

Money For Jam

Enabling women at risk of poverty to create financial wellbeing through micro-enterprise

by Katelijne Lenaerts



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Executive summary

This document outlines how a co-design process with 13 women over 50 has led to a unique and innovative solution to helping women at risk of income poverty, using the vehicle of micro-enterprise.

The co-design process firstly gave us some amazing insights in the myths and assumptions around who these women are that are at risk of income poverty as they grow older, as well as their attitudes and responses towards support programs currently offered to them and what these women want. We then co-designed, together with the women, a model for a support program that they feel meets their needs and that they will likely use:

What is typical about women over 50 at risk of income poverty?

1. The profile of women over 50 at risk of poverty is broad and there are many:

There seems to be a systemic assumption that unemployed people are necessarily low-skilled and inexperienced, which is not true for many mature age people not in mainstream employment. The more we talked to women themselves, the more we realised that there are many women over 50 at risk of poverty and that they are not necessarily only from a low socio-economic background: many have a good education, some have had professional careers, simply a set of circumstances have led them to become at risk of poverty, or even homeless.

2. Lack of confidence is a considerable barrier

These women have lost their self-esteem, self-confidence and belief in their capabilities through prolonged periods of hardship. The mainstream system providing financial support contributes to their feelings of shame and guilt, they feel disheartened and desperate. Mainstream employment services don't tend to focus on their non-work related strengths, passions and interests and their personal crises, thus not helping to rebuild their confidence.

3. The system does not allow for these women to thrive, or even just manage:

A lot of older Australian women are stifled by economic policies, and current services fail to understand their specific needs. Women we talked to definitely expressed that they are tired of being pigeon holed and referred to mainstream services that don't understand them or are not tailored to their needs, temperament and personality. These women also regularly face age discrimination and remain unemployed for longer periods, with the option of volunteering given as the solution for meaningful engagement and participation. Whilst they want to give back to the community, volunteering feels like a cop out solution and is leaving the women even more hamstrung with finding the time for paid economic participation, amidst all their other priorities.

These women also have been alienated by the paradigm of masculine values of achievement, success, the individual, fiduciary responsibilities, ruthless competition and profit. This has made them realise that they don't want to be a player in that game but they don't want to be dole bludgers either. They want to earn money and look after their complex lives.

4. A lot of women don't identify with being business owners:

Most women we spoke to could not identify with being business owners because of the masculine world it represents. They believe it is all about writing a business plan by yourself before you start, then doing it on your own, spending 80 hours a week in your business and taking risk.

When they have sought support to start a micro-enterprise, they have felt the system is not suited to their needs: they don't want a DIY toolkit of business planning templates or a loan that relies on an asset test. They don't want to go it alone and they don't want to do it fulltime and take an all or nothing approach.

The consequences are that women are disheartened and find it difficult to believe that their situation will change as they get older.

What do the women want and what can be done differently?

What we have learnt from the women is that a good outcome with regards to financial wellbeing is as much about looking after self, connecting with others, and safety and security as it is about earning an income.

They want a less transactional, more relationship-based focus of the activity providing payment, something that elevates them through this income generating activity to something more purposeful.

Support by peers or others who've gone along a similar path before them is far more valuable to them than templates and DIY kits - they feel peers understand what they have been going through. Knowing that there is a group of other women out there to help you through ups and downs, gives a sense of safety and security. It also provides an opportunity to marry up skills of people so they can eventually support each other.

All these solutions for actions to get towards financial wellbeing have to be placed in the context of the complex lives of women at risk of poverty. It has to be about focusing on strengths whilst working within the reality of barriers and priorities. Priorities shift as women get older, so do complexities. Caring responsibilities, health and the need to refocus on what's truly important in life makes it difficult for women to take an 'all or nothing' approach to small business. They need flexibility and the ability to do things on their terms. Even if finances are crucially low they still want to prioritise - they've had it tough for many years and desperately want to get balance - quality of life is prioritised over working long hours.

How the Money For Jam model responds to this:

Money For Jam offers a unique approach to workforce participation through entrepreneurship for women at risk of income poverty. It presents a path out of their position of disadvantage, a change in their circumstances and an opportunity to build their resilience. This approach unpacks their strengths and barriers and allows them to experience the world of business ownership, on their terms.

Money For Jam focuses on building emotional wellbeing first, using a strengths-based approach, taking into consideration barriers (including fitting the scale and effort towards micro-enterprise in with the women's complex lives) and using adaptive language with action over plans. It is built on the following principles:

Emotional wellbeing first, then financial wellbeing:

The foundation of Money For Jam is 'emotional wellbeing first, then financial wellbeing', to ensure the highest need is met as a matter of priority: rebuilding lost self-esteem and belief in their capabilities. Before talking micro-enterprise, boosting participants' emotional wellbeing is paramount as it will likely lead to more confidence and the ability to do well.

A strengths-based approach taking barriers into consideration:

Money For Jam is also about providing personalised and one-on-one support that is built around the participant's strengths and takes her barriers into consideration. Values and skills based on life experiences will need to be uncovered. Then enterprise ideas will be generated and tested based on the participant's skills and passions as well as a market need. Starting small, in order to fit in with the women's complex lives, time constraints and priorities, and gradually building confidence in running a small enterprise is a key aspect of the Money For Jam approach.

Use adaptive language, start with looking at micro-enterprise as an income diversification strategy firstly and take action over plans:

Women want and deserve real help in the trenches rather than referral services or a toolkit and they can't commit to an 'all or nothing' approach of having to work on your small business fulltime or not at all, especially given their complex lives, needs and priorities.

Therefore the language used to unpack business and entrepreneurship will be key to the success of Money For Jam, as is an approach of actions over plans using more feminine oriented language and learning by doing: we offer help with thinking about enterprise ideas, trialing enterprise ideas and finding customers until traction is found. This will all be done within the priorities and timeframes of the women and the ability to speed up or slow down if required - no need to go at it full time if that's not possible. An enterprise facilitator who is also a mentor will help them with setting up a micro-enterprise that is relevant, do-able and achievable.

We believe that, when exiting the Money For Jam program, women will have built resilience, greater financial security and more confidence, and over time they will hopefully be more comfortable with the more masculine oriented world of small business. What started as an extra income generating activity can become the replacement income generating activity. We also believe that participation in Money For Jam can lead to more options for economic participation: to continue their micro-enterprise at the pace they have been going; enter the more masculine world of small business and get support from formal programs such as the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme or small business loan facilities offered by banks; or even increase their opportunities for more mainstream forms of workforce participation.

Ultimately, Money For Jam will allow these women to change their position from the current response of "no, I wouldn't know how to run a business" to "yes, I am an entrepreneur".

About the Centre for Applied Policy in Positive Ageing (CAPPA)

The Centre for Applied Policy in Positive Ageing (CAPPA) is the 'do tank' of Australia's think tank Per Capita.

Per Capita is one of Australia's leading think tanks dedicated to building a new vision for Australia based on fairness, prosperity, community and social justice. It addresses disadvantage and inequality in Australia by advocating to influencers for policy change, by conducting and communicating independent research and policy recommendations to decision makers, and ultimately, by the translation of these policy recommendations into applied policy.

CAPPA undertakes social innovation projects that focus on finding solutions to emerging issues resulting from Australia's ageing population, with the aim to increase the social and economic wellbeing of older Australians. We achieve this mission in multiple ways:

- » Develop innovative and original social innovation projects, underpinned by rigorous research.
- » Test social innovation projects in the field, and prepare them for scaling.
- » Conduct original ageing related public policy research.
- » Champion positive ageing by reframing the public debate.
- » Influence policy makers and practitioners to ensure long-term strategic change.

Katelijne Lenaerts is the Director of CAPPA and has led this co-design project. Katelijne has extensive experience in project management and technical advisory roles on economic, enterprise and social enterprise initiatives across Africa, Asia, South America and Australia. Prior to starting with CAPPA Katelijne worked for 2.5 years at Social Ventures Australia, developing and contributing to a number of social innovation projects focusing on employment and economic wellbeing.

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- » City of Casey
- » Cranbourne Info and Support Service
- » CGEA
- » CASA SE
- » The Andrews Centre
- » Sister Works
- » Municipality Association Victoria

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A special mention to Meryl, who not only was a participant in the co-design process but was also engaged as entrepreneur for her unique skills and expertise that were needed in this co-design process, true to the Money For Jam principles.

Where we started and why

We have all heard about the benefits of health and science leading to longer lives and how this has led to the population of over 65s rapidly growing. Too often the media and policy makers treat longevity and ageing as a burden to society rather than an opportunity.

The seed for this project was planted when we had completed the Blueprint for an Ageing Australia, a document that outlines seventeen practical and important policy recommendations across seven policy areas that can make ageing a positive experience for all. The Blueprint is built around the idea that living longer is a good thing, that the rising average age of our population is a vindication of advances in science and health policy, and that the best way to approach it is to look for ways that older Australians can participate more effectively in our society and our economy to the best of their abilities.¹

However, not everyone experiences longevity the same way. We also read reports that indicate that women tend to be more financially disadvantaged in their 50s and 60s than men, increasing their risk of income poverty in retirement. Despite the labour force participation rate of women increasing, driving up the average retirement age, women still move into the last third of their lives with around 60% of the savings of men. The financial pressures of ageing are keenly felt by these women, especially those who are in the private rental market. Women who are aged 50+ are particularly vulnerable because many of them are unable to engage in regular paid employment due to caring responsibilities and

mental and physical health issues. Despite willingness to work, they also regularly face age discrimination and remain unemployed for longer periods. As a result, they are at risk of becoming wholly dependent on government support.

On a positive note, there are also stories about older women who have managed to find ways to increase their financial security through running a micro-enterprise, often in an informal capacity. Pauline, a woman on the age pension, shared her story with us - she had found resourceful ways to boost her Government allowance by offering gardening services to neighbours in their 80s. Gardening strengthened her emotional wellbeing and gave her a source of extra cash. She explained to us that this extra cash makes the difference between her being able to afford jam instead of just margarine on her toast in the mornings.

This got us thinking about a project that can stimulate self-employment as a way to boost older women's incomes. Combining the recommendations of the Blueprint with Pauline's story, the purpose and name of the project was born:

Money For Jam – Sisters are doing it for themselves: micro-enterprise support for females over 50.

¹Per Capita Australia (2014). Blueprint for an Ageing Australia. Per Capita Australia Limited, Sydney.

The questions we are trying to answer in this project

We started with one question: How can an 'enterprise enabler' improve outcomes (wellbeing and financial) and reduce welfare dependence for older women facing financial stress?

We sought to answer this question by spending time with women and learning about their life stories, their day-to-day lives, what they believe they need and what would help them achieve increased financial security. Ultimately we wanted to discover answers to the following questions:

1. Who are the potential future customers of this enterprise enabler program?
2. What are the characteristics of women experiencing success? Or wanting success?
3. What helps and hinders enterprising behaviours?

