


Manual 25

Community Forests Program

May 2022

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At a Glance

Community Forests Grant Program	
Purpose	Provide funding to conserve land for timber harvest and community benefit.
Who may apply?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local government entities • Native American tribes • Nonprofit conservation organizations • A state agency working with one or more of the above entities
When are applications due?	May 3, 2022
When are grants awarded?	June 2023 estimate
What types of projects are eligible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition • Combination
What are the grant limits?	\$3 million maximum No minimum grant
What must I contribute?	15 percent
Is a plan required?	A community forest management plan must be submitted to RCO before project completion.
How is my project evaluated?	An advisory committee reviews written materials and scores the projects.
What's new this year?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changed PRISM Online to require a SecureAccess Washington account and a one-time double sign in. • Changed PRISM Online to include cultural resources mapping tool. • Revised match metrics on Cost Summary page in PRISM. • Created a carbon credit and ecosystem services payment option. • Require local jurisdiction review by application due date. • Landowner acknowledgement must confirm landowner receipt. • Added an evaluation criterion for an unscored Project Introduction. • Stewardship and Management criteria requires a summary of financial plan. • Forestland Benefit criterion requests information about new benefits of the project.

Section 1: Introduction

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

- ✓ The Community Forests Program
- ✓ About RCO
- ✓ Who makes decisions
- ✓ Where to get information
- ✓ Grant process and timeline

The Community Forests Program

In 2020, the Washington State Legislature directed the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to establish eligibility criteria and a list of community forest projects for funding consideration. RCO used these criteria to create the Community Forests Program. Community forests provide many public benefits including forest products, forest management, forest products manufacturing jobs, money for public services, environmental services such as clean air and water, carbon dioxide storage, climate resiliency, and opportunities for recreation, education, and cultural enrichment. As the population and urban footprint of the state continues to grow, the Community Forests Program provides communities with a valuable tool for conserving forests for the benefit of current and future generations.

Focus on Forest Conservation

The purpose of this program is to protect and maintain actively managed forestlands, consistent with local land-use planning. Fragmentation and development of forestlands results in greater risks of impact to communities from wildfire and climate change and deprives communities of the economic, environmental, cultural, recreational, and educational opportunities a community forest can provide. The Community Forests Program provides funding to help communities protect and enhance their surrounding

forestlands by acquiring land and developing collaborative models of community-based forest management and use.

Definitions

With the exception of the definition of “forestland,” the definitions below are reprinted from Washington Administrative Code [286.04.010](#).

Acquisition project—A project that results in the purchase or donation of fee or less-than-fee interests in real property. These interests include, but are not limited to, conservation easements, access or trail easements, covenants, water rights, leases, and mineral rights. Additional guidelines and rules for acquisition projects may be found in [Manual 3: Acquisition Projects](#).

Development project—A project that results in the construction or work resulting in new elements including, but not limited to, structures, facilities, and materials to enhance outdoor recreation resources. Additional guidelines for development projects may be found in [Manual 4: Development Projects](#).

Forestland¹—Property that is at least 5 acres in size, suitable to sustain natural vegetation, and at least 75 percent forested or capable of being reforested. Forestland includes the trees and the infrastructure and other elements necessary to manage and operate the forest or for the production, preparation, or sale of the trees and non-timber forest products.

Project—The undertaking, which is, or may be, funded in whole or in part with money administered by RCO.

Project area—A geographic area that delineates the grant-funded site that is subject to RCO application and grant agreement requirements.

Restoration project—A project that brings a site back to its historic function as part of a natural ecosystem or improving the ecological functionality of the site. For this grant program, restoration projects may include activities that improve forest health or the ability of the forest to produce trees and other non-timber forest products. Additional guidelines for restoration projects may be found in [Manual 5: Restoration Projects](#).

¹Forestland as used here was devised specifically for this program and informed by the definition of forestland used in the U.S. Forest Service’s [Community Forests Program](#), Revised Codes of Washington [84.34.020](#), and [84.33.035](#).

About RCO

RCO is a small state agency that manages multiple grant programs to create outdoor recreation opportunities, protect the best of the state's wildlife habitat and working farms and forests, and help return salmon and orca from near extinction.

Manual Authority

This manual was developed under the authority of the 2020 Supplemental Capital Budget and has been approved by the RCO director. This manual explains eligibility and project requirements for the Community Forests Grant program, how to apply for grants, and the evaluation and scoring process. This manual also outlines the primary responsibilities of grant recipients and references several other RCO manuals, grant materials, and procedures, applicable to applying for and managing a Community Forests Program grant. All materials are available on the RCO Web site. To obtain more information please contact RCO.

Who Makes Decisions

Staff Decisions

Staff review grant applications to ensure they are complete, the projects are eligible to compete, the grant applicants are eligible to apply, and the match is certified. Staff also score objective evaluation criteria, such as the amount of match provided by applicants. Finally, staff make routine grant management decisions about billings, reports, minor scope changes, short time extensions, and more.

Advisory Committee Decisions

An advisory committee evaluates grant applications and scores them to create a ranked list of projects for the director to consider. Advisory committees also review proposed program policies and criteria changes, and in some cases make recommendations to the director about scope changes and how funding should be distributed.

Director Decisions

The RCO director makes the final decisions for funding, policies, and project changes. In addition, the director, or designee, makes many project decisions ranging from authorizing payments to approving cost increases to approving payment of charges in excess of lower bids to terminating projects.

Not a Public Hearings Office

The RCO director does not serve as a public hearings officer and does not decide land-use issues. To the extent possible, each project proposal should demonstrate adequate public notification and review and have the support of the public body applying for the grant.

