

# RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE PROJECT DELIVERY AND GRANT MANAGER WORKLOAD STUDY



Washington State  
**RECREATION and  
CONSERVATION OFFICE**

**FEBRUARY 15, 2008**



**BERK & ASSOCIATES**



*"Helping Communities and Organizations Create Their Best Futures"*

Founded in 1988, we are an interdisciplinary strategy and analysis firm providing integrated, creative and analytically rigorous approaches to complex policy and planning decisions. Our team of strategic planners, policy and financial analysts, economists, cartographers, information designers and facilitators work together to bring new ideas, clarity, and robust frameworks to the development of analytically-based and action-oriented plans.

**BERK & ASSOCIATES**

120 Lakeside Avenue  
Suite 200  
Seattle, Washington 98122  
P (206) 324-8760

[www.berkandassociates.com](http://www.berkandassociates.com)

**Principals:** Bonnie Berk and Michael Hodgins  
**Project Manager:** Pia Franzese  
**Project Team:** Bonnie Berk, Heather Rogers, Pia Franzese, Fauna Doyle

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

---

### Purpose and Focus of the Study

In order to optimize the delivery of its grant programs, as well as achieve greater efficiencies in overall organizational performance, the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) has identified project “un-timeliness” as an area for improvement. Such a finding has emerged from RCO’s own desire to develop and progress as an agency, as well as the Washington State Legislature and the Office of Financial Management’s (OFM) interest in reducing RCO’s rate of reappropriations. To address this issue, this study seeks to understand and examine the root causes of reappropriations and the strong correlation to project delay within the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (RCFB) and Salmon Recovery Funding Board’s (SRFB) grant programs. In particular, project delay was analyzed at a systems level by examining internal (within the RCO) and external (outside the RCO) factors that lead to schedule slippage.

Assessment of SRFB and RCFB grant manager workload was added to the scope of the study, with the understanding that this issue would be evaluated not only within the context of project delivery and delay, but from an organizational efficiency and staff morale standpoint.

It is important to note that this study is occurring at a pivotal moment in the RCO’s history. With a new executive management team, a renaming of the Agency, the recent hiring of additional support personnel, and an Agency-wide desire to advance as an organization, the RCO is poised to enter a new era of strategic management and development. The findings and recommendations presented in this report are intended to help advance these goals and objectives by strategically moving the Agency forward as a whole.

### Timeline and Study Methodology

The study began in mid June 2007 and ended mid February 2008. During this time, a completed situation assessment was conducted which included:

- 25 project sponsors interviews
- 10 best practice interviews with other grant agencies located across the United States
- Two grant manager focus groups (for RCFB and SRFB grant managers)
- Individual interviews with select RCO grant, policy, and fiscal staff
- Interviews with OFM personnel and legislative staff
- PRISM analysis and data sorting; and program assessment and evaluation

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

---

This section presents a summary overview of the major findings that have emerged from this study. The RCO is a highly successful organization, considered by many stakeholders as one of the best grant funding agencies to work with in the State. The Agency's most important asset is its employees, who are dedicated and committed to ensuring that its projects achieve their recreation and conservation objectives. That said, the RCO is encountering significant challenges in delivering many of its project on schedule, an issue that is reflected in the Agency's relatively high re-appropriations rate.

While the RCO's budgetary and programmatic increases are largely due to the Agency's achievements in administering grants, the RCO's internal infrastructure support has not kept pace with such growth. The RCO needs to re-evaluate its current organizational model not only to improve project delivery performance, but also to achieve overall organizational efficiency and boost staff morale.

This report recognizes that project success is not only tied to being on-time and on-budget, but also to outcome measures such as the number of salmon returning to a stream or the number of hikers using a forest trail. In fact, many of the sponsors and grant managers noted that some of the most "successful" outcome-driven RCO projects have had major schedule and cost slippage issues. That said, gaining a better understanding of the root causes of delay can provide opportunities for improvement and can turn good projects into great ones.

RCO staff, at both the Executive and non-Executive level, are self-aware of many of the challenges and opportunities facing the Agency and appear receptive and eager to embrace organizational change.

High-level findings to help the Agency design its future management systems follow:

### **RCO's Rate of Reappropriations is Relatively High**

RCO's rate of reappropriations has been relatively high over the past two biennial funding cycles (particularly in 2005-2007), as compared to the six other state agencies identified in this report: the Department of Community Trade and Economic Development; the Department of Ecology; the Department of Natural Resources; the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission; the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife; and the Washington State Conservation Commission. However, given that the six agencies have such different and unique capital programs, such comparisons may not be fully indicative of an agency's relative effectiveness with respect to project delivery. Additionally, given the type of complex natural resources projects the RCO is engaged in, it is unrealistic to expect that reappropriations will ever be entirely eliminated.

The reappropriations issue is systemic and highly complex – not only does the RCO manage long-term projects, its most frequent sponsors, such as the Department of Natural Resources, the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, and the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, are currently facing their own challenges concerning reappropriations and delivering timely projects within their capital programs. Making significant progress on reducing reappropriations will require a focused and coordinated effort among senior management at these agencies. The RCO needs to take steps to reduce reappropriations where it can, and for those projects that are expected to take more than one biennium to complete, the RCO should be clear in its budget requests and communications with the Office of Financial Managements and the Legislature regarding reappropriations expectations.

## **Project Delay Is Systemic Across Program, Project, and Sponsor Type**

Project delay for RCO funded projects exists at a systemic level, occurring across a range of programs, project categories and sponsor types. For example, although the Washington Wildlife Recreation Program has the largest total number of late projects, the SRFB program has the most projects experiencing the greatest length of delay. By sponsor type, three State agencies (Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, Department of Natural Resources, and Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife) account for almost half of total project delay (47%), although tribes, government agencies and nonprofit entities all contribute a significant share to this problem. Acquisition projects were by far the category of project type that faced the most schedule slippage issues (49%), with development projects following second at 24%.

## **Project Delay is Caused by Many Internal and External Factors**

Project delay stems from a large number of internal (within the Agency) and external (outside the Agency) factors. A significant portion of the internal factors contributing to project delay are related to RCO staff workload and response to project delay, while external factors are due to a wider range of issues (from lack of sponsor resources to permitting issues to environmental site conditions). Some of the external factors that contribute to project delay are beyond the RCO's ability to control once a project has been funded. What is within the Agency's power to manage is ensuring that the projects being selected for funding are appropriately scoped and ready to proceed. Additionally, a grant manager's ability to pro-actively monitor a project's progress is instrumental in identifying and preventing potential challenges once a project is underway.

## **Grant Manager Workload is Tied to Project Delivery Concerns**

Historically, grant managers have been viewed as an available resource pool to draw from to fill various Agency needs and gaps without backfilling the void. At present, grant manager duties not only include the management of active projects, but also comprise assisting applicants and preparing application materials, developing and updating programmatic policies, preparing materials and reports for Board meetings and workshops, and addressing compliance concerns. Over the years these tasks have been coupled with an increasing project workload, which has overextended grant managers' capacity to effectively perform the majority of their job duties – particularly responsibilities related to proactively monitoring and managing projects. For RCFB grant managers, these issues are exacerbated by the need to be an expert in nine grant programs, consisting of over 25 unique grant categories. These factors in turn have impeded the grant managers' ability to proactively manage grants.

It is interesting to note that the title of "grant manager" does not accurately capture all the work that these employees perform. One large example is that grant managers spend over half of their time in the pre-application and application process, with this percentage as high as 80% in certain months.

## **Lack of Standardization in Internal Processes and Policies**

Currently, grant managers each have different methods for prioritizing tasks, interpreting cultural resource issues, processing billings, authorizing amendments, inputting data into PRISM, and responding to project delay. A lack of standard Agency-wide protocols or processes within these areas has led to inefficiencies and inconsistencies. While a certain degree of autonomy and flexibility is important at the individual grant manager level, having more concrete and universal protocols on how

to do business (an “RCO way” of doing things) in these specified areas would offer greater clarity and direction to staff. Part of this involves developing clear policies on proper contract length, when extensions are awarded, and consequences of delay (see section 5.0 and 6.0 for more information).

### **There are No Formal Reporting and Information Systems in Place**

The absence of standard reports for both grant managers and Executive Management that identify project delivery problem areas at a project, program, and grant division level has further restrained RCO staff from effectively understanding how the Agency is truly performing with respect to project delivery. At present, many grant managers are operating in a vacuum and are not fully aware of what projects are in need of the most attention, thereby limiting their ability to deal with or pre-empt challenges that occur during the life of a project.

### **RCO Response to Project Delay Helps Perpetuate the Cycle**

In interviews conducted for this study, the overwhelming majority of sponsors identified the RCO as one of the best grant agencies to work with in the State. Part of this response appears tied to the strong relationships that sponsors have developed with individual grant managers, as well as the perception that the RCO staff treats schedule slippage as a normal and natural consequence of managing projects. This perception is reinforced by the RCO’s lenient approach to addressing untimely projects. Amendments, such as time extensions and scope changes, are relatively easy for sponsors to receive. Additionally, Executive Management and the Boards have historically been averse to terminating projects for non-performance. This lenient approach – in which there are no apparent costs or consequences for missing deadlines and milestones – helps perpetuate the cycle of project delay.

### **Other Grant Agencies Are Experiencing Similar Project Delay Issues**

Almost all of the ten state grant-making agencies that were interviewed across the county are currently grappling with the issue of project delay and workload issues. One of the primary findings that emerged from the best practice research is that many grant-making agencies rely (more heavily than the RCO) on electronic information systems to reduce workload through the standardization of forms, status reports, automated processes, and the ability to present and report information quickly and consistently. Another finding is that a major factor contributing to workload challenges is the number of programs for which a grant manager is responsible. While many of the interviewees noted that project load is tied to multiple variables, an average given for an acceptable project workload is around 65 projects. Lastly, the grant-making agencies that were interviewed that appear to have the least difficulty with project delay are also those that provide the most assistance with pre-planning, such as offering planning and design grants and awarding additional application points for projects that are more ready to proceed than others.

## STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

---

### Framework for Recommendations

The following recommendations are action strategies that address specific issues facing the RCO and are organized into three categories: project delivery, grant manager workload, and organizational efficiency and cohesiveness. While these issues are interrelated – for example, improving grant manager workload can positively impact project delivery and organizational efficiency – each contains its own unique set of opportunities and challenges. That said, the implementation of these recommendations is not intended to occur in isolation of one another but should be viewed as a package of targeted strategies that will move the Agency forward as a whole in achieving its goals.

The following symbols next to the three categories are tied to each recommendation to indicate which issue(s) the recommendation is attempting to address. Additionally, recommendations that are determined to have the biggest impact on the Agency (in terms of change) are highlighted in red.



**Improve Project Delivery.** As a government agency, the RCO faces the challenge of needing to reduce the amount of project delay across all grant programs while concurrently maintaining fairness and equity in funding habitat and recreation projects across sponsor and project type. Additionally, as project success is not only measured by timeliness, but also by factors such as social and environmental impacts, project delay should generally be viewed by the RCO as a condition that can be greatly improved upon rather than a problem that should be eliminated entirely. As such, the follow criteria were used in determining final project delivery recommendations: strategies that provide incentives for sponsors to reduce project delay that will not target specific sponsor entities or a project type; and strategies that will provide the appropriate tools and support to not only prevent project delay, but will also provide the necessary changes for improvement once project delay occurs.



**Reduce Grant Manager Workload.** One of the RCO's greatest strengths is the personal relationships that grant managers have developed and cultivated with project sponsors over the years. The ability for a grant manager to provide guidance and assistance on a project from the nascent pre-application stage to final closeout promotes clear channels of communication, consistency in workflow, and a deep understanding of a project's intricacies. However, due to increasing workload, the ability for grant managers to spend substantial time working closely with applicants and sponsors has diminished. As such, an important criterion in this analysis was selecting strategies that reduce current workload pressures by enabling grant managers to dedicate quality time and energy to restoring and strengthening these external stakeholder relationships. While several viable options that address workload issues were explored, not all were included in the study's final recommendations (see **Grant Manager Workload Strategies for Further Consideration** for more information).



**Increase Organizational Efficiency and Cohesiveness.** As the RCO has grown in programmatic and budgetary size, there has been an increase in the complexity of Agency policies and internal processes. Over time, variations in how RCO staff perform specific duties and functions; interpret Board and legislative intent; and respond to applicants, project sponsors, and other stakeholders have created silos and sometimes confusion within and across grant programs and the Agency as a whole. Accordingly, recommendations within this category are strategies that are intended to increase organizational unity by promoting communication between staff and clearer guidelines and standards for the Agency as a whole to follow.

## Greater Standardization and Specialization

As the RCO continues to realize significant programmatic and budgetary growth, the Agency will need to move towards more structure, including greater standardization and specialization in its internal roles and processes. Such a transition is a natural step in achieving greater organizational efficiency, coordination, and functionality for any growing and mature agency.

### ***Specialization of Job Functions and Responsibilities***

At this organizational juncture, there is a substantial need to shift some responsibilities currently placed upon grant managers to other staff. Such a reallocation of duties would provide more time and greater flexibility for grant managers to dedicate their energies to what they do best – nurturing and growing proposals into successful projects.

**1. Creation of a Grants Support Division and Five New Staff Positions.** In light of this workload assessment, the RCO should consider creating five new staff positions located in a new unit within the Grant Division called Grant Support (this name is subject to change). Four of the proposed positions would be delegated responsibilities to tasks previously assigned to grant managers and would perform duties for both the RCFB and SRFB. The fifth position would be classified as a Grant Division Manager and would oversee the entire Grant Division. The Grant Division Manager would directly supervise the four proposed staff members within the Grant Support unit and the two SFRB and RCFB Section Managers. Under this scenario, the Grant Division Manager would be the only position reporting to the Deputy Director, and would serve as point person between Executive Management, SRFB and RCFB staff, and the two Boards.



**a. Programmatic Policy Specialist and Board Liaison.** This position would develop programmatic policies for the SRFB and RCFB, function as liaison between the two Boards, and prepare relevant materials related to Board activities. Specific tasks include revising the policy manuals, preparing relevant materials for Board meeting presentations, and updating the two Boards on each other's activities. This position would also work closely with leading grant managers from both the SRFB and RCFB to ensure that the impacts (on the Agency, grant managers, sponsors, etc.) of a proposed or modified policy are fully explored and understood. Additional job duties would include reviewing existing SRFB and RCFB policy to explore potential areas for developing Agency-wide policies and guidelines.



**b. Compliance Specialist.** The qualifications for this position (which the RCO is now in the process of hiring) would require an understanding of legal compliance issues. This position would be primarily responsible for reducing the backlog of unaddressed compliance issues currently assigned to grant managers (particularly for projects undergoing conversion). Such a person would also need strong Geographic Information System (GIS) skills to identify project boundaries for examining where compliance challenges may arise in the future. As part of RCO policy and statute, the position would also be responsible for monitoring projects every five years to ensure the continued protection of outdoor recreation and habitat investments.



**c. Cultural Resources Specialist.** Requirements for this position include a working knowledge of Executive Order (EO) 05-05, including an understanding of the review process, documentation necessary for compliance, and what types of projects are subject to review. Having someone on staff to provide a consistent interpretation of this Order, as well as serve as the point person for cultural resource questions, would help remove the confusion and ambiguity currently surrounding this issue. The RCO has recently hired a consultant to determine the appropriate amount of responsibility that should be placed on the Agency in addressing Executive Order 05-05 issues. Whether this position is part-time, full-time, or hired on a purely contractual basis will likely depend upon the consultant's final recommendations.



**d. Contracts and Billings Specialist.** Such a position would be responsible for ensuring consistency in contract and billing interpretation across the entire Agency, including preparing grant and non-grant contract agreements, working directly with the Fiscal Department to process billings, and monitoring projects to ensure that they are meeting contractual requirements. Specific tasks would include: handling programmatic and administrative agreements for SRFB, RCFB, and Executive Management; preparing grant contracts by working closely with grant managers and sponsors, which would include determining appropriate milestones and project timelines; determining eligible and allowable costs, authorizing billing submittals, and answering sponsor billing questions; and periodically checking project files to perform quality control and ensure that contractual requirements are met.



**e. Grant Division Manager.** This position would oversee the entire Grants Division and directly serve as manager for the four proposed staff in the Grants Support Unit and for the SRFB and RCFB Section Managers. Specific tasks include: serving as the Division's direct point of contact for Executive Management; overseeing general operations and activities of the Grants Division; and functioning in an advisory capacity to the SRFB and RCFB Boards. Such a position previously existed a few years back, but when the position was vacated, it was not filled.

### ***Standardization of Internal Policies and Processes***

In conjunction with increased job specialization, the RCO should implement greater standardization of its internal policies and processes. At present, grant managers have each developed their own methods for project tracking, addressing delayed projects, and performing general job duties. This situation has led to an inability to properly prioritize tasks and determine what projects are in need of the most attention. While a certain amount of autonomy and flexibility is important to manage grants, providing greater structure and guidance will improve workflow. Additionally, grant managers will be able to make better decisions due to clearer information, guidance, and support at the Agency level.



**2. Development of Agency-Wide Policies.** An assessment and evaluation of RCFB and SRFB policies is needed to determine areas for potential standardization, as well as identifying what policies should remain distinct (due to issues of legality or needs based on programmatic differences). One such example is evaluating the approval threshold for scope changes. This policy was recently modified (for an indefinite period) to require that amendments for both SRFB and RCFB projects receive the Director's consent. Previously, this policy differed for SRFB and RCFB projects, and it may be beneficial to maintain a similar approval threshold for both sections. Identifying such potential areas for standardization and collaborating with staff on this issue could be a task designated for the proposed Programmatic and Operational Policy Specialist.



**3. Matching Geographic Boundaries.** SRFB and RCFB Section Managers should work together to map out similar geographical boundaries when assigning grant manager workload, to ensure that proposed habitat and recreation projects within the same locale complement rather than conflict with one another. With similarly defined territories, assigned SRFB and RCFB grant managers within a specified geographic region should schedule regular meetings to compare application lists and projects. This will also help to maximize potential funding synergies or identify compliance challenges. While creating identical boundary limits may not be possible due to different programmatic requirements concerning geography, the opportunity still exists to develop an approximate border match.



**4. Operational Manual.** Currently, operational policies for grant managers are embedded throughout various procedural grant manuals, making it difficult and cumbersome for grant managers to find and review information. Creating a separate operational manual that is specifically used for internal purposes and can be used by both SRFB and RCFB grant managers would greatly reduce confusion (particularly for new grant managers) and ensure greater consistency in grant management activities. At present, senior grant managers from both sections are working together to develop such a manual, but have had difficulty dedicating sufficient time to create the document, due to workload constraints. Clear direction and support from Section Managers in creating a timeline for the manual's completion as well as providing sufficient resources to meet this timeline would be beneficial in expediting the process.



**5. Notification for Meeting Milestones.** Automated email or notice should be sent to sponsors before a milestone is reached and submitted again once the sponsor is delayed in reaching that milestone. Section Managers or Senior Grant Managers should be assigned the responsibility of developing the content for the notices. The IT Division should examine PRISM's capability to automatically send out these notices to sponsors as well as alert grant managers that this task has been performed. **(High Impact)**



**6. Baseline Milestone and Schedule Estimates.** Information stored in PRISM should produce milestone and project length estimates for specific types of projects. For example, when developing a contract for a habitat restoration project, there should be a specified range of appropriate milestones and project closure dates that grant managers can review against proposed project schedules. Such a baseline will be useful in developing greater timeline accuracy and project management accountability on the sponsor side, as well as providing grant managers with better information on whether a project warrants a time extension. **(High Impact)**



**7. Grant Manager Orientation and Training.** At present, recently hired grant managers are not receiving formal orientation and training, which is vital for ensuring that these new employees are smoothly integrated into performing grant manager tasks and duties. Senior Grant Managers should develop a training manual and schedule that clearly identifies the type of training needed (and who will be responsible for providing that training) to effectively perform specified grant manager job duties.

## Customized Management Information Reports

Currently, neither grant managers nor Executive Management have the information they need to most effectively manage RCO grants. Agency staff would greatly benefit from receiving regular reports that provide customized, detailed, and up-to-date project information. Consistent reporting will provide clear direction on what actions need to be taken to rectify problem areas, how to prioritize tasks, and keep staff generally informed about how they are performing at an individual, grant section, and organizational level. It is important that the Executive Management communicate to all RCO staff that information is not intended to criticize or penalize an individual or division, but rather serves to help staff and the Agency make better, more informed decisions.

 **8. Project Status Reports for Grant Managers.** The Fiscal Department should prepare monthly project status reports for individual grant managers that list all of their managed projects and clearly highlights those that are late in meeting milestones, not completed on pre-determined closeout dates, or have other pressing issues that may lead to project delay. Additionally, grant managers should also be given quarterly reports of how the Agency as a whole is performing related to project delivery. Such reports will be based on the performance measures identified in this study. (**High Impact**)

 **9. Executive Management Reports.** Executive Management should be given quarterly reports (as well as reports produced on an “as needed basis”) by the Fiscal Department that identifies how the Agency as a whole is performing related to project delivery. Such reports will be based on some of the performance measures identified in this study and would provide a high-level assessment of this issue as well as supply information on specific projects that are experiencing project delay issues. (**High Impact**)

 **10. Project Status Reports for Sponsors.** The RCO should send quarterly status reports to sponsors, particularly ones that are experiencing project delay. Such reports would be similar to those created for grant managers and RCO Executive Management; they would detail all projects not meeting their contractual requirements, undergoing significant amendments, or encountering other challenges. Reports should not only be sent to a sponsor’s project manager, but also the sponsor’s executive director or department director. (**High Impact**)

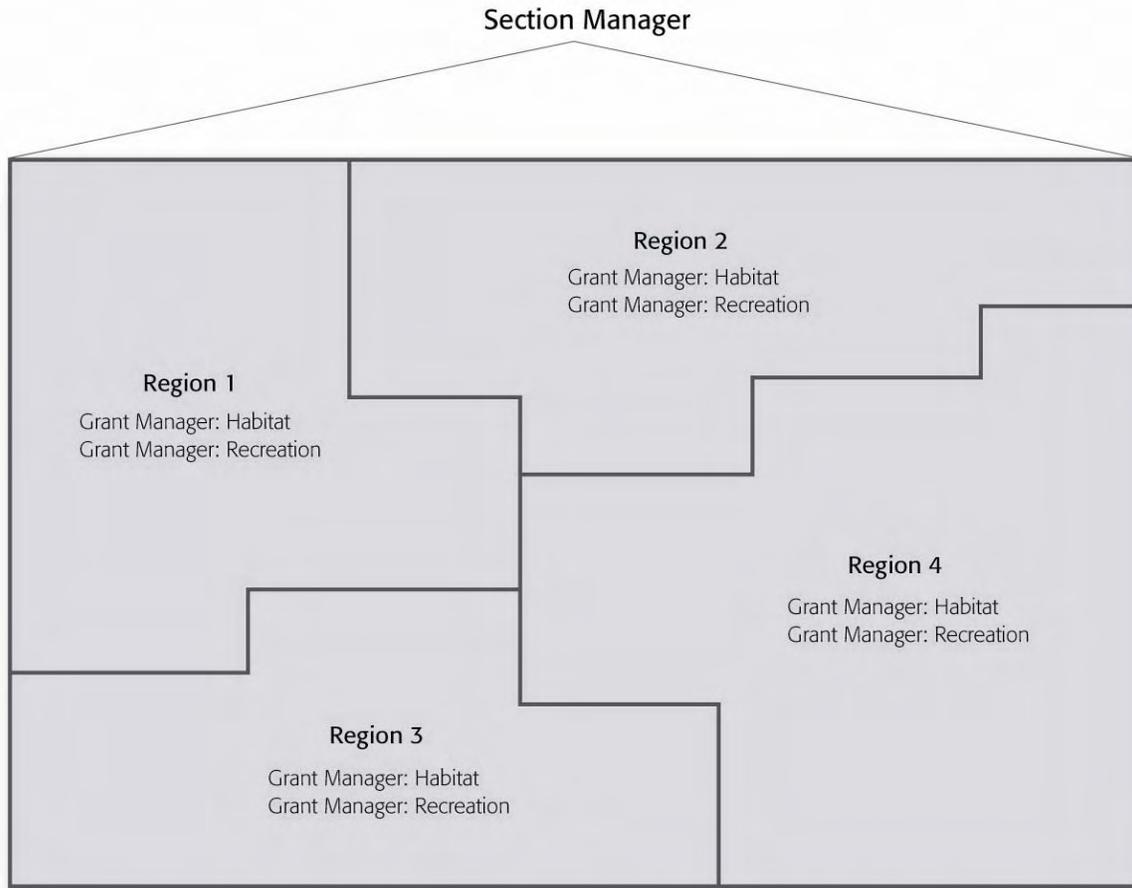
## Recommendations Specific to RCFB

One of the largest challenges facing RCFB grant managers is the requirement to become expert in such a broad and diverse number of program areas. Currently, there are nine different programs with 25 sub-programs that grant managers must work within, each with its own unique sets of procedures, policies, timelines, and stakeholders. The required knowledge and work generated by each program has placed enormous pressures on grant managers, with even the most seasoned staff finding difficulties in effectively managing their projects.

 **11. Assigning Grant Manager Workload and Program Specialization.** The RCFB is already exploring the possibility of assigning two grant managers to an assigned region that would specialize in different program areas. While this would lead to greater territory for a grant manager to cover (as the current boundaries would likely need to be doubled if the number of grant managers remain the same), there would be a reduction in the number of program areas that a grant manager would be required to understand. One possible split for program specialization

would be between habitat and restoration projects. Under this structure, the assigned habitat grant managers would manage all Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account and Land and Water Conservation Fund projects and the majority of Washington Wildlife Recreation Program projects. The assigned recreation grant managers would then be responsible for managing all Boating Facilities Program, Firearms and Archery Range Recreation Program, Non-highway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities Program, Youth Athletic Facilities, Boating Infrastructure Grant Program, National Recreational Trails Program projects and a small portion of Washington Wildlife Recreation Program projects. **Exhibit 1** shows this proposed arrangement. (**High Impact**)

**Exhibit 1  
Proposed Grant Manager Workload Conceptual Diagram**



Habitat = ALEA, LWCF and WWRP

Recreation = BFP, FARR, NOVA, YAF, BIG, NRTP and WWRP

Note: This is a conceptual map and not intended to represent actual or proposed grant manager territories.



**12. Creation of an Additional Senior Operations Grant Manager Position.** The following recommendation proposes changing the current Senior Policy Grant Manager position into a Senior Operations Grant Manager position (thereby making a total of two Senior Operations Grant Managers for the RCFB). Such a shift makes sense in light of the study's recommendation to shift programmatic policy responsibilities to other personnel. Additionally, as the Senior Operations Grant Manager does currently manage a project workload, the two positions would be divided (as proposed in Recommendation #11), with one responsible for habitat-related projects and the other responsible for recreation-related projects. The two Senior Operations Grant Managers would help in filtering relevant information up to the RCFB Section Manager, as well as assist the Section Manager with overseeing RCFB staff.



**13. Access to Technical Review and Information.** While the SRFB has a technical review panel, RCFB applicants and project sponsors do not have access to comparable resources. In particular, RCFB grant managers noted that applicants and sponsors often ask engineering or cost estimate questions that RCO staff does not have the technical ability to answer. Having an on-call person (perhaps hired on a contractual basis) to help answer such questions could help grant managers better provide technical information to applicants and sponsors, which in turn could improve project scoping, planning, and management on the sponsor end.

### **Recommendations Specific to SRFB**

While SRFB grant managers are not experiencing the same issue as RCFB concerning program volume, there are specific opportunities for improvement that are unique to this grant section.



**14. Increase Lead Entity Involvement.** SRFB should consider whether lead entities – local organizations responsible for developing, prioritizing, and submitting projects to the SRFB – should assume a greater role in sponsor oversight throughout the grant process. At present, lead entities are highly invested during the application process, but some quickly lose presence once projects are funded. There are several reasons for promoting greater involvement of lead organizations: they are generally located near project sites and have an ability to more effectively monitor day-to-day operations; they have a deep understanding of a project's history and its issues: and they have generally forged close relationships with the project sponsors. When sending out notifications or reports, lead entities should be alerted along with sponsors of projects experiencing issues and challenges, as well as kept well informed throughout the process on the progress of any of their affiliated projects.



**15. Multiple Funding Dates.** With the recent establishment of a year-round technical review panel, the SRFB is now in the process of assessing the impacts of providing multiple opportunities for Board approved funding throughout the year instead of just one. Such a structural shift may help grant manager workload concerns by spreading the number of projects acquired more evenly over the course of a year. Additionally, multiple funding dates would allow sponsors greater flexibility on when projects are started, which in turn can have a positive impact on project delivery.

## Project Workload

There is no magic number or formula that can be applied to determining grant manager workload due to such variation in project complexity, sponsor type, and level of grant manager experience. Best practices research showed a very wide range of projects per grant manager, reflecting some of the difference in the granting agencies and programs and indicating the difficulty in defining a specific range.

Currently, Section Managers appear to be carefully considering the number of projects assigned to a grant manager on a case-to-case basis. The grant managers interviewed noted that managing 65-75 projects is a “doable” number, with experienced grant managers likely to feel more comfortable at the higher range and newer, less experienced grant managers preferring the lower range.

Given that many of the recommendations in this report are aimed at reducing grant manager workload in some fashion, it is likely that the 65-75 range is low under circumstances that include a reduction in other tasks (like billings and contract management, and, in a few instances, programmatic policy development). The Agency’s recent experience in combination with reduced workload in other areas suggests that an average range of 70-85 total active and board funded projects per full-time grant manager is reasonable. The actual number of projects should vary some to reflect the challenges inherent in different programs, project types, and sponsors.

The RCO’s funding level continues to grow substantially (25% from 2005-07 to 2007-09), and it is reasonable to expect that additional grant management staff is needed to assume the workload generated by new projects. For the organization to maintain its excellent service levels and manage a constantly growing level of projects and programs, adequate staffing is critical. The two new grant manager positions that were recently filled are a good start that addressed the retrospective staffing need, but in order to continue managing the agency’s growth, additional grant management staff is recommended. To maintain a range of 70-85 active and board funded projects per grant manager a minimum of three additional grant managers would be required.

It is important to note that the hiring of additional staff will likely generate more work in the short run, especially given the absence of a formalized training program (Recommendation #7 above).

**16. Determining a Project Threshold.** Section Managers should determine an average project threshold when assigning new projects and considering if additional grant managers need to be hired. For example, if the threshold is set at 85 projects per grant manager, then once the average project workload for grant managers rises above this level, Section Managers would consult first with grant managers and then with Executive Management about hiring additional staff. Eighty projects is a reasonable starting place, but this threshold should be revisited periodically as the RCO institutionalizes other practices that impact grant manager workload. **(High Impact)**



## Improvements to the Internal and External Flow of Communication

Within this report, communication was examined both internally (the flow of information within the Agency) and externally (the flow of information from the Agency to the outside world). Internally, while there are strong pockets of communication flow among staff, strong communication silos exist throughout the Agency. Such lack of interaction and dialog appears most pronounced between the Grants Division and Executive Management, which in turn has created significant challenges in clearly outlining expectations, making informed organizational decisions, and defining and understanding staff roles and responsibilities. Externally, sponsors, particularly those experiencing problems, have not been given enough direct feedback by RCO grant managers and Executive Management on their projects' status and what steps can be taken to improve challenged projects.



**17. Communication between the Grant Division and Executive Management.** The Director and Deputy Director should continue attending RCFB and SRFB staff meetings quarterly to listen to specific issues and concerns, as well as learn more about the day-to-day responsibilities of grant managers. In particular, SRFB and RCFB Section Managers and Executive Management should work together to clearly identify and agree upon roles, responsibilities, and priorities for Section Managers and Senior Grant Manager to help align expectations and workflow.



**18. Communication between Grant Managers.** Currently SRFB and RCFB grant managers do not formally meet together as a group. If the RCO is moving towards a more "agency-wide" approach, having at least quarterly meetings with the entire grant manager group could further promote and identify similarities between the two groups, rather than differences. Such meetings can serve as a platform to discuss issues such as additional areas for standardization and specialization, raise and identify concerns and issues that are at the grant manager level, as well as provide updates on relevant activities.



**19. Communication between RCO Executive Management and Sponsors.** In order to send a signal that the RCO is serious about improving project delivery, face-to-face meetings should occur between the RCO Executive Management and sponsors that have a history of project delay to determine how to address specific issues, challenges, and concerns. Management on the sponsor side should be involved in these meetings and should be consistently kept abreast of a project's status through reports sent by the RCO. **(High Impact)**



**20. Communication between RCO and Office of Financial Management.** Around the issue of reappropriations, the RCO needs to better explain its budget requests to the Office of Financial Management. For each project and program type, the RCO should understand historical spending patterns and timelines and be able to present a Spending Plan to accompany its capital budget requests. This Spending Plan will communicate expected levels of reappropriations in future biennia based upon the current budget request. Unexpected reappropriations should similarly be identified with an explanation and communication about what steps the RCO has been taking to reduce reappropriations in general. **(High Impact)**

## Use of PRISM

While PRISM functions very well as a data repository tool, both sponsors and RCO staff interviewed noted that the system – as a result of recent upgrades and modifications – has become increasingly difficult to navigate and extract meaningful information. In particular, PRISM, in its present form, is not an effective management tool for both grant managers and Executive Management. In addition, PRISM is not maximizing its current and potential capabilities in assisting grant managers more proactively manage projects, as many of the tasks currently conducted by grant managers, such as notifying or updating sponsors of due dates or requirements, could become automated.

