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 process[65] and evaluation criteria during public meetings.

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 outdoor recreation in Washington. The director may appoint *ex officio* members to the advisory committees 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 application, and summary application materials, and score the projects.

At the same time, 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 the applicant and obtained from the state Departments of Commerce and Health and the state Office of Financial Management.

The advisory committee and RCO scores are combined for an application's total evaluation score. The resulting ranked lists are the basis for funding recommendations that the RCO director submits to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board, which

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[65]Washington Administrative Code 286-13-020

makes the final decision about funding in public meetings.[66] The public is given an opportunity to comment on the grant proposals before the board makes its decision.

Do Not Fund Recommendation[67]

Occasionally during evaluations, 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 after application scores are tabulated.

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 evaluators, and invite the applicant to attend the post-evaluation meeting to respond to questions. The applicant also may submit a written response to the evaluators' 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 board a summary of the "Do Not Fund" recommendation and any committee member comments. The board will consider the advisory committee's recommendation at a regularly scheduled public meeting, before the ranked list is adopted (consideration may take place at the same meeting, but the "Do Not Fund" recommendation will be discussed before the ranked list is adopted). The board retains discretion in awarding all grant funds.

Evaluation Criteria

All grant requests must be completed and submitted in the format prescribed by the director.[68] Responses should be tailored to the facility proposed in the application and should not include other unrelated facilities (fields, courts, etc.) that might be at the same park or complex. Applicants must address Evaluation Criteria 1-8 in PRISM Online.

These responses along with an application fact sheet, maps, site plan, visuals, and letters of support comprise the materials that are viewed electronically by the advisory committee.

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[66]Washington Administrative Code 286-13-050
[67]Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2014-06
[68]Washington Administrative Code 286-13-020

Evaluation Question Summary

Question		Maximum Points
Unscored		
	Project Introduction	0 points
Scored by the Advisory Committee		
1	Need–Local Priorities	20 points
2	Project Scope	15 points
3	Project Design-Fit	10 points
4	Project Design-Budget	5 points
5	Project Engagement-Methods	7.5 points
6	Project Engagement-Community	7.5 points
7	Project Engagement-Partnerships	5 points
8	Sustainability	5 points
9	Facility Management	5 points
10	Availability	5 points
11	Readiness to Proceed	5 points
Scored by RCO		
12	Green Space Availability	3 points
13	Social Vulnerability	3 points
14	Health Outcomes	3 points
15	Matching Shares	0.5 point
16	Proximity to People	0.5 point
17	Growth Management Act Preference	0 points
	Total Points:	**100**

Detailed Evaluation Questions[69]

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

- Describe the project location within the state, region, and site to help orient the evaluators to the project area and its context in the service area.[70]

- Summarize the site's condition, the project's acquisition, development, or renovation goals, and the recreation opportunities the project will provide.

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[69]Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2015-02
[70]The service area is the geographic area where most of the anticipated users live, as defined by the applicant.

Adopted December 2023 by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2023-27

1. **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.

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

    Adopted December 2023 by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2023-27

2. **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?

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

    Adopted December 2023 by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2023-27

3. **Project Design-Fit.**[71] 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.

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

    Adopted December 2023 by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2023-27

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[71]For acquisition projects, RCO suggests focusing on proposed uses shown on the conceptual plan.

4. **Project Design-Budget.** 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?

   ▲ Point Range: zero to five points

   Adopted December 2023 by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2023-27

5. **Project Engagement-Methods.** 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.

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

   Adopted December 2023 by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2023-27

6. **Project Engagement-Community.** How has community input influenced the project design?[72]

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

   Adopted December 2023 by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2023-27

7. **Project Engagement-Partnerships.** 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.

   ▲ Point Range: zero to five points

   Adopted December 2023 by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2023-27

8. **Sustainability.** Please discuss how the project's location or design supports the applicant's sustainability plan or how the ecological, economic, and social benefits and impacts were considered in the project plan.

   Sustainability reflects choices made to balance the desired benefits and potential impacts of a project on the surrounding landscape and community. Examples of sustainability factors that could be part of a project or maintenance plan are

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[72]For acquisition projects, RCO staff suggests focusing on how community input influenced site selection.

provided below for consideration but are not all-inclusive. Applicants and evaluators should treat this list as a guide, not a checklist. Applicants are encouraged to be creative in expressing the sustainability factors of their projects, and evaluators should score projects based on the extent to which applicants have considered and addressed the benefits and impacts of their projects whether they discuss one of the factors below or many.

Ecological Factors

- Minimizes impacts to, or improves ecological function of, surrounding lands

- Includes low-impact design or other green building techniques that reduce water, energy, resource consumption, or greenhouse gas footprint

- Provides a buffer to future natural disasters or anticipated climate impacts

- Includes landscaping that supports native species and/or pollinator habitat

Social Factors

- Encourages access via multi-modal and active transportation choices

- Promotes opportunities for physical activity, social and cultural connections, or community education

Economic Factors

- Uses materials that support local producers, are recycled or recyclable, increase the project's anticipated lifespan, or reduce future maintenance costs

- Creates efficiency in the provision of public services (i.e., stormwater infiltration, increased tree canopy, carbon sequestration, etc.)

- Maximizes lifespan or reduces future operational costs

- Supports a local economic development initiative

▲ Point Range: zero to five points

Adopted January 2020 by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2020-06. Revised December 2023 by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2023-28.