More detailed information about director decisions is available in *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*, *Manual 4: Development Projects*, and *Manual 5: Restoration Projects*.

Where to Get Information

Recreation and Conservation Office:

Natural Resources Building
1111 Washington Street Southeast
Olympia, WA 98501

[E-mail](#)

Telephone: (360) 902-3000

FAX: (360) 902-3026

Hearing Impaired Relay Service: Call 711

[Web site](#)

Mailing Address

PO Box 40917

Olympia, WA 98504-0917

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

Other Grant Manuals Needed

The manuals below provide additional information for RCO grant-funded projects and are available on the [grant manual page](#) of the RCO Web site. Each can be made available in an alternate format. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review the other manuals that apply to their specific project type and activities.

- [Manual 3: Acquisition Projects](#)
- [Manual 4: Development Projects](#)
- [Manual 5: Restoration Projects](#)
- [Manual 7: Long-Term Obligations](#)
- [Manual 8: Reimbursements](#)

Grant Process and Timeline

RCO offers grants in even-numbered years, in conjunction with the state budget. The grant process, from application to grant award, spans 18 months and is outlined below. While the order of the steps in this process remains consistent, for precise dates, visit the RCO Web site.

Even-numbered Years

Webinars. RCO conducts Webinars (an online meeting) in the winter or early spring to provide information about the grant programs offered that year.

Entering Applications. RCO strongly encourages applicants to start the online application early. PRISM Online will open usually by March 1.

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

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

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

To begin an application, log into PRISM Online and select the "+ New Application" button to enter grant application information. RCO uses this information to assign an outdoor grants manager. This manager guides applicants through the process, reviews application materials, helps determine whether proposals are eligible, and may visit the project site to discuss site-specific details. Click here to learn more about [PRISM's components and technical requirements](#).

Applications Due. Applications are typically due in early May of even-numbered years. The application includes the data entered into PRISM and all required attachments. Applicants should "submit" the application before the deadline. The "Check Application for Errors" button on the "Submit Application" screen will indicate which pages are incomplete. Incomplete applications and applications received after the deadline will be

rejected unless RCO's director has approved a late submission in advance. Follow the requirements in the Applicant's To Do List online.

Technical Reviews. Grants managers review the applications to ensure they are eligible, identify any issues of concern, and provide feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal. Applicants then may make changes to improve the projects, if needed. Applicants must complete all modifications and resubmit the applications by the technical completion deadline.

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

RCO Submits Biennial Budget Request. RCO sends to the Governor a recommended funding amount for Community Forests Program for the next biennium.

Project Evaluation–Written Process. The advisory committee members use the application materials, which include the responses to the evaluation questions, cost estimates, maps, graphics, and photographs, to score each proposal against a set of criteria.

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

Director Approves Project List. The RCO director considers the recommendations of the advisory committees and any written public comments received and then approves a list of projects for submittal to the Governor.

Legislature Approves Projects. When it develops the state capital budget, the Legislature generally approves funding for the Community Forests Program.

Odd-numbered Years

Legislature Approves Projects. When it develops the state capital budget, the Legislature considers the project list submitted by the Governor and funding for the project proposals.

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

Director Awards Grants. After the Legislature and Governor approve the capital budget, the director makes the final grant awards.

Grant Agreements Issued. After grant awards, applicants have 2 calendar months³ to submit pre-agreement documents (checklist provided by grants managers.) RCO staff then prepare and issue grant agreements. Applicants must return the signed agreements within 3 calendar months from the date RCO sends the agreements to the applicants for signature.⁴ Once the agreements are signed, the applicants, now referred to as project sponsors, may begin their projects, according to the terms of the grant agreements. Each agreement will be written and monitored for compliance by RCO staff. See *Manual 7: Long-Term Obligations* for more information.

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

Ongoing

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

- Develop milestones for project implementation. Complete acquisition projects in 2 years, combination projects in 3 years, and exceptionally complex projects in 3.5 years. RCO may terminate projects that do not meet critical milestones established in the grant agreement.
- Begin project implementation quickly and aggressively to show measurable progress towards meeting project milestones.
- Submit progress reports at intervals as designated by the RCO grant agreement.

Project Completion. When projects are completed, sponsors must submit their final bills, final reports, and supporting documents needed to close the projects as specified in

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

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

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

the agreements.⁵ If the bills and documentation are not submitted within 6 months of the end dates within the agreements, RCO may terminate the agreements without payment.

⁵Washington Administrative Code 286.13.040(7)

Section 2: Policies

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

- ✓ Eligible applicants
- ✓ Eligible project types
- ✓ Eligible costs
- ✓ Environmental requirements
- ✓ Property requirements
- ✓ Other requirements
- ✓ Project area stewardship and ongoing obligations

Eligible Applicants

- Local government entities, including:
 - City or county government agencies
 - Special purpose districts and other political subdivisions of the state (e.g., park and recreation districts, port districts, public utility districts)
 - Public development authorities (as authorized under Revised Code of Washington [35.21.730](#))
- Native American tribes
- Nonprofit conservation organizations
- A state agency *working directly* with one or more of the above entities

Applicant Requirements

Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations must meet all the following eligibility requirements:

- Be registered in the State of Washington as a nonprofit corporation as defined by Chapter 24.03 Revised Code of Washington AND meet the definition for nonprofit nature conservancy in Revised Code of Washington 84.34.250⁶
- Consistent with Revised Codes of Washington 24.03.220, 24.03.225, and 24.03.230, identify a successor organization to ensure management continuity of any RCO grants received by the corporation or association.
- Demonstrate experience and capacity to actively manage projects relevant to the types of activities eligible for Community Forests Program funding. Experience can be demonstrated through the capacity and knowledge of individuals within the organization, their partners, or contracted professionals and should not be based on how long the organization has existed.
- Provide a copy of articles of incorporation and by-laws including any amendments.

