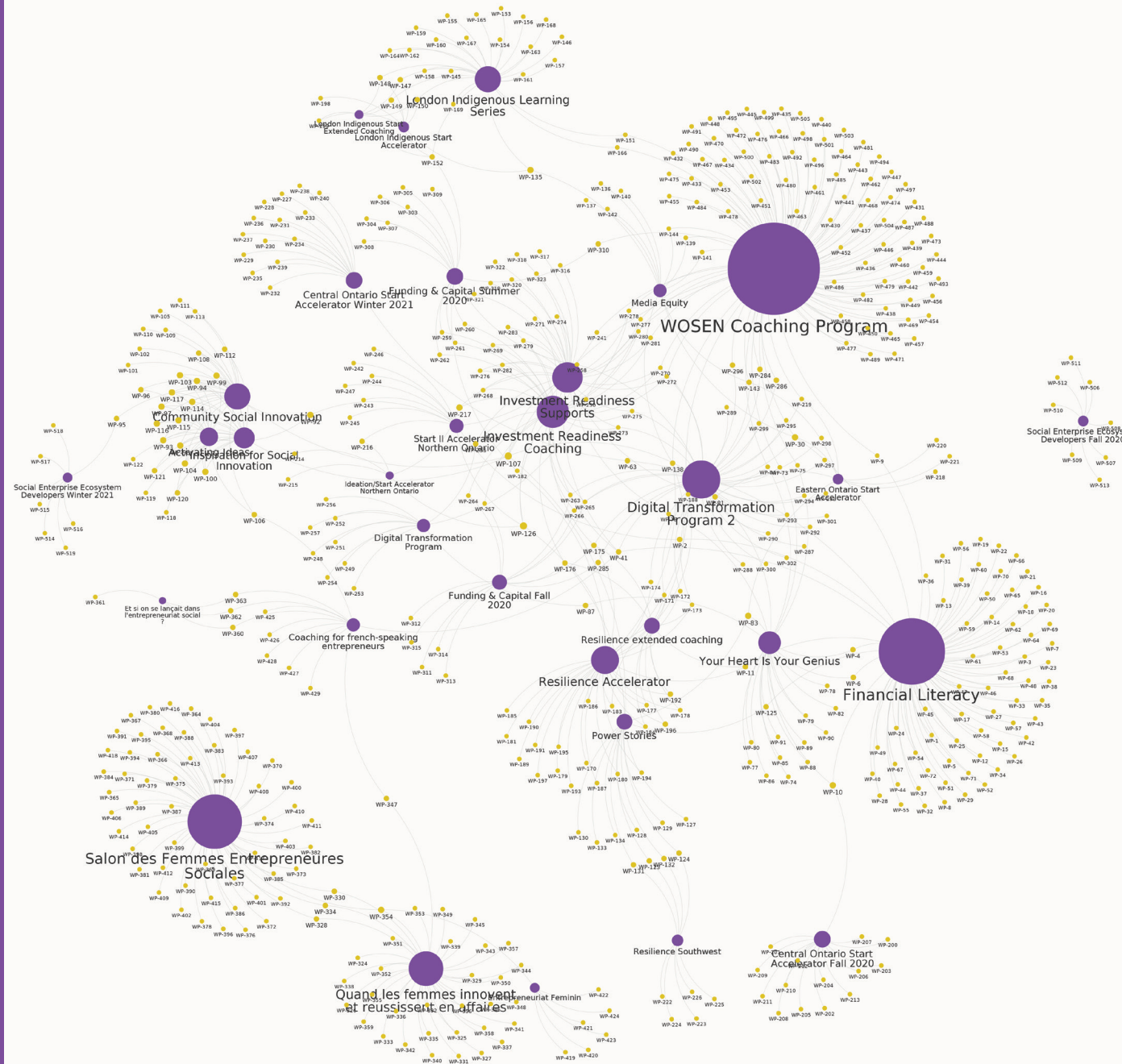


# The Story of WOSEN

Women of Ontario Social Enterprise Network (WOSEN)

OUTSTANDING BY STANDING TOGETHER

Interim Report  
AUGUST 2019 – MARCH 2021



# Executive Summary

The current social enterprise ecosystem has not typically been accommodating to everyone, often offering 'one-size fits all' programming, and prioritizing rapid growth businesses and sectors that are viewed to have the potential to become profitable quickly. As a result, women<sup>1</sup> and non-binary/genderqueer entrepreneurs — who are more likely to centre sustainable growth and create service-based businesses (Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub, 2020) — are particularly underrepresented and underserved. Many stakeholders (e.g., mentors, coaches, investors) do not have the skills, tools, business networks or funding models to meet the unique needs of this demographic.

## WHAT IS WOSEN?

It is a province-wide collaborative led by Pillar Nonprofit Network in partnership with the Centre for Social Innovation (CSI), Social Venture Connexion (SVX), and NORDIK Institute (NORDIK) with support from Lean4Flourishing (L4F). Collectively they are delivering the Women of Ontario Social Enterprise Network (WOSEN).

### WOSEN COLLABORATIVE

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Grounded in an ecosystem of trust and respectful relationships

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Principle-focused approaches: WOSEN Design Principles

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Collaboration and co-creation: programs and project operations

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Professional development: individual and collaborative-wide

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<sup>1</sup> Women includes ALL women

## WHAT IS WOSEN DOING?

WOSEN is focused on catalyzing social innovation – reorganizing (or reimagining) the way the current entrepreneurial system works to enable underrepresented and underserved founders to participate and prosper in business and society.

**Goal:** Collectively create a stronger entrepreneurial ecosystem across Ontario that supports the development of women-owned and women-led ventures that have a positive social and environmental impact, building a prosperous and resilient economy for all in Ontario.

WOSEN is dedicated to equity and inclusion, and seeks to support entrepreneurs from underserved and underrepresented communities, including those who are Indigenous, in rural or remote regions, racialized, immigrants or refugees, 2SLGBTQ+, or those with disabilities.<sup>2</sup>

## HOW IS WOSEN DOING THIS?

WOSEN's collaborators are creating the critical resources, relational networks and stakeholder capacity that underpin a healthy, functioning and thriving ecosystem to foster more inclusive economies. There are three structural components: Developmental Evaluation, Program Evaluation and Knowledge Products. The Developmental Evaluation approach informs project and program development and evaluation, and the identification, creation and mobilization of knowledge products.

<sup>2</sup> All programing is inclusive of Two-Spirit and non-binary/genderqueer individuals.

## 1. DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION

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Linking evaluation to Theory of Change

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Continuous reflection, assessment, design evolution and implementation

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## 2. PROGRAM EVALUATION

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Centering the lived experience and knowledge of participants and other entrepreneur ecosystem stakeholders

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Iterative design and delivery cycles

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Responding to evolving needs

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## 3. KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS

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Identification, creation and mobilization of products capturing WOSSEN's learning and impact to inform and influence practitioners and the ecosystem stakeholders: business support, funding agencies, investors, researchers and policy makers.

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### WHAT WAS WOSSEN'S IMPACT?

*"Through the WOSSEN program and my mentor, I met one of my main advisors, and I now have two contacts who have agreed to participate in my pre-seed investment. Although I still need to raise more funds to close my target of \$250K, this is the start I really needed. I am very grateful for the support you have both provided and for the support of the CSI community."*  
(Investment Readiness Support Participant)

*"Being given the space where it is actively encouraged to think critically and practically about systems transformation has been an incredibly powerful thing... To have the space to really test out massive change also allows the opportunity to see where smaller changes with substantial impact can be implemented in a wider range of programming. I feel confident in saying that my participation in WOSSEN programming, and the relationships built with the other partners, the participants, and the communities/people we engage with has helped me grow to be a better person, and a better support in the entrepreneurial ecosystem."* (WOSSEN Practitioner)

WOSSEN delivered 34 regional and provincial programs in this reporting cycle and 24 are evaluated in this report.

### IMPACT ON PARTICIPANTS

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- 700+ participants from 120 communities
- 97% of participants from underrepresented groups
- 248 early stage and 121 resilience/growth entrepreneurs
- Unlocked approx. \$1M investment for participants
- Increased targeted knowledge
- Increased more positive attitudes and behaviours
- Expanded relationships and networks

### IMPACT ON PRACTITIONERS

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- Gained a significant amount of deep learning and professional development underpinning the fostering and growth of women-owned and women-led ventures
- Increased capacity for principle-focused approaches; co-creation processes; developmental evaluation; and the creation of knowledge products
- Increased recognition of the role and value of reflective practice in advancing this field

#### **4 KEY LEARNINGS FOR CONTINUOUS SOCIAL INNOVATION AND EVOLUTION**

Key lessons from the WOSEN experience will shape the future of the program, and may prove critical to the reorganization of the current entrepreneurial system to foster the growth of women-owned and women-led ventures with a positive social and environmental impact.

1. Establish a collaborative founded on trust and dedicated to collaboration and co-creation in addressing system change;
2. Ground the work in WOSEN Design Principles, an inclusive, anti-racist and decolonizing framework;
3. Adopt a developmental evaluation approach to support ongoing reflection and assessment informing co-creative and responsive design;
4. Reduce the amount of facilitator delivered content, creating opportunities for more discussion, dialogue and relationship building between participants and tailor content to meet smaller group or more individualized needs.

In sum, although the data collection tools and shared measurement platform was implemented after the onset of the program delivery schedule, the Interim Report does amass a considerable amount of participant, ecosystem stakeholder and practitioner feedback and insights suggesting the methodology is working. WOSEN has met its programing deliverables during this reporting cycle, and in many cases exceeded the intended project engagement numbers mid-way through the initiative. The project increased participant and practitioner capacity knowledge in this field, contributed positive shifts in attitudes and behaviors and expanded relationships and networks, all of which will advantage them in their endeavours.

WOSEN program evolution is ongoing, responding to emerging needs. The development of knowledge projects is well underway and their mobilization will be an area of focus in the next cycle. The initiative is well positioned for the upcoming Project Summative Review that will inform how the collaborative moves forward and what relationships need to be created or strengthened in support of this important work.

# Acknowledgements

The Women of Ontario Social Enterprise Network (WOSEN) collaborative consists of the following organizations, staff and funding partners.



**Pillar Nonprofit Network** strengthens individuals, organizations and enterprises invested in positive community impact. We support nonprofits, social enterprises and social innovators by sharing resources, exchanging knowledge and creating meaningful connections across the three pillars of nonprofit, business and government. Pillar Nonprofit Network believes that a connected network sparks collaboration and a willingness to lean on each other to help build an engaged inclusive and vibrant community. WOSEN staff: Rachel Berdan, Charles Blazevic, Eaman Fahmy, Kaleigh Rodgers, Caitlin Villeneuve, Mariam Waliji.



**Social Venture Connexion** SVX is a nonprofit, diversified financial services firm driving impact for investors, organizations, funds, and enterprises. We provide knowledge and insights, design strategies and products, manage funds, operate a platform for raising impact capital and making impact investments, and support systems change initiatives. We work across sectors that deliver meaningful impact: climate, food, equity, housing, and community real estate, helping investors find and make impact investments and issuers raise impact capital. WOSEN staff: Ashley Wang, Bridget Zhang, Li Jiang, Paula Sahyoun.



**Centre for Social Innovation** (CSI) Toronto is home to 1,000 nonprofits, charities and social ventures and provides these members with the spaces, knowledge, tools, resources and connections they need to grow their impact. For 15 years, CSI has been female-led. WOSEN staff: Jo Reynolds, Eyra Abraham, Mitlalie Makhani, Barnabe Geis, Andrea Tsang.



**Lean4Flourishing** works with members of the entrepreneurship ecosystem who seek to encourage entrepreneurial practice to realize key public policy goals and the Sustainable Development goals. L4F supports the co-creation of social and environmental impact centred entrepreneurship programming. L4F is female-led. WOSEN staff: Ondine Hogeboom, Ellen Martin and Sarah Naylor.



**NORDIK Institute** (Northern Ontario Research, Development, Ideas and Knowledge) is an innovative community-based research hub affiliated with Algoma University dedicated to building healthy, resilient communities by building capacity to achieve cultural, social, economic and environmental justice. It has established strong links with other research institutes, universities, and colleges. WOSEN staff: Dr. Jude Ortiz, Maureen Strickland, Krista Bissiallon, Diaymn Lauzon, and Elizabeth MacMillan. Graphic designer: Gabrielle Louttit.



**FedDev Ontario** works to advance and diversify the southern Ontario economy through funding opportunities and business services that support innovation and growth in Canada's most populous region. The Agency has delivered impressive results, which can be seen in southern Ontario businesses that are creating innovative technologies, improving their productivity, growing their revenues, and in the economic advancement of communities across the region.

*Proud recipient of support from the Government of Canada through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.*



**Social Enterprise and Entrepreneurship** (SEE) is an initiative led by NORDIK Institute to support the development of the social economy through the building capacity of social entrepreneurship by strengthening the ecosystem.

*This report does not necessarily reflect the views of the funder, member organizations of the WOSEN Collaborative or delivery partners.*

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# 1.0 Introduction

The Interim Report captures the story of WOSEN, from launch to mid-way through its three-and-a-half-year initiative (2019-2023). It conveys the collaborative's intentions, progress, learnings and impact in meeting its goals. It offers a deeper understanding of the complexity of issues that the collaborative lives with in undertaking this work, i.e., its co-management, emerging challenges and future direction in service of continuing to enhance practices that create a more equitable and inclusive womens<sup>3</sup> entrepreneurial ecosystem. It also provides an opportunity to celebrate WOSEN's innovative approaches and successes.

The report is divided into four sections. The Introduction sets the story line of who comprises the WOSEN collaborative and what they are collectively doing to address systemic challenges of entrepreneurial women who are underrepresented and underserved in business.

The Project Overview (Section Two) speaks to the initiative's intentional grounding of building an ecosystem of trust through its operations, outlines its Theory of Change and evaluation frameworks and reasons for adopting a Developmental Evaluation approach. It covers how the design and delivery of four women-focused programs and the creation of knowledge products collectively increase capacity to support women-led social enterprises. This section also includes the program design methodology founded on discovery – finding out 'where participants are at' as a basis of understanding how best to engage them in development and learning goals – and the incorporation of the emergent [WOSEN Design Principles and application](#) that support inclusive, responsive and anti-oppressive environments.

Section Three, Evaluation, provides an assessment of WOSEN's learnings and impact in relation to meeting its goals and objectives; the impact of engagement on its participants and practitioners; the knowledge products that the collaborative created; how learnings were mobilized; and the project's professional development opportunities. Lastly, it identifies the project's next steps and priorities in moving forward.

The final section, Conclusions, begins with a brief summary and looks toward the initiative's ongoing development.

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<sup>3</sup> Women includes ALL women



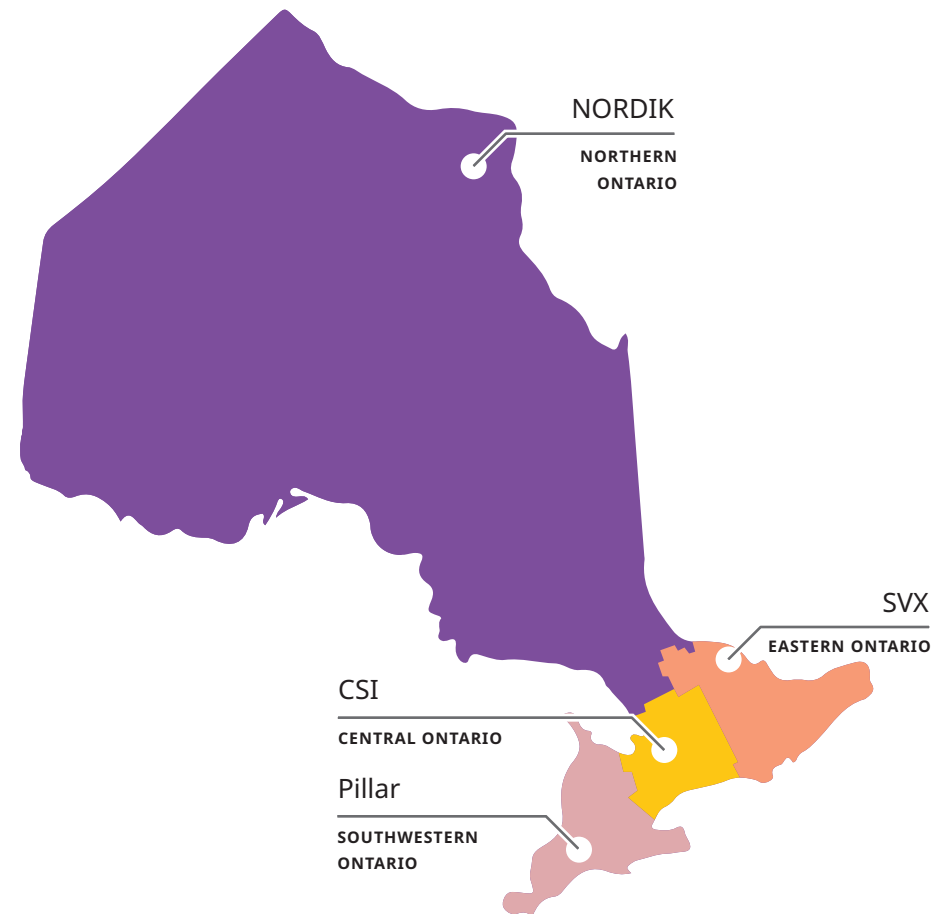
# 1.1 What is WOSEN?

It is a province-wide collaborative led by Pillar Nonprofit Network in partnership with the Centre for Social Innovation (CSI), Social Venture Connexion (SVX), and NORDIK Institute (NORDIK) with support from Lean4Flourishing (L4F).

Collectively they are delivering programming as the Women of Ontario Social Enterprise Network (WOSEN) to create a stronger entrepreneurial ecosystem across Ontario that supports the development and growth of women-owned and women-led ventures that have a positive social and environmental impact. It aims to build a prosperous and resilient economy for all in Ontario. WOSEN is dedicated to equity and inclusion, and seeks to support entrepreneurs from underserved and underrepresented communities, including those who are Indigenous, in rural or remote regions, racialized, immigrants or refugees, 2SLGBTQ+, or those with disabilities.

The collaborative builds off of a 2-year (2017-19) Ontario Network of Entrepreneurship-Social Enterprise Partnership (ONE SEP), funded by the Ontario government to grow the social enterprise ecosystem (e.g., entrepreneurs; business development organizations and agencies; educators; and investors/funders). ONE SEP also allowed for ongoing critical dialogue revealing gaps hindering the development and growth of women identified and gender diverse founders from equity deserving groups in Ontario, prompting the desire for further investment to address these barriers through the Women of Ontario Social Enterprise Network (WOSEN). A successful funding application was submitted to the Capacity Building Stream of the [Women's Entrepreneurship Strategy Ecosystem Fund](#), through the [Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario \(FedDev Ontario\)](#).

Figure 1. Provincial partners



## 1.2 What is WOSSEN doing?

*“The traditional business systems can be quite exclusive and can push certain individuals from marginalized communities to the fringes, and they’re unable to access the knowledge, the capital or the supports. [WOSSEN] is a way to try to disrupt those systems to try to provide what it is that they need.”*

*– Eaman Fahmy, Pillar*

The current social enterprise ecosystem has not typically been accommodating to everyone, often offering ‘one-size fits all’ programming, and prioritizing rapid growth businesses and sectors that are viewed to have the potential to become profitable quickly. As a result, women<sup>4</sup> and non-binary/genderqueer entrepreneurs — who are more likely to centre sustainable growth and create service-based businesses (Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub, 2020) — are particularly underrepresented and underserved.

The WOSSEN initiative is focused on catalyzing **social innovation** — **reorganizing the way the current entrepreneurial system works to enable women to participate and prosper in business and society.** Collectively they are creating the critical resources, relational networks and stakeholder capacity that underpin a healthy, functioning and thriving ecosystem to foster more inclusive economies.

To address systemic gaps that exclude or hinder entrepreneurial women, WOSSEN is disrupting and adapting current relationships to create new pathways of inclusivity. Thus, the project is predicated on the relational aspects of systems — people can only be understood in relationship to each other, therefore, new networks need to be established, reorganizing the way it operates, to facilitate linking equity-deserving groups into the system.

Wheatley and Frieze (2009) state:

*“ ... it’s [ systems] the way life organizes itself. It’s the most natural form of existence not just to mankind but to all species on this planet. Nothing lives alone except us westerners who got hooked on the idea that it’s all about individualism and competition. It is the basic form of organizing. There is no other way to live.”*

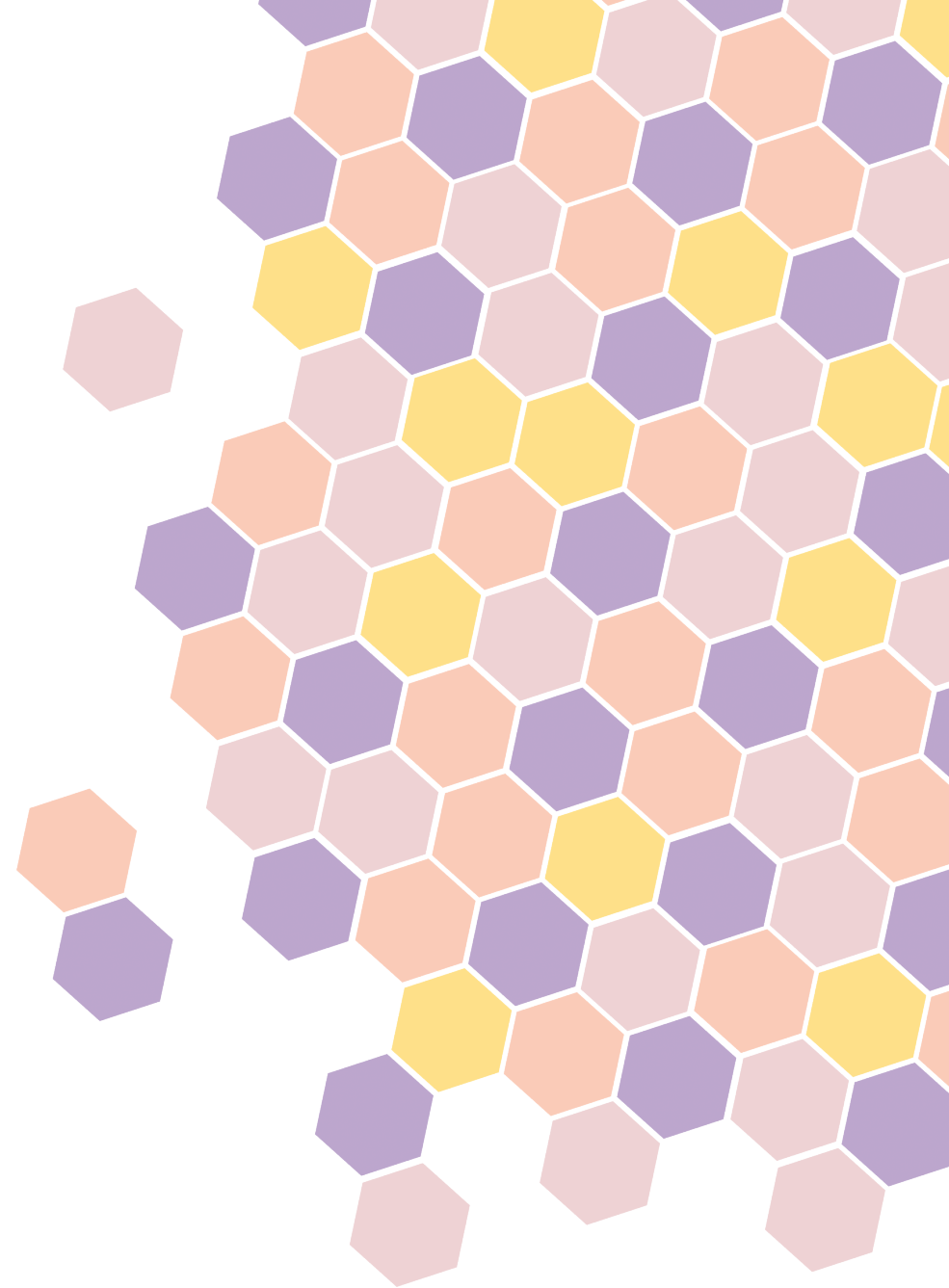
To this end, WOSSEN is **fostering an ecosystem of trust and respectful relationships** among the collaborative members, founders, business supporters and community partners, thereby creating the pathways, the linkages, the relationships and networks that support systemic change toward more equitable, inclusive people and places.

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<sup>4</sup> Women includes ALL women

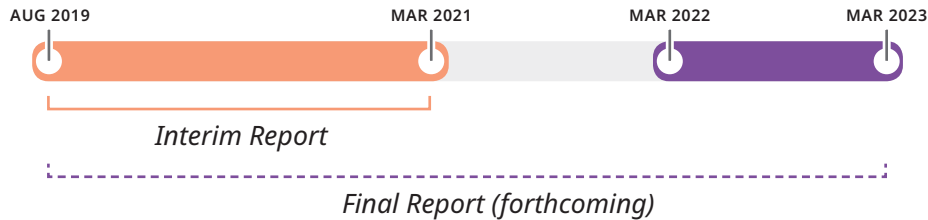
The collaborative is centring enterprising women in undertaking this work, supporting equity-deserving groups from diverse backgrounds who have business solutions, i.e., social enterprises that put people and the planet first, to build skills that match their potential to flourish and to connect with local and/or global communities and resources to succeed. Social enterprise is an approach to business (rather than a legal structure) that is value-based and principles-focused. Its value proposition is incorporated into its mandate and directs its operation. Specifically, they seek to have a positive social, cultural or environmental impact through its operations, and/or sale of products or services. WOSEN has adopted a broad definition of social enterprise that includes cooperatives, nonprofit and for-profit business forms.

