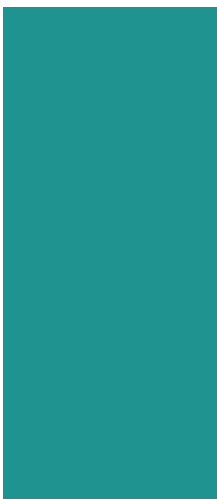


Enabling Scale in Saskatchewan

Report of the Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on
the Gender Entrepreneurship Gap



Prepared by WESK

Submitted To | Government of Saskatchewan

Preface

This report is respectfully presented to the Government of Saskatchewan by the Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on the Gender Entrepreneurship Gap with recommendations to create a more robust provincial economy.

In May 2019, the Government of Saskatchewan through the Status of Women Office announced the creation of the Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on the Gender Entrepreneurship Gap (referred to in this report as Saskatchewan Advisory Committee or Committee) to address the gender entrepreneurship gap in Saskatchewan.

The Committee was comprised primarily of entrepreneurs and included representation from a venture capital firm and a lending institution.

The Saskatchewan Advisory Committee commenced its work in September 2019 and concluded in June 2020. As the work of the Committee was undertaken pre-COVID-19, the original recommendations were reexamined to address the challenges emerging from the pandemic.

Acknowledgements

WESK would like to thank the members of the Saskatchewan Advisory Committee for their deep commitment and passion in volunteering their time to this endeavour. The expertise, experience and acumen of the members was invaluable in developing these strategic recommendations to the Government of Saskatchewan.

WESK and the Committee wishes to thank the Government of Saskatchewan for commissioning this report, with specific recognition of the Honourable Tina Beaudry-Mellor, Minister of Advanced Education, Innovation Saskatchewan and the Status of Women Office. Minister Beaudry-Mellor has served as an unwavering champion of the Committee's mandate.

Partners and Sponsors

The work of the Saskatchewan Advisory Committee was undertaken with the support and sponsorship of the following:

- Government of Saskatchewan, Status of Women Office

The Circle of Builders

WESK would like to recognize the financial support received from a group of venture capital firms/ investors. The Circle of Builders were pivotal in enabling the work of the Saskatchewan Advisory Committee and helping shape the business climate of the future for women entrepreneurs. The Circle of Builders included:

- Eric Clark, COO & Partner, PFM Capital Inc.
- Jason Drummond, President, Drummond Group
- Greg Yuel, President & CEO, PIC Investment Group Inc.

Women Entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan Economic Statistics (2020)

This report was commissioned by WESK, prepared by PwC, and sponsored by:

- Conexus Credit Union
- Hill and Levene Schools of Business
- Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub

Contents

	Preface
01	Acknowledgements
	Vision: Leading the Country
03	The Saskatchewan Growth Plan
	Introduction
04	The Saskatchewan Advisory Committee
	The Impact of Women-owned and Women-led Businesses
	The Challenge
05	The Opportunity
	Defining Priorities
06	Actions for Impact - Recommendations
	1.0 Enhancing Access to Capital
07	2.0 Developing Scale-Enabling Policies
08	3.0 Streamlining Access to Data, Programs and Networks
09	4.0 Enhancing Awareness and Support by Building Momentum
	Additional Considerations
10	Measuring Impact
11	Next Step
	Conclusion
12	Appendices
	Appendix A: Summary of Recommendations
13	Appendix B: Saskatchewan Advisory Committee Terms of Reference
17	Appendix C: Saskatchewan Advisory Committee Members

Executive Summary

The Saskatchewan Growth Plan

In 2019, Premier Scott Moe announced the creation of Saskatchewan's Growth Plan – The Next Decade for Growth, 2020-2030. The Plan reflects ambitious social and economic targets to build a better quality of life for Saskatchewan people. Growing the provincial population to 1.4 million people, creating 100,000 new jobs, growing capital investment to \$16 billion annually, and increasing exports by 50% are some of the pivotal targets demarcated in the Plan.

The Province committed to reduce red tape and regulatory burdens for business. Included within specific actions, the Province indicated it will "work with the Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee to help women-led companies transition from startup to scale up."¹

Introduction

Advancing gender equality through the creation of economic activity has the potential to add \$150-420 billion in Canada by 2026. Women entrepreneurs are engines of economic growth and job creation.

"Given the relatively low participation of women in business ownership, targeting female entrepreneurs and tapping into this relatively underutilized resource pool has the potential to boost economic activity."² Attention

Vision: Leading the Country

Saskatchewan is the preeminent province in Canada for women to start, build, and scale a business. Women-led businesses achieve scale and contribute on par with male-led businesses to the GDP of Saskatchewan and job creation.

Women entrepreneurs can influence and accelerate the achievement of the Saskatchewan Growth Plan targets.

to scaling women-owned businesses will accelerate the achievement of targets stated in the Government of Saskatchewan's Growth Plan. However, women entrepreneurs encounter some unique barriers that impede achieving scale.

The purpose of this report is to delineate recommendations that mitigate or minimize challenges and support women owned/led businesses to scale.

This report represents the culmination of the work of the Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan (WESK) Advisory Committee in support of this action.



