

Manual 16

Recreational Trails Program

August 2024

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At A Glance

Recreational Trails Program	
Purpose	This program provides grants to rehabilitate and maintain recreational trails and their amenities that provide a backcountry experience for motorized and nonmotorized uses. Grants also are used to educate visitors about proper trail use.
Who may apply?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cities and towns • Counties • Federal agencies • Native American tribes • Nonprofit trail organizations • Special purpose districts • State agencies
Is a plan required?	No
What types of projects are eligible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development • Education • Maintenance
What are the grant limits?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and maintenance: \$5,000-\$150,000 • Education: \$5,000-\$20,000
What must the project sponsor contribute?	20 percent minimum
How is the project evaluated?	An advisory committee reviews the written application materials and scores the project.
When are applications due?	October 31, 2024
When are grants awarded?	June 2025 (Estimate, and pending federal approval of funding)
What's new this year?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated the Buy America policy to waive costs for projects under \$500,000. • Existing rules about time limits, extensions, inspections, acknowledgments, and signs were added to this manual.

Section 1: Introduction

This section covers the following:

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

Recreational Trails Program

Every six years, Congress schedules passage of the nation's surface transportation bill. Since 1991, this massive funding authorization law has included provisions for the Recreational Trails Program (RTP).

Program Goals

RTP is a federal assistance program to help states provide and maintain recreational trails for both motorized and nonmotorized uses, including walking, hiking, bicycling, in-line skating, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and off-road motorized vehicle driving, including off-road motorcycling and all-terrain and four-wheel vehicle riding.

Each state develops its own procedures to solicit and select projects for funding in response to its recreational trail needs. In Washington State, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board has chosen to use RTP money to reduce the backlog of deferred maintenance¹ on recreational trails that provide a backcountry experience.

¹A backlog of activities that organizations deem necessary to bring facilities into good repair. Deferred maintenance generally is work that is left undone due to the lack of resources or perceived lower priority than projects funded. Failure to perform deferred work may result in the progressive deterioration of the facility condition or performance, and if not addressed, will significantly increase restoration cost.

To determine the presence of a “backcountry experience,” consider:

- The project’s setting, which does not need to be pristine, but should be predominately natural. A backcountry experience can be found in an urban area.
- The extent to which the user will experience the natural environment as opposed to seeing or hearing evidence of human development and activity.

RTP supports trails used for the following:

- 4x4 and light truck driving
- All-terrain vehicle and utility task vehicle riding
- Canoeing and kayaking
- Cycling
- Horseback riding and pack animal activities
- Hiking and pedestrian use²
- Motorcycling
- Mountain biking
- Nonmotorized snow trail activities
- Snowmobiling

Categories

RCO offers two categories of RTP grants. A General Category project involves development, renovation, or maintenance of a recreational trail. An Education Category project provides information, education, training, or outreach that benefits recreational trail users. More information is in section 2.

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board

RTP is administered by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board, which is a governor-appointed board composed of five citizens and the directors⁰ (or designees) of three state agencies—Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Natural Resources, and Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission.

The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) supports the board. RCO is a state agency that manages multiple grant programs to create outdoor recreation opportunities, protect the best of the state's wildlife habitat and working lands, and help return salmon and orca from near extinction. In Washington, the board administers RTP grants in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration. Many of the regulations governing this program are prescribed by the federal government.

²Note: Wheelchair use by mobility-impaired people, whether operated manually or powered, constitutes pedestrian, nonmotorized trail use.

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.

Program and Manual Authority

Authority for this program is found in the federal Recreational Trails Program Guidance, the Revised Code of Washington 42.56.040 of the Public Records Act, and Washington Administrative Code Chapter 286.

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.

This manual provides basic information on procedures and policies used by RCO to administer this program. Authority for the policies was provided by the Governor of Washington and federal legislation.³

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. The advisory committee also reviews proposed program policies and criteria changes, and in some cases makes recommendations to the funding board or director about how funding should be distributed between funding categories. By law, members must include both motorized

³The [Fixing America's Surface Transportation \(FAST\) Act](#) reauthorized the RTP as a set-aside of funds from the [Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside](#) under [Surface Transportation Block Grant Program](#).

and non-motorized recreational trail users and must meet at least once each federal fiscal year.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 4: Development Projects*.

⁴See the federal [Recreational Trails Program Guidance](#).

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 [RTP 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 alternative formats.

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

Federal Program Information

[Federal Highways Administration Recreational Trails Program Guidance](#)

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, visit the RCO website for precise dates.

Even-Numbered Years

Webinars. RCO conducts workshop webinars (an online meeting) each summer to provide information about the grant programs offered that year.

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, 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 proposals are 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 RTP for the next biennium.

Applications Due. An application typically is due in early November of even-numbered years. The application includes the data entered into PRISM and all required attachments. The applicants should *submit* the application before the deadline. The *Check Application for Errors* button on the *Submit Application* screen will indicate which pages are incomplete. 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 each proposal. The applicant then may make changes to improve the project, if needed.

Odd-Numbered Years

Technical Completion Deadline. RCO establishes 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 Evaluations—A Written Process. The advisory committee members use the application materials, which include the responses to the evaluation questions, cost estimates, maps, graphics, and photographs. The members score each proposal against a set of criteria approved by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board.

Post-Evaluation Conference. After project evaluations, RCO staff tabulates the scores and shares the results with the advisory committee. The committee discusses the preliminary ranked lists 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 lists of projects are 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 committees, written public comments submitted before the meeting, and public testimony at the meeting. The board then approves the ranked lists of projects for funding consideration.

Legislature Approves Funding. When it develops the state capital budget, the Legislature considers the potential federal funds that may be awarded to Washington State for RTP and generally approves funding authority for RCO.

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.⁵

Board Awards Grants. After the Legislature and Governor approve the capital budget, the board makes the final grant awards⁶ in a public meeting. The applicant is encouraged, but not required, to attend.

Grant Agreements 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

⁵Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(3)

⁶Pending Federal Highway Administration’s approval of funds.

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

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

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 webinar for successful grant applicants. This webinar covers a 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.

Project Completion. When projects are completed, sponsors must submit their final bills, final reports, and supporting documents needed to close their projects as specified in the agreements.⁹ If the bills and documentation are not submitted within 6 months of the end dates within the agreement, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board may terminate the grant agreements without payment.

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.

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:
 - Designs are completed.
 - Bid documents are prepared.
 - Environmental assessment is completed.
 - Permits are in-hand.
 - Advanced Implementation Waiver 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.¹⁰

⁹Washington Administrative Code 286.13.040(7)

¹⁰Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(3)

Pre-Agreement Phase

- An applicant must submit the pre-agreement materials requested by RCO within two calendar months of funding approval.¹¹
- 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:*
 - Development projects Up to three years
 - Education projects Up to two federal fiscal years
 - Maintenance projects Up to two years
 - Exceptionally complex projects Three years

RCO staff monitors critical project milestones (for example, 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.¹²
- 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.

¹¹Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(4)

¹²Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040

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.¹³ 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.

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.¹⁴ 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(8)

¹⁴Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(7)

Section 2: Policies

This section covers the following:

- ✓ Grant categories
- ✓ Eligible applicants
- ✓ Eligible project types, activities, and costs
- ✓ Ineligible projects and costs
- ✓ Environmental requirements
- ✓ Property requirements
- ✓ Equipment policies
- ✓ Other requirements and things to know
- ✓ Project area stewardship and ongoing obligations

Categories

RCO offers two categories of RTP grants: General Category grants for trail development, renovation, or maintenance, and Education Category grants for trail education and information. Federal polices dictate how the funding is disbursed to each category to ensure equitable distribution for both motorized and nonmotorized uses.

Funding Priorities

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board gives preference to projects that further specific goals of the [2023 Recreation and Conservation Plan](#).

This preference is shown in evaluation criteria that place a high priority on projects that excel by doing the following:

- Filling an established need.
- Adhering to high design standards.
- Reducing trail maintenance backlogs.

