

Realising the potential of Women's Enterprise in the South East;
A Strategy for the Region

2005-2010



Contents

	Page
Executive summary	3
1 What is this document about?	6
2 Why is Women's Enterprise important?	7
3 What does the National Framework call for?	10
4 How has the region responded so far?	12
5 Key challenges for the region	15
6 What are we aiming to achieve?	16
7 What is our strategy for getting there?	17
8 How will we implement it?	24
9 How will we know if we are succeeding?	27
10 How will the implementation be paid for?	29

Appendices

- I People consulted
- II Information sources
- III Prowess Flagship standards

Executive summary

What is this document about?

This document describes the strategy for realising the potential of Women's Enterprise in the South East. It has been prepared by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) and the South East Women's Enterprise Steering Group. It is the region's response to the DTI's Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise.

Why is Women's Enterprise important?

Women are massively under-represented among the region's business owners. Only about 15% of businesses are majority-owned by women and only about 27% of all self-employed people are women. This under-representation is a lost opportunity for our region. A significant increase in the level of female entrepreneurship in the South East would:

- Make a significant contribution to closing the region's productivity gap with the world's most competitive regions
- Transform the lives of individual women, their families and their communities, particularly in the region's most disadvantaged areas

What are the key challenges for the region?

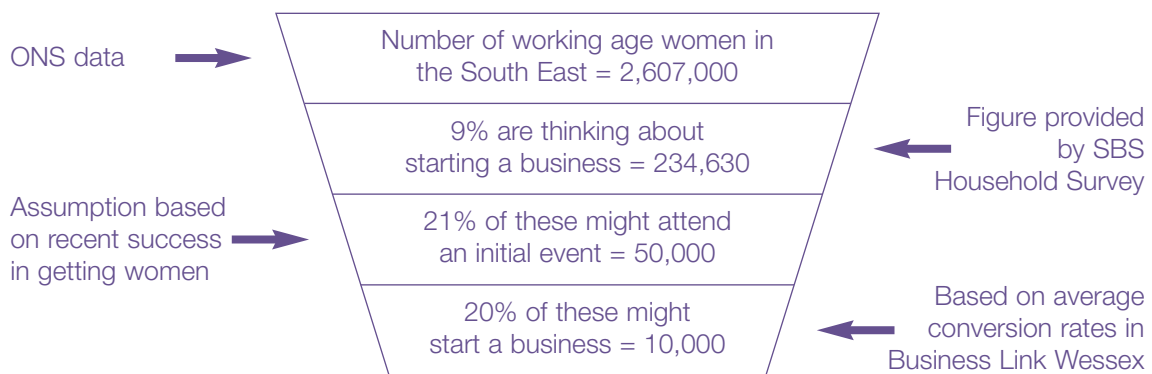
The region has already responded enthusiastically to the DTI's Strategic Framework. However, we still face some significant challenges if we are to achieve the framework's long-term ambitions and to fully realise the potential for Women's Enterprise in this region. These challenges are:

- The absence of good quality data disaggregated by gender makes it difficult to plan and monitor progress
- Gaps in the provision of support particularly access to finance and markets; the provision of flexible childcare; the difficulties of moving from benefits to self-employment; and the need to provide access to women-friendly business support and networks in every part of the region
- Helping women overcome their barriers and converting their undoubted interest in enterprise into actual start-ups
- Providing support for all segments
- Providing women-friendly support in a way that is financially sustainable long-term
- Mobilising all partners behind a common vision and increasing our collective capacity to deliver

What are we aiming to achieve?

By 2010 our goal is that there will be 10,000 more women-owned businesses in the region.

This is an ambitious goal which reflects our belief that the appetite for enterprise amongst women is huge. We have developed a 'Women's Enterprise Pipeline for the South East' (see below) as a tool to help us understand the scale of this task and the steps we need to go through. The pipeline shows that we may need to communicate with over 200,000 women in the next five years to achieve our goal of 10,000 new start-ups.



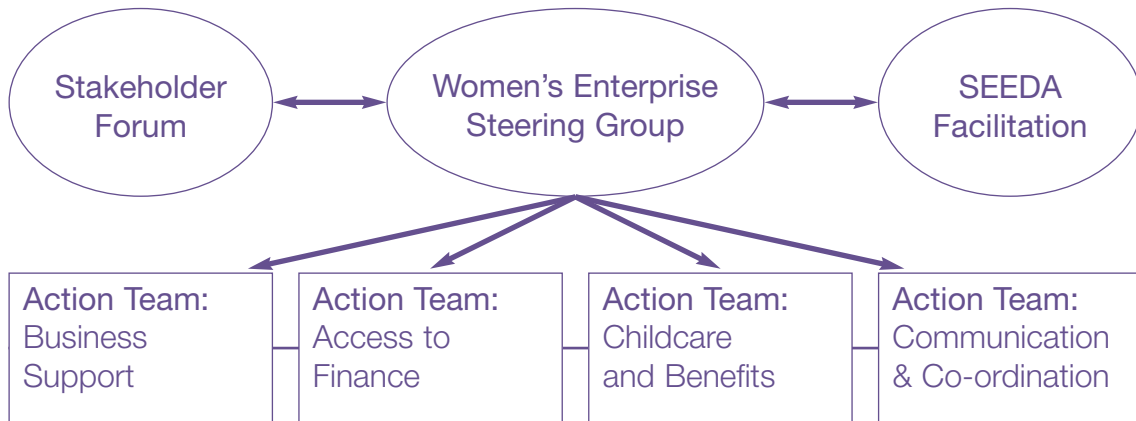
What is our strategy for getting there?

We have defined six strategic priorities that must be addressed over the next five years:

1. To make women-friendly business support available to every woman in the region regardless of where she lives and to ensure that the needs of all segments are met
2. To improve women entrepreneurs' access to finance and access to markets
3. To overcome the disincentives for women to move from benefits to self-employment
4. To improve the provision of flexible childcare facilities for women entrepreneurs
5. To raise the profile and understanding of women's entrepreneurship and its impact on the economy amongst all stakeholders
6. To connect members of the Women's Enterprise community with one another and with public policy makers

How will we implement the strategy?

This strategy will be implemented through the following organisation structure:



What is the timetable?

November 2005	Stakeholder Forum – regional event to invite the forum to comment on the draft strategy New Steering Group and Action Team members identified and approached
December 2005	Steering Group reviews feedback from the consultation and finalises the strategy document
January 2006	SEEDA approves the strategy document Action Teams initiated
February 2006	Action Teams complete initial action plans and work gets underway including – development of website and communication of the strategy SEEDA approves 2006/2007 budget for regional co-ordination Prowess annual conference
April 2006	Final report back from the pilot projects Capacity building fund starts to award grants to mainstream business support organisations working towards Flagship status

How much will it cost to implement?

The proposed approach to funding the implementation of this strategy is:

- SEEDA will fund all areas of regional co-ordination and communication
- Mainstream business support organisations will be expected to meet the needs of female clients with their **existing** funding streams or by winning grant funding for targeted sub-regional projects from other sources
- SEEDA will establish a regional Capacity Building Fund for Women's Enterprise to which the mainstream organisations can apply to help them achieve Prowess Flagship status
- SEEDA will seek to mobilise the resources of other agencies and other parts of SEEDA behind this strategy

This year SEEDA has allocated £154,000 to Women's Enterprise in addition to the c£50,000 provided by the Business Links' Regional Collaboration Fund. Longer term we estimate that the funding required from SEEDA for regional co-ordination will be as follows:

Activity	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009
Capacity Building Fund	£500,000	£500,000	£500,000
Website development	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000
PR	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000
Stakeholder Forum	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000
Other	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000
TOTAL	£555,000	£555,000	£555,000

1 What is this document about?

1.1 Purpose

This document describes the strategy for realising the potential of Women's Enterprise in the South East. It has been prepared by SEEDA in response to the Department of Trade and Industry's (DTI) *Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise*¹ which tasked each of the regional development agencies with preparing a plan to implement the principles of the framework in their regions.

