

CREATING A NATURALIST AND STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

REMOTE, ARAPAHOE COUNTY, ADAMS COUNTY

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PROJECT INTRODUCTION

Colorado State University Extension (CSUE) is developing a statewide Naturalist and Stewardship program. This program will partner with counties and organizations throughout the state to teach interested people environmental education techniques, Colorado natural history, and stewardship activities. These participants could in turn lead programs for the public. People who complete the program can then volunteer their time leading environmental education and stewardship programs.

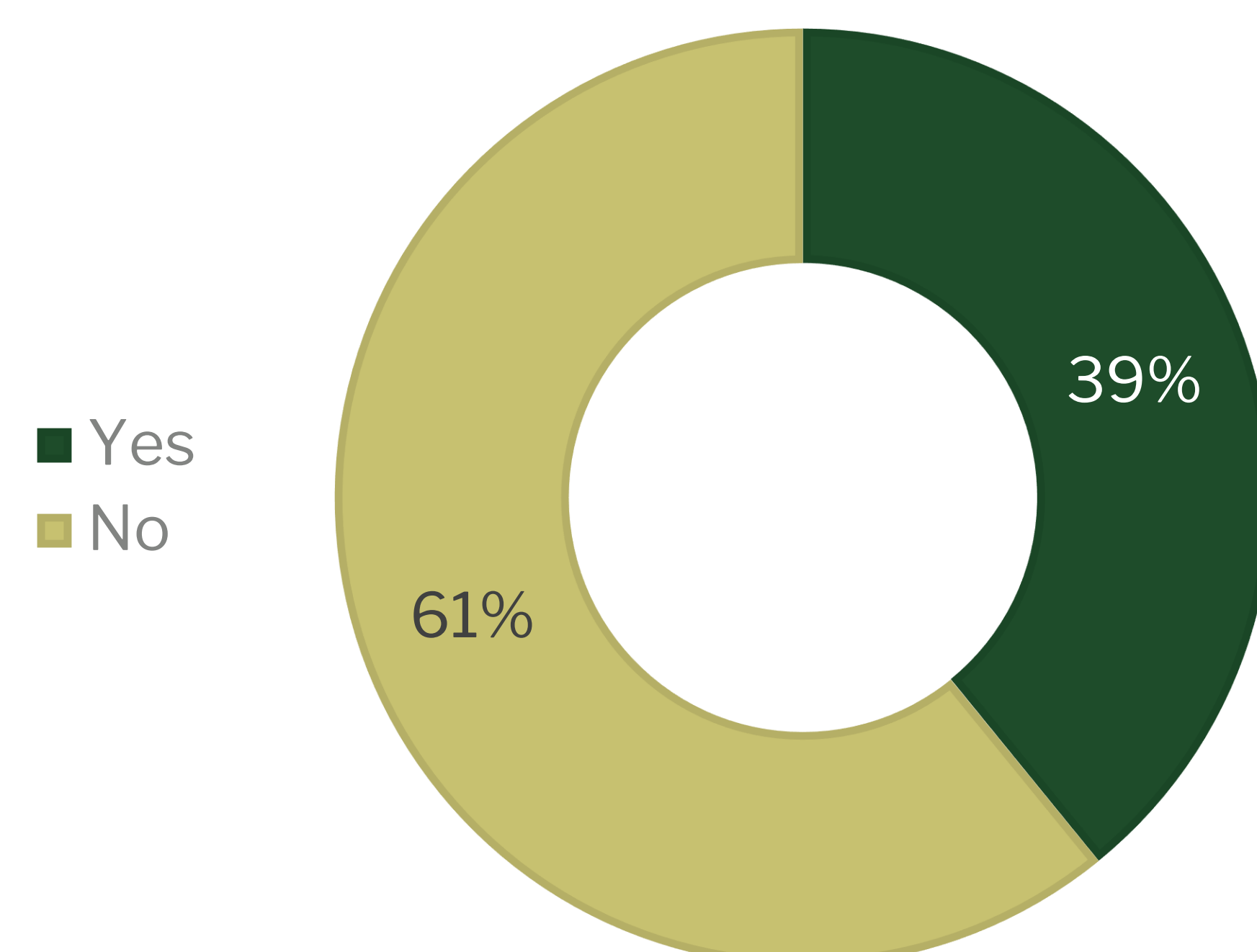
We are partnering with CSU Online to develop a hybrid curriculum similar to what other state Extension programs have, that will also be modeled after Colorado's successful Certified Master Gardener program. The program will consist of a Core Curriculum which includes courses on Environmental Education, Colorado Life Zones, and basic Flora and Fauna. Then there will be continuing educational badging courses available for those interested, focusing on topics such as Native Plants, Pollinators and Insects, and the Geology of Colorado. This format would give participants the freedom to explore what interests them while still gaining a basic overview of Colorado natural resources and practical skills needed to teach the public about the outdoors.

This project is a result of a statewide Community Needs Assessment (CNA). The CNA made it clear that Coloradans value environmental education and outreach, which was ranked as the most important natural resources issue in the Front Range, and the third most important natural resources issue throughout Colorado.

INTERNSHIP GOALS

My role has focused on preparing the project to start collaborating with subject matter experts and CSU Online for instructional design development.

