

# Community Outdoor Athletic Facilities Program

## Overview

The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) will distribute at least \$12 million, and potentially up to \$24 million, through competitive grants in its Community Outdoor Athletic Facilities (COAF) program. The program's goal is to improve meaningful access to athletic facilities for underserved communities and recreationists statewide.

This funding will be allocated across five regions of the state in proportion to their populations. The grants will be awarded to outdoor athletic facility projects involving acquisition, development, or renovation components.

## Two-Step Application Process

**RCO will accept COAF pre-applications in [PRISM](#), its online database, until 11:59 p.m. Pacific Standard Time on March 13, 2024.** The pre-applications will be scored and ranked within each region using the evaluation criteria provided below. Based on the demand and available funding, RCO will invite some or all applicants in each region to submit additional materials to form a complete application for the final regional competition. An advisory committee will score and rank the final applications based on additional evaluation criteria. The scores from both the pre-application and final application will be combined and used to create a ranked list of projects within each region for funding consideration by the RCO director.

## Two Funding Rounds

The RCO director will award an initial \$12 million in grants in October 2024, based on the ranked lists and the amount available in each region. These grants will be available immediately upon execution of grant agreements.

The state Legislature has projected an additional \$12 million for COAF in the 2025-2027 biennium. To the extent additional funding is allocated, the RCO director will award more grants to projects on the ranked lists in May 2025, with funding available July 1, 2025.

## Where to Get Information

This packet provides the key information necessary to help applicants understand the funding opportunity, scope eligible projects, and submit strong pre-applications. A general outline of the grant process schedule is in the [COAF Key Steps and Timeline](#). Precise dates are on the [COAF web page](#).

Questions about this funding opportunity may be directed to an outdoor grants manager. Visit the [contact a grants manager page](#) to identify the correct person based on location.

## Funding and Awards

### Regional Allocation

State law requires RCO to distribute COAF funding in proportion to population. To meet this requirement, funding will be allocated to five different regions of the state based on the most recently available population estimates. The following table shows the regional allocations at \$12 million and \$24 million.

| Region             | Counties   | \$12 Million | \$24 Million |
|--------------------|--|--------------|--------------|
| Western Region     | Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Skamania, and Wahkiakum Counties          | \$1,967,263  | \$3,934,525  |
| South Sound Region | King, Pierce, and Thurston Counties  | \$5,429,403  | \$10,858,807 |
| North Sound Region | Island, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom Counties  | \$2,013,445  | \$4,026,889  |
| Northeast Region   | Chelan, Douglas, Ferry, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, and Stevens Counties                                     | \$1,212,051  | \$2,424,102  |
| Southeast Region   | Adams, Asotin, Benton, Columbia, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Kittitas, Klickitat, Walla Walla, Whitman, and Yakima Counties | \$1,377,838  | \$2,755,677  |

### Matching Share

There is no match required for this grant program.

## Grant Minimum and Maximum

An applicant may request a grant of at least \$50,000 and not more than \$1.2 million.

## Number of Grant Proposals Allowed

An applicant may submit more than one proposal in this funding round; however, no applicant will receive funding for more than one proposal in a region. Each application must be for a single location or site and contain one or more eligible activities. Each development or renovation project also must stand alone as a viable recreation experience that is not dependent on other projects or future phases of work.

An applicant may submit the same scope of work to COAF and another RCO grant program such as the [Youth Athletic Facilities](#) or [Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program](#). In addition, COAF may be used as match with other RCO funding that is secured from the 2025-2027 state biennium. COAF may not be used to serve as a cost increase from a previously funded RCO project.

## Program Eligibility

### Eligible Applicants

- Cities, counties, towns
- Special purpose districts (parks and recreation, school, port, etc.)
- Other subdivisions of local government authorized to own outdoor athletic facilities
- Native American tribes<sup>1</sup>
- Qualified nonprofit organizations<sup>2</sup>

Entities who are not eligible for COAF funding can be involved in a project in many different ways, whether helping to complete the application, providing partnership support during implementation, or contracting for funded deliverables. However, only an eligible entity may submit a grant application and sign a grant agreement and ultimately is responsible for project management and long-term obligations associated with state funding.

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<sup>1</sup>Native American tribes as recognized by the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs.

<sup>2</sup>A "qualified nonprofit organization" is one that meets each of the following criteria: (1) Is registered with the Washington Secretary of State as a nonprofit corporation; (2) Has been active in youth or community athletic activities for at least three years; (3) Does not allow exclusive use of the facilities paid for through this program. The organization must allow public access to the facility funded; (4) Does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, creed, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or income. For example, "boys only" or "girls only" organizations would not be eligible for a grant. Nonprofits should be prepared to provide a copy of articles of incorporation and bylaws including any amendments as part of a final application.

