

INVEST OTTAWA

#IWM2026



Our Journey

**The Invest Ottawa
Women Founders &
Owners Strategy**

www.investottawa.ca/women

SINCERE THANKS



#IWM2026 #WeMeanBusiness



WOMEN FOUNDERS & OWNERS SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD



Thusha Agampodi
Fullscript



Clare Beckton
Own Your Success



Dipalli Bhatt
OpenText



Karla Briones
Serial Entrepreneur &
Advisor



Mojdeh Cox
DE&I and Human
Rights Expert



Aquilas Dapaah
Founder & Lawyer



Jennifer Francis
Capital Angel Network



**Shavonne Hasfal-
McIntosh**
Founder



Bree Jamison-Holloway
Canadian International
Trade Tribunal



Katie LeClair
Entrepreneur /
Consultant



Solmaz Shahalizadeh
Blackbone Angels



Serena Nguyen
CEO & Founder



Diane Watson
Ribbon
Communications



Heather Ward
Hyperion Global Energy



Nick Quain
Invest Ottawa



Sonya Shorey
Invest Ottawa

Here for All Women

When we use the term ‘women,’ we refer to all individuals who identify as women.

This includes women of colour, transgender women, and women with gender-diverse identities, including gender non-conforming women (as we know, gender is fluid and can change throughout one’s lifetime).

These women have historically and systemically been excluded from many mainstream programs, services, and opportunities. Invest Ottawa is making a concerted effort to prioritize equity, access, and inclusion in everything we do.

Our goal is to ensure that anyone who would like to access our programs and services truly feels welcome and supported.

#IWM2026 #WeMeanBusiness

Our Goals

NEAR-TERM

**ESTABLISH
THE
FOUNDATION**

(2019 - 2021)

Build a robust pipeline of Ottawa women founders and the value delivered by Invest Ottawa to women-owned businesses.

MEDIUM-TERM

**DRIVE
MEASURABLE
PROGRESS
TOWARD GOALS**

(2022 - 2024)

Continued implementation and ramp-up of new programs and services that expand the capabilities and impact of women founders.

LONG-TERM

**EXPAND GLOBAL
LEADERSHIP &
COLLABORATION**

(2025-2026+)

Cooperation on big-picture goals and challenges to create more significant market and investment opportunities for women founders.

Our Strategy

PROMOTE

- Increase the visibility of women founders
- Create new content and promotional platforms
- Amplify the voice and impact of women founders

EDUCATE

- Inspire through role models and top leaders
- Provide training sessions, workshops & events
- Create women peer-to-peer groups

EQUIP

- Enable through mentorship
- Enhance R&D, business, and market capabilities
- Evolve and create new programs and services

CONNECT

- Get women engaged
- Facilitate linkages to mentors, investors & clients
- Drive new opportunity in national and global networks

