



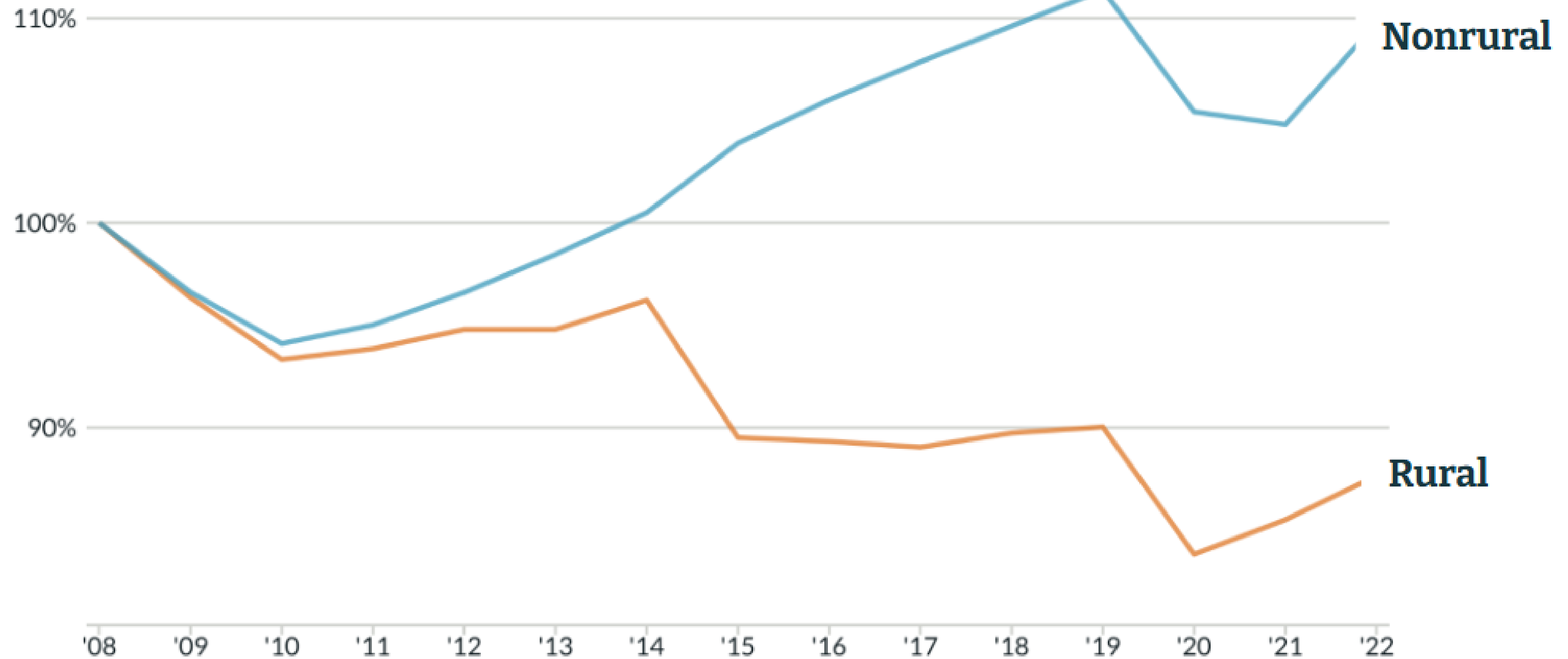
# CORI Innovation Fund

Investing in Rural America's  
Entrepreneurs

February 5, 2025



# Rural vs. urban job growth



Employment relative to 2008 levels

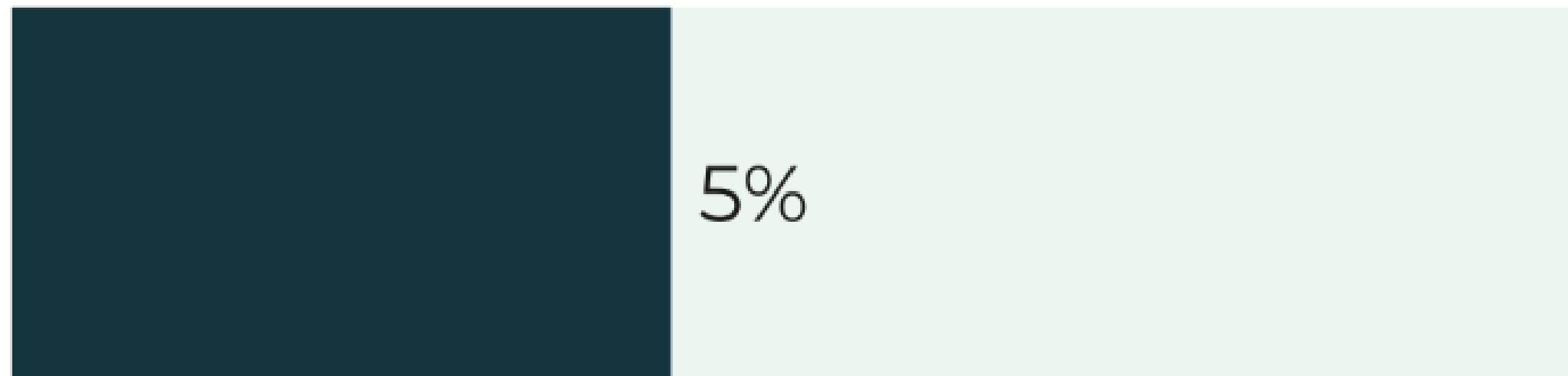
## Rural Americans are underrepresented in tech jobs

