



## AUDIT OFFICE OF GUYANA

PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNANCE, TRANSPARENCY  
AND IMPROVED PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

### REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

### ON A REVIEW OF THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WOMEN'S INNOVATION AND INVESTMENT NETWORK (WIIN) PROGRAMME


**A PERFORMANCE AUDIT**



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23 September 2024

Hon. Manzoor Nadir, M.P.  
Speaker of the National Assembly  
Parliament Office  
Public Buildings  
Brickdam  
Georgetown.

Dear Mr. Speaker,

### RE: PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

In accordance with Part V Section 24 and Section 28 of the Audit Act 2004, I am pleased to submit a Performance Audit Report on a Review of the Design and Implementation of the Women's Innovation and Investment Network (WIIN) Programme.

This report is required to be laid before the National Assembly, and I would very much appreciate it if this could be done at the earliest opportunity.

With best regards.

Yours sincerely,







The Auditor General is the external auditor of the public accounts of Guyana, and is responsible for conducting Financial and Compliance, Performance and Value-for-Money and Forensic Audits with respect to the Consolidated Financial Statements, the accounts of all budget agencies, local government bodies, all bodies and entities in which the State has controlling interest, and the accounts of all projects funded by way of loans or grants by any foreign State or organisation.

In conducting performance/value-for-money audits, the Auditor General examines the extent to which a public entity is applying its resources and carrying out its activities economically, efficiently, and effectively with due regard to ensure effective internal management control.

This report has been prepared in accordance with Part V Section 24 (1) (b) of the Audit Act 2004. In conducting this Performance Audit, we followed the Code of Ethics and Standards and Guidelines for Performance Auditing of the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI), of which the Audit Office of Guyana is a member.

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# A PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

## A REVIEW OF THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WOMEN'S INNOVATION AND INVESTMENT NETWORK (WIIN) PROGRAMME



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Why we did this audit

The Ministry re-established the Guyana Women’s Leadership Institute (GWLI) in 2021 and spent a total of \$185.5M over two years. This included \$64M spent in 2021 alone on the Women’s Innovation and Investment Network (WIIN) training programme, aimed at empowering women and girls. However, the programme started five months after the Institute was re-established and rolled out nationally in July. A Performance Audit was conducted from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2022 to determine whether the design and implementation of the WIIN programme could empower vulnerable women, giving them a better opportunity to access employment or start a business.

### Key messages

For the years 2021 and 2022 over 6,000 individuals across all ten administrative regions of Guyana received training through the Institute’s WIIN programme, in seven technical and vocational areas. This is more than the targeted amount and represents 41% of the persons who had applied for the period. However, the design and implementation of the Programme could not have empowered underprivileged and single-parent women to gain employment or start a small business to sustain themselves and their families. Since key stakeholders were not involved in designing the programme and participants were not checked up on to receive feedback for critical decision-making.

### What we found

**The GWLI has developed good working environments and training spaces, as well as provided staff with the equipment needed to perform their duties.** Additionally, training needs were identified and used to design the programme. Further, systems are in place to properly monitor and evaluate the programme's performance and graduates' progress.

**The Programme has made improvements.** The programme initially offered level one courses in seven areas. However, they are now offering up to level three in those areas and two new areas. They have also hired new staff, to allow better service to more people efficiently and effectively.

**Unspecified and Inadequate staffing.** Staff strengths were not determined, no provision was made for monitoring and evaluation of personnel on the Institute’s organisation structure, and key positions were not filled. These were necessary for the effective design and implementation of the WIIN programme

**Only 16% of vulnerable women who were interested in the programme were reached.** During the period, 14,663 persons had applied to the programme and 2,571 of them were identified as the most vulnerable (unemployed single parent) women. However, only 410 of these women took part in the programme. As a result, 84% of the most vulnerable women are at risk of being left behind.

### Way forward

The Audit Office has made six (6) recommendations to management for improving the Guyana Women’s Leadership Institute's performance. Through the implementation of these recommendations, the WIIN programme will be able to reach more vulnerable women and better empower them to sustain themselves and family.



## **Introduction**

1. A Performance Audit on Women’s Empowerment at the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security was undertaken by the Audit Office of Guyana. The audit was conducted on the Women’s Innovation and Investment Network (WIIN) programme of the Guyana Women’s Leadership Institute (GWLI), focusing on the programme’s design and implementation and effectiveness in achieving its objectives. The audit covers the period 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2022.
2. The Ministry of Human Services and Social Security is responsible for implementing the Government’s social services agenda nationally. Its mission is *to contribute to economic and social development by formulating policies to ensure the effective delivery of social and welfare services towards the provision of social protection floors for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups among the population.*
3. Under Programme 2 – “Social Services” of the Ministry’s operations, the Guyana Women’s Leadership Institute was developed, to accomplish the Ministry’s mission in fulfilment of the Government’s commitment to the United Nations (UN), Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 – “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”.
4. Women’s Empowerment includes increasing women’s self-worth, decision-making power, access to resources and opportunities, power and control over their own lives, and the ability to effect change.<sup>1</sup> Initiatives under this umbrella should be properly planned, designed, and implemented to be effective and positively affect the lives of citizens, especially vulnerable women and girls.

## **Programme Background**

5. The Government established the GWLI on 6 December 1997 to provide support, training, and development for women and girls throughout Guyana. To achieve that mandate, the Institute offers training courses intended to improve the skills of women and girls, so they can easily find employment, start businesses and add to their pool of life skills.
6. The Institute was non-functional for several years, however in January 2021 it was re-established by the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security. As such, the mandate was changed, and they are now required to create new and creative courses that prepare participants for future opportunities in the marketplace, in the new economy. This is through the development of micro, small, or medium-term businesses or by receiving the required skill training to find good-paying jobs or additional work to increase income.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.peacecorps.gov/educators/resources/global-issues-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment/>

7. With that in mind, the Women’s Innovation and Investment Network (WIIN) initiative was launched. The initiative is the main empowerment activity of the Ministry. It aims to equip women and girls with knowledge, skills and business management training for them to better sustain themselves and family towards national development. Under the initiative, the WIIN Training Programme, WIIN in Business Clinic, WIIN Business Incubator, a Business Directory, an App, and an exhibition titled “WE LIFT” were established.

8. The WIIN programme was launched in Baramita, Region One in May 2021 and was expanded in July of the same year to the other nine administrative regions. It focuses on vulnerable women and girls, ensuring they are empowered to create a better quality of life for themselves, their families and communities. This is by providing education and training through accredited institutions such as the University of Guyana, Institute of Distance and Continuing Education (UG-IDCE), University of the West Indies, School of Business and Applied Studies Limited (UWI-ROYTEC) and the Association of MBAs (ABMA), United Kingdom.

9. Its objectives are to ensure equal access to technical and vocational education and training, introduce the purpose and use of the Ministry’s social services and support the development of micro-enterprises throughout Guyana. The aim is to:

- Provide a fundamental understanding of all Ministry of Human Services and Social Security programmes (child care, sexual offences, domestic violence, gender relations, anger management, trafficking in person, pension and public assistance, conflict resolution and mediation).
- Train participants in business and financial literacy skills intended to stimulate the development of micro-enterprises (cottage industry) in multiple regions of Guyana; including the development of business plans with support from the WIIN business incubator.
- Empower participants by providing accredited certification in critical life skills areas, which increases access to employment opportunities, micro-financing options and micro-enterprise formation.
- Ensure equal access to all accredited training to vulnerable persons, especially women and girls in all ten regions of Guyana.
- Provide monitoring and evaluation services to participants after training to measure success and provide support to participants who may be struggling and require further assistance and advice through a full-fledged coaching and mentoring system.

10. The programme structure includes 30 – 35 man-hours of teaching, completing a workbook, and a final assessment. Participants were also taught about domestic violence and the social services assistance offered by the Ministry. Additionally, they would be assisted with the preparation of business plans to allow access to external funding. Through collaboration financial support would be given to qualifying individuals with a business to boost cash flow or to start a business.

## Roles and Responsibilities

11. The Permanent Secretary is the head of the Budget Agency and has overall responsibility for the management of the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security. This officer is assisted by the Deputy Permanent Secretary, Accountant, Procurement Officer, and other staff to manage and control the financial resources of the Ministry and the Institute.

12. The management team of the Institute comprises the Permanent Secretary, the Director of Social Services, the Board of Directors, and a Coordinator. They are assisted by eleven persons, these include an Economic Empowerment Officer, two Senior Training Officers, a Receptionist, two Data Entry Clerks, an Administrative Assistant, a Driver, two Cleaners and a Handyman.

13. The Coordinator has overall responsibility for managing the Institute's day-to-day operations. This officer ensures programmes and activities established by the Institute are properly implemented, monitored, and evaluated.

