



STARTUP **WA**

SUMMIT SERIES

startupwa.org



Acknowledgement of Country

StartupWA acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures; and to elders both past and present.

Acknowledgement

StartupWA is a not-for-profit, representative organisation that promotes the growing startup sector in Western Australia. The StartupWA Board of Directors are all volunteers and share a vision for Western Australia to be recognised as a global hub for entrepreneurial and technology talent. StartupWA would like to thank its Board of Directors consisting of Tom Goerke (Chair), Dr Kate Brooks, Jason Balchand, Rafael Kimberley-Bowen, Les Delaforce, Chloe Constantinides, Kay Solanki, and Cam Sinclair, for their contribution to organising and running the Summit Series.

StartupWA would also like to acknowledge the efforts of Dee Roche, Senior Management Consultant and World Café facilitator, who volunteered her time and expertise to provide the framework for the Summit Series events.

The Summit Series would not have been possible without the help and support of many other volunteers who gave their time to run these events. In particular, StartupWA would like to extend its gratitude to Rebekah Craggs, Diana Guria, Jack Hallam and Faisal Malik.



Executive Summary

StartupWA received funding through the New Industry Fund that enabled it to host three Summits in 2021, each focusing on one group of underrepresented entrepreneurs in Western Australia (WA), such are:

- Female Founders,
- Regional Founders, and
- Indigenous Founders.

This report uses the term Indigenous to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We respect and acknowledge the diversity of communities, identities and clan groups for all Indigenous people of Australia.

By applying the World Cafe Methodology, each Summit identified current challenges each group of entrepreneurs face.

This report provides an overview of the collated participant feedback from all three Summits. It presents the reader with practical recommendations on how the State Government, together with stakeholders from the Western Australian startup ecosystem, may minimise these challenges and contribute to the continuous development of a more diverse startup ecosystem in WA.

The findings from the Summit Series have been grouped into five overarching themes. These themes are:

1. **Education:** Develop the capabilities of founders depending on the lifecycle of their businesses and provide investors and potential investors with the knowledge they need to understand the intricacies of startups and how to invest in the ecosystem.
2. **Networks:** Increase the visibility of online and offline events held across the Western Australian startup ecosystem. Increase the level of interaction between corporations and the local startup scene.
3. **Local success stories:** Showcase and tell the origin stories of successful local entrepreneurs, their teams and support networks.
4. **Access to funding:** Government funding through precisely constructed instruments designed to support very specific projects, valuable from the point of view of the national economic policy; attraction of more diverse investor groups into Western Australia; and facilitating connections between startup founders and the investment community.
5. **Procurement:** Facilitate easier access to government contracts through increased market education and amendments to Government procurement processes and buying rules.



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1. Introduction

Besides creating new jobs and generating wealth in society, entrepreneurs and their startups foster technological innovation in industries. New venture creation¹ is statistically linked to both job creation and regional development.²

However, different definitions of 'startup' are used in literature and in industry. This report uses Steve Blank's³ definition of a startup: a startup is a temporary organisation formed to search for a repeatable and scalable business model.⁴ Blank does not specify the industry, company's age, or product innovation. However, he notes that a startup is characterised by its ambitions and dynamics of business development and, at a later stage, the external sources of funding. The technological element appears implicitly because the scalability of the business model can

be achieved mainly thanks to information and communication technologies (ICT).⁵

A startup ecosystem is a limited region, roughly within a 50 km (or one hour travel) range, formed by people, their startups, and various types of supporting organisations, interacting as a complex system to create new startup companies and evolve existing ones.⁶

StartupWA is a not-for-profit, representative organisation which promotes the growing startup sector in Western Australia. StartupWA aims to accelerate and advocate for the startup ecosystem that includes investors, technology hubs, accelerator programs and early-stage technology businesses.



¹ Cukier, D. and Kon, F., 2018. A maturity model for software startup ecosystems. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 7(1), pp.1-32. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13731-018-0091-6>

² Kasturi, S.V. and Bala Subrahmanya, M.H., 2014. Start-ups and small scale industry growth in India: do institutional credit and start-ups make a difference?. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Venturing*, 6(3), pp.277-298.

³ Silicon Valley entrepreneur and one of the three creators of the Lean Startup management concept

⁴ Blank, S., 2013. Why the lean start-up changes everything. *Harvard business review*, 91(5), pp.63-72.

⁵ Skala, A., 2019. The startup as a result of innovative entrepreneurship. In *Digital Startups in Transition Economies*, pp. 1-40. Palgrave Pivot, Cham.

⁶ Cukier, D. and Kon, F., 2018. A maturity model for software startup ecosystems. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 7(1), pp.1-32. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13731-018-0091-6>

“How might we grow a vibrant and diverse Western Australian startup ecosystem?”

One of StartupWA’s strategic objectives for 2021 was to explore Western Australia’s diverse startup ecosystem from different angles and develop inclusive recommendations and advocacy messages for government and industry. With support from the WA Government New Industries Fund, StartupWA organised a Summit Series comprising three events:

1. Female Founders Summit;
2. Regional Founders Summit; and
3. Indigenous Founders Summit.

Each summit discussed the overarching question of “How might we grow a vibrant and diverse Western Australian startup ecosystem?” with a specific focus on its target audience, such as:

- Female entrepreneurs;
- Regional entrepreneurs; and
- Indigenous entrepreneurs.

Each summit ran as a single World Café⁷ event and included diverse attendees from across the

Western Australian startup ecosystem such as entrepreneurs, government representatives, universities, investors, large corporations, incubators, mentors, and support service providers. The key findings from each summit were collated in a book of proceedings.

This report presents an overview of all three summits. It highlights key topics discussed by the attendees and emerging themes resulting from each summit. Furthermore, it presents the actions put forward by the attendees that may contribute to the continued diversification and growth of the Western Australian economy.

The final section of this report highlights the overarching themes of the three summits: Education, Networks, Local Success Stories, Access to Funding and Procurement. Potential opportunities for State Government engagement in those five areas are investigated.



⁷ The World Café Community Foundation, 2022. <http://www.theworldcafe.com>

“A simple yet powerful conversational process that helps people engage in constructive dialogue, build personal relationships, foster collaborative learning, and discover new possibilities for action.”



2. Methodology

2.1 External Senior Management Consultant

The framework for the three summits was prepared in cooperation with senior management consultant and World Café facilitator Dee Roche.

2.2 The World Café Methodology

The World Café methodology is “a simple yet powerful conversational process that helps people engage in constructive dialogue, build personal relationships, foster collaborative learning, and discover new possibilities for action⁸.”

Researchers endorse that World Cafés enable large groups to think together creatively as part of a single, connected conversation⁹. This qualitative approach aims to create a café ambience that fosters informal conversations, representing a neutral public space where people feel free to engage with each other¹⁰. Participants move between tables, discover new insights into the topics created by other groups and build on top of those. Within a short period of time, meaningful data can be obtained from a relatively large number of participants¹¹.

However, it is important to highlight potential weaknesses of the World Café method and take action to mitigate them. For example, it is possible that participants put a different thematic emphasis in their discussion than intended by the organiser. Therefore, it is crucial to design the right ‘How might we’ questions¹².



Additionally, it is essential to highlight that knowledge creation ultimately depends on the participants of a World Café. The facilitator has no direct interaction in the discussion process¹³.

Nevertheless, World Café approaches have been successfully applied by businesses, government, health, education, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and within community settings worldwide and have gained increased acceptance among scholars as a qualitative research method¹⁴.

⁸Tan, S. and Brown, J., 2005. The world café in Singapore: Creating a learning culture through dialogue. *The journal of applied behavioral science*, 41(1), pp.83-90.

⁹Ibid; Löhr, K., Weinhardt, M. and Sieber, S., 2020. The “World Café” as a participatory method for collecting qualitative data. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 19, pp.1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920916976>

¹⁰Brown, J. and Isaacs, D., 2005. *The World Café*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc.

¹¹ Löhr, K., Weinhardt, M. and Sieber, S., 2020. The “World Café” as a participatory method for collecting qualitative data. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 19, pp.1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920916976>

¹²Prewitt, V., 2011. Working in the café: lessons in group dialogue. *The learning organization*.

¹³Löhr, K., Weinhardt, M. and Sieber, S., 2020. The “World Café” as a participatory method for collecting qualitative data. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 19, pp.1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920916976>

¹⁴Ibid.

2.3 World Café Guidelines - Seven Design Principles

It is recommended that a World Café incorporates the following seven design principles to foster a collaborative dialogue, active engagement and constructive possibilities for action¹⁵:

2.4 Summit Event Design

Each summit applied the World Café approach that involves:

- Facilitating a simple, effective, and flexible format for hosting group dialogue.
- Creating a living network of collaborative dialogue around questions that matter to the targeted audience, e.g. female founders, regional founders and Indigenous founders.
- Building on top of ideas from previous rounds helps to share knowledge and connect diverse perspectives. Participants bring key ideas from one table to the next and keep developing them.
- Engaging in new levels of collaborative thinking and supporting unexpected insights.

