

APPALACHIAN COMMUNITY CAPITAL

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PROGRAM SPONSORS



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (“RFP”) FOR OPPORTUNITY APPALACHIA PROJECT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Project Sponsor: Whistle Pig Country Store, Ewing, VA

Project Name: Whistle Pig Farmers Market & Country Store Project (Project Summary provided in Attachment B.)

Release Date: June 22, 2022
Proposal Due Date: July 20, 2022
Selection Date: July 27, 2022
Contract Period: July 27, 2022 – February 28, 2023 (or later)

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Technical Assistance for Opportunity Appalachia Projects

I. Overview of Request for Proposals

Appalachian Community Capital (ACC) seeks contractual support for specified Technical Assistance for real estate project development.

The Technical Assistance contractor will report to the Program Manager of Opportunity Appalachia. The requested Scope of Services is noted in Attachment A, and may involve:

- Architectural and engineering,
- Market research/demand assessment,
- Development of investment prospectus, preparation of pro forma financial projections, structuring of projecting financing,
- Feasibility assessment,
- Identification of project developers and/or business operators,
- Investor outreach for project finance/investment,
- And other types of support.

Entities interested in providing Technical Assistance must complete the Request for Qualifications RFQ, as noted on the [Opportunity Appalachia](#) webpage and found [here](#). Proposals will be evaluated on contractors' qualifications (per the RFQ), expertise, track record, Scope of Work, budget/timeline, and other project requests.

II. About Opportunity Appalachia

[Opportunity Appalachia](#) will provide technical assistance to develop and structure investable transactions, and it will create investment prospectuses and pitch decks that will be used to bring investment to rural and downtown communities. Investment priorities include projects focusing on downtown development, manufacturing, IT, healthcare, education, food systems, clean energy, heritage tourism, and recreation.

The program recently announced selection of 34 projects to participate in the program to bring jobs, business support, and investment to Central Appalachia. The selected projects propose to create over 1,600 permanent and 190 construction jobs and attract over \$177M in financing to develop textile manufacturing facilities; downtown development; community centers; health, wellness, and childcare centers; food and agricultural facilities; hotels; and retail enterprises in downtown and rural areas across Central Appalachia.

These proposed projects are signals of the growing investment potential in our rural and downtown communities in Central Appalachia. Opportunity Appalachia will work closely with private investors, banks, Community Development Financial Institutions, New Markets Tax Credits investors, Historic Tax Credit Investors, and Federal agencies to highlight participating communities and access financing for transactions.

Once project technical assistance is completed, a highly visible Investor Convening event will be held in early 2023 that will target both local and pre-vetted national investors, as well as federal and state funders. A curated web-based platform hosting prospectus / pitch decks will also be made available to facilitate investor due diligence.

The program is supported by the Appalachian Regional Commission, the US Department of Treasury CDFI Fund, Truist, Goldman Sachs, and the Dogwood Health Trust.

III. About the Appalachian Region

The Appalachian Region, as defined in ARC's authorizing legislation, is a 205,000 square-mile region that follows the spine of the Appalachian Mountains from southern New York to northern Mississippi. It includes all of West Virginia and parts of 12 other states: Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. Forty-two percent of the Region's population is rural, compared with 20 percent of the national population.

The Appalachian Region's economy, which was once highly dependent on extractive industries, has become more diversified in recent times and now includes larger shares of manufacturing and professional services, among other industries. Appalachia has made significant progress over the past five decades: its poverty rate, which was 31 percent in 1960, had fallen to 16.3 percent over the 2013– 2017 period. The number of high-poverty counties in the Region (those with poverty rates more than 1.5 times the U.S. average) declined from 295 in 1960 to 98 over the 2013–2017 period.

These gains have transformed the Region from one of widespread poverty to one of economic contrasts: some communities have successfully diversified their economies, while others still require basic infrastructure such as roads, clinics, and water and wastewater systems. The contrasts are not surprising considering the Region's size and diversity—the Region extends more than 1,000 miles from southern New York to northeastern Mississippi, and it is home to more than 25 million people.

Target geography

Central Appalachia – North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia



IV. Project Timeline

It is anticipated that the contractor will be selected by July 15, 2022 for an estimated contract start date of July 15, 2022 through February 28, 2023.

