchbase report.
- 2 Women make up just **15.4%** of venture capital decision-makers at U.S.-based firms.
- 3 Only **12%** of partners at VC firms globally are women, according to a study by Atomico.

The disparity is clear, and it goes beyond statistics: male-dominated VC boards can result in unconscious biases against women-led startups, creating a vicious cycle that makes it harder for women founders to secure funding. This lack of representation among both VCs and funded founders hinders innovation and diversity in the broader business ecosystem.

However, when women are empowered to enter the venture capital field, they bring fresh perspectives, invest in more diverse teams, and contribute to more inclusive decision-making processes. According to First Round Capital's 10-Year Project, **companies with at least one female founder perform 63% better than their all-male counterparts**. Yet, they still struggle to raise the capital they need.

III. WHAT IS VENTURE CAPITAL?

Venture capital is a form of private equity financing where **investors provide capital to early-stage, high-potential startups in exchange for equity or ownership stake in the company**. The goal is to help businesses scale and achieve large returns on investment through events such as an initial public offering (IPO) or acquisition.

The Lifecycle of a Venture-Backed Startup

The typical lifecycle of a startup that receives venture capital funding involves several stages:

- **Seed Stage:** Early funding to develop a concept. The business is not fully developed, and investments are high-risk.
- **Early Stage:** The company begins to scale and needs funding to grow its team, develop its product, or enter the market.
- **Growth Stage:** The startup has found product-market fit, and additional funding is required for rapid expansion.
- **Exit:** The company either goes public (IPO) or is acquired by another firm. Investors typically realize their returns.

Key Players in the VC Ecosystem

The venture capital ecosystem consists of various stakeholders who play essential roles in financing and supporting startups:

Limited Partner

Invest capital into venture funds.

Entrepreneur

Seek funding from VCs

General Partner

Generate returns for LPs

Advisor/Mentor

Guide startups

IV. THE GENDER GAP IN VC

Despite the potential for women to transform venture capital, the industry is still male-dominated. From the lack of women in decision-making to the lack of capital allocated to female-run startups, the gender gap is not only clear, but ongoing.

Why Does This Gap Exist?

Male Dominated Networks

Venture capital is driven by relationships. Men have dominated the networks that create deal flow, mentor rising talent, and invest in startups. These “old boys’ clubs” often exclude women, making it hard for them to break into the industry.

Accidental Bias

Research from HBR shows that during pitch meetings, men are typically asked “promotion” questions that focus on growth, while women are asked “prevention” questions that focus on risks. This leads to a women-led businesses to be seen as less scalable.

Lack of Role Models

With so few women in leadership roles, it can be difficult for younger women to find mentors and role models in the industry.

Economic Case For Closing the Gender Gap

Higher Returns

According to First Round Capital’s 10-year report, companies with at least one female founder perform 63% better than all-male teams.

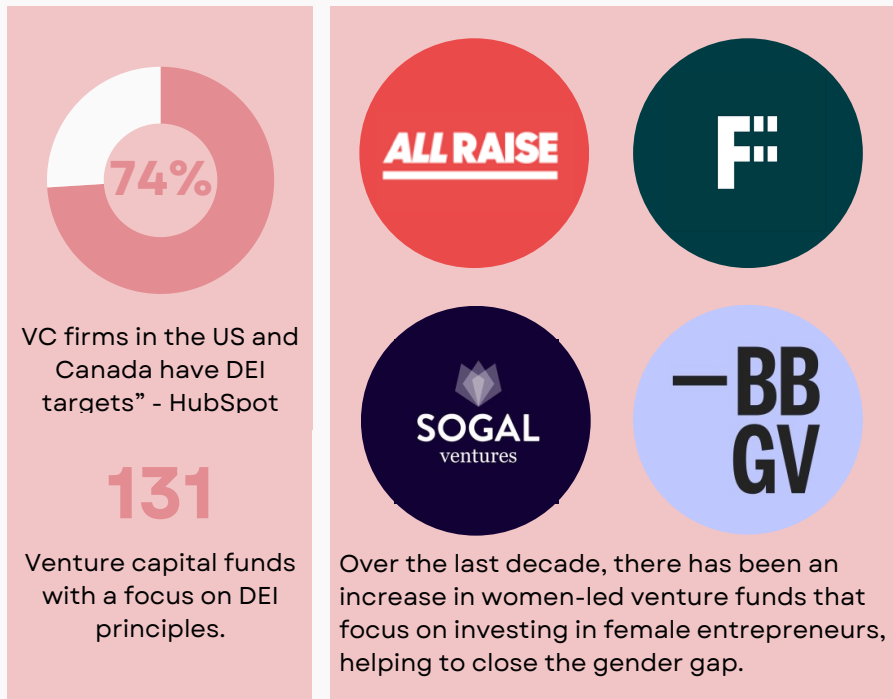
More Innovation

Diverse teams develop more innovative solutions. VC firms that invest in minorities often outperform those that don’t.

