

Association of Public Health Laboratories

Case Study

Sustaining Member Program: A Study in Corporate and Member Value

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The Association of Public Health Laboratories' Sustaining Member Program has enabled public-health professionals and corporations to partner in new ways, much to the benefit of the industry and the public alike.

When the H1N1 swine flu strain became a pandemic threat in 2009, it was the Association of Public Health Laboratories' corporate partner program that helped enable the immediate public health response, managing the spread of the disease. A manufacturer of diagnostic devices had been a corporate member of APHL, and that relationship helped streamline distribution of the equipment needed for H1N1 detection.

Collaborations between associations and companies like this one allow both parties to achieve goals likely not possible without the collaboration, and associations are often uniquely positioned to foster such partnerships. Through this same APHL program, another company gained international relationships that enabled it to provide global services while helping expand the association's international reputation. Another company broke into a key market previously impossible to reach, becoming the leading provider in that market and supplying the resources necessary for association members to meet an unmet need.

As association leaders look for new ways to increase marketable value with little to no investment, smart corporate leaders are looking for more responsible ways to make a social impact while building a more sustainable business. APHL's well-designed corporate partnership program enables it to provide a mutually beneficial opportunity for companies to make this kind of impact while increasing its own marketable value.

The Genesis of an Idea

APHL is the national nonprofit organization representing governmental laboratories that monitor and detect public health threats. In 2005, APHL developed the Sustaining Member Program at the direction of Executive Director, Scott Becker. An association veteran with over 20 years in public health and 13 years leading APHL, Becker was known for his progressive thinking in association management. Since its inception, the program has continually provided value to the

association's members that could not have been gained any other way. The program has also increased unrestricted funding for the association.

From the late 1990s to early 2000, there was a great deal of attention placed on managing interaction between government officials and lobbyists through The *Lobbying and Disclosure Act* of 1995¹ and the *Honest Leadership and Open Government Act* of 2007². These laws were initiated as a response to, among other things, the growing concern over large corporations manipulating policy in their favor through relationships with government officials. In alignment with these laws, state and local government officials adopted strict protocols and procedures to eliminate even the perception of conflicts of interest, significantly restricting interaction between private industry professionals and state and local government officials. Unfortunately for the public health sector, restricting interaction also meant reducing opportunities for public health professionals to learn about new technologies, scientific innovation and services that could impact the future of public health. For the private sector, it meant reduced opportunity for private companies to understand and meet the needs of the public health community.

Becker wanted his members to benefit from the knowledge they could gain from private industry and knew that APHL was in the position to facilitate and manage non-commercial interaction for the educational benefit of association members and industry professionals. He also knew that companies with an interest in public health laboratories needed a way to stay informed. Corporate leaders urged him to develop a program that would allow interaction and communication between private industry and public health laboratory professionals, and he knew that if he wanted to increase value to his members, such a program could be the solution.

Developing the Program

When Becker first introduced the idea of the Sustaining Member Program to the Board of Directors, questions arose about whether APHL was “selling out” by providing “access” to members. There were horror stories about associations that partnered with companies to the detriment of the association. To address this concern and structure boundaries of any relationship between APHL, APHL members and corporate program participants, APHL developed a corporate protocol, a guideline articulating the boundaries of the program that would be shared with all interested companies. One critical guideline was to establish that the Sustaining Member Program would not be a sales platform for corporate participants to sell products or services to APHL members.

Through the work of consulting firm, Mosaik Strategies, hired to develop the program, APHL interviewed a number of corporate representatives to gather information on what needs could be met through this program, what value it could bring and what price the market would bear. APHL members were also interviewed to understand what value members could get from the program. After the corporate protocol was approved and research was conducted, the program was developed.

¹ The Lobbying Disclosure Act, Public Law 104-65 -- DEC. 19, 1995, 109 STAT. 691, <http://lobbyingdisclosure.house.gov/lda.html>.

² The Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007, PUBLIC LAW 110-81—SEPT. 14, 2007, 121 STAT. 735, http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ081.110.pdf.

The Sustaining Member Program was created as a multi-tiered, annual member program with varying benefits at different levels. Benefits include guaranteed exhibit booth space at APHL's annual meeting, advertising in APHL publications, regular updates and news about public health, and invitations to APHL conferences and events. Two of the four membership levels include as a benefit an invitation to participate in the Corporate Leadership Council, an annual event that brings together public health laboratory leaders and industry leaders to discuss the future of public health. For many members, this is one of the most important benefits that the Sustaining Member Program provides.

