



Survey Background: Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities Program

Applicant survey Due Dec 19, 2025

Introduction

RCO is considering policy changes to NOVA for the 2026 grant round (November of 2026). We aim to get preliminary feedback from applicants via the [accompanying survey](#).

No decisions are being made currently. If policy proposals are developed based on this survey, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board will consider those in April of 2026, after a public comment period.

Use this document alongside the survey to gain more context and definitions for each of the survey questions.

The survey questions are general in nature, to help us scope out useful options. If/when we move forward, we will develop more detailed policy proposals you will see sometime in early 2026.

The survey questions assume at least a good familiarity with the NOVA program, its policies, and the evaluation criteria, and funding outcomes.

If you have questions about the NOVA program, or anything in this survey, or need help completing it, please email or call Adam Cole at adam.cole@rco.wa.gov or 360-725-3939.

If needed, you can also reference the following program materials and history:

- NOVA Websites: [Education/Enforcement](#), "[Trails](#)"
- [Education and Enforcement Program Manual](#)
- "[Trails](#)" [Program Manual](#) (Nonmotorized, Nonhighway Road, ORV/Motorized)

- Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Materials on NOVA Changes (see item 8D) here <https://rco.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/RCFB-Draft-MeetingMinutes-June2025.pdf>
- June 24 RCFB meeting: [Recreation and Conservation Funding Board - TVW](#)

Question 4 - 5

We are considering options to increase the impact of NOVA grants, improving efficiency, and reducing workload for applicants in obtaining grants. The goal is to reduce the number of grants an organization needs to fund the NOVA supported work within their jurisdiction. Larger grants may also create greater impact, for example, through larger work crews, taking advantage of economies of scale, and funding longer-term projects while retaining staff. Essentially allowing a deeper dive into the needs on the landscape through a larger contribution from NOVA.

This question aims to see what applicants favor in terms of "larger grants."

"Larger grants" are:

1. increasing grant limits
2. creating opportunities for "longer-term grants"
3. or allowing "combination grants," allowing combine scopes of work that are currently required to be applied for separately in the 4 NOVA funding categories (Education and Enforcement, Nonmotorized, Nonhighway Road, and ORV/Motorized)
4. or implementing all of these concepts at once (a higher limit, combination, and longer-term grant).

Terms in this question:

"Raising grant limits modestly." This means increasing the amount an applicant may request in each funding category by around \$50,000. Here are the current grant limits:

- Education and Enforcement: \$250,000 per biennium
- Nonmotorized, Non-highway Road: \$200,000 (maintenance-operations, and development and land acquisition projects)
- ORV/Motorized: \$250,000 (maintenance-operations), no limit on development and land acquisition projects.

"Longer-Term Grants." This means creating an opportunity for some grants in each funding category to not have to compete in the subsequent biennium. For example, if a grant is funded

highly in one biennium, it could be resubmitted next grant round for the same amount and scope of work for the same or nearby facility and be funded first over those that must compete. Long-term grants may offer applicants a more stable funding solution to their operations.

However, we are only considering offering this as a limited part of the overall NOVA funding. For example, a longer-term grant may be offered to only a select number of projects (3-5?) in each fund category based on one or more predetermined policy variables such as high rank but limited to no more than one longer-term grant to any single applicant or agency, thereby ensuring more than one applicant or agency receives them. If successful, this option could be expanded in the future. Longer-Term grants are only being considered for maintenance operations, and education and enforcement grants.

"Combination Grants." Combination grants in this context refers to grant applications that would combine scopes of work that are currently only eligible in one of the current fund categories (Nonmotorized, Nonhighway Road, ORV/Motorized). Allowing combination grants means eliminating the need to apply for NOVA funds by funding category. In other words, a single combination grant request could include maintenance, education and enforcement scopes of work that benefit Nonmotorized, Nonhighway Road, and ORV/Motorized users.

