As you all know this is a competitive loan repayment program. Unlike NIH or HRSA’s LRPs our funding is not as such that we can provide anyone who applies funding to repay their loans.

Also, in veterinary medicine an index for veterinary medical underservice has never been established. This is primarily because we do not have widely accepted indicators for animal health that can be applied across all animal populations like infant mortality in human health or a veterinarian to animal population ratio as the number of veterinarians needed per animal depends on the animal species and production system used.

As a result, the decision was made to involve the states in this process as you all have a better idea of the needs within your state than anyone here in DC. However, we did not want there to be a high administrative burden for anyone nor did we want a skewed representation of shortages. Thus NIFA decided to allocate each state a maximum number of allocations based on agricultural census data. After consulting with the National Agricultural Statistics Services about what variables from the Agricultural census would most strongly correlate with state-level food supply veterinary medicine, for Land area and Livestock and Livestock Products Total Sales were chosen.

Land area is directly correlated with the number of veterinarians needed to provide veterinary services in a state because of the practical limitations relating to the maximum radius of a standard veterinary service area and is directly correlated to the percent of land devoted to livestock production. While the “Livestock and Livestock Products Total Sales ($)” variable broadly predicts veterinary service need in a State because this is a normalized (to cash value) estimate of the extent of (live) animal agriculture in the state.

This is the process and approximate timeline we have followed since 2010 and will continue for 2017. Note that all numbers are approximate, but does not usually vary by more than a week and when time has to be sheared off, it is taken from the processing step first then from the reviewers.

As you can see the program has something going throughout the year. Once The awards are approved in October is when we historically have had a “slow” time within our program office, but still very busy for our policy office where they continue to finalize the loan documents and other paperwork with participants before their contract starts on January 1.

This whole process is driven by when shortage situations can designated. Based on our evaluation last year it was recommended to try and have shortages designated early enough for 4th year vet students to seek employment in the shortage areas. Additionally, with the new Veterinary Services Grant Program it would be good to have shortages designated earlier in order to have both programs going through application processing and reviews at about the same time. Thus we will be changing the timeline for FY 2018.

For your situational awareness this is what the process and timeline will look like starting for FY2018. The steps in the process stay the same, but everything except contract start date gets pushed earlier in the year. Shortage nominations for FY2018 and beyond will actually occur in
late summer early fall of the previous calendar year, so that we can post shortages by Dec/Jan. So shortages for 2018 are submitted in 2017 and posted NLT Jan of 2018.

Due to the shift in calendar, FY2018 will have some overlap with FY 2017 processes. Of particular note is the timing of when awardees sign contracts versus when nominations will be due. In order to allow you all to make new nominations for 2018 and for us to get shortages posted in Dec/Jan we will only know who we have extended offers to before the nominations are due. Typically we know who has accepted them as well, but this will not be the case until 2019 when we are able to offer the awards in August vs. September.

Additionally, in order to get nominations processed and reviewed prior to the holiday’s nominations should never be due later than mid Oct as we move to the new calendar.

As a reminder unlike some grants and cooperative agreements, the funds offered to VMLRP participants are guaranteed for the life of their contract as we obligate all funds for the award per FY. All of our contracts start Jan 1. This won’t change in 2018, awardees will just have an extra month or so to get their affairs in order.

All new awards are for 3 years with a maximum of $75,000 distributed in quarterly payments to their lenders with up to $25,000 paid in one year. Renewal awards are eligible for the same maximum award, but the contract length is depending on their debt level, thus someone with less than $25,000 in eligible loans would only renew for one year. If it was a new contract and their debt was less than $25,000 they would have to serve the 3y minimum for an initial contract.

The amount of money each year varies based on the appropriation and if any money was left from the previous year as the amount of an award is not set at $75,000, but rather is determined by an applicant’s eligible debt. Thus we have loan repayment awards that range from $15,000 to $75,000. Typically this means our funding runs out around applications ranked in the top 20-25 for each panel. For Type III public practice awards, the funding runs out sooner as congress mandated that most of the funds go to private practice, thus currently only 10% of available award funds go to type III awards. This usually results in 4-5 awards total, or those ranked within the top 5 of all applicants. Competition is fierce for these positions and Brian will speak to this more later. I don’t anticipate this percentage changing for 2017, if it were to change it would not exceed 15%.

Reviewers are primarily veterinarians from across all practice types. Concerted effort is made to have reviewers that are currently in food animal or rural mixed animal private practice.