Rural  
America's  
share of  
the **total**  
**workforce**



12%

Rural  
America's  
share of  
the **tech**  
**workforce**

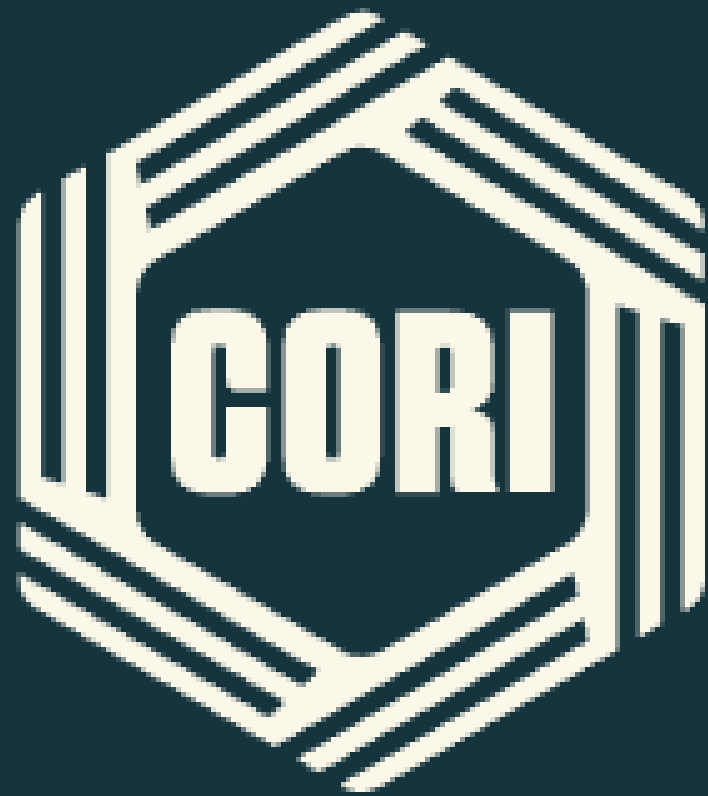


5%

Source: ACS 5-year estimates (2021)

# CORI Vision and Mission

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## Vision

**A new era of prosperity for rural America  
in the age of innovation.**

## Mission Statement

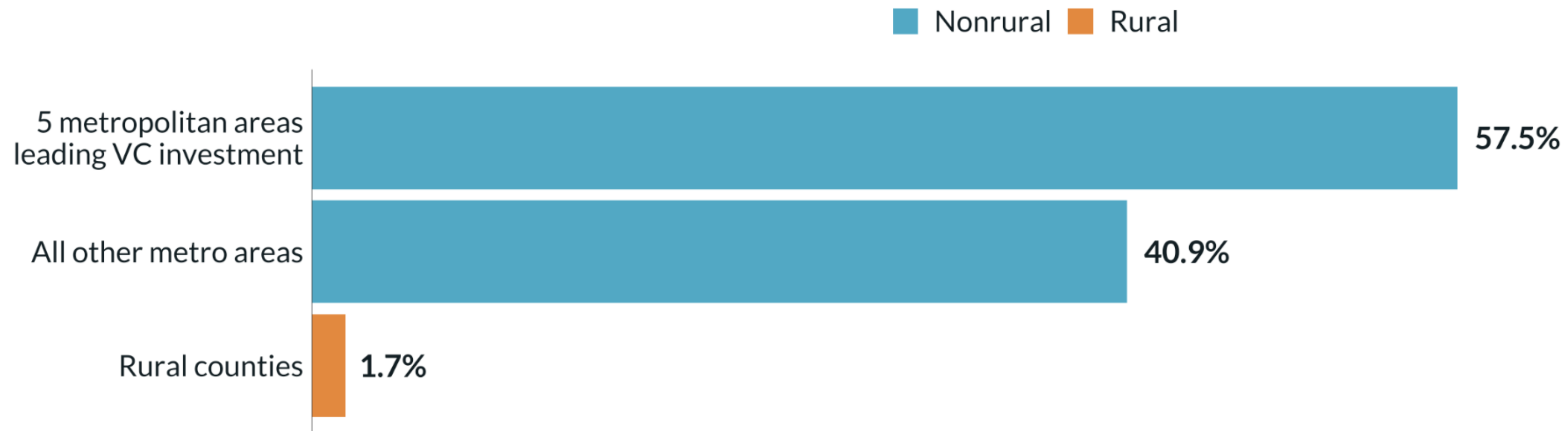
**Creating opportunities that empower rural people  
to thrive in the tech economy.**

# The Rural VC Gap



Metropolitan areas accounted for the vast majority of venture capital investment in 2022

*Share of venture capital dollars received by businesses headquartered in the U.S.*



Source: SEC Form D (2022)

Notes: The 5 leading metro areas are San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley, New York-Newark-Jersey City, Boston-Cambridge-Newton, Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, and Chicago-Naperville-Elgin.

