LYCOMING COUNTY RESOURCE GUIDE

Below is a listing of programs available to place-based businesses, entrepreneurs, nonprofits and governments in Lycoming County, including business loans, grants and tax credit programs, technical assistance, marketing resources and recognition programs.

Some grant programs may require collaboration with a nonprofit organization. Every effort is made to ensure that program details are current, but applicants should double-check information with program managers before applying. Programs may have additional requirements.

Inclusion here does not imply endorsement.

Have an update or a new program you think should be listed here? Email details to wildscopa@pawildscenter.org.

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LOANS

Ben Franklin Technology Partners: The award-winning Ben Franklin Technology Partners is one of the nation's longest-running technology-based economic development programs. For over 31 years, BFTP has provided early-stage and established companies with funding, business and technical expertise and access to a network of innovative, expert resources. BFTP couples its financial commitment with access to a wide range of mentoring, business and technology development services. BFTP delivers hands-on technical and business expertise, providing both early-stage and established companies with a wide range of business and technical assistance. This includes business plan reviews, technical assessments, intellectual property counsel, marketing advice, operations and fund-raising strategies. Find out more at www.benfranklin.org/what-is-bftp/.

Commercial Facade Improvement Program: The City of Williamsport offers a low interest loan for repairs and improvements of exterior of commercial property. Money can be used for roofing, window and door replacement, lighting, painting, accessibility accommodations or correction of pre-existing hazardous conditions.   Loan is maximum of $10,000 with a 3% interest rate. Requires monthly repayments and a ten year repayment term. Visit www.cityofwilliamsport.org or contact the Williamsport Community Development Office at 570-327-7511.

Community Economic Development Loan Program: The Community Economic Development loan is available to for-profit small businesses involved in the business-to-public service, mercantile, commercial, or point of sale retail sectors. A small business is defined as having 100 or fewer full-time employees. In order to receive a loan under this program, a small business must demonstrate a positive direct impact on the community in which it is located, on residents of that community, or on the local and/or regional economy. Funds can be used for land acquisition, site improvements, acquisition of existing buildings, building renovation, leasehold improvements, new construction, machinery and equipment, working capital and certain soft costs. Loans are up to $100,000 or 50% of eligible project costs, whichever is less. For more information contact SEDA-COG at 570-524-4491, finance@seda-cog.org or visit them online at www.seda-cog.org.

Enterprise Development Fund: The Enterprise Development Fund is a non-territorial organization that provides loans to all businesses in the north western region of Pennsylvania along with Ohio and New York. Loans can be used for working capital, machinery, equipment and real estate. The maximum is $500,000 and there are requirements for equity contribution. For more information, visit them online at edcec.org or contact Rebecca Wurst at 814-899-6022 or rwurst@developerie.com.

Industrial Properties Corporation Revolving Loan Fund: Industrial Properties Corporation offers the Revolving Loan Fund to businesses with less $1 million annual gross sales or employing less than 50 people in Lycoming County. Loans can be used for new construction, leasehold improvements, machinery, equipment, buildings and working capital. Maximum amount is $50,000. For more information, visit their website at williamsport.org or contact Nancy J. Eischeid at 570-326-1971 or neischeid@williamsport.org.

PennCAP Program: The Pennsylvania Capital Access Program (PennCAP) provides a loan guarantee to small businesses based on a portfolio concept. The Pennsylvania Economic Development Financing Authority (PEDFA) provides capital to guarantee loans made through participating lending institutions in conjunction with the program. The program is a partnership between the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and participating PennCAP banks. Most companies authorized to do business in Pennsylvania will qualify for a PennCAP loan. Start-up businesses may be financed through PennCAP. PennCAP proceeds can be used for the purchase of land, buildings, machinery, equipment and working capital. The maximum PennCAP loan amount is $500,000. Minimum loan amounts are established by each participating bank. To learn more information about the PennCAP Program, please visit https://dced.pa.gov/programs/pennsylvania-capital-access-program-penncap/

The Progress Fund: The Progress Fund is a non-profit financial institution based in Southwestern Pennsylvania but offers loans across the PA Wilds region. The Progress Fund specializes in loaning to tourism businesses (past clients include a canoe livery, vodka distiller, historic tavern, art studio, hardware store, cabins, white water rafting company, coffee shop, winery and others). Find them online at: www.progressfund.org or call 724-216-9160.

Rural Energy for America Program (REAP): REAP provides guaranteed loan financing and grant funding to agricultural producers with at least half of their gross income coming from the agricultural operation and rural small businesses in a town with a population of fewer than 50,000 inhabitants to purchase or install renewable energy systems, or make energy efficiency improvements. Energy efficiency projects require an energy audit or assessment completed by an independent third party. Applications can be submitted any time throughout the year but will be evaluated and awarded after various deadlines. Learn more here.