Each event was framed around the following three parts:

- Part I: Questions and Powerful Conversations;
- Part II: Emerging Themes and Deeper Insights; and
- Part III: Collective Actions.



Part I: Questions And Powerful Conversations. The first round consisted of table discussions where participants in rotation explored the three “How might we” questions. These conversations allowed participants to share their initial ideas on each question presented. The table facilitators captured everyone’s input on big postit wallpapers.

Part II: Emerging Themes And Deeper Insights. Each Table Facilitator reads out the findings of Part 1, followed by an open group discussion.

Part III: Collective Actions. Participants reconvene by choosing one key theme and then break it down into a set of actions and/or recommendations.

¹⁵International Creative Commons Attribution4 Design, 2022 <http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/design-principles>

2.5 Questions That Matter

In line with the World Café design principles, the Summit Series 2021 sought to address questions relevant to the real-life concerns of the target groups, e.g. female founders, regional founders and indigenous founders. Those questions were used to frame, but not limit, the discussion themes in Part 1 of the summits.

In preparation for the World Café questions, a consultation framework was developed to maximise all stakeholders' participation through informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering. The consultation was based on the Appreciative Inquiry approach that focuses on strengths rather than weaknesses. This lends itself to the generation of a large number of innovative ideas which can be synthesised into themes and action plans while also informing and engaging people in the process in a meaningful way. In addition, Appreciative Inquiry processes facilitate going deep into what is meaningful for stakeholders and create a ripple effect in seeding commitment moving forward.

2.5.1 Female Founders Summit

The 2020 report "Achieving Scale. Breaking Through Barriers for Female Founders"¹⁶ formed the basis for the 'How might we' questions addressed by the World Café participants in Part I.

Broekman and Easton¹⁷ identified barriers to scale, both from the business owner's perspective and resource considerations for the business. According to the researchers, the perceived challenges for female founders can be categorised into the following three areas:

1. Cashflow;
2. Managing time; and
3. Sales.

The researchers grouped the barriers faced by female founders to scale their businesses into the following four key dimensions:



1. The delegation threshold

When and how a founder begins to leverage other people's time and expertise.



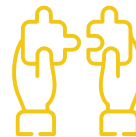
2. Who's got your back?

Being networked to access and actively engage with trusted advocates and advisors.



3. Business investment literacy

Knowledge to navigate funders and financial arrangements to improve the overall financial position of the business.



4. The execution gap

Closing the gap between knowing and doing to ensure intent meets action.

Based on the presented barriers for female founders highlighted in the above mentioned report, StartupWA developed the following three questions:

1. *How might we encourage more women to create tech startups?*
2. *How might we let go of what is narrowing our people networks?*
3. *How might we reimagine the funding allocation models?*

¹⁶ Louise Broekman and Jan Easton, Advisory Board, 2020. Achieving Scale: Breaking Through Barriers for Female Founders.

¹⁷ Ibid.

2.5.2 Regional Founders Summit

The primary source for creating the “How might we” questions for the Regional Founders Summit was the Western Australian Regional Innovation Hubs Report¹⁸, authored by Meshpoints in collaboration with Spacecubed. Meshpoints

provides practical support to local innovation facilitators to deliver social benefits to Western Australian regional communities.

The 2020 Western Australian Regional Innovation Hubs Report outlines eight key findings regarding the needs for regional communities.



Stability of client supply and demand



Access to training and upskilling resources



Promoting economic diversity in the regions



Access to quality startup mentors and advice



Social enterprise and impact investment sector and policy support



Affordable housing to counteract the increasing cost of living



Secure funding to support enterprise ideas and startups in remote communities



Skills shortage affecting the ability to grow businesses

Considering the above, StartupWA developed the following three World Café questions for Part 1 of the Regional Founders Summit:

1. *How might we rethink capital mobilisation to overcome financial barriers for regional startups?*
2. *How might we reimagine navigating the challenges of distance and time when building networks across regional WA?*
3. *How might we generate and excite the appeal of regional centres to attract and inspire new talent?*

¹⁸ Meshpoints, 2020. Western Australian Regional Innovation Hubs Report <https://app.hubspot.com/documents/5849306/view/113813061?accessId=15dd6d>



2.5.3 Indigenous Founders Summit

The 2021 Backing Black Business Report¹⁹, commissioned by Generation One and authored by PwC's Indigenous Consulting, outlines the need for greater financial inclusion for Australia's Indigenous business sector. The paper presents several social, cultural and economic factors that contribute to the financial exclusion of Indigenous people at an individual level:

1. The geographic location;
2. Access to services;
3. Lack of identification documents;
4. Unemployment;
5. Lower income;
6. Lower financial literacy;
7. Family structure;
8. Lower age and life expectancy;
9. Risk management processes of financial institutions;
10. A lack of cultural capability in financial institutions;
11. Self-exclusion;
12. Lower financial resources; and
13. Impacts of history.

In addition to the findings of the 2021 Backing Black Business Report, the know-how and personal experiences from Leslie Delaforce and Rhys Paddick contributed to the development of the following three questions:

1. *How might we re-imagine funding and overcome financial barriers for Indigenous startups?*
2. *How might we foster and accelerate a thriving people network?*
3. *How might we develop, create and retain Indigenous startups in WA?*

¹⁹ Minderoo Foundation and Generation One, 2021. <https://www.minderoo.org/generation-one/reports/backing-black-business>

3. StartupWA Summit Series 2021

3.1 Female Founders' Summit

The Female Founders Summit was held on the 16th of July 2021 at Liberty Flexible Workspaces in Perth.

The goal of the Female Founders' Summit was to construct a list of actions and recommendations in response to the question, *'How might we grow a vibrant and diverse WA startup ecosystem for female founders?'*

The Female Founders' Summit lead and then StartupWA board member, Dr. Kate Brooks, notes that "We are welcoming and respectful of women, including trans women and those who are nonbinary, gender non-conforming, and anyone who identifies as a woman in a way that is significant to them. We also welcome allies who are committed to creating environments that are supportive of people who are typically underrepresented in the workplace and beyond."

3.1.1 The Facilitator

After a community-wide callout for expression of interest (EOI), Bethan Winn was selected as the Female Founders Summit 2021 facilitator. Bethan is a critical thinker, facilitator and coach. She has worked with numerous Perth SMEs, the public sector commission, and leadership programs. She is highly regarded for her practical approach and engaging delivery.

3.1.2 The Participants

Participants were invited based on expressions of interest to attend the Female Founders Summit 2021.

Participation was curated to ensure a diverse mix of female founders and leaders from the Western Australian startup ecosystem. There were fifty (50) participants representing founders, community, government, industry, educational institutions, investors, and mentors. A complete list is provided in Appendix A.

3.1.3 Part I. Questions And Powerful Conversations.

Part I consisted of three rounds, each lasting for fifteen minutes, in which the participants discussed the given 'How might we' question allocated to their table. Table facilitators captured the discussions. After fifteen minutes, the participants moved to the next table, discussing another 'How might we' question. Each table facilitator reiterated the captured content discussed by the previous group before a new round started.

Tables 1, 2 and 3 below capture the content participants discussed in Part 1 of the Female Founders Summit.



“How might we grow a vibrant and diverse Western Australian startup ecosystem for female founders?”



Table 1. Discussion capture of question A 'How might we encourage more women to create tech startups?'

Emerging themes and deeper insights	Discussion capture: 'How might we encourage more women to create tech startups?'
Early education and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girls, from a young age, need to be taught to be more risk-averse. • Failure needs to be reframed so that it is not always seen as something that induces fear. • Females need to be encouraged and taught how to create and foster professional networks from an early stage in their careers. The starting point for these networks is usually friends and colleagues. • Successful women in the technology sector need to be made more visible in order to inspire others to follow their passion ('see it to be it'). • The question was raised how 'problem solvers' are created. • The tech sector is a very male-dominated industry which has resulted in fewer women having tech or coding skills. Are those skills required to create a startup? • More education is required on commercialisation techniques and options. • As a result of women typically being more risk-averse, they may need a greater level of encouragement to innovate and disrupt Western Australia's industries. • Introduce more mentoring and networking opportunities and talks in high schools to foster entrepreneurship and encourage action.
Accessing support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a lack of networking opportunities. • Female founders like to maintain the autonomy and control of the business. • Many female founders start later due to the assumption of the need to build a financial cushion. Women need earning power and financial security to get started. • Silos around different types of businesses and industries exist and need to be broken through. • It takes time to build relationships. • Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women and migrant entrepreneurs are underrepresented and need different support. • The entrepreneurship pathways that are available in Western Australia need to be better highlighted. • "Startmate office hours" – 30-minute access to startup founders. • Need to connect networks and create mentoring opportunities. Matching a female founder to the right support is crucial.

STEM focus

- Need to find convergence between creative and tech skills.
- Entrepreneurship and tech are two different things and may have two different solutions
- There is an incorrect perception about tech startups – you don't need to be a coder to do well.
- Need for different solutions for different career stages e.g. pre-, early-, mid-, and advanced-career, as all of the previous have different needs and require different setups (e.g. high or low tech).
- Bring startup thinking to non-STEM areas, e.g. arts or psychology.