"Rural" refers to the "nonmetro" definition, which includes all nonmetropolitan counties.

# AT A GLANCE

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CORI Innovation Fund I  
\$4.15MM OZ Seed Fund

CORI Innovation Fund II  
\$4.5MM Seed Fund

Green Mountain Accl. Fund  
\$3MM Accelerator Stage Fund

**180+**  
**Employees in**  
**Rural Tech**  

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**\$55+ Million**  
**Portfolio**  
**Capital Raised**

# TECH COMPANY ATTRIBUTES

## What We Look For:

Deep  
industry  
knowledge +  
experience

Unique IP or  
competitive  
advantage /  
tech enabled

Innovative  
idea to  
accelerate  
change

Product  
reaching a  
previously  
underserved  
consumer

Opportunity  
to scale  
significantly  
over time

## Company Stage

**Revenue: \$0 – 5 Million**

**Capital Previously Raised: \$0 – 5 Million**

**Scalability: 10x Return Potential**

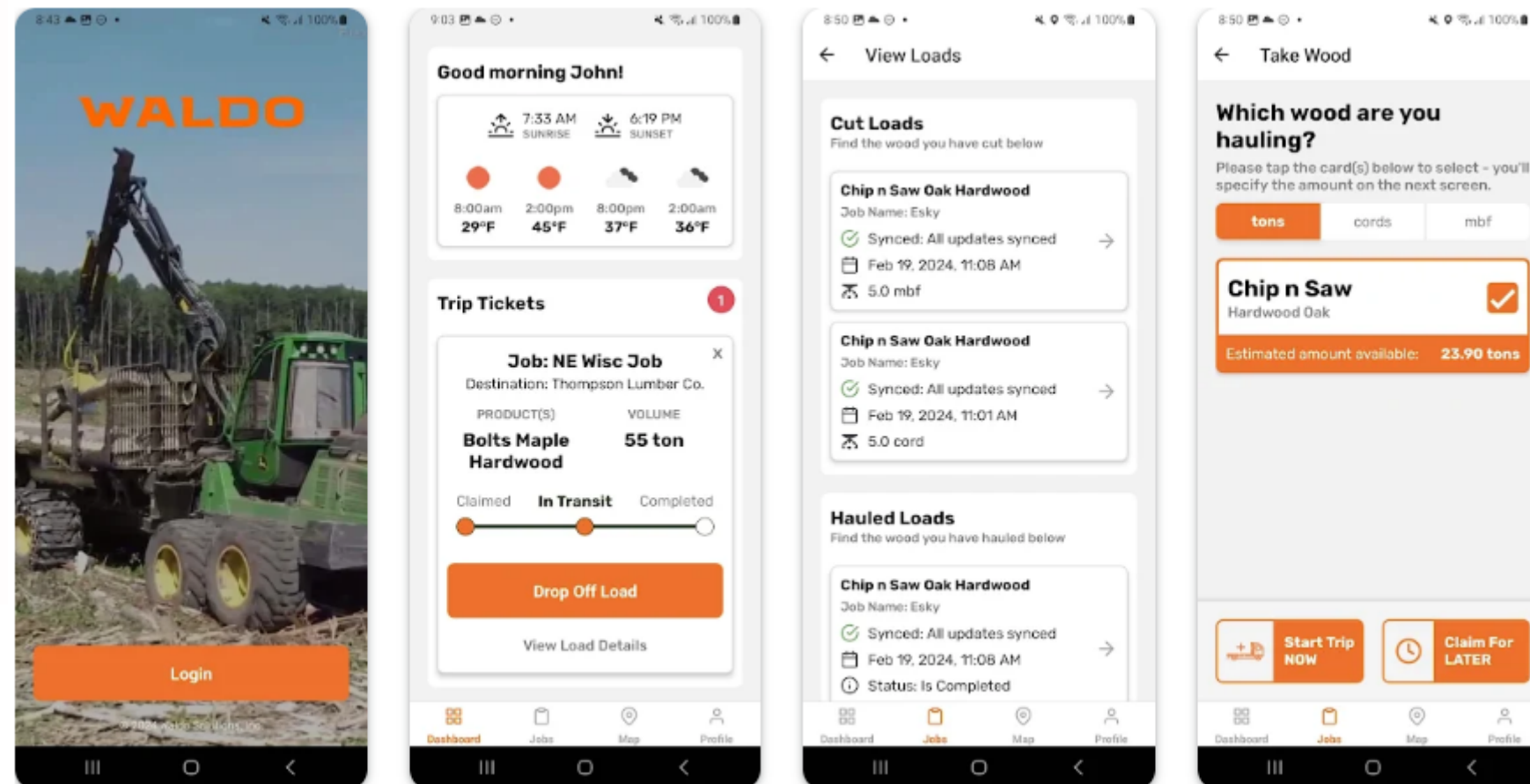
**Sustainability: 10-Year Growth Path**



# Waldo Solutions

# WALDO

THE OPERATING SYSTEM OF THE FOREST INDUSTRY





# The Headset App

TENFOUR LABS, INC

Coach Communications  
Made Simple...

the  
**HEADSET**  
app





Lost Coast Ventures

# Lost Coast Ventures

## February 2025

[LostCoastVentures.com](http://LostCoastVentures.com)



# About Us



Lost Coast Ventures

## John W. Ballard

B.A., Humboldt State University, '80  
M.Ed., Colorado State University, '82  
Founder, LCV  
Public Company CFO and CEO  
Cal Poly Boldly Rising Campaign  
Board Member, Santa Cruz Local,  
New Way Homes



## Dan Philips

A.A., College of the Redwoods, '88  
B.S., Humboldt State University, '91  
