



Polaris Women In Business Network

Overview

WOMEN
— IN —
BUSINESS

About Polaris

The Polaris Business Development Centre with core support from the City of Salisbury, is a dynamic hub designed to support entrepreneurs, inspire innovation, and grow businesses.

The City of Salisbury's Strategic Urban Planning Team and the Economic Development Team are co-located at the Polaris Centre and collectively form the City Shaping Division. This strategic arrangement reflects the City of Salisbury's commitment to advancing economic activity in the area, which creates a more progressive, sustainable and connected community for all.

Located at Innovation House, Technology Park in Mawson Lakes, the Polaris Team works with anyone interested in the idea of a business (intenders), start-ups, micro, small, medium and large-sized businesses helping them change their lives as they bring their business visions into reality.

Just as Polaris – the North Star guided sailors with their navigation of the seas, the Polaris Centre is a guiding star for business people in Northern Adelaide and now Greater Adelaide as a proud delivery partner with the Office for Small and Family Business.

Our mentors have a wealth of knowledge and experience and provide a supportive ecosystem of practical educational and networking resources to our clients that cover ideating, starting, planning, financing, marketing, digital tools, and more. With knowledge of the local property market, including zoning, contact with landowners, developers, agents and government bodies, we can also assist with site selection and navigate the process of development.

With a suite of tailored services for those with just a seed of an idea to those with businesses already turning over \$1.5+ million a year, we at the Polaris Centre would be delighted to provide the extra support you need to drive your business further.

At the Polaris Centre, we offer a unique approach to delivering our services. Unlike self-paced online platforms, the Polaris point of difference is in human mentors to inspire, motivate and guide business intenders and owners together with interactive in-person workshops.

Our clients engage with like minds, enjoy human interaction and build strong relationships with our dedicated mentors and network.

The Polaris Team also delivers workshops and mentoring in regional areas such as the Barossa Valley, Eudunda and Adelaide Hills. These services are provided on request and fee-for-service unique to the regional requirements and costs.

The Polaris Centre is a proud delivery partner of The Small Business Fundamentals Program, an initiative of the Government of South Australia's Office for Small and Family Business, delivered through the South Australian Small Business Strategy 2023 – 2030.

Polaris Women In Business Network

The Polaris Women in Business (WIB) Network – created and supported by the Polaris Business Development Centre (Polaris Centre) and the City of Salisbury - is an initiative that is coordinated BY women in business FOR women in business.

Originally convened in 2007 to provide a network for women operating their business from home and to minimise professional and social isolation in Northern Adelaide. Our WIB Network has expanded over the years and now welcomes women from all over greater Adelaide and inner regional area.

The Polaris WIB Network hosts networking events that include guest speakers who are local Adelaide business-women to share their business story and journey. Additionally, the Polaris WIB Advisory Committee organises Business Showcasing and Speed Networking Events.

The following 6 factors are key features that underpin the Polaris WIB Network:

1. Sharing insight and experience without the risk of judgment

One of the most valuable benefits of our women's only business network is that it represents a safe space for women to come together and candidly discuss their experiences. Whether its unique challenges women face in their business, professional lives, struggles to get the recognition they deserve, or simply the comfort of knowing they're not in it alone, many women gain invaluable insight from the WIB network.

Where so many boardrooms, conferences, and other networking events tend to be skewed towards the male perspective, having a place where women direct the conversation is an essential and effective way to break out of the familiar rhythms of women's day-to-day professional lives. For women who have been facing gender-related obstacles in their career, hearing similar stories from other successful women will likely give them the confidence to keep going and continue pushing boundaries to make a space for themselves.

2. Facilitating strong relationships

Forming relationships lies at the heart of the Polaris WIB Network and the ethos of the Polaris Business Development Centre. With so many amazing minds in a single room, some are bound to connect on any manner of things. In addition, many relationships formed via curated and purposeful networking have a longevity that a simple friendship may not have. The fact is, when we network with someone, there's an inherent trust and stake involved. We entrust another woman when we network with them, and they do the same. That trust is the reason why that women will be willing to connect with a new contact, with another woman in their field, or why a business referral is passed to a certain person. This kind of trust is often simply not present in regular friendships, and it's these beginnings that lead to networking relationships carrying on for years and years.

Many women who started out as mentors and mentees, or simply professional acquaintances, have carried on those relationships, supporting each other in many other ways as well. Some women have met their best friends in our WIB Network, or their future business partners, as well as collaborators of all kinds. That's the benefit of embracing learning from a network of outstanding women: you never know what you'll find.

