Section 4: Project Evaluation

This section covers the following:

✓ The evaluation process
✓ The evaluation criteria

The Evaluation Process

The evaluation process begins when RCO adopts the evaluation process and evaluation criteria.[18]

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 forestland 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](#).

An applicant prepares written responses to address the evaluation criteria. Advisory committee members individually review the written responses, graphics included in the applications, and summary application materials, and score the projects. Scoring is confidential.

The resulting ranked list is the basis for funding recommendations to the RCO director. Before making a decision, the director will consider written public comments and any comments shared with the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board at its review meeting.

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[18]Washington Administrative Code 286-13-020

Evaluation Criteria

All of the project criteria are scored by the advisory committee.

Criteria Summary

Criteria		Evaluation Elements	Points
	Project Introduction	Elements: map, project goals and objectives	Not scored
1	Forestland Benefits	Elements: forest resources, property features, landscape context	All projects 15 points
2	Public Benefits	Elements: economic benefit, recreational and cultural benefits, environmental benefits, income use	All projects 15 points
3	Stewardship and Management	Elements: finances, operation and management, future development and restoration, organizational experience	Acquisition projects 15 points / Combination projects 12 points
4	Development and Restoration	Elements: development and restoration goals, budget and timeline, risks	Combination projects 3 points
5	Community Engagement	Elements: community engagement process, governance structure, organizational capacity	All projects 15 points
		Total Points	**60**

Detailed Evaluation Questions

Project Introduction (Not scored)

This is an opportunity to set the stage for the project. The following detailed criteria will provide an opportunity to describe the project in more depth; however, the intent here primarily is to help orient the evaluators to the project.

- Locate the project on statewide, regional, and site maps to help orient the evaluators to the project area and its context within the landscape.

- Briefly provide a broad overview of the project goals and objectives, surrounding ownership, and land-use patterns.

1. **Forestland Benefits**

What are the specific forestland values this project will protect? Please describe in detail the characteristics of the property to be acquired, current land uses, zoning and land-use restrictions, how much of the property is forested, and whether any property rights were previously severed or will be severed before acquisition. Include all the following in the description:

- A summary of the timber and non-timber forest resources on the property, their condition, and the potential of the property to support future forests.

- A summary of other features of the property such as wetlands, streams, buildings, roads, and other notable natural or manufactured elements and their condition.

- A summary of the landscape surrounding the project area including non-forest land uses and connectivity to other working forestlands, protected habitat lands, or public recreation opportunities.

- A summary of additional benefits that will be achieved and why this project should be prioritized at this time. Additional benefits are beyond those which exist under current ownership and could be public access, avoided threat of conversion to land uses other than forestland, avoided impacts from changing ecological conditions, climate resiliency, or other factors.

▲ Point Range: zero to fifteen points

2. **Public Benefits**

    How will the community forest be developed or maintained to provide public recreational, educational, cultural, environmental, and economic opportunities? Please provide a socioeconomic description of the community that will primarily benefit from the community forest and describe:

    - How the project area will provide economic benefits including anticipated financial returns (and timing), job creation, and how the project area will support infrastructure critical to the forest products industry, tourism, and other public services.

    - How the public will experience the project area including opportunities for recreation, hunting and gathering, environmental education, and cultural enrichment.

    - The project's anticipated environmental benefits including how the project area will benefit ecosystem services, water quality, and other sensitive natural resources, or how it supports the goals of a state or local plan (climate action plan, wildlife habitat plan, forest action plan, salmon recovery plan, comprehensive plan, etc.).

    - How any income that exceeds the costs of ongoing operation and management of the community forest will be redistributed to benefit the public.

    ▲ Point Range: zero to fifteen points

3. **Stewardship and Management**

    What are the primary anticipated management objectives for the community forest and how will they likely be funded and achieved? Please include an assessment of the following:

    - A summary of the forest's financial plan, including costs and anticipated funding sources to support the goals of the community forest.

    - The ongoing stewardship, operation, and maintenance needs on the property.

    - Future anticipated restoration or development needs including forest health treatments, upgrades to fish passage and other infrastructure, forest road improvements, and any other development to facilitate public access, and how these activities will be funded.

    - The expertise and capacity of the applicant's organization and partners for long-term management of the site including staff, volunteers, partners and contractors, financial resources, and any other relevant factors.

▲ Point Range: zero to fifteen points for acquisition projects; zero to twelve points for combination projects

4. **Development and Restoration**

What are the plans for development and/or restoration activities on the property acquired? In the description, include details about the following:

- The development and/or restoration project goals

- A budget narrative and timeline

- Anticipated risks to achieving the project goals

- How the development and/or restoration activities will support the forest's economic and community benefits

▲ Point Range: zero to three points for combination projects only.

5. **Community Engagement and Support**

What is the community engagement process used for developing or implementing this project? How will the community participate in future decisions on the management and use of forest resources? In the response please describe the following:

- How residents, elected officials, tribal governments, and community organizations are or will be engaged, and how their input is or will be incorporated into the project.

- Strategies used or planned to seek input from segments of the population that have been historically marginalized or underrepresented in land-use management decision making.

- The anticipated governance structure of the community forest and who will have final decision-making authority over the community forest management.

- The capacity and experience within the applicant's organization and partners that will be dedicated to facilitating continued, long-term governance and community engagement.

- Community support or partnership commitments secured for this project.

▲ Point Range: zero to fifteen points