

Manual 14

Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities

Nonhighway Road Category
Nonmotorized Category
Off-Road Vehicle Category

August 2024

Table of Contents

At a Glance	1
Section 1: Introduction	3
Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities Program	3
Recreation and Conservation Funding Board	6
Who Makes Decisions.....	7
Where to Get Information.....	9
Grant Process and Timeline.....	10
Time Limits and Extensions.....	12
Section 2: Policies	16
Eligible Applicants	16
Eligible Project Types and Costs	19
Environmental Requirements.....	30
Property Requirements.....	33
Other Requirements and Things to Know	36
Equipment Policies.....	40
Project Area Stewardship and Ongoing Obligations	44
Section 3: Money Matters	45
Grant Limits.....	45
Matching Share	46
Types of Match	48
Cost Increases	50
Where the Money Comes from and How It's Distributed.....	50
Federal Rules	53
Records, Audits, and Reimbursement	54
Section 4: Project Evaluation	55
How Project Evaluation Works	55
Evaluation Criteria.....	58
Appendix A: Definitions	75
Appendix B: NOVA Plan Policies and Priorities	78

At a Glance

Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities

Purpose	The program provides grants to plan, buy, develop, and maintain land and facilities that support a range of trail- and back-road-related outdoor recreation.
Who may apply?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cities and towns • Counties • Federal agencies • Native American tribes • Off-road vehicle nonprofits (in off-road vehicle category only) • Special purpose districts • State agencies
Is a plan required?	An outdoor recreation comprehensive plan is needed to apply, except for a maintenance and operation grant proposal.
When are plans due?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans are due September 3, 2024. See <i>RCO Manual 2: Planning Policies and Guidelines</i>.
What types of projects are eligible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land acquisition • Development or renovation • Maintenance and operation • Planning
What are the grant limits?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonhighway road and nonmotorized: \$200,00.0. • Off-road vehicle: a maintenance and operation project is limited to \$250,000, no limit for other project types.
Must the applicant contribute match?	No. However, project scores are weighted to reward projects that include a matching share made up of non-government contributions.
How is the project evaluated?	Advisory committee reviews and scores written application and the applicant participates in a question and answer session.
When are applications due?	October 31, 2024
When are grants awarded?	June 2025 (estimate)
What's new this year?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant fills out a written application and participates in a virtual question and answer session with the advisory committee. • Increased the amount of money that may be requested for maintenance projects in the Off-Road Vehicle Category to \$250,000 and to \$200,000 for all projects in the Nonhighway Road and Nonmotorized Categories.

- Existing rules about time limits, extensions, inspections, acknowledgments, and signs were added to this manual.
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Section 1: Introduction

This section covers the following:

- ✓ The grant program
- ✓ The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board
- ✓ Who makes decisions
- ✓ Where to get information
- ✓ The grant process and timeline
- ✓ Time limits and extensions

Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities Program

The Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities (NOVA) program provides grants to plan, buy, develop, and maintain land and facilities that support a range of trail- and back-road-related outdoor recreation, such as the following:

- Riding all-terrain, utility task, and four-wheel drive vehicles
- Hunting and fishing
- Gathering berries, firewood, mushrooms, and other natural products
- Horseback riding and pack animal activities
- Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing
- Mountain bicycling
- Hiking, backpacking, and climbing
- Motorcycling off-road
- Sightseeing

Activities supported by the program range from development of trails and trailheads, to maintenance and operation of intensive use areas such as off-road vehicle sports parks, to educating the public about safely using these areas. Information about education and enforcement projects may be found in *Manual 13: Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities Program, Education and Enforcement Category*, available on the Recreation and Conservation Office's website.

NOVA grants are intended to allow agencies to provide quality opportunities for recreationists—opportunities that satisfy user needs, are environmentally responsible, and minimize conflict between user groups.

NOVA Categories

NOVA grants are available in the following four categories:

- Nonhighway road
- Nonmotorized
- Off-road vehicle
- Education and enforcement¹

Nonhighway Road Category

Projects in this category are intended to serve people with facilities that are adjacent to, or accessed by, nonhighway roads, which are described below. This includes recreation activities such as the following:

- Boating (non-motorized, such as rafts, canoes, and kayaks)
- Camping
- Driving for pleasure, sightseeing, viewing wildlife, etc.
- Hunting and fishing
- Gathering berries, mushrooms, wood, and other natural products
- Picnicking
- Walking on interpretive trails

¹Grant information found online in *Manual 13: Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities Program, Education and Enforcement Category*.

Nonmotorized Category

Projects in this category are intended to serve people who recreate on trails that are accessed via nonhighway roads, described below. This includes trail use for the following:

- Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing
- Hiking, backpacking, and climbing
- Horseback riding and pack animal activities
- Mountain bicycling

Off-Road Vehicle Category

Projects in this category are intended to serve people who use off-road vehicles for recreation, including the following:

- All-terrain vehicle and utility task vehicle riding
- Four-wheel driving
- Motorcycling

By law, off-road vehicles do not include snowmobiles, go-karts, or watercraft.

Nonhighway Road Definition

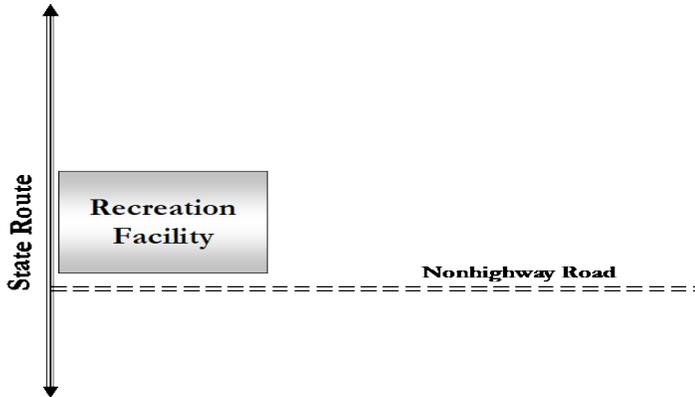
Nonhighway road recreation facilities and nonmotorized recreational facilities must be adjacent to, or accessed by, a nonhighway road. A nonhighway road is any road owned or managed by a public agency, a primitive road,² or any private road for which the owner has granted an easement for public use and for which appropriations from the motor vehicle fund were not used for (a) original construction or reconstruction in the past twenty-five years; or (b) maintenance in the past four years.³ Nonhighway roads must be open for the public to drive on for recreational use.

Though the following examples do not illustrate the full range of eligible projects, they do show how these criteria are applied to typical NOVA projects.

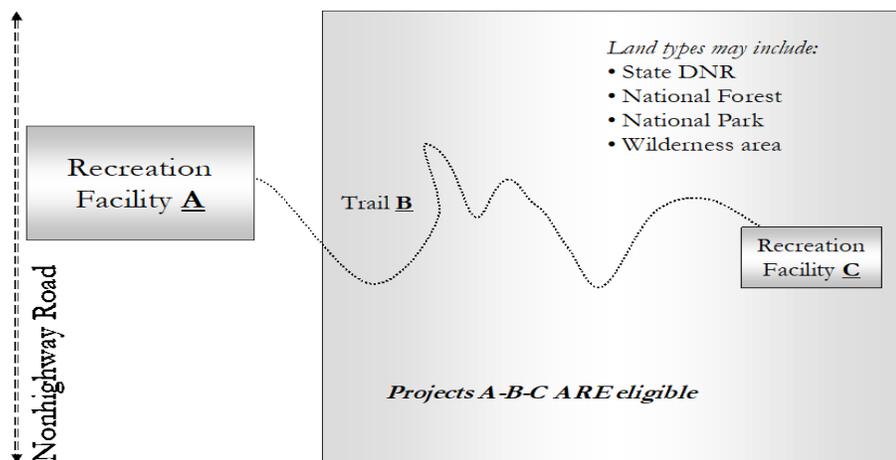
²Revised Code of Washington 46.09.310(18)

³Revised Code of Washington 46.09.310(7)

Example 1: The proposal is to fund a recreation facility that is adjacent to a nonhighway road. It is also adjacent to a state route. The project **is** eligible.



Example 2: The proposal is to fund recreation facilities A-B-C, only one of which is adjacent to a nonhighway road. The facilities may be on a variety of land types, including a wilderness, national park, or national forest land. A-B-C **are** all eligible.



NOVA grants may not be used to develop, maintain, or improve nonhighway roads unless those roads or bridges are specifically designated for recreational trail use by the managing agency. Eligible work must directly support and be necessary for trail recreation. RCO may require prorating the allowable costs if the improvements benefit both trail recreation and vehicular traffic.

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board

NOVA is administered by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board, which 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 small 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 and orca from near extinction.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board recognizes its obligation to ensure its programs and policies are equitable and inclusive and has taken steps to address disparities. The board has resolved to continue to examine its policies and reach out to diverse partners to ensure that Washington's investments are not only for a few but reflect the board's values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Read the board's [Resolution 2020-35](#) in full online.

Manual Authority

Authority for this program is found in Revised Codes of Washington 46.09, Off-road, Nonhighway, and Wheeled All-terrain Vehicles; 42.56.040 of the Public Records Act; and Washington Administrative Code Chapter 286, including sections 4, 6, and 13.

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board adopted these policies in a public meeting and the RCO director approved the manual under the authority granted in Washington Administrative Code 286-04-060.

Who Makes Decisions

Staff Decisions

Staff will review a grant application to ensure it is complete, the project is eligible to compete, the grant applicant is eligible to apply, and the match is certified. Staff also score objective evaluation criteria, such as those relating to Growth Management Act compliance. Finally, staff make routine grant management decisions about billings, reports, minor scope changes, short time extensions, and more.

Advisory Committee Decisions

An advisory committee evaluates grant applications and scores them to create a ranked list of projects for the funding board to consider. Advisory committees also review proposed program policies and criteria changes, and in some cases make recommendations to the funding board, RCO, the Departments of Fish and Wildlife and

Natural Resources, and the State Parks and Recreation Commission about how funding should be distribute.⁴

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 sixty 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.

Board Decisions

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board makes the final decisions for funding, policies, and project changes, although some decisions it has delegated to the agency director.

Not a Hearings Board

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board's role is to award grants and *not* to act as a hearings board that rules on land-use issues. The board's intent is that all proposals, to the extent possible meet the following criteria:

- Are the outcome of a public process in which all interests have had an opportunity to be heard.
- Have resulted from a community-supported decision to submit the application.
- Are ready for implementation.
- Will ensure that maximum benefit is gained from the grant.

The board's grant allocation meeting must not be the first public meeting in which interested parties have a chance to express views on a project.

More detailed information about board and director decisions is available in *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects* and *Manual 4: Development Projects*.

⁴Revised Code of Washington 46.09.340

Where to Get Information

Recreation and Conservation Office
Natural Resources Building
1111 Washington Street
Olympia, WA 98501
[Email](#)

Telephone: (360) 902-3000
FAX: (360) 902-3026
Hearing Impaired Relay Service: Call 711
[Website](#)

Mailing Address
PO Box 40917
Olympia, WA 98504-0917

RCO 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 website on the [NOVA Trails grant page](#).

Other Grant Manuals Needed

These manuals provide additional information for grants and are available on RCO's website. Each can be made available in an alternative format.

- *Manual 2: Planning Policies and Guidelines*
- *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*
- *Manual 4: Development Projects*
- *Manual 7: Long-Term Obligations*
- *Manual 8: Reimbursements*
- *Manual 13: Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities Program, Education and Enforcement Category*

Statewide Strategic Plans

Every third biennium, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board adopts a plan⁵ to guide distribution and expenditure of NOVA funds. Policies in this manual are based on priorities and recommendations from the [2023 State Recreation and Conservation Plan](#). RCO encourages the applicant to review this plan and relate the application to program policies and priorities.

⁵Revised Code of Washington 46.09.370

Grant Process and Timeline

RCO offers grants in even-numbered years, in conjunction with the state budget. The grant process, from application to grant award, spans about a year, and is outlined below. While the order of the steps in this process remains consistent, for precise dates, visit the RCO website.

Even-Numbered Years

Workshops. RCO conducts workshop webinars each summer to provide information about the grant programs offered that year.

Planning Deadline. September 3 is the planning deadline. This ensures the applicant completes the planning process before applying for a grant. Agencies that apply for grants in the same year that their planning eligibility expires must ensure that their planning eligibility extends through the board meeting in which the projects first are considered. NOVA maintenance and operation grants do not require plans.

RCO's website has a list of [eligible applicants](#). To verify or establish eligibility for a specific grant program, contact RCO's planning specialist.

Entering Applications. RCO strongly encourages the applicant to start the online application early. PRISM Online usually opens in August.

To enter an application, the applicant must sign up for a [SecureAccess Washington](#) account and submit a [PRISM account form](#). When using either of these databases for the first time, the applicant must complete a double sign-in.

1. Using SecureAccess Washington credentials, login to PRISM.
2. When redirected to the SecureAccess login page, enter the SecureAccess credentials.
3. When redirected to a one-time PRISM sign-in page, enter the PRISM login credentials.
4. The applicant will be directed back to the PRSM home page.

This double sign-in will happen only once. After completing the double sign-in, the applicant will use SecureAccess Washington credentials to log into PRISM.

To begin an application, 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 the applicant through the process, reviews application materials, helps determine whether the proposal is eligible, and may visit the

project site to discuss site-specific details. Visit RCO's website to learn more about [PRISM's components and technical requirements](#).

Board Submits Biennial Budget Request. The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board sends the Governor a recommended funding amount for NOVA for the next biennium.