Lack of diversity in the tech sector

- “Shine a light” on local success stories. Celebrate the great businesswomen in WA and share their business journey.
- Western Australia has more mining tech, whereas the East Coast has more fintech.
- Women often feel as if they do not belong as the tech startup scene is largely [white] male-dominated.
- Questioning the question: Why are we trying to “fix” women? Why make them more like men?

Celebrating female entrepreneurs

- Women make many of the purchasing decisions in households. That should lead to business opportunities.
- There needs to be more female lead-speakers at events to provide role models and inspiration for others.

Family commitments


- Parenthood and/or shared responsibilities impact the available time for networking before and after work hours.
 - Single mothers have little flexibility and/or free time to pursue their entrepreneurial ideas.
 - There's a large financial burden for a parent to be at work e.g. fees for daycare can be very expensive.
 - Mothers returning to work after parental leave often lack confidence.
 - Startup/ entrepreneur life can be more flexible to support family life.
 - Need for child-friendly networking spaces.
 - Need for parent rooms in co-working spaces.
- 

Table 2. Discussion capture of question B 'How might we let go of what is narrowing our people networks?'

Emerging themes and deeper insights	Discussion capture 'How might we let go of what is narrowing our people networks?'
Safe spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women feel safe, valued and able to attend when they are not outsiders. • Buddy systems and/or mentors inviting women to a networking event. • Many networking events are hosted in and revolve around alcohol and bar environments. • Women need to be included, but not everyone wants “women only” events. • Establish creative ways to connect with people such as Lego games or interactive environments. • Pitch events can feel particularly hard and intimidating as they are usually male-dominated. • Warm introductions can help women feel welcome and included.
Language / cultural / geographical barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many events happen in the evening over alcohol and canapes. This environment is not comfortable for everyone. • If English is a second language, how can we help people access events and feel included? • Skills from overseas are important and new immigrants need to be welcomed and embraced. • Many finance conversations happen in places women choose not to attend e.g. rugby or golf. • Kaleidoscope concept e.g. share your (country's) network.
Naming of events and networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some networks, e.g. women in mining, feel closed to those that do not fit the label. • Some labels on networking events create silos. • Do events need a female quota?
Access to investors and funding decision-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These networks can feel inaccessible or hard to find. • Those with strong networks need to be encouraged into becoming a 'connector' and helping women grow their networks through making introductions • Share your networks. Leaders in Perth can share their networks especially with new arrivals to Western Australia. • Provide free and accessible coaching services.

Event organisation

- Those with young families or family obligations can find it hard to get out and get along to anything outside 'normal working hours'.
- There are so many networks. People tend to stick to the same ones and build relationships but may be missing out.
- Overwhelmed with networking options. It is confusing when events are at the same time/day.
- An online events calendar would help connect people and reduce overwhelm.
- Online events are more inclusive as it allows single parents or people who live outside the CBD area to take part.
- More diversity (gender, culture and age) needs to be considered and encouraged when choosing event speakers.
- Consider the naming of the network carefully as it might be perceived to exclude others.
- Panellists have a commitment to speak up when there's no diversity on a panel. Panellists could turn down opportunities that could be given to those in the minority, i.e., pass the microphone.
- Hold events in safe spaces, e.g. not alcohol-related venues. Publish a code of conduct before the event.



Table 3. Discussion capture of question C 'How might we reimagine the funding allocation models?'

Emerging themes and deeper insights	Discussion capture 'How might we reimagine the funding allocation models?'
Networking and pitching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we speed up access to funders and the right networking opportunities? • Networking and pitching can be a challenge with family commitments. • Are pitch events non-conducive to women? • Change perspective - women are not a charity. • Events require a diverse audience. • Over time people will see the value of investing in women-led businesses. • One-on-one meetings are better than pitching as the real personality can be seen.
Generalisations about women and money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women are more conservative. • Are there better funding models (non-equity-based)? • Businesses with social impact are more common with female entrepreneurs. • For women, it can be uncomfortable talking about investment terms, valuations, financials. • There needs to be education on investment terms, valuations, etc. • Return on purpose versus return on investment. • Thinking is broken because of impatience with capital. • Women feel uncomfortable with the responsibility of spending other people's money.
Success with grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding is not available for every business model. • Founders have unrealistic expectations about the success rate of funding. • A central hub that helps with grant applications, financial education and shares funding stories. • A gap in funding at an earlier stage of a business. • The user experience around the grant application process is low. • Grants schemes are designed to solve particular problems. • Depends upon the space / sector / funding. • Change of policy to be more inclusive. • Do female founders not apply for funds? • Who you know matters in WA in terms of grant success. • You need to talk to the right people and share knowledge and experiences. • Bias in play in the selection process. • Feedback is not given when failing an application, so how can we improve? • Quotas / targets as part of an overall situation.

- Can the State Government showcase female-led startups that can be invested in?
- Quotas: government could use procurement quotas for female-led businesses.
- The idea for specific grants such as sole parent, migrant, refugee, Indigenous women entrepreneurs.

Securing investment

- Investors need to look for a greater purpose when evaluating investment opportunities.
- The role of Government policy, engage with the government.
- A role for superannuation. Roles of grants.
- Businesses have different levels of investment readiness.
- Need for experience to secure investment.
- Investors only focus on scale.
- Investors are mainly men. Results in unconscious bias.
- A state-specific investment that has investments that have matched funding.
- (Re)Define what the term 'startup' means and commonly use the same definition.
- Increase the appetite for investment to extend beyond the mining sector.
- Bring alliance funding networks to WA.
- Lack of venture capital in Western Australia for Western Australian tech startups.



3.1.4 Part II. Emerging Themes And Deeper Insights.

In the second part of the Female Founders Summit, the table facilitators presented the captured discussions for each question to the whole audience. After the presentation, the summit facilitator asked the audience if something was missed and opened up the space for discussion.

Taking into account the insights of the table and group discussions, the following themes and deeper insights unfolded, see Table 4.

Table 4. Emerging themes and deeper insights based on captured insights from Part I.

How might we question	Emerging themes and deeper insights
A - How might we encourage more women to create tech startups?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early education and engagement of women. • Provide more opportunities to access support. • Include entrepreneurial projects in STEM. • Provide options and encouragement to diversify in the tech sector. • Celebrate female entrepreneurs. • Flexible solutions to accommodate family commitments.
B - How might we let go of what is narrowing our people networks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create safe spaces. • Remove language / cultural / geographical barriers. • Choose gender-neutral names for events and networks. • Provide access to investors and funding decision-makers. • Mindful event organisation.
C - How might we reimagine the funding allocation models?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networking and pitching. • Generalisations about women and money. • Provide support with grant applications. • Attract more diverse groups of investors to Western Australia.



3.1.5 Part III. Collective Actions.

In the third part of the Female Founders Summit, the participants developed collective actions. This section highlights the proposed actions in line with the overarching question *'How might we grow a vibrant and diverse WA tech startup ecosystem for Female Founders?'*

Celebrate Female Entrepreneurs

The participants presented multiple ideas on how to shine a light on successful female founders in Western Australia, like media campaigns showing female entrepreneurs in different contexts to change the Australian perception of women's skills, potential and interests.

According to the attendees, sharing the stories of female founders, their highs and lows, successes and failures, will empower and inspire others. The attendees mentioned that the content exists already to some extent and would require amplification. As an example, participants referred to Women in Tech Western Australia (WiTWA), who advocate for diversity, inclusion and equity for women in tech²⁰.

Create a Startup Skill-Matching Marketplace

Another action put forward by the Female Founders Summit is an online startup skill-matching marketplace that helps founders find the local resources they need. The participants outlined the following features:

- A self-assessment to discover the user's strength gap(s);
- Categories such as experiences, networking, mentoring, funding options; and
- Discover options based on who is close by (geographically).

Training In Investor Readiness

Investor readiness is the degree to which a startup is prepared and optimised for the process of raising capital from investors. This involves planning and preparing the requisite information, documents and answers in anticipation to the likely requests and questions that emerge during the screening, pitching and due diligence phases of raising capital.

The participants highlighted the need to improve startups' investor readiness by providing female entrepreneurs with access to specialist mentoring and advice.

²⁰ <https://www.witwa.org.au>

Creative and Inclusive Events

The Female Founders Summit participants also discussed planning and hosting creative and inclusive events to attract a diverse audience. The following event planning considerations were presented:

- Inclusive timing of the event;
- Provide a buddy option, e.g. group attendees before the event based on specific criteria;
- Bring a mentee, e.g. provide the opportunity to bring a plus one;
- Establish and communicate a code of conduct prior to the event;
- Create invitations using inclusive language;
- A panel without diversity is a no go, e.g. panels with only male or female speakers should be discouraged wherever possible;
- Offer free parking for events in collaboration with local councils to attract participants who live outside the CBD area to join the event.

The attendees suggested an annual meeting where established startup community representatives in Western Australia meet to align their activities and events to avoid scheduling clashes. The participants put forward the idea of capturing events of the Western Australian startup ecosystem in an online calendar, accessible to everyone.