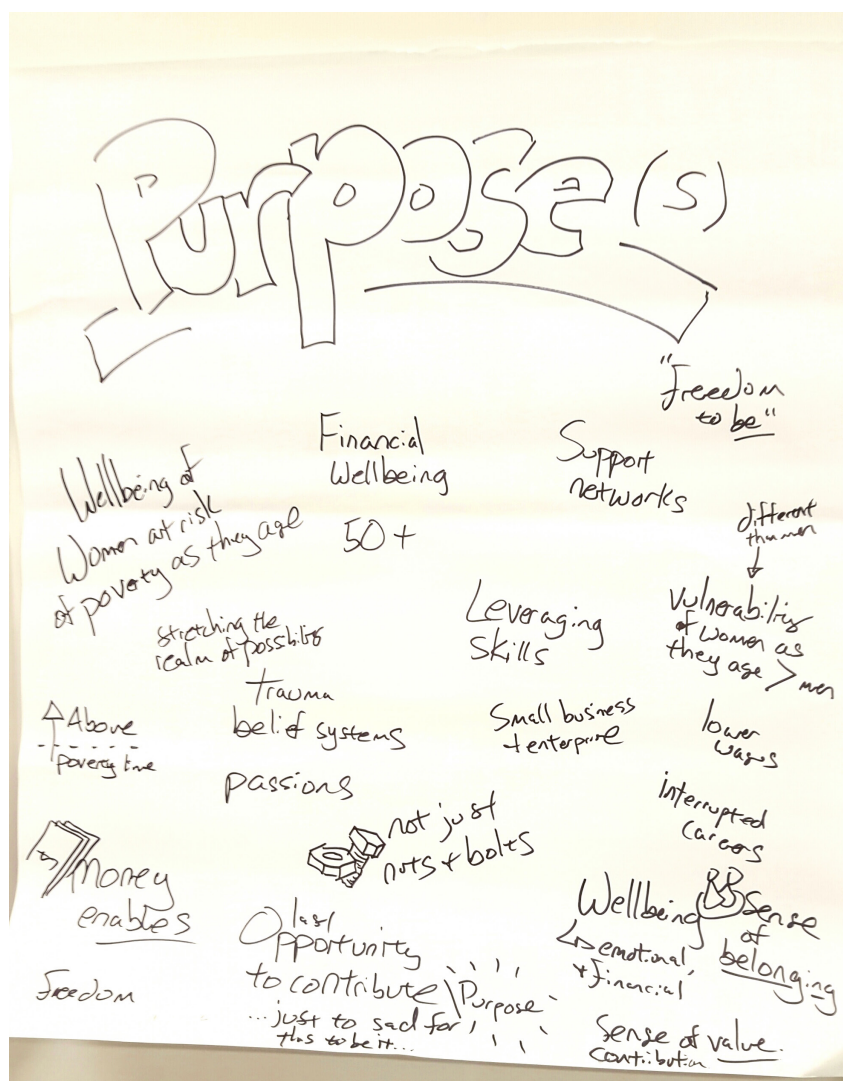
4. What will it take to make a financial difference to these women?

The Centre for Applied Policy in Positive Ageing (CAPPA) used a co-design approach and involved women who are currently at risk of poverty in the process of designing a model for this enterprise enabler.

This report outlines what we've learnt during this co-design process.

We think there is a different approach to providing a better future for women at risk of poverty than currently being offered to them. These women are open to a different path to better financial wellbeing - they have some great insights and ideas of what that new and innovative approach might look like.

In this report we share some opportunities for a support service that better enables change in financial wellbeing for women over 50.



Our approach to social innovation and co-design

For us, success for this project is about developing a solution that will create meaningful change for women like those involved in this co-design process. With support from the Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) CAPPA developed a process that allowed us to work with people to develop solutions that would work for them. Central to this process was the aim to better understand the needs of women over 50 who have gone through financial hardship and develop a program with them that other women like them are likely to use and that will lead to increased wellbeing.

What is social innovation

This project is about social innovation – that means finding solutions that are more attractive to people, more effective at creating outcomes and more sustainable in the long term. An iterative process of defining questions and assumptions and then testing the assumptions with the future target audience of the social innovation project is used to get to a solution.

What is co-design

Co-design is a methodology that is used to find a unique solution to a problem, by actively involving the future users of the potential solution in the design process, to help ensure the result meets their needs and is going to be used by them.

Social innovation often means that you start with a high level of unknowns which over time are reduced through testing assumptions. We used this co-design methodology to reduce the unknowns and get to a point where we have enough clarity to test a solution. This means that we:

- » Start problem solving with a question, not a solution: rather than coming up with a solution ourselves, we first have to know the context in which women at risk of poverty live and operate, and let them tell us what a good outcome would look like for them. We didn't start with an answer in the back of our mind;
- » Learn from people in context: people are the experts in their own lives and spending time with them can lead to some surprising insights that provide inspiration for a new solution; and
- » Learn through making and testing: the insights gained from people leads to ideas for a solution. Testing the solution helps to more clearly see what people are attracted to and what not, what creates change and what things cost.

The journey of co-designing this social innovation project can be summarised in four sequential stages – identifying opportunities for new solutions, designing new solutions, trialing a solution and spreading new solutions.²

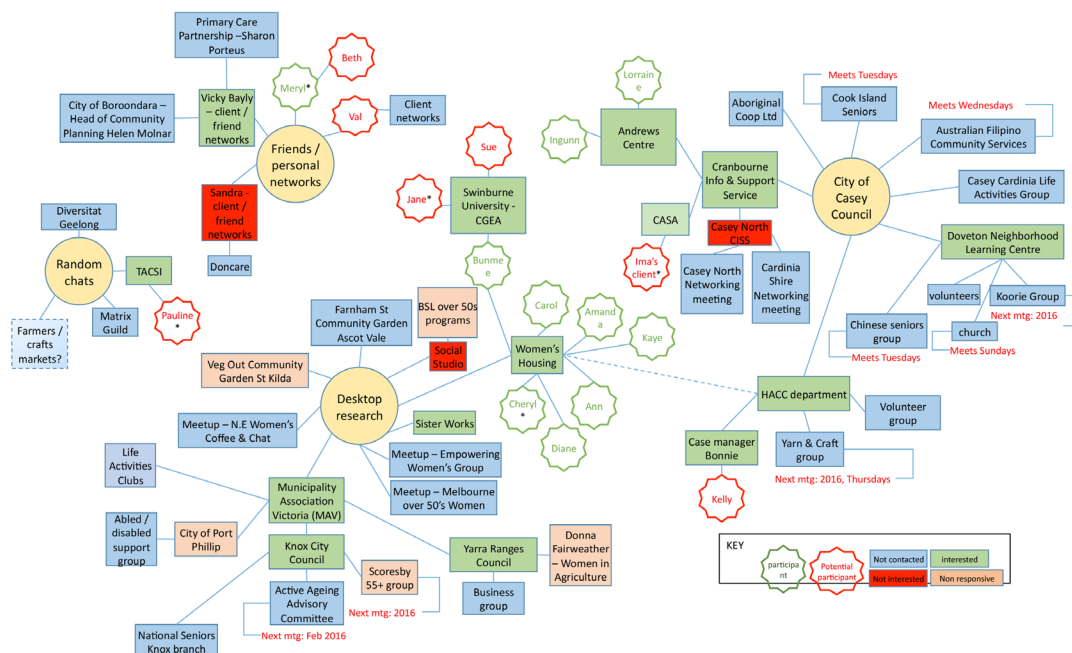
This report covers the identification of opportunities for new solutions and the design of a new solution that would increase financial wellbeing of women over 50 at risk of income poverty.



Figure provided by TACSI

²TACSI (2016). A proposal to support the analysis and workshop design for Money For Jam. The Australian Centre for Social Innovation. Unpublished proposal.

Recruitment of the women:



Recruiting people in this kind of research can be up to half of the time spent on gaining insights, and persistence was the key ingredient required to find the women.

TACSI's extensive experience with this type of work shows that getting an in-depth understanding of and working with 8 to 12 participants is enough to identify recurring patterns of needs, wants and unfulfilled opportunities. So we set out to find about a dozen women who wanted to share their life stories with us. We wanted to meet with women with a range of different circumstances (single or partnered, different age groups, CALD³ background etc.), life stories and backgrounds. We firstly did some deskbased research on the most likely areas where older women live who are on some form of Government support. We then

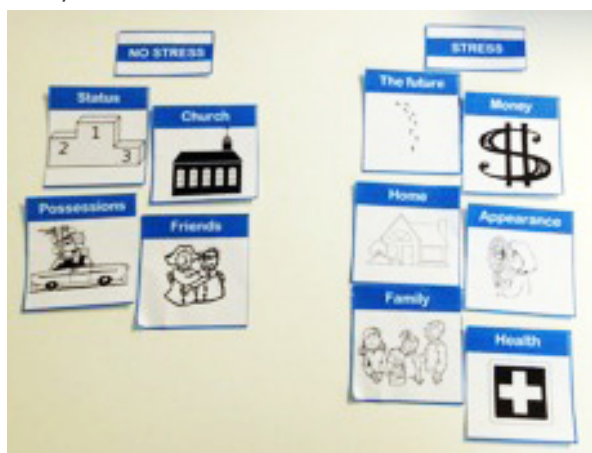
enlisted the help of local councils, personal networks and random chats to identify women at risk of poverty or organisations who provide support to women at risk of poverty. We spoke to 4 councils, 10 grassroots organisations and many individuals and we quickly learnt that the language used to describe the project and what it aims to achieve is very important. We shifted the description from a women's enterprise support project to a program that aims to increase financial wellbeing because we found that women tend to not relate to the notion of being a business owner. So, trying to find women already gave us some insights into the sensitivities around women and micro-enterprise. Through many conversations and attempts to reach out we finally found 13 women who were willing to have deeper engagement with us.

³CALD background = Culturally and Linguistically Diverse background

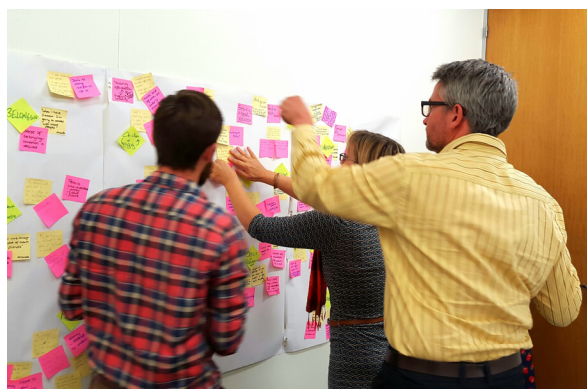
Learning from people in context:

To get to understand the complexities that surround these women's lives, we had to explore their situation deeply. We worked with a relatively small sample size but spent quality time with them, using tools that go deeper than surveys. So we spent time with 13 women, mostly in their homes or another environment where they would feel comfortable, and we had long chats.

