

The following document outlines the **2024 policy priorities of the Association of Women's Business Centers (AWBC)**. These priorities have been identified to modernize, support, and promote the growth of women-owned businesses across various sectors. The AWBC aims to create an inclusive and equitable business environment by addressing barriers faced by women entrepreneurs and providing them with access to resources, capital, technology, and opportunities. These policy priorities reflect the AWBC's commitment to empowering women entrepreneurs and fostering their success in the ever-evolving business landscape of 2024.

## 2024 POLICY PRIORITIES

### MODERNIZE THE WBC PROGRAM

### CREATE ACCESS TO CAPITAL

### EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES

### LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD

### GENERATE TECHNOLOGY ACCESSIBILITY

### FUEL GENDER PARITY



### 1. MODERNIZE, FUND AND LEVERAGE THE WBC PROGRAM AT SBA.

The WBC Program at the Small Business Administration (SBA) should be re-authorized, for the first time in 20 years as envisioned in H.R. 5361 / S. 2184. This will ensure the program is up-to-date, adequately supported, and positioned to provide essential support to women entrepreneurs.

### 2. CREATE ACCESS TO CAPITAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS.

To provide greater access to capital for women entrepreneurs, leverage the Community Reinvestment Act and State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) to increase lending, designate funding for WOSBs in Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs, and incentivize early-stage investment in women-owned companies through federal programs.

### 3. EXPAND OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN-OWNED SMALL BUSINESSES THROUGH OPEN GOVERNMENT AND FOREIGN MARKETS.

Simplify the WOSB certification process, allowing Women's Business Centers (WBCs) to certify businesses, and adopt a trade policy agenda that prioritizes small and women-owned small businesses. These actions will streamline certification, support WBCs as key supporters of women-owned businesses, and create opportunities in international markets.

### 4. LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD BY ADDRESSING LONGSTANDING BARRIERS WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS DISPROPORTIONATELY EXPERIENCE.

Ensure women business owners benefit from tax reform, make affordable healthcare options available, increase opportunities for federal assistance in childcare, recognize solopreneurs, and enable entrepreneurs to save for retirement. These measures aim to address barriers such as tax burdens, healthcare costs, childcare responsibilities, and retirement planning that disproportionately affect women entrepreneurs.

### 5. ENABLE TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATIONS TO BENEFIT WOMEN BUSINESS OWNERS.

Provide clear guidance on breakthrough technologies, expand digital commerce and online marketplaces, and make technology investments and R&D tax deductible for women-owned businesses. These steps will ensure that women entrepreneurs can leverage technologies, access global markets, and stay at the forefront of innovation.

### 6. IDENTIFY AND ESTABLISH GENDER PARITY IN UNDERREPRESENTED INDUSTRIES.

Establish solutions for industries where women are underrepresented, conduct a GAO study to identify industries with disparate representation, create a national broadband plan, and strengthen programs for women inventors' education and IP protections. These actions aim to bridge the gender divide, increase representation in underrepresented industries, ensure equal internet access, and support women inventors.