¹ <https://pubsaskdev.blob.core.windows.net/pubsask-prod/114516/Saskatchewan%2527s%252BGrowth%252BPlan%252BFinal%252BNov%252B13%252B2019.pdf>, pg. 52

² Women Entrepreneurship in Canada Report prepared for WESK by PwC October 2018, pg., 1.

The Saskatchewan Advisory Committee

The WESK-led Saskatchewan Advisory Committee was launched in September 2019 to advise the Government of Saskatchewan on the development of strategies, policies, and activities to level the playing field for women entrepreneurs and support scaling up of women-owned businesses.

The Committee members were selected by WESK through an open expression of interest. (See Appendix C for Committee members). The Committee Terms of Reference were shared publicly (See Appendix B). Both women and men were encouraged to participate. Committee members agreed to serve as a representative voice for women entrepreneurs and business owners. The Committee was mandated to develop recommendations to present to the Government of Saskatchewan for its consideration and action.

To ensure the efficacy of recommendations developed by the Committee, WESK commissioned a report through PwC entitled *Women Entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan Economic Statistics* to serve as a benchmark. Much of the data embedded in this report is drawn from two sources:

- *Women Entrepreneurship in Canada*, WESK report prepared by PwC (2018); and
- *Women Entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan Economic Statistics*, WESK report prepared by PwC (2020).

The Impact of Women-owned and Women-led Businesses

Data suggests that advancing gender equality in the creation of economic activity can potentially add \$150 - \$420 billion (6% - 18%) to Canada's GDP by 2026.³ The Royal Bank of Canada estimates that a 10% increase in the number of women-owned small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) would add an additional \$198 billion to Canada's GDP.⁴

Assuming Saskatchewan accounts for 4.2% of national GDP, the province stands to benefit from an injection of \$6.3 - \$17.64 billion in GDP.⁵

In 2019, women entrepreneurs contributed \$23.1 billion



to the Saskatchewan economy and created 191,836 jobs.⁶ When Saskatchewan women lead a business, they are more likely to headquarter that business in this province.

The implications arising from the contributions of women entrepreneurs in our province are significant, particularly for the targets in the Growth Plan. The following findings from the WESK commissioned PwC report, 2020 are predominantly relevant:

- Women-owned businesses have a greater propensity for job creation. These businesses are contributing 26% of total GDP and employing approximately 33% of the Saskatchewan workforce.⁷
- Women own 33% of businesses in health and social assistance sectors.⁸ Not only are these sectors anticipated to be future drivers of the Saskatchewan economy but are also labour intensive and therefore portend well for job creation.
- Women-led businesses economic contribution of \$23.1 billion to the GDP can be enhanced by supporting women entrepreneurs to scale their businesses.

³ McKinsey Global Institute (2017a)

⁴ The emergence of the "Millennipreneur" – 2016 BNP Paribas Global Entrepreneur Report, BNP Paribas Wealth Management and Scorpio Partnership, 2016.

⁵ Statistics Canada Table: 36-10-0222-01 (formerly CANSIM 384-0038).

⁶ Women Entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan Economic Statistics Prepared by WESK by

PwC May 20, 2020, pg., 38.

⁷ Women Entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan Economic Statistics Prepared by WESK by PwC May 20, 2020, pg., 8.

⁸ Women Entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan Economic Statistics Prepared by WESK by PwC May 20, 2020, pg., 8.

The Challenge

While efforts to scale women-owned businesses will result in a greater impact on GDP and job creation, data clearly demonstrates that women are less likely to own/lead a business as the size increases.⁹ Over 80% of women-owned businesses in Saskatchewan have under 10 employees. Women simply are not achieving the same level of scale as men-owned businesses.

Addressing the barriers that hinder the achievement of growth and scale will yield significant economic gain. Research studies/reports and testimonials consistently reference access to financing and capital; access to mentors and networks, and the challenge of balancing personal/family responsibilities with business growth as the primary barriers.

Notwithstanding the social imperative of advancing equality, the data strongly supports the economic case for investing in women entrepreneurs.

In Saskatchewan, only 13.7% of SMEs are majority female-owned, compared to 17.0% in the top province (Ontario).¹⁰ In addition, over 80% of women-owned businesses have under 10 employees and reflect smaller scale.

The Opportunity

A strong Saskatchewan with a robust economy will require a recalibration of the growth strategy to address scale of women-owned businesses such that the contribution of \$23.1 billion in 2019 can be **exceeded**.

For Saskatchewan to lead the nation, the following measures need to be addressed to monitor progress toward achievement of this vision. While targets are not yet defined, measures should include:

1. Total number of women-owned businesses in Saskatchewan relative to total businesses.
2. Total percentage of women-owned businesses relative to the Canadian average.
3. Total number of medium and large businesses owned by women relative to total medium and large businesses.
4. Women entrepreneurs' contribution to GDP relative to total GDP.
5. New jobs created by women-owned businesses relative to total jobs created.

⁹ Women Entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan Economic Statistics Prepared by WESK by PwC May 20, 2020, pg., 19.

¹⁰ Women Entrepreneurship in Canada Report prepared for WESK by PwC October 2018, pg., 19.



Defining Priorities

It was determined that supporting women to scale their businesses would ultimately boost economic growth and job creation. In addition, the economic impact would reverberate through the ecosystem, propelling achievement of the Growth Plan targets.

