

# Challenges and Opportunities for Diverse Women During the Pandemic

Women's Entrepreneurship  
Conference 2021

February 23, 2021



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*Professor, Entrepreneurship & Strategy, Ryerson University*



Women  
Entrepreneurship  
Knowledge Hub

# Agenda

- > State of Women Entrepreneurs
- > Impact of COVID-19 on Women Entrepreneurs
- > The Way Forward: Inclusive Innovation
- > Conclusion



# >STATE OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

**15.6%**

of SMEs are majority owned by women

**37.4%**

of self-employed women in Canada in 2019

**13.3%**

of Canadian women are entrepreneurs

Women are a **larger percentage of new business**, but companies are smaller

**92.7%**

are micro firms with less than 20 employees

**78.4%**

of self-employed women have **no paid help**, versus 67.5% for men



# Slightly Less Likely than Men-Owned Firms to be High-Growth or Medium-Growth

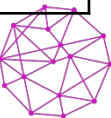


Differences diminish when control for **sector**

Growing proportion are **exporting** but slightly less than men (10.8% vs. 12.2%)

# Financing

Start-up funding by % women ownership	No women	>50% women
Credit from financial institutions	38.0%	32.6%
Personal financing used toward business	83.0%	84.0%
Financing from friends or relatives	16.8%	16.2%
Retained earnings (previous/other business)	11.6%	12.2%
Trade credit from suppliers	17.9%	10.1%
Capital leasing	12.9%	7.3%
Government loans, grants, subsidies and non-repayable contributions	3.8%	4.9%
Financing from angel investors and VCs	2.4%	0.6%
Other	2.3%	2.8%



# Unlocking Export Markets



- Women are a crucial part of the Canadian economy's recovery: A 10% increase in women-owned SMEs could add \$198 billion to our GDP
- Between 2011 and 2017, % of women-owned businesses doubled (5 -10%) bridging the gap with men owned businesses (11.2%)



## Barriers remain:

- Lack of knowledge related to policies and opportunities
- Lack of connections to networks & supports
- Lack of access to capital



Group	Population	Self-Employed	Share Self-Employed	Self-Employed		Share Self-Emp who are Women
				Men	Women	
Canada	34,460,064	2,211,369	6.4%	1,411,070	800,299	36.2%
Aboriginal [Indigenous]	1,626,625	49,369	3.0%	29,628	19,741	40.0%
Arab	506,003	30,369	6.0%	23,296	7,073	23.3%
<b>Black</b>	<b>994,793</b>	<b>34,370</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>24,222</b>	<b>10,148</b>	<b>29.5%</b>
Chinese	1,454,571	96,965	6.7%	56,816	40,149	41.4%
Filipino	731,099	14,259	2.0%	6222	8,037	56.4%
Latin American	414,918	21,778	5.2%	12,889	8,889	40.8%
Other Asian	700,624	52,740	7.5%	32,518	20,222	38.3%
South Asian	1,805,102	106,443	5.9%	78,443	28,000	26.3%
Immigrant	7,493,196	601,738	8.0%	400,220	201,518	33.5%
1. Before 1990	2,623,136	235,779	9.0%	162,375	73,404	31.1%
2. 1990-1999	1,420,855	140,743	9.9%	92,443	48,300	34.3%
3. 2000-2010	2,119,718	166,519	7.9%	105,740	60,779	36.5%
4. 2011-2015	1,122,971	45,626	4.1%	30,740	14,886	32.6%



# Immigrant Entrepreneurs

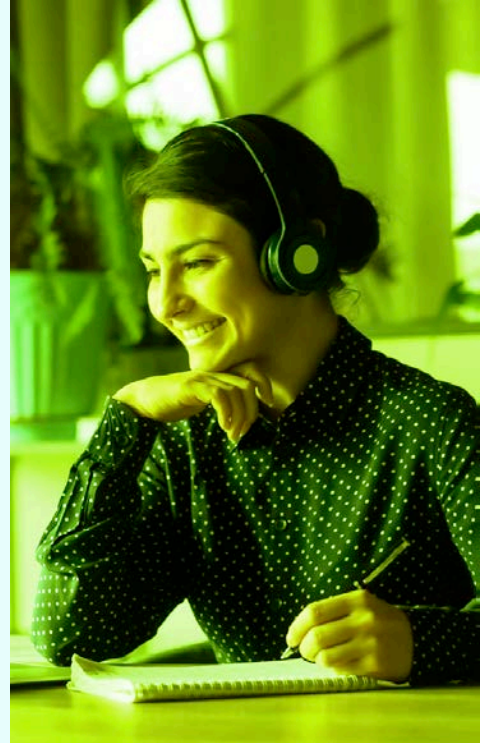
- 30% more likely to be high growth SMEs
- Push and pull factors drive immigrant entrepreneurs
- Immigrant women entrepreneurs face additional barriers:
  - local knowledge,
  - language,
  - discrimination,
  - lack of mentors and networks





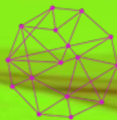
# Indigenous Entrepreneurs

- Indigenous people report lower rates of entrepreneurship than the Canadian average
- Indigenous women are more likely than other women to pursue entrepreneurial enterprises, particularly when self-employment
- Structural challenges exist for Indigenous women, particularly those who live on reserves, which often lack basic infrastructure and opportunities for financial support



