



REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program

MODIFICATION: This RFA is an updated version of the FY 2023 solicitation. It includes only the references to FY 2024 funding; FY 2023 references have been eliminated.

FUNDING YEAR: Fiscal Year (FY) 2024

LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE: April 1, 2024

APPLICATION DEADLINE: April 12, 2024

ANTICIPATED PROGRAM FUNDING: \$9,000,000

AVERAGE INDIVIDUAL AWARD RANGE: \$15,000 to \$104,250

ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER: 10.313

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT
National Institute of Food and Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture

Assistance Listing Number (ALN): The Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) is listed in the Assistance Listings under number 10.313.

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines

Task Description	Deadline
Letter of Intent:	April 1, 2024
Application:	5:00 P.M. Eastern Time, April 12, 2024
Applicants Comments:	Within six months from the issuance of this notice <i>(NIFA may not consider comments received after the sixth month)</i>

Advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA). The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) recognizes research, education, and extension efforts will have the greatest impacts when programs are grounded in DEIA. NIFA is committed to enhancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility of programs and encourages individuals, institutions, and organizations from underserved communities to apply to funding opportunities as lead, co-lead, or subaward recipient(s), and to engage as leaders in the peer panel review process to support the development of strong networks and collaborations. NIFA encourages applications that engage diverse communities and have broad impacts through research, education, extension, and integrated activities to address current and future challenges.

Stakeholder Input. NIFA seeks comments on all Request for Applications (RFA) so it can deliver programs efficiently, effectively, with integrity, and with a focus on customer service. NIFA considers comments to the extent possible when developing RFAs, and uses comments to help meet the requirements of Section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 ([7 U.S.C. 7613\(c\)\(2\)](#)). Applicants may submit written comments to Policy@usda.gov. Please use the following subject line: Response to the VMLRP RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This RFA is being released prior to the passage of a full appropriations act for FY 2024. Enactment of a continuing resolution, appropriations act, or other authorizing legislation may affect the availability or level of funding for this program. The amount available for support of this program in FY 2024 is approximately \$9 million.

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture requests applications for the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) for FY 2024 to repay qualified educational loans for eligible veterinarians in exchange for veterinary services in designated shortage situations in the United States and U.S. Insular Areas.

This notice identifies the objectives for VMLRP services deadlines, funding information, eligibility criteria for applicants, and application forms and associated instructions.

FY 2024 Updates

Major updates were made to the previous VMLRP RFA. Those applying should review this RFA thoroughly. The changes are as follows:

1. A letter of intent (LOI) is now required for all VMLRP applicants.
2. VMLRP applications will now be submitted through the online cloud-based platform, Box.com, available at [Box.com](https://www.box.com). 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.
3. There is new guidance on the professional narrative content and structure for new and renewal applicants.
4. There are updated evaluation criteria for new and renewal applicants.
5. NIFA has a cooperative agreement with LifeStock Inc. to assist VMLRP applicants with writing and submitting applications. Assistance will be available for up to two hours of one-on-one sessions with LifeStock staff.

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PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

In December 2003, the National Veterinary Medical Service Act (NVMSA) passed into law adding section 1415A to the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1997 (NARETPA). This law established a new Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program ([7 U.S.C. 3151a](#)) authorizing the Secretary of Agriculture to carry out a competitive program of entering into agreements with veterinarians under which they agree to provide veterinary services in veterinarian shortage situations.

Section 7105 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 amended section 1415A to revise the determination of veterinarian shortage situations to consider (1) geographical areas that the Secretary determines have a shortage of veterinarians; and (2) areas of veterinary practice that the Secretary determines have a shortage of veterinarians, such as food animal medicine, public health, epidemiology, and food safety. This section also added that priority be given to agreements with veterinarians for the practice of food animal medicine in veterinarian shortage situations.

The regulations at [7 CFR 3431](#) outline the process and procedures for designating veterinarian shortage situations as well as the administrative provisions for VMLRP.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The purpose of the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) is to assure an adequate supply of trained food animal veterinarians are placed in identified shortage situations. The VMLRP incentivizes food animal veterinarians to serve in serious veterinary shortage situations in exchange for veterinary education loan repayment assistance. A short-term objective of the program is to match the specific area needs with the knowledge, skills, abilities, experiences, goals, and aspirations of applicants. The long-term objective of the program is to provide educational loan repayment support to veterinarians to sustain clinical private and public practice in shortage situation areas.

Each year, State Animal Health Officials (SAHOs) and Federal veterinary medical officers (VMOs) identify more than 220 veterinary shortage situations across the United States and Insular Areas and more than 130 veterinarians compete to receive one of the approximately 65 to 80 loan repayment awards the program can fund annually. Although states can choose to nominate fewer veterinary shortage situations than they are allocated, most states continue to nominate the maximum number of veterinary shortage situations allocated to their state. This indicates that demand for the program remains strong throughout the country, particularly in animal agriculture-intensive states where shortages are most acute and widespread.

The VMLRP is aligned with the following:

[USDA Strategic Plan FY 2022-2026](#) goals:

1. Strategic Goal 2: Ensure America's Agriculture System is Equitable, Resilient, and Prosperous;
2. Strategic Goal 4: Provide All Americans Safe and Nutritious Food;
3. Strategic Goal 5: Expand Opportunities for Economic Development and Improve Quality of Life in Rural and Tribal Communities

[USDA Science and Research Strategy, 2023–2026](#) priorities:

1. Accelerating Innovative Technologies and Practices

For a program informational webinar please visit the [NIFA calendar](#) for dates, event registration, and link. If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate in any of the informational webinars listed, please contact the event host listed no later than 10 days prior to the event.

Table 2: VMLRP Key Information

Title	Description
Program Code:	VMLRP
ALN	10.313
Project Type:	Loan Repayment
Letter of Intent Deadline	2024: April 1, 2024
Application Deadline	2024: April 12, 2024
Award Duration:	New Applicant: 3 Years Renewal Applicant*: 1 Year: \$15,000-\$25,000 eligible student loan debt 2 Years: \$25,001-\$50,000 eligible student loan debt 3 Years: \$50,001+ eligible student loan debt
Anticipated # of Awards:	Approximately 65 - 80 Up to two awards per veterinary shortage situation area (Section V. Part E for selection criteria).
Maximum Award Amount:	Maximum Loan Award: \$75,000 Maximum Tax Liability: \$29,250
	Maximum Total Award (Loan + Tax Liability): \$104,250

*Terms of the fully executed agreement as a renewal varies based on the applicant’s eligible Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) educational debt. The minimum eligible DVM debt is \$15,000 at the start date of the service agreement.

Additional requirements on expected performance goals, indicators and targets may be required as a condition of award.

C. Program Area Description

This loan repayment program contains two general categories of participation:

1. Mitigation of private practice veterinary shortage situations in food animal medicine; and
2. Mitigation of public veterinary practice and specialty veterinary discipline shortage situations.

