



CHICAGO VC & STARTUP RESOURCE GUIDE

A running list of the accelerators, incubators, programs, investors, communities and reading worth knowing if you are new to Chicago, or new to venture capital and startups.

A LONGJUMP GUIDE

WELCOME

WELCOME TO CHICAGO

If you're new to the area or interested in diving into the world of venture capital (VC) and startups, this guide is for you. Hi, I'm Fiona Chen, a 2nd year at University of Chicago Booth School of Business with a goal of running my own VC firm one day. Like many of you, I'm relatively new to Chicago and VC. Prior to Booth, I was in management consulting for a decade and had a brief stint as a startup co-founder.

At LongJump, we have the privilege of working alongside brilliant ecosystem partners and a front row seat in many pre-seed founders' journeys. Additionally, for the past year, I've interviewed dozens of VC leaders and startup founders across multiple stages and industries. Here's a running list of resources LongJump has earmarked over the years, as well as what I've personally found helpful or that have been recommended to me by my interviewees.

We hope this guide helps accelerate your inevitable trajectory towards success.

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A FEW NUMBERS WORTH KNOWING

Figures are from each organization's own published materials as of October 2026. Sources are linked in the entries that follow.

\$110K

LongJump's first check at pre-seed, industry-agnostic, Midwest founders with a strong Chicago bias, no warm intro needed

LONGJUMP

70+

Investor meetings generated for 15 founding teams at The Raise 2026 investor matchmaking day

LONGJUMP / WORLD BUSINESS CHICAGO

81

Chicago-area venture firms listed by stage in this guide, from first institutional check to growth

SECTION 13

\$220K

Techstars Chicago's investment for 5%, open to all sectors; next deadline November 18, 2026

TECHSTARS

\$200K

mHUB Ventures' first check into each company admitted to its Energy Tech, MedTech and Sustainable Manufacturing accelerators

MHUB

\$2.1M

Awarded across 10 finalists at the 2026 New Venture Challenge, UChicago's accelerator, now in its 30th year

POLSKY CENTER

WHERE TO FIND THEM

THE RESOURCES IN THIS GUIDE, ON THE MAP

Every place in this guide with a street address. Three are highlighted because together they show the range of support here: a founder incubator, a university hub serving both founders and future investors, and a corporate-backed venture collaborative.



- 1 TechNexus Loop
- 2 Ferris & Co Loop
- 3 World Business Chicago Loop
- 4 Fabrik River North
- 5 1871 Merchandise Mart
- 6 Matter Merchandise Mart
- 7 mHub Near West Side
- 8 Hatchery East Garfield Park
- 9 2112 Irving Park
- 10 Polsky Center / Polsky Exchange Hyde Park
- 11 The Garage at Northwestern Evanston
- 12 Portal Innovations Fulton Market

5 1871

Chicago's flagship tech incubator in the Merchandise Mart. Programs for founders at every stage, and the center of gravity for the city's startup events.

10 POLSKY CENTER (UCHICAGO)

The university's entrepreneurship hub. Founders get the New Venture Challenge and Polsky Exchange co-working; aspiring investors get the PE/VC Lab and Booth Angels.

1 TECHNEXUS

A venture collaborative in the Loop that pairs corporates with startups: co-working, events and an active investing arm under one roof.