Founder, MetaSystems and LCV  
Public Company Chief Technical Officer  
Chair, Cal Poly Boldly Rising Campaign  
Co-Chair, President's Council, CR



# LCV Goals and Investment Criteria



Lost Coast Ventures

## LCV Criteria for Investment

- ❑ **Local Connection:** A strong link to Cal Poly Humboldt or College of the Redwoods
- ❑ **Innovative and Scalable Business Idea:** Scalable business concept with the potential to grow beyond the North Coast with a commitment to creating high-quality local jobs.
- ❑ **Driven and Ethical Founder(s) with a Clear Purpose:** Founder(s) should possess the vision to address a substantial market need with a deep understanding of their market and customers, and the dedication to realize their vision.

Mentoring

Launch 20+ mentoring engagements by 2025; complete more than seventy-five by 2027

Economic Growth

Support and fund five+ early-stage business concepts by 2027 with promise to add 250+ new jobs to Humboldt County

Financial Return

Raise and deploy necessary seed capital that returns >\$5M in equity to Humboldt/CR by 2032

Making Early-Stage, Fundable Investments that Spur Economic Growth and Support the Surrounding Community

# Founding Members--StartUp Humboldt Coworking Space



Lost Coast Ventures



- **SBDC** – Empowers businesses at all stages



**Internews** –NGO and long-term tenant of Arcata office



**Cal Poly Humboldt** – Cultivates an innovative mindset



**CR** – Develops the local workforce



Lost Coast Ventures

**Lost Coast Ventures** – Fuels the growth of startups

Building is Occupied—Grand Opening Planned for Late March of 2025—Memberships Available!

