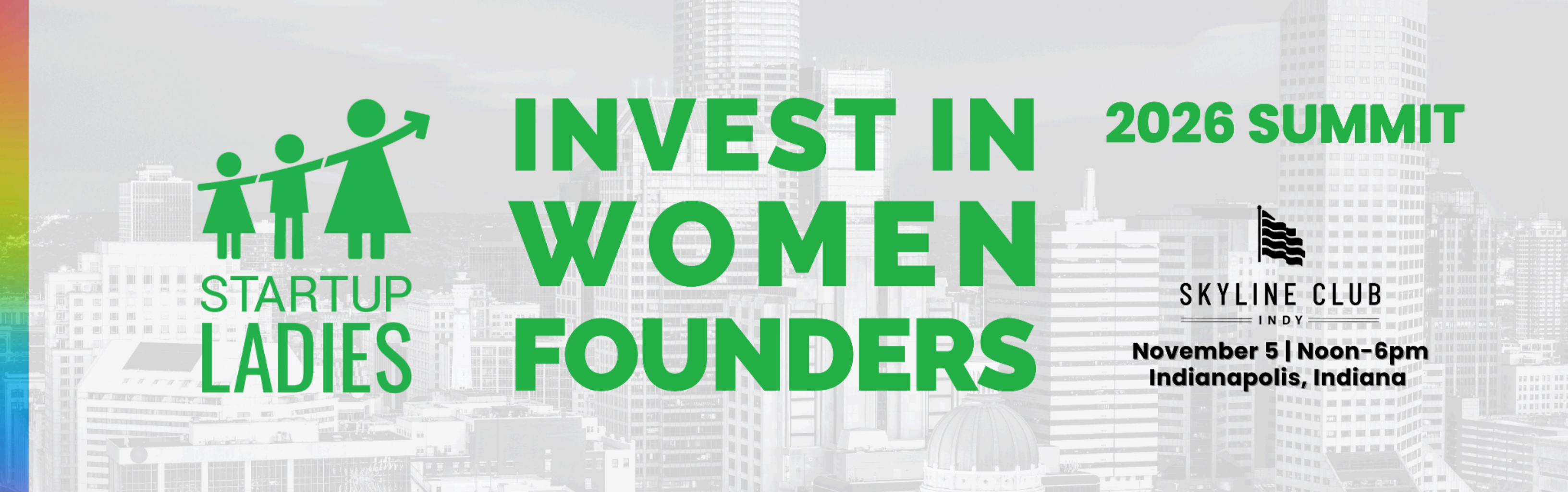

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 9, 2026

The Startup Ladies Reveal Top 9 Women Founders for Fifth Annual Invest In Women Founders Summit

Nine scalable companies from seven states will connect with investors, customers, and corporate leaders in Indianapolis on November 5

INDIANAPOLIS, IN - September 9, 2026 - The Startup Ladies, the Midwest's leading organization training women founders to become investor ready while preparing current and future investors to invest in women-owned companies, today announced the Top 9 founders selected for its fifth annual Invest In Women Founders Capital Readiness Accelerator and Summit.

The 2026 Top 9 represent seven states and nine distinct markets spanning financial technology, pet wellness, education technology, food science, personalized wellness, water safety, consumer products, employee training, and health technology. Five companies are already generating revenue, two are based in Indiana, and several are commercializing patented or proprietary products and technology.

The founders were selected from the most competitive and sophisticated applicant pool the organization has received in five years. They are now completing intensive training in financial modeling, growth strategy, due diligence, investor communications, capital planning, and relationship building. The accelerator culminates Thursday, November 5, 2026, from noon to 6 p.m. at the Skyline Club in Indianapolis.

Meet the 2026 Top 9 Founders

Nesha K. Brown, Tech Founder and Executive Director of PurposeMint - Oklahoma
A behavioral-fintech savings platform sponsored by financial institutions to help asset-limited households build emergency savings and connect with mainstream financial services.

Jerrica Fletcher, Founder and CEO of PawGone Good - Texas
A pet-wellness company creating functional dog snacks designed to support digestion, oral health, lean muscle, and overall wellness.

Lindsay Fried Augustine, Founder and CEO of Simply Succeed - Georgia
A software and services company helping independent college advisors manage operations, serve more families, and grow sustainable advising practices.

Sunandita Ghosh, Ph.D., Founder of ClearPRO - Indiana
A food-science company developing specialty whey-protein ingredients and proprietary processing technology for clear, stable, high-protein beverages.

Ashley Infausto, CEO and Co-Founder of Scoutwell - Oregon
A personalized-wellness company pairing precisely dosed cannabinoid products with outcomes tracking to help consumers make better-informed decisions.

Latashia Key, Ph.D., Founder and President of Wisdom.on.Wellness LLC - Louisiana
A sports, recreation, swimming, water-safety, and wellness education company expanding safer and more inclusive pathways into aquatic instruction.