ACCELERATORS AND PROGRAMS FOR FOUNDERS

- **Alchemist Chicago** - deep-tech accelerator for pre-seed and seed-stage deep-tech startups with technical founding teams of at least two co-founders, building in quantum (via Duality), AI and data science, robotics, cleantech, agtech, advanced materials and manufacturing, biotech, spacetech and similar foundational technologies
- **Duality (is now part of the Quantum track at the Alchemist)** - accelerator for startups across quantum computing, sensing and communication, from software to hardware
- **Food Foundry** - Relish Works' accelerator for food and food-tech startups, with Gordon Food Service as corporate partner
- **gener8tor** - the Midwest-born accelerator with a Chicago program; investment plus a concierge-style, founder-first format
- **mPOWER** - mHUB's pre-accelerator for founders at the very earliest, idea-stage end of hardtech and physical product development
- **mHUB Energy Tech Accelerator** - six-month, cohort-based hardtech accelerator run out of mHUB's Chicago innovation center, where selected startups get a \$200,000 initial investment from mHUB Ventures, plus prototyping labs and technical assistance, mentorship, and connections to industry leaders and investors
- **mHUB MedTech Accelerator** - a six-month program in which mHUB invests \$200,000 initial capital, provides structured mentorship, and connects startups with clinicians, manufacturing experts and regulatory advisors. The thesis is device-heavy: medical devices, diagnostics and connected health hardware, built in mHUB's prototyping facility
- **mHUB Smart and Sustainable Manufacturing Accelerator** - a six-month program in which mHUB invests \$200,000 initial capital, mentorship, stipends, and access to mHUB's supplier network. It's designed to take a startup from concept or prototype to the foundation of a profitable, scalable business. Industry partners co-define each cohort so that market demand is identified up front, leading to pilots and investment on the back end
- **New Venture Challenge** - University of Chicago Booth School of Business's flagship accelerator, run as a spring quarter Booth course with finals in May; \$2.1M awarded in 2026 across 10 finalists. Alumni include Grubhub, Braintree/Venmo, Simple Mills, Tovala. There are variations of NVC: NVC, Social NVC, College NVC, Global NVC
- **Techstars Chicago** - the local program of the global accelerator; three months, investment, mentorship and a Demo Day
- **The Raise (LongJump)** - pre-seed fundraising program for first-time, post-product Chicago founders, run with World Business Chicago: six sessions (January to March) on how investors think and how to run a round, plus an investor matchmaking day with the LongJump network. No warm intro needed

03 INCUBATORS AND ENTREPRENEUR SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

INCUBATORS AND ENTREPRENEUR SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS (ESOS)

- **1871** - Chicago's flagship tech incubator in the Merchandise Mart; programs for founders at every stage, plus the center of gravity for the city's startup events
- **mHub** - hardtech and manufacturing innovation center with prototyping labs, programs and a fund for physical-product startups
- **Matter** - healthcare technology incubator connecting startups with health systems, payers and pharma
- **2112** - incubator for music, film, fashion and creative industry startups
- **Hatchery** - food and beverage incubator in East Garfield Park with shared commercial kitchens and business support
- **Polsky Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (UChicago)** - the university's entrepreneurship hub; the NVC, Polsky Exchange co-working, deep tech ventures and the PE/VC Lab all live here
- **The Garage at Northwestern** - Northwestern's student and alumni startup hub in Evanston (TIME's No. 1 university startup incubator); 1,500+ startups and \$1.6B+ raised over 11 years. Programs: Jumpstart, Residency, open community events

04 CO-WORKING SPACES

CO-WORKING SPACES

- **Fabrik** - member-run co-working at 440 N Wells in River North, with hot desks, conference rooms by the hour and member-hosted events
- **Ferris & Co** - new co-working space located at 1 W Monroe St with dozens of desks, conference rooms, dry erase boards, and more
- **Polsky Exchange** - Polsky Center's coworking space and community incubator on 53rd Street in Hyde Park. With flexible coworking, huddle and conference rooms, classrooms, event space, and the Fab Lab, the only entrepreneurship-focused fabrication lab on the South Side
- **TechNexus** - the Loop-based venture collaborative that pairs corporates with startups; co-working, events and an active investing arm under one roof

05 PROGRAMS, FELLOWSHIPS AND COURSES FOR BREAKING INTO VC

PROGRAMS, FELLOWSHIPS AND COURSES FOR THOSE LOOKING TO BREAK INTO VC

CHICAGO

- **Chicago:Blend Venture Fellowship** - a structured, immersive fellowship built to help emerging professionals break into VC, with placements at Chicago funds
- **Illinois Venture Capital Association (IVCA)** - the state's industry association; promotes VC University cohorts locally and runs events worth having on your radar

