



Queensland
Small Business
Commissioner



Small
Business
Friendly

Small Business Friendly Accelerator Guidebook

The self-support resource for organisations on the small business friendly journey

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Providing feedback

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Welcome to the SBF family

Whether you have just joined the Small Business Friendly (SBF) Program or are well along the path of being more small business friendly, we are pleased to present the Accelerator, a set of self-support materials to help support your efforts.

Like any journey, you need to have a plan for where you are today, where you want to be and how you will get there. This guide includes a range of tools and guidance materials to help you plan your journey and accelerate your efforts to be more small business friendly.

Being small business friendly means recognising and considering small businesses as an important customer and supplier to your community, as well as a recipient of your organisation's services and activities.

Joining the SBF Program is a significant commitment and signing the charter is a key step in your journey. Like other members, you have committed to:

- Considering small businesses when you make key decisions that impact them, such as purchasing and payment practices, tender processes and legislative or policy decisions
- Being mindful of small businesses, their issues and priorities when making decisions for your community
- Keeping track of your improvements, showcasing innovative activities, and reporting on your progress each financial year.

We are confident the Accelerator will help you to successfully deliver your small business friendly initiatives.

We look forward to working with you and connecting you with other members. As we know, being small business friendly is everyone's business!



Dominique Lamb

Small Business Commissioner



About the Accelerator

The Small Business Friendly Accelerator is not a burdensome compliance requirement - quite the opposite. It is a set of self-support tools and advice to help you put a **simple, yet powerful strategy** in place to help your organisation be more small business friendly.

It helps put an organised and systemic framework to what you are likely already doing. It is not extra work but a framework to help you flow from one step to another. It will help you build the buy-in and the mandate across your organisation to better support your local small businesses.

Think of your small business friendly journey as ‘cycles’ of improvement. You don’t need to do everything at once. Focus, make changes, get results – then start the cycle again!

Your Accelerator Action Plan will help you to successfully deliver your small business friendly initiatives. While you need to establish your plan early, executing this may occur over a period of months or 1-2 years depending on your leadership team’s initial priorities for action. This framework and action plan will also help you to showcase and report on your achievements. Having a clear plan and executing it well will help get everyone involved, which is key.

Regardless of where you are on the small business friendly journey or the size of your organisation, the tools and guidance in the Accelerator have been created to:


- Capture your strategy and plan for becoming more small business friendly
- Help you assess where you are today - whether you’re starting out, or doing a check-up
- Gather the internal support for change
- Make it happen in your organisation.

Designed to support those who are charged with implementing the SBF Program within their organisation, the Accelerator will help you to improve alignment between the commitments from the charter and the opportunities for your organisation.

How to use the Accelerator

Building on the The five-step approach to being small business friendly, the Accelerator gives you the next layer of actions, set within an overall strategy that you can communicate up, down, across and outside your organisation.

No matter where you are on the journey - whether you’re starting out or needing a refresh, the Accelerator will help you make progress fast. It contains a series of tools and guidance materials to help you on your journey.

 If you get stuck, please contact the QSBC for additional support.



The five-step approach to being small business friendly



The self-support suite

Support to plan your journey

The Accelerator Action Plan should be established early, while the execution may take some time.

Support materials for the journey

1 Reveal your blind spots using the Blindspot Assessment

A powerful process to engage senior leaders in your organisation and provide some initial guidance on where your organisation is today and the consistency of those views across the leadership team.

2 Share and engage using the Engage Wider Framework

Drive the initial mandate across your whole organisation in a structured way that engages and energises team members, whilst recruiting the cross-functional team to take it forward.

3 Do a stocktake using the Capturing Improvements Method

With the cross-functional team in place, it is important to capture the things you're already doing today, find any gaps and generate new ideas for action.

4 Take action by creating a list of Priorities for Action

Refining your list of ideas, prioritising them for effort versus impact, then focusing them into the three priority areas agreed.

5 Get involved by showcasing and reinforcing

Practical guidance on building your improvements catalogue, sharing them with your peers and across the organisation to demonstrate the value of the collective effort.

The following sections provide guidance for planning your journey and how to use the tools to accelerate your progress at each step.



