

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE
WASHINGTON, DC

FSIS DIRECTIVE	4410.5	4/9/20
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STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM FOR IN-PLANT VETERINARY MEDICAL OFFICERS

I. PURPOSE

This directive provides instructions for the Student Loan Repayment Program (SLRP). This program is for current GS-12 in-plant Veterinary Medical Officers (VMOs). This Directive is supplementary to FSIS Directive 4537.1, Revision 2, Repayment of Student Loans Program, and DR 4050-537, Repayment of Student Loans.

II. BACKGROUND

FSIS uses the Student Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) to retain in-plant VMOs. In-plant VMOs possess unique qualifications and perform a function essential to the Agency mission. An in-plant VMO may be eligible to be considered for a student loan repayment if FSIS can demonstrate that in the absence of granting loan repayment benefits, the Agency would have difficulty retaining him / her. The SLRP is discretionary and contingent on available funding. The Agency will pay up to \$10,000 per qualified employee, per calendar year, for up to three years (\$30,000 total) in loan repayment. The program requires the employee to sign a three-year Service Agreement. The Agency will announce the application period annually via an FSIS Notice, the Wednesday Newslines, and e-mails to VMOs. Employees will be selected for the program on a case-by-case basis.

III. ELIGIBILITY

A. VMOs meeting the following criteria are eligible to receive consideration for student loan repayments:

1. VMOs who are permanent, GS-12, in-plant employees and have been on a career-conditional or career appointment for at least one year;
2. VMOs who are in good standing (i.e., rated fully successful or higher and with no disciplinary actions pending or occurring within the last three years); and

B. A student loan is eligible for repayment if it is:

1. Made, insured, or guaranteed under the Higher Education Act of 1965 Title IV Parts B, D, or E; specifically, Federal Family Education Loans, William D. Ford Direct Loan Program, or Federal Perkins Loan Program, or
2. A health education assistance loan made or insured under the Federal Family Education Loans, William D. Ford Direct Loan Program, or Federal Perkins Loan Program.
3. Loans made or insured under the Public Health Service Act (LDS, PCL, NSL, HPSL, HEAL).

DISTRIBUTION: Electronic

OPI: OPPD

NOTE: The loan holder must be the SLRP applicant and the loan must have been used for the specific education of the SLRP applicant.

IV. VMO RESPONSIBILITIES

A. During the announced application period, VMOs are to complete FSIS Forms 4410-27, [Student Loan Repayment \(SLRP\) for Current Inplant VMO Application](#) and 4410-28, [SLRP Loan Information](#) and submit the forms along with a copy of their most recent performance appraisal to: SLRP@usda.gov.

B. Before loan payments are made, VMOs are to complete and sign an AD-1152, *Service Agreement for a Receipt of Student Loans*.

C. VMOs must make loan payments on all portions of the remaining loans that USDA does not pay. The Government's payments do not exempt employees from this responsibility or from their liability for the loans.

D. VMOs are to pay for any income tax obligations resulting from the loan repayment benefit.

V. AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

A. To recommend the granting of a Student Loan Repayment, the Front-Line Supervisor (FLS) is to complete form AD 1151, [Repayment of Student Loan\(s\)](#) referenced in Appendix A of DR 4050-537, [Repayment of Student Loans](#), and sign the request as the Recommending Official.

B. The District Manager or designee will submit the signed form to SLRP@usda.gov. The e-mail submission will be considered concurrence with the FLS recommendation.

VI. SERVICE AGREEMENTS

A. As outlined in Section IV. B., employees are to sign a service agreement that acknowledges their commitment to complete a three-year service period of employment with Office of Field Operations (OFO). However, should the employee separate as an in-plant GS-12 VMO, but remain with FSIS in another capacity before all loan payments are dispersed, the employee forfeits any future loan repayments. A service agreement does not constitute a right, promise, or entitlement for continued employment or noncompetitive conversion to the competitive service.

B. The minimum employment period established under a service agreement is three years regardless of the loan repayment amount.

C. If the employee fails to complete the service agreement because he or she separated from FSIS voluntarily or involuntarily due to misconduct or poor performance, the entire amount of the loan paid by the Agency will be recovered according to USDA regulations governing offset from indebted Government employees or through provisions governing debt collection if the individual leaves Federal service.

VII. PAYMENTS

A. Student loan payments are:

1. Discretionary and subject to the conditions in the written service agreement between the Agency and the employee;

2. Applied to the indebtedness outstanding at the time that the Agency and the employee enter into the agreement; and
3. Made by the National Finance Center directly to the holder of the loan by electronic transfer.

B. When payment is made, tax withholdings are deducted or applied.

C. More than one loan may be repaid as long as the loan repayments do not exceed the \$10,000 annual limit.

VIII. REIMBURSEMENT

A. The employee is required to reimburse the Agency if the employee:

1. Involuntarily separates for misconduct or performance reasons before completing the service agreement. If the employee is involuntarily separated for reasons other than misconduct or performance (e.g., work reduction, downsizing), reimbursement is not required; or
2. Voluntarily separates before completing the service agreement. This includes resignations from Federal service, voluntary retirements, or transfers to other Federal agencies.

B. The minimum employment period established under a service agreement is three years regardless of the loan repayment amount. For example, if an employee's agreement states that he or she will receive \$10,000 per year for 3 years and the employee leaves FSIS with 6 months remaining on the service agreement after receiving \$30,000 in loan repayment benefits, the employee is required to reimburse the Agency for the entire \$30,000.

IX. QUESTIONS

Refer questions regarding this directive to SLRP@usda.gov.



Acting Assistant Administrator
Office of Policy and Program Development