

515.82(b)(1) Screening of Applications

Effective for Statewide signups beginning on or after October 1, 2004, there will be two categories of EQIP applicants: Category 1, High Priority; and Category 2, Medium Priority. Applications placed in Category 2 will be evaluated, scored, and ranked **ONLY** if there are sufficient funds available to fully fund all applicants in Category 1.

EQIP applicants in Wisconsin who have terminated an EQIP contract after May 15, 2004 but prior to completing all contracted practices will be placed in Category 2 for potential EQIP Statewide contracting (see Exceptions, below). EQIP applicants who have been offered an EQIP contract but withdrew after May 15, 2004 prior to signing the contract will also be placed in Category 2 for potential EQIP Statewide contracting (see Exceptions, below). This policy applies regardless of whether the contract that was cancelled (or the producer withdrew before signing an EQIP contract offer) was the result of a Statewide or a County signup.

Exceptions will be granted by the NRCS District Conservationist or designee under the following conditions:

1. The contract was cancelled or the producer withdrew due to economic hardship that did not exist at the time of application.
2. The contract was cancelled or the producer withdrew due to hardship as the result of health issues.
3. The practice or practices that were not completed as per the terms of the contract were determined to be no longer needed. This could occur because the producer chose to solve the resource problem through other means, or the producer changed his or her operation in a way that no longer required the practice.
4. The producer involuntarily lost control of the land.

Applicants placed in Category 2 for the first time shall remain in Category 2 for a period of two Federal fiscal years. After that time the applicant shall return to Category 1. Applicants placed in Category 2 a second time shall remain in Category 2 for a period of five Federal fiscal years. Applications placed in Category 2 will be held at the county level and will not be forwarded to the state level unless specifically requested.

The above policy applies to applications for Statewide signups. Counties may adopt this policy for their local signups by reviewing the Statewide policy with the Local Work Group (LWG) and receiving a positive recommendation in writing from the LWG.