

animal veterinarians in shortage situations and provide USDA with a pool of veterinary specialists to assist in the control and eradication of animal disease outbreaks.

§ 3431.9 Eligibility to apply.

(a) *General.* To be eligible to apply to the VMLRP an applicant must:

(1) Have a degree of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM), or the equivalent, from an accredited college of veterinary medicine;

(2) Have qualifying educational loan debt as defined in § 3431.3 of this title;

(3) Secure an offer of employment or establish and/or maintain a practice in a veterinary shortage situation, as determined by the Secretary in accordance with the procedures in Subpart A, within the time period specified in the VMLRP service agreement offer; and

(4) Provide certifications and verifications in accordance with § 3431.16 of this Part.

(b) *Non-eligibility.* The following individuals are ineligible to apply to the VMLRP:

(1) An individual who owes an obligation for veterinary service to the Federal government, a State, or other entity under an agreement with such Federal, State, or other entity is ineligible for the VMLRP unless such obligation will be completely satisfied prior to the beginning of service under the VMLRP;

(2) An individual who has a Federal judgment lien against his/her property arising from Federal debt; and

(3) An individual who has consolidated qualifying loans with loans not qualifying for repayment under the VMLRP.

§ 3431.10 Eligibility to participate.

To be eligible to participate in the VMLRP, a participant must meet the following criteria:

(a) Meet the eligibility criteria of § 3431.9 for applying to the VMLRP;

(b) Be selected for participation by the Secretary pursuant to § 3431.12.

(c) Be a licensed veterinarian in the jurisdiction in which he or she proposes to practice;

(d) Be a citizen, national, or permanent resident of the United States;

(e) Sign a service agreement to provide veterinary services in one of the veterinarian shortage situations; and

(f) Comply with the terms and conditions of the Service Agreement.

§ 3431.11 Application.

Individuals who meet the eligibility criteria of § 3431.9 may submit an online program application or any other application process provided by the Secretary.

§ 3431.12 Selection of applicants.

(a) *Review of applications.* Upon receipt, applications for the VMLRP will be reviewed for eligibility and completeness by the appropriate staff as determined by the Secretary. Incomplete or ineligible applications will not be processed or reviewed.

(b) *Peer review.* Applications for the VMLRP that are deemed eligible and complete will be referred to the VMLRP peer panel for peer review. In evaluating the application, reviewers are directed to consider the following components, as well as any other criteria identified in the RFA, and how they relate to the likelihood that the applicant will meet the terms and conditions of the VMLRP agreement, continue to serve in a veterinary shortage situation, or pursue a career in food animal veterinary medicine:

(1) Major or emphasis areas(s) during formal post-secondary training (e.g., bachelors degree major, minor);

(2) Major or emphasis area(s) during formal training for DVM/VMD degree;

(3) Specialty training area/discipline (e.g., board certification or graduate degree);

(4) Non-degree/non-board certification training or certifications (e.g., animal agrosecurity coursework and certifications);

(5) Applicant's personal statement;

(6) Awards;

(7) Letters or recommendation, if applicable; and

(8) Other documentation or criteria, as specified in the RFA.

§ 3431.13 Terms of loan repayment and length of service requirements.

(a) *Loan repayment.* For each year of obligated service in a veterinary shortage situation, as determined by the