Through the design and delivery of four programs and knowledge products, WOSEN is **co-creating new equity-focused education and training products, and increasing access to resources and capital, thereby building equity-deserving women founders' capacity to innovate and adapt, which will also reap broader community/ societal benefits.** The iterative design and delivery cycles enable the collaborative to respond to emerging understanding of how to serve this demographic, their evolving needs, as well as the changing dynamics of the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem.



# 1.3 Purpose of the report

## Reporting cycles



The Interim Report provides an opportunity for the collaborative to reflect upon its activities, assess its progress and impact in meeting its goals, and revisit their alignment with its Theory of Change. The collective reflection further strengthens WOSSEN practitioner capacity for addressing systemic challenges that equity-deserving entrepreneurs face by creating space for honing in on what interventions are effective, reviewing ecosystem supports that have been requested, and determining whether or not their provision is within or beyond WOSSEN's current mandate. The report documents the collective's actions and reflections and enables celebrating and sharing its insights and successes with broader ecosystem stakeholders.

Progress in meeting its goals is assessed with a framework of changes in: i) knowledge; ii) attitudes and beliefs; iii) behaviours; and, iv) relationships and networks. These four areas underpin social innovation, sparking systemic change and the capacity to adapt. The data have been organized into two broad categories – learning and impact.

Learning centres on practitioners, i.e., what has been learned about founders served through WOSSEN and the SE ecosystem; what has been learned about yourself as a practitioner.

Impact focuses on participants, i.e., “the social, environmental or economic effect or change (either positive or negative - inclusive of

outputs and outcomes), that occurs to people and communities as the result of an activity, project or policy undertaken” (Centre for Organizational Effectiveness, 2019, p.17).

The report is intended to provide:

1. A snapshot of the project's developmental questions:  
Where are we now? What have we done/what led us to this point? What did we learn and what impact did it have? What needs to happen next, and how are we going to do it?
2. A document to share:
  - a. Internally, within the collaborative and community partner organizations to strengthen capacity for:  
  
assessing progress in meeting goals and deliverables; measuring impact; instilling a culture of continuous learning and improvement; creating environments supportive of knowledge generation and reflective practices; fostering respectful relationships and networks; and building a case for further investment and adoption of principle-based initiatives, specifically, WOSSEN Design Principles, in the social enterprise ecosystem.
  - a. Externally, the public to:  
  
increase practitioner capacity to support women-owned and women-led social enterprises; and influence diverse stakeholders and audiences, informing sector policies, planning, investment and perspectives, leading to more inclusive, effective and sustainable development practices and a more equitable economy for all.

For a list of programs included in this reporting cycle, please see [Programs delivered, page 20](#).

# 2.0 Project Overview

## Outstanding by standing together

*“Everybody had a common understanding of what we hoped to do because we were shaping that together. We had a lot of trust from everyone because we co-created our vision together.”*

*– Sarah Beyea, WOSEN Project Manager*

The WOSEN initiative aims to reimagine the social enterprise ecosystem — who it serves and how it functions — with a focus on addressing systemic barriers to create a stronger entrepreneurial ecosystem across Ontario that supports the development and growth of women-owned and women-led<sup>5</sup> ventures that have a positive social and environmental impact. It aims to build a prosperous and resilient economy for all in Ontario. WOSEN is dedicated to equity and inclusion, and seeks to support entrepreneurs from underserved and underrepresented communities, including those who are Indigenous, in rural or remote regions, racialized, immigrants or refugees, 2SLGTBQ+, or those with disabilities.

<sup>5</sup> Women includes ALL women

This section provides an overview of the collaborative’s positioning: the project’s Theory of Change and Developmental Evaluation frameworks through which WOSEN intends to meet its goal of unleashing the entrepreneurial energy and capacity of women who have solutions that put people and the planet first, enabling these entrepreneurs to build skills that match their potential to flourish.

The WOSEN collaborative may be considered a sector focused collective impact model (Kania and Kramer, 2011) targeting the women’s entrepreneurial ecosystem. While not engaging all community sectors, it is composed of five diverse organizations with a common mandate of social innovation: specifically, supporting and strengthening organizations and businesses that put people and planet first. Pillar supports and strengthens individuals, organizations and enterprises invested in positive community impact; CSI supports a platform to grow a community of social innovators; SVX is a diversified financial services firm that drives impact for investors, organizations, funds and enterprises; L4F focuses on business model innovation to support enterprises that generate tri-impact of financial, social and environmental value for all shareholders; and, NORDIK is a development and research hub dedicated to holistic community development. Its Social Enterprise and Entrepreneurship (SEE) initiative aims to address social and economic challenges through supporting the development of the social enterprise ecosystem.

The WOSEN collaborative has a common agenda and shared measurement tools, undertakes mutually reinforcing activities, and has established continuous communication and feedback flows. As the administrative project lead, Pillar functions as the backbone organization.

The partnering organizations have extensive experience in leading social innovation, thus an integral aspect of the project is the commitment “to do things differently” in the design and delivery of a suite of programs, the creation of knowledge products, and operationally.

The work is grounded in working collectively and intentionally to create an **'ecosystem of trust'** that fosters and supports respectful relationships among the collaborative, founders, business supporters and community partners, thereby creating the pathways, the linkages, the relationships and networks that support systemic change toward more equitable, inclusive people and places. Project-wide monthly meetings, weekly and bi-weekly program meetings and program methodology (including outreach, engagement and evaluation), all consider and allot time for nurturing and creating safe and brave spaces for dialogue, story sharing and feedback loops in order to centre and surface:

- i. the founders: where they are at; what they are experiencing; what they need in order to feel successful; and processes for meeting their goals; and,
- ii. practitioners: what they are learning, unlearning and experiencing and the support they need to undertake this work.

Exploring shared language, diverse perspectives, and new ways of understanding, practicing, and organizing underpin change and adaptation. This deep inner work of reflection and dialogue enables ongoing adoption and evolution of:

1. Principle-focused approaches;
2. Collaboration and co-creation; and,
3. Professional development

**Principle-focused approaches** are based on values: what matters to those who develop and attempt to follow them. Central questions include: What are our principles? To what extent are we adhering to them? What are the consequences and impact of following them? And, what are the results of not adhering to them? Their application requires judgement, providing opportunity to surface the implications of decisions. Rather than being prescriptive, they offer direction, thus allowing opportunities to adapt to different contexts and changing understandings. As Patton and Campbell-Patton illustrate, "principles are the rudder for navigating complex dynamic systems" (2017).

**A culture of collaboration leading to co-creation** is incorporated throughout the project. The Project Kick Off, the first gathering of the partners in September, 2019, collectively established the Guiding Principles (later incorporated into the [WOSEN Design Principles](#) emerging from the WISE Accelerator Design Jam in January, 2020, and the shared project vision.

Operationally, the WOSEN partners collectively established a project implementation plan identifying key people and the shared decision-making process based on the RACI framework (Responsible, Accountable; Consulted; Informed). It gathers input from everyone to shape the project from budgets to program delivery.

Programmatically, collaboration and co-creation underpins the design, reiteration and delivery of programs and services. It speaks to WOSEN's commitment to reimagine the entrepreneurial ecosystem by providing new business tools and strategies that better enable underrepresented and underserved founders to achieve their aspirations.

**Professional development opportunities** designed to build practitioner capacity to undertake this work were central to the collaborative's activities. There were many and diverse instances ranging from monthly partner meetings; the creation of knowledge products; program level development and delivery support (training, reflection, guest speakers); and engagement of ecosystem stakeholders.

Each of these foundational aspects of social innovation – principle-focused approaches, collaboration and co-creation, and professional development – has been integrated into the project and programs, and its impact reviewed and assessed through a Developmental Evaluation lens. For more information please see [Program design, page 14](#); [What was WOSEN's impact on practitioners and further supports requested, page 40](#); [What professional development opportunities were there?, page 54](#); and [Program development, page 57](#).

## 2.1 Evaluation frameworks

The WOSEN project is rooted in social innovation with the goal of collectively disrupting the social enterprise system to become more equitable and inclusive, serving all women and non-binary/genderqueer people in meeting their entrepreneurial aspirations. While the project is respectfully bound to the funder's deliverables (i.e., programs, key performance indicators, timelines) the collaborative perceives the work within the broader context of social innovation. As such, it lives within a dynamic, interdependent, multivariable, constantly changing context where there are less defined pathways to achieving its goals, thus necessitating exploring processes, learnings and impacts to understand the context and conditions that support activities that create the desired change (e.g., how and why it happened), which activities might further strengthen the movement, and what is emerging that should be considered.

Figure 2. Strategic learning for social impact (Preskill & Beer, 2012).



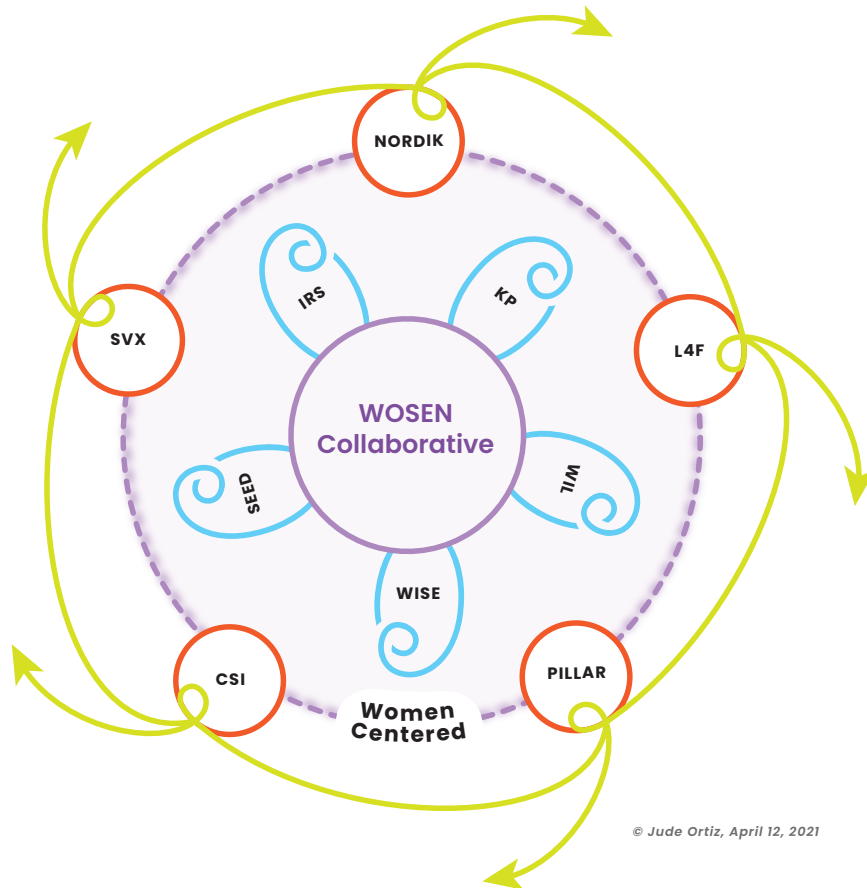
The partnering organizations have identified the outcomes that they want to see, i.e., a more equitable and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem, and based on past experience, organizational knowledge and literature have charted pathways toward the end goal. Regardless of how well thought out in advance, plans may need to adapt to circumstances as the project unfolds. Critical is the relationship between timely assessment of actions (learnings and impact in meeting goals) and strategic decision-making processes in guiding the initiative forward. Thus, two intertwined evaluation frameworks that link strategy to evaluation were adopted: Theory of Change and Developmental Evaluation. Both support incorporating evolving knowledge generation, thereby enabling continuous learning and adaptation to effect change in effective and meaningful ways.

## 2.2 Theory of Change

A Theory of Change (ToC) is a robust approach to programming theory, monitoring and evaluation. The supposition is created to identify why the activities will create the intended outcomes, rather than stating that they will occur. It supports clarifying what is believed to be the underlying causes of change, articulates the causal pathways, and the outcomes the project wants to see within the context in which the intervention is operating. It surfaces the assumptions of what actions/inputs lead to what outcomes. As the project unfolds the ToC may need to be revised to incorporate learnings and impact emerging from evaluation. Questions that guided the creation of WOSEN Theory of Change include: What are we doing? For whom? Why is this important? And, what are the outcomes we want to achieve?

## 2.2.1 WOSEN's Theory of Change

Figure 3. WOSEN Theory of Change



- WOSEN Collaborative
- 4 Programs WISE, WIL, SEED and Investment Readiness Supports – and Knowledge Products
- - - Women Centered
- Collaborative Organizations
- Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

*The WOSEN collaborative's principles-focused approach to the development of a women's entrepreneurship ecosystem will support the growth of the spectrum of underrepresented women who are building enterprises that have a social and ecological impact core to their business offerings in urban, rural and remote regions in the province of Ontario.*

*Integrating a developmental evaluation approach to address four key ecosystem gaps will foster a continuous learning, a knowledge sharing and co-creation environment that will drive systems level change, situating women as central to economies that are connected to the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#), specifically #5: Gender Equity and #8: Decent Work and Economic Growth (Nov 15.19).*

Four key ecosystem gaps are addressed through four innovative programs: Women in Social Enterprise (WISE); Women-Centred Innovative Learning (WIL); Social Enterprise Ecosystem Development; (SEED) and Investment Readiness Supports (IRS), and the creation of knowledge products (KP) to build practitioner capacity. They are described in the [Programs section, page 12](#).

The learnings are incorporated into each partnering organization and further mobilized through the ecosystem.



## 2.3 Developmental evaluation

A Developmental Evaluation (DE) approach instills a culture of reflection, assessment, adaptive design and implementation within the context of the Theory of Change (ToC) by linking evaluation to strategy. It focuses on developmental questions, such as: What is being developed? How is it being developed and what is being assessed? Given what has been developed and what has emerged, what is next? Does the evidence support the Theory of Change or should the ToC be revised?

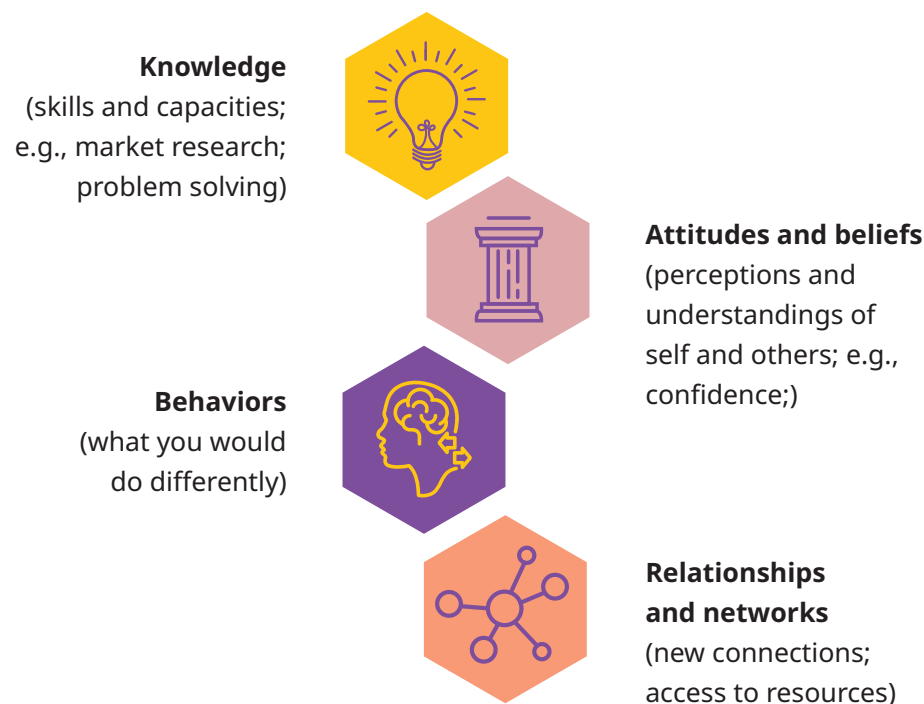
The DE methodology is underpinned by iterative cycles of program and project level reflection — observation, reflection, planning and act/implementation — sound community development principles that facilitate emergent understanding of successes, and concerns and challenges as the project unfolds. This methodology supports continuous innovation, transformation and professional development by integrating real-time feedback and robust sense-making into the work through:

- Data collection (design and implementation);
- Knowledge sharing;
- Collaboration and co-creation;
- Responsive design; and,
- Accountability to fundamental principles and commitment to change.

The collaborative requested Dr. Jude Ortiz of NORDIK Institute to lead the DE subcommittee, thereby opting for an internal evaluator. A Project Evaluation Design was developed that included the [Theory of Change](#); the [Assessment framework](#); [Evaluation questions](#); and Milestones which provided direction for program evaluation methodology, reflection on delivery, knowledge product development, dissemination and program and project summative evaluations.

### 2.3.1 Assessment framework

WOSEN's overarching assessment framework aims to identify changes in participant capacity for adaptation in transitioning to more equitable, inclusive and sustainable economies by capturing changes in:



## 2.3.2 Evaluation questions

The following ten evaluation questions were developed collaboratively. Some of the questions target deliverables identified in the Contribution Agreement with FedDev Ontario, while others are intended to reveal aspects of what the partners consider important to supporting a women's entrepreneurial ecosystem as well influencing broader systemic change. A few of the questions include sub or clarifying questions that appear in italics below.

### Engagement:

1. Who did WOSSEN engage?
2. Which sectors are women entrepreneurs contributing to building healthy, resilient people and places?

### Learning and Impact:

3. What was WOSSEN's impact on program participants? (women, business developers, investors)
4. What did participants identify as ways to further develop a social entrepreneurial ecosystem supportive of women and non-binary/genderqueer people?
5. What was WOSSEN's impact on practitioners?

*How does reflective practice contribute to increased capacity for understanding oneself, appreciation of the diversity of human experience and cultures, and ways to affect social innovation?*

6. What did WOSSEN practitioners identify as ways to further develop their capacity to serve a social entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports women and non-binary/genderqueer people?

### Knowledge Creation and Mobilization:

7. What resources and knowledge products were developed?
8. How was WOSSEN's learnings and impact mobilized?
9. What professional development opportunities were there?

### Moving Forward

#### 10. Program and Project Development:

*How have the programs developed and what has the collaborative learned in this cycle?*

*What has the collaborative done in this cycle, what has it learned, and what does it need to do moving forward? How does the WOSSEN collaborative aim to meet identified outstanding and future program and project needs, and ongoing or arising questions? What relationships need to be developed and/or strengthened to support this work?*

## 2.3.3 Data collection

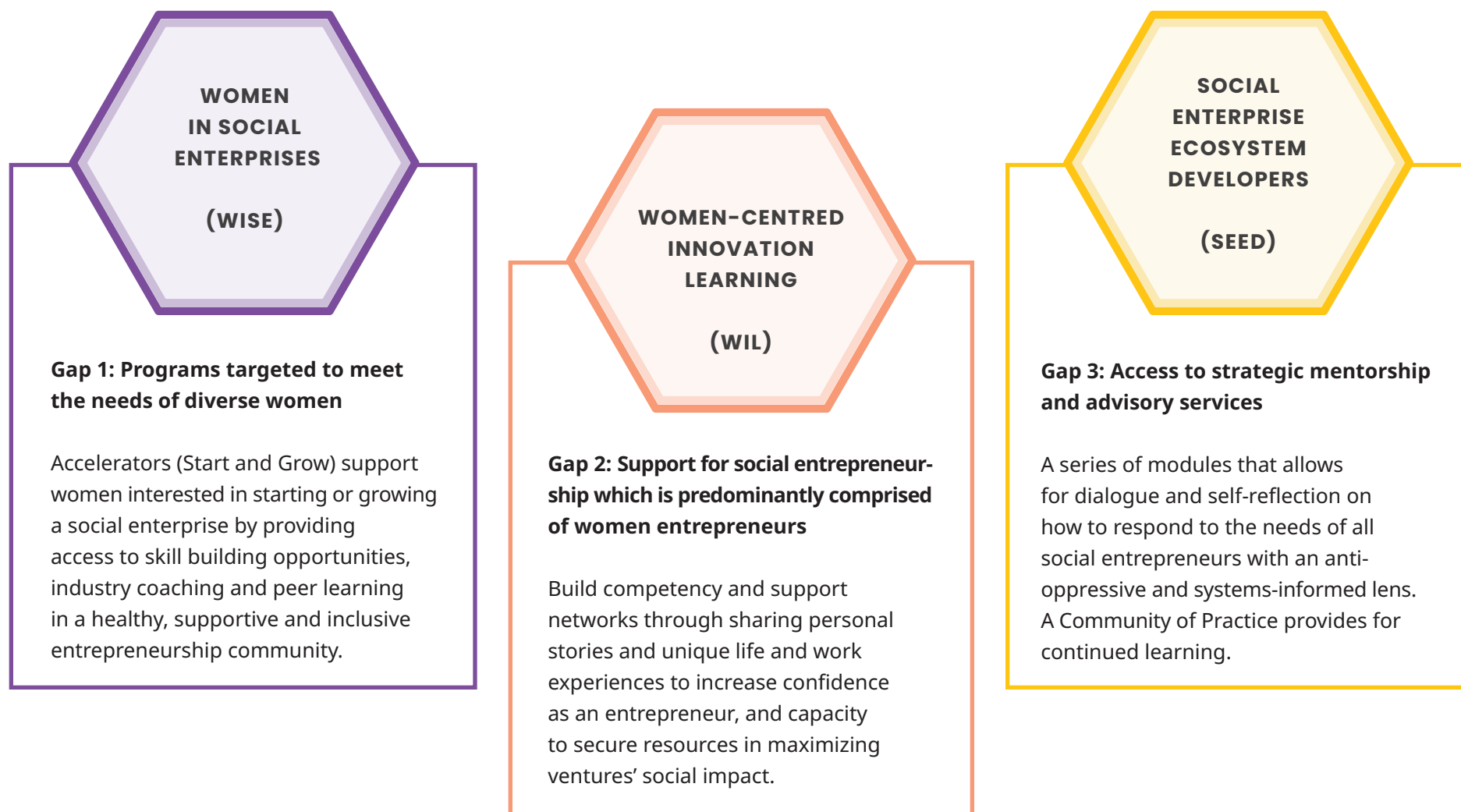
A project-wide data collection process and sharing platform (Airtable) was implemented over the duration of this reporting cycle. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected through a variety of methods that engaged participants and practitioners. The diversity of feedback loops in real time greatly contributed to the richness of the data collected.

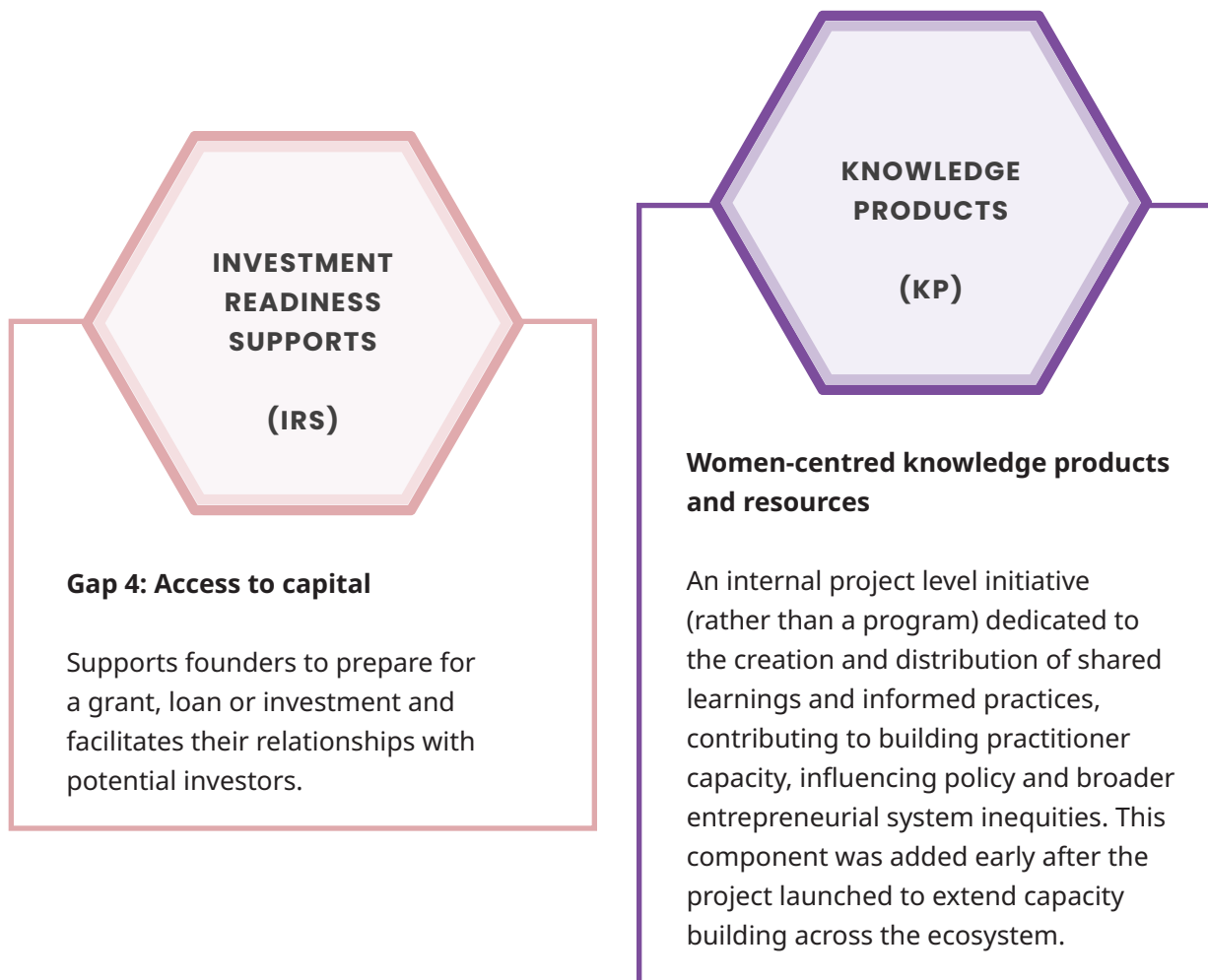
Collection tools included intake forms; feedback forms during program delivery and/or end of programming; program delivery team discussions; project-wide dialogues; individual episodic reflection questions as part of the DE; and written reports.

