



## **Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC) Project Services Information**

**Organizational background** – Through directly assisting land managers and other partners with their priority on-the-ground needs, Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC) motivates and enables people to become active stewards of Colorado’s natural resources. Our vision is to foster within every Coloradan a passion for, and commitment to, caring for the outdoors. To do this, we engage thousands of adult and youth volunteers across the state each year in building and maintaining trails, creating healthy environments for plants and wildlife, restoring ecologically-damaged places, and improving park and open space infrastructure through the construction and maintenance of recreational facilities, historic structures, and landscaping.

Since 1984, VOC has organized more than 1,000 volunteer projects on public lands and managed more than 120,000 volunteers for a total donated labor value of nearly \$24 million. We also provide extensive stewardship training through our [Outdoor Stewardship Institute \(OSI\)](#) to help land managers and nonprofits expand the leadership and technical capacity of their volunteers, and provide comprehensive online resources through our [Stepping Up Stewardship Toolkit](#) to help groups effectively plan and manage their own outdoor volunteer events.

VOC is managed by a 17-member board and 13 full-time staff along with one seasonal project manager, key interns, and volunteer leaders. This team coordinates thousands of volunteers and designs and implements over 90 projects each year, taking place April through October.

VOC’s programs are developed to ensure an ongoing commitment to, and full understanding of, outdoor stewardship. We are continually expanding the VOC experience for volunteers by adding value, networking, and learning opportunities both before and after the project experience. As Colorado’s leader in outdoor volunteerism, VOC is positioned to capitalize on our state’s growing population and volunteer movement to engage new and diverse groups of volunteers.

**Project application process** – VOC undertakes an annual application process for stewardship projects after conducting outreach to land management agencies. The projects VOC selects are intended to deliver the desired quality and accomplishments for the land managers; represent a range of experiences and technical challenges from easy to very difficult; and be engaging and educational for volunteers. VOC staff and trained volunteers scout projects with the respective resource or partner agency as part of the review process to ensure they are appropriate for volunteers, determine the type and skill level of work, and assess logistics and our ability to accomplish the objectives as outlined by the land management agency.

## VOC Project Services

- *Volunteer Management:* Volunteer recruitment and training is handled by VOC, with assistance from partner agencies when applicable. In cases where VOC is partnering closely with other local community groups, we may ask them to help recruit local volunteers or provide some Crew Leaders and project volunteers from their ranks. All volunteer registration and communication is handled by VOC staff through our custom database.
- *Volunteer Leadership and Training:* Each year, VOC engages 100+ volunteer leaders in a variety of roles. This cadre of skilled, trained volunteers are an indispensable part of our programs, providing for project planning, logistics, and crew leadership on a volunteer basis.
  - In addition to training our own leaders, VOC helps our partners expand their own capacity by training hundreds of volunteers and agency staff each year through our [Outdoor Stewardship Institute \(OSI\)](#). These trainings may be customized to your organization's needs and/or coupled with your proposed volunteer project.
- *Project Design:* If needed, VOC has the capacity to perform technical project design in consultation or collaboration with our project partners. We can also help partners determine best priorities and scope of work for volunteer projects.
- *Tools and Equipment:* VOC can provide most basic hand and power tools necessary to complete trail or ecological restoration projects. Special equipment and tools not provided by VOC will be rented or purchased by partner agency.
- *Safety and Logistics:* Safety will always be the utmost priority for VOC and the partner agencies we work with. VOC performs a risk assessment and our Crew Leaders are trained to ensure that project work proceeds in a safe manner. The partner agency is responsible for securing emergency medical personnel, providing emergency communications, and notifying local law enforcement

and/or search and rescue coordinators of our presence in their jurisdiction. Other safety concerns such as vehicular traffic and weather will be addressed and resolved as necessary on site.

- *Food and water:* Most VOC projects include food provided to volunteers; food procurement and preparation is generally VOC's responsibility or is negotiated with project partners. We have the capacity to provide adequate water for projects, and usually ask for partner assistance in procuring a location to fill containers if water cannot be provided on site.

Though most projects fall into a 1-or-2-day weekend time frame, VOC successfully manages a variety of volunteer project types each year. From weekday evening gardening near our Denver office to multi-day trips in the backcountry, our model can be adjusted to best suit partner needs.

**Project planning & implementation** – The following timeline represents the typical planning and implementation process undertaken by VOC and our volunteer project leaders. This is meant to serve as an example of the level of detail and organization VOC brings to our projects. Not all projects may adhere to the same timeline and process, and VOC strives to provide our partners with the flexibility needed for unique requirements.

*Three to six months prior to project (or when snow level/weather allows)*

- Site visit conducted with VOC staff and project land manager; project size and scope of work determined.
- Project design and planning completed.
- VOC Volunteer Project Team Lead recruited and briefed.
- VOC Volunteer Project Team needs determined and members recruited.
- VOC and agency complete Scope of Services Agreement.
- VOC Project Manager and Volunteer Project Team determine volunteer Crew Leader training needs; scheduling of any necessary training sessions.
- Volunteer recruitment begins: Project description posted on websites and other outreach strategies implemented including outreach to organized groups in the local area; print materials developed.
- VOC Project Manager and Volunteer Project Team are engaged to begin logistics planning.

*Two months prior to project*

- Risk management assessment by agency staff, VOC staff, and Volunteer Project Team; emergency plans written.

- Project logistics finalized and reviewed by VOC staff and leadership volunteers.
- Volunteer recruitment continues.
- Project tools and any necessary materials secured.

*Three weeks up until project implementation*

- Crew Leader recruitment and orientation.
- Volunteer recruitment continues.
- Local media contacted and engaged.
- Final project site prep is completed.
- Logistical and background communications sent to volunteers.

*Post-project Evaluation (up to two weeks following project)*

- Crew Leaders complete evaluations and submit to VOC along with their project hours.
- Volunteers contacted by VOC staff with post-project thank you and photos, summary of work accomplished, and request for evaluation.
- Volunteer waivers processed and hours logged.
- VOC sends written evaluation to the land manager to learn how to strengthen these relationships and be as effective as possible in our collaborations.
- VOC Project Manager and Volunteer Project Team debriefs project up to two weeks following the project completion.

For more information on how VOC collaborates with land management and other partner organizations, please contact Dean Winstanley at [dean@voc.org](mailto:dean@voc.org) or 303-715-1010 ext. 119. To submit a project for VOC's consideration, please complete an [online application](#).