The following recommendations for PRISM improvements will require substantial time, staff, and financial resources. Such a dedication of resources needs to be aligned with the identification and preparation for the future of information management at the State level. The Office of Financial Management is currently in the process of evaluating the impact of developing one grant system for State agencies, where there would be one central repository for entering contract information. If the RCO is able to enact these recommendations, it will need to do so with the understanding that identifying and meeting external system interoperability requirements will be considered at every stage of the improvement process.

Based on RCO staff and sponsor interviews, as well as our own personal analysis, the following recommendations were made for PRISM improvements:

**21. PRISM Task Force.** A PRISM Task Force, comprised of representatives from Executive Management, the Grants Division, the Fiscal Department, and project sponsors, should be formed. The Task Force would be charged with evaluating the impacts of the proposed improvements as well as identify additional modifications and changes to ensure that the system is more user-friendly and a better management reporting tool. Such a Task Force should hold regularly scheduled meetings and update RCO staff on its progress.



**22. Automated Requests and Notices.** PRISM should adopt the capability to automatically send standardized notices (such as an email) to sponsors and grant managers: before and after milestone due dates; if sponsors have not submitted an annual billing; and when a project's scheduled close date is approaching. By automating this process, both sponsors and grant managers will be alerted and reminded in a timely manner of important dates and requirements, with minimal (if any) staff effort. **(High Impact)**



**23. Standardized Reports.** As previously addressed, PRISM should produce comprehensive, customized, and reader-friendly reports for grant managers, Executive Management, and Fiscal Staff that provide a holistic assessment of how the organization is managing grants at an individual, section, and organizational level. **(High Impact)**



**24. DashBoard System.** The proposed PRISM Task Force should explore the option of developing an online, interactive, DashBoard system similar to the Transportation Improvement Board (TIB). Such a system would actively monitor the Agency's overall health and performance by assessing key measures that would be drawn from and collected by PRISM. This information would not only be available to staff, but is also open to the public. TIB routinely provides demonstrations on the DashBoard system to other State agencies interested in acquiring such a system. **(High Impact)**





**25. Application Information.** Currently, grant applications for all programs can be completed online via PRISM. While this feature has streamlined the application process substantially, information is not always retained historically or accessible across programs. PRISM should have the capability to save base information (i.e. name, address, financial information) previously input into the system for sponsors applying to a new program or the same program at a later date.



**26. Total Cost Information.** Currently, project cost information stored within PRISM only reflects the total amount the sponsor was able to bill on a project, not the true project cost. Such data can be misleading as this information is often used by applicants in developing project cost estimates for proposals. PRISM should provide information for both types of financial data, with a clear demarcation of their differences.



**27. Applicant History Information.** PRISM should track over time amendment information on a project-by-project basis (such as the number of time extensions, scope changes, etc.) that will help grant managers make more informed decisions. For example, knowing that a sponsor has on average three time extensions per agreement would help grant managers at the onset of a project be more pro-active in ensuring that schedule slippage does not occur.

## Performance Measures

To set the stage for effective strategic planning, the RCO needs to develop a set of performance measures that can be used to assess progress in improving project delivery concerns and how well efforts to address this issue are working. Outcome measures – such as counting the number of salmon returning to a stream or the number of hikers using a given trail – are indicators to assess the actual impact of an agency's actions. Output measures – such as tracking the number of projects put under agreement in 90 days – are important to measure as they are tools to assess the progress on achieving successful outcome measures, as well as identifying specific areas to concentrate on for improvement. The recommendations in this report focus specifically on output benchmarks, as outcome measures will be further examined and addressed in the development of the RCO's Government Management Accountability and Performance (GMAP) objectives.



**28. Output Measures.** In order to provide a holistic assessment of how well the Agency is performing regarding project delivery, the RCO should develop multiple output benchmarks that examine various points during a project's life (i.e. from "birth until death"). Specifically, RCO should focus on examining activities that the Agency should already be doing based on policy and administrative code. **(High Impact)**



This may include the percent of projects that:

- Were put under agreement within 180 days after Board funding date
- Provided certification of match 30 days prior to Board funding approval
- Met their first milestone date without a time extension
- Submitted a billing in the past year
- Closed out within 90 days of project completion

## Incentives for Sponsors to Deliver Projects On-Time

A major issue for the RCO is the perception by many of its sponsors that project delay is not a significant problem for the Agency. Such a perception has been cultivated over the years by RCO's image as a lenient and flexible grant agency and reinforced by the way that staff respond to project delay. While there is a fear among RCO staff and project sponsors that adopting a tougher approach will dramatically change the culture of the organization and its relationship with the public, there appears a strong need for the Agency to develop incentives for sponsors to avoid schedule slippage.

While understanding that this is a nuanced issue, this report recommends the development and enforcement of a mixture of policies that are designed to avoid project delay through positive and punitive incentives. RCO staff, particularly grant managers, will be tasked with the responsibility of effectively communicating these policies (once approved by the Boards).

  
**29. Agency Response to Project Delay.** The RCO should consider creating a tiered system, where delayed projects fall into three categories. The first tier could consist of projects that are classified as "mildly delayed" and the RCO could request that sponsors identify the reasons for delay and successfully outline what pro-active steps are being taken to address these problems – Board approval for a time extension would not be needed at this point. The second tier would be for projects that are classified as "significantly delayed." Board approval would be needed to obtain a time extension and sponsors would have to provide an even more detailed explanation of why the delay occurred and how the sponsor is planning to meet the new timeline. At this stage, Executive Management should be working closely with the grant manager and sponsor to monitor progress. The third and last tier would be projects that are being considered for termination, a decision that should be supported Agency-wide. **(High Impact)**

**30. Factoring in Applicant History.** One idea is awarding additional bonus points during the application process to applicants who have previously been awarded grants and have a history of delivering projects on-time. Conversely, applicants who have previously been awarded grants and have a history of project delay could have points deducted off their total score. A tradeoff for such scoring might be the penalization of first time applicants who do not have a history with the RCO and thus may be at an unfair disadvantage when competing against applicants who have a good project history. **(High Impact)**

**31. Readiness to Proceed.** As poor scoping and planning is strongly correlated to project delay, rewarding additional application points to projects that are ready to proceed would provide incentives for applicants to invest greater resources in the project design stage. Some examples of areas for awarding bonus points are having permit-ready projects, 30% engineer drawings, landowner authorization for the sale of a property (for acquisition projects), and completed wastewater/stormwater planning documents. **(High Impact)**

**32. Authorizing Amendments.** There should be greater scrutiny from RCO staff in authorizing proposed project amendments. The Director has recently assumed initial responsibility for reviewing all projects that are requesting scope changes. At this juncture, this level of scrutiny is appropriate, although in the future (when the RCO has made greater strides towards reducing project delay), delegation of this task to other senior staff would be more sustainable and efficient.



- 33. Terminating Projects.** For the most egregiously delayed projects, the RCO should consider cutting off funding and ending the project. Such a decision should be reserved only for the projects that have been identified by grant managers, Executive Management, and the Board as non-viable and are experiencing major challenges (see Recommendation #29 concerning RCO response to project delay). Such a decision should be strongly supported Agency-wide. (**High Impact**)

## Project Planning and Design



- 34. Planning and Design Grants.** The RCO should increase the number of planning and design grants offered and make them available across all programs. Funding more of these types of projects will likely produce greater accuracy in cost and time estimates, fewer occurrences of delay from issues such as permitting and land owner approval, fewer amendments, and less work for staff. Sponsors currently have the option to apply for planning grants in two RCFB programs (Boating and Non-highway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities Program) and in SRFB acquisition and non-capital grants. However, sponsors do not always make use of such grants as it is easier to go through the application process only once, securing a larger chunk of funding to do everything. Providing additional bonus points for applications that are adequately scoped and ready to proceed (i.e. having a permit-ready plan) would encourage applicants to make more use of these types of grants. (**High Impact**)

## Phased Projects

Providing incentives for sponsors to have multi-phased projects will likely increase the amount of time dedicated to scoping and planning for a project, which in turn can positively impact project timeliness. Additionally, by managing projects in stages, sponsors have greater flexibility in determining the project schedule and timeline, as they are not beholden to completing an entire project within one or even two funding cycles. One potential drawback to project phasing is that the RCO is not guaranteed that a multi-staged project will be completed, as sponsors may not apply or even be considered eligible for the second round of phasing. Additionally, project phasing may lengthen the project timeline as the sponsor applies and waits for additional development funding.



- 35. Encourage Project Phasing.** Where it makes sense to do so – given project timeline and complexity – the RCO should encourage sponsors to propose their projects in phased segments. Logical phases might include pre-design/design, acquisition, construction, etc and would be generally similar to the existing State process for large capital projects. (**High Impact**)



- 36. Align Phasing with Biennial Funding Cycles.** Under the current system, a sponsor's decision of whether or not to propose a project in phases has more to do with the grant limit under a given program or the sponsor's ability to provide matching funds. Where possible, the RCO should consider limiting phased projects to two years in order to match the phase to the biennial funding timeline and help reduce reappropriations. (**High Impact**)

## **Grant Manager Workload Strategies for Further Consideration**

Although the following workload alternatives were not included in the study's final recommendations, such strategies should be examined for further consideration and discussion by RCO staff.

**Dividing all Grant Programs by Recreation and Habitat.** One interesting idea considered – proposed by grant management staff – was reorganizing the entire Grant Division and allocating programs under a Recreation and Habitat division instead of the current RCFB and SRFB structure. Such a separation would shift programs previously under the RCFB to the newly created Habitat side; thereby creating a more even split in the number of programs a grant manager is expected to manage and fully understand. One potential disadvantage of this structure would be that some grant managers would answer to two boards, which may in the long-run create additional workload concerns.

**Hiring Additional Grant Managers without Reducing Duties.** Another option that was explored is maintaining the wide range of duties performed by grant managers. However, in order to reduce workload pressures, a substantial increase in grant manager staff would be needed to effectively manage the breadth of work currently performed. However, the hiring of additional grant managers would do little to stem the prioritization of certain tasks over another. Further, grant managers would still be required to perform duties that they might not have the technical capacity or knowledge to properly perform (such as dealing with compliance and cultural resource issues).

**Splitting Application and Active Grant Management Duties.** The third option that was closely considered was dividing the work performed during the application cycle and work performed during the active project management cycle into two separate positions. From a pure efficiency standpoint, such a split could improve overall workflow by decreasing work capacity bottlenecks that occur during certain times of the year (particularly when the application cycle is in full swing) and ensure that sufficient energy is devoted to active project management. However, such a division of labor might disrupt one of the primary strengths of the Agency – the personal relationships that grant managers have cultivated with project sponsors. Additionally, important information concerning a project's details learned in the application stage could be lost in the transfer to active project management with another staff position.

**Two RCFB Section Manager Positions.** On the RCFB side, supervising 11 staff is a difficult task for one Section Manager to perform alone. This study closely examined the impacts of creating an additional Section Manager position (for a total of two), with each Section Manager overseeing a specified number of RCFB grant programs and staff. An advantage to such a split would be the reduced workload burden on the current Section Manager, as specific duties could be shared and one person would no longer be required to oversee nine grant programs or be directly responsible for managing such a large number of staff. However, a potential drawback is that hiring an additional Section Manager might further accentuate differences among RCFB programs rather than the similarities (which might ultimately have an adverse impact in promoting cohesiveness within and outside the Grant Division).

# CONTENTS

## Report

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Project Overview.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Purpose and Focus of the Study	1
1.2	Study Methodology	3
1.3	Report Components	3
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background: History and Structure of the RCO.....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1	Recreation and Conservation Funding Board	4
2.2	Salmon Recovery Funding Board	6
2.3	Growth of the Agency	7
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Reappropriations Assessment.....</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1	Overview of Reappropriations	9
3.2	Comparative Assessment of RCO's Reappropriations Rate	10
3.3	Detailed Assessment of RCO's Reappropriations	13
3.4	Drivers of RCO Reappropriations	15
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Analysis of RCO Project Delay.....</b>	<b>16</b>
4.1	Overview	16
4.2	Project Delay by Program	16
4.3	Project Delay by Sponsor Type	18
4.4	Project Delay by Project Type	20
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Causes of Project Delay.....</b>	<b>22</b>
5.1	External Causes of Project Delay	22
5.2	Internal Factors of Project Delay	24
5.3	Conceptual Example of a Project Experiencing Delay	26
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Grant Manager Workload.....</b>	<b>28</b>
6.1	Staffing: Positions and Responsibilities	28
6.2	Grant Manager Roles and Responsibilities	29
6.3	Grant Manager Activity Cycle and Schedule	32
6.4	Assigning Workload	36
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Sponsor Perspectives.....</b>	<b>37</b>
7.1	What the RCO Does Well	37
7.2	Proposed Areas for Improvement	37
<b>8.0</b>	<b>Best Practice Research.....</b>	<b>40</b>
8.1	Methods and Approach	40
8.2	Findings	41
8.3	Summary of Findings by State	45
<b>9.0</b>	<b>Summary of Findings.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>10.0</b>	<b>Strategies and Recommendations.....</b>	<b>51</b>

## Attachments

**A – Interview List**

**B – Sponsor Interview Summary**

**C – Sponsor Interview Protocol**

# **RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE**

## **Project Delivery and Grant Manager Workload Study**

### **1.0 PROJECT OVERVIEW**

#### **1.1 Purpose and Focus of the Study**

In order to optimize the delivery of its grant programs, as well as achieve greater efficiencies in overall organizational performance, the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) has identified project “un-timeliness” as an area for improvement. Such a finding has emerged from RCO’s own desire to develop and progress as an agency, as well as the Washington State Legislature and the Office of Financial Management’s (OFM) interest in reducing RCO’s rate of reappropriations. To address this issue, this study seeks to understand and examine the root causes of reappropriations and the strong correlation to project delay within the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (RCFB) and Salmon Recovery Funding Board’s (SRFB) grant programs. In particular, project delay was analyzed at a systems level by examining internal (within the RCO) and external (outside the RCO) factors that lead to schedule slippage.

Assessment of SRFB and RCFB grant manager workload was added to the scope of the study, with the understanding that this issue would be evaluated not only within the context of project delivery and delay, but from an organizational efficiency and staff morale standpoint.

Specific areas that the study addresses are:

- Assessing the RCO’s current situation regarding reappropriations at the program, agency, and state level
- Identifying internal and external challenges facing the RCO in improving project delivery
- Understanding the impact of program requirements on sponsors, and ensuring that such requirements are reasonable and appropriate
- Learning best practices within other grant management programs and how such practices could potentially be applied to the RCO’s work, management, and organizational processes
- Analyzing grant manager workload and how this affects project delivery and overall productivity
- Developing strategies that directly address project delivery and workload concerns

It is important to note this study was conducted in a highly collaborative manner, with RCO staff and sponsor involvement solicited at various stages of the study’s progress. Special thanks are extended to the various RCO staff that took time out of their busy schedules to discuss and share their perspectives on the challenges and opportunities presented within this report.

## 1.2 Study Methodology

Data collection and analytic methods for this report included:

**Two focus groups with RCFB and SRFB Grant Managers.** Two focus groups were held to discuss project delivery and grant manager workload. Topics covered included: grant manager roles and responsibilities, appropriate workload size, defining project success, internal and external issues relating to project delay, and challenges and opportunities for organizational improvement.

**Individual Interviews with Selected RCO Staff.** In addition to the focus groups, selected grant managers, and policy, executive, and fiscal staff were interviewed by telephone or in person to discuss specific issues relating to project delivery and workload. These conversations were instrumental in learning more about key issues throughout the Agency.

**Telephone interviews with Select Sponsors.** Interviews were conducted with more than 25 previous and current RCO project sponsors, representing a broad range of external stakeholders (state and local government agencies, nonprofits, and tribes). An interview protocol was developed for these interviews and sent out in advance to respondents before each conversation. A summary of individual sponsor comments can be found at the end of this report (see **Attachment B**).

**Interviews with Office of Financial Management and Legislative Staff.** In order to gain perspective at the state level, telephone interviews were conducted with current and former Office of Financial Management staff as well as State legislative staff. These conversations particularly focused on how reappropriations are currently viewed and addressed at the state level.

**Comparative and Best Practices Research on Other Granting Agencies.** Telephone interviews were conducted with granting agencies in Washington, California, Oregon, and Wisconsin to identify best practices research. The majority of grant agencies interviewed provide habitat and/or recreation grants, although one or two agencies that do not provide these types of grants were selected based on their reputation for innovation and efficiency. An interview protocol was developed specifically for these interviews (see **Attachment C**).

**PRISM and Reappropriations Data Analysis.** Data provided by the PRISM system and the Office of Financial Management was reviewed and analyzed to identify trends and issues related to project delay and reappropriations at the project, program, and Agency level. Comparisons to other state grant agencies were also made to examine RCO's reappropriation rate in relative terms.

**Program Evaluation and Assessment.** A strategic situation assessment was developed, synthesizing the interviews, data analysis, and comparative research. This assessment provided the foundation for the findings and recommendations presented in this report.

## 1.3 Report Components

This report is organized into the following ten components: 1) Project Overview; 2) History and Structure of the RCO; 3) Reappropriations Assessment; 4) Analysis of Project Delay; 5) Causes of Project Delay; 6) Grant Manager Workload; 7) Sponsor Perspectives; 8) Best Practice Research; 9) Summary of Findings, and 10) Strategies and Recommendations.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND: HISTORY AND STRUCTURE OF THE RCO**

Established in 1964, the RCO is dedicated to creating and maintaining recreational and habitat opportunities within Washington State. With 47 employees, the RCO staffs five Boards: the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (RCFB); the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB); the Governor's Forum on Monitoring Salmon Recovery and Watershed Health; the Washington Biodiversity Council; and, the Invasive Species Council. Two of the Boards, the RCFB and the SRFB, have responsibility for awarding and managing capital project grants. Both Boards solicit, make grant awards, and oversee sponsor progress for property acquisition and facility development projects that support the Boards' missions. Grants are typically for open space protection and acquisition, farmland protection, habitat conservation, trail development, and parks and recreation facility projects.

The RCO has a history and reputation as an efficient and high-functioning state agency, with a passionate and committed staff that care deeply about the work that they do. RCO's growth over the past four decades is a strong testament to its overall success as a grant funding agency. In the last ten years alone, the State Legislature has increased the RCO's capital budget by 62% (from \$250 million to \$404 million), awarded the Agency five new grant programs, and approved the creation of four new standing boards or councils.

The Agency's clientele, identified by RCO staff as "project sponsors," comprise a wide variety of public, tribal, and nonprofit entities that can range dramatically in their organizational size, available resources, institutional capacity, and mission. RCO grant managers, of which there are currently 15, are viewed as the primary contact between the sponsors and the Agency and are responsible for ensuring that funded projects are effectively managed. One of the greatest strengths of the RCO is the strong relationships that grant managers have developed and maintained over the years with project sponsors.

Grant information is stored and accessed through an automated online database called the Project Information System (PRISM). PRISM provides a wide array of functions, such as allowing applicants to apply for grants online and monitor the progress of a project, serving as a general management tool for grant managers and providing necessary data for fiscal staff and executive management. As of January 2008, PRISM identified the RCO as currently funding approximately 1,300 active and recently-Board-funded projects.

### **2.1 Recreation and Conservation Funding Board**

The RCFB was created at the onset of the RCO's inception (1964) and is charged with providing leadership and funding to help its partners protect and enhance Washington's natural and recreational resources for current and future generations. The RCFB makes competitive awards to applicants for nine Federal and State grant programs. State programs are: Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account; Boating Facilities Program; Firearms and Archery Range Recreation Program; Non-highway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities Program; Washington Wildlife Recreation Program; and Youth Athletic Facilities. Federal programs are: Boating Infrastructure Grant Program; National Recreational Trails Program; and Land and Water Conservation Fund. Within these nine programs are 25 sub-programs, 11 of which are in the Washington Wildlife Recreation Program.

## RCO Project Delivery and Grant Manager Workload Study

Exhibit 1 below provides an overview of RCFB grant programs.

### Exhibit 1

### RCFB Grant Program Summary

Year Program Begins at RCO	Program Name	Separate Planning Grants Offered Y/N	Match Required	Eligible Sponsors						
				Local Gov'ts	State Agencies	Tribes	Federal Agencies	Non-profit	Salmon Lead Entity	Private Marina
<b>STATE FUNDING SOURCE</b>										
1964	<b>Boating Facilities Program (BFP)</b>									
	Local	Y	25%	X		X				
	State Agency	Y	None		X					
1978	<b>Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activies (NOVA)</b>									
	Nonhighway Road (NHR)	Y	None	X	X	X	X	X		
	Nonmotorized (NM)	Y	None	X	X	X	X	X		
	Off-Road Vehicle (ORV)	Y	None	X	X	X	X	X		
	ORV Noise Enforcement	N	None	X	X	X	X			
	Education and Enforcement	N	None	X	X	X	X			
1990	<b>Firearms and Archery Range Recreation (FARR)</b>	N	33-50%	X	X				X	
1990	<b>Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP)</b>									
	Outdoor Recreation Account									
	Local Parks	N	50%	X		X				
	State Parks	N	None		X					
	Trails	N	50% **	X	X	X				
	Water Access	N	50% **	X	X	X				
2005	State Lands Development	N	None		X					
	Habitat Conservation Account									
	Critical Habitat	N	50% **	X	X	X				
	Natural Areas	N	None		X					
	Urban Wildlife Habitat	N	50% **	X	X	X				
2005	State Lands Restoration	N	None		X					
2005	Riparian Protection Account	N	50% **	X	X	X			X	
2005	Farmland Preservation Account									
2005	Farmland Preservation	Y *	50%	X						
1998	<b>Youth Athletic Facilities (YAF)</b>									
	New Facilities	N	50%	X				X		
	Improving Existing Facilities	N	50%	X				X		
	Maintaining Facilities	N	50%	X				X		
2003	<b>Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account</b>	N	50%	X	X	X				
2007	<b>Boating Activites Program</b>									
<b>FEDERAL FUNDING SOURCE</b>										
1965	<b>Land &amp; Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)</b>	N	50%	X	X	X				
1994	<b>National Recreational Trails Program (NRTP)</b>									
	General	N	20%	X	X	X	X	X		
	Education	N	20%	X	X	X	X	X		
1998	<b>Boating Infrastructure Grant Program (BIG)</b>									
	Tier 1 (\$5,000 - \$95,000)	N	25%	X	X	X		X		X
	Tier 2 (at least \$100,001)	N	25%	X	X	X		X		X

\* Planning grants for projects that will result in a request for development funds under this program are NOT eligible

\*\* No matching funds are required for state agencies

Source: RCO and Berk & Associates, 2008

While the type of applicant to a particular RCFB program is often dependent on the program, eligible applicants generally include Federal and State agencies, cities, counties, towns, ports, school districts, tribes, and nonprofits. The majority of the RCFB programs require that sponsors complete a planning process prior to applying for grant funding.

### 2.2 Salmon Recovery Funding Board

Created in 1999, the SRFB manages three grant programs: the SRFB Grant Program, the Family Forest Fish Passage Program, and the Puget Sound Restoration Program. The SRFB's mission is to support salmon recovery by funding habitat protection and restoration projects. The Board also supports related programs and activities that produce sustainable and measurable benefits for fish and their habitat. This includes serving as a pass-through funder for National Marine Fisheries Service grants, to assist in implementation of the Forest and Fish Agreement of 1999. This funding is provided to three State agencies: the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Department of Ecology.

SRFB projects are based on a local planning process. Lead entities (of which there are 25 in the State) are local, watershed-based organizations that solicit, develop, prioritize, and submit to the SRFB projects for funding consideration (see **Exhibit 2** for a complete list of lead entities). Lead entities convene technical committees to review proposed projects and citizen committees to place projects on a prioritized list. The project lists are submitted for consideration to the SRFB. Project sponsors include public or private groups or individuals. Typical sponsors are regional fisheries enhancement groups, cities, counties, tribes, state agencies, and conservation districts.

#### Exhibit 2

##### Salmon Lead Entities

1. Grays Harbor County
2. Hood Canal Coordinating Council
3. Island County Public Works
4. King County (WRIA 8)
5. King County (WRIA 9)
6. Kitsap (East) Peninsula Lead Entity
7. Klickitat County
8. Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board
9. Mason Conservation District
10. Nisqually River Salmon Recovery
11. North Olympic Peninsula LE
12. North Pacific Coast LE
13. Pacific County
14. Pend Oreille Conservation District
15. Pierce County
16. Quinalt Indian Nation
17. San Juan County
18. Skagit Watershed Council
19. Snake River Salmon Recovery Board
20. Snohomish
21. Stillaguamish LE
22. Thurston Conservation District
23. Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board
24. WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery Board
25. Yakima River Basin Salmon Recovery Board

## 2.3 Growth of the Agency

A substantial driver of the RCO's current situation is growth. The RCO has grown significantly in the past decade, in terms of total capital budget, number of programs administered, and number of projects funded. Since the 1999-2001 biennial funding cycle, RCO's total capital budget has grown 62% from \$250 million to \$404 million. Much of this growth was within the RCO's two largest grant programs, the SRFB's Salmon Recovery Program and the RCFB's Washington Wildlife Recreation Program. The Salmon Recovery Program, founded in 1999, currently accounts for \$133 million of the capital budget (33%). The Washington Wildlife Recreation Program accounts for \$151 million of the capital budget (37%).

With the growth in capital budget, the number of projects funded by the RCO has also increased. The RCO is currently funding over 1,400 projects, compared with an average of about 1,000 during the 1999-2000 biennial funding cycle, for a growth in projects of approximately 40%.

In addition to budget and project growth, the RCO is now administering a number of new programs, funding categories, boards, and councils. Since 1990, the Legislature (by budget or statute) or the Governor (by Executive Order) has assigned the RCO:

**Eleven New Grant Programs:** Washington Wildlife and Recreation Programs (1990); Firearms and Archery Range Program (1991); National Recreational Trails Program (1994); Youth Athletic Facility Program (1998); Salmon Recovery Funding Board (1999); Boating Infrastructure Program (1998); Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account Grant Program (2003); Family Forest Fish Passage Program (2003); Puget Sound Restoration and Acquisition (2007); Boating Activities Program (2007); and Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities Program (2007)

**Five New Washington Wildlife Recreation Program Funding Categories:** Riparian Habitat (1997/ended); Riparian Protection Category (2005); Farmland Preservation Category (2005); State Land Restoration Category (2005); and State Lands Development Category (2005)

**Six New Task Forces or Advisory Councils:** State Wildlife and Recreation Lands Management Task Force (ad hoc/1992); Local Parks M&O Taskforce (ad hoc/2001); Non-highway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities Advisory Committee (standing/2003); Youth Athletic Facilities Advisory Committee (later repealed)' FAAR Advisory Committee (standing); and Habitat and Recreation Land Coordinating Group (sunset January 1, 2012)

**13 New Special Studies, Assessments or Reports:** Assessment of needs of state habitat and recreation areas (1990); Public Lands Inventory (1997); Comprehensive Monitoring Strategy (2001); Non-highway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities Fuel Use Study (2001); Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (2004); SSB6242 Inventory and Land Acquisition Strategy (2004); In Lieu Tax Study (2005); Trails Database Feasibility Study (2006); Off-Road Vehicle Noise Education and Enforcement Study (2006); Recreation Levels of Service Standards (2006); Biodiversity Strategy (2006); Invasive Species Strategy (2006); and Boating Needs Assessment (2007)

**Four New Standing Boards or Councils:** SRFB (1999); Biodiversity Council (2004); Monitoring Forum (2004); and Invasive Species Council (2006)

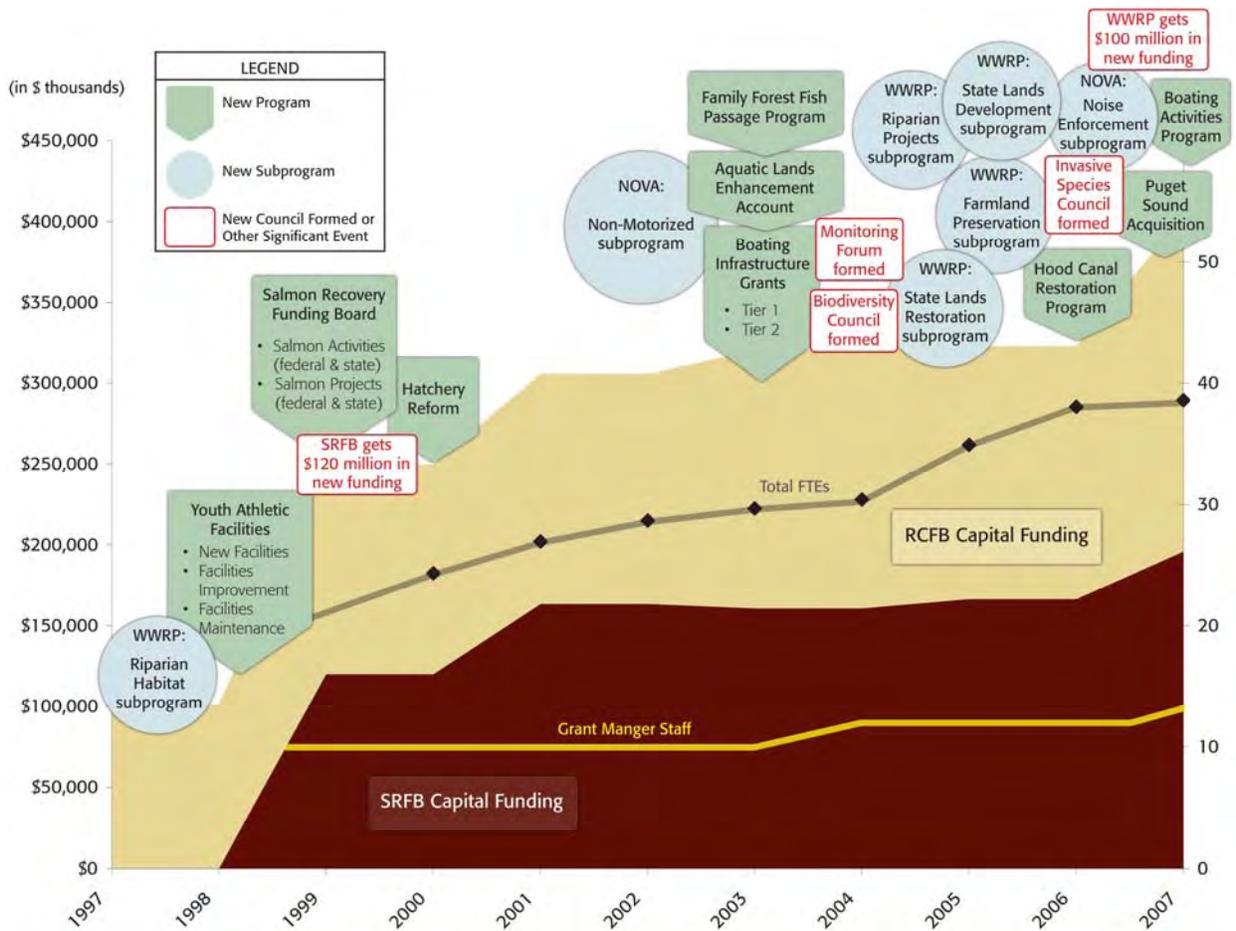
## RCO Project Delivery and Grant Manager Workload Study

Staffing levels at the RCO have not kept up with this level of growth. While it was once a point of pride for the Agency to administer all of these growing funds, projects, programs, boards, and councils without substantial increases in staff, this is no longer realistic. Until the recent hiring of three grant managers (two were new positions and one was filling a recently vacant position), the number of RCFB grant managers remained constant at six for four years. Total full-time equivalent (FTE) growth at the RCO has remained relatively constant, averaging 6.8% per year since 2000. Such staffing includes grant, administrative, planning, finance, board, and council support.

**Exhibit 3** below shows a timeline of budget, programmatic, project, staffing, and other growth at the RCO over the past decade.

### Exhibit 3

#### A Conceptual Timeline of Growth at the RCO



Source: Berk & Associates, 2008

## 3.0 REAPPROPRIATIONS ASSESSMENT

### 3.1 Overview of Reappropriations

Capital budget spending – the ability to spend funds that are appropriated by the Legislature during a given budget cycle – is a performance indicator that has received increasing attention from the Office of Financial Management and the Governor’s Office in recent years. Reappropriation requests resulting from an inability to spend the appropriated biennial capital budget, are an issue for all State agencies with capital programs. From a statewide policy perspective the concerns around reappropriations are threefold:

**Excess State Bonding.** To the extent that bond financing is supporting capital budgets, an inability to spend the full biennial appropriation results in the State’s bonding capacity being unnecessarily tied up. This hinders the State in its ability to most efficiently allocate resources and could result in the State bonding and paying for debt service on a higher level of capital than is being used. This could ultimately lead to a higher cost of capital for the State.

**Agency Accountability.** Accountability in budgeting suffers when reappropriations are consistently high. If an agency is unable to spend its capital budget in the designated timeframe, the legislature is less likely to continue funding the agency at that level.

**Efficiency of Project Management and Delivery.** High levels of reappropriations are often indicative of inefficiencies in an agency’s process for executing capital projects.

The RCO has experienced relatively high levels of reappropriations in recent years and faces a couple of major challenges with regard to this issue:

**Timing of Capital Budget Cycles and Project Life Cycles.** The RCO faces a unique challenge with respect to minimizing reappropriations, given that nearly half of the grants it oversees are for projects with schedules longer than one biennium. As the RCO has grown in terms of the number of programs it manages and in terms of total capital funding, it has become increasingly difficult to keep the flow of capital funding and the timing of projects in sync. Many of the Agency’s grants are for projects expected to take four to five years. This is reflected in RCO’s reappropriations levels.

**Grants Made to Other State Agencies.** Most state agencies with capital programs experience reappropriations at some level. Under pressure from the Office of Financial Management and the Legislature, some agencies, including the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission and the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, have recently taken steps to understand and reduce their reappropriations. These initiatives and the general performance of other agencies’ capital programs is particularly relevant to the RCO given that over 35% of its grant funding is distributed to three state agencies: Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, and the Department of Natural Resources. Given that these agencies are struggling with their own project delivery and reappropriations issues, this delay is reflected in the RCO’s project performance and reappropriations levels.