Currently, 26 companies participate in APHL's Sustaining Member Program. Since it began, the membership fees have remained the same. But the value the association gains from the program is greater than just the revenue through membership fees collected. Sustaining members fund portions of the annual meeting, educational training and events. They also support a scholarship fund that APHL uses to award funding for travel to educational training and events for members who would not otherwise be able to attend.

Case Studies

The increased funding is important to APHL and its work. But just as important is the benefit APHL members experience from the interaction with sustaining members and the value these companies enjoy through the program. Three companies that participate in the Sustaining Member Program—Life Technologies, Gen-Probe, and HDR CUH2A—provide a good case study illustration of the mutual benefit realized through APHL's effort to foster interaction between its laboratory members and corporate members.

Case Study 1: Life Technologies Helps Slow a Deadly Pandemic

Life Technologies' participation in the APHL Sustaining Member Program catapulted the company's brand in a key market while enabling the public health community to immediately respond to the H1N1 pandemic threat, managing the spread of the disease.

Benefit to laboratory members: Faster response to H1N1 threat.

Benefit to corporate member: Increased industry adoption of its product.

Life Technologies joined the APHL Sustaining Member Program at the program's inception in 2005 as Applied Biosystems, Inc. (later to become Life Technologies Corporation in 2008). The company manufactures and sells biotechnology tools for surveillance and diagnostics, so bio-threats generated business. Joining the Sustaining Member Program offered a way to learn more about public health, a key business market, while offering the opportunity to introduce the public health community to new technologies that could help strengthen the public health system.

Life Technologies manufactures the Applied Biosystems 7500 Fast Dx, an instrument with a list price of approximately \$65,000 used in the detection of influenza. In September 2008, the instrument received clearance by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to be used with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) seasonal influenza test as public health laboratories' approved platform to detect and diagnose seasonal influenza. After the FDA approval, Life Technologies collaborated with the CDC and APHL to provide training for public

health laboratories nationwide on the FDA-approved platform to ensure consistency, minimize variables and create confidence in the results. By April 2009, about half of the public health labs had been trained on the platform.

In April 2009, the CDC alerted Life Technologies to an emergency—a new strain of swine flu. Influenza A (H1N1) had been identified in California, Texas and Mexico. The FDA issued emergency use authorization instructing qualified laboratories to use a new CDC test for this new strain of influenza on only the Applied Biosystems 7500 Fast Dx instrument or the Applied Biosystems 7500 Fast Research Use Only (RUO) instrument for detection of the virus. At the time, there were 100 Applied Biosystems 7500 Fast instruments in the field. Life Technologies formed a special task force to internally coordinate its response to the public health need. According to Head of Public Health at Life Technologies, Brian Plew, “within 24 hours of being alerted to the health emergency, we started shipping instruments to laboratories needing additional testing capacity.”

Texas was one of the first two states with confirmed cases of H1N1 influenza and the Texas Department of State Health Services was one of the first labs to receive additional instruments. Dr. Susan Neill, Director of the Texas State Laboratory Services states, “Prior to the emergency, the lab was accustomed to testing about 1,400 influenza specimens per year for seasonal influenza. But now the lab was receiving nearly 1,400 specimens per day for swine flu.” The lab, which already was using an Applied Biosystems 7500 Fast for testing, was now well over capacity for its infrastructure. Life Technologies immediately provided the lab with two additional instruments to increase capacity.

The accelerated pace of manufacturing, shipping and upgrading equipment continued for months until all public health laboratories were equipped with the necessary instruments to meet the increased demand for testing.

By the end of the emergency response, Life Technologies had placed an additional 200 instruments in the public health laboratory community, increasing the number of Life Technologies instruments in the field 300 percent while significantly increasing public health capacity for testing and surveillance of the H1N1 influenza. Life Technologies did not require immediate payment for the instruments or upgrades. Instead, the company worked with APHL to develop fair pricing for the instruments and the maintenance contracts covering both the old and the new instruments. “Without support from APHL through the Sustaining Member Program, we may not have been able to be there and be prepared for the rapid response to the H1N1 pandemic” says Plew. Working with CDC to secure funding, APHL facilitated the execution of contracts for each instrument in public health laboratories.

