



## GOCO 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

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## **Land Acknowledgment**

At Great Outdoors Colorado, it is our responsibility to examine history and find meaningful ways that our organization can take steps toward healing and reconciliation. In our commitment to contributing positively to the improvement of the state and its diverse peoples, we must always remember that the lands and waters of our beautiful state are the homeland of many tribes past and present. They include the Apache Nation, Arapaho Nation, Cheyenne Nation, Pueblo Tribes, Shoshone Tribe, and Ute Nations.

Together, we recognize the past and ongoing injustices perpetrated against Indigenous peoples including the painful history of genocide, forced removal, and stolen land. We respect and honor Elders past, present, and future, and all Indigenous peoples for their relationship with this land throughout generations.

It is through this lens that we commit to the long-term pursuit of equity, continued and sustained dialogue with Indigenous peoples, honoring Indigenous sovereignty, and addressing effective restoration strategies in partnership with Indigenous people and Native Nations. We believe that together we can identify, steward, and commit resources in support of reconciliation while pursuing GOCO's mission across the lands now known as Colorado.



## Welcome

Dear partners and friends,

As we approach the launch of our next chapter, we are excited to welcome you to the Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) 2025 Strategic Plan. This plan is a roadmap for GOCO's investments in the coming years and a catalyst for collective action toward protecting and enhancing Colorado's outdoors.

Since the launch of our 2020 Strategic Plan, we've been on a growth path alongside our partners, adapting to a values-driven, community-centered strategy. We created new efficiencies, lowered funding barriers, and deepened our collaborative role. Your feedback confirmed that our approach is working. With this foundation in place, we refined our strategy for 2025, considering emerging trends and the insights we gained. This plan reflects our learning and serves as a guide for how you can access GOCO's funding, benefiting Colorado's outdoors and your communities.

Colorado's outdoor partners are facing unprecedented challenges, from climate change impacts and increasing demands on the land, to capacity constraints and stressed financial resources. Yet, with passion and perseverance, Coloradans have been making significant strides in safeguarding our outdoors and our way of life.

You protected important landscapes, working tirelessly to bring decades-in-the-making conservation initiatives to completion. You engaged locally to build parks and trails that breathe new life into communities. You took on complex restoration efforts to revive ecosystems and wildlife habitat. You stewarded our most-loved outdoor destinations with care. And you created groundbreaking models for equitable outdoor access. This strategic plan builds upon these successes, reflecting and celebrating our shared values.

Your work, and regional partnerships across the state, also provided ground-up inspiration for the forthcoming Colorado's Outdoors Strategy. A vital framework for action and collective impact, the statewide strategy will guide us toward climate-resilient conservation and sustainable outdoor recreation outcomes. Together, we will pursue collaborative and innovative solutions that address the pressing challenges facing our landscapes while enhancing quality of life for all Coloradans.

We have done great work together. Let's build on the momentum and chart the path forward for a vibrant and sustainable future for our great outdoors.

With gratitude,

Jackie Miller  
Executive Director

Mina Liebert  
Board Chair

Pamela Denahy  
Board Chair 2022-2024



## **Mission, Vision & Guiding Principles**

### **Mission**

To help preserve, protect, enhance, and manage the state's wildlife, park, river, trail, and open space heritage.

### **Vision**

To fulfill the trust of the people of Colorado through wise investments in the great outdoors.

### **Guiding Principles**

- Elevate equity.
- Lead with legacy in mind.
- Leverage innovation and be flexible to increase impact.
- Evolve how to approach investment areas.
- Be a responsive and cooperative partner.



## Equity Statement

As a statewide organization that invests millions of public dollars each year in community assets like parks, trails, open space, and outdoor programs, we are committed to supporting organizations and individuals in making Colorado's outdoors more accessible, safe, and welcoming. These efforts are critical across our great state—from urban and suburban to mountain and rural communities.

Historically, some people have been prevented from enjoying the outdoors and excluded from the design of outdoor projects. However, we know that these projects bring many benefits to people's lives. Outdoor access supports quality of life, boosts local economies, contributes to health and wellbeing, and builds stronger relationships among community members.

GOCO's grant programs promote community-centered approaches to project development to ensure positive outcomes are felt more equitably. We encourage our partners to engage diverse voices in project visioning, planning, and decision-making, especially Black, Indigenous, Latine, and racially and ethnically diverse people; those from people across the spectrum of sexual and gender identity; those with disabilities; and those from low-income, urban, and rural communities. By meaningfully including these perspectives, projects will be more relevant to community needs and achieve greater impact.

