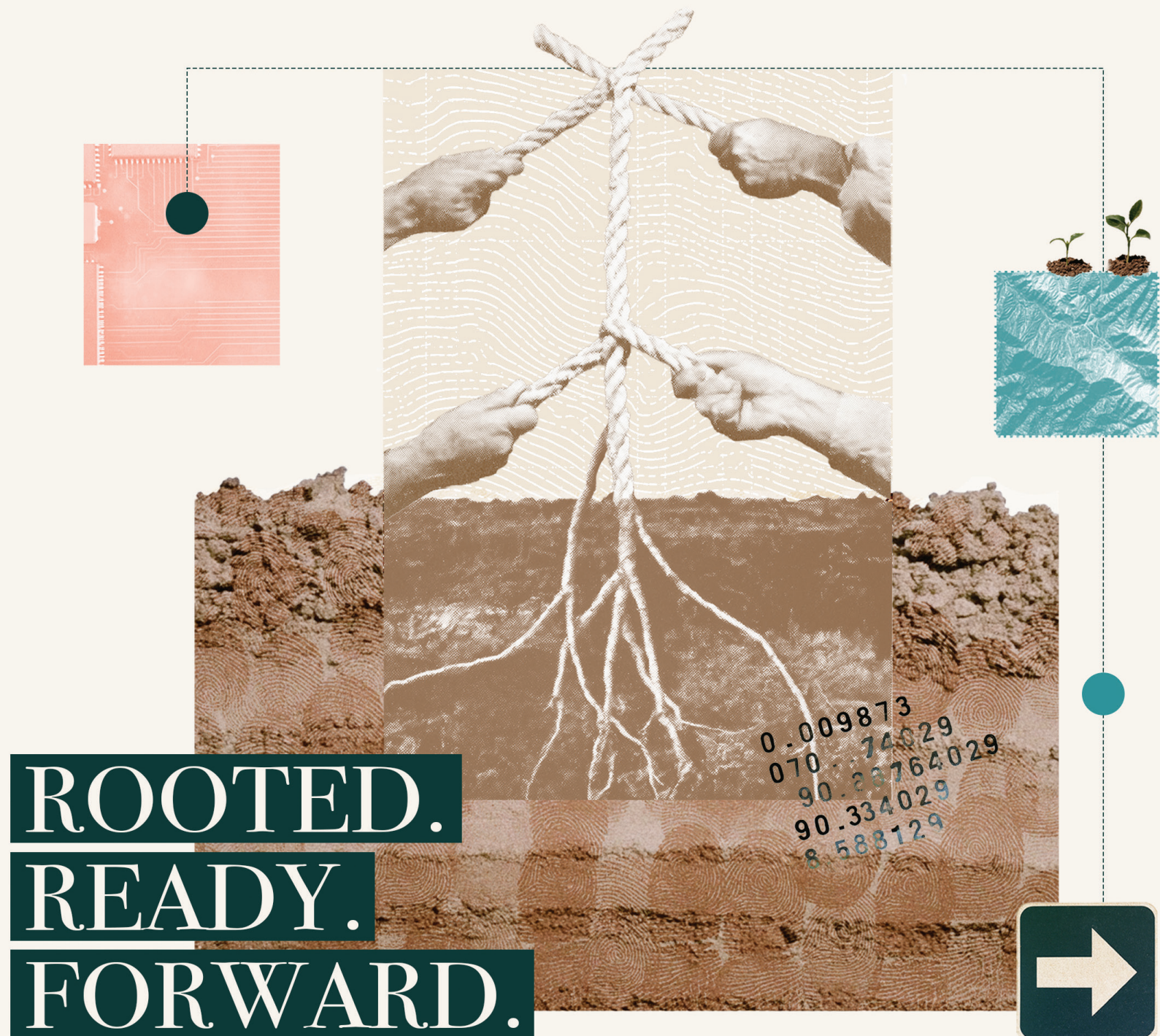


THE CATALYST

INAUGURAL ISSUE

— BII —

BII LEADERSHIP SUMMIT 2026



Proudly hosted by Trillium Asset Management at One Congress

A Community Built, Also for the Hard Days

Dear BII Portfolio Leaders,

Before I say welcome, I want to say thank you.

Thank you for making the time to be here. Thank you for continuing to show up for your teams, your customers, your communities, and one another. And thank you for trusting us enough to let BII see both the parts of your businesses you are proud of and the parts that are hard.

Over the last year, I've had the privilege of sitting down with many of you through annual meetings, check-ins, problem-solving conversations, and the occasional call where the plan we thought we had suddenly needed to change. I've walked away from a lot of those conversations thinking about the weight that leadership carries.

This has not been an easy year.

Across the portfolio, businesses have navigated shifting public policy, funding and revenue disruptions, rising costs, supply-chain pressure, longer customer payment cycles, constrained access to capital, and an environment that can seem to change before you have finished adjusting to the last thing.

But the spreadsheets and dashboards only tell part of the story.

They do not show the founder lying awake wondering how to make payroll work. They do not show the leader deciding how much uncertainty to share with a team that is already anxious. They do not show the emotional weight of making a decision that may be right for the business but painful for the people involved. They do not capture how exhausting it can be to project confidence when you are still trying to figure out the answer yourself.

I want to acknowledge that—not because today is meant to dwell on what is difficult. Quite the opposite. I want to acknowledge it because it makes what I have seen from this community even more meaningful.

Again and again, I have watched leaders adapt.

You have found new customers when old ones disappeared. You have rethought business models. You have pursued partnerships that were not part of the original plan. You have cut costs where you had to and invested where you believed it mattered. You have asked hard questions about your businesses, your teams, and your own leadership.

That has changed how I think about resilience.

We often use the word to mean endurance—the ability to take a hit, absorb it, and keep standing. But what I have seen this year is something much more active.

Resilience is the willingness to change without losing yourself in the process.

It is recognizing when the original plan no longer fits the world you are operating in. It is being stubborn about your purpose while remaining flexible about how you get there.

The goal is not simply to endure. It is to become better at navigating whatever comes next.

But there is another reason this gathering feels just as important to me.

Leadership can be lonely.

We sometimes talk around that fact because leaders are supposed to be the ones with answers. Your employees look to you. Your families look to you. Customers, investors, and communities may look to you. And when everyone is looking in your direction, it can be hard to admit that sometimes you are also just trying to figure it out.

One thing I hope this Summit does is create a space where you do not have to pretend otherwise.

You do not need to have every answer here. You do not need to make your business sound more polished than it is. You do not need to turn every challenge into a success story.

You can simply be honest.

Because somewhere in this room is probably another leader who has wrestled with the problem you are carrying. Maybe they have solved it. Maybe they have not. Sometimes just knowing somebody else understands the weight of it matters.

We tend to think about business infrastructure in terms of capital, systems, technology, talent, or expertise. All of those things matter.

But relationships are infrastructure too.

That is why I hope all of us approach today with generosity.

Share the lesson you learned the hard way. Ask the question you have been hesitant to ask. Talk to the person you do not already know. If somebody tells you about a challenge and you know someone who might help, make the introduction. If you have learned something useful, pass it along.

None of us benefits from figuring out the same things alone.

And that spirit matters because the businesses represented here are trying to do more than simply grow. Across this portfolio, you are creating jobs, building ownership, developing people, serving communities, solving real problems, and trying to ensure that the value your companies create reaches more people.

That work comes with tensions. Mission and business reality do not always line up neatly. Leadership often means living inside that complexity and making imperfect decisions without losing sight of why you started.

You do not have to resolve all of that today.

My hope for this Summit is much simpler.

I hope you learn something useful. I hope you meet someone you would not have met otherwise. I hope at least one conversation makes you think differently about your business. I hope you leave with a little more clarity about something that has been weighing on you.

And I hope you leave with a little more energy than you arrived with.

