

S U P P O R T I N G
E N T R E P R E N E U R I A L
W O M E N I N W A L E S

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE



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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

**Cronfa Datblygu
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INTRODUCTION

The Welsh Government document, 'Supporting Entrepreneurial Women in Wales' provides a strategic focus for business support organisations that provide support for women who are starting, sustaining or growing their business in Wales.

This Good Practice Guide complements the focus highlighted within 'Supporting Entrepreneurial Women in Wales' as it includes practical tips for you as business support organisations on how best to engage with women who are setting up or already running their own business. By making small changes, business support organisations will be able to deliver a service suitable for everyone in the community whether they are setting up in business or looking to sustain or grow their business.

This Good Practice Guide will support the partners engaged in the Welsh business ecosystem to tackle inequality and ensure that the needs of entrepreneurial women in Wales are being fully met.

Developing and supporting women's enterprise is proven to be critically important for overall business and economic prosperity. In the UK, research by the Women's Business Council and Deloitte has found that if levels of female entrepreneurial activity increased to match those of men, the UK economy could be boosted by over £180bn by 2025. It has been well documented that entrepreneurship is a strong basis for women's economic independence as well as important for growth and employment generation – both locally and nationally.

The proportion of women owned businesses in Wales stands at 28%, just below the UK level of 31%. Women still face a number of barriers and difficulties in setting up and maintaining businesses. Research shows that a more gender focused approach in support delivery is required to unlock the full economic and individual potential.

Results from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) show that Entrepreneurial activity in Wales in 2017 has continued to remain strong with the TEA (Total Early-Stage Entrepreneurial Activity) rate standing at over 6% and start up intentions at around 8%. However, at 3.8% the female TEA rate in Wales is less than half of the male rate of 8.8%.

As business support organisations, you are key in developing and supporting women entrepreneurs, by being gender aware in your delivery you can directly enhance the entrepreneurial mind-sets, skills and attitudes across communities. Gender equality measures such as the removal of gender stereotypes in education; awareness raising and activities to tackle occupational segregation, such as the promotion of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects to girls and women, can encourage more young women to consider setting up their own business. While education and training are key drivers in this process, the engagement which you have with local businesses and business organisations will be the source of the real-life examples and experiences that are essential for the positive promotion of entrepreneurship.



Fusion, Cardigan

“ The moral case for greater gender equity is clear, and so is the economic case. As countries around the world seek to grow their economies and reduce inequality, tapping into the huge potential of women can be a game changer. ”

Christine Lagarde, Managing Director,
International Monetary Fund (IMF), March 2017.

F R A M E W O R K T H E M E S A N D G O O D P R A C T I C E T I P S

The Welsh Government, and key organisations involved in business support delivery, have made a commitment to undertake a series of actions across a number of agreed themes. These themes provide the strategic overview with which you can develop practice to further support entrepreneurial women in Wales. This practice will also benefit the wider eco-system and support an inclusive approach to the Welsh economy.



Dinorwig Distillery, Dinorwig

Themes within this guide are:



**Business Advice
and Information**



Business Awards and Events



Accessing Finance



**Incubation Units; Co-working
Locations and Business Hubs**



Mentoring



Monitoring Practice Delivery



Networking

This guide explains the importance of developing good practice under each theme and suggests some practical tips on the following pages.

B U S I N E S S A D V I C E A N D I N F O R M A T I O N

Business advice and information is a crucial resource for businesses seeking to start-up and grow. Every business is different and the ability to closely tailor your business support to your client needs, helps to maximise the benefit.

Finding good quality and relevant information is necessary at all stages of business development. The importance of style and methods of communication and language should not be underestimated. Navigating through business advice and information can be difficult when first starting out – particularly across the regulatory environment – therefore, you have to make sure that all of your communications are inclusive and avoids bias.

For example, many business advice and support services declare their services are 'gender neutral', and do not favour men or women. Yet a 'gender-neutral' focus can miss the point about what is required in a service – that it responds appropriately to the specific needs of a client group. This approach is generally described as being 'gender-blind', where knowledge of the requirements of, in this case, women are not seen, understood or acknowledged, in attempts to make services appear neutral.