Public Development Authorities

Public development authorities must meet all the following eligibility requirements:

- Submit the resolution or ordinance that authorizes the public develop authority.
- Demonstrate legal authority to own property and operate in the proposed project area.
- Identify an organization that will be responsible for receiving and maintaining the public community forest property, subject to RCO's Deed of Right, in the event of insolvency or dissolution.
- Demonstrate experience and capacity to actively manage projects relevant to the types of activities eligible for Community Forest Program funding. Experience can be demonstrated through the capacity and knowledge of individuals within the

⁶Revised Code of Washington 84.34.250 defines nonprofit nature conservancies as having as one of its principal purposes, among other possible purposes, conserving natural resources. For this grant program, conserving natural resources should be interpreted to include conserving forestlands for timber management and harvest.

organization, their partners, or contracted professionals and should not be based on how long the organization has existed.

State Agency Applicants

State agencies must demonstrate they are *working directly* with another entity that is eligible to apply in this grant program. The state agency must submit a written agreement formalizing the partnership with the other entity. The agreement must specifically describe all the following:

- The community benefits for which the forest is being acquired.
- Each entity's roles and responsibilities.
- How community input will be integrated into forest planning and management decisions.
- How future revenue generated by the community forest that exceeds operation and management expenses will be shared with the community.

Legal Opinion for First-time Applicants

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

- Contract with the State of Washington and/or the United States of America.
- Meet any statutory definitions required for RCO grant programs.
- Receive and spend public funds including funds from the RCO.
- Acquire and manage interests in real property for conservation or outdoor recreation purposes.
- Develop and/or provide stewardship for structures or facilities eligible under board rules or policies.
- Undertake planning activities incidental thereto.
- Commit the applicant to statements made in any grant proposal.

Eligible Project Types

Projects must acquire fee-simple title of real property. Projects also may include forest and habitat restoration activities or development of recreational facilities on the property acquired.

Acquisition Projects

- Grants may be used for fee-simple acquisitions only. The value of conservation easements or other rights donated or acquired using other funding sources on property that will contribute to the community forest's public benefits may be eligible to satisfy the match requirement.
- Acquisition projects may include incidental costs including but not limited to administrative costs, due diligence, fencing, initial invasive species treatment, property line adjustments, signs, and transaction fees. See RCO's *Manual 3: Acquisitions* for a more complete list of eligible incidental costs.

Combination Projects

Combination projects include property acquisition and one or more other activities: forestland restoration, habitat restoration, or development of recreational opportunities. Restoration and development activities must occur on the property acquired using the community forest grant. The total cost of the restoration and development activities combined cannot exceed 10 percent of the overall project budget.

Restoration activities may include forest health treatments, habitat or ecosystem restoration, aquatic restoration, planting or reforestation, and fish barrier removal or repairs.

Grants cannot be used for mitigation or to satisfy regulatory requirements for activities that are not related to the establishment or development of the community forest. See RCO *Manual 5: Restoration Projects* for more information on projects that include restoration activities.

Development activities may include developing trails and trailheads, parking, restrooms, campgrounds, picnic areas, day-use facilities, challenge courses, signs, interpretive displays, and other recreational opportunities that are compatible with the management objectives of the community forest. See RCO *Manual 4* for more information on projects that include development activities.

Other Considerations

Multiple Parcel Acquisition Projects are Allowed

All parcels must either be identified in the project application or the applicant may identify a geographic envelope containing all parcels under consideration and provide a written description of how the parcels will be prioritized for acquisition within the envelope. Proposed parcels should be contiguous with one another or contiguous with property currently managed under the community forest. Parcels may be non-contiguous if applicants can demonstrate that acquiring land anywhere within the geographic envelope will achieve the goals of the community forest. Regardless of the size of individual parcels, the total of all parcels acquired using grants must be at least 5 acres.

Phased Projects

Large acquisition projects can be complex, multi-year, and multi-partner efforts, and require extensive analysis, coordination, and implementation. A project sponsor should consider the potential complexity that large-scale or multi-million-dollar projects may create and should discuss phasing with RCO staff. Phased acquisition projects are subject to the following criteria:

- Approval of any single phase is limited to that phase. No endorsement or approval is given or implied toward future phases.
- Each phase must stand on its own merits as a viable project.
- Each phase must be submitted as a separate application.

Eligible Costs

Acquisition and Other Incidental Costs

Acquiring property means purchasing or receiving a donation of fee-title interest in real property. Acquisition may include the underlying land, timber, any associated mineral and water rights, and any other fixed assets that accompany the property. Other non-fixed assets such as heavy equipment or movable structures are not eligible in this program.

Incidental costs related to acquisition are eligible. Examples include appraisals, administrative costs, title reports, recording fees, closing fees, cultural resource surveys, fencing, invasive species control, surveys, signs, taxes, and relocation, removal, or demolition of unwanted existing structures. Additional rules for land acquisition are in RCO Manual 3.

Development and Restoration Costs

Development and restoration costs are for actual construction activities. These activities include costs for labor, materials, and equipment use. They start with site preparation and end with completion of the final punch list. Development and restoration costs together may not exceed 10 percent of the total project budget. Additional rules for recreational development projects may be found in *Manual 4: Development Projects*. Additional rules for restoration projects can be found in *Manual 5: Restoration Projects*.