Most of all, I hope today reminds you that you are part of something larger than your own organization.

There are people in this room rooting for you. There are people here who can help you. There are people here who need something you have learned.

And there is a community around this work that becomes stronger every time we choose to invest in one another.

I feel incredibly lucky to be part of that community with you.

Welcome to BII's Leadership Summit.

Let's make the most of the day.

Warmly,

Keyur

Accountability Runs in Every Direction: What Impact Investing Asks of All of Us

Impact accountability often gets pictured as a scorecard: metrics, reports, a funder checking whether a borrower hits a target. At Boston Impact Initiative (BII), we see it differently. It's not something we impose on the organizations we invest in. It's a shared commitment running in every direction, between BII and the businesses we back, between BII and the funders who trust us with capital, and between all of us and the communities we aim to support.

Impact does not need to be rigid to be real. The goal isn't a strict rulebook everyone salutes, but honest agreements that help a partnership hold together when things get hard, and celebrate together when things go well.

One tool we use for this is the impact covenant: a mutually agreed set of commitments built into an investment, alongside the financial terms, naming what impact both sides are working toward and how they'll advance it together. Unlike a rigid loan covenant meant to catch a default, an **impact covenant** is meant to open a conversation, reviewed on a regular cadence, with room to adjust as circumstances change.

Accountability runs in every direction of this work. BII shows up for our portfolio with capital tailored to their journey, honest advising, and flexibility when circumstances shift. Entrepreneurs show up for BII and their communities by stewarding capital responsibly and staying aligned with the impact an investment is meant to support. Funders show up with patient, catalytic capital and philanthropy, allowing us to offer entrepreneurs the flexibility they need. Banks, institutions, and policymakers also shape whether community ownership and wealth building can truly take root. No single CDFI can do this alone.

Roundhead Brewing Company in Hyde Park shows what this looks like in practice. Founders Craig Panzer and Luis Espinoza initially planned to pay an hourly wage plus tips. The BII team encouraged them to go further and abolish tipping altogether, given its history of wage inequity by race and gender. BII didn't dictate the answer;

the two sides worked through it together and landed on a 20% administrative fee that empowers Roundhead to pay a living wage with any surplus shared across the whole team. As a result, Roundhead experiences very little staff turnover and has built a high-performing team. In recognition of their efforts and success, BII reduced the loan interest rate by 0.5%.

That's an impact covenant in action: not a clause that penalizes a business for falling short, but a standing commitment, paired with real advising, that keeps a shared goal like wage equity in view and gives both sides room to get there together.

Trust like this is what makes our capital unique. When entrepreneurs know BII will be honest and flexible, they bring us their challenges early, while there's still time to solve them together. When funders see accountability held with care, they're more willing to commit patient capital and philanthropy for the long haul, which is what allows good capital to flow to the people and places that need it most.

We hope everyone in our portfolio experiences accountability as mutual investment, not obligation. If you're building alongside BII, we hope you see yourself as a partner helping shape the future of our communities, not the recipient of a demand from an investor. That's a conversation we're glad to keep having, relationship by relationship, for as long as it takes to build the shared prosperity we all envision.

BY ALIANA PIÑEIRO
Chief Impact Officer at
Boston Impact Initiative



Growth That Creates Options: Building for Change Without Losing Your People

Growth is usually talked about as an outcome. More revenue. More customers. More employees. More capital. More market share. Those things matter. But lately, I have found myself thinking about growth through a different lens:

■ Is growth giving the business more options, or fewer?

That question feels increasingly important in an environment where the assumptions underneath our businesses can change quickly. Customers disappear. Funding environments tighten. Costs move. New technologies alter what is possible. Strategies that made perfect sense two years ago can suddenly become liabilities.

For many mission-driven entrepreneurs, those pressures are compounded by another reality: you are often trying to build differently while working with fewer resources. You may have less access to capital, thinner teams, and less room for error while also trying to create good jobs, invest in people, serve communities, and build an organization consistent with the values that brought you into the work.

That makes how you grow just as important as whether you grow. In this kind of environment, size alone does not create strength. Optionality does. The strongest businesses are not necessarily the ones that correctly predict what happens next. They are the ones with enough flexibility to respond when their prediction is wrong.

Good growth should create that flexibility. It should give you more customers rather than deeper dependence on one. More operating capacity rather than greater dependence on a founder. More financial flexibility rather than a larger fixed-cost burden. More ways to solve a problem rather than one increasingly complicated way of doing things.

■ Growth should expand the number of good decisions available to you.

That kind of optionality is built through the interaction of three things: people, process, and technology. When those three reinforce one another, organizations gain capacity. When one significantly outpaces the others, friction follows.

And right now, technology is moving extraordinarily fast. Artificial intelligence is rapidly lowering the cost of capabilities that would have been difficult for many smaller businesses to access even a few years ago. Research, analysis, writing, customer support, workflow automation, knowledge management, forecasting, sales enablement, and administrative work can increasingly be augmented without a massive technology budget or enterprise implementation.

For businesses that have historically had to accomplish a great deal with limited resources, that is a meaningful opportunity. AI is not only making some work cheaper or faster. It is giving businesses a relatively inexpensive sandbox for redesigning process.

A leader can now look at almost any recurring workflow and ask a simple question: Why are we still doing this this way?

Elsewhere in this issue, the piece on AI Champions offers a practical answer for how companies can begin that experimentation: find employees with deep expertise, give them meaningful workflows to



*The goal is not to perfectly
predict the future.
It is to build an organization
capable of meeting it —
without losing sight of the
people you are building it with.*

improve, measure the result, and turn what works into organizational capability. The central idea is important: AI creates the most value when it multiplies human expertise rather than attempts to replace it.

For mission-driven companies, that creates a deeper leadership challenge.

■ **Technology can change much faster than people can.**

A new tool can be deployed overnight. A workflow can be redesigned in a week. An organization does not transform on the same timeline.

That gap matters because technology alone does not create optionality. A company becomes more adaptable only when its people and processes can absorb what the technology makes possible.

People need to understand why something is changing. They need an opportunity to learn. They need clarity about what the change means for their role. They need permission to experiment and occasionally get something wrong. And they need managers who can distinguish between resistance that comes from fear and resistance that comes from legitimate operational insight.

Most importantly, they need to understand how they fit into the organization that is being built.

That does not mean avoiding hard decisions. A people-centered company still has to make difficult calls about roles, performance, cost structure, and where human effort creates the most value. Mission cannot become an excuse for preserving every process or every job exactly as it exists today. But neither should efficiency become an excuse for treating people as an afterthought.

■ **The how matters.**

For mission-driven businesses, change management is not simply about getting employees to adopt a new tool. It is about creating the conditions for people to participate meaningfully in how the work evolves.

That matters because employees often understand the work better than anyone else. They know where the friction lives, which shortcuts have accumulated over time, and which parts of a process can be automated versus which require judgment, empathy, trust, or context.

Inviting people into that redesign is not just consistent with a mission orientation. It can produce a better business.

Without that engagement, companies can easily create a strange form of organizational whiplash: new technology sitting on top of old behavior. The software changes. The process technically changes. But the way people work does not.

■ **That is not transformation. It is implementation.**

And I suspect this is where many companies will struggle over the next several years.

As access to AI becomes increasingly democratized, access itself becomes less of a competitive advantage. The harder advantage to replicate may be an organization that knows how to change.

■ **The constraint is shifting from what technology can do to what organizations can absorb.**

That makes change management much more than a large-company discipline or something we worry about during major restructurings. It becomes a core operating capability—and, increasingly, a source of optionality.

A business with stronger people, better processes, and adaptable technology has more ways to respond when conditions change. It can launch something new without rebuilding the entire organization. It can absorb a large customer without breaking the team. It can lose a key employee without losing everything that employee knew. It can use capital to accelerate an engine that already works rather than compensate for one that does not.