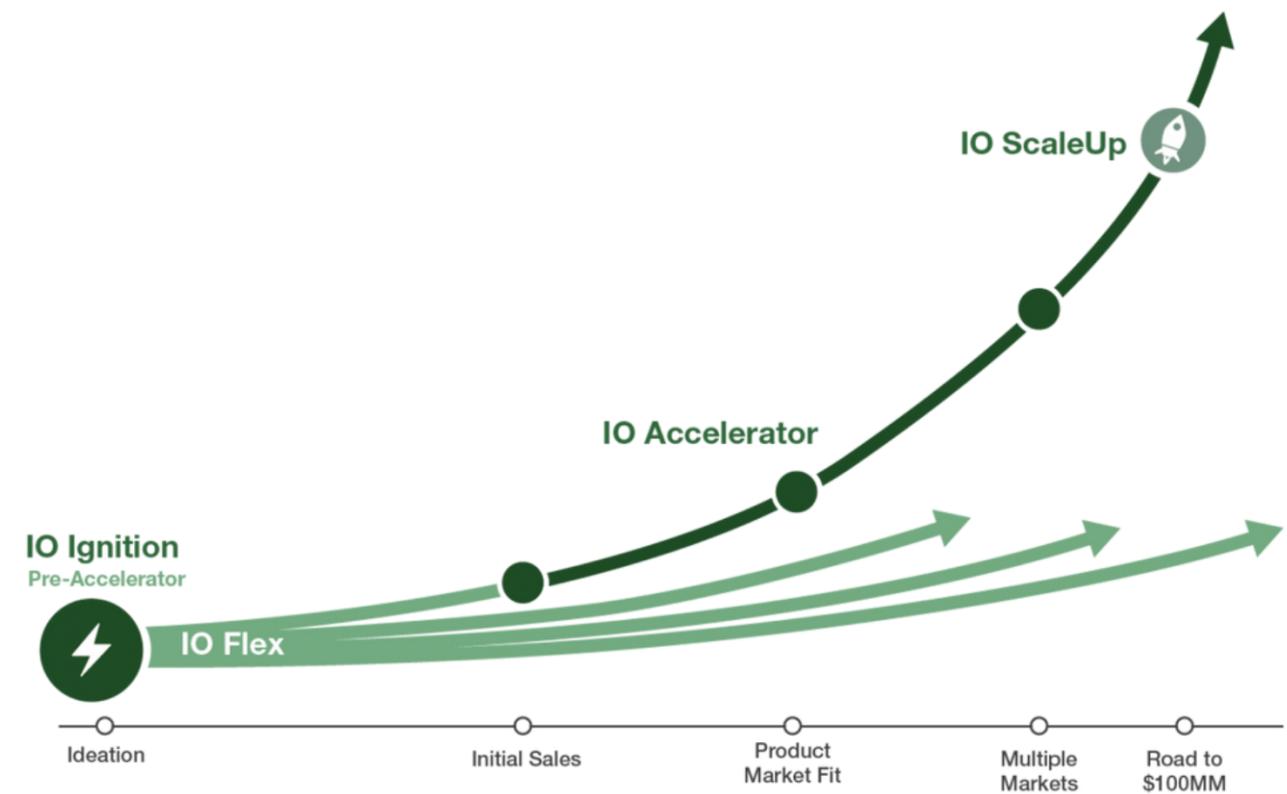


HOW DO WE SUPPORT FOUNDERS?

Entrepreneurship Team

- Starter Company Plus
- Summer Company
- Educational Centre – Workshops and Advisory Services

Venture Team



IO Ignition (2025)

26

companies participating in IO Ignition cohorts in 2025 had at least one Woman Founder or Co-Founder (or were women-led)

33%

of companies that participated in IO Ignition in 2025 (26 out of 78) have at least one Woman Founder or Co-Founder (or were women-led)

87%

of the winning companies in the 2025 IO Ignition Pitch Competitions (4 total) had at least one Woman Founder or Co-Founder (7 out of 8 winners).

IO Ignition

164

out of the 443 companies in IO Ignition from 2019-2025, had at least one Woman Founder

37%

of all participating companies since the inception of this program have at least one Woman Founder

54%

of all Pitch Competition winners were women founders or co-founders (28 out of the 52 pitching founders)

IO Flex

2021

Flex was established to give founders flexible access to early-stage advisors, cost-saving start-up perks, and a network of like-minded peers.

170

Companies in IO Flex have at least one Woman Founder or Co-Founder as of December 2025.

25%

of IO Flex companies have at least one Woman Founder or Co-Founder as of December 2025 (170 out of 672 firms).

IO Accelerator

10

Out of 30 IO Accelerator tech companies had at least one Woman Founder/Co-Founder as of December 2025 (33%).

16

Out of 30 IO Accelerator tech companies had at least one woman C-suite and/or VP as of December 2025 (53%)

22

Total women leaders in IO Accelerator tech companies

IO Accelerator

2021

29% of IO Accelerator companies had at least one Woman Founder, Co-Founder, C-Suite Leader or VP

2022

56% of IO Accelerator companies had at least one Woman Founder, Co-Founder, C-Suite Leader or VP

2023

54% of IO Accelerator companies had at least one Woman Founder, Co-Founder, C-Suite Leader or VP

2024

55% of IO Accelerator companies had at least one Woman Founder, Co-Founder, C-Suite Leader or VP

2025

53% of IO Accelerator companies had at least one Woman Founder, Co-Founder, C-Suite Leader or VP

IO ScaleUp

91

Women Co/Founders, C-suite leaders and VPs by women were employed at IO's Scale Up companies.

