

Manual 2

Planning Policies and Guidelines

July 2018

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Section 1: Introduction

In this section, you'll learn about the following:

- ✓ The value of planning
- ✓ The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board
- ✓ Where to get information

The Value of Planning

Planning is vital to the success of any effort to provide recreation opportunities or conserve habitat. Planning that engages people, supporters and opponents alike, will help ensure that the right actions are taken for the right reasons at the right time.

Fundamental to good planning is the collection of data. Good, quantitative data will strengthen the results of the planning effort, help inform budget discussions, and assist in justifying actual needs (as opposed to perceived) in grant applications.

In brief, planning helps with the following:

- Coordinating interests while minimizing or settling conflicts.
- Building consensus.
- Prioritizing needs and actions.
- Detecting and responding to trends.
- Evaluating the success of programs.
- Building and defending budgets.
- Ensuring continuity of direction as officials change.

- Providing opportunities for public involvement.
- Providing information.
- Making decisions.
- Being efficient with limited resources and funding.

Planning is a cycle. A finished plan reflects the consensus of the participants. As people and issues change, your plan will need to change as well. Expect to regularly update or rewrite your plan.

About the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board was created in 1964 by a vote of the citizens of the state of Washington. The governor-appointed board is composed of five citizens and the directors (or designees) of three state agencies—Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Natural Resources, and Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission. The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) supports the board.

RCO is a state agency that manages multiple grant programs to create outdoor recreation opportunities, protect the best of the state's wildlife habitat and working lands, and help return salmon from near extinction.

Where to Get Information

Recreation and Conservation Office

Natural Resources Building

1111 Washington Street

Olympia, WA 98501

E-mail: info@rco.wa.gov

Telephone: (360) 902-3000

FAX: (360) 902-3026

TTY: (360) 902-1996

[Web site](#)

Mailing Address

PO Box 40917

Olympia, WA 98504-0917

Other Information Sources

- [American Planning Association, Washington Chapter](#) has resources for planning focusing on state communities and the Growth Management Act.

- [Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals](#) offers information and publications on resource recreation of particular interest to natural resource managers charged with public access.
- [National Recreation and Park Association](#) focuses on urban issues.
- [Washington Recreation and Park Association](#) is an excellent resource for urban and local park professionals.
- [Washington State Department of Commerce](#) has planning guidance, especially related to the Growth Management Act. Look at the guidebooks and resources under [Growth Management Services](#).
- U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service's [Park Planning](#) section of its Web site offers planning tools intended primarily for national parks but includes documents of interest to general recreation planning.
- [Washington State Office of Financial Management](#) publishes state population data including projections of population change, and the [State Data Book](#), which reports on trends of interest to recreation and habitat planning.

Section 2: Developing Your Plan

In this section, you'll learn about the following:

- ✓ Who must plan
- ✓ Recommendations for your planning process
- ✓ Estimating future need
- ✓ Public disclosure rules

Who Must Plan

This manual is intended as guidance for organizations wishing to become eligible for grants from the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board.

In the four board grant programs listed below, organizations must establish eligibility by producing a comprehensive plan before they may apply for grants. The plan must be adopted and meet the requirements and guidelines explained in this manual.

- Boating Facilities Program (BFP)
- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)–State and Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership programs
- Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities (NOVA)
 - Nonhighway Road Category
 - Nonmotorized Category
 - Off-Road Vehicles Category

- Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP)
 - Habitat Conservation Account–Critical Habitat, Natural Areas, Riparian Protection, State Lands Restoration and Enhancement, and Urban Wildlife Habitat Categories
 - Outdoor Recreation Account–Local Parks, State Lands Development and Renovation, State Parks, Trails, and Water Access categories

Grant applicants unsure of the grant category their proposals best fit should consult RCO staff.

This planning requirement has been in place since the board was established in 1964. The requirement exists for several reasons, not the least of which is to demonstrate that the public supports your program and your grant proposals.

RCO strongly recommends that organizations interested in any grant program develop a plan whether or not the program requires a plan. In addition to the benefits outlined above, grant evaluators often ask for information that typically is found in a plan.

Partnership Options

An organization may use another (partner) agency’s plan to save resources and attain eligibility. Agencies may do this if their jurisdictions overlap another’s or if they wish to combine planning programs into a single cooperative document.

Shared Jurisdiction Plan

School, port, and utility districts often are willing to accept the adopted park and recreation or habitat conservation plans of other agencies, such as a parks department, when working collaboratively with another jurisdiction. This option recognizes that a park department’s facilities can complement the programs of agencies like the special districts mentioned above. This is especially true when recreational or resource opportunities are provided as a secondary activity to the district’s primary mission.

This option may be used only if each of the following four items can be demonstrated to RCO:

- The area where the district wishes to seek a board grant is within the planning or service area of a partner agency whose plan has been accepted by RCO.
- The district formally has adopted all plan elements required by the board. The elements may be taken directly from the partner agency's plan as long as appropriate modifications are made. For example, a school district's recreational goals and objectives may not be exactly the same as a park department's goals.
- The partner agency has confirmed in writing that the district's plan is compatible with the partner agency's actions.
- The plan is no more than 6 years old.

