



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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**MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES CITY-BACKED LOAN PROGRAM FOR WOMEN
EXPANDING THEIR BUSINESSES**

‘WE Fund: Growth’ will make affordable loans available to women often shut out of traditional bank loans

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio today announced a first-of-its-kind targeted loan program that will make more than \$5 million in affordable capital accessible to women entrepreneurs seeking to grow their businesses. *WE Fund: Growth* is designed to overcome barriers faced by women seeking to grow their businesses. It will offer loans between \$25,000 and \$125,000.

The mean wealth of single women in the United States is 52 percent that of men and women’s credit scores are 10 points lower on average than that of men in every debt tier. These disparities are part of the reason financial institutions decline loan applications from women-owned businesses, and at a rate of up to 20 percent higher than their male counterparts.

“It is time to right economic wrongs and give women-owned businesses the same opportunity to compete as any other. This loan program will improve the lives of New York women, their families and communities. Know that New York – the city immigration, diversity and small businesses – has your back,” **Mayor Bill de Blasio** said.

“We are focused on making sure New York women, including in our immigrant communities, get a fair shot in the working world. As we raise awareness of discrimination faced by women in the business world, we must pave the way to fair future,” said **Deputy Mayor for Housing and Economic Development Alicia Glen**.

WE Fund: Growth is being launched six months after the City launched its first *WE Fund* program, *WE Fund: Crowd*, a separate initiative that helps women entrepreneurs crowdfund up to \$10,000 in zero-interest loans with Kiva.org. This is part of a targeted push by the City to help break down discriminatory barriers women face as they seek to raise funds for a business.

“The baseline economic disparity between men and women is actually causing aspiring women entrepreneurs to miss out on opportunities for financial empowerment,” said **Gregg Bishop, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Small Business Services**. “With *WE Fund: Growth*, we’re ensuring that women have every opportunity to grow a successful business here in New York City.”

“Unlocking opportunities for women entrepreneurs is a critical part of our work to support small businesses and eliminate barriers for growth,” said **New York City Economic Development Corporation President and CEO James Patchett**. “Through our partnership with SBS, we are excited to expand the Neighborhood Credit Fund to provide women-owned businesses with the resources they need to succeed.”

The Department of Small Business Services estimates that sixty to eighty businesses will be served by *WE Fund Growth*, receiving loans projected to total more than \$5 million.

Businesses that might take advantage of this loan program: A restaurant looking to buy a new industrial stove, a fashion designer seeking open a storefront, and a filmmaker seeking to hire new staff and expand her business.

About *WE Fund: Growth*

Working through the City’s Economic Development Corporation’s Neighborhood Credit Fund, the City will spur low-interest loans by creating a loan-loss reserve fund to cover any defaults. The City’s contribution will be \$2.5 million.

Neighborhood Credit Fund lenders participating in *WE Fund: Growth* include:

- Renaissance Economic Development Corporation
- BOC Capital
- NYBDC
- Excelsior Growth Fund
- Brooklyn Cooperative Federal Credit Union

Interested business owners should visit we.nyc to learn more and apply.

About WE NYC

Launched in 2015, WE NYC delivers tailored, research-based programs to connect women entrepreneurs to the resources, education, and community they need to flourish. WE NYC services are free and open to all women throughout the five boroughs. For more information, visit we.nyc.

“Far too often, women do not have access to the loans they need to start their own businesses,” **Public Advocate Letitia James** said. “WE Fund: Growth is a critical program that will provide women with the funds necessary to be successful and will go a long way towards leveling the economic playing field in New York City. I applaud Deputy Mayor Glen and Commissioner Bishop for providing this invaluable opportunity that will allow women to overcome financial barriers and expand their businesses.”

“Women entrepreneurs play a central role in cultivating Brooklyn’s commercial vitality and economic development. I applaud Mayor de Blasio and SBS Commissioner Bishop for launching this loan program, which will open many new doors for women entrepreneurs to get started in our borough. Women, particularly women of color, face many economic and social barriers to

getting ahead in launching their own business. This is a promising initiative that I hope will lead to growth and prosperity for all involved,” **Borough President Eric Adams said.**

“It is appalling that in 2018 we still have a statistic as disturbing as single African American and Latina women own less than one cent for every dollar owned by a single white male. However, as the saying goes, it is better late than never. I pride fully applaud the city’s new \$2.5 million WE Fund: Growth program to target women entrepreneurs and finally give them access to capital that they have long for demanded, but were denied. Through this initiative, the city also shows its dedication to support the new law I introduced and the Governor signed in 2017 that raised the cap on city agency contracts to MWBEs from \$25,000 to \$150,000. We raised the cap and now the city is giving women-owned business access to capital to obtain these bigger agency contracts,” State **Senator Marisol Alcantara.**

“Groundbreaking initiatives like WE NYC and WE Fund: Growth are essential to women’s empowerment. Step by step, they are helping to dismantle the economic barriers which have confronted women for centuries. Women cannot participate fully in our economy if they do not have equal access to capital, plain and simple. Thank you to the Mayor’s Office, NYC Small Business Services, and the Economic Development Corporation for developing innovative ways in which more and more women can secure funding that will help them build their businesses, break through historic barriers, and achieve true economic parity,” said **Council Member Helen Rosenthal, Chair of the Committee on Women.**

“With a population of more than 8 million residents, comprised primarily of women, the City of New York is uniquely positioned to end the gender disparity in entrepreneurship. The success of our city relies on our ability to become a more inclusive society by closing the opportunity divide,” said **Council Member and Majority Leader Laurie A. Cumbo.** “The *WE Fund: Growth* Program will help bridge the gap by enabling our city’s women entrepreneurs to thrive - spurring innovation, creating jobs, and contributing immensely towards the vitality of our city's economy.”

“It is unacceptable that even today, women and women of color in entrepreneurship continue to face disproportionate challenges when seeking funding to grow their businesses. This is why we need to do all that we can as a City to fuel their success and leadership,” said **Council Member Margaret S. Chin, Co-Chair of the Women's Caucus.** “We: Fund Growth helps close the gender gap by providing up and coming female innovators access to capital to get their ideas off the ground and take their businesses to the next level. I thank Deputy Mayor Glen, Department of Small Business Services Commissioner Gregg Bishop and the New York City Economic Development Corporation for their collaborative work to support women-led businesses.”

“As one of only 11 women in the City Council, it is a priority of mine to ensure that women in New York City have the same opportunities to start and expand their businesses as men do. In order for women-led businesses to succeed, we need to break down the barriers that put these enterprises at a disadvantage. I applaud SBS and NYCEDC on taking important steps to ensure women have access to resources that maximize their entrepreneurial potential,” said **Council Member Carlina Rivera, Co-Chair of the Council’s Women’s Caucus.**

“WE Fund: Growth is a program that will contribute to the economic success of our city by helping women entrepreneurs gain access to much needed capital,” said **Council Member Mark**

Gjonaj. “This program’s combination of low-interest loans and loan-loss reserves is a fiscally responsible tool to help level the playing to ensure that everyone has equal access to the American dream.”

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