The issue of gender blindness has been addressed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), stating,

*“there is a need to **mainstream a gender sensitive approach** in all entrepreneurship and growth policies, in order to consider, include and reflect the specific characteristics, needs and challenges of female entrepreneurs (both existing and would-be) and women’s businesses”.*

Adopting a mainstream 'gender-aware' approach to practice is essential to meet the needs of **all** entrepreneurs. Research conducted by RBS shows that women tend to start up in business with different skills and experience than men including less management experience and less business contacts – highlighting the need for a different and a more gender-aware type of business support.

One way of checking how gender aware your services are may be to look at the language used by your service across the different methods of communication. This includes client facing communications (meetings, workshops etc.); written communications (promotional leaflets, information briefings); online communications (website, social media etc.) to identify and remove any gender bias. For example, this could be something very simple such as checking the use of nouns that are not gender-specific to refer to roles or professions (e.g. chairman, businessman, etc.) and checking the use of pronouns (e.g. not to use 'he', when the gender of the person is unknown).

As well as the need to use gender neutral language, there is a range of terminology common within business support agencies with which many women may not immediately identify - either personally or in business terms. For example, a number of women's businesses may operate in sectors not considered to be of, 'high growth potential', and this may discourage women to look for any support and advice on 'growth programmes' as they do not think it applies to them. Therefore, they may become more disengaged from the growth support process – and from business support services generally.

Any information which you produce should be inclusive, and check that your communications are gender balanced – including images and photographs – with information on products and services tailored to the needs of all client groups within your community.

Starting and sustaining a business can be challenging for everyone, however, studies such as the Federation of Small Business (FSB) 'Untapped Potential of Women in Enterprise', the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor and the Women's Enterprise Scotland research, 'Women in Enterprise', show that some challenges can be more significant for women, particularly in the areas listed:



Access to finance



Access to social support and networking



Educational and occupational segregation



Competing demands on time (home and work responsibilities)



Information and training gaps



Lack of mentoring opportunities and role models

In the recent research conducted by the FSB in the UK, women business owners mentioned other challenges, for example, one third (34%) of FSB women business owners said they felt they had experienced discrimination as a business woman in the past. Women FSB members recalled instances in which clients, suppliers and external contractors either mistook their role in the business or assumed that a male partner or employee was the business owner. Such experiences can impact confidence of women business owners and over time, may erode business growth motivation.

Some of these challenges faced by women entrepreneurs may often go unseen and therefore, not recognised by business support agencies. Training for advisors in your service and raising awareness of the challenges women entrepreneurs can face, will help boost your staff team capability to deliver a client-specific business support, thus ensuring that your business support and advice services consistently meet the needs of your women clients and are well placed to tackle the gender gap in enterprise.



“ I found the gender awareness training we received very helpful as I now better understand the potential barriers to accelerating the growth of women led businesses in Wales. ”

Vicky Griffiths, Business Relationship Manager
(Participant of the business advisor gender balance training)

The Little Stitchery Sewing Rooms, Ystradgynlais

PRACTICAL TIPS

- Provide training for your staff on the needs of women entrepreneurs and best practice in delivering needs based, gender-specific business support.
- Think about your business support and others across Wales. Are there particular sectors which are targeted for growth? Does this have the potential to exclude particular groups?
- Be alert for unseen or less obvious support needs, such as loss of confidence due to experiences of bias and discrimination rather than informed assessments of business capability.
- Where support services such as training and events align to known areas of challenge for women entrepreneurs, promote those services to your women clients as a target group.
- Develop tailored support with the needs of women in mind.
- Think about some of the challenges listed above and look at your promotional information including online pages, by checking your language and images through a gender lens and ask, – *'Is the language used or images presented illustrating a service that applies to women?' 'Are the kinds of businesses run by women in Wales represented here?' 'Do we have a fair split, representing women in business and men in business?'* Think about reviewing your communications strategy regularly to gather information on what methods are working best to attract clients – both men and women - to the service.
- Try and use relevant role models and examples of the kinds of businesses trading in your area and across the country. Think about the split between businesses run by women and men. Also show a range of type and size of business across different sectors and a diversity of business owner by - representing businesses run by black and minority ethnicity (BME) clients; businesses operating across urban / rural areas; and any businesses run by clients with disabilities.
- Build up links with local and national educational institutions, including schools and colleges, to promote a culture of entrepreneurship based on the principles of gender equality and develop an entrepreneurial mind-set amongst young people.
- Consider using new methods and outlets for your communications to get your messages across to wider and more diverse sections of the community.
- Consider regular targeted campaigns to boost take up of services by entrepreneurial women. Use different networks to engage BME women; women in isolated communities; women with disabilities. Set up a system to monitor these campaigns so that you know what works well for the future.
- Share your experiences locally and nationally so that best practice examples and success stories can be promoted to attract entrepreneurial women to services across the country.