There are many forms of that flexibility. Financial optionality means having liquidity before you desperately need it. Commercial optionality means enough customer and revenue diversity that one lost relationship does not dictate your future. Operational optionality means creating systems that can flex as the company evolves. Technological optionality means developing the willingness and capability to experiment before change becomes mandatory.

And human optionality means building people who can grow into new responsibilities, exercise judgment, transfer knowledge, and help redesign the organization around them.

I increasingly believe that last category deserves much more attention. There is a temptation in periods of rapid technological change to view people primarily as a cost to optimize. For mission-driven businesses, that framing is particularly incomplete.

Your people are not simply an expense sitting beside process and technology. They are often where the mission becomes real. They are how customers experience the company. They carry institutional knowledge. They build relationships. They exercise judgment. And over time, they become the people capable of taking on responsibilities that once belonged only to the founder.

So the opportunity is not simply to ask how much work technology can remove.

■ **What becomes possible when technology gives our people more leverage?**

A salesperson can spend less time assembling information and more time understanding customers. A finance leader can spend less time compiling reports and more time interpreting what they mean. Institutional knowledge that once lived inside one person's head can become accessible to an entire team. Leaders can spend less time managing repetitive work and more time coaching, deciding, and building.

Those are not simply efficiency gains. They are investments in organizational capacity. And that brings us back to growth.

The businesses that are strongest five years from now may not be those that adopted the most technology or automated the most tasks. They may be the ones that became exceptionally good at translating change into greater capacity—while bringing their people along and being honest about the changes that could not be avoided.

For every leader in our portfolio, I think that creates a few questions worth returning to:

Is our growth creating more options or quietly eliminating them? Where are we still overly dependent on one person, one customer, one system, or one way of working? And are we investing as intentionally in our people's ability to adapt as we are in the tools we are asking them to use?

None of us knows exactly what the next several years will bring. That is precisely why optionality matters. The goal is not to perfectly predict the future.

It is to build an organization capable of meeting it—without losing sight of the people you are building it with.

BY KEYUR PATEL

Director of Portfolio
Management & Programs
at Boston Impact Initiative



Building On What We Built

At El Planeta during more than two decades, we have lived through the transformation of newspapers, the financial crisis, the rise of social media, the collapse of traditional advertising models, a global pandemic, the consolidation of regional banks, the digitalization of information and, now, the extraordinary era of artificial intelligence.

We are still here, and building.

El Planeta began as a local Spanish-language newspaper serving Massachusetts. Today, our family business has evolved into Tiempo Company, with El Planeta in Massachusetts, El Tiempo Latino in Washington, D.C., the national platform Tiempo News, and our in-house creative agency, Espacio Hub.

Since 2020, our industry and the communities we serve have faced one disruption after another. Through all of them, Boston Impact Initiative has been there, not only understanding our numbers, but understanding why our work matters. As an entrepreneur, knowing that your financial partner understands the role your company plays in the community makes you feel less alone when difficult decisions have to be made.

And that matters for growth. If a business is important to the community it serves, sustainability cannot be the finish line. It has to create the conditions to keep adapting, investing and growing.

Capital is capital on a spreadsheet, but in the real world, the relationship between an entrepreneur and a financial institution can influence whether a company merely survives a difficult period and at the same time has enough confidence and flexibility to reinvent itself.

BII's philosophy of combining different forms of capital with knowledge, relationships and technical support reflects precisely the kind of ecosystem that can be especially important for businesses operating in communities historically underserved by conventional finance.

We love newspapers, and we still print. Actually, we most likely produced the broadsheet you are reading right now. However, we are not in the newspaper business.

Yes, our foundation is based on trust, reputation and reliable journalism.

Today, we are a storytelling company producing local stories in Massachusetts, D.C., Maryland and Virginia that help decode the world around us. Our audiences value what we create, and our clients and sponsors love being part of that ecosystem.

We learned to protect our mission while navigating a new world of formats. That has meant making very practical choices: investing more in the journalism, storytelling, technology and commercial capabilities that can travel across all of them.

With Marcos, my nephew as shareholder and replacing me as CEO, made me become comfortable making decisions that initially felt like retreat. Everything feels personal because, in many ways, it is personal.

But sustainability sometimes requires saying no to something that worked for 15 years so that you can say yes to something that may work for the next 15. Marcos has also taught me that succession is about giving them enough room to build on what worked and question what no longer does.

I used to live with the mantra question: How do we preserve what we built? And Marcos taught me to add an additional question to that mantra: What are we trying to build next? That perspective has been enormously important for my business life, and for the life of my business.

Our team now includes people from more than seven nationalities, 51% women, and a growing majority of our employees are members of Generation Z.

Entrepreneurs understandably spend a great deal of time looking for capital; but my experience has taught me to pay equal attention to who is providing that capital.

The best financial relationships are tested when circumstances become complicated. Regional-bank consolidation in Massachusetts and changes in conventional lending have left many small businesses and community organizations with fewer institutions that understand them. For companies like ours, mission-oriented investors can occupy an important space between traditional finance and philanthropy: expecting businesses to perform while also recognizing the economic and community value we create. BII provides us the air to breathe long enough to adapt, make difficult decisions, grow and begin building the next version of the company.

BY JAVIER MARIN

Founder and Executive Chairman,
and co-owner of El Planeta /
Tiempo Company. Author of the
book "Live from America: How
Latino TV conquered the U.S."



AI Simplified: How To Amplify Your Best Employees



Most business owners I speak with are asking some version of the same question: What AI platform should we use? New features appear every week, and the possibilities seem to expand faster than any leadership team can evaluate them. For traditional software, the playbook was relatively straightforward: choose the best available tool, roll it out, and train everyone to use it. AI changes that playbook, and understanding why gives business owners a much clearer place to start.

Traditional business software is largely designed to standardize how work gets done. A CRM gives salespeople a common system to follow. An ERP creates a shared process across the organization. Training employees means teaching them how to operate within that system.

AI is different because the person using it plays a much bigger role in determining what it can accomplish. Give the same AI tool to two employees working on the same task and they can produce very different results. The employee who understands the work deeply knows what context to provide, what a good result looks like, what the AI is missing, and where their own judgment still matters. The technology may be the same, but the value it creates can be drastically different.

That reframes the starting question: which employees have expertise worth multiplying? Give those employees the ability to redesign how their work gets done with AI, and they become AI Champions. Their expertise guides the technology, their experiments reveal where AI creates real value, and what they build can eventually help the rest of the organization work better.

An AI Champion is an employee who combines deep knowledge of the work with the curiosity and judgment needed to improve that work using AI.

This is the foundation of the Champion model: people who are good at their jobs get a say in how AI changes their work.

CORE PROCESS

- Identify one trusted employee with deep expertise.
- Choose one recurring, time-consuming workflow.
- Record how long it currently takes and what a good result looks like.
- Test AI while keeping human review.
- Measure, document, and share what works.

■ Finding your AI Champions

An AI Champion combines deep expertise with sound judgment, curiosity, and follow-through. They understand an important part of the business from the inside: which steps take too long, what tends to create problems, and which details matter to the final result. Crucially, they can define what good looks like for a piece of work and reliably judge whether an AI has achieved it. When something feels unnecessarily difficult, they start wondering how it could work better and have the persistence to turn that curiosity into something useful.

For an owner deciding where to start, look for the person you trust to catch when something is wrong, explain what a good result is, and keep looking for ways to improve the work.

These people make strong Champions because their existing expertise gives AI something valuable to amplify. With access to AI, some guidance, and one real problem to solve, they can begin connecting what the technology can do with what the business needs.

■ Let the Champion learn through real work

Once you have identified a Champion, give them one recurring piece of work with a clear beginning and end, in other words, one workflow to improve. Choose something they already know deeply: preparing a client proposal, researching prospects, reconciling financial data, reviewing documents, responding to customers, or producing a recurring management report. The strongest starting points are tasks that happen frequently and take meaningful time. Before changing it, capture the starting point: how long the task takes today, how often it happens, and what a good result looks like. That gives the Champion something concrete to improve and the business something concrete to measure.

