

## **Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Veterinary Shortage Situations**

#### **What is a shortage situation and who determines an area as a shortage situation?**

Shortages are defined through implementation of a shortage nomination process. Chief State Animal Health Officials, or their designees, submit nominations to designate specific shortages and NIFA uses an external panel of veterinary experts to review these nominations. The panel recommends either to approve or to disapprove designation of each submitted nomination.

#### **How many nominations did NIFA receive and how many received designation as a shortage situation?**

Each year, NIFA receives approximately 200 nominations from across the country and 85-90% of nominations received are designated as shortage situations.

#### **How do I know if a certain area qualifies as a shortage situation for the VMLRP?**

Prior to the opening of an application cycle, [a map](#) showing all designated veterinary shortage situations is shown on the VMLRP website. You will be able to view designated shortage situations for an application year by filtering by Fiscal Year (FY). For shortages within a particular state click the state of interest on the U.S. map.

#### **My area was not designated as a shortage situation. What does this mean?**

The State Animal Health Official (SAHO) of each state is the authorized nominator of shortage situations for the respective state. Stakeholders with interest in providing data in support of a case for veterinary shortage in a particular area may contact their SAHO. It is important to keep in mind that the number of shortage situations is capped for each state, based on state land area and total farm-gate value of animals and animal products, as reported by the National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS). Therefore, the nominating official, or his/her designee, is responsible for prioritizing the severity of veterinary shortages and submitting nominations based on that prioritization. There is no guarantee that a SAHO will prioritize any given position high enough to make the final list. Nevertheless, it is also anticipated that SAHOs would find input from stakeholders very helpful as they undertake this prioritization process in response to periodic solicitations by NIFA for new nominations.

#### **My state does not have a designated shortage situation. Why?**

If there are no designated shortage situations in your state, it may be that no shortage situation nominations were submitted by the state, or shortage situation nominations were submitted by the state, but the external review panel did not recommend them for official designation.

**My practice is in the county that borders a county designated as a shortage area. Do I have to move in order to be eligible to apply?**

The VMLRP is a national program, thus the objective is to fill shortage situations with veterinarians best able to mitigate these shortages. There is no requirement that applicants live, or be based, in the same county or state as the shortage situation. It must be clear in your application how you will provide services to situation applied. Your application will be judged based on how well you match to the shortage situation, and the relative severity of the shortage, with respect to local, state, and national needs.

**How often will NIFA solicit nominations from SAHOs?**

We presume that, over time, the shortage situation priorities of a state will change due to veterinarians relocating to fill critical areas designated by the VMLRP. We will also be mindful of spontaneous shifts in perceived threats to animal health in time and space. To address changing conditions, we will assess the relative demand for reprioritization of shortage situation distribution within the States on an annual basis. However, we reserve the right to solicit nominations from SAHOs on a biennial basis to save administrative costs and to adhere to the aggressive annual program schedule and/or to respond to funding fluctuations.

**Will NIFA help me find employment in a shortage area?**

No. This program is only a loan repayment program. It is up to the applicant to find or create a veterinary position in the designated area, and thereby mitigate the shortage.

**Can I apply for multiple locations that may be of interest to me?**

No. Each applicant may choose only one shortage situation. Select your best match, make your best case, and be strategic.

**When do I need to start employment in a shortage area to qualify? Can I still apply even if I have not secured an offer in one of the designated shortage areas?**

You may apply even if you have not secured an offer of employment or started a practice in a designated shortage area. You will be given 90 days to secure employment or establish a practice in the designated veterinary shortage situation upon notification of an award. Failure to secure employment or establish a practice in the designated veterinary shortage situation within the given timeframe may result in withdrawal of the award offer.

**What is the timeline that determines when I need to start employment in a shortage area to qualify? I started my practice last year in one of the designated shortage areas. Am I still eligible to apply?**

The SAHO of your state identified your area as a shortage knowing what veterinary services are already there. You would be eligible for the program as a "retention" case.