Life Technologies’ collaboration with APHL through the Sustaining Member Program improved the ability of APHL’s members – the public health labs – and CDC to meet the critical needs of their communities, particularly during the H1N1 pandemic through training, open communication and immediate response for surveillance and diagnostic equipment. Through the program, Life Technologies better understands the needs of the public health community. The mutual value of the relationship will continue as Life Technologies and APHL maintain their open communication by sharing the needs of the public health community, advocating for infrastructure support for public health laboratories, and introducing new technology into the

public health system, ultimately strengthening the laboratories that protect the public's health and safety.

Case Study 2: Gen-Probe Helps Increase STD Awareness

Gen-Probe's participation in the APHL Sustaining Member Program led to relationships that helped make Gen-Probe the leading provider of sexually transmitted disease (STD) tests while increasing STD awareness in hard-to-test areas.

Benefit to laboratory members: Increased testing for STD in high-risk communities.

Benefit to corporate member: Increased industry adoption of its STD testing kit.

Gen-Probe, a leading provider of diagnostic tests and instruments to detect HIV, chlamydia, and other sexually transmitted diseases³, is a Diamond member, the highest Sustaining Member Program level. Pete Kelley, Director of National Accounts for Gen-Probe encouraged APHL to develop the Sustaining Member Program to allow public health sector vendors to interact as partners. "We need to be in this together," Kelley says. "I've seen a lot of situations where certain missions cannot be accomplished because public health doesn't have the funding or a necessary vehicle that private industry has. If public health and private industry can work together in a partner relationship, there would be synergy to behoove both." Gen-Probe, like many other companies, is striving to reduce costs. "But this will not affect the company's participation level in the program. The value of the program is clear in the boardroom," Kelley states.

Through the Sustaining Member Program, APHL becomes a coordinating body for public health laboratories. This enables companies like Gen-Probe to work with the entire public health laboratory community through one leader, instead of working with the hundreds of individual public health laboratories and the various governments that run them. According to Kelley, "this is one of the greatest benefits of being a Sustaining Member."

Gen-Probe realizes value from the program in many ways. When the company acquired Prodesse, Inc., a company that produces influenza tests, Gen-Probe talked with APHL staff to understand how the Prodesse products could potentially support the public health community and what would be necessary for FDA clearance. This kind of information helps Gen-Probe develop products most effective for public health use, helps the company prepare for the FDA clearance process and helps the public health community prepare for an emergency by having FDA-cleared products readily available.

In June 2005, Gen-Probe learned that there was a public health concern about chlamydia awareness. There was a need to increase the understanding of the disease's potential to cause infertility and the need to be tested. As a Sustaining Member participant, Gen-Probe reached out to APHL to collaborate on addressing STD prevention concerns. Together, APHL and Gen-Probe proposed the *Chlamydia Awareness Campaign* to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Coordinator for one of the largest of ten CDC regions, Region 4. The Region

³ Hoovers Fact Sheet on Gen-Probe Incorporated, <http://www.hoovers.com>, retrieved April 26, 2010.

4 leadership quickly executed the campaign in colleges and universities. Gen-Probe donated all of the testing kits. The success of the Region 4 campaign generated interest in CDC Region 6. Again, Gen-Probe donated testing kits, and Region 6 initiated its Chlamydia Awareness Campaign in charter high schools. Many of these schools became part of that Region's Infertility Prevention Project. The campaigns were a great success. The two Regions shared with the CDC and Congress data collected through their campaigns to ensure continued funding and to expand the campaigns. The campaigns have become an annual program continuing today, with Gen-Probe donating the testing kits.

The need for STD testing in certain high risk communities—colleges, universities, high schools, juvenile detention centers and prisons—was known, but public health resources to meet this need were scarce. Access to these high risk communities was impossible for a vendor. Through the APHL Sustaining Member Program, Gen-Probe and the public health community accomplished something they did not have the resources to accomplish alone. And Gen-Probe expanded its market to include previously unreachable communities. Gen-Probe's Aptima[®] test, now the product of choice for STD testing, has become the most widely used STD test in the country. Gen-Probe's participation in the program helped increase its understanding of the public health market, leading to better exposure and greater usefulness of products in public health.

Case Study 3: HDR CUH2A Brings Architectural Expertise to International Public Health

HDR CUH2A's participation in the APHL Sustaining Member Program led to international public health relationships that initiated the firm's outreach to global communities. Through its volunteer organization, Design 4 Others, the firm expanded its staff's problem-solving skills and strengthened architectural design expertise through the challenges of building public health laboratories in rural Africa, developing a market differentiator.