The VMLRP facilitates professional workforce development in critical agricultural sectors related to animal health and well-being. Specifically, this program incentivizes veterinarians to consider practicing, or serving in other professional capacities, in geographic or specialty veterinary discipline shortage areas important to the security of local, state, and federal food safety infrastructures, and more broadly to the protection of animal and public health. The

mitigation of shortage situations in food animal veterinary practice is emphasized in areas of veterinary specialization such as, but not limited to, epidemiology, food safety, and public health.

In this respect, the VMLRP achieves important outreach objectives because the veterinarian is among the most highly trained and respected agricultural professionals, especially in rural areas and communities where a significant proportion of food animal production occurs. By virtue of their broad education in the biomedical and animal sciences, their intimate connection to the local farming communities they serve, and their skills in clinical, diagnostic, surgical, therapeutic and population medicine, veterinarians represent an essential component of NIFA's extension and outreach capacity, and of the nation's agrosecurity, food security, and public health infrastructures. Furthermore, veterinarians serving in specialized settings such as state veterinarians, epidemiologists, food safety inspectors, animal disease laboratory directors and university faculty, that are also experiencing workforce shortages, provide an important communication link among state and federal government agencies, animal owners/producers, and the public.

PART II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

This RFA is being released prior to the passage of a full appropriations act for FY 2024. Enactment of a continuing resolution, appropriations act, or other authorizing legislation may affect the availability or level of funding for this program. The amount available for the VMLRP in FY 2024 is approximately \$9,000,000. USDA is not committed to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards.

NIFA anticipates that approximately 90 percent of available funds will be awarded to veterinarians for [Type I and Type II](#) private practice of food animal medicine in geographic areas determined to have shortage(s) of veterinarians. Approximately 10 percent of available funds will be awarded to veterinarians serving in [Type III](#) public practice, specialty practices, or discipline areas determined to have a shortage of veterinarians such as, but not limited to, food animal medicine, public health, epidemiology, and food safety.

B. Application Restrictions

NIFA will evaluate applications using the criteria described in [Part V](#) of this RFA. There are three types of VMLRP applications for FY 2024:

1. **New application:** A new application is one from an individual who is not a current VMLRP awardee. New applicants will apply to serve a veterinary shortage situation area that is designated and active in the fiscal year they apply. New applications will be evaluated competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in [Part V](#) of this RFA and are subject to the due dates herein. (see [Appendix III](#) for definition).
2. **Renewal application:** A renewal application is an application from a veterinarian who previously accepted a VMLRP agreement and is in the last year of the VMLRP agreement or is in the first year after their VMLRP agreement has ended. Note that a previous VMLRP awardee who is beyond the first year after their agreement expired is considered a new applicant. An applicant submitting a renewal application will apply using the assigned veterinary shortage situation identification code from their original award. An applicant who has previously received an award and is interested in applying to serve in a shortage situation area that is different than their current or previous agreement will need to submit a new application. Renewal applications will be evaluated competitively, among all applications, using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in [Part V](#) of this RFA, subject to the due dates herein. To verify if you qualify for a renewal or need assistance verifying your veterinary shortage situation identification code, please contact vmlrp.applications@usda.gov for assistance. (see [Appendix III](#) for definition).

C. Types of Designated Veterinary Shortages

There are three types of veterinary shortage situations, all based on a 40-hour work week:

1. Type I – at least 80 percent of time (32 hours per week) committed to private practice food supply veterinary medicine;
2. Type II – at least 30 percent of time (12 hours per week) committed to private practice food supply veterinary medicine in a rural area;
3. Type III – at least 49 percent of time (19.6 hours per week) committed to public practice.

Further descriptions of each shortage situation type can be found on the [VMLRP Shortage Situations](#) resource page under “Resources for Preparing and Submitting Nominations.”

PART III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligibility Requirements

Applicants for the VMLRP must meet all the requirements discussed in this RFA. Failure to meet the eligibility criteria by the application deadline will result in exclusion from consideration or preclude NIFA from making an award. There is no limit to the number of times a VMLRP award can be renewed if eligible and selected. If you continue to meet the eligibility criteria and have qualifying veterinary educational debt, you may apply for a renewal award.

New applicants are eligible for the VMLRP if they meet all the following requirements:

1. Meet all of the requirements outlined in [7 CFR 3431.10](#);
2. Have a degree of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM), or the equivalent, by July 1 of the application year, from a college of veterinary medicine accredited by the [American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education](#);
3. Have a minimum qualifying educational loan ([see 7 CFR part 3431.3](#)) debt of \$15,000 from a lender capable of accepting incoming Automated Clearing House (ACH) payments at the start date of your service agreement. If you are unable to verify this with your lender, please contact vmlrp@usda.gov (Subject: lender payment acceptance assistance) for assistance.
4. Secure an 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;
5. Provide certifications and verifications as defined in [7 CFR part 3431.16](#), Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program;
6. 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. Please contact the VMLRP staff for further clarification of a specific situation via email at vmlrp@usda.gov;
7. Not have a federal judgement lien against his/her property arising from Federal debt.

Renewal applicants are eligible for the VMLRP if they meet all of the following requirements:

1. For FY 2024 RFA, renewal applicants must have a VMLRP agreement start date of January 1, 2021 (FY 2020) or January 1, 2022 (FY 2021).
 - a. 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 vmlrp.applications@usda.gov to verify their information.
 - b. If an applicant is applying as a renewal applicant to a veterinary shortage area other than their previous shortage area and agreement, he/she **must** apply as a new applicant.
2. Meet all of the requirements outlined in [7 CFR 3431.10](#);
3. Have a degree of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM), or the equivalent, by July 1 of the application year, from a college of veterinary medicine accredited by the [American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education](#);
4. Have a minimum qualifying educational loan ([see 7 CFR part 3431.3](#)) debt of \$15,000 from a lender capable of accepting incoming Automated Clearing House (ACH)

payments at the start date of your service agreement. If you are unable to verify this with your lender, please contact vmlrp@usda.gov (Subject: lender payment acceptance assistance) for assistance.

5. Secure an 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;
6. Provide certifications and verifications as defined in [7 CFR part 3431.16](#), Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program;
7. 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. Please contact the VMLRP staff for further clarification of a specific situation via email at vmlrp@usda.gov;
8. Not have a federal judgement lien against his/her property arising from Federal debt.

Veterinary Shortage Situations – VMLRP applicants apply to serve one designated veterinary shortage situation. To determine which veterinary shortage situations are designated, consult the [Veterinary Services Shortage Situation Areas](#) map. In the middle of the webpage, under the dropdown menu for “Fiscal Year”, select the applicable fiscal year; the map will automatically populate that year’s veterinary shortage situations. Shortage situations for FY 2024 will be posted no later than January 2024.

Federal Employees – There are no prohibitions against the participation of Federal employees if they meet all eligibility requirements for participation in the VMLRP. Full-time federal government employees (e.g., USDA/APHIS or FSIS, etc.) who wish to apply for a veterinary shortage situation outside of their current federal employment must meet the following:

1. Eligibility requirements outlined in detail in the section above.
2. Certain employees may be required to report outside employment, as well as the VMLRP award, and get clearance from the USDA Office of Ethics (see [Outside Employment/Activities](#)).

