

Women Business Center (WBiC) at Lahore

Rationale:

Business incubation is a dynamic process of business enterprise development. Incubators nurture young firms (from start-ups to maximum of 5 year old enterprise), helping them to survive and grow during the startup and expansion period (movement from home-based offices to commercial place) when they are most vulnerable. Incubators provide hands-on management assistance, planning business growth, exploring new opportunities, legal considerations, managing finance, and orchestrated exposure to critical business support services. They also offer entrepreneurial firms shared office services, access to equipment, flexible leases and expandable space all under one roof. The Incubator centers have worldwide have made an important contribution to promoting economic growth, stimulating industrial development, creating jobs and boosting growth in particular regions.

Status of Women Entrepreneurship

According to Economic Census of Pakistan- Preliminary Report – May 2005 by Federal Bureau of Statistics, there are 70,658 women owned businesses operating across Pakistan. This represents 3% of total enterprises in Pakistan. It is estimated that most of the women owned businesses fall within the category of SMEs. Table 2 below, highlights the corporate structure of their businesses.

| Table: 1 Employment by Status of Establishment, Employment Status and Sex | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|--|--------|----------------|---------|----------------------|---------|
| Status of Enterprise | Total | Proprietors / Partnership / Self Employees | | Paid Employees | | Unpaid Family Helper | |
| | | MALE | FEMALE | MALE | FEMALE | MALE | FEMALE |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| TOTAL | 6,580,031 | 2,906,718 | 70,737 | 1,768,673 | 245,938 | 1,448,238 | 139,727 |
| Household | 338,522 | 127,338 | 52,295 | 9,105 | 4290 | 44,880 | 100,614 |
| Corporate Enterprise | 64,559 | 1,773 | 51 | 58,655 | 4,080 | | |
| Government | 115,042 | 714 | 79 | 84,233 | 30,016 | | |
| Other | 6,061,908 | 2,776,893 | 18,312 | 1,616,680 | 207,552 | 1,403,358 | 39,113 |

(Source: Economic Census of Pakistan, 2005, FBS)

The level of women participating in enterprise development currently is around 16%, reason being availability of their limited resources topped by lack of confidence to invest in infrastructural facilities. Mostly, women in business venture into setting-up their business facility once the clientele is defined and their cash cycle becomes manageable.

In order to bridge this gap, government of Pakistan has given SMEDA the task of setting of First Women Business Incubation Center (WBIC)- a step toward promoting Women Entrepreneurship- a one window especially catering to their business needs. This center will address the WE specific development needs along with providing them secure space to nurture their business. Hence, it would not only provide physical facility but also impart business management training to existing and new entrepreneurs.

What is WBiC?

Women Business incubation Center (WBiC) will provide 'hands-on support' not 'life support' to women entrepreneurs (our clients). Women Entrepreneurs (WEs) will be offered to rent office space for establishing presence in the market (expanding from home based business to commercial office), or starting their business with promising business plan or looking for an opportunity to market their products through display center at nominal charges along with access to instant business management solutions. In total, 35 ladies will be selected to utilize Women Business Incubation Center. It is expected with the establishment of this Center around 1000 WEs will be getting direct or indirect assistance through WBIC in a period of 3 years.

What are the goals of WBiC?

The major goal of this project is to help women to develop their business skills that will enable them to compete effectively in today's marketplace. Broadly speaking its objectives are mentioned below:

- To provide secure office facility for Women Entrepreneurs
- Providing them business support services
- To provide a platform for networking
- Exploring new business opportunities;

Services offered at WBiC

Following services will be provided to in order to encourage and promote Women in Business.

i. Office Space

The space which will be allocated for Women to set up their independent offices is given in table 2. The Women Entrepreneurs (WEs) will be selected on the basis of their business concept/business plan, educational background and leadership quality preferably Ladies working in Services Sector or Non-Traditional items. This rented office areas within the center could be used by start-ups and existing Women Entrepreneurs for maximum period of 2 years. The main objective is to empower and build the capacity of Women Entrepreneurs upto this period and by that time these ladies should be able to operate independently the daily activities of business. These offices will be rented for a maximum of 2 years to an individual with the prior contract arrangement of incubation premises utilization and exit strategy. To minimize the misuse of WBiC facility, it will be binding under contract for ladies to show at least 5% growth in their business or having developed a sound contract with buyers/suppliers otherwise the full cost of the area utilized will be charged upon her/ them at the end of incubation tenure.

| Sr. No. | Office Space (in Square feet) | Rental per Month | |
|---------|-------------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| | | <i>Year 1</i> | <i>Year 2</i> |
| | | Rs. 50/sq ft | Rs. 60/sq ft |
| 1 | Small Offices 100 sq ft (15) | Rs. 5,000 | Rs. 6,000 |
| 2 | Medium Offices 250sq ft (10) | Rs. 12,500 | Rs. 15,000 |

Source: SMEDA Estimates

¹ The rentals are estimated on current market prices and are subject to change.