Before testing a workflow, confirm what information can safely be entered into the selected AI tool. Customer data, confidential documents, financial information, and personally identifiable information may require additional safeguards or approved systems.

An AI Champion working in business development regularly prepared proposals after client meetings. He knew exactly what a strong proposal required: which of 13 templates fit the opportunity, how the executive summary should connect the client's needs to the offer, which proof points belonged in the document, and what the finished proposal should look like. He used that expertise to build an AI workflow that turned meeting notes into a branded proposal, then created his own validation checklist to review the AI's work before anything reached a client. In real use, a process that had taken between 30 and 75 minutes could produce a proposal draft in about a minute, leaving him to focus his time on judgment, refinement, and the client relationship.

Another AI Champion, working in finance, started with a recurring executive reporting process. Each cycle required pulling information together from Notion, Google Sheets, and meeting transcripts. He gradually built a workflow that brought those sources together, generated the report, and routed it for human review before publication.

The finished workflow saved about 15 hours of manual effort per reporting cycle while also making the output more consistent. A second workflow he helped build for forecast data saved the revenue team about 10 hours each month.

The pattern is simple: both applied AI to a recurring task, kept human review where it mattered, and measured the improvement.

These Champions develop what I think of as AI muscle memory by improving work they already understand. With each experiment, they learn what context AI needs, where it performs well, and where their own judgment matters most. After enough practice, they start seeing opportunities naturally. They can look at a piece of work and recognize where AI could accelerate a step, where a process could be redesigned, and where human judgment creates the most value.

■ Turn individual expertise into company capability

The next step is to make what the Champion built useful beyond their own role. That means documenting the workflow well enough for someone else to use it. If their team can use it successfully, the company has crossed an important threshold: expertise that once lived mainly with one person has started becoming a multiplying capability.

Once a workflow works for other people, its value begins to multiply across the organization. A Champion may initially save several hours a week through one improvement. As colleagues begin using the same workflow, those gains spread across the team. Over time, the company can build a simple internal library of proven workflows for recurring work such as using AI to research prospects, prepare reports, and review information. The Champion's role grows with that process, from improving their own work to maintaining what they have built, identifying new opportunities, and helping others apply what works.

Bringing these workflows into the open also helps address shadow AI: employees using AI tools and creating AI-assisted ways of working without the company having visibility into what is being used or how. By giving that experimentation a supported path through AI Champions, the company gains visibility into which tools are being used, what workflows are changing, and which experiments are producing value. Useful solutions can then be reviewed, documented, and shared across the organization.

Visible results create a natural path for AI adoption. When employees see a colleague complete a frustrating task faster or produce a better result, the conversation quickly becomes practical: "How did you do that?" and "Could we use that here?" Curiosity brings more people into the process, and new Champions emerge as employees spot opportunities in their own work.

That approach also sends a clear message to employees: your expertise is valuable, and AI gives you a way to extend its impact. As Champions turn what they know into workflows others can use, their experience begins shaping how the organization works more broadly. AI becomes a multiplier of human expertise.

■ Build the capability to keep finding the next opportunity

The lasting advantage is having people inside the business who can keep finding the next valuable AI opportunity and turn what they learn into something the organization can use.

The process is simple: *find expertise worth multiplying, improve one real workflow, and share what works.* As that cycle repeats, employees help shape how AI changes the business and the company becomes better at finding the next opportunity.

BY BOZ VITANOVA
Founder & CEO
at TeamLift



An AI Champion is an employee who combines deep knowledge of the work with the curiosity and judgment needed to improve that work using AI.

Making the Difficult Look Easy

Businesses usually describe themselves through what they sell: a product, a service, a program, or a completed project. That description is necessary, but often incomplete. Customers may choose a business not only because of what it delivers, but because of everything surrounding that delivery: specialized knowledge, trusted relationships, cultural understanding, original thinking, credibility, judgment, and the ability to solve problems that were never included in the original request.

That raises an important question:

What does your business provide that customers rely on, but rarely see named?

This appears across industries. A community organization may be funded to deliver a program, while the institution supporting it also depends on years of trust with the people it hopes to reach. A contractor may be hired to complete a project, but the customer also benefits from knowledge of suppliers, regulations, sequencing, and potential problems. In both cases, the formal deliverable is only one part of the exchange.

When the rest remains invisible, it is difficult to manage. A business cannot decide whether a contribution belongs within its core service, could become a separate offering, requires protection, or is being provided freely for a strategic or mission-related reason if it has never clearly identified it. Instead, the additional contribution simply becomes “what we do,” a phrase that can hide unpaid effort and unrecognized value.

Because these capabilities feel familiar inside the business, they can appear effortless from the outside. Years of experience become a quick answer. A carefully developed relationship becomes an introduction. Original thinking becomes part of a proposal. The team solves a complicated problem before it reaches the customer, so the customer never sees the complexity that was removed. The business becomes exceptionally useful while appearing deceptively simple.

The result is not only a pricing problem. It can also affect the balance of power in a business relationship. A larger customer, institution, or corporate partner may appear to hold most of the leverage because it controls the contract or budget. Yet it may depend on knowledge, relationships, cultural understanding, community credibility, or proximity to customers that it does not possess. Recognizing those capabilities as business value changes the way a company enters the relationship. It brings something the other party needs and may not be able to reproduce.

That distinction carries greater commercial weight now. Price, quality, and convenience remain fundamental, but customers and institutions also consider who they buy from, how a business operates, and whether its claims feel credible. As Millennials and Gen Z take on more purchasing and organizational decision-making power, values alignment, cultural authenticity, and community credibility increasingly influence

how businesses are evaluated. These factors may not decide every purchase, but they can strengthen trust and preference when the core offer is already competitive.

This is not an argument for placing a fee on every idea, conversation, or introduction. Sharing knowledge can build trust and strengthen a partnership. But there is a meaningful difference between generosity that is chosen and additional work that has quietly become expected. The decision may still be to provide something freely. The difference is that the decision becomes deliberate.

Recognizing this value begins by paying attention. What do customers request before the work officially begins? What problems do they bring back after a project is complete? What do they say when recommending the business? Employees can also identify which requests require more effort than customers realize and which forms of support have become standard without ever being discussed.

Once the complete contribution is visible, the business can separate the core deliverable from the differentiated capabilities surrounding it. The product or service must remain competitive on quality, price, and usefulness. Around it may sit specialized expertise, customization, implementation support, access, trust, or insight. Those capabilities do not all require the same response, but each deserves a decision.

That creates four possible choices: package, price, protect, or deploy strategically. Some capabilities should be described more clearly within the core offer so customers understand what they are receiving. Some should be priced separately. Some require limits or protection, particularly when they depend on sensitive relationships, proprietary knowledge, or substantial staff time. Others may be used strategically to enter a market, strengthen a partnership, or advance the company's mission. The point is not to monetize everything. It is to stop giving everything the same treatment.

This is where business development becomes more than finding customers. It helps a company understand why people choose it, what makes it difficult to replace, and how those strengths should shape its services, partnerships, and revenue model. Trust, cultural understanding, and judgment may not appear on an invoice, but they can determine whether the work succeeds and whether a customer returns.

The invoice may name the product or service. It rarely names the full reason the customer chose you. The work is to understand what else people rely on, decide how that value belongs in the business, and stop allowing it to remain invisible by default.

What do people rely on you for beyond what they officially hire you to do, and are you treating that value with the attention it deserves?