Duplicate or Multiple Submissions – duplicate or multiple submissions are not allowed. NIFA will disqualify both applications if an applicant submits duplicate or multiple submissions.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

No Match Required - The VMLRP has no matching requirement. NIFA will not factor matching resources into the review process as an evaluation criterion.

PART IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

A. Letter of Intent

- 1) **Letter of Intent (LOI):** VMLRP applicants are required to submit a LOI stating their intent to apply to the program. If you do not submit an LOI by the deadline, you will not be able to apply for the VMLRP. The LOI will be sent in an email to VMLRP.applications@usda.gov. The deadline for LOI submission in FY 2024 is Monday, April 1, 2024, by 5:00 PM Eastern Time.
- 2) **LOI Email Format:** Use the following format for LOI submission:
 Email Subject: FY 2024 LOI Submission
 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:
- 3) **Correspondence and receipt of LOI:** Upon receipt of an LOI, NIFA staff will create an individualized folder for each applicant in the online platform called Box.com Applicants will receive a confirmation email after an LOI is received and a folder in Box.com is created. This 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.

B. Method of Application

Application materials can be accessed two ways:

- 1) Application materials can be downloaded from the NIFA website ([VMLRP application forms](#)); the list of VMLRP forms is available by scrolling down the webpage.
- 2) If you do not have access to the web page or have trouble downloading the materials, you may contact the VMLRP program staff via email at vmrlp.applications@usda.gov. When emailing the VMLRP program staff, please include your name, mailing address, e-mail address, and phone number in the body of the email. State that you want a copy of the RFA and the associated application forms for the VMLRP. You must download and install a version of Adobe Reader that is compatible to access and complete application materials. **Table 3** provides instructions on how to obtain an electronic application.

Table 3: Steps to Obtain Application Materials

Steps	Action
Step One: Download Adobe Software	Download and Install Adobe Reader (see Adobe Software Compatibility for basic system requirements)
Step Two: Locate and Download Application Materials	To download NIFA VMLRP application forms go to VMLRP Application forms .

C. Content and Form of the Application

Applications must conform to the application preparation and submission instructions. All attachments to an application must comply with NIFA font, spacing and margin requirements and MUST be in PDF (portable document format) (see [Table 4](#) for further instructions). NIFA will only accept applications submitted as a complete pdf document file (not a PDF portfolio). Applications will not be accepted for review if they do not follow the specific guidelines.

The VMLRP application must be typed. Electronic and wet (ink) signatures are acceptable. Handwritten responses on any part of your application or recommendations will not be accepted and your application will not qualify for further consideration. Lastly, applications submitted by mail will not be accepted and your application will not qualify for further consideration.

Proper preparation of application materials will assist reviewers in evaluating the merits of each application in a systematic, consistent fashion. Financial documents should be unmarked in their original format. Notes included in your financial documents will not be reviewed. Identified below are the elements of a new application followed by the elements of a renewal application.

NIFA will accept subsequent submissions, that are identified as revisions, to an application until the application deadline. The final submission prior to an application deadline will be the submitted application for review. However, applicants that do not meet the application requirements, including partial applications, risk being excluded from NIFA's review. Table 4 outlines other VMLRP instructions for applicants.

Table 4: VMLRP Application Instructions

Instruction	References
Review Eligibility of Veterinary Services Shortage Nomination Form from the State Animal Health Official (SAHO) and select the Shortage Area for submission.	VMLRP Veterinary Services Shortage Situations Map
Documents must be in a portable document format (PDF) format.	Creating PDFs with Adobe Guide
Documents must be merged into two separate PDF documents . Instructions are indicated below for which forms must be combined for the two PDF documents. Applications will be rejected if the application materials do not follow this format.	Merging PDFs with Adobe Guide
Documents must be an electronic copy of the PDF.	Print PDF to Electronic Copy with Adobe Guide
Reduce the file size of the application before submission.	Optimizing PDF to Reduce File Size with Adobe Guide
Sign the PDF documents.	Sign PDFs with Adobe Guide
Follow the submission instructions.	N/A
Contact the VMLRP program staff for technical support and keep a record of the correspondence.	N/A
Contact the VMLRP program staff if applicant does not receive correspondence from NIFA regarding an application received within 15 days of submission.	N/A

New applications – New applications must contain the elements described below. The application must be uploaded into your Box account as **two PDF documents (a Program Document and a Loan Document)** as follows:

Program Document:

1. [Application Part 1: Program Form](#)
 - a. Resumé
 - b. Unofficial Transcript(s)
 - c. License and APHIS accreditation
2. Professional Narrative
 - a. Types I & II must include a map of the selected shortage situation area along with the practice area clearly defined.
3. Application Part 3: Recommendation Forms (if submitted as part of application)

Loan Document:

1. [Application Part 2: Financial Form](#)
 - a. Additionally, you must provide:
 - i. Master Promissory Note(s)/Consolidated Promissory Note(s) for each loan servicer.

1. Disclosure Statement(s) for each loan from each servicer may be substituted for the Promissory Note(s) if unable to retrieve the Note(s) at the time of submission. Additional information may be requested upon review of submission.
- ii. Loan Servicer Account Statement and Individual Loan Details
 1. An account statement must show the total balance due as well as a complete list of each loan held by that loan servicer. The statement and details must have a retrieval date within 90 days of the application deadline.
 2. Individual loan details are needed for each loan on the list included with the account statement, showing the current principal and interest balances, original loan amount, and date of the loan and/or disbursement date(s).
- iii. A Student Aid Loan Summary and Student Aid Individual Loan Detail Report(s) from [Federal Student Aid](#) (FSA) website.
 1. These documents must include the entire summary page showing totals and lists of loans for every servicer, as well as individual loan details for each loan on the list showing dates of every disbursement for each loan.
 2. Loans paid in full by the borrower do not need to be included with this submittal. Loans paid in full by consolidation must be included.
 3. A text file (.txt) is not acceptable for this request. Information will have to be “printed to pdf” then saved and submitted.

Renewal Applications – Renewal applications must contain the following elements. The renewal application must be uploaded into your Box.com account as **two PDF documents (a Program Document and a Loan Document)** as follows:

Program Document:

1. [Application Part 1: Program Form](#)
 - a. Resumé
 - b. Unofficial transcript(s)
 - c. License and APHIS accreditation
2. Professional Narrative
 - a. Types I & II must include a map of the selected shortage situation area along with the practice area clearly defined.
3. Three Application Part 3: Recommendation Forms (if submitted as part of application)

Loan Document:

1. [Application Part 2: Financial Form](#)
 - a. Additionally, you must provide:
 - i. If your original award is from 2022 or older, applicants with consolidated loans must submit a list of loans that were included in the consolidation.
 - ii. Loan Servicer Account Statement and List of Loans
 1. The account statement must show the total balance due as well as a complete list of each loan held by that loan servicer. The statement with list must be dated within 90 days of the application deadline.
 2. An individual breakdown of each loan from the servicer is not needed. However, the list of loans showing the current balance at the time the

statement is retrieved, is needed along with the account statement. NIFA may request additional information as needed during review.

