



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

Marketing &
Regulatory
Programs Business
Services

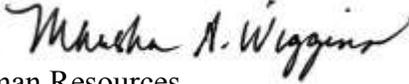
Human Resources
Division

1400 Independence
Avenue, SW
Washington, DC
20250

DATE: March 14, 2012

SUBJECT: Notice of Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) and/or
Voluntary Incentive Separation Payment (VSIP)

TO: GIPSA Employees in VSIP/VERA occupations

FROM: Marsha A. Wiggins 
Director, MRP Human Resources

As you are aware, agencies across USDA are facing budget reductions, and are continuing to focus on streamlined organizations, refocused priorities, and more efficient and effective use of resources.

As part of that strategy, in addition to normal agency attrition, GIPSA is offering Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) (also known as “early out”) and Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment (VSIP) (also known as “buyout”) opportunities to employees in certain occupational series and locations. By offering these voluntary buyout and early out opportunities, GIPSA hopes to create some flexibility to continue supporting our organization while managing funding reductions.

Voluntary Early Retirement Authority

GIPSA is offering the VERA opportunity to employees who meet the minimum age and length of service criteria. The VERA expands the normal retirement eligibility to allow employees to voluntarily retire, with an immediate annuity, with 20 years of service at age 50, or at 25 years of service regardless of age. This early out is only offered to eligible employees in targeted occupations, as explained below.

Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment

GIPSA is offering a VSIP opportunity, or buyout, for those employees in the occupational series identified in Enclosure 1. Buyouts provide a financial incentive for employees to voluntarily separate by optional retirement, voluntary early retirement, or resignation. The amount received for the buyout during this offer will be a maximum of **\$20,000**. Please note that if an employee separates with a buyout and subsequently accepts federal employment within five years of separation, the entire amount of the buyout must be repaid.

Payments of voluntary separation incentives (buyouts) will be authorized for up to 49 eligible GIPSA employees in the occupational series and organizational units shown in Enclosure 1. The list includes the maximum number of employees in each job series to whom buyouts will be offered.

You are eligible to apply for a VSIP/buyout if:

1. You serve under a permanent appointment in one of the occupational series/locations listed below.
2. You separate from the Federal service by voluntary resignation, voluntary early retirement, or regular voluntary retirement no later than April 30, 2012; and
3. By the time you separate, you have been continuously employed in the Federal Government for the last 36 months.

You are not eligible to apply for a VSIP/buyout if:

- You do not meet all three of the above criteria;
- You are a reemployed annuitant;
- You are eligible for disability retirement;
- You are in receipt of a specific notice of involuntary separation for misconduct or unacceptable performance;
- You have received a buyout before;
- You have received a student loan repayment benefit within 36 months of separating;
- You have received a recruitment or relocation incentive within 24 months of separating;
- You have received a retention incentive within 12 months of separating;
- You are in a position covered by a Direct Hire authority in use at USDA. For GIPSA, those positions are Information Technology Specialist (Security), GS-2210, grade 9 and above; or
- You are in a Student Trainee position.

VSIP Application Process

The VSIP/buyout is neither a right nor a benefit. Applying for a separation incentive payment is entirely voluntary and GIPSA management, in collaboration with Human Resources, will make all final decisions on which applications are approved, according to the outlined criteria.

The VSIP/buyout application period is from March 19 – April 13, 2012.

Buyout applications received by the deadline will be considered in the following order:

Category I:

Eligible employees currently serving in occupations in the organizational units shown in Enclosure 1, based on the maximum cap shown in the column marked Category I. For example, one employee in job series 1980 will receive a VSIP. If more than one employee in series 1980 applies for the VSIP, the employee with the most service, using the leave service computation date, will be given priority for the VSIP.

Category II: In the event that fewer than 49 employees serving in occupations shown in Enclosure 1 apply for a VSIP, GIPSA will remove the maximum cap in each of the following categories:

0110 Agricultural Economist and Supervisory Agricultural Economist
0301 Program Specialist
0303 Administrative, Program, and Staff Assistant
0343 Management and Program Analyst
0501 Supervisory Financial Systems Analyst
0511 Auditor and Supervisory Auditor
0963 Legal Instruments Examiner and Supervisory Legal Instruments Examiner
1101 Legal Specialist and Supervisory Packers and Stockyards Specialist
1146 Agricultural Marketing Specialist and Supervisory Agricultural Marketing Specialist

If the number of applications from employees serving in occupations shown in Enclosure 1 exceeds the number of VSIP/buyouts available, employees with the most seniority based on the leave service computation date will be given priority.

If you wish to apply for the buyout, please submit your Application for Voluntary Separation with a Buyout, Enclosure 9, between March 19 – April 13, 2012. Please read the application carefully before signing it. Employees who submit a timely and complete application will be notified by email of approval or disapproval of their application, and will be provided with instructions for the next steps in the retirement or separation process. If approved, you must separate from service through voluntary resignation, voluntary early retirement, or regular voluntary retirement no later than April 30, 2012.

Your decision to separate by retirement or resignation is voluntary. This is an important decision and you are encouraged to seek information from your servicing HR specialists for assistance in making an informed choice.

Employees with questions about the VSIP/buyout should contact Jon Crowson, Human Resources Staffing Specialist, at (612) 336-3364, or via email to jon.g.crowson@aphis.usda.gov.

Questions regarding retirement or insurance benefits should be directed to Barbara Watry, Human Resources Benefits Specialist, at (612) 336-3301, or via email to barbara.j.watry@aphis.usda.gov.

Please review the information in the enclosures thoroughly.

Enclosures:

To assist you with your decision-making process, the following information is included:

Enclosure 1: List of occupational series eligible for VERA/VSIP opportunity in GIPSA

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/downloads/Positions_in_GIPSA_Eligible_for_VSIP.pdf ;

Enclosure 2: How to Request Retirement Information, so that you can make an informed decision

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/downloads/How_to_Request_Retirement_Calculation.doc ;

Enclosure 3: Frequently Asked Questions on VERA, so that you better understand this benefit

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/downloads/VERA_FAQs.pdf ;

Enclosure 4: Other Considerations for VERA, so that you take appropriate steps to be prepared

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/downloads/other_considerations.pdf ;

Enclosure 5: How to Request a Buyout Calculation, so that you can make a decision

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/downloads/How_to_Request_Buyout_Calculation.doc ;

Enclosure 6: Frequently Asked Questions on VSIP, so that you understand the implications of a buyout

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/downloads/VSIP_FAQs.pdf ;

Enclosure 7: VSIP Tax Considerations, so you are aware of tax information

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/downloads/VSIP_Tax_Considerations.pdf; and

Enclosure 8: VSIP Guidance on Reemployment and Contracts

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/downloads/VSIP_Guidance_Reemployment_Contracts.pdf ;

Enclosure 9: GIPSA Application for Voluntary Separation with a Buyout, should you choose to take advantage of this offer.

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/downloads/GIPSA_Application_for_Voluntary_Separation_with_Buyout.doc