

Applicant's To-Do List

Readiness and Recreation Initiative

This to-do list is designed to help the applicant prepare and submit a grant application for the Land and Water Conservation Fund Readiness and Recreation Initiative.

This program provides funding to enhance recreational opportunities near military installations. Grants may be used for an array of projects and facilities, such as sports fields, playgrounds, walking trails, and nature reserves, to benefit the public and military families alike. Projects **must do the following**:

- Include land acquisition.
- Be in a Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Partnership Opportunity Area or Sentinel Landscape.
- Have a Letter of Support from a military installation or range commander.

An applicant may request \$250,000 to \$2,880,000. The applicant must contribute 50 percent or 1:1 ratio matching share.

Some Things to Note

- The forms and manuals referenced here may be viewed on the [grant program page](#).
- The timeline for applying in 2026 is compressed due to the timing of the federal announcement of this program, but it will be offered every year for the next four years. If a project is not ready, please don't rush the application—submit in a subsequent year.
- If selected for funding, additional application materials will be required and awards will not be made until 2028 (see steps 8 and 9).
- Do not start any ground-disturbing activities (including geotechnical testing) before an award.

Alternative Format

To get this document in an alternative format or help accessing its contents, please contact the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) Communications at rcocommunications@rcowa.gov or 360-902-3000. People with hearing impairments or speech disabilities may dial 711 for the Washington Telecommunications Relay Service.

Step 1: Establish Eligibility

Eligible Applicants

- Cities and towns
- Counties
- Federally recognized Native American Tribes
- Park and recreation districts
- Other special purpose districts, such as port and public utility districts, if legally authorized to acquire and develop public open space, habitat, or recreation facilities, and have a stated mission that includes acquiring, developing, owning and managing recreation areas.
- State agencies

First-Time Applicants

A first-time applicant to the RCO must submit a legal opinion to establish eligibility (due by the technical completion deadline—see step 5). RCO has a sample form—reach out to a grants manager if needed.

Eligible Project Location

Projects must be in a Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Partnership Opportunity Area (see [interactive map](#)) or [Sentinel Landscape](#).

Planning Eligibility

An applicant's current recreation plan must be on file with RCO by **July 1, 2026**. A plan establishes eligibility for six years with RCO so check to see if a plan already is on file. See *Manual 2: Planning Guidelines* and the [RCO Planning Requirements](#).

Program Goals, Eligible Projects, and Limitations

Program Goals

The goals of the Readiness and Recreation Initiative are as follows:

- Expand access to outdoor recreation for military communities and the public.
- Establish or preserve compatible land use buffers around military installations that support military readiness and operations.
- Preserve natural resources and improve community disaster resilience.
- Leverage resources across partners (military installations, governments, nonprofit organizations, private sector, etc.) to further readiness and recreation.
- Address the unique needs of military communities and stimulate local economies

Eligible Projects

Eligible project types include acquisition of lands, wetlands, and waters for public outdoor recreation, including new areas or additions to existing parks, forests, wildlife management areas, beaches, and other similar areas dedicated to public outdoor recreation, as well as physical connections among them (e.g., trails, waterways, land between recreation areas, wildlife habitat corridors).

In addition, a project for acquisition may include the development of outdoor recreation resources. Development should encompass essential public outdoor recreation activities and the necessary support facilities for public use. Projects could involve a combination of land acquisition and site development. These projects can cater to a diverse range of public outdoor recreation activities and facilities required to enhance the use and enjoyment for the public.

Ineligible Elements and Program Limitations

- Acquisition of lands, or interests in lands, that completely restrict access to specific people (e.g., non-residents of a community)
- Acquisition support costs such as appraisals or title work
- Facilities that support semi-professional or professional athletics such as baseball stadiums or soccer arenas

- Funding for recreation programs, equipment, team or individual participation fees, or support of any sports leagues
- Indoor facilities such as recreation centers or facilities that support primarily non-outdoor purposes like nature centers, community centers, education centers, dining facilities, or overnight accommodation (such as a lodge or hotel)
- Stand-alone development projects without a land acquisition component

Step 2: Review Materials and Schedule Pre-Application Meeting

Review the appropriate Recreation and Conservation Funding Board manuals for this grant program:

- *Manual 15: Land and Water Conservation Fund*: The basic rules about eligible project types, elements, and costs apply. Note that the Readiness and Recreation Initiative, as described in this To-Do List, has some differences which include project location requirements, deadlines, grant limits, and evaluation process (written).
- *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*
- *Manual 4: Development Projects*

Schedule a pre-application meeting with an RCO grants manager to discuss project scope, eligibility, and next steps. Go to [Contact a Grants Manager](#) on the RCO website and filter by grant program for Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Step 3: Submit an Application—October 1, 2026

SecureAccess Washington Account

Before beginning an application, get a [SecureAccess Washington](#) account. A new applicant also should submit a [PRISM New User Account Form](#). When using either of these databases for the first time, an applicant must complete a double sign-in.

