



National Institute of Food and Agriculture

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

BIOENERGY, CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT
FOOD PRODUCTION AND SUSTAINABILITY
YOUTH, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY
FOOD SAFETY AND NUTRITION
INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

NIFA

Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program RFA Announcement and Technical Assistance Webinar FY2024

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- This webinar will be recorded. Please be sure your microphone is muted.
- ***Zoom Tech Support*** = 1-888-799-0125, Option 2
- Throughout the presentation, you may type questions in the chat box.
- Slides and the recording from this conference will be posted to **<https://www.nifa.usda.gov/events/technical-assistance-webinar-veterinary-medicine-loan-repayment-program-vmlrp>**



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<https://www.usda.gov/non-discrimination-statement>

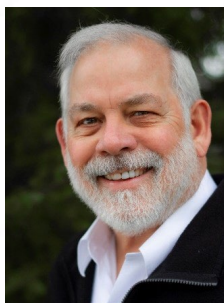
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Topics We Will Cover

- NIFA Overview (*5 min.*)
- Program Overview (*10 min.*)
- Request for Applications (RFA) Details (*10 min.*)
- Proposal Evaluation Process (*10 min.*)
- Additional Information/Resources (*10 min.*)



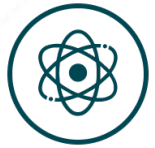
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NIFA Overview

NIFA Overview

- **National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)** is the extramural science-funding agency within USDA's Research, Education and Economics mission area.
- NIFA **invests in and supports** initiatives that ensure the long-term viability of agriculture.
- NIFA provides **funding and strategic leadership** for programs that ensure groundbreaking discoveries in agriculture-related sciences and technologies reach the people who can put them into practice.

Topics Covered by NIFA Programs



Advanced Technologies

Bioenergy; Biotechnology;
Nanotechnology



Animals

Animal Breeding; Animal Health;
Animal Production; Aquaculture



Business and Economy

Markets and Trade; Natural Resource
Economics; Small Business



Natural Resources

Forests; Grassland and Rangeland;
Soil, Water, and Air



Education

Minority Serving Institutions; Teaching
and Learning; Workforce Development



Environment

Climate Change; Ecosystems; Invasive
Pests and Diseases



Farming and Ranching

Agriculture Safety & Technology; Farmer
Education; Organic & Family Farms



Human Sciences

Community Vitality; Family Well-Being;
Youth



Food Science

Food Quality; Food Safety



Food and Nutrition Security

Nutrition; Obesity; Wellness



International

Global Engagement; Global
Food Security



Plants

Crop Production; Pest
Management; Plant
Breeding; Plant Health



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Program Overview

Purpose and Priorities of VMLRP

RFA Page 6

- Assure an adequate supply of trained food animal veterinarians are placed in identified shortage situations.
- Incentivize veterinarians to serve in veterinary shortages in exchange for veterinary education loan repayment assistance.
- Short-term objective: match specific shortage area needs with knowledge, skills, abilities, experiences, goals, and aspirations of applicants.
- Long-term objective: provide educational loan repayment support to veterinarians to sustain clinical private and public practice in shortage areas.

Authority, Regulations, Rule

- Program guidance documents
- Authorizing legislation, 7 USC 3151A Section 1415A
 - National Veterinary Medical Service Act (NVMSA), 2003. Public Law 108–161 108th Congress (<https://www.congress.gov/108/plaws/publ161/PLAW-108publ161.pdf>). Added section 1415A (<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2021-title7/pdf/USCODE-2021-title7-chap64-subchapIII-sec3151a.pdf>) to the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1997.
- Regulations, 7 CFR PART 3431
 - Chapter XXXIV of Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 3431, Subpart A and Subpart B. https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=e3cd63123b08ca3a6cff8bdbc5bb2c9b&node=pt7.15.3431&rgn=div5#se7.15.3431_12
- Final Rule (2010)
 - <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2010/04/19/2010-8628/veterinary-medicine-loan-repayment-program-vmlrp>