## Financial Management

14. The management of the WIIN programme falls under the GWLI of the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security. The Permanent Secretary is expected to establish and maintain adequate management controls over financial and human resources, monitor the effectiveness of the controls, and ensure relevant legislations such as the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act 2003, Procurement Act 2003, and Stores Regulations 1993 are complied with. Funding for the management of the Institute and its training programme is provided through the annual appropriations received from the Consolidated Fund.

## Reasons for Undertaking the Audit

15. After re-establishing in 2021, the Institute budgeted a total of \$185.5M for the years 2021 and 2022 as shown in the table below, to be spent on training activities aimed at empowering women and girls.

Year	Approved Budget \$'000
2021	64,600
2022	120,943
<b>Total</b>	<b>185,543</b>

Table 1 – Proposed Budget for the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute (GWLI) training activities  
Source: Ministry of Human Services and Social Security, Programme 2 -Social Services,  
GWLI 2021 Work Plan and 2022 Cash Flow Statement

16. There were concerns by stakeholders that the margin between the re-establishment of the institute and the rollout of the training programme was very close. This limits the activities necessary for making important decisions. In addition, there was a lack of key management personnel within the Institute's organisational structure, and planned support services for graduates were not in place or not functional. However, hundreds of individuals were being trained and some were given financial assistance to start or boost businesses.

17. Considering the above, and the fact that the Institute's operations were never audited, a performance audit was conducted on the GWLI and its WIIN training programme. In this regard, the audit will be conducted in the following areas:

1. Management Structure, Resources, and Systems
  - a. Determining whether an organisation structure was established with all personnel in place.
  - b. Determining whether suitable working and training environments, with the necessary equipment, tools and systems for the services being offered were available.
2. Programme Design and Implementation
  - a. Determining whether the design and implementation of the programme involve other government and private sector organizations.
  - b. Assessing if needs were identified, analysed and utilised in programme design and implementation.
  - c. Determining whether gender gaps and inequalities among women were considered in the design and implementation of the programme.
  - d. Determining whether the process did not discriminate against or leave no one behind.
3. Monitoring and Evaluation
  - a. Determining whether a monitoring and evaluation system was established, including personnel.
  - b. Determining whether the programme was evaluated and reported on including recommendations for improvements.
  - c. Determining whether participants were monitored and results reported to management.
4. Continuous Improvements
  - a. Determining whether issues identified during monitoring and evaluation exercises were used to improve the courses, programme and participants' experience.

### **Audit Objective**

18. The overall objective of the audit is to determine whether the Guyana Women’s Leadership Institute has effectively designed and implemented the Women’s Innovation and Investment Network programme, to allow vulnerable women access to employment or establish a micro-enterprise.

### **Audit Scope**

19. The audit covered the period 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2022. It focuses on how the Ministry designed and implemented the WIIN programme, taking into consideration multi-stakeholder involvement, coherence and integration and the principle of leaving no one behind. Ensuring women and girls across Guyana, have equal access to technical and vocational education and training, including business and financial literacy skills, which increases access to employment opportunities, micro-financing options and micro-enterprise formation. Also, the provision of monitoring and evaluation services to participants after training to measure success and provide support to those who may be struggling and require further assistance and advice through a coaching and mentoring system.

20. The audit did not focus on the results or outcomes of the WIIN programme, as it is in its developing stage and according to the WIIN results chain process, the timeframe for outcomes is expected after five years of implementation. At the time of the audit, the Programme had just completed two and a half years of implementation. As such, the focus was on the design and implementation of the programme and its effectiveness in reaching the targeted population and providing planned services.

### **Audit Criteria**

21. Audit criteria are reasonable standards against which management practices, controls, and reporting systems can be assessed. The audit criteria and their sources are in the “About the Audit” section of this report.

### **Report Structure**

22. This report consists of the following four chapters, which cover the Lines of Enquiry considered by the audit:

- *Chapter 1* – Management Structure, Resources, and Systems
- *Chapter 2* – Programme Design and Implementation
- *Chapter 3* – Monitoring and Evaluation
- *Chapter 4* – Continuous Improvements

# Chapter 1

## Management Structure, Resources, and Systems

### Criterion 1.1

The management structure and environment established for the programme are fully equipped and functioning for the delivery of services.

23. The GWLI should have conducive working and training environments with a functioning management structure, which is properly staffed. This will allow participants to receive quality services while achieving the programme's goals and objectives.

### *Good working environment and equipment were in place*

24. The Institute is located on the East Coast of Demerara. It also has a sub-office at Anna Regina, Essequibo, which was used to provide information to the public. The main complex has undergone some rehabilitations over the last two years and now houses a training hall, computer laboratory, business incubator, culinary art centre, a pergola (structure for hosting events), and administrative offices.

25. It should be noted that continuous repairs are being done to enhance the facility and accommodate additional spaces to expand the services being offered. Staff also indicated they have the necessary tools and equipment to properly execute their duties.



Figure 1 – The Guyana Women's Leadership Institute Main Complex at Cove and John E.C.D  
Source: Audit Office of Guyana      Photograph Taken: 2023/8/31





Figure 2 – The Guyana Women's Leadership Institute Computer Lab  
Source: Audit Office of Guyana                      Photograph Taken: 2023/8/31



Figure 3 – The Guyana Women's Leadership Institute Culinary Arts Centre  
Source: Audit Office of Guyana                      Photograph Taken: 2023/4/4



Figure 4 – The Guyana Women's Leadership Institute Pergola  
Source: Audit Office of Guyana                      Photograph Taken: 2023/4/4

***Adequate training spaces were available and used***

26. Training at the Institute was done using a hybrid approach (online and in-person) and was conducted in all ten administrative regions. The in-person training used both private and public places which included:

- Ministry facilities
- Government Centres
- Schools
- Technical and Vocational Institutes
- Regional Democratic Councils buildings
- Mayor and Town Councils buildings
- Mandirs
- Multi-purpose Facilities

27. Participants indicated that the facilities were easy to access, suitable and beneficial for the training that was conducted.

***Staff strengths were not determined and key positions were not filled***

28. An organisational structure is required to be in place based on the National Estimates and Programme Budgeting. It defines job titles, roles, and responsibilities and provides the basis on which tasks and routines rest and decisions are made. It ensures the smooth and efficient functioning of operations toward achieving goals. As such management should establish an organisational structure for the GWLI based on the services being offered, ensure staff strength for every position is determined and each position is staffed based on the workload. This allows segregation of duties, and planned activities to be carried out efficiently and effectively.

29. The Institute's organisational structure has nine levels of authority and nineteen positions responsible for its day-to-day operations. However, the number of individuals to fill each position was not stated. As of 31 December 2022, the staff strength was eight, including four at the operational level and four support staff. During the execution of the audit in May 2023, although four additional operational staff were hired, it could not be determined if each position had its full complement of staff.

30. Monitoring and evaluation are key to determining a programme's performance and future decision-making. However, there were no provisions within the structure for such personnel. Rather, those tasks were performed by the Coordinator, with the assistance of course facilitators. Also, as of September 2023, the positions of Economic Empowerment Specialist, Assistant Economic Empowerment Specialist, Deputy Coordinator and Trainers were not filled.



31. Further, the Business Incubator which is the centre for providing business support to graduates such as business management, writing business plans, branding, etc. was physically established. However, it did not have the staff to assist graduates with those services. The failure to properly establish an organisational structure with all relevant positions relating to an organisation's operations, determining staff strength for each position and ensuring all positions are filled, could affect the Institute's ability to properly design and implement the programme, the quality of services offered to women and girls and the efficiency and effectiveness in achieving its objective.

***Recommendation:*** *The Audit Office recommends that the Head of the Budget Agency should ensure the Institute has an approved organisational structure with the required staff strength and all positions relative to its responsibilities and services offered.*

***Management's Response:*** Based on advice from PSM, GWLI was a subvention agency, as such it would not have had an organisational structure for much of its life. In 2021, when the institute was resuscitated (after being out of operation for years) and programs implemented (expansion of government programs), thereafter, it became necessary to have an organisational structure. The Ministry submitted a proposed structure in 2022. However, no such approval has been given.

The Ministry takes note of the findings outlined and steps will be taken to address these accordingly in order to strengthen the institution and improve the quality of services provided.

## **Conclusion**

32. Even though the physical operational environment and the facilities used for training were adequate, the Ministry did not take a structured approach to managing the Institute. As a result, staff strength for each position within the structure was not established, all positions were not catered for in the organisational structure and key positions were not filled. These were necessary to design and implement the WIIN programme effectively.

## Chapter 2

### Programme Design and Implementation

33. Training programmes are used to improve a person's capabilities, upgrade existing knowledge, and help them obtain new skills and learnings. For a training programme to be effective, it must follow a logical process. This process is referred to as the "Training Cycle" and consists of four stages: (1) Identify learning needs, (2) Design the Training, (3) Deliver the training, and (4) Evaluate the training.

