

§ 106-1079. Large Animal Healthcare Enhancement Fund.

(a) Fund Created. – The Large Animal Healthcare Enhancement Fund is created as a special fund within the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The Fund shall be administered by the Authority. The purpose of the fund is to make grants to encourage veterinary students to enter and stay in large animal veterinarian practice and to support large animal veterinarian practices to enable them to better serve their designated counties.

(b) Fund Sources. – The Fund shall consist of any money appropriated to it by the General Assembly and any money received from public or private sources. Unexpended, unencumbered money in the Fund from sources other than appropriations from the General Assembly shall not revert and shall remain available for expenditure in accordance with this section. The Authority may use up to five percent (5%) of General Fund appropriations in each fiscal year for administrative support.

(c) Grant Eligibility. – A large animal veterinarian who practices or plans to practice in one or more designated counties may be eligible for a grant of up to twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) per fiscal year. Applicants shall apply in a format to be determined by the Advisory Commission, but the application shall require the applicant to state the designated counties in which the large animal veterinarian is practicing or plans to practice, the amount of funding requested, and the approved use for which the applicant intends to use the funds. When determining which applicants shall be awarded grant funds, the Advisory Committee shall consider all of the following criteria:

- (1) The geographic area of the State that an applicant serves or would serve and the need for large animal veterinary services in that area of the State.
- (2) The number of designated counties that an applicant serves or would serve.
- (3) The number of different large animal veterinarian specialties in which the applicant practices.
- (4) The percentage of time the applicant devotes to large animal veterinary services.
- (5) Any additional criteria the Advisory Committee determines to be appropriate.

(d) Uses of Grant Funds. – The grant recipient may use the funds to support the recipient's large animal veterinary practice, including any of the following:

- (1) The repayment of educational loans related to the recipient's veterinary degree.
- (2) The purchase of equipment or technology for use in the recipient's large animal veterinary practice.
- (3) Any additional uses the Advisory Committee determines is appropriate to promote and develop large animal veterinarians to practice in designated counties.

(e) Limitations. – The Advisory Committee shall review applicants on an annual basis to determine eligibility under the criteria developed under subsection (c) of this section. The Advisory Committee shall also review each recipient of grant funds at the end of each fiscal year. A recipient whose veterinary license expires, is revoked, or is suspended during the fiscal year in which the grant is awarded, or who fails to practice large animal veterinary medicine in the designated counties named in the recipient's application, shall repay the amount received from the Fund.

(f) Report. – The Agricultural Finance Authority shall report no later than October 1 each year to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources and the Fiscal Research Division of the General Assembly regarding the implementation of this section during the previous fiscal year. The report shall include a list of the recipients of grants from the Fund for the previous fiscal year, the amount of the grants received,

how recipients used awarded grant funds, and whether any awarded funds were required to be repaid by recipients. (2023-134, s. 10.1(b).)