## 2.4 Programs

4 key ecosystem gaps addressed through 4 innovative, evolving programs, plus knowledge products to build practitioner capacity and influence broader entrepreneurial system change

Figure 4. Programs addressing ecosystem gaps





**INVESTMENT  
READINESS  
SUPPORTS  
(IRS)**

**Gap 4: Access to capital**

Supports founders to prepare for a grant, loan or investment and facilitates their relationships with potential investors.

**KNOWLEDGE  
PRODUCTS  
(KP)**

**Women-centred knowledge products and resources**

An internal project level initiative (rather than a program) dedicated to the creation and distribution of shared learnings and informed practices, contributing to building practitioner capacity, influencing policy and broader entrepreneurial system inequities. This component was added early after the project launched to extend capacity building across the ecosystem.

As the project progressed, the ecosystem gaps became more clearly defined, as reflected in section 3.5.1, [Program development, innovation and evolution, page 57](#).

**ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMING**

In addition to the above four core programs and the development of knowledge products, the [Women’s Entrepreneurship Strategy Ecosystem Fund](#), provided WOSSEN with additional program funding to support the following identified needs that emerged during the initial offerings. These three programs addressed specific ecosystem needs and were launched at various times after June 2020 and ended in March 2021.

- iii. Francophone women social entrepreneurs;
- iv. Digital transformation: connecting women to industry coaches to build capacity around social media marketing, search engine optimization, e-commerce and other digital marketing categories; and
- v. Extended Coaching Program (ECP) providing English and French speaking entrepreneurs up to ten hours of one-on-one coaching with women social entrepreneurs.

The Digital Transformation and the Extended Coaching Program are evaluated in this report. The learnings and impact from the Francophone programming will be reported in a separate document.

## 2.4.1 Program design

### Designing with intention

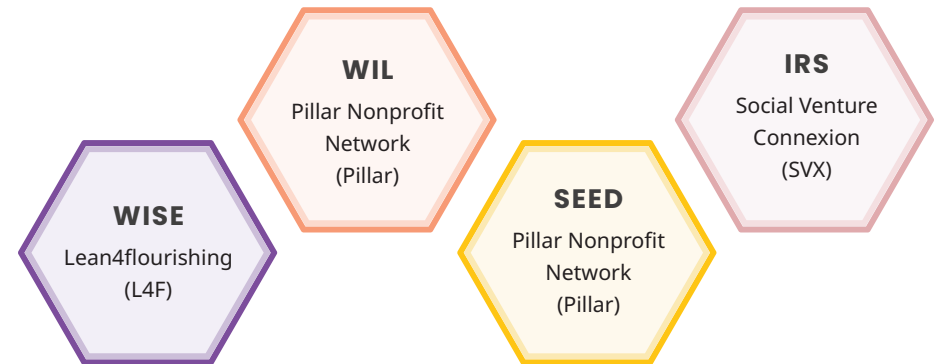
Programs aimed to create a safe and brave environment that would support surfacing different conversations to spur self learning, individual developmental shifts and relationship building that ground healthy, resilient entrepreneurs. They were intentionally co-created and input-focused (rather than solely output-focused) centering the lived experience and knowledge of participants and other entrepreneurship stakeholders (i.e., founders, practitioners, business supporters, community partners).

Intentional co-creation involved:

1. Conducting discovery (ethnographic) research by gathering stories, experiences and insights directly from entrepreneurs, potential entrepreneurs and other entrepreneurship stakeholders.
2. Recognizing and respecting existing relationships between entrepreneurs and business development supporters, investors/funders and their offerings;
3. Articulating what entrepreneurial supports need to be built, strengthened, redesigned, or reconfigured to create inclusive economies and just societies utilizing a social enterprise model; and,
4. Developing pathways to create and deliver such

Each program was led by one of the collaborating organizations, with co-creators responsible for the innovative design, development, evolution, and program evaluation. Each program determined its weekly or bi-weekly meeting schedule of WOSEN collaborators, plus the frequency of smaller team meetings to further monitor or manage the delivery, or concentrate on program design and developmental evaluation.

Figure 5. Program leads

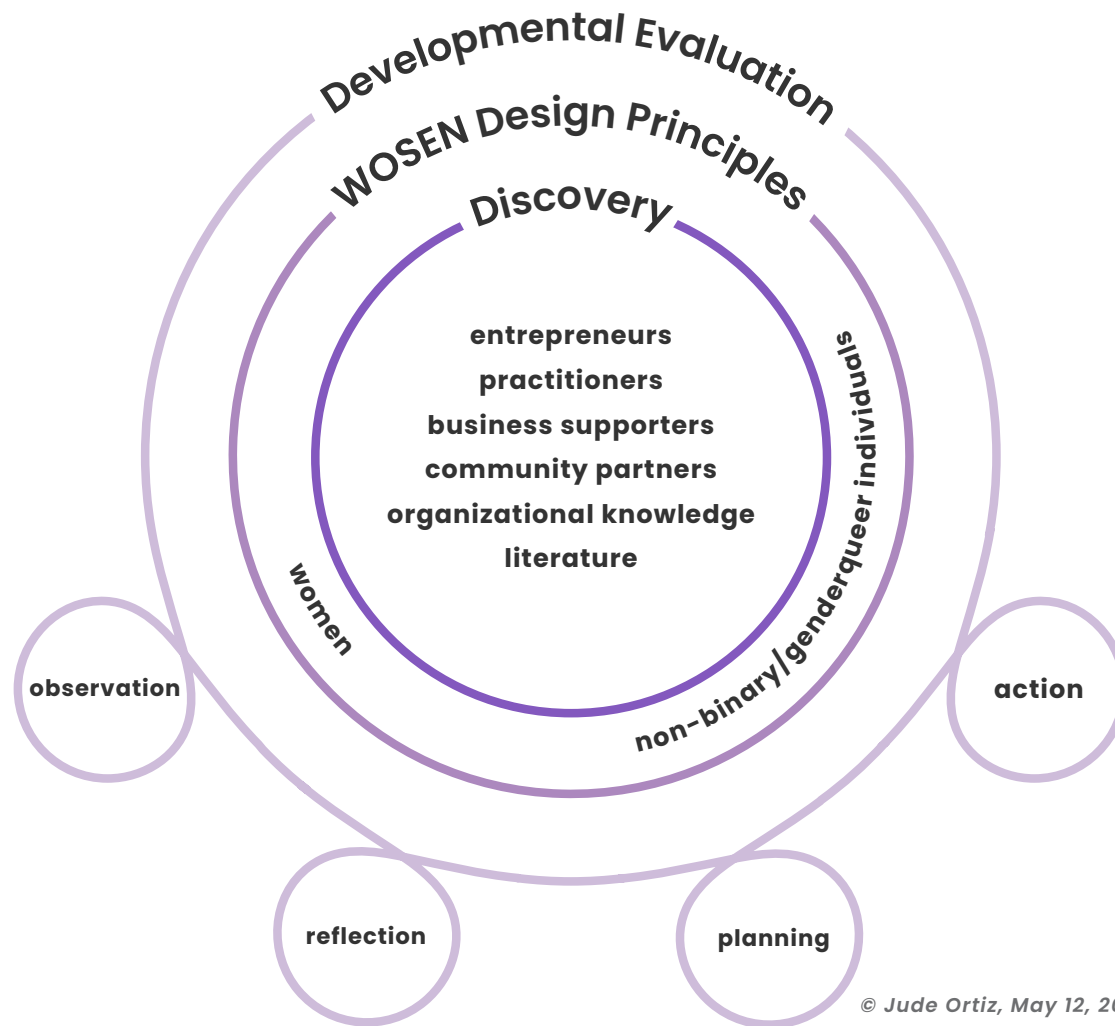


A fundamental element common to the four core programs (regardless of which ecosystem gap they address) is **the necessity of understanding the entrepreneurial context** — stakeholders' current knowledge, attitudes and beliefs, behaviours, and relationships and networks — in service of re/designing supports to be more inclusive, equitable and sustainable, enabling new ways of thinking, connecting, and thriving.

**Two overarching questions** underpinning WOSEN's intentional program design revolved around:

- How can women-focused support advance the entrepreneurs' endeavours?
- How can service providers support women-focused entrepreneurs based on their current context and needs?

Figure 6. Program design



**Discovery lays the foundation, WOSEN Design Principles shape the structure and developmental evaluation assesses the learnings and impact**, which is nested in the **transformational cycle of observation, reflection, planning and action**. The redesign iteration or evolution occurred in real time during delivery or at the end in preparation for the next delivery cycle.

Ethnographic research was conducted to gain insight and knowledge from:

- Stakeholders: women and business supports;
- Organizational knowledge;
- Community partners' understanding; and
- Literature

Each program developed targeted questions, and organized and analyzed the data to meet their specific needs. For example, L4F, the lead for WISE, utilized Ken Wilbers' *The Four Worlds of Sustainability* (cited by Brown, 2007) arranging it into four quadrants (psychological, behavioural, cultural and systems) to better understand the dynamics and forces that influence people's perspectives and actions. A sampling of questions used in the WISE Accelerator design are included in [Appendix 1: Discovery questions, page 70](#).

Figure 7. WOSEN Design Principles



The **WOSEN Design Principles (WDP)** have become the project's guiding principles influencing shared language, planning, implementation and evaluation. The seven principles emerged from the first Accelerator Design Jam (Jan 2020) led by L4F.

A description of each WOSEN Design Principle and ways they were incorporated into the programming appears in the section outlining the impact of engagement in practitioners. See [WOSEN Design Principles and application, page 42](#). Please also see [What knowledge products and resources were developed?, page 50](#) for two products based on the Principles.

# 3.0 Evaluation

## 3.1 Purpose of the evaluation

The WOSSEN initiative is focused on catalyzing social innovation, reorganizing the way the current entrepreneurial system works by creating the critical relational networks and resources that underpin a healthy, functioning and thriving entrepreneurship ecosystem to enable women to participate in business and society by building prosperity for all in Ontario. More specifically, the partners are collaborating to unleash the entrepreneurial energy and capacity of underserved women<sup>6</sup> who have solutions that put people and the planet first by redesigning how business supports are provided, enabling these entrepreneurs to build skills that match their potential to flourish and to connect with local and/or global communities and resources to succeed.

This interim evaluation is grounded in accountability, assessing the intervention's progress in meeting its stated goals and objectives. It is reviewed in terms of key performance indicators, and changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and relationship/networks that underpin the capacity to innovate and adapt at the individual, organizational and systems level. The WOSSEN initiative is being assessed at both the program and project level to identify the relationships between the two levels, and linkages between WOSSEN and the broader ecosystem it intends to influence. The evaluation, and the resulting Interim Report, is intended to first, benefit the collaborative partner members, practitioners and organizations, and second, the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem of educators, resource people, organizations, practitioners, investors/funding agencies and those who create policy.

The project has adopted a Developmental Evaluation approach, collecting quantitative and qualitative data from program participants;

<sup>6</sup> Women includes ALL women

program delivery data; scheduled development meetings and reflections summarized by program leads; collaborative-wide meeting notes; and episodic practitioner reflections. The evaluation questions focus on learning and impact. Learning centres practitioners - i.e., what has been learned about women founders served through WOSSEN, SE ecosystem; about yourself as a practitioner; and impact focuses on participants - "the social, environmental or economic effect or change (either positive or negative - inclusive of outputs and outcomes), that occurs to people and communities as the result of an activity, project or policy undertaken." (Centre for Organizational Effectiveness, 2019).

Overall, the Interim Report has provided the WOSSEN Collaborative an opportunity for reflection, introspection and redirection at approximately mid-way through the initiative's mandate, identifying where the collaborating partners consider the project to be successful in meeting its goals.

### 3.1.1 Evaluation data sources

Data for the evaluation was gathered from a variety of collection tools. Administrative reports provided data related to the deliverables and other areas where quantitative data is included. Feedback from program participants, coaches, guest facilitators and partners was gathered at the end of the session and analyzed during the program's iterative review process and then organized into a Program Summative Review that each program lead presented during a series of monthly partner meetings. The Participant End of Program survey data forms the basis of [section 3.3.2](#) itemizing the impact of participating in WOSSEN. Practitioners provided data regarding their learnings through Monthly Partner meetings, episodic reflections and a Practitioner Reflection survey. Additionally, Practitioner Satisfaction Rating and Recommendations survey was distributed to WOSSEN practitioners and appears throughout the evaluation in respective areas of assessment. A [Summary of practitioner satisfaction rating](#) appears in Appendix 5, [page 85](#).



### 3.1.2 Limitations to the study

There are limitations to the study, with the most significant being linked to issues around human resources, delaying the implementation of a project-wide data collection process. This large-scale project, understandably, needed to focus its energy on program design and development first with the intent of incorporating the developmental evaluation aspect into each program as they evolved. As a result, not every program delivered during this reporting cycle is included in the evaluation. A table of [Programs delivered, page 20](#), illustrates the number and type included, and where applicable, the evaluation indicates which program data is included and the number of participants and response rate.

The impact associated with COVID-19, and the necessity of pivoting from in-person to online delivery, further stretched practitioner capacity during this unprecedented time of reimagining ways of working to achieve stated goals. However, they drew on their reserves, and created pathways forward, including hiring additional staff, and collectively built capacity to incorporate the developmental evaluation approach. Moving forward the collaborative has overcome these initial challenges and is in a very good position entering the second half of the project.

Other limitations include tensions between program delivery and reporting cycles. For example, the Francophone programs, although completed by March 31, 2021, will be assessed in a separate report to provide additional time for reflection and assessment in collaboration with community delivery partners.

Lastly, it is important to note that Interim Report would typically include both a Program and a Project Summative Review, the latter forming the basis of the next steps in the Moving Forward section referencing, for example, insights into recommendations for further action and priorities and if the Theory of Change needs to be revisited. Since the collaborative

is transitioning to a new Developmental Evaluation lead who will engage the partners in a thorough investigation in determining future pathways, this report includes Program Development (gleaned from the Program Summative Reviews), and concludes with a nod to the project's direction.

## 3.2 Engagement

### Who did WOSEN engage?

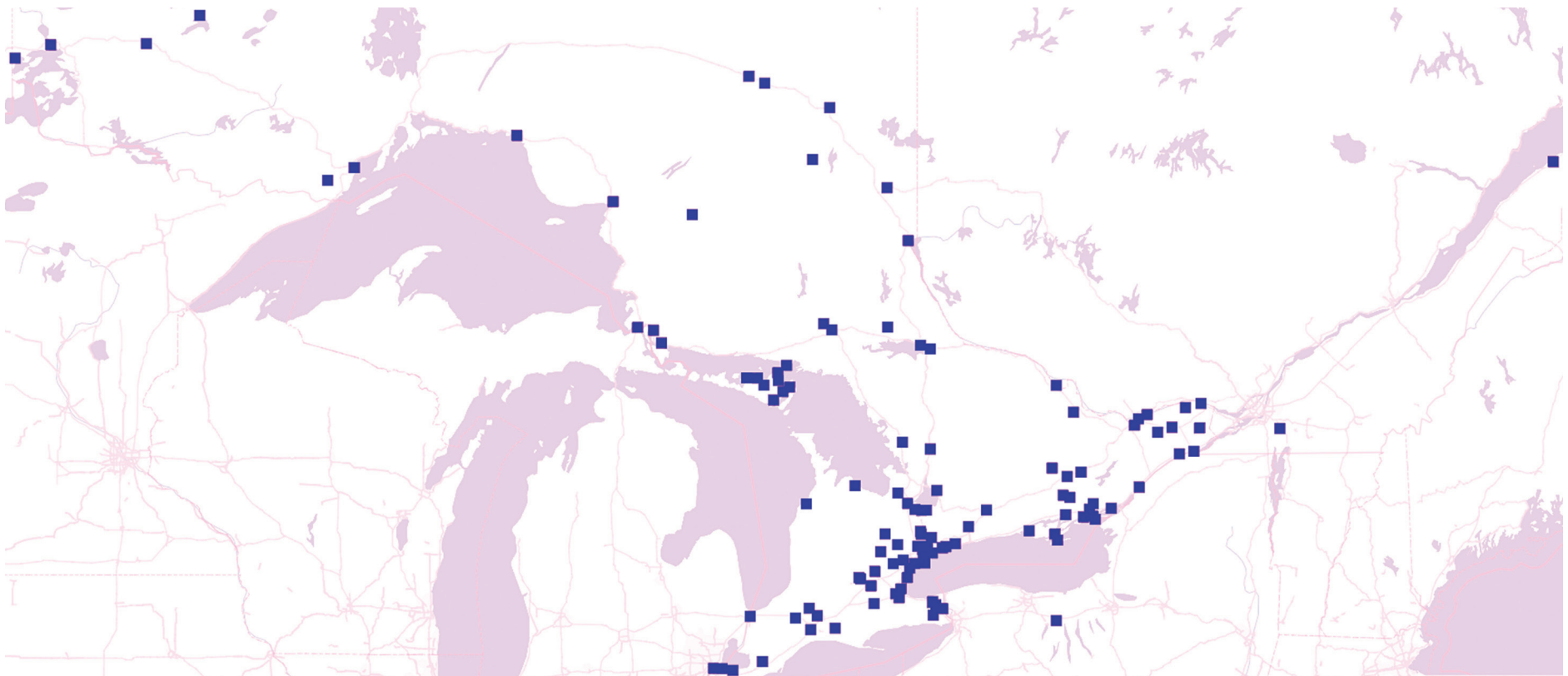
WOSEN aims to engage two broad categories of participants: women underrepresented in business, and those who support the entrepreneurial ecosystem — individuals and organizations working in business development, investment, funding, coaching, or community development spheres. All offerings are designed to build capacity, relationships and networks to overcome systemic barriers that limit equity-deserving founders' participation. WISE, WIL, IRS and ECP engage women underrepresented in business as well as ecosystem supporters, whereas SEED is specifically tailored to people supporting the entrepreneurial ecosystem including community developers and/or leaders.

This section assesses WOSEN's progress meeting their goal of engaging underrepresented women entrepreneurs and ecosystem supporters from a variety of perspectives including: overall participation numbers; women's self-identification in underrepresented groups; sector classification; the stages in women's entrepreneurial journey; and the roles the ecosystem stakeholders played in the project.

### 3.2.1 Location of participants

As a provincial initiative, WOSEN aims to engage participants from urban and rural communities in all regions. The map illustrates the **120 communities** where the **719 program participants** reside. In the northern region, the most western participants were from the Kenora area, followed by a few from Thunder Bay and the shore of Lake Superior. There was a cluster along Highway 11 and in Timmins, as well as Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury and Manitoulin Island. The southwestern region from Windsor eastward, to the central area around Toronto, to eastern Ontario including places surrounding Lake Ontario, and communities near the St. Lawrence River were well represented.

*Map #1: Location of participants*



## 3.2.2 Programs delivered

The following table lists the **34 regional and provincial programs delivered** in this reporting cycle and identifies the **24 evaluated in this report**. The Contribution Agreement specified the number of each type of program to be delivered within certain timeframes, and the collaborating partners determined which organization — Pillar, CSI, NORDIK or SVX — would take the lead in delivering them.

Table 1: Programs delivered

PROGRAM	REGIONAL	PROVINCIAL	INCLUDED IN EVALUATION
<b>WISE</b> (Women in Social Social Enterprise): Accelerator programs			
Start	6		5
Grow/Resilience	1	2	2
<b>WIL</b> (Women-Centred Innovation Learning): Responsive programming tailored to build competency and support networks			
<b>English</b>			
Indigenous Communities (London)	1		0
Media Equity		1	0
PowerStories™ - An African Centred Approach with Dobijoki Emanuela		1	1
Leading into the Future: Inspiring and Activating Community Social Innovation	3		3
Your Heart is your Genius		1	1
Financial Literacy		1	1
<b>French</b>			
Et si on se lançait dans l'entrepreneurial social?	1		0
Quand les femmes innovent et réussissent en affaires	1		0
Entrepreneuriat féminin		1	0
Salon des femmes entrepreneures sociales		1	0

PROGRAM	REGIONAL	PROVINCIAL	INCLUDED IN EVALUATION
<b>SEED</b> (Social Enterprise Ecosystem Developers): A series of modules that allows for dialogue and self-reflection on how to respond to the needs of all social entrepreneurs with an anti-oppressive and systems-informed lens, and a Community of Practice provides for continued learning.			
Social Enterprise Ecosystem Developers: Rebuilding Our Economy for Shared Prosperity	4		4
<b>IRS</b> (Investment Readiness Support): Supports founders to prepare for a grant, loan or investment and facilitates their relationships with potential investors			
Funding and Capital		2	2
Investment Readiness Supports		1	1
Funder Pair		1	1
<b>ECP</b> (Extended Coaching Program); One-on-one coaching for entrepreneurs at various stages of development			
New entrepreneurs		1	1
Grow/Resilience		1	1
London Indigenous Start	1		0
French Entrepreneurs		1	0
<b>Digital Transformation:</b> Support for women to digitally transform their business through increased capacity around social media marketing, search engine optimization, e-commerce and other digital marketing categories.			
Digital Transformation		1	1

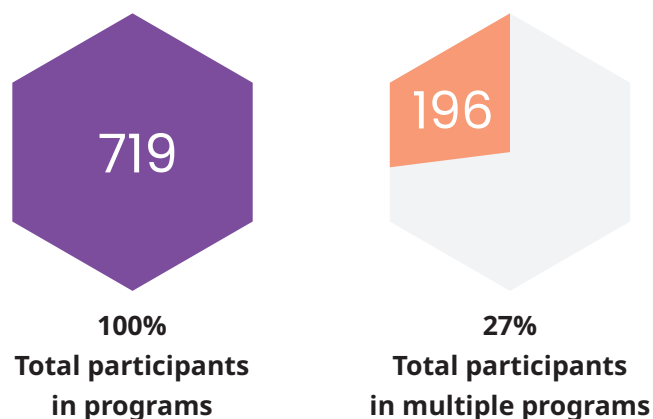
### 3.2.3 Attraction and participation

This section reflects on the collaborative's satisfaction with their current outreach and communication strategies in reaching the target audiences and the resulting number of people engaged in the programs. It also discusses factors impacting these areas.

As the administrative lead, Pillar provided the human resources to establish the communications branding including infographics, general social media images, headers and footers, banners, PowerPoint templates, etc. Partners provided input and direction into the development of the WOSEN website and Pillar was tasked with its creation and ongoing maintenance and updates.

Each collaborating partner was responsible for communication and marketing strategies surrounding their program delivery. Reaching the intended audience, conveying the benefits and value of the offering and a clear pathway to registration were key components. The intake process aimed to ensure alignment between participant expectations and the program offering. Sometimes applicants were referred to

Figure 8. Total number of participants



other programming opportunities within WOSEN or beyond, or to other resources that may be a good match for the individual. Ongoing participant care was designed into each program's methodology.

Communication and marketing considerations included the target audience, i.e., where they reside in terms of reaching them (organizational memberships, community centres, personal or professional networks) and what tools would be most effective. Women within WOSEN's scope can be difficult to locate. Many of the outreach strategies to engage equity-deserving entrepreneurs were through networking, touching base with organizations rather than utilizing social media which tends to cast a broad net. Membership newsletters were leveraged as were media releases, particularly in the northern region, to spread awareness across a vast geographic area with limited organizational infrastructure. This latter avenue faced challenges due to the review time required by WES. To recruit ecosystem supporters the collaborating partners drew on their existing relationships as well as tapping into each other's networks that extend into the broader ecosystem.

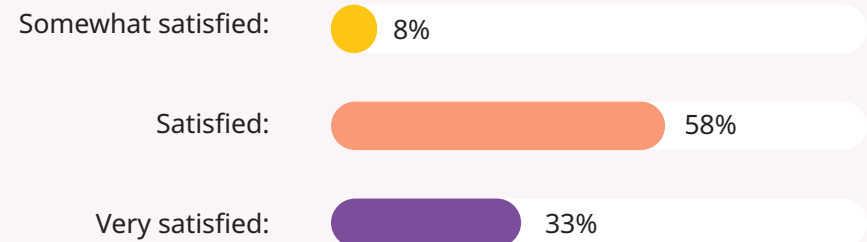
WOSEN engaged a total of **719 participants** in their various programs. The project aims to provide a suite of programs that support participant needs at different entrepreneurial stages and/or practices. While there was not a specific desired percentage of crossover, **27% of the total number of participants attended multiple programs** indicating WOSEN is making progress in this area. Promotion of opportunities between WOSEN partners increased as the year progressed due, in part, to having time to establish communications pathways for this purpose once the heavy lifting of organizing the initial offerings in an online format were underway.

