

SUPPORTING STATEMENT - PART A for

OMB Control Number 0524-0050:

Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program

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Systems

Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program

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A1. Circumstances that make the collection of information necessary.

Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information.

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is requesting a revision of a currently approved information collection. In December 2003, the National Veterinary Medical Service Act (NVMSA) was 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 program of entering into agreements with veterinarians under which they agree to provide veterinary services in veterinarian shortage situations. The purpose of the program is to assure an adequate supply of trained food animal veterinarians in shortage situations.

NIFA will designate geographic and practice areas that have a shortage of food supply veterinarians to carry out the VMLRP goals of strengthening the nation's animal health infrastructure. NIFA will carry out NVMSA by entering into educational loan repayment agreements with veterinarians who agree to provide veterinary services in veterinarian shortage situations for a determined period of time.

Before NIFA educational loan repayment agreements can be issued, certain nomination information is required from State Animal Health Officials (SAHO). This information is obtained via a Veterinarian Shortage Situation Nomination Form. The nominations submitted are reviewed and it is particularly important that the information be provided in a standardized document to ensure a consistent review for all nominations.

After shortage situations are designated, the VMLRP requests information from applicants related to eligibility, qualifications, career interests, and recommendations necessary to evaluate their applications for repayment of educational indebtedness in return for agreeing to provide veterinary services in veterinarian shortage situations. The information for collection is also used to determine an applicant's eligibility for participation in the program. It is important that the information be provided to NIFA in a standardized fashion to ensure a consistent review for all applicants.

Once veterinarians are selected for participation in the VMLRP and enter into an educational loan repayment agreement with NIFA the participant must report service and payment information on an annual basis to the VMLRP for oversight of the agreement. This information must be provided in a standardized document to ensure uniform oversight for all participants and for monitoring the program's short-term impacts.

A2. Purpose and Use of the Information.

Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a

new collection, indicate how the agency has actually used the information received from the current collection.

Veterinarian Shortage Situation Nomination. NIFA will publish a solicitation in the Federal Register or on the VMLRP website for veterinarian shortage situations every one, two or three years. SAHO's will submit the necessary information to NIFA using the Veterinarian Shortage Situation Nomination form on an annual basis or as determined by Program Staff.

NIFA will convene a committee of food supply veterinary medicine experts from Federal and/or state agencies, industry, private mixed or large animal practice, to review the nominations and make recommendations to the National Program Leader. Nominations designated as veterinarian shortage situations are made available via the VMLRP website for applicants to review. The Veterinarian Shortage Situation Nomination form defines the location and the species or veterinary discipline and outlines the services a VMLRP participant agrees to provide.

Application. NIFA will publish the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) on the NIFA website for VMLRP loan repayment applications from individual veterinarians on an annual basis. Interested individuals submit the necessary information to NIFA using the application forms:

- Application Part 1: Program,
- Application Part 2: Financial; and
- Application Part 3: Recommendation.

NIFA convenes an external peer review panel to review submitted and eligible applications to make recommendations to the NIFA National Program Leader. The panelists include food supply veterinary medicine experts from Federal and state agencies, private veterinarians, private associations, and other relevant organizations.

The information collected allows the peer review panel to evaluate each applicant's qualifications, career interests, and letters of recommendation to identify the most meritorious applications for repayment of educational indebtedness in return for agreeing to provide veterinary services in veterinarian shortage situations. The information collected is also used by NIFA staff to determine an applicant's eligibility for participation in the VMLRP and to establish their award amount.

Records and Reports. NIFA requires a Service Verification to be collected each quarter. This is an affidavit signed by the participant certifying they are still employed and provided the services as required by the terms and conditions of their service agreement. The Service Verification is submitted via a secure cloud-based content management tool or other electronic system. Payment is issued upon receipt of this form.

NIFA requires the Annual and Final Progress Reports to be collected annually. These forms replace the service logs from the previous information collection. The Final Progress Report document is provided to the participants in the last year of their service agreement. Participants must submit the progress reports to verify services provided by the participant are consistent with the terms and conditions of the service agreement. The Annual and Final Progress Reports are

fillable PDF forms submitted via a secure cloud-based content management tool or other electronic system. Obtaining this information any less frequently could result in delayed payments, increased financial burden on the participant due to compounded interest, and delayed identification of service agreement breaches after release of government funds.