Given majority of women owned/led businesses are under one million, it was deemed appropriate and efficacious to focus on this segment, particularly women-owned businesses with revenue between \$100 thousand and \$1 million.

The Committee also acknowledged, discussed and addressed to a lesser extent the needs, challenges and opportunities of women-owned businesses exceeding \$1 million.

While start-ups and micro businesses were not the focal point of this process, the Committee recognized the vital impact of start-ups and micro businesses to the Saskatchewan economy.

It was deemed pivotal to address the unique challenges that Indigenous women entrepreneurs encounter in starting and scaling a business through a separate and independent process that takes account of the current work of WESK through the Matchstick Program. The Matchstick Program, developed and delivered over three years by WESK with direction of Advisory Council representatives of Indigenous organizations, engaged over 300 Indigenous women entrepreneurs. Culturally sensitive programming provided participants an introduction to entrepreneurship through workshops, mentoring circles, business advising and loan services.

Additionally, the unique needs and challenges of newcomer women entrepreneurs warrant investigation and examination.

Actions for Impact

Recognizing the pivotal nature of data-driven decision making and policy development, the Committee identified four priority areas for action:

1. Enhancing access to capital
2. Developing scale-enabling policies
3. Streamlining access to data, programs and networks
4. Enhancing awareness and support by building momentum.

1.0 Enhancing Access to Capital

Recommended Actions:

1.1 Create incentives for angel investors to provide access to capital and financial support to women-owned and women-led businesses

Evidence revealed women are less likely to secure capital than male counterparts. This is attributed to the types of businesses that women typically own, the manner in which they pitch their businesses, and the bias (unconscious and conscious) of those making the decision. "Women are discriminated against by financial institutions and, thus, more likely to be denied a loan or to be asked for additional guarantees while facing higher interest rates."¹¹

Further, while not always the case, women are more likely to own service-related businesses or lower capital-intensive businesses, both of which are often more difficult to scale. A variety of research has also concluded that women are under-represented in the technology industry and account for 6% of founders in Canada. The technology sector has the propensity for rapid scale and venture capital investment.

To address this gap, WESK launched **Founders Table** in partnership with Economic Development Regina and funded by Innovation Saskatchewan. This pilot project completed March 31, 2020, with 10 women, yielded significant outcomes, few of which are as follows:

- 100% of founders changed their product due to the knowledge acquired through this mentoring group;
- 80% have increased number of employees; and
- 70% are engaged in ongoing funding conversations with angel investors and venture capital firms they met through the mentoring group.



Dedicated and focused strategies and support can certainly influence participation and success of female founders in the technology sector. Research clearly demonstrated that diversity in leadership correlates strongly with financial performance. Companies with at least one female founder outperformed all-male founding teams by 88% over a ten-year period.¹² Women-owned businesses do achieve scale and can be a lucrative investment. In fact, medium-sized businesses owned by women outperform revenues achieved by male-owned business in Saskatchewan.

The Committee proposes the following recommendations:

- Incentivize angel investors to invest in women entrepreneurs;
- Develop a Digital Hub, referenced as a recommendation in section on Access to Data, Programs and Networks, and a "network" of angel investors that matches them with a pool of entrepreneurs seeking financing;
- Source new streams of funding/financing, particularly through financial institutions/banks that are dedicated to women entrepreneurs; and
- Continue to deliver programs such as the Founders Table to increase the number of female founders.

¹¹ Women Entrepreneurship in Canada Report prepared for WESK by PwC October 2018, pg., 14.

¹² Canada US Council for Advancement of Women Entrepreneurs, 2018.

2.0 Developing Scale-Enabling Policies

Recommended Actions:

2.1 Develop and monitor measures through a women entrepreneurship economic scorecard

Effective decision making and policy implantation requires sound data and research. Recent reports such as the *Women Entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan Economic Statistics* provides a benchmark against which future development and progress can be measured.

The Committee proposes the following recommendations:

- Define measures and metrics for the short and long term; and
- Implement an effective monitoring mechanism and process to assess and evaluate future progress.

2.3 Implement a growth innovation fund and connect recipients to mentors to increase potential for success

According to the *Women Entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan Economic Statistics* report, women are less likely to lead a business as the size of the business increases.

The Committee proposes the following recommendations:

- Create a growth innovation fund to identify and support women-led businesses with high potential to scale;
- Incentivize angel investors to support women-led businesses; and
- Concurrently, engage mentors to advise and guide the recipients to ensure greater success.



2.2 Incentivize job-growth as a mechanism to encourage scale in companies with high potential for success

To support the achievement of the Saskatchewan Growth Plan targets of 100,000 new jobs by 2030, it is prudent the Government consider incentives for scaling and job creation. Not only does this fuel scale, but also assists employers in mitigating risks associated with an expanding workforce.

The Committee proposes the following recommendation:

- Incentivize a job-growth mechanism to encourage scale in all companies with high potential, regardless of the gender of ownership or management.

2.4 Develop and implement mechanisms to enable childcare for women entrepreneurs in scaling phase

The ages of 18 to 34 are critical years for developing innovative enterprises.¹³ This period corresponds with a time of increased pressures due to parenting duties. While men in Canada are increasingly taking active roles in family-related chores, the primary burden of household responsibilities still resides with women regardless of how much they work or earn.¹⁴ The Committee identified this is a fundamental challenge to women leaders scaling their businesses.

