

This OTR pet store is going national

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Over-the-Rhine pet food and supply store Pet Wants is planning on taking its concept national this summer.

The boutique dog and cat food store with two Cincinnati locations – in Findlay Market and at 1409 Vine St. – will open up applications for national franchising on June 9.



"It was always in the plans to franchise," founder Michelle Hobbs told me. "We knew our concept was unique and isn't being done anywhere else in the United States."

The idea for Pet Wants was born when Hobbs discovered that the national pet food brand she was feeding her dog was aggravating its skin allergies. So she set out to make her own food.

Pet Wants entered – and ended up winning – the inaugural Bad Girl Ventures class in 2010. That's where Hobbs baked

franchising into the business plan.

"The problem was, when you attempt to franchise – and we looked into it several times – there's a lot of legal and regulatory work," she said.

After reading about the Cincinnati-based Franchise Funding Group in the Business Courier, Hobbs reached out for help with bringing her concept to the national stage, she said.

Franchise Funding Group specializes in helping businesses expand through franchising.

"Think of Franchise Funding Group as Shark Tank but without the wildly popular TV show," Franchise Funding Group President Dan Murphy said in a news release. "For Pet Wants, we provided them with more than \$150,000 in services, hundreds of hours in training and support, project funding, marketing expertise, and access to our proven systems/processes for a minority stake in her new franchise system."

The Pet Wants brand is for people who care about what goes into their own food and give their pet's diet the same kind of scrutiny, Hobbs said. It would work best in growing urban areas like Short North in Columbus.

"Our goal is to be a cult brand," she said. "We're not mass produced. It's made in small batches every month. People seek it out because it stands alone in its performance."