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## **Understanding the Needs of Women Entrepreneurs in Scotland**

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*Publication date:*  
2020

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in Discovery Research Portal](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Arshed, N., & Knox, S. (2020). *Understanding the Needs of Women Entrepreneurs in Scotland: A Case for a Scottish Women's Business Centre*. University of Dundee.

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**Understanding the Needs of Women Entrepreneurs in Scotland:  
A Case for a Scottish Women's Business Centre**

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## Executive Summary

- The aim of this report is to provide an in-depth understanding of the context, challenges, roles, resources, capabilities, requirements and possibilities to transform women's enterprise support in Scotland.
- We report the findings of research interviews with the Women in Enterprise Action Group members, local enterprise agencies and focus groups across 11 regions of Scotland with over a hundred women entrepreneurs. We also provide 11 case illustrations of existing 'promising' practices (rather than the misleading notion of 'best' practice) and a case of 'illustrating' demand, all evident in sustainable models of women's enterprise support that could be widely adopted in Scotland to implement our recommendations.
- The key findings from our study are:
  - A lack of cohesion between women's enterprise support organisations and wider stakeholders.
  - Areas of localised and contextualised good support and advice, but a lack of consistency across Scotland.
  - Generic and frequently inexpert advice for women entrepreneurs, with some cases of more personable and engaging support.
- We recommend that Scotland needs a more outcomes-focused and sustainable model of business support for women entrepreneurs than is currently available. This model should feature:
  - A balance between local, regional and national support, which is critical, with a strong desire from start-up entrepreneurs and those at the early-stages of growth for local support, greater expertise among advisers and gender-tailored approaches to delivery.
  - A structured programme of expert mentoring and networking.
- We propose that our recommendations can be met by:
  - Creating an organisation branded as the Scottish Women's Business Centre.
  - Forming a governing board to which the Scottish Women's Business Centre will be held accountable and to provide it with expert advice on strategy and leadership. The board would comprise non-executives drawn from local enterprise agencies, academics with expertise in women's entrepreneurship, and specific executive managers.
  - Establishing eighteen 'new' local women's business centres to reflect regional variations in women entrepreneurs' needs but brings them together under the umbrella of the Scottish Women's Business Centre organisation.
  - Partnership working to deliver programmes of gender-tailored support in Scotland, comprising several existing agencies, individuals and Scottish Government.
  - Charging each Scottish Women's Business Centre with offering start-up programmes and growth (including early-growth) programmes of support to women business owners.
  - Embedding local Scottish Women's Business Centres into the existing infrastructure, e.g., libraries, community centres, colleges, business centres, Business Gateway premises, etc., and not requiring new buildings, people and structures.

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## 1. Introduction

In this report we ask key stakeholders in the women's entrepreneurial ecosystem in Scotland (delivery agencies and women entrepreneurs) what they believed to be effective business support for both women's start-ups and growth companies and whether support could be successfully delivered by the creation of a Women's Business Centre (WBC). We present the findings of an extensive investigation into these questions. Based on the findings we also make recommendations for a sustainable and feasible delivery model for women's enterprise support that meets stakeholders' expectations and requirements. We do so by drawing on data from: (a) 18 interviews with Women in Enterprise Action Group (WEAG) members, (b) 24 focus group interviews involving more than 100 women start-up and growth entrepreneurs in 11 regions of Scotland, (c) eight interviews with representatives of other support agencies within the entrepreneurial ecosystem, (d) a further 11 case illustrations of 'promising practices' for modelling a women's business centre in Scotland, and (e) an 'illustration of demand' case study with a social enterprise for women.

We found: (1) a lack of consistent localised and contextualised support and advice, which is personalised and tailored for women entrepreneurs, (2) the majority of women entrepreneurs were critical of generic and frequently inexperienced advice, (3) a balance between local, regional and national support was critical to any initiative, with a strong desire from start-up entrepreneurs and those at the early-stages of growth for local support and greater expertise among advisers, and (4) a programme of expert mentoring and networking was required.

Given these findings, our recommendations are that the Scottish Government support a two-tier strategy. The first tier strategy would be to establish a national WBC, which we propose is called the Scottish Women's Business Centre. This centre should be promoted and branded as an 'umbrella' organisation for supporting and promoting women's entrepreneurship in Scotland. The second tier strategy would comprise two elements:

- (a) Regionally-based local women's business centres, embedded in existing regional infrastructure, e.g., libraries, community centres, colleges, business centres, Business Gateway offices, etc. focused on assisting local start-up women entrepreneurs.
- (b) A national panel of expert enterprise champions focused on providing women entrepreneurs in early growth and growth businesses with expert advice (e.g., finance, marketing, people management and organisational development) in a holistic manner. These regional enterprise champions would need to be experienced in system-wide mentoring. They would also be required to design and deliver a structured series of gender-tailored programmes to deliver to growth business owners.

To address the question of what delivery agencies and women believed to be effective business support for women's start-ups *and* growth companies, and whether support could be successfully delivered by the creation of a Women's Business Centre (WBC), we began our research by reviewing the relevant literature on women's entrepreneurship. This review helped frame our report and substantiate our recommendations. Secondly, we introduce and justify our methods of data collection, in which we are confident achieved a high degree of rigour. We sought (a) to ensure that the data collected were representative of all stakeholders, (b) to be transparent in how

we collected the data to ensure our qualitative approach is consistent with the canons of good qualitative inquiry and, (c), ensure our methods of enquiry were based on word-for-word transcriptions of what participants thought, felt and said, and were based on rigorous standards of inductive analysis. Thirdly, we present our findings according to key themes identified in our data analysis. Fourthly, we present our recommendations which have been informed by the extensive data collected from the stakeholders within the women's entrepreneurial ecosystem and, finally, we close by concluding the report.

## 2. Setting the scene

### 2.1 Where are we now?

According to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), at the start of 2019 there were 5.9 million SMEs in the UK (BEIS, 2019a). Of the 5.9 million SMEs, 343,535 were operating in Scotland, providing an estimated 1.2 million jobs (Scottish Government, 2019). Both the UK and devolved governments have understood the importance of entrepreneurship to the economy and pursued years of enterprise policies in the hope that public sector support of entrepreneurial activity will drive economic growth, increase employment and strengthen international competitiveness (Audretsch and Beckmann, 2007; Van Praag and Versloot, 2007).

Given this evidence, there is a growing recognition on the part of academics and policy-makers that increasing the participation of women in entrepreneurship can play an important role in improving macroeconomic performance (Brush, et al., 2006). Accordingly, governments have deployed a range of women-specific enterprise policies designed to foster beneficial economic and social outcomes (Jennings and Brush, 2013). Despite significant effort and expenditure, policy interventions have struggled to achieve their objectives and, thus, women remain underrepresented in the small-to-medium sized business sector (Carter et al., 2015).

The proportion of women starting and growing their businesses has remained consistently low in the UK in comparison to their male counterparts, and shows no sign of rising. For example, the proportion of women participating in enterprise has declined; only 5.6% compared to 5.8% in 2013 are engaged in entrepreneurship (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2018). Furthermore, only an estimated 17% of SME employers are majority-led by women, defined as controlled by a single woman or having a management team of which a majority are women (BEIS, 2019b).

However, in Scotland, evidence from Levie et al. (2018) shows that the proportion of women who are actively starting a business has risen and the early-stage entrepreneurial activity (those that are about to and have just started a business) has caught up with the UK average. The number of young women in Scotland who are in the early-stages of entrepreneurship has trebled since 2008. Additionally, the gender gap in people starting businesses has also reduced in Scotland – whereas in the rest of the UK it has increased. Internationally, the enterprise gender gap is now nearing the par of leading entrepreneurial nations such as the US and Canada (Levie, 2018). Scotland's male to female ratio of early-stage entrepreneurs is 67%, compared to 50% for the rest of the UK. Nevertheless, whilst there are positive signs in Scotland with regards to early-stage businesses, it is less positive for established businesses. The Small Business Survey reports that in 2018, 15% of SME employers in Scotland were women-led. Although on a par with the UK-wide level, this is down six percentage points from 2017 (21%).

Although Scotland is making improvements in terms of entrepreneurial activity, women in Scotland continue to face barriers like access to finance, mentoring, etc., when starting and growing a business. Women account for 34% of total self-employment and, according to the Small Business Survey Scotland (2016), they majority-own only 19% of SMEs and equally own only 23% of SMEs. Furthermore, the female self-employment rate was lower in Scotland (9%), than in the UK (11%) in 2017 (Scottish Government Equality Evidence Finder, 2019). Other official



figures show that there are 94,900 self-employed women in Scotland, 5.4% of the working age population. It remains the case that Scottish men are much more likely to be their own boss than their female counterparts with 183,300 Scottish men self-employed, equivalent to 11% of the working age population (FSB, 2018). In comparison, women-led businesses are more likely to comprise younger sole traders, operate from home, be located in the service sector, have lower average turnover and employment, and are less likely to own more than one business.

## **2.2 What has been happening in the women's entrepreneurial ecosystem?**

Historically, the policy approach towards women's enterprise at the macro-level has mirrored the inconsistency of attitudes to small enterprises generally. In the UK, enterprise policy in the 1960s was geared towards supporting multinational corporations, largely ignoring small firms (Scase, 2000) until the Bolton Report was released in the 1970s to address market failure in advice and support provision for entrepreneurs and SMEs (Bennett, 2008). In the 1980s the government, driven mainly by a social and employment agenda, sought to promote an 'enterprise culture.' It has been argued that although women were involved in setting this agenda, there was no specific focus directed towards them (Forson, 2006). The 1990s saw the government concentrating on high growth start-ups. This period was designated the 'decade of women in leadership' (Naisbitt and Aburdene, 1996). When, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the focus shifted to productivity, the government came to regard encouraging entrepreneurship as one of the key approaches to raise productivity and, thereby, the national income (Reynolds et al., 2001). This included encouraging women's enterprise but policy and strategic support for the development of women's enterprise has still tended to be disjointed, with a lack of consistent resource and commitment (Brierton, 2014). The UK government's support for women's enterprise has been sporadic (Table 1). When interest has been shown, the focus has been on producing research papers rather than on delivering good quality, effective enterprise policy. The Labour government (1997-2010) was the first to establish a set of enterprise policies explicitly recognising and including women entrepreneurs within the entrepreneurship arena (Waring and Brierton, 2011).

The mounting number of studies in the field of women's entrepreneurship has also raised the level of government interest in women's enterprise but it is only in the last few years there has been a national strategic approach developed to advance women's enterprise in the UK (Forson, 2006). The *Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise* (DTI, 2003) was an early attempt to address what women need in terms of support and advice in the enterprise arena. However, the framework only served to highlight the government's lack of a coherent and consistent policy direction for women in business, and the lack of disaggregated statistical information on women's business activity (Blisson, 2004). The government's main aim was to significantly increase the numbers of women starting up in business but, instead, women's invisibility and the lack of gender parity within the enterprise environment became apparent.

In 2004, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, proclaimed that "the key factor in increasing the UK's business start-up rates is getting more women to start their own business" (One North East Regional Development Agency, 2005). This led to an array of support initiatives in the UK aimed at assisting women to start and develop their own businesses (Bennett and Richardson, 2005). This support included the Women's Enterprise Task Force (WETF), which was set up in 2006 as a national body to champion women's enterprise. The WETF presented its

recommendations to the government in the form of a report, *Greater Return on Women's Enterprise* (WETF, 2009) but, to date, the government has made no significant attempt to implement the recommendations of the report.

During the first half of the last decade, the Coalition government pledged to encourage women's enterprise as part of its Growth Agenda (Government Equalities Office, 2013). To encourage more women to become entrepreneurs, the government committed to deliver £2 million over three years to support women's enterprise in rural areas and promised to appoint 15,000 new mentors to support women setting up or growing a business. A Women's Business Council with an independent chair was also established, whose remit was to guide public policy on women in business and to advise on improving the business environment for women. In the second half of the decade, there has been an influx of government and private industry-led reports highlighting the importance of women to the economy and challenging the existing support whilst recommending much needed gender-specific support and advice (Carter et al., 2019; Rose Review of Female Entrepreneurship, 2019; Women and Enterprise All-Party Parliamentary Group, 2019; Burt Review, 2015). Despite these reports, neither the previous nor current Conservative government has yet to commit to establishing a women's enterprise agenda, although HM Treasury commissioned the Rose Review of Female Entrepreneurship in 2019 and the UK government replied with an official government response as to how they will be taking forward the report's recommendations (HM Treasury, 2019).

Scotland has also been working towards raising the profile of women entrepreneurs through a government-led group. In March 2014, *Scotland's Framework and Action Plan for Women's Enterprise* was published; its aim was to increase the contribution of women's enterprise to the Scottish economy and outline actions that need to be taken to address the gender gap in entrepreneurial activity. The actions outlined in the framework focused on: mentoring and networks, ambassadors and role models, markets and finance, and gender-specific support, with their delivery being overseen by the Women in Enterprise Implementation Group (FSB, 2016). More recently, the Women in Enterprise Action Group was set up in 2017 with the remit to deliver on the commitments made in the *Enterprise and Skills Review* is to realise untapped economic potential by tackling the gender gap across start-ups and growth companies - including through this summer's refreshed Women in Enterprise Action Framework, with action to deliver a sustainable model that collaboratively develops and monitors future gender-aware and gender-specific policies and interventions. The Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills, Jamie Hepburn, chairs the Group. The Minister also appointed an Independent Adviser (Dr Norin Arshed) to offer impartial advice on moving forward with women's enterprise in Scotland by providing recommendations as to what can be delivered, how it can be delivered and by whom.

**Table 1: Government interest in women’s entrepreneurship**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Government</b>	<b>Secretary of State/Minister</b>
The Rose Review of Female Entrepreneurship (2019)	Sets out recommendations to improve female start-up and scale-up rates and contributes £250bn of new value to the UK economy.	2019	Conservative	Robert Jenrick
Refreshed Scotland’s Framework and Action Plan for Women’s Enterprise (Carter, 2017)	The actions contained in this refreshed Action Framework are grouped into four themes to be addressed: mentoring and networking, role model project, finance, and gender-specific support with a budget of £400,000 dedicated to funding exemplar women’s enterprise programmes.	2017	SNP	Nicola Sturgeon
The Conservative Party Manifesto (2015)	No women’s entrepreneurship/enterprise-specific documentation was released. The Party Manifesto made no mention of women’s enterprise.	2015	Conservative	Sajid Javid
Scotland’s Framework and Action Plan for Women’s Enterprise (2014)	Set up with the aim to increase the contribution of women’s enterprise to the Scottish economy and outline actions that need to be taken to address the gender gap in entrepreneurial activity with a budget of £200,000 dedicated to funding exemplar women’s enterprise programmes.	2014	SNP	Nicola Sturgeon
Women and the Economy - Government Action Plan (June, 2013)	Women’s Business Council set up by the Coalition government in 2012 to advise on how to maximise women’s economic contribution.	2013	Coalition	Vince Cable
BIS Small Business Survey 2010: women-led businesses boost (BIS, 2011)	The report set out the key findings from the 2010 Small Business Survey (SBS): women-led businesses boost.	2011	Labour	Peter Mandelson
Greater return on women's enterprise - The UK's Women's Enterprise Task Force's report and recommendations (WETF, 2009)	This report set out the economic case for women’s enterprise and recommended partners and stakeholders in how to achieve a greater economic return from investment in women’s enterprise.	2009	Labour	Peter Mandelson

Assessing the effectiveness of different forms of support for women's enterprise: the regional women's enterprise initiatives (BERR, 2008)	The aim of the evaluation was to capture the value (including knowledge, understanding and good practice) of a set of small-scale initiatives designed to test different approaches and develop practice.	2008	Labour	John Hutton
Women's Enterprise Task Force (set up in 2006)	Supporting the government in increasing the quantity, success and scalability of women's enterprise in the UK.	2006	Labour	Alistair Darling
Women's business ownership: recent research and policy developments (Carter and Shaw, 2006)	This report provided an assessment of recent research investigating women's business ownership.	2006	Labour	Alistair Darling
Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework. Sharing the vision: a collaborative approach to increasing female entrepreneurship (DTI, 2003)	Developed to provide a collaborative and long-term approach to the development of women's enterprise in the UK.	2003	Labour	Patricia Hewitt
Women's business ownership: a review of the academic, popular and internet literature (Carter et al., 2001)	The objective of this review was to present a detailed analysis of the research and popular literature on female entrepreneurs.	2002	Labour	Patricia Hewitt

### **2.3 Why are women entrepreneurs important?**

Women are integral to economic growth. One key trend evidencing this claim is that women business owners are growing at a faster rate than males in world terms (Brush et al., 2009). In 2010, over 100 million women in 59 countries started and grew a new business (Kelly et al., 2011). In the UK alone, women business owners contribute £75 billion in Gross Value Added (GVA) each year (BIS, 2013) and £130 billion in turnover (Alexander et al., 2009). In Scotland, it has been highlighted that women-owned businesses contribute to an estimated £8.8 billion in GVA to the Scottish economy (Federation of Small Business, 2016). However, empirical evidence indicates that almost twice as many men as women become entrepreneurs, a ratio that is consistent across countries (Acs et al., 2005). Furthermore, up to £250 billion of new value could be added to the UK economy if women started and scaled new businesses at the same rate as men in the UK (Rose Review of Female Entrepreneurship, 2019).