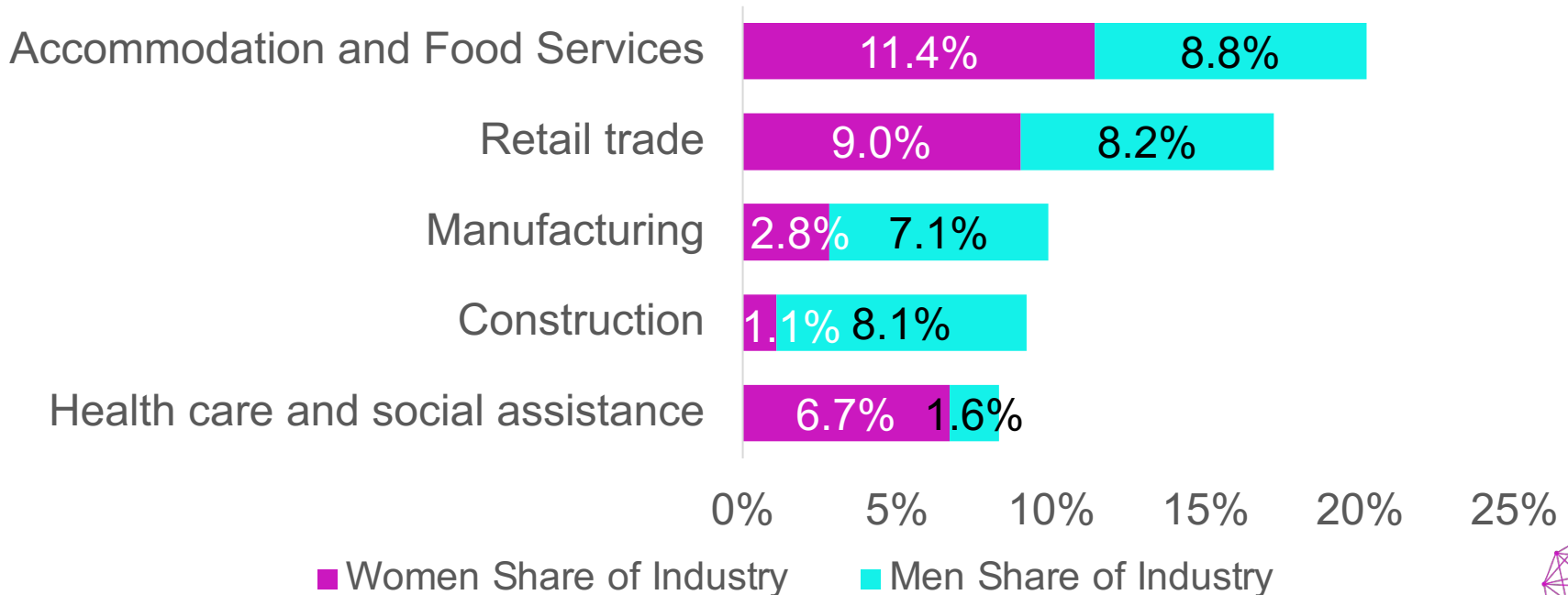
# > GENDERED IMPACT OF COVID-19

- 25.2% of women-owned businesses laid off 80% or more of their employees, vs 18.3% overall
- 61% of women founders report challenges versus 34% of businesses (*Statistics Canada, 2020*)
- Most support programs designed to support SMEs with employees, resulting in women being excluded for the support
- Burden of unpaid work is crushing many women entrepreneurs
- Impact is exacerbated for Indigenous, Racialized and Black women entrepreneurs and those who are in rural areas

