

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Forum Ventures

What we're striving to do from our corner of the tech startup ecosystem

By: Steph Jones, Program Manager and Head of D&I at Forum Ventures

At Forum Ventures, our mission is to create a space where everyone—no matter their background—can get access to funding, build their dreams, and push the world forward.

We know that the Venture Capital and startup landscape is inherently flawed when it comes to diversity, inclusion and equal opportunity. As both a startup program and fund, we're in a unique position to influence the future of the tech industry – not only with the founders we fund, but how we support underrepresented founders within and outside of our portfolio, as well as how we use our platform to educate our portfolio founders around the importance of embodying inclusivity and accessibility within their own company cultures and practices as they grow and scale.

Over the past two years we've made a pledge to support our portfolio founders with:

1. [A Founder's Equity Resource Manual](#). This is a living document that is updated frequently and takes founders through a journey from ally in thought to an ally in action. For example, we explain how to break down implicit biases, how to create a diverse hiring plan and marketing plan, and how to lead a diverse team during difficult and culturally sensitive times, among other topics.
2. [A growing list of external Founder Resources](#) for founders outside of our portfolio that can guide them to spaces to get support as an underrepresented founder or to the information they need to start breaking down biases.
3. A Diversified Mentor Network – one that expands this community so that it better reflects the world we live in moving forward.
4. More Diverse Perspectives In Our Program by reviewing our program content in order to eliminate any unconscious biases and add relevant diverse perspectives. Our hands-on program allows us to roll up our sleeves and work side by side with founders as they grow their companies, and encourage them to build culturally competent, inclusive, and diverse companies from day one.
5. Create founder resource groups and celebrate our diverse founders.

This pledge was just the beginning.

We've also looked inside our own doors to make sure that we're living and breathing these values and practices as a company.

Over the past two years, we've been focused on building a diverse team. We believe that a variety of lived experience and perspective provides a distinct competitive advantage; managers with a diverse team from platform to investment are uniquely positioned to build the firms that can identify, invest in, and support the amazing companies of founders from diverse backgrounds, enabling future innovation.

The pillar of our commitment to equitable investing is an investment team that is diverse at its center and having women of color leading our investment efforts enables us to open the aperture and keep inclusion at the center of all our investment practices from sourcing and beyond. [A diverse investment team statistically makes better decisions but they also make better investments.](#)

Currently, 39% of our team members are people of color and 67% are women.

In 2021, across our 72 investments, 43% had at least one founder who was Female, Black, LatinX or LGBTQ. We will continue to measure and improve on this.

Today, we believe D,E, & I is embedded in our fund DNA and everything we do for our portfolio founders is done through that lens. We are working towards a brighter future at Forum and we hope that it makes an exponential impact from our small corner of the world as we fund and support more early stage companies. The work is never done but we try to contribute daily.

We will be updating you all on our stats, initiatives, and goals quarterly - check back here soon!