



PRESS RELEASE—CONTACT DSPS NEWSROOM AT (608) 576-2491

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DSPS Secures Funding to Restore Valuable Wisconsin Fund That Helps Wisconsinites Repair or Replace Aging Septic Systems, Opens Grant Applications

MADISON, Wis. – The Department of Safety and Professional Services is re-opening grant applications for the Wisconsin Fund, a program that provides financial assistance to homeowners and small businesses with failing private onsite wastewater treatment systems (POWTS).

Even when still operational, failing POWTS, commonly called septic systems, are a health concern because they contaminate well and ground water with disease-causing bacteria and other microbes. Systems easily cost several thousand dollars or more to repair or replace, and this can be an extreme hardship to homeowners and small businesses. The Wisconsin Fund exists solely to help Wisconsinites with limited resources handle these expenses.

“We are pleased to be re-opening applications for the Wisconsin Fund,” said DSPS Secretary Dawn Crim. “We recognize that this funding is invaluable for many rural communities.”

Eligibility is based on several criteria, including household income and age of the POWTS. Currently 67 counties of Wisconsin's 72 counties, the City of Franklin, and the Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin participate in the program. County government officials assist interested individuals in determining eligibility and in preparation of grant applications.

Crim says the agency is eager to extend the program to the remaining five counties and all twelve recognized Tribal Nations in Wisconsin. “There is not another funding source like this,” Crim said. “We want to make sure that those who need it have access to it.”

The department has administered the Wisconsin Fund since its inception in 1978, and the program has been a lifeline for homeowners who would not otherwise have been able to afford to repair their failing POWTS. However, the program sunsetted at the end of the 2019-21 biennium and no grants were awarded this year.

Recognizing the importance of the Wisconsin Fund, the governor signed 2021 Wisconsin Act 67, which reauthorized the program. Due to the timing of the reauthorization, the department was unable to accept grant applications for the 2021-22 budget year. Because grants were not awarded last year, the department will award up to \$1,680,000, or two years' worth of grant funding, in a single round. Applications are now open and close on January 31, 2022. Funds will be disbursed after July 1, 2022. These dates are set by statute.

Individuals and small business owners interested in applying for Wisconsin Fund grants should contact their county administration or tribal government.

The Department of Safety and Professional Services issues more than 240 unique licenses, administers dozens of boards and councils that regulate professions, enforces state building codes, runs the state fire prevention program, and maintains the award-winning Wisconsin Enhanced Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, which is a key tool in the multi-faceted public health campaign to address the opioid epidemic. A fee-based agency, the Department of Safety and Professional Services is self-sustaining and receives no general fund tax dollars for its day-to-day operations. With five offices and 250 employees throughout Wisconsin, DSPS collaborates with

constituents and stakeholders across a wide range of industries to promote safety and advance the economy.

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