

# 2014 Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Grant Process, Staff Survey Results

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# General Conclusions

## **Key Action Items for 2016 Grant Round from Staff Survey**

- Work to better organize online information and tools provided to applicants on the Recreation and Conservation Office's Web site.
- Address ongoing issues with GoTo Meeting's audio clarity and consistency. Encourage in-person presentations whenever possible.
- Consider options to re-organize the content of manuals into a more usable format.
- Add citations to manuals to more clearly link them to RCW, WACs, and/or board policies.
- Consider communicating program deadlines to applicants in an improved online format.
- Improve the speed and functionality of PRISM Online.
- Strive to improve diversity of the volunteer review panels.

# Response Details

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# Program Acronym List

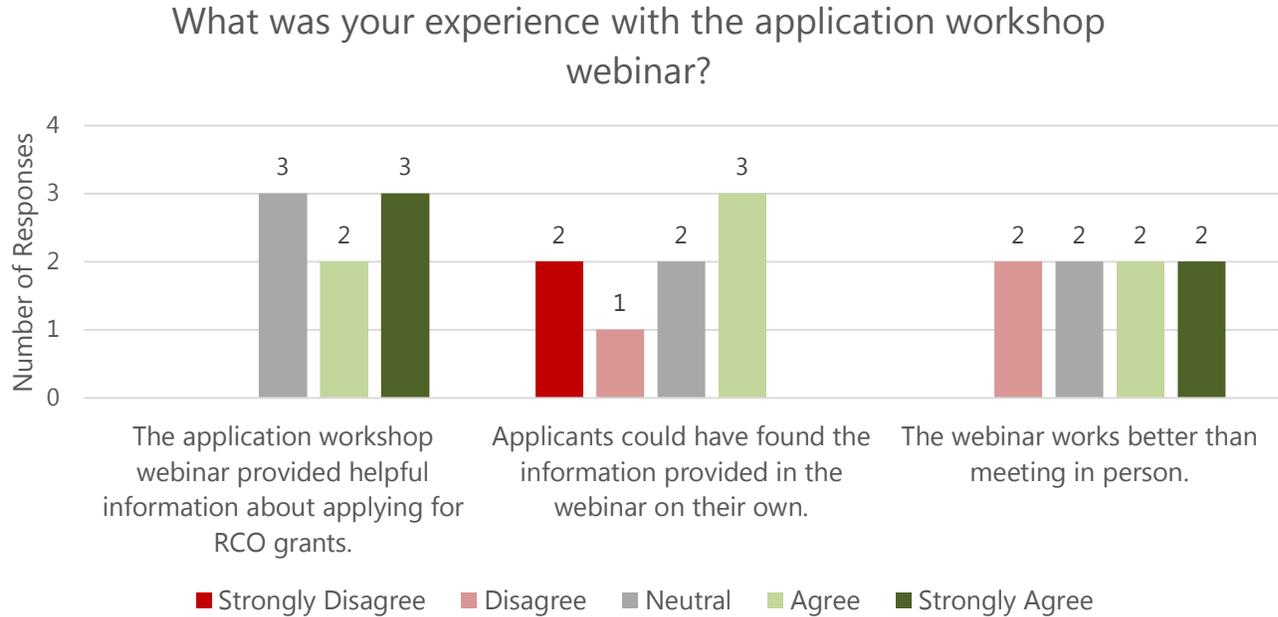
<b>Program Acronym</b>	<b>Program Name</b>
BFP	Boating Facilities Program
BIG	Boating Infrastructure Grant
FARR	Firearms and Archery Range Recreation
LWCF	Land and Water Conservation Fund
NOVA	Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities Program
WWRP	Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program

## Survey Approach

Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) staff distributed the 2014 Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (RCFB) staff survey to grant managers on November 7, 2014. The survey closed on December 4, 2015 with eight grant manager responses.

## Question Series 1: Webinar, Online Tools, and Manuals

### Application Workshop Webinar



### Notes

- Grant managers responded that the workshop webinar provided applicants with helpful information about applying for RCO grants.
- Grant manager responses were mixed on whether applicants could have found the information provided in the webinar on their own.
- Responses highlighted the balance between saving resources by hosting a webinar and developing personal interactions with applicants.

