

Section 4: Project Evaluation

This section covers the following:

- ✓ How project evaluation works
- ✓ Evaluation criteria

How Project Evaluation Works

The evaluation process begins when the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board adopts the evaluation process³⁸ and evaluation criteria³⁹ during public meetings. Also, it is the process the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service uses to make its funding decisions.

The RCO director appoints people to serve on an advisory committee to evaluate each grant proposal. In recruiting members for the committee, RCO seeks to appoint people who possess a statewide perspective and are recognized for their experiences and knowledge of boating in Washington. The director may appoint *ex officio* members to the advisory committee to provide additional representation and expertise. Visit RCO's website for [membership and other details](#).

As an attachment to the PRISM application, an applicant must provide written responses to the evaluation criteria outlined below. Advisory committee members individually review the written responses and application materials, and score the project. Scoring is confidential.

RCO staff score the objective sections of the application, such as the amount of matching share an applicant is providing and conformance to growth management planning. Staff scores are based on information submitted by applicant and obtained from the state Office of Financial Management and the state Department of Commerce.

³⁸Washington Administrative Code 286-13-020

³⁹The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board approves the criteria for Tier 1 and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approves the criteria for Tier 2.

Tier One Projects

The advisory committee and staff scores are combined for an application's total evaluation score. The resulting ranked lists are the basis for funding recommendations to the RCO director, who makes the final decision.⁴⁰ The public is given an opportunity to comment on the grant proposals at a meeting of the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board.

Tier Two Projects

For projects to be evaluated, scored, and ranked for funding consideration, applicants must follow the requirements in the latest federal "Notice of Funding Opportunity." The notice outlines the required documents and specifies the format and page limits for each. These documents generally include a project summary, project statement, responses to evaluation criteria, maps, site plans, drawings, photographs, letters of commitment, and other supporting documents.

NOTE: The "Notice of Funding Opportunity" often is not available until after RCO begins accepting grant applications, and each year the page limits, questions, and other requirements may change. RCO will provide an Applicant's Next Steps document outlining these additional requirements. Applicants must work with their RCO grants managers and check the RCO website to make sure they have the latest requirements.

The advisory committee reviews Tier Two proposals and makes a recommendation to RCO's director as to whether the projects should be submitted for the national competition.

The public is given an opportunity to comment on the grant proposals at a meeting of the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board. After board review, the projects are submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which assembles a panel of professional staff to review and evaluate projects. This national review panel uses evaluation criteria published with the annual "Notice of Funding Opportunity" to score and rank projects. This committee then makes a recommendation to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service director, who makes the final funding decision.

Do Not Fund Recommendation⁴¹

Occasionally during evaluations of Tier One projects or following review of Tier Two projects, the advisory committee may express significant concerns about a project, such that it would like to discuss a "Do Not Fund" recommendation. If this occurs, the advisory committee may discuss its concerns at the post-evaluation meeting, which takes place

⁴⁰Washington Administrative Code 286-13-050

⁴¹Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2014-06

after application scores are tabulated. For Tier Two projects, RCO staff will notify applicants of the proposed “Do Not Fund” recommendation before projects are sent to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the national competition.

If a “Do Not Fund” recommendation is scheduled to be considered, RCO will notify the applicant in writing, identify the significant concerns expressed by the advisory committee, and invite the applicant to attend the post-evaluation meeting to respond to questions. The applicant also may submit a written response to the advisory committee’s concerns. To ensure all projects are treated equally, no additional testimony from applicants or visitors is taken at the post-evaluation meeting. The advisory committee determines a “Do Not Fund” recommendation by a simple majority vote of the committee members that participated in application evaluations.

RCO staff will forward to the director a summary of the “Do Not Fund” recommendation, any committee member comments, and the applicant’s response. The director will consider the advisory committee’s recommendation before the ranked list is approved. The director retains discretion in awarding all grants.

Evaluation Criteria

Tier One Projects⁴²

The questions listed below will be used to evaluate and rank all Tier One projects. An applicant must address in writing each criterion for each project application. An applicant may provide a maximum of four, single-sided pages using 8.5” x 11” paper with one-inch margins and a twelve-point font for evaluation criteria responses. In the criteria below, eligible vessels and users means vessels twenty-six feet and longer.

