



DART
DRONE AUTOMATION & ROBOTICS TECHNOLOGY

&

STARTUP
MONTEREY BAY
CONNECT



ENTREPRENEURSHIP OPPORTUNITIES WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

MARCH 12TH, 5:30–7:30 PM



UCMBEST CENTER

3180 IMJIN RD | MARINA, CA

Featured Speakers:



OFFICE OF RESEARCH
& INNOVATION



MONTEREY
BAY
APEX
ACCELERATOR

NAVAL X

HAWKTOWER

VENTURE CAPITAL FOR CENTRAL CALIFORNIA





Bill Sherrod

Advisor, HawkTower

Fmr. Chief of Staff and
Dir. of Strategic Initiatives,
Naval Postgraduate School

&



HAWK TOWER

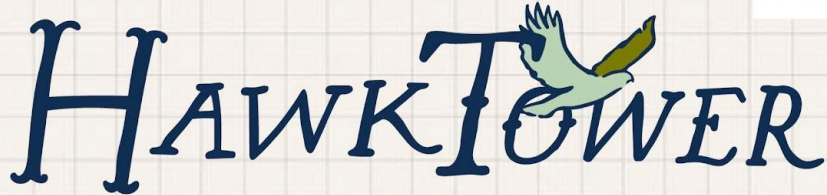
VENTURE CAPITAL FOR CENTRAL CALIFORNIA





Houthi attacks close vital Red Sea route for Maersk's container ships

Red Sea Container Shipping Down 30% Over Attacks, IMF Says



VENTURE CAPITAL FOR CENTRAL CALIFORNIA

What Business Leaders Are Saying About the Red Sea Attacks

The Houthi attacks on commercial ships are driving up freight costs and adding delays to journeys, with some companies affected more than others.



U.S. Navy Destroyer Shoots Down Drone Over the Red Sea



A U.S. Navy destroyer launches an anti-aircraft missile (USN file image) PUBLISHED NOV 15, 2023 10:44 PM BY THE MARITIME EXECUTIVE

FOX BUSINESS **BUSINESS ALERT**

3:37P ET

10YR YIELD	3.792%	▼ 0.106	30YR YIELD	3.951%	▼ 0.097	
LAST TRADES	▶ 0.03	AMAZON.COM (AMZN)	153.48	▲ 0.07	INTEL	+0.22%

DOW 37,629.54 ▲ 84.21



WE BELIEVE...

... The answers to our nation's most pressing challenges can only come from an innovative entrepreneurial ecosystem supported by a healthy and inclusive community to enable the development of solutions at the speed and scale of relevance.



WE BELIEVE...

... This is not the responsibility of solely the established defense industrial base or emerging defense technology community.