If this change were to be implemented, RCO would still allocate NOVA funds per the statutory requirements of 30% to education and enforcement projects, and 70% equally divided by Nonmotorized, Nonhighway Road, and ORV/Motorized.

This idea would benefit applicants by not having to apply for multiple grants in the same local for mixed use facilities.

RCO foresees having a higher grant limit for combination grants if we move to this model.

Question 7 - 8

Larger grants may mean fewer awards each grant round, and potentially more concentrated in certain parts state, or by agency/applicant.

A way to ensure the program is distributive in nature is to either create "set asides" for minimal funding geographically, and for "small agencies," or for facilities that do not receive NOVA funds frequently. Therefore, RCO is considering two things:

- 1) (Question 7) Establish Funding Regions. RCO could break up the state into several groupings of counties (for example) and allocate at least a minimal amount (or proportional, based on population or other data) for projects in each of those areas thereby ensuring state-wide grant-making.

- 2) (Question 8) First Time/Long Time Applicants. Identifying a limited amount of funds each grant round go to first time applicants, or to projects that have not been awarded funds over a period of time ensures the program maintains a distributive policy mechanism.

Question 11 - 12

The current definition of "Sport Parks" is "a facility designed to accommodate competitive off-road vehicle recreational uses including, but not limited to, motocross racing, four-wheel drive competitions, and flat track racing. Use of off-road vehicle sports parks may be competitive or noncompetitive in nature."

Questions 13

- The purpose of policy changes in the evaluation criteria is to address stakeholder feedback that NOVA is too focused on areas of the state with large recreational landscapes, that get relatively high use and are near population centers.
- The evaluation criterion/criteria below and possible direction for change are only related to Nonmotorized, Non-highway Road, and ORV/Motorized categories. Not Education and Enforcement – unless otherwise noted.

Evaluation Criterion	Prioritizes	Policy Concern	To Do
1. Need 2. Need Fulfillment	Need for funding based on conditions and user demand.	Overly favors applicants with "larger landscapes" over small recreation areas and those with lower usage.	Examine the criteria to balance need, usage, and support for remote or smaller recreation areas.
8. Predominantly Natural	Landscapes with no or little development, and views of predominantly natural scenery.	Prioritizes forested areas over open landscapes near working lands and urbanized areas.	Strike the criterion or include evaluative elements that prioritize diverse recreational contexts.
9. Project Support	Projects with demonstrated user support	Benefits areas with high use	Modify criterion in line with new project support criterion in other RCO

Evaluation Criterion	Prioritizes	Policy Concern	To Do
	often in the form of letters of support.	near urban areas.	programs that focus on agency outreach to diverse groups and how input is reflected in the project proposal.
11. Matching Shares	Prioritize projects that provide match.	Benefits projects close to urban areas where volunteerism and donations are high.	Strike the criterion, reduce the weight of the criterion, or introduce variables that “even the playing field” for outlying recreation areas or lesser used areas.
12. County Population Density	Prioritizes projects near population centers.	Disadvantages projects in less populated areas of the state.	Reduce the weight of the criteria from 2 points to 1.
13. Proximity to People (these are statutorily required)			

Summary of Criteria

Criteria	Title	Questions by Category and Project Type	Maximum Points	NOVA Plan Policy
Scored by Advisory Committee				
1. Need		All	15 Points	A-1, C-7
		Maintenance and Operation	25 Points	
2. Need fulfillment		All	15 Points	A-1, C-6, C-7
		Maintenance and Operation	25 Points	
3. Site suitability		Acquisition	15 Points	C-15
		Combination Acquisition and Development	5 Points	
4. Project design		Development	10 Points	C-1, C-5, C-7, C-8, C-14
		Combination Acquisition and Development	5 Points	
5. Planning		Planning	10 Points	C-6, C-15
6. Sustainability		All projects, except Maintenance	5 Points	
7. Readiness to proceed		All projects, except Maintenance	5 Points	
8. Predominantly natural		Nonmotorized and Nonhighway Road Categories only	5 Points	C-13
9. Project support		All	10 Points	C-3, C-4
10. Cost-benefit		All	5 Points	A-1, C-3
Scored by RCO				
11. Matching shares		All	5	C-4
12. County population density		All	1	C-2
13. Proximity to people		All	1	C-2
14. Growth Management Act preference		All	0	
Nonhighway and Nonmotorized Total Points Possible			77	
Off-road Vehicle Total Possible Points			72	

KEY:

All=includes acquisition, development, maintenance and operation, and planning project types.