PRISM Online Application

PRISM will open in September. To start an application, go to [PRISM Online](#) and select + *New Application*. Follow the prompts to fill out the application. On-screen instructions, tool tips, and links are available throughout the *Application Wizard*.

PRISM Attachments

The PRISM Online application includes an *Attachments* page. Attach the documents below before submitting the application. Include the applicant's name, project name, and RCO project number on each attachment. Maps must include a north arrow, scale, and labels for any major highways, roads, cities, water bodies, etc. If the project includes acquisition and development, attach the documents required for both project types.

Note the **bold names** below match the attachment type choices in PRISM.

- ☐ **Assurances for Construction Programs—SF 424D.**
- ☐ **Authorizing Resolution/Application Authorization** (due by the technical completion deadline—see step 5) shows the application is supported by the elected council, commission, board, or executives of the applicant's organization. Use the template available on the grant program web page. The applicant must adopt the text verbatim even if using a different format.
- ☐ **Budget Narrative.** Use the template available on the grant program web page.
- ☐ **Certification of Applicant Match** (due by the technical completion deadline—see step 5) shows what amounts and sources of match are in hand or is planned for the project. Use the form available on the grant program web page.
- ☐ **Control and Tenure Documentation** (development projects only). If proposing development on property owned or controlled by the grant applicant, include property ownership information, such as a deed, and all applicable leases, easements, and use agreements. See *Manual 4: Development Projects* for additional details about control and tenure.
- ☐ **Correspondence.** Letter of support from the relevant military installation's commander.
- ☐ **Landowner Acknowledgement Form.** The applicant must demonstrate that the landowner is aware of the interest in buying the property. There are several options to meet this requirement: see "Application Requirements" in section 3 of *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects*.
- ☐ **Map: Boundary Map—Proposed** must indicate clearly the park area proposed for acquisition or development, as well as the proposed boundary of the larger park or recreation area that would be subject to the perpetual protection provisions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (54 USC 200305(f)(3)),

all known outstanding rights and interests in the area held by others, total acres within the boundary, and a north arrow. For detailed map requirements, see "Boundary Map" under the "Protection of Federal Investments and Ongoing Stewardship" heading in section 2 of manual 15. See also the "In Perpetuity Requirement" section below in this document.

- ☐ **Map: Other.** Site Analysis Map that illustrates site attributes such as flood zones, storm data, slopes, conservation areas, tree canopy, nutrient-rich soils, impervious surfaces, view sheds, and impervious cover.
- ☐ **Map: Parcel Map** shows the parcels to be acquired in the scope of work as well as adjacent land ownership. Show the parcels in relation to local roads, landmarks, etc.
- ☐ **Milestones** (one-page limit). Use the milestone worksheet specific to the project type (acquisition and/or development) that is available on RCO's [Post Award Information web page](#). The start date should be no earlier than June 2028.
- ☐ **Photograph.** Every application requires at least one project photograph in .jpg format. The photograph should be of the project site and should best characterize the project. A current ground shot or aerial view would be appropriate. An applicant may attach additional photographs.
- ☐ **Project Narrative** (ten-page limit, eleven-point font or larger, one-inch margins, provide in Word format). The project narrative consists of a project data page, project overview, and responses to the evaluation criteria. See "Detailed Instructions for Project Narrative" below.
- ☐ **RCO Fiscal Data Collection Sheet.** Use the form available on the grant program web page.
- ☐ **Site Plan: Conceptual Site Plan** provides a visual diagram of the intended future use and development of the property. Identify the location of planned recreational improvements and other features such as where the public will access the site, parking, etc.
- ☐ **Site Plan: Development Site Plan** (development projects only) shows the proposed improvements at the project site. Identify the location of planned recreational improvements and other features such as where the public will access the site, parking, etc. Development site plans should show site boundaries, major site features, and proposed project elements. Existing and future elements should be distinguished from those in the current project. Master, schematic

design, design development, and construction document level plans are suitable for development site plans. While not required, at least a 30 percent level design is most helpful to understand general scope and location of the project.