- Being ready to proceed and having widespread public support.
- Demonstrating sustainability and environmental stewardship
- Presenting a favorable benefit-cost ratio and appropriately estimating and explaining costs.
- Bringing a high proportion of non-government contributions and matching value to the project (cash, goods, services, etc.)
- Exhibiting compliance the Growth Management Act, when applicable.

40-30-30 Requirement

Federal legislation¹⁵ requires the following:

- 40 percent of this program's funds must be used for recreational trail or related projects that facilitate diverse recreational trail use in recreational trail corridors, trail sides, or trailheads. "Diverse" means more than one trail activity, such as the following:
 - More than one nonmotorized trail activity
 - More than one motorized trail activity
 - A combination of compatible nonmotorized and motorized trail activities.
- 30 percent of this program's funds must be used for motorized recreation, either multiple or single use.
- 30 percent of this program's funds must be used for nonmotorized recreation, either multiple or single use.

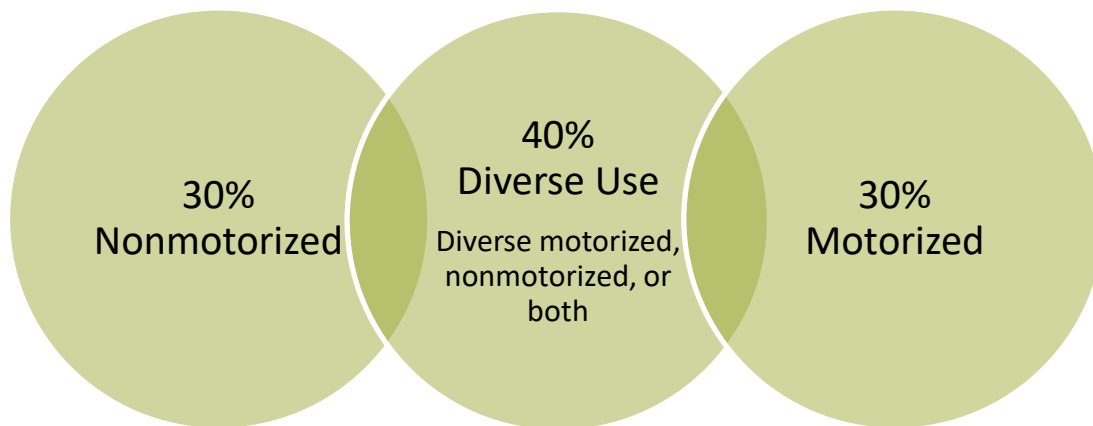
RCO applies the 40-30-30 formula to the money it receives from the federal government. It then applies the formula to the amount of money awarded in the General and Education Categories. These percentage requirements may not be waived, and the money must be carried over to the next grant cycle if there are insufficient applications to meet the 40-30-30 minimums.

By federal rule and board practice, no more than 5 percent of RTP funds may be allocated to education projects.

Note: It is possible to exceed the minimum percentage requirements. For example, a diverse motorized project, such as snowmobile and motorcycle trails, may satisfy the

¹⁵23 U.S.C. 206, (d)(3)(A)

40 percent diverse use requirement and the 30 percent motorized use requirement simultaneously. The same applies for nonmotorized use.



Classifying Projects

RCO uses the decision tree in appendix 1 and the “Primary Management Objective” described below to determine the best category for the project. Projects are categorized as one of the following:

- **Nonmotorized, Single Use:** A project primarily intended to benefit only one mode of nonmotorized recreational trail use, such as pedestrian only or equestrian only.

Note: A trail for pedestrian use could include walking, hiking, running, bird watching, backpacking, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. It’s considered a single use because all use is by pedestrians.

- **Nonmotorized, Multiple Use:** Projects that benefit more than one mode of nonmotorized recreational trail use at the same time (such as walking and bicycling; hiking and horseback riding) or in different seasons (such as hiking in the summer and cross-country skiing in the winter).
- **Diverse Use:** A project intended to benefit single or multiple nonmotorized use, single or multiple motorized use, or a combination of compatible nonmotorized and motorized uses. For example, a trail that is built for equestrian use in the summer and snowmobile use in winter or a trailhead serving all-terrain vehicles and bicycles.
- **Motorized, Multiple Use:** A project primarily intended to benefit more than one mode of motorized recreational trail use, such as: motorcycle and all-terrain vehicle use or all-terrain vehicle use in summer and snowmobile use in winter. These projects may benefit some nonmotorized uses, but the primary intent must be for the benefit of motorized use.

- **Motorized, Single Use:** A project primarily intended to benefit only one mode of motorized recreational use, such as snowmobiling. These projects may benefit some nonmotorized uses, but the primary intent must be for the benefit of motorized use.

Classifying Motorized Use

In most years, it has been a challenge to meet the 30 percent motorized use requirement because too few applications are submitted for this use. To help meet the requirement, RCO defines projects as motorized if the application shows the amount of approved motorized use to be more than incidental. In addition, at least one of the following conditions must be met:

- If an education project, it must target motorized use.
- If a trail project, the manager must have certified it as having a motorized Primary Management Objective.
- If a trail project, it must be open to motor vehicles and include features clearly designed to accommodate recreational, motorized trail vehicles (climbing turns, tread hardening, groomed paths, off-road vehicle or snowmobile-related signs, loading ramps, etc.)

Changing Categories to Meet Funding Requirements¹⁶

To meet the funding requirements, RCO may move projects between categories. The process is described below.

After projects are evaluated, but before the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board meets to award grants, staff identify the highest scoring, partially funded, or unfunded project and determine if it could be funded by moving it (or a project higher on the list) to a category with extra funds. Staff, in consultation with the advisory committee, then recommend that the board shift the project if all the following conditions are met:

- It is eligible for placement in the new category.
- There are enough excess funds for the project in that category.
- The category change does not affect an education project.

The process is repeated until the money is used or no more projects can move. Any remaining money is applied to the same category in the next grant cycle.

¹⁶Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2008-16

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are shown below.

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

Applicant Requirements

Nonprofit Organizations

A qualified nonprofit organization must meet all the following eligibility requirements:

- Be registered with the State of Washington as a nonprofit corporation per Revised Code of Washington 24.03.
- Have been active in trail-related activities for at least three years. “Actively managing projects” means performing the tasks necessary to manage a funded site such as designing and implementing development projects, performing maintenance, conducting education activities, securing and managing funds and other resources, and other trail-related tasks.
- Have named a successor at the time of any change in organizational status (for example, dissolution), as required by state law.
- Not discriminate on the basis of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, income, race, religion.
- Provide the articles of incorporation and bylaws, including any amendments.

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board’s intent is that nonprofits maintain nonprofit status. Because this is not always possible, a successor organization must agree in writing to assume any ongoing project responsibilities should the original organization’s status change. The responsibilities are identified in RCO’s grant agreement with the project sponsor. A qualified successor is any party eligible to apply for RTP funds and capable of complying with contract responsibilities. The board recommends, whenever possible, a government agency be sought as a successor. A successor need not be named for maintenance or education projects.

Legal Opinion for First-time Applicants

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

Eligible Project Types

This section describes project types that are eligible for funding. To be eligible, a project proposal must be directly associated with an existing recreational trail. RTP projects are subject to compliance under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other federal environmental laws, regulations, and executive orders. Review the environmental compliance section of the manual for additional information.

Development 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.¹⁷ Development projects are for the construction of *new* trailside and trailhead facilities¹⁸ for recreational trails and the development of short trail linkages that connect two or more trail systems together. Trailside and trailhead facilities should have a direct

¹⁷Washington Administrative Code 286.04.010(7)

¹⁸"Trailside" and "trailhead facilities" mean trail components or associated facilities that serve the purpose and safe use of a recreational trail and may include, but not be limited to, the following: drainage, crossings, stabilization, parking, signs, controls, shelters, and water, sanitary, and access facilities.

relationship with an existing recreational trail; a highway rest area or visitor center is not an appropriate use of funds.

