

Evaluation of Women Into Business Workshops and Networking

Final Report

for

Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh & Lothian



EKOS Limited

economic development & regeneration

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Appendix A: Comparison of WIB Workshop Content and Think Plan Do

1. Introduction

This report presents the results, conclusions and recommendations from the evaluation of the Women into Business (WIB) Workshops (previously known as Women Mean Business) and Networking.

1.1 Study Background

It is estimated that women account for 27 per cent of self-employment in the UK, but that only 12-14 per cent of businesses are majority owned by women. This does not compare favourably with the US, where an estimated 28 per cent of businesses are majority owned by women¹. This is a concerning statistic, particularly in light of the work of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) which argues that the relative proportion of women starting businesses is a key driver of the overall level of entrepreneurial activity in national economies².

In recognition of this deficit, and of the important role that women's enterprise can play in furthering the economic development of Scotland, the Scottish Enterprise Network has been active in developing support services to meet the needs of female entrepreneurs and would be entrepreneurs.

In Edinburgh and Lothian, Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh & Lothian (SEEL) delivers two key Programmes as part of the Women into Business initiative:

- Women into Business Workshops; and
- Women into Business Networking Events.

The latter are part of the national Women into Business Programme, with networking events delivered all over Scotland by the relevant Local Enterprise Companies (LECs). The Workshop Programme is a local initiative, delivered throughout the Edinburgh and Lothian region.

The main aims of both Programmes are to extend entrepreneurship amongst women by providing women-centred support to encourage and enable more women to set up businesses, and to improve the competitiveness and sustainability of those businesses.

SEEL commissioned EKOS Ltd to evaluate the effectiveness and impacts of these Programmes over the two-year period between January 2003 and January 2005, and to gather recommendations to inform future delivery in this area. This report details the findings of that evaluation.

¹ A Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise, Department of Trade and Industry, 2003

² Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2001): Executive Report, Kauffman Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership, Babson College, Boston.

1.2 Aims, Objectives and Method

1.1.1 Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of the study was to provide SEEL with a robust understanding of the economic impacts of the WIB Workshops and Networking Events. The more detailed objectives were to:

- examine the market failure rationale for the Programmes and determine the extent to which the Workshops and Networking Events address this market failure;
- assess the performance of the Programmes against a range of quantitative and qualitative measures;
- examine the relationship and fit with other Business Gateway services and products;
- gather direct feedback from clients on the quality and effectiveness of the Programmes; and
- identify key areas, activities and gaps and make recommendations on how these gaps may be addressed.

1.1.2 Method

The study was carried out in four stages as follows:

- **Inception Period** – agreement of the study method, design of the research programme and preparation of the fieldwork materials;
- **Partner Consultations** - consultations with internal and external partners to seek their views on the impact of the WIB Programme to date, identify key lessons and examine fit with wider business development activity;
- **Beneficiary Survey** - telephone consultations with WIB beneficiaries, including those who have participated in the Workshops, attended the Networking Events or both; and
- **Analysis & Reporting** - production of this draft report, addressing at a minimum, all the objectives set out in the study.

1.3 Structure

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** describes the broad context for the Programmes and states their objectives, aims and targets;
- **Chapter 3** reports the findings of the consultations with key partners;
- **Chapter 4** reports the findings of the survey of participants;
- **Chapter 5** presents the economic impact assessment; and
- **Chapter 6** presents our conclusions and recommendations.

2. Study Context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the WIB Workshops and Networking Programmes, focussing on:

- market context;
- programme description and rationale;
- programme management;
- funding;
- objectives and targets; and
- previous evaluation evidence

2.2 Market Context

Our review of the market context has been drawn from the findings of two key reports produced for the National Unit for Women's Enterprise (NUWE)³.

2.1.1 Pre-Start and Start-Up Issues

Total self-employment in Scotland is around 344,000, with women accounting for 33% (115,000). Furthermore, there are around 275,000 women in Scotland interested in starting their own business. However, there are a number of distinct characteristics that make realising this goal difficult.

First, the vast majority of women believe that they have few entrepreneurial characteristics. Compared to themselves, they believe that entrepreneurs:

- are more likely to take risks;
- put work before family;
- are more dynamic and think up new ideas; and
- have little concern for job security.

Further to this, women at the pre-start stage also believe that they have fewer relevant skills necessary to be entrepreneurs. For instance:

- business skills (30% of women believe they do not have the skills vs. 19% of men);
- financial skills (29% vs. 23%);
- selling skills (32% vs. 26%); and
- computing skills (34% vs. 29%).

³ TERU (December 2003) "National Unit for Women's Enterprise: Research and Evaluation Programme Phase 1". Report for Scottish Enterprise and EKOS Ltd (May 2004). "National Unit for Women's Enterprise: Research and Evaluation Programme Phase 2". Report for Scottish Enterprise.

Furthermore, women account for just 19% of Scotland's independent new starts (according to Dun and Bradstreet's records of all business start-ups from 1993 to 2003). With just 19%, this suggests that without a much higher women's birth rate it will take many years for the gender gap to narrow significantly.

2.1.2 Types of Businesses

There are issues around the different types of businesses set up by women compared to men. These differences are around sector, size and growth ambitions. Women's new starts largely reflect the existing stock of women owned businesses. Wholesale, retail and personal services account for 45% of start-ups and hotels and restaurants for 13%. Women are least well represented in the primary industries, construction and communications. Women 'high growth' new starts include cleaning, hotels, plumbing, hairdressing, rather than the industries the SE Network focus support such as technology business and business services (i.e. the growth sectors).

With regards to size, women-owned businesses are on average smaller than men-owned business. Women businesses average 3.4 employees compared to 7.3 for men. Women also tend to have a larger share of sole traders and a lower share of limited companies. Furthermore, women businesses tend to have lower sales per employee, standing at approximately £36,000. This compares to £130,000 for men-owned businesses and £209,000 for joint-owned businesses. Women also have a greater proportion of businesses that are part-time 'extra-curricula' activity.

Finally, it is argued that women tend to be less ambitious in terms of business growth. Fewer women in business expect to set up a limited company with many more expecting to be self-employed and have no employees. Details are given in **Table 2.1**.

TABLE 2.1: TYPE OF COMPANY WOMEN SET-UP COMPARED TO MEN		
	Women	Men
No Employment	26%	18%
Self Employment	38%	32%
Partnership	23%	17%
Limited Company	10%	21%

Source: TERU (2003) NUWE Research and Evaluation Programme Phase 1 Report

2.1.3 Current Support

The Scottish Enterprise (SE) Women Into Business (WIB) Package provides support services on a national basis, targeting three distinct business life-cycle stages; pre-start, start-up and growing businesses. On a national basis, and in addition to the WIB Package, two interlinked women-centred networks operate in the provision of networking, the Association of Scottish Business Women and the British Association of Women Entrepreneurs.

On a regional basis, the only initiative offering a similar level of activities and funding services to the same target markets as WIB is 'Women into Enterprise', which is geographically restricted to Glasgow city boundaries.

Overall, there are very few women-centred support services implemented in addition to WIB across Scotland. All remaining women-centred initiatives in Scotland are small-scale, often ad-hoc initiatives targeted at pre-start activities, and all regions in Scotland have access to regional women business clubs offering networking. Therefore, most individual schemes have been streamlined and linked to the WIB/Business Gateway service provision.

Private sector provision is limited, and web-based research revealed that banks do not differentiate their products into women-centred funding schemes, at least as far as this is visible on the web.

2.3 Programme Description and Rationale

The WIB Programme delivered by SEEL consists of two distinct sub-programmes – Workshops and Networking. The former was launched in September 1999 and was formerly known as Women Mean Business (WMB), while the latter was launched in September 2000.

The Workshop provision is a pre-start initiative, comprised of a series of twelve evening workshops held in Edinburgh and a series of nine evening workshops in East/Midlothian and West Lothian. The Workshops are aimed at women who are interested in setting up their own business, and they specifically target those who have not run a business before but have a clear business idea in mind. Recruitment to the course is via application, and candidates are selected not on the validity of their business idea, but by according to their level of commitment to completing the full workshop programme and working through their business idea.

In the autumn of 1999, SEEL ran a twelve-week pilot of the 'Women Mean Business' workshops. The pilot was considered successful and courses have since been run each year in Edinburgh, with the first course in West Lothian being offered in 2002. For the period on which the evaluation is focussed (from January 2003), records obtained from SEEL reveal that 170 women have completed the Workshop Programme, as detailed in **Table 2.1**, below.

Workshop			
Date	Area	No. of Attendees	Capacity
January 2003	West Lothian	19	95%
January 2003	Edinburgh	18	90%
September 2003	Edinburgh	15	75%
September 2003	East/Midlothian	18	90%
January 2004	West Lothian	17	85%
January 2004	Edinburgh	18	90%
September 2004	Edinburgh	14	70%
September 2004	East/Midlothian	19	95%
January 2005	West Lothian	12	60%
January 2005	Edinburgh	20	100%
Total		170	85%

Source: SEEL Programme Records

The Networking events are similarly aimed at women who are interested in starting a business but are also open to those that have recently started. The Networking activities are part of a national programme of support, with SEEL responsible for the delivery within Edinburgh and the Lothians. The Programme is comprised of a series of nine monthly networking events taking place from September through to May. Since 2002, a membership of 400 women has developed and average attendance at each event is around 60.

SEEL developed the WIB Programme to break down some of the barriers facing women starting a business, e.g. motivation, confidence, networking and making contacts etc. The overall rationale for the provision of women-centred support mechanisms was substantiated through recent work undertaken for the National Unit for Women's Enterprise (NUWE) at SE⁴. It confirmed that the key barriers facing women attempting to start up a business relate to the following areas:

⁴ Ekos Ltd (May 2004). "National Unit for Women's Enterprise: Research and Evaluation Programme Phase 2". Report for Scottish Enterprise.

- accessing start-up finance;
- know-how and information on financial aspects of business management;
- lack of confidence and belief in own abilities, including concerns about being taken seriously; and
- a need for networking and mentoring to access peer support, reduce isolation and provide business development information.

The WIB is clearly orientated towards support designed to address these issues, particularly the latter three. Although start-up finance is not awarded directly through WIB, the Programme has a role in signposting women to this kind of support .

2.4 Programme Management

Responsibility for the management of WIB lies with Business Gateway. The delivery of the Programme (both the Workshops and the Networking) is outsourced to Sheena Briley Consultants, with marketing and recruitment undertaken by Avante Consulting. Recruitment comes largely through referrals from the Business Gateways, local authorities and through other business development programmes.

Partners are kept informed of the WIB activities through regular monthly Steering Group meetings. Integration with other support has always been at the heart of the development of the WIB and this has been facilitated by the Steering Group. The group is chaired by Sheena Briley and attendees include:

- Business Gateways (Edinburgh, West Lothian, East Lothian and Midlothian);
- Micro-Credit;
- Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce; and
- DHP Edinburgh.

The role of the Steering Group is to review progress and make decisions regarding changes in delivery. Much of the information presented to the Group is generated through evaluation forms distributed to all attendees at the Networking Events and at the final Workshop. These evaluation forms cover:

- overall impression of the Workshops and Networking Events, with specific rating of:
 - o guest speakers;
 - o venue;
 - o overall course/event organisation;
 - o and, specific to the Workshops:
 - application process;
 - tutors;
 - course materials; and
 - enquiries handled by Business Gateway
- proportion that would recommend participation to others;
- areas of the services that are of particular use; and
- suggested improvements to the course and events.

2.5 Project Funding

SEEL is the sole funder of the Programmes. Total funding for the period since January 2003 is outlined in **Table 2.2**.

Year	No. of Workshops/Networking	Cost per Workshop/Networking Event	Total
Workshops	10	£7,141.06	£71,410.63
Networking	21	£2,954.47	£62,043.92
Total	-	-	£133,454.54

Source: SEEL Records

From January 2003 to March 2005, a total of 10 Workshops have been undertaken (see **Table 2.1**). The cost per workshop is £7,141.06 (including VAT). This includes the cost of delivery and the marketing and recruitment costs. Therefore, the total costs of workshops for the period is £71,410.63. For the Networking a total of 21 events have been undertaken (nine in 2003, nine in 2004 plus three for January, February and March 2005). The cost per networking event is £2,954.47 (including VAT), totalling £62,043.92 for the period. Total cost of the project is £133,454.54.

2.6 Objectives and Targets

The overall purpose of the Programme is to tackle the market failures (as discussed in **Section 2.2**) which act as barriers to women wishing to start-up in business and which require to be addressed by specific support for women.

To date there have been no specific targets set (e.g. women who have gone on to set up a business following support) against which to compare performance. We consider this to be a significant shortcoming and one that should be addressed as a matter of urgency. We return to this issue in the final chapter.

2.7 Previous Evaluation Evidence

Although no monitoring data were supplied for the study, both the Workshops and Networking events are subject to regular evaluation, as mentioned above. The consultant responsible for delivering the WIB Programmes supplies regular updates to SEEL and to the Steering Group, covering attendance at the Workshops and Networking events and feedback from participants.

In addition, a larger evaluation of the Women Mean Business (WMB) Workshops was undertaken in 2002.

The findings of the evaluation were extremely positive and drew attention to the very high levels of customer satisfaction with the content and delivery of the Workshops. The support was found to be motivating and inspirational for participants, and the evidence suggested that it been successful in providing women with the knowledge and skills needed to start a business. In addition, the evaluation showed good linkages to the Business Gateway (then Small Business Gateway) and offered confirmation of the rationale for women specific support.

Ultimately, however, the success of women's enterprise support is measured in economic development terms, i.e. the start-up and survival rate of women owned businesses. On this measure, the previous evaluation offered encouraging conclusions.

Monitoring data provided for the period 1999-2001 is shown in **Table 2.3**, over.

	No. of participants	Business starts	%
1999 daytime course	10	5	50%
1999 evening course	19	1	5%
2000 daytime course	8	3	38%
2000 evening course	19	5	26%
2001 daytime course	9	4	44%
2001 evening course	13	0	0%
Total	78	18	23%

Source: WMB Monitoring data

As shown, the overall business start-up rate during the first two years of the WMB courses was 23%. However, this does not account for those women who at the time of data collection were actively pursuing a new business venture but had not yet started up. If these are included, the rate increases to 38%.

