

Know Before You GOCO

PATHWAYS PROGRAM GUIDANCE

Welcome! We're so glad you're here. Please read the following information carefully for the best chance at GOCO funding. Contact your GOCO program officer with any questions.

The Pathways Program supports organizational capacity, research projects, and regional or statewide planning efforts that address critical issues in the outdoors. This includes innovative strategies that address natural resource and outdoor recreation needs of Colorado's communities, and proposals that allow for transferable or replicable approaches to scale impact.

Priority will be given to projects that clearly outline impactful planning and research opportunities that address regional and statewide opportunities, issues, and trends in the outdoors, and advance innovation, sustainability, and equity.

When funding capacity, applicants are encouraged to consider hiring practices, professional development, and thoughtful wages. Where possible, we aim to support projects that create long-term, full-time jobs or career growth for people from underrepresented groups, including BIPOC, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, and others from marginalized communities.

Funding Request Range

While there is no maximum request amount, competitive grants often range between \$100,000 and \$300,000. GOCO may suggest a revised funding request amount, as needed.

Contact your program officer for more information about large investment proposals up to \$5,000,000.

Timeline

1-3 years for project completion, with flexibility based on deliverables

Grant Process

1. Explore grant programs and requirements.
2. Contact your program officer and develop a concept. (3+ months)
3. Submit a concept paper.
4. If invited, submit an application.

5. If awarded, complete your project.
6. Submit final documentation for funding reimbursement.

Note that some projects may experience several rounds of feedback from GOCO staff prior to and during concept paper submission. Once a concept paper is submitted, award decisions are announced six months later at a GOCO board meeting.

Eligibility

Eligible Organizations

- Colorado cities, towns, and counties
- Title 32 special districts eligible to receive Conservation Trust Fund distributions
- Land conservation organizations that support open space and natural area acquisitions
- Political subdivisions of the State of Colorado whose missions are to identify, manage, or acquire open space and natural areas
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Eligible Grant Expenses

- Project planning, coordination, implementation, communications, and/or celebration
- Technology and other one-time non-fixed assets
- Expenses incurred during the grant period by the applicant and any contracted service providers for services directly related to project outcomes and administration
- Strategic planning, consulting services, and other community engagement costs
- Staff, board, and other relevant personnel professional development, skill training, workshops, and conferences

The following expenses **will not** be covered:

- Advocacy and policy work
- Programmatic support for outdoor experiences or environmental education
- Local government land use master and site-specific plans pertaining to parks, recreation, trails, and open space (see Community Impact Program to submit)
- Project contingency

This list is not exhaustive. Contact your GOCO program officer to confirm eligible expenses.

Match Requirements

GOCO does not have a set match requirement for our funding opportunities, though competitive proposals often reflect strategic project partnerships, resources, and complementary funding sources. Your program officer can also provide guidance.

Payment & Reimbursement

GOCO prefers to provide reimbursement for grant awards where grantees request a single payment upon project completion at closeout. Should reimbursement create a barrier for project completion, please discuss available alternatives, including advanced and partial payments.

Other Requirements

Wildlife Review

Applicants may be asked to work with their GOCO regional program officer and the local Colorado Parks & Wildlife Area Wildlife Manager (AWM) to understand, document, and mitigate any impacts to wildlife habitat. Concept papers invited to the application may be required to submit the wildlife review form. Please contact the AWM well in advance of the application deadline.

How Proposals are Assessed

Alignment with GOCO's Program Values

- *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 to break 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.

Additional Considerations

- *Urgency* – Priority goes to projects ready to be implemented and/or projects that address time-sensitive issues or respond to urgent circumstances

- *Need* – Priority goes to projects that will benefit most from GOCO funding, whether there are few other funding options or GOCO’s contribution will help leverage a match from another organization or the community. We aim to equitably distribute funding throughout the state. We also consider the scale of impact relative to GOCO’s investment.
- *Outcomes* – We consider the project’s ability to advance shared understanding of critical natural resource and recreation issues, equity initiatives, expand access to disproportionately impacted communities, advance collaborative opportunities that develop and expand networks and partnerships, and utilize climate resilient and environmentally conscious approaches.
- *Advancing relevant plans and resources* – We consider how the outcomes of a proposal may be applicable or transferable. Additionally, we consider how projects align with local, regional, or statewide efforts, such as the goals, objectives, and collective strategies identified in Colorado’s Outdoors Strategy.

Submitting a Proposal

Concept Paper

Applicants should work with their GOCO program officer to develop a concept paper. Drafts are accepted on a rolling basis. Program officers ask follow-up questions as needed and provide feedback. GOCO staff collectively reviews concepts and identifies the most competitive proposals to invite to the full application. All applicants receive feedback from their program officer.

Site Visits

GOCO staff may request a project site visit. Any requests will be made to project leads identified in the concept paper or application.