Its purpose is to:

- Confirm Women's Enterprise as a key strategic priority for this region
- Explain the potential that Women's Enterprise has to address key economic and social issues in this region
- Give clear direction on the challenges that need to be addressed and the priorities for action
- Inspire SEEDA and its partners to take up the challenge of creating an environment and culture that produces a step-change in the number of women starting and growing businesses

1.2 Who is the document aimed at?

Bringing about a step-change in the level of Women's Enterprise can only be achieved with the collaboration of a wide range of national, regional and local partners. This document is therefore intended to be read by:

- All parts of SEEDA
- Government Office of the South East (GOSE)
- Publicly funded business support agencies including the Business Link Operators; Enterprise Agencies; Enterprise Hubs; Enterprise Gateways; Finance South East; the Manufacturing Advisory Service
- Higher and Further Education Institutions
- Specialist Women's Enterprise support organisations and networks from the public, private and voluntary and community sector
- Business networks and representative organisations e.g. Chambers, Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Institute of Directors (IOD), Confederation of British Industry (CBI)
- Area Investment Framework partnerships
- Jobcentre Plus
- Learning and Skills Councils

¹ DTI/Small Business Service, *A Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise*, 2003

- Local Authorities (Economic Development Units, Childcare Units)
- Enterprise Insight
- Prowess (the national advocacy organisation for Women's Enterprise)
- The Small Business Service (SBS)

1.3 Development of the strategy

The development of this strategy has been led by SEEDA's Enterprise Team and overseen by the Women's Enterprise Steering Group which comprises representatives of key partner organisations in this region (See Appendix I for details).

SEEDA has also consulted with a wide range of organisations actively supporting Women's Enterprise locally, nationally and internationally to understand what work is already underway, to identify the key issues and to seek out best practice. This included an intensive study tour to the US to meet the organisations that have been responsible for driving its rapid growth in Women's Enterprise. It has also drawn on a number of recent research reports (See Appendices I and II for full details of information sources and people consulted).

2 Why is Women's Enterprise important?

2.1 Under-representation is a lost opportunity

Although women make up 52% of the population and 46% of the economically active, they are massively under-represented among the region's business owners. Only about 15% of all businesses are majority-owned by women and only about 27% of all self-employed people in the region are women².

This under-representation is a lost opportunity for our region. Tackling women's under-representation in business is much more than just an issue of equal opportunities. A step-change in the number of female entrepreneurs in the South East would:

- Make a significant contribution to closing the region's productivity gap with the world's most competitive regions
- Transform the lives of individual women, their families and their communities particularly in the region's most disadvantaged areas

And the potential is huge: 9% of working age women in the South East report that they are interested in starting a business³ – that is almost a quarter of a million women.

² ONS, *Labour Force Survey* 2003

³ SBS, *Household Survey*, 2003

2.2 Closing the productivity gap

Improving productivity is at the heart of the Regional Economic Strategy for the South East (RES) and accelerating levels of enterprise is identified as a key lever for closing the productivity gap between the South East and its major competitors. This is because regions with high start-up rates have more competition and more innovation resulting in higher productivity rates.

Analysis of our enterprise performance compared with major competitors shows that the greatest potential for increased entrepreneurship in the region lies with women. For example, the UK has about the same number of male-owned businesses per capita as the US. However, it has only about half the rate of female-owned enterprises as the US where female entrepreneurship has been accelerating at a rapid rate over the past 20 years. The lower rate of female entrepreneurship in the UK accounts almost entirely for the total enterprise gap between the US and the UK.

If the South East had the same rate of female-owned businesses as in the US, we would have an additional 50,000 more businesses in the region and the potential for a significant improvement in our productivity performance.

Furthermore, contrary to the common perception that women's businesses are often little more than 'hobby' businesses, the evidence is growing that women-owned companies are increasingly performing better than their male counterparts in areas which are key drivers of productivity⁴:

- Women are more likely to be innovative than men in their approach to business development and new ideas. They are more likely to use new technology and to be providing a product or service that is new to the market
- They are on average more qualified than men. 24% of self-employed women have a degree or equivalent compared with 18% of self-employed men. Research shows that more highly qualified entrepreneurs grow their business at a faster rate
- Women-owned businesses are increasingly looking to grow. 44% of female-led firms recorded sales growth in the third quarter of 2004, 7% more than businesses overall. And 46% of female-led businesses expected growth in the final quarter of 2004
- Women are more likely to move from unemployment to self-employment: around one in five women come into self-employment from unemployment compared to around one in 15 for men. So, on entering self-employment from unemployment, women make a more immediate contribution to GDP in that we see less economic displacement

Women's Enterprise could therefore be key to closing the region's productivity gap with its international competitors.

⁴ The information in the following four bullet points has been taken from - DTI/Small Business Service, *Promoting Entrepreneurship*, March 2005

2.3 Transforming disadvantaged communities

Women's Business Centres were established in the US over 15 years ago targeting socially and economically disadvantaged women and since their inception they have worked with over 500,000 women. The evidence from this long-established programme is that female entrepreneurs not only transform their own lives but also those of their families and their communities as they tend to fill gaps in local services, hire more local people, buy more services from local businesses and spend more in the local communities.

Women's entrepreneurship should therefore be considered as a major opportunity for addressing the challenges faced by the most disadvantaged communities in the South East.

3 What does the national framework call for?

3.1 Aims

In 2003, the Government published its *Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise* to fundamentally change cultural and social attitudes to Women's Enterprise and to bring about a step change in women's representation in business. Its aim is to "increase significantly the numbers of women starting and growing businesses in the UK, to proportionately match or exceed the level achieved in the USA."

3.2 Targets

The Strategic Framework set three challenging targets:

- By 2006, women will account for 40% of customers using government-sponsored business support services. (In the South East women currently represent around 22% of Business Link's customers)
- By 2006, women owned businesses will account for 18-20% of the UK total. (The current level in the South East is about 15%)⁵
- By 2006, the number of women from ethnic minority communities receiving business support assistance will be proportional to their representation in the local/regional population. (We have no baseline data on this measure for the South East)

3.3 Action priorities

The *Strategic Framework* set out detailed priorities for action under four headings and it tasked the regional development agencies with producing collaborative plans for implementing these actions at regional and local level.

1. Business Support Provision
2. Access to Finance
3. Childcare and Caring Responsibilities
4. The Transition from Benefits to Self-Employment

⁵ The target for women-owned businesses has subsequently been increased by HM Treasury and the DTI to 20% by 2006, rather than the range of 18-20%

3.3.1 Business Support Provision

The *Strategic Framework* recognises that women have different needs than men when it comes to business support. For example, many want to start their business on a part-time basis; whilst women have the skills and the ideas they often lack the confidence to start a business; and their caring responsibilities make it more difficult for them to access some programmes.

The *Strategic Framework* therefore identifies the need for more women-friendly business support. Specifically, it calls for more outreach initiatives, improved access to networking, mentoring and coaching, women-targeted incubation and effective online provision. Building women's self-esteem and confidence is identified as crucial to creating successful women entrepreneurs.

It emphasises the need for the parallel development and improvement of targeted and mainstream support services. It calls for all mainstream business support provision to be designed to meet the needs of women as well as men but it also recognises that specialist targeted provision is likely to be needed in the short to medium term. The Strategy Framework states:

“Although ultimately it is better to design appropriate mainstream programmes than to develop support provision specifically for women, changes to culture, attitude and environment, as well as to infrastructure and delivery mechanisms, may take years. It is therefore important to support and develop new and existing targeted initiatives, where needed, to help women in the short to medium-term.”

This approach is backed up by the experience of the US where Women's Business Centres providing specialist, targeted support have been a critical contributor to the acceleration of Women's Enterprise there.