Content and form of the application guidelines must be followed. An application that does not meet the guidelines indicated may be disqualified without review. Except for recommendations, multiple submissions with separate attachments will not be considered without prior arrangements. For questions regarding the submission of applications, please email: vmllrp.applications@usda.gov.

General Instructions for Application Forms

1. [Veterinary Services Shortage Situations Map](#)

The map of designated veterinary shortage situations contains all shortage situations eligible for application for a given FY application cycle. The location of service, species served for Types I or II, discipline designations for Type III, and activities that are to be conducted are identified on the veterinary shortage situation form. VMLRP applicants will use this information to select shortage situations they are willing and qualified to fill and to guide the preparation of their applications. If offered a VMLRP award, NIFA will use this information to assess agreement compliance of awardees. Therefore, it is important for the applicant to read carefully the requirements stated on the veterinary shortage situation form.

All states shaded in blue have at least one designated veterinary shortage area. Shortage situations appear in the table below the map. Additional details for a shortage situation can be found by clicking on the ID code of the area of interest. Previous years' designations can be found by selecting the year of interest in the "fiscal year" filter (data is not currently available for all program years).

2. [Application Part 1: Program Form](#)

Applicants may only apply to fill one of the designated veterinary shortage situations for each application period. Applicants must indicate the shortage situation they propose to fill by entering the five-digit shortage identification code in Section 1 of this form. To determine which designated veterinary shortage situations are open for application and the applicable five-digit shortage identification codes, go to the [VMLRP Veterinary Services Shortage Situations map](#) and scroll to the dropdown menu for "FY" select the current FY.

If your Veterinary License and/or USDA APHIS Accreditation have not been posted or received, indicate "Pending" for the license information on page 4.

A renewal applicant should enter the five-digit shortage identification code of the original shortage situation they are currently serving or served through a VMLRP award. If a renewal applicant is uncertain of the correct five-digit shortage identification code, the applicant should contact the VMLRP program staff to obtain this information via email at vmllrp.applications@usda.gov.

3. **Resumé**

This document should describe in summary the applicant's education, work history, credentials, trainings/seminars, certifications, and other accomplishments and skills. The information provided should demonstrate the applicant's abilities to serve in the designated

shortage area. The body of the resumé is limited to two pages. An additional page (optional) may be included to list publications, patents, etc.

Renewal applicants must provide an updated resumé to add any academic degrees, work experience, professional awards and honors, or other special achievements that took place since their last VMLRP application.

DO NOT include demographic information, photographs of yourself, financial information, or a Social Security Number.

4. **Unofficial Transcript(s)**

An unofficial transcript from the applicant's professional veterinary degree program is required. If the applicant attended more than one school during their DVM studies, unofficial transcripts from all schools must be provided. If your degree has not posted to your transcripts prior to the application deadline, provide an unofficial transcript to date.

Renewal applicants must submit unofficial transcript(s), including coursework taken since the original VMLRP award.

5. **Veterinary License and USDA APHIS Accreditation**

Include a copy of your State veterinary license and your USDA APHIS accreditation status. Use this webpage: [USDA APHIS | For Veterinarians](#) to enter your last name and accreditation number. The copy of your USDA APHIS accreditation should include your name, category II, the state, and the renewal date. If you have not received your license and accreditation indicate this by writing "pending" in numbers 10 and 11 of section 4 on the Application Part 1: Program form.

6. **Professional Narrative**

There are separate instructions for the content of the narrative of new and renewal applicants. New and renewal applicants are required to create a document with their personal statement that must conform to the following guidelines:

- a. Page size must be letter (i.e., 8.5 inches × 11 inches); have one-inch margins, have 12-point font; and be double spaced.
- b. Use an easily readable font (e.g., Geneva, Helvetica, or Times New Roman).
- c. This document must not exceed five double-spaced, typed pages. This limit has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition.
- d. Include your name, the date, and the page number in the header on each page.

We highly recommend you proofread the personal statement for grammar and spelling errors. The panel will consider grammar and spelling errors in their review and ranking of applicants.

DO NOT include your demographic information, financial information, or a Social Security Number in the personal statement.

7. **New Applicant Professional Narrative**

a. Introduction

- i. Clearly summarize the perceived problem(s) occurring in veterinary shortage situation you are applying to serve as stated by the State Animal Health Officials (SAHO) and from your professional knowledge. (Note that veterinary shortage situation nominations clearly state the specific problems and needs on page two of the shortage nomination form).
- ii. Describe, and to the extent possible quantify, the scope of the practice in which you will be serving when addressing the shortage area, if awarded (# of clients, # of farms, # of herds, # of farm calls weekly, monthly and yearly, how it is equipped, etc.).
- iii. State why you are professionally, geographically, and functionally poised to effectively relieve the veterinary shortage area to which you have applied to serve. If you are a new graduate describe your relevant course work, training, internships, or externships that have prepared you to serve the shortage situation area.
- iv. Type I and Type II applicants: Consider detailing how you are particularly equipped to provide veterinary services to the must serve species and activities identified in the shortage nomination.
- v. Type III applicants: Consider detailing how you are particularly equipped to address the specialty area and activities listed for in the shortage nomination.
- vi. Where applicable, this section may include, but is not necessarily limited to, descriptions of:
 1. Formal pre-professional educational training (e.g., undergraduate, or graduate degree programs and credentials);
 2. Formal training during pursuit of the DVM (or equivalent) degree (e.g., electives, curricular emphases);
 3. Formal, post-DVM (or equivalent) training and specialization (e.g., graduate degree programs, internships, residency programs, and board certifications);
 4. Professional employment experience in private or public veterinary practice, or other relevant work experiences before, during, or after earning the DVM (or equivalent) degree;
 5. Specialty short-course certifications, accreditations, or licensures (e.g., APHIS accreditation, agrosecurity training series, food animal production management courses, certified proficiency-training in foreign animal disease diagnostics);
 6. Awards, honors, or special achievements;
 7. You may wish to reference your resumé rather than include each of the bullets above in your personal statement.

b. Approach for mitigation of shortage area

- i. Explicitly describe the strategies, tactics and/or business plan you will employ to mitigate the need of the shortage area you are applying to serve. Where applicable, this section may include, but not necessarily be limited to, descriptions of:

1. Planned stakeholder/client involvement in veterinary service prioritization, planning, implementation, and evaluation; include a description of the relationships with local community leaders, organizations, and producers in identifying best strategies to mitigate veterinary service shortages, and most effective methods of evaluating and effectiveness of strategies employed.
2. Describe proposed activities over the three-year service commitment that will address the shortage nomination.
3. Approach to tracking the number of clients, farms, or number of animals.
4. Plans to communicate increased/enhanced services to clients in the veterinary shortage situation area.
5. Pitfalls that might be encountered and any plans to address them.
6. Limitations to proposed activities.

c. Sustainability/ Future/ Long Term Goals

- i. Describe existing ties to the community and current community involvement. If you are new to the area describe opportunities for establishing ties within the community, and community involvement activities.
- ii. Estimate the impact of your proposed mitigation approach on local livestock, livestock operators, and local economic vitality and to ongoing state-federal interests including health of animal populations, food safety, food security, and public health during and after the award period. For example, how will your service to the shortage situation area be sustained after the service commitment, or what lasting impacts will your service have in the shortage area.