Application Due. The application typically is due in early November of even-numbered years. The application includes the data entered in PRISM and all required attachments. The applicant should *submit* the application before the deadline. The *Check Application for Errors* button on the *Submit Application* screen will indicate which pages are incomplete. An incomplete application and an application 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. Grants managers review the application to ensure it is eligible, identify any issues of concern, and provide feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal. The applicant then may make changes to improve the project, if needed.

Odd-Numbered Years

Technical Completion Deadline. RCO will establish a technical completion deadline by which the application must be in its final form. After this date, the applicant will not be able to make any further changes. The applicant must complete all changes and resubmit the application by the technical completion deadline. RCO will score applicable evaluation criteria as of this date.

Project Evaluation. The advisory committee members use the application materials, which include responses to the evaluation criteria in section 4 of this manual, cost estimates, maps, graphics, and photographs to score the project. The members score the proposal against a set of criteria approved by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board. The applicant also participates in a virtual question and answer session with the advisory committee.

Post-Evaluation Conference. After project evaluations, 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 post the preliminary ranked lists on RCO's website. The resulting ranked list of projects is the basis for the funding recommendations to the board.

Board Approves Project List. In an open public meeting, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board considers the recommendations of the advisory committee and staff, written public comments submitted before the meeting, and public testimony

at the meeting. The board then approves the ranked list of projects for funding consideration. The applicant is cautioned that the board's approval of the project list is not the same as funding approval.

Legislature Approves Funding. When it develops the state capital budget, the Legislature generally approves funding for the NOVA program.

Proof of Matching Funds. An applicant with match included in the application must provide proof of the availability of matching funds by the match certification deadline, which is at least one calendar month before board approval of funding.⁶ For a project with land acquisition, the applicant must provide the preliminary title report by the match certification deadline.

Board Awards Grants. After the Legislature and Governor approve the capital budget, the board makes the final grant awards in a public meeting. The applicant is encouraged, but not required, to attend.

Grant Agreement Issued. After grant award, the applicant has two calendar months⁷ to submit pre-agreement documents (checklist provided by grants managers.) RCO staff then prepare and issue the grant agreement. The applicant must return the signed agreement within three calendar months.⁸ Once the agreement is signed, the applicant, now referred to as a project sponsor, may begin the project, according to the terms of the grant agreement. Each agreement will be written and monitored for compliance by RCO staff. See *Manual 7: Long-Term Obligations* for more information.

Successful Applicant Webinar. After the board approves funding, RCO publishes online a recorded workshop for successful grant applicants. This workshop covers the sponsor's responsibilities to comply with the grant agreement, issues that might come up when implementing a project, billing procedures, amendments for changes and time extensions, closing project procedures, and long-term compliance.

Time Limits and Extensions

The sponsor must complete the funded project promptly. For this reason, RCO staff, with applicant assistance, establishes a timetable for project completion, including enforceable milestones and a project completion date. To avoid the risk of the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board or director withdrawing the grant, the board adopted the following guidance for each project phase.

⁶Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(3)

⁷Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(4)

⁸Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(5)

Application Phase

An applicant must provide reasonable assurance that the project can be completed on time and meet milestones. Reasonable assurance may include such evidence as the following:

- Appraisals and review are completed.
- Designs are completed.
- Bid documents are prepared.
- Environmental assessment is completed.
- Hazardous substances review is completed.
- Option agreements are signed.
- Permits are in-hand.
- Property is in escrow.
- Waiver of Retroactivity is in-hand and signed.

At least one calendar month before the funding meeting, when requested by RCO, the applicant must provide written certification of matching fund availability.⁹

Pre-Agreement Phase

An applicant must submit the pre-agreement materials requested by RCO within two calendar months of funding approval.¹⁰

With RCO staff assistance, the applicant must develop milestones, to be included in the grant agreement and a timeline that does not exceed two to three years.

Implementation Phase

To help ensure reasonable and timely project completion, accountability, and the proper use of funds, an applicant must do the following:

- Develop milestones for project implementation that ensure timely completion of the project as follows:

⁹Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(3)

¹⁰Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(4)

- Acquisition, development, and planning projects: up to three years
- Combination projects: up to three years. (The acquisition portion must be completed in ninety days. See “Combination Projects” below for more information)
- Maintenance and operation projects: up to two years
- Exceptionally complex projects: up to three and a half years

RCO staff monitors critical project milestones (for example, ordering appraisals and reviews, starting construction). Unsatisfactory progress may be cause for project termination or other remedies (See the grant agreement section on termination and other remedies). Any RCO director decision may be appealed to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board.

- Begin project implementation quickly and aggressively to show measurable progress towards meeting the milestones.
- Submit a reimbursement request at least once a year.¹¹
- Submit progress reports at intervals as designated by the RCO grant agreement.

Extensions

The director may approve a project up to four years. When one Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grant is used to match another, RCO staff will use the earliest grant to determine the four-year window.

Requests for extensions that would exceed four years may be referred to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board for action.

Extension requests must be in writing and provided to RCO not less than sixty days before expiration of the project’s completion date.¹² The request must justify the need and commit to a new set of specified milestones.

Project Completion

The grant agreement end date will be written into the grant agreement. It is the date that is the end of the period of performance and all project work must be complete and may be extended only when authorized by the board or director.

¹¹Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040

¹²Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(8)

When a project is completed, the sponsor must submit the final bill, final report, and supporting documents needed to close the project as specified in the agreement.¹³ If the bill and documentation are not submitted within six months of the end date in the agreement, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board may terminate the agreement without payment.

¹³Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(7)

Section 2: Policies

This section covers the following:

- ✓ Eligible applicants
- ✓ Eligible project types and costs
- ✓ Environmental requirements
- ✓ Property requirements
- ✓ Other requirements and things to know
- ✓ Equipment policies
- ✓ Project area stewardship and ongoing obligations

Eligible Applicants

Eligible Applicants¹⁴

The following organizations meeting the planning eligibility requirement (on next page) may apply for NOVA grants:

- Local agencies (cities, towns, counties, port districts, park and recreation districts, etc.)
- Federal agencies
- State agencies
- Native American tribes
- Nonprofit off-road vehicle organizations (see below)

¹⁴Revised Code of Washington 46.09.530

Applicant Requirements

Nonprofit Off-Road Vehicle Organizations¹⁵

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board may award grants to nonprofit off-road vehicle organizations only for projects that benefit off-road vehicle recreation on publicly owned lands or lands once publicly owned that came into private ownership in a federally approved land exchange completed between January 1, 1998 and January 1, 2005. Publicly owned lands are defined as lands that are owned, leased, or otherwise controlled and managed by a federal, state, or local government through statute or other legal authority, fee-simple ownership, easement, lease, interagency agreement, memorandum of agreement, or similarly formal document.

The nonprofit must meet all the following criteria:

- Be able to contract with the State of Washington.
- Be registered with the State of Washington as a nonprofit corporation per Revised Code of Washington 24.03.
- Demonstrate at least three years of actively managing projects relevant to the types of projects eligible for funding in the applicable NOVA category. "Actively managing projects" means performing the tasks necessary to manage a NOVA-funded site such as negotiating for acquisition of property rights, closing on an acquisition, developing and implementing plans, designing and implementing development projects, performing maintenance and operations, conducting education or enforcement activities, securing and managing the necessary funds regardless of fund source, and other related tasks.
- Not discriminate on the basis of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, income, race, or religion.
- Provide copy of articles of incorporation and bylaws including any amendments.

Legal Opinion for First-time Applicants

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board requires a organization wishing to apply for a grant for the first time to submit a legal opinion that the applicant is eligible to do all 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.

¹⁵Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2016-28

- 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.

Planning Requirements

To be eligible for a grant for land acquisition, planning, and development projects, each applicant must submit a comprehensive outdoor recreation plan that has been adopted by the applying organization's governing body. This helps ensure projects have been through a public process and were prioritized by the community. Plans must be accepted by RCO by the planning deadline, which typically is September 1 in even-numbered years.

Once RCO accepts the plan, the applicant is eligible to apply for grants for up to six years from the date the applicant organization adopted the plan. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that plans and documents are current. [Eligible applicants](#) are listed on RCO's website. For more information, consult *Manual 2: Planning Policies and Guidelines*. Co-sponsors also should consult the "Joint and Cooperative Projects" section in *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects* or *Manual 4: Development Projects*.

Comprehensive plans are not required for an applicant submitting a maintenance and operation project.

If the grant applicant is submitting a planning grant and doesn't have a comprehensive plan, the applicant can do a streamlined comprehensive plan in one of the following two ways:

1. Submit a plan (like the one described above) or other document that establishes the need for further plans or studies.
2. Submit a document that addresses all the following:
 - The area that is to be studied or needs a plan.

- Recreational use patterns in the affected area, including use conflicts or unacceptable user behavior.
- Public demand (why this area merits its own plan).
- Records of public involvement such as mailings, media presentations, public meetings, workshops, or other forums for public comment.
- The authority for implementing this plan.

Eligible Project Types and Costs

Acquisition Projects

Acquisition projects are those that purchase or receive a donation of fee or less-than-fee interests in real property. These interests include, but are not limited to, access and trail easements, covenants, water rights, leases, and mineral rights. Acquisition of leases or easements must be for at least twenty-five years. Properties must be developed within five years from the date the property was acquired. Policies for land acquisition projects are in *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*.

Ineligible Acquisition Projects

- Acquisition of land for facilities or uses not eligible for NOVA development funding or use.
- Land acquisition by or for federal agencies.
- Acquisition of lands under existing ownership of the applicant. See "Acquisition of Existing Public Property" in manual 3 for exceptions.
- Acquisition of lands with revenue producing potential where the cost of acquisition could be financed completely through revenue accruing to the project.
- Acquisition of property interests for a period of less than twenty-five years.
- Acquisition of facilities or structures that are not eligible or will not be used for eligible purposes.

Eligible Acquisition Costs

- Land acquisition costs and certain administrative and incidental costs as outlined in *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*.

Development or Renovation Projects

A development project is construction or work resulting in new elements including, but not limited to, structures, facilities, and/or materials to enhance outdoor recreation resources.¹⁶ Development means development of trailside and trailhead facilities, new trails, and trail linkages for recreational trails. Development also includes renovation of existing facilities when they have deteriorated to the point where their usefulness or safety is impaired (although not because of inadequate maintenance) or the facility has become obsolete.

Renovation means a project that improves an existing site or structure in order to increase its service life or functions.¹⁷ Renovation can be extensive repair, reconstruction, or rehabilitation to bring a facility up to standards suitable for public use and extend its useful service life. A development project may include both new construction and renovation activities in the same project.

Development projects must conform to policies and procedures found in RCO *Manual 4: Development Projects*. RCO strongly encourages applying [Federal Trail Design Standards](#) as a best practice for newly constructed and altered trails.

Eligible projects may include the following:

- Trails and trailhead facilities.
- Entry roads, parking.
- Sanitary facilities including sewer systems and other related utilities that meet applicable local and state health requirements.
- Route and interpretive signs, informational bulletin boards, and invasive species prevention signs.
- Picnic and camping areas.
- Wildlife viewing facilities.
- Nonmotorized boating access facilities.
- Shooting and archery ranges.¹⁸
- Utilities, including water, electric, and telephone service.

¹⁶Washington Administrative Code 286.04.010(7)

¹⁷Washington Administrative Code 286-04-010(21)

¹⁸See *Manual 11: Firearms and Archery Range Recreation* for RCO's policy on range and course certification.

- Extensive reconstruction of existing improvements when they have deteriorated to the point where their usefulness or safety is impaired (although not because of inadequate maintenance) or the facility has become obsolete.
- Facilities for existing off-road vehicle sports parks including motocross tracks, sand drag strips, four-wheel drive competitive and play facilities, spectator facilities, concession buildings, and park administration and maintenance facilities.
- Employee residences. The construction of residences must be for employees directly involved in the operation and maintenance of a NOVA-assisted project provided that all the following conditions are met:
 - The residence will help assure increased public service and protection of park facilities.
 - The employee assigned to or using the residence normally must be available in the park on a twenty-four-hour basis. The employee must be assigned to off-road vehicle facilities and activities at least 75 percent of the employee's time.
 - The park residence is one component of a comprehensive park development.
 - The residence or improvements must be permanent at this site.

Ineligible Development Projects

- Creation or establishment of new off-road vehicle sports parks
- Development of areas to be used commercially, primarily for semi-professional or professional activities
- Development of commercial facilities such as go-kart tracks and amusement facilities, even when these elements are part of a larger off-road vehicle area
- Development of a nonhighway road (see nonhighway road definition in appendix A)
- Development on property on which RCO staff or the grant applicant anticipates future unacceptable or immitigable impacts to the NOVA project as part of an ongoing land management program by the grant applicant

Eligible Development Costs

- Architectural and engineering (information about reimbursement limits is in *Manual 4: Development Projects*)
- Boot and equipment decontamination facilities
- Buildings, including administrative, maintenance, registration, residence, storage, and well house
- Campgrounds, including utilities, waste disposal, and group camps
- Fencing and gates, including barrier rocks and bollards
- Stock facilities such as corrals, highlines, hitching posts, loading ramps, and water troughs
- Invasive species prevention signs
- Landscaping, including irrigation, trees, and shrubs
- Lighting, including security, parking, and roads
- Off-road vehicle tracks, including hill climbs, rock crawls, motocross, and four-wheel drive
- Park furnishings, including spectator seating, water and drinking fountains, benches, flag poles, stoves, and tables
- Parking including curbs and oil separators
- Permits
- Restrooms
- Campground and access roads, including guardrails, surfacing, and striping
- Shelters, including interpretive, kiosks and picnic shelters
- Signs, including boundary, interpretive, regulatory, directional, and informational
- Site preparation and demolition, including clearing, dump and recycle fees, erosion control, and fill grading
- Trails, including retaining walls, switchbacks, bridges, culverts, puncheon, replanting, trestle conversion, turnpikes, and water bars

- Utilities, including catch basins, telephone service, power, and waste systems
- Viewpoints
- Nonmotorized water access, including ramps, floats, and gangways

Maintenance and Operation Projects

Maintenance and operation projects maintain areas and facilities through repairs, upkeep, and routine servicing for the benefit of outdoor recreationists.¹⁹ Maintenance is routine or periodic repair of trails, trail segments, or trail-side facilities to restore them to standards or conditions to which they originally were designed and built. Maintenance does not change the original purpose, intent, or Primary Management Objective²⁰ for which the trail was designed and constructed and occurs within the existing operational right-of-way²¹ of the trail.