Cooperative Plan

Regional planning commissions and councils of governments often select this option. It recognizes that a single plan may be the most efficient way to provide public facilities. There is no limit to the number of agencies that may be included in a cooperative plan. The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board recommends that when more than two agencies are involved, that one agency coordinates the planning activities.

Partners that have been involved in lead entity planning efforts for salmon habitat recovery also may select this option. Each partner agency or organization must document its contribution and participation in the planning efforts and comply with the items noted below.

This option may be used only if each of the following items can be demonstrated to RCO:

- The completed plan includes all elements required by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (Section 3).
- The completed plan has been adopted by the participating agency or organization.

Nonprofit nature conservancy corporations or associations seeking to become eligible¹ for the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program’s Riparian Protection Category have the option to certify that the corporation or association has published a plan or document that has been accepted or incorporated into a plan or program managed by a public agency for public purposes.

Recommendations for Your Planning Process

RCO recommends, but does not require, determination of a level of service for park and recreation planning, including trails. An analysis with the level of service tool will indicate strengths and weaknesses of your parks and trails system, suggesting where you may need additional resources.

The level of service tool works best for those considering grants from the following grant programs:

- Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA)
- Boating Facilities Program (BFP)
- Land and Water Conservation Fund LWCF)–State and Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership programs
- Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP)
- Youth Athletic Facilities (YAF)

The level of service tool uses indicators in three categories, each with measureable elements. There are two level of service tools: one for local agencies and one for state agencies. Both are explained in the Appendix C.

Once the categories and elements have been assessed and scored, it is your choice whether to average the scores or to keep each separate. Consider how you will use the level of service scores when deciding.

¹Complete nonprofit nature conservancy corporation or association eligibility requirements are explained in *RCO Manual 10b, Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Habitat Conservation Account*.

For example:

- If you are applying for a grant to build a new ball field, you may wish to present results of the quantity criteria that support your request.
- If you are building a budget request for additional maintenance resources, you may wish to use results from the quality criteria. Providing new trails can be justified with the access criteria.
- If you are developing a report to citizens, you may wish to publish results of each of the criteria, and suggest an overall average.

Estimating Future Need

Using the level of service quantity criteria can help estimate future need. If you choose to use per capita data goals and have determined current per capita levels, the gap is one estimate of future need.

In addition, you can make estimates of the growth of current activities. Participation in various outdoor activities will be affected by changes in population, available sites and infrastructure, lifestyles, economics, technology, and the politics of land use. With an understanding of these characteristics, you can use available data to make a best estimate of change in recreation patterns in your community.

Completely new activities are nearly impossible to predict: For example, the emergence of the personal watercraft and the mountain bike in the 1980s and 1990s were not accounted for under traditional projection methods.

A simplistic way to estimate future need is to use population estimates from the Washington State Office of Financial Management. Recreation participation tends to change slowly, with participation levels often directly tied to overall population growth.

Planners can simply decide that participation in current activities will grow at the same rate as the population. However, we suggest that this approach needs to be tempered by consideration of more than simple population growth. Consider the following:

- **Participation by age group** is a key consideration in estimating future participation. Varying physical demands of different activities will encourage or discourage continued participation as people age. Vigorous field sports such as soccer or rugby, for example, tend to be the domain of younger people; walking

or bird watching, on the other hand, will appeal to older adults who seek to enjoy outdoor recreation in relative comfort.

- **User group organization and representation** makes up the political landscape in which your planning is done. However, as tempting as it is to plan for “those who show up,” it is important to consider that some activities appear not to lend themselves to user group organization. Sidewalk users, perhaps those walking or walking with pets, have not formed known significant organizations apart from socially oriented *Volksmarching* groups or perhaps neighborhood associations that deal with a variety of issues.
- **Land use and land designations** have profound impacts on recreation. As urban density grows, it is often accompanied by fewer backyards and open lots. Therefore, more density will suggest the need for more parks and open spaces.
- **Economic conditions** strongly influence recreation patterns. Boat sales, for example, are known to follow the national economy. Activities such as walking that do not require big ticket consumer items, on the other hand, may not respond to economic changes because the activity simply does not cost much money.

National projections of recreation change are available from the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment.² The national survey has earned a solid reputation as a principal data resource for recreation planning. A key feature of the survey is its projections of future participation in outdoor recreation. Projections are for nationwide participation, as well as for regions.

Public Disclosure Rules

RCO records and files are public records that are subject to the Public Records Act.³ More information about the [RCO's disclosure practices](#) is available online.

²The Interagency National Survey Consortium, Coordinated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Recreation, Wilderness, and Demographics Trends Research Group, Athens, GA, and the Human Dimensions Research Laboratory, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN.

³Revised Code of Washington 42.56

Section 3: Required Elements

In this section, you'll learn about the following:

- ✓ Plan requirements
- ✓ Plan eligibility
- ✓ The Growth Management Act and Recreation and Conservation Funding Board plans
- ✓ RCO review

Plan Requirements

RCO has no requirements for the number of pages, number of chapters, or format. Whether an organization needs a modest or more robust plan is dependent on the needs of that organization. A successful plan is one that accurately reflects the characteristics of the organization for which it has been prepared.

