



UTAH'S  
**EVERY KID  
OUTDOORS**  
INITIATIVE

# COMMUNITY PARTNER PLAYBOOK 2026

A guide to strengthening communities  
through nature connection





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# WELCOME

## Thank you for your support!

Utah's Every Kid Outdoors Initiative relies on our community partners to provide outdoor opportunities for every child across Utah. We are so grateful for your support and collaboration, and can't wait to witness our growing impact as we work together!



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## OUR MISSION

Utah's Every Kid Outdoors is the state's initiative dedicated to promoting **a healthy, active, nature-filled childhood for all of Utah's youth.**

## OUR WHY

On average, children ages 8 to 18 spend 7.5 hours a day on screens. The average American child spends four to seven minutes a day playing outside. Children are becoming increasingly disconnected from nature, engaging in less exercise, and are at greater risk of poor health. Studies confirm **outdoor play reduces stress, improves focus, enhances emotional health, and reduces risk of obesity.**

Every child deserves the opportunity to experience the transformative power of outdoor adventure.

## OUR APPROACH

Through our relationships with educators and community partners, and through the Adventure Challenge, we're making outdoor recreation accessible to all Utah youth—regardless of background or experience level—so they can benefit from a healthy, active childhood.

## OUR BACKGROUND

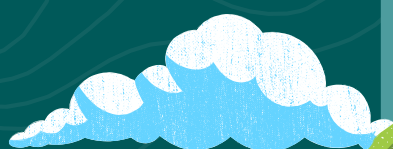
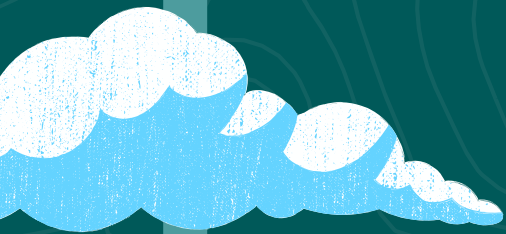
Launched in 2019 with a legislative resolution signed by the Governor and the Utah Legislature, Utah's Every Kid Outdoors Initiative is overseen by the Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation.



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# ADVENTURE CHALLENGE

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# EVERY KID OUTDOORS ADVENTURE CHALLENGE

Our key program: Fourteen nature-based adventures  
to empower kids to get outdoors



## The Adventures:

- Nature Journaling
- Winter Adventure
- Winter Games
- Follow a Trail
- Starry Skies
- Camping
- Water Discovery
- Observe Wildlife
- Utah Rocks!
- Utah's Wild Places
- Plant Discovery
- Nature Mindfulness
- Share Nature
- Utah Forever

# HOW THE ADVENTURE CHALLENGE WORKS

## Four simple steps to Adventure!

1. **Register.** Participants sign up via QR code on passport or survey at any point during the year, with the help of a trusted adult.
2. **Adventure!** Kids explore the outdoors and have fun as they complete the fourteen adventures! Ideas for completing each adventure can be found in their passport and online.
3. **Track Progress.** Kids can track progress with stickers in their passport. Participants submit progress via EKO's website.
4. **Earn Prizes!** Those who complete all 14 adventures and the end-of-year survey are entered for a chance to win experience-based prizes from our generous sponsors.
  - a. Entries due Dec 31 - prizes announced early January.
  - b. Prize examples include: Day passes, lift tickets, guided adventures, fits-all-sizes outdoor gear, and more!

## Adventure Challenge Passports

### A way to record your adventures!

- Passports are **free** and can be picked up at any distribution center.
- They contain stickers for each of the 14 adventures, which can be placed on the respective page once the child completes each adventure.
- Passports also include a QR code that links to the EKO website, where participants can sign up for the Adventure Challenge and report their progress to be entered for a chance to win prizes.

