

FAQ

OUR GRANTMAKING AND MORE

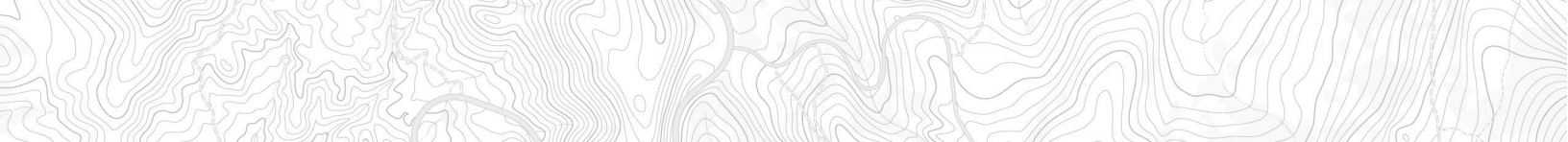
Several questions arose during recent partner outreach and we wanted to take the opportunity to share more about our approach.

1. What additional information can GOCO provide about application criteria and decision-making?

GOCO evolved to a values-based approach to grantmaking with its 2020 Strategic Plan. The new approach is outlined in the [grantmaking philosophy](#) and the [reviewer guidance](#) speaks to the merits considered when evaluating proposals. This shift from a less quantitative, criteria-based rubric assessment allows for partners to develop transformational projects and better tell the story of impact. We understand that this is a change, especially for our long-time partners, so please connect with our team early for guidance. We'd love to chat, even if you don't have a project for GOCO investment at this time.

2. Can GOCO further elaborate on community engagement expectations and how they may differ from project to project?

GOCO encourages community engagement and community-driven projects. Our approach emphasizes broad-based, community-led efforts and encourages partners to secure active participation from their communities in all aspects of project development. Staff also understand that traditional outreach processes such as surveys and public meetings serve as a great foundation for project planning. For certain types of projects, it makes sense to rely solely on traditional outreach methods when additional engagement may not offer added benefits. Further, demonstrating community support and buy-in may look different for certain projects (e.g., land acquisitions). Recognizing that community engagement requires capacity and resources, GOCO will fund staff, community connectors and resident leadership, and/or consultants as part of project planning, development, and activation. We have seen communities across the state, small and large, effectively use innovative strategies to



engage residents in a variety of projects. Please connect with GOCO staff in the early stages of your project so that we can reflect on how to best demonstrate support and share resources that can help inform your approach to engagement, if needed.

3. Does GOCO have match requirements?

GOCO does not have a strict match requirement for our funding opportunities, though you should explore opportunities for strategic project partnerships, which can include both cash and in-kind resources. Additionally, our application allows partners to outline other leveraged resources in order to reflect the value of recently committed resources, such as the acquisition of land for a new park or other elements completed in anticipation of your proposal. We encourage grantees to use GOCO funds as match for additional fundraising efforts.

4. What resources and training does GOCO provide to support partner success? What is planned for the future?

As part of GOCO's framework of regionally dedicated program officers, staff is positioned to continually meet with partners, offer planning and resource recommendations, and support collaborative connections that can advance project development. We understand that partners would benefit from additional communication, education, and resources related to the types and range of impactful projects that compete for GOCO funding, ways to elevate community engagement, peer learning opportunities for project development, and grant administration terms. Our team is looking at ways to better support partners through increased resources and peer engagement. If you have ideas or specific needs, please let us know.

5. How does GOCO consider geographic parity (e.g. between larger and smaller communities) in its grantmaking approach?

GOCO's constitutional amendment intends for investments to support projects of highest and best use regardless of geography. This contrasts with Conservation Trust Fund investments (which were also authorized by the same constitutional amendment) that explicitly support entities on a per capita basis throughout Colorado. We track our investments across the state to ensure parity and report to our 19-member board of trustees, which is comprised of two members from each of Colorado's eight congressional districts. As GOCO continues to adapt to meet the demands of an evolving state, the flexibility provided by focusing on the highest and best need allows for responsive action to the most critical needs of any given moment in time. We anticipate continuing to look at the geography of our investments as only one consideration among many as we review and recommend grant decisions.

6. Does GOCO offer an emergency fund to respond to disasters like wildfire and floods?

As part of the 2020 spending plan, the GOCO board set aside a small portion of funding each fiscal year to address unforeseen opportunities (e.g., a large land acquisition) or challenges (e.g., impacts of natural disasters). If the funding doesn't get awarded or allocated in that fiscal year, it rolls over into the following fiscal year. This allows GOCO to be nimble in responding to emergency events and provides fiscal flexibility without impacting planned funding for existing grant programs and investments.

7. Why is there a requirement for a third-party conservation easement?

A third-party conservation easement ensures continual monitoring of the land and that the terms of the agreement are upheld. Easements offer security in knowing that open space land acquisition investments remain in perpetuity to preserve and protect natural resources, habitat, and landscapes with significant conservation values.

8. Why are some 501(c)(3) organizations ineligible for direct GOCO funds?

The constitution identifies specific entities eligible for GOCO funding. Competitive grants for the identification, acquisition, and management of open space and natural areas of statewide significance can be made available to Colorado Parks and Wildlife, counties, municipalities or other political subdivisions of the state, or non-profit land conservation organizations (i.e., land trusts). Competitive grants to acquire, develop or manage parks can be made available to local governments or other entities eligible for distributions from the Conservation Trust Fund. Ineligible 501(c)(3) organizations may partner with an eligible entity on a project proposal. Staff can provide additional guidance on eligibility and other competitive grantmaking requirements.