

Manual 12

Boating Infrastructure Grant Program

May 2020

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At a Glance

Boating Infrastructure Grant	
Category	Tier 1 State Grants Tier 2 National Grants
Purpose	This federal program provides grants to develop, renovate, and maintain public boating facilities that target recreational boats 26 feet long and larger. Grants also may be used to provide information and boater education.
Who may apply?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cities and towns • Counties • Native American tribes • Private marina operators • Qualified nonprofits • Special purpose districts • State agencies
Is a plan required?	No
What types of projects are eligible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and renovation • Education • Tier 1: Maintenance • Tier 2: Maintenance with development or renovation
What are the grant limits?	Tier 1: \$5,000 to 192,086 Tier 2: \$200,001 to \$1,440,645
What must I contribute?	25 percent. Projects with a match 26 percent or more will receive additional points during evaluation
How is my project evaluated?	Tier 1: A state advisory committee reviews written applications and scores the projects. Tier 2: A national review panel evaluates written applications and scores the projects.
When are pre-applications due?	June 1, 2020
When are final applications due?	July 1, 2020 Note for Tier 2 projects, the due date may change to ensure applicants meet the federal application deadline.
When are grants awarded?	July 2021, pending U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approval
What's new this year?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changed PRISM Online to make applications easier • Split the Tier 1 evaluation criteria into separate evaluation questions to accommodate electronic scoring.

Section 1: Introduction

In this section, you'll learn about the following:

- ✓ The Boating Infrastructure Grant program
- ✓ Program administration
- ✓ Where to get information
- ✓ The grant process and timeline

The Boating Infrastructure Grant Program

Congress authorized the Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) Program under the Sportfishing and Boating Safety Act of 1998.¹ The program provides funds to the states for development, renovation, and maintenance of boating facilities for recreational vessels 26 feet and longer. Funds also may be used to provide information and enhance boater education.

Obtaining and managing a grant requires the highest level of preparation from the applicant and the highest level of due diligence from a successful grant sponsor. No matter the amount of money or relative share of BIG in a project, program rules apply to the entire funded project throughout the compliance period identified in the grant agreement.

Funds for the BIG program come from a portion of the federal Aquatic Resources Trust Fund as allowed by law.

Program Administration

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service within the U.S. Department of the Interior manages this federal grant program. The Service ultimately receives and approves all project applications, agreements, and amendments.

¹Public Law 105-178 of the Sport Fish Restoration Act, commonly referred to as the Dingell-Johnson Act.

Washington State Recreation and Conservation Funding Board

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board administers this program for Washington State. The board is a governor-appointed board composed of five citizens and the directors (or designees) of three state agencies—Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Natural Resources, and Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission.

The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) supports the board. RCO is a state agency that manages multiple grant programs to create outdoor recreation opportunities, protect the best of the state's wildlife habitat and working lands, and help return salmon from near extinction.

Who Makes Decisions

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board make the final decisions for funding, policies, and project changes, although some decisions it has delegated to the agency director.

Board Decisions

The following list summarizes many project decisions made by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board in public meetings or by subcommittees of the board. Each is in accord with statutes, rules, and board policies.

- Initial grant approval.
- A project cost increase of more than 10 percent of the project total in the grant agreement for board-funded projects. Cost increases are allowed only in certain grant programs. Review the cost increase information in this manual for more details.
- A "conversion" that changes the project site or how the site is used from that described in the grant agreement, Deed of Right, or Assignment of Rights. See *Manual 7: Long-term Obligations* for more information about conversions.
- A significant reduction in the project's scope after receiving a grant. Typically, the board will make decisions about scope reductions if the RCO director thinks the project's evaluation score would have been different with the reduced scope. Not included are changes that do not modify significantly the way the public uses a facility, the intended opportunity, or restoration objective funded.

- Changes in policy; for example, establishing new grant limits or eligible expenditures.
- Time extensions beyond 4 years of the board or director approval date.

Director Decisions

The RCO director, or designee, makes many project decisions based on rules and board policies. The decisions range from authorizing payments, to approving cost increases, to approving payment of charges in excess of lower bids, to terminating projects.

A project sponsor may request that the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board reconsider a decision made by the director. To request reconsideration, the project sponsor must send a letter to the board chair at least 60 calendar days before a board meeting. The request is added to the board's meeting agenda and the project sponsor then may address the board at the meeting. The board's decision is final.

Not a Public Hearings Board

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board is not a public hearings board and does not decide land use issues. To the extent possible, all project proposals should demonstrate adequate public notification and review and have the support of the public body applying for the grant.

Manual Authority

This manual provides basic information on procedures and guidelines used in the BIG program. The program has two integrated sets of policies. The first are the policies of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as described in the federal circular. The second are the policies of the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board. The board adopted these policies, which focus on project selection, grant agreement, management, and enforcement of federal requirements, in public meetings. If the policies conflict or are unclear, federal policy generally supersedes board policy.

Authority for the administrative policies and guidance for the evaluation questions are established in the following statutes, rules, and plans:

- [50 Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) Part 86, Boating Infrastructure Grant Program: Final Rule](#)
- [Washington Administrative Code 286](#)
- Recreation and Conservation Funding Board's [Boating Grant Programs Plan](#)
- [Washington State Recreation and Conservation Plan 2018-2022](#)

Where to Get Information

Recreation and Conservation Office

Natural Resources Building

1111 Washington Street SE

PO Box 40917

Olympia, WA 98504-0917

[E-mail](#)

Telephone (360) 902-3000

FAX (360) 902-3026

Hearing Impaired Relay Service: (800) 833-6388

[Web site](#)

Mailing Address

PO Box 40917

Olympia, WA 98504-0917

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region

Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration

911 NE 11th Avenue

Portland, OR 97232

Telephone (503) 231-6120

FAX (206) 220-4161

[Web site](#)

RCO outdoor grants managers are available to answer questions about this manual and grant program. Please feel free to call. In addition, manuals, forms, and most other materials referenced in this manual are available on RCO's Web site on the [BIG grant page](#).

Other Grant Manuals Needed

The manuals below provide additional information for grants and are available on the [grant manual page](#) of the RCO Web site. Each can be made available in an alternative format.

- *Manual 4: Development Projects*
- *Manual 7: Long-term Obligations*
- *Manual 8: Reimbursements*

Grant Process and Timeline

RCO offers grants every year, in conjunction with the federal budget. The grant process, from application to grant award, spans 15 months, and is outlined below. While the order of the steps in this process remains consistent, visit the RCO Web site for precise dates.

Even-numbered Years

Webinars. RCO conducts workshop Webinars in the winter or early spring to provide information about the grant programs offered.

Entering Applications. RCO strongly encourages applicants to start online applications early. PRISM Online usually opens by March 1. Applicants log into PRISM Online and select the "+ New Application" button to enter grant application information. RCO uses this information to assign an outdoor grants manager. This manager guides applicants through the process, reviews application materials, helps determine whether proposals are eligible, and may visit the project site to discuss site-specific details. More information about [PRISM's components and technical requirements](#) may be found online.

Applications Due. While RCO accepts Tier 1 applications during the even-numbered years only, Tier 2 applications are accepted annually. Pre-applications for both tiers are typically due in early May. This year the pre-application deadline has been extended to June 1, 2020. Final applications are due in early July. The application includes the data entered into PRISM and all required attachments. Applicants should "submit" the application before the deadline. The Check Application for Errors button on the Submit Application screen will indicate which pages are incomplete. Incomplete applications and applications received after the deadline will be rejected unless RCO's director has approved a late submission in advance. Follow the requirements in the Applicant's To-Do List online.

Technical Reviews. As part of a written review process, the Boating Programs Advisory Committee will review projects to identify any issues of concern, assess the technical merits of projects, and provide feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal. Grants managers will review the applications also and send comments to applicants. Applicants then may make changes to improve the projects, if needed. Applicants must complete all changes and resubmit their applications by the technical completion deadline. During technical review the advisory committee makes a recommendation to RCO's director on submittal of the Tier 2 projects to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for funding consideration.

