



Grant Evaluation Criteria

Aligning statewide priorities and equity goals for 2024 and beyond.

Policy Brief
January 2024

Background

During the past year, Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) staff worked with the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board to revise grant evaluation criteria in six recreation and conservation focused grant programs. With these revisions, RCO and the board intend to improve opportunities for outdoor recreation and physical activity in communities that have less access to parks and open space. RCO also aims to distribute grants more equitably by providing greater opportunities for communities with less capacity and fewer financial resources.

Programs Affected

Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA)
Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
Youth Athletic Facilities (YAF)
Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP)

- Local Parks
- Trails
- Water Access

What Changed?

Four criteria commonly used in all six programs were revised: Project Need, Project Scope, Project Design, and Project Engagement.

A new unscored “Project Introduction” was added, while the “Expansion or Renovation” criterion was eliminated from WWRP Local Parks and Water Access.

Applicants no longer need to copy socioeconomic and health data from the application data tool to paste into their project presentations.

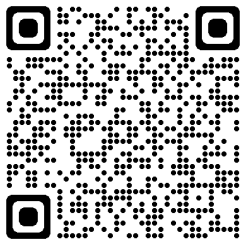


Project Need: Statewide Priorities

A data-driven needs assessment.

Project Need consists of two parts: one scored by RCO, and another scored by the advisory committees. The advisory committees will score answers to narrative questions.

The RCO scores are data-driven and reflect statewide priorities in the 2023 Recreation and Conservation Plan and recommendations in RCO’s grant program equity review. Points are awarded based on the project location and rankings for **social vulnerability**, **poor health outcomes** from the Department of Health’s Washington Tracking Network. Points also are awarded for **green space availability**, based on a spatial analysis from RCO’s equity review.



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Questions? Contact an Outdoor Grants Manager.

[rco.wa.gov/recreation-and-conservation-office-grants/
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Updated Criteria

Project Introduction

Introduce the project's location and goals to set the stage for the project.

- Locate the project on statewide, regional, and site maps to help orient the evaluators to the project area and its context in the service area.
- Summarize the site's condition; the project's acquisition, development, or renovation goals; and the recreation opportunities the project will provide.

NOTE: The service area is the geographic area where most of the anticipated users live, as defined by the applicant.

Project Need: Local Priorities

Describe the need for new or improved recreation facilities, how the need is known, and why existing amenities in the service area do not satisfy the need. A complete response should include the following:

- A simple inventory and condition of relevant outdoor recreation opportunities in the service area.
- Description of gaps in access, opportunity, or service delivery.
- Description of the current and/or anticipated use of the project site and any factors that contribute to fluctuations in use or demand for service.
- Description of how the need for this project has been identified and prioritized, including whether it is linked to local recreation or open space plans.

Project Scope

Describe the site's existing natural and built features. Describe what is being proposed in the project, including land acquisition and/or elements to be built or renovated, and for what purpose.

What recreation opportunities will this project provide?

Project Design

Describe how the design aligns with the need, location, and project scope. Describe how the design addresses any constraints and whether the design provides access for users of all abilities. Applicants may choose to describe design elements such as parking and site access, accessibility features, environmental considerations, green infrastructure, cultural or historic interpretation, mitigation of public use impacts, etc. If available, include design visuals.

Provide an overview of the project budget and how the cost estimate was determined. If the proposal includes additional site design and permitting, what is the process and anticipated schedule to be construction-ready?

Project Engagement

RCO encourages applicants to use a variety of methods to gather input on the project. How were the people who will be most impacted by the project engaged?

- Describe what methods were used and the populations engaged, including underserved populations and/or Native American tribes. Describe the relevance of that participation for the population size, demographic, or socioeconomic conditions of the community or service area.
- How has community input influenced the project design?
- Describe any community partnerships that are providing support for the project whether through financial, in-kind, project delivery, or other means. Partnerships may be formal or informal. Describe the significance of the partnerships within the community or service area.