A C C E S S I N G F I N A N C E

Access to finance is a critical enabling resource for women-led businesses, not just at start-up but also to help invest for growth. While more women are starting up in business as a career option, fewer are making it through to the growth pipeline. Addressing this gender imbalance at the growth stage would add over £180bn to the UK economy by 2025 according to research conducted by Deloitte and the Women's Business Council.

Studies have shown that women, on average, start their business with one third less capital than their male counterparts. Under-capitalisation limits entrepreneurial growth by constraining business investments in key assets such as equipment, employees, or inventory.

When considering funding, women are more likely to have a longer thought and assessment process before acting to take on investment. In particular, there is a reluctance or aversion to taking on secured lending, where the main asset secured is the family home. More banks are recognising women as a distinct group and offering tailored services including lending support.

In terms of the newer funding models, crowdfunding has worked well for women with the language and approach found to be less intimidating. Research by PWC has shown women to be more successful at crowdfunding than men. Female-led campaigns were 32% more successful at reaching their funding target than male-led campaigns. This is in contrast to research by Barclays bank, where men are significantly more likely to gain venture capital funding for their businesses than women.

Other forms of funding women have reported as being valuable include leveraging the value of sales through use of advanced payment and boosting available funds for re-investment.

PRACTICAL TIPS

- Consider that some women may take longer to think about taking on investment. Taking time to consider investment is not a lack of interest in investing for growth, for example.
- Review your lending arrangements within your organisation and consider if they are gender aware.
- Where increased investment may enable the achievement of growth plans for businesses, consider highlighting channels, such as unsecured lending and crowdfunding which may have greater appeal to women entrepreneurs.
- Make sure that your women clients are aware of the support services offered by banks specifically those specially designed for women owned businesses.
- Also, think about other external factors that may influence financial decisions. For example, stereotypical images and media representations of women entrepreneurs can be detrimental in several ways – such images not only have a negative impact on women who may be considering starting their own business, but also on potential funders and business collaborators who may be influenced by such representations.



Emily Webb, Oarsome Grips

M E N T O R I N G

Having a business mentor can help entrepreneurs in many ways, including developing business strategies by sharing their skills, expertise, experience and contacts. Research has shown that women are more likely than men to state that they find the environment around business advice to be quite unwelcoming and unsympathetic to some of the particular challenges they face, therefore, mentoring is often chosen by women as a better option for their business development and growth aspirations.

Research by McGowan et al, found that women and men prefer different kinds of advice, with men often preferring to opt for advice on a consultancy basis while women prefer services based more on a mentoring and coaching model.

The Federation of Small Businesses found that for women entrepreneurs, mentoring can be particularly effective in building self-confidence and enabling women to challenge perceptions of their own skills and capabilities. Women are less likely to know many people in business and therefore have fewer opportunities to benefit from contact with others who may be willing to share knowledge and experience about setting up or running businesses.

A study by Women's Enterprise Scotland found mentoring was valued by 84% of women-led businesses who had accessed mentoring. In addition, 43% said that they saw mentoring as the support they needed to grow their business in the next three years. Where businesses had been able to access a mentor, there was found to be benefit from working with someone who had faced similar experiences and challenges.

PRACTICAL TIPS

- Find out what mentoring schemes and opportunities there are in your area and advise your women clients of these services and how they can be accessed.
- Include mentoring support as an option in addition to consultancy services.
- Think about including mentoring support services as an option to enhance the self-confidence and motivation of women clients.
- Aim to recruit a balance of men and women as mentors and highlight them when offering service.