Diversify the Economy and Create New Pathways for Funding

The participants recognised that Western Australia is mainly a resource-focused state. They noted the lack of investor appetite and the lack of understanding from investors towards other industries.

Participants proposed a central database that includes investor profiles, networks, and middle “men”, and is widely accessible to the startup community. Platforms such as AngelList Venture provide this information internationally, but are not well established in Western Australia²¹.

Participants further highlighted the need for the government to provide more funding options for the seed stage.

More Mentoring And Buddy Programs To Assist Female Founders

Participants noted that women often lack strong networks which would allow them to facilitate business development, the know-how to navigate corporate and public sector procurement processes and mastery of technologies that would enable them to penetrate new markets. To help female founders effectively grow their networks, a mentoring and buddy programme was proposed.

The solution would:

- Help the mentee understand where they are in their business journey;
- Provide a fabric that summarises a range of potential capabilities they require moving forward;
- Provide a list of curated mentors that may meet their needs (based on an online assessment of the mentee).

The service would also provide mentors with a platform to register. The process would include recommendations and a code of conduct.



²¹ www.angellist.com

“How might we grow a vibrant and diverse Western Australian startup ecosystem for regional founders?”



3.2 Regional Founders Summit

The Regional Founders Summit took place on the 29th of October 2021 at Maker + Co in Bunbury as a hybrid model of in-person and online attendance.

The summit sought to construct a list of actions and recommendations in response to the question: ***How might we grow a vibrant and diverse WA startup ecosystem for regional founders?***

3.2.1 The Facilitator

After a community-wide callout for an expression of interest (EOI), Kali Norman from Meshpoints was chosen to facilitate the Regional Founders' Summit. Kali has worked strategically to foster innovation growth through communities across Perth's city and key regional centres for over five years. She has a passion for collaborative approaches and promoting local talent across sectors.

Meshpoints' services are focused on operational implementation in specific locations, growing a network of professional facilitators. Meshpoints envisage that, over time, these ecosystems will self-sustain.



meshpoints
powered by spacecubed

3.2.2 The Participants

The wisdom in the room was curated to be a mix of regional founders, regional hub operators, industry leaders and government representatives.

There were thirty-nine (39) participants, with fifteen (15) of them dialling into the summit remotely.

Founders, directors, managers, CXO's and supporting organisations joined for the sessions, with individuals from the following organisations:



TENDER RELIEF



A complete participant list is detailed in Appendix B.

3.2.3 Part I. Questions And Powerful Conversations.

Part I followed the same design as described in section 3.1.3. The only difference was having the online participants allocated to different break out rooms with a virtual room facilitator capturing the discussion of each 'How might we' question.

Table 5 below captures the online and in-person participants' discussions per 'How might we' questions in Part 1 of the Regional Founders Summit 2021.


Table 5. Discussion capture of the three 'How might we questions' discussed during the Regional Founders Summit 2021.

How might we question	Discussion capture
A - How might we rethink capital mobilisation to overcome financial barriers for regional startups?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There needs to be a distinct differentiation between a 'startup' and a 'small and medium enterprise' (SME). • There needs to be an agreed upon and commonly used definition for the term 'startup'. • Startups have different risk profiles than SMEs. • It is hard for new investors to know where to start. • Investors want to invest locally so that they can interact with the founding members. • The Government is outcome-focused. • Lots of startups are excluded in government procurement because of the risks. • There needs to be better awareness, education, and communication of the available funding options. • It is hard for founders to allocate time to writing grant applications and access which grants to apply for. • 'Build local' - create a government policy to have more businesses open locally that add to economic value. • Encourage government agencies to invest in regional locations and offer financial incentives. • Break larger government spending initiatives into smaller amounts to help startups with initial seed funding. • Procurement clustering - so Startups can bid collectively. • Need to build a culture of innovation in regional areas. • Accelerators and other programs need to be supported long term by the Government for better effectiveness and consistency across the regions. • There could be a travelling investor show and grassroots pitch nights. How do we get investors to come into the region? • Need to alleviate tension for those startups that are not investor ready yet by offering solutions to reduce nervousness and increase confidence.

B - How might we reimagine navigating the challenges of distance & time when building networks across regional WA?

- Distance and travel are killers in the region.
- Flexibility in the workforce is needed for mobility.
- Need to better utilise technology and communications tools to drive the required change.
- Regional centres have strong internet connectivity but further out connectivity and speed is an issue.
- Effective transport to the regions. How would air taxis and autonomous vehicles help?
- A collective mindset in regional areas could mean the creation of buying groups to share shipping container space and costs.
- The cost of flights can be prohibitively expensive for startups, which is a critical issue.
- Accelerators and programs need to offer a choice of virtual attendance. This cannot be an afterthought. It needs to be inclusive.
- Upgrade facilities in regional hubs to provide better digital conference and streaming facilities.
- Can the metaverse and virtual reality (VR) be digital enablers?
- Identify vital regional hubs to be centre points, not just Perth.

C - How might we generate and excite the appeal of regional centres to attract and inspire new talent?

- Need to get the local government to take regional innovation seriously.
 - Need to create a home for new entrepreneurs.
 - Education in schools to build grassroots.
 - Need to understand what unique opportunities exist in regions in order to build awareness.
 - Innovation and ideation from another discipline that a newcomer could tap into and gain insight.
 - Purposefully engage people from local communities to cross-pollinate ideas, concepts, and practises.
 - Need to showcase success stories from existing hubs.
 - Locking anchor tenants in hubs to attract new interest.
 - Showcase studies from a regional perspective.
 - It is less about the opportunity and more about the people.
 - Need more data so people can know what skills are in their local area.
 - Creating specialist sectors like advanced manufacturing help build a regional reputation.
 - Lifestyle is promoted as a reason to work in regions.
 - Need to unlock existing talent like retirees that could act as mentors.
- 

3.2.4 Part II. Emerging Themes And Deeper Insights.

Following the same design as previously described in section 3.1.4 the following themes and deeper insights were uncovered, see Table 6.

Table 6. Emerging themes and deeper insights based on captured insights from Part I of the Regional Founders Summit 2021.

How might we question

Emerging themes and deeper insights

A - How might we rethink capital mobilisation to overcome financial barriers for regional startups?

- Investor education.
- Founder education and support.
- Encouraging engagement from local government organisations.
- Dedicated resources in each development.
- Commission dedicated to startup support.
- Grant writing education and support.
- Government procurement needs to adapt.

B - How might we reimagine navigating the challenges of distance & time when building networks across regional WA?

- Technology is a critical enabler.
- Local heroes need to champion efforts.
- Innovators need to come together to form networks.
- The community mindset needs to be challenged.
- Travel needs to be more cost-effective.

C - How might we generate and excite the appeal of regional centres to attract and inspire new talent?

- Need more regional success stories shared nationally.
- Better work-life balance.
- Connect community and purpose.
- Value-based outcomes.
- Tap into existing talent.
- Specialist sectors that attract respective talent.
- Anchor tenants to create [more] jobs.



3.2.5 Part III. Collective Actions.

The in-person and online participants worked in separate groups on identified key themes, breaking them down into desirable, feasible, and viable actions. The participants put forward the following consistent themes and collective actions.

Fragmentation Challenges

To overcome the challenge of distance and fragmentation, a digital aggregation platform was proposed. It would contain business listings with information on jobs, collaboration and networking opportunities. The group highlighted the importance of the platforms needing to be at the forefront of information on regional innovation to create networks and suggested that it should be run by independent governance champions.

The gathered data would be available for entrepreneurs and governments to access.

Value-Based Attraction And Promotion

The group presented the following two actions:

1. Allocate grants to have funding set aside for stories and or promotional campaigns. This can lead to a fear of missing out (FOMO) effect and make people want to go and be part of it.
2. Regions to have campaigns that articulate their vision for business. Regions that are not funded by the resources sector or by corporations need funding from the government.

Unlocking And Connecting Talent

The participants proposed three actions to unlock and connect talent in Western Australia's regional areas.

The first proposal was a government-funded regional innovation campaign, curated by StartupWA or Meshpoints, that features the stories of local regional tech entrepreneurs. This visual diary of the communities raises awareness of local success stories. The group emphasised that content management needs to be radically inclusive and startups need to be involved in the initial conversations.

The second idea put forward was a geolocated database of skills, segmented by region. Currently, hubs use software to connect talent within their hub but not across regions.

And thirdly, the participants raised the need to run school innovation programs to identify passions and skill sets from a much earlier age.

Recommendations Around Travel

To overcome the challenges of costly travel and the current travel limitations imposed due to COVID, the attendees suggested the following.

- **Map the clusters and regional strengths.** Identify existing clusters of skills to showcase **local strengths.**
- **Create content that showcases the region and community.** Create video content to showcase the success stories of local startups. Plan and organise events such as a regional West Tech Fest type event that shines a light on regional tech founders and brings people from the city into the regional areas.
- **Create combined outcomes to change the mindset.** Bring people together for collaboration instead of competition. Develop and foster a culture of working together for a bigger picture.

“How might we grow a vibrant and diverse Western Australian startup ecosystem for Indigenous founders?”