## Planning Eligibility

An approved parks, recreation, or open space plan is not required to apply for COAF funding.

## Eligible Facilities

COAF funding is provided specifically for outdoor athletic facilities. An outdoor athletic facility is an open-air or covered, but not enclosed, facility dedicated in whole or in part to the purposes of sports and athletics. Facilities eligible for funding provide the opportunity for sports or athletic training or practice using a person's physical skills and ability. Examples of eligible outdoor athletic facilities include, but are not limited to, athletic fields, hard courts, track and courses, and swimming pools. For questions about whether a specific facility would be eligible, please contact an outdoor grants manager.

A facility funded with a COAF grant must be open to the public for youth and/or community athletic purposes and not be exclusively fee-based. "Open to the public" means that the facility is available for enjoyment by the general public for the facility's intended purpose when it is not otherwise closed during scheduled games or practices, during school hours, or during an organization's business hours.

## Eligible Project Types

The following types of projects are eligible for COAF funding:

- **Development:** construction or work resulting in new elements, including but not limited to, structures, facilities, and/or materials to enhance outdoor athletic resources. Guidelines for development projects are in [RCO Manual 4: Development Projects](#).
- **Renovation:** improving an existing site or structure to increase its useful service life beyond original expectations or functions. This may include changing use, extending use, expanding use, or expanding size. Guidelines for renovation projects are in [RCO Manual 4: Development Projects](#). An applicant submitting a project for renovation must select *Development* as the project type in PRISM Online.
- **Acquisition:** buying real property rights such as land, easements, and leases for the express purpose of developing or renovating an eligible athletic facility. The minimum interest length for fee acquisition is perpetuity, and at least twenty years for less-than-fee interest (easements, leases, etc.). Requirements and procedures for acquisition projects are outlined in [RCO Manual 3: Acquisition Projects](#).
- **Combination:** projects involving a combination of acquisition and development or renovation components.

## Eligible Elements

Each application must include items that are found within the field of play or on the court or track and that are essential for the competitive sport to occur. Such items are referred to as being “in bounds.” Items that are outside the field of play or off the court or track (i.e., “out of bounds”) are eligible for funding if there is one or more item in bounds in the grant application.

### In-Bounds Elements

- Purchase of fee or less-than-fee interest in real property.
- Single- and multi-use athletic fields (soccer, cricket, baseball, football, softball, lacrosse, rugby, etc.), single- and multi-use hard courts (basketball, tennis, pickleball, volleyball, etc.), tracks and courses used for athletics (golf, disc golf, skatepark, pump tracks, track and field, etc.), swimming pools or paddling facilities, rock climbing facilities, archery facilities, ice rinks, bike parks, horseback riding facilities, or outdoor fitness equipment.
- Supporting infrastructure (drainage, grading, irrigation, field lighting, fencing, coverings, accessibility elements, etc.) within the field of play.
- Amenities within the field of play (goals, nets, bases, fences, etc.). These amenities are not eligible as a sole project activity and must be part of a larger project proposal that includes eligible in-bounds elements. This does not include non-capital items (balls, cones, rackets, etc.), which are not eligible for funding.

### Out-of-Bounds Elements

- Small indoor facilities (restrooms, maintenance sheds, pump houses, locker rooms, storage areas, boathouses, etc.) that support the athletic facility.
- Amenities (roads, parking lots, paths, accessibility elements, playgrounds, scoreboards, bleachers, landscaping, signs, docks, etc.) that support the athletic facility.

## Eligible Costs

- Administrative costs up to 20 percent of the total construction amount (architectural and engineering, bidding, construction supervision, environmental site planning, surveys, project administration, project closeout, etc.).
- Development and/or renovation costs (cultural resources, permits, surveys, demolition and site prep, construction, fixed equipment, rental or purchase of maintenance or construction equipment, etc.).

- Acquisition costs (administration, real property costs, appraisal, appraisal review, boundary line adjustments, land survey, closing and recording fees, etc.), if the project has an acquisition component.

Costs related to administration, cultural resources, and permitting incurred before the start of an agreement are eligible for reimbursement upon execution of a grant agreement. A more complete description of eligible costs and pre-agreement costs is in [Manual 4: Development Projects](#). If there is an acquisition component, additional pre-agreement costs may be eligible if a Waiver of Retroactivity has been issued; for more information see [Manual 3: Acquisition Projects](#).

