

RCW 89.08.620 Grant recipients—Prioritization. (1) When prioritizing grant recipients, the commission, in consultation with the department of agriculture, Washington State University, the department of fish and wildlife, and the United States department of agriculture natural resources conservation service, shall seek to maximize the benefits of the grant program by leveraging other state, nonstate, public, and private sources of money. The primary metrics used to rank grant applications must be made public by the commission.

(2) The grant program must prioritize or weight projects based on consideration of the individual project's ability to:

(a) Increase the quantity of organic carbon in topsoil through practices including, but not limited to, cover cropping, no-till and minimum tillage conservation practices, crop rotations, manure application, biochar application, compost application, and changes in grazing management;

(b) Increase the quantity of organic carbon in aquatic soils;

(c) Intentionally integrate trees, shrubs, seaweed, or other vegetation into management of agricultural and aquacultural lands, with preference for native vegetation where practicable and appropriate;

(d) Reduce or avoid carbon dioxide equivalent emissions in or from soils;

(e) Reduce nitrous oxide and methane emissions through changes to livestock or soil management; and

(f) Increase usage of precision agricultural practices.

(3) The commission shall develop and approve a prioritization metric to guide the distribution of funds appropriated by the legislature for this purpose, with the goal of producing cost-effective carbon dioxide equivalent impact benefits.

(4) Applicants that create riparian buffers along waterways, or otherwise benefit fish habitat, must receive an enhanced prioritization compared to other grant applications that perform similarly under the prioritization metrics developed by the commission.

(5) (a) Applicants that create or maintain pollinator habitat must receive an enhanced prioritization compared to other grant applications that perform similarly under the prioritization metrics developed by the commission.

(b) For the purposes of this subsection, "pollinator habitat" means an area of land that is or may be developed as habitat beneficial for the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of all pollinators, including honey bees, as determined by the department of agriculture.

(6) The commission shall downgrade a specific grant proposal within its prioritization metric if the proposal is expected to cause significant environmental damage to fish and wildlife habitat. [2021 c 278 s 9; 2020 c 351 s 4.]

Purpose—Intent—2021 c 278: See note following RCW 43.23.300.

Findings—Intent—Public funds—2020 c 351: See notes following RCW 89.08.610.