

Saskatchewan Women Entrepreneurship Charter

About the Women Entrepreneurship Charter

The [Women Entrepreneurship Charter](#) is an initiative launched by Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan (WESK) to address the gender entrepreneurship gap in our province. The charter is comprised of four principles to provide guidance and examples as to how you and your organization can best support local women-owned businesses.

From the principles below, we recommend that your organization establish targets to increase your engagement with and support of women-owned Saskatchewan businesses that are in alignment with your organizational objectives.

Preamble

The Saskatchewan Women Entrepreneurship Charter serves as a catalyst to inspire and empower organizations to adopt new practices and adapt current practices to be more inclusive. WESK recognizes that many organizations currently possess defined targets, while for others, the procurement targets proposed may be a challenge. The purpose of the Charter is to encourage achievement of defined targets where feasible and delineate incremental increases in existing targets/practices where appropriate. We encourage all organizations to lead, plan, and execute intentionally and strategically with these guiding principles.

Background

In May of 2019, the Government of Saskatchewan announced the creation of the WESK-led Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on the Gender Entrepreneurship Gap. The Committee had a mandate to advise on strategies, policies, and activities to level the playing field for Saskatchewan women entrepreneurs. The work of the Committee began in September 2019 and concluded in July 2020 with the release of their final report of recommendations entitled [Enabling Scale in Saskatchewan](#).ⁱ

The report includes 10 recommendations, one of which was to launch a charter to build a pool of champions in support of women entrepreneurs. A full list of recommendations can be found in the report.

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

Criteria of Women-Owned Business

For the purposes of the Charter, women-owned business is defined as follows:

- Majority woman-owned (greater than 50%)
- Woman-owner must be a Saskatchewan resident
- Business must be operating in Saskatchewan

Why Support Women Entrepreneurs?

Women entrepreneurs are major contributors of economic growth and job creation. In 2019, women entrepreneurs contributed \$23.1 billion to the Saskatchewan economy and created 191,836 jobs.ⁱⁱ Yet, research indicates women entrepreneurs encounter unique barriers that hinder full participation in growing the wealth of our province. By understanding and addressing the unique barriers that women entrepreneurs encounter, we can enhance opportunities to scale businesses and boost economic growth in our province.

How to Participate

We are seeking progressive organizations and individuals with a commitment to advancing gender parity and equality, through economic activity to sign on as champions.

Participating organizations will receive:

- Opportunity to be celebrated through a new, annual award recognizing a company that is demonstrating exceptional Charter commitment and action.
- A 'Champion of Women-Owned Saskatchewan Business' brand kit to identify yourself as a Charter Champion (includes a digital badge and certificate of participation).
- A 'Champion of Women-Owned Saskatchewan Business' certificate to display your commitment.
- Be showcased on the WESK Charter Champion webpage.

Principle 1: Procure with Her

We know that landing that next contract keeps a woman entrepreneur's cash flow strong and her ability to keep growing real. With this in mind, we recommend establishing a baseline for procurement from women-owned Saskatchewan businesses.

Principle 1 Recommendation: 5% - 15% of total procurement from women-owned Saskatchewan businesses.

- As a minimum, we suggest the final target should be no less than 5% of your total procurement or funding. We acknowledge that this may take many years depending on your starting point and the access to women-owned suppliers in your industry in Saskatchewan. We encourage you to start implementing incremental increases to grow this number. As a minimum we would encourage you to strive for 5% within 5 years. If 5% is attainable sooner, we would recommend that you strive to increase your annual target by 25% as you strive to hit the 5% - 15% marker.

Examples:

- Create a commitment and scale up your organizational targets for the next 5 years around procurement from, or funding to, women-owned Saskatchewan businesses.
- Choose to support her first when purchasing staff gifts, gift cards or corporate merchandise.
- Review procurement guidelines and processes organizationally every two years. Ensure they are inclusive and are set up to allow her to bid on and win contracts.
 - Note: Consider the profile of women entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan when reviewing your procurement guidelines. See "Profile of Women Entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan" below.
- Advocate for gender diversity in the supply chain.
- Advocate for diversity through sub-contractor spend.

