



2026 – 2031

Five-year Strategic Plan

SCAN FOR MORE INFO



Water Education Colorado (WEco) was originally funded through legislation in 2002 with the task of educating and engaging Colorado citizens to ensure a sustainable water future for Colorado.

Vision:

At Water Education Colorado, we're on a mission to ensure Coloradans are informed on water issues and equipped to make smart decisions that guide our state to a sustainable water future. We do this by providing balanced and accurate information, education and leadership programs. We understand that water issues can be both complex and polarizing, so we work to bring together diverse perspectives, build bridges among sectors and provide valuable reporting, training and resources for all Coloradans.

Mission:

We ensure Coloradans are informed on water issues and equipped to make decisions that guide our state to a sustainable water future.

Core Values:

- *Water is Life*
- *Information is for All*
- *Objectivity is Fundamental*
- *Knowledge is Progress*
- *Collaboration is Powerful*

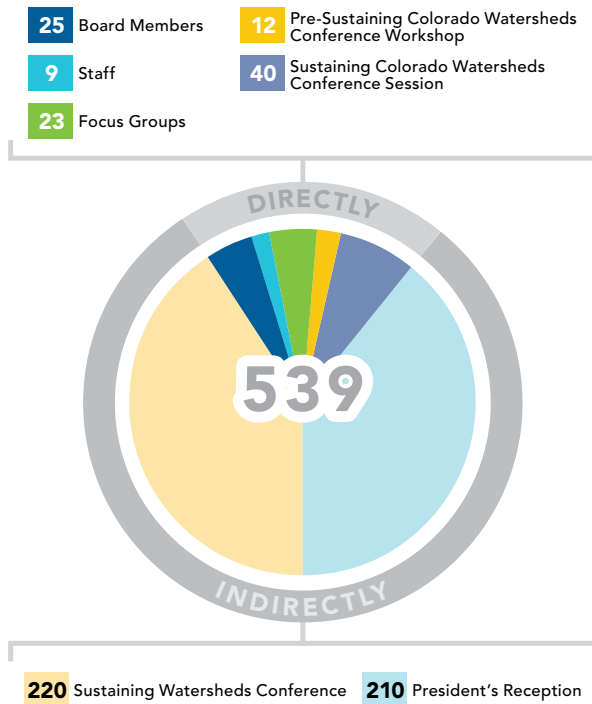


LEARN MORE ABOUT WECO, ITS VALUES AND PEOPLE AT:
[WATEREDUCATIONCOLORADO.ORG/ABOUT-US/MISSION-VALUES/](https://watereducationcolorado.org/about-us/mission-values/)

Strategic Planning: An Inclusive Process

In early 2025, WEco engaged Lacy Consulting Services (LCS) to develop a comprehensive five-year strategic plan. LCS intentionally structured the process to prioritize inclusivity at every stage. Through a collaborative approach, input was actively sought from board members, staff, organizational leadership, partners, and beneficiaries of WEco’s programs and educational offerings. This broad engagement ensured the resulting strategies were closely aligned with the unique needs of Coloradans and remained true to the vision articulated by WEco.

INDIVIDUALS ENGAGED:



Through various engagements with Board, staff, and partners, WEco Strategic Planning Committee identified a total of four strategic pillars and nine strategies. A series of actions were crafted for Year One to help advance the work. Staff and Board will review the strategic plan yearly and update with next steps to ensure the strategic plan remains dynamic and relevant.

Additional strategies that were not chosen to advance within WEco’s current funding and capacity are available in Appendix A. If additional capacity and funding become available, WEco can pull from unchosen strategies.

