

The path to global sales starts here

U.S. Trade Assistance Centers:
The U.S. Commercial Service of the U.S. Department of Commerce provides free help, including export counseling, market research and introductions to international partners.

It operates two trade assistance centers in the city: one in Lower Manhattan and one in Harlem.

Reps from Ex-Im, the Department of Commerce and the U.S. Small Business Administration are stationed at 33 Whitehall St.; 212-809-2650.

The Harlem U.S. Export Assistance Center is stationed at 163 W. 125th St.; 212-860-6200. To learn more go to export.gov.

NYC Business Solutions Centers: There are seven offices around the five boroughs. To find one close to you, go to nyccommerce.org or call 311.

Casting a wider net

NYC looks to help small businesses export goods and services overseas

BY PHYLLIS FURMAN

New York Daily News

Brooklyn company is proving you don't have to be Jewish -- or even American -- to love herring.

A year and a half ago, Acme Smoked Fish decided to test the waters in Japan after store reps there began knocking on its door eager to sell the company's Blue Hill Bay herring.

Since then, Williamsburg-based Acme -- a leading smoked fish supplier dating back to the early 1900s -- has expanded in other countries including Guatemala, Costa Rica and Mexico, where locals favor Acme's whitefish salad.

Today, foreign sales account for 24% of the company's sales and could reach 34% as Acme starts to make a bigger push into Asia.

"We have just scratched the surface," said Gabriel Viteri, Acme's vice president of strategy and business development. "We have identified the markets that value products from the U.S."

With the domestic economy still rocky, a growing number of New York City small businesses are looking to export their goods and services -- and now the city wants to help them along.

Tomorrow, the city's Department of Small Business Services will announce a partnership with the Export-Import Bank of the United States (Ex-Im Bank), a federal agency that provides export financing and credit insurance to businesses who might otherwise be turned down by commercial banks because their loans are deemed too risky.

Business Solutions Centers across the five boroughs soon will be promoting loan programs and products offered by Ex-Im. Counselors in the centers have been trained to spot small businesses that would make good candidates for exporting. One important target will be minority entrepreneurs who face fewer barriers in understanding foreign cultures and languages.

"There is a lot of untapped potential," said Colleen Galvin, assistant commissioner, financial services and capital access at the Department of Small Business Services.

Politicians on both the federal and local levels see exports as key to locating jobs. Two years ago, the White House set a goal of doubling exports within five years. City Council Speaker Christine Quinn has pushed for local government to grow small business exports as a way of spurring the economy.

Local companies appear to be getting the message: Of the $138 million in loans authorized by Ex-Im Bank this year, 45% -- $125 million -- went to small businesses. That's up from the $120 million Ex-Im authorized for local small businesses in 2011.

"We want to make it simpler and reduce the risk," said Steven Dreyfus, managing director of Dreyfus Global Trade, an export management company in Manhattan, which now handles small business exports at a way of spurring the economy.

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The world is a big place," said Kara Ross, owner of a Garment Center-based luxury handbag and designer jewelry company that bears her name.

"It's my security blanket," Dreyfus said.

"It's not an easy process. It takes time and a lot of paperwork," Ross said.

But there has been a payoff. Sales to overseas markets, including China, Europe and the Middle East, account for 24% of Ross' sales and the international business is growing.

The designer just learned that her exotic skin bags will be carried by a Neiman Marcus website that is about to launch in China.

"The path to global sales starts here."

Kara Ross, owner of her self-named luxury handbag and designer jewelry company. At right: Acme Smoked Fish.