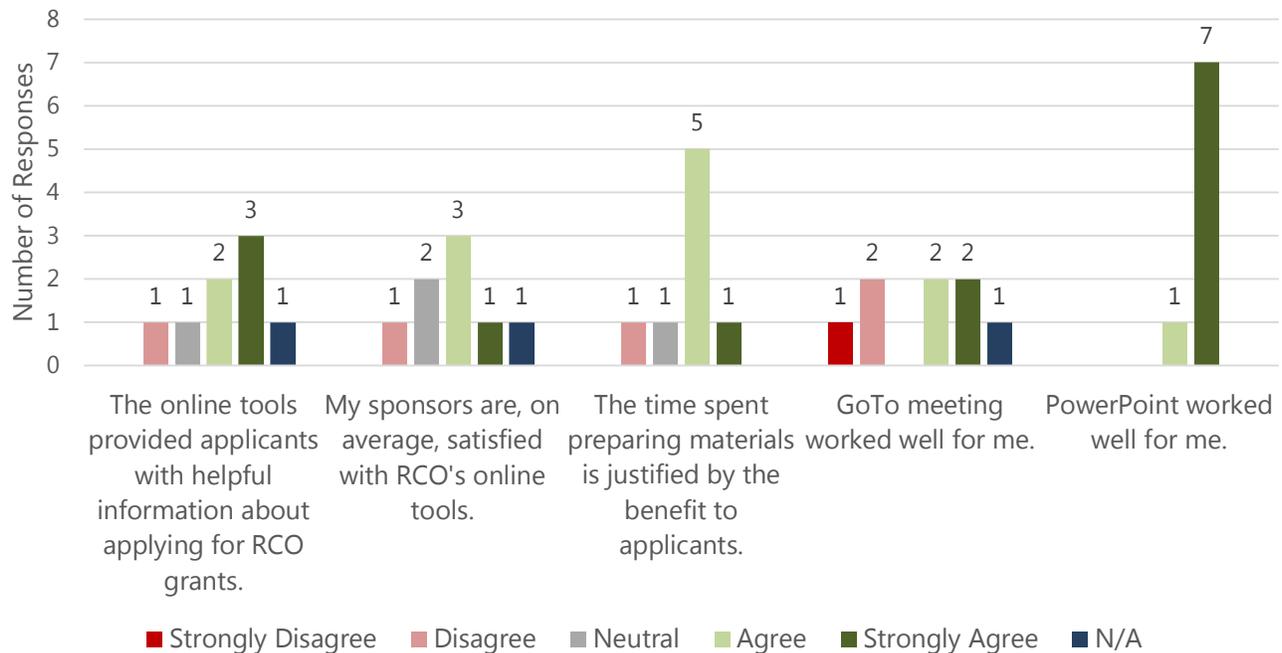
### Staff Comments

The following table includes unedited comments from staff.

Comment
The webinar has cost savings but still requires preparation. This year, preparations were not organized and everything was a scramble at the end to get done. In the future, the webinar could be pre-recorded, played and then opened up for live Q&A. There is no real reason to do it live anymore. What is lost is the personal interaction with potential applicants where you learn more and provide better advice and instruction than through email.
I think the webinar is a good option to save on staff resources and applicant's time and resources. It is ALWAYS beneficial to meet face to face with people though and that is accomplished with the pre-award inspections and discussions grants managers have in the field.
Very useful tool for applicants that live in the far reaches of the state.

## Online Tools

What was your experience with our online tools?



## Notes

- Grant managers generally provided positive responses regarding online tools and felt that the time spent preparing materials is justified by the benefit to applicants. However, comments suggest that online information could be better organized.
- Grant managers had mixed responses related to GoTo meeting. One grant manager discussed ongoing issues with audio clarity and consistency, another recommended that applicants attend in-person unless there are extenuating circumstances.

## Staff Comments

The following table includes unedited comments from staff.

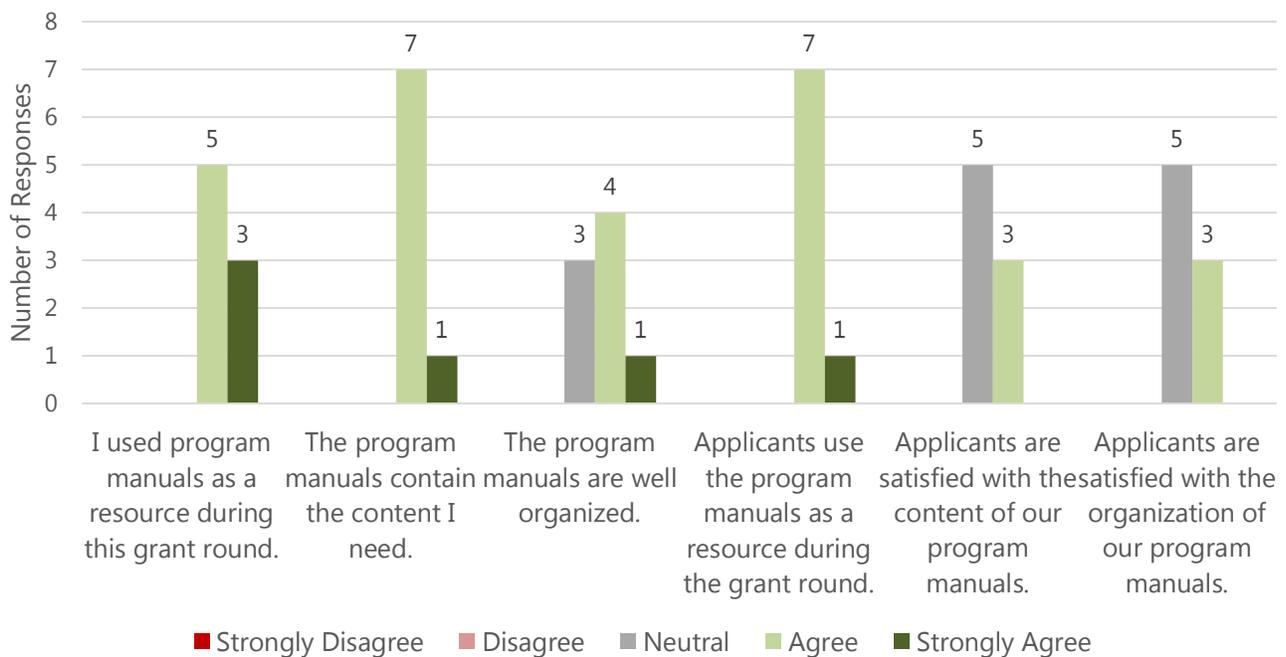
Comment
While the online information is valuable, it is difficult to find and not organized in a manner that is easy to navigate. I spend a lot of time sending people links and pdf documents. I believe that we need to go back to an application manual (even if it is just online)
There are too many recurring issues with using GoTo meetings as our preferred technology. Audio clarity and consistency is the #1 problem of holding a GoTo meeting. Since we are now committed to holding web-based meetings, we need the proper tools and equipment to do it easily and consistently. We cannot control variables on the other end, but, if they cause problems in the process, we have to have ways to control or fix since it is our preferred process.