The Accelerator Action Plan

Creating your Accelerator Action Plan

Objective: Gather your thoughts and provide an action plan to commence or reignite your small business friendly journey.

The Accelerator Action Plan helps you to bring all your thoughts and actions into one place to get started or refresh your journey to being more small business friendly.

It is a planning tool to help you to capture the key activities you need to undertake as you think through each of the elements of the five-step approach, unpacking who needs to be involved and putting a timeframe around each activity. This is just a plan – executing each step may take months or 1-2 years depending on your priorities.

Who should be involved?

The Accelerator Action Plan is designed to be used by the person (or group) charged with bringing the SBF Program to life in your organisation.

Outcomes

By creating your Accelerator Action Plan you will have a documented plan to help your organisation be more small business friendly. It provides a plan to gain support and enact change in your organisation as you progress through each step. Providing your completed Accelerator Action Plan to the QSBC will help fulfill your charter commitments.

1 Familiarise yourself with the Accelerator support materials. Have a quick read through the rest of this guide to gain an initial understanding of the self-support suite.

2 Download the Accelerator Action Plan Template and familiarise yourself with it.

3 Work progressively through each step of the Accelerator completing the Accelerator Action Plan sheets as you go. It will help you to capture your main activities for each step, including:

- What needs to be done
- Who is the lead
- Who needs to be involved
- When you want it done by.

There are five sheets to complete, one for each step of the Five-Step Approach.

4 Complete the key milestone dates page at the back of the Accelerator Action Plan to create a quick summary of when you plan to complete each step. You should also set a refresh date to commence the Accelerator cycle again.

5 Share it with your leadership team when complete for their refinement and approval.

6 Share your plan with the QSBC as soon as you have approval from your senior leaders, via email to engagement@qsbq.qld.gov.au This is an important deliverable for new members and a great way for existing members to show ongoing commitment.



#Top tips

- Remember to specify your 'refresh' date. Being small business friendly is a continuous cycle of improvement. There's no hard and fast rule – it is dependent on your needs and speed of change
- Share your plan with the QSBC and check in with us during the drafting stage if you need a sense-check.



The Blindspot Assessment

1

Step 1: Reveal your blind spots

Objective: Know where you're starting from and where your organisation needs to focus for greatest impact.

To reveal your blind spots, use the Blindspot Assessment Template to help you get the mandate for change and improvement and support your SBF Program commitment. Linked directly to the charter, this assessment process acts as a benchmark, helping you to gain clarity on where your senior leaders believe you are today and the gaps to focus on.

Why is this important? Without a clear and shared awareness of your gaps, there can be little desire to change where you are today. This assessment helps you to get being more small business friendly on the leadership agenda and open discussions on how this can be achieved.

When considering your plan, make sure you allow time for this crucial step. It gives you a reference point to reflect on each year to see how far your organisation has come on your journey.

Who should be involved?

The Blindspot Assessment is primarily used with the senior leadership level of your organisation. Depending on the size and complexity of your specific situation, you may choose to extend this to other leaders in your organisation, but it's not intended for front-line staff.

Outcomes

The Blindspot Assessment Template helps you to quickly gain clarity on where you are, engages the senior leadership team on the journey ahead and gives you some initial support to create change. The benchmark it provides is directly linked to the charter commitments and sets the mandate for being more small business friendly. From this assessment, you will have three priority areas for action.

1 **Blindspot Assessment Template** and familiarise yourself with it. Assessing where you believe your organisation is now on your own is one of the best approaches to accomplish this.

2 **Set up a meeting time** with your senior leadership team. You will need about 30-60 minutes, with the overall intent of benchmarking their individual perspectives on where your organisation is today on the small business friendly journey.

3 **Print out enough copies** of the Blindspot Assessment Template. Make sure to have a couple of extras handy.

4 **Run the session**

A suggested outline for the meeting is:

- Introduction – the purpose and expected outcomes
- Expectations – honest self-assessment of the organisation as a whole
- Assess – read the charter elements, then circle the statement that best reflects where they believe the organisation is today (gut feel over deep analysis is best here)
- Capture – thoughts/reflections in the space provided on the template
- Discuss – once everyone has completed the assessment, facilitate a discussion to examine the elements that are aligned or common and the elements that are not
- Strategy – what priority areas emerge from the assessment and discussion? Each person needs to capture these in the space provided. These then form the basis of the mandate for change and future actions.

