



**PA WILDS CENTER**  
FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP



**The PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship  
Wilds Cooperative Scout**

Building, Connecting and Cultivating the WCO Value Chain Network

**Request for Proposals**

**Summary**

The PA Wilds Center is looking to contract with community based organizations in seven counties of the Pennsylvania Wilds (Clearfield, northern Centre, Cameron, Potter, Lycoming, Clarion and Tioga) to serve as Wilds Cooperative Scouts. Scouts will help to build, connect and cultivate the Wilds Cooperative of Pennsylvania (WCO) Value Chain Network. Scouts will focus on outreach to local producers and placed-based businesses that support and grow the work of the Wilds Cooperative and align with the PA Wilds Center's growth goals.

**RFP Issued:** September 28, 2018

**Responses Due:** November 2, 2018 (COB – 5 p.m.)

Send questions and proposals to: Abbi Peters, Managing Director, [apeters@pawildscenter.org](mailto:apeters@pawildscenter.org).

**Contract Amount:** A minimum of \$1500 per year (based on geographic footprint) plus additional annual performance based bonuses. The contract does not include additional funds for travel.

**Timeline:**

September 28, 2018: RFP issued

November 2, 2018 (COB): Proposals due.

December 3, 2018: Contracts awarded.

January – February 2019: Contractor onboarding sessions

January 2019 – December 2021: Contract period (performance to be reviewed on an annual basis)

---

**About Our Organization**

The PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship, Inc. (PA Wilds Center) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit whose mission is to integrate conservation and economic development in a way that strengthens and inspires communities in the Pennsylvania Wilds.

Many local partners are involved in the effort to grow the region's nature and heritage tourism industry under the Pennsylvania Wilds brand. The PA Wilds Center is the coordinating entity among these partners. The PA Wilds Center's work is sustained through partnerships, program fees, philanthropic giving, government grants, and entrepreneurial activities related to the Pennsylvania Wilds brand.

The Pennsylvania Wilds, one of the state's 11 official tourism regions, is a large rural area that covers about a quarter of the Commonwealth and is home to about 4 percent of the state's population. The 12 1/2 –county landscape is known for its two million acres of public land -- more than Yellowstone National Park. It also boasts two National Wild & Scenic Rivers, the largest wild elk herd in the Northeast and some of the darkest skies in the country. It has a rich oil and lumber heritage.

Promoting locally-made handcrafted products and tying them to the regional tourism brand and visitor experience has been a key focus of the Wilds work for 10 years. More than 200 Juried Artisans participate in The Wilds Cooperative program currently, working across a variety of mediums, from wood to pottery to photography to fibers to painting to metals to culinary arts. Their unique products allow visitors to "take home a piece of the Pennsylvania Wilds."



**PA WILDS CENTER**  
FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP



Learn more about the PA Wilds Center here: [www.pawildscenter.org](http://www.pawildscenter.org).

Learn more about The Wilds Cooperative of PA here: [www.wildcsopa.org](http://www.wildcsopa.org).

### **About Our Work**

PA Wilds Center seeks to expand our current entrepreneurial ecosystem tied to the region's growing destination and lifestyle brand. This ecosystem includes a trademarked brand (the PA Wilds logo); a regional products value chain (called The Wilds Cooperative of PA, currently 300 businesses strong); an online store (ShopthePAwilds.org) and physical brick-and-mortar locations (PA Wilds Conservation Shops) that sell products and services from this rural products value chain; regional marketing (pawilds.com and related ad campaigns); and business development tools and mentoring for businesses in our value chain.

In developing our nonprofit omnichannel retail model and value-chain, PA Wilds Center has looked at two large, multi-unit retail chains/distributors that source products/value chains from distressed rural regions. These are multi-million dollar enterprises (\$5.6M and \$27.7M in annual revenue, respectively) doing social good under similar models to ours but further along. A key differentiator is that these models source from international distressed rural regions, not from the United States, as our project does.

Where chains and big boxes can vacuum money out of tiny rural communities, our regional entrepreneurial ecosystem is being designed to do the opposite -- to systematically re-invest in, and build supports around, those toughest businesses to grow on the rural landscape -- small businesses -- helping entrepreneurs brand their products and get them to market, build skills, grow revenues, create jobs and inspire local pride. An economic force in its own right, this ecosystem is also designed to enhance community character and build the amenities that will make the region's communities -- and existing major employers there -- more competitive.

Increasing the number of businesses participating in the Center's rural value chain and expanding business development support for them, so they can keep up with demand, is vital to the Center reaching its goals. Already, with the single company store, we are feeling growing pains in our value-chain.

### **Project Scope**

Under this proposal, we're looking to contract with six individuals or organizations to serve as "Scouts" across the Wilds region, bringing more creative makers and businesses into our value-chain to meet demand.