8. Renewal Applicant Personal Statement

a. Introduction

- i. Clearly summarize the perceived problem(s) occurring in veterinary shortage situation you are applying to serve as stated by the State Animal Health Officials (SAHO) and from your professional knowledge and experience serving the area.
- ii. Briefly summarize what you have done to mitigate the shortage and address challenges or limitations the shortage area continues to experience (this will be covered in more detail in the Impact section below). (Note that veterinary shortage situation nominations clearly state the specific problems and needs on page two of the shortage nomination form).
- iii. Describe, and to the extent possible quantify, the scope of your practice (# of clients, # of farms, # of herds, # of farm calls weekly, monthly and yearly, how it is equipped, etc.).
- iv. State why you are professionally, geographically, and functionally poised to effectively relieve the veterinary shortage area to which you have applied to serve.

- v. Type I and Type II applicants: Consider detailing how you are particularly equipped to provide veterinary services to the must serve species and activities identified in the shortage nomination.
- vi. Type III applicants: Consider detailing how you are particularly equipped to address the specialty area and activities listed for in the shortage nomination.
- vii. Where applicable, this section may include, but not necessarily limited to, descriptions of:
 1. Formal pre-professional educational training (e.g., undergraduate, or graduate degree programs and credentials);
 2. Formal training during pursuit of the DVM (or equivalent) degree (e.g., electives, curricular emphases);
 3. Formal, post-DVM (or equivalent) training and specialization (e.g., graduate degree programs, internships, residency programs, and board certifications);
 4. Professional employment experience in private or public veterinary practice, or other relevant work experiences before, during, or after earning the DVM (or equivalent) degree;
 5. Specialty short-course certifications, accreditations, or licensures (e.g., APHIS accreditation, agrosecurity training series, food animal production management courses, certified proficiency-training in foreign animal disease diagnostics);
 6. Awards, honors, or special achievements;
 7. You may wish to reference your resumé rather than include each of the bullets above in your personal statement.

b. Impact of previous award service and continued approach for shortage area

- i. Describe scope of the impact of your service during the current award (increased # of clients, # of farms, # of herds, # of farm calls weekly, monthly and yearly, etc.) within the shortage area.
- ii. Describe the impact of your service in the shortage area on local livestock, livestock operators, local economic vitality, and to ongoing state-federal interest to the health of animal populations, food safety, food security, and public health.
- iii. These impacts should be supported by appropriate metrics (e.g., percent increase in clientele base or service radius, increase in number of livestock served, decreased rates of morbidity or mortality, or other measures of animal health and productivity, number of community outreach events presented and number of attendees, impacted on clientele profits and/ or sustainability)

c. Sustainability and Long-Term Goals:

- i. Address how receiving the VMLRP award enabled your professional success including long-term career goals beyond the VMLRP agreement. Address how receiving a renewal VMLRP award will continue to your professional success. Describe your current

involvement in the community and how that has developed since your initial award.

- ii. Estimate the impact of your proposed mitigation approach (impact of future award) on local livestock, livestock operators, and local economic vitality and to ongoing state-federal interests including health of animal populations, food safety, food security, and public health during and after the award period. For example, how will your service to the shortage situation area be sustained after the service commitment, or what lasting impacts will your service have in the shortage area.

9. [Shortage Situation Map for Types I & II](#)

For those applying to a Type I or Type II shortage situation, a map (limited to 1 page) must be provided to identify the location of the proposed shortage situation in relation to the location of the veterinary practice from which the applicant will be working. For mobile practices, identify beginning and end locations for a typical workday. Any spatial features may be added to the map (e.g., circles, arrows, or points) to highlight these areas. Any spatial features added to the map is the only portion of the application that may be handwritten. Please make sure the map is clear and legible to read.

10. [Application Part 2: Financial Form](#)

This form requests information on qualified loans you want to be considered for the VMLRP. Only outstanding educational loans from a legally enforceable institutional, State, or Government entity made for the purpose of meeting the costs of attending an accredited college or university of veterinary medicine will be considered. Applicants must complete sections one through three of the Application Part 2: Financial form for each loan servicer they wish to be considered.

An Application Part 2: Financial form is to be completed for each servicer and not for each loan held by the servicer. The amounts provided should represent the total balance due to that individual loan servicer at the time of your application.

Individuals who consolidated their veterinary school loans with other educational loans (e.g., undergraduate) are allowed to apply for the VMLRP; **however, only the eligible portion of the consolidated loan (veterinary school loans) will be considered for repayment by the VMLRP.** Individuals who consolidated their DVM loans with non-educational loans or loans belonging to an individual other than the applicant, such as a spouse or child, are **ineligible** for VMLRP consideration. Please visit [VMLRP Loan Consolidation](#) webpage for more information.

a. [Promissory Note\(s\)/Disclosure Statements](#)

- i. The promissory note must include the name of the borrower, loan type (Stafford, Perkins, etc.), date of note, signature of borrower, and date of signature. **Please do not include the terms and conditions, notices, or instruction pages of the promissory note.** It can take several weeks to obtain a promissory note from a loan servicer. It is highly recommended to

contact your loan servicer as soon as you decide to apply for the VMLRP. If you are unable to obtain the promissory note by the application deadline, Disclosure Statements are an acceptable alternative. Please contact the VMLRP office via email at vmlrp.applications@usda.gov with any questions.

b. Loan Servicer Account Statement

- i. All applicants must submit an account statement showing total balance due, as well as a complete list of each loan held by that loan servicer. These documents must have a retrieval date within 90 days of the application deadline. A complete statement or balance printed from the loan servicer's website is acceptable. This document typically provides the current total loan balance, individual loan balances, interest rate, and other information, including the account number and payment address.

c. Loan Servicer Individual Loan Details

- i. Individual loan details are also needed, showing the current principal and interest balances, current interest rate, original loan amount, and date of the loan and/or disbursement date(s). Typically, this information can be printed from the loan servicer's website and may either be one document containing details for all loans or separate documents for each loan. If loans are grouped together, be sure to expand the groups on the website to show the entire loan details.

d. Student Aid Loan Summary

- i. This information is retrieved from the [Federal Student Aid](http://FederalStudentAid.gov) website. **Please do not submit text files (.txt) as they are not acceptable for submission.** To be considered for repayment, the borrower will "print to pdf" each section required and include these sections within the pdf submittal. Reach out to vmlrp.applications@usda.gov with any questions.
- ii. A Student Aid Loan Summary is a printout of the borrower's Federal Student Aid "My Aid" homepage showing the total loan debt outstanding as well as a list of all educational loans that have been disbursed and/or paid in full by the borrower. This summary includes the total number of loans, total balance, list of loan types (Consolidated, Subsidized, Unsubsidized, etc.), and the loan breakdown grouped by loan servicer. In order to show the list of loans in the loan breakdown section, click "view loans" for each loan servicer.

e. Student Aid Loan Detail Report

- i. This information is a printout of each individual educational loan identified within the list of loans on the Student Aid Loan Summary page. The Student Aid Loan Detail Report for each loan must include the loan type, balance due, disbursement dates, and total amount disbursed throughout the life of the loan.
- ii. Loan Consolidation (if applicable). Applicants with consolidated loans must submit a list of loans that were included in the consolidation. Additional documentation may be required to verify eligibility (e.g. the original amount disbursed and disbursement date for each loan).