Required Elements

RCO looks for a minimum of six elements in a plan, whether the plan supports a grant application for a capital project (facility development and land acquisition) or a non-capital project (architectural, engineering, planning, etc.). The six elements are detailed below.

1. Goals and Objectives

The plan must support the applicant's habitat conservation or park and recreation mission, including the current project, with broad statements of intent, or goals. Goals describe desired outcomes. An example is to "make athletic fields more accessible" or to "provide mule deer habitat."

Objectives, on the other hand, are both measurable and more specific. Include objectives to help describe when a goal has been attained. An example of an objective is to "create

six athletic fields in East County” or “acquire 300 acres of mule deer habitat near the North Creek Planning Unit.”

Goals and objectives should be realistic, supported by resources you can reasonably expect to have available, and reflect the needs in your community or service area, or for habitat projects the needs of species of interest. These needs will be discovered through your experience, inventory assessment, and public involvement.

Examples

- You may have found that your ball fields are filling up early in the season and that the waiting list has been the same for years. Your experience is evidence of need, which can be confirmed by consulting with the public. You may decide that the goal is to eliminate or significantly reduce the waiting list. The objective could be to add lights to extend use, to add a field, or to purchase and develop additional property.
- Your inventory may indicate that there are several facilities that are obsolete or have reached their useful service life. Or you may find that facilities are underused because of their location or changing demographics. A resulting goal could be a major renovation or relocation of facilities.

The public is always interested in helping to set goals and objectives. Public involvement is indispensable, not only to hear what people have to say, but also to give you the opportunity to share your organization’s needs.

2. Inventory

Depending on the project to be submitted, an “inventory” or “planning area description,” refers to one of the following:

- A description of the planning or service area, including the physical setting and conditions, and relevant demographic, program, and resource information.
- A list of proposed capital projects (land acquisitions, developments, renovations, and restorations).
- A report on the supply and condition of existing recreational facilities or opportunities, habitat conservation species, or relevant land types.

- A report on the projected annual maintenance and operational costs for each existing recreational or habitat conservation site in the inventory.

The purpose of an inventory is to provide the context for proposed improvement, renovation, or new projects. RCO requires no specific format for the inventory.

The inventory may include a comprehensive account of the area's facilities, lands, programs, and condition. It also may include local, state, federal, and private facilities and extend beyond the applicant's jurisdiction. The inventory may be completed in a quantitative or a qualitative (narrative) format.

Assessing the **condition** of your inventory is important. Sites and facility conditions will reveal weaknesses in your maintenance and operation, help identify facilities that may need renovation or replacement, and provide indicators of use levels. If you manage habitat or natural areas, you will want to assess the health of the natural systems, the extent of invasive species, adjacent land uses, and other issues. Habitat conservation elements may assess habitat types, certain species, threats, ownerships, and historical gains or losses.

Another key consideration is the **capacity** of your current inventory. Are ball fields under used or are teams turned away every season? Do park reservation sites fill up at the start of the year? Are trailhead parking lots full, causing people to park on adjacent streets? If a habitat or conservation plan, is there sufficient habitat to support desired species or functions?

Maps

RCO strongly encourages use of maps, especially with Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Mapping and GIS should be combined with the service area concept, in particular to determine whether recreation sites and facilities are found where people need them most. Research has found that the closer the opportunity, the more likely it is that people will use it.

3. Public Involvement

Include a description of how the planning process gave the public ample opportunity to be involved in plan development and adoption. Try and select methods that support the planning strategy. Even the best efforts sometimes do not provide sufficient information, data, or results. For example there may be a limited response to a survey or a poor turnout at a meeting. What works for one community may not work for another—be flexible. Some examples include the following:

- Internet surveys
- A citizen's task force or advisory committee
- Workshops
- Surveys or interviews (formal or informal)
- Community TV
- "Listening posts" and demonstrations
- Public meetings
- Round table discussions or focus groups

Selecting only one public involvement method may create unanticipated problems. For example, if using only public meetings, your plan can be unduly influenced by those who have the time to attend. There usually are many other people with different perspectives and interests unable to attend meetings for a variety of good reasons.

The public involvement process should be thorough and suitable to local conditions and the service area. However, you are strongly encouraged to gather as much objective data as possible.

Surveys are important. A survey can reveal opinions on need, willingness to pay, participation in recreation activities, interest in habitat protection, and so on. If you do not have the money to pay for a survey, you may find that secondary data sources can help fill in the gaps. RCO, for example, keeps recreation participation data useful to a regional level. The Washington Office of Financial Management has excellent population data, and also publishes an annual Washington State survey that includes recreation and other data.

Whatever the process, you should consider current public satisfaction with available sites and facilities, as well as public demand for additional sites and facilities. Allowing sufficient time for the public to respond is important.

Good documentation of public involvement and support is important. You'll need the documentation to defend your plan and the decisions you make because of the plan. Also, this documentation is one element used by RCO for evaluating grant projects.

4. Demand and Need Analysis

The analysis takes your inventory work and public involvement into consideration, balancing public demand with your organization's capacity. The analysis may indicate that the current inventory is sufficient if certain improvements are made. On the other hand, you may find that the public is demanding a significant expansion of sites and facilities. These demands may not be possible to meet with the resources you have now: your plan should include a way to make sure you get the resources you need.

