Evaluation of W-Power

Report for

Highlands and Islands Enterprise

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frontline

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1.1   The W-Power Programme (W-Power)

W-Power was a North Periphery and Arctic programme which aimed for equal growth and increase in the contribution of women to regional economy in sparsely populated Northern and Artic communities, as women leaving the North is one of the main challenges to beat in these areas. All project partner regions suffer from similar challenges caused by peripherality, creating a strong argument for transnational cooperation.

Project objectives included the capacity building of women entrepreneurs, improvement of gender- related business advisory services, and encouragement for self-employment in sparsely populated communities. Development work of W-Power was based on actual needs, joint collaboration and close engagement with key stakeholders in a quadrupole helix manner.

W-Power was a 65% ERDF funded Northern Periphery and Arctic (NPA) project piloting new approaches to supporting women running businesses in remote rural areas. HIE participated in the project from September 2018 through to the end of August 2021, working with partners in Finland, Sweden, Iceland, Republic of Ireland and Canada. In Scotland, delivery focused in the HIE Argyll and the Islands area. A February 2021 report, on behalf of the new voluntary W-Power Management Group, noted an extension in the geographic boundaries of W-Power to include similar remote areas in the wider HIE area which resulted in two new members.

An SME project partner (Pure Energy Centre) working independently of HIE delivered the project in Shetland. HIE had two associate partners (Scottish Islands Federation and Scottish Rural College in Dumfries) whose role was to support implementation of the project activities and whose members benefitted from the project outputs. HIE's financial contribution to the project was budgeted at £96,313 against total project costs of £239,140[1]; with the main project cost being the salary and other costs relating to the full-time project manager who was employed by HIE until June 2021.

The W-Power Programme comprised the following four work packages, with a focus on remote and sparsely populated communities:

- improving the regional business environment for women
- transnational learning
- gender-sensitive coaching
- creating an innovation platform for new pre-start-ups

Creating business networks to support women was a strand of W-Power's programme delivered by HIE. HIE opted to deliver the majority of this support online and this became particularly important from early 2020 with the onset of COVID-related constraints.

A baseline study for the project conducted by HIE identified a consistent pattern across the partner regions participating in the Programme. It found that:

- there are fewer women entrepreneurs than men across all partner regions
- women are more likely to be part-time entrepreneurs than men and to work in lower value sectors
- there are differences in the typical motivation, aspirations, attitudes and preferences of men and women entrepreneurs; and the typical characteristics of enterprises run by men and by women

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[1] Appraisal Paper NPA Project – W-Power Final (HMS Project ID: 9364866) – as at May 2018 exchange rates

- these differences mean that women face a range of particular challenges which impact on their ability to access relevant finance and business support and the benefits gained from role models, networks and mentoring
- women are more likely to experience negative impact from unconscious bias, cultural assumptions and stereotyping

1.2   HIE's objectives for the W-Power Programme

HIE's main interest in participating in W-Power was to support female entrepreneurship, piloting a new approach with a longer-term view of generating economic impacts in Argyll and the Islands with a focus on:

- increasing entrepreneurship rates, particularly of younger people
- increasing productivity in existing businesses by increasing the adoption of workplace innovations and new business models
- enhancing the capability of business support providers to address the specific needs of women (as well as men)
- contributing towards population retention and the sustainability of rural communities

1.3   The objectives of this evaluation

The evaluation, through consultation with Programme participants, HIE's programme manager and stakeholders focussed on:

- the extent to which Programme objectives have been achieved in the HIE area
- the activities that have been carried out for participants' potential benefits – regionally and internationally
- the Programme elements that have worked well and those that might have been more effective (though the COVID-19 pandemic has constrained travel and international collaboration in the latter stage of the Programme)
- how the Programme might be sustained and built on in Argyll and the Islands, and the experience used to enhance female entrepreneurial support in other parts of the HIE area (particularly in rural and remote areas and in relation to young people)

2 Background to W-Power

2.1 Overview of W-Power

The overall W-Power Programme comprised four work packages, each with a different lead organisation as follows:

WP1: HIE – Improvement of regional business environment
WP2: Strukturum – Transnational learning - women entrepreneurs – Peer to Peer Networking Programme
WP3: WestBic – Gender-sensitive business advisor coaching concept
WP4: Karelia – Innovation platform for new pre-start-ups

A description of what was involved in each work package including HIE's role is presented below, and a summary of the detailed activities aligned with each work-package is presented in Appendix 1.

2.1.1 *Work Package 1 – improvement of regional business environment*

Work Package 1 included a literature review and research which lay the groundwork for the rest of the programme. HIE's delivery across Work Package 1 comprised three core strands:

- Comparative baseline study – women's entrepreneurship
- Mapping of regional business support and innovation platforms
- Thematic seminar

HIE consulted with partners and built up an evidence base which was used in the development of subsequent work packages. An infographic summarising the key findings of the research is provided in Appendix 2.

2.1.2 *Work Package 2 – the Peer2Peer Networking Programme*

The Peer2Peer (P2P) Networking Programme, led by Strukturum, was a transnational exchange programme between women entrepreneurs in sparsely populated regions. Based on information (needs) in the application forms, applicants were matched in pairs or, occasionally, in teams. In the peer-to-peer networking activity, each P2P pair/team:

- develops a **'learning workplan'** before the exchange takes place – the plan is a tool to help managing expectations, responsibilities, documentation and learning activities
- **visits** a peer women entrepreneur in another partner country
- **hosts** a peer women entrepreneur from another partner country

The P2P networking process

1. Application
2. Matching
3. Contracting
4. P2P networking
5. Evaluation Reporting
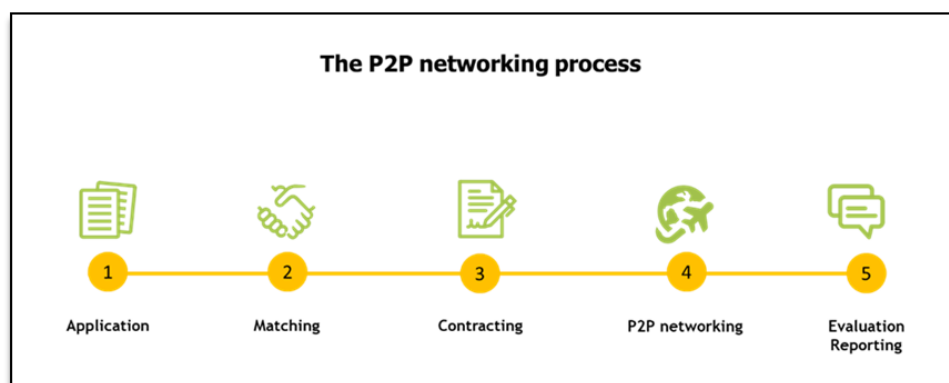
HIE recruited five women to participate in international peer learning exchanges, this included one Scottish participant from outside the HIE region. In November 2019 there was a thematic seminar in Sweden to bring those attending together to exchange experience and learning and some members from the Highlands and Islands attended.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the transnational reach of W-Power was hampered, with the proposed one-to-one peer learning journeys suspended following initial matching.

2.1.3   Work Package 3 – Gender-sensitive business advisor coaching concept

Work Package 3, led by WestBic, was a gender sensitive advisor coaching concept and comprised three core activities:

- benchmarking and best practice
- coaching pilot
- thematic seminar (virtual)

"In Autumn 2020, HIE participated in piloting a toolkit developed by W-Power Irish project partners WestBIC, to support the delivery of more gender-sensitive business support. The *W-Power Gender-Sensitivity in Coaching, Training and Mentoring Toolkit* provided a range of tools to help businesses and organisations develop and maintain cycles of continuous improvement to evolve their products and services to be more gender-sensitive. The toolkit is intended to help support female entrepreneurs in remote, rural areas in the following ways:

- ensure coaching, mentoring and training support provision is provided in a more 'gender-equal' way
- share transnational benchmarks, best practices and findings from the latest research
- help remove barriers and lower the threshold for rural women to consider entrepreneurship as an option

2.1.4   Work Package 4 – Innovation platform for new pre-startups

Work Package 4, delivered by Karelia, is an innovation platform developed for new pre-startups which was created and piloted during the project. The platform consists of a clearly defined structure, design and code of conduct, which makes it easily transferable to different frameworks. The platform was especially suitable for knowledge intensive businesses and was designed to raise the interest of women of all ages to start their own business in sparsely populated communities.

HIE was involved in supporting an innovation pitching competition which could help up to five businesses to develop new projects through its new online innovation platform. The platform was open to businesswomen and teams led by women from around the Arctic fringe. Seven companies from the Highlands and Islands entered, two of which were shortlisted and received €2k to develop their projects. The two companies[2] and their projects were:

- **Company 1** – a company offering horse-back holidays in the Campbeltown area. The funding allowed them to travel to Bulgaria and participate in a weeklong training camp in the Bulgarian School of Horseback Archery. They have now trained their staff and horses, achieved certification from the British Horseback Archery Association and have rolled out the new product. While affected by COVID-19, the company continue to increase its product offering and expand their existing business.

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[2] Companies names removed.

"The results have been very beneficial to our business. Not only have we achieved all the steps we have set out to achieve by this stage, but our confidence in our ability and the ability of our horses has grown significantly. Our ideas of exactly what this new product will now look like have been focused to something which we think will be well received by customers and which we are excited to begin to promote."

- **Company 2** – a skincare company that specialise in effective functional products for athletes that are designed and made using sustainable ingredients and methods. The money awarded to them through the innovation competition allowed them to launch in February 2020, including setting up a shopify website as well an active social media presence. The company planned to apply for EDGE funding to further develop the business.

In addition to the innovation platform, WP4 also included Innovation Week, which ran from the 19th to the 21st of October 2020 and included eight innovation-themed events over the three days.

2.2 W-Power activities including the Slack Network

Across all work packages HIE delivered a total of 80 meetings which were held between October 2018 and May 2021 – these were run online since March 2020. Meetings were held in a number of locations, including Bute, Oban, Lochgilphead, Dunoon, and Inveraray. The meetings had various purposes, for example:

- The Bute and Dunoon meetings were opportunities for the Project Manager to promote W-Power and meet local businesses – the events were organised by others.
- In Oban and Lochgilphead the Project Manager participated in these groups to build relationships with local women in business as well as recruiting businesses to the project.
- The Inveraray event was an educational and networking event for project participants with international partners.

There was also a 'trade show' in Edinburgh where W-Power was promoted as an example of HIE typical work.

The Slack Network (which formed a significant part of the project's delivery) is an online platform which hosts a wide range of events and activities. The main week-to-week activities in the network were a Wednesday coffee chat and Friday Zooms. There were a range of channels where members could post information and discuss different topics and themes. When the project was fully funded, two to three webinars and other online events were held per month. As the funding reduced this decreased to one per month.