We also used tools such as card sorting to understand better what these women want in their lives, their opinion on existing support systems and barriers and drivers to improving their current circumstances. For example, we made cards that list a number of items that could cause stress in a woman's life. We then asked the women to sort through the cards and place them under 'stress' or 'no stress'. We then asked more questions to understand what each of those items means to the person and in which context. This brought to light interesting disconnects between what people say they want and do and what they actually do – we wanted to discover mismatches between people's perceptions and reality.



The next step was to unpack the stories that women had shared with us and find patterns in attitudes, perceptions, barriers and identify factors that can contribute to success in earning additional income, thus getting more people on track. We did this in a small team and we learnt a lot from these stories.



We then took our assumptions back to the women who we had spent time with and ran a series of co-design workshops with them. This was the first time that the women had met each other and the dynamic of the workshops was electric. In these workshops we tested our assumptions on what the principles should be that inform a micro-enterprise support service for older women. We also tested language to be used to attract the desired market segment for this service and make them feel it was suitable for them, and we eventually came up with a concept for the Money For Jam program and asked women if they would use it.

What might work for me... <i>We'd like your help imagining new support services that could help people like you. We'll walk through a few different steps to design what an imaginary service just for you might look like. This will help us think about what might work best for lots of people in the future.</i> <i>The goal of this service is to help you get a bit more money and maybe some other good things as well.</i> <i>We'll go through each step as a whole group.</i>	Step 1 <i>Choose 2 to 3 blue stickers and place here.</i> <i>It's most important that this service would help me...</i> Step 2 <i>For each of the blue cards you placed above, talk a bit with your partner about why you chose that one. If your partner wants, they can jot a few notes here.</i> * *
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Stories

We spent time with 13 women to understand their life stories, how they say they are doing and how their hardship journeys have affected their capacity to create greater financial wellbeing. Here are the stories of 3 of those women, with more of the women's stories featured in appendix 1:

Meryl

A bit about her life:

Meryl is a well-educated woman in her mid 50s. She has lived in northern NSW for the past 20 years and recently moved to Melbourne to be closer to her daughter, who is attending university there and recently has been going through an emotionally difficult time. Meryl is a single parent.

Meryl was diagnosed with a chronic illness 35 years ago, which started due to childhood trauma. Her active mind and passionate personality meant she did not want to just stay at home and not be well. At times when her health was preventing her to work, she used that time to study. During those times she also learnt to be gentle with herself and find quality and meaning in her life through meditation. When she found herself in dire financial situation she would push herself to go back to work for as long as she could before relapsing.



Although the illness did not allow her to go into the workforce fulltime, due to clearly identifying what her mind and body needed in order to maintain some modicum of health, she kept up a healthy balance of gentle exercise, community involvement and active parenting. She worked to stave off financial crisis.

Meryl's financial security changed when her daughter turned 16. She could no longer get the single parent pension and switching to a disability pension was difficult because the Government welfare system put pressure on her because it is hard to validate her illness, even though her illness was preventing

her from earning an income fulltime. She is currently on a disability pension however this is still leaving her at risk of income poverty. Resilience and necessity led her on a pathway to self-employment. She came to see that facilitating learning was her passion and strength...

Because of her enquiring mind and her sense that the medical system wasn't going to support her, Meryl decided to take matters in her own hand and study social ecology, psychological sustainability and wellbeing, and neuroscience. She discovered she loves to facilitate learning, and through friends and personal networks she was introduced to the world of managing retreats and delivering workshops that increase emotional wellbeing.

"It was always a cycle of work, study, collapse and work, study, collapse and that's how I got through."

Effectively, Meryl's lifelong attitude to learning, combined with self determination to better the quality of her life and her need to understand herself, her passions, strengths and interests led to her grabbing an opportunity to start a micro-enterprise.

How she says she's doing:

Much of Meryl's focus is geared to the bright side of life – appreciating small things and creating wellness for herself in the face of unwellness. Meryl is well-educated, has experience both in the workforce and with self-employment. Despite this, the move to Melbourne together with reduced Government funding for organisations running the kind of wellness programs that Meryl's business offers, has meant she is currently struggling to keep her head above water.

“Going through all that, I lost quite a bit of confidence. I did start to look at doing factory work, and was told ‘we’re only taking people experienced at factory work, it’s about efficiency’.”

Income from her self-employment activity is currently hard to get - she feels she lacks the knowledge and experience of running a small business in a big city as compared to a regional town, she doesn't have the contacts and networks yet in Melbourne.

Meryl is again trying the avenue of employment to get back on track financially. She struggles and feels the system of trying to find work is not geared towards people like her – she is highly educated and is looking for work in her field. Because she is on a disability pension she can only use a certain type of employment provider who tends to offer her low level jobs working on an assembly line, packaging or the like. Employment services direct her to online registration forms rather than getting to know her face-to-face. She feels this makes it a challenge for her, with her background and experience, to present well: “If you are on a disability pension, it means you are not intelligent, not capable and you don't know what best would serve you. The patronizing condescendence is staggering”.

“Each one of these systems devalue the person more and more. They will affirm your position in society down here.”

Her take on the meaning of a good life and what financial wellbeing looks like:

Contribution and participation makes all the difference to Meryl's feeling of wellbeing. Knowing she is adding value to other people's lives is a deep source of nourishment for her. Being able to combine this with the ability to financially support herself so she can be off Government benefits is her goal.

A good life is just as much about intimate connections with people and making time for those around you that are important to you, as is focusing on the pressing issue of creating some financial stability. Money is not necessarily a value for Meryl but the lack of it creates a lot of stress in her life.

Being valued and knowing self-value is fundamental to Meryl's wellbeing and her strong practice of commitment to self continues to build the foundation for a good life: “You can't afford an adversarial relationship with self when you are at that deep level of need, so it's important to kick the habit of ‘it must be me’ when things go wrong in life”. She emphasizes that it's important to change the habit of not self imploding and making the self wrong, when things in life go wrong.

What support she'd like more of that would make a financial difference for her:

Meryl feels she doesn't know how to penetrate the places where she could sell the services of her micro-enterprise. She feels she needs to be a bit more realistic about what she is doing. At some point she reached out to small business support programs in her region, however she felt the services were not aligned to her values and this made it alienating. The masculine language and approach of business planning, templates, competition and self-promotion felt like a barrier too.

Initially Meryl felt that what would be an ideal way of supporting her income generation efforts is a service agency that would find customers for her and link her into opportunities for delivery of wellness programs. At other times she expressed a need for guidance so she can find the customers herself. She told us that the support of someone with a business background would help her to know who to see and when to see these potential customers. A small business advisor, someone who has done similar things like her and gives her the ins and outs, would be valuable, regular one-on-one support that keeps her accountable and helps her identify barriers and practical ways to move forward.

She strongly feels that collaborating with others and joining up with others – not going it alone – is the best approach for her, given her cyclical need to take the foot off the gas pedal and to counteract her feeling that she is not aligned with the world of small business.

Based on her experience of starting a micro-enterprise, her advice to other women who may want to explore the option of doing an extra income generating activity outside the traditional employment arena, is:

1. Identify your passions that make your heart sing
2. Identify your strengths, then engage them
3. Identify your values as a means to determine intrinsic motivation and determine the best way to move forward. Become clear on these things and the clarity will ensue
4. Determine a gap or need in the market and tailor your skill around that need and make it your niche market
5. Baby steps are perfect: too big a leap before a strong foundation can be built can lead you to a feeling of defeat and straight back to the spot where you were before you started
6. Courage is the number one virtue and can only be actualised by action. This will build resilience, forward momentum and self-belief
7. Always look after yourself, you are the key asset in your enterprise. Self-nurture is non-negotiable

Diane

A bit about her life:

Diane is a strong woman with a past professional career who found herself in a position of homelessness. Having been in a senior management role for a number of years, her work environment caused a lot of stress and anxiety. A prolonged period of bullying exacerbated the stress and around the same time her children became quite ill. As a divorced mother of two, she felt she needed to hold everything together, and it wasn't holding together! A financial investment that turned bad, combined with being unwell but continuing to try to juggle work and family got the better of her. She lost the family home and had to go on Centrelink benefits.

Applying for Government benefits was very difficult for Diane, not only because of the burdensome process but also the psychological impact of moving from financial security and independence to reliance on 'hand outs' – loss of self-worth and shame became central to Diane's state of mind. When she finally got the Government



benefits, she realised it still wasn't enough to survive on and pay the rent. She ended up in a boarding house and describes this experience as a huge eye opener: she had never known anyone that takes drugs before or had a criminal record and now she was living amongst these people. She felt unsafe. Being able to get back to a living arrangement where no one can get in her home unless she would give them access became a priority.

Diane was desperate to change her financial situation so she could move out of the boarding house and into a one-bedroom unit, another option offered by the affordable housing provider for those who are able to pay the higher rent. She actively looked for employment and applied for a lot of jobs without success, despite her professional background. Internal panic led her to start looking for income generation options outside the square. Without necessarily focusing on her strengths, passions or values, she considered extra cash generation activities such as ironing, being a supermarket merchandiser or volunteering for Meals on Wheels – anything would do, just to get some self-worth, to get out of there. Diane felt she was fighting a never ending battle and the whole process made her feel totally disheartened and beaten: "I felt beaten, I felt ashamed".

Her family became alienated from her and could not offer her the support she needed. Thankfully she has a couple of very close friends who helped her out when things were really tough.

"I never had enough money for food: I really need to get my medication, but it's either food or medication"

"I was desperate enough to go to the Salvation Army for a food voucher"

How she says she's doing:

Diane finally managed to get a temporary administration job and she now lives in a one-bedroom unit provided by Women's Housing, which makes her feel more secure and safe.

The feeling of being in survival mode is ongoing for Diane, because the job is temporary and not secure and a number of health and family circumstances that made her situation deteriorate in the first place still require a lot of her time and energy. She needs something more to get back on top of things but she isn't sure what that something is. She continues to apply for jobs as she believes that a job creates self-worth in her life. She continues to struggle to get one. Thinking about self-employment as an option out of financial insecurity makes her nervous and scared. She feels she has been burnt too many times, losing her own home, her security, the hearth for her family – it has disheartened her.

"My doctor called it 'the middle class victim'. Even though I'm educated, it doesn't mean I don't experience poverty and unfortunately, I'm the prime candidate for that. However, I'm the lucky one because I don't have external issues like domestic violence or substance abuse or mental illness".

Diane feels she has learnt a lot and wants to give back to the community but she doesn't know where to start or how to do this. Sure, there is the option of volunteering but she firstly needs to use all her energy to financially get back on her feet.

Her take on the meaning of a good life and what financial wellbeing looks like:

Diane feels that a foundation is required for a good life, consisting of a safe and secure home, self-worth through an income generating activity where you feel valued and respected, and having the means to look after your health. Health and money are strongly interrelated for Diane: money is needed for good health – good health allows you to get an income.

Those closest to her are very important to her, because of the support she receives from them as well as the support she is able to give. Keeping her strength up so she can provide support for her loved ones in their times of need is crucial to her life and happiness. Having more time to spend with loved ones is number one on her wish list for a good future.