Other Eligible Costs

Administrative, Architectural and Engineering Costs

Administrative costs are necessary to prepare a project for development or restoration, but do not involve direct construction activities. These activities may occur before and during actual project construction and may include bidding, construction supervision, environmental site planning, project administration, project closeout, recording documents, surveys, etc. Note: In RCO's online PRISM system, these activities are categorized as "architectural and engineering (A&E)" costs.

Administrative costs for acquisition projects are limited to no more than 5 percent of the total costs of the property and incidental costs combined. Administrative costs for development and restoration activities are limited to no more than 20 percent of the total construction amount. See RCO Manuals 3, 4 or 5 for more information.

Community Forest Management Plan

Sponsors are required to submit a community forest management plan to RCO before project completion. Sponsors may use up to \$30,000 of the grants to develop this plan. If the sponsor already has a management plan for the community forest, an update to the plan that includes the acquired properties is an allowable cost not to exceed \$10,000.

Pre-Agreement Costs

RCO may reimburse a sponsor for certain allowable expenses incurred before the start date of a grant agreement if the grant is awarded.

For acquisition projects, most incidental costs incurred before an RCO grant agreement are allowable for reimbursement. Land costs are not allowable as a pre-agreement cost unless a Waiver of Retroactivity has been approved. See RCO Manual 3.

For restoration and development projects, preliminary costs necessary to get a project ready for the construction phase (i.e., architecture and engineering, permits) are allowable for reimbursement.

The sponsor may not incur any construction cost (except cultural resources, permits, or surveys) before the period of performance in the agreement. See *Manual 5: Restoration Projects* and *Manual 4: Development Projects* for more information.

Ineligible Activities and Costs

Grant funds cannot be used for the following project activities.

- Any costs associated with the preparation or presentation of the grant application.
- Acquisition of lands already owned by an applicant or eligible sponsor except under a waiver of retroactivity.
- Properties acquired by a condemnation action of any kind.
- Restoration costs required by permit or other regulatory requirements to mitigate for activities that are not related to establishment of, or development on, the community forest or the responsibility of the seller.
- Costs not directly related to implementing the project such as overhead or indirect costs.
- Environmental cleanup of illegal activities (contaminated materials, derelict vessels, trash pick-up, methamphetamine labs, etc.).
- Animal species introduction or propagation, other than biological controls for invasive species.
- Fish or other wildlife production facilities, such as fish hatcheries to produce sport fish.
- Construction or renovation of indoor facilities such as community centers, environmental education or learning centers, gymnasiums, swimming and therapy pools, and ice-skating rinks.
- Routine operation and maintenance costs.
- Purchase of maintenance equipment, tools, or supplies.

Environmental Requirements

Cultural Resources Review

Governor's [Executive Order 21-02](#), Archaeological and Cultural Resources, directs state agencies to review state-funded acquisition and construction projects for potential impacts to cultural resources, which are defined as archeological and historical sites and artifacts, and traditional tribal areas or items of religious, ceremonial, and social uses. As part of this review, state agencies must consult with the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation and affected Native American tribes and ensure that reasonable action is taken to avoid adverse impacts to these resources. The federal government, through Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, requires the same compliance for federally funded projects and projects with other federal involvement, for example, projects on federal lands, with federal funds, or those that require a federal permit.

RCO will review all acquisitions and ground-disturbing actions for potential impacts to cultural resources and initiate consultation with the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation and tribes before issuing a grant agreement. As a result of this review and consultation, sponsors may be required to complete a cultural resources investigation and additional requirements may be added to the grant agreement.

Cultural Resources Background Study

For Acquisition-only Projects

As noted in the [Washington State Integrated Forest Management Plan Guidelines and Template](#), sponsors are responsible for protecting any cultural and historic resources present in their project areas. To fulfill this requirement, sponsors must attach Cultural Resources Background Studies to their forest management plans. These studies may be undertaken as desktop analyses and may not require field work. The studies must be completed by people who meet the Secretary of Interior's [Professional Qualifications Standards](#) as described in 36 CFR Part 61. Site-specific Inadvertent Discovery Plans for unanticipated discovery of human remains or archaeological resources, also must be included in the management plans. The Cultural Resources Background Study should include (at minimum) the following content:

- Study area location and extent
- Physical and environmental setting
- Ethnography and historical setting
- Archaeological setting

- Archaeological and historic built-environment records search
- Assessment of the potential for additional buried and above-ground cultural resources
- Management recommendations for the known and newly discovered cultural resources

Combination Projects (Acquisition with Development or Restoration Actions)

Combination projects may require a full cultural resources assessment, inclusive of field work, to address any ground-disturbing actions.

For all projects, archaeological and historical data may be proprietary or sensitive. If data is proprietary, sponsors must identify it as such and use discretion if including data in their plans. Please do NOT include any information that identifies the locations of archaeological sites or the sites of traditional religious, ceremonial, or social uses in plans. This information is protected by state and federal laws to help prevent looting and destruction of these sites. Site-specific and location data should be kept on separate documentation marked "Proprietary—for landowner only" and kept in secure locations by the sponsors.

Sponsors must include costs to complete Cultural Resources Background Studies and the cultural resources consultation process in their project budgets. The studies and all forms must meet requirements outlined in the [Washington State Standards for Cultural Resources Reporting](#). RCO encourages sponsors to work with qualified cultural resources professionals to estimate costs. The Association for Washington Archaeology' provides [a list of qualified consultants](#) on its Web site.

This study does not exempt future projects or action from undergoing a formal review by the Washington Department of Natural Resources or another regulatory agency when the landowner proposes activities that require a Forest Practices Application/Notification from the Department of Natural Resources. RCO encourages sponsors to submit subsequent plan updates, if applicable.