In terms of recruiting participants, engagement in multiple programs, and retention, there are a plethora of factors that impact a person's decision to enroll or withdraw. Collaborating partners consider the COVID-19 pandemic may have exacerbated these underlying considerations.

Below are a few examples noted by partners;

- Timing: day, hour, program duration
- Readiness and a match with content
- Not aware of other opportunities
- Other challenges and demands:
  - Many participants were struggling financially with multiple jobs, feeling overworked and too exhausted to participate
  - Quite a number of students (part/full time) underestimated the work involved; felt overwhelmed trying to balance academics and enterprise development
  - Some participants experienced losses in their family/friends due to COVID-19 and that impacted their ability to “show up” with full attention and focus
  - Unexpected burden of care for family members
  - Parents, including single parents, were challenged with taking care of children and concentrating on developing their enterprise
  - Extreme anxiety and needing extra support and encouragement to attend sessions (i.e., relaying to them that it’s a safe/brave space)

### How satisfied is the collaborative with its communications and participation numbers?



WOSEN Practitioner Satisfaction survey comments included:

*“I believe our communications strategies need to be more focused and tailored to the target demographic. Part of the strategy should incorporate relationship building, and I’m wondering how we can build that into our approach.”*

*“We have reached twice as many people than anticipated in the project as a whole, as well as reaching diverse women social entrepreneurs from across the Province. We have reflected upon our outreach strategies and are always adjusting to bring WOSEN opportunities to diverse audiences. While we still have work to do, I know we are well on our way.”*

[Appendix 5: Summary of practitioner satisfaction ratings, page 85](#) provides a listing of the 12 areas the collaborative assessed.

### 3.2.4 Women from underrepresented groups

Program participants were invited to self-identify if they belonged to one or more of the underrepresented and underserved groups that WOSEN seeks to support. Of the 713 participants engaged in programming in this reporting cycle, 690 identified as women. The totals in the table below include women who identified with more than one category and participated in more than one program.

Over the duration of the project, WOSEN’s internal goal aims to have **at least 70%** of its program participants be from the **underrepresented groups**. WOSEN has exceeded its goal, **engaging 97% of the target demographic** in its programs.

Table 2: Self-identification with underrepresented groups

<b>WOMEN SELF-IDENTIFYING WITHIN THE FOLLOWING UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Women	690
Non-Binary	11
Two-Spirit	2
LGBTQ+	54
Indigenous Peoples	96
Member of a rural community	94
Youth (under 40)	262
Persons with Disabilities	58
Newcomers to Canada	59
Racialized person (Visible Minorities above)	214

### 3.2.5 WOSEN supported women entrepreneurs

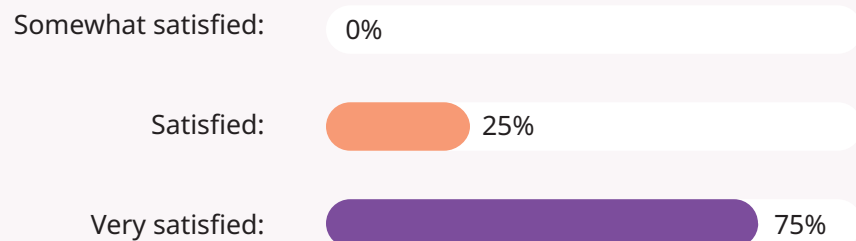
Following are WOSEN’s key project impacts identifying specific ways the collaborative aims to support women, and progress in reaching its target at approximately the mid-way point. Programming to engage two target areas (markets abroad and supplier diversity) have not yet been offered, thus have ‘0’ participants.

Data was gathered through participant registration and intake forms from the WISE, WIL (English and French), SEED, IRS, Digital Transformation and the ECP (English and French) programs.

Table 3: Number of women entrepreneurs supported

WOSEN SUPPORTED WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS	TOTAL PROJECT GOALS	TOTAL NUMBER OF WOMEN	%OF PROJECT GOALS
Women supported in starting a new business	18	248	1378%
Women supported in growing an existing business	115	121	105%
Women supported to strengthen entrepreneurial skills	450	754	167%
Women connected with networking, matchmaking or mentorship opportunities	325	656	201%
Women supported to engage in traditionally under-represented sectors (i.e., STEM)	57	58	101%
Number of women supported in growing their business in markets abroad	10	0	0%
Number of women supported in supplier diversity initiatives	10	0	0%

**How satisfied is the collaborative with meeting its key project impact goals?**



WOSEN Practitioner Satisfaction survey comments included:

*“A wonderful testament to the responsive and dedicated work of the project team.”*

*“Where we’ve delivered, we’re ahead of target, which is exciting! Curious about further breakdown of support for women from marginalized groups as an internal indicator if not a funder impact area.”*



### 3.2.6 Unlocking capital

The project has a deliverable goal of unlocking 3.6 million in capital for WOSEN participants. While a few of the WIL programs support financial literacy and management, and a number of WISE participants are accessing investment on their own accord, the IRS programs are considered to be the primary means of realizing this target.

The Investment Readiness Supports program and the Funder Pairing program focus on preparing and facilitating access to capital tools including: Term loans; Bridge financing loans; Microloans; Direct equity; Venture Capital/ Private Equity fund investment (LP); and loan guarantees and grants. For more information please see the [Investment Readiness Supports, page 62](#).

How much has WOSEN unlocked for its participants?

Of the 25 founders responding to the IRS survey conducted in the spring of 2020:

- 15 founders secured funding
- \$950,000 secured in investments, grants or loans
- Founders applied for \$2.8M
- Founders are seeking \$27M in capital

### 3.2.7 Which sectors are women entrepreneurs contributing to building healthy, resilient people and places?

Based on the National Occupational Classification System, women entrepreneurs are contributing to building healthy, resilient people and places in a variety of sectors. Participants from the WIL (English and French), IRS and ECP (English and French) programs were requested to indicate the sector in which they are operating.

**Total number of respondents: 514**

Table 4: Entrepreneurial sectors

SECTOR	# OF PARTICIPANTS	% OF PARTICIPANTS
Agriculture and agri-food	17	3%
Arts, entertainment and recreation (including Motion picture and sound recording)	63	12%
Book publishing industry	5	1%
Broadcasting and telecommunications	3	0.6%
Business, scientific and other professional service	75	15%
Computer systems, software and video games design, and publishing and data processing	17	3%
Construction	4	0.8%
Education	43	8.4%
Finance, real estate, management of companies, and administrative and supporting services	7	1.4%
Health care and social assistance	65	12.6%
Manufacturing	40	7.8%
Other Services (including religious, grant making, civic, and professional and similar organizations)	116	22.6%
Transportation Services	1	0.2%
Wholesale and retail	58	11.3%

While the data is informational in nature, as WOSEN does not have any target metrics for this question, nor was it relevant for every program, WOSEN's Theory of Change aims to situate women as central to economies that are connected to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, specifically #5: Gender Equity and #8: Decent Work and Economic Growth. The IRS program did track participants' relationship to the UN SDGs and found:

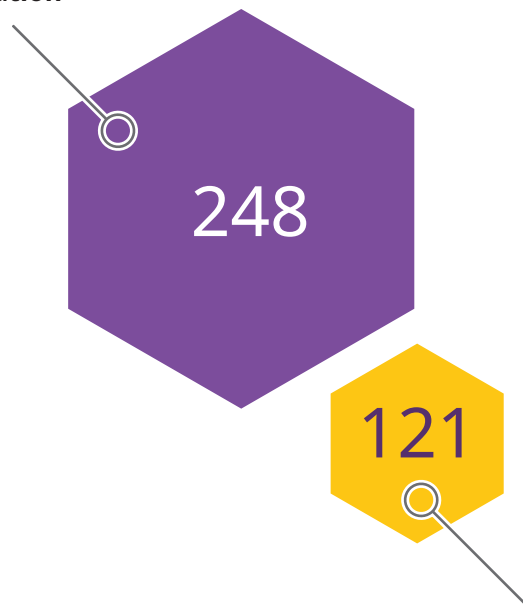
- 49 founders identified they were working toward specific SDGs, including:
  - Good Health and Well-being (48%)
  - Sustainable Cities and Communities (40%)
  - Reducing Inequality (28%)
  - Affordable and Clean Energy (5%)
  - Gender Equality (5%)
  - Decent Work and Economic Growth (3%), and
  - Climate Action (3%)

### 3.2.8 Stage in entrepreneurial journey

Women participating in WISE, IRS and the ECP (English and French) programs were asked to identify which stage their business was in.

Figure 9. Entrepreneurial stage

**Starting a business or less than 3 years in operation**



**Resilience or Growing: Operational for 3 years or more**

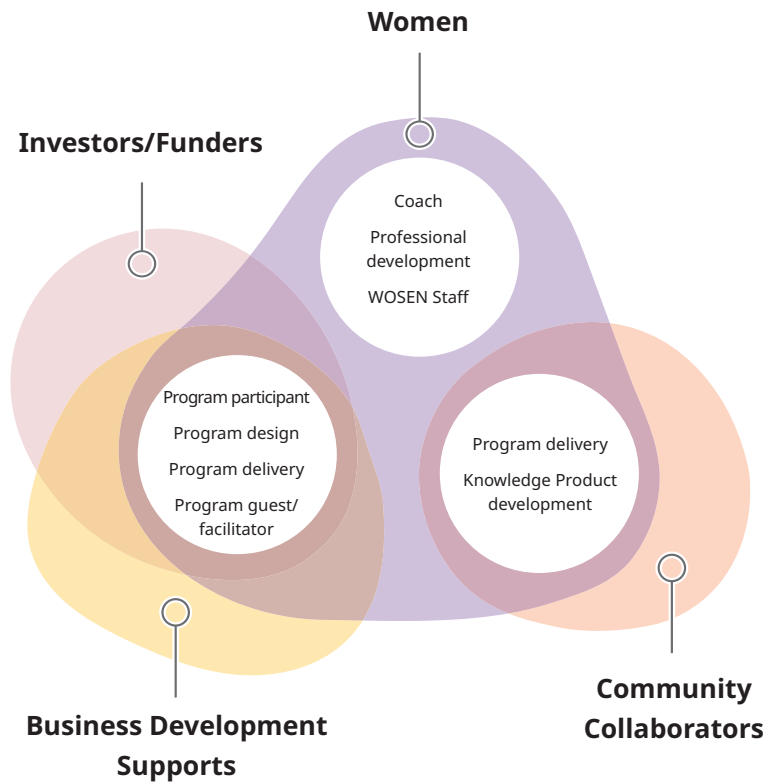
There are no project goals in this area, and the number of early or resilience stage participants is dependent on the type of programming offered.

### 3.2.9 Engagement of ecosystem stakeholders

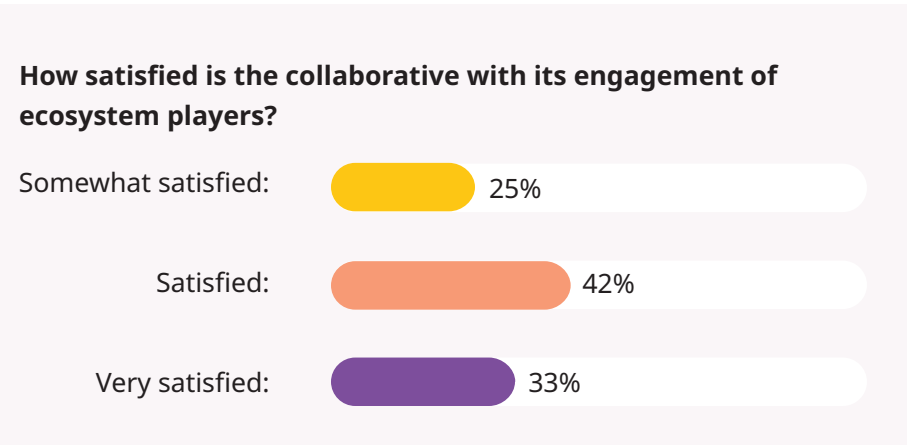
The project is taking an ecosystem approach to shift perspectives and practices towards more equitable and just economies by collaborating with a diversity of people in the entrepreneurship sphere to design, develop and/or deliver programming. Intentional engagement aimed to raise awareness of systemic barriers and increase entrepreneurial supporters' capacity to serve diverse founders, particularly women. The project does not have specific target goals regarding the number it intends to engage, but rather, aims to embed engagement throughout its programming areas and respond to emerging needs as the project unfolds. The following image portrays who WOSEN engaged from an ecosystem perspective and the type of participation.

Total of 14 new external collaborators contributing to program design, delivery, guest/facilitator, knowledge product development and professional development.

Figure 10. Ecosystem engagement and contribution



- Investors/Funders (e.g., Narinder Dhami, Marigold Capital; Wendy and Anabelle, Dragonfly Ventures; Sally Dimachki and Sagal Dualeh, Canadian Women’s Foundation)
- Community Partnerships (e.g., Studio FEiST; sisterhood media; Sandbox Centre; Iceberg Digital Marketing)



Following are a few examples of the stakeholders engaged in this cycle

- Program Guest/Facilitators (e.g., Narinder Dhami, Marigold Capital; Susan Henry and Jean Barrett, Alterna Credit Union)
- Business Development Supporters (e.g., Northwest Business Centre( Kenora); Conseil de la coopération de l’Ontario (CCO))

WOSEN Practitioner Satisfaction survey comments included:

*“I found that ecosystem partners we approached were eager to participate and offer support in various ways.”*

*“I would still like to see us reach a critical mass of stakeholders so that there is actual change. I’m not sure if we’re there yet.”*

## 3.3 Learnings and impact

This section evaluates the learnings and impact WOSEN has had on program participants and practitioners, and identifies what other supports they would like.

### 3.3.1 What was WOSEN's impact on participants?

Data gathered through the Participant End of Program Evaluation survey provides the foundation for assessing the impact of delivering four women-centred programs on entrepreneurial ecosystem gaps from a variety of perspectives that underpin individual and societal transformation. The evaluation inquired about participant overall satisfaction with the program; if they were engaged in a meaningful way; changes in their knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and relationship/networks as a result of participation; and further support they are seeking.

Program participants: WISE (120); WIL-English (242); SEED (15); Digital Transformation: (40); ECP- English (123)

Total number participants: 540; Total of respondents:103; averaged response rate: 19%

Please see [Appendix 2: Participant End of Program Evaluation Response Rates, page 75](#), for a breakdown for each program.

#### 3.3.1.1 OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THE PROGRAMS

*"There was time to work, and trainers encouraged participation and allowed us time to work together."* (Start Participant)

*"I asked questions for clarifications, I got information that was helpful, and I felt I really connected with everyone involved. It was a deep and impressive experience."* (Start Participant)

*"There was good opportunity to have a voice at the table. There was good effort to ensure inclusivity. I especially appreciated the creative piece that was composed with each session."* (SEED Participant)

*"It meant a great deal being able to speak with another woman that has experienced and continues to go through the struggles of running and growing a successful small business."* (Extended Coaching Program Participant)

*"Through the WOSEN program and my mentor, I met one of my main advisors, and I now have two contacts who have agreed to participate in my pre-seed investment. Although I still need to raise more funds to close my target of \$250K, this is the start I really needed. I am very grateful for the support you have both provided and for the support of the CSI community."* (Investment Readiness Support Participant)

As a broad assessment of the value of the programs, the End of Program Participant survey utilized a Net Promoter Score Question to inquire about their satisfaction with the program.

*How likely are you to recommend this program to a friend or colleague?*

**Net Promoter Score: 68**

Figure 11. Participant responses

deep  
gratitude

thank you so much for hosting this series!

extreme gratitude

I really thought this series was unique and love the format of learning -  
I hope there are more of these sessions

great hosting  
and facilitation

thank you so much!  
Looking forward to the next series :)

love your efforts and hard work on this project!  
Way to go!!!!!!

### 3.3.1.2 MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

*“A lot of the content delivered I was able to deeply reflect on and apply to my personal and professional life. Further, I got to engage with like-minded women entrepreneurs who helped me grow my ideas just through conversation and feedback.”*

*– Start Participant*

Two of WOSEN Design Principles are Inclusive and Accessible. This question assesses how participants felt regarding their ability to participate in a meaningful way.

*Were you able to participate in a way that was meaningful to you?*

Yes: 94%

No: 6%

Positive comments included:

*“I found the facilitators created an inclusive and empathic space.” (WISE)*

*“Every session was relevant - I learned something new in each session - I had the opportunity to discuss and ask questions all the time and this made the experience engaging and helped me retain information better.” (WISE)*

*"There were multiple ways/time to participate. I tend to prefer the 1-1 breakout discussions, and also used the DM chat to respond to something someone said. I liked that these were in addition to the large group "check-ins"."* (WIL)

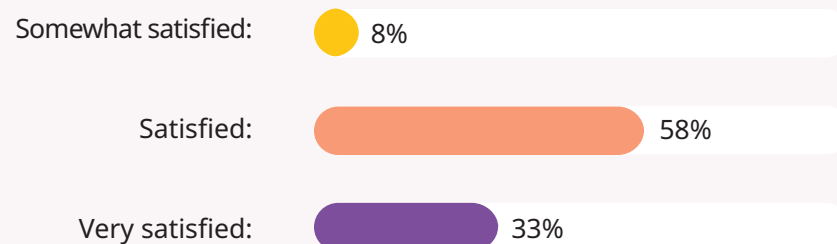
*Why not? What could we have done differently?*

*"In a longer program, allow more time for chat and networking in person events, or break out rooms on zoom. Not much scope in 1 hour with 2 or 3 presentations."* (WIL)

*"Tech issues, emphasis on independent work & subsequent sharing."* (WIL)

*"Seemed to be for people just starting out and not enough help for the other ones."* (WIL)

### How satisfied is the collaborative with participant overall satisfaction and meaningful engagement?



WOSEN Practitioner Satisfaction survey comments included:

*"I think that 68 is a good score and we have done a lot of experimentation in programming over the past year so especially when you are trying something new, I think this is a great starting point."*

*"Not sure if the net promoter score represents the actual satisfaction of participants? From my knowledge and experience, most participants in programs had a very positive experience of WOSEN programming. I do believe that participants overall have had very positive experiences."*



### 3.3.1.3 CHANGES IN PARTICIPANT KNOWLEDGE AND FURTHER SUPPORTS REQUESTED

The End of Program Participant survey asked respondents to identify one to three key learnings that they have taken away from the program. They were also questioned regarding how the program could be improved upon should it be offered again. Data from the second question largely consisted of areas where additional support was being requested. It is important to note that respondents' feedback were not limited to the program they had completed, but were invited to indicate topics in which they were interested in building further capacity. Additionally, the program may have covered some of the items listed, but participants may be seeking more in-depth information.

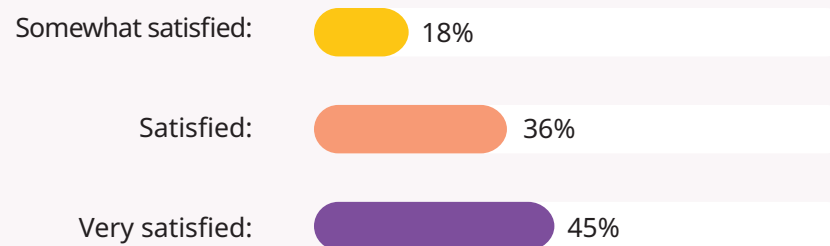
The data indicates that each program met its learning objectives, with respondents identifying a range of areas where specific knowledge had been gained. Overall, participants were seeking more detailed information and more sessions focusing on specific topics. There were a large number of requests for additional education in business development (planning, launching) and financial literacy (a broader spectrum, or a series of accounting courses) and to a lesser degree, operations and human resources management. Most frequently these items were included in the program, but respondents felt they wanted additional depth.

The Digital Transformation and Extended Coaching programs, in particular, requested more individualized 'how to' assistance with content and further 1-1 coaching, and for a considerably longer duration, e.g., up to a year. Other comments focused on the delivery: timing, duration and availability of course material during and after the program ended.

Participant responses in the SEED program were framed more as questions around ways to move forward, integrating learnings into daily life. Questions included: Are we being as 'inviting' as possible?; What can I do today? In my job and otherwise?; How might I/we challenge institutional thought grids that are restrictive?; And, will this be a community of practice that will hold relevance in our geographic, sector and industry relationships?

Details for each program – description, regional or provincial delivery, key learnings participants noted and further supports they requested – are located in [Appendix 3: Changes in participant knowledge and further supports requested, page 76](#).

#### How satisfied is the collaborative with changes in participant knowledge?



WOSEN Practitioner Satisfaction survey comments included:

*"I feel that as we went through the program, the knowledge gap appeared over time and we were or are starting to course correct."*

*"Challenging to evaluate this, however, in my experience I believe that in the majority of programs participants gained some new knowledge about themselves and about business. The content in each program has been very intentionally designed to ensure that it does provide value to participants in a meaningful way. However, my question would be, has this knowledge helped participants' businesses and has it helped them to make better business decisions for themselves?"*



### 3.3.1.4 CHANGES IN PARTICIPANT ATTITUDES

*“I entered the START program with what I believed was a minuscule idea to serve my communities. I leave the START program understanding how the impact I seek to make intersects with numerous factors – my business plan, my market research, the stakeholders I engage with, and who I am. Surrounded by incredibly supportive and like-minded women entrepreneurs, I leave START confident in my abilities to mould a sustainable social enterprise that best serves my communities.”*

- Start Participant


*“My skills/product is no less than others”*

- Digital Transformation Participant

The End of Program Participant survey feedback provided data to assess the programming impact on participant’s attitudes, whether or not they had gained, for example, more confidence, self-value, and empathy for others: healthy attributes that contribute to the capacity to engage with oneself and others in achieving goals.

*At the end of this program I feel:*

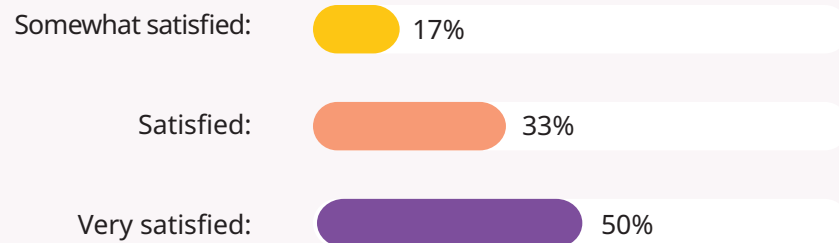
Table 5: Changes in participant attitudes

 ATTITUDES	TOTAL %
Excited/energized	63%
More confidence	60%
Increased desire to make the world a better place	54%
I see challenges as opportunities	53%
Less fear of risk or failure	49%
More self-value	48%
Empathy for others	43%
The same as when I started	11%
Something else not listed.	
<i>Responses included: more educated on navigating the business sector; more willing to reach out/make connections; more determined</i>	7%
None of the above	1%



### 3.3.1.5 CHANGES IN PARTICIPANT BEHAVIOUR

#### How satisfied is the collaborative with changes in participant attitudes?



WOSEN Practitioner Satisfaction survey comments included:

*"For entrepreneurship programs, I believe that WOSEN did a wonderful job at supporting participants to feel that they were in a supportive community and no matter the challenges had a place to share their journey experiences."*

*"I think that this has been one of the key outcomes for all programs and therefore the majority of participants have felt a shift in attitude based on the support provided. This has been one of the great strengths of WOSEN."*

*"I think I struggle with not knowing what the baseline for participants is. As in, did they feel as though they didn't need positive changes in the areas outlined because their base-level was quite high, or because they didn't feel engaged in the learning?"*

*"I feel that I have a slightly better understanding of social media marketing, and I have an idea of how to move forward with marketing of my online business."*

*- Digital Transformation Participant*

*"I have been in business 31 years, but never online and never using social media marketing. It has been a frustrating year of trying to move online. My coach has given me enough knowledge to keep trying."*

*- Digital Transformation Participant*


*"Desire to continue on my path to fulfill my passion/purpose"*

*- WISE Participant*

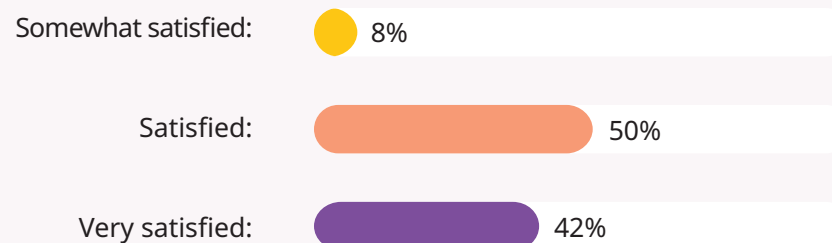
Behavioural changes - changing one's actions - are an important attribute for moving forward, taking the next step (e.g., implementing plans) as well as persevering through difficult times. The table below captures participant evaluation gathered through the End of Program Participant survey.

