

June 13, 2019

ATTACHMENT 2

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

SUBJECT: Notice of Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment Authority

TO: Economic Research Service Employees receiving notice of Directed Reassignment

FROM: Willis Collie, Director 
REE Mission Area Human Resources Division

The Economic Research Service (ERS) is offering a limited number of Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) and Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment (VSIP), also known as an “early out” and “buyout” respectively, based on an availability of funds and to ensure the agency maintains a critical number of employees to support the mission.

The VSIP will be offered to all current permanent employees that have received a notice of directed reassignment. The VSIP must be requested in conjunction with a resignation, an optional retirement, or through VERA.

The VSIP will be offered to employees on a first-come-first-service basis. The window to apply for the VSIP will open Monday, **July 22, 2019, at 8:00 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) and will close on Monday, July 29, 2019 at 5:00 p.m. EDT.**

The application approval and subsequent payment of the VSIP will be made effective only if you choose to separate between **Monday, September 16, 2019 and Friday, September 27, 2019.** Should you accept the VSIP and separate before **Monday, September 16, 2019 or after Friday, September 27, 2019,** the VSIP incentive and any associated VERA will be revoked.

If you choose to decline your directed reassignment with interest in the VSIP (buyout) and subsequently fail to apply for the VSIP or are found ineligible/unapproved, the Agency will continue the process to remove you from Federal Service through involuntary separation procedures.

Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment Authority (Buyout)

This Authority allows an agency to provide a financial incentive for eligible employees to voluntarily separate by Resignation, Optional Retirement or VERA/Early Out. The maximum amount payable for a Buyout is \$25,000 (gross amount) or a calculated amount for severance pay, whichever is less, regardless of the method of separation.

To determine your VSIP eligibility and for more information:

1. Review Office of Personnel Management (OPM's) VSIP Overview

<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/workforce-restructuring/voluntary-separation-incentive-payments/>

2. Review “FAQs for VSIP” (Attachment 4)
3. Review “Tax Questions on Buyouts” (Attachment 6)
4. Contact the Human Resources Division, Compensation, Retirement and Benefits Branch at ERS-DR-VV@ars.usda.gov or 301-504-1489 for counseling.

A sample Buyout calculation form (Attachment 5) is provided for your use. Please note that if an employee separates with a buyout and subsequently accepts Federal employment within 5 years of separation, the gross amount of the Buyout must be repaid.

Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (Early Out)

This Authority expands the normal retirement eligibility to allow employees to voluntarily retire at age 50 with 20 years of service or at any age with 25 years of service. ERS will only approve VERA for those employees who have been offered and have accepted the VSIP.

To determine your VERA eligibility and for more information, please proceed with the following steps:

1. Review Office of Personnel Management (OPM’s) VERA Overview:
<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/workforce-restructuring/voluntary-early-retirement-authority/>
2. Review the “FAQs for VERA” (Attachment 7).
3. Review “Other Considerations for VERA” (Attachment 8).
4. Contact the Human Resources Division, Compensation, Retirement and Benefits Branch at ERS-DR-VV@ars.usda.gov or 301-504-1489 for counseling.

Application and Approval Process

5. To apply for the **VSIP**, complete the attached “Application for Voluntary Separation Incentive Program (VSIP/BUYOUT)” (Attachment 3).
6. Email your signed Application for VSIP to ERS-DR-VV@ars.usda.gov within the cited timeframes
7. Once your VSIP application has been approved, you will need to either apply for 1) optional retirement, VERA (early retirement), or resign.
8. Information and the application for **Optional Retirement or VERA** will be provided by the Human Resources Division.

VSIP Applications submitted before or after the application window or by any other means will not be accepted.

You will receive email acknowledgement of your application by the Human Resources Division within 3 business days of receipt.

This is an important decision and you are encouraged to seek additional information from the Human Resources Division, Compensation, Retirement and Benefits Branch at ERS-DR-VV@ars.usda.gov or 301-504-1489.