In the 2002 evaluation, primary data were collected via a postal survey and focus groups with Workshop participants. The start-up results in this survey were even more encouraging.

	Sample size	Businesses started	%
Focus group sample	12	6	50%
Telephone sample	13	5	38%
Total	25	11	44%

Source: Evaluation of WMB, Sheena Briley Consultants, 2002

Once again, if the number of women actively pursuing businesses is also included the success rate for the WMB courses increases significantly as shown in **Table 2.5**, below.

	Sample size	Businesses started + actively pursued	%
Focus group sample	12	11	92%
Telephone sample	13	9	69%
Total	25	20	80%

Source: Evaluation of WMB, Sheena Briley Consultants, 2002

Although these findings are very positive, there are caveats to note. First, the data do not tell us anything about the success or otherwise of the businesses established. Secondly, there is no evidence relating to the counterfactual position i.e. what would have happened had these women not attended the Workshops. Although the respondents in the 2002 evaluation study did say that the Workshops had played a pivotal role in their business start-up process, this is not the same as saying that they would not have started a business had they not attended the workshops. These caveats notwithstanding, the available evaluation evidence for the Workshops is very positive and encouraging.

More recent evaluation work has tended to focus largely on measures of customer satisfaction collected via questionnaires distributed to Workshop and Networking participants. Again the feedback has been consistently positive, and has formed a key input to the ongoing development of the services through the work of the Steering Group.

It is worth mentioning at this stage that no robust monitoring data were made available to the study. This is likely related to the lack of targets, but we recommend that in addition to a robust target setting process, an effective method for monitoring progress should be established. In particular, the monitoring data should seek to move beyond measures of customer satisfaction towards appropriate measures of learning outcomes and business formation and survival rates.

3. Consultations

3.1 Introduction

In evaluating projects, it is important to seek the views not only of beneficiary companies, but also of strategic partners and project funders. Therefore, consultation meetings were held with representatives of various organisations involved in the development and delivery of the WIB Workshops and Networking Events in Edinburgh and the Lothians. A total of seven individuals from the following organisations were consulted:

- Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh and Lothian;
- West Lothian Council;
- East Lothian Council;
- Sheena Briley Consulting; and
- Avante Consulting.

Consultations were undertaken through face-to-face or telephone interviews, using a semi-structured approach and agreed pro-forma. A range of issues were covered, including:

- objectives, rationale and activities of the WIB Workshops and Networking Events;
- role of the WIB activities in wider business development;
- degree of fit with other support services and mechanisms;
- impacts of WIB activities on participants businesses and on the business start-up market more generally;
- current strengths and weaknesses of the Programmes; and
- areas for future improvement.

The feedback is presented in aggregate form and reflects the general consensus of the consultees. In particular, no reference or attribution is made to any specific organisation or individual.

3.2 Rationale and Objectives of WIB Workshops and Networking

Understanding of the underlying rationale for the development of the WIB Workshops and Networking Events was generally good amongst consultees. Most of the respondents were of the view that there are specific constraints or barriers facing women considering setting up their own businesses. These tend to relate to issues of confidence, career breaks and family commitments, as well as lack of information about available business start-up support and advice. A couple of consultees also commented that the rationale for the women specific support was in line with SE's national policies on entrepreneurship and women's enterprise, and was ultimately driven by the fact that fewer women than men set up their own businesses.

The objectives of the WIB support were also clearly understood, and were reported as follows:

- for the Workshops, the objectives were to provide groups of committed women with the skills and knowledge required to set up their own business. They were also aimed at providing women with information about other forms of business support available to them should they choose to start up their business; and
- for the Networking Events, the objectives were seen as being more about providing women with a supportive and non-threatening environment in which to meet their peers. In addition, through presentations and discussion at the Networking Events the participants would gain knowledge and insight into running a business.

It was also noted that opportunities to network and establish business contacts are particularly important to women as they are often working as sole traders and as a result can feel quite isolated.

3.3 Promotion and Targeting

Feedback from the consultation discussions indicates that both the WIB Workshops and Networking Events are strongly promoted through a variety of channels. The main channel is through the Business Gateways. The support is promoted via direct mail, advertising in local press and business magazines, distribution of printed materials, online promotion and more targeted follow up with women who have registered with support agencies but have not yet set up a business.

In addition, the local authorities play a strong role in promoting the Programmes by distributing printed materials at all public access points such as libraries, swimming pools, supermarkets etc. Many of the consultees commented that the strong demand, particularly in the Edinburgh area, is evidence of the efficacy of this approach.

The selection of participants for the Workshops is worth considering in a little more detail. After registering interest in attending, women are invited along to an open evening to receive further information about the course and meet with the trainers and advisers. At this stage, the key criterion for inclusion in the course is demonstrable commitment to completing the full course. Following the open evening, potential participants complete an application form and, again, the key criterion is commitment to completing the course. The quality of the business idea being proposed is a secondary consideration, but is taken into account more when looking at the composition of the Workshop groups. However, it is important to note one exception to this. In West Lothian, the quality of the business idea does seem to be an important consideration in the selection process.

According to consultees, the recruitment process is a key factor in the success of the Workshops. It is essential that all of the participants are sufficiently motivated and committed to the course in order to create the right dynamic within the group.

Selection for the Networking Events is more open. While the Workshops are targeted at women at the pre-start stage (i.e. prior to starting a business), the Networking Events are also open to those that have recently started a business. It was also reported that effort is made to ensure women exit from the WIB Networking after a year or so. In addition, there have been some complaints about network marketing (i.e. people joining the network to market their services to the participants) and again efforts have been made to prevent this from happening.

3.4 Integration

Consultees were asked to comment on the extent to which the WIB activities are well integrated and on the linkages to wider business development support. The general feeling was that the Workshops and Networking Events complement each other well. The Workshops are seen as providing participants with the skills and knowledge needed to set up in businesses, and the Networking Events complement this by providing an environment for women to meet with their peers throughout the pre-start and start-up phases. The Networking does not provide the same degree of intensive training support, but allows women to expand their network of contacts. It was also reported that the Workshops and Networking are both strongly promoted through the respective events and activities.

In terms of wider integration, feedback was generally positive. Business Gateway staff are involved in both the Workshops and Networking, and participants in the Workshops are encouraged to register with a Business Gateway adviser. Business Gateway advisers are directly involved in three of the Workshop sessions and their services are heavily promoted at both the Workshop and Networking Events. Indeed, women considered not yet suitable for the Workshops are often encouraged to attend Business Gateway pre-start workshops to help them develop their business ideas in more detail.

Advisers and representatives from national programmes such as Business Mentoring Scotland, Micro-Credit and Business Investment for Growth (BIG) also attend the Workshops and Networking Events, and participants are encouraged to consider these programmes as part of their next steps in setting up in business. In particular, the Micro-Credit Programme, with its group based approach, was seen by a couple of consultees as the logical next step for women once they have completed the WIB Workshops. For example, it was reported that one of the Workshop groups in East Lothian moved on to Micro-Credit as a group (although this group had since disbanded). Consultees felt that these links were well developed and that Business Gateway was well integrated into the overall process.

It is worth noting that there are two other Networking programmes available in the region, one in West Lothian and one (recently developed) in East Lothian. In both cases, respondents did not consider these to be duplication of the national WIB Networking events (that take place in Edinburgh). In West Lothian, the women's network is broader and is open also to women in senior positions in businesses not necessarily their own. In East Lothian, the network has been developed in response to demand, as women in the region have found it difficult to arrange evening childcare and travel to Edinburgh for the WIB Networking events. Again, this was seen as meeting the needs of a different market and therefore not in competition with WIB.

Consultees felt that integration with other support had always been at the heart of the development of the WIB programmes and has since been facilitated by the Steering Group overseeing their development and delivery. The Steering Group was seen as a good idea, although a couple of consultees noted that attendance and engagement was not always consistent across all of the partners.

3.5 Impacts

Consultees were asked to comment on the impacts of the WIB activities to date in a number of respects.

3.5.1 Participants

All of the consultees felt that the impacts on participants, in both the Workshops and the Networking Events, had been very positive. For the Workshop participants, reported benefits were in terms of increased knowledge, skills and confidence. Many of the consultees also felt that a large proportion of the women that participated in the Workshop did go on to set up businesses, but that this was generally after a period of 12 – 24 months. Some also commented that following the Workshops some women made the decision not to proceed with their business venture and that this should be seen as a positive outcome. However, a couple of the respondents raised the issue of the sustainability of businesses set up following the Workshops, although no-one was able to offer any insight into this. Certainly, there are examples of women who have set up businesses that have gone on to become very successful and who now speak at the Workshops or Networking Events but, in wider terms, no evidence on the survival rates of businesses was available.

The impacts of the Networking Events were seen as being less about knowledge and skills, although these were identified as benefits, but more about making new contacts and accessing peer support. Other identified benefits were increased confidence and greater awareness of wider support.

In both cases, there was general agreement that the impacts and benefits for participants were largely attributable to the fact that the support is delivered in a women only environment. All of the consultees felt that this provides a more supportive and productive environment.

3.5.2 Women's Enterprise

When asked about the impacts of the WIB activities on the wider rate of women's enterprise in the region, respondents were less able to comment. Some of the consultees pointed to the strong and growing demand for both the Workshops and Networking Events as suggestive of growing interest in enterprise amongst women in the region. However, others pointed out that a whole range of business support provision will contribute to entrepreneurship and start-up rates, and attributing any gains to a single intervention would be problematic.

An important issue about monitoring was also raised here. While the Business Gateway records information on business starts, there is no mechanism for tracking the business starts that have come through the WIB support. Had this been in place, there would be a stronger basis for tracking the wider impacts of the Programmes in terms both of start-up rates and of business survival. This was seen as a missed opportunity.

3.5.3 Other Support

Consultees were also asked if the WIB activities had impacted upon the work of their own organisation, or on that of other support providers such as SE and the Business Gateway. Some organisations have long been involved in women's enterprise support (e.g. West Lothian Council) therefore the impact of WIB had been minor. However, it was widely felt that the Programmes have led to significant changes in the Business Gateways. Both the Workshops and the Networking Events are branded as Business Gateway products, and respondents felt that general levels of awareness of the Programmes amongst advisers was increasing, and that more referrals were coming through as a result.

3.6 Strengths and Weaknesses

The key strengths of the Workshops were seen as the quality of the training material and the trainer (Sheena Briley). The fact that the courses are tailored to specific needs and are constantly revised in response to need was also seen as a strength. Other identified strengths were the quality of the participants, that the support is free, the venues are good and that the sessions are women only, providing a supportive, non-competitive environment. Finally, the support of the Business Gateway and the fact that other support organisations and programmes make presentations at the events was seen as critically important to the wider integration of the Workshop provision. Few weaknesses were identified for the Workshops apart from the limited number of places and the over-reliance on the current trainer.

While the courses in Edinburgh are regularly heavily oversubscribed, in West/Midlothian there is more of a struggle to get 20 participants. It was also reported that the quality of participants in Edinburgh is much higher, and it was felt there was a need to be more conscious of these differences. In addition, the issue of selective recruitment was raised. The Workshops target those women most likely to have real commitment to starting a business, and that arguably are less in need of help. However, if the support were to target weaker prospects then the number of start-ups achieved would fall.

In terms of the Networking Events, the key strength was that the Programme was developed based on direct feedback from participants. After each event the Steering Group considers the feedback from attendees and uses this to inform the future programme, giving the audience the kinds of input that they have requested. The women only focus was again mentioned as a strength, and it was seen as providing a non-threatening networking environment.

Identified weaknesses included reported difficulties in encouraging women who have been in the network for a long time to move on to other mainstream support, and there was a comment that the content is not always strong. It was also suggested that it would be useful if more than one Business Gateway representative attended every event and that the Business Gateway could set up a table to distribute information about their products. This had been done at the last event and was considered to have been very valuable.

3.7 Future Issues

Consultees were asked to consider some issues for the future of the WIB support. In particular, they were asked if the WIB support activities filled a gap in current support, and what could be done in future to improve the impacts of the services.

Almost all of the consultees felt that the WIB programmes did fill a gap and that without this support, fewer women in the region would consider starting businesses. In particular, women with confidence issues were felt to need this support, although it was noted that those women with more confidence and real commitment to starting a business would probably do so anyway and might be better suited to mainstream support provision. One consultee was less convinced that the WIB support filled a clear gap. Much of the material covered by the Workshops (and Networking) was available through mainstream Business Gateway products, and there was feeling that attitudes towards women in business have changed. However, amongst those consulted this was a minority view.

In terms of the future of the WIB Workshops, a number of improvements were suggested:

- more follow up of Workshop participants to encourage them to take up other forms of support;

- more ongoing consultation with women to define their needs. The customer profile is changing with less unemployment and more women leaving good careers to start businesses. Support needs to change accordingly;
- consider running the course in Edinburgh more often to meet high demand;
- there is perhaps a need for provision that lies between the very loose ‘drop in and out’ pre-start workshops offered by Business Gateway and the very intensive WIB courses; and
- in light of the selective recruitment issue raised earlier, it was suggested that there may be a need to develop a two level approach. For those women who are well advanced with their business idea and have demonstrable commitment, perhaps a shorter course would be sufficient, while those needing more support could be offered longer, more in depth training.

All of the consultees agreed that the Workshops and Networking events should continue, and that there was evidence of ongoing need and demand for women specific support.

3.8 Summary

The consultation responses were generally very positive and displayed high levels of support for the WIB Workshops and Networking Events amongst the partners. The rationale and objectives of the Programmes were clearly and consistently understood by the consultees, and were seen to be well aligned with national policy on women’s enterprise.

The Programmes are well promoted through a variety of channels and all partners are playing an active and effective role in that process. In terms of the recruitment of participants, the Workshop are clearly more targeted than the Networking Events and the feedback was that there may be an element of selective recruitment in that only women that have a clear commitment to the completion of the Workshop course are selected. These are likely to be those women with greatest commitment to setting up a business, raising issues about the additionality of support. We return to this later in the report.

In general, the Programmes were considered to be well integrated with other support, both women specific and mainstream and it is clear that this has been a strong feature in their development. In particular, integration with Business Gateway was considered to be very strong, as were the linkages to other women-specific programmes such as the Micro-Credit and Business Investment for Growth schemes operated by SE. This integration has also been helped by the Steering Group, although there was an issue raised about attendance with a suggestion that some partners have been more active participants than others.