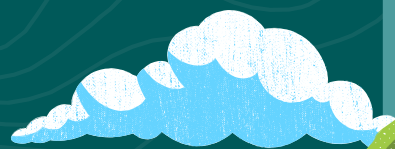
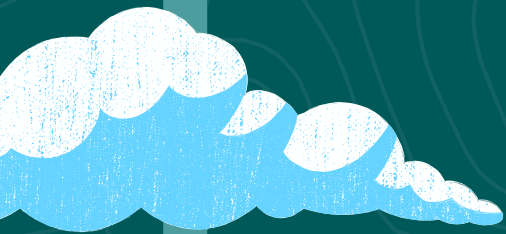




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# COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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# HOW TO REGISTER

## as an EKO Partner

### Registration

- Decide which type of partnership best suits your organization.
- Sign up via our registration survey at the QR code to the right, or at: [https://utconciierge.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_09CjANwPIMnJ28m](https://utconciierge.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_09CjANwPIMnJ28m)
- Receive your Community Partner Welcome Kit in the mail.



### Getting Started

- We request that 50% of patron-facing staff who will help distributing the EKO passports or staff your EKO events watch a brief training video, which will be sent via email after registration.
- Display window cling, poster, and passports from your Welcome Kit in dedicated public location, such as front desk. Keep the FAQ reference sheet nearby, in case staff encounter questions!

### Checking In

- In order to track the impact of the Every Kid Outdoors Initiative, we ask for your help in gathering a bit of data. **You will receive a quarterly check-in survey asking:**
  - Distribution Centers
    - How many passports you have distributed (approximately).
  - Community Hubs
    - How many events with Adventure Challenge themes you have held.
    - How many people attended each event (approximately).
  - Any feedback or suggestions for future improvement.
  - Materials requests, for additional passports, posters, etc.

# TYPES OF PARTNERSHIP

Decide which works best for your organization!  
Find in-depth descriptions of each in the following pages.

## Distribution Centers

Where families pick up Adventure Challenge passports

## Community Hubs

Host ~4 events/year that incorporate an EKO Adventure Challenge

## Sponsors

Prize donors  
Venue donors  
Tabling



Got ideas for ways to work together? We want to hear from you!

# DISTRIBUTION CENTERS

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Getting Started (see How to Register)

- Sign up via our registration survey.
- 50% of patron-facing staff watch brief training video.
- Display window cling, passports, and poster in a public location.

### Passport Distribution

- Distribute passports to interested patrons.
- Refer to welcome packet FAQ sheet to answer patron questions.
- Direct patrons to scan the QR code on the EKO poster or the passports to sign up for the Adventure Challenge.

### Check-in & Materials Requests

- Complete a quarterly check-in survey to report approximately how many passports you have distributed.
- Request more passports and materials through this same survey.

### Cross-Promote Events

- Share information about upcoming Utah EKO quarterly events via your newsletters, social media, or displays.
- Add related events to our community calendar to be featured:
  - <https://recreation.utah.gov/events/community/add/>

### Annual Distribution Center Meeting

- At least one member of your organization attends our annual distribution center meeting (held in Spring) to receive updates and mentorship, and network with other centers across the state.



# COMMUNITY HUBS

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Getting Started (See how to Register)

- Sign up via our registration survey.
- 50% of patron-facing staff watch brief training video.
- Display a window cling and a poster in a public location.

### Host Adventure-Challenge Events

- Host ~4 events/year that incorporate an EKO Adventure Challenge.
  - Please see the following pages for event guidelines and tips.
  - If your organization can host less than 4 events/year, we still want to partner with you!
- Refer to welcome packet FAQ sheet to answer patron questions.
- Direct patrons to scan the QR code on the EKO poster or the passports to sign up for the Adventure Challenge.

### Check-in & Materials Requests

- Complete a quarterly check-in survey to report how many events you have held, and the approximate attendance at your events.
- Request more materials through this same survey.

### Cross-Promote Events

- Share information about upcoming Utah EKO quarterly events via your newsletters, social media, or displays.
- Add related events to our Community Calendar to be featured:
  - <https://recreation.utah.gov/events/community/add/>

### Quarterly Community Partner Meeting

- At least one person from your organization attends a quarterly Community Hub meeting to receive updates, engage in mentorship, and network with Community Hubs across the state.
  - Will meet 1-2 p.m. MST. Dates for 2026 are: Feb. 25, May 27, Aug. 26, and Nov. 18.
  - If you are not a Community Hub and would like to participate, please email us for an invite!