*At the end of this program I feel I am/have:*

Table 6: Changes in participant behaviour

 CHANGES IN PARTICIPANT BEHAVIOUR	TOTAL %
More curious in exploring solutions	72%
More self-motivated	53%
Able to take initiative	52%
Able to think more creatively	49%
Perseverance	43%
Able provide more leadership	36%
Able to call on relationships/networks	19%
Better work/life balance	13%
No different	6%
None of the above	1%

### How satisfied is the collaborative with changes in participant behaviour?



WOSEN Practitioner Satisfaction survey comments included:

*"I think as far as the limitations that all programs have on behaviour change WOSEN has done a good job at supporting participants to improve or change some of their behaviours that could better support their businesses. These are challenging times overall for most entrepreneurs and so what can programs really ultimately shift and what should be deemed to be a good measure of success? I do believe that WOSEN has made an impact on behaviour."*

*"LOVE that curiosity is as high as it is. Again, curious about the 6% who feel no different. 19% for "able to call on relationships/networks" feels low given how much of our programs are cohort-based, so I'm curious about how that can be boosted, what approaches? Similar curiosity about further boosting numbers and where barriers/opportunities might be, particularly for anything under 50%; alternatively, what do we believe are the most critical and how do we centre them in program design?"*



### 3.3.1.6 CHANGES IN PARTICIPANT RELATIONSHIPS AND NETWORKS




*“Perhaps this was just our group but the networking component of the program after being in a lockdown for a year was inspiring and humbling. I think WOSEN could be a great place to build a network of female entrepreneurs and while there might be others in Northern Ontario, the bureaucracy is annoying. This group was open, collaborative and full of support. Continuing to allow networking would be great.”*

*- WISE Participant*

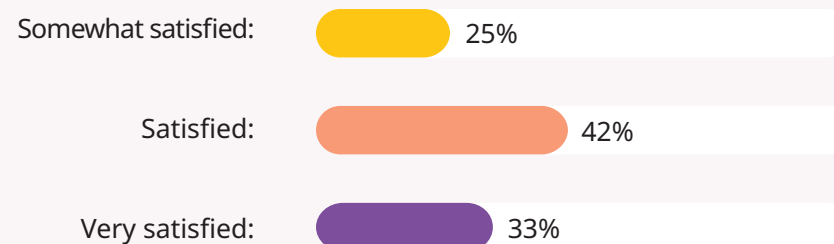
Relationships are fundamental to having a community of people you can connect with and rely upon to access the myriad of resources (education, skills, information, contacts, etc.) one needs to flourish. New networks change how systems operate, creating linkages and expanding them, in this case, to better support social entrepreneurship.

*Did you make any connections, and would you feel comfortable reaching out to them at a later date?*

Table 7: Changes in participant relationships and networks

 CHANGES IN PARTICIPANT RELATIONSHIPS AND NETWORKS	TOTAL %
I would feel comfortable reaching out to the presenters, coaches, etc.	81%
I would feel comfortable reaching out to other participants	51%
I do not feel that I made connections	8%
I participated but do not feel comfortable reaching out to other participants, presenters, coaches, etc.	7%
I am not sure	7%

### How satisfied is the collaborative with changes in relationships and networks?



WOSEN Practitioner Satisfaction survey comments included:

*"I am thrilled to see so many folks making connections - or confident in feeling comfortable reaching out. However, this doesn't tell the whole story. ie: did people actually reach out? Are they actually making connections? I would like to see us be more intentional around building and creating a container for the network to connect beyond programming."*

*"Curious how to increase the numbers for participants to reach out to each other, and if that means creating more space in programming for relationship building between participants."*

### 3.3.2 What was WOSEN's impact on practitioners and further supports requested?

*How does reflective practice contribute to increased capacity for understanding oneself, appreciation of the diversity of human experience and cultures, and ways to affect social innovation?*

This section aims to assess the impact of engagement on the collaborative's practitioners, centering reflective practice and identifying further supports that they have indicated would assist them in undertaking this work. The data regarding learnings and impact upon other practitioners engaged in WOSEN (for example, coaches, guest facilitators, etc.) was collected within individual program delivery evaluations and included in the Summative Program Reports prepared by each lead. Please see [Program development, page 57](#), for more information.

Collaborating partners' WOSEN practitioner learnings may be framed in terms of systems change – understanding that change begins with oneself, the inner journey – and presents itself as knowledge gained, and attitudinal shifts that impact behaviour (actions) and support relationship building and network development. Change is not linear, but rather dynamic, with one adaptation influencing other capacities that may lead to personal and community transformation of varying degrees and scale. Learning is personal and internal: processing takes time and the ability to articulate it can be challenging. As such, assessing the impact of practitioner engagement as a separate category is difficult as it is woven into all aspects of the initiative.

Based on practitioners' reflections, the collaborative considers that there has been significant learning around the project's goals: disrupting the entrepreneurial ecosystem by redesigning business supports for underrepresented and underserved women founders, enabling them to build capacity and flourish while simultaneously influencing stakeholder engagement toward more inclusive equitable practices.

Learnings and impact were acquired during facilitation and program level and individual reflective practice. They included: increased practitioner knowledge; more attuned attitudes and behaviours in understanding the context; ways to design participant engaged programming; promising responses in supporting underrepresented women in business; and the development of relationships with practitioners WOSEN and beyond.

Overall, the practitioners have centred foundational community development approaches – meeting people (participants, practitioners and ecosystem stakeholders) where they are at and responding to emerging circumstances. Thus, project and program design and development has followed the transformational cycle of observation, reflection, planning and action underpinned by a Developmental Evaluation lens. One practitioner aptly described it as *“Programs shift - they gather, assimilate, respond, and repeat.”*

Following is a sampling of comments gathered from the Practitioner Reflection survey:

#### **Impact of engagement:**

- *“Being given the space where it is actively encouraged to think critically and practically about systems transformation has been an incredibly powerful thing... To have the space to really test out massive change also allows the opportunity to see where smaller changes with substantial impact can be implemented in a wider range of programming. I feel confident in saying that my participation in WOSEN programming, and the relationships built with the other partners, the participants, and the communities/people we engage with has helped me grow to be a better person, and a better support in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.”*
- *“WOSEN has significantly changed how I address inclusion, diversity, equity and access on a day to day basis in my work with teams, participants and in the design of our programs. I will be taking forward what I have learned through our processes at WOSEN into my other projects for years to come.”*

- *“I have experienced growth in my capacity to be present with others, to see different perspectives. Much of my work has invited me to slow down and let go of urgency to some degree, which has supported being more present. The flip side of that is that scope hasn't necessarily changed nor have deadlines, so realizing the importance of also re-evaluating what actually needs to get done and when.”*
- *“WOSEN has encouraged me to think deeply about the integration of our design principles into every aspect of our work. We consider who we work with, how we work with them, and why we work with them.”*
- *“The pace of WOSEN work is also really interesting to me. We have time constraints, rigid rules and specific expectations due to our funders so we work hard and we work a lot, all of our plates are FULL, and there is a perpetual feeling of so much to do all the time. AND yet, we still pause together, we still hold time in meetings to check in, connect and be open about where we're at. It is a really beautiful thing.”*

### **The role of reflective practice:**

*“A reflective practice is an excellent way to be responsive to emerging needs, to assess approaches and to better understand myself and my team in our collaborative work. This approach integrates evaluation into the day to day of our applied work together.”*

*“Being in regular reflective practice, for me, supports greater self love, which also increases my capacity to be in a healthier relationship with my ego and listen / observe more fully and with humility. I think that's key to good collaboration.”*

*“Wicked problems are not solved overnight. They often need a collective of bright, dedicated individuals and resources to tackle them. Reflection allows practitioners to think about solutions to these wicked problems, and is the spark for deep discussion.”*

*“The fact that a self-reflective practice is built into the WOSEN project has provided for an enriching experience. The cycle of reflecting, unlearning/ learning, putting into practice, and then reflecting once more cultivates real personal and professional growth. It has allowed me the opportunity to delve deeper into content, recognizing that the learning never ceases.”*

*“Understanding self: reflective practice (RP) helps me remember my intentions around what I was designing and how I wanted to show up in delivery. It also gives me a better reminder of how I felt during design and delivery, which is an important factor for me. Social Innovation: I think reflective practice is really helpful over time. It can be difficult to get the momentum and sometimes evaluations can feel like a chore, however, once it has built up over time and you can start to see your progress, you can also be more mindful of the impact you're having.”*

In an attempt to streamline practitioner learnings and impact and not duplicate evidence found in other areas, the data in this section is organized around WOSEN's three identified intertwined areas of adaptation and evolution gained through deep inner work of reflection and dialogue:

1. Principle-focused approaches
2. Collaboration and co-creation
3. Professional development

Within these three areas practitioners indicated engagement in the project resulted in increased knowledge; more attunement to attitudes and beliefs (theirs and others); new patterns of behaviours or actions that were more inclusive and equitable; and increased relationships and networks (deeper or newer) within the collaboration and the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem. Perhaps most importantly, they indicated a greater appreciation of, and capacity for, reflective practice; its integral role in advancing system change through novel, responsive programming; intentional relationship building; and respectful action.



# WOSEN design principles and application



## 1. Inclusive & Accessible

Do the work required to know your participants. Listen to understand and work to foster an environment of shared meaning and trust, where all participants can feel they belong and have equitable access to opportunities and resources.

The WOSEN Design Principles were developed collaboratively, requiring extensive and intensive reflection providing deep professional development opportunities. L4F led the development of the seven principles as part of the three-day WISE Design Jam (January, 2020). They emerged from sound inquiry around practitioners' orthodoxies (assumptions each person brings with them), ethnographic research and by applying methodologies to surface the positionality of traditional programmes and programme supports (individuals and logistical). The principles were created to intentionally redirect the focus of general entrepreneurship support programs toward the specific entrepreneurs the project intends to serve. Understanding of the principles has continued to evolve through intentional reflection and continued dialogue. The Start program significantly contributed to their development, incorporating them as the basis of program design and implementation, with the broader WOSEN project adopting them quickly thereafter. Practitioners have continued to deepen their understanding of their meaning, personally, and how to live by them in service of the project.

Following are the seven WOSEN Design Principles and examples of how practitioners have incorporated them into their program design and delivery. Two knowledge products based on the WOSEN Design Principles are in development. Please also see [What knowledge products and resources were created?, page 50](#), for details.

- a. Ensure all individuals are heard, valued and treated with respect by providing programming that considers lived experience, learning needs, and any physical and cultural barriers to inclusion.
- b. Invite participants to bring their whole selves, acknowledging multi-dimensional identities.
- c. Consider who is in the program and ensure that the content meets the needs of the participants. For example, summarise regularly, providing another chance for the flow of the discussion to be understood; use visual and auditory supports as often as possible while avoiding information overload; and consider what role hearing, sight and mobility might play in activities and spaces.
- d. Take stock of your own positionality and power before each session and consider how it may bias your perspective. Examine the language you use - is it inclusive & accessible, easy to understand and without too much jargon?
- e. Provide opportunities and invite participants to share their positionalities and power with the group, tailoring activities to enable them to leverage their power.

*"With Northern Ontario being such a large geographic area, virtual sessions and virtual coaching made the program more accessible. Using user-friendly language without 'buzzwords' also contributed to accessibility"*  
(Elizabeth MacMillan, NORDIK)



## 2. Decolonized

WOSEN acknowledges that we find ourselves in a colonized system that has oppressed and systemically devalued Indigenous ways, voices, and lives. It aims to create space for multiple realities in programming so that we can build relationships and engage in collective wisdom and knowledge sharing together. Decolonized de-centers where knowledge is held and rethinks how knowledge can be formed.

- a. *Decolonized* acknowledges the kinds of enterprises we are talking about are not “new” (social enterprises or community-driven businesses), rather Indigenous peoples have been doing this work for centuries. Similarly, innovation does not only refer to technological innovation, but also old knowledge and principles which seek to be made new again through any form of solution development.
- b. Invite and value other ways of knowing,
- c. Speak to colonization, e.g., How might colonization be responsible for this state of affairs or perspective?
- d. Give credit if using aspects of another’s culture and use in harmony with that culture’s intention.
- e. Normalize that it is ok for anyone to speak up about present or historical harm or discomfort, and build community muscles of treating this feedback as a gift rather than meeting it with pushback and silencing.

## 3. Anti-Oppressive

Anti-oppressive practice seeks to recognize the oppressions that exist in society and attempt to mitigate their effects and eventually equalize the power imbalance in our communities. Practicing anti-oppression work in real terms is not only confronting individual examples of bigotry, or confronting societal examples, it is also confronting ourselves and our own roles of power and oppression in our communities and the bigger picture.

- a. Consider co-creating a community agreement and guidelines so you have transparent protocols in place.
- b. Explore your patterns of flight, fight, freeze, appease when it comes to feedback and confrontation. Build the muscles of being able to respond to feedback rather than reacting and shutting it down so that you can model taking corrective feedback from people experiencing oppression.
- c. Balance between holding someone accountable for an offensive or ignorant statement and still engaging them in the conversation. If you have the emotional bandwidth, use it as a teachable moment to allow further entry into the conversation.
- d. When discomfort, harm or other issues arise, ask the group for suggestions on how to deal with these situations in the future.
- e. Normalize at the start of a group’s time together the difference between intention and impact and ask people to commit to taking responsibility for impact.



#### 4. Systems-Informed

WOSEN aims to integrate systems thinking, taking the time to step back and examine the larger cultural and historical contexts in which we find ourselves. We believe that through understanding systems we can enable ourselves to change them by unpacking systemic barriers, e.g., being aware, actively informed and inviting global conversations and differing perspectives. Systems-informed means to work to acknowledge and understand the links between elements that make up a system, including your place within the system. While discussion is invited, it is not a place for political lobbying but for empathizing, learning, and growing.

- a. Zoom out: take a step back from a conversation and see the larger context in which an issue is taking place.
- b. Leverage the diverse lived-experiences of the group.
- c. Use activities that invite the participants to hear and see each other's work.
- d. Notice when people use either/or and try to simplify complex issues, slow it down and encourage people to do a deeper analysis.
- e. When faced with an urgent decision, take a break to think creatively and avoid making decisions under extreme pressure.

#### 5. Responsive

WOSEN acknowledges unique cultural attributes and elements, creating space for participants to request culturally appropriate support they need. Responsive practice means centering the needs and identities of the participant and changing directions as needed to move in the direction that they need.

- a. While being present for others, you practice self-care to ensure that WOSEN may continue to provide the same quality of support over time and to protect yourself from giving more than is in your cup to give.
- b. In being responsive, you create opportunities to calm, stretch and carve space for empathy and empathizing individually and together. You aim to understand the emotional needs of women entrepreneurs and pace learning at the speed of trust.
- c. Avoid responding to someone who is triggered as a problem within your session. A triggered person is letting you know they don't feel safe. Interpret them as asking for help and connection. Say "It's ok to feel afraid, but you're not in any danger. You're here with me right now."
- d. Stay nimble and know your go-to moves - Being present and mindful of go-to moves when encountering specific situations, moving slowly, and creating space for silence can all help a facilitator to determine the best course of action in any given moment.
- e. Work for balance between process and content, but give precedence to process over content when you have to choose.

*"The team designed sessions as we went through the program to stay flexible to the needs of the group." (Maureen Strickland, NORDIK)*



## 6. Ecosystem-Approach

WOSEN does not plug into patriarchal systems or adopt patriarchal norms such as being overly competitive and exclusive. An ecosystem-approach showcases the value of partnership and collaboration, helping entrepreneurs learn how to partner well, and be active personal and systems mappers and designers. Collaborators are invited into WOSSEN networks and practice inclusion for the purpose of collective impact as well as for the purpose of social justice.

- a. Foster the idea that success is shared.
- b. Promote give and take: The ecosystem-approach invites us to share success, raise our collaborators and allies up, but it also invites us to ask for what we need. Asking for help or support is not perceived as weakness or as “begging”. Give and take are equal activities in the eyes of the ecosystem.
- c. Plan for moments of teamwork and cooperative activities considering how the participants within the session may be able to help one another.
- d. Create a culture where people can bring problems to the group to solve, not just to report activities.
- e. Invite participants to connect with one another on social media and other platforms or in other places where they may be able to see each other’s networks, make introductions, and support each other.

## 7. Human-Centred

Historically, and in the context of the patriarchal economic systems, women have not always had the space to leverage their capacities, values, or ways of working. WOSSEN practices human-centeredness to create these missing opportunities to calm, stretch and carve space for empathy and being as we are. Understanding the emotional needs of women entrepreneurs and not treating emotions as misplaced in the context of work or innovation is crucial.

- a. Pace learning at the speed of trust and do not force strategies, opinions, or the best practices of the patriarchy on one another. Instead, favor being trauma informed and building authentic relationships with one another. WOSSEN programs are not “therapy sessions” places where social, societal or institutional forms of harm or oppression can take place. That said, do not accept non-feasible ideas no matter how comforting they may be. WOSSEN programs aim to enable participants’ real progress and action.
- b. Make room for women’s ways of being and doing - invite everyone to come as they are and protect the shared spaces from assumptions about how one “can” or “should” do business, advocacy work, or social innovation based on societal norms.
- c. Create a safe space for expression - enable participants to both heal and thrive by creating a space to share their experiences and challenges but also their values, hopes, and dreams for the future.
- d. Get in the mindset of speaking for and on behalf of yourself and only yourself.
- e. Follow up with participants and continue the relationship.

*“By integrating the Design Principles such as Human-Centered and Responsive, we feel we developed a deeper connection with the entrepreneurs.” (SVX)*

### 3.3.2.2 COLLABORATION AND CO-CREATION

*“Centering the voices of others requires more investment. Other voices include WOSEN collaborators, community partners, guest speakers, and program participants, providing them time and space for sharing their experiences with the group and facilitators.”*

*– WOSEN Practitioner*

Each aspect of the project was a collaboration, with many components being co-created, carving space for practitioners to contribute in areas where they were strong and increase their capacity in others. Program design and development methodology fostered collaboration and shared purpose through scheduled meetings and design jams.

#### **Foundations for co-creating a shared program delivery framework:**

- Consistent calls (program: weekly; biweekly; frequent delivery team meetings)
- Building shared language, experiences, knowledge and trust through co-creation
- Reflection time
- Practitioner support
- Experience Sharing
- Program assets sharing: resources, processes (e.g., story arch), content, evaluation, forms - Airtable and Quick Start Access Organization

Pivoting the Accelerator Resilience/Grow program from an in-person delivery to online workshop in response to restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic is an excellent example of how the collaborative worked together, effectively redesigning to adapt to the changing needs of entrepreneurs and practitioners during this crisis. One practitioner stated “Beautiful Chaos - while it felt chaotic in the thick of it and not beautiful, the result was beautiful.” (WOSEN Practitioner). Below is a sampling of other practitioner quotes reflecting on the WISE collaborative design process:

*“For me, I couldn’t have done my facilitation work in an intentional way without the collaborative design process involving the WOSEN WISE team. The insights and support I gained from my team members was indescribable, especially as we worked together and supported each other during a global pandemic. I can attribute a lot of my personal and professional development as a result of the collaborative process.”*

(WOSEN Practitioner)

*“I found the experience of collaborating with different facilitators was a reminder of designing from the participant perspective (what need are we fulfilling) rather than instinctively designing from a facilitator perspective.”*

(Rachel Berdan, Pillar)

*“Extremely time consuming but there is great value in it, particularly insight and resource sharing.”*

(Maureen Strickland, NORDIK)

*“Was a wonderful collaboration that helped everyone figure it out. Things they wouldn’t have figured out on their own. Together the team identified all of their strengths and co-created something really cool.”*

(WOSEN Practitioner, Resilience program)

### 3.3.2.3 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development opportunities were available throughout the entire project. Some were formal while the majority of learnings presented themselves on a daily basis through the collaborative design process and reflective practice embedded in program development, delivery, administration and evaluation of WOSEN. Also see [What professional development opportunities were there? page 54](#).

Three key areas of growth:

1. **Knowledge Product Development** processes related to determining audiences; and homing in on purpose(s), strategic use, prototyping, beta testing, budgeting, timelines, etc. (See [What knowledge products and resources were developed?, page 50](#)).
2. **Developmental Evaluation** design and implementation including identifying common questions; balancing data collection between what is required, actionable and ‘interesting to know; standardizing forms and questions; common data collection and sharing platform; functionality; timelines, etc. See [Developmental Evaluation, page 10](#).
3. **Relationship Building and Network Development** between and among the WOSEN collaborators and the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem as many new individuals and organizations became engaged in the project as facilitators, guest facilitators, guest speakers, and coaches as well as partners in program delivery and knowledge product development. Each practitioner has extended their personal networks which will advantage them beyond the life of this initiative.

### 3.3.2.4 FURTHER SUPPORTS PRACTITIONERS REQUESTED

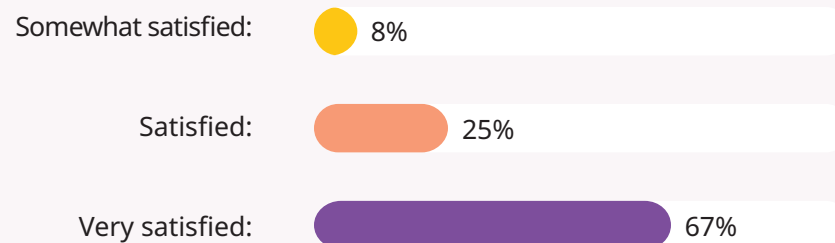
The majority of responses to this Practitioner survey question referred to project areas that they consider to be in need of further development, rather than personal capacity building topics or supports they would like to support them in their WOSEN work, and as such, are not included in this section. They will, however, contribute to the evaluation question regarding the collaborative's future direction.

Following is a sample of capacity topics requested:

- *“Anti-racist / decolonized program delivery / facilitation training”*
- *“If possible, the opportunity to take professional development courses on topics such as trauma-informed communication and facilitation for various accessibility formats would be great!”*
- *“It would be wonderful to have professional development available to enhance our learning. For example, language -- how it evolves and changes -- has been an ongoing discussion and we would benefit from experts in the field, particularly from those with lived experience.”*

### How satisfied is the collaborative with the impact on practitioners?

*(e.g., impact of your engagement; what you have learned; changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and relationships/networks?)*



WOSEN Practitioner Satisfaction survey comments included:

*“Speaking from my own experience, I have learned so much throughout this program. I believe that is true across the collaborative.”*

*“My engagement in WOSEN has had a huge impact on me due to application of the design principles and the opportunity to have generative discussions with the team.”*

*“I personally feel as though I have grown and am continuously learning through our collaborative work, working with ecosystem partners, and from the participants themselves.”*



## 3.4 Building awareness and ecosystem capacity

The three areas that comprise this section are knowledge products, mobilization and professional development opportunities. It focuses on ways the collaborative has capitalized on their learnings to affect system change within and beyond the WOSEN project.

### 3.4.1 What knowledge products and resources were developed?

*"Knowledge products are transactional. Knowledge relationships are transformational."* (André Vashist, Pillar)

Knowledge products are intended to increase understanding of ways to foster respectful relationships and deepen contextual knowledge when engaging with people who are underrepresented in business. They aim to build capacity to support the development of equitable and inclusive people and communities, creating space so all may participate in business, life, and society at large.

WOSEN's products are intended to influence: i) practitioners within and beyond the WOSEN collaborative; ii) and the support side of the ecosystem, e.g., business support, funding agencies, investors; researchers and policy makers.

Development of the knowledge products is a project-wide initiative with committees struck to focus on particular assets. The range of tools include: reports, program resources, project resources, entrepreneur profiles, case studies, blogs, television promotions, journal articles, podcasts, and news articles. Following is a sample of four knowledge products.

#### WOSEN Design Principles knowledge products

The collaborative is in the process of developing two knowledge products based on the seven WOSEN Design Principles that were developed during the first WISE Design Jam (January 2020) and subsequently incorporated into the broader project. Please see [WOSEN Design Principles and application, page 42](#) for a description of the seven principles and ways practitioners have integrated them into WOSEN programming.

Both are intended to inform future program design and methodology when working with diverse entrepreneurs. They bring awareness, resources and support to facilitators, coaches and other programming stakeholders so they can build empathy and a fuller understanding of the contextual relationships that contribute to shaping women entrepreneurs' lives. The two products are at different stages of beta testing.

- i. Facilitator's Guide and Workbook for Accelerator Programs
  - A grounding resource to support facilitators to incorporate the principles into the planning, preparation, and delivery. It contains definitions, helpful tips, and self-assessment and reflection questions.
- ii. Pollinating Change: Designing Principles for a Better World (Draft title)
  - A deck of cards for big (and small) reflections and program design. By taking time to respond and connect through questions, teams build relational knowledge, which they can use to create connections between peoples lived experiences and how participants, staff, or customers engage with products or services.

WOSEN received funding from Innoweave to work with Saralyn Hodgkin, an Innoweave Developmental Evaluation Coach, to bring clarity around the potential of WOSSEN's approach to diversity, inclusion and gender-based equality influence across social enterprise ecosystems within and beyond the partnering organizations.

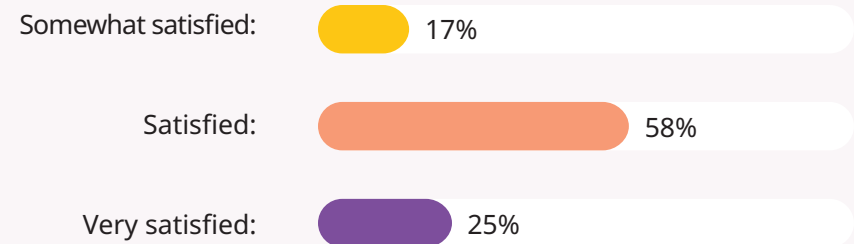
### [Place-Based Impact Investing: Catalyzing women-led enterprises in Ontario's COVID recovery](#)

As communities consider how to rebuild their local economies in a post-COVID era, it is critical to ensure that our investments generate community value in addition to financial value. This article highlights the need to support women-led and women-serving businesses with place-based impact investment solutions. Investing in women-led organizations will be a critical part of the path to a just recovery that champions equity, innovation, and prosperity for all.

