# Veterinary Services Grant Program (VSGP)

## ***FY2018 Request for Applications (RFA)***

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: May 18, 2018**

**ELIGIBILITY: See Part III, A of RFA**

United States Department of Agriculture

National Institute of Food and Agriculture

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**VETERINARY SERVICES GRANT PROGRAM**

**INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT**

**CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE:** This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under **10.336**.

**DATES:** Applications must be received by **5:00 p.m. Eastern Time** on **May 18, 2018.** Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding (see Part IV, C. of this RFA). Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within 6 months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

**STAKEHOLDER INPUT:** The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) seeks your comments about this RFA. We will consider the comments when we develop the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and we'll use them to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). Submit written stakeholder comments by the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice via e-mail to: Policy@nifa.usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the **Veterinary Services Grant Program** RFA.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** NIFA requests applications for the **Veterinary Services Grant Program (VSGP)** for fiscal year (FY) 2018 to develop, implement and sustain veterinary services and relieve veterinarian shortage situations in the United States and U.S. Insular Areas. The anticipated amount available for grants in FY 2018 is approximately **2.4 million**. This RFA is being released prior to the passage of an appropriations act for FY 2018. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or an appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program.

This notice identifies the objectives for **VSGP** projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a **VSGP** grant.

Please visit the VSGP webpage for information on applicant webinars.

# Table of Contents


PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION ..... 4
A. Legislative Authority and Background ..... 4
B. Purpose and Priorities ..... 4
PART II—AWARD INFORMATION ..... 6
A. Available Funding ..... 6
B. Types of Applications ..... 6
C. Project Types ..... 6
D. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research ..... 10
PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION ..... 11
A. Eligible Applicants ..... 11
B. Cost Sharing or Matching ..... 11
PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION ..... 12
A. Electronic Application Package ..... 12
B. Content and Form of Application Submission ..... 13
C. Submission Dates and Times ..... 21
D. Funding Restrictions ..... 22
E. Other Submission Requirements ..... 22
PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS ..... 23
A. General ..... 23
B. Evaluation Criteria ..... 23
C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality ..... 26
D. Organizational Management Information ..... 26
E. Application Disposition ..... 26
PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION ..... 27
A. General ..... 27
B. Award Notice ..... 27
C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements ..... 27
D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements ..... 27
PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT ..... 30
PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION ..... 31
A. Use of Funds; Changes ..... 31
B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards ..... 31
C. Regulatory Information ..... 32
D. Definitions ..... 32
E. Materials Available on the Internet ..... 32

## PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

### A. Legislative Authority and Background

Section 7104 of the 2014 Farm Bill (P.L. 113-79) added section 1415B to the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA), as amended, (7 U.S.C. 3151b) to establish the Veterinary Services Grant Program (VSGP). This amendment authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to make competitive grants to qualified entities and individual veterinarians that carry out programs in veterinarian shortage situations and for the purpose of developing, implementing, and sustaining veterinary services. The first funding for the VSGP was included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016 (P.L. 114-113).

### B. Purpose and Priorities

Veterinarians play significant roles in assuring food and fiber animal health and wellbeing, food safety and security, public health, and producer profitability, especially in rural areas of the U.S. where most livestock production occurs. The VSGP, and companion Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) authorized by the National Veterinary Medical Services Act (NVMSA), were born out of concerns that long-term maldistributions in the veterinary workforce have left some rural communities with insufficient access to livestock veterinary services. By appropriating funds in FY 2005 to implement the NVMSA (previously authorized in 2003), Congress sought to lessen one cause of this workforce problem, i.e., the tremendous educational debt burden of graduating veterinarians. This incentive program helped reduce educational debt of veterinarians in exchange for service in designated veterinary shortage areas. However, it has been widely acknowledged that there are other important factors contributing to the maldistribution of veterinarians serving the agricultural sector besides debt burden. Among these are limited access to specialized education and training which will enable veterinarians and veterinary technicians to provide services in designated veterinarian shortage situations, and insufficient practice-enhancing equipment and personnel resources to enable veterinary practices to expand or improve access to veterinary services in rural veterinarian shortage situations.

To complement the work being done under the VMLRP, and more comprehensively address this shortage problem, the VSGP is designed to support education and extension activities and practice enhancement initiatives that will enable veterinarians, veterinary students, veterinary technicians, and veterinary technician students to gain specialized skills and provide practices with additional resources (e.g., equipment, personnel) needed to more effectively mitigate veterinary service shortages in the U.S. Ultimately, this program will bolster the capacity of private practitioners to provide food animal veterinary services in designated rural veterinarian shortage situations.

The purpose of VSGP is to develop, implement, and sustain veterinary services and relieve veterinarian shortage situations in the U.S., which includes insular areas (see Part VIII, D. Definitions for a definition of “insular area”). Grants will be made available on a competitive basis to:

A. Establish or expand accredited veterinary education programs, veterinary residency and fellowship programs, or veterinary internship and externship programs carried out in coordination with accredited colleges of veterinary medicine.
B. Provide continuing education and extension, including veterinary telemedicine and other distance-based education, for veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and other health professionals needed to strengthen veterinary programs and enhance food safety.
C. Cover travel and living expenses of veterinary students, veterinary interns, externs, fellows, and residents, and veterinary technician students attending training programs in food safety or food animal medicine.

Grants will also be made available to establish, expand and better equip for-profit or nonprofit veterinary practices or individuals operating a veterinary clinic or providing veterinary services in a certain veterinarian shortage situation, as designated through the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program, that is situated in a rural area, as defined in section 343(a) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1991(a)).

This program aligns with USDA Strategic Goal #4, Facilitate Rural Prosperity and Economic Development.

The VSGP supports Goal 4 (Objective 4.1: to expand rural business opportunity and rural quality of life).

The VSGP aligns with the USDA Research, Education and Economics Action Plan and specifically addresses Goal 1B, Goal 5, Goal 6 and Goal 7.

Additionally, VSGP aligns with Goal 1 (Sub-goals 1.1, 1.6, and 1.7) of the NIFA Strategic Plan.

## PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

### A. Available Funding

This RFA is being released prior to the passage of an appropriations act for FY 2018. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or an appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program. The anticipated amount available for grants in FY 2018 is approximately $**2.4 million**. The funds will be awarded through a competitive grant process. There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards.

NIFA plans to allocate approximately 2/3 ($1.6 million) of the FY 2018 VSGP funds for Education, Extension and Training grants and approximately 1/3 ($800,000) for Rural Practice Enhancement grants. NIFA reserves the right to adjust these allocations based on the number of meritorious applications received within each program area.