Application Review

Invited applications are reviewed by peer reviewers from relevant conservation and recreation organizations. Reviewers assess the merit of each application, including any supplemental information provided by the applicant, based on various factors (listed under ‘How proposals are assessed’ above). Peer reviewers and GOCO staff then meet to discuss their reflections. GOCO staff recommend projects to GOCO’s board of trustees for consideration during the Programs Committee Meeting. The board then approves final grant awards at the following board meeting. All applicants receive feedback from their program officer.

Committee Presentation and Board Acknowledgment

Representatives from projects recommended for funding may have the opportunity to speak briefly at GOCO's Programs Committee meeting. Projects and partners will also be recognized at the following board meeting where final awards are made. Dates will be confirmed with your program officer.

PATHWAYS PROGRAM CONCEPT PAPER

Submit materials through the website form by no later than 5 pm on the concept paper deadline. Text documents should use 11 pt font or larger and have 1-inch margins. Please submit materials in plain text (no letterhead or logos). Submit individual documents for each category; for example, the narrative should be submitted as a single document and the additional attachments can be compiled and submitted as a single document. Each individual document submitted must be 30 MB or less.

- Narrative – *submit file in doc or docx*
- Budget – *available on Pathways web page; submit file in xls or xlsx*
- [Optional] Budget Narrative
- Additional Attachments

Project Summary

Be prepared to provide the following information when submitting your concept paper through the form on the webpage:

- Project name
- Your name and contact information
- Applicant organization(s)
- Applicant name(s)
- Partner organization and name (if applicable)
- County/Counties/Statewide
- Grant request amount
- Total project amount (this should match the total source of funds field in your budget)
- Grant time period
- Brief project description (50 words or less; 3-4 sentences)

Concept Narrative

Write a short narrative (up to 2 pages; 11 pt font or larger; 1-inch margins) in response to the following prompts. Responses do not need to follow the formatting below.

- Describe the organization(s) leading this effort, including your current organizational goals and roles you and/or partners will play in the proposed project.
- Describe the proposed research, planning, or capacity request. What issue, need, or opportunity does it address? In addition, include the following when appropriate:
 - How your project advances equity;
 - What makes the project urgent;
 - How it aligns with your long-term organizational goals;

- And/or how it aligns with existing regional or statewide plans.
- Discuss expected outcomes for your community and/or natural or recreational resources. If appropriate, highlight innovation, replicability, or transferability of this project.

Budget Form

In the form, a high-level budget should provide sufficient details that reflect project readiness, partnerships, and matching resources. Consider how your budget reflects areas outlined in the ‘How proposals are assessed’ section above. Round figures to the nearest dollar. If a grant is awarded, the budget will be included in the final grant agreement as the budget and match funding committed to the project and used to track project outcomes and expenses for reimbursement. You will be asked to provide the following:

- *Scope of Work* – Identifies the project elements outlined in the Concept Narrative.
- *[Optional] Leveraged Resources* – Provide any recent investments beyond those outlined in the Scope of Work that will go, or have already gone, towards this project. For example: previous research phases supported by other funding. You may also use this space to reflect time or resources that have been used as match in other grant applications to avoid allocating donated time or other resources to more than one grant (also known as “double-dipping”). Instances of time or resources may only be counted once in the budget, whether they’re included in the Scope of Work or Leveraged Resources.

[Optional] Budget Narrative

If you feel it will be helpful to proposal reviewers, explain estimated costs or matching funds in one page or less. Narratives should be written so that a reader who is not familiar with the project can understand what expenses are anticipated and why. Do not write a narrative for every expense; rather, provide higher-level budget categories and how they will help accomplish objectives. Do not include information already included in the Concept Narrative.

Examples:

- Personnel (\$85,000 GOCO/\$95,000 match) – These funds will be used to hire 1 project manager and 1 coordinator (salary, benefits, etc.) to facilitate all aspects of the program and provide boots on the ground support.
- Training (\$6,000 GOCO) – Training will support up to 10 staff members and an additional 10 volunteers in order to advance project goals.
- Pending Match Funding (\$200,000) – An application was submitted to <insert source> in early February, with an update on recommended projects in early April and a final award decision by May 6th. If not awarded, our back up plan is to <insert funding sources>.

Additional Attachments

- Up to four pages of supporting documentation (ex: maps, photos, charts/diagrams, etc.)

Looking Ahead: Final Application

Those invited to complete the application will have approximately one month to develop the following application materials. Please plan accordingly.

- Responses to Proposal Narrative prompts (up to five pages)
- Budget and Optional Budget Narrative
- Resolution from the applicant's governing body (your resolution must meet GOCO's resolution requirements)
- Wildlife review and completed Wildlife Review Form
- Indication of support (up to five; may include letters of support from partners, community members, volunteers; a summary of media articles, broadcasts, testimonials, etc.)

Applicants may provide up to six pages of the following attachments:

- Planning documents (examples: infographics, process outlines, comments, data)
- Timeline
- Maps or diagrams
- Photos