



# STRENGTHENING ECOSYSTEM SUPPORTS FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Ontario Inclusive Innovation (i2) Action Strategy

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Entrepreneurship and Innovation are key strategic areas of research expertise at Telfer School of Management. Home of the Women's Enterprise Research Exchange, and 2011 Canadian Taskforce for Women's Business Growth, the Telfer School of Management supports Canada's largest team of globally-recognized innovation and entrepreneurship scholars. Telfer is one of only two business schools in Canada, and one of less than 70 business schools in the world to have achieved the triple crown of accreditations (AACSB, AMBA, EQUIS). The University of Ottawa is also the largest bilingual (English-French) university in the world, and a proud member of the U15 Group of Canadian Research Universities.

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With an international team of researchers and partners, the Diversity Institute, in the Ted Rogers School of Management at Ryerson University, undertakes collaborative evidence-based projects to advance diversity and inclusion. Our action-oriented approach explores the complex barriers faced by under-represented groups, pioneers new approaches to inclusive innovation and leads changes in policy and practice. The Diversity Institute leads Canada's new Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (WKH) as well as research for the new Future Skills Centre. The Ted Rogers School of Management at Ryerson University is Canada's largest AACSB accredited management school.

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The project team recognizes the contributions of 25 anonymous interview participants and the 117 survey respondents. Contributing members of the Telfer Centre for Executive Leadership include Glen Orsak, Margaux Carson, Jacob Morrow and Mireille Faucon. Telfer faculty member Dr. Allan Riding and M.Sc. (Management) graduate student Wuraola Peter assisted in the analysis of Statistics Canada data and onsite interviews. Contributing members of the Ryerson Diversity Institute team included staff Erin Roach, Meagan Trush, Henrique Hon, Andrea Mihai and Erica Wright and Research Associates Dr. Roger Pizarro Milian, Mohamed Elmi (University of Cape Town), Ruby Latif (Royal Roads University) and Jodi-Ann Francis (Ryerson University).

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Inclusive innovation (i2) seeks to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem for and innovative capabilities of diverse women entrepreneurs in Ontario.

To inform i2 policies and practice, this report highlights the lessons learned from a comprehensive gender-based assessment of Ontario small business, innovation and social enterprise organizations.

Activities included secondary analyses of Statistics Canada data, an online survey of 117 mainstream and women-focused intermediaries, 25 onsite interviews with leaders of Ontario business support organizations, and six regional workshops. A capstone conference was held at the Telfer Centre for Executive Leadership at the University of Ottawa in June 2019.

Inclusive innovation is a top-of-mind concern for leaders of Ontario small business, innovation and social enterprise organizations. The business case or diversity-as-competitive-advantage is a primary motive for supporting i2. Four of the 25 interview participants cited equity as a rationale to support i2.

With respect to the approaches to supporting gender and diversity, three themes emerged: all are welcome; there is a need to support women in mainstream operations; and the value of women-only, feminist, and women-focused enterprise supports. The assessment found clear evidence as to the importance of employing an intersectional lens in constructing i2 small business and innovation services. Most gender and diversity initiatives were informal, in development, or aspirational.

Most organizations (68.0 percent) do not provide gender equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) training for staff or clients.

- 44.4 percent of organizations consider gender and diversity in recruiting clients;
- 27.4 percent of organizations consider gender and diversity in selecting and assessing clients.



In terms of targeted programs and services, 4 in 10 organizations offer special support to help women and other diverse groups access programs and services:

- 33.3 percent of organizations offer one or more *women-only* business programs or services;
- 17.1 percent of organizations retain advisors or employees who are experts on gender and women entrepreneurship; and
- 12.8 percent of organizations report having policies to support women entrepreneurs.

Among Ontario organizations, underlying challenges that impede i2 include: limited knowledge about equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI); limited executive commitment; difficulties recruiting diverse entrepreneurs; organizational and industry culture; absence of measurement and tracking; gendered perceptions about entrepreneurship; assumption that i2 is a women's issue rather than leadership

issue; and sexist behaviours and practices. Funder performance criteria further dampen the engagement of women entrepreneurs within business support organizations. Economic indicators as performance measures of small business and innovation support organizations systemically exclude many women entrepreneurs who are more likely to operate smaller and newer businesses, and to be self-employed without employees. Interview participants also cited conflicts in funder program criteria and limited co-ordination among funding agencies, leading to program fragmentation or duplication.

Most activities of the organizations surveyed focused on start-up (63.0 percent) versus scale-up (e.g., technology support, equity investments and legal services). While start-up supports are valuable, the secondary analysis of Statistics Canada data signals the need to emphasize *scale-up*, rather than seeking to increase the number of self-employed women or start-ups.

The participant interviewees found that i2 strategies are often predicated on the perspective of the organization's leadership, such as how well women are served within *existing* support services. There remains a lack of evidence-based insight about the institutional support needs of diverse women entrepreneurs, and the value or effectiveness of Ontario business support organizations.

Women-focused programs and services within mainstream organizations are *not* core deliverables; most initiatives were pilot or *ad hoc*. When asked if gender and diversity are considered in designing and developing programs and services, 56.5 percent indicated yes. When asked to describe *how* gender and diversity are considered:

- 15.4 percent of organizations considered gender and diversity in designing programs;
- 11.1 percent of organizations engage in partnerships for program development or delivery; and
- 3.4 percent of all organizations make accommodations for specific groups.

Interview participants cited the tendency of government to fund new or pilot initiatives (e.g., chasing "shiny new...") versus established programs with demonstrated track records, further diluting the perceived value of knowledge about gender-related barriers to start-up and scale-up.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Governments are encouraged to leverage their sphere of influence, and to shape behaviour by building into requests for proposals, EDI performance criteria such as recruitment of diverse entrepreneurs, enhanced knowledge about EDI among staff/clients, and gender parity in governance. Performance criteria should be commensurate with the size of organization. Government agencies can also lead by example, engaging in supplier diversity to support diverse women-owned and other under-represented businesses.

Systemic barriers to inclusion cannot be addressed without substantive effort to recruit, engage and track the impacts on under-represented groups. Funding is needed to support expert advice on EDI strategies and diversity assessments of Ontario small business, innovation, and social enterprise organizations.

Policymakers and organization leaders cannot assume that women-owned and men-owned enterprises introduce similar types of innovation, or are innovative to the same degree. Funding and prestige are associated with types of innovation in which men-owned firms predominate. Current investment accords less importance to the innovations and economic contributions of women entrepreneurs and women-owned enterprises. The mandates of support organizations should be expanded to include all types or forms of innovation (e.g., product, process, organizational, and market innovations) and enterprises (e.g., co-operatives, not-for-profit, social enterprises), rather than prioritizing advanced technology and the funding established and larger SMEs. Investment should expand to sectors in which women-owned businesses predominate, such as services, retail and culture. Organizational performance measures should equalize economic and social outcomes.

Most collaboration among mainstream and women-focused organizations takes the form of sponsorship or event support and cross-promotions. More meaningful collaboration is needed, such as co-development of programs and training.

Interview participants sought better co-ordination of federal, provincial, and municipal funding to address program duplication and fragmentation of services. Participants also expressed the need to streamline administrative oversight and reporting, particularly with respect to the small women-focused programs, relative to larger (e.g., innovation) programs.

To support these recommendations, the report describes two assessment tools: the Ryerson Diversity Institute (RDI) **Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT)** that was used to frame the survey and onsite interviews; and the Telfer **Gender-Smart Entrepreneurship Education and Training (G-EET)** framework to inform services and program design, development, delivery and evaluation. These tools can assist intermediaries in constructing comprehensive strategies to strengthen ecosystem supports for diverse women entrepreneurs and other under-represented groups.



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# OVERVIEW OF THE ONTARIO i2 ACTION STRATEGY





## OVERVIEW OF THE ONTARIO i2 ACTION STRATEGY

This report summarizes the key lessons learned from the **Ontario Inclusive Innovation (i2) Action Strategy**. The overarching objective of the action strategy is to achieve diverse and equitable participation of women entrepreneurs within the Ontario enterprise development ecosystem.

The i2 report presents:

- A profile of women's entrepreneurship in Ontario;
- An assessment of business supports for women entrepreneurs in Ontario;
- Insights about the challenges of building the capacity of Ontario business support organizations to respond to the needs of women entrepreneurs; and
- Recommendations to strengthen business support organizations.

To do so, a gender-based analysis (GBA+) of intermediaries was conducted. Activities included:

- Secondary analyses of Statistics Canada data;
- An online survey of small business, innovation and social enterprise support organizations; and
- 25 onsite interviews with leaders of mainstream and women-focused organizations.

Six regional workshops provided leaders of Ontario intermediaries with opportunities to discuss the preliminary report findings, and to brainstorm about response strategies. The i2 Advisory Committee provided feedback on the draft report and conference agenda.



The findings of the Ontario i2 Action Strategy establish benchmarks with which to monitor and evaluate progress in supporting diverse women within Ontario small business support organizations.

## REPORT OUTLINE

This report is organized as follows. Section two presents the project rationale and frameworks used to structure the research, including RDI **Diversity Assessment Tool** (DAT), and Status of Women Canada **Gender-based Analysis Plus** (GBA+). Drawing on secondary analysis of Statistics Canada data, section three presents a profile of women's entrepreneurship in Ontario. The gender-based assessment of women's enterprise supports in Ontario is then described (section four). The findings are based on an online survey of 117 intermediaries in Ontario. Section five summarizes insights from 25 onsite interviews, including rationales and challenges of operationalizing i2 strategies, policies and practices. The conclusions and study limitations follow (section six). Implications of the assessment are discussed throughout the report.

To inform promising practices, Appendix A describes the RDI **Diversity Assessment Tool**. Appendix B describes the Telfer **Gender Smart Entrepreneurship Education and Training** (G-EET) framework. Appendix C presents an overview of the six regional workshops, including questions and i2 canvas. Appendix D explains the research methods employed in the assessment. Appendix E contains auxiliary information about the state of women entrepreneurs in Ontario and Canada.

## IMPACTS OF i2 ACTION STRATEGY

The findings of the Ontario i2 Action Strategy establish benchmarks with which to monitor and evaluate progress in supporting diverse women within the Ontario business support organizations. The i2 project also serves to advance insights with respect to:

- Gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) of small business, innovation and social enterprise organizations using the RDI **Diversity Assessment Tool**.
- Understanding the challenges of Ontario intermediaries in supporting diverse women entrepreneurs.
- Documenting the principles of promising practice to support women entrepreneurs, including gender-smart entrepreneurship education and training (G-EET).
- Content development for EDI training targeted at executives, staff, clients and other stakeholders.
- An alumni network of transformative change leaders (e.g., launch of a LinkedIn circle and follow-up meetings among the regional workshop participants).

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The Ontario i2 Action Strategy was a collaboration between the Telfer Centre for Executive Leadership (CEL) in the Telfer School of Management at the University of Ottawa, and the Ryerson Diversity Institute (RDI) in the Ted Rogers School of Management at Ryerson University.

Dr. Barbara Orser (Full Professor, Telfer) was the Project Leader and Principal Investigator (PI), with Co-investigators Dr. Catherine Elliott (Assistant Professor, Telfer) and Dr. Wendy Cukier (Director, RDI). The project was supported by Telfer CEL and RDI personnel.

The Telfer Centre for Executive Leadership (Telfer CEL) team led the analysis of Statistics Canada data, onsite interviews, organization of the regional workshops, capstone conference, project report, and project management. The Ryerson Diversity Institute (RDI) led the design, analysis and reporting of the online survey, and the creation of the i2 web platform. RDI helped to organize and participated in the onsite interviews, hosted a regional workshop, and contributed to the conference and writing of the report.

The Contract Authority was the Brookfield Institute of Innovation + Entrepreneurship, Ryerson University. In-kind contributions were provided by the Deloitte Chair in the Management of Growth Enterprises (Telfer School of Management), Telfer Centre for Executive Leadership, and the Ryerson Diversity Institute. The work was conducted between May 2018 and June 2019.



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# WHY DOES ONTARIO NEED AN i2 STRATEGY?

## WHY DOES ONTARIO NEED AN I2 STRATEGY?

Historically, innovations that are important to women's lives, such as those related to sewing, cooking, childcare, and nursing were dismissed as relatively less valuable, important or prestigious.<sup>1</sup> The diminishing of women's innovative and economic contributions continues.

Today, a substantial proportion of entrepreneurs are women, yet women-owned enterprises are less likely to benefit from government-funded small business and innovation support services compared to male-owned enterprises.<sup>2,3</sup> When other dimensions of diversity are considered, U.S.-based research shows that some racialized, immigrant, Indigenous, LGBTQI2, and entrepreneurs with disabilities may be less likely to benefit from enterprise support.<sup>4</sup> For example:

- Reviews of small business and innovation intermediaries suggest that governance, processes, and resources are dominated by men. A study of Ontario incubators, observed that women accounted for 29.0 percent of board positions. Racialized minorities accounted for 9.0 percent of board positions.<sup>5</sup> Women face systemic barriers, such as unconscious bias, gendered stereotypes and discrimination in building their enterprises. Racialized minorities and other under-represented groups face additional barriers.<sup>6,7</sup>
- Studies of women's enterprise policies and programs report on programs without policies and policies without programs.<sup>8,9</sup> Studies of innovation systems show that gender and diversity are often not considered.<sup>10,11</sup>
- Studies of Ontario small business supports call for robust evaluations of program design and effectiveness to understand: "the extent to which business support programs impact company resources and capabilities, the extent to which they impact company performance, or the extent to which they impact the sectors and regions that comprise the economy."<sup>12</sup> Most Ontario business support organizations do not collect gender or other intersectional data to inform program design or evaluation.<sup>13,14</sup>
- A 2014 review of 65 Ontario *small business* programs found that program funding "favours the largest and oldest companies, the companies least likely to be in need of support." (Dalziel et al., 2014, p. 7).<sup>15</sup> The practice effectively excludes many women, newcomers, and racialized minorities who may not have the extensive business networks and funding to become established on their own.<sup>16</sup>
- Most innovation studies focus on the firm level of analysis. Innovation studies typically focus on expenditures on R&D, investments in Information, Communications and Technology (ICT), machinery and equipment, and outputs, such as patents.<sup>17</sup> Among the first studies to examine gender and Canadian innovation systems was Rowe (2016), who observed that in explaining why women remain absent from the innovation space, the majority of policymakers and other leaders cited "women's lack of interest in core technology aspects of innovation."<sup>18</sup> Limited consideration was given to gender biases in the types of innovation that receive support.
- A focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) has additional unintended consequences in terms of excluding women, under-represented groups, low income businesses, and women entrepreneurs living outside of large, urban centers.<sup>19</sup>
- Government investments in innovation and economic development prioritize industry sectors in which women business owners are under-represented. Most investments targeted at promising 'high growth' firms fail to consider equity and diversity of clients. For example, the Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity (2019), *Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Innovation. Roundtable Summary* concluded that the 2017 federal Innovation Superclusters Initiative had few mechanisms to hold funded projects accountable for gender equity and diversity.<sup>20</sup>

Collectively, the evidence suggests diverse women-owned enterprises are not afforded a fair share of small business support or funding. At the same time, women-focused interventions, such as the Women's Enterprise Centres in Western Canada, positively impact the growth performance of women-owned enterprises.<sup>21,22</sup> Objective evidence is needed to inform policies and practices to increase the engagement and support of women entrepreneurs in Ontario.<sup>23</sup>



In response, advisory bodies have called for actions to create inclusive entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystems. The *Canada-US Council for the Advancement of Women Entrepreneurs*, for example, identified the need to challenge accelerators and professional networks to take bold actions to attract and develop women-owned businesses.<sup>24</sup>

The *Women Entrepreneurs Ontario Collective* (2016) advanced recommendations for development of a gender-focused scorecard to report on the engagement of women entrepreneurs within the entrepreneurial ecosystem.<sup>25</sup> The advisory panel also recommended preparation of a strategic business plan for enhancing support services for women entrepreneurs.

