



Terms of Reference
Publishing Partner for the Appalachian Children’s Book Collection

Project	Appalachian Children’s Book Collection
Type of Engagement	Co publishing and children’s book development partner
Expected Contract Period	May 2026 to October 2027
Anticipated Workshops	Author workshop in August 2026 and illustrator workshop in September 2026
Primary Contact	Karen Harmon, U.S. Project Manager, Room to Read

1. Background and Rationale

Room to Read is seeking a qualified publishing partner to support the development and production of the Appalachian Children’s Book Collection. The collection will include approximately 6 to 10 original picture books for children in kindergarten through third grade. The books will reflect Appalachian voices, landscapes, traditions, families, and contemporary experiences with accuracy, dignity, warmth, and joy. The initiative responds to two connected needs: limited access to high quality books in many rural Appalachian communities and limited availability of contemporary children’s books that authentically reflect Appalachian children, families, cultures, and everyday experiences. The project is intended to increase representation, support early literacy engagement, and invest in regional authors and illustrators.

2. Purpose of the Assignment

The purpose of this Terms of Reference is to define the role, responsibilities, deliverables, and expected timeline for a publishing partner that will help Room to Read develop, produce, and prepare for distribution a culturally grounded Appalachian children’s book collection.

3. Objectives

- Develop 6 to 10 original children’s picture books for kindergarten through third grade readers.
- Center Appalachian authors, illustrators, communities, and lived experiences throughout the creative process.
- Create books that are appropriate for homes, classrooms, libraries, and community based literacy programs.
- Avoid stereotype driven portrayals and ensure stories reflect Appalachian communities with nuance, care, and joy.
- Prepare final print ready files and supporting assets for noncommercial distribution and potential commercial publication.
- Support a dual channel model that expands access for high need communities while also creating opportunities for broader visibility and retail reach.

4. Scope of Work

The publishing partner will serve as the lead technical partner for publishing development and production. The scope of work is expected to include the following components.

4.1 Project Management and Coordination

- Serve as the primary publishing lead for the collection.
- Assign a project lead to manage schedules, communication, deliverables, risks, and decision points.
- Develop and maintain a detailed production workplan with key milestones and dependencies.
- Participate in regular coordination meetings with Room to Read.
- Provide timely updates on progress, risks, budget considerations, and decisions needed.

4.2 Creator Recruitment and Management

- Identify, recruit, and recommend qualified Appalachian authors and illustrators or creators with deep ties to Appalachian communities.
- Support a selection process that reflects a range of Appalachian experiences, identities, geographies, and perspectives.
- Coordinate communication with contributors and manage creator timelines.
- Support contributor agreements, payment administration, and rights related documentation, as agreed during contracting.

4.3 Workshops and Creative Development

- Help plan and facilitate a weeklong author workshop in August 2026.
- Help plan and facilitate an illustrator workshop in September 2026.
- Support joint development of collection themes that reflect the breadth and complexity of Appalachian life.
- Provide guidance that strengthens story concepts, authenticity, age appropriateness, and market readiness.

4.4 Editorial Development

- Guide concept development, manuscript drafting, revision, copyediting, and proofreading.
- Ensure manuscripts are appropriate for kindergarten through third grade audiences.
- Support review cycles with Room to Read and incorporate feedback in a clear and timely manner.
- Maintain consistency in editorial quality while preserving each creator's voice.

4.5 Illustration, Design, and Production

- Oversee illustration development, art direction, sketches, revisions, and final art review.
- Provide design and layout for covers and interiors.
- Prepare final print ready files for each approved title.
- Provide editable source files and agreed production assets.
- Support quality assurance before print approval.

4.6 Rights, Licensing, Branding, and Distribution

- Clearly document the proposed rights and licensing structure for creators, the publishing partner, and Room to Read.
- Support agreements that protect Room to Read's needs for noncommercial printing, program use, and dissemination.
- Lead or advise on commercial publication strategy, retail distribution, school and library channels, and long term visibility.

- Coordinate with Room to Read on branding, acknowledgments, metadata, and public facing language.

5. Expected Deliverables

Deliverable	Description	Lead	Timing
Detailed workplan and production schedule	Milestones, review points, dependencies, risk areas, and meeting cadence.	Publisher	Project launch
Creator recruitment plan	Approach for identifying, recruiting, recommending, and managing Appalachian authors and illustrators.	Publisher	Early phase
Workshop plans and materials	Agendas, facilitation approach, preparation materials, and follow up actions for author and illustrator workshops.	Shared	August and September 2026
Manuscript development package	Drafts, revisions, editorial notes, copyedited manuscripts, and final approved text for each title.	Publisher	Per title
Illustration and design package	Sketches, art review materials, final art, cover design, and interior layouts.	Publisher	Per title
Print ready files	Final production files for each approved title, including covers and interiors.	Publisher	Before print approval
Editable source files and assets	Editable design files, final art assets, and agreed production materials.	Publisher	Final delivery
Rights and licensing summary	Clear summary of contributor rights, publisher rights, Room to Read usage rights, and any restrictions.	Publisher	Contracting and final delivery
Progress updates	Regular written updates highlighting accomplishments, risks, decisions needed, and next steps.	Publisher	Ongoing

