SOUTH AFRICA · STARTUP CAPITAL

Who opens the door to investors in South Africa

In South Africa, warm introductions beat cold emails. These 26 connectors sit between founders and the people who write cheques. Each one is sorted by the job they do, with what they run, how often, and how to get involved.



YOUR GUIDE

Tirumalarao Naidu

Website · LinkedIn · X · Instagram · Threads · Facebook · Pinterest

START

Founder

- Idea to early revenue
- Needs trust before money

→

DOOR-OPENERS

Connectors

- Pitch platforms and accelerators put you in front of investors
- Weekly walks, cafés and meetups build trust
- Business and diaspora networks reach established money
- Media and operators get you investor-ready

→

CAPITAL

Cheque-writers

- SA angels and VCs
- European and MEA angel clubs
- DFI-backed fund-of-funds
- Family offices (via Counder)

OPEN NOW · CLOSES 15 NOV 2026

AfricArise Cape Venture Bridge

A six-month programme for 20 Western Cape tech startups, backed by the Western Cape government (DEDAT). You get investment-readiness training, at least 12 hours of mentoring and R125,000 in tech credits. The top five join a funded delegation to GITEX Africa in Morocco, 26–28 April 2027, with investor meetings booked in advance. To apply, you need a registered Western Cape business, at least two co-founders or full-time staff, and plans to sell internationally within 12 months.

APPLY Programme details and application · Dan Mabbyalas on LinkedIn

Pitch platforms and accelerators

Investors are in the audience, so these are the shortest path to a funding conversation.

Christophe Viarnaud · Dan Mabbyalas

AfricArena and AfricArise

Christophe, a French serial entrepreneur and former French Tech ambassador in Cape Town, founded AfricArena in Cape Town in 2017. It is an accelerator and summit network that connects African startups with investors and corporates. Dan is Head of Programmes for AfricArena and AfricArise.

- Regional summits run in Cape Town, Johannesburg, North Africa, Egypt and West Africa, plus showcases in Paris, San Francisco, New York and Tokyo
- Investors pitch to founders as well as the other way round
- Corporate challenges have included Air France KLM, Engie and Leroy Merlin
- **AfricArise** runs the Cape Venture Bridge (see callout above)

CONTACT africarena.com · AfricArena on LinkedIn · Dan on LinkedIn · Facebook · X @AfricArena2020

Office in Century City, Cape Town. Open calls are also posted on VC4A Programs.

PITCHING PAN-AFRICAN

Michelle Kleu, Managing Director

Innovation City Cape Town

Invite-only community of startups, scale-ups, corporates and investors in a converted building on Darter Road, Gardens. Stephan Ekbergh (founder of Travelstart) and Kieno Kammies co-founded it, and it launched in 2022.

- About 3,500 m² in the Longkloof precinct
- Licensed from Epicenter Stockholm, so members can reach its 500+ member companies
- Hosts curated startup–investor–corporate "speed dating"
- Annual Awards Night each April, including VC of the Year and Entrepreneur of the Year

CONTACT innovationcity.co.za · Facebook · X @InnocityCPT · Events on Quicket

Membership is by invitation. Attend an open event or ask a member to introduce you. Darter Studios, Darter Road, Gardens, Cape Town.

HUB CORPORATES

Mathew Marsden, founder

Startup Club ZA

National founder community that started as The Joburg Startup Club and rebranded to reach the whole country. Its stated goal is to become a leading investment channel for startups.

- **The Big Pitch** event series runs with the South African Future Trust (SAFT)
- Masterclasses and pitching hubs with a network of VC partners
- Ran Founder Day at Africa Tech Festival
- The Startup Club Podcast interviews founders of Ozow, Zulzi, Pineapple, Melon Mobile and others
- Ecosystem platform where founders get public feedback

CONTACT startupclubza.com · LinkedIn · Instagram · YouTube · Mathew on LinkedIn

PITCHING NATIONAL

Khwezi Jackson, Business & Partnerships Manager

22 On Sloane

One of Africa's largest startup campuses, based in Sandton. Richard Branson helped open it as the Global Entrepreneurship Network's first startup campus in Africa in 2017. It has since opened a Cape Town hub.