Their role is to review applications and assess the quality of the match of the applicant to the circumstances and needs of the shortage situation described by you. They make their assessment based on the knowledge, skills and experience as evidenced by the applicant’s education pre, post and during veterinary school, extra-curricular activities, employment, accreditation, personal statement and recommendations.

All while considering the factors and circumstances necessary for the following criteria

1. Most effective mitigation of the shortage situation
2. Priority of relatively more severe shortages

3. Achieving the highest likelihood that an awardee will realize employment satisfaction and professional success during and beyond VMRLP

Our goal is to work ourselves out of this program. We want to place veterinarians in situations that they can help fill for the long-haul not just the duration of the contract. We can only commit them to 3y of service, but reviewers do keep in mind the likelihood someone will continue to provide the same services in the same area or as a public service employee so the shortage is not resubmitted in 3y because the awardee left.

We are using the same pdf-fillable form as last year, except our OMB info is updated and hopefully the form quirks identified last year have been fixed.

Again, rather than saving all your pdfs and then emailing us with all of your attachments, you will submit from the form. The form will auto generate an email with your form attached. The difference here is this form is in a data format, thus we can consolidate all of the nominations into one data file that can be uploaded into our database and online once the locations are designated.

We will send you a response once we have received the data. If there is a problem we will let you know and not count it against you if data is missing, but it is in by the due date. I recommend saving a copy of the filled out form on your computers to ensure nothing gets lost. If you are having trouble submitting you can send us the fillable forms in an email instead of just submitting from the form. What we will not accept is a form that has been printed to pdf or saves as non-fillable form as we need to be able to pull the data file which is automatically sent to us when you hit submit.

I will show you the form and what submission should look like. As I go through the form I will explain what information should go on each line.

The top right box [CLICK FOR ARROW] is for VMLRP to assign a shortage number. Please do not fill this in.

All boxes outlined in red must be filled in. If it is not highlighted in red it is either optional or you only fill out depending on the type chosen. If this nomination is a carryover i.e. you submitted it last year and want to resubmit it again, you will just copy and paste the information into each field as appropriate. Remember carry overs should not have any changes made as the form is not reviewed again.

[CLICK FOR ARROW] The first line is the location of the shortage. For private practice (type I and II) these should list counties. Do not include modifiers like county, parish or borough or the state name unless you are listing a county from a neighboring state. Other descriptors can be included if it helps focus the area. For example, San Bernardino 100 mile radius around the city of Barstow or southwestern Benton. If your intent is for the vet to provide most of their services in one county, but they can provide services in other counties you can list the primary county
then say surrounding counties. For example, Stearns and the surrounding counties of Kandiyohi and Meeker.

The key is the area to be covered should be logistically feasible. Along with any other description needed.

For type III positions the state can be listed if the services are to be provided for the whole state. If it is a regional position you can list the counties. In either situation the location must include geographically relevant text it should not read District 9 unless it is followed by the list of counties that fall in District 9.

The approximate center of the shortage should be a city, zip code, cross streets, GPS coordinates. Something that helps pinpoint the focus of the area and can be mapped. For type III awards this should be the address of the primary office the veterinarian will be working from.

The next box is a drop down for the Overall Priority of the Shortage.

Either Critical, High or Moderate. The information you provide on page 2 should support the priority level you indicate here, especially when addressing risk. The higher the risk of not filling the more critical the priority should be.

A Moderate Priority – is an area lacking in some aspect of food supply veterinary services, justified by lack of or insufficient access to veterinary services for basic animal health, well-being, production, food safety or public health.

A High Priority – meets the criteria of moderate priority, plus any additional concerns relating to food supply veterinary medicine or public health. For example, extremely large census of animals vs. available services or unique threats to the area like an ongoing outbreak

A Critical Priority – is an area SEVERELY lacking in food supply or public health-related veterinary services by meeting the criteria of moderate and high plus additional concerns relating to the roles veterinarians play in protecting animal and public health. For example an area with a high potential for natural disasters or incursion of a foreign disease because of high-throughput of international importation sites, proximity to international borders where wildlife and food animal species readily cross.

Informally a critical priority keeps you up at night, high priority you think about regularly, but not losing sleep and moderate priority is an area that you know needs the help, but impact if not filled low.

Next is the drop down for shortage area type.