### 3.2 Comparative Assessment of RCO's Reappropriations Rate

To gauge how the RCO is performing relative to its sponsor agencies and others engaged in similar types of natural resources and/or grant-making work, a comparative analysis was undertaken using information from the State's enacted capital budgets for the 2007-09 and 2005-07 biennial funding cycles, as documented by the Office of Financial Management.

#### Agencies Selected for Comparison

The following state agencies were selected for comparison:

**The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development.** The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development is offered as a point of comparison because it engages in grant-making and public works projects. In terms of total capital budget, the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development is much larger than the RCO. For the 2005-07 biennium, its capital budget totaled \$1.0 billion with reappropriations of \$455.5 million (45%); in the 2007-09 biennium, its capital budget totaled \$1.4 billion with reappropriations of \$638.5 million (45%).

**The Department of Ecology.** The Department of Ecology is perhaps most similar to the RCO in that it is a natural resources agency engaged in a number grant-making programs to support environmental management. In terms of total capital budget, the Department of Ecology is approximately twice as large as the RCO. For the 2005-07 biennium, its capital budget totaled \$655.9 million with reappropriations of \$260.3 million (40%); in the 2007-09 biennium, its capital budget totaled \$817.9 million with reappropriations of \$387.1 million (47%).

**The Department of Natural Resources.** The Department of Natural Resources is a natural resources agency that is a recipient of RCO grants. As of August 2007, the Department of Natural Resources had 29 active projects with the RCO, totaling over \$30.4 million. In the 2005-07 biennium, its capital budget totaled \$159.4 million with reappropriations of \$25.3 million (16%); in the 2007-09 biennium, its capital budget totaled \$251.0 million with reappropriations of \$15.1 million (6%). Relative to the RCO and other state agencies with RCO-funded projects, the Department of Natural Resources has the lowest rate of reappropriations.

**The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission.** The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission is a natural resources agency that is a recipient of RCO grants. As of August 2007, the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission had 32 active projects with the RCO, totaling over \$19.6 million. In the 2005-07 biennium, its capital budget totaled \$49.6 million with reappropriations of \$8.9 million (18%); in the 2007-09 budget cycle, its capital budget nearly doubled, totaling \$98.1 million with reappropriations of \$32.5 million (33%).

**The Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife.** The Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife is a natural resources agency that is a recipient of RCO grants. As of August 2007, it had 34 active projects with the RCO, totaling over \$24.7 million. In the 2005-07 biennium, the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife's capital budget totaled \$71.3 million with reappropriations of \$21.5 million (30%); in the 2007-09 budget cycle, its capital budget totaled \$78.3 million with reappropriations of \$10.5 million (13%).

## RCO Project Delivery and Grant Manager Workload Study

**The Washington State Conservation Commission.** The Washington State Conservation Commission is a natural resources agency that engages in some grant-making activities. It works with conservation districts to help citizens protect renewable resources and administers a number of small grant programs to promote organizational capacity building and promote better land management and conservation. The Washington State Conservation Commission is significantly smaller than the RCO in terms of capital budget. In the 2005-07 biennium, its capital budget totaled \$14.9 million with reappropriations of \$4.3 million (29%); in the 2007-09 biennium, its capital budget totaled \$7.2 million with reappropriations of \$4.3 million (60%).

### RCO's Relative Reappropriations Trends

During the 2005-07 budget cycle, the RCO's rate of reappropriations was higher than all six similar agencies described here. During the most recent 2007-09 budget cycle, the RCO's rate of reappropriations decreased to a level below that of the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, the Department of Ecology, and The Washington State Conservation Commission.

**Exhibit 4** below compares total capital budget and reappropriations levels of the RCO with the six state agencies over the last two biennial budget cycles.

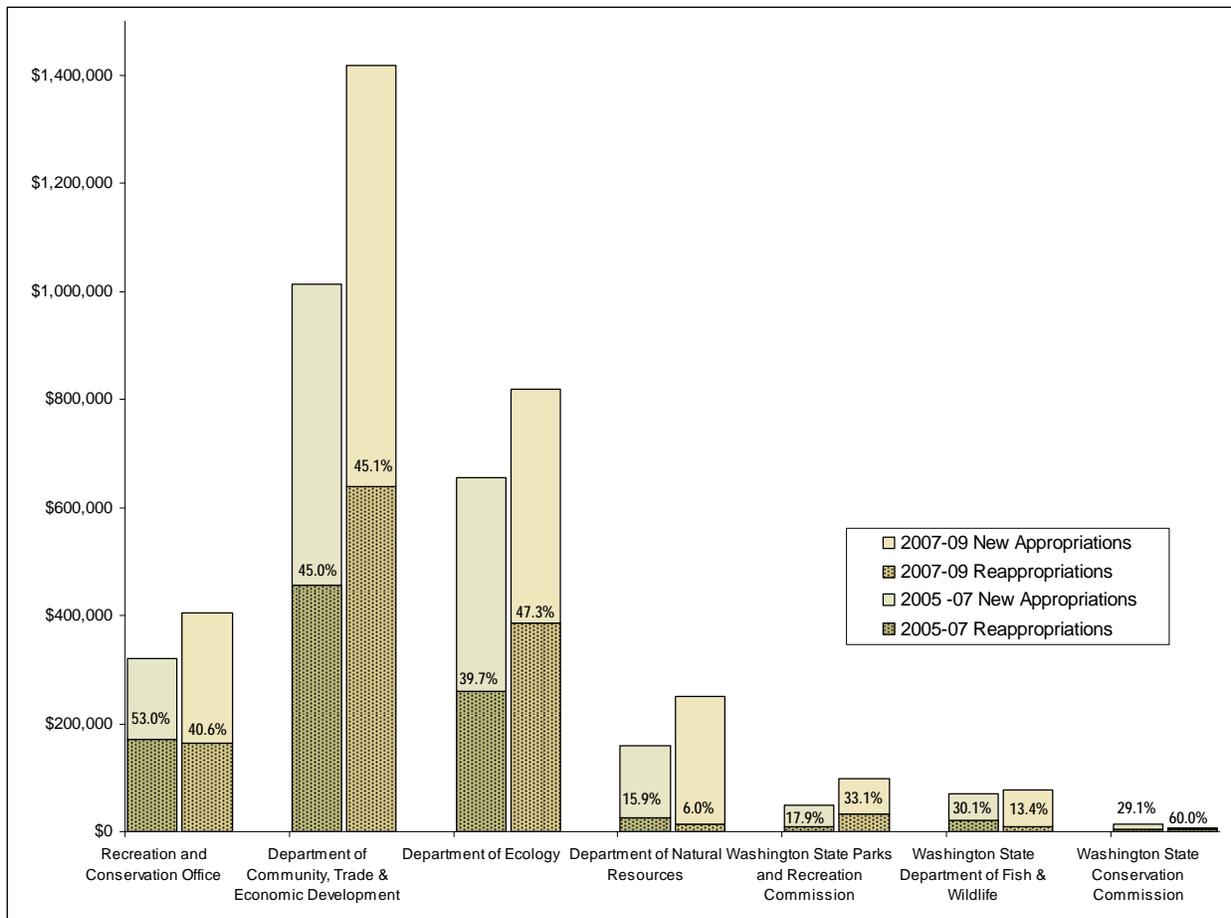
# RCO Project Delivery and Grant Manager Workload Study

## Exhibit 4

### RCO Reappropriations Compared to Other Relevant State Agencies

(in \$ thousands)

State Agency	2005-07 BUDGET CYCLE				2007-09 BUDGET CYCLE			
	New Appropriations	Re-appropriations	Total Capital Budget	Re-appropriations Percent	New Appropriations	Re-appropriations	Total Capital Budget	Re-appropriations Percent
<b>The Recreation and Conservation Office</b>	150,876	170,073	320,949	53.0%	240,004	164,037	404,041	40.6%
The Washington State Conservation Commission	10,550	4,325	14,875	29.1%	2,879	4,318	7,197	60.0%
The Department of Ecology	395,649	260,279	655,928	39.7%	430,749	387,145	817,894	47.3%
The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development	557,252	455,514	1,012,766	45.0%	778,546	638,546	1,417,092	45.1%
The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission	40,711	8,875	49,586	17.9%	65,604	32,483	98,087	33.1%
The Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife	49,887	21,452	71,339	30.1%	67,761	10,499	78,260	13.4%
The Department of Natural Resources	134,121	25,264	159,384	15.9%	235,856	15,128	250,984	6.0%



Source: Office of Financial Management and Berk & Associates, 2008

### **3.3 Detailed Assessment of RCO's Reappropriations**

Analysis of information provided by the RCO's Finance Department on capital budget and reappropriations over the past five biennia yielded the following observations:

- The RCO's capital reappropriations have increased at an average rate of 20% per biennium, as compared to a 5% biennial rate of increase for newly appropriated funds
- Reappropriations account for 45% of the Agency's capital budget, on average
- During the 2003-2005 biennium, RCO's capital reappropriation rate peaked at 58%
- Reappropriation rates declined in the two biennia following 2003-05 and were at 40.6% in the most recent budget cycle
- Adjusting for the addition of new programs, the RCO's reappropriation rate has remained relatively constant, averaging 53%
- On average, the Washington Wildlife Recreation Program accounts for 33% of the Agency's capital budget and 38% of its reappropriations
- On average, SRFB projects account for 48% of the Agency's capital budget and 53% of its reappropriations

All programs are experiencing significant levels of reappropriations, ranging from a low of 31% to a high of 87% in the 2007-09 biennium. For longer standing programs, reappropriations have remained relatively constant over the past few biennia. A couple of small new programs (Hood Canal and Youth Athletic Facilities) have experienced significant reappropriations with 100% of the funds awarded in the 2005-07 biennium reappropriated in the 2007-09 biennium (\$3.5 million total)

**Exhibit 5** below shows the RCO's reappropriation levels by program over the last five biennia.

**Exhibit 5  
RCO Reappropriations by Program**

Program	99-01			01-03			03-05			05-07			07-09			07-09 Reappropriations	Average Reappropriations
	New Funds	Reappropriations	Total														
Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account							5,356	3,913	9,270	5,025	4,368	9,392	5,025	3,405	8,430	40%	43%
Boating Facilities Program	8,433	11,218	19,652	6,934	13,332	20,266	7,507	14,732	22,239	7,271	10,803	18,074	8,021	6,976	14,997	47%	60%
Boating Infrastructure Grants				2,000		2,000	2,000	1,900	3,900	200	3,122	3,322	200	1,329	1,529	87%	59%
Firearms and Archery Range Recreation	354	668	1,023	400	256	656	250	451	701	222	335	557	472	263	735	36%	54%
Family Forest Fish Passage Program							2,000		2,000	4,367	1,191	5,558	6,000	2,725	8,725	31%	24%
Hatchery				11,200		11,200	10,000	8,536	18,536	6,000	11,210	17,210	6,000	6,884	12,884	53%	45%
Hood Canal										1,000		1,000		996	996	100%	50%
Land and Water Conservation Fund	773	253	1,026	7,500	61	7,561	5,735	6,583	12,318	4,500	7,126	11,626	1,000	5,633	6,633	85%	50%
Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities Program	5,434	5,662	11,096	5,528	6,519	12,047	6,926	6,738	13,664	7,579	8,022	15,601	9,036	8,140	17,176	47%	50%
National Recreational Trails Program	1,478	594	2,073	2,333	1,194	3,527	2,260	1,593	3,853	2,800	1,555	4,355	3,500	2,056	5,556	37%	36%
Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration													40,750		40,750	0%	0%
Salmon Recovery Funding Board Grants	119,928		119,928	74,993	77,235	152,228	46,375	93,737	140,112	62,000	80,071	142,071	60,000	72,562	132,562	55%	47%
Watershed Data										500		500			0	N/A	0%
Washington Wildlife Recreation Program	48,000	47,036	95,036	45,000	51,197	96,197	45,000	48,753	93,753	50,000	41,325	91,325	100,000	50,568	150,568	34%	45%
Youth Athletic Facilities										2,500		2,500		2,500	2,500	100%	50%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>184,401</b>	<b>65,431</b>	<b>249,833</b>	<b>155,888</b>	<b>149,794</b>	<b>305,682</b>	<b>133,410</b>	<b>186,936</b>	<b>320,345</b>	<b>153,964</b>	<b>169,127</b>	<b>323,091</b>	<b>240,004</b>	<b>164,037</b>	<b>404,041</b>	<b>40.6%</b>	<b>46%</b>
<b>Percent Reappropriated</b>		<b>26.2%</b>			<b>49.0%</b>			<b>58.4%</b>			<b>52.3%</b>			<b>40.6%</b>			
Totals (excl. new programs)	64,473	65,431		142,688	149,794		131,410	186,936		149,964	169,127		149,254	164,037			
<b>Percent Reappropriated</b>		<b>50.4%</b>			<b>51.2%</b>			<b>58.7%</b>			<b>53.0%</b>			<b>52.4%</b>			

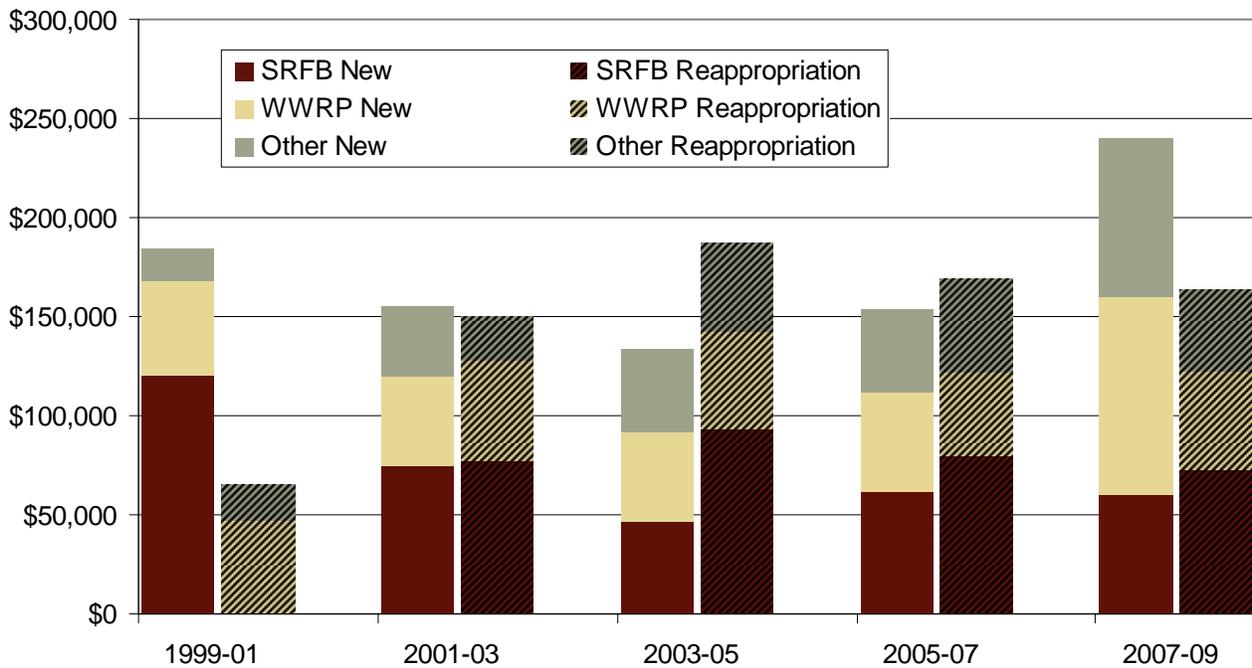
Source: RCO and Berk & Associates, 2008

### 3.4 Drivers of RCO Reappropriations

At a programmatic level, the Washington Wildlife Recreation Program and Salmon Restoration projects are driving reappropriations, accounting for 75% of all reappropriations during the 2007-09 budget cycle. These two programs account for 70% of the total capital budget, and have a concomitant level of reappropriations. Averaging 60% over the past five biennia, the Boating Facilities Program's reappropriations rate is the highest of all RCO programs. Boating Facilities Program projects comprise 6% of the total capital budget.

**Exhibit 6** below shows reappropriations by major program over the past five biennia.

**Exhibit 6**  
**RCO Funding Levels by Major Program**  
**(in thousands)**



Source: RCO, Berk & Associates 2008

## 4.0 ANALYSIS OF RCO PROJECT DELAY

### 4.1 Overview

Schedule deviation and project delay are the primary contributors to reappropriations associated with projects scheduled to be completed within one biennium or less. A detailed analysis of the timeliness of active grant-funded projects was undertaken to assess the current state of RCO's grant portfolio and to determine what types of projects, programs or sponsors were more likely to experience delays.

The analysis is based upon a complete list of RCO's active grant projects as of August 2007. These projects were exported from RCO's PRISM system by RCO staff and do not include administrative contracts or small education and training projects. The list includes a total of 560 active projects. Project delay was defined as the difference in time (measured in months) between the "original funding end date" and "funding end date" reported by PRISM.

In total, 206 of the 560 active projects are experiencing documented delays (37%). In terms of dollars, this translates into \$86.1 million of \$207.5 million (42%) total program dollars. While there was insufficient data to determine at a quantitative level causes leading to project delay, the study does provide a qualitative assessment of this issue further on in this report.

With respect to severe delays (defined as delays greater than 24 months), 47 of the 560 active projects fall into this category (8%), accounting for \$18.8 million in total program dollars (9%).

### 4.2 Project Delay by Program

At the program level, the Washington Wildlife Recreation Program accounts for the largest portion of delayed projects, with approximately \$42.3 million dollars in total funding tied to delayed projects (49%). While salmon projects account for a lesser amount (\$25.4 million, or 30%) of total delayed projects, salmon projects include the greatest portion of severely delayed projects (\$11.5 million or 61% of severely delayed projects). The Boating Facilities Program also includes a relatively high portion of severely delayed projects. At \$3.6 million (19% of severely delayed projects), the Boating Facilities Program surpasses the Washington Wildlife Recreation Program in this category.

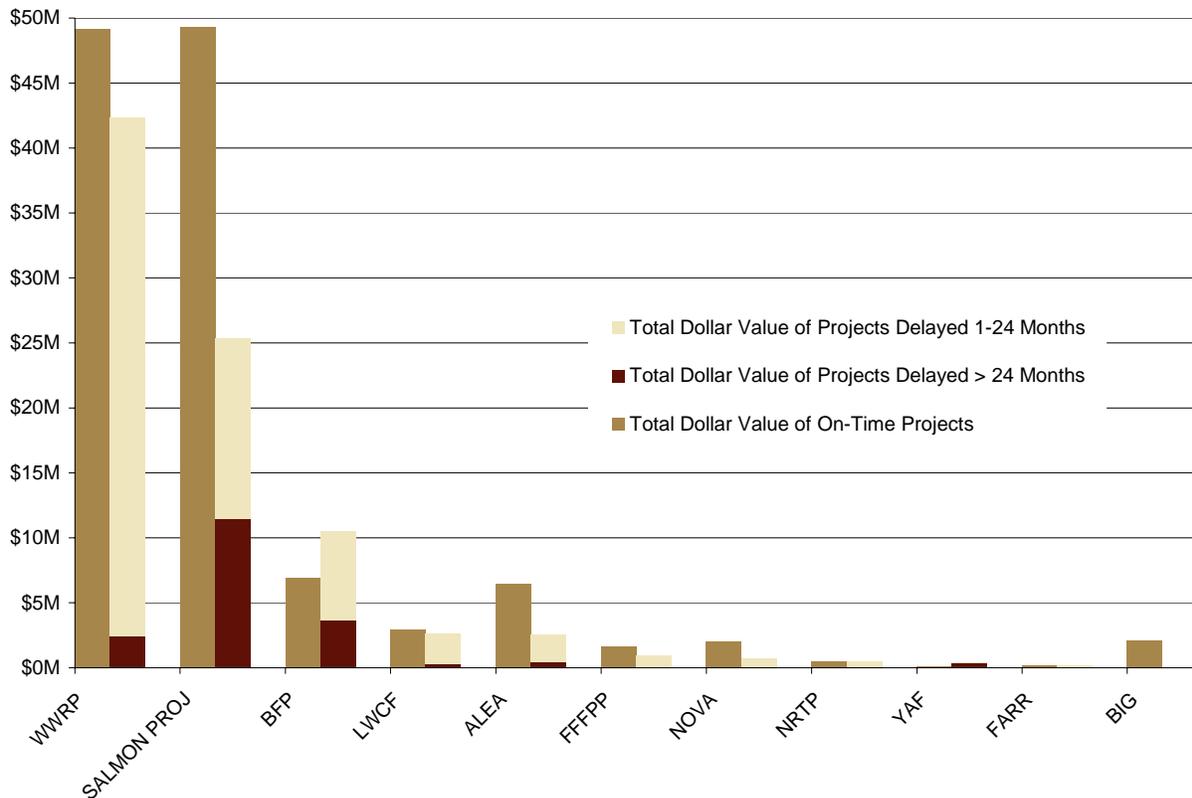
**Exhibit 7** below provides more detail on project delays by program.

# RCO Project Delivery and Grant Manager Workload Study

## Exhibit 7

### Delayed RCO Projects by Program

Program	Total Dollar Value of Active Projects	Total Dollar Value of Projects Without Delays	Total Dollar Value of Projects Delayed 1-24 Months	Total Dollar Value of Projects Delayed > 24 Months	Percent of Total Project Dollars	Percent of Total Dollar Value of Delayed Projects
Washington Wildlife Recreation Program	\$91,517,576	\$49,177,382	\$39,885,321	\$2,454,873	44.1%	49.2%
Salmon Recovery Funding Board Grants	\$74,719,935	\$49,329,414	\$13,878,403	\$11,512,118	36.0%	29.5%
Boating Facilities Program	\$17,472,427	\$6,969,212	\$6,860,577	\$3,642,638	8.4%	12.2%
Land and Water Conservation Fund	\$5,569,771	\$2,968,193	\$2,301,578	\$300,000	2.7%	3.0%
Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account	\$8,958,271	\$6,436,525	\$2,111,242	\$410,504	4.3%	2.9%
Family Forest Fish Passage Program	\$2,610,623	\$1,617,392	\$993,231	\$0	1.3%	1.2%
Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities Program	\$2,691,465	\$1,989,015	\$660,450	\$42,000	1.3%	0.8%
National Recreational Trails Program	\$968,818	\$514,492	\$428,325	\$26,001	0.5%	0.5%
Youth Athletic Facilities	\$548,069	\$142,186	\$25,000	\$380,883	0.3%	0.5%
Firearms and Archery Range Recreation Program	\$346,656	\$167,362	\$179,294	\$0	0.2%	0.2%
Boating Infrastructure Grants	\$2,129,500	\$2,129,500	\$0	\$0	1.0%	0.0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$207,533,111</b>	<b>\$121,440,673</b>	<b>\$67,323,421</b>	<b>\$18,769,017</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>



Source: RCO and Berk & Associates, 2008

### **4.3 Project Delay by Sponsor Type**

The RCO works with a large variety of sponsor organizations, ranging from other state agencies to small nonprofit organizations. Given the variations in staffing levels and resources available to different types of organizations, it was initially expected that smaller organizations with less experience managing capital projects would have a greater likelihood of sponsoring delayed projects. This was not always the case.

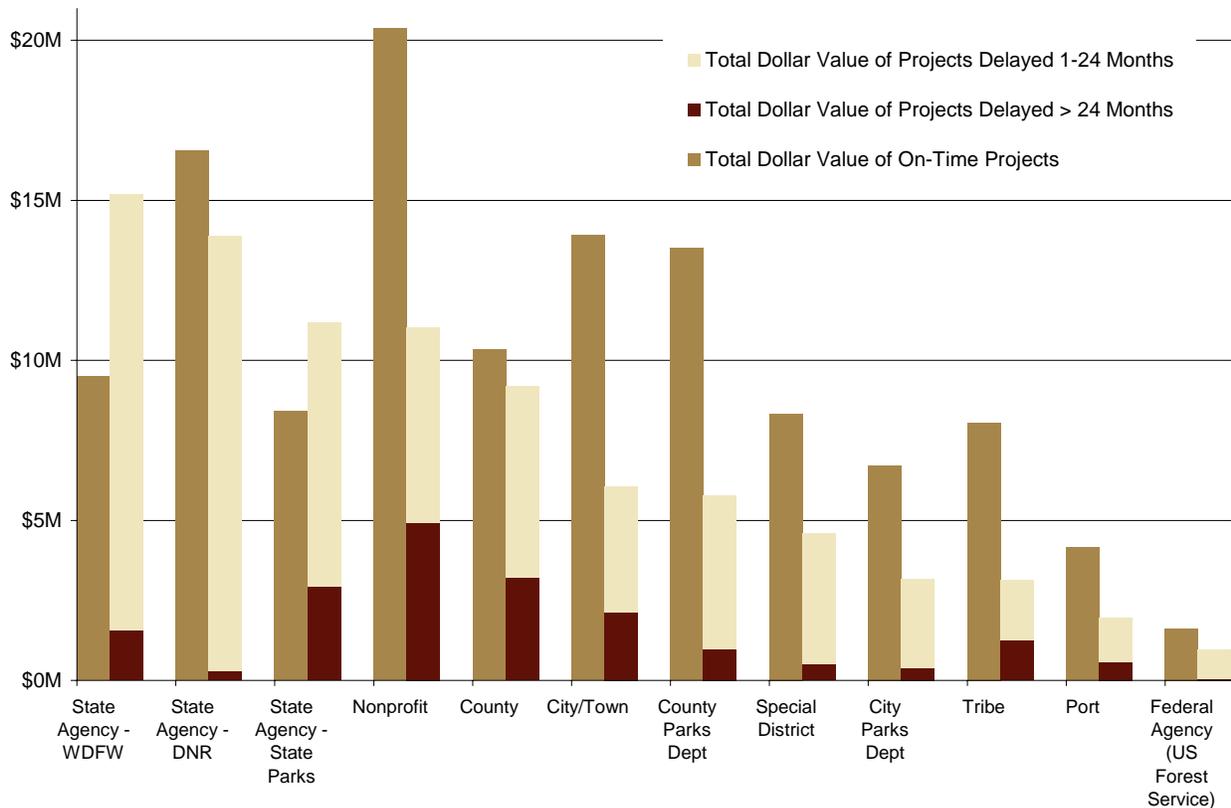
Projects sponsored by other state agencies – the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, and the Department of Natural Resources – account for \$40.3 million, or 47% of the total project delay. Nonprofit agencies showed mixed experiences. They were responsible for the greatest portion of on-time projects (\$20.4 million, or 17% of on-time projects), and they were also responsible for the greatest portion of severely delayed projects (\$4.9 million, or 26% of severely delayed projects). Other organizations like tribes, cities, counties, and others, showed similarly mixed results, though on a smaller scale. Tribes, for example, sponsor \$11.2 million or 5% of RCO-funded projects. With \$8.1 million associated with on-time projects, tribes account for 7% of all on-time projects. They also account for 7% of all severely delayed projects (\$1.3 million).

**Exhibit 8** below provides more detail on project delays by sponsor type.

Exhibit 8

RCO Delayed Projects by Sponsor Type

Sponsor Type	Total Dollar Value of Active Projects	Total Dollar Value of Projects Without Delays	Total Dollar Value of Projects Delayed 1-24 Months	Total Dollar Value of Projects Delayed > 24 Months	Percent of Total Project Dollars	Percent of Total Dollar Value of Delayed Projects
State Agency - the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife	\$24,677,663	\$9,495,323	\$13,612,877	\$1,569,463	11.9%	17.6%
State Agency - the Department of Natural Resources	\$30,418,788	\$16,540,401	\$13,598,387	\$280,000	14.7%	16.1%
State Agency - the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission	\$19,591,697	\$8,400,167	\$8,255,907	\$2,935,623	9.4%	13.0%
Nonprofit	\$31,400,896	\$20,380,310	\$6,106,522	\$4,914,064	15.1%	12.8%
County	\$19,523,374	\$10,331,971	\$5,967,815	\$3,223,588	9.4%	10.7%
City/Town	\$19,967,601	\$13,908,567	\$3,935,296	\$2,123,738	9.6%	7.0%
County Parks Dept	\$19,276,953	\$13,503,062	\$4,811,700	\$962,191	9.3%	6.7%
Special District	\$12,916,922	\$8,328,898	\$4,093,508	\$494,516	6.2%	5.3%
City Parks Dept	\$9,891,667	\$6,715,576	\$2,790,390	\$385,701	4.8%	3.7%
Tribe	\$11,205,830	\$8,058,025	\$1,875,117	\$1,272,688	5.4%	3.7%
Port	\$6,095,272	\$4,154,900	\$1,374,927	\$565,445	2.9%	2.3%
Federal Agency (US Forest Service)	\$2,566,448	\$1,623,473	\$900,975	\$42,000	1.2%	1.1%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$207,533,111</b>	<b>\$121,440,673</b>	<b>\$67,323,421</b>	<b>\$18,769,017</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>



Source: RCO, Berk & Associates, 2008

#### **4.4 Project Delay by Project Type**

Different types of projects (acquisition, restoration, development, or combination) have different types of challenges associated with them. Acquisition projects were repeatedly noted as being problematic given the unpredictability of landowners, rapidly increasing property values in some areas of the State, and the amount of time it takes for the Legislature, funding boards, and agency to make a funding decision and execute the potential acquisition. Development projects are subject to the pitfalls of other capital projects, like permitting challenges and rapidly increasing construction costs. These types of causes of delay are discussed in greater detail in the sections that follow.

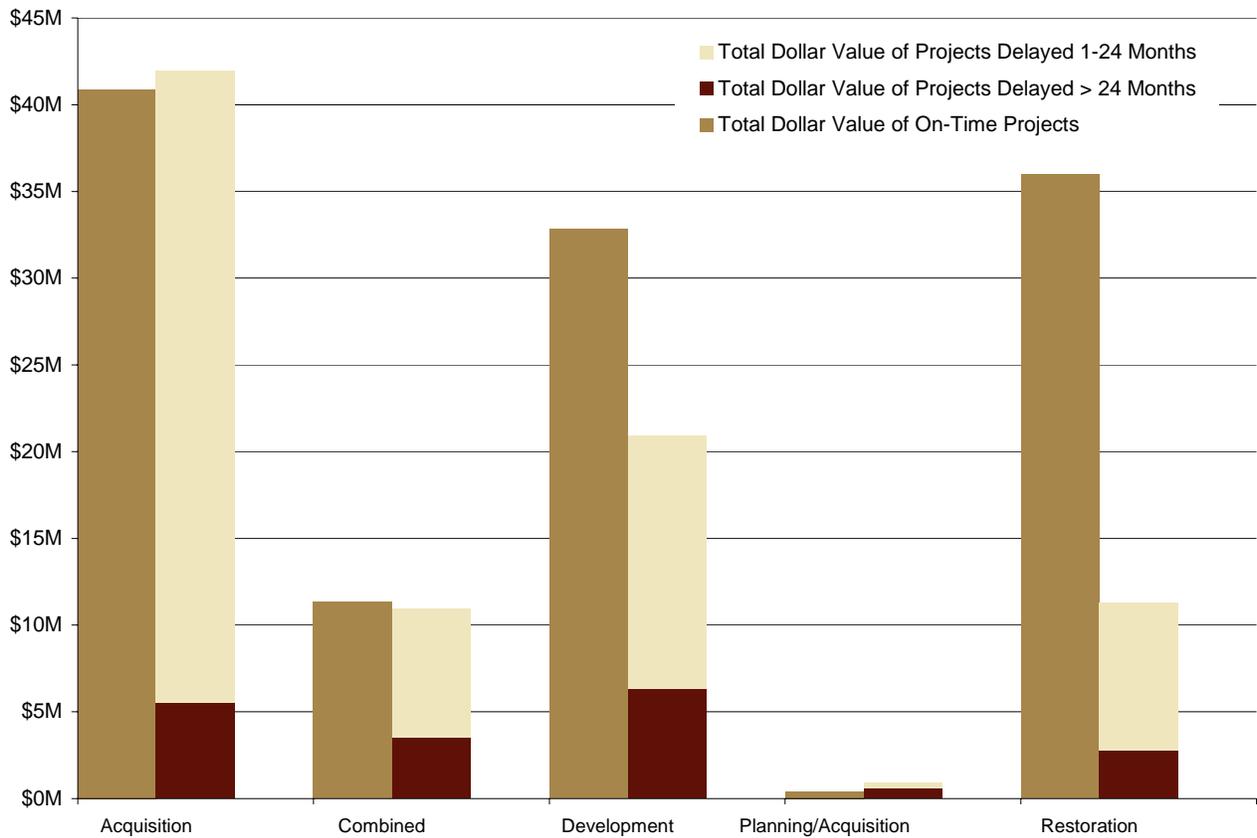
Acquisition projects account for the greatest portion of delayed projects (49%), with \$42.0 million dollars being the total value of projects experiencing some delay. In contrast, development projects account for \$21.0 million in total value of delayed projects (24%). While development projects account for less than acquisition projects in terms of total delayed projects, they have the greatest portion of severely delayed projects (\$6.3 million or 34%).