In realising that women entrepreneurs are a powerful source of innovation and job creation (Brush et al., 2006; Orhan and Scott, 2001), and that they have an important impact on economic development and poverty alleviation (Bortamuly and Goswami, 2015; Kreide, 2003), governments are increasingly looking to enterprise policy to attract more women into entrepreneurship (Carter and Marlow, 2003). They are also interested in deploying enterprise policies for women to increase rates of participation and productivity (Carter et al., 2015; Menzies et al., 2004). This has led policy-makers and practitioners to view women entrepreneurs as a special group worthy of dedicated research and policy attention (Westhead, 2003).

### **2.4 Should women entrepreneurs be given gender-specific enterprise policies?**

The need for women-only enterprise policies has been hotly debated over the years. Some scholars have argued that very few differences exist between male and female-owned businesses in terms of performance (Ahl, 2004; Chrisman et al., 1990; Kalnins and Williams, 2014; Storey, 2011; Watson, 2012). However, other studies do show that women under-perform compared to their male counterparts (Brush et al., 2006; Lee and Marvel, 2014). Both male and female entrepreneurs face constraints, but it has been argued that women face greater additional obstacles because they also often perform multiple roles as carers, income earners, mothers and wives, and they may also have primary responsibility for community activities (McClelland et al., 2005; Wang, 2013). As a result, many women have limited access to resources such as education, training, funding and business opportunities and it has been argued that there is a “scarcity of research to inform about the gendered nature of entrepreneurship policy and/or women-focussed small-business programming” (Orser, et al., 2012, p. 237).

Researchers have identified a variety of reasons why women do not take advantage of the enterprise policy initiatives currently available to them, including their social background, lack of confidence, childcare responsibilities and ethnicity (Fielden et al., 2003). Furthermore, many women entrepreneurs work in low technology industries, which are less capital intensive, and they are likely to have smaller firms than their male counterparts (Bortamuly and Goswami, 2015; Noguera et al., 2013). The numerous enterprise policy programmes for women are a clear indication that policy-makers are aware of the economic case for encouraging more women into enterprise. However, the low numbers of women entrepreneurs in the UK suggest that these policies are not achieving their aims. A closer inspection is required of how women use enterprise policies and why, the means by which they are delivered and how women’s enterprise policies are understood and positioned by policy-makers and institutions (Arshed et

al., 2019). It has been acknowledged that: "...while women business owners are just as heterogeneous a group as male business owners they encounter disadvantages originating from the gender-system in society and that to effectively support women business owners, it is necessary to provide programs and attributes dedicated solely towards women business owners" (Tillmar, 2007, p. 95). Because attention has been focused on funding and supporting industries whereby women entrepreneurs have low participation rates, such as advanced technology, manufacturing, etc., alongside the attitudinal barriers about women entrepreneurs which often include inappropriate programme and service delivery models, context, location, timing and client relationships (Orser et al., 2012).

## **2.5 What do women entrepreneurs want?**

There is no shortage of women's entrepreneurship studies but they have typically been concerned with socio-economic factors (Saridakis et al., 2014), motivations (DeMartino et al., 2006; Seet et al., 2008) and personality traits (Sexton and Bowman-Upton, 1990; Verheul et al., 2012); with more recent studies looking at 'money, markets and management' (Carter et al., 2013). These have sought not only greater understanding of the diverse motives, goals and outcomes of women's entrepreneurship but also the embeddedness of entrepreneurial activity in families, as well as its institutional and socio-spatial contexts (Xheneti et al., 2019). Despite the growing level of research into women's entrepreneurship, there are few consistent findings (Jennings and Brush, 2013). We know that women entrepreneurs are generally more likely than their male counterpart to have higher levels of education and ventures in service industries, aspire to lower growth expectation and be motivated by non-economic goals (Terjesen et al., 2016). We also know that women entrepreneurs face three major barriers (Piacentini, 2013): restricted access to finance (Roper and Scott, 2009; Sena et al., 2012), lack of a network (Cross and Armstrong, 2008; Tonge, 2008; Van Emmerik, 2006), and social and cultural barriers (Achtenhagen and Welter, 2011). Baughn and colleagues (2006) argue that gender roles and the social acceptability of entrepreneurship can influence the general level of support.

We also know that recent government initiatives have been developed from a largely neoliberal market standpoint with little evidence that direct support works (Huggins and Williams, 2009). North America follows a low regulation model to increase the number of start-ups, but European countries, including the UK, rely on a high-support route (van Stelet al., 2007), providing a range of services designed to foster an environment that is likely to create more opportunities for women and offering logistical, consultancy and financial support for projects developed by women (Pardo-del-val, 2010). Even so, women have done little to challenge existing structures, partly because they have had to rely on power brokers – or resource 'gatekeepers' – not all of whom support separate policies for women (Brush et al., 2009). Yet, we know that programmes to support women's entrepreneurship have been recognised as important in encouraging women to become entrepreneurs (Roos, 2019). It is also important that legitimising women's businesses and how they are perceived by the stakeholders within the entrepreneurial ecosystem is understood to ensure that they are given the appropriate enterprise policies which are effectively implemented for women (Arshed et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2019).

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The review was aimed at understanding stakeholders in the women's entrepreneurial ecosystem in Scotland, to address the areas of concern and understand the environment of women's enterprise given space and place. The key takeaways are the low rate of participation of women

in the field of entrepreneurship. Studies show the barriers they face and how these barriers should be addressed but also that policies have had little impact on transforming this picture. Therefore, avenues need to be explored to find sustainable ways forward and to show how, when, where and what is required to ensure more women participate in the entrepreneurial economy, including those from lower socio-economic and disadvantaged backgrounds.

### **3. Methods**

To provide greater insight into the questions, we decided to collect evidence directly from Scottish women entrepreneurs themselves and the agencies and stakeholders that currently support them. Our data were collected during the period of April 2019 to November 2019 through semi-structured interviews, focus groups and case studies (promising practices and illustrating demand). The data collection involved five stages:

1. Eighteen interviews with 14 of the 15 organisations within the WEAG.
2. Twenty-four focus group interviews involving over 100 women start-up and growth entrepreneurs in 11 regions of Scotland.
3. Eight interviews with representatives of other support agencies within the entrepreneurial ecosystem.
4. Eleven case illustrations of ‘promising practices’ for sustainable and feasible models for women’s enterprise support.
5. An ‘illustrative demand’ case of interactive event to raise awareness among women from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds in Dundee of how entrepreneurship can improve their economic and social lives – hosted in a local community centre.

The interviews, focus groups and promising practices were all viewed in a manner that would allow us to understand the need and requirements for a WBC in Scotland with the following questions at the fore:

- What would a WBC look like?
- Who would be involved in the WBC?
- How would a WBC be funded?
- Where would a WBC be based?
- How would a WBC become sustainable and feasible in the long-term?

#### **3.1 Data collection**

It should be noted that the University of Dundee’s Code of Practice for Research Ethics was followed, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained of all individuals (and their organisations) who participated in the data collection.

##### **Stage 1: Women in Enterprise Action Group interviews**

The first stage involved contacting 20 individuals in the 15 member organisations of WEAG. An initial email was sent to all individuals introducing the role and the remit of the independent adviser which was to meet with all the group members to understand their roles, resources, capabilities, motivations and ways forward for women’s enterprise in Scotland. All members were emailed dates, times and locations for the meeting – all interviews were held between April 2019 and May 2019.

Eighteen individuals who responded and agreed to be interviewed were asked to read the participant information sheet and sign a consent form guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity. This allowed the individuals to discuss matters openly and without repercussions from other members of the group or the Scottish Government.



## Stage 2: Focus groups

The second stage was undertaking focus groups which involved women entrepreneurs from eleven regions in Scotland between July 2019 and September 2019. The purpose of the focus groups was to ensure that the recommendations would be based on and reflected the experiences and expectations of women entrepreneurs in Scotland. There were 24 focus groups organised (12 concentrated on start-up and 12 on growth businesses) in the following regions of Scotland:

- Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire
- Ayrshire
- Inverness and Highlands
- Islands
- Edinburgh City Region
- Greater Glasgow
- Moray
- Argyll and Bute
- South of Scotland
- Stirling and Clackmannanshire
- Tay Cities

Business Gateway was approached to assist in the logistics of the focus groups and assisted in promoting the event and sending out invitations to women entrepreneurs and to local enterprise agencies. The focus groups were also promoted via social media (Facebook and LinkedIn) and the local press. Table 2 highlights the regions and number of participants in each focus group.

**Table 2: Focus group information**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Start-up participants</b>	<b>Growth participants</b>
Aberdeen	5	3
Argyll & Bute	1	3
Ayrshire	9	2
Edinburgh	4	6
Glasgow/Renfrew	10	10
Inverness & Highlands	4	3
Islands	4	5
Moray	2	3
South of Scotland	3	8
Stirling & Clacks	4	7
Tay Cities	9	7
<b>Total participants</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>52</b>

The focus groups were run as follows:

- The women entrepreneurs were welcomed and given a participant sheet, consent form and discussion sheet (see Appendix 1).
- They were given 10 minutes to read and complete the participant sheet and the consent form. They were then asked to think about the questions on the discussion sheet for the focus group discussion.

- The focus groups lasted an estimated hour and the discussions were centred on the questions which they were asked to think about prior to the group discussion.

All focus groups were recorded and the format for both the start-up and growth groups were the same to ensure consistency, rigour and validity.

### Stage 3: External stakeholders

The third stage was undertaken during the months of May 2019 and June 2019. The third stage involved interviewing eight individuals who were also part of the wider entrepreneurial ecosystem. The individuals involved in this stage either approached the lead academic or were recommended by various sources due to their role in the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Scotland. Each interviewee was asked to discuss their organisation, their key areas of delivery, evaluations of the support delivered and their funding models. Table 3 highlights the sample.

**Table 3: External stakeholders' sample**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Type of organisation</b>	<b>Description of organisation</b>
Lanarkshire	Public	Assisting women into business
Glasgow	Social	Assisting women from disadvantaged backgrounds to gain confidence, get support and be part of the community
Renfrewshire	Public	Assisting small businesses by providing support, advice and co-working space
Glasgow	Private	Assisting SMEs with finance and lending
Aberdeen	Public	Incubator for businesses which provides support and space
Dundee	Private	Assisting women into business
Dundee	Social	Provides co-working space
Highlands	Public	Provides start-up and growth advice and support for women

### Stage 4: Promising practices

The fourth stage was undertaken between April 2019 and October 2019. Contact was made to have a discussion as to why, where, when and how these organisations delivered services and support to their communities. They were also asked to highlight evaluations of the services delivered and their funding models. The aim of collating promising practices was to understand various models in different regions which were sustainable and feasible, and applicable in terms of transposing women's enterprise within their organisation and their delivery mechanisms. Table 4 highlights a summary of those eleven involved in promising practices and the cases will be discussed in detail in the recommendations section as modes of delivery.

**Table 4: Snapshot of promising practices**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Information</b>
Women's Business Station	Dundee	Programme of education and learning, practical activities and events, networking, mentoring and continuous support. Specialises in micro business start-up support; increasing participation; reducing isolation and building confidence.
InCube	Renfrew	Addresses the challenges faced by many entrepreneurs such as lack of confidence and a sense of isolation.
The Northern Innovation Hub	Inverness	One-day workshops and events to intensive support lasting up to a year.
Realise	Orkney	Woman only development programme for female entrepreneurs for growth, sustainability, profitability, better business–life balance.
Renfrewshire Business Network	Renfrewshire/ Online	Free networking events for SMEs.
The Circle	Dundee	Affordable workspace that also provides opportunities for sharing resources, collaboration and networking.
WEvolution	Glasgow/Dundee/ Paisley/Greenock	A movement of people from disadvantaged backgrounds and their aspirations for a better life for themselves, their families and communities. Bringing people together in its Self-Reliant Groups, WEvolution promotes a way of working alongside communities that is based on trust, self-governance and collective endeavour towards entrepreneurship.
Queen Margaret University/East Lothian Council Business Gateway Partnership	Edinburgh	On-campus Business Gateway located in Queen Margaret University's business incubation space, the Business Innovation Zone.
Elevator	19 business centres across Scotland	Runs community-driven initiatives on the topic of entrepreneurship, employability and enterprise, working with several academic organisations, thousands of business owners and ambitious entrepreneurs.
Scottish Coworking Network	Edinburgh, Dundee, Dunfermline, Inverness and Troon	Created accessible spaces in communities where entrepreneurs and businesses are supported to work, meet and collaborate and offers a programme of events and activities that will support business development and encourage networking.
Business and Intellectual Property Centre Glasgow	Glasgow	Support entrepreneurs and innovators from that first spark of inspiration to successfully launching and growing a businesses.

**Stage 5: Illustrating demand**

The final stage of the data collection involved hosting an event at the Dundee International Women's Centre (DIWC). DIWC seeks to engage, educate and empower women from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, to help them achieve their personal goals. It provides educational, recreational and social activities, as well as employment training, information and advice services for disadvantaged and/or excluded women from over 60 countries.

The event, organised and hosted by Dr Norin Arshed and delivered by three speakers, raised awareness of the benefits of entrepreneurship to women, especially among those from ethnic-minority backgrounds and those from deprived areas and promoted information, advice, support and knowledge available in the region. Caryn Gibson (Business Gateway) explored the

idea of what it means to be an entrepreneur, engaged participants in the debate over business ideas and how they can access information, advice and support. Angie Foreman (Programme Director Coca-Cola 5by20 at Women's Business Station) provided further practical tools and advice on how to start their journey. She was also forthcoming on how she would help and inspire the women. Finally, Rabia Salimi (Henna) was invited as a role model and drew on her experiences of becoming an entrepreneur which involved having young children, losing her confidence and getting the support and assistance she needed from Business Gateway and Angie to enable her to start her business.

The event was free of charge but required registration, lunch was provided and there was also a crèche free of charge for women with children. There was 50 people registered for the event and 42 attended. The case will be discussed in detail in the recommendations section.

### **3.2 Data Analysis**

The interviews with both the WEAG members and the focus groups were analysed in a systematic manner. All interviews and focus groups were recorded with permission. We followed strict guidelines in analysing and reporting qualitative research (Gioia et al., 2013). The first step in the analysis was to transcribe all interviews verbatim. The second step involved manually coding the data and identifying initial ideas in the data and grouping them into categories, known as open coding (first order codes) - key words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs from the transcripts, memos and field notes were highlighted. The final step involved coding and interpreting by entering all codes into the NVivo 12 program (software that is used to analyse text). This aided verification of the data, re-coding where necessary and linking key concepts to build a narrative from the findings.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Women's Enterprise and Action Framework Group analysis

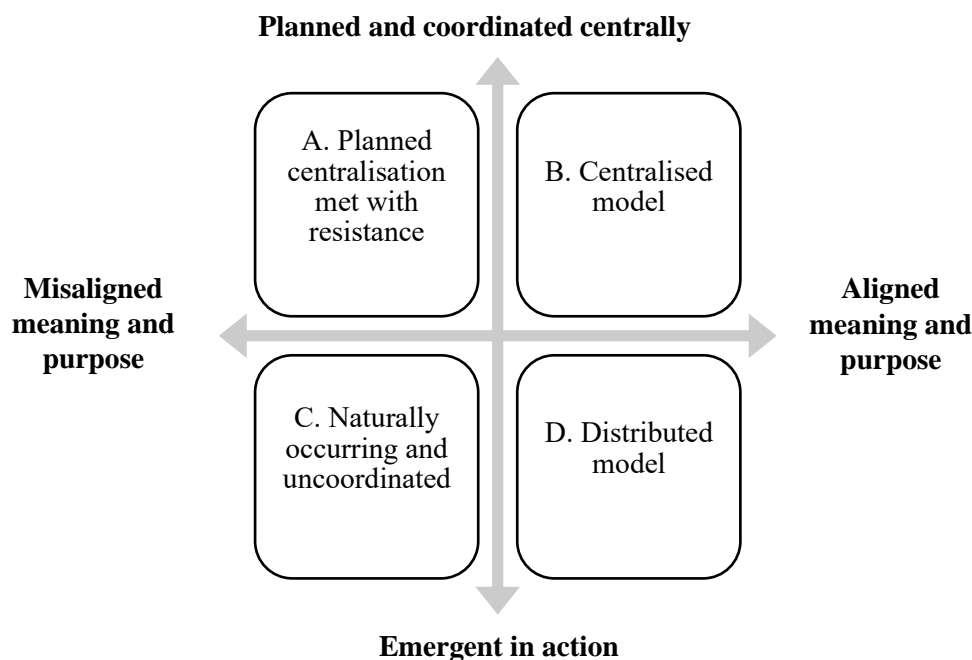
#### 4.1.1 Women's Enterprise and Action Framework's coordination and alignment

The first part of our analysis involved mapping out the potential territory for supporting women in entrepreneurial activity in Scotland. This involved two dimensions:

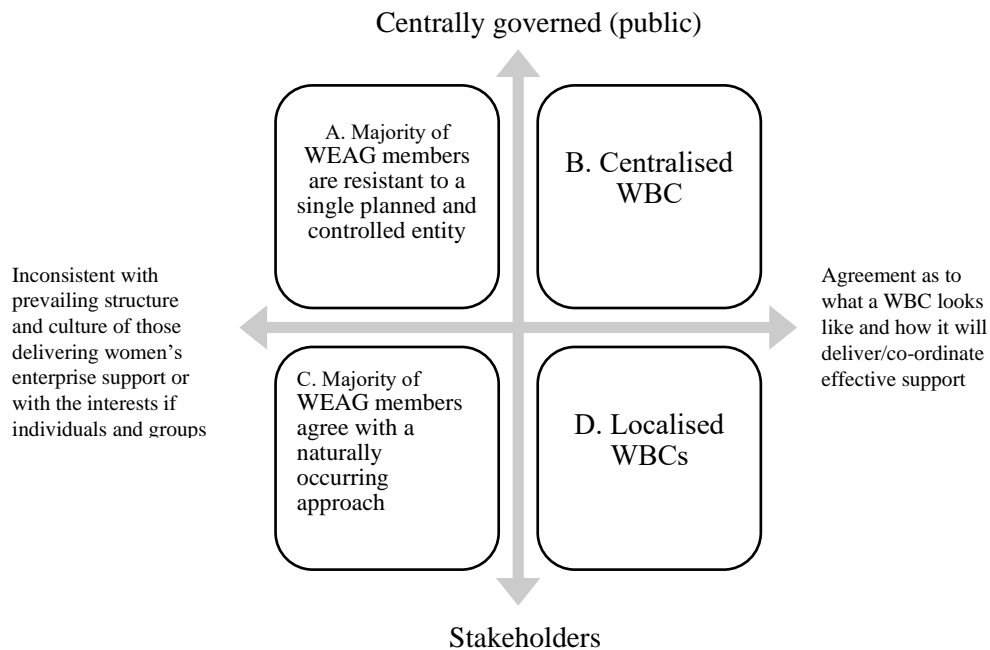
- 1) Whether WEAG holds the same or different interpretations of, and interests in, how support should be delivered.
- 2) Whether WEAG understands the best form of support as planned and coordinated by government or as something that emerges from bottom-up, as led centrally or as directed in a more distributed manner.

