



Member Profile

Collab Capital

Driving Growth Amidst Challenges
to Diversity Initiatives



Jewel Burks Solomon was looking to grow Partpic, a startup designed to streamline the purchase of maintenance and repair parts by facilitating a search for replacement parts using a camera-enabled mobile device, when she met Barry Givens at the Atlanta Technology Development Center business incubator. A founder himself, Givens worked down the hall building Monsieur, where he developed an automated bartending technology.

While their initial entrepreneurial journeys took different turns, the duo later came together to form Collab Capital, an early-stage venture capital firm. Amid shifting priorities around diversity initiatives, Collab Capital maintains its dual focus on providing top decile returns to their LPs while supporting underrepresented Black founders to address the wealth gap and promote economic growth.

Although the firm does not identify as an impact fund, it focuses on investing in Black founders who are developing technological solutions to address critical challenges in key industries that impact everyday life. By combining founders' domain expertise and innovative approaches with Collab Capital's operational experience and extensive network, the firm helps scale market-defining businesses. This strategy aims to deliver a significant impact while generating strong returns for its LPs.

Finding Alpha with Diverse Founders

Collab targets three focus areas that its founders consider essential to building shared prosperity with a focus on underserved communities.

The Future of Work: Collab Capital targets businesses that promote economic mobility by enabling individuals to make a living, upskill, and advance economically. This includes companies developing tools or services that facilitate upward mobility, such as job training platforms for reskilling and workforce development. They also focus on founders building solutions to make capital more accessible for all entrepreneurs. The aim is to create pathways for individuals to move into

higher economic classes and improve their long-term prospects.

The Future of Care: Recognizing that health is a cornerstone of prosperity, Collab Capital focuses on businesses addressing key areas such as elder care, women’s health, and mental health. While these areas are prioritized, the firm’s broader goal is to support innovations that contribute to overall well-being, ensuring communities have the resources they need to thrive.

Community Infrastructure: The firm invests in businesses that provide the foundational elements necessary for a strong community, including access to healthy food, clean water, and reliable broadband. These are viewed as critical building blocks for sustained growth and development.

Through these focus areas, Collab Capital executes its mission to create positive social impact while targeting returns of 3x to 4x for its investors.

Among the firm’s 38 investments is Goodr, a Black-owned company tackling food waste and hunger. The company partners with large-scale food producers, such as airports, hotels, and hospitals, where substantial amounts of edible food often go to waste. This wasted food, typically sent to landfills, contributes to environmental harm through increased carbon emissions.

“Our tagline is that we invest in the building blocks of shared prosperity. For us, that means we not only make investments that will create large financial outcomes for the founders, but we also take into account the positive trickle-down effect their products will have on the world.”



Barry Givens
Co-Founder
Collab Capital

Goodr acts as a logistics partner, rescuing surplus food and redirecting it to nonprofit organizations within the local community. For example, if a hotel banquet has leftover trays of untouched food, Goodr collects and delivers it to those in need. Beyond food recovery, Goodr provides its clients with detailed dashboards, tracking the weight of food rescued and its impact on reducing carbon emissions. “Every company at this point has a net-zero goal that they’re trying to hit, many of them by 2030 or 2035.

And Goodr helps them with the data to showcase how they track toward those goals,” says Burks Solomon, Collab Capital co-founder and managing partner.

An Entrepreneurial Rollercoaster

Givens and Burks Solomon’s journey as co-founders of Collab Capital was shaped by their shared experiences of struggling to raise capital to scale their businesses, a challenge they often discussed while sharing space in a business accelerator. Both successfully secured seed funding but faced significant barriers when pursuing larger Series A rounds, often encountering shifting goalposts and systemic inequities. “Every time I was raising, she was raising. Every time I was angry, she was angry,” Givens recalls. “And we told each other, ‘The next thing we want to do is to help the next generation of Black entrepreneurs avoid these unnecessary roadblocks.’”

Givens was forced to sell off his company’s IP earlier than he desired despite having generated over \$1 million in revenue, “I licensed it to a competitor who did the same thing we did but for wine,” says Givens. “So, we ended up selling them all of our technology basically for nothing.” After his entrepreneurial venture, Givens became managing director for global startup accelerator Techstars. Meanwhile, Burks Solomon sold Partpic to Amazon in 2016 for a healthy exit and went to work for the global retailer for three years.

During that time, Burks Solomon began angel investing, writing small checks to support Black founders with big ideas. “I started to meet with Barry about what it would look like for us to do a more scaled solution to the problem that we saw when we were founders, where there are plenty of super talented entrepreneurs who were still having the same difficulties that we experienced in terms of raising capital,” Burks Solomon recalls.

Shared frustrations led the duo to vow that, if given the opportunity, they would

become the type of investors they wished they had encountered while raising capital for their ventures. The two, reflecting on their experiences, started drafting plans for a venture fund to address the structural barriers faced by Black entrepreneurs. Together, they envisioned a firm that would provide capital, operational expertise, and networks to help Black founders succeed while addressing systemic funding gaps and delivering strong returns for investors. That idea became a reality with the launch of Collab Capital in 2019.

“I think we both have a heart and passion for our people, so the work of Collab is very much steeped in who we are and our purpose to do good work on behalf of Black folks. So, in those core areas, we have a really strong alignment, which makes our partnership work.”



Jewel Burks Solomon
Co-Founder
Collab Capital

Now investing out of Fund II, Collab Capital continues its work as a Black-owned asset management firm dedicated to investing in Black-owned businesses. “I would like our firm to be used as the blueprint to invest in underserved communities,” says Givens. “I would like people to write about what we built and use that as a way to go into other communities – whether it is for women, LGBTQ, wherever the need is.”

And while conversations around diversity initiatives grow increasingly polarized, the Collab team will remain focused on its mission to invest in financial, human, and network capital to support, grow, and sustain Black-owned innovative businesses effectively. “It’s not that we are exclusive,” Burks Solomon points out. “It’s just that in our inclusion, we want to make sure that Black folks have an opportunity to play in the huge economic opportunities related to technology innovation.”