9. **Facility Management.** Does the applicant have the ability to operate and maintain the facility?

   - Describe the applicant's structure and indicate how long the organization has been involved in youth or community athletics.

   - Describe how the athletic facilities are addressed in the applicant's maintenance plan.

   - If the applicant does not own the property, describe the management agreement with the property owner.

   ▲ Point Range: 0-5 points

   Revised December 2023 by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2023-28

10. **Availability.** When the project is complete, how often will it be available for competitive youth sports in a calendar year?

    Provide details on when the facility will be open for competitive play for youth and adults or use by the general public for drop-in play. Hours when the facility is not available for competitive play or use by the general public are not considered in the evaluation.

    Consider seasons of use, types of use, hours of use, and restrictions on access. Identify when the facility will be closed for competitive play, for example when the facility will be closed for use by a school or nonprofit organization. Describe the use policy for scheduling the facility: Who can schedule the facility, what sports can use it, and how do they get on the schedule?

    ▲ Point Range: zero to five points

11. **Readiness to Proceed.** What is the timeline for completing the project? Will the sponsor be able to complete the project within three years?

    Explain how the applicant can move quickly to complete the project by documenting completed appraisal and review, permits secured, or availability of needed labor or volunteers. In addition, please provide an estimated timeline by for completing the project.

    ▲ Point Range: 0-5 points

    Revised December 2023 by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2023-28

12. **Green Space Availability** (applicant does not answer in evaluation session). Green space availability scores are determined using spatial data analysis from RCO's equity review of grant programs. For that review, census tracts were classified as having High (more than eight acres per one thousand residents), Medium (three to eight acres per one thousand residents), and Low (less than three acres per one thousand residents) green space per capita.

    ▲ Point Range: one to three points

    | One point | High green space |
    | Two points | Medium green space |
    | Three points | Low green space |

    Adopted December 2023 by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2023-27

13. **Social Vulnerability** (applicant does not answer in evaluation session). Social vulnerability scores use a combination of sixteen social and economic conditions such as limited English, crowded housing, or population living in poverty. The scores are based on information from the Washington Tracking Network's Information by Location mapping tool.

    ▲ Point Range: zero to three points

    | Zero points | Vulnerability rating one to two |
    | One point | Vulnerability rating three to five |
    | Two points | Vulnerability rating six to seven |
    | Three points | Vulnerability rating eight to ten |

    Adopted December 2023 by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2023-27

14. **Health Outcomes** (applicant does not answer in evaluation session). This score is from the Washington Tracking Network's Information by Location mapping tool, which shows the Health Disparity Index scores and Poor Health Outcomes ranking.

    ▲ Point Range: zero to three points

    | Zero points | Health outcome rating one to two |
    | One point | Health outcome rating three to five |
    | Two points | Health outcome rating six to seven |

Three points   Health outcome rating eight to ten

Adopted December 2023 by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2023-27

15. **Matching Shares** (applicant does not answer in evaluation session). Is the applicant providing the minimum required match?

   ▲ Point Range: zero to two points, which later are multiplied by one-quarter.

   Zero points   0-5 percent greater than the minimum required match

   One point   5.01-14.99 percent greater than the minimum required match

   Two points   15 percent or greater than the minimum required match

Revised December 2023 by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2023-28

16. **Proximity to People** (applicant does not answer in evaluation session). State law requires the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board to give funding preference to projects in populated areas. Populated areas are defined as a town or city with a population of 5,000 or more, or a county with a population density of 250 or more people per square mile.[73] Is the project in an area meeting this definition?

   ▲ Point Range: 0-0.5 point

   0 points   No

   0.5 point   Yes

Revised December 2023 by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2023-28

17. **Growth Management Act Preference** (applicant does not answer in evaluation session). Has the applicant made progress toward meeting the requirements of the Growth Management Act?[74]

   State law requires that whenever a state agency is considering awarding grants to finance public facilities, it shall consider whether the applicant[75] has adopted a comprehensive plan and development regulations as required by Revised Code of Washington 36.70A.040.

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[73]Revised Code of Washington 79A.25.250
[74]Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250 (Growth Management Act preference required.)
[75]County, city, or town applicants only. This segment of the question does not apply to Native American tribes, park districts, or nonprofit organizations.

When reviewing such requests, the state agency shall accord additional preference to applicants that have adopted the comprehensive plan and development regulations. An applicant is deemed to have satisfied the requirements for adopting a comprehensive plan and development regulations if it has done one of the following:

- Adopts or has adopted within the time periods specified in state law.

- Adopts or has adopted by the time it requests a grant or loan.

- Demonstrates substantial progress toward adopting within the time periods specified in state law. An agency that is more than 6 months out of compliance with the time periods has not demonstrated substantial progress.

A request from an applicant planning under state law shall be accorded no additional preference over a request from an applicant not planning under this state law.

This question is scored by RCO staff based on information from the state Department of Commerce, Growth Management Division. Scoring occurs after RCO's technical completion deadline. If an agency's comprehensive plan, development regulation, or amendment has been appealed to the Growth Management Hearings Board, the agency cannot be penalized during the period of appeal.

▲ Point Range: RCO staff subtracts a maximum of one point.

Minus one point	The applicant does not meet the requirements of Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250.
Zero points	The applicant meets the requirements of Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250.
Zero points	The applicant is a Native American tribe, park district, or nonprofit organization.