When new members joined the group they were added to the "#welcome channel" where existing members post friendly messages to welcome them and provide hints and tips for finding their way around Slack.

The core elements and channels within Slack are summarised below:

- #events channel: where Slack Network advertise and provide links for any live webinars been run. It is also used to link to information about other events which may be of interest to members eg Business Gateway webinars.
- #back catalogue live events: where the Slack Network posts information about webinars held and recorded, along links to the sessions on YouTube, where webinars are stored in private channels.
- #help me out channel: where members can post questions they need help with, eg looking for a recommendation, asking for advice on how to do something, product recommendations or even mentoring support.

- <u>#member promotions channel:</u> an area for women to post about the products/services they offer through their business.
- <u>Wednesday typed Coffee Chat:</u> held at 10.30am every Wednesday, members come together in the #coffee_break channel in Slack and type chat in real time about what is happening in their world; quirky news, fun stuff ie the type of informal chat you might have if you were having a coffee with a friend. This was a well-established slot that regularly attracted between 4 and 8 people.
- <u>Friday zoom Coffee Chat:</u> held at 10.30am every Friday, a zoom call was started which members accessed through the #events channel in Slack for face-to-face informal chat. The idea was to bring a coffee and have *"a blether"* with whoever turns up. During lockdown these were held on Mondays and Fridays, regularly attracting five to six members as each session.

Other channels included:

- #blether
- #reading_list
- #wins_for_the_week
- #social_media_and_websites
- #marketing_and_sales
- #financincing_your_business

The Management Group also had a private channel on the Slack platform where they discussed management issues and shared information. Individual members also had access to one-to-one direct messaging within the Slack workspace.

Appendix 3 lists the range of events and the areas of remote access. It covered the period from January to October 2020 and demonstrates the categories of events that have been held and participant numbers, across live and online events.

2.3 Comparable programmes

From our review of provision and consultation with HIE, there are (or have been) only a few programmes which are comparable to W-Power or provide other mechanisms for women to interconnect in rural areas. The following table provides an overview of four comparators; two of which are in Ireland.

Programme and Objectives	Programme overview
Realise – Orkney [3] Business Gateway Orkney (in conjunction with Orkney-based Catalyst Collective)	This programme began in April 2019 and has been open and free to any Orkney based female business owners or entrepreneurs who: • want to create positive change in their business, through growth, sustainability, profitability, or better business-life balance • want some help to turn goals into reality • feel excited and energised by working in a group of other women entrepreneurs • can commit to attending the programme's workshops, and engaging, reflecting and experimenting between sessions Participants join a group of 8-10 women business owners and entrepreneurs in six 3-hour coaching sessions across a period of 8 months. The topics covered in the peer coaching sessions are tailored to the groups' needs and could include: • connecting with purpose • big picture planning • managing overwhelm and productivity • networking • self-promotion • authenticity

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[3] https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/catalyst-collective/BG+Realise+Brochure+.pdf

Programme and Objectives	Programme overview
	A similar programme was run in Shetland. This was delivered in partnership between The Pure Energy Centre, W Power, Shetland Business Gateway and Orkney based consultancy Niteo Development. The programme ran from October 2020 to April 2021, with a group of 8 women from Shetland's Mainland and isles. [4]
ACORNS programme[5]	The ACORNS programme has been designed to support early-stage female entrepreneurs living in rural Ireland and runs over six months part-time. To qualify for consideration for the programme, the entrepreneur must: • be female • have recently set up a new business which she owns, or part owns • be at an advanced stage of planning a new venture and have a clear idea of what she wants to achieve • be living outside the administrative city boundaries of Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick, and Waterford The programme is provided free for the participants and has been funded under the CEDRA 2015 Rural Innovation and Development Fund by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The most recent completed programme (Acorns 6) had 42 participants.
WREN – Women's Rural Entrepreneurship Network[6]	WREN, which has been co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Social Fund, is an on-line business programme which focuses on training and mentoring for women who wish to become self-employed or who are already in the early stages of business development. The programme modules include: • personal development • practical business skills training • one-to-one mentoring with a subject matter expert • female "role model" sharing of experience and support • facilitated networking sessions • on-line learning supports The next WREN Programme will focus on art, craft and design.
Developing Rural Women's Entrepreneurship - Rural Business Women[7] (2003-2006)	The aim of the project was to focus on the development of the inhabitants and entrepreneurs in rural areas, especially female small-scale entrepreneurs and tourism businesses in Northern Peripheral areas. The areas involved were Scotland, Sweden, Iceland, and Finland. The main function of the transnational project was to sustain the local economy and create employment possibilities for rural entrepreneurs in nature and tourism businesses, and related areas, by promoting female entrepreneurship and providing support for the establishment of local businesses. Participants in Scotland were: • Moray College, Nairn Learning Centre *(now closed)* • Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Authority • Scottish Agricultural College

Prior to W-Power, Argyll had an Oban Women in Business Group (which held events and networked) and a creative industries network. Also, Kate MacDonald, who latterly became a member of W-Power's volunteer management team as the project was transitioning to being self-led, started WRENS (a different organisation to the Irish WREN summarised above), which is predominantly Mid-Argyll focused and holds 6-8 Zoom meetings per month, with a mailing list of c90 women. It was started four years ago as a face-to-face network pre-pandemic to get and share advice.

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[4] https://www.shetnews.co.uk/2021/08/11/support-programme-for-female-entrepreneurs-gets-positive-feedback/
[5] https://acorns.ie/
[6] https://www.secad.ie/supporting-female-entrepreneurship/
[7] https://keep.eu/projects/1148/Developing-Rural-Woman-s-Ent-EN/

Other women's business organisations and groups in Scotland include:

- **Experts in Residence** – a new Royal Bank of Scotland programme designed to encourage more women to launch their own business.
- **Highland Business Women** – a networking organisation which has an annual awards ceremony and provides mentoring support.
- **Business Women Scotland** (formed 12 years ago) – which also hosts annual awards and provides a mentoring programme, produces a monthly digital magazine, provides networking opportunities, and runs roadshow events.
- **Women's Enterprise Scotland** (WES) – established in 2011 to create a voice for female-owned enterprises in Scotland and to promote policy and best practice which allows women to start up and grow their own businesses (with funds administered by Lantra).
- **Women in Agriculture Scotland** – which has tackled the issues raised in the 2017 Women in Farming & Agriculture report, including training targeted at the needs of women.
- **Female Founder Squad** – launched in 2021 by an entrepreneur from her home office in Stonehaven, which offers tools to help women build and scale their businesses.
- **Women Rocking Business Helensburgh and Lomond** – a self-support group who meet twice yearly.
- **The Association of Scottish Businesswomen** – founded in 1995 as an umbrella organisation for a number of businesses women's clubs and offering direct membership throughout Scotland.
- **BAWE Scotland** – an arm of the British Association of Women Entrepreneurs for entrepreneurs with growing ambitions.
- **Moray Business Women** – established in 2006, and with over 90 business and professional women members, it promotes networking and has monthly meetings over supper.

There are also programmes that women can participate in for a charge, eg Women in Business – London Business School (£3,300 for a 5 week online programme), and Oxford Women's Leadership Development Programme (£2,200 for a six week online course).

3   Participant Feedback

W-Power comprised a network of 70 women from across Argyll and Bute, of whom 42 were contacted to inform the evaluation. We consulted 25 women (a 60% response rate) who had participated to varying degrees across W-Power's range of activities. In addition, the HIE Area Manager for Argyll and the Islands provided a note of the views of a number of other women. These are included below in the quotes, in the section summary and are taken into account in the conclusions.

3.1   Sector

The vast majority of respondents (23, 92%) identified their business sector; three highlighted two sectors. Most were in tourism (7) followed by food and drink (4) and health and wellbeing (4). The spread of sectors is presented in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Sectoral overview

N=23
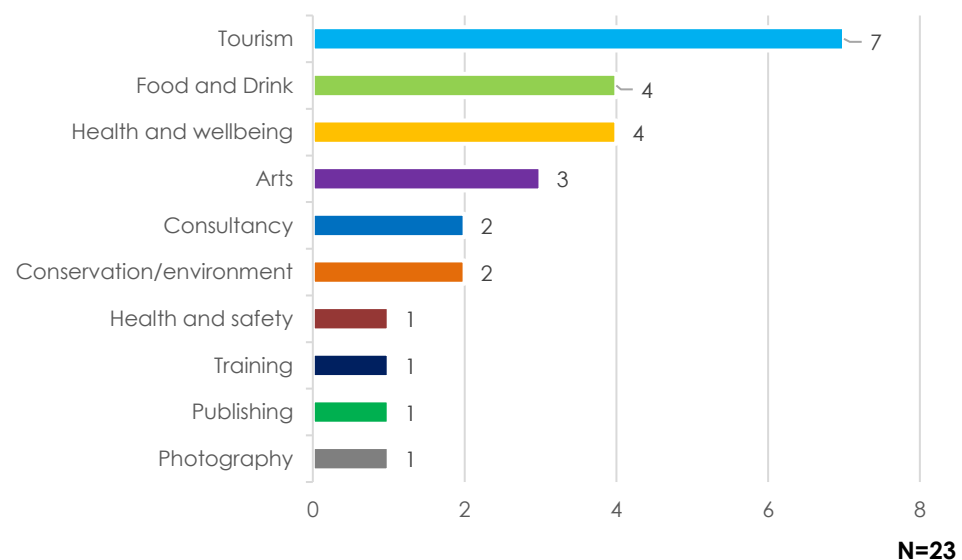
3.2   Business status and economic activity

Two thirds of respondents (14, 70%) were self-employed or sole traders. The remainder either had employees or contractors. Most (8, 38%) stated that they had additional employment which included being a landlord or have part time work including consultancy.

Figure 3.2: Business status

■ Self-employed/sole trader ■ Business with employees or contractors

N=21

9
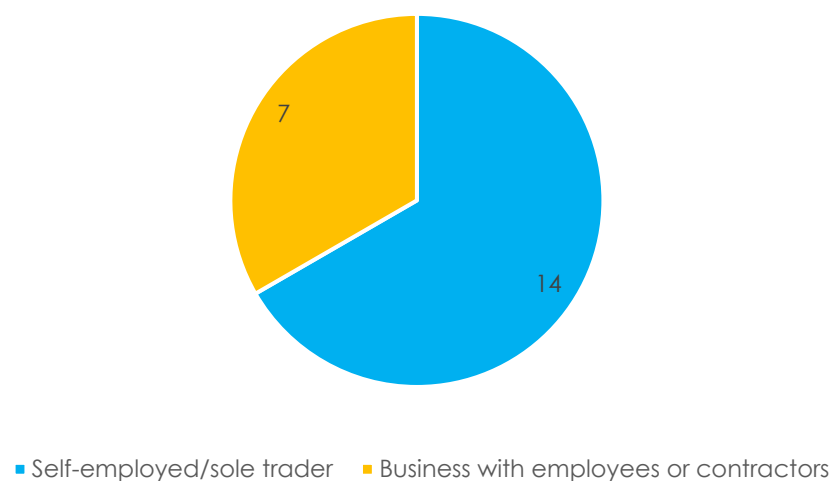
3.3   How participants first heard about W-Power and the Slack Network

Most respondents became heard of the W-Power/Slack Network through a local networking group (8, 40%) or a HIE communication (4, 20%). Figure 3.3 presents the results.