- ☐ **Visuals.** Graphics, maps, photographs, and renderings provide context such as current site conditions, and the surrounding environment. These could include site features or constraints, community engagement, or current uses.

The following attachment types are not required, but where applicable, the applicant also should attach:

- ☐ **Project Support/Concern Documents.** Letters and other documented expressions of project support or concern from elected officials, community members, or others will be made available for advisory committee and federal merit panel (evaluator) review. **All letters should be combined into one PDF and attached to the project in PRISM.**
- ☐ **Existing cultural resource surveys or reports, or environmental studies** (including State Environmental Policy Act documentation or critical area reports) that have been completed at the park or project site.

NOTE: Except for a few protected items, such as cultural resources data or confidential appraisal documents, as soon as the application is started in PRISM, it and most attachments will be available for review by RCO staff, advisory committee, and the public.

Submit Application

Submit the application in PRISM Online by the deadline or the application will be ineligible.

Step 4: Technical Review (Written)—October 5-31, 2026

The state's Land and Water Conservation Fund advisory committee, RCO, and the National Park Service review the application for eligibility, completeness, and clarity. RCO will return the application in PRISM Online with feedback, questions, or suggested changes.

Step 5: Resubmit Application by Technical Completion Deadline—November 30, 2026

- ☐ Address issues raised during technical review and make modifications, if needed.

- ☐ Attach the adopted **Applicant Resolution/Authorization** (if not already attached) that shows the application is supported by the political, board, or executives of the applicant's organization. The applicant must adopt the text verbatim even if using a different format.
- ☐ Attach a signed **Certification of Applicant Match** (if not already attached) to show what amounts and sources of match the applicant has in hand or is planning for the project. Use the form available on the grant program web page. RCO may ask the applicant to recertify applicant match before an agreement is issued.
- ☐ Legal opinion (only for an applicant who has never applied for an RCO grant). RCO has a sample form—reach out to the grants manager if needed.
- ☐ Complete all revisions and resubmit the application in PRISM Online by the technical completion deadline or the application will be deemed ineligible.

Step 6: Final State Review and Submit to National Park Service—December 2026

RCO will review the final application to ensure that it meets program goals and objectives. RCO's director will approve the applications to be sent to the National Park Service for national competition.

Step 7: National Evaluation and Ranking—Winter-Spring 2027

Once the National Park Service regional office accepts an application, it is sent to federal project reviewers. Projects will be ranked according to the reviewers' scores and a list provided to the director of the National Park Service, who makes the final funding decision.

Step 8: Submit Pre-Agreement Materials—May to December 2027

If the National Park Service selects the project for funding, the applicant must submit additional materials to create a full application.

- ☐ **Revisions** to original application documents, if needed or requested.
- ☐ **Map:** Boundary Map—Final.
- ☐ **Land and Water Conservation Fund Program Specific Documentation—** Documentation will be determined by the National Park Service after selection.

- ☐ **Proof of Ownership (control and tenure)**—if required for the project and not already provided. Typically includes parcel maps, deeds, title reports, leases, etc.
- ☐ **National Historic Preservation Act Documentation**—Documentation will be determined by the National Park Service to complete Act consultation. This often includes cultural resource surveys, area of potential effect descriptions, etc.
- ☐ **National Environmental Policy Act Documentation**—Documentation will be determined by the National Park Service to complete the Act process. This often includes state or local environmental review documents, threatened and endangered species report, federal permits, etc.
- ☐ **Appraisal and Appraisal Review**—Must meet federal award requirements and may include additional requests for documentation such as a parcel map.
- ☐ **Site Development Plan** if applicable to the project.
- ☐ **Other Documents** as required by RCO or the National Park Service.

Step 9: Grants Awarded, Agreements Issued—May 1, 2028 (estimate)

The RCO director approves the grants, contingent on congressional approval of funding for the program and federal grant award. The earliest start date is expected to be in late spring 2028.

RCO works with the grant applicant to execute a grant agreement before work begins.

- ☐ Applicant reviews the following Recreation and Conservation Funding Board manuals:
 - *Manual 7: Long-Term Obligations*
 - *Manual 8: Reimbursements*
- ☐ Applicant reviews the Successful Applicant Webinar materials, then completes the project.