Operation means the regular and routine non-capital operational costs such as cleaning restrooms, garbage service, septic service, etc. of a NOVA-eligible trail, facility, or area. Maintenance and operation projects shall be allowed only at trails, facilities, and areas that currently are managed and in use.

Examples of Eligible Maintenance Activities

- Removing debris and vegetation such as fallen trees and branches from the trail, clearing encroaching brush or grasses, and removing rockslides
- Maintaining trail tread such as filling ruts, reshaping a trail bed, repairing a trail surface or washouts, installing riprap to retain cut and fill slopes, and constructing a retaining wall or cribbing to support trail tread and concrete and asphalt repairs
- Performing erosion control and drainage work such as replacing or installing drainage dips, water bars, and culverts, and realigning sections of trail to prevent erosion or to avoid sensitive areas
- Repairing or replacing deteriorated, damaged, or vandalized trail or trailhead structures, including sections of bridges, boardwalks, puncheon, signs, information kiosks, fencing, and railings

¹⁹Washington Administrative Code 286.04.010(12)

²⁰Or trail management objective

²¹Operational right-of-way refers to the area that previously has been disturbed and maintained as a recreational trail.

- Maintaining campgrounds, picnic areas, and viewpoints including repair or replacement of site furnishings such as picnic tables, fire grills, barbeques, and garbage cans
- Maintaining intensive-use sports parks, tracks, and riding areas such as track grooming and modification
- Maintaining administrative buildings including painting and minor repairs
- Maintaining driveways and entry roads, campground roads, and parking areas
- Operating costs such as staffing, garbage and septic services, utilities, liability insurance to cover volunteers, and training

Maintenance and operation of facilities open to both motorized and nonmotorized use also are eligible, provided that the Primary Management Objective of the facility clearly²² is identified as nonhighway road, nonmotorized, or motorized off-road vehicle recreation. Only NOVA-eligible trails and facilities may be maintained using NOVA funding.

Ineligible Maintenance and Operation Projects

- Maintenance and operation of trails and facilities not open, available, or managed for NOVA uses
- Projects that acquire capital equipment, tools, or supplies with no maintenance or operations activity
- Projects that maintain nonhighway roads
- Trails and facilities not eligible to receive NOVA capital funding

Eligible Maintenance and Operation Costs

Eligible project costs include direct costs to operate and maintain trails and facilities such as the following:

- Salaries and benefits²³
- Equipment rental and purchase

²²For example, in widely distributed publications and maps, on the agency website or on-site signs.

²³Supervisory activities, including the direct management of and planning for in-field work, are eligible for reimbursement. This usually includes scheduling, coordinating equipment and tools, directly supervising field crews and work, managing timesheets and bills for field work, and submitting grant reimbursements and progress reports.

- Professional services
- Supplies and materials
- Training
- Travel and transportation

Equipment Costs

Equipment purchases are eligible in maintenance and operation projects only and may include equipment used to maintain eligible nonhighway road, nonmotorized, or off-road vehicle trails, facilities, and areas. The grant sponsor must maintain records of all capital equipment purchased and comply with RCO's equipment management policies later in this section.

Eligible equipment includes the following:

- Accessories and attachments for equipment and vehicles such as blades, canopies, backhoes, loading ramps, snowplows, stump grinders, tracks, or winches
- All-terrain vehicle
- Backhoe
- Brush hog
- Bulldozer
- Chain saw
- Excavator
- Motorcycle
- Mountain bicycles
- Power wheelbarrow
- Skid steer
- String trimmer
- Tractor or trail builder
- Trailer
- Utility task vehicle

Ineligible Maintenance and Operation Costs

- Pre-agreement activities
- Uniforms
- Equipment rental or lease fees that exceed the purchase price of the equipment

Planning Projects

These projects may include all phases of planning intended to result in future NOVA-eligible type recreation opportunities and must result in one or more of the following:

- Engineered, construction-ready documents, and permits “in-hand” that will allow a grant sponsor to proceed with development when funds for construction become available
- Completed comprehensive plan (except plans to establish eligibility for RCO grants)
- Completed feasibility and preconstruction studies, cultural resource assessments or surveys, environmental studies or assessments, route surveys and reconnaissance, user and use data collection, or site or master plans

Ineligible Planning Projects

- Planning activities or development and preparation of plans used to establish eligibility for RCO grant programs
- Projects containing cost elements designed to produce planning information on items ineligible for NOVA acquisition or development funding
- Plans unlikely to lead to future NOVA facilities that meet Recreation and Conservation Funding Board funding eligibility criteria
- Plans for private facilities or for facilities where public use would be prohibited, except in administrative areas such as employee residences, garages, workshops, storage buildings, etc.

Eligible Planning Costs

All project activities must occur during the active period of the grant agreement. There are no eligible pre-agreement costs for planning projects. Examples of eligible planning costs include the following:

- Communication
- Cultural resources
- Goods and services (items that cost less than \$1,000 such as rentals and leases, subscriptions, supplies)
- Staff salaries and benefits

- National Environmental Policy Act, State Environmental Policy Act, and other permits
- Professional services
- Transportation and travel

Reimbursement will be dependent upon the progress made toward completing the scope of work in the grant agreement. This means a sponsor must complete a task and submit the associated documentation with the reimbursement request to RCO for that task. If a grant sponsor is unable to complete the design, obtain permits, or complete the study or plan, RCO reserves the right to request repayment of the grant.

Combination Projects

A combination project involves acquisition and facility development or renovation. To help ensure timely completion of this project, at least one month before the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board considers approving funding, the applicant must secure the property by one of the following methods:

- Acquisition under the Waiver of Retroactivity policies and procedures (*Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*).
- Have property in escrow pending grant approval. Closing must occur within ninety days after the funding meeting.
- Obtain an option or purchase and sale agreement on the property that extends past the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board funding meeting. Execution of the option or agreement must occur within ninety days after this meeting.

If the acquisition is for less-than-fee interest, and if not acquired already via a Waiver of Retroactivity, the applicant also must provide draft copies of all leases or easements to RCO for review. Execution of the leases or easements must occur within ninety days after the funding meeting.

For the acquisitions to remain eligible, the grant sponsor must follow all the requirements and procedures outlined in *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*.

Other Considerations

Phased Projects

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board recommends that an applicant discuss phasing a very expensive or complex project with RCO staff. A phased project is subject to the following parameters:

- Approval of any single phase is limited to that phase. No endorsement or approval is given or implied toward future phases.
- Each phase must be submitted as a separate application.
- An applicant may submit only one phase per funding cycle.
- 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.

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

Joint and Cooperative Projects

Some projects may have two or more sponsors. For example, a joint project could be where one agency owns the property to be developed or maintained by another, or where two or more agencies team up to provide financial support for a project. Applicants with joint or cooperative projects are jointly responsible for implementing the project and in addition to the grant agreement, must adhere to the policy for Joint and Cooperative Projects in *Manual 4: Development Projects*.

Other Eligible Costs

Only allowable costs may be included in the project. A cost is allowable if it is reasonable, necessary to complete the approved scope of work, eligible in the grant program, and incurred during the period of performance set forth in the grant agreement. Costs outside the period of performance may be allowed. See "Pre-agreement Costs." A cost is considered reasonable if the work or materials and the cost reflect what a prudent person would have spent under the circumstances. A cost that is allowable in the grant program, but is not in the approved scope of work, is not eligible for reimbursement.

Pre-agreement Costs

RCO will pay only for work performed after a grant agreement has been signed by both RCO and the grant sponsor with the following two exceptions:

- Expenses, such as preliminary designs, environmental assessments, construction plans and specifications, cultural resource surveys, and permits, all of which are incurred within three years of the start date of the grant agreement.
- Most incidental costs incurred for purchase of real property. Land costs are not allowable as a pre-agreement cost unless RCO has approved and issued a Waiver of Retroactivity. See *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*.

Construction, maintenance, or planning (for planning grants) performed before the execution of a grant agreement and compliance with cultural resource laws will not be eligible for payment and may jeopardize funding for the entire project. For more details, see *RCO Manual 3: Acquisition Projects* or *Manual 4: Development Projects*, on RCO's website.

Note: There are no eligible pre-agreement costs for planning projects or maintenance and operation projects.

Ineligible Costs for All Projects

The following are ineligible for reimbursement or for use as any portion of the grant sponsor's matching share:

- Appliances, furniture, and utensils
- Bonus payments of any kind
- Ceremonial or entertainment expenses
- Charges for deficits, debts, or overdrafts
- Charges in excess of the lowest acceptable bid when competitive bidding is required, unless RCO's director agrees before the award of a contract to the higher costs
- Charges incurred that are contrary to Recreation and Conservation Funding Board policy, the applying agency, or rules, regulations, and laws applicable to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board, RCO, or the applying agency
- Costs associated with securing NOVA grants, including preparation of RCO applications and travel expenses including per diem for attending related meetings (evaluation, funding, etc.)
- Costs incurred before execution of a grant agreement (except for eligible pre-agreement expenses such as permitting and architectural and engineering costs for development projects)
- Costs of discounts not taken
- Damage judgments arising out of acquisition, construction, or equipping of a facility, whether determined by judicial decision, arbitration, or otherwise
- Donations or contributions made by the participant, such as to a charitable organization

- Fines and penalties
- Interest expenses
- Losses arising from uncollectible accounts and other claims, and related costs
- Overhead and indirect costs such as general supervision, accounting, and clerical
- Payments to an equipment replacement fund
- Purchase of capital equipment for planning or study projects
- Purchase of capital equipment that is not wholly dedicated to the maintenance of eligible nonhighway road, nonmotorized, or off-road vehicle trails, facilities, and areas
- Taxes for which the organization involved would not have been liable to pay
- The unsubstantiated value of materials contributed without cost to the project sponsor
- Trailside and trailhead facilities without a direct relationship with a recreational trail

Environmental Requirements

An applicant applying for NOVA development, maintenance and operation, or land acquisition grant must review and document compliance with the requirements of the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)²⁴ and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).^{25,26}

Before beginning any work, the sponsor is required to obtain all necessary permits and comply with all applicable environmental regulations, including the National Historic Preservation Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and other state and local environmental requirements. Documentation is required before RCO will award the grant. If permitting is included, a determination is needed before RCO will issue a notice to proceed to construction.

See the Department of Ecology guidance on the [State Environmental Policy Act](#) or National Environmental Policy Act.

²⁴Revised Code of Washington 43.21C

²⁵Revised Code of Washington 46.09.530(3)

²⁶42 USC Sec. 4321 et seq.

Projects that 1) have a significant environmental impact; 2) have substantial controversy on environmental grounds; 3) have significant impact on properties protected by section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act or section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act; or 4) are inconsistent with any federal, state, or local law, requirement, or administrative determination relating to the environmental aspects of the action are not exempt and are subject to further environmental review.

Documenting Environmental Compliance

To comply with the requirements of the environmental laws, within two months of funding approval and before RCO will issue a grant agreement, RCO must receive the environmental clearance documents. Federal agencies must provide documentation of environmental clearance for their projects and for projects occurring on their land. The NOVA Landowner Agreement for Maintenance Projects includes a certification that the federal landowner will review and document compliance with NEPA and the National Historic Preservation Act for applicants working on federal lands.

Cultural Resources and Historic Properties

Governor's [*Executive Order 21-02*](#), *Archaeological and Cultural Resources*, requires that state agencies review acquisition and construction projects for potential impacts to cultural resources, which are defined as archeological and historical sites and artifacts, and traditional tribal areas or items of religious, ceremonial, and social uses. The goal is to ensure that reasonable action is taken to avoid, minimize, or mitigate harm to those resources.

The federal government, through section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, requires similar compliance for projects with federal involvement, for example, projects on federal land, with federal funds, or requiring a federal permit.

Review Process

RCO facilitates review under the Governor's executive order. Federal agencies facilitate review under the National Historic Preservation Act. If the federal review covers the entire RCO project area, there is no additional review needed to meet state requirements. Both processes require review, analysis, and consultation with the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation and affected Native American tribes.

RCO evaluates all projects before funding and initiates consultation with the affected tribes and the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. The applicant should not initiate consultation with either of these groups. The review may require the sponsor to conduct cultural resources surveys or may add requirements to a grant agreement.

The applicant should budget for cultural resources work for most projects. The cost of a cultural resources investigation is highly dependent upon the size, scope, and location of the project. RCO encourages the applicant to work with qualified cultural resources professionals to estimate costs. The Association for Washington Archaeology' maintains [a list of qualified consultants](#) on its website. Costs for compliance actions (e.g. survey, monitoring, permitting, redesign, and mitigation) are eligible for reimbursement and should be included in the grant application.

