



WES Inclusive Women Venture Capital Info Session Transcript

May 10, 2022

Wendy Cukier: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Wendy Cukier and I'm the Academic Director for the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub and the Diversity Institute at the university formerly known as Ryerson. I'm really pleased that you could join the webinar today. We'll just give participants a few moments to roll in and then we'll get started.

Wendy Cukier: Okay, great. There may be a few people rolling in, but we should proceed because there's lots to discuss today. Before we get started, I'd like to say that I'm joining you from the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnaabe, the Haudenosaunee, the Chippewa and the Wyandot peoples. Wherever anyone is joining this call from across the country, you are on traditional land of Indigenous peoples.

Wendy Cukier: All of us at the Diversity Institute and the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub have renewed our commitment to truth and reconciliation, and try to ensure that the concerns of Indigenous people are embedded in the work that we do. Thank you very much for joining us today.

Wendy Cukier: I also want to note that simultaneous translation is available. If you look at the bottom of your screen, there's a button that you can choose for English or French or both. Any questions that you have, you can post in the Q&A box. The chat will not be live except for us to post some links and so forth. Please do post your questions in the Q&A box, and we'll do what we can to answer them. If we don't get through all your questions, we will have a transcript of this session, which is being recorded. We will go through and make sure that we share the responses to any questions that remain unanswered.

Wendy Cukier: I'm very pleased to have with me today, Sabine Soumare, who is the Executive Director of the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub and Etienne-René Massie, who is the Director General of Small Business Branch at Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada who will give you a lot more details on the program itself.

Wendy Cukier: I wanted to set the stage and provide a bit of context based on the work that the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub has been doing, because we believe that this initiative is an important part of the overall strategy supporting women entrepreneurs. We're very pleased to be involved in facilitating this session.

Wendy Cukier: As you know, we are really here today because the Honorable Minister Mary Ng, who is now Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, lot of portfolios, announced this new Inclusive Women Venture Capital Initiative.



Wendy Cukier: And under this new call, \$15 million has been allocated to support new projects, focusing on responding to the barriers in the venture capital environment, especially for diverse, intersectional or underserved women. This initiative really responds to the research that we've done, which suggests that the lack of access to venture capital in the ecosystem for women and especially diverse women, is a function of a number of complex factors.

Wendy Cukier: Now, this particular fund, again, is part of the suite of programs offered by the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy, and it is really focused on Ecosystem players, organizations, not individual women entrepreneurs by encouraging Ecosystem partners to undertake initiatives that are going to address opportunities for women by making the VC sector more inclusive and representative, by offering training and other programs to support inclusion in VCs, but also to help equip women to attract venture capital.

Wendy Cukier: So it really does address some of the issues that we've identified on both the supply and the demand side of the equation. And we know that women entrepreneurs are under financed. We also know there are a whole variety of factors, which contribute to this. Women are about a quarter less likely to attract VC investments. Some of this is because of the sectors that they are in, the size of their operations and so on and so forth. Some of it is a function of how women are treated when they pitch to VCs.

Wendy Cukier: And there's a lot of evidence that shows that women are treated differently. That men are often questioned differently about their potential rather than their track record whereas women are more likely to be questioned about their track record than their potential. We also know that currently in Canada, women are underrepresented as partners in VC firms, and they're under 10% of managing partners. And yet we know that when VCs do have women partners and women in decision making roles, they're far more likely to invest in women entrepreneurs than others. We know that there's a lot that can be done in the financial sector generally. And we know that the government has a number of interrelated initiatives addressing some of the structural issues. So it's important to recognize this fund is one piece in a comprehensive package of initiatives.

Wendy Cukier: But we think that, as I said, it does go to several of the key issues that we have identified in the research as presenting barriers to women entrepreneurs. And so, we continue to address other dimensions of the innovation ecosystem to challenge stereotypes about who's an entrepreneur, to try to celebrate women's success.

Wendy Cukier: One of the great things that we found in our latest State of Women Entrepreneurship report is while women unicorns [n.b. "unicorn" is a term frequently used to describe a startup company with a valuation of over \$1 billion] are rare, they're increasing in number in Canada, and that is encouraging indeed. So without further ado, I would like to turn the mic over to Etienne-René Massie who will talk more about the program and who's eligible and how you can apply.