3.3.2 Access to Finance

A study sponsored by the Bank of England - 'Report on the 2004 Survey of SME Finances' - identified that banks are typically charging female business owners 1% more than men on their business borrowings. Women regardless of business sector capitalise their businesses on average at just one third of the level of their male counterparts and that includes high growth sectors such as technology. Women-owned businesses also account for less than 5% of equity finance. Research suggests that gender in itself has no impact on the success of businesses but that consistent undercapitalisation does. The *Strategic Framework* calls for better understanding of the specific issues facing women and suggests activity including improved information and marketing of finance options, development of more innovative schemes such as microcredit group lending and proactive venture capital and angel investment initiatives targeted at women.

3.3.3 Childcare and Caring Responsibilities

Women in the UK are still responsible for 80% of caring and domestic responsibilities. The implications of this for women starting and growing businesses needs to be recognised and appropriate assistance offered – including assistance for part-time as well as full-time businesses.

3.3.4 The Transition from Benefits to Self-Employment

For a significant number of women claiming welfare benefits, the flexibility of self-employment is highly attractive – offering the opportunity to combine caring responsibilities with work. In some disadvantaged areas, particularly rural locations it may be one of the few options available. Despite recent reforms the welfare system remains geared towards a traditional, male model of full-time employment and does not adequately support the more cautious and tentative manner in which many low income women start businesses. The *Strategic Framework* calls for action to address this e.g. by changing the way programmes such as New Deal are marketed to women.

4 How has the region responded so far?

4.1 The data

Our attempt to understand the current levels of female entrepreneurship in the region have been severely hampered by the lack of data about business ownership in the UK which is disaggregated by gender and ethnicity. Fig.1 presents our current estimate of the baseline and the scale of the task in the South East if we are to contribute to the achievement of the national targets. However, there is much more work to be done to refine our approach to measurement and this will be done in collaboration with Prowess and the Small Business Service (SBS).

Measure	South East current	2006 Target	Scale of the task
% (number) of majority women-owned firms using government-sponsored services	22% ⁶ (28,000)	40% (48,000)	20,000 more Business Link assists p.a. needed i.e. 70% more than current levels ⁷
% (number) businesses majority owned by women	15% ⁸ (49,500)	20% (66,000)	16,500 new businesses i.e. 30% more than current levels ⁹
Number of BME women receiving support	Data collation process being developed. This will include identifying the different minority groups that have different needs and barriers	In proportion to their representation in the community	If we assume BME women represent 7% of population, then Business Links might need to assist approximately 1,400 more BME women to achieve this target

Fig.1 Estimated South East baseline vs. national targets

In its *Regional State of Women's Enterprise in England* report published in June 2005, Prowess also provided the following indicators:

- **Total entrepreneurial activity** – According to latest figures from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM 2004) the total rate of total entrepreneurial activity in South East England amongst women increased from around 2.8% to 4.4% over the period 2002 - 2004. This conforms to the national trend although the South East rate is currently marginally higher than the national average of 3.9%. In keeping with the national trend, the rate of entrepreneurial activity amongst the male population remains around double that of the female population
- **Self-employment** – Figures from the Labour Force Survey suggest that the proportion of the workforce which is self-employed and female is significantly higher in the South East (8.5%) than the national average (7%)

⁶ These figures apply to Business Link operators only

⁷ Assumes current total Business Link assists is 120,000

⁸ Annual Small Business Survey 2003

⁹ Assumes total number of businesses in South East is 330,000

4.1 Regional activity (as of December 2005)

The actions taken so far at the regional level to implement the Strategic Framework in the South East are:

- A South East Women's Enterprise Steering Group was formed in 2003 to champion the issues at regional level. Chaired by Rosemary French, CEO Business Link Surrey, it includes representatives from Prowess, SEEDA, the Enterprise Gateway Network and Enterprise Agencies
- A Regional Co-ordinator for Women's Enterprise was appointed in 2004 funded by the Business Link Regional Collaboration Fund
- A Stakeholders Forum was held in November 2004 bringing together all the organisations in the South East interested in supporting Women's Enterprise
- A quarterly electronic newsletter for stakeholders was launched in February 2005 and has been widely circulated
- 18 local events were sponsored in 2004/2005, run by a range of public and private sector organisations, which attracted over 300 women interested in starting or growing a business. 12 'Glass Ceiling' seminars were also sponsored by the region and run by the IOD. These attracted almost 500 women
- A Ministerial visit in March 2005 was hosted by SEEDA's Chair and CEO. This think tank meeting with Jacqui Smith, MP, the then Minister for Women & Equality, provided an opportunity to bring together a number of the region's female entrepreneurs with key strategic partners to identify the key issues for women's businesses
- Responsibility for delivery of Women's Enterprise within SEEDA was mainstreamed into the Business & International Division from April 2005, from the Strategy & Sustainability Division where the policy development work on Women's Enterprise in 2004/2005 had been carried forward by the Economic Inclusion Team This represented a recognition of the key part growth in female owned businesses could play in the regional economy. The Regional Co-ordinator was seconded to SEEDA at this point
- A business support directory was launched in April 2005 following an exercise which mapped women-friendly business support provision in the region
- South East role models were identified and promoted via a new publication launched in May 2005
- A delegation from the South East participated in the Prowess-led study tour of the US in June 2005 to seek out best practice and learn how Women's Enterprise has been accelerated there

4.2 Sub-regional activity

Sub-regional organisations in the South East have responded enthusiastically to the Strategic Framework's call for more women-friendly business support at local level as evidenced by a mapping study undertaken in collaboration with Prowess¹⁰ and the subsequent production of the Business Support Directory for the region¹¹. The following sections provide some examples of the scale and nature of this activity.

¹⁰ Enterprise Research, *Women Friendly Business Support Provision in South East England*, June 2005

¹¹ SEEDA, *South East England Directory of Business Support for Women*, 2005

4.2.1 Business Link Operators

Following their support for the funding of a regional Women's Enterprise Co-ordinator, the region's Business Link operators have been taking significant steps to make their services more women-friendly e.g. making sure women have the option of a female advisor, supporting local women's networks and targeted start-up activity. In particular, the achievements of Business Link Wessex were recognised in November 2004 when it won the Prowess Business Link award for Outstanding Achievement in Women's Enterprise Development for its 'Women Into Business Programme'; and Business Link Wessex has just been awarded Prowess Flagship status (the national standard for Women's Enterprise development) for its start-up service.

4.2.2 Enterprise Agencies

Enterprise Agencies, which are largely funded through the Business Link Operators, feature strongly in the mapping exercise and are an important provider of start-up services to women. Many are reporting growing demand from women for their services.

4.2.3 Enterprise Gateways

The Enterprise Gateway Network was established by SEEDA and the region's Business Links to provide business support for excluded groups. Their innovative outreach activity is proving highly successful and they are demonstrating particular success in reaching women who in most cases form the majority of their clients. Faringdon Enterprise Gateway is the first business support organisation in the region to have been awarded Prowess Flagship status. There are currently 10 Gateways with plans to extend the network to 20 within three years.

4.2.4 Local Networks

There are an increasing number of self-help women-friendly networks throughout the region some of which are privately run and others are provided or supported by public agencies or the voluntary and community sector. These include Women in Business (Sussex, Surrey and Kent), Women's Wisdom (Hampshire and the Isle of Wight), Enterprising Women (Sussex), Ladies that Lunch (Oxfordshire).

4.2.5 Higher Education

Higher Education Institutions are working actively to promote entrepreneurship amongst their students and their communities and most are seeing high participation rates from women. A number are giving particular focus to women e.g. the University of Surrey is currently running the 'Training Women to Win' programme funded by the European Social Fund (ESF).

4.2.6 Finance South East

Finance South East ran a women-only investment readiness event in May 2005 called 'Dragonflies Den' which attracted 20 women with high growth potential and enabled them to pitch their ideas to a panel of women-only Business Angels. Finance South East is now exploring the potential for a women-only business angel network for the region based on US best practice.