Discuss both the community's and organization's priorities. Explain how the decision to acquire land, develop, preserve, enhance, restore, or manage was made. For example, what options were considered, which were rejected, and what are their advantages and disadvantages. Ultimately, the questions to be answered are "specifically, what does the community want" and "how do we know this to be true."

RCO recommends that "need" is best determined by assessing multiple criteria or metrics.

- For recreation projects, the criteria could include current levels of participation, anticipated change based on trends, capacity of your current inventory, distance between residential areas and existing opportunities in the planning service area, public satisfaction, manager needs, current maintenance levels, and access issues.
- For habitat projects, the criteria could include number and extent of species present, known threats, condition of available habitat, opportunities for habitat restoration or improvement, public support, management needs, stewardship levels, and the potential for compatible public access.

5. Capital Improvement Program

Include a capital improvement or capital facility program of at least 6 years that lists land acquisition, development, renovation, and restoration projects. The capital improvement program should include the list of projects in ranked order of preference, indicate the year of anticipated implementation, and include the plan for financing the projects. Include any capital project submitted to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board for funding. RCO considers all capital improvement and capital facility program costs as estimates.

6. Plan Adoption

Include a resolution, ordinance, or other adoption instrument showing formal approval of the plan and planning process by the governing entity. The level of governing entity approval must be equivalent to the plan's scope. Thus, a city or countywide plan must be approved at the council or commission level. Department heads, district rangers, regional managers or supervisors, etc., as determined by the applicant in coordination with RCO, will approve other plans.

Format Options

Because there are a wide variety of agency needs and approaches to planning, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board is flexible about the format and types of plans that may be submitted to meet eligibility requirements. Contact RCO staff if you have questions about your submission and meeting the planning requirement.

Here are two examples of acceptable formats:

- Adopt Recreation and Conservation Funding Board required elements into a larger plan, such as a regional, all-agency comprehensive, or Growth Management Act plan.
- Adopt Recreation and Conservation Funding Board required elements into individual plans for each program in which the grant applicant wishes to compete.
- Adopt Recreation and Conservation Funding Board required elements into individual plans for different types of recreation, such as a boating or trails plan.

Plan Eligibility

Standard Eligibility

Once the planning requirements are met, RCO grants eligibility for up to 6 calendar years from the date of plan adoption. This means, in some cases, less than 6 years of eligibility may be granted if, for example, the agency plans for a 6-year period yet does not adopt the plan quickly.

Extended Eligibility

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board provides the option of extended eligibility to newly created cities and counties that combine park and recreation and/or habitat conservation planning into the planning required under the Growth Management Act. This allows newly created cities or counties to compete for a board grant even though they only have a draft plan.

To qualify, the agency must submit a written request for extended eligibility when submitting a grant application to RCO. In such cases, the date of board eligibility and the date a county, city, or town is required to adopt its comprehensive plan under Chapter 36.70A Revised Code of Washington is the same. The agency must submit all materials to fulfill the board's planning requirements by this deadline.

This extended eligibility provision expires on the date established under Chapter 36.70A Revised Code of Washington.

Growth Management Act and Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Plans

The Growth Management Act encourages recreation and habitat conservation planning in several ways, including the following:

- A Growth Management Act goal designed to guide the development and adoption of comprehensive plans is to “Retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.”⁴
- “Each county and city shall adopt development regulations that protect critical areas...”⁵
- “Each comprehensive plan shall include...a land use element designating the proposed general distribution and general location and extent of the uses of land, where appropriate, for...recreation, open spaces...”⁶

⁴Revised Code of Washington 36.70A.020(9)

⁵Revised Code of Washington 36.70A.060(2)

⁶Revised Code of Washington 36.70A.070(1)

- “Comprehensive plans may include...other subjects relating to the physical development within its jurisdiction, including...recreation.”⁷
- “Each county and city that is required or chooses to prepare a comprehensive land use plan under RCW 36.70A.040⁸ shall identify open space corridors within and between urban growth areas. They shall include lands useful for recreation, wildlife habitat, trails, and connection of critical areas as defined in RCW 36.70A.030 (<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=36.70A.030>).”⁹
- “Whenever a state agency is considering awarding grants...for public facilities..., it shall consider whether the county, city, or town in whose planning jurisdiction the proposed facility is located has adopted a comprehensive plan and development regulations as required by RCW 36.70A.040...”
- “If a comprehensive plan, development regulation, or amendment...has been appealed...the county, city, or town may not be determined to be ineligible or otherwise penalized...during the pendency of the appeal [to the Growth Management Hearings Board]...”¹⁰

Many of the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board’s planning requirements parallel those in the Growth Management Act, including a capital facility element with inventory, forecast of future needs, and the multi-year financing plan. It is important that agencies working to meet the board’s planning requirements consult with the growth management planners in their jurisdictions. Not only is it likely that both planning groups will discover areas of mutual interest and concern, but they also will be able to discuss coordinating survey efforts, data sharing, and other efficiencies. Note, that the deadlines for the Growth Management Act and board planning requirements may differ.