BY WALTHER MORALES RIOS
Senior Program Manager
at Boston Impact Initiative



THE CATALYST PORTFOLIO RESOURCE GUIDE



BII Technical Assistance Offerings. Expertise, connections, and practical resources for portfolio companies

BII's relationship with its portfolio companies extends beyond capital. Our Technical Assistance offerings connect leaders with specialized expertise, trusted service providers, business coaching, grant opportunities, and peer relationships. These resources build on the knowledge already inside each organization and make additional support easier to access as priorities and opportunities evolve.

01

BUSINESS COACHING

Focused guidance aligned with each company's stage, priorities, and circumstances

BII offers business coaching that responds to the priorities leaders are actively working through. Areas of focus may include growth strategy, business development and sales, go-to-market planning, capital raising, and strengthening how leaders communicate their business and investment narrative.

COMMON AREAS

Growth strategy; business development and sales; go-to-market planning; capital raising; and narrative-building

HOW TO ACCESS

Speak with your primary BII contact about current opportunities and the support that may be most useful

GREENEDGE ACCELERATOR:

BII's GreenEdge Accelerator offers no-cost coaching for established Massachusetts businesses interested in entering or expanding within the clean-energy economy. The program focuses on operations, pricing, financial organization, internal procurement and contract readiness.

Learn more about GreenEdge at bostonimpact.org/greenedge-accelerator

02

CATALYTIC GRANT POOL

Targeted funding for important business priorities

The Catalytic Grant Pool helps eligible portfolio organizations access vetted third-party services that advance important business priorities. Portfolio companies have used this support for:

- HR consulting, leadership coaching, and workplace culture
- Bookkeeping, fractional CFO services, and stronger financial controls
- AI workflow training and operational improvements
- Marketing strategy, sales development, and brand positioning

ELIGIBILITY

Active BII portfolio organizations in good standing. Awards are competitive, and eligibility and award parameters may vary.

NEXT CYCLE

Planned for 2027.

HOW TO LEARN MORE

Speak with your primary BII contact about current opportunities and the support that may be most useful.

03

BII CONVENINGS

Relationships, peer exchange, and visibility across the portfolio community

BII convenings create intentional opportunities for portfolio leaders to build relationships, exchange practical knowledge, and increase visibility across the broader BII community.

SUMMER GATHERING

BII's annual fundraising event, featuring portfolio-company voices and opportunities for peer and community connection.

LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

Held approximately every 12–18 months for deeper exchange among portfolio leaders. Companies help shape the topics and format around the realities they are navigating.

STAY INFORMED

Watch for portfolio communications or speak with your primary BII contact.

04

TRUSTED SERVICE PROVIDERS

Specialized support from diverse, culturally competent, and mission-aligned providers

BII maintains a curated network of providers who understand the operational realities of impact-driven organizations.

PROVIDER	AREAS OF SUPPORT	CONTACT
SmartStartupHR	HR strategy, workplace culture, and people operations	smartstartupphr.com Tasha Kitty info@smartstartupphr.com
HRW Lawyers	Complex employment and labor matters requiring support beyond AIM's HR Hotline	hrwlawyers.com Tierra Jenkins tjenkins@hrwlawyers.com Charlotte M. Petilla cpetilla@hrwlawyers.com
TeamLift	AI adoption, workflow automation, and operational efficiency	teamlift.co Boz Vitanova boz@teamlift.co

05

AIM PARTNERSHIP

Employer guidance, workplace resources, and business connections

BII portfolio companies have access to membership benefits through the Associated Industries of Massachusetts (AIM), one of the state's largest employer associations.

AVAILABLE SUPPORT	A \$2,500 grant for one-on-one support during the company's time in the BII portfolio
SERVICES	HR advising, employment and compliance guidance, workplace training, legal guidance on employment matters, and benchmarking resources
BUSINESS CONNECTIONS	Procurement guidance and introductions to companies within AIM's corporate network
GENERAL CONTACT	Julie Ferro · jferro@aimnet.org
HR SOLUTIONS	Kyle Pardo · kpardo@aimhrsolutions.com

06

EXTERNAL GRANT SUPPORT

Guidance on relevant public and philanthropic opportunities

The resources listed to the right provide a starting point for businesses seeking funding for employee training, equipment, facilities, clean energy, environmental projects, or research and development. Program availability, eligibility, and deadlines may change, so review the current requirements on each website.

HOW TO LEARN MORE

Speak with your primary BII contact about current opportunities and the support that may be most useful.

TRAINING & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Massachusetts: Workforce Training Fund Express offers reimbursement for approved employee training.
Rhode Island: Real Jobs Rhode Island.
Connecticut: Industry-Driven Skills Training Fund.

EQUIPMENT, FACILITIES & MANUFACTURING

Massachusetts Business and Innovation Programs provides a central list of programs supporting equipment purchases, facilities, manufacturing, and other capital needs.

CLEAN ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT & AGRICULTURE

Use the EEA Grants Navigator for energy, environmental, and agricultural programs. The MassDEP Grants and Financial Resources directory includes recycling, waste-reduction, climate, and environmental funding.

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

America's Seed Fund through SBIR and STTR provides competitive funding for eligible small businesses developing scientific or technological innovations with commercial potential.

BROAD GRANT SEARCH

Search current federal opportunities through Grants.gov and Massachusetts opportunities through the Community Grant Finder.

HOW BII CAN HELP

BII can help portfolio companies:

- Identify relevant grant opportunities
- Determine whether a program fits the proposed project
- Understand eligible expenses and application requirements
- Prepare supporting information and documentation
- Develop a system for tracking applications and deadlines

BEFORE APPLYING

Confirm that the grant covers the expenses your business is planning, whether matching funds are required, and whether the program reimburses expenses or provides funding in advance. Applicants should also understand any procurement requirements or long-term conditions attached to grant-funded purchases.

HOW TO ACCESS SUPPORT:

Begin with the priority or opportunity in front of you

Start with your primary BII contact. Share the priority or opportunity you are working on, and the BII team will help connect you with the most relevant resource, provider, or relationship.

BOSTON IMPACT INITIATIVE • bostonimpact.org

BII PORTFOLIO COMPANIES

88 ACRES | Food & Agriculture | Canton, MA

88 Acres is an artisan food company that produces healthy snacks free of the top eight food allergens. Their Canton-based manufacturing center generates good jobs. The enterprise currently employs over 70 people. They also prioritize ingredient sourcing from New England-based farmers and waste-reduction practices. The BII Fund made its initial investment in 2017. In 2019 and 2025, BII made follow-on investments to expand their business.

www.88acres.com

ALL IN ENERGY | Environment & Energy | Boston, MA

All In Energy is a Boston-based nonprofit organization that seeks to accelerate an inclusive, clean energy economy for underserved communities in Massachusetts. They are also increasing energy sector job opportunities for diverse talent through their internship program with local universities and community colleges. In 2021, BII made a term loan to All In Energy to grow their team and in 2022, BII provided a line of credit to assist the organization with contract financing.

www.allinenergy.org

AND STILL WE RISE | Healthcare & Healthtech | Boston, MA

ASWR provides liberation focused therapy services to individuals and communities who, historically, are overlooked or marginalized by the mental health field — women, BIPOC, queer, and trans folks. ASWR also provides consulting services to public and private organizations seeking to further their inclusion and belonging efforts, provide support to marginalized members, and/or reckon with events of racism, bias, or violence. ASWR's stated aim is to dismantle oppressive systems, liberate marginalized people and provide culturally affirming psychotherapy, consultation, and life-coaching services. In 2023, BII provided a term loan to refinance debt.

www.andstillwerise.us

AYNI INSTITUTE | Real Estate | Revere, MA

Ayni Institute is a training and research institute for movements and organizations in social change that are seeking to bring about a more reciprocal world. They are dedicated to developing frameworks, material, and content that can help social change organizations and leaders develop strategy and become resilient leaders. They also work to protect and expand the knowledge of indigenous wisdom, reciprocity, and memory, particularly from Latin America, through trainings and other cultural preservation projects. The word Ayni means “reciprocity” in Aymara, an indigenous language from the Andean region of South America. In 2024, BII Fund II provided real estate-backed financing to support the Ayni Institute in purchasing a building to host their training and expand future programming.