The *Canadian Taskforce for Women's Business Growth* (2011) concluded that there is limited collaboration between mainstream and women-focused enterprise support organizations.<sup>26</sup> Consistent with many of the findings of this report, structural impediments included systemic biases in funding, client selection criteria, lack of gender-sensitive programming and networks, macho organizational cultures, and limited representation of diverse women on decision-making boards.

## BUILDING i2 ECOSYSTEMS

Innovation ecosystems are comprised of a broad range of stakeholders which help support, reproduce and transform enterprises over time, creating enabling environments and cultural attitudes that catalyze entrepreneurship.<sup>27</sup> The Ontario ecosystem reflects individuals, innovation and enterprise support organizations and societal forces.<sup>28</sup>

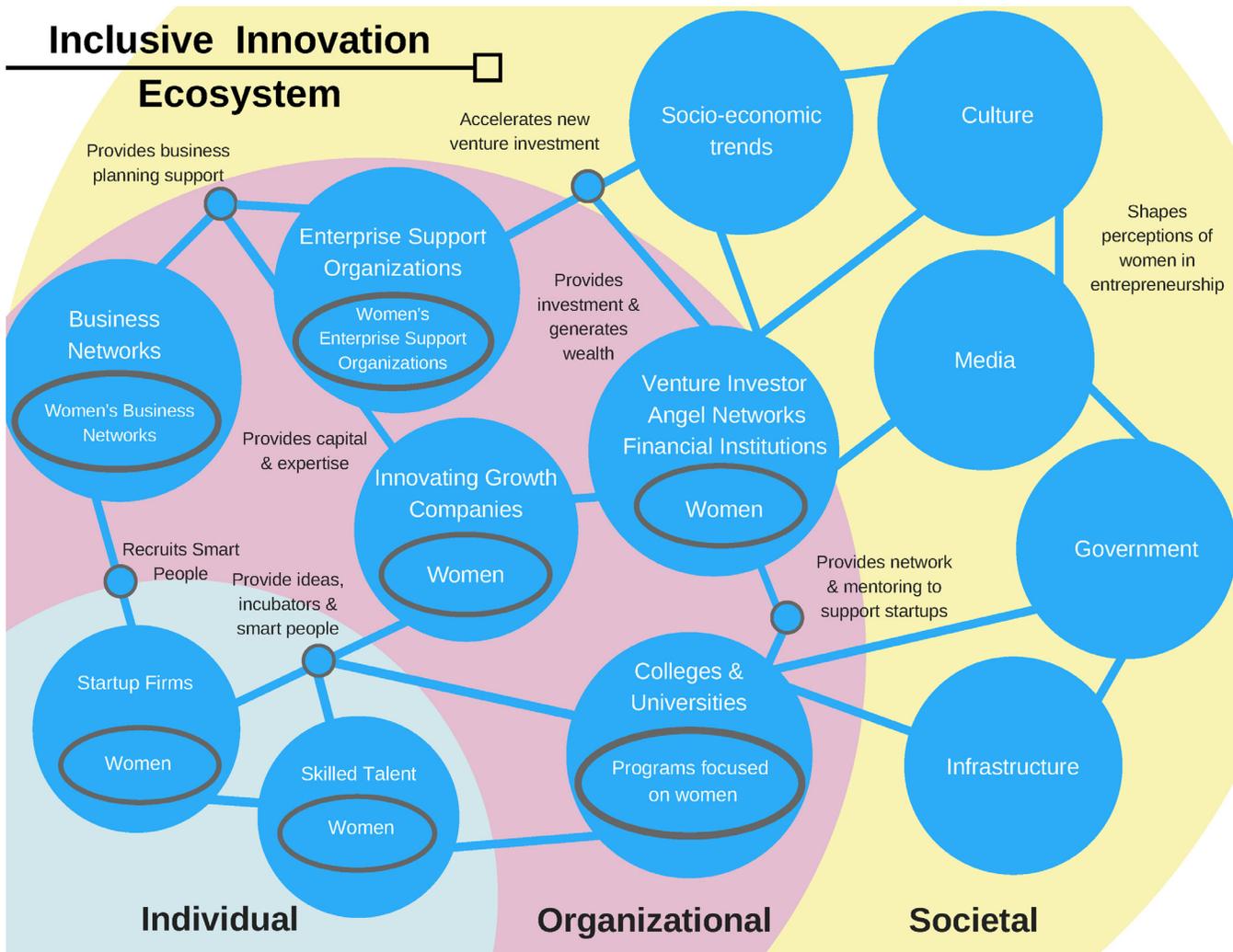
Building on public health approaches to evidence-based change and social innovation models, Cukier et al. (2014)<sup>29</sup> and Cukier (2018)<sup>30</sup> have developed an ecological model of innovation ecosystems. The model depicts the interactions of macro (societal), meso (organizational) and micro (individual) level influences associated with diversity and inclusion. Figure 1 illustrates that inclusion of women entrepreneurs must occur within and across all three levels. Developing an inclusive innovation ecosystem also requires analyses of enabling factors within each level.

- At an individual level, analysis considers perspectives and experiences of diverse women entrepreneurs. This is because enabling conditions shape and bias individuals' preferences, aspirations and behaviours.<sup>31,32</sup> Language and definitions of entrepreneurship and innovation impact the ways in which individuals self-identify and express their entrepreneurial aspirations, factors that contribute to gendered "entrepreneurial identities."<sup>33</sup>
- At an organizational or meso level, analysis considers mainstream intermediaries, women-focused programs, investment funds and networks, and how intermediaries impact women entrepreneurs.
- At the *societal or macro level*, the model points to the need to understand how government policies and investment (e.g., research, development, innovation, grants, tax credits) and broader policies (e.g., regulation, taxation and childcare) impact women entrepreneurs. The role of culture and institutional environments in promoting values and assumptions (e.g., role models, stories, and stereotypes that shape expectations and aspirations) are also crucial to building an inclusive innovation ecosystem.

The i2 strategy was targeted at the organizational level. This included business support organizations such as accelerators, incubators, small business centers, investment networks and associations, post-secondary institutions, economic development agencies, chambers of commerce, social enterprise organizations, supplier diversity organizations, in addition to grassroots, feminist, and community initiatives. All play vital roles in supporting the commercialization of innovation, and assisting nascent, start-up, and established small businesses to flourish.

Mainstream, women-focused, feminist and social enterprise support organizations offer a broad range of advisory services: advice; networking; coaching; mentoring; skills development (e.g., ideation, selling, pitching, financial and human resource management); business modeling; export promotion; human resources and customer relationship management; and accessing financial capital. Educational institutions are expanding innovation, social enterprise and entrepreneurship courses and related supports. The private sector continues to introduce specialized facilities and software targeted at entrepreneurial ventures.

Figure 1: An inclusive innovation ecosystem (Cukier et al., 2013)

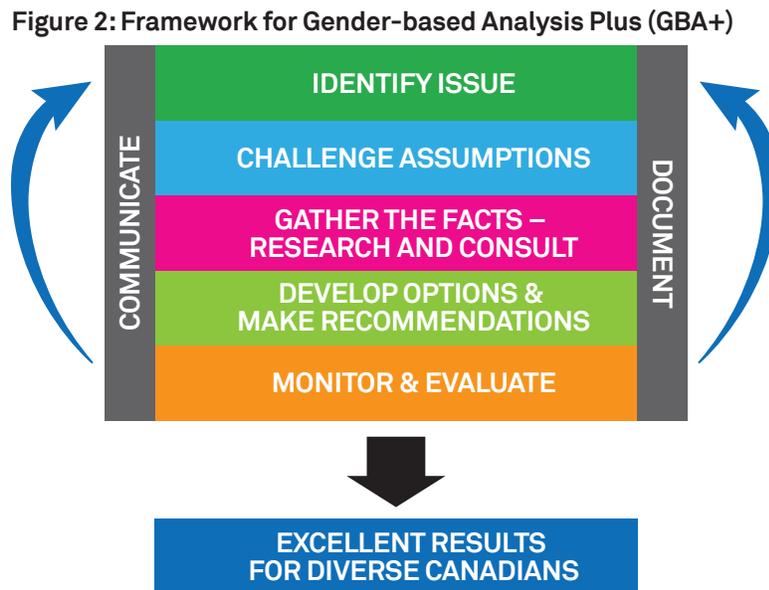




## FRAMEWORK USED TO ASSESS THE ONTARIO ECOSYSTEM

To conduct the diversity assessment, the research teams adhered to the framework and principles specified in Status of Women Canada **Gender-based Analysis+** (GBA+). The framework is illustrated in Figure 2. The first step of the assessment was to

identify issues and challenge assumptions. The research teams then undertook primary and secondary research, and consulted with ecosystem leaders through the six regional workshops. Recommendations are advanced.



Source: Status of Women Canada (2019). GBA+ Demystifying GBA+ Job Aid

## Definitions

Consistent with the principles of GBA+, the research teams employed an *intersectional lens* of inclusion. Inclusion incorporates entrepreneurs who self-identify as women, LGBTQI2, newcomers, racialized women, women with disabilities, Francophones, Indigenous, Northern and rural, remote, young, low-income and older women who are operating small business ventures.

*Intersectional* refers to how aspects of social and political discrimination overlap with gender. *Women-focused* refers to centers and education and training (EET) programs targeted explicitly at women.

*Innovation* was defined in accordance with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) *Oslo Manual* guidelines. These guidelines incorporate four types of innovation: product, process, marketing and organizational innovation.

The assessment recognizes different business models and legal structures, including neo-classical, social, feminist,<sup>34</sup> and co-operative enterprises.

*Inclusiveness policies* were viewed as a means to support innovation activities in less innovative firms, (including micro-entrepreneurs, small- and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups) across all sectors.



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# PROFILE OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN ONTARIO

## PROFILE OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN ONTARIO<sup>i</sup>

Consistency with respect to definitions of innovation, entrepreneur and women-owned businesses presents challenges. Co-operatives, not-for-profit, relational and social enterprises, for example, are not typically captured in government statistics on small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Innovation is often proxied using criteria such as investment in research and development, patents and licenses, and the number of SMEs operating in the advanced technology sectors. In all instances, the contributions of women entrepreneurs are less visible and are less likely to be recognized in policies and support programming.

Yet, women have high levels of entrepreneurial intent and engagement in Ontario. The *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor* (2017), for example, has reported that in Ontario:<sup>35</sup>

- 16.7 percent of women and 21.1 percent of men are involved in early-stage entrepreneurial activities (TEA). Similarly, 5.9 percent of women and 9.3 percent of men are involved in established businesses.<sup>36</sup>
- The female-to-male early stage entrepreneurial activity ratio is 0.79; that is, for every 10 men engaged in TEA, eight women are, as well. This ratio is consistent with other regions in Canada.

The ripples of gender influence in early-stage entrepreneurial activities are evidenced in the start-up rates of self-employment, particularly among employer SMEs.

## RATES OF SELF-EMPLOYMENT

Self-employment is regarded as an embryonic form of new business enterprise. As of August 2018, Statistics Canada *Labour Force Survey* indicated there are over 1.1 million self-employed persons in Ontario, including 701,300 self-employed men and 417,800 self-employed women.

- Between January 2000 and August 2018, the number of self-employed men in Ontario increased from 590,300 to 701,300, an increase of 111,000. During this same period, the number of self-employed women increased by 109,200 from 308,600 to 417,800. The above aggregate rates of change in self-employment among men and women were similar.
- While the number of self-employed women grew between 2000 and 2018, almost half of the growth in self-employment (52,800) was accounted for by *unincorporated without paid employees*. Conversely, the number of self-employed men in the same category (unincorporated without paid employees) decreased by 6,200. The increase in the number of incorporated firms *with* paid help among self-employed women (n = 26,500) was approximately half that of men-owned incorporated firms with paid help (n = 52,500).
- As such, the firms of self-employed men were significantly more likely to be incorporated, and more likely to retain paid employees than were firms owned by self-employed women. Self-employed women were more likely to enter the market with an unincorporated business and no employees.
- 23 percent of self-employed women and 35 percent of self-employed men had paid employees.

The findings illustrate that a gender-related challenge is to support women entrepreneurs in achieving scale, rather than focus policies and programs on increasing the number of start-ups.

<sup>i</sup> This section was compiled by Dr. B. Orser and Dr. A. Riding, Telfer School of Management. For further details contact [orser@telfer.uottawa.ca](mailto:orser@telfer.uottawa.ca).

## EMPLOYER SMALL- AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES (SMEs)<sup>37</sup>

In 2017, majority women-owned firms comprised 15.6 percent of employer SMEs nationally. Among the sub-sample of 258,153 Ontario employer SMEs (representing 35 percent of employer SMEs in Canada), 13.0 percent were fully (100 percent) owned by women; 46.0 percent of businesses retained some ownership by women (including the 100 percent women-owned SMEs).

Regional profiles of Ontario employer SMEs by Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) found significant differences in the proportion of firm ownership and gender:

- The highest proportion of women-owned employer SMEs were located in the Ottawa-Gatineau and Kingston CMAs, with fewer women-owned employer SMEs in the Toronto and Kitchener-Waterloo-Cambridge CMAs.
- It is not clear what might account for the gender differences across the CMAs. Differences may be associated with regional culture, sector, the availability of paid employment, educational attainment or provision of inclusive small business and innovation support services.

## Size and rate of firm growth

On average, majority women-owned employer SMEs are smaller than those owned by men. Majority women-owned enterprises, for example, are overrepresented among firms that employ 1 to 4 employees, and under-represented among firms that employ 20 to 99, and firms with over 100 employees. However, between 2011 and 2017, the growth performance of women-owned firms continued to strengthen. For example:

- Statistics Canada (2019) reports that the share of medium- to high-growth SMEs (that is, businesses with an annual sales or revenue growth rate above 10.0 percent over the past three years) for women-owned SMEs increased from 16.5 percent in 2011 to 18.5 percent in 2017. This compares with 18.3 percent in 2011 to 20.8 percent in 2017 for men-owned SMEs.<sup>38</sup>

## Sector profiles

Majority women-owned employer SMEs are under-represented among: Professional & Scientific Services; Manufacturing; Wholesale; Transportation; Primary (Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting); and Construction sectors. Gender differences in sector distribution hold implications for the engagement of women-owned businesses in sector-specific support programs and related funding opportunities, particularly programs and market interventions targeted at goods production and product innovation. For example:

- In 2017, among **clean technology** employer SMEs, women were significantly under-represented: 4.8 percent of clean technology employer SMEs were majority women-owned; and 67.7 percent of clean technology employer SMEs retained no ownership by women. The balance of SMEs were 50.0 percent owned and minority-owned by women.
- Conversely, among **social enterprises**, 21.2 percent of charities and 27.2 percent of not-for-profit employer SMEs were majority women-owned; 55.5 percent of *charities* and 38.9 percent of *not-for-profit* employer SMEs retained no ownership by women. The balance of firms were 50.0 percent owned and minority-owned by women.