Diane responds to this period of pain, crisis and hardship with empathy and gratitude. A good outcome for her would be to share the empathy she has learned over the past 5 years and give back to the community rather than take more. Diane would love to be a mentor for other women who go through hardship, to share her learning from this journey ... if it could all fit into the week and her financial security would be sorted.

What support she'd like more of that would make a financial difference for her:

The desire to give back to the community seems to be a good starting point to think about a good life for Diane. However, without support from someone to think through her options and how she can make good use of all the wisdom, self-knowledge and perseverance gained over the last 5 years of extreme hardship, she doesn't know where to start or how to do this.

During our time with Diane, it became apparent that she has developed a lot of resourceful ways to save money during this period of hardship, but that this was not something that Diane was consciously considering as an opportunity for a micro-enterprise. She is too busy keeping her head above water. It seems likely that there are ways Diane could focus these skills of resourcefulness and perseverance, strengths and values towards money making opportunities.

Bunmee

A bit about her life:

Bunmee grew up in Thailand and came to Australia through marriage with an Australian man. She is 51 and has a 10-year-old daughter. She doesn't have any family here and has some friends, but she says they are not close friends.

A history of domestic violence and living in an environment with drug dealers has made her very wary of people. Bunmee keeps her distance from people and at the same time is in need of support to help herself and her child in times of need. She doesn't know where to go for support and relies on her daughter's school environment for guidance.

"I'm in my room, I lock up"

"They do what they want to do. When I don't like it, nothing to do with me. I just cheer up 'hello, how are you'. Simple. No drama. No arguing."

Bunmee is on Newstart Allowance and as part of the Mutual Obligation Requirement to continue to get this allowance, she goes to an English language training course 3 days a week. She worked for a number of years in factories and this has had a negative impact on her health. She says her basic level of reading and speaking English, combined with the impact of years of hard labour on her health, impedes her ability to earn an income.

As a young adult in Thailand, Bunmee worked for many years in a Thai market, and she can buy and sell things profitably like the best of them. Her English language teacher tells us that Bunmee is good at cooking and trading, yet Bunmee does not mention it to us during our time with her. Bunmee likes repairing cars and sewing clothes, but doesn't have the skills to put it into practice.

How she says she's doing:

Much of Bunmee's time goes towards meeting her Mutual Obligation Requirements as part of the Newstart Allowance and looking after her 10-year-old daughter. She still feels, although she has lived in Australia for 28 years, that she doesn't know how the support system works in Australia and where to get support when she needs it. Much of Bunmee's free time is spent on going to psychologist and social worker appointments and volunteering at the breakfast club of her daughter's school.

She feels unsafe in the apartment building she is living in as drug dealers roam the corridors – she doesn't dare to complain about this though, as she fears being kicked out and being back on the streets. She wants to protect her daughter from this environment. The realisation that her daughter understands what is going on in the corridors as she asks her mother regularly "when are we going to move?" makes Bunmee very anxious and sad.

"How do I prove [about the drug dealers]? And also, I have a kid, being kicked out, I have to think about the kid. I care for the kid more than them"

Now her daughter is in year 6 the household costs are rising and Bunmee doesn't have the money to pay for any of it. Bunmee really feels she needs to do something to increase her income but she doesn't know what or where to start.

Her take on the meaning of a good life and what financial wellbeing looks like:

Having a car equals access to opportunities for Bunmee.

Protecting her child from harm is an absolute priority and her wellbeing is closely linked to safety and security.

"I'm funny and cheery, but inside I'm sad"

Bunmee sees being able to communicate better in English as essential to achieving financial wellbeing.

What support she'd like more of that would make a financial difference for her:

Bunmee is incredibly under-resourced, disconnected, isolated and disempowered. Being from a CALD background exacerbates the situation. A complex history of dislocation from family, domestic violence and homelessness, compounded by physical and mental health issues, isolation and uncertainty make life very difficult for Bunmee, and the Australian system is not able to support her in this complexity – she is falling through the cracks.

The great thing about Bunmee is that she knows what she likes doing, and it wouldn't take much to reconnect her with her earlier life experiences of being good at selling and buying at the markets in Thailand. However, from what we heard whilst spending time with Bunmee, she seemed too paralysed and depressed to be able to identify for herself what she would need to kick-start her with an income generating activity.

We wonder how the self-doubt and perceived limitations due to English language skills could be overcome and how Bunmee's qualities and experience could shine through instead, to help her earn some extra cash. Learning skills would be valuable to lift her self-confidence, but how could we open up her mind to the idea she can learn new skills or even get her to realise the skills and strengths she already has and apply them to something? For example, one of the other women interviewed for this program identified how she is really good at buying things cheap at garage sales, ebay etc. and reselling them at a higher price – sometimes restoring them but sometimes just reselling them to the right market. Perhaps all Bunmee needs is to learn some basic computer skills to do this and rely on skills she already has?

What we learnt from the profiles of Meryl, Diane and Bunmee

Meryl's story indicated that despite education, experience and resilience, she is still at risk of long term income poverty because she doesn't fit in the standard box of disability and is overwhelmed by the business world and how to move in it efficiently. Meryl knows her values, strengths and how to build on that, which is a fantastic and strong foundation to get to financial security.

Diane is resilient and hard working yet it appears that, by not being able to clearly focus on her own capacity, skills and talent, trying to establish extra income generating activities could be more damaging to her self-worth and confidence and make her slide even further.

The level of complexity that Bunmee deals with in her day-to-day life is so high that the mainstream system cannot support her – she is falling through the cracks. She knows what she likes and what she's good at (with a bit of encouragement) but doesn't have a support system that can help her to put it into practice. Being from a CALD background is an added barrier.

Although we only describe a full profile of 3 women in this report, all 13 women's profiles offered common learnings like the ones we summarised here for Meryl, Diane and Bunmee, giving us a good picture of patterns of women at risk of poverty and the strategies they tend to use to get through hardship. What we've learnt and how this is applied to the Money For Jam model will be described in the remainder of this report.

What we've learnt

What is typical about these women and what are the consequences for financial wellbeing

For Amanda, Anne, Bunmee, Carrol, Cheryl, Diane, Kaye, Lorraine, Meryl, Ingunn, Beth, Jane and Sue ensuring their financial wellbeing is an everyday worry. They describe themselves as being in despair, surviving or just doing ok.

We asked ourselves what it is that could move someone from the feeling of despair to thriving. In order to find out, we analysed what the assumptions are around who these women at risk of poverty are, what their attitudes and responses are towards financial wellbeing programs currently offered to them, and what the consequences of these assumptions are for women over 50 at risk of poverty:

Education and past achievements don't protect you from being at risk of poverty

The profile of women over 50 at risk of poverty is broad and there are many:

The more we talked to support organisations and women themselves, the more we realised that there are many women over 50 at risk of poverty and that they are not 'losers' – many have a good education, some have had professional careers and they

are not necessarily from a low socioeconomic background.

The scale of the problem is substantial. The report 'Times of Our Lives?'⁴ revealed that in 2011, 34% of single women 60+ were in permanent income poverty. There is great urgency. These women (800,000 plus) are living in poverty now with more at risk of joining them.

Lack of confidence is a considerable barrier

These women have lost their self-esteem, self-confidence and belief in their capabilities through prolonged periods of hardship. The women we spoke to were mostly focused towards trying to find help within the mainstream support system, such as Centrelink, JobActive providers and not-for-profit organisations. The process made them feel disheartened and desperate. JobActive providers don't tend to focus on the needs of these older women and don't recognise their non-work related strengths, passions and interests and their personal crises. There seems to be a systemic assumption that unemployed people are necessarily low-skilled and inexperienced, which is not true for many mature age job seekers. The age gap between most employment services staff and women over 50 may contribute to poor appreciation of mature age jobseekers' perspective, skills and experience.⁵

The system does not allow for these women to thrive, or even just manage:

A lot of older Australian women are stifled by economic policies, and current services fail to understand their specific needs. Women we talked to definitely expressed that they are tired of being pigeon holed and referred to mainstream services that don't understand them or that are not tailored to the needs, temperament and personality of the individual: "Centrelink wants me to lead a humble and happy life", Anne, 61, said of her experience with being on Newstart Allowance. These women regularly face age discrimination and remain unemployed for longer periods. As a result, they often become wholly dependent on Government support, leading to lower levels of self-esteem and a downward spiral of reduced economic participation.

It often seems that the only option the system can give

⁴ Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation (2016) Times of our lives? Building opportunity and capacity for the economic and social participation of older Australian women. Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation, Melbourne.

⁵ McGann M., Bowman D., and Biggs S. (2015). 'Too old to work, too young to retire' A summary of the ARC Linkage Research Project: Understanding and addressing workforce vulnerabilities in midlife and beyond 2012 – 2015. Australian Research Council, November 2015.

“They [the system] want to keep me smaller and smaller. I worry about how they get us to fit into society. I don’t know if they’re going to let us be”
Anne

them for meaningful engagement is volunteering. Whilst they want to give back, volunteering feels like a cop out solution to the problem of how to deal with the Mutual Obligation Requirements of Newstart Allowance. This requirement to do volunteering is leaving the women even more hamstrung with finding opportunity and time for meaningful and paid engagement in society, amidst all their other priorities. None of the available services provided adequate support to these women to explore suitable avenues of micro-enterprise.

“I want work to be a reflection of who I am”
Lorraine

These women also have been alienated by the paradigm of masculine values of achievement, success, the individual, fiduciary responsibilities, ruthless competition and profit. This has made them realise that they don’t want to be a player in that game but they don’t want to be dole bludgers either. They want to earn money and look after their complex lives.

These women didn’t identify with being business owners:

Tired of leaping
out of my
comfort zone

When they have sought support to start a micro-enterprise, they have felt the system is not suited to their needs: they don’t want a DIY toolkit of business planning templates or a loan that relies on an asset test. They don’t want to go it alone and they don’t want to do it fulltime and take an all or nothing approach.

Most women we spoke to could not identify with being business owners

because of the masculine world it represents. They believe it is all about writing a business plan by yourself before you start, then doing it on your own, spending 80 hours a week in your business and taking risk.

Priorities shift as women get older, so do complexities. Caring responsibilities, health and the need to refocus on what’s truly important in life makes it difficult for women

to take an ‘all or nothing’ approach to small business. They need flexibility and the ability to do things on their terms. Even if finances are crucially low they still want to prioritise – they’ve had it tough for many years and desperately want to find balance – quality of life is prioritised over working long hours and they could not see how they could meet their other priorities and run a business.

Initially women struggled to see how engaging in a micro-enterprise could help them given their complexities and priorities as it would dominate their lives and become the whole focus.

The consequences are that women are disheartened and find it difficult to believe that their situation will change as they get older.

What do the women want and what can be done differently?

What we have learnt from the women is that a good outcome with regards to financial wellbeing is as much about looking after self, connecting with others, and safety and security as it is about earning an income.