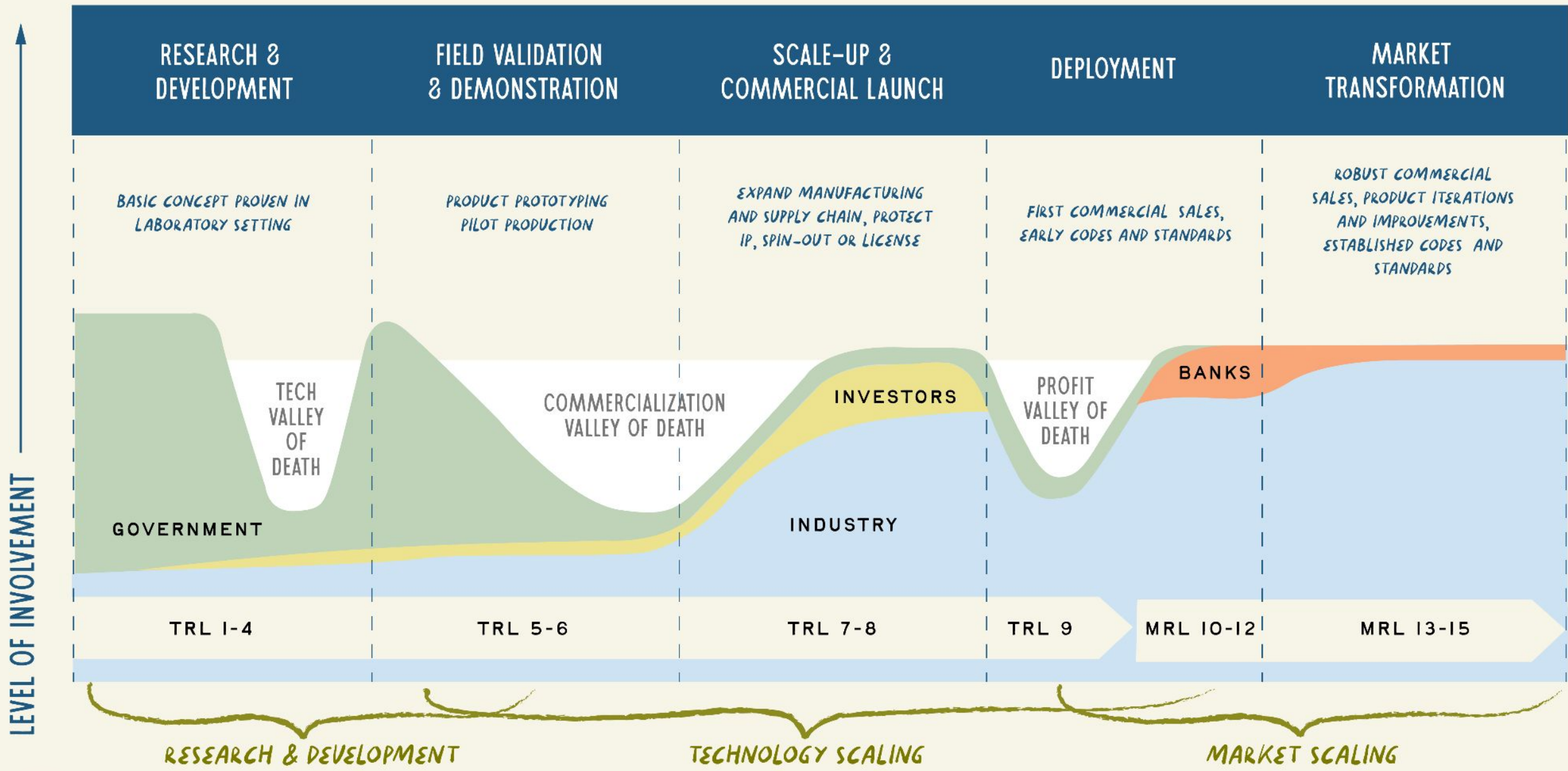


StartUp Humboldt Building at 876 7<sup>th</sup> St, Arcata (Fall of '24)



**THE  
RESERVOIR**





TECHNOLOGY RISK

# Introducing The Reservoir

Founded in 2024, The Reservoir is an impact venture fund/studio and nonprofit incubator that accelerates innovation in specialty crop agriculture by providing startups and engineers with access to robotics, automation, and testing facilities on working farms.

We help engineers develop and validate solutions that address real-world ag challenges—faster and with short-term milestones.

We catalyze scalable venture-backed startups while also expediting industry solutions that may not fit traditional venture models.



## RESERVOIR VENTURES

**\$25M**

TARGET FUND SIZE FOR RESERVOIR VENTURES I

**\$100K** → **10%**

AVERAGE INITIAL STARTUP INVESTMENT

OWNERSHIP TARGET FOR KEY BETS

## RESERVOIR FARMS

**25+** → **2000+**

TARGET STARTUPS INCUBATED ANNUALLY

HIGH-ROAD JOBS CREATED FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS



## 5-Year Targets

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100+

startups & farms supported

2000+

high-road jobs created

200+

smart implements built

## Impact Commitments of The Reservoir

1. **Inclusive Workforce:** Hire and train employees from underserved communities and provide them with equity and profit sharing opportunities.
2. **Accessible Precision Ag:** Provide farmers with real-time impact data and make robotics and precision tools more accessible to more farmers.



# Blending Silicon Valley Innovation With AgTech Expertise



**Danny Bernstein**  
The Reservoir & Reservoir Ventures  
CEO & Managing Partner

**A seasoned entrepreneur and tech executive wh sold Meebo to Google for \$100M.** Backed by Sequoia/Khosla. **Google executive** (Managing Director) in the Global Business Organization. Led deal, business development and ecosystem teams for Google AI/Research, Search, Chrome/Web, and Identity/Sign-In. Twice promoted in the prestigious Foundation leadership program. **Microsoft executive** (Partner) focused on M365/Teams. Developed the product and business strategy for growing revenue and usage for Teams SMB. **Stanford GSB** (Exec Program) and **UC Davis**.

Board Observer to **Farm-ng** and **Agrifol Software**. Venture Advisor to **BEAM Circular**.