Type I is a food animal medicine positions requiring 80% FTE (32hours)

Type II is a rural area food animal medicine, essentially your mixed animal practitioner, requires 30% FTE or 12 hours a week spent on food animals.
The definition of rural area is defined in the farm bill as any area other than a city or town with a population of 50,000 inhabitants and the urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to such city or town.

Type III is the public practice position, requires 49% FTE or 19 hours a week.

For both type I and type II indicate the Must cover species, meaning the vet must be providing services to these animals in order to meet their agreement obligation. You can also indicate a May serve species, these are “fall back” species meaning if business is such that they cannot meet all of their contracted FTE time with the must serve species they can augment with the may cover species. If I did a service audit not seeing services to may cover species for a quarter is not a problem. Therefore, if you want them to definitely see a specific species on a regular basis make them “must cover”

Please do not use may or must cover species for work someone can do with the other % of their FTE time to meet business needs i.e., 20% for Type I or 70% for Type II, or some other variation if you change the %FTE. If you put equine or companion animals here the assumption is there is somewhat of a shortage for this type of work and the applicant can claim that time for the program. If you list either of these, which may be justified e.g., a small town with a lot roaming strays, then be sure you address it on the next page and under activities state the exact type of activities that are needed e.g., Rabies vaccinations or during the off cattle season up to 50% of VMLRP time can focus on companion animals as long as the focus is rabies vaccines and emergency preparedness

For Type III awards you will enter the employer, the position name as they would find it for applying, and the specialty or discipline that is needed. THIS MUST BE FOR ONLY ONE POSITION NOT TWO e.g. you can’t ask for a microbiologist and field officer in the same solicitation unless their duties would be exactly the same and it is only the title that differs. For example, at CDC their epidemiologist positions can often be filled by a health scientist, medical officer or veterinary officer. The degree is what determines the “title”, but the job is exactly the same.

Our reviewers are trying to match the best person for the position thus if the position is written for more than one job description reviewers cannot compare apples to oranges for a match. This could lead to 2 people being the best match for 2 different positons, but only one shortage. ADDITIONALLY THERE SHOULD BE ONLY ONE EMPLOYER unless there is some situation where the same job can be done no matter the employer e.g. 50/50 split of the position between fed and state OR Ag and Health Depts. If this is the case please let me know. We have had situations where an applicant has a public service job with the federal government and the position is a state position. It has caused confusion when the applicant doesn’t talk about quitting the federal job to take the state job, thus the assumption is it is a state job and thus the person is not a good match.

Finally, this FTE % box is optional. If you determine that the FTE’s proposed are not high enough you may designate a higher percent. For example for a type II award you may indicate
50% if 30% is too low. Or for type III you may indicate 100% if this is a full time position and they will only be doing what you outline in the questions on the next page.

Please keep in mind we set these percent’s lower as we recognize the need to either have to do companion animal practice to help augment food animal practice, to run a successful mixed animal business or to enable a state to have a part-time epidemiologist, pathologist, etc. or adjust to changes workload distributions. Therefore, if you increase the % FTE please be sure there is enough work available for the applicant to meet the requirement and/or maintain that requirement for the duration of the award. Additionally our %FTE is based on a 40h work week, thus if a vet is putting in 60h we are not having them track 30% of 60h, but rather 30% of 40. This can make a big difference during the slow months.

Page 2 has 4 questions. While we anticipate that the responses to these questions will have some subjectivity, we strongly encourage you to present verifiable quantitative and qualitative evidentiary information wherever possible. Absence of quantitative data such as animal and veterinarian census data for the proposed shortage area(s) may lead the panel not recommending the nomination for approval.

The reviewers assess the nomination based on these questions, thus I have written the maximum points reviewers can give each section during the merit review process.

First, you must describe the importance of the vet filling this shortage area and what objectives you want this vet to achieve. Reviewers are assessing the importance of this area based on both your qualitative, but mostly quantitative assessment like census of animals vs. number of vets available, economic importance to the state or region, etc.

#2 Is where you outline the activities the veterinarian can provide in order to meet the shortage. This is the main section reviewers are using to see if applicants have the knowledge, skills and experience to best fill the shortage. Reviewers are looking to see if this is well described and clear i.e. an applicant would know what is expected of them. Also, this is what determines what the awardee can do to claim time toward their contract. Similar to the %FTE this can be a very important consideration for slow periods.