Principle 2: Amplify Her Voice

We know that giving a women entrepreneur the opportunity to broaden her customer base through co-promotion, recognition, and accelerator programs will give her the boost she needs to scale her business. It may even help her push past that next hurdle.

Principle 2 Recommendation: Leverage your networks to amplify awareness of women-owned Saskatchewan businesses.

Examples:

- Share your “Champion of Women-Owned Saskatchewan Businesses” badge to raise awareness for this charter and for closing the gender entrepreneurship gap.
- Sponsor or create an award, recognition program, or grant for her.
- Find ways, organizationally, to help promote or bring awareness to her through your social media channels, newsletter, or organizational events.
- Partner with her on an event, product, or service offering, etc., to give her a broader platform to grow her customer base.

Principle 3: Share Skills with Her

We know that learning from experienced business professionals and established entrepreneurs, both male and female with diverse backgrounds, will help her in shaping her own business strategy. Your experience, your advice, and your mistakes could be a game-changer for helping her succeed in her entrepreneurial journey.

Principle 3 Recommendation: Look for ways in which your experience or subject matter expertise could be utilized to mentor her.

Examples:

- Mentor her through local programs.
- Create your own program through which senior staff in your organization could mentor her.
- Assess your internal skills, competencies, and best practices. Find a way to invite her in and have her learn from your organization.

Principle 4: Shatter a Ceiling

We know that access to networks and making connections is one of the most powerful tools for her to advance her business.

Principle 4 Recommendation: Invite her into your networks to allow her to build meaningful business connections.

Examples:

- Extend her an invitation into business-focused groups.
- Ask her to speak to a group, club, or organization you belong to.
- Connect her to people or opportunities that you are aware of.
- Recruit her to your board to create a diversity of experience, skills, and networks.

“Investing in Saskatchewan women entrepreneurs is not just the right thing to do, it’s the smart thing to do.”
– *Prabha Mitchell, CEO of WESK*

Ready to sign up? Visit wesk.ca/sk-women-entrepreneurship-charter/

But Why Stop Here?

Check out these other fantastic initiatives below.

- The 50/30 Diversity Challenge: <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/icgc.nsf/eng/07706.html>
- The UN's Women's Empowerment Principles: <https://www.weps.org/about>

Appendix

Profile of Women-Owned Saskatchewan Businessesⁱⁱⁱ

- Women lead 44% of businesses with 0 employees, and 34% of businesses with at least 1 employee
- Women are less likely to lead a business as the size of the business increases
- Women are more likely to be in the health care, social assistance, national security, and finance and insurance industries
- Women led businesses tend to be more labour-intensive and less capital intensive
- Women-led businesses are relatively more likely to be organized in the form of partnerships, public sector organizations, non-profit and unincorporated entities. 95% of men-led businesses are incorporated (private/publicly traded), compared to 88% of women-led businesses.
- 57% of women entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan are solo entrepreneurs
- 36% of women entrepreneurs have 2-10 employees

Related WESK Resources

- Women Entrepreneurship in Saskatchewan Report: <https://wesk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/WESK-Women-Entrepreneurship-in-Saskatchewan-Report-2020.pdf>
- Enabling Scale in Saskatchewan Report: https://wesk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Enabling-Scale-in-Saskatchewan_July_27.pdf

ⁱ Enabling Scale in Saskatchewan. Prepared by WESK on July 27, 2020. https://wesk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Enabling-Scale-in-Saskatchewan_July_27.pdf

ⁱⁱ Women Entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan Economic Statistics. Prepared for WESK by PwC May 20, 2020, pg., 38. <https://wesk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/WESK-Women-Entrepreneurship-in-Saskatchewan-Report-2020.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ COVID-19 Small Business Assessment Survey. Created by WESK April 7, 2020.