Awards issued as a result of this RFA will have designated the Automated Standard Applications for Payment System (ASAP), operated by the Department of Treasury's Bureau of the Fiscal Service, as the payment system for funds. For more information see https://www.fiscal.treasury.gov/.

### B. Types of Applications

In FY **2018**, both new and resubmitted applications will be accepted.

**New application**. This is an application that has not been previously submitted to the **VSGP**. We will review all new applications competitively using the screening for administrative requirements, review panel evaluation of proposals using evaluation criteria and selection process described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

**Resubmitted application.** This is an application that had previously been submitted to the VSGP Program but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary (see Response to Previous Review, Part IV). We must receive resubmitted applications by the relevant due dates. We will evaluate resubmitted applications in competition with other pending applications in the appropriate area to which they are assigned and review them according to the same evaluation criteria (Part V, B) as new applications.

### C. Project Types

Applications will be accepted for two project types: (1) Education, Extension and Training and (2) Rural Practice Enhancement.

#### 1. Education, Extension and Training (EET) Grants

**Program Code – VSGPE**
**Program Code Name –** VSGP Education

**Application Deadline – May 18, 2018** (5:00 p.m., ET)
**Proposed Budget Requests –**

- Budgets must be between $75,000 and $250,000, including indirect costs, for project periods of 2-4 years. Applications with budget requests outside these ranges will not be reviewed.
- Indirect costs are limited to 30 percent of the total Federal funds provided (or 42.857 percent of total direct costs) under each award. Therefore, when preparing budgets, you should limit your request for the recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of your institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 30 percent of total Federal funds awarded. See Part V section 7.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further indirect cost information.

**Program Area Priority –**Education, Extension and Training grants will support the following types of activities and programs, to relieve veterinary shortage situations, for any of the following purposes:

- To allow veterinary students, veterinary interns, externs, fellows, and residents, and veterinary technician students to cover expenses (other than the types of expenses described in the rural practice enhancement program area) of attending training programs in food safety or food animal medicine.

- To establish or expand accredited veterinary education programs (including faculty recruitment and retention), veterinary residency and fellowship programs, or veterinary internship and externship programs carried out in coordination with accredited colleges of veterinary medicine.

- To provide continuing education and extension, including veterinary telemedicine and other distance-based education, for veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and other health professionals needed to strengthen veterinary programs and enhance food safety.

- Although these grants can last 2 to 4 years, they do not have a minimum service commitment to a designated county.

Examples of activities may include development and implementation of:

- Traditional or non-traditional learning opportunities;
- Non-degree educational training programs;
- Courses associated with existing degree programs;
- Continuing education.

In FY 2018, focus will be placed on programs for the following:

- Veterinary students enrolled in an accredited veterinary degree program
- Veterinary interns, veterinary externs, veterinary fellows, veterinary residents, veterinary technician students and veterinary technicians
- Early career practicing veterinarians who, at the time they initiate the activities proposed in the application, are within 5 years of graduation from a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) or equivalent degree program.

Proposals should emphasize educational content that teaches:

- Veterinary practice enhancement techniques and strategies that benefit the health of agricultural animals
- Best practices for delivering quality veterinary services in rural areas, and/or
- Veterinary approaches to foster food safety, epidemiology, or veterinary public health.

**Note:** For the purposes of this RFA, please refer to Part VIII, D. Definitions, for definitions of "Education activity" and "Extension activity".

**Other Program Area Requirements:**

- Applicants are encouraged to coordinate with other qualified entities and to be creative and innovative in their approach
- The purpose of the proposed educational activities must be to substantially relieve veterinary shortage situations, or facilitate or support veterinary practices engaged in public health activities, in the U.S.
- Application narratives must include formal evaluation plans (as described in Part IV.B.) to document the anticipated reach and impact(s) of each educational activity. These plans should be participant-centered and implemented during the term of the project.
- In FY 2018, applications that propose to develop new degree programs will not be funded.

**2. Rural Practice Enhancement (RPE) Grants**

******NOTE: Rural Practice Enhancement Grants require a three-year service commitment******

**Program Code – VSGPR**
**Program Code Name –** Rural Practice Enhancement
**Application Deadline – May 18, 2018** (5:00 p.m., ET)
**Proposed Budget Requests –**

- Budgets must be between $75,000 and $125,000 for project periods of 3-4 years. Applications with budget or project duration requests outside these ranges will not be reviewed.
- Indirect costs are not permitted for Rural Practice Enhancement grants.
- All funds may be requested to support equipment costs. Equipment is defined in 2 CFR 200 as tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost of $5,000 or more.

**Program Area Priority –**Rural Practice Enhancement grants will support the development and provision of veterinary services to substantially relieve designated rural (as defined in Part I, B.) veterinary shortage situations (as defined in the following section) in the U.S. Funds may be used for one or more of the following:

A. Equip veterinary offices
    - Applicants must explain how requested equipment will be used to provide veterinary care for agricultural animals in rural veterinarian shortage situations
B. Share in reasonable overhead costs of operating a qualifying veterinary practice

- Overhead costs may include, but are not limited to: salary and fringe benefits for veterinarian(s) support personnel, office rent, vehicle fuel supporting ambulatory services, maintenance contracts on equipment used to treat food animals, expendable medical and office supplies, computer software, utility expenses, and business consultant fees.
- Establish mobile veterinary facilities in which a portion of the mobile facilities will address education or extension needs. Mobile veterinary facilities include, but are not limited to a vehicle equipped to provide mobile veterinary services, a trailer squeeze chute or other animal restraint devices.

It is imperative that applicants make a compelling case in their Project Narratives (See Part III, B (3)(b)) describing how the equipment, mobile facilities, personnel or other resources supported by the grant will contribute substantially toward public health objectives and/or mitigation of the veterinary service needs described in the shortage situation.