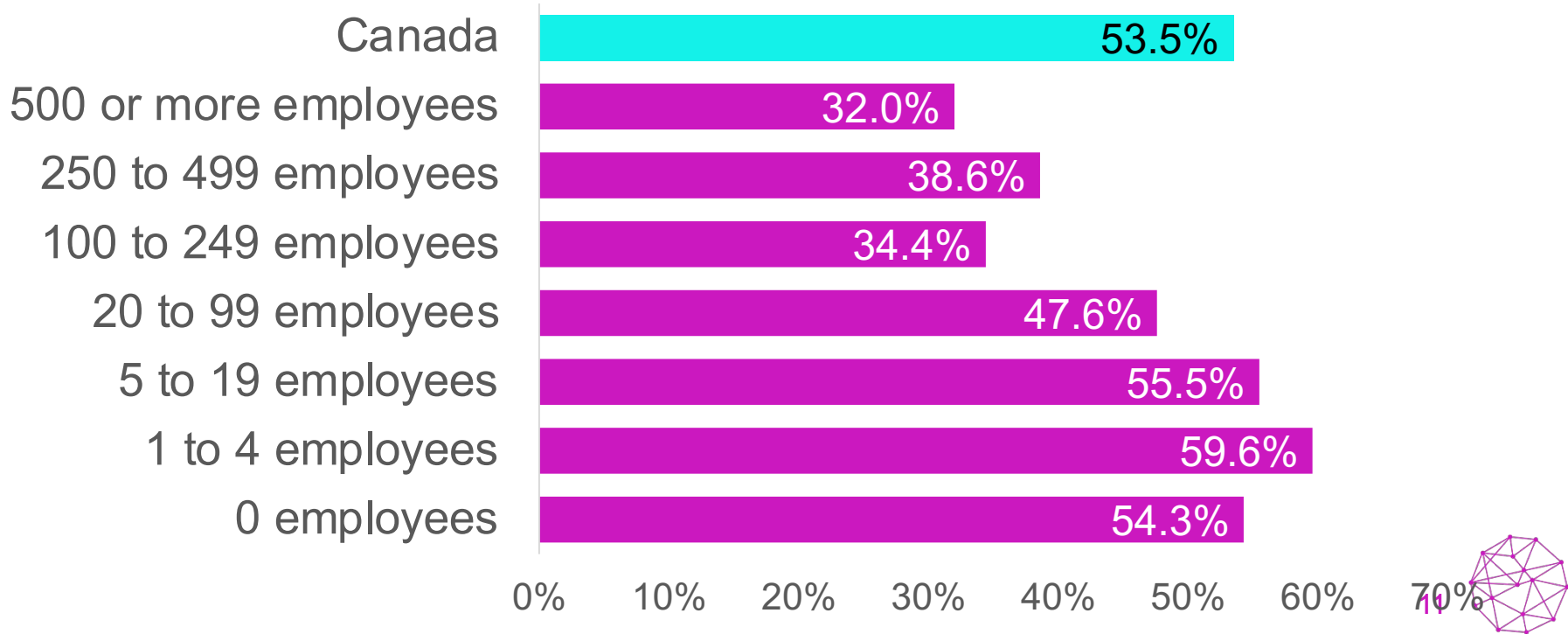


# Women Dominated Industries Most Affected

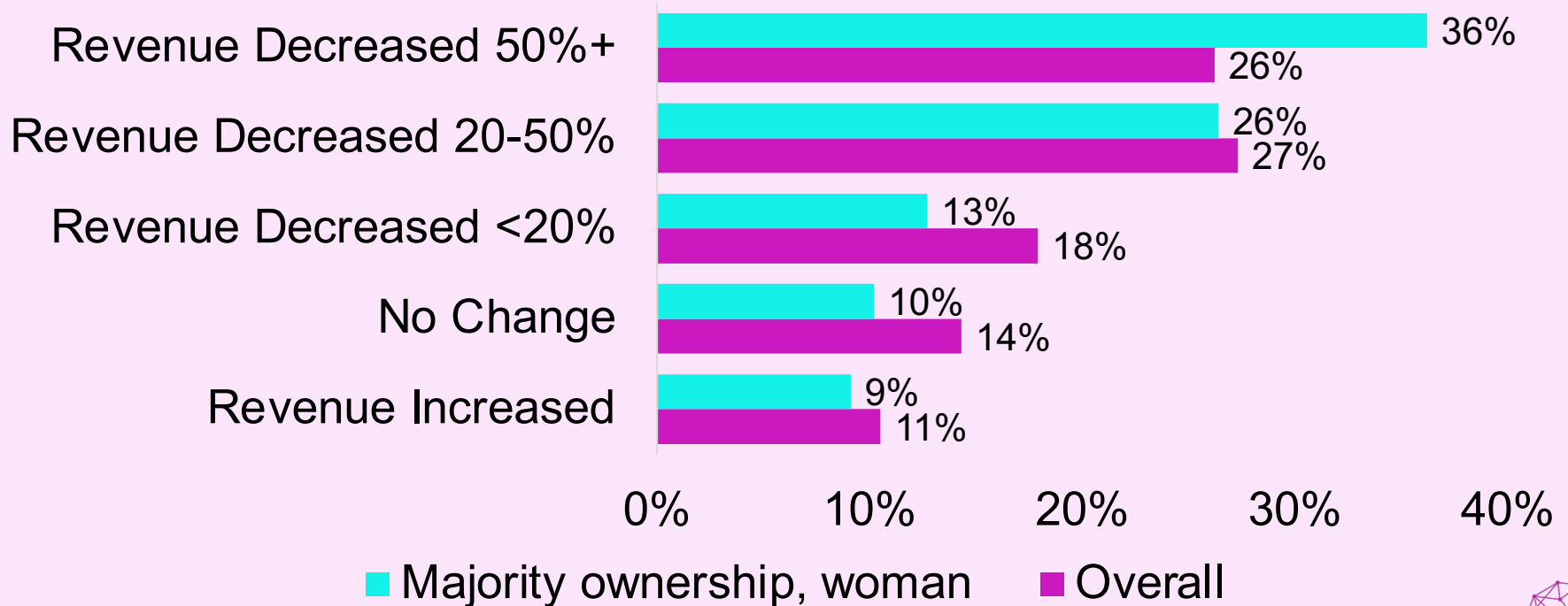
Share of total March & April layoffs (2020)



# Those Reporting 20% Decline in Revenue: Micro Businesses are the Seedlings



# Change in Business Revenue due to COVID-19 (Q1 2019 to Q1 2020)



# Intersectionality

## Indigenous women

- Self-employment for Indigenous women is 40.2%; higher than the self-employment of Canadian women, which is at 37.4%
- Indigenous entrepreneurs create businesses for collective benefit; e.g. social enterprise
- Additional barriers access to services, financing, information, basic infrastructure

## Immigrant Women

Women are 36.1% of self-employed immigrants compared to 38.5% of Canadian-born

Varies with ethnicity

Filipino (56.4%), Chinese (41.4%), Latin American (40.8%)

Additional barriers: local knowledge, language, discrimination, lack of mentors and networks



## Rural & Farming Women

- High rates of self-employment
- Rural women have shared ownership of farms at a rate of 29% (2016)
- Lack access to infrastructure (e.g. broadband, childcare, transportation)
- Farming is highly gendered; there is an image of the independent male farmer

## Black Women Entrepreneurs

Percentage of Respondents	CIBA	BBPA
Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy will not help	37	80
Do not think they will qualify for Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA)	20	80
Are fully open	20	10
Cannot pay April Bills	30	80
Worried about permanent closure	39	85
Unsure they will be able to reopen	32	60
Can survive less than a month under current conditions	25	85
Have capacity to take on debt	56	96



# Persons with Disabilities



# Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity



**ADHD: The  
Entrepreneur's  
Superpower**





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# Theme 1: Mental and Physical Health

- Women are facing various personal and/or expectation-based struggles
- Women often fill multiple roles for the people close to them (e.g. parent, caregiver, partner, emotional support for community members, etc.)
- The challenges (worrying about potential contagion, isolation, stress about uncertainty for business, managing multiple roles, etc.) impact their mental and physical health

“Trying to **balance** my work and home life **became a whole new challenge.**”



# Theme 2: Revenue Loss and Bankruptcy

- Women entrepreneurs face loss of revenue and the subsequent financial challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic on

“As a business owner, **the loss of income is always difficult to navigate**. Although we have had to weather prior storms in the form of recessions, **this is different** in that **the level of uncertainty around how the industry will be affected for the foreseeable future comes into play.**”



# Theme 3: Strategic Decisions

- Business owners have to reconsider business strategies to quickly adapt to the changes in society
  - Changing business models
  - Moving online
  - Taking on more business processes
  - Finding additional work to fund business
- Resilience is the key for many women entrepreneurs to stay afloat

“That's my drive and despite the pandemic, **female entrepreneurs don't give up easy on anything**. I am that small business, female entrepreneur. Pure grit.”



# Theme 4: Workplace Safety

- Respondents are stressed with workplace adjustments to meet COVID-19 safety measures
  - Reorganization of office space
  - Purchasing of PPE for staff
  - Implementing changes for safety of customers/clients
- Stress is heightened for some sectors
  - Healthcare
  - Direct-to-consumer services (e.g. hair salons)



# Theme 5: Online Presence

- Some businesses shifted to online commerce, but others do not have the option, due to the nature of their businesses

“We **also moved to online Zoom classes** to still offer some normalcy to students. Again not many families appreciated this format, and **they did not participate and withdrew their children and refused to pay for any more classes.**”



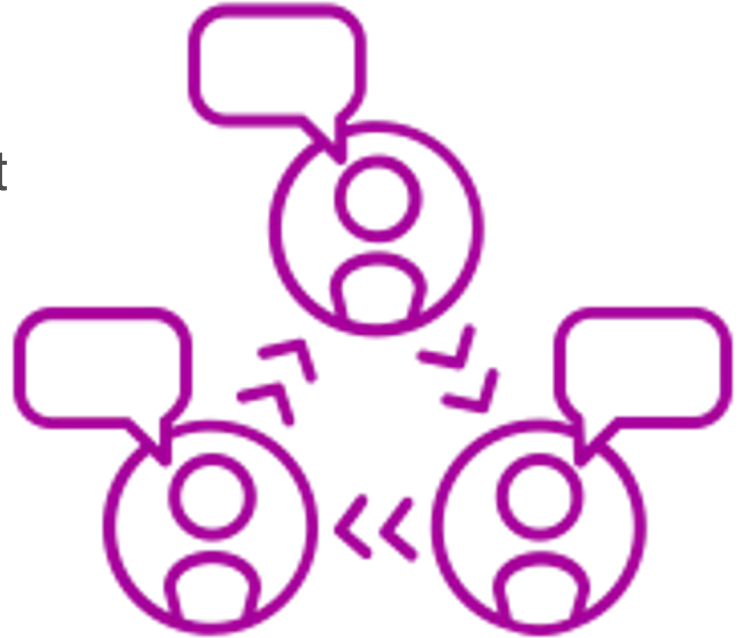
# Theme 6: Employee Issues

- Laying off employees (due to a variety of pandemic-related reasons, such as financial problems, fear of virus, business closure, etc.) is a challenge
- Some entrepreneurs have to reduce their own salary or the working hours of their employees
- Women entrepreneurs feel responsible for the physical and emotional well-being of their employees
- Managing employees who are working from home is also a challenge