SBA 504 Loan Program: This loan is for businesses with a net worth less than $15 million and profit after tax less than $5 million. Funds can be used for land acquisition, site improvements, acquisition of existing buildings, building renovation, leasehold improvements, new construction, machinery and equipment, furniture and fixtures, engineering fees, architectural fees, appraisal fees and environmental fees. Loans cannot be used for working capital, venture capital or investment purposes. Gross amount of the loan can be up to $5,000,000 for regular loans, $5,500,000 for Public Policy Goal loans, and $5,500,000 for small manufacturers or 40% of the total eligible project costs, whichever is less. For more information about the interest rates, terms, and equity requirements, call 570-524-4491 or visit www.sedacogldc.org.

SEDA - Council of Governments: SEDA-COG is based in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, and offers a variety of low-interest loan programs to start-ups and existing businesses in Lycoming, Clinton and Centre counties (and other counties outside the PA Wilds). They can package First Industries loans and other state loan programs and also have other pools of money to draw upon. Call 570-524-4491 or visit them online at www.seda-cog.org.

SEDA-COG's U.S.D.A. Intermediary Relending Program: This loan is for any for-profit or non-profit small business in Centre, Clinton and Lycoming counties are eligible for this loan. Loan limit is $250,000 or 50 percent of the eligible project costs, whichever is less. Money can be used for machinery and equipment, working capital, land acquisition, site improvements, acquisition of existing building, building renovations, leasehold improvements, new construction, refinancing (restrictions apply) and certain soft costs. Established businesses must provide a minimum of 10 percent of project costs; start-ups or change in ownership must provide 15 percent. One job must be created or in some cases retained within three years for every $25,000 of funds borrowed. Contact SEDA-COG at 570-524-4491 or finance@seda-cog.org or visit them online at www.seda-cog.org.

Small Business First: This low-interest loan is geared toward a number of small business enterprises with 100 or fewer employees. Loan limit is $200,000 or 50 percent of total eligible project costs, whichever is less.

Money can be used on land and building acquisition; construction; machinery and equipment; working capital (limited to $100,000). Requirements include job creation. For more information contact SEDA-COG at 570-524-4491, finance@seda-cog.org or visit them online at www.seda-cog.org.

Small Business Pollution Prevention Assistance Account (PPAA) Loan Program: PPAA provides low interest loans to small businesses undertaking projects (located within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania) that reduce waste, pollution or energy use. Loans will be used to fund 75 percent of the total eligible project cost, up to a maximum of $100,000. Small businesses with 100 or fewer full-time employees are eligible. The loan interest rate is 2% and has a maximum term of 10 years. This funding can help small businesses comply with environmental regulations while receiving the economic benefits of preventing pollution and using energy more efficiently. Visit the PPAA Loan website for additional information.

Small Business Pollution Prevention Assistance Account (PPAA) Loan Program: PPAA provides low interest loans to small businesses undertaking projects (located within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania) that reduce waste, pollution or energy use. Loans will be used to fund 75 percent of the total eligible project cost, up to a maximum of $100,000. Small businesses with 100 or fewer full-time employees are eligible. The loan interest rate is 2% and has a maximum term of 10 years. This funding can help small businesses comply with environmental regulations while receiving the economic benefits of preventing pollution and using energy more efficiently. Visit the PPAA Loan website for additional information.

Williamsport Micro Enterprise Loan: This program is for commercial enterprises in the City of Williamsport with five or fewer employees, including the owner. The owner or at least 51 percent of employees must be of low to moderate income to qualify. Loans of up to $10,000 are available. Interest rate is 3 percent. Funds can be used to: provide credit to establish, stabilize or expand an eligible micro enterprise; provide technical assistance; provide general support to the business. An application and business plan are required. Program is dependent on funding. Visit www.cityofwilliamsport.org or contact the Williamsport Community Development Office at 570-327-7511.

Williamsport Shopsteading Loan Program: This program offers financial assistance to private economic development projects in the City of Williamsport. Maximum assistance is $100,000 at 4 percent interest. To be eligible a project must: provide at least two dollars of financing for each dollar of assistance; create or retain jobs for people, at least 51% of whom are low to moderate income; for every $15,000 of assistance, one job must be created or retained. Program is dependent on funding. Visit www.cityofwilliamsport.org or contact the Williamsport Community Development Office at 570-327-7511.

GRANTS AND TAX CREDITS

Act 129 Rebates: Pennsylvania utilities have energy incentive programs under Act 129 that provide rebates for the purchase of new equipment for lighting systems, HVAC, motors, and other equipment. The final rebate

amount is determined for each project individually but generally ranges from $0.025/kWh to $0.05/kWh of energy saved. Pre-approval is recommended for all projects prior to commencing construction. Based on the utility company that covers your area, you can learn more at either the Pennsylvania Electric, West Penn Power, or PPL Utilities Corp. websites.

