



Grant Evaluation Criteria

Policy Brief
January 2024

Project Need: A Brief Discussion on Statewide Priorities

For 2024, the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) worked with the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board to adopt new grant evaluation criteria in the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA), Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), and Youth Athletic Facilities (YAF) programs, and the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program's (WWRP) Local Parks, Trails, and Water Access Categories. The adopted changes advance Washington State's priority of creating meaningful access to outdoor recreation for all by improving opportunities for outdoor recreation and physical activity in communities that have less access to parks and open space.

According to the *2023 Washington State Recreation and Conservation Plan*, having access to nature and opportunities for physical activity are critical to a happy and healthy lifestyle. Developing parks and trails where they don't already exist can lead to communities that are healthier, less stressed, have cleaner air and water, and suffer less from the extremes of a warming climate.

As a result of the adopted changes, the **Project Need** criterion now consists of two parts: one scored by RCO and another scored by an advisory committee. The RCO score is based on the project location, while the advisory committee score is based on information provided by the applicant during a presentation or in writing.

The factors scored by RCO are data-driven and reflect statewide priorities in the 2023 recreation and conservation plan and recommendations in a 2022 equity review of RCO's grant programs. Points are awarded based on the project's location and how that location ranks on three indicators of statewide need: **green space availability**, **social vulnerability**, and **poor health outcomes**. Together, these three RCO scored criteria are worth 9% of a project's overall score. An applicant will be able to see their preliminary scores when they place their worksite point in PRISM.

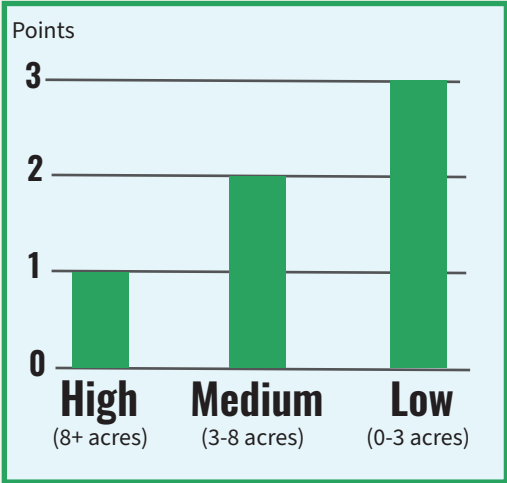


Project Need: Statewide Priorities

Scores will be awarded based on the following point scales:

Green Space Availability

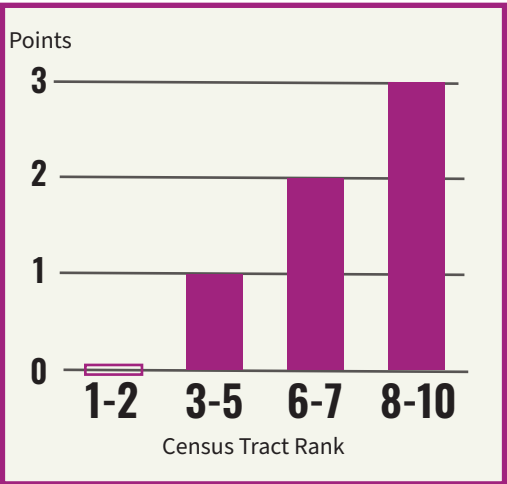
In the equity review of RCO grant programs, the Prevention Institute calculated the number of publicly accessible acres of green space in every Washington State census tract. The calculations used the United States Geological Survey’s Protected Areas Database of the U.S. as the data source for green space. According to the U.S. Geological Survey the database is, “America’s official national inventory of U.S. terrestrial and marine protected areas that are dedicated to the preservation of biological diversity and to other natural, recreation and cultural uses...” Using these calculations, the Prevention Institute categorized each census tract into one of three groups based on the ratio of available acres of green space per 1,000 residents: High (greater than 8 acres), Medium (between 3 and 8 acres), and Low (less than 3 acres).



Social Vulnerability Index

The index is comprised of sixteen data sets compiled by the **Washington State Department of Health** from the US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey and the Washington State Office of Financial Management. These indicators of social and economic condition are grouped into four categories: 1) Household Composition and Disability; 2) Housing Type and Transportation; 3) Race, Ethnicity, and Language; and 4) Socioeconomic Determinants.

Social vulnerability is determined by a weighted average of these sixteen factors. The census tracts are ranked as a comparison between all tracts in Washington State with 10 being the most vulnerable and 1 being the least. Each ranking is roughly 10% of census tracts.



Poor Health Outcomes Index

The index is comprised of five data sets which are compiled by the **Washington State Department of Health** Center for Health Statistics. According to the department, these rankings help to compare health and social factors that contribute to differences in health outcomes across population groups. These differences are sustained over time and generations, are beyond the control of individuals, and follow the larger patterns of inequality that exist in society.

These health outcomes are an indicator of where investments in improving access to outdoor recreation can lead to better opportunities for physical activity and an overall improvement in community health.