**Exhibit 9** below provides more detail on project delays by project type.

Exhibit 9

RCO Delayed Projects by Project Type

Project Type	Total Dollar Value of Active Projects	Total Dollar Value of Projects Without Delays	Total Dollar Value of Projects Delayed 1-24 Months	Total Dollar Value of Projects Delayed > 24 Months	Percent of Total Project Dollars	Percent of Total Dollar Value of Delayed Projects
Acquisition	\$82,866,633	\$40,878,183	\$36,433,818	\$5,554,632	39.9%	48.8%
Combined	\$22,263,200	\$11,318,406	\$7,401,180	\$3,543,614	10.7%	12.7%
Development	\$53,770,577	\$32,819,077	\$14,619,585	\$6,331,915	25.9%	24.3%
Planning/Acquisition	\$1,364,762	\$424,430	\$338,575	\$601,757	0.7%	1.1%
Restoration	\$47,267,939	\$36,000,577	\$8,530,263	\$2,737,099	22.8%	13.1%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$207,533,111</b>	<b>\$121,440,673</b>	<b>\$67,323,421</b>	<b>\$18,769,017</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>



Source: RCO, Berk & Associates, 2008

## 5.0 CAUSES OF PROJECT DELAY

Project delay for RCO-funded grants stem from a broad range of internal and external factors, some of which are closely linked at a systemic level. A case in point is that the RCO's most frequent sponsors, such as the Department of Natural Resources, the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission and Recreation Commission, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife, are currently facing their own challenges concerning reappropriations and delivering timely projects for their various grant programs. Conversely, the RCO's own internal processes and actions can have significant ramifications on how a sponsor manages a project.

### 5.1 External Causes of Project Delay

Project sponsors have to overcome a lot of hurdles in order to finish a project on time. There are multiple reasons for schedule slippage – inadequate planning and budgeting, lack of resources, and slow internal processes are all factors that eat away vital time from the schedule. Below are some of the most common external challenges cited for RCO funded project delay:

**Lack of Project Management Resources.** Often, sponsors have insufficient staff and time available or dedicated to ensuring that a project is sufficiently planned for, monitored, and managed. Project delay can also occur from sponsors spreading resources too thin, such as starting new projects while current projects are already experiencing staffing and money shortages.

**Inadequate Project Planning and Scoping.** Not enough up-front investment in scoping and planning for general readiness-to-proceed can lead to schedule slippage early on. Specific examples include not fully researching and understanding site conditions and construction timetables, projecting the true costs of construction, or budgeting adequate time to obtain site approval or permits.

**Escalating Costs.** Unplanned increases in materials and construction costs, or landowners wanting additional monies than previously agreed upon (specific to acquisition projects) are all financial factors that can cause project delay. Such escalating costs can often delay a project as sponsors are forced to place the project on hold while they look for additional funds.

**Delays in Project Start.** Postponing a project's start date often indicates that over the long-term the project will become delayed. Some of the relevant issues cited, particularly for construction or acquisition projects, were lack of administrative clearance, failure or delay in signing a construction contract, failure or delay to take over the project site, or inability to sign a lease agreement.

**Fish Window.** Traditionally, construction sites in close proximity to salmon spawning beds are required to operate within a specific summertime "fish window" when salmon activity is at its lowest. Such a window limits the timeframe certain projects are active, and can sometimes hold up or delay a project if not adequately planned for.

**Inexperienced Project Management Staff.** Initial naiveté in applying for grants and managing projects, particularly for first-time applicants or inexperienced project sponsors, often translate into unrealistic expectations for deliverables, cost, and time estimates.

## RCO Project Delivery and Grant Manager Workload Study

**Lack of Consequences.** Due to the lack of consequences for project delay, particularly from the RCO, many sponsors do not view schedule slippage as a problem or issue. Sponsors are aware that a project can be extended up to four years before it has to go to the Board. As such, many of the deadlines created for a project are often ignored or seen as “soft deadlines.”

**Slow Internal Approval Processes.** Approval from council members, advisory groups, financial departments, or other stakeholders is often needed for starting a project, entering a new project phase, or making changes or modifications. In particular, government sponsoring entities often face challenges with bureaucratic processes, which in turn can stretch an already tight project timeline.

**Scope Changes.** Frequent or significant changes in project specifications due to unforeseen consequences or changes in desired results during different stages of project development can lead to additional work and ineffective planning. Scope changes also take time to obtain approval (both on the sponsor side and from the RCO) which can produce schedule slippage.

**Staff Attrition.** Another issue related to project delay is unplanned attrition, which can affect a project plan and timeline as valuable knowledge and communication can be lost if not effectively transferred. Time is also lost in the mentoring of new person as he or she may require some time to understand the project and its complexities.

**Task Spillover.** Tasks that are not completed in previously established milestones (due to factors such as inefficiency, resource problems, etc), will likely have to be completed in the next milestone thereby increasing the load on the project management team. If adequate time is not planned for, these tasks spilled from previous milestones can have a snowball effect and delay the project.

**Accessibility Rules.** Sponsors frequently do not effectively plan their project around accessibility requirements, such as building wheelchair ramps or accessible bathrooms for a facility construction project. This situation is sometimes only identified once a project is well underway, which can cause delays in construction or lead sponsors pressed to find additional monies to accommodate such requirements.

**Obtaining Permits.** The lengthy permitting process, such as from the U.S. Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, can take over a year to complete. Many applicants do not have the resources or even the authority (particularly government agencies) to apply for permits unless they are guaranteed that the project will be funded.

**Dependency on Other Funding Sources.** Delays caused by other funding sources, such as the National Parks Service, are often beyond sponsor control, sometimes leading to the postponement or halting of a project. Additionally, some of the other funding sources may have tighter or more difficult restrictions, which can be harder to navigate and gain approval from if an unforeseen circumstance arises.

## 5.2 Internal Factors of Project Delay

In addition to external factors that contribute to project delay, there are a number of factors internal to the RCO that contribute to project delay. These factors were identified through focus group discussions with RCO staff, individual interviews with RCO grant managers and selected staff, and interviews with other stakeholders like the Office of Financial Management and legislative staff. Below are the internal factors identified that are contributing to project delay:

**Workload.** An analysis of RCO grant manager workload is presented in detail in the sections that follow. Given their extensive on-the-ground knowledge of programs and sponsors, grant managers are called upon to perform a wide variety of tasks, not all of which are directly related to managing grants. The breadth of tasks they perform, in combination with an increasing number of projects to manage, have left grant managers with little time to proactively manage projects. The result is limited awareness of the status of active projects and an inability to potentially prevent occurrences like scope changes that lead to project delay.

**Travel Time.** Site visits required during the application process as well as during project closeout involve a significant amount of statewide travel. While such visits are beneficial to both sponsor and grant manager, it also leaves less time for grant managers to focus on in-house management duties (authorizing amendments, handling billings, answering sponsor questions, etc).

**Internal Document Approval.** The need for authorization by RCO management (Section Managers or Executive Management) for signing off on amendments or other important documentation was noted as an internal issue for project delay. There was some concern from a few grant managers interviewed that this problem could be exacerbated if the threshold requirement for amendment approval by management is set too low.

**Programmatic and Policy Shifts.** Each grant cycle brings major programmatic and policy shifts that are generally necessitated by efforts to address problems or issues identified by the Legislature or the Board. Such shifts have made it difficult for grant managers to stay abreast of requirements and efficiently answer sponsor questions. This sentiment was noted most strongly on the RCFB side, due to the higher number of grant programs.

**Lack of Policy Direction.** Several SRFB staff interviewed felt that as a relatively new and rapidly expanding grant program, there has not been sufficient policy development for the programs that they oversee. Where possible, they have adopted RCFB policies but do not apply them comprehensively. This has created a lack of clear policy direction, causing grant managers to address issues as they arise on a case-by-case basis.

**Poor Communication.** A few RCO staff interviewed noted that there was a history of poor communication from previous executive management, which lead to some grant managers feeling that management did not have a complete understanding of all the work that they do. For example, previous Executive Management generally did not participate in any grant manager meetings, nor did they clearly communicate an elevated sense of importance around project timeliness. This lack of understanding and direction has made it difficult for grant managers in the past to effectively prioritize their workload.

**Confusing Policy Manuals.** Policy manuals are confusing and difficult to use. For RCFB programs alone, there are eight different general policy manuals covering topics from planning policies to billings. In addition to this there are 13 programmatic policy manuals. The Non-highway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities Program and the Washington Wildlife Recreation Program each have three different manuals covering multiple subprograms, while programs like the Boating Facilities Program and Youth Athletic Facilities have one manual that covers multiple subprograms. In addition to the policy manuals there are dozens of different forms corresponding to the program and project type. This level of complexity means that grant managers spend more time answering sponsor questions and that sponsors may potentially head down the wrong path on some element of their project, causing unnecessary complication and potentially, project delay. Some noted that if manuals were consolidated, less time would be spent searching for information.

**Use of PRISM.** As a result of recent upgrades and modifications made to PRISM, both the sponsor and the grant manager have been experiencing difficulties navigating the system and have noted that information takes longer to upload and input. This leads to more time dedicated to helping sponsors locate information as well as more time spent using the system.

**Reports and Information.** More importantly, PRISM is not a good reporting tool – grant managers cannot quickly access reports that inform them of the status of their projects. Many of the management staff expressed that while a lot of data is input into the system there is difficulty extracting useful information.

**Processing Billings.** Submitted billings often get delayed as the grant manager tries to coordinate with the Finance Department and the sponsor to ensure all required documentation has been submitted and issues of reimbursement are resolved.

**Conversions.** Conversions – projects that change the use of their originally intended function and are thus in non-compliance – require a great deal of grant manager time. Additionally, grant managers interviewed felt that they do not always have the level of expertise required to deal with them efficiently. Furthermore, conversions are generally unexpected occurrences that don't allow grant managers much flexibility in scheduling.

**Executive Order 05-05.** Executive Order 05-05, signed into action in November 2005, requires state agencies with capital improvement projects to integrate the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA), and concerned tribes into their capital project planning process. Although the RCO has recently taken steps to determine agency-wide policies around EO 05-05, grant managers working on SRFB and RCFB projects are not interpreting it consistently. Questions around how much responsibility for complying with EO 05-05 should be passed on to sponsors caused uncertainty and delay as grant managers tried to work through this issue on multiple projects.

**Lack of Support from Management.** In previous years, in instances where a project was significantly delayed and not making any progress, and the grant manager has recommended that the project be terminated, management has not backed the grant manager's decision. This has led to some projects languishing and adding to delay and reappropriations levels.

**Putting Contracts under Agreement.** Due to workload constraints or missing documentation from the sponsor, grant managers are not always timely in getting approved projects under agreement. This can lead to a delayed project start and a greater likelihood that the entire project will be delayed.

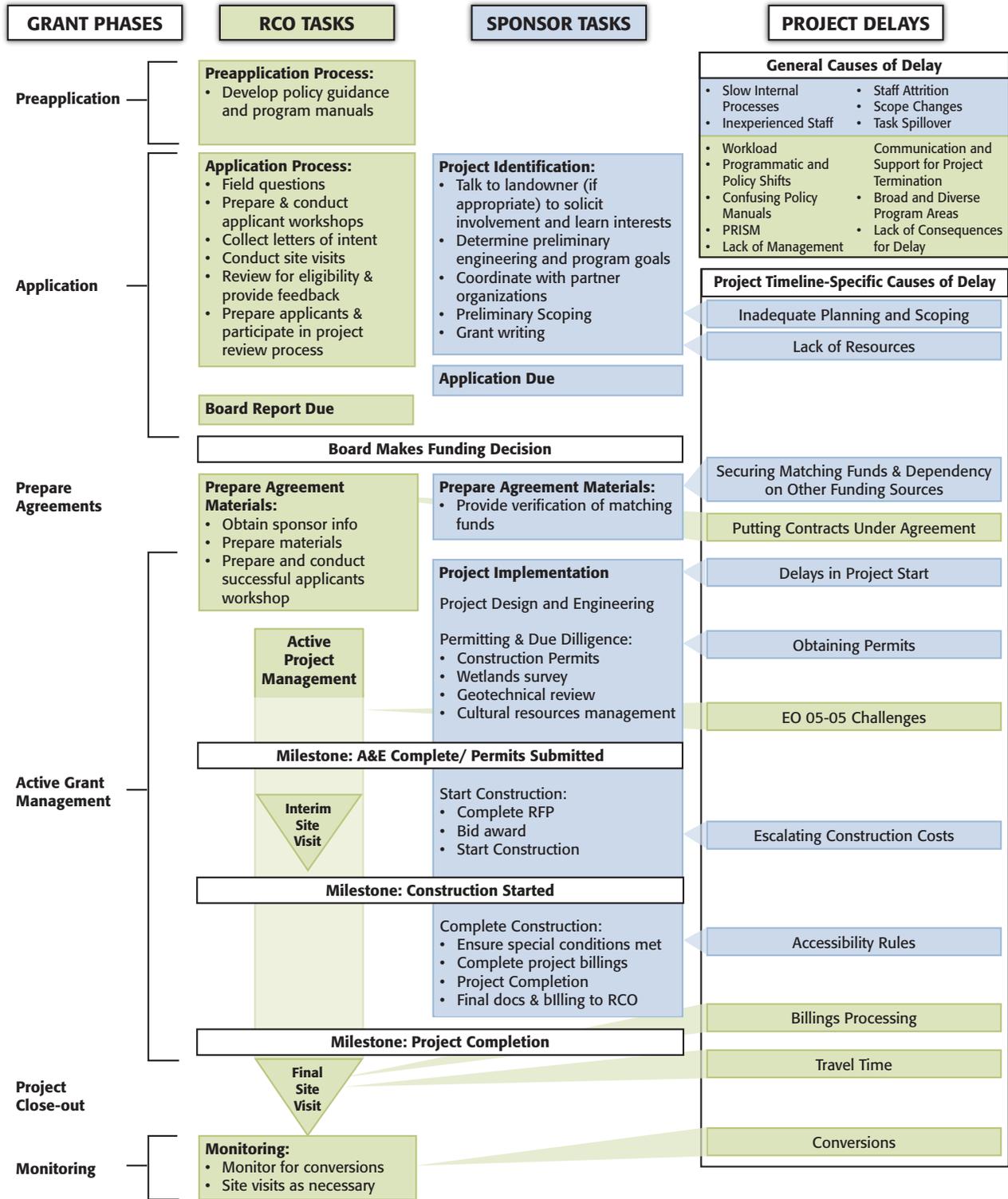
**Broad and Diverse Number of Program Areas.** For RCFB grant managers, the expectation to become expert in such a broad array of recreation and habitat programs has been a particular challenge. RCFB currently administers nine different grant programs and 25 subprograms. Each of these categories reflects a unique set of policies, and multiple project types (i.e. acquisition, development, etc.) can be executed under these programs and subprograms. It has become a difficult task for RCFB grant managers to remain experts in all of these categories, especially when changes and additions occur during each funding cycle. This level of complication leads to inefficiencies and exacerbates workload issues.

### 5.3 Conceptual Example of a Project Experiencing Delay

The external and internal delays described above can affect a project at different phases in its life-cycle, with varying consequences. **Exhibit 10** below provides an illustrative example of a typical development project, noting where in the project lifecycle the internal and external delays described above are more likely to arise.

Exhibit 10

RCO Development Project Timeline and Potential Areas of Delay



## 6.0 GRANT MANAGER WORKLOAD

Grant manager workload is not only tied to project delivery, but also impacts staff morale and the Agency as a whole in effectively reaching its goals and objectives. To better understand workload concerns, focus groups were conducted with RCFB and SRFB staff as well as individual interviews with select grant managers. At present, all grant managers interviewed expressed concern with their current workload, which has increased significantly over the past few years.

The following section examines current grant manager roles and responsibilities, the challenges facing grant managers in securing a more balanced workload, and how workload is currently determined.

### 6.1 Staffing: Positions and Responsibilities

As shown in **Exhibit 11**, for SRFB, staff of nine includes one section manager, one senior operations grant manager, six grant managers (some of whom only dedicate a portion of their time to grant management), and one administrative assistant. For RCFB, the staff of twelve includes one section manager, two senior grant managers (one working on the operational side and one working on the policy side), six grant managers (one of whom dedicates a portion of her time to SRFB grant management), one grants program specialist, one accessibility specialist, and one administrative assistant. Additionally, there is one staff person within the Planning, Policy, and Government Affairs Division (not shown in the exhibit) that assists RCFB staff with project evaluations and coordinating with the various advisory groups. This division of labor results in 4.85 FTEs dedicated to grant management for SRFB and 6.7 FTEs dedicated to grant management for RCFB.

#### Exhibit 11

##### Grant Division Organizational Structure

SRFB	RCFB
Section Manager (1)	Section Manager (1)
Senior Grant Manager (1)	Senior Grant Manager (2)
Grant Manager (6)	Grant Manager (6)
Administrative Assistant (1)	Accessibility Specialist (1)
	Grant Program Specialist (1)
	Administrative Assistant (1)

Until recently, there had not been an increase in the number of grant managers hired, despite significant programmatic and budgetary growth. In attempting to address this issue, three new RCFB grant managers and one new SRFB grant manager were hired in 2007. However, it is important to note that one of the RCFB hires replaced a recently vacated grant manager position and was not a newly created position. Additionally, since taking on additional duties, Senior Grant Managers have

significantly reduced their active project workload, which means that the new hires are now assuming some of this burden, causing the average number of projects per grant manager to only decrease by a relatively low amount. Lastly, there is a steep and relatively long learning curve for new hires, which in the short-term creates additional work for some of the more experienced grant managers. Accordingly, while the new grant manager hires have alleviated workload pressures to a certain degree, many of the grant managers are still facing significant challenges in this area.

### Section Managers

Section Managers do not typically manage active projects (although the SRFB Section Manager does manage programmatic grants). General Section Managers' responsibilities are to:

- Supervise grant managers and other section staff
- Determine individual grant manager workload
- Oversee (at a general level) section operations concerning:
  - Policy initiation and development
  - The evaluation process
  - The training of new hires
  - Outreach with external stakeholders
- Understanding the challenges, opportunities, and issues associated with each program
- Serving as point person for the section and Executive Management
- Serving in an advisory capacity to the Board

The study finds, particularly for the RCFB, the Section Manager is experiencing difficulties in balancing such a broad range of responsibilities, particularly as this position may be performing additional duties outside those listed above. This in turn has led to an inability for the Section Manager to properly serve as supervisor and has created some confusion over what this position's roles and responsibilities are and should be.

## 6.2 Grant Manager Roles and Responsibilities

Historically, grant managers have been viewed as an available resource pool to draw from in filling various Agency needs and gaps. In addition to direct grant management, grant manager roles and responsibilities include assisting applicants during the application phase, preparing materials for Board meetings, creating and evaluating operational and grant policies, and updating policy manuals. For SRFB and RCFB grant managers, current work activities performed throughout the year can be roughly divided into four components:

- Pre-application and application
- Active project management
- Post-project closure
- Ongoing policy development

At a minimum, grant managers spend 50% of their time working on pre-application and application activities, although in some months this percentage moves closer to 80%. The remaining time is spent dealing with active projects and ongoing policy development. The majority of the grant managers interviewed noted that their schedule leaves very little time to monitor closed projects to ensure that they are in compliance or address post-project issues as they arise.

### **Pre-Application and Application Process**

During the pre-application and application process, grant managers spend the majority of their time preparing and updating materials, attending meetings and site visits, and serving as an informational resource for applicants. Specific tasks include:

- Updating policy manuals and application materials to reflect changes made by the Board
- Assisting applicants with technical, procedural, and programmatic issues and questions
- Preparing, conducting applicant workshops that are held throughout the State
- Visiting sites throughout the State to review projects and determine eligibility requirements
- Reviewing applications to ensure they are ready to proceed
- Preparing report materials before Board funding decision meetings
- Notifying applicants that their projects have been funded and placing contracts under agreement

During this time, significant travel may be required, particularly for conducting workshops and project site visits. While certainly a busy time, grant managers described the pre-application and application process as one of the most rewarding parts of their job. This is attributable to the strengthening of existing sponsor relationships and building new relationships, traveling out in the field to see potential projects, and reviewing exciting and innovative proposals. Additionally, spending sufficient time with proposals in this phase gives selected projects a greater chance of being successful down the road.

### **Active Project Management**

Once a project has been funded, the grant manager is responsible for working with sponsors and monitoring projects to ensure that they are meeting Agency requirements and deadlines and that the project is running smoothly and on-time. Specific tasks include:

- Making sure that sponsors are meeting their stated milestones
- Reviewing and authorizing billing requests<sup>1</sup>
- Answering sponsor's questions about technical, procedural, or programmatic issues
- Reminding sponsors to send in necessary paperwork in order to meet contractual requirements
- Processing amendments, such as time and scope changes

---

<sup>1</sup> The Fiscal Department has recently assumed the responsibility of initially reviewing billing requests and contacting sponsors if documents are missing or requirements are not being met.

- Inputting up-to-date information into PRISM and organizing file folders
- Conducting site visits or performing desk audits to close out a project

Grant managers interviewed stressed that currently, many of these project management duties are not being completed or addressed in a timely manner due to workload and prioritization issues. Duties that are tied to the application process generally take precedence over grant management duties, in part because this is what grant managers understand that Executive Management is prioritizing, and also because there is a higher incidence of firm deadlines to meet during the application phase (such as Board funding meetings, application due dates, scheduled workshops, etc). Such prioritization of responsibilities has led to less effective active project management as grant managers are unable to properly attend to sponsor needs, identify projects most at risk for delay, and perform routine tasks in a timely manner.

### **Post-Project Completion – Ensuring Compliance**

Another responsibility currently assigned to grant managers is handling compliance concerns. By State and Federal law, sponsors are required to ensure that after completion projects remain in compliance with grant provisions and that the RCO's outdoor recreation and habitat investments are protected. After project completion, unless authorized by the RCO, a project is obligated to continue functioning as originally intended in perpetuity. RCO policy also states that grant managers should review projects every five years to ensure that such specifications are being met. If a project is found to be out of compliance, the grant manager assigned to the project must work with the sponsor to resolve the issue.

There are several ways that a project can become out of compliance, with conversion being the most serious. A conversion, as defined by RCO policy, is "a project status that results when use or function of recreation or habitat land or facilities paid for by the RCO/SRFB changes to uses or functions other than those for which assistance was originally approved." It is important to note that there is a certain degree of latitude in determining whether a project is not meeting previous agreement specifications. For example, changing a baseball field to a soccer field will not likely lead to non-compliance as the overall purpose – providing a recreational activity to the public – has not been altered. However, there are often changes in use which do not constitute non-compliance with grant provisions.

Grant managers estimate that a simple conversion task can take up to 40 to 50 hours to address (spread over time), with a complex case consuming more than 100 hours. While the RCO has many projects currently classified as being out of compliance, the majority of these cases are not being resolved. This is because the grant managers are overloaded with other responsibilities and do not see this work as one of their highest priorities, particularly as there is no hard deadline attached to addressing compliance concerns. Although a compliance strategy was devised several years ago which was intended to notify sponsors of potential issues, a plan was never officially implemented due to the sheer volume of work it would likely generate.

### Policy Development

There are currently three tiers of policy that help guide the RCO: operational policy, grant program policy, and strategic policy. Operational policy involves the day-to-day operations of grant management, such as outlining the steps for processing a billing submittal or identifying what amendment data should be input into PRISM. Grant program policy functions at a higher altitude and looks at issues such as whether the maximum grant allowance within a given grant program should be raised to a new threshold, or determining what materials should be submitted by a sponsor once a project has been approved for funding. At the highest altitude is the strategic policy, which encompasses more global subjects such as the State's policies on outdoor recreation or salmon restoration.

At present, all grant managers are involved in reviewing, updating, and developing operational policies. RCFB and SRFB Senior Operational Grant Managers have the responsibility of developing an operational manual that all grant managers can use. Concerning grant program policy, under a new experimental structure, two grant managers (both on the RCFB side, although one does dedicate a small portion of time to managing SRFB projects) are now responsible for dedicating 50% of their time to working with the RCO's Planning, Policy, and Government Affairs Division to develop and assess the impact of various programmatic policies. Both of the grant managers in charge of developing grant program policy noted that effectively balancing such work with an active project workload was a significant challenge.

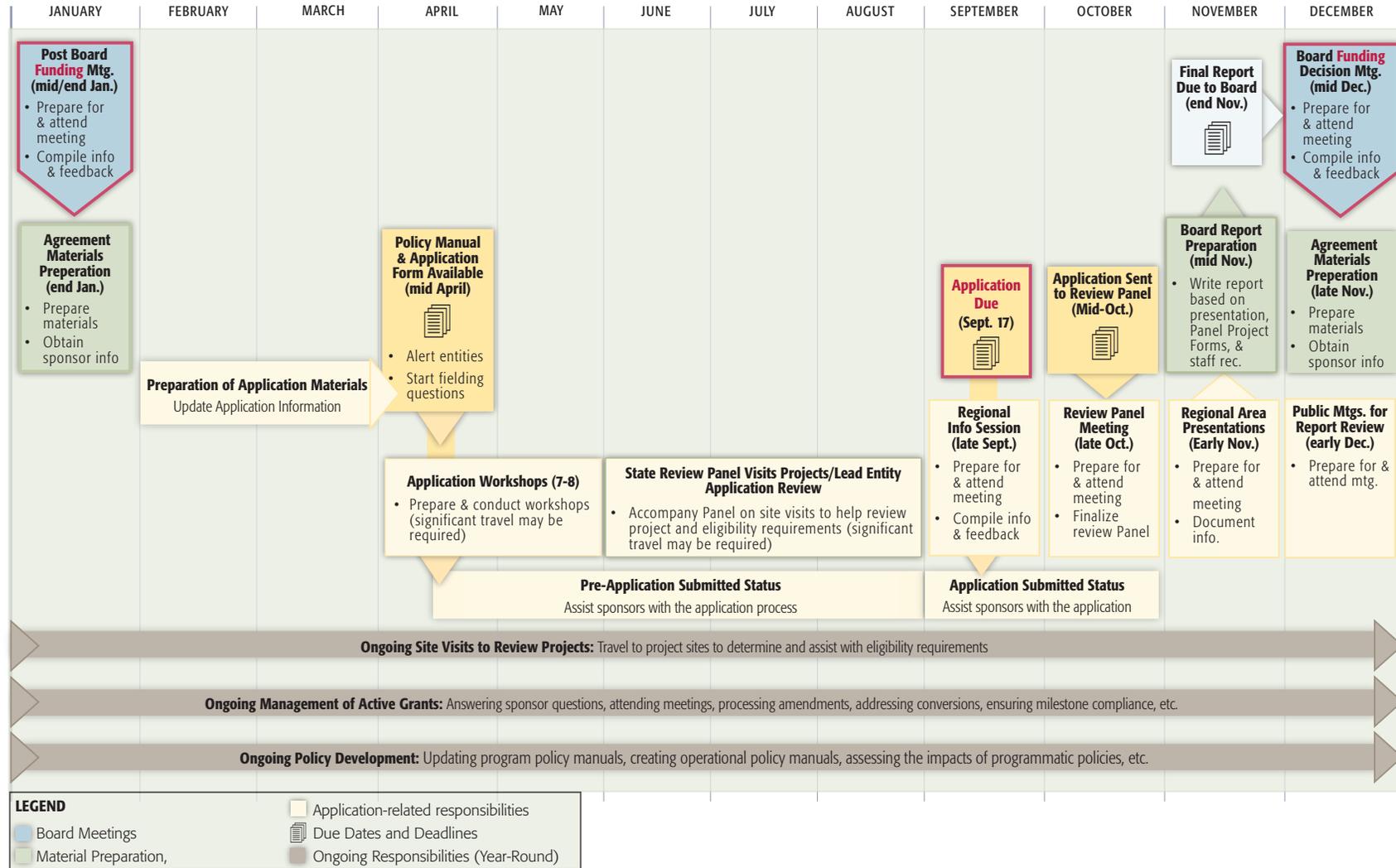
### 6.3 Grant Manager Activity Cycle and Schedule

Grant manager workload varies for both SRFB and RCFB grant managers depending on where they are in the annual cycle. The SRFB only has one funding date each year – generally held in December – while RCFB project funding happens three times throughout the year (typically in January, September, and November) due to its numerous grant programs. That said, the SRFB is recently examining the impact of creating more Board funding opportunities throughout the year.

#### SRFB Grant Manager Activity Cycle

SRFB staff grant managers generally are managing the largest number of projects in the early part of the year (as new projects are approved for funding in December), with April through August dedicated to pre-application and application activities, such as conducting site visits, reviewing applications, and conducting the applicant workshops. September through November is spent ensuring that applications are complete, attending regional area presentations, and preparing materials for the Board funding meeting in December. Throughout the year grant managers handle activities related to ongoing grant management (such as processing billings, reminding sponsors of important milestones, and authorizing amendments) and policy development (such as updating the policy manuals and assessing the impacts of various programmatic policy changes). **Exhibit 12** provides a general overview of a typical SRFB grant manager schedule for the year.

## Exhibit 12 SRFB Annual Schedule

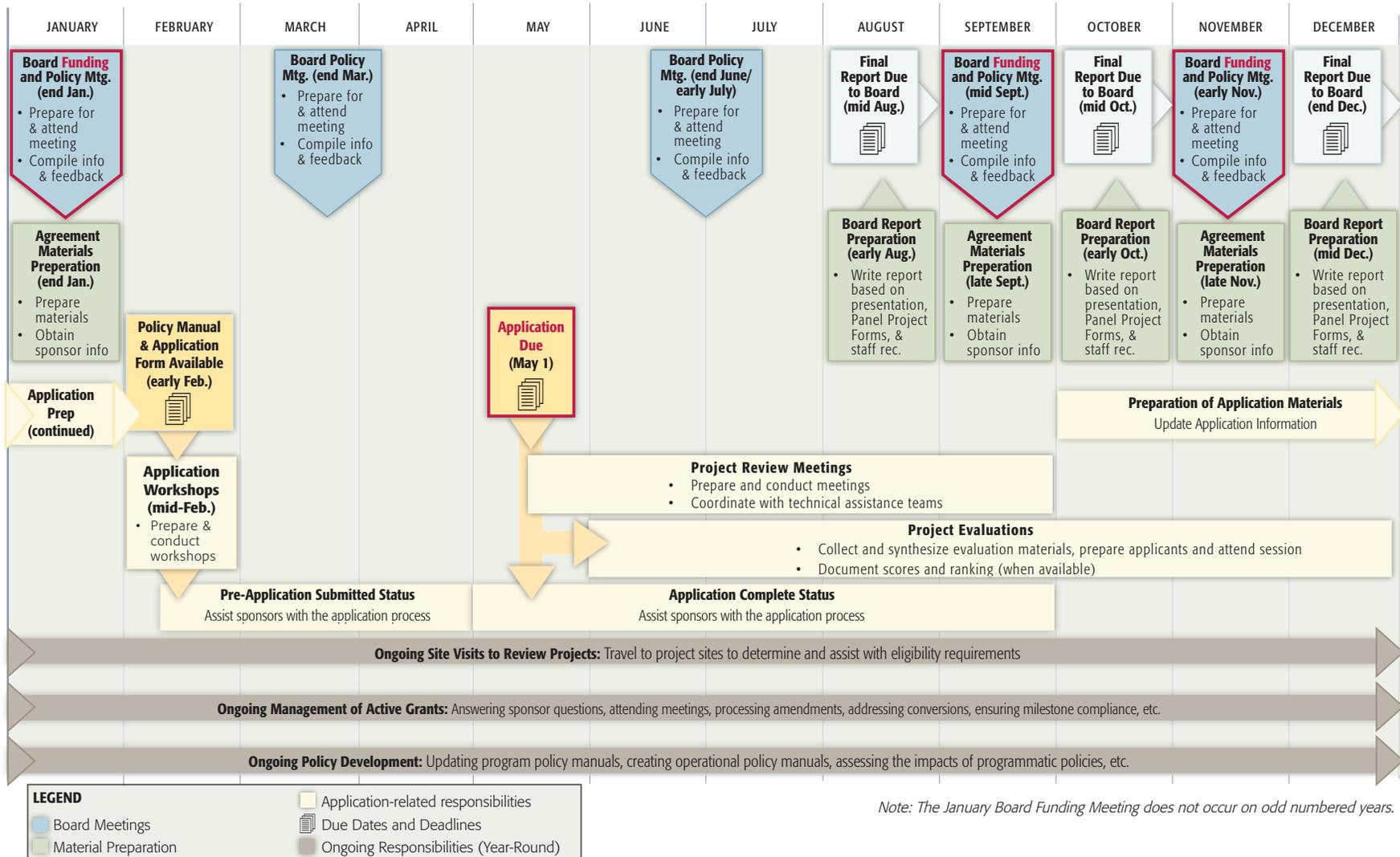


### RCFB Grant Manager Schedule

The RCFB annual schedule is slightly more complex, due to the relatively high number of administered grant programs. For every even numbered year, there are three Board funding decision dates held in the months of January, September, and November. For every odd numbered year, there are only two board dates (September and November) as Washington Wildlife Recreation Program and Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account projects are not awarded grant monies at this time. January through March is typically dedicated to application preparation. March through September is spent assisting applicants with questions, holding project review meetings and conducting site visits. June through December is generally dedicated to project evaluations and preparing for Board funding meetings. Throughout the year, RCFB grant managers are also responsible for the ongoing management of active grants and policy development.

**Exhibit 13** provides a general overview of a typical RCFB grant manager schedule for the year.

### Exhibit 13 RCFB Annual Schedule



### 6.4 Assigning Workload

Based on PRISM data as of January 2008, there are approximately 1,300 active and recently approved Board funded projects. Assuming there are 4.85 dedicated SRFB grant managers and 6.7 dedicated RCFB grant managers, this yields an active project workload of over 110 projects per grant manager. Data provided by the RCO during the same time period shows full time grant managers with workloads ranging from 63-134 active and Board-funded projects with an average of 95 projects. It is important to note that the low end of this range includes three new staff members who are still in training.

The number of projects per grant manager has increased substantially in recent years. Five years ago, each grant manager managed approximately 65 active and Board-funded projects, roughly reflecting a 75% increase. Both RCFB and SRFB grant managers clearly expressed that in light of all the other work that they do, 90-110 projects is too many projects to manage.