NATIONAL

- **Hustle Fund Venture Fellowship** - virtual, for aspiring VCs, fund managers and angels, working the Hustle Fund team's live deal pipeline
- **Kauffman Fellows** - two years, aimed at mid-career investors (mostly GPs, partners and principals)
- **Laconia Venture Cooperative** - a part-time program where you learn by doing diligence alongside the Laconia team; another one I did myself
- **Toigo LIFE Program (Venture Capital Intensive)** - Toigo's one-year program for graduate students headed into finance, with a VC-specific track: technical training, practitioner-led sector deep dives, one-on-one hiring coaching and access to Toigo's firm network. I completed this last year and it was very informative
- **VC Lab (Decile Group)** - the free accelerator for people launching a first fund; relevant if you're thinking about emerging management
- **VC University (Venture Forward, NVCA, Berkeley Law and Stanford Law)** - a 10-week virtual certificate course that gives a structured, practical foundation in venture capital. Venture Forward (NVCA's nonprofit foundation) has awarded full scholarships to at least 10% of each cohort since 2019 for aspiring and early-career VCs from underrepresented backgrounds
- **VC University Bootcamp** - the intensive four-day in-person version at Stanford for advanced investment professionals
- **Venture Deals course (Techstars)** - the free online companion to the book; a good first step before paying for VC University

06 ANGEL INVESTOR COMMUNITIES

ANGEL INVESTOR COMMUNITIES

- **Chicago Booth Angels** - the Booth alumni angel network; a natural landing spot for students and recent grads who want to start writing checks
- **Chicago Early Growth Ventures** - member investment group backing seed-stage companies with Chicago ties and building up the local angel pool
- **Lofty Angels** - the angel group attached to Lofty Ventures, backing early-stage Chicago founders
- **The Josephine Collective** - angel investing collective led by Desiree Vargas Wrigley, backing early-stage founders and bringing new investors into the room

08 MEETUPS

MEETUPS

- **1Million Cups** (Weekly) - Kauffman Foundation's national program built around founders presenting their business to the local community over coffee
- **Claude Community** (Monthly, ad-hoc) - Chicago meetups for people building with Claude; builders, founders and the curious
- **F*ck Up Nights Chicago** (Ad hoc) - the global series where founders tell the story of a failure on stage; the most honest startup event in the city

07 ECOSYSTEM PARTNERS

ECOSYSTEM PARTNERS

- **Chicago Innovation** - runs the annual Chicago Innovation Awards and year-round programs celebrating and connecting innovators
- **Illinois INVENT** - the State of Illinois's direct equity program, funded through the U.S. Treasury's SSBCI initiative, providing growth capital to Illinois startups. Belongs under Ecosystem partners or as a note at the top of the VC firms section rather than in a stage tier
- **Illinois Venture Capital Association (IVCA)** - the state's trade association for VC and PE; events, awards and the local push behind VC University
- **P33** - nonprofit launched to make Chicago a top-tier tech hub; talent, deep tech and ecosystem-building initiatives
- **World Business Chicago** - the city's public-private economic development agency; corporate attraction, startup support and The Raise partner

- **Grassroots Tech Community** (Monthly) - an IRL community of Chicagoland tech enthusiasts with monthly meetups and panels; a good first room for anyone new to the scene
- **Startup Grind Chicago** (Monthly) - teaches and connects founders, and free membership gets you the newsletter and member perks

NEWSLETTERS

- **CHI IRL** - Chicago's weekly calendar of tech and startup events, from meetups to conferences to workshops
- **Chicago Startup Events** - curated, founder-focused Chicago events calendar with a free "Weekly Roundup" email that goes out every Monday morning
- **Ilya Strebulaev's "VC 101: Investor Decision Making"** - the Stanford GSB professor's Substack series breaking down how investors actually make decisions; the newsletter companion to The Venture Mindset
- **Landon's Loop** - Landon Campbell's (Drive Capital) newsletter on Chicago and Midwest venture, written by someone actively investing here
- **Midwest Startups** - weekly roundup of funding rounds, launches and hires across the Midwest; the fastest way to learn who's raising in the region
- **Pitchbook News** - the data provider's free daily newsletter on deals, exits and market trends; the numbers everyone quotes come from here
- **Tactical Fundraising by Elizabeth Yin** - mechanics of early-stage fundraising from the investor's side of the table and how to think about different types of funding for an early-stage startup, whether to use a SAFE, etc.
- **Venture Capital Journal Daily** - daily industry news on fundraising, fund closes and LP activity, from the Private Equity International family

PODCASTS (recommendations from dozens of GPs)