The Committee proposes the following recommendations:

- Provide enhanced incentives for childcare expenses; and
- Co-working spaces that include childcare.

¹³ 21 Globerman, S. & Clemens, J. (2018b).

¹⁴ https://www.springer.com/us/about-springer/media/research-news/all-english-research-news/household-chores--women-still-do-more-/15086994?utm_campaign=3_nsn6445_brand_PID100069343&utm_content=de_textlink&utm_medium=affiliate&utm_source=commission_junction

3.0 Streamlining Access to Data, Programs and Networks

Recommended Actions:

WESK has been in existence for twenty-five years and provides a plethora of programs and services to women entrepreneurs including business advising, financing, training and mentoring. Albeit WESK has expended significant resources and time in supporting start-ups; in the last two years, the priority to support women to scale up became a predominant undertaking based on the data, and additional research WESK commissioned. With funding from Western Economic Diversification Canada, WESK designed **The Exchange**, a program to drive business growth and profit for women poised to scale. Due to the pandemic this program has pivoted to address economic recovery for this year.



3.1 Build an entrepreneurship hub for women entrepreneurs

One of the greatest challenges for all entrepreneurs is navigating the entrepreneurial ecosystem and leveraging relevant available resources. The entrepreneurial ecosystem includes educational institutions, banks, accountants, investors, regulators, and governmental agencies, to name a few. While support is vast, information and resources often lack coordination and can be overwhelming to navigate.

The Committee proposes the following recommendations:

- Building on the current infrastructure and programs/services of WESK such as The Exchange, create a one-stop shop Digital Hub that eases navigation and access to: resources, programs and services, mentors, experts and peers; and

- Create systems for real-time data collection regarding but not limited to program/service utilization, demographics on the business and degree to which businesses are achieving scale. The data gathered will also be valuable for analysis of trends and insights into identifying companies who may or may not be aware of their position for scaling.

This portal will enable women to access relevant resources in a timely manner. The digital nature of the hub eliminates barriers to access such as distance, accessibility to childcare, and financial resources.

This online hub will also link women to mentors and subject matter experts in a virtual environment.

3.2 Create partnerships with educational institutions to provide relevant educational opportunities for existing and aspiring women entrepreneurs

Currently there are several initiatives at post-secondary institutions that incorporate entrepreneurship in meaningful ways. The Women Entrepreneur Executive in Residence at the Hill and Levene Schools of Business at the University of Regina is an illustration of the concept. This program casts a spotlight on entrepreneurship and fosters role modelling and mentoring. This is particularly important given that women lack the business training, financial acumen and mentors relative to men.

Further, women entrepreneurs experience several barriers in accessing capital. Women founders are evaluated differently and subjected to bias related to their performance and success creating a significant funding gap between men and women.¹⁵ The primary reason reported for this bias is the lack of female investors and leaders on the decision-making teams.

The Committee proposes the following recommendations:

- Post-secondary institutions develop and deliver micro-credentialing programs to augment financial literacy and acumen; and
- Post-secondary institutions develop and deliver programs to educate and empower women to engage in investment activities.

¹⁵ Canada US Council for Advancement of Women Entrepreneurs, 2018.

4.0 Enhancing Awareness and Support by Building Momentum

Recommended Actions:

4.1 Increase awareness of the contribution of women entrepreneurs to the Saskatchewan economy and profile the successes of individual women entrepreneurs

The contribution of women-owned business to the provincial GDP is relatively unknown, under-estimated and often ignored.

The Committee proposes the following recommendation to educate, inform and influence the general population and policymakers:

- Profile women entrepreneurs utilizing qualitative and quantitative data to enunciate their challenges, opportunities and successes.

These challenges include struggles of raising capital, gaining family and community support, finding mentors, and accessing markets. Drawing attention to these aspects may serve to increase solutions and supports. The combination of testimony and data creates a compelling picture that will inform the public and inspire more women to start businesses with the intent to scale.

4.2 Launch a brand that uniquely identifies Saskatchewan women entrepreneurs

The economic devastation from the pandemic has created a groundswell of support for shopping local and supporting Saskatchewan small businesses. The Government of Saskatchewan has created/endorsed prominent initiatives such as "Priority Saskatchewan" and "Together We Stand", to support economic recovery.

The Committee proposes the following recommendation:

- WESK lead a collaboration with other organizations to advance a brand to identify and support local women entrepreneurs

4.3 Launch a charter to build a pool of champions in support of women entrepreneurs

Women entrepreneurs need successful business leaders and organizations to serve as powerful influencers. A Charter publicly affirms a commitment to advance women entrepreneurship.

The Committee proposes the following recommendation:

- The development of a charter enabling organizations and individuals to pledge a set of values and establish a set of targets concerning the engagement of businesses owned by women.

Recognition of these community champions will encourage greater awareness and shape a more supportive business climate for women. Champions may also serve as mentors, advisors, subject matter experts, and connectors for women.



Additional Considerations

In defining its scope of work, the Committee was mandated to focus its effort on supporting the scaling of women-owned businesses. However, throughout its deliberations, additional considerations came to light. The Committee recommends future attention to these priority areas.