5 **Collate the results**

At the end of the session, gather the assessment sheets so you can revisit and review the perspectives. Capture the strategic priority actions in a table so that they are catalogued.

6 **Close the loop**

To keep momentum going, write a note of thanks to each participant, return their assessment sheets and summarise the key actions and outline the next steps in the journey.



#Top tips

- Keep copies of the individual results from this round, then refer to them when you refresh the process again (we suggest in 12-24 months).
- You can run split sessions with the senior leaders and the next layer of management to examine the differing views – this can provide some powerful insights, gaps and outcomes.



2

Step 2: Share and engage

Objective: Share your commitments with the entire organisation and empower the team to help you fulfill them.

To share and engage effectively, the Engaging-Wider Framework is used to engage the entire organisation on your journey to becoming more small business friendly. This includes all functions and levels within the organisation.

Creating awareness of small businesses and their needs, where you currently sit on the journey to being small business friendly, and the actions you need to take to get you there, is crucial to success. The framework includes three primary activities:

- Share the outcomes
- Understanding Stakeholders Sessions
- Recruit Small Business Champions.



Without the wider-team on board, the journey to being more small business friendly may fall short, lack energy and ultimately, make little headway for change. This step helps you to share your current position and commitments, engage the wider-team on the journey and recruit Small Business Champions that will take your initiatives forward with purpose.

Who should be involved?

The Engaging-Wider Framework is an organisation-wide initiative, designed to engage the wider-team on the journey to being more small business friendly. That said, you might like to start with the customer-facing functions, given their existing understanding of and exposure to small businesses.

These may be different depending on your organisation, but can include your customer service teams, compliance teams, business development teams and other service functions that have direct contact with small businesses.

Your back-office teams will need to be engaged in due course for the organisation to become truly small business friendly, but the customer-facing teams are a great place to start.

Outcomes

The Engaging-Wider Framework tool helps you to quickly gain awareness and support for your journey across the organisation. Sharing the onus for success with both the customer-facing and back-office functions quickly makes small businesses, everyone's business. The more support and engagement you can garner, the more successful, far-reaching and long-lasting, your improvement efforts will be.

The Engaging-Wider Framework

- 1 Prepare to share the outcomes of your Blindspot Assessment** with the wider organisation to raise awareness and understanding of where you sit today in being small business friendly. When planning:
- Agree communication channels to reach the wider-team (eg. video, lunchbox sessions)
 - Set and agree key messaging with your senior leaders ahead of time
 - Use the Five-Step Approach as a guide for your communications and a way finder for staff.

- 4 Run Understanding Stakeholders Sessions**
- A suggested outline for the session is:
- Introduction – the purpose and expected outcomes
 - The role of the organisation – the enabler for our stakeholders
 - Why the focus on small businesses?
 - How to engage with your staff
 - Who are our small businesses?
 - What do **they** need?
 - What do **we** need?
 - The need for Small Business Champions and their role
 - Next steps.

- 2 Collate your key messages** to be shared with the wider-team, including:
- Introducing the Five-Step Approach
 - Key findings from your Blindspot Assessment
 - Your strategic priorities for action (the three key areas identified)
 - The next steps you intend to take.

- 5 Recruit your Small Business Champions**
- Within the session, garner expressions of interest for joining the Small Business Champion group, charged with taking the initiatives forward for the organisation. Capture the names of the interested parties, ensuring the key areas of the organisation are represented. Once compiled, review the EOI and recruit those team members you believe to be passionate, energetic and connected with your small business remit and goals.

- 3 Create your key communications piece** with the key messages including an invitation to a Understanding Stakeholders Sessions.

- 6 Close the loop**
- To keep momentum going, write a note of thanks to each participant and introduce them to their new Small Business Champions. Also, summarise the key actions and outline the next steps in the journey.



#Top tips

- Be open and honest when sharing the findings of your Blindspot Assessment. Chances are your team are already fully aware of the gaps in your organisation and will feel energised and motivated by the invitation to be part of journey.
- Be clear and intentional in the communication of your purpose and the goals in being more small business friendly. Some team members will be doing it well already, while others will be new to the concept.
- Choose your Small Business Champions wisely. They must be fully engaged in the process, energised by change, and open-minded. They must also have great leadership and communication skills to engage the wider-team.