34. The stages are further expanded to guide the execution process for more effective results. The expansion is broken down into a five-step process which is referred to as the ADDIE model, an acronym for Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate as seen in Figure 5 below:

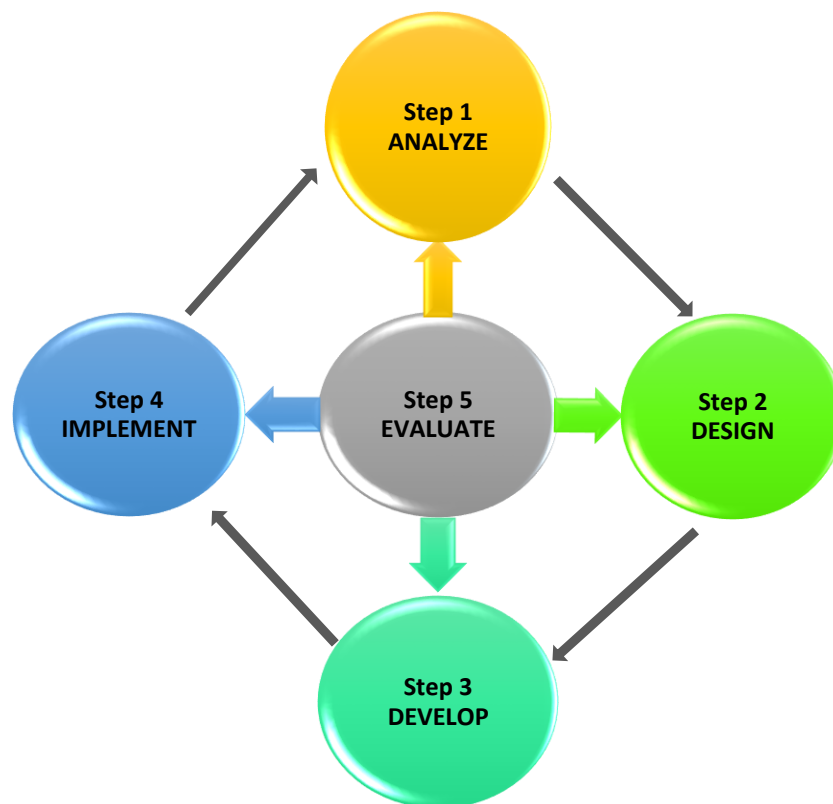


Figure 5 – The ADDIE 5-step process to effective training

Source: eLearning Industry

35. Each step is done in the given order and is further explained as follows:
- Analyze – identify and assess training requirements such as the **Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How**.
  - Design – making practical decisions about the **strategy, delivery methods, structure, duration, method of assessment, and feedback**.
  - Develop – create the **course content** ensuring each element matches the design phase.
  - Implement – carry out the actual training in keeping with the design phase considering **who is enrolled, the time given, pass marks for assessments, and feedback collected**.
  - Evaluate – **collecting feedback to bring awareness of gaps**, that management may not have thought about and develop an evaluation report with actionable changes for current and future courses.

***Criterion 2.1***

The Guyana Women's Leadership Institute developed training programmes under the Women's Innovation and Investment Network initiative based on needs assessment.

36. For vulnerable women to develop their knowledge and skills to improve their chances of being employed or starting a business, their needs and the needs of the business sector must be determined. Further, the gaps that exist between women and men must also be considered. Determining these needs puts the Institute in a better position to develop a programme and courses that are impacting, and will allow them to achieve their goals and objectives.

***Training and development needs identified***

37. The Ministry stated that the needs of citizens were considered before the programme and its courses were developed. The data used to inform those needs were collected when the Ministry rolled out its Garment and Accessories Cottage Industry Initiative (GACII) in 2020, interacted with over 4,000 women across Guyana and conducted outreaches with women's groups, community leaders, and other agencies. Needs identified at the state level (gender equality gaps) in the areas of literacy, women's training, economic empowerment, and labour force participation were also considered in the process.

38. The information collected was analyzed by the technical team within the Ministry and the Institute. The needs identified to bridge these gaps were training, establishment of micro-enterprises, and learning additional skills (See Figure 6). This resulted in the establishment of goals, objectives, and strategies for the Institute's work plan, along with the WIIN programme, and its courses.

39. The training preferences were in five key areas, garment construction, child care, elderly care, cookery/culinary arts and information technology. Further, needs identified include women entering the labour market and providing a wide range of skills and support critical to accessing financing for microenterprises.

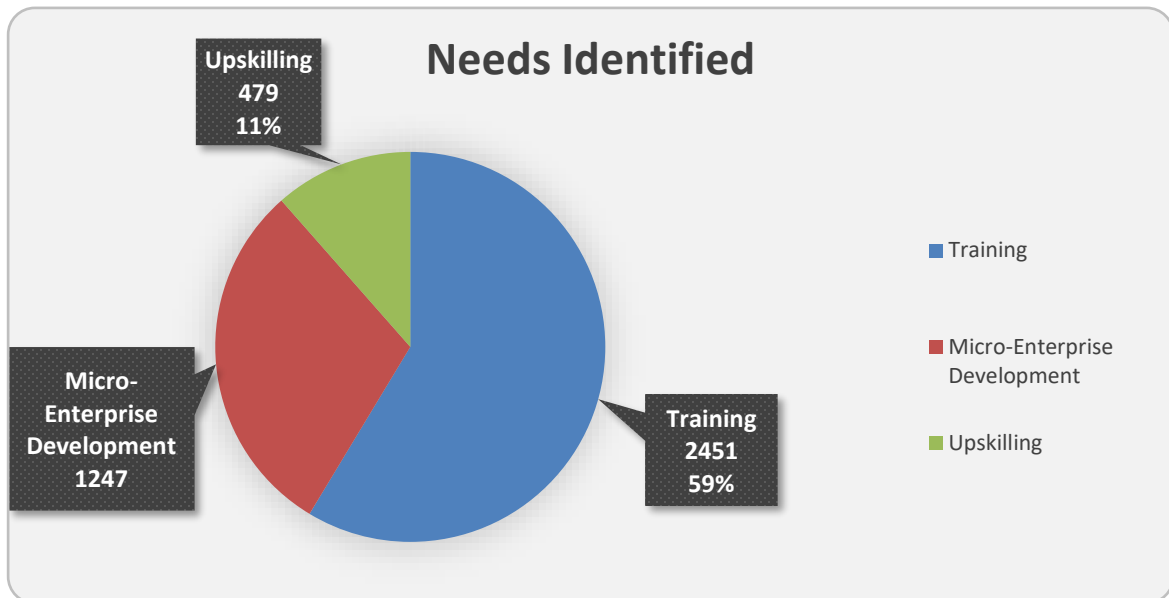


Figure 6 – Chart showing needs or support requested by individuals during community outreach  
Source: Ministry of Human Service and Social Security Needs Analysis Report

**Criterion 2.2**

The design of the training programmes was inclusive and the courses offered are comparable to those offered by other technical and vocational institutes and educational institutions nationally.

40. The Ministry of Human Services and Social Security designed the WIIN training programme, and its courses to focus on vulnerable women and girls nationally. This gave them a fair chance to participate in the programme, and a better opportunity to gain new or improved knowledge and skills. It will ensure they are empowered and no one is left behind in being employed or starting a business.

***The whole-of-government, multi-stakeholder approach not taken to design courses***

41. As it relates to the courses, they were all free so there were no financial barriers to participation and completion. They had three components; classroom lectures, completion of a workbook, and an assessment.

42. The Ministry indicated it worked with other stakeholders to develop the courses. They collaborated with several private educational institutions and requested proposals for course design, development, and delivery in seven areas. The Ministry's technical team reviewed the proposals, and the respective boards evaluated them before giving approvals and allowing the entering of contracts. The Council for Technical Vocational Education and Training (CTVET) was contacted to accredit the GWLI and its courses, but accreditation had not been granted as of September 2023.

43. Although the Ministry indicated that they collaborated with other stakeholders in developing the courses, the involvement of key stakeholders such as technical and vocational institutes and government agencies was not evident. Their non-participation in developing courses was confirmed through interviews. Hence, it could not be determined if the course content was benchmarked. As such, the Institute did not demonstrate that the courses offered were equivalent to those provided by government-owned technical and vocational institutions and educational institutes nationwide, despite being developed by accredited institutions. Therefore, training received by vulnerable women through the Institute may not be beneficial in allowing them to gain meaningful employment.

***Recommendation:** The Audit Office recommends that the Head of the Budget Agency should ensure consultations with other stakeholders and decisions made for course design are documented and presented for audit scrutiny.*

**Management's Response:** To execute this program, the Ministry has collaborated with various Governmental agencies (MOE, MCYS, MOLG etc.), the United Nations (UNICEF, UNWOMEN etc.) private sector (Nations Inc., Her Venture, Exxon Mobil, Women Chamber of Commerce, Centre for Local Business Development etc.) and various financial institutions (local banks and other lending agencies). The targets set under the WIIN Program are in keeping with the Government's mandate. That being said, the Ministry can be guided as to what entails a "whole-of-government and multi-stakeholder approach" so as to improve going forward.