Figure 3.3: Awareness of W-Power/Slack Network

N=20
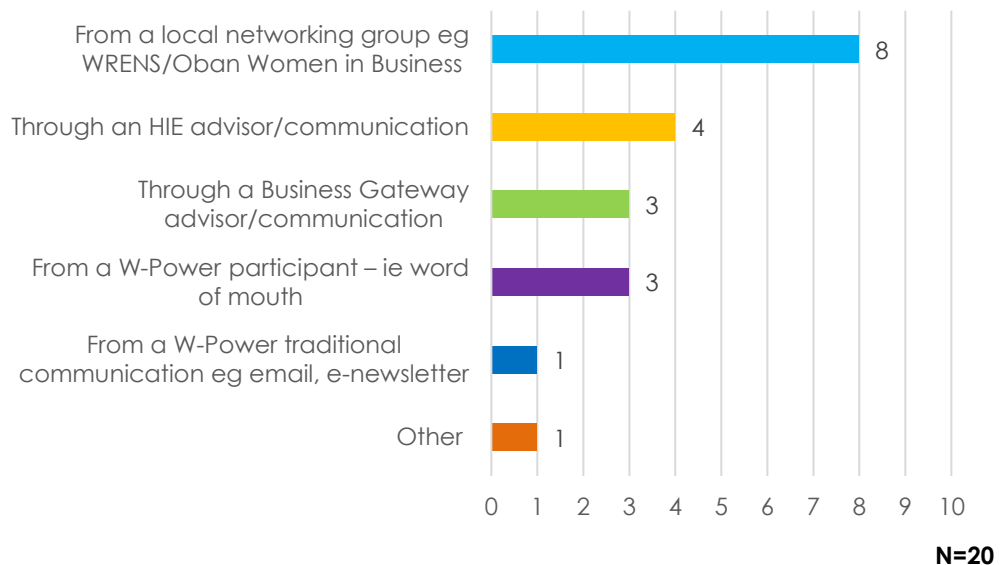
3.4   Involvement in W-Power and wider public sector support

The majority of respondents (11, 58%) had attended a few events/activities, including those accessed online afterwards. Figure 3.4 presents the results.

Figure 3.4: Involvement in W-Power Events/Activities

N=19
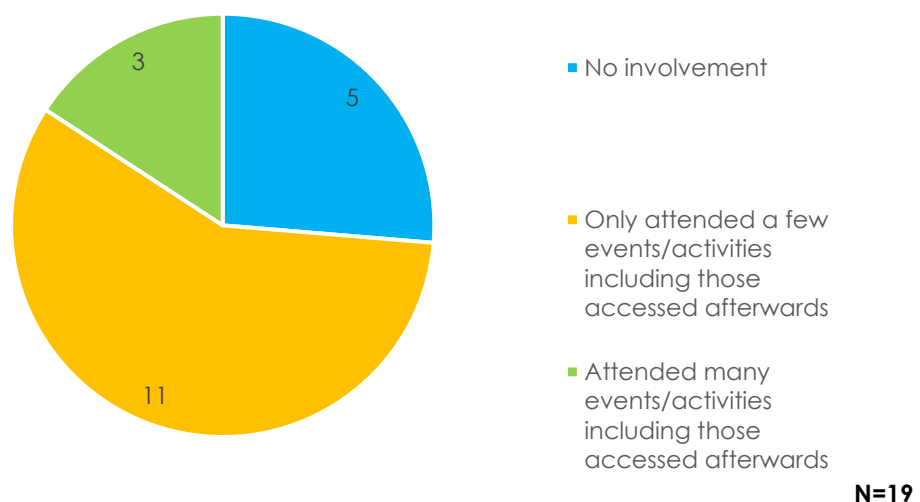
Respondents were asked to identify additional public sector business support that they had accessed. Almost half (9, 47%) accessed additional support included Business Gateway (4), COVID-19 grants (3) and other HIE support (2).

3.5   Expectations from participating in W-Power

The majority of respondents (18, 72%) identified what they wanted to achieve from participating in W-Power. The majority (14, 78%) wanted to expand their network, with two of these adding that this was important to them in a new and/or rural location. Other expectations included:

- access to resources/new ideas (7, 39%)
- learning from others/peer-to-peer (4, 22%)
- women only (4, 22%)
- developing their business (4, 22%)

Others mentioned building confidence and to give back to their local area.

Some specific comments were:

"Exposure to new ideas and network contacts, more for variety of experience than for business expansion."

"To get local knowledge and contacts for my business as I had recently moved to the area."

"As a woman I felt it would be good to be part of a network and link to women only events."

"I wanted a way of sharing my research and extending my own network to improve the outcomes of my business."

3.6   Significance of W-Power being a women only network

The majority of respondents (15, 83%) felt that the women only aspect of the network was to some extent, or the main reason why they participated.

Figure 3.5: Extent to which being woman only impacted on participation

Legend:
- Yes – it was the main reason
- Yes – to some extent
- No

N=18
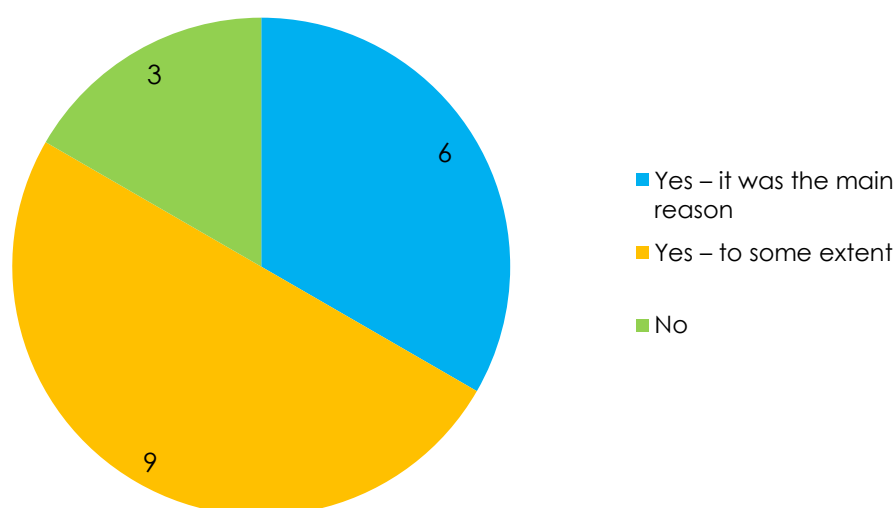
Some **supporting** comments for women only were:

> *"Hearing from people in similar situations and learning from others – and women only felt the right place for me at the time."*
>
> *"To connect with other business owners who were female, I felt that they would understand any challenges better!"*
>
> *"I've come from a very male-dominated industry so seeing a female-only network was appealing and I hoped it would support and encourage more women to be entrepreneurial."*
>
> *"If men were invited, dynamics would change."*
>
> *"Some men have been speakers at webinars, etc, but it would be wrong to have them at coffee mornings."*

Some responses from **those who said it was not the reason for participating** included:

> *"It put me off, but I went along anyway! Most of my clients are male business owners and I have always worked in male dominated businesses. I understand why others might want female only, but for me it's not a draw."*
>
> *"I was not particularly concerned that it was for women only; however, I do take comfort in it now."*
>
> *"It actually put me off to start with but I found it beneficial in the end."*

3.7 Activities and resources accessed

Most respondents had accessed Peer to Peer learning exchanges (7, 39%) and the W-Power wider online resources (7, 39%). Figure 3.6 presents the overall results.

Figure 3.6: Activities and resources accessed
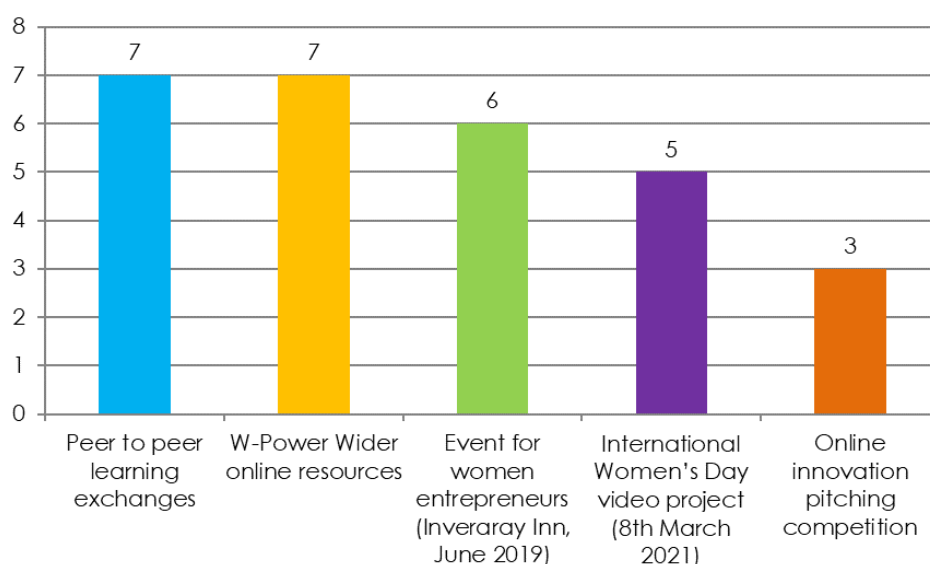
N=18

3.8   Engagement in Slack activities and events

The Slack activities and events most accessed by participants included Webinars (11, 65%) and informal peer support (11, 65%), followed by the weekly coffee break chats (8, 47%). Figure 3.7 summarises the events and activities accessed.