3 Step 3: Do a stocktake

Objective: Assemble a cross-functional team and gather the actions you're already doing, check alignment with your commitments, highlight any gaps for action and promote what you're already doing.

Do a stocktake by using the Capturing Improvements Method. With the cross-functional team on board, you can now charge forward with gathering improvements that you either have in motion, or need to get in motion, to progress along the small business friendly journey.

The Capturing Improvements Method has been designed to help you put a structure around completing the stocktake activity. Following the successful completion of the first two steps, you will now have built a momentum around the SBF Program. In many cases, there are things already happening in your organisation that people are not aware of. This process helps to bring those to the surface.

Who should be involved?

Undertaking the Capturing Improvements Method is best suited to the person charged with bringing the SBF Program to life in your organisation and the cross-functional team of Small Business Champions.

Outcomes

Once you have completed this method, you will have catalogued improvement initiatives you already have in place, identified any gaps and generated new ideas, all set within your overall priority actions. This collaborative approach becomes the foundation that drives your final Accelerator Improvements Spreadsheet.

Capturing Improvements Method

- 1 **Download the Accelerator Improvements Spreadsheet** and familiarise yourself with it. This will become a living document and you will reference it throughout your journey.
- 2 **Set up a session with the Small Business Champions** to identify existing initiatives. Host a brainstorming session with the group, using sticky notes to capture each initiative and input these to the Accelerator Improvements Spreadsheet as 'existing' improvements.
- 3 **Host a follow up to examine the gaps and come up with new ideas** to meet the needs of the charter and the three priorities for action identified in the Blindspot Assessment. Input these into the Accelerator Improvements Spreadsheet as 'new' ideas.
- 4 **Consolidate the list**
This is a great opportunity to gain clarity on the possibilities for now and the future. Review the list and begin to group like items or remove the duplicates. At this stage, do not rule out any ideas on whether you believe they are possible. This will happen collaboratively with step 4.
- 5 **Promote the great work already being done** by using your internal communications channels to highlight specific people or teams from this stocktake exercise.

While you will have a long list, choose a few improvements to highlight that are currently in progress and some possibilities for the future. Sharing this information will educate and energise your colleagues and help maintain momentum.



#Top tips

- When hosting a brainstorming session, always start by giving each participant plenty of time to write down their thoughts. Don't start with open forum brainstorming as this is proven to reduce the likelihood of breakthrough new ideas and stifles creativity.
- Make sure that your actions are specific in nature (SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound). If you feel that action is too general, chances are you need to break it down further into smaller components.
- Remember that every idea is a good idea. Even if a proposed improvement might not be possible on this cycle, chances are that it will be great for the next. Be sure to capture it.



4 Step 4: Take action

Objective: Engage with internal teams and your small businesses to create, refine and prioritise your action plan, then take action to start implementing your improvements.

This step is focused on identifying the actions for improvement using the Prioritising Action Approach. The section is about helping you to focus your activities. Having a long list of ideas can become daunting and not only that, by working through an unprioritised list, you could be working on the wrong improvements.

To enable a quick and easy way to prioritise your improvements use the Effort-Impact Matrix. For actions that are high effort and low impact, you will want them further down your list. The actions that are low effort but high impact, you will want at the top of your list.

Use the matrix on your list of existing and new Accelerator Improvements Plan from step 3. While it may be subjective, performing this activity with your Small Business Champions will yield positive results and garner buy-in.

Who should be involved?

The Prioritising Action Approach is best suited for the person charged with bringing the SBF Program to life in your organisation working with the cross-functional team of Small Business Champions.

Outcomes

At the end of this stage, you will have a list of actions for improvements for your organisation. You will have selected three to five achievable actions per agreed priority to focus your efforts. You will also have a catalogue of opportunities ready for the next cycle of improvements, and have established an internal process for continuous improvement.

1 Set up a meeting with your Small Business Champions
Ahead of this meeting, make sure that each person has a copy of the current Accelerator Improvements Template and have had time to familiarise themselves with the existing and new improvements captured.