Feedback on the perceived impacts of the Programmes was very positive and all consultees felt that the Workshops were effective in developing the skills and knowledge required to help participants to start up businesses. The Networking Events were seen as providing complementary peer support and business contacts for women that might otherwise feel quite isolated. Both Programmes were considered to help grow women’s confidence as well as provide them with wider awareness of available support. Importantly, in both cases the view was that these benefits and impacts were largely attributable to the fact that the support was women only.

In terms of strengths and weaknesses, the content and delivery of the workshops was seen as a key strength, as were issues such as the quality of participants and the women only focus. The consultations revealed little in the way of weaknesses and all consultees felt that the Programmes should continue.

Amongst areas of possible improvements were greater follow up of Workshop participants, more effective tracking of monitoring data through Business Gateway and ongoing consultation with women to review and adapt the services. In addition, there was a suggestion that perhaps a two level approach might be needed with less intensive support for those women that are clearly committed to business start up and more in depth provision for those with less confidence or commitment.

4. Company Survey

4.1 Introduction

To gather data on the impacts of WIB support, telephone and email surveys of participants were undertaken. Both formats produced top line data, with the telephone surveys allowing more in depth probing.

As detailed in **Table 4.1**, below, **30** telephone interviews were undertaken and the email survey received **54** responses, giving a total of **84** respondents.

	Telephone	Email	Total
Workshop Only	10	1	11
Networking Only	12	40	52
Both	8	13	21
Total Participants	30	54	84

The number of responses for Workshop participants totalled **32**, of which 11 had attended the Workshops only and 21 had attended Workshops and Networking. The total number of responses from those attending the Networking events was **73**, of which 52 had attended Networking only.

4.1.1 Sample Profile

Of the 84 respondents, 62 (74%) currently run their own business, with a further 14 (17%) planning to do so in the future. Seven of these plan to start their business within a year, two within two years and three in over two years. A further two respondents were unsure when they will start, five stated that they do not plan to do so and the remaining three were unsure if they will start a business. Details are given in **Table 4.2**.

	No.	%
Currently runs own business	62	74%
Plan to run own business in the future	14	17%
Do not plan to run own business	5	6%
Don't know if run own business in the future	3	4%
Total	84	100%

The main business activities of the 62 respondents that currently run a business are detailed in **Table 4.3**, over. Almost half (47%) stated that they did not fit into any of the suggested business sectors, with 15 selecting 'other' and 14 'other services'. The former included property letting, education, public health and life coaching, with the latter including IT services, web design, business consultancy, HR management, market research, statistical research and retail product development. Following, this, some 15% were involved in creative industries and 15% in personal services.

	No.	%
Other	15	24%
Other Services	14	23%
Creative Industries	9	15%
Personal Services	9	15%
Financial Services	4	6%
Food and Drink	3	5%
Craft and Related	3	5%
Tourism	2	3%
Transport and Communications	2	3%
Manufacturing	1	2%
Total	62	100%

The majority of businesses consulted are sole traders (60%), followed by limited companies (32%), with the remainder in the form of partnerships as shown in **Table 4.4**.

	No.	%
Sole Trader	37	60%
Limited Company	20	32%
Partnership	5	8%
Total	62	100%

4.1.2 Marketing and Awareness

In order to assess the marketing of the WIB Programme, respondents were asked how they first became aware of WIB. The results are detailed in **Table 4.5**.

	No.	%
Business Gateway	49	60%
Brochure	8	10%
Newspaper	6	7%
Another organisation	4	5%
SEEL	3	4%
Word of mouth	2	2%
Website	1	1%
Total	82	100%

Awareness of the Programme was largely generated through the Business Gateway, suggesting good awareness and promotion of the Programme among Business Gateway staff, and strong referral mechanisms.

Direct marketing through brochures and newspapers was responsible for 17% finding out about the programme. These are important sources in that in that it allows WIB to access those who are not in the 'support network'.

Respondents were also asked about their understanding of what the WIB Programme is trying to achieve for women owned businesses in Edinburgh and the Lothians. Referring to the Workshops, the majority believed that the role of the Workshops was to encourage women to start their own business and equip them with the skills to do so. They were also seen as playing a role in encouraging and inspiring women, giving them the confidence to take forward their ideas. This was also (and perhaps more so) seen as a function for the Networking.

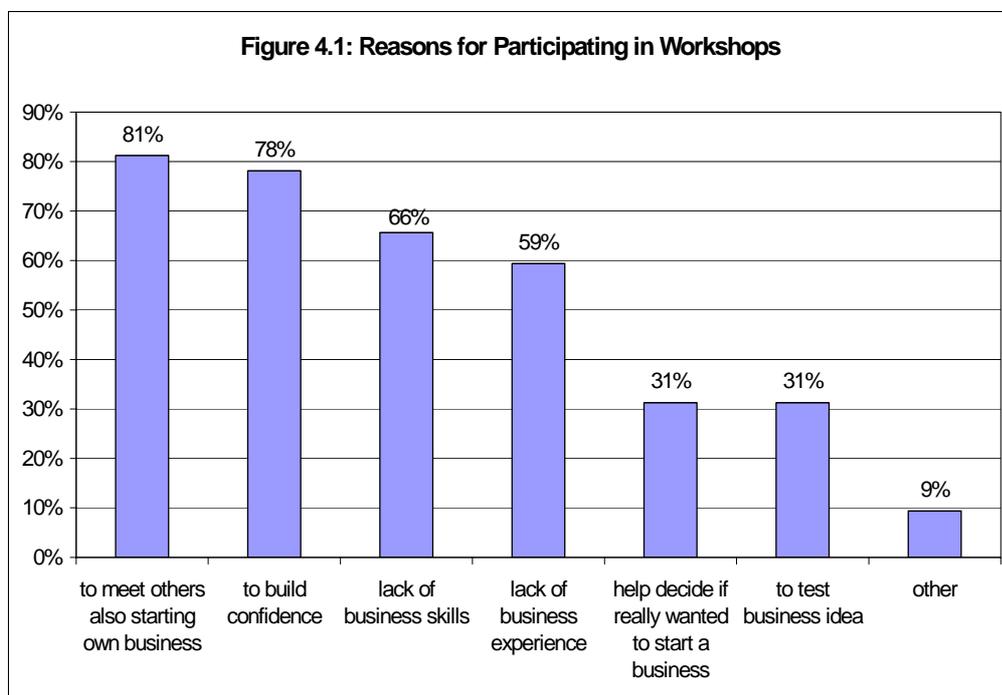
The Networking was also perceived as a means to create business opportunities. These perceptions are strongly aligned with the objectives of the Programme and suggest good understanding amongst the client base of the purposes of WIB.

4.2 Workshop Participants

To gain a clear picture of the individual performance of the Workshops and the Networking, the responses for each are presented in two separate sections.

As stated there were **32** responses from Workshop attendees, 18 from the telephone survey and 14 from the email survey. Of the 32, most had attended all of the Workshops in the Programme. For those that did not attend all, only one or two classes were missed by each individual, suggesting high levels of commitment to the course and effective selection processes by Avante Consulting.

Respondents were first asked to give the main reasons that they decided to participate in the Workshops. The results are shown in **Figure 4.1**.



Over 80% of respondents stated that they had participated in the Workshops in order to meet others in the same position. This is clearly in line with the NUWE study which suggested a need to access peer support to reduce isolation and build confidence – both barriers to women starting a business. This is followed by 78% who attended to increase their confidence. 66% of respondents attributed their attendance to a lack of business skills and 59% to a lack of business experience.

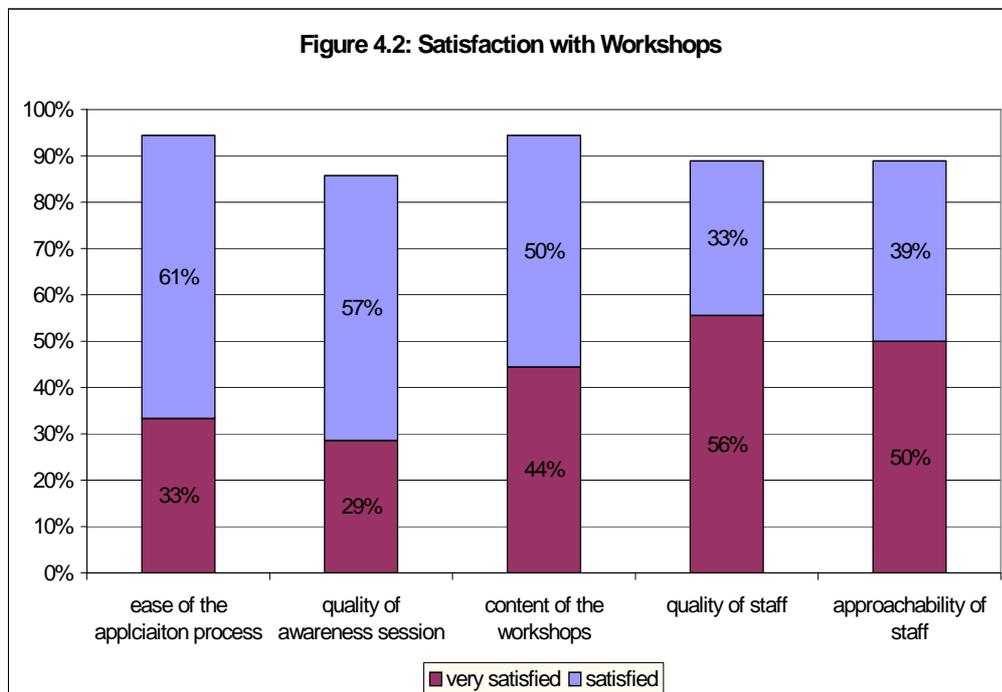
Only one-third felt that the Workshops would help them make the decision about whether they really wanted to start their own business and help them to test their business idea. In general, these respondents reported that they had already decided to start their own business and were comfortable that they had a sound business idea. The 'other' category included:

- to generate awareness of UK business culture;
- to create a network of support; and
- to find out more following the information session.

The 18 respondents surveyed by telephone were then asked to rate how satisfied they were with various elements of the workshops, namely:

- the ease of the application process;
- quality of awareness session;
- content of the workshops;
- quality of staff; and
- approachability of staff.

Overall, the Workshops were rated very highly, with at least 86% of respondents stating that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with each element (see **Figure 4.2**). Some 94% were very satisfied/satisfied with the ease of the application process and the content of the Workshops.



When then asked to expand on their answers, for those with a high level of satisfaction common reasons included:

- the trainer was excellent and built a very good relationship with the group;
- the entire course ran very smoothly without any problems;
- it was a friendly and therefore enjoyable experience; and
- the mix of the participants resulted in very effective group dynamics.

For those that were less satisfied, the poor attitude of the security guard at one of the venues was highlighted by a number of participants as causing a very tense and uncomfortable atmosphere within the group. Another felt that the whole process was a little rushed. However, it should be emphasised that these were the views of a very small minority, and most respondents expressed satisfaction with the content and pace of the Workshops.

To gain an insight into the possible impact of the Workshops, each participant was asked to describe their business start-up position prior to attending the Workshop and then their position at the time of interview. Details are given in **Table 4.6**.

TABLE 4.6: POSITION PRIOR TO AND AFTER ATTENDING WORKSHOPS						
Position AFTER Attending Workshops	Position PRIOR to Attending the Workshops					TOTAL
	Definite business idea and know how to progress	Definite business idea and partial knowledge on how to progress	Possible business idea but no idea how to progress	Vague business idea	No business idea	
Have started own business	2	15	3			20
Planning to start own business		1	3			4
Definite business idea and know how to progress		2				2
Definite business idea and partial knowledge on how to progress			1			1
Decided not to start business		2	1	1		4
Started business but no longer trading		1				1

The table above shows that, prior to attending the Workshops, the majority of participants did not know how to progress in order to start their own business. However, following the Workshops, 20 (66%) had started a business with a further four (13%) planning to start in the future.

Moreover, analysis through cross tabulations revealed that **all** of the participants (excluding those four who decided not to start and the one that started but is no longer trading) have made some progress towards starting a business. These are highlighted by the shaded areas.

Although four respondents decided not to start their own business, it must be stressed that this was not the result of insufficient guidance and advice from the Workshops. Three of the four reported that their knowledge of how to start a business had either increased or increased significantly. Reasons for not starting included:

- the lifestyle of self employment was not suitable;
- family commitments;
- lack of start-up finance; and
- other personal reasons.

Although 21 companies started a business following the Workshops, the measure of success will be how long these survive. As we could control the sample surveyed by telephone, we ensured that the sample was biased towards those that attended the earlier workshops so that information on survival rates could be collected. This was not controllable via email.

	Tel.	Email	Total
Under 6 months	0	5	5
6 months	2	2	4
12 months	3	2	5
18 months	1	0	1
24 months	4	1	5
Not survived	1	0	1
Total	10	11	21

The results in **Table 4.7**, above, are very positive in that all but one business that started following the Workshops are still trading and some have reached the two year stage. However, the time elapsed since many of the Workshops was insufficient to allow a larger sample to generate more robust results. However, the signs are generally positive given that many reported significant improvements in their knowledge of how to run a business following the Workshops.

The 24 respondents who stated that they have now started or were planning to start their own business were then asked how significant participation in the Workshop had been in reaching that decision.