Technical Completion Deadline. RCO establishes a technical completion deadline by which applications must be in their final form. After this date, applicants will not be able to make any further changes. RCO will score applicable evaluation criteria as of this date.

Board Reviews Projects. In an open public meeting, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board will review the projects, consider written public comments submitted before the meeting, and hear public testimony at the meeting. Applicants are encouraged, but not required, to attend. This review may happen at the same time as the technical review.

Board Submits Biennial Budget Request. The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board sends the Governor a request for authority to spend any federal funding for BIG approved for the next biennium.

Proof of Matching Funds. Applicants with match included in their applications must provide proof of the availability of matching funds by the match certification deadline, which is at least 1 calendar month before board approval of funding.²

Project Evaluations—A Written Process. For Tier 1 projects, the Boating Program Advisory Committee uses the application materials, which include the responses to the evaluation questions, cost estimates, maps, graphics, and photographs. The committee members score each proposal against a set of criteria approved by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service assembles a panel of staff to review, rank, and recommend Tier 2 applications for funding. The panel uses the application materials, which include responses to the evaluation criteria that are published annually in the Federal Notice of Funding Opportunity. The panel submits its recommendation to the director of the Service, who makes the final funding decision.

Post-Evaluation Conference. After project evaluations for Tier 1 projects, RCO staff tabulate the scores and share the results with the advisory committee. The committee discusses the preliminary ranked list and the application and evaluation processes. The public may join this advisory committee conference call; however, to ensure a fair and equitable process, guests may not testify. Shortly after the conference call, staff posts the preliminary ranked list on RCO's Web site. The resulting ranked list of projects is the basis for the funding recommendation to the RCO director.

Preliminary Approval. Near the beginning of the federal fiscal year, RCO's director approves the Tier 1 projects and sends them to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for funding. The director also submits Tier 2 projects for the national funding competition.

²Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(3)

Section 4 provides additional information about the evaluation process for Tier 2 projects.

Odd-numbered Years

Funding Approval. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service director announces funding, typically in March or April.

Grant Agreement Materials. After the funding announcement, applicants have 2 calendar months to submit pre-agreement documents (checklist provided by grants managers).³ This typically includes documentation necessary for environmental and cultural resources clearance.

RCO staff prepare the federal application, which includes the pre-agreement materials, for submittal to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for its review.

Federal Grant Agreement. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service then issues a federal grant agreement to RCO that often includes special conditions that the grant applicant must satisfy before RCO can issue a notice to proceed with construction or maintenance activities.

State Grant Agreement. Following receipt of the federal agreement, RCO staff then prepare and issue the grant agreements. Applicants must return the signed agreements within 3 calendar months.⁴ Once the agreements are signed, the applicants, now referred to as project sponsors, may begin their projects, according to the terms of the grant agreements. Each agreement will be written and monitored for compliance by RCO staff.

Successful Applicants' Workshop. After RCO and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approve funding, RCO publishes online a recorded workshop for successful grant applicants. This workshop covers sponsors' responsibilities to comply with the grant agreement, issues that might come up when implementing projects, billing procedures, grant agreement amendments for changes and time extensions, closing project procedures, and long-term compliance.

Ongoing

Project Implementation. Sponsors must complete projects promptly. To help ensure reasonable and timely project completion, accountability, and the proper use of funds, applicants will do the following:

³Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(4)

⁴Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(5)

- Develop milestones for project implementation that ensure timely completion of projects as follows:
 - Development projects 2-3 years
 - Exceptionally complex projects 2-3½ years

RCO may terminate projects that do not meet critical milestones established in the grant agreement.

- Begin project implementation quickly and aggressively to show measurable progress towards meeting project milestones. Submit a reimbursement request at least once a year.⁵
- Submit progress reports at intervals designated by the RCO grant agreement.
- If a time extension is needed, the sponsor must submit a written request at least 60 days before expiration of the grant agreement.

Project Completion. When a project is completed, sponsors must submit the final bill, final report, and supporting documents needed to close the project as specified in the agreement.⁶ If the bill and documentation are not submitted within 6 months of the end date within the agreement, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board may terminate the agreement without payment.

⁵Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(6)

⁶Washington Administrative Code 286.13.040(7)

Section 2: Policies

In this section, you'll learn about the following:

- ✓ Categories and grants offered
- ✓ Eligible applicants, project types, and activities
- ✓ Ineligible projects and costs
- ✓ Proration of eligible activities
- ✓ Environmental requirements
- ✓ Property requirements
- ✓ Other requirements and things to know
- ✓ Protection of federal investments and ongoing stewardship

Categories and Grants Offered

There are two tiers of grants offered in BIG. For the most part the categories are almost identical; however there are a few key differences, which are as follows:

Tier 1: State Grants

- Applicants may submit a stand-alone maintenance project.
- States can use Tier 1 funds to administer the BIG program.
- Applications are reviewed, evaluated, and ranked by the Washington State Boating Programs Advisory Committee.
- Each year the US. Fish and Wildlife Service makes funding available to each state. The State can submit one or many projects.
- RCO's director uses the annual appropriation to award grants to the ranked list of Tier 1 grant applications submitted during the even-numbered year.

Tier 2: National Grants

- Applicants may submit maintenance activities as part of a development or renovation project only. See “Maintenance Projects” for more information.
- Applications are reviewed by RCO staff and the Boating Programs Advisory Committee for eligibility and then forwarded, without state evaluation to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the national competition.
- Each year the US. Fish and Wildlife Service accepts Tier 2 grant proposals. The State can submit multiple projects.
- The director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service awards grants to Tier 2 projects annually.

Choosing a Grant Category

A grant applicant submits a proposal to a specific category. RCO staff reviews the applicant’s choice and recommends any changes. The key difference in the two categories is the total project cost and how the project will be selected for funding. A BIG project will be evaluated only in one category. At the applicant’s discretion, projects appropriate to more than one category may be divided into stand-alone, distinct projects and submitted separately. One project cannot depend on the anticipated completion of another.⁷ An applicant must determine the best category for the project by the technical completion deadline, unless otherwise authorized by the director.

Eligible Applicants

Grants may be made to the following organizations:

- Cities and towns
- Counties
- Native American tribes
- Port districts
- Nonprofit organizations (see below for qualifications)
- Private operators (see below for qualifications)

⁷Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 86-Boating Infrastructure Grants §86.44(a)(2)

- State agencies
- Some special purpose districts, such as park and recreation districts or public utility districts, are eligible if legally authorized to acquire and develop public outdoor recreation facilities.

Applicant Requirements

Nonprofit Organizations and Private Operators

A private operator or nonprofit organization must meet all the following eligibility requirements:

- Be registered with the State of Washington's Secretary of State.
- Have an equivalent successor identified in its articles of organization.
- Have been active in recreational boating for a minimum of 3 years.
- Does not require exclusive use of the facilities funded through this program.
- Does not discriminate on the basis of any protected class.
- Provides evidence that its primary purpose or business is recreational boating.
- Meets federal eligibility requirements.
- Provides a copy of articles of incorporation and by-laws including any amendments.

Legal Opinion for First-Time Applicants

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board requires all organizations wishing to apply for a grant for the first time to submit a legal opinion that the applicant is eligible to do the activities below. The legal opinion is required only once to establish eligibility.

- Contract with the State of Washington and/or the United States of America.
- Meet any statutory definitions required for Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grant programs.
- Receive and spend public funds including funds from the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board.
- Acquire and manage interests in real property for conservation or outdoor recreation purposes.

- Develop and/or provide stewardship for structures or facilities eligible under board rules or policies.
- Undertake planning activities incidental thereto.
- Commit the applicant to statements made in any grant proposal.
- Enter into a grant agreement that requires federal and state approved mitigation if there is a conversion or if the outstanding rights or reversionary interests are exercised in such a manner that results in a conversion.