Rebalance Retreats, Kilgetty

NETWORKING

Networking has proven to be an effective tool for all business owners at all stages of business – from start-up through to all stages of business development and growth. Building social capital – i.e. a network of social connections - is an important part of developing a business and of seeking support. Entrepreneurial women regularly cite networking and being able to build on social and business connections as one of the most important methods of support for them in business.

Research has also shown that entrepreneurial women view networking as a significant way to develop and grow both their business and also their own business skills. Networking was also seen as an important means of combatting isolation which can be a feature of business ownership – especially for those women who are sole traders, or who work from home, or who have children or other caring responsibilities and therefore, limited working hours.

It is important, therefore, that your service understands that women, and other under-represented groups, tend to have a greater need for networking opportunities. Such opportunities can assist with a number of business development areas including finding business partners; accessing finance; finding suppliers; finding customers; finding staff etc.

Research has shown the benefits of networking – and specifically, women-only networks. Benefits of women only networks and networking events have included feeling more comfortable in the environment; feeling less intimidated in a women-only space; developing a greater confidence to network and speak with others; and experiencing a more comfortable place to do business.

Entrepreneurial networks can make a difference to those who are thinking of setting up or at the early stages of business. While networking in general can be intimidating, studies by Women's Enterprise Scotland and the OECD have shown women only networks are found to be more comfortable environments for many, helping to grow confidence and eventually giving women the opportunity to attend other mixed sex and / or sector specific networking events. The timing and nature of networking events was key for women led businesses. The after-hours approach of many events (e.g. 'Beer and Pizza' events) was less appealing to some women.

PRACTICAL TIPS

- Find out what local networking opportunities are available in your area. You may want to consider setting up some events. Consider setting up a 'buddy system' for those who may be new to networking so that women don't have to walk into events on their own.
- If you do set up networking events, think about how best to structure them so that they may be more successful. For example, think about how to engage new and also more experienced entrepreneurs and other local partners in the business community. Consider women-only events and, if successful, you may be able to give ownership of future networking events to some of its members.
- Use the networks as a means of listening to women entrepreneurs so that this keeps you up to date with their experiences and support needs.
- Think about promoting the benefits of learning and peer to peer support across the networks and use networking events to build bridges between entrepreneurs, business service providers and other local partners in your business community. Be aware of timings; location; accessibility issues etc., so as to make the network as inclusive as possible.



Air Covers, Wrexham

BUSINESS AWARDS AND EVENTS

Business awards and events are a growing feature of the entrepreneurial landscape. While many events are positioned as open to all, a lack of women being nominated, attending, or being represented in speaking slots or on panels at these events, has been a catalyst for the rise of many women-specific awards and events across the country.

There is a growing range of women's awards, seeking to highlight the achievements of women-owned businesses and to champion entrepreneurship as an alternative career option. Female role models are vital to inspire more women to unlock their entrepreneurial talents and create a diverse, gender balanced and innovative business ecosystem.

By applying a 'gender lens approach' at the planning stage of events, you will help to ensure that the proposed structure of your event and your promotional communications will attract more of a diverse mix. It is also a good risk management exercise which can avoid instances where brand reputation is damaged, for example, by using all male panels, or speakers. As stated earlier in this guide, a more careful use of language in marketing communications can boost the reach into all sections of the community – including the local business community – and avoids any unintended exclusion. Gather information on the participation rates in events by gender, as this will not only measure effectiveness and identify best practice, but it will help you ensure diversity and inclusion goals are being achieved.

PRACTICAL TIPS

- Find out about awards specifically for women entrepreneurs and encourage your clients to apply or nominate their peers to highlight business achievements. This will help build motivation with existing business owners and also the next generation of new businesses.
- Select judging panels to make sure you have a balanced gender mix.
- Think about gender when planning your events to ensure a balanced mix of participants is achieved. Provide a diverse range of speakers and contributors. Review event participation rates by gender and assess whether any action may be required to improve participation to reflect your organisational diversity and inclusion values.
- As women remain the majority of care providers in the family, consider the timing of events and training programmes (you may even consider support through some crèche provision, if resources allow). This will not only deliver optimal inclusion and diversity at your events, it will also show a better return on investment in your event programmes.
- If you find lower numbers of women entrepreneurs are engaging with events, review the language used in promotional materials and think about including inspiring female role models as speakers and panel members. Consider running specific events for women as this may help you to build a better engagement with women entrepreneurs.