**Jillian Heisman**  
The Reservoir  
COO/CFO



**Michelle Reimers**  
The Reservoir  
GM, Reservoir Farms



**Alexander Wolf**  
Dean, School of Eng, UCSC  
Advisor, AI



**Matthew Hoffman**  
Driscoll's  
Advisor, Plant Science



**Dr. Hillary Thomas**  
Naturipe  
Advisor, Berries



**Walt Duflock**  
Western Growers  
Advisor, AgTech



**Karen Warner**  
BEAM Circular  
Advisor, Bioeconomy



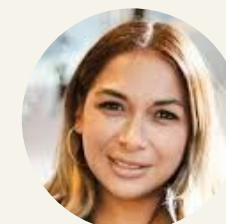
**Dr. Rolando Perez**  
Stanford, NASA  
Advisor, Sustainability



**Lenny Mendonca**  
ex-CA, ex-McKinsey  
Advisor, California



**Jeffrey Jackson**  
ex-Sun World, T&A  
Senior Advisor



**Dr. Jackie Cruz**  
Hartnell College  
Advisor, Workforce



**Eric Morgan**  
ex-Braga, Soil Health Lab  
Advisor, Regenerative

# Rural: Big Markets, AI & Bioeconomy



## 1/ Modernize and Optimize Existing Practices

### AI/Automation in Specialty Crop Agriculture (\$33B by 2027)

- 50-70% of HVC production costs are labor-related (\$16B in CA annually)
- Automation can reduce labor needs by up to 40%

### Agricultural Financial Technology (AgriFintech) (\$21B by 2026)

- By 2030, Ag will generate 25 PBs of data. 50%+ of farms undergoing digitalization
- AgriFintech solutions can cut administrative costs by up to 20%.

### Disaster Prevention and Climate Adaptation (\$20B by 2031)

- Wildfire damages reach \$1T+ (10x faster than estimates)
- Predictive modeling can improve response times by 25%

## 2/ Enable New Sustainable Models

### Bioeconomy / Biological Inputs (\$31.8B by 2029)

- 55M tons of annual ag by-products contribute to 24% of GHG emissions
- U.S. row-crop producers using biologicals rose from 37% in 2022 to 45% today

### Regenerative Agriculture (\$32B by 2031)

- Biochar has shown 10% boosts in crop yields and 47% cut in plant diseases
- Regenerative techniques can sequester 1-2 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per acre annually

### Precision Agriculture (\$22B by 2031)

- Precision ag can reduce water by 20 and pesticides by 10%; increase yields by 15%
- Field sensing can identify pests or irrigation needs with 95% accuracy







# Modernizing Existing Ag Practices is Imperative

## Challenges Facing Specialty Crop Agriculture

**41%**

wage growth for H-2A  
ag workers from 2018  
to 2024

**\$16.3B**

cost of agriculture  
labor in California

**50-70%**

labor as a % of food  
product costs in  
specialty crops

**8x**

increase in CA  
regulatory costs in 12  
years

**141K**

fewer family farms  
compared to 2017

**50K**

CA farm acres  
lost annually

## Path Forward

### Learning from Past Winners

Blue River (\$305M) and Bear Flag (\$250M) were winners in the previous cycle. These examples are always referenced. Both are anomalies – “fit” teams that quickly became market disruptors even at early stages. Better incubator programs can address this challenge.

### Recent Gains in AI and Automation

AI-enabled advances in farm digitization, weeding, spraying, and harvest assist—led by innovators like Carbon Robotics, GUSS and Farm-ng—optimize farms, reduce costs, and enhance efficiency.

### Increase Spend on Automation

Automation sales reached \$150–\$200M in 2024 with projections estimating an increase to \$700–\$800M by 2026.

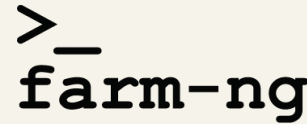
### Innovation Initiatives Driving Commercialization

Driven by billions in public funding and initiatives like F3 Innovate, BEAM Circular, UC ANR’s VINE initiatives, and soon, the Reservoir incubators.

### Impediments to Broader Adoption

Product-market fit, lack of standard data architecture, and cross-platform interop hinder widespread adoption among farmers.

# R&D Analysis of 100+ Orgs in Agriculture & Working Lands



## TL;DR Early-stage rural-focused startups are less prepared to scale

### Rural Incubators and Accelerators Fall Short

- **Lack of Top-Programs:** No programs that resemble Y-Combinator or Skydeck.
- **Lack of Testing Facilities:** No fields customized for startups, always ready, like 24/7/365 FIRA.
- **Too Much Exposure, Too Early:** Testing on grower fields risks costly mistakes.

### Difficult to Find Product-Market Fit

- **Solving Fake Problems:** Startups are detached from realities of industry and are a few steps behind.
- **Ability to Validate:** Lack of third-party certification and validation reduces trust with growers and industry

### Lack of Trust Between Startups & Industry

- **Industry Burnout:** Growers want to believe startups but have grown skeptical of promises
- **Cultural Misalignment:** Mismatch between industry work practices (e.g., early mornings) and startups
- **Inbox Overflow:** Industry is bombarded with startup pitches. Can't sift through quality.

### Lack of Capital Efficiency for Startups

- **No Shared Infrastructure:** Purchase duplication across programming, equipment and facilities.
- **Limited Access to Public Funding:** Relative to defense or energy startups
- **California Market Entry:** Expensive and inefficient relative to other verticals.



