

LABORATORY SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

MISSION

To promote and support high performance levels of state and local public health laboratory systems through continuous quality improvement.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

National emergency preparedness efforts have provided a basis for developing and refining public health systems at the national, state and local levels, and for assuring that those systems are as consistent, integrated and seamless as possible. Experience with preparedness has demonstrated that inclusion of partners and stakeholders in a systems approach improves public health outcomes.

Public health laboratories, as critical members of public health systems, are often not fully recognized except when extraordinary circumstances put them in the spotlight. The anthrax terrorist attacks of 2001, the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic, recurring food chain outbreaks, and major floods are examples of the need for public health responses in which the critical role of laboratories emerge. These nationally significant events bring deeper appreciation and recognition for highly effective systems in public health laboratories. To consolidate these gains, there is a need to advocate and show improvements and refinement of laboratory systems on a continuous basis.

To improve and assess performance of state and local public health laboratory systems, the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL), in collaboration with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), developed the [Laboratory System Improvement Program \(L-SIP\)](#). It is modeled on the proven performance standard assessment process used by local and state public health departments for the last decade.

PROGRAM BENEFITS

L-SIP produces the following benefits for state and local public health laboratories:

- Provides support for the accreditation of state and local public health departments by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB).
- Provides a benchmark for public health laboratory system practice improvements, by setting a “gold standard” to which public health systems can aspire.
- Improves communication and collaboration by bringing partners (e.g., public health, environmental and other laboratories, first responders and key constituencies) together.
- Educates stakeholders about the public health laboratory system and the interconnected activities that lead to collaborative system solutions.
- Strengthens the diverse network of partners throughout the federal, state and local systems, leading to cohesive partnerships and better coordination of activities and resources.
- Identifies strengths and gaps that can be addressed in laboratory system quality improvement efforts.



“Doing a reassessment in our state allowed our partners and stakeholders to realize how important their participation in the system is for continuous improvement. Most appealing was comparing results from the initial assessment to the reassessment.”

— *New Hampshire L-SIP reassessment*

PROGRAM RESOURCES

The **L-SIP Assessment** is a user-friendly process that includes an assessment tool for establishing a baseline measure of performance for continuous improvement. Visit APHL's [L-SIP website](#) to access the resources below and more.

L-SIP Assessment Tool

The assessment is based on the following framework and concepts:

- The [10 Essential Public Health Services](#)
- The [11 Core Functions and Capabilities of Public Health Laboratories](#)
- A system focus
- Measurement against gold standards using a scoring matrix
- A commitment to continuous improvement.



Meeting with our partners at the L-SIP assessment helped us all to learn that we are part of a laboratory system. We now feel ready to move forward with the vision of developing capacity to meet or exceed national performance standards.”

– *Montana L-SIP assessment*

L-SIP User's Guide

The User's Guide includes a description of the program and its framework; explanation of the process; recommendations of partners to invite; guidelines for facilitators, theme takers and coordinators; and much more. The guide contains sample materials, including letters, agendas and a template for the final report.

Other Resources

Technical assistance is available via multimedia trainings for assessment coordinators, facilitators and theme takers.

APHL's [Member Resource Center](#) is a collection of documents created and reviewed by APHL and peers in the public health laboratory field and is intended to give members ready access to shared practices, communications, protocols, quality improvement tools, etc.

A **mentoring program** provides support and guidance for those planning an assessment from state or local systems that have completed an L-SIP assessment.

The [Quality Improvement Forum](#) is a community of public health laboratory professionals who share continuous system improvement activities and assist each other in the development of performance management projects.



Personally, I really found it helpful to meet and interact with diverse departments of the City and State Health Departments.”

– *City of Milwaukee L-SIP assessment*

LEARN MORE

If you are interested in participating in this program, need technical assistance or would like more information about the L-SIP mentoring program, visit aphl.org/L-SIP or contact Tina Su, MPH, at 240.485.2729 or bertina.su@aphl.org.