www.ayni.institute

BEANTOWN BUILDERS | Real Estate | Boston, MA

Beantown Builders is a Brockton-based, Black-owned general contracting firm that specializes in residential remodeling projects in the Greater Boston area. The company works with first-time homebuyers who take 203K loans to remodel the homes, which are often distressed properties. Their work makes home ownership and home improvement accessible to more families. In 2021, BII made a term loan to Beantown Builders to refinance debt and support company growth.

www.beantownbuilders.com

BONTERRA | Education & Edtech | Austin, TX

WeSpire is a Software-as-a-Service (“SaaS”) platform that utilizes behavioral science as well as social and game mechanics to design, run, and measure customized programs and actions for employee engagement spanning across sustainability, civic-service, wellness, and human resource functions. WeSpire's platform measures business and environmental impact metrics and analytics in real time, and generates reports, allowing employees and managers to see the impacts of their actions. WeSpire joined Bonterra in 2023, expanding Bonterra's suite of solutions of employee engagement. In 2017, BII Fund made a convertible preferred investment in the platform to ensure that its diversity/inclusion module has the quality of content and influence that can transform the way corporate and nonprofit employees think about racial and economic justice.

www.bonterratech.com

BOSTON WHILE BLACK | Professional Services | Boston, MA

Boston While Black is a membership network for Black professionals, entrepreneurs and students — native or new to Boston — who are seeking connection and community. It is designed to provide a vital infrastructure for belonging; make space for Black experiences, community and culture; and help members “find their tribe,” grow their networks and enjoy the city. Started during the COVID-19 pandemic, it has grown to include young professionals, community activists, business leaders, creatives, politicians and some of Boston's largest employers. Boston While Black hosts a digital community; small, intimate events; and a wide range of curated programming, including speakers, cultural experiences, neighborhood tours and town halls; it also provides access to leadership programs. BII Fund II invested in the network in 2023 to support its growth.

www.bostonwhileblack.com

CAREACADEMY | Education & Edtech | Boston, MA

CareAcademy provides professional and family caregivers with high-quality online training classes to help deliver the best care to older adults with the support, guidance and compassion needed to improve their quality of life. The platform makes it easier for caregivers to upskill and continue their education to better serve clients and advance their careers. Founder Helen Adeosun is committed to serving caregivers who are often women of color and immigrants. Fund I first invested in 2018; Fund II made follow-on investments in 2022 and 2025.

www.careacademy.com

CARIBBEAN INTEGRATION COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (CICD) | Real Estate | Mattapan, MA

Caribbean Integration Community Development (CICD) is a non-profit housing and community development organization that creates and maintains affordable housing in areas of Boston with large numbers of people of Caribbean descent. The organization's first affordable housing development is Cote Village in Mattapan, which will be permanently affordable and meet LEED Silver Sustainability Standards. In 2021, BII extended a line of credit to CICD to smooth cash flows and facilitate team growth. In 2026, BII extended a pre-development loan to support CICD's Blue Hills project — a 48-unit, 100% affordable senior apartment building in Mattapan designed to keep long-time residents rooted in the community they've built.

www.cicdofboston.org

CASABE FRUIT STORE AND DELICATESSEN | Food & Agriculture | Lawrence, MA

At the time of the original investment, Casabe was an alternative to the traditional bodegas of Lawrence, offering fresh and durable food, with conventional and organic options that would accept payments from Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) cards. In 2023, Casabe opened a second location at Lawrence General Hospital, which has now become their primary location. In 2021, BII partnered with the Harvard Business School Impact Fund to provide a term loan for startup working capital to the newly opened store.

www.casabe-store.com

CERO COOPERATIVE | Environment & Energy | Boston, MA

CERO is a worker-owned cooperative that collects commercial compost in the greater Boston area and creates business ownership and earning opportunity for the people of color among the working-class community. CERO's waste separation system increases reclamation and sale of clean paper, plastics, metals, waste vegetable oil and organic food waste, reducing customer trash sent to landfill and incinerators by 50 percent or more. CERO has been a long-time portfolio member of the Boston Impact Initiative LLC. In 2017, BII Fund provided a loan for working capital. www.cero.coop

COLORFUL RESILIENCE | Mental Health | Springfield, MA

Colorful Resilience is an outpatient mental health services practice specializing in serving the BIPOC, LGBT+, immigrant, and first-generation communities, as well as their allies. The practice is distinguished by its commitment to cultural competency and its focus on employee well-being and professional development. Colorful Resilience provides a clear pathway for early practitioners, starting as interns and progressing towards training, certification, licensure, and potentially launching their own practice. The company views itself as a training facility and incubator for the mental health industry, which is known for high burnout and turnover rates. BII invested in Colorful Resilience in July 2025 through a Term Loan. www.colorfulresilience.com

COOPERATIVE FUND OF THE NORTHEAST (CFNE) | Financial Services | Watertown, MA

The Cooperative Fund of the Northeast (CFNE) is a community development loan fund that facilitates socially responsible investing in cooperatives, community-oriented nonprofits, and worker-owned businesses in New England and New York. CFNE provides financial products, business assistance, and investment opportunities that promote socially conscious enterprise. In 2013, Boston Impact Initiative became an investor in CFNE's Social Investment Fund, as well as a frequent co-investor in direct lending to cooperatives. www.cooperativefund.org

CPA MA (Community Purchasing Alliance MA) | Professional Services | Boston, MA

Community Purchasing Alliance (CPA MA) is a purchasing cooperative that leverages the buying power of institutions to negotiate and drive down costs of vendors and service providers, while steering spending to diverse vendors using sustainable practices for their members. Their members consist of faith-based institutions, schools, affordable housing, and other nonprofits. BII Fund II invested in CPA MA in 2023. www.cpa.coop/massachusetts

DEMOCRACY BREWING | Food & Agriculture | Boston, MA

When BII invested in Democracy Brewing, they were a small worker-owned cooperative, start-up brewery with a tasting room in South Boston. Now, they have a tap room and restaurant in Downtown Boston, a restaurant and bar in East Boston, and are building a new brewery and event space in Lewiston, ME. In 2017, Fund I purchased Direct Public Offering shares. www.democracybrewing.com

DORCHESTER FOOD CO-OP | Food & Agriculture | Dorchester, MA

The Dorchester Food Co-op is a community and worker-owned cooperative market that provides economic opportunity and healthy affordable food. The Co-op is a space for education and cultural activities, and serves as a dynamic center for healthy eating and sustainable living in Dorchester. In 2013, BII provided grant funding to support the completion of a feasibility study and in 2015 purchased Direct Public Offering shares. www.dorchesterfoodcoop.com

EAST BOSTON NEIGHBORHOOD TRUST | Real Estate | East Boston, MA

East Boston Neighborhood Trust is a real estate project in East Boston that created a Mixed-Income Neighborhood Trust (MINT) to acquire and manage 114 units of affordable and workforce housing for people earning the area median income and below at a time when housing stabilization was desperately needed in Boston's rapidly gentrifying neighborhood. The over \$50 million transaction brought together the City of Boston, traditional banks, impact investors, foundations, and individual investors to provide a wide range of affordability for families in East Boston. In 2022, Fund II provided a term loan for the project. www.ebcdbc.com

ECO AUTO | Environment & Energy | Tewksbury, MA

Husband and wife, Al and Michelle Salas, founded Eco Auto in 2022 to address the growing demand for consumers wanting to enter the Electric Vehicle market, but who were deterred by the high barriers to ownership. Eco Auto is committed to lowering the high costs associated with purchasing and owning Electric Vehicles (EV) and plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEV), by carrying a diverse inventory of certified pre-owned vehicles, affordably installing at home charging stations, and helping new buyers navigate current local and federal rebates and incentives available to electric vehicles drivers. Fund II made an investment in Eco Auto in 2024 and a follow-on investment in 2025 to support business growth. www.myeecoauto.com