2 Host a prioritising action meeting Set aside enough time for this, depending on how many actions you have captured. Share the Effort-Impact matrix with the team. Work through it collaboratively on assessing whether it is high or low effort and high or low impact for each action.

3 Prioritise the Improvement Actions list. The Accelerator Improvements Spreadsheet will categorise each action for you:



4 Overlay the organisation's three priority areas identified in the Blindspot Assessment
From your list of Accelerator Improvements, choose three to five actions that sit under each agreed priority. You can add the priority areas as section headings in the improvements catalogue if you want to keep it all in one place.

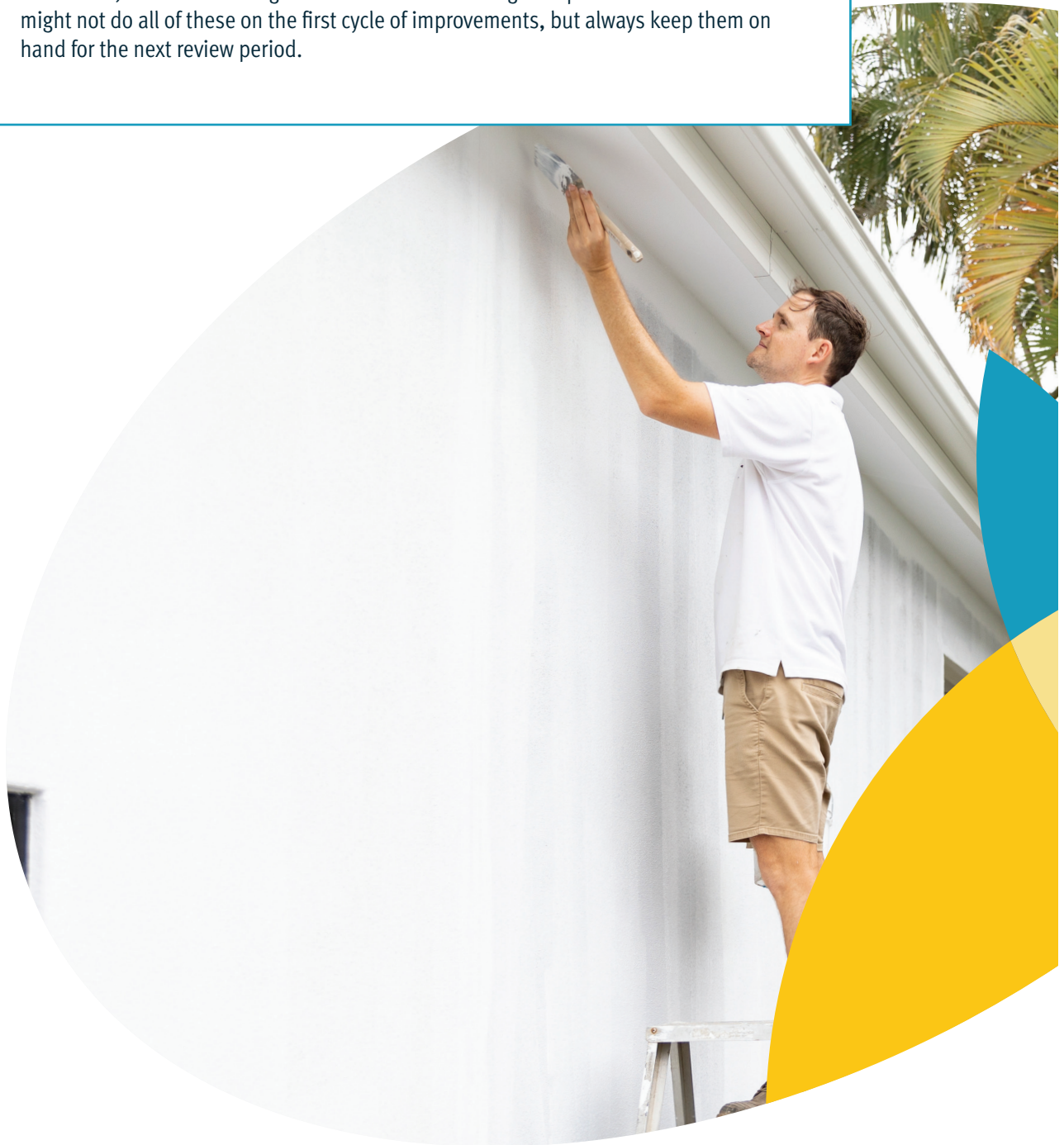
5 Communicate and share the actions for implementation
Now that you have a focused list, communicate it back to the senior leadership team and out to your wider organisation to highlight your intended actions and close the loop on the process.