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. A renovation project is one that improves an existing site or structure in order to increase its service life or functions.¹⁹ 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.

Below are examples of development projects.

- Construction of trailside or trailhead facilities adjacent to an existing recreational trail.
- Construction of a trail linking two existing trails by building a new, connecting trail of one mile or less.
- Renovation or reconstruction of a trail.
- Construction or replacement of bridges, boardwalks, and other trail structures.
- Construction of enhanced recreational access for people with disabilities.

Examples of Ineligible Development Projects

- Building a trail that departs from an existing trailhead.
- Sidewalks along or next to public roads or streets.
- Maintenance of a trail.²⁰

¹⁹Washington Administrative Code 286-04-010(21)

²⁰De minimis amounts of maintenance may be permitted when directly associated with, and necessary for, the development project to occur.

Maintenance Projects

Maintenance projects are those that maintain areas and facilities through repairs and upkeep for the benefit of outdoor recreationists.²¹ Maintenance is routine or periodic repair of existing trails, trail segments, or trailside facilities to restore them to standards or conditions to which they were originally designed and built. Maintenance does not change the original purpose, intent, or Primary Management Objective²² for which the trail was designed and built, and which occurs within the existing operational right-of-way²³ of the trail. Except for snow-based recreation trails, maintenance projects shall be allowed only at trails, facilities, and areas that are currently managed and in use.

Maintenance projects also must conform to the accessibility policies and procedures found in *RCO Manual 4: Development Projects*.

An applicant for maintenance project may request a grant for up to two consecutive years.

Below are examples of maintenance projects.

- Removing debris and vegetation such as fallen trees, noxious weeds, 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 washout, installing riprap to retain cut and fill slopes, constructing 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, or culverts, and realigning sections of trail to prevent erosion or avoid sensitive areas.
- Repairing or replacing deteriorated, damaged, or vandalized trail or trailhead structures, including sections of bridges, boardwalks, puncheon, signs, information kiosks, fencing, railings.
- Grooming and canopy clearing for snow trails.

The State's priority is reducing backlogged maintenance on trails that provide a backcountry experience.

²¹Washington Administrative Code 286.04.010(11)

²²Or Trail Management Objective

²³"Operational right-of-way" refers to the area that previously has been disturbed and maintained as a recreational trail.

Examples of Ineligible Maintenance Activities

- Re-opening a closed trail.
- Projects to purchase supplies and equipment without performing trail maintenance.
- Operational costs and activities such as litter pick up, cleaning restrooms, garbage service, septic service, etc.

Education Projects

Education projects are those that provide information, education, and outreach programs for the benefit of outdoor recreationists.²⁴ These grants are for programs to promote safety or environmental protection. Below are examples of education projects.

- Developing and providing trail-related safety education or environmental education programs.
- Developing and providing training on trail accessibility and sustainability.
- Producing trail-related education materials, including information displays, in print, video, audio, and interactive computer displays.
- Development and distribution of brochures, flyers, and kiosk information.
- Developing publications related to trail planning, design, construction, maintenance, operation, and assessment.
- Patrolling trails to educate trail users on protecting environmentally sensitive areas.
- Patrolling trails to monitor trail use, safety, conditions, and environmental impacts.
- Patrolling trails to provide trailside assistance including emergency aid, search and rescue, and helping trail users repair equipment.
- Providing training related to trail planning, design, construction, maintenance, operation, and assessment. Note: this does not include training related to club or organizational development or grant-writing skills.

Note: Some publications are partially educational. For example, a trail system map, in general, is not an allowable education project. However, if one side of the map is

²⁴Washington Administrative Code 286-04-010(10)

dedicated to trail safety and environmental protection, then education funds may be used for a prorated portion of the cost to produce the publication.

Duration of Education Projects

Education grants and match must be spent by September 30 of the federal fiscal year in which they were awarded.²⁵ Any money remaining after the federal fiscal year will be reallocated to trail maintenance or development projects. See “Advance Implementation for Education Category Projects” for more information about the federal fiscal year.

Examples of Ineligible Education Projects

- Law enforcement
- Creating a roadside area (parking, fencing, restrooms, drinking fountain, etc.) where signs and an interpretive trail will convey a trail safety or environmental protection message. Only the signs are eligible. The other elements may qualify as a separate RTP development project.

Other Considerations

Phased Projects

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board recommends that an applicant discuss phasing very expensive or complex projects with RCO. An applicant may phase larger proposals into two or more stand-alone projects. Phased projects are subject to the following:

- 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.
- 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 earlier phases are considered by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board when making decisions on current project proposals.

²⁵23 United States Code 206(d)(2)(G)

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*.

Primary Management Objective

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 and communicated to trail 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. An applicant must select **one** Primary Management Objective for each project. All other uses are considered secondary.

Compatibility

When a trail accommodates diverse uses, the sponsor must ensure that the uses are compatible. For example, a sponsor builds a trail for all-terrain vehicles, which may not be compatible with equestrian use.

Eligible Activities and 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" below. A cost is considered reasonable if the work or materials and the cost reflect what a prudent person would have spent under the circumstances.

Incurring Pre-agreement Costs

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

- For a development project, expenses, such as preliminary designs, environmental assessments, construction plans and specifications, cultural resource surveys, and permits, may be eligible for reimbursement if approved in advance by the Federal

Highway Administration.²⁶ For more details, see *RCO Manual 4: Development Projects*.

- If construction begins before the execution of a grant agreement and before the adoption of required environmental decision documents, the entire project will be disqualified.
- For an education project, costs incurred before an RCO grant agreement are not allowable as a pre-agreement cost unless RCO has approved and issued an Advance Implementation Waiver.

Note: There are no eligible pre-agreement costs for maintenance projects.

Developing or Renovating Facilities

Work types are distinct scopes of work in a project. Costs for the work types below are eligible for reimbursement: information about reimbursement limits for architecture, engineering, and administrative costs is in *Manual 4: Development Projects*.

- Architecture and engineering
- Buildings and structures (such as restrooms, warming huts, shelters, and storage)
- Campgrounds
- Environmental compliance (see "Pre-agreement Costs" above)
- Fencing and gates, including barrier rocks and bollards
- Landscaping (irrigation, trees, shrubs, etc.)
- Park furniture (benches, bike racks, trash cans, etc.)
- Parking
- Permits
- Signs
- Site preparation
- Stock facilities (corrals, highlines, hitching posts, loading ramps, water troughs, etc.)
- Trails, including trail structures such as boardwalks, retaining walls, bridges, culverts, puncheon, trestle conversions, turnpikes, water bars, etc.
- Viewpoints
- Water access facilities

Maintaining Facilities

When directly associated with an existing recreational trail, costs for the following activities or items are eligible for reimbursement.

²⁶Federal Highway Administration must provide written approval per 2 Code of Federal Regulations 200.458. Costs are limited to those incurred no more than eighteen months before federal approval of the project.

- Equipment and boot decontamination to prevent the spread of noxious weeds
- Equipment repair and maintenance
- Liability insurance to cover volunteers
- Labor, including salaries and benefits
- Materials
- Noxious weed removal
- Professional services
- Purchase, rental, and leasing trail construction and maintenance equipment²⁷
- Supplies, including small maintenance tools and minor equipment²⁸ (i.e., small and attractive assets) and personal protective equipment
- Transportation or travel (mileage, per diem)

Providing an Education Program

When closely associated with an existing trail, costs for the activities below are eligible for reimbursement:

- Communication
- Professional services such as graphic design, recording, production, etc.
- Salaries and benefits
- Supplies*
- Training*
- Travel and transportation*

*Costs must be less than \$1,000.

²⁷Equipment can include such items as mowers and trail grooming machines provided the equipment is used primarily to construct and maintain recreational trails. This does not include the purchase of equipment to be used for purposes unrelated to trails. For example, a mower purchased under this program must be used primarily for trail and trailside maintenance and not to maintain open lawn areas or sports fields.

²⁸This covers individual items costing less than \$1,000 per item such as small maintenance tools, minor equipment, forms, maps, gravel, training, and other goods and services needed for the project.