Not Eligible

Any grantee, sub-grantee, or contractor of any grantee or sub-grantee that has been debarred or suspended under [Executive Order 12549](#).

Eligible Project Types

Development or Renovation Projects

A development project is construction or work resulting in new elements, including but not limited to structures, facilities, or materials to enhance outdoor recreation resources. Development projects may include new elements or renovation of existing public outdoor recreation facilities and support amenities such as restrooms or showers. Renovation work is intended to improve an existing site or structure in order to increase its useful service life beyond current expectations or functions. Grants for development projects also may cover demolition, site preparation, architectural and engineering services, and similar activities that are essential to complete the proposed project scope.

Applicants submitting projects for development or renovation must select development as the project type in PRISM Online. Guidelines for development and renovation projects are in *Manual 4: Development Projects*.

Education and Information Projects

An education project provides information for the benefit of boaters. The materials must be designed to target eligible vessels or a BIG-funded project.

Maintenance Projects⁸

Maintenance projects are defined in the federal regulations⁹ as the following:

“Maintenance means keeping structures or equipment in a condition to serve the intended purpose. It includes cyclical or occasional actions to keep facilities fully functional. It does not include operational actions such as janitorial work.

In Tier 1, BIG allows two types of maintenance projects: A stand-alone maintenance project or as part of a development or renovation project, as long as it relates to the development or renovation activities of the project.

Maintenance activities are allowed as part of a Tier 2 development or restoration project only if they are directly related to the development and restoration activities of the project and do not exceed more than 50 percent of total project costs.

Other Considerations

Phased Projects

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board recommends that applicants discuss phasing very expensive or complex projects with RCO staff. Phased projects are subject to the following parameters:

- Approval of any single phase is limited to that phase. No approval or endorsement is given or implied toward future phases.
- Each phase must stand on its merits as a viable or complete recreation experience and is not dependent on the completion of future phases or work.
- Each phase must be submitted as a separate application.

Progress and sponsor performance on previously funded project phases may be considered by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board when making decisions on current project proposals.

⁸Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2016-11 adopted in February 2016

⁹50 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 86, Boating Infrastructure Grant Program

Eligible Project Activities and Costs

Developing or Renovating Facilities

Examples of facilities and support amenities that may be developed and renovated include the following:

- Dinghy or courtesy docks
- Dredging (additional details highlighted below)
- Fixed or floating breakwaters, wave attenuators, sea walls and other improvements that provide a harbor of safe refuge.¹⁰
- Marine fuel dock and pump-out stations
- Navigational aids (beacons, signals, and markers)
- Signs (safety, invasive species prevention, and boater information)
- Transient¹¹ moorage floats and slips, fixed docks, piers, gangways, and mooring buoys
- Upland support facilities such as laundry, restrooms, showers, utilities, etc.

Dredging

Applicants must show in their grant applications all the following:

- Dredging is needed to fulfill the purpose and objectives of the proposed project.
- Dredging costs have been prorated between the expected use by eligible vessels and ineligible vessels.

Other requirements related to dredging are as follows:

- Dredging-related actions may not exceed \$200,000 in federal funds.
- The dredging may be anywhere in the basin, but it must support the project.

¹⁰A *harbor of safe refuge* gives eligible vessels protection from storms. The facility must offer a place to secure vessels and access to provisions and communication for users.

¹¹Transient means an eligible recreational vessel traveling to a single facility for day use or staying overnight for up to 15 consecutive days.

- The dredge area must allow safe navigation to, from, and within the funded facility and allow vessels to dock safely and securely at transient slips.
- When completed, the dredged area must have a water depth at least 6 feet at the lowest tide or fluctuation, unless the sponsor can show that with a depth of less than 6 feet, the funded facility will serve its intended purpose for the typical eligible user that visits that location.
- The sponsor must maintain the dredged area at the approved width and depth for the useful life of the BIG-funded facility, unless awarded BIG funds in the future that provide for maintenance dredging.

Additional guidelines for development projects are in *Manual 4: Development Projects*.

Producing Education or Information Materials

Examples of education and information activities that are eligible for funding include the following:

- Advertising in print or electronic media with emphasis on the funded facility or services for eligible users (may not market a marina as a whole)
- Brochures that direct boaters to funded sites
- Charts and cruising guides
- Newsletter articles, marina or agency Web pages, and other communications that are directly related to the funded project

Maintaining Existing Facilities¹²

Examples of eligible maintenance actions, which excludes janitorial work, include the following:

- Lubricating mechanical components of BIG-funded equipment
- Replacing minor components of a BIG-funded improvement, such as bolts, boards, and individual structural components
- Painting, pressure washing, and repointing masonry.

¹²Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2016-11 adopted in February 2016

Incurring Pre-agreement Costs

RCO will pay only for work performed after grant agreements have been signed by both RCO and project sponsors with one exception. Expenses, such as preliminary designs, environmental assessments, construction plans and specifications, cultural resource surveys, and permits, may be eligible for reimbursement, if approved by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Construction performed before the execution of a grant agreement and compliance with cultural resource laws (Section 106 of the National Environmental Policy Act) will not be eligible for payment and may jeopardize funding for the entire project.

Paying Indirect Costs

RCO allows agency indirect costs for all projects that receive federal funding or are used by RCO as programmatic match to a federal grant. An applicant is required to attach the RCO Fiscal Data Collection Sheet before submitting an application. Start filling out this form early and work with accounting staff to estimate the indirect costs.

Ineligible Projects and Costs

Ineligible Projects

Ineligible projects include the following:

- Conduct surveys to determine boating access needs
- Construct or renovate principal structures not expected to last at least 20 years
- Construct, renovate, or maintain boating infrastructure tie-up facilities for the following:
 - Tie-up slips available for occupancy for more than 15 consecutive days by a single party
 - Dryland storage or haul-out features
 - Boating features for trailerable or “car-top” boats (boats typically less than 26 feet in length), such as launch ramps and carry-down walkways
- Construct, renovate, or maintain boating infrastructure for the following:
 - Shops, stores, food service, retail businesses, or lodging
 - Facility administration or management, such as a harbormaster’s office

- Construct, renovate, or maintain road or parking lots
- Develop a state program plan to construct, renovate, and maintain boating infrastructure tie-up facilities
- Do not provide public benefits, for example, a project that is not open to the public for use
- Fund operations or routine custodial and janitorial maintenance of the facility.
- Involve law enforcement activities
- Involve multiple worksites
- Purchase real property or interests in real property, including riparian rights
- Purchase or operate service boats to transport boaters to and from mooring areas
- Significantly degrade or destroy valuable natural resources or alter the cultural or historic nature of the area
- Specific projects identified as mitigation as part of a habitat conservation plan approved by the federal government for incidental take of endangered or threatened species, or other projects identified for habitat mitigation purposes. Also, see *RCO Manual 4: Development Projects* for exceptions.

Ineligible Costs

Manual 4: Development Projects and Title 50 Code of Federal Regulations §86.16 provide additional information about ineligible costs, which includes the following:

- Ceremonial or entertainment expenses
- Charges for contingency or other similar reserves
- Charges for deficits or overdrafts
- Charges incurred contrary to the policies of the sponsor
- Charges in excess of the lowest bid when competitive bidding is required
- Costs not directly related to implementing the project such as unrelated mitigation
- Costs of discounts not taken

- Damage judgments whether determined by judicial decision, arbitration, or otherwise
- Direct administration, operation, and routine maintenance costs
- Donations or contributions made by the project sponsor, such as to a charitable organization
- Employee facilities, including residences, appliances, office equipment, furniture, etc.
- Environmental cleanup of illegal activities (i.e. removal of contaminated materials or derelict vessels, trash pickup, methamphetamine labs, etc.)
- Expenses for publicity
- Fines and penalties
- Interest expenses
- Items not included in the grant agreement
- Legal, professional fees paid in connection with raising funds
- Losses arising from uncollectible accounts and other claims and related costs
- Marketing or outreach efforts, including giveaway items, general agency newsletters or Web sites, exhibits promoting ineligible facilities or activities
- Purchase of supplies and other expendable personal property not directly related to achieving the project objectives
- Salaries and expenses of the executive (harbormaster, mayor, etc.), project sponsor, or local governing body (board, city, county, etc.)
- Support facilities that exclusively serve ineligible facilities
- Taxes that the project sponsor would not have been liable to pay

Proration of BIG Eligible Activities

If the facility will benefit boats of all sizes, applicants must prorate the share of costs that will benefit boats at least 26 feet long. Common examples of costs that might be used by all boaters and often must be prorated include fuel docks, restrooms and showers, retaining walls, bulkheads and breakwaters, pump-out stations, dredging, and other

features that are expected to partially benefit ineligible users. To determine how to prorate the project costs, see [§86.19](#) of the federal regulations.

