



Great Outdoors Colorado

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GOCO awards \$14.125 million in Inspire grants to get kids across Colorado outside

DENVER – On Friday, the Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) Board awarded a total of \$14.125 million in grants to nine [Inspire Initiative](#) communities in Colorado.

GOCO's Inspire Initiative invests in places, programs, and pathways to get Colorado kids and their families outside. The innovative Inspire framework is being looked at as a national model in connecting youth with the outdoors, and the participating communities' approaches to addressing barriers to the outdoors will serve as examples to other rural, urban, suburban, or mountain locales across the country.

Community-based coalitions bring together representatives from local governments and organizations in the outdoor recreation, education, and public health fields, among others. Community members, including youth, have active roles in planning and implementation to ensure all Inspire projects meet their specific needs. GOCO funding this cycle will be matched by more than \$10.4 million in local matching dollars, and will help put coalition plans into action over the next three years, building capacity for the long term.

This marks the second round of implementation funds awarded, following [grants in December 2016](#) to six pilot communities totaling \$13.5 million. GOCO selected all six pilot and nine tier II coalitions in 2015 for [planning grants](#), and each coalition spent more than a year identifying community-specific barriers to getting kids outside and creating a vision for meaningful change.

In total, GOCO has now awarded more than \$29 million in Inspire grants. \$4.125 million of today's awarded funding was contributed by GOCO partners. The Colorado Health Foundation supported Inspire with a \$4 million grant, and the

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Boettcher Foundation contributed a \$75,000 grant for rural communities. DaVita donated \$50,000 to the initiative.

The nine Inspire communities awarded implementation grants today will impact more than 43,000 youth and create 983 youth and community jobs in these service areas: Denver's Cole neighborhood; Montezuma County; greater Delta County; Sheridan; Garfield County; Westminster, Arvada, and incorporated Adams County; Edwards in the Eagle Valley; the Hillside neighborhood of Colorado Springs; and Alamosa.

Funded projects are as follows:

My Outdoor Colorado (MOC) Cole, \$2,179,077 grant to City and County of Denver

The Inspire coalition in Denver's Cole neighborhood will address challenges the community's youth face in taking advantage of the many health and well-being benefits of getting outside. Safety, cost, and the lack of transportation are a few of the barriers. The coalition plans to use a culturally relevant context to deepen outdoor skills and knowledge, practice nature inclusion, and increase feelings of nature connection among members of the Cole community.

Enhancements to Russell Square Park will welcome Cole residents and community members, and programs are designed to engage families, youth, and young adults in outdoor activities that meet their comfort levels, developmental stages, and growing outdoor skills and interests. In addition, MOC Cole aims to collaborate with the local community and law enforcement to provide training, coaching, and creative approaches that help youth of color feel safe and supported in choosing to spend time in parks.

Montezuma Inspire, \$1,843,109 grant to Montezuma Land Conservancy (MLC)

MLC and a coalition of partners, called the Montezuma Inspire Coalition (MIC), will work to get kids outside in Montezuma County, including those in Cortez, Dolores, Mancos, and Towaoc. The MIC will focus on youth of middle school and high school ages who spend far less time in the outdoors than younger kids in the area.

To break down local barriers to the outdoors, the coalition will launch programs and offer field trips that fit into the school day, make transportation and outdoor gear more readily available, offer opportunities to build outdoor knowledge and skills, and provide free activities for older youth in safe places. The coalition will also upgrade places for outdoor learning at its community school gardens and



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MLC's farm in Lewis. The MIC will also increase opportunities for youth in Montezuma County to experience pathways to future careers in the outdoors, collaborating over time with outdoor-related businesses and nonprofits in the area to develop mentorships, apprenticeships, and internships.

The Nature Connection (TNC), \$1,729,663.50 grant to Delta County

TNC aims to break down community-identified barriers to youth getting outdoors in Delta County, including a lack of skills, gear, and time. Delta County School District 50J and Montrose County School District will serve as the coalition's main programming hubs and work toward two goals: integrating outdoor experiences into a comprehensive program that targets area youth with a range of activities by age level, and creating The Nature Connection GEAR OUT gear library. Hotchkiss will build beginner and intermediate mountain bike trails and a pump track for skill building. Delta will develop camping opportunities, and several communities will see new climbing boulders.

TNC will continue to develop its Youth Outdoor Network program offering high school students outdoor service learning and stewardship opportunities at five high schools and will also create paid internships to nurture interest in working in the outdoors.

Sheridan Inspire, \$1,703,842 grant to City of Sheridan

The Sheridan Inspire coalition will build on the momentum of a strong, diverse coalition of partners already working to improve the lives of Sheridan youth and families. The group will address local barriers to the outdoors, including lack of awareness of available outdoor resources, language barriers, costs of entry and equipment, safety concerns, and lack of transportation. Improved signage and maps will help Sheridan residents access and enjoy nearby outdoor places, and the coalition will also invest in creating inspiring outdoor spaces at Alice Terry Elementary School and Fort Logan Northgate.