# Theme 7: Collaborations

- Many women business owners collaborate with other local businesses to help each other stay afloat
  - Some partner together on specific initiatives
  - Others support each other in their community
  - These efforts are reciprocated by community members
- Some women entrepreneurs go above and beyond to support their stakeholders





# Theme 8: Government Support

- Many women-owned businesses are not eligible for business support programs provided by the Government of Canada
- Some entrepreneurs continue paying rent, because landlords refuse to apply for rent-relief programs
- Some women entrepreneurs benefit from government support programs but encountered problems with these programs

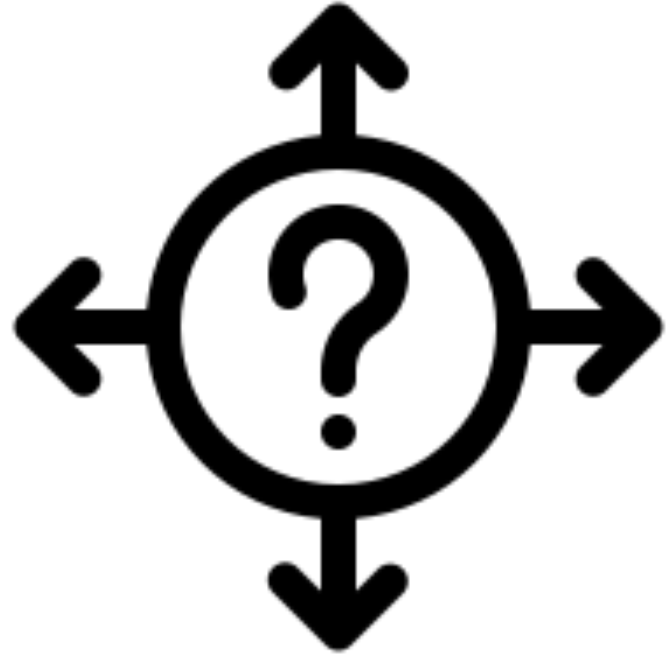
“We were not able to participate in government wage support or loan programs related to COVID because **the eligibility criteria were too restrictive.**”



# Theme 9: Uncertainty

- Women entrepreneurs are challenged due to the increasing uncertainty in their businesses and the future

“The **uncertainty about clients' ability to pay for our services** has also put **significant pressure** on the business and team.”



# Theme 10: Innovative Approaches

- Women entrepreneurs also benefit from this period in various ways.
  - Using the opportunity to take courses and improve their skills
  - Conducting research on ways to improve their businesses



# Themes Specific to Black Women Entrepreneurs (n= 65)

## **Theme 11: Businesses created to meet needs of African/Black People**

*“To be the market leader in Authentic African Cuisine... providing high quality food in a very fine and relaxing environment”*

*“Search for healthier hair and skin care ....while I was on a .. self discovery journey as [a] black woman which led me to my own natural hair journey”*

*“[I ] would often have my family back home ship me clothing materials hair product and extensions, black soap as it was quite difficult to find these products”*

## **Theme 12: Businesses were often inspired to celebrate culture**

*“to celebrate African and Caribbean heritage”*

*“food just like music and sports brings people together for all walks of life...[African immigrants] are almost non-existent in the retail stores”*

*“To focus on working with women and BIPOC creators....to fill that void by producing content from these communities and helping to export it to the world”*



### **Theme 13: Address inequality and support the community**

*“I was the only Black girl on the team and faced serious racism and discrimination. I did not have a voice to speak out and to stand up for the injustices that were done to me.” I needed to create a safe space for your black girls to have a voice. To love themselves, to understand their culture and to believe in their power.*

*“Black women needed a place where we could be ourselves. We could laugh and talk about things that affected us most being a visible minority”*

### **Theme 14: Experiences of Anti-Black Racism**

*My father suffered through many hardships... he worked for a company that did not treat him fairly based on the colour of his skin.. His perseverance taught me not to give up even when challenging times arise”*

*“From a young age, I realised the lack of representation of my culture in mainstream media, arts and fitness and I wanted... to [showcase] it to the world”*

*“There was huge low self esteem... as society followed the Eurocentric standard of beauty.”*

*“I did not have equal rights to advancement opportunities in my home country”*

*“I have experienced so much racism on both sides of my race.”*



## Theme 15: Trauma Informed

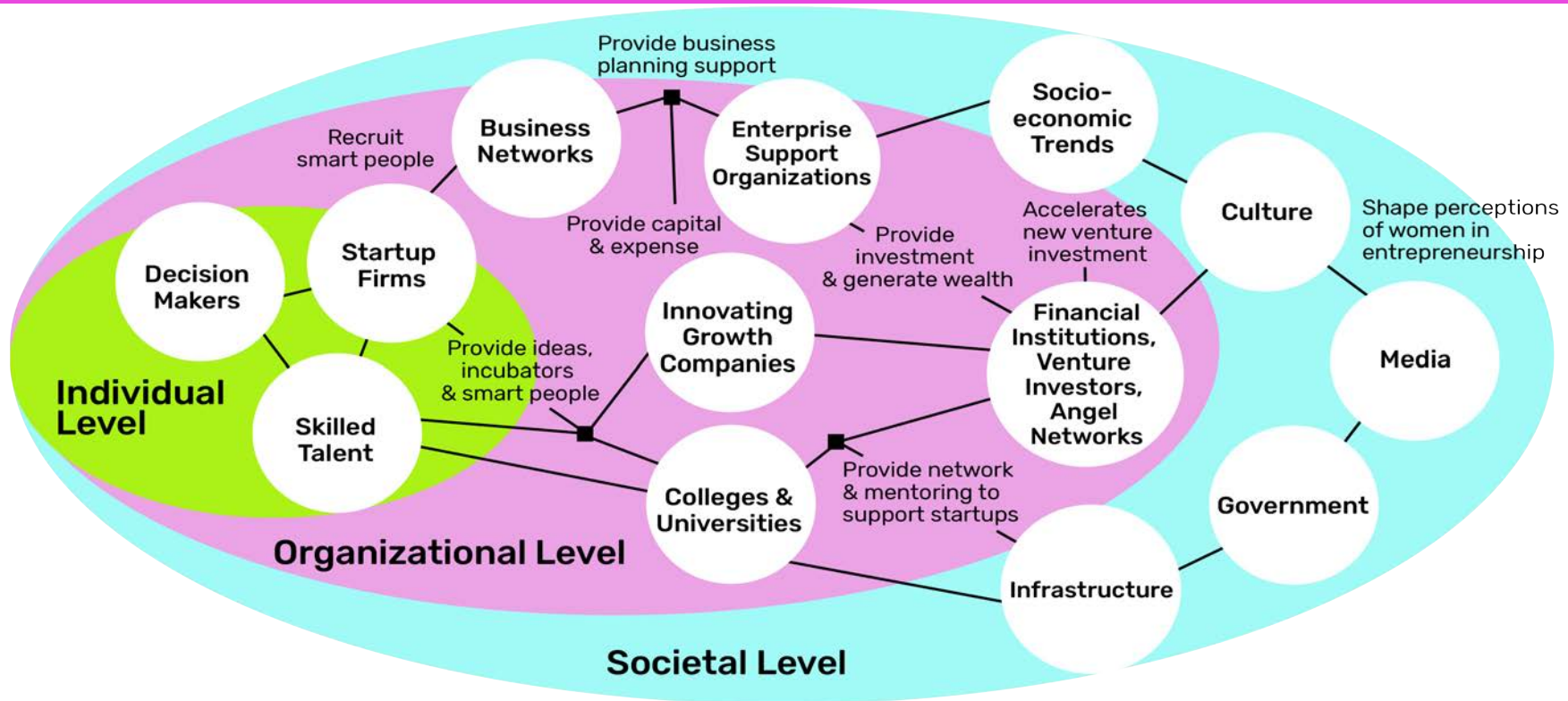
Many started their businesses because of a personal tragedy or family crisis which cannot be discussed without risking identifying the individuals. Illness. Murder. Depression. Death. Survivors of genocide.