EL PLANETA | Arts, Culture, & Media | Boston, MA

El Planeta covers local news, events, resources, and community life in Boston and across New England for the Latino community. It reaches more than 3.8 million monthly digital impressions across its digital channels. During the COVID-19 pandemic, El Planeta became a crucial community resource, forging new partnerships and expanding its audience across New England to students, young professionals, and established families. El Planeta serves as an essential link between organizations, companies, government agencies, and the Latino community, while providing critical news coverage of historically underrepresented communities. In 2020, Fund I provided a line of credit to El Planeta, and in 2023, Fund II provided a growth loan to support the organization's expansion. www.elplaneta.com

EMVISION PRODUCTIONS | Arts, Culture, & Media | Swampscott, MA

EmVision Productions creates video content that helps clients communicate their organization's social impact. Co-founder Tariana V. Little holds a DrPH from Harvard, focusing on communications and innovation and this expertise informs their Social Impact Storytelling™ framework. Their clients include nonprofits, social enterprises, government agencies, and corporations. In 2021, BII provided a term loan to finance a production vehicle, equipment and team growth. www.em.vision

FIVE STAR PLATING | Manufacturing | Lawrence, MA

Five Star Plating (FSP) provides metal finishing services (anodizing, hard coat, chromate conversion, zinc plating and powder coating) to commercial sheet metal fabricators and machine shops serving a variety of industries including medical, industrial, telecommunications, electronics, defense/aerospace and food services. It is located in Lawrence, and provides competitive job opportunities to the local community. In 2019, BII Fund provided Five Star Plating with a loan to facilitate this growth. Five Star Plating exited the portfolio in 2026. www.fivestarplating.com

FLORRENT | Environment & Energy | Amherst, MA

Florrent is a deep-tech company innovating to design and build the next generation of high energy density ultracapacitors that will stabilize electrical grids and address critical bottlenecks for the adoption of renewable energies, electric vehicles and net-zero buildings. Its ultracapacitors are manufactured in Western Massachusetts from abundant and regenerative biomass, grown domestically in the U.S. by Black and Indigenous farmers. Fund II has provided three rounds of convertible debt and preferred equity financing from 2023 to 2025 to support Florrent's product/market validation, which we expect will successfully commercialize its innovative battery technology. www.florrent.com

FUTURO MEDIA GROUP | Arts, Culture, & Media | New York, NY

Futuro Media creates multimedia content for and about underrepresented communities in an increasingly diverse world. Founder Maria Hinojosa is an award-winning news anchor and reporter who has covered America's untold stories for over two decades. In 2019, BII Fund I provided a bridge loan to FMG and in 2020, we provided a term loan and a line of credit for growth and navigation of funding cycles. In 2025, Fund II provided a loan to launch Futuro+, a membership-based service. www.futuromediagroup.org

HILLSIDE HARVEST | Food & Agriculture | Boston, MA

Hillside Harvest is a Caribbean-American natural condiment brand that sells at regional grocery stores, local farmers markets, direct-to-consumer on their website, and even at Fenway Park! Hillside Harvest has developed three hot sauce flavors and two Jamaican jerk marinades. Founder Kamaal Jarrett's vision was to create a brand that would bring the Caribbean flavors of his heritage out of the specialty international markets and into mainstream supermarket aisles. In 2022, BII partnered with other investors to make a loan to Hillside Harvest with a revenue-based repayment structure to fuel the company's early growth. www.hillsidesauce.com

HOUSING CORP OF ARLINGTON (HCA) | Real Estate | Arlington, MA

Housing Corporation of Arlington (HCA) is a well-established non-profit community development corporation dedicated to creating and preserving affordable housing in Arlington, Massachusetts. HCA operates comprehensive housing programs including affordable housing development and management, homelessness prevention services, and energy efficiency upgrades for low-income homeowners. The organization has built strong community relationships and successfully completed LIHTC deals throughout its history. In September 2025, BII provided subordinated debt financing to support HCA's acquisition of 59 affordable housing units at 840-846 Massachusetts Avenue and 1517 Newman Way, preserving critical Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH) in a gentrifying area. This tenant-driven acquisition serves residents across affordability levels from 30% to 80% AMI and demonstrates how strategic community partnerships can prevent displacement while building resident power through initiatives like HCA's Tenant Council. www.housingcorporarlington.org

KINGSTOWN GREEN CO-OP | Manufacturing | Hartford, CT

Kingstown Green Inc. is a small worker-owned manufacturing co-op located in Hartford, CT, that produces eco-friendly, handcrafted caskets that are solid wood and biodegradable. Kingstown Green is a member of the Green Burial Council, a non-profit organization approved by the Federal Trade Commission to regulate the green sector of the funeral industry. The caskets have received the highest rating given by the Green Burial Council. www.kingstowngreencocasket.com

MATHTALK | Education & Edtech | Cambridge, MA

MathTalk is a community-focused education technology public benefit corporation based in Cambridge. Using playful installations, technology and books, MathTalk promotes early math and language development among children. It uses the latest scientific research on cognitive development and is rooted in the cultures of local communities of color. In 2019, Fund I made an investment to enable the company to further develop its Mathscapes and mobile app. In 2022, Fund II made a follow-on investment to support growth and in 2023, we provided a bridge loan against a grant to smooth cash flows. www.math-talk.com

MEETCAREGIVERS | Healthcare & Healthtech | Newton, MA

MeetCaregivers connects families seeking at home care providers with pre-screened and qualified caregivers using technology enabled services to make the process safe and easy for families and clinicians. MeetCaregivers' technology uses a match feature algorithm to ensure the right fit for client and clinicians. Additionally, the company is now covered by Medicare and can serve more seniors and their families. In 2019, Fund I provided growth capital to support the company's plans to develop the app and expand their team and in 2024, Fund II provided receivable financing to help smooth cash flow. www.meetcaregivers.com

NUEVO DÍA ADHC | Healthcare & Healthtech | Boston, MA

Nuevo Día is a Latino- and woman-owned facility that seeks to help low-income seniors and disabled people in Boston remain as independent and as healthy as possible in a culturally competent environment. The vision of this organization is to be the leading Adult Day Health program serving the Latino community in Greater Boston. In 2022, BII made an equity investment for startup costs and working capital. In 2025, BII provided additional financing to support Nuevo Día's expansion with a second facility in West Roxbury, enabling the organization to nearly double its service capacity and create approximately 30 new jobs. This expansion addresses the critical need for culturally competent elder care services and demonstrates how investing in woman-led, minority-owned healthcare businesses can simultaneously advance health equity and economic opportunity in the local community. www.nuevodiaadhc.com

RABBIT HOLE HOUSING COOPERATIVE | Real Estate | Portland, ME

Rabbit Hole Housing Cooperative (RHH) is a group-equity housing cooperative in Portland, Maine, dedicated to providing affordable, safe, and welcoming housing for the queer and transgender community. RHH operates under democratic governance using Sociocracy 3.0 principles, with four councils (Organizing, Finance, Membership & Events, and Maintenance) that ensure all affected members participate in decision-making. The cooperative features a low share buy-in paid over 12 months, making membership accessible while building collective ownership. In 2025, BII provided acquisition financing to support RHH's purchase of 1851 Washington Avenue, a 7,215 square foot property with capacity for 8-9 bedrooms that will serve founding members and future residents. This community-driven acquisition addresses critical housing insecurity—with nearly 40% of transgender people experiencing ongoing housing instability due to discrimination—and creates a model for permanently affordable, democratically-controlled housing. The cooperative will also serve as a community hub and creative space, strengthening Portland's LGBTQ+ community while demonstrating how strategic partnerships can build resident power and housing justice for marginalized communities. <https://bostonimpact.org/portfolio/rabbit-hole-housing-cooperative/>

