

PRESS RELEASE



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Mountain BizWorks and Outdoor Gear Builders Announce Second Waypoint Accelerator Cohort, “Mountains to Sea”

9 startups selected for next cohort of the East Coast’s first outdoor business accelerator

Asheville, NC, (December 4, 2020) – Mountain BizWorks and Outdoor Gear Builders of WNC today announced the 9 companies participating in the second annual Waypoint Accelerator program, which launches December 3 and continues through March 2021. Waypoint Accelerator provides promising new outdoor startups with focused support and resources to help them start, grow and thrive.

“As the first program of its kind in the eastern U.S., the Waypoint Accelerator represents a major collective investment into the continued growth of our region’s outdoor industry, and our belief in the transformative power of the outdoor economy” said Sophia Paulos, Mountain BizWorks board chair. “This year’s cohort is packed with innovative companies, ranging from the mountains to the sea, and we look forward to helping them realize their potential.”

Designed for early-stage, outdoor-focused companies, Waypoint combines an intensive startup curriculum with tailored mentorship from more than 80 seasoned advisors, drawing on the region’s thriving outdoor industry network. Waypoint also features strong

access-to-capital connections but, unlike some other accelerator programs, doesn't require participants to give up equity or take investment to participate.

“This is an exciting time for the outdoor industry in North Carolina, and we are excited to see that this year’s cohort includes nine more fast-growing companies ranging from the mountains of Western North Carolina all the way to the Outer Banks,” said Amy Allison, Director of the NC Outdoor Recreation Industry Office and a co-founder of the Outdoor Gear Builders. “The Waypoint Accelerator is a fantastic way to grow the next generation of great outdoor entrepreneurs here in our state.” The 9 companies making up the second Waypoint Cohort – five of which are rural-based – were selected from a highly competitive pool of 23 applications. The program will be held virtually, supporting business growth and innovation in the face of the pandemic and helping participants make the most of historically high levels of outdoor engagement. Cohort members include:

- **Asheville Adventure Company (ashevilleadventurecompany.com)**
Asheville Adventure Company’s meticulously planned trips make intimidating experiences accessible to the average consumer, showcasing the most awe-inspiring places in WNC.
- **Asheville Picnic Company (ashevillepicniccompany.com)**
Asheville Picnic company provides a picnic meal with famous food products made in Asheville for you to take on your outdoor adventures in WNC.
- **Block by Block Industries (bxbind.com)**
Block by Block trains and employs individuals with barriers to employment in manufacturing high quality sewn goods for the outdoor industry.
- **Lake Lure Rowing (lakelurerowing.com)**
Lake Lure Rowing is expanding rowing opportunities in Western North Carolina with an organization founded on competition and fun.
- **North Cove Social Club**
Sited on 150+ glorious rolling acres at the base of the Linville Gorge, North Cove Social Club will be the premiere destination for disc golf in the United States.
- **OBX On the Fly (obxonthefly.com)**

OBX On the Fly is the Outer Banks' first and only full-service fly shop, offering fly fishing products, guide services, merchandise, and classes, including a custom fly rod building class.

- **Plantd Climbing** (plantdclimbing.com)
Plantd Climbing builds locally-made, quality durable goods and training tools for the climbing industry and community, and is the Southeast's only local supplier of volumes and texture services.
- **Rove Cycling**
Rove is a Brevard-based cycling development program delivering year-round adult and summer youth instruction showcasing the Southeast's best riding.
- **WNC Outdoor Collective** (wncoutdoorcollective.com)
WNC Outdoor Collective is a collective of local and regional makers showcasing and selling specialized well-crafted products and services in a common retail storefront that surrounds a 3,000ft² outdoor gathering space for outdoor enthusiasts.

Waypoint Accelerator is a strategic initiative of the Growing Outdoors Partnership, a collaborative of public and private sector organizations working to advance WNC outdoor industry and related economic opportunities. The effort is supported in part by seed funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission, and significant staffing and support resources are being provided by the Small Business Technology Development Center at Western Carolina University

More information about the Waypoint Accelerator program is available at waypointaccelerator.com.

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Mountain BizWorks

Mountain BizWorks is a U.S. Treasury certified non-profit Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) that provides tailored small business lending and peer-learning programs to help grow great businesses and expand economic opportunities in Western North Carolina.

For more information, visit mountainbizworks.org.

The Outdoor Gear Builders

The Outdoor Gear Builders of WNC works to is a coalition of Western North Carolina-based outdoor companies collaborating to share talents, encourage new ideas and inspire each other. The member brands are dedicated to creating exceptional outdoor gear with a focus on responsible manufacturing, cutting edge innovation and economic growth in the region.

For more information, visit outdoorgearbuilders.com.

NC Small Business and Technology Development Center (SBTDC)

The SBTDC is a business and technology development extension service of the North Carolina University System funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the US Small Business Administration. Providing no fee confidential business coaching services, the SBTDC is committed to sharing knowledge, education and targeted resources enabling small and mid-sized businesses, emerging entrepreneurs and local/state leaders to innovate and succeed.

For more information, visit sbtdc.org.