

# Op-Ed: Women entrepreneurs are driving recovery from the pandemic

By: Amy Lea, District Director, SBA Wyoming District Office

Since 1987, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has celebrated Women's History Month to recognize the role women entrepreneurs have in building and strengthening our local and national economies. Women have transformed the face of entrepreneurship across America in both urban and rural communities. This is especially true while our nation confronts the challenges of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Women entrepreneurs continue to play a greater role in creating new jobs and economic activity across the country. According to the National Association of Women Business Owners, nearly 12 million businesses are owned by women, generating \$1.7 trillion in sales, and employing over 9 million people. Together, these businesses represent one of the fastest growing sectors of our economy.

Wyoming has long been known as the Equality State, and our team and resource partners do their best to hold that standard. According to the Tax Foundation, Wyoming is again the most business-friendly state in the country, and we strive to ensure women-owned small businesses are able to take advantage of the resources and opportunities available to them.

Even given these opportunities and this tremendous growth, women continue to face challenges and obstacles when starting and growing a business. According to a recent [study](#) by the SBA's Office of Advocacy, women-owned firms are overrepresented in industries related to domestic services which tend to have low growth potential. Also, women are more likely than men to run home-based businesses, and women with children were more likely to have a homebased business.

The study also found that men with children were less likely to operate their businesses from home. Women with children at home were less likely to operate in high growth industries, while the opposite was true for men. Women with college degrees were more likely to be in high growth industries like construction and accounting/booking services. Men in high growth

industries tended to have proportionately fewer college degrees. Finally, racial minorities own more businesses in women-concentrated industries such as beauty salons and childcare services.

To level the playing field for women entrepreneurs, the SBA is administering vital economic aid programs to provide a lifeline to millions of American small businesses, non-profits, and their employees. The Paycheck Protection Program, COVID-19 Economic Injury Disaster Loans, Targeted EIDL Advance, Shuttered Venue Operators Grants, and debt relief for existing agency borrowers are part of the nation's largest economic relief efforts ever.

The SBA continues to support initiatives that benefit the women's business community to address barriers to access to capital, business training, government contracts, and disaster recovery assistance. This is especially true in minority communities where the agency has called on its lending partners to redouble efforts to assist eligible borrowers. SBA is working to ensure economic aid programs are accessible to all eligible entities, including those hit hardest, while protecting program integrity and ensuring that aid is released as quickly as possible.

Another way SBA assists women entrepreneurs is through its more than 100 Women's Business Centers nationwide which assist women in starting and growing small businesses. Our partners at the [Wyoming Women's Business Center](#) provide a full range of services for women entrepreneurs, serving people of all genders at all stages of planning, implementation, and growth. For those interested in contracting with the federal government, the Women-Owned Business Certification helps equalize the procurement process for women business owners, as the government limits competition for certain contracts to businesses certified as women-owned. This initiative compliments SBA's 8(a) program to assist socially and economically disadvantaged business owners in accessing federal contracts.

Other mentoring programs include SCORE, a network of thousands of volunteer business counselors around the country who mentor and educate small business owners, our statewide [Wyoming Small Business Development Center Network](#), and the [Veterans Business Outreach Center](#) in Billings which services Montana, Wyoming and Utah.

At the SBA, our role is to support all entrepreneurs scale-up their business and recover from today's challenges. This is especially true as we celebrate national Women's History Month. For more information on SBA's programs and services please visit [sba.gov/wy](https://sba.gov/wy), follow us on Twitter @SBA\_Wyoming, and subscribe to our e-newsletter [here](#). Our team can be reached at (307) 261-6500.

Yep, they could qualify as a live performing arts organization operator. As long as the majority of their shows are staged at qualifying venues and they meet the other eligibility criteria they should be fine to apply.