⁴²Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2016-11 adopted February 2016

Evaluation Criteria Summary

Criteria	Evaluation Element	Possible Points
Scored by the Advisory Committee		
1	Meet a Documented Need	10 points
2	Demonstrate Cost Efficiency	7 points
3	Improve Boater Access	3 points
4	Project Design	3 points
5	Demonstrate Partnerships	3 points
6	Advance Technology	3 points
7	Demonstrate Innovation	2 points
8	Environmental Stewardship	1 point
Scored by RCO		
9	Match	7 points
Total Possible Points:		39 points

Detailed Evaluation Questions

- 1. Meet a Documented Need.** Will the proposed boating infrastructure meet a need for more or improved facilities?

Evaluators will consider if the project will do any of the following:

- Construct new boating infrastructure in an area that lacks it, but where eligible vessels now travel or would travel if the project were completed
- Renovate a facility to improve its physical condition, follow local building codes, improve safety, or adapt it to a new purpose
- Create accessibility for eligible vessels by reducing wave action, increasing depth, or making other improvements
- Expand an existing facility that is unable to accommodate current or projected demand by eligible vessels
- Make other improvements to accommodate an established need

▲ Point Range: zero to ten points

- 2. Demonstrate Cost Efficiency.** Will eligible users receive benefits from the proposed boating infrastructure that justify the cost of the project?

Evaluators will consider the total cost of the project, the benefits made available to eligible users, and the objectivity or reliability of the data and information used to demonstrate benefits relative to costs. Evaluators may consider the availability

of preexisting structures and amenities, but only in the context of the identified need. Because costs vary depending on local factors, evaluators do not use a cost per slip to compare projects.

Applicants should relate costs and benefits to the need for the project (See §86.43(a)).

Applicants should describe any factors that would influence costs such as the following:

- The need for specialized materials to meet local codes, address weather, future sea level rise, terrain, or extend useful life.
- Increased transportation costs due to facility location.
- Other factors that may increase costs but support needed benefits.

Applicants should describe any costs associated with providing a harbor of safe refuge, if applicable.

▲ Point Range: zero to seven points

3. Improve Boater Access. Will the proposed boating infrastructure accommodate boater access to significant destinations and services that support transient boater travel?

Evaluators will consider the following:

- The degree of access that the BIG-funded facility will provide to activities, events, or landmarks near the facility, how well known they are, how long they are available, and how likely they are to attract boaters to the facility.
- The availability of services and the degree of safety at and around the facility, the ease of access to these services, and how well they meet the needs of eligible boaters.

▲ Point Range: zero to three points

4. Project Design. Is the proposal appropriately designed for the intended use?

Evaluators should consider design and construction elements such as the following:

- Accurate cost estimates
- Aesthetics

- Environmental impacts
- Future maintenance needs
- Materials and specifications
- Risk management
- Space relationships
- User friendly elements
- Universal accessibility

▲ Point Range: zero to three points

5. Demonstrate Partnerships. Will the proposed project include contributions by private or public partners that contribute to the project objectives?

Partners may include non-federal entities such as sub-grantees, private businesses, state agencies other than the primary recipient of BIG funds, nonprofit organizations, or federal agencies other than the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. To be considered a partner, the entity must commit a financial or in-kind contribution or take a voluntary action that is necessary for, and directly and substantively contributes to, completion of the project. See §86.55 and §86.57 for additional guidance.

Evaluators will consider the following:

- The significance of the contribution to the success of the project
- How the contribution supports the actions proposed in the project statement
- How the partner demonstrates its commitment to the contribution
- The demonstrated ability of the partner to fulfill its commitment

▲ Point Range: zero to three points

6. Advanced Technology. Will the proposed project include physical components, technology, or techniques that improve eligible user access?

Evaluators will consider whether the project will increase the availability of the BIG-funded facility for eligible users or improve eligible boater access to the facility.

Applicants should describe if the project will be doing either of the following:

- Using a new technology or technique
- Applying a new use of an existing technology or technique

Evaluators will consider if the project will use an optional or advanced technology or technique. If going beyond the minimum technical requirements for a project component, applicants must describe the current standards and how they will exceed the standards. Points will not be awarded for followings standards set by law.