- More than 100 startups in Johannesburg and more than 20 programmes
- Incubation for tech companies with sales under about $135k, plus the Catalytic acceleration programme
- Publishes a Deal Book of selected startups for investors every six months
- Partners include Telkom, Microsoft, the World Bank Group, VC4A and ABAN
- **CPT Sloane Connect** runs every Friday from 8am in Cape Town, with a free hot desk and coffee and up to 40 people. It is supported by DEDAT

CONTACT 22onsloane.co · Startup programmes · Book CPT Sloane Connect · Instagram · Facebook

Campus: corner of William Nicol Drive and Sloane Street, Bryanston, Sandton. Khwezi organises the Cape Town Fridays, so the meetup is the easiest place to meet her.

CAMPUS INCUBATOR

Founder communities and events

These build the reputation and trust that lead to warm introductions.

Will Green

Will's Green Walk · Origin Stories

Will is an entrepreneur, growth strategist and founder of Co.lab. He started a weekly Lion's Head hike out of frustration with traffic, and it has become one of Cape Town's best-known founder rituals.

- Every Friday at 05:55 on Lion's Head. Anyone can join
- Passed its 100th walk in April 2025, and also runs "Founders & Funders" summit walks
- **Origin Stories**: nine founders each tell their story in seven minutes, with no pitching, at the Star Theatre in District Six
- Also runs connection masterclasses

CONTACT Join the walk on Meetup · Origin Stories tickets · Will on LinkedIn

WALKS STORYTELLING

Lisa Aspeling, co-founder

Founders Café

Lisa founded Founders Café with Liz Pretorius. It is a small, peer-led community for founders, CEOs and SME owners, run through her agency Anago Marketing. Lisa also co-founded Flower Café.

- **Founders Café Fridays**: weekly 7am netwalks in Cape Town, including on the Alphen Trail
- Morning events of up to 40–50 people, with a founder product showcase, one-on-one peer consults and guided speed networking
- Held at Flower Café, Paarden Eiland. Also runs Founders Café Nights

CONTACT founderscafe.co.za · Event tickets · Meetup group · Lisa on LinkedIn

MEETUP SMES

Melissa Slaymaker

Women in Tech South Africa

Melissa is Regional Director for Africa and Talent Hub Director at Women in Tech Global, a non-profit that aims to empower 5 million women and girls in STEAM by 2030. She has 15+ years in tech executive search across Europe and Africa.

- Co-designed **THIS IS ME**, a four-month job-readiness programme delivered to SA corporates
- Speaks and moderates at Africa Tech Festival and other events
- Co-founded NFTy-art, a Web3 education startup

CONTACT Women in Tech SA · Melissa's profile · WIT SA on LinkedIn

Search "Melissa Slaymaker" on LinkedIn to message her directly.

WOMEN FOUNDERS TALENT

Hilton Theunissen, co-founder

GrowthWheel South Africa

A joint venture set up in 2015 by Hilton and David Madie. It gives SA incubators and support programmes a shared framework, platform and data for helping small businesses grow.

- Partnered with the Small Business Agency and its 74 funded incubators
- More than 700 ecosystem builders use it with over 14,000 SA businesses a year
- Useful for finding the incubator that fits your stage

CONTACT Book a call with Hilton · LinkedIn · GrowthWheel SA

ADVISORY INCUBATORS

Jasper Mutsaerts

The Thinking Cap · Local Legends

Founder events and community. We found no public detail beyond his LinkedIn profile, so ask him directly for event dates and formats.