For example, if the grant applicant proposes to build a moorage dock that will benefit big and small boats, with 70 percent of the vessels being more than 26 feet long (based on the percentage of slips in the marina), the grant application may include only the 70 percent of eligible project costs.

Applicants do not need to prorate costs if the facility is solely for boats longer than 26 feet or when producing information and education materials.

Applicants must include explanations of prorating, the method used, as well as data to validate the method in the Budget Narrative. See the Applicant's To-Do List. Applications will not be considered for funding if costs are not prorated appropriately.

Environmental Requirements

Environmental Regulations

Once projects have been selected for funding, compliance with all applicable federal laws, regulations, and policies, including environmental laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, and National Historic Preservation Act, and applicable executive orders must be satisfied before the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service can approve a grant and make funding available.

Supplemental information, such as the National Environmental Policy Act checklist, may be required pending U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service review.

National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 Process

The National Historic Preservation Act's Section 106 requires project applications to be reviewed to determine if there will be any impact to historical properties. RCO begins this process by contacting the State Historic Preservation Office and Native American tribes. The State Historical Preservation Office then determines the potential impacts, defines the "area of potential affect," and may request a cultural resources survey.

If a cultural resources survey is requested, the project sponsor must complete the survey. RCO forwards the survey to the State Historic Preservation Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and interested Native American tribes for review and comment. RCO then forwards comments and the State Historic Preservation Office determination to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for a final determination.

This review and the review under the National Environmental Policy Act are two separate, distinct processes. They can, and should, occur simultaneously. They should be coordinated to avoid duplication of public involvement or other requirements.

If research shows that cultural resources do exist, they must be identified and a description of how they will be protected included in the environmental assessment.

Intergovernmental Review

To receive BIG grants, sponsors must notify directly state, area-wide, and regional agencies, and local governments that would be affected by the project. This may be accomplished by publishing the project notice in the Federal Register or (preferred) by sending information directly to affected agencies. Such notices should include a detailed description of the proposal, an address where comments may be forwarded, and the deadline for comment. A 60-day comment period is suggested.

Public Review

At a minimum, project sponsors are required to ensure the public has had an opportunity to review and provide written comments on completed environmental assessments. This public comment period must be at least 30 days. The notice must be published in the local newspapers and community notices and on the applicant's Web site. The goal is to ensure the notice is broadcast widely so people have ample time to comment. Grant applicants must review the comments and include their responses to substantive comments in the application to RCO.

If the proposal is revised in response to public comments, or for any other reason, RCO should consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to determine if the public needs another opportunity to review the revised environmental assessment.

See the Cultural Resources section in *Manuals 3, 4, or 5* for additional details.

Invasive Species

The Washington Invasive Species Council developed [protocols](#) for preventing the spread of invasive species while working in the field. The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board encourages grant sponsors to consider how their projects may spread invasive species, and work to reduce that possibility. Invasive species can be spread unintentionally during construction and restoration activities. Here is how it could happen:

- Driving a car or truck to a field site and moving soil embedded with seeds or fragments of invasive plants in the vehicle's tires to another site. New infestations can begin miles away as the seeds and fragments drop off the tires and the undercarriage of the vehicle.

- Moving water or sediment infested with invasive plants, animals, or pathogens via boots, nets, sampling equipment, or boats from one stream to another.
- Moving weed-infested hay, gravel, or dirt to a new site, carrying the weed seeds along with it, during restoration and construction activities. Before long, the seeds germinate and infest the new site.

The key to preventing the spread of invasive species is twofold: Use materials that are known to be free of invasive plants or animals in the project and clean equipment both before and after the job. Equipment to clean should include, but not be limited to, footwear, gloves, angling equipment, sampling equipment, boats and their trailers, and vehicles and tires.

Sustainability¹³

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board encourages grant recipients to design and build sustainable projects to maximize the useful life of what they build and do the least amount of damage to the environment.

The board encourages sponsors to use sustainable design, practices, and elements in their projects. Examples may include use of recycled materials; native plants in landscaping; pervious surfacing material for circulation paths and access routes, trails, and parking areas; energy efficient fixtures; onsite recycling stations; and composting.

Property Requirements

Control of the Land

To protect investments made by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board and to assure public access to those investments, sponsors must have adequate control of project sites to construct, operate, and maintain the areas for the term required by the grant program and grant agreement. This “control and tenure” may be through land ownership, a lease, use agreement, or easement. See *Manual 4: Development Projects* for more information.

Projects on State-owned Aquatic Lands

If a project will occur over, in, or alongside a navigable body of water, an authorization to use state-owned aquatic lands may be needed.

¹³Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2011-22 and 2014-06

All marine waters are, by definition navigable, as are portions of rivers influenced by tides. Navigable rivers and lakes are those determined by the judiciary, those bounded by meander lines, or those that could have been used for commerce at the time of statehood. The Department of Natural Resources' aquatic land managers will help the grant applicant determine if the project will fall on state-owned aquatic lands and provide more information on its authorization process. See the [land manager coverage map](#) online for contact information for the Department of Natural Resources aquatic land managers.

If the project is on state-owned aquatic lands, the grant applicant will need to secure a lease or easement (use authorization) to use those lands from the Washington Department of Natural Resources. Securing a lease or easement may take up to a year. RCO requires the executed lease or easement within 2 calendar months¹⁴ after board funding approval to show control and tenure for the site. The lease or easement is required before the project will be placed under agreement, unless RCO's director approves an extension in advance. Review the control and tenure requirements in *Manual 4: Development Projects*.

The following online resources may be helpful to review:

- [Grant Projects on State-owned Aquatic Lands](#)
- [Leasing State-owned Aquatic Lands](#)
- [Boundaries of State-owned Aquatic Lands](#)
- [Caring for Washington's Nearshore Environments](#)

Department of Natural Resources' Review of Project Scope

Local government, nonprofit, and private operator applicants that need to secure a use authorization meeting board policy must do the following:

- Meet with the Department of Natural Resources to review the proposed scope of work.
- Complete a Joint Aquatic Resource Permit Application (JARPA) and give a copy to the Department of Natural Resources.
- Attach to the grant application a Scope of Work Acknowledgement Form (signed by the Department of Natural Resources) by the technical completion deadline.

¹⁴Washington Administrative Code 286-13-045(4)

State agency applicants must follow the same procedure when developing a new facility where one currently does not exist. RCO will coordinate an interagency in-person review of proposals for all other state agency projects.

Public Property Records¹⁵

All funded sites, regardless of the grant amount, must be maintained for outdoor recreation purposes for the compliance period identified in the grant agreement. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service requires that the project sponsor record a "Notice of Grant" in its public property records that notes that the site was developed, renovated, or maintained with BIG assistance and cannot be converted to other than public outdoor recreation use without the written approval of RCO and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The permanent record must include a signed and dated boundary map that documents the project area¹⁶ subject to the grant agreement.

Project sponsors must agree to this requirement as a condition of receiving grants. Prospective applicants should carefully consider their ability and willingness to comply with this provision before applying for a grant. See *Manual 4: Development Projects* for more information on creating the required boundary map.

