



LAND ACQUISITION PROGRAM

Great Outdoors Colorado's (GOCO) Land Acquisition Program seeks to invest in land conservation projects that protect significant conservation values, connect people to place, create landscape scale connectivity, and bolster the health of people and communities. We invite partners to work collaboratively to pursue land conservation goals that represent shared priorities among a community. Partners should consider community impacts and elevate diverse perspectives as they develop land conservation projects. For FY25, GOCO plans to invest \$10.3 million in local government funds and \$8.6 million in open space funds to advance projects across all base programs, including Community Impact, Land Acquisition, Planning & Capacity, and Stewardship Impact.

Partners are invited to submit projects for consideration that protect unique open spaces, natural areas, and agricultural lands with significant conservation values. These include projects that provide public recreation access, essential wildlife habitat and migration corridors, critical watersheds, waterways, and riparian ecosystems, scenic viewsheds and greenways, and farms and ranches. We will prioritize projects with the most significant conservation outcomes, including those that protect irreplaceable natural resources, provide places for people to connect to the outdoors, contribute to strong resilient ecosystems, and mitigate the negative impacts of climate change. We believe GOCO's most impactful investments prevent imminent threats that are likely to result in a significant land use change or substantially impair the project's conservation values.

The public benefits of land conservation are significant and multi-faceted. These multi-faceted benefits include protection of our state's natural resources and ecological systems; supporting healthy communities by providing recreation and education opportunities, local food supplies, and contributing to fresh air and clean water; connection to the environment and a sense of place; and diversifying and supporting local economies. Funding for the outdoors can also be a meaningful equity lever in Colorado—and a means to address issues of disparity and disproportionality. As you develop your land protection project, we ask that you consider and articulate the multi-faceted benefits of your project.

To support the full scope of a land acquisition project and its intended outcomes, applicants may request funding, as needed, for the following components:



- Land acquisition and due diligence costs,
- Local capacity building through investments in existing staff, community members and/or consultants,
- Community planning, organizing, and collaboration,
- Habitat restoration,
- Site specific management plans, and
- Storytelling, project communications and celebrations.

Proposed projects must reflect one or more of GOCO's program values as identified in our [2020 strategic plan](#) and outlined later in this document. These values are intentionally open to interpretation and definition by our partners; how they are or could be reflected in each project and community is unique. And not every project will integrate multiple values. Projects that demonstrate several values, as well as projects that embody a singular value, can have meaningful impacts and significant merit.

GOCO regional program officers look forward to working with partners on project visioning and development to ensure your valuable time is spent on projects that will compete well in this program. We know the needs of our statewide network are vast and we look forward to hearing your ideas and working with you to advance projects throughout Colorado.

ABOUT US: GOCO invests a portion of Colorado Lottery proceeds to help preserve and enhance the state's parks, trails, wildlife, rivers, and open spaces. GOCO's independent board awards competitive grants to local governments and land trusts and makes investments through Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Created when voters approved a constitutional amendment in 1992, GOCO has since funded more than 5,700 projects in all 64 counties of Colorado without any tax dollar support. Visit GOCO.org for more information.

General Guidance and Grant Information

BEFORE YOU BEGIN: Contact your GOCO regional program officer to discuss your project in detail using the contact information on our staff [webpage](#). Together, you will determine whether your vision will compete well in the Land Acquisition Program.

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY: This program is open to entities eligible to receive GOCO open space and local government funds as listed below. Ineligible entities can partner with an eligible entity to apply. As always, GOCO strongly encourages partnerships.

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



- c. Political subdivision of the State of Colorado that includes in its mission the identification, acquisition, or management of open space and natural areas
- d. 501(c)(3) non-profit land conservation organization that includes in its mission the identification, acquisition, or management of open space and natural areas, e.g., land trusts
- e. Colorado Parks and Wildlife

CONCEPT PAPER DEVELOPMENT: Applicants should work with their regional officer through a concepting process, which can take several months or longer depending on the proposal. GOCO will accept draft concept papers on a rolling basis and can provide feedback. As part of an iterative process, staff will reflect on the readiness and competitiveness of a proposal and make recommendations regarding a concept paper submission. Staff collectively considers all concept papers submitted in a cycle and will invite the most competitive projects to submit a full application.

GOCO may ask clarifying questions of applicants at the concept or application stage to better understand your project. Staff may coordinate site visits to learn more about the opportunities in a community and hear more from the residents and stakeholders involved in planning processes. We may also seek additional written information for certain proposals. The content of conversations and any additional information submitted become part of the concept or application and open for discussion during staff or peer review as a means of vetting the merit of individual projects. All application materials and related communications may be subject to Colorado Open Records Act requests.

PROGRAM VALUES: Projects should encompass one or more of GOCO's program values as identified in our [2020 strategic plan](#) :

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.

GRANT AMOUNT AND MATCH REQUIREMENTS: Applicants will work with their GOCO regional program officer to arrive at an appropriate request amount and a customized match amount for your project based on other resources available and your ability to match. Please remember that GOCO serves communities throughout Colorado and appreciates applicants keeping requests reasonable and reflective of expected outcomes.

TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION: Applicants will work with their GOCO regional program officer to customize a timeline for your project based on the various deliverables. Please note that due diligence review will take a minimum of 60 days after notice of award and multi-parcel transactions or complicating factors will lengthen the time needed for review.

PROPERTY OWNERSHIP: Applicants seeking funding for projects involving federal land must discuss the proposal with GOCO staff prior to submitting a concept paper or application. GOCO cannot participate in property acquisitions involving condemnation or the threat of condemnation.