Challenge America Grant Program – The National Endowment for the Arts: The Challenge America grant offers support primarily to small and mid-sized organizations for projects that extend the reach of the arts to underserved populations – those whose opportunities to experience the arts are limited by geography, ethnicity, economics, or disability. Age alone (e.g., youth, seniors) does not qualify a group as underserved; at least one of the underserved characteristics noted above also must be present. Challenge America grants are limited to specific types of projects and are for a fixed amount of $10,000 and require a minimum $10,000 match. Within the Challenge America category, the Public Art project type is intended to support primarily visual arts projects, which may be temporary or permanent, such as murals, sculptures, multimedia, or environmental art, developed through a meaningful community engagement process. A policy limits consecutive-year NEA grant funding. To learn more about this program, visit its website at www.arts.gov/grants-organizations/challenge-america/grant-program-description.

First Community Foundation Partnership of Pennsylvania (FCFP) grants: Founded in 1916, First Community Foundation Partnership is the leading resource for philanthropists in North Central PA. FCFP manages several grant funds for specific focus areas that serve communities throughout their service area. The Williamsport Lycoming Competitive Grant Cycle considers requests from qualified 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations serving the residents of the City of Williamsport and Lycoming County, with missions relating to art & culture, education, health & human services, youth, environment, and economic development. Nonprofit organizations that are qualified to receive tax-exempt contributions as defined by the IRS – in the vast majority of cases, applicants will be 501(c)(3) organizations, or a unit of local government as described in Section 170(c)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code. However, nonprofit organizations without 501(c)(3) status may work through another qualified 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that is willing to serve as a Fiscal Sponsor. Applicants must apply with a minimum request of $10,000 – maximum request of $250,000. A majority of applicants' programs must benefit the residents of Lycoming County. Learn more at https://www.fcfpartnership.org/grants-scholarships/grants/.

Grants for Arts Projects – The National Endowment for the Arts: Grants for Arts Projects is the National Endowment for the Arts' principal grants program for organizations. Through project-based funding, NEA supports public engagement with, and access to, various forms of excellent art across the nation, the creation of art that meets the highest standards of excellence, learning in the arts at all stages of life, and the integration of the arts into the fabric of community life. Projects may be large or small, existing or new. These grants support artistically excellent projects that celebrate creativity and cultural heritage, invite mutual respect for differing beliefs and values, and enrich humanity. Matching grants generally range from $10,000 to $100,000. A minimum cost share/match equal to the grant amount is required. The NEA funds projects only. Projects may

consist of one or more specific events or activities. Projects do not have to be new. Excellent existing projects can be just as competitive as new ones. Visit https://www.arts.gov/grants/grants-for-arts-projects to learn more.

Lumber Heritage Region Mini Grants: The Lumber Heritage Region of PA, Inc. occasionally offers a mini-grant program for eligible projects throughout the region. Funding for the Lumber Heritage Region, LHR, Mini-Grant Program is provided through the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Bureau of Recreation and Conservation (BRC) and thus must adhere to all statewide rules and regulations. Eligible applicants for the program would include non-profit 501(c)3 organizations, municipalities, COG's, Conservation Districts, Educational Institutions, and Housing and Redevelopment Authorities. The project must be located within the Lumber Heritage Region boundaries. To learn more visit www.lumberheritage.org/grants/.

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR): Dedicated to serving Pennsylvanians with disabilities who want to work, the OVR provides a wide range of services just for employers to meet recruitment and hiring needs. The OVR matches prescreened, qualified candidates to business requirements, and provides follow-up and support to make sure both the employee and the employer are satisfied. In addition to offering on-the-job training and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) technical assistance among other employer services and business incentives, they also offer tax breaks for hiring persons with disabilities and for making improvements to facilities making them accessible to persons with disabilities:

- **Disabled Tax Credit**: The Disabled Tax Credit is specifically geared to eligible small businesses for meeting increased expenses incurred in complying with the ADA. To qualify, a business must have fewer than 30 employees or a gross yearly income of less than $1 million. The maximum that can be claimed in any tax year under this provision is $5,125, as the allowable amount of tax credit is equal to 50 percent of the expenditures in excess of $250, but not more than $10,250. Eligible expenditures may include removing architectural, communication, or transportation barriers, providing qualified readers, taped texts, interpreters, the myriad of technical assistive devices, and offsetting the purchase or modification of equipment and devices for individuals with disabilities.
- **Architectural and Transportation Barrier Removal Tax Deduction**: Any private business may claim up to $15,000 per tax year for making its premises or public transportation vehicles more accessible to persons with disabilities or the elderly. Eligible expenditures may include installing ramps, widening doorways, modifying restrooms, or equipping a shuttle van with a lift.

For more information about these tax breaks and other OVR benefits and services, contact an Employer Representative at one of the two District Offices listed below that serve Lycoming County:
- Williamsport Vocational Rehabilitation Services (Serving Clinton, Lycoming, Potter and Tioga counties) at The Grit Building, Suite 102, 208 W. 3rd Street, Williamsport, PA 17701, or by phone at 570-327-3600 Voice, 570-327-3620 TTY, 800-442-6359 Voice (Toll-free within PA) or 800-654-5984 TTY (Toll-free within PA).
- Altoona Blindness & Visual Services (Serving Centre, Clinton, and Lycoming counties) at 1130 12th Ave., Suite 300, Altoona, PA 16601, or phone 814-946-7330 Voice, 866-695-7673 Voice (Toll-free within PA) or 844-242-1060 TTY (Toll-free within PA).