Recently Added Growth Management Act Guidance

The Washington State Department of Commerce recently updated its Washington Administrative Codes that guide Growth Management Act planning. The [parks and recreation element](#) is available line.

⁷Revised Code of Washington 36.70A.080(1)(c)

⁸<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=36.70A.04>

⁹Revised Code of Washington 36.70A.160

¹⁰Revised Code of Washington 43.17.250

RCO Review

The applicant must submit a relevant plan to RCO for review. If RCO does not approve the plan, it will be returned, along with the reason the plan was rejected. Applicants may make any necessary corrections and re-submit the plan to RCO. If RCO approves the plan, the applicant is eligible to participate in identified grant programs for up to 6 years from the date of adoption by the applicant's governing entity. After that period, the applicant must submit a new or revised plan to retain eligibility.

Submitting Draft Plans

If you are currently planning, you are welcome to consult with RCO staff at any time. You may submit an outline, draft, or other material for RCO staff review. A draft or preliminary review helps determine any need for additional technical assistance and can be more efficient for applicants working under a compressed time line.

For this review to result in an accepted plan, RCO encourages agencies seeking eligibility to submit their plans in draft form as early in the year as possible or in the year before submitting an application. This allows staff time to advise applicants of anything that may need correction before the planning deadline.

Submitting a Final Plan for Approval

Once you have completed your process, all planning materials must be adopted by your governing board and received by RCO, in final form, by the planning deadline.¹¹ This ensures you have completed the planning process before applying for grants. Check the RCO Web site for the planning [deadline](#).

Agencies not meeting established deadlines are declared ineligible for the current grant cycle.

RCO staff will review the plan for consistency with the Washington Administrative Code and the policies and guidelines found in this manual.

Agencies that apply for a board grant in the same year that their planning eligibility expires must ensure that eligibility¹² extends through the funding meeting in which the project will first be considered.

¹¹Washington Administrative Code 286-13-040(2)

¹²6 years from the date of adoption.

Applicants may find current year [funding meeting dates](#) on RCO's Web site.

Self-Certification

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board uses a self-certification system to ensure completion of its planning requirements. This means that each applicant must do the following:

1. Complete the requirements described in this manual.
2. Use the Self-Certification Form 222 in Appendix B to certify that the requirements are complete.
3. Provide the supporting planning documents electronically, signed self-certification form, and copies of adoption materials to RCO for acceptance.

Appendix A: Terms and Definitions

Terms Defined in State Law

"Recreation" means those activities of a voluntary and leisure time nature that aid in promoting entertainment, pleasure, play, relaxation, or instruction.¹³

Any city or town in this state acting through its council or other legislative body, and any separately organized park district acting through its board of park commissioners or other governing officers, shall have power to acquire by donation, purchase or condemnation, and to construct and maintain public auditoriums, art museums, swimming pools, and athletic and recreational fields, including golf courses, buildings and facilities within or without its parks, and to use or let the same for such public and private purposes for such compensation and rental and upon such conditions as its council or other legislative body or board of park commissioners shall from time to time prescribe.¹⁴

Any county or city may acquire by purchase, gift, devise, bequest, grant or exchange, title to or any interests or rights in real property to be provided or preserved for (a) park or recreational purposes, viewpoint or greenbelt purposes, (b) the conservation of land or other natural resources, or (c) historic, scenic, or view purposes.¹⁵

Any county, acting through its board of county commissioners, is empowered to build, construct, care for, control, supervise, improve, operate and maintain parks, playgrounds, gymnasiums, swimming pools, field houses, bathing beaches, stadiums, golf courses, automobile race tracks and drag strips, coliseums for the display of spectator sports,

¹³Revised Code of Washington 79A.05.010

¹⁴Revised Code of Washington 35.21.020

¹⁵Revised Code of Washington 36.34.340

public campgrounds, boat ramps and launching sites, public hunting and fishing areas, arboretums, bicycle and bridle paths, and other recreational facilities.¹⁶

Terms Defined in the Washington Administrative Code

The Department of Natural Resources has developed definitions found in [Washington Administrative Code 332-52-010](#) online.

The State Parks and Recreation Commission has its definitions in [Washington Administrative Code 352-32-010](#) online.

Commonly-Used Terms and Suggested Definitions

RCO has found that many terms commonly used in recreation planning do not have consistent definitions from one plan to another. We suggest, but do not require, the following definitions:

Access: The public's ability to physically use land or water.

Active recreation: Predominately human muscle powered.

Capital Improvement Program (CIP): A list or description of proposal capital projects.

Capital project: A project that results in acquisition of new property or a new built facility.

Consumptive: Recreation that physically consumes resources; examples include berry picking, shellfish harvest, hunting, fishing.

Development: A development project is construction or work resulting in new elements, including but not limited to structures, facilities, and/or materials to enhance outdoor recreation resources.

Dispersed: Recreation that is scattered or spread across the landscape and not concentrated at a specific site. Examples include trail uses, camping, walking, cycling, and jogging.

Impact (low, medium, high): The effect that recreational uses have on resources including but not limited to soils, water, species, habitat, sites, and facilities.

¹⁶Revised Code of Washington 36.68.090 emphasis added

Improve: Expanding an existing site or facility to serve more uses or more types of use.