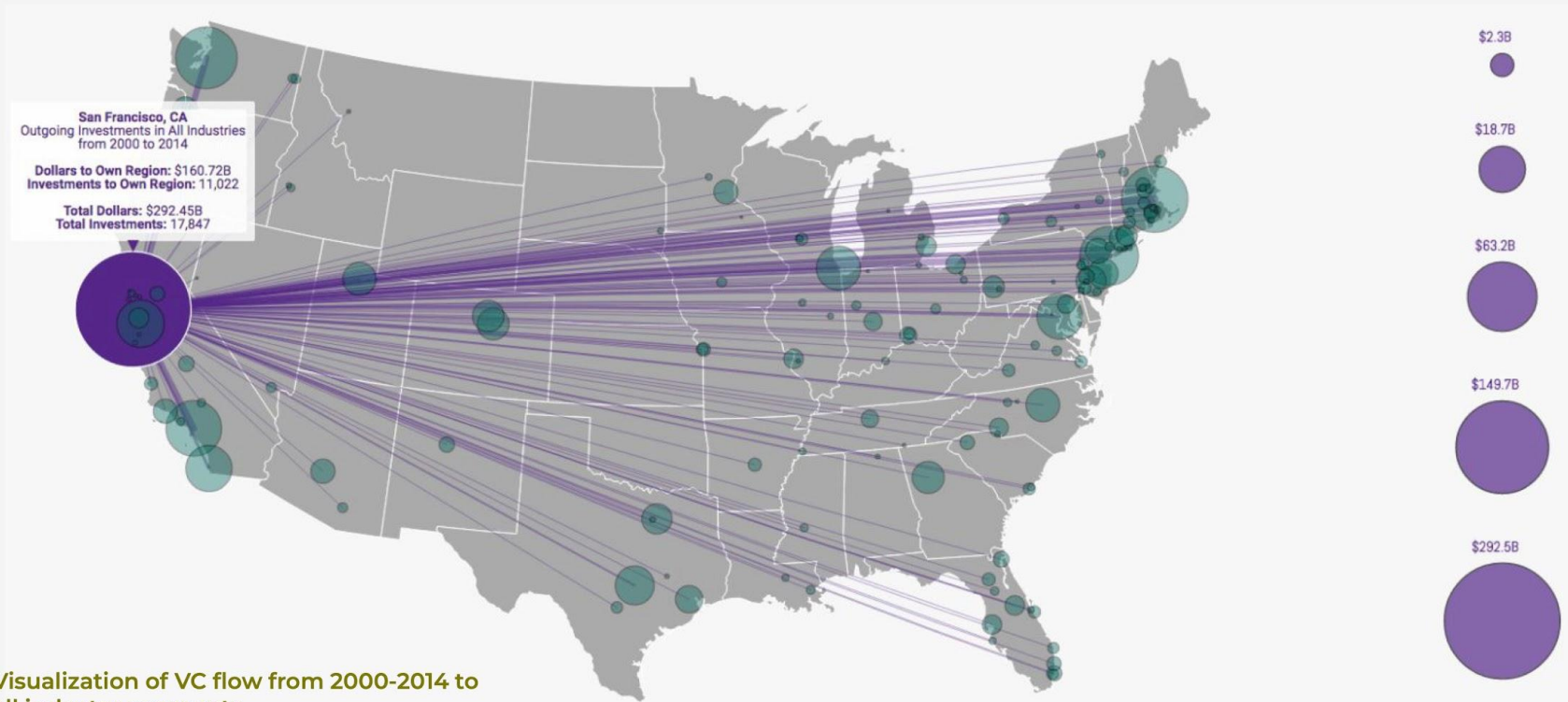


WE BELIEVE...

... This is our shared responsibility.



CALIFORNIA LEADS THE NATION IN VENTURE CAPITAL

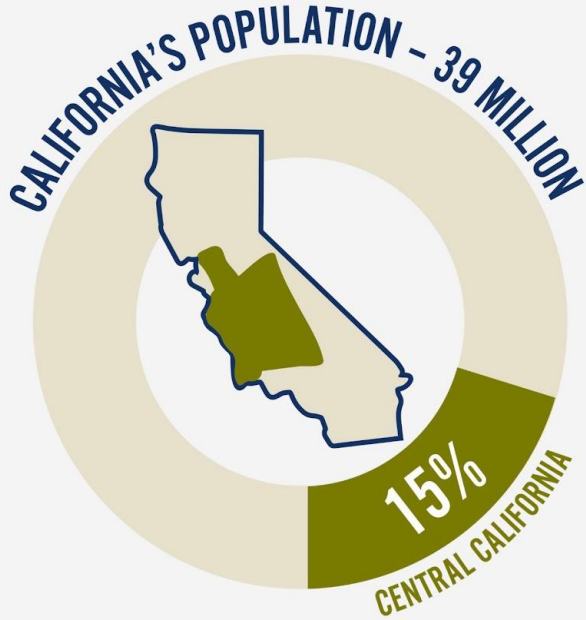


Visualization of VC flow from 2000-2014 to all industry segments.

BUT CENTRAL CALIFORNIA SITS IN THE SHADOW



CENTRAL CALIFORNIA IS A DESERT FOR VENTURE CAPITAL



\$104B in venture capital investments in 2022.

[.24% across Fresno, Monterey, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Benito, Stanislaus, Tulare, Kern, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo] [.54% in Santa Barbara and Santa Cruz]

CENTRAL CA: Why Now?

1. TECH HUB FOR MOBILITY

HO to Joby. spacious rural airports ripe for innovation

2. AGTECH INNOVATION

1/4 of US food. ~\$17B/year (USGS); 300+ crops

Home to WGA, Driscoll's, Taylor Farms, etc.

