



Article 358

August 10, 2014

WESST and Etsy Partner to Help Craftspeople Become Entrepreneurs

By Julianna Silva, Regional Manager, WESST

Etsy, the leading online craft marketplace, established its Craft Entrepreneurship Program last year to make it easier for artists, craftspeople and other microentrepreneurs — especially those in underserved communities — to sell their products and services directly to consumers.

That program is coming to New Mexico in September, thanks to a partnership with WESST, a private nonprofit economic development organization that provides business training, consulting and loans to small businesses in New Mexico.



The Craft Entrepreneurship Program is a five-week series of classes in which artistically talented low-income adults learn the basics of business so they can set up online venues that enable them to reach new markets. Classes will be taught by successful online craft sellers who coach and support participants through every aspect of setting up their online shops alongside WESST trainers who work with small businesses every day.

Using Etsy as a learning lab, teachers share best practices on topics that impact new sellers most — including time management, branding, pricing, shipping and photography — to help them earn supplemental income through their craft business.

To minimize startup costs, students will be able to list 20 items for sale on Etsy.com at no cost.

To be eligible for the program, applicants must:

- Have at least one handmade craft item ready to sell and an idea for a related line of products.
- Commit to attending six weekday classes — about 12 hours total — at WESST in Albuquerque.
- Have never made any sales on Etsy.com, though applicants with an existing store on the site are allowed.
- Have a credit card and checking account to allow sales transactions to be made.
- Have consistent access to a computer with an internet connection.

Workshops begin Sept. 2 at the WESST Enterprise Center in Albuquerque, 609 Broadway Blvd. N.E.

Space is limited and applications are being accepted now. For more information, visit WESST's [Craft Entrepreneurship page](#) or go to the [Craft Entrepreneurship online application](#).

Tech-based platforms like Etsy have low barriers to entry for microbusinesses and provide opportunities for creative individuals to earn supplemental income. Research from the Aspen Institute demonstrates that those who "patch" their household income through microenterprises report "significantly higher earned income from their combined wages" and were more likely to move out of poverty.

Etsy sellers represent an encouraging shift toward using manufacturing skills to generate supplemental income and flexible employment. The Etsy community — a global online network of independent artists and designers — has been pioneering a new model for economic prosperity.

Etsy's Craft Entrepreneurship Program complements WESST's commitment to cultivating entrepreneurship and creating a pathway out of poverty for its clients, especially low-income women and minorities, by helping them achieve financial autonomy through sustained self-employment. WESST is the only New Mexico organization that offers long-term, comprehensive training, technical assistance and loans specifically targeted to underemployed or low-income women and minorities, though its clients represent all demographics in the state.

To learn more about WESST, visit www.wesst.org or call 1.800.GOWESST.

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