In The Welsh Wind Distillery, Aberteifi

INCUBATION UNITS CO-WORKING LOCATIONS AND BUSINESS HUBS

As entrepreneurship is increasingly viewed as a career option, more business start-up spaces such as incubation units, enterprise hubs and co-working spaces are being established. With more women setting up businesses, considering your service provision through a gender lens from the outset can help to ensure support services are designed to be as effective as possible for all.

Research shows us that women tend to start up in business with different skills and experience than men. Sometimes this can include limited management experience and women often have less business contacts when they are first starting out. (RBS Group, 2013). It is not surprising, therefore, that women may benefit from a different approach to business support delivery. For example, sections in the guide above have explored how women may prefer more of a mentoring and coaching service to a consultancy approach in business support.

Incubations units can really help support women by enabling business start-up and building capacity. They can also support research and implementation of women-only services by providing the environment necessary for women to establish their business and set targets for growth. Such units can also help create and promote networks and support innovation across businesses and provide a sense of shared purpose. If models are successful, they can help influence local and national economic development policy.

Some incubation support services may have a fast-track approach to business growth, creating an environment where entrepreneurs are encouraged to scale-up their business as quickly as possible, including taking on investment in the form of debt or equity. This can be beneficial to many businesses and reach them at the exact stage at which this level of support is needed.

Women have been reported as viewing business success through a broader range of measures than focusing simply on business turnover. For example, research has shown that women tend to focus more on measures such as product quality; bridging a service gap; or creating employment. While this is not about a lack the ambition to grow - women often have a different approach to achieving growth and measuring business success. By making sure that your staff have an understanding of the different preferences that women entrepreneurs may have will enhance the experience of both the women themselves and boost the success of the incubation units and business hubs.

PRACTICAL TIPS

- Think about what research shows us about the different support needs of women entrepreneurs when establishing incubation services and hubs so that your services best align to support both women and men. You can provide training for staff on the needs of women entrepreneurs and best practice in delivering needs based, gender-specific business support.
- Help create an entrepreneurial environment which is beneficial for all entrepreneurs and creates an inclusive and enabling support landscape for entrepreneurial women and men. This may include, for example, setting up networking opportunities across businesses and support the sharing of experiences within the hub.
- When assessing business success, adopt a range of measures of success alongside turnover, including employment creation and community benefits such as bridging vital local service gaps.
- Help promote women entrepreneurs in sectors where they are under-represented by developing support such as mentoring and networking and increase the use of entrepreneurial women as role models in all sectors.



MONITORING PRACTICE DELIVERY

Gender disaggregated data, as part of an effective monitoring and evaluation system, is important to examine the impact of any programme or policy intervention to increase the participation of women.

The gathering and analysis of gender disaggregated data is essential to help you identify best practice and will highlight the economic return on any targeted gender programmes that you develop for your service. Working with your stakeholders and partners in the business eco-system, try to share information, as far as you are able, so as to build up a more accurate picture of local and area-based need.

In their recent UK study, the FSB identified a lack of consistent and regular gender-disaggregated business ownership data. The report made a recommendation to improve data collection to provide policymakers with a stronger evidence base on women entrepreneurship.

By developing simple methods, you can be more effective in policy improvement and change - such as by collecting and analysing gender disaggregated data - as part of your equalities impact assessment process.

PRACTICAL TIPS

- Establish information systems to ensure that data on take up, completion of support programmes, and client satisfaction is disaggregated by gender.
- Look at your data on a regular basis and discuss results with the staff team so that it may be used to inform future programmes – for example, by measuring inputs, activities and impact of outputs. Longer term effects can be monitored so as to enhance your evidence-based policy development on gender equality improvements.
- If you have staff members responsible for monitoring, support them, possibly through training, so that you can best report on progress in supporting entrepreneurial women.



Workplace Worksafe, Ruthin

TO CONCLUDE ...