- **Acquired** - Ben Gilbert and David Rosenthal's multi-hour deep dives on how great companies were built; the most-recommended podcast in VC
- **Acquiring Minds** - Will Smith's interviews with people who bought small businesses; the entrepreneurship-through-acquisition (ETA) path
- **Business Breakdowns** - Colossus's one-company-per-episode breakdowns of business models and competitive dynamics
- **How I Built This with Guy Raz** - founder origin stories told in narrative form; the gateway podcast for entrepreneurship
- **Moonshots with Peter Diamandis** - exponential technology and the long view on what's coming
- **Possible with Reid Hoffman** - the LinkedIn co-founder and Greylock partner on optimistic futures with technology
- **The a16z Show** - Andreessen Horowitz's flagship show on tech, markets and the firm's theses
- **The Full Ratchet** - Nick Moran's "Venture Capital and Startup Investing Demystified," podcast; it's one of the longest-running VC interview shows
- **Think Like an Owner** - Alex Bridgeman's conversations with operators and investors in small and mid-sized businesses
- **This Week in Startups** - Jason Calacanis's long-running show on startup news and founder interviews
- **Venture Unlocked** - Samir Kaji's interviews with fund managers and LPs on how venture firms are built; required listening if you want to raise a fund someday
- **Vital Dawn** - Adam Crisafulli's short daily briefing on financial news and how markets may react

JOB BOARDS AND TALENT NETWORKS

Most VC roles never make it to LinkedIn. These are the boards and newsletters people in the industry actually forward around.

- **John Gannon's Venture5** - the long-running one; still the most-forwarded VC job list
- **NVCA Careers in VC** - the National Venture Capital Association's own board; every posting is reviewed by NVCA, so it stays low-noise
- **Startup&VC** - VC roles by city, updated weekly, plus a talent collective
- **Venture Capital Careers** - the largest board dedicated specifically to VC, from analyst through partner-track roles, with a Chicago filter and free email alerts
- **Venture Forward Job Board** - investing roles only (analyst through partner, plus fellowships and internships) at U.S. VC firms and corporate venture arms; postings roll off after 30 days and are also shared in the Venture Forward newsletter and the VC University Slack
- **Wellfound** - startup roles with a Chicago filter
- **Firm-run portfolio boards** - a16z, Index, General Catalyst and, locally, Lofty Ventures, Chicago Ventures, Hyde Park Venture Partners and Drive Capital all run boards for their portfolio companies

11 ACTIVE ECOSYSTEM LEADERS

ACTIVE ECOSYSTEM LEADERS (and growing!)

Abin Kuriakose

Chief Strategy & Innovation Officer, World Business Chicago (WBC)

Betsy Ziegler

CEO, 1871

Brad Henderson

CEO, P33 Chicago

Christopher Deutsch

Founder, Lofty Ventures

Chrystal Price

City Ambassador, Lovable

Desiree Vargas Wrigley

General Partner, The Josephine Collective and Velocity Catalyst

Fred Hoch

Founding Partner, TechNexus Venture Collaborative

Joey Mak

CEO, Chicago:Blend

Krystal Rogers

Founder, Chicago Startup Events

Landon W. Campbell

Investor, Drive Capital

Luke Tanen

President and CEO, Chicago Innovation

Mark Tebbe

Board Member, World Business Chicago

Michael Fassnacht

CGO and President, ClayCo

Monika Razdan

VC Platform & Investor Relations, Dipalo Ventures

Nevin Ramanujan

General Partner, InnovateHealth Ventures

Rajiv "RajNATION" Nathan

Founder, Startup Hypeman; Chapter Director, Startup Grind Chicago

Rebecca Sholiton Kahnweiler

Managing Partner, LongJump

Salvador Dueñas

Senior Director of Programs, Chicago:Blend

Samir Mayekar

Managing Director, UChicago's Polsky Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Shannon McGhee

CEO, SeedSpot

Tina Hrabak

Partner and Head of Platform, LongJump

Todd Walton

City Ambassador, Claude Community Chicago

Umama Kibria

Co-Founder, Play

WHO ARE WE MISSING?

This list is built from the people we keep running into at events, in deals and in inboxes across Chicago. If there's someone who should be on it, an investor, operator or organizer who shows up for this ecosystem, tell us at hello@longjump.vc or fchen8@chicagobooth.edu.