The online tools are great, however the webpage is at times difficult to navigate. You can get info several different ways which I believe is confusing. We can discuss this in more detail at our retreat. I think there are simple ways to make webpage navigation less difficult so sponsors are presented with exactly what they need for each grant program.

I feel that the applicants that utilized Go-To for technical review had a disadvantage in the feedback that they were given for their respective grant program. I will strongly recommend that all applicants in the next grant round to be in-person for technical review unless they absolutely cannot make it.

## Manuals

What was your experience with RCO's manuals?



## Notes

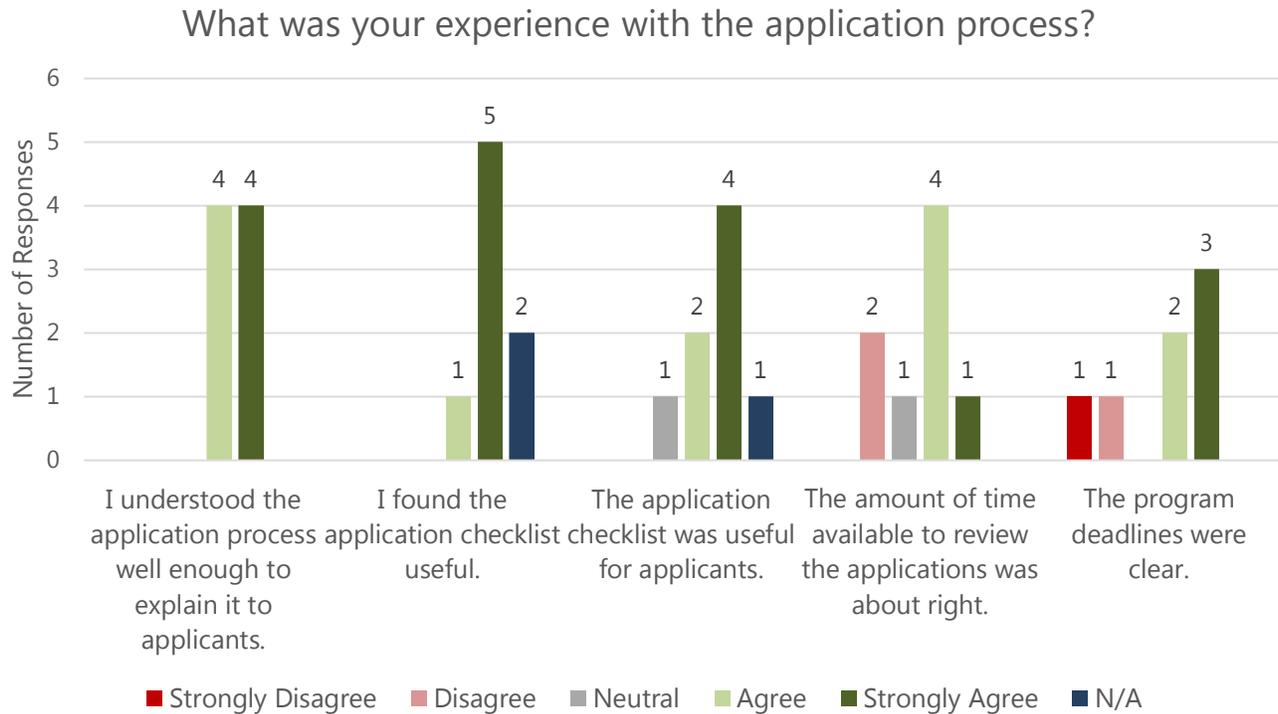
- Grant managers provided positive or neutral responses regarding RCO's manuals.
- Several grant managers suggested in their comments that manuals need further citations to RCW, WACs, and/or board policies.
- Grant managers also suggested several ideas for how to re-organize the content of manuals into a more usable format.