THIS STRATEGIC PLAN ENGAGED OVER 500 INDIVIDUALS AT THE FOLLOWING EVENTS:

MAY	WEco Strategic Planning Committee (Board and staff members)
JUNE	WEco Board Retreat WEco Strategic Planning Committee (Board and staff members)
JULY	Focus groups with partners WEco Strategic Planning Committee (Board and staff members)
AUG	Focus groups with partners WEco Strategic Planning Committee (Board and staff members)
SEPT	WEco President’s Reception WEco All-Staff Meeting WEco Strategic Planning Committee (Board and staff members) WEco department-specific meetings (fundraising, publications, programs, etc.)
OCT	Sustaining Colorado Watersheds WEco Board Retreat WEco Strategic Planning Committee (Board and staff members)
NOV	WEco Strategic Planning Committee (Board and staff members) WEco All-Staff Meeting
DEC	WEco Strategic Planning Committee (Board and staff members)

The final strategies and actions were prioritized and detailed by WEco staff in early December as they are responsible for carrying out this strategic plan.

Core Strategic Approach

Mutually Beneficial Partnerships – WEco is dedicated to building mutually beneficial partnerships that authentically support both partner organizations’ goals and advance WEco’s vision. Programs will be designed to be self-sustaining, deliver educational value for all Coloradans, and generate enough revenue for WEco to fund the essential work of its team into the future.

Notes of Clarification: WEco will continue to seek funding to support implementation of current, high-standard water education programming throughout Colorado. This strategic plan focuses on those efforts that keep WEco relevant and sustainable over the next 5 years.

This is a combined strategy and first-year action plan. Each strategy will need to be revisited yearly by WEco to create a new action plan. External and internal factors tend to change every six to 12 months. This approach keeps the strategic plan dynamic and relevant over the next five years.

Strategic Plan Snapshot



PILLAR 1:

**Innovative
Technology to
Advance Water
Education**



PILLAR 2:

**Outreach to
New Audiences
(youth and
Spanish-speaking)**



PILLAR 3:

**Diverse
and Sustainable
Funding**



PILLAR 4:

**Effective
Workplace
Culture**

STRATEGIES:

- Increase digital engagement by 60% within five years by developing and distributing at least 50 multimedia education pieces annually (videos, podcasts, interactive content) that target diverse audiences
- Establish partnerships with at least two niche influencers per year (e.g. boating, outdoor lifestyle) to co-create water education content and extend reach into new audiences

STRATEGIES:

- Increase reach to 1,500 students and/or Spanish-speaking community members annually by collaborating with existing educators, community leaders, and partner organizations
- Form and sustain formal partnerships with at least 10 organizations already working with youth (K-12, Tribal youth, young professionals) and/or Spanish-speaking communities across Colorado within five years

STRATEGIES:

- Increase total members by 50% and achieve 90% annual retention rate by year five
- Diversify funding opportunities and maintain a policy of ensuring no single source constitutes more than 30% of WEco’s funding
- Improve sponsor satisfaction by formalizing follow-ups for events, programs, and publications sponsors to ensure satisfaction and continued future sponsorship

STRATEGIES:

- Increase and maintain staff satisfaction at 85%+ over five years in the following areas: Competitive Compensation, Career Development Pathways, Onboarding, Work Satisfaction, Travel Frequency, and Board-Staff Interactions
- Increase local capacity across two regions in Colorado to improve regional engagement

Strategic Pillars, Strategies, First-Year Actions, and Milestones

PILLAR 1:

Innovative Technology to Advance Water Education



STRATEGY: Increase digital engagement by 60% within five years by developing and distributing at least 50 multimedia education pieces annually (videos, podcasts, interactive content) that target diverse audiences



1 FIRST YEAR KEY ACTIONS

- Develop an approach and set targets for creating a variety of multimedia pieces
- Improve strategic partnership for channel of engagement (e.g. Colorado Sun, Water Congress)
- Develop accessible content such as audio articles
- Increase partnerships with potential content creators
- Publications Committee and staff update yearly milestones

MILESTONES

YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and Publications Committee determine specific multimedia goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15% increase in engagement online 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update progress toward minimum 12% increase per year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update progress toward reaching 60% increase within five years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update approaches based on new technology and platforms

RESPONSIBLE PARTY

Lead - Publications and Digital Resources Managing Editor; Support - Marketing, Communication, and Outreach Manager

METRICS

12% Increase in social media engagement per year, # of likes, # of comments, # of reshares