12 BOOKS

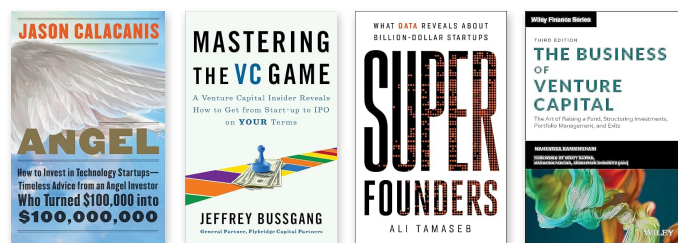
BOOKS

Grouped by lane. Each cover links to the book.

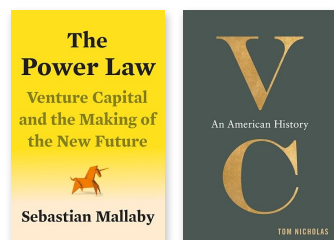
START HERE (THE THREE EVERYONE RECOMMENDS FOR A REASON)



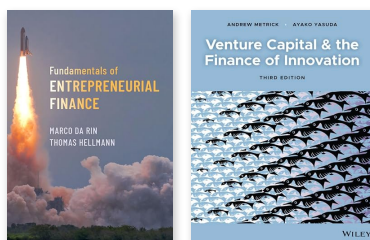
HOW INVESTORS ACTUALLY THINK



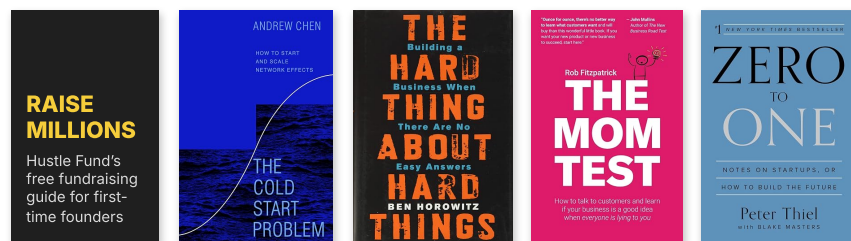
HISTORY AND CONTEXT



GOING DEEPER: THE TEXTBOOKS

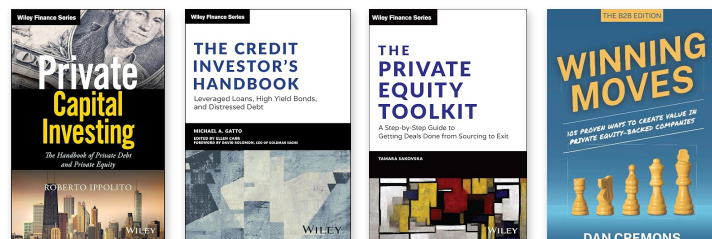


FOR FOUNDERS (AND FOR INVESTORS WHO WANT TO SPEAK FOUNDER)



IF YOU'RE ALSO LOOKING AT PRIVATE EQUITY AND CREDIT

A lot of Chicago investing seats sit in growth equity and PE rather than pure venture, so it's worth knowing the adjacent shelf.



LOCAL VC FIRMS BY STAGE

Where first checks and follow-ons in Chicago actually come from. Stage tiers are approximate; always check a firm's current fund. Cross-checked against Krystal Rogers' [Chicago VC Firms by Operating Stage \(Chicago Startup Events\)](#), which groups firms by founder stage rather than round.

PRE-SEED (FIRST INSTITUTIONAL CHECK)