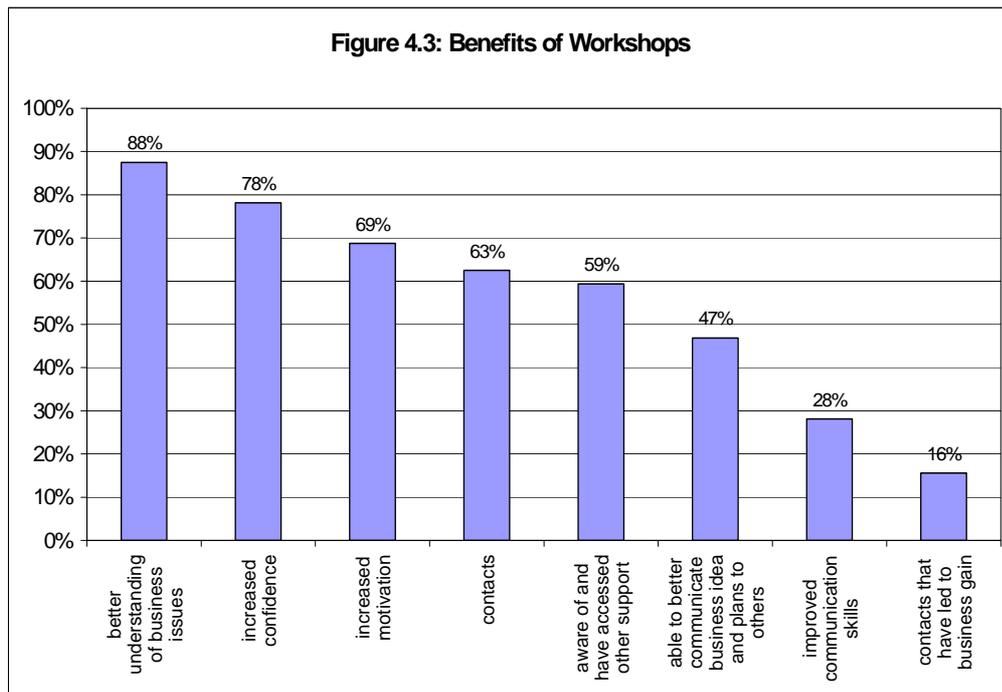
As shown in **Table 4.8**, below, the Workshops were very effective in influencing participants' decision making. Of the 22 that responded, 12 (55%) stated that the workshops were very significant, seven (32%) that they were significant and three (14%) that they were of minor significance. It is important to note that nobody suggested that the Workshops were insignificant in their decision to start their own business.

	No	%
Very Significant	12	55%
Significant	7	32%
Minor Significance	3	14%

When probed for the reasons for their answers, many respondents simply stated that the Workshops were very effective in equipping them with a more than acceptable level of knowledge and skills required to start a business. Others believed they benefited from the Workshops as they:

- provided realistic guidance regarding the pitfalls of running a business;
- covered topics that were wholly relevant;
- offered solutions to any questions, queries and doubts; and
- provided a supportive network that instils the confidence needed to take business ideas forward.

Following this, respondents were then asked to identify any other benefits that have resulted from participation in the workshops. The results are shown in **Figure 4.3**, over.



88% felt that the Workshops provided them with a better understanding of business issues. Furthermore, a large proportion stated that they have benefited in 'softer' issues – 78% reported increased confidence and 69% increased motivation. It is also the case that participation in the Workshops has opened doors for women to access other support, with 59% accessing either women-specific or mainstream support following the Workshops. This included:

- e-commerce support;
- broadband grants;
- Micro-Credit;
- Business Gateway business plan support;
- Chamber of Commerce business advisor; and
- further support from speakers at the workshops including Inland Revenue and accountancy support.

In addition, some also reported that their communication skills had improved, with 47% stating that they are better able to communicate their business idea and business plan to others. 28% reported that participation had generally improved their communication skills. Finally, 63% said that the Workshops had generated new contacts. Despite only 16% of such contacts leading to business gain (e.g. bookkeeper generating sales work through the group), the supportive environment of the group should not be underestimated in terms of encouraging women to start a business.

It is clear from the results above that the Workshops were rated very highly by the participants, and therefore it is no surprise that 30 of the 32 stated that they would recommend participation to others thinking of starting their own business.

Finally, respondents were given an opportunity to suggest any improvements to the Workshops. The general response was that, on the whole, the Workshops worked very well in their current format. However, some suggested improvements included:

- better screening of candidates to prevent those who are not really equipped to run their own business from taking the place of someone much more capable and suited to the lifestyle;
- split workshops into two different groups – those with and those without a business plan, to prevent the more advanced backtracking;
- more women of the same sector in the same group (however, others stated the diverse range of businesses contributed to excellent group dynamics);
- more support following the completion of the Workshops; and
- more information on where and how to access grant support.

4.3 Networking Participants

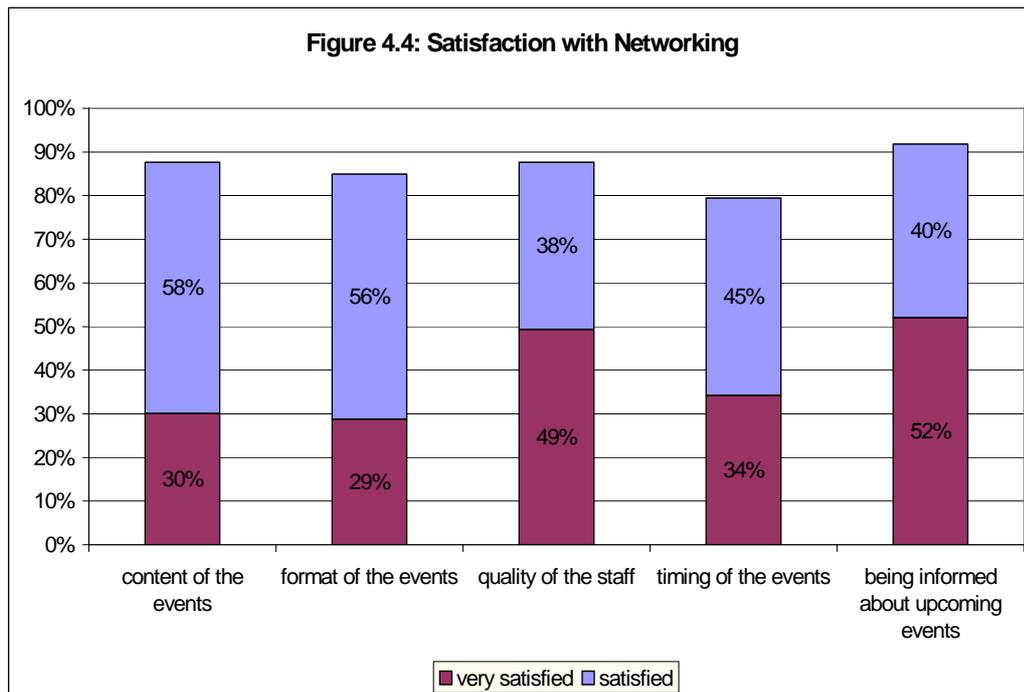
There were **73** responses from Networking attendees, with 20 telephone responses (12 attended Networking only and eight attended both Networking and Workshops) and 53 email responses (40 attended Networking only and 13 attended both Networking and Workshops).

A third of respondents have attended more than five of the Networking Events, with 26% having attended between three and five, and 36% between one and two (see **Table 4.9**).

TABLE 4.9: NUMBER OF NETWORKING EVENTS ATTENDED		
	No.	%
One	10	14%
Two	16	22%
Three	11	15%
Four	3	4%
Five	5	7%
More than five	24	33%
No Reply	1	1%
Total	73	100%

Figure 4.4, over, displays the respondents' levels of satisfaction with the following aspects of the Networking Events:

- content of events;
- format of events;
- quality of staff;
- timing of events; and
- being informed about upcoming events.



Overall, the Networking Events were rated highly, with at least 79% of respondents stating that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with each of the above factors. Some 92% were very satisfied/satisfied with being informed about upcoming events, 88% were very satisfied/satisfied with the content of the event, 87% with the quality of the staff, 85% with the format of the events and 79% with the timing of the events.

As with the Workshops, participants in the Networking events were asked to describe their business start-up position prior to attending the Networking and their position at the time of interview to gain an insight into the possible impacts. Results are given in **Table 4.9**. There were only 71 responses as two respondents did not reply to this question.

TABLE 4.9: POSITION PRIOR TO AND AFTER ATTENDING NETWORKING						
	Position prior to attending Networking					
	Already started business	Planning to start own business	Definite business idea & know how to progress	Definite business idea & partial knowledge for progress	Possible business idea but no idea how to progress	Vague business idea
Position after attending Networking						
Continuing business as before	20					
Continuing business with improved knowledge, confidence etc	13					
Planning to start own business		2			2	
Have now started own business		11	4	7	3	
Definite business idea and know how to progress			2	2	1	
Definite business idea and partial knowledge on how to progress				2		
Decided not to start business					1	1

The shaded areas of the table shows all those that had made some form of progress since attending the Networking. Of the 71 respondents, 43 (61%) had made some progress, with 26 (37%) remaining in the same position and two (3%) deciding not to start a business.

For those continuing as before, it does not necessarily mean that the Networking has not been of benefit. They may have attended only very few meetings or may have found the Networking Events to be of benefit, but other factors have constrained their progress. Similarly, one cannot assume that the progress made by the 61% was a direct result of the Networking (this will be discussed further in the economic impact section).

The 62 respondents that reported starting or planning to start their own business were asked how significant participation in the Networking had been in improving their understanding of how to run a business.

As shown in **Table 4.10**, of the 59 that responded, 90% felt that the Networking events had a significant effect on their level of knowledge with respect to running a business. Eight (14%) reported that the Networking had been very significant, 21 (36%) that it had been significant and 24 (41%) reported that it had been of only minor significance.

	No	%
Very Significant	8	14%
Significant	21	36%
Minor Significance	24	41%
Not significant at all	6	10%

Respondents interviewed by telephone were then probed to give reasons for their answers.

Those that described the Networking events as very significant or significant, felt that they were an essential source of business contacts, that they presented the opportunity to learn from others, and that they had played an essential role in building confidence and morale.

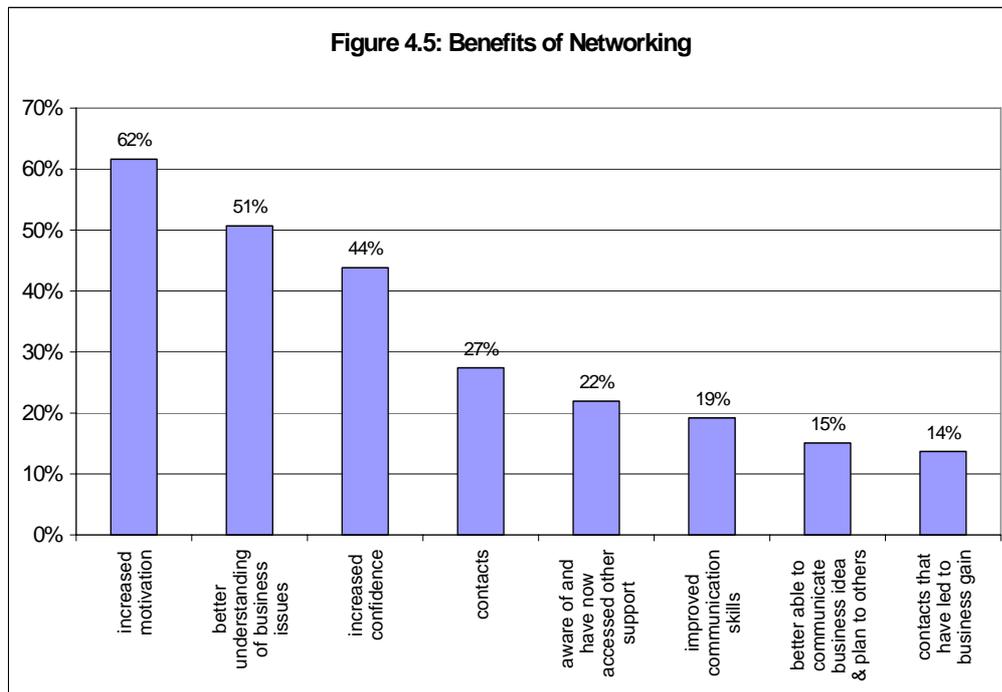
For those that reported that it had been of minor significance, many commented that they would probably have started or developed their business at the same level and same pace had they not attended. However, they did comment that the Networking Events:

- assisted with planning and understanding of how to run business;
- played a supportive role so that sole traders do not feel isolated;
- were useful, however, it was the workshops that had a significant impact; and
- assisted in confidence building and 'getting yourself out there'.

Some also commented that the structure and dynamics of the events resulted in them having only minor significance. It was noted that the group is too large to make any individual impact and that it was not flexible enough to meet the needs of individual sectors.

Finally, those who stated the events were not significant at all criticised them as being more of a 'talk shop'. While they saw this as a valid role, they felt that it does not deliver hard business results.

In recognition of the perhaps less direct impacts of the Networking, respondents were asked to identify more qualitative benefits. The results of this are given in **Figure 4.5**.



The results were a mix of these softer issues and harder business skills issues. With regards to the former, some 62% stated that the events had increased their motivation, 44% that it increased their confidence and 19% that it improved their communication skills. Regarding the latter, just over half (51%) reported a better understanding of business issues, while 14% have generated contacts that have led to business gains. Following the Networking Events, just over a fifth of respondents have accessed other support.

Although only half reported the Networking as having a very significant/significant role in their decision to start up a business, some 94% would recommend the Programme to others. This is largely due to the supportive role that the Networking provides and the fact that it increases motivation, confidence and enables participants to make contacts that, while they may not lead to business gain, do provide a network of mutual support. This was felt to be particularly important for the sole traders.

Furthermore, 76% stated that they would like to continue to attend the Networking Events in the future, with many stressing that they would now be more selective as to which events to attend (i.e. those that have the most relevance to their business needs). Others again stressed the fact that they would like to continue as they appreciated (and needed) the peer support.

For the 10% that stated they would not continue, the reasons did not reflect a poor opinion of the Networking Programme. Rather, half reported that they felt the Networking Events were more appropriate in the start-up stage and have less relevance to them now that they are in the growth stage. For others, the reason was simply that they are not going ahead with their business idea and therefore no longer require the support. The remaining 14% were unsure if they would attend in the future.

Finally, respondents were given an opportunity to suggest any improvements to the Networking Events. Some 64% did not comment, either as they could not think of anything or that they felt the events were good as they are. Of the remaining 36% (28), suggested improvements included:

- the segmentation of groups by sector and/or by stage in the business cycle. It was suggested that the events tried to be too many things to too many people and needed to be more targeted (6);
- the introduction of 'assisted networking', for example provide a 'buddy' that introduces an attendee to others at the event (5);
- more time for networking as opposed to long presentations (3);
- the provision of a delegate list with contact details in order to generate business contacts (3);
- rotate the day of the week it is held or consider weekend events instead of the same day of each week which does not suit everyone (3); and
- challenge and involve attendees more. In particular, ask attendees what they would like the events to cover (2).

