

THE WISCONSIN FUND

A Private Sewage (Septic) System Replacement And Rehabilitation Grant Program

Dodge County participates in a grant program referred to as **The Wisconsin Fund**. The Wisconsin Fund is a State-funded **grant assistance program** designed to **reimburse** eligible home and small business owners a **portion of the costs** associated with the replacement/rehabilitation of **an existing, failed private septic system**. This information packet explains how the grant program works and who is eligible to apply for financial assistance.

WHO CAN APPLY FOR A GRANT

WHAT ARE THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Home or small business owners may be eligible for a grant if they meet **ALL** of the following requirements:

1. The home or business is **not** served by public sewer.
 2. The family or business **income** is within **program limits** (Pg. 4).
 3. The applicant must be the person who bore the **cost** of replacing the system.
 4. The septic system serving the home or business was installed prior to **July 1, 1978**.
 5. The home or business is served by a **Category 1** or **Category 2** failing septic system (Pg. 1).
 6. The application is submitted within **3 years** of the date of the County's verification of system failure.
 7. The applicant is the owner of the **principal residence** or **small commercial establishment** which has the (documented) failing septic system (Pg. 3).
 8. The applicant must have received either a "determination of failure" or a written enforcement order (sanitary violation) from the County **PRIOR** to the installation of the replacement system.
 9. The applicant complies with all other applicable program requirements.
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WHAT IS A FAILING SYSTEM

A septic system may not show any apparent signs of failure but still may be considered to be a "failing" system. Wisconsin law defines three categories of "failing" private sewage systems:

- CATEGORY (1)** A system which discharges sewage to bedrock, drain tiles, groundwater, surface water or into zones of seasonally saturated soils. These types of systems are given highest priority for grant assistance.
- CATEGORY (2)** A system which discharges sewage to the ground surface. These systems are eligible for a grant, but have a lower priority for funding than Category 1 systems.
- CATEGORY (3)** A system which causes sewage to backup into the interior of the structure it serves. This type of failing system IS NOT ELIGIBLE for grant assistance, unless it would also qualify as a Category 1 or Category 2 failing septic system.
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WHAT STEPS DO I FOLLOW TO APPLY FOR A GRANT

First and Foremost. Carefully and thoroughly read through **ALL** of The Wisconsin Fund information packet. The information packet should answer most of the questions you have about the program. It should also help you determine whether or not you may be eligible for any funding and whether or not you wish to proceed further and apply for grant assistance.

If after reading through the entire information packet, you believe that you may be eligible for grant assistance and subsequently would like to apply for funding, please follow these guidelines:

1. Contact a County Land Use / Sanitary Specialist before you begin any work on replacing your septic system. County staff will discuss your particular situation and help you determine whether or not you should proceed further with system replacement or application submittal.
2. Next, have a State Certified Soil Tester (CST) conduct a soil test (perk test) on your property. The soil test will determine the type and location of the replacement system. Please be sure to have the CST place at least one (additional) soil test boring near your existing septic system. This is a very important step because it will determine the type (category) of system failure and subsequently the priority of funding.

IMPORTANT: In order to eligible for any funding, it is essential that County staff inspect the boring next to your existing system to document system failure. Failure to have the County document system failure will make you INELIGIBLE for any funding from this program.

3. Next, you will need to decide upon a State-licensed plumber to design and install your replacement septic system. The plumber will need a copy of the soil test in order to properly design your replacement septic system.
4. Next, you will need to obtain a sanitary permit from the County, which will allow you to have the replacement septic system installed. Normally, your plumber will take care of obtaining the required sanitary approvals and permits for you.
5. Next, after obtaining your sanitary permit, you will need to complete a grant application form (forms available in our office). You will also need to pay the required \$120 grant application fee. The application fee is nonrefundable. Also, you must meet all the eligibility requirements (Pg. 1) and submit any paperwork (Pg. 3) or additional supporting information that may be required.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: 10:00 a.m. January 29th

Please Note: All application forms and associated application information must be submitted to our office prior to 10:00 a.m. on January 29th for you to be eligible for the preceding fiscal year's funding cycle. No exceptions!

Wisconsin Fund Grant Money is not guaranteed. The Wisconsin Fund grant program is a State-funded, County administered, program whose funding is dependent upon yearly State legislative approval. Thus, the yearly funding of the program is not guaranteed. If the number of approved applications submitted to the State exceeds the available State funding, the State will prioritize funds based on the type of system failure. Category 1 grants have a higher priority and are paid in full before any Category 2 grants are funded. If any funds remain, then Category 2 grants are funded. If there are insufficient State funds to fully provide payments for all of the approved applications in any particular category, then these grants will be "pro-rated" by the State. Please be aware that if you apply for a grant and if funds are not available for a particular funding year or if your application is either denied or pro-rated, you will NOT BE ELIGIBLE to apply again at a later date.

WHAT PAPERWORK IS REQUIRED TO APPLY

If you decide to proceed with applying for grant assistance from The Wisconsin Fund, you will need to submit to this office the following required information and documentation (paperwork):

- A copy of the bill or receipt for the cost of completing the soil test.
- Copies of all bills or receipts associated with the cost of the replacement septic system.
- Copies of your Federal Income Tax Return(s) for either the taxable year prior to or the year in which the determination of failure was made. Be sure the copies are signed and dated.
- A properly completed and signed Wisconsin Fund application form. The \$120 application fee must also accompany the application form (Please make checks payable to: **Dodge County**).

HOW MUCH MONEY CAN I RECEIVE

The maximum grant that you are eligible to receive is based upon a flat rate (grant table amount) per septic system type/component. The amount that you are eligible to receive varies depending upon the extent of the work needed to bring your system into compliance with the State code. The County has copies of the grant tables.