The Our Town Grant Program – The National Endowment for the Arts – Supports creative placemaking projects that integrate arts, culture, and design activities into efforts that strengthen communities or provide opportunities for the arts to be integrated into the fabric of a community by advancing local economic, physical, and/or social improvements. Creative placemaking is when artists, organizations, and community development practitioners deliberately integrate arts and culture into community revitalization work. This funding supports strategies to enhance the quality of life and opportunity for existing residents, bring attention to key cultural, historical, and community assets, and revitalize or reinforce a community's distinct sense of place. Our Town requires a partnership between a local government entity and nonprofit organization, one of which must be a cultural organization; and should partner with other sectors (such as agriculture and food, education and youth, economic development, environment and energy, health, housing, public safety, transportation, and workforce development). Projects may include arts engagements such as artist residencies, arts festivals, community art co-creations, performances, public artworks, cultural planning, design of artist space, cultural facilities, public space, and community planning, and artist and creative industry support. Our Town offers support for projects with matching grants ranging from $25,000 to $150,000. Learn more on this program at its NEA website.

PAsmart Industry Partnership Grants: Through Industry Partnerships (IPs), businesses are partnering to build stronger, more competitive industries through training, networking, recruitment, and collaboration to raise career and industry awareness. PAsmart Industry Partnership grants provide funds to support the development, launch, implementation, and technical assistance of IPs that are demand-driven in addressing the workforce, economic development, and educational needs of Pennsylvania industries. For more information about Industry Partnerships, contact Shuana Davis at shesdavis@pa.gov or at 717-571-4806, or visit https://www.dli.pa.gov/Businesses/Workforce-Development/Pages/Industry-Partnerships.aspx for additional resources.

PA Wilds Mini Grants: PA Wilds Center operates occasional mini grant programs for businesses, nonprofits and communities. The focus, amount and timing of the mini grant offering changes depending on funding source and other parameters, but the program is always tied to PA Wilds strategies. Past offerings have included signage grants, design assistance grants (connected to the PA Wilds Design Guide for Community Character Stewardship), and grants that advance nature and heritage tourism projects in the region. To stay up to date on mini grant offerings, sign up for our e-newsletter on the homepage of www.pawildscenter.org, or check out the "Mini Grants" under the site's "Programs & Services" tab.

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (DCNR): DCNR offers competitive grant opportunities that may be of interest to local governments and recreation and conservation organizations through its Community Conservation and Partnerships Program (C2P2). C2P2 grants fund projects related to parks, recreation and conservation, including planning, acquisition, and development of public parks; recreation areas; motorized and non-motorized trails; river conservation and access; and conservation of open space. Grants also support regional and statewide partnerships that build capacity to better develop and manage resources. Applications for DCNR's C2P2 grants are accepted once a year, typically during the spring. In addition, DCNR also offers special grants periodically. Learn more at

www.dcnr.pa.gov/Communities/Grants/, or by contacting Wes Fahringer, the Northcentral Region Advisor for Potter, Cameron, Clinton, Centre, Tioga and Lycoming Counties, at 570-401-2465 or mfahringer@pa.gov.

Pennsylvania Partners in the Arts (PPA) – Is a partnership between local organizations and Pennsylvania Council on the Arts (PCA), a state agency whose mission is to foster excellence, diversity and vitality of the arts and to broaden the availability and appreciation of those arts throughout the state. Operating in all 67 PA counties, PPA re-grants funds to support a variety of local and community arts activities. The PPA Program is administered by 14 local partners statewide. PPA offers Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator Program (CEAP), Entry to Program Stream, and Program Stream grants for art-related projects and organizations. CEAP is designed to pair access to existing small business consulting services with financial resources up to $2,000 for PA creative entrepreneurs who aspire to start their own for-profit business or who operate an existing for-profit micro business within at least one creative industry area, which include marketing, architecture, visual arts and crafts, design, film and media, digital games, music and entertainment, and publishing. With the PCA's overarching value of diversity, equity, and inclusion, CEAP prioritizes investment in creative entrepreneurs who identify as Black, Indigenous, or persons of color or those located in and whose work benefits low-income communities. Entry to Program Stream and Program Stream supports qualified applicants that provide artistic programming and/or arts services in Pennsylvania that expand constituent access to the arts, increase awareness and advocacy for arts funding at all levels, and enable the PCA to provide increased assistance. Generally, grant amounts will range from $2,000 to $3,000 for the Entry to Program Stream. Organizations or programs stay in Entry to Program Stream until recommended for Program Stream, based on panel review and assessment totals. Once in Program Stream, generally, grants range from $3,000 to $5,000. Learn more on the CEAP and Program Stream landing pages on the PPA website, or by contacting your PPA Partner, The Community Giving Foundation: Christine Orlando at 570-752-3930 x 2, corlando@csgiving.org, or 725 West Front Street, Berwick, PA 18603.