4.4 Other Support

All 84 respondents were asked if they have accessed or intend to access any other forms of business development support. This was to help determine:

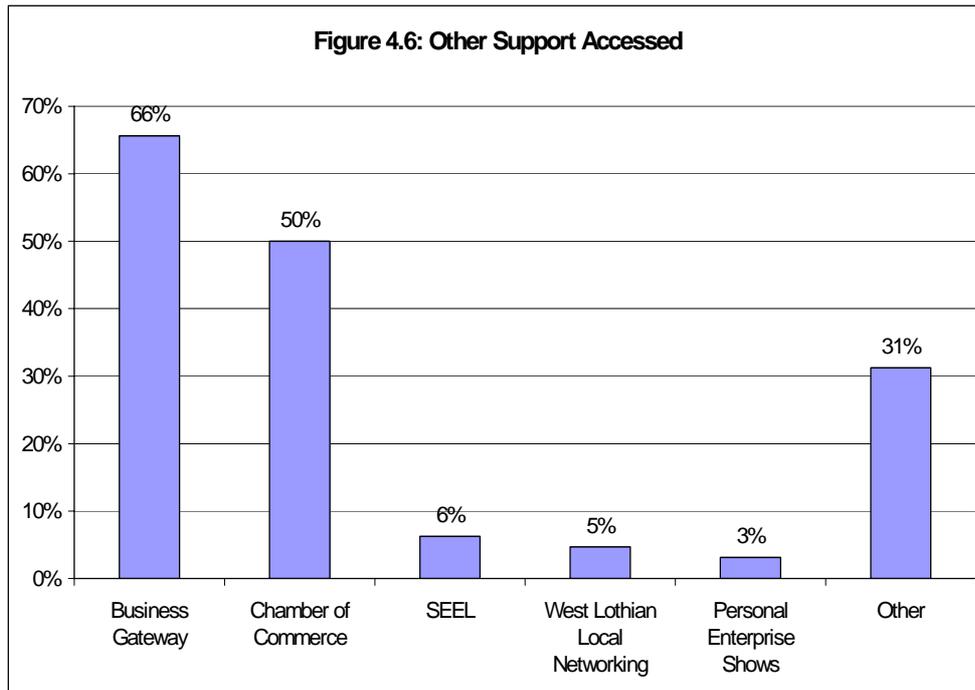
- if the women were taking advantage of mainstream support or women specific support;
- if their involvement with WIB had encouraged them to seek other support;
- how accessible support is for women; and
- if there are any gaps in the support available.

When asked if other support had been accessed, six did not respond. Therefore, the figures are based on a figure of 78. Some 82% (64) stated that they had accessed other support, with 18% (14) having only used WIB support.

Across all areas of support, it is encouraging that 62% felt that their experience with WIB had encouraged them to seek other support and that this was largely mainstream and not women-specific. 21% stated that it had not encouraged them to seek other support and the remaining 18% were unsure.

This suggests that, beyond the start-up stage, women-owned businesses do not necessarily see the need for support to be delivered through women-specific services. This is consistent with the findings of the recent NUWE study that women-specific schemes are most appropriately targeted on the pre-start and start-up phases to build confidence and enable women to establish supportive business networks.

Figure 4.6, over, provides details of the other support accessed by the 64.



Over two-thirds of those who accessed further support following WIB support have taken advantage of Business Gateway services. This was largely in the form of a business advisor and/or the use of e-commerce support. This is unsurprising, as 60% of WIB attendees originally found out about the programme through the Business Gateway. Furthermore, some 62% stated that their involvement with WIB had encouraged them to seek further support from Business Gateway.

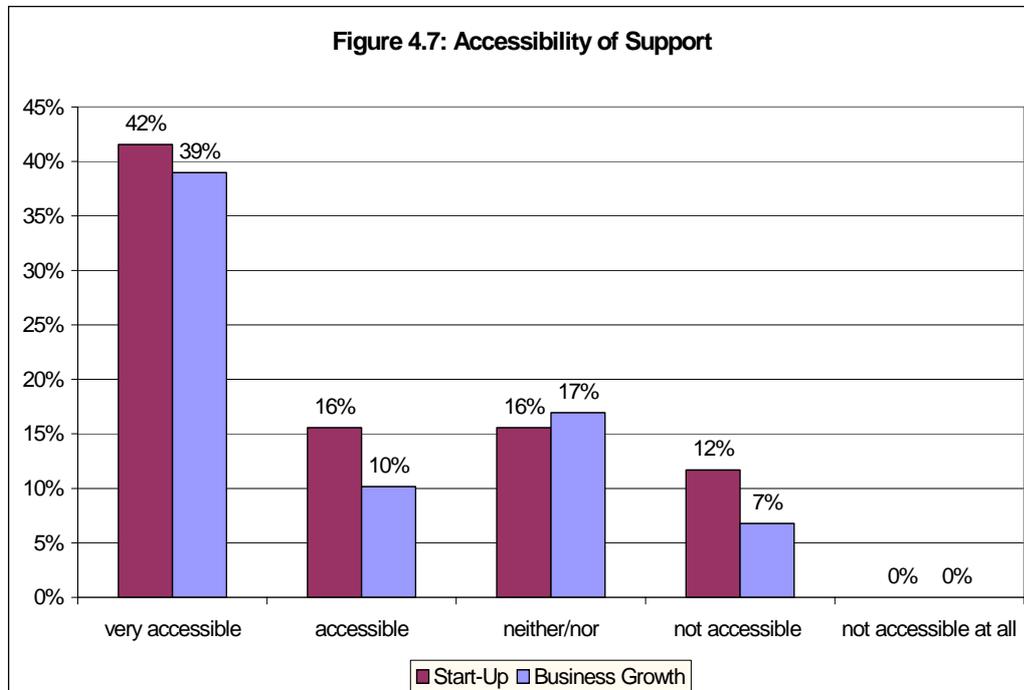
Half of all respondents had accessed private sector support via the Chamber of Commerce, with 66% stating that involvement with WIB encouraged them to seek this support.

The 'other' category included the following:

- Micro-Credit (3);
- Business Mentoring Scotland (3);
- British Networking International (3);
- DHP Business Advisor (2);
- Inland Revenue advice and accounting advice free following workshops (2);
- Shell Live Wire;
- private business coaching;
- British Psychological Society;
- Creative Entrepreneurs Club;
- BYOBIZ (Build your Own Business) at Napier University; and
- Advice from clients/friends/personal contacts.

All but two of the above mentioned forms of support are mainstream and not women-specific.

All respondents were then asked how accessible they felt support is for women both at the start-up stage and at the business development stage. Excluding those that did not know/could not comment, the results are given in **Figure 4.7**. A total of 77 responded to the start-up question and 59 to the business growth question.



The data show that the majority of respondents felt that both start-up support and business growth support is accessible to women. It is also important to note that no respondents rated the support being not accessible at all. Most commented that they had never experienced any difficulties and that the Business Gateway is always a good starting point. However, it was suggested that start-up support is easier to access than business growth support.

These findings are in contrast to those of the NUWE study, which found that women are less aware of existing services, both women-centred and mainstream. However, it should be remembered that the current sample have already participated in the WIB Programme and as a result should have higher levels of awareness of wider support provision.

For those who felt support was not easily accessible, the issues raised included:

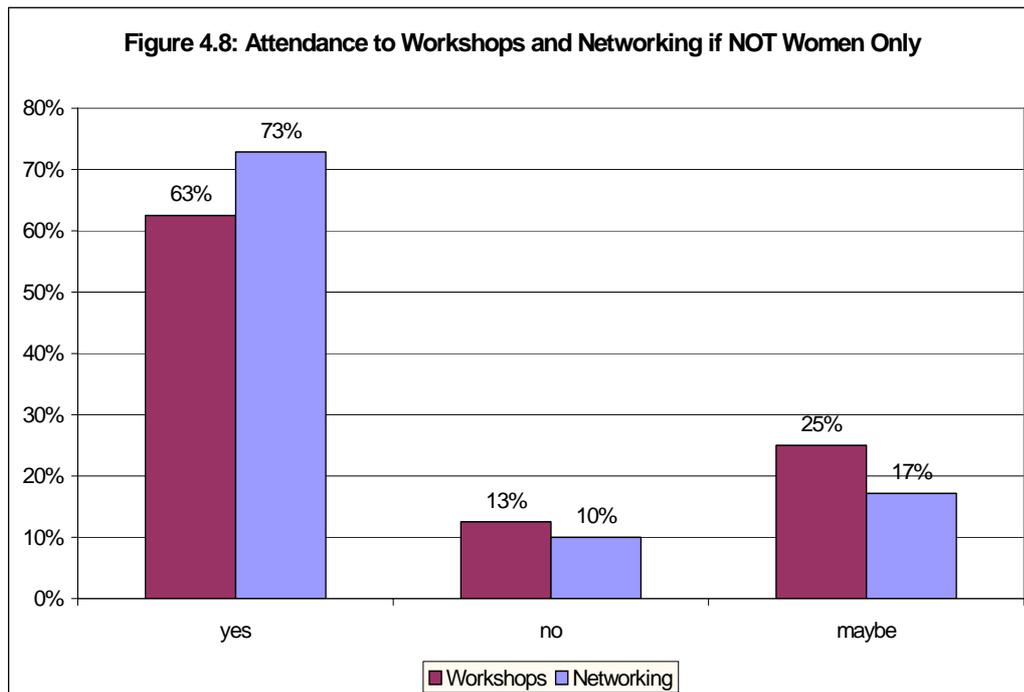
- support is largely available for those who are positive that they want to start a business and not available to those who were thinking of it and needed someone to talk to and test their idea; and
- insufficient support for people wishing to grow business - help with start-up and then it stops.

When then asked if there were any gaps in support, 40% of respondents felt that there were, with 26% stating that there were none and 35% were unsure. These gaps tend to be in the areas described above. In addition, it was commented that there was insufficient follow-up support after the Workshops, and perhaps mentoring or group meetings should be available. As this is available (e.g. Business Mentoring Scotland

and Micro-Credit) this perhaps suggests an information problem as opposed to gaps in support. However, given that a representative from Micro-Credit presents at the Workshops it is difficult to see where there is room for improvement.

4.4.1 Women Specific Support

All respondents were asked a series of questions about women specific support to gain an insight into whether there is a need for women-specific support and if the needs of women are being met. First, respondents were asked if they would have attended the Workshops and the Networking had they **not** been for women only. There were 32 responses regarding the Workshops and 70 regarding the Networking. The results are given in **Figure 4.8** below.



For the workshops, 63% would have still attended the Workshops if they had not been for women only, with just 13% stating that they would not have attended. 25% were unsure.

Telephone respondents were probed to give reasons for their answers. For those that would have attended, most stated that it was simply not an issue for them and some went on to suggest that it may have been advantageous if men were present. However, a number did report that although it would not have discouraged participation, in hindsight they could see the advantages of the women-only format. In particular, it was felt that this helps to create an environment that is supportive rather than competitive. This was considered to be critical in building confidence and belief in their abilities.

There were no distinct characteristics to differentiate those that would have attended from those that would not have attended. This may be attributable to the relatively small sample size. However, what can be said is that of the 63% (20) that would have attended anyway, there specific reasons for attending the Workshops in the first place were to:

- build confidence (70%);
- meet others also starting their own business (70%); and

- gain business skills (65%).

In particular, the first two are consistently identified as barriers to women's enterprise and are often used to justify the need for women-specific support. This raises two questions. First, would the women have really attended the groups had they been mixed? There are issues surrounding possible self-presentation effects and the fact that these women have attended workshops and as a result are **now** more confident, which may have influenced their response. We return to this issue in Chapter 5. The second question is whether these problems could be overcome through mainstream support. However, the NUWE study provides strong evidence that suggests that mainstream support may not be able to tackle these issues. In our professional judgement, we would argue that mainstream support might suffice for some of these women, however, not as many as the data implies.

For those that would not have attended had the events been mixed, the simple reason was that it would be too intimidating. Indeed, some reported that they had found it intimidating enough with only women.

While this may suggest that perhaps there is no need to have women-specific Workshops, there are a number of other factors to consider. First, it is important to consider the characteristics of the four women that would not have attended had they not been for women only. Of these four, two went on to start a business, one is planning to start and one decided not to start. Also, of the 25% (8) that may not have attended, seven went on to start a business. Therefore, two business starts would definitely not have happened, potentially rising to nine. Given that 20 of the 32 who attended the Workshops started a business, this may have almost halved the number of start-ups had the Workshops not been for women only.

Furthermore, it is important to stress that many women attending the Workshops already had a definite business idea and some knowledge of how to progress. This suggests that these women may have been more confident and motivated than other women and therefore less intimidated by mainstream support.

With regards to the Networking, only 10% would not have attended had it not been for women only. The reasons for this again centred on lack of confidence and the feeling that a mixed environment would have been too intimidating. There was also the concern that previous experience has taught them that in such an open-ended forum men tend to dominate. Others stated that the women-only factor was a benefit to their business in that women are more likely to buy their products.

However, the vast majority (73%) reported that they would have attended had the Networking not been for women only, with many commenting that it would have made no difference to them and they currently attend mixed groups. However, again this issue of hindsight arises, with many realising the benefits of a women-only environment.

All were asked if they felt that the business needs of women were different to those of men. As shown in **Table 4.11**, some 58% believed that they were, compared to 23% who said that they were not.

	No.	%
Yes	49	58%
No	19	23%
Don't Know/No reply	16	19%

Reasons given as to why the needs are different are that women:

- have family commitments to juggle along with a business, which inevitably affects their time commitment to the business (16);
- are generally less confident than men to take their ideas and business forward (15);
- are less competitive and provide a support to other women in business (9);
- are more likely to be involved in life-style businesses and are striving to achieve a work-life balance (7); and
- are treated differently and perhaps discriminated against, particularly when seeking funding – women are not always taken seriously (4).

On the other hand, those that did not feel that the needs of women are different suggested that one cannot easily split difference by gender, and that in fact the differences are in the type of business e.g. lifestyle business versus growth-orientated business.