Figure 3.7: Slack activities and events accessed

N=17
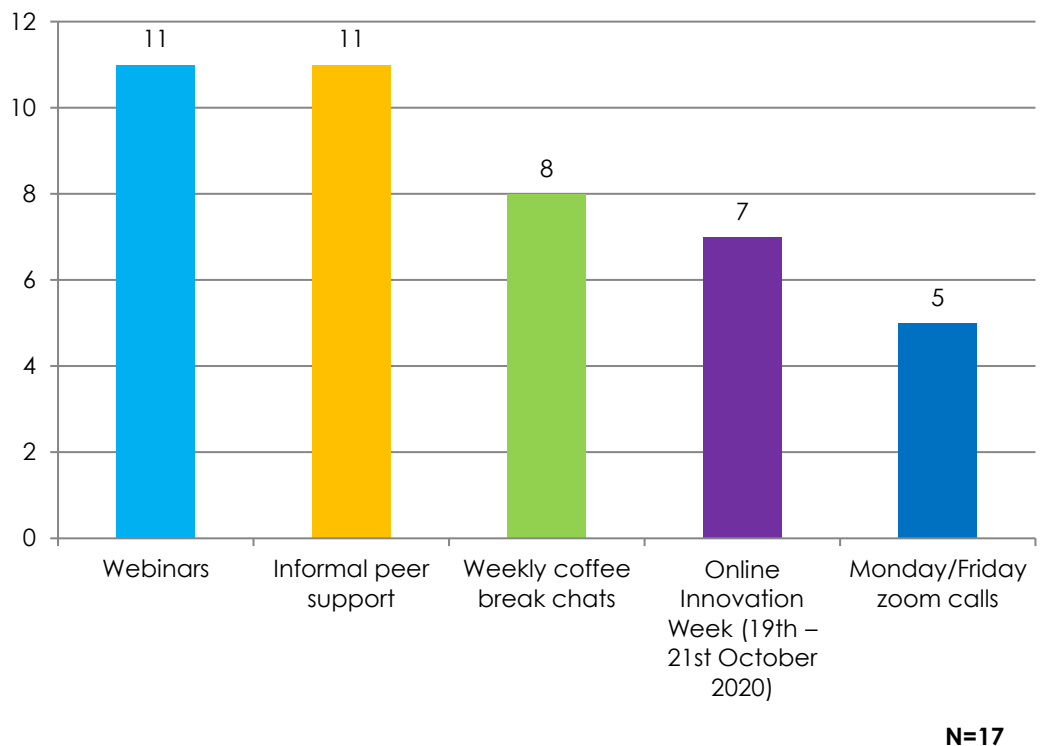
Most participants recalled attending either one event (6, 38%) or between two and five events (5, 31%). Two people attended more than 20 events.

Figure 3.8: Number of Slack webinars and e-events attended

N=18
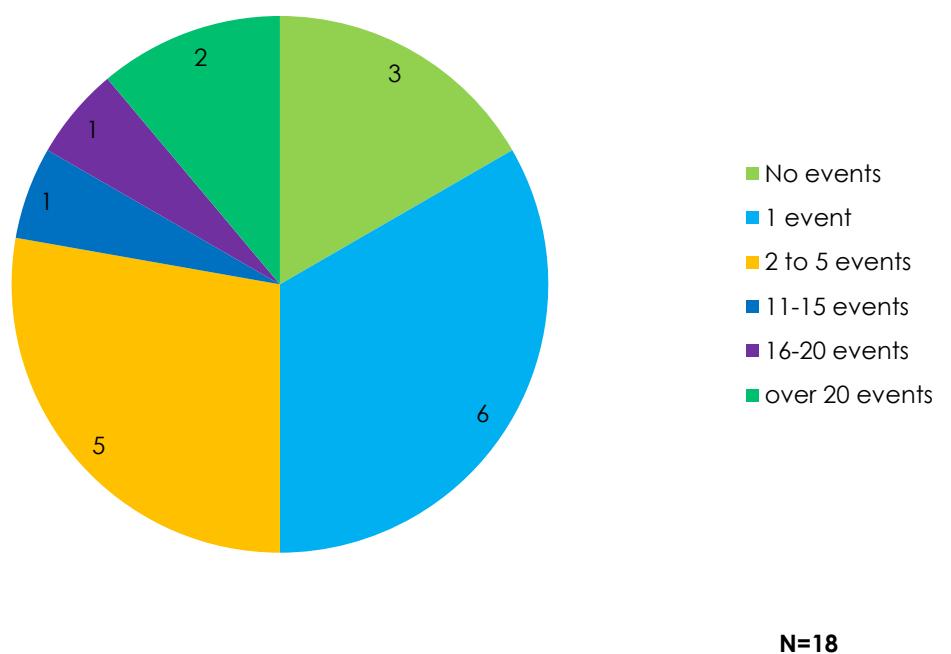
When respondents were also asked the number of Slack webinars and e-events that they subsequently accessed online, half (8, 50%) had accessed the available online events/webinars, with six accessing between 1 and up to 5 events.

Figure 3.9: Subsequent Slack webinars and e-events accessed

Legend:
- No events
- 1 event
- 2 to 5 events
- 6 to 10 events
- 11-15 events
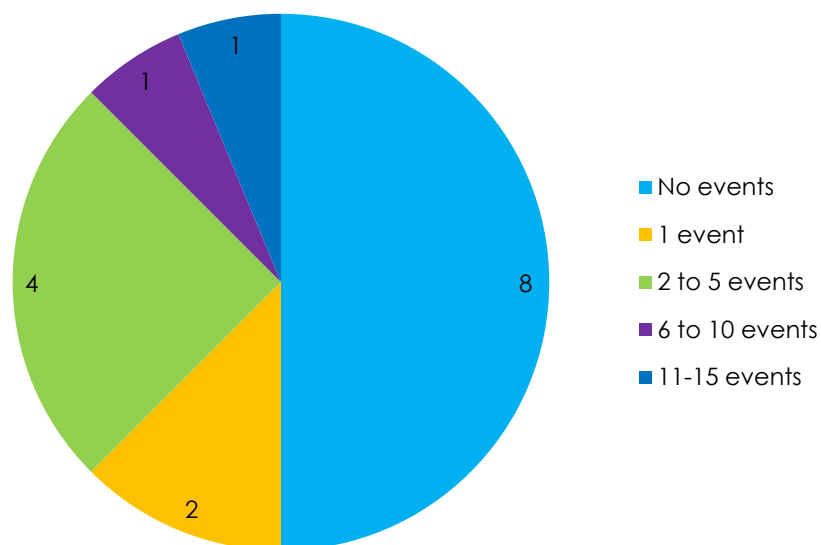
N=16

3.9   Value of events and activities attended

Respondents were asked to rate the value of the events and activities they had attended on a scale of 0 = very poor/limited value through to 5 = excellent value. Table 3.1 presents the weighted average of the most frequently attended events and activities[8] and shows the webinars (4.7), W-Power podcast Series (4.6) and the informal peers support (4.5) were of most value to respondents. Any score above 4, however, is extremely good.

Table 3.1: Value of events and activities[9]

Event/Activity	Weighted Average
Webinars	4.7
W-Power podcast series	4.6
Informal peer support	4.5
Peer-to-peer learning	4.4
Online Innovation Week	4.2
Monday/Friday zoom calls	4.2
W-Power website	3.9
International Women's Day video project	3.8
Weekly (typed) coffee break chats	3.5
W-Power Facebook page	2.8

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[8] Attendance was a minimum of 5.
[9] The number of respondents varied across each event/activity theme.

3.10 Aspects of the women only nature of the network that worked best

'A more collaborative feeling' and 'more camaraderie' were viewed as the most positive aspects of W-Power; as shown in Figure 3.11.

Figure 3.11: Aspects of women only nature of the network that work best

N=17
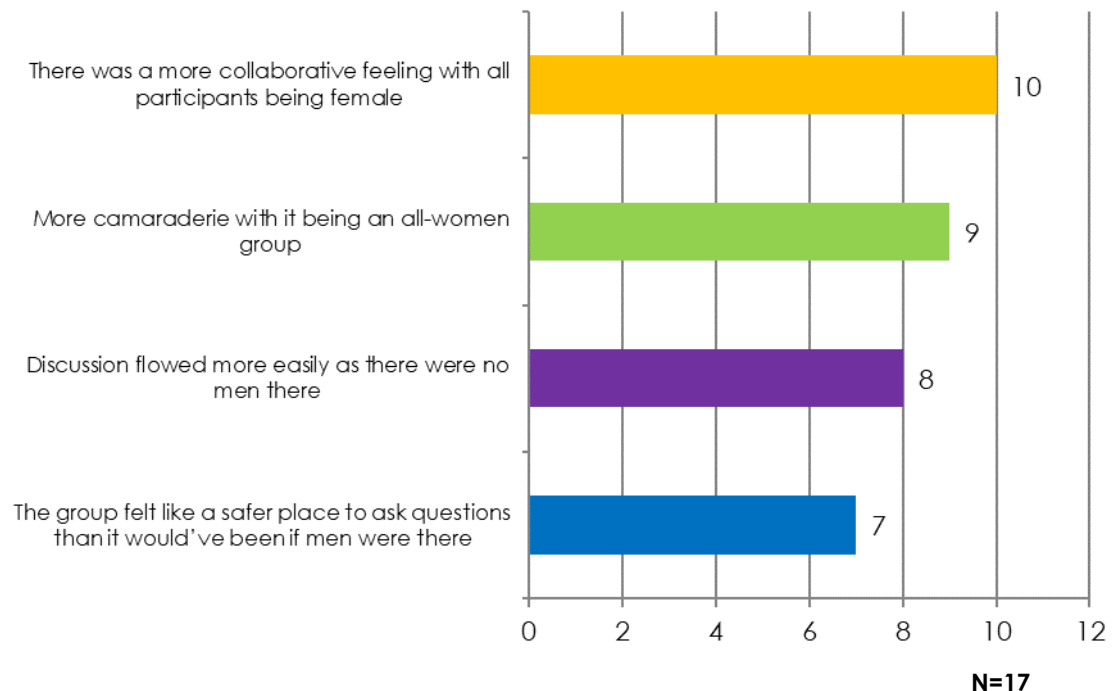
Two participants added comments relating to the fact that **they would be comfortable in a male environment and/or that they value male input**:

> "No aspect of the 'women only' that worked well for me. I value men's opinions."
>
> "Men have not treated us differently and have helped us get started."

Those who thought they were **more comfortable in the women only environment** gave reason such as:

> "Got so much out of this and it was a lifeline when COVID-19 happened and the peer to peer support was fantastic; and the information was great it really helped people."
>
> "I was more comfortable as I am usually in a male dominated environment."
>
> "There was a feeling of friendship there despite not meeting anyone face to face, feeling supported 100% throughout the network, particularly with the core individuals of my group."

3.11 Overall satisfaction with W-Power

The majority of respondents (11, 61%) rated overall satisfaction as 4 or more on a scale of 1 = not satisfied to 5 = very satisfied.