Etienne-René Massie: Thanks, Wendy. And thanks for the introduction. : And I'm happy that we can work with the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub to provide this information session today.

Etienne-René Massie: As I begin, I wanted to acknowledge that I'm speaking to you from the traditional, unceded territories of the Algonquin Anishnaabe people and I'm grateful to have the opportunity to be present in this territory and speak to you from this territory today.

Etienne-René Massie: So before we begin, again, thanks to the Knowledge Hub for hosting the event today. The Knowledge Hub continues to be an important partner in our efforts to support women entrepreneurs.

Etienne-René Massie: However, just to be clear up front, while the Knowledge Hub is hosting this event today, they were not involved in the design or in the delivery for this initiative of the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy. They're being gracious hosts today. If there's questions and comments about the initiative, they should be directed to ISED.

Etienne-René Massie: The session today, as we know it, is being recorded and we'll be posting the video after so if people can have it and review it as they wish. My goal today is really to provide an overview and elaborate on the eligibility of this new initiative and to then be able to answer questions at the end.

Etienne-René Massie: Launched under Budget 2018, the Government of Canada's Women Entrepreneurship Strategy aims to increase women owned businesses, access to the financing talent, networks and expertise that they need to start up to scale up and access new markets. In support of the strategy's objectives, the federal government has launched the Inclusive Women's Venture Capital Initiative.

Etienne-René Massie: Through this initiative, \$15 million has been allocated to support new projects focused on responding to the barriers in the venture capital environment, especially for diverse, intersectional and/or underserved women. This initiative will provide non-repayable contribution funding to not-for-profit organizations, to build a more inclusive venture capital environment.

Etienne-René Massie: This could include projects that aim to strengthen the capacity of women entrepreneurs to access venture capital funding, increase representation of women in the venture capital industry, or initiatives that ensure that the venture capital industry is sensitive to gender and potential unconscious biases in their operations.

Etienne-René Massie: So what is outside of the scope of this initiative? This initiative will not support the following activities. We will not support direct investment in funds or the creation of funds such as venture funds. We will not support further distribution of funds to third party organizations for others to manage.



And we will not support standalone research activities that are not directly serving the objectives or the desired outcome of the initiative. And for additional clarity, this initiative will not support standalone research projects.

Etienne-René Massie: However, it will support eligible research related costs necessary to support project delivery, such as IT, technical expertise, legal translation, digital and social media production.

Etienne-René Massie: It will not be providing venture capital funding or financing directly to women entrepreneurs. For women entrepreneurs who are looking for financing, the federal government has invested in the Women Entrepreneurship Loan Fund. In March, we announced as the administrators of this funding, lending will be available shortly. We would encourage you to check the loan page website, and we're going to provide links here in the chat for you.

Etienne-René Massie: Some of you may remember that the government announced the Venture Capital Catalyst Initiative in Budget 2021. The government closed a consultation on that initiative on April 8th, and we are looking forward to launching that fund in the near future.

Etienne-René Massie: Now I'd like to go back to the purpose of our discussion today, which is the Inclusive Women's Venture Capital Initiative to discuss who can apply the partnership components of this initiative and the types of projects that would be supported through funding, and what will be required in the application.

Etienne-René Massie: Links to the program guide are provided in the group discussion so you can follow along or review later. These links are also going to be shared in the chat.

Etienne-René Massie: First I'd like to discuss eligibility, which is outlined in section B four of the guide. First of all, the lead applicant must be a Canadian not-for-profit organization with a minimum of two years of operating experience. The organization has to have a focus on supporting women in the venture capital environment.

Etienne-René Massie: Should partners opt to create an entity for the project, for delivery of this project, the entity has to be incorporated prior to the application submission date, and at least one of its partner organizations must meet the minimum two years of operational experience in the field.

Etienne-René Massie: We are seeking organizations that are able to demonstrate significant experience in advancing the participation of women in the venture capital industry. For additional clarity, applicants need to clearly demonstrate significant experience working with women entrepreneurs and relevant experience working in the VC ecosystem, or with VC firms in their applications.



Etienne-René Massie: The lead applicant should fall under at least one of the following categories of not-for-profit organizations or associations. For example, a business or investor associations, post-secondary academic institutions, or research institutes, business or entrepreneur support organizations or associations, research or innovation hubs, Indigenous organizations, business accelerators or incubators, and associations representing not-for-profit social enterprises or cooperatives.

