

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 process⁴¹ 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 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](#).

An applicant prepares a PowerPoint presentation to address the evaluation criteria and deliver it to the advisory committee during a virtual, oral presentation.⁴² Advisory committee members may ask follow-up questions before they score the grant proposal. The virtual online presentation process is broadcast live on YouTube for the public, but the public is not invited to comment.

The advisory committee then scores the grant application using the responses to the criteria, graphics included in the application or provided during the presentation, and summary application materials.

At the same time, RCO staff score the objective sections of the application, such as the amount of matching share the applicant is providing and conformance to growth

⁴¹Washington Administrative Code 286-13-020

⁴²Adopted by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board in June 2023 with Resolution 2023-24.

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.

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 that the RCO director submits to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board, which makes the final decision about funding in public meetings.⁴³ The public is given an opportunity to comment on the grant proposal before the board makes its decision.

Do Not Fund Recommendation⁴⁴

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 vote⁴⁵ of the committee members who 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.

Growth Management Act Compliance

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board considers an organization's compliance with the Growth Management Act when awarding grants for public facilities.⁴⁵ The board gives preference through evaluation scoring to town, city, and county applicants who are required to plan under the Act.⁴⁶ Scoring for compliance with the Act and other staff-

⁴³Washington Administrative Code 286-13-050

⁴⁴Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2014-06

⁴⁵Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250

⁴⁶Revised Code of Washington 36.60A

scored evaluation criteria are based on the organization's status as of the category's technical completion deadline. RCO uses information reported by the Washington State Department of Commerce for scoring Growth Management Act compliance. Agencies in compliance receive a zero score on the question, while out of compliance status results in a minus one score.

At the time of application, the applicant should consult its planning department or contact [Washington State Department of Commerce's Growth Management Services](#) to determine the compliance status. If an organization is out of compliance, this advance inquiry may give the organization time to change its status before the technical completion deadline. RCO is not responsible for changing an organization's compliance status with the Growth Management Act.

Evaluating Combination Projects

Projects involving both acquisition and development or planning are evaluated on all the criteria for both types of projects. To ensure equal treatment for combination projects, the scoring multiplier for some evaluation criteria is half of that used for individual acquisition, development, or planning projects.

Evaluation Criteria

Boating Facilities Program Evaluation Criteria Summary		
Scored by the Advisory Committee		
Question	Project Type⁴⁷	Possible Points
1. Need	All Projects	15 points
2. Site Suitability	Acquisition Projects	20 points
	Combination, Development, Planning Projects	15 points
3. Urgency	Acquisition Projects	10 points
	Combination Projects	5 points
4. Project Design	Development Projects	10 points
	Combination of Acquisition and Development Projects	5 points
5. Planning Success (architecture and engineering only)	Planning Projects	10 points
	Combination of Acquisition and Planning Projects	5 points
6. Sustainability	Combination, Development, Planning Projects	5 points
7. Cost-benefit	All Projects	10 points
8. Boats on Trailers	All Projects	5 points
9. Boating Experience	All Projects	6 points
10. Readiness	All Projects	5 points
Scored by RCO		
11. Matching Shares	All Projects	4 points Local
		1 points State
12. Proximity to People	All Projects	1 points
13. Growth Management Act (local agencies) Preference	All Projects	0 points
Total Possible Points		76 points Local 73 points State

⁴⁷All project types=Acquisition, development or renovation, combination, and planning (architecture, engineering, or permit-related). Combination projects include both acquisition of real property and either development or planning activities.

Detailed Scoring Criteria

1. **Need.** Is the project needed?

Consider whether the project addresses boater needs as described in the *Recreational Boating Plan*. Consider the goal of the project and how it relates to the service area and the following:

- Inventory of existing sites and facilities
- Physical condition of the inventory
- Unserved or underserved populations
- Amount of use of existing sites
- Potential use of proposed sites
- How the project meets the need

Is the project named by location or type as a priority in an adopted plan? Examples of such plans include comprehensive, shoreline, port, waterfront access, park, open space, capital improvement, and capital facilities.