CONTACT Jasper on LinkedIn

EVENTS FEW PUBLIC DETAILS

Business and diaspora networks

Established business owners, many of whom invest as angels or introduce founders to angels.

Nic Latouf · John Watson

The Lekker Network

A global membership network launched in 2024 that connects South Africans abroad with businesses at home. Its co-founders are Nic Latouf (an original founder of Veldskoen shoes), Renier Lombard of FDC, Madeleine Henstra and Guy Ellis.

- Ambassadors include Bob Skinstad, John Sanei and Bruce Whitfield
- Its first summit, in March 2026 at Lourensford Wine Estate, brought together about 300 South Africans from 32 countries
- John Watson, a chartered accountant and "connectability" coach, hosts the network's podcast, The Right Place
- Membership is by application

CONTACT Apply at thelekkernetwork.com · John on LinkedIn · John's Substack

Search "Nic Latouf" on LinkedIn to reach Nic.

DIASPORA MEMBERS

Mark Sham, founder & CEO

Suits & Sneakers

A talk series in the style of TED, started in 2015. Experienced entrepreneurs share honest stories of failure and success. It runs in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban.

- Rated 4.7 from more than 1,700 attendee reviews on Quicket
- Mark also founded The Tryst, a content hub in Woodlands, Sandton, where many sessions are held
- Guests have included Veldskoen's Nick Dreyer

CONTACT suitsandsneakers.co.za · Facebook · X @SuitsSneakers · Upcoming talks · Book Mark to speak

Search "Mark Sham" on LinkedIn to message him.

TALKS ENTREPRENEURS

Monique Labat, member

Rotary Club of Stellenbosch

Chartered in 1937, part of Rotary District 9350. Its members are professionals and business owners from the Winelands, where many local angel investors live. Monique also runs Monique Labat Consulting.

- Meets on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month, 18:00 for 18:30, at the Stellenbosch District Riding Club on the R44
- Visitors are welcome. Contact the club secretary through rotarystellenbosch.org.za

CONTACT rotarystellenbosch.org.za · secretary@rotarystellenbosch.org.za · Monique on LinkedIn

NETWORK WINELANDS

Cephas Ndubueze, founder

FOMO Cape Town

FOMO is a media and events company with a weekly newsletter read by more than 20,000 people in the Berlin and Munich business and tech scene. Each summer it runs a "Cape Town season" for the Germans and Europeans who spend January to March in the city.

- Season WhatsApp group had 450+ members last year, for a €10–20 one-off fee
- Meetups, dinners such as the eCommerce Dinner, a padel open and charity events
- Good for meeting visiting European operators and investors

CONTACT Join the 2026/27 season group · FOMO Padel Open

Search "Cephas FOMO" on LinkedIn to reach the founder.

EVENTS EUROPE → CT

Media, visibility and operator support

Help with being seen and with getting ready for investors before you pitch.

Renier Kriel, founder

The Open Letter

A twice-weekly newsletter on SA tech, startups and business, with more than 20,000 readers. Renier exited his company 4i after 12 years and now advises startups from Stellenbosch.

- Live interview events, rated 5.0 on Quicket
- Co-hosts the podcast "How Would You Build It"
- Previously ran Stellenbosch Digital, a meetup held every two months
- A useful place to learn which funds are active

CONTACT Subscribe · Live events · Renier on LinkedIn

Replying to a newsletter issue reaches the team directly.

MEDIA

Paul K Roberts

The Luminary Hub · Link Leverage

Paul founded The Luminary Hub and helps B2B leaders "turn LinkedIn into a trust engine." He writes the Link Leverage newsletter on visibility, positioning and inbound leads.

- Relevant because many SA investor introductions now start on LinkedIn

CONTACT Paul on LinkedIn · Link Leverage newsletter

VISIBILITY

Grant Webster

Fractionation · Gralen

A fractional CEO and COO, executive coach and non-executive director in Cape Town with 20+ years of experience. He was a founding executive at a major SA e-commerce retailer and founded Gralen Consulting in 2014.

