

SECTION 2

2.1 STAFFING GRANT GUIDANCE

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Staffing grant eligibility criteria

DATCP uses two-tiered approach to award annual staffing allocations. Tier 1 awards are \$75,000. Tier 2 awards attempt to provide counties with funding to pay for three positions, based on actual costs of those positions, at the rate of 100 percent for the first position, 70 percent for the second, and 50 percent for the third position.

In 2015, the Tier 2 formula was modified for the first time since its inception in 2006 to strengthen the conservation focus of county programs. DATCP sought to accomplish this goal by limiting 100 percent funding for county’s first position to department heads or technicians only if they spend 95% or more of their time on “qualifying conservation activities,” such as providing technical assistance, designing and installing conservation practices, implementing NR 151 performance standards, Farmland Preservation Program compliance monitoring, and administration of local livestock ordinances.

If DATCP considers further modifying the staffing grant formula to better achieve its conservation goals, it will engage the LWCB and counties, and will provide an advance announcement about any new criteria in the grant application instructions for the applicable grant year.

LCC oversight responsibilities

County Land Conservation Committees (LCC) or appropriate county board committees are required under s. ATCP 50.10, Wis. Admin. Code and Ch. 92, Stats to oversee local administration of SWRM grant funds from authorizing county requests for funding to approving expenditures of grant funds.

In rule and policy, DATCP is taking steps to ensure that LCCs are functioning as required by state law. The 2014 revision to ATCP 50, for example, clarified that each county LCC must approve the terms of a DATCP grant contract or amendment before the document is signed by an authorized county representative. This includes annual renewals by the County under the terms of the Master Contract signed in 2017.

Changes in reimbursement procedures

In recent years, SWRM program staff has focused on measures to streamline the grant processes, with a special emphasis on electronic submission of documents. Here are some key improvements regarding staffing grants:

1. Electronic signature on the reimbursement form. Electronically sign the completed Excel Spreadsheet and email datcpswrn@wisconsin.gov. No need to print out and scan the completed form for electronic submission.
2. Change in deadlines to support submission of only one reimbursement request. The November 1st deadline for a county's first reimbursement is intended to give county's time to submit only one reimbursement request.
3. No email reminders for DATCP and no need to wait for pre-filled spreadsheet. When you have incurred costs equal to your staffing grant, download the reimbursement form, <https://datcp.wi.gov/Documents/StaffSupReqForm297.xlsx> and send the completed request to DATCP.

Match requirements

In completing their staff and support reimbursement requests, counties are responsible for ensuring that they have met the match requirement for all positions where a match is required. Currently no match is required for a county's first position which DATCP funds at 100 percent, but is required for all other positions for which a county seeks reimbursement. Sec. ATCP 50.32 (7) (c) 4. clarifies that counties can use various funding sources to meet their match requirement, including county levy, permit fees, private grants, federal grants, state funds other than those under chs. 92, 281 and 283, Stats.

Reimbursement of support and other costs

Counties may not obtain more 10 percent of their annual grant award as reimbursement for support costs such as such as training. [Revised s. ATCP 50.32 (5) (b)]. DATCP's reimbursement request forms incorporate this cap.

In addition, counties may only claim training-related reimbursement for registration, fees, travel, and materials related to (a) training in conservation planning and management, technical standards implementation, clerical assistance, computer usage, and communications; (b) courses building skills to perform current responsibilities or develop professionally in the field of soil

and water management, and (c) other training costs identified in the grant application for the grant year in which the funds are to be expended. s. ATCP 50.32 (3m).