3.3 Indigenous Founders Summit

On the 4th of November 2021, the Indigenous Founders Summit was held at the Flour Factory in Perth CBD.

The summit sought to construct a list of actions and recommendations in response to the question: *How might we grow a vibrant and diverse WA startup ecosystem for Indigenous founders?*

3.3.1 The Facilitator

After a community-wide callout for expressions of interest (EOI), Rhys Paddick was selected as the summit facilitator. Rhys is an Indigenous educator, facilitator, MC and artist. Rhys has worked within the education sector, Not-For-Profit organisations and Local Governments. He is now a sole trader with the focus of his work being to bring Indigenous culture to the forefront of the broader Australian community and business sector.

3.3.2 The Participants

StartupWA welcomed a diverse group of Indigenous founders and leaders from the Western Australian startup ecosystem to the summit. Seventeen (17) participants represented founders, community, government, industry, the education sector, the Indigenous business and startups sector including investors and mentors. A complete list of attendees has been outlined in Appendix C.



3.3.3 Part I. Questions And Powerful Conversations.

Following the same design for Part I as described in section 3.1.3, Tables 7, 8 and 9 capture the insights from the discussions focused on the ‘How might we’ questions.

Table 7. Discussion capture of question A ‘How might we re-imagine funding and overcome financial barriers for Indigenous startups?’

Emerging themes and deeper insights

Discussion capture ‘How might we re-imagine funding and overcome financial barriers for Indigenous startups?’

Funding

- Aspiring founders do not know what funding options are available for their business model.
- Uncertainty about what funding is good for the current stage of their business.
- Prefer a community-based approach.
- Learn from other founders by accessing questions and answers in a forum or community portal, e.g. similar to Reddit for Q&A, an online portal.

Initial first steps

- Need to step out a milestone approach to get started.
- Make microfinancing options easier and available.
- Curate and create a mentor network to connect with.

Think outside the box. Non-fiat and alternative money sources (Web3 - the new internet)

- Currently requires personal responsibility and where do we access the alternative funding?
- Need to connect more investors to Indigenous startups.
- Adjust values of the non-Indigenous community to better understand and take a culturally specific (innovative) approach.
- No force to be included (Anti “shoehorn” approach.)
- Introduce the two worlds concept (Indigenous and Western), understanding Indigenous culture and the intersection of traditional business.
- Build investor confidence with Indigenous people. Gaining knowledge on both sides.

Education

- Some Indigenous founders don’t know anything about funding and what options are available or suitable.
- An education programme is required to increase funding and financial literacy.
- Need an education programme to teach stakeholders in the wider startup ecosystem about the cultural differences between Indigenous and Western cultures.

-
- Fear of diluting the value of the Indigenous business by having non-Indigenous investors. Tender modelling for some contracts requires 100% Indigenous ownership.
 - How do you give back (invest) if you cannot financially give back?
 - Encourage the Indigenous community to preference support to other Indigenous businesses.
 - Wish for change in government tender policy and buying rules.
 - Do not have an “Entrepreneur in Department of Labour and Employment” system.
 - Introduce similar to a Chief Entrepreneur similar to QLD Government but and Indigenous Chief Entrepreneur
 - Create an inclusive environment for Indigenous founders, similar to a buddy system.
 - Les Delaforce is the leading tech Indigenous person in WA and still, he is struggling to break down barriers.

Opportunities

- Development of a “futures fund” for Indigenous founders.
- Need to adopt an evidence-based approach with the Government.
- It needs to be Indigenous-led and championed otherwise it won’t gain the necessary traction.
- A national community that supports Indigenous founders, like the She-EO model.
- Subsidise the initial costs of starting and registering a business and help attract investment into the Indigenous entrepreneurship space.
- Educate investors on what it means to be 100% Indigenous-owned.
- Educate the non-Indigenous stakeholders on cultural differences.
- Establish mentor networks.

Barriers


- What’s the product/quality?
 - Access to the right networks.
 - “Need to throw more ladders down to bring people up.”
 - Hard to find culturally safe spaces.
 - Ideation to a minimal viable product (MVP) is very difficult, as Indigenous founders have limited access to required resources.
 - What funding is even available and how can it be accessed?
 - Can micro-financing platforms help? The first steps can be complex.
 - Highlighting those that have been successful as leaders and inspire the next generation.
 - Government buying rules are not startup-friendly, as most startups do not have two years of trading history.
- 

Table 8. Discussion capture of question B ‘How might we foster and develop a thriving and cohesive people network?’

Emerging themes and deeper insights	Discussion capture ‘How might we foster and develop a thriving and cohesive people network?’
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be transparent about who got funding and for what reasons. • Non-Indigenous people need to understand the culture of Indigenous people.
Relation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan and host an annual conference for Indigenous [aspiring] founders and leaders in the Western Australian startup ecosystem to help build connections and grow networks. • Build a network of networks. • Establish a relationship with someone within the Government. • Establish collaborations between the Noongar chamber, Waalitj, StartupWA and more. • Smaller networks are more transient. • Structured networking opportunities. • Include Indigenous entrepreneurs in remote communities.
Cultural Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A cultural shift is required. • Learned behaviour, you can do this. • Currently, there are not enough success stories of Indigenous founders. • Share the failures and collectively learn from them. • An online space may be required to facilitate shared learning. • Engaging with Indigenous founders out of merit.
Creating Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a uniform, inspirational story. • Change the perception of “you’re not from here”. • There may be a current perception that working with Indigenous founders is a risk rather than a capability. • Make Indigenous entrepreneurship sexy and create awareness. • Promote Indigenous culture.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different levels of racism (not productive and unintentional) due to not being informed. • Grow but also understand the Impact investment space. • Development of empathy required. • Create mentoring and coaching opportunities. • For non-Indigenous people, offer a service or app to learn and understand the Indigenous culture. • Industry agnostic, which provides collaboration. • Requires a different mindset that pushes the agenda.

Table 9. Discussion capture of question C ‘How might we develop, create and retain Indigenous startups in Western Australia?’

Emerging themes and deeper insights

Discussion capture ‘How might we develop, create and retain Indigenous startups in Western Australia?’

Education

- Capture “where are the learnings?”
- Who can we learn from at a national and international level?
- What successful models can be replicated?
- What can be learnt from founders, community, investors and schools.
- Need to foster education to be an entrepreneur from early childhood.
- Education for investors on Indigenous culture.
- Dedicated events for Indigenous founders.
- Retaining startups needs more investigating.
- Education on where to get money (equity).

Accessibility and inclusivity

- There’s a perception of being different - “no one looked like me” in the startup world.
- If people feel comfortable and included, they will keep coming back.
- Plan and host dedicated events.
- Sense of inclusivity – accessibility amongst Traditional Owner groups.
- Accessibility with Indigenous entrepreneurs.
- Maintaining the cultural protocol of the Country.
- Cultural protocol navigation. Understanding the various cultures across WA and more broadly Australia
- Support success and share success stories.

Funding

- Dedicated funding and grants may be required for Indigenous businesses.
- Create Indigenous co-investment fund.
- Understand what is successful and is working in other states.
- Understanding the context and where the value chain is.
- Provide financial advice for founders (basic financial).
- Re-aligning available resources (not reinventing the wheel).

“No one looked like me in the startup world. Didn’t feel like there was a space for me.”



3.3.4 Part II. Emerging Themes And Deeper Insights.

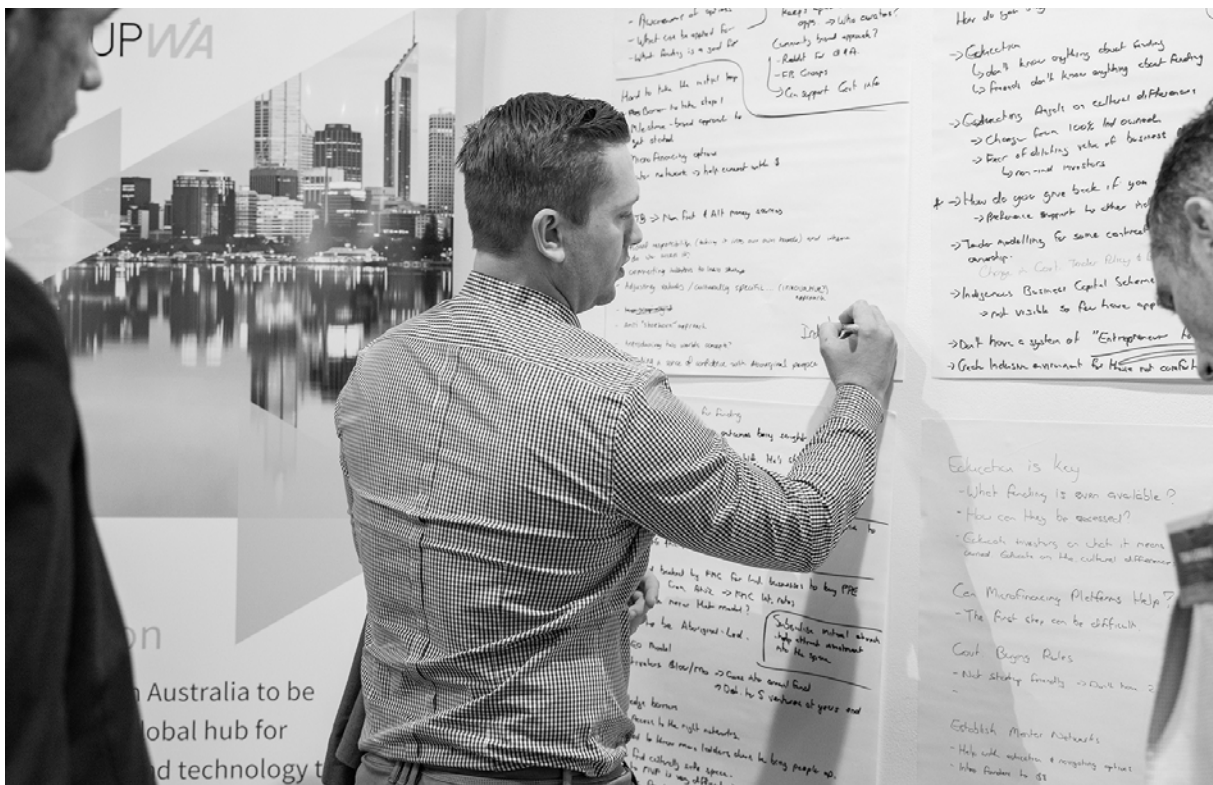
Based on the table and group discussions, the following themes emerged and insights were gained across the three 'How might we questions', see Table 10 below.

