

# The V.E.T. Collaborative

The Veterinary Education and Training Collaborative

## An Initiative to Address Kentucky's Large-animal Veterinary Shortage

### THE CHALLENGE

Kentucky's multi-billion-dollar agriculture industry is an essential engine driving the Commonwealth's economy and its future. High-quality, accessible animal care in our agricultural sector helps ensure that engine is strong and running. Our state and its agricultural sector, however, face a critical challenge.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has identified roughly 500 counties across 46 states that are experiencing a veterinarian shortage.<sup>1</sup> In Kentucky, 86 of the 120 counties are affected, according to the USDA and recent news reports.<sup>2</sup> The shortage is particularly acute among large-animal veterinarians and practices – an issue that disproportionately impacts Kentucky's farms and rural communities.

Contributing factors to the large-animal vet shortage include:

- A lack of coordinated training opportunities involving large animals;
- A dearth of recruitment, preparation and retention programs for rural, large-animal practice;
- The high debt load upon completion of veterinary school;
- Salaries that are not competitive with other types of veterinary medicine or other professional occupations; and
- Career burnout and retirements of current rural, large-animal veterinarians, as evidenced by recent news reports.

### AN ANSWER

The following proposal—referred to as the V.E.T. Collaborative—seeks to directly address the large-animal vet shortage in a way that maximizes the impact and the efficacy of existing programs, targets new resources in a thoughtful way and utilizes those resources in the most cost-effective manner possible.

The partners in the V.E.T. Collaborative—with a statewide reach—believe it is imperative that we work together with sister institutions, industry representatives, state government and policymakers, and other providers and caregivers to address this critical challenge.

### THE REQUEST AND DETAILS

**The V.E.T. Collaborative requests \$808,950 in new funding in the first year and \$1,238,370 in new funding in the second year of the biennium to support the following programs and initiatives.**

	FY2025	FY2026
<b>Current Funding</b>	\$5,828,560	\$6,061,768
<b>New Funding Request</b>	\$808,950	\$1,238,370
<b>Total Required</b>	\$6,637,510	\$7,300,138

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.nifa.usda.gov/vmlrp-map?state=530&field\\_type\\_of\\_shortage\\_value=All&field\\_status\\_value=All&field\\_vsgp\\_status\\_value=All&fiscal\\_year=&year=All](https://www.nifa.usda.gov/vmlrp-map?state=530&field_type_of_shortage_value=All&field_status_value=All&field_vsgp_status_value=All&fiscal_year=&year=All)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/local/2023/12/04/veterinarian-shortage-in-kentucky-impacts-pet-owners-farmers-food-supply/69785409007/>



# The V.E.T. Collaborative

## The Veterinary Education and Training Collaborative

The V.E.T. Collaborative—representing the University of Kentucky, Western Kentucky University, Auburn University and the Kentucky Veterinary Medical Association—is focused in four primary areas:

- Building a pipeline of more veterinary students by reaching into the K-12 system to incentivize interest early;
- Expanding and ensuring access through more veterinary student slots and extensive student support efforts;
- Focusing attention and resources on large-animal practices in the state through scholarships, research initiatives and internships; and
- Investing in large-animal veterinary practices and practitioners through the creation of an accessible loan repayment program.

### **BUILD THE PIPELINE**

- **K12 Student Mentor Program** – Collaboration with Extension and Ag Education to build interest in veterinary careers among rural students.
- **Day-camp/Summer Camp** – Focused on rural, large-animal veterinary experiences.
- **Dual Credit** – High school and college learning opportunities for courses relevant to pursuing veterinary school.

### **EXPAND ACCESS AND ENSURE SUCCESS**

- **Veterinary Contract Spaces** – Expand program by five slots (each year) at established veterinary schools across the southeast.
- **Bridge Scholars** – New program for pre-vet students to build animal handling skills and training for success in veterinary school.
- **Tutoring** – New programs and resources for pre-vet students who may need assistance in undergraduate barrier courses (ie. math, chemistry, biology).

