



CONSERVATION SERVICE CORPS APPLICATION GUIDANCE

Please read the following information carefully to learn everything you need to know about compiling your application materials. [CYCA](#) and [GOCO](#) staff remain available to review application materials prior to submission. The [Conservation Service Corps \(CSC\)](#) program supports projects that engage Colorado youth and young adults in meaningful conservation, stewardship, and outdoor recreation work while delivering lasting benefits to communities and natural resources across the state. The goal of these funds is to employ youth and young adults (ages 14-25) throughout the state on critical outdoor recreation and natural resource stewardship projects using the network of Conservation Service Corps accredited by CYCA.

Priority will be given to projects that provide significant conservation or outdoor recreation outcomes, create high-quality corpsmember learning and workforce development experiences, demonstrate strong partnerships and community benefit, and produce lasting, measurable impacts. Projects that address multiple objectives will be particularly competitive.

How Applications Are Assessed

The CSC program is highly competitive, and funding is limited. Applications are evaluated based on overall project quality, anticipated outcomes, program alignment, and potential impact. While no single factor determines whether a project is funded, applicants are encouraged to thoughtfully address the considerations below throughout their proposal.

Corps Education & Workforce Development: Competitive proposals should demonstrate how the project will provide meaningful corpsmember experiences by:

- Developing technical, leadership, and professional skills.
- Providing hands-on training in conservation, stewardship, and outdoor recreation.
- Building transferable workforce skills and career pathways.
- Engaging corps members in meaningful public service and community impact.
- Offering opportunities for leadership development, teamwork, and personal growth.
- Completing work that provides lasting benefits to Colorado's communities, natural resources, and outdoor recreation assets.

Alignment with CYCA Core Values

- *Transformation* – The power of the corps experience makes positive, significant, and enduring changes to the lives of youth and young adults.
- *Collaboration* – We are better, stronger, and more impactful when we work together.
- *Impact* – Every action seeks to maximize positive impact.
- *Service* – Dedication to serving communities.
- *Stewardship* – Every place in Colorado is special, and therefore local knowledge and relationships are necessary for enduring stewardship.

Alignment with GOCO Program Values

- *Resource Conservation*– Supporting strategic land conservation and resource protection work.
- *Outdoor stewardship* – Sustainability of and improvements to the state’s natural and recreational resources.
- *Community vitality* – Conservation and outdoor recreation efforts that support communities and quality of life.
- *Equitable access* – Breaking down barriers to the outdoors.
- *Youth connections* – Giving children and their families opportunities to get outside and experience all the benefits of doing so.

Additional Considerations:

- Demonstrated need and urgency of the proposed work.
- Community support and local or regional priority.
- Anticipated conservation, stewardship, recreation, or community outcomes.
- Readiness to implement the proposed project within the grant period.
- Opportunities to leverage partnerships, matching resources, or other funding.
- Alignment with relevant local, regional, or statewide plans, strategies, or priorities, including the Colorado's Outdoors Strategy where appropriate.
- The project's ability to create lasting and measurable benefits beyond the grant period.

Applicant Eligibility

This program is open to the following entities eligible to receive GOCO open space and/or local government funds.

- **Local Government Funding:** Projects may include park development and renovation, playgrounds, trail construction, recreation amenities, outdoor gathering spaces, and community recreation improvements.

- **Open Space Funding:** Projects may include habitat restoration, natural resource stewardship, ecological resilience, invasive species management, forest health, and projects that enhance natural landscapes.

Eligible for both Open Space & Local Government Funding: The following entities are eligible for both sources of funding, and are therefore eligible to submit proposals for all types of activities listed above.

- Colorado municipality or county
- Title 32 special district eligible to receive distributions from the Conservation Trust Fund

Eligible for Open Space Funding Only: The following entities are eligible for ONLY Open Space funding, and are therefore limited to activities listed under the “Open Space Funding” bullet above. Any proposals submitted that contain activities listed under the “Local Government Funding” bullet will be ineligible to proceed in the review process.

