

To demonstrate the health of your capital stack, you must track metrics that reflect both **software efficiency** (equity focus) and **operational stability** (debt focus).

As of February 2026, investors have shifted away from "growth at all costs" and are prioritizing **unit economics** and **profitability benchmarks**.

The 2026 Metric Cheat Sheet

1. Unit Economics (Efficiency)

Metric	2026 SaaS Benchmark	2026 Physical Product Benchmark
LTV:CAC Ratio	3:1 to 4:1	3:1 (Ideal for seed stages)
CAC Payback	8–18 months (depending on deal size)	Under 12 months
Gross Margin	75% or higher (Legacy SaaS)	40% to 60% (Depending on industry)
AI Gross Margin	~25% (Due to high compute costs)	N/A

2. Growth & Retention (Scale)

- **Net Revenue Retention (NRR):** Aim for **101% or higher**. Top performers in 2026 maintain **111%+**.
- **Monthly Growth Rate:** Top early-stage startups target **10–17%** monthly growth, settling to **6–7%** after reaching \$3M ARR.
- **Annual Churn:** Average B2B SaaS churn is currently **4.9%**. "Best-in-class" remains **below 3%** annually.

3. Capital Efficiency (OPM Health)

- **Burn Multiple:** This is your "fastest trust signal" in 2026.
 - **Good:** < 2.0 (You spend \$2 to add \$1 of new revenue).
 - **Best-in-Class:** < 1.0 (Typical for mature businesses nearing profitability).
- **Rule of 40:** Your (Growth Rate + Profit Margin) should be **≥ 40%** to prove you are balancing growth and profitability effectively.

- **ARR per Employee:** A critical 2026 benchmark for lean operations is **\$150k–\$250k**.

4. SBA & Debt Compliance

Unlike equity investors, [SBA lenders](#) primarily care about your ability to service debt.

- **Debt Service Coverage Ratio (DSCR):** Lenders generally require a **1.15x to 1.25x** ratio, meaning your cash flow is at least 15–25% higher than your debt payments.
 - **Ongoing Compliance:** While standard 7(a) and 504 loans often lack ongoing "maintenance covenants," participants in special programs like the **8(a) Business Development Program** must comply with mandatory financial data calls—such as the recent **January 5, 2026 audit**—to maintain eligibility.
-