We know that learning about and responding to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) challenges requires time and intention. Internally, GOCO is applying these principles to our own operations, updating hiring practices, providing education and support for staff and board members, and creating EDI goals across departments. Our learning process will continue to change—and change us in the process.

We acknowledge that our partners and other stakeholders are on their own paths and might be at different places in their learning. We also look to our partners to help us inform and refine our own approach to best support and invest in them and their communities.



## What We Know

GOCO's mission is broad. The constitutional amendment directs us to protect our outdoors for future generations. Embedded in this language is the grand responsibility to care for an ecosystem of people, places, and wildlife, and to respond effectively to their ever-evolving needs.

Today, as always, Colorado is in a state of change. This dynamic place we call home faces pressures on its natural resources, some of which we have confronted as enduring challenges and others of which are new or quickly accelerating.

According to The State of the Rockies: 2024 Conservation in the West Poll, 67% of Coloradans reported observing significant climate change impacts over the past decade. The state faces increasing environmental stress from more frequent droughts, wildfires, floods, and rising temperatures, all of which put added pressure on natural systems. Additional broadscale stressors elevated by GOCO partners include growing costs; increased use, necessitating restoration and stewardship in addition to ongoing protection; and development, sometimes resulting in habitat loss and fragmentation.

Protecting vibrant ecosystems across our lands is essential to preserving Colorado's unique character and the long-term well-being of its residents and wildlife. Roughly 10% of Colorado's land, or 6 million acres, is already in protected status. While that suggests progress, through recent stakeholder engagement, our partners have reinforced a sense of urgency for large-scale land acquisition and quick action when the right opportunities arise, given competing demands on the landscape.

The price of land in Colorado is on the rise, faster even than inflation. We are fortunate to have complementary funding sources for land protection in the state: the Conservation Easement Tax Credit program and GOCO's Land Acquisition and Transaction Cost Assistance programs. The tax credit incentivizes private landowners to protect their land for agricultural, environmental, historic, and recreational purposes. When it is insufficient or impractical for any given land transaction, GOCO programs often offer needed support. Working together, the programs can better keep pace with increasing costs and other pressures.

As with conservation, investments in stewardship are critical to safeguarding Colorado's natural resources and recreational assets in the face of accelerating climate change and human impacts. Demand for stewardship dollars, for everything from ecological restoration efforts and wildfire recovery to invasive species removal and trail maintenance, is outpacing available funding. Colorado faces a backlog of maintenance and restoration projects, and current statewide and regional planning efforts are likely to reveal greater need and increase the demand. Partner-cited factors include higher costs for crews and staff, a need for longer-term initiatives, and ongoing stewardship challenges in



high-visitation areas—all of which require greater and more collaborative funding sources and an enduring commitment from funders and partners.

Coloradans who spend time outdoors and receive the many benefits of recreation feel more connected to our great outdoors and help protect nature in the future. Capital projects supporting local recreation, like parks and trails, enable close-to-home outdoor access and can be transformational for communities. But here, again, we see that diminished purchasing power is putting a strain on resources for our stakeholders. GOCO's local government partners struggle with increasing construction costs, staffing constraints, and aging infrastructure while also allocating larger portions of their budgets to operations and maintenance. Despite the challenge to maintain or rehabilitate existing amenities, and other growing needs like fire mitigation, they cite landscape-scale open space conservation and acquisition as a top-priority use for GOCO funding.

Funding for the outdoors is a meaningful equity lever in Colorado because the benefits of conservation and recreation are so rich and multi-faceted. By applying an equity lens across funding opportunities, we believe GOCO can contribute to broad-scale systems change. To that end, we work to create and administer programs that are accessible to and equitable for all prospective grantees, and through them, elevate the most needed and urgent projects across Colorado communities.

In recent years, GOCO has made strides in partnering with Tribes and Indigenous Peoples. By understanding the ongoing connections with land, water, and wildlife that Indigenous people hold to this day, we can help reconcile a painful history while fostering collaboration, stewardship, youth engagement, and improved integration of traditional practices and Indigenous knowledge with Western science. We know that listening to, engaging, and collaborating with communities and individuals who are deeply connected to natural systems will have meaningful impacts on conservation.

Concern about children not spending enough time outdoors stands at an all-time high, according to the Conservation in the West poll. 87% of respondents consider it to be a serious or very serious problem. There is cause for hope though. Since 2015, GOCO has invested in the Generation Wild movement to support locally based coalitions as they connect Colorado kids and families with the outdoors across urban, suburban, and rural communities. Passionate groups of individuals and organizations, including schools, local governments, nonprofits, and more, are creating culturally responsive programming and enriching outdoor experiences for more Coloradans to enjoy.