Etienne-René Massie: Eligible organizations must have at least two years of operational experience and a mandate or history of programming or services that support diversity in the venture capital environment, and/or women as entrepreneurs, or fund managers, or industry professionals. I will elaborate on how this eligibility applies in the context of partnership shortly.

Etienne-René Massie: In addition, priority will be given to organizations that have achieved a minimum 50% gender parity and a minimum 30% of other underrepresented members on boards in senior management prior to the launch of this call. This is in keeping with the spirit of the federal government's 50-30 Challenge. [We have links to the 50-30 Challenge](#) that will be provided in the chat function.

Etienne-René Massie: Let's move to partnerships. Applications from partnerships are encouraged, but an organization may also choose to apply independently. Partnerships must be led by an eligible not-for-profit organization and can include participation from not-for-profit and for-profit organizations. Just to be additionally clear, a partnership can include for-profit organizations, venture capital funds, or other investment or entities or partners. But if a for-profit entity participates in the partnership as a partner, it is expected that they will make a financial contribution.

Etienne-René Massie: For-profit private sector partners on projects may not be the financial beneficiaries nor be remunerated through project funding. For example, a not-for-profit organization may engage a venture capital fund or a corporation as partners to the project. In this case, the venture capital fund or the corporation will be expected to make at a minimum, either a financial contribution to offset project costs, or provide in-kind support, such as industry contact, expertise, staff support, et cetera.

Etienne-René Massie: Both lead applicant and partner experience and expertise should be used to demonstrate the skill set and the capacity to meet the required assessment criteria, and at least one of the member organizations must meet the minimum two year operational experience in the field.

Etienne-René Massie: If you're looking to connect with other organizations that discuss possible partnerships, the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub's Sharing Platform is available to connect those who have an ask, with those who have support to give and could be a good tool to find partners. The free online platform is available at sharing.wekh.ca, and we'll also put a [link in the chat for you](#).

Etienne-René Massie: If you've never used the platform before, you'll need to take a minute to create an account, and then you'll be able to post your ask or view asks from others. We recommend using the



connections category to post or find others to collaborate with on your applications. We also recommend including the wording “seeking partners for Inclusive Women Venture Capital Initiative” in the title of your asks. If you have any questions about the Sharing Platform, we would encourage you to contact the Knowledge Hub directly. The Knowledge Hub can be contacted at di.wekh@ryerson.ca.

Etienne-René Massie: Next I'm going to turn to project parameters. The details are provided in section B of the guide, and we'll provide [links to the chat to that section](#). The project length may vary, but all activities must be completed by March 31st, 2025, and that's a hard stop deadline. That's when our appropriated funding ends for this initiative.

Etienne-René Massie: Projects must have a minimum total budget of \$600,000 and must not exceed a budget of \$5 million. Projects must be national or multi-regional. A multi-regional project is one that serves five or more of the provinces and territories in Canada. We will give priority to projects that deliver services in all provinces or in territories, for clarity purposes.

Etienne-René Massie: Projects must also be delivered in both official languages as per the Official Languages Act. Organizations that do not currently have capacity must provide clear plans on how additional capacity will be established to deliver services in English and French. Do remember that translation is an eligible cost in projects as well.

Etienne-René Massie: Priority will be given to projects that include a focus on meeting the needs of diverse, intersectional and/or underrepresented women.

Etienne-René Massie: Projects should focus on one or more of the following areas; providing education and training to the venture capital industry; engaging investors to better understand, adapt to, and work with women entrepreneurs in their enterprises; providing support to women entrepreneurs on options for financing; supporting efforts to advance and grow the representation of women in the venture capital industry; fostering networking and mentoring models for women entrepreneurs and their business; and to demonstrate support and contributions in other areas which will serve to strengthen the network of women, and diverse entrepreneurship organizations in Canada aligned with the Inclusive Women Venture Capital Initiative's objectives.

Etienne-René Massie: If we turn to eligible costs, the eligible costs are the project costs that are reasonable, incremental, and required to carry out the eligible activities. Expenses incurred prior to signing a contribution agreement are not eligible for reimbursement. You need to wait until we sign a contribution agreement with the successful applicants before starting to expend funds. Additional details on eligible costs and activities are elaborated on in the guide.

