



# Fact Sheet

## Women's Enterprise Centre

Women play an important role in the creation and operation of small businesses across Canada, yet they often face barriers and a lack of support. To help remove these barriers, Western Economic Diversification Canada established the Women's Enterprise Initiative to provide business information and services to women entrepreneurs. In British Columbia, the Women's Enterprise Centre (WEC) provides the services made available through this initiative. WEC provides complimentary business counseling, resource information and referrals, business-to-business linking and a variety of innovative training programs for aspiring and existing women entrepreneurs.

The goal of WEC is to ensure entrepreneurship is viewed as a valuable option for women of all ages and to ensure women have access to capital and services that could assist them in the development of their businesses.

Over the past ten years, over 30,000 women in B.C. have benefited from WEC services, including business advice, loans and skills training. In ten years, the Women's Enterprise Centre of B.C. has:

- Provided over \$7.5 million in direct financing to women-owned businesses in BC;
- Assisted 166 existing businesses grow or stabilize through additional loans, training and/or counseling;
- Accommodated nearly 11,000 women in over 1000 workshops and seminars to improve their business skills;
- Helped eliminate barriers by increasing access to information and resources and by referring clients to complementary services; and
- Remained current with changing needs of women entrepreneurs and responded to changes by consistently evaluating, adding and revising programs and services.

Women's Enterprise Centre invests in enterprising women in BC with loans of all sizes, up to \$100,000, repayable over anywhere from a few months to a maximum of five years. Over 22% of the loans provided to WEC clients have helped to secure funding from other lenders and program providers. Unlike banks or other funding providers, WEC BC loans are accompanied ongoing business coaching and training.

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