**The Ouray Ice Park Accessibility Program**

**Mission Statement:**

Increase access, opportunity and participation in the Ouray Ice Park for under-represented communities and economically and physically disadvantaged youth and persons.

**Why is this program needed?**

Ouray, CO brands itself as the outdoor recreation capital of Colorado, but there are many who face economic, physical, and cultural barriers that prevent them from enjoying the Ouray Ice Park and the San Juan area as a whole. The goal of this program is to increase accessibility for these communities. Our community has been blessed by the increasing levels of tourism and economic growth in the area, and this program presents an opportunity for us to give back. The Ouray Ice Park is internationally-renowned and attracts visitors from across the globe; I cannot think of another organization that is in a better place to be a leader in outdoor accessibility programming. The more we educate and get these groups into the outdoors, the greater the appreciation they will have for the environment and conservation. Investing in these causes is investing in people’s lives and the future of the planet.

**The Three Pillars:**

1. Annual scholarship fund managed by the Ouray Ice Park, Inc. to be awarded to individuals of our target social and economic demographics.
2. 2-Day Annual Event hosted by the OIPI for disadvantaged youth and persons, economically and physically, and under-represented communities.
3. CGO Partnership Program

**Purpose/Mindset behind the Three Pillars:**

1. Annual Scholarship Fund
   1. The Ouray Ice Park taps its resources to raise money dedicated to alleviating the costs of getting disadvantaged persons into the OIP. Our aim is to go big: we’d like to provide financial support for 10s of people to travel to and from, stay and eat at, gear up for and participate in events, either organized like an Ice Fest or as Institutional Groups such as Paradox Sports have done. Perhaps there could be tiers ranging from partial to full support, depending on need.
2. 2-Day Annual Event
   1. Give these communities an event of their own, something that is separate from the blitz of the Ouray Ice Festival. This event should highlight the unique and wonderful characteristics of each group represented. It is important that people experience such gatherings with affinity groups and have athletes and instructors around that look like them and have elements of their backgrounds in common.
3. CGO Partnership Program
   1. Guiding companies survive and even thrive in the winter because of access to the Ouray Ice Park. This program gives CGOs an opportunity to give back and provide resources to make these scholarships, events, and ice climbing days come to fruition. It can be difficult for guiding companies to work directly with accessibility organizations due to red-tape, program approval processes, and limited resources. However, if we combine the resources, relationships, and voice behind the Ouray Ice Park with the professional know-how, manpower, and experience of guiding companies, we have the opportunity to increase accessibility at greater numbers than if we all tried to do this on our own.

**What Partnerships Can Help Make these Programs Possible?**

1. **Annual Scholarship Fund**
   1. The same donors/sponsors that already give to the OIP are an incredible resource to explore
   2. OIPI should partner with national organization such as Climbing 4 Change, Color the Crag, Paradox, etc., who have experience with such programs, and also with organizations with local operations like Camp Yoshi and our schools, that can identify and bring people from these communities near and far into the Park.
   3. State and Federal Government Grants
      1. For the same reason that coordinating CGOs resources under the OIP umbrella would be more effective than CGOs pursuing these causes alone, the OIP as an entity has a better chance and opportunity to apply and succeed in securing tax-payer funds to secure these causes. Colorado is starting the Colorado Outdoor Equity Grant Fund to further the same causes as this proposed program (with a special focus on economically disadvantaged); this could be a good place to start once it is in place.
   4. Ice Park Membership Add-On
      1. The OIP could offer an add-on on the same page people purchase Ice Park Memberships. For instance, when someone goes to choose their membership level, they could be presented with the option to donate to the scholarship fund.
2. **2-Day Annual Event**
   1. This is an opportunity to involve the rest of Ouray’s business community. The Wright Opera House might be interested in hosting key-note speakers that are members of the disadvantaged and under-represented communities. The closing ceremony of the two-day event could be hosted at the WOH, the OIP, or elsewhere. Restaurants and hotels in town could be interested in offering discounts to people participating in the event. Having a local restaurant cater the key-note speaker event would be great if someone was on board with the idea. Basecamp could host indoor dry-tooling for participants limited to wheelchairs or others who just cannot get into the Ice Park due to a more impactful disability. The list goes on for how the community could show support.
   2. CGOs would play a large part in this. Just as CGOs facilitate Ice Festival Clinics, they would be able to host these clinics.
3. **CGO Partnership Program**
   1. Much of what is proposed in this document will not be possible without local guiding companies providing resources for the base purpose of the program: get people climbing!!! The Two-Day Event might be difficult to host this year, but what follows is very, very feasible: the idea is that CGOs pick 1-2 days per month where they will dedicate a certain amount of resources to the program’s cause. A little goes a long way: If 6 local CGOs volunteered just two guides for one day of climbing in December, January, February and March, we could still get 192 disadvantaged persons into the Ice Park. We could set these dates at the beginning of the season; the OIP books and manages who gets admittance into the clinics/guided days and the CGOs provide the resources. CGOs get their name associated with the clinic/guided day and some marketing as an incentive.
      1. Some sort of partnership program could be extended out to the local hotels and restaurants, too. If one hotel and restaurant was willing to lessen the costs of their services for the participants (this burden could be held by a different restaurant and hotel each month), it could make a large impact on the feasibility of non-local communities getting access to these programs.