11. [Application Part 3: Recommendation Form](#)

Each individual you request to be a recommender must complete an Application Part 3: Recommendation Form. The form includes ratings and short answers designed to allow reviewers to assess your capabilities to provide veterinary services in the specific shortage situation. Recommenders are encouraged to review and consider the information describing the relevant shortage situation on the [VMLRP Service Shortage Situations](#) map located on the website.

Three separate individual recommendations are required. If fewer than three recommendations are received by the application deadline, your application will not be accepted and will not be considered for further consideration.

The short answers may be prepared on only one side of a standard size (8½” x 11”) white paper with one-inch margins, typed or word-processed using type no smaller than 12-point font, and double spaced. Use an easily readable font face (e.g., Geneva, Helvetica, or Times New Roman). All sections of this form must be typed. Handwritten responses on any part of this form will not be accepted and your application will not be considered for further consideration.

VMLRP does not have requirements for who a recommender may be; it is the applicant’s decision to choose whom they think will be the best recommenders for their application. We do encourage applicants to choose their recommenders based on the information they provided in their personal statement and can support their ability to serve the specific requirements that are listed in the shortage nomination form. The recommenders should be able to speak to your ability to serve that shortage area. We encourage applicants to reach out as early as possible to their recommenders, to ensure that recommendation letters get submitted by the deadline.

It is always the applicant’s responsibility to contact and follow up with recommenders to ensure all required recommendations are completed and submitted in accordance with the applicable instructions. Recommenders will be receiving an email verification of receipt of the recommendation from NIFA.

D. Funding Restrictions

VMLRP loan repayment awards are capped at \$25,000 for each year of service rendered (tax payments are in addition to the award amount). Loan repayments will be made directly to the participant’s lending institution on behalf of the participating individual. Lending institutions must be capable of accepting incoming Automated Clearing House (ACH) payments. If you are unable to verify this with your lender, please contact vmlrp@usda.gov (Subject: lender payment acceptance question) for assistance.

The quarterly repayments will be applied to the principal, interest, and related expenses on government and commercial educational loans received by the participating individual for attendance at an American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education accredited college of veterinary medicine resulting in a degree of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine or the equivalent. The VMLRP will only repay debt incurred at an institution that is accredited at the time of attendance and graduation. If the school was accredited the first day of attendance, the

VMLRP will repay debt incurred at that institution during the time of your attendance, up until graduation. This includes any scenario involving an individual transferring from a non-accredited institution to an accredited institution.

Individuals with a degree from an institution that was not accredited at the time the degree was conferred are ineligible for award. This is regardless of the fact the individual may have attended an accredited institution prior to transferring to a non-accredited institution from which they received their DVM. Regarding accreditation of foreign schools, VMLRP will repay debt incurred at an institution during the time that institution was accredited, which could be several years after the establishment of the school. If an institution received accreditation status during your attendance at this institution, only the portion of veterinary school loans that were disbursed after the institution's date of accreditation shall be repaid by the VMLRP. If you received your DVM degree from an institution that was not accredited at the time the degree was conferred, you are ineligible for the VMLRP award.

Tax payments equal to 39 percent of the total loan repayment amount given will be paid directly to the participant to assist with offsetting the additional income claimed when receiving a VMLRP award. The participant is required to pay this amount to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). These tax payments are not tax-exempt and will be reported to the IRS along with loan payments paid to a servicer on the participants behalf. The participant will receive a Form 1099-G (Certain Government Payments) from the National Finance Center (NFC) at the beginning of the year following the close of a calendar year. If you do not receive a form 1099-G by the end of February of that year, reach out to 1099 Help Desk at 1-800-421-0323 or by email at 1099helpdesk@usda.gov.

E. Submission Requirements

1. Application Submission Dates and Time

For the FY 2024 RFA, LOIs must be received by Monday, April 1, 2024. Applications and recommendations must be received by 5:00 PM Eastern Time on Friday, April 12, 2024. Applications received after the posted deadlines will not be considered for funding.

2. Submission of Application

- a. **Application submission:** Applicants will upload two single PDF documents (Program Document and Loan Document), with the forms in the order listed in [Part IV \(Application and Submission\), Section C \(Content and Form of the Application\)](#) of this RFA to their individual folder in Box.com by the application deadline. Applicant access to individual folders in Box will be removed by the application deadline at 5:00 PM Eastern Time on Friday, April 12, 2024.
- b. **Correspondence and receipt of application materials:** If the applicant has not received correspondence from NIFA regarding receipt of a submitted application within 20 business days of submission, the applicant must contact the VMLRP program staff by email at vmlrp.applications@usda.gov to request confirmation of receipt of their application. Failure to alert NIFA that confirmation of receipt has not been received could result in the application not being reviewed by the peer review panel.

- c. **Recommendation Submission:** Recommendations must be emailed (preferred) to vmlrp.applications@usda.gov or faxed to 1-833-208-8205. Subject of the email should read “VMLRP Recommendation, Applicant Last Name, First Name”. Do not submit recommendations by mail. Recommendations received by mail will not be accepted and your application will not qualify for further consideration.
- d. **Correspondence and receipt of recommendations:** It is always the applicant’s responsibility to contact and follow up with recommenders to ensure all required recommendations are completed and submitted in accordance with the applicable instructions. Recommenders receive an email verification of receipt of the recommendation from NIFA when it is processed.

We urge you to submit early. VMLRP applications are complex and require completion of multiple forms, if you wait until the last days before the due date to submit your application you risk missing the deadline. We encourage inexperienced applicants to submit their applications at least two weeks or more before the deadline.

A [Cooperative Agreement with LifeStock Inc.](#) has been established to support the [Veterinary Services Grants Program \(VSGP\)](#) and the [Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program \(VMLRP\)](#). The end-goal, for NIFA and LifeStock, Inc. is better and more expanded animal health care delivery in the rural US, leading to improved economics for producers and better protection against incursions of transboundary animal diseases, as well as enhanced food security for the nation. Throughout the program, special attention will be paid to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, ensuring that minority applicants are provided all the guidance and support desired or needed.

LifeStock, Inc. Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) are prepared to provide mentorship and guidance to potential applicants through live and on-line remote support regarding the assessment of the applicant’s entire application package. The objectives of all of these activities are to enhance the visibility of and accessibility to NIFA’s veterinary programs to applicants , creating a strong pool of well-informed and successful applicants, and increase the success of an applicant scoring in the Outstanding and High Priority categories. LifeStock Inc., will be available to support VMLRP applicants with creating and submitting their application for no cost. For details visit this webpage: www.lifestockguide.org. For appointments regarding application assistance email: nifaprogramshelp@lifestock.org.