» **Looking after self:** Carrol wants to be independent and in control of her own life, without interference of family; Lorraine does not want to feel guilty about prioritising herself above others, Amanda wants strong mental health and the ability to move around. Many others wanted to do things every day that make them feel good and have more self-confidence so they could transfer this into a job, active participation in society or creating of self-worth.

“The feeling of satisfaction after a good outcome when challenging myself” Kay

» Financial wellbeing was expressed as financial freedom of choice and income security on a day-to-day basis. Savings for a rainy day would alleviate money stress and would allow them to look after themselves better, feeding into the first point listed by the women as a good outcome: looking after self. All the women agreed that income generation should be through an occupation that aligns with their goals and values in life. Some expressed a desire to not have to carry the burden of securing an income alone.

“No more fear of falling into poverty” Amanda

» Connecting with others: analysis showed that having the time, head space and opportunity to be with and look after loved ones is central to older women's lives. They want to belong to a place in society and have the knowledge that there is someone to care for them when they need it. Contribution to society creates a sense of purpose, a vital component to wellbeing and is interlinked with a good solution for creating financial wellbeing. Some search for this through spirituality and connection with a higher being, others want to experience intimacy through strong relationships with loved ones.

"Spending time with grandkids on my own terms"
Carrol

» Having a place that is safe and secure, as well as feeling safe through stability in life is another building block to a good outcome in financial wellbeing.

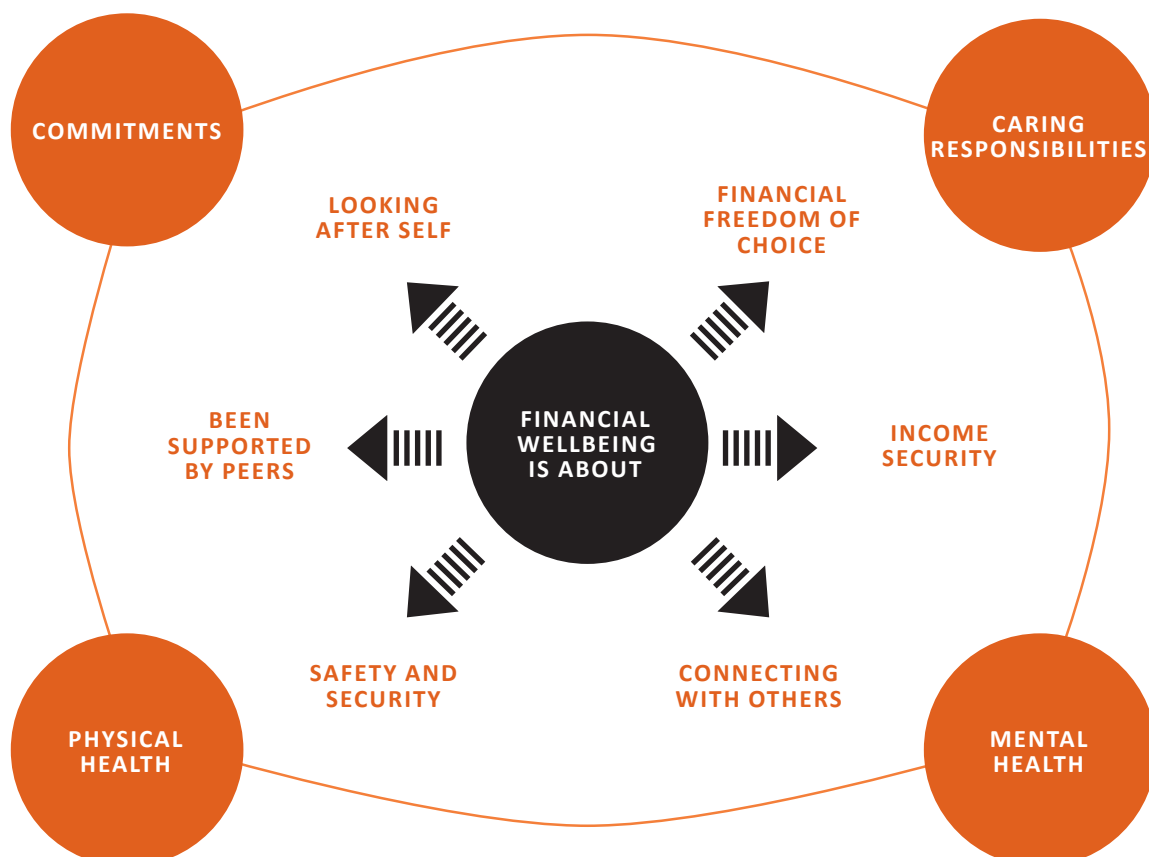
Women also told us that they want to be supported by peers. They feel peers understand what they have been going through and knowing that there is a group of other women out there to help you through ups and downs gives a sense of safety and security. It also provides an opportunity to marry up skills of people to support each other.

"It is most important that they [the customer] see me as an asset" Anne

The women also want a less transactional, more relationship-based focus of the activity for payment, something that elevates the women through this income generating activity, to something more purposeful.

All these solutions for actions to get towards financial wellbeing have to be placed in the context of the complex lives of women at risk of poverty. It has to be about focusing on strengths whilst working within the reality of barrier and priorities.

"If you bang your thumb with a hammer and, right then, somebody comes along and asks you for something, you're not going to be very helpful" Lorraine



From research to shifts

In analysing the stories of the 13 women we came across a number of patterns that can form the basis of an innovative solution to support women to achieve greater financial wellbeing. We distilled these into a number of myths and building blocks that can help us shift our thinking about women and micro-enterprise:

Myths

We discovered some myths during our research about women, poverty and the approach to small business:

Myth 1: being in poverty means you're a loser

We discovered that education and achievement do not always protect you from poverty. All it takes for anyone to fall into poverty is an unlucky event or a series of unlucky events: the loss of a job; a relative falling ill; the onset of a mental illness or other serious health issue; an injury; an abusive relationship; or a relationship breakdown.

Myth 2: the referral or the toolkit

These women want and deserve real help, in the trenches, giving them a boost. They don't need a toolkit or a referral to another service that provides a referral to another service that provides ...

Myth 3: a single big business plan

Too many support systems make aspiring business owners spend months developing detailed, unrealistic, useless business plans. Often the process of developing these plans kills the energy and passion that the aspiring business owner brought on day one, it reduces their confidence. Rather than a one-size-fits-all business development course, what these women tell us they need is individually tailored support that takes account of their history and current life circumstances. Starting small and with bias towards action to get a bit of traction as quickly as possible seems a sensible solution to us.

Myth 4: everyone aspires to be a business mogul

Not everyone who aspires to be self employed wants to make a big plan, get a loan, and start a business, ready for global expansion. Some women may come in with big dreams that we want to help them nurture and others will come in just wanting a bit of extra cash, but either way we want to help them start small and get traction.

Myth 5: the lone entrepreneur

Running a business does not have to be done on your own, and it became apparent that a lot of women don't want to do it on their own. They don't have to. Rather than this being about competition, we can make this about collaboration, mutual support and solidarity.

With these myths exposed, many opportunities present themselves.

From barriers to opportunities

We distilled the patterns we saw during the analysis of the interviews into three categories:

- » Older women and micro-enterprise
- » Wellbeing & micro-enterprise
- » The practicalities of starting and running a micro-enterprise

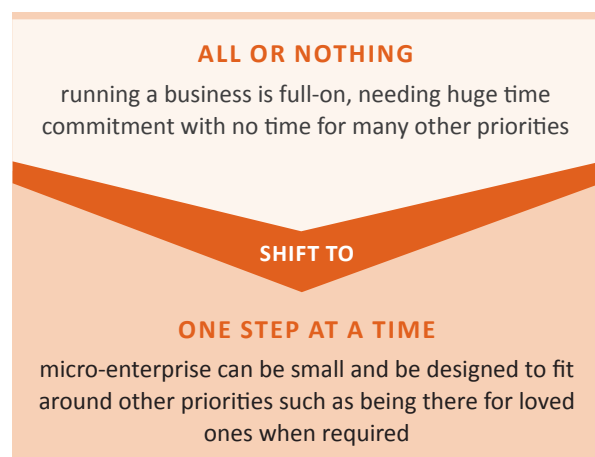
These categories form the building blocks of a number of shifts that we believe are required to create a support program for women over 50 at risk of poverty that will help them with financial wellbeing through micro-enterprise. A shift is a change in how we think about

women in micro-enterprise or how women can change their attitude towards micro-enterprise as an income generating opportunity.

The shifts are derived from looking at barriers and framing them differently so they become opportunities. We did this by comparing those barriers experienced by women who feel stuck to positive deviants we observed – those who were doing well despite their challenging circumstances. From their actions and attitudes, we found clues for how other women could overcome their challenges.

Below is a condensed list of shifts that capture most of the critical insights. The full set of shifts are included in appendix 2.

Older women and micro-enterprise



Despite their financial hardship, many of these women have needs and commitments that have a higher priority than making extra money, even though they are at risk of poverty. These other priorities include caring responsibilities, mental and physical health issues and relationships with friends and family.

“I could have leaped into the bigger pond, but to be honest, at this age I’m so weary of leaping....it now just needs to be a wee smoother” Meryl

These complex sets of priorities make the possibility of starting a business particularly daunting. If, instead of talking about starting a business, we talk about turning a passion into a product and testing to see if that product has buyers, then it’s much less daunting. It’s possible to be a good grandmother, mother, wife, and friend and earn a little extra cash through a micro-enterprise; in that order of priority.



The women we worked with didn’t identify with the language and the dominant culture of business. They were put off by talk of business plans, marketing and revenue projections. Similarly, they felt like their skill sets were not well suited to business where assertiveness and competitiveness are seen as assets. Despite all of this, many of the coping strategies that the women have developed through their various hardships are readily translatable into business.

A system of micro-enterprise development that’s based on conversation and trial and error rather than formal business planning, product development and market research would be less intimidating and much easier for them to embrace. The emphasis can be on starting small and slowly, working within their networks and learning about marketing and market access as you progress.



Most of the women who are the target audience for Money For Jam have been through very substantial hardship. They see starting a business as very risky and are very resistant to going out on a limb when their lives are already strained.

“I’m not a risk taker ... it’s hard for me to change and do something” Jane

If their skills and passions can be drawn out and employed to create a micro-enterprise and if they start small through trial and error, then the risk is minimal because they are doing something they enjoy anyway with whatever time is available to them after they have satisfied their other priorities. The strengths based, ‘start small’ and step-by-step approaches mean that micro-enterprise ideas can be tested without massive investment of time and resources.

Wellbeing & micro-enterprise

I NEED TO FEEL GOOD EVERY DAY TO RUN A BUSINESS -

Running a business requires strength, stability and know-how – you need to feel good, be healthy and have your life together before you can run a business

SHIFT TO

INCOME GENERATION THAT INCLUDES WELLBEING -

You can run a micro-enterprise despite your ups and downs and this income generating activity can also increase your emotional wellbeing

There was a sense among the women that they needed to be mentally and physically strong and healthy to run a business, and needed to be on top of their life all the time. Women were hesitant about micro-enterprise as a means to increase financial wellbeing, as they couldn’t see how the stress of it all could help them emotionally. It all seemed very hard, given their equal need to increase their emotional wellbeing.