Any required cultural resources investigations or documentation must be complete before the sponsor may start any ground-disturbing activities, such as demolition, planting, or building signs. Ground disturbance or demolition started without approval are breaches of the grant agreement. Typically, cultural resources approval will be authorized as part of the notice to proceed.

For an acquisition project, cultural resources requirements must be completed before final reimbursement will be made.

Projects on State and Federal Lands

Archaeological and cultural resources compliance for a project on land owned or managed by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington Department of Natural Resources, or a federal agency is the responsibility of the respective agency regardless of the sponsor.

Before ground disturbing work, alteration of a potentially historic or culturally significant structure, or release of final payment on an acquisition, the sponsor must provide RCO all documentation acknowledging and demonstrating that the applicable archaeological and cultural resources responsibilities of the state or federal landowner or manager has been conducted.

An applicant that is a local agency or nonprofit organization doing work on land owned or managed by a state or federal agency must submit in PRISM a signed cultural resources completion memo or checklist from that agency before disturbing any ground.

See *RCO Manual 3: Acquisition Projects* or *Manual 4: Development Projects* for additional details on the RCO cultural resource review process.

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 the grant sponsor to consider how the project may spread invasive species and work to reduce that possibility. Invasive species can be spread unintentionally during construction, maintenance, 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 introduction and spread of invasive species on a project 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, tools, vehicles, trailers, and tires.

Sustainability

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board encourages grant sponsors 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, access routes, trails, and parking areas; energy efficient fixtures; onsite recycling stations; and composting.

Property Requirements

Landowner Acknowledgement of Application

As part of any grant application for acquisition of real property, the project sponsor must demonstrate that the landowner is aware of the sponsor's interest in purchasing property rights. The applicant may meet this requirement by completing one of four options as detailed in *RCO Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*.

Control of the Land

To protect investments made by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board and to assure public access to those investments, the sponsor must have adequate control of a project site to construct, operate, and maintain the area 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. The type of instrument needed depends on the project type, scope of work, and underlying landowner. For example, RCO's Landowner Agreement for Maintenance Projects may be suitable for a nonprofit applicant conducting maintenance activities on state or federal land; however, RCO requires a longer compliance period for a project that restores or rehabilitates facilities and significantly extends a facility's useful life.

Control and Tenure Requirements for Nonprofit Off-road Vehicle Organizations

Nonprofit off-road vehicle organizations must take the steps below according to the type of project and the land ownership.

Planning and Development Project

Publicly Owned Property

- Secure control and tenure of the project site as described in manual 4, for the period required by development projects.

Or

- Co-sponsor the grant along with a NOVA-eligible landowner.

Privately Owned Property²⁷

- Secure control and tenure of the project site as outlined in manual 4 for the period required for development projects.
- Demonstrate through easement, lease, or other legally binding agreement that the public will have access to the completed project for the required term. For planning projects, the project area does not have to be available to the public until the actual planned project (development) has been completed.

Maintenance and Operations Project

Publicly Owned Property

- Execute a RCO Landowner Agreement Form or comparable agreement, as approved by RCO. The tenure must meet or exceed the period of performance and ongoing obligations identified in the RCO grant agreement.

²⁷Lands once publicly owned that came into private ownership in a federally approved land exchange completed between January 1, 1998 and January 1, 2005

Privately Owned Property²⁸

- Satisfy the control and tenure requirements in manual 4.

OR

- Provide a lease, easement, or other legally binding agreement for the project property that allows the proposed project and public access. The tenure must meet or exceed the period of performance and ongoing obligations identified in the RCO grant agreement.

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.

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 land, 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 sixty days 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](#)

²⁸Lands once publicly owned that came into private ownership in a federally approved land exchange completed between January 1, 1998 and January 1, 2005.

- [Caring for Washington's Nearshore Environments](#)

Department of Natural Resources' Review of Project Scope

Local government applicants that need to secure a use authorization meeting board policy must do all 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.

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.

Other Requirements and Things to Know

Carbon and Ecosystem Service Credits²⁹

Land acquired or encumbered with a RCO grant may be enrolled in carbon credit and other payments for ecosystem service programs. These programs issue credits or direct payments to landowners for activities such as protecting land, planting trees, or improving management practices that reduce, sequester, or prevent future carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions. Read more information in *RCO Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*.

Number of Grant Proposals Allowed

In general, RCO does not limit the number of grant proposals from a single applicant during the biennial grant cycle. However, each proposal must be for a different scope of work. 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 the applicant contact staff to discuss options for phasing a costly, interrelated, or complex project proposal.

²⁹Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2021-02

Accessibility

Facilities or elements³⁰ 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. In case of conflict between minimums, the one providing the most access shall prevail. RCO shall have final determination.

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 website 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.

Competitive Bid Requirements³¹

Grant sponsors shall follow current state procurement procedures or write their own. When buying things, the grant sponsor shall provide open and free competition, to the maximum extent practical. Be aware of organizational conflicts of interest. Contractors that develop specifications, requirements, statements of work, invitations for bids, or requests for proposals cannot be hired for the resulting work. A grant sponsor receiving federal money also must follow federal laws and regulations.

Youth Crews³²

Agencies receiving NOVA funds for capital purposes shall consider contracting with the State Parks and Recreation Commission, Department of Natural Resources, or other federal, state, and local agencies for youth crews in completing the project.

RCO Manual 16: Recreational Trails Program provides more information about youth crews.

³⁰A 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).

³¹RCO's project agreement standard terms and conditions, Section 16 or 18 (U.S. Forest Service agreement)

³²Revised Code of Washington 46.09.530(2)

Fees and Income

User or other fees may be charged for areas and facilities acquired or developed with NOVA grants. See *Manual 4: Development Projects*, and Washington Administrative Code 286-13-110 for more information.

Inspections

The sponsor shall provide the right of access to the project area to RCO to conduct pre-award inspections. After project funding, this access is expanded to include RCO, or any of its officers, or to any other authorized agent or official of the State of Washington or the federal government, at all reasonable times, to monitor and evaluate performance, compliance, and quality assurance. Normally, RCO staff conducts four types of project site visits:

- **Pre-award.** Made during the application phase, normally with the applicant to assess the project area and scope of work for eligibility concerns and compatibility with the grant program.
- **Interim.** This inspection, normally coordinated with the sponsor, is made sometime during the project implementation phase to help resolve any apparent or anticipated problems and to monitor project progress.
- **Final.** Before final acceptance of the contractor's work or accepting a project as complete, the sponsor shall request a final inspection by RCO. This request must be made only after the project is complete, architects and/or engineers have made their inspections, and defects have been corrected. It should be scheduled near project completion but still within the performance period of the contractor. The project must be constructed and functional as described in the grant agreement. The final inspection will review the following:
 - Completion of the project scope of work as described in the agreement.
 - Site appearance and construction quality.
 - Location of the funding or grant program acknowledgement sign. See *Grant Program Acknowledgement and Signs*, below.

When RCO staff's final inspection verifies that the project is complete, the final payment, including retainage, will be made.

- **Compliance.** Performed about every five years to ensure the site is managed and maintained as specified in the grant agreement.

Grant Program Acknowledgement and Signs³³

Acknowledgement

The sponsor must acknowledge Recreation and Conservation Funding Board funding assistance, by program, if possible, in all projects. This includes the following:

- Written acknowledgement in any news release or publication developed or modified for the funded project.
- Verbal acknowledgement during all ground-breaking and dedication ceremonies.
- A sponsor should notify RCO at least two weeks before any project dedication ceremony and thirty days in advance if an RCO representative or speaker is requested at the ceremony.

Signs

Prominent placement of signs at entrances and other locations unless exempted by board policy or waived by the RCO director. The sponsor may build such signs to harmonize with an existing design standard or request a standard acknowledgement sign from RCO.

For sponsor's developing their own signs, below are suggestions for how to incorporate appropriate acknowledgement:

- Funding provided by the Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities program.
- Grant funding from the Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities program made available from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Funding Board.

Funding acknowledgement signs must be posted before the grant agreement end date and final reimbursement. RCO may provide free funding acknowledgement signs for this grant program upon request. The sponsor must provide proof of the funding acknowledgement by attaching photographs or other evidence to PRISM.

Additional Rules and Instructions

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board may issue additional or modified rules, instructions, interpretations, and guides from time to time as it believes necessary for the effective conduct of the grant program. Such changes may apply to all projects.

³³Washington Administrative Code 286-13-120

Whenever possible, sufficient lead time will be given between the announcement and the effective date to minimize impacts to projects already in process at the time of announcement.

Public Disclosure Rules

RCO records and files are public records that are subject to the Public Records Act.³⁴ More information about [RCO's disclosure practices](#) is available online.

Equipment Policies

A grant sponsor may rent, lease, or purchase equipment and vehicles to construct and maintain recreation trails and trailheads. Purchasing equipment and vehicles is permissible for maintenance projects but not for development or planning projects.

A grant sponsor may purchase equipment when all the following conditions exist:

- The equipment is an essential and necessary component to implement the project or program.
- Purchasing is more cost effective than renting or leasing equipment.
- The equipment is wholly dedicated for trail maintenance, not prorated or used for other, non-permissible uses.

Equipment includes capital equipment³⁵ and small and attractive assets,³⁶ as determined by RCO, which are necessary for trail maintenance projects. For Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grants, equipment means the following:

- **Capital equipment:** Equipment and vehicles that cost \$5,000 or more per unit (including ancillary costs³⁷) and have a useful life of more than one year.
- **Small and attractive assets:** Items that cost less than \$5,000 per unit (including ancillary costs), have a useful life of more than one year, and are vulnerable to loss. RCO has determined that the following shall be considered equipment and are subject to the following equipment requirements and management:

³⁴Revised Code of Washington 42.56

³⁵Office of Financial Management State Administrative and Accounting Manual Chapter 30

³⁶Office of Financial Management State Administrative and Accounting Manual Chapter 30.40.20

³⁷Costs that are directly attributable to asset acquisition, such as freight and transportation costs, site preparation costs, and professional fees, that are necessary to place a capital asset into its intended state of operation.

- Laptops, notebook computers, tablets, and smartphones with unit costs of \$300 or more.
- Optical devices, binoculars, telescopes, infrared viewers, range finders, cameras and photographic projection equipment, desktop computers, television sets, DVD players, Blu-ray players, and video cameras with unit costs of \$1,000 or more.
- Mechanized and powered hand tools such as chainsaws, string trimmers, generators, rock drills, and power wheelbarrows with unit costs of \$300 or more.
- Vehicles such as mountain bikes, motorcycles, and All-terrain vehicles, with a per-unit cost of \$300 or more.
- Trailers for storage and or hauling equipment.
- Other items as determined by the RCO.

Purchasing Equipment

To maximize the benefit of grants and ensure fair and ethical treatment of bids from suppliers, the sponsor shall use a competitive procurement process³⁸ when purchasing equipment.

Equipment Management

A sponsor must maintain a record of all equipment purchased under a Recreation and Conservation Funding Board agreement that meets the definition of capital equipment or small and attractive assets. The sponsor, not the board or RCO, always takes title. This inventory record begins with the list of any equipment purchases proposed in the project application. Upon board approval of the project, this listing is entered into the grant agreement.

The sponsor shall have, and make available to RCO upon request, equipment records that include the following:

- A description of the equipment.
- Manufacturer's serial number (model, stock, vehicle identification, or other unique number securely affixed to the equipment).
- Source of the equipment, including grant or other agreement number.

³⁸2 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 200

- Acquisition date and cost.
- Percentage of sponsor participation in the cost of the project or program for which the equipment was acquired as specified in the grant agreement.
- Location, use, and condition of the equipment and the date the information was reported.
- Ultimate disposition data, including date of disposal and sale price, including the method used to determine current fair market value when a sponsor compensates the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board for its share, if sold.

The sponsor shall establish adequate maintenance procedures to keep the equipment in good condition.

The sponsor shall institute a control system to ensure adequate safeguards to prevent loss, damage, or theft of the equipment. Any loss, damage, or theft shall be investigated and fully documented. The sponsor shall promptly notify RCO of any such occurrence.

Periodic Inventory

The sponsor shall conduct a physical inventory of equipment and reconcile the results with previous records at least once every two years. This should continue until final liquidation has been made. Inventory records must be maintained just as other records for audit purposes. Any differences in this physical inspection and those shown in the accounting records shall be investigated by the sponsor to determine the causes of the difference. In connection with the inventory, the sponsor shall verify the existence, current use, and continued need for the equipment. A detailed written report on the results of this inventory shall be provided to RCO upon request.

Continued Use

The sponsor shall use the equipment in the project or program for which it was acquired for as long as needed, whether or not support continues through subsequent grants from the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board or program, without making a refund to the program.

The value of equipment use may not be included in any other RCO grant if the equipment was purchased with RCO grants.

When the sponsor disposes of the equipment (see below), procedures that provide for fair competition, to the extent practicable, and result in the highest possible return, shall be established.

