



Excellence
in Women's
Enterprise
Development

Rationale: Established Business Support Standards

1. Outreach and Targeted Marketing

Research finds that targeted women-friendly outreach and marketing activities succeed in attracting more women.

2. Access

Inaccessible programmes can effectively design women and other groups out.

Costs women's businesses are on average smaller so the availability of bursaries or reduced cost options can be particularly important.

Size of business and growth aspirations programmes restricted to large turnover business will have fewer women and other groups who are growing through outsourcing for example. Women are more likely to set modest growth targets, which have no relation to ultimate achievement. They will be excluded by programmes with entry barriers based on level and pace of aspirations, for example 'only open to companies with the stated ambition of achieving a £1million + turnover'.

Caring responsibilities we would expect women in established businesses/social enterprises to have strategies in place re. cost and access to care. However timing of events may be critical and organisations should consult before holding events at atypical times.

Culture some cultural groups will not attend mixed gender events.

Location women are more likely than men to be dependent on public transport and personal safety is an important concern.

3. Segmented Market Knowledge

To effectively target market segments, organisations need to measure the effectiveness of their marketing approach.

4. Listening Organisations

Women in business/social enterprise often feel invisible and not listened to – best practice organisations really do listen to and act on feedback from their clients.

5. Regular face-to-face Service

Low confidence is an issue for a lot of women at every stage of business/social enterprise and there is growing evidence that while more women are starting businesses/social enterprises – there is also a higher attrition rate in the early years. Regular face to face services build trust.

6. Promotion of Clients' Businesses/Social Enterprises

Such promotion has multiple benefits: promoting the clients' business/social enterprise; creating relevant role models for other women; making it clear that the programme is accessible and welcoming. This is particularly important in sectors where women are under-represented.



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7. Some Women-Only Provision

Women often feel more comfortable in discussing broader issues affecting their businesses/social enterprise in a woman-only session. This can enable strong and effective networks to develop, which are a source of ongoing support.

Where women are a minority in a particular business sector the support of other women in a similar position can be particularly important. Women-only can be an essential option for some cultural groups. Some women oppose women-only provision and it should not be mandatory for the women on your programme, but the option must be offered for those women who could benefit from it.

8. Staff Who Reflect and Understand the Target Group

You certainly don't need to be a woman or a member of a minority group to be empathetic to their needs. However it does make sense for organisations to reflect the groups they are targeting to some extent. It is important for the internal culture of the organisation and also to provide role models for clients.

Gender, ethnicity and age can have a significant impact on how people start businesses and those issues should be understood by business support professionals. It is now statutory for public bodies which deliver business support services to women to comply with the Gender Equality Duty (April 2007).

Positive action can be required to ensure that policies and practices ensure gender equity.

9. Commitment to Diversity

Numbers of women and BAME groups supported by growth focused programmes tend to be very low and this in itself can reinforce low achievement and complacency.

While some targeted growth sectors such as engineering have very low numbers of women in the workforce, stretching and realistic medium term targets are important to ensure that programmes do not reinforce exclusion.

10. Established Programmes

Reflecting on experience and feedback from clients is an important part of the process of designing a quality programme of women's business/social enterprise support.

11. Significant Impact

Programmes for established businesses/social enterprises often target narrow but significant niches and at this stage in the enterprise pipeline impact focuses on increased jobs and GVA rather than number of businesses. For those programmes, we need to see that women are a significant and growing proportion of the client base.

12. Effective Partnerships

We need to be sure that an organisation has control of the quality of the services that comprise its supply chain/provider network if it is dependant on that network to deliver a coherent women-friendly service. Whilst signposting can be a useful way of referring to additional support services, a signposting relationship would not constitute partnership working.



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13. Coherent Range of Services

There is clear evidence that a significant proportion of women grow their businesses/social enterprises at a more gradual and tentative pace. Transformational, interactive business/social enterprise support, based on ongoing customer relationships, is appropriate for those women, rather than the traditional transactional approach based on information and one-off advice.

We expect organisations offering support to established businesses/social enterprises to be able to provide a full range of services to meet the needs of women directly or, in partnership, where they can influence the quality of delivery.