The period of performance for the grant typically is two to three years.

In Perpetuity Requirement

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act requires that no property acquired or developed with assistance under this grant program will, without the approval of the

Secretary of the Interior, be converted to other than public outdoor recreation use. The Secretary may approve a conversion only if the Secretary finds it to be in accordance with the state's statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation plan and only on such conditions as the Secretary considers necessary to ensure the substitution of other recreation properties of at least equal fair market value and of reasonably equivalent usefulness and location. (see 16 U.S.C. § 8464(b)(4)(C)(i)).

Therefore, as a condition of the grant, the National Park Service requires that language be recorded against the deed of the park or recreation property advising that the property was acquired and/or developed with federal funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund and that the property must be preserved for outdoor recreation uses in perpetuity and cannot be converted to any use other than public outdoor recreation use without the written approval of the Secretary of the Interior.

This approval is contingent upon the project sponsor replacing the area to be converted with a *new* recreation area involving land of at least equal fair market value and reasonably equivalent recreational utility, and the conversion and its replacement found consistent with the state's statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation plan.

The perpetuity requirement is applied to the park or other recreation area *as a whole*. Exceptions for boundaries that would apply to a lesser unit of a park will be considered only if the unit is a stand-alone recreation area (i.e., its borders do not include other areas of the park) and is self-sustaining (i.e., it does not rely on nor serve adjoining park area for access, utilities, support facilities). The State and the National Park Service must agree to any boundary that does not comprise the whole park, and the National Park Service may deny an application that is not consistent with this policy.

Buy America Preferences for Infrastructure Projects

Build America, Buy America Act preferences apply to projects funded by this grant program. Reference [2 CFR Part 184—Buy America Preferences for Infrastructure Projects](#) for further guidance. The grant recipient must comply with the Build America, Buy America Act requirements for the entirety of the project, from bidding through construction. Additionally, the recipient must comply with the award terms and conditions. This includes ensuring subawards, if applicable, follow all Act requirements and regulations of the federal award. Also, the [Uniform Guidance](#) places the responsibility for internal controls and documentation on recipients, and subrecipients, in 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart D—Post Federal Award Requirements.

Detailed Instructions for Project Narrative

The project narrative must be under ten pages, in font size of eleven or larger, and have one-inch margins. The ten-page limit includes all text and figures. Only include information that is pertinent to the application.

The project narrative consists of the following three sections, each detailed below:

Section 1: Project Data Page

- Indicate the submission date (DD/MM/YYYY)
- Applicant name and contact information
- Sub-recipient name and contact information (if applicable)
- Project title
- Name of park/property
- Name of property title holder
- Project property address/location
- Acreage of the project site and proposed boundary
- Project type: land acquisition or combination acquisition with new development or renovation.
- Previous Land and Water Conservation Fund or Readiness and Recreation Initiative recipient: Yes/No, if yes provide the year and funding amount.
- Brief description of the project and its proposed impact (One hundred words or less).

Section 2: Project Overview

Site Description (required)

- Describe the property's physical features (e.g., terrain, water features, built structures, existing amenities) and quantify where possible (e.g. fifty acres of forested land).

- Describe current uses of the property and note any uses that will be discontinued or remain in place once the project is completed.
- Identify any known site constraints, such as utilities, easements, rights-of-way, contamination history, or other physical or legal limitations.

Acquisition Description (required)

- Describe the property's current ownership.
- State whether the acquisition would create a new public park/recreation area or if it will expand an existing site, and if so, by how many acres.
- *Optional:* Describe the current acquisition status, including negotiations, due-diligence steps completed or in progress (title work, appraisal status, basis of value if no appraisal yet completed).

Development Description (only complete if development is proposed):

- Describe the planned physical improvements and facilities, and whether they are new construction, rehabilitation, areas for conservation, or replacement.
- Explain any expected impacts on the natural landscape (e.g., temporary disturbance, permanent changes).

Eligible Area Description (required)

- Describe the REPI Opportunity Zone or [Sentinel Landscape](#) that this project is located in. You can find this information using the [REPI Interactive Map](#)
 - Filter the Layer list to include "Military > REPI Partnership Opportunity Area" and "Sentinel Landscapes > Sentinel Landscapes."
 - Describe the project's proximity to a military installation and a military community.