As a general rule, project assignment is determined by geographic territory and by State and Federal agency. For example, one RCFB grant manager manages all habitat projects for the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife and all RCFB projects in Seattle and King County. Territory is broken down at the county level, with some grant managers managing multiple counties (particularly in Eastern Washington's rural areas, that have fewer active projects and applicants) and some managing just one or two counties in Western Washington.

When determining workload, numerous factors are considered by Section Managers (who are in charge of assigning projects to grant managers), such as the location of assigned territory, category of project, type of sponsor, and level of grant managers experience. As grant managers are constantly visiting project sites during the application and active grant management process, travel distances are a major component in determining workload. Grant managers with projects within Eastern Washington territories will likely spend additional days out of the office when conducting site visits. On average, grant managers noted that they travel roughly one day a week to visit a site before a project begins and when a project closes.

The category of project assigned is also an important workload measure, as some grant managers noted that fieldwork projects can be less work than managing design or acquisition projects. Sponsor type is a significant consideration as a small local government agency with few resources and not a lot of project management experience may require more attention than a larger and more resource rich organization that has strong history of managing grant funded projects. Grant manager experience is also a strong factor in determining workload, as more experienced grant managers will likely have greater ability to manage a larger project load.

## 7.0 SPONSOR PERSPECTIVES

Interviews with 25 project sponsors were conducted to gain an external perspective concerning project delay issues, as well as identify potential areas for Agency improvement. The overwhelming majority of sponsors interviewed noted that grant managers generally exceed expectations in terms of professionalism, availability, and customer service. Over 85% of the respondents stated that the RCO was perceived as one of the best funding agencies (or the best) they have worked with. Respondents cited several areas that the RCO could improve upon as well as areas they felt the RCO was doing well, which are detailed below. (For a more detailed examination of sponsor responses, please refer to **Attachment A** at the end of this report that provides a comprehensive summary of interviewee comments.)

### 7.1 What the RCO Does Well

**Responsive and Engaged Grant Managers.** Almost every sponsor interviewed noted that grant managers are very supportive throughout the life of a project and were typically always available to answer questions and provide guidance during the application process and once a project was underway. Sponsors were also appreciative that they only had to deal primarily with one point person at the RCO, especially as strong relationships have developed over time.

**Flexibility and Understanding.** Many of the sponsors interviewed expressed gratitude regarding the flexibility and understanding provided by RCO staff in responding to unforeseen or unanticipated consequences during project implementation such as granting time extension and scope changes.

**Nonpolitical Staff.** While there were one or two respondents who expressed that a certain degree of bias existed in funding decisions, these issues were reserved mostly for Board or committee review members. For the most part respondents felt that, while the RCO operated in a highly political environment, the RCO staff did an excellent job of maintaining fairness in ranking decisions.

**Applicant Workshops.** Although not all sponsors interviewed attended the applicant workshops regularly, those that did mentioned that these workshops were very helpful in providing grant program criteria, process, time-line, and amount of grant requests. One suggestion that did arise was that workshops could include more information about past projects funded so applicants can see what kinds of projects do well.

### 7.2 Proposed Areas for Improvement

**Billing Process.** The billing process was frequently mentioned as cumbersome on several levels: paperwork from the RCO is not always sent to the right person or department; grant managers sometimes take a long time to submit final billings; and the requirement to fill out a status report for every billing (no matter how small) was cited as unnecessarily time-consuming.

**PRISM.** While many sponsors liked the ability to submit application and other materials via PRISM, several respondents noted downsides to using the system. PRISM was mentioned as often difficult to navigate, causing frustration, confusion, and additional work for users. Some issues mentioned were: additional help is often needed from grant managers to walk sponsors through the PRISM process as

it is not a self-explanatory system; retrieving, submitting, or downloading information is much slower when compared to other internet functions; and that information presented in PRISM is not always intuitive or can not be found easily.

**Perception of Committee Review Biases.** A few sponsors noted that evaluations were subject to internal biases from committee review members (all of whom are external to the Agency and are mostly comprised of volunteers). In particular, one sponsor noted that there appeared to be a bias against funding projects involving the hunting of animals, while another sponsor mentioned that committee members appeared to favor projects that were from their home region.

**Communicating Changes and Updates.** Due to the frequency of application and procedural changes, many sponsors felt that it was difficult to keep apprised of the latest updates. One suggestion was that there should be avenues other than the workshop to inform sponsors of application and policy changes, such as an updated cheat sheet or executive summary routinely sent out that identifies relevant changes.

**Procedural Manual.** Respondents mentioned that the procedural manual is dense and confusing to read, which can be especially taxing for entities with limited time and resources. Sponsors felt that providing a cheat sheet specific to a given program that identifies needs and requirements might limit the time spent navigating through the manual or contacting grant managers for help.

**Project Presentation.** Multiple sponsors described the presentation process as an uncomfortable environment. Examples provided were: presenters often cannot finish their presentations without being interrupted by committee questions; there was a perception of bias against applicants with fewer resources as they often don't have the public speaking expertise or the ability to create a "professional looking" presentation.

**Process and Timeline.** A few sponsors specified on the RCFB side that having a little more time to put together the written material between the application workshop and the application due date would be beneficial. By having additional time to prepare applications, these sponsors felt that their submitted proposals would be of higher quality.

**Adopted Resolutions.** Requiring municipalities to have an adopted resolution in order to be eligible for funding was noted as too stringent. Due to the lengthy approval process for some local governments, there is often a rush to submit information to Council, which sometimes translates into less thorough project selection and evaluation. It was suggested that the RCO should consider other alternatives such as a letter of support by the mayor.

**Conversion Resolutions.** The conversion resolution was also noted as too strict and not an efficient process: obtaining approval by the RCO (and other grant agencies) takes a long time; there should be more flexibility in changing the function of an old project site (due to changing demographics, landscape, needs, etc).

**Lack of Technical Expertise.** For SRFB projects, one sponsor specified that there should be more construction expertise, rather than individuals with a purely biological background involved in the technical review. For RCFB projects, another sponsor expressed the desire that grant managers were more available to provide technical assistance by conducting additional site visits.

## **RCO Project Delivery and Grant Manager Workload Study**

**Matching Funds.** A sponsor noted that there is a need “to scramble” in order to secure matching funds once a project has been awarded funding, which causes stress. Another issue cited in this area was that confusing matching fund ratios make it harder for sponsors to track funds and substantial time is sometimes devoted to working with a grant manager on this issue (as the way a sponsor might manage/track the match is very different from the RCO).

**Different Requirements for Smaller Projects.** Some of the sponsors located farther away from Olympia stressed that it is sometimes hard to schedule project reviews and is costly and time consuming to send over a representative to present on a proposed project. This appeared particularly burdensome for smaller agencies and entities located further away that are applying for smaller grants.

## 8.0 BEST PRACTICE RESEARCH

In an effort to gain an understanding of internal and external grant management factors that contribute to delay, and to learn about strategies for reducing that delay, best practice research was conducted. The grant management practices of state and county level agencies in the states of Washington, Oregon, California, Wisconsin, and Virginia were reviewed. Grant management literature was also analyzed.

### 8.1 Methods and Approach

Ten telephone interviews were conducted with the follow individuals:

- Executive Director, Washington Public Works Board
- Executive Director, Washington Transportation Improvement Board
- Restoration and Enhancement Program Coordinator, Division of Recreation Fisheries, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Deputy Director/Manager, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
- Education Outreach Coordinator, Marion County Soil and Conservation District in Oregon
- Grants Administrator, Rural Parkways Program, Office of the Secretary, California Resources Agency
- Assistant Park and Recreation Specialist, California State Parks Department
- Grant Manager, Watershed Program, California Department of Water Resources
- Grants Administrator, Recreation and Planning, Virginia Department of Recreation and Conservation
- Grants Administration Section Chief, Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

These agencies were selected for study based on several factors:

- Similarity in types of projects awarded; all but the Transportation Improvement Board award recreation or conservation grants
- Recommendations from interviewees as agencies with excellent grant management results
- Operating in states similar to Washington's relatively decentralized governance structure, such as the Virginia Department of Recreation and Conservation

Interviewees were asked about their organization and grant-making processes, the workload, roles and responsibilities of grant managers, and strategies for grant and program management. Published grant management literature reviewed included the *"Guide to Opportunities for Improving Grant Accountability"* by the Domestic Working Group Grant Accountability Project, and the United States Government Accountability Office 2006 grant management report *"Enhancing Performance Accountability Provisions Could Lead to Better Results."*

## **8.2 Findings**

Every agency interviewed had recently struggled or was still struggling with project delay, grant manager workload and sufficient time for active grant management responsibilities, but the size and scope of the agencies varied greatly. Agencies oversaw between 1 and 45 different grant programs, with most handling between 6 and 10 grant programs, with 65-6,000 active grants. The number of active grants managed by one employee ranged from 20 to 1,000 and agencies employed between 1 and 33 grant managers. Most agencies awarded a range of kinds of grants – large, medium, small, short-term, long-term – to non-profits, local and state agencies. Every funding cycle, agencies awarded between \$600,000 and \$80,000,000.

It is important to note that while many agencies are struggling with similar issues related to re-appropriations, project delay and grant management practices, differences in geography, demographics, laws, and culture have created very distinct organizational structures and operating environments. Due to these differences, a model that works effectively in one agency may not work well in another. That said, information obtained from this assessment provides useful insights into how different grant-making agencies are dealing with the challenges, opportunities, and constraints of managing recreation and conservation grant programs.

**Exhibit 14** below provides a summary of grant programs managed by the agencies interviewed.

Exhibit 14

Matrix of Organizations Interviewed

Agency	Grant Managers	Grant Programs	Active Projects/ Grant Manager	Grant Portfolio	Grant Managers Responsibilities	Project Assignment	Database	Consequences for Delay
RCO	15	11	90-100	\$207 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pre-application site visits and project reviews</li> <li>active project site visits, billings and contract management</li> <li>compliance monitoring for completed projects</li> <li>ongoing policy development</li> <li>solicit applicants</li> </ul>	geography, agency	PRISM	none
California Department of Water Resources, Watershed Grant Program	2	1	28	\$10 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>approve grant agreements and invoices</li> <li>manage distribution of liason work</li> <li>coordinate with partners</li> </ul>	none	none	provisions to withhold funding until project is back on track
California Resources Agency, Rural Parkways Program	7	1	20-30	\$26 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>application review</li> <li>contracts</li> <li>Managing reimbursements</li> </ul>	number of projects	none Grant Management System (GMS)	last 10% of grant is withheld until after project closes
California State Parks Department	6	5	80-150	\$800 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>evaluate grant applications</li> <li>recommend grants</li> <li>administer grants</li> </ul>	geography, agency	none	20% of grant is withheld until after project is completed
Marion County Soil and Conservation District	8	11	50-60	\$0.6 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pre-application scoping and technical assistance</li> <li>All grant management activities "from A-Z"</li> <li>applicant recruitment</li> <li>application assistance</li> </ul>	program	none	none
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Recreational Fisheries Division	1	1	200	\$4.5 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>writing grant agreements</li> <li>Board liason</li> <li>coordinate primary review of application</li> <li>recommended funding</li> </ul>	none	none	past history informally considered during application review
Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board	6	5	162-400	\$100 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>coordinate with fiscal staff on grant agreements, invoices</li> <li>monitor projects, review reports</li> <li>pre-application site visits and project reviews</li> <li>active project site visits, billings and contract management</li> <li>compliance monitoring for completed projects</li> </ul>	geography	online database	loss of available funding if the project is not completed
Virginia Department of Recreation and Conservation	5	6	120	\$1.5 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ongoing policy development</li> <li>negociate scope of work and performance measures</li> <li>monitor quarterly reporting</li> <li>process payments</li> </ul>	none	none	none
Washington Public Works Board	5	6	100	\$327 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>close out loans</li> </ul>	geography	limited database software	points deducted from future grant applications
Washington Transportation Improvement Board	5	6	100	\$360 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pre-application client consultations and field reviews</li> <li>project rating and peer review project selection process</li> <li>active grant contract management</li> </ul>	number of projects, travel time	Dashboard	three tiered warning process; potential project termination
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources	33	45	40-1000	\$82 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>budget reconciliation</li> <li>administrative rule and policy revision and creation</li> <li>reporting to boards and legislature</li> </ul>	program	Oracle	unknown

Berk & Associates, 2008

### Grant Manager Workload

**Roles and Responsibilities.** Many agencies have their grant managers performing tasks “from A to Z” in the grant-making process. A few had contracts and billing specialists. The Wisconsin State Department of Natural Resources has a particularly innovative approach, dividing tasks between administrative “grant managers” and regional “staff.” Grant managers, located in the central office, reconcile budgets, create and revise administrative rules and policy matters, issue and sign grant agreements, create presentations and reports for the boards and the legislature, and maintain grant materials up-to-date and on the web. The regional staff work with project sponsors in the field, and are responsible for technical assistance, assisting project sponsors with completing applications, monitoring project progress, and following up after clients to ensure all necessary forms were received by the grant manager in a timely fashion. Regional staff and grant managers are also responsible for coordinating with each other to ensure consistency with the way grants are administered statewide. The California Department of Water Resources Watershed Grant Program used a similar organizational model with staff focused on technical assistance and general support for project sponsors, freeing grant managers to work on grant agreement and contract monitoring issues.

**Number of Projects.** Many external interviewees reported “crushing” workloads and “crisis mode” managing due to lack of staff and other resources. One interviewee said, “I personally have a sense that we have too many contracts per employee, but I couldn’t identify where.” Several identified between 60 and 80 active grants per manager as ideal, but only Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board had a formal benchmark to signal that a manager had too many grantees. Their benchmark, 200 active grants, taxes an individual’s ability to “juggle all those balls” according to the interviewee. Three organizations, Washington Public Works Board, California Department of Water Resources, and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, reported being in the process of developing benchmarks.

**Assigning Projects.** Grants were usually assigned to grant managers informally by program or by region. Four agencies informally assess “difficulty” level of grantee and distance from the workplace so that grant managers with higher difficulty clients or clients further from their office could have fewer grants to manage. A few agencies work to reduce the number of programs each grant manager has to work with, only assigning grant managers projects under a few grant programs. Those agencies report that the number of projects a grant manager had could be increased if there were fewer grant programs the manager had to remember. Only the Washington Transportation Improvement Board had a formal system for assigning grants to particular managers, based on a 100 project average with weighting of projects that involve higher than average travel times. Some considerations mentioned by other agencies included number of active grants, number of overall grants, difficulty level of clients, previous experience with a client, geography, subject matter expertise, seniority, and the personal interests or preferences of the grant managers.

### Internal Operations and Reporting

**Standardization.** The Washington Public Works Board, Oregon Water Enhancement Board, California State Parks Department, and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, reported that common applications, contracts, reports and reporting procedures within and across programs reduce delay for the grantee organization and the grantor organization. The Oregon Water Enhancement Board

mentioned increased project sponsor satisfaction because of increased consistency and improved grant manager productivity due to standard online application processes. The California Transportation Improvement Board created a common process for dealing with all delayed projects. The California Department of Water Resources identified needing standardization.

**Database.** The Washington Public Works Board, Washington Transportation Improvement Board, California Resources Agency, California State Parks Department, and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, used databases and reporting systems of varying degrees of sophistication. Agencies with databases identified them as key tools towards successful grant programs. The California Department of Water Resources and Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation did not have databases but were in the process of developing them. Various database functions included:

- Automatically generating a letter every six months advising each grantee to turn in a project status report
- Automatically generating standardized correspondence form letters and grant agreements to print and store
- Generating reports for grant manager upon request
- Generating non-compliance reports, listing grant manager's projects
- Notifying grant manager if grantee has not drawn funds from agency in the past 90 days
- Counting down the amount of time each grantee has to encumber funds
- Tracking received applications
- A project module screen to enter in critical data and assign number to project
- A project module screen to check off all applications required for complete application
- A project module screen for explanatory information or "Diary Field"
- A map to facilitate assigning contracts by county
- Sorting by grant manager to identify how many projects and programs they have
- Linking information to a "Dash Board" system to actively monitor agency performance

### Literature Review Findings

The Grant Accountability Project also strongly recommends consolidating information into a database. It cites the Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration's Transportation Electronic Award Management database, the Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education "Ed e-Monitoring" database, and the National Science Foundation's "FastLane" database as highly functional best practice examples. The database functions they emphasize are:

- Being a "one-stop center" for all grant manager, project sponsor, and general public information
- Program fund use reporting and trend analysis, including kinds of uses and geographic distribution of uses
- Programming to alert staff when reports are due
- Color coding of grants based on status

- Monitoring staff performance
- Linking emails, correspondences, performance reports and evaluations to specific projects and programs
- Integration with agency financial accounting system
- Tracking grant deliverables, annual, and final reports

### Sanctions and Incentives

**Readiness to Proceed.** Similar to the RCO, most agencies included some sort of “readiness” standard in their assessment of grant applications, although there was a continuum of the weight “readiness” received. The California Resources Agency allocates points for scope and budget realism and conducts a site visit for each applicant. The Wisconsin State Department of Natural Resources gave extra points during the review process to projects that prove they are “ready to go” through letters of support from landowners or a 30% match from the local city or county. Also, if a permit is needed the applicant only receives “ready” points if they actually have the permit already, they don’t receive points for having applied for the permit. The Grant Accountability Project recommends imposing conditions that must be met before a grant is awarded if a pre-award evaluation indicates lack of readiness on the applicant’s part.

**Consequences for Delay.** The Washington Public Works Board, Marion County Soil and Conservation District, Virginia Department of Recreation and Conservation reported that they do not impose consequences for delayed projects other than holding the grantees “feet to the fire” and being “constantly in their faces.” The Oregon Department of Fisheries informally considers history of past delay when deciding whether to fund future projects. The Watershed Grant Program in the California Department of Water Resources can withhold funds until a project is back on track. The Washington Transportation Improvement Board recently instituted a three tiered delay mitigation process, starting with a notice and ending with termination. While the agency has never actually had to terminate a project the process is credited with reducing the delayed project count by more than 70 projects. The California State Parks Department and the California Resources Agency Rural Parkways Program withhold the final 10-20% of the grant money until the project is completed.

### 8.3 Summary of Findings by State

**California Department of Water Resources, Watershed Grant Program** awards grants to federal, state and local agencies as well as nonprofit and for-profit organizations in order to support stewardship efforts and watershed management and health strategies. Organized so that other staff provide technical assistance to and liaise with the project sponsors, grant managers are able to process solicitations, invoices and deal with other contract issues with very short turn around times.

**California Resources Agency Rural Parkways Program** works to restore, protect and manage California’s natural, historical and cultural resources for current and future generations. Established by the Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act of 2002, the Rural Parkways Program awards funding for recreation, habitat, flood management, conversion to river parkways, and conservation and interpretive enhancement projects to California public agencies and nonprofits. Much of the program’s grant application process is dedicated to determining project readiness, including several application questions, and pre-selection site visits.

## RCO Project Delivery and Grant Manager Workload Study

**California State Parks Department** awards grants that help to preserve the State's biological diversity, protect its natural and cultural resources, and create opportunities for outdoor recreation. Funded by state bond acts since 1964, municipalities and nonprofits are eligible for project funding and technical assistance. In order to reduce project delay the agency requires grantees to spend funding within six months of receiving it.

**Marion County Soil and Conservation District** provides technical, financial and educational services to help Marion County land users conserve soil, water and related natural resources. Based on interviews with other grant-making organizations, it was identified as one of the best smaller grant-making agencies in terms of technical assistance and project timeliness. As most of its grant programs focus on technical assistance, planning, and education, they are not faced with some of the complexities like permitting and construction that can cause delay in capital development projects. It is interesting to note that the grant managers at the Marion County Soil and Conservation District spend about 90% of their time on planning, scoping and technical assistance to clients during the application and implementation stages of their projects.

**Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Division of Recreation Fisheries** is charged to protect and propagate fish for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. They fund non-profit and governmental agency restoration and enhancement projects in Oregon. The division has an online application system credited with reducing grant manager workload and withholds 10% of funds from the grantee until the completion report is submitted.

**Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board** promotes and funds actions that enhance Oregon's watersheds. Grant award recipients are generally governmental and nonprofit entities. Specific programs are dedicated to restoring salmon runs, improving water quality, and strengthening ecosystems. In addition, the agency also directs a small grant program to support landowner projects that improve watershed health as well as monitoring the effectiveness of previous watershed enhancement efforts.

**Virginia Department of Recreation and Conservation** awards Land and Water program grants to local governmental entities and Trail program grants to non-profit, local and state agencies for the purpose of conserving, protecting and enhancing Virginia land, rivers, streams, dams, and the Chesapeake Bay. While one grant manager oversees an average of 120 active grants, all Land and Water program grants require lifetime monitoring; grant managers can have more than 400 additional grants in post-compliance monitoring.

**Washington Public Works Board** provides infrastructure financing and technical assistance at the community level for activities directed at improving public health, safety, and environmental infrastructure. Managing a total of six grant programs and an average of 500 active projects, the agency has an appropriation authority of \$327 million. Grant recipients are generally public organizations such as cities, counties, and water and sewer districts, although the agency does provide funding to private entities such as companies running water systems and homeowners associations.

**Washington Transportation Improvement Board** funds high-priority transportation projects for municipalities and counties throughout the state. This agency was recommended for study because of its intranet based performance management Dashboard system which has been credited with helping

## **RCO Project Delivery and Grant Manager Workload Study**

to significantly reduce the number of delayed projects (additional information on the Dashboard system is provided in the recommendation section of this report).

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources** works to protect and enhance the state's air, land, water, wildlife, fish, forests and ecosystems; to provide a healthy, sustainable environment and outdoor opportunities; and to work with citizens in partnership. A bureau within the agency manages 45 grant programs and funds projects for local municipal and Native American agencies as well as nonprofit conservation agencies. The agency focuses on project readiness in order to reduce project delay.

## **9.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

This section presents a summary overview of the major findings that have emerged from this study. The RCO is a highly successful organization, considered by many stakeholders as one of the best grant funding agencies to work with in the State. The Agency's most important asset is its employees, who are dedicated and committed to ensuring that its projects achieve their recreation and conservation objectives. That said, the RCO is encountering significant challenges in delivering many of its project on schedule, an issue that is reflected in the Agency's relatively high re-appropriations rate.

While the RCO's budgetary and programmatic increases are largely due to the Agency's achievements in administering grants, the RCO's internal infrastructure support has not kept pace with such growth. The RCO needs to re-evaluate its current organizational model not only to improve project delivery performance, but also to achieve overall organizational efficiency and boost staff morale.

This report recognizes that project success is not only tied to being on-time and on-budget, but also to outcome measures such as the number of salmon returning to a stream or the number of hikers using a forest trail. In fact, many of the sponsors and grant managers noted that some of the most "successful" outcome-driven RCO projects have had major schedule and cost slippage issues. That said, gaining a better understanding of the root causes of delay can provide opportunities for improvement and can turn good projects into great ones.

RCO staff, at both the Executive and non-Executive level, are self-aware of many of the challenges and opportunities facing the Agency and appear receptive and eager to embrace organizational change. With a new Executive Management Team, the recent hiring of additional support personnel, and an Agency-wide desire to advance as an organization, the RCO is poised to enter a new era of strategic management and development. High-level findings to help the Agency design its future management systems follow:

### **9.1 RCO's Rate of Reappropriations is Relatively High**

RCO's rate of reappropriations has been relatively high over the past two biennial funding cycles (particularly in 2005-2007), as compared to the six other state agencies identified in this report: the Department of Community Trade and Economic Development; the Department of Ecology; the Department of Natural Resources; the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission; the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife; and the Washington State Conservation Commission. However, given that the six agencies have such different and unique capital programs, such comparisons may not be fully indicative of an agency's relative effectiveness with respect to project delivery. Additionally, given the type of complex natural resources projects the RCO is engaged in, it is unrealistic to expect that reappropriations will ever be entirely eliminated.

The reappropriations issue is systemic and highly complex – not only does the RCO manage long-term projects, its most frequent sponsors, such as the Department of Natural Resources, the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, and the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, are currently facing their own challenges concerning reappropriations and delivering timely projects within their capital programs. Making significant progress on reducing reappropriations will require a focused and coordinated effort among senior management at these agencies. The RCO

needs to take steps to reduce reappropriations where it can, and for those projects that are expected to take more than one biennium to complete, the RCO should be clear in its budget requests and communications with the Office of Financial Managements and the Legislature regarding reappropriations expectations (see **Section 3.0** for more information).

### **9.2 Project Delay Is Systemic Across Program, Project, and Sponsor Type**

Project delay for RCO funded projects exists at a systemic level, occurring across a range of programs, project categories and sponsor types. For example, although the Washington Wildlife Recreation Program has the largest total number of late projects, the SRFB program has the most projects experiencing the greatest length of delay. By sponsor type, three State agencies (Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, Department of Natural Resources, and Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife) account for almost half of total project delay (47%), although tribes, government agencies and nonprofit entities all contribute a significant share to this problem. Acquisition projects were by far the category of project type that faced the most schedule slippage issues (49%), with development projects following second at 24% (see **Section 4.0** for more information).

### **9.3 Project Delay is Caused by Many Internal and External Factors**

Project delay stems from a large number of internal (within the Agency) and external (outside the Agency) factors. A significant portion of the internal factors contributing to project delay are related to RCO staff workload and response to project delay, while external factors are due to a wider range of issues (from lack of sponsor resources to permitting issues to environmental site conditions). Some of the external factors that contribute to project delay are beyond the RCO's ability to control once a project has been funded. What is within the Agency's power to manage is ensuring that the projects being selected for funding are appropriately scoped and ready to proceed. Additionally, a grant manager's ability to pro-actively monitor a project's progress is instrumental in identifying and preventing potential challenges once a project is underway (see **Section 5.0** for more information).

### **9.4 Grant Manager Workload is Tied to Project Delivery Concerns**

Historically, grant managers have been viewed as an available resource pool to draw from to fill various Agency needs and gaps without backfilling the void. At present, grant manager duties not only include the management of active projects, but also comprise assisting applicants and preparing application materials, developing and updating programmatic policies, preparing materials and reports for Board meetings and workshops, and addressing compliance concerns. Over the years these tasks have been coupled with an increasing project workload, which has overextended grant managers' capacity to effectively perform the majority of their job duties – particularly responsibilities related to proactively monitoring and managing projects. For RCFB grant managers, these issues are exacerbated by the need to be an expert in nine grant programs, consisting of over 25 unique grant categories. These factors in turn have impeded the grant managers' ability to proactively manage grants.

It is interesting to note that the title of "grant manager" does not accurately capture all the work that these employees perform. One large example is that grant managers spend over half of their time in the pre-application and application process, with this percentage as high as 80% in certain months (see **Section 6.0** for more information).

## 9.5 Lack of Standardization in Internal Processes and Policies

Currently, grant managers each have different methods for prioritizing tasks, interpreting cultural resource issues, processing billings, authorizing amendments, inputting data into PRISM, and responding to project delay. A lack of standard Agency-wide protocols or processes within these areas has led to inefficiencies and inconsistencies. While a certain degree of autonomy and flexibility is important at the individual grant manager level, having more concrete and universal protocols on how to do business (an “RCO way” of doing things) in these areas would offer greater clarity and direction to staff. Part of this involves developing clear policies on proper contract length, when extensions are awarded, and consequences of delay (see **Section 5.0 and 6.0** for more information).

## 9.6 There are No Formal Reporting and Information Systems in Place

The absence of standard reports for both grant managers and Executive Management that identify project delivery problem areas at a project, program, and grant division level has further restrained RCO staff from effectively understanding how the Agency is truly performing with respect to project delivery. At present, many grant managers are operating in a vacuum and are not fully aware of what projects are in need of the most attention, thereby limiting their ability to deal with or pre-empt challenges that occur during the life of a project (see **Section 5.0 and 6.0** for more information).

## 9.7 RCO Response to Project Delay Helps Perpetuate the Cycle

In interviews conducted for this study, the overwhelming majority of sponsors identified the RCO as one of the best grant agencies to work with in the State. Part of this response appears tied to the strong relationships that sponsors have developed with individual grant managers, as well as the perception that the RCO staff treats schedule slippage as a normal and natural consequence of managing projects. This perception is reinforced by the RCO’s lenient approach to addressing untimely projects. Amendments, such as time extensions and scope changes, are relatively easy for sponsors to receive. Additionally, Executive Management and the Boards have historically been averse to terminating projects for non-performance. This lenient approach – in which there are no apparent costs or consequences for missing deadlines and milestones – helps perpetuate the cycle of project delay (see **Section 5.0 and 7.0** for more information).

## 9.8 Other Grant Agencies Are Experiencing Similar Project Delay Issues

Almost all of the ten state grant-making agencies that were interviewed across the county are currently grappling with the issue of project delay and workload issues. One of the primary findings that emerged from the best practice research is that many grant-making agencies rely (more heavily than the RCO) on electronic information systems to reduce workload through the standardization of forms, status reports, automated processes, and the ability to present and report information quickly and consistently. Another finding is that a major factor contributing to workload challenges is the number of programs for which a grant manager is responsible. While many of the interviewees noted that project load is tied to multiple variables, an average given for an acceptable project workload is around 65 projects. Lastly, the grant-making agencies that were interviewed that appear to have the least difficulty with project delay are also those that provide the most assistance with pre-planning, such as offering planning and design grants and awarding additional application points for projects that are more ready to proceed than others (see **Section 8.0** for more information).

## 10.0 STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Framework for Recommendations

The following recommendations are action strategies that address specific issues facing the RCO and are organized into three categories: project delivery, grant manager workload, and organizational efficiency and cohesiveness. While these issues are interrelated – for example, improving grant manager workload can positively impact project delivery and organizational efficiency – each contains its own unique set of opportunities and challenges. That said, the implementation of these recommendations is not intended to occur in isolation of one another but should be viewed as a package of targeted strategies that will move the Agency forward as a whole in achieving its goals.

The following symbols next to the three categories are tied to each recommendation to indicate which issue(s) the recommendation is attempting to address. Additionally, recommendations that are determined to have the biggest impact on the Agency (in terms of change) are highlighted in red.



**Improve Project Delivery.** As a government agency, the RCO faces the challenge of needing to reduce the amount of project delay across all grant programs while concurrently maintaining fairness and equity in funding habitat and recreation projects across sponsor and project type. Additionally, as project success is not only measured by timeliness, but also by factors such as social and environmental impacts, project delay should generally be viewed by the RCO as a condition that can be greatly improved upon rather than a problem that should be eliminated entirely. As such, the follow criteria were used in determining final project delivery recommendations: strategies that provide incentives for sponsors to reduce project delay that will not target specific sponsor entities or a project type; and strategies that will provide the appropriate tools and support to not only prevent project delay, but will also provide the necessary changes for improvement once project delay occurs.



**Reduce Grant Manager Workload.** One of the RCO's greatest strengths is the personal relationships that grant managers have developed and cultivated with project sponsors over the years. The ability for a grant manager to provide guidance and assistance on a project from the nascent pre-application stage to final closeout promotes clear channels of communication, consistency in workflow, and a deep understanding of a project's intricacies. However, due to increasing workload, the ability for grant managers to spend substantial time working closely with applicants and sponsors has diminished. As such, an important criterion in this analysis was selecting strategies that reduce current workload pressures by enabling grant managers to dedicate quality time and energy to restoring and strengthening these external stakeholder relationships. While several viable options that address workload issues were explored, not all were included in the study's final recommendations (see **Grant Manager Workload Strategies for Further Consideration** for more information).



**Increase Organizational Efficiency and Cohesiveness.** As the RCO has grown in programmatic and budgetary size, there has been an increase in the complexity of Agency policies and internal processes. Over time, variations in how RCO staff perform specific duties and functions; interpret Board and legislative intent; and respond to applicants, project sponsors, and other stakeholders have created silos and sometimes confusion within and across grant programs and the Agency as a whole. Accordingly, recommendations within this category are strategies that are intended to increase organizational unity by promoting communication between staff and clearer guidelines and standards for the Agency as a whole to follow.

## Greater Standardization and Specialization

As the RCO continues to realize significant programmatic and budgetary growth, the Agency will need to move towards more structure, including greater standardization and specialization in its internal roles and processes. Such a transition is a natural step in achieving greater organizational efficiency, coordination, and functionality for any growing and mature agency.

### ***Specialization of Job Functions and Responsibilities***

At this organizational juncture, there is a substantial need to shift some responsibilities currently placed upon grant managers to other staff. Such a reallocation of duties would provide more time and greater flexibility for grant managers to dedicate their energies to what they do best – nurturing and growing proposals into successful projects.

**1. Creation of a Grants Support Division and Five New Staff Positions.** In light of this workload assessment, the RCO should consider creating five new staff positions located in a new unit within the Grant Division called Grant Support (this name is subject to change). Four of the proposed positions would be delegated responsibilities to tasks previously assigned to grant managers and would perform duties for both the RCFB and SRFB. The fifth position would be classified as a Grant Division Manager and would oversee the entire Grant Division. The Grant Division Manager would directly supervise the four proposed staff members within the Grant Support unit and the two SFRB and RCFB Section Managers. Under this scenario, the Grant Division Manager would be the only position reporting to the Deputy Director, and would serve as point person between Executive Management, SRFB and RCFB staff, and the two Boards.



**a. Programmatic Policy Specialist and Board Liaison.** This position would develop programmatic policies for the SRFB and RCFB, function as liaison between the two Boards, and prepare relevant materials related to Board activities. Specific tasks include revising the policy manuals, preparing relevant materials for Board meeting presentations, and updating the two Boards on each other's activities. This position would also work closely with leading grant managers from both the SRFB and RCFB to ensure that the impacts (on the Agency, grant managers, sponsors, etc.) of a proposed or modified policy are fully explored and understood. Additional job duties would include reviewing existing SRFB and RCFB policy to explore potential areas for developing Agency-wide policies and guidelines.