Paden Sickles, Founder and CEO of SickFit - Texas
A veteran-owned performance compression-sock company serving people who spend long, demanding shifts on their feet.

Irina Sorrels, Founder and CEO of H.E.R. Academy LLC - Indiana
A trauma-informed education and certification company helping employers respond to domestic violence's effects on workplace safety, retention, and productivity.

Liz Tomon, Founder and CEO of LOO - Illinois
A health-technology company developing an incontinence brief that signals potential urinary tract infections during an ordinary brief change.

Read the complete founder profiles and business models: **Nine Women Founders Building Scalable Companies Investors Should Know**

Where Prepared Women Founders Meet Serious Investors

The Summit is deliberately not a traditional pitch competition. Each founder is paired with an exited founder, executive, or investor for an Oprah-style interview covering the substance investors and prospective customers need to understand: the problem, solution, business model, traction, market opportunity, growth strategy, leadership, and capital readiness. After the interviews, attendees meet directly with the founders to explore investment, customer, partnership, and advisory opportunities.

By November 5, each founder will arrive with a refined business model, three-year financial projections, clearly defined capital needs, a use-of-funds plan, measurable growth milestones, investor materials, and preparation for substantive due-diligence conversations.

An Accelerator Built for an Overlooked Market

Research has found that startups founded or cofounded by women generate more than twice as much revenue per dollar invested as startups founded by men, yet women founders continue to receive only a small share of available investment capital. The Startup Ladies addresses that market failure from both sides: preparing women to build fundable companies and preparing more people to evaluate and invest in them.

For more than a decade, The Startup Ladies has delivered more than 500 programs, developed more than 100 eLearning lessons, supported thousands of entrepreneurs, produced five annual capital-readiness accelerators and summits, and helped facilitate more than $1 million in investment in member companies. Its model combines competitive selection, live and asynchronous education, individualized coaching, financial and due-diligence preparation, investor training, executive engagement, and measurable follow-through.

> *"I have spent more than a decade helping women start and scale companies, and I know what becomes possible when expertise, preparation, and capital come together," said Kristen Cooper, Owner, Founder & CEO of The Startup Ladies. "Research shows that startups founded or cofounded by women generate more than twice as much revenue per dollar invested as startups founded by men. If you hold the purse strings, follow the money. The Top 9 are building sophisticated companies in valuable markets that traditional investor networks too often overlook."*

A Major Economic Development Opportunity for Indiana

The accelerator brings founders from across the country into relationships with Indiana-based investors, executives, customers, attorneys, financial experts, commercialization leaders, and professional-service firms. Every introduction can become a commercial relationship, and every company exposed to Indiana's talent, expertise, and capital networks gains another reason to build, hire, partner, and grow here.

Supporting women founders is not a niche economic-development strategy. It is a disciplined way to identify high-potential companies that traditional capital networks consistently undervalue. The Startup Ladies has built the founder pipeline, curriculum, investor education, expert network, and operating experience required to turn overlooked potential into investable companies and measurable economic activity.

Meet the Companies Before the Rest of the Market Does

Investors, executives, prospective customers, corporate innovators, and professional-service providers are encouraged to purchase tickets and begin building relationships with the Top 9. Organizations that want to strengthen Indiana's pipeline of scalable women-owned companies are invited to sponsor the Summit. Sponsorship makes the accelerator possible while positioning participating organizations among the investors and business leaders helping promising companies secure customers, attract capital, create jobs, and grow.

Purchase tickets: 2026 Invest In Women Founders Summit tickets

Explore the Top 9: Read the full announcement and founder profiles

Sponsorship inquiries: Kristen@TheStartupLadies.org

Event Details

Date	Thursday, November 5, 2026
Time	Noon to 6 p.m. ET
Location	Skyline Club, Indianapolis, Indiana

Media Contact

Media interested in speaking with The Startup Ladies or members of the 2026 Top 9 should contact:

Kristen Cooper (she/her)
Owner, Founder & CEO
The Startup Ladies
Kristen@TheStartupLadies.org
317-645-6494

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About The Startup Ladies

The Startup Ladies is a woman-owned professional membership organization for entrepreneurs, investors, and corporations. The company identifies, educates, connects, and increases investment in women entrepreneurs starting and scaling businesses. Its goals are to increase the number of women building scalable companies and help them secure the capital, customers, and relationships required to grow.

Through in-person events, live virtual training, eLearning, accelerators, and one-on-one mentoring, entrepreneurs progress from idea to market to growth. People with the financial capacity to invest are taught how startup investing works and connected with investor-ready founders. Corporations participate to identify innovative companies, build commercial relationships, and provide the services growing businesses need.

People of every gender are welcome to participate and become members. Learn more at **TheStartupLadies.org**