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Contact: Rosemary Dempsey, 303-226-4530, rdempsey@goco.org or

Laura Cardon, 303-226-4531, lcardon@goco.org

GOCO awards \$13.5 million for Inspire grants to get kids outside

DENVER – Today the Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) Board awarded the first round of implementation funding for six [Inspire Initiative](#) pilot communities, totaling \$13.5 million in grants.

GOCO's Inspire Initiative will invest in places, programs, and pathways to get kids outside in communities across the state. This innovative framework is being looked at as a national model, and each coalition's approach to the unique challenges of their community will serve as examples to other rural, urban, suburban, or mountain communities across the country.

The six pilot coalitions were selected by GOCO in 2015 for a planning grant, spending the last year defining barriers and creating a vision for meaningful, sustainable change in connecting youth with the outdoors.

Youth have led the charge in each of these communities; this funding will put their plans into action over the next three years to build capacity for the long term. The coalition model of Inspire has also brought together organizations in a new way, with collaboration across outdoor recreation, education, and public health organizations.

In total, Inspire will impact nearly 42,000 youth and create more than 520 jobs in the service areas of the six pilots: Northeast Metro Denver (Commerce City, northeast Aurora, and Denver's Northeast Park Hill and Montbello neighborhoods); Denver's Westwood neighborhood; Lafayette; Leadville; Lamar; and the San Luis Valley.

GOCO's \$13.5 million in funding will leverage \$9.7 million in local matching dollars.

Funded projects are as follows:

Get Outdoors Leadville!, \$3 million grant to Lake County

Despite being surrounded by world-class outdoor recreation, a significant portion of children in Leadville do not get outside due to physical, cultural, and social barriers. Get Outdoors Leadville! (GOL!) brought together more than 70 agency and community members, six youth researchers, and six Latina promotoras to create a vision for getting kids outside.

GOL! will invest GOCO funding to developing places for kids to get outside in their own backyard. The majority of the grant will be dedicated to expanding and enhancing programs for youth that will ultimately provide pathways to careers in the outdoor recreation or natural resources industries.



Many of these programs will be based out of the Lake County School District, leveraging expertise from local outdoor program providers. Full Circle, a local non-profit, will be offering Familias Juntas to get families outside together and they will expand their Outdoor Leadership Club to reach more age groups. Still another opportunity is with Rocky Mountain Youth Corps' Lake County Youth Crew.

Nature Kids/Jovenes de la Naturaleza, \$2.8 million grant to the City of Lafayette

Nature Kids/Jovenes de la Naturaleza (NKJN) will focus on a one-square mile area, in a network of public schools serving the lowest income children in the Boulder Valley School District. Youth living in these neighborhoods lack nearby outdoor spaces to play, safe routes to walk or bike to school, and outdoor programming tailored to their community, where more than half the population is Latino.

NKJN engaged more than 200 individuals of all ages to design the vision funded by this GOCO grant, benefitting youth and families whose children attend Sanchez, Pioneer, and Ryan Elementary Schools; Angevine Middle School; and Centaurus High School. Nearly 40 organizations, led by Thorne Nature Experience, will work together to take a scaffolded approach to providing a spectrum of outdoor experiences from the backyard to the backcountry.

Just over \$1.2 million of the grant will be dedicated to building a new community park at Sanchez Elementary along with a trail to connect this park to nearby neighborhoods. Eighty two environmental education, outdoor recreation, and pathway-to-employment programs will be used to connect youth to nature and the outdoors and to enable them to build a career in the outdoor recreation or natural resource industries.

My Outdoor Colorado, \$2.7 million grant to the City and County of Denver

Denver will pilot its My Outdoor Colorado (MOC) program in the Westwood neighborhood in the southwest portion of the city. The coalition will serve as model for partnership between community-based organizations and local government.

Lack of transportation, gear, awareness, and bilingual and culturally relevant programming are all barriers for kids to get outside, whether in their backyard or the backcountry. GOCO funding will help bring the outdoors to life through meaningful programs and pathways to careers in the outdoors. Programming partners include Denver Parks and Recreation, the Boys and Girls Club of Metro Denver, the Greenway Foundation, and Westwood Unidos. The coalition will work with Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC), Groundwork Denver, Mile High Youth Corps (MHYC), and The Greenway Foundation for career pathway opportunities.

Go Wild NE Metro, \$2.7 million grant to the cities of Aurora, Commerce City, and the City and County of Denver



The GoWild Northeast Metro Coalition will serve Commerce City, northeast Aurora, and Denver's Montbello and Northeast Park Hill neighborhoods. GOCO funding will help open new entry points to The Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Refuge. The coalition will also work to connect youth with Barr Lake State Park and will create safe, close-to-home outdoor places for kids.

GoWild will also invest programming through the Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver, The Urban Farm, Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership, Bluff Lake Nature Center and Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK) and create career pathways through Mile High Youth Corps and Groundwork Denver.

Inspire Lamar, \$1.3 million grant to the City of Lamar

Lamar will invest in transforming North Gateway Park and Willow Creek Park, both of which are easily accessible from the Lamar Loop trail. Eighteen programs and associated pathway opportunities will bring new experiences to youth like fishing, camping, and biking, and will give them the gear to do it with an affordable outdoor gear library.

The coalition will partner with [Colorado Parks and Wildlife](#) to run a "Train the Trainer" program, which will bring in experts from both organizations to train local residents in delivering high-quality outdoor education programming.

San Luis Valley Inspire, \$1 million grant to the towns of Antonito, Crestone, and Saguache

GOCO funding will be invested in Antonito, Creede and Saguache, building the Antonito Outdoor Education Center and investing in the creation of the Antonito Adventure Program, improving connections along Creede's Willow Creek Corridor, the Headwaters Youth Conservation Corps, the Saguache Backyard to Backcountry Program, and the Saguache Youth Conservation Corps.

Great Outdoors Colorado (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 4,800 projects in urban and rural areas in all 64 counties without any tax dollar support. Visit GOCO.org for more information.