Advance Implementation for Education Category Projects

RTP is a federal grant program that receives funding annually. The federal fiscal year starts October 1 of each year and ends September 30 of the following year. The Federal Highway Administration often does not approve RTP funding at the beginning of the fiscal year, which can create a challenge for projects with a fall starting time.

An applicant may get approval to start a project before the grant agreement is executed fully by seeking an Advance Implementation Waiver.²⁹ This written document allows the applicant to begin work on a project that has a complete application on file with RCO for the upcoming biennium. To request an Advance Implementation Waiver, the applicant must submit the following:

- A complete grant application, if not already on file with RCO
- A written request with a justification for the critical need to begin the project early
- A Certification of Applicant Match³⁰
- All required pre-agreement materials, including any outstanding control and tenure documentation and updated milestones
- Any other materials needed to support the request

An applicant may begin work after receiving a waiver from RCO. An applicant compelled to begin work before securing a grant agreement, does so at its own risk. If a grant is not awarded, RCO will not reimburse any expenses. If RCO does award a grant, the applicant must have met all applicable federal and state program policies to receive reimbursement or to use the project activities as match toward a grant. This includes following applicable state and federal procurement rules, including the Buy America Act that places restrictions on purchase of all steel and iron incorporated into a funded project. See policy for Buy America.

Indirect Costs

In RTP, RCO allows project sponsors to bill indirect costs.³¹ Indirect costs are those incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective. The applicant must attach the RCO Fiscal Data Collection Sheet before submitting an application. The applicant should start filling out this form early and work with its accounting staff to estimate indirect costs.

²⁹ Code of Federal Regulations 200.458.

³⁰ Washington Administrative Code 286-13-045(3)

³¹ Code of Federal Regulations, Part 200.56

Equipment Costs

Maintenance Projects

Purchasing equipment to maintain recreational trails and trailheads is permissible in maintenance projects. "Equipment" means capital equipment and small and attractive assets necessary for trail maintenance, as determined by RCO. See "Equipment Policies" for definitions and additional details. Eligible equipment includes the following:

- All-terrain vehicle
- Backhoe
- Brush hog
- Bulldozer
- Skid steer
- String trimmer
- Tractor or trail builder
- Chain saw
- Excavator
- Power wheelbarrow
- Rock drill
- Trailer
- Truck
- Utility task vehicle

Equipment must be wholly dedicated for trail maintenance activities and may not be prorated or used for non-permissible uses. A sponsor must have sufficient experience and inventory controls, maintain records of all equipment purchased, and comply with RCO's equipment management policies found later in this section **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Education Projects

Purchasing equipment or (small and attractive assets³²) necessary for implementing the education program, as determined by RCO, is allowable. Small and attractive assets are limited to the following:

- 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.

³²Items that cost less than \$5,000 per unit (including sales tax and ancillary costs) with a useful life of more than one year, and which are vulnerable to loss.

- Other items as determined by the RCO

Purchasing Capital Equipment

RCO must get pre-approval from the Federal Highway Administration for equipment with a value of \$5,000 or more. Purchases must comply with the Buy America Act. See “Buy America Act” below for details.

Roads

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

Grants may be used on high-clearance, primitive roads and bridges with a trail Primary Management Objective. These roads or bridges may include old county, town, or township rights-of-way that are no longer maintained for passenger vehicle traffic, provided the project does not open the road to regular passenger vehicles.

“Ineligible Projects and Costs

Ineligible Projects

- Planning projects, including feasibility studies, master plans, site planning studies, and wildlife impact studies.
- Land acquisition or condemnation of any kind.
- Law enforcement. Commissioned law enforcement officers or rangers may, however, perform certain education activities.
- New trail development not directly related to an existing recreational trail.
- Projects that do not directly benefit recreational trails.
- Roads and bridges unless specifically designated for recreational trail use and not accessible to, or maintained for, regular passenger vehicles.
- Stand-alone engineering and permitting projects.
- Trails, sidewalks, and other paths that provide an urban experience.
- Those facilitating motorized use on national forest or Bureau of Land Management land unless any of the following are met:

- The land is not designated Wilderness.
- Construction is consistent with the management direction in Forest Service or Bureau plans.
- Facilitating motorized use on, or access to, recreational trails on which motorized use was prohibited or had not occurred as of May 1, 1991.
- Those on property bought under a conditional sales contract, unless the project sponsor has title to the property.
- Those that severely restrict public use, such as on property with deed provisions that have a significant negative impact on public recreational use of the property. Projects may be on public or private land but must provide written assurances of public access.

Ineligible Costs

- Appliances, furniture, and utensils.
- Bonus payments of any kind.
- Ceremonies and entertainment expenses.
- Charges in excess of the lowest acceptable bid when competitive bidding is required, unless RCO's director authorizes the higher costs, in writing, before the award of a contract.
- Charges incurred contrary to the policies and practices of the organization involved or of the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board.
- Costs associated with preparation of the grant application.
- Costs incurred before execution of a Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grant agreement. Planning and environmental compliance costs may be allowed if incurred after the Federal Highway Administration's approval.
- Costs incurred before the Federal Highway Administration provides signed authorization to proceed.
- Damage judgments arising from developing a facility, whether determined by a judicial decision, arbitration, or otherwise.
- Donations or contributions made by the participant, such as to a charitable organization.

- Fines, penalties, interest expenses, deficit and overdraft charges, and losses from uncollectible accounts.
- Indirect costs for federal agencies (organization operation costs not directly associated with implementing the approved project).
- Losses arising from uncollected accounts.
- Payments to an equipment replacement fund.
- Publicity expenses, except legal requirements for public notice.
- Purchase of capital equipment that is not wholly dedicated to the maintenance of eligible recreational trails.
- Routine maintenance of vehicles.
- Taxes for which the organization involved would not have been liable to pay.
- The cost of donated materials if their values are not substantiated.
- The value of discounts not taken
- The value of personal properties, unless specifically approved in advance by RCO's director.
- Value of materials, equipment, and services donated to the project sponsor if unsubstantiated. See *Manual 8: Reimbursements* for information about what is needed for a verifiable audit trail.

Environmental Requirements

An applicant applying for a development or maintenance grant must review and document compliance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other federal environmental laws, regulations, and executive orders. Each project must be reviewed to assure that it does not have a significant impact on the environment.

Some RTP projects will be classified as categorically excluded from NEPA documentation when they meet the criteria for an exclusion, which typically involves actions that do not have a significant environmental impact.³³ However, before beginning any work, the applicant and sponsor must obtain all necessary permits, satisfy the State Environmental Policy Act, and comply with all applicable federal environmental regulations, including

³³RCO Memorandum of Agreement with Federal Highway Administration

the National Historic Preservation Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and other state and local environmental requirements.

A project that 1) has a significant environmental impact; 2) has substantial controversy on environmental grounds; 3) has 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) is inconsistent with any federal, state, or local law, requirement, or administrative determination relating to the environmental aspects of the action, is not exempt and is subject to further environmental review. Such a project may not qualify for categorical exclusion and in most instances, is not a good candidate for RTP funding.

Documenting Environmental Compliance

To comply with the NEPA requirements, within two months of funding approval and before RCO will issue a grant agreement, RCO must receive the environmental clearance documents. If the project is on federal land, the environmental documentation is due by the technical completion deadline. Review the Applicant's To-Do List and the RTP Landowner Agreement form for additional information.

Federal agencies must provide documentation of environmental clearance for their projects and for projects occurring on their lands. The RTP 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. RCO staff will submit all other projects to the Federal Highway Administration for environmental review.

The Federal Highway Administration will accept federal management agency determinations for NEPA, section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, and the Endangered Species Act compliance for projects on lands under the control of that federal agency or requiring an approval action by that agency.

