# Discussion Guide: Project Identification and Review Considerations for Watershed Planning Under RCW 90.94.030

V12November2019

## Purpose of Discussion

This document provides considerations for the committee’s approach to identifying and reviewing projects.

## What is Required?

The NEB Guidance states that planning groups will prepare a watershed plan for their WRIA. These plans will include projects and actions intended by the planning group to both offset all new consumptive water use and achieve a NEB. (pg. 6)

The NEB Guidance defines projects and actions as general terms describing any activities in watershed plans to offset impacts from new consumptive water use and/or contribute to NEB. (pg.5) Examples of project types include: water right acquisition offset projects; non-acquisition water offset projects (e.g. managed aquifer recharge, streamflow augmentation); habitat and other related projects.

The NEB Guidance states that there is no minimum requirement for the number or distribution of offset projects or actions within each WRIA. Chapter 90.94 RCW allows offsets for permit-exempt domestic wells to occur anywhere within a WRIA, provided the watershed plan achieves a NEB within the given WRIA. This means planning groups have significant latitude to place offset projects at desired locations (e.g. most beneficial to fish, meet local feasibility considerations, etc.) regardless of whether these provide offsets within each of a WRIA’s subbasins. (pg.9)

## Background and context

Technical consultants can support the committee in identifying and developing projects for the Plan and support to evaluate project benefits. Additional support is available to identify projects with acquisition opportunities. Technical consultants have developed draft project screening criteria for the committee’s consideration. The intent of the screening criteria is to provide a tool that can evaluate relevant attributes of candidate projects and prioritize the most valuable projects for further evaluation and potential inclusion in the WRE plan for each respective WRIA.

## Considerations for the Committee

The committee needs to consider the following in determining how best to identify and evaluate projects:

Project Identification, Development, and Review:

1. What makes a good project? Are there certain types of projects or geographic areas we want to consider or focus on? Are there certain types of projects or geographic areas we want to avoid? For example, looking for projects closest to the anticipated growth impact or looking for projects closest to fish critical streams.
2. Are there other key considerations for project identification and development?
3. How will the committee tailor the criteria to meet the need for our WRIA? (See [associated memo on project criteria](https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/_1962/images/WREC/WRIA10/201911/WRIA10CmteProjectScreeningCriteriaDraft20191002.pdf).)
   1. Workgroup recommendation is to weight water offset benefits higher than habitat benefits for the first review of projects.

Process/Committee Involvement

1. What is the preferred process for bringing projects forward for committee consideration? (Consider both those that are general ideas as well as those that are more fully developed projects.) Some options for committee consideration include:
   1. iterative at each committee meeting (such as one hour of each meeting dedicated to reviewing projects).
   2. special focused workshops on projects for workgroup, committee and/or others.
   3. by project type or geographic area.
   4. full list that has undergone an initial screening by a workgroup.
   5. combination of any of the above.
2. Does the committee support a multi-phased approach to project review (e.g. fatal flaws followed by more detailed criteria) and if so, who should complete each level of review?
3. What additional information does the committee need to determine the process for considering projects in the plan?