PennTAP Energy Grants and Rebates: The Pennsylvania Technical Assistance Program (PennTAP) at Penn State is a statewide technical assistance organization with a network of expert technical advisors that supports Pennsylvania businesses and anchor institutions — including manufacturers, municipalities, educational institutions, entrepreneurs, farmers, and economic development agencies. The PennTAP team can assist with opportunities for funding to assist with efforts to improve efficiency and reduce energy-related costs, which often require investment in new equipment, technology, or controls. PennTAP advisors help identify funding programs available to businesses, help determine the right grants for each company and project needs, provide estimates of project payback, and assist with grant and rebate applications and required paperwork. A limited amount of free assistance is available. Call 814-865-0427, email penntap@psu.edu, or visit https://penntap.psu.edu/ for the most up-to-date information on funding for which your organization may qualify.

Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit Program: This program offers federal income tax credits as an incentive for private property owners to rehabilitate historic properties for income-producing uses. Generally speaking, if you rehab the building to the requirements you're eligible to get 10 to 20 percent of your costs returned at tax time. This program does not provide funding up front. It is important to research and apply to

this program prior to starting work. The National Park Service administers this program at the federal level. Visit https://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives.htm for details.

River Sojourn Grants: The PA Organization for Watersheds and Rivers offers competitive grants for single and multi-day paddling events on Pennsylvania rivers. Sojourns must incorporate significant educational programming, and be open to all participants (i.e., private trips are not eligible). To learn more, go to: https://pawatersheds.org/sojourns/apply-for-a-mini-grant/.

Small Business Advantage Grant Program: This grant provides assistance to small businesses in Pennsylvania with 100 or fewer full-time employees to incorporate pollution prevention or energy-efficient equipment or processes that reduce waste to increase the business's competitiveness while simultaneously improving the environment of Pennsylvania residents. The program provides 50% matching grants, up to a maximum of $5,000, and must save the small business a minimum of $500 and at least 25% annually in energy consumption or pollution prevention related expenses (Natural Resource Protection projects are exempt). Visit here for more information or by contacting 717-772-5160 or epadvantagegrant@pa.gov.

Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC): The WOTC is a federal tax credit available to employers for hiring individuals from specific target groups, which include numerous qualified candidates such as veterans, who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment. WOTC incentivizes workplace diversity and facilitates access to good jobs for American workers, helping targeted employees move from economic dependency to self-sufficiency while earning a steady income and becoming contributing taxpayers. Employers generally can earn a tax credit equal to 25% or 40% of a new employee's first-year wages, up to the maximum for the target group to which the employee belongs. For questions, contact the Tax Credit Services Unit at 800-345-2555 or RA-BWPO-TaxCredits@pa.gov. To learn more, visit https://www.dli.pa.gov/Businesses/Workforce-Development/WOTC/Pages/default.aspx.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Covation Center: The Covation Center at 217 W. Fourth St., Williamsport, PA 17701, is a non-profit organization committed to providing co-working space, business coaching, referral assistance, and training for small businesses and start-ups. Supporting businesses by enhancing co-working, community, and coaching, the center offers free community membership with the selection of a membership level at one's leisure. Call 570-435-1993 or visit https://covationcenter.org/ to learn more.

DEP Small Business Assistance Program: Complying with environmental regulations can be difficult, especially for small businesses. Recognizing this, DEP created the Small Business Assistance Program, which assists small businesses with regulatory compliance, provides information on cost saving pollution prevention practices, and ensures consideration of small businesses in development of new regulations. Learn more here.

Energy and Operational Assessments: PennTAP Technical Advisors can assist small to mid-sized Pennsylvania manufacturers assess and address energy, efficiency, and sustainability challenges by a systematic "low-cost/no-cost" approach to periodically re-commission a building to restore or exceed the building's original energy performance known as building re-tuning (BRT), providing pollution prevention and energy efficiency (P2/E2) on-site or virtual assessments, performing economy-energy-environment (E3) assessments and employee training, and delivering training pertaining to energy management systems, ISO 50001, and Superior Energy Performance (SEP) certification and implementation, including a no-cost DOE 50001 Ready Navigator program for manufacturers. For more information, call 814-865-0427, email penntap@psu.edu, or visit them online at https://penntap.psu.edu/.

PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship: Founded in 2013, this regional non-profit is dedicated to integrating conservation and economic development in a way that strengthens and inspires communities in the Pennsylvania Wilds. The Center operates several programs for businesses and communities, including The Wilds Cooperative of PA, PA Wilds Mini Grants, PA Wilds Design Guide for Community Character Stewardship, PA Wilds Licensing, PA Wilds Conservation Shops and PA Wilds Champion Awards. Many of these programs are outlined on this resource sheet. To learn more, go to www.pawildscenter.org.

> **PA Wilds Conservation Shops:** PA Wilds Center operates this growing network of online and physical gift shops. To be eligible to sell wholesale to the Conservation Shop, businesses must be members of The Wilds Cooperative of PA (see previous listing).