CONSERVATION EASEMENT: GOCO recommends applicants and landowners review [GOCO's Model Conservation Easement](#), which includes required GOCO provisions, prior to submitting an application. Applicants seeking funding for a fee title acquisition must discuss their plan to protect the property from present and future development threats with their GOCO regional program officer.

WILDLIFE REVIEW: Applicants should work with their GOCO regional program officer and the local CPW Area Wildlife Manager (AWM) to understand, document, and mitigate any impacts to wildlife habitat. Concept papers invited to application will be required to submit the wildlife review form as part of the application packet. We ask that you contact the AWM well in advance of the application deadline.

SITE VISITS: GOCO staff may conduct site visits scheduled in collaboration with the project leads identified in the concept paper or application.

ELIGIBLE COSTS AND MATCH: The following table, though not comprehensive, outlines specific eligible costs for this program. Please discuss any potential project expenses with GOCO to determine the eligibility of those expenses prior to applying.



ELIGIBLE COSTS
Costs associated with project planning/coordination/implementation/communications/celebration
Staff expenses incurred by the applicant and any contracted service providers for professional services directly related to project outcomes and administration
All costs associated with acquisition including the property interest(s) and associated due diligence costs
Costs associated with management planning
Costs associated with habitat restoration

PROPOSAL REVIEW: The guidelines and criteria that inform GOCO’s project review and decision-making process is available on our [website](#). GOCO strives to support applicants through the application process with feedback and guidance to minimize the investment of partner time and resources on concepts and applications deemed less competitive. GOCO is committed to a fair, equitable, and efficient review process from concept papers to applications and will use a consensus-based process to arrive at funding recommendations. GOCO relies upon the collective wisdom of reviewers rather than vesting power or authority in individual reviewers.

GOCO staff will review concept papers on a rolling basis, prior to the concept paper submission deadline for the concurrent grant cycle. The concepting stage is an iterative process between GOCO’s regional program officers and partners to generate the best possible proposal for any given grant round. GOCO staff will evaluate the merit of each proposal and assess the project’s relative potential to help advance one or more of GOCO’s program values. The review is comprehensive across GOCO’s four base programs – Community Impact, Stewardship Impact, Planning & Capacity, and Land Acquisition. GOCO staff will invite successful concept paper applicants to submit a full application and will provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

Invited applications submitted by the due date are subject to a formal peer review process where GOCO will convene a group of peer reviewers to evaluate project merit. Reviewers will assess each application, including any additional supplemental or clarifying information submitted. As with the concept paper review, GOCO will provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

COMMITTEE PRESENTATION & BOARD ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: Partners recommended for funding may have the opportunity to briefly speak to project outcomes at GOCO’s Programs Committee meeting and will be recognized by the GOCO Board as part of their quarterly meeting. Please confirm these dates with your regional officer.



Grant Administration Information

If a grant is awarded, GOCO will assign a Grants Officer to work with the project lead on all aspects of grant administration including execution of a grant agreement, due diligence items, reporting criteria, grant payment options, and signage requirements.

Prior to submitting an application, applicants and landowners should review GOCO's [appraisal guidelines](#) and [Land Acquisition Procedures](#), which includes a description of due diligence documentation required before funds can be released.

PAYMENT: GOCO prefers to disburse funds for the acquisition and transaction costs as a single payment occurring at closing. For any additional project components, grantees can request one progress payment of up to 75% of the grant amount prior to project completion with the remaining 25% paid upon project completion. Should these reimbursement options create barriers for project completion, please discuss available alternatives, including advanced and partial advanced payments, with your regional program officer.

Please contact a Grants Officer now if additional grant administration information is a necessary consideration prior to application. You can find relevant contact information at the link below.

Contact

Our Grant Programs team is available to discuss your project and proposal so feel free to reach out using the contact information found on our staff [webpage](#). We look forward to working with you!



Project Summary Information

Project Title:

Applicant Organization(s):

Applicant Name(s):

Partner Organization (if applicable):

Partner Name (if applicable):

Amount Requested:

Estimated Total Project Cost:

Estimated Grant Period (years):

Brief Project Description (limit to space provided without expanding the text box; use 10 pt font)



Please use the summary information sheet above as the cover sheet for the concept paper. Refrain from using letterhead or logos as part of materials and limit submissions to the following documents.

A concise narrative should address the following prompts. Responses need not follow the formatting below but should answer all considerations put forth. Please limit narrative responses to 2 pages using 11 pt font or larger and 1-inch margins for formatting:

- Describe the proposed project, including its location and size, context within the landscape, current status, transaction structure, and timeline for acquisition. Discuss the conservation values and public benefits of the proposed conservation project including what makes this unique and a priority to the state, region, and community.
- Explain existing threats to the property's conservation values and public benefits, and why it is critical to complete the project at this moment in time. Discuss how these threats will result in a land use change that substantially impairs the conservation values.
- Reflect on the community impacted by this project and discuss how it will enhance community vitality. Discuss efforts to date or the work to be done to involve community members and relevant partner organizations in project visioning and to elevate unheard voices in your community.

Budget

Please review the budget instructions and use the GOCO Budget Form provided on the [program page](#). The budget instructions outline the option to include a budget narrative if helpful to further provide context about your proposal.

Additional Attachments

- Transaction and Due Diligence form provided on the [program page](#)
- Up to two maps (a context map and a detailed/schematic map)
- Up to two pages of photos

While not requested at the concept paper phase, those invited to application will be asked to provide the wildlife review form, resolution from the governing body of each applicant organization, and evidence of community support as part of the application packet.