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**EQUITY IN STATE-BASED
OUTDOOR RECREATION &
EDUCATION PROGRAMS:**

Analysis of Eight Western States

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Masters of the Environment
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER



CONTENTS

01	Executive Summary
02	Glossary of Terms
03	Report Justification
09	Addressing Access
12	Economic Contributions
14	COVID-19
15	Confluence of States
16	Methodology
17	State Sections (see next page for breakdown)
90	National Recommendations
93	A Case for a National Opportunity Fund/Foundation
96	The Work Continues...
98	Conclusion
99	Acknowledgments
100	About the Authors
101	Citations
110	Photo Credits

STATE SECTIONS



Arizona
Pages 17-24



Colorado
Pages 25-36



Idaho
Pages 37-42



Montana
Pages 43-53



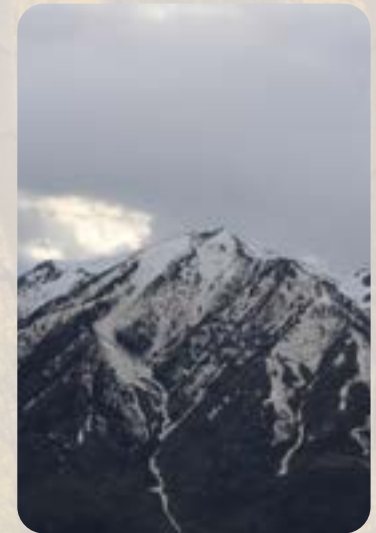
Nevada
Pages 54-65



New Mexico
Pages 66-74



Utah
Pages 75-81



Wyoming
Pages 82-88

“Wilderness is not a luxury but a necessity of the human spirit, and as vital to our lives as water and good bread.”

**EDWARD ABBEY,
DESERT SOLITUDE**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Western states are known for breathtaking landscapes and world-class recreational opportunities; however, there is a proven unequal distribution of access to these outdoor experiences. With current outdoor participation levels reaching record highs, 72 percent of reported recreators identify as white, while overall participation among communities of color remains stagnant. Compounded by historic systemic inequities that create a legacy of excluding communities of color from outdoor recreation, there is a need to examine state-level outdoor recreation and education programs and funding opportunities to improve participation for historically underrepresented communities.

This report builds on the National Outdoor Equity Initiative and the work done by the Outdoor F.U.T.U.R.E coalition. Drawing on inspiration from the Center for American Progress' identification of the Nature Gap, this report provides a comprehensive overview of state-based outdoor recreation and education programs in eight western states (AZ, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, UT, WY) compiled from months of desktop research and interviews with program staff members. Thoroughly understanding and analyzing the current opportunities at the state level led to identifying efficiencies and gaps in outdoor opportunities for marginalized communities. Examining best program practices provided insight into state and federal recommendations for improving equitable access to the outdoors. Deeply rooted in aspirations to transform opportunities for outdoor access, this report is a vehicle for enhancing positive change to narrow the diversity gap in outdoor spaces. Ultimately, the information serves as a guide to justify the need for a National Opportunity Fund/Foundation to provide states with the financial and resource support necessary to expand access to the outdoors.



Glossary of Terms

For the purpose of this report, we define key terms to create a guideline for consistent meaning. The definitions are not intended to be an external authority on how the words are used but rather a tool to provide internal foundational understanding.

- **Access:** The opportunity to engage in outdoor activities without barriers, including financial, transportation, or geographic.
- **Barriers:** Factors (e.g., money, time, knowledge, opportunity) that hinder people’s ability to access life-enhancing outdoor spaces and experiences.
- **Equity:** The consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals.
- **Meaningful experience:** Foundationally safe and enriching access to outdoor and green spaces. These experiences can be impactful on a deep level regardless of age, race, spiritual background, or socioeconomic status.
- **Outdoor Education:** The discovery through experimentation and learning that connects an individual to the natural world through an engagement in environmental and recreational activities in a classroom or outdoor setting.
- **Outdoor/Nature-based:** A place outside, away from buildings, where the natural environment can be experienced.
- **Underserved, Underrepresented, or Marginalized Communities:** Populations that face barriers and undue hardships to outdoor access due to race, ethnicity, minority factors, culture, socioeconomic standing, ability, and geographic location (34 U.S. Code § 12291 - Definitions and Grant Provisions, n.d.).
- **Outdoor Recreation:** Any activity meant to generate self-satisfaction that involves using and appreciating natural resources, relies on the values of ecosystem services, and occurs in nature-based environments (Phipps, 1991).
- **State-based programs:** Recreational and educational experiences funded, designed, or implemented by the state.
- **Statewide Outdoor Comprehensive Recreation Plan (SCORP):** A state guide for all public outdoor recreation. To be eligible for funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a state must prepare a SCORP every five years. It is the most comprehensive and updated document for states to demonstrate recreation accomplishments and needs (American Trails Staff, 2019).



REPORT JUSTIFICATION

In 1984, American naturalist E.O. Wilson hypothesized that humans possess biophilia, "the innate tendency to seek connections with nature" (Rogers, 2019). Spending time outdoors has proven benefits for people of all ages. Increasing evidence proves that spending meaningful time outdoors positively affects physical and psychological well-being and profoundly impacts childhood development (Weir, 2020). Outdoor activities can alleviate stress, improve cognitive function, and increase concentration (Avitt, 2021). Research also suggests positive youth experiences in the outdoors have a correlation to continued engagement and pro-environmental attitudes as adults (Sachs et al., 2020). The National Wildlife Federation reports that children enrolled in schools with environmental education components score higher on standardized testing and demonstrate increased critical thinking performance (Health Benefits and Tips, n.d.). The lifelong suite of benefits resulting from outdoor engagement should be universally attainable because access to the outdoors is a human right.

According to a report from the Outdoor Industry Association, 2020 saw record-high participation in outdoor recreation, with 53 percent of Americans over the age of six reportedly engaging at least once (2021 Outdoor Participation Trends Report, 2021). While 7.1 million more Americans recreated in 2020 than in 2019, the increase in engagement did not translate to increased diversity; 72 percent of reported recreators identified as white. This lack of diversity is not representative of the demographics of the United States, implying existing barriers to participation are rooted in systemic inequities (2021 Outdoor Participation Trends Report, 2021) (see figure 3).

The Outdoor Industry Association identifies many barriers preventing continued or new outdoor engagement: proximity to recreation destinations, familial obligations, lack of awareness, and access to a preexisting community of recreationists (2021 Special Report, 2021). Additional identified barriers from a separate report include affordability, a lack of early childhood exposure to the outdoors, cultural factors, thoughts of not fitting in, discrimination, and historic trauma resulting in fear of safety (Askew & Walls, 2019). These reasons are compounded and intensified by the intersection of socioeconomic standing, race, age, gender, and ability. In the Outdoor Industry Association report, 46 percent of Americans expressed a desire to participate in outdoor recreation, which suggests the need to eliminate identified barriers and further examine how to welcome non-participating communities into outdoor spaces. Including and integrating equitable considerations into state-sponsored programming and educational efforts can increase accessibility for modern life and first-time outdoor participants (2020 Outdoor Participation Report, 2020).

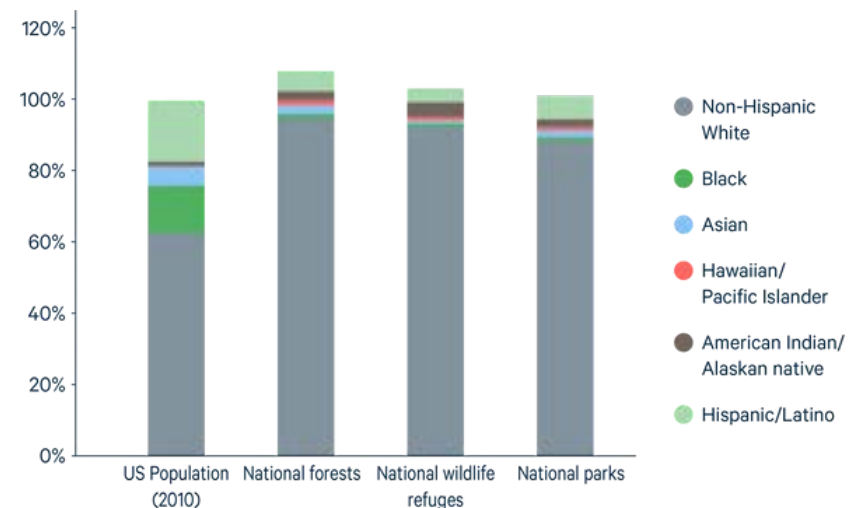
REPORT JUSTIFICATION (cont.)

Outdoor participation among under-represented communities depends heavily on access quality, the perception and reality of safety, and opportunity. The unequal distribution of benefits from a connection to nature is attributed to the intersection of racism, policy, and segregation (Rowland-Shea et al., 2020). Black Americans were integral in establishing parks such as Yosemite and Sequoia. Still, they were legally prohibited from entering National Parks until the issue of a 1945 general bulletin by Washington mandating the full desegregation of national park facilities (Engle, 1996). Until the 1964 passage of the Civil Rights Act, people of color were intentionally prohibited from accessing outdoor public spaces reserved for the enjoyment and use of white people (Humphrey, 2020). Communities opposing the historic legislation banning discrimination based on race, religion, or gender began to defund recreation opportunities and establish private clubs to continue legal exclusion practices (Fleming, 2021).

Nearly 60 years later, the National Health Foundation identifies outdoor recreation's "diversity gap" as the product of historical segregation, racial violence, and economic inequality (Humphrey, 2020). In 2018, Black Americans were the most under-represented group and accounted for just six percent of National Park visitation (National Park Service Comprehensive Survey of the American Public, 2019). The National Park system maintains the most prominent and well-known natural spaces in the United States. Still, its legacy of historical exclusion and segregation has not disappeared based on the demographic trends of visitors. Created on stolen indigenous land with white

visitors in mind, the National Park system is not a historically-inclusive outdoor sanctuary despite current efforts to appeal to Black Americans (Mercer, 2022). Aggregate data from the US Forest Service, National Park Service, and Fish and Wildlife Service further demonstrate the absence of diversity in visitors to public lands. Representing 63 percent of the population, non-Hispanic whites account for 88 to 95 percent of public land visitors. Disproportionate to the demographics of the US, only one to 1.2 percent of Black Americans and 3.8 to 6.7 percent of Hispanic/Latinos report visiting public lands (Askew & Walls, 2019). Current data suggest that the ability to spend time outdoors is still rooted in historically legalized segregation.

Figure 1. Visitors to Public Lands and US Population by Ethnic/Racial Group



Graph and data from a Resources report on Diversity in the Outdoors (Askew & Walls, 2019). Note from the report: "Note: The national forest and national wildlife refuge surveys allowed respondents to select more than one ethnic/racial identity, thus the totals are greater than 100 percent."

REPORT JUSTIFICATION (cont.)

Redlining, forced displacement, and economic segregation also create barriers to providing natural areas for people of color and low-income communities (Grove et al., 2018). According to the Center for American Progress, "nature-deprived" areas contain a higher proportion of eliminated natural environments resulting from human activity, such as urban sprawl and gentrification (Rowland-Shea et al., 2020). The study goes on to say, "70 percent of low-income communities across the country live in nature-deprived areas. This figure is 20 percent higher than the figure for those with moderate or high incomes" (Rowland-Shea et al., 2020). Additionally, 74 percent of communities of color in the contiguous United States live in nature-deprived areas, compared with 23 percent of their white communities. These historical inequities and unjust policies result in targeted communities receiving fewer ecological benefits such as air and water purification, climate change mitigation, biodiversity, disease control, and opportunities for leisure and recreation (Rowland-Shea et al., 2020) (see figure 2).

Despite the lack of diversity in outdoor recreation participation, quantitative data demonstrate the interest in engaging in outdoor recreation is growing, especially in recent years, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic ("2021 Special Report," 2021). A 2020 Recreation and Park Association survey found that roughly 82 percent of US residents consider parks and recreation "essential" (Outdoor Recreation FAQs, 2022). Access issues surrounding opportunities for the full scope of benefits nature provides - such as quality outdoor education and

recreation, career-building opportunities, and mental and physical health benefits - increased in recent years. The creation of Outdoor Equity Grant Programs in New Mexico (page 70), Colorado (page 29), and California demonstrate the surge in focus on equitable access among state legislators. In 2021 a national coalition of Black, Indigenous, and leaders of color launched the Outdoor Future Initiative (OFI), further proving the appetite for an increase in equitable outdoor access in state-based programs. OFI came together to increase outdoor ecological education and improve access to recreational experiences on public lands for underserved youth and communities of color by investing in long-term program providers, regardless of income or zip code (Outdoor F.U.T.U.R.E., n.d.).

Figure 2. Percentage of U.S. population living in nature-deprived areas in our targeted states

State	White Communities	Communities of Color
Arizona	39%	51%
Colorado	34%	57%
Idaho	30%	57%
Montana	32%	59%
Nevada	29%	54%
New Mexico	41%	46%
Utah	29%	53%
Wyoming	34%	65%

Data from The Center for American Progress' Nature Gap Report (Rowland-Shea et al., 2020).

REPORT JUSTIFICATION (cont.)

The systemic inequities deeply ingrained in our social structure and law contribute to biased narratives and stereotypes. These present a complicated task and demonstrate the necessity for bridging the Nature Gap and eliminating identified barriers to meaningful and accessible environment engagement. The institutionalized legacy of underrepresenting people of color in common outdoor spaces resulted in a lack of current representation and a sense of belonging. The well-publicized 2020 incident in Central Park surrounding racial profiling and the unwarranted confrontation of Black bird-watcher Christian Cooper by a white woman suspecting he did not belong reinforces the notion that outdoor spaces are not always welcoming and inclusive to people of color (Maslin Nir, 2020). The February 2020 murder of Ahmaud Arbery is a stark reminder that racially-driven acts of hatred continue to represent the feelings and realities of safety for people of color in the outdoors (Streeter, 2020). The ongoing debate over geo-tagging in nature is a modern-day manifestation of exclusionary practices. The desire to gatekeep outdoor spaces for those traditionally allowed to recreate outdoors and have generational information of access implies that nature-based experiences are not welcoming to everyone (Williams, 2019). Despite the common idea that “the outdoors are for everyone,” the lingering legacy of exclusion and racially-driven violence remain present in how “everyone” is defined.

Access to the outdoors will remain limited until we incorporate the historically underserved, underrepresented, and excluded communities. Moreover, the experienced risk, racial profiling,

stereotyping and vulnerability will continue to be present in outdoor recreation without immediate and thoughtful intervention. Building a relationship with outdoor spaces through early education and recreation is fundamental to receiving experiential benefits and establishing a sense of place. People of every background should see themselves represented in outdoor participation; meaningful experiences should not be reserved for wealthy, white, affluent members of society. Equitably increased opportunity, funding, and tailored programming representative of diverse voices and culturally-relevant content are a precursor to improved access. Through thoughtful and intentional inclusion, communities typically left out of environmental and recreational conversations will receive foundational experiences that allow them agency to experience the natural world and reap the benefits of recreation on public lands.