Acknowledgement and Signs¹⁷

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service requires sponsors to use the Sport Fish Restoration logo to show the source of funding for a BIG project. The logo must do the following:

- Be posted at all BIG sites funded with a development, renovation, or maintenance grant.
- Be printed on Web-based material or other visual representations of BIG projects or achievements.
- Be included on funded and related educational and informational related materials.

Federal guidelines include language sponsors may use to acknowledge BIG participation. RCO can provide the signs.

Sponsors also must provide clear information, using signs or other methods (i.e. Web site, brochures, etc.), that directs eligible users to the funded facility and includes restrictions, operating periods, and ineligible use.¹⁸

¹⁵Title 50 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 86: Boating Infrastructure Grant §86.18

¹⁶ Washington Administrative Code 286-04-010(19)

¹⁷Title 50 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 86: Boating Infrastructure Grant §86.92

¹⁸Title 50 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 86: Boating Infrastructure Grant §86.94

Other Requirements and Things to Know

Public Access¹⁹

Public access means access by eligible users for eligible activities or other users for activities that either support the purpose of the funded project or do not interfere with the purpose. Sponsors must allow public access to any part of the funded facility during its useful life.²⁰ Funded sites must be open to the public for reasonable periods. Also, the sponsor must allow reasonable public access to other parts of the facility that would normally be open to the public and must not limit access in any way that discriminates against any member of the public.

Guest Moorage Fees

Sponsors may charge the public reasonable fees for use of guest recreational moorage and tie-up facilities developed, renovated, maintained, or replaced with BIG. The fees must be based on the prevailing rate for the area and may not pose an unfair competitive amount, based on other publicly and privately owned tie-up facilities in the area.²¹ RCO must approve any changes in the fee structure for 20 years from project completion. See *Manual 4: Development Projects* and Washington Administrative Code 286-13-110 for more information.

Number of Grant Proposal Allowed

In general, RCO does not limit the number of grant proposals from a single applicant during the grant cycle. However, each proposal must be for only one location or site. The application may contain one or more eligibility activities. Each application must stand alone on its own merits with a viable, recreation experience and not be dependent on other projects or future phases of work.

A grant proposal for the same project or scope of work may be submitted to another RCO grant program only if it is being used as match. Each proposal must identify the other RCO matching grant proposal. RCO recommends applicants contact staff to discuss options for phasing costly, interrelated, or complex project proposals.

¹⁹Title 50 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 86: Boating Infrastructure Grant §86.92

²⁰Sponsor may limit access due to an emergency; for repairs, construction or safety; or when seasonally closed for business.

²¹[50 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 86.31](#)

Accessibility

Facilities or elements²² constructed with RCO grants and sponsor match are required by law to be accessible regardless of whether there are specific standards adopted in the State Building Code, Americans with Disabilities Act, or Architectural Barriers Act, as amended. Other federal laws, guidelines, and best practices also may apply to achieve accessibility.

RCO encourages sponsors to exceed the minimum accessibility standards and use a design principle that maximizes universal accessibility for all. See *Manual 4: Development Projects* and the RCO Web site for detailed information about how to make the facility meet [accessibility requirements](#). Plans, project applications, cost estimates, and construction drawings must reflect compliance with facility access and signing requirements.

Nondiscrimination

RCO activities are intended to follow state and federal guidelines for nondiscrimination. If you believe RCO or its programs are discriminatory, express concern to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board, or director of the [Office of Civil Rights](#), U.S. Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

Public Disclosure Rules

RCO records and files are public records that are subject to the Public Records Act.²³ More information about the [RCO's disclosure practices](#) is available on the Web site.

Reports

Annual Billing to RCO

Sponsors must submit a reimbursement request at least once a year during the state's fiscal year (July 1-June 30) for all eligible expenses incurred during that time.

Progress Reporting

RCO requires all project sponsors to report on project progress periodically. The date when progress reports are due is stated in the milestones of the grant agreement and

²²A facility is all or any portion of buildings, structures, site improvements, elements, and pedestrian routes or vehicular ways located on site. An element is an architectural or mechanical component of a building, facility, space, or site (2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, Department of Justice, September 15, 2010).

²³Revised Code of Washington 42.56

sponsors will receive electronic notice when reports are due. Progress reports are entered and submitted through the PRISM database system.

Final Performance Report

At project completion, all sponsors will submit final reports detailing the objectives and work performed through these projects, project changes, estimated versus actual costs expended, etc. Final performance reports are required before RCO will release final retainage payments.

Protection of Federal Investments and Ongoing Stewardship²⁴

An RCO grant comes with long-term obligations to maintain and protect the project area²⁵ after a project is complete. The long-term obligations are in 50 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 86, Boating Infrastructure Grant Program: Final Rule and RCO's grant agreement. A [sample grant agreement](#) may be found on RCO's Web site.

RCO recognizes that changes occur over time and that some facilities may become obsolete or the land needed for something else. The law discourages casual discards of land and facilities by ensuring that grant sponsors replace the lost value when changes or conversions of use take place.

In general, the project area funded with an RCO grant must remain dedicated to the use as originally funded, such as outdoor recreation, habitat protection, farmland preservation, forestland preservation, or salmon recovery purposes, for as long as defined in the grant agreement. For development and renovation projects, the period is often determined by the type of control and tenure provided for the project.

A conversion occurs when the project area acquired, developed, or restored with RCO grant funding is used for purposes other than what it was funded for originally. See RCO *Manual 7: Long-term Obligations* for a discussion of conversions and the process required for replacement of the public investment. Non-compliance with the long-term obligations for an RCO grant may jeopardize an organization's ability to obtain future RCO grants.

²⁴Revised Code of Washington 79A.25, Washington Administrative Code 286, RCO's grant agreement standard terms and conditions, and *Manual 7: Funded Projects*.

²⁵Project area is the defined geographic area where the project occurs and is described in the project's boundary map.

Compliance Period²⁶

The compliance period for Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects is a useful life period for the entire project based on the longest useful life period identified for one or more capital improvement(s) within the BIG-funded project.

²⁶Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2016-11 adopted in February 2016

Section 3: Money Matters

In this section, you'll learn about the following:

- ✓ Grant limits
- ✓ Match requirements
- ✓ Types of match
- ✓ Additional requirements

Grant Limits

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board establishes grant limits for its programs. The grant limits for each category are shown below.

- **Tier 1 State Grants:** An applicant may request a grant of at least \$5,000 and not more than \$192,086 per project.
- **Tier 2 National Grants:** An applicant may request a grant of at least \$200,001 and not more than \$1,440,645 per project.

BIG funds may not exceed 75 percent of a project's total cost. The sponsor is responsible for project cost overruns. Also, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board will not reimburse more than the sponsor's actual out-of-pocket expenditures.

Cost Increases

Cost increases may be granted by the board or RCO director if financial resources are available and the increase does not exceed the federal grant limits. Each cost increase request will be considered on its merits. See *Manual 4: Development Projects* for more details on cost increases.

Development Projects: Administration, Architecture, Engineering

Architecture and engineering costs for development and renovation projects is limited to 20 percent of the total project cost.

Additional information about eligibility and reimbursement maximums is contained in *Manual 4: Development Projects* (architectural and engineering costs).

Match Requirements

Matching Share

Match is the project sponsor's contribution to a project. By requiring a match for grants, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board intends to meet statutory requirements, foster and demonstrate local commitment to the projects and spread the money from the grant program to a greater number of projects.²⁷

Applicants must provide a minimum of 25 percent in matching resources for each project. For example, if an applicant requests a \$75,000 grant, the applicant must contribute \$25,000 for a total project cost of \$100,000.

Projects with a match higher than 25 percent will receive additional points under a question included in the evaluation criteria.

Except for state agencies and Native American tribes, at least 10 percent of the total project cost must be provided in the form of a non-state, non-federal contribution.²⁸ For example, if a total project cost is \$500,000, the applicant must provide \$50,000 in matching share from a local source such as local government appropriation, cash, private grants, or in-kind donations.

