

GENERATION WILD GRANT OPPORTUNITY FOR EXISTING COALITIONS
Interim Funding 2024/2025
Narrative Concept Proposal
July 27, 2023

The vision of the Generation Wild Northeast Metro Coalition is that every young person - wherever they live and regardless of resources – has abundant opportunities to connect and engage with the outdoors in ways that are inspirational, transformational, and meaningful to them and will cultivate a new generation of stewards of nature.

Generation Wild Northeast Metro Coalition (GenWild NEMC) thanks Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) for the opportunity and is excited to apply for interim funding from GOCO for the Generation Wild program. Generation Wild NEMC is:

- *One of the largest in terms of partners (12), communities (4) and numbers of youth (over 40,000) in our communities,
- *One of the most stable and sustainable with the same high-producing twelve partners that have been embedded in our communities for over 7 years, and
- * One of the most productive, especially in terms of being community-driven and providing 25 percent of all programs and 21 percent of all paid jobs across all the GOCO funded Generation Wild projects statewide.



Youth Council member as a Black-footed Ferret

The four communities around the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge that Generation Wild NEMC serves are: Commerce City, Northwest Aurora, Montbello, and Northeast Park Hill. These communities jointly have around 40,000+ youth to be served by Generation Wild programs, based on public school enrollment. Most of our schools have over 75% or more free and reduced lunch designation. Our communities consist of youth and families who face barriers to outdoor access and who have been historically underserved and underrepresented in outdoor recreation. These communities are facing change and pressure from rising prices and outside growth. GenWild NEMC partners are the trusted, long-term support systems in the neighborhood, such as the local Boys & Girls Clubs, Environmental Learning for Kids, and our community connectors embedded in our partners.

“ELK is the bridge between our urban youth and nature! It is the window to self-discovery, exploration, knowledge, service and adventure!”- Michelle, ELK parent.

The Generation Wild NEMC (formerly GoWild NEMC) partners have worked together since the first Inspire Planning Grant with no changes in partners or capacity organization staff. Our partners are: Bluff Lake Nature Center, Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver, ELK – Environmental Learning for Kids, Groundwork Denver, Mile High Youth Corps, Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership, The Urban Farm, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Barr Lake State Park, Aurora, Denver, and Commerce City. All the organizations are exceptional partners that collaborate with each other and have produced thousands of high-quality programs, pathways, and events.

From Tessa Nelson, Youth Program Leader with The Spring Institute, Aurora, an organization that works with immigrant and refugee families along East Colfax. “I think kids who have had no exposure to nature, these kids who kind of spend their lives cooped up in apartment buildings – experience enormous joy coming out here and also real pride in themselves as they learn new skills and are able to accomplish things that are difficult. You can see their self-esteem grow before your eyes!”

Our 2020 Strategic Plan outlines our commitments to serve of our communities:

- We engage community in all significant coalition decisions.
- Youth are served at a deeper level while still creating opportunities for the initial “spark” of interest in the outdoors.
- Partnerships within the coalition have expanded to create greater measurable impact.
- The NEMC is structured to support the success of coalition partners and build toward a sustainable model.

Generation Wild Northeast Metro Coalition goals for 2024/2025 are to 1) continue meaningful and deep engagement with our varied and changing communities; 2) continue fulfillment of our vision: every young person - wherever they live and regardless of resources – has abundant opportunities to connect and engage with the outdoors in ways that are inspirational, transformational, and meaningful to them and will cultivate a new generation of stewards of nature through diverse programming, events, and pathways; 3) provide stable and sustainable administrative capacity support; and 4) plan for future strategic partnerships, growth, and commitments to our communities.

Goal 1: Our actions, strategic plan and our goals emphasize our engagement with our communities. Each partner devotes energy and resources to learning what our communities want and need. Our programs and youth jobs have changed over six years due to that engagement. Our Youth Council is one way to provide feedback and proved to be invaluable in providing input.

Melany Alvarez, Youth Council 2022/2023, “The Youth Council is important because we do different activities that most people haven’t done before and when we do those activities, we give feedback.”

Goals 2: Our commitment to breaking down barriers and providing excellent programs, jobs, and events was evident when we wrote our vision in 2017 when we formed the coalition for the Inspire Planning Grant.

Anali Blue, Bluff Lake Nature Center GenWild Intern: There was never a dull moment and no day was the same which I always have appreciation for. Not once did I say I “hate” or “dislike” my position so once again, thank you.

Goal 3: For these interim two years, the coalition partners are committed to continue our “extreme” collaboration with each other and our communities. We greatly appreciate the capacity organization staff to keep coalition-wide connections and priorities in focus. Each partner has greater opportunities to find additional funds for programs and youth jobs, but few other entities besides GOCO will fund the glue (capacity organization) that holds the coalition together.