By understanding these two dimensions, we mapped the current situation and what the potential future could look like for women's enterprise. We then applied an analytical model (Figure 1) which has previously been used within public sector organisations to understand how organisations can be led to ensure effectiveness (Martin et al., 2015; Thorpe et al., 2011). Following analysis, we applied the model to the evidence which highlights key elements in how a WBC model can be coordinated within Scotland's current enterprise support landscape (Figure 2).

**Figure 1: Options for women's enterprise support coordination**



**Figure 2: WEAG analysis for women’s enterprise support coordination**



Our analysis revealed four potential options for organising women’s enterprise support, some more desirable than others:

- A) The first option of support is planned and coordinated centrally but does not align with stakeholders and is met with resistance. Following consultation to align interpretations and interests, this describes a model whereby a physical centre is located somewhere in Scotland and acts as a centralised hub and centre of expertise to support women entrepreneurs – location and the physical existence of a building become important here in signifying to women that help is available.
- B) The second option is if support is to be planned and coordinated centrally, it should be aligned to the needs of stakeholders and the business base.
- C) The third option is where support is locally led with stakeholders’ interests, but it is misaligned where stakeholders and women entrepreneurs’ interpretations and interests are unplanned and disengaging.
- D) The fourth option is where support is locally led with stakeholders’ interests aligned. Following consultation to align interpretations and interests, this describes a more distributed model with no central location or physical presence in the form of a building but more free form and locally-led to suit local circumstances.

**4.1.2 Alignment of women’s enterprise stakeholders**

To understand the alignment of stakeholders we looked for insights into areas of cohesion and conflict. We assessed different stakeholder motivations, commitments and delivery approaches, as well as the current relationship dynamics and support functionality. A summary of stakeholder alignment is presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: Summary of stakeholder alignment and misalignment**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Aligned</b>	<b>Misaligned</b>
Supportive of Scottish Government policy	The support for Scottish Government policies that aim to tackle the enterprise gender gap	X	
Range of services	The ability of stakeholders to tackle a broad range of enterprise support services	X	
Motivations and aspirations	The motivations and aspirations for stakeholders to work towards tackling the enterprise gap		X
Gendered approaches	The view on which approach should be taken to support more women to start and grow businesses		X
Current functionality	How stakeholders currently operate as a collective		X
Stakeholder relationships	The willingness and ability of stakeholders to work with one another		X
Protectionism	The sense that stakeholders are protective over the services and do not want to collaborate		X
Duplication	The sense that there is replication of each other's services		X

Stakeholders were aligned across the following points:

- All WEAG members expressed their support for the Scottish Government's women's enterprise agenda and were committed to developing policy.
- Stakeholders delivered a broad range of services to business owners, including acceleration programmes, funding, access to finance, advisory, training and mentoring services, networking, peer support, lobbying, award ceremonies and media representation.

However, stakeholders were misaligned across a number of points:

- WEAG members had different motivations and aspirations with regards to women's enterprise support, including: reducing gender inequality, unlocking potential or consider supporting women part of their everyday jobs.
- Each motivation warranted a different approach to delivering support. Some organisations preferred gender-specific support, others gender-focused and others gender-mainstreaming approaches.
- The ability of stakeholders to work effectively together was frequently questioned during the interviews. There was a lack of cohesion, with many WEAG members frustrated at a lack of progress.

- Many believed there was a lack of openness into policy and programmes with no accountability and uncertain direction as to what members collectively wanted to achieve.
- Tension exists between member organisations, with many questioning whether collaborative approaches would work. Some organisations had poor working relationships with each other.
- Many WEAG members felt that organisations were particularly protective over the services that they offer and did not want to collaborate with each other.
- Stakeholders argued that there was duplication in the enterprise support system which cluttered the landscape.

#### **4.1.3 Governance of women’s enterprise stakeholders**

To understand how women’s enterprise support should be coordinated we looked for insights from the WEAG members on governance. We assessed different proposed models, delivery scopes, leadership and desired roles for delivering support. A summary of how the WEAG members’ views correspond is presented in Table 6. We assessed whether women’s enterprise support should be governed centrally, distributed or if there was no consensus between stakeholders on delivery approaches.

Members of the Action Group had no consensus on proposed WBC models, with a number of options presented, including:

- A national bricks and mortar centre, akin to an innovation centre, with regional hubs.
- An organisation coordinating other network organisations.
- Bespoke women’s enterprise programme delivered as a core public sector service.
- An organisation dedicated to lobbying government and private sector, providing academic research and best practice case studies.
- Online platform for women’s enterprise support and resources.

With regards to factors of the WBC that should be governed centrally, stakeholders believed that core funding and leadership needed to come from the public sector. Funding options included:

- Core funding from national governments
- Boost funding from local authorities and public agencies
- Leveraging further funds from wider sources (e.g., ERDF)
- Generating income from additional services
- Incorporation into core public enterprise support services
- Additional competitive funding for private sector collaboration to deliver programmes.

With regards to leadership, members of WEAG highlighted that the public sector should lead the delivery of women’s enterprise support. A few Action Group members believed that women’s enterprise support should be led by an external partner. However, the majority of the group questioned the ability of one external organisation to be able to deliver or coordinate a collaborative approach of the necessary scale.



The distributed aspects of the WBC that stakeholders agreed upon included the delivery scope and the desired roles that stakeholders wish to take. There was common consensus that regional delivery of women’s enterprise support was the best approach because the travel times for business owners to reach to a main hub would be difficult. Furthermore, access to local knowledge, context and infrastructure and the availability of local resources to deliver was fundamental in the discussions.

The roles that Action Group members wished to take with any coordinated efforts to deliver women’s enterprise support also varied. Options included:

- Managing and leading a WBC model
- Co-delivering elements of a programme
- Working with women’s enterprise support from the outside, holding it accountable for delivery and meeting the needs of the business base.

**Table 6: Summary of stakeholder insights into women’s enterprise support governance**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Central</b>	<b>Distributed</b>	<b>No consensus</b>
Proposed WBC models	Stakeholders vision for delivering women’s enterprise support.			X
Delivery scope	The geographic scope for delivering women’s enterprise support.		X	
Funding models	The proposed funding model for delivering women’s enterprise support.	X		
Leadership and organisation	Who should be in charge of managing and implementing women’s enterprise support.	X		
Desired WBC roles	Stakeholders desired input into women’s enterprise support.		X	

#### **4.1.4 Summary of Women’s Business Centre models**

Based on the findings from the WEAG members’ interviews several options for a WBC model emerged. These included a national WBC, a national network organisation, a public sector programme delivered regionally, an external lobby organisation and a national digital portal. Each would be coordinated and aligned differently with WEAG members’ motivations (summarised in Table 7).

**Table 7: Summary of potential WBC models**

	<b>National WBC</b>	<b>Network Organisation</b>	<b>Public Sector Programme</b>	<b>Lobby Organisation</b>	<b>Digital Portal</b>
<b>Description</b>	A national bricks and mortar centre, akin to an innovation centre, with regional hubs	An organisation coordinating other network organisations	Bespoke women’s enterprise programme delivered as a core public sector service	Dedicated to lobbying government and private sector, providing academic research and best practice case studies	Online platform that business owners go to for women’s enterprise support and resources
<b>Stakeholder alignment</b>	Misaligned	Aligned	Middle of the road	Misaligned	Aligned
<b>Governance</b>	Centralised	Distributed	Middle of the road	Distributed	Centralised
<b>Gendered approach</b>	Gender-tailored	Gender-specific	Gender-tailored Gender-mainstream	Gender-specific	Gender-specific
<b>Delivery scope</b>	National	National	Regional	National	National
<b>Funding</b>	Public sector funding	Private Public sector sponsorship	Public sector	Private	Public sector funding
<b>Leadership</b>	External partner led	Private	Public sector agencies	Private	External partner led
<b>Role of public sector</b>	Funding Accountability	Funding Accountability	Funding Coordination and management		Funding Coordination and management
<b>Role of external stakeholders</b>	Delivery	Delivery	Delivery collaboration Accountability	Funding Coordination and management	Updating content

## 4.2 Women entrepreneurs' analysis

### 4.2.1 Challenges that focus group participants faced

The first part of the focus group focused on the barriers and challenges that participants faced when starting or growing their businesses. This aimed to understand both **what** business owners find challenging and **why** they find these aspects challenging. For example, if accessing appropriate and good support is **what** the business owner found challenging, it could be that uncertainty of which organisation to go to for support is the reason **why** this is challenging. In many cases several reasons contributed to aspects that business owners found challenging.

The focus groups had a wide geographic coverage, spanning 11 regions in Scotland, targeting both start-up and growth business owners. This uncovered several challenges that existed amongst many business owners but, also, more specific challenges that were prevalent in different geographies (urban and rural locations) and stages of business development (early-stage, early-growth and growth). Definitions for the different geographies and stages of business development are outlined in Table 8.

**Table 8: Definitions of geographies and stages of business**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Description</b>
Urban	When a business owner is located in a densely populated area.
Rural	When a business owner is located in a sparsely populated area.
Early-stage	When a business owner is trying to start or has just started a business.
Early-growth	When a business owner has started a business that is foreseeably sustainable and has taken the initial steps to growth, such as employing the first few people or moving into business premises.
Growth	An established business that is looking to grow by increasing sales, production capabilities, innovation or exporting.

The challenges that were uncovered are presented in Table 9. This also highlights which type of business owner they are most inherent towards.

**Table 9: Challenges focus group participants face**

	Early-stage		Early-growth		Growth	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
<b>Regulatory burden and bureaucracy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception that the amount of bureaucracy needed for grant applications and to receive support is unnecessary and irrelevant</li> <li>• Perception that public sector support is too selective and exclusive - with certain 'boxes' and 'targets' to push</li> <li>• Perception that government policies to support business owners are incoherent and unfairly burden certain target groups</li> <li>• The procedures business owners have to follow to get grants and support are a waste of time, with the outcomes not worth the effort</li> </ul>					
<b>Location and infrastructure</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The availability of networking events and organisations</li> <li>• The amount of travelling it takes to access support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The availability of suitable business premises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The distance to markets of rural locations, the lack of supply chains to these markets and the lack of connection to these markets</li> <li>• The amount of travelling it takes to access to support</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The difficulties in attracting human resources to rural areas</li> <li>• The distance to markets of rural locations, the lack of supply chains to these markets and the lack of connection to these markets</li> </ul>
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The availability of suitable business premises</li> </ul>	
<b>Discrimination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business owners dismissed or not taken seriously because of their gender</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business owners having to validate their business and success to men and peers</li> </ul>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face barriers because of male-dominated business arenas and societal perception of male norms</li> </ul>					
<b>Childcare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Struggling to juggle child care responsibilities and running a business financially</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lack of support structures in place for childcare provision outside of school</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Childcare taking money and time of business owner away from growth activities</li> </ul>	
<b>Access to finance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business owners not knowing how to access finance</li> <li>• A lack of small, easily locatable and easily accessible finance options to get started</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business owners located in less attractive markets or falling foul of eligibility criteria for funding</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The perception that there is a lack of funding available for growth activities</li> </ul>	

	Early-stage		Early-growth		Growth	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
<b>Access to support</b>	• Business owners confused about where to turn to for support		• Business owners uncertain about where to go for support and to access specialised growth services			
<b>Market challenges</b>	• Challenges on how to market business to be competitive					• Recruiting skilled staff into the business
	• Challenges with the operation of the business, including managing cash flow		• Challenges with the operation of the business, including managing cash flow and paying wages			
			• Challenges faced with making sales and negotiating with suppliers and contractors			
<b>Lack of knowledge and confidence</b>	• Business owners facing generic confidence issues about their abilities and uncertainty over starting a business		• Business owners face specific confidence issues about their abilities with regards to some facets of their business operations			
	• Business owners face knowledge gaps over specific topics, including tax, accounts, business planning, marketing					
			• Business owners face knowledge gaps over specific topics, including HR, PR and legal			
<b>Time</b>	• Challenges faced with balancing starting up and work / personal commitments					
			• Challenges faced with balancing the multi-faceted number of roles needed to run a business, and the ability to outsource these roles			
	• Lack of time to attend business support programmes, training or events					

#### ***4.2.1.1 Challenges faced by early-stage business owners***

The challenges faced by early-stage businesses included:

- Public sector bureaucracy, where there was a perception that they had to ‘jump through hoops’ in order to fill in application forms for support. They felt like they were subject to many ‘tick-box’ exercises where public sector support was selective and, in many cases, exclusive of business owners as they had restrictive criteria and targets to meet. Often business owners felt that government policies to support business excluded them by, for example, targeting certain sectors and industries.
- Participants from rural locations also struggled with the available support infrastructure that they had access to in their location. Attending networking events and the amount of travel time to get to other support was a disadvantage and a barrier to accessing support.
- Discrimination when starting their businesses. Their legitimacy was questioned because of their gender. A lot of participants expressed the challenges of operating in male-dominated business environments, particularly in rural areas. They also highlighted encounters with the public sector, their customers, peers and wider enterprise support organisations where their businesses were dismissed or not taken seriously.
- Childcare was also a challenge for many business owners both financially and physically. The cost of childcare was frequently highlighted, especially when business owners were not yet making a profit. This was a double-binding because it would mean that more time was spent away from running their business to look after their children, which would mean they were not generating income. Numerous participants expressed a lack of support structures as a reason why childcare was a challenge.
- Access to finance was another common barrier that participants faced. This is seen as a challenge from both the demand-side and supply-side. Business owners had a gap in their knowledge with regards to how to access finance, whilst also finding many early-stage finance options had restricting eligibility for their sectors.
- Access to wider support, such as advice, training and networking was also a challenge for many participants. Business owners were often confused about where and who to turn to for support when they were thinking about starting a business.
- Participants expressed challenges with the operation of the business, including managing cash flow and finding suitable premises. They also expressed difficulties in relation to how to market themselves in order to stay competitive in their markets.
- Many participants expressed a lack of knowledge and confidence as a challenge when starting their business. Business owners highlighted knowledge gaps over specific topics, including tax, accounting, business planning and marketing. Business owners also faced confidence issues about their abilities and uncertainty over starting a business.

#### ***4.2.1.2 Challenges faced by early-growth business owners***

Participants who were in the early-growth stages of their development faced several common barriers. These included:

- Facing excessive regulatory and public sector bureaucratic burdens.
- For rural business owners, the amount of time it takes to travel to access support.
- Facing male-dominated business environments.
- Challenges of how to market their business to be competitive.
- Balancing work and personal commitments.
- Knowledge gaps with regards to specific topics including tax, accounts, business planning and marketing.
- A perceived lack of time to attend business support, training and events.

These business owners also faced new challenges, including:

- Business owners in urban locations (city and town centres) felt there was a lack of suitable premises to move their businesses into. This was the case for business owners moving out of home into co-working space, incubation or small premises and business owners that required physical space, e.g., retail or manufacturing.
- In rural locations the main challenge was with regards to access and connection. Business owners faced difficulties with the availability of networking events and support, connectivity to larger markets, supply chains and labour forces.
- Issues with regards to discrimination - rather than being dismissed, they felt that they had to validate their business attempts. This was both to male-dominated environments and to their peers.
- With regards to childcare, they faced challenges with the support structures that were available for them, particularly outside of school hours. With the demands of the business growing, often business owners would have to rely on friends and family for support.
- Access to finance for business owners was perceived as a challenge during the initial growth steps. The perception that there is a lack of funding available for these activities was evident by business owners across multiple locations, sectors and types of business.
- The operational challenges that early-growth participants faced were also in line with their growth activities. This included managing cash flow, paying wages, making sales and negotiating with suppliers and contractors.

#### ***4.2.1.3 Challenges faced by growth business owners***

Participants who were in the growth stages of their development faced a number of common barriers. These included:

- Facing excessive regulatory and public sector bureaucratic burden.
- Having to validate their businesses and success to men and their peers.