## Types of innovations

Statistics Canada (2019) reports that women-owned enterprises are as likely to innovate as men-owned enterprises.<sup>39</sup>

Studies based on aggregated data or anecdotal perceptions<sup>40</sup> mask subtle—but crucial—gender and sectoral differences. The secondary analysis of Statistics Canada refutes arguments that there are no gender differences in type or rate of innovation among Canadian SMEs.



Statistics Canada adheres to OECD standards in defining four categories of innovation:

- Product innovation: a new or significantly improved *good or service*.
- Process innovation: a new or significantly improved *production process or method*.
- Organizational innovation: a new *organizational method* in your business practices, workplace organization or external relations.
- Marketing innovation: a new way of *selling your goods or services*.

Secondary analysis of the 2017 Statistics Canada data found that among Canadian employer SMEs:

- Majority-women-owned employer SMEs were *less likely* to engage in production or process innovations, but *more likely* to engage in marketing innovations than businesses owned by men.
- No gender differences were found in the propensity of majority women-owned firms to engage in product (goods and services) and organizational innovations suggesting that the representation of

women-owned businesses within related innovation programs should be commensurate with their representation within the target sector.

It is also instructive to comment on more advanced analyses of the 2014 *Survey of Financing and Growth of SMEs*. Riding, Orser & Liao (2018) documented sector-specific gender influences in the rates of innovation within some, but not all, types of innovation.<sup>41</sup> After accounting for systemic differences in owner and firm characteristics, there were no significant gender differences in the propensity for any type of innovation among Goods Producers or among firms in the Other Services sectors. Across all sector categories, majority women-owned businesses were as likely as majority men-owned businesses to introduce organizational innovations.

However, in the Scientific, Technical & Professional Services sectors, majority women-owned businesses were significantly *less likely* than counterpart majority men-owned SMEs to introduce any of the four types of innovation. In the Wholesale & Retail sectors, majority women-owned businesses were significantly *more likely* than firms owned by men

to introduce marketing innovations. Otherwise, no significant gender differences by type of innovation were identified in the Wholesale & Retail sectors.

As was the case historically, current funding favours the types of innovation in which men-owned firms predominate. This perpetuates the practice of according less importance to the innovations and socio-economic contributions of women-owned enterprises.

### Education, experience, skills, and competencies

- Almost half (46.3 percent) of founders of 100 percent women-owned employer SMEs held a university degree, compared to 39.2 percent of 100 percent men-owned firms.
- With respect to years of management experience, 65.2 percent of 100 percent women-owned businesses compared to 73.3 percent of 100 percent men-owned businesses had more than 10 years of management experience.
- Conversely, 9.3 percent of 100 percent women-owned businesses compared to 5.8 percent of 100 percent men-owned businesses had less than five years of experience.

Differences in years of management experiences may help to explain why:

- A 2017 survey of Canadian business owners conducted by the Telfer School of Management, in collaboration with the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC), found that 11.0 percent of women business owners self-assessed their financial knowledge as “very knowledgeable” compared with 26 percent of men.<sup>42</sup>
- A 2015 study conducted by the Brookfield Institute of Innovation + Entrepreneurship found that in Ontario, 19.0 percent of women and 22.0 percent of men said they were “very confident” in their skills in financial management. Fewer than half (42.0 percent) of Ontario women reported that they were confident and had the knowledge and skills required to start a business compared to 61.0 percent of men.<sup>43</sup>

## IMPLICATIONS

It is misleading to report significant gender differences in the absolute growth rate of self-employed. Such statistics conflate rates of engagement among women entrepreneurs. In Ontario, like other Canadian provinces and territories, women are significantly less likely to pursue entrepreneurship as a career compared to men. Self-employed women are significantly more likely to be unincorporated and without paid help compared to self-employed men.

Self-employed workers with no paid employees often fall outside government small business and innovation surveys. Many entrepreneurial women remain invisible within policy discussions and programs to support innovation and small enterprises. The analysis of secondary data also suggests differences in scale, which can translate into diseconomies and differences in firm growth rates, which further limit founder visibility and accessibility to small business and innovation support services.

The relative absence of paid employees, for example, impacts the capacity of women-owned firms to respond to market opportunities and leverage organizational efficiencies. Many high-profile innovation support programs specify eligibility based on having paid employees. The tendency of organizations to cherry pick or favour ‘high potential’ enterprises further disadvantages self-employed women and women-owned employer SMEs.

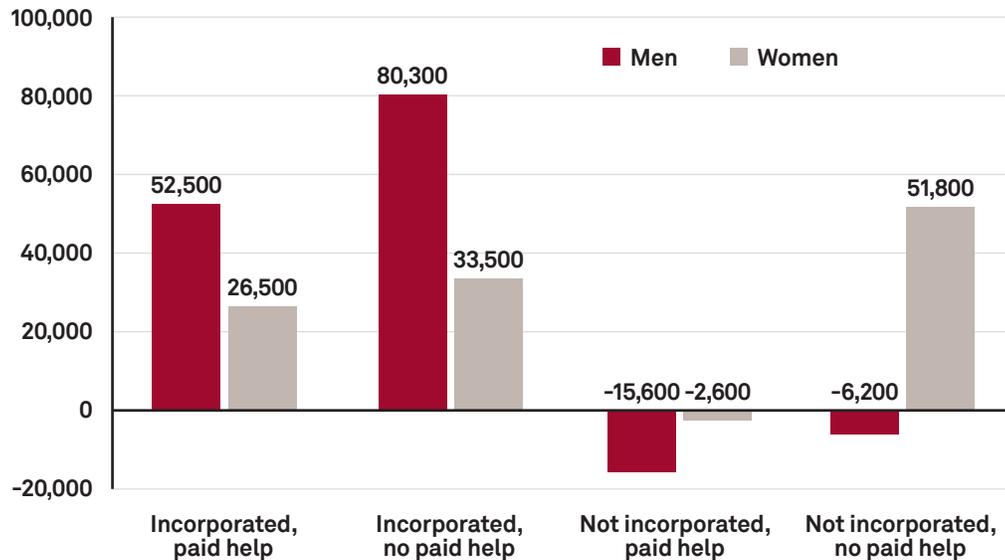
The Government of Ontario is called upon to undertake sophisticated analyses of the *use* and *impacts* of small business and innovation support systems. The assessment should include *intersectional* owner and firm attributes (e.g., sector, tenure, types of innovation), and the integration of multiple sources of information, such as self-employment data, unique company identifier and taxation data (the business number assigned by the Canada Revenue Agency), mainstream and women-focused organizational outcomes, and gender-based criteria described in this report.

Table 1: Self-employment in Ontario, 2000 to 2018

	INCORPORATED		NOT INCORPORATED		Total
	Paid help	No paid help	Paid help	No paid help	
<b>MEN</b>					
January 2000	138,200	87,300	72,300	292,500	590,300
August 2018	190,700	167,600	56,700	286,300	701,300
Change	52,500	80,300	-15,600	-6,200	<b>111,000</b>
Growth rate, p.a.	1.7%	3.5%	-1.3%	-0.1%	0.9%
<b>WOMEN</b>					
January 2000	41,600	30,800	30,000	206,200	308,600
August 2018	68,100	64,300	27,400	258,000	417,800
Change	26,500	33,500	-2,600	51,800	<b>109,200</b>
Growth rate, p.a.	2.7%	4.0%	-0.5%	1.2%	1.6%

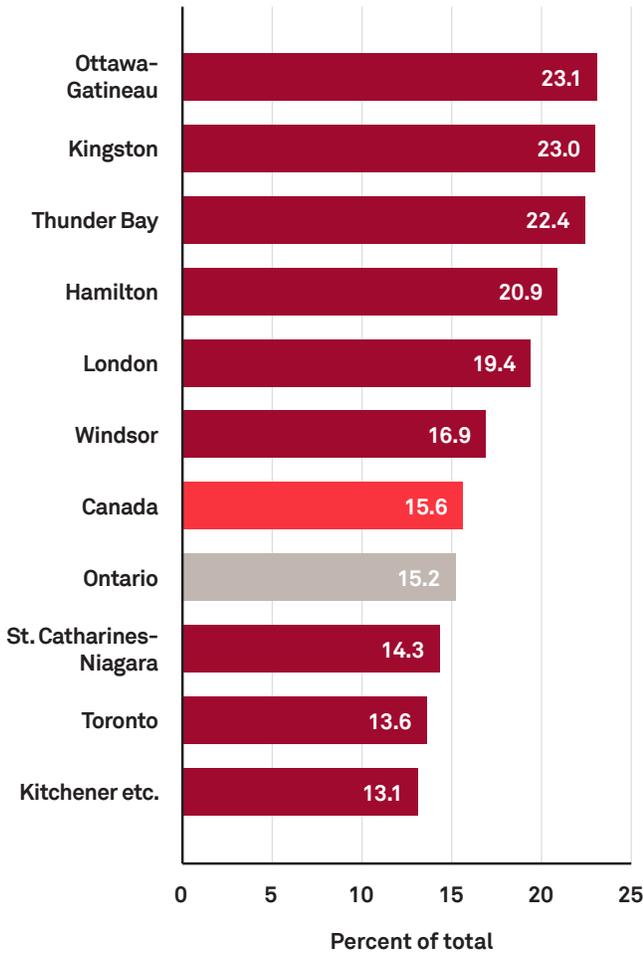
Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM 282-0012 (Orser & Riding, 2019).

Chart 1: Changes in self-employment, by category and gender (2000 to 2018)



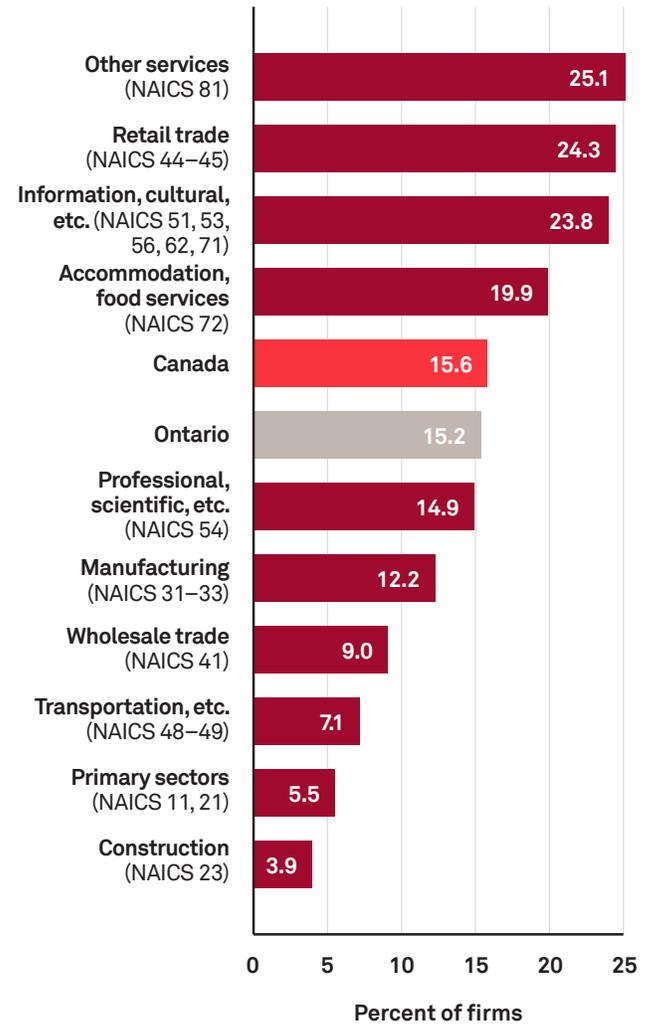
Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM 282-0012 (Orser & Riding, 2019).

**Chart 2: Regional profile, by CMA, for majority women-owned SME employers (2017)**



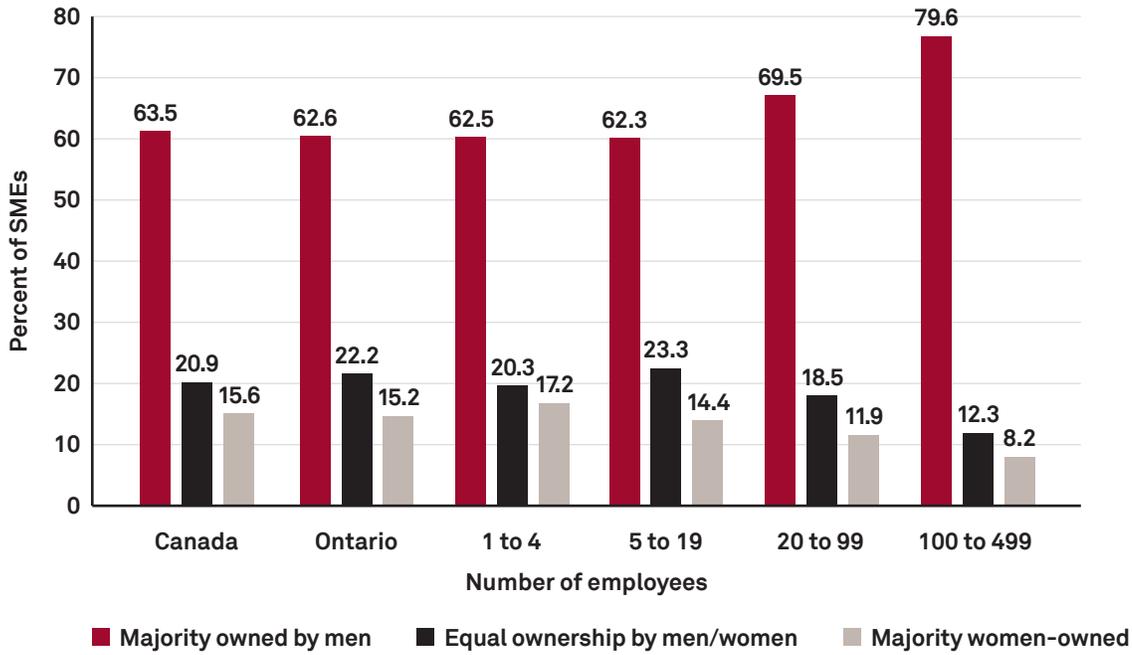
Source: Statistics Canada, <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/061.nsf/eng/03087.html>, Table 40.

**Chart 3: Sector distribution of Canadian majority women-owned employer SMEs (2017)**



Source: Statistics Canada, <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/061.nsf/eng/03087.html>, Table 40 (Orser & Riding, 2019).

Chart 4: Canadian SMEs, by size and gender of ownership (2017)



Source: Statistics Canada, <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/061.nsf/eng/03087.html>, Table 40 (Orser & Riding, 2019).

4

# THE STATUS OF WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE SUPPORTS IN ONTARIO



## THE STATUS OF WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE SUPPORTS IN ONTARIO<sup>ii</sup>

To assess the status of women's enterprise supports in Ontario, primary data was collected through an online survey of small business and innovation organizations. The survey was informed by the **Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT)**. The tool provides organizations with a framework to construct comprehensive strategies to advance the inclusion of women and other underrepresented groups. A description of the DAT is included in Appendix A.<sup>44</sup>

Invitations to participate were sent by email to 686 organizations that were identified through an online scan of the Ontario innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem. Recruitment occurred between December 2018 and February 2019. A total of 117 organizations

completed the survey, representing a response rate of 17.0 percent. Additional information about the survey methodology is available in Appendix D. A summary of the survey findings follows. This information establishes benchmarks to track progress in advancing i2 within Ontario small business support organizations and networks.