For more details on the process required, see *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*, *Manual 4: Development Projects*, or *Manual 5: Restoration Projects*.

Invasive Species

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

- Driving a car or truck to a field site and moving soil embedded with seeds or fragments of invasive plants in the vehicle's tires to another site. New infestations can begin miles away as the seeds and fragments drop off the tires and the undercarriage of the vehicle.
- Moving water or sediment infested with invasive plants, animals, or pathogens via boots, nets, sampling equipment, or boats from one stream to another.
- Moving weed-infested hay, gravel, or dirt to a new site, carrying the weed seeds along with it, during restoration and construction activities. Before long, the seeds germinate, and infest the new site.

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

Sustainability

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

Property Requirements

Property Acquired Must be Forestland

Forestland is defined as property that is at least 5 acres, suitable to sustain natural vegetation, and at least 75 percent forested or capable of being reforested. For projects that acquire multiple parcels, the sum of all parcels must create an area that is at least 5 contiguous acres of forestland. Use and management of the property must maintain the property as forestland.

If the property being acquired is enrolled in the county's designated forestland, timberland, or open space current use tax program, the sponsor is encouraged to continue the property's enrollment in the program if eligible. If the property is not enrolled, sponsors are encouraged to apply for enrollment. The County will help sponsors determine which properties are eligible for which program upon acquisition and development of the community forest management plan.

Local Jurisdiction Review

Before applying for a grant to acquire property, an applicant must review the proposed project with the county or city with jurisdiction over the project area. The applicant then must provide documentation that the applicant has conferred with the local county or city officials.

The jurisdiction's legislative authority may submit a letter to the RCO director stating its support of, or opposition to, the project. The director shall make the letter available to the Governor and the Legislature when submitting its prioritized project list as part of RCO's biennial capital budget request. The applicant must complete this local review for each new application even if resubmitting a project from a previous grant cycle.

Landowner Acknowledgement

As part of any grant application for property acquisition, the applicant must demonstrate that the landowner is aware of the applicant's interest in buying the property. Applicants may meet this requirement by completing one of four options detailed in RCO's Manual 3; however, the landowner's receipt and acknowledgement of notice must be clearly documented in writing.

State owned Aquatic Lands

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

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

If the project is on state-owned aquatic lands, the grant applicant will need to secure a lease or easement (use authorization) to use those lands from the Washington Department of Natural Resources. Securing a lease or easement may take up to a year. RCO requires the executed lease or easement within 60 days after board funding approval to show control and tenure for the site. The lease or easement is required before the project will be placed under agreement, unless RCO's director approves an extension in advance. Review the control and tenure requirements in *Manual 4: Development Projects* or *Manual 5: Restoration Projects*.

The following online resources may be helpful to review:

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

Department of Natural Resources' Review of Project Scope

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

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

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

Acquiring Land with Severed Mineral Rights

While a sponsor may acquire land with severed mineral rights, the sponsor is strongly encouraged to perform additional due diligence to determine the feasibility and risk of a third-party mineral owner exercising the rights. Development of the mineral rights by a third party could be treated as a conversion under RCO's long-term obligations policy. In such an event, the sponsor may encounter a legal obligation to find, fund, and acquire replacement land with similar community forest benefits and value.

Complimentary Easements or Covenants

If an acquisition project includes funding from other sources that also require some form of encumbrance on the property such as a Notice of Grant, deed restriction, or other encumbrance, the project sponsor must provide a copy of the encumbrance to RCO for review. Other funding sources may include private foundations, other local, state, or federal grant programs, payments for ecosystem services, transfer of development or other property rights, etc. RCO will review the encumbrance for consistency with RCO's

Deed of Right and the grant agreement. RCO's Deed of Right includes reference to encumbrances from other funding sources and requires any future conversion be valued without the other funding source's encumbrance on the title. As long as the encumbrance from the other funding source is consistent and compatible with RCO's funding, the project may remain eligible for funding.

If any easement is required after the completion of the RCO project, the sponsor must provide a copy of the draft easement for RCO to review. As long as the easement is compatible with the purpose of the community forest, no conversion will occur per the policies in *RCO Manual 7: Long-Term Obligations*.

Deed of Right

RCO requires a Deed of Right to be recorded on each parcel acquired with RCO funding assistance. The Deed of Right grants to the State of Washington the right of public access, and grants to RCO the right to inspect the property, to enforce the terms of the grant agreement, and protect the property for the primary purpose of the grant funding. For more information on RCO's Deed of Right, recording process, and an example see *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*.

Other Requirements

Number of Grant Proposals Allowed

In general, RCO does not limit the number of grant proposals from a single applicant during the biennial grant cycle. However, each proposal must be for a different scope of work. Each application must stand alone on its own merits as viable forestland not be dependent on other projects or future phases of work.

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

Community Forest Management Plan

A community forest management plan must be submitted to RCO before project completion. Forest management plans must follow the [Integrated Forest Management Plan Guidelines](#) produced by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Washington State Department of Revenue, U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Forest Service, and American Tree Farm System.

In addition to the elements included in the Integrated Forest Management Plan Guidelines, a community forest management plan must include the following:

- A description of the public benefits provided by the community forest.
- A plan for community engagement and decision making.
- A financial management plan, consistent with the income use policy below, that includes a description of how any revenue generated that is in excess of the community forest's stewardship, management, and operational needs will support the stated public benefits.

When another plan already exists, the RCO director or their designee may approve an alternative plan format that meets the intent of the community forest management plan guidelines.

Permitted and Prohibited Uses

Property acquired for a community forest must be managed according to the sponsor's Community Forest Management Plan and future updates to the plan. Generally, communities have wide discretion in the use and management of the community forest so long as the property is actively managed and maintained as forestland.