Section 3: Responses to Merit Review Criteria

Projects will be evaluated on the extent to which they:

1. Expand Access to Outdoor Recreation for Military Communities and the Public
2. Promote Compatible Land Use and Natural Resource Protection
3. Align with Community Needs

4. Leverage Resources in Support of Readiness and Recreation
5. Demonstrate Feasibility

The National Park Service will evaluate and consider only those applications that separately address each of the merit review criteria. It is highly recommended that this section of the project narrative is labeled by criterion.

Criterion 1—Expand Access to Outdoor Recreation for Military Communities and the Public

5 total points

To what extent does the project:

- Expand outdoor recreation opportunities for both military communities and the general public;
- Address a gap in recreation access; and
- Meet an outdoor recreation priority identified in the State or Territory's SCORP (Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan).

Points	Scoring Description
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|---|--|
| 5 | The project significantly expands outdoor recreation access for both military communities and the public, with strong evidence of unmet recreation needs and clear justification supported by a SCORP or similar planning documents. |
| 3 | The project provides a moderate expansion of recreation opportunities , but justification of need is partial or mixed. Benefits to military communities or the general public are present but limited in scale, specificity, or clarity. Alignment with SCORP or community recreation needs is mentioned but not strongly demonstrated. |
| 1 | The project offers minimal or unclear recreation benefits , does not address documented recreation deficiencies, and/or provides weak justification for how military communities or the public will benefit. Alignment with SCORP or community recreation priorities is missing or superficial. |

Criterion 2—Promoting Compatible Land Use and Natural Resource Protection

5 total points

To what extent does the project:

- Establish or preserve compatible land use buffers around military installations;
- Support military readiness and operations;
- Enhance disaster resiliency for communities and military installations;
- Protect natural resources, such as wildlife habitat, open space, ecological connectivity, etc.; and
- Contribute to long-term conservation outcomes.

Points	Scoring Description
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| 5 | The project strongly protects or establishes compatible land use buffers that prevent incompatible development and clearly enhance military readiness. It provides meaningful natural resource protection and disaster resiliency , including preservation or restoration of habitat, open space, ecological connectivity, or other benefits. |
| 3 | The project provides moderate benefits to compatible land use or natural resource conservation. Some buffering or protection is present but not substantial. Benefits to military readiness or conservation are partially described or lack detail. |
| 1 | The proposal shows minimal alignment with compatible land use or resource protection. Conservation benefits are weak or undefined. |

Criterion 3—Aligning with Community Needs

5 total points

To what extent does the project:

- Address the unique needs of the military community and other communities near the project, such as improving community wellbeing and stimulating local economies.
- Meaningfully incorporate community engagement.

Points	Scoring Description
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| 5 | The project demonstrates a strong, structured community engagement process that identified and incorporated residents' needs into the overall project plan. The resulting project includes initiatives that stimulate the local economy and improve overall community well-being. |
| 3 | Some community engagement and support are described, but the depth of the engagement efforts, or their incorporation into the project are moderate. |
| 1 | Minimal evidence of community engagement or alignment. |

Criterion 4—Leveraging Resources in Support of Readiness and Recreation

5 total points

To what extent does the project:

- Demonstrate strong partnerships and efficient use of resources to advance recreation access and promote mission-compatible landscapes.
- Foster collaboration among partners (military installations, government, non-profit organizations, private sector, etc.) to further the Readiness and Recreation Initiative mission.

Points	Scoring Description
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| 5 | The project demonstrates a sophisticated partnership strategy , with meaningful involvement and clear coordination across military, government, and other community partners. |
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| 3 | Some partnership engagement; collaboration exists but is not well developed or only moderately contributes to overall project success. |
| 1 | Limited or unclear partnerships with minimal demonstrated resource leveraging. |

Criterion 5—Project Feasibility

5 total points

To what extent does the project:

- Have a sound and reasonable project plan?
- Have a clear, feasible, well-detailed budget, including a plan to meet the 1:1 match requirement and minimize administrative costs?
- Demonstrate the ability to complete the proposed scope of work and maintain the project in the long term.

Points	Scoring Description
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|---|---|
| 5 | Clear, reasonable plan; feasible budget; high likelihood of project success and meeting Land and Water Conservation Fund's perpetuity requirement. |
| 3 | Moderate feasibility; some gaps in the overall project plan or budget. |
| 1 | Limited evidence of feasibility. |