### PROFILE OF ONTARIO ORGANIZATIONS

The types of organizations that were invited to participate in the i2 survey and the associated response rates are detailed in Table 2. The largest cohorts of respondent organizations were regional small business organizations (n = 49), and Chambers of Commerce (n = 20). Women business support organizations accounted for 10.0 percent of the sample respondents (n = 12).

**Table 2: Profile of respondent organizations (n = 117)**

Types of organization	Sent	Completed	Response rates
Regional Small Business Organizations	149	49	33%
Chambers of Commerce	155	20	13%
Women's Business Support Organizations	70	12	17%
Other Business Support Organizations	44	8	18%
Angel Investors/Investor Networks	23	6	26%
Incubators/Accelerators	19	5	26%
Social Enterprise Organizations	21	5	24%
Universities/Colleges	25	5	20%
Public Libraries	14	2	14%
Municipal Economic Development Offices	97	2	2%
Banks/Financial Institutions	46	1	2%
Boards of Trade	13	1	8%
Business Councils	1	0	0%
Employment Centers	9	0	0%
Anonymous		1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>686</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>17%</b>

<sup>ii</sup> This section was compiled by Dr. W. Cukier and staff of the Ryerson Diversity Institute. For further details contact [wcukier@ryerson.ca](mailto:wcukier@ryerson.ca).

## Organizational mandates, funding and activities

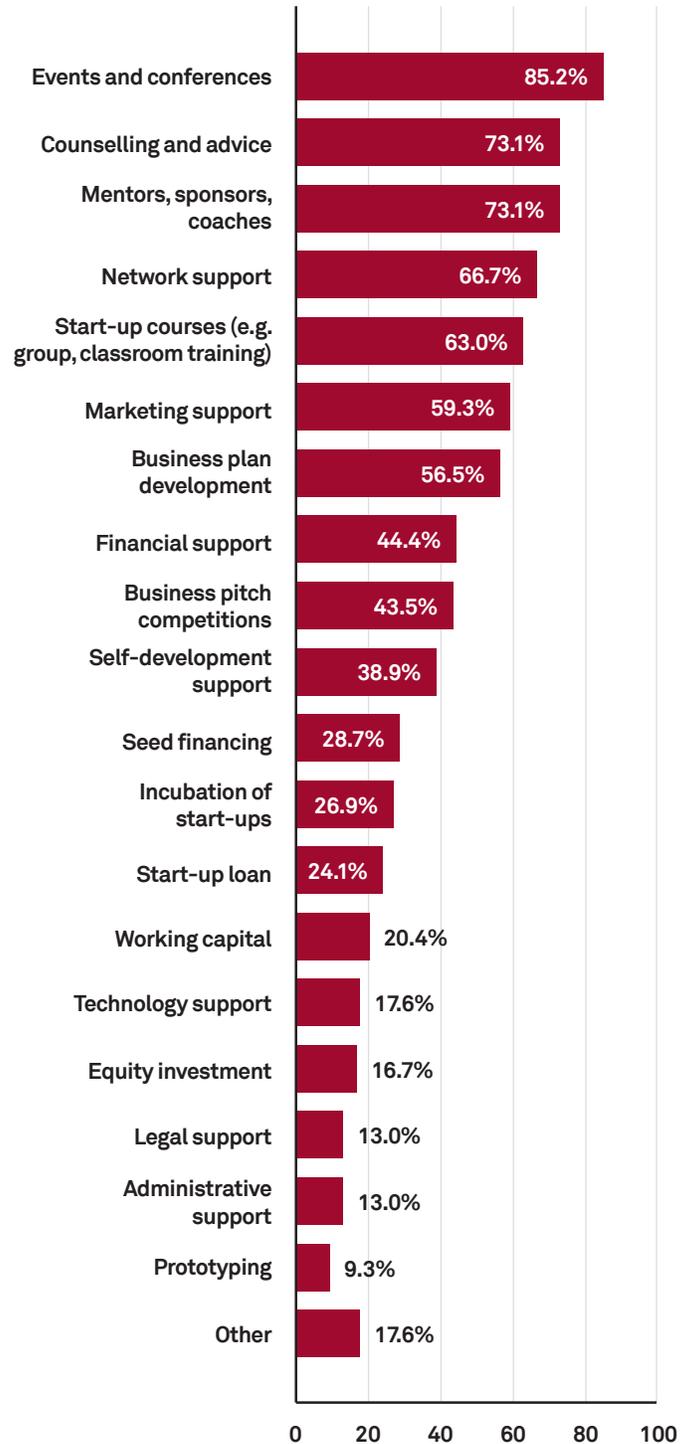
When asked to describe the organization’s goals, 77.1 percent of organizations focused on economic development, while 39.6 percent focused on small business support. The responses were not mutually exclusive.

Participants were asked to describe how their organization was funded. The findings demonstrate the complexity and duplication of funding, given that most organizations secure funds from multiple sources. Provincial funding and program/service fees were primary sources of funding (54.2 percent and 53.3 percent, respectively). Approximately four in 10 organizations relied on federal, municipal and private funding.

In terms of the main functions or programs that the organizations offer, events and conferences topped the list of frequency (85.2 percent) followed by ‘counselling and advice’, ‘mentorship, sponsorship and coaching’ (both at 73.1 percent) and network support (66.7 percent). Chart 5 illustrates the main functions and programs organizations offer. Most activities focus on start-up (63 percent) versus scale-up (e.g., technology support, equity investments and legal services). The chart also reveals that many Ontario organizations are focused on start-up training or support for early stage business activities (e.g., classroom training, marketing, business plan development), with the exception of networking and mentorship that may support various stages of business development.

While start-up supports are valuable, particularly those that address the needs of women, research on established women-owned enterprises points to the value of more services to support women-owned businesses to scale, and to ensure firm survival.<sup>45</sup> The 2017 OECD Gender Initiative, for example, compiled data from the national statistical offices of nine OECD member nations to examine the performance of women-owned businesses. The study found that women-owned businesses had lower survival rates than men-owned businesses, and the rates that women discontinued the business exceeded that of male counterparts. Factors that contributed to this inequity included restrictive financing, and business challenges within women-dominated sectors.

Chart 5: Main functions and program organizations offer (n = 117)



## WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE SUPPORTS

### Governance

Among Ontario small business and innovation support organizations, 93.0 percent (n = 105) reported at least one woman in a governance position (Board of Directors or Steering Committee). On average, women represented 48.9 percent ( $\pm 21.4\%$ ) of the positions, with a representation ranging from 0 percent to 100 percent. When analyzing mainstream organizations, (that is, removing women-focused organizations), the representation drops to 44.2 percent ( $\pm 15.8$  percent). Chart 6 illustrates the percentage distribution of women in governance positions within the organizations surveyed.

### Equity, diversity and inclusion training

The survey findings indicate that training about EDI across Ontario intermediaries is low. The majority of organizations (68.0 percent) provide no employee training on gender, inclusion and diversity. Approximately two in 10 (22.4 percent) provide some form of employee training, while 9.3 percent of respondents were unsure whether this training is offered by their organization.

### Tracking and measuring diversity

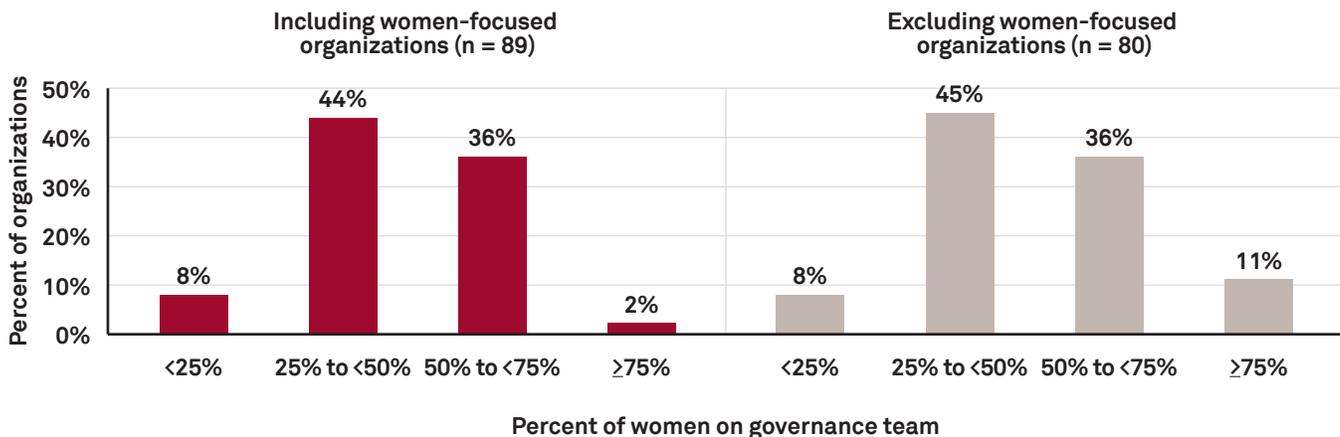
Consistent with the mandates of economic development and small business support, the majority of intermediaries (84.4 percent) track economic outcomes, including number of firms started and jobs created. Few organizations track broader socio-economic inputs or outcomes, such as community engagement, increased employability, and entrepreneurial skills and competencies.

Among the Ontario organizations that track and measure diversity:

- 32.6 percent (23.9 percent of all organizations) collect recruitment data;
- 17.4 percent (12.8 percent of all organizations) track the number of firms started;
- 17.4 percent (12.8 percent of all organizations) use metrics required by funders; and
- 15.1 percent (11.1 percent of all organizations) track the number of jobs created.

It is well documented that support from leadership is a critical element in implementing successful diversity agendas within organizations.<sup>46</sup> Leadership must also be held accountable to the organization's EDI strategy through performance measures and public transparency (e.g., recruitment of staff and clients, program and services design).<sup>47</sup> Not only is gender parity in governance important for advancing opportunities for women entrepreneurs, there is a clear business case for involving more women in decision-making in organizations. The advancement of women in leadership increases financial performance and innovation in organizations.<sup>48</sup>

Chart 6: Representation of women on the Board of Directors or Steering Committee (n = 89)



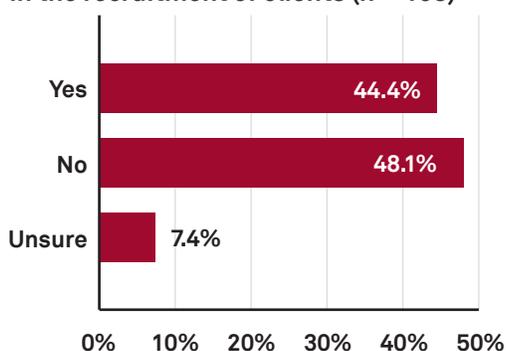
While commitment to gender diversity among North American organizations has markedly improved, research shows there is still a gap between the stated commitment and measurable action towards equity. It has been argued that many businesses do not approach a gender strategy with the same level of discipline as other business priorities.<sup>49</sup> The survey findings support this claim, particularly with respect to the few organizations that engage their staff in diversity and inclusion training. In this case, gender-sensitive and culturally relevant training is particularly important in regards to the recruitment of clients and design of programs for women entrepreneurs.<sup>50</sup>

### Recruiting diverse women entrepreneurs

Among the Ontario organizations surveyed, less than half (44.4 percent) considered gender and diversity when recruiting new enterprises or clients. Among Ontario organizations that do consider gender and diversity in client recruitment:

- 19 percent (6.8 percent of all organizations) offer women-specific programs; and
- 7.1 percent (2.6 percent of all organizations) consider how diverse (gender and other under-represented groups) potential client enterprises are when recruiting.

**Chart 7: Gender and diversity are considered in the recruitment of clients (n = 108)**



### Selecting and assessing clients

Among Ontario organizations, only 27.4 percent of organizations (n = 106) consider gender and diversity in the processes for *selecting* and *assessing* clients or client firms.

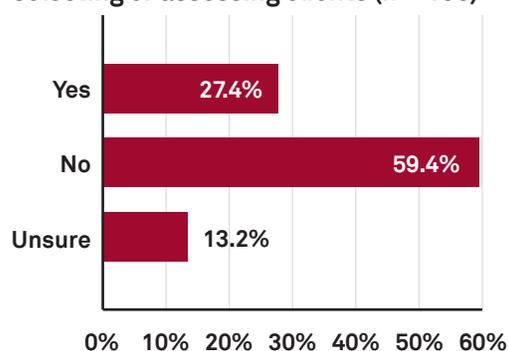
Of the Ontario organizations that consider gender and diversity in selecting and assessing client firms:

- 36.4 percent (6.8 percent of all organizations) do so through targeted programs;
- 31.8 percent (6.0 percent of all organizations) offer exclusive programs that are only available for groups of interest; and.
- 9.1 percent (1.7 percent of all organizations) employ blinded screening to reduce bias when selecting clients.

In considering gender and diversity, the potential for innovation is much higher with a diverse team. According to a 2011 *Forbes Insights* study, workforce diversity leads to economic growth, encourages new ideas, and introduces diverse problem-solving techniques that would not otherwise be available.<sup>51</sup>

As only 27.4 percent of Ontario support organizations consider gender and diversity in the selection and assessment of clients, there may be organizations with diverse leadership, or those with women leaders, that have been overlooked, thus minimizing opportunities for growth for these organizations.

**Chart 8: Gender and diversity considered when selecting or assessing clients (n = 106)**



### Targeting programs and services

Among the (approximately) 42.0 percent of Ontario organizations that target programs and services to women.

- 86.7 percent (33.3 percent of all organizations) offer one or more women-only business programs or services;
- 44.4 percent (17.1 percent of all organizations) retain advisors or employees who are experts on gender and women entrepreneurship;
- 33.3 percent (12.8 percent of all organizations) report having policies to support women entrepreneurs; and
- 11.1 percent (4.3 percent of all organizations) report that the mandate of the organization is explicitly focused on women entrepreneurs.

### Special support for women entrepreneurs

Approximately 39.8 percent of intermediaries offer special support to help women and diverse groups access programs and services. Among the remaining Ontario organizations, 44.4 percent offer no special supports, while 15.7 percent of respondents were unsure.

Among the 39.8 percent of those Ontario intermediaries that provide special support to help women and diverse groups:

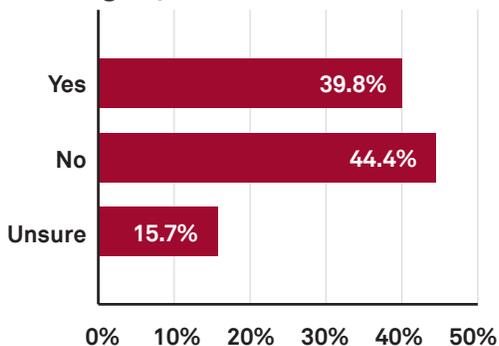
- 18.9 percent (6.0 percent of all organizations) offer a specific programming;
- 16.2 percent (5.1 percent of all organizations) offer childcare;
- 10.8 percent (3.4 percent of all organizations) offer transportation; and
- 5.4 percent (1.7 percent of all organizations) offer lower/no program costs.



Charts 9 and 10 illustrate the percentage of organizations that offer special supports to help women and diverse groups, and that consider gender and diversity in the design of programs and services.