### [Social Venture Financial Plan](#)

This knowledge product is used within the Investment Readiness Supports program to work through key activities that prepare founders for investment readiness. It was developed by CSI with content provided by L4F and the SVX.

#### How satisfied is the collaborative with its development of knowledge products and resources?



WOSEN Practitioner Satisfaction survey comments included:

*"As this was not on the agenda at the start of the project it has been wonderful to have been able to put together these knowledge products. The only reason I have selected 'satisfied' is that we still have some work to do to get these knowledge products disseminated and into more people's hands so that we can scale our impact and share the knowledge that we have gained."*

*"I think the resources are great, and am eager to understand more of how they can be used beyond WOSSEN."*

### 3.4.2 How was WOSEN’s learnings and impact mobilized?

Mobilization of learnings and impact contribute to informing and influencing the entrepreneurial ecosystem and the general public about the systemic challenges that underserved and underrepresented entrepreneurs encounter. This section reports on the number of blogs

and case studies disseminating the learnings and impact of WOSEN. It also includes media hits (i.e., online, print, radio, television and news articles) that have promoted the program, raising awareness about WOSEN’s mandate. Each partner was responsible for creating, distributing, reporting their earned media hits in a collaborative-wide Airtable database. Many of the program resource knowledge products have not yet been widely-distributed beyond the partners and/or are in development, thus, not ready for distribution.

Between November, 2020 and March, 2021:

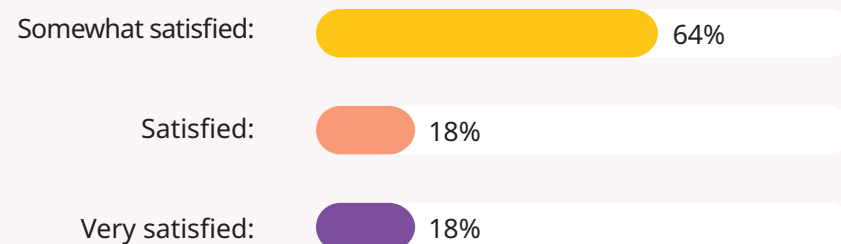
Table 8: Knowledge mobilization

<b>Internally generated</b>	
Pillar Nonprofit Network	1 blog post: <a href="#">A Network of Support Built on a Foundation of Trust: Lessons from the Start-up of WOSEN</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 228 page views</li> <li>• Shared through Community Connector newsletter, 1,350 opens</li> <li>• Social media stats include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Twitter - 2,545 interactions, 86 engagement, 16 likes, 9 retweets;</li> <li>Facebook: 15 likes, 3 shares</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
CSI	3 blog posts, each with a combined direct distribution of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facebook: 33,064 views and interactions</li> <li>• Instagram: 5,420 views and interactions</li> <li>• LinkedIn: 12,379 views and interactions</li> <li>• Twitter: 22,579 views and interactions</li> <li>• <a href="#">How 12 Women Entrepreneurs are building the next economy</a></li> </ul>
SVX	1 case study on Medium <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 407 reads, distributed through our general and investor newsletter and LinkedIn post with a combined 1,186 impressions</li> <li>• <a href="#">Place-Based Impact Investing: Catalyzing women-led enterprises in Ontario’s COVID recovery</a></li> </ul>
<b>Externally earned</b>	
media hits	Reuters Overseas: 1 online blog, unknown readership

Table 9: Raising awareness of issues

<b>Internally generated</b>	
Pillar	<p>1 blog post about the media release “Minister Ng announces Women Entrepreneurship Strategy investments”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 188 page views</li> </ul> <p>Social Media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 Twitter posts, combined 7,972 impressions</li> <li>• 7 Facebook posts, combined 90 likes</li> </ul>
NORDIK	<p>6 media releases distributed across Northern Ontario to 150 + media; economic developers and organizations; educational institutions; Community Futures Development Corporations; and First Nation Economic Developers</p> <p>11 Newsletters each with a direct distribution of 400+</p>
SVX	<p>5 LinkedIn posts (including re-posts) with a combined 1,528 impressions, 3 newsletters with a combined 1,191 opens</p>
<b>Externally earned</b>	
media hits	<p><b>23 hits in total:</b> 20 regional; 1 provincial; 1 national; 1 international</p> <p>Media: 1 radio; 2 television; 20 online</p> <p>Audience size: unknown</p>

### How satisfied is the collaborative with mobilizing its learnings and impact?



WOSEN Practitioner Satisfaction survey comments included:

*“We are just at the start of sharing our Knowledge Resources. Some of them have not yet been finalized or ready for broader distribution.”*

*“I think there is so much more to come within the next few months that will help mobilize learnings: i.e., Interim report and design principles blog and Belonging Cards, etc. I am very curious about systemic change and making sure that those with power in the ecosystem are seeing and reading our learnings. How do we ensure that these get into the hands of those that impact the perpetuation of the system?”*

### 3.4.3 What professional development opportunities were there?

Professional development is a key aspect of systems change, and thus an integral goal of WOsEN. As noted in the section [WOsEN's impact on practitioners, page 30](#), due to the collaborative nature of the project, opportunities to build WOsEN practitioner capacity were plentiful. Of note were the development of knowledge products, implementation of the Developmental Evaluation component and the WOsEN monthly partner meetings.

A number of professional development instances were for individual WOsEN staff, others were collaborative-wide. Some aimed to influence the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem while a few were targeted to a combination of stakeholders. As a dynamic collaborative with many partners and external relationships, learnings gained through professional development wove their way through the ecosystem, informing others while simultaneously being informed through processes of storytelling, deep listening, and responding. The following seven examples illustrate a range of project-wide, program and individual specific opportunities.

1. **WOsEN Monthly Partner Meetings:** Space to share and delve deeper into time-sensitive topics, e.g., discuss Indigenous world views including knowledge, teachings and decolonization; issues emerging from current events such as Black Lives Matter, and continuing to develop reflective practices through exploring foundational aspects of the project. They hold time to reflect on each of the WOsEN Design Principles, supporting deeper learning, the development of shared language and a trusting support network in undertaking this challenging work. It is an important space for internally co-generating, sharing and mobilizing knowledge across the breadth of the initiative.
2. **OCAP Principles:** As part of WOsEN's commitment to respectful relationship building and inclusive practices, two members of the Developmental Evaluation Team were certified through the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC) OCAP program offered in partnership with Algonquin College. OCAP stands for ownership, control, access, and possession. They are a set of standards that establish how First Nations data can be collected, protected, used and shared.
3. **Social Enterprise World Forum:** (September, 2020). WOsEN sponsored four members of the collaborative to attend the online forum.
4. **JIWAI and the Common Platform:** Presented to the Developmental Evaluation Team when investigating which data collection platform might best meet WOsEN's needs.
5. **Strike UP!** (March, 2021). Five WOsEN team members participated in the digital conference aimed to empower women entrepreneurs to grow their businesses and help them gain access to growth partners, mentorship and finance opportunities. Through this opportunity, WOsEN connected to a broader diverse audience and shared information about the collaborative and upcoming programs. WOsEN's virtual session, focused on Human-Centred networking, attracted over 600 conference attendees.
6. **Gender-Smart Entrepreneurship Education & Training Plus (GEET+) Consultation.**  
  
Dr. Barbara Orser and Dr. Catherine Elliott engaged WISE practitioners to assess the gender inclusivity of WISE Accelerator Programs using the GEET + framework and scorecard. The framework is designed to help practitioners evaluate Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in program and advisory services and to construct action plans to address program gaps.

In addition WISE practitioners provided an assessment of the GEET+ framework and scorecard which is at a BETA phase of development. This consultation took place during a Design Jam and in a post session debrief. It was noted that GEET + enabled practitioners to identify gaps in WISE programs where EDI could be improved as well as areas within the GEET + framework and scorecard that could be improved for future versions. It was also noted that GEET+ supported the professional development of WOSEN practitioners and therefore could also influence the broader ecosystem that GEET + intends to influence.

- 7. **Knowledge product development:** Funding through Innoweave’s Developmental Evaluation Coaching stream supported the development of the knowledge products and their impact.

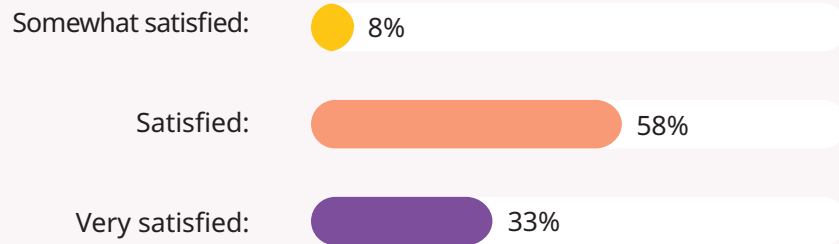
WOSEN Practitioner Satisfaction survey comments included:

*“I’ve had exceptional access to opportunities to grow in line with our project priorities, budget, and commitments to each other and the people we’re working with.”*

*“I think there has been a ton of learning and that participating as a WOSEN collaborator is a huge PD on it’s own! Personally, I would love to engage in more ecosystem opportunities and find ways to bring that learning back to the collaborative.”*

*“I very much appreciate the space created for reflection, and for the opportunity to specifically learn from other collaborators and their own reflections on the programs they deliver. I do find that it can sometimes be difficult to meaningfully engage with the workload, and still appreciate the opportunity to do so.”*

**How satisfied is the collaborative with the professional development opportunities?**





## 3.5 Moving Forward

Typically, an Interim Report with a DE lens would include both a Summative Program Review and a Summative Project Review. The latter would form the basis of 'Next Steps', by providing insights into recommendations for further action and priorities; arising, ongoing or burning questions and, if the Theory of Change needs to be revisited. At the writing of this Interim Report, the Summative Program Review has been completed; however, the collaborative is transitioning to a new Developmental Evaluation lead who will engage the partners in a thorough investigation in determining pathways forward.

The Moving Forward section, therefore, contains a reflection on program development, but project development considerations are outstanding. It does, however, contain a WOSEN practitioner reflection on their satisfaction in meeting project goals that was gathered through a survey. The survey also inquired what action, if any, should be pursued in relation to the questions and, if so, if it were a short, medium, long term priority or one that should be considered for a future initiative, and comments. The information gathered will be provided to the new DE lead.

## 3.5.1 Program development, innovation and evolution

*How have the programs developed and what has the collaborative learned in this cycle?*

WOSEN's innovative programs aim to create a safe and brave environment that would support surfacing different conversations to spur self-learning, individual developmental shifts and transformational relationship building that ground healthy, resilient entrepreneurs. They are intentionally co-created, input-focused (rather than solely output-focused) centering the lived experience and knowledge of participants and other entrepreneurship stakeholders (i.e., founders, practitioners, business supporters, community partners) and responsive to emerging circumstances. This section provides a snapshot of their summative reviews, briefly describing the program's purpose, targeted ecosystem gap, and their design innovation and evolution during this reporting cycle.

### **Three key questions framing women-centered programming:**

Early in the project the following three questions were posed as part of the monthly partner meetings providing a foundation frame for the design of women-centred programming.

1. How may we shift from meeting “our” needs to meeting participant needs?
2. How can we manage tensions between being responsive to participants' emerging needs, delivering on what we offered participants, and what funders expect us to deliver?
3. How can we be responsive in short-term programs?

Please see [Appendix 4: Three key questions framing women-centered programming, page 82](#), for practitioner responses.

Summative Program Reports providing the collaborative space to share and dialogue around their learnings, impact, and arising questions were presented by program, Pillar, CSI, SVX and L4F, leads during a succession of monthly partner meetings. Each was responsible for specific program deliveries and associated logistics including marketing and communication strategies and the methodology, i.e., discovery to inform its design; identifying which, if any, community partners, (e.g., co-facilitators, guest speakers) were to be engaged and their roles; evaluation and redesign evolution in response to emerging awareness, understanding, and changing needs. Evaluation was embedded into each program session as a formal feedback form or closing circle that informed reflection and iteration decisions either during the delivery or at the end of the program.

One WOSSEN Start program was delivered prior to the COVID-19 pandemic with the remainder of deliveries pivoting from in-person to an online format. The transition to the distance format was a steep learning curve. For more information regarding its impact and learnings please see [What was WOSSEN's impact on practitioners and further support requested, page 40](#). Furthermore, with the shift to virtual programming, WOSSEN was unable to offer key supports such as childcare. Transportation was less of an issue, given the home-based nature of the programming, but access to reliable broadband internet and the capacity to engage online limited a number of participants' ability to engage and/or the depth of participation.



## REFLECTION ON PROGRAM INNOVATION AND EVOLUTION

Overall, the two most frequent WOSSEN Design Principles cited as a starting point for program design were ‘responsive’ followed by ‘anti-oppressive.’ Responsiveness is underpinned by deep listening, making sense of what is heard, and finding ways to quickly integrate such into the next engagement, to build trust and commitment in meeting participant needs within the scope of the project, or referring them elsewhere for further support. Anti-oppressive practice involves continually monitoring power dynamics and attempting to surface, acknowledge and mitigate their effects within the programs to create a safe and engaging space. For more details please see [WOSSEN Design Principles and application, page 42](#).

### Four key components of program innovation and evolution:

1. Ground the work in WOSSEN Design Principles, an inclusive, anti-racist and decolonizing framework;
2. Adopt a developmental evaluation approach to support ongoing reflection and assessment informing co-creative responsive design and evolution;
3. Reduce the amount of facilitator delivered content, creating opportunities for more discussion, dialogue and relationship building between participants; and,
4. Tailor content to meet smaller group or more individualized needs.

The above four key components are applicable to social innovation, in general, as they support system change.

As the project evolved, the ecosystem gaps became more clearly defined. Following are the individual program development cycles and the respective ecosystem gaps they are addressing.

## 3.5.1.1 WOMEN IN SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

### WISE: Novel women-focused accelerator programs: Start and Grow

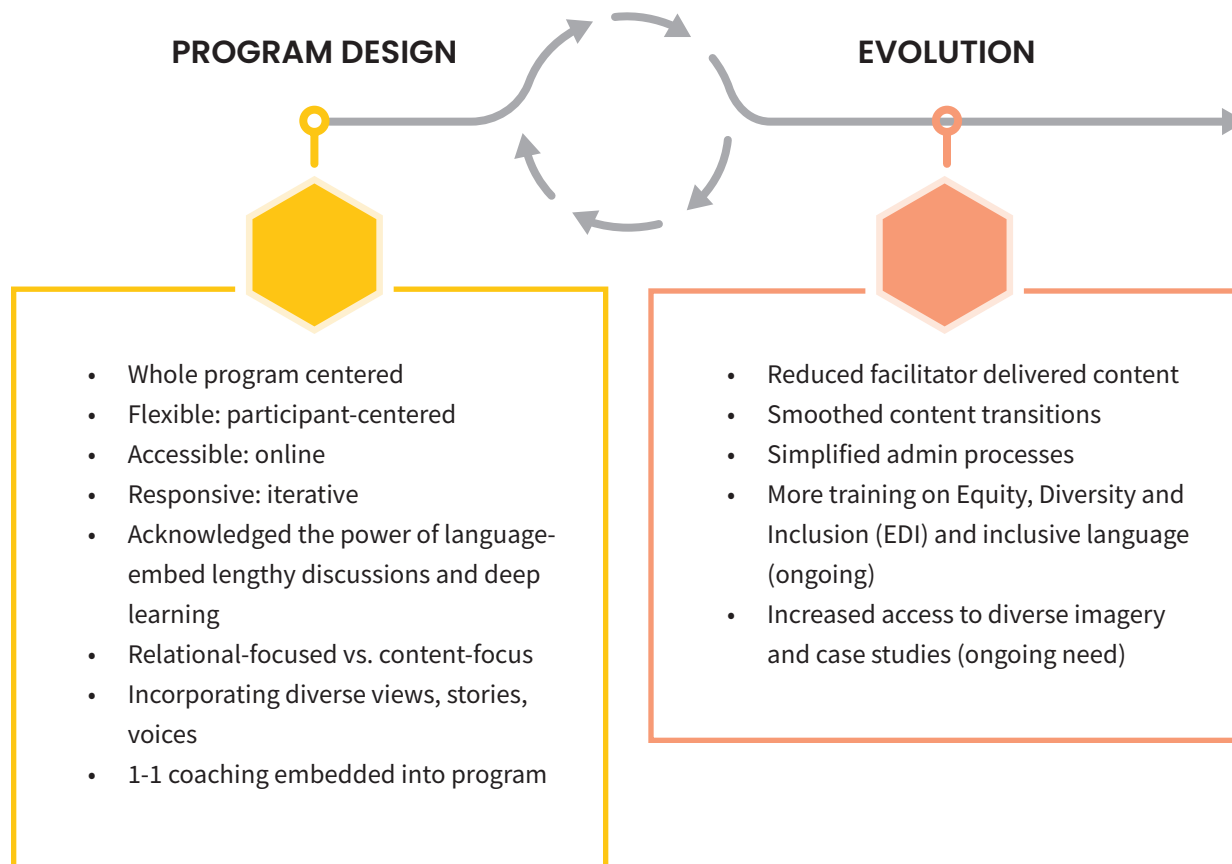
**Ecosystem gap:** Women-focused entrepreneurial development from ideation to scaling up

The WISE program delivery was originally conceived to be regional and in-person delivered by Pillar, CSI, NORDIK and SVX with L4F providing program development support, including, in some cases, context expertise. Due to COVID-19, it rapidly pivoted to a L4F led on-line provincial delivery of a Grow program. The shift from individual delivery to a province-wide Grow/Resilience was seen as responding to the immediate needs of women in business facing the unprecedented challenge of a pandemic, as well as supporting the collaborators in managing transforming in-person approaches to the unfamiliar online format. Partners stated that, overall, it was very challenging trying to balance tensions between learning how to co-create one shared program; taking the time necessary to produce a new program; and the urgency to support women reeling from the pandemic.

The WISE program has significantly contributed to the evolving definitions and practices associated with the [WOSSEN Design Principles and application, page 42](#). L4F led the development of the knowledge product, Facilitator’s Guide and Workbook for Accelerator Programs. (See [What knowledge products and resources were developed?, page 50](#))

The Start program has undergone two Design Jams. The January, 2020 in-person session was very powerful, unpacking orthodoxies and grounding it within a women-focused lens. The mid-March, 2021 session was virtual in preparation for the next delivery cycle in 2021-22. The Resilience Redesign Jam is scheduled for June, 2021. The WISE Accelerator program does not extend into 2022-23, the final year of the WOSSEN initiative.

Figure 12. WISE program development cycle



*“Lived experience = Lived expertise - I think this one was a game changer when it came to my workshop spaces. I loved reminding participants that they do carry lived expertise! And not to be afraid to tap into it, share it with others and use that knowledge to help them in their Social Enterprise development.”*

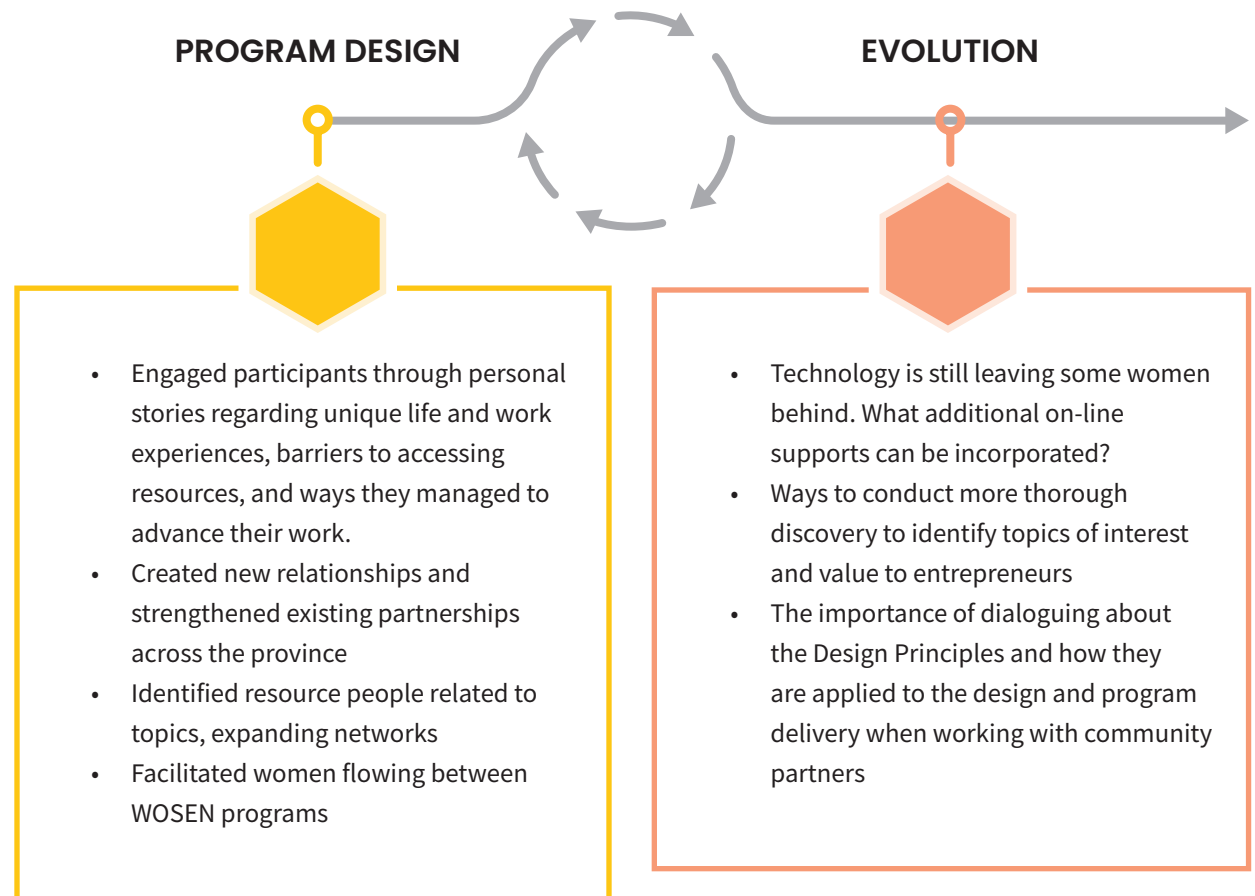
*- CSI Practitioner, WISE Start*

### 3.5.1.2 WOMEN-CENTRED INNOVATIVE LEARNINGS

**WIL: Timely, responsive, targeted topics.** A powerful educational option to those who may not be ready or able to commit to a longer accelerator program.

**Ecosystem gap:** Connect siloed networks while building competencies and relationships between entrepreneurial women and development supports.

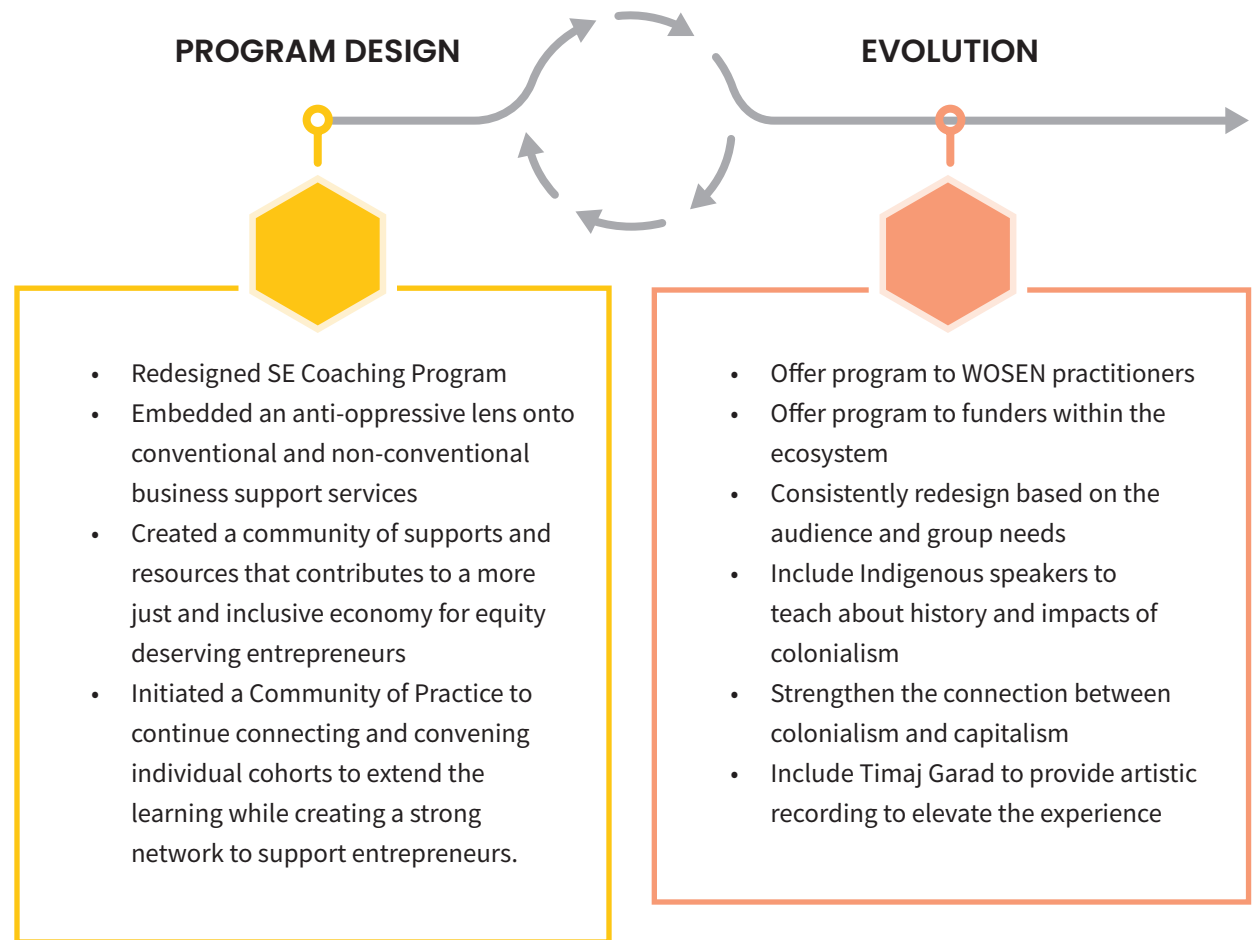
Figure 13. WIL program development cycle



### 3.5.1.3 SOCIAL ENTERPRISE ECOSYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

Led by Pillar, design jams were held in July and August, 2020, to conceptualize a program that created space to surface the negative impacts the COVID-19 pandemic is having on the most vulnerable and marginalized communities, and through a series of conversations, increase business service providers' capacity to assist them. There were two offerings of Rebuilding the Economy for Shared Prosperity this reporting cycle.