- Uncertainty of where to go for support and to access specialised growth services.
- Challenges with the operation of the business, including managing cash flow and paying wages.
- Challenges faced with making sales and negotiating with suppliers and contractors.
- Facing specific confidence issues about their abilities with regards to some facets of their business operations.
- Facing knowledge gaps over specific topics, including HR, PR and legal.
- Challenges faced with balancing the multi-faceted number of roles needed to run a business and the ability to outsource such roles to others.

These business owners also faced new challenges, including:

- Business owners in rural locations were further challenged by not being able to attract skilled staff into the business. This was because of the lack of available labour locally and the distance to densely populated areas with access to this talent.
- Distance to markets was also an issue for growth businesses in rural areas, with a lack of supply chains and connectivity to markets frequently cited. A lack of networking opportunities was also apparent in rural areas, which was a disadvantage to businesses looking for social support to help them grow.
- With regards to growing businesses, childcare was viewed as a resource drain on the company. Having to pay for childcare, and juggle responsibilities, was seen as taking money and time away from the business owner and from businesses growth activities.
- The perception that there is a lack of funding available for growth activities was also frequently mentioned.



#### 4.2.2 Types of business support - promising practices

Findings from the focus groups gave insight into four types of business support that business owners valued. These were mentoring and advisory services, networking and peer support, funding and growth and leadership programmes. Definitions of these types of support can be seen in Table 10.

**Table 10: Different types of support**

<b>Types of support</b>	<b>Description</b>
Mentoring and advisory services	One-to-one relationship with someone that supports the business owner through encouragement, providing knowledge and connections.
Networking and peer support	Opportunities to exchange information and develop professional or social contacts; and provide knowledge, experience, emotional and practical help to each other in small groups.
Funding	Financial assistance to help with business development.
Growth and leadership	Additional support to specifically help the business and business owner to grow, such as acceleration programmes.

The focus group participants were able to give insights into how they would like these types of support delivered. We found variance in the function and delivery of this support across the different stages of development. For mentoring and advisory and networking and peer support, business owners were able to recount positive and negative experiences which can help highlight promising practices. A summary of these findings is presented in Table 11.

**Table 11: Types of business support - promising practices**

	Early-stage		Early-growth		Growth	
Business advisory services	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
<i>Interaction:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome and engaging to all business owners in all sectors and stages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dismissive attitude and uninterested</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatable and knowledgeable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impersonal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatable, experienced and well-connected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not relatable and inexperienced</li> </ul>
<i>Functions:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidence building</li> <li>• Connecting to courses, services and programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broad</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sounding board</li> <li>• Connections to expert advice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unspecific and inconsistent advice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sounding board</li> <li>• Connections to markets and contacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irrelevant and unspecific advice</li> </ul>
<i>Delivery:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-to-one relationship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transactional, volume</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generic</li> </ul>
<b>Networking and peer support</b>						
<i>Interaction:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transactional, male-dominated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building personal relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transactional, male-dominated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making connections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male-dominated, inflexible</li> </ul>
<i>Function:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing challenges</li> <li>• Peer support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business connections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focused knowledge-building</li> <li>• Business connections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sales</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business connections and opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unfocused peer support</li> </ul>
<i>Delivery:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small groups</li> <li>• Personal connections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large groups,</li> <li>• Speed networking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed and diverse groups</li> <li>• Common themes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unfocused,</li> <li>• Large groups</li> <li>• Speed networking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common sectors and practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unfocused, small groups</li> </ul>

	<b>Early-stage</b>	<b>Early-growth</b>	<b>Growth</b>
<b>Funding</b>			
<i>Function:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small incentive to purchasing equipment, supplied</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help to employ people</li> <li>• Help to move into bigger space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support to develop new products or markets</li> </ul>
<i>Delivery:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start-up grants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff guarantee</li> <li>• Premises grants</li> <li>• Access to procurement contract</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity specific grants - innovation, digital, export</li> </ul>
<b>Growth and Leadership</b>			
<i>Function:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-help group</li> <li>• Accountability</li> <li>• Practical learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pitching</li> <li>• Marketing</li> <li>• Sales</li> <li>• Connections to people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connections to markets</li> <li>• Trade missions</li> <li>• Funding</li> </ul>
<i>Delivery:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start-up programme</li> <li>• Social space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acceleration programme</li> <li>• Incubation space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competitions</li> <li>• Larger procurement bids</li> </ul>

#### ***4.2.2.1 Types of business support for early-stage***

For business advisory services, promising practices included:

- Business advisers that were welcoming and engaged with them, regardless of the type of business, their sector, aspirations, experiences or stage of development.
- Support to help build the confidence, connect the business owner to relevant courses and programmes and to assist with their development.
- Business owners appreciated more personable interaction with one-to-one relational approaches with a local adviser.
- Negative experiences involved interaction with uninterested advisers. Business owners felt that their business ideas and plans were dismissed.
- Advice that they received which was viewed as broad and irrelevant was regarded as negative. It was usually delivered in a transactional manner or a 'high-volume' setting.

For networking, promising practices included:

- A community building approach, where they could interact with peers in similar situations to them. In these small groups they felt that they could talk about their challenges and approaches to starting their business.
- Participating in small groups so that they could create personal relationships with other local people. Not only do these groups help share knowledge, but provide emotional support and build confidence.

With regards to funding, promising practices included:

- Small grants which would act as incentives for starting their business. These grants would help them towards purchasing some initial equipment, stock or to help develop their products in order to get going. These were primarily council grants accessed through local Business Gateway services.
- With regards to additional support to help growth, promising practices included:
- Structured start-up programmes that have set targets and milestones, and were delivered within small social groups. They were able to take the business owners from point A to B in a structured way which was useful to overcome the uncertainty and low confidence that many business owners experienced when starting-up.

#### ***4.2.2.2 Types of business support for early-growth***

For business advisory services, promising practices included:

- Advisers that were relatable and knowledgeable. These advisers listened to business owners, did not dictate what to do but held participants accountable to targets and

actions. They acted as sounding boards for participants giving potential options and constructive feedback to assist with growth.

- Advisers that took an active interest in the business owner's development and were also useful in making connections to the wider ecosystem.
- Negatively viewed approaches were impersonal with advisers not taking an active interest in the development of the business or business owner. As a result, the services offered were often generic and irrelevant.

For networking, promising practices included:

- Business owners would prefer mixed sex networking events that were more focused on building personal relationships. Networking events that provided focused and relevant knowledge for growth challenges were preferred. These were also used to create business connections.
- Negative accounts of networking were usually experiences of events which were sales focused, transactional and male-dominated.

With regards to funding, promising practices included:

- Public sector grants that could be used for their growth activities. This was mainly through various council grants that business owners accessed via local Business Gateways. These grants were relevant to their growth stage, primarily with regards to moving into new premises and employing people.

With regards to additional support to help growth, promising practices included:

- Programmes that provided dedicated support that focused on accelerating their businesses. The programme sometimes included funding awards at the end, but the main benefit that participants highlighted was the structured programming, with specific and relevant advice and support.
- These dedicated acceleration programmes provided specialist training and advice for business growth. Aspects that business owners found useful included pitching, marketing and sales. They also provided opportunities to network, make connections with people and access wider market opportunities.

#### ***4.2.2.3 Types of business support for growth***

For business advisory services, promising practices included:

- Advisers needed to be relatable, experienced and well-connected to wider markets and enterprise support. These advisers acted as a 'mentor' to the business owner by having relevant experience in growing a business. Many participants that were growing or looking to grow their business would recount experiences with a mentor or state that they were looking for a good mentoring relationship. Mentors act as sounding boards

and experienced advisers to the business owners, who actively engage with the business and the individual business owner.

- Negative accounts of business advisers showed that they were non-relatable and inexperienced.

For networking, promising practices included:

- Networking for participants that were at the growth stage was much more transactional than at previous stages. Business owners would regard networking as an opportunity to make connections for generating and developing businesses. They would also use networking events to meet people with more experience who have faced similar challenges to potentially act as mentors or advisers.
- The negative experiences of networking events for growth business owners was the lack of flexibility in their timing and structure. This often made attendance difficult and minimised some of the benefits that the participant would yield from networking.
- Equally, for growth business owners, networking events that focused on small peer support sessions that were important at early-stages were received more negatively by business owners in the growth stage.

With regards to funding, promising practices included:

- Public sector grants that could be used for their innovation activities. This was mainly via various Scottish Enterprise grants. These grants were relevant to their growth stage, primarily with regards to developing new products and entering new markets.
- In a few cases, participants would look for other forms of finance such as loans and competition funding. Competition funding came with focused growth support which was regarded positively. They attracted larger amounts of funding, investment opportunities and connections to international markets

### 4.2.3 Approaches to delivering business support

The previous section highlighted different types of support that focus group participants valued. This section gives further insight into how participants looked to receive support by highlighting the delivery approaches they regarded as the most beneficial (Table 12).

**Table 12: Delivery approaches**

<b>Approach</b>	<b>Description</b>
Geographic	Highlights the location and scope of where participants would like to receive business support.
Gendered	Highlights how gender is viewed in the design of the programme; either as <i>specific</i> to a certain gender; <i>tailored</i> to one gender but not exclusive of others; <i>awareness</i> that different genders have different needs; or, <i>non-gender-specific</i> approaches that do not take account of gender differences.
Relational	Highlights preferences for one-to-one relationship interaction.
Social	Highlights preferences for the social situations in which support takes place.

The focus group participants were able to give us insight into which approaches they preferred support to be delivered. We found variance in these approaches across the different stages of development. A summary of these findings is presented in Table 13.

**Table 13: Approaches to delivering business support - promising practices**

	<b>Early-stage</b>	<b>Early-growth</b>	<b>Growth</b>
<b>Delivery approach</b>			
<i>Geographic approach:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local advisers and networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local networks</li> <li>• Regional for expertise and highly valuable advisers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional networks</li> <li>• National for expertise and highly valuable support</li> </ul>
<i>Gendered approach:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender-specific and tailored</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender aware</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-gender-specific</li> </ul>
<i>Relational approach</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-based</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relational-based</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transactional</li> </ul>
<i>Social interaction:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peers and similar business stages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sector-specific support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sector-specific and more experienced</li> </ul>



#### ***4.2.3.1 Approaches to delivering business support for early-stage businesses***

Early-stage business owners felt that business support should be:

- Locally delivered due to the travel time that they were willing to commit to reach support and because they believed local knowledge was important in delivery.
- Gender-specific support at start-up (many but not all appreciated this aspect). This was particularly with regards to peer support and group programmes and workshops. The main approach of gender-specific support that participants expressed as important was the more relational approach to delivery and in the interaction with other business owners.
- A community approach to building relationships, where they wish to feel a sense of belonging and to be a part of a community. In this community setting, they wanted to form personal relationships with people that they interact with.
- Social situations with their peers and other people that they could relate to that had similar experiences and businesses as them. Social interaction in smaller and informal group settings was preferred over larger professional formats.

#### ***4.2.3.2 Approaches to delivering business support for early-growth businesses***

Early-growth business owners felt that business support should be:

- Predominately delivered locally; although, many were willing to travel across regions for focused and specific advice. They would be willing to travel when the level of support was seen to have a clear impact on their business.
- Through gender aware and tailored approaches. Having support delivered by and with people that they could relate to regardless of gender was important to help their business. At the same time, they appreciated events that were not male-dominated.
- A relational-based approach to support. They looked to connect on a personal level with the people that they engaged with, often they were able to do this through relating to similar experiences, industries or ambitions for their business.

#### ***4.2.3.3 Approaches to delivering business support for growth businesses***

Growth business owners felt that business support should be:

- Focused on expertise and highly valuable support. Focus group participants that were more advanced in growing their business saw the benefits of travelling to wider regions. They viewed this as important to develop their knowledge, make business connections and expand their reach.

- Non-gender-specific support and valued mixed networks, mentors, advisers and wider support. The main concern was with regards to the experience and benefit they would receive from the support.
- Delivered in a transactional manner, with specific focus and clear benefits and insights for the development of the business or the owner.
- A social setting in which they looked to interact, being surrounded by people from the same industry with expert and relevant knowledge. Often, they would look for more experienced business owners for this expert advice.

#### 4.2.4 Public sector services

Insights from across the focus groups, in all regions and amongst all business owners, frequently highlighted their experiences of working with the public sector. Experiences of engaging with public sector services included Business Gateway, Scottish Enterprise and Highlands & Islands Enterprise support and wider interaction with the public sector, such as local councils.

From the findings we were able to draw several insights into promising practices. This was with regards to how business owners interacted with the public sector, the content of the support and advice they obtained, the burden that was placed on the business owner during interaction and additional benefits they received from the interaction (Table 14).

**Table 14: Public sector practices for business support**

<b>Practice</b>	<b>Description</b>
Interaction	The nature of the communication that went on between public sector and business owner.
Content	The content of the interaction between the public sector and business owner.
Burden	The burden the interaction placed on the business owner.
Additional benefits	Any extra support that the business owner received from the interaction.

Across the focus groups the perception of public sector services was decidedly mixed with many cases of positive and negative practices highlighted. Participants were asked to explain why their experiences were either positive or negative, as highlighted in Table 15.

Promising practices in the public sector included:

- Public sector employees that were understanding and supportive were viewed positively, whilst those that were dismissive and excluded business owners were regarded negatively.
- The content of the support was also regarded as important for focus group participants. Some business owners felt that they received focused and relevant support whilst some others felt that services were non-relatable to their business needs.

- Another key insight that emerged from the focus groups was the burden that business owners felt was placed on them by their engagement with the public sector. The public sector support and advisers that looked to reduce administrative burden on business owners by filling in forms and reducing the amount of time spent on applications was very positively regarded.
- Conversely, engagement with the public sector where business owners felt administrative and regulatory burden was placed on them, with lots of form-filling and tick-box exercises, was regarded as negative.
- Positive engagement with the public sector also had additional benefits to the business owners. Business Gateways that were seen by business owners to proactively connect them with other support, services and assisting with funding were regarded positively.
- Negative experiences also involved being offered different services and different qualities of services within and across organisations and a lack of flexibility in delivering these services.

**Table 15: Public sector services – promising practices**

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<b>Interaction</b>	<p><i>Understanding and supportive</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and advisory services are supportive of business owners and approachable</li> </ul>	<p><i>Dismissive and exclusive</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business owners are dismissed by public sector services, ignored or excluded due to certain criteria</li> </ul>
<b>Content</b>	<p><i>Focused and relevant support</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business owners can relate to services, that have focused topics, relevant for their stage of development</li> </ul>	<p><i>Unhelpful and non-relatable services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and advisory services are unsupportive, unfocused and business owners are unable to relate them to their challenges</li> </ul>
<b>Burden</b>	<p><i>Reducing public sector bureaucracy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public sector helps to reduce administrative burden on companies by filling in forms and reducing the amount of time spent on applications</li> </ul>	<p><i>Form-filling and tick-boxing exercises</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative and regulatory burden placed on business owners, with lots of form-filling and tick-box exercises</li> </ul>
<b>Additional benefits</b>	<p><i>Connecting to wider support offerings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public sector services connect business owners with other support, services and assisting with funding</li> </ul>	<p><i>Inconsistent offerings and lack of flexibility</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business owners being offered different services and different qualities of services within and across organisations, a lack of flexibility in delivering these services</li> </ul>

### **4.3 External stakeholders**

The stakeholders who were interviewed out with the WEAG members were part of the wider entrepreneurial ecosystem. They were all of the same opinion that local advice and support for women entrepreneurs (as well as entrepreneurs in general) was the best way forward. They argued that the services delivered at a local level would be much more focussed on the needs and developments of the individuals, and communities were important in how they delivered business support. However, the external stakeholders agreed that the wider entrepreneurial ecosystem was confusing and often led to many individuals not being able to navigate their way to their services.

Many of the stakeholders believed that women entrepreneurs required confidence and a welcoming environment in which to discuss and work when starting and growing their businesses. For example, the incubator in Aberdeen highlighted that many of their networking events were male-dominated and, very often, women's engagement with them tailed off during their growth periods as they often retreated rather than move forward with their business. However, there were also three stakeholders who found within their organisations that women did not need specific support as they already catered to women's needs. For example, the Glasgow based organisation which assists SMEs with finance and lending, awards 40% of their loans to women.

Overall, the stakeholders all agreed that women required more attention in terms of enterprise in Scotland. They were all very much in favour of collaborating with other agencies and ensuring that their services were delivered to women effectively.

## 5. Recommendations

### 5.1 Introduction

Based on the evidence from key stakeholders in the women's entrepreneurial ecosystem (comprising WEAG members, women entrepreneurs and those delivering enterprise policy initiatives), our main recommendation is that Scotland needs a more outcomes-focused and sustainable model of business support for women entrepreneurs than is currently available to them. From the focus groups, we found that the challenges and needs of women for support varied according to the different stage of their business and where they were geographically located. Thus, a one-size-fits-all solution is unlikely to work; instead we recommend a more nuanced delivery framework to match Scottish women entrepreneurs' needs.

Our proposal is to create an organisation known as the Scottish Women's Business Centre (SWBC). This model recognises the different needs of women entrepreneurs for space and place. WBCs, originally created to assist all women, including those socially and economically disadvantaged women in starting and building their businesses, have been successful almost regardless of their age, location and co-location status (Carter et al., 2019; Langowitz et al., 2006).

