

Voluntary Stewardship Program Funds Use for Project Cost Share

After receiving funding from the Legislature for the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP), the Commission makes funds available to each of the 27 participating counties.

After a county VSP work plan has been approved by the VSP Technical Panel, VSP funds plans may be used for implementation. Each county is free to choose how to allocate those funds, but regardless of how the funds are allocated, must continue to meet all the requirements of the VSP (RCW Chapter 36.70A), and must also meet the goals and objectives of their own VSP work plan.

The Commission urges counties contemplating creating a VSP cost-share program to review all of the obligations in RCW Chapter 36.70A and to review Policy Advisory [03-18 Roles and Responsibilities during VSP implementation – Amended](#), and 05-18 [VSP Implementation Reporting – 2 year and 5 Year Reports](#) for a summary of some of those obligations before making its decision. Some of those obligations include:

- Maintaining a regularly-meeting VSP work group which oversees work plan implementation
- Conducting periodic evaluations of the county work plan
- Instituting adaptive management
- Providing a detailed, written report every 2 and 5 years of implementation efforts and success
- Meet contract obligations with the Commission and others responsible for VSP implementation
- Conducting outreach and education to meet work plan goals
- Providing technical assistance, or contracting with an entity to so provide, to VSP participants
- Meet the goals and objectives of the county work plan
- Staffing needs, including salary, equipment and other items required to perform their job

The Commission urges counties to create an implementation budget and project management protocols in order to meet the statutory requirements. The Commission also urges counties who might want to use VSP funds for cost-share projects to partner with an entity (such as your local conservation district) that already has the training, knowledge and experience with administering a cost-share program using the Commission's cost-share policies and procedures. Finally, the Commission urges counties to review the [Commission's cost-share policies and procedures](#), specifically the [Grant and Contract Procedure Manual](#) and [Cost Share Process](#) before making a decision to offer VSP funds for cost-share.

If VSP funding will be spent on cost-share projects with landowners, there are a few requirements:

- The county work group will need to approve any cost share program used in the implementation of VSP.
- [Washington State Conservation Commission cost-share policies](#) would need to be abided by, regardless of who is administering the cost-share program (conservation district or some another implementing entity (such as the county)). Since WSCC funds are being used as the basis for the cost-share funding, WSCC policies apply.
- If a conservation district is implementing the VSP cost-share program, the conservation district rate of reimbursement is used. If a county is implementing the VSP cost-share program without the assistance of a conservation district, the county must pass a rate of reimbursement resolution ([see the Grant and Contract Procedure Manual](#)).
- If the entity administering the cost-share program and otherwise involved in contracting with landowners for project implementation using VSP funds has not already been trained in the Conservation Commission cost-share policies and procedures, that entity must be so trained before funds can be used from the Commission. Please contact the Commission staff below to schedule a training.
- VSP projects that are funded using any Commission funds will need to be reported in the five year report under RCW 36.70A.720 (2) (b) (i) and (c) (i).

Anyone implementing VSP and seeking to use VSP funds for cost-share must consult with Commission staff before funds are available. The staff person at the Commission responsible for VSP cost-share is Karla Heinitz. Please contact her by email at kheinitz@scc.wa.gov or by phone at 360-407-6212.