**Other Program Area Requirements:**

- Overhead costs cannot exceed 50% of the total budget. These costs must be directly associated with providing service to a veterinarian shortage area. Applications with budgets that request greater than 50% for overhead costs will not be reviewed.
- Requests for overhead support must be justified, item by item, in the Budget Narrative (See Part IV, B.6).
- Funds cannot be used to construct new buildings or facilities or to acquire, expand, remodel, or alter an existing building or facility, including site grading and improvement and architect fees.
- If funds are requested to establish mobile veterinary facilities, activities to address the required education or extension needs must be described in the Project Narrative section and may include: experiential learning opportunities for veterinary or veterinary technician students, interns, or externs; courses, seminars, lectures or other events for producer groups, the public, community organizations or academic institutions; or participation in emergency preparedness events.
- Applicants who are current VMLRP awardees from any year (i.e., you have a VMLRP service obligation at the time you submit this application) must propose to serve the same shortage area to which they are obligated under their VMLRP award.
- Applicants who do not have a current VMLRP award must apply with reference to a single shortage situation that was designated, *but not awarded* under the VMLRP in 2017. (i.e., status appears as 'Open' for FY 2017 on the VMLRP shortage map webpage).
- The ID of the shortage situation the applicant is proposing to serve must be clearly listed in the project title and abstract.
- Shortage situations must qualify as **rural** (as defined in Section 343(a) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1991(a))). By definition, VMLRP type II shortage situations are rural. For type I shortage situations, use the USDA Rural Development's Business Program's Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI) map to assess "rural" eligibility. The map can be found here. (Select

Rural Business at top, then the link for RCDI, accept the disclaimer and zoom into the area of interest.)

- Regardless of award amount, successful applicants must commit to spending three years mitigating the veterinary service shortage applied for, at the percent full time equivalent (FTE) specified in the shortage situation form (which can be found for each shortage here). Except in certain extenuating circumstances beyond the awardee's control, the three-year term of service cannot be moved to a different shortage situation/location. In the event of extenuating circumstances impacting ability to meet service obligations, awardees must contact NIFA for guidance.
- VMLRP participants, applicants, and practices employing VMLRP participants are eligible to receive VSGP rural practice enhancement awards; however, percent FTE cannot be counted twice. For these recipients, NIFA may extend the project period to accommodate cumulative service agreement terms (see FAQs).
- Only one award will be given per veterinarian shortage situation and only one award per applicant.
- A VSGP RPE award will not be made for a shortage area in which a VMLRP awardee is serving except to that VMLRP awardee.

**D. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research**

In accordance with sections 2, 3, and 8 of 2 CFR Part 422, institutions that conduct USDA-funded extramural research must foster an atmosphere conducive to research integrity, bear primary responsibility for prevention and detection of research misconduct, and maintain and effectively communicate and train their staff regarding policies and procedures. In the event an application to NIFA results in an award, the Authorized Representative (AR) assures, through acceptance of the award that the institution will comply with the above requirements. Award recipients shall, upon request, make available to NIFA the policies, procedures, and documentation to support the conduct of the training. See http://nifa.usda.gov/responsible-and-ethical-conduct-research for more information.

## PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

### A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may only be submitted by the entities listed below if they carry out programs or activities that will: 1) substantially relieve veterinarian shortage situations; or 2) support or facilitate private veterinary practices engaged in public health activities.

For Education, Extension, and Training Program Area:

- a State, national, allied, or regional veterinary organization or specialty board recognized by the American Veterinary Medical Association;
- a college or school of veterinary medicine accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association;
- a university research foundation or veterinary medical foundation;
- a department of veterinary science or department of comparative medicine accredited by the Department of Education;
- a State agricultural experiment station; or
- a State, local, or tribal government agency.

For Rural Practice Enhancement Program Area:

A for-profit or nonprofit entity located in the United States that, or individual who, operates a veterinary clinic providing veterinary services, (i) in a rural area, as defined in section 343(a) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1991(a)), and (ii) is a current VMLRP awardee from any year (i.e., those with a current service obligation at the time of this application) and applies with reference to the shortage area to which they are obligated to serve; or is not a current VMLRP awardee and applies with reference to a veterinarian shortage situation designated, *but not awarded* under the VMLRP in 2017 (i.e., status appears as 'Open' for FY 2017 on the VMLRP shortage map webpage).

For all program areas, award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. Failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration or will preclude NIFA from making an award.

### B. Cost Sharing or Matching

NIFA does not require matching support for this program and matching resources will not be factored into the review process as evaluation criteria.

## PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

### A. Electronic Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to NIFA in response to this RFA. **We urge you to submit early to the Grants.gov system. This is a complicated application, and if you wait until the last few days before the due date to start entering your application, you risk missing the deadline.** For an overview of the Grants.gov application process see http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/grant-application-process.html.

**New Users of Grants.gov**

Prior to preparing an application, we recommend that the Project Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) first contact an Authorized Representative (AR, also referred to as Authorized Organizational Representative, or AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grants.gov. If not (e.g., the institution/organization is new to the electronic grant application process through Grants.gov), then the one-time registration process must be completed **PRIOR** to submitting an application. It can take as long as two weeks to complete the registration process so it is critical to begin as soon as possible. In such situations, the AR should go to **"Register," in the top right corner of the Grants.gov web page (or go to** http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html**), for information on registering the institution/organization with Grants.gov.** Part II,1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide contains detailed information regarding the registration process. Refer to item 2, below, to locate the "NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide."

**PLEASE NOTE The registration process for new applicants does take at least two weeks and is best started as soon as possible to allow ample time for completing the application especially if you are an individual veterinarians or a veterinary practice entity.**

**Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials**

To receive application materials:

1. You must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov to access, complete, and submit applications. For basic system requirements and download instructions, see http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html. Grants.gov has a test package that will help you determine whether your current version of Adobe Reader is compatible.

2. To obtain the application package from Grants.gov, go to http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/download-application-package.html and enter the funding opportunity number

   **VSGP Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NIFA-VSGP-006543**

   From the search result, click "Select Package" to access the application package. A Grant Application Package is tied to a particular funding opportunity. You may submit

an application ONLY to the particular funding opportunity to which the Grant Application Package is associated.

Contained within the application package is the "NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide." This guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

**If you require assistance to access the application package** (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms) **or submitting the application,** refer to resources available on the Grants.gov website (http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-tools-and-tips.html). Grants.gov assistance is also available at:

Grants.gov customer support
800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035
Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on federal holidays.
Email: support@grants.gov

Grants.gov iPortal (see https://grants-portal.psc.gov/Welcome.aspx?pt=Grants):
Top 10 requested help topics (FAQs), Searchable knowledge base, self-service ticketing and ticket status, and live web chat (available 7 a.m. - 9 p.m. EST).
Have the following information available when contacting Grants.gov:

- Funding Opportunity Number (FON)
- Name of agency you are applying to
- Specific area of concern

**B. Content and Form of Application Submission**

You should prepare electronic applications following Parts V and VI of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed to prepare an application in response to this RFA. **If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.**

**Note the attachment requirements (e.g., PDF) in Part III, Section 3 of the guide. ANY PROPOSALS THAT ARE NON-COMPLIANT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS (e.g., content format, PDF file format, file name restrictions, and no password protected files) WILL BE EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW. Grants.gov does not check for NIFA required attachments or that attachments are in PDF format; see Part III, Section 6.1 of the guide for how to check the manifest of submitted files. Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. We will accept subsequent submissions of application revisions and attachments until close of business on the closing date in the RFA (see Part V, 2.1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further information).**

**For any questions related to the preparation of an application,** review the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide and the applicable RFA. If assistance is still needed for preparing application forms content, contact:

- Email: electronic@nifa.usda.gov
- Phone: 202-401-5048
- Business hours: Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. ET, excluding federal holidays.