Question 14

Current Detailed Match Criterion in NOVA (excluding Education and Enforcement)

11. Matching shares (applicant does not answer). What percentage of the total project cost is the applicant contributing?

RCO staff scores this question based on information provided in the application. Only elements considered reimbursable are eligible for use as an applicant's match. For evaluation scoring purposes, an RCO grant used as match will not count toward the award of matching share points. No additional information is required.

▲ Point Range: zero to five points.

Zero points	0-10 percent of project's value will be contributed by the applicant.
One point	10.01-20 percent of project's value will be contributed by the applicant.
Two points	20.01-30 percent of project's value will be contributed by the applicant.
Three points	30.01-40 percent of project's value will be contributed by the applicant.
Four points	40.01-50 percent of project's value will be contributed by the applicant.
Five points	More than 50 percent of project's value will be contributed by the applicant.

Question 20

Current Detailed Need and Need Fulfillment in NOVA (excluding Education and Enforcement)

Detailed Evaluation Criteria

For each question scored by the advisory committee, descriptive text and bullets are provided to help applicants and evaluators. A successful proposal need not address each consideration, nor is the list all inclusive.

1. **Need.** What is the need for new, improved, or maintained facilities?⁶⁴ (Applicants respond only to bulleted items clearly relevant to their projects.)

A) State, Regional, Land Manager, or Community Needs

- Cite any publicly reviewed and adopted plan that supports the need for the project by name, location, or type.
- Describe why NOVA funds are critical to the completion of this project (current physical condition, safety, environmental issues, imminent threat of loss of recreation, etc.)

B) Inventory Issues

- Describe similar opportunities now available in the local area.
- Describe the need for new and/or improved facilities in the service area. For example, are there overcrowding issues? Is this a unique recreational experience?
- Describe any significant maintenance backlog in the project area.

C) Use

- Describe how accessible (including to people with disabilities) the finished project will be to intended users.
- Describe how heavily trails and support facilities in the area are used.
- Describe any unserved or underserved user groups.

- ▲ Point Range: zero to five points, which staff later multiplies by three for all projects except maintenance and operation projects, which are multiplied by five.

Zero points	No or very weak need established.
One to two points	Fair to moderate need established.
Three points	Strong need established.
Four to five points	Very high to exceptional: several points made to establish need.

2. Need fulfillment. How well will this project fulfill the service area's needs identified in Question 1? (Applicants respond only to bulleted items clearly relevant to the project.)

- How does the project meet the applicant's stated goals and objectives?
- How does the project meet the needs identified in the service area?
- How will the project meet the needs of any underserved user groups?
- How have intended users been included in the planning process and how has their feedback been addressed?

▲ Point Range: zero to five points, which staff later multiplies by three, for all projects except maintenance and operation projects, which are multiplied by five.

Zero points	No or weak evidence of need satisfaction.
One to two points	Fair to moderate evidence. Project fills only a small portion of the apparent or expressed need.
Three points	Strong evidence. An important need will be addressed by the project, although that need will not be filled completely by the project as proposed.
Four to five points	Very high to exceptional evidence. The project fulfills a critical need.

Question 22

Current Detailed Predominantly Natural Criterion:

- 8. Predominantly natural** (off-road vehicle applicants do not answer this question).
Is the project site in a predominantly natural setting? (Applicants respond only to bulleted items clearly relevant to the project.)

Consider the project's immediate physical setting, not its distance from structures that affect the setting. Apart from the proposal, to what extent does the user experience the natural environment versus human structures and activities: buildings, radio/cell towers, roads, dams, etc.?