## Staff Comments

The following table includes unedited comments from staff.

Comment
Manuals currently function as both a resource for sponsors and a tool for staff. I believe that we need a more detailed master manual with citations to applicable RCW, WAC and adopted board policy. A more streamline "toolkit" or online manual could be provided to applicants to help them navigate the application and implementation process. Plain talking the manuals has resulted in watering down or misinterpreting the polices.
Having them online and searchable is very helpful.
Should better clarify some eligibility issues, such as structures/buildings.
We should keep manuals as an internal resources or retire them completely. We should move towards a grant workbook format that is unique to each application. The workbook would be a "how to" guide for each stage of a grant's life and contain all materials needed (no jumping from one manual to the next and our website searching for forms and such. The applicant creates his/her own workbook by entering info about his/her org, project, funding, etc. into a wizard the hits "Print my Grant Workbook." Maximize hotlinks for easy navigation to all needed resources.
Program manuals need policy references.
Manuals also need a program quick summary (1 page) at the beginning.
We can do more to organize and consolidate manuals. Too much is repeated across a dozen or so manuals. Manuals lack significant guidance for non-capital projects (planning, education, M&O)
Applicants use grant program manuals, but not sure about 3, 4, or 5.
I haven't heard of applicants being dissatisfied with the manuals. If they can't find what they are looking for, we always get the question. However, it's not because they didn't look, but because it just was not clearly stated one way or the other in the manual. That typically is intentional.

## Question Series 2: Application Process



### Notes

- Grant managers responded that they understood the application process well enough to explain it to applicants.
- Two grant managers selected not applicable (N/A) when asked if they found the application checklist useful. Comments suggest that at least one of these grant managers were unsure of what the application checklist was.
- Two grant managers felt they did not have enough time to review applications.
- Two grant managers also felt RCO should further clarify program deadlines for applicants. A suggestion from the comments was to share the deadline schedule electronically.

### Staff Comments

The following tables include unedited comments from staff.

Comment
I checked NA because I do not know what an application checklist is. If this refers to the To Do list than I would say it was super useful and I found it useful for me work too.
I no longer feel confident in explaining our processes. RCFB grants staff have too many programs, variations on processes and requirements between programs to be experts at any one, two or three. Staffing is not adequate to be able to divide in a way that would allow them to be subject matter experts.

Some dates and information availability changed for NOVA and RTP several times (prism opening, manual availability, application due dates, etc.). We should really look at the timing of the 2nd round applications (BFP, FARR, NOVA, RTP) and not try to sandwich amongst the 1st round applications. Its a disservice to these applicants when the RCFB doesn't even see these applications until June the following year. Much rushed to hurry up and wait when we could be more thoughtful.

Program deadlines were confusing. Why do we only get a HARD copy of the schedule? Why is it not electronically sent OR centrally located for everyone to see the most recent version of the document? It was frustrating, time consuming and unprofessional when I spoke with applicants and did not have the correct version of the schedule in front of me, therefore providing inaccurate information.

I know that we are restricted in giving applicants more time for applications, but that first technical completion deadline sure did come along very quickly!

### Question Series 3: PRISM Online

#### Notes

- Staff responded unanimously that PRISM Online resulted in more complete applications.
- Grant managers commented that it remains challenging to interact with PRISM online due to speed and functionality issues. Several grant managers suggested improvements.

#### Staff Comments

The following tables include unedited comments from staff in response to the prompt, "What enhancements are needed (if more than one, please include in priority order)?"

#### Comment

PRISM online did result in more complete applications, however it remains challenging to interact with PRISM online and provide assistance to our applicants due to issues related to speed and not being able to work in multiple applications at the same time. There were too many errors that occurred.

Continue to refine/enhance PRISM Online with tool tips and instructions. The required application submit attachments was very helpful, but we could also add a list of other attachments due later in the process to give applicants a heads up.

Do not allow the sponsors to skip ahead, this resulted in errors and confusion.

The applications were more complete in the sense that any materials that were required, something was submitted. Quality and usefulness will always be the wild card. Items submitted are still sometimes placeholders or work in progress because applicants know they have the opportunity to change everything.

I think so, but navigating through the review of the online applications was slow and clunky.

1. Need to speed it up.
2. Ability to click back and forth on the review screen to the application would have been really nice.