Research shows that children who perceive themselves to be connected to nature perform more sustainable behaviors, namely pro-ecological behaviors, frugality, altruism, and equity, and the more they do so, the happier they are. To date, Generation Wild coalitions have brought more than 7,000 programs and 3,000 career pathway opportunities to more than 270,000 participants.



In 2024, GOCO contracted with an outside firm to measure the impact of Generation Wild's sibling communication campaign through a statewide survey. 51% of Coloradans recalled seeing at least one Generation Wild campaign element. More than three quarters of parents familiar with the campaign agreed that it improved their attitude about playing outside and made them more likely to explore the outdoors with their kids. 26% of parents had seen Generation Wild's list of "100 Things to Do Before You're 12," a primary campaign asset that provides tips and inspiration for outdoor play, and of that group, 58% said they used the list in the last six years. The campaign is resonating with parents to positively impact children's physical and mental well-being and inspire the next generation of environmental stewards.

Colorado's ability to innovate and collaborate in coming years will be crucial to ensuring the sustainability of our natural resources and outdoor recreation opportunities. To address current challenges with urgency, GOCO is working alongside Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the Department of Natural Resources, the Governor's office and other state agencies, representatives of the Regional Partnerships Initiative, and key stakeholders to develop Colorado's Outdoors Strategy. The strategy will provide a statewide vision and action plan for climate-resilient conservation and restoration, exceptional and sustainable outdoor recreation, and coordinated planning and funding. Partners aim to release the strategy, which includes a foundational inventory of critical datasets, useful tools, and important resources to inform decision making, in the first half of 2025.

GOCO has aligned our 2025 Strategic Plan with community-based, Tribal and Indigenous, regional, and statewide visioning and planning efforts and will eagerly support projects and initiatives elevated out of them. Our objective: strategically identify the highest and best uses for GOCO investments, across the broad mission, to support Colorado's great outdoors now and for future generations.





## Where We're Headed

GOCO's 2020 Strategic Plan put forth a community-centered, values-based strategy and program portfolio; a partner-centric grantmaking philosophy; and an operational plan that changed our way of working. We aimed to create new efficiencies and lower barriers to funding while deepening our role as a collaborative partner. GOCO and its partners engaged in new ways, and the results were positive.

To build on it in 2025, we surveyed the landscape for continuing and emerging trends, reflected on our learning, and listened to partners. An independent contractor conducted an anonymous survey, one-on-one interviews, and four focus groups with our partners. Results indicated that GOCO's plan was largely successful in meeting their organizations' needs, but ongoing challenges they faced—from rising costs and limited resources to their own staff capacity—illuminated new opportunities to refine our strategic approach and program design.

[GOCO's 2024 Partner Survey: Key Findings]

- 93% of respondents agree or strongly agree that GOCO is a trusted funding partner.
- 79% say GOCO considers the unique culture and needs of each community.
- 84% say GOCO's grant programs align with their priority projects.
- 80% believe GOCO's regional staffing model, which launched in 2021, has been effective.

Thank you to our partners who took part in the engagement process and provided meaningful input to inform our direction.

[End]

This strategy aims to:

- *Strengthen conservation efforts:* By protecting and enhancing natural landscapes, we will safeguard Colorado's ecological health and biodiversity.
- *Expand outdoor recreation:* We will increase access to high-quality recreational opportunities, promoting healthier lifestyles and community engagement.
- *Support local communities:* Through targeted investments, we will support local and regional initiatives that enhance community resilience and well-being.
- *Promote innovation and collaboration:* Embracing new ideas and fostering partnerships will be central to addressing complex challenges and achieving shared goals.
- *Increase equity:* We will invest in projects created in partnership with communities that are traditionally underrepresented in outdoor recreation and conservation.



### *Structural Changes*

The new program portfolio builds on the success of existing programs while also allocating resources for a new initiative to address Colorado's pressing challenges.

In partnership with Colorado Parks and Wildlife, we will launch a strategic initiative focused on implementing Colorado's Outdoors Strategy (COS) and advancing the efforts of the hard-working collaboratives participating in the Regional Partnerships Initiative. Across our grant programs, we will elevate projects that align with COS.

We plan to invest in more Generation Wild communities to inspire and grow the next generation of environmental stewards.

We will expand funding for partner programs—RESTORE Colorado, Conservation Service Corps (CSC), and the Transaction Cost Assistance Program supporting conservation easements—to collaboratively accelerate stewardship and land acquisition efforts.