Table 10. Emerging themes and deeper insights based on captured insights from Part I of the Indigenous Founders Summit 2021.

Education	Of [aspiring] Indigenous founders	Raise the awareness of Indigenous culture, its values, beliefs and worldviews.
	Investors	Educate non-indigenous investors about the values of Indigenous culture and guide them on how to take a culturally specific innovative approach.
	Indigenous startups	Promoting, creating and showcase startups and entrepreneurship as a viable pathway to employment.
	Indigenous community members	Understanding that startups are a form of self determination through economic empowerment.
	Indigenous community	Collectively promote the unique experiences of 60,000 years of culture as business opportunities.
Networks	Improve and diversify	Strengthen existing networks by diversifying the representation of Indigenous founders and speakers.
	Connect	Identify and provide a summary of available networks to connect with.
	Update	Having a channel to update and highlight the success of former Indigenous founders, in turn inspire others to follow in their footsteps.
	Share	Share own broad network with others.
	Inclusivity	Create an inclusive community where Indigenous founders feel safe, welcomed, respected and equally engaged.

Networks	Communicate	Use yarning circles as a comfortable arrangement for non-hierarchical and collaborative discussion. Exercise respectful communication. Reflect without judgement.
	Be seen and understood	Share perspectives through storytelling. This way an atmosphere of trust and a non-judgmental environment can be created.
Culture	Innovate	Foster innovative approaches in line with Indigenous culture.
	Promote	Expand Indigenous representation. Establish collaborative partnerships with Indigenous people to ensure that the content reflects cultural authenticity.
	Distinguish	Acknowledge the differences between Indigenous culture and non-Indigenous culture.
	Safety	Create a culturally safe space for Indigenous peoples with the help of collaborative partnerships, relationship building, critical reflection of pre-existing values, biases and beliefs from non-Indigenous people.
	Educate	Provide a better understanding of the differences and similarities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures.
	Build	Develop cultural courage that enables non-Indigenous peoples to interact with and be guided by Indigenous knowledge and worldviews.
	Honour	Acknowledgment and recognition of Indigenous people's knowledge.

Funding	Identify	Identify the available funding options per business type, stage and ownership structure.
	Collaborate	Establish mentor networks. Foster collaboration between businesses and organisations.
	Take the opportunity	Build confidence in Indigenous startups to make use of available funding options.
	Give back	Financially support Indigenous founders.
	Monitor	Measure the value that Aboriginal startups create through dollar value and social impact. There is a lack of data captured across the country however could inform future programs.
	Invest	Create dedicated funding sources for Indigenous-led startups.



3.3.5 Part III. Collective Actions.

In response to the overarching question of ‘How might we grow a vibrant and diverse WA startup ecosystem for Indigenous Founders?’ the participants proposed the following actions.

Education And Empathy

The participants of the Indigenous Founders Summit suggested the following steps to educate and raise more awareness between the Indigenous and Western worlds.

- A government-funded and led education and marketing programme providing educational background about Indigenous culture. The participants highlighted the importance of co-designing those campaigns with Indigenous people to ensure that the content is culturally authentic. For educational workshops, it is essential to create a safe place that enables storytelling and deep listening, resulting in connecting at a much deeper level.
- Start education programs at schools to promote Indigenous culture through the Department of Education. The attendees noted that only when people are familiar with a topic, they will normalise it.
- An education programme or workshops for government procurement policymakers to highlight the difference between majority Indigenous-owned versus 100% Indigenous-owned.
- Create networking events with a diverse cohort of people in attendance.
- Provide dedicated networking events for Indigenous entrepreneurs and supporting networks.

Fragmentation Challenges

Almost one in five Indigenous people lived in remote and very remote areas, compared to around one in one hundred non-Indigenous Australians²². To reduce the challenges caused by fragmentation, the participants of the Summit presented the idea



of an alliance that focuses on Indigenous founder education. As a mechanism, the alliance could offer an online platform enabling the Indigenous startup community consisting of founders, mentors, investors and educators to exchange knowledge and connect online. Additionally, face-to-face networking events may be offered across Western Australia.

The alliance could be run by captains of industry, such as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA or Local Government Councils.

²² Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016. <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/2075.0Main>

Genuine Accessibility And Empathy

The participants discussed a best practice framework to create an environment where Indigenous startups can thrive. The framework includes:

- A guide for lateral love used for:
 - » Social Media;
 - » Internal communication, and
 - » External communication.
- Make cultural empathy part of business as usual.
- A focus on emotions:

- Via sight: Display local Indigenous art in spaces. Showcase successful Indigenous startups and share their individual success stories.
 - » Via sound: Share the stories of local people, land and culture. Host events that attract Indigenous founders.
 - » The development of a phrase that resonates globally, such as 'RUOK' day.

It was noted that the Western Australian startup ecosystem could lead by example. After the successful integration of the above framework, bigger businesses may follow.



4. Overarching Emerging Themes

The purpose of the StartupWA Summit Series was to frame actions in response to the overarching question: *‘How might we grow a vibrant and diverse startup ecosystem in Western Australia?’*

The Summit Series has given StartupWA insights from three under-represented groups of Western Australian entrepreneurs:

- Female Founders;
- Regional Founders; and
- Indigenous Founders.

The insights gained from the Summit Series have been grouped into five (5) overarching themes.

These themes are the suggested focus points that will contribute to the continuous development of a more diverse startup ecosystem in WA. The five themes are:

1. Education;
2. Networks;
3. Local success stories;
4. Access to funding; and
5. Procurement.

The following sections will discuss how the State Government can support initiatives within those five key areas.



“How might we grow a vibrant and diverse startup ecosystem in Western Australia?”

4.1 Education

Throughout all three summits, the topic of education was regularly suggested and discussed. As education is a very broad theme, for the purposes of this section, it has been separated into ‘Founder Education’ and ‘Investor Education’.

4.1.1 Founder Education

The educational background of a startup’s founders can be a strong driver of its performance. It is essential to develop the capabilities of founders depending on the lifecycle of their businesses.

Entrepreneurship in universities plays an essential role to educate and attract both local and global talent. Universities foster the entrepreneurial culture via semester-long courses, and by collaborating with the local industry to offer events that inform students about the elements of starting a business and create opportunities to exchange knowledge.

Despite the common perception that startup founders are in their early twenties, research highlights that the average age of founders of high-growth startups is forty-five (45).²³ Founders in this age group, especially in the context of female,

Indigenous, and regional founders, have their own unique lifestyle barriers faced in gaining the knowledge required to understand all aspects or running a startup. Therefore, more educational activities that nurture the knowledge of a founder and fit into their lifestyle need to be offered. Such activities may include access to acceleration programs (both online and in-person), access to local community ambassadors and mentors, participation in round table discussions and themed workshops.

4.1.2 Investor Education

Throughout the Summit Series, it was suggested that founders are not the only parties who would benefit from having better access to education in order to advance the growth of the startup sector. Providing investors, and potential investors, with the knowledge they need to understand the intricacies of startups and how to invest in the ecosystem, will help increase access to investment capital across all sectors.

One of the specific areas that was discussed during the Summit Series was how investors can better assess risk in order to make more informed investment decisions when considering early-stage startups.



²³ Pierre Azoulay, Benjamin F. Jones, J. Daniel Kim, and Javier Miranda, 2018. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2018/07/research-the-average-age-of-a-successful-startup-founder-is-45>

It was highlighted that the risk appetite of local investors who are investing in, or considering investing in, tech startups is perceived as conservative. One of the factors for this is the lack of expertise when it comes to properly understanding what a startup does and how it can effectively be commercialised.