We outline and discuss the nature of a WBC for Scotland in the following sections of this report. In broad brush terms, however, our model comprises several agencies, individuals and Scottish Government working in partnership to deliver programmes via gender tailored support around the country in Scotland. To be clear, we are *not recommending* that the SWBC will be in the form of a single building in any city or region within Scotland. Rather, we *are recommending* a 'house of brands approach', which creates 18 local women's business centres to reflect regional variations in women entrepreneurs' needs but brings them together under the umbrella of the SWBC organisation. These new local WBCs will be embedded in existing infrastructure, e.g., libraries, community centres, colleges, business centres, Business Gateway offices, etc., and will not require new buildings. The locations are based on Scotland's 18<sup>1</sup> regions which have been found in previous studies to involve local solutions to economic problems. Each SWBC will be charged with offering start-up programmes and a growth (including early-growth) programmes of support to business owners. These programmes are based on the findings of this report for what women business owners need with regards to support, several cases of promising practices, and insights from WEAG members and external stakeholders delivering support. We have also taken into consideration the existing evidence base into international promising practices of WBCs and women's enterprise support (Carter et al., 2019).

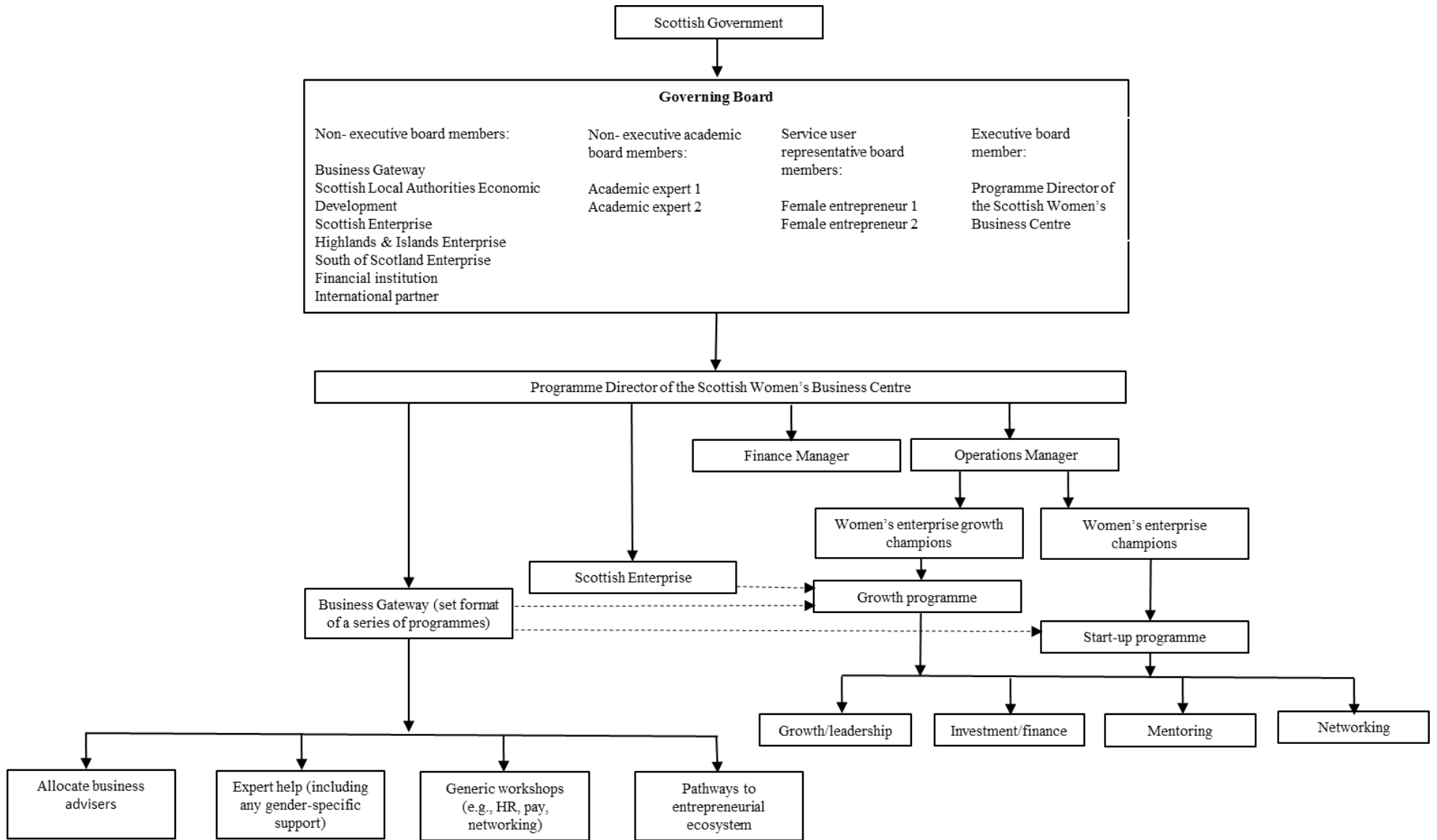
We further propose that the governance of the SWBC be overseen by a Board, comprising non-executives drawn from across Scotland, academics with expertise in women's entrepreneurship, and executive board members. The Board's principal function will be to hold a newly-appointed Programme Director and executive management team to account for their decisions and to provide them with guidance on strategy and leadership. To ensure that the SWBC will be delivering

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<sup>1</sup> The regions are aligned to Business Gateway: Aberdeen City and Shire; Argyll and Bute; Ayrshire, Arran and Cumbrae; Dumfries and Galloway; Dunbartonshire; Edinburgh & Lothians; Fife; Forth Valley; Glasgow; Highland; Lanarkshire; Moray; Orkney; Outer Hebrides; Renfrewshire; Scottish Borders; Shetland and; Tayside.

effective and gender-specific advice and support throughout Scotland, the model is depicted in Figure 3 as well as being further discussed in the following sections.

**Figure 3: The Scottish Women’s Business Centre**





## **5.2 Scottish Women's Business Centre Structure**

### **5.2.1 Scottish Government**

The governance model could be led by the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government establishes policies, procedures, values and long-term planning to be implemented effectively. The recommendation will be administered by the Government to ensure transparency and accountability and to ensure it is implemented as effectively, fairly and sustainably as set out in the report.

### **5.2.2 Governing Board**

A governing board could be created to oversee the strategic direction of the SWBC and to hold the executive management team to account for their decision making and actions. The governing board, which comprises executive and non-executive members, and expert advisers, will be responsible for driving forward the strategic direction of the recommendations and model, for setting key priorities, ensuring performance, and managing risk and accountability.

The governing board will monitor the delivery and quality of the recommendation, provide advice as well as make decisions about changes to the delivery as it evolves, provide support, guidance and have oversight as the model is implemented. The governing board will consist of representatives from the following organisations, and key individuals:

#### ***Non-executive board members***

- Business Gateway
- Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development
- Scottish Enterprise
- Highlands & Islands Enterprise
- South of Scotland Enterprise
- International partner (e.g., Ernst & Young, PwC, etc.)
- Financial institution (e.g., RBS, Halifax, etc.)

#### ***Non-executive academic board members***

- Academic expert 1
- Academic expert 2

#### ***Service user representative board members***

- Female entrepreneur 1
- Female entrepreneur 2

#### ***Executive board member***

- Programme Director of the Scottish Women's Business Centre

### 5.2.3 Scottish Women's Business Centre

The SWBC is an organisation that aims to promote women's entrepreneurship by assisting and supporting women in the early stages of start-up, early growth and growth businesses in Scotland. To achieve this aim, the following objectives must be met:

1. The SWBC must be accountable to the Scottish Government and the governing body to ensure transparency, accountability and financial viability.
2. To develop an organisational structure which brings together public agencies in Scotland with a common vision for supporting and promoting women's entrepreneurship.
3. The brand of SWBC should be promoted heavily to become widely recognised and accepted as the main organisation assisting women's entrepreneurship in Scotland.
4. The SWBC brand should be incorporated in all delivery of gender-specific support with delivery partners.

An extension of the SWBC brand is the online presence. The online presence should be as simple and user-friendly as possible with each region's champions updating the programmes on offer. This should be hosted initially by the Scottish Government with access given to each regional champion (for both start-up and growth) to ensure up-to-date information is available which is focused on regional requirements. The Business Gateway website is a useful template. However, the promotion of the SWBC organisation, website and offerings requires a different approach to ensure that different types of women, communities, etc., are reached.

The services, which will be gender-specific, fall under the following themes:

- Investment/finance
- Networking
- Mentoring
- Growth/leadership

Given the extensive study undertaken, the start-up support could include a programme of events and workshops, networking opportunities for women and access and links into wider enterprise support with the aim of developing more women-owned businesses feeding into Business Gateway and external partners. Areas of focus should include: business planning and idea development; digital assistance and marketing; and cash-flow management. The programme is to be delivered following international best gender-tailored practices and should include collaboration with wider ecosystem partners. The programme should initially be piloted to further inform delivery.

The growth programme (which includes the early-growth) could include a programme of events and workshops, networking opportunities for women and access into wider non-gender-specific networks and market opportunities with the aim of feeding into the Business Gateway Growth Pipeline, Scottish Enterprise services and external partners. Areas of focus include: growth planning; HR and employment; business premises; access to growth finance; early-stage innovation, exporting and internationalisation; and sales and marketing. The programme, delivered following international best gender-tailored practices, must include collaboration with wider ecosystem partners. The programme should be initially piloted to further inform delivery.

#### **5.2.4 Programme Director of the Scottish Women's Business Centre**

A Programme Director could be appointed to manage the implementation of the model. The Programme Director could be funded by the Scottish Government and appointed from either Scottish Enterprise or Business Gateway (the post could be advertised internally within the organisations).

The role of the Programme Director will involve overseeing the implementation of the SWBC, to ensure consistency of what is being delivered and how (ensuring regional variation) via the organisation. Their responsibilities will include:

- Overseeing the SWBC organisation
- Managing the delivery of the model across the 18 regions in Scotland
- Managing the programme budget and costs of administering the model/programmes
- Regular reviews and assurance with regional managers/champions of women's enterprise
- Ability to forecast and create roadmaps to achieve goals
- Coordinate and prioritise resources across women's enterprise support
- Maintain key relationships across stakeholders across Scotland
- Ensure all regional managers/champions of women's enterprise support have undergone CPD training for diversity
- Evaluate all delivery in a consistent, rigorous and systematic manner

#### **5.2.5 Finance Manager**

Further to the Programme Director's role, there is a requirement to appoint a Finance Manager who will directly report to the Programme Director. The Finance Manager will be part of the senior executive team with responsibility for the SWBC financials. They will combine operational and strategic roles, manage accounting and financial control functions, and establish a financial strategy for the recommendation. The Finance Manager could be part-time and appointed via a secondment from either Scottish Enterprise or from the Scottish Government.

#### **5.2.6 Operations Manager**

The Operations Manager will also be directly responsible to the Programme Director and the governing board. The role is crucial in that it involves liaising and dealing with the enterprise champions daily. The operations manager will oversee daily activity of the champions across Scotland. They will also prepare budgets, schedules and evaluations. The Operations Manager's post could be a full-time position and seconded from Business Gateway given the regional experience and the expertise in delivery required for the role.

#### **5.2.7 Enterprise Champions**

Business Gateway could enable expert advice and support for women by appointing 18 women's enterprise champions who will be tasked with undertaking, promoting, delivering, overseeing, etc., the women's enterprise support within their own region as well as assisting the Programme Director with designing and overseeing the programmes within their regions, and ensuring contacts and relationships are made with local authorities and delivery agencies in the wider entrepreneurial ecosystem. The regional champions will also be tasked with

promoting and embedding the SWBC into the local infrastructure in accordance with their region's requirements as well as ensuring evaluation is undertaken.

Further to the women's enterprise champions there could also be nine women's enterprise growth champions (where they will cover two regions each) and they will be tasked with ensuring that they are the main contact for women looking to grow their business. The growth champions could be appointed through Scottish Enterprise.

It is essential that the growth champion is trained, experienced and knowledgeable in growth businesses to provide the required support and advice for women rather than ad hoc or disconnected/fragmented advice and support for women. The growth champion will be the key contact for the women with growth businesses and the understanding will be that the support will be intensive and individualised through the champion who will guide the individual.

It is evident from previous studies that "gender-specific peer-learning, training and advisory programmes that are delivered with a regional focus and are designed and delivered for a specific target beneficiary are more successful than basic gender-neutral programmes" (Carter et al., 2019, p. 3). Therefore, it is important that all champions are given the appropriate gender and diversity training - both start-up and growth businesses require high levels of gender awareness and diversity gender-specific delivery and, therefore, all champions could attend a gender diversity course as part of the training for their role. There are training bodies such as the Chartered Management Institute who can undertake bespoke training.

It is essential that the champions understand the following:

- The fundamentals of gender and diversity definitions
- An understanding of why equality and equity is important in business support
- Information on whether inclusive approaches are feasible
- Assessment tool to ensure that the champions are practicing gender-specific and diverse business support
- Principles of being gender-specific when designing business support
- Tools to test the impact of gender-specific and diverse business support

### **5.2.8 Business Gateway**

The SWBC's programmes could feed into Business Gateway's existing activities which are already in place and focused around the following:

- Allocate business adviser
- Workshops (HR, pay, networking etc.)
- Introduce and highlight access to the wider entrepreneurial ecosystem (Scottish Enterprise, Interface, etc.)

The above could cater for early-stage programmes involving peer-support, training and advice over a set duration with accountability targets and early-growth programme involving events and workshops, networking opportunities for women and access into wider non-gender-specific networks and market opportunities. For the growth businesses there could be key champions in place who would be involved in networking and collaborating with women entrepreneurs who require to move to the next stage of their business growth. It should be highlighted that Business Gateway work alongside Scottish Enterprise to align support and

advice to women growing their businesses, this would act as a feeder programme to growth activity that they promote.

Business Gateway also provides a series of Women into Business workshops with consistent learning outcomes aimed at encouraging more women to start their own businesses. Workshop topics covered include:

- Introduction and networking
- Business Planning
- Marketing
- Funding
- E-commerce
- Presenting and selling
- Customer management
- Final session and further support

These are available as part of the core Business Gateway workshop catalogue, and local authorities can decide how and when to run these based on client demand. These have been further developed by some Business Gateway areas as part of their ability to provide additional local services for their clients. However, it could be part of the operational manager's remit to oversee how these align with the SWBC offerings in order to avoid any duplication, etc.

Further support which is freely available from Business Gateway could also be considered. This involves:

- Online resources – access to online guides and market research information
- Tailored advice – delivered by a professional business adviser
- Workshops and events – extensive programme of topics to help improve business skills
- Business development programme – business adviser support and access to additional support from Enterprise Agency partners
- Digital business support – the DigitalBoost programme helps people improve digital skills

### 5.3 Timeline

**Year 2020/21** – this period allows exemplar programmes from the year 2019/20 to continue and for evaluations to be undertaken. This should also allow time to set up the SWBC as an organisation, fill the posts and ensure programmes are available and viable for delivery for women. The first year will be the initial pilot year of the model.

It should be noted that all programmes delivered to the women should be subject to a competitive tendering process (which should highlight previous experiences, rigorous evaluations and follow-ups of the programmes with the entrepreneurs from those involved in tendering).

**Year 2021/22** – the model should evolve given the first year, feedback, evaluations, and changes should be implemented this year.

**Year 2022/23** – this should be the final year of the pilot and highlight that the model should be able to function with little, if any, Scottish Government funding and all evaluations should be explicitly embedded within the model (short-term, medium-term and long-term).

### 5.4 Implementing the model

Given the complexity of the SWBC model, there are various ways of implementing it which highlights that one size does not fit all. There are 18 regions within Scotland; within these regions there are 32 local regions and, therefore, we are mindful that the implementation of the SWBC is applied according to regional needs. In each region the SWBC will be embedded in the local infrastructure. In this section we have highlighted various ‘promising practices’ and an ‘illustrative demand’ case as to how the SWBC can be embedded in local communities allowing the use of existing organisations and infrastructure (Appendices 2 and 3).

### 5.5 Summary of promising practices

This section aligns the findings with some examples of what is being undertaken in the case studies and how this highlights the potential for delivery, sustainability and feasibility of the SWBC. There is an understanding that women require support and advice at a regional and local level, and it is key that the model is driven by an “instrument-context approach which views initiatives to suit a specific context and population” (Carter et al., 2019, p. 6). There are areas of challenges, voiced by many of the women who participated in the focus groups. The promising practices highlight some of the solutions in how women’s enterprise support for women can be delivered locally, address concerns and replicate their models in the differing regions under the SWBC.

**Rural:** The Northern Innovation Hub and Realise programme are both ways that address the rural issues of networking, communication and mentoring. The Hub offers varied programmes across many sectors: life sciences, food and drink, tourism and the creative industries, with the cross-cutting themes of young people and technology. An accelerator of this sort could easily adapt the SWBC brand and the Realise programme offers women who are at an early growth stage to connect and network to address the difficulties of being a business owner in rural areas.

**Co-working spaces:** Many of the promising practices offer co-working spaces for women, e.g., The Northern Innovation Hub, The Circle, Elevator WEvolution, Queen Margaret

University and libraries. Furthermore, there are cases such as WEvolution who offer access to their spaces 24/7 and security for the women. Women are then not forced to use spaces and work during hours they could be running their business, caring for family or children or undertaking other paid employment.