V. Instructions to Submit a Proposal

Contractors seeking to provide the full suite of TA services should submit the items listed below. It is expected that one proposal should include all requested services, which may mean that multiple entities are providing services, with one identified lead contractor.

- Scope of Work (max 3 pages) describing proposed activities to be undertaken as requested in Attachment A, with identified staffing (lead and support) for each work element.
- Budget that defines deliverables, rates and proposed payment schedule including indirect costs. A Not to Exceed cost for the full engagement must be provided; costs not to exceed \$75,000. Payment Schedule to be based on deliverables / outcome milestones.
- Timeline for Scope of Work, with deliverable milestones.
- Biography/resume for all staff noted in proposal (or provided in RFQ response).
- References from current or prior clients, including name, title, organization, contact information, and a brief description of the relevant work performed (or provided in RFQ response).

Please submit responses via email in one pdf attachment by Proposal Due Date to Kathryn Coulter Rhodes oa@acc1.org.

VI. Proposal Evaluation

ACC will select contractors through a competitive process based on the following criteria.

- Qualifications (per those provided in the RFQ), expertise, track record, and staff bios.
- Scope of Work and Timeline
- Budget
- Requests from project sponsors

Attachment A

Requested Scope of Services

Project Sponsor: Whistle Pig Country Store

Project Name: Whistle Pig Farmers Market & Country Store Project

Project Summary provided in Attachment B.

TA Requested

- Architectural drawings and floor plan design for the Market and Country Store. Engineering and design of infrastructure systems, including septic, water runoff, and water line.

Attachment B

Summary Information

Lead Contact: Jan Brown

Applicant Organization: Whistle Pig Country Store

Address: 6911 Wilderness Road, Ewing, VA 24248

Phone: (828) 713-9848

Email: whistlepigjan@gmail.com

Community Information

1. Communities targeted by this application (municipality(ies), county(ies), and census tract(s):
Note: See Appendix I for a list of eligible counties.

The communities of Ewing, Virginia, Ewing is an unincorporated community and census- designated place (CDP) in Lee County, Virginia. The population was 198 and the poverty rate of 5.56% and median household income of \$22,000.00: Rose Hill, Virginia, , with a population of 645, poverty rate of 5.5% and median household income of \$29000.00. Situated in the LENOWISCO district Lee County, Virginia will be the most greatly impacted. This county and area is one of the poorest counties in Virginia. While population is small in Ewing it will have a major impact on the community, and surrounding towns in Lee County, Virginia. Lee County, Virginia has a poverty level of 25.5% with 23.8% of its population receiving Food Stamps. It also has a high percentage of the population on disability (25%) It will also impact Lincoln Memorial University Veterinary school which currently has 4885 student enrolled and 313 FT and 275 PT staff members. Lee County borders Harrogate, Tennessee, and Middlesboro, KY. Both are in a @9 mile distance from the proposed market and store. The median household income for Harrogate, TN is \$26,042, with a poverty level of 12.5%, while the median household income for Middlesboro, KY, is \$15,501.00 has a poverty level of 35.5%. The households receiving food stamps in Ewing average 9.4% with the neighboring TN at 12.5% and KY at 35.5% Whistle Pig sees an imperative need to bring wholesome fresh produce, fruits and healthy meal options to these communities at a price that is affordable to these communities. Currently within Ewing, the only options for food is fast food at local delis inside the gas stations. The long term goal of Whistle Pig is to create healthier communities through better food options, a place to gather and connect, and renewed pride.

2. Service area of applicant (note if different than above, or note same): While population is small it will have a major impact to the community, surrounding small towns. It will also impact Lincoln Memorial University Veterinary school which currently has 4885 student enrolled and 313 FT and 275 PT staff members. The school is located in this very underpopulated and underserved area and the students have voiced a need for this type of business and community hub. It is also estimated that daily traffic along Route 58 where Whistle Pig will be located has 3400 cars per day of inflow and outflow. Tourists, hikers and campers traveling through this area, visiting the National and State Park and campgrounds also have voiced a desire for a place to shop, eat and get to connect with the local community. It is estimated that 85% of the patrons will be in the age range of 18-65. The farmers market and store will be located centrally to main businesses and locations such as: LMU Veterinary School - 4.6 miles away;, Cumberland Gap National Historic Park Campground, 9 miles away; Cumberland Gap Historic National Park, 5 miles away; Wilderness Road State Park, 4 miles away; popular hiking trails of the Sand Cave and White Rocks, 8 miles away; Elydale Elementary, 2 miles away; Thomas Walker High School, 7 miles away. There is no farmers market in the area for at least 20 miles. Many local farmers go across state lines into Harrogate, TN or Middlesboro, KY to sell their products. Community, tourists and students also travel into TN and KY for shopping, food,