Stewardship is of high priority to partners, so it will be funded through several programs, including RESTORE Colorado, CSC, and Community Impact. Consolidating our previous Stewardship Impact program into Community Impact will help reduce confusion about applicant eligibility, application criteria, and desired project outcomes.

In lieu of a Centennial Program, on an annual basis we will offer Centennial-level grant opportunities for signature stewardship and capital projects, while still considering large-scale land acquisitions on an ongoing basis.

### *Implementation Success*

To be partner-supportive, the new program portfolio will provide opportunities for projects of all sizes that help drive our shared values. We recognize that costs are on the rise, so we are increasing grant amounts, including the upper request limit for Community Impact grants. We will fund large-scale projects more frequently, to be opportunistic and maximize impact.

We heard that our partners want more support. By moving from three to two base program grant cycles per year, GOCO staff will be more available for outreach, technical assistance, and resource sharing in interim periods.

For additional detail on these changes, please refer to the Appendix: Program Changes At-a-Glance.



## How We Engage

We build relationships with partners to ensure our grant process is approachable, efficient, and effective. That means less time applying for funding, and more time achieving outcomes for Colorado's people, places, and wildlife.

*Accessibility* | We work to remove barriers to ensure equal access to funding and aim to make grant-making processes clear and efficient.

*Community-centered approach* | We strive to meet communities where they are. Together with partners, we consider the unique culture of each community in order to fulfill its vision.

*Education and support* | We provide partners with resources, training, and shared learning opportunities to support success.

*Communications* | We communicate with clear, accessible language and lift up our partners' authentic, community-created stories.



## What We Value

GOCO's values guide our decision-making. Intentionally broad, they aim to respond to statewide challenges and opportunities while supporting locally designed solutions.

*Resource conservation* | We value strategic land conservation and resource protection work.

*Outdoor stewardship* | We support sustainability of and improvements to the state's natural and recreational resources.

*Community vitality* | We invest in conservation and outdoor recreation efforts that support communities and quality of life.

*Equitable access* | We partner with communities actively breaking down barriers to the outdoors.

*Youth connections* | We believe children and their families deserve opportunities to get outside and experience all the benefits of doing so.

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## Program Portfolio

GOCO's competitive grant program portfolio is designed to align with our broad and diverse mission and our values. We know that needs are vast across Colorado, and we do our best to support partners as they tackle urgent conservation opportunities, restore important landscapes and habitats, and provide high quality outdoor recreation experiences for their communities.

To focus on these outcomes and make our programs accessible, we have simplified our program portfolio. It includes three base programs, three partner programs, Generation Wild, and a new collaborative funding effort with Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW).

Launching in the first half of 2025, Colorado's Outdoors Strategy gives GOCO and others an opportunity to align projects, programs, and grantmaking around a collective vision for the state's future. The outcomes achieved under many, if not all, of our programs align with the north star goals and objectives of the strategy. In addition, GOCO and CPW's new, jointly funded program will support the Regional Partnerships Initiative and implement projects identified in partnership plans. We will use the resources and tools developed under the strategy to help assess project merit and identify outcomes consistent with its goals.

We recognize that the demand for high-impact projects continues as communities grow and change. GOCO invests in signature, large-scale initiatives for outdoor recreation, conservation, and stewardship as Centennial projects, which partners can apply to receive funding for once annually through our Community Impact program or in any cycle of our Land Acquisition program.

It is important to note that we seek to increase our investment in projects that are led by, prioritized by, and in service to Tribes and Indigenous peoples, across all grant programs. Such projects might include land acquisitions that protect sacred sites or efforts that invest in capacity and technical support.

Beginning in 2025, GOCO will offer the following programs:

*Community Impact* | GOCO invests in planning, capital, and stewardship projects that improve a community's access to the outdoors and its quality of life.

*Land Acquisition* | GOCO invests in land conservation projects that advance conservation values and connect people to place.

*Transaction Cost Assistance* | GOCO invests in costs associated with conservation easement transactions that advance statewide land protection priorities.



*RESTORE Colorado* | GOCO invests in significant habitat restoration and stewardship efforts across the state to address increasing impacts on Colorado's natural resources.

*Conservation Service Corps* | GOCO invests in projects that employ young people on critical outdoor recreation and restoration projects.

*Pathways* | GOCO invests in innovative visioning, research, and capacity projects that address trends, issues, and opportunities in the outdoors.

*Generation Wild* | GOCO invests in advancing equitable access to the outdoors through local coalitions that provide program and pathway opportunities to youth and families who might not otherwise have them.

