

DAILY NEWS

NYC Partnering with Etsy to Offer Workshops on How to Turn Crafts into Profits

NYC Craft Entrepreneurship Program to launch on March 4: seeks to help low-income NYers earn extra cash

BY PHYLLIS FURMAN



Etsy CEO Chad Dickerson.

The city has a new idea for helping low-income New Yorkers earn some extra cash: turn them into Etsy sellers.

The NYC Department of Small Business Services is about to launch the NYC Craft Entrepreneurship Program, a free course that will teach artists, craftsman and designers how to turn their handiwork into microbusinesses, city officials told the Daily News.

The program, which kicks off on March 4, will target low-income artisans - those earning \$52,793 or less - with proven artistic and craft skills, with the goal of enrolling about 500 people over the course of a year.

Citi Community Development is providing \$155,000 in funding, while Etsy, the giant Brooklyn-based online marketplace, developed the curriculum in

partnership with the city and found successful Etsy sellers to teach the classes.

Each course will include five workshops, taught over two weeks, covering things like search engine optimization, photography and product pricing - elements essential to launching an online store.

"A lot of people have really good ideas, but they need education," to turn them into businesses, said Jackie Mallon, the city's deputy commissioner of workforce development.

The Department of Small Business Services decided to move ahead after a tryout this past fall.

Among the graduates is Ingrid Gonzalez, a 30-year-old employment counselor from the East Tremont section of the Bronx who makes knit accessories.

Since September, her Etsy store, IngMade, has done 20 transactions, taking in about \$500. The business is not profitable yet, but is making progress, she said.

Starting a business "is something I had been thinking about for a long time," she said. "This gave me a timeline and took away the excuses."

The idea for an Etsy-guided startup course began in Rockford, Ill., when the city's mayor tweeted Etsy CEO Chad Dickerson seeking help on job training.

New York City officials got wind of the Rockford program, and asked Etsy for the same. The program "will provide an opportunity for New Yorkers who have a passion and talent in a craft to sell their product online and earn supplemental income by creating their own business," Maria Torres-Springer, commissioner of the NYC Department of Small Business Services, told the News.

Etsy expects to offer the program to other cities later this year, Etsy policy director Althea Erickson said.