Figure 3.12: Overall satisfaction with W-Power
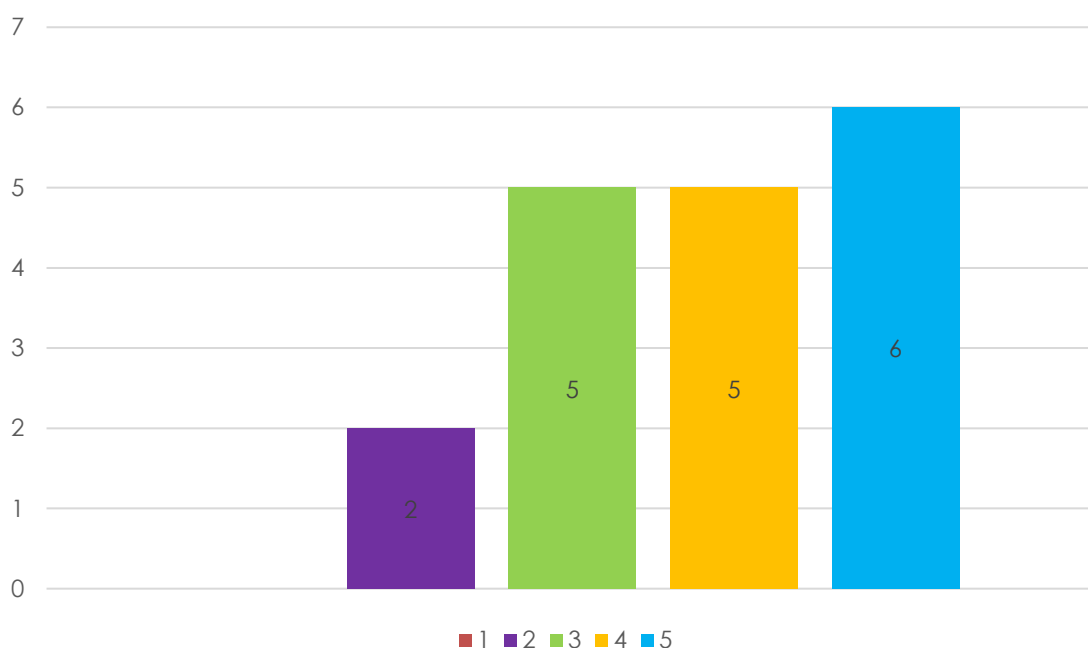
N=18

3.12 Impact of W-Power

W-Power was seen to have the biggest impact for respondents in the following categories (percentage of participants rating the effect 3 or above out of 5):

- new ways of working (12, 63%)
- increased confidence in business (9, 47%)
- access to other forms of support (9, 47%)

Table 3.2 presents the full findings.

Table 3.2: Impact of W-Power

Event/Activity	% scoring 3 or above out of 5
New ways of working	63%
Increased confidence in business	47%
Access to other forms of support eg HIE, BG	47%
New and/or improved skills	42%
Participation in other networks	42%
Development of new products/services	40%
New approaches to business	44%
Improved market awareness	39%
Existing market expansion	35%
New markets explored/entered	32%
Business viability	28%

3.13 Awareness of the W-Power International Programme

The vast majority of respondents (15, 94%) were aware that W-Power was part of a wider international programme. Respondents gave their view on the extent this international connection has added further value to them or their business:

> *"I have only attended one international event, but it was very useful to see similar issues being discussed and talked through even on the international scale."*
>
> *"I was part of the peer exchange with Iceland, I found it very helpful despite not being able to go."*
>
> *"My use of this has been limited so far due to Covid but there is definitely scope for practical use of the international element in the future."*
>
> *"An exchange that would have involved going to Lapland was cancelled, which was disappointing."*

3.14 Employment and Turnover

3.14.1 Employment

While all respondents did not provide employment figures, for those that did, overall they expected an increase in their employment from when they started W-Power, and between 2021 and 2023. Total full-time employment is projected to double from 20 (at the start of W-Power) to 40, and more than quadruple for part-time employment (increase from 4 to 23). The average full-time employment at the beginning of W-Power being 1.43 which is expected to double to 2.86 by 2023. The effect on part-time employees is even greater, with a projected increase over five times the size of the number at the start of W-Power, ie 0.29 part-time staff compared to 1.64 projected by 2023. Table 3.3 summarises the findings.

Table 3.3: Full and Part Time Employment Summary

	At the beginning of W-Power		Currently (2021)		Projected 2023	
	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT
Total employment	20	4	28	9	40	23
Average employment	1.43	0.29	1.87	0.6	2.86	1.64
Number of survey respondents	N=14	N=14	N=15	N=15	N=14	N=14

3.14.2 Turnover

Similar to employment, turnover is expected to rise significantly, based on responses from up to 10 participants. Average annual turnover was estimated to more than quadruple from £41k to £169k, and total turnover by 2023 to increase from £371k to £1.69m. Table 3.4 summarises the findings.

Table 3.4: Turnover

	At the beginning of W-Power	Currently	Projected 2023
Total turnover	£371,000	£526,500	£1,689,000
Average turnover	£41,222	£58,500	£168,900
Number of survey respondents	N=9	N=9	N=10

3.14.3 Attribution to W-Power

Respondents were asked whether they felt their involvement in W-Power had impacted on their current/future turnover and employment. Attribution in relation to current employment was considered low, with only two (from 11 respondents) saying yes, which accounted for four employees. This increased slightly in the future with four companies noting attribution to W-Power, representing nine employees. Turnover attribution is higher with five respondents citing impact on current turnover (total £253k, an averaging £50.7k); increasing to six in the future (total £997k and average £166.2k).

3.14.4 Impact of COVID on employment and turnover

Respondents gave their view on the extent to which COVID-19 had affected their business with regards to turnover and employment. As would have been expected, it has had a major impact for the majority of participants.

"Massive – I have a home popup studio, so restriction on people entering the home made it impossible for me to photograph clients. My lockdown project was to create an external studio from my home that would allow me to continue my photography business when restrictions were lifted. I've only been able to open for 2 months out of 12 in the last financial year."

"It has been affected by having current activity put on hold and home-schooling two children."

"I run a travel business so the impact on turnover has been huge. We were not able to trade for 6 of our first 12 months of operation. Employment-wise this will have set us back in making our first hires as we first have to get the business on a sound financial footing."

"I have gone back to my previous work, with W-Power not having the same value to me."

3.15 Behavioural change

The following section presents responses relating to the behavioural change respondents have experienced since participating in W-Power across three themes:

- business growth ambition
- personal management and leadership skills
- confidence in decision-making

Respondents were asked to score each theme on a ten-point scale, with 10 the highest score. Scores related to before participating in W-Power and currently/as a result of participating. A weighted average was calculated to show overall difference.

3.15.1 Growth ambition

W-Power has had a strong impact on the growth ambition of the respondents such that before participating 60% rated their ambition as seven or more out of 10, which increased to 83% as a result of W-Power.

Figure 3.13: Growth Ambition

N=17
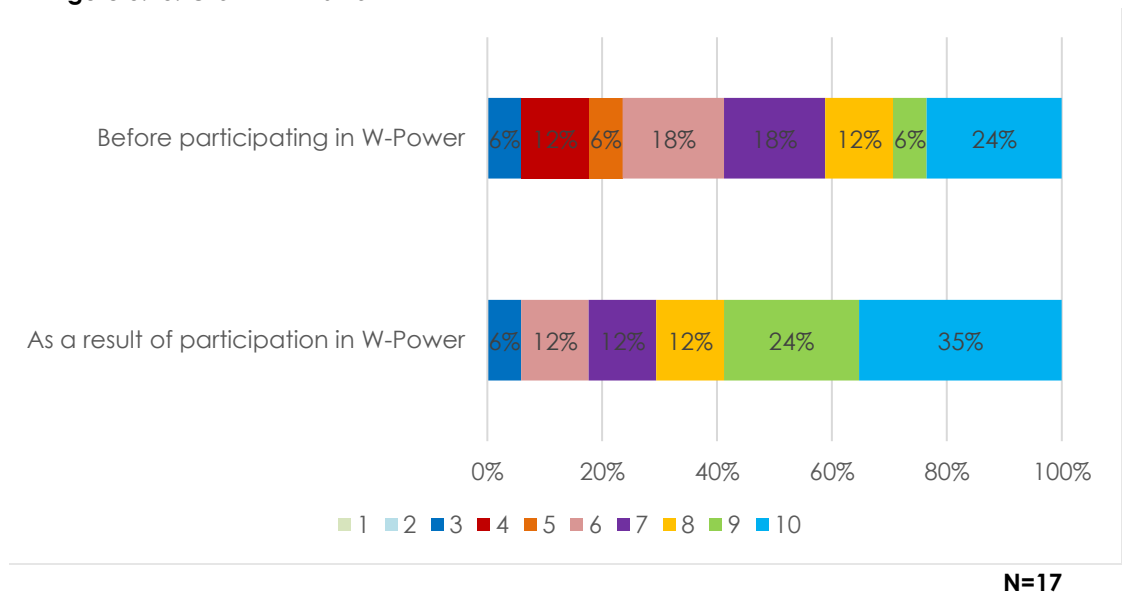
3.15.2 Confidence in decision-making

W-Power has also had a strong impact on participant's confidence in decision-making such that before participating 60% rated their confidence as seven or more out of 10, which increased to 94% as a result of W-Power.

Figure 3.14: Confidence in decision-making
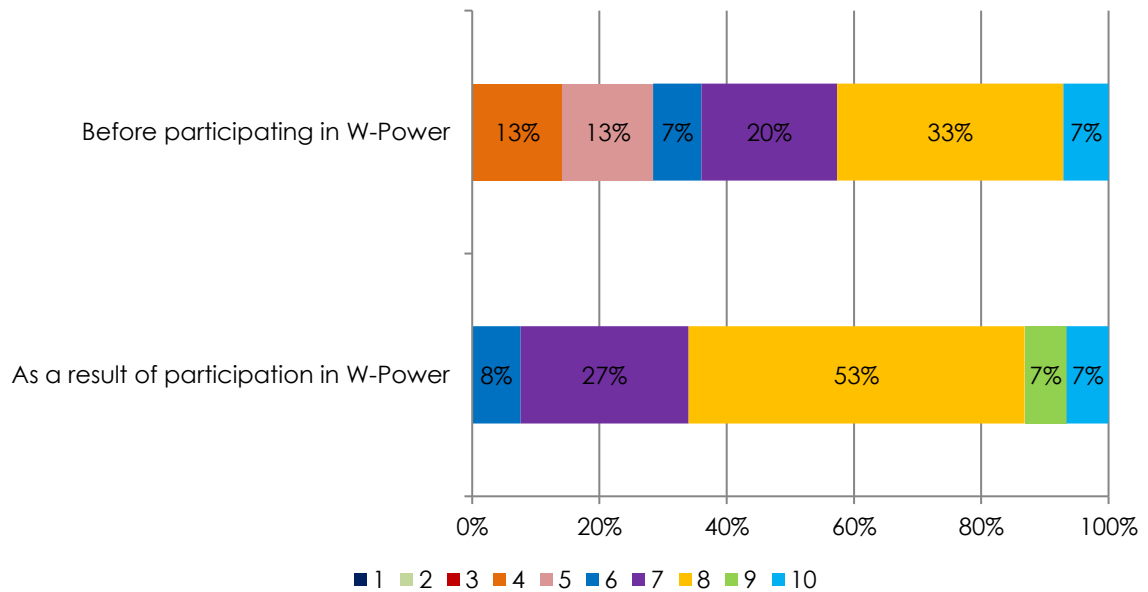
N=15

3.15.3 Business resilience to economic shock

W-Power had a strong impact on business resilience to economic shock such that before participating 48% rated their confidence as seven or more out of 10, which increased to 75% as a result of W-Power.