Final summary report	Summary of process, contributors, major decisions, lessons learned, and recommendations.	Publisher	Project close
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6. Room to Read Responsibilities

- Provide overall project direction and strategic oversight.
- Review and approve major deliverables, including creator recommendations, manuscripts, illustrations, design, and final files.
- Coordinate internal stakeholder input and decision making.
- Lead or co lead noncommercial distribution planning through schools, community facing partners, faith based organizations, and after school providers.
- Manage programmatic use of books through Room to Read initiatives.
- Provide timely feedback and approvals to support the agreed production schedule.

7. Required Qualifications

- Demonstrated experience publishing children’s books.
- Strong editorial, design, production, and project management capacity.
- Experience managing multi title publishing workflows.
- Experience working with authors, illustrators, editors, designers, and production teams.
- Understanding of rights, licensing, contributor agreements, and commercial distribution.
- Ability to work with culturally specific, regionally grounded, or community based publishing projects.
- Demonstrated sensitivity to authentic representation and community grounded storytelling.
- Preferred experience in Appalachia or with rural communities and regional creators.

8. Timeline

Phase	Estimated Timing	Key Activities
Procurement and selection	April to June 2026	Review proposals, select partner, complete contracting, confirm scope and budget.
Project launch and planning	June to July 2026	Confirm workplan, roles, review process, recruitment approach, and production schedule.
Author workshop	August 2026	Develop concepts, themes, story direction, and author workplans.
Illustrator workshop	September 2026	Develop visual direction, art process, illustration schedules, and review approach.
Editorial and illustration development	October 2026 to Spring 2027	Draft, revise, review, and approve manuscripts, sketches, layouts, and final art.
Final production and quality assurance	Spring to Summer 2027	Finalize copyediting, proofreading, design, metadata,

		rights summary, and print ready files.
Printing and distribution preparation	Summer to Fall 2027	Support print approval, distribution planning, and launch preparation.
Distribution and project close	Fall 2027 to October 2027	Books printed and distributed, final reporting completed, lessons learned documented.

9. Reporting and Communication

- Regular project check ins with Room to Read, with frequency confirmed during contracting.
- Written progress updates that include completed work, upcoming milestones, risks, decisions needed, and budget or timeline implications.
- Clear documentation of review rounds, approvals, changes requested, and final decisions.
- Immediate flagging of issues that may affect timeline, quality, contributor participation, rights, or budget.

10. Budget and Payment Schedule

The publishing partner should provide a detailed budget in U.S. dollars. The budget should separate required costs from optional costs and include a brief narrative explaining each line item. The proposed budget should include the following categories where applicable:

- Project management
- Author fees
- Illustrator fees
- Editorial development
- Copyediting and proofreading
- Art direction
- Design and layout
- Production and file preparation
- Metadata development
- Rights and permissions administration
- Travel and workshops
- Administrative or overhead costs
- Optional services

Payments should be tied to clear milestones and agreed deliverables. Final terms will be confirmed during contract negotiation and internal approval.

11. Evaluation Considerations

- Relevant experience in children’s publishing and multi title production.
- Strength and clarity of the proposed approach.
- Demonstrated ability to work with Appalachian creators or similar regional communities.
- Editorial, illustration, design, and production capacity.
- Project management systems and communication practices.
- Rights, licensing, and distribution experience.
- Budget clarity, reasonableness, and alignment with scope.
- Fit with Room to Read’s goals for authenticity, quality, access, and regional creative leadership.

12. Submission Requirements

- Cover letter
- Organizational background
- Relevant experience and sample projects
- Proposed approach and methodology
- Proposed team and staffing plan
- Timeline with major milestones
- Detailed budget and budget narrative
- References
- Any assumptions, dependencies, or optional services

13. Key Assumptions

- Final title count may be refined based on budget, creator availability, production complexity, and contract negotiation.
- Room to Read will remain actively involved in approvals and programmatic distribution planning.
- The publishing partner will lead publishing development and advise on commercial publication and market reach.
- Books are anticipated to be printed and distributed in Fall 2027.
- The final contract will define ownership, licensing, contributor payments, branding, file delivery requirements, and distribution rights.

14. How to Apply

Interested candidates who meet the required qualifications are invited to submit the following:

- CV or organizational profile
- Cover letter describing relevant experience
- Proposed methodology and timeline
- Proposed budget
- Applications should be submitted to Karen.harmon@roomtoread.org by June 12, 2026