**b. Compliance Specialist.** The qualifications for this position (which the RCO is now in the process of hiring) would require an understanding of legal compliance issues. This position would be primarily responsible for reducing the backlog of unaddressed compliance issues currently assigned to grant managers (particularly for projects undergoing conversion). Such a person would also need strong Geographic Information System (GIS) skills to identify project boundaries for examining where compliance challenges may arise in the future. As part of RCO policy and statute, the position would also be responsible for monitoring projects every five years to ensure the continued protection of outdoor recreation and habitat investments.

  
  
**c. Cultural Resources Specialist.** Requirements for this position include a working knowledge of Executive Order (EO) 05-05, including an understanding of the review process, documentation necessary for compliance, and what types of projects are subject to review. Having someone on staff to provide a consistent interpretation of this Order, as well as serve as the point person for cultural resource questions, would help remove the confusion and ambiguity currently surrounding this issue. The RCO has recently hired a consultant to determine the appropriate amount of responsibility that should be placed on the Agency in addressing Executive Order 05-05 issues. Whether this position is part-time, full-time, or hired on a purely contractual basis will likely depend upon the consultant's final recommendations.

  
  
  
**d. Contracts and Billings Specialist.** Such a position would be responsible for ensuring consistency in contract and billing interpretation across the entire Agency, including preparing grant and non-grant contract agreements, working directly with the Fiscal Department to process billings, and monitoring projects to ensure that they are meeting contractual requirements. Specific tasks would include: handling programmatic and administrative agreements for SRFB, RCFB, and Executive Management; preparing grant contracts by working closely with grant managers and sponsors, which would include determining appropriate milestones and project timelines; determining eligible and allowable costs, authorizing billing submittals, and answering sponsor billing questions; and periodically checking project files to perform quality control and ensure that contractual requirements are met.

  
**e. Grant Division Manager.** This position would oversee the entire Grants Division and directly serve as manager for the four proposed staff in the Grants Support Unit and for the SRFB and RCFB Section Managers. Specific tasks include: serving as the Division's direct point of contact for Executive Management; overseeing general operations and activities of the Grants Division; and functioning in an advisory capacity to the SRFB and RCFB Boards. Such a position previously existed a few years back, but when the position was vacated, it was not filled.

### ***Standardization of Internal Policies and Processes***

In conjunction with increased job specialization, the RCO should implement greater standardization of its internal policies and processes. At present, grant managers have each developed their own methods for project tracking, addressing delayed projects, and performing general job duties. This situation has led to an inability to properly prioritize tasks and determine what projects are in need of the most attention. While a certain amount of autonomy and flexibility is important to manage grants, providing greater structure and guidance will improve workflow. Additionally, grant managers will be able to make better decisions due to clearer information, guidance, and support at the Agency level.

  
**2. Development of Agency-Wide Policies.** An assessment and evaluation of RCFB and SRFB policies is needed to determine areas for potential standardization, as well as identifying what policies should remain distinct (due to issues of legality or needs based on programmatic differences). One such example is evaluating the approval threshold for scope changes. This policy was recently modified (for an indefinite period) to require that amendments for both SRFB and RCFB projects receive the Director's consent. Previously, this policy differed for SRFB and RCFB projects, and it may be beneficial to maintain a similar approval threshold for both sections. Identifying such potential areas for standardization and collaborating with staff on this issue could be a task designated for the proposed Programmatic and Operational Policy Specialist.

### 3. **Matching Geographic Boundaries.** SRFB and RCFB Section Managers should work together to



map out similar geographical boundaries when assigning grant manager workload, to ensure that proposed habitat and recreation projects within the same locale complement rather than conflict with one another. With similarly defined territories, assigned SRFB and RCFB grant managers within a specified geographic region should schedule regular meetings to compare application lists and projects. This will also help to maximize potential funding synergies or identify compliance challenges. While creating identical boundary limits may not be possible due to different programmatic requirements concerning geography, the opportunity still exists to develop an approximate border match.

### 4. **Operational Manual.** Currently, operational policies for grant managers are embedded



throughout various procedural grant manuals, making it difficult and cumbersome for grant managers to find and review information. Creating a separate operational manual that is specifically used for internal purposes and can be used by both SRFB and RCFB grant managers would greatly reduce confusion (particularly for new grant managers) and ensure greater consistency in grant management activities. At present, senior grant managers from both sections are working together to develop such a manual, but have had difficulty dedicating sufficient time to create the document, due to workload constraints. Clear direction and support from Section Managers in creating a timeline for the manual's completion as well as providing sufficient resources to meet this timeline would be beneficial in expediting the process.

### 5. **Notification for Meeting Milestones.** Automated email or notice should be sent to sponsors



before a milestone is reached and submitted again once the sponsor is delayed in reaching that milestone. Section Managers or Senior Grant Managers should be assigned the responsibility of developing the content for the notices. The IT Division should examine PRISM's capability to automatically send out these notices to sponsors as well as alert grant managers that this task has been performed. **(High Impact)**

### 6. **Baseline Milestone and Schedule Estimates.** Information stored in PRISM should produce



milestone and project length estimates for specific types of projects. For example, when developing a contract for a habitat restoration project, there should be a specified range of appropriate milestones and project closure dates that grant managers can review against proposed project schedules. Such a baseline will be useful in developing greater timeline accuracy and project management accountability on the sponsor side, as well as providing grant managers with better information on whether a project warrants a time extension. **(High Impact)**

### 7. **Grant Manager Orientation and Training.** At present, recently hired grant managers are not



receiving formal orientation and training, which is vital for ensuring that these new employees are smoothly integrated into performing grant manager tasks and duties. Senior Grant Managers should develop a training manual and schedule that clearly identifies the type of training needed (and who will be responsible for providing that training) to effectively perform specified grant manager job duties.

## Customized Management Information Reports

Currently, neither grant managers nor Executive Management have the information they need to most effectively manage RCO grants. Agency staff would greatly benefit from receiving regular reports that provide customized, detailed, and up-to-date project information. Consistent reporting will provide clear direction on what actions need to be taken to rectify problem areas, how to prioritize tasks, and keep staff generally informed about how they are performing at an individual, grant section, and organizational level. It is important that the Executive Management communicate to all RCO staff that information is not intended to criticize or penalize an individual or division, but rather serves to help staff and the Agency make better, more informed decisions.

 **8. Project Status Reports for Grant Managers.** The Fiscal Department should prepare monthly project status reports for individual grant managers that list all of their managed projects and clearly highlights those that are late in meeting milestones, not completed on pre-determined closeout dates, or have other pressing issues that may lead to project delay. Additionally, grant managers should also be given quarterly reports of how the Agency as a whole is performing related to project delivery. Such reports will be based on the performance measures identified in this study. **(High Impact)**

  
 **9. Executive Management Reports.** Executive Management should be given quarterly reports (as well as reports produced on an “as needed basis”) by the Fiscal Department that identifies how the Agency as a whole is performing related to project delivery. Such reports will be based on some of the performance measures identified in this study and would provide a high-level assessment of this issue as well as supply information on specific projects that are experiencing project delay issues. **(High Impact)**

 **10. Project Status Reports for Sponsors.** The RCO should send quarterly status reports to sponsors, particularly ones that are experiencing project delay. Such reports would be similar to those created for grant managers and RCO Executive Management; they would detail all projects not meeting their contractual requirements, undergoing significant amendments, or encountering other challenges. Reports should not only be sent to a sponsor’s project manager, but also the sponsor’s executive director or department director. **(High Impact)**

## Recommendations Specific to RCFB

One of the largest challenges facing RCFB grant managers is the requirement to become expert in such a broad and diverse number of program areas. Currently, there are nine different programs with 25 sub-programs that grant managers must work within, each with its own unique sets of procedures, policies, timelines, and stakeholders. The required knowledge and work generated by each program has placed enormous pressures on grant managers, with even the most seasoned staff finding difficulties in effectively managing their projects.

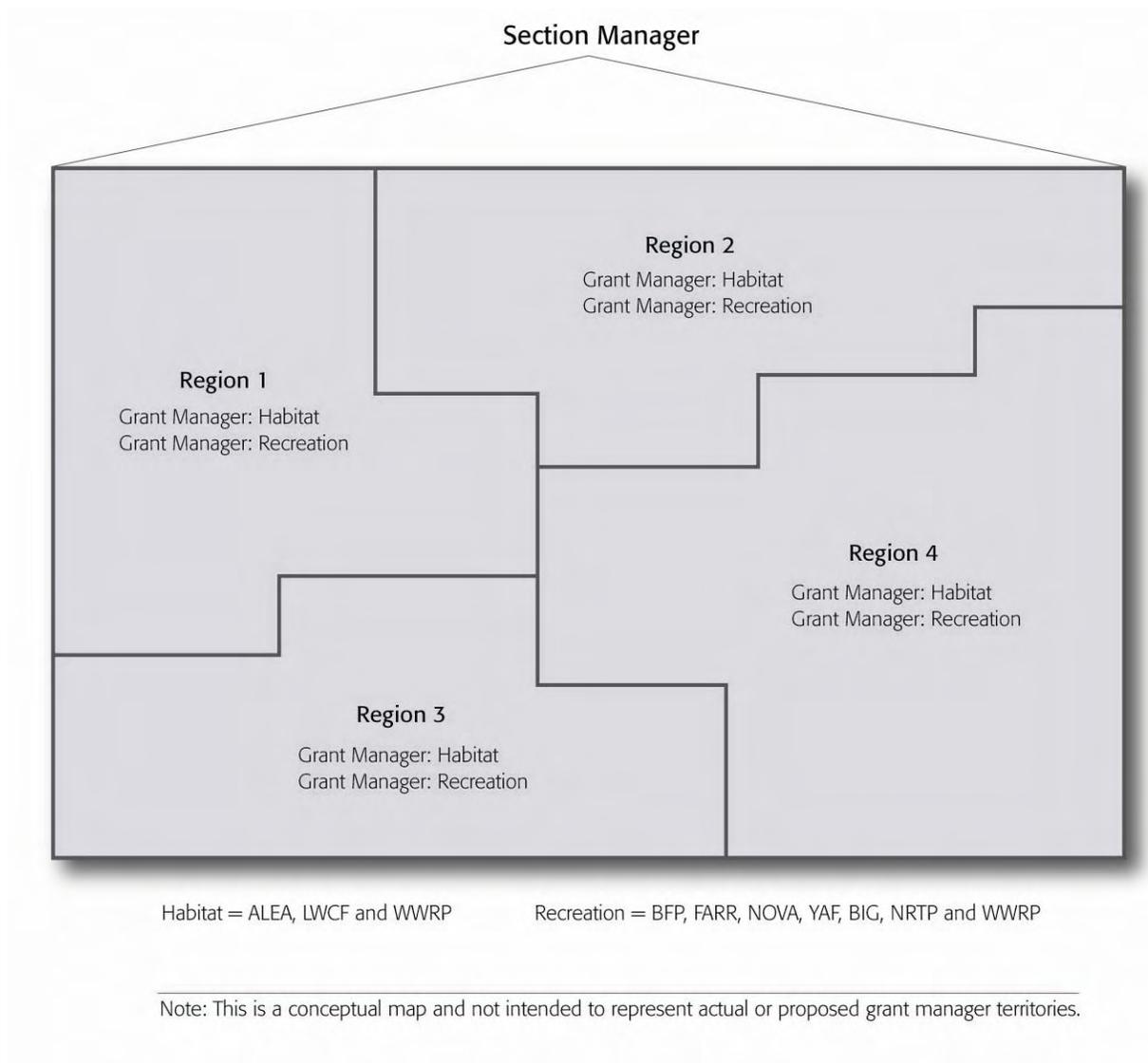
  
 **11. Assigning Grant Manager Workload and Program Specialization.** The RCFB is already exploring the possibility of assigning two grant managers to an assigned region that would specialize in different program areas. While this would lead to greater territory for a grant manager to cover (as the current boundaries would likely need to be doubled if the number of grant managers remain the same), there would be a reduction in the number of program areas that a

## RCO Project Delivery and Grant Manager Workload Study

grant manager would be required to understand. One possible split for program specialization would be between habitat and restoration projects. Under this structure, the assigned habitat grant managers would manage all Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account and Land and Water Conservation Fund projects and the majority of Washington Wildlife Recreation Program projects. The assigned recreation grant managers would then be responsible for managing all Boating Facilities Program, Firearms and Archery Range Recreation Program, Non-highway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities Program, Youth Athletic Facilities, Boating Infrastructure Grant Program, National Recreational Trails Program projects and a small portion of Washington Wildlife Recreation Program projects. **Exhibit 15** shows this proposed arrangement. **(High Impact)**

### Exhibit 15

#### Proposed Grant Manager Workload Conceptual Diagram



Source: Berk & Associates, 2008

### **12. Creation of an Additional Senior Operations Grant Manager Position.**



The following recommendation proposes changing the current Senior Policy Grant Manager position into a Senior Operations Grant Manager position (thereby making a total of two Senior Operations Grant Managers for the RCFB). Such a shift makes sense in light of the study's recommendation to shift programmatic policy responsibilities to other personnel. Additionally, as the Senior Operations Grant Manager does currently manage a project workload, the two positions would be divided (as proposed in Recommendation #11), with one responsible for habitat-related projects and the other responsible for recreation-related projects. The two Senior Operations Grant Managers would help in filtering relevant information up to the RCFB Section Manager, as well as assist the Section Manager with overseeing RCFB staff.

### **13. Access to Technical Review and Information.**



While the SRFB has a technical review panel, RCFB applicants and project sponsors do not have access to comparable resources. In particular, RCFB grant managers noted that applicants and sponsors often ask engineering or cost estimate questions that RCO staff does not have the technical ability to answer. Having an on-call person (perhaps hired on a contractual basis) to help answer such questions could help grant managers better provide technical information to applicants and sponsors, which in turn could improve project scoping, planning, and management on the sponsor end.

## **Recommendations Specific to SRFB**

While SRFB grant managers are not experiencing the same issue as RCFB concerning program volume, there are specific opportunities for improvement that are unique to this grant section.

### **14. Increase Lead Entity Involvement.**



SRFB should consider whether lead entities – local organizations responsible for developing, prioritizing, and submitting projects to the SRFB – should assume a greater role in sponsor oversight throughout the grant process. At present, lead entities are highly invested during the application process, but some quickly lose presence once projects are funded. There are several reasons for promoting greater involvement of lead organizations: they are generally located near project sites and have an ability to more effectively monitor day-to-day operations; they have a deep understanding of a project's history and its issues: and they have generally forged close relationships with the project sponsors. When sending out notifications or reports, lead entities should be alerted along with sponsors of projects experiencing issues and challenges, as well as kept well informed throughout the process on the progress of any of their affiliated projects.

### **15. Multiple Funding Dates.**



With the recent establishment of a year-round technical review panel, the SRFB is now in the process of assessing the impacts of providing multiple opportunities for Board approved funding throughout the year instead of just one. Such a structural shift may help grant manager workload concerns by spreading the number of projects acquired more evenly over the course of a year. Additionally, multiple funding dates would allow sponsors greater flexibility on when projects are started, which in turn can have a positive impact on project delivery.

### Project Workload

There is no magic number or formula that can be applied to determining grant manager workload due to such variation in project complexity, sponsor type, and level of grant manager experience. Best practices research showed a very wide range of projects per grant manager, reflecting some of the difference in the granting agencies and programs and indicating the difficulty in defining a specific range.

Currently, Section Managers appear to be carefully considering the number of projects assigned to a grant manager on a case-to-case basis. The grant managers interviewed noted that managing 65-75 projects is a “doable” number, with experienced grant managers likely to feel more comfortable at the higher range and newer, less experienced grant managers preferring the lower range.

Given that many of the recommendations in this report are aimed at reducing grant manager workload in some fashion, it is likely that the 65-75 range is low under circumstances that include a reduction in other tasks (like billings and contract management, and, in a few instances, programmatic policy development). The Agency’s recent experience in combination with reduced workload in other areas suggests that an average range of 70-85 total active and board funded projects per full-time grant manager is reasonable. The actual number of projects should vary some to reflect the challenges inherent in different programs, project types and sponsors.

The RCO’s funding level continues to grow substantially (25% from 2005-07 to 2007-09), and it is reasonable to expect that additional grant management staff is needed to assume the workload generated by new projects. For the organization to maintain its excellent service levels and manage a constantly growing level of projects and programs, adequate staffing is critical. The two new grant manager positions that were recently filled are a good start that addressed the retrospective staffing need, but in order to continue managing the agency’s growth, additional grant management staff is recommended. To maintain a range of 70-85 active and board funded projects per grant manager a minimum of three additional grant managers would be required.

It is important to note that the hiring of additional staff will likely generate more work in the short run, especially given the absence of a formalized training program (Recommendation #7 above).

**16. Determining a Project Threshold.** Section Managers should determine an average project threshold when assigning new projects and considering if additional grant managers need to be hired. For example, if the threshold is set at 85 projects per grant manager, then once the average project workload for grant managers rises above this level, Section Managers would consult first with grant managers and then with Executive Management about hiring additional staff. Eighty projects is a reasonable starting place, but this threshold should be revisited periodically as the RCO institutionalizes other practices that impact grant manager workload. **(High Impact)**



## Improvements to the Internal and External Flow of Communication

Within this report, communication was examined both internally (the flow of information within the Agency) and externally (the flow of information from the Agency to the outside world). Internally, while there are strong pockets of communication flow among staff, strong communication silos exist throughout the Agency. Such lack of interaction and dialog appears most pronounced between the Grants Division and Executive Management, which in turn has created significant challenges in clearly outlining expectations, making informed organizational decisions, and defining and understanding staff roles and responsibilities. Externally, sponsors, particularly those experiencing problems, have not been given enough direct feedback by RCO grant managers and Executive Management on their projects status and what steps can be taken to improve challenged projects.



**17. Communication between the Grant Division and Executive Management.** The Director and Deputy Director should continue attending RCFB and SRFB staff meetings quarterly to listen to specific issues and concerns, as well as learn more about the day-to-day responsibilities of grant managers. In particular, SRFB and RCFB Section Managers and Executive Management should work together to clearly identify and agree upon roles, responsibilities, and priorities for Section Managers and Senior Grant Managers to help align expectations and workflow.



**18. Communication between Grant Managers.** Currently SRFB and RCFB grant managers do not formally meet together as a group. If the RCO is moving towards a more “agency-wide” approach, having at least quarterly meetings with the entire grant manager group could further promote and identify similarities between the two groups, rather than differences. Such meetings can serve as a platform to discuss issues such as additional areas for standardization and specialization, raise and identify concerns and issues that are at the grant manager level, as well as provide updates on relevant activities.



**19. Communication between RCO Executive Management and Sponsors.** In order to send a signal that the RCO is serious about improving project delivery, face-to-face meetings should occur between the RCO Executive Management and sponsors that have a history of project delay to determine how to address specific issues, challenges, and concerns. Management on the sponsor side should be involved in these meetings and should be consistently kept abreast of a project’s status through reports sent by the RCO. **(High Impact)**



**20. Communication between RCO and Office of Financial Management.** Around the issue of reappropriations, the RCO needs to better explain its budget requests to Office of Financial Management. For each project and program type, the RCO should understand historical spending patterns and timelines and be able to present a Spending Plan to accompany its capital budget requests. This Spending Plan will communicate expected levels of reappropriations in future biennia based upon the current budget request. Unexpected reappropriations should similarly be identified with an explanation and communication about what steps the RCO has been taking to reduce reappropriations in general. **(High Impact)**

### Use of PRISM

While PRISM functions very well as a data repository tool, both sponsors and RCO staff interviewed noted that the system – as a result of recent upgrades and modifications – has become increasingly difficult to navigate and extract meaningful information. In particular, PRISM, in its present form, is not an effective management tool for both grant managers and Executive Management. In addition, PRISM is not maximizing its current and potential capabilities in assisting grant managers more proactively manage projects, as many of the tasks currently conducted by grant managers, such as notifying or updating sponsors of due dates or requirements, could become automated.

The following recommendations for PRISM improvements will require substantial time, staff, and financial resources. Such a dedication of resources needs to be aligned with the identification and preparation for the future of information management at the State level. The Office of Financial Management is currently in the process of evaluating the impact of developing one grant system for State agencies, where there would be one central repository for entering contract information. If the RCO is able to enact these recommendations, it will need to do so with the understanding that identifying and meeting external system interoperability requirements will be considered at every stage of the improvement process.

Based on RCO staff and sponsor interviews, as well as our own personal analysis, the following recommendations were made for PRISM improvements:

**21. PRISM Task Force.** A PRISM Task Force, comprised of representatives from Executive Management, the Grants Division, the Fiscal Department, and project sponsors, should be formed. The Task Force would be charged with evaluating the impacts of the proposed improvements as well as identify additional modifications and changes to ensure that the system is more user-friendly and a better management reporting tool. Such a Task Force should hold regularly scheduled meetings and update RCO staff on its progress.



**22. Automated Requests and Notices.** PRISM should adopt the capability to automatically send standardized notices (such as an email) to sponsors and grant managers: before and after milestone due dates; if sponsors have not submitted an annual billing; and when a project's scheduled close date is approaching. By automating this process, both sponsors and grant managers will be alerted and reminded in a timely manner of important dates and requirements, with minimal (if any) staff effort. **(High Impact)**



**23. Standardized Reports.** As previously addressed, PRISM should produce comprehensive, customized, and reader-friendly reports for grant managers, Executive Management, and Fiscal Staff that provide a holistic assessment of how the organization is managing grants at an individual, section, and organizational level. **(High Impact)**



**24. DashBoard System.** The proposed PRISM Task Force should explore the option of developing an online, interactive, DashBoard system similar to the Transportation Improvement Board (TIB). Such a system would actively monitor the Agency's overall health and performance by assessing key measures that would be drawn from and collected by PRISM. This information would not only be available to staff, but is also open to the public. TIB routinely provides demonstrations on the DashBoard system to other State agencies interested in acquiring such a system. **(High Impact)**



 **25. Application Information.** Currently, grant applications for all programs can be completed online via PRISM. While this feature has streamlined the application process substantially, information is not always retained historically or accessible across programs. PRISM should have the capability to save base information (i.e. name, address, financial information) previously input into the system for sponsors applying to a new program or the same program at a later date.

 **26. Total Cost Information.** Currently, project cost information stored within PRISM only reflects the total amount the sponsor was able to bill on a project, not the true project cost. Such data can be misleading as this information is often used by applicants in developing project cost estimates for proposals. PRISM should provide information for both types of financial data, with a clear demarcation of their differences.

 **27. Applicant History Information.** PRISM should track over time amendment information on a project-by-project basis (such as the number of time extensions, scope changes, etc.) that will help grant managers make more informed decisions. For example, knowing that a sponsor has on average three time extensions per agreement would help grant managers at the onset of a project be more pro-active in ensuring that schedule slippage does not occur.

### Performance Measures

To set the stage for effective strategic planning, the RCO needs to develop a set of performance measures that can be used to assess progress in improving project delivery concerns and how well efforts to address this issue are working. Outcome measures – such as counting the number of salmon returning to a stream or the number of hikers using a given trail – are indicators to assess the actual impact of an agency’s actions. Output measures – such as tracking the number of projects put under agreement in 90 days – are important to measure as they are tools to assess the progress on achieving successful outcome measures, as well as identifying specific areas to concentrate on for improvement. The recommendations in this report focus specifically on output benchmarks, as outcome measures will be further examined and addressed in the development of the RCO’s Government Management Accountability and Performance (GMAP) objectives.

 **28. Output Measures.** In order to provide a holistic assessment of how well the Agency is performing regarding project delivery, the RCO should develop multiple output benchmarks that examine various points during a project’s life (i.e. from “birth until death”). Specifically, RCO should focus on examining activities that the Agency should already be doing based on policy and administrative code. **(High Impact)**



This may include the percent of projects that:

- Were put under agreement within 180 days after Board funding date
- Provided certification of match 30 days prior to Board funding approval
- Met their first milestone date without a time extension
- Submitted a billing in the past year
- Closed out within 90 days of project completion

## Incentives for Sponsors to Deliver Projects On-Time

A major issue for the RCO is the perception by many of its sponsors that project delay is not a significant problem for the Agency. Such a perception has been cultivated over the years by RCO's image as a lenient and flexible grant agency and reinforced by the way that staff respond to project delay. While there is a fear among RCO staff and project sponsors that adopting a tougher approach will dramatically change the culture of the organization and its relationship with the public, there appears a strong need for the Agency to develop incentives for sponsors to avoid schedule slippage.

While understanding that this is a nuanced issue, this report recommends the development and enforcement of a mixture of policies that are designed to avoid project delay through positive and punitive incentives. RCO staff, particularly grant managers, will be tasked with the responsibility of effectively communicating these policies (once approved by the Boards).

**29. Agency Response to Project Delay.** The RCO should consider creating a tiered system, where delayed projects fall into three categories. The first tier could consist of projects that are classified as "mildly delayed" and the RCO could request that sponsors identify the reasons for delay and successfully outline what pro-active steps are being taken to address these problems – Board approval for a time extension would not be needed at this point. The second tier would be for projects that are classified as "significantly delayed." Board approval would be needed to obtain a time extension and sponsors would have to provide an even more detailed explanation of why the delay occurred and how the sponsor is planning to meet the new timeline. At this stage, Executive Management should be working closely with the grant manager and sponsor to monitor progress. The third and last tier would be projects that are being considered for termination, a decision that should be supported Agency-wide. **(High Impact)**



**30. Factoring in Applicant History.** One idea is awarding additional bonus points during the application process to applicants who have previously been awarded grants and have a history of delivering projects on-time. Conversely, applicants who have previously been awarded grants and have a history of project delay could have points deducted off their total score. A tradeoff for such scoring might be the penalization of first time applicants who do not have a history with the RCO and thus may be at an unfair disadvantage when competing against applicants who have a good project history. **(High Impact)**



**31. Readiness to Proceed.** As poor scoping and planning is strongly correlated to project delay, rewarding additional application points to projects that are ready to proceed would provide incentives for applicants to invest greater resources in the project design stage. Some examples of areas for awarding bonus points are having permit-ready projects, 30% engineer drawings, landowner authorization for the sale of a property (for acquisition projects), and completed wastewater/stormwater planning documents. **(High Impact)**



**32. Authorizing Amendments.** There should be greater scrutiny from RCO staff in authorizing proposed project amendments. The Director has recently assumed initial responsibility for reviewing all projects that are requesting scope changes. At this juncture, this level of scrutiny is appropriate, although in the future (when the RCO has made greater strides towards reducing project delay), delegation of this task to other senior staff would be more sustainable and efficient.





- 33. Terminating Projects.** For the most egregiously delayed projects, the RCO should consider cutting off funding and ending the project. Such a decision should be reserved only for the projects that have been identified by grant managers, Executive Management, and the Board as non-viable and are experiencing major challenges (see Recommendation #29 concerning RCO response to project delay). Such a decision should be strongly supported Agency-wide. **(High Impact)**

### Project Planning and Design



- 34. Planning and Design Grants.** The RCO should increase the number of planning and design grants offered and make them available across all programs. Funding more of these types of projects will likely produce greater accuracy in costs and time estimates, fewer occurrences of delay from issues such as permitting and land owner approval, fewer amendments, and less work for staff. Sponsors currently have the option to apply for planning grants in two RCFB programs (Boating and Non-highway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities Program) and in SRFB acquisition and non-capital grants. However, sponsors do not always make use of such grants as it is easier to go through the application process only once, securing a larger chunk of funding to do everything. Providing additional bonus points for applications that are adequately scoped and ready to proceed (i.e. having a permit-ready plan) would encourage applicants to make more use of these types of grants. **(High Impact)**

### Phased Projects

Providing incentives for sponsors to have multi-phased projects will likely increase the amount of time dedicated to scoping and planning for a project, which in turn can positively impact project timeliness. Additionally, by managing projects in stages, sponsors have greater flexibility in determining the project schedule and timeline, as they are not beholden to completing an entire project within one or even two funding cycles. One potential drawback to project phasing is that the RCO is not guaranteed that a multi-staged project will be completed, as sponsors may not apply or even be considered eligible for the second round of phasing. Additionally, project phasing may lengthen the project timeline as the sponsor applies and waits for additional development funding.



- 35. Encourage Project Phasing.** Where it makes sense to do so – given project timeline and complexity – the RCO should encourage sponsors to propose their projects in phased segments. Logical phases might include pre-design/design, acquisition, construction, etc and would be generally similar to the existing State process for large capital projects. **(High Impact)**



- 36. Align Phasing with Biennial Funding Cycles.** Under the current system, a sponsor's decision of whether or not to propose a project in phases has more to do with the grant limit under a given program or the sponsor's ability to provide matching funds. Where possible, the RCO should consider limiting phased projects to two years in order to match the phase to the biennial funding timeline and help reduce reappropriations. **(High Impact)**

## Summary of High Impact Recommendations

The following is a summary of the recommendations identified as strategies that would make the greatest impacts in terms of improving project delivery, reducing grant manager workload, and improving organizational efficiency and cohesiveness.

  **Notification for Meeting Milestones.** Automated email or notice should be sent to sponsors before a milestone is reached and submitted again once the sponsor is delayed in reaching that milestone. Section Managers or Senior Grant Managers should be assigned the responsibility of developing the content for the notices. The IT Division should examine PRISM's capability to automatically send out these notices to sponsors as well as alert grant managers that this task has been performed. **(High Impact)**

 **Baseline Milestone and Schedule Estimates.** Information stored in PRISM should produce milestone and project length estimates for specific types of projects. For example, when developing a contract for a habitat restoration project, there should be a specified range of appropriate milestones and project closure dates that grant managers can review against proposed project schedules. Such a baseline will be useful in developing greater timeline accuracy and project management accountability on the sponsor side, as well as providing grant managers with better information on whether a project warrants a time extension. **(High Impact)**

 **Project Status Reports for Grant Managers.** The Fiscal Department should prepare monthly project status reports for individual grant managers that list all of their managed projects and clearly highlights those that are late in meeting milestones, not completed on pre-determined closeout dates, or have other pressing issues that may lead to project delay. Additionally, grant managers should also be given quarterly reports of how the Agency as a whole is performing related to project delivery. Such reports will be based on the performance measures identified in this study. **(High Impact)**

  **Executive Management Reports.** Executive Management should be given quarterly reports (as well as reports produced on an "as needed basis") by the Fiscal Department that identifies how the Agency as a whole is performing related to project delivery. Such reports will be based on some of the performance measures identified in this study and would provide a high-level assessment of this issue as well as supply information on specific projects that are experiencing project delay issues. **(High Impact)**

 **Project Status Reports for Sponsors.** The RCO should send quarterly status reports to sponsors, particularly ones that are experiencing project delay. Such reports would be similar to those created for grant managers and RCO Executive Management; they would detail all projects not meeting their contractual requirements, undergoing significant amendments, or encountering other challenges. Reports should not only be sent to a sponsor's project manager, but also the sponsor's executive director or department director. **(High Impact)**

  **Assigning Grant Manager Workload and Program Specialization.** The RCFB is already exploring the possibility of assigning two grant managers to an assigned region that would specialize in different program areas. While this would lead to greater territory for a grant manager to cover (as the current boundaries would likely need to be doubled if the number of grant managers remain the same), there would be a reduction in the number of program areas that a

## RCO Project Delivery and Grant Manager Workload Study

grant manager would be required to understand. One possible split for program specialization would be between habitat and restoration projects. Under this structure, the assigned habitat grant managers would manage all Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account and Land and Water Conservation Fund projects and the majority of Washington Wildlife Recreation Program projects. The assigned recreation grant managers would then be responsible for managing all Boating Facilities Program, Firearms and Archery Range Recreation Program, Non-highway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities Program, Youth Athletic Facilities, Boating Infrastructure Grant Program, National Recreational Trails Program projects and a small portion of Washington Wildlife Recreation Program projects. **Exhibit 15** shows this proposed arrangement. **(High Impact)**



**Determining a Project Threshold.** Section Managers should determine an average project threshold when assigning new projects and considering if additional grant managers need to be hired. For example, if the threshold is set at 85 projects per grant manager, then once the average project workload for grant managers rises above this level, Section Managers would consult first with grant managers and then with Executive Management about hiring additional staff. Eighty projects is a reasonable starting place, but this threshold should be revisited periodically as the RCO institutionalizes other practices that impact grant manager workload. **(High Impact)**



**Communication between RCO Executive Management and Sponsors.** In order to send a signal that the RCO is serious about improving project delivery, face-to-face meetings should occur between the RCO Executive Management and sponsors that have a history of project delay to determine how to address specific issues, challenges, and concerns. Management on the sponsor side should be involved in these meetings and should be consistently kept abreast of a project's status through reports sent by the RCO. **(High Impact)**



**Communication between RCO and Office of Financial Management.** Around the issue of reappropriations, the RCO needs to better explain its budget requests to the Office of Financial Management. For each project and program type, the RCO should understand historical spending patterns and timelines and be able to present a Spending Plan to accompany its capital budget requests. This Spending Plan will communicate expected levels of reappropriations in future biennia based upon the current budget request. Unexpected reappropriations should similarly be identified with an explanation and communication about what steps the RCO has been taking to reduce reappropriations in general. **(High Impact)**



**Automated Requests and Notices.** PRISM should adopt the capability to automatically send standardized notices (such as an email) to sponsors and grant managers: before and after milestone due dates; if sponsors have not submitted an annual billing; and when a project's scheduled close date is approaching. By automating this process, both sponsors and grant managers will be alerted and reminded in a timely manner of important dates and requirements, with minimal (if any) staff effort. **(High Impact)**



**Standardized Reports.** As previously addressed, PRISM should produce comprehensive, customized, and reader-friendly reports for grant managers, Executive Management, and Fiscal Staff that provide a holistic assessment of how the organization is managing grants at an individual, section, and organizational level. **(High Impact)**



**DashBoard System.** The proposed PRISM Task Force should explore the option of developing an online, interactive, DashBoard system similar to the Transportation Improvement Board (TIB). Such a system would actively monitor the Agency's overall health and performance by assessing key measures that would be drawn from and collected by PRISM. This information would not only be available to staff, but is also open to the public. TIB routinely provides demonstrations on the DashBoard system to other State agencies interested in acquiring such a system. **(High Impact)**



**Output Measures.** In order to provide a holistic assessment of how well the Agency is performing with project delivery, the RCO should develop multiple output benchmarks that examine various points during a project's life (i.e. from "birth until death"). Specifically, RCO should focus on examining activities that the Agency should already be doing based on policy and administrative code. **(High Impact)**

This may include the percent of projects that:

- Were put under agreement within 180 days after Board funding date
- Provided certification of match 30 days prior to Board funding approval
- Met their first milestone date without a time extension
- Submitted a billing in the past year
- Closed out within 90 days of project completion



**Agency Response to Project Delay.** The RCO should consider creating a tiered system, where delayed projects fall into three categories. The first tier could consist of projects that are classified as "mildly delayed" and the RCO could request that sponsors identify the reasons for delay and successfully outline what pro-active steps are being taken to address these problems – Board approval for a time extension would not be needed at this point. The second tier would be for projects that are classified as "significantly delayed." Board approval would be needed to obtain a time extension and sponsors would have to provide an even more detailed explanation of why the delay occurred and how the sponsor is planning to meet the new timeline. At this stage, Executive Management should be working closely with the grant manager and sponsor to monitor progress. The third and last tier would be projects that are being considered for termination, a decision that should be supported Agency-wide. **(High Impact)**



**Factoring in Applicant History.** One idea is awarding additional bonus points to applicants who have previously been awarded grants and that have a history of delivering projects on-time. Conversely, applicants who have previously been awarded grants and have a history of project delay could have points deducted off their total score. A tradeoff for such scoring might be the penalization of first time applicants who do not have a history with the RCO, resulting in an unfair disadvantage when competing against applicants who have a good project history. **(High Impact)**



**Readiness to Proceed.** As poor scoping and planning is strongly correlated to project delay, rewarding additional application points to projects that are ready to proceed would provide incentives for applicants to invest greater resources in the project design stage. Some examples of areas for awarding bonus points are having permit-ready projects, 30% engineer drawings, landowner authorization for the sale of a property (for acquisition projects), and completed wastewater/stormwater planning documents. **(High Impact)**



**Terminating Projects.** For the most egregiously delayed projects, the RCO should consider cutting off funding and ending the project. Such a decision should be reserved only for the projects that have been identified by grant managers, Executive Management, and the Board as non-viable and are experiencing major challenges (see Recommendation #29 concerning RCO response to project delay). Such a decision should be strongly supported Agency-wide. (**High Impact**)



**Planning and Design Grants.** The RCO should increase the number of planning and design grants offered and make them available across all programs. Funding more of these types of projects will likely produce greater accuracy in costs and time estimates, fewer occurrences of delay from issues such as permitting and land owner approval, fewer amendments, and less work for staff. Sponsors currently have the option to apply for planning grants in two RCFB programs (Boating and Non-highway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities Program) and in SRFB acquisition and non-capital grants. However, sponsors do not always make use of such grants as it is easier to go through the application process only once, securing a larger chunk of funding to do everything. Providing additional bonus points for applications that are adequately scoped and ready to proceed (i.e. having a permit-ready plan) would encourage applicants to make more use of these types of grants. (**High Impact**)



**Encourage Project Phasing.** Where it makes sense to do so – given project timeline and complexity – the RCO should encourage sponsors to propose their projects in phased segments. Logical phases might include pre-design/design, acquisition, construction, etc and would be generally similar to the existing State process for large capital projects. (**High Impact**)



**Align Phasing with Biennial Funding Cycles.** Under the current system, a sponsor's decision of whether or not to propose a project in phases has more to do with the grant limit under a given program or the sponsor's ability to provide matching funds. Where possible, the RCO should consider limiting phased projects to two years in order to match the phase to the biennial funding timeline and help reduce reappropriations. (**High Impact**)

## Grant Manager Workload Strategies for Further Consideration

Although the following workload alternatives were not included in the study's final recommendations, such strategies should be examined for further consideration and discussion by RCO staff.

