



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Pennsylvania Wilds Artisan Collaborative Marketing Consultant

Summary

The PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship (Center) seeks a consultant to support strategic marketing planning for a new program called the Pennsylvania Wilds Artisan Collaborative, which will launch in July 2024 and run through December 31. The Artisan Collaborative will invest in rural entrepreneurs to support the development of new PA Wilds branded products and help bring them to market to meet growing consumer demand. Through this new program, four Professional Juried Artists in the Wilds Cooperative of PA (WCO) network will be selected through a competitive application process to receive funding to work with a local manufacturer to design and bring to market PA Wilds branded products that align with the brand's values.

The WCO is a value chain network of more than 600 creative entrepreneurs, organizations and communities based in the highly rural Pennsylvania Wilds region, a premier outdoor recreation destination. Together, WCO members and the PA Wilds Center are addressing PA Wilds market demands by connecting and scaling the unique establishments and producers that are central to the region's place-based tourism development.

The goal of this project is to attain a comprehensive plan for marketing the Artisan Collaborative program to customers and to develop tools to consistently promote the program beyond its pilot phase. See "Project Scope" for more details.

Timeline

RFP Issued: July 16, 2024

Responses Due: August 16, 2024

Potential Interviews: August 23 or 29, 2024

Notifications: August 30, 2024

Contract Period: September 2, 2024 - December 20, 2024

Final Deliverables Due: December 13, 2024

Budget

\$20,000 (a separate budget is available for plan implementation)

Contact

Send questions and proposals to: Forms@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 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.

About the Artisan Collaborative Initiative

The PA Wilds Artisan Collaborative will invest in rural entrepreneurs while developing new branded products that inspire pride and create new economic opportunities for local communities. This project enables artists in the Wilds Cooperative of PA – a value chain network that includes more than 150 rural artisans spanning food, craft, visual, and creative industries – to receive funding to design products inspired by the PA Wilds and that incorporate the PA Wilds brand. The program will include professional development opportunities for participating artists, such as referrals to resources to help them scale beyond the project. PA Wilds Center will cover costs related to design development, merchandise production, and marketing. PA Wilds Center offers branded commerce platforms for sales of product lines out of the gate; however, artisans will also be able to sell the products through their own channels.

The project seeks to establish a benchmark for how companies collaborate with small artisan businesses. The PA Wilds Artisan Collaborative will accomplish many outcomes beneficial to the manufacturers, artists, the PA Wilds and visitors and other consumers of PA Wilds branded products. Benefits achieved will include:

- Paid work opportunities for rural artisans and inventory purchases from local manufacturers.
- Elevating the profiles of and goodwill toward rural artisans and local manufacturers through collaborative storytelling and marketing campaigns.
- New PA Wilds branded goods will be available to consumers to meet market demand.
- Artists will establish new business connections with regional manufacturers to keep up with product demands.
- Artists will receive referrals to professional development opportunities.
- Artists will own their designs and be able to sell them.
- PA Wilds Center will have rights to use the PA Wilds licensed designs. As licensed designs, royalties will be collected on sales, supporting the PA Wilds Center's mission.
- Manufacturers will connect with a network of talented creatives in rural PA, supporting future product development collaborations.
- Investments will be tracked using a new IMS, helping to establish metrics for our region.
- This project will uplift the value of strong partnerships with cultural communities.

Project Scope

The PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship (Center) seeks a consultant to support strategic marketing planning for a new program called the Pennsylvania Wilds Artisan Collaborative, which will launch in July 2024 and run through December 31.



This Artisan Collaborative will invest in rural entrepreneurs to support the development of new PA Wilds branded products and help bring them to market to meet growing consumer demand. Through the Artisan Collaborative, four Professional Juried Artists in the Wilds Cooperative of PA (WCO) network will be selected through a competitive application process to receive funding to work with a local manufacturer to design and bring to market PA Wilds branded products that align with the brand's values.

The WCO is a value chain network of more than 600 creative entrepreneurs, organizations and communities based in the highly rural Pennsylvania Wilds region, a premier outdoor recreation destination. Together, WCO members and the PA Wilds Center are addressing PA Wilds market demands by connecting and scaling the unique establishments and producers that are central to the region's place-based tourism development.

The consultant selected for this project would support the development of a comprehensive plan for marketing the PA Wilds Artisan Collaborative program and to develop tools to consistently promote the program beyond its pilot phase. Materials developed under this proposal will include collateral for PA Wilds Center and the participating artisans and manufacturers to help tell the overall story of the program.

Creative materials developed under this contract will be used in a variety of advertisements and placements, including (but not limited to) digital, print and commercial uses ranging from social media to brochures, table tents and signage, to products and more.

Consultant Activities

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

- Evaluate & Define
 - Review Wilds Cooperative and PA Wilds branding guidelines and materials
 - Develop deeper understanding for the Wilds Cooperative network and broader PA Wilds Entrepreneurial Ecosystem's overall goals for how the Artisan Collaborative is designed
 - Review program timeline, participating manufacturers and their company stories, and product categories that will be created through the pilot.
 - Review PA Wilds Center's platforms, channels, networks and overall reach so these can be considered when developing the marketing plan.
- Recommendations & Deliverables
 - Marketing Plan
 - Finalizing marketing language and program promotional tools;
 - Identifying the program's core audience(s) and recommendations on how best to reach them within a certain budget reality (\$24,000 is secured for pilot program advertising);
 - Detailing how marketing can transition between pilot and future of the program.
 - Promotional materials for PA Wilds Center, participating artisans and manufacturers to leverage as part of raising public awareness about the initiative and the first slate of products produced. Promotional materials that align with and help implement the Marketing Plan could include:
 - Digital assets like social media graphics, templates, flyers;
 - Future contracts for content creation, such as: photography, copywriting and videos;
 - Physical program branded materials (hang tags, sales materials, etc.)



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
 - The importance of investing in small businesses to grow rooted wealth and support rural revitalization
 - Microsoft Suite and its companion tools in Google Drive
 - Client relationship management software
 - Place-based rural economic development strategies
- Understand entrepreneurial spirit and thinking
- Participate in training and professional development opportunities offered by Center staff to become more informed about the nonprofit; its mission, programs and services; and its partnership network

Proposal Requirements

Proposals will be accepted from individuals, organizations, and firms with experience supporting strategic planning and developing governance frameworks for complex partnership entities.

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, and methods;
 - Your approach to allocating time to accomplish the project outcomes;
 - 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; and
 - Specific assets and tools that you will be provide as part of the project deliverables.
- Reference Materials
 - Provide 3-5 examples of comparable past marketing campaign projects that you have managed and completed; and
 - Provide 3-5 references who can speak to your services.

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) in a multi-stakeholder planning process
- 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 companies

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 forms@pawildscenter.org by COB August 16, 2024.

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