**Criterion 2.3**

A plan was established for the implementation of the programme.

44. The GWLI should have an approved plan to implement the WIIN programme, to guide activities undertaken and avoid fragmentation, duplication, and confusion.

**Annual work plans guided training programme implementation**

45. Planning defines the approach for implementing a programme. It describes the activities to be undertaken, the allocation of resources, roles, and responsibilities. The implementation of the WIIN training programme was guided by the Institute’s annual work plans. An examination of the 2021 and 2022 work plans revealed the following:

Proposed Training Activities, Cost and Expected Outputs	Values	
	Year 2021	Year 2022
Course to be delivered	23	22
Training Period	23 Weeks	30 Weeks
Training Cost	64.6 Million	120.9 Million
Women to be trained	2,000 to 3000	3,230

Table 4 - Guyana Women’s Leadership Institute proposed training activities, cost and expected outputs  
Source: Guyana Women’s Leadership Institute 2021 and 2022 Work Plans

46. The Ministry explained that the Institute was not a separate entity under its control; rather, it was a unit under Programme 2 - Social Services of the Ministry’s operations. Its operations were funded under the said programme's current and capital expenditure. Each unit within the Ministry was required to prepare a detailed work plan inclusive of cost, which was submitted to their programme head for inclusion in the Ministry’s annual budget submission to the Ministry of Finance. Once approved the unit was expected to follow that plan to achieve its annual goals and objectives.

**Criterion 2.4**

The implementation process complied with the plan, and the programme was consistent, accessible, fair, and impartial nationally.

47. The implementation process used by the GWLI for its WIIN programme should be conducted according to approved plans, to allow consistency and fairness in delivering the training nationally.

***Programme implementation impartial***

48. The Institute explained that the programme provided training and education to vulnerable women, girls, and young men, in difficult situations (in a few cases) across all administrative regions of Guyana. It was launched in 2021 and piloted in Region One in May. The official rollout was in July of the same year, nationally. The training applied a hybrid approach in response to the need for in-person and online training.

49. Participants were contacted and enrolled based on their application and training materials were free. Additionally, some participants in regions 1, 6, 7, 8, and 9 were provided with an allowance to cover meals, travel, and accommodation, which would have prevented them from attending the classes.

50. Upon completing each course participants were issued a certificate and in some cases a cash grant to help with business start-up or enhancement. The implementation process complied with the annual work plan and there was fairness across regions.

***The programme did not reach all interested vulnerable women***

51. The Programme’s main focus was on underprivileged and single-parent women in all the administrative regions of Guyana. These groups were referred to as vulnerable women and identified as women and girls living in vulnerable circumstances and communities. As such, we expect the Institute to ensure those groups were chosen during the selection process.

52. Participating in a programme offered by the GWLI is voluntary on the part of each person. The process of participating in the WIIN programme is shown in Figure 7 below.

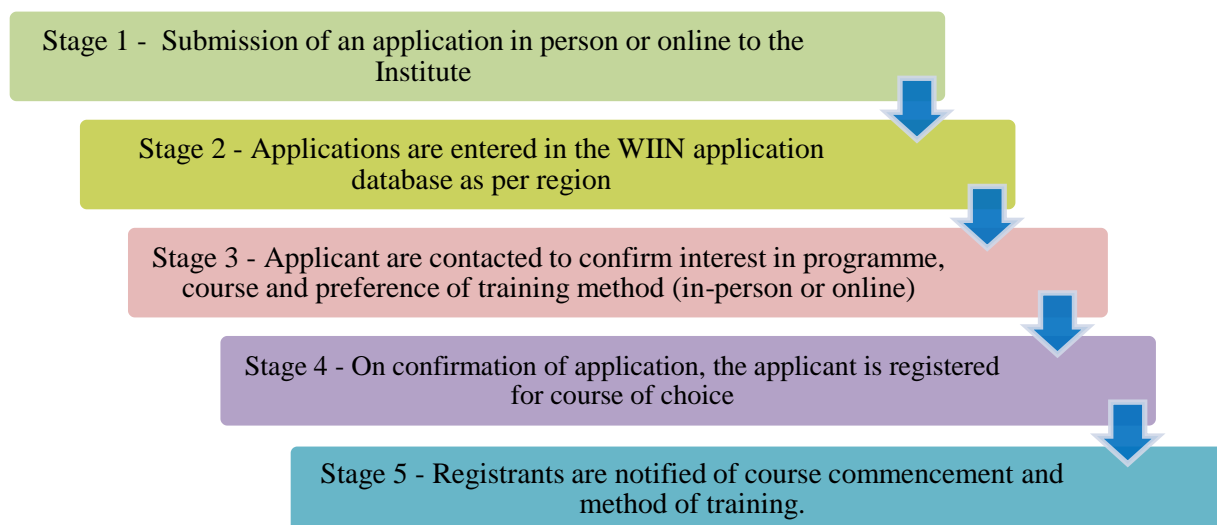


Figure 7– Process for participating in the WIIN programme  
Source: Audit Office of Guyana

53. In 2021 and 2022, a total of 14,663 persons applied to the WIIN programme. However, the Institute did not say how many people they contacted at stages 3, 4, and 5. They also did not confirm the number of applicants in each vulnerability category.

54. We found that 5,341 of the total applicants, were single parents who were employed, while 7,745 were unemployed. Based on the Ministry’s criteria the most vulnerable would be classified as single-parent women who were unemployed. An analysis of the applicants’ database was done to determine how many of the women who had applied fell under that category. It was revealed that 2,571 of the unemployed were single parents. As such, 18% of the total applicants were assessed as the most vulnerable. The following table provides details of the analysis conducted.

<b>Audit Analysis Focus Areas</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>Total for the Period</b>	<b>% for the Period</b>
Employed Applicants	1,573	5,181	6,754	46
Unemployed Applicants	2,320	5,425	7,745	53
Unknown	98	66	164	1
<b>Total Applicants</b>	<b>3,991</b>	<b>10,672</b>	<b>14,663</b>	<b>100</b>
Single-parent Applicants	1,214	4,127	5,341	36
Unemployed, Single-parent (Most Vulnerable) Applicants	662	1,909	2,571	18

Table 2 – Applicants according to employment status, family type, and categorized most vulnerable  
Source: Audit Office of Guyana

55. Although, the Institute did not indicate how many individuals were informed of the programme commencement for the years, a total of 6,122 individuals participated. This represents 42% of the total applicants. The participants' database was compared with the findings of the applicants' database, to determine the percentage of the most vulnerable applicants who participated in the programme. We found that of the 2,571 most vulnerable applicants only 410 of those individuals participated in the programme. This indicates the programme only reached 16% of the most vulnerable applicants as shown in the table below.

<b>Audit Analysis Focus Areas</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of Applicants</b>
Total Participants	2,097	4,025	6,122	42
Unemployed Participants	535	252	789	10
Single-parent Participants	282	248	530	10
Unemployed, Single-parent (Most Vulnerable) Participants	163	247	410	16

Table 3 – Participants according to employment status, family type, and categorized most vulnerable  
Source: Audit Office of Guyana



56. This proves that the participation rate was low for the targeted population, especially for the most vulnerable women. Additionally, the Institute failed to show how it used the information from this process to make decisions for the programme implementation. As a result, 84% of the most vulnerable women interested in the programme were not reached, and the programme's objectives may not be achieved.

***Recommendation:*** *The Audit Office recommends that the Head of the Budget Agency should ensure application and registration information is analysed and used for design and implementation decisions.*

**Management's Response:** At the point of implementation, GWLI did not have staff members with the necessary skill sets to conduct such an analysis. Further, the Ministry has a target and limited budget and has exceeded the target with the resources available to us. Our established criteria were utilised for the programs to ensure that training, both in person and online is offered to all 10 Administrative Regions of Guyana. GWLI has a database that captures the participants who were trained in 2022. The Ministry aims to rotate its training annually to various Regions in an effort to capture as many vulnerable communities as possible given its financial and personnel allocations.

## **Conclusion**

57. The Institute trained over 6,000 individuals during 2021 and 2022 in seven technical and vocational areas. However, they did not prove that they effectively designed and implemented the WIIN programme. This was to ensure all interested vulnerable women, had equal opportunity to access knowledge and skill development that could allow them to gain meaningful employment or start a small business.

58. The conclusion was reached due to a lack of participation from various government and technical and vocational institutions in developing the courses. Additionally, information from the application and registration process was not used to make decisions, resulting in 84% of interested vulnerable women not participating in the programme. As such, some groups of women were not reached and may be at risk of being left behind.

# *Chapter 3*

## *Monitoring and Evaluation*

### *Criterion 3.1*

The Ministry establish a structure and systems to monitor and evaluate the performance of the programme and the accomplishments of graduates.

