to or less than the sum of the school’s estimated standard student budgets for living expenses for the degree of veterinary medicine for the year(s) during which the program participant was enrolled in the school. However, if the school attended by the program participant did not have a standard student budget or if a program participant requests repayment for living expenses which are in excess of the standard student budgets described in the preceding sentence, the program participant must submit documentation, as required by the Secretary, to substantiate the reasonableness of living expenses incurred. To the extent that the Secretary determines, upon review of the program participant’s documentation, that all or a portion of the living expenses are reasonable, these expenses will qualify for repayment.

Service agreement means the agreement, which is signed by an applicant and the Secretary for the VMLRP wherein the applicant agrees to accept repayment of qualifying educational loans and to serve in accordance with the provisions of NVMSA for a prescribed period of obligated service.

Termination means a waiver of the service obligation granted by the Secretary when compliance by the participant is impossible, would involve extreme hardship, or where enforcement with respect to the individual would be unconscionable (see breach of agreement).

Withdrawal means a request by a participant for withdrawal from participation in the VMLRP after signing the service agreement, but prior to VMLRP making the first quarterly payment on behalf of the participant. A withdrawal is without penalty to the participant and without obligation to the Program.

§ 3431.4 Solicitation of stakeholder input.

The Secretary will solicit stakeholder input on the process and procedures used to designate veterinarian shortage situations prior to the publication of the solicitation for nomination of veterinarian shortage situations. A notice may be published in the Federal Register, on the Agency’s Web site, or other appropriate format or forum. This request for stakeholder input may include the solicitation of input on the administration of VMLRP and its impact on meeting critical veterinarian shortage situations. All comments will be made available and accessible to the public.

§ 3431.5 Solicitation of veterinarian shortage situations.

(a) General. The Secretary will follow the procedures described in this part to solicit veterinarian shortage situations as the term is defined in §3431.3.

(b) Solicitation. The Secretary will publish a solicitation for nomination of veterinarian shortage situations in the Federal Register, on the Agency’s Web site, or other appropriate format or forum.

(c) Frequency. Contingent on the availability of funds, the Secretary will normally publish a solicitation on an annual basis. However, the Secretary reserves the right to solicit veterinarian shortage situations every two or three years, as appropriate.

(d) Content. The solicitation will describe the nomination process, the review criteria and process, and include the form used to submit a nomination. The solicitation may specify the maximum number of nominations that may be submitted by each State animal health official.

(e) Nominations. Nominations shall identify the veterinarian shortage situation and address the criteria in the nomination form which may include the objectives of the position, the activities of the position, and the risk posed if the position is not secured.

(f) Nominating Official. The State animal health official in each State is the person responsible for submitting and certifying veterinarian shortage situations within the State to NIFA officials. It is strongly recommended that the State animal health official of each State involve the leading health animal experts in the State in the nomination process.

§ 3431.6 Review of nominations.

(a) Peer panel. State shortage situations nominations will be evaluated by a peer panel of experts in animal health convened by the Secretary. The
§ 3431.10 Eligibility to participate.
(a) General. To be eligible to participate in the VMLRP, a participant must:
(1) Meet the eligibility criteria of §3431.9 for applying to the VMLRP;
(2) Be selected for participation by the Secretary pursuant to §3431.12;
(3) Comply with all State and local regulations (including appropriate licensure where required) in the jurisdiction in which he or she proposes to practice;
(4) Be a citizen, national, or permanent resident of the United States;
(5) Sign a service agreement to provide veterinary services in one of the veterinarian shortage situations; and

§ 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 a college of veterinary medicine accredited by the AVMA Council on Education;
(2) Have qualifying educational loan debt as defined in §3431.3;
(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 of this part, within the time period specified in the VMLRP service agreement offer; and

(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 that will not 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 total qualified debt that does not meet the debt threshold.