The Pennsylvania Wilds is larger than Massachusetts. In a region of this size, it is impossible for the PA Wilds Center Team to have a full awareness of, and maintain meaningful contact with, all of the businesses across the region. We are looking for a team of Scouts that can focus on their defined footprint, helping to find, connect and cultivate the types of businesses that will help the WCO value chain grow. This will in turn help the region's communities thrive. This is a pilot program, in which Scouts will focus on defining their footprint within the following counties: Cameron, Clarion, Jefferson, Clearfield, northern Centre, Lycoming, Potter, and Tioga.

The PA Wilds Center has programs and resources that serve individuals, businesses, nonprofits and communities. The successful contractor will be trained on the PA Wilds Center's Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Structure and goals, and then expected to use their network to set up presentations and other outreach efforts (tours, site visits, etc.) to help businesses and communities understand the opportunities of this value chain and identify products/services that they could be pitching to the value chain.

The contractor will be trained on The PA Wilds Entrepreneurial Ecosystem, which includes the following programs:

**The Wilds Cooperative of PA:** A value chain network of nearly 300 businesses, this is the PA Wilds Center's main business development program. It focuses on growing the kinds of unique businesses that are central to place-based



**PA WILDS CENTER**  
FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP



tourism development (artisans, craft micro-producers, B&Bs, unique restaurants and retailers, etc). This is a juried program (for producers) with dues (\$25-\$105 annually).

**Pennsylvania Wilds Licensing:** This program offers businesses a way to expand their product lines by developing PA Wilds-branded products for wholesale and retail. It also allows outdoor recreation events, festivals, etc. to use the Wilds logo to help promote their event, while simultaneously inspiring pride in place.

**PA Wilds Conservation Shop:** An omnichannel commerce platform (online and brick-and-mortar) where we sell products from our value chain. The buying practices for the PA Wilds Conservation Shop maintain that a minimum of 90% of the inventory for the commerce platform is purchased from local businesses and micro producers in The Wilds Cooperative and PA Wilds Licensing programs.

**Regional Marketing:** Sustained regional marketing through media content platforms and marketing campaigns to promote visitation to the region and the purchase of local products and services.

**Professional Development:** Branding and marketing tools; access to new markets; educational and networking opportunities; and mentorship/referrals to PA's service provider network (financing, business planning etc.).

**Contractors will have access to additional resources, including:**

**WCO Value Chain Toolkit:** This will include a standard presentation and handouts about the Wilds Cooperative, its role as a Value Chain, and information on how to join.

[PA Wilds Center 2016-2017 Annual Report](#)

[PA Wilds 2018-2021 Strategic Plan](#)

[Value Chain information](#)

### **Contractor Requirements**

Contractor must:

- Understand entrepreneurial spirit and thinking;
- be a member of the WCO in good standing or willing to join;
- have access to internal resources/info on regional data (help secure baseline and informing / expanding on data)
- attend an in-person training workshop on an annual basis (lunch will be provided);
- attend jury sessions for new Wilds Cooperative Members (as needed);
- hit annual outreach minimums (to be established in final contract); and,
- consider participating in additional entrepreneurship training opportunities as presented by the PA Wilds Center.

### **Technical Requirements**

Contractor will be required to have:

- a smart phone
- a laptop with basic office software (Word, Excel, PowerPoint)
- a dependable vehicle
- internet
- office space
- access to and working knowledge of Google Drive and Gmail



**PA WILDS CENTER**  
FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP



### **Budget Details**

Contractor will be paid a minimum of \$1500 per year (contract amount will be based on geographic footprint of outreach area), plus the opportunity to earn an annual bonus based on performance has determined by outreach metrics (as established by the PA Wilds Center, to be outlined in final contract). The contract does not include additional funds for travel, all mileage and expenses incurred during outreach activities are the responsibility of the contractor.

### **Additional Benefits**

Contractor will also receive:

- (1) complimentary ticket to the Annual PA Wilds Dinner (2019, 2020 and 2021 events)
- (1) PA Wilds tote bag
- \$100 credit (one time) for PA Wilds branded apparel purchased through the PA Wilds Conservation Shop
- 20% discount to PA Wilds Conservation Shop
- WCO membership fees waived for the organization (while under contract)

### **Proposal Requirements**

Please submit your proposal in pdf format to Abbi Peters, Managing Director, by COB November 2, 2018. Files over 5MB should be sent using a Dropbox or similar file share method.

Include the following in your proposal response:

- Cover letter summarizing your business' qualifications to perform this type of targeted outreach, identifying the county (or counties) you plan to work in, and explaining why you joined The Wilds Cooperative and the value it has brought to your organization.
- General description of your operation (include total number of staff, and identify who will be assigned as the lead in your organization for fulfilling the contract) and mission statement (if applicable).
- General description of your current role in the community and the network of businesses located in the footprint you propose to cover.
- Describe the experience your business/organization has in recruiting businesses around specific product development, licensing or tourism activities. Please provide examples.
- Links to your organization's social media handles and websites.

### **RFP & Project Timeline Details**

RFP Issued: September 28, 2018

Responses due: (COB) November 2, 2018

Contractors announced: December 3, 2018

Contractor onboarding sessions: January – February 2019

Contract period: January 2019 – December 2021 (performance to be reviewed on an annual basis)