OUTDOOR RECREATION PARTICIPATION HIGHLIGHTS

Data from the Outdoor Foundation's 2021 Outdoor Participation Trends Report provides further insight into the demographics of recreation participation as shown below:

Unchanged from the previous year, 72% of outdoor participants in 2020 were white, while just under 60% of the U.S. population identifies as white. Other than increased Hispanic recreation participation, trends have not significantly changed since 2015 (see figure 3);

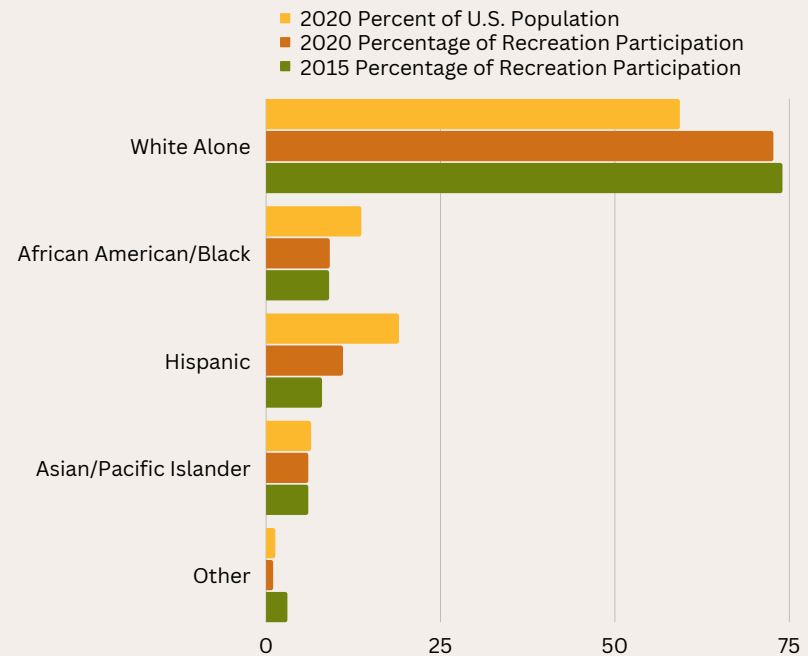
Only 38% of Black Americans over the age of six participated in 2020, down 2% from 2019, translating to just 9% of total outdoor recreation engagement in 2020, roughly the same for the past seven years (see figure 3);

Outdoor recreation participation among Black Americans has remained stagnated, with an increase of 0.3 percent annually over the past three years;

Just 49 percent of Black American children aged 6 to 12 and 46 percent aged 13 to 17 participated in outdoor recreation, the lowest by far of any other group suggesting a future gap in adult outdoor participation; and

Unchanged in the last eight years, 54% of outdoor participants identified as male and 46% as female (Trends Report, 2021).

Figure 3. Comparison of U.S. Demographics and Outdoor Participation Data



The recreation participation rates do not reflect the demographic makeup of the U.S.

U.S. Demographics from 2020 U.S. Consensus Data (Quick Facts United States, 2021)

Outdoor Recreation Participation in 2015 and 2020 from The Outdoor Foundation's 2021 Outdoor Participation Trends Report (Trends Report, 2021)





ADDRESSING ACCESS

State-based programming and funding opportunities represent one aspect of programs that expand access to the outdoors. As this report does not offer a comprehensive understanding of all components of equitable access, the following briefly acknowledges other areas to consider when holistically considering the multi-faceted dimensions of access:

Trail Infrastructure and Maintenance

Trail health and ongoing maintenance allow for continued public recreation and are arguably the fundamental elements of access. At the state and national levels, numerous programs and grant opportunities address trail infrastructure and maintenance. The Recreational Trail Program, Off-Highway Vehicle Fund, and Land and Water Conservation Fund provide federal trail and infrastructure maintenance funding. Similar state-level funding opportunities include Colorado's Non-Motorized Trails Grant Program, Wyoming's Outdoor Recreation Grant, New Mexico's Outdoor Recreation Trail Grant, Arizona's State Park Trail Program Heritage Fund, and Idaho's Recreational Road and Bridge program. Criteria for funding vary by program but often include proximity to trails, trail maintenance, trail development, playground development, and outdoor recreation facilities. Infrastructure and maintenance are essential components of access, but there are inequities in funding levels and where projects occur. Additional equity components should be considered when deciding which areas receive funding for maintenance.

Urban Green Spaces

Inner-city and urban green spaces provide a geographically-viable alternative for outdoor recreation. These spaces provide meaningful experiences in nature when barriers to transportation, resources, time, and access exist. Understanding green space acreage, quality, and safety are essential for evaluating a community's access to urban parks. According to the Trust For Public Land's 10-Minute Walk



ADDRESSING ACCESS (cont.)

program, one in three United States residents does not live within a 10-minute walk of a park, including more than 28 million youth (10-Minute Walk, n.d). The program also documents how parks that serve a majority of communities of color are four times smaller and host five times as many people as parks that serve white communities (10-Minute Walk, n.d). As the greater outdoors are threatened by climate change, social and financial disparities, and physical proximity, urban green spaces will be essential outdoor recreation areas to develop and maintain.

Reservation Systems

Reservation systems are an increasingly popular tool to moderate traffic in recreation areas, particularly in National Parks. In 2022, eight National Parks had summer-time reservation systems to help alleviate traffic and protect natural spaces (Pennington, 2022). Based on current outdoor recreation trends, reservation systems likely will continue and spread to other National Parks. National standards should be in place to distribute equitable access through these systems. Visiting places like National Parks require adequate transportation, financial means, and technical planning that disproportionately excludes communities of color. In 2018, Black Americans accounted for just six percent of National Park visitation. Widespread reservation systems may lead to further reductions in participation as they add an extra logistical step that excludes families and communities lacking time and experience (National Park Service Comprehensive Survey of the American Public, 2019). Because the NPS-timed entry reservation systems are relatively new, long-term visitation trends are difficult to discern. Available data has shown that higher-income individuals make up the majority of reservation slots at NPS campsite reservations (Kuta, 2022). This trend likely will continue without considering the equitable distribution of reservations through the system.



ADDRESSING ACCESS (cont.)

Locked Public Lands

The historic process for distributing land in the West has resulted in over six million acres of public land in eleven western states being permanently inaccessible and landlocked due to surrounding private lands (Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and onX, 2019). The absence of a public road, lack of adjoining public land by way of a public road, and federal acres landlocked by closed public lands contribute to the decreased available public land for recreationists and sportsmen and women. The total landlocked area is larger than the eight most visited national parks combined and cuts off access primarily for sports activities such as hunting and fishing. Montana has the largest amount of landlocked public land, with 1.56 million acres. New Mexico, Arizona, and Wyoming rank just behind Montana with 1.35 million acres, 1.31 million acres, and 1.11 million acres, respectively (Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and onX, 2019). States have addressed the landlock issue through land acquisitions, land exchanges, increasing staff to establish programs to address these access challenges on state and federal lands, and creating walk-in programs (Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and onX, 2019). Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership generates recognition of the issue through the use of GIS and data tracking to strengthen the argument for increasing access. State and inter-state coalition action have been ongoing, with incremental progress permitting entry into landlocked areas.

Climate Change

Climate change directly impacts when and how people can recreate due to more severe weather events, increasing natural disasters, and a shift in traditional seasonality. Hotter temperatures and prolonged drought impact varying forms of water recreation, particularly in the west, due to increasing aridification. There are predictions that the winter sports and recreation season will be cut in half by 2050 due to warming temperatures and shifting precipitation patterns (Climate Change and the Outdoor Industry, n.d). The results of climate change will continue to alter accessibility and limit recreation opportunities that are culturally and socially important to many Americans.

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS

Outdoor recreation is a significant and growing contributor to the United States economy. Despite the onset of the pandemic in 2020, contributions reached \$374 billion, or 1.8 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) (Lawson, 2021). In 2021, these contributions increased, totaling \$454 billion, or 1.9 percent of the GDP (Outdoor Recreation, 2022). According to a 2021 report from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Montana ranks number two in contributions to the state GDP at 4.4 percent (Outdoor Recreation, 2022). Outdoor recreation in all eight western states contributes more than 2.1 percent annually to their state GDPs, with Wyoming ranking tied at 4th in the nation, followed by Idaho (7th), Colorado (8th), Utah (10th), Nevada (13th), Arizona (19th), and New Mexico (23rd) (Outdoor Recreation, 2022). Small and rural communities near rivers, trails, and other recreational opportunities rely on the economic growth afforded to small businesses through outdoor recreation (Outdoor Recreation, 2022). As the outdoor industry is an essential contributor to the economic health of western states, there are financial drivers in expanding access and improving equitable access and engagement to traditionally underrepresented populations. Developing more robust programs at the state and local levels will help support the development of urban and rural outdoor recreation economies.



Economic Contributions of the Outdoor Recreation Industry in 2021

Figure 4. Value Added, Employment, and Compensation

State	GDP Contribution	Percentage of GDP Contribution	Employment	Percentage of State Employment	Wages and Salaries
Arizona	\$7.7 billion	2.00%	95,183 jobs	3.20%	\$4.4 billion
Colorado	\$9.6 billion	2.50%	120,063 jobs	4.30%	\$5.7 billion
Idaho	\$2.2 billion	2.70%	29,867 jobs	3.80%	\$1.2 billion
Montana	\$2.2 billion	4.30%	26,169 jobs	5.40%	\$1.1 billion
Nevada	\$4 billion	2.30%	49,501 jobs	3.80%	\$1.1 billion
New Mexico	\$4.2 billion	1.90%	25,916 jobs	2.70%	\$1.1 billion
Utah	\$4.9 billion	2.50%	61,890 jobs	3.90%	\$2.7 billion
Wyoming	\$1.2 billion	3.40%	14,187 jobs	5.10%	\$0.6 billion

Data from the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis (State Summary Sheets, 2022)

COVID-19

The Covid-19 pandemic caused unprecedented global havoc and instability. It resulted in temporary lockdowns throughout the United States, dramatically reduced travel, and the shutdown of traditional avenues for entertainment, such as bars, restaurants, and sporting events. The dangers of gathering indoors and the reduction in entertainment options led to increased participation in outdoor activities. According to the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) report of 2021, the number of new and returning outdoor participants in 2021 increased by 26 percent since the onset of the pandemic. This was the highest increase ever recorded (OAI, n.d.). The 2022 OIA report found that outdoor participation rates grew 6.9 percent since March 2020.



A conflicting study by the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics at the University of Georgia concluded there was a 26 percent reduction in visitation to recreation sites post-Covid-19 compared to pre-Covid-19; this was due to several factors, including the closure of national and state parks, time constraints, and fear of contracting the virus (Landry et al., 2021). The pandemic-induced lockdowns primarily affected the urban population due to challenges in accessing the outdoors compared to rural dwellers (Rice et al., 2020). The pandemic affected outdoor recreationists and those employed in the travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation sectors. The workers experienced a significant loss in earnings of up to 40 percent (Graham, 2021). With the effects of the pandemic still lingering, time and further studies will reveal the extent and depth of the impact.



THE CONFLUENCE OF STATES

WWW.CONFLUENCEOFSTATES.COM

The Confluence of States (The Confluence) is a bipartisan movement to increase awareness of outdoor recreation access by establishing codified state-based Outdoor Recreation Divisions. Started in 2018 by Colorado, Montana, North Carolina, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, Washington, and Wyoming, The Confluence currently has 16 members, including Maine, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, Virginia, Arkansas, Maryland, and New Hampshire. Brought together by a shared passion for the outdoors and an interest in maintaining the outdoor industry economy, The Confluence centers its efforts on unifying communities, bridging societal divides, and improving mental and physical health. The four main pillars of the Confluence of States are Conservation and Stewardship, Education and Workforce Training, Economic Development, and Public Health and Wellness. The Confluence commits to addressing determinants of outdoor access “by increasing outdoor recreation opportunities for people of all backgrounds and abilities” (Outdoor Recreation Industry Confluence Accords, 2022). The Confluence Accords emphasize the importance of building relationships and partnerships to address shared values and common goals and work towards shared visions.



METHODOLOGY

Through collaboration with WRA, the MENV Team developed targeted questions to understand grant opportunities and the state-based function of programs, history, and equity components. A foundational understanding of state-based opportunities was developed through desktop research and report reviews, relevant legislation, department grant manuals and applications, and government websites. To remedy gaps in available information, we spoke with staff members in state departments that house the programs and grants. An attempt was made to confirm the state program write-ups through relevant department and division staff. A list of the interviews and staff-vetted programs is found in each state section.

An inventory of the compiled data allowed the MENV Team to track and contrast program and funding opportunities and provide a holistic understanding of the network of available options. Discussing our findings and sharing insights across the eight states identified room for improvement and examples of best practices for including components to increase equitable access. The nine-month effort culminated in this report showcasing each state's programs and funding sources, relevant recommendations for improving access for underrepresented populations, and an argument for a National Opportunity Fund/Foundation.

A presentation to relevant stakeholders took place on Tuesday, November 15th, and provided the MENV Team with recommendations and feedback for strengthening the report. Representatives from The Wilderness Society, Western Resource Advocates, Trust for Public Lands, Next 100, Outdoor Industry Association, REI Cooperative Action Fund, Conservation Colorado, Keystone Policy Center, Nuestra Tierra Conservation Project, Rocky Mountain Youth Corps, and Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education contributed comments and thoughts after a 30-minute presentation from the MENV Team. The feedback and suggestions for improvement were incorporated into the Economic Contributions section, and the overall recommendations and "next steps" can be found at the report's end.



ARIZONA



Student-aged Population:
22% under 18 years of age

Socioeconomic Breakdown:
12.8% persons in poverty

**Land Owned by Federal Agencies,
States, and Municipalities:**
54.8%

*Citations included in References



ARIZONA

STATE OVERVIEW

Arizona is currently the second fastest-growing state in the country, with an expected 1.4 percent annual growth rate per year until 2030 (Arizona Draft Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan [SCORP], 2022). Of the 72 million acres of land in the state, the BLM manages 16.6 percent, the Forest Service manages 15.3 percent, 17.5 percent is private, and 27.7 percent is Tribal owned (Public Land Ownership in the United States, 2019). Arizona offers public recreation opportunities within its 34 state parks, three national parks, 21 other National Park Service units, four BLM national monuments, 128 lakes, and five major rivers (SCORP, 2022). According to the 2021 Census, 53.2 percent of residents identify as white alone, 5.4 percent as black, 5.3 percent as American Indian, 32.3 percent as Hispanic, 0.3 percent as Native Hawaiian, and 3.8 percent as Asian. Twenty-two percent of the population is 18 or younger, with those over 65 being the most populated age group in the state (Arizona Census QuickFacts, 2021). Additionally, 12.8 percent of the population is in poverty, with 13 percent of Arizonans reporting some form of disability (SCORP, 2022). The SCORP identifies Arizona as having an extremely high level of outdoor recreation participation; 72 percent of the population participated in some form of outdoor recreation in 2021 (2022). According to the SCORP, Arizona's near-term focus is on providing quality outdoor experiences to the public, embracing diversity, equity, inclusion, and conservation, and minimizing environmental impacts (2022).

ARIZONA

STATE PROGRAMS

Department/Division	Program	Website
Arizona Game & Fish Department	Heritage Fund Program	www.azgfd.com/wildlife/heritagefund/program/
Arizona Game & Fish Department	Heritage K-12 Small Grant Program	www.azgfd.com/wildlife/heritagefund/program/k-12-small-grants/
Arizona State Parks	Heritage Outdoor Education Fund Program	www.azstateparks.com/heritage-fund-grants



Research

Information for all programs was acquired through desktop research or informational interviews via email.

Contributors

- **Arizona Game & Fish Heritage Fund**
 - Email interview: Lou Ann DeHart
 - Program review: Lou Ann DeHart
- **Arizona State Parks Heritage Fund Program**
 - Email interview: Saterra Gibbon
 - Program review: Saterra Gibbon



ARIZONA STATE PROGRAMS

Game & Fish Heritage Fund

The Arizona Game & Fish Department Heritage Fund Program was jointly established in 1990 with the Arizona State Parks Heritage Fund with a strong emphasis on historic preservation and wildlife conservation. Per §5.572 (B) (D), Arizona Game & Fish receives up to \$10 million each year from the Arizona lottery and allocated \$380,000 to the Heritage Partnership Program in 2022. The Education Branch recently started the K-12 small grant program, and larger-scale education projects can apply through the main fund program. In previous years, five percent of the Heritage funds were allocated towards environmental education, with numerous success stories represented through 'Schoolyard Habitat Projects.' Current funding goes towards wildlife conservation and wildlife-related recreation efforts. There is still a program priority to fund and “educate children and adults about wildlife,” and educators are recommended to seek funding through the K-12 small grant program.

Game & Fish Heritage Fund K-12 Small Grant

The Heritage K-12 Small grant is a subset of the Arizona Game & Fish Heritage fund program. Teachers are awarded up to \$3000 in funding to incorporate or create accessible and high-quality wildlife education in the classroom. The Arizona Lottery allocates funding, and \$32,000 was available during the 2022 grant cycle. To qualify, projects must meet at least one of the three criteria: Educator Professional Development, Teacher-Designed Field Experiences, and School-based Wildlife Education Projects and Resources. The latter of the two criteria directly contributes to nature-based access both in and outside of the classroom. This grant is already proving to be successful due to the high number of applicants applying per cycle and the number of recipients. Twenty projects applied during the last grant cycle, and twelve were awarded funding across seven Arizona counties. Projects ranged from online expedition programs to public school field studies and outdoor learning opportunities.

