

Natural Resources Building
P.O. Box 40917
Olympia, WA 98504-0917
1111 Washington St. S.E.
Olympia, WA 98501



(360) 902-3000
TTY: (800) 833-6388

E-mail: Info@rco.wa.gov
Web site: www.rco.wa.gov

STATE OF WASHINGTON
RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE

August 4, 2022

Dear Honorable Senators and Representatives:

Attached please find the Prevention Institute's review of grant programs managed by the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO). The review, as directed in the 2021-2023 operating budget (ESB 5092, Section 305(2)), asked RCO to identify changes to improve the equitable distribution of recreation grants and reduce barriers that might prevent under-served communities from receiving grants.

To conduct the review, Prevention Institute used data from the past three grant cycles and input from stakeholders and communities to develop recommendations on how to improve access to funding. In addition to the public outreach conducted by the contractor, RCO met with several Governor's Commissions to discuss the equity review and included insight gained from these discussions as part of the input received.

The Prevention Institute offered recommendations in areas that focused on developing new grant programs, changing some processes and evaluation criteria, and ensuring that underserved communities are engaged with grant programs. They noted challenges with RCO's complex grant application process, reimbursement payment method, organizations' lack of knowledge of RCO grants, true or perceived lack of opportunity, and other issues that may deter potential applicants and hinder those who do apply.

Prevention Institute's findings and recommendations will guide our agency to more equitable delivery of state resources and, in turn, more equitably available recreation opportunities. Some recommendations also prompt us to consider our potential role in issues typically outside of our grant-making role, but that may have impact on our project sponsors and their communities, such as housing policy and public safety. While these issues require the knowledge and expertise of many partners, the review provides an opportunity for RCO to consider if and how it might best contribute to these broader conversations and issues.

Our next step is to develop a path forward for implementing many of the recommendations, some of which would require additional staff and funding. We would be happy to present an overview of the report to you at any time.

Please contact me or Brock Milliern (360-789-4563) with questions or a request for a presentation.

Sincerely,

Megan Duffy
Director

Attachment (1)