*“Stress, poverty and struggles have been our biggest motivation. We look forward to sharing [life] and light with the entire world...”*

*“I wanted a black psychologist to speak to the trauma they have experienced..[they] will understand how their history and culture is connected to the trauma they have experience in their life”*



# >TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM



# “Think Entrepreneur. Think Male.”

The collage consists of 40 small rectangular panels arranged in a grid. Each panel contains either a portrait of a man, a group of men, or a text snippet. The text snippets include titles of articles and search suggestions. For example, one panel shows a search box with 'Related searches' and options for 'entrepreneur logo', 'successful quotes', and 'entrepreneur quotes'. Other panels feature titles like 'TOP 10 SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEURS IN ...', 'Propel Entrepreneur-in-Residence Has ...', 'Why Being an Entrepreneur is Hard...', 'Five Qualities of a Good Businessman ...', 'TOP 5 SUCCESSFUL RICHEST E...', 'To find success as an entrepreneur ...', 'An Entrepreneur With O...', 'Entrepreneur - Key Person of Influence', 'Kevin O'Leary, Founder ...', 'Most Powerful Advice Entrepreneurs Ignore', 'Entrepreneurs To Eliminate The Stigma ...', 'Ahmad Al Mutawa ...', 'Frank Islam ...', 'Factors Affecting the Job Security of ...', 'Emerging Entrepren...', 'Entrepreneurs Get Strong By Recogn...', 'Young And Successful Entrepreneurs Who ...', 'making big strides, meet Ze Nixumalo', 'Entrepreneur Types Explained - Launchopedia', 'Iranian Entrepreneur and Techn...', 'business man suit p...', 'Chinese Entrepreneur: Success, Polit...', 'Entrepreneurs & Sta...', 'Entrepreneur Drawing B...', 'Top 10 Young Indian Entrepreneurs 2...', 'Binny Bansal: Want to help 10,000 ...', 'Michael Hill (entrep...', 'First Person: Kevin Curry, entrepre...', 'Most Promising Ghenaian...', 'Portrait Of Man, Closeup, Head Shot...', 'OSPE Supports the Engineer-Entr...', 'ROI on branding is a del...', 'Brent Zettl Wins Startup Canada ...', 'ready to be an entrepreneur ...', 'Hasan Haider to share his success ...', and 'Cengiz Elhiz'.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/info-tech/binny-bansal-want-to-help-10000-entrepreneurs/article26182994.ace>