Permitted Uses of Community Forests

Following is a list of some of the permitted uses:

- Timber harvest and forest management
- Harvest of non-timber forest products
- Public hunting, gathering, and other subsistence activities
- Managed grazing compatible with forestlands
- Development of recreational and educational facilities
- Habitat conservation and ecosystem restoration
- Transferring development rights before acquisition; transferring water rights
- Payments for ecosystem services
- Utility development that does not significantly reduce the percent of forested land on the property at the time of acquisition

Prohibited Uses of Community Forests

- Residential development

- Commercial mining or mineral extraction⁷ (except as it supports the community forest management and operations—i.e., small gravel borrow pits for roads, trails)
- Permanently selling or severing any acquired mineral rights
- Activity that is incompatible with the purpose of the Community Forests Program or that significantly reduces or alters the percent of forested land that was on the property at the time of acquisition

Public Access

Regardless of whether the property is developed, all property acquired in fee-title with RCO grants must be available for public use. Public use means that the general public has regular, legal access and use of property acquired with RCO grants. For more information on public access requirements, see Manual 3.

Limiting or restricting public access to part or all of a project area is allowed for the following reasons:

- Protection for the safety of the public. For public safety closures, the sponsor must identify a specific hazard with known consequences to visitors.
- Protection of water quality or critical, important, or sensitive species, habitats, or ecosystems.
- Protection of significant research and education sites or resources that might otherwise be compromised by public access, and areas where there is active research or education.
- Protection of historical or cultural resources. However, the sponsor shall allow exemptions to limits on public access in the case of cultural and spiritual uses that do not damage or otherwise adversely affect the protected resources.

The director or designee may approve additional limits to public access on a case-by-case basis.

Carbon and Ecosystem Service Credits⁸

Land acquired or encumbered with an RCO grant may be enrolled in carbon credit and other payments for ecosystem service programs. These programs issue credits or direct payments to landowners for activities such as protecting land, planting trees, or

⁷See disclaimer on exercise of mineral rights by a third party.

⁸Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2021-02

improving management practices that reduce, sequester, or prevent future carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions. Read more information in *RCO Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*.

Existing Buildings and Structures

Buildings and structures may remain on the property if they support the purpose and function of the community forest. If a project sponsor wishes to retain a building or structure on the property, the intended use of the structure must be identified in the grant application. If a project sponsor wishes to retain a structure that is not eligible for an RCO grant, then the structure and associated land and support facilities must be excluded from the grant application. Grants may be used to remove or demolish unwanted structures.

Compliance with Forest Practices

Community forest owners must comply with the Forest Practices Rules or other equally protective standard of forest management when conducting timber management or harvest activities. For more information on compliance with the Forest Practices Act, contact the Washington State Department of Natural Resources at (360) 902-1400, fpd@dnr.wa.gov, or www.dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/forest-practices/rule-implementation.

Inspections

RCO staff is responsible for implementing the compliance policy. RCO has a policy to inspect completed projects to compare actual conditions to the terms and conditions of the grant agreement. An inspection may be done at any time during the life of an RCO funded project. Inspection will result in a determination of compliance, non-compliance, or conversion.

RCO encourages sponsors to regularly inspect their projects and to advise RCO if potential compliance issues exist. For more information see *RCO Manual 7: Long Term Obligations*.

Accessibility

Facilities or elements constructed with RCO grants and sponsor match are required by law to be accessible regardless of whether there are specific standards adopted in the State Building Code, Americans with Disabilities Act, or Architectural Barriers Act, as amended. Other federal laws, guidelines, and best practices also may apply to achieve accessibility. In case of conflict between minimums, the one providing the most access shall prevail. RCO shall have final determination.

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

Public Disclosure Rules

RCO records and files are public records that are subject to the Public Records Act.⁹ More information about the [RCO's disclosure practices](#) is available on the Web site.

Administrative Rule Exceptions

The following RCO administrative rules do not apply to the Community Forests Program:

- [286-13-110](#) Income, Income Use

Project Area Stewardship and Ongoing Obligations¹⁰

An RCO grant comes with long-term obligations to maintain and protect the project area¹¹ after a project is complete. The long-term obligations are in RCO's grant agreement. A [sample grant agreement](#) may be found on RCO's Web site.

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

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

A conversion occurs when the project area acquired, developed, or restored with RCO grant funding is used for purposes other than what it was funded for originally. See *RCO Manual 7: Long-Term Obligations* for a discussion of conversions and the process

⁹Revised Code of Washington 42.56

¹⁰Revised Code of Washington 79A.25, Washington Administrative Code 286, RCO's grant agreement standard terms and conditions, and *Manual 7: Funded Projects*.

¹¹Washington Administrative Code 286-04-010(19) Project area is the geographic area that delineates a grant-assisted site which is subject to application and grant agreement requirements.

required for replacement of the public investment. Non-compliance with the long-term obligations for an RCO grant may jeopardize an organization's ability to obtain future RCO grants.

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

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

Stewardship Monitoring and Reporting

A community forest monitoring report must be submitted to RCO at least once every 5 years. The report must include a description of resource management that occurred within the past 5 years including harvest, stewardship, development, or restoration activities; any anticipated changes to the operation or management of the community forest; and any natural or unplanned human alterations to the land. The report may be the same report developed or used for other funding sources such as the U.S. Forest Service's Community Forest Program.

Accounting Assurances

The sponsoring organization must maintain financial oversight of the community forest regardless of community engagement, governance, and decision-making structure. Transferring property and financial oversight responsibilities to another eligible sponsor is allowed at any time upon approval by RCO.

