



Planning for Recreation Access

Grant Guidelines

Applications due November 14, 2022

EQUITY IN OUTDOOR RECREATION

Washington has an abundance of natural beauty and a rich tradition of outdoor recreation. Participating in outdoor recreation improves our health and well-being and builds stronger communities.¹ However, across the state, in both rural and urban communities, “deserts” exist where diverse recreation opportunities are lacking.² In 2022, the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) published an equity review of the agency’s grant programs to identify barriers to participation and changes toward improving equitable distribution of funding and recreation benefits.³ RCO is assessing recommendations from that review and has concurrently developed a new grant program to assist communities with the first step of recreation access: planning.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In 2021, the Washington State Legislature directed the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to provide grants for recreation planning, predesign, and technical assistance to communities that lack access to outdoor recreation facilities and resources. Together with the Community Outdoor Athletic Facilities Fund (COAFF), RCO is pleased to announce the 2022 Planning for Recreation Access (PRA) grant program. Up to \$3 million is available to assist in community planning for outdoor recreation access.

The goal of this program is to aid communities in defining outdoor recreation needs and developing plans for recreation access. This program aims to support local community involvement in recreation planning benefiting people who lack sufficient access to the outdoors.

¹*Health Benefits Of Contact With Nature*, University of Washington, 2019

²*Recreational Assets of Statewide Significance in Washington State*, Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office, 2019

³*Equitable Grantmaking: A Comprehensive Review of Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office Grant Programs*, Prevention Institute, 2022

Projects that demonstrate collaboration between local governments, community-based organizations, and community residents in need of access to outdoor recreation are highly encouraged to apply.

Priority Communities

This program is intended to provide communities with the planning resources necessary to be successful in future funding efforts, whether through other RCO grant programs or other avenues. All types of outdoor recreation opportunity planning are eligible including efforts related to developing local parks, trails, water access, community forests, boating, community athletics, and much more. Projects that combine multiple outdoor recreation opportunities and work across levels of government and private service providers are encouraged.

The PRA grant will prioritize projects that aim to address recreation access gaps in:

- Racially diverse neighborhoods in dense urban areas, and
- Small, rural communities.

In addition, the program will prioritize applicants and communities that have not received an RCO recreation grant in the past 10 years.

AUTHORITY

This program was developed under the authority of the 2021-2023 Capital Budget and has been approved by the RCO Director. This guidance document explains eligibility and project requirements for the Planning for Recreation Access grant program, how to apply for grants, and the evaluation and scoring process. This manual also outlines the primary responsibilities of the grant recipients and references several other RCO manuals, grant materials, and procedures applicable to applying for and managing a PRA grant. All materials are available on the RCO website. To obtain more information, please contact RCO at PlanningForRecreationAccess@rco.wa.gov.

FUNDING DETAILS

Availability of Funding

Up to \$3 million is available for planning grants through two funding sources:

Approximately \$2.3 million is available from a 2021-2023 Capital Budget proviso dedicated for planning and technical assistance grants. These grants can be used for planning activities related to outdoor recreation opportunities.

RCO's newly established Community Outdoor Athletics Facility Fund (COAFF) is also contributing up to \$750,000 for planning projects that include a community athletics

element. Examples of community athletics elements may include but are not limited to outdoor stadiums, fields, courts, pools, and tracks.

Whether a project will be funded with COAFF money will be determined by RCO staff based on each project's scope. Project sponsors will track and administer grants the same, no matter which funds are used.

Grant range

RCO is anticipating awarding proposals ranging from \$20,000 - \$250,000 each and will consider projects outside of this range on a case-by-case basis.

Match

There is no match required for this program.

Payment on Reimbursement Basis

RCO pays grants through reimbursement. Sponsors may request reimbursement only after having paid their employees and vendors. RCO does not provide money before vendors are paid. For information on reimbursement and billing procedures, see [Manual 8: Reimbursements](#).

Limit on the Number of Projects

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.

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.

Public Disclosure Rules

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

Statewide Vendor Number

Grant sponsors must have a statewide vendor number to receive payments. They can be paid by check or electronic fund transfer (EFT). Visit the Department of Enterprise Services Web site to register.

USE OF FUNDS

Project Deliverables

Successful applicants will have through June 2024 to complete their planning project. Projects must result in one or more of the following:

1. A comprehensive parks, recreation, and open space (PROS) plan that meets the guidelines for grant program eligibility outlined in RCO's [Manual 2: Planning Guidelines](#).
2. A parks, recreation and conservation land acquisition strategy or funding plan
3. Pre-design, design, or construction ready plans or bid documents. Multi-site projects are welcome.
4. Feasibility study, alternatives assessment, cultural resources survey, SEPA compliant environmental assessment, or permitting.

Eligible Costs

PRA funds may be used for any planning, predesign, or technical assistance related to public outdoor recreation facilities including:

- Community engagement and outreach, including facilitation services, public meeting support, publications, and promotional materials, etc.
- Site design and engineering costs or services
- Multi-site projects within the planning area
- Permitting, alternatives assessments and environmental assessments
- Preconstruction studies or surveys such as feasibility studies, route surveys, or cultural resources surveys

Ineligible Costs

RCO will not reimburse sponsors for costs not directly related to planning, pre-design or technical assistance of public outdoor recreation facilities. As such, the following are not reimbursable.

- Purchase of facility equipment, installation costs, or construction costs
- Planning or design of facilities that do not provide access to the general public.
- Recreation programming costs
- Costs not directly related to implementing the proposed project such as indirect and overhead charges
- Costs incurred prior to the start date of a project agreement
- Projects unlikely to lead to eventual capital development

Accessibility

While conducting planning activities, be aware that facilities or elements constructed with RCO grants 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.