Level of Service: Measure of the current status of a park and recreation system as a whole.

Maintain: To maintain existing areas and facilities through repairs and upkeep for the benefit of outdoor recreationists.

Multiple-use: Use by more than one type of recreation on the same facility.

Non-consumptive: Resource recreation that depends on, but does not consume, resources; for example, photographing wildlife.

Park: Land or an area set aside for a special purpose, but particularly for leisure or recreation.

- Neighborhood park has a service area of a reasonable walking distance, up to 1 mile.
- Community park has a service area that includes the city limits of a town or city.
- Regional park is intended to serve populations from multiple jurisdictions.
- State park is owned by the State of Washington.
- Marine park is intended for access via watercraft.
- Day-use park does not allow overnight uses such as camping.
- Camping is an overnight stay in a tent or other non-permanent structure.
- Seasonal parks are intended for use in specific seasons.

Passive: Activities usually conducted in place and requiring minimal physical exertion such as picnicking, watching a sports event, sun bathing, or relaxing.

Renovate or renovation: The activities intended to improve an existing site or structure in order to increase its useful service life beyond original expectations or functions. This does not include maintenance activities to maintain the facility for its originally expected useful life.

Restoration: Bringing a site back to its historic function as part of a natural ecosystem or improving the ecological functionality of a site.

Shared use: Use by more than one type of recreation on the same facility.

Trail: According to the Washington State Trails Plan (RCO, 2013) "...a path, route, way, right-of-way, or corridor posted, signed, or designated as open for travel or passage by the general public but not normally designated as open for the transportation of commercial goods or services by motorized vehicles...an opportunity to experience solitude or companionship, recreation or challenge; an opportunity for the appreciation of nature; a means of achieving renewal of body, mind, and spirit." A trail is a recreational facility that also can serve as a non-motorized route for transportation.

Appendix B: Self-Certification Form

Self-Certification Form

The form is a reproducible master. On the first three lines, enter the name and adoption date of the plans and other documents submitted in fulfillment of the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board's planning requirement. If more space is needed, use the reverse.

Check or initial each plan element that will be provided to RCO with this form. In the right column, enter information that will enable RCO staff to locate quickly each item initialed.

Certify the accuracy of the information on the form by completing the signature line and submit all material to RCO according to the submission requirements for final plans.

Planning Process Self-Certification Form		
Use this form to certify that the need for your project has been determined through an appropriate planning process. Provide the completed form with the subject plans and adoption documentation to RCO via e-mail or other means of electronic access (i.e. Box.com, OneDrive, etc.).		
Organization Name:		
Name and adoption date of documents submitted in fulfillment of this requirement:		
▶		
▶		
▶		
Check or Initial Each to Certify Completion	Plan Element Certification	Document and Page Number Location of Information
	1. Goals, objectives: The attached plan supports our project with broad statements of intent (goals) <i>and</i> measures that describe when these intents will be attained (objectives). Goals may include a higher level of service.	
	2. Inventory: The plan includes a description of the service area’s facilities, lands, programs, and their condition. <i>(This may be done in a quantitative format or in a qualitative/narrative format.)</i>	
	3. Public involvement: The planning process gave the public ample opportunity to be involved in plan development and adoption.	
	4a. Demand and need analysis: In the plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An analysis defines priorities, as appropriate, for acquisition, development, preservation, enhancement, management, etc., and explains why these actions are needed. • The process used in developing the analysis assessed community desires for parks, recreation, open space, and/or habitat, as appropriate, in a manner appropriate for the service area (personal observation, informal talks, formal survey(s), workshops, etc.). 	
	4b. Level of Service assessment (optional): An assessment of the criterion appropriate to your community. Possibly establish a higher level of service as a plan goal (above).	
	5. Capital Improvement Program: The plans includes a capital improvement/facility program that lists land acquisition, development, and renovation projects by year of anticipated implementation; include funding source. The program includes any capital project submitted to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board for funding.	
	6. Adoption: The plans and process has received formal governing body approval <i>(that is, city/county department head, district ranger, regional manager/supervisor, etc., as appropriate)</i> . Attach resolution, letter, or other adoption instrument.	

I certify that this information is true and complete to the best of my knowledge.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C: Level of Service Tool and Guide

Level of Service for Local Agencies

The level of service tool works best for local communities considering grants from these grant programs:

- Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA)
- Boating Facilities Program (BFP)
- Land and Water Conservation Fund LWCF—State and Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership programs
- Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP)
- Youth Athletic Facilities (YAF)