The OECD (2016) *Report to G7 Leaders on Women and Entrepreneurship* indicates that having certain supports available, such as childcare (as is the case in Denmark and Sweden) leads to low gender gaps in entrepreneurial revenues.<sup>52</sup> The effort made by those organizations to offer programming specific to women is indicative of barriers that women entrepreneurs face, and the need to fill these gaps in order to facilitate growth of entrepreneurial women leaders.

**Chart 9: Special supports to help women and diverse groups (n = 100)**

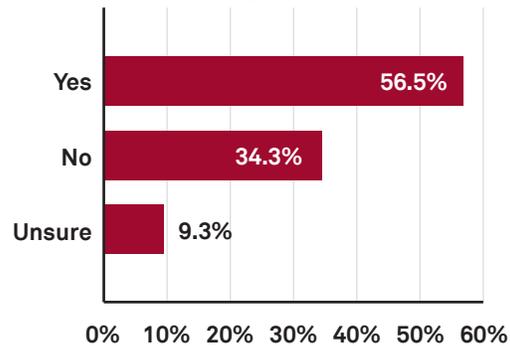


### Program and services design

When asked if gender and diversity are considered in designing and developing programs and services, 56.5 percent indicated “yes.” The organizations that consider gender and diversity in the design and development of programs were asked to describe *how* gender and diversity are considered:

- 34.6 percent (15.4 percent of all organizations) consider gender and diversity in designing programs to meet particular needs;
- 25.0 percent (11.1 percent of all organizations) engage in partnerships for program development or delivery; and
- 7.7 percent (3.4 percent of all organizations) make accommodations for specific groups.

**Chart 10: Gender and diversity are considered in the design of programs and services (n = 108)**



### ACCOUNTING FOR WOMEN-FOCUSED ORGANIZATIONS

Ten percent of the sample were women-focused support organizations (n = 12). Analysis was conducted to identify potential differences in practices between mainstream organizations and the overall sample. For this, the data was analyzed a second time, excluding the women’s business support organizations.

The sub-sample of mainstream organizations has a lower average representation of women in governance positions (44.2 percent versus 48.0 percent) ( $\pm 15.8$  percent versus  $\pm 21.4$  percent). When compared to the ecosystem as a whole, mainstream organizations were *less likely* to: offer programs or services explicitly targeting women (37.1 percent versus 42.1 percent); consider gender and diversity in the recruiting of new enterprises or clients (41.8 percent versus 44.4 percent); consider gender and diversity in designing and developing programs and services (53.1 percent versus 56.5 percent); consider gender and diversity when selecting or assessing clients (23.7 percent versus 27.4 percent); and support and/or partner with women-focused grassroots associations, industry networks and other communities that support women entrepreneurs (75.5 percent versus 77.8 percent).

Mainstream organizations were *more likely* to: require staff training on gender and diversity (23.5 percent versus 22.4 percent); track results (85.9 percent versus 84.4 percent); and provide seed financing (30.6 percent versus 24.1 percent), start-up loans (26.5 percent versus 24.1 percent), equity investment (18.4 percent versus 16.7 percent) and working capital (22.4 percent versus 20.4 percent).

## IMPLICATIONS

The survey findings present a clear need to engage more Ontario organizations in inclusive innovation strategies and to support EDI practices. One area of promise is the high number of organizations that support, or partner with women-focused organizations and associations, industry networks and other communities that support women. Diverse, inter-sector partnerships have been shown to enable mutually beneficial collaborations within the ecosystem, and create more effective mechanisms to support diverse entrepreneurs.<sup>53</sup>

The majority of collaboration takes the form of sponsorship or event support (57.5 percent) or cross-promotions (29.0 percent). More meaningful collaborations are needed, such as co-development of programs.<sup>54</sup> Greater knowledge-sharing and feedback from women-focused communities are also critical in building relevant programs and contributing to an inclusive innovation ecosystem.<sup>55</sup>

The survey findings suggest progress in terms of women's representation within enterprise support organizations, including board representation, outreach to women-focused centers, networks, etc. and support initiatives to increase entrepreneurial opportunities for women and diverse groups. However, the findings indicate potential areas of concern, such as a low number of organizations that support: employee training on gender, inclusion and diversity; special support for women and diverse groups; and strategies to ensure gender and diversity are considered in the design of programs and service.

Diversity training is a crucial element of ensuring the buy-in of key individuals and creating an inclusive organizational culture, which in turn influences the effectiveness of programs for women and diverse groups.<sup>56</sup> The low rate at which gender and diversity are considered in the selection and assessment of clients potentially demonstrates a parallel issue, raising concern about limited mechanisms for ensuring diversity and gender equity among client pools.

Selection bias is shown to be a major obstacle for women entrepreneurs, particularly in regards to accessing financing and resources,<sup>57</sup> suggesting a benefit to wider use of blind screening and similar mechanisms.<sup>58</sup> Yet, targeted or exclusive programs for under-represented groups were used by 6.8 percent of Ontario organizations, while blind screening was used by 1.7 percent of the organizations.

While outreach and targeted programs can be beneficial, implementing a gender and diversity strategy throughout all organizational processes (including recruitment, employee engagement and performance tracking) is needed to address systemic barriers for under-represented groups in entrepreneurship.<sup>59</sup>



5

# PRACTITIONERS' PERSPECTIVES ABOUT WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE SUPPORTS



## PRACTITIONERS' PERSPECTIVES ABOUT WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE SUPPORT<sup>iii</sup>

The 25 onsite interviews provided the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of practitioners' perspectives about gender and inclusive innovation. The interviews also enabled the researchers to probe about organizational capacity and impacts of i2 strategies, policies and practices.

In this section, we report on the rationale, barriers and status of i2 in Ontario intermediaries, as described by the participant interviewees. Illustrative quotes, comparative findings from the literature and implications for building i2 strategies are also presented. The selection of organizations was based

on regional representation, mandate, client profiles (e.g., students, newcomers) and legal structure (e.g., non-profit, for-profit, hybrid). Discourse analysis techniques categorized participants' statements. The case or respondent number of the quote is indicated in brackets at the end of statement.

The analysis of statements suggests that most organizational-level EDI initiatives were informal, in development or aspirational. Only a minority of participants described a strategic approach to managing i2 within their organizations. These initial observations are consistent with the survey findings.

<sup>iii</sup> This section was compiled by Dr. B. Orser (Telfer School of Management). For further details contact [orser@telfer.uottawa.ca](mailto:orser@telfer.uottawa.ca).



Most interview participants described the need to increase the percentage of women within existing programs and services, or women-focused events and programs. Few discussed the need to modify or construct gender-inclusive content within existing programs and services.

## APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

EDI were top-of-mind issues for many of the interview participants. Ontario practitioners shared a range of views about enterprise support for women entrepreneurs, gender equity, diversity, and i2. With respect to the *approaches* to supporting gender and diversity, three themes emerged: all are welcome, there is a need to support women in mainstream operations, and the value of women-only, feminist, and women-centered enterprise supports.

### All are welcome

Participant statements grouped within this theme capture the view that the organization was welcoming and open to all. Decisions were based on perceived merit of client firms, not gender. A minority of participants stated there are few reasons to focus on women, or women-inclusive business support services. Resource limitations were typically described as a further rationale for not supporting women-focused support services. These perspectives were expressed by men and women:



*Do we talk about who we have and who is welcome? ...we're open for business and we are very inclusive, and we want to have anybody come in. We're not specifically saying, we'd like to have more women, we'd like to have more diversity, we'd like to have more companies from the under-represented areas, Indigenous... (C22)*



## Gender mainstreaming

Most Ontario intermediaries perceive that they are already supporting i2, and that they are generally meeting the needs of women-identified clients. Among mainstream intermediaries, few provided dedicated women-focused services as core deliverables. Only 7 of the 25 interview participants described a strategy to support equity and diversity (e.g., executive level commitment, monitoring organizational cultures, client/community input in program design and approval, etc.). Most interview participants described the need to increase the percentage of women within existing programs and services, or women-focused events and programs. Few discussed the need to modify or construct gender-inclusive content within existing programs and services.



*We don't proactively track that. In all our job postings, we talk about, sort of, equal opportunity employer, diversity and we foster that, and embrace it. ...We view diversity as a strength ... people have different experiences and different perspectives, and so that certainly is, you know, a component of our thought process as we think about. (C20)*





### Women-only, feminist, and women-focused supports

Interviewees grouped within this theme cited the value of and need for women-centers or women-focused business support services to address perceived gender barriers to women's enterprise support, and gender challenges of business ownership.

Women-focused centers and programs were viewed as innovative, safe spaces, a place for women to build self-confidence, to mentor or be mentored, and to network with peers and like-minded others. Illustrative program content included core entrepreneurial skills and competencies, augmented by gender- and feminist-informed insights, such as focusing on managing social capital (e.g., networks and referrals), alternative enterprise models (e.g., feminist business models), health and wellness, self-reliance, self-confidence, and inclusive definitions of entrepreneurial success.

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*They want to trust an environment to come into, speak their minds, say "I don't understand," ... respected, and not held back. (C4)*

*Women are intimidated, they're not welcomed, they don't feel like it's a natural place for them. ... Number one is, the environment has to change and it's not gonna change overnight. And it's not gonna change just because women move in. Number two is women need a leg up and they need to feel more comfortable and more confident within themselves that they're great business people... And so, in order to do that they need support of like-minded people, and if they're women then so be it and that's great. (C19)*

### CRITICISM OF MAINSTREAM AND WOMEN-ONLY/WOMEN-FOCUSED SERVICES

Criticisms of mainstream interventions were voiced by interview participants, including the view that Ontario innovation intermediaries are aware of gender biases, fail to respond to the needs of women clients, or pay lip service to equity, diversity or inclusion (e.g., "checking the checkbox").

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*There are lots of people in OCE [Ontario Centers of Excellence] that understand both the ways in which their structures are building in biases, barriers, and so on. But the leadership, like, use a picture of the OCE board at events... "What's wrong with this picture?" (C10)*

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Criticisms of women-only and women-focused intermediaries were also cited, such as the need to have men and women at the table, higher capacity of mainstream versus women-focused support organization, and need to focus efforts on addressing mainstream organizational-level barriers.

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*I still believe that for acceleration of this movement to happen, we need women and men working together in ways that are helpful to both. And it's more of a combination of all things. ... So, whatever it takes to get women ready to be able to be part of that, and what is it that men need to know ... It's not about enabling, it's not about creating an environment, you have to be in an environment where everyone appreciates each other's values. (C19)*

Organizational leaders cannot assume colleagues, funders and other stakeholders hold similar perspectives. When discussing enterprise supports for women entrepreneurs, it is important to share perspectives about alternative i2 mechanisms to ensure that others are ‘talking the same language’ about gender and inclusive innovation. The findings reinforce the earlier recommendation of tracking of socio-economic inputs and outcomes in order to validate assumptions, such as ‘all are welcome.’

## INTERSECTIONALITY AND ENTERPRISE SUPPORTS

Participant interviewee described the importance of employing an intersectional lens in constructing small business supports. One participant, for example, cited the need to develop women-focused newcomer networks and entrepreneurial support organizations. It was explained that, because most settlement services focus on securing paid employment, there is a gap for

highly skilled, experienced immigrants who are entrepreneurial. Where small business support services are available, most focus on self-employment or micro-enterprises. Professional credentials of newcomers are often ignored. Innovation support intermediaries fall outside the purview of settlement referral services. As a result, entrepreneurial women tend not to be referred to innovation/ entrepreneurship organizations.

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*They went through to the typical settlement agency. They were sent for English training. From India... When we're dealing with the newcomer entrepreneurship space, are you dealing with older entrepreneurs? They have business experience from somewhere else, not necessarily from here, and there's a whole leveling conversation that has to happen. (C7)*

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A standardized client intake form, one that respects legislated privacy guidelines, will facilitate information gathering, including client profiles and enterprise types (e.g. social, co-operative, for-profit, not-for-profit).

Several interview participants described the challenges of women entrepreneurs living in rural Northern Ontario, noting that the criteria of most government funders respond to the needs of Southern business owners. In a Northern context, gender-related challenges for start-up and scale-up include limited access to the Internet, physical and emotional isolation, a slower pace of acceptance of women as entrepreneurs, and male power brokers within communities who can be reluctant to bring women business owners into their networks.

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*If you look at real remote and Northern Ontario, it's totally different. Doing business in the north and the challenges and things that the women face... what they have to work with and even simple as Internet access and having a computer because you can't do business, you know, these days you just can't unless you're on-line. (C13)*

Sector influences were described. One interview participant, for example, remarked on the challenges of recruiting women clients, mentors and role models into an advanced technology intermediary, assuming there are too few women engaged in technology or innovation:

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*It's very difficult to find. For example, in technology. few senior professors are female. ...they're already tapped. ...the choices are limited. (C24)*

Recruitment strategies may differ by client income profile. For example, to reach women entrepreneurs living near or under the poverty line, one organization employed targeted social media channels (such as, Twitter, Facebook), and partnered with multiple support organizations. In expanding women-focused education and training programs, another organization collaborated with a local women's crisis center.

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*...they definitely make either under or just above the poverty line, so we definitely gear the recruitment towards women like that. So, we have different accessible Facebook groups. ...we have Twitter groups, social media pages. ...we've done different information sessions to organizations across the city that deal with these types of groups. ...We try to make different partnerships in the city, in order to gear to the specific groups, to recruit these women. (C15)*

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GBA+ analysis of both funders' performance criteria and small business support organizations will inform practitioners about the differing needs of diverse women entrepreneurs. A standardized client intake form, one that respects legislated privacy guidelines, will facilitate information gathering, including client profiles and enterprise types (e.g. social, co-operative, for-profit, not-for-profit). For illustrative content, see the University of Toronto's job *Applicant Diversity Survey*.<sup>60</sup>

## RATIONALES FOR GENDER-INCLUSIVE ENTERPRISE SUPPORTS

The majority of Ontario practitioners adhere to the business case or diversity-as-competitive-advantage, or economic rationale for supporting i2.<sup>61</sup> Only four interview participants cited equity as a rationale for supporting i2. This finding is not surprising, given the economic development mandate of most small business programs, and evidence of preference for larger, established SMEs.<sup>62</sup> The focus on diversity-as-competitive-advantage further dilutes the engagement of *diverse* women entrepreneurs and alternative business models (e.g., social, environmental, feminist, relational, community-based enterprises).

Rationales to support i2 were then categorized into four underlying themes: personal, firm, industry, and institutional-level rationale:

*Personal-level rationales* were associated with participants' experiences of previous or current business ownership, having family who identify as LGBTQI2, and/or a daughter or woman partner who owns or owned a small business.

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*Our CEO has taken such a strong stand, he's got a daughter who's going into ... She's got a software development business... So, when he stands up, he speaks from a very strong perspective of authenticity. (C2)*

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*Firm-level rationales* were associated with enhanced creativity, design and user-driven innovation and hence, enhanced performance of the business. This rationale echoes observations about enhanced performance of diverse teams and leadership in large corporations.