**Challenges and Incentives/Solutions:**

1. **Annual Scholarship Fund**
   1. Challenges:
      1. The OIP is limited on funds, so the monetary sources dedicated to this program cannot cannibalize the funds needed for the regular operations of the OIP. If the OIP does not have enough resources to run properly, then there is nowhere for anyone to climb.
   2. Incentives:
      1. Gear, schwag, and the same benefits the OIP gives to regular Ice Park Members and sponsors of the OIP and the Ice Festival (exposure, marketing, etc.)
2. **2-Day Annual Event**
   1. Challenges:
      1. This one may be difficult to hold in fully-developed form this year, but it is something that should be explored! If we start figuring this out now, then an event of this sort could be awesome for 2022/23. Note that an event for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) and LGBTQ+ communities, and people with disabilities, called “All In,” is now being planned with a national organization in association with a currently-permitted CGO.
      2. The Ice Fest is already an immense amount of work for the OIP and Ouray Community at large to host every year. While this event would not be nearly as large as the regular Ice Fest, it will still take a lot of work. We also do not want to cannibalize the regular Ice Fest and decrease hype, attendance, or the money raised by this event.
      3. Key to this event’s success is the timing; it needs to be far enough away from the Ice Fest to be its own thing, but not so far separated that it falls too early or late in the ice season. The “All In” event is tentatively scheduled for weekend of January 8, 2022.
   2. Incentives/Solutions
      1. Incentives are where we will need to get creative. Marketing opportunities, social media takeovers, sponsor highlights, etc. can be explored. But, hopefully the cause of the event garnishes enough good-will for some businesses to get on board.
      2. This event can be explored as a smaller donation-based event (on the part of the local community), or as a larger money-generating event like the Ice Fest, but with a really great cause behind it.
3. **CGO Partnership Program**
   1. Challenges: [Removed all references to requiring CGO participation.]
      1. Getting CGOs on board to volunteer resources for no cost or at-cost to participants could be difficult (more so around holidays, where they make more money).
      2. Coordinating resources between CGOs is not always a simple task
      3. How do people book clinics and events? Is everything coordinated through the OIP and the OIP communicates its needs to CGOs? Is it done Ice-Fest style with clinic and event bookings on CGO websites? If so, does the OIP control the prices/are they free? How do we vet/control who is able to book these clinics/dates? We have to ensure the appropriate communities are getting access.
         1. This will ultimately require meetings with CGOs to figure out.
   2. Incentives/Solutions:
      1. Copying what I stated in the partnership section:
         1. A little goes a long way: If 6 local CGOs volunteered just two guides for one day of climbing in December, January, February and March, we could still get 192 disadvantaged persons into the Ice Park. We could set these dates at the beginning of the season; the OIP books and manages who gets admittance into the clinics/guided days and the CGOs provide the resources. CGOs get their name associated with the clinic/guided day and some marketing as an incentive.
      2. Set the dates for the 2-day event and any other dates we host for these communities outside of holiday weekends.
      3. Offer increased marketing and exposure through OIP channels
      4. The 2-Day Event and any other dates hosted would not count against CGO permit user days
      5. There’s many ways we could coordinate resources. This topic is probably better discussed in a group forum where CGOs are asked to formulate their ideas and thoughts in-advance before a meeting is held.

**Final Thoughts:**

We’re not doing these volunteer days for money. If CGOs make more money due to the good-will, karma, and marketing we generate out of this program, then that’s great. But the whole point is for us to figure out ways we can give back, not take more. I think we can all afford 1 day per month to volunteer a guide or two to make some impactful days happen for these communities, at the least :) [Removed some other personal references.]