59. The Institute should monitor and evaluate the WIIN programme and its graduates to determine their performance and whether goals and objectives were achieved.

60. The Institute's main responsibility was to supervise the WIIN programme and ensure the following activities were completed:

- Registration of applicants, processing and entering forms into the database.
- Selection of suitable locations to conduct training.
- Monitoring and evaluation of training activities.
- Submission of registers from training agencies and facilitate payments on contracts.
- Follow-up with participants after training to measure changes.
- Provide support services to participants through the WIIN Business Incubator and WIIN app.

### *Systems were in place for monitoring and evaluation*

61. The audit found that the performance of the Programme was measured using two approaches. They were to (i) monitor and evaluate the training, and (ii) measure the performance of the programme.

62. To assess the training, the Institute used two methods, (1) collecting feedback from participants using an approved form "Training Evaluation Form", which was completed at the end of each course and (2) conducting an assessment at the end of each training period using eight key indicators as follows:

- Adherence to course outline and curriculum
- Proper delivery of content by facilitator
- Proper equipment to allow for the delivery of content
- Involvement and engagement of participants in the learning process
- Interaction between participants and facilitators
- Completion of Workbook
- Evaluation of training at the completion phase to gather critical feedback
- Evaluation of Workbooks (low, mid, and high performers)

63. The overall performance of the Programme was measured using eight criteria that were developed and used at the end of each training period. The criteria are as follows:

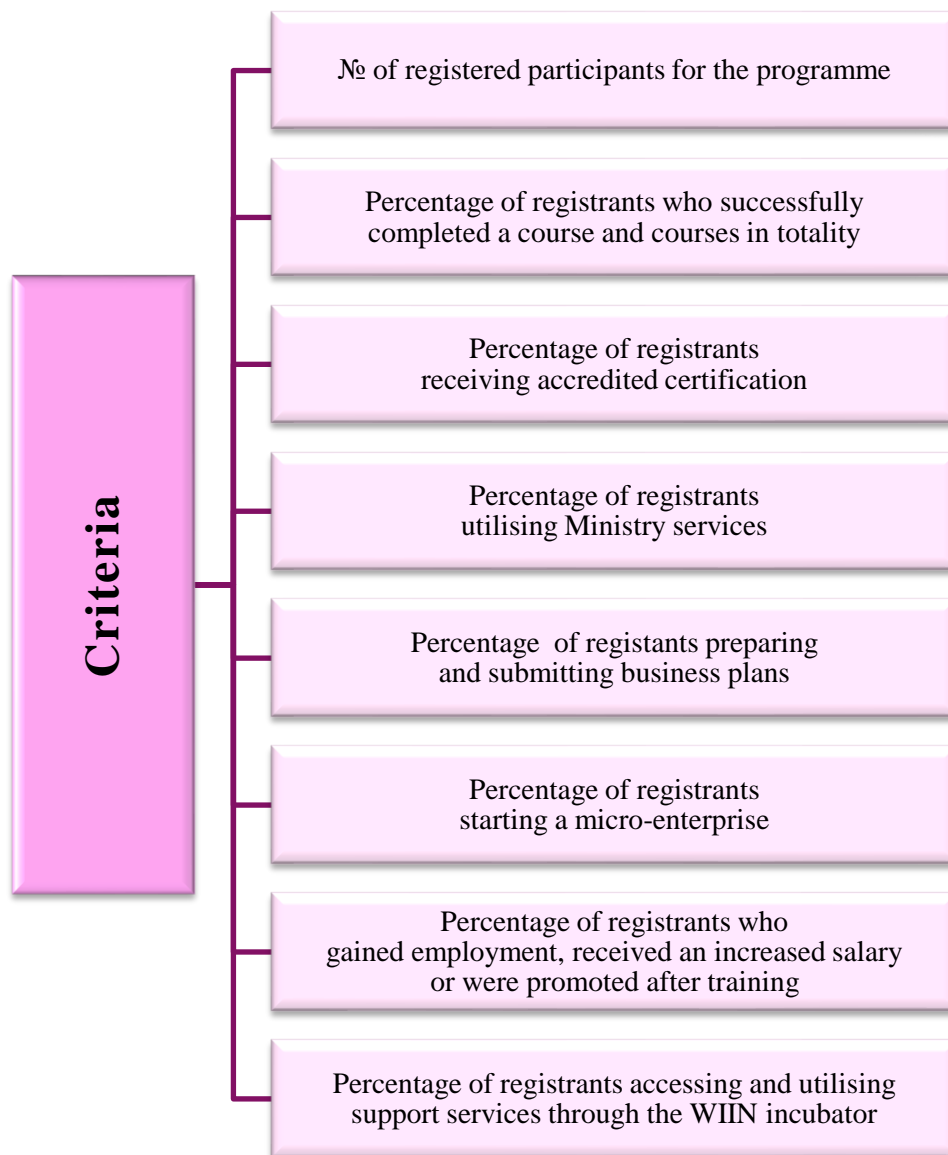


Figure 8– Criteria used to assess the Programme's overall performance of citizen involvement

Source: Guyana Women's Leadership Institute

64. The results of the activities mentioned above, are reported annually to the Director of Social Services, the Permanent Secretary, and the subject Minister.

**Criterion 3.2**

The programme was monitored and evaluated to determine its effectiveness.

65. The Institute should monitor and evaluate the WIIN programme to assess its effectiveness and its impact on the women who have been trained.

***The programme surpassed its targets for training***

66. The Programme had intended to train about 6,000 individuals during the period. An examination of documents and reports presented, and an analysis of the Institute database revealed that the Programme surpassed its yearly target of persons trained as shown in Figure 8 below.

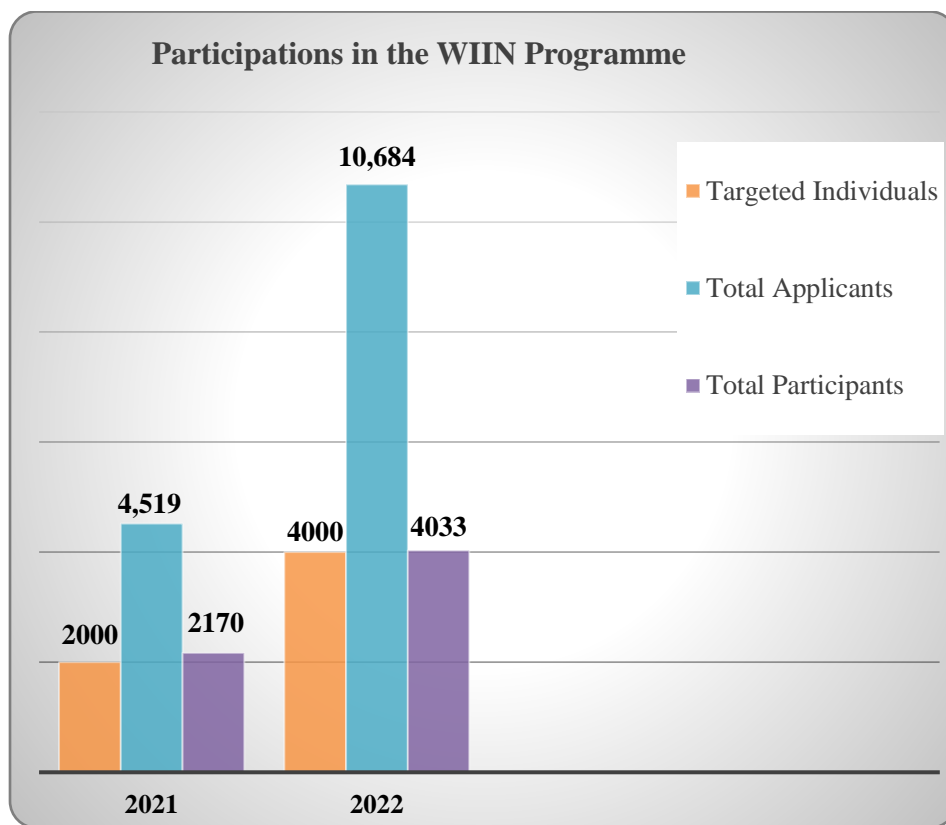


Figure 9– Programme’s overall performance of citizen involvement  
Source: Guyana Women’s Leadership Institute

***Training activities were assessed as “very good” by participants***

67. Training at the Institute was monitored and evaluated to ensure course content adhered to course outlines and curriculum, and data management processes were completed. For 2021, the Programme’s performance was assessed and the results were reported in its Monitoring and Evaluation Report. The overall performance was scored at an average of 4 as shown in Table 5.