Level of Service Summary Local Agencies					
Indicators and Criteria For Local Agencies	A	B	C	D	E
Quantity Criteria					
Number of Parks and Recreation Facilities Percentage difference between existing quantity or per capita average of parks and recreation facilities and the desired quantity or per capita average	<10%	11-20%	21-30%	31-40%	>41%
Facilities that Support Active Recreation Opportunities Percentage of facilities that support or encourage active (muscle-powered) recreation opportunities	>60%	51-60%	41-50%	31-40%	<30%
Facility Capacity Percentage of demand met by existing facilities	>75%	61-75%	46-60%	30-45%	<30%
Quality Criteria					
Agency-Based Assessment Percentage of facilities that are fully functional for their specific design and safety guidelines	>80%	61-80%	41-60%	20-40%	<20%
Public Satisfaction Percentage of population satisfied with the condition, quantity, or distribution of existing active park and recreation facilities	>65%	51-65%	36-50%	25-35%	<25%
Distribution and Access Criteria					
Population within Service Areas Percentage of population within the following services areas (considering barriers to access): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.5 mile of a neighborhood park/trail • 5 miles of a community park/trail • 25 miles of a regional park/trail 	>75%	61-75%	46-60%	30-45%	<30%
Access Percentage of parks and recreation facilities that may be accessed safely via foot, bicycle, or public transportation	>80%	61-80%	41-60%	20-40%	<20%

Quantity Criteria

Indicators and Criteria For Local Agencies	A	B	C	D	E
Quantity Criteria					
Number of Parks and Recreation Facilities Percentage difference between existing quantity or per capita average of parks and recreation facilities and the desired quantity or per capita average.	<10%	11-20%	21-30%	31-40%	>41%
Facilities that Support Active Recreation Opportunities Percentage of facilities that support or encourage active (muscle-powered) recreation opportunities	>60%	51-60%	41-50%	31-40%	<30%
Facility Capacity Percentage of demand met by existing facilities	>75%	61-75%	46-60%	30-45%	<30%

Number of Parks and Recreation Facilities

This indicator measures the quantity of existing park and recreation facilities in a community. It is intended as a classic comparison of population to available facilities: it measures the difference between the existing per capita average of park and recreation facilities and the desired per capita average with respect to the desired quantity of facilities. It is based on goals found in local community plans, as well as national guidelines such as those published several years ago by the National Recreation and Park Association.

Whether to include school facilities is a community choice.

Example: your community may have a planned goal of 5 acres of park for each 1,000 people. Your current inventory is 3 acres for each 1,000 people. The difference is 2 acres per thousand, or 40 percent. The result is a “D” on the level of service.

Facilities that Support Active Recreation Opportunities

This indicator measures the percent of facilities that support or encourage active recreation opportunities. “Active recreation” is defined as predominantly muscle-powered: walking, jogging, paddling, cycling, field and court sports, and so on. The indicator provides a more direct measure of a park and recreation system’s ability to encourage participation in activities through the types of facilities (and potentially programs) it offers.

Whether to include school facilities is a community choice.

Example: Your community has 40 park and recreation sites, 30 of which support active recreation, such as walking, field sports, court sports, and so on. The other 10 sites support passive recreation. The active sites are 75 percent of the total inventory. The result is an "A" on the level of service.

Facility Capacity

This indicator measures the existing capacity of a community's park and recreation facilities.

Whether to include school facilities is a community choice.

Example: You decide what your capacity may be, either the system as a whole, or specific site or facility types. You determine, whether by survey or estimate, the actual use and compare it to the capacity. Your ball fields have capacity for 100 regular season adult games, and you are being asked to schedule 125. You are meeting 80 percent of demand with your current capacity. The result is an "A" on the level of service.

Quality Criteria

Indicators and Criteria For Local Agencies	A	B	C	D	E
Quality Criteria					
Agency-Based Assessment Percentage of facilities that are fully functional for their specific design and safety guidelines	>80%	61-80%	41-60%	20-40%	<20%
Public Satisfaction Percentage of population satisfied with the condition, quantity, or distribution of existing active park and recreation facilities	>65%	51-65%	36-50%	25-35%	<25%

Agency-Based Assessment

This indicator measures the current status or condition of existing park and recreation facilities, as determined by park and recreation staff. You assess the percentage of sites and facilities that are fully functional for the specific design and safety guidelines you have assigned to them.

Example: You assess your park and recreation inventory of 50 sites. You find that five are substandard; the rest, 90 percent, are fully functional according to your own standards. The result is an “A” on the level of service.

Public Satisfaction

This indicator measures the public’s satisfaction with the condition, quantity, or distribution of existing park and recreation facilities in their community.

Example: You survey your community and find that 55 percent are satisfied or highly satisfied with your parks and recreation sites and facilities. The result is a “B” on the level of service.

Distribution and Access Criteria

Indicators and Criteria For Local Agencies	A	B	C	D	E
Distribution and Access Criteria					
Population within Service Areas Percentage of population within the following services areas (considering barriers to access): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.5 mile of a neighborhood park/trail • 5 miles of a community park/trail • 25 miles of a regional park/trail 	>75%	61-75%	46-60%	30-45%	<30%
Access Percentage of parks and recreation facilities that may be accessed safely via foot, bicycle, or public transportation	>80%	61-80%	41-60%	20-40%	<20%

Population within Service Areas

This indicator measures the distribution of and population served by existing park and recreation facilities in a community. This indicator requires the use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and should incorporate access points, barriers to access, and census block data into the analysis.

Whether to include school facilities is a local choice.

Example: You map your community and compare service areas to population. You find that 55 percent of your population is within a half mile of a local park. The result is a “C” on the level of service.

Access

This indicator measures the ability of people to access park and recreation facilities without a personal motorized vehicle. The measure is an estimate of pedestrian, bicycle, and public transportation access to park and recreation facilities. It may be investigated with the help of GIS.

