

Women, STEM and Investment: Closing the Gender Gap



Key Highlights



As part of the Women Backing Women campaign, Oxford Brookes University hosted a highly successful event on 5th June 2023 that brought together women researchers in STEM and founders of university spinouts and women Business Angels and investors, as well as key figures from the enterprise ecosystem including Innovate UK, the Royal Academy of Engineering, the Royal Society of Chemistry, the Francis Crick Institute, UKBAA, British Business Bank and the NatWest Group.

“University spinouts are critical to the UK innovation ecosystem.”

HM Treasury

Investment in University spinouts has increased more than five-fold: from £960 million in 2014 to £5 billion in 2021; but in May 2023 only 18% of 1339 spinouts tracked by Beauhurst had at least one female founder.

Research led by Oxford Brookes University, funded by the Engineering and Physical Science Research Council, under its Inclusion Matters programme, highlighted that a major challenge for women founders is securing investment to develop and grow their businesses.

“When I go to meetings with investors, everyone is in their 50’, male, white and wearing a suit, I feel quite alien...even if they don’t consciously think women are less worthy of investment [they] are not looking at you as equal and that can be quite distressing”

A female founder

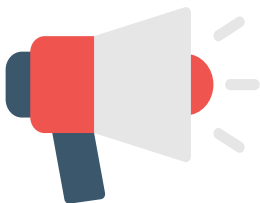
The Women Angel Insights Report shows that women business angel investors are more likely to invest in women founded companies. However, women angel investors represent only 14% of their investment community.

Thus, there is scope for women spinout founders and women angel investors to join forces to close the gender investment gap.



Highlights from the event

In a series of panel discussions a number of themes emerged and clear calls for action were made signalling how to close the gender gap, and begin to address other inequalities across the system.



Call to action:

We must set an aspirational target of 30% to increase both the proportion of university spinouts with at least one woman founder and of women Business Angels, by 2030.

What can you do to help really drive forward the opportunities for more women in STEM to access investment?

- We must work better together to harness our combined forces and so have greater impact
- We must challenge existing narratives and change cultures to create more enabling environments for women innovators
- We must encourage more women in STEM to become business angels investors

Work better together

“If we can connect like this more regularly, and mentor each other, and share our experiences...that’s so powerful.”

Dr Emma Hayhurst - Co-founder of Llusern Scientific

- We all need to connect better together including through events such as this, to share experiences, skills and knowledge across the entrepreneurial ecosystem and combine forces to address the gender gap.
- Universities, and particularly those outside of the “golden triangle”, should consider how they could better share resources to support academics seeking to commercialise their research; this could include different or new regional groupings or sector groupings bringing together researchers working in similar fields.
- Within universities we need to align the different initiatives (such as Athena Swan), and ensure the different university systems and processes are designed to support entrepreneurial activity and reflect the different mindset required.
- Universities should develop longer term relationships with investors to help build awareness amongst academics of the investment process, providing role models, information and networks into other entrepreneurs and investors; this will also help increase understanding amongst investors of STEM opportunities.
- Universities within similar sectors could work together to develop pipelines of research that will be of interest to investors; this will support building longer term relationships with them.

Change culture

“We know a key solution to getting more women founders is to get more women investors, and particularly to get more women with STEM backgrounds to become investors.”

Jenny Tooth OBE, Executive Chair at UK Business Angels Association

We need to encourage more women and particularly women with a STEM background, to become women investors and get more women onto investment boards; women bring their financial contributions but also their insights and knowledge

MORE WOMEN IN INVESTMENT DECISION-MAKING – IMPACTS INVESTMENT IN FEMALE FOUNDERS



ANGEL GROUPS WITH MORE THAN 20% WOMEN MAKE DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF INVESTMENTS IN WOMEN FOUNDRERS



WOMEN ANGELS MAKE 30-50% OF THEIR TOTAL INVESTMENTS IN FEMALE FOUNDERS



VC INVESTMENT TEAMS WITH MORE THAN 24% WOMEN BACK 2X MORE WOMEN LED DEALS



WOMEN INVESTORS SOURCE MORE WOMEN AND BRING 50% MORE WARM REFERRALS

- We all need to challenge the traditional narratives around women, STEM and entrepreneurialism; this is an intergenerational societal issue so we need to look across all ages including working in schools. (Women in Innovation Award)
- Universities need to recognise the value of research commercialisation in universities and give it equal status to traditional research and teaching activities ties. (Bristol's University Enterprise Fellowship)

Build capability

"I was a PhD student who went straight into business - it was a very steep learning curve but honestly take the risk, it's worth it...if you have some research or innovation you are passionate about...don't be scared - go for it!"