**There are 7,000+ startup incubators worldwide—yet none combine a working farm for specialty crops with dedicated maker spaces for robotics and autonomous solutions**



# RESERVOIR FARMS

**Nonprofit Robotics  
Incubators for  
the Future of Specialty  
Crops Agriculture**

## Opening in 2025

- **First On-Farm Ag Robotics Incubators**
- **Access To World-Class Soil and Pre-Planted Beds**
- **Bedded Crops, Vines and Orchards**
- **Exclusive Western Growers Partnership for Certification & Validation**
- **Robotics Shops & AgTech Testing**
- **Integrated Workforce Development**

# Positive Industry Response

## Sample of Press Coverage

**The Modern Acre:** The First Startup Incubator Facility Dedicated to Ag Robotics

**Future of Agriculture:** California's Efforts to Lead the Future of Agtech

**Wine Business Monthly:** New Incubator to Spur Development of Autonomous Robots and Tractors

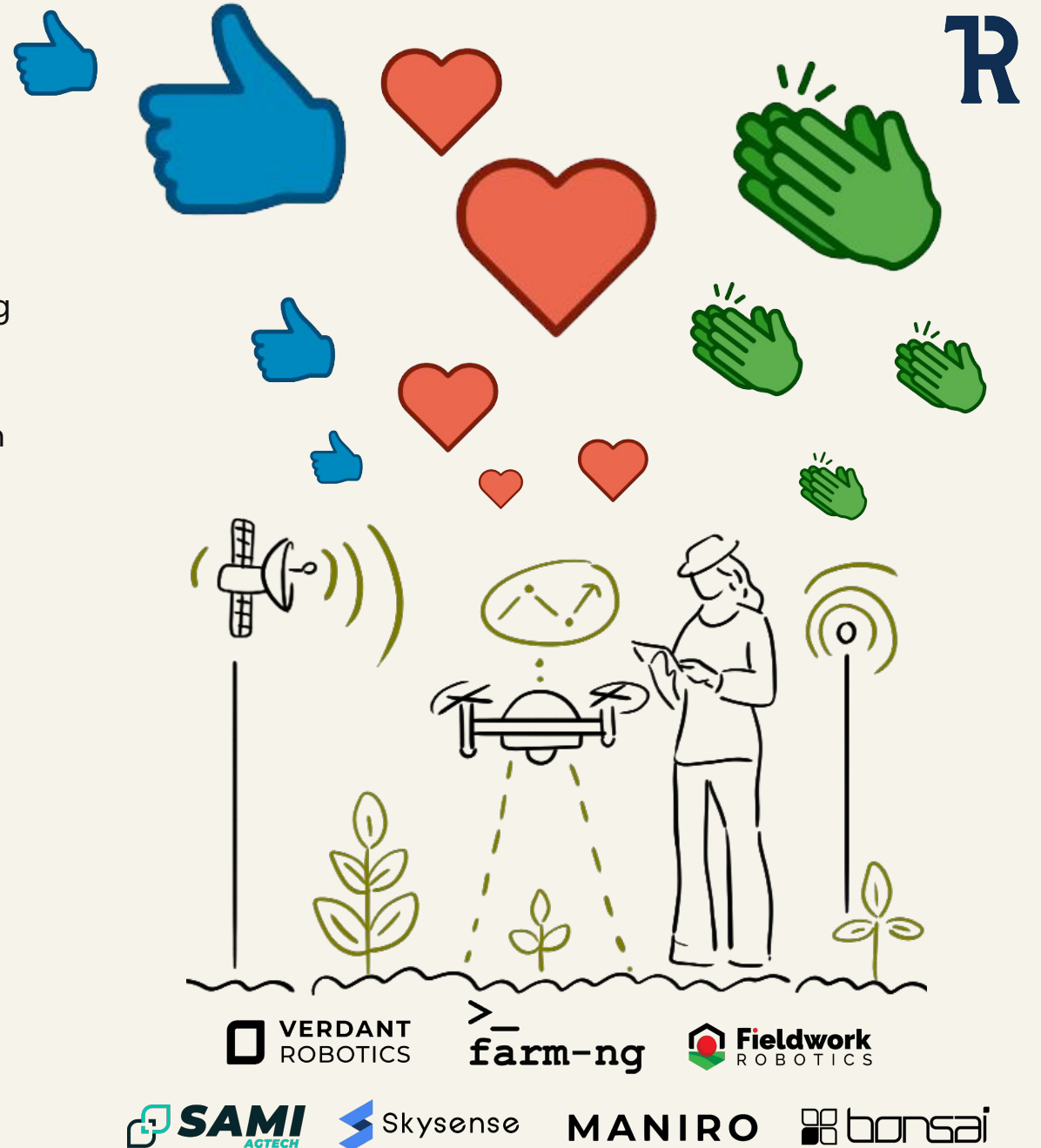
**The Robot Report:** New incubator Reservoir Farms to cultivate agrobotics startups