State Parks Heritage Fund Program

Housed in the Arizona State Parks Department, this Heritage fund was originally established in 1990 to receive \$10 million a year from the Arizona State Lottery. The Historic Preservation portion program was removed from this statute in 2008 but restored in 2020. The program received \$2.5 million in funding for FY 2023 (July 2022-June 2023), with 30 percent of the funds being designated for preservation efforts.



ARIZONA STATE PROGRAMS

Following the 2022 year, the remaining funds from the lottery will be deposited into the State Parks Heritage fund. In addition to historic preservation, grants go toward trail projects, local, regional, and state parks, and environmental education programs. Environmental education projects must adhere to specific criteria addressing “recreational, social, or environmental need” and focus on whether the project will serve youth and help grow future generations of outdoor enthusiasts.

Spotlight Program: Atabey Outdoors

www.atabeyoutdoors.com

Created in 2020, Atabey Outdoors is a Phoenix-based 501c3 organization that provides BIPOC youth with outdoor experiences. Women of color exclusively comprise the administrative team and the outdoor mentors, and the organization serves Black, Indigenous, and girls of color aged 8-12. Through its four core values of fortitude, understanding, respect, and empathy, Atabey Outdoors is committed to increasing BIPOC representation in the outdoors and offering youth a safe space to participate (About, n.d). Atabey Outdoors bases programming on the Theory of Change model to answer the question, "How can we link this outdoor adventure to an important life skill that youth can take with them into their communities?" (Our Approach, n.d). The organization recognizes barriers to outdoor experiences for BIPOC communities, including "the cost of gear, transportation and meals/snacks," and offers scholarships to cover all activity costs (Take Action, n.d). Atabey Outdoors' vision is "to ensure BIPOC youth feel safe, confident and worthy of taking up space outdoors & to empower the next generation of mindful leaders." (About, n.d)

Atabey Outdoors offers free drop-in weekend programs, soon-to-be-released program memberships, and full-day/weekend outdoor adventure trips. Day activities include nature walks, yoga, cooking in nature, indoor rock climbing, overnight camping, and other nature-based activities that occur multiple times a month (What We Offer, n.d). Additionally, Atabey Outdoors offers a Junior Outdoor Mentor Program for Black, Indigenous, and Girls of Color ages 13-17. The seasonal program hosts exclusive outdoor experiences for accepted Outdoor Mentors and allows girls to apply lessons in "teambuilding, leadership, mentoring and outdoor skills." (Junior Outdoor Mentor Program, n.d).





ARIZONA RECOMMENDATIONS

- Current grant opportunities are spread across different departments of Arizona under similar names. This makes it difficult for users to understand what program to search for when applying for grants. Cross-department advertising or linkage would create a larger network of program relations throughout the state. This would allow users to find new programs more easily, increasing an applicant's probability of receiving funding. Simplifying the process for finding youth-based outdoor education programs will allow more applicants to find the relevant programming. This should lower barriers to entry of more parties successfully receiving funds.
- The Heritage K-12 Small Grant offers a specified program geared toward educators. The language of this grant offers an accessible blueprint for others to replicate with its wide focus on outdoor education applicability. This grant would benefit from having a more substantial amount of funding, as it is a subset of the larger Fish & Wildlife Heritage Fund.
- Program effectiveness works only if the general public is aware of its opportunities and benefits. Increased marketing and community outreach to inform the public of the suite of programs in Arizona will diversify and increase participation. Relying on word-of-mouth communication excludes populations of nontraditional recreators and diminishes the likelihood of increasing engagement.



ARIZONA RECOMMENDATIONS CONT.

- A greater amount of specific equity-based language in state-wide grants would be highly beneficial. Currently, language included in grant opportunities is accessible to those who are well-versed in common application projects but not to a wider audience. Diversifying eligible projects project types that focus on serving historically excluded communities and youth will lower barriers to entry and allow for a wider variety of projects to apply. Without a current Outdoor Equity Grant present in Arizona, more equity language included in applications will diversify the candidates and projects seen applying.

COLORADO

A scenic landscape of Colorado featuring a rocky foreground with sparse green vegetation, a range of mountains in the distance under a cloudy sky, and a large red diagonal overlay on the right side.

Student-aged Population:
21.3% under 18 years of age

Socioeconomic Breakdown:
12.4% persons in poverty

**Land Owned by Federal Agencies,
States, and Municipalities:**
41.5%

*Citations included in References



COLORADO

STATE OVERVIEW

Colorado enjoys a robust outdoor industry, with 92 percent of the population participating in outdoor activities every few weeks and 69 percent engaging one to four times a week (Trends Report, 2021). More than 98 percent of residents live within 50 miles of at least one state park, and 56 percent live within 50 miles of six or more state parks. Despite the geographic accessibility to the outdoors, Get Outdoors Colorado (page) identified several barriers to youth participation, including time and resource limitations, transportation access, inadequate information about outdoor opportunities, and the notion that the outdoors are generally inaccessible. Hispanic youth expressed similar difficulties engaging in outdoor activity but also cited feeling unwelcome in outdoor spaces (Trends Report, 2021). Colorado is one of the fastest-growing states in the U.S., and diversity is increasing, with 45 percent of the state's population expected to be non-white by 2050 (Rosewicz et al., 2021) (Trends Report, 2021).

According to the 2019 SCORP, "outdoor recreation opportunities contribute to increased quality of life, economic prosperity, and the health of Colorado communities and residents" (Colorado Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2019). Several strategies to increase inclusivity and representation in the outdoors were prioritized, including compiling research regarding barriers and motivations to outdoor participation, considering these barriers in planning, and supporting and using existing programs to increase representation in outdoor space users. An expressed commitment and vision for improving access to outdoor spaces for all Colorado residents includes ensuring local economic stability, personal health, and the sustainment of natural resources.

COLORADO

STATE PROGRAMS

Department/Division	Program	Website
Colorado Parks and Wildlife (State Lottery)	Great Outdoors Colorado	www.goco.org
Colorado Parks and Wildlife (Great Outdoors Colorado)	Generation Wild	www.generationwild.com
Colorado Parks and Wildlife	Partners in the Outdoors Grant	www.cpw.state.co.us/aboutus/Pages/Partners-Conference-Apply-for-a-Grant.aspx
Colorado Parks and Wildlife	Outdoor Equity Grant	www.cpw.state.co.us/aboutus/Pages/Outdoor-Equity-Fund.aspx
Office of Economic Development & International Trade	Colorado State Outdoor Recreation Grant	www.oedit.colorado.gov/colorado-state-outdoor-recreation-grant



Research

Information for all programs was acquired through desktop research and informational interviews via email.

Contributors

- **Partners in the Outdoors Grant**
 - Email interview: Jen Anderson
 - Program review: Jen Anderson
- **Outdoor Equity Grant**
 - Email interview: Andrea Kurth
 - Program review: Andrea Kurth
- **Colorado State Outdoor Recreation Grant**
 - Email interview: Matt Nunez
 - Program review: Matt Nunez
- **Great Outdoors Colorado**
 - Email interview: Tilah Larson
 - Program review: Tilah Larson
- **Generation Wild**
 - Phone interview: Erika Meyer
 - Program review: Erika Meyer
- **Diversify Whitewater**
 - Zoom interview: Caroline Queen
 - Program review: Caroline Queen

COLORADO STATE PROGRAMS

Partners in the Outdoors Grant

Housed in Colorado's Park and Wildlife Department, Partners in the Outdoors is focused on three key initiatives to bring together differing outdoor interests in the state: the Partners in the Outdoors Conference, The Colorado Outdoor Partnership, and the Colorado Outdoor Principles. The key driver in this program is to "advance and balance both outdoor recreation and conservation in Colorado."

Aside from the Outdoor Equity Grant Program, which resides in the Partners in the Outdoors program, a separate grant program is specific to the Partners in the Outdoors. This grant program is focused on awarding recipients whose goals ultimately align with Partners in the Outdoors' goal to create greater recreation and conservation balance in the state. Additionally, this grant is focused on awarding recipients that address priority areas from the Colorado Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), including sustainable access and opportunity, stewardship, land, water, wildlife conservation, and funding the future.

The grant program runs annually with February deadlines and awards recipients up to \$10,000. To apply, the organization must be either a non-profit or a government entity and be able to match the funds from the grant. Previous recipients include organizations like the Cal-Wood Education Center and the Hispanic Access Foundation. These organizations mean this grant program is directly applicable to fund youth-based outdoor access equity.

Outdoor Equity Grant

Housed in Colorado's Park and Wildlife Department, the Outdoor Equity Grant Program has existed since FY 2022 to offer state-wide funding to historically excluded communities. This grant is one of the few state-based programs that exist to target the concept of "equity" specifically. This program is geared toward youth up to age 25 and must be culturally responsive in some way. The foundation of the Outdoor Equity Grant is based on the notion that access to nature is an essential human right.

Created by HB 21-1318 in 2021, \$75,000 is provided by the Colorado State Lottery, with the first round of grants awarded in 2022. In addition, the Lottery pledged \$4 million over the next four years for the program. Applicants typically are awarded anywhere between \$10,000-\$100,000 and target a range of systemic issues.



COLORADO STATE PROGRAMS

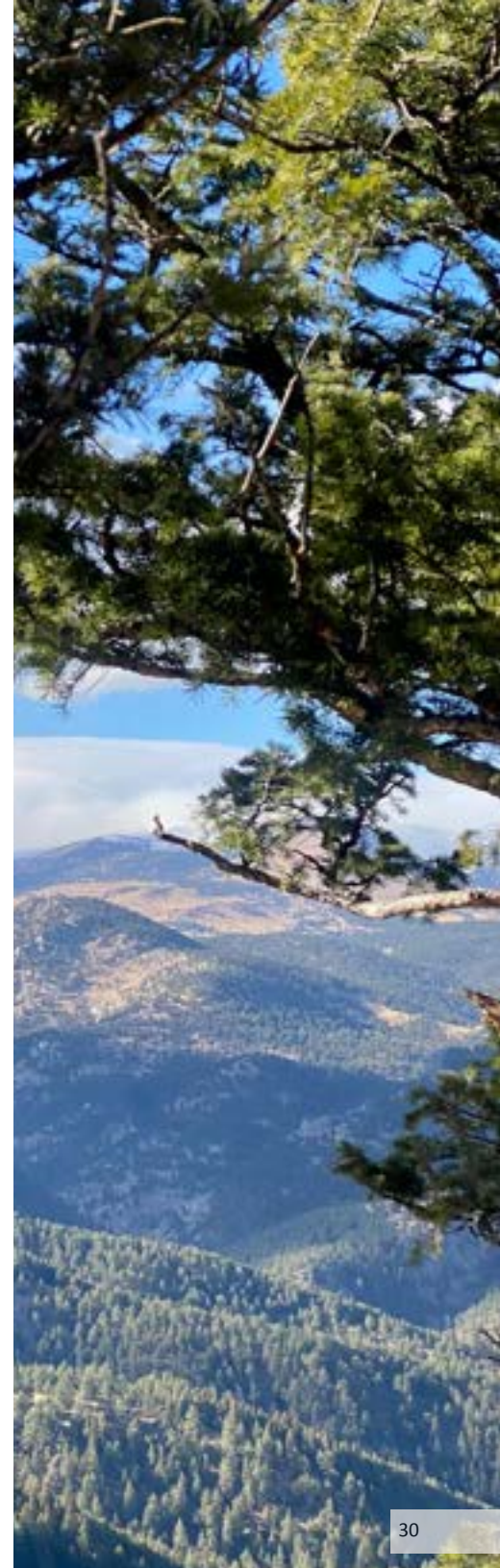
Programs must address at least one of the following issues: “the racial inequities young Coloradans face in accessing the outdoors, improving environmental justice, accessibility to the outdoors for Colorado youth from historically excluded communities, including black, Indigenous, and youth of color, LGBTQIA2S+ youth, youth with disabilities, immigrant and refugee youth, and low-income youth; providing environmental, experiential, outdoor, or stewardship and conservation education.”

Programs must address at least one of the following issues: “the racial inequities young Coloradans face in accessing the outdoors, improving environmental justice, accessibility to the outdoors for Colorado youth from historically excluded communities including black, Indigenous, and youth of color, LGBTQIA2S+ youth, youth with disabilities, immigrant and refugee youth, and low-income youth; providing environmental, experiential, outdoor, or stewardship and conservation education.”

The program addresses and targets the sensitive topic of equity, and an Outdoor Equity Board was developed to award funding and govern the grant program. The board has specific term limits, and most of the positions must have experience with racial justice issues, conservation issues, environmental justice issues, providing outdoor education programs, and disability-accessible outdoor programming. The board announced \$1.8 million in grant awards in June of 2022, with additional funding from GOCO and CPW increasing the investment from \$550,000 during the first year.

Subsequent years will see an increase in funding for the Outdoor Equity Grant, with the board distributing \$1.5 million in the fiscal year (FY) 2023 and \$2.25 million for the year following. As the program grows with the lottery, OEGP will eventually distribute up to \$3 million annually. This level of funding increases the likelihood of success for both the organization that receives funding and improves access for historically excluded communities in Colorado.

The grant runs on two cycles, one during the spring and one during the fall, and has no restrictions on organizations applying yearly for the program. While any individual organization may receive a total of \$250,000, the FAQs for the program state that a varied selection of organizations is more akin to the overall goals of the grant. Awarded grantees in the first round ranged from \$4,000-\$150,000. After the calendar year 2022, there will only be one grant cycle per year in the fall.



COLORADO STATE PROGRAMS

Colorado State Outdoor Recreation Grant

The Colorado Office of Economic Development & International Trade houses the Colorado Outdoor Recreation Industry Office (OREC). OREC's main purpose is to connect all different facets of life in Colorado to the great outdoors on a state level, focusing mainly on industry, communities, and people.

OREC opened the Colorado State Outdoor Recreation Grant on June 1, 2022, with eligibility for government bodies, nonprofits, colleges, universities, economic development organizations, and Indian Tribes. Four million dollars was made available through the American Rescue Plan Act from the Economic Development Administration on the federal level. The funding level per project depends on scope and infrastructure; infrastructure projects are awarded between \$100,000 and \$1 million, with all other projects receiving between \$10,000 and \$100,000.

Preference is given to applicants who are "located in rural areas, are women, veteran and/or minority-owned, and meet additional criteria." (Colorado State Outdoor Recreation Grant, n.d). There is clear language in the Colorado State Outdoor Recreation Grant about eligibility being tied to the growth of OREC goals such as "human-land interaction for recreational benefits OR economic development or marketing activities intended to support the outdoor recreation industry." (Colorado State Outdoor Recreation Grant, n.d). In addition, equity and conservation are considered funding priorities. Under these criteria, 10 organizations received funding through Round One of the 2022 grant (Boosting Colorado, 2022).

Any project that could contribute to the growth of Colorado's outdoor recreation industry is eligible for grant funding. This grant focuses on the development style of strong community-level support and prioritizes projects focused on recreation in a natural environment. In addition, equity and conservation are considered funding priorities, and OREC partners with the Outdoor Equity Grant and Great Outdoors Colorado.

Get Outdoors Colorado

Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) is an outdoor education and competitive grant provider organization funded by the Colorado State Lottery to focus on: resource conservation, outdoor stewardship, community vitality, equitable access, and youth connections. GOCO is a unique political sub-division of the state with an individual board appointed by the governor while still being funded by lottery proceeds. GOCO has a specific



COLORADO STATE PROGRAMS

equity commitment listed to address disproportionate access to the outdoors for communities of color and Indigenous peoples to help guide their grant funding and partner and community engagement. Their commitment is based on four key ideas: Accessibility, a Community-Centered Approach, Education and Support, and Communications.

Established in 1992, GOCO was approved by the Great Outdoors Colorado constitutional amendment, which directs 50 percent of Colorado Lottery proceeds to GOGO. GOCO is constitutionally capped based on lottery revenues and has an annual increase that reflects economic adjustment. The FY23 budget is roughly \$75 million, including their organization administration, Colorado Parks and Wildlife investment, and competitive grant programs (Annual Report, 2021). This funds GOCO's grants and programs, including the Community Impact Grant and Generation Wild, a grant program and communications campaign focused on youth engagement and equity components.

