MAKE MEANINGFUL CHANGE | ENGAGE WITH EMPATHY | PERSIST BOLDLY







QUARTERLY

NEWSLETTER

July 1, 2026 - September 30, 2026

WOMEN VENTURE

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25 Years of Investment. Generations of Impact.

Greetings Friends & Supporters,

25 years ago, there was a powerful hypothesis behind our work at WomenVenture: **when we invest in women through access to affordable capital, that investment will ripple far beyond one business**. Today, we see the proof in our communities.

We are celebrating 25 years as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). The only CDFI in the state that prioritizes serving women. WomenVenture clients are entrepreneurs and small business owners creating jobs, generating wealth for themselves and families, and strengthening the communities they call home.

At the same time, we're staying closer than ever to small businesses navigating economic disruption and increasingly urgent capital needs. And we're using our voice nationally and locally from **protecting CDFI funding, the Community Reinvestment Act**, and through supporting small businesses launch, rebuild or revitalize.

Your continued support fuels our capacity to achieve our **ambitious goals of serving 10,000 unique individuals and deploying $15 million in loan capital to community by 2030**.

The hypothesis is working. **Imagine what we can prove together over the next 25.**



With gratitude,

LeeAnn Rasachak, WomenVenture CEO

BE A VOICE FOR CHANGE

Contact your local representatives and share your voice to impact policy changes around equitable resources for CDFIs, small businesses, and the hardworking entrepreneurs building them.



Healing Birch Waters:
Lessons on Sustainability and Valuing Your Craft



When developing a small business, some of the most important lessons come from recognizing what needs to change for the business to grow sustainably. For Tammy, owner of **Healing Birch Waters**, that meant learning to value not only her products, but the time, knowledge, and purpose behind them.

Education and sustainability run deep for Tammy. As a Black and Indigenous woman, her connection to the earth's natural resources has always been a part of her heritage. She grew up near the Mississippi River, exploring its banks with her father, honoring the water and the birch trees that lined its shores. Birch trees are sacred in Tammy's family, who feel connected to the energy and memories they carry.

That love for water systems continued to flow throughout Tammy's life. In addition to her day job as a social worker, **she founded Healing Birch Waters in 2023 to create balance between humans and nature through art and healing energies**. Tammy began this journey inspired by the Mississippi River, creating goat milk soaps made with natural ingredients to limit chemical runoff into waterways and encouraging consumers to become better water stewards.

"We started with one bar of soap at a time," she shares. Tammy is the sole owner of her business but works alongside her sons and granddaughter to keep up with inventory and operations. Tammy later expanded to soy-based and beeswax candles, including teacup candles inspired by a desire to put her inherited china sets to use.

Beyond her products, Tammy leads educational programming through Healing Birch Waters and works closely with **BIPOC Outdoors**, **St. Paul Parks and Recreation**, and the **Capitol Region Watershed District**. She teaches community groups about water quality, sustainable fishing, outdoor recreation, art, and water stewardship.

Read the full story on Tammy's entrepreneurial journey.

WomenVenture's Annual Staff Retreat



Read more about WomenVenture's 2026 Staff Retreat.

The WomenVenture Team gathered for its annual **All Staff Retreat** back in August!

The agenda was filled with many mission moments, including **a panel of Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) experts and allies** for an informative discussion about their experiences in the evolving small business landscape.

Two incredible clients - Rapheal Kol, owner of POWL and **Laura Van Hofwegen, owner of The Sota Fountain** - joined the day to share their entrepreneurial journeys and what WomenVenture's support meant to them.

WomenVenture at the Minnesota State Fair

Feeling the post State Fair blues? Us too! But remember – all the small businesses who rocked the fairgrounds for those 12 crazy days need your support year-round!

WomenVenture gathered for a staff outing to shop small and show big support for our incredible clients taking on the fair. We're so proud of all their dedication and commitment to promoting their businesses day in and day out!

Over the Labor Day weekend, **WomenVenture CEO LeeAnn Rasachak** joined **WomenVenture client Emily Kisa**, owner of **Kisa Boutique**, and **Emmy award-winning comedian and radio host Sheletta Brundidge** at the **WCCO Radio Booth** to talk all things small business at the Minnesota State Fair.

Read more to find the interview and the full list of WomenVenture clients at the 2026 State Fair.







WomenVenture Receives Celebration of Service Award

Thank you to the **St. Paul Area Chamber** for honoring WomenVenture with the **Celebrate Service Award** during the **September 2026 Lunch with Leaders: Small Business & Entrepreneurship** event!

The event reinforced that supporting small businesses isn't the work of one organization. It takes a connected ecosystem of community champions making meaningful introductions, sharing resources, and celebrating one another's success.

Read more about the Celebrate Service Award.

Welcome to our New Board Members!



Lavina Lau
Community Member



Jaime Proman
Securian Financial



Anne Leland
Exodus Lending



Hillary Combs-Orgeman
Associated Bank

We are thrilled to have their leadership, experience, and industry expertise supporting the growth and success of WomenVenture's mission. Our Board of Directors plays a vital role in our everyday momentum as they set direction, ensure resources, and provide oversight on critical impact areas that move our mission forward and create greater opportunities for entrepreneurs to start, grow, and sustain successful businesses. **Welcome to WomenVenture!**





Community & Connections:
Back to Business

It was a wonderful evening of **meaningful connection, shared perspectives, and intentional refocusing** as we transition into a new season of growth and possibility.