Etienne-René Massie: We would recommend that you read through those as you are developing your project. Before we turn to questions, I'd just like to outline what will be required in the application process.



Etienne-René Massie: The deadline for applications is June 20th, 2022. The application package must include a completed application form, a proposal paper, no more than 15 pages in length. Please note that applications that exceed the page limit may be screened out. We need two years of past financial statements audited or review engagement. We need incorporation documents of the lead applicant. We need the completed budget detail template. We are looking for sustainability plans.

Etienne-René Massie: So what happens once the funding ends for this initiative? Projects can of course be wound down and be completed, or projects can have a sustainability plan to continue past the end date.

Etienne-René Massie: If you're applying as a partnership, include an agreement between the parties or letters of support from all the partners and those documents should describe the roles, the responsibilities, and if applicable, financial and in-kind contributions to the projects.

Etienne-René Massie: Quebec based organizations will need to confirm if they are subject to compliance with the M-30 legislation. Just to be clear, we ask that so we know what steps we need to take with the Quebec government for those organizations. We will work with any successful candidates to ensure the proper authorizations are obtained. We just ask that people outline that in their applications. All of these requirements are outlined in section B.5 of the guide, and we are including [links in the chat](#).

Etienne-René Massie: Through the proposal paper, each applicant will be asked to elaborate on a number of areas, including the organization's eligibility, the key roles for the partners, and the responsibilities of the partners, the capacity of the organization and its partners. It's imperative that all applicants clearly articulate their experience in working with the VC ecosystem and with VC firms and the length of time they have done so given the objectives of this funding stream.

Etienne-René Massie: Project objectives and scope including what gaps the project will address, the design elements and how it will contribute to the initiative's objectives, project focus areas, the project activities, the risk and mitigation plan, the budget for the project, the expected outcomes and the sustainability plan, including details for the orderly conclusion of the project at the end date or plans to achieve future sustainability.

Etienne-René Massie: Section 5 of the guide provides instructions on how to format the proposal and the specific details that are being sought for each element of the project. We would encourage all interested applicants to review this section closely in advance of preparing an application.

Etienne-René Massie: If we turn to timelines, the deadline for application is June 20th, 2022 at 11:59 a.m. Pacific Standard Time. We strongly recommend that you submit your application well before the deadline to ensure there are no unforeseen technical issues at the time of submission, as late submissions will not



be considered for funding. Just to be clear, technical issues at the deadline mean that you will not be further considered. Please apply ahead of time to avoid any last minute technological issues.

Etienne-René Massie: If you have questions, we're happy to answer them. We have an inbox for the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy. We've included the [link to the address](#) in the chat box, and we will welcome any questions. However, if you wait until the last minute to send your questions, we can't guarantee that we'll be able to answer in time.

Etienne-René Massie: Once the call for applications closes, we'll assess applications based on the criteria set out in the application guide. Every applicant will receive a confirmation of their application's receipt immediately after submitting it. We will advise in writing of the outcome of the project's assessment, and there will be a time delay between your submission and your acknowledgement of receipt, and the final determination on the projects.

Etienne-René Massie: Successful proposals under this call for applications will be awarded three years of non-repayable contribution agreement. This means that successful applicants will receive up to three years of project funding, which would conclude on March 31st, 2025. Successful applicants will be required to report regularly to ISED on the initiative. This will include quarterly progress updates, annual reports, which include audited financial statements and a final report.

Etienne-René Massie: That concludes sort of the overview presentation, and now we'll move to the Q&A section. I'll turn it over to Sabine, who will moderate the Q&A session for us.

Sabine Soumare: Great, Etienne. I know that Wendy will monitor the English and I will take the French questions.

Wendy Cukier: We can take turns, but I'll kick off. There are basically two questions that have been posed so far. Maybe I'll take the first and Sabine you can take the next.

Wendy Cukier: So the first question is, we incorporated as a Canadian non-profit, July 20th, 2020. There is a two year operating requirement as of June, 2020. Is there any discretion in this requirement as the group was actively working six months prior to incorporation?

Etienne-René Massie: Thank you for that question. I would say if you have partners that you are bringing to your application, those partners could help you meet that two years of operating requirement, you would have to very clearly articulate and demonstrate the six months before. What I would encourage you and we encourage this for all projects to think about partnerships. I think with partners, you'll be able to meet that two years of experience, because those partners will bring in their years of experience as well.