STRATEGY: Establish partnerships with at least two niche influencers per year (e.g. boating, outdoor lifestyle) to co-create water education content and extend reach into new audiences



1 FIRST YEAR KEY ACTIONS

- Develop a list of niche influencers that WEco wants to engage
- Invite influencers to an intimate “Influencers Reception” to let them get to know WEco and to better understand their platform
- Develop relationships with key niche influencers
- Co-create water education content with two influencers
- Co-develop a process for best practices and approaches for working with influencers

MILESTONES

YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an implementation plan, set framework for collaboration on water education with influencers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to implement plan and assess satisfaction of relationships, reassess framework for collaboration on water education with influencers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain mutually beneficial partnerships, develop relationships with two key niche influencers and assess satisfaction of relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop relationships with two key niche influencers and assess satisfaction of relationships

RESPONSIBLE PARTY

Lead - Marketing, Communication, and Outreach Manager; Support -Publications and Digital Resources Managing Editor

METRICS

Two formal partnerships with niche influencers per year, # of attendees at “Influencers Reception”, # of engagements through co-created content, Influencers feel heard and trusted (survey)

PILLAR 2:

Outreach to New Audiences (youth and Spanish-speaking)



STRATEGY: Increase reach to 1,500 students and/or Spanish-speaking community members annually by collaborating with existing educators, community leaders, and partner organizations



1 FIRST YEAR KEY ACTIONS

- Assess all past attempts to engage youth and Spanish-speaking audiences looking for challenges, successes, and opportunities
- Continue to develop and distribute educational resources in English and Spanish
- Establish a relationship with Colorado Department of Education
- Identify geographic scope of communities with a high level of Spanish-speaking residents
- Meet with Spanish-speaking residents to determine which water issues are important
- Review best practices and approaches for creating a youth advisory committee
- Conduct a review of all programming to determine if any should be sunset to allow for new programming

MILESTONES

YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programming assessment conducted, develop list of mutually beneficial partnership opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with or establish a youth and/or Spanish-speaking focused advisory council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New resources created to specifically reach youth and/or Spanish-speaking communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significantly increase direct engagement with youth and/or Spanish-speaking communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review approach to yearly reach and update as needed

RESPONSIBLE PARTY

Lead - Program and Outreach Coordinator; Support - Programs Director

METRICS

of resources developed in Spanish, # of resources developed for youth, # of materials distributed, # of counties/regions engaged, # of meetings with Spanish-speaking communities, # of people reached with distribution

STRATEGY: Form and sustain formal partnerships with at least 10 organizations already working with youth (K-12, Tribal youth, Young Professionals) and/or Spanish-speaking communities across Colorado within five years

1 FIRST YEAR KEY ACTIONS

- Develop a list of youth organizations WEco is excited to engage
- Develop a list of organizations that work with Spanish-speaking communities that WEco is excited to engage
- Gift organizations free access to an experiential opportunity in year one that showcases WEco’s work
- Develop a formal partnership with at least two organizations by the end of year one
- Determine if there are any universities that make sense to incorporate into this strategy to capture young professionals

MILESTONES

YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrow scope of work within this strategy, develop a formal partnership with first two organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop two formal partnerships, co-develop activities for year three with new partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-implement activities, assess satisfaction of formal partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue implementing activities, develop four new formal partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop one new formal partnership, assess satisfaction of formal partnerships in preparation for next five-year strategic plan

RESPONSIBLE PARTY

Lead - Program and Outreach Coordinator;
Support - Programs Director

METRICS

of youth-centered partnerships formed, # of Spanish-speaking centered partnerships formed, # of times engaged before formal partnership is formed



PILLAR 3:

Diverse and Sustainable Funding



STRATEGY: Increase total members by 50% and achieve 90% annual retention rate by year five

1 FIRST YEAR KEY ACTIONS

- Review options and best practices for membership auto-renewal
- Implement membership auto-renewal
- Develop and implement a member survey to determine needs, wants, and satisfaction level with membership