Indigenous Women

As the focus of the deliberations were on scaling women-owned businesses, the Committee believes that further research is required to address the unique needs of Indigenous women entrepreneurs. To increase business ownership within the Indigenous community, greater attention is warranted in facilitating ideation and support of start-ups. The Committee recommends a separate process be established to ensure needs of this community are addressed in a culturally appropriate manner, with engagement of Indigenous women.

Newcomer Women

Newcomers to Canada bring a wealth of entrepreneurial experience. Investing in supports to enable immigrant women entrepreneurs to navigate the ecosystem will result in new start-ups in Saskatchewan. This is an important target population and was not sufficiently addressed in the recommendations thus necessitating further research.

Youth/Young Entrepreneurs

Young entrepreneurs, generally defined from 18 to 39 years of age, are passionate and innovative but require unique supports, particularly in accessing capital and mentors. The needs, challenges and opportunities of this segment merits further attention and research.



Measuring Impact

The Committee recommends the creation and resourcing of an Implementation and Oversight Group comprised of select members of SAC, representation from WESK, and government officials to:

- Define measures;

- Assess current resources available in government that can be leveraged;

- Define data points that will be captured in relation to women owned/led businesses; and

- Define/develop a process for ongoing monitoring.

Targets that are developed should employ the WESK 2020 Women Entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan Economic Statistics report as baseline data against which progress can be measured, in particular the impact of women-owned and women-led businesses on the Saskatchewan economy.

Next Step

This report is the culmination of the recommended actions of vested individuals with lived experience as entrepreneurs. The Committee recommends development of an implementation plan as the next step.

Recommendations in this report require detailed research and analysis to refine, design, and develop implementation and evaluation plans. The output of this exercise will entail:

- refinement of the tools and programs recommended in the report;
- a comprehensive implementation, resourcing, and evaluation plan;
- an implementation timeline; and
- identification of lead agencies for each action.

Conclusion

The report clearly establishes the correlation between scaling women-owned businesses and economic growth. Notwithstanding the social imperative of advancing gender equality and equity, the implications for economic development are incontrovertible and irrefutable. Success in the achievement of Growth Plan targets is contingent upon women-owned businesses scaling.

Saskatchewan has evidenced leadership by virtue of creating the Advisory Committee to undertake its mandate. The Province has a remarkable opportunity to **lead** the country and position Saskatchewan as the preeminent province for women to start, grow and scale a business.

Building a business climate in Saskatchewan that enables women entrepreneurs to scale through: comprehension and awareness of the impact of women entrepreneurs on the economy; efficacious policy development; and ease of access to capital, resources, experts and mentors will monumentally redefine the nature and success of small business in the province.

WESK will continue to advance the momentum and execution of the recommendations emerging through this report by facilitating the development of an Implementation Plan.

“Investing in women entrepreneurs is not just the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do.”

Appendices

Appendix A: Summary of Recommendations

1.0 Enhancing Access to Capital

Recommended Actions:

- 1.1 Create incentives for angel investors to provide access to capital and financial support to women-owned and women-led businesses

2.0 Developing Scale-Enabling Policies

Recommended Actions:

- 2.1 Develop and monitor measures through a women entrepreneurship economic scorecard
- 2.2 Incentivize job-growth as a mechanism to encourage scale in companies with high potential for success
- 2.3 Implement a growth innovation fund and connect recipients to mentors to increase potential for success
- 2.4 Develop and implement mechanisms to enable childcare for women entrepreneurs in scaling phase

3.0 Streamlining Access to Data, Programs and Networks

Recommended Actions:

- 3.1 Build an entrepreneurship hub for women entrepreneurs
- 3.2 Create partnerships with educational institutions to provide relevant educational opportunities for existing and aspiring women entrepreneurs

4.0 Enhancing Awareness and Support by Building Momentum

Recommended Actions:

- 4.1 Increase awareness of the contribution of women entrepreneurs to the Saskatchewan economy and profile the successes of individual women entrepreneurs
- 4.2 Launch a brand that uniquely identifies Saskatchewan women entrepreneurs
- 4.3 Launch a charter to build a pool of champions in support of women entrepreneurs

Appendix B: Saskatchewan Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on the Gender Entrepreneurship Gap

Terms of Reference | May, 2019

Background

On May 20, 2019, the Honourable Tina Beaudry-Mellor, Minister responsible for Advanced Education, Innovation and the Status of Women Office announced the creation of the Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on the Gender Entrepreneurship Gap.

A 2018 Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) report, commissioned by WESK, entitled *Women Entrepreneurship in Canada* provides significant baseline data and reveals a gender gap in entrepreneurialism. Some highlighted findings include:

- Female-owned businesses contribute \$148 billion to the Canadian economy, according to a 2011 study. Growing women entrepreneurship could add \$150 billion to \$420 billion to the Canadian economy by 2026.
- In Saskatchewan, only 13.7 per cent of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are majority female-owned, compared to 15.7 per cent nationally and 17 per cent in Ontario.
- In Canada, men are twice as likely as women to own and operate a business, and progress toward entrepreneurial gender parity has stalled in the past two decades, growing 0.3 per cent annually. Should this trend continue, it would take 180 years to close the gender gap.
- Financing is the number one barrier to women starting businesses, for reasons such as lending discrimination, barriers to venture capital, having less income to invest and a personal lack of confidence.
- The rejection rate for financing, according to Industry Canada data from 2015, is skewed to favour men: 65.7 per cent of women's applications were rejected, compared with 24.8 per cent of men's applications. Lack of industry stability was cited as rationale. Insufficient collateral was another reason for which 66.6 per cent of women's applications were rejected, compared with 35.7 per cent of men's applications.
- Women are lagging in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education: In 2016, women filled just 22 per cent of STEM-related jobs in Canada, according to Statistics Canada.
- The "digital revolution" will more negatively impact women, as women tend to work in industries facing technological advancements, including in service, financial, insurance and administrative sectors.
- Most innovative entrepreneurship happens between the ages of 25 and 44 — when women tend to have children and raise families.