“I didn’t want to focus on making money. I really want to do it for the enjoyment.” Cheryl

Changing the perception of what it means to run a business could allay many of these concerns. Creating the understanding that engagement in micro-enterprise can be enjoyable and rewarding even if the income generating activity doesn’t achieve its financial goals would reduce concerns about being strong enough and having to get it “right”. Engaging in a micro-enterprise activity that draws on their values and passions, while fitting in around their other responsibilities, is likely to improve other aspects of their lives through increased self-confidence and self-esteem.

JUST DO IT / 80 HOURS A WEEK –

success in micro-enterprise means dedicating 80 hours a week to it

SHIFT TO

YOUR OWN CAPACITY DICTATES THE TIME AND EFFORT SPENT ON MICRO-ENTERPRISE –

Extra income generation through micro-enterprise is only sustainable if dictated by your own capacity and priorities at any point in time

The clearly stated priorities of the women were that making money had to align with their values. If making money conflicted with their values and the other priorities in their lives, then they would rather remain poor. We believe that focusing on extra income generation at this stage of the women’s lives is only sustainable if it aligns with their values and needs. It also needs to be done within their own capacity and for most of these women, that’s not full time in this stage of their lives.

LEARNING ABOUT BUSINESS THROUGH BUSINESS TRAINING –

The pathway to enterprise income generation is through training and support in how to start and run a business

SHIFT TO

LEARNING ABOUT BUSINESS THROUGH WELLBEING TRAINING AND SUPPORT -

The pathway to income generation from micro-enterprise is to learn about wellbeing, sustainability and fun activities and, following that, business training

Rather than a business support program that focuses purely on the business side of things, a program that has confidence and wellbeing support at its core would provide these women with the resources and resilience to go out and try their business ideas with the guidance of a mentor. This learning by doing instead of learning theory and then doing, is much more appealing to the women we worked with. However, before they will take the first steps, they need a boost in confidence and wellbeing and they need to know that when they take those first steps somebody will be there to support them with every step.

“Sometimes you need practical support that just isn’t there” Diane

Having the courage to try something that may not work requires a level of self-confidence that many of these women lack. Building the confidence to see the effort itself as worthwhile and to see negative results as part of the path to success will be a necessary precursor to micro-enterprise engagement for many of the women in the target demographic for Money For Jam.

The practicalities of starting and running a micro-enterprise

ALL THE DUCKS IN A ROW FOR MICRO-ENTERPRISE START-UP –

you need to have a business plan before you can start your micro-enterprise and you have to have an expert to provide advice

SHIFT TO

ONE STEP AT A TIME -

the income generating activity can be started small and step-by-step and can (but doesn’t have to) lead to the main source of income generation; peers can provide a lot of support at start-up

Other business start-up programs, like the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS), give the impression that everything needs to be planned out in advance and business skills need to be well-developed before you can start a business. Similarly, the popular conception is that small business is a massive commitment.

“NEIS makes it very complicated: you’ve got to do all this research and business planning before you are even considered for support. Business planning is a very masculine framework” Meryl

This is where the distinction between small business and micro-enterprise is important. A micro-enterprise can truly be micro in both time commitment and the resources needed to begin. You can literally start by selling a single item online at virtually no cost above the production cost of the item – or walk one person’s dog once for \$10 – and just see how it goes.

Similarly, going through the Money For Jam program with a cohort of women taking a similar journey will increase wellbeing through solidarity and connectedness. One of the things that became immediately apparent during the co-design stage was the immediate improvement in outlook that occurred simply by bringing these women together. Being with other capable women who were also experiencing financial hardship created a strong sense of solidarity. They immediately began helping each other by sharing knowledge of resources, talking about car-pooling etc. Additionally mentoring from other women who have done it before them creates confidence and strength.

PASSION IS ENOUGH –

following your passion is enough to be successful in business

SHIFT TO

PASSION AND REALITY ARE A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR MICRO-ENTERPRISE –

the micro-enterprise idea should be based on passion combined with a reality check of market interest and your own priorities

While it’s true that it’s not necessary to have traditional business skills or to have a fully-fledged business plan in order to start a micro-enterprise, you do need to have a market for your product. It’s no good making rainbow tie-dyed handkerchiefs if nobody is going to buy them. Instead of formal market research, these women are very capable of testing their ideas in the market using the skills they currently possess. With a little guidance and encouragement, they can test and refine ideas with very little risk.

How we got to the model and what to do next

The model

As discovered through the co-design process, women over 50 don't tend to relate to the notion of being business owners but their life experiences demonstrate resilience and resourcefulness. We believe that those acquired coping strategies can translate well into business - with a bit of guidance.

Money For Jam offers a unique approach to workforce participation through entrepreneurship for women at risk of poverty. It presents a path out of their position of disadvantage, a change in their circumstances and an opportunity to build their resilience. This approach will unpack their strengths and barriers and allow them to experience the world of business ownership, on their terms. Money For Jam focuses on building emotional wellbeing first, using a strengths-based approach, taking into consideration barriers (including fitting the scale and effort towards micro-enterprise in with the women's complex lives) and using adaptive language with action over plans:

Emotional wellbeing first, then financial wellbeing:

Having another person to bounce ideas off

The foundation of Money For Jam is 'emotional wellbeing first, then financial wellbeing': women who have experienced prolonged periods of hardship have usually lost self-esteem and belief in their capabilities. Before talking micro-enterprise, boosting participants' emotional wellbeing is paramount as it will likely lead to more

confidence. This emotional wellbeing component will be underpinned by a peer-to-peer support system that

will allow Money For Jam participants to get together regularly and give each other support through the ups and downs, during and well beyond the program.

A strengths-based approach taking barriers into consideration:

Money For Jam is also about providing personalised and one-on-one support that is built around the participant's strengths and takes her barriers into consideration. Values and skills based on life experiences will need to be uncovered. Then enterprise ideas will be generated and tested based on the participant's skills and passions as well as a market need. Starting small, in order to fit in with the women's complex lives, time constraints and priorities, and gradually building confidence in running a small enterprise is a key aspect of the Money For Jam approach.

Help with the business side – the 'entrepreneur' role

Adaptive language, start with looking at micro-enterprise as an income diversification strategy and take action over plans:

Lastly, we believe that the language used to unpack business and entrepreneurship will be key to the success of Money For Jam. Some of the women engaged in the co-design process had experience of dealing with entrepreneurship programs, banks and other small business support services and had found that, to be given business planning templates and having to think about market research and marketing strategies in a formalised way, became a barrier to progress for them – it kills their energy and passion and reduces their confidence. These programs often require an ‘all or nothing’ commitment: you either do it fulltime or you don’t get a look in. Women want and deserve real help in the trenches rather than referral services or a toolkit.

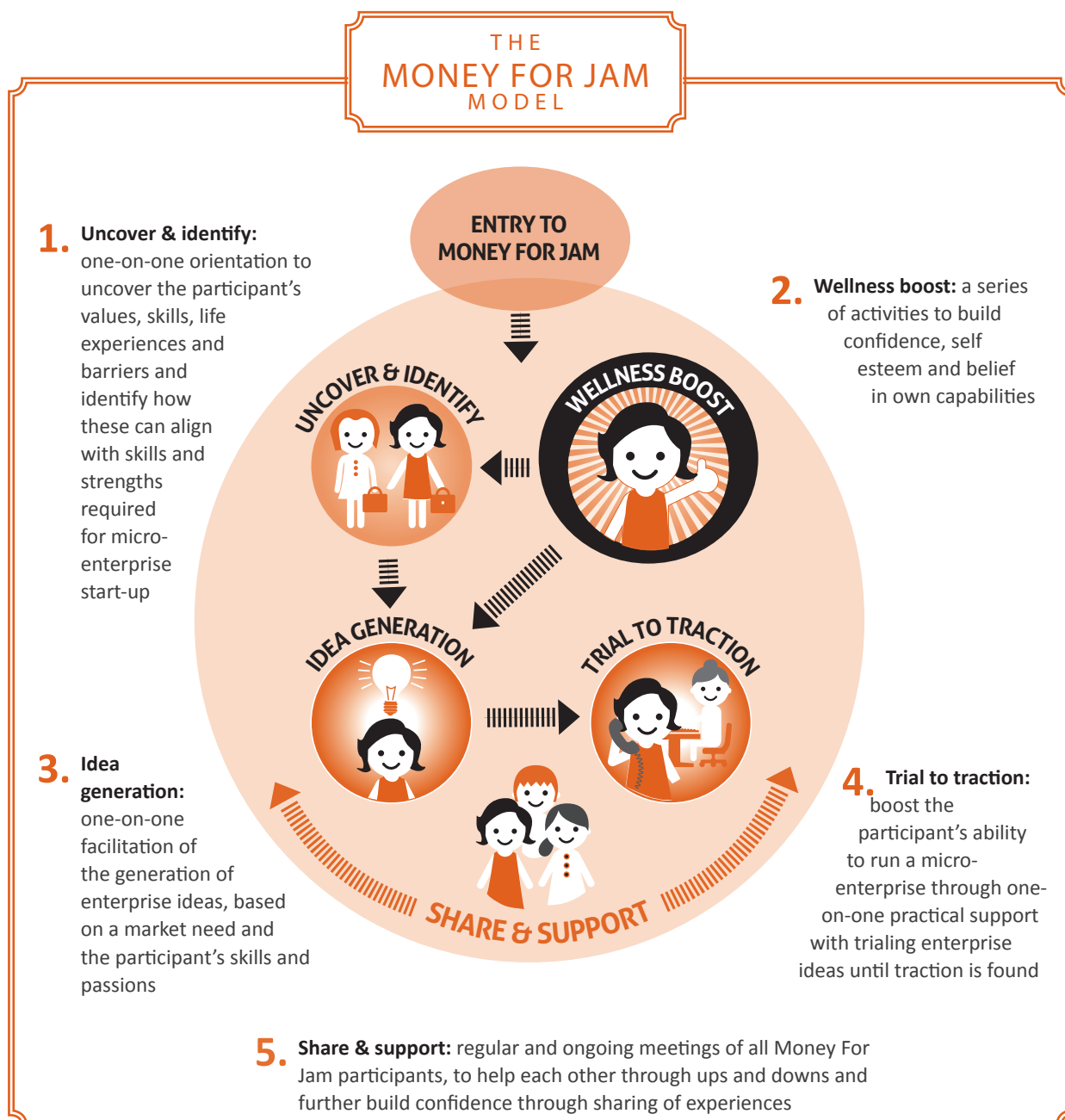
“I don’t want the IKEA version of business planning – DIY. It’s not engaging” Diane

Money For Jam responds to this with an approach of actions over plans using more feminine oriented language and learning by doing: help with trialing enterprise ideas and finding customers until traction is found. This will all be done within the priorities and timeframes of the women and the ability to speed up or slow down if required - no need to go at it full time if that’s not possible. A mentor will help them with setting up a micro-enterprise that is relevant, do-able and

achievable.