Equipment Liquidation

When the sponsor discontinues use of the capital equipment (assets) for the purpose for which it was funded, the following liquidation procedures shall apply:

1. **The sponsor wishes to retain the equipment.** When the sponsor no longer needs the equipment as provided above but wishes to keep it for uses not eligible in the program, the sponsor must compensate RCO as directed under "Calculating Program Refund."
2. **The sponsor does not wish to retain the equipment.** If the sponsor has no need for the equipment but it still has value, the sponsor shall request disposition instructions from RCO. If so instructed, the sponsor will do the following
 - A) Original cost of more than \$1,000: The sponsor shall sell the equipment and reimburse the grant program as directed below under "Calculating Program Refund."
 - B) RCO may instruct the sponsor to transfer title to a third party named by RCO who is eligible in the grant program under existing statutes. In such cases, the sponsor will be compensated by the receiving party in the amount equal to the proportional share (as specified in the grant agreement) of the current fair market value of the equipment.
3. **The equipment has no value.** This occurs when the equipment has lost value or has outlived its useful life, not due to lack of maintenance. The sponsor may notify RCO and if RCO concurs, the equipment will be removed from equipment inventory reporting requirements.

Calculating the Program Refund

When selling equipment, the sponsor must refund the grant program RCO's proportional share listed in the grant agreement. The sponsor shall use procedures for the sale that result in the highest possible return.

The sponsor may deduct selling or handling expenses, not to exceed \$100 or 10 percent of the sale amount, whichever is less, from the amount owed RCO. The sponsor must document and submit any such selling or handling expenses along with the refund to RCO.

A sponsor may not use RCO's portion of the sale to buy replacement or other equipment.

Project Area Stewardship and Ongoing Obligations³⁹

An RCO grant comes with long-term obligations to maintain and protect the project area⁴⁰ after a project is complete. The long-term obligations are in RCO's grant agreement. A [sample grant agreement](#) can be found on RCO's website.

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 the grant sponsor replaces 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 nonhighway road or off-road vehicle recreation, for as long as defined in the grant agreement. For an acquisition project, the period is determined by the rights that are acquired. For development and restoration projects, the period is 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 grants 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.

After a project is complete (that is, after RCO's final reimbursement and acceptance of the project), RCO documents that were signed by the sponsor continue to govern the project area described in the boundary map for which funds have been granted.

Changes may be made only with the prior approval of the board. If a compliance issue arises, RCO staff works with the sponsor to resolve the issue. Unresolved, identified issues could result in restrictions on applying for or receiving future grants.

³⁹Revised Codes of Washington 46.09 and 79A.25, Washington Administrative Code 286, RCO's grant agreement standard terms and conditions, and *Manual 7: Long-Term Obligations*.

⁴⁰Project area is the defined geographic area where the project occurs and is described in the project's boundary map.

Section 3: Money Matters

This section covers the following:

- ✓ Grant limits
- ✓ Matching share
- ✓ Types of match
- ✓ Where the money comes from and how it's distributed
- ✓ Federal rules
- ✓ Records, audits, and reimbursements

Grant Limits⁴¹

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grants are intended to expand the sponsor's existing capacity, not replace funding that would have been used for a project without the grant.⁴²

The board establishes grant limits for its programs to help make funds available to a greater number of projects. The grant limits for NOVA are as follows:⁴³

- Off-road Vehicle Category: \$250,000 for maintenance projects. No limit for other project types.
- Nonhighway Road Category: \$200,000 per project.
- Nonmotorized Category: \$200,000 per project.

⁴¹Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2016-28

⁴²Washington Administrative Code 286-13-045(6)

⁴³Approved in June 2024 by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2024-07

Administration, Architecture, and Engineering

Direct administrative costs for acquisition of real property are limited to no more than 5 percent of the total acquisition cost. Administrative, architecture, and engineering costs for development projects are limited to 20 percent of the total development cost. Additional information about allowable architecture and engineering costs are described in *Manual 4: Development Projects*.

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 foster and demonstrate local commitment to the projects and to spread the money from the grant program to a greater number of projects.⁴⁴

Although match is not required for the NOVA program, an applicant is strongly encouraged to provide matching resources. A project score is sometimes weighted to reward a project that includes a matching share made up of non-government (volunteer) contributions.

Eligible Match

Applicant resources used to match board funds must be eligible in the NOVA category, and may include, but are not limited to, any one or more of the following:

- Appropriations and cash
- Bonds—council or voter
- Corrections labor
- Donations—the value of using donated cash, equipment use, labor, land, materials, property rights, or services (see “Types of Match” below)
- Force account—the value of using a sponsor's equipment, labor, or materials (see “Types of Match” below)
- Grants—federal, state, local, and private (see “Types of Match” below)
- Local impact and mitigation fees (see “Types of Match” below)
- Proceeds of a letter of credit or binding loan commitment

⁴⁴Washington Administrative Code 286-13-045(2)

- Other Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grants that meet the requirements outlined below.

Not Allowed as Match

- Costs associated with meeting a mitigation requirement for another project or action (e.g., permit requirement, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing, habitat conservation plan, legal settlement).
- Costs for items not included in the grant agreement.
- 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 or expenditure on another RCO project.)
- Costs that are not eligible for a grant.
- Costs that are not necessary or an integral part of the project scope.
- Existing sponsor assets such as real property or developments.

Match Requirements

Before the board awards a grant, the required match must be secured so the project can move forward. All matching resources must meet all the following:

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

RCO rules governing projects apply equally to the grant applicant's match. For example, if a grant applicant uses donated land as match, RCO rules requiring the land to remain in recreation use forever apply to the donated land 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 may not be used as match in another board-funded project.

Match Availability and Certification⁴⁵

To help ensure the project is ready for implementation when approved, the applicant must have matching funds available for expenditure before the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board approves funding. The applicant must sign and submit a Certification of Match Form to ensure the project is included in the funding recommendations. The applicant is advised to plan for a project with match dependent on citizen votes or a ballot measure. This certification is due at least one calendar month before Recreation and Conservation Funding Board action.⁴⁶ The form and deadlines for certifying match are on the RCO website.

RCO may declare a project ineligible if there are no guarantees that matching funds are available. That project may be passed over in favor of a project with the match in place. Such decisions are based on the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board's confidence in the applicants' 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. The applicant will have six months from the time of the first grant award to certify the match requirements of that grant. To prevent a backlog of unspent grants, the sponsor must finish the project by the earliest completion date of the two grants.

Types of Match⁴⁷

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 inmates, community service labor, and volunteers), and material is discussed in *Manual 8: Reimbursements*. RCO strongly encourages the applicant to secure written confirmation of all donations planned as match and attach the donation letters to the PRISM Online application.

⁴⁵Revised Code of Washington 79A.25.140, Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040 (1)(c)

⁴⁶Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040 (3)

⁴⁷Washington Administrative Code 286-13-045 (2)

Donated land must expand existing recreation lands or stand on its own as a viable recreation area. Review *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects* before taking title to property that will be donated and used as match. Manual 3 outlines the requirements for valuing the property and for securing a donation statement from the seller.

Force Account

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

Force account values and the value of donated contributions must be recorded on a separate project financial ledger maintained by the sponsor in a way that readily is identifiable in federal and state audits.

Corrections Labor

In determining the value of corrections or convict labor for a project, only the actual out-of-pocket cost of paid labor is allowable. Corrections or convict labor is not volunteer labor or donated labor that may be valued at fair market value.

Other Grants

In some cases, a sponsor may use funds awarded from a separate grant program as 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.

The use of federal funds as match may be governed by federal and state requirements and thus will vary with individual program policies.

The applicant must clearly identify in the grant application all grants to be used as match. RCO will help determine if the source is compatible with Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grants.

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Grants as Match⁴⁸

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.

⁴⁸Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2005-24

- Only elements eligible in both grant programs are counted as the match.
- Each grant is evaluated independently and on its own merits, as if the match were coming from elsewhere.
- The grant applications are submitted in the same biennium.⁴⁹

For evaluation scoring purposes, an RCO grant used as match will not count toward the award of matching share points.⁵⁰

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.

Cost Increases⁵¹

Cost increases for an approved project may be granted by the board or director if financial resources are available. Each cost increase request will be considered on its merits. The director may approve a cost increase request as long as it does not exceed 10 percent of the project's initial approved grant amount. The director's approval of an acquisition project cost increase is limited to a parcel-by-parcel appraised and reviewed value. See *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects* or *Manual 4: Development Projects* for more details on cost increases.

Where the Money Comes from and How It's Distributed

In 1972, the Legislature set aside 1 percent of the state's gasoline excise tax to provide funding for NOVA.⁵² A second source of funding for this program is off-road vehicle registration fees.⁵³

Distribution of Money

Each year, the state treasurer refunds 1 percent of motor vehicle fuel tax revenues and then distributes the money to NOVA programs as shown in Figure 1 below.

⁴⁹Washington Administrative Code 286-13-045(7)

⁵⁰Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2014-06

⁵¹Washington Administrative Code 286-13-085

⁵²Revised Code of Washington 46.09.520

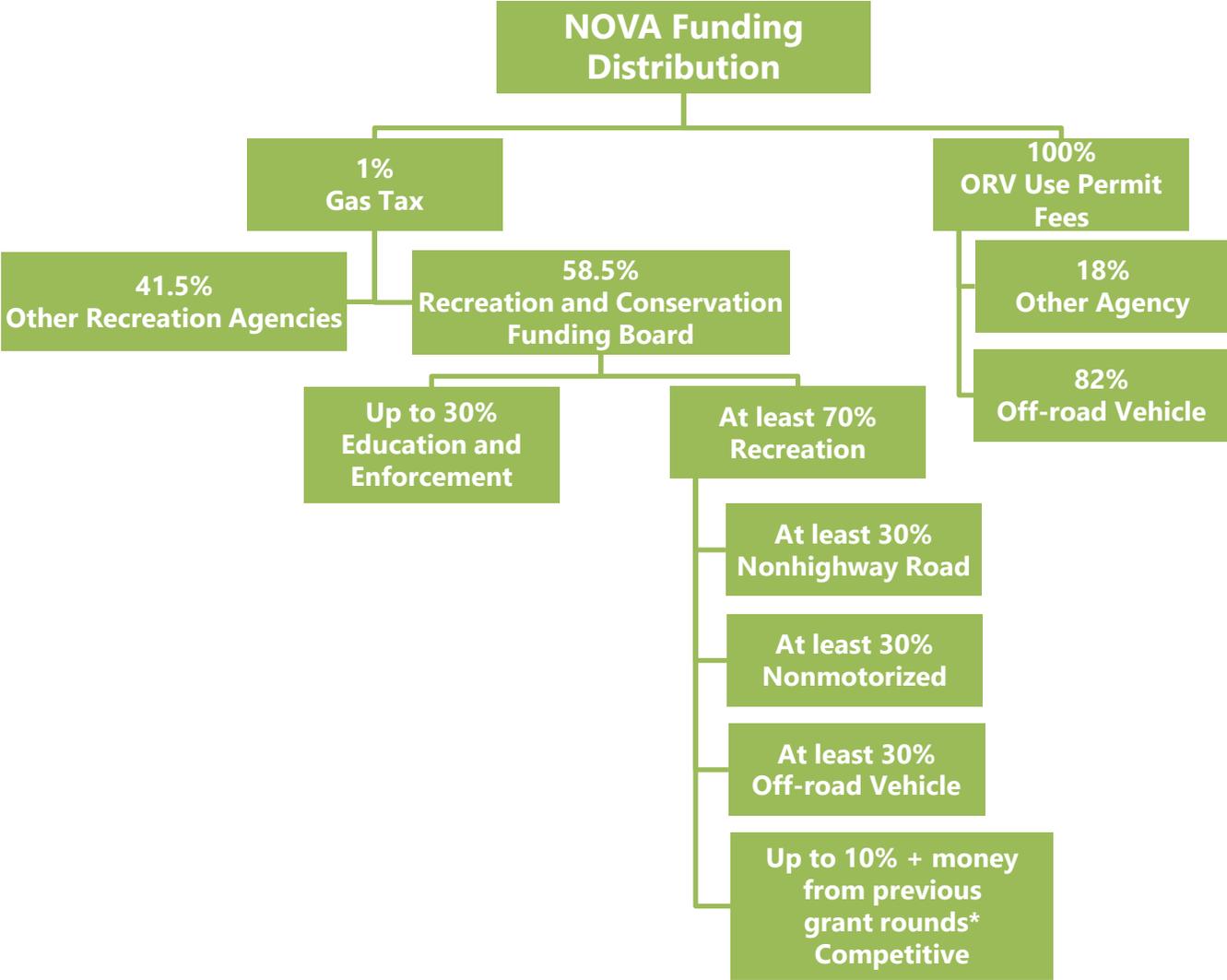
⁵³Revised Code of Washington 46.68.045

Allocation of Funds

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board may waive any of the “not less than 30 percent” percentages if one of the following conditions are met:

- There are insufficient requests for funds.
- In the board’s view, a project has scored too low in evaluations.

A subset of the above “70 percent for recreation projects” money is the “competitive dollars,” which are funds that remain after distribution of the recreation project dollars.



*Funds from previous grant rounds include money that remains after all projects applying for grants were funded, or when money is unused because a project couldn't be finished or finished under budget.

Funding Process

Allocation of board funds begins when the advisory committee scores and ranks all projects. The advisory committee evaluates grant applications by category using board-adopted criteria.

Next, RCO staff completes the following steps, the results of which are reviewed by the advisory committee and presented to the board:

1. Allocates the gasoline tax dollars⁵⁴ to the nonhighway road, nonmotorized, and off-road vehicle categories using the formula in Figure 1, above.
2. The "permit fee subgroup"⁵⁵ recommends allocation of the off-road vehicle fees received under Revised Code of Washington 46.68.045.
3. Allocates returned funds from previous years to partly funded and alternates in the same category. Adds any excess gasoline tax funds⁵⁶ and remaining returned funds to the pool of competitive dollars. Allocates to partly funded or unfunded projects⁵⁷ using the three criteria below:
 - The number of NOVA recreationists served and the advisory committee's confidence in the number claimed.
 - The amount of non-state match in a project.
 - The number of unfunded projects in that category.
4. Anything leftover is added to the competitive pool for the next grant cycle (see the step 3, above). Any excess off-road vehicle permit dollars are carried over to the off-road vehicle category.