WHEN WILL I RECEIVE MY MONEY IF APPROVED

Grant funds are allocated on an annual cycle. The County must submit all applications to the State in January. The State will then review each application and decide upon the maximum grant award in the following fiscal year or fall of each year. **Normally**, grant checks are sent to recipients in late November or early December.

WHAT IS A PRINCIPAL RESIDENCE OR SMALL BUSINESS

Principal Residence: A residence (home) which is occupied at least **51%** of the year by the owner. A principal residence includes a residence owned by a trust or estate of an individual, if the residence is occupied at least 51% of the year by a person who has an ownership interest in the residence as a beneficiary of the trust or estate. Seasonal homes and rental properties **do not** qualify.

Small Business: A business place or commercial establishment (a.k.a. small commercial establishment) with a maximum daily wastewater flow of less than 5000 gallons per day as determined by the State plumbing code.

A small commercial establishment also includes farms, which includes the farm residence, if the farm residence is occupied by a person who is an operator of the farm and if the maximum daily wastewater flow rate of both the farm and farm residence are less than 5000 gallons per day. "Farm" is defined as a parcel of 35 or more acres of contiguous land that is devoted primarily to agricultural use.

WILL MY FAILING SYSTEM STILL NEED TO BE REPLACED EVEN IF I'M DENIED OR INELIGIBLE

Yes! A failing septic system is a violation of both the Dodge County Sanitary Ordinance and Wisconsin Statutes. Once a failing system has been observed by County staff and an enforcement order (violation) has been issued to the owner to replace the failing system, the system will have to be replaced even if you are not eligible for a grant.

WHAT ARE THE PROGRAM INCOME LIMITS

For A Principal Residence:

In order for a person to be eligible for grant funds, the total annual family income of the owner(s) of the principal residence may not exceed **\$45,000**. The annual family income shall be based upon the Adjusted Gross Income of all of the owners of the residence, as computed for Federal income tax purposes for the taxable year prior to or the year in which the (County) determination of system failure was made. You will be required to submit a copy of your Federal Income Tax Return(s) as evidence of your income.

Additionally, a "base level" income of **\$32,000** also applies. A person whose income did not exceed \$32,000 would be eligible for the full grant amount as determined from the grant funding tables. However, a person whose income was more than \$32,000 but less than \$45,000 would receive a "pro-rated" amount. The pro-rated amount is equal to the grant amount as determined from the grant funding tables minus 30% of the amount by which the person's income exceeds \$32,000.

***EXAMPLE:** A homeowner has an annual family income of \$36,000 and is eligible, from the grant table, for a grant of \$3,800 in cost sharing. However, per the "pro-rated" income adjustment, the maximum grant this homeowner would be eligible for would be adjusted as follows:*

<i>Grant amount as calculated from grant table</i>	<i>\$3,800</i>
<i>Less $(\\$36,000 - \\$32,000) \times 30\% = \\$4,000 \times .30 =$</i>	<i>\$1,200</i>
<i>Maximum adjusted grant amount</i>	<i>\$2,600</i>

For A Small Business:

In order for a small commercial establishment to be eligible for grant awards, the annual gross revenue of the business that owns the small commercial establishment shall not exceed **\$362,500**. Gross revenue shall be based upon the gross revenue of the business for the taxable year prior to or the year in which the determination of failure was made. In addition to the customary required paperwork (Pg. 3), you will also need to submit a copy of both your Wisconsin and Federal Income Tax Forms as evidence of your gross revenue.

CAN I REPLACE MY OLD HOME WITH A NEW ONE AND STILL BE ELIGIBLE

The owner of a principal residence or small commercial establishment who meets all of the grant eligibility requirements may replace the structure served by a failing private sewage system and be eligible for grant assistance to replace the failing system if all of the following additional conditions are met:

- The original building served by the failing septic system must have been constructed and occupied prior to July 1, 1978.
- The maximum grant amount shall be based upon the minimum septic system capacity that would have been necessary to serve the original structure. Any increase in capacity required to serve a larger replacement structure is not eligible.
- The replacement structure was or will be constructed in a location that would be accessible to the failing system. A site diagram showing the location of the existing septic system and the location of the replacement system must be submitted along with the application.
- The original principal residence or small business was owned and occupied by the applicant when the enforcement order (violation) was issued. In the case of a fire or storm damage rendering the building uninhabitable, the enforcement order may be issued up to 6 months after the building was last occupied.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN BUYING OR SELLING A PROPERTY

A **SELLER** is eligible to apply for grant assistance if:

- The home being sold is the seller's principal residence.
- The seller bore the cost of replacing the failing septic system.
- The County enforcement order (sanitary violation) was issued to the seller while the seller was the owner and occupant of the principal residence.
- The seller meets all other applicable program requirements.

A **BUYER** is eligible to apply for grant assistance if:

- The buyer incurs the cost of replacing the failing septic system.
- The home being purchased becomes the buyer's principal residence.
- The failing septic system is replaced **after** the buyer becomes the owner.
- The buyer meets all other applicable program requirements.

Furthermore, in the case of either selling or buying a principal residence or small commercial establishment, the following additional documentation must be provided along with all other required application material:

- Copy of the closing statement or other documentation which shows the date of sale of the property.
- Copy of the sale contract, escrow agreement or other documentation which shows which party will incur the cost of replacing the failing private sewage system.

WHO TO CONTACT

Questions concerning The Wisconsin Fund program can be directed to the following:

ATTN: Dodge County Land Use / Sanitary Specialist
Dodge County Land Resources and Parks Department
Dodge County Administration Building
127 East Oak Street
Juneau, WI 53039-1329

Phone (920) 386-3700

Fax (920) 386-3979