The Community Impact Grant builds on GOCO's equity commitment and overall organization values by requiring applying projects to encompass one or more of GOCO's core values. Projects must focus on providing people and communities greater access to the outdoors, and project grants can range between \$100,000-\$1,000,000. GOCO does not require matching grant funds for this program but does encourage the grantee to use the funds as a matching goal for fundraising efforts. In addition, the state constitution outlines eligible organizations to receive GOCO funding.

Generation Wild

In response to an understanding of barriers to the outdoors for kids and families in Colorado, Generation Wild (GW) started in 2015 as part of GOCO's strategic plan. In the same year, 22 planning grants ranging from \$50,000-75,000 were awarded to local municipalities to develop strategies to increase outdoor access through programming and recreational opportunities. While there was flexibility for the use of the funds at the local level, municipal applicants were asked to consider how to provide a continuum of programs to accommodate varying interests and skill development, pathway opportunities for employment in the outdoor recreation industry, and educational opportunities for local schools. Of these 22 applicants, 15 were funded for implementation over three to four years and became the first GW community partners. The financial support allows the coalitions to work toward making the outdoors welcoming and accessible to



COLORADO STATE PROGRAMS

those who have been historically prevented and underrepresented in nature-based experiences. Equipped with financial resources from GOCO designated by the Colorado Lottery, each partner supports the work of 10 to 15 local community-driven groups. The constitutional amendment mandates a required match, but there is no specific mandate for the amount. GW recognized the difficulties in providing matching funds for communities due to the pandemic and updated the 2020 Strategic Plan to accommodate limited resource availability, loosening the previous requirements of a 25 percent match of 10 percent cash and 15 percent in-kind donation.

GW supports diverse and community-based coalitions of local governments, schools, nonprofits, and health-based organizations. It allows its partners to focus on youth needs to create unique and tailored programming to encourage outdoor engagement and a connection with nature. Depending on the funded region and available experiences, youth and their families can engage in summer camps, after-school programs, and overnight excursions designed to break down barriers to the outdoors. According to GOCO's 2020 Strategic Plan, in which GW adheres to the principles, the programming is committed to advancing equity and limiting barriers to funding to allow for more diverse involvement in outdoor activities.

GOCO has invested \$40.4 million in GW, reaching more than 40,000 Colorado youth through 2,140 unique and regionally relevant opportunities. In the 2021 fiscal year, 12 previously-funded GW communities received \$17.4 million to reinvest in the growing coalitions in their regions. The funded communities continue to identify and work to solve specific barriers to the outdoors. They have created gear libraries to eliminate the financial burden of acquiring the appropriate equipment, developed messaging to easy outdoor activity ideas for caregivers with limited time, and provided bilingual weekend family camps to engage residents who do not speak English. The current funding allocation is set through 2024 and 2025.

Spotlight Program: Diversify Whitewater

<https://diversifywhitewater.org/>

Diversify Whitewater received \$4,000 from the Outdoor Equity Grant to help support the organization's mission to provide free-of-charge paddling events. The organization works to "promote Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in paddlesports by removing the barriers that may exist for Black, Indigenous, People of Color



COLORADO STATE PROGRAMS

(BIPOC) and Allies in kayaking, canoeing, rafting, and stand-up paddling" (Our Mission, n.d). Diversify Whitewater is committed to expanding DEI opportunities in paddlesports by creating a safe and welcoming space for new participants. The organization teaches the importance of sustainable outdoor practices and prioritizes responsible recreation on Indigenous land. Including these practices helps build a greater BIPOC community in paddlesports and creates a foundation for these skills to be passed down to the next generation of incoming recreators.

Diversify Whitewater hosts two different no-cost paddling events to lower barriers to entry in paddlesports: Community River Floats and Paddling Skills Days. The Community River Float provides guided Whitewater rafting trips to experience "the beauty of rivers with participants" (Our Mission, n.d). Paddling Skills Day events teach participants the technical skills of whitewater rafting. These events teach newcomers how to "paddle and navigate different types of boats on calm water, empowering participants to continue paddling on their own" (Our Mission, n.d). The organization, supported by donors and volunteers, connects with these communities by focusing on events in close-to-urban areas, mitigating transportation issues as much as possible. Through its partners' support, Diversify Whitewater provides paddling and other outdoor gear for its participants to continue recreating without guidance. In addition to these events, Diversify Whitewater also partners with other non-profits as sponsors and has scholarships for festival participation and paddling instruction.





COLORADO RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Partners in the Outdoors grant offers an innovative application process requiring applicants to adhere to SCORP guidelines for approval. This program’s application guidelines reference the SCORP’s mission as its main criteria for application validity. This grant builds upon Colorado’s SCORP by using it as a resource to continue the recreation standards the state has set. The Partners in the Outdoors Grant is an example of how to further use a SCORP as a foundation for outdoor recreation efforts.
- The Outdoor Equity Grant Program centers equity in the application language and appeals to a large base of potential applicants. The grant focuses on lowering barriers to entry for youth and promotes increased diversity in outdoor recreation participation, providing guidance for other grant programs to emulate. The Outdoor Equity Board provides a reliable method to ensure a wide selection of programs receives funding by including a diverse board of members. The Outdoor Equity Grant’s recipient list for 2022 reflects the success of included equity components with 40 awardees, including universities, libraries, all-black recreation groups, community centers, and urban youth engagement groups. Colorado could benefit by implementing a similar board to all programming to address equity issues.



COLORADO RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Colorado State Outdoor Recreation Grant is new but provides a blueprint for larger programs that are eligible to receive funding for outdoor recreation. The two tiers of application rules and funds provide more diverse organizations to apply, further lowering barriers to entry to outdoor education funding. The Recreation Grant provides another best practice for using an Outdoor Recreation Office by focusing on expansive criteria with the connection between recreationists and the land they use.
- A single state-based program will not necessarily address all aspects of access and reach every community; thus, a network of programs designed with programmatic limitations and specialization in mind can appeal to a greater user base. Colorado is an example of this type of network of outdoor recreation programs, as the specialized programs complement other opportunities in the state. However, the strength of Colorado's network is hindered by a lack of cross-department advertising. Despite the complementary nature of the state programs, they can be difficult to navigate and understand for the applicant. Collaborative advertising across projects will ensure that applicants do not miss finding similar grants, further lowering barriers to receiving funding. This will continue to diversify applicants leading to a wider and more varied amount of funded projects.



COLORADO RECOMMENDATIONS

- Many Colorado programs have matching fund requirements as a legally-binding obligation. The effects of these additional financial barriers should be mitigated when and where possible. When financial matching is constitutionally mandated, programs should address whether the specified amount hinders participation. Organizations may be discouraged from applying due to these requirements and, as a result, may not obtain the needed funding to benefit youth outdoor education. Grant opportunities would benefit from implementing a sliding-scale method to alleviate large financial obligations for programs that can not meet matching requirements. A sliding-scale method would allow programs to match funding within their means rather than adhere to a set value that does not address the financial capabilities of applicants. Generation Wild has a state constitutional requirement to have matching funds but recognizes this barrier and has been reevaluating the matching requirement for its grant program. Allowing for a needs-based sliding scale for required matching when feasible is an equitable strategy to allow for more diverse participation in grant applications.

IDAHO



Student-aged Population:
22% under 18 years of age

Socioeconomic Breakdown:
10.1% persons in poverty

**Land Owned by Federal Agencies,
States, and Municipalities:**
67.8%

*Citations included in References



IDAHO

STATE OVERVIEW

There are 25 state parks in Idaho, and the six national parks offer reserves, historic sites, monuments, recreation areas, archaeological sites, volcanic preserves, and nature preserves. With 18 ski resorts, more than 2,000 lakes, and 93,000 miles of rivers and streams, Idaho has year-round recreation opportunities (Idaho Water Facts, n.d.). The outdoor economy is a significant contributor to Idaho's local economy, and the state is experiencing a rapid increase in population. Sixty-two percent of the state's lands are public, with a total of 53.4 million acres available, with the majority managed by the Forest Service and BLM (Idaho's Public Lands, n.d). The Forest Service manages 38.2 percent of the land, the BLM manages 22 percent, the NPS manages one percent, 5.1 percent is state-owned, 3.3 percent is tribal-owned, and the remainder of all other lands is private for the remaining 28.9 percent of all land in Idaho (Public Land Ownership in the United States, n.d). Eighty-one percent of the population identifies as white, with the remaining state breakdown as 0.9 percent black, 1.7 percent American Indian or Indigenous, 1.6 percent Asian, 13.3 percent Hispanic, and 0.2 percent Native Hawaiian (Idaho Census QuickFacts [Census], 2021). The state has seen one of the largest population growth in the US since 2010, second only to Utah, with an increase of 17.3 percent, exceeding the national average of 7.4 percent (Idaho Draft Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan [SCORP], 2022). Of the 1.8 million residents, 25 percent are 18 years of age or younger, and 10.1 percent are people in poverty (Census, 2021). This high increase, coupled with a large youth population in the state, demonstrates a pressing priority for outdoor recreation needs. Outdoor recreation contributes \$2.2 billion annually (SCORP, 2022). Just over 42 percent of residents recreate multiple times a week, ranking Idaho as the third in the nation for outdoor recreation participation, only behind Alaska and Montana (SCORP, 2022).

IDAHO

STATE PROGRAMS

Department/Division	Program	Website
Idaho Parks and Recreation	Be Outside Idaho	www.parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/idaho-recreation-and-tourism-initiative/grants/
Idaho Fish and Game	Community Fishing Trailers	www.idfg.idaho.gov/fish/trailers



Research

Information for all programs was acquired through desktop research or informational interviews via email.

Contributors

- **Be Outside Idaho**
 - Email interview: Victoria Runnoe
 - Program review: Victoria Runnoe



IDAHO STATE PROGRAMS

Be Outside Idaho

Sponsored by the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, the Be Outside Idaho Grant (BOI) is an Idaho Recreation and Tourism Initiative (IRTI) project. The grant focuses on smaller projects, as only \$12,000 is allocated to the program annually. Funded projects receive \$300-\$2,500. A total of ten projects were funded during the 2022 cycle. BOI is supported by IRTI's partners, who provide the majority of the grant funding; this year's funds were provided by BLM, US Forest Service, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, and others. BOI's project criteria are relatively short but quite important in the amount of liberty it gives to potential projects. BOI's main goal is to get more youth outdoors and to teach them about "the importance of the natural world." IRTI supports new efforts to increase outdoor access for youth as well as exhibiting opportunities and offers the BOI grant as support for these opportunities. The program has successfully supported its applicants, and funds from BOI have gone to various youth outdoor education experiences. While only having access to roughly \$12,000 a year, there were more than \$85,000 in requests for 2022, displaying a clear and desperate need for more funds and grants like BOI in the state.

Community Fishing and Fishing Trailers

Fishing is one of the most popular outdoor activities in the state, with access to 26,000 miles of streams and more than 3,000 natural lakes to take advantage of (Fishing, n.d). To lower the barriers to entry, the Department of Fish and Game Department hosts multiple different events and advertises different areas where fishing is catered toward a family day out. These "Family Fishing Areas" include seven different areas where access is relatively easy, and there is a higher chance of catching fish. In addition to these areas, the state hosts a "Free Fishing Day" in specific areas where volunteers are available to help first-time fishers learn the activity's basics. The program provides participants with loaner fishing gear, and necessary fishing licenses are waived during events (Free Fishing Day, n.d). The department manages "Take Me Fishing" trailers that travel to six regions throughout the state, providing full fishing gear, equipment, and information for first-time fishers. These trailers serve as mobile fishing gear libraries and allow families to participate without personally acquiring the necessary equipment (Take Me Fishing, n.d).





IDAHO RECOMMENDATIONS

- The demand for funding from Be Outside Idaho proves a need for increased state programs and outdoor recreation funding. As there is a major gap in supply and demand, Idaho would benefit greatly from additional funding for programs like BOI and creating more programs that address education for next-generation enthusiasts.
- BOI is an excellent example of structuring grant criteria to benefit communities with lower levels of resources, as they are both user-accessible and community-based. BOI's application guidelines offer more opportunities to historically excluded communities. Increased funding for programs like BOI and more programs, in general, is necessary for Idaho to create stronger foundations for next-generation outdoor participants.
- The Free Fishing Day and Fishing trailers offer a unique and mobile recreation opportunity. Although other states have a Free Fishing Day, the inclusion of the trailers provides an innovative idea of including more youth in fishing by bringing resources to them. The fishing trailers represent a larger recommendation for Idaho to incorporate more gear libraries into other outdoor recreation activities. Gear libraries offer short-term solutions to lowering the financial barriers of entry to gear ownership seen in the outdoor recreation economy. Idaho should increase the number of trailers across other outdoor recreation activities of their departments to both diversify participation and expand outdoor recreation accessibility.

MONTANA



Student-aged Population:
26.6% under 18 years of age

Socioeconomic Breakdown:
11.9% persons in poverty

**Land Owned by Federal Agencies,
States, and Municipalities:**
35.5%

*Citations included in References



MONTANA

STATE OVERVIEW

Montana's access to public lands looks different from many western states, given that nearly 65 percent of the land is privately owned, and the state has one of the highest rates of inaccessible public lands at just under 30 percent (Legislative Snapshot, 2022) (Brown, 2019). Despite the access limitations from land designation, Montana still has three publicly accessible scenic rivers (including the free-flowing Yellowstone River), 16 designated wilderness areas, 10 national forests, nine national parks, 55 state parks, and a plethora of municipal county parks and lands in which residents can experience the outdoors (Keillor et al., 2022). According to the 2020 Census, nearly 89 percent of residents identify as White alone, 0.6 percent as Black or African American, 6.6 percent as American Indian or Alaskan Native, one percent as Asian, and 4.3 percent as Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Nevada, 2021). Montana has numerous options for state-funded and facilitated outdoor recreation through the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, and residents enjoy free access to state parks with a Montana license plate.

Some of the expressed primary goals in the 2020-2024 SCORP, written with contributions from Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, and the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, promote accessibility of outdoor educational and recreational opportunities and ease access to outdoor recreation grants (Keillor et al., 2022). According to the SCORP, the Montana government and residents recognize a link between time spent outdoors and quality of life. They envision a state that enables recreational opportunities for all residents regardless of socioeconomic status. The 2014-2018 SCORP recognizes that youth interest in traditional outdoor recreation is declining, and developing programs to alter the trend was an identified agency focus (Creating a Vibrant Future for Montana's Outdoor Recreation Heritage, 2014). In Montana, access to outdoor activities is considered a hallmark of the state's legacy. It is as much about the experiences and engagement in the natural environment as it is about the activity itself (Keillor et al., 2022). In 2020, the outdoor recreation industry created 26,169 state jobs and contributed \$2.2 (4.3 percent) billion to the state GDP (2020 Montana, 2020).

MONTANA

STATE PROGRAMS

Department/Division	Program	Website
Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks	Montana Wild Transportation and Lodging Grants	www.fwp.mt.gov/education/montana-wild
Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks	Becoming an Outdoors Woman	www.fwp.mt.gov/education/becoming-an-outdoors-woman
Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks	Hooked on Fishing	www.fwp.mt.gov/fish/kids/hooked-on-fishing
Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks	Montana AmeriCorps	www.fwp.mt.gov/stateparks/ameriCorps
Department of Natural Resources and Conservation	Conservation Grants	www.dnrc.mt.gov/grants-and-loans
Formerly housed in The Montana Department of Commerce	Montana Office of Outdoor Recreation	N/A



Research

Information for all programs was acquired through desktop research and informational interviews via email.

Contributors

- **Montana Wild Transportation and Lodging Grants**
 - Email interview: Corie Rice
 - Program review: Corie Rice
- **Becoming an Outdoors Woman**
 - Email interview: Sara Smith
 - Program review: Wayde Cooperider
- **Hooked on Fishing**
 - Email interview: Jessi Gudgel
 - Phone interview: Dave Hagenruber
 - Program review: Dave Hagenruber, Jessi Gudgel
- **Montana AmeriCorps**
 - Phone interview: Seth Shteir
- **Conservation Grants**
 - Email interview: Stephanie Criswell



MONTANA STATE PROGRAMS

Montana Wild Transportation and Lodging Grants

Housed within the Department of Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFWP), Montana Wild (MW) is funded through hunting and fishing licenses, then appropriated by the state legislature. Located in Spring Meadow Lake State Park near Helena, MW offers free programming to the public to explore educational displays, native fish aquariums, and wildlife mounts. Schools and youth groups in 4th through 12th grade may also participate in free field trips offering conservation education programs.