Engaging, hands-on programs will connect families with resources and educate them on how to access Colorado's great outdoors, and will teach youth how to get to nearby outdoor places. Youth will also be exposed to experiences such as volunteer activities, skills training, and job opportunities that could inspire future careers in natural resources.

Get Outdoors Garfield County, \$1,570,541 grant to Garfield County

Get Outdoors Garfield County will serve residents of four communities: Parachute/Battlement Mesa, Rifle, Silt, and New Castle. Western Garfield County



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boasts outstanding outdoor recreation destinations, and yet many area youth lack access to these assets in their own backyards. The Inspire coalition will address several of the barriers to the outdoors: lack of access to water, gear, and transportation; programs for all ages; leadership opportunities; and school involvement in outdoor learning.

Two school districts, Garfield County School District 16 and Garfield Re-2, will serve as programming hubs so that students of all age groups and experience levels are connected to free outdoor programs. Programming partners will provide hands-on outdoor education and wilderness skills, science and outdoor education curriculum opportunities, and expeditionary learning experiences on the Colorado River. In addition, the coalition will build an outdoor classroom in Battlement Mesa and provide pathways to future careers in the outdoors through service learning experiences, leadership training, and jobs in the outdoors.

Westy POWER-PODER, \$1,423,297 grant to City of Westminster

The Westy POWER-PODER coalition, whose name stands for “Promoting the Outdoors through Wellness, Education & Recreation” (POWER) and “Promoviendo Oportunidades de Educación Recreativas” (PODER), will serve the Blocks of Hope area of Westminster, Arvada, and unincorporated Adams County.

The group will address barriers such as unsafe and hard-to-access parks and open spaces as well as the prohibitive costs of participating in outdoor activities. Park improvements planned along Little Dry Creek in the England Park Corridor will meet the needs of the neighborhood by creating community gathering and gardening spaces, and improving pedestrian and vehicular access.

Programming will provide opportunities for frequent, culturally relevant outdoor experiences. Parents from the community will lead programs in partnership with formally trained outdoor educators and high school teaching assistants. In addition, field trips, service learning projects, and paid internships will provide positive youth development and introduce youth to nature-based careers.

Eagle Valley Outdoor Movement (EVOM), \$1,412,710 grant to Eagle County

The EVOM coalition aims to provide equal access to outdoor opportunities for underserved youth and families in Edwards, addressing a variety of barriers to the outdoors, including lack of awareness of outdoor recreation opportunities, transportation, perceptions of risk and safety, time, and costs associated with programs and equipment.



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EVOM's plans include providing places for free play in two neighborhoods: Lake Creek Village and Eagle River Village. New nature play areas and community gathering areas, a pump track, and improved bike path access will provide youth with close-to-home outdoor destinations.

EVOM partners have created a continuum of engaging educational programs with age-appropriate, outdoor learning and exploration opportunities for youth in preschool through twelfth grade, as well as affordable programs for whole families. EVOM will also provide internships and other leadership development opportunities for high school students to apply outdoor skills and become outdoor leaders.

Out the Door! Pikes Peak, \$1,393,955.50 grant to City of Colorado Springs

Out the Door! Pikes Peak aims to create community equity and inclusiveness while engaging youth and families from the Hillside neighborhood in Colorado Springs in the outdoors. The coalition has identified the community's primary barriers to getting outdoors as lack of time, gear, and familiarity with outdoor spaces and programs, as well as transportation.

The Prospect Lake Beach House will be renovated to serve as a launching area for outdoor activities and will include areas for programming, a centralized information center, and a gear library. The park's beach will be enhanced, and new amenities will allow for improved programming. At Fountain Park, an unused area will be converted into a bike park with a bike demonstration area and paved skills course, slopestyle mountain bike trails, a tot track, and other features.

Prospect Lake Beach House and Hillside Community Center will serve as programming hubs, and outdoor education will be integrated into School District 11. Special events and family programs will encourage families to spend time together outside, and the coalition will also offer skill-building and job opportunities for youth to spark interest in future outdoor careers.

Recreation Inspires Opportunity (Alamosa RIO!), \$868,805 grant to City of Alamosa

Alamosa RIO! aims to integrate outdoor recreation into Alamosa's community culture and inspire a healthy relationship between youth and the outdoors. The group will enhance an existing trail system at Alamosa Ranch with new trail segments and interpretive signs and improve Friends Park, which sits adjacent to the Boys & Girls Clubs of the San Luis Valley (BGCSLV) clubhouse, to include interactive features such as treehouses, a zipline, an improved bike track, and a



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music garden. BGCSLV will also build an outdoor classroom on its land near Smith Reservoir near the towns of Blanca and Fort Garland.

RIO! programming partners organizations will offer a range of outdoor programs to meet the needs of youth, from kindergarten- to high-school ages, and create new pathways-to-employment opportunities for youth and young adults through internships, scholarships, and youth counselor positions.

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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 5,000 projects in all 64 counties of Colorado without any tax dollar support. Visit GOCO.org for more information.

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