▲ Point Range: zero to three points

7. Demonstrate Innovation. Will the proposed project include innovative physical components, technology, or techniques that improve the BIG-funded project?

Evaluators will consider if the project will include physical components, technology, or techniques that are newly available or repurposed in a unique way. Examples include components, technology, or techniques that do the following:

- Extend the useful life of the project
- Are designed to help save costs, decrease maintenance, or improve operation
- Are designed to improve services or amenities for BIG-eligible users
- Reduce the carbon footprint of the facility
- Reduce negative environmental impacts (beyond compliance requirements)
- Improve facility resilience

▲ Point Range: zero to three points

8. Environmental Stewardship. Has the facility where the project is located demonstrated a commitment to environmental compliance, sustainability, and stewardship and has an organization officially recognized the facility for its commitment?

Evaluators will consider if the application documents that the facility has received official recognition for its voluntary commitment to environmental compliance, sustainability, and stewardship by exceeding regulatory requirements. The official

recognition must be part of a voluntary, established program administered by a federal, state, or local agency, Sea Grant or equivalent entity, or a state or regional marina organization. The program must require the facility to use management and operational techniques and practices that will ensure it continues to meet the high standards of the program and must contain a component that requires periodic review. The facility must have met the criteria required by the program and received official recognition by the due date of the application.

▲ Point Range: zero to one point

9. **Match** (applicants do not answer). Will the proposed project include matching funds from private, local, or state sources (including grants) totaling 26 percent or more?

▲ Point Range: zero to seven points

Please note that, while in-kind services and materials may be included in the minimum 25 percent match requirement, the application will be scored only on this criterion for additional cash match. As given in §86.56, points will be awarded as follows.

One point	26-30.99 percent cash match
Two points	31-35.99 percent cash match
Three points	36-40.99 percent cash match
Four points	41-45.99 percent cash match
Five points	46-50.99 percent cash match
Six points	51-80.99 percent cash match
Seven points	81 or higher percent cash match

Tier Two Projects

The evaluation criteria⁴³ listed below will be used to review all Tier Two projects. An applicant must fully address in writing a response to each evaluation criterion. Refer to the latest Notice of Funding Opportunity for criteria updates and other specific requirements, such as page limits.

Evaluation Criteria Summary

Question	Subject	Maximum Points
A	Meet a Documented Need, Improve Eligible Boater Access, and Demonstrate Cost Efficiency	20 points
B	Meet Match Requirements and Demonstrate Partnerships	10 points
C	Demonstrate Innovation and Environmental Stewardship	6 points
Total Possible Points		36

Detailed Evaluation Questions

A. Meet a Documented Need, Improve Eligible Boater Access, and Demonstrate Cost Efficiency

- (1) Will the proposed boating infrastructure meet a need for more or improved facilities?

Evaluators will consider if the project will do any of the following:

- a. Construct new boating infrastructure in an area that lacks it, but where eligible vessels now travel or would travel if the project were completed
- b. Renovate a facility to improve its physical condition, follow local building codes, improve safety, or adapt it to a new purpose
- c. Create accessibility for eligible vessels by reducing wave action, increasing depth, or making other improvements
- d. Expand an existing facility that is unable to accommodate current or projected demand by eligible vessels
- e. Make other improvements to accommodate an established need

⁴³Criteria found in the Final Rule for BIG (50 CFR 86.51) published May 6, 2015 in the [Federal Register](#).

▲ Point Range: zero to ten points

- (2) Will eligible users receive benefits from the proposed boating infrastructure that justify the cost of the project?

Evaluators will consider the total cost of the project, the benefits made available to eligible users, and the objectivity or reliability of the data and information used to demonstrate benefits relative to costs. Evaluators may consider the availability of preexisting structures and amenities, but only in the context of the identified need. Because costs vary depending on local factors, evaluators do not use a cost per slip to compare projects.

Applicants should relate costs and benefits to the need for the project (See §86.43(a)).