Figure 3.15: Business resilience to economic shock
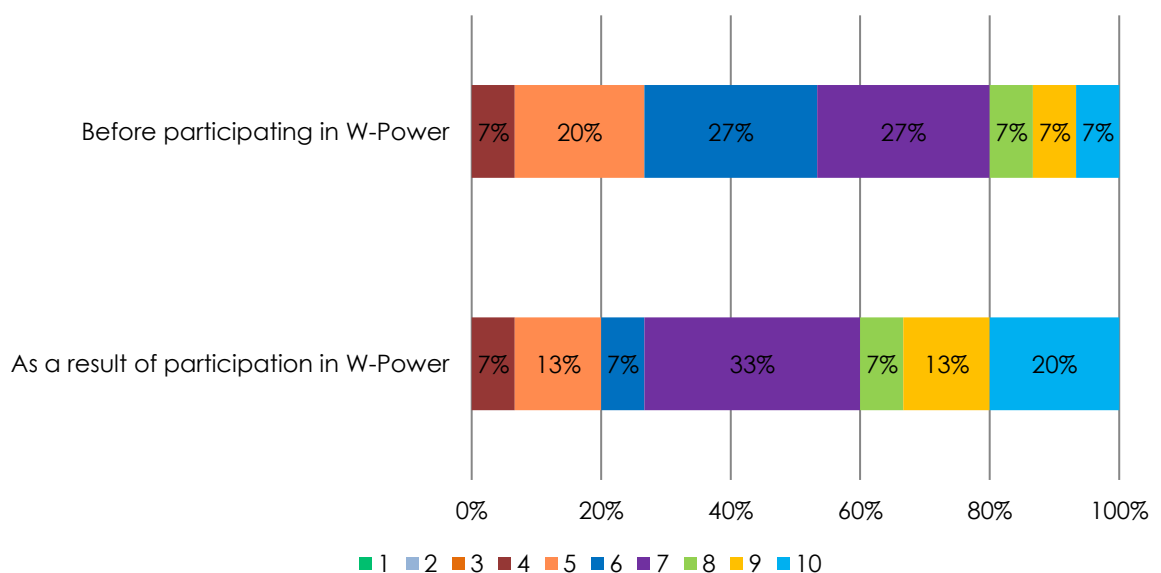
N=15

3.16 What worked well in W-Power/The Slack Network

Respondents noted the following aspects of W-Power which worked well, including:

- innovation prize
- social events
- access to resources
- Inveraray day
- networking opportunities
- webinars
- innovation events
- workshops
- group chat

Some comments included:

> *"I'm now going to be more ready and use more of the toolkit as I now have the learning to apply to the launch of the business – W-Power has empowered me!"*
>
> *"Being able to access resources at a time that suits me. As a lone worker it is a very useful platform to tap into for information and it's nice to have company. I find it great for getting questions answered and often someone else has asked the same question."*
>
> *"Inveraray day was useful to connect with other similar individuals."*
>
> *"Opportunity to make contacts with a wider group of people. The fact that things are happening every week and at different times makes it accessible. I like the fact that there are recordings as people can dip into these."*
>
> *"How resilient it was to COVID-19 because it could be done online."*

3.17 Areas for improvement

Respondents also noted aspects which they feel W-Power could improve, including:

- yearly planner of events would be helpful
- review of Slack communication
- improvements to the Slack Network – access and engagement
- more member involvement
- more face-to-face events when possible

Some comments included:

> *"A year planner of events if possible, or more notice as there are so many training events online now due to COVID-19, which sometimes means I've had to choose between events."*
>
> *"I find Slack very difficult to engage with."*
>
> *"I found the Slack app really confusing to start with – platform overload for me."*
>
> *"The weekly Zoom meetings may work better if there was a specific focus topic, to encourage members to join each week."*
>
> *"I would suggest one coffee break per week with a focused topic, and the rest open."*
>
> *"Would prefer opportunities for members to promote their businesses."*
>
> *"Would prefer webinars, etc, to be more advanced rather than intro sessions."*

3.18 Advantages of W-Power

W-Power was considered to have a number of advantages over more traditional business support programmes. These included:

- a safe space for women
- a more supportive environment
- less egocentric and hierarchical
- a more relaxed environment

Comments on this included:

"Safe space for women to grow confidence."

"A more supportive environment, not competitive at all and no point scoring or showing off. There is a genuine network of like-minded folk there to help you."

"It feels like you're talking to friends. No egos or hierarchy. The desire to help seems completely genuine."

"Business groups are different and terrifying, and not for self-employed people."

"The all-ages aspect of W-Power is good."

3.19 W-Power gender sensitive approach

Two thirds of respondents (10, 67%) thought there were no disadvantages to W-Power's gender sensitive approach. For the third that did (5, 33%), their reasons included:

- slight disconnect from real world engagement
- feel that better discussions are had when room is filled with people from different places and backgrounds

3.20 Further support requirements

A number of further support mechanisms were identified by respondents as desirable for them and their business. These included:

- more help with IT
- technology assistance
- peer group support
- one-to-one contact with specialists
- building contacts in international markets

3.21 Need for W-Power in the future

The majority (13) of the 17 respondents who answered felt there was a continued need for a programme such as W-Power in the future.

> *"Yes I think so. It has been a fantastic resource in helping me move my business forward. From videos, podcasts and just general chitchat I've gained so much and look forward to continuing my learning curve in business."*
>
> *"Yes, knowing there are others out there that can offer a listening ear or supportive advice is great and I recommend it often."*
>
> *"Yes, even more so now with an uncertain future. Many of us have had our heads held above the water by W-Power involvement this year."*

Those who did not feel there was a need for it explained their reasoning:

> *"Not for me in the current format."*
>
> *"Not as it stands. Find ways to make it possible for anyone to get involved with anything that's interesting. Allow men to get in touch with softer side so we can get in touch with our other sides too."*
>
> *"Personally, I don't think so, but I am one of the 'lighter' users so I'm not sure my opinion should carry much weight."*

3.22 Likeliness to recommend W-Power

Respondents indicated how likely they would be to recommend W-Power to colleagues/peers on a scale from 1- extremely unlikely to 10 – already had. W-Power scored extremely well in this matrix, with over half of respondents (9, 56%) having already recommended W-Power, and three quarters (12, 75%) rating likeliness seven or higher out of 10.

Figure 3.16: Net Promotor Score

Likeliness to recommend W-Power

■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 ■ 6 ■ 7 ■ 8 ■ 9 ■ 10

N=16

18
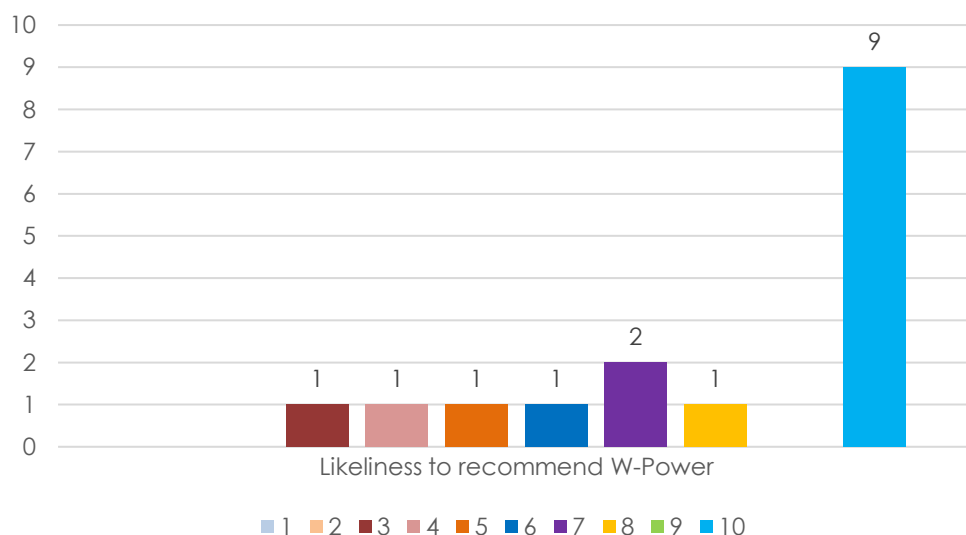
3.23   Roll out to other geographic areas

Participants gave a number of suggestions on what W-Power could do to make roll out to other geographical areas easier. These included:

- increase length of coffee break chats
- access long term funding
- targeted/genre-based chat rooms
- reassess the platforms
- W-Power name may put people off in certain areas
- more face-to-face when possible

Comments included:

> "Don't change anything; it really works well and should be easy to roll out more widely."
>
> "Possibly introduce same genre chat rooms or targeted courses, e.g., hospitality, art and craft, retail, where likeminded businesses can share a deeper relationship."
>
> "W-Power as a name might put some off – maybe look at how they get the message across."
>
> "Some more networking events when you get new people in so they understand what it's about and we can put faces to names."
>
> "There would be a benefit to add more hungry Highland businesses."

3.24   Other views of participants

Other views of participants were wide ranging, some of the recurring views included:

> "Keep it rural and women only."
>
> "W-Power needs overall funding" (to support the 4-5 volunteers who currently manage it). "Ten would be better" (to share the load)."
>
> "It needs someone to promote it."
>
> "Very busy day to day – more evening sessions would be appreciated."
>
> "There is a childcare angle – 6 or 7 of the most active W-Power members have children."
>
> "Going forward, I think the name should change. Women are striving not for power but equalities. Power is a very masculine and aggressive agenda."
>
> "For people not confident in using online, digital tools, local Slack training would help."
>
> "Peer to peer support that uses a more direct and person-centred approach might work."

4   Stakeholder Views

The following section summarises the views from ten stakeholders we consulted who had been closely involved in W-Power; covering programme and network management, women's business support groups and business and economic development agencies. The ten stakeholders were:

1.   Dave Roberts, SRUC
2.   Emily Campbell, Oban Women in Business
3.   Helena Puhakka-Tarvainen, NPA W-Power Project Lead
4.   Donald Melville, Business Gateway Adviser for Mid Argyll, Kintyre and Islay, and Bute and Cowal
5.   Kate MacDonald, WRENS
6.   Kirsty McColl, Scottish Islands Federation
7.   Morag Goodfellow, HIE Area Team Manager, Argyll and the Islands
8.   Cathy Higginson, W-Power Project Manager, HIE
9.   Kate Fraser, Senior Development Officer, Business Gateway, Argyll and Bute
10. Elizabeth Johnson, Pure Energy Ltd, Shetland Realise Pilot

4.1   Fit with W-Power's objectives and network management

W-Power was viewed as having a strong fit with the majority of stakeholder objectives. It was noted that while W-Power was supporting the delivery of a gender-specific approach, it was enabling participant readiness to move to traditional supports such as Business Gateway.