To help facilitate “outlying” schools participating at MW, small transportation and lodging grants program approved by the legislature became available in 2013 for field trips through “The Montana Wild Transportation and Lodging Grant.” The grants exist to include statewide Montana youth and take the undue financial burden off of schools unable to afford to access the conservation and recreation education programs without financial assistance. With an annual budget of \$25,000, schools located at least 50 miles from MW are eligible to receive up to \$2,500 for the cost of transportation, and schools more than 150 miles away are eligible for reimbursement for transportation and overnight accommodations.

Typically, around twenty schools apply annually, and all applicants are reimbursed for the travel expenses. When the demand exceeds the supply, the selection is based on distance, school enrollment, percentage of the school’s population visiting, and whether the school has applied for the grant in the last two years. Schools using the grant range from urban schools with 300 plus students to extremely rural schools with 20 students. The grants are advertised to Montana school principals and superintendents at conferences attended by MW, and included in the Office of Public Instruction’s newsletter.

Becoming an Outdoors Woman

Established in 1995, MFWP’s Becoming an Outdoors Woman (BOW) introduces women to the outdoors through programming, including fishing, hunting, orienteering, and kayaking. Scholarships to cover summer BOW weekends are offered to full-time female Montana residents the first time they participate. By providing the funds to cover first-time participation, the program strives to make outdoor experiences more accessible to those who may not otherwise be able to afford the full registration fee. The available scholarships cover \$100 of the registration cost, and there are an average of three to four requests per year out of the 300 or so women who participate. Funding is available through the state budget delegated to MFWP, and the program is advertised on the department website.



MONTANA STATE PROGRAMS

Hooked on Fishing

Transformed from the national Future Fisherman Foundation program started in 1996, Montana has tailored the Hooked on Fishing (HOF) program to fit the needs of its residents. An Aquatic Education program housed in the Communication Education Division of Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Department, HOF is funded by a federal grant through The Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act of 1950 and partially matched by state funds. HOF educates participating students on water, fish, and fisheries management and nourishes an interest in lifelong outdoor angling. The multi-lesson approach allows students to build relationships with their instructors, develop a more in-depth interest in the topic, and foster development, resulting in some students becoming teachers in the field. HOF provides educational material, expert training, and fishing equipment. Program participation varies regionally throughout the state, reaching approximately 225 classrooms in 100 different schools in six of the seven districts in Montana in both rural and highly populated areas depending on the school district. The program relies heavily on word of mouth from participating educators; details are listed on the department webpage.

Montana AmeriCorps

Part of a national, state and local network of AmeriCorp opportunities focused on service and volunteering, Montana AmeriCorp began in 2012 and offers 13 geographically diverse programs for outdoor educational experiences across Montana, turning the participating state parks into classrooms. Motor vehicle license fees fund roughly 50 percent of the program through Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks by the Montana State Parks and Recreation Board. The Corporation for National and Community Service funds the remaining 50 percent, primarily for member living allowances. Education and Interpretation is one of the four main goals of Montana AmeriCorps, and the programming available to the public is tailored to fit the unique needs of the geographic region. State parks designed for recreation focus on recreational activities, natural parks offer experiences with nature, and there are opportunities to learn about Montana's heritage, paleontology, and the indigenous significance of the region. The experiences vary depending on location and the expertise and passions of AmeriCorp members and are typically free to the public, aside from some large events that require additional resources. Entrance into the state parks where the programming is held is free to Montana residents with Montana plates. The opportunities are advertised through the state park's social media pages, paper flyers, email blasts, and press releases.



MONTANA STATE PROGRAMS

Conservation Grants

Three grant opportunities are housed in the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and are available for funding projects that foster a connection to the outdoors through education. Conservation District Project Grants (formerly known as HB223) and the Education Mini-Grants are available only for Conservation Districts (CD). The CDs are typically located in rural locations, providing funding for projects in more remote parts of Montana. The Conservation Education Mini-Grant is available to nonprofits, county or municipal governments, community groups, educational institutions, educators, or individuals.

The Conservation District Project Grants can be used for “conservation education and information” projects, including ongoing programming, field trips, and in-classroom instruction. Part of the criteria for application includes demonstrating a public benefit, filling an immediate need that fits the program's needs, impacts a large number of people, and producing long-term benefits. There is no mention of equitable consideration in the criteria; however, the guideline explicitly states, “applications will not be denied because of race, color, religious creed, political ideas, sex, age, marital status, physical or mental handicap, natural origin or ancestry.” The application cycle is bi-annual with a \$20,000 per grant limit, and there is no limit to how many times a CD can apply for a grant. Funding is also available for other conservation needs and is not exclusively for educational purposes or outdoor recreation connections.

The Education Mini-Grant provides funding for CD recipients to develop or maintain student and adult education projects focusing on water, weeds, and other natural resources. Schools and other organizations are eligible to receive the grant if approved and sponsored by a CD. Programming can include outdoor classrooms and field trips, and workshops for adults or youth. Funding can go toward educational supplies, transportation costs for field trips, and resource materials. There is no mention of equity in the listed criteria for recipients. The grant cycle is open year-round and has a grant limit of \$500. The Conservation Education Grant Program (CEG) provides funds for forestry and natural resource education programming assistance and outreach efforts to pre-K through 12th graders and educators in both classroom and informal outdoor settings. Recipients must either provide meaningful natural resource education to youth or improve the ability to deliver quality educational experiences; there is no specific mention of equity in the stated criteria. Travel expenses, activity, and event costs are eligible for funding. Up to \$3,000 is awarded per project, and applications are accepted year-round. Funding is derived from the U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, and is allocated through the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Forestry Division.



MONTANA STATE PROGRAMS

Montana Office of Outdoor Recreation

Created by Executive Order in the fall of 2017 by former Governor Steve Bullock, the Montana Office of Outdoor Recreation (OOR) is currently a not funded or staffed office that was created to connect outdoor recreation organizations in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors. The 2020-2024 Montana SCORP recommended additional funding and staffing to grow OOR and assist in outdoor recreation planning efforts. The SCORP describes a need to eliminate the challenges surrounding grant funding for outdoor recreation-related projects. There are no plans in place to accomplish these goals and revitalize the office.



Spotlight Program: Here Montana

(<https://www.heremontana.org/>)

Housed under Missoula's Department of Parks and Recreation from 2019 until May of 2022, Here Montana (Here MT) is currently an independent, participant-led BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) Community recreation program that works to increase and improve access and participation in the outdoors. Here MT works to increase the representation of the BIPOC Community in outdoor recreation to share the positive effects of time spent outdoors. They provide a built-in community for participation, education, and tips on how to recreate safely and where to obtain gear. Open to ages 14+ (with permission from a parent or guardian if under 18), events include regular backpacking, rafting, skiing, and climbing activities. Here MT removes barriers to outdoor involvement for historically excluded communities by providing access to outdoor gear, expertise from certified industry professionals, ongoing engagement, and additional resources for participation. Funded by Empower Montana, Here MT creates a safe space for the BIPOC Community in the outdoors, empowers and elevates their voices, and develops leaders within the greater community.





MONTANA RECOMMENDATIONS

- The cost of transportation limits the accessibility to programs. The Montana Wild Transportation and Lodging Grants provide an opportunity to reduce the financial burden for socioeconomically disadvantaged youth. To reach more underserved youth, the criteria for funding should be based on need rather than distance. A low-income school nearby should qualify over a well-funded school 150 miles away. By changing the criteria for funding to prioritize needs rather than distance, communities burdened by financial restraints will have increased opportunities to participate regardless of physical distance from a program.
- Hooked on Fishing provides continued engagement over the school year, allowing the possibility for kids to develop a deeper understanding and interest in the environment and outdoor participation. By creating pathways across other programming for more than one-off interactions, relationships with the natural environment and interest will potentially lead to further and widened exploration.
- Becoming an Outdoors Woman is an example of a program targeting and engaging specific potential recreators. Creating a welcoming and intentionally-tailored program experience designed to fit specific demographics and identities will help eliminate the hurdles for first-time engagements. Relatable representation within a program can encourage new participants and reduce reasons to avoid engagement.



MONTANA RECOMMENDATIONS

- Program effectiveness works only if the general public is aware of its opportunities and benefits. Increased marketing and community outreach to inform the public of the suite of programs in Montana will diversify and increase participation. Relying on word-of-mouth communication excludes populations of nontraditional recreators and diminishes the likelihood of increasing engagement.
- Understanding how Here Montana works and how the principles and practices can expand to a state-wide level will help remove barriers to outdoor recreation. Intentionally providing access to gear, expertise from certified industry professionals, ongoing engagement, and additional resources for participation will eliminate the financial burdens associated with many forms of recreation. Sustained funding of programs such as Here Montana will allow groups that understand a local community's needs to provide access and address and dismantle specific regional barriers.



NEVADA



Student-aged Population:
27.9% under 18 years of age

Socioeconomic Breakdown:
14.1% persons in poverty

**Land Owned by Federal Agencies,
States, and Municipalities:**
84.6%

*Citations included in References



NEVADA

STATE OVERVIEW

Nevada has the highest percentage of public lands in the continental United States at 85 percent. The ample land available combined with the low population density translates to a high level of public access and opportunity to recreate (Policy and Program Report, 2016). However, Nevada is one of the fastest-growing states, and the availability of resources limits the expansion of outdoor recreation and education opportunities. The government is taking action through the 2022 creation of the Nevada Agreement for Recreation Shared Stewardship, a partnership aimed at increasing state-agency collaboration to maintain outdoor access in a changing landscape (Delaney, 2022).

Participation in outdoor recreation is considered a quality-of-life indicator among residents. The state is home to six million acres of natural forest lands, 4,059 miles of trails, four national parks, 27 state parks, 200 lakes and water reservoirs, including Lake Tahoe, 600 rivers and streams, 83 beaches, 4,185 campsites, 300 natural hot springs, and three national monuments. The Nevada Division of State Parks reports about 57 percent of the population engages in some form of outdoor recreation annually (Nevada, n.d.) According to the 2022-2026 SCORP, outdoor recreation participation within the state has increased in recent years, primarily due to increasing awareness of the accessibility to scenic areas and diverse landscapes (Nevada Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2022). The SCORP also recognizes outdoor recreation as a basic human right and equates the opportunity to experience the outdoors as a necessity akin to “public schools, clean water, and affordable housing” (Nevada SCORP, 2022). Additionally, there is a strong desire to grow public participation in outdoor activities, particularly among an increasingly diverse population, and recreational planning and initiatives are a top priority. The SCORP prioritizes increasing youth participation in outdoor recreation, partially through meeting the needs of underserved geographic areas and populations so they can equitably share in the benefits of time spent in nature. While not the top priority for surveyed land managers, issues surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion are recognized as important components to consider when planning and developing outdoor experiences. The SCORP implementation matrix recognizes the need to provide and promote programming targeting increased recreation participation for residents who do not engage in outdoor experiences. The creation of the Nevada Division of Outdoor Recreation (page 58) from inspiration from the Confluence of States demonstrates the growing understanding and need within the state to educate and engage youth in outdoor recreation activities, particularly in underserved communities.

NEVADA

STATE PROGRAMS

State Department	Program	Website
Nevada Division of Outdoor Recreation	Outdoor Education and Recreation Grant Program	www.dcnr.nv.gov/divisions-boards/ndor
Nevada State Parks	Programs and Events	www.parks.nv.gov/learn
The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection	Grant Opportunities	www.ndep.nv.gov
Nevada Department of Natural Resources - Nevada Division of Forestry	Conservation Education and Outreach Program	www.forestry.nv.gov/conservation-education-outreach-grant
Nevada Division of Conservation Education	Programs and Recreational Opportunities	www.ndow.org/learn-discover/outdoor-education/



Research

Information for all programs was acquired through desktop research and informational interviews via email.

Contributors

- **Outdoor Education and Recreation Grant Program**
 - Phone interview: Colin Robertson
 - Program review: Matthew D. McDaniel
- **Nevada State Parks: Programs and Events**
 - Email interview: Kristin Sanderson
 - Program review: Kristin Sanderson
- **The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection: Grant Opportunities**
 - Zoom interview: Chuck Schembre
 - Program review: Chuck Schembre
- **Nevada Division of Forestry: Conservation Education and Outreach Program**
 - Email interview: Cayenne Engel
 - Program review: Cayenne Engel
- **Nevada Division of Conservation Education: Programs and Recreational Opportunities**
 - Zoom interview: Julie Bless, Aaron Keller
- **Get Outdoors Nevada (spotlight program)**
 - Zoom interview: Rachel Bergren
 - Program review: Rachel Bergren



NEVADA STATE PROGRAMS

The Nevada Outdoor Education and Recreation Grant Program

The 2019 biennial Nevada legislative session created the Nevada Division of Outdoor Recreation (NDOR) through AB486 in the State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Designed with input from a 13-state technical survey to understand programs and funding mechanisms in similar state divisions, NDOR aims to accomplish the following:

- Develop the outdoor recreation economy;
- Preserve natural resources;
- Promote the benefits of outdoor recreation through engagement with diverse communities;
- Educate and engage Nevada's youth in outdoor recreation; and
- Engage underserved populations to ensure equitable access to the outdoors.

The 2019 legislative session also created The Nevada Outdoor Education and Recreation Grant Program, initially located in the Division of State Parks. The Grant moved to NDOR in 2021 as the program goals surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion aligned more with the education priorities of NDOR and the common principles of the Confluence of States. The Division website explicitly expresses a commitment to advancing outdoor recreation opportunities by educating and engaging Nevada's youth in outdoor activities, specifically underserved populations, to grant access to outdoor recreation to all Nevadans. The Grant Program aims to support organizations providing outdoor education and recreation opportunities to Nevadans, prioritizing programs serving low-income or at-risk students. A request for funding from the general fund will be submitted during the budget cycle in the fall of 2022, as it was not in tandem with the initial passing. As a result, implementation of the program will not occur until 2023 at the earliest.

Nevada State Parks

The Nevada State Parks Division in the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources offers public events and programs within state parks to engage residents in interactive outdoor experiences and education. While there are fees to enter the park, the majority of the offerings are at little to no cost to the public. The park-sponsored programs and events are designed for mixed-age audiences with varying levels of experience in the outdoors. Specific programming such as bird watching and family campouts targets an inexperienced audience and allows an opportunity for those not ready to commit to buying equipment and planning an excursion. Parks equipped to fund and staff these experiences teach Leave No Trace ethics, provide all the equipment and supplies, guidance and instruction for setting up tents, building and starting a fire, campfire cooking, outdoor safety, and preparedness. Revenue from the park's



NEVADA STATE PROGRAMS

gift shops within the visitor centers and park offices contribute to the general interpretive supplies account to which all the parks have access and can only be used for educational and interpretive purposes pending the agency Administrator and Administrative Services Officer. Donations also help fund the interpreter's account and can be used for day-to-day educational experiences and recreational programming.

There are eight state park interpreters that plan, schedule, and implement park-sponsored opportunities of varying scale in their designated park units. For park units without interpreters, other agency employees, including supervisors, non-commissioned park rangers, and conservation staff specialists, provide the public programming and events, often on a less regular basis. Frequency and seasonal availability depend on the weather, environmental conditions, staffing availability, visitation patterns, and capacity limitations due to requested field trips for special interest groups. Programs occur regularly (weekly, monthly, seasonally) and consist of educational, interpretive, and/or recreational opportunities available to the general public designed to enhance visitor understanding of the park's cultural, social, and natural history. Events occur less frequently (typically once a year) as they attract a larger crowd and require a bigger budget than the regular program schedule. Given the increased scale of the events compared to the programs, they divert the staff's time, resources, and energy and occur less frequently. Annual core public programs and events are offered consistently but are subject to change as knowledge of the park's resources increases and evolves. There is an effort to create a sense of community and cultural diversity in the planning process that is continuously developing. Participation in programming and events varies depending on geographic location and average annual attendance. Fort Churchill, one of the more underused and rural parks, averages 12-25 participants in offered programming, and roughly 100-150 people attend the events. Approximately 50 percent of attendees are return participants taking advantage of the seasonal programs and have made the larger events an annual tradition. As Fort Churchill is more rural, some of the youth visiting through field trips are experiencing the outdoors for the first time, lack an understanding of stewardship ethics, and experience discomfort interacting with natural elements. The Nevada State Park system includes rural and urban landscapes, offering resources and facilities for varying degrees of outdoor comfort. Press releases for programs and events are written by the park interpreters and submitted to the Nevada State Park's Education Information Officer, who disseminates the information through agency social media channels and media contacts. The information is made available to the public through local, online and print newspapers and magazines, local radio and television stations, other government agencies, and non-profit organizations.