coffee and a place to gather. Whistle Pig Farmers Market and Country Store will capture those traveling out to TN and KY for work and from work, tourists and hikers, and students and staff that live outside this small community in KY, TN or Lee County.

3. Community Development Strategy(ies): Community development strategies associated with this project include: neighborhood planning, citizen participation, grassroots organizing, economic development, social welfare, health, education, recreation, and other aspects of community life important in sustaining a healthy community. The community is strongly supportive of this project. Letters of support follow to validate the support. Whistle Pig's owners are connected to the community and provide many events to support the students, teachers and residents. Events such as teacher appreciation days; free holiday events at the proposed farmers market location providing food, fun, and clothing; toiletries to students at the high school; and books for underprivileged children at Christmas. This project will provide a community hub for both the community, veterinary students, and tourists to come together, learn from one another and learn more about this community. It will provide placemaking through workshops on quilting, canning, art, crafts and woodworking. It will also provide the veterinary students a place to come and study and a community in which to belong. A community hub will provide a place to voice opinions, share needs and network. This community is rich in history and agriculture. Bringing a store and a farmers market to the community will allow for healthier food options, provide farmers with the ability to profit from their crops and give young people a place to work, learn good work habits and grow. The goal is to provide hope, health and a pride in the beauty of the area and in its people. Tourists, students and travelers will gain a better understanding of "far Southwest Virginia" and a new perception of this end of Virginia. Whistle Pig will reduce food miles for those in the westernmost portions of Lee County. The county feels that this will be a catalyst for growth in the surrounding areas and will aid in the expansion of other new businesses.

Project Information

4. Proposed Projects (list up to 3):

- I. **Name of Project, address:** Whistle Pig Farmers Market & Country Store Project, 1911 Wilderness Road, Ewing, VA 24248
 - **Size in Sq Ft.:** 5,400
 - **Total anticipated financing need \$:** 1,207,000
 - **Financing identified/anticipated, list source and dollar amount or note 'None':**
 - \$300,000 personal investment in purchase of property
 - \$50,000 VFAIF grant submission
 - \$10,000 VCEDA application
 - Seeking financing
 - **Project description (include url link if available):**

Travel to the farthest westernmost point of Southwest Virginia and you will find a rural community whose slogan is Where Virginia Begins. The county has attempted to increase its heritage tourism industry by emphasizing its role in the route used by settlers going west through the Cumberland Gap, at Lee County's western tip. Ewing, Virginia is the last stop before you reach Kentucky or Tennessee. Ewing has seen a population decline and many amenities no longer exist to cater to the local community and those visiting or traveling through. This will be a local country general store, deli, coffee shop and farmers market located in Ewing, Virginia that desires to revitalize this community with fresh food options, heritage workshops, a community gathering place and creating a healthier community. A "whistle pig" is a groundhog. Groundhogs are an extremely intelligent animals with complex social networks, who form kinship with their

young, understand and communicate threats through whistling, and work cooperatively to solve tasks. Whistle Pig relates the store to the attributes of the groundhog. Our community is intelligent, desires social networks, has strong family ties, and work together to achieve goals. The store's location is advantageous to its local community, the Wilderness Road State Park tourists and campers, tourists hiking the White Rocks and trails of the Cumberland National Historic Park, and the LMU DeBusk Veterinary Teaching Center. Jan Brown and Melissa Hubbard grew up in Lee County, Virginia, and desire to give back to their community. Their mother, a local school teacher, and father, a farmer, have spent their entire lives in Lee County, Virginia. Jan and Melissa see the potential in providing fresh foods, local fare, and a place for both the veterinary school community and locals to connect, build relationships, and grow together. Whistle Pig's immediate goal is to provide the area with a place to eat together, play together, learn together, and dream together. They feel the long-term effect will be a stronger community, a stronger farmers outlet, better health through fresh foods, and a renewed pride in the area. Phase One of Whistle Pig will be a Farmers Market. This market will provide a venue for farmers and the community to come together for fresh foods, produce, meats, and enjoy time together. Opportunity Appalachia's technical assistance will help with architect fees and other professional fees.