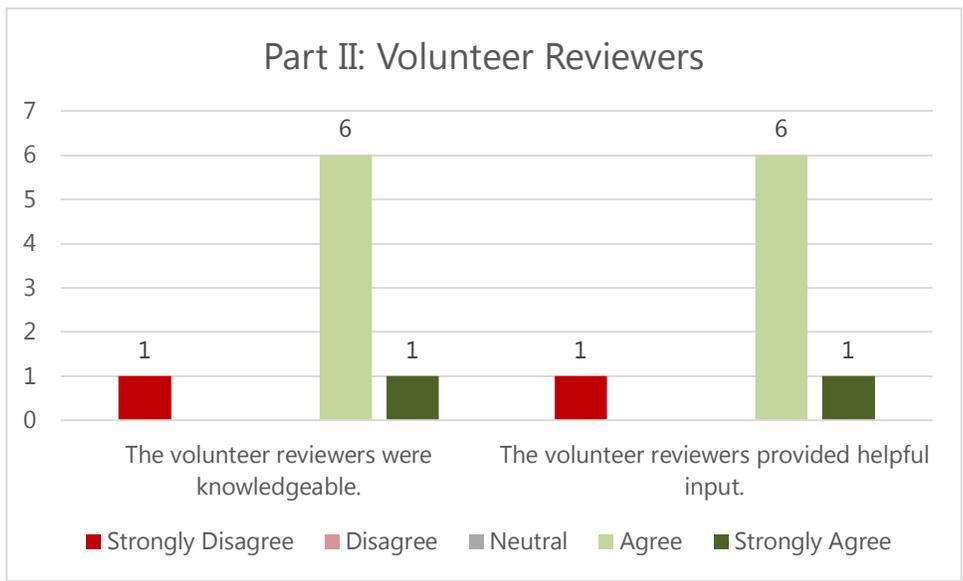
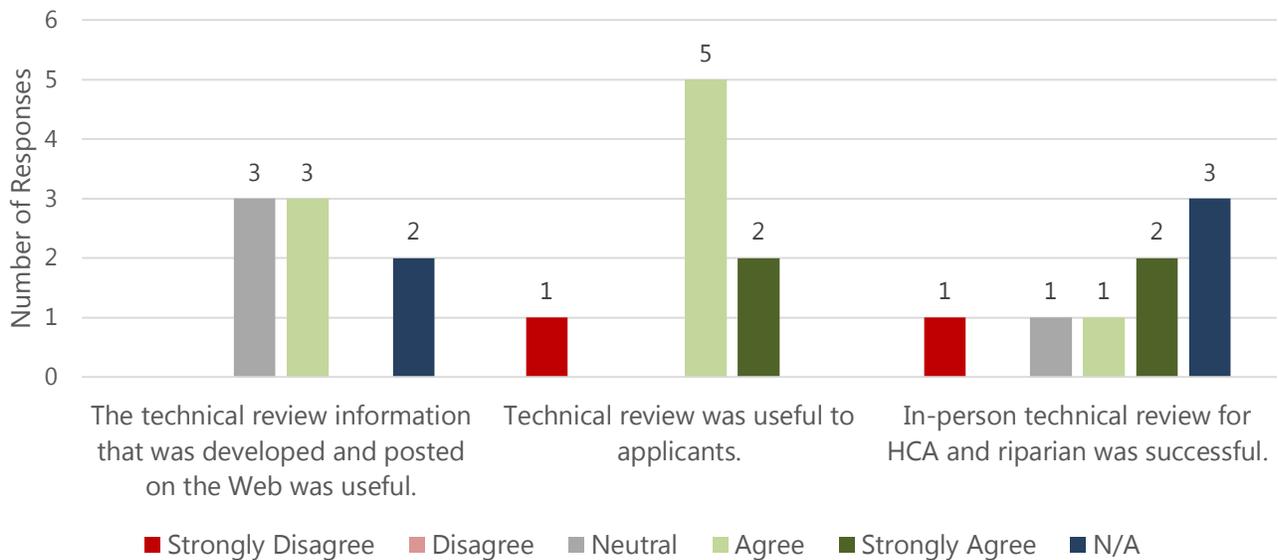
- 3. The save function needs to work so we don't lose information.
- 4. I need to know what is being sent to the applicant. What review comments are seen by the applicant? I am still not confident my applicants saw all my feedback?!?!?!?!?!?

However there was a lot of confusion about the attachments. There were several where there were legitimate reasons why sponsors weren't able to attach certain documents and for these we had to insert placeholders to allow the application process to proceed.

I had positive feedback from sponsors about the PRISM online who had also applied in the past on Prism 2007

## Question Series 4: Technical Review

Part I: Please tell us about your experience with technical review.



## Notes

- Grant manager feedback on technical review was generally positive.
- One grant manager disagreed that technical review was useful to applicants, in-person technical review for HCA and riparian was successful, and that the volunteer reviewers were knowledgeable and provided helpful input.