Wendy Cukier: The next question is, if we apply to the WES Ecosystem Fund in March, can we apply to the initiative as well with a different proposal and scope? And when will the decisions on each fund be made?

Etienne-René Massie: Thanks for that question. If you've applied under the WES Ecosystem Funding, you can definitely apply under this stream as well. There is nothing that stops you from applying for both.

Etienne-René Massie: Just to be additionally clear, when we did the WES Ecosystem Information Session and in our documentations, we noted there would be a second Ecosystem call later this year. If you apply for this call for application, doesn't mean that you could not also apply for the third one.

Etienne-René Massie: With regards to when decisions will be made, that is contingent a bit on the number of applications we receive. If we receive many applications, it just takes a bit more time. We are looking to make decisions in the late fall, early winter. It could be sooner if there are less applications that come in.

Wendy Cukier: Etienne, I'm just reading a bit of nuance into this. I think the question was when the decisions on the earlier Ecosystem Fund might be made. Is there a chance they'll be made before submission? Then I'm reading the second question to be, do they have to submit a different application or could they basically take two kicks at the can and submit the same application to this fund?

Etienne-René Massie: Sure. On the first question, we are currently in the middle of the assessment of all the applications that we have received through the first Ecosystem call. I cannot guarantee that decisions will be made before this call for the Inclusive Women's Venture Capital Initiative closes.

Etienne-René Massie: On the second part of your question, Wendy, if someone has applied under the ecosystem and wants to resubmit under this application, the same application, I would caution you to probably reread your application, make sure that you are hitting the objectives of the Inclusive Women's Venture Capital Initiative, but there's nothing that stops you from sort of taking a good portion of your Ecosystem application and reapplying under this call. The only element I'll say is, if you were successful under the first call, and you've essentially submitted the exact same proposal, you would not be double funded. Just for clarity on that point.

Wendy Cukier: Great, thanks. I'll take the next question.

Wendy Cukier: So when you speak of venture capital, are you including angel investor stage of investments, because those investments are typically the first external investment from accredited investors?



Etienne-René Massie: That's a good question, and that's actually something that we should be clear on. So this is really in the risk capital field. I think angel investments are like you say Wendy, at the very front end of the risk capital. They are the first investors often. So if you are working with an accredited investor and you are working with an angel group that is recognized, by NACO for example, National Angels Corporations, I would say, yes, you can apply. I would ask that in your application, you very clearly articulate how you are sort of investing in that front-end stage and how you are sort of a recognized angel group that is investing in this field.

Wendy Cukier: Thanks.

Etienne-René Massie: In women entrepreneurs, in this field, I mean like you are supporting and working with women entrepreneurs and their businesses.

Sabine Soumare: And the next one. If we, as the lead, have limited experience with VCs, would partnering with a VC on the project fulfill that requirement?

Etienne-René Massie: So that's a good question. I want to be very clear on this. This call for proposals is really targeted to helping women entrepreneurs sort of improve - we need to make a change in the venture capital in Canada. We need strong organizations that have very strong links to the venture capital field. So if you don't have expertise in venture capital and you are applying, you need to have very, very strong partners in the VC world that can sort of help you achieve the goals of this project. This is not, to be candid, an Ecosystem call more generalized for all kinds of support for women entrepreneurs.

Etienne-René Massie: We are really trying to hone in on the venture capital, risk capital part of the equation to help women entrepreneurs sort of overcome some of the barriers that exist on both sides of the coin, both for women entrepreneurs who are seeking funding, and for the venture capital industry, the risk capital industry. I'll include angels to be additionally clear, like to sort of bring those groups to invest more in women entrepreneurs.

Sabine Soumare: We have a question in French. Is an agricultural union working with women farmers and women entrepreneurs in agriculture eligible?

Etienne-René Massie: So, that's a good question. I think the dimension here that is important concerns venture capital investment in agriculture and production of agricultural goods and food. There are venture capital funds that are working in that area. So yes, in theory we can have a proposal that allies the agriculture side and the venture capital side. But, it's important to note that our objective through this call is not to fund general support services for women entrepreneurs in Canada. We are trying to help women entrepreneurs improve women entrepreneurs' access to venture capital. So I don't know if that answers the question specifically, Sabine, but I think it's a pretty important nuance indicating that it has to be related to venture capital.