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*... our founders were very intentional and they curated a founding community of members who are working in the sciences and the arts and the environment. The premise being is that when these different experiences come together, new ideas emerge. So, diversity is in our DNA from that perspective. (C18)*

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*Sector-level rationales* captured statements about changing client expectations (e.g., clients prioritizing people and planet over profit and other financial indicators), the need to support regional economic prosperity, and the value and importance of different types of innovation. Two interview participants, for example, described transition in innovation from products to services, and how women entrepreneurs are more likely to be engaged in social and service innovations. Two academic interview participants described how students expect university-based entrepreneurship services to support non-profit and social enterprises. For example:

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*I think there's a changing level of interest in general from young women, from young people in general and entrepreneurship as an option in our community. (C16)*

*The students know that everything needs to have, in this world, some kind of social understanding or you can't be sustainable." (C8)*

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*Institutional-level rationales* reflected statements about the value of supporting women entrepreneurs as a means to commercialize innovation, stimulate economic growth, and support export.

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*So, we understand that's a segment that is increasing and growing, and coming into our center, so this is why we've worked with [XX] and identified that there's an opportunity for a specific women entrepreneurship program. (C9)*

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The time period in which the onsite interviews were conducted (November 2018 to February 2019) coincided with two large federal requests for proposals (RFPs). Innovation Science and Economic Development, and Status of Women Canada funding

focused on women entrepreneurs, women-focused ecosystem support and research.<sup>63</sup> It was therefore not surprising that government grants and contributions were cited as a catalyst or rationale for gender and i2.

To provide comparative insight, Box 1 presents a synthesis of lessons learned from international case studies about gender inclusive innovation services (lanes-Satorra & Paunov, 2017).<sup>64</sup> The rationales from multiple country policies and programs align with the rationales expressed by the Ontario interviewees. It is notable, however, that Ontario participants also cited personal motives. This may have been a product of the study methodology, a methodology that enabled interviewees to share personal experiences and express opinions (e.g., semi-structured and open-ended questions versus review of published case reports). Alternatively, cultural and other differences may enable Ontario practitioners to voice personal motives for supporting inclusive innovation.

To inform conversations about the merit of women-only business support programs and services, Box 2 presents a summary of Canadian client rationales for accessing women-only small business support services.

### Box 1: International rationales for gender and i2

In a review of international practices to support gender and i2, the OECD (2017) has reported that most interventions seek to accomplish one or more of the following outcomes.

The rationales provide a checklist of performance indicators for Ontario i2 interventions.

- Enhance the integration of disadvantaged groups in innovation activities by promoting entrepreneurship among those groups.
- Promote firm growth and job creation in the formal economy through support provided to early-stage start-ups and SMEs led by disadvantaged groups.
- Address credit market failures faced by entrepreneurs from disadvantaged groups (e.g. overly strict conditions for accessing credit, high borrowing costs, borrower discouragement).
- Promote technology transfer, such as the adoption of new technologies or organizational methods, by firms in less innovative sectors.
- Increase the productivity and innovation performance of less innovative firms and sectors (e.g. through provision of training or business support services which increases the productivity of resources used).

Source: Ianes-Satorra, S. & Paunov, C. (2017). *Inclusive innovation policies: Lessons from international case studies*, OECD Science, Technology and Industry Working Papers, OECD Publishing, Paris.

### Box 2: Rationales for accessing women-only small business support services

Why do some entrepreneurs prefer women-only or women-centered, while others prefer mainstream business support services? Telfer School of Management studies have reported on the motives of Canadian women entrepreneurs in accessing women-only small business support organizations. The insights can be used to inform discussions about the merits and design of mainstream and women-focused i2 initiatives. When asked to explain why users accessed women-only small business training, women entrepreneurs stated that they sought:

- A community of practice with like-minded women business owners.
- Staff who understood their needs as women, and services targeted specifically to women.
- Empowerment, comfort and support.
- The opportunity to learn from other women.
- A place where they would be welcomed.
- Learning environments that are less stressful.
- Sources of market intelligence about their target market including other women.
- Mentorship and role models that demonstrate leadership skills.
- Acknowledgement of gender differences in founder experiences and knowledge.
- Open conversations about the gender-related challenges of business ownership.
- Strategies to address gender stereotypes and insights about how they impact women.
- Role models and stories about successful women entrepreneurs.
- Time management training that acknowledges their stage of life.
- Training about rights and benefits (e.g., parental leave).

Source: Orser, B., Elliott, C. & Findlay Thompson, S. (2012). Women-focused small business programming: Client motives and perspectives, *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 4(3), 236–265.

## BARRIERS TO i2

The interview participants identified a number of underlying barriers to building i2 mechanisms in the Ontario ecosystem. Primary barriers include:

- Limited knowledge about EDI
- Limited executive commitment to EDI
- Challenges recruiting diverse entrepreneurs
- Organizational and industry culture
- Limited measurement and tracking
- Funding criteria
- Limited knowledge about supplier diversity
- Absence of EDI performance metrics
- Language of entrepreneurship
- i2 remains a women's issue
- Sexist behaviours and practices

### Limited knowledge about EDI

Foundational challenges cited by the interview participants were limited knowledge, expertise and resource capacity to support I2 within their respective organizations. This information is consistent with the survey findings that few small business organizations in Ontario offer employee or client EDI training. Of those organizations that do, most were situated in or affiliated with large institutions, such as universities or healthcare centers.

Interview participants cited concerns about *how* equity and diversity are conceptualized within the ecosystem, including in the design and delivery of 'inclusive' business support programs and services. One participant expressed tolerance of gender role stereotyping, where male clients who prefer male advisors are assigned male advisors. The statement illustrates a lost opportunity to challenge gendered assumptions about the competence and acumen of women advisors:

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*You have to have a board that is well versed in equity, diversity. This board is not. (C7)*

*When I talk to a lot of the centers about gender inclusive programming, I get the blank stare. And my sense is they're not familiar or aware of what that might be. ...they feel that if they have women in their programs, they're gender inclusive. If they say, "Anyone can be in this program, all people can be in this program", they think that's being inclusive. They don't realize the diversity within the gender as well. And diversity period. (C17)*

*They [male clients] don't really want to listen to a woman. ... like if [name of woman advisor] goes in and talks to them, they don't seem to listen. We don't care. I don't care. As long as they get where they need to go... (C16)*

---

Several explanations may account for limited capacity to support EDI initiatives within Ontario small business support organizations:

- First, few studies have reported on the *challenges* of implementing i2 within small business, innovation and social enterprise mainstream *and* women-focused intermediaries. While there is considerable research about promising EDI practices within large corporations, such insights may or may not be applicable to small business intermediaries and their client firms. For example, corporate EDI practices may not incorporate sector norms, or inform gender-smart training or curricula. Guidelines are advanced in the next section.
- Second, funder assessment criteria to report on EDI strategies and outcomes is new for most Ontario small business organizations. Benchmarks to gauge organizational EDI performance are also in early development. To date, most assessment criteria are predicated on practices of large employers. There is an absence of standardized client intake criteria (forms) or data collection protocols. Baseline data are essential in monitoring and tracking progress.

- Third, in many cases, the organization’s founder’(s) commitment to gender and diversity was a legacy or pillar of the organization. This was, in part, evidenced in experiential differences between founder/managers of mainstream and women-only organizations—experiential differences that may contribute to knowledge gaps about gender and diversity. Leaders of advanced technology-focused accelerators, for example, were predominantly those with corporate experience in advanced technology. Founders/managers of women-focused organizations were universally women with small business ownership experience or involvement in feminist, poverty reduction or women’s networks. This is illustrated in the following two statements. The first is a leader of a mainstream organization. The second is a leader of a women-focused organization.

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*When [XX] first started, it was just as the IT boom, the dot com boom and bust happened, and so they created this thinking it'd be all IT-based companies... (C16)*

*My background again is ... I really love community outreach work, working with marginalized communities and demographics. So, I've always been interested in that kind of work. And I am a feminist, so I had a natural kind of inclination towards the subject matter. (C1)*

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Organizational commitment to gender diversity that is only legitimized or supported by funding is vulnerable to changes in leadership, and changes in government funding priorities.

### Limited executive commitment

This barrier captures challenges associated with organizational governance and leadership, including level of executive commitment to EDI. Gendered resource constraints, such as pay gaps between mainstream and women-focused program personnel, were described. Two interview participants cited trivializing of women’s enterprise and associated trivialization of women-focused programs. Legitimization of women-focused initiatives (gender and i2) was earned only upon receipt of significant program funding. Organizational commitment to gender diversity that is only legitimized or supported by funding is vulnerable to changes in leadership, and changes in government funding priorities.

### Challenges recruiting diverse women entrepreneurs

Interview participants cited challenges associated with recruiting diverse women onto boards and committees, and as mentors and clients. This was particularly evident in mainstream organizations mandated to support advanced technologies. Related issues included reliance on closed referral networks, and the observation that the same, often White women, sit on multiple boards or steering committees.

## Organizational and industry culture

Interview participants described the funding prioritization targeted at sectors and types of innovations dominated by men, resistance and push back from organizational gatekeepers (e.g., board chair, senior academic), a mindset of scarcity versus 'floating all boats', and the reluctance of leaders to share or give up power to enable change.

Several participants remarked about the tendency to view other small business organizations as competitors rather than complementary resources, an attitude seen to limit collaboration and knowledge sharing. Several interview participants discussed conflicting role expectations, and power relations within their respective organizations between professional groups (such as academics and non-academic 'civilians').

Interview participants cited barriers associated with engaging women-focused community partners. This included a reluctance of some women's organizations to collaborate due to skepticism, negative perceptions about entrepreneurship or capitalism, and the opportunistic behaviour of business support organizations to seek collaboration only when funding agencies specify the need to engage women-focused partners.

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*I think that's an aspect that people don't talk about, like at the power brokers in the community, it's usually the men and they usually don't let the women in and they don't perceive those women entrepreneurs in the same light... (C13)*

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## Limited measurement and tracking

As evidenced in the survey findings, reporting on the status of women entrepreneurs is not an industry norm. When asked to describe measurement and tracking protocols, most interview participants cited the percentage of women clients, employees, mentors, or board members. Only two of the 25 interview participants cited equity targets as performance outcomes. Data gathering and reporting on clients and client firms was described as complex, given privacy legislation and a reluctance of some clients to self-identify as members of an under-represented group.

Reporting and administration burden associated with grants and contributions to support women-focused infrastructure and programming were described as particularly onerous compared to larger grants. Funder requirements to engage community groups are typically without commensurate resources. Several participants stated that effort and time could be better directed to program design and delivery, rather than bureaucratic oversight:

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*I'm not aware of any strategies that are currently being used, but I am sure that we will keep it in mind, going forward with recruitment etc. ... We don't formally monitor or have metrics. However, we accept any clients, i.e., we are agnostic in the sense..." (C12)*

*We had a big long discussion with this women's roundtable and everybody had opinions on the education systems, lots of different opinions on what drives this bus, but it was all anecdotal. Nobody really had any hard data that said this is what would work or wouldn't work to change. (C16)*

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## Funding criteria

The engagement of diverse women entrepreneurs is not a performance indicator for most funders. Interview participants reported that governments, at all levels, prioritize economic outcomes over social, diversity and other types of outcomes. Funding criteria then biases client selection, favouring R&D-intensive SMEs and sector-specific SMEs. Preferred clients were described as “high potential”, “unicorns” and “hockey stick” businesses.

Funder priorities were also described as misaligned with the needs of the small business organizations and their clients. Competitive funding applications were seen to hinder collaboration, particularly among women-focused and mainstream organizations. In some instances, this resulted in program duplication.

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*Each donor has their own lens as to what they want to see, what their priorities are, what they want... (C10)*

*I think it becomes fragmented too because then there's just a focus on let's just work on immigrant women or diverse groups or let's just work on women who meet or are below our women's [program threshold]. (C13)*

---

Interview participants cited the tendency of governments to fund new or pilot women-focused initiatives versus core deliverables. Funding agencies were also seen as more likely to support women-focused initiatives that were heavily promoted via social media (e.g., chasing “shiny new...”) versus established programs and intermediaries with demonstrated track records.

Finally, frustration was expressed about the propensity of government to fund businesses in advanced technologies versus those sectors in which women-owned businesses operate, and the lack of coordination or cohesion in government funding criteria.

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*I believe that the way funding is done right now is really by sector or type as opposed to more collective, on how you're going to actually bring up the economy of a particular region. And then, it's saying that there's a lot of assumptions of what's going to bring up the economy in a particular region. Most people say it's tech. Most people believe that tech is the fastest way to do it. And what they forget is that there's already a number of businesses that are supporting the community in a very wholesome way. (C19)*

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The participant interviews found that EDI strategies are predicated on the opinions of the organization's leadership, including assumptions that women are well-served within existing support services. There remains a lack of evidence-based insights about diverse women entrepreneurs' support needs, and the value, effectiveness or impact of Ontario small business support organizations.

These findings indicate the need for holistic strategies rather than discrete (one off or ad hoc) programs or events to support diverse women entrepreneurs. There remains a disconnect in funder expectations targeted at women-focused entrepreneurial infrastructure and mainstream innovation (e.g., federal Women Entrepreneurship Strategy and Innovation Superclusters Initiative).

Government policy should hold funders and fund recipients accountable for EDI inputs and outcomes. Interview participants also sought simplified, streamlined reporting and administrative oversight, particularly for women-focused funded programs. This was important given limited scale and operational capacity of most organizations.



### Limited knowledge about supplier diversity

The **Diversity Assessment Tool** specifies the need to integrate inclusion across value chains (e.g. procurement, operations, R&D, products, services, marketing, communications, CSR). Supplier diversity is one such mechanism. Interview participants cited several related concerns, including: limited knowledge about supplier diversity and supplier diversity support organization; duplication of certification bodies that designate 'women-owned' enterprises; institutional policies that impede supplier diversity contracts (e.g., unions, pre-existing contracts, need for multiple bids, reporting burden of transgressions above a minimum amount); and lack of demonstrated government engagement in supplier diversity. The "government" was seen to not 'walk the talk' about supporting supplier diversity.

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*The [XX] government talks a good story, but I don't see the serious commitment at all when you go underneath the covers. ...Certainly, even within our own government, the U.S. has a public procurement, the government must do right. They had it for years. ...they need those corporate supply chains opened. What are we doing? We can't even define what women own business?" I said [XX] has, there's a few out there, I think we pick one and go. Like, come on, don't give me that. (C4)*

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The language used to promote events, mentoring or sponsorship opportunities, and courses was also seen to influence the profile of registrants (e.g., who arrives at the door).

Government agencies should lead the i2 agenda by example. This includes engaging in supplier diversity to support diverse women-owned businesses, co-ordinating federal/provincial and regional funding criteria to help avoid idiosyncratic, duplication, and fragmentation of funding, and requiring funding applicants to explain internal mechanisms to support i2. Where intermediaries are situated in or affiliated with large institutions, human resource policies (e.g., codes of conduct) and supports should be reviewed and potentially adopted to support all personnel (e.g., mentors, judges of competitions).

### Gendered perceptions about entrepreneurship

Interview participants remarked on negative connotations associated with ‘entrepreneurship’ (e.g., macho, masculine, males in high tech, for-profit, opportunism). The language used to promote events, mentoring or sponsorship opportunities, and courses was also seen to influence the profile of registrants (e.g., who arrives at the door). Phrases such as changemakers, social innovators and impact investment, for example, are more likely to draw entrepreneurs and innovators interested in social change and community-development.

The terms feminist, women-focused and women-only were positioned as problematic. One interview participant expressed concern about being labelled a “White feminist” organization. For another interview participant, ‘feminists’ were perceived to be those who seek to exclude men.

