Igniting Capabilities of Women Export Entrepreneurs in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Part II: Thematic Analysis and Recommendations

The thematic synthesis of interviews complements NZTE’s showcasing of individual success stories via podcasts, seminars, and networking events, and policy steps it has already taken. It reaffirms the need to tackle female underconfidence and hesitance or unfamiliarity over investment; and sexist perceptions by some institutional funders. It also affirms NZTE’s highlighting of allies outside the firm, but spotlights male allies as aids to finance, growth and expansion. Men’s IT knowledge could unlock global digital commerce to women with strengths in innovation and creative marketing of, say, digital wearables, eBooks and software programmes. The report suggests NZTE identify male business leaders and friendly entrepreneurs more formally than women’s informal networks do and offer education about allyship and gender barriers. But it stresses that women entrepreneurs need to be shown the power of female capital. To “ignite” the gendered capabilities these interviewees typify, policy should embrace what export enterprise means to women in A/NZ, which often goes beyond economic gain to social change.

Last, no one policy size fits the needs of all entrepreneurs or even all female entrepreneurs. The needs of wāhine Māori exporters are overdue for investigation. Migrant women’s ventures could be wrapped into Immigration New Zealand’s refresh of the NZ Migrant Settlement Integration Strategy and NZ Refugee Resettlement Strategy. And “blind” financial risk assessment in start-up funding could boost equity and inclusion and reduce poverty by empowering not only women and ethnic minorities but also, for example, other gender-diverse groups and people with health problems.

* The full report “Igniting Capabilities of Women Export Entrepreneurs” by Dr Susan Nemec, Anna Guenther, Professor Christine Woods and Jess Chilcott, May 2023 (16 pp) is available here.