4.2.7 Local Authorities

The Economic Development Units of many Local Authorities are actively engaged in influencing and contributing to the way in which business support is delivered in their areas and are placing a high priority on support for Women's Enterprise.

5 The Key Challenges for the Region

The region has already responded enthusiastically to the Strategic Framework. However, we still face some significant challenges if we are to achieve the Framework's long term ambitions and to fully realise the potential of Women's Enterprise for this region. These challenges are summarised below:

The absence of good quality gender-based data is a significant barrier to progress. Our counterparts in the US couldn't emphasise enough the importance of accurate, reliable and timely information on the characteristics and challenges of women business owners and claim they would not have been able to make the progress that they have without major breakthroughs on data collection.

The mapping exercise highlighted important gaps in provision despite the progress already made. In particular, more needs to be done on access to finance, access to markets, childcare, the transition from benefits and ensuring that women have access to high quality female-friendly business support and networks from pre start-up stage onwards wherever they live in the region and whatever their economic status.

We will need to improve the conversion rates to achieve national targets. Our experience has demonstrated that it is not difficult to get women to attend targeted local awareness events and training to start the journey to entrepreneurship. The big challenge is helping women overcome their barriers and converting this interest into actual start-ups. Anecdotal evidence suggests that conversion rates are significantly lower for women than men and those that do start a business generally take longer to do so. It is vital that we do more work to gain deeper insights into the barriers at this stage of their journey and what we can do to overcome them.

Women are a diverse group and more needs to be done to ensure business support provision is equipped to respond to the needs of different segments typically excluded including for example the disabled, ethnic minorities, different age groups and women from different economic and educational backgrounds.

Specialist targeted provision is vital but can be costly and hard to sustain. The experience of the US, with its Women's Business Centre programme, provides us with strong evidence that targeted specialist provision is essential to serve the needs of the hard to reach groups and is very successful in stimulating demand. However, the experience of other regions in the UK which have specialist programmes funded by the Phoenix Fund, the European Union (EU) etc shows that this approach can be costly and difficult to sustain when initial funding streams expire. In this region, where such funding is limited we need to find ways of providing targeted women-friendly support in a sustainable way by making full use of our existing mainstream and strategic regional programmes such as the Enterprise Gateway Network.

The task is huge and will require the collaboration of all our partners if it is to be achieved. This is not a job for a single initiative or programme. We need to find ways of mobilising everyone behind a shared vision and increasing our collective capacity to deliver. Continuing to improve communications and best practice sharing between all stakeholders is therefore vital.

6 What are we aiming to achieve?

6.1 Our vision for 2020

- The South East will be the best place in the UK for women to start and grow a business
- Women from all backgrounds will regard entrepreneurship as a real option
- The lives of individual women, their families and communities in the most disadvantaged parts of the region will have been transformed by the opportunities which enterprise opened up for them
- The growth in Women's Enterprise will have made a significant contribution to closing the region's productivity gap with its global competitors

6.2 Our goal for 2010

By 2010 there will be 10,000 more women-owned businesses in the region

This is an ambitious goal which reflects our belief that the appetite for enterprise amongst women is huge and that the rewards for success are high. We have developed a 'Women's Enterprise Pipeline for the South East' (Fig. 2 below) as a tool to help us understand the scale of this task and the steps we need to go through. The pipeline shows that we may need to communicate with over 200,000 women in the next five years to achieve our goal of 10,000 new start-ups.

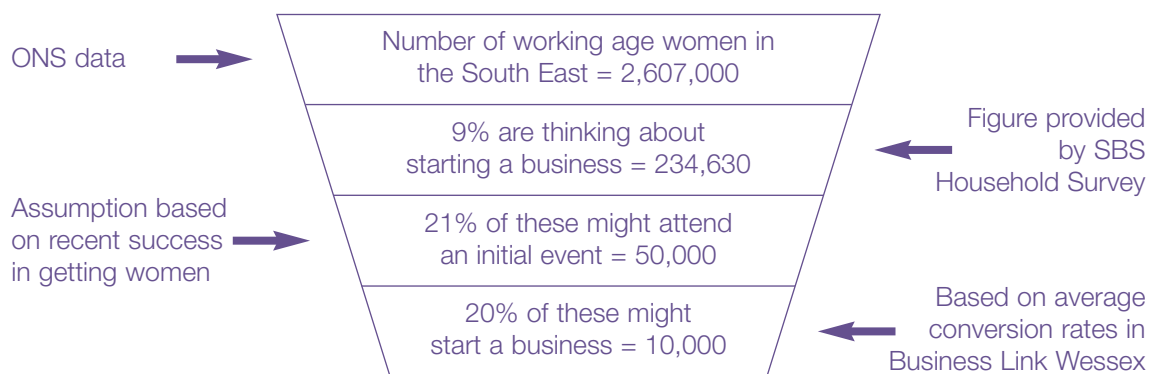


Fig.2 South East Women's Enterprise Pipeline

However, we also recognise that as our understanding of the baseline data and measures improves, we may need to refine this goal of 10,000 more businesses to reflect our improved understanding. We will review it on an annual basis to ensure it remains challenging but achievable.

7 What is our strategy for getting there?

We have defined six strategic priorities that must be addressed over the next five years to achieve our goal. These are:

1. To make women-friendly business support available to every woman in the region regardless of where she lives and to ensure that the needs of all segments are met
2. To improve women entrepreneurs' access to finance and access to markets
3. To overcome the disincentives for women to move from benefits to self-employment
4. To improve the provision of flexible childcare facilities for women entrepreneurs
5. To raise the profile and understanding of women's entrepreneurship and its impact on the economy amongst all stakeholders
6. To connect members of the Women's Enterprise community with one another and with public policy makers

Each of these priorities is explained in more detail below.

7.1 Women-friendly business support

The objective

To ensure that women-friendly business support is available to every woman in the region regardless of where she lives and to ensure that the needs of all segments are met.

The issue

The evidence that women have specific needs when starting and growing a business is now overwhelming. Those UK organisations that have offered women-friendly services have seen huge increases in demand and high success rates¹² and in the US the development of Women's Business Centres has proved highly successful. However, provision of such specialist services outside of the mainstream can be costly and difficult to sustain (indeed a number of Prowess Flagship programmes in other regions now face closure as initial funding streams come to an end and the recent 'State of the Regions' report stated there must be 'growing emphasis on more sustainable funding through mainstream and core funding, rather than on an ad-hoc project by project basis.'¹³).

¹² Prowess, *Show us the Money: the state of Women's Enterprise support*, 2004

¹³ Shared Intelligence (on behalf of Prowess) *State of the Regions* 2005

In this region, we already have a mainstream delivery structure backed by core regional funding which has the potential, with the right capacity building support, to service all segments of the women's market directly and/or through specialist local partners. This mainstream support structure comprises:

- The Business Link Operators (BLO) (the primary route to publicly funded business support in the South East through information, diagnostic and brokerage organisation)
- Enterprise Agencies (focused on start-ups generally and in some areas also working with excluded groups)
- Enterprise Gateways (focused on reaching excluded groups)
- Enterprise Hubs (focused on high growth technology and knowledge-based businesses)
- The specialist providers such as UK Trade and Industry (UKTI), Finance South East (FSE) and the Manufacturing Advisory Service (MAS)

The Joining Forces Project Group on Start-ups has already formed a sub-group to develop a consistent regional approach to encouraging and supporting women-owned start-ups.