**Childcare:** Very few organisations have childcare facilities for women entrepreneurs. However, some community centres for women offer childcare facilities at reasonable prices, for example, DIWC. Although many of these community centres do not offer business support for women, the case study – illustrating demand – highlights the importance of introducing and offering business support through such centres in Scotland. These centres provide space, crèche facilities and safe environments for women. Furthermore, the childcare facilities can be mobile as there are facilities that can be used like community centres and libraries that could employ childcare facilities for periods of time when business support is being offered (set days every month) via Enterprise Childcare (<https://www.enterprisechildcare.co.uk/services/mobile-creche/>) or Mobile Crèche (<http://mobilecrechedundee.org>).

**Sectoral support:** Women are dominantly based in the service industries but within the industry there are various sectors which include crafts, food and drink, creative, etc. Therefore, women in different sectors are looking for specific advice and support. The promising practices that cater to sectors include InCube, the Business and Intellectual Property Centre and The Northern Innovation Hub.

**Reaching underprivileged women:** Socially and economically deprived areas lack the knowledge and resources which can be found within the entrepreneurial ecosystem. The illustrating demand case study highlighted this and the DIWC, Women’s Business Station, The Circle, WEvolution, the Business and Intellectual Property Centre and Elevator all highlight how actively they work with those who are hard to reach; amongst them, many work with women to assist and support them in their communities as well as to become economically active by offering support, advice, and services such as educational facilities, benefits advice, etc., which allows the women to understand the structures and navigate their way around the support infrastructures. Furthermore, government provision for women’s entrepreneurship should be visible, signposting to the knowledge, tools and expertise which is often lost in the complex entrepreneurial ecosystem and women from these areas are unaware of the opportunities and support available, as highlighted by the illustrating demand case and, by using such facilities, this will raise awareness.

**Virtual:** Renfrewshire Business Network is a free and effective method of networking and collaborating amongst small businesses in local areas. This highlights the access, communication, networking and mentoring of a service based online which could potentially be incorporated into the SWBC brand.

By utilising the infrastructure as demonstrated in the promising practices and illustrating demand case, barriers that women’s business centres face, as highlighted in Carter et al.’s (2019) study - those of being unable to provide sustainable funding sources and the burden of public sector regulation and administration requirements - can be addressed.

## **6. Evaluation and pathways to impact of the model**

Evaluation is key to understanding and ensuring the effectiveness of the delivery of the SWBC across the 18 regions in Scotland. The aim of the evaluation of the SWBC is to report to the Scottish Government on the role and performance of the SWBC. It will give the Scottish Government an in-depth assessment of the extent to which the SWBC has increased, supported and advised women entrepreneurs effectively and whether, in the longer-term, this has directly contributed to developing and strengthening women's entrepreneurship and the economic impact in Scotland. We strongly recommend the evaluation is undertaken via Qualitative Impact Protocol (QuIP) (taken from Copestake, et al., 2019).

The QuIP can be characterised as a two-pronged methodology:

- It comprises clear and practical guidelines for collecting, analysing, and sharing narrative statements from intended beneficiaries (in this case women entrepreneurs) about significant drivers of change in their lives, including the impact of specific development actions intended to help them (gender-driven support programmes via SWBC).
- It sets out a flexible approach to generating evidence of whether a particular action is having the desired impact, and for whom, including exploring unintended outcomes and identifying unknown drivers of change.

A description of QuIP has been outlined in Appendix 4.



## **7. Conclusion**

This report provides evidence from 18 Women in Enterprise Action Group members, 24 focus groups involving more than 100 women start-up and growth entrepreneurs in 11 regions of Scotland, eight interviews with representatives of other support agencies within the entrepreneurial ecosystem, 11 case illustrations of ‘promising practices’ and an ‘illustration of demand’ case study with a social enterprise for women.

The evidence shows that a Women’s Business Centre, which takes into account the problems of space and place in women’s entrepreneurship, would be the best way forward for Scotland in terms of increasing women’s business start-ups and growth, and ensuring effective support is provided. Given the evidence, we recommend that an organisation, the Scottish Women’s Business Centre, be formally established and promoted with a Governing Board for driving forward the strategic direction of the recommendations and model, for setting key priorities, ensuring performance and managing risk and accountability. The Scottish Women’s Business Centre should be used as an umbrella brand, for delivery by regional organisations in 18 regions via enterprise champions (18 champions for start-up and 9 champions for early-growth and growth). Under the Scottish Women’s Business Centre brand, collaborations with local stakeholders within the entrepreneurial ecosystem could be adhered to, to ensure the challenges of women entrepreneurs are met at the local level. We also highlight how the Scottish Women’s Business Centre could be delivered regionally and within existing infrastructure by highlighting promising practices. These models are local and at the grassroots level, they can be replicated in regions in accordance to the women entrepreneurs’ requirements. Furthermore, evaluation is key when implementing the recommendation. It is important to note that the pilot stage has been recommended to run for three years to ensure that evaluation is captured intermittently at different stages – short-term, medium-term and long-term. Outputs and outcomes should be measured and reported via QuIP.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: Discussion sheet**

**Please take 5 minutes to read through the questions below. These will form the basis of the focus group discussion.**

1. What challenges regarding starting up/growing your own business did you face?
2. What advice and support did you seek out? What advice and support were you offered? Where (if anywhere) did you get such support/advice?
3. If you received advice and support, how good was it?
4. What was missing from the advice and support you received?
5. What would you like to see happen in women's enterprise support and delivery? Why?
6. What advice and support do you need to be provided locally and what could be provided on a Scotland-wide basis?
7. Here's two options for the future of Scottish women's enterprise support, which would you pick and why:

A Women's Business Centre located centrally in the Scottish central belt with good public transport access, well-furnished working spaces, full facilities, expert advice and support.

A number of local/regional Women Business Centres (under one brand) with varying degrees of support and advice, working spaces, facilities and possible crèche facilities - easy access given the locations, e.g., local libraries, community centres, etc.

## Appendix 2: Promising practices

### Promising practice 1: Women's Business Station



#### What is the Women's Business Station?

The Women's Business Station (WBS), founded in October 2018 by social entrepreneur Angie Foreman, is a social enterprise that will develop and expand the work of the Coca-Cola 5by20 Dundee programme beyond its completion date – 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2020. Governed by a six strong professional board and supported by over 60 local and national businesses, the drive and appetite to continue the legacy of the Coca-Cola Programme through WBS is evident.

WBS offers women, (with an emphasis on those who are marginalised) an opportunity to become socially and economically active. It does this through its enterprise facilitation approach and an on-going programme of education and learning, practical activities and events, networking, mentoring and continuous support. WBS specialises in micro business start-up support; increasing participation; reducing isolation, and building confidence.

WBS has the principal aim of increasing the number of women entrepreneurs, firstly in Tayside and then in Scotland.

#### What does it do and what has it achieved?

Through a well-structured programme of supportive training, follow-up courses and seminars, individual coaching and mentoring, network development, events and the formation of a close knit “family”, the WBS has either initiated or supported 150 women to open or sustain a business. These businesses employ 50 people in addition to the entrepreneurs, making significant contributions to the local economy and, as importantly, provide a strong foundation for women to run their own businesses in an entrepreneurial manner.

WBS specialises in micro business start-up support; providing a safe and encouraging place for women who dream of being economically independent through business. WBS's unique suite of training programmes and on-going support through its network of 40 mentors, 30 volunteers and 23 associates, provides the right environment and experiences so women can make an informed decision on their future. Empowerment is at the heart of everything WBS does.

WBS increases participation; reduces isolation and builds confidence. WBS adds significant value to the current business eco-support system for those who do not have adequate resources or time to focus on this market. The WBS model prides itself in being industry-driven, industry-led, and industry-supported. It aims to be fully self-sufficient in three years.

#### How will WBS achieve self-sufficiency?

WBS aims to generate its own income through the delivery of external training, membership fees, a mentoring service, events, masterclasses and tradeshow.

WBS has an ambitious vision to provide every woman in Scotland access to its services and support. To do this it is creating a scalable and sustainable model that will offer much more than is currently on offer. The next step to sustainability is to move from offering services to

offering spaces. Utilising empty units within local shopping centres, WBS aims to be the first social enterprise in Dundee to deliver regeneration with a difference. WBS is currently in negotiations with the management of Dundee's largest Shopping centre - Wellgate with the vision to re-shape and transform a large part of the Centre into a co-working, retail, events and community space for women entrepreneurs and their growing businesses.

### **What evidence of success is there?**

The Programme Director, Angie Foreman, adapted the Coca-Cola 5by20 programme and its delivery model to tailor them to the needs of the Scottish community and has proven that. Thus, her experience in taking forward WBS is unprecedented with evaluations from her previous programme showing that:

- In less than two years, the Coca-Cola 5by20 programme has supported 142 women, 80 of whom have launched their own business and 38 of whom continue to grow their business.
- Over 50 new jobs have been created, alongside over 30 volunteer opportunities. There are Currently 40 mentors, male and female, including entrepreneurs, consultants, academics and business people from a range of sectors.
- Since May 2017 this network has provided the programme with more than £450,000 of in-kind support.
- Over £1 million-worth of economic impact has been generated to the city and surrounding areas. The social impact is double the economic impact.

Annually, the offer of activities includes:

- 3 x FasTRACK to Business Success Programme
- 4 x Short Enterprise Courses
- 6 x Topic Specific Workshops
- 6 x Network and Social Events
- Social Media Network
- Mentor Programme
- 1 x Exhibition and Trade Show
- 2 x Educational and Social Events/Evenings

## Promising practice 2: InCube



### Background

Launched in June 2015 InCube, based at 27 High Street, Paisley, seeks to address the challenges faced by many entrepreneurs such as lack of confidence and a sense of isolation. The programme aims to work intensively with around 16 start-up and early stage businesses per annum to consolidate their business offer and grow their markets as well as support up to 50 other young creative businesses every year. The theme of “Creative Retail” was selected as the programme to specifically contribute to the regeneration of Paisley and to potentially support the repopulation of the town centre.

The InCube approach has been to ensure better connections between those within the creative sector, those entrepreneurs looking to start up and the business development network and from 2016. InCube now functions as a hub for start-ups, self-employment and enterprise offering the InCube Creative programme, a full range of Business Gateway services, Prince’s Trust drop-in, Digital Boost workshops and New Enterprise Allowance workshops. InCube is funded by Renfrewshire Council, Business Gateway and the European Regional Development Fund.

### Creative Programme

The InCube Creative programme encompasses a range of elements designed to provide a holistic approach to supporting pre-start and early stage product-based designers and makers. Participants attend two days per week for six months, then monthly in a phased exit plan for the following three months. The support on offer includes:

- A physical facility to new businesses with the supportive network necessary to increase their probability of survival during the crucial early years when they are most vulnerable. Accommodation within the business incubator provides hot-desking, office facilities and meeting space.
- Each InCube business is assigned a named Business Gateway adviser.
- Access to a range of free masterclasses and workshops covering subjects such as Branding, Market Research, Marketing, Costing and Pricing, Pitching to Retail. These masterclasses are open to the public and wider business community; however, InCube Creative programme participants have the additional benefit of an individual follow-up session with the course tutor in order to further personalise and apply the learning outcomes to their individual business needs.
- Access to the InCube shop, a retail unit based in Gilmour Street, Paisley which provides a no-cost opportunity to test the market and sell their products, allowing these fledgling businesses to generate vital cash-flow and gain customer feedback on their products. In addition to selling within the shop unit, businesses are encouraged and supported to trial alternative retail outlets including pop up shops and markets.
- The opportunity to develop wider support networks within creative communities and support organisations such as Creative Renfrewshire, Cultural Enterprise Office, Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce (12 months’ free membership is included as part of the programme), networking groups and relevant bodies such as Craft Scotland.
- The development of a website and e-commerce platform via their “Website in a Day” workshop plus on-going support with content planning and management, SEO, etc.

- Peer support - this plays an important part in the programme, and our monthly Creative Chat events provide a networking opportunity to meet with previous InCube graduates with whom there is a sharing of resources, knowledge and skills.
- Creative Toolkit programme – this has been developed specifically to address the key issue of resilience and mental well-being which affects many start-up businesses and, in particular, those within the creative industries sector. The programme consists of three workshops covering tips and techniques such as time management, positive self-talk and planning for success and further support is accessed via a closed online Facebook group.
- Renfrewshire Council’s Business Development support - InCube businesses are offered practical guidance on funding and the criteria needed to complete funding applications.
- The opportunity to apply for funding - this experience is designed to prepare participants for the experience of making funding bids at any future point of their business journey.
- Experienced one-to-one management advice and access to professional expertise, which ensures that each participating business completes a thorough business plan and any other strategic planning necessary within the framework of Monthly Activity Planning. During these meetings priorities and actions are agreed and reviewed and targets set. Further support is available via e-mail, phone calls or additional meetings if required.

The InCube Shop provides:

- A retail academy training model which provides learning and work placements to local unemployed people who are interested in developing a career in retail. Trainees complete an in-depth development programme, ensuring they have the right mixture of knowledge and skills to progress into work with local retail businesses.
- A retail setting within which InCube designers, makers and artists can sell their products and gain feedback from customers on their products.
- A Guest Trading programme offers guest trading slots for Renfrewshire residents who are creative designers or makers who are considering moving into retail.

To date, 50 businesses have participated in the InCube Creative programme which includes a mix of pre-start and early stage businesses. The age of participants ranges from University leavers to the over-50s with 90% of participants being female. The sectors supported include:

- Textile designers (fabric/wallpaper)
- Textile crafts (screen printing, needle-felt, crafts)
- Jewellery
- Millinery
- Ceramics
- Art
- Bookbinding
- Origami

## **Evaluation**

InCube provides continuing assistance following graduation from the programme - several of the businesses have taken the opportunity to “drop in” providing verbal updates on the progress of the business or to seek advisory support:

- Regular customer service survey and analysis is undertaken during the programme to assess the length of the programme, workshop content, one-to-one support, accommodation, ICT, etc.
- At the end of the InCube Creative programme
- Six months following completion of the programme
- 12 months following completion of the programme

The outcomes and impacts include:

- All businesses reported an increase in turnover
- Most of the start-ups have sustained/grown their businesses following the programme, with a few giving up part-time jobs to run the business full-time
- A Creative Crafts Trail now forms part of a regular menu of events attracting visitor numbers to the town. The trail consists of up to 10 free craft workshops operating over a weekend in a range of café/arts venues spread across the town centre

## **Creative Hubs**

A new focus for 2019 is the development of Creative Business Hubs. These new Hubs may take a range of forms, from maker-spaces to labs to clusters, but will share a commitment to sustaining and growing small local businesses and contributing to a better future for them. The hubs will offer rent subsidies and business support and will be led by a single business or by a collaboration or partnership, and the aims are:

- To create a network of creative hubs across Renfrewshire accommodating and supporting a wide range of small creative businesses
- That creative start-up in Renfrewshire is easy to do, affordable and accessible
- To support the aspiration for Paisley (and Renfrewshire) to become the place of choice for creative businesses in Scotland

Up to four new Creative Business Hubs will be supported each year until the end of 2022.

InCube provides a holistic programme of support to pre-start and early stage businesses within the Renfrewshire area which increases their probability of survival during the crucial early years when they are most vulnerable.

### Promising practice 3: The Northern Innovation Hub



The Northern Innovation Hub (NIH) was launched in 2018 and created to stimulate, encourage and support innovation and growth in the small to medium sized enterprises across the Highland Council area.

The programme is focused on four key sectors: Life Sciences, Food and Drink, Tourism and the Creative Industries, with the cross-cutting themes of Young People and Technology. Within this we have a range of programmes running, including:

- Pathfinder - a life sciences and technology accelerator programme delivered free of charge to SMEs, in Inverness with additional remote one-to-one support.
- NEXUS - a collaborative working facility for LS and technology businesses, again in Inverness, including rentable suites and a co-work space, where we also run regular networking events, often with keynote speakers. NEXUS offers paid rentals and, in some cases, free of charge for up to six months.
- Impact 30 - a young entrepreneurs' programme for business leaders of 35 years and under, working in a business three years or younger – no financial cost to participant businesses.
- XPONorth Digital - a programme of support for creative industries businesses.
- Technology Placements programme – opportunities for employers to take on a student or graduate to deliver a short term technology based project to progress the business; salaries are funded up to 50%.
- Coding Academy - delivered by CodeClan, this offers a fast-track software development course for local people looking to enhance skills and/or change career – cost to participant but subsidised by our programme.
- Adventure Tourism programme which will launch a focused accelerator programme and a mountain biking initiative early next year.
- Digital Tourism programme providing a range of digital support to tourism businesses and DMOs.

Over 500 businesses have engaged with NIH so far, and to date across the programmes NIH has provided intensive support to over 60 businesses, ranging from pre-start-ups to established companies across multiple sectors. NIH does not have a remit to support women, per se; however, many of the participants in individual programmes are female. For example, in the NEXUS space, of the tight business tenants, NIH has two led by women and a total of nine women working within the space. Equally, from the 23 businesses who have participated in the Pathfinder Accelerator so far, 14 of the 29 individual participants have been women.

NIH continues to monitor the participants' journeys and track impacts regarding growth, innovation, employment and productivity. NIH is consistently monitoring the wider benefits of the programme and will undertake a mid-term evaluation in 2020.

The programme receives funding from the UK government through the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal and the European Regional Development Fund, plus additional finance and support from HIE.

## Promising practice 4: Realise - Orkney Women Entrepreneurs Programme

### The Concept

A woman-only development programme for female entrepreneurs who have an existing business that has been running for over 12 months and have a desire to create positive change in their business (e.g., growth, sustainability, profitability, better business–life balance) and actively want some help to turn this into reality.