Benefit to laboratory members: Strengthened international reputation.

Benefit to corporate member: A market differentiator and increased international relationships.

HDR CUH2A is a major science and technology architectural firm skilled in laboratory design and builds. In 2008, CUH2A merged with another architectural design-build firm, HDR Architecture, Inc., becoming the latter's global science and technology division, HDR CUH2A. The firm, which had worked with many individual public health organizations, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as well as university and state public health laboratories, joined the Sustaining Member Program in 2005. "Through the program we gained more focused, efficient and robust interactions with over fifty state and territorial public health laboratory systems through one leadership organization," says Monica Bell, HDR CUH2A's Global Director of Business Development and Marketing.

As an APHL sustaining member, HDR CUH2A became a more active partner to the public health laboratory community. The firm became aware of more upcoming public health laboratory design-build projects, enabling it to bid more. Having worked on more public health laboratories worldwide than any other design-build firm, it developed a comprehensive understanding of the public health community, its unique needs and many constraints. This valuable insight became a differentiator for the firm.

In 2007, Senior Designer Jeff Minton came up with an idea to use this advantage. “Why not build laboratories in third world countries through philanthropic projects?” He took the idea to Division President Scott Butler who agreed that sending its experts to more resource-constrained countries would not only support its global vision, it would give them new perspective and develop a different set of problem-solving and innovation skills.

The firm began seeking international philanthropic opportunities but was surprised to meet resistance from international organizations that it believed would be happy to accept the firm’s donated expert services. The firm had a good reputation within the U.S. public health laboratory community and a strong relationship with APHL. But it had not yet developed international relationships or built the foundation of trust necessary in working with organizations in third world countries. APHL, on the other hand, had strong international relationships. So APHL introduced HDR CUH2A to public health leaders in CDC Tanzania who were working with the Tanzanian government and the Abbott Fund to help improve laboratory services throughout the country by building and modernizing 23 hospital laboratories.⁴ This introduction helped launch the first project for CUH2A’s global volunteer organization—Design 4 Others—providing professional services for critical-need facilities in communities with limited resources.⁵

HDR CUH2A domestic relationships through the Sustaining Member Program have also been valuable. HDR CUH2A has worked on public health laboratory projects covering almost half of the U.S. laboratory system in many capacities, sometimes in a non-compensated advisory capacity. Dr. Patrick Luedtke, Utah State Laboratory director and APHL member states, “The firm’s experts have become trusted advisors to public health leaders for anything related to laboratory design and builds. We call on HDR CUH2A for guidance, input or advice, even on projects that were not awarded to the firm.”

For example, in 2007, the Utah State Public Health Laboratory was selected by the World Health Organization (WHO) to build a bio-safety laboratory in Barbados. There was no funding included in the project for the development of the design and for planning. Luedtke went to HDR CUH2A and asked for its support. The firm donated its expertise and time to develop the design and then worked with local vendors, including the local architectural firm hired to build the laboratory HDR CUH2A designed, to develop the project budget.

According to Bell, “Fostering relationships is one of the most important, valuable benefits HDR CUH2A gets from the APHL Sustaining Member Program.” Through these relationships, the firm launched Design 4 Others. More international philanthropic and other projects followed, including projects with the WHO, the Mozambique Ministry of Health, and other international organizations.

The firm’s participation in the Sustaining Member Program helped build its differentiator – an understanding of the public health sector. Increased communication through the program led to increased opportunities through insights into upcoming public health laboratory builds. Working

⁴ Press Release, December 2, 2009, WASHINGTON, DC, Abbott and the Abbott Fund Honored With Corporate Citizenship Award for International Community Service, The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Business Civic Leadership Center Recognizes Abbott's Efforts to Strengthen Tanzania's Health Care System. http://www.abbott.com/global/url/pressRelease/en_US/60.5:5/Press_Release_0803.htm.

⁵ Press Release May 6, 2009, 'Design 4 Others' Honored by Magazine Awards Program.

with the public health sector has helped the firm strengthen its flexibility and its ability to create unique, sustainable, effective solutions within tight resource constraints. “It’s difficult to measure the value, but there’s no question that the value exists,” says Bell.