Eligible Match

A sponsor's matching share may include one or a combination of the following:

- Appropriations and cash
- Bonds—council or voter
- Corrections labor

²⁷Washington Administrative Code 286-13-045(2)

²⁸Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2005-24

- Donations—the value of using cash, equipment use, labor, materials, or services (see note below)
- Force account²⁹—the value of using sponsor’s equipment, labor, or materials (see note below)
- Grants—state, local, and private (see note below)
- Local impact and mitigation fees (see note below)
- Proceeds of a letter of credit or binding loan commitment
- Other Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grants that meet the requirements outlined below.

Not Allowed as Match

- Existing sponsor assets such as real property or developments.
- Costs or in-kind contributions that have been or will be used to satisfy match for another federal grant, cooperative agreement, or contract, unless authorized by federal statute. This includes funds from another federal source.
- Costs that are double counted. (A cost incurred by a sponsor in a project that has been reimbursed by RCO shall not be used as a match on another RCO project.)
- Cost that are not eligible for grant assistance.
- Cost that are not necessary or an integral part of the project scope.
- Costs for items or work that is not included in the grant agreement.
- Cost associated with meeting a mitigation requirement unrelated to the funded project. See “Mitigation Funds as Match” below.
- Cost incurred before a grant agreement is executed, except for pre-agreement costs approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Donations or in-kind contributions of personal property, structures, and services, including volunteer labor, contributed outside of the period of performance.

²⁹“Force account” means to use the applicant agency’s or organization’s employees or resources as opposed to, for example, a contractor’s staff, volunteers, or others.

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Match Requirements

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grants are intended to be the last source of funding for a project. In other words, before the board awards the grant, the required match must be secured so the project can move forward. Board grants also are intended to supplement the existing capacity of a sponsor, not to replace the existing funding that would have been used for a project without grant funding.

All matching resources must meet all the following criteria:

- Be an integral and necessary part of the approved project.
- Be part of the work identified in the application and grant agreement.
- Be for eligible work types or elements.
- Be committed to the project.

Rules governing projects apply to the grant applicant's match. For example, if a grant applicant uses donated moorage slips as a match, RCO rules requiring the moorage to remain in public recreation use throughout the compliance period apply to the donated slips as well.

In many grant programs, particularly those where match is not required, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board adopted evaluation criteria to encourage applicants to contribute matching shares. This typically is reflected in the criteria when points are given for non-governmental contributions or for exceeding the minimum match requirements. Applicants should carefully review the evaluation instrument to determine if this applies to their projects.

Except for grant applications submitted within the same biennium, matching resources or board grants, committed in one board-funded project must not be used as match in another board-funded project.

The board may require the applicant to provide a portion of its matching resources in local resources.³⁰

Match Availability and Certification

To help ensure Recreation and Conservation Funding Board projects are ready for implementation upon approval, applicants must have matching funds available for expenditure before the director approves funding. All applicants are required to sign and submit Certification of Match Forms to ensure their projects are included in the funding

³⁰Washington Administrative Code 286-13-045(4)

recommendation. Applicants are advised to plan for projects whose match depends on citizen votes or passage of ballot measures. This certification is due at least 1 calendar month before the director takes action.³¹ The forms and deadlines for certifying match are on the RCO Web site.

RCO may declare projects ineligible if there is no guarantee that matching funds are available. Those projects may be passed over in favor of projects with the match in place. Such decisions are based on the director's confidence in the applicant's ability to have the match in place when required.

When another Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grant is used as match, the certification of match will be tentative, conditioned on receipt of the other grant or on the sponsor providing the match from other resources. To prevent a backlog of unspent grants, the sponsor must finish the project by the earliest completion date of the two grants.

Types of Match

Donations

Donations are eligible only as matching funds and are not reimbursable. This means RCO will not pay more than the sponsor's out-of-pocket expenses. Valuing donations of equipment, labor (including inmate or community service labor), and material is discussed in *Manual 8: Reimbursements*. RCO strongly encourages applicants to secure written confirmation of all donations planned for use as match and attach the donation letters to the PRISM Online application.

Force Account

Force account refers to use of a sponsor's staff (labor), equipment, or materials. These contributions are treated as expenditures.

Other Grants

In some cases, a sponsor may use funds awarded from a separate grant program as its match. Other grants are eligible as long as the purposes are similar and grant sources do not restrict or diminish the use, availability, or value of the project area. These grants are eligible only as matching funds and are not reimbursable. Federal grants are not eligible for match.

³¹Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(3)

Applicants must clearly identify in grant applications all grants to be used as match. RCO will help determine if the sources are compatible with Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grants.

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Grants as Match³²

Another Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grant may be used to help meet the match requirements if all the following conditions are met:

- The grants are not from the same Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grant program.
- Only elements eligible in *both* grant programs are counted as match.
- Each grant is evaluated independently and on its own merits as if the match were coming from elsewhere.
- The applicant must provide a minimum of 10 percent of the total costs of the eligible elements being matched. This sponsor match may not be from federal or state funds and may include in-kind contributions. This policy does not apply to Native American tribes.
- The grant applications are submitted in the same biennium.³³

For evaluation scoring, an RCO grant used as match will not count toward the award of matching share points.³⁴

Matching resources also must conform to the deadlines discussed in Section 1 "Grant Process and Timeline."

Mitigation Funds as Match

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board allows use of impact fees and mitigation cash payments, such as money from a fund established as a mitigation requirement, as match if the money has been passed from the mitigating entity to an eligible applicant, and the board's grant does not replace mitigation money, repay the mitigation fund, or in any way supplant the obligation of the mitigating entity.

³²Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2005-24

³³Washington Administrative Code 286-13-045

³⁴ Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2014-06

Additional Requirements

Sponsors Pay First

RCO pays grants through reimbursement. Sponsors may request reimbursement only after paying employees and vendors. RCO does not provide money before vendors are paid. And, RCO will not pay more than the grant sponsor's out-of-pocket costs. Billing procedures are explained further in *Manual 8: Reimbursements*

Federal Rules

For all projects funded with federal funds or other grants that are used by RCO as match to a federal source, grant administration is governed by [Part 200-Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](#).

RCO may require additional information to meet federal grant requirements. RCO will provide an Applicant's Next Steps document outlining these additional requirements.

Records

Applicants must keep detailed records of all funded project costs including force account values and donated contributions. Refer to *Manual 8: Reimbursements* for details and instructions regarding audits, record retention, and documents required for reimbursement.

Section 4: Project Evaluation

In this section, you'll learn about the following:

- ✓ How project evaluation works
- ✓ Evaluation materials
- ✓ Evaluation criteria

How Project Evaluation Works

Evaluation Projects

Project evaluation is the competitive process adopted by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board to guide its grant awards.³⁵ Also, it is the process the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service uses to make its funding decisions. It is based on a set of approved³⁶ evaluation questions. The questions are created from statutory and other criteria developed through a public process. The evaluation questions for each category are on the following pages.

Evaluating Tier 1 Projects

There are two sections to the evaluation criteria: advisory committee-scored questions and RCO staff-scored questions. In the first section, RCO's Boating Programs Advisory Committee (see below) reviews and evaluates projects using board-adopted subjective criteria to score each project. Scores are based on each applicant's response to evaluation questions, graphics included in the application, and summary application materials made available in advance of the project's evaluation.

³⁵Washington Administrative Code 286-13-020

³⁶The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board approves the criteria for Tier 1 and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approves the criteria for Tier 2.

In the second section, RCO staff scores the projects using objective measures, such as matching share. Scores are based on material submitted by the applicant.

Scores from both sections are combined for a project's total evaluation score. The resulting ranked list is the basis for funding recommendations to RCO's director, who makes the final funding decision after the projects are presented to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board in an open public meeting.

Evaluating Tier 2 Projects

RCO's Boating Programs Advisory Committee reviews Tier 2 proposals and makes a recommendation to RCO's director as to whether or not the projects should be submitted for the national competition.