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*We are doing everything we can not to be labelled a White feminist organization, we’re very, very careful about that. (C26)*

*We are very much about inclusion and women and men working together to support women-led businesses. We believe men need to be at the table. And so, I don’t necessarily think that all of the champions and feminists that I’ve come across adopt that philosophy. Here at [XX], we have because we think it’s absolutely integral. (C2)*

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Another interview participant remarked that because the organization was staffed primarily by women, some members of the public perceived the organization provided only women’s programs. No such comment was made by leaders of organizations that were staffed primarily by men.

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*We’ve been accused because there’s so many women here that we only deliver women-focused programs. (C13)*

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## i2 remains a women's issue

Inclusive innovation was described as a women's issue versus sector or organizational issue. Two interview participants noted that when women-focused organizations are asked to share gender and diversity expertise, bureaucrats tend to assume time and other expenses will be borne by the women-focused organizations, without compensation:

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*There's a lot of momentum, and the majority of that momentum's coming from women. If men aren't in those rooms, then they're not learning what they need to learn. So, I'm so curious how to change that. (C18)*

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Concern that i2 is a women's issue was coupled by comments about the value of difficult conversations, need to identify one's position of power, and the dynamics of power relations. One interview participant, for example, raised the concern about low awareness of privilege among business support personnel.

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*It's challenging. I think a lot of it too, it's awareness. People are not necessarily aware that they're being excluded. We don't understand our privilege... We don't understand how privileged we are, what we have around us... (C14)*

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## Sexist behaviour and practices

Ontario small business organizations are not immune to sexist attitudes and behaviour. Interview participants noted gender pay gaps between mainstream and women-focused program staff. Two participants of university-based intermediaries described a chilly climate for women professionals in academe.

These multi-dimensional challenges in Ontario small business and innovation support organizations present further evidence as to why EDI initiatives require strategic planning, executive leadership, continuous oversight, performance targets, and monitoring of outcomes.

A woman with dark curly hair, wearing a white lab coat and clear safety glasses, is focused on adjusting a piece of blue equipment in a laboratory. In the background, another person in a lab coat is visible but out of focus. The scene is lit with warm, orange-toned light.

6

# CONCLUSIONS

## CONCLUSIONS

The survey and interview findings demonstrate the need for holistic strategies to support i2. This approach differs from current practice. The assessment documented a range of perspectives and assumptions about how women entrepreneurs are served (or not served) within Ontario business support organizations.

The findings suggest the need for formalized EDI initiatives that are led by executive leadership teams. Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) training for staff and clients is also recommended. EDI training content should reflect sector norms and needs. The scale and scope of i2 interventions will be dependent on organizational size. Organizational leaders are encouraged to hire advisors who can provide much-needed expertise and coaching on EDI.

Government funding agencies should hold business support organizations accountable for equity, diversity and inclusion inputs, processes and outcomes. Measures of organizational performance should include indicators of economic *and* social impact, such as changes in organizational values and industry culture, and knowledge about gender-related influences in venture creation.<sup>65</sup> The assessment suggests a need for funders to streamline reporting and administrative oversight, particularly for women-focused programs. Funders' accountability requirements should be accompanied with associated funding for small business organizations.

Finally, this report calls for government agencies to lead the i2 agenda by example. This includes engaging in supplier diversity to support diverse women-owned businesses, co-ordinating federal/provincial and regional funding criteria to avoid service duplication and fragmentation, and requiring all funding applicants to explain mechanisms to support i2. Where intermediaries are situated in or affiliated with large institutions, human resource policies (e.g., codes of conduct) and supports should be reviewed and potentially adopted for support personnel (e.g., mentors, judges of competitions). Additional resources to support EDI follow.

To inform practice, the RDI **Diversity Assessment Tool** (DAT) provides an organizational assessment framework. Telfer **Gender-smart Entrepreneurship Education and Training** (G-EET) provides a services and program design framework. These tools can assist practitioners in constructing comprehensive strategies to strengthen ecosystem supports for diverse women entrepreneurs and other under-represented groups.

A close-up photograph of a woman with blonde hair, wearing safety glasses and a red helmet, looking intently at a wooden surface. She is wearing yellow and black work gloves. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor or industrial setting.

7

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A. DIVERSITY ASSESSMENT TOOL (DAT)<sup>iv</sup>

The **Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT)** was developed to guide organizations, whatever their size, sector, or stage of development, to develop and implement a strategy to advance diversity and inclusion by treating them as core to every aspect of the organization's operations.

Developed initially for the ICT sector, the **Diversity Assessment Tool** has been applied to core players in the innovation ecosystem including financial and educational institutions, accelerators and incubators, and government as well as in health care and policing. The following summary provides an overview of the approach RDI recommends to developing an inclusive organization and contributing to an inclusive innovation ecosystem.

**Governance and Leadership** Practices to ensure commitment to gender diversity and inclusion are integrated into your organization:

- What are the governance and decision-making structures in the organization?
- Does the board consider diversity in identifying and developing candidates?
- Is there a skills matrix that considers diversity at every level of decision making—through boards, advisory committees, and adjudication/selection processes?
- Does outreach for recruitment extend beyond established referrals networks?
- Within large organizations, is there a Chief Diversity Office with executive status, as well as an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Council with influence?
- Are explicit diversity goals and policies communicated internally and externally?
- Are there diversity targets among leadership (e.g., boards, executive team, committees), where diversity reflects regional profiles of women entrepreneurs (e.g., intersectional profile of women entrepreneurs differs across geographic regions)?
- Are there clear and explicit statements regarding diversity and inclusion with a focus on the 'tone at the top' and leaders who communicate commitments and link diversity and inclusion to organizational performance and expectations.

### Human Resource (HR) Policies & Practices

Practices to ensure the organization's HR policies and practices enhance gender diversity and inclusion:

- Are there clear policies, such as codes of conduct expected of staff, mentors, clients and other stakeholders?
- Are there mandatory training for all leadership, staff, and clients (e.g., onboarding, ongoing). This may include unconscious bias, privilege, legal and ethical responsibilities, etc.
- Are there open and transparent recruitment, selection and advancement policies that address competencies bias free?
- Does the organization support mentoring, coaching and sponsorship of high potential individuals from under-represented groups?
- Does the organization support family-friendly policies, including daycare, respite and flexible working arrangements?

**Measurement, Tracking and Reporting** Practices to better measure, track and report on supporting diverse women:

- Has the organization established targets for each aspect of the diversity and inclusion strategy?
- Are management and staff held accountable for meeting EDI targets?
- Do staff and client engagement surveys include self-identification demographic data?
- Does the organization track staff and client retention, complaints, exit interviews and use multi-method approaches to gather data to inform strategies and provide feedback loops including listening and observation?

<sup>iv</sup> This section was compiled by Dr. W. Cukier and staff of the Ryerson Diversity Institute. For further details contact [wcukier@ryerson.ca](mailto:wcukier@ryerson.ca).

**Diversity Across the Value Chain** Practices to embed diversity in every aspect of the value chain regardless of the size or nature of the enterprise:

Whether large or small, public sector or private sector, all organizations have a set of activities that add value. (e.g., procurement, operations, R&D, products, services). Applying diversity assessment criteria throughout the organization's core activities is critical to embedding it in the organization's strategy. The criteria can also be used to advance inclusion in organizations across the ecosystem, including within post-secondary institutions, business support institutions, government agencies, and incubators/accelerators.

Some of the questions the DAT poses include:

- Do the procurement policies include gender and diversity targets? How does the organization engage with women-owned and led businesses?
- Is diversity and inclusion considered at every stage of operations, regardless of the business?
  - For example, in post-secondary institutions, how is it embedded in the student recruitment and support, in curriculum design and pedagogy, in research and development?
  - Within lending programs, how is it embedded in selection criteria, design and delivery of financial products and services?
  - In incubators, how is EDI considered in the recruitment, the selection, the support, and the evaluation of clients?
- Are the unique needs of diverse women considered in the outbound logistics or in the delivery of services and supports? Are there flexible formats and opportunities for clients to access products and services in ways that accommodate their needs?
- Are diversity and inclusion considered in the marketing and promotion processes? Are diverse women represented in traditional and online marketing and communications products? Are the needs of diverse women included in the design of the marketing and communications strategy?
- How are customers and clients tracked and supported after sales/services? Are diversity and inclusion considered in alumni and customer programs?

**Outreach** Practices to improve outreach tailored to groups of women entrepreneurs (e.g., Indigenous, racialized, newcomers, women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)):

- How does the organization engage with the external community to build the pipeline for diverse women and girls (e.g., What are the activities upstream? How does the organization interact with primary schools, high schools and post-secondary institutions?)
- How does the organization use its sphere of influence, its government relations and corporate social responsibility and philanthropic/volunteer activities to support women in leadership and entrepreneurship activities? Does it apply a diversity and inclusion lens?
- How do leaders engage externally with advocacy efforts to advance women entrepreneurs and leaders (e.g., the '30 percent club', through professional associations, conferences, etc.)?
- How does the organization engage with women-led organizations?
- How does it collaborate to advance an inclusive innovation ecosystem?

## APPENDIX B. GENDER-SMART ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION & TRAINING (G-EET)<sup>v</sup>

**Gender-smart entrepreneurship education and training (G-EET)** is a framework to support stakeholders in applying a gender lens in service and program design, development, delivery and evaluation. The G-EET can bolster market readiness, enhance the relevance of programs and services, and ensure that clients are knowledgeable about gender-related barriers and opportunities associated with venture creation.<sup>66</sup>

The framework can also be used to structure conversations about gender, and intersectionality within small business education and training organizations. We have used the framework to assess programs within mainstream and women-focused small business organizations and technical support services (e.g., National Research Council of Canada, Industrial Research Assistance Program). The framework is illustrated in Figure 3.

G-EET is founded on the authors' peer-reviewed research publications focusing on women's entrepreneurship, small business education and training, and small business/feminist policy (Orser & Elliott, 2015).<sup>67,68,69,70</sup> The tool has been field tested at the University of Ottawa within undergraduate and graduate level entrepreneurship, new venture creation, and women in enterprise courses in the faculties of Management and Engineering. Program formats ranged from 12-week introductory entrepreneurship courses to women-only engineering seminars. Cross-cultural relevance of G-EET has been assessed in Jordan among master trainers and classroom consultants, in collaboration with the Canadian Bureau of International Education and INJAZ (Jordan).

An understanding of gender-related barriers to venture creation is required to develop, deliver and evaluate *Gender-smart Entrepreneurship Education and Training*. In our book *Feminine Capital. Unlocking the Power of Women Entrepreneurs* (Orser & Elliott, 2015) we describe the gendered nature of entrepreneurship, including stereotypes and unconscious biases. Evidence-based learning aids help readers to adopt a gender inclusive lens to business support programs and services.

In collaboration with **Scotiabank Women Initiative™ Knowledge Centre**, we've created more gender-smart learning aids. Download these user-friendly resources for use in the classroom, seminars or individual learning environments.

To further inform gender inclusive business support services and programs, resources are available through these websites. Use the reports, business model canvas, and assessment tools to construct gender-smart entrepreneurship education and training that meet your client and student needs.

### Women's Enterprise Knowledge Platforms

[Women Entrepreneurship Research Exchange](#)

[Institute for Gender and the Economy](#)

[Women's Enterprise Organizations of Canada](#)

[Business Training Education Center for Women](#)

[OECD Inclusive Innovation Policy Toolkit](#)

[Next Wave Impact](#)

[McConnell Foundation Impact Investing](#)

### Gender Smart Tools & Diagnostics

[Scotiabank Women Initiative Knowledge Centre](#)

[Feminist business model canvas](#)

[Gender-based Analysis Plus \(GBA+\)](#)

[\*InterAction. Gender Audit Handbook. A Tool for Organization Self-assessment and Transformation\*](#)

[Implicit Association Test](#)

<sup>v</sup> This section was compiled by Dr. B. Orser and Dr. C. Elliott (Telfer, uOttawa). For further details contact orser@telfer.uottawa.ca.

**Figure 3: Gender-smart Entrepreneurship Education and Training (G-EET) (Orser & Elliott, 2015, 2019)**



## GENDER-SMART ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND TRAINING (G-EET)

**Organizational Commitment** The organizational mandate clearly articulates a commitment to gender and inclusive innovation. Equity, diversity and inclusion are integrated into all elements of program, design, delivery, and evaluation:

- Diverse women entrepreneurs have fair and equitable access to all services.
- EDI principles are stated at the outset of services, programs, training, and within education and training materials and presentations.

**Gender Expertise** Trainers, instructors and other stakeholders have relevant knowledge, expertise and skills to support gender-inclusive education and training:

- Staff, mentors and trainers receive training on EDI and gender-based plus (GBA+) analysis—in the context of small business, entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Content and materials are relevant to clients' experiences and life stage.

**Access to Resources** Program design increases women entrepreneurs' access to resources, including financial capital (lenders, equity investors), social capital, talent/human capital and technology:

- Follow-on and off-ramps to complementary services (e.g., mentors, advisors, technical support).
- Program bridges to contract and industry support (e.g., supplier diversity organizations, certification processes, sector, business owner networks, and small business private/public procurement opportunities).

**Program Design** Program design recognizes the gendered nature of entrepreneurship and innovation.

- Learning objectives acknowledge gender and inclusive innovation:
  - Illustrative learning objectives are to: learn about strategies to pre-empt gender-related constraints to start-up and scale-up; enhance women's economic empowerment; increase awareness about gender-related barriers to enterprise growth; and recognize the gendered nature of opportunity recognition.
- Program design responds to gender-related challenges of start-up and scale-up at the individual, firm, industry, and institutional levels:
  - Illustrative challenges include gender differences in entrepreneurial confidence, business ownership experience, network configuration, use of financial capital and stereotypes.
- Program design incorporates all types of innovation: marketing, process, organizational, product; and modes of enterprise (e.g., not-for-profit, co-operatives, social, peace, feminist, green).
- Content explains intersectionality and concepts of gender versus sex, unconscious bias, etc.
- Content acknowledges constructions of masculinity/femininity, gendered norms, culture.
- Participatory methods incorporate the experiences, perspectives and needs of diverse entrepreneurs.
- Class time is allocated to ensuring gender and inclusion concepts are absorbed and applied.

**Program Development** Programs and service content employ a gender lens.

- Content presents multiple constructions of entrepreneurial identity (identity gaps), recognizing that identity is fluid (not fixed, dependent on time and context).
- Content incorporates multiple definitions of 'success'.
- Information is shared about 'successful' women in multiple occupational roles.
- Women inventors and social innovators are recognized.
- Financial knowledge content recognizes the roles of lenders and investors, process of due diligence, funding options for start-ups, business model fundamentals, financial statements and term sheets, managing follow-on funding, and pro rata rights and dilution.
- Curricula includes discussion about gendered ecosystem, labour market and occupational roles
  - Illustrative sources of information include *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor*, *The World Economic Forum*, and *Female Entrepreneurship Index*.
- Curricula acknowledges the impact on personal, family and household: budgeting, caregiving, time management and well-being.
- Curricula explores support from others, including partner/spouse and other family members.

**Program Delivery** Alternative education and training formats and delivery mechanisms that recognize the unique needs of diverse women:

- Flexible options: E-learning, classroom, webinars, teleconferences, multi-week, online, etc.
- Instructional, peer-to-peer, self-directed, etc.
- Tertiary services to facilitate/support engagement: daycare, remedial ICT support, etc.
- Infrastructure: proximity to public transportation, security, lighting, and escorts.