The Money For Jam model contains a number of components:

1. **Uncover & identify:** each participant will have the opportunity to sit with an expert and uncover how their life experiences, values and skills can contribute to an individualised strengths based approach to micro-enterprise
2. **Wellness boost:** this will bring the women together in a series of activities that look at building confidence, self esteem and belief in their own capabilities
3. **Idea generation:** each participant will be paired with a micro-enterprise facilitator, who will act as a mentor and assist the participant in thinking through some options for enterprise ideas based on a market need and the participant’s skills and passions
4. **Trial to traction:** The focus of this component is on what needs to be done to get one of the enterprise ideas up and going; the facilitator will guide the participant through the steps of trialing enterprise ideas until traction is found
5. **Share & support:** all participants have the opportunity to get together on a regular and ongoing basis. These meetings underline that women are not going it alone, and will provide the opportunity to help each other through ups and downs and further build confidence through sharing of experiences



This visual representation of the model shows that the Money For Jam program is not a linear process and that women have a circle of support whenever they need it.

When exiting the Money For Jam program, women will have built resilience, greater financial security and more confidence, and over time they will hopefully be more comfortable with the masculine oriented world of small business. What started as an extra income generating activity can become the replacement income generating activity. We believe that participation in Money For Jam can lead to a number of options for economic participation: to continue their micro-enterprise at the pace they have been going; enter the more masculine world of small business and get support from formal

programs such as the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme or small business loan facilities offered by banks; or even increase their opportunities for more mainstream forms of workforce participation.

Ultimately, we believe these women will change their position from the current response of “no, I wouldn’t know how to run a business” to “yes, I am an entrepreneur”.

Appendix 3 gives a visual representation of how Money For Jam could fit into the more mainstream programs.

What to do next

We started this project to understand what a good outcome looks like with regards to financial wellbeing for women at risk of poverty and what needs to be done to get to greater financial wellbeing for these women. What we gained was a deep understanding of women's journeys through hardship and the reality that their lives are complex, and that a lot is happening to them at a time in their lives that things should really be getting easier and life should be about enjoyment and changing pace.

Thanks to the women's generosity, openness and honesty we now have a better understanding of the shifts that can be made to better support women like Amanda, Anne, Bunmee, Carrol, Cheryl, Diane, Kaye, Lorraine, Meryl, Ingunn, Beth, Jane and Sue to increase their financial wellbeing.

We now want to pilot Money For Jam with a small number of participants. Piloting will give us the ability to test three things:

1. Test the design of the Money For Jam model with a small number of women for its ability to achieve greater wellbeing outcomes for older women at risk of poverty;

2. Test key assumptions of a shortlisted number of business models for scaling of Money For Jam and develop a costing and resourcing model for broader roll out and scaling; and
3. Develop tools for building an evidence base and start building the evidence base, to be used to advocate this approach as a solution to the emerging issue of increased poverty and lack of financial security amongst older women.

Testing the Money For Jam potential business model scenarios will allow us to learn what works and how Money For Jam could be delivered effectively and efficiently at scale. This testing phase will therefore reduce risk for the scaling phase.

We are looking for organisations and individuals who want to be part of this journey towards an innovative solution to an issue with considerable scale. We are looking for support for Money For Jam, from organisations who have skin in the game and who believe in taking action, who don't accept anything less for women over 50 in need of support.



Reflections from the women involved in the co-design process

"It's been such a rich experience in so many unexpected and nourishing ways. Shattering myths, stereotypes and isolation and shame around being at risk. Sharing my story and journey so far in such a positive and supportive way was awesome"

"Great to see a project being client directed"

"This sort of group work would help women all the time, as a regular check and balance to negativity and things that keep us down"

"I felt that I have been taken seriously – not a victim – but as a life giver and survivor"

'Participation in the Money For Jam co-design process has made me motivated to embrace change in a more positive and realistic way"

"Participation in this co-design process has allowed me to explore going forward in my financial health more carefully"

Appendix 1 – More stories



Amanda

Amanda has a professional background as a mothercraft nurse, medical administrator, mobile customer service officer and a tour guide. After dealing with childhood trauma, she was looking forward to a rewarding career and to putting all the trauma behind her. A back injury in her early 20s led to

more periods of unemployment than employment – everything fell apart; “it made everything worse on all levels”.

When in employment, she was only able to work part time. Her finances dictated her living arrangements and for more than 20 years she moved from share house to share house, despite her mental health not coping with this very well. Not being able to work fulltime led to depression and anxiety, a horrible vicious circle.

At one point Amanda felt that perhaps starting her own business and being her own boss was the way to beat the disability caused by her back injury and her anxiety. She commenced in the NEIS program and found one of the toughest things was to write her business plan. She felt unsupported, couldn't see how the financing of her business idea would work and never finished the course.

She tries to get out of her unit whenever she feels agitated, as she feels trapped and needs to move around. She is a creative person and loves doing art classes as art helps her focus and deal with the anxiety. She still dreams of having a business, perhaps an arts business, nautical shop or healing centre, and is happy to start small with small steps ... but doesn't know where to start or where to get appropriate support and financing. Constant worries about money dominate her life.



Anne

Anne is a well educated woman with 2 adult sons. She is now in her early 60s and on Newstart Allowance. Her journey to this position of disadvantage is surprising. An oppressive childhood where she and her sister parented her mother, instead of the other way around, left Anne without an education.

She married young and worked for most of her adult life to support her children and her alcoholic husband. When she finally got the courage to walk away from the emotional abuse from her husband and children, she thought ‘I need time for Anne’ and studied an arts degree, fascinated by history. Interest in her father's history as a prisoner of war in Thailand led her to joining the Australia-Thailand Association. That turned out to be her entry into Thailand as an English language teacher.

After ten years of teaching in Thailand and Japan, a second relationship breakdown in the USA and after an investment of savings in a property in the US that she was unable to sell, she found herself reliant on Government support.

For her whole life Anne dug deep in herself to survive an oppressive childhood and marital circumstances - she is resilient, resourceful, fearless and self determined. Yet, abusive relationships have affected her self respect, with a family that is not supporting her.

Anne loves dog walking, history, English language teaching and working with children, seeing some great potential for turning these passions and likes into simple income generating activities. However, she has no trust that others will be there to support her or care for her when she needs it, and can't see how she could overcome barriers of finding customers and all those other things to get an income generating activity going.

Carrol

Carrol's mother was driven away by her father when she was very young, with a step-mother taking over, giving little love. From age 15 to now, Carrol has endured a series of abusive relationships from those that are supposed to be close to her. She survived financially, and did quite well for a period of her life through being resourceful and resilient. She started her working life making a living by working in a childcare facility, takeaway shops and service stations. In her mid 20s she was a cage dancer in a club in Melbourne which brought in very good money, and later on she became a high end escort. She describes this time like "being in the movie *Pretty Woman*, being taken out to 5-star restaurants and being dressed, but still being paid to do so". She had 2 children by that stage and could give them a good life thanks to the good income she was earning. She eventually gave up that job because it caused her to be away from her children a lot, and instead she started working with people with a disability. That's when she got seriously injured and she hasn't worked since.

Carrol feels that her family have always interfered with her life and she feels the best part of her life was when it was just her and her first love, when her family wasn't involved. A pivotal point in her life happened in her 30s when she met her birth mother. After not fitting in with the family she grew up in, Carrol had finally found a resemblance to herself, and she formed a strong bond with her birth mother. Carrol got a tattoo on her leg, specifically designed to honour and remember her birth mother and father, who have now both passed away.

Family support has never been present in her life, leading her to fend for herself and creating a certain level of independence and self determination in order to survive. Due to injury she has lost that independence and sadly hasn't gained respect or support from most of her siblings or children in times of need.

Carrol knows how to start an informal business, because she did this after her injury, and managed to live on this and not rely on government support for some time. A lot of money seems to have been made, but subsequently lost, together with her self confidence, independence and self belief.



Cheryl

Cheryl grew up in South Africa in a middle class family. She feels that her skills and talents weren't nurtured in the environment she grew up in and no one noticed her true self. She struggles with inner self doubt: "no one really sees me, the real me". She realised from a young age she had to be very good at what she wanted to do if she was to be successful, especially being from a mixed race background and being female in South Africa. She succeeded: she became the first person of colour to lecture at a white university in South Africa before Apartheid was dismantled, a massive achievement!

Cheryl came to Australia in 1991 with no financial support and decided to become self employed and put her creativity to good use: she bought a second-hand sewing machine, 2\$ a meter fabric and then just went to the markets and started selling, then bought some more fabric. Ten years later Cheryl had several labels and sold her clothes to exclusive boutiques. She lost it all when the GFC hit and her daughter became very unwell. That was the turning point in her life: "I was travelling on a path I didn't want to travel along" Cheryl says about that period in her life.

She became homeless about a year ago and now lives in rooming house accommodation where she is trying to start a creative art space in a few unused rooms in the rooming house, for all the residents to use. Even though she has no financial security anymore, she firstly wants respect, to feel comfortable that her daughter is doing ok and the freedom to be creative. Her attitude towards money has changed: "money doesn't bring happiness, but it makes it easier to do the things that make you happy". She feels shame for her current housing situation and this has created social isolation: "All my friends, people I knew from when I was successful, I haven't kept in touch with them because I find it embarrassing to say I'm homeless".

The inner self doubt, shame and exhaustion of the past years have worn her out, yet the thought of starting this creative arts space and providing an opportunity for homeless women in rooming houses, to give them an opportunity to express themselves, keeps her motivated.

Kaye

Kaye trained as an arts and crafts teacher in the 70s and changed her occupation in the 80s to a graphic artist and worked for many years in graphic design. She became mentally ill in her early 40s, continued working for a few years but when her private life crumbled, her life fell apart. She couldn't keep it together domestically, got evicted, became homeless and unemployed. She ended up in rooming house accommodation and lived there for 12 years. In the past year she gained enough stability to be able to afford the rent of a one-bedroom unit offered by Women's Housing. She describes being in the bedsit as 'it felt like it was transitional, even though it was 12 years'. Now she is in the unit, she feels she has a home there – that's really important to her.

Her psychiatrist took the attitude that she should find part time work and not just be on a fulltime disability pension, he minimised her medication so she could function better. Kaye describes this medical support as crucial to her path to recovery. She has been working part time in retail for 10 years, but her passions are with photography, painting and drawing. She would like to do more structured community activities too.

When we asked her if she had ever thought of earning extra cash outside of regular employment, she says: "I've always had problems with getting with the idea of the entrepreneurship thing. I've just got this mindset that I'm shit at it, I'm just shit at it, and part of that is because of female reticence. That's always going to be a problem with women 'Oh, I just can't possibly do that'. And I suppose, I've got no head for business at all, and it's also an issue of what you can do that makes money?"

