



Request For Proposals (RFP) - Strategic Plan for Fundraising Consultant

Summary

The PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship (Center) seeks a consultant to develop a Strategic Plan for Fundraising for the nonprofit that it can then use as a road map for helping to sustain its mission and impact long-term. See “Project Scope” for more details.

Timeline

RFP Issued: May 1, 2024

Responses Due: May 24, 2024

Potential Interviews: June 4, 2024

Notifications: June 20, 2024

Contract Period: July 15 - November 15, 2024

Draft Deliverables Presented: Sept. 18, 2024

Final Deliverables Due: November 1, 2024

Budget

\$20,000 - budget to cover consultant services and travel expenses

Contact

Send questions and proposals to: Tenos@pawildscenter.org

About the PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship, Inc.

The PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship, Inc., is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization whose mission is to integrate conservation and economic development in a way that inspires the communities of the Pennsylvania Wilds. The Pennsylvania Wilds is a highly rural 13-county region that includes the counties of Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Forest, Jefferson, Lycoming, McKean, Potter, Tioga, Warren, and northern Centre.

The PA Wilds Center leads a locally-informed, state-sponsored regional strategy to intentionally grow rural PA's outdoor recreation and tourism sectors under the place-based Pennsylvania Wilds brand, to diversify local economies, inspire stewardship, attract investment, improve quality of life and retain population.

PA Wilds Center operates these five core programs, which are organized into a synergistic Entrepreneurial Ecosystem to help achieve its mission:

Regional Planning & Partnerships Program

This program focuses on deepening and widening the critical partnerships and planning needed to advance the region as a sustainable outdoor recreation destination. This includes supporting key stakeholder networks; maintaining partnerships with foundational investors and helping coordinate new investment in the landscape; undertaking or supporting key reports and studies; recognizing excellent work by partners through an annual awards event; supporting regional community development



resources such as the PA Wilds Design Guide for Community Character Stewardship, and participating in local, regional, state and national peer networks.

Wilds Cooperative of PA (WCO)

This program consists of a growing network of creative businesses, nonprofits and communities from across the Pennsylvania Wilds. The WCO program aims to connect and promote the products, services and experiences only found in the PA Wilds as part of the region's outdoor recreation industry. Together, members of the WCO are addressing PA Wilds market demands by connecting and scaling the unique establishments and artisan businesses that are central to place-based tourism development in the PA Wilds.

Sustainable Commerce

This program encompasses the digital and brick-and-mortar platforms that allow rural makers to sell under the PA Wilds brand to reach new markets. PA Wilds Center's flagship PA Wilds Conservation Shop was established in 2016 at Kinzua Bridge State Park through a public-private partnership with DCNR. A second location opened at Leonard Harrison State Park in 2021. A third is opening in 2024 in Forest County, along the Knox-Kane Rail trail. These stores provide an opportunity for local artists who join the Wilds Cooperative to sell products directly to area visitors. In addition to physical stores, the PA Wilds Marketplace launched online at ShopThePAWilds.com in 2021. The platform allows artists to manage their own online storefronts on the site while taking advantage of PA Wilds marketing.

PA Wilds Licensing

PA Wilds Center manages the Pennsylvania Wilds brand trademark through a long-term public-private partnership with the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). Licensing activities allow regional stakeholders to use the iconic brand on marketing materials and products. Royalties from the sale of branded products stay in the region to support the PA Wilds Center's mission in the landscape.

Regional Marketing

PA Wilds Center implements regional lifestyle marketing that positions the 13-county region as a premier outdoor recreation destination and a great place to live, work and play. With a heavy focus on content marketing, Center staff work with a growing number of volunteer contributors and partners, as well as paid content contributors and contractors, to authentically tell the story of the region. This approach to marketing is focused on creating, publishing and distributing content with a goal of mobilizing action (visiting the region and/or supporting local businesses online and/or in person). The primary publishing outlet is PAWilds.com and its blog. However, content is also released on YouTube, @thepawilds on social media, and via eblasts.

For more information on the PA Wilds Center, visit www.PAWildsCenter.org. To learn more about the WCO, visit www.WildsCoPA.org. Explore the PA Wilds at www.PAWilds.com. Find regionally made products at www.ShopThePAWilds.com.



Project Scope

Context/Background

The PA Wilds is one of the Commonwealth's 11 designated tourism regions. It is also one of its eight Conservation Landscapes because of its unique natural assets. The region covers a quarter of the Commonwealth and includes the counties of Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Forest, Jefferson, Lycoming, McKean, Potter, Tioga, Warren and northern Centre. This swath of the state is highly rural, economically-distressed and home to the greatest concentration of public lands in the Commonwealth.

For 20 years, public- and private-sector partners have made coordinated investments to establish the 13-county PA Wilds region as an outdoor recreation destination to help diversify rural economies, improve quality of life, inspire stewardship, attract investment and retain population. These include investments in small business development, regional planning, branding and marketing, community character and natural resource stewardship, and recreation infrastructure. This generational work, featured in ten national studies in the last five years, is succeeding against many odds.

Founded in 2013, the PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship was born organically out of this generational, transformative work. At first, the Center's mission was focused on advancing the strategy's small business development programs. In 2015-16, all of the other PA Wilds programs, platforms, services and stakeholder networks were reorganized under the Center's umbrella for long-term sustainability. Today, the Center employs 23 people and is the designated backbone nonprofit for the regional PA Wilds strategy, working closely with local and state partners from the public and private sectors.

