

July 22, 2021

NYC Small Business Resource Network Launches 'Open + Online' to Help Small Business Owners Access Digital Economy as Pandemic Accelerates E-Commerce Trend

(New York, NY) -- "NYC Small Biz: Open + Online," a new initiative to help small businesses to participate in the growing digital economy, was launched today by the NYC Small Business Resource Network (SBRN), a unique public-private partnership among the New York City Economic Development Corporation, the Peter G. Peterson Foundation, the five borough Chambers of Commerce, NYC Department of Small Business Services and the Partnership for New York City.

Throughout the pandemic, brick and mortar businesses that lacked a digital presence and relied on foot traffic were at a disadvantage. The SBRN has worked to address that disparity by helping small businesses establish e-commerce capabilities, and as the economy begins to recover Open + Online will widely and rapidly increase that effort.

Mastercard SpendingPulse, which measures in-store and online retail sales across all forms of payment, reports that the share of New York City retail sales that took place online jumped from 13% in 2019 to 21% in 2021. In the apparel market, the online share of sales increased from 34% to 57%, underscoring the need for small business owners to be able to compete across channels. Open + Online will enable hundreds of small businesses to upgrade their web presence and expand their e-commerce activity as they struggle to recover from losses suffered during the pandemic.

To date the partners of SBRN thank Amazon, Bank of America, Centerview Partners, Crown Castle, [Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation](#), Fiserv, IAC, Medidata Solutions, Silicon Valley Bank, Wells Fargo and individual donors including Chris Hughes and Deanna Mulligan for their generous support in providing the funds necessary to launch Open + Online. Website building and e-commerce platforms Squarespace and BentoBox are offering a discounted annual subscription for participating businesses, as well as support in building sites. Program sponsors hope to attract additional private grants to expand the program, since technology upgrades will be critical for the survival of tens of thousands of businesses.

The program will engage independent web designers to build and upgrade websites. Entrepreneurs will receive expert guidance on how to maximize their new digital footprint. These services will be provided at no cost to small businesses selected to the program, prioritizing minority, women and immigrant-owned businesses with fewer than 20 employees. Examples of Squarespace websites that were created during a pilot phase of the program include:

Princess and an Heiress - princessandheiress.com

African Queen Boutique - africanqueenboutiquenyc.com

Park Asia Restaurant - parkasiabrooklyn.com

Small businesses can apply to Open + Online at smallbiz.nyc. Applications will be received on a rolling basis initially until September.

Since launching in 2020, more than 17,000 businesses from across the five boroughs have been reached through the SBRN. Popular resources include marketing, finance, legal, accounting and business strategy. Among the top industries served are restaurants, beauty and retail. The SBRN is working in communities that have been difficult to reach by other mainstream programs, with the majority of businesses seeking assistance being minority and/or women owned and with an average employee count under five. Find digital assets for the Open + Online program [here](#).

"The pandemic has exposed many weaknesses and inequities in our economy, across the country, and especially in New York City," said **Michael Peterson, CEO of the Peterson Foundation**. "We have the opportunity and obligation to help these businesses get back on their feet. Today's expansion of the Small Business Resource Network will help address critical economic disparities by helping thousands of small businesses, particularly those owned by minorities and women, recover and thrive by ensuring they are better able to participate in the digital economy."

"We are grateful to the generous donors of this public-private initiative, who recognize the importance of investing in small businesses," said **Maria Gotsch, President and CEO of the Partnership Fund for New York City**. "These new digital tools will empower small businesses to compete and grow in this accelerated digital economy, creating a more resilient small business community and preserving the vibrancy of our neighborhoods."

"New York City's continued recovery will depend on making sure small businesses have every opportunity to thrive," said **NYCEDC President and CEO Rachel Loeb**. "We're proud to launch Open and Online with the NYC Small Business Resource Network, Peterson Foundation, and New York City Department of Small Business Services. This assistance will help owners access core digital tools to expand their businesses and help rebuild our small business community."