> **PA Wilds Design Assistance Program:** The PA Wilds Design Assistance Program was created based on the idea that early, strategic and coordinated regional planning for new development will protect the authentic character and lifestyle of the Pennsylvania Wilds. At the core of the program is the PA Wilds Design Guide for Community Character Stewardship, now in its second edition, published in 2017. The Design Guide is a voluntary planning document that highlights how communities in the Pennsylvania Wilds can protect or enhance their unique community character as they grow – whether that growth is due to tourism, other economic development planning, resource extraction or other industries. The Design Guide can be downloaded in its entirety, or individual chapters that are targeted towards a particular project may be downloaded individually. For more information, or to download the free guide, visit www.pawildscenter.org/community-character-stewardship/.

> **PA Wilds Licensing:** The PA Wilds Licensing Program provides a way for businesses and organizations to apply to use the PA Wilds logo for marketing and merchandising use to help them leverage their business and community development efforts. Licensees must be members of The Wilds Cooperative of Pennsylvania (see previous listing). To learn more about how to apply to use this trademark, go to www.pawildscenter.org/use-the-pa-wilds-brand/.

> **PA Wilds Media Lab**: This business accelerator space at 61 N. Fraley Street, 2nd Floor, in Kane, PA, will be the PA Wilds Center's first office and program space. The 5000-square-foot area, located on the

second floor of an older Main Street-type building, will have tools, technologies, and classroom space to support the nonprofit's expanding entrepreneurial ecosystem and its regional partnership work. PA Wilds Center staff plan to use the Media Lab to develop content to continue to market the region as a premier outdoor recreation destination, and to support the PA Wilds-branded online marketplace to help rural entrepreneurs reach new markets. Later on, it plans to open the Media Lab to the 350+ businesses and organizations in its free Wilds Cooperative network for low-cost use of its equipment. Additional details will be announced soon, and visit https://www.pawildscenter.org/tag/media-lab/ to follow updates on the space's progress.

The Wilds Cooperative of PA: The Wilds Cooperative of PA is the main business development program of the PA Wilds Center. It focuses on growing and connecting the kinds of unique businesses and establishments at the heart of place-based nature tourism development – B&Bs, artisan and craft producers, specialty retailers, breweries, wineries, galleries, state parks, etc. The program is juried and member-based and assists businesses with marketing and branding tools; education and networking opportunities with similar kinds of businesses; access to new markets; and referrals to PA's service provider network (lenders, technical providers, etc). See www.wildscopa.org for membership guidelines, or contact: ECCOTA/Wilds Cooperative Staff Support, 814-772-7051 or wildscopa@pawildscenter.org.

Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Centers (IRCs): PA's seven IRCs serve as the state's lead economic development organizations, providing technical assistance and offering resources and events to the manufacturing community in order to assist companies with improved bottom line strategies, productivity enhancement, and waste elimination, and with topline growth by supporting strategic initiatives, new and improved products, market differentiation, and workforce development strategies. Funds will be awarded based upon submission and review of IRC proposals and work plans demonstrating regional needs, number of manufacturers, proposed projects, and projected impacts. Learn more about the IRC that serves Lycoming County, the Innovative Manufacturers' Center, at https://imcpa.com/.

Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers: These organizations provide educational programs and no-cost, confidential consulting services to entrepreneurs looking to start or grow a business. SBDC consultants work with entrepreneurs one-to-one to help test new business ideas, shape business plans, or investigate funding opportunities. There are 16 university-based centers in Pennsylvania with more than 90 outreach locations. SBDCs are often the first stop for entrepreneurs. The SBDC serving Lycoming County is the Penn State SBDC. Learn more at www.sbdc.psu.edu/.

PennTap Information Technology Help: PennTAP (Pennsylvania Technical Assistance Program), an Outreach arm of Penn State University, can help small businesses with a host of technology-related questions regarding the internet, website development, software selection, connectivity, security, networks and computer systems. A limited amount of free assistance is available. Contact Donna Yale, Advanced IT Team Lead, at 570-596-3585 or dyale@psu.edu or visit them online at http://www.penntap.psu.edu.

Product Development and Innovation Services: PennTAP (Pennsylvania Technical Assistance Program), an Outreach arm of Penn State University, can assist businesses and startups with a number of issues related to product development, such as feasibility of product design, assistance addressing design and material issues, connection with prototype development and manufacturing resources, business development resources for market research and commercialization planning, entrepreneurial coaching and connecting small businesses to the scientific and technical expertise within Penn State University and the federal laboratory system. For more information contact Tim Kerchinski, Team Lead for Innovation at 814-865-4388 or txk128@psu.edu or visit them online at www.penntap.psu.edu.

Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE): SCORE is a nonprofit association with a network of more than 13,000 volunteers dedicated to educating entrepreneurs and helping small businesses start, grow, and succeed nationwide by offering confidential business counseling services at no charge. SCORE is a resource partner with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and has been mentoring small business owners for more than 40 years. Representing more than 3,000 years of experience across 62 industries, SCORE volunteers have the knowledge and experience to help any small business owner get the help they need. SCORE also provides resources, templates, tools, and local workshops and events throughout the country to connect small business owners with the people and information they need to start, grow, and maintain their businesses, as well as online workshops available 24/7. Call 1-800-634-0245 or visit https://www.score.org/find-location?state=PA to learn more.