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

ELIGIBLE PROJECT SPONSORS

A project sponsor is the organization that receives a grant. Eligible sponsors for the Planning for Recreation Access grant include:

- Cities, counties, towns
- Federally recognized Native American tribes
- Nonprofit organizations that meet the following criteria:
 - Registered with Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)3 charitable organization
 - Registered as a nonprofit corporation at the state level
- Special purpose districts such as port, parks, conservation, or school districts

APPLICATION PROCESS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

RCO will accept PRA applications from October 14, 2022 through November 14, 2022. Proposals will be scored on the following elements:

- Project Location Map
- Letter of Interest (must use [provided template](#))
- Budget Worksheet (must use [provided template](#))

Scoring will take place between mid-November and mid-December. The PRA advisory committee will review and score projects individually and a final ranked list will be approved by the RCO director by December 31, 2022. Applicants will be notified of their ranking on the project list and successful applicants will be notified on next steps to receive their award.

Applicants may choose from the following methods to submit their application:

OPTION 1 Online Tool

Using this option, applicants will utilize an [online tool](#) to:

- Create a Project Location Map within the tool
- Attach Letter of Interest (using provided template)
- Attach Budget Worksheet (using provided template)

OPTION 2 Email

Using this option, applicants will send an email to PlanningForRecreationAccess@rco.wa.gov with three attachments:

- Project Location Map – an outline of the project location at a scale with obvious location boundaries. A simple format is acceptable.
- Letter of Interest (using provided template)
- Budget Worksheet (using provided template)

Project Location Map and Criteria

The map of the project location will be used to determine scoring of the below criteria. For projects that cross geographic boundaries or have multiple sites, census tract information within the project area will be averaged. Applicants **do not** need to provide the location specific information listed below.

Note: The location-based criteria have been developed to target the program’s priority communities (see pg. 2). As such, some criteria are geared toward urban communities and others are geared toward rural communities.

Map/Staff Scored Criteria

	<i>1 point awarded for each of the following</i>
Racial Diversity	Project is located in census tract(s) with 35% or higher people of color.
High Density	Project is located in census block(s) with a population density of 500 or more persons per square mile.
Low Density	Project is located in census block(s) with a population density of 25 or less persons per square mile.
Non-Taxable Land	Project is located in a county with 60% or greater non-taxable land base.

Low Income	Project is located in census tract(s) with a median household income lower than the county median.
Park Desert	Project location is outside of a 10-minute walk to a publicly accessible natural area or park.
Unaffordable Housing	Project is located in census tract(s) with a high amount of unaffordable housing, ranked 7 or higher by the Washington Tracking Network ⁴ .
Environmental Health Disparity	Project is located in census tract(s) with level of environmental health disparity, ranked 7 or higher by the Washington Tracking Network ² .
Community Capacity	The project location's Rural Capacity Index ⁵ is below the state mean. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lower score between County Subdivision and Community layers will be used. • For County Subdivision, point is awarded for RCI at or below 69. • For Community, point is awarded for RCI at or below 64.
	<i>2 points awarded for each of the following</i>
New Applicant A	Project location's city/town/census designated place has not received an RCO recreation grant in the past 10 years.
New Applicant B	Applicant has not received an RCO recreation grant in the past 10 years.

Letter of Interest/Budget Worksheet and Criteria

The Letter of Interest and Budget Worksheet will be used to determine project scoring of the below criteria. Applicants will be asked to address the following prompt in their letter:

On the following pages, provide a 2-page (or less) letter of interest describing your organization, the underlying outdoor recreation need in the community, and how you

⁴ Washington Tracking Network's Environmental Health Disparity Map <https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/wtn/WTNIBL/>

⁵ Rural Capacity Index developed by Headwaters Economics, <https://headwaterseconomics.org/equity/rural-capacity-map/>

will address that need through this planning effort. In addition to the underlined elements in this prompt, be sure to include:

- A brief history of your organization
- A description of the proposed project and any previous efforts toward this project
- Your overall budget request and what the award would fund
- How you have or how you will engage with the community to incorporate needs and desires of those who will use the site
- How you have or how you will engage with the landowner

Advisory Committee Scored Criteria

	<i>Up to 6 points awarded for each of the following</i>
Recreation Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what degree does the proposal demonstrate outdoor recreation needs within the community? • Does the project serve priority populations including racially diverse, dense, urban neighborhoods or small rural communities? • Does the proposal show a clear plan for eventually increasing or improving recreation access through the planning effort?
Engagement and Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the proposal describe a well-designed path for meaningfully engaging with the community? • Has the applicant worked with the landowner or demonstrated a plan to do so?
Opportunity for Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the proposal’s overall budget feasible and reasonable in for the scope of the project? • If funded, does the applicant have the ability complete the proposed project?

APPLICATION ASSISTANCE

Applicants may utilize the prepared tip sheet while preparing project applications.

RCO staff will be available to provide support and general guidance related to eligibility, application process, evaluation process, as well as to provide information related to other RCO grant programs. Staff may be reached at PlanningForRecreationAccess@rcو.wa.gov or during

virtual office hours held Wednesdays through the application period from 3PM – 6PM on Zoom at the following link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83157284707>.

RCO will provide successful applicants with a contractor roster of planning professionals that sponsors may choose to utilize during the course of the project.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Manual 2: Planning Guidelines](#)
- [Manual 4: Development Projects](#)
- [Manual 8: Reimbursements](#)