Sabine Soumare: If there is a need for clarification, don't hesitate to add it.



Etienne-René Massie: Certainly, and I would invite the organization if they want to clarify their question or add nuances or questions, we always have the generic email box to answer questions or expand on this question.

Wendy Cukier: The next question is, could you please further elaborate on the non-profit partner and specifically if a partner is a VC fund, how much financial contribution or in-kind is it expected? If someone's partnering with a VC fund, how are they supposed to contribute?

Etienne-René Massie: We would encourage, and we would really like to see VC funds sort of participate as partners in applications that are submitted under this call for application. We have not set a financial threshold for the partners to participate. I think that really depends on the role of the partner and what they bring to the project. We would like to see a financial or an in-kind contribution from those organizations to help advance the project.

Etienne-René Massie: I'm very hesitant to give a percentage of the total value of the projects that should come in-kind. In my career, I've seen projects where in-kind partners provide just as much funding as the government provides, and I've seen very minute amounts. I think a partner who is invested in this project needs to bring a substantive contribution to the table, be it financial or in-kind. In-kind can be calculated on fair market value of those services that are being provided to the project. I hope that helps answer that question. But again, if there's more precisions or elements, we're happy to bring more information through our WES inbox and on that one.

Wendy Cukier: The next question, can we incorporate a recipient component into this project to provide funding for delivery through local partner organizations?

Etienne-René Massie: If I understand this question properly, let's say a recipient organization would sort of provide funding to a local organization to provide services. We did note that this initiative would not support further distribution of funds to third party organizations for others to manage. So in that case, we would not allow sort of the further distribution, but we would encourage partners to come on board. I think there are different roles that partners can play on that front.

Etienne-René Massie: The nuance here is that further, like let's say we give someone a million dollars and they decide that they're taking \$500,000 and giving it to someone else, like just sort of saying like, this is your money, you go do what you want, like that doesn't work. But there's subcontractor arrangements that are allowed, there's partnerships that are allowed, but you can't sort of essentially take 500,000 and sort of grant it out to some other organization, that just doesn't work.

Wendy Cukier: Thank you very much. The next question is, can the partner be a VC firm that gives sweat equity for each cohort, i.e., education, skills development that ends in a pitch competition? For example, the government funding wouldn't be used as prize money, but the VC would provide an investment and/or seed.



Etienne-René Massie: On sweat equity, I kind of see that as in-kind support that is provided by the VC fund to help in the advancement of the goals of this initiative. I do think if the partner is doing that, that should definitely be outlined in the application to help us better understand that.

Etienne-René Massie: Like I said, the money from this initiative can't go to investments in companies. But if the VC fund is helping through their networks, their mentoring, their training, everything that a VC fund brings to a business, please put that in your application, clearly identify what you are. That's the kind of contribution that we're looking for from VC funds to bring to this initiative, because they will often have the links, the networks and the tools in the VC community that can sort of make the connections from the entrepreneurs to the risk capital, venture capital world. That is what we're trying to get at. I would encourage that and I would encourage you to put it in the application.

Wendy Cukier: And what about the prize money? I recognize that the government funding can't be used as prize money, but what if the VC put up 100K for example, that was going to be used in a competition? Could that be counted towards the...

Etienne-René Massie: The contribution? Yes.

Wendy Cukier: Exactly, because from experience a lot of the players in this world, that's kind of the model to test whether the training is producing the results you're looking for.

Etienne-René Massie: I would encourage that. If the VC funds are putting up money for prizes or elements like that, I think it would be important to sort of articulate that in the proposal.

Sabine Soumare: The next question and that's something that you've mentioned that we're looking for strong non-profit partners. There is one question here, which is what is considered a strong non-profit partner and for example, non-profit partner that spends the majority of their donations on marketing. This individual wants to work with grassroots non-profit partners.

Etienne-René Massie: A not-for-profit, if they're a partner organization, I think it's important to articulate in the application what they are bringing to the table, what they are bringing to the project, the services, the in-kind support that they will provide to the project. I don't have a definition of what a strong not-for-profit is. It really is about explaining in the proposal what the lead applicant and the partners are bringing to the project, what their roles and responsibilities are, and what experience or strengths they are bringing to the overall endeavor. That's how we will sort of in our assessment, we will look at that and sort of be able to assess where it relatively stands.