3. NAVAL & DUAL-USE ECOSYSTEM

NPS, Naval Innovation Center ('28), new NavalX hub

4. CENTRAL VALLEY WINDFALL

Growing pop. Fresno: \$80M+ in new public funding (F3)

BEAM Circular in Modesto (2025 Accelerator Program)

5. STANFORD PRESENCE IN MONTEREY

Hopkins receiving \$/investment via Stanford/DoERR

6. BLUE ECONOMY & OCEAN RESEARCH NETWORK

6,034 sqm of sanctuary, MBARI, NOAA, Moss Landing

7. RISING HISPANIC POPULATION

4x advanced degrees since '00; 2x founders since '18

8. EMERGING UC SCHOOLS IN SANTA CRUZ AND MERCED

UCSC & UCM poised to become the next UCSB

9. WORKFORCE VIA CAPABLE & SCRAPPY CSU SCHOOLS

Cal Poly (West's #1 public, CLE) Fresno St.'s WET Center

10. HOUSING & WATER INVENTIONS, BORN OF NECESSITY

shortage of 3M+ housing units in across CA

>40% of CA's water, 17% of US's irrigated land





BETTING ON EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES IN AI

Open air space, manufacturing and agriculture, supply chains and more – rural AI environments are uniquely positioned to commercialize and innovate.

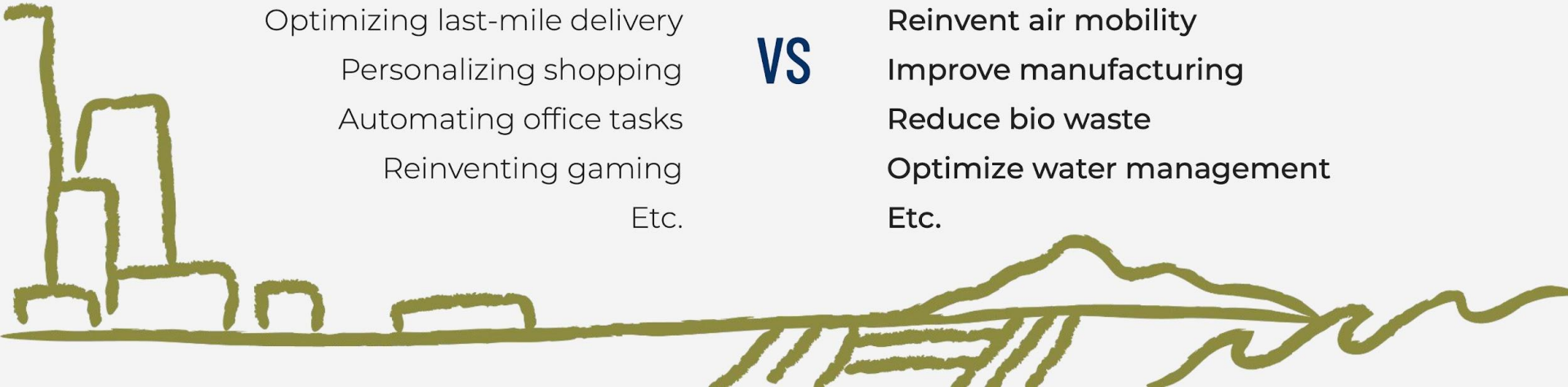
CURRENT STATE

- Building large-language models
- Generating text/images/video
- Optimizing last-mile delivery
- Personalizing shopping
- Automating office tasks
- Reinventing gaming
- Etc.

VS

EMERGING

- Defend America
- Feed the world
- Reinvent air mobility
- Improve manufacturing
- Reduce bio waste
- Optimize water management
- Etc.





WHAT IS A RURAL AI STARTUP?



TECHNOLOGY FOCUS

- ✓ **AI - First/Enabled**
Enable novel solutions to automation
- ✓ **Proprietary Data Ownership**
Scalable Data Collection
- ✓ **Intelligent Vertical Applications**
Capabilities, user experience, efficiencies
- ✓ **Research Driven**
PHDs & advanced degrees in AI, CS, vision, data science

BUSINESS MODEL

- ✓ **Big Slices of Large TAMs**
Follows trend of IT investment in AI
- ✓ **Operational Efficiency**
Emphasis on ROI-driven CAC or profitability
- ✓ **Local Talent**
Retain and return
- ✓ **Strategic Fits with Larger Companies**
Bias towards experienced management teams



GAPS TO ADDRESS

- 1. New startups**
- 2. Keeping great entrepreneurs in the County**
- 3. Bringing great entrepreneurs back to the County**
- 4. Recruiting great entrepreneurs from outside the County**
- 5. Year round entrepreneurial programming for key constituencies**