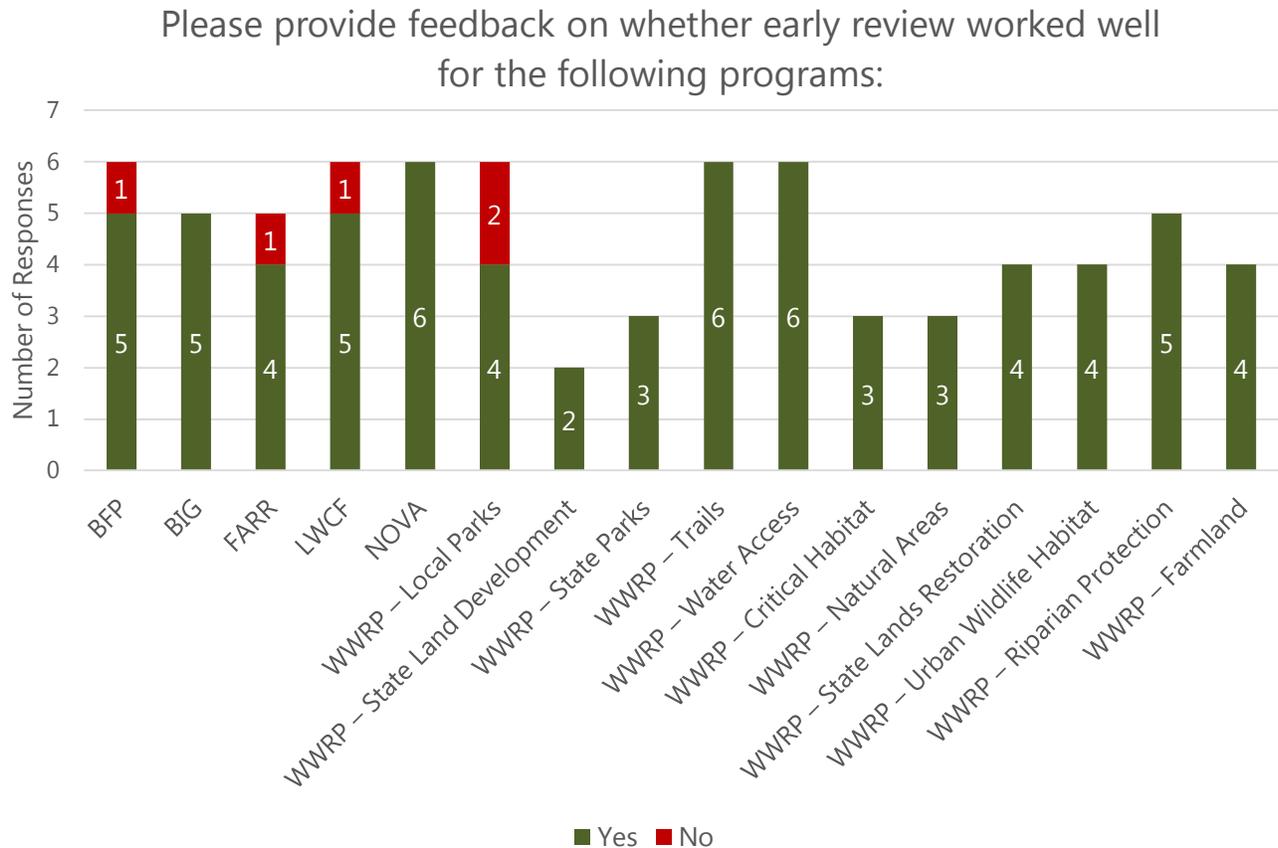
## Staff Comments

The following tables include unedited comments from staff.

Comment
I don't know what the first question is asking.
I found comments after technical review were positive for the applicants. I found comments from reviewers, especially Local Parks committee were very different. They did not like the quality of the technical review PPTs.
I don't remember the technical review information that was posted on the web. But the evaluators were great! Lorinda did a fabulous job getting enthusiastic and well qualified evaluators.
At times the Urban Wildlife team appeared to be very critical without providing positive steps to make the projects better.

## Question Series 5: Early Review

Early technical review meetings were intended to reduce the amount of time OGMs spend reviewing and commenting on each individual application.



## Notes

- Grant managers generally responded that early review worked well.
- Between 1-2 grant managers felt that improvements were needed for the following programs:
  - Boating Facilities Program (BFP)
  - Firearms and Archery Range Recreation (FARR)
  - Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
  - Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP)-Local Parks

## Staff Comments

The following tables include unedited comments from staff.

Comment
I answer "not sure" to all of the above
I think the process worked very well. We should not burden ourselves if an applicant is unprepared or has a shoddy presentation at technical review. Its not a reflection on RCO or the OGM. Its a

reflection that we have had a relaxed standard for so many years and applicants know that its not the part of the process that "counts" towards their evaluation.

