

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Expense Reimbursement Grant Utilization: A Quick Reference Guide

Overview of the Operator Certification Expense Reimbursement Grant Program

Title	Operator Certification Expense Reimbursement Grant Program, Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) §1419
Purpose	To provide funding for certification and training costs for small drinking water systems operators
General Description	Provides reimbursement for the costs of training, including an appropriate per diem for unsalaried operators, and certification for persons operating systems serving 3,300 persons or fewer
Utilities Covered	All small community water systems (CWS) and non-transient non-community water systems (NTNCWS) serving 3,300 or fewer persons

Benefits

Who	<p>Small drinking water system operators who receive training that promotes public health protection and professionalism</p> <p>Owners who are required by state regulation to maintain a certified operator at its public water system</p> <p>Customers who receive safe drinking water due to services provided by the water facility and the well-trained operator with ability to service the water facility</p>
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Concerns

States	<p>Difficulty spending grant funds on reimbursement and training of small water systems</p> <p>System operators are not taking advantage of reimbursement opportunities</p>
EPA	<p>States' slow spending reflects minimal activities of workplan</p> <p>States' ability to spend all funds and complete activities by end of project period</p>

Optional Provisions

Assumptions

- ✓ States will first use grant funds to provide reimbursement for training and certification costs of small system operators serving 3,300 persons or fewer and per diem for unsalaried operators
- ✓ States should be exploring creative ways to advertise availability of ERG funds as an incentive for operators to take advantage of reimbursement
- ✓ States should consider reimbursement of training for new rules as pro-active measure
- ✓ After reimbursement of all costs has been made, States may (after notification to EPA) use any “remaining balance” funds for Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) purposes

Other Options

- Apply for 1 year extension to grant project period
 - ✓ States need to determine if this is feasible
 - ❖ Extensions beyond 1 year are not encouraged
 - ❖ Consider if 1 year timeframe is adequate to spend all monies
- If not . . .
- Amend ERG workplan to include new activities
 - ✓ Written proposal must meet SDWA §1419(d)
- Or . . .
- Roll “remaining balance” funds over to DWSRF
 - ✓ State must provide 20% match on “remaining balance” funds
 - ✓ Only 31% can go to set-asides
 - ✓ Output/Outcomes must fit EPA’s strategic plan goals, objectives and subobjectives of the DWSRF grant

Important Reminder!!!

- States are encouraged to contact their EPA state program manager or grant project officer to discuss options as early as possible