# SPONSORS

We couldn't do this without you!



**Monetary and in-kind donations to EKO are tax-deductible.**

## Prize Sponsors

- Kids who complete the Adventure Challenge are entered into a prize drawing. Your donation of prizes rewards their exploration with real-world experiences.
  - Examples of experience-based prizes: Day passes, lift tickets, guided adventures, fits-all-sizes outdoor gear

## Quarterly EKO Event Sponsors

Every Kid Outdoors hosts free quarterly events, which offer many ways to support:

- **Venue Sponsors:** Bring families to your space, and support a healthy childhood for kids in your community!
- **Tabling:** Our quarterly events offer tabling opportunities.
- **Other:** Sponsors can also donate gear or rental time, food or drink, or transportation for the challenges.

## Promotional Support

- Partners can promote the Every Kid Outdoors Initiative via their newsletters, websites, and social media platforms.

# 2026 SPONSOR LEVELS & BENEFITS

Your support helps us turn exploration into prizes, rewarding kids' efforts with real-world experiences. **We are primarily seeking donations of in-kind, experience-based prizes.**



## ALPINE | In-kind and venue donations = \$1,000+

- **Premier Logo Placement:** Featured logo placement on the Adventure Passport (anticipated distribution of 10,000+ Passports), posters at our distribution centers, and staff t-shirts.
- **Exclusive Name Recognition:** "This year's Adventure Challenge is presented by *Your Organization*." This phrase will be used at all four 2026 in-person events (anticipating 500+ attendees per event).
- **Dedicated Social Media Campaign:** A social post and story during the challenge period dedicated only to your organization, highlighting your prize(s) and your commitment to the EKO initiative.
- **Highlighted Feature on Website:** Large logo displayed on the Alpine-level sponsor section of our website with a hyperlink to your site.
- **Only 6 spots available!**



## CANYON | In-kind donations = \$500 - \$999

- **Prominent Logo Placement:** Featured logo placement on posters at our distribution centers and staff t-shirts.
- **Integrated Social Media Campaign:** Inclusion in "Adventure Challenge Prize Spotlight" posts shared with other Canyon-level sponsors, featuring your logo and mentioning your specific prize(s).
- **Feature on Website:** Logo displayed on the Canyon-level sponsor section of our website with a hyperlink to your site.



## MEADOW | In-kind donations = up to \$499

- **Social Media Shoutout:** Inclusion in a "Thank You to Our Sponsors" post.
- **Supporting Logo Placement:** Logo placement on our staff t-shirts.
- **Feature on Website:** Logo displayed on the Meadow-level sponsor section of our website with a hyperlink to your site.

**Custom sponsorship opportunities available!**

# BENEFITS OF PARTNERING

## with Utah's Every Kid Outdoors Initiative

### Get Healthy Utah Designation

- Partnering with Utah's Every Kid Outdoors to distribute passports and/or host community events can count towards earning a Get Healthy Utah designation for your city.
  - Learn more at:  
<https://gethealthyutah.org/>



### More Robust Grant Applications

- Partnering with Every Kid Outdoors can strengthen your grant applications by demonstrating that you already offer programming that gets kids outdoors.
  - Learn more about the Youth Engagement Grants offered by the Division of Outdoor Recreation in the Appendix.

### Increased Traffic

- More foot traffic to your location.
- Highlight on the DOR website as a partner.
- Cross-promotion of events.

### Free Community Partner Welcome Kit

- Includes a window cling, poster, FAQ reference sheet, and (for distribution centers), an initial set of 20 to 200 passports (depending on how many you request), and a display box.
  - Additional passports can be requested through the quarterly check-in/materials request survey that will be sent via email.

