



The goal of this contest is to provide services to the region's nature-based outdoor recreation by offering rewards to new and expanding businesses which submit solid business plans to provide vital goods and services to users of the bike trails, mountain bike trails, hiking trails, water trails, skiing trails, ATV trails, hunting, fishing, etc. in all of Venango County. Anyone looking to launch a new venture or expand an existing one that offers a service or product to the outdoor recreation industry is invited to participate.

[See the reverse side for contest rules.](#)

Contest Dates & Deadlines

Contest Kicks Off:	Friday, September 11, 2026
Concept Papers Due:	October 30, 2026 by 4:00 PM
Semi-Finalists Announced:	December 1, 2026
Business Plans Due:	March 26, 2027, by 4:00 PM
Presentations:	April 2027; exact date, time, and location to be determined
Winners Announced:	May 2027; exact date, time, and location to be determined

Need some help? Free services here:



Amy Keth
Assistant Director
Small Business Development Center
PennWest University
896 East Main Street
Clarion, PA 16214
814-393-1956 | amketh@pennwest.edu
www.PennWest.edu/sbdc

Elevating Outdoor Recreation Business Contest Overview

The contest officially **kicks off on Friday, September 11, 2026**. Direct questions to Kim Harris at 814-677-3152, Ext. 120 or kharris@oilregion.org. You can schedule a meeting to discuss your potential application if you would like to meet.

How to Apply:

Submit a **concept paper** along with your application outlining your business idea by **October 30, 2026, by 4 p.m.** Downloadable forms and additional details are available at www.oilregion.org.

Send completed applications and concept papers either digitally or in hard copy to:

Jessica Gorman

Oil Region Alliance

217 Elm Street

Oil City, PA 16301

Email: jgorman@oilregion.org

Questions? Contact:

- Jessica Gorman at 814-677-3152 ext. 100
- Kim Harris at 814-677-3152 ext. 120 or kharris@oilregion.org

Contest Details:

- **Semi-Finalists** will be announced on **December 1, 2026**
- **Semi-Finalists** will develop full business plans and **submit them by 4 p.m. on March 26, 2027**.
- Semi-Finalists will present their business plan to a panel of judges in **April 2027; exact date, time, and location to be determined**.
- **Winners** will be announced in **May 2027**; exact date, time, and location to be determined.

Prizes:

- **1st Place:** \$10,000
- **2nd Place:** \$5,000

Funds will be disbursed at the discretion of the Oil Region Alliance as outlined in the Winner's Agreement.

Receipts are required for reimbursement; funds cannot be spent in advance.

Eligibility:

- Open to **new or expanding businesses** that provide essential goods and services for **nature-based outdoor recreationists**. (This includes providers and producers).
- Businesses **must be located in Venango County**.

Note: If the Selection Committee and/or Judges determine no entry is worth the investment, the Oil Region Alliance reserves the right to **withhold awarding prizes**.

Special thanks to **Venango County** for their partnership and support in funding this contest.

**All contestants must read and review the Contestant's Terms and Conditions. To be eligible for participation, contestants must agree in writing to the rules, regulations, terms, and conditions of the contest. In addition, winners must sign the Winner's Agreement form before we award any funds.*