

**Connect Initiative
Grant Program Details**

Great Outdoors Colorado is pleased to announce the second round of our Connect Initiative grant program – a five-year strategy aimed at increasing access to outdoor experiences through the construction of non-motorized trails of local, regional and statewide significance. The Connect Initiative will focus on connecting existing trail gaps, constructing new, highly demanded trail systems and providing increased access for youth and families to existing parks, open spaces, natural areas and environmental education opportunities. GOCO’s FY-2017 spending plan allocates up to $10 million for this grant cycle.

During the development of GOCO’s new strategic plan, public and stakeholder input indicated Coloradans’ continued support for more trail connectivity. Meanwhile, the health and wellness of our state’s youth and families is a topic of concern as youth obesity rates continue to rise. Through this initiative, Coloradoans will have free access to safe, non-motorized trails connecting them to outdoor destinations and experiences in their own communities and beyond.

**Grant Information**

**IMPORTANT DATES:** Concept papers must be submitted electronically **no later than 5pm on Tuesday April 17, 2017.** Please submit concept papers to**trails@goco.org****.** The GOCO Board will invite concept papers chosen to move forward to full application at its June 19th 2017 meeting. Grant awards will be made on November 30th, 2017.

**MATCH REQUIREMENTS**: The project applicant and partners are required to commit financially to the project in order to apply. The Connect Initiative requires a minimum match of 25% of the total project cost, of which, a minimum of 10% must be cash. GOCO will not fund more than 75% of the total project cost.
 **ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS:** Article XXVII of the Colorado Constitution establishes that the only entities eligible to receive grants through this initiative are municipalities, counties, and title 32 special park and recreation districts that receive Conservation Trust Funds (CTF) from the Department of Local Affairs. Those eligible entities may sponsor projects on behalf of entities that are not eligible for GOCO funding such as school districts, non-profit organizations, etc. In these instances, an eligible local government or special district within your area may partner with your organization to pursue the project. The eligible organization will be responsible for obtaining the necessary approvals via a resolution from their governing body, entering into an intergovernmental agreement (or the like) with the ineligible organization, signing off on all necessary grant materials, and receiving and redistributing grant funding. At the time of application only a draft IGA or MOU is required.

**PROJECTS:** Applicants may request up to $2 million. Projects must be primarily for trail construction, however acquisitions may be considered with staff approval. There is no requirement on trail surface type. Projects that present an exciting opportunity to leverage partnerships and outside funding, connect important trail segments, and that are shovel ready may score more favorably.

**TIMELINE:** If an applicant is awarded funds for construction, work on the proposed project may not begin until after the grant has been awarded (November 30, 2017) and a contract is signed with GOCO. Grantees are allowed up to three years to complete trail construction (November 30, 2020).

**CONCEPT PAPER:** Email Local Government Program Manager Jake Houston at trails@goco.org to discuss your eligibility for this grant program and to receive a concept paper for your project. Please include three times you are available for a phone call to discuss your project.