

- Unshackled Ventures

For my summer project, I collaborated with Unshackled Ventures to analyze the state of Immigrant Entrepreneurship and research investment potential across targeted industries and sectors. Unshackled Ventures is an early-stage venture capital firm that invests solely in immigrant-founded start-ups. Immigrant entrepreneurs face several challenges in America's start-up and funding ecosystem. They lack access to capital, particularly at the early stage (pre-seed and seed rounds), due to lack of connections and limited networking exposure. Unshackled Ventures leads early-stage investment rounds in immigrant-founded start-ups by providing the first round of capital to companies that are usually pre-product, pre-revenue, and pre-incorporation. They provide the 'friends and family' capital – the first sources of capital for a new business – to foreign-born founders who lack connections and resources in the American start-up ecosystem. In addition to capital, Unshackled provides complete visa and immigration solutions to immigrant founders as well as access to a host of entrepreneurial resources and connections.

Firstly, I worked with Unshackled Ventures to develop a report on the State of Immigrant Entrepreneurship. I identified key trends in fundraising patterns, economic impact, employment generation, social contributions, and investor participation in immigrant-founded start-ups. I also highlighted the unique challenges faced by immigrant founders and the resource gaps that exist in the current system. I distilled insights on how these identified trends can help inform Unshackled's investing patterns and entrepreneur support services.

Secondly, I worked alongside the Unshackled investment team to develop 'deep dive' reports on specific industries, sectors, and start-ups. These deep dive reports served to inform investment decisions and aid the evaluation process for potential investments. Additionally, deep dive reports act as readily available references that build upon each other and enable an accelerated investment evaluation process. I was also involved with the investment evaluation process and supplemented my deep dive research with technical, industry, and firm-specific questions for founders of potential investment opportunities. I conducted deep dive research on various areas such as the Reverse Mortgage sector, FinTech applications for the silver economy (senior citizens), the Buy Now Pay Later industry, financial solutions for blue collar workers, the 'Build in Public' space, etc. These deep dives inform investment decisions in the immediate term and serve as ready reference guides in the long term.

Limited access to early-stage funding is a major obstacle for immigrant founders with only 6% of pre-seed funding flowing to immigrant founded ventures. Unshackled fills a crucial gap in the system by providing capital access at the earliest ideation stages of an immigrant's venture. Working alongside the Unshackled team was an enriching experience, and I was able to learn a great deal about the process of a venture capital firm and the immense potential of immigrant entrepreneurs. Ensuring ease of doing business and capital access for immigrant founders is the first critical step in enabling their success.