All project sponsors must follow and comply with generally accepted accounting principles, financial reporting, and audit requirements for their organizational structure. Sponsors must ensure accounting practices for community forests allow for the tracking of revenues and disbursements to ensure funds are used to further the public benefits identified in the community forest plan.

For the first 5 years after establishment of a new community forest, and once every 5 years thereafter, sponsors must submit to RCO a copy of the annual financial report for the community forest which includes an accounting of all income, expenditures, and transfers of revenue from the community forest during that reporting period. The financial report can be the same report used to satisfy annual Internal Revenue Service or Washington State financial audit and reporting requirements.

Section 3: Money Matters

In this section, you'll learn the following:

- ✓ Grant limits
- ✓ Matching requirements
- ✓ Types of match
- ✓ Other things to know

Grant Limits

Grants are intended to supplement the capacity of a sponsor. They are not intended to supplant existing programs or fund projects that would have been undertaken without a grant. Therefore, applicants should not seek grants from RCO to replenish their cash accounts. Grants should be used to expand an applicant's existing capacity to provide facilities to its users.

There is no minimum grant request. The maximum grant request is \$3 million.

Matching Requirements

Matching Share

Applicants must contribute matching resources at least equal to 15 percent of the amount of the grant requested. For example, if an applicant requests a \$100,000 grant, the applicant must contribute \$15,000 for a total project cost of \$115,000.

Match is the project sponsor's contribution to a project. By requiring a match for grants, RCO intends to foster and demonstrate local commitment to the projects and to spread the money from the grant program to a greater number of projects. Before RCO awards a grant, the required match must be secured so the project can move forward.

All matching resources must meet the following criteria:

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

RCO rules governing projects apply to the grant applicant's match. For example, if a grant applicant uses donated land as a match, RCO rules requiring the land to remain in forest forever apply to the donated land as well.

RCO may require the applicant to provide a portion of its matching resources in local resources.

Match Availability and Certification

To help ensure projects are ready for implementation upon approval, applicants must have matching funds available for expenditure before the RCO approves funding. All applicants are required to sign and submit "Certification of Match" forms to ensure their projects are included in RCO's funding recommendations to the Legislature. Applicants are advised to plan ahead for projects whose match depends on citizen votes or passage of ballot measures. This certification is due at least 1 calendar month before director action. The forms and deadlines for certifying match are on the RCO Web site.

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

Eligible Match

RCO policy allows match sources that are eligible for reimbursement in the program. Examples of eligible match sources include the following:

- Appropriations or cash
- Bonds—council or voter
- Conservation futures
- Corrections labor
- Donations—the value of using donated cash, equipment, labor, land, materials, property rights, or services (see Types of Match section below)

- Force account—the value of using sponsor’s equipment, labor, or materials (see Types of Match section below)
- Grants—federal, state, local, and private (see Types of Match section below)
- Local impact and mitigation fees (see Types of Match section below)
- Proceeds of a letter of credit or binding loan commitment
- Other RCO grants that meet the requirements outlined below.
- The value of an acquired conservation easement or other less-than-fee property interest that protects forestland next to the project area or enhances the public benefits of the community forest may be eligible as match. Examples include easements acquired using grants from the U.S. Forest Service’s Forest Legacy or Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program’s Forestland Preservation category.

In such cases, the value of the interest must be based on an appraisal or fair market valuation of the interest to be acquired, or if already acquired, the actual purchase price/donated value. Valuation of the interest cannot be completed using Community Forests Program grants. The acquisition must occur within the period of performance for the community forest grant project or under a waiver of retroactivity. RCO must review any easements to ensure consistency with the purpose of the Community Forests Program. The sponsor must grant RCO a third-party right of enforcement on any conservation easements acquired for the duration of the easement term.

Not Allowed as Match

Existing assets and costs associated with mitigation required for actions that are not associated with the community forest project are not eligible to be used as match.

Types of Match

Donations and Force Account

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

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

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

Other Grants

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

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

Applicants must clearly identify in the grant application all grants to be used as match. RCO will help determine if the source is compatible with RCO grants.

Other RCO Grants as Match

Another RCO grant may be used to help meet the match requirements if the following conditions apply:

- The grants are not from the same RCO grant program.
- Only elements eligible in both grant programs may count as the match.
- Each grant is evaluated independently and on its own merits, as if the match were coming from elsewhere.
- The applicant provides a minimum of 10 percent of the total costs of the eligible elements being matched. This sponsor match may not be from federal or state funds, and may include in-kind contributions. This policy does not apply to Native American tribes.
- The grant applications are submitted in the same biennium.¹²

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

¹²Washington Administrative Code 286-13-045(7)

Mitigation Funds as Match

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

Other Things to Know

Payment on Reimbursement Basis

RCO pays grants through reimbursement. A sponsor may request reimbursement only after having paid the employees and vendors. RCO does not provide money before vendors are paid. Except as otherwise provided below, RCO will pay only at the percentage identified in the grant agreement after the sponsor has presented an invoice documenting cost incurred and compliance with the provisions of the grant agreement.

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

Reimbursement shall not be approved for any donations, including donated land.

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

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

Federal Rules

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

Records

Applicants must keep detailed records of all funded project costs including force account values and donated contributions. Refer to *Manual 8: Reimbursements* for details and

instructions regarding audits, record retention, and documents required for reimbursement.

Audits

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

Section 4: Project Evaluation

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

- ✓ The evaluation process
- ✓ The advisory committee
- ✓ The evaluation criteria

The Evaluation Process

The evaluation process begins when RCO adopts the evaluation process and evaluation criteria.