6 Meet with your Small Business Champions regularly
Now that you have a list of actions for implementation, ensure that you meet regularly to track progress and maintain momentum. Once you get close to completing your actions, prepare to revisit the improvement cycle again.



#Top tips

- If you find you have only 'easy wins', run through the analysis again. Chances are, some of the ratings can be revisited to give you greater clarity.
- Think of your improvement planning as 'cycles' of improvement. You don't need to do everything at once. Focus, make changes, get results – then start the cycle again!
- Remember, this list is a living document and is a catalogue of potential actions. You might not do all of these on the first cycle of improvements, but always keep them on hand for the next review period.



5 Step 5: Get involved

Objective: Be an active member of the SBF family by showcasing your achievements, sharing your experience and learning from other organisations on the journey.

This step is about showcasing and reinforcing. This is a key, yet often overlooked part of the process to being more small business friendly. By sharing initiatives, wins and outcomes both internally and externally, you will begin to create the forward motion and traction needed for long-lasting impact.

Without the discipline or process for capturing, reporting and celebrating your efforts in being more small business friendly, you may find your team quickly lose momentum, motivation and focus. Small businesses will also quickly forget the efforts you've made on their behalf, reducing your impact, undermining your goals and risking your reputation. Sharing your initiatives and wins through the SBF community also creates opportunities for learning, development and collaboration.

When sharing your showcasing and reinforcing efforts, be sure to create a simple process that is not tedious or time-consuming. Getting your team engaged and excited, and motivated to share their efforts, will help create the momentum you need for longevity and impact.

Who should be involved?

Showcasing and reinforcing is an ongoing, organisation-wide effort, requiring the entire team to contribute to the journey to being more small business friendly. A fundamental shift is required to ensure all levels and departments take ownership for being small business friendly. While it is likely that most initiatives and good-news stories will initially come from the customer-facing teams, the expectation is that back-office teams will soon come to the party, sharing initiatives and improvements that impact small businesses.

Outcomes

Showcasing and reinforcing helps you to gain traction and engagement for your journey at all levels of the organisation. Celebrating individuals and teams who show initiative and energy to improve the small business experience, helps create energy and excitement to become involved and join the effort. The more you can own your desire to be small business friendly, the more your team will engage in your story and come along for the ride.



Showcase and reinforce

1 Share the Small Business Friendly Showcase Template with all departments.

You might:

- Create introductory text to explain what the template is for and how to use it
- Ask your Small Business Champions to present the template in department meetings
- Include a link to the template in your internal newsletters and on your intranet.

4 Gather social proof from your small business community

Capture stories, quotes and testimonials from small businesses who have benefited from your initiatives and showcase them on your website and in your communications channels.

2 Create a catalogue of initiatives you've undertaken that can be updated by your Small Business Champions and the wider-team, including:

- Updates to processes that improve the customer experience
- Department improvement plans
- Grants submitted to help small businesses
- Large initiatives implemented or started that will help small businesses
- Small business feedback or stories received about the impacts you're making
- Award submissions and results
- Collaborations or initiatives with other organisations/industry.

5 Engage with other members and the QSBC team to showcase your efforts, share ideas, brainstorm, problem-solve and learn from others' efforts. Visit the [QSBC Showcase](#) page to learn about other successes.

3 Agree on a series of communication channels your team can use and encourage them to use them regularly, including:

- Internal intranet and newsletters
- Community communications such as media, local publications, newsletters, public information, Small Business Champion, showcases and presentations
- Internal awards celebrating proactive team members and initiatives
- Social media channels
- Your website.