For example, a proposal for a new site in a large city with few existing sites likely would seem to fill a substantial need and could receive a high score. A proposal for improving a geographically remote site accessing an important sport fishery in high demand also could receive a high score.

▲ Point Range: zero to five points, which later is multiplied by three.

2. **Site Suitability.** Is the site well-suited for the intended recreational uses?

Consider the following:

- The site's size and location
- Topography and soil conditions
- Existing facilities or development (if any)
- Adjacent land uses
- Natural features or attractions (such as productive fishing locations)
- Alternatives that may have been considered

In general, sites more suitable for the intended uses should get higher scores.

- ▲ Point Range: zero to five points, which later is multiplied by three for combination, development, and planning projects and by four for acquisition-only projects.

3. Urgency (any project with acquisition as a component). How urgent is the need for funding from the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board?

If the grant is not made available, will public access or use be lost? Consider the availability of alternatives. Where none exist, the significance of BFP funding may be higher. BFP funding shall augment, not replace, other sources of funding available to the grant sponsor.

- ▲ Point Range: zero to five points, which later is multiplied by two for acquisition-only projects.

0 points	No evidence presented.
Low score	Minimal urgency. Site opportunity appears to be in no immediate danger of a loss in quality or to public use in the next two years.
Medium score	Actions are under consideration that could result in the opportunity losing quality or becoming unavailable for future public use.
High score	Actions will be taken that will result in the opportunity losing quality or becoming unavailable for future public use.

4. Project Design (development or acquisition and development projects only). Is the proposal appropriately designed for the intended use?

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board policy rewards design standards and construction techniques intended to maximize service life, minimize routine maintenance, and avoid environmental impacts.

For example, if users of a proposed boat ramp can be expected to be power loading, solid concrete ramp construction may be more appropriate than concrete plank construction. In harsh marine conditions, steel piling or concrete could be expected to have a longer service life than timber piling.

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

- Accurate cost estimates

- Aesthetics
- Future maintenance needs*
- Innovative and creative elements*
- Materials and specifications*
- Risk management
- Space relationships*
- User friendly elements

*User-friendly and universally accessible considerations

- ▲ Point Range: zero to five points, which later is multiplied by two for development-only projects.

Revised February 9, 2016, by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2016-10.

- 5. Planning Success** (planning or acquisition and planning projects only). What potential does this project have to successfully complete the required documents needed to start a development project?

Evaluators are asked to judge how likely it is that the project will result in development in the near future. Factors to consider include the following:

- Cost-effective design and construction standards.
- Site conditions that might require extraordinary or unique architectural and engineering efforts.
- The results of public involvement.
- Whether design approaches are untested or have tested successfully.
- The experience or expertise of the organization that will do the work.
- The complexity or feasibility of environmental mitigation that could be required.

- ▲ Point Range: zero to five points, which later is multiplied by two for planning-only projects.

6. Sustainability (development, combination, and planning projects only).

Sustainability reflects choices made to balance the desired benefits and potential impacts of a project on the surrounding landscape and community. Please discuss how the project's location or design supports the applicant organization's sustainability plan or how the applicant considered the ecological, economic, and social benefits and impacts in the project plan.

Examples of sustainability factors that could be part of a project or maintenance plan are provided below for consideration but are not all-inclusive. The applicant and evaluators should treat this list as a guide, not a checklist. The applicant is encouraged to be creative in expressing the sustainability factors of the project, and evaluators should score the project based on the extent to which the applicant has considered and addressed the benefits and impacts of the project whether the applicant discusses 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

- Addresses an identified disparity in social or environmental services
- 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, Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2020-06

7. Cost-Benefit. Do the benefits of the project outweigh the costs?

Having reviewed the technical and other merits of the project proposal, evaluators now are asked to determine its overall cost-benefit.

Cost can be more than dollars. It also can be unacceptable harm to the environment or something that causes unnecessary ill will for boaters.

Benefit is the gain realized with the requested level of public investment. It can be gain for boaters, the environment, or the public, or some other gain.