The strategy

- Our strategy is therefore not to create a new separate structure for Women's Enterprise but instead to persuade all publicly funded mainstream business support providers in the region to make their services more accessible and relevant to the women in the market segments which they each serve and to think about the needs of women in everything they do
- SEEDA will encourage regionally-funded business support organisations to work towards achieving Prowess Flagship standards within five years¹⁴. As part of the contractual process, SEEDA will ask these organisations to provide an action plan to set out how they propose to get there
- Many of the things that mainstream organisations need to do to be more responsive to women don't cost much and can be achieved with existing funding (e.g. changing the start times of events, using more appropriate images in marketing material, always offering the option of a female adviser, bringing about cultural change in the organisation). However, some new money will be required to make the transition and to support women from excluded groups. SEEDA will therefore establish a regional capacity building fund to help mainstream organisations work towards achieving Flagship standards and to develop new approaches particularly for hard to reach groups. They may apply to the fund for activities such as best practice visits to Flagship programmes in the UK; international study visits; gender focus training with their staff; transforming their marketing material; developing childcare partnerships; piloting innovative approaches; or working with high quality specialist providers to address the needs of specific groups
- To kick off this capacity building work, during 2004/2005 SEEDA will fund six sub-regional pilots (three with Business Links and three with Enterprise Gateways) to help them better understand how to convert women's interest in enterprise into an actual business start-ups

¹⁴ The Prowess Flagship standards are the nationally recognised quality standards for best practice in women's enterprise development. Details of the standards are provided in Appendix III. Organisations may apply for accreditation for their whole organisation or just for an individual programme. Prowess is also planning an enhanced process to support the journey towards Flagship status that will recognise those business support agencies who have not yet met all of the Flagship criteria but who are willing to enter into a formal process that confirms their commitment to achieving the Flagship criteria within an agreed timescale

- Specialist local providers (e.g. women's networks, community organisations and private providers) can have a valuable role to play in addressing gaps in mainstream provision or in helping to reach new markets. Business Link Operators and their Enterprise Gateways, are best positioned to work with such local providers and so, in order not to risk confusion or duplication in the market, SEEDA will not fund local provision directly
- SEEDA will encourage mainstream business support organisations to disaggregate their customer data by gender and report regularly on their contribution to achieving the regional targets. Some Business Link Operators are doing this already

7.2 Access to Finance

The objective

To improve women entrepreneurs access to finance and access to markets.

The issue

Access to finance is one of the issues which is consistently identified as a barrier to business start-up and growth, particularly for women. The issues are complex and are as much to do with women's attitudes to finance, risk and debt as to any direct discrimination in the supply side.

Access to markets has not featured strongly in the UK's assessment of the barriers to Women's Enterprise. However, our US study trip highlighted that without access to markets women won't get finance and without access to finance women can't access new markets. The US has made huge progress in opening up corporate and government procurement to women and helping them gain a position in the supply chains. Much more needs to be done here if women are to be assisted to grow their businesses.

The strategy

- The Joining Forces Project Group on High Level Finance will be asked to ensure the specific needs of women will be considered. As part of this work Finance South East will be asked to explore the potential for a women-friendly business angel network and venture capital fund based on successful US models for women owned businesses with high growth potential
- SEEDA will encourage partners to develop women-friendly investment readiness programmes which address the specific issues faced by women including their fear of debt, their consistent undercapitalisation, their lack of personal resources and their understanding of the sources of finance available. These programmes must be made available and relevant for every segment. The Joining Forces sub-group on female start-ups will be particularly valuable here
- Through the continuing policy work on Women's Enterprise in SEEDA's Strategy & Sustainability Division, the Economic Inclusion Team will support the development of financial products for high risk businesses where traditional financial support is not available i.e. through microcredit programmes and Community Development Finance Institutions (CDFIs) to meet the financial needs of women entrepreneurs in disadvantaged areas
- We will closely examine the recommendations of the national Women's Enterprise Panel Action Group on Access to Finance due in the autumn of 2005. Where appropriate the region will offer to pilot new approaches. Finance South East has already indicated to SBS the region's interest in piloting an investment readiness programme

- All publicly funded business finance sources in the region will be asked to provide data disaggregated by gender e.g. Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme, the Research and Development Grants, the South East Community Development Fund and the Accelerator Fund
- SEEDA will work with Prowess to explore the potential for increasing women's access to government and corporate procurement contracts. Through SEEDA's work on Corporate Responsibility in the region, a dialogue will be initiated with the major corporate companies located in the South East who are known to be already implementing diversity procurement programmes in the US. In addition, we will incorporate an element of gender focus into the SBS/SEEDA/BLO pilot on SME procurement that is currently underway

7.3 Overcome welfare benefits disincentives

The objective

To overcome the disincentives for women and to move from benefits to self-employment.

The issue

The issue of benefits and how women can be assisted in making the transition from welfare into enterprise is consistently highlighted as one of the deterrents to self-employment particularly in disadvantaged areas. Benefit rules in this area are complex and often poorly understood by advisers. Much of the action needed to address this issue needs to be taken at national level. At the regional level there are a number of things we can do to improve our understanding of the issue and our ability to impact it.

The strategy

- We will invite a senior regional manager from Jobcentre Plus to join the Women's Enterprise Steering Group to ensure this issue is placed firmly on our agenda and we have the right expertise around the table to understand what we can do regionally and locally
- We will encourage business support providers, particularly the Enterprise Gateways who lead on the hard to reach segments, to build relationships with their local Jobcentre Plus and Inland Revenue office and to work with them to produce better information for women
- We will collate the experiences of women on benefits through our business support providers and networks and communicate these to national and regional policy makers
- On the basis of the evidence gathered SEEDA will seek to inform and influence government, through its Strategy & Sustainability Division, on measures to assist emerging female entrepreneurs make the transition from benefits to self-employment

7.4 Childcare

The objective

To improve the provision of flexible childcare facilities for women entrepreneurs.

The issues

The availability, flexibility and cost of childcare both in the pre and post start-up phases is a significant barrier for many women who would otherwise be capable of running successful businesses. Whilst some of the issues can only be tackled at national level, there are a number of things we can do within the region to make provision more accessible for women entrepreneurs.

The strategy

- Business support providers will be encouraged to develop partnerships with local childcare providers to provide affordable facilities to women taking advantage of business support programmes particularly in the pre-start-up phases
- Business support providers will be encouraged to work with their Local Authorities (who have a remit from the Department for Education and Skills (DFES) to improve the provision of childcare generally) to provide specialist business advice and training for individuals and Social Enterprises interested in setting up childcare businesses and to raise awareness of the opportunities and the grant funding available
- The regional Social Enterprise Strategy will support the development of a guide for social entrepreneurs developing childcare businesses as a source of best practice and guidance for business support agencies and the public sector. The county social enterprise partnerships, Change Up, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and voluntary and community sector local consortia addressing public service delivery, will be encouraged to support local initiatives as part of the delivery of this strategy
- We will collate the experiences of women entrepreneurs throughout the region and communicate these to national and regional policy makers
- Through the continuing policy work on childcare in SEEDA's Strategy & Sustainability Division, the Economic Inclusion Team will bring together regional partners to identify support and policy issues to further support for the delivery of the Women's Enterprise Strategy

7.5 Raising the profile

The objective

To raise the profile and understanding of women's entrepreneurship amongst all stakeholders including the public, investors, opinion formers, policy makers and business support agencies.

The issue

Women's Enterprise support organisations in the US have made extensive use of the media to change the public's, business decision makers', investors' and policy makers' perceptions of women owned businesses. In the UK, whilst there is growing acceptance of Women's Enterprise, there is still a widespread lack of understanding about its scale, its economic importance and about the nature of the businesses that women are successful developing. Too many investors, policy makers and business support agencies still believe that women are only interested in 'hobby' businesses and there is a shortage of positive role models. The media is still largely focused on a handful of high profile women who are unrepresentative of the breadth of Women's Enterprise in the UK.

