



INVEST IN WOMEN FOUNDERS

2025 SUMMIT



SKYLINE CLUB
INDY

November 13 | Noon-6pm
Indianapolis, Indiana

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 9, 2025

The Startup Ladies Announce Applications Open for 2025 Top 9 at the 4th Annual #InvestInWomenFounders Summit

Indianapolis, Indiana - SEPTEMBER 9, 2025: The Startup Ladies are accepting applications for the *Top 9* at the 4th Annual #InvestInWomenFounders Summit, taking place **Thursday, November 13, 2025, at the Skyline Club in downtown Indianapolis.**

The *Top 9* consists of nine women and nonbinary founders selected to receive immersive training and one-on-one mentorship through The Startup Ladies Accelerator. The program culminates at the **#InvestInWomenFounders Summit**, where each *Top 9* founder will be interviewed Oprah-style in front of a room full of investors, entrepreneurs, and senior executives. These interviews cover the same core content typically included in a pitch, but in a far more personal, conversational format, and the audience has opportunities to interact, ask questions, and connect directly with the founders. Our interviewers, who are exited founders and senior executives, not only conduct the interviews but actively open doors for the founders they are assigned to and for others in the room, and in some cases, invest.

APPLY HERE: <https://forms.gle/rhwhvta7MzxW5T2W9>

Applicant criteria: <https://bit.ly/466EhPr>

Summit web page: <https://www.thestartupladies.org/2025summit>

A live Q&A with Kristen Cooper, CEO & Founder of The Startup Ladies, will be held on **Friday, September 13, from 3:00–4:00 p.m. ET.** This session is for prospective applicants with questions about the *Top 9* application process. Interested candidates can register here: <https://bit.ly/4gfjNap>

The Summit will kick off with a **panel discussion of past Top 9** alumni who have raised capital through The Startup Ladies and are continuing to scale their companies. The panel will be moderated by Startup Ladies Ambassador, sponsor, and very successful woman in tech, **Rhaya Shilts, Owner of [Jackson Sky Creative](#)**. This opening conversation provides both proof of impact and inspiration for attendees.

SUMMIT AGENDA:

Noon	Guests arrive, check in, go to assigned table, visit with founders at tables & buffet lunch
12:30 pm	Formal welcome, conversations at table
1:15 pm	Panel discussion with past Top 9 success stories
2:00 pm	Fund the founder! Session 1 (3 rooms)
2:45 pm	Break
3:00 pm	Fund the founder! Session 2 (3 rooms)
3:45 pm	Break
4:00 pm	Fund the founder! Session 3 (3 rooms)
4:45 pm	Break
5:00 pm	Cocktail reception
6:00 pm	Wrap up

Each Top 9 finalist receives a benefits package valued at **\$7,500**, including training, one-on-one mentoring, a ticket to the Summit, and a display table to showcase their company. **There is zero cost for founders to apply or participate.**

Applications are open for one week and close Monday, September 15, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. ET.

“The #InvestInWomenFounders Summit is a major community initiative. Dozens of volunteers invest hundreds of hours to prepare founders to be investor-ready, and the event also highlights Indianapolis as a hub for innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic growth with women at the helm,” said Kristen Cooper, Founder & CEO of The Startup Ladies.

How the Top 9 are selected

A diverse subcommittee of The Startup Ladies Board ([Jantina Anderson](#), [Rebecca Bormann](#), [Teresa Danielson](#), [Doug Rammel](#), [Anita Williams](#)) reviews every application and evaluates candidates using the following criteria:

- Woman-owned or nonbinary-owned company
- Founder’s proven track record and industry expertise
- Problem defined clearly; solution clearly articulated
- Scalable business model with a defined market
- Evidence of traction (funding raised, revenue, or customer demand)
- Potential for social impact

Important: This program is open to for-profit companies only. Nonprofits are *not* eligible to apply.

Why this Summit Matters to the Business Community

The **#InvestInWomenFounders Summit** is designed to create real connections between founders and the people who can accelerate their growth. Entrepreneurs are educated and mentored, receive visible stage time, audience engagement, and direct investor access. Investors and corporate partners discover vetted, trained, investment-ready women founders. The Startup Ladies' approach works. Members have already raised over **\$1 million** through our investor network.

Despite being a major entrepreneurship initiative, the State of Indiana has provided little to no support for this flagship event for women founders in past years. This is especially striking given the millions of dollars allocated to startup events run primarily by men that attract an overwhelming majority of men. We call on the State and its economic development agencies to step up and sponsor women who are actively building scalable businesses, driving innovation, and growing the local economy.

Call to Action for Indiana Companies

Every scalable startup needs two banks, at least one attorney, an accountant (tax, audits, quickbook), insurance, web development and/or custom software, marketing services, HR and benefits, talent recruitment, and more. We encourage companies that provide these critical services to startups, entrepreneurs, investors, and executives to get involved. Your support can take many forms: sponsoring the event, purchasing tickets, and then showing up in person. Most importantly, come engage directly with women-owned businesses and help fuel their growth. This is a unique opportunity to connect with vetted, investment-ready founders, demonstrate your commitment to diversity in entrepreneurship, and contribute to Indianapolis' economic development.

We thank our location sponsor, the [Skyline Club](#) for being an ongoing champion for women. This will be a very inspirational space for this event.

Tickets

The **#InvestInWomenFounders Summit** is open to the public. Tickets include admission, lunch, access to breakout sessions, the cocktail reception, and all-day parking in the One America Tower garage.

- \$99 – Startup Ladies Members (through October 24)
- \$199 – Skyline Club Members (through October 24)
- \$199 – Early Bird General Admission (through September 30)
- \$249 – General Admission (October 1–31)
- \$299 – Last Minute General Admission (November 1–10)
- \$2,500 – Corporate or University table of 8
- \$2,500 – Vendor display table (includes 2 tickets to the Summit)

Anyone who becomes a Scaleup, Corporate, or Investor Member of The Startup Ladies by September 30 will receive a complimentary ticket with the annual membership paid in full.

Contact

To learn more, view interviews from the 2024 Summit, apply to be in the Top 9, or purchase tickets, visit: <https://www.thestartupladies.org/2025summit>

Media interested in speaking with The Startup Ladies about their upcoming #InvestInWomenFounders Summit should contact:

Kristen Cooper (She/Hers)
CEO & Founder
The Startup Ladies
Kristen@TheStartupLadies.org
317-645-6494

#

About [The Startup Ladies](#)

The Startup Ladies is a professional membership organization for entrepreneurs, investors, and corporations. The woman-owned company identifies, educates, connects, and increases investment in women entrepreneurs starting up and scaling businesses. The organization's goals are to: increase the number of women starting up scalable businesses and help them secure investment to grow.

Through in-person events, live virtual training, eLearning, and one-on-one mentoring, entrepreneurs go from: idea, to market, to growth. Individuals with financial capacity are taught how to invest in startups, and then are connected to investor-ready founders. Corporations providing ancillary services to founders and funders secure new deals by participating in events.

People of every gender are welcome to participate and become members. Learn more about membership and attending events at: TheStartupLadies.org.