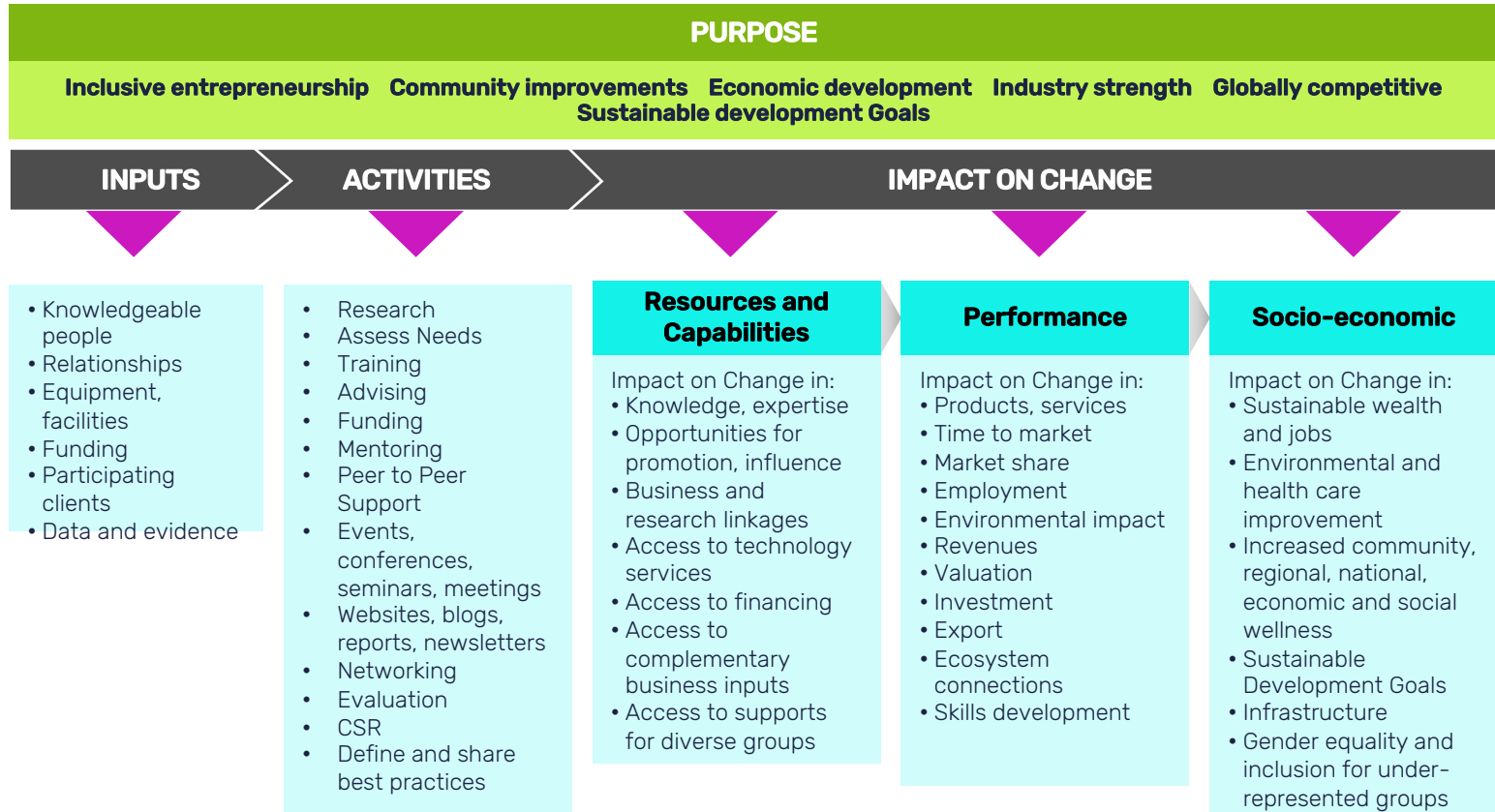
# STEM is Necessary but Insufficient



# Entrepreneurship includes social



# Innovation intermediary logic model



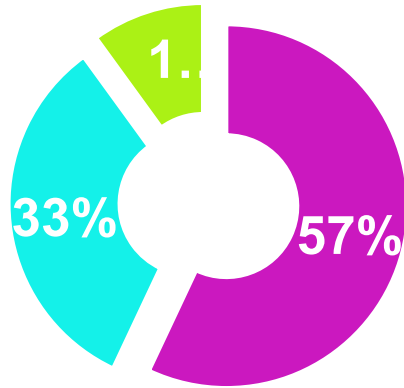
# Femmessor Results: Backwards and in high heels

WES Funded 265 + 97 from the FQ Fund  
to women-owned businesses

Startup: 20-50K

Growth: up to 150K

\$4,678,600 million in loans



■ Starting up

■ Growth

■ Transfer of  
ownership or  
acquisition

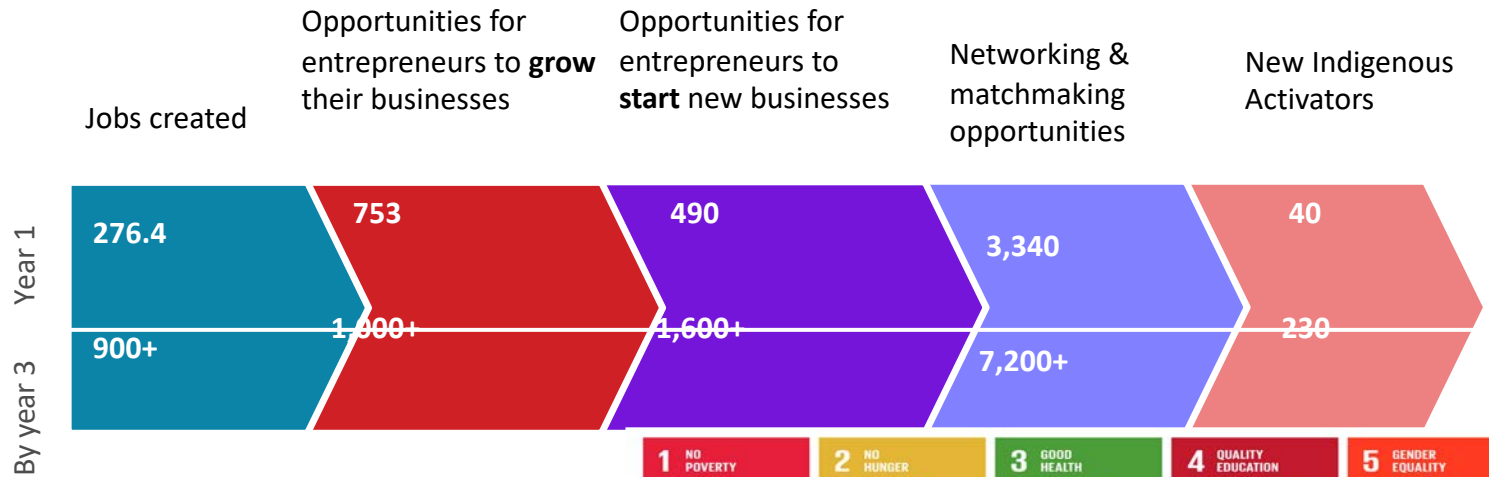
- 97 funding granted
- \$48 million in investment benefits
- 792 jobs created and maintained
- 392 companies in follow-up and support
- 92% satisfaction of funded entrepreneurs