Cultural Resources and the National Historic Preservation Act

In compliance with section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (16 USC 470), the Federal Highway Administration must take into account the effects of projects on historic properties and cultural resources. RCO will coordinate with the Federal Highway Administration to review background information on a project and ensure compliance with section 106. The results of this consultation may require the applicant to conduct additional archeological studies as necessary. This section applies to projects involving development, maintenance, renovation, rehabilitation, restoration, or relocation. If the project is on federal lands, the cultural resources documentation is due by the technical completion deadline.

Projects on State and Federal Lands

Archaeological and cultural resources compliance for a project on land owned or managed by a state or federal agency is the responsibility of the respective agency, regardless of sponsoring entity type. 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.

Review the Applicant's To-Do List and the RTP Landowner Agreement form for additional information. See the "Cultural Resources" section in *Manual 4: Development Projects*.

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 and the Federal Highway Administration encourage the 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 tools and 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 incorporate sustainable design, practices, and elements into the scope of a project. Examples may include use of on-site or 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

Control of the Land

To protect investments made by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board and to ensure public access to those investments, a sponsor of a development or maintenance project must have adequate control of the 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,³⁴ easement, or joint cooperative grant agreement approved by RCO. 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 a maintenance project may be suitable for an applicant with a seasonal snow-grooming project on public land; however, RCO requires a longer compliance period for a project that restores or rehabilitates facilities and significantly extends a facility’s useful life.

Project on Privately Owned Land

An applicant who develops or restores trails or trail-related facilities on privately owned land must secure easements or other legally binding agreements that ensure public access to the recreational trail improvements funded with RTP assistance. An easement must authorize the recreational trail, ensure that the landowner will allow or cooperate with activities of the proposed project, and ensure public access to the trail improvements for at least twenty-five years after project acceptance by RCO.

Projects on State-owned Aquatic Lands

If a project will occur over, in, or alongside a navigable body of water, 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

³⁴Use agreements may not be accepted in all situations. Contact an RCO grants manager for more information.

grant applicant determine if the project will fall on state-owned aquatic land 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) from the Washington Department of Natural Resources to use that land. Securing the 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*
- *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.

Equipment Policies

A sponsor may rent, lease, or purchase equipment and vehicles to construct and maintain recreation trails and trailheads. A sponsor may rent, lease, or purchase some small and attractive assets to deliver education programs (see "Education Project Costs"

above). Purchasing equipment and vehicles is not permissible in development projects. A sponsor may purchase equipment when all the following conditions are met:

- 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 or education activities, 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. "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:
 - 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

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.

Purchasing Equipment

To maximize the benefit of a grant and ensure fair and ethical treatment of bids from suppliers, the sponsor shall use a competitive procurement process³⁸ when purchasing equipment. RCO must get pre-approval from the Federal Highway Administration on behalf of the sponsor for capital equipment purchases. To justify the request, the sponsor must provide RCO with a description of the capital equipment, including, make, model, and purchase price, and a description of how the equipment will be used. If the equipment is made of, or includes, steel or iron, its sourcing and assembly must satisfy the Buy America requirements. See Buy America below.

Equipment Management

A sponsor must maintain a record of all equipment that meets the definition of capital equipment or small and attractive assets and is purchased under a Recreation and Conservation Funding Board agreement. 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
- 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 and method of liquidation and 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

³⁸2 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 200

The sponsor shall establish adequate maintenance procedures to keep the equipment in good and working 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 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 maintenance or education 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 utilization may not be included in any other RCO grant if the equipment was purchased with a RCO grant.

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.

In an ongoing maintenance program, the sponsor may trade-in or sell equipment and use the proceeds to offset the cost of buying new equipment used for allowable RTP program activities. In this situation, the equipment becomes part of the sponsor's reportable equipment inventory and the sponsor must continue to follow the equipment management procedures in this manual for the new equipment, until liquidated.

Equipment Liquidation

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

- **The sponsor wishes to retain the equipment.** When the sponsor no longer needs the equipment but wishes to keep it for uses not eligible in the program,

the sponsor must compensate RCO as directed under "Calculating Program Refund."

- **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.
 - 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."
 - 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.
- **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 can 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.

Other Requirements and Things to Know

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.

Accessibility

Facilities or elements³⁹ 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 the sponsor 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 Requirements⁴⁰

The sponsor shall follow current state procurement procedures or write its own. When buying things, a 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. The sponsor receiving federal money also must follow federal laws and regulations online at [Federal Highways Administration Recreational Trails Program Guidance](#).

Buy America

Buy America requirements apply to all steel and iron incorporated in a funded project when the total value of the materials or equipment exceeds \$2,500.⁴¹ This includes the purchase of equipment such as trail grooming vehicles, mechanized maintenance equipment primarily constructed with steel or iron, and all materials permanently

³⁹A 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).

⁴⁰RCO's project agreement standard terms and conditions, section 16 or 18 (U.S. Forest Service agreement) Revised Code of Washington 46.09.530(2)

⁴¹U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, Title 23, § 635.410

incorporated into a project (e.g., bridge girders). If the total amount of the project is below \$500,000, this requirement is waived. Steel tools that do not comply with Buy America Act requirements must be inventoried and the total should not exceed \$2,500. The provision requires these materials be melted and manufactured domestically and that documentation is obtained to verify Buy America compliance. If documentation of domestic steel and iron manufacturing is not available, then a waiver request is necessary (see below). For more information, see the Federal Highway Administration's [Buy America Construction Program Guide](#).

Buy America Waivers

Waiver requests may be made for items that do not meet Buy America requirements. The project sponsor must work with the grants managers, who will coordinate the request with the Federal Highway Administration. When submitted, a waiver request is made available for public review and comment in a federal register. For vehicle and equipment purchase waivers, the Administration processes requests quarterly, on the condition that the product has final domestic assembly.

Youth Crews

RCO encourages the sponsor to use qualified, youth conservation or service corps for construction and maintenance of recreational trails in this program. "Qualified youth conservation or service corps"⁴² are defined in U.S. codes⁴³ as "Healthy Futures Corps," which is designed to meet unmet health needs in communities, and "qualified urban youth corps," which is any program established by a state or local government or nonprofit organization that meets all the following criteria:

- Is capable of offering meaningful, full-time, productive work for individuals between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five, inclusive, in an urban or public works or transportation setting.
- Gives participants a mix of work experience, basic and life skills, education, training, and support services.
- Provides participants with the opportunity to develop citizenship values and skills through service to their communities and the United States.

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

⁴²Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act 21 § 1524

⁴³42 U.S.C. 12572(a)(2) and 42 U.S.C. 12656(c)(3)

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 Signs⁴⁴

Acknowledgement

The sponsor must acknowledge RTP, if possible, in all projects. This includes the following:

- Written acknowledgement in any news release or publication developed or modified for the funded project.

⁴⁴Washington Administrative Code 286-13-120

- 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.
- All training and educational materials and programs developed with RTP grants must acknowledge RTP and the Federal Highway Administration. Written materials and the results of the planning and research should be available to the public. Except in rare circumstances, materials produced with RTP funds should be available as public domain material.

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 a sponsor developing its own sign, below are suggestions for how to incorporate appropriate acknowledgement:

- Funding provided by the Recreational Trails Program.
- Grant funding from the Recreational Trails Program was made available from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Funding Board and the Federal Highway Administration.

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. Signs are not required for Education Category projects.

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. 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.

Nondiscrimination

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board and RCO activities are intended to follow state and federal guidelines for nondiscrimination. If this goal is not being met, express

concern to RCO, or [file a complaint](#) with the Office of Civil Rights, Federal Highway Administration.

Public Disclosure Rules

RCO records and files are public records that are subject to the Public Records Act.⁴⁵ More information about the [RCO's disclosure practices](#) is available online.

Project Area Stewardship and Ongoing Obligations⁴⁶

An RCO grant comes with long-term obligations to maintain and protect the project area⁴⁷ 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 sponsor replace the lost value when changes or conversions of use take place.

In general, the project area funded with an RCO grant must remain dedicated to the use as originally funded, such as outdoor recreation, habitat protection, farmland preservation, or salmon recovery purposes, for as long as defined in the grant agreement. The ongoing obligation for RTP development projects is at least twenty-five years from the date RCO accepts the project as complete.