**Dividing all Grant Programs by Recreation and Habitat.** One interesting idea considered – proposed by grant management staff – was reorganizing the entire Grant Division and allocating programs under a Recreation and Habitat division instead of the current RCFB and SRFB structure. Such a separation would shift programs previously under the RCFB to the newly created Habitat side; thereby creating a more even split in the number of programs a grant manager is expected to manage and fully understand. One potential disadvantage of this structure would be that some grant managers would answer to two boards, which may in the long-run create additional workload concerns.

**Hiring Additional Grant Managers without Reducing Duties.** Another option that was explored is maintaining the wide range of duties performed by grant managers. However, in order to reduce workload pressures, a substantial increase in grant manager staff would be needed to effectively manage the breadth of work currently performed. However, the hiring of additional grant managers would do little to stem the prioritization of certain tasks over another. Further, grant managers would still be required to perform duties that they might not have the technical capacity or knowledge to properly perform (such as dealing with compliance and cultural resource issues).

**Splitting Application and Active Grant Management Duties.** The third option that was closely considered was dividing the work performed during the application cycle and work performed during the active project management cycle into two separate positions. From a pure efficiency standpoint, such a split could improve overall workflow by decreasing work capacity bottlenecks that occur during certain times of the year (particularly when the application cycle is in full swing) and ensure that sufficient energy is devoted to active project management. However, such a division of labor might disrupt one of the primary strengths of the Agency – the personal relationships that grant managers have cultivated with project sponsors. Additionally, important information concerning a project's details learned in the application stage could be lost in the transfer to active project management with another staff position.

**Two RCFB Section Manager Positions.** On the RCFB side, supervising 11 staff is a difficult task for one Section Manager to perform alone. This study closely examined the impacts of creating an additional Section Manager position (for a total of two), with each Section Manager overseeing a specified number of RCFB grant programs and staff. An advantage to such a split would be the reduced workload burden on the current Section Manager, as specific duties could be shared and one person would no longer be required to oversee nine grant programs or be directly responsible for managing such a large number of staff. However, a potential drawback is that hiring an additional Section Manager might further accentuate differences among RCFB programs rather than the similarities (which might ultimately have an adverse impact in promoting cohesiveness within and outside the Grant Division).

## ATTACHMENT A

### INTERVIEW LIST

#### SPONSOR INTERVIEWS

##### Local Municipalities

Asotin County Conservation District, Cheryl Sonnen  
City of Bellingham, Leslie Bryson  
City of Kent, Lori Flemm  
City of Puyallup, Ralph Dannenberg  
City of Seattle, Charles Ng  
City of Shoreline, Maureen Colaizzi  
City of Tacoma, Bart Alford  
City of Tukwila, Bruce Fletcher  
City of Vancouver, Jeroen Kok  
City of Woodinville, Lane Youngblood  
Jefferson County, Matt Tyler  
King County, Sharon Claussen  
Port of Allyn, Bonnie Knight

##### State Agencies

Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife,  
Dan Budd  
Washington State Department of Parks and  
Recreation, Ken Graham  
Washington State Department of Parks and  
Recreation, Terri Heikkila

##### Nonprofit

Columbia Land Trust, Bard Paymar  
Lower Columbia Fish Recover Board, Melody  
Tereski  
Methow Conservancy, Jason Paulson/Joy Schwab  
Mountains to Sound Greenway, Doug Schindler  
Grays River Habitat Enhancement District, Delvin  
Frederickson

##### Tribes

Yakama Nation, Jamie Brisbois  
Quinault Nation, Mark Mobbs

#### INTERVIEWS WITH EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Office of Financial Management (OFM), Sand Triggs, Capital Budget Assistant  
Office of Financial Management (OFM), Tom Saelid, Senior Budget Assistant  
Puget Sound Partnership, Jim Cahill, Director of Accountability and Budget  
Washington State Senate Ways and Means Committee, Brian Sims, Capital Budget Coordinator  
Washington State House of Representatives, Nona Snell, Fiscal Analyst

**RCO STAFF INTERVIEWS**

Executive Management, Kaleen Cottingham, Director  
Executive Management, Rachael Langen, Deputy Director  
Executive Management, Jim Fox, Special Assistant to the Director  
Planning Services, Jim Eychaner, Outdoor Planner  
Fiscal Department, Mark Jarasitis, Manager  
Fiscal Department, Robbie Marchesano, Accountant  
Grant Services, RCFB, Marguerite Austin, Manager  
Grant Services, RCFB, Lorinda Anderson, Grants Program Specialist  
Grant Services, RCFB, Myra Barker, Outdoor Grants Manager  
Grant Services, RCFB, Kammie Bunes, Outdoor Grants Manager, Policy  
Grant Services, RCFB, Rory Calhoun, Accessibility Specialist  
Grant Services, RCFB, Adam Cole, Outdoor Grants Manager  
Grant Services, RCFB, Dan Haws, Outdoor Grants Manager  
Grant Services, RCFB, Darrell Jennings, Outdoor Grants Manager

Grant Services, RCFB, Leslie Ryan-Connelly, Outdoor Grants Manager  
Grant Services, RCFB, Kim Sellers, Outdoor Grants Manager  
Grant Services, RCFB, Sarah Thirtyacre, Outdoor Grants Manager  
Grant Services, SRFB, Brian Abbott, Manager  
Grant Services, SRFB, Kay Caromile, Outdoor Grants Manager  
Grant Services, SRFB, Marc Duboiski, Outdoor Grants Manager  
Grant Services, SRFB, Tara Galuska, Outdoor Grants Manager  
Grant Services, SRFB, Jason Lundgren, Outdoor Grants Manager  
Grant Services, SRFB, Barb McIntosh, Outdoor Grants Manager  
Grant Services, SRFB, Mike Ramsey, Outdoor Grants Manager  
Grant Services, SRFB, Leslie Ryan-Connelly, Outdoor Grants Manager  
Information Services, Scott Chapman, PRISM Database Manager

**GRANT-MAKING AGENCY INTERVIEWS**

California State Parks Department, Don Shapiro, Assistant Park and Recreation Specialist  
California Department of Water Resources, Kristyne Miller, Grant Manager  
California Resources Agency, Office of Secretary, Leah Northrop, Grants Administrator  
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Restoration and Enhancement Board, Laura Tesler, Program Coordinator  
Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Ken Bierly, Deputy Director/Manager  
Oregon Marion County Soil and Water District, Ron Crouse, Education Outreach Coordinator  
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Synthia Waymack, Grants Administrator  
Washington Public Works Board, Kelly Snyder, Executive Director  
Washington Transportation Improvement Board (TIB), Steve Gorcester, Executive Director  
Wisconsin Knowles-Nelson, Department of Natural Resources, Mary Rose Teves, Grant Section Chief

## ATTACHMENT B

### SPONSOR INTERVIEW SUMMARY

#### INTRODUCTION AND GUIDE TO THIS SUMMARY

- This draft Interview Summary encompasses the results of select RCO sponsor interviews conducted from July through October 2007.
- The Summary is a collection of the comments made by interviewees, organized by theme.
- Each bullet point represents a single person's comments.
- All points made and issues identified in this Summary are those conveyed by the interviewees. To obtain useful information, interviewees were assured that responses would not be attributed to specific individuals or organizations.
- Attachment A presents a list of the sponsors interviewed.

#### SPONSOR COMMENTS

##### Application Process

##### General Perceptions of the Application Process

*How would you characterize your experience in applying for RCO grants?*

- It's a great process. The staff is always very available and if they are not in the office, they call us immediately back. We usually go the workshop to find out about changes or updates, but we don't need a lot of help in the application process. However, if we do every need help on anything else, the RCO staff is always readily available.
- Applying is relatively smooth and easy. However, there is lot more application paperwork for the RCO than the King County Conversation Futures grants. Overall, I think that the RCO has the most paperwork and time consuming grants.
- Our RCO grant manager has been great. However, the application process has been difficult at times. The presentations can be stressful. The Board asks a lot of technical questions out of the blue. I don't have the staff to help with applying and I'm not a technical expert. So we end up hiring people to help us through this process. It seems like the presentations are geared towards the projects that have the most resources at hand – which makes competition really hard.
- I am doing everything in the applications process. But you need expert help to put together a comprehensive project. It's not a level playing field as a small agency doesn't have the technical expertise to answer Board questions. How can we compete with the Port of Seattle?

## RCO Project Delivery and Grant Manager Workload Study

- The application process is pretty straightforward – our grant manager really walked us through the first time around.
- We have a lot of experience. We've been applying and receiving RCO grants for a number of years, since the early 80s or late 70s. We've been successful although it's become more competitive.
- The process has gotten easier because we know what to expect and now we can do PowerPoint presentations instead of slide shows. It's a pretty time-consuming process –it's tedious and a lot of work. It's difficult to keep track of applications or presentations when the RCO changes the deadlines and due dates.
- Once you have done it a couple of times it gets easier. We don't really ask for too much help. The instructions are pretty straightforward.
- I think there's a bias during the evaluations. I don't think it's intentional – it's pretty subtle. This bias is not necessarily with RCO staff, but with the review committees and the Board.
- For such a highly political environment, the RCO staff is pretty unbiased. However, I don't have the same opinion about the technical review committees!
- I think there's a bias during the evaluations. I don't think it's intentional, and it's pretty subtle. This bias is not necessarily with RCO staff, but with the review committees and the Board.
- For such a highly political environment, the RCO staff is pretty unbiased. However, I don't have the same opinion about the technical review committees!
- RCO is largely composed of people who do not hunt. They have a bias against hunting big game. Our Agency is mandated to provide such hunting (it's a legitimate thing). Their evaluation process is clearly biased against this.
- The application process is frustrating. This is also true for the whole process. It takes a lot of time and resources to putting together an application.
- It's a lot of work, and it has become more complex every biennium (as the RCO must respond to changes imposed by the Legislature, the Governor's office, and the Boards). The RCO continues to add to the process whenever there is an issue. This has evolved into a laborious application process. At times it appears the application and presentation process is the objective rather than the much broader legislative intent to fund habitat projects. Ultimately, it's the process that is used to evaluate projects – which is really frustrating to me. It seems like the determination of which projects get funded is boiled down to a 20 minute PowerPoint presentation in front of a group of layman. I think some projects win not because they are sound but because they reflect the process that RCO has developed.
- For smaller grants, I think the application process should be a little easier. Perhaps not everyone has to come over and give a presentation.
- We have a grants specialist in our office that has really helped us in improving the way we apply. The grants specialist first looks at the whole application process and then comes to us and asks us specifics about the project to fill in the gaps. This position is also the lead in the application process and ensures that everything is moving smoothly.

- I have been really satisfied with the application process. The workshops help and staff provides written materials to tell you what to do. When there are changes they tell me in the workshop. I prefer to think we are successful because of our preparation.
- The application process is a little clunky on both ends, but we've generally had a good experience. The slide presentations present a large burden in terms of time and resources, and maybe they shouldn't be required for all grants.
- The application process is overall a positive experience.
- The RCO workshops are great. It also helps that the application is now online; it makes the process more streamlined.
- Applying to RCO grants has always worked great for us.
- I've had not problem applying to RCO grants. They take time, but the process is pretty clear.
- It's an arduous process – but I think overall the RCO staff is very helpful, which makes applying easier.

### **Readiness to Proceed**

*By the time your application was completed, did you feel adequately prepared in terms of project funding, scope, and design?*

- We previously had an administrator who would have us propose on grants for which we weren't prepared. For example, we didn't have the permits or the matching funds ready – it was ridiculous, and a waste of time. Then we became more organized and proposed on grants for which we had our permits and engineering in order, and so when we got the project, we already had most things together. That was good. The RCO has also tightened up; they want you to spend the money immediately. There are other projects the money could be going to, so you really have to be ready to go when you apply.
- We dedicate a lot of effort in applying for grants. We have three professional park planners who are responsible for taking a project from acquisition to working on the master plan and developing a funding strategy (which may include RCO grants). The park planners also apply for the permits, work with engineers, and apply to the RCO. They do everything.
- When we apply, we have to first know that the project is feasible. You need to do some preliminary engineering and have good time and cost estimates before you apply for the grant. That helps ensure the project will be successful.
- Well, sometimes it's a rush job and I don't feel like we fully thought everything out. However, this is a staffing and overall resource issue on our end (and has nothing to do with the RCO).
- We are prepared to the extent that we can be. We don't do full construction design as we don't get reimbursed for the pre-design (prior to signing the project agreement).
- I feel prepared in that I've submitted what the RCO has asked me to submit. It's really helpful that my grant manager listens to my presentation ahead of time.
- Yes, I feel like we are adequately prepared when we apply.

- Well, I usually feel prepared, but I'm sure you'll run into various opinions. You think you are doing fine and then you're arguing with the technical review committee and you leave the meeting shaking your head because there is an overall lack of experience in that room.
- In terms of scope and design we don't really feel like we are 100% ready because of our lack of staff and expertise. Last time, we had to pay out of pocket to hire someone to help.
- Sometimes I feel like a project we are putting together might not have the right components and timeline. Time-wise it's difficult to really dedicate all my energies to this as I'm juggling a huge amount of work.
- Our proposals are largely scoped and designed beforehand.
- Yes, I think we are as prepared as we can be. Of course, there are always unforeseen consequences that can hold up a project. If we had more time and resources, I'm sure we could improve our planning and scoping – we just do the best that we can.
- Yes, I think we spend a lot of time scoping our project and making sure that the project is doable.

### **Requesting the Appropriate Funding**

*Do you feel your organization initially requested the appropriate funding amount? If not, were there reasons behind why you requested a smaller (or larger) amount than was needed?*

- Overall we're pretty good at estimating costs because we do a lot of projects, but sometimes there's a condition, the bidding climate has changed, or the cost of materials has gone up.
- We have not shied away from reducing the budget scope.
- That's a strategy that we always consider. We have asked the RCO for less than we would have liked so it means we have to pay more on our end.
- We usually ask for as much as we can get. The only challenge is that because the RCO process is so thorough, we are applying for grants years before the project starts. So what we know when we apply and what happens when we are finally able to start can change the project significantly. Since we start so early in the process, the scope and budget often change. Our grant manager is pretty understanding about these changes.
- We try to ask for the right amount. If we didn't, our proposal would look like it has been badly planned and scoped.
- I think we are pretty good about asking for what we need. Ultimately, to finish a project (and do it well), you have to be right up front about what it will cost.
- No, that has never been the case. We have asked for what we think we need, but when we start building we always find we need more.
- If you ask for too much and get too greedy then RCO will not want to fund the project. You need real numbers.
- We're having problems related to the funding for a project we're working on right now, which we haven't completed yet because of time; the project is complete but we have some planning and some initial maintenance still to do.

- We have considered asking for less. However, in the long run that would really hurt us so we have decided not to go that route.
- We have had a number of SRFB grants. On the acquisition side we're pretty right on with our cost estimates, but on the restoration side there have been lots of times where we've had to adjust funding. In those cases, we've brought in funding from another source to supplement the SRFB fund. If we had problems with the estimate being off, it was because of design or that the project ends up being more complicated (not because we deliberately were asking for less).
- Most of the time (95%) we have asked for what we felt was the appropriate amount. Of course, as time goes on in the life of a project, you always wish you ask for more as there are so many factors that can lead to cost increases (i.e. rising price of materials, project delay, etc.).

### **Applying for a Matching Grant**

*If you applied for a matching grant, what was your process for ensuring these the funds were set aside?*

- We have a resolution stating we have the funds. There is whole formal process that starts months before I apply to the RCO. The RCO requires that you have a resolution of support (which is a signed document that states the necessary funds are available). With in-kind donations, the resolution is still there, the letter comes from a donation agreement form (signed by the City Manger).
- Concerning matching funds: within our CIP we have general capital funding that is shown as a match. The Council specifies that these monies are set aside (reserved for the project and the match). Given the size of our city, we have not used in-kind donations yet.
- In one case (for a park grant) we had in our match secured in the city budget. In a conservation grant, we pieced together the money for a grant (before we applied) through donations.
- We have a fund used from industrial development that we could borrow from (for the match). But most small entities do not have the ability to borrow against themselves.
- We try to gather our funds simultaneously. As soon as possible after we find out we're receiving a grant, we begin seeking those matching funds. If there's one challenge with the program, it's been that the State and Federal programs have different timing, so that could make it more complicated than it otherwise would be.
- We've been working on our grant management system, but typically when working on our SRFB grants, we have a pretty simple match scenario. Early on I don't think we fully understood how exactly a match works. Since then, we've learned more about what match expectations should be. We've been better lately.
- We have applied for matching grants. Typically, I'm very conservative. We have a sort of internal mantra: promise less, deliver more. So usually I have more matching funds in my back pocket in case something falls through. If the match is unsecured at the time of the RCO application, we might not count on all of it.
- One challenge we always face is securing the matching funds. We celebrate receiving a RCO grant, and then we have to scramble to get the matching funds. I'm not sure what I would say is the primary challenge. The RCO has been really flexible with us in terms of obtaining the matching funds, and we really appreciate that. I'm not sure what they do on their end, but we really appreciate it. To their credit, they're pretty good at checking in with us before the deadline to feel out whether we're on track or not.

- Matching funds have been a challenge. I've been managing these SRFB grants for five years and I still don't understand how the ratios work. The confusing ratios make it harder for me to track and then I have to inconvenience the grant manager to help me through this process. The way I manage the match and the way they manage the match is totally different, and it's different from the way others manage it. The RCO expects a match with every payment and most of our funders just assume you're going to have a match. We'll go to SRFB for restoration dollars and then go somewhere else for acquisition dollars. So we'll send out the SRFB dollars first because restoration can't happen until after acquisition, so we won't have our match for a long time. Sometimes we ask the RCO if they could not charge the match for this reimbursement, and then the ratios are really off and it's really hard to figure out where we are in the grant. That's a pretty significant challenge. The RCO is good about helping us figure it out.

### **Suggestions for Application Process Improvements**

*Do you have any ideas on how the application process could be improved?*

- Well, the application process seems long and I don't know if there is some way to make it shorter. It is difficult going to Olympia to do a presentation; perhaps we could submit something online instead. It needs to be taken into consideration that some people are good presenters and some people aren't, and maybe we could just submit written answers to the questions. We generally don't go to that extent for multi-million dollar Department of Transportation (DOT) grants, although the paperwork is much more onerous. It's very time consuming. I know smaller firms have had to hire graphics people to do their presentations for them because they don't have anyone like that on staff, and that seems a little unfair because your ability to demonstrate your project to your peer group has a lot to do with winning.
- The evaluation is rather a subjective process. That is hard to change. Perhaps the RCO should give several points that this is a phased project. Consider that it is a phased project, and it is going to be coming back. Give a bonus for phased projects. They do ask if it is a phased project, but I don't know how they score that. I don't think it is currently a scoring category. It might be good to do that.
- The cost estimation sheet could be more consistent; it should be clearer what goes in each line. In general, the RCO should look into shortening up the process somehow. There are multiple deadlines that are a little unclear. I also know from having sat on the Trails Committee that a lot of the people on the panel were from the Seattle metropolitan area, so they were already familiar with some of the projects coming in. When grant proposals would come in that they would recognize, they would say, oh, yeah, they really need that. I remember a project coming in from eastern Washington that I thought was fabulous, but no one else thought it was that great.
- Maybe there is the potential for having a different category for smaller projects, perhaps create an abbreviated process for projects under \$100,000. The RCO has had meetings about this. Right now they treat all projects the same.
- There should be an abbreviated version of the application for the smaller projects.
- The RCO should look at reworking its funding schedule. For example, with the two year limit, you apply for a project in August, find out in September if it's going to be sent to the Governor, then the Legislature passes it, then the RCO Board reviews it, and then you have the project agreement in July. So in this case you have lost a construction season. Even if you ready to go, you might have to wait. You need to try to finish project before the rainy season and fish window (usually July, August, September).

- The RCO has a fantastically complete manual. However, sometimes it is too dense. That is Sometimes it is hard to look through. It might be helpful to have shorter summary sheets that you can refer to on a daily basis.
- Sometimes when you go through the process and sit through the review committee it can feel very intimidating. There are a lot of interest groups that they bring in that are valuable, but sometimes they really bog you down in the details. For example, they questioned us about the cost of a \$1,500 park bench. That was really distracting because we only had 20 minutes to present. The level of detail for the budget seems like overkill. When you are at the concept level of design, you just don't know that level of detail. Sometimes it makes it difficult to get through your presentation. It's more of an aggressive process. It's nothing to do with the staff – the staff tries hard to keep the focus group on task. Maybe during the presentation, the RCO should allow for the applicant to get though the entire 20 minutes before the questions are asked. Perhaps a 15 minute presentation with 5 minutes of questions would be better.
- I think the process is good now. Although more time to put together the written material would be good. Waiting until March to have the meeting and then have everything due on May 1<sup>st</sup> is not long to prepare information and graphics. It would be easier if the process started in February. Smaller municipalities struggle to keep up.
- I think funding should happen sooner. A good example is our WWRP water access grant that we applied for on May 1, 2006. We didn't have our contract even though we knew we had the contract approved. So any day we expected we were going to get our contract. We hoped to start construction in the spring. The Legislature approved the funds for the grant program in winter 2007 (January-April). It seems like a screwed up system to me. The Legislature should have put more in for the programs.
- Sometimes we get confused. There are so many grant programs and so many different dates. There are some we never apply for and some we always apply for. We need to track them better.
- The application process is the most cumbersome aspect of the process. For small programs like the Youth Athletic Facilities program, presentations should not be required.
- During the presentations, the RCO needs to actively facilitate the evaluators. Sometimes they get stuck on tangents and derail a very well-timed and honed presentation.
- The application process to me is flawed. There should be more technical expertise involved earlier either with the TAC review or other people with a construction background, not necessarily with a biological background. The reason I say that is because we took a river trip two years ago to review a project and we took some fish biologists with us. I was amazed at the dumb questions that were asked. One of them mentioned that he had never been on a river trip before, and I thought "you've never been on a river trip to look at banks and things, and you're in charge?" My thinking: lack of experience seems to be a big problem.
- The run through in June is very helpful. It would be helpful to have greater technical expertise. Our grant manager is very helpful, but there are only so many hours in her day. We need hands-on availability. It would be great if we could get more technical assistance (i.e. having someone come out more than once to the project site and give his/her opinion).
- I think preference should be given to phased projects. We had a planning grant, but were rejected for the construction grant (as the planning process was difficult). We appealed, and we got it.

- I think the RCO should not require formal presentations for all grants – there should be a cutoff for which small projects need not do this.
- When the RCO makes policy decisions about its programs, it should inform its sponsors and allow them plenty of time for feedback, questions, and comments.
- The evaluators awarding grants should represent both large and small locales.
- The requirement that municipalities have an adopted resolution in order to be eligible for funding is too stringent. It takes time for the council/legislature to do this, and when there's a rush to get information to the council for approval in adequate time, project selection and evaluation isn't as thorough as it might otherwise be. Perhaps the RCO should consider alternatives to the adopted resolution, like a letter of support from the Mayor.
- We're in North-Central Washington, and we're required to make presentations to committees in Olympia as part of the grant process. It would be nice to have an eastern Washington venue we could travel more easily to where we could do that. It takes at least two days to travel to and from Olympia to make a one-hour presentation. We're happy to do it because of the funding, but it is a waste of our resources to do that.
- A lot of work could be done on the application questions and application metrics. Remove the ambiguities. The RCO should provide more clarity and be more specific about what they really want. The project metrics page is absolutely useless.

## The Billing Process

### General Perceptions of the Billing Process

*How would you characterize your organization's experience with the RCO billing process?*

- Things have been really good in this regard. The RCO holds the Successful Applicant Workshop and we have our people go to that (particularly to learn about billings). Things are better now that I have an accounting assistant. She is trained in the process and works with the grant manager. The paperwork she does is good, and we get copies of every invoice. So she has been a big help.
- I think the process is relatively easy compared to other grant funding agencies. Our grant manager is quick to indicate what we should not be doing.
- The number of invoices you send to the RCO is equal to or exceeds the number of invoices we send to all other state agencies combined. However, I will say the Fiscal Department at the RCO is really great.
- Overall the process works well. The RCO's fiscal folks are well organized and work well with our fiscal folks. There is a very low rate of issues that crop up.
- The billing process has been pretty smooth. I think it's a relatively easy process.
- We prefer to accumulate at least \$100,000 in reimbursable costs before we bill. It requires too much effort to go through the process for less than this. I don't understand why we have to provide a cost summary if we are billing something that is really small.
- I would say that the RCO billing process is more arduous than other billing processes I've seen.

- The billing process is getting better. We are starting to bill more often. I think before we just didn't have sufficient staff dedicated to this.
- Good and it has gotten better as we've gone on. The RCO fiscal folk are really great and proactive.
- We have had a great experience; it is very easy. The RCO has a workshop that is really helpful. Someone at the RCO has called us to remind us that we hadn't sent RCO a bill in six months (and it is very helpful when they do this). Once we forgot to bill out for the final 10%, and they reminded us. The staff was very pleasant.
- The RCO billing process is more arduous than others. It's the only billing process that asks for a check number for every transaction, even if we paid for it with a Visa or whatever. It requires a check number for every expense. Our billing process just isn't set up like that. It's only required on the expenses that we directly apply for. But that's something I've always kind of rolled my eyes at. Other than that I think the process is pretty straightforward – it's much better than the federal grants. In general, I understand that the RCO is held fiscally responsible for the money. They're doing well, but I still wonder why they require the check number instead of just having an accounting system printout.

### **Billing Challenges and Areas for Improvement**

*Does your organization experience problems with billings? If so, what is the source of the problems?*

- There can be confusion when we receive grant money from RCO. Other city departments may also be receiving money from the RCO, and the funds aren't clearly labeled by project. When we send in our paperwork to the RCO it's really clear what the grant application is for, but when we receive funds, it's not likewise noted. There has been confusion around other people receiving our mail. For example, our A-19 form at one time went to the Public Works Department with someone else's name on it. That's the only thing I can think of now that's been a problem with RCO. It's not a huge deal, but it surprises me because in every other aspect they're great.
- Because of the large amount of money our agency is spending, we bill monthly. The RCO's guidelines call for a status report on the project every time we have a billing. This includes a FedEx bill for eight dollars. Nothing has changed, but we have to send a report. I asked the RCO if we could improve on the process by meeting monthly or quarterly, but then we had our billings rejected once because we didn't include reports.
- Sometimes the RCO staff sends the billing to the wrong personnel over here, which has caused problems.
- We are a big agency that has many different departments handling billing, construction, administration etc. Sometimes the RCO sends the bill to the wrong department, which can be frustrating and also causes confusion.
- Billings go the RCO grant manager and then to the RCO fiscal folks. Problems in the process arise when the grant manager has determined that a portion of the bill is ineligible for reimbursement. This can take a while to resolve and can be frustrating.
- Most of the time denials are not due to errors in paperwork. The reimbursements get denied for misinterpretation of project requirements by the grant manager (which is either a new or outlandish interpretation). That is the biggest beef I have: changes in the program requirements. They change program requirements without adequate notice to the grantees. They don't get the new requirements out to the people in the trenches that are doing the job. The changes often happen without documentation or explanation.

- We send in requests monthly. When there is an acquisition, it is only billed once. For construction, we bill monthly. When we bill, part of the process is filling out a progress report. Sometimes I feel that including progress reports with each billing doesn't make much sense. If the bills are small, we wait. I don't think the process needs to change.
- In the past, it has been good. We get paid electronically, but they send confirmation of billing to our finance department. It would be better if they sent it back to the account manager. I think all information should be funneled to one person.
- I checked with our accountant, and she said she's never had any major problems and that if something minor comes up she gets on the phone and gets an answer.
- We try to bill quarterly, but with land acquisitions it's often retroactive, so we like to have everything ready to permit. With a development project, we bill quarterly so we usually hear from the RCO every three to four months.
- We have had issues with billing before but they're very easily resolved and not very out of the ordinary. Anything that RCO staff has requested for billings has not been abnormal or unreasonable. I'd say we bill once a month, and out of a dozen bills, we'd maybe have had one question from RCO staff.

## Project Management

### Internal Reporting and Management Systems

*What are your internal systems to manage and track projects?*

- We have a job cost system that creates a unique job cost code for each project. We're able to capture all the costs associated with a certain job by running reports. We can see staff time and consultant/contractors costs, and we also have a project spreadsheet that we keep. All that is in addition to communicating with the project manager, weekly meetings, and daily inspections of projects during construction.
- Internally we make reports quarterly to the city manager or director on how things are going. It is somewhat informal. We also present to city council.
- I normally get together with the accounts team and contract engineer to sit down and review. We provide copies of a draft report and forward those to the RCO during various stages in the process. We try to tie these to the reimbursement request as there are milestones we must meet. We try to meet these, but milestones get shifted due to delays.
- We have a complete and complex CIP tracking document to show how much money is scheduled to be sent this year and the following year to Council. We then provide quarterly reports on those active projects to Council. In terms of fiscal management, we assign funding sources a unique number, so when we bill to the RCO we can easily run a report. Each project has its own funding number and each funding source within each project has its number. Our CIP process is updated and passed annually. In July, we assess where we are with projects each year. The Council approves it every year.
- Our field manager generates field notes, and at the end of the month they turn into a report. We get the bill from the contractor, and we see that they have done things correctly. We have an employee that tracks capital

spending. It's her full time job. The report first comes to us. Then it is sent to finance to provide them a record of what has been send.

