

# Vermont Educational Loan Repayment Program for Medical Lab Professionals (Medical Laboratory Technicians, Medical Laboratory Technologists, and Clinical Laboratory Scientists)

## 2024 PROGRAM OVERVIEW and PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY

The purpose of this educational loan repayment program is to increase access to health and dental care in underserved communities and to address the health professional shortages that cause disparities in access to health care in Vermont.

Category	Eligibility Standard
Description Up to \$10,000 in state funds annually	Funded by state and local funds. AHEC, on behalf of the state, shall make loan repayment awards in exchange for service commitments by eligible health care professionals. Recipient must have outstanding educational debt acquired in the pursuit of an undergraduate or graduate degree from an accredited college or university that exceeds the amount of the loan repayment award.
Award Amount + Voluntary Employer match	Up to \$10,000 in state funds per year. State awards may be enhanced by employer or community matching funds. Employer match is encouraged, but not required (see employer application for match minimum/maximum dollar amounts). Awards go directly to pay educational loans.  Current educational loan debt must exceed \$10,000.
Tax Liability	The federal Affordable Care Act passed on March 23, 2010, treats debt repayment under the Vermont Educational Loan Repayment Program for Healthcare Professionals as exempt for income tax purposes.
Prioritization for Awards	Program objectives/selection criteria are established annually by the Vermont Department of Health in consultation with AHEC, in accordance with Vermont laws, and the federal Public Health Service Act, to strategically respond to the most pressing health care workforce needs in the state. Other factors <i>may</i> include local goals for improved service through workforce recruitment/retention; applicant educational loan debt level; number of hours per week that applicant works; or other awarding parameters.
Citizenship	Recipient must be legally authorized to work in the U.S.
State of Residence	Per Legislative statute, recipient must be a Vermont resident; must serve the people of Vermont.
Eligible Medical Lab Professionals (medical lab technician, medical lab technologist, and clinical lab scientist)	Employment as a medical laboratory technician, medical laboratory technologist, or clinical laboratory scientist at an eligible University of Vermont Health Network (UVMHN) work site within the state of Vermont. Medical lab professionals assist with the process of analyzing patient specimens, such as samples of blood, bodily fluids, and tissues to reveal the composition to inform health care diagnosis and treatment.  Must have at least an associate degree from an eligible/accredited school and be qualified as and currently working as a medical laboratory technician, medical laboratory technologist, or clinical laboratory scientist.  Applicant must have completed any required probationary and/or orientation period as defined by employer.
Eligible Medical Lab Professionals: Hours	A medical lab professional must work full-time (as defined by their employer) at the specified eligible University of Vermont Health Network (UVMHN) laboratory worksite during the year of service and at least 45 weeks per year; participants who take more than 7.14 weeks of leave in a service year (for any reason), fail to meet the 45-week minimum.