NEVADA STATE PROGRAMS

Nevada State Parks offer additional programming to encourage discovery and exploration of the state parks and increase outdoor knowledge:

Annual Fee-Free Days are offered twice a year in June and September, waiving all visitation fees.

Starting in 2017, the 5th Grade Discovery Pass allows 5th-grade public school students to use free day passes throughout the duration of their school year, including family and friends arriving in the same vehicle. Passes are distributed to 5th-grade teachers throughout Nevada, who pass them on to their students. Charter schools, private schools, and homeschool groups can work with division offices in Carson City to receive passes.

The Nevada State Parks Passport Program offers an opportunity to obtain a free annual day pass to all of the Nevada State Parks by acquiring 15 stamps from 15 different Parks. The passport also serves as a travel aid and log for visitors to track their experiences.

Nevada Division of Environmental Protection

The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP), housed in the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, controls the 319(h) Nonpoint Source Grant Program that funds counties, conservation districts, higher education institutions, regional agencies, and nonprofit organizations in issues related to watersheds and nonpoint source (NPS) water pollution. The grants are eligible to go toward education and outreach efforts. The NDEP has provided funding to various projects to engage the public in outdoor activities and educational experiences involving reductions in NPS water pollution (Nonpoint Source Grant Program, n.d.). The funding originates from the US Environmental Protection under the federal Clean Water Act. There is no explicit equity language included on the NDEP website for grant recipients other than stating environmental education programming is intended for a “diverse audience of stakeholders” (SFY 2021 Annual Report, 2021). The Grant Funding Opportunity document that lists the criteria for application suggests the Environmental Education Outreach Proposals include the targeted audience in the request for proposal, but it is not required, and there is no explicit wording about criteria prioritizing underrepresented populations or expanding access to the funded programming (Nonpoint Source Grant Program, n.d.). Some of the recent educational and outdoor experiences designed to increase community interaction with watershed health and nonpoint source pollution are as follows:

Carson River Watershed Environmental Education Program

Awarded to River Wranglers to offer opportunities for local schools to expand their knowledge base of NSPS



NEVADA STATE PROGRAMS

through facilitating workshops, educational sessions, and field days in the Carson River watershed (SFY 2021 Annual Report, 2021).

Project WET and Discover a Watershed Development Workshops

Awarded to Get Outdoors Nevada, program funding went to hands-on professional and developmental workshops for southern Nevada educators to equip them to demonstrate the importance of Nevada's water resources (SFY 2021 Annual Report, 2021).

Valuing and Protecting our Tahoe Watershed

Awarded to the Great Basin Outdoor School, this program offers a four-day residential camp and field study for youth and adults to develop a more robust understanding of the natural world. The place-based education program allowed fifth and sixth-grade classes, high school and college students, and ecology teachers to learn at Camp Galilee in Lake Tahoe in the spring, fall, and winter and increase their commitment to sustainability and connection to the environment. The funding also went to hosting annual teacher training through Project WET, an educational program providing curriculum and lesson plans to teachers to educate their students about water. The trained teachers participated in the River School Farm Spring and Summer break adventure day camps that informed students about the Tahoe Watershed (SFY 2021 Annual Report, 2021).

Watershed Education Initiative

Awarded to Sierra Nevada Journeys (Bureau of Water Quality Planning, 2021), this program educated 4,493 K-8th grade students and 166 educators, increasing awareness of stewardship and NPS.

Truckee Meadows Nature Study Area, Phase I

Awarded to Truckee Meadows Parks Foundation, this project created an opportunity for educational and recreational activities in an outdoor learning laboratory. Five hundred community members participated in the event through educational events and volunteer activities (SFY 2021 Annual Report, 2021b).

Conservation Education and Outreach Program

The Nevada Division of Forestry (NDF) in the Nevada Department of Natural Resources offers grants from the Conservation Education and Outreach Program (CE). The US Forest Service funds around \$10,000 to \$12,000 annually to DOF, which then allocates it to CE. Recipients can be state and local agencies, tribes, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions, though non-profit entities are typically the grant recipients.

NEVADA STATE PROGRAMS

Funded programming includes outdoor or classroom-based workshops or classes that create education-driven experiences and activities focused on diverse age groups and populations. The application requires information on the purpose, objective, work plan, budget, and expected deliverables. Despite the intention to fund projects aimed at diversity, there are currently no specific criteria for reaching targeted and diverse age groups and populations. At publication, the criteria schema for selecting grant recipients is changing as NDF further expands and defines the program. The funding is available for current, new, or developing CE programming with a maximum allotment of \$10,000 per application. Recipients can apply again after funding has been exhausted, given a track record of perceived success by the NDF program staff. NDF has funded Sierra Nevada Journeys to implement outdoor classrooms and programming, Project Learning Tree to create curricula and provide workshops for teachers about implementing the curriculum through various lesson plans, and Get Outdoors Nevada to create wildlife habitats and implement varying volunteer opportunities and classroom programs. The solicitation of new partners to expand the pool of applicants and user benefits is currently underway.

Nevada Division of Conservation Education (NDOW)

The Nevada Division of Conservation Education is one of the seven divisions within The Nevada Division of Wildlife (NDOW). It offers and promotes free educational programming to residents, incorporating the outdoors as a natural classroom for students to experience the most accessible local outdoor recreation opportunities. Funding for all programming is provided annually from the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) Program through U.S. Fish and Wildlife to support state and local outdoor recreational opportunities. Programs include interactive experiences and education in hunting, fishing, boating, archery, and wildlife. The activities are free of cost unless specific licenses are necessary for participation. The offerings are viewed as a public service, and any nominal associated costs go to the expert instructors providing the experience. The outdoor clinics are offered throughout Nevada and are publicly advertised through social media channels, the NDOW website, and e-newsletters sent out multiple times throughout the year. NDOW goes into the classroom as well, offering hands-on activities for all grade levels through Project WILD educator workshops and Trout in the Classroom. These programs are advertised to district educators quarterly and train teachers to bring wildlife and conservation ideas into the classroom, providing them with resources and support to assist in administering the curriculum. Smaller grants are also occasionally available for “on-the-ground” community projects in line with NDOW’s mission to fund outdoor education, recreational boating,



NEVADA STATE PROGRAMS

and fishing education programs. Grant funding is made available through federal aid, state appropriations, assessment fees, sportsmen fees, boat registration, boat fuel taxes, and private donations (Grants Procedure Manual, 2017).

SPOTLIGHT PROGRAM: Get Outdoors Nevada

www.getoutdoorsnevada.org

Get Outdoors Nevada is a 501(c)(3) organization that started as Outside Las Vegas Foundation and expanded state-wide in 2018. While much of the work occurs in Southern Nevada, GON is consciously expanding to the entire state by creating and fostering new relationships with underserved populations, including launching a pilot project to engage youth in rural communities outside the original geographic scope. Formed initially from understanding the link between the quality of life and outdoor spaces, GON's ongoing mission is to connect people of different ages and backgrounds to Nevada's outdoor opportunities on federal and state land. Achieving this goal through education, service, and community involvement, many of the programs offered target families and school children who are considered at-risk or underserved and have limited access to the outdoors. One of the six core values is a dedication to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. Grant programs are targeted at reaching more rural areas of Nevada to provide transportation to in-field experiences to open up opportunities. The programming is systematically reviewed to identify inconsistencies, gaps, and biases to improve cultural competence in focusing on marginalized communities and their perspectives. A suite of nature-based activities and training are offered, including formal and informal classroom instruction, teacher training, and guided field trips. According to the 2021 Annual Report, GON reached 2,540 youth through 165 individual programs covering various outdoor-related topics. While GON does not collect demographic data of program participants, available data from the served schools and communities estimate that approximately 80-85 percent of the youth they reach are from underserved communities. GON receives funding from the federal government, The Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA), state resources, the Nevada Department of Wildlife, and private entities. Programming and microgrant availability is advertised through a built network of educators, multiple social media platforms, and newsletters. Cognizant of the resources necessary to successfully apply for funding, GON works to eliminate technical barriers for microgrants by providing assistance and direction to streamline the process and ease unnecessary hardships for applicants.





NEVADA RECOMMENDATIONS

- Program effectiveness works only if the general public is aware of its opportunities and benefits. Increased marketing and community outreach through various media platforms to inform the public of the suite of programs in Nevada will diversify and increase participation. Relying on word-of-mouth communication excludes populations of nontraditional recreators and diminishes the likelihood of increasing engagement.
- Simplifying and streamlining grant language and processes will increase accessibility and provide the public with easy-to-understand requirements that will entice them to apply for funding. Offering support for applicants will eliminate barriers for groups who lack experience obtaining funding, widening the ability of those who do not traditionally apply for grants. Eliminating bureaucratic red tape should expand the pool of applicants.
- Codified budgets for programming will provide resilience during an economic downturn and allow programs to grow and thrive without the threat of defunding. Incorporating a budget request into program development within divisions will eliminate the delay in implementing equitable opportunities. A secure and immediate financial source will provide sustained opportunities to attract and train instructors, providing continuous opportunities for users.



NEVADA RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continuing to fund community nonprofits, as seen through NDOW, will help to prioritize the needs of local groups who have an intimate understanding of the best use of funding. Trusting grassroots groups such as Get Outdoors Nevada to provide relevant opportunities will allow for tailored programming that targets community needs and wants. By financially empowering the groups working within the community, traditional non-participants in outdoor recreation can be targeted, considered, and accommodated.
- Explicit equity language frequently is missing from the requirements for grant opportunities. Including and prioritizing specific criteria for needs-based financing will allow for new partnerships in grant programs with underrepresented groups. Crafting grant proposals to assess and respond to the financial needs of disadvantaged applicants rather than the prestige of an organization will lead to the diversification of recipients and broaden the communities that generally benefit from financial assistance.
- Continued monitoring and evaluation of how programs and grant opportunities work and whom they are reaching are imperative to understand the efficacy of efforts. Allowing flexibility to update criteria to accommodate more diverse populations and provide agency for historically disempowered community-level programs will lead to a more holistic approach to outdoor engagement.

NEW MEXICO



Student-aged Population:
27.8% under 18 years of age

Socioeconomic Breakdown:
18.4% persons in poverty

**Land Owned by Federal Agencies,
States, and Municipalities:**
45.6%

*Citations included in References



NEW MEXICO

STATE OVERVIEW

New Mexico is the sixth most diverse state in the United States. Data from the 2020 census found that 50.1 percent of residents identify as Hispanic or Latino, and 35.9 percent identify as White alone. The 2022 - 2026 SCORP acknowledges the importance of integrating the cultures of the 23 indigenous communities that reside in New Mexico into outdoor recreation planning. The communities represent 11 percent of the population and inhabit 11 percent of state lands (SCORP, 2021). Home to the plains, the intermountain plateau, and the Rocky Mountains, New Mexico offers unique and stunning areas for outdoor enjoyment. Behind Arizona, New Mexico has the second-highest amount of sunny days per year, and the elevation provides for seasons state-wide (New Mexico Climate & Geography, n.d.). There are 121,000 square miles of public lands in New Mexico, offering ample opportunities for hiking, biking, fishing, wildlife viewing, skiing, horse riding, paddling, and visiting archeological sites. Federal agencies manage 32 percent of public lands, state agencies manage 12 percent, and native Tribes, private landowners, and local governments control the remaining 56 percent (SCORP, 2021)). According to the New Mexico Office of Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD), federal and state park visitation is rising significantly. Data from ORD shows that 65 percent of New Mexicans participate in outdoor recreation, 76 percent consider themselves outdoor enthusiasts, and 70 percent agree that ensuring opportunities for outdoor recreation is imperative (ORD, 2020). Outdoor recreation is an essential stream of revenue for the state, creating 33,500 in-state jobs and contributing \$1.2 billion in annual income. Residents of New Mexico spend \$4.8 billion on outdoor recreation, contributing \$2.3 billion to the State's GDP (Lawson, 2020)

NEW MEXICO

STATE PROGRAMS

Department/Division	Program	Website
New Mexico Office of Outdoor Recreation (ORD)	Outdoor Equity Fund	www.nmoutside.com/ord-team
New Mexico Office of Outdoor Recreation (ORD)	The Outdoor Recreation Trails Grant	www.nmoutside.com/ord-team
New Mexico State Parks	Outdoor Education Program	www.emnrd.nm.gov/spd/activities/outdoor-education/



Research

Information for all programs was acquired through desktop research or informational interviews via email.

Contributors

- **Outdoor Equity Fund and Outdoor Recreation trail grant**
 - Email interview: Alyssa Renwick and Bruce Krasnow
 - Program review: Colonus Carl
- **Outdoor Recreation Trail Grant**
 - Email interview: Alyssa Renwick and Bruce Krasnow
 - Program review: Colonus Carl



NEW MEXICO STATE PROGRAMS

New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Office

Motivated by the expansion of outdoor programs in New Mexico, Governor Michelle Lujan Grishman signed legislation creating the Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD) in 2019. ORD's vision is “to transform the state's economic, social, and environmental future by championing sustainable outdoor recreation and increasing access to it for all New Mexicans.”(New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division, n.d.). The division aims to “achieve positive, measurable impacts on economic development, conservation, education, and public health.” Additionally, ORD works closely with businesses, non-profit organizations, partner states, and federal agencies. The ORD identifies its core values as “sustainable economic development, conservation & access, equity, education, and health & wellness, and implements different programs geared toward improving outdoor education in New Mexico” (New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division, n.d.) Since its inception, the division has invested close to \$2 million in grants to help fund New Mexico trail projects (New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division, n.d.).

Outdoor Equity Fund

In 2019, New Mexico was the first state in the United States to create an Outdoor Equity Fund (OEF) through Senate Bill 462. OEF is open to Tribes, Pueblos, and Nations, municipalities, counties, nonprofits, k-12 schools and districts, and colleges and universities. Created to increase opportunities for young people from underrepresented communities to access the outdoors, applicants must “have a well-developed plan to engage low-income youth in nature-based outdoor recreation activities” (2022-Outdoor-Equity-Fund-Program-Guide-ENGLISH.Pdf, n.d.). OEF addresses inequity in outdoor access and engages low-income youth in outdoor recreation activities.

The guiding legislation explicitly states beneficiaries must target areas where 40 percent of program participants are from low-income families. Additionally, programs must have an educational plan to engage youth in subject matter relating to the climate and the environment (Senate Bill 462, 2019). Program activities eligible for funding include adaptive outdoor recreation, camping, nature observations, biking, and trail, off-road motorized, water, and snow activities. Program activity must be completed within 18 months of receiving the grant, and progress and final reports must be submitted to OEF.



NEW MEXICO STATE PROGRAMS

Funded through the state Legislature with additional contributions from the outdoor industry, private foundations, and other non-government foundations, OEF awards recipients \$1,500-\$20,000 with a 1:1 cash or in-kind matching requirement for urban recipients and a 2:1 matching requirement for rural applicants (Outdoor Equity Fund, n.d.). OEF eliminates barriers to the outdoors by providing camping gear, transportation, and fees for local programming. In FY 2020, OEF received 84 applications and awarded more than \$270,000 split among 25 recipients, which provided approximately 2,700 youth with increased outdoor access. Funding went to various projects, including Zuni Pueblo winter and summer trips to the Zuni River and opportunities designed to get kids with disabilities to spend time outdoors. In FY 2021, grant recipients increased, and OEF awarded 57 applicants, nearly \$900,000. The increased funding availability allowed more than 22,000 youths from underrepresented communities to access outdoor recreation and education across the state (Outdoor Equity Fund, n.d.) In FY 2022, OEF awarded just under \$800,000 in grants ranging from \$2,130 to \$20,000 to 47 organizations. The awardee list includes programs from 16 counties, with 50 percent supporting Tribal, rural, and/or land grant communities (OEF grant recipients, 2022).