Unseen Potential

By failing to invest in women, venture capital is missing out on innovative businesses and ideas that have the potential to transform industries.

V. THE PROGRESS OF WOMEN IN VC



Get Inspired By These Investors



Ann Miura-Ko, **Founding Partner at Floodgate**

Often referred to as the "Most Powerful Woman in Startups," Ann Miura-Ko is a founding partner at Floodgate, one of Silicon Valley's leading early-stage venture firms. She was an early investor in companies like Lyft and Refinery29.



Kirsten Green, **Founder of Forerunner Ventures**

Founder of Forerunner Ventures, Kirsten Green made her mark by backing consumer brands like Warby Parker, Dollar Shave Club, and Glossier. Her firm is known for investing in companies that challenge traditional retail models.



Arlan Hamilton, **Founder of Backstage Capital**

Arlan Hamilton founded Backstage Capital, a VC firm that invests in "underestimated" founders, including women, POCs, and LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs. She is a trailblazer, having started her fund while experiencing homelessness and has invested in 180+ companies.

VI. TRADITIONAL VC PATHWAYS



INVESTMENT BANKING

Investment bankers help corporations raise capital and manage financial transactions. They learn how companies are financed, grow, and scale, which is key to evaluating startups as a VC.

MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

Consultants' problem-solving skills align well with the demands of VC. They work closely with companies to solve challenges, similar to how VCs support companies in tackling operational issues.



STARTUP EXPERIENCE

Working at a high-growth startup provides firsthand experience in the world that VCs invest in. Startups require a strong understanding of market dynamics—skills that are directly applicable in VC.



VII. NON-TRADITIONAL PATHWAYS

EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Many women have successfully transitioned into VC from academia or research roles, with a focus in fields like AI or sustainability, which are very relevant to venture investing.

How to Transition: Focus on sectors where your research expertise can give you an edge in evaluating startups. Start networking with VCs in these specific verticals, highlighting your subject-matter expertise.

JOURNALISM AND MEDIA

Journalists who cover startups, technology, or finance can develop a strong understanding of the industries VC firms invest in and build large networks.

How to Transition: Leverage your existing network and your ability to analyze market trends. Transitioning into an investor relations or portfolio support role is often a good first step for journalists.

SOCIAL IMPACT AND NONPROFITS

Venture capital is increasingly looking at social impact investing, which generates both positive financial returns and social outcomes. Women from nonprofit or social impact backgrounds bring unique perspectives on sustainable, ethical business models.

How to Transition: Find firms that focus on impact. Highlight your experience in assessing the social and environmental benefits of organizations.

VIII. SKILL DEVELOPMENT

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

In venture capital, you should be able to analyze financial statements, forecast revenue, and assess company valuations.

How to Develop This Skill

- ✓ **Online courses** on platforms like **Coursera** and **Udemy** offer training in financial modeling, accounting, and startup valuation.
- ✓ **Courses** in **financial analysis** or **completing an MBA** if you're new to this area.

DEAL SOURCING

Venture capitalists need to find new investment opportunities. This requires developing an eye for early-stage companies with potential.

How to Develop This Skill

- ✓ Attend **startup pitch events** to meet founders and **discover new companies**.
- ✓ Build relationships with other **investors**, **accelerators**, and **incubators**.



NETWORKING

Venture capital is a relationship-driven business, and this ability to build strong networks within the community is valuable.

How to Develop This Skill

- ✓ Regularly attend industry **conferences**, **webinars**, and **networking events**.
- ✓ Practice networking strategies like **informational interviews** and outreach through **LinkedIn**.

STRATEGIC THINKING

VCs need to think strategically. Evaluating a startup isn't just about financials, but also how it fits into the industry and its scalability.

How to Develop This Skill

- ✓ Follow **thought leaders** and **industry reports** on future trends and innovation.
- ✓ Write about **industry shifts** or create your own **analysis of markets**.