A few stakeholders specifically highlighted the lack of support for female entrepreneurs as a key driver. Others noted that while there was a lot of generic business support, there was limited focus on women, and that there was even less across the Argyll and Bute region. The overall view was that W-Power was complementary and additional to what was currently provided across the target region.

Stakeholders were happy with the performance, stating that it had exceeded expectation and the majority of targets. While some activities and events were affected by COVID-19 and did not happen or were delivered in a virtual setting, the majority of events prospered, bolstered by the Slack Network.

Overall, HIE management was viewed as extremely good. Stakeholders saw considerable value in the resource, especially around engagement, management of events and activities and making peer connections across the membership.

The majority of stakeholders were not close enough to the W-Power Management Group to comment on its effectiveness. Those that were felt there was definite value as it added further time and resource to help operate W-Power.

Stakeholders stated that the Slack Network was a great resource that worked well once it gained momentum. Stakeholders highlighted that in their view it had been slow to get off the ground and was initially not very user friendly.

> *"Very happy, it's been an excellent programme. We have managed to get the right partners in the right place. There has been very few dropouts and many participants that have used the support on multiple occasions."*

4.2   Strengths and areas for improvement

There was general agreement on the **strengths** of W-Power across all stakeholders. These can be summarised as:

- Peer learning and peer-to-peer support – from fellow participants and from those leading events and the Slack Network.
- Gender-specific approach – leading to a safe space to share concerns and ask the 'daft questions'.
- Friendship and camaraderie – a feeling that the group was non-judgemental and supportive.
- Flexible approach – which adapted easily and well to the impact of COVID-19, predominately due to the existing online platform being used.
- Strong programme management – that was supportive and helped develop a sense of community – especially for those in very rural areas.
- Wide range of events – including online access and regular catch-ups which helped keep up the momentum.
- The increased value of a female network that can still operate with COVID-19 restrictions.

There was less agreement on **areas for improvement**, with some saying none. Others highlighted:

- COVID-19 – the impact this had on some of the face-to-face activities – although the online elements were viewed as working well and supporting continued connections.
- Gender-sensitive toolkit – being too complicated, with uptake lower than needed to fully assess the benefits.
- More communication – more publicity of the events and activities to keep up the momentum.
- Improved connectedness with other business support mechanisms – to support the linkages to the wider support environment that W-Power participants could use to fully develop the business offering.
- Ability to differentiate the online platform offering during COVID-19 – while W-Power's online platform was established pre-COVID-19, the challenge became the ability to differentiate this from the plethora of online offering from other business support services.

> *"The approach to starting your own business can be different for men and women. Women can be more creative and optimistic but cautious; the gender - specific approach allows this to be acknowledged."*

4.3   Advantages and disadvantages of gender-specific support

Stakeholders were in agreement that the gender-specific approach had advantages over traditional approaches. They viewed it as a good starting point for the entrepreneurship journey, allowing women to more safely share concerns and challenges. One noted that this approach would help lead to a better gender balance allowing more women to obtain senior and leadership positions.

> *"Lots of research that says gender-specific is a good starting point on the entrepreneurial journey."*

There was limited feedback on the disadvantages of gender-specific support. The main concern was preparedness to operate in a traditional approach as they moved forward with their business. However, it was highlighted that a key purpose of W-Power was to build confidence to join a mixed gender network which would help mitigate this. There were no suggestions on how to get participants more involved in W-Power. One stakeholder mentioned the need to explain how W-Power connects to the wider business support landscape to demonstrate that this is not an isolated programme.

4.4 Learning from others

In general, stakeholders were uncertain about other programmes that W-Power could learn from. Some mentioned Investing in Women and Women's Enterprise Scotland; but noted that it would be better to ensure connection with them as they operated in different support areas. Others mentioned the W-Power partner programme Realise, operating in Orkney and Shetland. The Acorn Programme was also highlighted – providing female entrepreneurs support in rural Ireland.

> *"W-Power is leading the way! It's come about at a good time and built on other women networks, including WRENS and Oban Women in Business."*

4.5 Continued need and roll out

Stakeholders were unanimous in the need for wider roll out of W-Power, considering that this would be a good model, particularly the learning from the online support on the Slack Network and the peer-to-peer support. Some felt sector or regional specific groups and linking to a place-based approach as well as rural Growth Deals would be good add-ons.

4.6 Final comments

Overall views were very positive about W-Power and its impact on its target audience. Specific comments included:

> *"The collaboration and the confidence that a group of women can give to each other has been quite powerful!"*
>
> *"It's an excellent programme. That we were able to support women when they were often at their weakest and with the help of their peers to help them grow and develop as individuals and as businesses."*
>
> *"The Inveraray session (with 40-50 people) when partners came to Scotland had vibrancy and ambition, with good speakers. I was surprised at the high energy."*
>
> *"Some women becoming involved for lifestyle reasons and others for business growth is a good blend."*
>
> *"These small businesses are really important to the area as a whole."*
>
> *"The biggest challenge in Argyll is depopulation – so self-employment not hitting the stats but if it keeps them in the community. This is critical – the portfolio approach."*
>
> *"W-Power is the glue that holds us together!"*
>
> *"Friendly safe space that help us promote each other!"*

5 Conclusions

5.1 W-Power has made strong progress on its overarching objectives as defined by HIE

HIE's participation in the W-Power Programme led to better understanding of entrepreneurial support to females in rural areas across the Northern Peripheral and Artic region. The challenges facing women entrepreneurs in those areas is better understood, and the support available to them has been mapped.

HIE's involvement in W-Power has achieved positive economic benefits for a number of participants despite the pandemic. Some respondents had experienced growth in employment and turnover since joining W-Power and were projecting further increases; however, the direct attribution to W-Power was low. Others regarded W-Power as more about supporting personal growth and confidence than economic gains. A number of respondents stated that being female only was not the main attractor or had actually put them off, however they noted that this changed as a result of the Programme:

> *"I was not particularly concerned that it was for women only; however, I do take comfort in it now."*
>
> *"It actually put me off to start with but I found it beneficial in the end."*

W-Power has also supported entrepreneurship in remote and rural areas. While many respondents had already started their business journey prior to joining, there were examples where participants pushed forward with their ideas quicker and to a greater extent as a result of the Programme and the support from the Slack Network.

While we are unable to provide evidence that shows that W-Power has enhanced business productivity, there were many examples of positive impacts on business processes; with learning from events, activities and peers being integrated into day to day running or development of participants' businesses.

W-Power has also contributed to population retention and the sustainability of rural communities by providing support to women and their businesses in these areas that have been part of the W-Power network.

Overall, the number of women who have been assisted in business development, the benefits that have been achieved through business growth, and the increased business potential that participants now have through their participation is considered very good value for the funding that HIE has contributed towards the Programme.

5.2 W-Power has achieved extensive reach regionally through its events and activities

The number of events and activities run through W-Power and supported by the Slack Network was extensive in a short period of time (as demonstrated in Appendix 3). The ability to access activities online after an event and the regional spread added further to this reach and usability. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the transnational reach of W-Power was hampered, with the proposed one-to-one peer learning journeys/country visits were suspended following initial matching. The initial seminar however did bring some participants together and resulted in some benefits, with one participant highlighting: *"I was part of the peer exchange with Iceland, I found it very helpful despite not being able to go".*

COVID-19 also brought benefits as the virtual delivery platform that W-Power already had in place allowed them to provide extra support to their members and ultimately increased accessibility across the target areas.

5.3 Most events and activities worked well with some improvements suggested

Feedback from participants and stakeholders on the events and activities has generally been positive across range, accessibility, delivery mode, frequency, content and location. While respondents had been keen to increase face-to-face interaction, they understood that COVID-19 had driven this necessary change toward full virtual delivery.

Whilst events were rated highly by the majority of respondents, the most value came from: the online pitching competition, the event at the Inveraray Inn; the webinars and podcasts; and the informal peer support – all scored 4.5 or higher out of 5 by our interviewees, which is extremely positive. Overall satisfaction with the Programme was also high, with the majority scoring 4 or more out of 5.

Over and above the request for more face-to-face interaction, the areas suggested for improvement were generally process related and linked to communication about events, including reminders. Some participants, though, would value more intensive business development or mentoring help.

5.4 Sustaining W-Power and enhancing female entrepreneurial support in other parts of HIE

As summarised in Section 2.2, W-Power is one of a few local, regional and national programmes geared towards female business owners, who have variable needs and ambitions which different programmes (some free, but some charged) can help them with.

It is possible that W-Power would continue without public funding, but the pressure that this would put on volunteer administrators who also have their own businesses to sustain or grow and might have family responsibilities, we believe would limit the scale of W-Power as a mechanism for helping both existing participants and potential new participants; and we would therefore recommend a degree of public funding support for at least a period of one to two years. The conditions for this might be:

- Continuing effort is put into expanding participation geographically, with programmes of support and events geared to the specific needs of new, as well as existing, participants and business-to-business working encouraged.
- W-Power (possibly with a new name) develops links with other local, regional, national and international businesswomen groups.
- More young people, including women who might not yet have started a business, are encouraged to participate in events and activities.
- Face-to-face meetings are encouraged, as well as online communications, when this again becomes possible – particularly, between women with shared or complementary business interests who would not otherwise have met each other.

HIE might work with the Business Gateways in the different parts of its region to encourage W-Power to maximise its reach and impacts, with financial assistance towards travel and professional course participation potentially available.

The COVID 19 pandemic presented female entrepreneurs with challenges on many fronts, including isolation, childcare and home-schooling responsibilities, business impacts, etc. The W-Power Programme provided a key support to participants at this time, and regular contact with others going through similar challenges was invaluable to the wellbeing of some participants. The following points were noted in participant feedback:

> *"Got so much out of this and it was a lifeline when COVID-19 happened and the peer-to-peer support was fantastic; and the information was great it really helped people."*
>
> *"Yes, even more so now with an uncertain future. Many of us have had our heads held above the water by W-Power involvement this year."*

5.5   W-Power helped build confidence to join mixed gender entrepreneurial supports

Female only is a valid way of providing a supportive environment for female entrepreneurs, although this approach doesn't suit all women. The majority of stakeholders and participants viewed it as good starting point for the entrepreneurship journey, allowing women to more safely share concerns and challenges and a collaborative and supportive way. However, the main concern was preparedness to operate in a traditional approach as they moved forward with their business. However, it was agreed that W-Power helped build confidence to join a mixed gender network which would help mitigate this.