# Results & Impact – 2019

## \$5m. 73 ventures. 0% interest. 95% repayment. 100% SDGs



1 NO POVERTY

2 NO HUNGER

3 GOOD HEALTH

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

5 GENDER EQUALITY

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

7 RENEWABLE ENERGY

8 GOOD JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

9 INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION

13 CLIMATE ACTION

14 LIFE BELOW WATER

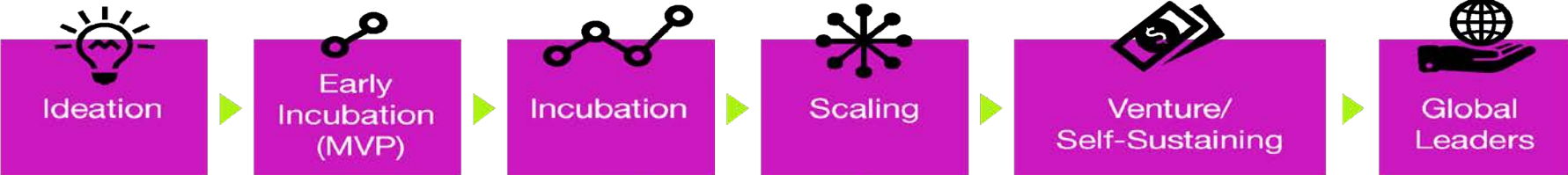
15 LIFE ON LAND

16 PEACE AND JUSTICE

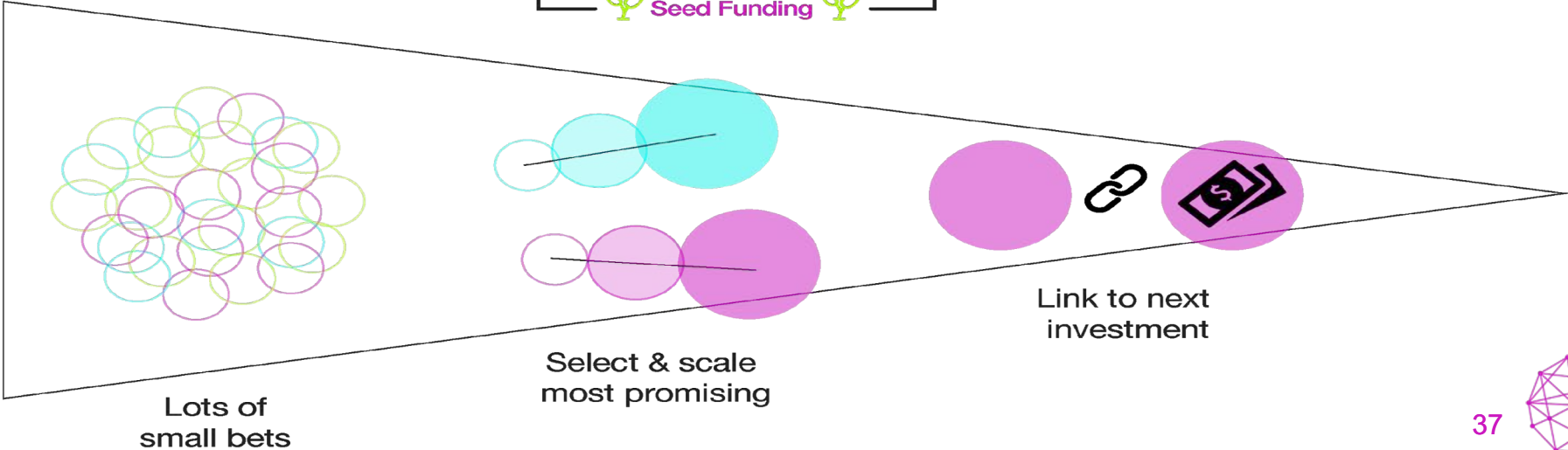
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

**THE GLOBAL GOALS**  
For Sustainable Development

# Building incubation/acceleration/sustainability pathways: New models



Seed Funding



# Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT)



Governance,  
Leadership, and  
Strategy



Values and Culture



Across the Value  
Chain



Recruitment,  
Selection,  
and Promotion



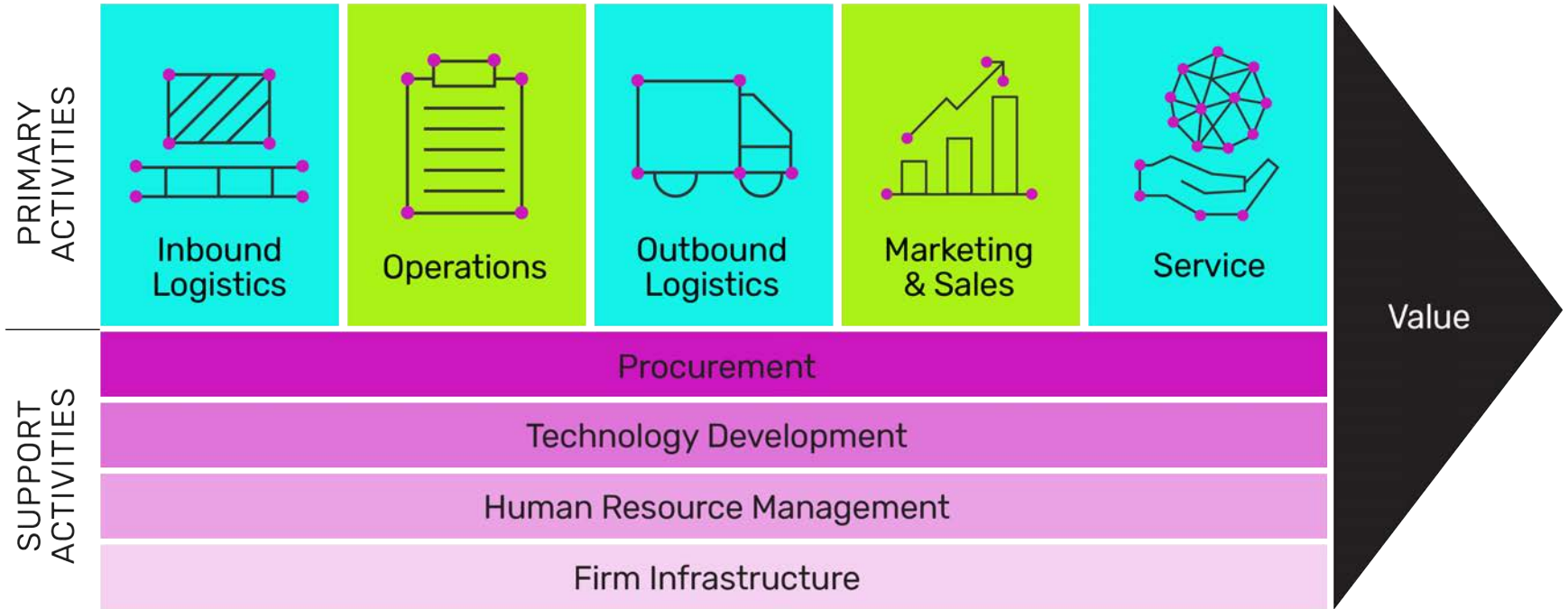
Measurement  
and Tracking



Growing the Pool

- **Financial Institutions**
- **Innovation Superclusters**
- **Incubators**
- **Funders:** FedDev Ontario, Mitacs, Infrastructure Canada
- **Business Services:** Chambers of Com
- **Universities**

# D&I Across the Value Chain





# Use Procurement and a Gender and Diversity Lens on Funding as a Strategic Lever



- Introduce a diversity component to procurement processes
- Set targets and track the maturity and success of supplier diversity over time
- Encourage governments at all levels, as well as corporations, to build capacity for women and diverse entrepreneurs to participate in supply chains
- Gender and diversity to funding and recovery





# Skills Agenda

- Shaped almost entirely by large businesses even though SMES are 90%+ of jobs
- Limited focus on SMEs and entrepreneurs generally
- Even less on women and BIPOC
- Limited understanding of intersectional issues in the ecosystem
- Without capacity building on both supply and demand sides there are missed opportunities
- Entrepreneurial skills are essential skills and offer pathways to employment



# Building capacity among WEs



WORKSHOP SERIES

## Demystifying Incorporation

**PART 1**

Why should I incorporate?

**PART 2**

How do I incorporate?

