Increasing the Power and Influence of Women of Color

Pivotal Ventures, founded in 2015 by Melinda French Gates, expands opportunity and equality in the United States through high-impact investments, partnerships, and advocacy. Through Pivotal, Melinda committed $1 billion in 2019 to increase women’s power and influence.

We recognize that to achieve this goal, we must address the unique needs and aspirations of women and girls of color who face the harmful and compounding systems of racism and sexism.

Although the barriers to social progress are higher for women of color, funding to support them is not. Only 0.5% of philanthropic funding goes specifically to women and girls of color, according to the Ms. Foundation for Women. Additional research has found that less than 1% of venture capital funds went to Latina and Black women founders in 2022.

Our country needs to invest more in women of color—in their talents, skills, and ambitions for the future. Until this happens, we will continue to miss out on their transformative ideas and leadership. To catalyze greater support for women of color, Pivotal works in three ways.

First, by putting equity at the heart of all our programmatic work.

Second, through a Centering Women and Girls of Color strategy. While integrating equity into our overall efforts is essential, we recognize that more is needed. This strategy supports partners tackling acute challenges for women and girls of color.

Third, by investing capital in funds and early-stage companies led by historically under-resourced investors and founders.

Read more about our strategy →

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OUR FOCUS AREAS

Putting an Equity Lens on All of Our Work
Inequities are often biggest for women of color. So whether it is building women's political power or creating a modern caregiving system, Pivotal is committed to putting women of color at the heart of our work. By doing so, we can remove the barriers to equality while advancing progress for our entire society. For example, our tech and innovation efforts support Black, Latina, and Native American women—the populations that are least represented in one of society’s most influential sectors. And our adolescent mental health strategy focuses on young people of color and LGBTQ+ youth who are being failed by an inadequate mental health care system.

Investing In Women of Color Funders and Founders
Pivotal provides investment capital to women and people of color as part of our work on women’s power and influence. We make indirect fund investments as a limited partner and direct investments in startup companies. We believe that diverse leadership teams at the funds and companies in which we invest are important for both our impact and return profile. These investments are intended to signal to the wider investment ecosystem that investing with a diversity-first mindset leads to meaningful returns.

Increasing Philanthropic Support for Women and Girls of Color
Pivotal launched the Centering Women and Girls of Color strategy to provide philanthropic funds to organizations working on women and girls of color's specific challenges and opportunities.
To guide our grantmaking in this area, we convened a “Women and Girls of Color Design Council”—an external group of 10 women of color from across sectors who co-designed the strategy. The council identified five key areas where increased support for women of color can unlock much-needed progress. Based on this, we provide funds to partners in the following areas:

- Increasing women of color’s economic mobility, economic security, and intergenerational wealth.
- Preventing violence and creating safe spaces for healing and joy for survivors of violence.
- Changing biased narratives and supporting new narratives about women and girls of color that are rooted in their power and joy.
- Championing the leadership of, and opportunities for, girls of color.
- Enhancing research into the focus areas listed above, as well as investing in women of color researchers.

In addition to what we fund, the council has urged us to look at how we fund. With their input, our philosophy is to give flexible funding to organizations that center the needs of women and girls of color, so their leaders can deploy the funds based on their knowledge and judgment.

FEATURED PARTNERS DRIVING IMPACT

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