Purpose

The purpose of the Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on the Gender Entrepreneurship Gap (the Advisory Committee) is to advise on the development of strategy, policy, and activity to level the playing field for women entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan.

Role

Drawing on new and existing evidence and utilizing the skills and knowledge of Committee members, the Advisory Committee will undertake the following to advance women entrepreneurship in Saskatchewan:

- Advise on strategic direction – the development of strategies and actions to be taken by WESK and/or the stakeholders within the entrepreneurial ecosystem;
- Advise on priority areas and topics – the development of new priority areas and recommended actions or interventions to be taken to address priorities;

- Advise on policy – identify areas of policy gaps or improvement;
- Advise on research – apply existing research and identify data gaps necessary for further understanding of current and future state;
- Advise on access to capital and venture capital – identify opportunities to enhance access to capital and venture capital; and,
- Advise on measures – utilizing baseline data, identify best measures to track meaningful change to the current state.

The Advisory Committee will also:

- Serve as a spokesperson for key issues and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan;
- Advocate for the advancement of women entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan through public speaking, providing access to professional networks, and outreach to stakeholders and influencers; and,
- Engage in a reflective, self-evaluative process to improve the effectiveness of such bodies.

Responsibilities

Advisory Committee members are responsible for:

- Attending all meetings of the Advisory Committee;
- Contributing to the work of the Advisory Committee through the provision of expertise and knowledge;
- Respecting mutually agreed norms and confidentiality;
- Speaking with “one voice” as per the consensus of the Advisory Committee; and,
- Participating in task groups as identified by the Advisory Committee.

Decision-Making Authority

The Advisory Committee is advisory in nature and not a decision-making body.

The Advisory Committee shall provide recommendations to the WESK Board of Directors and the Government of Saskatchewan.

Recommendations of the Advisory Committee shall be consensus-based.

Membership

The Advisory Committee shall be selected by WESK and be comprised of a maximum of twelve (12) women and men committed to the advancement of women in entrepreneurship. The majority of the committee will be comprised of women.

The Advisory Committee must have members with experience in entrepreneurship. Specifically, experienced entrepreneurs with knowledge in scaling a business, expansion and diversification, trade (export and import) and accessing capital.

Additional members will be selected to fulfill a cross section of skills and competencies including but not limited to finance, legal, policy, strategy, research, management, venture capital.

Members should have connection to capital and business networks in Saskatchewan and beyond with an understanding of the Saskatchewan business and entrepreneurial landscape as well as current and future trends in small and medium sized enterprises.

Efforts will be made to ensure committee diversity in ethnicity, geography, and gender as well as, representative of a variety of industries and sectors.

Term

Advisory Committee members shall be appointed for a one-year term ending June 30, 2020.

Frequency, structure and location of Meetings

The Advisory Committee will meet in-person approximately every two months (approximately five meetings) in either Regina or Saskatoon for not longer than three hours per meeting.

The first meeting will involve a one-day strategic planning session followed by an evening networking event.

Conference calls may be requested during interim periods.

Meetings may consist of formal meetings, workshops, and/or task groups

Remuneration

Advisory Committee members will be reimbursed for expenses at Government of Saskatchewan rates.

Participation in the Advisory Committee is considered voluntary. There is no remuneration for time.

Reference Materials

Advisory Committee members are encouraged to review the following contextual materials:

- WESK website <https://wesk.ca/>
- Women Entrepreneurship in Canada <https://wesk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/WESK-Report-Oct.15-2018-PwC-1.pdf>
- Leader-Post article regarding launch of the Advisory Committee <https://leaderpost.com/news/saskatchewan/entrepreneurial-gender-gap-under-scrutiny-with-newadvisory-committee>

“

**We are passionate about
WESK's vision and boldly act
on our purpose of closing the
gender entrepreneurship gap.**

— **Prabha Mitchell**
Chief Executive Officer, WESK

Appendix C: Saskatchewan Advisory Committee Members



Adele Buettner, Founder and President, AgriBiz Communications Corp.

Founded 1993, AgriBiz Communications serves the management, marketing and communication needs of agricultural and food organizations with a local, provincial and national reach.

The success of AgriBiz is grounded in Adele's leadership skills and natural diplomacy, her focus on collaboration, and an innate ability to problem-solve. She has exceptional insight into board governance through her experience as a manager and senior executive, as well as serving on several boards including roles as an executive member of the Canadian

Western Agribition, Chair of the SaskTel Centre, and President of both Saskatoon Prairieland Park Corporation and Agriculture in the Classroom (Sk) Inc.