The Center's work is sustained through partnerships, grants, philanthropic giving and entrepreneurial activities related to the Pennsylvania Wilds brand. As the PA Wilds Center turned 10 years old, the nonprofit's Board of Directors and Executive Staff began to embark on a number of plans to guide future development of specific programs and the nonprofit overall. The Strategic Plan for Fundraising is one of these plans and aims to examine corporate and individual giving and recommendations around establishing an endowment. No actual fundraising will be done through this project.

Results from this plan will feed into other plans being developed at the PA Wilds Center.

Consultant Activities

The successful proposal will provide a mix of research, analysis and interviews with the Board of Directors and Staff. All proposals should include consultant travel.

The activities in this project will be completed in three phases:

- Outreach & Data Collection
 - At a minimum, the following outreach will be required to support the evaluation and definition phase of the project:
 - Kickoff meeting with PA Wilds Center Staff (virtual or at our offices in Kane, PA) to gain a deeper understanding of the nonprofit's programs, impacts, stakeholder networks, current fundraising activities, and growth trajectory



- Audit of the Center's current fundraising infrastructure and resources - staff, systems and processes, software, platforms, campaigns, etc.
 - 1:1 calls/virtual meetings with 10 members of the Board of Directors and up to four staff to provide insights into fundraising opportunities and challenges.
 - Review and analysis of relevant case studies and data sources to inform recommendations. At least one case study should examine how visitor audiences have been engaged in giving campaigns.
- Evaluate & Define
 - Based on outreach, data collection, and research, draft recommendations for a phased approach to increasing individual and corporate giving at the nonprofit, to include recommendations related to operations (staff capacity, processes, systems, platforms, etc to support fundraising activities); timing (recommendations should be based on current realities of workload, upcoming opportunities, etc); scale (what is an appropriate target for the nonprofit to shoot for at various stages of its growth); and budget (estimate the cost of each recommendation).
 - Make recommendations for donor/prospect development and stewardship - who are our most aligned potential donors (top five categories) and how do we reach them?
 - Develop case(s) for support for PA Wilds Center fundraising efforts for major categories of aligned donors.
 - Make recommendations for endowment fundraising and management, planned giving, special event fundraising
 - Create a basic toolkit for the Board and staff that explains the fundraising cycle and their roles in it and provide an overview to the group.
 - Deliverables
 - In-person presentation of draft findings to Board of Directors @ Sept 18 BOD Meeting (Kane, PA)
 - Provide a final written Strategic Plan for Fundraising that:
 - Provides an overview of the fundraising cycle, summarizes where we are now with fundraising, and our opportunities for growth
 - Provides practical recommendations on how to stand up a more robust fundraising program, including recommendations that examine board and staff/operational structures to support a fundraising program and for a phased approach, and cost analysis
 - Identifies our most aligned potential donors and how best to reach them
 - Includes written cases for support for each major category of potential donor
 - Includes recommendations for how to recognize donors
 - Includes recommendations for endowment fundraising and management, planned giving, and special event fundraising
 - Details qualitative and quantitative data and includes graphics for easy digestion of data, concepts and recommendations



- Includes the basic toolkit to build awareness with Board and staff members about their roles in fundraising, and makes recommendations for how to engage/onboard new board members to support fundraising activities

Consultant Requirements

Consultant must:

- Be familiar with
 - Rural PA – its major industries, culture, opportunities, challenges
 - The PA Wilds as a place and a regional strategy
 - Microsoft Suite and its companion tools in Google Drive
 - Client relationship management software
 - Place-based rural economic development strategies
 - Fundraising

Proposal Requirements

Proposals will be accepted from individuals, organizations, and firms with experience planning and implementing fundraising activities for other nonprofit organizations.

Proposals should cover and/or include the following:

- Cover Letter summarizing:
 - Why this project speaks to you personally or professionally;
 - Your qualifications and an overview of your experience, including results from similar projects, especially in rural communities; and
 - General description of your operation (do you have all of the required talent in-house or will you need to sub-contract), identification of who will be assigned as the lead in your organization for fulfilling the contract, and your mission statement (if applicable).
- Proposed Work Plan summarizing:
 - Your approach to managing this project, including budget scope, data, research, outreach, and evaluation methods;
 - Your approach to allocating time to accomplish the project outcomes and availability to participate in routine meetings with project managers; and
 - Major milestones within the contracting period which will inform review and feedback from PA Wilds Center and help shape the outputs, outcomes and final deliverables.
- Reference Materials
 - Provide 3-5 references who can speak to your services; and
 - Provide 2-3 case studies or relevant evidence of past projects to demonstrate their impacts and sustainability.

Selection Criteria



The PA Wilds Center will evaluate each proposal according to the criteria listed below, considering the information provided in the proposal, references, and any other information about the Consultant and its performance.

Project Work Approach, Deliverables, And Organization (40 points)

- Firm grasp of the project scope and objectives
- Quality and organization of response to proposed work program and proposed deliverables
- Quality of creative approach to the deliverables
- Organization and completeness of the response
- Writing skills, as shown through the submission and any other submitted work examples

Related Experience, Work Examples, And Innovation (40 points)

- Quality of submitted work examples
- Experience and demonstrated ability of consultant(s)
- Past performance of consultant(s) on similar projects
- Demonstration of an innovative and high-quality approach to similar projects

Cost (20 points)

- Demonstration of successful budget performance and previous experience in meeting project budgets
- Description of the approach to budgeting

Location (5 points)

- Bonus points for PA-Wilds-based applicants

Proposals that are not complete or do not meet requirements of this RFP may not be considered. PA Wilds Center reserves the right to request additional information, site visits, interviews or presentations, from one or more of the Consultants.

Submission Instructions

Please email your proposal as a pdf attachment to tenos@pawildscenter.org by COB May 24, 2024.

Thank you for your interest in responding to this RFP. We look forward to your response.