- Political subdivision of the State of Colorado that includes in its mission the identification, acquisition, or management of open space and natural areas
- Land Trust
- Colorado Parks & Wildlife
 - **PLEASE NOTE:** If you are a CPW employee considering applying for this program, please note that CPW operates an internal program that also funds projects for CYCA Youth Corps crews on CPW properties. Applicants should explore this opportunity prior to applying for this program, for more information on this internal CPW program, contact Lori Morgan at lori.morgan@state.co.us
 - **CPW-Specific Project Eligibility:**
 - CPW staff may apply to the Conservation Service Corps (CSC) program for high-impact, multi-week corps projects that are not able to be funded through the internal CPW program with the following caveats:
 - **Proposals must include a clear explanation of why internal CPW funding is not available.**
 - CPW staff should work together to internally prioritize submissions—projects with higher impacts, longer duration, diverse corps involvement, and cross-jurisdictional work will be the most competitive.
 - Proposals that include CPW financial participation or cost-share will be viewed more favorably.
 - **Proposals must be limited strictly to open space outcomes**—meaning activities such as trail maintenance or campground improvements are NOT eligible.

Project/Property Eligibility

- Applicants must apply for a minimum of two weeks of Conservation Service Corps work.
 - One week = a minimum of 320 hours of labor (8 people for 40 hours each, for example) inclusive of one-way travel and 4-5 hours per week of on-site education activities for the crew.
- The project's primary objective must be to enhance or restore open space, wildlife habitat, or other ecosystem resources (*e.g., noxious weed removal, forest health treatments, post-fire recovery, post-flood recovery, riparian restoration, etc.*), or to construct, enhance, or restore trails and other passive recreation infrastructure such as signage, fencing, and tent pads.
 - **Eligible Forest Health Projects:** Primary purpose is to improve ecosystem health, habitat quality, ecological resilience, or the stewardship of open space resources.
 - While eligible forest health projects may also provide secondary benefits related to wildfire risk reduction or defensible space, those outcomes must be incidental to the project's conservation and stewardship objectives.
 - **Ineligible Wildfire Projects:** Projects whose primary purpose is wildfire mitigation, fuels reduction, community protection, or the creation of defensible space.
 - **PLEASE NOTE:** Applicants should clearly demonstrate that conservation, habitat restoration, ecosystem health, or open space stewardship—not wildfire mitigation—is the primary driver of the proposed work.
- The project must occur on land owned or controlled by a:
 - municipality, county, or other political subdivision of the state;
 - land trust or other private party when the land is permanently protected by a conservation easement or other permanent use restriction; or
 - federal agency
 - **PLEASE NOTE:** while federal agencies are not an eligible applicant, projects that occur on federally managed land are permissible if they are to perform stewardship or restoration projects; or develop improvements for or stewardship of passive recreation, e.g. soft surface trails.
 - The applicant must be a local government or open space organization and they must clearly demonstrate how their community will benefit from the project—such as demonstrable impact on the local economy, improvement of an interconnected riparian area, etc.
- Projects must provide a public benefit and comply with any conservation easement, other use restriction, or government policies or procedures concerning management of the property's resources.

- Applicants must demonstrate capacity to host a Conservation Service Corps crew and coordinate closely with the corps in advance of submitting a proposal, to ensure the project is appropriate.

Working with a Conservation Service Corps

From project planning to completion, it is easy to use a Conservation Service Corps. Corps are high-capacity organizations that are well-prepared; they arrive with the equipment, skills and supervision to succeed. After talking with a potential sponsor, the Conservation Service Corps will match the right type of crew for the project.

Typical projects include:

- constructing and maintaining Colorado's trail system
- improving outdoor recreation amenities such as playgrounds and parks
- forest health
- restoring wildlife habitat
- installing and dismantling fences
- mitigating and removing invasive species

Shared Project Responsibility: Hosting a Conservation Service Corps requires cooperation, communication, and shared responsibility. Many sponsors ask, "What do I need to provide?" The chart below details how corps generally share responsibility. Of course, a project may require a different breakdown of responsibilities which you can discuss with corps staff as you plan the project.