5.6   Transferability of W-Power to other demographics and other entrepreneurial supports

From the feedback and research gathered it is apparent that tailored entrepreneurial supports such as W-Power has more benefits than pitfalls. Participants cited increased confidence and reduced barriers over more traditional entrepreneurial and business supports. As such we believe the main delivery elements would be easily transferable to other demographics, however some areas would need further tailoring. For example, if the target is young people a different social media platform might be deemed more appropriate. Whereas elements such as pitching, and business advisor/coaching would need minimal changes, maybe more young people on judging panels or as coaches etc.

Equally the feedback suggests that the main elements of the W-Power Programme could easily be incorporated into other entrepreneurial supports. The Slack Network and the supporting online resources were well used by participants, particularly during the pandemic, and would be viewed as a cost-effective learning, sharing and networking mechanism. In addition, while the peer-to-peer learning journeys were hampered by the pandemic, benefits were still accrued and value was highlighted, which demonstrates the strength of this approach.

Frontline
January 2022

Work Package 1

Summary of HIE Activity

Empower Network Grow

W-Power works with women entrepreneurs in sparsely populated areas across Northern and Arctic communities, encouraging them to set up, develop and grow their businesses.

The project's baseline study shows that, while both men and women successfully start and grow their business, **women are:**

LESS likely than men to be entrepreneurs

MORE likely to work part time

MORE likely to work in the service sector

MORE likely to start a business for financial need or work/life balance

Men are:

MORE likely to work in higher earning sectors

MORE likely to benefit more from established networks

MORE likely to see earning potential as the reason for starting their business

These differences mean that women can face a range of particular challenges affecting:

- their access to relevant finance and business support
- the benefit they gain from role models, networks and mentoring
- the impact of cultural assumptions and stereotyping

So, where are the best places to get the support you need to start and grow your business?

You will want different types of support as you set up and grow your business.

You can find useful information online as well as contacting local or national agencies and networks. Look out for support tailored for groups such as women, young people or indigenous entrepreneurs.

Formal business and innovation support providers

- offer advice, workshops, events, training on funding and investment; business planning; marketing and sales internationalisation; innovation etc.
- provide skills development and training: entrepreneurship, leadership and management etc.
- deliver coaching and mentoring schemes

Banks, accountants and other financial institutions

- may offer financial advice, business planning and/or access to funding
- some offer micro-loans, often preferred by women at start-up stage

Networking and mentoring

- look for informal local groups as well as formal networks

Business idea competitions or pitching events

- these give you a chance to showcase your ideas, receive feedback and you may win specialist support to help develop your ideas

W-Power: empowering women entrepreneurs in sparsely populated Northern communities

Overall W-Power Programme

Work-Packages – Summary of Workplan and Activities

Project Workplan and Lead	Work plan activity	Project activity	Methodology	Transnational project participants	H&I / D&G participants	Beneficiaries	Outputs over project duration September 2018 - August 2021
Stakeholder groups All	T1.1 Engagment of stakeholder groups	Set up regional stakeholder groups		Women entrepreneurs, business advisers, business angels etc. (plus associate partners, Higher Education	HIE, SIF, SRUC (Dumfries) .....?		5 regional stakeholder action plans, 6 stakeholder events per region; 2 transnational stakeholder meetings incl. project evaluation; 5 regional stakeholder afterlife plans
T1 - Business environment / entrepreneurship benchmarking HIE	T1.2 Comparative baseline study - women's entrepreneurship	a) Map current regional self-employment rates by gender and b) identify regional barriers and challenges which impact disproportionally on women entrepreneurs (indigenous and immigrant populations where relevant)	a) Desk review and b) focus groups	1. potential start-ups 2. new start-ups 3. SMEs wishing to grow 4. SMEs wishing to acccess global markets 5. current business support providers	12 FT/PT women entrepreneurs / SMEs	Informs workplans T2-4	Report 1 - regional state of women's entrepreneurship incl. barriers, challenges and regional / national policies: infographics for dissemination
	T1.3 Mapping of regional business support and innovation platforms	Map current business support provision and innovation platforms by region - identify whether generic, gender-aware, gender-specific	Template for completion by regional partners	All (12?) current regional business support and innovation platform providers (public and prIvate sector)	HIE, SE, BG, local authority, RBS .... ?	Informs workplans T2-4	Report 2 - a) mapping of regional business services to support T3 implementation; b) mapping of regional innovation platforms for new start-ups and business ideas to support T4; regional infographics for dissemination
		Regional dissemination events in all regions to share mapping information	1-2 events in each region	Higher education students, existing and potential entrepreneurs		Members of the public seeking support for self-employment / entrepreneurship - particularly women and	Infographic packs for 12 events of available business support services and innovaton platforms in regional languages (English, Swedish, Finnish and Icelandic)
	T1.4 Thematic Seminar 1 - Scotland		Seminar	Regional partners, Regional stakeholder group, general public, entrepreneurs for site visits			Scotland's transnational meeting May 2019 - T1 related issues - steering group meetings, workshop, upskilling event, regional conference / general public, benchmarking / site visit
T2 - Transnational learning - women entrepreneurs Strukturum	T2.1 Building business skills, innovation and development of women entrepreneurs	Regional baseline of specific needs of women entepreneurs for upskilling / capacity building	Survey	Women entrepreneurs (indigenous and immigrant populations where relevant)		Informs upskilling programme content	1 Survey
		Upskilling programme based on T1 outputs and survey of women' entrepreneur's needs	Programme of upskilling events			Women entrepreneurs (indigenous and immigrant populations where relevant)	1 Programme for regional and transnational delivery
		Regional upskilling workshops	Regional workshops	Women entrepreneurs		Women entrepreneurs	3-6 workshops per region
		Transnational upskilling events at thematic seminars 2-5	Transnational events	Women entrepreneurs		Women entrepreneurs	4 transnational events delivered at thematic seminars
		Feedback survey of regional and transnational upskilling events	survey			Informs T3	1 feedback survey
	T2.2 peer to peer mentoring scheme	Co-create mentoring scheme				Women entrepreneurs	1 mentoring scheme
		Co-creation of transnational visits of mentoring pairs of women entrepreneurs	Open entry application	Successful applicants - women entrepreneurs		Successful applicants - women entrepreneurs	24 transnational mentoring visits (10 Finland, 5 Scotland, 4 Sweden, 3 Ireland, 3 Iceland)
		Motiviational videos from transnational mentoring pairs	Self-created videos to increase digital / marketing skills	Successful applicants - women entrepreneurs		Successful applicants - women entrepreneurs	12 videos
	T2.3 Thematic Seminar 2 - Sweden		Seminar	Regional partners, Regional stakeholder group, general public, entrepreneurs			Sweden's transnational meeting November 2019 - T2-related issues
T3 - gender-sensitive business advisor coaching concept WestBic	T3.1 benchmarking and best practice	Inventory of good practice from WP1 and benchmarking best practice models across NPA area				Informs T3	1 Inventory of good practice and 6 best practice gender-sensitive coaching models
	T3.2 coaching pilot	Create gender-sensitive coaching concept	Co-creation with end users	Business support and innovation platform providers			1 concept note on gender-sensitive coaching
		Train the trainer event in Ireland for regional pilots		Regional representative to lead regional pilots?		Regional business support and innovation platform providers	1 Train the Trainer event
		Regional pilots of coaching concept to suit local circumstances		Regional business support and innovation platform providers		Regional business support and innovation platform providers	5 regional pilots
		Modelling and transnational dissemination of coaching model and tools		Regional business support and innovation platform providers		Regional business support and innovation platform providers	1 coaching model and tools
	T3.3 Thematic seminar 3 - Ireland		Seminar	Regional partners, Regional stakeholder group, general public, entrepreneurs			Ireland's transnational meeting May 2020 - T3-related issues
T4 - Innovation platform for new pre-startups Karelia	T4.1 - Innovation platform co-creation	Select best practice based on T1 mapping and pilot design with regional engagement		Best practice innovation platform providers			1 best practice exercise and 1 pilot
		Regional innovation workshops for Higher Education students and researchers	Workshops	Regional Higher Education students and researchers		Regional Higher Education students and researchers	6 regional workshops
	T4.2 platform piloting and modelling	Pilot 1 - Finland-led transnational pilot; Pilot 2 - regional implementation in at least 4 project regions				Regional innovation platform providers	1 pilot 2019; 4 pilots 2020
		Lessons learned from pilots, model development for transnational dissemination				Informs evaluation	1 Dissemination note
	T4.3 Thematic Seminar 4 - Finland		Seminar	Regional partners, Regional stakeholder group, general public, entrepreneurs			Finland's transnational meeting December 2020 - T4-related issues

Events and Activities

Attendance and Remote Views

W-Power event	Date	Live event	Remote views to end Jan 20	Remote views to end Feb 20	Remote views to end Mar 20	Remote views to end Apr 20	Remote views to end May 20	Remote views to end Jun 20	Remote views to end Jul 20	Remote views to end Aug 20	Remote views to end Sep 20	Remote views to end Oct 20	Remote views to end Nov 20	Total views
Goal Setting and Making it Happen	14 Jan 20	8	17	20	21	24	26	26	26	26	26	28	29	37
Time Management Tips	22 Jan 20	10	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	13
Websites & social media Q&A	30 Jan 20	8	2	4	4	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	14
Sources of Finance	6 Feb 20	5		5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	11
Female Entrepreneurship Funding	14 Feb 20	5		3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	8
Small Business Finance	18 Feb 20	3		2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	6
Q&A on Starting a Small Business in Argyll	21 Feb 20	5		2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	8
Investing in Your Marketing Strategy	13 Mar 20	4			2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	7
Tell Your Business Story Using Instagram	31 Mar 20	7			3	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	12
Social Selling Using Facebook and Instagram	2 Apr 20	6				6	8	9	9	9	9	9	9	15
Selling on Instagram Q&A	17 Apr 20	6				2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	9
Live Case Study - ScotlandByMail	24 Apr 20	7				2	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	13
LinkedIn for Business	29 Apr 20	8				3	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	16
Business Income Streams	7 May 20	8					9	9	9	9	9	9	9	17
Automating recurring tasks, Google Analytics	8 May 20	6					5	5	5	5	5	5	5	11
Live Case Study - Marketing Strategy & Plan	22 May 20	7					4	4	4	4	4	4	4	11
Commercial Awareness	2 Jun 20	10						13	14	14	14	14	14	24
Live Case Study - e-commerce*	5 Jun 20	5												5
How Interface Can Support Your Business	1 Jul 20	5							2	2	2	2	2	7
Preparing to Hire	4 Aug 20	2								6	6	6	6	8
How to Go About Outsourcing	19 Aug 20	5								7	7	7	7	12
Your Podcast Questions Answered	28 Aug 20	6								4	4	4	4	10
10 Ways to Generte Media Covrage	24 Sep 20	7									10	10	10	17
Follow-up PR Q&A	2 Oct 20	5										1	1	6