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Private Well Grants Program – Guidance on Qualifying Expenses

The Private Well Grants (PWG) program provides much needed funds to private well owners for well assessments, well sealing or plugging, and well rehabilitation. Questions often arise that leave the county environmental health employee wondering if a private well related activity qualifies for PWG funding. This document is meant to clarify what types of wells and activities qualify for PWG funding.

Step 1: Is it a private well by definition?

First, to qualify for PWG, the well needs to be a private water well:

> *"Private water well"* means a well that does not supply a public water supply system.

Definition of a public water supply system:

> *"Public water supply system"* means a system for the provision to the public of piped water for human consumption, if such system has at least 15 service connections or regularly serves an average of at least 25 individuals daily at least 60 days out of the year. The term includes (1) any collection, treatment, storage, and distribution facilities under control of the supplier of water and used primarily in connection with the system, and (2) any collection (including wells) or pretreatment storage facilities not under the control which are used primarily in connection with the system.

If the well is a public water supply system, as defined above, it does not qualify for PWG funds.

If the well meets the definition of a private well, as defined above, proceed to ***Step 2***.

Step 2: Types of Private Wells that qualify

In this step, private wells are further defined by two categories: Wells that Qualify and Wells that DO NOT Qualify.

Wells that Qualify

- Private homeowner-use or farm-related water supply wells
- Potable water for humans or livestock
- Non-potable wells
- Irrigation wells
- Plant process water wells
- Privately owned water-level monitoring wells to check for well interference issues
- Newly discovered old wells on private or community property
- Community owned wells that were gifted or donated as part of a property but aren't used as a public water supply (limits on funding eligibility).
- Former public wells that are disconnected from the public water supply and were not/are not owned by towns, cities, or communities (local governments have tax base to cover fund these activities).
- Geothermal water supply wells – owned by individuals or entities (ground heat exchange loops do not qualify)

Wells that DO NOT Qualify

- Monitoring wells
  - Underground storage tank [UST], leaking underground storage tank [LUST] sites, landfills, animal feeding operations [AFO], confined animal feeding operations [CAFO], DNR or EPA required monitoring wells – contaminated sites, Superfund sites, pump and treat facilities for contaminated sites, pipeline industry, bulk facility, fertilizer production, railroad, etc.

- Former city, town, or community owned public water supply wells
- Abandoned/unsuccessful geothermal loop boreholes or GHEX loops
- River levee relief wells
- Dewatering wells
- Geotechnical exploration wells and Geoprobe boreholes
- Elevator shaft wells
- Mine wells, air-shaft or conduit boreholes
- Cathodic protection wells associated with radio towers, pipelines, and other large structures in contact with the ground.
- Any other type of well that was not used for a defined consumption – call to ask!

If the well qualifies based on the above criteria, please move to ***Step 3***.

Step 3: Services that Qualify

This step defines the types of activities and well services that qualify for PWG funding. The well owner or certified well contractor must contact you prior to starting the work in order to qualify for PWG funding. This allows you the opportunity to observe their work, verify their methods, and gain insight to the quality of work that is performed by the contractor.

Private Well Testing

The county health specialist must collect the samples. Homeowners can not send you a bill for sampling they or anyone else performed.

Standard tests that are covered under PWG include nitrate, bacteria, manganese, and arsenic. Requests for covering the costs of other analytes will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, but at a minimum, the requested analyte must have a United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) maximum contaminant level (MCL) or health advisory level (HA). Requests for reimbursement of other analytes must be submitted via email to Iowa Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) using the contact information at the end of this document.

Private Well Plugging

Wells must be plugged by an Iowa Certified Well Contractor. The work can also be performed by the homeowner only, under the supervision of the county health specialist. Well drillers can plug all types of wells, pump installers can plug all types of wells, and well pluggers can only plug Class 1 wells (18-inches or greater in diameter and less than 100 feet deep) and Class 3 wells (sandpoint wells). Please refer to Iowa Administrative Code (IAC) 567 Chapter 39 for well plugging requirements. Sandpoint wells qualify for plugging through PWG.

Cistern Plugging

Cisterns must be plugged if they pose a hazard to groundwater, however, Iowa does not have specific standards when it comes to plugging a cistern. The following is recommended guidance: remove any trash and hazardous debris; cap, close, or plug/seal any pipes; create holes in the bottom of the cistern to allow for drainage – you do not want water to pool in the plugged cistern as it may cause soft spots, foul odors, and/or water to back up into existing piping; break down the cistern top and sidewalls 1-2 feet beneath the surface (this material may be left in the bottom); fill the cistern with clean flowable fill such as sand, screened clay, or screened topsoil and compact the material with a mechanical compactor; and finish the top to match the surface of the surrounding area.

Well Rehabilitation/Reconstruction

The only type of rehabilitation/reconstruction work that qualifies for funding is work that prevents contamination of an aquifer, however, improving the quality of the drinking water is a benefit of that work. Bacterial contamination, other serious contamination issues, or to prevent the contamination to the aquifer are the primary reasons for well rehabilitation funding. The following two paragraphs address questions related to wells with multiple contaminants.

Listed below are examples of work and well issues that QUALIFY and DO NOT QUALIFY for well rehabilitation/reconstruction funding. Please reach out to the Private Well Program for further clarification.

TABLE 1: Examples of work or well issues that QUALIFY for PWG funding:

• Extension of well casing • Elimination or relocation of a well pit • Installation of a pitless adapter • Buried slab reconstruction • Shock chlorination or disinfection	• Improving grouting • Installation of a liner and new grouting • Replacement of a well cap • Wellhead grade and drainage improvement

TABLE 2: Examples of work or well issues that DO NOT QUALIFY for PWG funding:

• Repair or replacement of a pump • Electrical wiring work • Controls • Improvement of pump capacity • Rock or brick cased wells • Shock chlorination for wells subject to contamination by multiple anthropogenic sources	• Pressure tank • Piping or plumbing • Repair of water treatment equipment • Non-health related water quality • Wells contaminated with nitrate only

Proceed to Step 4 to see the reimbursement amounts for the well services that qualify for PWG funding.

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Step 4: Reimbursement Amounts for Services

The table below shows the maximum reimbursement for each type of service.

Item	Payable to Well Owner	Administrative Fee	Maximum Unit Cost
Well Testing	No charge for qualifying water tests	$125	Actual cost plus $125
Well Testing	Actual cost of Other Water Tests *Contact Mindy Uhle	$125	Actual cost plus $125
Well Plugging	Actual cost up to $700	$100	$800
Cistern Plugging	Actual cost up to $400	$100	$500
Well Reconstruction and Rehabilitation	Actual cost up to $2000	$400	$2400
Shock Chlorination	Actual cost up to $400	$100	$500
Well Assessment	Actual cost up to $600	$100	$700

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