### **FOCUS ON RURAL, LARGE-ANIMAL PRACTICE IN KENTUCKY**

- **Summer Experiences** – Designed for first-to-second year veterinary students to gain experience with large-animals in rural practices; helps prepare for clerkships.
- **Rural Practice Clerkships** – Designed for fourth-year veterinary students to participate in two-week clinical rotations in rural, large-animal practice in Kentucky.
- **Research Scholars** – Joint research programs to enhance rural, large-animal education and training.

### **INVEST IN RURAL, LARGE-ANIMAL PRACTITIONERS**

- **Kentucky Rural Veterinary Loan Repayment** – Cohort of five graduates, per year, over five years, for a total of 25; option to renew a second five years.
- **Joint Investment** – The request is a shared cost between General Fund and Kentucky Ag Development Funds. Estimated \$2.2 million total cost over five years.
- **Commitment** – Enrollees make a five-year commitment to rural practice.

### **BENEFITS**

- Focused on critical factors predicting rural, large-animal practice;
- Rapid response to begin addressing the workforce shortage;
- Efficient use of state resources matched by private, university and federal partners;
- No additional accreditation required; and
- No apparent statutory changes required.



# The V.E.T. Collaborative

The Veterinary Education and Training Collaborative

## BUDGET DETAIL

	FY 2025		FY 2026	
Personnel	State Funds	Match Funds (Univ/Private/Grant)	State Funds	Match Funds (Univ/Private/Grant)
VET Collaborative Director (1)	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000
Full-time Faculty Fellows (2)	\$150,000	\$100,000	\$150,000	\$100,000
Part-Time Clinical Faculty (2)	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000
Program Coordinators (2)	\$100,000	\$50,000	\$100,000	\$50,000
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>
<b>Program Operating Funds</b>				
Job Shadowing/Day Camps	\$50,000	\$125,000	\$50,000	\$125,000
Summer Camp			\$50,000	\$125,000
Barrier Course Tutoring	\$75,000	\$50,000	\$75,000	\$50,000
Bridge Scholars	\$75,000	\$150,000	\$75,000	\$150,000
Summer Veterinary Experience			\$75,000	\$100,000
Rural Veterinary Practice Clerkship			\$75,000	\$100,000
Veterinary Research Scholars		\$50,000		\$50,000
Planning Fund Pool		\$250,000		\$250,000
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$200,000</b>	<b>\$625,000</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>	<b>\$950,000</b>
<b>Veterinary Contract Spaces</b>				
Contract Spaces*	\$177,700		\$369,620	
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$177,700</b>		<b>\$369,620</b>	
<b>Loan Repayment</b>				
KY Rural Veterinary Loan Repayment	\$31,250	\$31,250	\$68,750	\$68,750
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$31,250</b>	<b>\$31,250</b>	<b>\$68,750</b>	<b>\$68,750</b>
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	<b>\$808,950</b>	<b>\$956,250</b>	<b>\$1,238,370</b>	<b>\$1,318,750</b>
<small>*The amount represents the cost of adding five contract spaces in Year 1 and an additional five contract spaces in Year 2 bringing the total number of contract spaces to 174 by FY2026. Kentucky's current investment in the contract space program is projected at \$5,828,560 in FY25 and \$6,061,768 in FY26.</small>				

**PLANNING FUND POOL** – Over the next two years, the University of Kentucky will commit \$500,000 to planning efforts related to the program detailed above. This may include, but will not be limited to:

- Exploring deeper academic partnerships and student/teaching exchanges with the V.E.T. Collaborative and other interested stakeholders;
- Capital planning and design efforts for potential capital investments in a future biennium;
- Ensuring the partnership addresses the unique needs of different veterinary practitioners; and
- Opportunities in research and clinical experiences with public and private partners.