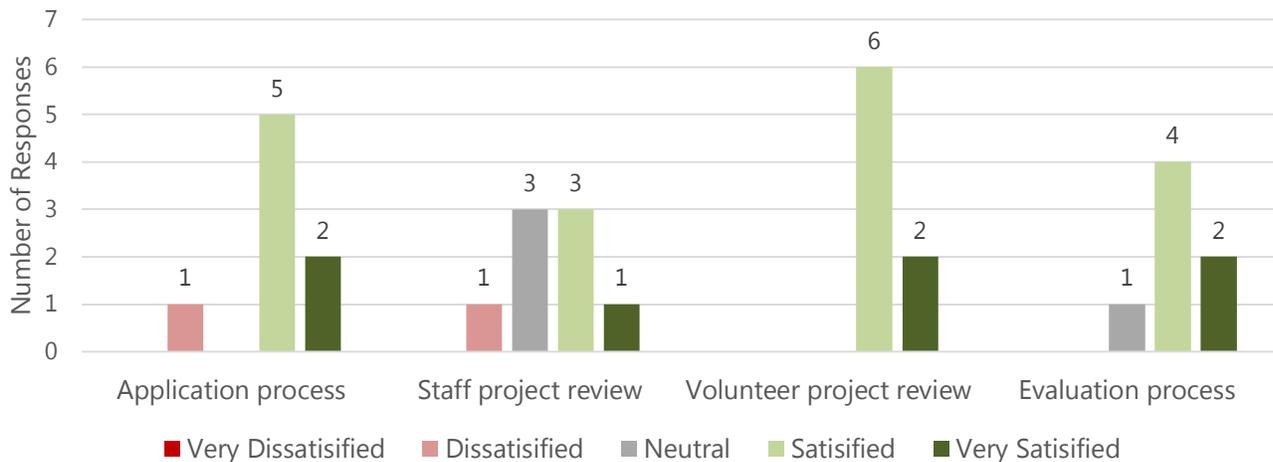
I think I struggled with the change because going into Technical Review, I usually would know the project much better than I did this round. I would have worked with them to get basic template of the PPT down and so that would not have been a concern raised at Technical Review. I found that much of the feedback at Local Parks in particular had to do with formatting of the presentation rather than feedback on the technical merits of the project. I feel like if we can provide that feedback prior to technical review, than evaluators time will be better spent. The amount of feedback I sent my applicants after their technical review, was a huge amount of information all at one time. I am not sure eliminating the initial review helped me any. I felt like I was in catch up mode along with my applicants. Those that I thought it went fine was if I only had a couple of those applications in the category/grant program.

I think it worked well for all.

## Question Series 6: Overall Satisfaction and Performance

### Overall Satisfaction

How would you assess your level of satisfaction with:



### Notes

- Grant managers were generally satisfied with the application process, staff project review, volunteer project review, and the evaluation process.
- One comment suggested that the volunteer review panels could be more diverse.

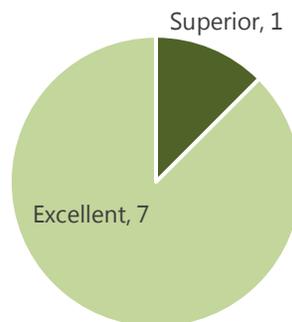
## Staff Comments

The following tables include unedited comments from staff.

Comment
We should strive to make our review panels represent the demography of the state to the best of our ability. Local Parks should be more diversified by specialty...less industry operators (limit retired parks professional to no more than one), and more general public. We need to skew the cadre of parks professionals we do use to a younger demographic. Local Parks could also benefit from technical folks (engineers, architects), leaders of non-profit sports leagues, and one or two from academia and elected office.
Should say "staff technical review" and "volunteer technical review" above.
Technical review for WWRP Trails was very good and yielded good results. NOVA tech review through a written process is labor intensive and had less value added.
I think application process is tough with the number of projects we are all managing and working with. I found it extremely difficult to provide good quality feedback to applicants in such a short turnaround. Technical difficulties does not help!
I didn't feel like I was providing good quality customer service and that was hard on me. I also felt like I was putting a lot of time and effort into it, many times working at home and in the evenings. I am not sure how to make the process more manageable. This would be a good topic at our retreat.
Things seemed to work as they should have. The grant round seemed easier to me this year, but maybe that's because I have more experience now.

## Section Performance

How would you assess the overall performance of your section this grant round?



## Notes

- Grant managers responded that their section performed well this grant round.
- Comments suggest that the RCFB grant managers are a tight-knit team who helped each other through the grant round.
- Non-grant management staff including Cindy, Lorinda, and Marguerite also received kudos in the comments section.

## Staff Comments

The following tables include unedited comments from staff.

Are there kudos or suggestions you'd like to share with management?
Cindy did an amazing job with the technical review and evaluations - esp. getting the rooms, materials and presentations ready.
Kudos to entire team - we all helped cover each other as needed when someone was out of the office, etc.
Having Lorinda to handle scheduling and planning eligibility is very helpful.
Kyle should be praised lavishly.
Sponsors should bring their presentations with them on flash drives. This would save OGM time during this very busy time and allow sponsors to make last minute changes.
Lorinda and Cindy did a super job of keeping the ship afloat. Much behind the scenes work to keep things rolling from plan reviews, meeting scheduling, volunteer recruitment, material preparation, room set up, etc...
Kyle did a super job of taking the reins for the MSP and overseeing all those (3) applications in a new process.
The entire section worked hard to pull this off to ensure the process yielded great results, positive experiences by the applications, unquestioned ranked lists, agency and program integrity, etc.
Marguerite for juggling too many tasks and responsibilities at any one time. The job of managing the RCFB grants section is too big for 1 manager.
We have a great group of grants managers that really stepped up. It was tough and we did it! :)
Yes, thanks for the excellent facilitation! Thank you for being available to answer questions, even though I KNOW you were busy. Thank you for having our backs when we made mistakes and helping us to work out solutions.

