



Cultural Resources for Applicants and Sponsors

The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) requires reviews of most projects for their potential effects on cultural resources. This is a limited, high-level review that looks at factors like location, landform features, known archeological sites, and ethnographic sites. RCO shares information about the projects and the cultural resources recommendations with the Department of Archeological and Historical Preservation and tribes. Based on this first consultation, more cultural resources requirements may be included in the RCO grant agreements.

Budgeting for Cultural Resources

Applicants should budget for cultural resources work for most project types (acquisitions, planning, planting, etc.) because there are no unilateral exemptions. RCO even reviews projects with minimal or no ground-disturbing work to ensure there is no conflict with state laws protecting archaeological sites.

Cost for a survey depends on the scope, scale, and location of the project. A survey for a discrete project action in a low-risk area may cost \$2,000-\$5,000. A survey for a larger project or activities in a very high-risk area (or known site) could cost \$50,000 or more.

RCO encourage the project sponsor to reach out to cultural resources consulting firms to aid in budgeting or conducting a pre-review. Many firms will provide the service free or for low cost. Cost increases are not allowable in most grant programs, so please budget appropriately during the application process. [Resources for finding consultants](#) are online at the Association for Washington Archaeology.



During the Application Process

Application Questions

The grant application has cultural resources questions. Please answer all questions thoroughly. The more detail provided, the easier for RCO to evaluate the project's potential to affect cultural resources.

Applicants must map the project's Area of Potential Effect in the online application. This is the area that project activities could disturb. Please attach any cultural resources reference documents to the online application.

Project Reviews

RCO may do an early review of applications and provide comments during the grant technical review process. Formal review and consultation typically will not begin until the technical review process has been completed and projects have been ranked. Consultation with Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation and tribes will follow. RCO will insert cultural resources requirements into the grant agreement before signing it. The project sponsor should review the milestones, special conditions, and standard terms and conditions in the grant agreement and contact the outdoor grants manager with questions.

Lead Agency

The process for the cultural resources review will depend on the lead agency and location of the project.

RCO-Funded Projects

RCO is the lead agency for most projects funded through the office. RCO's review includes review of the Department of Archeological and Historical Preservation database, General Land Office survey maps, Lidar data, U.S. Coast & Geodetic Survey T-sheets, historic U.S. Geological Survey quadrant maps, historic aerial photos, and published ethnographic works.

Do not submit reviews forms directly to the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation for RCO-funded projects. RCO is not delegating consultation to project sponsors.

Projects with a State Connection

A project sponsored by a state agency or occurring on state-owned or -managed land (regardless of the sponsor) is the responsibility of the state agency. Each agency has its own process for addressing cultural resources. RCO cannot exempt or determine treatment for projects on state lands. State agencies must provide documentation of compliance with



Governor's [Executive Order 21-02](#) or Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as appropriate.

Projects with a Federal Connection

If a project is on federal land, includes federal funding, or requires a federal permit, cultural resources compliance typically is the responsibility of the lead federal agency. The review will follow Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Contact RCO before starting work for questions about the lead agency.

Tribal Contact

Project sponsors and consultants may communicate directly with tribal cultural resources staff for technical coordination, report writing, and notification of field work and findings. The consultant should provide all communication with tribes to RCO or summarize them in the cultural resources report. RCO will keep lead agency status for formal consultation unless otherwise noted.

WISAARD Number

RCO staff set up and manage cultural resources information in the Washington Information System for Architectural and Archaeological Records Data (WISAARD) system. Please do not transmit materials directly to the Department of Archeological and Historical Preservation. If a consultant needs to be added to a WISAARD project record to fill out forms, e-mail culturalresource@rco.wa.gov with the PRISM project number, sponsor name, and the company and people to add.

Cultural Resources Investigations

Cultural Resources Surveys

Cultural resources surveys are investigations to identify cultural resources, determine their significance, and evaluate potential project impacts on those resources. The exact activities will vary depending on the scope of the project, results of consultation, and lead agency. The report produced from the survey will include data analysis and recommendations. The author of the report is responsible for ensuring that the report is succinct, adheres to Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation reporting [guidelines](#), conveys all necessary information, and responds to client needs.

Unless otherwise noted, a cultural resources survey must include inspection techniques to identify both surface and subsurface archaeological resources and recordation of historic era-



built environment resources in the project area. The proposed field methods will be completed, at the principal investigator's discretion, depending on the results of background review and fieldwork. Survey methodology that deviates from standard practices must be discussed with RCO in advance.

The consultant completing the cultural resources survey must meet the Secretary of Interior qualifications as described in the Code of Federal Regulations [36 CFR Part 61](#).

The surveyor or report author should be judicious in tailoring the length and content of the report to the scale of the project. Even when no sites are found during fieldwork, a survey report is needed to detail the actual areas inspected and the methods the contractor used.

If the survey identifies an archaeological site or historic properties, the project sponsor must work with RCO and consulting parties to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the impacts. Please be aware that mitigation activities may be reimbursed partly if included in the grant agreement but ultimately are the project sponsor's responsibility.

The landowner (if not the project sponsor) must be notified before conducting a cultural resource survey on the property.

Cultural Resources Survey Report

The project sponsor should review the survey report, making sure the RCO number and grant program are listed, and then give it to the RCO grants manager. Allow 30 days for review. RCO cultural resources staff will review the report, request any needed edits, and send it to the consulting parties for their comments. RCO will notify the project sponsor and consultant of all comments received. Once the comments are resolved, RCO submits the report in WISAARD and consultation is completed.

No ground disturbing actions may occur until RCO has given authorization to proceed.

Already Have a Survey Report?

That's great! Having a cultural resources survey report already may save time and simplify the project review. The report may be submitted for consultation; however, still budget for the services of a consultant because the lead agency will want to review the report under its own rules. If there have been changes to the size, extent, or lead agency since the study was prepared, changes might be needed to the report. The Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation will not review the Historic Property Inventory forms and archaeological site forms prepared by the consultant until a regulatory agency requests it, and the department might have comments or require changes to the documents.



Inadvertent Discovery

Inadvertent Discovery Plans

RCO has a standard [Inadvertent Discovery Plan](#). The plan must always be available onsite. Everyone working on the project must be briefed on the procedures. The consultant may either incorporate the RCO plan into the reports or draft a more site-specific plan. If writing a more site-specific plan, the consultant must include all necessary plan instructions and relevant project information, and list RCO as a contact.

Inadvertent Discoveries

If archaeological or historic materials are discovered, work in the area of the discovery and immediate vicinity must stop immediately. The area must be secured, and notification must be provided to tribal cultural staff and committees, RCO cultural resources staff, and the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation.

If human remains are discovered, work in the immediate vicinity must stop, the area must be secured, and notification must be provided to tribal cultural staff and committees, RCO cultural resources staff, the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, and the coroner and local law enforcement, as quickly as possible according to [Revised Code of Washington 68.50](#).