



# BENSON CAPITAL PARTNERS

## **What is Benson Capital Partners?**

Benson Capital Partners (“BCP”) is a New Orleans-based, for-profit entity founded in 2019 by Gayle M. Benson, principal owner of the New Orleans Saints and Pelicans. BCP is an organization that facilitates new business formation, workforce expansion, and wealth creation by investing capital and providing resources to the most promising companies that are addressing large markets. Benson Capital Partners is a partnership to honor the legacy of her late husband Tom Benson by fostering entrepreneurship and innovation in the Gulf South Region.

Today, Benson Capital Partners announces the initial closing of its inaugural fund, Benson Capital Fund I, LP. The fund will target investment opportunities related to the Gulf South region to further the efforts that Benson Capital Partner launched last year. Gayle Benson hopes that this fund demonstrates leadership for New Orleans and the Gulf South region by acting as a catalyst to promote economic development and growth in our community.

## **How large is the fund?**

Today, through Gayle Benson’s leadership, Benson Capital Partners announces the initial closing of Benson Capital Fund I, LP with more than \$50 million raised, representing the largest venture capital fund ever created in this region.

## **Who are investors in BCP?**

Joining Gayle Benson in Fund I are other successful entrepreneurs and executives with strong ties to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast as well as corporate leaders that include Entergy Corporation, Raising Cane’s, and others. Jones Walker, LLP served as fund formation counsel to Fund I.

## **Why was Benson Capital Partners created?**

Gayle Benson launched Benson Capital partners to facilitate and jump-start new business formation, workforce expansion and wealth creation in New Orleans and across the Gulf South. BCP and Fund I were created to continue Tom Benson’s legacy of business and economic development in the region.

## **Why now?**

While our region rebuilt itself following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina through the classic entrepreneurial traits of tenacity and innovation, the reality is that this region lacks capital to create further step-change growth. BCP plans to provide the required catalyst to correct that and build on the promising trends that followed post-Katrina. The timing is right and the

environment is now breeding a local wave of increasingly experienced startup founders who are pragmatic, focused, and hungry.

The early funding scene has improved substantially since Hurricane Katrina so companies in the Gulf South are able to raise angel and seed rounds on the earliest end of the spectrum. They're also able to attract attention from the West/East Coast for later stage deals. However, in between, there are no players – until us.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we believe that injecting capital into our region is now more important than ever to promote our local and regional entrepreneurial ecosystem as our economy continues to suffer from the reduction in tourism, depressed oil prices and overall curtailed economic investment.

### **Why is Benson Capital Partners focusing on the Gulf South?**

The Gulf South region rebuilt itself following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina through the classic entrepreneurial traits of tenacity, innovation, and grit. This environment is now breeding a local wave of increasingly experienced startup founders who are pragmatic, focused, and hungry. Startups haven't been the only innovators over the past 15 years. The Gulf South's largest companies such as Entergy and Ochsner Health System have made meaningful investments in innovation too. Simultaneously, the area's leading academic institutions, Tulane University and Louisiana State University, have dramatically expanded their entrepreneurship programs all while the state government has provided pioneering support of tax-advantaged Opportunity Zones. Despite these promising trends, the region lacks capital to create step-change growth.

There is a massive gap in the early-stage funding landscape for significantly bootstrapped companies focusing on building profitable businesses in untraditional, sometimes niche markets. They are too small for private equity fund economics, are too far away from West/East Coast venture capitalists, and lack the physical asset bases or operating histories for banks. Investors place a high risk-premium on these opportunities, yet this risk is mispriced for many bootstrapped companies with meaningful traction. This is particularly germane to the Southeastern U.S. where available capital is scarce. BCP plans to provide the required catalyst with its inaugural fund.

### **What kind of companies are you looking to invest in?**

We're looking for all kinds, but will be focused on early-stage businesses capable of rapid growth. That means we'll mostly be looking at technology that can scale. With that said, we don't invest in science projects, sketches on the back of a napkin, or mere ideas. We are seeking businesses that have already demonstrated traction and show strong evidence of product-market fit. These companies may not be generating revenue at the time of investment, but we will want to see a clear path to monetization.

Additionally, we are looking to leverage the historical competitive advantages of the Gulf South while not being distracted by sectors where the region has limited expertise. In other words, new snowplow technologies are almost certainly out of scope for this inaugural fund. We're looking to hone our focus on sectors where the Gulf South can compete on a global stage.

**How do I learn more?**

Mike Katz (Managing Director) and Caroline Crumley (Director) manage the day-to-day operations of Benson Capital Partners. They are always looking to unearth great startups and are looking forward to your leads and recommendations. For any inquires relative to Benson Capital Partners, please contact [hello@bensonCP.com](mailto:hello@bensonCP.com).