A setting does not need to be pristine or untouched to rate a high score:

- A second growth forest often is sufficiently natural.
- A remote high camp or ridge-top trail can afford distant views of cities or towns.
- A campground or trailhead can be located adjacent to or at the end of a paved road.
- The number of people using the facility will not detract necessarily from the setting or desired recreational experience.

When evaluators score this question, they will look at the natural setting of the location, not the facility proposed for funding.

▲ Point Range: zero to five points.

Zero points	No evidence presented, or site is not natural.
One to two points	Setting is not very natural: too much noise, too many roads, clear cuts, etc.
Three to four points	Setting is mostly natural. Though it may be adjacent to a clear cut or touch a road, virtually all views and sounds are natural.
Five points	Setting is natural. Any trees are predominately mature, sights and sounds are all natural.

Question 26

Current Detailed Project Support Criterion:

- 9. Project support.** To what extent do users and the public support the project?
(Applicants respond only to bulleted items clearly relevant to the project.)

Support can be demonstrated in both financial and non-financial ways and varies depending upon the project type. In scoring this question, evaluators consider the type of support that is most relevant to the project. Examples of support or endorsement include the following:

- Voter-approved initiatives and bond issues.
- Donations to help complete the project: labor, equipment, money, materials, or land.
- Advisory board approval, completion of a public planning process that endorsed this project.
- Positive letters, oral testimony at public meetings, or support from friends or user groups.
- Positive (or the absence of extensive negative) media coverage.

▲ Point Range: zero to five points, which staff later multiplies by two.

Zero points	No or very weak evidence presented.
One to two points	Minimal to fair specific evidence of support.
Three points	Moderate support.
Four to five points	Exceptional to overwhelming support.

Question 31

Current Detailed Planning Criterion:

- 5. Planning** (planning projects). To what extent will the proposed plan or study help provide opportunities and address sustainability of the natural environment?⁶⁸
(Applicants respond only to bulleted items clearly relevant to the project.)

Recreation Benefit and Public Involvement Factors

- Will this project directly benefit the intended recreation? Explain. (For example, will it result in a development proposal or will more planning be required?)
- What are the results of any public involvement in the planning proposal?

Proposed Plan Scope and Outcomes Factors

- Are the project's planning goals and objectives appropriate? Explain.
- Is the proposed plan or study cost-effective?
- Does the plan or study reflect current planning or design standards or is the approach untested?
- Are there any conditions on site or in the study area that might require extraordinary or unique planning or design efforts?
- What is the complexity or feasibility of environmental mitigation that could be required?
- Does the plan or study address maintenance and stewardship of the planning area?
- What are the qualifications and experience of the personnel, including consultants?

▲ Point Range: zero to five points, which staff later multiplies by two.

Zero points	Evidence is vague, or it appears that the project will not lead to new opportunities for the intended type of recreation.
One to two points	Fair to moderate evidence. Proposal likely will lead to weak or below average new recreation opportunities.
Three points	Good. Proposal likely will lead to an above average or several solid recreation opportunities.
Four to five points	Very good to excellent. Proposal likely will lead to an outstanding opportunity in the intended recreation type.

Question 33

Current Detailed County Density and Population Proximity Criterion:

- 12. County population density** (applicant does not answer). Is the project site in a county with a population density greater than 250 people per square mile?

RCO staff will score this question based on maps provided with the application. The policy is supported by Revised Code of Washington 79A.25.250 and NOVA Plan policies in appendix B.

▲ Point Range: zero to one point.

Zero points	No
One point	Yes

- 13. Proximity to people** (applicant does not answer). Is the project site within thirty miles of a city with a population of twenty-five thousand people or more?

RCO staff will score this question based on maps provided with the application. The policy is supported by Revised Code of Washington 79A.25.250 and NOVA Plan policies in appendix B.

▲ Point Range: zero to one point.

Zero points	No
One point	Yes