By law, laboratories must report certain conditions discovered during testing to state and local public health departments. Officials use this data to respond effectively and quickly to potential outbreaks.

Historically, labs could only mail or fax their reports. Each transmission was time- and labor-intensive. Follow-ups, errors and inconsistent formatting caused more delays.

As technology advanced, states evolved a new method of data sharing, called electronic laboratory reporting (ELR), to more efficiently meet stringent regulations. ELR dramatically improves the ease, speed and accuracy of data transmission nationwide.

ELR has enabled CDC to receive comprehensive coronavirus data in near real-time to inform next steps and produce potentially life-saving recommendations.

The Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) has enabled the reporting of COVID-19 data through its AIMS platform. Using AIMS, public health agencies can submit essential data to CDC for detailed analysis, visualization and surveillance. This data provides a comprehensive national snapshot of the testing landscape and is being used federally to help support the safe re-opening of communities.