Following Recreation and Conservation Funding Board review in an open public meeting, the projects are submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which assembles a panel of professional staff to review and evaluate projects. This national review panel uses evaluation criteria published with the annual "Notice of Funding Opportunity" to score and rank projects. This committee then makes a recommendation to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service director, who makes the final funding decision.

Boating Programs Advisory Committee

RCO manages the BIG program with the assistance of a standing advisory committee. The advisory committee's role is to recommend policies and procedures to RCO for administering grant funds and to review, evaluate, and score grant applications. The resulting ranked list is the basis for funding recommendations to RCO.

In recruiting members for the committee, RCO seeks to appoint people who possess a statewide perspective and are recognized for their experience and knowledge of outdoor recreation and boating in Washington.

RCO's director may appoint *ex officio* members to the committee to provide additional representation and expertise.

Check RCO's Web site for [membership and other details](#).

Do Not Fund Recommendation

Occasionally during evaluations of Tier 1 projects or following review of Tier 2 projects, the advisory committee may express significant concerns about a project, such that it would like to discuss a "Do Not Fund" recommendation. If this occurs, the advisory committee may discuss its concerns at the post-evaluation meeting, which takes place after application scores are tabulated. For Tier 2 projects, RCO staff will notify applicants

of the proposed “Do Not Fund” recommendation before projects are due to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the national competition.

If a “Do Not Fund” recommendation is scheduled to be considered, RCO will notify the applicant in writing, identify the significant concerns expressed by the advisory committee, and invite the applicant to attend the post-evaluation meeting to respond to questions. The applicant also may submit a written response to the advisory committee’s concerns. To ensure all projects are treated equally, no additional testimony from applicants or visitors is taken at the post-evaluation meeting. The advisory committee determines a “Do Not Fund” recommendation by a simple majority vote of the committee members that participated in application evaluations.

RCO staff will forward to the director a summary of the “Do Not Fund” recommendation, any committee member comments, and the applicant’s response. The director will consider the advisory committee’s recommendation before the ranked list is approved. The director retains discretion in awarding all grant funds.

Evaluation Materials

Tier 1

As an attachment to the PRISM application, applicants must provide written responses to the evaluation criteria outlined in this section. The advisory committee reviews the responses along with the application fact sheet, maps, plans, graphics, and summary application information entered in PRISM to score and rank projects.

Scoring is by secret ballot. All scores are sent to RCO where they are tabulated and compiled to establish a ranked list of projects. The ranked list is the basis for funding recommendations to RCO’s director.

Tier 2

For projects to be evaluated, scored, and ranked for funding consideration, applicants must follow the requirements in the latest federal “Notice of Funding Opportunity.” The notice outlines the required documents and specifies the format and page limits for each. These documents generally include a project summary, project statement, responses to evaluation criteria, maps, site plans, drawings, photographs, letters of commitment, and other supporting documents.

NOTE: The “Notice of Funding Opportunity” often is not available until after RCO begins accepting grant applications, and each year the page limits, questions, and other requirements may change. RCO will provide an Applicant’s Next Steps document outlining these additional requirements. Applicants must work with their RCO grants managers and check the RCO Web site to make sure they have the latest requirements.

Once the director approves the Tier 2 projects, RCO will forward the application materials, including any required federal forms, to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for funding consideration.

Evaluation Criteria

Tier 1 Projects³⁷

The questions listed below will be used to evaluate and rank all Tier 1 projects. Applicants must address in writing each criterion for each project application. Applicants may provide a maximum of four, single-sided pages using 8.5" x 11" paper with 1" margins and a 12-point font for evaluation criteria responses. In the criteria below, eligible vessels and users means vessels 26 feet and longer.

Summary of Tier 1 Questions and Score			
Scored by	#	Title	Maximum Points
Advisory Committee	1	Meet a Documented Need	10
Advisory Committee	2	Demonstrate Cost Efficiency	7
Advisory Committee	3	Improve Boater Access	3
Advisory Committee	4	Project Design	3
Advisory Committee	5	Demonstrate Partnerships	3
Advisory Committee	6	Advance Technology	3
Advisory Committee	7	Demonstrate Innovation	2
Advisory Committee	8	Environmental Stewardship	1
RCO Staff	9	Match	7
Total possible points			39

Scored by the Advisory Committee

- 1. Meet a Documented Need.** Will the proposed boating infrastructure meet a need for more or improved facilities?

Evaluators will consider if the project will do any of the following:

- Construct new boating infrastructure in an area that lacks it, but where eligible vessels now travel or would travel if the project were completed.
- Renovate a facility to improve its physical condition, follow local building codes, improve safety, or adapt it to a new purpose.

³⁷Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2016-11 adopted February 2016

- Create accessibility for eligible vessels by reducing wave action, increasing depth, or making other improvements.
- Expand an existing facility that is unable to accommodate current or projected demand by eligible vessels.
- Make other improvements to accommodate an established need.

▲ Point Range: 0-10 points

2. Demonstrate Cost Efficiency. Will eligible users receive benefits from the proposed boating infrastructure that justify the cost of the project?

Evaluators will consider the total cost of the project, the benefits made available to eligible users, and the objectivity or reliability of the data and information used to demonstrate benefits relative to costs. Evaluators may consider the availability of preexisting structures and amenities, but only in the context of the identified need. Because costs vary depending on local factors, evaluators do not use a cost per slip to compare projects.

Applicants should relate costs and benefits to the need for the project (See §86.43(a)).

Applicants should describe any factors that would influence costs such as the following:

- The need for specialized materials to meet local codes, address weather, future sea level rise, terrain, or extend useful life.
- Increased transportation costs due to facility location.
- Other factors that may increase costs but support needed benefits.

Applicants should describe any costs associated with providing a harbor of safe refuge, if applicable.

▲ Point Range: 0-7 points

3. Improve Boater Access. Will the proposed boating infrastructure accommodate boater access to significant destinations and services that support transient boater travel?

Evaluators will consider the following:

- The degree of access that the BIG-funded facility will provide to activities, events, or landmarks near the facility, how well known they are, how long they are available, and how likely they are to attract boaters to the facility.
- The availability of services and the degree of safety at and around the facility, the ease of access to these services, and how well they meet the needs of eligible boaters.

▲ Point Range: 0-3 points

4. Project Design. Is the proposal appropriately designed for the intended use?

Evaluators should consider design and construction elements such as the following:

- Accurate cost estimates
- Aesthetics
- Environmental impacts
- Future maintenance needs
- Materials and specifications
- Risk management
- Space relationships
- User friendly elements
- Universal accessibility

▲ Point Range: 0-3 points

5. Demonstrate Partnerships. Will the proposed project include contributions by private or public partners that contribute to the project objectives?

Partners may include non-federal entities such as sub-grantees, private businesses, state agencies other than the primary recipient of BIG funds, nonprofit organizations, or federal agencies other than the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. To be considered a partner, the entity must commit a financial or in-kind contribution or take a voluntary action that is necessary for, and directly and substantively contributes to, completion of the project. See §86.55 and §86.57 for additional guidance.

Evaluators will consider the following:

- The significance of the contribution to the success of the project.
- How the contribution supports the actions proposed in the project statement.
- How the partner demonstrates its commitment to the contribution.
- The demonstrated ability of the partner to fulfill its commitment.

▲ Point Range: 0-3 points

6. Advanced Technology. Will the proposed project include physical components, technology, or techniques that improve eligible user access?

Evaluators will consider whether the project will increase the availability of the BIG-funded facility for eligible users or improve eligible boater access to the facility.

Applicants should describe if the project will be doing either of the following:

- Using a new technology or technique
- Applying a new use of an existing technology or technique

Evaluators will consider if the project will use an optional or advanced technology or technique. If going beyond the minimum technical requirements for a project component, applicants must describe the current standards and how they will exceed the standards. Points will not be awarded for followings standards set by law.

▲ Point Range: 0-3 points

7. Demonstrate Innovation. Will the proposed project include innovative physical components, technology, or techniques that improve the BIG-funded project?