These offices are fully equipped with wireless internet system, telephone line (charged to users as per actual cost monthly), desk, chairs and AC. The ladies renting WBiC facility will be given preference to participate in training programs organized by WBiC.

ii. Display Facility

Display Center facility has 10 small units for which a fee will be charged to meet the maintenance expenses. Therefore, variety of products produced by ladies would be displayed in that facility. These ladies will be given advice on quality management, product designing & development for further enhancement and marketability of their products. This display facility will be available for WEs at Rs. 2,500/- per week per stall to cover operational cost of managing display center. Ideally each WE can at maximum Utilize the Display facility starting from 1 week to 6 weeks. After a gap of 6 months she may apply again. This way more ladies will be given chance to participate.

iii. Direct, one-to-one advice

Incubation center will be providing guidance to clients on various business management techniques, business planning, opportunities for managing financial issues, enterprise development, marketing, product development, team-building and also specialist areas (e.g. sector knowledge).

iv. Professional services (e.g. accountants, lawyers, product developers, etc.)

Apart from services offered by WBIC manager, experts/ consultants will be hired to give specialized services to WEs at nominal fee. These consultants would be in field of Legal, Marketing, Financial, Accounting, Product Development/Designing, Quality Control, and BDS on need basis. These consultants will be visiting WBIC on regular basis so that they are easily accessible for ladies utilizing WBIC facilities.

v. A business 'portal'

SMEDA already has a web portal dedicated for WEs that is Women Information Network www.win.org. This provides up to date information on WEs issues and agencies working for economic empowerment of women. This portal will be a cyber information repository for women entrepreneurs in Pakistan. And other features will be added in that web portal.

vi. Seminars, Workshops and Training Programs

SMEDA helpdesk will be established in WBiC for delivering specially designed products for women entrepreneur development. In addition to this, Business advisory services of SMEDA will be delivered through this desk such as business plans, pre-feasibility studies, marketing plans and training programs for Women Entrepreneurs skill development and enhancement.

vii. Training & Meeting Room

This incubation center will have one Training hall with sitting capacity of 30-40 persons. The training room will have (10) PC units placed which can be used by WEs being tenants at WBiC or general walk-ins for web-surfing, re-align with international trends and networks. In addition to this include library section having useful information for business development, growth, and latest issues. Further center will have one meeting room (with sitting capacity of 8 persons). These rooms will be available for meeting and training program purposes for WEs with prior

approval/booking. These facilities can be used by walk-ins and ladies present in the incubation center however, fee will be charged from Women Entrepreneurs

Who can Apply?

Ladies having a business idea or are currently operating their business through their homes working in Manufacturing, Trading, Services Sector (excluding clinical doctors, dentists, lawyers and NGOs) or Non-Traditional items will be encouraged to apply for renting space at WBIC. However, all Business Development Services including training programs, direct-counseling, Expert advice, using meeting rooms, Internet area, other services such as photocopy, fax facilities, etc can be utilized by any walk-in Women Entrepreneur.

Project Benefits

WBIC aims at providing an opportunity to WEs to gauge the marketability of their products and to explore other potential markets. With the growing recognition that women have unique talents which could be harnessed for development and for creating employment opportunities for others who are not suited to an entrepreneurial career, developing women as entrepreneurs has become an important part of national development planning and strategies. By providing one window facility to this emerging sector of our economy will encourage Women to participate in Economic development and will provide chance to explore real market forces, whereby increasing their bargaining power, leading to their economic empowerment.

Your Feedback and comments

This project is first initiative for helping Women in Business, an institution promising a secure space for nurturing women businesses by providing them office space totally managed by women, exhibition area along with direct provision of crucial business information, training and counseling through panel of experts.

We are looking for experts and institutions in various sectors, subjects, fields who may like to partner with us in making our services delivery better equipped to deal with business requirements of Women Entrepreneurs.

Further, we invite all stakeholders, that is institutions, experts, academia, and Women Entrepreneurs themselves, to guide us and give us suggestions, comments to improve or add upon our existing portfolio of services or mechanism of delivery of services. Kindly contact us:

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