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.

⁵⁴Revised Code of Washington 46.09.520(2)(d)

⁵⁵Off-road vehicle and mountain biking recreationists, governmental representatives, and land managers (Revised Code of Washington 46.09.340)

⁵⁶Excess funds are those that remain after all projects in the category have been funded, or when money is returned from a previously funded project because it wasn't completed or was completed for less money.

⁵⁷Revised Code of Washington 46.09.520(2)(d)(iii)

Records, Audits, and Reimbursement

Sponsors Must Pay First

RCO pays grants through reimbursement. A sponsor may request reimbursement only after paying employees and vendors. RCO does not provide money before vendors are paid.

Except as otherwise provided below, RCO will pay only at the percentage identified in the grant agreement after the sponsor has presented an invoice documenting costs incurred and compliance with the provisions of the grant agreement.

RCO will not pay more than the sponsor's out-of-pocket costs.

Reimbursement shall not be approved for any donations, including donated land. Donations are eligible as match only.

RCO may pay an escrow account directly for RCO's share of the approved cost of land and related costs if the sponsor indicates a temporary lack of money to buy the land on a reimbursement basis. Before release of RCO grants into escrow, the sponsor must provide RCO with a copy of a binding agreement between the sponsor and the seller, all required documentation, and evidence of deposit of the sponsor's share, identified in the grant agreement, into an escrow account. See *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects* for more information on escrow payments.

Billing procedures are explained further in *Manual 8: Reimbursements*.

Audits

All records relevant to projects funded by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board must be on file with the grant sponsor and are subject to audit by the state and inspection by RCO. If the auditor's inspection of the records discloses any charges incorrectly claimed and reimbursed, cash restitution of the incorrect amount must be made to the board.

Records

The applicant 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

This section covers the following:

- ✓ How project evaluation works
- ✓ The evaluation criteria

How Project Evaluation Works

The evaluation process begins when the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board adopts the evaluation process⁵⁸ and evaluation criteria during public meetings.

The RCO director appoints people to serve on an advisory committee to evaluate each grant proposal. In recruiting members for the committee, RCO seeks to appoint people who possess a statewide perspective and are recognized for their experiences and knowledge of outdoor recreation in Washington. The director may appoint *ex officio* members to the advisory committee to provide additional representation and expertise. Visit RCO's website for [membership and other details](#).

An applicant prepares written responses to address the evaluation criteria. Advisory committee members individually review the written response, graphics included in the application, and summary application materials, and score the project. The advisory committee then hosts a question and answer session that is available for live public view.⁵⁹ Committee members submit their scores to RCO after all the question and answer sessions have been completed.

At the same time, RCO staff score the objective sections of the application, such as the amount of matching share an applicant is providing and conformance to growth management planning. Staff scores are based on information submitted by the applicant

⁵⁸Washington Administrative Code 286-13-020

⁵⁹Approved in June 2023 by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2023-24.

and obtained from the state Office of Financial Management and the state Department of Commerce.

The advisory committee and staff scores are combined for an application's total evaluation score. The resulting ranked lists are the basis for funding recommendations that the RCO director submits to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board, which makes the final decision about funding in public meetings.⁶⁰ The public is given an opportunity to comment on the grant proposals before the board makes its decision.

Do Not Fund Recommendation⁶¹

Occasionally during evaluations, 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.

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 evaluators, and invite the applicant to attend the post-evaluation meeting to respond to questions. The applicant also may submit a written response to the evaluators' 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 board a summary of the "Do Not Fund" recommendation and any committee member comments. The board will consider the advisory committee's recommendation at a regularly scheduled public meeting, before the ranked list is adopted (consideration may take place at the same meeting, but the "Do Not Fund" recommendation will be discussed before the ranked list is adopted). The board retains discretion in awarding all grants.

Growth Management Act Compliance

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board considers an organization's compliance with the Growth Management Act when awarding grants for public facilities.⁶² The board gives preference through evaluation scoring to town, city, and county applicants who are required to plan under the act.⁶³ Scoring for compliance with the Growth Management Act, and other staff-scored evaluation criteria, is based on the organization's status as of

⁶⁰Washington Administrative Code 286-13-050

⁶¹Revised by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board January 9, 2014

⁶²Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250

⁶³Revised Code of Washington 36.60A

the category's technical completion deadline. RCO uses information reported by the Washington State Department of Commerce for scoring Growth Management Act compliance. Agencies in compliance receive a zero score on the question while out of compliance status results in a minus one score.

At the time of application, an applicant should consult its planning department or contact [Washington State Department of Commerce's Growth Management Services](#) to determine its compliance status. If the organization is out of compliance, this advance inquiry may give it time to change its status before the technical completion deadline. RCO is not responsible for changing an organization's compliance status with the Growth Management Act.

Letters of Support

Letters and other documented expressions of project support will be available to the NOVA Advisory Committee members through PRISM Online for their review. The applicant should summarize this support when responding to the evaluation criteria, "Project support." A copy of each letter or document of support must be uploaded to the PRISM Online application.

Evaluation Criteria

Summary of Criteria

Criteria	Title	Questions by Category and Project Type	Maximum Points	NOVA Plan Policy
Scored by Advisory Committee				
1. Need		All	15 Points	A-1, C-7
		Maintenance and Operation	25 Points	
2. Need fulfillment		All	15 Points	A-1, C-6, C-7
		Maintenance and Operation	25 Points	
3. Site suitability		Acquisition	15 Points	C-15
		Combination Acquisition and Development	5 Points	
4. Project design		Development	10 Points	C-1, C-5, C-7, C-8, C-14
		Combination Acquisition and Development	5 Points	
5. Planning		Planning	10 Points	C-6, C-15
6. Sustainability		All projects, except Maintenance	5 Points	
7. Readiness to proceed		All projects, except Maintenance	5 Points	
8. Predominantly natural		Nonmotorized and Nonhighway Road Categories only	5 Points	C-13
9. Project support		All	10 Points	C-3, C-4
10. Cost-benefit		All	5 Points	A-1, C-3
Scored by RCO				
11. Matching shares		All	5	C-4
12. County population density		All	1	C-2
13. Proximity to people		All	1	C-2
14. Growth Management Act preference		All	0	
Nonhighway and Nonmotorized Total Points Possible			77	
Off-road Vehicle Total Possible Points			72	

KEY:

All=includes acquisition, development, maintenance and operation, and planning project types.

NOVA Plan Policy=Criteria orientation in accordance with the NOVA Plan 2005-2011, which were carried forward to the current plan. The letter and number codes reference corresponding policies in the plan.

Detailed Evaluation Criteria

For each question scored by the advisory committee, descriptive text and bullets are provided to help applicants and evaluators. A successful proposal need not address each consideration, nor is the list all inclusive.

1. Need. What is the need for new, improved, or maintained facilities?⁶⁴ (Applicants respond only to bulleted items clearly relevant to their projects.)

A) State, Regional, Land Manager, or Community Needs

- Cite any publicly reviewed and adopted plan that supports the need for the project by name, location, or type.
- Describe why NOVA funds are critical to the completion of this project (current physical condition, safety, environmental issues, imminent threat of loss of recreation, etc.)

B) Inventory Issues

- Describe similar opportunities now available in the local area.
- Describe the need for new and/or improved facilities in the service area. For example, are there overcrowding issues? Is this a unique recreational experience?
- Describe any significant maintenance backlog in the project area.

C) Use

- Describe how accessible (including to people with disabilities) the finished project will be to intended users.
- Describe how heavily trails and support facilities in the area are used.
- Describe any unserved or underserved user groups.

⁶⁴Throughout this question, the applicant should address the need for facilities or recreation opportunities in the specific grant category in which he or she is applying. For example, if the applicant is applying for an off-road vehicle grant, he or she should describe the need for off-road vehicle facilities or address the off-road vehicle recreation opportunities.

- ▲ Point Range: zero to five points, which staff later multiplies by three for all projects except maintenance and operation projects, which are multiplied by five.

Zero points	No or very weak need established.
One to two points	Fair to moderate need established.
Three points	Strong need established.
Four to five points	Very high to exceptional: several points made to establish need.

Revised April 2020, Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2020-08.

- 2. Need fulfillment.** How well will this project fulfill the service area’s needs identified in Question 1? (Applicants respond only to bulleted items clearly relevant to the project.)

- How does the project meet the applicant’s stated goals and objectives?
- How does the project meet the needs identified in the service area?
- How will the project meet the needs of any underserved user groups?
- How have intended users been included in the planning process and how has their feedback been addressed?

- ▲ Point Range: zero to five points, which staff later multiplies by three, for all projects except maintenance and operation projects, which are multiplied by five.

Zero points	No or weak evidence of need satisfaction.
One to two points	Fair to moderate evidence. Project fills only a small portion of the apparent or expressed need.
Three points	Strong evidence. An important need will be addressed by the project, although that need will not be filled completely by the project as proposed.
Four to five points	Very high to exceptional evidence. The project fulfills a critical need.

Revised July 2018, Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2018-11.

- 3. Site suitability** (acquisition or combination acquisition and development projects). To what extent is the site to be acquired well suited for the intended recreational activity?⁶⁵ (Applicants respond only to bulleted items clearly relevant to the project.)

Describe the suitability of the site's physical features for the proposed uses. Generally, sites most compatible with the proposed uses will score higher. Consider such factors as the following:

- Size
- Topography
- Soils
- Natural amenities
- Location

Other considerations include the following:

- How is the proposed acquisition compatible with the adjacent land uses?
- Does this acquisition provide a buffer to the existing use area? Explain.
- Will the proposed acquisition link to an existing facility?⁶⁶ Explain.

- ▲ Point Range: zero to five points, which staff later multiplies by three, for acquisition only projects.

Zero points	No evidence presented, or the site is inappropriate for the intended recreation uses.
One to two points	Below average to moderate. The site appears fair for the intended uses, though there may be concern over its appropriateness.
Three points	Good. Site is adequate or reasonable for intended uses.

⁶⁵An applicant should address the suitability of the site for the recreation facility in the specific grant category in which he or she is applying. For example, if the applicant is applying for an off-road vehicle grant, he or she should describe the suitability of the site for off-road vehicle recreation.

⁶⁶Existing facilities providing recreation for the specific grant category in which he or she is applying. For example, if the applicant is applying for an off-road vehicle grant, will the proposed acquisition link to an existing facility providing off-road vehicle recreation.

Four to five points Very good to excellent. Site is outstanding.

Revised April 2020, Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2020-08.

- 4. Project design** (development or combination acquisition and development projects). Is the proposal appropriately designed for intended uses and users? (Applicants respond only to bulleted items clearly relevant to the project.)

If the facility has a Primary Management Objective,⁶⁷ describe how the project design is compatible with the objective.

Explain how the project uses proven design criteria including the following:

- User-friendly and universally accessible elements.
- Adequate spatial relationships, surfacing, width, and grades (are there switchbacks, how is multiple use facilitated, how tight are curves for off-road vehicles, bicycles, and motorcycles?)
- Trails: Were “loop” designs considered and if present, do the loops lead to a primary destination?

Explain how the design accomplishes the following:

- Protects and complements the environment.
- Makes the best use of the site.
- Minimizes the need for ongoing maintenance.
- Satisfies users’ desired level of difficulty (for off-road vehicles only)
- For existing trails: Does not over build (retains the difficulty level) and minimizes user displacement.

- ▲ Point Range: zero to five points, which staff later multiplies by two for development projects.

Zero points	Poor evidence presented or inappropriate design. For example: environmental issues not addressed, trail difficulty level or user experience not addressed or can be expected to change substantially, or high probability of user displacement.
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⁶⁷“Primary Management Objective” definition in Appendix A.

One to two points	Below average to moderate. For example: design does fair job of addressing environmental issues, use difficulty level and user experience will change somewhat, there appears to be some user displacement.
Three points	Good. For example: design is adequate or reasonable to address environmental problems, retains similar difficulty level and user experience, or may be low levels of user displacement.
Four to five points	Very good to excellent. design is outstanding. If a trail, it retains difficulty level and user experience with minimal or no user displacement.

Revised 2004.

- 5. Planning** (planning projects). To what extent will the proposed plan or study help provide opportunities and address sustainability of the natural environment?⁶⁸ (Applicants respond only to bulleted items clearly relevant to the project.)

Recreation Benefit and Public Involvement Factors

- Will this project directly benefit the intended recreation? Explain. (For example, will it result in a development proposal or will more planning be required?)
- What are the results of any public involvement in the planning proposal?

Proposed Plan Scope and Outcomes Factors

- Are the project’s planning goals and objectives appropriate? Explain.
- Is the proposed plan or study cost-effective?
- Does the plan or study reflect current planning or design standards or is the approach untested?
- Are there any conditions on site or in the study area that might require extraordinary or unique planning or design efforts?

⁶⁸An applicant should address the recreation opportunities provided in the specific grant category in which he or she is applying. For example, if the applicant is applying for an off-road vehicle grant, he or she should describe the off-road vehicle opportunities that would be provided.

- What is the complexity or feasibility of environmental mitigation that could be required?
- Does the plan or study address maintenance and stewardship of the planning area?
- What are the qualifications and experience of the personnel, including consultants?