All respondents were then asked if they believed that more women-specific support should be available. As **Table 4.12** reveals, 30% stated that there should be more and 39% did not believe there should.

TABLE 4.12: SHOULD THERE BE MORE WOMEN-SPECIFIC SUPPORT?		
	No.	%
Yes	25	30%
No	33	39%
Don't Know/No reply	26	31%

Of those that felt there should not be more, many did stress that this does not imply that there should be less. Others believed more in mixed support commenting that business involves both men and women so women should feel comfortable interacting with both, and perhaps women would benefit more from mixed support.

For those who felt there should be more, some felt that male advisors sometimes do not understand women and women generally have a lack of confidence, suggesting a need for specific help and support in this area. For instance, some women may have taken time off to look after family, and when getting back into work they may need some moral support to help them get back into business.

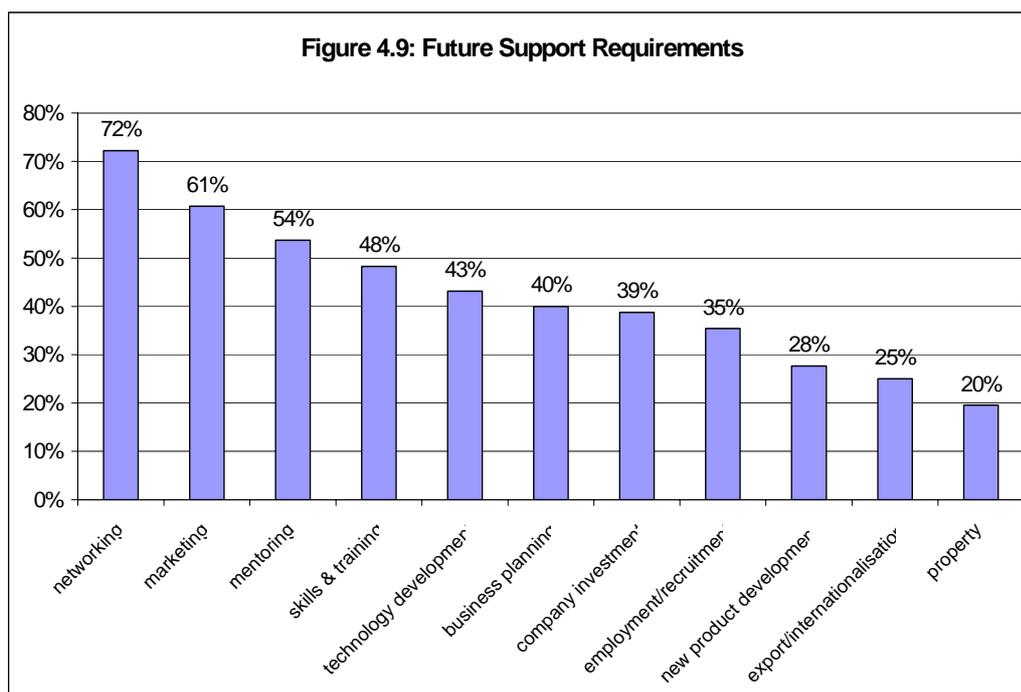
4.4.2 Future Support Needs

All respondents were asked to describe their future support needs and there were 73 responses. Of the 73 that responded, 62 (85%) stated that they would require some support. 18 would require more than they have had in the past, 28 the same level as in the past and 16 less than in the past. Only three (4%) stated that they would not require any support and the remaining 8 (11%) were unsure. These findings are not surprising as many of the women on WIB were, or are currently, at the pre-start or start up stage.

The 62 that require some support were asked to detail the areas in which this would be required. As **Figure 4.9** shows, networking support is in very high demand, with 72% stating they would require this in the future. The need for support networks is also evident in that 54% stated that they would like some form of mentoring support. In terms of specific business issues, the most common need is marketing (61%) and skills and training support (48%). Of those that require skills and training support, the majority (75%) are those that have only been to Networking Events, with only 25% who stated that they required this support had previously attended the Workshops.

What is also true is that those from the workshops largely require business growth support and financial planning for business growth. This is an important finding as they are not still requiring support in areas that the Workshops were designed to cover, but support *after* the start-up stage. For those that attended the Networking Events, support required included:

- book-keeping and financial management;
- computer and IT training; and
- business growth support.



As shown in **Table 4.13**, below, this assistance would largely be sought from other public sector agencies (69%), mainly Business Gateway and from WIB (58%). This is a positive finding in that a large proportion are now happy to go back to Business Gateway, suggesting their willingness to access mainstream support. Finally, a third did state that they would also seek private sector support, with 24% unsure where they would go.

TABLE 4.13: SOURCE OF FUTURE ASSISTANCE		
	No.	%
WIB	36	58%
Other Public Sector	43	69%
Private Sector	21	33%
Don't Know	15	24%

4.5 Summary

A total of 84 beneficiaries of the WIB programme were involved in the evaluation, of which 62 (74%) currently run their own business, with a further 14 (17%) planning to do so in the future. The remaining eight are either unsure if they wish to pursue a business idea or have already decided that self-employment is not for them.

Awareness of the Programme is largely generated through referrals from the Business Gateway suggesting a good awareness and promotion of the scheme from all the gateways – Edinburgh, Midlothian, West Lothian and East Lothian. Marketing

through brochures and newspapers is also critical in encouraging women not in the 'support network' to access WIB.

With regards to the Workshops, the main reasons that women wanted to participate was to meet others starting their own business (81%) and to build confidence (78%). This is largely in line with the issues raised by the NUWE study which suggested that women require peer support and that they lack confidence and belief in their own abilities. Lack of business skills and experience also encouraged 66% and 59% to participate, respectively.

When then asked if their needs had been met, the results were very positive in that the vast majority had a better understanding of business issues, increased confidence, increased motivation and made contacts with others. Further benefits included awareness of other support available, with 59% now having accessed other support, largely mainstream support. Again, this fits well with the recommendations of the NUWE study, which suggests that women-specific support is required in the pre-start and early start-up stages but once they reach a sufficient point they should exit women-specific and access mainstream services. This is clearly what is happening among WIB clients.

The overall opinion of the Workshops was that they were excellent in their current format and generally it was difficult to pinpoint room for improvement. However, some improvements were around segmenting the groups by sector or by the stage in the business cycle and more group support following the completion of the course.

It was also important to grasp an understanding of how significant the Workshops had been in encouraging women to start up. **All** reported that the Workshops had some significance, with 55% stating they were very significant. Additionally, some 21 individuals started a business following the Workshops and a further four are planning to start in the near future. Therefore, almost 80% have started or plan to start a business. Furthermore, early indications of survival rates are very positive. Of the 21 who started a business, only one is no longer trading.

The networking was also rated very highly by the participants with at least 79% satisfied with various elements of the Networking including the content, format and timing of the events and the quality of the staff. Although none reported starting a business as a direct result of the Networking (many had already started) some 61% have made some form of progress since attending the events. Specific benefits were a mix of soft and hard impacts, with increased motivation and increased confidence at the top of the list along with a better understanding of business issues.

Overall, the Networking Events were rated as very effective by most and many understood the crucial role that they played in providing peer support. Some suggestions for improvements included more time for networking and the introduction of 'assisted networking'. This may be useful in that only 27% have made contacts and only 14% have made contacts that have led to business gain. This may also be made easier by the provision of a delegate list to all attendees. Other suggested improvements were segmentation by sector and/or business life cycle stage and rotating the day of the week the events are held.

Many women felt that the needs of women-owned businesses were different to those of men. It was suggested that women face barriers such as low confidence, low belief in their ideas and childcare commitments. It is believed that WIB support is sensitive to these issues and is very effective in tackling them. However, it is clear that there is not an over-reliance on this women specific support, as the respondents were very active in seeking mainstream forms of support following WIB support. Some 62% felt that WIB encouraged and facilitated them to seek other support.

Finally, in terms of future support needs, 85% felt that they would continue to require some form of support. Networking and mentoring were high on the agenda with 72% and 54% respectively, stating they would require this support, largely due to the fact that they feel slightly isolated as may be sole traders. Although 58% would return to WIB, 69% would use other mainstream public sector support, again an encouraging finding.

5 Economic Impact Assessment

5.1 Introduction

One of the tasks of the study was to provide a robust assessment of the economic impacts and value for money provided by the WIB Programme over the agreed period. This Chapter reports the economic impact of the WIB Workshops. The impacts are derived from information and data obtained from the survey of companies and from WIB programme management. It covers:

- project expenditure;
- gross employment and sales; and
- gross to net impacts.

5.2 Project Expenditure and Activities

Table 5.1 details the cost of delivering the workshops. The total cost for three years was £57,1280.50 including VAT. This includes the cost of delivery, cost of marketing and recruitment and the cost of the venue for the East/Midlothian workshops (both Edinburgh and West Lothian workshops are held in Business Gateway premises at no extra cost).

For the period for which this research was concentrated (January 2003 to January 2005⁵), a total of 8 workshops have been undertaken, four each year (two in Edinburgh, one in West Lothian and one for East/Midlothian) at a cost of £28,564.25 per year. A total of 138 participants were involved in the eight workshops.

TABLE 5.1: WORKSHOP EXPENDITURE (2002-2005)		
Year	Activity	Cost
2003-2004	Delivery of Workshops	£17,460.50
	Marketing and Recruitment	£11,103.75
2004-2005	Delivery of Workshops	£17,460.50
	Marketing and Recruitment	£11,103.75
Total		£57,128.50

Note: The cost figures are inclusive of VAT.

5.3 Gross Employment and Sales

A total of 32 companies surveyed had participated in the Workshops. Of these, 12 were unable to identify any impacts. 20 respondents attributed the start of their business to the WIB Workshops. Of those 20 respondents, 10 reported employment impacts totalling 21.5 FTEs. For the remaining ten that attributed business starts to the Workshop support we have assumed that each business will have created one job through self-employment, except in two cases, where the self-employment impact was part time (0.5 FTEs in each case). Therefore, the total gross jobs figure includes self-employment impacts.

In addition, it is worth noting that while all other respondents that reported employment impacts reported either one FTE or 0.5 FTE, one respondent reported the creation of 15 jobs (the business is a café). Therefore, with this one exception, none of the businesses created has yet led to further employment growth.

⁵ This period was considered as the brief asked to concentrate on those that have attended the workshops since January 2003 and although workshops have since began in January 2005, they have not yet reached completion.

The reported gross employment impacts for the companies surveyed are shown at **Table 5.2**, below.

TABLE 5.2: GROSS EMPLOYMENT AND SALES IMPACTS			
	Number reporting	Total	Average
No. of gross new jobs created	20	30.5	1.525
Sales	20	£623,500	£31,175

The total increase in gross employment to date has been 30.5 FTEs, averaging 1.53 FTEs per business and total gross sales were £623,500 averaging £31,175 per business. A total of 12 companies were unable to provide job impacts at this time.

5.4 Gross to Net

In order to move from gross to net impacts it is necessary to take account of the following:

- additionality;
- displacement; and
- multiplier effects.

5.4.1 Additionality

Non-additionality (or deadweight) is the proportion of gross direct jobs that would have been expected to occur even if support through WIB had not been provided. Businesses were then assessed according to the following types of additionality:

- *absolute additionality*: where all gross direct jobs are additional, was taken to apply where none of the jobs outcomes would have occurred in the absence of WIB. Where there was no evidence of absolute additionality we made allowance for:
- *time additionality*: where WIB enabled the reported changes to happen sooner. Adopting the standard assumption that a project has a 10 year life, we allocated 10% additionality for every year for which the reported changes in business performance were brought forward; and
- *scale/quality additionality*: where WIB had a positive influence on the level of gross direct jobs. This was obtained following in-depth discussions with the companies to ascertain the nature of scale and quality impact of WIB.

Based on the responses received, we found that:

- **2** companies reported absolute additionality;
- **6** companies reported time additionality;
- **2** reported scale/quality additionality; and
- **10** reported zero additionality.

This suggests a need for better screening to ensure that only those that would not otherwise go ahead are able to access support.

5.4.2 Displacement

Our investigation of displacement considered those factors that would reduce the gross impact of any increases in business activity. It included collecting information on a variety of areas, including:

- location of major competitors;
- location of main markets; and
- current market conditions.

Displacement was then assessed according to the following factors:

- *high displacement*: ranging of 70-90%;
- *medium displacement*: ranging from 40-60%; and
- *low displacement*: ranging from 10-30%.

Displacement was assessed at the local (Edinburgh & the Lothians) and national (Scottish) levels. The assessed levels of displacement are shown at **Table 5.3**.

Factor	Number of Companies	
	Local	Scotland
Low	1	1
Medium	2	1
High	7	8

The analysis shows that WIB has supported companies with generally high displacement both at the local (i.e. Edinburgh and the Lothians) and Scottish levels. This perhaps suggests that there is room for improvement at the appraisal stage with greater emphasis on support for those operating within non-local markets.

5.4.3 Multiplier Effects

The increase in economic activity as a result of the Project will also have two types of wider impact on the economy:

- **supplier effect**: an increase in sales in a business will require it to purchase more supplies than it would have otherwise. A proportion of this 'knock-on' effect will benefit suppliers in the local and Scottish economies; and
- **income effect**: an increase in sales in a business will usually lead to either an increase in employment or an increase in incomes for those already employed. A proportion of these increased incomes will be re-spent in the local and Scottish economies.

It is difficult to extract relevant data from the companies on levels and, in particular, the distribution of purchases. However, we believe that overall the types of companies supported through WIB will have a normal pattern of purchases and have assumed that these will be within the norm. These were assumed to be:

- **1.21** for the combined supplier and income multiplier at the Edinburgh and Lothians level; and
- **1.44** for the combined supplier and income multiplier at the Scottish level.

These coefficients are consistent with those recommended in HM Treasury best practice.

5.4.4 Net Additional Employment

Applying additionality, displacement and multiplier effects to gross employment created as a result of WIB, the estimates of net additional employment shown in **Table 5.4** are obtained.