*Regional Partnerships Initiative* | GOCO invests in Regional Partnerships to collaboratively plan and implement project outcomes that promote sustainable outdoor recreation and climate-resilient conservation and restoration.

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## Community Impact

Parks, trails, and other outdoor recreation opportunities support physical and mental health, build community, and attract visitors who support local economies. By creating more close-to-home recreation, we make it easier for everyone to access the many benefits nature provides.

Through the Community Impact program, GOCO invests in projects of various scales that enhance a community's quality of life and increase access to the outdoors. Partners can apply for funding to plan for, develop new, or revitalize existing parks, trails, natural areas, and outdoor amenities. This includes resources to address critical stewardship projects in the parks, trails, and open spaces frequented by residents of and visitors to their communities.

We also provide opportunities to submit proposals for high-impact projects that require significant resources. These Centennial projects aim to achieve broad and/or multi-value outcomes and are often of regional or statewide significance.

We ask partners to reflect on their goals, available resources, and ways to involve residents and community partners in the design process so that projects reflect community needs and priorities. We also ask that they consider climate-resilient and environmentally conscious design approaches when possible.

GOCO works collaboratively with grantees to support projects from concept to completion. As needed, we consider funding local capacity for project management, land acquisition for development, community-centered planning and design, and project implementation—all within a single grant. We consider the unique needs of our partners and exercise flexibility to ensure the program is accessible to and accommodates communities of all sizes and with varying degrees of capacity.

Together, we will increase the number of Coloradoans, especially those from disproportionately impacted communities, who have close-to-home access to high-quality outdoor recreation amenities, natural areas, and experiences.



## Land Acquisition

Colorado's unique open spaces, natural areas, and agricultural lands are vital to our way of life. Conservation efforts, on both public and private lands, remain essential to sustaining strong ecosystems, promoting climate resiliency, advancing landscape-scale connectivity, and enhancing community vitality.

Through our Land Acquisition program, GOCO invests in fee simple land acquisitions that provide public access and considers conservation easements when tax credits are financially insufficient or impractical. Projects provide passive public recreation access; essential wildlife habitat and migration corridors; critical watersheds, waterways, and riparian ecosystems; scenic viewsheds and greenways; and new parks and open spaces for disproportionately impacted communities.

GOCO considers projects of all scales, allowing opportunities to advance signature and high-impact Centennial proposals through any grant cycle. We provide flexible funding opportunities to remain responsive to urgent acquisitions, offer low- and no-interest loans, and work with partners as they develop new and innovative practices to accelerate conservation. We encourage comprehensive project visioning to advance multiple objectives, such as advancing community conservation initiatives, increasing public access, restoring and enhancing landscapes, and planning for ongoing stewardship.

We prioritize projects with the most significant conservation outcomes. We will use the data and mapping tools developed for Colorado's Outdoors Strategy to inform priorities while also considering the threat of conversion.

Our land protection efforts will strengthen Colorado's ecological health and biodiversity and provide greater access to nature.





## Transaction Cost Assistance

Colorado's Conservation Easement Tax Credit program provides private landowners with an incentive to support conservation outcomes. Costs to complete conservation transactions, however, can be prohibitive for some.

Through the Transaction Cost Assistance Program (TCAP), GOCO works collaboratively with Keep It Colorado, a statewide coalition working to protect private and public lands, to help nonprofit land trusts and open space partners lower financial barriers for landowners and cover the costs associated with the transactions.

Keep It Colorado directs funding to offset costs associated with appraisals, baseline assessments, title work, environmental assessments, project fees, and stewardship endowments. Projects must support partners in advancing the goals of *Conserving Colorado: A 10-year Roadmap for the Future of Private Land Conservation* by conserving land that provides critical habitat, supports local food systems, preserves iconic viewsheds, protects wetland and river corridors, and safeguards places of historic and cultural significance.

TCAP will help protect lands with high biodiversity, connectivity, and climate resilience; keep agricultural lands working; and support communities' way of life. The investments will advance the conservation community's collective goal of protecting 3.3 million acres by 2033.



## RESTORE Colorado

From the high alpine headwaters of Colorado's rivers to the shortgrass prairie of the eastern plains, Colorado is home to some of the most impressive landscapes in the country. But demands on our lands put a strain on wildlife and their habitats. Faced with the accelerating impacts of habitat loss and climate change, GOCO helped create the Restoration and Stewardship of Outdoor Resources and Environment (RESTORE) Colorado program.

Administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, RESTORE Colorado employs a collaborative funding model to support large-scale habitat restoration and stewardship projects that enhance the resiliency of ecosystem services for wildlife and communities. Pooled funding creates efficiency and flexibility for partners to embark on larger, multi-benefit projects on public and private lands, often crossing jurisdictional boundaries. Priority landscapes include riparian areas, wetlands, grasslands, forests, sagebrush, and migration corridors.

We work with partners to develop and promote innovative, project-based solutions and practices that enhance ecosystems to mitigate habitat impacts from climate change, drought, fire, and other limiting conditions. In addition, partners are encouraged to elevate projects that address opportunities for disproportionately impacted communities, diverse constituents, and urban areas.

As a RESTORE partner, we aim to increase the scale and quality of Colorado's ecosystems so that they continue to support healthy wildlife and communities.



## Conservation Service Corps

Colorado's stewardship needs are significant. Fortunately, across the state, conservation service corps are ready to engage in on-the-ground projects that improve our landscapes while providing jobs and career opportunities for youth, young adults, and veterans.

In partnership with Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA), GOCO's Conservation Service Corps (CSC) program invests in projects that employ corps crews on critical outdoor recreation and stewardship projects. Crews accomplish a variety of stewardship outcomes: constructing and maintaining trail systems, improving outdoor recreation amenities, restoring riparian areas, enhancing forest health, improving wildlife habitat, and removing invasive species among them. Plus, corps members learn job readiness and leadership skills that prepare them for future careers.

State agency, land conservation, and local government partners work directly with one of several corps to design and apply for projects. Meanwhile, GOCO is working with CYCA and its accredited member corps to expand into new communities, and given greater demand for corps work, we will make direct investments in their capacity and sustainability.

Through GOCO's continued commitment to Conservation Service Corps, we will increase the number of participants in corps service, reach new Colorado communities, and increase the quality of Colorado's recreational and natural resources.



## Generation Wild

Kids grow better outside. That's more than a tagline; it's an imperative to create connections to the outdoors for the health and wellness of Colorado's youth.

Through the Generation wild program, diverse, local coalitions comprised of nonprofits, local governments, schools, and more are investing GOCO resources in culturally responsive programming; pathways to outdoor leadership, internships, and careers; and the essential staff and capacity needed to drive and manage their work. Generation Wild communities are focused on increasing resilience, driving sustainability of programs, and maintaining an adaptive response to community-specific needs.

As the central funder for this unique and large-scale outdoor equity movement, GOCO prioritizes consistent and flexible funding, empowering communities to navigate the cycles of collaborative work and increase their capacity over time. To support network development, we work to elevate best practices, offer shared resources and learning opportunities, and collaborate closely with our partners as they grow and evolve.

In the coming years, we will advance the movement with ongoing investments in established Generation Wild communities while also supporting a select number of new coalitions. This powerful network will bring outdoor programs and experiences to more youth and families.

### *Generation Wild Communications*

A bold social change initiative launched in 2017, the Generation Wild communications campaign continues its mission alongside the community coalitions to inspire Colorado kids and families to get outside more often. The statewide, creative campaign reaches parents across the state with the tips and resources they need to make outdoor play a priority.

Not only does the effort bring visibility to a pressing issue and top concern for Coloradans today, but it does something about it. Its message touches hearts and drives parents to take action—to the benefit of their children's health and happiness. The campaign strives to reach and represent Colorado kids and parents with integrity and authenticity through inclusive language and imagery, and the accessibility of its resources and ideas.

An ever-expanding partner network of community-oriented and mission-aligned organizations, including the Generation Wild coalition communities, find unity under the trusted Generation Wild brand. Colorado public libraries, parks and recreation organizations, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Boys & Girls Clubs, and many others have already rallied to join the movement. Will you join in?



## Pathways

Colorado is in a constant state of change. Learning and evolving through change is critical as we build a sustainable future for our outdoors. Taking stock of available tools and resources, creating new ones, and learning from others help us fill knowledge gaps and chart paths forward.

With Pathways funding, our partners address pressing issues and opportunities through research and knowledge building; new data, tools, and models; and staff capacity. This program supports high-level visioning processes, equity initiatives, climate resilience efforts, and community engagement strategies that develop and expand networks and partnerships.

Alongside our partners, we reflect on the salient issues impacting Colorado communities and offer funding support to address them. We intentionally elevate needs and opportunities within disproportionately impacted communities and increase representation across visioning efforts and capacity-building initiatives.

GOCO supports a culture of learning. Investing in new ideas and the people who will do something with them will help us continually evolve and respond to the demands of the times.



## Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)

The GOCO-CPW partnership is a powerful collaboration focused on addressing Colorado's broad outdoor needs. Approximately half of GOCO's funding is invested through CPW to advance conservation, wildlife management, outdoor recreation, and environmental education. GOCO funding helps CPW establish and improve its state parks system, provide youth programs and internships, develop and steward trails, protect crucial wildlife habitats, and maintain and enhance Colorado's diverse wildlife heritage, including the conservation of our state's threatened, endangered, and native species.

GOCO will continue to deepen its partnership with CPW to better understand the agency's key priorities and align our shared missions and resources for the greatest impact. By listening to and learning from experts within CPW, GOCO is better equipped to fund shared priorities and guide communities across the state in developing projects that support wildlife conservation and outdoor recreation.

In the next five years, GOCO and CPW will embark on our first collaborative funding opportunity to help advance the goals of Colorado's Outdoors Strategy.

### *Regional Partnerships Initiative*

CPW's Regional Partnerships Initiative (RPI) created a network of regionally based coalitions known as "Regional Partnerships" that bring together broad interests to advance conservation and outdoor recreation priorities for their area. Collectively, Regional Partnerships learn from and elevate community-level perspectives, values, and priorities to inform planning and projects across the state. As of 2024, 20 Regional Partnerships cover 75% of Colorado's geographic area. With future grant cycles, CPW aims to grow membership so that coalitions cover more of the state.

Regional Partnerships will be critical to the implementation of Colorado's Outdoors Strategy (COS). Launching in the first half of 2025, COS will advance climate-resilient conservation and restoration, exceptional and sustainable outdoor recreation, and coordinated planning and funding. The strategy provides a framework for the Regional Partnerships to elevate their priorities in statewide forums, incorporate the unique needs and values of their communities into their work, and integrate with the strategy's vision, goals, objectives, and collective strategies.

GOCO and CPW are collaborating to infuse the RPI with \$50 million in funding over five years. Regional Partnerships can apply for grants for project implementation and additional data and capacity needs.



Funding will support a broad range of outcomes across jurisdictional boundaries as projects align with COS goals and objectives:

|                          |   |   |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| <p><b>GOALS</b></p>      | <p><b><u>Climate-Resilient Conservation and Restoration</u></b></p> <p>Conservation and restoration of lands and waters help wildlife and biodiversity thrive; habitats are resilient and connected; communities benefit from healthy ecosystems and agricultural lands.</p>  | <p><b><u>Exceptional and Sustainable Outdoor Recreation</u></b></p> <p>A diversity of high-quality outdoor experiences are accessible, equitable, and inclusive; management and stewardship enhance benefits for and minimize impacts to people, landscapes, and communities.</p>   |
| <p><b>OBJECTIVES</b></p> | <p><b>Conservation:</b> Increase the conservation of public and private lands and waters with high biodiversity, connectivity, and climate resilience while supporting communities and agricultural land.</p> <p><b>Restoration:</b> Increase restoration of public and private lands and waters with high biodiversity, connectivity, and climate resilience, including areas most impacted by increasing populations, human disturbance, and climate change.</p> <p><b>Wildlife and Biodiversity:</b> Enhance habitat connectivity and species recovery on public and private lands and waters for wildlife and biodiversity.</p> | <p><b>Experiences and Opportunities:</b> Enhance a broad range of exceptional outdoor recreation experiences, including close-to-home and statewide opportunities that meet diverse needs and interests.</p> <p><b>Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:</b> Increase the accessibility and inclusivity of outdoor experiences and opportunities for diverse and disproportionately impacted communities and individuals.</p> <p><b>Management and Stewardship:</b> Enhance management capacity and foster stewardship to support exceptional outdoor experiences and opportunities that are sustainable and resilient, avoid and minimize environmental impacts, and respect people and communities.</p> |

Working together, Coloradans will ensure a future where our outdoors, people, community character, and ways of life endure for generations to come.



## How We Evaluate

At GOCO, being a responsible steward of public resources and an exceptional partner to you are top priorities. To support these commitments, we evaluate our programs and approaches to measure progress, identify opportunities, and drive continuous improvement. Our evaluation efforts focus on the following areas:

### *Community Listening*

GOCO is committed to building authentic relationships with grantees and stakeholders across the state. Listening is our most effective tool for understanding how we're doing. Through partner satisfaction surveys and stakeholder interviews, we gather valuable feedback to strengthen relationships, adjust our approaches, and refine our strategies.

### *Project Outputs: Data Gathering*

We continue to track key quantifiable metrics—from acres of land and miles of river conserved to miles of trail constructed and numbers of parks built or enhanced—to convey the breadth and scope of GOCO-funded projects and our board's investments.

