The Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for Prevention and Control of Emerging Infectious Diseases (ELC) Cooperative Agreement program distributes funding to 64 state, local and territorial health departments. It provides critical support to epidemiologists and laboratory scientists who are instrumental in discovering and responding to various food, water and vector-borne outbreaks, as well as funding vital improvements in health informatics. Despite ELC’s vital role in responding to the pandemic, annual funding levels are not adequate to maintain public health preparedness, which hinders response to public health emergencies. For example, applications for FY 2019 ELC funding greatly exceeded the funds available; requests totaled more than $497 million, compared to the $231 million awarded.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the existing ELC platform was the mechanism used to distribute supplemental response funding to health departments. In FY 2021, ELC distributed $31.4 billion to assist with COVID-19 response efforts, roughly 13,600% more than the funding awarded in FY 2019. View CDC’s state by state table, which dramatically illustrates the difference between the low levels of funds annually available to states to build and maintain capacity, compared to what was needed in the response. COVID-19 supplemental funding was frequently used for desperately-needed updates to equipment and data systems that were unaffordable with the low annual funding.

* 2019 latest available numbers

Full funding will allow jurisdictions to maintain this improved capacity and address new threats:

- Additional health department staffing to enhance public health capacity and coordination.
- Increased support to local health departments to provide for these jurisdictions’ specific needs.
- Providing for data needs such as laboratory information management systems; integrated data systems that support epidemiology and public health laboratories; electronic laboratory reporting, case reporting and health records; contracts to maintain surveillance systems and cloud data storage.
- Fulfilling ongoing equipment and supply needs such as laboratory reagents and maintenance.
- Improvements to Laboratory Response Network for Biological Threats (LRN-B) laboratories for new technologies and expanded partnerships.
- Expansion of NWSS to include new communities and other pathogens.
- Improving waterborne pathogen outbreak response at the state and local level.