Third is a short description of what has been done to attract veterinarians to this area, but has been unsuccessful. Maybe vets come, but don’t stay longer than a year. Maybe practice owners have reported no applicants to their advertisements. Incentives offered for state position, etc. This section is weighted the least. Reviewers are just concerned that some effort has been made to attract veterinarians to this location and is not solely dependent on being designated for this program.

Finally Risk. This is weighted the highest. Reviewers are evaluating what the risk is to a safe and wholesome food supply and to animal, human and environmental health not only locally, but regionally, nationally and even internationally if a veterinarian is not is not secured or retained. This section is the main part that supports the priority level you indicated on the first page.
Although not a section for you to fill out, reviewers also evaluate the whole nomination and provide points based on the justification that this location, species needing to be served and/or discipline is a bona fide shortage.

The last page is the affirmation page and your contact information.

These two affirmations provide assurance that as SAHO you understand the shortage nomination process and the importance of having reasonable confidence that the nomination submitted describes a bona fide shortage area. The second assurance is particularly important to help avoid the placement of a VMLRP awardee where veterinary coverage already exists, and where undue competition could lead to insufficient clientele demand to support either the awardee or the veterinary practice originally serving the area.

THE ONE DIFFERENT THING FOR 2017 IS WE WILL NOT BE ACCEPTING CARRY OVERS. Meaning all nominations will undergo a merit review vs. being automatically accepted even if you do not make any changes to the nomination. You can still submit a shortage situation as you would typically do as a carry over, but it will undergo review this year. We will do carry overs again starting in 2018. When we do, the reason why we have you copy and paste your nominations each year for carry overs is to obtain these assurances each year as it is expected that you have at some level reassessed any nomination being carried over to ensure it is still a shortage situation.

A note of caution…we do not recommend just submitting nominations based on having someone in mind or knowing someone will apply. Reviewing the data some locations have stayed open for years and then one year they get filled. The strength of the applications and the circumstances in which veterinarians find themselves changes year to year, so don’t count out an area or think that you have failed if you have a true shortage and it is not being filled or the person you had in mind to fill the area does not get the award. We have had situations where it appears the nomination was intended for a specific person (type III this is more of a given), but others apply and are sometimes the better candidate.

Moving back to the form.

If you try to submit with a one of the red boxed fields not completed you will get this error review the form add the info needed then hit submit

Before you submit you can save the form to work on it later or to ensure you have a copy before submitting. Go to File Save As the pick the location you want save and give the file a name.

When you save the form it should remain fillable, so you can make changes to it before submitting. Once you are ready click submit

You will see the box outlined in orange pop up. Select default I and then click Continue, If you do not have a default email server such as outlook or an equivalent system used by your state, save each form you fill out and contact our office at vmlrp@nifa.usda.gov or call me, so we can ensure we get the right forms.
You will get an email that is auto generated to go to our application inbox. NOTE the file type is fdf. This is what we want as this is a data file vs. just the form. This enables us to process the information on the forms for posting to our website and linking to applications in a more efficient manner.

Please change the subject to your state name and the number of nominations you plan to submit. As you see here MN will be submitting 4 and this is the first one. You can also annotate this in the body of the email along with any other information you want to bring to our attention, then hit send. This will occur for each nomination, thus if you have 8 nominations we will receive 8 emails from you.

When we go back to carry overs in 2018 you will make that statement as seen here alerting us to the nomination being a carryover along with the prior year’s Shortage ID. This will help us identify the correct shortage to verify nothing has changed and to keep track of the shortages as after 3 carry overs we will require the shortage to undergo review again. This means any shortages designated in 2017 if carried over do not need to undergo review again until 2021. This process is to help keep ensure shortages posted year after year maintain the same quality standard.

All of the information presented today can be found on our website. On our home page go to Shortage Situations

To find the pdfs of those situations not filled in 2016. Click on the link for the 2016 map

Click on your state to filter the table below. In this case I clicked on Florida. Last year’s pdfs are available to download directly from the table and you can tell by the Status column if the situation was not filled for 2016 it will say OPEN or if they did not sign a contract it will say Offered.

Also from the shortage situation page you can find the guide for the nomination form. Here you will find the allocation table, the nomination form and step by step instructions for each item on the form as well as a manual you can download for using the pdf-fillable form.

There is a place for this webinar under tools on the VMLRP Shortage Situation Page, but traditionally I have just emailed out the link to the recording for you all to access at any time. If you would prefer to have it open access on the website let me know and I will look into posting it there as well.