The Outdoor Recreation Trails Grant

The codified 2020 Outdoor Recreation Trails Grant (formerly Special Projects and Outdoor Infrastructure) provides funding to projects that increase opportunities for communities to access the outdoors. The grant invests in conservation projects open to New Mexicans, provides opportunities for access to the outdoors, and offers substantial economic benefits to communities (Outdoor Recreation Trails Grant, 2022). While the program is statewide, its main focus is on tribal communities and residents in rural areas. The grant is divided into two tiers, with the first tier focusing on local projects and the second tier focusing on regional projects. Both tiers are available to tribes, Pueblos, and Indigenous Nations, municipalities, counties, public school districts, colleges, soil and water conservation districts, and Acequia and land grant associations. To qualify for funds, applicants must demonstrate a strong focus on “recreation value, contribution to equitable outdoor access, environmental and cultural impacts, economic value, and finally, demonstrable community support.”



NEW MEXICO STATE PROGRAMS

The general fund, junior bills, and special appropriations provide funding for the grant. In FY 2020, six organizations received \$77,000; in FY 2022, 25 applicants received \$506,736.17. Seven million dollars is available for FY 2022, and the first cohort of 2022 was awarded \$2.74 million (Outdoor Recreation Trails Grant, 2022).

New Mexico State Parks

Established in 1933 and housed in the New Mexico Department of Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources (EMNRD), the state parks division offers programs designed to provide New Mexicans with safe, fun, and educational outdoor experiences throughout 35 parks. The state parks' mission is to provide "recreational and educational facilities and opportunities, promote public safety, protect and enhance natural and cultural resources, provide first-class recreation and enrich the lives of visitors" (EMNRD, 2021). Since 2007, New Mexico State Parks have offered an Outdoor Education Program to enhance quality education programs for people visiting the parks (EMNRD, 2021). The program reached more than 173,775 students by providing opportunities to visit state parks.

Spotlight Program: The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy (ASLA)

www.aslacademy.com

Located in Albuquerque, ASLA is a state-certified program that alleviates recreational participation gaps by teaching dual language. Established by a team of dedicated educators and parents of deaf and hard-of-hearing students, ASLA provides an opportunity for kids to thrive and find community by incorporating American Sign Language into recreation. In 2021, ASLA partnered with the Honey Badger Conservation Crew and received \$20,000 from OEF to support a five-week summer program for deaf, hard-of-hearing, and disabled students and their families to spend time outdoors visiting national parks, wilderness areas, and public lands. An additional educational component provided land management experience through wrapping cottonwood trees in chicken wire enclosure devices and monitoring pitfall trapping. The project is an example of engaging and enabling youth with disabilities and providing meaningful connections with nature (The ASL Academy, 2019).





NEW MEXICO RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strengthening collaboration in decision-making among the Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD), relevant NGOs, underrepresented communities, pueblos, and tribes will enable outdoor recreation programs to reflect community priorities and lead to a deeper understanding of diverse local needs. The active inclusion of tribes, people of color, and other underserved communities will ensure that diverse voices are centered in outdoor recreation and education program development and can increase diverse participation. Understanding what communities need and want is central to appropriate program development, and diverse voices should be included in the early planning stages.
- The increased number of applicants for the Outdoor Equity Fund suggests the demand outweighs the available resources, and the program would benefit from additional funding. Increased funding allocation to programs prioritizing and providing equitable access will facilitate operation expansion and increase great outdoor experiences for residents. Expanding the size and number of programs will increase participation and enable further reach to diverse communities.
- Since its inception, the Outdoor Recreation Fund (OEF) has provided opportunities for access to the outdoors. Monitoring and evaluating the fund's use is essential to understand the gaps and opportunities to enhance its purpose, inform decision-making, and keep records of the beneficiaries.



NEW MEXICO RECOMMENDATIONS

- In partnership with outdoor recreation providers, ORD should develop a database to help record the gaps, successes, and opportunities of outdoor activities in New Mexico. Records from the database will ensure informed decision-making and promote equal allocation of resources to support access to the outdoors for New Mexicans.

UTAH



Student-aged Population:
35.5% under 18 years of age

Socioeconomic Breakdown:
8.6% persons in poverty

**Land Owned by Federal Agencies,
States, and Municipalities:**
74.4%%

*Citations included in References



UTAH

STATE OVERVIEW

A mix of mountainous and desert terrain, Utah is rich in natural resources, culture, unique natural formations, and spectacular recreation opportunities. The 13th largest state in the U.S., approximately 71 percent of land in Utah is public and managed by state and federal agencies (Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation). The state is home to five national parks, 44 state parks, and 14 ski resorts, providing ample opportunity for outdoor recreation, including motorized recreation, skiing, hiking, biking, camping, boating, fishing, and water sports (Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation). Time spent outdoors has been increasing in Utah recently, with 10 million visits to national parks recorded in 2020 (Lawson, J. Q. 2021). The outdoor recreation industry contributes significantly to Utah's economy, with \$6.4 billion generated through taxes and employment in 2021 (Linnabary, 2021). According to Utah's 2014 -2018 SCORP, outdoor recreation enhances residents' health and social benefits, and the natural environment and parks significantly contribute to satisfaction (Utah SCORP, 2014 - 2018) Outdoor recreation has allowed families and friends to spend quality time together and strengthen their relationships. A study by the Institute of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism at Utah State University found recreation participation in the five National Parks is overwhelmingly white. At the same time, Hispanic, Latino, Asian, and Black communities are underrepresented (Jordan et al., 2020).

UTAH

STATE PROGRAMS

State Department	Program	Website
Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation (OOR)	Utah Outdoor Recreation Grant (UORG)	www.business.utah.gov/outdoor/
Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation (OOR)	Utah's Trail Forum	www.business.utah.gov/outdoor/
Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation (OOR)	Utah's Every Kid Outdoors (EKO) initiative	www.business.utah.gov/outdoor/
Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation (OOR)	Utah Children Outdoor Recreation and Education grant (UCORE)	www.business.utah.gov/outdoor/



Research

Information for all programs was acquired through desktop research and informational interviews via email.

Contributors

- **Utah Outdoor Recreation Grant**
 - Zoom interview: Patrick Morrison
 - Program review: Patrick Morrison
- **Utah's Trail Forum**
 - Zoom interview: Patrick Morrison
 - Program review: Patrick Morrison
- **Utah's Every Kid Outdoors Initiative**
 - Zoom interview: Patrick Morrison
 - Program review: Patrick Morrison
- **Utah Children Outdoor Recreation and Education Grant**
 - Zoom Interview: Patrick Morrison
 - Program review: Patrick Morrison
- **Get Outside**
 - Phone Interview: Mathew Mizukawa



UTAH STATE PROGRAMS

Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation

Recognizing the significant economic and quality of life contributions from the outdoor industry, Governor Herbert established the first state Office of Outdoor Recreation (OOR) in 2013. The office manages the “state's natural assets that can sustain economic growth for years to come” (Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation). OOR partners with the state parks, business enterprises, and the community to preserve, protect and broaden Utah’s economic and social value. Since its inception, the office has awarded grants to communities and non-governmental organizations to build infrastructure and trails to make outdoor spaces accessible in Utah.

Utah Outdoor Recreation Grant

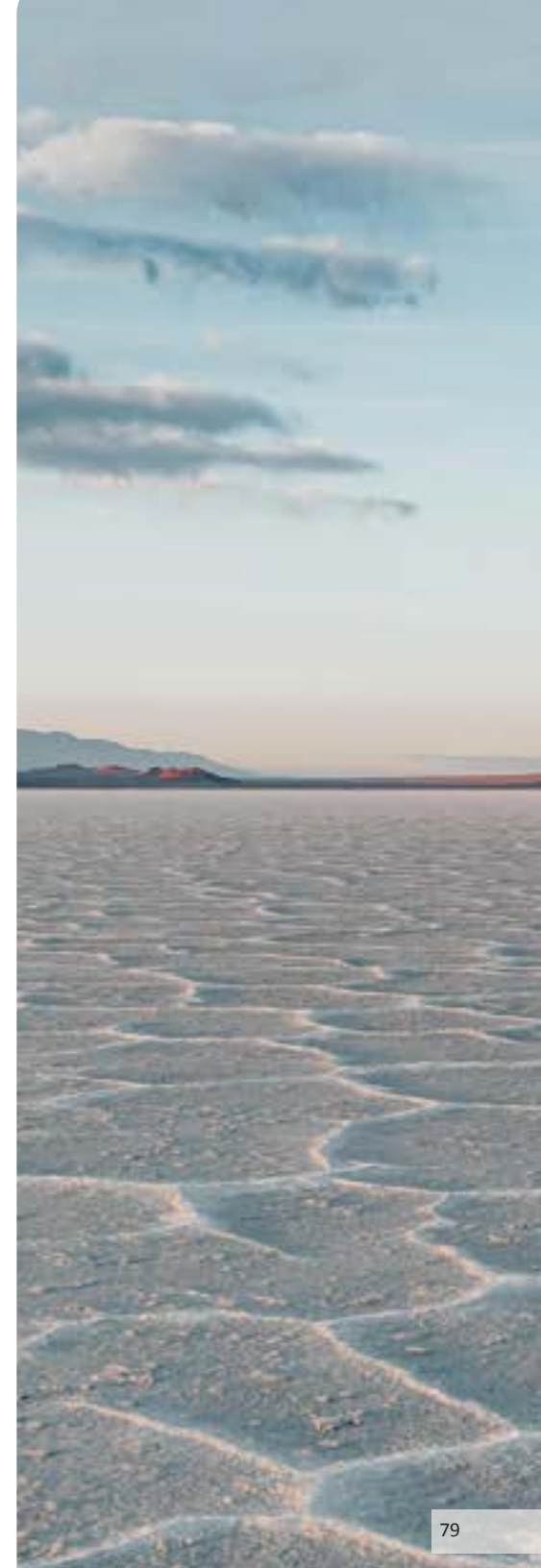
Funding for the Utah Outdoor Recreation Grant (UORG) began in 2015 and kept expanding in subsequent years. The grant is divided into two tiers. The 1-tier grants award between \$10,000 to \$150,000 per project, while the 2-tier (UORG Regional Asset Tier) awards \$500,000. A total of 99 projects were awarded \$7.6 million in grants across the state in the 2021 grant cycle (Utah OOR Grant recipient, 2021.) The grant is statewide, emphasizes rural communities, and mainly targets projects focusing on building infrastructure. Unfortunately, the fund cannot be used for planning, equipment, land purchasing, and funding of education programs.

Utah’s Trail Forum

Utah’s Trail Forum brings together outdoor industry professionals, trail advocates, volunteers, and community leaders to discuss and advance the conversation around trail management, access, and quality of outdoor areas. The state-wide forum established in 2022 builds community through workshops and networking opportunities, the sharing of best practices, and the promotion of local organizations to foster lifelong adventure and advance equitable access to the outdoors for all the communities living in Utah. The Forum does not fund projects but helps develop a unified network to provide safe and sustainable access to trails throughout Utah.

Utah’s Every Kid Outdoors Initiative

Enacted through the 2019 bill HCR004, Utah’s Every Kid's Outdoor Initiative (EKO) encourages youth to increase time spent outside to maintain a healthy and active lifestyle through affordable activities. The bill appropriated a one-time amount of \$100,000 from the general fund for the fiscal year 2020 to the



UTAH STATE PROGRAMS

Governor's Office of Economic Development, Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation, and Utah Children's Outdoor Recreation and Education Grant (Concurrent Resolution Supporting Utah's Every Kid Outdoors Initiative, n.d.). The program targets the residents of Utah, tourists, educators, youth programs, non-profits, and programs that inspire to provide the opportunity for kids and families to spend time outdoors. While still new, the impact of EKO is yet to be determined. The office hopes to expand the reach of this initiative in the coming years.

Utah Children Outdoor Recreation and Education Grant

Housed in the Office of Outdoor Recreation, the UCORE grant was created to provide “high-quality, outdoor-focused learning experiences to school-aged children and teaches them the physical skills that can make outdoor recreation part of a healthy and active lifestyle.” UCORE grants are available to educational institutions, local governments, tribal communities, and non-profit organizations and empower greater-need youth by engaging them in outdoor recreation and educational activities. Grant criteria require funded projects and programs to assist children in developing outdoor participation skills, provide physical activities for youth aged 6-18 and incorporate science and nature-based learning experiences (Utah Children's Outdoor Recreation & Education Grant, 2020) The UCORE grant also explicitly prioritizes programs that reach underserved communities, maximize engagement, and contribute to the active lifestyles of youth with the greatest needs. Additionally, funding is provided to programs offering nature-based opportunities incorporating science, technology, engineering, or math. According to the Utah code, section 79-8-303 (2), the grant is funded by appropriations made by the legislature, interest earned on the accounts, private donations, and other grants (House Bill 0143, 2019).

SPOTLIGHT PROGRAM: Get Outside

www.getoutsideutah.org

Based in Southern Utah, Get Outside (GOS) is a non-profit organization focusing primarily on improving the physical and mental health of low-income youth, minorities, and females through outdoor activity engagement. Get Outside addresses identified barriers, including lack of funding, education, and opportunity that limit engagement. GOS works with schools to support student-led clubs that create outdoor activity platforms. Additionally, GOS partners with donors to provide outdoor equipment and financial assistance to youths from low-income communities (About Get Outside).





UTAH RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is a need to monitor and evaluate outdoor recreation users in Utah to better understand the diversity of outdoor users. Further, tracking visitations will help keep a robust database of activities carried out by visitors and major recreational sites across the state and by whom.
- One-off funding for programs does not promote deep development or further expansion and outreach. Continuous access to funds will allow program staff to focus resources on improving opportunities rather than writing grant proposals and seeking out alternative sources.
- Collaboration and partnership between the Utah Outdoor Recreation Office and the federal, local, or state agencies such as state parks and forestry to share knowledge and experiences on ways to better provide Utahns with the opportunity to spend time outside. The forum is a great source of networking for different departments and divisions, there could be more focus on equity-driven results.
- Improve public awareness and information sharing of various state grants. Increased awareness can be achieved through advertisements on social media, websites, stakeholder groups, and recreation associations.

WYOMING



Student-aged Population:
22% under 18 years of age

Socioeconomic Breakdown:
9.2% persons in poverty

**Land Owned by Federal Agencies,
States, and Municipalities:**
53.8%

*Citations included in References



WYOMING STATE OVERVIEW

With only 578,000 residents, Wyoming is the least populated state in the country and one of the least diverse, with 1.2% of residents identifying as Black, 2.8 percent as American Indian, 1.1 percent as Asian, 10.6 percent as Hispanic, and 83.3 percent as White alone (Wyoming Census QuickFacts [Census], 2021). Twenty-two percent of the population is 18 years of age or younger, and 9.2 percent of the state population is in poverty (Census, 2021). The highest populated age group is those 65 years and older. While the GDP of Wyoming ranks 49th in the country, the state ranks seventh in per capita GDP (Wyoming Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan [SCORP], 2019). The outdoor industry contributed \$5.6 billion to the state economy in 2017, making it an economically important industry (Outdoor Recreation Economy Report, 2017).

Wyoming has more than 30 million acres of federal land managed by various offices and bureaus (SCORP, 2019). The BLM manages 18.5 million acres or 27.9 percent of the state, the Forest Service manages 14.7 percent, the NPS manages 3.7 percent, the state manages 6.2 percent, 3.2 percent is tribal-owned, and the remaining 43 percent is privately owned and managed (Public Land Ownership in the United States, 2019). Wyoming's 2019-2023 SCORP contains numerous surveys indicating recreation's importance to residents and high outdoor activity participation levels. Just more than 94 percent of survey respondents believe public recreation is either "Very Important" or "Important." (SCORP, 2019) One of the top issues identified by surveyors was the loss of public land and related access. Wyoming will need to address the current demographic trends in correlation with the state's importance of public land access. The SCORP references that a high aging population will influence the type of outdoor programs and facilities needed in the coming years. This means the state will need to engage with its younger population as well in order to create a harmonious future for its outdoor recreation economy.