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

An applicant prepares a PowerPoint presentation to address the evaluation criteria and delivers it to the advisory committee during a **virtual, oral presentation**. While the evaluation meeting is open to anyone, they are not public hearings. As such, only applicant-designated spokespersons may address the advisory committee. An RCO staff member serves as a nonvoting moderator.

Advisory committee members may ask follow-up questions before they score the grant proposal. The virtual online presentation process is broadcast live on YouTube for the public, but the public is not invited to comment.

The advisory committee then scores the grant application using the responses to the criteria, graphics included in the application or provided during the presentation, and summary application materials. Scoring is confidential.

At the same time, RCO staff score the objective sections of the application, such as the amount of matching share an applicant is providing. Staff scores are based on material submitted by the applicant and information obtained from the state Office of Financial Management and the state Department of Commerce.

The advisory committee and staff scores are combined for an application’s total evaluation score. The resulting ranked lists are the basis for funding recommendations to the RCO director.

Evaluation Criteria

All of the project criteria are scored by the advisory committee.

Community Forests Program Evaluation Criteria Summary

#	Title	Elements	Project Type	Maximum Points Possible
	Project Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map • Project goals and objective 	All	Not Scored
1	Forestland Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest resources • Property features • Landscape context • Additional benefits and threat 	All	15
2	Public Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic benefit • Recreational and cultural benefits • Environmental benefits • Income use 	All	15
3	Stewardship and Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finances • Operation and management • Future development and restoration • Organizational experience 	Acquisition	15
			Combination	12
4	Development and Restoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development or restoration goals • Budget and timeline • Risks 	Combination	3
5	Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community engagement process • Governance structure • Organizational capacity 	All	15
Total Points Possible				60

Detailed Evaluation Questions

Project Introduction (Not scored)

This is an opportunity to set the stage for the project. The following detailed criteria will provide an opportunity to describe the project in more depth; however, the intent here primarily is to help orient the evaluators to the project.

- Locate the project on statewide, regional, and site maps to help orient the evaluators to the project area and its context within the landscape.
- Briefly provide a broad overview of the project goals and objectives, surrounding ownership, and land use patterns.

1. Forestland Benefits

What are the specific forestland values this project will protect? Please describe in detail the characteristics of the property to be acquired, current land uses, zoning and land use restrictions, how much of the property is forested, and whether any property rights were previously severed or will be severed before acquisition. Include all the following in your description:

- A summary of the timber and non-timber forest resources on the property, their condition, and the potential of the property to support future forests.
- A summary of other features of the property such as wetlands, streams, buildings, roads, and other notable natural or manufactured elements and their condition.
- A summary of the landscape surrounding the project area including non-forest land uses and connectivity to other working forestlands, protected habitat lands, or public recreation opportunities.
- A summary of additional benefits that will be achieved and why this project should be prioritized at this time. Additional benefits are beyond those which exist under current ownership and could be public access, avoided threat of conversion to land uses other than forestland, avoided impacts from changing ecological conditions, climate resiliency, or other factors.

▲ Point Range: 0-15

2. Public Benefits

How will the community forest be developed or maintained to provide public recreational, educational, cultural, environmental and economic opportunities? Please provide a socioeconomic description¹³ of the community that will primarily benefit from the community forest and describe:

- How the project area will provide economic benefits including anticipated financial returns (and timing), job creation, and how the project area will support infrastructure critical to the forest products industry, tourism, and other public services.
- How the public will experience the project area including opportunities for recreation, hunting and gathering, environmental education, and cultural enrichment.
- The project's anticipated environmental benefits including how the project area will benefit ecosystem services, water quality, and other sensitive natural resources, or how it supports the goals of a state or local plan (climate action plan, wildlife habitat plan, forest action plan, salmon recovery plan, comprehensive plan, etc.).
- How any income that exceeds the costs of on-going operation and management of the community forest will be redistributed to benefit the public.

▲ Point Range: 0-15

3. Stewardship and Management

What are the primary anticipated management objectives for the community forest and how will they likely be funded and achieved? Please include an assessment of:

- A summary of the forest's financial plan, including costs and anticipated funding sources to support the goals of the community forest.
- The ongoing stewardship, operation and maintenance needs on the property.
- Future anticipated restoration or development needs including forest health treatments, upgrades to fish passage and other infrastructure, forest road improvements, and any other development to facilitate public access, and how these activities will be funded.

¹³Applicants may use RCOs [Grant Application Data Tool](#) as a starting reference point for describing the community socioeconomic conditions.

- The expertise and capacity of the applicant's organization and partners for long-term management of the site including staff, volunteers, partners and contractors, financial resources, and any other relevant factors.

▲ Point Range: 0-15 points for acquisition projects; 0-12 points for combination projects

4. Development and Restoration

What are your plans for development and/or restoration activities on the property acquired? Include in your description details about:

- The development and/or restoration project goals
- A budget narrative and timeline
- Anticipated risks to achieving the project goals
- How the development and/or restoration activities will support the forest's economic and community benefits

▲ Point Range: 3 points for combination projects only.

5. Community Engagement and Support

What is the community engagement process used for developing or implementing this project? How will the community participate in future decisions on the management and use of forest resources? In the response please describe:

- How residents, elected officials, tribal governments, and community organizations are or will be engaged, and how their input is or will be incorporated into the project.
- Strategies used or planned to seek input from segments of the population that have been historically marginalized or underrepresented in land use management decision making.
- The anticipated governance structure of the community forest and who will have final decision-making authority over the community forest management.
- The capacity and experience within the applicant's organization and partners that will be dedicated to facilitating continued, long-term governance and community engagement.

- Community support or partnership commitments you have secured for this project.

▲ Point Range: 0-15