The strategy

SEEDA will invest in:

- Intensive PR activity in the regional, local and specialist media to promote a range of positive role models from all segments (building on its recent role model brochure), to raise awareness of the economic benefits of Women's Enterprise and to use research findings to generate debate around continuing barriers to progress. It will work closely with local partners in this activity
- A roadshow explaining the economic case and the region's commitment to Women's Enterprise which can be rolled out to business support agencies, Jobcentre Plus and Inland Revenue staff, professional networks, banking teams, investors' groups, opinion formers etc
- Publications to promote Women's Enterprise including a Key Fact Sheet (based on the successful US publication)
- Continued support for Enterprise Insight activity to engage and interest young women in enterprise

7.6 Connecting the community

The objective

To connect members of the Women's Enterprise community with one another and with public policy makers.

The issues

The appointment of the South East Women's Enterprise Co-ordinator in 2004 has already brought about improved co-ordination and communication between the Women's Enterprise community. This community includes women entrepreneurs themselves, support agencies, networks, higher education, research groups and voluntary and community groups. The experience of the US tells us that co-ordination and communication is critical but not always easy to achieve. It requires intensive ongoing work to keep everyone moving towards the common goal.

The US experience has also demonstrated the importance of engaging women business owners themselves in the process of influencing public policy makers as their voices are much more powerful and influential than when the agencies alone speak out. In the US it is women business owners themselves who have driven the agenda. Whilst that would be difficult to achieve here we do need to find structured ways of enabling women entrepreneurs to influence public policy where it affects them.

The strategy

SEEDA will continue to host a regional co-ordination role for Women's Enterprise to:

- Build relationships with all of the stakeholder organisations
- Develop a regional web portal for Women's Enterprise which will connect women with support in their area; promote women's networks; promote role models; and provide information for policy makers and the media. The Women's Enterprise business support directory will be incorporated into this website. In designing the web portal SEEDA will draw on the lessons learnt from SBS' recent on-line summit
- SEEDA will also contribute regional content to the new national Women's Enterprise website – www.womensenterprise.co.uk
- Continue to produce a regional e-newsletter for stakeholders
- Build on the first Stakeholder Forum event held in November 2004 and invite women entrepreneurs, government and non-government agencies to an annual regional event. This will provide opportunities to influence policy makers, share best practice and celebrate success
- Create and manage a formal policy consultation process through which individual women entrepreneurs will have the opportunity to input their views on key policy issues such as childcare, welfare benefits, the Regional Economic Strategy for the South East (RES) etc. This process will use existing women's networks and support agencies to reach as many women entrepreneurs as possible
- Put women forward to represent the community on influential regional and national bodies particular where women's representation is currently low or non-existent e.g. Business South East, the Boards of the Sector Consortia and the Enterprise Hubs. Provide them with training and support to help them become effective advocates for Women's Enterprise

At sub-regional level we propose to identify a Women's Enterprise champion in each county from amongst the existing support agencies to help improve communication and co-ordination at the sub-regional level. This champion would be someone passionate about Women's Enterprise and actively involved in supporting women entrepreneurs. They might come from a Business Link, an Enterprise Gateway, Enterprise Agency or other support agency and would be responsible for:

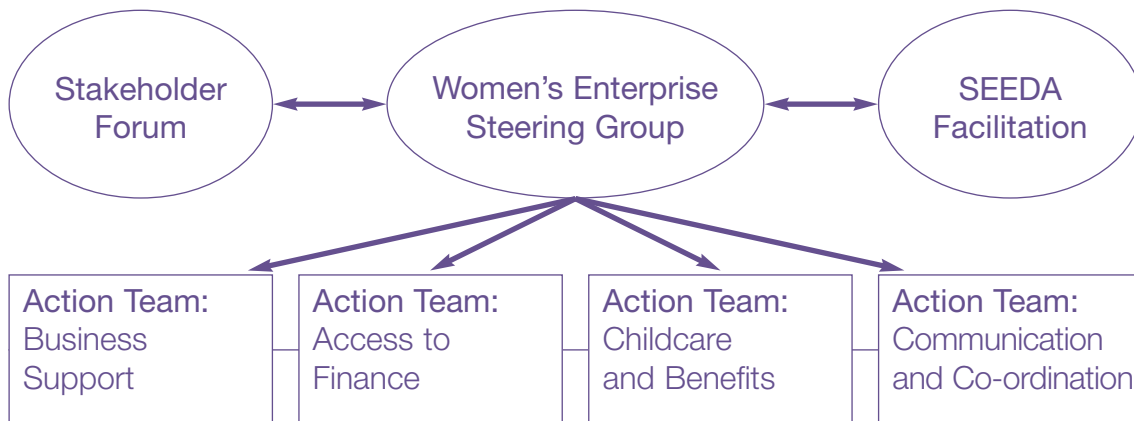
- Helping the regional co-ordinator identify all the organisations involved in supporting Women's Enterprise in their sub-region
- Bringing these organisations together on a regular basis at the sub-regional level to improve understanding of what each other offers, share best practice, identify opportunities for collaboration or funding bids, identify gaps or ensure duplication is avoided

SEEDA will provide a small amount of funding, from the Capacity Building Fund, for champion's organisation to assist with this process.

8 How will we implement it?

8.1 Overall implementation structure

This strategy will be implemented through the following organisation structure:



The roles of each of the components of this structure are explained below:

8.2 Women's Enterprise Steering Group

The Women's Enterprise Steering Group will be retained but its membership will be expanded to comprise:

- Four women entrepreneurs (one of which would be invited to chair the group)
- A representative of the Business Links (Deputy Chair)
- A representative of the Enterprise Gateways
- A representative of the Enterprise Hubs
- A representative of the Enterprise Agencies
- A representative from a women's network
- A representative from Jobcentre Plus
- The South East Women's Enterprise Co-ordinator
- SEEDA's Head of Enterprise
- SEEDA's Head of Business Support
- SEEDA's Head of Economic Inclusion
- A representative from Prowess
- A representative from the learning and skills community

The group will meet quarterly and be responsible for:

- Appointing members of the action teams, providing them with their terms of reference and reviewing their progress
- Reviewing the impact of the overall strategy against the key indicators
- Reviewing the results of consultations with the Stakeholder Forum and the wider Women's Enterprise community and providing advice to SEEDA on policy issues
- Providing advice to SEEDA on future development of the regional strategy and additional research requirements
- Reviewing and contributing to emerging policy development to support delivery of the regional strategy
- Meeting annually with the Chair and business members of SEEDA's Board to raise the profile of Women's Enterprise and to discuss strategic issues

8.3 Action Teams

Four Action Teams will be created to drive forward the detailed implementation of the strategy. These teams will be:

1. Business Support (Priority one)
2. Access to Finance (Priority two)
3. Childcare and Benefits Issues (Priorities three and four)
4. Communication and Co-ordination (Priorities five and six)

The Action Teams will be appointed by the Steering Group and will comprise:

- At least one member of the Steering Group
- At least one member of SEEDA's Enterprise Team
- The Women's Enterprise Co-ordinator
- At least one of the sub-regional Women's Enterprise champions
- Other people from the Women's Enterprise community with expertise and interest in this area

They will meet as and when required and will be responsible for:

- Producing the detailed action plan for their priority
- Monitoring progress against the action plan
- Reporting on progress to the Steering Group

8.4 Stakeholder Forum

The Stakeholder Forum will meet formally once a year at an annual event. Its role will be to bring together all members of the Women's Enterprise community including entrepreneurs, government and non-government agencies to build relationships, share best practice, input to policy issues and celebrate success. It will be chaired by Pam Alexander, Chief Executive of SEEDA as a demonstration of the importance which SEEDA places on this issue. Members of the Forum will also be able to input to policy issues via regular web-based consultations and will receive a regular e-newsletter.