**1. SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. See Part V, Section 2.18 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for the required certifications and assurances (e.g., Prohibition Against Entities Requiring Certain Internal Confidentiality Agreements).

**2. SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 3. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

**3. R&R Other Project Information Form**

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 4 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Veterinarians handling vertebrate animals only for clinical purposes should indicate that vertebrate animals are **not** being used on the corresponding Assurance Forms. This assurance element applies only to vertebrate animal use specifically for teaching or research. If, however, any handling of animals beyond activities necessary for clinical assessment is proposed, for example, to meet the requirement for a portion of services including education and extension, the applicant should indicate that vertebrate animals **are** being used and approval of the proposed activities by an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) will be required.

**a. Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract**. (PDF format is required)

The following items should be included in the summary (please include underlined text along with your responses):

1) Project Title: (Note: For Rural Practice Enhancement applications this will be the shortage ID code).
2) Project Director, and any Co-Project Director(s): For Education, Extension and Training applications include institutional affiliation for each. For Rural Practice Enhancement applications only the person responsible for managing award funds, typically the applying veterinarian or veterinary practice owner, should be included here.
3) Total Funds Requested.
4) Collaborators: Education, Extension and Training applications only, if applicable.
5) Summary Text: Concise (250 words or less) overview of problem(s) being addressed, objectives, approach and relevance to the purpose and goals of VSGP.

See Part V. 4.7 of NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions. Use the above Summary/Abstract template subheadings rather than the template in the guide. **NOTE: The project summary/abstract of successful applications will be published by USDA and, therefore, should not contain proprietary or private information. BEFORE SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION, IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE APPLICANT TO REVIEW THE SUMMARY/ABSTRACT ATTACHMENT TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH THE SPECIFIED WORD LIMIT, PDF FORMAT, AND SHORTAGE ID (ONLY FOR RURAL PRACTICE ENHANCEMENT APPLICATIONS). ALL SUMMARY TEXT EXCEEDING 250 WORDS AND RURAL PRACTICE ENHANCEMENT APPLICATIONS MISSING THE SHORTAGE ID IN THE PROJECT TITLE WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR REVIEW.**

**b. Field 8. Project Narrative.** (PDF format is required)

**For Education, Extension and Training applications:**
The Project Narrative shall not exceed **12** PAGES of written text, regardless of whether it is single- or double-spaced, and up to **three (3)** additional pages for figures and tables. We have established this **maximum (15 pages**) to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

**NOTE:** Appendices to the Project Narrative are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. Do not add appendices to circumvent the page limit. **Applicants that do not address the items listed below risk being excluded from NIFA review.**

The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

1) Problem Identification and Significance: Clearly state the specific problem to be addressed and its importance to relieving shortage situations.

2) Background: Include a clear statement of the long-term goal(s) and supporting objectives of the proposed activities. Summarize the body of knowledge or other past activities that substantiate the need for the proposed project. Describe ongoing or recently completed significant activities that relate to the proposed project including the work of key project personnel. Include preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed project. In addition, this section should include in-depth information on the following, when applicable:
   a) Estimates of the magnitude of the issues to be addressed and their relevance to livestock producers and other stakeholders, and to ongoing local community, state, and Federal food and agricultural education and extension programs or needs.
   b) The role of public and private stakeholders in problem identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation as appropriate.
   c) Reasons for the work being done by the proposed entity(ies).

3) Objectives: All applications must include a statement(s) of specific aims of the proposed effort in clear, concise, complete, and logically arranged terms.

4) Methods: Explicitly state the procedures or methodology you will apply to the proposed effort. This section should include but not necessarily be limited to, descriptions of:

a) stakeholder involvement in problem identification, planning, implementation and evaluation;
b) if applicable, plans for coordination and/collaboration with other qualified entities and their roles and responsibilities (see item 5 management and collaboration plan below);
c) proposed project activities, listed sequentially;
d) techniques to be employed in this project, including their feasibility and rationale;
e) plans to communicate results to stakeholders and the public;
f) pitfalls that might be encountered; and
g) limitations to proposed procedures.

5) Project Evaluation Plan. Explicitly state the outputs and outcomes expected from the proposed project. Explain the data gathering procedures that will be used to monitor and assess progress toward intended project outcomes. When describing the measurement instruments you plan to use (surveys, interviews, focus groups, measures of class performance, cost-benefit analyses, etc.), be sure to mention why they are appropriate to gauging success. Evaluation plans must contain baseline data when available or describe how baseline data will be obtained for monitoring outcomes. A plan for tracking students/trainees after graduation and/or to assess the communities they will be serving to measure impact your project has on addressing shortage situations should be described. Finally, the Evaluation Plan should contain measures of (1) student/trainee learning or engagement (2) the number of students/trainees impacted by your project as a result of the proposed activities (3) the number of students/trainees serving or planning to serve shortage situations and (4) return on investment i.e., the trainee's impacts relieving veterinary shortage situations.

6) Management and Collaboration Plan. Applicants are encouraged to use approximately two of the 15 pages for this section. It is critical to have a clearly articulated management plan that describes the roles and functions of all key personnel and, where applicable, partners, collaborators and organizations, as related to the proposed project. See "Definitions" (Part VIII, D.) for definitions of Partner and Collaborator. For projects proposing coordination between two or more entities, include: time allocated by each partner for attainment of objectives; key roles of each partner and collaborator; and plan for administration of the proposed project and its maintenance and partnerships. Describe the plans for coordination, communication, data sharing and reporting among members of the project team and stakeholder groups. Describe the commitment of the organization and partners to this project; and how the collaboration and its impact will be sustained beyond the period of the award. An applicant's failure to provide the requested information in the Management and Collaboration Plan may preclude NIFA from making an award. In addition, letters of commitment signed by the Authorized Representative (AR) of the partnering organizations demonstrating that the partners involved have agreed to abide by the Management Plan should be provided (see "Other Attachments" below).