MILESTONES

YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a plan for increasing total members and annual membership, survey members for wants, needs, and satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll out an auto-renewal system for membership, Increase membership by 25% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement key items in the membership plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey members for wants, needs, and satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase total membership by 50% from 2026

RESPONSIBLE PARTY

Lead - Membership and Development Manager;
Support - Operations Coordinator

METRICS

of new members per year, retention rate of established members, satisfaction of members



STRATEGY: Diversify funding opportunities and maintain a policy of ensuring no single source constitutes more than 30% of WEco’s funding

1 FIRST YEAR KEY ACTIONS

- Conduct a funding analysis with Board, key staff and funders to determine the landscape of funding opportunities
- Identify critical relationship gaps in funding opportunities
- Create a plan to diversify funding opportunities
- Create a robust and technologically efficient tracking system



MILESTONES

YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate and update policy around single source funding, complete funding analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring on additional Board members that fill a gap in fundraising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a diverse portfolio of funders and bring in one new major funder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess funding strategies and ensure a diversity of avenues for achieving goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review funding sources pursued to capture successes and lessons learned



RESPONSIBLE PARTY

Lead - Executive Director; Support - Finance and Fundraising Committee

METRICS

of Board members filling relational gaps in funding opportunities, # of new funding opportunities pursued, # of new funding opportunities secured, staff satisfaction with tracking system

STRATEGY: Improve sponsor satisfaction by formalizing follow-ups for events, programs, and publications sponsors to ensure satisfaction and continued future sponsorship

1 FIRST YEAR KEY ACTIONS

- Survey development for sponsors (Ex. questions: Were expectations set when initial sponsorship was secured? Did we meet your expectations? Do you feel your funding was utilized properly? How can we improve our approach to better align with your goals?)
- Set a timeframe for sponsor engagement
 - Pre- and post-event sponsorship
 - Pre-, mid- (when speaking they are speaking to program attendees), and post-program engagement
 - Pre- and Post publication sponsorship

MILESTONES

YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a sponsor program and survey mechanism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain or increase sponsorship income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase sponsorship income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisit sponsorship plan and update based on data received 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain or increase sponsorship income

RESPONSIBLE PARTY

Lead - Membership and Development Manager;
Support - Executive Director

METRICS

Positive response to survey questions, increased or maintained sponsorship, amount of sponsorship funding received per year

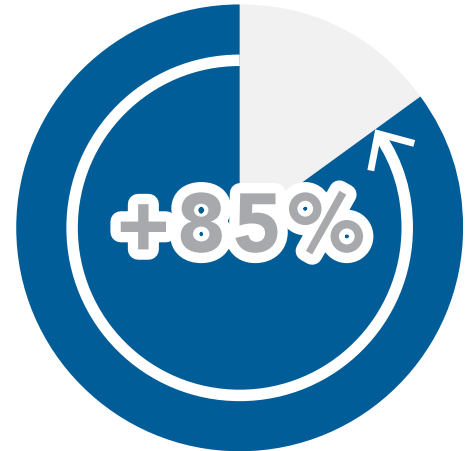


PILLAR 4:

Effective Workplace Culture



STRATEGY: Increase and maintain staff satisfaction at 85%+ over five years in the following areas: Competitive Compensation, Career Development Pathways, Onboarding, Work Satisfaction, Travel Frequency, and Board-Staff Interactions



1 FIRST YEAR KEY ACTIONS

- Review and update job description and annual plan of the person implementing this work
- Conduct a compensation analysis
- Create a yearly staff satisfaction survey
- Determine baseline data from first survey and then implement bi-annually
- Develop a tracking mechanism for data collection
- Identify burnout moments per person, as the cause of burnout is different
- Assess the key areas being measured and develop plans to maximize satisfaction for each
- Implement plan to increase satisfaction

MILESTONES

YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish an anonymous survey for all employees, finalize staff satisfaction maximization plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roll out staff satisfaction maximization plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain and expand benefits where needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement second compensation analysis, update staff satisfaction maximization plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain and expand benefits where needed, continue bi-annual survey