APHL has benefitted from its relationship with HDR CUH2A through the expertise and knowledge the firm shares with its members, providing unique and valuable insight and expert guidance on laboratory technology and builds. APHL also benefits from the education programs for public health laboratory professionals provided by HDR CUH2A. The expertise HDR CUH2A shares with organizations globally has helped strengthened APHL’s international reputation through the connection it provided. Finally, HDR CUH2A supports and helps fund APHL activities, promoting continuous improvement in the quality of laboratory practice and health outcomes.

Realizing Mutual Value

For APHL, the Sustaining Member Program enables it to provide more value to its members. For corporate participants, the program provides an opportunity to exercise more social responsibility with increased involvement in programs and activities that impact their industries. Also through the program, the association guides corporate members to become better corporate citizens.

Corporate participants of the APHL Sustaining Member Program agree that this program is one of the most effective, if not the most effective, corporate-association partnership programs in which they participate. It offers the company value beyond the program’s cost. PerkinElmer was one of the companies that encouraged APHL to initiate the program. LeeAnn Dennewitz, Vice President, Genetic Screening, PerkinElmer Health Sciences says that being part of the program helps PerkinElmer “build our pipeline for products and services and solutions that we need to bring out in the future to fill the gaps” in the public health community. Dennewitz goes on to explain that through the Sustaining Member Program, APHL “will indicate where the needs are and we can go and learn more about the needs and how our products relate.”

Each corporate participant has developed a better understanding of the public health laboratory community by participating. This improved understanding of public health leads to improved products and services these companies provide to better meet the unique needs of the association members’ and their constituencies.

In addition, APHL has had its own “ah-ha” moment. “Through this Program we have learned of our ability to shape the future by engaging in dialogue with partners, including the corporate sector,” says Scott Becker. More interaction with the corporate sector through the Sustaining Member Program has given APHL a better understanding of the role technology plays in the future of public health, enabling continued improvement in the public health laboratory system. Through this learning, APHL has evolved its own mission.

Key Success Factors

As with many other successful initiatives, there are key factors within the APHL Sustaining Member Program that make it so effective. These program success factors are described below.

Rests on a Firm Foundation

As an association program, it is critical that the Sustaining Member Program be mission-focused and built to increase member value. The basic reason APHL exists is to serve its members and its mission. Every APHL program must be based on that foundation.

Ensures Interests and Understands Needs

A key initial step for APHL in developing its Sustaining Member Program was to communicate with potentially interested companies to ensure an understanding of their interests and needs that would be met through the program. APHL knew that there was an interest in developing this program and took the next step in building the program by talking with interested prospects for the program. This initial research prepared APHL to develop marketable offerings for its program. It also helped APHL avoid lost resources in developing unwanted benefits.

Boundaries Are Clearly Articulated

Before APHL could invite companies to participate in its partnership program, it was first necessary to articulate what was and was not acceptable collaboration under the program. APHL developed the corporate protocol, a guideline that defined the boundaries of the relationship to protect the reputation of the association and its members. The protocol clearly stated that APHL would not endorse a company or its products. Upon reviewing the protocol, companies could immediately determine whether the Sustaining Member Program was going to offer what they were looking for in the relationship before joining the program.

Supported by Its Members

Prior to developing the program and the corporate protocol, APHL talked with its members to keep them informed of its intention to pursue the development of a corporate partner program and to listen to and address their concerns. Understanding the needs of and gathering input from its members was important in maintaining good relationships and developing a stronger program. A partnership program without the support of the members will offer no value to either corporate participants or association members and is destined to fail.

Resources Dedicated

Key to running any successful program is dedicating the right resources in the right amounts. APHL assigned a long-time APHL and laboratory professional, Linette Granen, who brings both public health experience and customer service skills as the program's corporate relations manager. Having a dedicated manager who understands both sides of the partnership increases the value the program provides.

Strong Leadership

Critical to the success of APHL's corporate partner program is leadership that understands and can articulate the value companies bring to its members and the value the members offer the companies to help foster real partnerships. APHL leaders openly met requests to develop the program. "Often there is an adversarial relationship detrimental to both [companies and associations]. [The associations] think that the company just wants to sell them something and get the highest price," explains Kelley of Gen-Probe. APHL leaders articulated the mutual benefit and facilitated collaboration on both sides of the partnership to ensure success.

APHL's willingness to evolve through a greater understanding of the world around them is what places the organization in a leadership position, creating and sustaining a truly successful

partnership program. Brian Plew of Life Technologies describes the Sustaining Member Program as “very innovative and unique, because we really feel like we [the corporate partners] are a part of APHL’s community. No other organization I have been involved in is offering anything like this.”