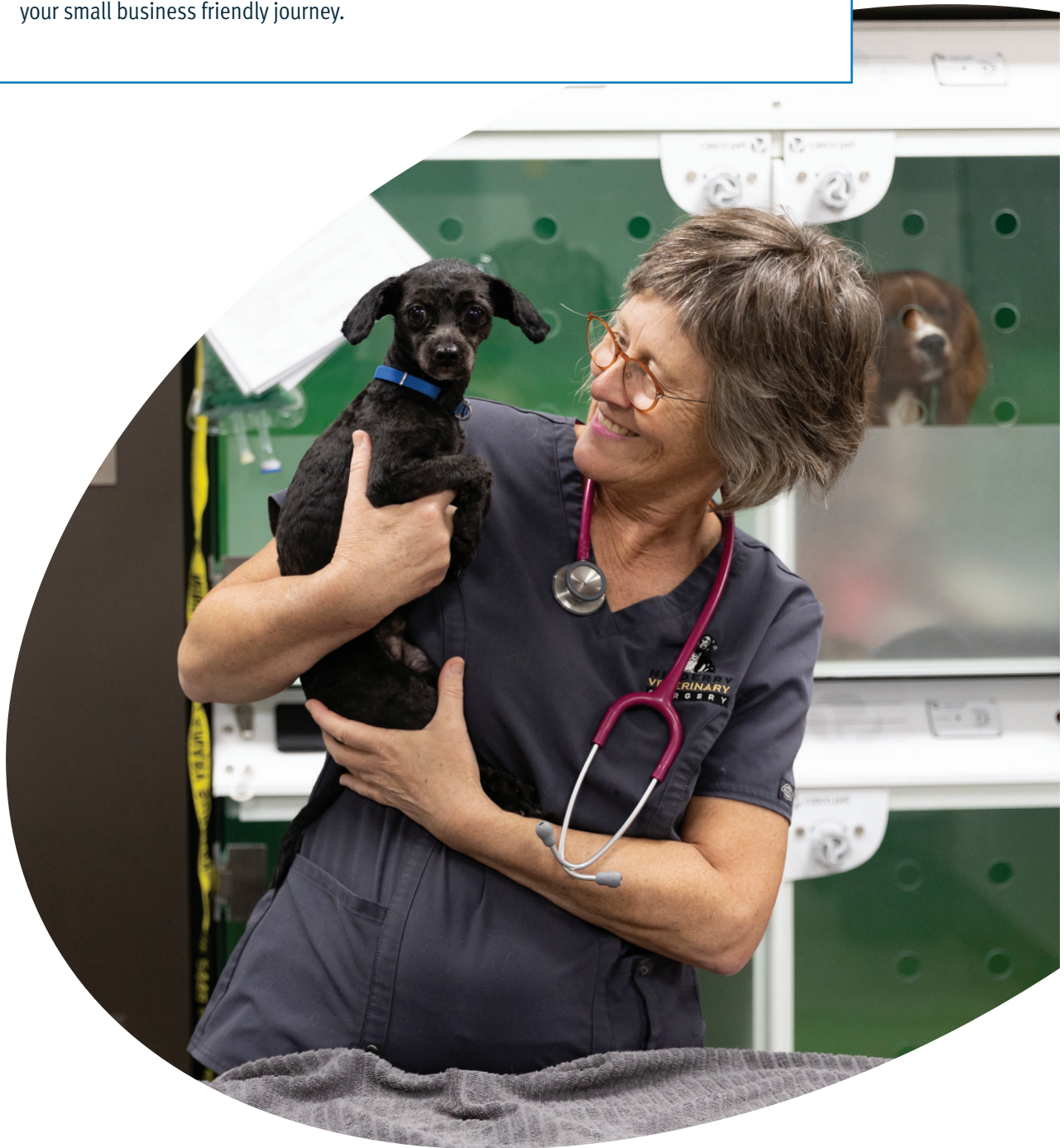
6 Close the loop

Showcasing is an important deliverable for members under the SBF charter and a great way to celebrate your progress.



#Top tips

- This is a continuous cycle, not a box-ticking exercise or 'one and done'. It is important that all team members, senior leadership included, understand that they must continually go back through the cycle
- Celebrate your wins, learn from your challenges and build on your successes. All team members must understand that going back through the cycle regularly is integral to your small business friendly journey.





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