7) Project Timetable: The proposal should outline all important phases and major milestones as a function of time, year by year, for the entire project, including periods beyond the grant funding period.

The following table summarizes the sections of the Project Narrative for **Education, Extension and Training** applications, suggests an approximate number of pages to allocate to each section, and shows the evaluation criteria most relevant to each section:

| **Narrative Section** | **Suggested # of Pages** | **Related Evaluation Criteria (see Part V, B. of this RFA)** |
|---|---|---|
| Problem Identification and Significance | 1 | Relevancy |
| Background | 1.5 | Relevancy; Expertise, Experience and Institutional Resources |
| Objectives | 1 | Relevancy; Technical Merit |
| Methods | 4 | Technical Merit; Collaborations; Achievability |
| Project Evaluation Plan | 2 | Technical Merit |
| Management and Collaboration Plan | 2 | Achievability; Expertise, Experience and Institutional Resources |
| Project Timetable | 0.5 | Achievability |

**For Rural Practice Enhancement applications:**
The Project Narrative shall not exceed **six (6)** PAGES of written text, regardless of whether it is single- or double-spaced and up to **two (2)** additional pages for figures and tables. We have established this **maximum (eight (8) pages**) to ensure fair and equitable competition.

**NOTE:** Appendices to the Project Narrative are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed shortage mitigation plan. Do not add appendices to circumvent the page limit. **Applicants that do not address the items listed below risk being excluded from NIFA review.**

The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

1) Problem Identification: Clearly state the specific problem(s) faced by you or your practice to address the shortage situation applied for.

2) Introduction: Include a clear statement of the goal(s) and supporting objectives of the proposed rural practice enhancement activities. Summarize information that substantiates the need for the proposed resources by describing ongoing or recently completed significant activities and current staffing relative to serving the proposed shortage situation. Include preliminary data/information pertinent to acquisitions and implementation of the proposed enhancements in veterinary service. In addition, this section should include in-depth information on the following, if applicable:

a) Estimates of the magnitude of the impact of the proposed practice enhancements on local livestock, livestock operators, and local economic vitality, and to ongoing state-federal interests including health of animal populations, food safety, food security, and public health.
b) The role of local community leaders and producers in identifying best strategies to mitigate veterinary service shortages, and most effective methods of evaluating effectiveness of strategies employed.
c) Reasons why the applicant is professionally, geographically and functionally poised to effectively relieve the veterinary shortage applied for.

3) Objectives: All applications must include a statement(s) of overarching aims, and goals and corresponding specific objectives of the proposed effort in clear, concise, complete, and logically arranged terms. Objectives should focus on the project period and may also consider any potential long-term impacts beyond the period of funding.

4) Approach: Explicitly describe the strategies, tactics and/or business plan you will employ, using the resources specifically acquired through support from this grant, to achieve stated goals and objectives. Where applicable, this section may include, but not necessarily be limited to, descriptions of:

a) planned stakeholder/client involvement in veterinary service prioritization, planning, implementation and evaluation;
b) proposed specific activities, listed sequentially;
c) business or veterinary services (including consultants) to be employed, including feasibility and rationale;
d) expected results for the veterinarian shortage situation supported by appropriate metrics (e.g., percent increase in clientele base or service radius; increase in number of livestock served; decreased rates of morbidity or mortality, or other measures of animal health and productivity; number of community outreach events presented and number of attendees, projected impact on clientele profits and/or sustainability, projected return on investment from equipment purchased or staff supported;
e) education or extension activities that will be offered (if funds are requested to establish mobile facilities) including the amount of time that will be devoted to these activities;
f) methods used to collect, analyze and interpret evaluation/impact data;
g) plans to communicate results to stakeholders and the public;
h) pitfalls that might be encountered; and
i) limitations to proposed activities.

5) Project Timetable: The proposal should outline important phases and major milestones as a function of time, year by year, for the entire project, including periods beyond the grant funding period.

The following table summarizes the sections of the Project Narrative for **Rural Practice Enhancement** applications, suggests an approximate number of pages to allocate to each section, and shows the evaluation criteria most relevant to each section:

| Narrative Section | Suggested # of Pages | Related Evaluation Criteria (see Part V, B. of this RFA) |
|---|---|---|
| Problem Identification | 0.5 | Technical Merit |
| Introduction | 1 | Expertise and Experience; Technical Merit |
| Objectives | 1 | Technical Merit |
| Approach | 3 | Technical Merit |
| Project Timetable | 0.5 | Technical Merit |

**Field 9. Bibliography & References Cited – PDF attachment. No page limit.** If any references were cited in the Narrative, include their citations in this attachment. Title the attachment "Bibliography and References" in the document header and save the file as 'Bibliography'.

**Field 12. Other Attachments**

See Part V. Section 4.12 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide (Field 12 on the form) for instructions regarding mandatory Felony Convictions or Tax Delinquent Status.

**Response to Previous Review.** This requirement only applies to "Resubmitted Applications" Part II, B., "Types of Applications" identifies the type of application(s) that may be submitted in response to this RFA. PDs must respond to the previous review summary on no more than one page titled "RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS REVIEW" and save file as "ResponsetoPreviousReview". If desired, additional comments may be included in the text of the Project Narrative subject to the page limitations of that section.

**For Education, Extension and Training applications:**

**1) Commitment Letters – PDF attachment(s). No page limit.** For projects proposing partnering, collaboration or coordination, letters of commitment from all participating parties (signed by the AR of the collaborating organization) stating that the collaborators involved have agreed to their stated roles in the project and have agreed to abide by the **Management and Collaboration Plan.** Letters from other organizations or people whose participation is important to the success of the project, committing those collaborators to specific roles, are also encouraged. Title the attachment(s) as 'Letter of Commitment – Organization Name' in the document header and save file as 'LetterofCommitment_OrganizationName'. Other more general letters of support (i.e., from those who are not committing to a specific role in the project) are not needed and should not be included. See Part VIII.F for an example of a commitment letter.

**For Rural Practice Enhancement applications:**

**Rural Development Map Screen shot – PDF attachment(s). No page limit.** Rural Practice Enhancement proposals for shortages situations other than Type II need to demonstrate that the shortage location is considered rural per Section 343(a) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1991(a)). This can be done by providing a screen shot from the USDA-Rural Development's Business Program's Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI) eligibility map. The map can be found at

http://eligibility.sc.egov.usda.gov/eligibility/welcomeAction.do. Select business programs under Property Eligibility on the left then the link for RCDI, accept the disclaimer and zoom into the area of interest and capture a screen shot.