RESPONSIBLE PARTY

Lead - Executive Director; Support - Operations Coordinator; Additional Support - Consultant

METRICS

Staff satisfaction over 85% in each area, career development plans for every staff, staff feel heard throughout the process (survey)

STRATEGY: Increase local capacity across two regions in Colorado to improve regional engagement

1 FIRST YEAR KEY ACTIONS

- Identify which regions WEco needs to expand their presence
- Expand ambassador program with a focus on regional priorities
- Determine if a remote position living in a specific region is feasible
- Develop training for WEco partners and ambassadors to represent WEco at certain events throughout the state
- Identify a list of regional events that WEco would like ambassadors, partners, and/or remote staff members to attend to improve regional engagement
- Host a regional thank you event for Ambassadors, Partners and remote staff member

MILESTONES

YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map statewide partnership and geographic gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify mutually beneficial partnerships across all basins and build upon existing programs and projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a needs assessment and funding plan for statewide strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of engagements in key regions with minimal travel from WEco staff in Denver office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update approaches accordingly

RESPONSIBLE PARTY

Lead - Executive Director;
Support - Programs Director

METRICS

of Partners and remote staff in identified regions, # of communities covered by Partners and/or remote staff member, # of events attended by Partners and/or remote staff member to represent WEco, partners' and remote staff member's feeling of connection with WEco



Appendix A

Strategy Prioritization

Items in **bold** were chosen to be included as priorities in the 2026-2031 Strategic Plan.



Innovative Technology to Advance Water Education

Strategy: Develop and distribute at least 50 multimedia educational pieces annually (videos, podcasts, interactive content) targeting diverse audiences, increasing digital engagement by 60% within five years.

Strategy: Establish partnerships with at least 2 niche influencers per year (e.g., boating, outdoor lifestyle) to co-create water education content and extend reach into new audiences.

Strategy: Develop and implement distribution partnerships with 10 community organizations and media outlets to expand content reach beyond traditional water audiences by year five.

Strategy: Produce and distribute water education content in at least two additional languages e.g., Spanish, storytelling format, engaging 10,000 individuals annually through inclusive programming by year five.

Strategy: Pilot at least one high-risk innovative campaigns annually (e.g., meme pages, influencer takeovers) focused on younger demographics to diversify engagement.

Strategy: Create and maintain an accessible online repository of verified data sets and educational reference materials, with at least 20,000 unique users annually by year five.

Strategy: Establish a dedicated rapid response digital task force by year 2 to monitor and counteract water-related misinformation, reducing misinformation spread by 50% on key platforms by year five.

Strategy: Implement a digital-first social media strategy that grows followers and engagement on major platforms by 100% over five years, including ongoing social media training for communications staff.



Outreach to New Audiences (youth and Spanish-speaking)

Strategy: Form and sustain formal partnerships with at least 10 organizations already working with youth (K-12, tribal youth, young professionals) and Spanish-speaking communities across Colorado within five years.

Strategy: Collaborate with educators, community leaders, and partner organizations to co-create and distribute water education curriculum and resources in English and Spanish, reaching at least 10,000 students and community members annually.

Strategy: Deliver annual training and resources to at least 20 partners working with youth and Spanish-speaking populations, supporting environmental justice and equity with measurable improvements in their water education capacity (survey-based).

Strategy: Adopt robust language access plans; ensure all major water education communications are available in Spanish and target a 50% increase in Spanish-language resource downloads and media placements in Spanish-speaking outlets by year five.

Strategy: Develop ongoing, reciprocal feedback and engagement mechanisms (e.g., advisory councils, listening sessions) with youth and Spanish-speaking community members, achieving at least 200 participants per year and 80% satisfaction with WEco's responsiveness.

Strategy: Annually implement at least one bold campaign that gives youth and Spanish-speaking advocates full ownership (e.g., advocacy workshops, public storytelling projects, media takeovers), measuring participation and visibility.

Strategy: Establish a youth leadership program, prioritizing representation of Spanish-speaking and marginalized youth; ensure at least 25 youth are mentored annually and at least 10 youth-led projects launched per year by year five.