Evaluators will consider if the project will include physical components, technology, or techniques that are newly available or repurposed in a unique way. Examples include components, technology, or techniques that do the following:

- Extend the useful life of the project.
- Are designed to help save costs, decrease maintenance, or improve operation.

- Are designed to improve services or amenities for BIG-eligible users.
- Reduce the carbon footprint of the facility.
- Reduce negative environmental impacts (beyond compliance requirements).
- Improve facility resilience.

▲ Point Range: 0-2 points

- 8. Environmental Stewardship.** Has the facility where the project is located demonstrated a commitment to environmental compliance, sustainability, and stewardship and has an organization officially recognized the facility for its commitment?

Evaluators will consider if the application documents that the facility has received official recognition for its voluntary commitment to environmental compliance, sustainability, and stewardship by exceeding regulatory requirements. The official recognition must be part of a voluntary, established program administered by a federal, state, or local agency, Sea Grant or equivalent entity, or a state or regional marina organization. The program must require the facility to use management and operational techniques and practices that will ensure it continues to meet the high standards of the program and must contain a component that requires periodic review. The facility must have met the criteria required by the program and received official recognition by the due date of the application.

▲ Point Range: 0-1 point

Scored by RCO Staff

- 9. Match.** Will the proposed project include matching funds from private, local, or state sources (including grants) totaling 26 percent or more?

▲ Point Range: 0-7 points

Please note that, while in-kind services and materials may be included in the minimum 25 percent match requirement, the application will be scored only on this criterion for additional cash match. As given in §86.56, points will be awarded as follows.

1 point	26-30.99 percent cash match
2 points	31-35.99 percent cash match

3 points	36-40.99 percent cash match
4 points	41-45.99 percent cash match
5 points	46-50.99 percent cash match
6 points	51-80.99 percent cash match
7 points	81 or higher percent cash match

Tier 2 Projects

The evaluation criteria³⁸ listed below will be used to review all Tier 2 projects. Applicants must fully address in writing a response to each evaluation criterion. Refer to the latest Notice of Funding Opportunity for criteria updates and other specific requirements, such as page limits.

Question	Subject	Maximum Points
A	Meet a Documented Need, Improve Eligible Boater Access, and Demonstrate Cost Efficiency	20
B	Meet Match Requirements and Demonstrate Partnerships	10
C	Demonstrate Innovation and Environmental Stewardship	6
Total possible points		36

Scored by the National Review Panel

A. Meet a Documented Need, Improve Eligible Boater Access, and Demonstrate Cost Efficiency

- (1) Will the proposed boating infrastructure meet a need for more or improved facilities?

Evaluators will consider if the project will do any of the following:

- a. Construct new boating infrastructure in an area that lacks it, but where eligible vessels now travel or would travel if the project were completed.
- b. Renovate a facility to improve its physical condition, follow local building codes, improve safety, or adapt it to a new purpose.

³⁸Criteria found in the Final Rule for BIG (50 CFR 86.51) published May 6, 2015 in the [Federal Register](#).

- c. Create accessibility for eligible vessels by reducing wave action, increasing depth, or making other improvements.
- d. Expand an existing facility that is unable to accommodate current or projected demand by eligible vessels.
- e. Make other improvements to accommodate an established need.

▲ Point Range: 0-10 points

- (2) Will eligible users receive benefits from the proposed boating infrastructure that justify the cost of the project?

Evaluators will consider the total cost of the project, the benefits made available to eligible users, and the objectivity or reliability of the data and information used to demonstrate benefits relative to costs. Evaluators may consider the availability of preexisting structures and amenities, but only in the context of the identified need. Because costs vary depending on local factors, evaluators do not use a cost per slip to compare projects.

Applicants should relate costs and benefits to the need for the project (See §86.43(a)).

Applicants should describe any factors that would influence costs such as the following:

- a. The need for specialized materials to meet local codes, address weather, future sea level rise, terrain, or extend useful life.
- b. Increased transportation costs due to facility location.
- c. Other factors that may increase costs but support needed benefits.

Applicants should describe any costs associated with providing a harbor of safe refuge, if applicable.

▲ Point Range: 0-7 points

- (3) Will the proposed boating infrastructure accommodate boater access to significant destinations and services that support transient boater travel?

Evaluators will consider the following:

- a. The degree of access that the BIG-funded facility will provide.

- b. Activities, events, or landmarks near the facility, how well known they are, how long they are available, and how likely they are to attract boaters to the facility.
- c. The availability of services and the degree of safety at and around the facility, the ease of access to these services, and how well they meet the needs of eligible boaters.

▲ Point Range: 0-3 points

▲ Total Point Range for Question A: 0-20 points

B. Meet Match Requirements and Demonstrate Partnerships

- (1) Will the proposed project include private, local, or state funds greater than the required minimum match?)

Please note that, while in-kind services and materials may be included in the minimum 25 percent match requirement, the application will be scored only on this criterion for additional cash match. As given in §86.56, points will be awarded as follows:

1 point	26-30.99 percent cash match
2 points	31-35.99 percent cash match
3 points	36-40.99 percent cash match
4 points	41-45.99 percent cash match
5 points	46-50.99 percent cash match
6 points	51-80.99 percent cash match
7 points	81 or higher percent cash match

▲ Point Range: 0-7 points

- (2) Will the proposed project include contributions by private or public partners that contribute to the project objectives?

Partners may include non-federal entities such as sub-grantees, private businesses, state agencies other than the primary recipient of BIG funds, nonprofit organizations, or federal agencies other than the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. To be considered a partner, the entity must commit a financial or in-kind contribution or take a voluntary action that is

necessary for, and directly and substantively contributes to, completion of the project. See §86.55 and §86.57 for additional guidance.

Evaluators will consider the following:

- a. The significance of the contribution to the success of the project.
- b. How the contribution supports the actions proposed in the project statement.
- c. How the partner demonstrates its commitment to the contribution.
- d. The demonstrated ability of the partner to fulfill its commitment.

▲ Point Range: 0-3 points

▲ Total Point Range for Question B: 0-10 points

C. Demonstrate Innovation and Environmental Stewardship

- (1) Will the proposed project include physical components, technology, or techniques that improve eligible user access?

Evaluator will consider whether the project will increase the availability of the BIG-funded facility for eligible users or improve eligible boater access to the facility.

Applicants should describe whether the project will be doing either of the following:

- a. Use a new technology or technique.
- b. Apply a new use of an existing technology or technique.

Evaluators will consider if the project will use an optional or advanced technology or technique. If going beyond the minimum technical requirements for a project component, applicants must describe the current standards and how they will exceed the standards. Points will not be awarded for followings standards set by law.

▲ Point Range: 0-3 points

- (2) Will the proposed project include innovative physical (components, technology, or techniques) that improve the BIG-funded project?

Evaluators will consider if the project will include physical components, technology, or techniques that are newly available or repurposed in a unique way. Examples include components, technology, or techniques that do the following:

- a. Extend the useful life of the project.
- b. Are designed to help save costs, decrease maintenance, or improve operation.
- c. Are designed to improve services or amenities for BIG-eligible users.
- d. Reduce the carbon footprint of the facility.
- e. Reduce negative environmental impacts (beyond compliance requirements).
- f. Improve facility resilience.

▲ Point Range: 0-2 points

- (3) Has the facility where the project is located demonstrated a commitment to environmental compliance, sustainability, and stewardship and has an organization officially recognized the facility for its commitment?

Evaluators will consider if the application documents that the facility has received official recognition for its voluntary commitment to environmental compliance, sustainability, and stewardship by exceeding regulatory requirements. The official recognition must be part of a voluntary, established program administered by a federal, state, or local agency, Sea Grant or equivalent entity, or a state or regional marina organization. The program must require the facility to use management and operational techniques and practices that will ensure it continues to meet the high standards of the program and must contain a component that requires periodic review. The facility must have met the criteria required by the program and received official recognition by the due date of the application.

▲ Point Range: 0-1 point

▲ Total Point Range for Question C: 0-6 points