In small group settings, participants connected with WomenVenture staff members during a **"Small Business Study Hall"** where they discussed topics like finance, sales, operations, marketing, and networking.

The facilitated activities and open networking were followed by an **"Inner Allies: Leveraging Your Creativity to Power Your Entrepreneurial Path"** workshop led by **Daneika Glenn, founder of Learning2Fly.**

Save the date for our upcoming networking night on Thursday, November 12!

Shine Bright, Do Good:
A Kendra Scott Give-back Event

WomenVenture partnered with **Kendra Scott – Rosedale Center for a Kendra Gives Back event!**

During the event, **20% of all purchases will be donated back to WomenVenture**, helping us continue to provide entrepreneurs with the education, consulting, and capital they need to launch and grow successful businesses.

Thank you to all those who generously showed up to **Shine Bright, Do Good**, and support WomenVenture!





WomenVenture at Roho IGNITE

WomenVenture had the honor of attending the **Roho Collective - IGNITE Business Conference**, which brought together BIPOC creators, artists, and entrepreneurs to explore the resilience and creativity it takes to grow a business in the creative sector. **We're proud to support entrepreneurs of all paths**, especially the artists and creatives who transform their passion into thriving businesses.

Welcome to our newest WomenVenture Team Members



Christina Meyer

Business Consultant

Christina came to WomenVenture after years of working alongside small businesses to help turn their goals for growth into strong, sustainable operations. Her experience spans business operations, financial processes, marketing strategy, and organizational development, giving her a firsthand understanding of the opportunities and challenges entrepreneurs navigate as their businesses evolve.



MarLee Johnson-Volk

Advancement Director

MarLee came to WomenVenture after building a career dedicated to helping mission-driven organizations grow their impact and strengthen their communities. By partnering with organizations across the country to cultivate meaningful relationships and sustainable philanthropic support, she gained firsthand insight into the resources, connections, and strategies that help organizations succeed and create lasting change.



Lee Lee

Loan Officer

Lee came to WomenVenture after a career journey that led him from startups and consumer lending to community-focused finance. While providing accounting support to local nonprofits, he discovered an opportunity to use his financial experience in service of his community, eventually joining Hmong American Partnership and supporting its CDFI lending program.



Congratulations, Graduates!

The quarter began with entrepreneurs graduating from WomenVenture's **Launched & Growing** AND **Small Business Essentials** courses wrapping up their programs after weeks of working with expert advisors to invest in their visions. We're so proud of all their commitment, ideation, enthusiasm, and vulnerability as they navigate the world of small business ownership, and EXCITED to see where they'll go next!

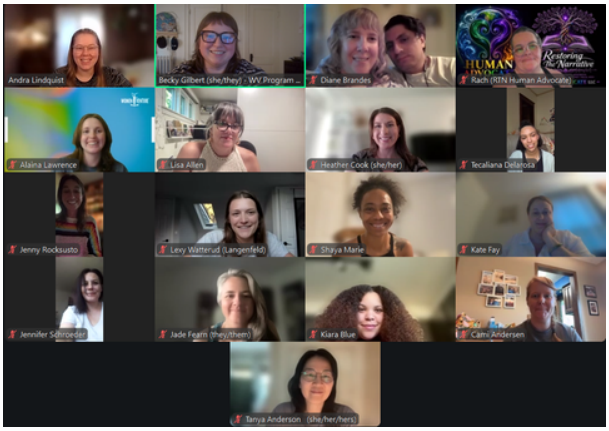
Launched & Growing

Cohort graduation on July 7.



Small Business Essentials

Cohort graduation on July 14.



Training Updates: A New, Flexible Way to Explore Your Business Idea

Our training team has transitioned **Getting Ready**, our trainer-led introductory entrepreneurship course, to **Ready, Set, Validate!**, and launched **Business Readiness Roadmap**. **Both are FREE, self-paced online courses** designed specifically for entrepreneurs in the pre-launch stage.

Getting Ready helped participants explore how their skills, personality traits, and financial habits align with their entrepreneurial goals. The new self-paced courses build on that foundation by helping aspiring entrepreneurs assess the viability of their business ideas while gaining a clearer understanding of what business ownership entails.

Read more about the the transition and how to find these new self-paced courses.

Visit our Events Calendar for upcoming trainings and program events!

Thank you, Annual Corporate Partners!



GET INVOLVED

Make a Donation

Your donation to WomenVenture empowers women and underrepresented entrepreneurs to achieve their economic goals by building profitable and sustainable businesses.

Volunteer with Us

Our clients benefit greatly from the lived experience and professional expertise of volunteer mentors.

Shop Our Clients' Businesses

WomenVenture's Client Business Directory features professional business services and products offered by our clients.

Become a Corporate Partner

Drive economic growth, remove systemic barriers, and expand access to affordable capital as a Corporate Partner.

Attend an Upcoming Event

WomenVenture offers a series of in-person or online trainings, courses, and networking events. Register to join our community of support!

WOMEN VENTURE

165 Western Avenue North
Suite 8, Office #100
St Paul, MN 55102
Phone: (612) 224-9540

womenventure.org