A conversion occurs when the project area acquired, developed, or restored with a RCO grant 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 a 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.

⁴⁵Revised Code of Washington 42.56

⁴⁶Revised Code of Washington 79A.25, Washington Administrative Code 286, RCO's grant agreement standard terms and conditions, and *Manual 7: Long-Term Obligations*.

⁴⁷Project 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
- ✓ Cost increases
- ✓ Federal rules
- ✓ Fees and income
- ✓ Records and reimbursement

Grant Limits

A Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grant is intended to expand the sponsor's existing capacity, not replace funding that would have been used for a project without the grant.⁴⁸

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

- General projects \$5,000-\$150,000 per project
- Education projects \$5,000-\$20,000 per project

The architecture and engineering limit for development projects is 20 percent of the estimated development costs. Allowable architecture and engineering costs are described in *Manual 4: Development Projects*.

⁴⁸Washington Administrative Code 286-13-045(6)

Matching Share

Match is the project sponsor's contribution to a project. By requiring a match for a grant, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board intends to foster and demonstrate local commitment to the project and to spread the money from the grant program to a greater number of projects.⁴⁹

An applicant must contribute matching resources at least equal to 20 percent of the total project cost. For example, if an applicant requests a \$100,000 grant, the applicant must contribute \$20,000 for a total project cost of \$120,000. This is called providing a 20 percent matching share.

Match contributions above the minimum may earn more points; see "Matching Shares" under "Evaluation Criteria" for more information.

Local Agencies and Nonprofits

An applicant must provide a minimum of 10 percent of the total cost of a project in the form of a local contribution, not from a state or federal source.⁵⁰ This policy does not apply to Native American tribes.⁵¹ For example, if a total project cost is \$100,000, the applicant must provide \$10,000 in matching share from a local source such as local government appropriation, cash, grants, or in-kind donations.

Federal Agencies

- For federal match requirements, see Title 23, United States Code.⁵²
- For each federal project, support from the Secretary of Transportation (includes RTP), will not exceed 80 percent of the total cost.
- The share attributable to the Secretary and a federal agency shall not exceed 95 percent of the cost.

Eligible Match

Applicant resources used for match must be eligible in RTP and may include any one or more of the following:

- Appropriations and cash
- Bonds—council or voter

⁴⁹Washington Administrative Code 286-13-045

⁵⁰Washington Administrative Code 286-13-045

⁵¹Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2005-24

⁵²Title 23 United States Code, §206. Recreational trails program, f. (Federal Share)

- Corrections labor (see “Types of Match” section below)
- Donations—the value of using donated cash, equipment, labor, materials, or services (see “Types of Match” section below)
- Force account—the value of using a sponsor’s equipment, labor, or materials (see “Types of Match” section below)
- Grants—federal,⁵³ state, local, and private (see “Types of Match” section below)
- Local impact and mitigation fees (see “Types of Match” section below)
- Proceeds of a letter of credit or binding loan commitment
- Other Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grants that meet the requirements outlined below.

Not Allowed as Match

- Costs that are not eligible for grant assistance or included in the grant agreement.
- Costs that are not necessary or an integral part of the project scope.
- Costs that are double counted. A cost incurred by a project sponsor on a previous project that already has been paid cannot be used as a match or expenditure on another RCO project.
- A donation or costs toward a project for one federal program cannot be double counted for another federal program.
- Existing sponsor assets such as real property or developments.
- 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).

Match Requirements

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

- An integral and necessary part of the approved project.

⁵³Sometimes, funds from other federal programs may be credited as a non-federal share. See Title 23 United States Code, §206. Recreational trails program. (Federal Share).

- Part of the work identified in the application and grant agreement.
- For eligible work types or elements.
- Committed to the project.

RCO rules governing a project apply to the grant applicant's match. For example, if a grant applicant uses a donated bridge as a match, RCO rules requiring the bridge to remain available for program purposes throughout its useful life apply to the donated bridge 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. An applicant should carefully review the evaluation criteria to determine if this applies to the project.

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

The board may require the applicant to provide a portion of its matching resources in local resources.⁵⁴

Match Availability and Certification

To help ensure the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board project is ready for implementation upon approval, 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 recommendation. The applicant is advised to plan for projects with match dependent on citizen votes or passage of ballot measures. This certification is due at least one calendar month before Recreation and Conservation Funding Board action.⁵⁵ The forms and deadlines for certifying match are on the RCO website.

RCO may declare a project ineligible if there is no guarantee that matching funds are available, and the 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 applicant's ability to have the match in place when required.

⁵⁴Washington Administrative Code 286-13-045(4)

⁵⁵Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040 (3)

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 Match

Donations

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

Force Account

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

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 its match. Other grants are eligible if the purposes are similar and grant sources do not restrict or diminish the recreational use, availability, or value of the project area.

The eligibility of other federal funds used as a match is governed by federal and state requirements.

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 Match⁵⁶

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

- The grants are not from the same Recreation and Conservation Funding Board grant program.
- Only elements eligible in both grant programs may count as match.
- Each grant is evaluated independently and on its own merits, as if the match were coming from elsewhere.
- The applicant must provide a minimum of 10 percent of the total costs of the eligible elements being matched. This applicant match may not be from federal or state funds and may include in-kind contributions. This policy does not apply to federal and state agencies and Native American tribes.
- The grant applications are submitted in the same biennium.⁵⁷

For evaluation scoring purpose, an RCO grant used as match will not count toward the award of matching share points.⁵⁸

Matching resources also must conform to the deadlines discussed in section 1, "Grant Process and Timeline."⁵⁹

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 Increases⁶⁰

Cost increases for approved projects may be granted by the board or director if financial resources are available. Each cost increase request will be considered on its merits. The

⁵⁶Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2005-24

⁵⁷Washington Administrative Code 286-13-045

⁵⁸Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2014-06

⁵⁹Washington Administrative Code 286-13-04

⁶⁰Washington Administrative Code 286-13-085

director may approve a cost increase request as long as it does not exceed 10 percent of the project's initial approved grant amount. See *Manual 4: Development Projects* for more details on cost increases.

Federal Rules

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

Fees and Income

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

Records 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. Donations are eligible as match only.

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

Audits

All records relevant to a project funded by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board must be on file with the 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

A sponsor 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
- ✓ Evaluation criteria

How Project Evaluation Works

The evaluation process begins when the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board adopts the evaluation process⁶¹ 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 responses, graphics included in the application, and summary application materials, and score the project.

Letters and other documented expressions of project support that are provided to RCO by attaching in PRISM by the technical completion date will be provided to the advisory committee as part of the evaluation packet. An applicant also should summarize this support when responding to evaluation question 9 for general projects or question 5 for education projects.

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

⁶¹Washington Administrative Code 286-13-020

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.⁶² The public is given an opportunity to comment on the grant proposal before the board makes its decision.

Do Not Fund Recommendation⁶³

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 who 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.⁵⁷ The board gives preference through evaluation scoring to town, city, and county applicants who are required to plan under the act.⁵⁸ Scoring for compliance with the Growth Management Act, and other staff-scored evaluation criteria, is based on the organization's status as of 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; out of compliance status results in a minus one score. At the time of application, an applicant

⁶²Washington Administrative Code 286-13-050

⁶³Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2014-06

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.

Evaluation Criteria

Education Projects

Education proposals are evaluated and funded separately from RTP General (development and maintenance) Category projects. The advisory committee assesses each principally on the criteria shown in the table below. RCO does not provide more information to encourage a variety of creative proposals.

The applicant must respond to the five evaluation questions individually in PRISM Online.

These responses along with an application fact sheet, maps, site plans, visuals, and letters of support, comprise the evaluation materials provided to the advisory committee for evaluation review and scoring.

