



community development partnership

Creating opportunities for people to live, work, and thrive on the Lower and Outer Cape

CDP Referral Program Supports Small Business

"The CDP offers an invaluable service for those who are starting and don't know what's most important, who to ask, where to find help, and more."

- Mariah Fidalgo, co-Founder and Owner of the Wild Water Collective

Have you ever purchased or used a service based solely on recommendations from others?

The CDP's success in reaching and serving more small business owners is largely due to word of mouth. We are thrilled when a small business owner mentions that they learned about the CDP through a family member, friend, colleague, acquaintance, or one of our community partners. One of the most valuable referrals we receive is from small business owners who have had positive, first-hand experiences working with us.

One such client is Mariah Fidalgo, the owner of Wild Water Collective in Orleans. Mariah has been a CDP client since 2021. She often refers friends and acquaintances seeking business help and resources to the CDP. She says that her experience with the CDP significantly benefited her business and acknowledges the CDP for helping new business owners like herself become aware of things they may need to learn. The Cape's seasonal economy and rural character, with small towns spread out, make it particularly challenging for small business owners to thrive and promote themselves. "The CDP offers an invaluable service for those who are starting and don't know what's most important, who to ask, where to find help, and more," she said.



Mariah Fidalgo, co-Founder and Owner of the Wild Water Collective and CDP Client

Mariah recently recommended [Isabel Souza](#), a ceramic artist, teacher, and shop owner based in Wellfleet, and was entered into our drawing. She received a gift certificate to [Four Winds Leather & Native American Shop](#) in Eastham. Four Winds has been in business for nearly 30 years, selling beautiful leather and handmade goods. Mariah says she can't wait to use her gift certificate, saying, "Now I get to support another small business!"

Mariah learned about the CDP by participating in the EforAll Accelerator Program, an immersive program for those looking to start or grow a business. She said that given that she has an art degree and not a business degree, she needed to develop the skills to be a business

owner. Pam Andersen, Director of the CDP's Business & Credit Program, told her about the CDP's Microloan Program, which offers local small businesses microloans up to \$50,000 for expansion and startup costs, cash flow assistance, new equipment purchases, and inventory to help you grow and thrive. Wild Water Collective received two loans – one for inventory, which helped them launch the business. A second loan in 2023 supported hiring an additional staff person.

She said the CDP and its staff stand out for their accessibility and community focus. "I am not sure how we would have grown without their help," said Mariah. In particular, she said learning how to borrow and spend money is essential. Her store has a mixed model of consignment and retail, which is different than traditional retailers. "We must manage our cash flow so we don't bury ourselves," she said.

Mariah grew up in Orleans. She moved away at 18 for college, earning a degree in costume design and textiles from Boston University. After graduation, she moved to New York City to pursue a career as a costume designer specializing in dyed and distressed clothing for film, television, and film. She and many colleagues were out of work when the pandemic shuttered the entertainment industry. Later, strikes made job security seem even more insecure. She returned home to Orleans to figure out what could be next. Leaning on her making skills, she started sewing clothes. Mariah joked, "I did not pack enough clothing, so I started sewing." She met other makers, creatives, and like-minded friends at pop-up events, including Emily Mandirola. Emily was selling artisan products from Oaxaca, Mexico. They struck up a friendship; both sought to turn their passions, skills, and values into a viable business and create a new community. They decided to give being small business owners a try. They opened Wild Water Collective in Orleans, featuring ethically sourced, handmade clothing, accessories, and gifts from one-of-a-kind artisans. The Wild Water Collective started with 25-30 artists; four years later, it has almost 70.

Emily stepped back from the business in 2024, and Mariah decided to continue. "This year is my first full year as a solo business owner, so in some ways, it is like being a new business all over again," she said. Mariah has many goals; one of the most important, she says, is to be a place that is open year-round and serves residents, including creating space for the community and increasing accessibility for queer folk. "We promote many non-binary artists and POC (people of color)," she says. "It is exciting and important for everyone to feel welcome. It is more than selling something."

Like many year-round residents, Mariah says it is hard to be a business owner on the Cape when you can't afford to live here. Although she and her husband feel fortunate to have a place to live, it took them two years to find a year-round rental. She says it is too hard to find a stable place to live. She adds, "If we want more younger people to make a life here, we must make it easier." She believes the CDP does excellent work for affordable housing and thinks that towns need more nontraditional housing as a solution.



Visit Wild Water in Person and Online

wildwatercollective.com
56 Main Street
Orleans, MA 02653
facebook.com/wildwatercollective
instagram.com/wildwatercollective

Fall Hours

Thursday-Saturday, 11-5
Sunday 12-4 or by appointment

Current Favorite Items!

Clamdles
Oyster appliques
Hand dyed jackets and sweatshirts

Hands on Learning Workshops

Wild Water Collective hosts fun workshops with guest artists, e.g., ceramics, indigo dying, mending, bundle dying with flowers, and more!

