



PA WILDS CENTER

FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Educational Improvement Organization (EIO) Programming for 2023-24

Programs dependent on available funding.



PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship (PA Wilds Center) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization whose mission is to integrate conservation and economic development in a way that strengthens and inspires communities in the Pennsylvania Wilds. The official registration and financial information of the PA Wilds Center may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

PAwilds.com -- PAwildscenter.org -- WildsCoPA.org.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILL BUILDING SERIES: PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

The Entrepreneurship Skill Building Series: Product Development is geared toward high school students who are interested in learning more about product design, product line development, craftsmanship, quality control, pricing and bringing a product to market. This is a great opportunity for career and technical education classes, entrepreneurial clubs, or other classes focused on inspiring entrepreneurship in young people.

This series consists of collaborative partnerships with schools and community nonprofits to a) empower educators with practical projects and examples in their classrooms and b) increase awareness for students about rural entrepreneurial opportunities related to the demand for Pennsylvania Wilds products, services and experiences. Coursework consists of a mixture of classroom and hands-on training sessions during normal class time, with tools provided to teachers and students to facilitate learning objectives. Sessions would cover a variety of topics related to rural entrepreneurship, the PA Wilds as a place and a movement, and product development related to demand for regional products.

Approved schools will work with PA Wilds Center to develop specific product lines (examples below) from start to finish, with interactive discussion and lessons covering: 1) supply and demand, 2) product pricing, 3) wholesale vs. retail pricing and the difference between business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) sales, 4) quality control, 5) product photography and marketing, 6) how to create a Buyer's Pack, 7) how a value chain differs from a supply chain, and more. Examples of products that students could make in classes include, but are not limited to, ceramic mugs, ornaments, bird houses, milk-based soaps, vegetable-based candles, wooden train whistles and designs for value-added products such as t-shirts.

Participating classes would receive:

1. An investment of up to \$4,000 in classroom equipment and supplies related to product development / production.
2. A toolkit presentation for teachers to demystify the concept of innovation and entrepreneurship in the Pennsylvania Wilds and inspire the next generation of rural entrepreneurs.
3. A field trip to Kinzua Bridge State Park, home of the flagship PA Wilds Conservation Shop, to learn about the PA Wilds Entrepreneurial Ecosystem and see a best-in-class example of how the demand for PA Wilds made and branded products is helping rural artisans sustain their families.

Classrooms will have two options for selling products they produce with PA Wilds. They may choose one or both options, depending on what makes sense for the school or nonprofit partner. Options include:

1. Selling wholesale to PA Wilds Conservation Shops, which are mission-driven gift shops that improve market access for rural entrepreneurs by sourcing 90 percent of their inventory from

rural makers and businesses in the PA Wilds. These shops are located on public lands in the PA Wilds region, and they intentionally pass foot traffic to area businesses and attractions, raise funds for conservation, and accomplish other mission points. PA Wilds Center purchases products at wholesale prices in order to mark up for retail.

2. Creation of an online seller storefront on the PA Wilds Marketplace at ShopThePAWilds.com, where students will be able to apply all the concepts learned in the classroom in real time by going from product development and production phases to listing, selling and shipping. Storefronts require establishment of seller policies pertaining to returns and shipping. Storefront managers must also manage inventory when listing products. Once orders are placed, the students and/or classrooms would be responsible for shipping products. Sellers earn 85% of gross sales, as there is a 15% referral fee on all orders.

In addition to the two PA Wilds commerce platforms, classrooms will also be encouraged to look at other opportunities to sell products developed under this partnership within their local community. Revenue generated by the classes would go back to the classroom to support operation of the micro-business the following school year, or to support students as they enter the workforce (providing scholarships, investing in toolboxes for graduates, or similar efforts). Participating classes would be required to develop a plan for how they intend to utilize funds raised through the program.

The Entrepreneurship Skill Building Series will briefly explore all facets of the outdoor industry and break down preconceived notions about what types of businesses and organizations fall within it. For example, while many think of linchpin businesses such as outfitters and guides when it comes to the outdoor industry, other entrepreneurs are filling critical service gaps - such as content creators, artisans making products that reflect the local assets, and retailers that help move those local products.

The outdoor recreation economy is an \$862 billion annual industry in the United States, accounting for 1.9% of GDP and more than 4.5 million jobs in fields that include everything from guide and outfitting services to developing and manufacturing outdoor products such as kayaks, backpacks, tents and cook stoves. Public lands are at the heart of the outdoor recreation economy. For the last 20 years, local partners from the public and private sectors have been working to grow this sector of the economy in the Pennsylvania Wilds. The region is uniquely positioned to do this as it is home to more than 2 million acres of public land – more than Yellowstone National Park – and 16,000 miles of waterways. Approximately \$1.85 billion is spent annually on tourism related activities in the Pennsylvania Wilds, a region that is home to only about 4 percent of the state's population. Nearly eight times the regional population visits annually for overnight trips, and more than 80 million people live within a six-hour drive. The demand for these outdoor experiences is simultaneously driving demand for regional services and products.

Students enrolled will be required to complete at least one online multimedia education module, which will conclude with a test-your-knowledge Q&A. After completing the module, students articulate to the rest of their class what they learned from the module, providing a great opportunity for further digestion of the materials and to do public speaking. Modules are designed to provide an example of real-world local applications of core curriculum subject areas and also add depth to the student's understanding of how outfitters/guides relate to the Pennsylvania Wilds landscape. Modules to choose from include:

- Geography: The Pennsylvania Wilds' role as one of the state's 11 official tourism regions and one of its eight Conservation Landscapes; its rural nature (covers 25 percent of PA but only has 4 percent of its population); counties that comprise the region; and its unique topography.
- History, Environment & Ecology: An overview of the early environmental devastation and recovery of the Pennsylvania Wilds landscape, its wildlife, tremendous public land holdings (more than Yellowstone National Park) and present-day stewardship efforts.
- Economics: The Pennsylvania Wilds effort has been called "one of the greatest natural-resource based economic development programs in the United States" by a national expert. This module looks at the economic opportunity of growing the region's nature and heritage tourism industry, how visitor spending has grown over time, the multiplying effect of local spending and how place-based tourism investments are unique in that they also improve quality of life for a community.
- Business & Entrepreneurship: This module looks at the emerging entrepreneurial ecosystem around the Pennsylvania Wilds effort, how businesses are using the regional brand to expand their products and services, resources available to entrepreneurs in PA and examples of how young people moved back to rural PA to start businesses.
- Arts & Humanities: This module looks at how arts and culture are incorporated into the Pennsylvania Wilds effort and how they help distinguish the region as a destination and build community pride.
- Civics & Government: This module looks at how citizens, nonprofits, businesses and local, state and federal government work together to advance the ground-breaking Pennsylvania Wilds effort.
- Science & Technology: As part of the effort to grow nature tourism in the Pennsylvania Wilds, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) built several new high-performance conservation destination facilities to orient and educate visitors. This module provides an overview of these facilities and their green building features.
- Computer & Information Technology: PA Wilds Center is a virtual organization that must connect a lot of different kinds of stakeholders across a large rural landscape. This module looks at key platforms/software the nonprofit uses to do this (WordPress, Quickbooks, Google Docs, Canva and Social Media), and the basic functionality of each.

Schools Eligible: Ridgway Area Middle/High School

Duration: September - June

Locations: School

Cost to Students/School: Free

Other: Students/parents/schools provide transportation. Permission slips/liability waivers required from parents to have students participate.