

## Unlocking untapped potential:

\$60k competition and free small business festivals to empower next wave of Aussie female founders

**6 MARCH 2024: A series of free small business festivals have been launched across the country and a \$60,000 competition will return to uncover Australia's next generation of women entrepreneurs.**

The Accelerator for Enterprising Women's Kickstarter Challenge will open on 26 March to all promising female entrepreneurs over the age of 18 with big ideas.

A panel of expert judges will select finalists in four categories:

- Health, Wellbeing and the Care Economy
- Climate Change and Sustainability
- Community Impact
- FinTech or e-Commerce

A fifth finalist will be determined by public vote.

The winner will be awarded \$30,000 in equity-free funding to develop her business idea. The other finalists will each receive \$7,500.

To help prepare for the competition, or simply to network and access free resources to help their small businesses grow, women are invited to attend free Female Founder Festivals in Canberra, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Hobart and Melbourne, hosted by the Accelerator for Enterprising Women. They will be headlined by some of Australia's most accomplished entrepreneurial women ready to pass on their knowledge and insights.

In addition to the festivals, intensive AccelerateHER Workshops will be held to help attendees grow their ideas from a basic concept into something they are ready to share with the world.

The program is delivered in partnership with the Council of Small Business Organisations Australia. COSBOA chief executive officer Luke Achterstraat said COSBOA wanted to ensure anyone who wanted a future in entrepreneurship could create that career path.

“This competition will be a pivotal moment not just for the winner of the \$30,000 in equity-free funding, but for a host of others who will find the courage, support and information they need to get their ideas off the ground too,” Mr Achterstraat said.

“Women in our community have so many transformational ideas we need to harvest for the good of society and our economy.”

The Accelerator for Enterprising Women’s spokesperson Miriam Rizvi said programs such as these were imperative as research continued to show how far women lag behind.

Women are under-represented in entrepreneurship. Only about one in three small businesses are run by women and the latest [State of Australian Startup Funding report](#) released by Cut Through Venture and Folklore Ventures details the “severe imbalance in the distribution of funding” for women founders.

“We have chosen four entry categories ripe for some truly game-changing ideas and we’re excited to see what women across Australia come up with. Initiatives such as this Kickstarter Challenge, and the Accelerator for Enterprising Women, uncover the depth of the talent out there and give women tangible paths forward to embrace their potential as successful business owners,” Ms Rizvi said.

*Ends*

**AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW:** Accelerator for Enterprising Women spokesperson Mim Rizvi in Sydney — 0415 738 288

Kickstarter dates:

Entries open on 26 March  
Voting opens 29 April  
Entries close 16 August  
Voting closes 23 August  
Grand final and winner announced 9 October

Female Founder Festivals:

Canberra — 27 March  
Hobart — 6 May  
Brisbane — 15 May  
Sydney — 22 May  
Perth — 5 June  
Adelaide — 19 June  
Melbourne — 26 June

**About the Accelerator for Enterprising Women**

The [Accelerator for Enterprising Women](#) is part of the Future Female Entrepreneurs Program (FFEP), an innovative entrepreneurship program available free to all women and girls in Australia funded under the Australian Government’s Women’s Leadership and Development Program.