

Decision Considerations for Yahara WINS Funding Requests

Yahara WINS Executive Committee Meeting 3/17/2026

Background: Yahara WINS operates under a governance and funding model that consists of Yahara WINS entering into service agreements that provide resources for partners to find projects that result in phosphorus reductions. Some of these agreements are multi-year agreements and some are agreements for one off projects that come to the executive committee outside of the projects that are done as part of the multi-year agreements. Since the beginning of WINS, the focus has been on implementing agricultural cropland practices (ex. cover crops, reduced tillage) as this is the most cost-effective strategy to meet our phosphorus reduction goals. Agreements that allow for cost sharing cropland practices that reduce runoff also helps farmers to go above and beyond Wisconsin's runoff management performance standards (NR 151, Wis. Adm. Code) and implement practices for improving soil health that are more protective of water quality

Issue: Although there are different types of projects that reduce phosphorus runoff from agricultural sources, the WINS model in recent history has been successful at funding agreements that provide financial support for farmers to improve cropland performance beyond state requirements for meeting water quality standards. The WINS model, except for one project (see example below), has not been providing financial support for farmers to come into compliance with state requirements. The exception to this is in 2025 the WINS executive committee approved funding for the Myhre farm in Rock Co. to address direct runoff from a feedlot to the Rock River. Cost sharing this project assisted Myhre to achieve compliance with NR 151 agricultural performance standards, the minimum level of performance expected of all farmers in Wisconsin.

There is potential that more projects will come to the WINS executive committee to consider for cost sharing projects for farmers to meet minimum performance standards even though there are other sources of cost sharing in Wisconsin meant to be used for meeting compliance with NR 151 (e.g., Targeted Runoff Management, Notice of Discharge, Farmland Preservation Program).

Request: There is a need for the executive committee to codify policy around the scope for which WINS funding can be used to help guide future funding decisions. Developing a policy will allow WINS to be consistent around how funding requests are handled in the future. The executive committee is requested to discuss items that they would want to see put into a policy. The results of the discussion will be used to develop policy we will use to guide our decisions on future funding requests. WINS staff will return with a draft policy based on the discussion for the executive committee to take action on Suggested items for discussion:

- Are there any types of projects WINS should not fund
- Potential impacts to county and state enforcement strategies should WINS funding be used for resolving NR 151 non-compliance issues.
- The scope of WINS includes funding all types of agricultural projects regardless of the environmental enforcement status of the project.

- WINS funding is only to be used for projects that help the farmer go above and beyond existing performance standards and is not considered environmental enforcement.
- WINS funding will not be used on projects to come into compliance with NR 151 performance standards.
- WINS will focus funding on practices to go beyond state standards and will consider other projects that may include environmental enforcement on a case-by-case basis. No policy will be developed to guide future WINS funding decisions.