73%

(43 out of 59) tech companies in IO ScaleUp had at least one woman C-suite and/or VP women as of December 2025.

15%

(9 of 59) tech companies in IO ScaleUp had at least one Woman Founder or Co-Founder as of December 2025.

2022

63% of IO ScaleUp companies had at least one Woman Founder, Co-Founder, C-Suite Leader or VP

2023

77% of IO ScaleUp companies had at least one Woman Founder, Co-Founder, C-Suite Leader or VP

**2021 -
2023**

The number of women founders/co-founders in the IO ScaleUp program remained consistent at 7

2024

68% of IO ScaleUp companies had at least one Woman Founder, Co-Founder, C-Suite Leader or VP

2025

73% of IO ScaleUp companies had at least one Woman Founder, Co-Founder, C-Suite Leader or VP (43/59)

Invest Ottawa Funding

- This fiscal year, IO has directly distributed 39 microgrants to startups totaling \$380,000
- 14 of these awards went to companies with at least one woman founder: **36% of total awards**
- IO intentionally awarded larger grants to several priority groups including women founders
- Actual award funding to women was \$190K of \$380K total: **50% of total investment \$**

#IWM2026



Starter Company Plus Program

Starter Company Plus Applications

279 applications
944 waiting list

Starter Company Plus Participants

60% self-identify as women
(23 out of 38 participants)

Starter Company Plus Grants

23 of expected grant recipients
self-identify as women

23 grants awarded to women

Investment awarded to entrepreneurs who
self-identify as women

\$115K awarded to date;
Additional \$20K; TBC on March
2026

Five Years of Funding through Starter Company Plus

In 2025, we awarded 23 grants to women founders in Cohort 2 (4 awards TBC on March 2026 for Cohort 3)	60% of participants funded-Cohort 2
In 2024, we awarded 19 grants to women founders in Cohort 1 (5 awards TBC on March 5 for Cohort 2)	66% of participants funded-Cohort 1
In 2023, we awarded 22 grants to women founders	81% of participants funded
In 2022, we awarded 13 grants to women founders	48% of participants funded
In 2021, we awarded 25 grants to women founders	76% of participants funded
In 2020, we awarded 18 grants to women founders	62% of participants funded

Summer Company Program

Summer Company Applications

162

Summer Company Participants

11 participants (out of 29) self-identify as women: 37%

Summer Company Grants

34% of grant recipients self-identify as women

(10 out of 29 grants)

Investment awarded to entrepreneurs who self-identify as women

\$30K in grants

ABOUT

SheBoot

The national non-profit corporation that prepares women founders to pitch their business and secure investment.

RESULTS TO-DATE (2020 - 2025)

55

Women
Angel
Investors



78

Program
Graduates



\$1.6 Million

Invested in women-led, Canadian
technology companies by SheBoot
investors.



\$50 Million+

Raised by SheBoot Alumnae

SheBoot

The resources, training, and network you need to pitch your business and secure investment.

**Applications for SheBoot 2026
launch **April 1st!****

SAVE THE DATE

www.sheboot.ca



Invest Ottawa Governance & Operations

In December 2025:

- 44% of our Directors identified as women
 - 8 out of 18 Directors (December 2025)
 - In 2025, four new Directors joined the Board and one identifies as a woman.
 - In 2025, two new Officers joined the Board and one identifies as a woman.
- **IO Team**
 - 68% of employees identify as women (66 out of 97 FTE, Contracts, Students)
 - IO Executives: 60% (2025), 50% (2024), 33% (2023), 40% (2022) - 43% (2021) - 33% (2020)
- **43% of Invest Ottawa advisors identified as women as of December 2025**
 - 17/45 (38%) of Venture Advisors were women
 - 7/10 (70%) of Entrepreneurship Advisors were women
 - In 2017, this was only 10%

#IWM2026

#IWM2026

Our Journey Continues

Thank you, allies, champions and partners across our community.

We could not do this without you!

There's much more work to do and progress to be made, but we can do it together.

www.investottawa.ca/women



International Women's Month

FEATURED LEADERS