Corps Responsibilities	Project Sponsor Responsibilities
• Pre-project walk-through with sponsor's staff • Adult supervision • Youth/young adult crew (at least 8 people and 320 hours of labor) • Basic tools • Transportation • Camp equipment & food (if necessary)	• Project planning • Pre-project walk-through with corps staff • Specialty tools (if necessary) • Sponsor staff person available to answer questions and check work regularly • Complete an end-of-project evaluation • Access to free camping (if necessary)

What Conservation Service Corps Are

- Youth, young adult and veteran workforce development programs
- Programs focused on developing youth and young adults through service
- Programs focused on providing veterans experience for post-service conservation careers
- Programs focused on environmental education and ethic of stewardship

What Conservation Service Corps Are Not

- Professional contract-work crews
- Volunteer programs
- Recreation or summer camp programs
- Court-ordered or juvenile-offender diversion programs
- Wilderness therapy or mental health counseling

Planning Resources

Colorado's Outdoors Strategy: Applicants are encouraged to develop projects that align with the vision outlined in [Colorado's Outdoors Strategy \(COS\)](#) and contribute to advancing one or more of the Strategy's North Star Goals. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review the [COS Resource Hub](#) for tools, resources, and guidance that can help strengthen project planning and demonstrate regional and statewide relevance.

Local/Regional Planning Efforts: Applicants are encouraged to develop projects that reflect local and regional priorities by engaging with regional partnerships and incorporating relevant planning efforts into project development. Competitive proposals will demonstrate how the project aligns with adopted plans, community engagement efforts, and collaborative initiatives, such as comprehensive plans, parks and recreation master plans, open space plans, habitat or watershed management plans, forest health plans, trail master plans, [Regional Partnership Initiative](#) priorities, and other local or regional strategies. Projects that demonstrate coordination across organizations and jurisdictions, leverage existing planning efforts, and address shared conservation or outdoor recreation goals are encouraged and may be better positioned to achieve lasting, meaningful impacts.

Budget

Corps Rates: Final crew rates are established annually by CYCA and are subject to change.

- Day Crew: \$14,500/week
- Camping Crew: \$14,800/week
- Specialty Crew (Herbicide/Chainsaw): \$15,500/week
- Wood Chipper: \$1,250/week

Match Requirement: Applications require a minimum of 10% match, 100% of which can be in-kind and may be from the applicant, the Conservation Service Corps, or other contributing project partners. If the applicant is unable to meet this match requirement, please reach out to CYCA to discuss a match waiver justification.

Application Review

CYCA partners with GOCO staff and external peer reviewers to evaluate applications, assess project merits, and develop funding recommendations. Throughout the review process, the review committee may request additional information, clarification, or revisions.

Recommendations are based on proposal competitiveness relative to the applicant pool and available funding before being presented to the GOCO Programs Committee and ultimately the GOCO Board of Trustees for final approval. Applicants will receive feedback regarding the status of their application throughout the review process.

Grant Administration

Contracting: Grantees will enter into a contract with CYCA and must complete the proposed project and submit all required final documentation by December 31 of the following year, unless an extension is approved by CYCA, GOCO staff, or the GOCO Board. Applicants are encouraged to propose projects that can reasonably be completed within the required timeframe.

Award Disbursement: The applicant will not receive funding from GOCO. GOCO will disperse funding directly to CYCA. CYCA will disperse funding directly to corps identified in project proposals.

Reporting: Upon project completion, grantees will be required to complete a project evaluation and report on project accomplishments and outcomes.

Questions

Questions about applicant/project eligibility:

Sammie Trotter

GOCO Program Officer

720.576.4112

strotter@goco.org

All other inquiries:

Tom Dillow

CYCA Associate Director

303.717.5659

tdillow@cyca.org

To locate/contact the Conservation Service Corps serving your area, click [HERE](#).

CONSERVATION SERVICE CORPS APPLICATION

RFP Release Date: July 8, 2026

You will submit your application digitally through the link available on the CYCA website [HERE](#).

Application deadline - August 19, 2026 by 4:00PM

Required file submission for ALL proposals:

☐ Project Maps:

Upload AT LEAST two (2) maps showing (1) Project location(s) in larger context, including labeled towns and numbered highways and (2+) Detailed map for each discrete project location showing specific project area(s) and components of proposed scope of work.