### Strengthen Your Community Through Nature Connection

- Foster physical, emotional, and mental well-being for youth in your community by promoting an active, outdoor childhood and inspiring nature connection.



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# PLANNING PARTNER EVENTS

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A Guide for Community Hubs

# EVERY KID OUTDOORS PARTNER EVENTS

## What is an Every Kid Outdoors Partner Event?

- An event that gets kids outdoors!
  - Use the 14 EKO Adventure Challenges as inspiration.
  - Consider incorporating an Adventure Challenge into the events your organization already hosts!
- An event that is free or low-cost.
- If possible, distribute EKO passports and offer information about the EKO program at the event.
- Register your event as an Every Kid Outdoors partner event to access our marketing media kit and have your event featured on the Division of Outdoor Recreation Community calendar.
  - <https://recreation.utah.gov/events/community/add/>

**Events should highlight your local geography and recreation resources.  
What does your community love or value?**



**Please see our media kit for information about using Utah's  
Every Kid Outdoors logo and branding to promote your event.**

# EVERY KID OUTDOORS PARTNER EVENT GUIDELINES

## While planning your event:

- Fill out this form to register your Adventure Challenge-themed EKO partner event and add it to our Community Calendar:
  - <https://recreation.utah.gov/events/community/add/>
- See the next page for Event Hosting Tips.
- After filling out the event registration form, you'll receive access to the EKO media kit, which you can use while creating flyers, social posts, and other marketing materials for your event.
  - Please refer to our branding guidelines for best practices.
  - Market your event as an Every Kid Outdoors partner event (vs. an Every Kid Outdoors event)
  - Consider adding the Adventure Challenge badge(s) that coordinate with your event to the invitation!
- While you can host an EKO partner event without registering the event with us, you will not be able to use our logo or media materials for your unregistered event, nor will your event be featured on our calendar.



## Ready to start inviting people to your event?

**Register your event to be featured on our Community Calendar!**

<https://recreation.utah.gov/events/community/add/>

# TIPS FOR HOSTING AN EKO PARTNER EVENT

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## Market the event

- Reach out to local schools first. Including your event in the school newsletter is an easy and excellent way to reach a large number of families in your area.
- Contact local print magazines or newspapers (several months in advance is best) and ask them to include your event in their Calendar of Events.
- Request an interview or event highlight on a local radio station.
- Market the event on your social media accounts.
- Hang flyers up at local businesses.



## Create a registration system

- To count attendance at your event and avoid stress from an unexpected crowd, establish a sign-up system.
- Try using Eventbrite or a system already used by your institution.



## Consider logistics ahead of time

- Where will people use the restroom, dispose of trash, or get water? How can you incorporate sustainability into logistics? You can encourage people to bring reusable water bottles, provide recycling options, and teach “leave no trace” principles.



## Lean into local

- Think about the unique geography and recreation opportunities near you. How can you incorporate these?
- Consider collaborating with other local organizations.
  - For example, you can work with local nonprofits, state parks, educational institutions, municipalities, retailers, or restaurants.



# TIPS FOR HOSTING AN EKO PARTNER EVENT

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## Provide the event for free or at low cost

- Offering free events attracts a larger audience.
- Local business sponsorships can help cover costs to keep activities free.
- Grant funding is available through the Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation. Consider applying for the Utah Children's Outdoor Recreation and Education Grant (UCORE) for programming.
  - See the youth engagement grants page in the appendix.



## Be creative!

- Use the Adventure Challenge themes as a launching point. If you are providing opportunities for families in your community to recreate outside, you are doing it right!
- 

## IDEAS FOR EKO PARTNER EVENTS

Consider incorporating an Adventure Challenge theme into events your organization already hosts!



### Starry Skies Adventure

- Collaborate with your local library to check out a telescope. No telescopes available? No problem. Choose an open space to gather at night - try using a constellation app for guidance!



### Plant Discovery Adventure

- Lead a walk through the local park or nearby hiking trail. Use a plant identification app (like iNaturalist) or a field guide to learn about native plants in your area.