Sabine Soumare: There is no specific criteria.



Etienne-René Massie: If you're a not-for-profit partner, there's some basic steps: you should be incorporated and you should have experience in the field and you should be able to demonstrate the results that you have done through your previous work. We don't have criteria that define what a strong NFP or a weak NFP is and everything in between.

Wendy Cukier: The only people that can apply are the non-profit partners, not the individual entrepreneurs, not the VCs, not any for-profit organizations as the principal applicant. Is that correct, Etienne?

Etienne-René Massie: That is correct. A not-for-profit has to be the lead applicant. They can have partners, but again, if you're a sole entrepreneur, the not-for-profit and the lead applicants, it doesn't matter whoever we fund, they cannot take the money and invest it in companies. That is not part of this initiative. They are there to work on supports for ecosystem and for women entrepreneurs and the VC sector. We are not about investing in entrepreneurs proper.

Wendy Cukier: Yeah. So a for-profit company, just to get a hundred percent clarity on this, a for-profit company cannot be the lead applicant?

Etienne-René Massie: Yes, correct. A for-profit company cannot be the lead applicant.

Wendy Cukier: Do you have a preference about whether or not a VC is a service provider or whether they're a partner? Is there a difference in your mind, in the strength of an application?

Etienne-René Massie: I don't think there's a difference in my mind. I think what we look at is what are those, what is that VC entity bringing to the project as a partner or as a service delivery agent? I'm agnostic if you're a partner, a service delivery agent, but I think we would like to know what services you're bringing. And if you are a partner, there is a requirement that you bring something into the project so that you make a contribution to the project in-kind or financially.

Wendy Cukier: Great. Sabine, do you wanna take the next?

Sabine Soumare: The next one, could you clarify the number of regions in the individual project should impact?

Etienne-René Massie: Yeah, the reach of the project. We are looking for either national projects and national projects or projects where services will be offered, irrespective of where they are in all provinces and territories. Multi-regional we define as offering services in at least five provinces or territories. The permutation of provinces and territories is not important to us, but you need to have at least five provinces or territories in your project. As I indicated, preference will be given to national projects so that we can sort of maximize the reach of the projects across the country.



Sabine Soumare: So could you confirm if the lead organization and the non-profit partners will be reimbursed for the administrative costs? For-profit partners will not be reimbursed for their administrative costs.

Etienne-René Massie: There's a few subtleties here to the question. We will reimburse the expenses related to the project and the not-for-profit lead would articulate what those expenses are. The not-for-profit, the lead applicant, can subcontract work to private organizations. If they subcontract work to private organizations, there's a fee for service arrangement between the not-for-profit contribution agreement recipient and the private company. And in that case, that's okay.

Etienne-René Massie: If, for example, not-for-profit A partners with venture capital company A, venture capital company A brings services, brings in-kind support to the project, they would not be reimbursed for those expenses that they bring. The nuance, if you're in a contracting arrangement with the not-for-profit, you can get reimbursed. If you are a partner coming to the project and helping out, we would not necessarily reimburse you if you were a for-profit company.

Sabine Soumare: Thanks, Etienne.

Etienne-René Massie: I will just add that we are happy to take questions through the inbox. We are happy to provide clarifications. If in my presentation, I've confused you between the guide and my presentation, please send an email and the team and I will sort of go through it. We'll issue clarifications if that is of any help to any of the participants on our call today.

Wendy Cukier: Well, thanks so much. Thank you Sabine for your contributions, and thanks to everybody who joined in today. I just did want to underscore that we've been doing a lot of work internationally, and there's no question that Canada is really regarded now as a world leader in terms of the work that it's doing across government to advance the women entrepreneurship ecosystem. And particularly with that focus on intersectional identity.

Wendy Cukier: I really wanted to thank Etienne and his very large team for joining you today and clarifying this really important development. And also thanks to the DI team who helped with the logistics. And as Etienne said, any questions about the fund should be directed to ISED. We are merely facilitating this particular session. Thank you very much.

Etienne-René Massie: Thanks, Wendy. Thanks, Sabine. And thanks everyone for joining us today. Really appreciate you hosting Wendy and the team at the Diversity Institute, or I should say the Knowledge Hub for Women Entrepreneurship.

Etienne-René Massie: Have a good afternoon.



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