**Program Evaluation** Programs, trainers and client outcomes are measured and monitored using sex disaggregated qualitative and quantitative data. This includes evaluation criteria such as, level of knowledge about gender-related influences in venture creation, and the gendered nature of innovation.

- Performance metrics to gauge program 'success' extend beyond *economic outcomes* (e.g., traditional measures such as revenue growth, jobs created, and financing secured).
- *Perceptual outcomes* include enhanced entrepreneurial self-efficacy or confidence, the 'identity gap', financial literacy, and different dimensions of entrepreneurial intent.
- *Contextual outcomes* include strategies to confront gender role stereotypes, macho organizational/industry culture, and evidence of creating safe and welcoming environments for diverse entrepreneurs.
- *Relational outcomes* include strategies to develop and manage social capital: relationships with family, friends, associates, mentors, advisors, industry/trade associations, and other stakeholders.
- Evidence of how the organization enhances the *visibility* and collective voices of diverse women entrepreneurs.

## APPENDIX C. REGIONAL WORKSHOPS

Six regional workshops were held in Spring 2019. The invitation e/mail list included individuals identified by the host organizations, 686 contacts contained in the RDI i2 survey mailing list, and 25 onsite interviewees. Dates and location of the workshops included:

- March 27, 2019: in Ottawa at Invest Ottawa Bayview Yards
- April 8, 2019: in Toronto at Ryerson University
- April 9, 2019: in Waterloo at the Schlegel Centre for Entrepreneurship & Social Innovation, Wilfred Laurier University
- April 10, 2019: in Hamilton at the Innovation Factory
- April 16, 2019: in North Bay at the Business Centre
- April 16, 2016: in Thunder Bay at PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise

Participant benefits included:

- A sneak preview of the Ontario i2 Action Strategy assessment;
- Opportunity to share practices to accelerate inclusive innovation;
- Validating evidence-based insights about women entrepreneurs; and
- Participation in discussions about lessons learned and experiences with industry peers.

Following presentations that the preliminary i2 research findings, participants were divided into groups and assigned one of the following questions. An i2 canvas (Figure 4) was used to document insights and report back to the assembled group. The following workshop questions and i2 canvas can be used by organizations, networks, associations and other stakeholders to structure conversations about inclusive innovation.

1. How can commitment to gender diversity and inclusion be further integrated into your organization (e.g. skills matrix, explicit diversity targets, from top to bottom)?
2. How can your organization's HR policies and practices be employed to enhance gender diversity and inclusion (e.g. clear policies, mandatory training)?
3. How can your organization better measure, track and report on supporting diverse women entrepreneurs (e.g., targets, accountabilities)?
4. How can your organization bolster diversity across the value chains (e.g., procurement, operations, R&D, products, services)?
5. How can your organization retain a gender diversity lens in the design and delivery of programs and services (e.g., within curricula)?
6. How can your organization further develop the pipeline of diverse women entrepreneurs (e.g. help shape policies, address stereotypes)?
7. How can your organization improve outreach tailored to targeted groups of women entrepreneurs (e.g., Indigenous, racialized, newcomers, women in STEM)?
8. How can your organization bolster collaboration among actors (e.g., mainstream, women-focused SME networks)?

Figure 4: Inclusive innovation (i2) workshop canvas



Q1: HOW CAN COMMITMENT TO GENDER DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION BE FURTHER INTEGRATED INTO YOUR ORGANIZATION (e.g. skills matrix, explicit diversity targets, from top to bottom)?	
<b>Challenges in YOUR organization?</b>	<b>Response (action) strategies</b>
	1
	2
	3
<b>Enablers</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Person, policies, practices	Expertise, funding, tech, partners
	<b>Next steps</b>
	This week:
	This month:

## APPENDIX D. STUDY METHODOLOGIES

### SURVEY

To identify organizations that would participate in the online survey, RDI researchers completed a preliminary scan of organizations that fit within the categories of the innovation ecosystem in Ontario. Aggregated lists of organizations from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDCs), for example, were used to identify those that would fit the criteria necessary to participate in the study.

An invitation to voluntarily and confidentially participate in the online survey, delivered through the Qualtrics platform, was sent between December 2018 and February 2019 to 686 organizations via email. There were 117 (17.0 percent) organizations that submitted responses.

The questions used in the online survey were informed by the RDI **Diversity Assessment Tool** (DAT). Questions developed for the survey sought to understand the overall values of the participating organizations and attitudes towards diversity by asking questions based on the six categories of the DAT: Leadership and Governance; Strong and Transparent Human Resource Practices; Quality of Life and Organizational Culture; Measure and Track Diversity; Integrate or Mainstreaming Diversity across the Value Chain; and Developing the Pipeline.

### ONSITE INTERVIEWS

Twenty-five in-person interviews were conducted between November 2018 to February 2019. Interviews were held on-site and audio recorded for accurate transcription. The selection of organizations was based on regional representation, mandate, client profiles (e.g., students, newcomers) and legal structure (e.g., non-profit, for-profit, hybrid).

The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews. The onsite interviews were aimed at understanding practitioners' perspectives about gender, entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystems, and the benefits and challenges associated with i2 within Ontario business support organizations. They also provided data on organizational capacity and the impacts of i2 policies and practices. The interview guideline was informed by the RDI **Diversity Assessment Tool** (DAT).

Participants were asked to describe their organization's programs, how they obtain funding, how the programs are managed, and whether they target the specific needs of women and diverse groups. They were also asked about the governance structure of the organization, as well as supervision and oversight of individual programs and personnel.

An initial coding scheme was constructed based on this initial information. The analyses of data were undertaken in multiple stages to identify additional responses, and to match themes and patterns within and across cases. As the analysis progressed, themes emerged. Themes were then positioned in the context of the study framework.

*Research instruments used in the i2 project are available upon request.*

## STUDY LIMITATIONS

Like many surveys, the survey was subject to *non-response bias* (organizations that do not support equity, inclusion and diversity are less likely to respond); *selection bias* (results are dominated by a small number of organization categories); and *common method bias* (the nature of the survey questions may influence desirable responses). Similarly, the participant interviews were subject to the effects of non-response bias. The findings may therefore overstate support targeted at women entrepreneurs in Ontario.

## ETHICS REVIEW

The survey and onsite interview protocols were approved by the Ethics Review boards of the University of Ottawa (S-10-18-1238) and the Ryerson Diversity Institute (REB 2018-365).

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The Brookfield Institute for Innovation + Entrepreneurship call for proposals was specific to: “Empowering Women Entrepreneurs” with the objective “...to build supports within the Ontario ecosystem that provide equitable opportunity for success for *women entrepreneurs*, including social entrepreneurs, in growing their businesses.” The assessment focus was therefore ‘women’ and women-owned enterprises.

## APPENDIX E. ADDITIONAL SME PROFILE INFORMATION<sup>vi</sup>

### REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF ONTARIO EMPLOYER SMEs

Table 3 profiles Ontario employer SMEs by Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) and gender of firm ownership. Significant differences were observed in the proportion of firm ownership, by gender, across CMAs.

As reported, the analysis found that the highest proportion of women-owned employer SMEs are located in the Ottawa-Gatineau and Kingston CMAs with relatively fewer women-owned SMEs in the Toronto and Kitchener-Waterloo-Cambridge CMAs.

**Table 3: Ontario SMEs, by CMA and gender of firm ownership (2017)**

	PROPORTION OF OWNERSHIP HELD BY WOMEN				
	None	1–49%	50%	51–99%	100%
ALL CANADIAN EMPLOYER SMEs	53.3	10.2	20.9	2.5	13.1
ALL ONTARIO EMPLOYER SMEs	54.0	8.6	22.2	2.2	13.0
Hamilton	52.9	9.8	16.5	4.5	16.4
Kingston	55.5	4.4	17.1	1.6	21.4
Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo	55.0	11.8	20.2	3.0	10.1
London	44.4	8.5	27.7	2.4	17.0
Ottawa-Gatineau	50.9	8.6	17.3	2.5	20.6
St. Catharines-Niagara	59.6	7.9	18.2	2.0	12.3
Thunder Bay	59.7	7.6	10.3	3.2	19.2
Toronto	57.0	7.5	21.9	2.1	11.5
Windsor	48.9	11.9	22.4	1.3	15.6

Source: Statistics Canada, <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/061.nsf/eng/03087.html>, Table 40 (Orser & Riding, 2019).

<sup>vi</sup> This section was compiled by Dr. B. Orser and Dr. A. Riding (Telfer, uOttawa). For further details contact [orser@telfer.uottawa.ca](mailto:orser@telfer.uottawa.ca).

## SECTOR PROFILE OF EMPLOYER SMEs

Table 4 presents more detailed profiles of Canadian social enterprises, clean tech and exporter employer SMEs, by gender of firm ownership. The findings again indicate that, among clean technology employer SMEs, women are significantly under-represented: more than 80.0 percent of clean technology employer SMEs are majority-owned by men. In contrast, not-for-profit and charity employer

SMEs reflect somewhat greater ownership among women and tend to be co-owned. The data further illustrate the challenge of engaging women within advanced technology and R&D-intensive sector programming, given that the clean tech cluster has received considerable federal funding and related support.<sup>71</sup>

**Table 4: Proportion of social, clean technology and exporter SMEs, by gender of firm ownership**

	PROPORTION OF OWNERSHIP HELD BY WOMEN				
	None	1–49%	50%	51–99%	100%
EMPLOYER SMEs IN CANADA	53.3	10.2	20.9	2.5	13.1
SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP					
Not-for-profit	38.9	16.4	17.5	18.8	8.4
Charity	55.5	11.8	11.5	16.2	5.0
OTHER					
Clean Technology	67.7	13.7	13.8	1.0	3.8
Exporter	53.6	12.7	18.9	3.4	11.4

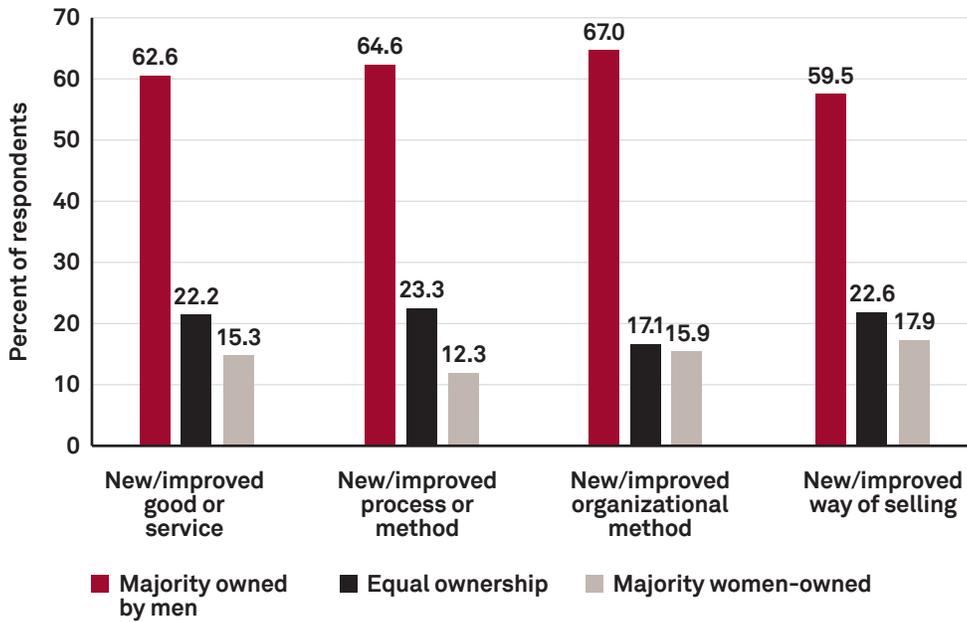
Source: Statistics Canada, <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/061.nsf/eng/03087.html>, Table 40 (Orser & Riding, 2019).

## TYPES OF INNOVATION

Recalling that 15.6 percent of employer SMEs are wholly-owned by women, Chart 11 compares this benchmark with the percentages of women-owned SMEs that have introduced at least one of the four types of innovation in 2017.

Women-owned businesses are introducing products, marketing, process and organizational innovations. Examination of other owner and firm attributes (e.g., sector, age, experience) with respect to the proportion of ownership by regional is required.

**Chart 11: Innovation among Canadian SMEs, by gender of firm ownership and type of innovation (2017)**



Source: Statistics Canada, <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/061.nsf/eng/03087.html>, Table 32 (Orser & Riding, 2019),

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**Dr. Catherine J. Elliott** (Co-investigator) is an Assistant Professor of Organizational Behaviour and Human Resources at the Telfer School of Management, University of Ottawa. Her research focuses on women's entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial identity,

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**Dr. Wendy Cukier** (Co-investigator) is a Professor of Entrepreneurship and Strategy, and Founder of the Diversity Institute, Ryerson University. She is the co-author of the bestseller, *Innovation Nation: Canadian Leadership from Java to Jurassic*. As Vice President,

Research and Innovation at Ryerson University, she doubled research funding, supported expansion of the DMZ, and led the development of a multi-institutional Incubate Innovate Network of Canada (I-INC). Wendy has supported innovative programs to support women and under-represented groups, including SheEO, Summer Company, Social Enterprise Development Fund, Newcomer Entrepreneurship Hub and the Women's Entrepreneurship Hub as well as the newly-announced Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub that is funded by the Government of Canada. She will lead research for the new Future Skills Centre. A judge for pitch competitions, she is a Board member of Mammoth, nPower, and Green Iglu (formerly Growing North). She chairs Women's College Hospital Board, is an advisor to the Canadian Women's Foundation, and is an ex-officio member of the Minister's Expert Panel on Women Entrepreneurship. Industry recognition and awards include: Sara Kirke Award; YWCA Woman of Distinction; Woman of Influence; Harry Jerome Diversity Award; Canada Pakistan Business Council's Professional of the Year; and Metropolis Research Award. She was named among '100 Alumni who shaped the century' by the University of Toronto, and holds a Meritorious Service Cross, one of Canada's highest civilian honours. She also holds a MA, MBA and PhD, and Honorary Doctorates from Laval University and Concordia University. She has completed MITs Executive Entrepreneurship Program.

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- 60 University of Toronto job applicants are asked to complete an *Applicant Diversity Survey*. Related information specifies: “We collect applicant diversity data to help inform, evaluate and diversify our employee recruitment and talent management strategies. These efforts add to our ongoing work to build an equitable and inclusive community where all members flourish, and to advance employment equity across our three campuses. ... The *Applicant Diversity Survey* includes questions pertaining to the four designated groups as specified in Canada’s *Employment Equity Act* (i.e. women, aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, and members of visible minorities). It also queries additional information that helps to advance equity, diversity and inclusion work at U of T, such as ethnocultural identities, gender identity, visible and invisible disabilities, and sexual orientation.” Access at <http://uoft.me/UP>.
- 61 The diversity-as-competitive-advantage rationale is inconsistent with that favoured in the United Kingdom. The equity rationale aligns with Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy and rationale favoured within the European Union. In Canada, it appears gender equity is situated within a development context outside of the mainstream innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem. See Ljunggren, E., Alsos, G. A., Amble, N., Ervik, R., Kvidal, T., & Wiik, R. (2010). *Gender and Innovation. Learning from Regional VRI Projects. NF-Report, 2*, 2010.
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# Strengthening ecosystem supports for women entrepreneurs

Ontario Inclusive Innovation (i2) Action Strategy

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