A second factor that was discussed is the difference in cultural and general understanding between investors and Indigenous and female founders. It was suggested that there would be mutual benefit from investors gaining further education on the differences in culture between the Indigenous business community and the investment community; and the differences between female founders and male founders in relation to how they pitch to investors. Overcoming these differences would reduce the hurdles currently faced by these founder cohorts and result in more investment capital being made available to these startups. It is worth noting that there has been a significant increase in the number of impact investors and

high net worth investors investing in Indigenous businesses. In addition, there have been a number of programs across the country that are bridging the gap between Indigenous founders and investors. The result has been investment into Indigenous startups and an increased understanding of Indigenous culture.

From an investment perspective, there has been an increase in the number of Indigenous businesses which has led to an increase in the number of successful Indigenous business owners. These business owners could become investors in their own right resulting in Indigenous investors investing into Indigenous founders.

In order to achieve this, education programs are needed which will help facilitate the creation of more Indigenous investors in Australia, and deploy more equity investment and capital into the Indigenous startup sector that will lead to accelerated job growth.

Recommendation 4.1.1

The State Government has already setup the right framework to provide small business education through the likes of the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC). Utilising the resources available through the SBDC, a series of startup-focused workshop series would be beneficial in closing these education gaps both for founders and investors.

The SBDC, in collaboration with StartupWA, will need to facilitate a roundtable discussion with key stakeholders in order to ideate the education topics that would have the greatest impact on growing the startup sector in the under-represented cohorts of female founders, regional founders, and Indigenous founders. These education topics can then be formulated into courses and workshops made available in a number of formats from online learning to in-person sessions in both regional hubs and metropolitan locations.

4.2 Networks

A flourishing startup ecosystem consists of social networking spaces and frequent events, both in-person and online, that foster strong connectivity and people networks. Those spaces and events need to be designed in a manner that is inclusive so that people of all cultures, nationalities, gender and ages feel welcome and have the opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas without the fear of discrimination.

Increasing the visibility of events held in the startup ecosystem is a solid first step in fostering and

growing these people networks, and helping to create a community.

The participants also raised the need for an increased level of interaction between corporations and the local startup scene. These engagements between corporations and startups are critical for the ecosystem development.²⁴ Increased engagement between these two cohorts of stakeholders can benefit the overall ecosystem in a number of ways, including through corporate venture capital models as seen with Woodside's FutureLab Spark and through direct commercial agreements.

Recommendation 4.2.1

It was suggested by multiple participants of the Summit Series that the most difficult aspect to building their people networks was being able to find the right events to attend. The discussion amongst the participants extended to the suggestion that the startup community would benefit from a curated events calendar that aggregates all of the key events, publishing them in one location. It was suggested that this would help reduce event clashes as well as growing the people networks within the ecosystem.

This is not a new concept and, in part, already exists. However, with the provision of more resources, the organisations that are currently providing this type of service, such as Startup News, will be able to curate a more comprehensive events calendar and increase distribution to reach a larger number of aspiring startup founders who are not yet embedded in the startup ecosystem.

The State Government can also enhance the startup events space by organising, co-organising, or sponsoring events that address specific needs that the market is not sufficiently addressing. For example, events that encourage educational opportunities and interactions between corporations and startups. This initiative would be best implemented as a collaboration between StartupWA and the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC) which already runs events and workshops of a similar nature.

²⁴ Harima, A., Harima, J. and Freiling, J., 2021. The injection of resources by transnational entrepreneurs: towards a model of the early evolution of an entrepreneurial ecosystem. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 33(1-2), pp.80-107. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2020.1734265>

Recommendation 4.2.2

While Recommendation 4.2.1 addresses the need to grow people networks in general, additional activity is required to help regional founders grow their networks. The current state is that the majority of startup and tech-focussed networking and educational events are held in the Perth Metropolitan Area. This makes sense as it is where the highest population density is in the state. However, to promote regional entrepreneurship and increase the rate of growth of regional startups, more of these events need to be hosted in regional startup hubs.

One such event that the State Government can consider as a signal to the market would be to either organise, or partner with an organisation to organise, a regional startup and technology conference. An event of this nature could be a stand-alone conference organised specifically for the regions or an event connected with an existing technology conference such as West Tech Fest.



4.3 Local Success Stories

A common theme throughout all three summits was that highlighting and celebrating the successes of both the individual entrepreneurs and startups in these underrepresented groups will help to inspire the next generation and provide role models for what is possible. The simplest method of highlighting these successes is through story telling. It was suggested that these stories will need to tell the journey of the entrepreneurs, including the successes, failures, and key learnings throughout that journey.

Sharing entrepreneur and startup success stories of this manner helps to enhance trust in the particular

business environment, accelerates the entry of new ventures and increases investment opportunities. Brown and Mason, 2017, suggested that the creation of visible success stories is a prerequisite for attracting entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial resource providers.²⁵

Visible success stories of local entrepreneurs creates real role models with whom Western Australian's can identify themselves. The combination of the awareness of local success stories and identifiable role models, paired with networking and collaboration opportunities, fosters the spirit of 'I can do that, too.' The outcome of this is that more Western Australians will consider starting their own entrepreneurial journey.



²⁵ Brown, R. and Mason, C., 2017. Looking inside the spiky bits: a critical review and conceptualisation of entrepreneurial ecosystems. *Small business economics*, 49(1), pp.11-30. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-017-9865-7>

Recommendation 4.3.1

Celebrating success stories, both of entrepreneurs and startups as a whole, is an initiative that should be deployed as an ‘always on’ strategy to inspire upcoming generations and the next wave of startup founders. It is recommended that these success stories be told and championed by startup media channels and promoted widely to relevant audience segments. This promotion will need to be through a wide range of media, from social media channels such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and TikTok to digital news and media publications. The stories would also need to be in a range of formats to ensure that it speaks to each generation with maximum effectiveness. These formats include, but are not limited to, written articles, podcasts and video casts.

While this is currently being implemented on a small scale through current startup and business media outlets, the scale of story telling and distribution of those stories needs to be increased. StartupWA recommends two different methods of achieving this.

A Longterm Initiative Through StartupWA

StartupWA’s preferred approach is through a partnership with the State Government by which StartupWA manages the creation and distribution of these ‘Startup Stories’ through conversations and interviews with the startup community, funded by the State Government. This approach would need to be viewed as a long-term activity, costed for a period of three to five years. The stories would need to cover a range of points of view, including:

1. Female founders;
2. Indigenous founders;
3. Regional founders;
4. Employees working in startups, across a number of disciplines but with a strong focus on under-represented groups in STEM fields;
5. Angel investors; and
6. Venture Capital firms.

This model helps to facilitate a stronger relationship between StartupWA and the rest of the startup community which aides it in better understanding what the startup community needs to grow. It also allows StartupWA to capture a greater amount of data and insights on the startups that are operating in WA which will help to inform future reports and State Government initiatives.

A Series Of State Government Grants

The second option for increasing the number of startup success stories and the amplification of those stories would be through the availability of grants to help digital media companies cover the expense of creating and distributing this content.

If adopting this approach, the grant application process would need to assess the applying organisation’s ability to create and distribute this style of content, and understand the potential audience size across WA, Australia, and Internationally.

Both of these options will help to foster entrepreneurship within the state as well as growing the profile of WA as a startup hub on an international level, increasing its attractiveness to founders and STEM talent from abroad.

4.4 Funding

The supply and accessibility of finance for startups are important conditions for their growth and survival.²⁶

Studies highlight a negative evaluation of the effectiveness of many public programs that aimed to stimulate economic development by supporting entrepreneurship in general.²⁷ As a result, policy priorities of countries promoting entrepreneurship are being reformulated, like in Poland. It is no longer about promoting entrepreneurship as such, but about precisely constructed instruments designed to support very specific projects, valuable from the point of view of the national economic policy. As an example, the recent Business Research and Innovation Initiative (BRII) set four challenges that the government currently faces in policy and service delivery areas. The grant (up to \$1 million) enables founders to solve these challenges using innovative approaches. More initiatives of this type would benefit the ecosystem.

The attraction of more diverse investor groups into WA may benefit the growth of the local startup ecosystem. According to LaunchVic, the proportion

of venture capital funded startups reaching unicorn status (startups with a valuation of US\$1 billion or AUD\$1.3 billion) quadrupled within the last decade from 20% to 82%. LaunchVic notes that startups receiving seed funding scale on average four times faster than those that did not receive funding in their early stages. Startups that have raised capital at a Series A and later stage scale six times faster.²⁸

Through this Summit Series and further conversations with the startup and investment community in WA, there are two opposing views. Founders, especially in underrepresented cohorts such as regional, female and Indigenous startups, comment that there is a lack of availability of capital in the market. Investors have the opposing view that there is no shortage of investment capital available in the Western Australian market, but that investment opportunities are scarce.

This suggests there are two problems that need to be addressed in order to grow the startup community through the availability of capital:

1. Increasing the amount of investment capital in the market; and
2. Connecting the investment community with the startup founder community to increase the number of investment discussions.