Adele is a passionate foodie and farm girl based in Saskatoon. She was raised on a mixed grain/beef operation east of Saskatoon and resided in that area until 2009. Today, Adele lives and works in Saskatoon while maintaining involvement in the family farm. Her daily life combines elements of urban and rural Saskatchewan.



Adrienne Ivey, Co-owner, Evergreen Cattle Co.; Owner, View from the Ranch Porch

Adrienne Ivey is passionate about agriculture and rural living. Growing up on a family grain farm in North East Saskatchewan, and then gaining a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture degree from the University of Saskatchewan, farming is in Adrienne's bones. After working for many years for small, independent agricultural companies, Adrienne saw the growing demands of her own farm business, and made the decision to use her experience to further the exponential growth of her farm and ranch. Adrienne ranches near Ituna, Saskatchewan with her husband and two children. Through her blog, View From The Ranch Porch, as

well as social media and speaking opportunities such as her TEDx Talk, Adrienne is committed to sharing the story of modern agriculture with the people eating the food that Saskatchewan farmers are producing. Having worked with small agricultural businesses as well as starting her own farming operation, Adrienne understands the issues facing rural and remote female entrepreneurs and is eager to be a part of finding the solutions to those road blocks.



Alicia Soulier, Founder, SalonScale Technology Inc.

Alicia Soulier embodies what it means to be an entrepreneur. Describing her as a risk-taker, visionary and passionate leader does not do justice to the hard work and heart she puts into her ventures. With 13 years in the salon industry under her belt, Alicia has built and run a multi-award-winning salon, 4X winner of Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan/Manitoba hairstylist of the year with the Contessa and Mirror Awards, Finalist for New business Venture, Customer Service, and Entrepreneur of the Year SABEX awards. Now, Alicia has added the title of "tech founder" to her name with the creation of her new advanced hair salon-back bar solutions software, SalonScale Technology Inc. Most recently, in the spring of 2019, Alicia was the proud recipient of the full \$15K cash prize from the Co.Launch finale. Today,

SalonScale is one of the provinces' fastest-growing tech companies with sales globally. Using her current platform, and the success of SalonScale, Alicia intends to disrupt the hair salon supply chain, and ultimately create a healthier economic ecosystem in the hair industry.



Christine Hrudka, Owner, Pharmacy First (8th Street) and Pharmacy First (Lifebridge)

Christine is a graduate of the University of Saskatchewan. She is an owner of Pharmacy First on 8th and Pharmacy First at Lifebridge. Previously, Christine was a Shoppers Drug Mart franchise owner for 16 years in both Regina and Saskatoon. Christine served and chaired the Pharmacy Economics Committee for 5 years. She served on the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Council for 3 years and was President in 2010. Christine serves on the PAS Board currently and chaired for 2 years. Christine is the appointed PAS representative on the Canadian Pharmacists Association board. She has volunteered for many community boards such as SREDA, YWCA, United Way and WESK. Christine lives in Saskatoon with her husband, Gordon Wyant.



Eric Clark, COO and Partner, PFM Capital Inc.

Eric Clark is the Chief Operating Officer and a partner of PFM Capital. Mr. Clark joined PFM in 2010 and as the head of Business Development is responsible for the creation and implementation of the firm's fundraising and deal origination functions. Mr. Clark's role touches on a number of key areas of the firm including investor relations and fund compliance, with particular focus on managing stakeholder relationships.

Mr. Clark is a member of the board of directors of the Regina Chamber of Commerce, the Saskatchewan Capital Network, and the Canadian Venture Capital Association.



Janis Dubreuil, Partner, Allan Construction

Janis has worked in the Saskatchewan construction industry since graduating from the University of Saskatchewan in 2000 with a Civil Engineering Degree. Upon graduating she joined her family construction company, Allan Construction, and became one of the partners in 2005.

Janis has served on several boards within Saskatchewan over the past 12 years. In 2007, she joined the Saskatoon Construction Association and became the first female president in 2014. During that time Janis also served on the Saskatchewan Construction Association for 2 years and is currently sits on the Saskatoon Industry Education Council board.



JoeAnne Hardy, President and Partner, WBM Technologies Inc.

At WBM, JoeAnne is honored to lead an incredible team of over 315 people across Western Canada implementing technology solutions for some of Canada's largest and most progressive private and public sector organizations. Because she works in the tech industry, it might be hard to imagine that some of her most valued skills were learned on a ranch in South West Saskatchewan, but it's true. Growing up on an acreage near Maple Creek watching her parents, her siblings and her friends and neighbors taught her so many lessons about the importance of commitment, passion and doing what you love with people you love. It's these lessons that still inspire her in the work she does everyday. It also contributed to making her a serious morning person and a pretty good horseback rider!

JoeAnne is honored to have been recognized by CDN Magazine as one of the top 10 women in IT in Canada. She also serves on the Board of Directors for SaskTel, Saskatchewan Blue Cross and the NSBA, Saskatoon's business association.

She splits her time during the week between Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Saskatoon and Winnipeg. On all her travels, she always likes to find new places to run and spend time outside...even in the winter! JoeAnne is blessed to have a wonderful family and loves nothing more than spending time her husband Bob, her awesome stepkids Lauren and Matt and her grandson Dominic (who is the apple of her eye).