### Utah Forever Adventure

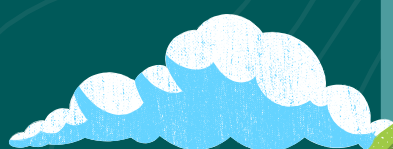
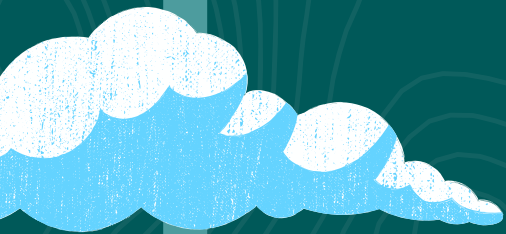
- Organize a community trash clean-up day, or collaborate with a local environmental organization to host an invasive plant removal event.



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# APPENDIX

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# YOUTH ENGAGEMENT GRANTS

Grants are available from the Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation for outdoor recreation programming and outdoor classrooms for youth, up to \$15,000.

## Who is eligible?

- Educational institutions
- Cities/towns/counties
- Tribal governments
- Non-profits

Grants open **Aug. 31, 2026**  
and close **Oct. 16, 2026**

## To learn more, contact:

**Caroline Weiler**  
Youth Engagement  
Program Manager  
[cweiler@utah.gov](mailto:cweiler@utah.gov)



Scan for grant resources  
and to learn how to apply



# REQUESTING SPONSORSHIP FROM LOCAL BUSINESSES

for Community Hubs requesting event support

## Example email:

Partnership Invitation: Supporting Utah's Every Kid Outdoors Initiative

Dear [Contact Person Name or Partnership Team],

My name is [ ], and I'm contacting you about Utah's Every Kid Outdoors Initiative. It's a free statewide legislative initiative that empowers young Utahns to get outdoors through 14 adventure challenges, designed to foster a lifelong love for the outdoors.

Every participant receives a free Adventure Challenge Passport—a personal adventure tracker, used to collect badges, record memories, and earn outdoor accomplishments.

### **The Challenge: Get Every Kid Outdoors**

[Organization name or facility name] is rising to meet the challenge as a Utah's Every Kid Outdoors Community Hub. We host free or low-cost Adventure Challenge-themed events.

This is where we are seeking your support! We invite [ ] to join our mission by providing [resources, funding, materials] for our next Adventure Challenge-themed event.

A partnership with [organization name] as a Utah's Every Kid Outdoors Community Hub shows a profound commitment to the health and future of Utah's children. We greatly appreciate your consideration in helping us ignite this love for the outdoors.

We look forward to talking about how your services can inspire a new generation of adventurers.

Warm Regards,  
{Your Name}



# BENEFITS OF OUTDOOR RECREATION FOR CHILDREN



EVERY KID OUTDOORS  
ADVENTURE  
CHALLENGE



## PHYSICAL HEALTH



- Strengthens bones & muscles
- Increase Vitamin D absorption
- Enhances motor skills
- Improves vision/eye development
- Increases physical well-being and improves sleep quality
- Improves fitness & reduces obesity risk

## MENTAL & EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING



- Reduced stress & anxiety
- Boosted mood & happiness
- Enhanced emotional resilience & mental health
- Sense of mastery & connection with nature
- Promotes and deepens spirituality
- Strengthens relationships with families & communities

## COGNITIVE GROWTH



- Increased volumes of both gray and white matter in the brain
- Improves the ability to deal with risk, problem solve, think creatively, & cooperate with others
- Improved spatial & directional awareness
- Increased attention span
- Better emotional regulation

## ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE



- Improves focus, concentration & working memory
- Improves academic achievement & scores on standardized tests
- Improves mental processing for tedious activities
- Fewer discipline issues
- Increased motivation for & understanding of STEM learning

## SOCIAL SKILLS & DEVELOPMENT



- Enhanced teamwork, communication & interpersonal relationships
- Stronger friendships
- Improves social and emotional learning



This message is brought to you by the Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation.