The programme consists of a cohort of 10 women entrepreneurs, who meet six times over a six- to eight-month period. The group is facilitated by an experienced coach/facilitator who is herself a successful entrepreneur. The group sessions are co-designed by the group and tackle the issues that women are facing in their businesses. The sessions use a group coaching format. The group stay connected between sessions using a WhatsApp group. Topics have included:

- Managing overwhelm and productivity – how to feel spacious in a hyper-connected world; how to balance multiple roles and multiple demands on time; setting boundaries and saying ‘no’.
- Networking – building a network that stretches the women and supports their business.
- Self-promotion – learning to get visible.

The programme is supported and funded by Business Gateway Orkney. The first cohort is mid-way through the programme. The programme will be evaluated in January 2020. Early design thinking is underway for a virtual version of the programme.

### The Context: Specific challenges for rural women entrepreneurs

Rural women entrepreneurs face gender-specific challenges in growing their businesses. These include:

- **Lack of role models, sponsors and mentors.** Access to sponsorship, role models and mentoring is critical to the success and growth of entrepreneurs and their businesses. Lack of access is amplified in rural communities where women face greater isolation, and geographic barriers to participation in women’s events and organisations.
- **Multiple roles and gender stereotypes around caring** mean women entrepreneurs are often juggling a wider range of commitments and face more time constraints. This is often amplified in rural communities where women are more likely to be juggling multiple roles and where gendered roles are more traditional/gender stereotyping may be more prevalent and explicit.
- **Stereotyping around what ‘entrepreneurship’ and ‘leadership’ looks like** means that women do not always see themselves as a natural fit for these labels. Unconscious bias means that women face pushback from peers, clients and stakeholders when they adopt behaviours that are perceived to be male, e.g., ambition and focus.
- **Women are socialised to be communal, consensus-building and ‘liked’**, which leaves them less equipped to own their own successes and get credit for their work. Women are often socialised to downplay their successes and their worth. This can be amplified in rural communities where their businesses are more visible/less anonymous.
- **The visibility/vulnerability cycle.** There are fewer female entrepreneurs and, therefore, they are more visible. When they fail, their failure is also more visible.



## **Promising practice 5: Renfrewshire Business Network**

Renfrewshire Business Network (RBN) was established in November 2012, in a restaurant in Paisley. The founder, Jo Smith, was attending networking events in the Glasgow area, and felt there were limited meetings locally and she was not aware of any networks which supported women only. Jo wanted the meetings to be free of charge as not all SMEs can afford to spend money on networking events.

Jo then decided she would set up her own networking events which would take into consideration the following:

- The times would always be from 9.30-11.30 am, to support anyone with child/care responsibilities.
- The event would be local to avoid time and cost for travelling.
- The network would be a 'roaming' one to allow a variety of businesses to showcase themselves to their peers, and the wider business community.
- The network would be welcoming, friendly, inclusive and safe – allowing individuals to build their confidence.

The ethos of RBN is to encourage and support SMEs to network, which is crucial to building business relationships, but also includes larger businesses. This allows access to large companies, and the opportunity to speak with more experienced business people.

Jo approached local businesses to ask if they would host an RBN meeting, and explained that they would be free to attend. During the meeting the host would be able to promote their own business through whatever means they wanted, i.e., a presentation, leaflets, discounts, tours, etc. Refreshments were not required and would be entirely at the discretion of the host. After a lot of hard work and one-to-one networking with the business community RBN flourished.

In 2019 numbers attending each event average around 25-30, and people often approach Jo to host a meeting. Hosts see the value in opening their doors to business people who then post on social media or through word-of-mouth promote the hosts and their businesses.

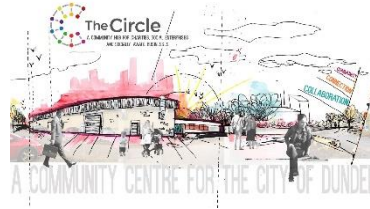
Although no money changes hands, Jo feels it is important to give back to the community that has supported RBN, so there are a couple of events which do that. For example. The Christmas lunch was launched, because many sole traders miss this yearly event now that they are on their own, and a representative from a local charity is invited along. RBN also takes a table at the annual RAMH dinner which has supported people in Renfrewshire and across Scotland, with mental health issues. This highlights that RBN also understands the social value of its work and involves the third sector.

RBN now has 600 members on their LinkedIn group, has been hosted by over 80 businesses which include – the Royal Bank of Scotland, the University of Paisley, Holiday Inn Glasgow Airport, Rosset Butler Academy, Abbeymill Business Centre, Fore Play Golf, Mar Hall, the Normandy Hotel, Hostelling Scotland and many more.

There is a website [www.renfrewshirebn.co.uk](http://www.renfrewshirebn.co.uk) which is kindly hosted by David Atkinson and the team at Co2 Design in Paisley, there is also a Twitter account @RenfrewshireBN and all the meetings are advertised on LinkedIn, Eventbrite, Find Networking Events, the What's On Network and Twitter.

Due to the increased attendance of people from a variety of geographical areas, RBN has 'roamed' into areas outside Renfrewshire. All businesses from all areas are welcome to attend and/or host, but the ethos of supporting SMEs to increase their business contacts, many of whom are women, is the reason it exists. There are some great small businesses out there but many lack in confidence to network, which can sometimes be a barrier when trying to get started. The goal of the RBN is to ensure networking is an easy and friendly part of business.

## Promising practice 6: The Circle



### What does The Circle offer?

The Circle provides volunteering opportunities to the local community. Everything from handyman and care-taking, to gardening, events, reception, hospitality, working with children and adults furthest from the labour market and links to our tenant organisations in our building and nationally. The Circle also provides work experience and placements to support people to get into these opportunities in the sector. In addition, it is keen to look at the skill sets of individuals to help match them towards trustee or non-exec director positions.

### The Circle Academy

The Circle Dundee Academy provides a mixture of expert-led sessions and practical learning. It covers everything from mindset and people to governance and legal, alongside unique income-generating tasks and mock board meetings.

It is currently advertising this for both candidates and sponsorship. The first cohort started on 23rd September 2019 in Dundee and it has ambitions to roll this out across the UK.

It is looking for people who:

- Want to learn new skills necessary for either employment, volunteers or trustee positions.
- People who have a business idea where they have strong social objectives which they can take from idea to execution.
- People already operating a business or social enterprise who want to grow their organisations.
- Employees who want to work on continued professional development and take this learning back into their organisations.
- They will be working with people setting up charities, social enterprise, co-ops, b-corps, employee ownership, company ltd by shares and guarantee focussed on a More Than Profit Approach.

The candidates will leave the programme with strong business and enterprise skills. Throughout the programme, candidates will create a business plan which will then be pitched to an audience of investors, funders and mentors. There will also be specialist recruitment professionals attending the pitch event and they will be looking to identify potential recruits to roles within social enterprise and charity. The income generated throughout the six tasks will go into a 'pot'. There will be two winners, each will have an equal share of the money.

They will be awarded in categories of:

- Outstanding contribution in the income generation tasks, voted by the board members.
- Best business plan, as voted for by the pitch day audience.

After the 12-week programme the candidates will have use of co-working space for a further nine months alongside monthly meetings with the Academy Manager. In addition, they will have nine masterclasses where they can continue to develop their skills. The opportunity for

continuing support is endless, with The Circle Academy alumni, who will be encouraged to become peer mentors.

### **The Circle Consultancy**

It also offers a wide range of in-house consultancy services to individuals and organisations setting up and growing their organisations on a bespoke basis. The Circle has raised over £13 million for the organisations and individuals they work with. Kirsty Thomson CEO and Founder of ACK Third Sector Consultants CIC and Circle Scotland CIC, is a social entrepreneur with 20 years' experience working with charity leaders, social entrepreneurs and socially aware businesses. She has worked with over 250 clients including globally using Skype and Zoom.

### **The Circle Tenants**

The Circle offers office space which includes fixed overheads and access to our meeting rooms and a programme of events as well as access to eight-hours of consultancy per annum. We currently have 16 tenants ranging from charities, social enterprises and commercial enterprises.

### **The Circle Room Hire**

They offer a range of spaces of different sizes to our tenants and external organisations which can be booked out. These are offered at affordable rates for hourly and daily bookings.

### **Social Innovation and Enterprise**

The Circle is already working with UNLTD on the Resilient Communities Programme and they have committed £20k of funding via the Circle for the next two years. It is currently working with 13 social entrepreneurs.

## Promising practice 7: WEvolution



### Introducing WEvolution statistics

Since starting in 2014, WEvolution's work has gradually started to uncover unlikely entrepreneurs in Scotland's communities who have been given the chance and confidence to become entrepreneurs:

- Forty Self-Reliant Groups (SRGs) in Scotland involving 200 women in Scotland's 'most deprived communities'<sup>2</sup>.
- Fifty-eight microbusinesses at various stages of business development including one self-employed and coming off benefits.
- Another seven women en route to becoming self-employed in the next 12-18 months.

### The approach

WEvolution's SRGs are the first of their kind in Scotland and in the UK. The initiative grew out of a 10-day immersion trip hosted by the Church of Scotland in January 2011 through which 13 women from seven of Glasgow's least understood communities experienced at first hand the transformative impact of women's self-help groups in India.

WEvolution's work is about building simple and nurturing relational ecosystems around people who, often, do not get seen as adding any value to the society and markets. It does this through the SRGs – collectives of people around support and savings, learning new skills and using these to design and create products and services.

Markets that identify as an SRG are:

- Saving regularly – helps build ownership and a common fund to draw upon in need/business idea
- Meeting regularly – establishes trust and commitment
- Collective and have rational leadership – builds leadership abilities
- Not accepting external grants – challenges dependency and encourages resourcefulness
- Four to 10 members – helps build a community around individuals
- From similar socio-economic backgrounds – builds equality in circumstances and challenges to move on together.

### Principles underlying WEvolution's work

There are two fundamental principles or insights that are key to understanding the work of WEvolution:

1. People, because of where they live and/or their circumstances get given a number of tags or labels: beneficiaries, users, clients and, essentially, are treated as consumers and a 'cost' to society. SRGs change the tag to that of producers and contributors of value, both social and economic. The work, therefore, is as much about developing and supporting SRGs as it is about a culture and mindset shift.

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<sup>2</sup> WEvolution prefers to call these 'least understood' communities.

2. The relational ecosystem that is an SRG helps mark three key shifts for the people:
  - Feeling worthy – changing the way they feel
  - Shift in cognition – changing the way they think
  - Shift in agency – changing the control/stake in how their life turns out

## **Achievements**

These include:

1. Evidence that the approach is working for the women: a cobweb of impacts including 95% of those surveyed in SRGs speak of having a greater control over their lives, role-modelling for their families, better health and going on to start up microbusinesses.
2. WEvolution has been chosen by Nesta and the Observer as one of the 50 New Radicals in 2016 changing the UK communities.
3. A further 60 SRGs involving 300 women (and a few men) started through our Scale Programme - six partnerships with organisations that are shaping SRGs into a movement (Leeds, Manchester and Bristol in England; Cardiff and Swansea in Wales; and, Rotterdam in the Netherlands).

## **‘Scaffolding’ around the SRGs**

Among some of the key ‘scaffolding’ provided within the ecosystem includes:

1. Microfinance – no or low cost loans given at three levels: £25 to £200 at 0%; £201 to £1,000 at 0%; £1,001 to £5,000 at 7%.
2. 24/7 WEvo Hubs – we have prototyped dedicated spaces in Paisley and Inverclyde (and a new one coming up in Dundee) that serve as connecting and creating spaces for SRGs.
3. Peer Gatherings – serving to connect individuals and groups from across the UK and thus creating a unique space for building both a movement and a marketplace.
4. Stand Proud Forum – a collection of SRG members keen on driving forward a ‘tiny but powerful change’ around the Universal Credit and self-employment.

## **Conclusion**

WEvolution has ambitious plans to create 5,000 SRGs and reach 70,000 women in the next five years in Scotland. Alongside, it wants to help develop multiple 24/7 WEvo hubs across communities. The plans will require resources but, above all, a commitment from the government and policy-makers to trust the approach and the pace.



## Promising practice 8: Queen Margaret University and East Lothian Council Business Gateway Partnership

The Queen Margaret University’s (QMU) partnership with Business Gateway, delivered by East Lothian Council, exemplifies QMU’s ongoing commitment to supporting enterprise creation in the region and to assisting students, staff and graduates considering setting up their own businesses as well as providing an important and accessible resource for members of the public in East Lothian.

Seven years since the launch of the service in 2012, QMU is incredibly proud to still be the only Scottish University with an on-campus Business Gateway located in their business incubation space the Business Innovation Zone (BIZ). The number of referrals from external Business Gateway users for innovation and research from QMU also continues to grow. A key strength is having a service rooted in the local community and the Business Gateway partnership has allowed QMU to increase the reach of the wider activities of the University, enabling students, researchers and local start-ups to share space, knowledge and experiences. By bringing entrepreneurs from the local community to the University campus at the point of company inception, the on-campus Business Gateway is also planting a seed very early on in the entrepreneurial journey of the opportunities of working with a university and accessing research and innovation for economic growth.

QMU continues to champion alignment between the focus of innovation and the pressing enterprise and societal issue of gender inclusion. QMU is committed to addressing gender disparity in entrepreneurship and is proud that nearly two thirds of QMU start-up companies are created by females. There are over 40 start-ups located in BIZ and they have piloted access to this space with local start-ups referred to them by the Business Gateway, including Lead a Bright Future as well as other SME initiatives such as East Lothian BID on Food and Drink, the first in Europe.

The use of the campus by Business Gateway and members of the public has greatly enhanced and influenced QMU’s insight into its own entrepreneurial identity with gender inclusion at the heart. The East Lothian Business Gateway has been key to embracing this mission as we have worked in partnership to grow female start-ups. In 2018/19, 57% of users of the QMU/East Lothian Business Gateway were female and the service continues to exceed national averages for the creation of female start-ups as a result of using the service.

<b>Female start-ups created as a result of using the service QMU/East Lothian Business Gateway</b>
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<b>Female Start-Ups – Business Gateway National Figure</b>
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2018/19 – 50%
2017/18 – 47%

<b>Female Start-Ups –QMU/East Lothian Business Gateway National Figure</b>
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2019/20 – (at October 2019) – 58%
2018/19 – 59%,
2017/18 – 50%

The Business Gateway service was delighted to welcome its 1200th user of the service at QMU in October 2018. Since it first opened in 2012, nearly 500 new businesses have been created as a direct result of the Business Gateway Service at QMU. In the past year they have sought to

increase the on-campus Business Gateway's active involvement in the direct delivery of entrepreneurial education into the curriculum, including doctoral education. In 2018/19 it contributed to 18 undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across QMU. Through their on-campus location, the Business Gateway advisers provide ongoing mentoring and support to staff, students and alumni – bringing an invaluable, fresh and real time perspective on company creation and entrepreneurial skills.

In support of International Women's Day 2019 and to mark the launch of the UK Government Alison Rose Review of Female Entrepreneurship QMU hosted a sell-out EntreprenHER event in March 2019 with Prue Leith and East Lothian Business Gateway to highlight the achievements of women entrepreneurs. EntreprenHER provided a platform for a panel of female entrepreneurs based in QMU's Business Innovation Zone (BIZ) to take centre stage and provide real-life experiences of the challenges – and discrimination – they have faced in establishing and running successful businesses. Chaired by East Lothian Business Gateway, the panel discussion covered a range of topics.

QMU's ongoing work in supporting users of the Business Gateway with East Lothian Council has led to the provision by the Council of an attractive location package to encourage QMU students to stay and grow business in East Lothian. In the past year, QMU social enterprises have benefited from Community Interest Company funding offered by the Council, with its Start Up, Health Design Collective, securing funding through the East Lothian Council Social Investment Fund (ELSIF).

The partnership has also leveraged additional funding from the Edinburgh Merchant Company. In 2018 the Edinburgh Merchant Company Enterprise Fund was set up, the aim being to encourage entrepreneurship and support business start-ups with education, encouragement and mentoring support from members. Over the last year the fund has supported seven businesses including fodilicious, an innovative food company for people suffering from IBS; S'Wheat, a biodegradable water bottle; Health Design Collective, a social enterprise developing a range of health care products and Echo Park Studios, a drum tuition app.

There are ambitious plans to grow collaborative support for business, based on the success of the QMU/East Lothian Business Gateway Partnership with Government funding of £30 million, being made available through the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal. This will contribute towards the development of Edinburgh Innovation Park on land next to the University campus, a joint development by East Lothian Council and QMU.



## Promising practice 9: Elevator



### What Is Elevator?

*“To generate and recycle wealth, to energise and inspire individuals and as a result improve the economic prospects of the communities in which we work.” Elevator’s Vision Statement*

With over 30 years of experience of delivering business and economic support services, Elevator is one of Scotland’s foremost organisations dedicated to supporting the entrepreneurs and business leaders of today and tomorrow. It does this by providing a range of events and programmes, vibrant and inspiring business advice, and by encouraging entrepreneurship and enterprising behaviour through a range of engaging projects and events across Scotland. Elevator operates as a social enterprise with a singular focus to maximise the impact it can make on the Scottish economy.

Elevator has 19 business centres across Scotland from Banff to Perth and runs several community-driven initiatives on the topic of entrepreneurship, employability and enterprise, working with several academic organisations, thousands of business owners and ambitious entrepreneurs.

### What it does and what it has achieved?

Elevator seeks to inspire, motivate and nurture the new and growing businesses, from a diverse range of sectors, teaching them entrepreneurial disciplines, best practice for business growth and giving them access to a network of businesses, role models, mentors and the entrepreneurial ecosystem across Scotland.

