Women’s Business Resource Centers (WBRC)

A Women’s Business Resource Center (WBRC) is a safe space with childcare where women of various backgrounds can access educational opportunities and basic resources and receive mentoring and training from established entrepreneurs to start-up and grow their businesses. The WBRC addresses some of the main barriers to women’s economic empowerment and participation, including access to capital and technology and lack of business skills, among others.

Establishing a Women’s Business Resource Center

The WBRC model serves as a foundation of an entrepreneurial ecosystem, enabling women’s economic empowerment and leadership and increasing economic opportunities, particularly in countries where extreme inequality for women is one of the most pressing development obstacles. CIPE adapts the model to best fit the local context and enables local partners to operate the WBRC, who can use it to generate revenue for continued sustainability. After establishing the WBRC, CIPE helps local partners develop a cohesive business plan.

Success Story

CIPE established the WBRC in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea with funding from the Australian Government’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the US Department of State’s Bureau of Global Women’s Initiatives (GWI). Since opening in 2016, more than 3,800 women have received training and business services. A mentorship program links aspiring PNG women entrepreneurs with more established businesswomen mentors, and 42 women-owned enterprises fully operate out of the WBRC. The WBRC provides childcare services so that women with child-care needs are not excluded from programs, and the Center serves as a clearinghouse of information on additional services available to women, such as reporting and recovering from gender-based violence.
WBRC offer a variety of services, including:

- Business skills development: education and networking on issues, such as supply chains, financial literacy, social media management, legal rights, civil engagement and leadership. Training includes formal courses and standardized curriculum, with some stand-alone courses, including local case study examples, for women to pursue degrees in entrepreneurship and other topics. Curriculum modules are available with a video library and e-learning tools and accessible to people with disabilities.

- Mentorship program: Pairing mentors and mentees to grow their businesses and share information

- Local business database: Access to local service providers and connections to business-to-business support services.

- Training and consultation rooms: A main training room to accommodate 20-30 participants, plus smaller meeting rooms for individual consultations

- Childcare: Onsite childcare facilities with trained staff and child protection safeguards

- Co-working facilities: Access to information technology equipment and services.

Countries where the model has been employed successfully:

- PAPUA NEW GUINEA (2016)
- GUATEMALA (2021)