Figure 14. SEED program development cycle



### 3.5.1.4 INVESTMENT READINESS SUPPORTS (IRS)

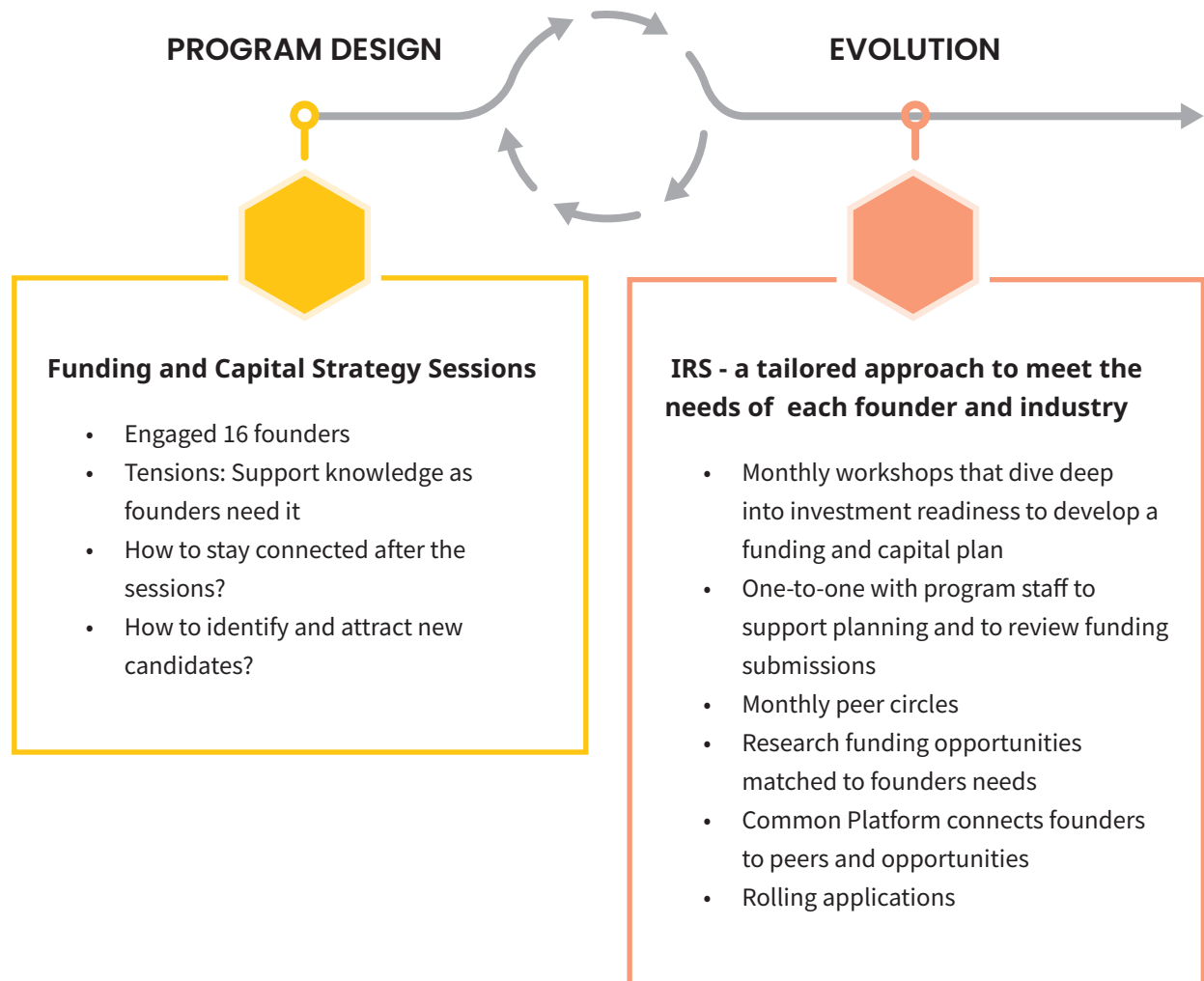
Figure 15. IRS program development cycle

**IRS - Ambitious and unique programs to access and mobilize available capital**

#### Ecosystem gaps:

- Founders need non-repayable start up funding \$5K-\$60K
- Current granting landscape is a challenge for founders - Capital is not well aligned to the market.
- Early stage founders need more opportunities to prototype and test their products and services in order to demonstrate traction and learn.

**Program Design:** Began with Funding and Capital Strategy offering two pilot sessions four-weeks duration in Summer and Fall, 2020 supporting 50 founders. Tensions around providing knowledge in the manner that founders need it was considered when the program was revised and re-launched in January, 2021 as Investment Readiness Supports for founders who lead established social ventures, who have a defined capital need, and who are preparing for funding or investment in the coming year. Founders choose to participate in the offerings.





*“Capital flows in ecosystems where there’s value alignments. Funding success occur at a micro-level where there is an industry/network specific initiatives and relationships. Building the founders relationships within their ecosystem provides stronger opportunities for accessing capital & resources.”*

*- Eyra Abraham, CSI WOSEN Practitioner*

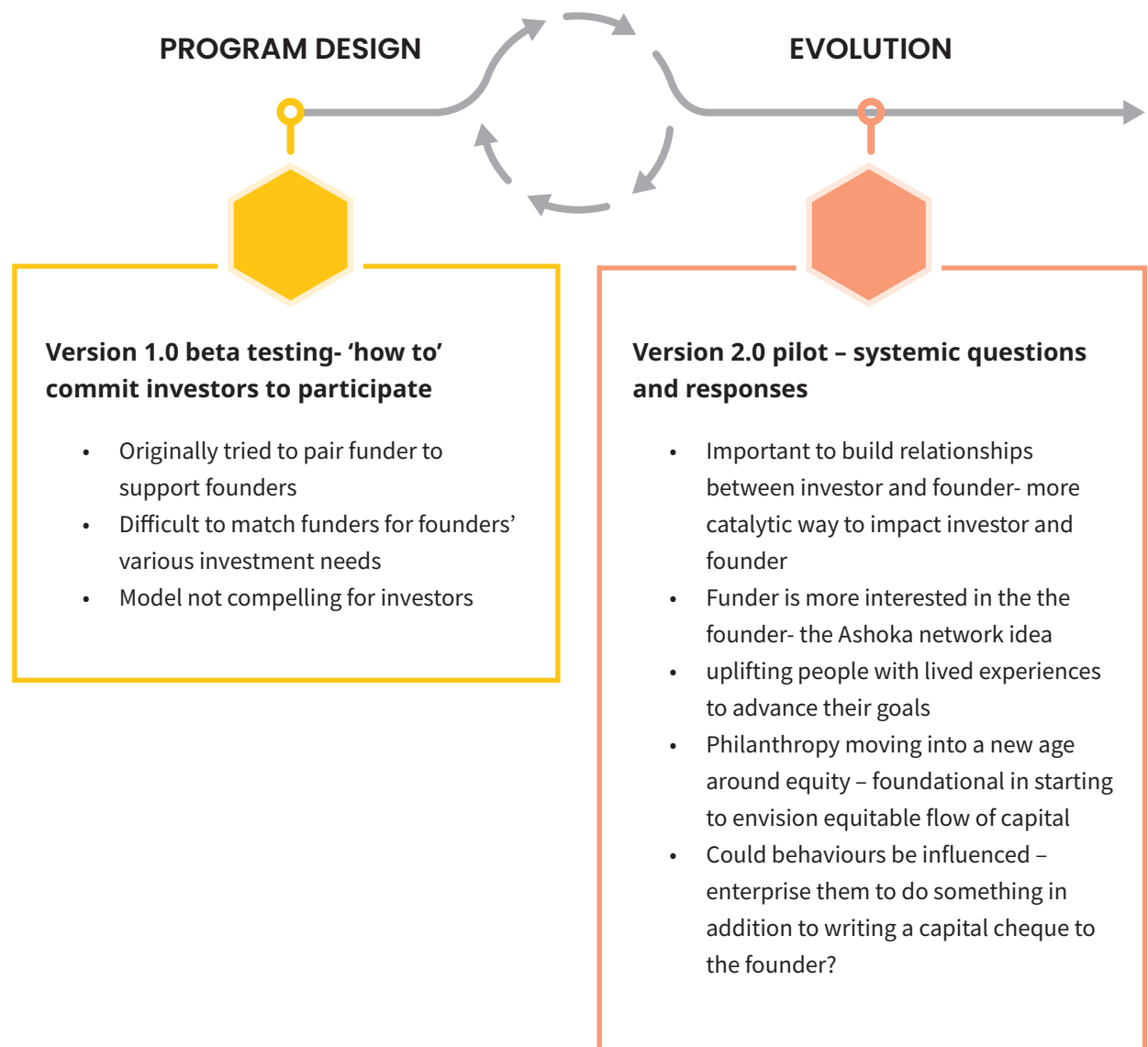
*“Peer circle sessions leverage the collective wisdom of the group and provide solutions for the challenges that entrepreneurs are facing. By creating space for experience sharing, story sharing, and network sharing, peer circles have helped connect entrepreneurs emotionally, build trust and bonds, provide opportunities for collaboration, and form long-term business partnership within the group.”*

*- Li Jiang, SVX*

## IRS – Funder Pair Program

Funder Pair seeks to create systemic change in the way that capital flows to entrepreneurs by bridging the funding gap between WOSSEN's women founders and funders (e.g., investors, lenders, and grantors). It is intentionally seeking to begin or increase investment in women-led ventures by understanding funder criteria, presenting opportunities that match, and providing general support to find the right-fit between funder and venture. This pilot program is approaching the stage of matching investors with founders with the understanding that investors are very interested in who the founders are.

Figure 16. IRS Funder Pair program development cycle



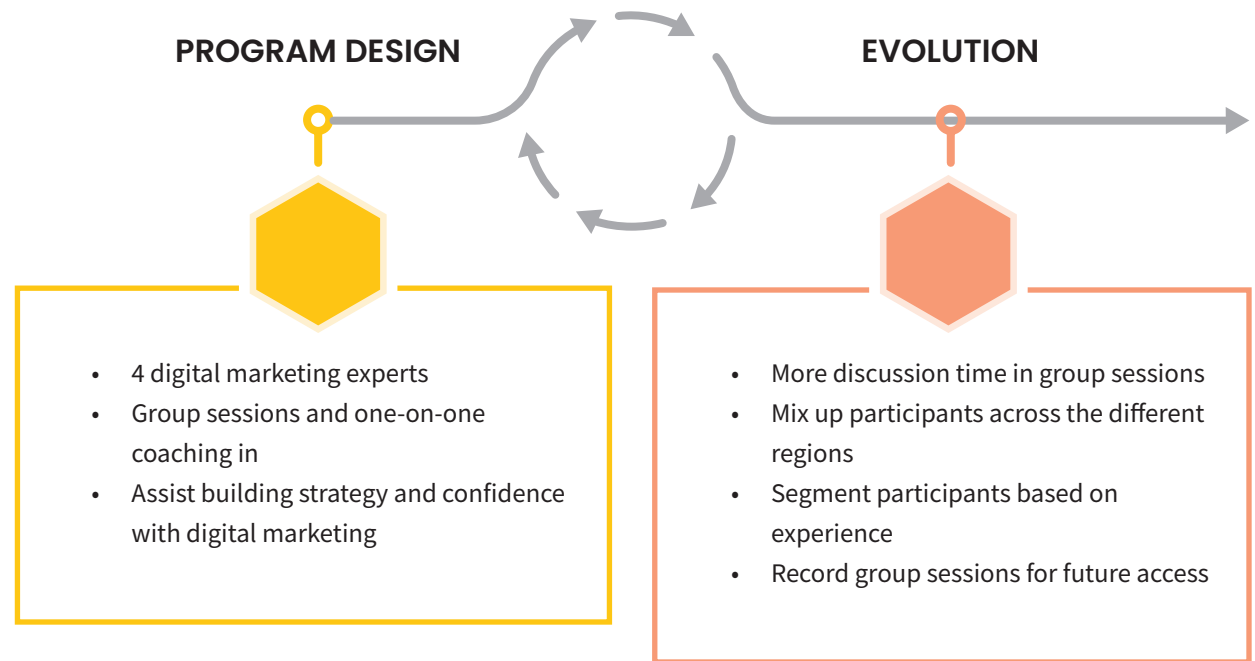
### 3.5.1.5 DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM

**Digital Transformation** – Transforming women’s business through increasing capacity

**Ecosystem gap:** Increasing women’s technological capacity

The program focused on digitally transforming women’s business through increasing capacity around social media marketing, search engine optimization, e-commerce and other digital marketing categories. Additional WES funding allowed the program to be delivered once from January - March, 2021. Pillar led the design of this provincial program and the partners recruited industry experts and participants. Figure 17 illustrates some of the learnings to consider the next time it is offered.

Figure 17. Digital Transformation program development cycle





### 3.5.1.6 EXTENDED COACHING PROGRAM

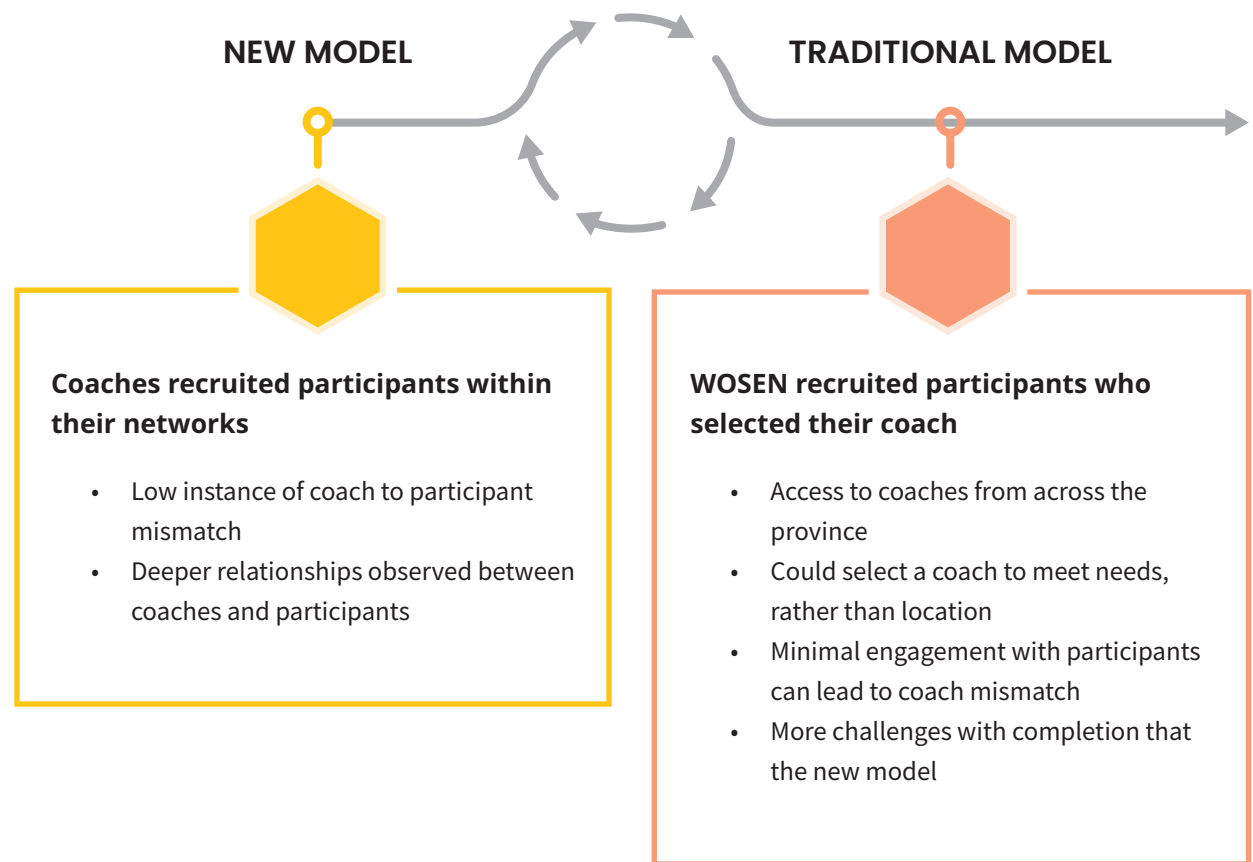
**ECP:** Increase entrepreneurial capacity through one-on-one coaching

**Ecosystem gap:** Women-centred 1-1 coaching support

Additional WES funding enabled WOSEN to implement an Extended Coaching Program (ECP) providing up to ten hours of one-on-one coaching to English and French speaking entrepreneurs. A separate report assessing the French language ECP and the French language WIL programs will be prepared later in 2021.

There was a high demand for coaching. The program enabled flexibility for coaches and participants to mutually agree upon the number of sessions, duration and scheduling of sessions. ECP was delivered in each region across the province beginning September, 2020 and ending March, 2021. Figure 18 illustrates some of the learnings to consider next time it is offered.

Figure 18. Extended Coaching program development cycle



The ECP expanded WOSEN's coaching network, connecting coaches with each other through onboarding activities, creating important professional networking opportunities, thus assisting in building ecosystem supports.

L4F co-developed a shared administration process together with Pillar which was very time consuming and challenging due, in part, to the demanding delivery timeline and lack of allocated staff to undertake this work.

## 3.5.2 Project development

*What has the collaborative done in this cycle, what has it learned, and what does it need to do moving forward?*

*How does the WOSEN collaborative aim to meet identified outstanding and future program and project needs, and ongoing or arising questions? What relationships need to be developed and/or strengthened to support this work?*

Typically, an Interim Report with a DE lens would include a Summative Project Review forming the basis for Next Steps by providing insights into recommendations for further action and priorities; arising, ongoing or burning questions and, if the Theory of Change needs to be revisited. At the writing of the Interim Report, the collaborative is transitioning to a new Developmental Evaluation lead who will engage the partners in a thorough investigation in determining pathways forward, therefore, this section concludes with a WOSEN practitioner reflection on their satisfaction in meeting project goals that was gathered through a survey. The survey also inquired what action, if any, should be pursued in relation to questions, and if so should it be considered a short, medium, long term priority or one that should be explored for a future initiative. Additional comments were also sought. This information will be provided to the new lead providing a strong foundation in advancing the work.

### **WOSEN Practitioner Satisfaction Ratings**

In total, 14 WOSEN practitioners were invited to complete the survey with 12 providing input, resulting in a response rate of 86%. On average, 17% of respondents were somewhat satisfied; 42% were satisfied and 41% were very satisfied. The comments and recommendations WOSEN practitioners provided will be taken forward and discussed in the near future. Please see [Appendix 5: Summary of practitioner satisfaction ratings, page 85](#). The satisfaction ratings also appear in their respective sections throughout the previous evaluation sections.

While the collaborative has not yet completed a comprehensive Summative Review, they have identified key learnings that impact social innovation and evolution in this field.

### **Four key social innovation and evolution learnings:**

Key lessons from the WOSEN experience will shape the future of the program, and may prove critical to the reorganization of the current entrepreneurial system to foster the growth of women-owned and women-led ventures with a positive social and environmental impact.

1. Establish a collaborative founded on trust and dedicated to collaboration and co-creation in addressing system change;
2. Ground the work in WOSEN Design Principles, an inclusive, anti-racist and decolonizing framework;
3. Adopt a developmental evaluation approach to support ongoing reflection and assessment informing co-creative and responsive design;
4. Reduce the amount of facilitator delivered content, creating opportunities for more discussion, dialogue and relationship building between participants and tailor content to meet smaller group or more individualized needs.

# 4. Conclusions

The collaborative's foundation of trust and dedication to collaborating and co-creating the objectives, processes, programming and evaluation framework is seen as an innovative, effective and impactful approach to addressing system change. The common agenda and shared measurement tools, mutually reinforcing activities and avenues of continuous communication has contributed to developing and/or strengthening relationships and networks within the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and thus, WOSEN's success in reorganizing the way the current entrepreneurial system works to enable women to participate and prosper in business and society.

In sum, although the data collection tools and shared measurement platform was implemented, in some cases, well into the program delivery schedule, the Interim Report does amass a considerable amount of participant, ecosystem stakeholder and practitioner feedback and insights suggesting the methodology is working. There are areas that surfaced through the WOSEN Practitioner Satisfaction Rating survey, program reflections and project dialogues where practitioners have requested more nuanced details that might, for example, be captured through pre/post survey questions, more discussion around ways to further support relationships and network building within the programs and how to assess the impact of knowledge projects and the mobilization of such in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. The development of knowledge projects is well underway and their mobilization will be an area of focus in the next reporting cycle.

WOSEN has met its programming deliverables during this reporting cycle, and in many cases exceeded the intended project engagement numbers mid-way through the initiative. Participants indicated they gained knowledge, experienced positive shifts in attitudes and behaviors and expanded relationships and networks, all of which will advantage them in their endeavours. WOSEN practitioners indicated that a significant amount of deep learning and personal growth transpired during this reporting cycle around principle-focused approaches, co-creation processes and developmental evaluation that underpin the fostering and growth of women-owned and women-led ventures with a social positive and environmental impact. Practitioners also attribute knowledge product development processes to considerable professional development, and underscore the role and value of reflective practice in advancing this field. The initiative is well positioned for the upcoming Project Summative Review that will inform how the collaborative moves forward and what relationships need to be created or strengthened in support of this important work.

Social innovation affecting systems change and evaluating impact is a complex and long-term process whereas the WOSEN project is limited to three-and-a-half years, and thus, herein lies one of the tensions. These considerations, as well as other participant and practitioner comments noted throughout in the report, will provide a strong foundation for framing the next cycle of Development Evaluation inquiry, reflection and evolution.

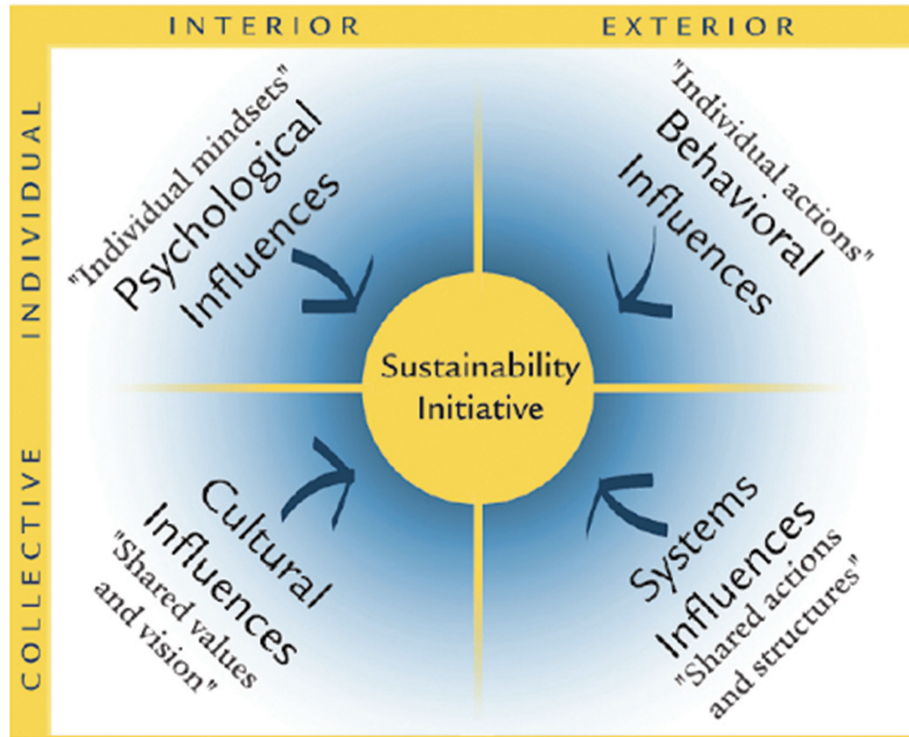
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# Appendix 1: Discovery questions

Following is a sampling of Discovery questions to guide program design organized around the Four Worlds of Sustainability (Brown, 2007).