In addition to the support costs identified in s. ATCP 50.32(4), each year in the grant application, DATCP identifies other support costs which may be claimed. In recent years, these reimbursable costs include:

1. If a county requires a cost-share practice for a landowner who may qualify for economic hardship treatment under s. ATCP 50.42(4), a county may seek reimbursement for the costs related to an eligibility determination, including the *costs of a certified public accountant or accredited financial institution preparing a financial statement*.
2. If an *archaeological or cultural resource assessment* or *endangered species assessment* is required at a cost-share project site, then a county may seek reimbursement of the full cost under the category of a support cost. (As an alternative, counties may recover these costs as part of cost-share reimbursement at the 70 or 90 percent rate).
3. Conservation-related mapping or data collection (e.g. Lidar) or site investigations

Special procedures for counties awarded cooperator and Nutrient Management Farmer Education (NMFE) grants

Counties can apply for and receive cooperator and NMFE grants separate their SWRM staffing and support grants. DATCP has revised its grant contracts, as well as related forms, to ensure that county recipients (a) use cooperator or NMFE grant funds only for work related to the project, and not for any work the county is authorized to perform under the basic staffing grant awarded as part of SWRM grant program, and (b) adopt internal procedures to prevent them from seeking reimbursement for SWRM work under a cooperator or NMFE grant.

Unlike staffing grants awarded to counties, counties are eligible to extend unspent cooperator and NMFE grant funds for one year.

Procedures for reallocation and redirection of staffing grant funds

With DATCP approval, counties have options to use staffing grants for other purposes. While no special form is required to make these requests, there are specific procedures that apply for reallocation and redirection of staffing grant funds. These requests must be received by October 1 of the calendar year of the grant.

1. **Reallocation** from county LCC to another agency or entity in the county under s. ATCP 50.32(1)
 - i. Counties can only request reallocation of staffing grant funds to a city, town, village, tribe, county drainage board or another agency operating in the county.
 - ii. Reallocated staff funds can only be used to pay for work performed within the county.

- iii. The county must submit a written request to DATCP and receive written permission to reallocate any funds. The counties that have exercised this option have requested reallocation as part of their annual grant application.
- iv. The request must specify the total amount of reallocation.
- v. The request must identify specific activities in the county's LWRM plan that will be performed by the entity receiving the re-allocation. DATCP recommends that counties provide a copy of the work plan with the specific activities clearly identified.
- vi. DATCP will approve a maximum amount to be reallocated, which will enable a county to spend any unused portion of the reallocation to cover its own staff costs.
- vii. Even though reallocated funds can only be used to pay for work or activities performed during the grant year, they cannot be used to pay for work or activities performed prior to the date DATCP grants permission for the reallocation. Reallocated funds can be used to pay for support item costs in accordance with s. ATCP 50.32(4).
- viii. When counties seek reimbursement for work performed by an entity using reallocated county staffing grants funds, the county must list the name of each staff person performing the work and the rate of reimbursement sought. On their request form, counties must select only one person (including county employees) for positions entitled reimbursement at the 100 or 70 percent rates. The county must provide the appropriate match for all persons listed except the first position.
- ix. Reallocated funds cannot be used to meet county matching requirements for other state or federal programs.
- x. The county must submit and certify reimbursement requests for work or activities performed by the entity authorized to receive re-allocated funds.
- xi. DATCP will reimburse counties which assume responsibility for transferring funds to entities authorized to receive reallocated funds.
- xii. As part of its annual report for the year in which the funds were reallocated, the county will need to provide a description of the activities performed by the entity with the reallocated funds.

2. **Redirection** from county staffing grant funds to cost-share funds under s. ATCP 50.32(11)

- i. No county can submit a request for redirection unless it first submits a staffing grant reimbursement request on or after July 1 for costs incurred before July 1.
- ii. The county must submit a written request to DATCP no later than October 1st and receive written permission to redirect any funds.
- iii. The request must specify the total amount of redirection.
- iv. Redirected funds cannot be used to pay for cost-shared practices installed before DATCP granted permission for the redirection.
- v. Redirected funds cannot be used to pay for cost-share contracts executed before DATCP granted permission for the redirection.
- vi. If DATCP permission is granted, the county's grant contract with DATCP must be amended to reflect the redirection of funds. The revised contract would include a provision that redirected funds would not be eligible for extension.
- vii. Redirected funds are not eligible to be transferred to another county.