Required file submission ONLY if work will be conducted on privately-owned property with conservation easement/use restriction:

☐ Authorization letter from easement/use restriction holder:

Letter should be signed by the holder of the conservation easement or other use restriction, and should indicate that the proposed work does not violate the easement/use restrictions.

Project Summary

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

- Applicant organization name and contact information
- Technical partner name and contact information (if applicable)
- Project Title
- Brief project description (100 words or less; 5-6 sentences)
- County/Counties/Statewide
- Project names, address(es) or approximate location(s)
- Property contact/owner names
- Property Type(s) (*i.e. Private w/ conservation easement, Publicly owned park, Publicly owned open space, Other*)
- Anticipated Impacts/Outcomes (*i.e. Total Acres Restored, Acres of Riparian Areas Restored, Acres of Invasive Species Mitigation, Acres of Forest Habitat Restored, Trail Miles Built/Improved/Decommissioned, Recreation Areas Enhanced*)
- Crew/Equipment Weeks Requested (*Day Crew, Camping Crew, Specialty Crew, Wood Chipper*)
- Corps name and contact information
- Authorized Representative name, organization, and title

Proposal Narrative

All narrative questions will be submitted directly through the digital form. Following are the questions asked in the application:

- **Conservation Service Corps Experience/Education Information**
 - **Youth engagement and workforce development:** Describe how corps members will be engaged in meaningful project work and the benefits they will receive through participation. Include opportunities for skill development, leadership, career exploration, certifications, stewardship experiences, or connections to conservation and outdoor recreation careers.
 - **Entity Facilitating Corps Education**
- **Project Overview, Need, and Benefits**
 - **Scope of Work:** Provide a detailed description of the proposed scope of work. Include the specific activities to be completed by corps members, the location(s) where work will occur, anticipated project timeline, key deliverables, and expected outcomes.
 - **Community Need, Project Benefits & Consequences of Non-Funding:** Describe the need or opportunity your project addresses, the anticipated benefits to your community and region, and the likely consequences if Conservation Service Corps funding is not awarded. Include how the project will improve outdoor recreation, natural resources, community assets, quality of life, and/or equitable access to the outdoors. If funding is not awarded, explain whether the project would be delayed, scaled back, completed through other resources, or not completed, and describe the anticipated impacts on project outcomes, community benefits, and youth workforce development.
 - **(Specific to CPW Applicant) Why is CPW internal funding not available for this project?**
- **Planning, Readiness, and Sustainability**
 - **Approvals, permits, and other required approval component verification:** If these components are not in place, be prepared to detail the status and anticipated completion details.
 - **Barriers to completing the proposed scope of work by December 31, 2027:** Be prepared to explain any barriers that would prevent completion by this deadline.
 - **Project Planning & Development:** Describe how this project was developed. Include any planning efforts, stakeholder engagement, partnerships, assessments, or adopted plans that informed the proposal and demonstrate project readiness. Examples may include alignment with the Colorado Outdoor Strategy, Regional Partnership Initiative priorities, comprehensive plans, parks and recreation master plans, trail master plans, habitat management plans, forest health plans, watershed plans, open space plans, community engagement efforts, or other strategic planning processes.

- **Long-Term Sustainability:** Describe how the project and its benefits will be maintained over time. Include who will be responsible for ongoing maintenance, stewardship, monitoring, or management activities; any dedicated funding or resources available to support these efforts; and how the project will continue to provide conservation, recreation, community, or youth engagement benefits beyond the grant period.
- **Colorado's Outdoor Strategy**
 - **Alignment:** Describe how your proposed project advances one or more of Colorado's Outdoors Strategy's North Star Goals. Include specific project activities, anticipated outcomes, partnerships, or planning efforts that support these goals.
 - **North Star Goals** that help focus investments and partnerships across the state:
 - Climate-Resilient Conservation and Restoration
 - Exceptional and Sustainable Outdoor Recreation
 - Coordinated Planning and Funding
 - **COS Resource HUB**
 - Applicants are encouraged to utilize available tools in the development of proposals.