- **Community Impact (quantify / provide estimates):**
Creation of at least 20 jobs starting at minimum of \$15.00 per hour. Benefits will be provided when the profits of the store reach an allowable point. Staff will receive Serv Safe certifications, training in barista, training for cook, cashier, stocking, customer service and can advance to different positions when available. The Ewing area is socially disadvantaged with high unemployment. Little options are locally available for employment. Many travel over 30-60 miles daily for employment. While Whistle Pig hopes to maintain the history of the "old Wheeler store" it also desires to bring in new options and ideas learned from both owners while living outside the area that can inspire the high school students to dream big about their local community. With agriculture strong in the region, Whistle Pig sees an opportunity to show different job opportunities and a path to more diverse work alternatives. Mainly, Whistle Pig wants to impact Ewing and Lee County in a way that the community can feel the strength in this history of its culture while forging new vibrant paths for the future. The farmers market and store will provide a place for locals to see their crafts and homemade items, offer workshops on traditional classes such as canning, quilting, woodworking and other crafts. This will spark a more diverse economic environment. The project seeks to see a vibrant place that includes both the local community connect to the LMU Veterinary student population and travelers across the United States. Success will be measured by the sales of the market and store, number of farmers selling in the market, number of workshops and participants, and new small businesses that may pop up. Whistle Pig will provide a solid foundation and path for other new small businesses to follow and grow.
- **Name(s) of project sponsors, developer, and/or business owner, if identified:**
Project Sponsors are: Jan Brown, Owner and Melissa Hubbard, Owner
- **Technical Assistance Needed:** architectural drawings are needed for the store and the market. financial pro forma development, and capital raise.
- **Describe the connection to other proposed projects listed on this form (if applicable):** N/A

5. **Clean Energy Focus:** Whistle Pig plans to reuse wood from a barn that they will tear down on the property. They will follow energy efficient measures in their cooking and with their disposal of food. The building will consist of repurposed materials. Clean energy options will be explored where possible.

6. **Applicant Capacity:** What is the relationship of the applicant to the community? How has the community demonstrated its support of the project(s)? Describe the applicant's role and capacity for completing or overseeing project activities: Growing up in Lee County, Virginia, Jan and Melissa helped their parents work the farm. Jan and Melissa learned the value of community connections, hard work, and relationships as they worked alongside their parents in this small community. After leaving the area for a number of years, both Jan and Melissa have returned with a deep love for and drive to see the community they grew up in grow in the promise that it has. They understand that this area in the farthest part of Southwest Virginia is grossly underserved and that opportunities are needed for the next generation to see value in staying. Upon seeing the old Wheeler Store, both Jan and Melissa knew that by purchasing this building and the surrounding property, they could provide locals with the most basic of needs of fresh food access, community gathering and connection, and a place for the veterinary students to study and engage with the local community. Melissa owns Hubbard Club Lambs and works with the local FFA in the high school as well as the veterinary school. Jan is retired and is a former coach, small business owner and entrepreneur. Both Jan and Melissa see a community longing to have more than just a convenience store deli, but a place to call their own and be proud of. These connections to the community have given Jan and Melissa an outlet to hear their needs and requests for the area. The community often stops at the store and asks for certain items to be sold there or requests they carry certain products. The community is extremely excited that there will be a local place with good fresh food and a place to fellowship. Through their participation with the Virginia Tech Study, Melissa understands what the students and staff want at the store and farmers market. Every interaction, be it volunteering with the schools, hosting community events or working with locals has sparked conversations about the store and farmers market and what the community desires and has driven their design. Jan Brown, Co-Owner Jan Brown is the co-owner of Whistle Pig Country Store. Jan is retired and currently oversees the operational management. She was the first female owner of a Snap-On Tools franchise and has a background in business startup and management. Melissa Hubbard, Co-Owner Melissa is the co-owner of Whistle Pig Country Store. She has been the owner of Hubbard Club Lambs for over 15 years and runs about 150 mature ewes. Melissa has raised livestock for 40-plus years.