



MEMORANDUM

To: GOCO Board
From: Chris Yuan-Farrell, Open Space Program Coordinator
Jackie Miller, Director of Youth Programs
Date: December 8, 2016
Re: The Colorado Outdoor Stewardship Coalition's Strategic Planning Proposal

At the October 7, 2016 board meeting, staff updated the board on progress made toward meeting the second priority of GOCO's Inspire strategic plan goal – Take Care of Our Great Outdoors – which directs us to explore ways to fund outdoor stewardship organizations for work on state and local lands and land protected by nonprofit land conservation organizations. To that end, staff presented our proposal to forgo immediately creating a new grant program in lieu of tasking the Colorado Outdoor Stewardship Coalition (COSC), a partnership of some 35 diverse outdoor stewardship organizations (OSOs), with helping us to build the foundation for such a program. We requested that they respond to a request for proposal (RFP) organized around four priorities:

1. Increase the quality and quantity of stewardship projects;
2. Increase the collective impact of stewardship organizations by advancing collaborative projects at-scale;
3. Increase the diversity of stewardship volunteers; and
4. Engender a stewardship ethic in Colorado's citizens.

On November 17, 2016, Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado, on behalf of the COSC, submitted an ambitious proposal that seeks to address all four of the above listed priorities. Over the course of 15 months, the COSC will contract an employee to undertake the various components of this planning effort guided by an advisory committee with direction and input provided by the broader COSC membership. Through online surveys and assessments, direct solicitations, and in-person regional meetings, the COSC seeks to engage a broad and representative diversity of OSOs and land managers across Colorado. The COSC proposes four discrete outcomes for this planning effort, summarized below.

First, the COSC will develop an accessible online database of Colorado OSOs that exist around the state. This database will increase the ability of OSOs, land managers, and funders to partner effectively and coordinate regional-scale stewardship efforts. Second, the COSC will develop OSO best practices and standards made available online as the *Colorado Outdoor Stewardship Best Practices Guide*. The standards are intended to amplify the effectiveness of outdoor volunteer stewardship organizations by improving the quality of work and, correspondingly, offering land managers more consistency and reliability from volunteer labor. Third, the COSC will develop comprehensive uniform metrics for data reporting. Currently, land managers,



funders, and OSOs use inconsistent reporting metrics which creates difficulty when trying to assess the statewide performance and progress of OSO stewardship efforts. The uniform metrics seek to address this issue which holds universal value for funders, OSOs, and land managers alike. Finally, the COSC will develop at least three, large-scale and collaborative demonstration projects across Colorado.

The timeline and objectives presented in the COSC's proposal seem both reasonable and comprehensive. Staff feels confident in the COSC's ability to accomplish all the underlying components of the proposal within a 15-month timeframe. Staff views this planning process as a necessary and important first step in helping us achieve our strategic plan goals around volunteers and stewardship. By laying the groundwork for more strategic, sustainable, and measurable stewardship projects, we can achieve greater results from future on-the-ground stewardship investments performed by organizations that adhere to the tenets of the forthcoming standards *Guide*, use universally accepted metrics for measuring success, and partner in a collaborative, scaled approach. Moreover, the deliverables developed through this planning effort will have many tangential and spillover effects that will help achieve a significant and permanent increase in the diversity, professionalism, and abilities of Colorado's outdoor stewardship volunteers.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the board approve a direct expenditure of \$100,000, split equally between open space and local government purposes, to fund the COSC's strategic planning proposal.