



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
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CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**MAYOR DE BLASIO AND KIVA ANNOUNCE FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND
CROWDFUNDING PROGRAM FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS**

City pledges up to \$1,000 in zero-interest loans for women launching crowdfunding campaigns to start or grow their businesses; City contribution will facilitate \$3 million in loans and 500 new businesses in three years

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio and the not-for-profit crowdfunding platform Kiva.org today launched *WE Fund: Crowd*, a first-of-its-kind City-led crowdfunding program to help women entrepreneurs access affordable capital and start businesses in New York City. Through Kiva, women entrepreneurs can apply for crowdfunded loans of up to \$10,000 and the City will contribute the first 10% of their loan request. The program is designed to reach at least 500 businesses over three years.

“Leveling the playing field for women entrepreneurs will help grow and diversify our economy, and strengthen our families and neighborhoods,” **Mayor Bill de Blasio** said. “With Kiva, we will help launch small businesses that might otherwise never get off the ground.”

“Connecting women entrepreneurs directly to investors gives them access to seed money they need to open stores, restaurants and fashion companies in neighborhoods across New York City. As we continue to focus on stabilizing communities, growing jobs and supporting women in business, this collaboration with Kiva.org is simple and smart,” **Alicia Glen, Deputy Mayor for Housing and Economic Development** said.

“This joint initiative aims to drive social impact as well as provide crowdfunded capital to women who are traditionally denied loans,” said **Jonny Price, Senior Director of Kiva U.S.** “At a national level, if women were to receive a proportional amount of traditional small business loans, lending to women would increase almost sevenfold. This partnership is so important it can go a long way in demonstrating a path forward for entrepreneurial women across the country.”

WE Fund: Crowd helps address the gender entrepreneurship gap:

- Seventy percent of women entrepreneurs in New York City cite access to capital as a major challenge as they launch and grow companies.

- While approximately half of women entrepreneurs in New York City seek less than \$10,000 when launching a business, traditional financial products are often unavailable in small amounts and non-traditional financial products typically come with high interest rates.

Entrepreneurs interested in the program should visit we.nyc.

How *WE Fund: Crowd* works:

- The City will contribute the first 10% of an entrepreneur's crowdfunding goal when they launch their campaign.
- This loan from the City will be confirmed when the entrepreneur meets their full fundraising goal.
- The City's contribution is capped at \$1,000 per campaign and includes no-interest repayment terms for up to 42 months.
- In total, the City's commitment will facilitate more than \$3 million in loans.
- **Lenders:** Visitors to www.Kiva.org can choose the woman entrepreneur they want to help crowdfund with a loan of \$25 or more. As the entrepreneur repays, lenders can relend to another person or withdraw their money and put it back in their pocket. Neither lenders nor Kiva make any money from the loans facilitated. The City will provide the first 10% of the loan to help the entrepreneur reach her crowdfunding goal.
- **Borrowers:** Kiva's loans are available up to \$10,000 and are designed to reach women-owned small businesses locked out of traditional lending. Loans are offered at 0% interest, no fees, no minimum credit score, collateral, or minimum years of operation. Ninety-five percent of loan requests are fully fundraised, which is rare among crowdfunding sites.

This partnership with New York City is the first time that Kiva has worked on a government-supported crowdfunding initiative to provide seed money specifically for women entrepreneurs.

Founded in 2005, Kiva is an international nonprofit with a mission to connect people through lending to alleviate poverty and expand economic opportunity. Kiva has connected 2.5 million entrepreneurs in 83 countries with over \$1 billion in loans crowdfunded by 2 million individuals.

WE Fund: Crowd is also partnering with Kickstarter, Indiegogo, GoFundMe, and CrowdCrux to create digital tools to increase women's participation and success in crowdfunding campaigns.

Those interested may also register for the [WE NYC: Show Me the Money](#) conference on November 21st at NYU's Kimmel Center. The program will cover an array of topics related to business finance, including crowdfunding and other accessible financing options.