Summary of Criteria

Criteria	Possible Points
Scored by the Advisory Committee	
1. Need	5 points
2. Need satisfaction	5 points
3. Applicant’s ability	5 points
4. Cost-benefit	5 points
5. Support	5 points
Total Points Possible: 25 points	

Revised November 16, 2000

Detailed Scoring Criteria

1. **Need.** Describe the need for this project.
2. **Need satisfaction.** Describe the extent to which the project satisfies this need.
3. **Applicant’s ability.** Describe the applicant’s ability to accomplish the project.
4. **Cost-benefit.** Describe the project’s cost-benefit.
5. **Support.** Describe the support for the project.

Development and Maintenance Projects

The applicant for a development and maintenance project responds to each evaluation question individually in PRISM Online.

The applicant does not respond to the staff-scored criteria. RCO will score these questions based on other information or information submitted with the application.

These responses, along with an application fact sheet, maps, plans, visuals, and letters of support, comprise the evaluation materials provided to the advisory committee for evaluation review and scoring

Summary of Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Project Type	Possible Points
Scored by the Advisory Committee		
1. Need	All Projects	15 points
2. Need satisfaction	All Projects	15 points
3. Project design	Development	10 points
4. Maintenance	Maintenance	15 points
5. Sustainability	Development	5 points
6. Readiness to proceed	All Projects	5 points
7. Cost-benefit	All Projects	5 points
8. Cost efficiencies	All Projects	5 points
9. Project support	All Projects	10 points
Scored by RCO		
10. Matching shares	All Projects	10 points
11. Growth Management Act preference	All Projects	0 points
		Total Points Possible: 80

Detailed Scoring Criteria

- 1. Need.** How great is the need for improved trail facilities that provide a backcountry experience? The following considerations are provided to help applicants and evaluators understand some of the elements that help a project score well. A successful proposal need not address each bullet. Applicants should elaborate on all points clearly relevant to their projects.

State, Regional, Land Manager, or Community Needs

- Is the project supported by location or type in a publicly reviewed and adopted plan? For example, the *2023 State Recreation and Conservation Plan*.
- Describe how critical RTP funds are to the completion of this project.

- Describe any significant environmental damage in need of repair.
- Describe the consequences of not funding this project. For example, how immediate is any threat? Will actions be taken that will lead to a loss of quality etc.?

Trail Inventory Issues

- How large is any maintenance backlog?
- What similar trail opportunities are available now in the local area?
- How much of this need can be attributed to a history of inadequate care and maintenance?
- What is the current physical condition of the proposed facility?

Use

- How convenient will the finished project be to intended users?
- How heavily are trails and support facilities in the area used?
- How heavily will the finished project be used?
- Are there significant not served or under-served user groups?
- To what extent will safety hazards be resolved?

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

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 need, established in several ways.

Revised February 2006

2. Need satisfaction. To what extent will the project satisfy the service area needs identified in Question 1: Need?

How well does the specific proposal satisfy the need established in question 1? For example, on the proposed trail, will all surface water issues be remedied (water bars, grade dips, puncheon, water crossings, etc.)? How about the trail corridor (clearing, brushing, tree removal, etc.), safety, and sign issues? Responses must be quantified. How efficiently does the proposal target these needs?

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

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, or insufficient information is provided.
Three points	Strong evidence. The project will address an important need, although that need will not be filled completely by the project.
Four to five points	Very high to exceptional evidence. Project fills a critical need.

Revised February 2006

3. Project design (development projects only). Is the proposal appropriately designed for intended uses and users? The following considerations are provided to help applicants and evaluators understand some of the elements that help a project score well. A successful proposal need not address each bullet. Applicants should elaborate on all points clearly relevant to their projects.

- Describe how the project's setting is appropriate to the need? How does it complement the need?
- How does the design protect and complement the environment?
- Describe how the facility is designed for ease of maintenance.
- Describe the extent to which the design is user friendly and universally accessible.
- Describe the spatial relationships, surfacing, width, and grades. How tight are curves? Are there switchbacks? How is multiple use facilitated?
- If a trail, is it designed in a loop. Does it lead to a primary destination?

- Does the project have a Primary Management Objective?⁶⁴
- For projects with a motorized Primary Management Objective, is an adequate level of difficulty maintained?

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

Zero points	Poor evidence presented, or the design is inappropriate. For example: Environmental issues are not addressed; trail difficulty level and user experience are not addressed or can be expected to change substantially; or there is a high probability of user displacement.
One to two points	Below average to moderate. For example, design does only a fair job of addressing environmental issues; the difficulty level and user experience will be somewhat degraded; there appears to be some user displacement.
Three points	Good. For example: Design is adequate and reasonable to address environmental problems, the difficulty level and user experience will be unchanged; not much user displacement will occur.
Four to five points	Very good to excellent. Design is outstanding if a trail retains difficulty level and user experience with no user displacement.

Revised February 2006

4. Maintenance (maintenance projects only). To what degree will the project reduce recreational trail maintenance backlogs and/or recreate a recreational trail opportunity?⁶⁵ The following considerations are provided to help applicants and evaluators understand some of the elements that help a project score well. A successful proposal need not address each bullet. Applicants should elaborate on all points clearly relevant to their projects.

- Typically, how often does this trail require maintenance work?

⁶⁴“Primary Management Objective” 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 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.

⁶⁵Many winter recreation trail opportunities are re-created through snow grooming maintenance activities.

- When was maintenance performed last on this trail?
- How much of the area’s trail maintenance backlog will be alleviated by this project? That is:
 - What is the total number of trail miles in the system the applicant administers (i.e., park, ranger district)?
 - What is the number of trail miles the applicant plans to maintain each year?
 - What is the number of trail miles needing maintenance due to unplanned events resulting from such things as unusual weather, etc.?
 - Is this project request for support of regular planned maintenance or maintenance due to unplanned events? If unplanned events, what were the events?
- How is the applicant qualified to complete this project in a quality and timely fashion? What is the applicant’s experience with past maintenance projects?
- Are the project’s maintenance goals specific and appropriate? Explain.
- To what extent will this maintenance project extend the service life of this facility?

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

Zero points	Poor. Too little information is presented, or the project likely will not reduce trail maintenance backlogs or not recreate a recreational opportunity.
One to two points	Fair to moderate. Maintenance backlogs are reduced only somewhat or there appears to be only moderate ability to recreate a recreational opportunity.
Three points	Good. Project substantially reduces maintenance backlogs or a relatively important trail opportunity is recreated.
Four to five points	Very good to excellent. This project effectively eliminates trail maintenance backlogs or recreates a critical trail opportunity.

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

- 5. Sustainability** (development projects only). Sustainability reflects choices made to balance the desired benefits and potential impacts of a project on the surrounding landscape and community. Please discuss how the project's location or design supports the applicant's sustainability plan or how the ecological, economic, and social benefits and impacts were considered 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)
- 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

- 6. Readiness to proceed.** Is the applicant prepared to begin the project? The following considerations are provided to help applicants and evaluators understand some of the elements that help a project score well. A successful proposal need not address each bullet. Applicants should elaborate on all points clearly relevant to their projects.

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

- Exactly when will work on the project begin? When will work be completed or the facility be open to use?
- Are all elements ready, such as the following:
 - Permits
 - Environmental clearances
 - Engineering
 - Signed agreements
 - Equipment
 - Labor force, etc.?
- Have any appeals been resolved? Explain.
- How urgent is it that immediate action is taken? 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 less than twelve months.
Three to four points	Minimal to ordinary barriers exist that very likely will be removed by the time a grant and contract are awarded.

Five points

No barriers. The project is ready to move forward immediately.

Revised February 2006

- 7. Cost-benefit.** Do the benefits of the project outweigh costs? Costs may include prices that are too high, unacceptable harm to the environment, or factors that cause unnecessary ill will for trail users. Benefits are gains that come with the investment of public dollars. They can be gains for trail users, the environment, the public, or others.

The following considerations are provided to help applicants and evaluators understand some of the elements that help a project score well. A successful proposal need not address each bullet. Applicants should elaborate on all points clearly relevant to their projects.