Kaye's general attitude to life is that she feels content, but then, when something happens that makes it better, she is very grateful for it.

Lorraine

Lorraine lives with her husband in Endeavour Hills. They have 3 children and have had a full life dedicating themselves to their children. Roger was the main income earner and is now retired, and they get the age pension. Lorraine's life evolves around being available for loved ones around her, dealing with and sorting out their issues and meeting their emotional needs. She describes it as "just trying to keep all the balls in the air".

Lorraine is an amazing ideas person, creativity is a buzz word for her, it feeds her soul and gives her energy. She has an amazing ability to entwine her creativity with consideration for other people.

Roger manages the finances in the household and he worries about how to manage the level of household expenditure, leaving Lorraine sometimes budget strapped in her day-to-day management of the household. Reliance on Roger is a safety net that Lorraine has, unlike many others we interviewed, but it causes a certain lack of motivation. Lorraine talks about her lack of professional life with sadness, never having used her skills in a professional capacity and what she really liked to do – to be creative. She also feels guilty when taking too much time for herself as she believes she needs to be there in case one of the kids have an emergency.

She would like someone alongside her who pushes her along, to encourage her to create things and earn some money from it, so it can alleviate the household financial stress ... but without it eating too much into her precious time with grandkids or her need to be there for an emergency in the family.

Appendix 2

– Shifts

A. Women and micro-enterprise

A1. I'M A BUSINESS OWNER

Spending time on earning extra cash means I can't be there for my loved ones when they need me

SHIFT
TO

I'M A GRANDMA/WIFE/MOTHER AND EARN SOME EXTRA CASH

I can earn some extra cash and still be available for my loved ones when they need me

A2. I RUN A MICRO-ENTERPRISE

I rely on the income from my micro-enterprise for all my income

SHIFT
TO

I HAVE FOUND WAYS TO EARN EXTRA CASH THROUGH SELF-EMPLOYMENT

The income generating activity is an additional source of income that increases my financial wellbeing

A3. AS A WOMAN, I DON'T HAVE BUSINESS SKILLS

Women don't have the foundation to be 'pushy' in business, sell their services and put a value on their worth

SHIFT
TO

WOMEN'S STRENGTHS, EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS ARE TRANSFERRABLE TO BUSINESS

Women's strengths, experiences and resilience through hardship are a solid foundation for doing well in micro-enterprise

A4. BUSINESS LANGUAGE DEFINES MICRO-ENTERPRISE

Using business terminology is part and parcel of defining successful business design and practice

SHIFT
TO

PASSIONS, INTERESTS AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCES DEFINE MICRO-ENTERPRISE LANGUAGE

Successful business design and practice can be expressed using language that relates to women as carers and survivors of hardship

A5. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO DO MARKETING OR FIND CUSTOMERS

To earn an income from micro-enterprise you need to know how to do marketing and find buyers

SHIFT
TO

MICRO-ENTERPRISE CAN BE STARTED WITHOUT KNOWING EVERYTHING

Micro-enterprise can be started slowly through working within your networks and learning about marketing and market access as you progress

A6. RUNNING A MICRO-ENTERPRISE EQUALS TAKING RISK

Risk is inevitably linked to running a business

SHIFT
TO

EXTRA INCOME GENERATION THROUGH MICRO-ENTERPRISE CAN BE DONE WITH LITTLE RISK

It is possible to engage in micro-enterprise and earn extra income with very little risk

B. Wellbeing & micro-enterprise



B8. EDUCATION AND ACHIEVEMENT PROTECTS YOU FROM POVERTY

If you are educated and have past achievements your future is secure

SHIFT
TO

EDUCATION AND ACHIEVEMENT DOES NOT ALWAYS PROTECT YOU FROM POVERTY

Despite a strong background in education or having worthwhile past professional achievements, you can still become at risk of poverty

B9. OCCASIONAL SUPPORT

Running a micro-enterprise means doing it yourself and on your own with some support from business programs

SHIFT
TO

STEADY SUPPORT FOR WHEN YOU NEED IT

Support means regular check-ins by someone to learn the ropes from and hold my hand through the start-up process until traction is found

C. Income diversification and micro-enterprise

C1. IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY: A GOOD MOTHER OR EARN EXTRA CASH

You are not a good mother if you spend time on earning extra cash through micro-enterprise

SHIFT
TO

A GOOD MOTHER AND EARN EXTRA CASH

Being a good mother can be combined with being a woman who is able to earn extra cash through micro-enterprise

C2. LOOKING AFTER HEALTH OR EARNING EXTRA CASH

Good health is required to be able to earn extra cash, and if health is not 100% you can't do it

SHIFT
TO

EXTRA CASH CAN IMPROVE HEALTH

Activities that surround the process of earning extra cash can improve your health

C3. MICRO-ENTERPRISE IS DONE ON MY OWN

If I step into micro-enterprise, it means I have to do it on my own

SHIFT
TO

SOLIDARITY IN MICRO-ENTERPRISE

A micro-enterprise can be operated in harmony or cooperation with others, in various gradations (peer-to-peer support network, social enterprise, coop etc.)

D. How to go about starting and running a micro-enterprise

D1. ALL THE DUCKS IN A ROW FOR MICRO-ENTERPRISE START-UP

You need to have a business plan before you can start your micro-enterprise

SHIFT
TO

ONE STEP AT A TIME

The income generating activity can be started small and step-by-step and can (but doesn't have to) lead to the main source of income generation

D2. PASSION IS ENOUGH

Following your passion is enough to be successful in micro-enterprise

SHIFT
TO

PASSION AND REALITY ARE A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR MICRO-ENTERPRISE

An idea for a micro-enterprise should be based on what you are passionate about, combined with a reality check of market interest and your own priorities

D3. BUSINESS STOPS CREATIVITY

Creativity is killed if it is used for producing items for sale

SHIFT
TO

I USE MY CREATIVITY TO EARN EXTRA CASH

Using creativity to produce items for sale can be done with the right goals, priorities and mindsets in place

D4. ONE SIZE FITS ALL

Participating in a formal enterprise support program or business incubator is the pathway to micro-enterprise

SHIFT
TO

PATHWAYS AND TAILORED SUPPORT

There are different and individualised pathways that lead to the ability to earn extra cash through micro-enterprise

D5. ONLY EXPERTS CAN MENTOR

You have to be an expert to provide advice and support to a budding entrepreneur

SHIFT
TO

THE POWER OF PEERS

Peers can support each other with setting up and running an extra income generating activity - each has individual skills, passions and interests that underpin entrepreneurship

D6. FUNDING, BUT ONLY WITH BUSINESS PLAN AND TRACK RECORD

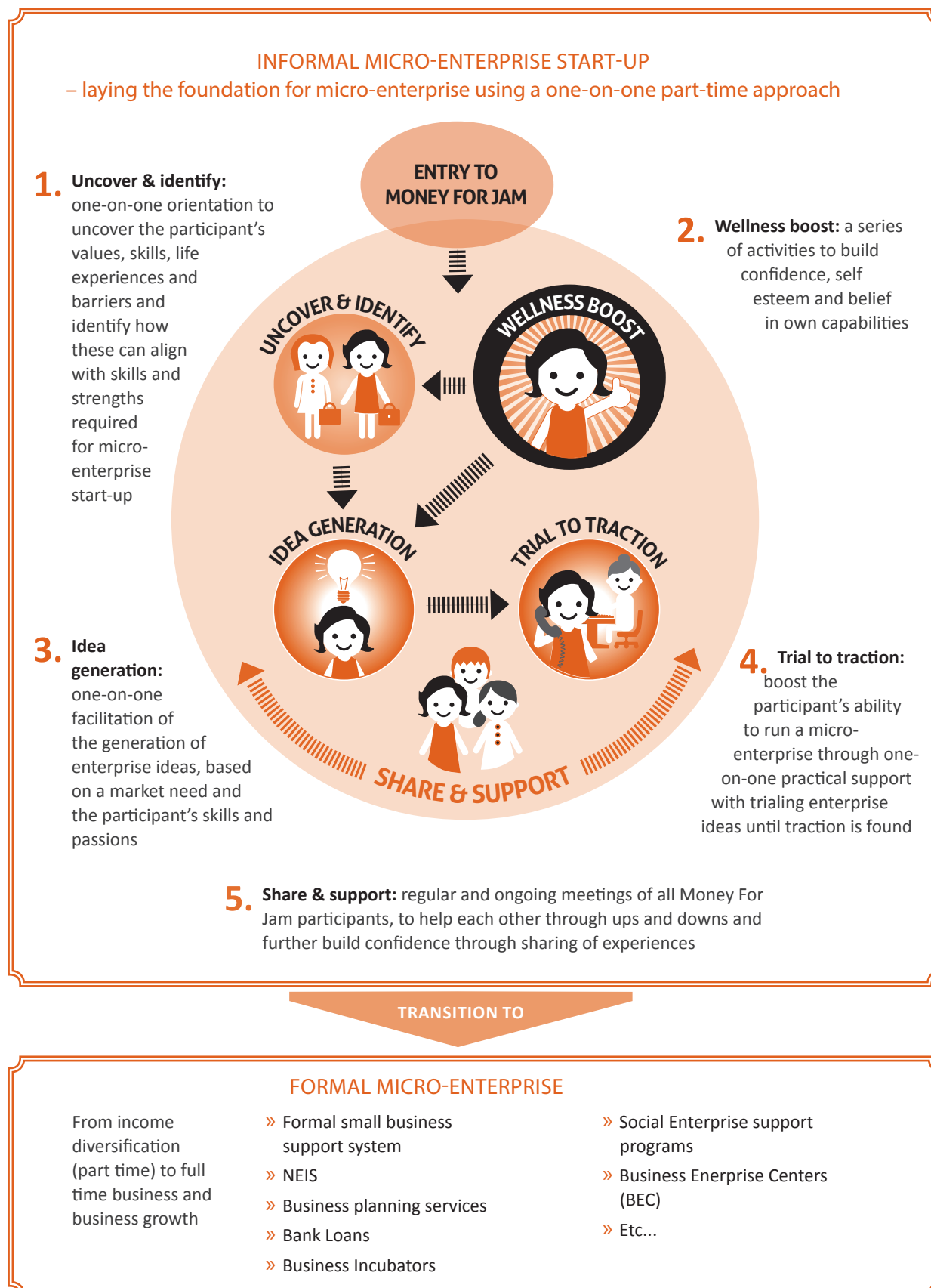
A sound business plan is required and you need to already be in business to be eligible for funding

SHIFT
TO

STAGED FUNDING TO ALLOW PEOPLE TO GET STARTED

Funding should be staged, to help people to get started at really small scale – selling a few items at a time, and grow the enterprise slowly

Appendix 3 – Money For Jam within the formal enterprise support system





percapita

IDEAS FOR A FAIR AUSTRALIA