8.5 SEEDA Facilitation

Staff within SEEDA's Enterprise Team will be responsible for:

- Facilitating the Steering Group and taking formal minutes
- Supporting the work of the Action Teams
- Communicating the regional strategy to relevant stakeholder organisations and persuading them of the case for supporting Women's Enterprise
- Advising the business support organisations on the development of their action plans to work towards Flagship status
- Building relationships with all members of the Stakeholder Forum and co-ordinating the annual Stakeholder Forum event
- Co-ordinating the production of content for the web portal
- Co-ordinating the PR activity
- Collating outcome data, analysing it and presenting it to the Steering Group
- Representing the region at relevant networks and forums

Staff within SEEDA's Economic Inclusion Team will be responsible for:

- Identifying and developing for implementation key policy issues to support women entrepreneurs from diverse and disadvantaged communities from the national and regional context
- Supporting the work of the Action Teams

8.6 Implementation timetable

The key steps to implementing this plan in 2005/2006 are highlighted below:

November 2005	Stakeholder Forum – regional event to invite the forum to comment on the draft strategy New Steering Group and Action Team members identified and approached
December 2005	Steering Group reviews feedback from the consultation and finalises the strategy document
January 2006	SEEDA approves the strategy document Action Teams initiated
February 2006	Action Teams complete initial action plans and work gets underway including – development of website, communication of the strategy SEEDA approves 2006/2007 budget for regional co-ordination Prowess annual conference
April 2006	Final report back from the pilot projects Capacity building fund starts to award grants to mainstream business support organisations working towards Flagship status

9 How will we know if we are succeeding?

9.1 Government targets

The Strategic Framework set the following national targets:

- By 2006, women will account for 40% of customers using government sponsored business support services
- By 2006, women owned businesses will account for 20% of the UK total
- By 2006, the number of women from ethnic minority communities receiving business support assistance will be proportional to their representation in the local/regional population

However, at present the measures are not in place to establish a baseline or monitor progress against these targets.

9.2 The data challenge

The lack of robust measures of women's business ownership nationally is well known and Prowess and the Women's Enterprise Panel have identified this as a major issue for government to address.

With regard to the measurement of business support usage, there is some concern amongst business support organisations about the administrative burden and the impact on customers that might be required to collect customer data disaggregated by gender and ethnicity. Whilst this concern is appreciated, we nevertheless believe that it is essential to collect customer data in this way if we are to make significant progress on Women's Enterprise. This view was reinforced by our US study tour where the head of the National Women's Business Council said:

"Having accurate, reliable and time data is a critical component in making the case for policy action and for monitoring progress (or lack thereof). Gender disaggregated government business information is extremely important on the characteristics and challenges of women (and men) business owners."

SEEDA will therefore place a high priority on encouraging the business support organisations which it funds to disaggregate their data by gender and ethnicity.

9.3 Proposed key indicators

In the absence of firm measures, SEEDA proposes to adopt a basket of key indicators where data sources exist and which together should provide an indication of whether the strategy is having an impact and be capable of informing future strategy development. These key indicators are:

Key Indicator	Data Sources	Baseline
% businesses using SEEDA - sponsored business support services which are female majority-owned	Business Support organisation customer information systems	Business Link – 23% (Cumulative 2004/2005) Data not currently available for other organisations
% businesses using SEEDA - sponsored business support services which are BME female majority-owned	Business Support organisation customer information systems	Not currently available
% businesses using SEEDA - sponsored business support services which are majority-owned by women with a disability	Business Support organisation customer information systems	Not currently available
% of self-employed people in the region who are women	Labour Force Survey (ONS)	27% (tbc)
% of start-ups in the region owned by women	Barclays/NOP	35% (2004)
Total Entrepreneurial Activity of women in the South East	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM)	4.4% (2004)
Number of women in the South East thinking of starting a business	A bespoke annual tracking survey for this region carried out by GEM	Not available – survey not yet commissioned
Number of businesses in the South East majority owned by women	Ditto	Ditto

To help address gaps in the data, SEEDA plans to fund a bespoke element of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor for the South East.

9.4 Using the data

Data against the key indicators will be collated and analysed by SEEDA's Enterprise Team and presented to the Women's Enterprise Steering Group at its quarterly meetings. At this stage we have insufficient historical data to enable us to set regional targets. As time progresses and our understanding of the data improves, we will be in a better position to do so.

9.5 Targets for mainstream support organisations

SEEDA considered setting gender and ethnicity-specific targets for its mainstream business support organisations but concluded that at this stage it would be preferable to encourage these organisations to view Women's Enterprise as a big opportunity to help them hit their core customer targets and to focus their efforts on embedding gender disaggregated measurement in their day-to-day work. They will be required to report regularly to SEEDA on their contribution towards achieving the headline targets of 10,000 new businesses and 40% penetration by business support agencies. In the longer term if this approach proves to be unsuccessful in achieving significant progress SEEDA will consider incorporating gender-specific targets into its contracts.

10 How will the implementation be paid for?

10.1 Overall approach

The proposed approach to funding the implementation of this strategy is:

- SEEDA's Business & International Division will fund all areas of regional co-ordination and communication including the Women's Enterprise Co-ordinator, PR activity, the Stakeholder Forum, the web portal, regional research and data gathering. In doing so, it will maximise the potential for corporate sponsorship to make the budget go further
- Mainstream business support organisations (i.e. the Business Link Operators, Enterprise Agencies, Enterprise Hubs, Enterprise Gateways and Finance South East) will be expected to meet the needs of female clients from their existing funding streams or by winning grant funding for targeted local projects from other sources e.g. Learning & Skills Councils, Area Investment Frameworks, ESF and Interreg
- However, SEEDA will establish a regional Capacity Building Fund for Women's Enterprise to which the mainstream organisations can apply to help implement their action plans for achieving Prowess Flagship status. Such activities to be supported by the fund would include best practice visits, gender focus training, pilot projects to test innovative approaches; or providing intensive support to excluded groups
- Business Link Operators and their Enterprise Gateways, are best positioned to work with local providers and so, in order not to risk confusion or duplication in the market, SEEDA will not fund local provision directly
- SEEDA will seek to mobilise the resources of other agencies and other parts of SEEDA behind this strategy e.g. Local Authorities in helping to address childcare gaps; the Higher Education Innovation Fund in supporting female graduate entrepreneurship; SEEDA's Economic Inclusion Team for policy and implementation work on financial products to support high risk businesses through microcredit provision, CDFIs and through the delivery of the regional Social Enterprise strategy

10.2 SEEDA expenditure 2005/2006

SEEDA's planned expenditure for this financial year only is as follows:

Activity	£	Status
Six local delivery partnership pilots @£20,000 each	120,000	Committed
Best practice visit to USA	3,000	Committed
Development of Women's Enterprise web portal and intranet	10,000	
Stakeholder Forum event	10,000	
Launch of the Business Directory	5,000	Committed
Production of the role model brochure	5,000	Committed
Prowess membership	1,000	Committed
TOTAL	154,000	

In addition, the Business Links' Regional Collaborative Fund has provided £64,000 to cover the cost of the Women's Enterprise Co-ordinator during 2005/2006 (in addition to the £30,000 it provided in 2004/2005).