INTRODUCING HAWKTOWER

HawkTower LLC

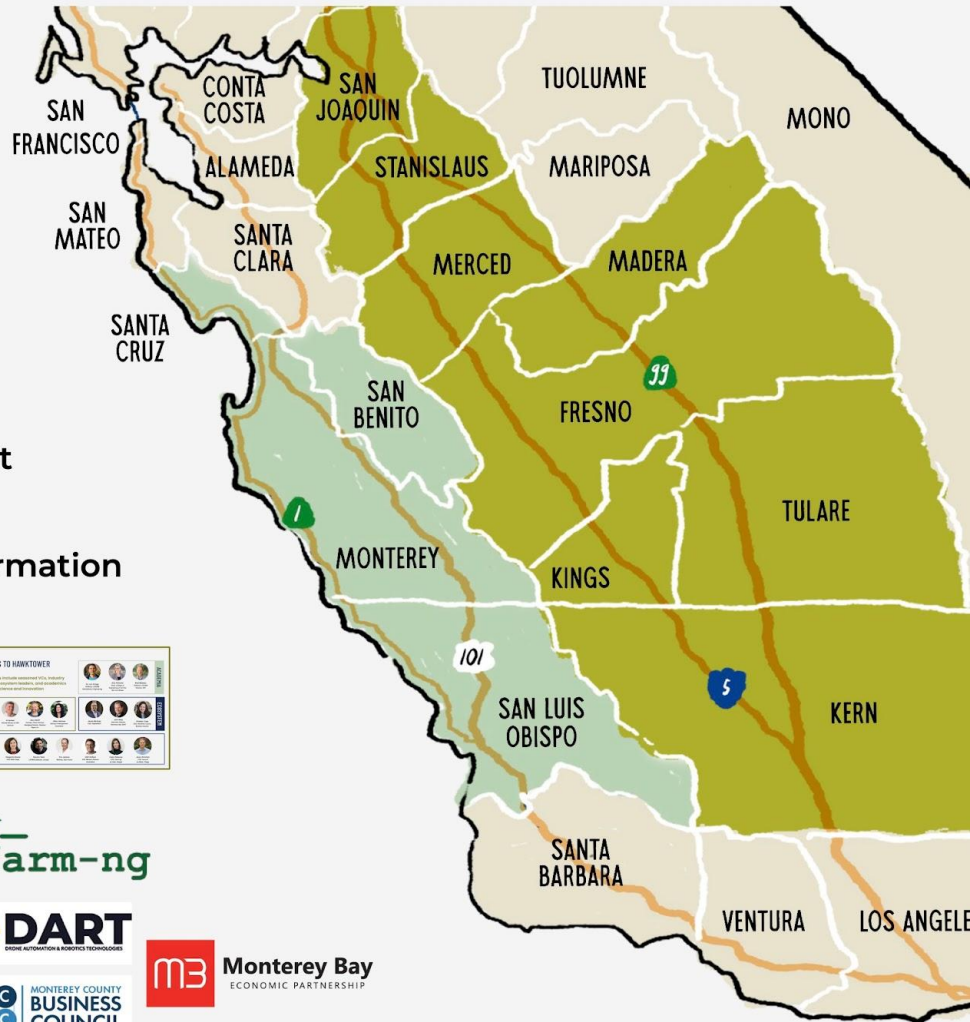
Investing in the Central Coast & Valley
HQ in Monterey County

- Mission is economic and workforce development
- Early-stage venture capital
- Focused on driving regional GDP and startup formation

Advisors: Include VCs, Deans and Professors, CEOs, Community Leaders, and World-Class AI Talent.

Portfolio: Completed our first investment with Watsonville's Farm-ng.

Expertise: Member of DART, MCBC, MBEP.





HAWKTOWER ► STARTUPS FOR CENTRAL CALIFORNIA

1 Emerging VC firm dedicated to local startups

HawkTower is long Central California. We view the region as the ideal rural innovation platform, with world-class R&D, and proximity to Silicon Valley, the world's 5th-largest economy.

2 Betting on AI's "rural" potential

AI is the fastest-growing market in IT. AI from Central California ("Rural AI") can help feed the world, manufacture more efficiently, solve waste, protect our food supply, manage water, and more.