## Pre-Application

### Submission

Pre-applications will be collected in PRISM, which is RCO's grant management database. Step-by-step information on how to create a PRISM account, sign in for the first time, and begin an application are found in the [Account Setup and Applying](#) document.

The pre-application is relatively simple and involves providing:

- Contact information for the organization
- A map point for the project site
- A description of the proposed project
- Initial metrics about the proposed scope of work (e.g., number of fields to be built)
- Estimates of the total project cost and RCO funding request
- Narrative answers to two questions (see "Evaluation" section below)
- Two pages of optional visual attachments. See the [COAF Pre-Application Checklist](#) for additional details.

Upon submission of a pre-application, the applicant will not be able to change the location and major scope elements of the proposal for a final application.

### Evaluation

After a pre-application is submitted, RCO staff will review it to ensure the project is eligible for funding consideration. As part of this process, RCO staff may make minor changes to prepare the application for review by the advisory committee. Invitations to submit final applications will be made May 6, 2024, and invitees will be given until June 20, 2024 to submit final applications. The advisory committee will score final applications based on several written criteria, including but not limited to, the project's

ability to provide meaningful access through access to the facility and operations and management to the community, and the level of community engagement and input on the project.

## Pre-Application Questions

| Pre-Application Questions               |                              | Maximum Points          |
|---|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Scored by the Advisory Committee</b> |                              |                         |
| 1                                       | Project Need and Impact      | 18 points               |
| 2                                       | Community and Applicant Need | 14 points               |
| <b>Scored by RCO</b>                    |                              |                         |
| 3                                       | Poor Health Outcomes         | 1 point                 |
| 4                                       | Median Household Income      | 1 point                 |
| 5                                       | Small Community              | 1 point                 |
| 6                                       | Racially Diverse Community   | 1 point                 |
| 7                                       | High Population Density      | 1 point                 |
| 8                                       | Facility Access Ratio        | 1 point                 |
| 9                                       | Grantee History              | 2 points                |
|   |                              | <b>Total Points: 40</b> |

## Narrative Criteria

Eighty percent of the pre-application points available are from two narrative pre-applications questions and are scored by an advisory committee.

- 1. Project Need and Impact (three thousand characters).** Why would this project be a gamechanger in the community?

Some things to consider:

- How the project would redefine youth and community athletic opportunities and overall quality of life in the area
- How the project meets a known, unmet demand
- How the project specifically provides access to underserved populations

▲ Point Range: zero to ten points, which are multiplied later by 1.8

- 2. Community and Applicant Need (two thousand characters).** What resource barriers do you and your community experience that get in the way of making this project a reality?

Some things to consider:

- Lack of available financing for athletic facility renovation and development

- Staffing constraints that limit fundraising and project management capacity
- Lack of internal technical expertise for project design and construction

▲ Point Range: zero to ten points, which are multiplied later by 1.4

## Data-Based Criteria

Twenty percent of the pre-application points available are based on data relating to the project location and applicant and are scored by RCO. Use this [online mapping tool](#) to see the scores associated with the project location.

- 3. Poor Health Outcomes.** Is the project in a census tract with a poor health outcome rank of seven or higher by the Washington Tracking Network?

▲ Point Range: zero to one point

Zero points    No

One point    Yes

- 4. Median Household Income.** Is the project in a census tract where the median household income is below the state mean?

▲ Point Range: zero to one point

Zero points    No

One point    Yes

- 5. Small Community.** If the project is in a city or town, is the jurisdiction's population less than ten thousand residents? If the project is outside a city or town, is the project in a county with sixty thousand or fewer residents? Or, is the applicant a tribal government?

▲ Point Range: zero to one point

Zero points    No

One point    Yes

- 6. Racially Diverse Community.** Is the project in a census tract where 35 percent or more of residents are people of color?

▲ Point Range: zero to one point

Zero points    No

One point    Yes



**7. High Population Density.** Is the project in a census tract with a population density of 5,000 or more people per square mile?

▲ Point Range zero to one point

Zero points No

One point Yes

**8. Facility Access Ratio.** Facility Access Ratio is the number of residents (in thousands) per publicly accessible athletic site. Is the project in a county with a facility access ratio below the state mean?

▲ Point Range zero to one point

Zero points No

One point Yes

**9. Grantee History.** Has the applicant received a RCO recreation grant in the past?

▲ Point Range zero to two points

Zero points Applicant has received a RCO recreation grant within the past eight years.

One point Applicant has not received a RCO recreation grant within the past nine years.

Two points Applicant has never received a RCO recreation grant.