## Question Series 7: Suggestions for Improvement

This question series was open-ended. The following tables include unedited comments from staff.

Category	Comment
<b>Application webinar</b>	Pre-record and just take Q&A live. staff need appropriate software to create movies and training videos (and training)
<b>Application webinar</b>	The workshop "sessions" we post online do not need to be recorded - it would be huge time savings each grant cycle to simply update the slide show without narration.
<b>Planning requirement process</b>	Over the years, local agency plans have lost a connection to the eligibility consideration and funding priorities. Consider linking these back together (e.g. project must be reference in CIP to be eligible, or they get bonus points if it is specifically named rather than generally cited)
<b>Planning requirement process</b>	We should allow plans to be submitted later than March 1st. OR we should be sending an extensive notification to applicants that this deadline is approaching. I ran into several situations, in which, the org had applied in the past, but new folks within the org and they missed this deadline because they were not aware of it.
<b>Pre-application consultation/site inspection with OGM</b>	Some OGMs do this very well, others are desk-jockeys.
<b>Technical review session</b>	Reviewers need blog-style place to provide feedback to applicants (e.g. comments on online news articles) and have these comments available to the evaluators during the evaluation session so notes can be reviewed instantly
<b>Application feedback from OGM</b>	We need to provide a good initial review of the application prior to technical review so that there is purpose in having the technical review. I know that seems to add more work, but it spreads the work out. As feedback after Tech review would be quick and to the point on the technical merits of the project.
<b>Scheduling of technical review and evaluation meetings</b>	Can we have the same time limits for every program?
<b>Scheduling of technical review and evaluation meetings</b>	For as many meetings as we schedule and time slots we fill in an application round for both tech review and evaluations, we would benefit from professionally developed meeting organizing/scheduling software instead of making Doodle "work"
<b>Scheduling of technical review and evaluation meetings</b>	It would be helpful if the technical review schedule could come out earlier. A scheduling tool is needed.

<b>Scheduling of technical review and evaluation meetings</b>	The schedule should always be posted in a central location. Please do not fill my inbox up with updated versions of a schedule. I could not keep track of that. However, updated scheduled on the G drive somewhere would be EASY to look up, if I needed to.
<b>Evaluation session</b>	Electronic scoring is critically needed. Too much staff time spent after evaluation verifying and entering scores. Current process is prone to errors.
<b>Advisory committee feedback and contributions</b>	Good in some programs, lacked value in written process.
<b>RCO Communications</b>	See notes about RCO website

### Question Series 8: How to Improve Efficiency

This question was open-ended. The following table includes unedited comments from staff.

<b>Is there something RCO can change to make your work more efficient for the next grant round?</b>
Limit the ability of sponsors to only upload required attachments and do not allow duplicate types. Shift from a bunch of separate attachments to a preliminary PowerPoint presentation that covers all the things we ask for....OGM's could then provide feedback in the Notes section of the PPT. This would also benefit the quality of Final PPT Presentations.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Electronic scoring at evaluations</li> <li>2. Blog-style commenting for technical review</li> <li>3. Utilizing the mapping capabilities we already have (why do we continue to ask for maps from applicants when they now pin-the-point?)</li> <li>4. More specialization for OGMs</li> </ol>
Not sure. Let me think about this. Perhaps discussion at the retreat?
A cube with a window, absolutely necessary to improve the efficiency and production of all OGM's.

## Question Series 9: Additional Resources Needed

This question was open-ended. The following table includes unedited comments from staff.

Are there additional internal resources you would like for the 2016 grant round (ex. additional meeting support, online materials, training, or other tools)?
Two computer monitors for expedited review of applications.
1. More online training videos for evaluators, applicants, etc. This was valuable for NOVA orientation 2. Digitized APE and boundary maps in PRISM. OGMs cannot do proper analysis with a dot. 3. Better inter-agency coordination between RCFB and SRF projects that overlap. Work is silo'ed and causes delays and compliance issues down the road because project funding and work is not coordinated within the agency
I will have to think about this.

## Question Series 10: What Works Well?

This question was open-ended. The following table includes unedited comments from staff.

Is there a part of the process that works especially well for you?
Reviewing applications in PRISM Online. Automatic e-mails and notifications from PRISM.
The Wizard was a big improvement and saved OGM's and Sponsors time.
It all works pretty well overall, but the whole enchilada is too big/too much for a very stretched staff. Project workload is part of the equation. OGMs are not subject matter experts and that calls into question the effectiveness and quality of what RCO expects there staff to do.
Once comments were done on PRISM online I liked that I just had to submit and it sent it automatically to my sponsor. However, resolving technical issues as described earlier are key and also determining what is actually viewed by the sponsor would be helpful. I assumed they saw all the feedback including Tech Review comments.
The electronic Application Checklist is much better and more efficient than the old paper process. Also, having only the required attachments as a batch edit in the on-line application saved a huge amount of time and effort during this grant...the applications came in much more complete.
I felt the process worked pretty much seamless throughout the summer.