Applicants should describe any factors that would influence costs such as the following:

- a. The need for specialized materials to meet local codes, address weather, future sea level rise, terrain, or extend useful life
- b. Increased transportation costs due to facility location
- c. Other factors that may increase costs but support needed benefits

Applicants should describe any costs associated with providing a harbor of safe refuge, if applicable.

▲ Point Range: zero to seven points

- (3) Will the proposed boating infrastructure accommodate boater access to significant destinations and services that support transient boater travel?

Evaluators will consider the following:

- a. The degree of access that the BIG-funded facility will provide
- b. Activities, events, or landmarks near the facility, how well known they are, how long they are available, and how likely they are to attract boaters to the facility
- c. The availability of services and the degree of safety at and around the facility, the ease of access to these services, and how well they meet the needs of eligible boaters

▲ Point Range: zero to three points

- ▲ Total Point Range for Question A: zero to twenty points

B. Meet Match Requirements and Demonstrate Partnerships

- (1) Will the proposed project include private, local, or state funds greater than the required minimum match?)

Please note that, while in-kind services and materials may be included in the minimum 25 percent match requirement, the application will be scored only on this criterion for additional cash match. As given in §86.56, points will be awarded as follows:

One point	26-30.99 percent cash match
Two points	31-35.99 percent cash match
Three points	36-40.99 percent cash match
Four points	41-45.99 percent cash match
Five points	46-50.99 percent cash match
Six points	51-80.99 percent cash match
Seven points	81 or higher percent cash match

- ▲ Point Range: zero to seven points

- (2) Will the proposed project include contributions by private or public partners that contribute to the project objectives?

Partners may include non-federal entities such as sub-grantees, private businesses, state agencies other than the primary recipient of BIG funds, nonprofit organizations, or federal agencies other than the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. To be considered a partner, the entity must commit a financial or in-kind contribution or take a voluntary action that is necessary for, and directly and substantively contributes to, completion of the project. See §86.55 and §86.57 for additional guidance.

Evaluators will consider the following:

- a. The significance of the contribution to the success of the project
- b. How the contribution supports the actions proposed in the project statement
- c. How the partner demonstrates its commitment to the contribution

d. The demonstrated ability of the partner to fulfill its commitment

▲ Point Range: zero to three points

▲ Total Point Range for Question B: zero to ten points

C. Demonstrate Innovation and Environmental Stewardship

(1) Will the proposed project include physical components, technology, or techniques that improve eligible user access?

Evaluator will consider whether the project will increase the availability of the BIG-funded facility for eligible users or improve eligible boater access to the facility.

Applicants should describe whether the project will be doing either of the following:

- a. Use a new technology or technique
- b. Apply a new use of an existing technology or technique

Evaluators will consider if the project will use an optional or advanced technology or technique. If going beyond the minimum technical requirements for a project component, applicants must describe the current standards and how they will exceed the standards. Points will not be awarded for following standards set by law.

▲ Point Range: zero to three points

(2) Will the proposed project include innovative physical (components, technology, or techniques) that improve the BIG-funded project?

Evaluators will consider if the project will include physical components, technology, or techniques that are newly available or repurposed in a unique way. Examples include components, technology, or techniques that do the following:

- a. Extend the useful life of the project
- b. Are designed to help save costs, decrease maintenance, or improve operation
- c. Are designed to improve services or amenities for BIG-eligible users

- d. Reduce the carbon footprint of the facility
- e. Reduce negative environmental impacts (beyond compliance requirements)
- f. Improve facility resilience

▲ Point Range: zero to two points

- (3) Has the facility where the project is located demonstrated a commitment to environmental compliance, sustainability, and stewardship and has an organization officially recognized the facility for its commitment?

Evaluators will consider if the application documents that the facility has received official recognition for its voluntary commitment to environmental compliance, sustainability, and stewardship by exceeding regulatory requirements. The official recognition must be part of a voluntary, established program administered by a federal, state, or local agency, Sea Grant or equivalent entity, or a state or regional marina organization. The program must require the facility to use management and operational techniques and practices that will ensure it continues to meet the high standards of the program and must contain a component that requires periodic review. The facility must have met the criteria required by the program and received official recognition by the due date of the application.

▲ Point Range: zero to one point

▲ Total Point Range for Question C: zero to six points