Goal 4: Over the years, partners and community members have suggested expansion of our coalition with



new nonprofits and new governmental agencies. Our successes have brought inquiries from potential new partners to expand our activities. In 2024/2025, planning with these potential new partners will occur. Out of this planning may come new strategic partnerships, mentoring, growth, increased outside funding, and commitments to new communities.



Our Youth Council is critical in connecting with our diverse communities and building our community-centered work. We have funds, including a grant from the US FWS, to continue the program this summer with three young people and to recruit ten new youth for a 2023/2024 school year.

Evelyn Alvarez, 2023 Summer Youth Council:
“People I know call the refuge my second home because I am always here and I love it.”

The Generation Wild NEMC operational model is one of support and sharing resources with partners, showing true collaboration. When asked to provide programs to another partner, the answer is “yes” even without additional resources. When asked to take fewer funds with the interim grant, one partner declined all funding and only asked to be considered when applying for other grants. City, state, and federal partners share their lands and resources to support youth from our neighborhoods with all partner programming and jobs. The fact that the twelve organizations are still committed to our neighborhoods and to each other shows the success of our efforts. The hopes, dreams, and commitments that formed the GoWild Northeast Metro Coalition eight years ago are thriving.

Boys and Girls Clubs and The Urban Farm – “We took a group of kids on a field trip to the Urban Farm, and they had such a great time learning about pollen, it’s role and importance in nature, and the different ways that pollination could occur. They also enjoyed feeding the different animals and learning more about the farm. Many of the kids said that they’ve never seen some of the animals in person before, so that was really exciting for them - they asked if we could go back every week!”

How do we capture all the benefits to our communities of the last six-plus years of GOCO-supported activities? We can count the number of programs and jobs created. We can get testimonials from our neighbors and friends. But the things you cannot count, such as community trust and partner growth and development cannot be quantified.

Because of the Generation Wild NEMC grants to our twelve partners, great changes have occurred. The GOCO Generation Wild partners expanded their programs and activities with outside funding and support. For example, the City Council of Commerce City funded for the first time a full-time permanent position to support outdoor and adaptive recreation. Two of our nonprofits grew from two or three employees to five to ten employees because of the stable base of funding that allowed the nonprofits to engage with their communities and provide much needed and appreciated services. The Groundwork Green Team program, piloted with the first NEMC GOCO grant, has been replicated in other communities with outside funding, after proving their worth with the first grants. The Boys & Girls Clubs expanded their activities by offering exciting outdoor programs such as horseback riding at The Urban Farm and fishing at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge.

The programs that are offered each year have changed based on feedback from the communities. Commerce City developed an afterschool and summer program based on GOCO's 100 Things to Do Before You're 12. It has become one of the most popular programs offered by Commerce City Parks, Recreation and Golf, with wait lists for every class. The US Fish and Wildlife Service at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge received Flagship status, which includes an annual increase in budget, from the US Department of the Interior. One of the key reasons for the designation was that the local US FWS staff showed their commitment to their neighbors through the Generation Wild NEMC grant. Based on feedback from the community, the refuge hired two bi-lingual rangers and dramatically increased their programs with the NEMC communities, which surround the refuge.

With less GOCO funding in 2024/2025, Generation Wild Northeast Metro Coalition is committed to finding other sources of revenue for our partners to continue with exceptional programs, events, and pathways. The Coalition's fundraising has been modest with local foundations because many of our partners are fundraising for their other programs, and the NEMC did not want to be in direct competition with our partners. NEMC is looking nationally for additional funds, not only for the next two years, but into the future.

Moving forward, our coalition is determined to stay engaged with our communities, to continue to work together, and to provide exceptional programming, events, and youth employment. Our communities want and expect our best efforts and we will deliver. Our commitment to using the collective impact models to realize our vision for fair and equitable access to the outdoors remains strong.

Gustavo Lopez Fleming, summer Aurora Generation Wild NEMC Intern 2022. "Thank you for an amazing summer experience in which I enhanced my learning and communication abilities. Most of all it was a fun job I would recommend to a lot of other people. Hope to keep in touch and I will carry naturalist values with me forever."



Boys and Girls Clubs of Metro Denver, Nature Activity – "Our Club partnered with Sand Creek Regional Greenway to provide nature education to a group of our members. The kids made mini-National parks with a variety of stones, sticks and little play animals. It was amazing to see them get so excited and by the end of the program, I had at least 15 kids coming up to me to show off their projects. The next day, the kids were asking when we were going to do that again because they had so much fun."