- **Chingona Ventures** - Samara Mejia Hernandez's pre-seed/seed fund backing overlooked founders in growth markets; fintech, future of work, edtech, healthtech, food and wellness; average check around \$1M, 50+ investments, Career Karma among them
- **Fifth Star Funds** - "America's first friends and family fund": a philanthropically backed pre-seed vehicle providing equitable access to friends-and-family-sized capital for underrepresented (primarily Black) Chicago founders, leaning B2B/SaaS
- **Giant Step** - deep-tech firm writing the earliest checks into aerospace and space startups building frontier hardware and infrastructure
- **Harper Court Ventures** - UChicago-affiliated venture firm backing companies spinning out of university research and talent; AI, health, climate and B2B software
- **Hyde Park Angels** - Chicago's largest angel group with an associated fund; pre-seed through early Series A across the Midwest, member-led diligence
- **Illinois Ventures** - UIUC-affiliated, research-based IT and life-science startups
- **Lofty Ventures** - Christopher Deutsch's pre-seed-to-A firm for software and consumer tech; doubles as a community builder with a steady calendar of founder events
- **LongJump** - first-check fund run by Chicago founders and operators; writes roughly \$110K into pre-seed rounds for Midwest founders with a strong Chicago bias, industry-agnostic with an emphasis on underrepresented teams. Runs The Raise, a six-session pre-seed fundraising program with World Business Chicago and the Coleman Foundation, where five of fifteen founders receive \$10K non-dilutive grants
- **mHUB Ventures** - \$200K first checks into hardtech companies admitted to the Energy Tech, MedTech and Sustainable Manufacturing accelerators; 60+ investments, second fund (\$20M) raised in 2025
- **Motivate Ventures** - small Chicago pre-seed/seed fund, generalist B2B
- **New Stack Ventures** - Nick Moran's pre-seed/seed fund for "remarkable founders outside the Valley," Heartland-anchored, heavy on B2B SaaS and devtools; Moran also hosts The Full Ratchet, one of the longer-running VC podcasts
- **Portal Innovations** - life-sciences venture firm that pairs pre-seed/seed capital with wet-lab space in Fulton Market, for science companies spinning out of UChicago, Northwestern and UIC
- **Propellant Ventures** - Seed-stage firm across healthcare, future of work, supply chain, fintech and edtech
- **Tawani Ventures** - the venture arm of Tawani Enterprises (Pritzker family office); generalist early-stage checks with an explicit Chicago and diverse-founder focus
- **Techstars Chicago / Long Chicago** - the relaunched three-month accelerator (\$220K for 5%, open to all sectors, next deadline November 18, 2026 for the spring 2027 class) paired with Long Chicago, a new Midwest-focused venture fund; mentors include Troy Henikoff, Guy Turner (HPVP) and Brian Luerssen (LongJump)
- **Velocity Catalyst Fund** - early-stage fund for Chicago and Illinois founders that also backs emerging fund managers; Desiree Vargas Wrigley is GP. Relevant twice over if you're thinking about raising a fund someday

LOCAL VC FIRMS BY STAGE (continued)

SEED (LEAD OR CO-LEAD, \$500K TO \$3M)