10.3 Longer term funding requirements

Longer term we estimate that the funding required for regional co-ordination will be as follows:

Activity	2006/2007 £	2007/2008 £	2008/2009 £
Capacity Building Fund	500,000	500,000	500,000
Website Development	10,000	10,000	10,000
PR	30,000	30,000	30,000
Stakeholder Forum	10,000	10,000	10,000
Other	5,000	5,000	5,000
TOTAL	555,000	555,000	555,000

APPENDIX I - People consulted

Women's Enterprise Steering Group

Irene Goh (Chair)	South East Women's Enterprise Co-ordinator
Rosemary French	Chief Executive, Business Link Surrey
Kathy Lewis	The Enterprise Centre
Nina Sian	Director, Slough Enterprise Gateway
Pam McHale	Head of Economic Inclusion, SEEDA
Greg Ward	Head of Enterprise, SEEDA
Julie Kapsalis	SEEDA
Glen Atherfold/Karen Lacey	SEEDA
Kiki Maurey	Prowess

South East

Deborah Wyatt and Jan Field	Business Link Wessex
Amanda Geel	Sussex Enterprise
Sally Goodsell	Finance South East
Ann Johnston	Slough Enterprise Hub
Marilyn Huckerby	Surrey Enterprise Hub
Caroline Salmon	PRIME
Shemila Tharani	Reading Enterprise Gateway
Roger Broad	Institute of Directors
Juliette Holme	Women's Wisdom
Jacqui Hughes	SEEDA
Kate Annison	SEEDA
Glen Atherfold	SEEDA

National/other regions

Saskia Kent	Prowess
Sarah McPherson	Prowess
Steve Michell	Small Business Service
Sally Arkley	Women's Business Development Agency – West Midlands
Gill Fennings	Her Business - London
Monica Hingorani	East Midlands Women's Enterprise Co-ordinator
Sharon Jandu	Women in Business - Yorkshire
David Rowe	University of Warwick Science Park

US Study Tour – organisations visited

Centre for Women's Business Research	National Women's Business Council
National Association of Women Business Owners	Women's Business Centre of Northern Virginia
Springboard Enterprises	National Association of Women's Business Centres
Women Entrepreneurs of Baltimore	Women Angels.Net
George Washington University	Small Business Administration
Office of Women's Business Ownership	Women's Enterprise National Council
Women President's Organisation	Quantum Leaps
Women Impacting Public Policy	Calvert Foundation

APPENDIX II

Information Sources

Aegis Associates, *South East Research*, 2005

Bank of Scotland, *Opening the Door for women in business*, 2004

British Chamber of Commerce/GEM, *Achieving the Vision – Female Entrepreneurship*, 2005

Business Link Wessex, *Women Into Business Dorset – 9 month report*, 2005

DTI, *Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise*, 2003

DTI/SBS *Promoting Female Entrepreneurship*, 2005

Enterprise Research, *Women Friendly Business Support Provision in South East England – a mapping report for SEEDA*, 2005

Martin Wyn Griffiths, *SBS Speech on Women's Enterprise to the World Bank*, 2005

National Regional Partnership Board on Business Support, *Promoting Women's Enterprise*, 2005

Prowess *The Flagship Award – For Best Practice in Women's Enterprise Development*, 2005

Prowess, *A manifesto for women's enterprise*, 2005

Shared Intelligence (on behalf of Prowess), *The Regional State of Women's Enterprise in England*, 2005

Prowess/UKBI – *Women-friendly incubation environments and managed workspaces*, 2005

SEEDA, *Directory of Business Support for Women*, 2005

SEEDA/Business Links/LSC *Joining Forces: An integrated framework for business support in the South East*, 2005

APPENDIX III

Prowess Flagship standards for business support providers

INCLUSION

1. Outreach

Evidence: An effective outreach programme (e.g. talks/visits to places women go).

Rationale: It is a big step for a lot of entrepreneurial women to describe themselves as 'businesswomen'. Those women will not be attracted by traditional methods of marketing.

2. Access

Evidence: Deal with access issues adequately e.g.:

Location: women are less likely to have access to a vehicle so venues should be accessible by public transport and in locations which take personal safety into consideration.

Costs: Women are more likely to be on lower incomes or benefits and may be excluded by the cost of care, travel or course fees.

Taking care responsibilities into account: Women with care responsibilities will need access to a crèche or help with childcare costs without too many restrictions.

Culture: Some cultures will not attend mixed gender courses

Rationale: Inaccessible programmes can effectively design women and other groups out.

CLIENT FOCUSED

3. Segmented market knowledge

Evidence: Disaggregate client statistics by gender, ethnicity, disability and any other relevant under-represented or disadvantaged groups and on balance they reach an adequate number of these.

Rationale: To effectively target market segments, you need to measure the effectiveness of your marketing approach.

4. Listening organisation

Evidence: Client focused – constantly working to improve the service and meet client needs, with good methods for listening to clients' experience and concerns. Will have procedures such as social audits or client surveys.

Rationale: Women in business often feel invisible and not listened to. Best practice organisations really do listen and act on feedback from their clients.

5. Regular face-to-face service

Evidence: A well promoted programme or menu of business support services, which clearly states the type of service available e.g. training courses, workshops, business advice sessions etc.

Rationale: Lack of confidence is an issue for a lot of women starting their own business. In the early stages face-to-face services are crucial. Regular face-to-face services will also build trust and help ensure that businesses feel that they can help shape the service.

6. Promotion of client's businesses

Evidence: Clients are assisted to promote and celebrate their businesses where possible e.g. encouraged to apply for awards; directories of members; press coverage of case studies.

Rationale: Such promotion has the dual benefit of both promoting the business (and many women find sales and marketing a particular problem) and creating relevant role models for other women looking to start a business.

EQUALITY

7. Some women only provision

Evidence: There is an option of women-only support in terms of either pre-enterprise training, business training or networking.

Rationale: Women often feel more comfortable in discussing broader issues affecting their businesses in a woman-only session. This can enable strong and effective networks to develop, which are a source of ongoing support during the process of starting and developing a business. Women-only can be an essential option for some cultural groups.

8. Commitment to diversity

Evidence: At least 40% of clients should be women and a proportionate % of BME women to local population (except in organisations specifically aimed at BME groups). There should be a clear commitment to promoting diversity through organisational policies and practice.

Rationale: If services are effectively targeted at women and are meeting their needs this will start to translate into greater numbers of women taking up those services. Within the Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise, the government's target for women using government funded business support services is 40% and mainstream business support organisations need to be meeting this target. The framework stipulates that the number of women from BME communities receiving business support assistance should be proportionate to their representation in the relevant local/regional population.

9. Women business support professionals

Evidence: At least 1/3 of the business support professional staff in the business support organisation are women.

Rationale: Support organisations need to make efforts to reflect the characteristics of their clients. Women business support professionals can be powerful role models to clients and women clients sometimes feel happier seeing another woman.

QUALITY

10. Established programmes

Evidence: The programme of women's business support has been established for at least one year.

Rationale: Reflecting on experience and feedback from clients is an important part of the process of designing a quality programme of women's business support.

11. Significant impact

Evidence: Programme assists a minimum of 50 women a year (30 in remote areas).

Rationale: Best practice is about making an impact as well as effective programme design and delivery. Quality programmes need to be committed to supporting a reasonable number of businesses.

12. Effective partnerships

Evidence: Where an organisation is dependent on partnerships to deliver elements of its service, the organisation will be able to influence the partner's delivery and will receive operational reports.

Rationale: Referral relationships are important, but best practice organisations will seek closer working relationships with organisations which enable them to deliver a coherent service. And they will expect the same high standards from partner organisations as they set for themselves.

13. Coherent range of services

Evidence: Directly or in the type of partnerships outlined above, the organisation is able to provide the following services, including at least one women-only option.

- a. *Pre-enterprise training or counselling.* Those sessions build confidence and personal effectiveness skills such as time management and negotiation. Essential foundations for people who are starting a business after a long period out of paid work.
- b. *Business training or counselling* – standard building blocks of most effective business support programmes.
- c. *Help accessing finance* (either the provision of grants and/or loans for business start-up and development and/or informed signposting to appropriate sources of finance and business advice input to ensure women are investment ready.)
- d. *ICT training* – Some reports find that women are less likely to use ICT in their business. Business ICT should be a core element of business training programmes and clients should be encouraged to use ICT to research and promote their business where appropriate.
- e. *Networking or mutual support groups* – An awful lot of business is conducted through informal and formal networks – but women have traditionally been less likely to participate in business or other networks. Women-only networks can be a stepping stone to engage in a range of networks and in themselves provide opportunities for important mutual support with other women in the same position.

Rationale: By providing a coherent range of services the organisation will enable women to access all the support they need to start-up or develop their business without the need to shop around numerous business support agencies.

Additional recommendations:

The services identified above are the minimum level required. In addition, organisations are encouraged to think about providing:

- Assistance in making the transition from welfare benefits to self-employment
- Mentoring or coaching services
- A managed workspace/incubation environment