This guide has been developed as part of a process to understand how best we can support entrepreneurial women in Wales, and to further promote positive messages around the opportunities available to women entrepreneurs.

There are benefits for our business support services to adopt a multi-dimensional approach to supporting entrepreneurial women. Working in partnership and by using different methods, tools and interventions we can boost the numbers of women starting up in business in Wales. By listing practical tips, it is hoped that this guide encourages business support agencies across Wales to engage with women who are setting up, sustaining or growing their own business. By making these small changes, business support agencies can be confident that they are providing a service suitable for everyone in the communities across Wales.

This is just the start of the process and we would be delighted to hear your views on how we can improve practice across the business support sector.

The economic potential of women entrepreneurs is far reaching. Not just in terms of growing the economic potential from women as a group, but also in terms of the strategic benefits from achieving a more gender balanced ecosystem such as greater innovation, productivity and competitiveness. By adopting the principles contained in this guide, and following some of the practical tips listed, we can all contribute to making Wales a better place for women in business.

A P P E N D I C E S

APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Gender-Aware/ Gender-Focused

A gender-aware or gender-focused approach considers any barriers that may be preventing the participation or use of a service by women (or men) and adapts accordingly in order that a positive outcome is achieved. In the case of business support provision, a knowledge and understanding of the key issues for women in business is required.

Gender-Blind

Gender-blind projects, programmes, policies and attitudes do not take into account different roles and diverse needs of women and men and fail to recognise that the roles and responsibilities of women/girls and men/boys are ascribed to, or imposed upon, them in specific social, cultural, economic and political contexts. They therefore maintain status quo and will not help transform the unequal structure of gender relations.

<http://eige.europa.eu/rdc/thesaurus/terms/1157>

Gender-Neutral

The term 'gender-neutral' means that something is not associated with either women or men. It may refer to various aspects such as concepts or style of language. However, what is often perceived to be gender-neutral, including in areas of statistics or dissemination of data collected in reference to a population, often reflects gender blindness in practice (a failure to recognise gender specificities).

<http://eige.europa.eu/rdc/thesaurus/terms/1157>

Gender-Specific Approaches To Practice

A gender-specific approach in a working environment, either in a policy or practice issue, is a targeted intervention applicable to one gender (men or women). Any such intervention being founded on insights from gender-disaggregated data, research and/or best practice insights and outcomes.

Social-Capital

The OECD defines social capital as, "...the links, shared values and understandings in society that enable individuals and groups to trust each other and work together".

Total Early-Stage Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA)

The prevalence rate of individuals in the working age population who are actively involved in business start-ups, either in the phase of starting a new firm (nascent entrepreneurs), or in the phase spanning 42 months after the birth of the firm (owner-manager of new firms).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 2: REFERENCE SOURCES AND READING

1. Welsh Government documents
Framework, 'Supporting Entrepreneurial Women in Wales'
Programme for Government
'Taking Wales Forward'
'Prosperity for All: The National Strategy'
Well-Being Statement 2017
Also, recent research report from Wales?
2. Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM)
3. Women Entrepreneurs: Developing collaborative ecosystems for success.' Deloitte (2017)
4. 'Good Practices in Women's Entrepreneurship'. European Institute of Gender Equality (2014)
5. 'Women in Enterprise: The Untapped Potential'. Federation of Small Business (2016)
6. 'Women in Enterprise in Scotland'. Women's Enterprise Scotland (2017)
7. 'Women Outperform Men in Seed Crowdfunding', PWC and the Crowdfunding Centre (2017)
8. 'Untapped Unicorns; scaling up female entrepreneurship' Barclays Bank and the Female Founders Forum (2017)
9. McGowan, P., Cooper, S., Durkin, M. and O'Kane, C. (2015), The Influence of Social and Human Capital in Developing Young Women as Entrepreneurial Business Leaders. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 53: 645–661
10. 'Policy Brief on Expanding Networks for Inclusive Entrepreneurship'. OECD/ European Union (2015)
11. 'Women in Enterprise: A Different Perspective'. RBS Group (2013)
12. 'Economic Benefits of Gender Equality' European Institute for Gender Equality (2017)

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