<p>Educational Debt</p> <p><b>Current debt must exceed \$10,000.</b></p> <p>Those eligible for Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) are encouraged to enroll: (<a href="http://www.studentaid.gov">www.studentaid.gov</a>)</p>	<p>Educational debt is verified. Loan(s) must be in good standing. The current loan balance must be greater than the total amount of educational loan repayment award (see minimum award amount). Qualifying debt are educational loans obtained through a U.S. student loan program and may not include any loans consolidated with another person or borrowed for another person’s educational pursuit, nor may they include mortgage, car, credit card, personal, family, business, or any other type of non-educational loan.</p> <p>If awarded funds, the Lender will be requested that educational loan repayment award amounts be applied directly to principal or toward monthly payments, whichever is most advantageous for the borrower to reduce debt (a program aim) and strategically factor enrollment in Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF). It is the awardee/borrower’s responsibility to determine with their lender, and enact whichever approach is most advantageous. For guidance about PSLF, contact your PSLF servicer.</p> <p>A goal of this program is to work in a partnership between the recipient, the State of Vermont, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and communities/practices/employers/foundations to reduce educational debt; these funds are a direct investment in Vermont’s workforce and achieving debt reduction must be demonstrated to show impact and ensure the program’s continuation.</p>
<p>Finances</p>	<p>Applicant must not: have any federal judgment liens; have defaulted on any federal payment obligations including student loans; have any federal or non-federal debt written off as uncollectible; have received a waiver of any federal payment obligation.</p>
<p>Ineligible Medical Lab Professionals</p>	<p>Those not listed as “Eligible Medical Lab Professionals”. Other ineligible medical lab professionals: per diem; or part-time; temporary medical lab professionals; contracted medical lab professionals; and traveling medical lab professionals; individuals whose citizenship may limit their ability to fulfill the service obligation of this program; medical lab professionals with a current contractual service obligation with the federal government, state, employer, or other entity, including loan repayment contractual obligation from other sources, unless that service obligation will be completely satisfied before this program’s contract has been signed. Note: certain provisions in employment contracts can create a service obligation (e.g., an employer offers a bonus in return for the medical lab professional’s agreement to work at that facility for a certain period of time or pay back the bonus). Individuals who have loans through the federal Health Resources and Services Administration are not eligible. Individuals with a breach of contract for a previous service obligation are not eligible.</p>
<p>Eligible Work Sites</p>	<p>Medical labs operated by the University of Vermont Health Network (UVMHN) located within the state of Vermont.</p>
<p>Ineligible Work Sites</p>	<p>All those not listed as “eligible work sites.”</p>
<p>Reapplication &amp; Lifetime Maximum</p>	<p>Recipients will have 1-year service commitments. Employment will be verified prior to disbursement of funds.</p> <p>This 2024 pilot program uses one-time funding from the federal American Rescue Plan Act State Fiscal Recovery Fund (ARPA-SFR) (i.e., Covid financial recovery funding). If funding is available in future years, awardees may receive loan repayment funds for maximum of four years per individual. Must reapply annually.</p>
<p>Service Obligation Period</p>	<p>Contracts are for 1 year (12 months) of service. One year of service per year of funding. The service period will be defined in the award contract and cannot start prior to a fully executed contract or work start date, whichever is later. No credit for work prior to executed contract. No credit for work while in school or training. No credit during a leave of absence. Recipients who take a leave of absence (for any reason) are required to extend the service contract end date.</p>

<p>Service Obligation Worksite</p> <p><b>A new job opportunity does not “cancel” this obligation.</b></p>	<p>An award is for one specific worksite and timeframe as defined in the contract. Awards/contracts are not transferable. Participants who voluntarily resign from their worksite(s) or are terminated by their worksite(s) for cause will be placed in breach of contract.</p> <p>*If you want flexibility to change jobs at any time, this program <b>is not</b> a fit for you.</p>
<p>Award Cancellation or Contract Termination</p>	<p>Award offers can be cancelled without penalty prior to a fully executed (i.e., signed) contract and/or prior to disbursement.</p> <p>The award and service contract are cancelled in its entirety in the event of a participant’s death.</p> <p>Contracts may have service and repayment obligations waived or postponed (temporary leave) if there occurs incapacity of the participant due to serious illness. Decisions are at the discretion of the program.</p> <p>Contract termination due to extenuating, unforeseen and documented circumstances may be requested by a participant, in writing, and with repayment of loan repayment funds disbursed under that contract. The contract termination will not be effective unless the participant submits a written request, the request is approved by the program, and the participant repays all loan repayment funds paid under the contract within 30 days.</p> <p>Awards are dependent on funding from the State of Vermont and/or U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Should the program funding be withdrawn or reduced prior to award disbursement, the agreement will be terminated or revised.</p> <p>Temporary leave (up to one year) may be granted, and the service period amended (i.e., extended) if compliance with the obligation is temporarily impossible or an extreme hardship.</p> <p>Changes in employment after a contract has been executed and a disbursement made will result in a breach of service obligation.</p>
<p>Breach of Service Obligation</p> <p><b>This is serious.</b></p> <p><b>The financial penalties are significant. Think carefully before entering a service contract.</b></p> <p><b>If you want flexibility to change jobs at any time, this program <u>is not</u> a fit for you.</b></p>	<p>A breach of service can occur after a service contract has been fully executed (i.e., signed), and a disbursement made.</p> <p>If the participant fails to begin or complete service following a fully executed contract and the disbursement of funds, the participant will incur a debt to the State in an amount not less than the damages that would be owed under the NHSC Loan Repayment default provision. See <a href="https://nhsc.hrsa.gov/">https://nhsc.hrsa.gov/</a></p> <p>Participant must repay as defined in the service contract, plus interest and collection costs. The interest rate is the maximum legal prevailing rate, as determined by the Treasurer of the United States, from the date of the breach.</p> <p>Applicants are ineligible if they have ever breached or received a waiver of a prior service obligation to the federal/state/local government or other entity, even if they subsequently satisfied the repayment obligation.</p> <p>Breach of service obligations are reported to funders and may result in reduced funding to the program. A breach of service has serious consequences for the individual as well as the VT State Educational Loan Repayment program.</p>