



# EPIDEMIOLOGY & LABORATORY CAPACITY FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES

## ESSENTIAL FUNDING FOR PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY RESPONSE

### ELC PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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

The ELC budget line should be increased by at least \$561 million—bringing total ELC annual funding to around \$800 million—and funded through CDC Budget authority.

### ELC FUNDING SUCCESSES

- Supported 51,000+ positions, including more than 3,600 laboratorians, through various COVID-19 awards. This represents around \$5 billion investment in public health workforce.
- Case investigation and contact tracing supported by ELC averted between 1.1–1.3M cases and 27,231–33,527 [hospitalizations](#) over 60 days during the 2020-2021 winter peak of the pandemic.
- Seven state and local jurisdictions were awarded a total of \$175 million to build new public health laboratories, add more space or make renovations to existing spaces. This is the first time CDC has ever provided such substantial awards specifically for this type of construction.
- CDC's [National Wastewater Surveillance System](#) (NWSS) has grown significantly since its creation in 2020, now collecting data from over 700 sampling sites nationwide that represent over 88 million Americans. ELC funded NWSS partners have used wastewater data in multiple ways, from [directing public health action](#) to [tracking variants](#).
- Supported increased national capacity for COVID-19 genomic sequencing, and more than one billion tests and reporting of results as part of the pandemic response, including over 37 million school tests.

#### 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.



#### ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORIES

8515 Georgia Avenue, Suite 700, Silver Spring, MD 20910 | 240.485.2745 | [www.APHL.org](http://www.APHL.org)

Contact: Peter Kyriacopoulos, Chief Policy Officer | 240.485.2766 | [peter.kyriacopoulos@aphl.org](mailto:peter.kyriacopoulos@aphl.org)