Criteria - Overall Assessment	5 Excellent	4 Very Good	3 Fair	2 Poor	1 Very Poor
1. Adherence to course outline and curriculum		x			
2. Proper delivery of content by facilitator		x			
3. Proper equipment to allow for the delivery of content		x			
4. Involvement and engagement of participants in the learning process		x			
5. Interaction between participants and facilitators		x			
6. Completion of workbooks			x		
7. Evaluation of training at the completion phase to gather critical feedback	x				
8. Evaluation of workbooks (low, mid, and high performers)			x		

Table 5 – Overall assessment of the WIIN Training Programme as per key indicators

Source: GWLI 2021 Monitoring and Evaluation Report

68. The audit surveyed a sample of 848 participants from all ten administrative regions who were trained in 2021, to determine their satisfaction with the training. Over 100 or 14% of responses were received from the overall sample. The results provided an 85% confidence level of satisfaction with the programme. The following table gives details of the survey.

Survey Questions	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Uncertain %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %	Total Responses
I was satisfied with the quality and sufficiency of the course materials	3	2	1	6	31	104
The course contents were clearly explained in class	4	0	1	55	40	104
The course content was relevant to my job/business	3	6	11	57	23	99
Course instructors/facilitators were knowledgeable	4	0	2	44	50	104
The pace and duration of the course were appropriate	2	9	3	63	24	104

Table 6– Participants satisfaction with training

Source: Audit Office of Guyana

**Criterion 3.3**

Graduates are monitored and evaluated to determine their achievement relative to the programme's objectives.

69. The Institute should monitor and evaluate participants after training to measure their growth and development and determine the programme's effectiveness.

***Databases contain duplicate and incomplete information***

70. The Institute was required to maintain a database of all applicants, participants, and skilled professionals, to allow easy access to information for decision-making. We found that a database of applicants, participants, and courses was maintained. The information was available by year, course, and region.

71. An analysis of the database revealed there were duplications and missing information of individuals. In addition, the information was not consistent across courses and regions. This resulted from inadequate staffing, who was tasked with performing additional duties to meet set targets. As such, the Institute may have used inaccurate information to make decisions for the WIIN programme.

***Recommendation:*** *The Audit Office recommends that the Head of the Budget Agency ensure databases maintained by the Institute are complete with accurate information.*

**Management's Response:** Data was manually collected by the small complement of staff at GWLI using the limited resources via Excel sheets. Data collection and maintaining a database has improved as our staff complement continued to grow.

***No evidence of follow-up with graduates***

72. Another responsibility of the Institute was to follow up with graduates after training to measure changes related to employment, business plan development, business start-ups, and increased income. Also, to provide additional support if necessary.

73. The Institute reported the accomplishments of graduates for the period under review. However, there was no evidence that a system for follow-up with graduates was in place or such activities were conducted.

74. The issue arose because the Institute did not have any data on the participants or graduates who used the Ministry services, and those who accessed and utilized the support services of the business incubator. The Institute's failure to document follow-up meant we could not verify whether information on graduates' progress was considered for future decision-making. Consequently, it was unclear whether the Institute provided accurate information to management to make informed decisions for the programme.

**Recommendation:** *The Audit Office recommends that the Head of the Budget Agency should ensure engagements with graduates are documented, analyzed, and used for decision-making.*

**Management's Response:** Routine follow-ups are done. The small complement of staff at GWLI using the limited resources continues to engage WIIN participants via calls, emails, and in-person meetings.

***No system in place to bring awareness of employment opportunities***

75. The Institute aims to provide support and strengthen the capacity of underprivileged and single-parent women for economic opportunities, income generation, and poverty reduction. This would be achieved by providing skill training which can be used to get employment or start micro-enterprises or small businesses. We expect the Institute to have a system in place to make graduates aware of employment opportunities and to assist with starting a business.

76. It was revealed that the Institute does not place graduates into jobs. Rather, through one of its business partners it was reported that a WhatsApp group was created to bring awareness to graduates of possible employment opportunities. In addition, letters were sent to prospective employers to familiarize them with the programme and encourage employing some of the graduates. Further, a one-off \$50,000 cash grant was issued to some graduates, who were interested in starting a business.

77. However, evidence to support the existence of the WhatsApp group and the dispatched letters was not presented. Also, there was no Follow-up with graduates to determine if the one-off \$50,000 cash grant was used for the intended purpose. This proved that the Institute has no structured system in place to raise awareness of possible employment opportunities; and to ensure participants were making economic progress. As such, objectives relating to empowering these women for economic advancement may not be achieved as expected.

**Recommendation:** *The Audit Office recommends that the Head of the Budget Agency should ensure:*

- i. documentation for exploring employment opportunities for graduates is kept and presented for audit scrutiny.*
- ii. measures are in place to verify that financial assistance is used for the intended purpose.*

**Management's Response:** The small complement of staff at GWLI using the limited resources continues to engage WIIN participants via calls, emails, and in-person meetings. Women-owned businesses are also showcased free of cost on the WIIN App. This app allows them to display their products/services and allows customers to shop via the platform. The Ministry has also established the Business Incubator on the grounds of GWLI to provide a 'hand-holding' experience to assist new business owners with the creation of business plans, projection of finances, acquisition of documents, and accessing finances. The Ministry also plans and executes the largest women-owned business expo in the Region, annually – WELIFT. At this expo, women entrepreneurs are given an opportunity to showcase their products/services to all of Guyana free of cost to the participants.

During the years 2021 – 2022, the Ministry engaged WFP and a grant of GY \$50,000 was given to all participants completing a WIIN course, with the intention of assisting the graduates to obtain the necessary documentation to establish their start-up businesses. Moving forward, if grants are given, measures will be put in place to ensure accountability on the part of grant recipients so as to ensure that funds are spent in accordance with its outlined purpose.

## **Conclusion**

78. The GWLI did not effectively implement its WIIN programme. This was evident as there were gaps in the monitoring and evaluation process relating to graduates. Follow-ups with graduates to understand their progress and the challenges they faced in advancing economically, were not conducted. Further, there was no system in place to raise awareness of possible employment opportunities. Also, the databases used to make informed decisions had duplicate and incomplete information. As such, objectives may not be achieved. as expected.



# ***Chapter 4***

## ***Continuous Improvements***

### ***Criterion 4.1***

The Ministry has identified areas for improvement and has addressed gaps, risks, and barriers to the initiative.

79. The Institute should identify areas for improvement and develop strategies to address gaps in the programme. This will improve the quality of the training delivered to women, hence the Programme's performance. It also, allows the Institute to achieve its goals and objectives more efficiently and effectively.

### ***Gaps and areas for improvement identified***

80. For the period under review, the major gap of the Institute was incomplete information about participants during and after training. This was because there was not enough staff to collect the required data, and complete processes promptly. Also, to provide participants with proper business training and support. As a result, four key areas were identified to improve the overall performance of the Programme. This included additional staffing, more business training and support for participants, a computerized management system, and full accreditation of the institute.

### ***Revision of courses offered by the programme***

81. At the start of the programme in 2021, the Institute initially offered introductory-level courses only. The duration was forty hours, which included teaching sessions and time for completing the final assessment. The courses were to provide foundation training in selected areas, as follows:

- i) Introduction to Childcare
- ii) Introduction to Patient Care
- iii) Core Competency for Admin Assistants
- iv) Introduction to Microsoft Office Suite
- v) Introduction to Care for the Elderly
- vi) Essentials of Graphics Design, Videography and Photography
- vii) Introduction to Garment Construction

82. As time progressed and demand grew, the Institute reshaped its programme. That move adjusted the courses being offered in 2022 as stated in the table below.

No.	Training Approach
<b>A</b>	<b>New courses offered - Introductory and intermediate levels</b>
	Culinary Arts (Guyanese Cuisine & Entrepreneurship)
	Home Management
<b>B</b>	<b>Courses that offered additional level - Intermediate level</b>
	Childcare
	Patient Care
	Care for the Elderly
	Essentials of Graphics Design, Videography and Photography
	Garment Construction

Table 7 – The new approach for courses offered under the WIIN programme for 2022  
Source: Guyana Women’s Leadership Institute

83. The Institute continued to improve in its delivery of services related to its courses, where level one to three training is offered in nine courses with each level covering a thirty-hour duration.

***New staff recruited***

84. The Institute started its operations with six staff. In 2022, the most qualified Senior Training Officer was appointed Coordinator. He was further assisted by two additional staff, a Data Entry Clerk, and an Administrative Assistant. At the end of that year, the staff strength was eight.

85. As of September 2023, the Institute contracted the services of four additional individuals; an Economic Empowerment Specialist, two Senior Training Officers, and a Data Entry Clerk. This brought its total staff complement to twelve.

86. The Institute also benefited from the services of several temporary employees. These individuals were employed through the PATHWAY 10-Day Workers programme under the Ministry of Local Government.

**Conclusion**

87. In conclusion, the Institute has taken steps to bridge the identified gaps and enhance the overall programme performance. This was evident as they employed new staff and continued to seek new ways of being assisted in the execution of their duties. They also revised the number and levels of courses offered as demand increased.