3 Recruiting world-class founders to the region

We produce accelerator programs with consortium partners, drawing on experience from Google and best practices from YC. We recruit 5-star founders, fund startups, and scale and grow.

HAWKTOWER TEAM



CEO & Founder

DANNY BERNSTEIN

 EXECUTIVE WITH 20+ YEARS IN COMMERCIALIZATION & INNOVATION

 SOLD VC-BACKED STARTUP TO GOOGLE IN 2012 (\$XXM)

 ALUMNI OF STANFORD GSB AND UC DAVIS  



GOOGLE

In 10 years at Google, led high-performing global partnerships teams and accelerator programs, across Search, Chrome, Android, Assistant, and Developers.



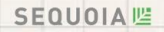
MICROSOFT

Led Product & Commercialization for Microsoft Teams. Reached 300M customers and \$XB in revenue.



VC-BACKED STARTUP (MEEBO)

1st business Hire, employee #5. VC from Sequoia and Khosla. Sold to Google (terms not disclosed).



Management



JILLIAN HEISMAN

Growth strategist to early stage and F1000 companies (e.g., SAP, CISCO, SVB). Prior positions with UBS, PwC, and Catalyst Strategies.



BILL SHERROD

Retired Navy Captain with 29 years at the DoD leading teams across maritime, aerospace, and research. Wrote the Naval Postgraduate School's strategic framework.



VITTORIA LECOMTE

Founder & CEO of Sesh, Polaris-backed digital health Co. Sesh merged with Caraway in 2023. Chief of Staff/GM at Blockchain. Forbes 30 Under 30.



ERIC JACKSON

Fourth generation Central Valley Ag family. Partner in Klein Family Farms and Rodney Strong Vineyards. Leadership roles at Verizon, Yahoo!, and LinkedIn.



OUR MISSION

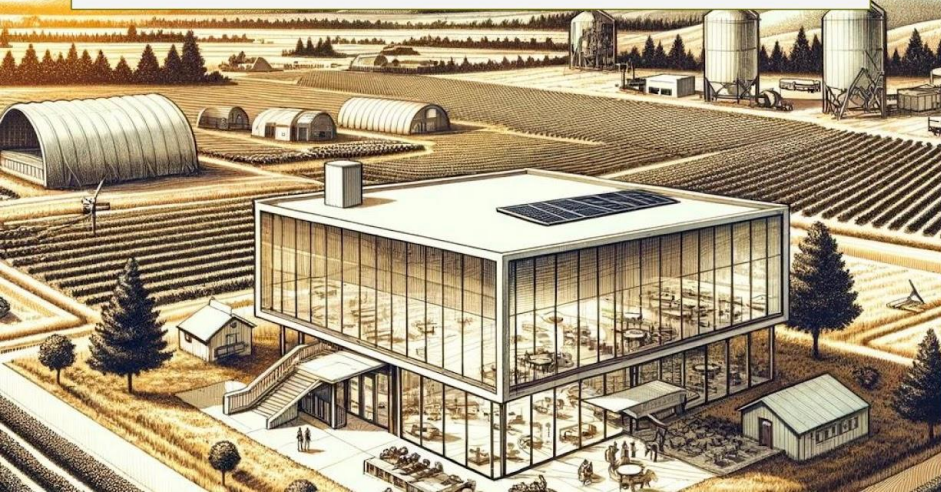


1 Tap Into the Rural AI Opportunity

1

2 Produce Awesome Local Accelerators

2



- UC PHDS & RESEARCHERS
- RISING INDUSTRIAL R&D
- CAL POLY RESEARCHERS
- FRESNO ST. RESEARCHERS
- DOD/DON CONNECTIONS
- GLOBAL "RURAL AI" TALENT
- STANFORD/IVY ALUMS FROM CENTRAL CA