The information collected enables VMLRP staff to provide program oversight ensuring participants are providing services as outlined in the veterinarian shortage situation form for the shortage situation they have agreed to serve and that federal funds are being distributed properly. Additionally, the Annual and Final Progress Reports enable VMLRP to evaluate program impacts and projected outcomes.

All information submitted to the VMLRP is subject to reporting as aggregate data in the program's annual report or as requested by stakeholders and Congress.

A3. Use of information technology and burden reduction.

Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.

NIFA makes every effort to comply with the E-Government Act, 2002 (E-Gov) (Pub. L. 107-347) and to provide for alternative submission of information collections.

In consultation with external stakeholders, NIFA has reviewed and evaluated this collection and proposes to implement numerous technological changes that will improve accessibility. NIFA will now provide the Veterinarian Shortage Situation Nomination Form, the Application Forms, Service Verification, Annual Progress Report and Final Progress Report in the accessible and PDF-fillable format. The agency is currently in development of the electronic web system eRA which has not been rolled out for respondents use; once it has been fully developed, the agency will seek public comment and submit a revision to OMB for approval before the system is deployed. The proposed technological updates will also reduce the time needed to complete the information collection, as well as the time needed for NIFA staff to review the information collected.

A4. Efforts to identify duplication.

Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Question 2.

This is the only loan repayment program administered by NIFA. 1There is no similar information available which can be used or modified to meet the informational needs of this

program. The information requested is specific to the VMLRP. NIFA has evaluated the forms included in this collection and has eliminated redundant and repetitive questions.

A5. Impacts on small businesses or other small entities.

If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities (Item 5 of OMB Form 83-I), describe any methods used to minimize burden.

This information collection will have no impact on small businesses or small entities as the respondents do not include any small businesses or entities.

A6. Consequences of collecting the information less frequently.

Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted, or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.

This is an ongoing, mandatory information collection.

Shortage Situation Nomination. SAHOs identify shortage situations in their own state and determine which areas to submit to NIFA on the VMLRP Veterinarian Shortage Situation Nomination forms. These forms are submitted only when requested by NIFA, usually on an annual basis. If nomination forms are not collected, the dynamic nature of the shortage situations would not be recognized leaving gaps in critical food animal veterinary services. Additionally, NIFA would be unable to properly screen and evaluate nominations for established criteria.

Application. Individual veterinarians interested in applying for a loan repayment agreement with the VMLRP will submit VMLRP application forms only during the designated application period. If application materials are not collected during a limited application window, NIFA would be unable to evaluate applications in a fair and timely manner to determine which applicants will receive funding through the VMLRP.

Records and Reporting. On a quarterly basis a participant will submit the Service Verification form affirming employment and service under the terms and conditions of the VMLRP service agreement. Obtaining this information less frequently could result in delayed payments, increased financial burden on the participant due to compounded interest, and delayed identification of agreement breaches after release of government funds.

Participants must submit an Annual and Final Progress Report to VMLRP staff on an annual basis. Without these progress reports, VMLRP staff are unable to verify services provided by a participant are consistent with the terms and conditions of the service agreement. Obtaining this information less frequently could result in delayed payments, increased financial burden on the participant due to compounded interest, and delayed identification of service agreement breaches after release of government funds.

If the data is not collected the VMLRP will not be able to highlight services provided by participants, describe the impact the program is having on shortage situations in the short-term, assess the potential retention of a participant's services for the shortage situation, or provide this information to Members of Congress, USDA, and stakeholders. The participant completes and submits the final progress report at the end of their contract period.

A7. Special circumstances relating to the Guidelines of 5 CFR 1320.5.

Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner:

- **Requiring respondents to report information to the agency more often than quarterly;**
- **Requiring respondents to prepare a written response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it;**
- **Requiring respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document;**
- **Requiring respondents to retain records, other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records for more than three years;**
- **In connection with a statistical survey, that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study;**
- **Requiring the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB;**
- **That includes a pledge of confidentiality that is not supported by authority established in statute or regulation, that is not supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, or which unnecessarily impedes sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use; or**
- **Requiring respondents to submit proprietary trade secret, or other confidential information unless the agency can demonstrate that it has instituted procedures to protect the information's confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.**

There are no special circumstances. The collection of information is conducted in a manner consistent with the guidelines in 5 CFR 1320.5.