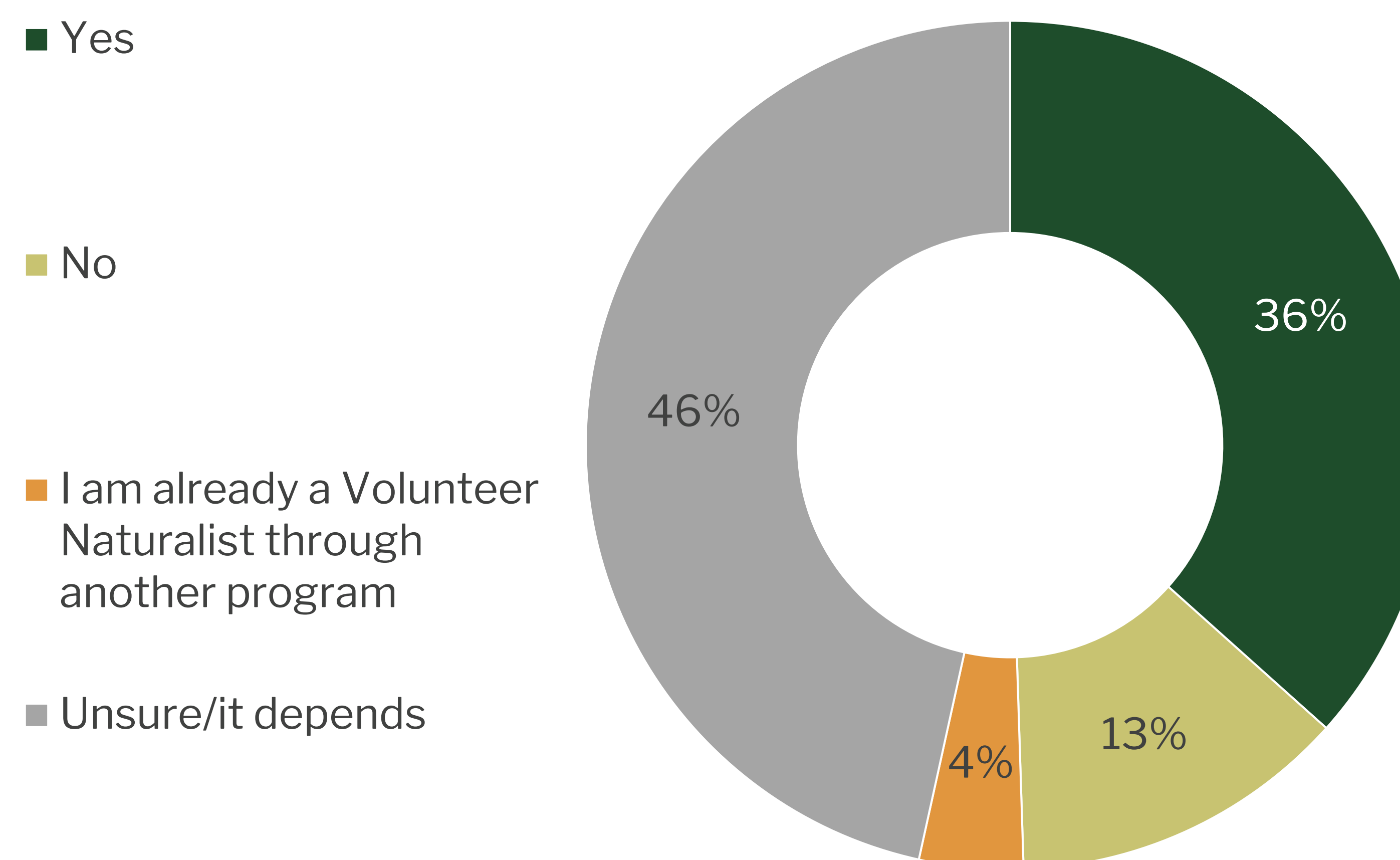
Figure 1. Percentage of surveyed Colorado Open Space Alliance organizations with existing naturalist programs.



ACHIVEMENTS

- Compiled information from CSU Extension's Community Needs Assessment to support the creation of a Naturalist and Stewardship program to further establish a need for the program
- Designed, developed and administered an electronic survey via the Colorado Open Space Alliance network of publicly funded open space programs to better assess their willingness to partner with CSU Extension for this project.
- Designed, developed and administered an electronic survey to potential participants to assess their interest in taking a Naturalist and Stewardship program
- Analyzed and disseminated all survey results to the mentor team
- Developed and sorted curriculum topics into three categories: core curriculum, continuing education badges, and field experiences
- Developed recommendations for next steps

Figure 2. Percentage of survey respondents interested in taking non-credit CSU Extension courses to become a certified Naturalist.



NEXT STEPS

- Finalizing the curriculum outline
- Developing the core curriculum in partnership with the Warner College of Natural Resources and CSU Online.
- Concreting the partnership with entities interested in working with the program, such as Colorado Parks and Wildlife.
- Write and submit an article on findings to the Journal of Extension

WHAT I LEARNED

One of the most prominent things I have learned from this internship has centered around the inner workings of a professional project, specifically within a larger organization. The amount of work which goes on behind the scenes in a project such as this was surprising, but understandable. I was able to participate in partnerships and help form new ones, a skill which will likely prove invaluable to me in my professional life. I was also able to learn a lot about Extension with the guidance of my mentor team.

RELEVANCE TO MY EDUCATION

As someone who hopes to pursue a career in environmental communication, this internship has allowed me to approach this field in a hands on, behind the scenes way. I am already an educator with CSU's Environmental Learning Center, and have experience as a volunteer naturalist, so being able to see how curriculum is developed has been fascinating. Additionally, by working with Extension and partnering with multiple other organizations, I have learned about many potential career opportunities that I had never previously considered.

Figure 3: A map of Colorado Open Space Alliance organizations throughout Colorado hoping to participate in this program.