Kimberly Parent, Owner and Artistic Director, Saskatoon Salsa Dance Company

Kimberly Parent has always loved to dance, but when she discovered Cuban music and dance, there was an instant connection—something inside her changed. After spending a year overseas learning and teaching, she returned to Saskatoon only to find a deficit in the genre with which she'd fallen in love. In fact, there were no Salsa lessons being offered in her hometown beyond ballroom style. And so it was that in 2003 Kimberly Parent began teaching Salsa simply to have others to dance with. In no time, her company, Saskatoon Salsa Dance Co., was born.

Kimberly's passion for dancing has led her to many places, and in many creative directions. One of her life's purposes is to help women feel comfortable, confident, and sensual in their own bodies, using salsa dance as the medium.

Hoping to inspire others into either dancing or business, Kimberly has been as guest speaker at many events in Saskatoon including the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Youth Entrepreneur Gathering, Women Entrepreneurs Sweet Success event, and Ideas on Tap to name a few.

In addition to heading up Saskatoon Salsa, Kimberly continues to perform and in January 2014, she and her partner Troy Davies won Audience Favourite at the GMG Jewelers Swinging with the Stars charity competition. In 2016 she and her partner Slade Desrochers won Judges Favourite in the same competition. Kimberly also furthers her dance education on a regular basis, training with professionals all over the world including Cuba, New York, Puerto Rico, Las Vegas, and Canada, always bringing her enhanced expertise and rejuvenated drive back to Saskatoon.



Mary Weimer, Chief Member Experience Officer, Conexus Credit Union

Mary was born and raised in Regina. A University of Regina graduate, Mary and her husband, Jeremy, have owned the Assiniboia Gallery since 1999. In 2013, Mary took leave from the day-to-day operations of the gallery and joined Hillberg & Berk as its Chief Operating Officer. In July 2018, Mary joined Conexus Credit Union as its Chief Member Experience Officer.

As Chief Member Experience Officer at Conexus, Mary will design the future focused member experience for the organization as well as lead Financial Wellness, Marketing, Public Relations, Community Investment and Cultivator – Canada's first credit union led business incubator.

Mary has been involved in several non-profit organizations over the years as a volunteer board member: Globe Theatre, Sask Art and currently, Youth Ballet Company of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce. Mary and her husband, Jeremy, live in Regina with their four children.



Murad Al-Katib, President and CEO, AGT Food and Ingredients Inc.

An international agri-food commodity trading strategic business and financial thinker, Murad founded AGT Foods in 2001, building a Canadian start-up into a global billion dollar value-added pulses, staple foods and ingredient company. Murad also serves as a Director of Arctic Gateway Group.

Murad serves as Chair of the Government of Canada National Agri-Food Strategy Roundtable, on the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada Board and as the Economic Development Regina Board Chair. Past Boards include the CSCA, Pulse Canada and a number of Canadian Government advisory boards and panels.

Murad has been a passionate advocate of entrepreneurs, championing compassionate entrepreneurship and working to expand female, youth and First Nations participation in business startups, advocating the role of entrepreneurs in driving social change and innovation in the new global economy.

Murad's awards include the 2017 Saskatchewan Order of Merit, a U of R Honorary Degree, 2017 "Oslo Business for Peace" Honouree, 2017 EY "World Entrepreneur of the Year", 2016 UN Association of Canada "Global Citizen Laureate", PROFITGuide Magazine's "30 Most Fabulous Entrepreneurs of the Past 30 Years" list, Globe & Mail "Canada's Top 40 under 40" and the Western Producer "44 Innovators Who Shaped Prairie Agriculture"



Natasha Vandenhurk, CEO, Three Farmers Foods Inc.

Natasha Vandenhurk is CEO and part owner of Three Farmers Foods. She is also the daughter of one of the farmers. Natasha began her venture at Three Farmers at the age of 24 after graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from the University of Saskatchewan. She and her team at Three Farmers are focused on creating natural, healthy foods and retailing these foods through health stores and specialty shops across Canada.



Rachel Mielke, CEO and Founder, Hillberg & Berk

Rachel Mielke is passionate about creating beautiful jewellery, and empowering women in the process. Her Regina-based luxury jewellery company's success story is about more than making money; it's focused on helping make a difference in the world – one sparkle at a time.

Through determination, hard work and business savvy, the Saskatchewan-born entrepreneur was able to take a few beads and a dream and transform them from a one-woman, kitchen-table-based operation into a multi-million-dollar company, with a large staff, housed in a spacious, world-class facility. Along the way, Rachel has inspired, supported and encouraged women to also find their sparkle.

Her company now has retail locations in Saskatchewan and Alberta, wholesale stores across Canada, and an online store serving customers globally.

A successful pitch on CBC's Dragon's Den helped Rachel grow her business. And showcasing the brand on The Shopping Channel has significantly boosted online sales.

Rachel is proud to have created a global supply chain, based in Regina, that sets Hillberg & Berk apart from other companies in the jewellery industry.

Her company has been commissioned to design custom jewellery for the Queen. It has made Canadian Olympic athletes sparkle. And the brand has been showcased at the Oscars.

While being recognized both locally and globally for her many impressive accomplishments, Rachel has remained humble. She continues to lead with her heart, and inspire by example. A true gem, Rachel sparkles as a CEO!



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