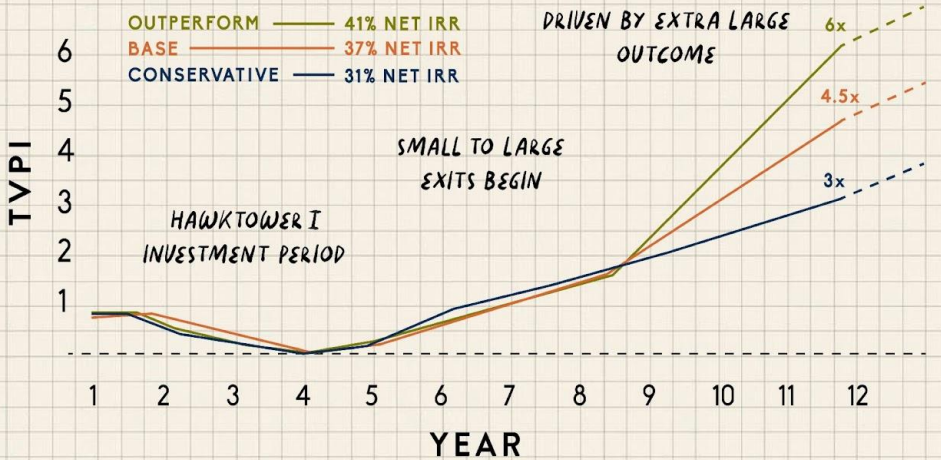


3 Recruit Founders to Central CA

3

4 Generate Returns (30%+ Net IRR)

4



HAWKTOWER SEEKS TO ENABLE THE STARTUP ECONOMY



AI

Industry

R&D, IP, Seasoned Founders, Early Access Customers, Investment, M&A, Sponsorships

INVESTORS

Academia

IP, Research, Founders, Workforce, Innovation, Entrepreneurship

2025-2028

Local AI-enabled startups built around regional strengths in Central California

HawkTower

Strategy, Early-Stage Capital, Startup Formation, Incubation, Accelerator, Strategic Partnerships

FOUNDERS

Talent

Founders, Returning Talent, Local Talent, Workforce Development, Grass Roots, Mentorship, Community

Silicon Valley

Later-Stage Capital, Imported Talent, Distribution, Strategic Partnerships.

ACCELERATORS

Gov

Public Funding (Regional, State, Federal, DoD), Research, Field Experimentation, Policy Support, Collaboration, Prioritization

Ecosystem

Research, Economic Development, Private Funding, Workforce Development, Infrastructure, Community, Collaboration



WHAT IS A STARTUP ACCELERATOR?

Year Round Programming

Open integrated approach to developing sustainable startup communities

- **Startup Community Programming**
- **Startup Events**
- **Ecosystem Development Training**
- **Founder Catalyst Programming**

Exploring programming collaborations with non-profits and universities

Impact:

- Broad access to best practices, networks of mentors and investors.
- Data-driven insights for program performance and stakeholder reporting.

Accelerator Programming (12-13 Weeks)

Rigorous and selective with a clear input and output – MRY startups ready for product-market fit and customers

- **Recruitment & Startup Selection**
- **Mentor Engagement**
- **12/13-Week Program**
- **Post-Program Support**

Impact:

- Dozens of new local startup companies.
- Aiding founders in scaling their startups and contributing to regional job creation and entrepreneurship.



ACCELERATOR STRUCTURE MODELED AFTER YC & GOOGLE

Operating Model

FORMAT

HT produces a selective 3-month (12 week) accelerator program per city per year.

OBJECTIVES

Improve the product, attract customers, and expand funding options.

SUPPORT

An investment team and mentors dedicated to the startups' success.

COHORT

Ranges from 3 to 12 startups, depending on program maturity, objectives, and funding.

CULTURE

Reflecting our core values, the program emphasizes productivity and urgency.

DEMO DAY

Culmination of the program. Open to the public and live streamed.

Funding Model

EQUITY INVESTMENT (HT)

HT invests \$125K per participating startup for 7% equity. We get an MFN for the next SAFE round.

PROGRAM \$ (HOST)

Provided to HT and the Consortium partners to run the Accelerator.

NON-DILUTIVE \$ (HOST)

Provided to the Startups to cover research and critical expenses (e.g., relocation).



