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Convener, Economy and Fair Work Committee
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Dear Convener

Thank you for your email following the commitment at my evidence session on 22 June to look into accessibility of the DigitalBoost grant.

The DigitalBoost grant has proven to be a successful scheme that is well received by businesses and delivers tangible economic benefits. We have now supported over 5,000 businesses with almost £50 million to support their digital ambitions and unlock over £60 million of private sector investment.

I can confirm that there were 2,154 applications submitted by women which made up 34% of all applications and 1,756 of those applications were successful which also made up 34% of all grants disbursed. It is worth noting that this is the gender of the individual that completed the application process that is recorded.

We will take a longer-term, sustainable approach to supporting more women to start, grow and scale businesses. To support this we have commissioned Ana Stewart, tech entrepreneur, to deliver an independent Review on widening access to entrepreneurship for women. The Review and its recommendations are due to be published in the autumn.

On the wider comments about the DigitalBoost grant, I believe Fiona Hyslop has already stated on 4 May, that the VAT requirements to access the higher levels of funding were put in place to stop fraud that had been seen elsewhere through business support funds during the pandemic.

I agree that if we were to launch the DigitalBoost grant again that aspects of it should be looked at to improve the product for the businesses that will be accessing it and would like to reiterate my offer of 22 June that I would be happy to work with the committee to make the scheme more accessible and in particular, addressing barriers to women benefitting from the grant.

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Yours sincerely,



KATE FORBES

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