Example: You have 100 park and recreation sites and 25 are in neighborhoods and can be gotten to by using sidewalks. An additional 10 are on bus stops. You think all parks can be reached with a bicycle, but staff reports few bicycles in the bike racks, and there is no demand for additional bike racks. You conclude that 35 sites are accessible without a car. That is 35 percent of the total inventory. The result is a “D” on the level of service.

Level of Service for State Agencies

The state agency level of service tool may be useful for federal as well as state agency applicants in the Boating Facilities Program, Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities program, and the Recreational Trails Program, especially the criteria concerning resource protection.

Like the local agency level of service, it is based on three categories. However, the elements of the criteria have been modified to recognize the difference in what state agencies provide as compared to local agencies. The state agency level of service is summarized in the table below.

Level of Service Summary State and Federal Agencies					
Indicators and Criteria for State and Federal Agencies	A	B	C	D	E
Quantity Criteria					
Capital Facility Development Biennial average percentage of unmet capital facility development (redevelopment, renovation, and/or restoration) goals	<30%	30-40%	41-50%	51-60%	>60%
Indicators and Criteria for State and Federal Agencies	A	B	C	D	E
Quality Criteria					
Agency-Based Assessment Percentage of facilities that are fully functional per their specific design and safety guidelines	>80%	61-80%	41-60%	20-40%	<20%
Public Satisfaction Percentage of visitor population satisfied with existing park and outdoor recreation facilities/experiences/opportunities	>65%	51-65%	36-50%	25-35%	<25%
Access Criteria					
Sustainable Access Percentage of access/recreation areas/facilities that provide sustainable recreation opportunities (e.g. help protect natural and cultural resources, use green infrastructure to strengthen natural processes, minimize encroachment and/or user-developed facilities, prohibit poaching, etc.)	>65%	56-65%	46-55%	36-45%	<35%

Quantity Criteria

Indicators and Criteria for State and Federal Agencies	A	B	C	D	E
Quantity Criteria					
Capital Facility Development Biennial average percentage of unmet capital facility development (redevelopment, renovation, and/or restoration) goals	<30%	30-40%	41-50%	51-60%	>60%

Capital Facility Development

This indicator measures the biennial average percent of unmet capital facility development goals for a state agency. Capital facility development goals generally are defined as any redevelopment, renovation, or restoration projects.

Example: Your agency capital plan may call for investment of \$70 million in a biennium but only \$30 million is available. The 50 percent difference would result in a “C” on the level of service.

Example: You may have scheduled 50 projects for completion but were able to complete only 10; 80 percent of your projects were not completed. This would result in an “E” on the level of service.

Quality Criteria

Indicators and Criteria for State and Federal Agencies	A	B	C	D	E
Quality Criteria					
Agency-Based Assessment Percentage of facilities that are fully functional per their specific design and safety guidelines	>80%	61-80%	41-60%	20-40%	<20%
Public Satisfaction Percentage of visitor population satisfied with existing park and outdoor recreation facilities/experiences/opportunities	>65%	51-65%	36-50%	25-35%	<25%

Agency-Based Assessment

This indicator measures the current status or condition of existing park and recreation facilities, as determined by park and recreation staff.

Example: You assess your access and recreation site inventory of 50 units. You find that five are substandard; the rest, 90 percent, are fully functional according to your own standards. The result is an “A” on the level of service.

Public Satisfaction

This indicator measures the public’s satisfaction with current access and recreation facilities, experiences, and opportunities.

Example: You survey your constituents or user groups and find that 55 percent are satisfied or highly satisfied with your parks and recreation sites and facilities. The result is a “B” on the level of service.

Access Criteria

Indicators and Criteria for State and Federal Agencies	A	B	C	D	E
Access Criteria					
Sustainable Access Percentage of access/recreation areas/facilities that provide sustainable recreation opportunities (e.g. help protect natural and cultural resources, use green infrastructure to strengthen natural processes, minimize encroachment and/or user-developed facilities, prohibit poaching, etc.)	>65%	56-65%	46-55%	36-45%	<35%

Sustainable Access

This indicator measures the provision of sustainable recreation opportunities at state-managed parks, recreation areas, and facilities. Sustainable access generally is defined as recreation opportunities that do not substantially degrade natural, cultural, and historic resources, or provide a measure of protection for these resources.

Examples of sustainable access may include facilities that help protect natural, cultural, and historic resources; use green infrastructure to strengthen natural processes, minimize encroachment, or user-developed facilities, and/or prohibit poaching, among others.

Example: A trail in a riparian area is unsustainable. A re-routed trail on terrain that drains well would be sustainable. Your total system adds up to 250 miles; 35 miles are in

sensitive riparian areas, making 86 percent of the inventory sustainable. The result is an "A" on the level of service.

It is up to the agency to determine its resource protection goals and how well they are being met. However, the measure is meaningless unless access is being provided.

Habitat and conservation projects cannot overlook the issue of public access. Access can be important for public support: Even a nature trail with a few interpretive panels could help establish the public support needed to secure and protect a site. Habitat planning proactively should encourage appropriate access.