Applications received by mail will not be accepted and your application will not qualify for further consideration. Do not submit an additional copy of the VMLRP application by mail. For questions regarding the submission of applications, please email: vmlrp.applications@usda.gov.

PART V. APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. NIFA's Evaluation Process

NIFA evaluates each application in a two-part process. First, we screen each application to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements set forth in this RFA. All administrative requirements must be met for the application to proceed to the next level of review.

Second, a scientific peer-review process will be used to technically evaluate applications that have met the administrative requirements using a review panel (see [NIFA Peer Review Process](#)).

Scientific Peer Review Process:

NIFA selects reviewers for the review panel based upon their training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, considering the following factors:

1. the level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities.
2. the need to include experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields.
3. the need to include other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs.
4. the need to include experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, and private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations.
5. The need to maintain a balanced composition with regard to race, ethnicity, gender representation, and an equitable age distribution.
6. the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness of each application to producers and the general public.

After each peer review panel has completed its deliberations, the responsible program staff of NIFA will recommend that a proposal is either approved for support from currently available funds or declined due to insufficient funds or unfavorable review.

NIFA reserves the right to negotiate with the submitting individual regarding project revisions (e.g., reductions in the scope of work, funding level, period, or method of support) prior to recommending any project for funding.

After the review process has been completed, NIFA sends copies of reviews, *not* including the identity of reviewers, and a summary (if applicable) of the review panel comments to the submitting individual.

Conflicts of interest. NIFA takes extreme care to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may influence the review or evaluation (see [NIFA Peer Review Process for Competitive Grant Applications](#)).

B. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria listed below is used by the panel reviewers to evaluate each application submitted that passes the administrative review in response to this RFA. There are different evaluation criteria for new and renewal applicants. The panel reviewers use the following evaluation criteria for this RFA:

1. New applicants

- a. **Expertise and Experience (50%):** This criterion relates to the demonstration of the applicant's knowledge, skills, abilities, and experience of the needs indicated within the veterinary shortage situation as it relates to the application by:
 - i. Formal pre-professional educational training (e.g., undergraduate, or graduate degree programs and credentials);
 - ii. Formal training during pursuit of the DVM (or equivalent) degree (e.g., electives, curricular emphases);
 - iii. Formal, post-DVM (or equivalent) training and specialization (e.g., graduate degree programs, internships, residency programs, and board certifications);
 - iv. Professional employment experience in private or public veterinary practice, or other relevant work experiences before, during, or after earning the DVM (or equivalent) degree;
 - v. Specialty short-course certifications, accreditations, or licensures (e.g., APHIS accreditation, agrosecurity training series, food animal production management courses, certified proficiency-training in foreign animal disease diagnostics);
 - vi. Awards, honors, or special achievements;
 - vii. Recommendations.
- b. **Achievability, Sustainability and Fit to the Shortage Area (35%):** This criterion relates to the applicant's ability to demonstrate potential for long term success in the shortage situation. It includes the prioritization of the veterinary shortage situation overall priority. New applicants will be evaluated on:
 - i. The proposed shortage situation circumstances and needs by indicating the mitigation of the shortage situation, goals, or business plans during period of VMLRP agreement;
 - ii. Long-term range goals that the applicant desires to complete beyond the VMLRP agreement, opportunities for establishing roots within the community, and community involvement activities;
 - iii. The mitigation approach addressing the strategy to reduce the risk(s) of the specific veterinary shortage situation for opportunities of success;
 - iv. How receiving the VMLRP award would provide professional success through the duration of the agreement;
 - v. Overall fit of applicants experience and expertise to the must serve species and specified activities required to meet the needs of the shortage area;
 - vi. 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.
- c. **Clarity and quality (15%):** This criterion are based on the overall clarity and quality of the application to include:
 - i. Clarity and quality of the personal statement and resume;
 - ii. Clarity and quality of the map;

- iii. Formatting, spelling, and grammar errors.

2. Renewal applicants

- a. **Expertise and Experience (50%):** This criterion relates to the demonstration of the applicant's knowledge, skills, abilities, and experience of the needs indicated within the veterinary shortage situation as it relates to the application by:
 - i. Formal pre-professional educational training (e.g., undergraduate, or graduate degree programs and credentials);
 - ii. Formal training during pursuit of the DVM (or equivalent) degree (e.g., electives, curricular emphases);
 - iii. Formal, post-DVM (or equivalent) training and specialization (e.g., graduate degree programs, internships, residency programs, and board certifications);
 - iv. Professional employment experience in private or public veterinary practice, or other relevant work experiences before, during, or after earning the DVM (or equivalent) degree;
 - v. Specialty short-course certifications, accreditations, or licensures (e.g., APHIS accreditation, agrosecurity training series, food animal production management courses, certified proficiency-training in foreign animal disease diagnostics);
 - vi. Awards, honors, or special achievements;
 - vii. Recommendations.
- b. **Impact, sustainability, and mitigation of shortage situation (35%):** This criterion relates to the goals accomplished and the services provided in the last VMLRP service agreement. It includes the prioritization of the veterinary shortage situation overall priority. Renewal applicants will be evaluated on:
 - i. The impact of service in their shortage situation area including metrics demonstrating impact within the shortage situation area;
 - ii. An update on the mitigation approach of the specific veterinary shortage situation for opportunities of success;
 - iii. Long-term goals that the applicant desires to complete beyond the VMLRP agreement;
 - iv. The developed ties within the community and community involvement activities developed during the previous award service agreement;
 - v. The applicant must address how receiving the VMLRP award would provide professional success through the duration of the agreement;
 - vi. Overall fit of applicants experience and expertise to the must serve species and specified activities required to meet the needs of the shortage area;
 - vii. Priority of moderate, high, or critical determined by the State Animal Health Official on the shortage nomination form. This criterion is used in the final ranking process among applicants.
- c. **Clarity and quality (15%):** This criterion are based on the overall clarity and quality of the application to include:
 - i. Clarity and quality of the personal statement and resume;
 - ii. Clarity and quality of the map;
 - iii. Formatting, spelling, and grammar errors.

C. Organizational management information

Applicants must submit specific management information prior to an award and update the information as needed. Applicants may only need to provide an update if there was a change in

previously provided information under this or another NIFA program. NIFA provides the requisite forms during the pre-award process. Although an applicant may be eligible for award under this program, there are factors that may exclude an applicant from receiving federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual, or a determination that an applicant is not responsible). All submitted applications shall be reviewed to ensure administrative compliance and completeness prior to an evaluation by the VMLRP application review panel. A complete review of each applicant's loan documents by NIFA will also take place prior to the announcement of awards.

D. Application disposition

Applicants may withdraw at any time before NIFA makes a final funding decision. NIFA will retain all applications, including withdrawn applications and unfunded applications. An electronic copy of each application not selected for funding, including those that are withdrawn, will be retained by VMLRP for three years.