"The pandemic highlighted the digital divide inside of our small business community, particularly underserved neighborhoods, said **Jonnel Doris, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Small Business Services**. "Helping businesses to establish e-commerce platforms and upgrade their web presence has been a priority for SBS throughout the pandemic, and we are delighted to continue this effort through our collaboration with EDC on the NYC Small Business Resource Network. The new 'Open and Online' initiative will connect entrepreneurs to necessary resources that will help them to adapt to a new economy."

"Small business are incredibly important to Amazon. Whether they sell in our store or operate delivery service businesses, small businesses are an extension of our customer-centric culture and help bring our customers the widest selection of products and services possible," said **Carley Graham Garcia, Amazon's New York City Head of External Affairs**. "We're happy to support the NYC Small Biz: Open + Online initiative as it helps more small businesses access and benefit from the digital economy."

"BentoBox is proud to be a service provider for SBRN and help New York City restaurants get online with best-in-class websites. Our mission is to empower restaurants to succeed and we're proud to partner with an organization that shares that mission. We are ready to support restaurants across the city to help them stand out online, grow their business, and build direct guest relationships," said **Krystle Mobayeni, Co-Founder and CEO of BentoBox**.

"Now more than ever, having an online presence is critical to participating - and more importantly, succeeding - in the modern economy," said **Ana Rua, Government Affairs Manager for Crown Castle**. "We're proud to support Open and Online to give small businesses the support they need as they work to adapt to the new normal and bring much-needed vitality, diversity and revenue to neighborhoods across New York City."

"This initiative puts equity at the center of New York City's recovery," said **Alessandra DiGiusto, Head of CSR Americas and Executive Director of the Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation**. "As small businesses are the backbone of our local communities, providing access to resources and platforms that builds their capacity is key to a strong future for all."

"At Fiserv, we believe companies can and should be a platform for good. As part of our ongoing commitment to provide support for small businesses, Fiserv is proud to partner with NYC's Small Business Resource Network and their 'Open + Online' initiative to help small business owners better access the digital economy," said **Neil Wilcox, Head of Corporate Social Responsibility at Fiserv**.

"Covid has accelerated the shift to e-commerce for many of our small businesses and neighborhood-based retailers," said **Randy Peers, President & CEO of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce**. "Having a viable and presentable website is now a basic necessity that all our businesses need in order to make a successful transition to the digital world. Through the SBRN and our Open and Online corporate sponsors, we will now be able to meet this need for hundreds of our small businesses."

"We are thrilled that SBRN continues to develop actionable, accessible resources to aid our Bronx small businesses in not only recovery, but helping plan for their futures," said **Lisa Sorin, President of The New Bronx Chamber of Commerce**. "The Bronx Chamber is honored to serve as a conduit to these supports by building relationships with small businesses throughout our commercial corridors. Bridging the digital divide is a key goal as we assist businesses in the pursuit of post-pandemic success."

"Businesses without a tech strategy were at a clear disadvantage during the pandemic," said **Jessica Walker, President and CEO of the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce**. "This critical partnership will help many of them to survive and set them up for success in the long-run."

"Small businesses are the lifeblood of our borough, and as they continue to rebound from the pandemic, we need to ensure that they have the support they need to succeed," said **Thomas J. Grech, President and CEO of the Queens Chamber of Commerce**. "The 'Open + Online' initiative will provide our region's entrepreneurs with the resources, skills and tools they need to help their businesses remain competitive, thrive and grow through e-commerce."

"If there is one thing we have learned from this pandemic, it's that everyone needs to be tech savvy. With that in mind, the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce is pleased to bring SBRN resources such as "Open + Online" to our local small businesses. Providing expert guidance to

improve their marketing presence is needed to stay competitive in today's digital world," said **Linda Baran, President & CEO of the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce.**