### *Project Outcomes: Storytelling*

Storytelling helps us understand the impact of GOCO's investments and celebrate the hard-earned efforts of our partners working on the ground in communities. We amplify stories in our annual report, website, newsletter, and social media to share successes and learning with our network.

### *Equity Assessment*

GOCO engages in internal equity surveys conducted by a third-party contractor to evaluate our progress in living equity values and growing a supportive, inclusive work culture. Externally, we rely on partner surveys to ensure we are making strides to lower barriers to funding and right-sizing program requirements for a diversity of partners.





## **Onward!**

As we move forward with renewed focus and determination, GOCO remains hopeful about the future of Colorado's great outdoors.

Through partnership and innovation, we will continue to overcome challenges and embrace opportunities to create lasting impacts. Whether conserving critical landscapes, expanding outdoor access, or fostering connections between people and nature, our collective efforts will help shape a resilient and thriving Colorado.

We enter this next chapter in GOCO's history with optimism and resolve, knowing that every step we take together strengthens our legacy and ensures a vibrant future for all who call Colorado home. Onward!

## **Mission & Governance**

The Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund was created in 1992 when voters approved Amendment Article XXVII to the Colorado Constitution to allocate Colorado Lottery proceeds. It directs a portion to GOCO for projects that preserve, protect, and enhance the state's wildlife, park, river, trail, and open space heritage, and it created a board of trustees to govern distribution.



**Appendix: Program Changes At-a-Glance**

While many of our programs and processes remain the same from our 2020 Strategic Plan to today, we have refined practices to align with partner feedback and are pleased to share these updates.

*Program Grant Cycles*

GOCO will transition from three cycles to two cycles per year for base programs on this schedule:

- Concept papers accepted in July with December funding awards
- Concept papers accepted in January with June funding awards

*Base Programs*

| <b>Program</b>      | <b>Notable Updates</b>   |
|---------------------|--|
| Centennial Projects | <p><i>Capital and Stewardship Proposals</i><br/>Annual funding opportunity for requests of \$2 to 5 million per project.</p> <p><i>Land Acquisition Proposals</i><br/>Considered at any time with requests up to \$10 million per project.</p>                             |
| Community Impact    | <p>Funding requests: \$100,000 to \$2 million.</p> <p>Stewardship opportunities now included in Community Impact.</p> <p>Site-specific and master plan opportunities for communities now fall within Community Impact.</p>   |
| Land Acquisition    | <p>Out-of-cycle applications accepted at any time for urgent land acquisitions.</p> <p>Prioritize fee simple land acquisitions that provide public access while also considering conservation easements where tax credits are financially insufficient or impractical.</p> |



|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
|                    | Continue to support the Conservation Easement Transaction Cost Assistance Program as outlined below.  |
| Stewardship Impact | <p>GOCO will no longer offer a separate Stewardship Impact program; rather, stewardship opportunities that address visitation and recreation impacts will be accepted through the Community Impact program.</p> <p>We will also consider Centennial-scale stewardship opportunities and continue to advance stewardship objectives through our partner programs outlined below.</p> |
| Pathways           | Previous Planning and Capacity program retitled to Pathways to distinguish opportunities separate from standard planning opportunities (e.g., site plans, community master plans, etc.) submitted through Community Impact.   |

*Partner Programs*

| <b>Program</b>   | <b>Program Opportunities</b>  |
|--|---|
| RESTORE Colorado<br><i>In partnership with National Fish and Wildlife Foundation</i>       | At-scale habitat restoration, expansion and improvement projects across priority landscapes.<br><br>GOCO will increase its annual investment to \$3.115 million by FY30.                                |
| Conservation Service Corps<br><i>In partnership with Colorado Youth Corps Association</i>  | Employs corps crews to work on projects such as trail restoration, forest health improvement, and invasive species removal.<br><br>GOCO will increase its annual investment to \$2.115 million by FY30. |
| Regional Partnerships Initiative<br><i>In partnership with Colorado Parks and Wildlife</i> | Funding will support implementation, capacity, and planning for the Regional Partnerships to help achieve progress towards the milestones identified in Colorado’s Outdoors Strategy.                   |



|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>GOCO and Colorado Parks and Wildlife will pursue a joint funding initiative that includes \$12.5 million from each of GOCO's four funding purposes for a total of \$50 million between FY26-30.</p> |
| <p>Transaction Cost Assistance Program<br/><i>In partnership with Keep It Colorado</i></p> | <p>Helps nonprofit land trusts and open space partners cover the costs associated with conservation easement transactions.</p> <p>GOCO will continue at its annual investment of \$1.1M per year.</p>  |

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