Dr Natalie Curtis, Co-Founder and CEO of Oxford Target Therapeutics

- We need to support women to develop their financial acumen by delivering high quality enterprise support programmes within universities; and wherever possible starting this education in schools.
- We need to ensure women have equal access to funding streams and opportunities for investment. (Access Mentoring encouraging underrepresented groups in engineering to access their programmes)

Enablers: examples of good practice

Women in Innovation Awards

Innovate UK, as part of UK Research and Innovation, offers up to 50 Women in Innovation Awards to women entrepreneurs across the UK each year. The winners receive a £50,000 grant and a bespoke package of mentoring, coaching and business support.

[Click here to find out more >>](#)

Bristol University Enterprise Fellowship Award

University Enterprise Fellowships are an opportunity for academics and researchers to explore an opportunity in enterprise, entrepreneurship, and research commercialisation. UEFs enable the Fellows appointed to dedicate time to explore the application of their own research or scholarship in a commercial or entrepreneurial context. Enterprise Fellowships focus on the person rather than the project.

[Click here to find out more >>](#)

RAE Access Mentoring

The Royal Academy of Engineering provides pre-application support to applicants from underrepresented groups in engineering. The Academy aims to provide additional support to applicants from groups that are persistently underrepresented within UK engineering through the grant application process. This positive action will contribute to improving diversity in the talent pipeline and widening the diversity of applicants and awardees within the Academy's research grant schemes.

[Click here to find out more >>](#)

WHAT NEXT?



Join our call to action and stay connected
by signing up to the LinkedIn group:

[Supporting Women for Spinout Success](#)

and follow us on Twitter:

[@WomenSpinouts](#)

Our speaker



Ana Avaliani

Director of Enterprise and Sustainable Development at the Royal Academy of Engineering



Professor Michele Barbour

Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor Enterprise and Innovation at the University of Bristol



Dr Olivia Champion

Founder and CEO of Entec Nutrition



Gordana Collier

Head of School Engineering, Computing and Mathematics, Oxford Brookes University



Dr Natalie Curtis

Co-Founder and CEO of Oxford Target Therapeutics



Dr Emma Hayhurst

Co-founder of Llusern Scientific, Innovate UK Women in Innovation Award Winner 2022



Pam Garside

Partner Newhealth, Chair Cambridge Angels, Fellow Judge Business School University of Cambridge



Priya Guha

Advisor & Venture Partner in technology and innovation



Professor Simonetta Manfredi

Director Research, Innovation and Enterprise, Oxford Brookes University



Dr Emily Nott

Head of Diversity and Inclusion Programmes at Innovate UK



Rebecca Todd

Investment Director at Longwall Venture Partners LLP



Jenny Tooth OBE

Executive Chair at UK Business Angels Association



Professor Kylie Vincent

Oxford University Academic Champion for Women in Entrepreneurship

Publications of interest



Investing in Women Scientists

This discussion paper aims to stimulate debate and the development of innovative approaches which help women entrepreneurs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) to secure investments which support the development and the growth of their spinouts and start-ups companies. It can be accessed at <https://bit.ly/investing-in-women-scientists> or by scanning the QR code.



The Women Angel Insights: The Impact of Female Angels on the UK Economy

The Women Angel Insights report, developed by UKBAA and Beauhurst, in partnership with NatWest, reveals that more than 5,000 women are making angel investments across the UK, helping to create over 10,000 jobs in the past decade. The report can be accessed at <https://bit.ly/women-angel-insights> or by scanning the QR code.



Spotlight on Spinouts 2022

The 1,166 active, academic spinout companies make up 2.52% of the UK's high-growth business population but punch well above their weight. In 2022, these companies secured £2.13b in equity investment, accounting for 9.11% of all equity finance raised by UK companies that year. The third edition of the Spotlight on Spinouts report explores the demographics of the academic spinout population, including their top-origin academic institutions, their funding sources and their survival and exit figures. The report can be accessed at <https://bit.ly/spotlight-on-spinouts-22> or by scanning the QR code.



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www.brookes.ac.uk/research/units/obbs/projects/women-and-spinouts

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