University Engagement Services: A department within the Penn State Office of Industrial Partnerships, PennTAP acts as the connection point between small to medium-sized businesses across the state and Penn State student and faculty communities seeking opportunities to engage with industry. PennTAP's expansive network of industry professionals is eager to connect with academics from Penn State looking to apply their knowledge to improve and innovate the industry space. The PennTAP team offers access to an abundance of university resources, including faculty expertise, research centers, state of the art facilities as well as students (for example, having senior engineering students work on one of your backburner projects for free as part of a capstone course), and connections to a network of government entities and private groups. A limited amount of free assistance is available. For more information, call 814-865-0427, email penntap@psu.edu, or visit https://penntap.psu.edu/.

HIRING AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Apprenticeship Program Registrations: The Apprenticeship and Training Office (ATO) within the PA Department of Labor & Industry is responsible for guiding and promoting the expansion of apprenticeship programs across the state. Apprenticeships are innovative training programs that allow employers to develop and prepare their future workforce while providing individuals with a learn-while-you-earn approach to career development. Apprenticeships include paid jobs where apprentices are paid employees who produce high-quality work while they learn skills that enhance their employers' needs, on-the-job learning that develops

skilled workers through structured learning in a work setting, classroom learning that improves job-related skills through education in a classroom setting (virtual or in-person), and mentorships which provide apprentices with the support of a skilled worker to assist and enhance critical hands-on-learning. Portable, nationally-recognized credentials will be issued at the completion of the program. Looking to increase the number of Registered Apprenticeship opportunities in PA, including expansion into non-traditional occupations and underrepresented populations, the ATO supports sponsors with resources they need to implement high-quality apprenticeships programs, including through technical assistance, strategic planning and ecosystem building, education and advocacy, and funding opportunities such as the PAsmart grant program. For more on apprenticeships, contact the PA Department Of Labor & Industry, Apprenticeship and Training Office, 651 Boas Street, 12th Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17121, by email at Apprenticeship@pa.gov, by phone at 717-783-5857, or online at https://www.pacareerlink.pa.gov/jponline/Apprenticeships.

Federal Bonding: The Federal Bonding Program was created as an incentive to employers to hire at-risk, hard-to-place job seekers and may provide a business insurance policy that protects an employer against loss of money or property due to employee dishonesty. The bond is good for six months up to the amount of $5,000 at no cost. To request a Federal Bond, the employer must call the Bonding Coordinator for a phone interview on the new employee's start date. A confirmation letter is then sent to the company and McLaughlin Company, which issues the bond directly to the employer. Contact the State Bonding Coordinator at 717-783-3676 or 1-800-345-2555, or visit www.dli.pa.gov/Businesses/Finding-Skilled-Workers/Pages/FederalBondingProgram.

Incumbent Worker Training: This training is provided to a current employee(s) (incumbent worker(s)) to meet the needs of an employer for an in-demand occupation (as determined at the local workforce service delivery system level) and assists an employer to retain a skilled workforce or avert the need to lay off employees, increase the competitiveness of the employer or employee, and are conducted with a commitment by the employer to retain or avert the layoffs of the incumbent worker trained. Such training may also include the up-skilling of an employer's current workforce, which may lead to additional opportunities for potential jobseekers. Pennsylvania's local workforce development boards, or LWDBs, are part of the public workforce system – a network of state and local providers and programs that support local and regional economic development, and the education and training of Pennsylvania's workforce. LWDBs connect the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry with PA CareerLink services for job seekers, workers, training providers, and employers. For more information on incumbent worker training, contact the LWDB that serves Lycoming County: Central Pennsylvania Workforce Development Board at 570-568-6868 or https://advancecentralpa.org/.

PA CareerLink services for employers: PA CareerLink is part of the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry's initiative to transform the landscape of how job-seekers find family-sustaining jobs and how employers find the skilled candidates that they need. Through this initiative, a user-friendly job-matching system was created to help bridge the gap between job-seekers and employers. It is easy for employers to search the talent pool in PA CareerLink and receive detailed information about job-seekers, create a job posting, get candidate recommendations, and connect with candidates for free. Benefits of the system include

sorting and filtering capabilities for managing referral lists, free business service team consulting to help find job candidates, keeping track of candidates associated with your job posting, saving customized searches, and receiving email alerts for new candidates. PA CareerLink also offers many resources to employers, which include news, facts, and statistics on job market data, workforce and compliance-related policies, services, and procedures, and Unemployment Compensation Tax and Employer UC Services programs that manage employer contributions (in the form of quarterly tax payments) that are the primary funding source for UC benefit payments and provide a wide array of services to employers and third-party administrators. Contact the Lycoming County CareerLink office at 329 Pine St., Williamsport, PA, 17701-6216 or by phone at 570-601-5465. Details: https://www.pacareerlink.pa.gov/jponline/Common/LandingPage/Employer.