Eligibility to Apply: *New Applicants*

- Meet all requirements outlined in 7 CFR 3431.10
- DVM or equivalent by July 1 of the application year, from a college of veterinary medicine accredited by the AVMA Council on Education
- Minimum qualifying *DVM educational* loan debt of \$15,000 from a lender capable of accepting incoming Automated Clearing House (ACH) payments at the start date of your service agreement.
- Offer of employment or establish and/or maintain a practice in a NIFA-designated veterinary shortage situation within the time period specified in the VMLRP agreement offer
- Certifications and verifications as defined in 7 CFR part 3431.16
- Not owe an obligation for veterinary service to the Federal government, a State, or other entity under an agreement with such Federal, State, or other entity unless such obligation will be completely satisfied prior to beginning service under the VMLRP.
- Not have a federal judgment lien against their property arising from Federal debt

Eligibility to Apply: *Renewal* Applicants

- Meet all requirements as described above for new applicants
- For FY2024, renewal applicants must have a VMLRP agreement start date of January 1, 2021 (FY 2020) or January 1, 2022 (FY 2021)
- If a renewal applicant is uncertain if their VMLRP agreement start date is applicable, the applicant should contact the VMLRP program staff via email to vmllrp.applications@usda.gov to verify their information
- If an applicant is applying as a renewal applicant to a veterinary shortage area *other than* their previous shortage area and agreement, they must apply as a *new* applicant.

Eligibility to Participate: *7 CFR 3431.10*

RFA Page 11

- Meet the eligibility criteria for applying to the VMLRP
- Be selected for participation through the application review process
- Comply with all State and local regulations, including licensure where required, in the jurisdiction proposed to practice
- Be a citizen, national, or permanent resident of the United States
- Sign a service agreement to provide veterinary services in one of the veterinarian shortage situations
- Comply with the terms and conditions of the Service Agreement

Overview of Veterinary Shortage Situation Areas

RFA Page 9

- Nominated each year by State Animal Health Officials (SAHO) or Federal Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) and designated by VMLRP
- Applicants apply to serve *one* designated veterinary shortage area
- To determine which veterinary shortage areas are available for applications consult the Veterinary Services Shortage Situation Areas map
 - <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/vmlrp-map>
- Shortage situations for FY 2024 were posted in January 2024

Types of Veterinary Shortage Situations

RFA Page 9

- Shortage situation describes necessary food animal veterinary services required for the area
- All are based on a 40-hour work week (FTE)
- Type I – at least 80% FTE (32 hours/week), private practice
- Type II – at least 30% FTE (12 hours/week) private practice, rural area
- Type III – at least 49% FTE (19.6 hours/week), public practice

<https://www.nifa.usda.gov/grants/programs/veterinary-medicine-loan-repayment-program/vmlrp-shortage-situations>

Veterinary Shortage Situation Areas

RFA Page 10, 17, 28-29

Description of needs of the shortage area

- Location – counties, state(s)
- Species -- Must serve and May serve
- Type – private (I, II) or public practice (III)
- FTE commitment – minimum for the Type, may be higher
- Veterinary Services
 - Private – medical, surgical, educational, regulatory
 - Public – food safety, epidemiology, public health, regulatory
- Community description
 - Draws to the area or the type of work for the DVM, or for the family

Used by the peer review panel to evaluate the match with applicants



Cost Share or Matching

RFA Page 12

- No matching is required.
- Matching resources will not be factored into the review process as evaluation criteria.



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Application Details and Documents

Application Changes from Prior Years

RFA Page 3

- Letter of intent (LOI) is required for all applicants
- Applications are submitted through Box.com, a secure online cloud-based platform
 - After NIFA receives an LOI from an interested applicant an individualized folder will be created for the applicant to upload their application to Box.com.
- New guidance on the professional narrative content and structure for new and renewal applicants
- Updated evaluation criteria for new and renewal applicants
- NIFA has a cooperative agreement with LifeStock Inc. to assist applicants with writing and submitting applications. Assistance will be available for up to two hours of one-on-one sessions with LifeStock staff.