For more ideas for family fun in the outdoors, visit [Recreation.Utah.gov/eko](https://Recreation.Utah.gov/eko)

### STUDIES CITED:

Cognitive Growth: Nicole et al. 2018; Bento et al. 2017; Fayanto et al., 2019;

Social Skills: Cooley et al. 2015; Thorsteinsson et al. 2023; Molyneux et al. 2022

Physical Health: McCurdy McPhil et al., 2010; Gunter et al., 2012; Ouyang et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2020; Zayatz et al., 2025; Karthikeyan, et al., 2022.

Mental & Emotional Wellbeing: Jackson et al., 2021; Wicks et al., 2022; Benham, 2023; Puhakka, 2025; Harris, 2016; Schein 2014; Izenstark et al., 2016.

Academic Performance: Wade et al., 2020; Vella-Brodick et al., 2002; Mackenzie et al. 2018; Aspinall, 2011; Wang et al. 2023

# ARE WE OVERLOOKING THE OUTDOORS?



***Spending time outdoors, or "green time," is a powerful counterbalance to the negative effects of screen time.***

Did you know that children ages 8 to 18 get 7.5 hours of daily screen time for entertainment alone? That adds up to **nearly four months a year spent looking at screens** for fun. Compare that to the four to seven minutes a day the average American child spends playing outside.



## THE SCREEN TIME EFFECT



### **BRAIN DEVELOPMENT:**

Negatively impacts the development of brain areas responsible for attention, complex memory, visual processing, and empathy in young children.



### **EYESIGHT:**

Linked to increased rates of myopia (nearsightedness) due to prolonged close-up focus and lack of natural light.



### **MENTAL WELL-BEING:**

Associated with cognitive decline and memory problems in adolescents, and linked to higher risks of Internet addiction.



### **SENSORY PROCESSING ISSUES:**

The highly stimulating, two-dimensional nature of screens overloads a child's visual and auditory systems, depriving them of the diverse sensory input necessary for healthy development. This can lead to sensory overload, fidgeting, and difficulty concentrating in real-world settings.



### **POOR POSTURAL CONTROL:**

Sitting and staring at screens can weaken a child's core and neck muscles, leading to poor posture and fatigue. This lack of foundational stability can also make fine motor tasks, such as writing, more difficult.



### **BALANCE & COORDINATION DEFICITS:**

Screen time replaces the active, dynamic movements necessary for developing the vestibular and proprioceptive systems. As a result, children may struggle with balance, spatial awareness, and coordinated movements.



## GREEN TIME ADVANTAGE



### **BRAIN & SKILLS:**

Mitigates the negative neurodevelopmental outcomes of screen time. Outdoor experiences can improve skills in attention, memory, and even nonverbal social cues.



### **VISION HEALTH:**

Proven to slow the deterioration of vision in children with myopia. Regular outdoor time is crucial for healthy eye development.



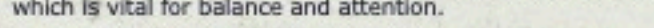
### **MENTAL RESILIENCE:**

Protects against the mental health conditions and cognitive decline linked to excessive screen use. Nature can serve as a protective buffer.



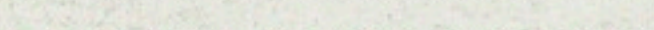
### **SENSORY & MOTOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT:**

Outdoor play helps children integrate their senses and build a strong foundation for learning. Exposing them to various textures, temperatures, and sounds it helps develop essential sensory and motor skills. Activities like climbing and swinging also help build the vestibular sense, which is vital for balance and attention.



### **CORE STRENGTH & STABILITY:**

Outdoor activities like climbing, jumping, and balancing strengthen a child's core muscles. A strong core is essential for good posture, handwriting, and overall coordination.



### **EMOTIONAL REGULATION & PROBLEM SOLVING:**

Outdoor play often involves risks and challenges, which help children learn about their own capabilities. Without pre-programmed activities to guide them, they learn to think independently and solve problems creatively. This can help them develop self-regulation and reduce stress.



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# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

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