WE Fund: Crowd is part of WE NYC, a women's entrepreneurship initiative launched by the City's Department of Small Business Services in 2015. WE NYC connects women to mentoring, expert advice and customized business and leadership courses to help them start and grow successful businesses. WE NYC has engaged nearly 4,000 women across New York City.

“The City is invested in women entrepreneurs and today we are proving it by launching an innovative program to help more women raise the capital they need to succeed,” said **Gregg Bishop, Commissioner of the City’s Department of Small Business Services**. “Having the City as their first investor will help women entrepreneurs build momentum in their crowdfunding campaigns and attract additional investors.”

“Investing in quality opportunities for women entrepreneurs is a critical part of our work to support small businesses and eliminate barriers to success,” said **New York City Economic Development Corporation President and CEO James Patchett**. “Through our partnership with SBS, we are excited to launch this new crowdfunding platform to ensure that women-owned businesses have the necessary resources to succeed.”

“For too long, minority and women entrepreneurs have faced barriers to accessing capital which is essential to the success of any business. *WE Fund: Crowd* is another program in the City’s toolbox to help break these barriers down and help foster the entrepreneurial spirit in New York City. I would like to thank SBS and Kiva.org for partnering and bringing this much needed program to women entrepreneurs,” said **Jonnel Doris, Senior Advisor and Director of the Mayor’s Office of Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises**.

“It’s hard to get loans from traditional banks. This program is great for entrepreneur women who want to start or expand their businesses,” said **Mona Birjeeb, owner of Safari, a Harlem Restaurant who used Kiva to raise funds to expand her business**.

“*WE Fund: Crowd* is exactly what is needed to close the funding gap for women entrepreneurs living in New York City,” said **Salvador Briggman, Founder of CrowdCrux**. “Without a doubt, this will boost innovation, job growth, and tax revenues for the region. Funding is the lifeblood of any new company. A program like this has never been tried before and it has the opportunity to spur growth, development, and attract valuable talent to New York City.”

“As an institution that provides access to capital for small businesses, we’re proud to support this progressive program to help women entrepreneurs get the affordable capital they need to succeed, in Brooklyn and throughout New York City,” said **Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Andrew Hoan**. “The commitment from the Mayor, NYCEDC and NYC SBS to jump-start crowdfunding opportunities through Kiva will help to foster the city’s continued economic development and help women-owned small businesses proliferate.”

“I believe that *WE Fund: Crowd*, a first-of-its-kind City-led crowdfunding program to help women entrepreneurs access affordable capital and start businesses in New York City is an excellent program to give women a competitive edge in launching a business,” said **Nunzio Del Greco, President and CEO of the Bronx Chamber of Commerce**.

“Studies show that women are particularly successful at crowdfunding,” said **Jessica Walker, president and CEO of the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce**. “Investing in this area is a smart way to support women entrepreneurs who need capital to grow.”

“It is good to see the city is focused on bringing new sources of funding to woman entrepreneurs. Initiatives like this will provide the seed money to encourage innovative start-ups to realize their vision and passion and launch new businesses throughout the city, “ said **Linda Baran, President and CEO of the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce.**

“The Queens Chamber of Commerce wholeheartedly supports this initiative”, says **Thomas J. Grech, President and Chief Executive Officer.** “Women are an important part of our small business economy and as we continue to grow our Chamber, we want to be inclusive of all entrepreneurs, especially women-owned and operated ventures”

“According to research conducted by the City of New York with support from Citi, 90 percent of women entrepreneurs funded more than 70 percent their business start-up out of their own personal savings, indicating a lack of access to other sources of funding,” said **Eileen Auld, NY Tristate Director, Citi Community Development.** “Through WE NYC’s leadership, women entrepreneurs in New York City will soon benefit from funding platforms, paired with training and support services, specifically designed to expand access to capital.”

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