Application Details

RFA Page 1

- **RFA** is available online
 - www.nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/FY24-VMLRP-RFA-P.pdf
- **Letter of Intent Deadline:** April 1, 2024 at 5 p.m. Eastern Time
- **Application Deadline:** April 12, 2024 at 5 p.m. Eastern Time
- **Submit** to individual folder at Box.com
- **Total funding available** in FY 2024: \$9,000,000
- **Maximum funding** per award: \$104,250 includes tax liability



Letter of Intent

RFA Page 13

- Required to submit a LOI as email, stating your intent to apply to the program
 - If not submitted by **April 1, 5:00 PM ET** will not be able to apply
- Send to VMLRP.applications@usda.gov
- Format:
 - Subject Line: FY 2024 LOI
 - Body of Email:
 - Hello VMLRP Staff, I am confirming my intent to apply to the VMLRP.
 - Please use the following contact information for my application:
 - Name: < First and Last >
 - Email:
 - Phone Number:
- Upon receipt of an LOI, NIFA staff will create an individualized folder in Box.com
- Applicants will receive a confirmation email after an LOI is received and a folder in Box.com is created.
 - Email will include specific instructions for how to upload documents to their individual folder for application submission.
 - An email will be sent from Box.com inviting applicants to access their individual folder for application submission.

Application Required Documents

RFA Page 15

- TWO Components of VMLRP Application
 - **Program Document**
 - **Loan Document**
 - Both as PDFs
- THREE Required Forms
 - Are to be included in the two PDF documents
 - **Application Part 1: Program Form**
 - **Application Part 2: Loan Form**
 - **Application Part 3: Recommendations (3)**
 - Can be submitted as part of the Program Document, or
 - Recommenders can submit directly to VMLRP via email
 - <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/grants/programs/veterinary-medicine-loan-repayment-program/vmlrp-required-documents>

Program Document

RFA Page 15

1. Application Part 1: Program Form
2. Resume
3. Unofficial Transcript(s)
4. Veterinary License and APHIS Accreditation
5. Professional Narrative
6. Type I and II: include map of the shortage area with the practice area defined
7. Application Part 3: Recommendations (3)
 - Include completed recommendations that are not emailed separately

Professional Narrative

RFA Page 18,
19-22

- Guidelines differ for New and Renewal applications
 - Refer to RFA for specific instructions
- Specifications:
 - *5 pages* maximum
 - 8.5 X 11 inch page size, 1-inch margins, 12-point font, double-spaced
- Include name, date and page number in the header on each page
- Highly recommend proofreading the professional narrative for grammar and spelling.
 - Review panel considers grammar and spelling in review and ranking of applicants.
- Applications exceeding the page limit on the professional narrative will be returned without review

Application Part 3: Recommendation

RFA Page 15, 26

- Three recommendations are required
 - Colleagues, producers, mentors, people who can attest to your skill
 - Not: family members
- Each recommender must complete the Application Part 3: Recommendation Form
 - Handwritten responses on any part of this form will not be accepted and your application will not be considered for further consideration.
- Recommendations can be submitted
 - As part of the Program Document (see RFA page 15), or
 - Via email to VMLRP.applications@usda.gov or fax (see RFA page 26)



Loan Document

RFA Page 15

1. Application Part 2: Financial Form for each loan servicer.
2. Master Promissory Note(s)/Consolidated Promissory Note(s) for each loan servicer.
3. Loan Servicer Account Statement and Individual Loan Details
4. Student Aid Loan Summary and Student Aid Individual Loan Detail Report(s) from Federal Student Aid (FSA) website.

Application Part 2: Financial Form

RFA Page 15,
22-23

- On the form complete Sections 1-3 for each loan servicer
 - If different loan servicers, complete a separate form for each servicer
- If loans have been consolidated into one account, only submit one Financial Form
- Recommend gathering all educational loan information before starting the form(s)
- Submit the Financial Forms as part of the Loan Document



FSA Loan Summary and Details Report

Federal Student Aid Website: <https://studentaid.gov>

1. Aid Summary Report
2. Individual Loan Detail Report(s)
 1. For every loan listed in your aid summary report



Eligible Loans: *7 CFR 3431.3*

- Qualifying loans for veterinary education leading to DVM/VMD degree
- AVMA Council on Education
 - Accreditation Required
- Eligible expenses
 - Tuition expenses
 - Other reasonable educational expenses
 - Reasonable living expenses
- Minimum \$15,000 Qualifying Loan



Ineligible Loans: *7 CFR 3431.15*

RFA Page 6, 22, 31

- Not obtained from a lending institution subject to examination by a U.S. or state agency of principal place of business
- With supporting documentation unavailable
- Consolidated with other individuals, spouses/children
- With expenses exceeding the standard of reasonableness
- Debt incurred under a similar program
- Non-educational (home equity)
- Not in current payment status (default, delinquency)