RENEW ENERGY PARTNERS | Environment & Energy | Boston, MA

Renew Energy Partners is a Boston-based energy efficiency project development firm that specializes in decarbonizing commercial buildings in New England. In 2014, BII joined as an anchor investor in Renew's collaborative project with HEET, a local non-profit that focuses on bringing efficiency upgrades to underserved markets. The joint program brings upfront financing and project management to retrofit Greater Boston's non-profit buildings and historic houses of worship to reduce energy costs and use across the sector. www.renewep.com

SIGN-SPEAK | Professional Services | Rochester, NY

Sign-Speak is an innovative technology company seeking to bridge the communication divide for the 48 million Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) individuals in the United States. Its technology tracks American Sign Language (ASL) users as they sign with a camera on a computing device and transcribes and translates in real-time to facilitate conversation with someone who only speaks English. This technology can also translate and transcribe back into ASL. The Sign-Speak founding team includes a deaf software engineer and has developed solutions for websites, in-person contact, and automated environments. Fund II invested in the company in 2023, and made a follow-on investment in 2024. www.sign-speak.com

SOLOMON GROUP | Environment & Energy | Cambridge, MA

Solomon Group is a strategic communications and consulting firm working with public and private companies that uses data to market clean energy programs to households in non-English speaking, immigrant and communities of color. Given their experience in the space, Solomon Group can provide data-driven insights on sub-segments of the population, with particular emphasis on historically disadvantaged communities to advance initiatives with specific focus on clean energy programs. In 2023, BII Fund II provided Solomon Group with a line of credit to smooth cash flow as the company grows. www.solomongrouppllc.com

SOMERVILLE COMMUNITY CORPORATION | Real Estate | Somerville, MA

Somerville Community Corporation offers services and leads community organizing that support low- and moderate- income residents to increase economic sustainability and civic participation. SCC partners with local developers, foundations, lenders, the City of Somerville, and community organizations, serving as a nexus for multi-stakeholder relationships. Following a 2019 bridge loan, in 2020, BII provided SCC with a second bridge loan to acquire housing units for primarily low-income and immigrant families.
www.somervillecdc.org

SUNWEALTH® | Environment & Energy | Hyde Park, MA

Sunwealth is a clean energy investment firm dedicated to finance high-performing commercial solar projects through the sale of investment products to accredited investors. Their goal is to accelerate capital into communities underserved by traditional solar financing. BII has made several investments in Sunwealth over the years out of the LLC, Fund I and Fund II. In 2019, BII Fund made an equity investment into Sunwealth to support the company's growth. In 2023, BII Fund II invested in Sunwealth's Solar Justice Fund, which emphasizes investment in women and BIPOC-owned or led solar companies and projects that uplift low-income communities.
www.sunwealth.com

SYNERGY CONTRACTING | Environment & Energy | Lawrence, MA

Synergy Contracting is a fully bonded, unionized, Latina, women-owned construction company specializing in Environmental Remediation, Demolition, and Cleaning Construction Services, headquartered in Boston, MA. In addition to the services provided, they offer accelerator programs to build knowledge and education in the construction space. In 2022, BII provided a line of credit to smooth cash flows as the company grows.
www.synergycoinc.com

THE LAZU GROUP | Professional Services | Boston, MA

At the time of BII's original investment, The LAZU Group was a technology-enabled DEI services firm that offered strategies for product development, marketing, talent recruitment and retention, and community engagement. They used a motivational-based approach designed with the principles of community organizing, traditional DEI, and mental health, to help people create better personal and professional connections, ultimately resulting in happier individuals and healthier organizations. The Lazu Group closed its line of credit with BII in 2025. The Lazu Group is an exited portfolio company from Fund I. In 2021, BII provided a line of credit to The LAZU Group to smooth cash flows as the company grows.
www.thelazugroup.com

**THE NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPERS AT PARK & PEARL
| Real Estate | Chelsea, MA**

The Neighborhood Developers (TND) is a Community Development Corporation with over 40 years of experience preserving affordable housing in Chelsea, Revere, and Everett, Massachusetts. TND acquired a 30-unit property at Park and Pearl Streets, addressing displacement pressures where rent increases of 25% or more force families from their homes, with plans to permanently preserve units as deed-restricted affordable housing. In 2025, BII invested alongside TND's OppCo Housing Accelerator Fund—a revolving loan fund managed by Opportunity Communities (OppCo), a nonprofit operating platform that strengthens the capacity of independent local community developers.
www.theneighborhooddevelopers.org

THRIVE! | Education & Edtech | Washington, DC

Thrive! is a software as a service platform that uses a proprietary algorithm to assess government program performance on reducing racial disparities. They sell to municipalities and conduct an initial equity audit, using an algorithm that tracks spending on certain interventions by agency. Then they provide recommendations, based on their findings, that will improve the lives of all people, including people of color. In 2023, Fund II made an investment into Thrive! for early business expansion costs.
www.equitywillthrive.com

TRILLFIT | Arts, Culture, & Media | New York, NY

Winner of Best of Boston, 2018, 2020, and 2021. TrillFit is a purpose-driven wellness business that is changing the face of boutique fitness. With the objective of seeing underrepresented communities become the face of health they are intentionally catering to the soon-to-be “new majority” by training and contracting with instructors that are also reflective of inner-city communities. In 2022, BII invested in equity in TrillFit as part of their Series Seed round to help them expand into new markets.
<https://trill.fit/>

VALLEY HOME INSULATION | Professional Services | Lawrence, MA

Valley Home Insulation offers residential insulation and weatherization services in Lawrence and the surrounding Merrimack Valley. Following the 2018 gas explosions, Columbia Gas offered 100% reimbursement for insulation and weatherization services on all homes it serves in the Merrimack Valley through the end of 2020. VHI leverages cultural competency and community presence to provide these services to low- and moderate-income residents of this region. In 2020, Fund I made a loan with revenue-based repayment to support early growth and in 2023, Fund II refinanced the Fund I loan and provided a term loan to fit their larger scale and cash flow needs.
<https://valleyhomeinsulation.com/>

WAKU | Food & Agriculture | Boston, MA

Waku is a gut-healthy drink that is inspired by an ancestral recipe, “horchata lojana”, created in the Andes Mountains. Waku’s raw ingredients are sourced from indigenous farmers in Ecuador, bottled in New Hampshire and distributed in the Northeast Region of the United States. In 2021, BII provided a line of credit to support the company’s need to build up its inventory.
<https://livewaku.com/>

WASH CYCLE LAUNDRY | Professional Services | Lynn, MA

WashCycle is a commercial laundry company with locations in Boston and Philadelphia, committed to creating good jobs and second chances for people overcoming histories of incarceration, homelessness, substance use, long-term unemployment, use of public benefits, and more. In 2017, BII Fund made an investment to support the company’s expansion to the Boston metro area.
<https://washcyclelaundry.com>

WELLSPRING HARVEST | Food & Agriculture | Springfield, MA

Wellspring Harvest provides fresh, local, and sustainable produce year-round while fostering economic empowerment in the community. As a worker-owned cooperative, they operate the largest urban greenhouse in Massachusetts, located in Springfield. They sell hydroponic lettuce and herbs to commercial and institutional customers, including local supermarkets, hospitals, and schools. In 2016, the BII Pilot Fund provided a loan for startup costs.
<https://wellspringharvest.com/>

NOTES

[illegible]

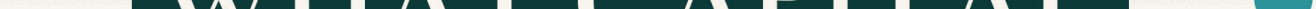
NOTES





BII

REIMAGINING
WHAT CAPITAL
CAN DO.



Boston Impact Initiative
2225 Washington Street, 2nd Floor · Roxbury, MA 02119
bostonimpact.org · info@bostonimpact.org
617-702-9132