Strategy: Maintain transparent public reporting and commit to full implementation of youth and Spanish-speaking strategies; no less than 90% of planned activities executed on time each year.

Strategy: Ensure that at least 50% of public-facing water education events and campaigns feature youth and/or Spanish-speaking leaders as the primary voices or facilitators.

Effective Workplace Culture

Strategy: Implement targeted retention programs including competitive compensation plans, career development pathways, and onboarding improvements to reduce staff turnover by 25% and board turnover by 20% by year five.

Strategy: Develop clear guidelines and training regarding staff-board interaction, role expectations, and communication processes by year 2, with 100% staff and board completion of relevant training by year three.

Strategy: Roll out a phased compensation review and adjustment plan aligned with market standards to increase average staff salaries by 20% and create documented career growth plans for 100% of staff by year five.

Strategy: Pilot decentralized staffing by placing staff in at least three regional centers statewide within three years to increase regional engagement and reduce burnout, measured by staff retention and regional program growth.

Strategy: Conduct annual workload assessments to identify staff burnout risks and refine strategic priorities to focus on top two-three initiatives, improving staff productivity and satisfaction scores by 30% by year four.

Strategy: Transition from outdated systems (e.g., manual time tracking, CRM, print receipts) to digital platforms within two years, achieving 100% staff adoption and reducing administrative time by 30%.

Strategy: Review all board committees to define clear mandates and sunset inactive committees, completing this refresh within 18 months, and reporting increased board engagement scores by 25% by year three.

Strategy: Institute biannual leadership reports to staff and board detailing workplace culture status, challenges, and progress, maintaining a minimum 75% staff satisfaction with communication by year three.

Strategy: Provide quarterly training and coaching for leaders on vulnerability, psychological safety, and trauma-informed practices, with 90% leadership participation and improved staff well-being scores by year five.

Diverse and Sustainable Funding

Strategy: Launch auto-renewal membership, increase total membership by 50%, and achieve 90% annual retention rate by year five.

Strategy: Decrease reliance on state agency allocations (e.g., CWCB) so that no single source constitutes more than 30% of WEco's annual operating budget by year five.

Strategy: Implement donor relations program with quarterly check-ins and annual digestible impact reports for all major funders and sponsors, improving donor satisfaction to 80%+ by year five.

Strategy: Create unified sponsorship packages (combining, e.g., events and publications) for funders, resulting in a 30% increase in sponsorship revenue and reduced administrative time by 25% within three years.

Strategy: Develop and maintain at least five active corporate giving partnerships, generating \$200,000 in unrestricted corporate donations annually by year five.

Strategy: Secure funding from at least 10 new foundations or private grant sources, with no less than 25% of annual income from these new sources by year five.

Strategy: Convert at least 50% of foundation/project grant support to multi-year general operating funding by year five.

Strategy: Achieve 90% retention of grant writing/management staff, and ensure 100% on-time completion of grant deliverables.

Strategy: Annually apply for grants and build philanthropic relationships in at least three new states beyond Colorado, increasing out-of-state funding by 20% by year five.

Strategy: Pilot 2 high-risk/high-reward fundraising campaigns (e.g., AI-driven donor targeting, cross-sector partnerships) each year to identify new sustainable funding streams, measuring ROI and scalability potential.



Acknowledgement

WEco extends heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to the development of this inclusive strategic plan. We are especially grateful to the individuals that volunteered their time to participate in focus groups and engaged with us at conferences. This ensured a diversity of partners and voices were reflected as we look to the future and work together to advance water education throughout Colorado.

Want to Get Involved or Learn More?

If you have any questions or wish to engage further to help advance our strategies, please reach out:

STOP BY :: CSU Spur: 4777 National Western Drive, Denver, CO 80216

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Board and Staff involved in the Strategic Plan

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If you have questions about the strategic planning process, please reach out to Lacy Consulting Services at leander@lacyconsultingservices.com or reach them through their contact form at www.lacyconsultingservices.com.

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