LOI and Application Submission

RFA Page 25

- Letter of Intent
 - Received by April 1, 2024, 5 PM ET
 - NIFA will establish a Box.com folder for each applicant
- Application
 - Two PDF documents: Program Document and Loan Document
 - Applicant access to Box.com folder will be removed at 5:00 PM ET, Friday, April 12, 2024.
 - NIFA only accepts **electronic** submission of applications.
- Start application process as early as possible to gather required documents

Support for Application Development

RFA Page 26

- VMLRP has entered into a cooperative agreement with LifeStock Inc. to assist VMLRP applicants with writing and submitting applications.
- Free assistance will be available for up to two hours of one-on-one sessions with LifeStock staff.
- Website and contact information
 - <https://lifestockguide.org/home>
 - **Email to request free application support:**
 - nifaprogramshelp@lifestock.org



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Proposal Evaluation Process

Evaluation Process

Applications are assigned to 3 reviewers on peer review panel

Reviewers produce individual reviews of each application, evaluating strengths and weaknesses.

Peer review panel meets, with written reviews used to guide panel discussions with other reviewers.

Through these discussions, panelists come to consensus on the final rating and ranking of applications.

Evaluation Criteria: New Applicants (1/2)

RFA Page 28

- **Expertise and Experience (50%)**

- Demonstration of knowledge, skills, abilities, and experience related to needs in the veterinary shortage situation
- Formal pre-professional educational training, DVM (or equivalent) degree (e.g., electives, curricular emphases), post-DVM training and specialization
- Professional employment experience in private or public veterinary practice, or other relevant work experiences
- Specialty short-course certifications, accreditations, or licensures
- Awards, honors, or special achievements;
- Recommendations

Evaluation Criteria: New Applicants (2/2)

- **Achievability, Sustainability and Fit to the Shortage Area (35%)**
 - Demonstrate potential *for long term success* in the shortage situation.
 - Long-term goals that the applicant has beyond the VMLRP agreement, opportunities for establishing roots within the community, and community involvement activities;
 - How receiving the VMLRP award would provide professional success through the duration of the agreement;
 - Overall fit of applicant’s experience and expertise to the Must Serve species and activities to meet the needs of the shortage area;
 - Priority of moderate, high, or critical as determined by the State Animal Health Official on the shortage nomination form. This criterion is used in the final ranking process among applicants.
- **Clarity and quality (15%)**
 - Clarity and quality of the professional statement and resume
 - Clarity and quality of the map
 - Formatting, spelling, and grammar errors

Evaluation Criteria: Renewal Applicants (1/2)

RFA Page 29

- **Expertise and Experience (50%)**

- Demonstration of knowledge, skills, abilities, and experience related to needs in the veterinary shortage situation
- Formal pre-professional educational training, DVM (or equivalent) degree (e.g., electives, curricular emphases); formal post-DVM training and specialization
- Professional employment experience in private or public veterinary practice, or other relevant work experiences
- Specialty short-course certifications, accreditations, or licensures
- Awards, honors, or special achievements
- Recommendations

Evaluation Criteria: Renewal Applicants (2/2)

RFA Page 29

- **Impact, Sustainability and Mitigation of the Shortage (35%)**
 - Goals accomplished and services provided
 - Impact of service in the area, including metrics demonstrating impact
 - Long-term goals that the applicant has beyond the VMLRP agreement
 - Developed ties to the community, and community involvement activities;
 - How receiving the VMLRP award would provide professional success through the duration of the agreement;
 - Overall fit of applicant’s experience and expertise to the Must Serve species and activities to meet the needs of the shortage area;
 - Priority of moderate, high, or critical as determined by the State Animal Health Official on the shortage nomination form. This criterion is used in the final ranking process among applicants.
- **Clarity and quality (15%)**
 - Clarity and quality of the professional statement and resume
 - Clarity and quality of the map
 - Formatting, spelling, and grammar errors

Timeline of VMLRP Application Review

3 months

- Request for Applications (RFA) released
- Proposal writing and planning
- **Applications submitted**

3 months

- Applications under peer review

2 months

- Awards are finalized and awardees notified

On average, this competitive program takes about 8 months from the proposal due date to an award being made to an individual.

We will keep you updated as much as possible. We appreciate your patience!



Questions?

VMLRP@usda.gov

VMLRP.applications@usda.gov