▲ Point Range: zero to five points, which staff later multiplies by two.

Zero points	Evidence is vague, or it appears that the project will not lead to new opportunities for the intended type of recreation.
One to two points	Fair to moderate evidence. Proposal likely will lead to weak or below average new recreation opportunities.
Three points	Good. Proposal likely will lead to an above average or several solid recreation opportunities.
Four to five points	Very good to excellent. Proposal likely will lead to an outstanding opportunity in the intended recreation type.

Revised February 2016 by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2016-09.

- 6. Sustainability** (combination acquisition and development, development, or planning projects). Sustainability reflects choices made to balance the desired benefits and potential impacts of a project on the surrounding landscape and community. Please discuss how your project's location or design supports your organization's sustainability plan or how you considered the ecological, economic, and social benefits and impacts in the project plan.

Examples of sustainability factors that could be part of a project or maintenance plan are provided below for consideration but are not all-inclusive. Applicants and evaluators should treat this list as a guide, not a checklist. Applicants are encouraged to be creative in expressing the sustainability factors of their projects, and evaluators should score projects based on the extent to which applicants have considered and addressed the benefits and impacts of their projects whether they discuss one of the factors below or many.

Ecological Factors

- Minimizes impacts to, or improves ecological function of, surrounding lands

- Includes low-impact design or other green building techniques that reduce water, energy, resource consumption, or greenhouse gas footprint
- Provides a buffer to future natural disasters or anticipated climate impacts
- Includes landscaping that supports native species and/or pollinator habitat

Social Factors

- Addresses an identified disparity in social or environmental services
- Encourages access via multi-modal and active transportation choices
- Promotes opportunities for physical activity, social and cultural connections, or community education

Economic Factors

- Uses materials that support local producers, are recycled or recyclable, increase the project's anticipated lifespan, or reduce future maintenance costs
- Creates efficiency in the provision of public services (i.e., stormwater infiltration, increased tree canopy, carbon sequestration, etc.)
- Maximizes lifespan, or reduces future operational costs
- Supports a local economic development initiative

▲ Point Range: zero to five points.

Adopted January 2020, Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2020-06

- 7. Readiness to proceed** (maintenance projects do not answer). How soon after the grant is approved can the project begin? (Applicants respond only to bulleted items clearly relevant to the project.)

There are often good reasons why managers are unable to initiate a project immediately. Even so, if other factors are equal, the NOVA program favors projects that move the quickest.

- Start-Finish: When will work on the project begin? When will work be completed and/or the facility be open to use?

- Preliminary Work: Are all elements ready—permits, environmental clearances, engineering, signed agreements, equipment, labor force, etc.? Have any appeals been resolved? (Explain.)
- Acquisitions: Has the landowner been contacted? Is the owner willing to sell? Does the applicant hold an option on the property? (Describe). Are required appraisals and reviews completed? (Describe). Will the land acquired be immediately available for use by users in the intended category? Explain.

▲ Point Range: zero to five points.

Zero points	Very large barriers exist that likely will delay the project a year or more.
One to two points	Substantial to significant barriers exist that likely will be removed in the next twelve months.
Three to four points	Minimal to ordinary barriers exist that likely will be removed by the time a grant is approved.
Five points	No barriers. The project is ready to move forward immediately.

Revised July 2018, Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2018-11.

- 8. Predominantly natural** (off-road vehicle applicants do not answer this question). Is the project site in a predominantly natural setting? (Applicants respond only to bulleted items clearly relevant to the project.)

Consider the project’s immediate physical setting, not its distance from structures that affect the setting. Apart from the proposal, to what extent does the user experience the natural environment versus human structures and activities: buildings, radio/cell towers, roads, dams, etc.?

A setting does not need to be pristine or untouched to rate a high score:

- A second growth forest often is sufficiently natural.
- A remote high camp or ridge-top trail can afford distant views of cities or towns.
- A campground or trailhead can be located adjacent to or at the end of a paved road.

- The number of people using the facility will not detract necessarily from the setting or desired recreational experience.

When evaluators score this question, they will look at the natural setting of the location, not the facility proposed for funding.

▲ Point Range: zero to five points.

Zero points	No evidence presented, or site is not natural.
One to two points	Setting is not very natural: too much noise, too many roads, clear cuts, etc.
Three to four points	Setting is mostly natural. Though it may be adjacent to a clear cut or touch a road, virtually all views and sounds are natural.
Five points	Setting is natural. Any trees are predominately mature, sights and sounds are all natural.

Revised 2004.

9. Project support. To what extent do users and the public support the project? (Applicants respond only to bulleted items clearly relevant to the project.)

Support can be demonstrated in both financial and non-financial ways and varies depending upon the project type. In scoring this question, evaluators consider the type of support that is most relevant to the project. Examples of support or endorsement include the following:

- Voter-approved initiatives and bond issues.
- Donations to help complete the project: labor, equipment, money, materials, or land.
- Advisory board approval, completion of a public planning process that endorsed this project.
- Positive letters, oral testimony at public meetings, or support from friends or user groups.
- Positive (or the absence of extensive negative) media coverage.

▲ Point Range: zero to five points, which staff later multiplies by two.

Zero points	No or very weak evidence presented.
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One to two points Minimal to fair specific evidence of support.

Three points Moderate support.

Four to five points Exceptional to overwhelming support.

Revised 2004.

10. Cost-benefit. Do the project's benefits outweigh its costs? (Applicants respond only to bulleted items clearly relevant to the project.)

Costs may include fiscal outlays, unacceptable harm to adjoining areas or the environment, and factors that cause unnecessary ill will from users, the public, or others. Benefits may be economic gains for the community, added opportunity for facility users, improvements to the environment, etc.

- What is the cost per mile for trails or other unit of measure for other projects? Explain.
- Describe this project's impact on the net availability of opportunities?⁶⁹
- What alternatives to the project were considered and why were they rejected in favor of the current proposal?
- Describe the recreation and non-recreational benefits this project will provide, including health, community economic development, education, and stewardship.
- Describe the project's environmental cost-benefit.
- Explain why reviewers should have confidence in the budget for this project.

▲ Point Range: zero to five points.

Zero points No evidence of a net benefit presented.

One to two points Little to modest evidence of a mild net benefit.

Three to four points Adequate to strong evidence of a solid net benefit.

Five points Substantial evidence of an exceptional net benefit.

⁶⁹An applicant should address the availability of recreation opportunities in the specific grant category in which he or she is applying. For example, if the applicant is applying for an off-road vehicle grant, he or she should describe the availability of off-road vehicle recreation opportunities.

Revised 2004.

11. Matching shares (applicant does not answer). What percentage of the total project cost is the applicant contributing?

RCO staff scores this question based on information provided in the application. Only elements considered reimbursable are eligible for use as an applicant's match. For evaluation scoring purposes, an RCO grant used as match will not count toward the award of matching share points. No additional information is required.

▲ Point Range: zero to five points.

Zero points	0-10 percent of project's value will be contributed by the applicant.
One point	10.01-20 percent of project's value will be contributed by the applicant.
Two points	20.01-30 percent of project's value will be contributed by the applicant.
Three points	30.01-40 percent of project's value will be contributed by the applicant.
Four points	40.01-50 percent of project's value will be contributed by the applicant.
Five points	More than 50 percent of project's value will be contributed by the applicant.

Revised January 9, 2014.

12. County population density (applicant does not answer). Is the project site in a county with a population density greater than 250 people per square mile?

RCO staff will score this question based on maps provided with the application. The policy is supported by Revised Code of Washington 79A.25.250 and NOVA Plan policies in appendix B.

▲ Point Range: zero to one point.

Zero points	No
One point	Yes

13. Proximity to people (applicant does not answer). Is the project site within thirty miles of a city with a population of twenty-five thousand people or more?

RCO staff will score this question based on maps provided with the application. The policy is supported by Revised Code of Washington 79A.25.250 and NOVA Plan policies in appendix B.

▲ Point Range: zero to one point.

Zero points	No
One point	Yes

14. Growth Management Act preference (applicant does not answer). Has the applicant⁷⁰ made progress toward meeting the requirements of the Growth Management Act?⁷¹

State law requires that:

- A) Whenever a state agency is considering awarding grants to finance public facilities, it shall consider whether the applicant has adopted a comprehensive plan and development regulations as required by Revised Code of Washington 36.70A.040 ("state law").
- B) When reviewing such requests, the state agency shall accord additional preference to applicants that have adopted the comprehensive plan and development regulations. An applicant is deemed to have satisfied the requirements for adopting a comprehensive plan and development regulations if it meets the following criteria:
 - Adopts or has adopted within the time periods specified in state law
 - Adopts or has adopted by the time it requests a grant or loan
 - Demonstrates substantial progress toward adopting within the time periods specified in state law. An agency that is more than six months out of compliance with the time periods has not demonstrated substantial progress.

⁷⁰Applicants in this question are counties, cities, and towns only. This question does not apply to nonprofit organizations or state and federal agency applicants.

⁷¹Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250 (Growth Management Act-preference required)

- C) A request from an applicant planning under state law shall be accorded no additional preference based on subsection (B) over a request from an applicant not planning under this state law.

Scores for this question are based on information from the state Department of Commerce, Growth Management Services. If an agency’s comprehensive plan, development regulations, or amendments have been appealed to a Growth Management Act hearings board, the agency cannot be penalized during the period of appeal. Scoring occurs after RCO’s technical completion deadline.

▲ Point Range: minus one to zero points.

- Minus one point The applicant does not meet the requirements of Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250.
- Zero points Applicant meets the requirements of Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250.
- Zero points Applicant is a nonprofit organization, state or federal agency.

Supplemental Questions

There are several questions that are applied only to projects eligible for competitive and excess funds.

Supplemental Questions		
Scored By	Question	Maximum Points
RCO Staff	A1. NOVA Recreationists Served	5 Points
Advisory Committee	A2. Confidence in Number Served	
RCO staff	B. Amount of Non-State Match	5 Points
RCO staff	C. Unfunded Projects in Category	5 Points
	Points Possible	15

- A1. Number of NOVA recreationists served.** How many NOVA recreationists actually will use this facility or project in a typical year?

RCO staff scores this question based on data provided in the application. No additional information is required. A revised score may be recommended by the advisory committee based on overall confidence in the number provided by the applicant and the number’s derivation.

▲ Point Range: zero to five points.

- Zero points Project will serve 0–999 NOVA recreationists.

One point	Project will serve 1,000–9,999 NOVA recreationists.
Two points	Project will serve 10,000–49,999 NOVA recreationists.
Three points	Project will serve 50,000–99,999 NOVA recreationists.
Four points	Project will serve 100,000–249,999 NOVA recreationists.
Five points	Project will serve 250,000 or more NOVA recreationists.

Revised March 26, 2009

The advisory committee scores this question based on information provided in the application. No additional information is required.

A2. Confidence in estimated NOVA recreationists served. How accurate is the applicant-provided number of NOVA recreationists served?

▲ Point Range: zero to one point, which staff later multiplies by the score of Question A1.

0 points	There is no confidence that the claimed number served is accurate. For example, there appears to be no basis for the number.
0.2 point	There is very low confidence that the claimed number served is accurate. For example, the information is from “office” estimates or trailhead registers.
0.4 point	There is low confidence that the claimed number served is accurate. For example, the information is based on very old information or interviews.
0.6 point	There is moderate confidence that the claimed number served is accurate.
0.8 point	There is good confidence that the claimed number served is accurate. For example, the information may be a little dated, but is from once accurate sources like on-site surveys.

1 point	There is high confidence that the claimed number served is accurate. For example, information is from a current on-site survey.
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Revised March 26, 2009

B. Amount of non-state match. What percentage of the total project cost is the applicant contributing from non-state resources?

RCO staff scores this question based on information provided in the application. Only elements considered reimbursable are eligible for consideration. No additional information is required.

▲ Point Range: zero to five points.

Zero points	0-10 percent of project's value will be from non-state resources.
One point	10.01-20 percent of project's value will be from non-state resources.
Two points	20.01-30 percent of project's value will be from non-state resources.
Three points	30.01-40 percent of project's value will be from non-state resources.
Four points	40.01-50 percent of project's value will be from non-state resources.
Five points	More than 50 percent of project's value will be from non-state resources.

Revised March 27, 2008

C. Unfunded projects in category. After scoring and ranking, how many projects are below the pre-Recreation and Conservation Funding Board approved funding line?

RCO staff scores this question based on information provided in the post evaluation listing of ranked projects. No additional information is required.

▲ Point Range: zero to five points.

Zero points	No projects are below the funding line.
One point	One to two projects are below the funding line.

Two points	Three to four projects are below the funding line.
Three points	Five to six projects are below the funding line.
Four points	Seven to eight projects are below the funding line.
Five points	Nine or more projects are below the funding line.

Revised March 27, 2008

Appendix A: Definitions

In this section, you'll learn about

- ✓ Definitions
- ✓ Commonly used acronyms

Definitions

Program definitions are found in Revised Code of Washington 46.09. A few of the more frequently used are repeated here:

Nonhighway road means any road owned or managed by a public agency, a primitive road, or any private road for which the owner has granted an easement for public use for which appropriations from the motor vehicle fund were not used for (a) original construction or reconstruction in the past twenty-five years; or (b) maintenance in the past four years.

Nonhighway road recreation facilities means recreational facilities that are adjacent to, or accessed by, a nonhighway road and intended primarily for nonhighway road recreational users.