**AgTech Navigator:** New incubator Reservoir Farms to cultivate agrobotics startups

**Western Growers:** The Reservoir Unveils the First On-Farm Robotics Incubators

**Farm Progress:** Hub farms to put new tech to the test

**UC ANR:** Partners unveil first on-farm robotics incubators





# Reservoir Farms, a First-of-Kind Startup Incubator

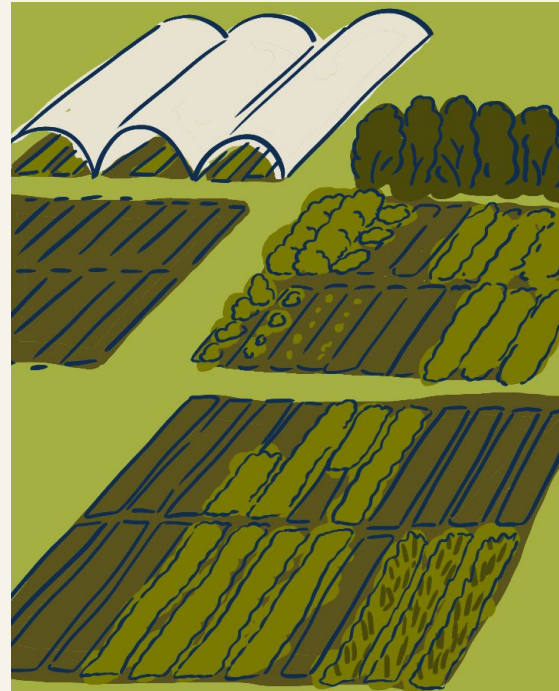
## ❑ Private & Public Makerspaces

- Fully equipped facility for iterating on MVP
- Secure areas w/ benches, tables, workstations
- Shop parts and supplies
- Specialized workshop services



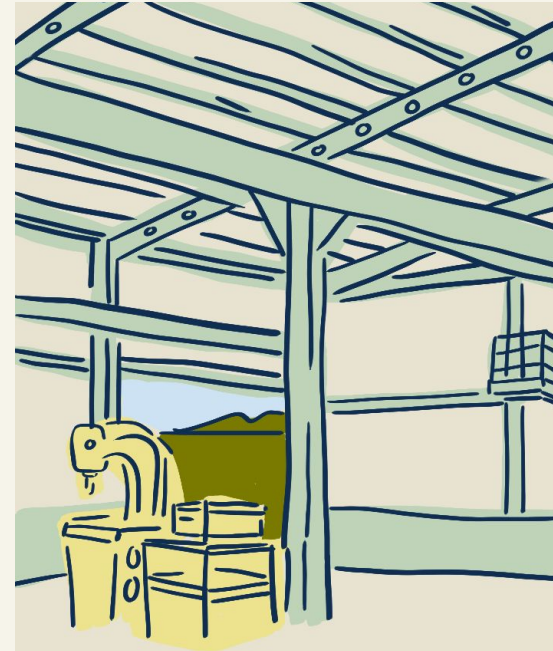
## ❑ Test Access to Farmed Acres

- Customized, pre-planted
- Private acreage
- Bedded crops and permanent



## ❑ Industry Validation & Field Testing

- Dedicated space for equipment
- Robust security infrastructure



## ❑ Investor, Mentor & Customer Access

- Demonstration space
- Lead generation via the WGA network
- Bolster sales pipelines with global growers





# Focus Areas for Startups at Reservoir Farms



## Robotics & Autonomous Systems

Automating and optimizing labor-intensive tasks to improve efficiency in agriculture through robotics, implements, drones, unmanned ground and aerial vehicles, and rovers.

## Example

Farm-ng

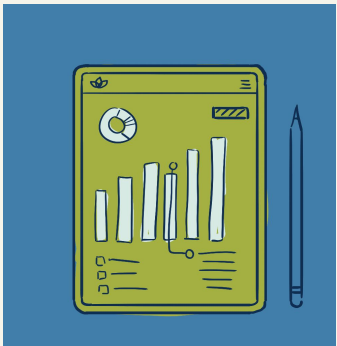


## Precision Agriculture

On-farm data collection tools such as sensors, drones, AI, and data analytics to optimize resources, improve yield and quality, and enable predictive agronomy.

## Example

Pivot Bio



## AI-Enabled AgriFinTech & Knowledge Management

Leveraging artificial intelligence to streamline financial management, operational efficiency, and knowledge management for farms. This includes potential applications of generative AI and LLMs for querying documents, data, and insights in real time, even in-field.

## Example

AgriFul Software

# RESERVOIR FARMS

R







**RESERVOIR**  
FARMS

# The Reservoir + WGA

A strategic partnership that provides access to grower networks and expertise for field testing and validation



## AgTech Scorecards

Exclusively at Reservoir facilities

## Access to Growers

2,300+ grower members

## Workforce Training

Leveraging the CDFA collaboration



THANK YOU!



# Organizational Cash Flow