**4. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)**
Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 5 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This section of the guide includes instructions about senior/key person profile requirements, and details about the biographical sketch and the current and pending support, including a link to a suggested template for the current and pending support. VMLRP recipients must include % FTE commitment for that program.

**5. R&R Personal Data –** As noted in Part V, 6. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award. Part V.6 also notes the importance and use of the information.

**6. R&R Budget**
This form contains the itemized listing and description of your project's budget request, including any sub-contractual or consulting costs. Please note that allowable consultants' rate of pay is limited to $629 per eight hour day. Complete all applicable fields for each 12 month period. Accompanying this form is the budget narrative/justification which outlines the rationale for each item listed and its associated cost. Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 7 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

For further information and instructions regarding indirect costs, refer to Part V, section 7.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. For indirect cost funding restrictions, refer to Part IV, D. of this RFA.

**7. Supplemental Information Form**
Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part VI, 1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. **Field 2. Program to which you are applying.** Enter the program code name (e.g., VSGP Education) and the program code (e.g., VSGPE) according to the chart below. Note accurate entry of the program code is very important for the proper and timely processing of the application.

| Program Code Name | Program Code |
|---|---|
| VSGP Education | VSGPE |
| VSGP Rural Practice Enhancement | VSGPR |

b. **Field 8. Conflict of Interest List**. See Part VI, 1.8 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

## C. Submission Dates and Times

We recommend that you conduct a thorough administrative review of the application before submission of it via Grants.gov to ensure that it complies with all preparation instructions. An application checklist is included in Part VII of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide to assist with this review.

While the checklist should be used to check the application for completeness, the application should be checked for the following required item(s). This is not an exhaustive list of required items; it only serves to highlight items critical to VSGP review. **Applications that fail to include these items will not be accepted for review.** The list includes:

- Summary/Abstract
- Narrative with all required sections
    - For Education, Extension and Training applications: Problem Identification and Significance; Background; Objectives; Methods; Project Evaluation Plan; Management and Collaboration Plan; Project Timetable
    - For Rural Practice Enhancement applications: Problem Identification, Introduction, Objectives, Approach, Project Timetable
- Other (program area-specific) documents
- Budget for each 12-month period and final cumulative budget
- Budget Narrative

In addition, **applications will not be accepted for review if they do any of the following**:

- Exceed the maximum pages allowed for Project Narrative
- Exceed the maximum federal budget or fall short of the minimum federal budget request for the type of application proposed
- Propose objectives or methods/approach that do not fit the purpose of VSGP
- Fail to include the shortage ID in the project title for Rural Practice Enhancement applications

**Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.**

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by **5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on May 18, 2018**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

**If you have trouble submitting an application to Grants.gov, you should FIRST contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to resolve any problems. Keep a record of any such correspondence. See Part IV. A. for Grants.gov contact information.**

We send email correspondence to the AR regarding the status of submitted applications. We strongly encourage you to provide accurate email addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received correspondence **from NIFA** regarding a submitted application within 7 days of the established deadline, contact the Agency Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

**D. Funding Restrictions**

For VSGP Education, Extension and Training Program Area grants, Section 713 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016 (Pub. L. 114-113) limits indirect costs to 30 percent of the total Federal funds provided (or 42.857 percent of total direct costs) under each award. Therefore, when preparing budgets, you should limit your request for the recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of your institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 30 percent of total Federal funds awarded. See Part V section 7.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further indirect cost information.

For Rural Practice Enhancement Program Area grants, indirect costs are not allowable. Shared overhead costs may be requested but must be limited to 50% of the total Federal funds requested.

You may not use grant funds awarded under this authority to construct a new building or facility or to acquire, expand, remodel, or alter an existing building or facility, including site grading and improvement and architect fees.

The funding period will commence on the effective date cited in the award instrument. Any such limitation also applies to subcontracts made under these awards.

**E. Other Submission Requirements**

**You should follow the submission requirements noted in Part IV, section 1.9 in the document entitled "NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide."**

For information about the **status of a submitted application**, see Part III., section 6. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

See Part V., Section 4.12. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide (Field 12 on the Form) for instructions regarding Felony Convictions or Tax Delinquent Status.

## PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

### A. General

We evaluate each application in a two-part process. First, we screen each application to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, a technical review panel will evaluate applications that meet the administrative requirements.

We select reviewers based upon their training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors:

- the level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities;
- the need to include experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields;
- the need to include other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs;
- the need to include experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and federal agencies, and private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations;
- the need to maintain a balanced composition with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness of each application to producers and the general public.

After each peer review panel has completed its deliberations, the responsible program staff of **VSGP** will recommend that your project be approved for support from currently available funds or be declined due to insufficient funds or unfavorable review.

**VSGP** reserves the right to negotiate with the PD/PI and/or with the submitting organization or institution regarding project revisions (e.g., reductions in the scope of work, funding level, period, or method of support) prior to recommending any project for funding.

We will send copies of reviews, ***not*** including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments to the PD after the review process has been completed.

### B. Evaluation Criteria

Different criteria and differently composed peer panels will be used to evaluate Education, Extension and Training Program Area proposals and Rural Practice Enhancement Program Area proposals, as described below. We will use the evaluation criteria below to review applications submitted in response to this RFA.

A reviewer's written evaluation entails two levels of assessment. First, the reviewer summarizes how well the application addressed each evaluation criterion. After the application has been

assessed for strengths and weaknesses of each criterion, the reviewer then evaluates the overall likelihood that the project will have significant outcome and impact. These written reviews are used to begin peer review panel discussions with other reviewers serving on the peer review panel. Through these discussions, peer review panelists come to consensus on the final rating and ranking of proposals. A complete description of NIFA's peer review process can be found at the NIFA website: https://nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource/NIFA-Peer-Review-Process-for-Competitive-Grant-Applications_0.pdf.

**Education, Extension and Training Grant Applications Review Criteria:**

**Applications with collaborations between or among qualified entities are typically considered stronger proposals**

**Relevancy and Innovation (weight =20%)** – Explanation and documentation that project is directed toward relieving veterinarian shortage situations and is innovative or novel in its approach. In addition, relevancy can be evaluated by the description of the necessity of the skills being developed for the target audience, the inclusion of stakeholders in the conceptualization and development of project activities, and demonstrated awareness of previous and alternative training and education programs.