- What alternatives to the project were considered and why were they rejected in favor of the current proposal? For example, in a snow grooming project, was leasing, contracting work to a private party, or no action considered?
- What is the cost per mile for trails or other unit of measure for other projects?
- What is the long-term cost of maintenance? Will it be cost-effective over the long-term?
- What is the applicant's past record with cost estimates (on-target, overruns, shortages, etc.)?
- Describe other benefits this project will provide, such as community economic development, education, and stewardship.
- What will be the environmental cost-benefit of this project?

It is important that applicants quantify responses. For example, by how much will a new and faster or larger snow groomer reduce maintenance costs? How much will be saved on future reconstruction costs if maintenance backlogs are eliminated now?

▲ 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 good net benefit.

Five points

Substantial evidence of an exceptional net benefit.

Revised February 2006

- 8. Cost Efficiencies.** To what extent does this project demonstrate efficiencies or a reduction in government costs through documented use of donations or other resources?

Donations—cash, real property, volunteer labor, equipment use, or materials

- What are the donations for this project?
- Who is making the donation?
- What is the value of the donation and how was the value determined?
- Is the donation in hand?
- If the donation is not in hand, does the applicant have a letter of commitment from the donor that specifies what is being donated and when?
- Is the donation necessary for implementation of the project? Are donations included in the project proposal?

Private grants awarded by non-governmental organizations

- Is there a private grant that is being used as match for this project?
- Who awarded the grant?
- What is the grant amount?
- What is the purpose of the grant?
- When will grant funds be available?

Are there other efficiencies for this project that will result in cost savings?

- What is the cost efficiency?
- Who is providing it?
- What's the value?
- When was the commitment made and when does it expire?

▲ Point Range: zero to five points.

Revised by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2016-07 on February 2016.

9. Project support (applicant does not answer). To what extent do users and the public support the project?

The following considerations are provided to help applicants and evaluators understand some of the elements that help a project score well. A successful proposal need not address each bullet. Applicants should elaborate on all points clearly relevant to their projects.

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. Examples of support and endorsement include the following:

- Efforts by the applicant to identify and contact all interested parties.
- The extent that there is support for the project. For example:
 - Level of land manager and user support (moderate, very strong, etc.)
 - Positive letters, oral testimony at public meetings, support from friends and user groups.
 - Positive, or the absence of extensive negative, media coverage.
 - The extent to which the public was involved in a comprehensive planning process that includes this project.
- Non-applicant donations to help complete the project: labor, equipment, money, materials, land.
- Advisory board approval or completion of a public planning process that endorsed this project.

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

Zero points	No or very weak evidence presented.
One to two points	Minimal or fair specific evidence of support.
Three points	Moderate to good support.
Four to five points	Exceptional to overwhelming support.

Revised February 3, 2006

10. Matching shares (applicant does not answer). To what extent will the applicant match the RTP grant with contributions from its own resources? RCO staff will respond to this question for each development **or** maintenance project. This question is based on information submitted with the application. 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, which staff later multiplies by two.

Zero points	20-25 percent of project's value will be contributed by the applicant.
One point	25.01-30 percent of project's value will be contributed by the applicant.
Two points	30.01-35 percent of project's value will be contributed by the applicant.
Three points	35.01-40 percent of project's value will be contributed by the applicant.
Four points	40.01-45 percent of project's value will be contributed by the applicant.
Five points	More than 45 percent of project's value will be contributed by the applicant.

Revised January 2014

11. Growth Management Act Preference (applicant does not answer). Has the applicant made progress toward meeting the requirements of the Growth Management Act? Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250 requires that:

- A) Whenever a state agency is considering awarding grants to finance public facilities, it shall consider whether the applicant⁶⁶ 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 any of the following conditions:

⁶⁶All references to applicants in this question refer to counties, cities, and towns only.

- 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.
- 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.

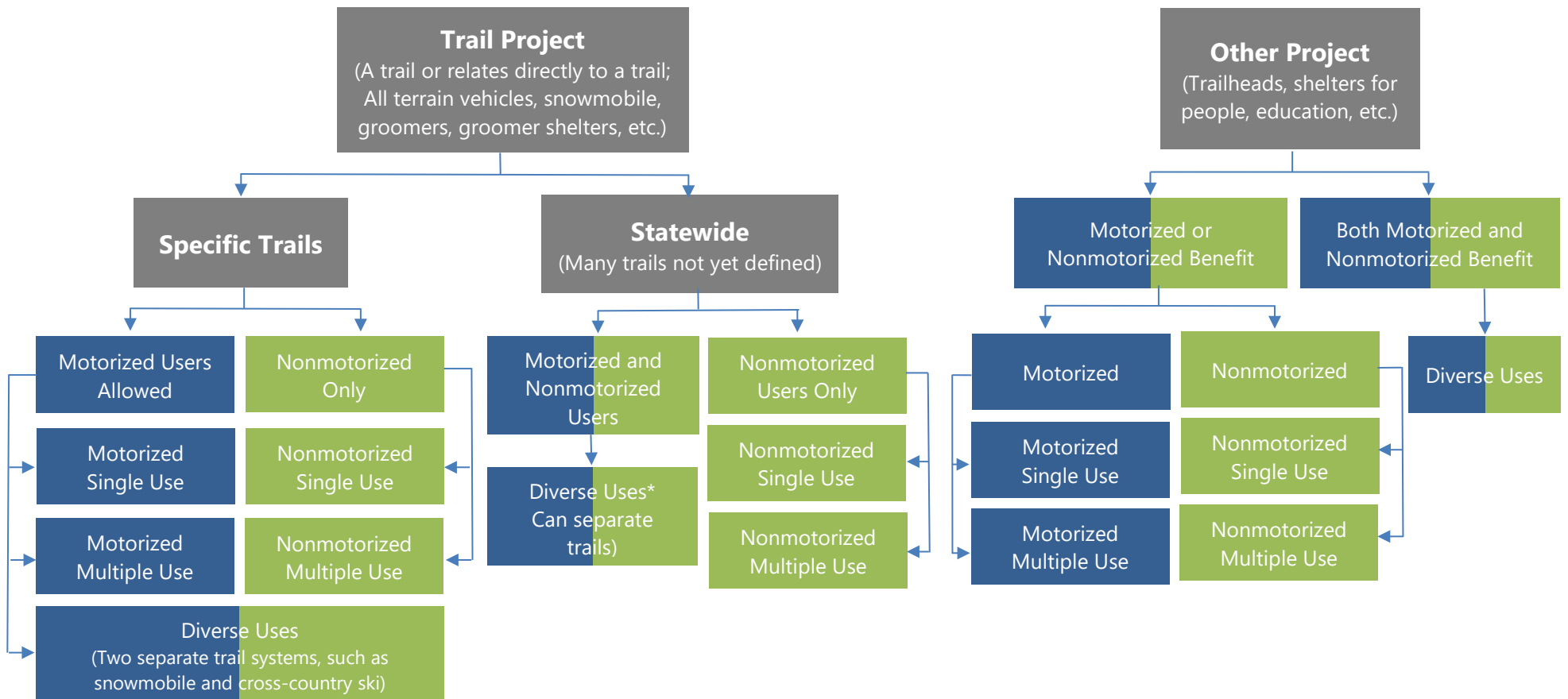
Scores for this question are based on information from the state Department of Commerce, Growth Management Division. If an agency's comprehensive plan, development regulations, or amendments have been appealed to a Growth Management Act Hearings Board, the agency cannot be penalized during the period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

▲ Point Range: zero to minus one point.

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

Revised July 1999

Appendix 1: RTP Category Decision Tree



Projects are classified as motorized if the amount of approved motorized use is more than incidental. In addition, at least one of the following criteria must be met:

- If an education project, it must target motorized use.
- If a trail project, the manager must have certified it as having a motorized Primary Management Objective. "Primary Management Objective" 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 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.
- If a trail project, it must be open to motor vehicles and include features clearly designed to accommodate recreational, motorized trail vehicles, such as climbing turns, tread hardening, groomed paths, off-road vehicle- or snowmobile-related signs, loading ramps, etc.