The following slides are what Dr. Lubbers presented last year. They provide you his perspectives as an applicant and a reviewer. I will just read over them without additional commentary. If you have any questions Dr. Lubbers if happy for you to reach out.

Be specific in regard to the area and need -- of need and completion of nomination form. The nomination review panel depends on information from SAHO to meet the intent of Congress. Currently 42 veterinarians practice in the shortage area versus 42 veterinarians practice in the shortage area and there’s a need for 10 additional food practice veterinarians. The VMLRP when working with applicants is highly competitive. Things that hurt applications -- when
communicating with potential applicants -- grammar and spelling. It’s $75,000 so someone should have proofread it. Forfeit to the area of need. If the SAHO indicates a must cover poultry and there is no mention of poultry medicine in the application that is something the panel tends to rank purely -- fairly poorly. Lack of evidence for potential excess. They may be an outstanding practitioner but the review panel only has the application. If there is no business plan that is something that makes it hard for them to determine how the person will succeed in a particular area. Low likelihood for personal/professional satisfaction. New graduates without mentorship, professional burnout etc. Type III situations are generally targeted situations. Very qualified individuals and may have grant writing experience. These are very competitive and there is a low number of awards. Renewal applications, the expectations are more than the status quo. What are they going to do beyond what they’ve already done? That is all we have. We didn’t actually end up using everyone so we are open for questions if anyone has any.

I’d like to say a couple words about the application and applicants. They really need to write their materials to the nomination. It helps if they remember that they are supporting their SAHO in their work and they intend to do that and the funding is coming from the federal government. They need to put something in the replication about how they will help the animal health systems in the state and federal government. Surveillance for transboundary animal diseases for instance, emergency task force in the state are very helpful.

> I have a question about carryovers. It’s my understanding that if an award is granted and a shortage area from the previous year that shortage area is not eligible for the next fiscal year? Is that correct?

> If you submitted a shortage in 2017 and you are carrying over to 2018 that is fine even if it was awarded in 2017 then you have to really justify why you are carrying over in 2018.

> Okay. That makes sense. What about for public ones where they have a different position? I would think that would be eligible since is a completely different position, is that correct?

> Correct.

> Thank you.

> I think going back to the first part I think the key there is it goes back to the numbers. If they -- there is still a shortage in an area where you have an -- a current a word here, it’s a matter of do you need another veterinary in that area and if the answer is yes that is acceptable. We just need to know why and so we have 42 -- where did it go? Currently 42 veterinarians practice in the shortage area and there is a need for an additional 10. If you only have one, you still need nine more. That’s just a goofy -- justification for another.

> Good information. Thank you.

> Other questions?

> Yes, concerning the type III awards limited to 10% on a national level. They are probably not competing within each state as other people compete for the type II and type I? Is that correct?
Everybody is essentially competing with everybody else in terms of getting rank and there are different levels of competition because essentially what the panel does is they look at all of the applicants and they look at the quality of the fit to the shortage area whether it is a type I or type II or type III. They are ranked essentially based on the merit of the fit. Then we go back and we look at the type III, and we also look in terms of if there are five people in Wisconsin 182, only one person will get that award. If the people that are ranked 1 and 2 happen to be in Wisconsin 182 the panel will have a discussion about are they really? Only one person per shortage area is going to get an award in a year. The type III technically is competing with everyone else, but they are being judged against their fit for a particular nomination or shortage nomination -- area and it's really their ability to demonstrate how well they fit that shortage area. That is how they are being ranked against everyone else. Doesn't make sense?

Yes, it does. I appreciate it.

Really what happens is there is essentially the pool of funding for the type I and type II is larger than the pull of funding available for type III. We are only able to make -- we make fewer awards on the type III side. If you pull them out and rank them separately it is numerically we are only able to make a few versus 90% of the funding. Any other questions?

I would like to thank the SAHOs for the support of this program.

I would echo that sentiment as well and I would thank you all for the work you are about to do in getting these nominations ready because it really does make a huge difference in the review process. If there are not any further questions, you can email us if you think of any later at VMLRP@nifa.usda.gov. We will be happy to respond to them throughout this open period. As a reminder, the nominations are due on or before November 21. We look forward to interacting with you in the future and thank you for joining us on the call today. I apologize for the technical dip is. — Difficulties. [ Event Concluded ]