## **Overall Conclusion**

88. The Ministry successfully re-established the GWLI. This institution now gives vulnerable women an opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills that could allow them to gain meaningful employment or start a small business. This is by providing technical and vocational education and training through the WIIN programme.

89. For the years 2021 and 2022 over 6,000 individuals across all ten administrative regions were trained. This was more than the Institute's annual targets. However, the Institute did not effectively design and implement the WIIN programme to allow vulnerable women access to employment or start businesses. We based our conclusion on the following:

- No evidence to show that information from the application and registration process was used to make implementation decisions. As such, 84% of vulnerable women who were interested did not participate in the programme.
- The courses were not developed using a whole-of-government, multi-stakeholder approach. Not all relevant government agencies and technical and vocational institutions participated in the development process. As a result, the courses offered may not be comparable to those of other agencies.
- The database maintained had duplicate and incomplete information. Also, the institute did not follow up with graduates after training to understand their progress and the challenges faced for effective decision-making.
- The organisational structure did not cater for monitoring and evaluation personnel and key positions were not filled. These were necessary for the effective design and implementation of the WIIN programme and the management of the Institute.

## **About the Audit**

This report prepared by the Audit Office of Guyana looked at the Structure of the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute, and the design and implementation of the Women's Innovation and Investment Network programme. Our responsibility was to provide objective information and advice and conclude whether the Women's Innovation and Investment Network programme, provides disadvantaged women and girls with knowledge and skills to access employment or to start a business.

## **Scope and Approach**

The audit covered the period 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2022 and focused on the following lines of enquiry:

- Management Structure, Resources, and Systems
- Programme Design and Implementation
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Continuous Improvements

We sought to determine whether the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security ensured:

- a) A management structure for the Institute has been established with clear roles, responsibilities, and lines of authority. It is fully staffed, equipped, and functioning, to allow objectives to be achieved effectively.
- b) The training programme design and implementation were planned with the involvement of other relevant stakeholders and ensured the most vulnerable were targeted and involved to leave no one behind.
- c) The programme and graduates were monitored and evaluated to determine gaps, barriers, and progress in achieving set objectives.
- d) Continuous adjustments were made by the institute to improve the delivery of service and the quality of the courses offered, to achieve objectives efficiently and effectively.

## **Audit Methodology**

We conducted structured interviews with officials of the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security, Guyana Women's Leadership Institute, and other relevant stakeholders in the education and skill development sectors from public and private organizations. We also conducted a survey with participants from the training programme, reviewed relevant documents and reports, and analysed the information collected to arrive at our conclusion.

## Audit Criteria and Sources

The main criteria that we used to conduct this audit and their sources are as follows:

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Source</b>
The management structure and environment established for the programme are fully equipped and functioning for the delivery of services.	Guyana Women's Leadership Institute Annual Report, Pages 7 – 10 - Key Roles and Responsibilities. GWLI Organizational Structure.
The Guyana Women's Leadership Institute developed training programmes under the Women's Innovation and Investment initiative based on needs assessment.	Best Practice.
The design of training programmes was inclusive and the courses offered are comparable to those offered by other technical and vocational institutes and educational institutions nationally.	Best Practice.
A plan was established for the implementation of the programme.	Best Practice.
The implementation process complied with the plan, and the programme was consistent, accessible, fair, and impartial nationally.	Best Practice.
The Ministry establish a structure and systems to monitor and evaluate the performance of the programme and the accomplishments of graduates.	Best Practice.
The programme was monitored and evaluated to determine its effectiveness.	Best Practice.
Graduates are monitored and evaluated to determine their achievement relative to the programme's objectives.	Best Practice.
The Ministry has identified areas for improvement and has addressed gaps, risks, and barriers to the initiative.	Best Practice.

**Definition of Terms Used in the Audit Report**

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)	SDGs, also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.
International Organization of Supreme Audit Institution (INTOSAI)	INTOSAI operates as an umbrella organization for the external government audit community. It is a non-governmental organization with special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations.
Guyana Women’s Leadership Institute (GWLI)	GWLI is a training facility established by the Government of Guyana, in December 1997 to provide support, help, training, and development for women and girls throughout Guyana.
Women’s Innovation and Investment Network (WIIN)	WIIN is a new women empowerment initiative that provides women and girls with training and skill development in technical and vocational education, aimed at providing beneficiaries with an opportunity to gain employment or start a small business.
Women’s Empowerment	Women’s Empowerment includes increasing women’s self-worth, decision-making power, access to resources and opportunities, power and control over their lives, and the ability to effect change.
Vulnerable Women	According to the Guyana Women’s Leadership Institute, these are unprivileged and single-parent females living in vulnerable communities and circumstances.
Cottage Industry	A small manufacturing business owned and operated by an individual or a family, typically operating out of a home rather than a purpose-built facility. It is defined by the small amount of investment required for its start-up.



**MINISTRY OF HUMAN SERVICES AND SOCIAL SECURITY**

**Office of the Permanent Secretary**

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Tel: (592) 223-7585 / 225-6545 ext 2315

2024.08.29

Mr. Deodat Sharma  
Auditor General  
Audit Office of Guyana  
63 High Street  
Kingston, Georgetown.

Dear Mr. Sharma,

Re: Amendment- Audit responses for the Review and Implementation Process for the Women's Innovation and Investment Network (WIIN) Programme.

With reference to captioned subject, please see the attached responses from the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security.

All for your information.

Regards,

  
.....  
Dawn Ellis  
Permanent Secretary (ag)

**Permanent Secretary**  
Ministry of Human Services  
& Social Security

Our Mission

To contribute to economic and social development by formulating policies to ensure effective delivery of social and welfare services towards the provision of social protection floors for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups among the population.

***Staff strengths were not determined and key positions were not filled***

An organizational structure is required to be in place based on the National Estimates and Programme Budgeting. It defines job titles, roles, and responsibilities and provides the basis on which tasks and routines rest and decisions are made. It also paves the way for the smooth and efficient functioning of operations toward achieving goals. As such management should establish an organisational structure for the GWLI based on the services being offered, ensure staff strength for every position is determined and each position is staffed based on the workload. This allows segregation of duties, and planned activities to be carried out efficiently and effectively.

The Institute have an organizational structure with nine levels of authority and nineteen positions which were responsible for running its day-to-day operations. However, the number of individuals to fill each position was not stated or presented. As of 31 December 2022, the staff strength was eight, including four at the operational level and four who offered support. During the execution of the audit in May 2023, although four additional operational staff were hired, it could not be determined if each position had its full complement of staff.

Additionally, although monitoring and evaluation are key components to determining a programme's performance and future decision-making, there were no provisions within the structure for such personnel. Rather, those tasks were performed by the Coordinator, with the assistance of course facilitators.

Also, personnel such as an Economic Empowerment Specialist, Assistant Economic Empowerment Specialist, Deputy Coordinator and Trainers were not on staff, and management could not say when these positions would be filled.

Further, the Business Incubator which is the centre for providing business support to graduates such as business management, writing business plans, branding, etc. was physically established. However, it did not have the staff to assist graduates with those services. The failure to properly establish an organisational structure with all relevant positions relating to an organization's operations, determining staff strength for each position and ensuring all positions are filled, could affect the quality of services offered to women and girls and the Institute's efficiency and effectiveness in achieving its objective.

**Management's Response:**

Based on advice from PSM, GWLI was a subvention agency, as such it would not have had an organisational structure for much of its life. In 2021 when then institute was resuscitated (after being out of operation for years) and programs implemented (expansion of government programs), thereafter, it became necessary to have an organisational structure. The Ministry submitted a proposed structure in 2022. However, no such approval has been given.

The Ministry takes note of the findings outlined and steps will be taken to address these accordingly in order to strengthen the institution and improve the quality of services provided.



***The programme did not reach all interested vulnerable women***

The Programme’s main focus was on underprivileged and single-parent women in all the administrative regions of Guyana. These groups were referred to as vulnerable women and identified as women and girls living in vulnerable circumstances and communities. As such, we expect the Institute to ensure those groups were chosen during the selection process.

Participating in a programme offered by the Guyana Women’s Leadership Institute is voluntary on the part of each person. The process of participating in the WIIN programme is shown in Figure 7 below.