TABLE 5.4: NET ADDITIONAL EMPLOYMENT (FTEs)		
	Local	Scotland
<i>Gross Direct</i>	30.5	30.5
<i>Less Non Additional</i>	26.87	26.87
<i>Gross Direct Additional</i>	3.63	3.63
<i>Less Displacement</i>	2.68	2.98
<i>Net Direct Additional</i>	0.95	0.65
Plus supplier multiplier	0.1	0.13
Plus Income multiplier	0.1	0.16
<i>Net Additional Employment</i>	1.15	0.94

At the Edinburgh and Lothians level net additional employment stands at **1.15 FTEs** and at the Scottish level at **0.94 FTEs**.

These FTEs relate only to those generated in the firms that participated in the survey – they account for 23% of total beneficiaries. Grossing up these figures to the population of WIB workshop beneficiaries (138 from January 2002 to December 2004) the numbers of net additional jobs created as a result of WIB would be:

- **5 FTEs** at the local level; and
- **4.1 FTEs** at the Scottish level.

Although, the employment generation is very low (but see issues raised in **Section 5.4.6**, below) the cost per net job is on a par with best practice at £11,425 at the local level and £13,934 at the national level, as detailed in **Table 5.5**. Although Scottish Enterprise does not publish cost per job guidance, European guidance from the Scottish Objective 3 Programme estimates that the cost per job through new firm formation measures should be around £13,411. This is higher than the cost per job for WIB at the local level, but slightly lower than the national figure.

TABLE 5.5: COST PER JOB		
	Local	National
Number Surveyed	32	32
Number of Net Additional FTEs	1.15	0.94
<i>Average Number of FTEs per Respondent</i>	<i>0.036</i>	<i>0.029</i>
Total Beneficiaries	138	138
<i>Grossed-up FTEs</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4.1</i>
Total Cost	£57,128.50	£57,128.50
<i>Cost per Job</i>	£11,425.70	£13,933.78

5.4.5 Net Additional Sales

Applying additionality, displacement and multiplier effects to gross sales created as a result of WIB, the estimates of net additional sales shown in **Table 5.6** are obtained.

TABLE 5.6: NET ADDITIONAL SALES (FTEs)		
	Local	Scotland
<i>Gross Direct</i>	£623,500	£623,500
<i>Less Non Additional</i>	£565,100	£565,100
<i>Gross Direct Additional Sales</i>	£58,400	£58,400
<i>Less Displacement</i>	£47,410	£51,910
<i>Net Direct Additional Sales</i>	£10,990	£6,490

At the local level, the net additional sales are £10,990, and £6,490 at the national level.

5.4.6 Implications of Results

The results imply low cost per job, however, also show very low job generation, largely due to low additionality and high displacement. However, there are factors that can explain the very low additionality and consequently very low impacts of the workshops, namely selective recruitment and self-presentation effects.

The selection procedures for those who attend the Workshops are such that the participants tend to be those that are very committed and determined to start up a business. They are not judged on their business idea but instead judged on their level of commitment. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that many (almost 70%) would state that they would have started a business without the support of the WIB workshops. In addition, a selection process that does not take account of the nature of the businesses proposed, will not be able to direct support towards businesses that will create lower levels of displacement.

Secondly, in our professional judgement, we believe that there are some self-presentation effects in the data that may have impacted on the low additionality. That is to say some respondents may have claimed that they were more than capable of starting a business without the support, even if this was not strictly true. The data revealed that for the twenty that have started a business and are still trading only two stated that they knew how to progress, with the remainder stating that they only had partial knowledge or none at all. Moreover, 88% of respondents reported that they had a better understanding of business issues following the workshops and **all** that the workshops were in some way significant in their decision to start a business (55% stating they were very significant and 32% significant). Such inconsistencies suggest that perhaps fewer would have started a business without the support of WIB that suggested by the data.

What the data also suggest is that although many may have started anyway, this increase in knowledge and understanding would have a greater impact not on **start-up** but in **survival rates**. This very much comes down to the quantity versus quality argument, i.e. is the role of the workshops to start-up as many businesses as possible or is it to ensure that those that do start-up have a high chance of survival. We would argue that it is the latter. As the data in **Table 4.7** revealed, the signs are good with regards to the survival rates of those businesses assisted through the workshops.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

As stated in the Introduction, the aims and objectives for the evaluation were to:

- examine the market failure rationale for the Programmes and determine the extent to which the Workshops and Networking Events address this market failure;
- assess the performance of the Programmes against a range of quantitative and qualitative measures;
- examine the relationship and fit with other Business Gateway services and products;
- gather direct feedback from clients on the quality and effectiveness of the Programmes; and
- identify key areas, activities and gaps and make recommendations on how these gaps may be addressed.

Our conclusions are based around these objectives.

6.1 Background Issues

Before discussing our main conclusions and recommendations, it is worth raising a couple of important issues relating to targets and monitoring.

First, no targets were set for either the Workshops or Networking events, and this must be considered a major shortcoming of the Programmes. Targets drive activity in important ways and without clear targets, it is difficult to judge the effectiveness of Programmes in meeting their objectives. It also makes it difficult to establish the contribution that the Programmes are making to wider economic development objectives.

The second related issue is the lack of clear monitoring data for the Programmes. While some data are available on levels of participation and regular feedback is collected on measures of client satisfaction, there is no clear system for monitoring the impacts of the Programmes in terms of business creation and sustainability.

The monitoring of business start-ups is rightly the responsibility of Business Gateway, however, if women specific support programmes are to be able to demonstrate their contribution to enterprise creation, it is essential that within Business Gateway start up data it is possible to identify those start-ups that have come through these programmes. Critically, such a system should also be able to track the survival rates of these businesses to establish the extent to which women's enterprise programmes such as the WIB Workshops and Networking events are helping to develop sustainable businesses.

Therefore, we have two key recommendations relating to these issues.

Recommendation 1:

That SEEL identifies a suitable range of targets for the Workshops and Networking Events and ensures that data are regularly collected to measure progress against these targets

Recommendation 2:

That SEEL works with the Business Gateway to ensure that the impacts of the WIB Workshops and Networking Events are properly captured in start-up data and that these are tracked over time to measure business survival rates.

These recommendations are consistent with those of the NUWE research and it is further recommended that SEEL works with NUWE on the target setting and monitoring processes to ensure national consistency in approach.

6.2 Rationale

The market failure rationale for women specific business support has been established through an extensive body of research, including that carried out recently for the NUWE⁶. In particular, Phase 2 of the recent NUWE research demonstrated through the primary research with pre-start and start-up women-owned businesses that the key barriers facing women attempting to start up a business relate mainly to the following areas:

- accessing start-up finance;
- know-how and information on financial aspects of business management;
- lack of confidence and belief in own abilities, including concerns about not being taken seriously; and
- a need for networking and mentoring to access peer support, reduce isolation and business development information.

With the exception of start-up finance, all of these barriers are clearly targeted by the Workshops and Networking events offered by SEEL through WIB.

The current study has not tested the existence of these market failure issues *per se*, but rather it has explored the extent to which the SEEL WIB support is helping women to overcome these barriers.

The findings show that women that have participated in the both the Workshops and Networking events have experienced benefits that suggest that they have begun to overcome some of the constraints affecting women at the pre-start stage. Feedback from the consultations and from participants provides strong evidence for the confidence and knowledge building impacts of the support. In particular, the Workshops demonstrated clear impacts on participants' overall levels of understanding of business issues, and had been successful in enabling participants to make clear and significant progress towards starting a business.

In addition, the most popular reasons for women wanting to participate in the WIB Workshop were to meet other women also starting their own business (81%) and to build confidence (78%). This is again largely in line with the issues raised by the NUWE study, which suggested that women require peer support and that they lack confidence and belief in their own abilities. Lack of business skills and experience also encouraged 66% and 59% to participate, respectively.

Therefore, our conclusion is that the WIB Workshops and Networking Programmes are addressing the key market failure issues affecting women's enterprise at the pre-start stage.

⁶ TERU (2003), *NUWE Research and Evaluation Programme, Phase 1* and EKOS (2004) *NUWE Research and Evaluation Programme, Phase 2*

However, the perceptions of women themselves regarding the type of service provision required to address their needs were more equivocal. While more than half of the women interviewed felt that the needs of women-owned businesses were different to those of men, only 30% of the sample felt that more women specific support should be available. In addition, the majority of the sample claimed that they would have attended the Workshops and/or Networking events even if they had not been women only. This finding contrasts slightly with the view expressed by the majority of the telephone sample that, with hindsight, the fact that the Workshops had been women only had been a major benefit, a view that is echoed in the feedback from the consultation programme.

In fact, the finding that so many women claimed that they would have attended the event regardless of the women only focus is less surprising than it may first appear, for two main reasons.

First, these are women that have *already* attended women-specific support and have reaped the benefits of that, including reported increases in their confidence and knowledge. As a result, they are *now* more likely to feel that mainstream support is more suited to their needs, and indeed many have progressed to mainstream support as discussed below.

Secondly, the recruitment process for the Workshops does suggest a degree of selective recruitment, with participants required to demonstrate real commitment to completing the course. As a result of this level of commitment, these participants are arguably more likely to be confident and, therefore, may feel less intimidated by mixed gender support.

In conclusion, the study supports the rationale for the SEEL Workshops and Networking Events, and it is clear that levels of client satisfaction are high. In addition, there is evidence to suggest that the Programmes are generating useful outcomes in terms of increased confidence and knowledge amongst participants. The combination of personal and business development activities is widely seen as a source of added value within the Programmes and these approaches appear to be well suited to meeting the needs of women at the pre-start stage.

6.3 Performance of the Programmes

A key element of the evaluation was to establish the performance of the Programmes in quantitative and qualitative terms.

6.3.1 Client Satisfaction

The evidence is very clear that levels of client satisfaction with both the Workshops and the Networking events are very high. This is demonstrated by the findings that:

- 86% of Workshop participants reported that they were satisfied/very satisfied with each element of the support;
- 78% reported increased confidence and 69% increased motivation to set up a business;
- at least 79% reported being satisfied/very satisfied with each element of the Networking events; and
- 64% of Networking participants reported increased motivation and 44% increased confidence.

There was particular praise for the content of the Workshops and for the Workshop trainer, and respondents felt that the courses had been well run, friendly and enjoyable. Workshop topics were considered to be relevant and provided realistic advice and support, and the supportive environment was also highly rated.

Therefore, the overall picture is one of high levels of client satisfaction, particularly for the Workshop provision.

6.3.2 Training and Learning Outcomes

The core purpose of training provision is to transfer learning to participants. The WIB Workshops performed well in this respect. In particular, 88% felt that the Workshops had provided them with a better understanding of business, and 59% reported being more aware of other sources of support. For the Networking events these impacts were also found, although to a lesser extent, which is unsurprising given the different focus of the activities.

However, the most compelling evidence of learning benefits comes from the comparison of participants' position with respect to starting a business prior to and after attending the Workshops. The Workshops had been successful in helping a significant proportion of the participants to make progress towards starting a business. It is therefore very difficult to see where improvements to the content of the workshops can be made. However, as highlighted in the NUWE study, many women find accessing start-up finance to be a problem, which is explained somewhat by a lack of confidence in approaching potential financiers both in the public and private sector, such as banks. Therefore, we have one recommendation for the content of the Workshops:

Recommendation 3:

The Workshop course should incorporate training with the specific aim of providing women with suitable skills and confidence to approach potential sources of finance.

6.3.3 Business Start-up

The ultimate aims of women's enterprise support should be about helping more women to establish successful new businesses. In this respect, it is our view that the WIB Programmes have had some success, with some very positive and encouraging signs.

Out of the sample of 84, a total of 25 women reported that they had gone on to set up businesses. Of this 25, 21 had participated in the Workshops. Therefore, from the sample of 32 women that had participated in the Workshops, 21 (66%) had set up a business, and a further four (13%) reported that they were planning to do so. On this basis, the findings are in line with those of the previous evaluation of the WMB Workshops carried out in 2002. This is an impressive record, especially considering the finding that **all** of the Workshop participants had made progress toward starting a business. In addition, 87% reported that the Workshops had been significant/very significant in helping them to start a business.

However, as raised in the consultations, the key measure here is not the absolute number of businesses started, but their survival rates. All but one of these 21 businesses were still trading at the time of data collection, and nine had been trading from more than 12 months with six trading from more than 18 months. While the number here are quite small, and the time elapsed between the support and this analysis is insufficient to allow more analysis of the survival rates of some of these businesses, the initial indications would appear to be quite positive.

Therefore, on the basis of this analysis, the WIB Workshops have a strong record in stimulating business start-ups with positive early signs for the sustainability of these businesses.

6.3.4 Additionality and Net Economic Impacts

While the gross impacts in terms of business starts appear to be positive, it is important in assessing the value for money offered by the WIB Programmes to take into account the level of additionality achieved by the support.

Economic impact calculations have not been provided for the Networking Events because it would not be expected that attendance at Networking Events would lead directly to economic impacts. Rather, we have focussed our impact calculations on the Workshop Programme as this support is more clearly aimed at the generation of impacts. Having said that, it is important to note that the Workshops are a training programme and as such their main purpose is not job creation.

The study collected direct impact data via the survey of Workshop participants. This survey also gathered information on levels of additionality and displacement associated with the support provided, and allowed the calculation of net impacts for the Workshops Programme. This analysis suggests that the number of net additional jobs created as a result of the WIB Workshops in the period January 2003 to January 2005, would be:

- **5 FTEs** at the Edinburgh and Lothian level; and
- **4.1 FTEs** at the Scottish level.

Although net employment generation appears to be low, the calculated cost per job of the Programme is £11,425 at the local level and £13,934 at the national level (total costs were £57,128.50). This compares favourably with European guidance suggesting that cost per job for new firm creation programmes should be £13,411.

Therefore, our conclusion is that the Workshops Programme offers good value for money in terms of its reported impacts.

However, it is important to note that the levels of additionality reported in the study were low. In other words, while 20 respondents reported impacts arising from the start up of their businesses, in 10 cases it was reported that these impacts would have occurred in the absence of the WIB Workshop support. In a further six cases, the WIB Workshops enabled women to start businesses quicker than they otherwise would, but only by a very short time span, and two cases reported scale additionality (they would have started a business but it would have been smaller). Therefore, of the 20 businesses that reported impacts, only 2 (10%) reported that these impacts would not have happened at all without the WIB support.