²⁶Stam, E. and Van de Ven, A., 2021. Entrepreneurial ecosystem elements. *Small Business Economics*, 56(2), pp.809-832. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-019-00270-6>

²⁷Autio, E. and Rannikko, H., 2016. Retaining winners: Can policy boost high-growth entrepreneurship?. *Research policy*, 45(1), pp.42-55. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2015.06.002>

²⁸LaunchVic, 2022. https://findingstartups.launchvic.org/transactions.rounds/f/all_slug_locations/anyof_~victoria_1~/growth_stages/not_mature/rounds/not_GRANT_SPAC%20PRIVATE%20PLACEMENT/tags/not_outside%20tech?showStats=YEAR&statsType=rounds&

Recommendation 4.4.1

Increasing the amount of investment capital available to Western Australian startups will help the startup sector grow at a faster rate and attract more talent into the ecosystem.

Throughout the summits, participants discussed the need for a State Government-led co-investment fund, similar to the Business Investment Fund (BIF) in Queensland. The BIF was created to support established small and medium businesses to innovate, realise their potential and promote job creation in the state.²⁹

The creation of a government-led co-investment fund is currently listed as number one on StartupWA's 'Top 10 Recommendations For The WA State Government' which can be found online at startupwa.org/topten.

As this is a fairly complex area and there are many models by which a government co-investment fund can be created, StartupWA's recommendation is for the State Government to investigate the various models and determine which would be the most suitable, should it wish to proceed with a co-investment fund.

Fostering long-term commitment of entrepreneurs to settle down and remain in WA should contribute to the growth of the startup ecosystem. Successful founders can not only inspire new entrepreneurs through sharing their stories and exchanging knowledge, but will often also become angel investors and re-invest their funds into the next generation of founders. This knowledge accumulation and capital recycling process provides an important resource flow within ecosystems.³⁰

Recommendation 4.4.2

Section 4.3 - 'Local Success Stories' makes a recommendation to better highlight startup success stories. By highlighting these success stories, investors are more likely to deploy their capital into WA startups as it reduces their perception of risk.

²⁹QIC, 2022. <https://www.qic.com.au/bqbif>

³⁰Spigel, B. and Harrison, R., 2018. Toward a process theory of entrepreneurial ecosystems. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 12(1), pp.151-168. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sej.1268>; Roundy, P. T. 2019. "Rust Belt or Revitalization: Comparing Narratives in Entrepreneurial Ecosystems." *Management Research Review* 42 (1): 102–121. doi:10.1108/MRR-09-2015-0216.

Recommendation 4.4.3

In order to facilitate connections between startup founders and the investment community, there first needs to be knowledge of who the founders and investors are.

In 2019, StartupWA published the ‘Startup Report’ which mapped out the main known startups, investors, and co-working spaces operating in WA’s startup ecosystem. However, a lot has changed and the ecosystem has grown a lot since that version of the report was published. There are also additional data points that would be of benefit and would help to map out the overall impact of the startup sector.

Funding is required to create an updated version of this report that maps:

- The main stakeholders in the startup ecosystem including the startups, founders, investors, co-working spaces, and all supporting services;
- The demographics of the founders and/or senior leadership team. This includes collecting data on the number of female-led and Indigenous-led startups operating in WA;
- The approximate revenue startups contribute to the WA economy;
- The number of people employed by startups in WA;
- Which startups have received investment capital, how much they’ve received, at what stage, and from whom; and
- Which startups are interested in seeking investment capital.

These data would allow both StartupWA and the State Government to gain a better understanding of the startup ecosystem in WA and what it contributes to the state’s economy. It would also provide data that can be used to facilitate relationships between investors and startups.

Through a permission-based opt-in, some of these data would be made available on startupwa.org. For example, a list of the startups seeking funding and the investors who are currently active in the market. This would allow the startup ecosystem to have access to a live resource that would aim to increase access to funding opportunities.

4.5 Procurement

Throughout all three summits, the subject of State Government procurement was raised. Access to government contracts is seen as a vital lever that can be pulled by the State Government in order to help the tech startup sector grow.

A number of concerns were raised regarding the current process for accessing government contracts. The most common concerns were:

- Startups and founders not understanding government buying rules or how to find and respond to government tenders;
- Summit participants questioning whether they would, in fact, be eligible for any government

- contracts and not wanting to navigate an onerous process if they aren't eligible; and
- Indigenous founders being concerned about whether accepting investment capital from non-Indigenous investors would result in them not qualifying for government contracts under the Indigenous Procurement Policy.

These concerns are all valid and help to highlight various areas where the State Government may be able to either simplify the procurement process or provide education to startups on how to better navigate the government procurement and tender processes.

Recommendation 4.5.1

Often, startups are working on either new problems or ones that haven't previously been solved in an effective manner. In these situations, the government procurement process and standard government buying rules may not provide the most optimal method of matching those potential solutions with the government's problems.

Many governments worldwide have tested different procurement processes and models to get a better end result and help foster the innovation ecosystem. One such process is Scotland's CivTech³¹ model. At a high level, this model flips the procurement process by encouraging the public sector to identify the problems they face for which they struggle to find effective solutions, rather than to try and procure what they believe to be a solution. These problems are then opened up to innovators for them to work on and create a solution for. There is a pre-defined process this model follows which is in-tune to the way a typical startup operates.

A model such as this would be beneficial for the State Government and would help to foster innovation in the state. StartupWA recommends that the State Government commits resources to explore the viability of implementing a model similar to CivTech.

³¹ QIC, 2022. <https://www.civtech.scot>

Recommendation 4.5.2

Founder education continues to be a theme that has emerged throughout the Summit Series.

Upon further investigation, some of the founder concerns about the government's buying rules and procurement process, especially in regards to Aboriginal Procurement Policy, have been misinterpreted.

Extending on the recommendations in Section 4.1 Education, the startup sector would benefit from a series of ongoing workshops that focus on assisting startups and founders navigate government procurement. The resources to facilitate this learning already exist in the Small Business Development Corporation.

Some of the topics surrounding procurement that would need to be explored are:

- How to navigate government procurement from finding open contracts to joining Common Use Arrangements and buying panels.
- How to structure your proposal to maximise probability of success.
- How will accepting external investment affect my government contracts? (Especially focusing on Aboriginal Procurement Policy).

Recommendation 4.5.3

The government procurement process can be used as an incentive to increase the number of female founded companies in a similar manner to the Aboriginal Procurement Policy.

A potential method for this would be to add a small weighting on State Government contracts that preferences those companies with a founding team or senior leadership team comprising more than x% females. This should be applied to all State Government contracts; however, could start in selected categories. The nominated percentage would need to be set at an ambitious target in order to provide a strong signal to the market.

5. Appendices

Appendix A - List of Attendees Female Founders Summit

First Name	Last Name Initial	First Name	Last Name Initial
Alex	J.	Lisa	L.
Aline	K.	Lisa	S.
Andrew	M.	Marika	G.
Ati	A.	Mary	T.
Ben	S.	Maryline	C.
Bill	W.	Naomi	R.
Cesira	L.	Natasha	P.
Charlie	G.	Niamh	T.
Conrad	L.	Ophelie	C.
Dee	R.	Peter	R.
Diana	G.	Peter	C.
Dinali	D.	Peter	B.
Donna	V.	Rafael	K.B.
Erin	C.	Rebecca	L.
Felicity	D.	Rebekah	C.
Heidi	P.	Samantha	S.
Ingrid	R.	Sandra	D.
Jack	H.	Sarah	R.
Jacqui	C.	Sherin	B.
Jamie	V.	Sheryl	F.
Jason	B.	Sofie	D.
Jennifer	H.	Sonja	T.
Jessica	G.	Steve	C.
Kaiya	M.	Suzzanne	L.
Kate	K.	Tamryn	B.
Kate	M.	Tina	A.
Kate	L.	Tom	G.
Kate	B.	Tracey	W.
Kay	S.	Trieu	N.
Lan	T.		

Appendix B - List of Attendees Regional Founders Summit

First Name	Last Name Initial
Adam	G.
Alan	B.
Ali	M.
Angie	W.
Anita	P.
Asher	V.
Ashleigh	O.
Ashleigh	E.
Brodie	M.
Cam	S.
Claire	B.
Craig	H.
Dean	S.
Eliza	C.
Eunice	S.
Florian	P.
Helen	C.
Ian	B.
Jacoba	S.
Jason	M.
Jason	B.
Jim	W.
Joanna	H.
Kali	N.
Kate	B.
Kay	S.
Mat	L.
Pi-Shen	S.
Rachel	K.B.
Raf	K.
Rex	D.
Richard	K.
Ruben	W.
Samual	I.
Sherin	B.
SJ	N.
Sudi	M.
Tom	G.

Appendix C - List of Attendees Indigenous Founders Summit

First Name	Last Name Initial
Adele	P.
Aline	K.
Andrzej	G.
Chandra	S.
Dana	G.
Faisal	M.
Gordon	C.
Jarrold	F.
Jasmine	K.
Jason	B.
Jaynaya	W.
John	N.
Koen	M.
Leslie	D.
Nikki	H.
Pi-Shen	S.
Rob	B.
Rohan	M.
Sam	I.
Sherin	B.
Tom	G.
Trieu	N.
Yulu	M.