WYOMING

STATE PROGRAMS

State Department	Program	Website
Game and Fish Department	Whiskey Mountain Conservation Camp	www.wgfd.wyo.gov/Education/Conservation-Education/Summer-Camps



Research

Information for all programs was acquired through desktop research and informational interviews via email.

Contributors

- **Whiskey Mountain Conservation Camp**
 - Email interview: Parker Everhart
 - Program review: Parker Everhart



WYOMING STATE PROGRAMS

Whiskey Mountain Conservation Camp

Housed in the Wyoming Game & Fish Department, this conservation camp is geared toward youth ages 14 through 16 and provides camps for boys and girls. The camp introduces youth to new outdoor recreational activities in a positive environment to gain a greater appreciation for the outdoors and learn valuable conservation skills. The camp costs \$150 for a five-day experience, with scholarships available to cover admission. Transportation is not provided.

SPOTLIGHT PROGRAM: WYldlife Fund

<https://thewyldlifefund.org/>

Since 2019, the WYldlife Fund has partnered with the Wyoming Game & Fish Department, specializing in connecting private funds to user groups. The fund is backed by various private donors that align with the mission of the Game & Fish Department. Despite the partnership, WYldlife Fund is an autonomous entity committed to enhancing the relationship between people and wildlife in Wyoming. The WYldlife fund aims “To promote sustainable use of Wyoming’s wildlife habitats and natural resources for future generations; To promote conservation and responsible conservation and enhancement of Wyoming’s fish, wildlife, natural resources, and outdoor recreational opportunities through education and advocacy; To help assure the future of high-quality hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities in Wyoming; [and] To develop, promote and participate in conservation education programs for educators, students, and all other Wyoming citizens” (Our Story, n.d).

The fund supports multiple different programs, including education and microgrant programs. The education program, “Inspire a Kid Camp,” includes a multiple-day overnight camp designed to educate 13-16-year-olds on “(outdoor) initiatives, outdoor recreation, and leadership development.” (Inspire a Kid Camp, 2022) The other education program, Maury Brown Kids Fishing Day, includes a large introduction to the fishing event with more than 600 participants (Maury Brown Kids Fishing Day, 2022). This event provided every child with a fishing pole and tackle box. The WYldlife Fund microgrants provide a one-time maximum of \$2,500 to projects that support the mission of the WYldlife Fund and specifically “advance Wyoming wildlife habitat, research, and education.” (Microgrants, n.d) Funds are first-come, first-serve, and applications are accepted through December first of each calendar year. Applications from 501(c)3 organizations and the Wyoming Game & Fish Department will be accepted.





WYOMING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Wyoming could benefit from expanding the amount of state-based grants available for outdoor education and youth engagement. The Outdoor Recreation Office would be ideal to house this programming style. It already has one grant, the Outdoor Recreation Grant, with equity language, but the program centers on infrastructure and trail maintenance. Additionally, the Outdoor Recreation Office has collaborators from across the state who “support sustainable outdoor recreation growth.” Still, the Office would benefit from an in-department funding source for these purposes (Outdoor Recreation Collaborators, n.d). An outdoor equity grant would be well-suited for this office.
- The Wyoming Game & Fish Department provides a wealth of online outdoor education resources but could incorporate increased funding for outdoor education programming and grants. The Whiskey Conservation Camp is an excellent, hands-on outdoor leadership and teaching opportunity with scholarships available, but it could be expanded by including transportation for students. The Inspire a Kid Initiative, one of the department's online youth outdoor education resources, would be a logical place to host grants and programs related to outdoor education. This resource currently “aims to introduce youth to the outdoors by providing resources for families to teach their children how to enjoy outside activities.” (Inspire a Kid, n.d) The WYldlife Fund launched a summer camp with the Inspire a Kid Initiative in 2022, but future years should additionally incorporate advertising on the Game & Fish Department’s website (Signature Programs, n.d).



WYOMING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Wyoming relies on multiple national recreation programs to fund infrastructure and maintenance projects. It would benefit from similar federal funding for outdoor recreation and education programs to expand locally and state-wide. National programs are essential to states like Wyoming with lower funding for youth outdoor recreation and education.



NATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

After analyzing and considering the recommendations within each state, the following list is a comprehensive set of guidelines and suggestions states can tailor to implement and improve equity and diversify participation in outdoor recreation and educational experiences.

- Develop a state-wide and national definition of equity to allow for consistent application of the term throughout programs and grant opportunity criteria.
- Any state that develops an Outdoor Equity Grant program should consider including an equity board to ensure set components and criteria advancing inclusion are included and enforced. Best practices for implementation can be found in Colorado, Utah, and New Mexico, which already have Equity Boards supervising their Outdoor Equity Grant. As states develop their own equity grants or any grant with substantial equity components as criteria, a similar style of board members should be assembled.
- Craft criteria for funding opportunities to include specific requirements to reach historically underserved populations. Prioritize needs-based measures that favor grassroots community groups that understand the needs and wants of local populations. Assist in completing applications to remove first-time applicants' barriers, streamline the process, and eliminate confusing jargon to allow grant seekers without ample time and dedicated resources to complete the process. Eliminate existing requirements for funded projects and programs to bear upfront costs through reimbursement by allocating funding before implementation.





NATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS (cont.)

- Continued monitoring and evaluation of how programs and grant opportunities work and whom they are reaching are imperative to understand the efficacy of efforts. Allowing flexibility to update criteria to accommodate more diverse populations and provide agency for historically disempowered community-level programs will lead to a more holistic approach to outdoor engagement. Newer programs will benefit from tracking early success, and more established programs can make changes based on long-term participation data.
- Develop a method to receive feedback from participating and non-participating community members to understand their needs and wants. Programs that meet the desires of a community will be more successful at reaching first-time participants who do not see themselves in the outdoors.
- Providing funding for programs set in durations longer than one year when possible. The work that goes into developing, implementing, and establishing outdoor opportunities may not be immediately demonstrated. Early consistent funding will allow a program to focus its resources and efforts on enhancing the programs and eliminate the need to reapply for funding in the short term. Consistent funding will also allow for the payment of fair wages to program staff and administrative roles at the local level and ensure more long-term and stable job opportunities.
- When possible, make grant-required matching funds on a sliding scale that considers recipients' financial needs and economic abilities. By requiring a large amount of financial capital to receive a grant, communities in need of resources will be eliminated from consideration.



NATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS (cont.)

- Improving the diversity of staff members in state departments can result in a better understanding of state needs and allow a broader range of communities to see themselves in the outdoors. Increasing diverse perspectives will let the experiences and backgrounds of historically underrepresented voices be influential in program design and implementation. States should consider implementing hiring practices and career outreach that target populations more representative of state demographics.
- Transportation is a significant barrier to outdoor participation. Increasing travel grants on a needs-based basis will allow for increased participation regardless of geographic distance.
- Create local gear libraries to eliminate the financial barriers to outdoor participation. Not having the correct equipment prevents people from trying new activities.
- The increasing connection between state departments and divisions will allow for the cross-promotion of programs and grant opportunities and sharing of best practices. Communication can lead to increased collaboration and eliminate redundant work, freeing time to build on lessons and fast-track improvements to outdoor opportunities. Developing a state-wide comprehensive list of available outdoor programming and funding sources will allow potential participants and applicants to understand options holistically.
- Program effectiveness works only if the general public is aware of its opportunities and benefits. Increased marketing and community outreach to inform the public about the suite of programs will diversify and increase participation. Relying on word-of-mouth communication excludes populations of nontraditional recreators and diminishes the likelihood of increasing engagement.





A Case for a National Opportunity Fund/Foundation

The above recommendations are tools states can use to evaluate their outdoor recreation and education programs. While current programs and grant opportunities are efficient at promoting outdoor recreation, key equity components to ensure the diversification of youth and adult recreators frequently are absent. There is a need to incorporate program components that address socio-economic barriers, safety concerns, and social exclusion that underrepresented communities face when recreating outdoors. The pandemic revealed a desire among communities to spend time outdoors, and program modification and development should reflect the needs of those who experience systemic barriers to access.

This report's highlighted nonprofit programs and community organizations represent a small fraction of the locally-led groups that would benefit directly from increased funding opportunities. Based on these programs, local communities can provide tailored experiences to encourage a more diverse group of youth and adults to participate in outdoor recreation. Funding remains a barrier to executing and maintaining these opportunities. Removing the financial obstacles will allow program staff members to focus on developing innovative and inclusive opportunities to get people outside. Community leaders who understand the local gaps in opportunity should lead the development of outdoor equity components in programming, and a national fund would support these efforts.

Providing more equitable outdoor access will strengthen community bonds and allow economic growth in regions across the West. Outdoor recreation is a consistent and significant contributor to state and national GDP. Expanding participant levels and the user base will strengthen these contributions and help support local economies dependent on tourism and recreation. Many of the states in this report rely on national programs' funding for trail and infrastructure maintenance. A similar federal outdoor equity grant that focuses on programming and grant opportunities is essential to give states the financial means to include historically underrepresented communities in their outdoor recreation economies. The lack of available



A Case for a National Opportunity Fund/Foundation

resources limits the efficiency of the dedicated staffers overseeing programs and grant opportunities. Supporting and strengthening outdoor recreation and education programs would benefit state and national GDP as an increase in recreators will lead directly to increased spending on equipment, transportation, and experiences.

The most common health conditions in the United States are related to mental illnesses. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 50 percent of Americans will be diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder during their lifetime, and one in five Americans will experience a mental illness in a given year (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). While spending time outside is not an end-all cure for alleviating mental health disorders, the studied health benefits of ecotherapy suggest a positive correlation between time outdoors and improved mental health (Bratman et al., 2019). A growing group of healthcare professionals are "medicalizing nature" by prescribing increased time outdoors. Expanding access to the outdoors to underrepresented communities will increase the number of people who benefit from these positive effects (Hamblin, 2015). Telling people to get outside to improve their health is not enough. Local and accessible programs must be funded and available to encourage and facilitate increased outdoor participation, and a national outdoor equity grant would accomplish this.

The reality of climate change affects recreation seasons and the alteration of ecosystems that support outdoor recreation. As climate change begins to change the outdoor industry, increased resiliency must occur through adaptation to shorter seasons, more extreme weather events, and an increasingly arid West. A more inclement climate means a potential decrease in outdoor recreation opportunities. It is crucial to adapt through practices of diversity, equity, and inclusion when developing programming to prevent the demographics of recreationists from becoming even less diverse. Funding from a national outdoor equity grant program would allow communities that understand their shifting landscape to develop inclusive and climate-dependent programming.

Currently, 16 bipartisan states form The Confluence of States, proving the possibility of political unity through common interests. United through a shared passion for the outdoors and an interest



A Case for a National Opportunity Fund/Foundation

in cultivating a robust outdoor recreation economy, The Confluence is an example of how states can build inclusive outdoor participation. The Confluence understands the necessity of a national platform that supports the recreation industry and the economy. In a time of increasing political polarization, The Confluence offers a pathway to work on a common interest and engage in bipartisan work. A national outdoor equity grant can build on the example set by The Confluence.

The current chronic and systemic inequities prevent underserved youth and communities of color from engaging in meaningful outdoor recreation and educational experiences. A national and diverse effort to eliminate these barriers is urgent. Financial support will help alleviate barriers, support the economy, and ensure the benefits of time spent outdoors are equitably distributed. The provided recommendations require adequate staffing, state resources, and time. Only some states have the capacity for these components, and federal assistance would assist in implementation. National legislation designed to promote, support, and advance equitable state-level outdoor recreation programs and grant opportunities would eliminate pressure on individual states to rely on limited annual budgets. A National Opportunity Fund/Foundation, akin to those established in California, Colorado, and New Mexico, would promote equity in outdoor recreation and alleviate barriers to meaningful participation. Transforming outdoor participation in the great outdoors to represent the face of America means investing in a diverse group of community leaders. Outdoor opportunities should be accessible to all Americans regardless of background, wealth, the color of their skin, or where they live. The development of a National Outdoor Equity Grant Program will provide a pathway to attain these goals and begin to provide more inclusive outdoor opportunities.

THE WORK CONTINUES...

Internal conversations with WRA, correspondence with Jason Swann with Trust for Public Lands, and a presentation to interested stakeholders led to developing the next steps" for "Project 2.0". The following recommendations would build on this report's foundational information on how state-based outdoor recreation and education programs function. The proposed next steps will lead to a better understanding of how communities interact with the outdoor education and recreation programs detailed in this report, develop details of the financial distribution of state-available funding, and strengthen the argument for a National Opportunity Fund/Foundation.

Policy legislation aimed at increasing equity components and expanding outdoor access should include the needs and wants of the communities benefiting from it. While this report explores what is currently available at the state levels and the funding opportunities, it falls short of identifying how they play out in practice and if they are impactful on the local level. After careful consideration when scoping this report, the MENV Team decided that the time constraints inhibited meaningful community engagement. Instead, efforts were best-spent understanding program opportunities' existing frameworks and realities. This analysis resulted in a top-down understanding of state-level recreation and education programs and grant availability, and it did not explore local user groups' interaction, perception, and utility. Whether the programs work for local communities is an area of focus not explored through this report. Further research to understand the dynamics between state-level programs, participants, and non-participants will give more insight into the effectiveness of available opportunities, which will lead to a better understanding of what is needed to improve programming. We suggest investing time and resources into going into communities and interacting with them to evaluate the effectiveness of programming and where additional financial support is needed.



THE WORK CONTINUES...

The nine months allotted for the Capstone project were insufficient to engage Indigenous communities and understand the nuances of their interactions and relationships with state-based recreational and educational opportunities in programs. Conversations with Indigenous communities should never be transactional, and building relationships and trust should not adhere to a deadline. Allowing ample time and continuous engagement to understand the needs of the communities and how state and federal-funded programming can best serve them is necessary to enact the necessary change. We suggest funding engagement efforts with Indigenous communities and allotting substantial time to build a foundational relationship that will lead to a more developed understanding of what is needed at the state level to develop culturally relevant and respectful programming.

Tracking and mapping where money flows are imperative to understanding the effectiveness of programs and grant distribution. Providing a thorough record of the distribution of state funds through grant opportunities will generate insight into if the historic disbursement of resources serves all communities. Knowing who has received funding, in what amounts, how consistently, and for how long will provide insight into understanding the inequities in resource allocation. Identifying parts of each state that would benefit from funding but have not received the benefits of grants will develop an understanding of where resources are needed in underserved communities. To adequately track the trends of resource disbursement, we suggest creating a GIS mapping tool to demonstrate trends and geographic gaps in funding.

Finally, reaching out to key decision-makers to influence policy and gain support for increased funding and representation of local communities is crucial to create change. While this report provides foundational knowledge of what outdoor recreation and education programs exist and how they are intended to function, lobbying and advocacy work is still necessary to increase an understanding of the inequities in state programs. We suggest funding lobby teams to reach out to their representatives to demand equitable outdoor access and strengthen the coalition for a national outdoor equity grant program.





CONCLUSION

Outdoor recreation participants do not reflect the demographics of the United States, and inequitable access to the outdoors permeates the local, state, and national levels. A more holistic understanding of state-sponsored programs allows for an examination of state and national outdoor education opportunities. The provided guidance and recommendations can serve as starting points for increasing equity in available programs and funding sources. Through consistent review and implementation of amplified equity components, historically underrepresented communities will have a path to new and deeper levels of participation in outdoor spaces. The uneven distribution of outdoor benefits can be reconciled through the development, advancement, and implementation of funding opportunities for marginalized communities to access and enjoy outdoor spaces equally.



Providing equitable outdoor recreation and educational programming opportunities is not the only solution to exclusionary behaviors resulting from systemic racism. Nonetheless, it is crucial to intentionally welcome and include communities historically excluded in the development of state-implemented outdoor access. The continued reexamination and further development of programming, creation of new opportunities, and increased funding opportunities to address equitable access are imperative. To accomplish this, states need greater financial assistance and resources. Additional funding from the federal government would aid the state's ability to support local community outdoor programs, making a significant case for a federal outdoor equity grant program. Consistent financial support will allow states to develop current programming and create additional opportunities that match the identified gaps and the needs of residents. A federal grant that provides the necessary resources and guidance to develop more equitable outdoor programming will institutionally support the notion that the outdoors are for everyone.



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