- **Two-part webinar series** with Corporations Canada, CPA Canada, McCarthy Tetrault and BDC
- Explored the **importance of corporate structure** and **debunked myths** surrounding incorporation
- **200** attendees



# Tailored programs to meet specific needs

- Toolkit for Indigenous Women
- Workforce Innovation and Inclusion Project (WIIP) for immigrants (IRCC)
- WE-Hub, NEH-Hub (IRCC)
- BBPA Boss Women Program
- Magnet Export Business Portal
- Mapping the Innovation Ecosystem



Saskatoon  
Open Door  
Society

**ADaPT**  
Advanced Digital and  
Professional Training



IEC-BC  
@IEC\_BC

Follow

Vocal coach, educator and speaker Ty Lowe is helping #Powerhack participants perfect their tech solution #pitches. #ElevatorPitch #Vancouver



## Finalists



Abi Ajibola

**CEO & Lead  
Photographer, Memoirs  
Photography by Abi**

After a decade-long career in the banking industry spanning Strategy, Business Development and Business Analysis functions in two of Africa's largest Banks, Abi transitioned fully into the creative industry as a portrait photographer.

[READ MORE >](#)



Orphanie Bégon-Leroy

**Founder, Les Poupées  
D'Or**

Les Poupées D'Or was founded by Orphanie Bégon-Leroy, a young woman of Haitian origin. A translator by profession, she has been working for more than 10 years as a trilingual interpreter for the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, and also holds an ASP in business start-up.

[READ MORE >](#)



Sam Bellamy

**Founder & President,  
Bazooka Inc.**

Sam Bellamy is the founder and president of Bazooka Inc, a Montreal-based tech company that creates AI-powered HR and educational tools to help organizations become more productive and inclusive.

[READ MORE >](#)



Jhonelle Brown

**Co-founder & CEO of  
Startup, Blink CMS**

Jhonelle is the co-founder and CEO of Startup, Blink CMS. She has her bachelor's degree in Communications, Culture and Information Technology from the University of Toronto and has over 10 years of experience as a product professional and business operations head in the digital media and publishing industry.

[READ MORE >](#)



Brenda Ebedi

Brenda Ebedi is a Nigerian-born Canadian who immigrated to Canada in 2018 with her beautiful family. As a mum of



Marie-Christine Ekedi

Marie-Christine Ekedi is a mother of two boys and an



Ilieana George

After almost 8 years in the pharmaceutical industry Ms. Ilieana George hung up her lab coat in exchange for paint coat.



Oghenemine Jarikre

**Founder & CEO, Redeem  
Clothing Revyclina Inc.**

# Rise Up: Pitch Competition

- 24 finalists (as of February 22)
- Rise Up includes eight different award categories representing various sectors, business and life stages with both financial and non-financial prizes awarded to the winners.
- All award winners and runners up will have the opportunity to be featured in the WEKH See It. Be It. Campaign and database.



# Start-up Experiences (BBPA Boss Women)

- Participants were young
  - Median age group: 30-39
- The participants were well educated
  - All had at least some post secondary education
  - 55% had at least a Bachelor's degree
- Median income: \$35,000-\$50,000
- Most businesses were in wholesale & retail (50%), and professional administration (35%)
- Most participants were working on their business plan (35%)
  - A large portion already had customers (30%)
- Majority were looking for capital/loans (75%)



# Mikwam Makwa Ikwe | Ice Bear Woman

- Indigenous Outreach & Partnership Development Lead worked with **32 indigenous organizations** to host **16 indigenous roundtables** with **350 participants** across Turtle Island.
- On August 25, 2020 a pipe ceremony was held and a traditional name given to WEKH by Elder Margaret Lavallee of Sagkeeng First Nation.

**Mikwam Makwa Ikwe** is Anishinaabe for Ice Bear Woman, a symbol of courage, strength and protection.



First Nations Technology Council



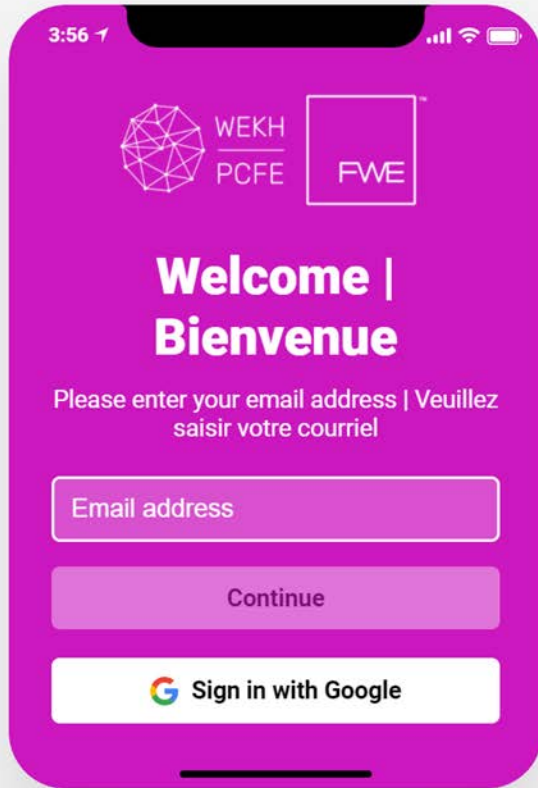
Native Women's Association of Canada



L'Association des femmes autochtones du Canada



# Finding Strength in the Collective



## WEKH/FWE: Sharing Platform | PCFE/FWE : Plateforme de partage

by SheEO

Please enter your email address |  
Veuillez saisir votre adresse courriel

SHARE APP

SHOW FULLSCREEN

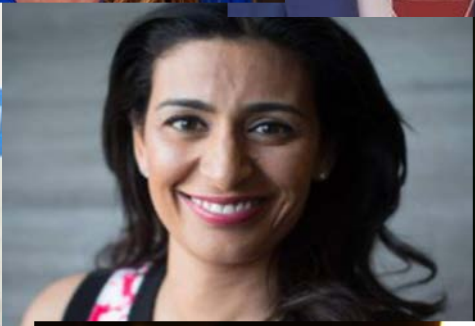


Scan with camera to install app.





See it.  
Be it.



# > CONCLUSION

- **Service providers and governments** recognize self employment and entrepreneurship and provide needed supports
- Communications: **raising awareness** and advocating
- Expanding the pool: **developing the pipeline**
- Diverse decision making, **bias-free and transparent** processes
- Tracking, **measurement** and accountability
- **Intersectionality is key**
- **Build inclusive innovation**



# Thank you

**Wendy Cukier, MA, MBA, PhD,  
DU (hon) LLD (hon) M.S.C.**

*Founder & Academic Director, Diversity  
Institute, Women Entrepreneurship  
Knowledge Hub, Academic Research  
lead*

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@CukierWendy



Women  
Entrepreneurship  
Knowledge Hub

[ryerson.ca/diversity](http://ryerson.ca/diversity)

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