

Providing Comment at a Board Meeting

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board encourages public participation in its discussions and activities.

About the Board's Process

This document will help you understand the grant process and decide how best to share your comments.

The board uses an open process to ensure that its decisions are fair and based on objective criteria.

How Projects Get to the Board

Grant applicants compete for board funding. A grant proposal must meet the requirements for the grant program. These requirements are described in grant manuals, and include eligibility, match, planning requirements, and more. You can find the manuals at www.rco.wa.gov/doc_pages/manuals_by_number.shtml.

Advisory committees evaluate proposals against the criteria set by the board. Committees are made up of volunteers who have experience in recreation and conservation issues; many of their names are listed on the board's website. The evaluation sessions are open to the public.

Each grant program has unique evaluation criteria, but they generally include community support and involvement. The board encourages each grant applicant to demonstrate adequate public notification and review.

The advisory committees score projects, and the Recreation and Conservation Office uses the scores to create a list of projects eligible for funding. We call this a "ranked list" because it is listed in order from the highest to the lowest score in that category. The ranked list is presented to the board for funding consideration; every cycle, deserving applicants are turned away due to lack of funding.

Correspondence from the public is sent to board members at the same time as the list (about two weeks before the meeting).

Projects also come before the board when a change occurs to the project that requires board approval. These changes include conversion to a different use, a scope change, and some time extensions.

How Can You Influence a Project?

If you are concerned about a project, a good first step is to contact the local government to learn about the approval process for that project. Many of the steps – such as environmental impact statements and permitting – require public hearings. You can participate in those hearings and write letters to decision makers to share your concerns.

Role of the Board in Land Use Issues

People sometimes attend board meetings to present concerns about how projects will affect their communities. Although the board allows such testimony, some of the issues are outside the board's authority and must be resolved by local planning departments or elected officials.

Land use decisions, such as a project's location, environmental impact, zoning, or other effects on a community, are outside the board's authority. The board's evaluation committees may score a project on how well it conforms to a community comprehensive plan, but the board does not review the decision of the local government on whether a project meets its zoning or has thoroughly addressed environmental impacts.

Grant agreements require the grant recipient to secure all permits before beginning construction. The grant recipient can work with board staff to change the scope of a project based on what they learn during the permitting or public hearing phases. If a project cannot be completed for permitting or other reasons, the board moves the funding to other grant proposals.

Tips on Making Effective Comments

Start by introducing yourself for the record. Indicate whether you are representing yourself or a group.

Address your comments to board members, not to the audience.

Speak into the microphone.

Explain why you are interested in the project or subject.

Make your remarks brief and clear; limit your comments to 3 minutes.

Avoid being too technical.

Do not repeat remarks made by others. If you know that others will be offering similar comments, try to coordinate and avoid duplication.

Comment only on issues relevant to the discussion.

State opinions and preferences, ask questions, and propose alternative solutions to particular issues. Where possible, include data to support your opinion.

Be prepared for questions and comments from board members.

Use facts and objective evidence.

Avoid personal attacks.

Ways to Make Public Comments

Written Comments

You may submit written comments to the board by mailing them to:

Recreation and Conservation Office
Attn: Wendy Loosle, Board Liaison
P.O. Box 40917
Olympia, WA 98504-0917

You also may submit comments via e-mail, at wendy.loosle@rco.wa.gov, or in person at the meeting.

Staff gives copies of all written comments to the board members and enters them into the record.

Spoken Comments

At a meeting, board members may ask questions about projects, the evaluation process, and how projects relate to the criteria. Members of the public are welcome to comment.

If you wish to speak at the meeting, fill out a comment card (available at the meeting) and give it to the board liaison. When the board chair calls your name, please have a seat at the speaker's table. Speak clearly into the microphone, and begin with your name for the record.

If you also provide written comments, please summarize those points or make additional comments when you speak. You do not need to read your comments to the board.