## WOMEN ACCELERATOR PARTICIPANT

### Central Issue to Explore:

- How can a women-focused incubator, accelerator and network of support help to support you?

**Psychological Influences:** intentions, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, expectations

---

1. What drives you to want to become partially or fully self-employed. start a business/become an entrepreneur?
  2. When you think of yourself embarking on this journey, what feelings and thoughts arise?
  3. What personal qualities do you believe are the most important to have when becoming self-employed/entrepreneur? Which do you already have and which do you want to improve or add?
  4. What does success as a self-employed/entrepreneur look like for you? Short-term vs. long-term
-

**Behavioural Influences:** observable actions, competencies/skills, influences in the environment that hinder/support behaviour, objective measurements

---

1. What skills do you possess that will help you become self-employed? Which would you like to develop?
2. What actions, if any, have you taken so far to become self-employed? (taken classes, registered a business, talked to friends about it, journaled about the idea, etc.)
3. What best supports your learning and development: (Prompt-lectures, stories, video, books/reading, learning-by-doing, worksheets and templates, group work, conversations, shadowing others, (add others if you see fit).
4. Think back to the best learning experiences you've had and describe what was present that enabled you to learn so effectively.
5. What(who) have you encountered along your journey that has made it difficult for you to take action to achieve your goals?
6. What(who?) have you encountered along your journey that has supported you in taking action to achieve your goals?
7. When you are in a classroom or learning environment, what factors need to be present for you to be able to remain alert, engaged, motivated and able to learn? This may include all forms of accessibility, location, transport, child care, stipends etc...

**Cultural Influences:** shared values/ history/experience, communications, relationships

---

Consider the culture of the groups you belong to, however you define belonging, when answering these questions. You might consider gender, gender-identification, sexual orientation, ethnicity/culture, family, workplace, sub-culture/shared interest, economic status, geographical location or any other ways of identifying.

1. What messages, values, beliefs or stories about self-employment/ entrepreneurship have you heard from your group or groups?
  2. How do you believe your culture influences your decisions around becoming self-employed/entrepreneur?
  3. How do messages, values, beliefs or stories about being self-employed your culture or other cultures impact you?
  4. Which relationships are the most important to you when trying to achieve your goals?
  5. What do you believe you most need from others (whoever you define as other)?
-

**Systemic Influences:** networks, economy, government/policy, law, social systems, education systems, collective action

---

1. What kind of economic issues hinder or support your ability to become self-employed?
  2. Imagine a network of support for entrepreneurs that was more than a one-time training opportunity. What do you imagine it could look like? (Prompt -You might have been a part of a supportive network or taken part in initiatives that support you in another area of your life – can those serve as examples to fuel your imagination?)
  3. Have you encountered any barriers to entry, eligibility or participation in programs or services offered by government or community organizations that, if they didn't exist, would enable you to get more support in moving forward with your entrepreneurial goals
  4. Imagine an education and training system that was just, equitable, sustainable and flourishing. How would it be different from what currently exists?
  5. Imagine an economy that was just, equitable, sustainable and flourishing. How would it be different from what currently exists?
- 

## **SERVICE PROVIDERS**

### **Central Issue to Explore:**

- How can local service providers support a women(identified)-focused incubator, accelerator and network?

**Psychological Influences:** intentions, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, expectations

---

1. What drives you to support people who want to become partially or fully self-employed, start a business/become an entrepreneur?
  2. What personal qualities do you believe are the most important to have when becoming self-employed?
- 

**Behavioural Influences:** observable actions, competencies/skills, influences in the environment that hinder/support behaviour, objective measurements

---

1. What (who?) have you encountered along your journey that has supported you in taking action to achieve your organization's goals? Can you see this relating to the goals of entrepreneurs?
  2. What kind of accessibility support does your organization currently offer entrepreneurs? This may include all forms of accessibility: location, transport, child care, stipends, etc.
-



**Cultural Influences:** shared values/ history/experience, communications, relationships

---

1. What messages, values, beliefs or stories about self-employment have you heard?
  2. Has it impacted your organization in supporting entrepreneurship? If so, how?
  3. Which relationships are the most important to you when trying to achieve your organization's goals?
- 

**Systemic Influences:** networks, economy, government/policy, law, social systems, education systems, collective action

---

1. Imagine an economy that was just, equitable, sustainable and flourishing. How would it be different from what currently exists?
2. From your perspective, what kind of economic issues hinder or support a person's ability to become self-employed?
3. Do you think they differ for women?
4. Imagine a network of support for entrepreneurs that was more than a one-time training opportunity. What do you imagine it could look like?

(Prompt-You might have been a part of a supportive network or taken part in initiatives that support you in another area of your life – can those serve as examples to fuel your imagination?)

---

# Appendix 2:

## Participant end of program evaluation response rates

The table outlines the response rates from various programs included in this evaluation.

<b>PROGRAM</b>	<b># OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b># OF RESPONSES</b>	<b>RESPONSE RATE %</b>
WISE: 4 Start; 1 Grow/Resilience	120	32	27
WIL- PowerStories™ - An African Centred Approach with Dobijoki Emnuela	28	7	21
WIL- Leading into the Future: Inspiring and Activating Community Social Innovation	109	7	6
WIL- Your Heart is your Genius	32	8	19
WIL- Financial literacy	73	14	19
SEED	15	9	60
Digital Transformation	40	17	43
ECP (English only)	123	9	7
Totals	540	103	19% Average

# Appendix 3:

## Changes in participant knowledge and further supports requested

Following provides more detailed information regarding knowledge gained and further supports requested.

### Women in Social Enterprise (WISE)

*"I feel empowered, equipped and supported"*

(WISE Participant)

WISE accelerators are designed to support women interested in starting or growing a social enterprise by providing access to skill building opportunities, industry coaching and peer learning in a healthy, supportive and inclusive entrepreneurship community.

Participant quotes:

*"Ask for advice and you will always get it"*

(WISE Participant)

*"Make sure you look after yourself"*

(WISE Participant)

*"It reinforced value of slow and purposeful work"*

(WISE Participant)

---

5 WISE Start and 1 regional delivered Grow/Resilience

Total number of participants:120; Total number of respondents: 32;  
Participant response rate: 27%

---

#### Changes in Knowledge

#### Further supports requested

---

- Skills (25)
  - SE identity (15)
  - Storytelling (13)
  - Research (8)
  - Planning Considerations (7)
  - Resources (6)
  - Other (10)
  - Program Design (20)
  - Business Development (16)
  - Financial (8)
  - Operations (8)
  - Anti-oppression (3)
  - Other (6)
-

## Women-Centred Innovation Learnings

WIL programs are individually tailored to meet specific delivery needs. Overall, they aim to build competency and support networks through sharing personal stories and unique life and work experiences to increase confidence as a women entrepreneur, and capacity to secure resources in maximizing ventures' social impact.

Each program identifies whether it was a regional or provincial delivery, the key learnings participants noted and further supports they requested. No French language programs are included in the data.

### **POWERSTORIES™ - AN AFRICAN CENTRED APPROACH WITH DOBIJOKI EMNUELA**

Pillar (Provincial delivery). We often equate Power with those who have authority over things that we feel we cannot control. What we fail to realize is that our Power sits right within us, our Power is in our stories. Your Power Story™ is what gives you authority over the outcome of your life and helps you narrate your journey to be the best version of YOU. In this workshop you will learn a new method to discover your story and see how it is connected to your business.

*"I loved connecting with the other participants and the way it all just felt so human and loving."* (PowerStories™ Participant)

---

Total number of participants: 28; Total number of respondents: 7;  
Response rate: 21%

---

#### **Key Learnings**

#### **Further supports requested**

- 
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Empowered, inspired and motivated: (7)</li><li>• The African framework is a reminder to question my 'western' Euro-centric lens</li><li>• Connected to an awesome network of women</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provision of support slides</li><li>• Promotion should indicate it would be interactive (2)</li><li>• Timing: (3) Later start; after dinner; daytime</li></ul> |
|--|--|
-

## Leading into the Future: Inspiring and Activating Community Social Innovation

[I most enjoyed] *"The opportunity to learn more about social enterprise in the north and several ventures I had never heard of. I thought the balance of practical and personal/anecdotal information that the presenters shared was compelling, and helped me feel I could identify with them as people and social entrepreneurs."* (Leading into the Future Participant)

NORDIK (Regional delivery). This series of three independent discovery workshops was designed to reveal opportunities for social innovation, people who are interested in engaging in this work and ways to support their initiatives, with a particular focus on women. It aimed to inspire social innovation, activate local talent and increase resilience.

Total number of participants over the three sessions: 109; total number of respondents: 7; Response rate: 6%

### Key Learnings

- Awareness of successful SEs: 4
- Be guided by your vision: (5)
- Business development: (4)

### Further supports requested

- Record and repeat at different times
- Longer sessions; more interactive
- Mid-day is challenging

## Your Heart is your Genius

[I most enjoyed] *"Quick moving, honest, heart centred, opportunity to connect with people I didn't know."* (Your Heart is your Genius Participant)

Pillar (Provincial delivery). In this two-part workshop series, we will focus on what matters most to you in your life and learn how to align and leverage those values in your business. In today's context, it is difficult to see the bigger picture and to strategically plan for business growth and development.

Total number of participants: 32; Total number of respondents: 8; Response rate 19%

### Key Learnings

- Increased self worth: (4)
- How to create safe space for people to feel authentic
- Trusting the process - focus on the output not the outcome

### Further supports requested

- Share contact information
- Pair up people already in business
- More time for sharing
- Less New Age

## Financial Literacy

[I most enjoyed] *“the scenarios and the facilitation to make it feel inclusive”*  
(Financial Literacy Participant)

CSI (Provincial delivery). Improving your financial literacy equips you with the knowledge and skills you need to manage your money more effectively. Through **scenario based learning** we will show you how to get a handle on your **debts**, make easy improvements to your **personal finances**, be your own **bookkeeper** and improve your **cash flow** for your business.

---

Total number of participants: 73 Total number of respondents:14;  
Response rate: 19%

---

### Key Learnings

- Importance of tracking: (8)
- Need for professional services (10)
- I am not alone with my financial literacy struggle
- Difference between bookkeeping and accounting; incorporation and sole proprietorship

### Further supports requested

- Record sessions for later viewing
- More/longer sessions & promo timelines
- Accounting 101 as a mini-series
- Q & A format
- Taking over existing businesses; registration and accounting

## Social Enterprise Ecosystem Development (SEED)

*“Very appreciative to all participants and coaches for creating the space to make real change!”* (SEED Participant)

SEED is a series of modules that allows for dialogue and self-reflection on how to respond to the needs of all social entrepreneurs with an anti-oppressive and systems-informed lens, and a Community of Practice provides for continued learning.

Participant responses to Further Supports Requested were framed more as questions around ways to move forward, integrating learning into daily life.

---

Total number of participants:15; Total number of respondents: 9;  
Response rate: 60%

---

### Key Learnings

- Ways to increase equity (9)
- Understanding of colonialism (9)
- Benefits of deep listening (4)
- Brave space (2)

### Further supports requested

- Are we being as ‘inviting’ as possible? (3)
- What can I do today? In my job and otherwise? (4)
- How might I/we challenge institutional thought grids that are restrictive? (4)
- Will this be a community of practice that will hold relevance in our geographic, sector and industry relationships? (3)

# Digital Transformation

*"This program was an eye-opener in revealing everything "you-didn't-know-you-didn't-know" about optimizing your digital infrastructure!"* (Digital Transformation Participant)

*"Push through your fear, you don't have to be perfect to be successful."* (Digital Transformation Participant)

*"Marketing your business can feel scary or even vulnerable. That means you're being authentic and this is such a human response! Jump into the pool, you are worth it and you can do it! It's easier than you think."* (Digital Transformation Participant)

Supported women to digitally transform their business through increased capacity around social media marketing, search engine optimization, e-commerce and other digital marketing categories. Offered Jan 2020 - March 2021 through Additional Funding from WES.

---

Total number of participants: 40 Total number of respondents:17;  
Response rate: 43%

---

## Key Learnings

## Further supports requested

- 
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creativity leads to success (10)</li><li>• Tools (9)</li><li>• Social media (6)</li><li>• Other (7)</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More hands on step-by step, personalized training (7)</li><li>• More tech learning (5)</li><li>• Business management (5)</li></ul> |
|---|--|
-

## Extended Coaching Program (ECP)

*"I'm so grateful for this coaching program. As someone with financial barriers, I couldn't have easily afforded this program when I needed it most. This came at a time where I benefited greatly from lessons I learned and guidance/feedback I received."* (ECP Participant)

*"I've said it once and I'll say it 1000 more times, this program was so helpful to me and I really appreciated the touch point each week. It kept me motivated and focused at a time where that felt really difficult."*  
(ECP Participant)

Increase entrepreneurial capacity through one-on-one coaching

Offered June 2020 - March 2021 through Additional Funding from WES

---

Total number of participants: 123; Total number of respondents: 9;  
Response rate:7%

---

### Key Learnings

- Business Skills (9)
- Personal Skills (9)

### Further supports requested

- Continued Support (5)
  - Type of continued support (3)
-



# Appendix 4:

## Three key questions framing women-centred programming

Three key questions were posed during a series of Partner monthly meetings providing a foundation frame for the design of women-centred programming. Following is a summary of practitioner learnings.

### **Question #1: *How may we shift from meeting “our” needs to meeting participant needs***

#### **Program design**

- We need to have a sense of what women need beforehand and what they expect from the program, e.g., doing thorough research/discovery prior to design
- Collect questions on topics from participants before a panel discussion/ guest speaker
- Intake/registration: asking the right questions to determine right fit
- Learn more about/centre the identity of participants. This is where an understanding of intersectionality comes to play
- Providing space for participants to speak is key
- Life happens: give participants permission with no pressure to engage as they can

- When we want to meet people where they are at, we also have to be people
- To lead in this way we may want to showcase our own wholeness
- Less material: design using less content that allows for more flexibility. Use one question/key learning point

**Partnerships:** *“The approach of direct connections with community organizations, rather than an open call out, has allowed for better relationship-building and more diversity in the programs offered.”*  
(SEED, Pillar Practitioner)

**Setting Guidelines:** *“Setting community guidelines at the start of the session, really set the tone of the program.”* (WISE, Pillar Practitioner)

### **On-line delivery:**

*“Personally, I’ve discovered that working remotely takes a toll on mental and therefore physical wellbeing. Videoconferencing fatigue can occur frequently, and I would expect that our cohorts will experience similar feelings when completing programming.”* (Practitioner Reflection, May 2020)

*“Trauma-informed approaches will help us support women who are experiencing different psychological responses to the pandemic.”* (Practitioner Reflection, May 2020)

*“We should address work/life balance in our programming/curriculum, and how to deal with those feelings of guilt that women often feel. Also, office hours may be helpful to allow participants to connect on small asks - as well as the Slack messaging.”* (Practitioner Reflection, May 2020)

### **Resources:**

- This is labour intensive programming – it takes longer – so we need to build it into our resources
- We can’t hold it all – it is intense work – Having two facilitators may help to support each other and alleviate tensions between “our” needs – self and participants
- We need diverse networks to able to meet participant needs
- Evaluation: We have to collect data and info during the program so that we can assess and respond to needs.
- We have to ask the right assessment questions. It takes time to align to session/program needs and finalize the language. This takes time and someone tasked with it.

**Question #2: *How can we manage tensions between being responsive to participants’ emerging needs, delivering on what we offered participants, and what funders expect us to deliver?***

### **Internal**

- Tension between knowing when to adapt and when we need to stick to the plan
- Communication to participants; setting expectations around responsive programming and need for feedback
- What we offered to participants & being responsive - find balance in the moment.
- Creatively negotiating the tension that exists in being responsive within rigid structures and upfront planning (funders / deliverables)
- Being responsive takes time to learn
- Requires a different design approach to programs
- Less upfront development more in the moment iterative development
- Managing tensions after the programming as well; ensuring there is opportunity for strong storytelling about the experience; debrief and share learnings

## External

- Feedback loops for funder conversations (dependent on the type of funder)
- Ask the funder: How flexible are you? How do you want to work with us?
- Where do we get flexible funding from, if we know that the rest of the funding is inflexible? The pursuit of complementary funding if a government funder can't support it.

## Question #3: *How can we be responsive in short-term programs?*

- Asking participants what their learning outcomes are as part of the program design
- Keep the design flexible, with options available to pull from in the moment, depending on how the session plays out
- Being as specific as possible in our asks to participants
- Incorporating different learning styles into activities/information delivery (e.g., visual activities)
- Scheduling in structured peer conversation during the workshops/sessions
- Learning as you go, talking to participants to learn what they want. Pivot as required
- Breakout/small groups, connecting peers to discuss the topic and create questions among themselves to raise and discuss
- Considering the timing of the session. Knowing your audience and what timing resonates with them.

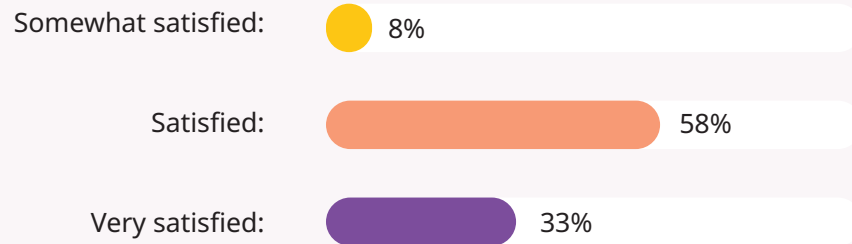
# Appendix 5:

## Summary of practitioner satisfaction ratings

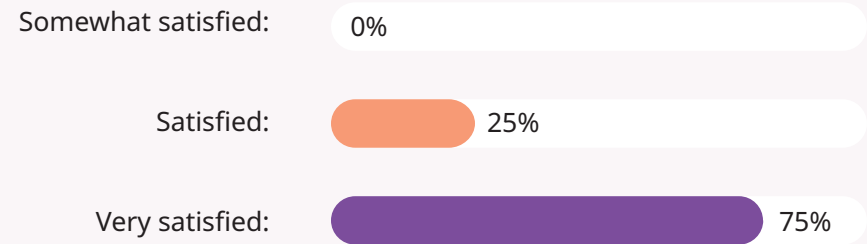
WOSEN practitioners completed a survey inquiring about their satisfaction with the collaboration in meeting its goals.

How satisfied are you with the:

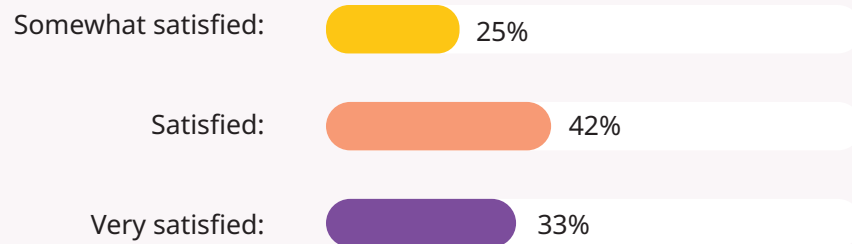
### 1. Communications strategies and participation numbers?



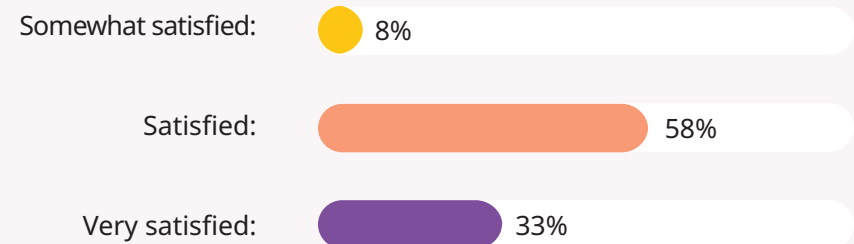
### 3. Meeting key project impact goals?



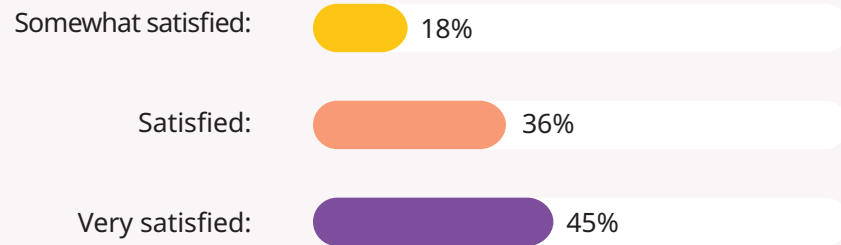
### 2. Engagement of ecosystem stakeholders?



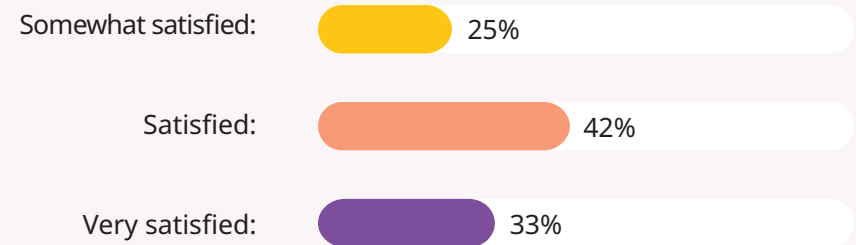
### 4. Participant overall satisfaction and meaningful engagement?



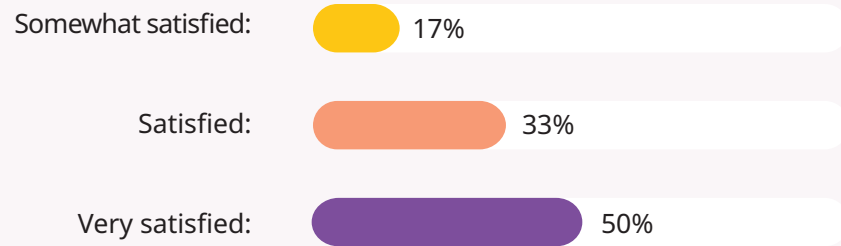
### 5. Changes in participant knowledge?



### 8. Changes in participant relationships and networks?

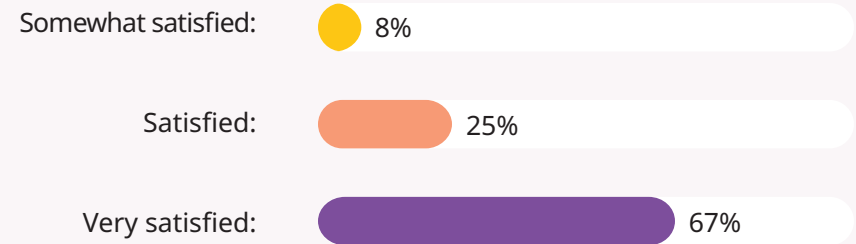


### 6. Changes in participant attitudes?

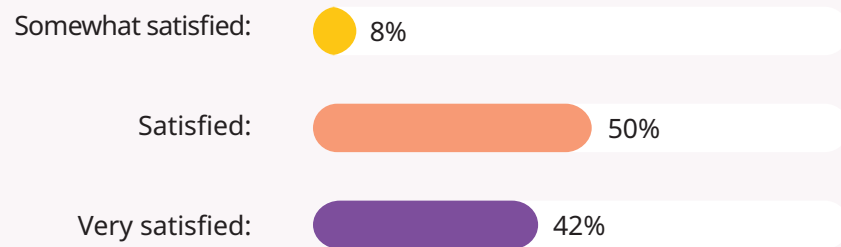


### 9. Impact on practitioners?

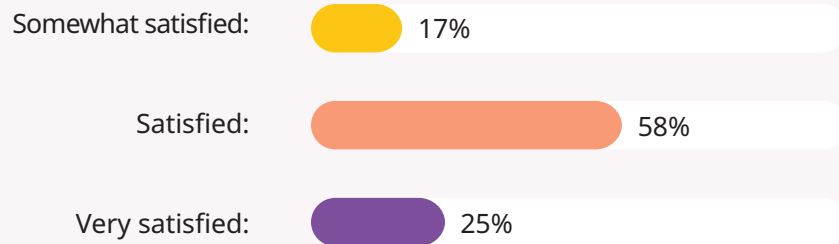
*(e.g., impact of your engagement; what you have learned – changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and relationships/networks?)*



### 7. Changes in participant behaviour?

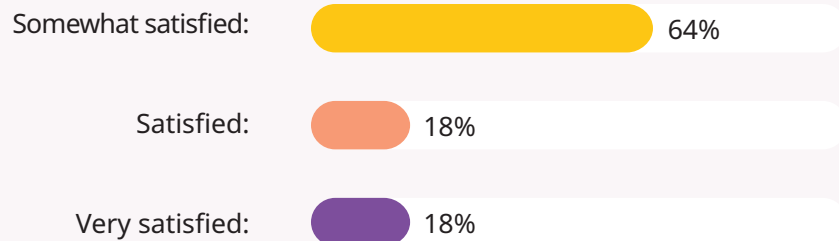


### 10. Development of knowledge products and resources?



On average, 17% of respondents were somewhat satisfied; 42% were satisfied and 41% were very satisfied. The comments and recommendations WOSEN practitioners provided will be discussed in the near future.

### 11. Mobilizing the learnings and impact?



### 12. Professional development opportunities?