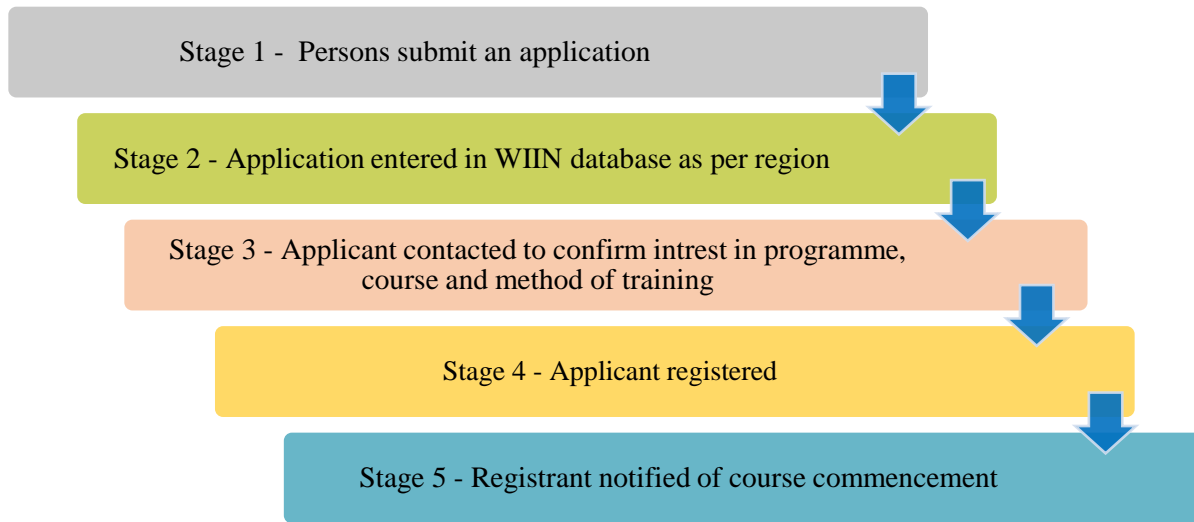


Figure 7– Process for participating in the WIIN programme  
Source: Audit Office of Guyana

For the years 2021 and 2022, a total of 14,663 individuals applied to the programme. However, the Ministry did not state how many individuals were contacted at stages 3 and 5 respectively nor how many of these individuals fell within each category of vulnerability. As such, it could not be determined whether vulnerable women were targeted for participation.

Based on the Ministry’s criteria the most vulnerable would be classified as single-parent women who were unemployed. An analysis of the applicants’ database was done to determine how many of the women who had applied fell under that category. We found that of the total applicants, 5,341 were single parents, and 2,571 of those single parents were unemployed. As such, 18% of the total applicants were assessed as the most vulnerable. The following table provides details of the analysis conducted.

<b>Audit Analysis Focus Areas</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>Total for the Period</b>	<b>% for the Period</b>
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Table 2 – Applicants according to employment status, family type, and categorized most vulnerable  
Source: Audit Office of Guyana

Although, the Ministry did not indicate how many individuals were informed of the programme commencement, for the years a total of 6,122 individuals participated. This represents 42% of the total applicants. An analysis of the participants' database was compared with the findings of the applicants' database, to determine what percentage of the most vulnerable applicants participated in the programme. We found that of the 2,571 most vulnerable applicants only 410 of those individuals participated in the programme. This shows that the programme only reached 16% of the most vulnerable applicants as shown in the table below.

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Table 3 – Participants according to employment status, family type, and categorized most vulnerable  
Source: Audit Office of Guyana

Further, having noted the low participation rate of the most vulnerable women, the Ministry did not demonstrate that they explored other means to reach the remaining 84% of these individuals. This reflects poor design and implementation of the programme, as such objectives were not achieved.

### **Management's Response:**

At the point of implementation, GWLI did not have staff members with the necessary skillsets to conduct such an analysis. Further, the Ministry has a target and limited budget and has exceeded the target with the resources available to us. Our established criteria was utilised for the programs to ensure that training, both in person and online are offered to all 10 Administrative Regions of Guyana. GWLI has a database that captures the participants who were trained in 2022 (attached). The Ministry aims to rotate its training annually to various Regions in an effort to capture as many vulnerable communities as possible given its financial and personnel allocations.

### ***The whole-of-government, multi-stakeholder approach not taken to design courses***

As it relates to the courses, they were all free so there were no financial barriers to participation and completion. They were also accredited and had three components; classroom lectures, completion of a workbook, and an assessment.

The Ministry indicated that they collaborated with other stakeholders in developing the courses. This was done when the Ministry engaged several private educational institutions and requested proposals for course design, development, and delivery under seven areas. The proposals were scrutinized by the Ministry's technical team and evaluated by the respective boards before approvals were given and contracts entered. Additionally, the documents examined reveal that the Council for Technical Vocational Education and Training (CTVET) was contacted for accreditation of the GWLI and its courses, which was not granted up to the time of reporting.

Although the Ministry indicated that they collaborated with other stakeholders in developing the courses, the involvement of key stakeholders such as other technical and vocational institutes nationally and government agencies was not evident. Their non-participation in designing the courses was confirmed through interviews. Hence, it could not be determined if the course content was benchmarked. As such, the Ministry did not prove that the courses offered were comparable to those offered by government-owned technical and vocational institutions and educational institutes nationally even though they were accredited. Therefore, training received by vulnerable women through the Institute may not be beneficial in allowing them to gain meaningful employment.

#### **Management's Response:**

To execute this program, the Ministry has collaborated with various Governmental agencies (MOE, MCYS, MOLG etc.), the United Nations (UNICEF, UNWOMEN etc.) private sector (Nations Inc., HerVenture, Exxon Mobil, Women Chamber of Commerce, Centre for Local Business Development etc.) and various financial institutions (local banks and other lending agencies). The targets set under the WIIN Program is in keeping with the Government's mandate. That being said, the Ministry can be guided as to what entails a "whole-of-government and multi-stakeholder approach" so as to improve going forward.

#### ***Databases contain duplicate and incomplete information***

The Institute was required to maintain a database of all applicants, participants, and skilled professionals, to allow easy access to information for decision-making. We found that a database of applicants, participants, and courses was maintained. The information was available by year, course, and region.

An analysis of the database revealed there were duplications and missing information of individuals. In addition, the information was not consistent across courses and regions. This resulted from inadequate staffing and segregation of duties. As such, the Institute may have used inaccurate information to make decisions for the Women Innovation and Investment Network programme.

**Management's Response:**

Data was manually collected by the small complement of staff at GWLI using the limited resources via Excel sheets. Data collection and maintaining a database has improved as our staff complement continued to grow.

***No evidence of follow-up with graduates***

Another responsibility of the Institute was to follow up with participants after training to measure changes related to employment, business plan development, business start-ups, and increased income. Also, to provide additional support if necessary.

The Institute reported the accomplishments of trained participants for the period under review. However, there was no evidence that a system for follow-up with graduates was in place or such activities were conducted.

This issue was proven, as the Institute had no data on registrants or participants who utilized the Ministry services and those who accessed and used support services of the business incubator. The failure of the Institute to document follow-up resulted in us not being able to verify participants' progress. Therefore, it could not be determined whether the Institute presented accurate information to its management to make informed decisions about participants and the programme.

**Management's Response:**

Routine follow-ups are done. The small complement of staff at GWLI using the limited resources continues to engage WIIN participants via calls, emails, and in-person meetings.

***No system in place to bring awareness of job opportunities***

The Institute aims to provide support and strengthen the capacity of underprivileged and single-parent women for economic opportunities, income generation, and poverty reduction. This would be achieved by providing skill training which can be used to get employment and start micro-enterprises or small businesses. We expect the Ministry to have a system in place to make graduates aware of employment opportunities and to assist with starting a business.

It was revealed that the Ministry does not place participants into jobs. Rather, through one of its business partners it was reported that a WhatsApp group was created to bring awareness to participants of possible job opportunities. In addition, letters were sent to prospective employers to familiarize them with the programme and encourage employing some of the graduates. Further, the Ministry through its Empowerment Fund issued a one-off \$50,000 cash grant, to qualified trained participants, who were interested in starting a business.

However, evidence to support the existence of the WhatsApp group and letters dispatched was not presented. Also, because there was no follow-up with graduates it could not be determined if the money was used for the intended purpose. This proved that the Ministry has no structured system in place to bring awareness of possible job opportunities and to ensure participants were

making progress economically. As such, objectives relating to empowering these women for economic advancement may not be achieved as expected.

**Management's Response:**

The small complement of staff at GWLI using the limited resources continues to engage WIIN participants via calls, emails and in person meetings. Women owned businesses are also showcased free of cost on the WIIN App. This app allows them to display their products/services and allows customers to shop via the platform. The Ministry has also established the Business Incubator on the grounds of GWLI to provide a 'hand holding' experience to assist new business owners with the creation of business plans, projection of finances, acquisition of documents, and accessing finances. The Ministry also plans and executes the largest women owned business expo in the Region, annually – WELIFT. At this expo, women entrepreneurs are given an opportunity to showcase their products/services to all of Guyana free of cost to the participants.

During the years 2021 – 2022 the Ministry engaged WFP and a grant of GY \$50,000 was given to all participants completing a WIIN course, with the intention of assisting the graduates to obtain necessary documentation to establish their start-up business. Moving forward, if grants are given, measures will be put in place to ensure accountability on the part of grant recipients so as to ensure that funds are spent in accordance with its outlined purpose.