A8. Comments to the Federal Register Notice and efforts for consultation.

If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publication in the Federal Register of the agency's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8 (d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.

Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

Consultation with representatives of those from whom information is to be obtained or those who must compile records should occur at least once every 3 years even if the collection of information activity is the same as in prior years. There may be circumstances that may preclude consultation in a specific situation. These circumstances should be explained.

Notice of intent to renew and revise this information collection was published in the *Federal Register* on Tuesday, July 15, 2025, Vol. 90, No. 133 (90 FR 31600). NIFA received two comments from this announcement, one of which was not relevant to this information collection and the other supported the approval of this collection. No specific changes were made to this collection in response to the comments.

Consultation with persons outside the agency. VMRLP participants provided information related to time needed to complete the collection, provided suggestions to improve instructions and formatting, and recommended that redundant questions be eliminated. In response, NIFA has eliminated redundant questions, updated the formatting, and reviewed instruction language to improve clarity. NIFA has consulted with the following people regarding this collection:

Justin Cunfer
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A9. Explain any decisions to provide any payment or gift to respondents.

Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

The agency does not provide payment or gifts to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

A10. Assurances of confidentiality provided to respondents.

Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

The information collection is handled in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act. A Veterinarian Medicine Loan Repayment System of Records Notification (SORN) appeared in the *Federal Register* on March 9, 2018.

A11. Justification for any questions of a sensitive nature.

Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior or attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. This justification should include the reasons why the agency considers the questions necessary, the specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

Information is requested involving the applicant's name, address, service payback obligations, employment data, professional performance and credentialing history (of licensed veterinarians); personal, and professional information; financial data including loan balances, deferment, forbearance, and repayment/delinquent/default status information. This information is used to: (1) Evaluate applicants and select participants for the VMLRP; (2) monitor loan repayment activities, such as payment tracking, deferment of service obligation, and default; and (3) assist NIFA officials in the collection of overdue debts owed under the VMLRP.

None of the information maintained in or requested on the Annual Progress Report, Final Progress Report and Veterinarian Shortage Situation Nomination Form is of a sensitive nature.

A12. Estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information.

Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information. Indicate the number of respondents, frequency of response, annual hour burden, and an explanation of how the burden was estimated.

A. Indicate the number of respondents, frequency of response, annual hour burden, and an explanation of how the burden was estimated. If this request for approval covers

more than one form, provide separate hour burden estimates for each form and aggregate the hour burdens in Item 13 of OMB Form 83-I.

- a. Veterinarian Shortage Situation Nomination. The Veterinarian Shortage Situation Nomination form is completed by SAHOs. It is estimated completion of this form, which includes checkboxes and text-limiting fields to minimize the overall burden, will take approximately two hours.
- b. Application. The application is completed by individuals applying to the VMLRP program. It is estimated it will take each applicant approximately five hours to complete the forms. It is also estimated it will take each recommender approximately one hour to complete the recommendation form. All of these forms are PDF-fillable with checkboxes and text-limiting fields to minimize the overall burden. The application forms were consolidated to be more streamlined for the application process.
- c. Records and Reports. Records and Reports are completed for all participants in the VMLRP. For each participant a Service Verification form must be completed and submitted on a quarterly basis. An Annual Progress Report must be provided on an annual basis. A Final Progress Report must be provided at the completion of the service agreement. It is estimated it will take approximately fifteen minutes to complete the Service Verification form, and approximately one hour each to complete the Annual and Final Progress Reports.

Estimated Annual Burden – Table 1

Type of Respondent and Form	No. of Respondents	Annual Frequency per Response	Total Annual Responses	Hours per Response	Total Hours
<i>State Animal Health Officials:</i> Veterinarian Shortage Situation Nomination Form	60	4	240	2	480
Animal Health Officials subtotal	60	---	240	---	480
<i>Applicants: VMLRP Application Package</i> Application Part 1: Program	200	1	200	3	600
Application Part 2: Financial	200	1	200	2	400
Applicants subtotal	200	---	400	---	1000
<i>Recommenders:</i> Application Part 3: Recommendation	400	1	400	1	400

Recommenders subtotal:	400	---	400	---	400
<i>Active Participants:</i>					
Service Verification	220	4	880	.25	220
Annual Progress Report	220	1	220	1	220
Final Progress Report	220	1	220	1	220
Active Participant subtotal:	220	---	1,320	---	660
Grand Total:	880	---	2,360	---	2,540

Assumes a 100% response rate.