Elevator is committed to supporting and developing entrepreneurs of any age and believes that being an entrepreneur is more than just running a business, it's about giving something back by being part of a community and making a positive difference. These activities include work with schools, colleges and universities and initiatives such as the Elevator Challenge, the BeBrave! Festival and the annual Elevator Awards.

Already an established provider of business acceleration, Elevator’s Accelerator Programme has a demonstrable track record of regional economic impact, supporting ambitious entrepreneurs and businesses with aspirations to scale and grow. This has been built around a model of taking groups of ambitious businesses with early stage products or services through a facilitated group programme incorporating workshops, networking, peer to peer support, and skills development including the Business Model Canvas.

Through its Centres for Entrepreneurship in Aberdeen and Dundee, Elevator offers a broad range of entrepreneurial opportunities including the energy accelerator Grey Matters, its flagship and academic accelerators and a Digital Accelerator programme run in partnership with Opportunity North East. In addition to the Aberdeen and Dundee Centres, Elevator also operates out of the Famous Grouse Ideas Centre in Perth where its team delivers a Creative Accelerator programme. An addition to the portfolio, is the Moray Accelerator, powered by Elevator: Launched in 2019, this is the first business accelerator which Elevator has run in the Scottish Highlands. Elevator was appointed by the Scottish Government’s economic and community development agency, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) and Business Gateway.



## Promising practice 10: Scottish Coworking Network



### What is the programme?

The Scottish Coworking Network has been delivered by Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) with funding from the Scottish Government. The project saw unused and unloved spaces in public libraries converted into vibrant co-working spaces to support entrepreneurs and small businesses. Public libraries have always been a space where people come to work and find information, often sitting silently at desks unaware those sitting around them are also running businesses. The hubs provide spaces in libraries which foster relationships and offer support to those already using the buildings as well as providing an offer to those not currently using library provision. Libraries have diversified and evolved to meet the changing needs of their communities and the project aimed to show the spaces were relevant to the business community. Co-working spaces are already active in libraries around the world including England, Australia, America and the Scandinavian countries. This is the first time formal co-working spaces have been introduced to public libraries in Scotland. The need for co-working spaces were identified in *Ambition and Opportunity: a national strategy for public libraries 2015-2020* in support of economic wellbeing and the role libraries have in this. The key aims of the project are:

- To create accessible spaces in communities where entrepreneurs and businesses are supported to work, meet and collaborate;
- To offer a programme of events and activities that will support business development and encourage networking and;
- To develop a framework for introducing co-working spaces which can be used by other library services to expand the network in future.

### What did it do and how was it delivered?

The project was designed and delivered over two years. A project manager was appointed to oversee identification of suitable spaces, appointment of contractors, refurbishments and the initial development of support services for the spaces. Five hubs are now operational: Edinburgh Central Library (30 spaces), Dundee Central Library (15 spaces), Dunfermline Carnegie Library and Gallery (19 spaces), Inverness Central Library (17 spaces) and Troon Library (eight spaces). A call for interest was put out to all public library services in Scotland who had a vacant space that they thought would make a good co-working space. The initial two hubs identified were in Edinburgh Central Library and Dunfermline Carnegie Library and the refurbishment of these spaces was completed in partnership with The Remakery Edinburgh - a social enterprise upcycling furniture and giving training opportunities to people who had been homeless and identified through Social Bite. This was their first major refurbishment project. The subsequent hubs were too far away from The Remakery to be viable, so alternative methods had to be found. Quotations for all work were obtained from small, local contractors to ensure local economies were supported as part of the refurbishment process in the three other hubs. SLIC contracted The Melting Pot Edinburgh to develop its booking and membership management system and to support the project manager through their co-working accelerator programme. The spaces were refurbished and opened between March and September 2019. The opening of the hubs is part of a pilot with an evaluation as an integral part of how the hubs become 'business as usual' for libraries and SLIC. Conversations will continue to take place into 2020 with the five library services as the future and ensuring the network remains active and sustainable.

## Who is it delivered to?

The first step on the journey was to identify suitable spaces and begin library discussions. The heart of this project is promoting library spaces as an inviting and successful environment to work and run a business. For this reason, it was integral that the hubs were run on a partnership basis with libraries services who were enthusiastic and recognised the value it could bring. Partnership agreements were signed with all five services with them all agreeing to:

- Provide a suitable space
- Provide a stable Wi-Fi connection
- Ensure the health and safety of the members was looked after at all times
- Contribute to the development of spaces and be part of the events programme
- Promote the space through their channels

In turn SLIC agreed to:

- Refurbish space and provide fixtures and fittings
- Manage memberships and payments
- Curate a programme of events for members
- Be the key point of contact for all members
- Promote through their channels

Now that the hubs are operational, SLIC only take a small percentage of membership fees to pay for online systems, covering banking fees, etc. The remaining revenue will be returned to the host services in the form of a grant allowing the services to invest in their libraries as they see fit. The structure of these payments will follow the evaluation. This adds an extra USP to members in that their membership fees contribute to enhancing vital public services.

Members come from a varied range of sectors and backgrounds including entrepreneurs, small business, freelancers and the charity sector. SLIC are aware and more oriented towards those at the very start of their journey and with small businesses as the space comes at such a low price point and those seeing their business financially succeed are encouraged to seek out the commercial co-working spaces to allow the Scottish Coworking Network to support grassroots businesses. Edinburgh and Dunfermline also now benefit from a volunteer host drawn from the community of members who provides community cohesion, a point of contact for those working and a friendly face for new members. The cost to members is at the lowest end in the co-working market with fixed desks at £60 per month and hot desks at £42 per month. This gets members:

- Unlimited access during library hours
- A desk space (they can leave behind belongings at fixed desks)
- Access to a members private group to share ideas and support
- Access to free business support networking and events
- Free or reduced price access to meeting spaces in partner libraries
- WIFI

### **How is it being evaluated?**

Part of the original funding included an independent evaluation. The evaluator was appointed through a competitive tender process and the remit for evaluation included:

- Experience of members past and present
- Experience of partner library services
- Experience of partner organisations
- A global study of similar spaces
- Recommendations for improving the network, upscaling and developing the core offer

This evaluation is due for publication in early 2020.

### **What special assets does it involve?**

The key to any successes experienced by the network and the businesses that operate from them has been forging good relationships with partner organisations who support new and developing businesses. Relations have been built at a local and national level. These range from members being able to access their services, partners promoting the hub and partners providing workshops and one-to-one support for members. These partners so far include:

- Business Gateway
- Federation of Small Businesses
- National Library of Scotland Business Team
- Regional Chambers of Commerce
- FutureX
- Women's Enterprise Scotland
- Young Enterprise Scotland
- Princes Trust
- RBS Highland Business/RBS Dundee Business
- Highland Women in Business

SLIC continues to explore partnerships in the business community and encourages partner libraries to refer local organisations.

### **Where is the project now?**

All five hubs are now functional, and the pilot phase officially ended in October 2019. SLIC continues to work with partner libraries to forge the way forward, implement learning from the pilot and develop a programme to support growth. This will take on a renewed energy in the New Year. The network currently has a capacity of 89 spaces. At the end of the pilot 50 spaces were being utilised by members.

## Promising practice 11: Business and Intellectual Property Centre Glasgow

The Business & Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC) Glasgow, launched in April 2019, is one of fourteen centres across the UK. It is modelled on the British Library Business & IP Centre in London and is delivered in partnership with the National Library of Scotland. The Centre at The Mitchell Library builds on Glasgow Libraries long standing business information service previously delivered under the brand 'Business @ The Mitchell' and expertise gained through membership of the PATLIB network.

The offering at BIPC Glasgow comprises:

- Specialist business information resource offer: researching new business ideas, business factsheets, market research, company information, business legislation and standards, intellectual property, signposting to support organisations.
- Customers can access some of our resources remotely with a library card number – offering flexibility for business users. We support customers to make best use of our information offer through the provision of supporting workshops and one to one appointments. Customers can also use an email enquiry service at [business@glasgowlife.org.uk](mailto:business@glasgowlife.org.uk).
- Workshops (delivered in-house and by partners).
- Expert advice sessions (delivered in-house and by partners).
- Inspirational events including screenings of the BPC London's Inspiring Entrepreneurs series
- Welcoming, accessible spaces with PC access and free WiFi.
- Service users in Glasgow do not have co-working facilities (as their view is that this is well served elsewhere in Glasgow through venues like the Tontine). They do have a general working space, study carrels, PC and laptop desks.

Business Gateway delivers advice sessions from BIPC on a daily basis with workshops scheduled for delivery from January 2020. BIPC Glasgow works closely with Business Gateway delivering 'A beginner's guide to IP' workshop as part of their workshop programme. The Centre's 'Experts in Residence' offers free advice sessions currently delivered by Creation IP (IP Attorney in Residence', Gilson Gray (Legal Advisers in Residence). Business start-up advice session and social enterprise start up advice sessions are delivered by Jobs & Business Glasgow. Rachel Jones, (Snapdragon IP) the Centre's first 'Entrepreneur in Residence' is BIPC Glasgow's Ambassador. Connecting and cross referral is built into the approach.

They are in the process of agreeing an MOU with Scottish Enterprise's IP and asset team, whereby Customers not meeting Scottish Enterprise's criteria for support will be referred to BIPC Glasgow for early stage IP support (the offer includes email enquiry service, one to one appointments with an Information Officer, 'A beginner's guide to IP' workshops and 'Trade mark starter pack' workshop). They will cross refer to Scottish Enterprise when appropriate. In addition, Scottish Enterprise have agreed to deliver IP themed workshops at BIPC Glasgow. There are also links with PeoplePlus and Princes Trust.

An externally-led, independent evaluation has recently been published which evaluated all of the hubs – this is viewed as a major benefit to the Mitchell, being able to be part of larger scale evaluations. It included interviews with customers and staff run by ERS social researchers. According to their evaluations it engages a broad spectrum but mainly creatives and consultancies that use the service.

BIPC network has specific targets for women and BME. Mitchell has a target of 50% female attendance and actual attendance is 61% according to latest figures. The network does make an effort to target those groups e.g. events – Mary Portas one of the inspiring entrepreneurs. In addition in Glasgow they actively seek to engage women entrepreneurs through partnering with the Gateway-led Women into Business programme, and argue that their entrepreneur in residence is a woman also helps.

The operational team at Glasgow comprises a senior manager with responsibility for Mitchell library and Business. Principal librarian with shared remit for business, a librarian who writes content, delivers workshops and runs the day to day. Plus two information officers, who also write content and are customer-facing. In addition they have a pool of front line staff. All participate in other Mitchell operational functions. A Partnership and Digital Engagement Manager has been appointed for 18 months to deliver a Power Up project, an initiative by Good Things Foundation, with the financial support of J.P.Morgan. The project ‘Making digital work for microbusiness’ targets sole traders and micro businesses from underrepresented groups including women, to adopt technology in their business.

A Steering Group governing all of the 14 hubs meets quarterly. They also run regular CAKE days (Collaboration And Knowledge Exchange) which allows them to share information and professional practice. London leads on the network and have a framework of reporting deadlines to which all the hubs contribute. London has a desire for this service to roll out further and they are looking at Edinburgh (National Libraries is already a strategic partner) and Aberdeen (a PATLIB already). They see that community libraries is an area which could be developed further – as referrals to the hubs. In London the British Libraries already operates a hub and spoke model in London, with 20 community libraries feeding into the hub.

From the UK wide Evaluation Report:

- Over the last three years the Business & IP Centre Network supported the creation of 12,288 businesses, equivalent to 15 new businesses every working day.
- 47% of these were created in the Northern Powerhouse.
- The services helped new and established businesses create an estimated total of 7,843 net additional FTE jobs.
- Net additional sales growth was an estimated £239 million.
- Net additional GVA for Business & IP Centre supported businesses was an estimated £78 million.
- The services deliver excellent value for money for the public purse, with a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of £6.95 for every £1 invested.

Latest Glasgow Demographic Report for Attendees (Jul – Sep 2019):

<b>Attendees</b>	1-2-1's	47
	Workshops	103
	Events	34
	<b>Total</b>	<b>184</b>

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Female</b>	65	64
<b>Male</b>	36	35
<b>No Reply</b>	1	1

### Appendix 3: Illustrating demand



#### Dundee International Women's Centre

The author of the report was awarded funding from The Economic and Social Research Council to participate in the Festival of Social Science 2019 with an event titled: "Empowering and educating ethnic-minority women to become entrepreneurs." This event was held on 7th November 2019 and hosted by the Dundee International Women's Centre and was attended by 42 women, local enterprise agencies and community leaders in Dundee to discuss the opportunities and challenges of entrepreneurship and to promote the services on offer. The event also had a crèche available (free of charge).

The event was facilitated by three key speakers who raised awareness of the benefits of entrepreneurship to women, especially among those from ethnic-minority backgrounds in hard to reach communities. Caryn Gibson (Business Gateway) explored the idea of what it means to be an entrepreneur, engaging participants in the debate over business ideas and how they can access information, advice and support. Angie Foreman (Programme Director Coca-Cola 5by20 at Women's Business Station) provided practical tools and advice on how to start their journey. Finally, Rabia Salimi (Henna) was invited as a role model and drew on her experiences of becoming an entrepreneur.

The event was a huge success with many women interacting, sharing ideas, asking for support and advice and networking. Some of the feedback from the women on the event were that it was:

*"Informative and inspirational."*

*"Very inspiring and motivational. This session was informative, and I was not aware of the services available and what they do. I hope to stay in touch with Business Gateway to help support my organisation."*

*"Very informative, helpful, direct and open. Inspiring."*

*"Very informative, makes me want to engage with Business Gateway in the future."*

*"Very informative and clear details about where to go/seek help. I do feel empowered after listening to the speakers."*

The comments highlight that the information that was disseminated at the event (which was only three hours long) was crucial as many of the women did not understand or have any information about the business support landscape. This was key in introducing them to some support mechanisms and agencies that can assist their business ideas and start-ups. Also, many of the women who attended praised the venue which was a safe environment for women (they had no issues if men attended – there was one man amongst them) as it allowed them to interact openly and confidently.

The purpose of the event was to highlight the use of community centres to deliver business support and advice to women and also to address the challenge of reaching women who are often hard to reach and have little knowledge of how to access and manoeuvre the complex entrepreneurship support ecosystem within Scotland.



DIWC is a social enterprise whose goal is to help women to gain the confidence, life skills, education and employability skills that will enable them to reach their full potential and prosper in their community. The Centre is at the heart of the community for women from diverse backgrounds and has on-site crèche facilities such as many activities, classes and support groups. The DIWC highlights the very grassroots level women's business centres that Carter et al.'s (2019) report strongly advocates, where they have been supporting women for 50 years (since 1969) and formed through sustainable funding which comes from donations, legacies, trading activities and investments.



## **Appendix 4: A brief description of QuIP**

1. The QuIP is a standardised approach to generating feedback about causes of change in people's lives that relies on the testimony of a sample of the intended beneficiaries of a specified activity or project.
2. The scope of a study is jointly determined by an evaluator and a commissioner, the shared purpose being to provide a useful 'reality check' on the commissioner's prior understanding of the impact of a specified activity or set of activities.
3. A single QuIP is based on the data that two experienced field researchers can collect in around a week. A useful benchmark (that emerged through the design and testing phase) is that a 'single QuIP' comprises 24 semi-structured interviews and four focus groups. Specific studies may be based on multiples or variants of this.
4. Interviewees are selected purposively from a known population of intended beneficiaries, ideally after analysis of what available monitoring data reveals about the changes they are experiencing.
5. Where possible, initial interviews and focus groups are conducted by independent field researchers with restricted knowledge of the activity being evaluated. This means that respondents are also unaware of what intervention is being evaluated, a feature referred to as double blindfolding (not blinding, because the blindfolds can be removed at any time).
6. Transcripts of interviews and focus groups are written up in pre-formatted spreadsheets to facilitate coding and thematic analysis.
7. An analyst (not one of the field researchers) codes the data in several predetermined ways. Exploratory coding identifies different drivers and outcomes of change (positive and negative). Confirmatory coding classifies causal claims according to whether they explicitly link outcomes to specified activities, do so in ways that are implicitly consistent with the commissioners' theory of change, or are incidental to it.
8. Semi-automated generation of summary tables and visualisations accelerate interpretation of the evidence.
9. It is easy to check back from summary evidence to raw data for purposes of quality assurance, auditing, peer review and deeper learning.
10. Summary reports of the evidence are a starting point for dialogue and sense-making between researchers, commissioners and other stakeholders, thereby influencing follow-on activities.

QuIP analysis uses a triple coding approach. This divides each causal pathway as follows:

- Drivers of change (causes). What led to change, positive or negative?
- Outcomes (effects). What change/s occurred, positive or negative?
- Attribution. What is the strength of association between the causal claim and the activity or project being evaluated?

Analysis along these lines can address many questions, including the following:

- Is the programme having the expected effect on intended beneficiaries?
- What other factors have affected expected outcomes?
- How do these factors relate to each other?
- Has the programme had any unanticipated effects, positive or negative?
- What drivers of change or patterns can be identified that could inform future programme design?
- Are there any ‘missing’ drivers: interventions not cited or not considered significant by respondents?
- How do the reported causal claims and chains compare with the organisation’s theory of change, process data on how the project was implemented and knowledge of impact from other sources?

Taken from Copestake, et al. (2019).