Nonhighway road recreational users: A person who drives on back roads or off road to go hunting, fishing, camping, sightseeing, wildlife viewing, picnicking, driving for pleasure, kayaking or canoeing, or gathering berries, firewood, mushrooms, and other natural products.

Nonhighway vehicle means any motorized vehicle including an off-road vehicle when used for recreational purposes on nonhighway roads, trails, or a variety of other natural terrain. A nonhighway vehicle does not include the following:

- Any vehicle designed primarily for travel on, over, or in the water

- Snowmobile
- Military vehicles
- Any vehicle eligible for a motor vehicle fuel tax exemption or rebate under Revised Code of Washington 82.36 while an exemption or rebate is claimed. This exemption includes but is not limited to farm, construction, and logging vehicles.

Nonmotorized recreational facilities means recreational trails and facilities that are adjacent to, or accessed by, a nonhighway road and intended primarily for nonmotorized recreational users.

Nonmotorized recreational users: A person who drives on back roads or off road to participate primarily in nonmotorized activities, including walking, hiking, backpacking, climbing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, mountain biking, and horseback riding.

Off-road vehicle means any non street-licensed vehicle when used for recreational purposes on nonhighway roads, trails, or a variety of other natural terrain. Such vehicles include, but are not limited to, all-terrain vehicles, motorcycles, four-wheel drive vehicles, and dune buggies.

Off-road vehicle recreation facilities include, but are not limited to, off-road vehicle trails, trailheads, campgrounds, sports parks, and use areas, designated for off-road vehicle use by the managing authority.

Off-road vehicle recreational user is a person who drives on back roads or off road to participate primarily in motorized activities, including riding all-terrain vehicles, motorcycles, four-wheel drive vehicles, or dune buggies (not snowmobiles or go-karts).⁷²

Off-road vehicle sports park is a facility designed to accommodate competitive off-road vehicle recreational uses including, but not limited to, motocross racing, four-wheel drive competitions, and flat track racing. Use of off-road vehicle sports parks may be competitive or noncompetitive in nature.

Off-road vehicle trail means a multiple-use corridor designated by the managing authority and maintained for recreational use by motorized vehicles.

Primary Management Objective is the sponsor's statement of how it intends to develop and manage the grant-funded project, including but not limited to, the primary intended user group (motorized, nonmotorized, and so on). When combining different types of uses on a trail system, the sponsor must select a Primary Management Objective, which means the main type of use for which a trail is managed. Not all trails are managed for a specific use. Primary Management Objectives are adopted by policy

⁷²Such vehicles as snowmobiles and go-karts are excluded in the legal definition of an off-road vehicle.

and communicated to a trail's users. For example, if an agency carries out a policy to manage a trail specifically for hiking and communicates this fact to users, the Primary Management Objective is hiking. A hiking Primary Management Objective does not necessarily mean that other trail uses are prohibited. A Primary Management Objective's advantage is that it provides all users with an understanding of the type of trail experience to expect. Applicants must select one Primary Management Objective for each project. All other uses are considered secondary.

Primitive road is a linear route managed for use by four-wheel drive or high-clearance vehicles that generally is not maintained or paved, a road designated by a county as primitive under Revised Code of Washington [36.75.300](#), or a road designated by a city or town as primitive under a local ordinance.

Wheeled all-terrain vehicle is (a) any motorized, nonhighway vehicle with handlebars that is fifty inches or less in width, has a seat height of at least twenty inches, weighs less than 1,500 pounds, and has four tires having a diameter of thirty inches or less, or (b) a utility-type vehicle that was designed for and capable of travel over designated roads and which travels on four or more low-pressure tires of twenty psi or less, has a maximum width less than seventy-four inches, has a maximum weight less than 2,000 pounds, has a wheelbase of 110 inches or less, and satisfies at least one of the following: (i) Has a minimum width of fifty inches; (ii) has a minimum weight of at least nine hundred pounds; or (iii) has a wheelbase of more than sixty-one inches. (Revised Code of Washington 46.09.310(19).

For other definitions of terms used in this manual, see the grant agreement. A sample is on the RCO website.

Appendix B: NOVA Plan Policies and Priorities



The following policies apply to nonhighway road, nonmotorized, and off-road vehicle capital and maintenance and operation grants. The policies below are an abbreviated list of what was adopted by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board for the 2008-2011 NOVA plan and were continued by the board into subsequent NOVA plans.

A. NOVA Program

Policy A-1 **The NOVA Program shall allow agencies to provide quality opportunities for nonhighway road, nonmotorized, and off-road vehicle recreationists—opportunities that satisfy user needs, are environmentally responsible, and minimize conflict among user groups. Sponsors will demonstrate accountability and help attain this goal, in part, by reporting on project related activities.**

NOVA funding shall augment, not replace, other sources of funding.

The NOVA Program allows user groups and public agencies to work cooperatively to provide nonhighway road, nonmotorized, and off-road vehicle recreation opportunities. Because of the program's revenue source and the effects of its funding, the program brings together many interests which are sometimes in conflict. NOVA funds shall be used to provide quality recreation opportunities in a manner that strives to minimize conflict and environmental damage.

NOVA funding is intended to enhance the capabilities of recreation providers and managers. Similar to other RCO funding programs, NOVA

funding shall achieve results that would not be possible without state funding. It shall not replace other funding. When NOVA funding is available for maintenance and operation, for example, it shall not be used to replace or divert monies that would otherwise be available for that purpose.

C. NOVA Recreation Facility Acquisition, Development, Maintenance, and Planning

Policy C-1 Encourage a primary management objective designation (equestrian, hiking, mountain bicycling, off-road vehicle, etc.) on facilities receiving NOVA funding.

Designating trails and other facilities with a primary management objective not only helps clarify the experience users can expect, but also provides clear and consistent direction to managers. Use of primary management objectives is supported by the *Washington State Trails Plan* (RCO, 1991).

Policy C-2 Encourage projects convenient to population centers.

Because of the nonhighway road threshold criteria (access via a non-gasoline tax supported road, etc.) and emphasis on natural settings, most NOVA recreation opportunities are provided in relatively remote settings. While it is often difficult or impossible to locate such opportunities in urbanized areas, priority shall be given to projects convenient to such areas. This policy is supported by the *Washington State Trails Plan* (RCO, 1991) and *An Assessment of Outdoor Recreation in Washington State* (RCO, 2002), and is consistent with Revised Code of Washington 79A.25.250.

Policy C-3 Encourage non-government contributions.

Contributions of money, materials, and/or services by volunteers, the private sector, nonprofit organizations, and others are important in the NOVA Program.

Donations stretch scarce public funding, improve the overall cost-benefit, extend “ownership” to those involved in the project, and help demonstrate broad public support.

Policy C-4 Encourage sponsors to contribute matching value to their projects.

Similar to Policy C-3, project sponsors who contribute part of a project's cost (via dollars, materials, or labor/service) make NOVA Program dollars reach more projects while demonstrating a local commitment in the project's success.

Policy C-5 Encourage projects that have design considerations that minimize the need for ongoing maintenance.

Projects can often incorporate design elements that reduce maintenance needs. Decisions about placement and materials, for example tread surfaces, often affect maintenance needs. Adequate consideration of maintenance during the design phase can result in long-term savings that far outweigh most short-term construction cost increases.

Policy C-6 Require general plans and completion of applicant-required processes before the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board funding meeting.

Project sponsors shall provide evidence of planning that supports the proposed project. Unlike project-specific engineering plans, these general plans shall clearly define goals, objectives, and needs, and be developed in a process that includes opportunities for public participation. They may include local agency comprehensive park plans, growth management plans, national forest plans, national park management plans, etc.

Policy C-7 Require applicants for maintenance and operation proposals to state their projects' goals and objectives in the applications. Encourage these applicants to provide "need" information during project evaluations.

If a project (the "solution") is to be successful, it must be clearly linked to a defined problem. Stating a project's goals and objectives accomplishes this. A goal is a broad statement of intent that describes a desired outcome—for example, "stop resource damage" or "improve trail safety." Objectives are connected to the goal and are both more specific and measurable. Objectives help us know when the goal has been accomplished. Typical objectives include "stop trail sediment from entering streams" and "apply federal trail safety standards."

"Need" is not so easily defined and so is rated in the more subjective project evaluations (in the nonhighway road, nonmotorized, and off-road vehicle evaluation instruments, see Questions 1 and 2). In the

NOVA program, need relates to a project's support as expressed in a publicly reviewed and adopted state, regional, or other plan. It can be described in terms of physical condition of existing facilities, safety and environmental issues, or the threat of the loss of an opportunity. Need can vary with the availability of similar opportunities, travel times, accessibility, and use levels.

Policy C-8 Require completion of applicant-required environmental processes before issuing a grant agreement.

Consistent with local, state, and federal laws and regulations, applicants must provide evidence of compliance with environmental planning and review requirements. This means demonstrating compliance with either the State or Federal Environmental Policy Act (SEPA or NEPA). In most cases, this means providing to RCO within ninety days after RCO funding approval, such documentation as a "Determination of Non-Significance" (SEPA); "Record of Decision," "Decision Notice," or "Decision Memo" (NEPA).

Applicants also must comply with any permitting requirements, including shoreline, hydraulics, building, health, etc. RCO does not require proof of compliance with these permit obligations.

Policy C-9 Require a lease period of at least twenty-five years for projects acquiring leases.⁷³

Before adoption of this policy, RCO required that, at minimum and short of a fee simple purchase, any land acquisition project needed to guarantee a lease lifespan of fifty years. Since, however, it is nearly impossible to obtain a fifty-year lease today because facility life expectancy is usually only twenty to twenty-five years, this requirement is reduced to twenty-five years.

Policy C-10 Within their respective Nonhighway Road, Nonmotorized, Off-road Vehicle funding categories, evaluate acquisition, development, maintenance and operation, and planning projects on a head-to-head basis.

By statute, NOVA facility funding is divided into three categories: *Nonhighway road, nonmotorized, and off-road vehicle*. Requiring that all projects within these categories compete in direct competition with one

⁷³This policy primarily concerns the state Department of Natural Resources.

another is one way we can help ensure that only the most desirable projects are funded.

Policy C-11 Fund maintenance and operation projects for up to two consecutive years.

Allowing maintenance and operations funding to be used for two years increases budget certainty for sponsors and may result in higher quality programs. At the same time, it reduces the work associated with an annual project submission for sponsors, the NOVA Advisory Committee, and RCO.

Policy C-12 The grant ceiling for individual projects is limited as shown in the following table.⁷⁴

Category	Maintenance and Operation	Land Acquisition-Development-Planning
Nonhighway Road	\$200,000 per project ¹	\$200,000 per project
Nonmotorized	\$200,000 per project ¹	\$200,000 per project
Off-road Vehicle	\$250,000 per project	No limit

Further, only the three previously Recreation and Conservation Funding Board-assisted sport parks (Thurston-Grays Harbor Counties, City of Richland, Spokane County.) will be considered for funding.

The above limits are imposed due to the shortage of funds available for projects, typically about \$560,000-\$600,000 in fuel tax dollars each year, for each funding category (nonhighway, road-nonmotorized, off-road vehicle).

Plan research strongly suggests broad support for increasing the availability and quantity of NOVA funding. One of the most intensely discussed issues during plan preparation was trail maintenance. Program administrators suggested that historically too much funding has been directed to capital projects without the necessary maintenance infrastructure and funding to support the efforts. Overall, plan research also shows recreationists find maintenance of trails as their most important issue.

⁷⁴Grant ceilings were modified by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board in July 2016 through Resolution 2016-28 and again in July 2024 through Resolution 2024-07.

Off-road vehicle recreationists indicated trail maintenance was their second most important issue. Except for sport parks, RCO rarely has seen a maintenance and operations project that approaches the \$200,000 limit.

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board limits the number of competition off-road vehicle sport parks it will support because of their relatively high cost.

Policy C-13 Encourage emphasis on projects in areas that are predominantly natural, such as are typically (but not necessarily) found in a “backcountry” environment. This policy does not apply to the Off-road Vehicle funding category.

To be eligible for nonhighway road and nonmotorized funding, projects must be adjacent to or accessed by a nonhighway road. Consideration of a "backcountry experience" in project selection is based on the notion that additional emphasis should be placed on allocating funds back to the type of setting where funds were generated. A portion of the NOVA fund is generated by motorists traveling on nonhighway roads, such as those that occur in national parks or forests. As such, travelers who pay the fuel tax will benefit from projects on or next to these roads. Emphasis on providing setting attributes that are predominantly natural is supported by *Washington Outdoors: Assessment and Policy Plan* (RCO).

This policy, however, does not apply to the off-road vehicle funding category. In surveys and NOVA advisory committee discussions, members of the off-road vehicle community said that, while they do enjoy natural settings, such areas are not significant enough to make them a funding priority.

Policy C-14 When reconstructing trails, encourage projects that correct environmental problems, retain trail difficulty and user experiences, and minimize user displacement.

Reconstruction can be less expensive than new construction and often presents opportunities to employ current standards and correct environmental problems. Project sponsors shall be sensitive to current trail uses and experiences and seek to minimize over building the trail and significantly changing the opportunity for either motorized or nonmotorized users.

Policy C-15 Find appropriate sites through the initiative of land managers.

RCO will not assume a proactive role in site identification. Consistent with its other programs, RCO will continue to rely on public land managers to identify appropriate NOVA project sites through their land use planning and public involvement processes. Recreationist groups are encouraged to continue to work with land managers to identify sites. RCO staff will continue to publicize the availability of NOVA funding opportunities through its grant workshops, web page, and publications.