- We have a monthly capital budget report that I get from our account. My administrative assistant is responsible for producing reports for all contracts. All of our projects are on this report (currently we have 80). If it is a grant funded project, it is noted. We have our staff meeting minutes where we list the dates we apply for the permit and put the status down. We have never had an RCO billing problem.
- We don't generate formal reports. I just email or call my assigned project manager to find out about the status of a project.
- We manage a database of active projects that issues reports on milestones, reimbursement schedules, etc. We're trying to get better at invoicing more regularly.
- We track through a time sheet that tracks in the same way the SRFB does. It captures all of our time by project, and then we have a reimbursement form for all non-staff time costs. We have codes for all our SRFB grants. That information goes through our financial person, and he develops a summary spreadsheet of each grant that we use for all of our billing.
- We don't have any internal reports to update us on project status.
- We use a mix of Quickbooks, and a separate stewardship program tracking system that tracks all of our trail and restoration projects. We also have a database that tracks volunteer involvements; it's a pretty extensive system. Because we have many funding sources, we're interested in tracking all the details.
- We have very short status reports. The projects are done during the summer; they're typically done and over with in a period of weeks.
- We do generate reports although they typically include more than just grant-related detail. They're prepared for internal staff and one of our Board Committees, and then shared with the full Board.
- We generate reports for all of our different funders, partners, and press. It contains whatever is appropriate and needed by that organization. Financial data, deliverables on the ground, volunteer data, recreational value, ecological value, project benefit. We produce an end-of-project report. We typically do quarterly billings, and pretty much have all kinds of different reports. I think this year we have about 60 different funding sources, so there are probably around 20 different kind of reports because they have different report requirements. We have to make sure we're tracking all the information needed to pump out information as it's required.
- We have an internal spreadsheet of active projects that is updated every month.

### **Communication with RCO**

*How and when do you communicate with the RCO concerning the progress and status of a project?*

- We communicate if there's some issue or question, or if there's something in the project that we're not going to do, that we can't do, those kinds of things.
- There are milestones but generally for us it has been very informal. We do a lot of email updates. I don't know if it is required. We tell them about any roadblock (how would you approach this). If our project manager felt the need to elevate the process to a formal letter he would tell us.

## RCO Project Delivery and Grant Manager Workload Study

- Our level of communication depends on the project. We are pretty bad about calling the RCO about things. We call when we are under construction for a month or two and need to notify them. We always invite RCO staff to ground breaking ceremonies and park ceremonies. We have forgotten to send plans for review. The RCO does not remind us. We will sometimes get a call from our grant manager, who reminds us about a technical completion deadline. He is good about that.
- We usually just call RCO staff if we have any questions. The RCO always gets back to me. The staff is great.
- If there is an issue, we just call the grant manager. Sometimes the grant manager will also just call us to check-in.
- Our communication with the RCO is an informal process – somewhat random, not strictly scheduled. We tend to just discuss issues when they arise.
- Beyond the required reports we really try to keep our grant manager in the loop.
- We don't have scheduled conversations with RCO staff. It just happens when it needs to happen.
- Mostly by phone or email. It's usually informal, unless an amendment needs to be requested.

### Internal Staffing Resources

*Do you have dedicated staff working on RCO funded grants? How many?*

- There is no dedicated staff to managing RCO grants. We only use whoever is available. It's on their things to do (assignments). Most of the time staff working on this will see the project from beginning to completion. It is primarily me and other people in the department. The last couple of budget funding rounds staff working on grants have retired or been cut out of the budget. Right now it's just me and a grant writer. I have a history of working on capital projects.
- Within our City, you might have two project managers competing for the same grant. Last year we applied for three Washington Wildlife and Recreation Grant Program (WWRP) grants and we had three project managers working on that. One has worked here for nine years, and one has worked here for seven years; both have a lot of experience with applications.
- Once a project is underway, we have six full time staff and six part-time staff (most of their job is not handling a capital project) devoted to handing RCO and other capital grants (federal mitigation grants, grant count PUD). They are located in the Real Estate Services Division (five FTE) and one of them is located in Jefferson County. There are another six people located throughout the state that also focus on this. They are not funded by this program. These six full-time FTE have a lot of experience in real estate transactions (acquisition of real property). Six FTE are only for the acquisition of land. The other six are FTE dedicated to capital development (construction).
- On my end, we have very little staff. We wish we had a grant writer, but smaller cities don't have that luxury. We don't have a project manager, so myself and the deputy director end up being a project manager. Next time we will have a construction manager fee in our plan to help us hire for the project.
- We don't have anyone who is 100% dedicated. I take the lead but rely on other people's expertise. If I'm working on a trail I go to our trail coordinator. It could be someone in the capital. It's usually me and I bring in other people. I don't do SURF grants, they are done buy Natural Resource and Lands Division.

## RCO Project Delivery and Grant Manager Workload Study

- I do the application. Once a project is funded I do the paperwork, and then it will get handed off to someone (if it's a capital project it goes to our facilities management division, but I handle the contract). Our billings are done by our Facilities Management Folks (I just make sure facilities management get it done).
- There are three of us that work on RCO grants. I do 99% of it myself. I have applied for all the grants executed.
- Six staffers work on these grants. There is no one person dedicated. For the six staff, this is just five to ten percent of their total job duties.
- My Deputy Director, myself, and my administrative assistant apply to RCO grants. Our Public Works Department applied for an ALEA grant this year. We all kind of pitched in.
- We had a grant that partially funded two staff members to work on active project management. This was incredibly helpful as we didn't have sufficient staff or resources.
- We have a dedicated grants and contracts coordinator. She submits the projects and oversees the coordination with other departments to collect all of the necessary information and supporting documentation. She manages 30-40 active grants, the bulk of them being RCO grants.
- Not sure how to answer. We have program staff that work on projects that are funded by the RCO grants and who work very closely with the staff at the RCO. They do have previous experience managing capital projects.
- There are about three people who do it as part of their jobs, maybe a couple percent of their job. We have a finance guy, and I work with the project administrator, and then we have someone who writes the grant.
- There are several people here that do this, but they don't work strictly with RCO grants. They are very skilled in trail work and restoration projects that are funded by RCO grants. Most of those people are on-the-ground implementers. We have agency partners and myself who are very familiar with RCO, and we end up dealing with RCO directly. Our Board president is on the RCO Board. Most of the staff isn't dedicated to RCO; they're just taking the funding and doing the work.
- There is regional project management and headquarter involvement (depending on type of project). Three people are involved in the billing process.
- We all have contributing roles. I do the budget, and there are two technical staff people. The Executive Director is the manager on any project we apply for and looks after the policy and programmatic sides of them. Out of five: the executive director, three managers—programmatic, technical, and administrative—and then support staff.

## Project Delivery and Completion

### Causes for Project Delay

*Have you ever had a project that has been delayed? Why?*

- There was a project where getting the property for a trail took a really long time, much longer than we thought. Fortunately, at that time, the RCO was extremely flexible and allowed us six years to work on the acquisition before we ever did the development. I can't remember the initial timeline proposed, but I do remember we got several extensions. When we were getting close to completion there was a pretty significant disaster in

Bellingham with a pipeline explosion. It damaged a lot of the area where we had planned the trail, so no work could be done in the disturbed area for a year or two. The RCO was very understanding.

- We have gotten time extensions, and typically I talk to the RCO project manager and write a letter. I don't know that we've ever gotten a budget increase. I didn't know you could, but we have gotten a scope change. Usually they're relatively minor in terms of the project.
- Yeah, generally, there have been a couple snags. There was one project that we didn't have enough money for, and it needed a restroom. We had to change the scope a bit, but it eventually got a restroom so it all worked out.
- Some external issues for delay are neighborhood groups who have an agenda and who maybe weren't involved with the initial planning. They have a different opinion and try to lobby the City Council, and we have to say that we're obligated because we have this grant. You have to show the resolution by the RCO and Council as you go along, it kind of brings everyone along together, so it's set. Other projects where we don't have the grant, or the grant organization, sometimes you get some outside pressures to change or alter the project. So in some ways it's good those measures are in place.
- Sometimes our internal processes hold up the contractor for getting started. We have internal timeframes to identify a contractor, award a bid, and get approval. Anything with water permitting is difficult. The salmon fish window (February-August) poses challenges. Once we come up against that February deadline everything stops (construction has to stop). We have to wait for the fish window to close. That creates a six month delay.
- Most of the time we are able to complete on time. Budget increases are never an option. Construction costs have skyrocketed.
- Internal challenges are processes that you have to go through for approval. External challenges are the permitting and bid problem (costs coming in higher). I talk to the grant manager about these issues although these conversations have not led to time increases. We try to be proactive.
- Absolutely. It takes two years (by the time landowner could move on). The appraisal process alone takes three to four months. By the time we are finished the specific property may not be there. Then the scope change takes month. We tell them we want a scope change. They need a lot of information, and then, we don't hear anything back. The scope change doesn't typically have to go back to the board. We can't reimburse costs unless the project is within the scope.
- Some challenges with land acquisitions are that the owner wants more money than the property is worth. They at times want more money than we can legally pay. Or sometimes the landowner has already sold the land (two years from the time we started talking).
- Permitting can take six months to two years. If there is a wetland on the site it is a minimum one-year. New regulations over the last decade, critical habitat, wetland protection.
- Because of the linear process that RCO is wedded to, we have had to get a scope change or a time extension. If the contract has gotten too old (more than three years more or less) then it has to go back to the Board. We have had two time extensions with the RCO.
- Acquisition is just set up for external challenges. Developing or redeveloping is a controversial issue. Land acquisition is controversial.

## RCO Project Delivery and Grant Manager Workload Study

- Right now the bidding climate is not so good. So, we have to re-bid on projects. In public works, re-bidding can take a long time.
- Yes we have had to ask for time and scope changes. If the changes were legitimate, it was just a matter of applying for it. It is relatively easy if you follow certain procedures. The biggest unknown is the permits. These are out of your hands.
- Yes. The first project that we applied for in 2000 was delayed. The delay came out of our naiveté with the process and city's lack of maturity and making projects happen. The project was more expensive than initially thought. We had to get an extension and the RCO was great about it. There were cost increases although we did not ask for more money. Seattle City Light was also difficult in letting us put down trails. The holdup was negotiating with Seattle City Light about where to put the right of way.
- One of the challenges we are working out right now on a project is environmental permitting concerns, which require a lot of time (especially if the State and the Army Corps of Engineers have to review something). It has not delayed our project, but it can be a hurdle. Scope changes also happen as you apply early on in the design process. You might give the RCO a cost and scope estimate, but as you move forward you need to modify these things. We also have a very vocal citizen population, especially concerning environmental concerns. That also can cause conflict, and it takes a lot of time.
- I have had one project when I needed a time extension. The delay was due to a bad industrial accident.
- The acquisition process takes a long time. So much can change in two years. I like the idea of bumping it up a year. It would also take away the appearance of elected bias. It would make it a little more transparent.
- The toughest thing is getting permits. Sometimes we apply for permits before we sign the contract. Any permit where water is involved is difficult.
- I can't think of a single project where we haven't asked for a time extension. Sometimes we ask for a budget increase, but we are usually told no. We have also requested scope changes. Time extensions are the most common.
- When we start a project we might not know the name of the park so we change the name often. What is annoying (on our end) is that we have to get approval for even small things like this – which can tack on time to a project.
- Permitting is the greatest challenge. In our city the utilities are not fully provided by the city's utility districts. Because these utility districts are small, they don't have the time to keep up with these requests. We had to get permits for a water or sewer district. They would not let us get our own engineers, so we had to use theirs. We are having these challenges as we annex unincorporated areas of King County.
- Yes, we have experienced project delay a few times. For example, we received a grant to purchase land, and the next part of the project to develop it. At the time, we didn't have the money to develop, so we leased the land to Sound Transit (with the money we received from the land lease going directly back to the development). However, the project was delayed for 1.5 years as we had to go through the National Parks Service (we were using Federal funds also).
- Yes we have had delays. To put this in perspective, a project was funded to start in 2004-05, but because of permitting it didn't get started until last year. Our costs went over the limit. Then we had the big flood last year.

The project fared really well, but we had one minor problem. We haven't completed the project according to the paperwork, and there is still a bit more work that needs to happen, like spraying for blackberries.

- Yes, we have had issues with delay. An example: we're putting in a large fish-friendly tide gate in a creek to replace an old one. The new gate is an approved design used in Oregon that Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife has seen before. In fact, they went to Oregon to see some of these gates. We went ahead and had the gate fabricated. The grant for this project depends on gaining approval by the Department of Fish and Wildlife, but now after the tide gate's been built, they won't give us the money. They hung us out to dry. We have this RCO grant we're sitting on, and we're talking to the Department of Fish and Wildlife right now. The existing creek has no fish in it, and the surrounding creeks are full of them. The reason for that difference is the tide gate. We're still being held up after the fact, and that gate cost \$15,000. Now we don't know what to do with it as of yet, all because of opinions and confusion. The proposal looked good at the onset, but now we're getting hung up.
- Once underway, we don't really have problems. We have a good engineer.
- Permitting can be a big issue. The costs and time of permits are both huge.
- We have limited staffing for administrative things. This has caused some issues with project delay.
- We have had issues with permitting. The Army Corps of Engineers is particularly onerous.
- For our acquisitions projects, we've had to push out grants a fair amount because we're dealing with land owners. They have different expectation of value, and issues like that, so we have had to extend I think all of our SRFB grants.
- On the restoration side, projects are about managing a lot of different relationships, with contractors, etc. On the acquisition side, it's just about the dynamic of working with land owners, so I think sometimes our projects haven't been as baked as they should have been, in terms of negotiations.
- We have had project delays probably due to either contractor unavailability or site conditions, if there was a rainy season. We've never had a project internally that has had to be extended by the RCO or delayed for long time. We have worked with partners who have been delayed a little longer, but those delays were likely due to too much work. There is one project I can think of, and they went to the RCO and got an extension. As long as they were able to show that the project was still feasible, underway, and able to be completed. With other agencies, it seems like they've been doing that more often (asking for budget increases, and so on). I'm sure that it's problematic. I've seen that in other agencies, but we've not had that problem. The agencies I've seen that had problems had them because they applied for the grant just to get the original money, the project just wasn't feasible, or the permits weren't in place. That could be something that the RCO could tighten up on if they feel there's a concern there. I know the legislature doesn't like money not spent when it was appropriated.
- Things we run into mostly are site conditions, weather issues, contractor availability, and contractor rate increases and materials costs. They have skyrocketed lately: gas has gone up, etc. We've seen some of that. We haven't run it into so badly that it's caused us to end a project, but we definitely keep our eyes on those. It goes back to if you don't have a solid estimating style or put in contingencies, then you are going to have problems. Whether it's your timeline or materials, forecasting these things make a difference. I have a sense that other groups tend to low ball because these grants are competitive.
- We've had issues with permitting – we always have problems with permitting!

- In property acquisition, unwilling sellers are a challenge. Also, sellers unwilling to accept the appraised value can be difficult.
- Yes. On projects things happen beyond our control – water, permitting, inspections (by permitting agencies), land owners change their minds, or they're not satisfied with how a project sponsor is working on their land.
- In the past, I think we have underestimated what project implementation would fully require. I also think that we're very limited in our staff and we have 82 partners we have to work with. It's difficult to get the partners to do things that need to be done. For example, if they need to change their Critical Areas Ordinance or something like that, they don't want to do it.

### RCO Response to Project Challenges

*How does the RCO generally handle problems/issues with your projects? What about authorizing time extensions?*

- RCO is guided by a lot of rules. They can only go so far, but they do their best to be accommodating.
- We have never been denied a time extension. The RCO staff might say that you don't need an extension for so long, but they usually approve some sort of extension. The RCO has a milestone schedule (punch list, construction complete, and final billing). Of course, these time extensions turn into more money. For example, construction costs go up 15-25% each year now (before it was 4%).
- We have had a great experience with the RCO grant managers in requesting time extensions. When there's a basis for extension the RCO works with us.
- Yes, we have asked for time extensions (and in once case, additional funds were given to us). With the time extensions, it's an issue of small staff and time. Our grant manager was very good about the extensions. Small size is a big part of the time delays.
- RCO is really good about understanding why delays happen. Problems arise all the time when you are doing a project – and the RCO staff is very aware of this.
- I think the grant managers are keenly aware of all the factors that can derail a project – they are really open to work with us if something goes wrong.
- The RCO handles amendments quickly. There is a formal procedure: we send a letter, and the RCO approves it administratively. When there is a conversion it has to go before the Board. They are also very amendable.
- I've never had a problem with getting time extensions or scope changes. Sometimes the approval process can take a bit of time, but the staff is always accommodating.
- RCO is always great about processing amendments, such as scope changes and time extensions. They understand that problems can easily happen and are quick to help.
- RCO is fantastic with responding to project challenges (particularly if we need more time if we have hit an unforeseen roadblock).
- We have never hit a snag when we request more time on a project. That's why I like to work with the RCO – they are very professional in dealing with project challenges.
- We have not had challenges with getting time extensions. RCO staff is good about this.

### Formal Completion Process

*What is your organization's formal process for completing a project with the RCO?*

- Once we complete construction we provide a report back to RCO and the grant manager will come through and make an inspection. I think the grant manager should come before this time to make sure everything is good. When they come after the fact, this is not always helpful.
- It's pretty informal. Before we send our last billing in, we contact the RCO and ask what needs to be completed. And they tell us before we pay it. RCO pays the final billing when the full project is completed, not when the funding runs out. This is not an issue. When we have exhausted all sources and project is done, our fiscal folks will then meet to debrief with the RCO grant manager to make sure everything makes sense.
- The final process is submitting a final billing. That is a slow process as the grant manager sometimes sits on it. I think the delay is workload. Maybe they need part time inspectors in the summer months to help them out.
- The last stage of the project is when we have substantial completion with the contractor and the public can use the site and it's not a safety concern. We might have few punch list items left (i.e. the paint needs to be redone or the door needs to be fixed). We decide the punch list with the contractor. The RCO will not come out until everything is completed on the punch list. This whole process makes sense, although it can take a while to officially close a project (which is an issue on both our end and the RCO's end).
- We would like RCO staff to come up and do an inspection before the contractor comes up and finalizes everything. That would save time down the pipeline. The RCO has done this before, but not always. Understandably, the RCO staff is sensitive to their travel time (and don't just want a single purpose trip).
- The project end date is a trigger in RCO's system. We have a formal project close-out manual that we go through, including final billing and RCO inspection. Sometimes it can take a while for the grant manager to finish closing the projects, but other than that, the whole process works fine.
- We do all the final reporting and close out the project with all the different transmittals and everything. We typically get the grant manager out to the project site, but it doesn't necessarily happen at project completion; it sometimes happens earlier. Overall, I think it is better when the grant manager comes and visits earlier so they can catch any mistakes before the official closeout.
- We have a report that shows statistics about what exactly was accomplished, who was involved, and what the funding sources were. It's kind of a press announcement. We provide those to other partners, land manager, the RCO, and our Board. It's kind of an outreach piece rather than a formal grant report. We do that for every project we complete. I think the whole process works well.

### General Comments

#### RCO Staff

*What are your overall perceptions of RCO staff?*

- Our grant managers always look closely at our projects to make sure we're headed in the right direction.
- Sponsors feel like RCO grant managers are champions for their projects. RCO staff is very proactive, and if we have questions during the project they're very good about answering them.

## RCO Project Delivery and Grant Manager Workload Study

- Grant managers are very available for questions although they are fairly busy.
- Grant managers are the best thing at the RCO. They are hard working and really keep us in the loop.
- RCO is not acting like partners, they are acting like adversaries. Part of the problem is lack of staff. But I fear if we give them too much staff then we will have more process.
- I really value the importance of having a good relationship with our grant manager. I value how they help us through the application process all the way to the close of the project. It helps with continuity.
- Generally RCO is very well managed with an excellent and professional staff. We have really forged great relationships with our grant manager.
- RCO staff is always available even though they work so hard and seem overworked. Our grant manager is fantastic. I like how we work directly with them and don't have to talk to 1,000 different people when we have questions or concerns.
- RCO has much more experienced staff now than 10 years ago. They are very responsive. I have never been held up.
- I've never called the RCO grant managers, and have just talked to staff in the billing department and they have been really good.
- I think our grant manager is overworked. He is very helpful, but I can tell there is too much on his plate.
- The staff is extremely knowledgeable and helpful.
- RCO staff is always available to answer questions – they are very helpful. However, I think they are doing too many things at once. I wish I could be more face-to-face time with our grant manager as she is wonderful.
- Yes, we do ask RCO staff a lot of questions. However, they are very available and the workshop they offer is really helpful.
- We learned that it's very helpful to have the availability of the staff at the RCO. It's important that over time we're building a relationship with someone who understands our organization and our projects. We've had more than one grant manager over the years that have helped us, but all of them have been good about staying connected.
- There have been times that I've needed help and our grant manager was able to assist us immediately. I love that we have developed such a close knit working relationship.
- I think it is important that we have the same person work with us in the application stage and the project implementation stage. That way, information is not lost along the way.
- The RCO staff is always available – we've never had any problems getting the answers we need. The process is very well laid out, in the manuals and such. We usually have a question or two but they get answered very quick.
- The RCO staff is always available to answer questions – they are very helpful. I like how there is just one point person I can turn to when I need help.
- The RCO staff is professional and passionate about the work that they do. They are great!

- I don't want the RCO to ever change its name again and I don't ever want them to give me a new grant manager (he is wonderful).

### Areas for Improvement

*Is there anything else you would like to add about the RCO grant process? What about further areas for improvement?*

- The RCO manuals and processes are a bit dense, so we've had to call our grant manager to walk us through (and they're so helpful on the phone).
- We have not really changed too much how we work with the RCO. RCO went to a two-year funding window and that really helped a lot. Now we are not always under the crunch.
- Their manuals are huge and it's hard to wade through them. As far as the paperwork, I'm not sure you can reduce it much more. As far as billings, sometimes we are confused on that. Our grant manager has been really helpful with this issue.
- The RCO grant managers slow down the process by pretending to review things they are not qualified to review (i.e. environmental assessments, appraisals, surveys). They do not have expertise in the area. This happens after we have closed the transitions or are billing for the transactions (i.e. letter of transmittal). My frustration is having RCO staff trying to interpret the appraisal. I think they need to omit this function entirely. They do have a requirement that property be appraised by a quality appraiser – there are standards within statute and Federal law that give internal checks and balances. RCO requirements make sure that these internal checks are addressed. When the RCO staff starts feeding back questions about the appraisal, it feeds into our staff time. Before we would just submit the letter of transmittal – now the RCO staff wants to review an entire report – which is fine, but they don't understand this information.
- I have an oddball problem – PRISM has a driver problem with my track ball and I also noticed that it is running slower because there's so much information in the database. I've talked with their IT people about that. Also, overall we can find out what we need on the system, but if I need a special report made, I have to call the RCO and ask for it. Reports aren't developed for anyone, and I understand this, but this is one of the limitations.
- With the change in PRISM, we experienced some strangeness (it took a long time to upload information and I wasn't sure if our information was being input), but I think it was a one-time thing. I think they are in the process of making it better.
- PRISM is pretty good, but it's not a management tool. The RCO should have a financial specialist that keeps it up to date, and it should be integrated with Fast Track.
- I think one thing that would be intriguing for a lot of people would be for the RCO to provide training on cost estimating. It seems like that's where a lot of problems come from. Sponsors could learn how to estimate out a process. Or they could even just learn project estimating or how to create some cushion in your grant – that type of training might be useful.
- As far as the RCO staff go, once we've gotten the grant, it's great. However, I don't know why they pull people like the financial manager from the City of Kelso to be on the technical review board. The review board should be manned by people who know the process and are involved in it. That's where I have a problem.

- The whole PRISM thing – it is onerous to us. I like a lot of the features (such as applying online) but it is so slow to use and hard sometimes to find what you are looking for.
- PRISM seems to be getting slower and more difficult to use. I have to sometimes call RCO staff to help me navigate.
- I don't know what they did to PRISM recently, but it seems harder to work with.
- I like that we can apply online via PRISM, but sometimes it is hard to use. It takes a long time to upload and download and sometimes the location of information is not very intuitive.
- Specifically for the RCO, an issue that we sometimes have is with the PRISM system. It seems like whenever the system is "improved," it actually becomes more complicated. For example, it seems to take longer than it should to retrieve, submit, or download information, especially when compared to other internet functions. We noticed this problem in this latest round, and you don't know if things are going through – it feels cumbersome in that way.
- Regarding the WWRP trails program: it seems like they tend to focus on the regional commuter trails like the Burke Gilman. There are some wild land trails that have a significant regional presence (such as a mountain side trail) that should be funded through the WWRP. Legally they could be, but for some reason those kinds of projects don't get ranked. I think it's been since 1992 that they've funded a trail like that. It seems like somewhere in the process it got lost. In the RCW authorizing language, I don't think that stipulation is there. It's just a small thing, and I think RCO is looking at that now. Other than that, I think RCO is the best funding source we work with, as far as balancing user-friendliness with governmental accountability and responsibilities. I really applaud them for being very consistent and non-political. They're in a political environment, yet they've been very good about being fair about their ranking committees.
- I think the biggest thing, because it's a statewide program, is making it easier for folks who are farther away to interact or schedule project reviews, etc. Fuel prices increase all the time, and to send someone to Olympia and back is not insignificant.
- The RCO needs to provide an executive summary to all of the players in the agency when changes have happened (not just an executive summary of what they have proposed to the Board). We need to know what board item was changed and how does that impact how we do our work.
- They need to maintain a log of the changes that they make. There is no historical backing that tells you when these changes were made. Because there is not log you can't tell when something was changed.
- I think the RCO should be clearer on what they mean for warrants and assurances for acquisition projects. There is a requirement that State agencies show the RCO we are not acquiring an environmental liability. We hire people to look for environmental waste and they give back a report. We do not buy dirty property (as RCO does not fund cleanup). The RCO has a requirement that the State certify that there is no known environmental liability. But then the RCO states that the agency has to certify that they have secured warranties and assurances from the seller and that the seller hasn't contaminated the property. Whether they do or not, the seller is still liable (and as such, the warrant is meaningless). So a seller can lie or tell the truth; either way they are liable. We have sellers who say we are not signing that type of warrant. The problem is that we ask the RCO what does that mean for warrants and assurances (and staff does not have a response).

## RCO Project Delivery and Grant Manager Workload Study

- The RCO does not even send out notices that they have a new manual. Their philosophy is that we maintain a website and you are responsible for knowing the rules. So you have to re-read the entire huge manual to discern what is going on.
- I think there should be more planning grants. That would really be helpful. If we could plan better, then we might not encounter so many problems later on down the road.
- The RCO should eliminate the biased against multi site projects. If we do not have to name every single land owner in the contract (i.e. if we identify the region or the habitat and do not necessarily identify one specific property) it would allow us greater flexibility. That way, we are not locked into a specific piece of ground.
- The RCO staff needs training to better understand legislative intent. There is no set time for the RCO to get the contract started. Their staff tells us it takes a while to get the contract out the door (their last excuse was that the Agency was undergoing a name change). But then when they finally send us the contract, they get on you to sign it ASAP.

### RCO Compared to Other Agencies

*Is there another agency that you receive grants from that you consider a good agency to work with? Why?*

- Well, none of the other grant-making agencies are as good as the RCO – we have grants from the Environmental Protection Agency, Washington State Dept of Ecology, and Washington State Department of Transportation. They are all okay but they're not as accessible. Maybe it's the culture, but the RCO just does things differently. They're easy to work with and have experience. I'm glad they've taken over some of the other grant processes from some of the other state agencies.
- The RCO is the only one we really apply for. The Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation agency is understaffed and it's hard to get information. The RCO doesn't seem to be understaffed and overwhelmed in this way. Overall, RCO is a good grant agency to work with.
- The RCO is the tops!
- Talk to the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife Service as they are great to work with. However, the RCO is also one of the best agencies to work with.
- The Transportation Improvement Board is fantastic. The RCO has tons of manuals; TIB does not have tons of manuals. Other than that the RCO is great. TIB is like the RCO in that they are very explicit with the scoring. I know what both agencies are looking for and it helps when preparing an application. We have made decisions not to apply as we know what projects will not score well.
- It seems as though the strings attached with purchasing land are sometimes cumbersome to deal with. RCO should allow landowners to have more flexibility with the use of their land they have helped purchased with grant funding. We are trying to go through the evolution of making a park site we acquired 40 year ago more reflective of our current population's needs and demands. To deal with issues regarding land purchased with RCO funds, you have to go through this very formal process. We had to wait for months. However, I know part of this has to do with gaining approval at the Federal level (with the National Parks Service).
- No, the RCO is the best grant-making agency. Everything else is bad in comparison, although the King County Conversation Futures is pretty good.

## RCO Project Delivery and Grant Manager Workload Study

- The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development has a pretty smooth process. The King County Conservation Futures is also good.
- The grant process is a lot smoother with the Washington State Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development. They are a good grant-making agency.
- Yes, the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife is a good agency. We received a number of grants from them and we have a very good rapport. The staff is helpful and has an attitude of "let's get it done." I really appreciate that. I also think the RCO is a great grant agency.
- With Washington State Recreation and Conversation Office has a very helpful Board and review panel. The RCO review panel is not that helpful and the process is usually incredibly stressful.
- Every grant agency is great as they give us money. RCO is tops in terms of the enormity and impact of what they do. They give out more money, so they require more paperwork. It just makes sense.
- We love dealing with the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development. It's simple. They submit a bill and it gets paid. King County also requires less paperwork and reporting than the RCO.
- All agencies with money – just kidding. They all have their own identities, and you take the good with the frustrating and in the end you don't complain. In general, for all agencies, I think it's important to take the time to really understand what it is like to be involved in a project from our perspective. Sometimes procedures and policies don't appear aligned with the needs of the people on the ground who are using the funding. That isn't a complaint for the RCO specifically, but I think it is important that the RCO always takes the time to understand how our projects are done.
- They're all good in their own ways. The RCO definitely goes beyond most grant agencies. Everything's so thought through – with the manuals and the systems. They put a lot more in the back end, so things are streamlined and automated in ways that none of our other grantors have done.
- The PRISM system and the way RCO manages its grants is way beyond any of our other grantors.
- In general we apply to a lot of different funding sources. The RCO has the best process; it's not necessarily the easiest but then again I don't think it should be. Overall, I think the RCO is very fair, provides clear expectations, and does not have a lot of politics that come into play that you often see in other grant-making agencies.
- I think the RCO is the best grant-making agency. Yes, they make pay attention to detail, but it's extremely appropriate or otherwise you end up with a lot of grants that aren't ready to move forward when they should. I feel like if you have a project with a fully developed scope then this project really isn't that arduous. If you're just trying to create something off the top of your head, then you're going to run into problems. They should only be funding well-thought out projects.
- There's no other agency that is better. I think that the PRISM process that they have in place and the mechanisms, fiscally, have been just ramped up year after year. They're very good although there have been some glitches with the system.
- The accounting and fiscal systems used by the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Washington State Department of Ecology are not as stellar as the RCO's systems. As far as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency goes, the accountability is amazing.

## ATTACHMENT C

### SPONSOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### OVERVIEW

The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), staff to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (formerly known as the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation or IAC) and the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, is conducting a study to better understand why some of its projects experience delay in delivery and completion. Part of the study involves speaking with entities familiar with recreation, habitat, or salmon recovery grants who can offer a candid perspective regarding the strengths, challenges, and opportunities concerning the grant process.

As someone familiar with the RCO grant process, we ask that you please take the time to answer the following questions. In order to encourage candid and meaningful conversations, responses to the interview questions will remain anonymous. Your feedback will provide valuable information on how the RCO can further improve its program services and assistance to grantees.

#### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

##### General Information

1. How often does your organization apply for RCO grants?
  - Is this part of your general funding strategy or does this only occur with special projects?
2. What is the size of your organization in terms of number of staff and budget (for 2007)?
  - How many employees do you have in your specific division? (*if applicable*)

##### Application Process

3. How would you characterize your experience in applying for RCO grants?
  - Did you generally need help from the RCO? How available was RCO staff?
4. By the time your application was completed, did you feel adequately prepared in terms of project funding, scope, and design?
  - Do you feel your organization initially requested the appropriate funding amount? If not, were there reasons behind why you requested a smaller (or larger) amount than was needed?
  - If you applied for a matching grant, what was your process for ensuring these the funds were set aside?
5. Do you have any ideas on how the application process could be improved?

## **Project Management**

6. Do you have dedicated staff working on RCO funded grants? How many?
  - What are their position and duties? How long have they worked in those positions? What is the turnover like?
7. What are your internal systems to manage and track projects?
  - Do you generate formal reports? If so, what do these reports contain and who reads them?
8. How do you communicate with the RCO concerning the progress and status of a project?
  - Is this an informal or formal process? Do you ever feel more communication is needed?

## **Project Delivery and Completion**

9. Have you ever had a project that has been delayed? Why? Did the delay result in asking the RCO for a time extension, budget increase, and/or scope change on a project? If so, what was involved in having these changes approved?
  - How did the RCO handle these requests?
  - Were there any issues that you felt were beyond your control that came up after a project was funded that affected the implementation schedule?
10. Based on previous experience, what are the greatest internal and external challenges that your organization faced once a project was underway?
  - What role, if any, did RCO have in attempting to resolve these issues? Would you have wanted RCO to do more? Less?
  - How did your own organization respond to these challenges?
11. How would you characterize your organization's experience with the RCO billing process?
  - Does your organization experience problems with billings? If so, what is the source of the problems? Internal? RCO?
12. What is your organization's formal process for completing a project with the RCO?
  - Did the RCO provide any feedback on how the project was handled? Was the feedback helpful?
13. Have you changed your work processes with the RCO over time? If so, why? What were the benefits?
  - Is there any training or capacity you need to successfully implement projects in the future?

## **Closing Questions**

14. Is there another agency that you receive grants from that you consider a good agency to work with? Why?
15. Is there anything else you would like to add about the RCO grant process?