A proposal demonstrating greater net benefits should score higher than a proposal with limited value or with value at too great a cost.

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

8. Boats on Trailers. Does the proposed project predominantly serve boats on trailers?

▲ Point Range: zero to five points.

Added February 9, 2016, by Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Resolution 2016-10.

9. Boating Experience. How will the project affect the boating experience?

Boaters are increasingly concerned about the quality of the boating experience. Although the meaning of a quality experience is highly personal, evaluators should consider the complex relationships among the following:

- The size and location of the water body to be accessed.
- The number and types of boats using that water body.
- The traditional or historic use of the water body.
- The number and types of additional boats that could gain access.
- Current and expected boat speeds.

Evaluators are asked to consider the overall potential impact of a proposal.

▲ Point Range: minus two to three points, which later is multiplied by.

Minus two or minus one point Proposal will harm or disrupt a quality boating experience.

Zero points Proposal will not change the boating experience.

One to three points Proposals will enhance or improve quality boating.

10. Readiness. Is the project ready to proceed?

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board policy encourages proposals that are ready for immediate implementation. That is, an applicant should be ready to start work as soon as a grant agreement is signed.

An acquisition proposal that has completed negotiations should get a higher score than a proposal for which negotiations still are underway or have not yet started.

A development proposal with permits in hand should score higher than a proposal that is in the process of securing permits.

An architecture and engineering proposal may merit a high score if it is clear that work on the permit or plan can start immediately.

▲ Point Range: zero to five points.

11. Matching Shares (applicant does not answer in evaluation session). To what extent will the applicant match BFP funds with contributions from its own resources?

To qualify, contributions must be eligible for BFP funding, and may include the following:

- Cash, the value of donated labor, equipment, and materials.
- The value of donated land or lesser interests in land, except when the interest is owned by the applicant or by a public agency.

For evaluation scoring purposes, an RCO grant used as match will not count toward the award of matching share points.

▲ Point Range: zero to four points.

Local Agencies

Zero points	0-25 percent of project's value will be contributed from applicant resources.
One point	25.01-45 percent of project's value will be contributed from applicant's resources.
Two points	45.01-55 percent of project's value will be contributed from applicant's resources.
Three points	55.01 percent or more of project's value will be contributed from applicant's resources.

Local and State Agencies

One point	Staff adds one point to the score assigned above if an applicant demonstrates that its matching share includes non-government contributions equivalent to 10 percent or more of the total project cost.
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Revised November 19, 2004

12. Proximity to People (applicant does not answer in evaluation session). Is the project site in a populated area?

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board policy is to give preference to projects in urban areas. Urban areas are defined in Revised Code of Washington 79A.25.250 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.

Is the project in an area meeting this definition?

▲ Point Range: zero to one point.

Zero points	No
One point	Yes

13. 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?⁴⁸

⁴⁸Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250 (Growth Management Act preference required.)

State law requires the following:

- A. Whenever a state agency is considering awarding grants to finance public facilities, it shall consider whether the applicant ⁴⁹ has adopted a comprehensive plan and development regulations as required by Revised Code of Washington 36.70A.040 ("state law").
- B. When reviewing such requests, the state agency shall accord additional preference to an applicant that has 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 meets any 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 six months out of compliance with the time periods has not demonstrated substantial progress.
- C. A request from an applicant planning under state law shall be accorded no additional preference based on subsection (B) over a request from an applicant not planning under this state law.

Scores for this question are based on information from the state Department of Commerce, Growth Management Division. If an agency's comprehensive plan, development regulations, or amendments have been appealed to a Growth Management Act Hearings Board, the applicant cannot be penalized during the period of the appeal. Scoring occurs after RCO's technical completion deadline.

▲ Point Range: minus one to zero points.

Minus one point	Applicant does not meet the requirements of Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250.
Zero points	Applicant meets the requirements of Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250.
Zero points	Applicant is a nonprofit organization, or state or federal agency.

⁴⁹All references to applicants in this question refer to counties, cities, and towns only.