

VMLRP Panels: FY- 2011

Panelist Selection, Roles and Responsibilities

Background; Description of Panel Objectives; Eligibility; Dates of Panels

NOTE: NIFA is committed to assuring diversity (race, ethnicity, gender, age, geographic, etc) on our panels so identification of, and volunteerism by, minority panel candidates is especially encouraged and appreciated. Early career individuals are also encouraged to serve.

*NOTE: NIFA protects the **confidentiality of reviewers** serving on our panels. Furthermore, NIFA is committed to guarding against **conflicts of interest (CoI)** between panelists and multiple aspects of the material they may be asked to review. Therefore, prior to service, panelists are asked to identify, and recuses themselves from review of, any VMLRP nominations or applications with which they may have conflicts. Guidance is provided to panelists to facilitate identification of real and perceived conflicts.*

The VMLRP requires the convening of two separate panel sets each program year. Each panel set addresses a different program requirement (shortage nomination evaluation and designation, or applicant/awardee rating and selection), as described below:

1. First Panel Set (aka: Nomination Panels): OBJECTIVE: Review/Recommend 2011 veterinary shortage situation nominations (submitted by State Animal Health Officials {SAHO}, typically the State Veterinarians) for official **shortage designation**. This is accomplished via a **1-day (for any given panelist) telepanel tentatively occurring during the week of April 18-22, 2011**. (There are actually 4 nomination panels corresponding to each of 4 geographic quadrants of the US, but any single panelist would only serve one 6-8-hour day during this nomination panel week; lunch and other short breaks during the day are provided.) A **\$225/day panel-time honorarium is paid** to those panelists allowed to receive such compensation (please seek guidance from your human resources and/or ethics offices for eligibility.) Successfully “designated” nominations, as recommended by the panel and approved by NIFA program leadership, will then constitute the pool of potential “shortage situations” that candidate veterinarians may apply to fill in the application/award phase of program year.

ELIGIBILITY to serve on Nomination Panel: By regulation, Nomination Panels may consist of only Federal and State employees, *and* employees of all colleges/units qualified to receive funds from the Animal Health and Disease (AHD) Sec. 1433 Program. Staff at all universities with Agricultural Experiment Stations (AES) and *all veterinary schools (public and private)* qualify to receive AHD1433 funds. Additionally, all non-university Federal and State employees are eligible to serve.

2. Second Panel Set (aka, Award Panels): OBJECTIVE: Review/Rank/Recommend applications from veterinarians applying for loan repayment awards in exchange for commitment to provide services in areas designated as shortages. In 2011, **these peer panels will meet mid- to late August (exact dates TBD) in Washington D.C. at NIFA head quarters building, or at a local hotel** (this panel may meet earlier in future program years). Award Panels last approximately 3 days each (**\$225/day panel-time honorarium and all reasonable travel expenses paid**, for those panelists allowed to receive such compensation.) **ELIGIBILITY to serve on Awards Panel:** All US citizens, especially including privately and publically practicing veterinarians with knowledge about Food Supply Veterinary Medicine or Veterinary Public Practice, are eligible to serve on these Awards Panels.

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Summary of Panel process; Panelist Duties; Estimated Time Commitments

Panelist Obligations during Pre-Panel, In-Panel, and Post-Panel Phases of Service:

1. **Pre-Panel Duties:** Prior to the actual panel meeting day(s), the panelist carefully **reads and writes evaluations** of nominations or applications for awards assigned to him/her. Approximately 25-30 nominations or applications are typically assigned per panelist.

a. **For Nomination Panels**, shortage nominations submitted by SAHOs are only about 2 pages in length and so pre-panel time commitment to evaluate and write a review is estimated at only about 30 min per nomination. For 30 nominations this corresponds to about 15 hours of pre-panel preparatory work per panelist.

b. **For Award Panels**, content of each application is more substantial (as is the honorarium), thus each application takes longer to read and generate a draft written review, and the time in-panel is longer; 3 days in D.C. versus 1 day via teleconference. A typical written review is $\frac{3}{4}$ to a 1 full page of narrative or bulleted assessments of application/applicant strengths and weaknesses, and evaluative constructive commentary. It is estimated that an Awards Panelist will spend 60-90 minutes reading and writing a well-developed draft review for each application *prior to* meeting in DC. For 30 applications, this corresponds to about 30 to 45 hours of pre-panel work carried out at the panelist's convenience. Panelists electronically send their draft written reviews to NIFA prior to the in-person panel meeting so that NIFA can make them available to the entire panel.

2. **In-Panel Duties (for both panel types):** Each panelist, whether in-person or via telepanel, will serve as either primary, secondary or tertiary reviewer for each assigned nomination/application. Typically, a panelist will serve as primary reviewer for about 10 assigned reviews, secondary reviewer for 10 reviews, and tertiary for 10 reviews. A panelist may also be assigned as "Reader" (4th reviewer) to some nominations or applications, but the Reader is not typically asked to provide a written review (unless one of the other assigned reviewers must recuse). During panel deliberation the primary reviewer orally summarizes and highlights key aspects of the nomination/application and offers an initial tentative score or rating. Secondary and tertiary reviewers, and the reader if assigned, add their comments and suggested ratings, respectively. The tertiary reviewer keeps a written record of the discussion. After the entire panel is queried for additional comments, the panel develops a single rating and ranking for each application through a consensus process. The tertiary reviewer then prepares a final written "Panel Summary" that includes evaluative comments and final recommendation by the panel at-large. This panel summary along with individual final-version panelist reviews are, with reviewer names removed, returned to the nominator (for Nomination Panels) or applicant (for Award Panels) so he/she can benefit from the panel's constructive comments and conclusions.

3. **Post-Panel Duties [NOTE: \$225/day Honorarium paid after all post-panel duties are completed]:**

a. **For Nomination Panels:** After the telepanel call terminates, panelists make any final edits to their individual reviews and electronically submit final versions to NIFA, preferably within 24 hours. Tertiary reviewers also compose a draft "Panel Summary" which they email for comment and concurrence to the primary and secondary reviewers. After receiving co-reviewer comments, the tertiary reviewer prepares the final version of the Panel Summary and submits it by email to NIFA, preferably within 5 days of the teleconference. The honorarium check is issued once NIFA has received all completed reviews assigned to a panelist.

b. **For Awards Panels:** The process is very similar to that followed by Nomination Panels *except*, because the panel meets on site in DC, there is an expectation that all final versions of individual reviews and panel summaries are submitted before panelists depart from NIFA. Thus, typically, when an awards panelist departs, all of his/her work is done and the honorarium check has been issued.