



Craft Your Commerce Project Manager
Part-Time Independent Contractor Position

Background:

Mountain BizWorks (MBW, mountainbizworks.org) is a non-profit certified community development financial institution (CDFI) that provides tailored small business lending and peer learning services across Western North Carolina. We do this towards a mission of building a vibrant and inclusive local economy.

Asheville and greater Western North Carolina (WNC) are home to an important craft tradition and a robust craft industry sector. In recent years, driven by several national and global trends (e.g., growing market demand for quality, authentic, and lifestyle products; democratization of production technologies like 3D printing and marketplaces like Etsy and direct-to-consumer), the nature of craft is changing beyond traditional studio practices to now include a new breed of professional makers and craft products companies. This shift offers significant opportunities for craft and WNC, but it also requires new entrepreneurial skills of both emerging and existing craft professionals.

Over the past two years, with support from the Windgate Foundation and others, UNC Asheville, Center for Craft, and Mountain BizWorks partnered on a project to address this critical region need. The project started with a research and design phase which included the WNC Maker Survey and focus group series garnering input from 329 individual makers, craft businesses and organizations. Utilizing this input, we designed and implemented *Craft Your Commerce* (CYC), a three-year project that emphasizes peer-to-peer learning and mentorship, which was a top identified attribute of how makers want to learn and who they want to learn from.

Purpose

The role of the Craft Your Commerce Project Manager is to take an active lead in achieving the following project goals:

- Establish a durable craft entrepreneurship program for regional makers and advance sustainable economic development for the region
- Broaden access to opportunities for creative entrepreneurs in underserved communities
- Develop a sustainable program model that achieves financial independence post-grant term. This will be achieved through program fees, partnerships, and other revenue opportunities

- Support Center for Craft property redevelopment and specifically the creative/craft sector hub and coworking spaces
- Strengthen the connections and foster collaboration within the craft industry in order to address growing craft sector workforce needs
- Increase regional and national recognition of Asheville and WNC as a center of excellence within craft, furthering the success of WNC-based craft brands and sector investment
- Increase engagement between the craft industry and UNCA students and faculty to support the next generation of makers and address growing craft sector workforce needs

Key Responsibilities

- **Develop and actively pursue a strategy that contributes to the sustainability of the Craft Your Commerce project**
 - Discover and assess opportunities that could add to the funding stack of the project, including but not limited to additional project grants
 - Explore revenue generating initiatives that provide makers and crafts businesses access to new markets and pathways for scaling their operations
 - Conduct a feasibility study for proposed new initiatives, using research, surveys and focus group studies of makers and other community stakeholders who will be impacted
 - Assist in the development of a business plan for the proposed initiative and its implementation once viability has been determined
- **Support the planning, development and delivery of the following program offerings, ensuring they continue to meet the evolving needs of makers:**
 - 2020 Makers Design Exhibit - work with Center for Craft and other project partners in the planning, marketing and delivery of the exhibit. Identify and outreach to key participants, including makers and potential buyers
 - CYC Workshop Series and other training programs - assist in planning the training programs' learning objectives, content and format. Identify and outreach to program speakers and presenters
 - Coaching and Mentoring program - identify and recruit small business coaches with qualifying backgrounds in craft and relevant creative enterprises. Assist in developing a mentoring program that connects emerging makers to more experienced mentors
- **Conduct and/or coordinate coaching & technical assistance to creative entrepreneurs in order to connect them to resources and opportunities**
 - Meet with makers individually and in groups to assess their needs and to connect them to appropriate resources, including MBW's learning and lending services
 - Facilitate project pipelines by connecting makers and potential buyers through the Makers Design Exhibit

- Provide technical assistance to prepare makers for taking on larger scale commercial projects
- **Be the liaison between the project and community stakeholders to strengthen connections and foster collaboration within the craft industry**
 - Leverage advice from the Craft Advisory Board when assessing and planning new project initiatives
 - Convene think tanks made up of makers, design creatives and business training experts to continuously understand the needs of makers and how the CYC programs can be tailored to meet these needs
 - Work with Center for Craft to ensure that CYC programs are integrated within their National Craft Innovation Hub's coworking business model
 - Be intentional in reaching out to makers from underserved communities and connecting them to opportunities
 - Address growing craft sector workforce needs by engaging local students in CYC and cultivating connections within the craft industry
- **Provide other project support as needed to achieve all the objectives and goals of the Craft Your Commerce project.**
 - Provide input and ideas for increasing regional and national recognition of Asheville and WNC as a center of excellence within craft

Qualifications and Experience:

- Committed to the mission of Mountain BizWorks of building a vibrant and inclusive local economy and the goal of Craft Your Commerce to empower and support artists, makers, and craft-products entrepreneurs in building sustainable and meaningful businesses
- The ideal candidate has a maker and/or creative business background and therefore has a relevant and practical understanding of the unique needs and challenges of creative entrepreneurs at different stages of growth
- Awareness of key institutions, opportunities, happenings and conversations in the arts and crafts industry locally, regionally and beyond
- Strong verbal, written communication and presentation skills
- Demonstrated ability to connect and work collaboratively with different community stakeholders including potential funders, project partners & supporters, artist and maker groups
- Proven business development skills and ability to identify business opportunities, conduct risk and cost-benefit analyses, present findings and develop and implement business plans
- Has a working knowledge of nonprofits and their funding model, particularly in the field of economic development
- Has a strong track record of mentoring and coaching other creative entrepreneurs, connecting them to various resources to start and grow their enterprises successfully

- A self-starter with the capacity to work independently and achieve goals with minimal supervision
- Solid Project Management skills, including the ability to develop and manage a detailed project schedule and work plan, provide project updates on a consistent basis to various stakeholders, ensuring that all projects are delivered on-time, within scope and within budget
- Has experience creating public relations strategy and developing brand identity, which will be essential in raising the project's visibility and fundability through community relations, speaking engagements, and marketing campaigns

Reporting Relationship: Reports to MBW Entrepreneurship Program Manager

Pay: \$30/hr up to 50 hours per month

Job Classification: Part-Time Independent Contractor

To Apply:

Qualified/interested candidates should email their resume and cover letter to Kareen Boncales, Entrepreneurship Program Manager, kareen@mountainbizworks.org. Subject line should read "CYC Project Manager." Initial responses to this opportunity are requested by Friday, January 31st with the position remaining open until filled thereafter.