- Took a R54m business from negative EBITDA to a R165m exit in three years
- Fractionation matches SMEs with vetted C-suite leaders and runs **Fractionals SA**, a community of hundreds of executives
- Advises on capital raises and exits. Retainers start at about R20k a month

CONTACT Enquire at Fractionation · LinkedIn · His events on Luma

OPERATOR EXITS

Michelle Louw, Marketing & Events

Outsourced CFO (OCFO)

A finance partner for startups and SMEs that offers fractional CFOs, cloud accounting, compliance and finance advisory. Louw Barnardt is co-founder and MD. Michelle runs its marketing and events.

- Serves more than 1,300 organisations, with offices in Cape Town, London and New York
- Hosts the annual **Scale-Up Con** in Cape Town
- Sponsored the Lekker Network Summit 2026 with a capital-efficiency workshop
- Useful for building models and data rooms before due diligence

CONTACT ocfo.com · office 021 201 2260 · Michelle on LinkedIn · Scale-Up Con

FINANCE EVENTS

Bridges to international capital

People and clubs that link SA startups with angels, family offices, funds and DFIs abroad.

Axel Peyriere, Venture Partner

Super Capital MEA Club

Super Capital is a Paris angel network and club-deal platform founded in 2018. It has invested more than €30m in 150+ startups since 2019. In 2025 it launched a Middle East & Africa club with Axel.

- Backs up to 10 startups a year with **€100k–€250k** per deal
- Axel co-founded AUTO24.africa and Africar Group and has backed 50+ regional startups, including Bumpa, Curacel, Termii and Julaya
- Investors join through Roundtable

CONTACT supercapital.club · Join as an investor · Axel's profile

Super Capital says it prefers a warm introduction and has no public pitch email. Its OpenVC listing shows tickets of $50k–$300k from prototype to scaling. Ask a connector on this page to introduce you, or message Axel on LinkedIn and mention the MEA Club.

INVESTS EUROPE → AFRICA

David van Dijk, Team Lead

Boost Africa · ABAN

David leads technical assistance for Boost Africa. It is a fund-of-funds backed by the EIB, AfDB and European Commission that invests in early-stage African VC funds and supports their portfolio companies.

- Co-founded the **African Business Angel Network** (ABAN) in 2015 and was its first executive director until 2019. ABAN grew to about 40 angel networks
- Helped launch SABAN, the South African Business Angel Network, in 2016
- Previously at VC4A. Moderating at SuperReturn Africa, Cape Town, 1–3 December 2026

CONTACT Meet him at SuperReturn Africa, 1–3 Dec · GEN profile

Boost Africa invests in funds, not startups. Ask David which of its portfolio funds suit your stage, then approach those funds.

FUNDS THE FUNDS DFI

Michel Weiss, CEO · Leonard Stiegeler, Chairman

Counder

An invite-only global leadership network that grew out of a Cape Town conference. Members join by personal referral, and AI matches them. Its January 2026 conference brought together 500 family-office principals, institutional investors and VC partners from 30+ nationalities at the Norval Foundation, with a focus on the Middle East.

- **Michel** founded Counder in 2018, leads Previdus Investments (early-stage InsurTech, mobility and sustainability), and co-founded Kasigro
- **Leonard** founded Pulse (formerly Ringier Africa Digital Publishing) and helped bring Rocket Internet to Africa. He has invested in Paystack, Flutterwave and Carbon

CONTACT counder.com/conference ·
Leonard on LinkedIn · Michel's profile
Attendance is by referral, so ask an existing member to put your name forward.

FAMILY OFFICES GERMANY → AFRICA

Philipp Alexander Ströhemann

Project Unleash · Unleash Dinners

Project Unleash is an initiative of PAS Ventures that helps early-stage SA founders build revenue-driven, investor-ready companies. Philipp invests his own money and offers peer mentoring. He is also co-founder and CEO of ComX.