## Final Application Questions

For projects invited to submit a final application, four additional criteria will be combined with pre-application scores for each project's final score. **The final application criteria below will not be part of the pre-application evaluation.** They are being provided here as a decision support tool for eligible entities as they develop, scope, and refine pre-applications.

| Final Application Questions             |                    | Maximum Points          |
|---|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Scored by the Advisory Committee</b> |                    |                         |
| 1                                       | Facility Access    | 12.5 points             |
| 2                                       | Operations         | 7.5 points              |
| 3                                       | Project Engagement | 12.5 points             |
| 4                                       | Site Location      | 7.5 points              |
|   |                    | <b>Total Points: 40</b> |

## Narrative Criteria

- 1. Facility Access (two thousand characters).** How will the proposed project elements improve access to athletics for underserved populations and the local community beyond what is currently available?

Include details on the following:

- New or expanded athletic opportunities made available
- Increased usability for multiple ages and abilities
- Extended use across days or seasons
- Safety and accessibility improvements

▲ Point Range: zero to five points, which are multiplied later by two and a half.

- 2. Operations (two thousand characters).** How will the facilities or site be operated and managed to maximize access to athletics for underserved populations and the local community?

Include details on the following:

- Innovative programming, partnerships, and/or joint-use agreements
- Regular hours and availability for public drop-in use
- Scheduling, reservation fees, membership dues, and/or entry costs
- Current or planned efforts to create a welcoming facility

▲ Point Range: zero to five points, which are multiplied later by one and a half

- 3. Project Engagement (two thousand characters).** RCO encourages an applicant to use a variety of methods to gather input on the project. What engagement methods were used and what populations were engaged, including underserved populations and/or those with land-use interests, such as Native American tribes? How has local community input influenced the project design?

▲ Point Range: zero to five points, which are multiplied later by two and a half

- 4. Site Location (two thousand characters).** How will the project's location support access to athletics for underserved populations and the local community?

Include details on the following:

- Relative location of similar athletic opportunities

- Whether other locations were considered
- Proximity to priority user groups
- Accessibility by a variety of transportation methods

▲ Point Range: zero to five points, which are multiplied later by one and a half

## Additional Considerations

Applying for, managing, implementing, and stewarding an RCO-funded project involves understanding and complying with other policies and procedures. The following are key policy considerations that a prospective applicant should consider when deciding whether to submit a pre-application:

- **Control of land.** An applicant must have adequate control of the land where the project is located to assure that the work will be implemented as proposed and meet the long-term obligations for project compliance. This “control and tenure” may be through land ownership, lease, use agreement, easement, or other instrument that authorizes the applicant to build and maintain the proposed project. The minimum control and tenure length is twenty years. Details on how to meet this requirement as part of a final application are in RCO [Manual 4: Development Projects](#). An applicant who does not own the land and has not established control and tenure as part of a previously funded RCO project is encouraged to reach out to a grants manager to ensure this requirement is met.
- **Other RCO Manuals.** Except as otherwise described herein, the COAF program is subject to the policies and procedures as described in the following grant manuals, as applicable: [Manual 3: Acquisitions Projects](#), [Manual 4: Development Projects](#), [Manual 7: Long-Term Obligations](#), [Manual 8: Reimbursements](#), [Manual 17: Youth Athletic Facilities](#).
- **Authorization.** The applicant is responsible for identifying an authorized representative and ensuring that representative has the authority to legally bind the organization with respect to the application and [grant agreement](#), if awarded.
- **Cultural Resources.** Pursuant to Governor’s [Executive Order 21-02, Archaeological and Cultural Resources](#), RCO reviews projects for potential impacts to cultural resources. An applicant should budget for cultural resources work for most projects, and any required cultural resources investigations or documentation must be complete before any ground-disturbing activities.
- **Project Implementation.** Upon execution of a grant agreement, a project should be completed in 1 to 1½ years for acquisition projects, 2 to 3 years for renovation or development projects, and up to 3½ years for combination or exceptionally complex projects. RCO may terminate a project that does not meet critical milestones included in the grant agreement.

- **Accessibility.** Facilities or elements constructed with RCO grants are required to meet or exceed the 2010 Americans with Disabilities Act Standards for Accessible Designs or other accessibility standard minimums as applicable to the project.
- **Accounting.** RCO pays grants through reimbursement. A project sponsor must keep detailed records of all funded projects costs and is subject to audit by the State and inspection by RCO. Refer to *Manual 8: Reimbursements* for details and instructions about audits, record retention, and documents required for reimbursement.
- **Long-Term Compliance.** An RCO grant comes with long-term obligations to maintain and protect the project area after the project is complete. For more information, see *Manual 7: Long-Term Obligations*.