**Technical Merit (weight = 50%) -** will be evaluated on the basis of:
(a) Clarity and delineation of objectives, activities and outcomes;
(b) Conceptual adequacy of the proposed activities to meet the needs of the targeted audience and mitigating veterinarian shortage situations including suitability and feasibility of the approach;
(d) Expected outputs and outcomes as indicated in Evaluation Plan;
(e) Science-based knowledge, skills, and capabilities gained are related to mitigating veterinarian shortage situations and will enhance and sustain human capital beyond the life of the project;
(f) Adequacy of evaluation plans to include number and expertise of evaluation team members and the strength of the measurements to assess outcomes and/or impact on both the shortage areas and their communities;
(g) Adequacy of plans to communicate results to stakeholders and the public;
(h) Sustainability of the project, including (where applicable) partnerships and collaborations, beyond the life of the grant;
(i) Compliance with targeted categories of trainees; and
(j) Reasonableness of the budget for planned activities. (While the size of the budget is not an evaluation criterion, the reviewers will be asked to evaluate whether it matches logically with the program described in the narrative and is cost-effective.)

**Achievability (weight = 20%)** – Probability of success of the project given the level of originality, target audience and budget for each activity. Importance will be given to description of potential pitfalls and how they will be addressed. There should be sufficient time commitment of Project Directors for project activities including management. The plans for management and collaborative arrangements of the proposed project should be adequate, e.g., time allocated for systematic attainment of objectives; clearly defined project roles and

relationships among the key participants and collaborators; plan for decision-making; and plan for administration of the proposed project and its maintenance, partnerships, and collaborative efforts.

**Expertise, Experience and Institutional Resources (weight = 10%)** – Includes the expertise of consultants and collaborators, sufficiency of the educational facilities and equipment for the proposed education and outreach methods. Importance will be given to the demonstration of expertise through successful multi-year experience in education, outreach, mentoring and/or technical assistance in veterinary medicine supporting agriculture. Also important are qualifications of applicant (individual or team) to conduct the proposed project activities and in evaluating project outcomes; and demonstrable institutional/organizational experience and competence in serving the needs of the identified target audience.

**Rural Practice Enhancement Grant Applications Review Criteria:**

**Expertise and Experience (weight = 30%)** – Importance will be given to the demonstration of knowledge, skills, abilities and experience of key personnel relative to shortage area needs and resources requested

**Technical Merit (weight = 70%) -** will be evaluated on the basis of:

(a) Clarity and delineation of objectives, activities and outcomes;
(b) Clarity of current practice operations to include baseline metrics (e.g., current service radius, number and location of clients within the veterinarian shortage situation, current number of calls/visits)
(c) Value of proposed equipment, overhead, and/or mobile practice facilities to the goal of mitigating the veterinarian shortage situation;
(d) Content and delivery approach(es) for education or extension activities (if funds are to be used to purchase or expand mobile facilities), including time commitment, size and demographics of intended audiences (e.g., X hours of educational opportunities to X number of producer groups, 4-H chapters, and/or community groups representing X number of people per month, year, or project period).
(e) Conceptual adequacy of the proposed activities to meet the needs of the veterinarian shortage situation (e.g., how will services be established or expanded, market/client recruitment or development strategies);
(f) Likelihood to achieve proposed outcomes, including realistic benchmarks for assessing progress and assessing outcomes for their clients and community (e.g., increasing clientele in shortage area by X% each year of grant period; increased average number of farm calls per month from X to Y over the life of the grant; improving clients' profits by X% through enhanced diagnosis, treatment, or management).
(g) Reasonableness of the budget for proposed resources. (While the size of the budget is not an evaluation criterion, reviewers will be asked to comment on whether it matches logically with the program described in the narrative.)

## C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, we take extreme care to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. See http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/competitive_peer_review.html for further information about conflicts of interest and confidentiality as related to the peer review process.

## D. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted one-time, with updates on an as-needed basis. This requirement is part of the responsibility determined prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another NIFA program. We will provide you copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the pre-award process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors that may exclude an applicant from receiving federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

## E. Application Disposition

An application may be withdrawn at any time before a final funding decision is made regarding the application. Each application that is not selected for funding, including those that are withdrawn, will be retained by VSGP for a period of three years.

## PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

### A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the NIFA awarding official shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the NIFA awarding official as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. The project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by NIFA under this RFA may be used only for the purpose for which they are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, regulations, terms and conditions of the award, applicable federal cost principles, USDA assistance regulations, and NIFA General Awards Administration Provisions at 7 CFR part 3430, subparts A through E.

### B. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the information described in 2 CFR 200.210.

See http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html to view current NIFA award terms and conditions.

### C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These may include, but are not limited to, the ones listed on the NIFA web page - https://nifa.usda.gov/federal-regulations.

NIFA Federal Assistance Policy Guide—a compendium of basic NIFA policies and procedures that apply to all NIFA awards, unless there are statutory, regulatory, or award-specific requirements to the contrary is available at http://nifa.usda.gov/policy-guide.

**Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research**

Please refer to Part II, D. for more information.

### D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

The output and reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions (see http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html for information about NIFA award terms). If there are any program or award-specific award terms, those, if any, will be identified in the award.

Grantees are to use REEport, NIFA's electronic, web-based inventory system to submit a project initiation report which documents expected products and outcomes of the project. Additionally, annual performance reports documenting realized project progress and outcomes must be submitted to the electronic system. The web-based system facilitates an electronic workflow between grantees and NIFA for project accomplishments to be easily searchable and allows for public access to information on Federally-funded projects. The details of these reporting requirements, including those specific to the annual and final technical reports, are included in the award terms and conditions.

**1. Annual Performance Report**

An Annual Performance Report must be submitted through REEport within 90 days after the completion of the first year of the project, and annually thereafter during the life of the grant. Generally, the Annual Performance Reports shall include a summary of the overall progress toward meeting project objectives (including data to document outputs and outcomes), current problems or unusual developments, the next year's planned activities, and any other information pertinent to the ongoing project, services being provided, or which may be specified in the terms and conditions of the award. Annual reports must contain data to document the outputs and outcomes and will need to be collected by the grantee.

**Education, Extension and Training Awards**

Annual reports should also include:

- progress assessing outcomes as described in the proposal;
- total student/trainee impact to date e.g., number of trainees/students directly supported or trained.