E. Selection Criteria for Multiple Applicants to a Shortage Area

The two highest ranked applicants to a veterinary shortage situation area can both be awarded if applicants work at different clinics within the veterinary shortage situation area, both must have been recommended for Outstanding or High Priority categories in the final ranking by panelists, and the SAHO approves placing two VMLRP awardees in the same veterinary shortage situation area.

PART VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of VMLRP funds available, the NIFA awarding official shall make an award and agreement offers to responsible and eligible applicants whose applications are determined most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The effective date of an award shall be January 1 of the following calendar year in which the application is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. All funds awarded by NIFA under this RFA shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application, the VMLRP authorizing statute at [7 U.S.C. § 3151\(a\)](#), the VMLRP regulations at [7 CFR Part 3431](#), and the terms and conditions of the award.

Award Notice. The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information as described in [2 CFR 200.211](#) (see [NIFA's Terms and Conditions](#)).

All VMLRP applicants will be informed by email of the final funding decisions related to the FY 2024 RFA by Monday, September 30, 2024.

The award package will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum:

1. Legal name and address of applicant to whom the NIFA Director has issued an award under the terms of this request for applications;
2. Designated veterinary shortage situation code, including the state;
3. Service period, specifying the amount of time the Department intends to support the service agreement without requiring re-competition for funds;
4. Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the NIFA Director during the service period;
5. Legal authority, or authorities, under which the award is issued;
6. Applicable award terms and conditions for the VMLRP;
7. Other information or provisions deemed necessary by NIFA to carry out its respective awarding activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular award.

The Secretary through their Designee may terminate this agreement no later than 30 days after the execution of this agreement if the individual:

1. Submits a written request for such termination to vmlrp@usda.gov.
2. The submittal shall include an explanation for the need to be released from the obligations of the agreement already signed.
3. If any funds have been disbursed, they may be required to be returned, which will be determined upon review of request submitted.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications and the projects outlined in this RFA (some are listed here: [Federal Regulations](#)). Unless specifically noted by statute or award-specific requirements, [NIFA Federal Assistance Policy Guide](#) applies to all NIFA awards.

C. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

Program Outputs:

The principal program output for FY 2024 will be verifiable mitigation of well-defined, high priority veterinary shortage situations in an estimated 60 to 80 locations across the country, for a period of three years.

Reporting Requirements

Reporting requirements are described in full detail within the [VMLRP Guidance Manual](#) available on the VMLRP website. Below is a list of the reporting currently required.

1. Quarterly Reporting:
 - a. Service Verification report form.
 - b. Service Log in Microsoft Excel format.
2. Shortage Situation Service Changes (if applicable):
3. Loan History from loan servicer.
4. Proof of tax payments made with VMLRP funds.
5. Copy Proof of active license during entire term of award.
6. Automated Clearing House (ACH) Enrollment OMB 1510-0056 for tax payments needed.
7. Recipient updates throughout term of the award such as:
 - a. Contact information changes
 - b. Employer changes
 - c. Supervisor changes
 - d. Loan officer changes
 - e. Early loan payoff notifications
8. Close Out Report at the end of the period of performance

SPECIAL NOTE: A Close Out Report is required from all awardees. This report is subject to review for completeness and must be approved by the VMLRP program staff prior to disbursement of the final payment.

PART VII. OTHER INFORMATION

A. Use of Funds and Changes in Budget

Delegation of fiscal responsibility. Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, awardees may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

Changes in the VMLRP Agreement

1. The permissible changes by the awardee in the approved agreement shall be limited to minor changes that do not substantially impact or alter the spirit and intent of the agreement to mitigate a specific veterinary service shortage in a specific geographic and/or occupational situation. To ensure that all applications are reviewed in an equitable and consistent manner, a change in the shortage area the applicant proposes to serve will not be considered once an application has been reviewed by the peer review panel. If the awardee is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the VMLRP program staff for a final determination.
2. Changes in Loan Repayment Schedule: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, changes in an approved loan repayment schedule must be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the VMLRP program staff prior to instituting such changes.

B. Access to Review Information

Copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments will be sent to the applicant upon request 60-90 days after the review process has been completed.

C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of NIFA transaction records, which are available to the public. Information that the Secretary of Agriculture determines to be confidential, privileged, or proprietary in nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, applicants should clearly mark any information within the application they wish to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary. NIFA will retain a copy of an application that does not result in an award for three years. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An applicant may withdraw at any time prior to the final action thereon.

D. Regulatory Information

This program is not subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, which requires intergovernmental consultation with state and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 ([44 U.S.C. Chapter 35](#)), the collection of information requirements contained in this notice have been approved under [OMB Document No. 0524-0039](#).

E. Definitions

Please refer to [7 CFR Part 3431, Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program](#), for applicable definitions for this program.

F. Materials Available on the Internet

Numerous tools and reference materials are available via the [VMLRP](#) website. The following listing represents a few selections available under the “[Applicant](#).” web page.

G. Limited English Proficiency

NIFA offers language access services, such as interpretation and translation of vital information, free of charge. If you need interpretation or translation services, please visit [NIFA Language Access Services](#) or contact Lois Tuttle, Equal Opportunity Specialist, at Lois.Tuttle@usda.gov or (443) 386-9488.

APPENDIX I: AGENCY CONTACTS

Program Contacts

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Application Assistance

LifeStock Inc.
nifaprogramshelp@lifestock.org

Financial & Administrative Contact

Linda Cambron
Capacity Branch Chief
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Telephone: 816-820-4039
Fax: 844-332-8008

U.S. Postal Mailing Address:

National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 419205, MS 10000
Kansas City, MO 64141-6205

Courier/Package Delivery Address:

National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
2312 East Bannister Road, MS 10000
Kansas City, MO 64141-3061

APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service - APHIS

Authorized Representative - AR

Automated Clearing House - ACH

Code of Federal Regulations - CFR

Doctor of Veterinary Medicine - DVM

Electronic Fund Transfer - EFT

Federal Student Aid - FSA

Fiscal Year - FY

Food Safety and Inspection Service - FSIS

Internal Revenue Service - IRS

National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1997 - NARETPA

National Institute of Food and Agriculture - NIFA

National Veterinary Medical Service Act - NVMSA

Portable Document Format - PDF

Project Director/Principal Investigator - PD/PI

Request for Application - RFA

State Animal Health Official - SAHO

United States Department of Agriculture - USDA

Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program - VMLRP

APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS

Refer to [7 CFR 3430 Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Federal Assistance Programs – General Award Administrative Provisions.](#)

Service Agreement:

Service agreement is an agreement signed by an applicant and the Secretary for the VMLRP wherein the applicant agrees to accept repayment of qualifying educational loans and to serve in accordance with the provisions of NVMSA for a prescribed period of obligated service.

Fully Executed Service Agreement:

The Secretary/Director or his/her authorized representative and the applicant sign the service agreement.

Lending Institution:

A lending institution is an establishment that focuses on dealing with financial transactions. Organizations such as a bank, credit union, or finance company that makes loans.

New Application:

This is an applicant, who was not previously awarded, that will provide veterinary service in a shortage situation.

Renewal Application:

This is an applicant that has provided veterinary service in a shortage situation and that completed a signed VMLRP service agreement.