- **11 Tribes Ventures** - Chicago seed fund with a values-driven founder-wellbeing thesis; fintech, food and consumer
- **53 Stations** - invests across healthcare, logistics, insurance and technology, with a preference for operationally important industries over hype cycles
- **Abundant Venture Partners** - Andrew Swinand's seed/A fund around healthy living, consumer and tech
- **Bridge Ventures** - early-stage checks into healthtech, climate, social impact and B2B software, with an emphasis on durable relevance over fast flips
- **Buoyant Ventures** - Amy Francetic's seed/Series A fund for climate-risk software
- **Capitalize VC** - Mark Thomann's fund for commerce enablement platforms and consumer brands; one of the investors at The Raise 2026 matchmaking day
- **Chicago Ventures** - the city's flagship seed fund (formerly the I2A Fund); Midwest-first, B2B SaaS, marketplaces, fintech, logistics and digital health, with hands-on help on hiring, GTM and follow-on raises. Tock, Fooda, Cameo-era winners
- **CMT Digital** - venture arm of CMT Group backing crypto, blockchain and fintech from seed onward
- **Corazon Capital** - Seed fund from Sam Yagan (OkCupid, Match) and Steve Farsht; consumer, marketplaces and software with a strong Chicago bias
- **Decasonic** - Paul Hsu's venture and digital-assets fund at the intersection of blockchain and AI, across software, infrastructure and financial systems
- **Energy Foundry** - early-stage energy and cleantech fund seeded by Illinois utility settlement money; seed through B, with corporate pilot connections
- **Evergreen Climate Innovations (formerly Clean Energy Trust)** - nonprofit-backed early climate investor for the Midwest, often the first institutional check for cleantech; \$100K to \$300K seed checks
- **Hyde Park Venture Partners** - Seed/Series A for "mid-continent" B2B software and marketplaces, typically companies at \$500K to \$3M revenue raising a first institutional round; offices in Chicago and Indianapolis; G2, Avant, High Alpha, Terminus
- **InnovateHealth Ventures** - healthcare-only seed fund launched in 2024 by Ellis and Nevin Ramanujan; first institutional checks of \$250K to \$1M into software and tech-enabled services that align payors and providers, explicitly avoiding biotech and FDA-approval devices. Co-hosts Chicago healthcare community events with MATTER
- **KGC Capital** - family-office seed investor in Chicago fintech and healthcare
- **M25** - Midwest-only, the region's most active early-stage investor since 2015; data-driven scoring model, \$250K to \$1M checks, can lead; 178 investments, Fund 4 raised in 2023. Publishes the annual Midwest Startups city rankings and runs a large portfolio community
- **Nameless Ventures** - Seed and Series A for Midwest-based technology companies, with operator-informed support; B2B and B2C software, fintech, healthtech
- **Network Ventures** - Seed-stage B2B SaaS with Chicago roots
- **OCA Ventures** - Jim Dugan's seed/Series A firm for fintech, healthtech, enterprise software and cybersecurity, US and Canada; led Sprout Social's A
- **Origin Ventures** - Seed to Series A in software, marketplaces and consumer for the "Digital Native economy"; 20+ years, GrubHub and Braintree early; Chicago plus Salt Lake City
- **SNAK VC** - early-stage specialist in marketplace startups: liquidity, network effects and efficient transactions in large markets
- **Starting Line** - Ezra Galston's seed fund for software and consumer businesses in overlooked categories underserved by innovation
- **Venture Forward Capital (formerly New Leaf Ventures) (formerly New Leaf Ventures)** - entrepreneur-led firm backing vertical and applied AI founders
- **West Loop Ventures** - fintech-focused seed fund

LOCAL VC FIRMS BY STAGE (continued)

SEED TO SERIES A, SECTOR SPECIALISTS

- **2Flo Ventures** - healthcare venture studio and fund that creates companies as well as investing in them; digital health and B2B health software
- **7wire Ventures** - digital health from Glen Tullman and Lee Shapiro (Allscripts, Livongo, Transcarent); seed through B
- **Barrel Ventures** - early-stage food-ecosystem investor backing companies modernizing how food is produced, distributed and experienced
- **Bluestein Ventures** - food-industry seed and Series A
- **Chain Vision** - blockchain-focused firm backing public, permissionless infrastructure and the developer tooling around it
- **Cleveland Avenue** - Don Thompson's (ex-McDonald's CEO) firm for food, beverage, restaurant tech and lifestyle brands; runs CAST US, a dedicated vehicle for underrepresented founders.
- **Create Health Ventures** - early B2B digital health, with a thesis around care delivery, operations and outcomes
- **Dipalo Ventures** - advanced manufacturing, energy, climate and physical AI; backs industrial transformation technologies. Monika Razdan (on the people list) is on the platform side, and Dipalo was in the room at The Raise 2026
- **Distributed Ventures** - insurtech, fintech, healthcare and benefits platforms that modernize how risk, finance and workforce coverage work
- **DRW VC** - the venture arm of DRW, the Chicago trading firm; stage-agnostic checks into financial and enterprise infrastructure with technical depth. Sits naturally next to Jump Capital
- **Energy Capital Ventures** - early-stage fund for sustainability and digital transformation in the natural gas and energy industries, backed by energy-sector LPs
- **Impact Engine** - Jessica Droste Yagan's impact firm with both a seed venture fund and a private equity strategy; economic empowerment, environmental sustainability and health equity
- **KB Partners** - Keith Bank's sports-and-technology fund: teams, athletes, fans and performance
- **Listen Ventures** - Jeff Cantalupo's consumer and culture fund for brands and platforms with real cultural resonance; media, creator economy, CPG
- **Marquee Ventures** - early-stage fund rooted in the Ricketts family's sports ownership; sports, media and fan engagement
- **Moderne Ventures** - Constance Freedman's seed/Series A fund for proptech, fintech, insurance and hospitality; runs the Moderne Passport, an industry immersion program connecting startups with its 700+ corporate partners
- **Nomadic Ventures** - climate fund investing early in startups decarbonizing mining, manufacturing and transportation
- **Off Center Ventures** - early-stage firm at the intersection of technology and media: content platforms, audiences and digital engagement
- **S2G Investments** - Lukas Walton's multi-stage platform for food and ag, oceans and energy; seed through growth with significant follow-on capacity
- **Sandbox Industries / Cultivian Sandbox** - runs sector funds with corporate LPs: the Blue Venture Fund (Blue Cross Blue Shield plans) for healthcare, Sandbox Insurtech Ventures, and Cultivian Sandbox for food and ag tech; pre-seed through growth
- **Supply Change** - food, culture and technology; backs the brands and platforms shaping modern consumer food experiences (Chicago and Los Angeles)
- **TechNexus Venture Collaborative** - Corporate-venture collaboration model: invests alongside corporate partners from seed to growth and operates TeamWorking, the Loop coworking hub
- **Velveteen Ventures** - values-driven firm backing businesses centered on children and planetary wellbeing; consumer, climate and social impact