- **Unleash Dinner Series**: dinners in Cape Town for fewer than 20 founders, mentors and early-stage investors, co-hosted with Nicolene Faulkner, Stefni Bridges and The Delta
- Covers go-to-market, fundraising readiness checks and honest feedback on what is blocking you
- Bridging Borders dinners: no public details found

CONTACT Philipp on LinkedIn ·
Unleash dinners on Luma · The Delta

ANGEL DINNERS

Dr. Marc Mogalle, Managing Director

Business Buddies GmbH

A Berlin firm, founded in 2014, that helps young founders with setup, strategy and financing. Marc has about 10 years of VC experience, including IPOs and trade sales such as RTT AG to Dassault Systèmes.

- Former venture partner at Finlab AG and Heliad Equity Partners
- Lecturer at the University of St. Gallen and TU Berlin, and runs the HSG Berlin alumni chapter
- Works as a fractional CFO or strategy lead. A route into the German angel network

CONTACT Marc's profile · Crunchbase
Search "Marc Mogalle" on LinkedIn to message him.

EARLY-STAGE VC GERMANY

Riccardo Petrantoni

Range Ventures

A Cape Town-based angel, founder and advisor with 16+ years in fast-growing startups across South Africa, Australia and Singapore. He founded Instants, worked on global business development at Beautypass, and studied at Università Cattolica in Milan.

- Mentor at Techstars and at Founder Institute Cape Town
- Ask him directly about Range Ventures' thesis and ticket size. A different Range Ventures in Denver, USA, appears in databases

CONTACT Riccardo on LinkedIn ·
Founder Institute Cape Town mentors

ANGEL MENTOR

How to reach out

These people get many messages, and a short, specific note stands out. The contact boxes list only channels that each person or organisation has published: websites, official emails and phone lines, LinkedIn, and social pages. Personal mobile numbers are not listed. If someone wants to share theirs, they will once you've connected.

1. **Show up first.** Join a walk, meetup or event before you ask for anything. A face they have met gets a reply.
2. **Use LinkedIn and keep it short.** Send a connection note under 300 characters, then a follow-up after they accept.
3. **Ask for one thing.** Ask for an introduction to a named investor, a seat at an event, or 15 minutes of feedback. Don't ask "Can you help me raise?"
4. **Make it easy to forward.** Include a two-line blurb about your company that they can paste to an investor unchanged.
5. **Close the loop.** Tell them what happened after the introduction, whatever the result.

LINKEDIN MESSAGE TEMPLATE

Hi [Name], I joined [walk / event] on [date]. I'm building [company], which [what it does, one line]. We have [traction metric] and are raising [amount] for [stage].

Would you be open to introducing me to [named investor / fund], or pointing me to the right person? I've added a two-line blurb below that you can forward.

Thanks, [Your name]

Which door to try first

Pre-revenue, building trust

Show up every Friday: Will's Green Walk at 05:55, a Founders Café netwalk, or CPT Sloane Connect in Cape Town. In Johannesburg, apply to 22 On Sloane's incubation programme. Read The Open Letter to learn who is investing.

Ready to pitch locally

Apply to the Cape Venture Bridge before 15 November, Startup Club ZA's Big Pitch, or an AfricArena summit. Ask Innovation City about its investor sessions. Get your numbers in shape with OCFO first.

Raising from abroad

Pitch Super Capital MEA for rounds of €100k–€250k. Ask for an invite to Counder or an Unleash dinner. Meet visiting Europeans during the FOMO Cape Town season, January to March.

Women founders

Use Women in Tech SA's programmes and network, and AfricArise, which encourages applications from women and young founders.



YOUR GUIDE

Tirumalarao Naidu

Know a connector who should be on this map, or spotted a detail that has changed? Get in touch.

Website · LinkedIn · X · Instagram · Threads · Facebook · Pinterest

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