Report New Hires: New hire reporting is a process by which employers submit information about their newly-hired and rehired workers to a state directory for crossmatching open child support cases, locating non-custodial parents who change jobs frequently, and reducing fraudulent overpayments in state benefit programs such as unemployment and worker's compensation program. For more information on the various ways to report, visit https://www.pacareerlink.pa.gov/jponline/Employer/ReportNewHires.

Workamper News: It can sometimes be difficult for tourism businesses in remote areas to find help for their peak seasons. Workamper News is a service that can help with this need. It is a national network of RVers who want to go someplace interesting and work, sometimes for just a season or year-round. More than half of the program's participants work to supplement their retirement income, while the rest work to support a full-time, or near full-time, RV lifestyle. Most Workamper jobs are in the outdoor hospitality industry (resorts, campgrounds, theme parks, state and national parks, etc.). For more information go to www.workamper.com.

MARKETING RESOURCES

PA Signing Trust: Tourist Oriented Directional Signing (TODS) are the official blue and brown directional signs that are installed on roadways to help the traveling public find businesses and attractions. To learn more information about the cost, eligibility requirements, and how to apply for TODS, go to: https://palogo.org/tods-program/.

Pennsylvania On Display: is the official brochure distributor for the state of Pennsylvania distributing brochures in the 35 Interstate Rest Areas, 17 Turnpike Plazas, and 14 Welcome Centers. Additional information is available on the website at www.PennsylvaniaOnDisplay.com.

Pennsylvania Tourism Office: The Pennsylvania Tourism Office offers a variety of opportunities to grow your tourism business and connect with potential visitors by advertising in one or more of their offerings. The state of Pennsylvania's marketing program enables advertisers to connect directly with travelers planning a visit to Pennsylvania. Use the impact of the Pennsylvania tourism brand and the marketing initiatives driving travelers to visit the Keystone State to connect your business with a highly qualified audience of travelers. Promotion

options include inclusion on visitPA.com, the official tourism site of Pennsylvania, whether through strategic placement on the homepage, display ads or listings in listings by category; the visitPA.com eNewsletter or Happy Traveler Travel Guide. More information about the PA Tourism Office and its advertising opportunities can be found online at https://www.visitpa.com/advertising-opportunities.

Williamsport Lycoming County Visitors Bureau: Operated by the Williamsport/Lycoming Chamber of Commerce, an agency promoting economic development in Lycoming County, the Visitors Bureau and Visitors Center help orient tourists to the county. A member-based organization, the Visitors Bureau helps promote established county businesses to visitors and residents alike. Learn more at www.vacationpa.com, by emailing visitorinfo@williamsport.org or by calling or 570-327-7700.

RECOGNITION PROGRAMS

Champion of the Pennsylvania Wilds Awards: Each year the PA Wilds Center recognizes individuals, groups, organizations, communities, and businesses that in the last year have made significant contributions to help grow and sustainably develop the outdoor recreation economy and nature tourism in the PA Wilds by marrying economic development and conservation goals. The awards are presented at an Annual Dinner. Nominations are judged by the degree to which they help advance one or more of these goals: to create jobs, diversify local economies, inspire stewardship of natural and cultural resources, and improve quality of life. Nominations are also judged by the degree to which they reflect the hallmarks of the effort to grow the Wilds' outdoor recreation economy, which include: use of creative partnerships and planning; fostering a strong sense of place and community pride; ability to replicate new ideas or models in other communities; and demonstration of strong grassroots support. www.pawildscenter.org/programs-and-services/awards-dinner/.

Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) each year selects recipients for the prestigious Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence. Any business, farm, government agency, educational institution, non-profit organization, or individual in Pennsylvania that has created, or participated in, the development of a project that promotes environmental stewardship in the state is eligible to apply. DEP evaluates projects for their degree of environmental protection, innovation, partnership efforts, economic impact, environmental education and outreach, consideration of climate change, sustainability, environmental justice benefits, and results achieved. Information can be found at www.dep.pa.gov/About/Awards/EnvironmentalExcellence/.

PA River of the Year Award: Each fall, the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the PA Organization for Watersheds & Rivers hold an online voting contest to name PA's River of the Year. Voting typically opens in November-December, with the winner being named in the new year. The honor brings with it recognition in the media and, often, increased visitation that supports small businesses while raising awareness about good stewardship of the waterway. To learn more, go to: http://pawatersheds.org.

PA Trail of the Year Award: Each year, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee designates a Trail of the Year to help build enthusiasm and support for both large and small trails, and raise public awareness about PA's trail network value. Nominations for PA Trail of the Year are typically accepted through late fall. The honor of being selected helps call attention to trails across the state and, often, brings more visitation that supports small businesses while raising awareness for good stewardship of trails. Learn more at: www.dcnr.pa.gov/Communities/TrailDevelopment/TrailOfTheYear/.