A CONCENTRATED STARTUP HUB IN MONTEREY COUNTY

Cherry picking talent to launch and grow companies here

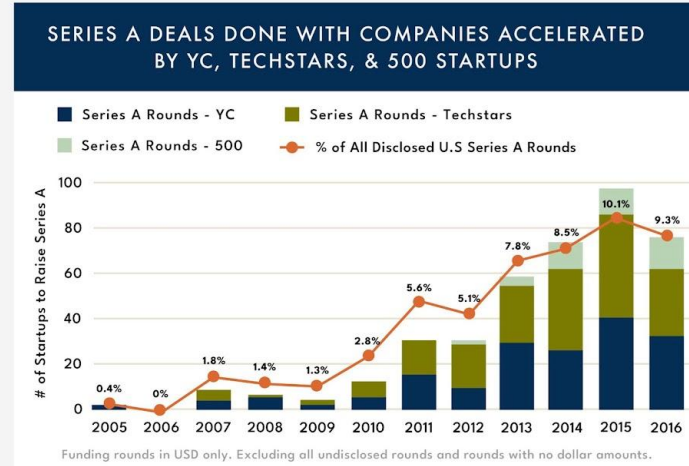
Accelerators are selective and application-based, rigorous and milestone-driven, cohort-based, measurable and accountable

3-10 new startups per cohort

per accelerator program per year

90%+ get funded

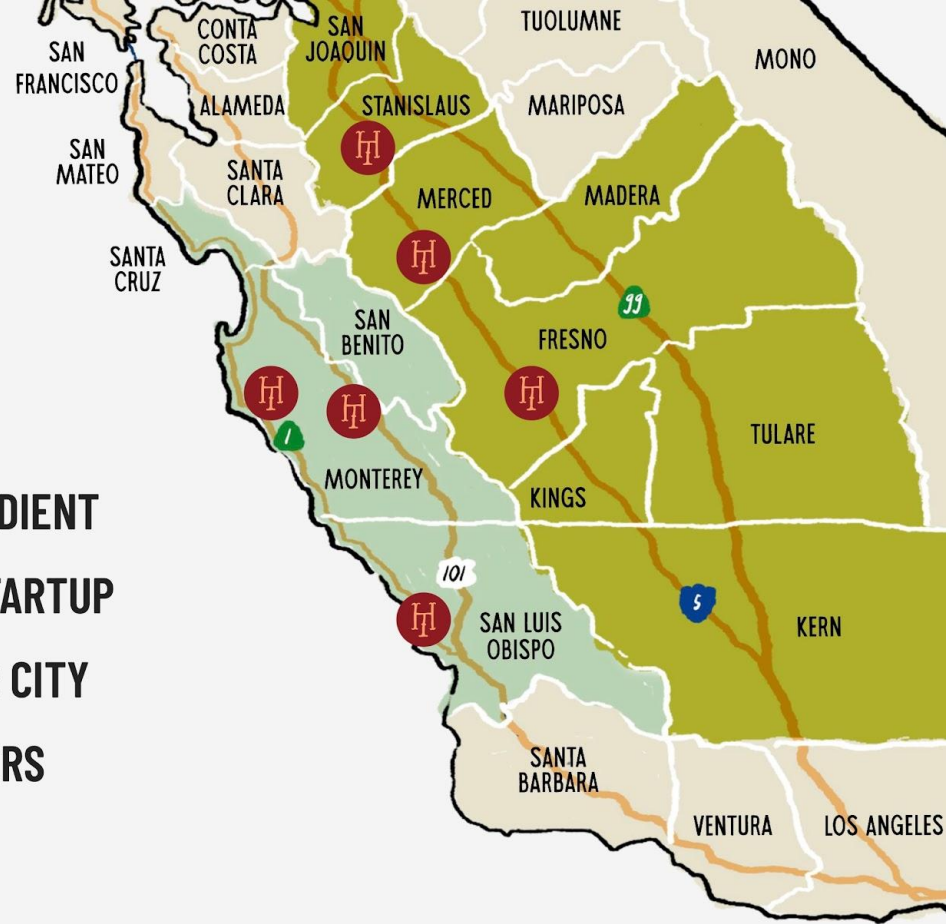
after graduating from “corporate” accelerators,
like Techstars or YC



BUILDING ACCELERATORS

How HawkTower Differentiates

-  **100% COMMITTED TO CENTRAL CALIFORNIA**
-  **IT'S STILL YOUR PROGRAM - WE'RE AN INGREDIENT**
-  **"SKIN IN THE GAME" - WE INVEST IN EACH STARTUP**
-  **100% LOCAL - WE BRING STARTUPS TO YOUR CITY**
-  **ABLE TO PARTNER & WORK ALONGSIDE OTHERS**
-  **BEST PRACTICES FROM SILICON VALLEY**



**2025 TARGET ACCELERATOR LOCATIONS:
SALINAS, MONTEREY, SLO, FRESNO, MERCED, MODESTO**



THANK YOU