3. Getting recognized for existing skills

Although women should be recognized for breaking through boundaries, it's important that the celebration doesn't end there. The Polaris WIB Network excels at recognizing the unique skill sets of our members and applauding their talents and knowledge independently of their gender. When amazing women are celebrated for their efforts in their business, careers and beyond, it can act as a catalyst for connecting and inspiring other women to do the same, lifting them up and clearly showing that there's a place for them.

4. Learning how to balance work with personal life

Many women deal with challenges and responsibilities beyond their businesses and careers. Whether it's volunteer work, ambitions around personal passions, raising a family, or any of the other countless tasks women take on, connecting with our group of successful WIB can be a huge asset for learning how to strike that all-important balance. Of course, this work-life harmony is not unique to women, but there tends to be less focus in the business and the professional world on a woman's role in this. Our Polaris WIB network is full of amazing role models: women who have done it all and are still some of the leaders in their fields. Seeing these success stories and learning from their first-hand experience is invaluable in striking a balance for our WIB members.

5. Learning from experienced mentors

No one can know everything, but the larger and more diverse our Polaris WIB Network, the more women can personally connect with certain experiences and perspectives that they otherwise wouldn't be aware of. Mentorship is one great example of inviting these viewpoints for women in business. Depending on personal goals, the specifics of a mentor relationship can vary greatly. However, the benefits of having a great mentor tend to remain the same.

A mentor can help our WIB to expand their knowledge thanks to their own experience, giving women knowledge that would otherwise be hard-earned through years of their own work. WIB Mentors can apply their own expertise to a situation, help women in identifying their goals, and work out the best ways to achieve them. In addition, mentors are often well-connected in their field, and might be able to give our WIB an advantage in certain professional situations. A mentor-mentee relationship can also extend beyond the professional realm, with trusted mentors offering wisdom on the more personal aspects of life as a woman in the modern era.

6. Pathways for growth and further development

The outcomes and impact of increased confidence, stronger relationships, recognition and balance in business and life is a desire to step up and grow. Our WIB Network is supported by the Polaris Centre, which is underpinned by many years of business experience, authentic mentoring practice and tailored programs. Therefore, the Polaris Centre provides the women in our WIB Network with opportunity and access to our suite of services to facilitate and support their growth. We also connect our members with other networks beyond our WIB Network and other programs in Greater Adelaide. As needed and based on feedback from our members we design and deliver specific needs workshops, such as The Networking for a Reason Workshop for our women in business.

In November 2023 the Polaris WIB Network Advisory Committee with support from the Polaris Centre convened and delivered the inaugural Women In Business Conference with 120 women in attendance. This conference is planned to be an annual event open to Women In Business from South Australia.

Additionally, the committee will work with the Polaris Centre and the City of Salisbury to organise and host an International Women's Day event annually. The event in March 2024 was attended by 189 people of which 181 were women.

The Polaris WIB Network Advisory committee is made up of experienced business-women that meet regularly to organise the events, select the guest speakers and coordinate delivery requirements.

Currently, the Polaris WIB Chairperson is a female member of the Polaris Centre team and supports the advisory committee with events coordination, marketing and promotion, financial and admin requirements.

The current Polaris WIB Advisory Committee includes:

- Janet Wootton - Polaris Women in Business Network Lead
- Bec Purczel - ACE Business
- Kim Delaney - Bloom Coaching
- April Hobbs - Innovate Adelaide
- Lynette Kelly - Clevergirl Initiatives

Typically, over 60+ women attend the WIB Networking Events. We have over 2,100 subscribers on the WIB Network database. The Polaris Centre Facebook page has over 1,800 followers of which 65% are women. E.g. at events that included keynote speakers such as Tammy Barton – MyBudget attracted over 120 attendees.

In February 2024, the WIB Network Dinner featured Adelady's and sold out at 140 attendees.

The Polaris WIB Network Advisory Committee hosts several WIB Networking events per year. A short video is produced of the WIB Network events that is shared using the Polaris Centre socials to promote the network and demonstrate the benefits of the network to other women. These videos include testimonials from women attending sharing their experience, learning and getting inspiration from the WIB Network events.

The Polaris Centre with investment from the City of Salisbury and funding from the Office of Small and Family Business will undertake significant development and improvement of the Polaris WIB Network in 2024 and 2025 including:

- Reimaging and strengthening the structure, terms of reference and code of conduct of the Polaris WIB Network Advisory Committee.
- Undertake a Co-design Empathy Workshop with the committee, WIB network members and WIB stakeholders to inform the work of the Polaris Centre in developing and shaping future service and programs that meet the needs of women in business.
- Refresh the branding of the Polaris WIB Network.