While the inconsistencies in the pattern of responses discussed in **Chapter 5** do suggest that non-additionality may have been overstated, it should also be noted that this confirms the view expressed by some of the consultees that the recruitment process effectively selects those women that are most likely to succeed. This is not necessarily a criticism. No workshop programme can afford to offer places to those that are unlikely to complete the course. However, it does raise a question. Is the WIB Workshops Programme targeting support at clients most in need?

The Workshops Programme is an intensive and focussed course that demands active participation and delivers clear benefits to participants. As such, it is not for everyone, and it is clear that the selection process has been a key factor in its success. However, if many of the women that do go on to set up businesses would have done

so without this support, then the partners should perhaps consider targeting training support at clients that are less certain in their ambitions.

This presents obvious challenges in terms of course design, recruitment and targeting and it is possible that the drop out rate could increase and the start up rate fall. Alternatively, there may be an opportunity for additional provision that builds demand for a more intensive course by encouraging those women with greater need to progress their business ideas and ambitions to a stage at which they can then participate effectively in the WIB Workshops. However, this would require a different kind of provision.

In addition to the low reported levels of additionality, the Workshop support also incurred high levels of displacement. Of the ten companies reporting additional impacts, seven were assessed as being in a high displacement group i.e. that support to that business would significantly displace business activity from other similar companies in the region.

This is consistent with the findings of other women's support programmes and is related to the kinds of businesses that women tend to establish (see **Chapter 2**). The current (and previous) research has demonstrated that women tend to set up businesses in lower growth and lower value added sectors of the economy (e.g. local service based activities). This then raises questions about the level of contribution that women-specific support can make to long-term economic growth in Scotland. In other words, if women-specific support mechanisms adopt a broad and inclusive approach, resources will be directed towards new start businesses at the lower ends of the growth spectrum. While this does not compromise the broader equal opportunities objectives of women specific support, it will inevitably dilute its contribution to the growth of the economy more generally.

In the case of the WIB Workshops and Networking activities this suggests the need for a more segmented approach to support, with the implication that the business ideas of women seeking support should be taken into account to a greater degree.

Recommendation 4:

The Workshops Programme should take into account the issues of displacement and additionality at the recruitment and selection stage of the Workshops.

In addition, the overall approach must influence and be influenced by appropriate targets. If the objectives of the Programmes are to focus on business creation then targets must be set appropriately.

Recommendation 5:

The target setting process must be aligned with the objectives of the Programmes and, for business creation objectives, targets should be set for the number of businesses set up following support and for survival rates at 18 months, 24 months and 36 months.

6.4 Integration with Other Support

The findings demonstrate high levels of integration between the Workshop and Networking Programmes, other women specific support and mainstream business development provision.

The active involvement of Business Gateway advisers in the Workshops and Networking events is key to this, as is the involvement of other support providers such as the local authorities and Chambers of Commerce. In addition, the involvement of

representatives of Micro-Credit, BIG and Business Mentoring Scotland has helped to raise awareness of further support and encourage participants to engage beyond the Workshops and Networking events.

The consultation feedback supported this, and there was a consistent view that the Programmes were well integrated and that referrals to and from the Programmes were working well. It was also noted that the Steering Group has helped to maintain this overview and prompted wider integration.

Feedback from participants also confirmed this general picture. 82% of participants reported accessing other forms of support, and 62% reported that their experience with the WIB programmes had encouraged them to do so. Of the other support accessed, almost all of this was mainstream rather than women specific, suggesting that beyond the start-up stage, women's support needs can be met through mainstream business support.

This is entirely appropriate, and suggests that the Workshops and Networking Programmes are effective in channelling women into more mainstream provision beyond pre-start support. Again, this finding is in line with those of the NUWE research, which argued that women specific support is most appropriately targeted at the pre start stages.

Therefore, our conclusion is that the Workshops and Networking Programmes are well integrated with other support, and in particular with Business Gateway, and that this is a key strength.

However, there was an issue raised with the Steering Group. While most consultees felt that the Group was effective and provided much needed co-ordination, there is a need to ensure that all of the partners are actively contributing and participating.

Recommendation 6:

The Steering Group works to ensure that all partners all fully engaged.

In addition, the Steering Group is currently chaired by Sheena Briley, the consultant responsible for the delivery of the Programmes. However, as the main funder for the programme, it is appropriate that SEEL now chairs this group.

Recommendation 7:

The Steering Group is chaired and managed by SEEL.

6.5 Further Recommendations

Taking into account all of the issues raised and discussed above, it is clear that the Workshops (and Networking) are delivering benefits to participants and are doing so in a cost effective manner. There is also strong evidence of ongoing demand and the Programmes are appropriately targeted at the key market failure issues affecting women's enterprise. Therefore, it is our view that provision should be continued.

Women's enterprise support is most needed and most appropriate at the pre-start stage, with the broad objective of encouraging more women to set up businesses. To this we would add a further objective, that of encouraging more women to set up more sustainable businesses.

Therefore, there is an ongoing need for support at the pre-start stage, and although the current support Programmes are clearly meeting this need, these are ongoing market failure issues. As one group of women overcome the barriers and constraints to setting up a business, another is waiting to do so. Therefore, SEEL has an ongoing

role to work with the local partners in this area, and the current support is delivering strong outputs against these objectives.

However, there are some important issues to consider. If additionality is to be improved, then women's enterprise support must reach those groups that are most in need of support. This requires greater diligence at the selection stage and appropriate signposting for those women that are going to start up anyway. It may be that this group are most appropriately dealt with through the mainstream provision of Business Gateway.

However, as mentioned, there may be merit in considering provision that can help to target women most in need of support such that they can be encouraged to progress their business ideas either through the WIB Workshops or through mainstream support.

The Business Gateway runs Think Plan Do Seminars and Workshops for pre-start businesses, and these workshops cover almost all of the same ground as the WIB Workshops (see **Appendix 1**). In addition, recent attendance figures show that more than half of the participants in the Think Plan Do Seminars and Workshops are women (based on January and February 2005). What is less clear is the extent to which the Think Plan Do Workshops have delivered to these participants, as no evaluation evidence is available.

However, it is worth considering the potential opportunity in aligning the women-specific workshops with the Think Plan Do product. However, in so doing, there are some important issues to consider:

- the women-only provision is delivering good results, and to a degree these are attributable to the fact that it is women-only;
- the current trainer has been instrumental in delivering a quality service and as she has decided not to continue with WIB, SEEL must consider how to handle succession;
- selective recruitment had meant that the WIB Workshops are capturing women that would start up their businesses anyway (thus reducing additionality) but is probably helping them to do so more effectively, creating better prospects for sustainability;
- some of the women that have participated in the WIB Workshops may be suited to mainstream rather than women-specific provision.

Therefore, we believe that women-only workshop support should continue, but that this could potentially be accommodated within the Think Plan Do product to ensure broad consistency with Business Gateway services. However, there are some important points to be made:

- provision of Think Plan Do Workshops for women should be women-only;
- Think Plan Do women-only Workshops should be delivered/led by a female trainer;
- the recruitment process should attempt to segment potential participants such that the women-only provision is targeted at those most in need. Women displaying greater confidence and willingness to progress their business idea could be directed towards mainstream Think Plan Do provision;

- the women-only Think Plan Do workshops should be tailored such that they take full account of some of the key issues facing women (as discussed earlier); and
- the wider involvement of other support providers in the Workshop sessions should be maintained.

In this way, the women-only provision can be targeted at those most in need, thereby improving the additionality of the Programme and addressing the key market failure issues identified earlier. Finally, it will be important to consider the branding issues. The evaluation has not examined the perceptions of the WIB brand, and shifting provision under the Think Plan Do brand might result in some losses in terms of wider brand recognition. This is an issue for the Steering Group to consider.

Recommendation 8:

The Workshops and Networking Events should be continued, although the Steering Group should now consider the potential opportunity of delivering women-only Workshop support within Think Plan Do.

While much of our discussion has related more to the Workshops, it is also worth considering the Networking Events in a little more detail. These were clearly perceived as useful and valuable by participants, and when asked about future support needs, networking was the most frequently mentioned area in which support would be required. Therefore, the Networking Events provide important ongoing support to start-up and existing businesses to the point at which they can exit to mainstream support. Managing this transition is crucially important and the Networking Events perform a valuable function in this respect.

Recommendation 9:

The Networking Events should continue to provide support to existing companies during the transition period between women specific and mainstream support, ensuring that exit is achieved at the appropriate time.

With respect to the Networking, a number of suggestions for improvement were made. In particular it was seen as critically important that the Networking Events remain well connected to both women specific and mainstream support and an increased Business Gateway presence is therefore recommended.

Recommendation 10:

Business Gateway should have a stand at every Networking Event to provide information on products and services

Appendix 1: Comparison Between WIB Workshop Content and Think Plan Do

Selection Procedure

The Think-Plan-Do (TPD) Programme involves a series of Seminars and Workshops primarily for people who are thinking about starting their own business. The Seminars are open to anyone *thinking* about starting a business, whereas the workshops are designed for people ready for action. This 'selective' recruitment is also evident in the WIB Workshops. Both Programmes run Workshops in Edinburgh, Midlothian, East Lothian and West Lothian.

The TPD Programme Workshops last for three hours, with the WIB Workshops taking place over two hours. This in itself is an issue that may have to be addressed. Although only an extra hour, there maybe some issues regarding childcare. East Lothian participants preferred the nine-week course as opposed to the twelve-week as they felt that getting childcare for 12 weeks would be problematic.

Readiness for Self-Employment

At the very first Workshop, both Programmes provide participants with the opportunity to assess their own suitability for self-employment, the potential highlights and pitfalls as well as creating their own personal action plan.

At the WIB workshop there is the opportunity to meet a representative from the Information Centre at Business Gateway. It is not clear whether this is also the case for the TPD Workshops, however, it is very useful to inform participants of the support available to them.

Communicating the Message

Communicating the Message is the theme for the second Workshop of the WIB Programme. This workshop investigates ways in which women communicate, the message that they wish to portray, selling skills and the presentation of their products and also themselves. This focuses on the '30 second commercial' and the 'business script'. This is arguably incorporated into the WIB Workshops to overcome the confidence barrier that many women face, and may be wise to retain for women-specific TPD Workshops (some 47% reported that they were better able to communicate their business ideas and plans to others following the Workshops).

Time Management

As with 'Communicating the Message', a time and stress management is unique to the WIB Workshop Programme. This looks ahead at the potential shape of the working year in self-employment, and ways to manage time, stress and themselves. Emphasis is on planning, strategy and achieving business goals. This again, is arguably more beneficial to women as they traditionally have more responsibilities in terms of family and running households. Although this has changed throughout the years, there is little doubt that within the majority of families women remain the major carer and therefore have more limits on their time to work extra hours and weekends than their male counterparts. Some consideration must be given to the effect that this may have if not covered in TPD.

Marketing and Market Research

Both Workshop Programmes cover the topics of Marketing and Market research. The WIB Programme splits this into two distinct workshops – the first on 'Market Research' and the second on 'Marketing your Product and Selling Skills', with the TPD Workshop covering both in the one Workshop (Workshop number two). However, as the TPD workshops last for 3 hours and the WIB Workshops 2 hours, the TPD may cover all necessary aspects within the time. Furthermore, the 9-week Workshop Sessions in West Lothian and East/Midlothian only undertake one workshop on this issue, suggesting one 3-hour workshop may suffice. That said, the research revealed that a third of WIB Workshop attendees stated that they would require some marketing support in the future, supporting the opinion that cutting back too much on this topic is not advisable.

Money Management/Finance

Financial management and planning is a key issue highlighted as a barrier to women starting their own business. Therefore, it is no surprise that the WIB Workshop Programme dedicates two workshops to this in Edinburgh. A further workshop in Edinburgh is dedicated to VAT, tax and insurance. These three workshops (6 hours of training), compare to one workshop (3 hours) under the TPD scheme. This may need to be addressed in TPD to meet the needs of women.

What is interesting is that although financial management is seen as a barrier to women's enterprise, only one two hour workshop in East Lothian and in West/Mid Lothian is dedicated to this. However, it is argued that there is other support provision in the local areas to assist with this element of business start-up. These issues will need to be investigated further in order to make an informed decision regarding the time that should be dedicated to any Women-specific TPD Workshop Programme.

Business Planning

Business Planning is covered in two workshops in all geographic areas in which the WIB Programme operates. The first is entitled 'Introduction to Business Planning' and the second 'Developing the Business'. In total four hours is dedicated to this issue. Currently within TPD the third workshop is dedicated to this, a total of 3 hours. A decision has to be made as to whether three hours as opposed to four will suffice.

E-Business

E-business is covered in one Workshop of the WIB Programme. It gives women the opportunity to look at how adopting e-business tools, even in the very smallest business, can mean more efficient, effective and cost effective ways of working. This workshop also invites a representative from the Chamber of Commerce, which has been revealed to be a source of business support for women. The TPD does not address this issue directly, however, there may be support within the wider Business Gateway remit. That said, it has to be considered that some women might not access this mainstream support.

The Future: Revisiting Goals

The final Workshop within WIB gives women the chance to look back at the progress made over the Workshop Programme, to assess goals for the short, medium and long term, and the importance of planning. The full title of the TPD is Think-Plan-Do-Review, and it is within the last section that the review of goals takes place.

Summary

It can be argued that there is a large degree of fit between the WIB Programme of Workshop and the TPD Programme. However, given the reported benefits of the WIB Workshops (78% have started or are planning to start a business and 88% have a better understanding of business issues), it is sensible to investigate areas of good practice.

The 'Communicating the Message' and 'Time Management' Workshops may have to be incorporated into the TPD to meet the needs of women. Furthermore, from the beneficiary survey marketing has been identified as an area where future support may be required, despite extensive coverage in the WIB Workshops. Therefore cutting this to suit the TPD timeframe may not be justifiable. The difference in time spent on Business Planning and the fact that e-business is not covered at all in TPD, must also be reviewed in detail before developing a TPD Programme to suit women.

Finally, another advantage of the WIB workshops is the use of speakers from other support organisations e.g. Chamber of Commerce and Business Gateway to inform women of other support available. Evidence from the beneficiary survey has shown that this has been very effective in encouraging women to seek this other support. Perhaps this too should be incorporated into the TPD Programme.