**Rural Practice Enhancement Awards**

Annual reports should also include:

- relevant metrics and qualitative assessments of shortage area status;
- evidence of progress toward achieving goals and objectives described in the original proposal;
- average number of hours (based on a standard 40-hour week equaling 100 % FTE), number of personnel performing services, and the types of services provided to specific species in counties/parishes within the shortage situation broken down by quarter (three month period) for the % FTE or hours required per the three-year service requirement. For example, a 30% FTE (most Type 2 shortages) service requirement corresponds to 12 hours per week averaged over an annual quarter (three months). For 80% FTE (most Type 1 shortages) the service requirement corresponds to 32 hours per week averaged over an annual quarter).
- uses of equipment purchased in part or in whole with grant funds in relation to stated objectives.

To ensure accuracy of annual progress and final reports, awardees are strongly encouraged to keep and securely archive a personal service log of activities and data relevant to their

three-year service obligation. This log should be sufficiently detailed to validate reporting submitted through REEport, in the event of audit.

Additional program or award-specific award terms may be identified in the award.

**2. Final Performance Report**

A Final Performance Report must be submitted within 90 days after the expiration date of the grant. The expiration date is specified in the award documents and modifications thereto, if any. Generally, the Final Performance Report shall be a summary of the completed project and include a comprehensive review of project objectives and accomplishments.

**Education, Extension and Training Awards:**
In addition to the general requirements above, final reports should include results of the project Evaluation Plan provided in the proposal (Part IV. B, Field 8); a description of any products and outcomes resulting from the project; partnerships and collaborative ventures that resulted from the project; future initiatives that are planned as a result of the project; the impact of the project on participants and veterinarian shortage situations. The report must document how project accomplishments (products, results and impacts, etc.) have been published or otherwise disseminated to the broadest extent throughout the veterinary community. The Final Performance Report should be accompanied by samples or copies of any products or publications resulting from or developed by the project. The Final Performance Report also must contain any other information which may be specified in the terms and conditions of the award.

**Rural Practice Enhancement Awards:**
In addition to the general requirements stated above, final reports should include an updated assessment of the shortage situation status (i.e., Is this still a shortage situation? Why or why not?); evidence of progress toward achieving goals and objectives described in the original proposal; for the final year the average number of hours, number of personnel performing services, and the types of services provided to specific species in counties/parishes within the shortage situation broken down by quarter (3 month period); uses of equipment purchased in part or in whole with grant funds in relation to stated objectives; partnerships and collaborative ventures that may have developed during the project period; future plans for the practice and services offered to the shortage situation; and the impact of services provided on the veterinarian shortage situation.

**3.** Financial Report for informational purposes, the "Federal Financial Report," Form SF-425, consolidates into a single report the former Financial Status Report (SF-269 and SF-269A) and the Federal Cash Transactions Report (SF-272 and SF-272A). The NIFA Agency-specific Terms and Conditions include the requirement that Form SF-425 is due on an annual basis no later than 90 days following the award's anniversary date (i.e., one year following the month and day of which the project period begins and each year thereafter up until a final report is required). A final "Federal Financial Report," Form SF-425, is due 90 days after the expiration date of this award.

## PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Programmatic Contacts –

Dr. Robert M. Smith, National Program Leader, or Ms. Lisa Stephens, Program Specialist, Institute of Food Production and Sustainability, National Institute of Food and Agriculture; USDA; STOP 2240; 1400 Independence Ave, SW, Washington, DC 20250-2240; telephone: (202)-401-4892; email: vsgp@nifa.usda.gov

Administrative/Business Contacts –

Susan Bowman, Awards Management Division, National Institute of Food and Agriculture; USDA; STOP 2271; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-2271; telephone: (202) 401-4324; e-mail: sbowman@nifa.usda.gov

OR

Adriene Woodin, Awards Management Division, National Institute of Food and Agriculture; USDA; STOP 2271; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-2271; telephone: (202) 401-4320; e-mail: awoodin@nifa.usda.gov

## PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

### A. Use of Funds; Changes

#### 1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, awardees may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

#### 2. Changes in Project Plans

In accordance with 2 CFR 200.308, awardees must request prior approval from NIFA for the following program or budget-related reasons:

> (i) Change in the scope or the objective of the project or program (even if there is no associated budget revision requiring prior written approval).
> (ii) Change in a key person specified in the application or the federal award.
> (iii) The disengagement from the project for more than three months, or a 25 percent reduction in time devoted to the project, by the approved project director or principal investigator.
> (iv) The inclusion, unless waived by the federal awarding agency, of costs that require prior approval in accordance with 2 CFR 200 Subpart E—Cost Principles of this part or 45 CFR Part 75 Appendix IX, "Principles for Determining Costs Applicable to Research and Development under Awards and Contracts with Hospitals," or 48 CFR Part 31, "Contract Cost Principles and Procedures," as applicable.
> (v) The transfer of funds budgeted for participant support costs as defined in §200.75 Participant support costs to other categories of expense.
> (vi) Unless described in the application and funded in the approved federal awards, the subawarding, transferring or contracting out of any work under a federal award, including fixed amount subawards as described in §200.332 Fixed amount subawards. This provision does not apply to the acquisition of supplies, material, equipment, or general support services.
> (vii) Changes in the approved cost-sharing or matching provided by the non-federal entity.
> (viii) The need arises for additional federal funds to complete the project.

The awardee will be subject to the terms and conditions identified in the award. See http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html for information about NIFA award terms.

### B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of NIFA transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. The original copy of an application that does not result in an award will be retained by the Agency for a period of

three years. Other copies will be destroyed. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

**C. Regulatory Information**

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 2 CFR part 415, subpart C , this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

**D. Definitions**

Please refer to 7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Financial Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions, for additional applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.

For the purpose of this program, we wanted to highlight the following definitions:

*Education activity or teaching activity* means formal classroom instruction, laboratory instruction, and practicum experience in the food and agricultural sciences and other related matters such as faculty development, student recruitment and services, curriculum development, instructional materials and equipment, and innovative teaching methodologies.

*Extension activity* means an act or process that delivers science-based knowledge and informal educational programs to people, enabling them to make practical decisions.

*Insular Area* means the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Virgin Islands of the United States.

*Rural area* is defined in section 343(a) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1991(a))

**E. Materials Available on the Internet**

VSGP information will be made available on the NIFA web site at www.nifa.usda.gov/vsgp. The following are among the materials available on the web page:

1. More information about upcoming VSGP cycles
2. Stakeholder Input
3. Requests for Applications
4. Links to eligible shortage area descriptions