



# REVIEWER GUIDANCE

## Review Process and Guidance

This review is comprehensive of GOCO's base programs: Community Impact, Land Acquisition, Planning & Capacity, and Stewardship Impact. In a previous conceiving phase, GOCO staff limited the pool of applications to those provided for your review.

We want to understand which projects, regardless of program, present the best opportunity for investment in any given grant cycle, any given year. This process represents a shift in our approach to evaluation that we believe is better aligned with **our flexible, values-based, approach** to grantmaking that also drives **equity**.

## Scoring Proposals

Scoring is a comparative analysis among all applications submitted, across programs and geographies, in consideration of previous GOCO awards, and known potential future projects. While we will not issue a final, average score for applications, we ask that reviewers provide a single overall score for each proposal as a starting point for discussion. Please score proposals on a 1-10 scale with 10 representing an outstanding proposal (you may use 0.5 points as necessary).

8-10 – Strong proposal, timely/urgent, will advance GOCO's program values, often multiple

5-7 – Relatively strong proposal, less timely/urgent

3-4 – Proposal has deficiencies, not timely/urgent, should resubmit

1-2 – Proposal is critically flawed, should NOT resubmit

We request that reviewers contemplate a spectrum of considerations when evaluating the merits of a proposal. Please consider the following when evaluating, comparing, and scoring applications:

1. Impact upon community and/or visitors
2. Ability to drive local, regional, or statewide economic development
3. Advancement of community-directed outcomes or community-centered process
4. Project takes advantage of strategic partnerships as opposed to a unilateral approach
5. Leverages other resources, financial and otherwise
6. Fit with grant program vs. other grant resources available beyond GOCO
7. Contribution toward one or more of GOCO's program values (and degree of contribution)
  - Resource Conservation
  - Outdoor Stewardship
  - Community Vitality
  - Equitable Access
  - Youth Connections
8. Extraneous factors e.g. natural disasters, pandemics, etc.
9. Geographic diversity (or programmatic, outcome, or other diversity)
10. Ability of and confidence in the applicant and partners
11. Compelling urgency to complete project
12. Scale of the impact relative to the project cost and community served

Consider the merit and quality of the anticipated outcomes rather than the quality of the writing and presentation of the proposal.

A proposal could contain a single fatal flaw or several smaller but collectively significant deficiencies that justify a lower score. In addition, reviewers should impart personal knowledge of the project during the review process through written and oral comments. The review is not limited to the narrative proposal and attachments – reviewers should consider other conversations, meetings, media reports, etc. that are not discussed or presented in the proposal.

### **Reviewer Comments**

Reviewers should provide comments detailing their decision as it relates to the items listed above. Comments should reflect your scoring decision i.e. critical comments for lower scores and more positive comments for higher scores. The provided scoresheet allows space to organize thoughts in several columns: comments, strengths, questions/concerns, and GOCO values. You do not need to provide content for all of these fields but please use the comments column to summarize your thoughts and feedback. We will paraphrase and organize this feedback on a summary sheet for all applicants.

### **Review Meeting**

The review meeting is an opportunity to convene and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of proposals and come to consensus about which projects to recommend for funding. We will use your scores to establish a baseline rank of proposals and use that baseline as the basis for discussion. We will discuss all projects but spend the majority of our time discussing projects where there is disagreement in scoring/ranking between reviewers to understand and account for scoring discrepancies. In general, we do not have enough funding to allocate to all projects, every round. We need to make difficult decisions about project recommendations and will use this reviewer meeting to substantiate our reasoning for advancing or declining proposals at this stage.

### **Process Feedback**

We thank you for your commitment to this process and the expertise you bring to the table advising GOCO about the most compelling projects to recommend for award. We welcome feedback and questions regarding this new process for reviewing grant applications and seek to continually improve upon how we support our local partners and create a fair and responsive process.