B. Provide estimates of annualized cost to respondents for the hour burdens for collections of information, identifying and using appropriate wage rate categories.

Annualized Costs to Respondents – Table 2

Type of Respondent	Total Hours	Hourly wage ¹	Total Cost Burden
<i>State Animal Health Officials</i>	480	\$77.70	\$37,296
<i>Applicants</i>	1,000	\$60.34	\$60,340
<i>Recommenders</i>	400	\$60.34	\$24,136
<i>Active Participants</i>	660	\$60.34	\$39,825
Grand Total:	2,540	---	\$161,597

All salaries were obtained from Bureau of Labor Statistics, median wage used unless a mean specifically posted for the position (<http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes291131.htm>). This estimate accounts for the cost of fringe benefit cost for the respondents.

A13. Estimates of other total annual cost burden.

Provide estimates of the total annual cost burden to respondents or recordkeepers resulting from the collection of information, (do not include the cost of any hour burden shown in questions 12 and 14). The cost estimates should be split into two components: (a) a total capital and start-up cost component annualized over its expected useful life; and (b) a total operation and maintenance and purchase of services component.

There are no capital/startup costs or ongoing operation/maintenance costs associated with this information collection.

A14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government.

Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government. Provide a description of the method used to estimate cost and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information.

1The staff members responsible for administering the VMLRP are full-time employees ranging in grade levels GS-9 to GS-15. Processing of VMLRP forms and data associated with these forms is included in their regularly assigned duties. This estimate includes the cost of fringe benefits.

Staff	Action	Annual Salary*	%FTE for Program	Total Annualized Cost
Program Assistant, GS-7	Processes applications for preliminary review, assists with data entry	\$58,122	25	\$14,531
Grants Management Specialist, GS-12	They Assess Loan Eligibility, process service verifications quarterly, validate number of hours worked quarterly, provide technical assistance, process payment verifications, and customer service.	\$103,098	100	\$103,098
Capacity Branch Chief, GS 14	Signature designee on award offers and service agreements to awarded participants.	\$144,875	10	\$14,488
Program Specialist, GS-12	Reviews applications for administrative compliance, coordinates panel meetings, distributes and collects surveys, assists with data analysis and reports	\$103,098	40	\$41,239
Program Coordinator, GS-13	Evaluates applications, coordinates panel members, announces awards, audits service, analyzes data and develops reports	\$122,597	80	\$98,078
National Program Leader, GS-15	Program direction and oversight, stakeholder relations, direct programmatic interaction with awardees and State Animal Health Officials, review and validation of service logs, analysis of survey data.	\$170,408	60	\$102,245

TOTALS	3 FTEs	\$373,679
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*Dollar amounts derived from the 2026 Federal Pay Tables for Kansas City-Overland Park-Kansas City, MO-KS assuming each step 5 annual salary for each GS level listed.

A15. Explanation of program changes or adjustments.

Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in Items 13 or 14 of the OMB Form 83-I.

The burden estimate for this collection has decreased by approximately 14,258 hours each year (from 16,798 hours to 2,540 hours). Consequently, the number of annual responses has decreased by over 57,000 responses per year (from 59,590 in 2022 to 2,360 currently) The decrease is the result of streamlining and removal of forms that are no longer required due to program policy changes and stakeholder input.

A16. Plans for tabulation, and publication and project time schedule.

For collections of information whose results are planned to be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication.

All information submitted to VMLRP is subject to reporting as aggregate data in the program's annual report, which is posted on the NIFA website, <http://nifa.usda.gov/vmlrp-reports-and-statistics>.

A17. Displaying the OMB Approval Expiration Date.

If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

All VMLRP forms will display the OMB approval date.

A18. Exceptions to the certification statement identified in Item 19.

Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in Item 19 of the OMB 83-I" Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act."

There are no exceptions to item 19 of OMB Form 83-I.