LOCAL VC FIRMS BY STAGE (continued)

SERIES A AND B

- **Baird Capital** - Venture and growth arm of Robert W. Baird; early and expansion-stage B2B tech-enabled services and healthcare in the "mid-country," with London and Singapore offices
- **Chicago Pacific Founders** - Healthcare services and healthtech, Series B through growth
- **Consumer Ventures** - next-generation consumer brands, products and the enabling technology behind how people buy
- **Drive Capital** - Columbus-based but with a Chicago office and the Midwest's largest fund (about \$2.2B to \$3B AUM); pre-seed to pre-IPO, thematically driven, with a popular \$500K pre-seed program
- **Energize Capital** - one of Chicago's largest climate funds (founded 2016 with Invenergy backing); software and technology for a digitized, decarbonized economy across energy and industrial systems. The biggest gap in the current list
- **First Analysis** - One of Chicago's oldest venture firms (40+ years), Series A and growth in vertical software and healthcare IT, paired with an in-house research practice
- **Jump Capital** - Series A/B in data-driven fintech, IT and data infrastructure, B2B SaaS and media; \$1M to \$10M checks from a \$350M fund; affiliated with Jump Trading
- **Lightbank** - Eric Lefkofsky and Brad Keywell's firm (Groupon founders), about \$700M AUM, seed through growth across AI, SaaS, fintech and marketplaces; Cameo, Sprout Social, Tempus-adjacent
- **MK Capital** - roughly \$300M AUM, Series A/B in B2B software
- **Permanent Capital Ventures** - Expansion-stage fund co-founded by former LinkedIn executive Mike Gamson
- **Pritzker Group Venture Capital** - Evergreen Pritzker family capital, founded 1996; leads Series A and B in consumer, digital health, enterprise and emerging tech; frequent co-investor with Chicago Ventures, Jump and Baird
- **UChicago Startup Investment Program** - \$25M fund for UChicago faculty, student and alumni companies, via Polsky
- **Adams Street Partners** - Chicago-headquartered fund-of-funds and co-investment manager; not a direct lead, but a major LP to venture funds, which matters for your Fund I planning
- **ARCH Venture Partners** - Spun out of UChicago in the 1980s and now one of the largest science-focused VCs anywhere (\$6.4B raised 2019-2023); creates and funds biotech and deep-tech companies from inception through growth (Illumina, Juno, Agios)
- **Sterling Partners** - Growth equity and PE across education, healthcare and business services
- **Tonic Ventures** - growth capital for enduring consumer companies with strong brands, repeat demand and scalable economics
- **Valor Equity Partners** - Antonio Gracias's operational growth firm (Tesla, SpaceX, Anduril); control and non-control positions at B+ and beyond, plus Valor Siren Ventures for food and retail tech with corporate partners

SERIES B+ AND GROWTH

- **81 Collection** - founder-focused fund for the overlooked, industrial and operationally complex sectors traditional venture ignores: manufacturing, logistics, construction tech, proptech

THIS LIST KEEPS GROWING.

If something is missing, email hello@longjump.vc or fchen8@chicagobooth.edu, or find Fiona at fionasvcjourney.substack.com. Updated October 2026.

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