



# Request for Proposals: Assessment of Informatics Needs in the Laboratory Response Network (LRN)

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## Summary

The Association of Public Health Laboratories, Inc. (APHL) is a nonprofit corporation organized under the District of Columbia law that serves as a national member organization in the United States representing the nation's public health laboratories (public health labs or PHLs). The Association's members include all of the country's state and territorial public health labs, a sizable number of its local PHLs and other affiliated institutional laboratories such as state agricultural, environmental or food safety laboratories. APHL is recognized as tax exempt by the Internal Revenue Service under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Its work on behalf of PHLs spans more than 60 years.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been vital in advancing public health laboratory infrastructure, enhancing laboratory technologies and improving the preparedness and response capacity by providing technical and operational support to Laboratory Response Network (LRN) member laboratories. Despite the significant accomplishments of the LRN, efficient electronic data messaging and challenges associated with unanticipated responses to emerging infectious diseases could potentially threaten its ability to quickly detect and respond to public health threats and emergencies. In order to maintain the strides in emergency preparedness achieved by the LRN, an efficient and sustainable strategy for electronic data messaging must be developed and implemented.

APHL, in cooperation with CDC, is seeking to select an applicant to assist in conducting a comprehensive data exchange environmental landscape analysis. The selected applicant will be eligible for an award of up to \$134,000, which APHL will distribute via a contract. In addition to the landscape analysis, the selected applicant will facilitate meetings with public health laboratories, other LRN member laboratories, APHL, CDC and other key federal stakeholders to better understand the status of data exchange in the LRN, current needs and a path forward. APHL will use the collected information to shape APHL and CDC data exchange plans for laboratory preparedness and response.

## Background

In 1999, through a collaborative effort with CDC, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and APHL, the LRN was founded primarily to respond to biological threats. Today, the LRN is charged with the task of maintaining an integrated network of state and local public health, federal, military, and international laboratories that can respond to biological, chemical and other public health threats. The LRN for Biological Threats Preparedness (LRN-B) and the LRN for Chemical Threats Preparedness (LRN-C) are unique assets, linking clinical, state and local public health laboratories, veterinary, agriculture, military, water- and food-testing laboratories, and federal laboratories. The LRN has expanded greatly since 1999 and remains a strong system capable of responding to a variety of public health threats, including emerging infectious diseases (e.g. Ebola and Zika) and natural disasters, such as the 2017 Hurricanes.

Maintaining this extensive laboratory network is critical to the nation's biological and chemical threat preparedness. A cornerstone of the LRN is its ability to produce rapid and actionable test results. To do this, the LRN employs two methods for electronic data exchange: LRN Results Messenger (RM) and Laboratory Information Management System integration (LIMS<sub>i</sub>). LRN RM was created to provide LRN laboratories with the ability to manage and share standard laboratory results data securely with CDC. LRN

RM represented the first step in an incremental approach to providing full standards-based electronic data exchange for the LRN. LIMS<sub>i</sub> is a parallel effort to LRN RM, representing the next generation of data exchange in the LRN. Its purpose is to enable laboratories to rapidly exchange data with CDC using their existing Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) and reducing the burden of duplicate data entry.

LIMS<sub>i</sub> was launched in 2010 by CDC, in partnership with APHL, and its goal is to speed data exchange by integrating software that LRN laboratories use to store their internal records with an automated messaging service that sends critical results directly to CDC, sample submitters and other critical partners. Currently, some LRN-B laboratories still use LRN RM in addition to LIMS<sub>i</sub> to transmit results to CDC.

LRN RM requires time-consuming manual double data entry, an extra step that LIMS<sub>i</sub> eliminates. In addition to reducing errors and simplifying electronic data messaging, LIMS<sub>i</sub> delivers high consequence and critical test results to the CDC much faster, enabling efficient preparedness and response efforts while reducing the burden for LRN PHL labs. Challenges with LIMS<sub>i</sub> include the ability to rapidly and systematically update required data fields for new threats across the nation.

Since inception, the CDC and APHL have been heavily involved in ensuring the success of LIMS<sub>i</sub>, both in an administrative capacity and with hands-on efforts. The CDC LIMS<sub>i</sub> implementation team works closely with laboratories throughout the process ensuring that laboratories are meeting standards and have the support they need to achieve full compatibility. Conference calls, test messages, and multiple site visits by implementation teams are all part of the process. LIMS<sub>i</sub> operability generally takes several months to complete, as laboratories (and their software) need to fit within certain parameters before implementation is possible. One of the biggest challenges in implementing LIMS<sub>i</sub> has been the wide range of LIMS that LRN member laboratories employ. Due to factors such as difference in budgets, and types of tests performed, a LIMS that works perfectly in one laboratory may not be an appropriate choice for another. Those that use the same software may use different modules or versions. Coping with these differences requires extensive involvement and cooperation with the software manufacturers, which can further extend the timeline for implementation of LIMS<sub>i</sub>. However, these hurdles are outweighed by the benefits, in particular, the time-saving advantages and reduced double-data entry burden.

In order to meet the needs of an ever-changing landscape in emergency preparedness, an efficient, adaptable, and sustainable strategy for electronic data messaging must be developed and implemented with the goal of providing a solution that fits the needs of all stakeholders.

## Funding Support

APHL will provide up to \$134,000 to fund the selected applicant for the project. The funding support amount represents the total amount available for the applicant, and APHL will use this amount for all activities specified in the applicant's proposal. The project duration is from the signing of a contract between the selected applicant and APHL, through June 30, 2018 – when the selected applicant has completed the work and submitted a final report to APHL.

## Eligibility

This is an open and competitive process. Applicants must comply with the Application Requirements below to qualify.

## Anticipated RFP Schedule

April 12, 2018	–	RFP Issued
<b>April 19, 2018</b>	–	<b>Letter of Intent Due to APHL (see below)</b>
<b>April 26, 2018</b>	–	<b>RFP Responses Due</b>
April 30, 2018	–	Proposal review completed and awardee selected
April 30, 2018	–	Draft contract submitted to APHL Legal for final internal review

APHL will communicate any modification to this anticipated schedule on APHL's procurement [website](#).

## Application Requirements

### Confirmation of Intent to Respond

APHL requests that prospective applicants submit a brief email statement indicating an intent to submit a proposal. APHL must receive this email by no later than **5:00pm ET on April 19, 2018**. Applicants must email this letter of intent to Tyler Wolford, MS, Senior Specialist, Laboratory Response Network at [tyler.wolford@aphl.org](mailto:tyler.wolford@aphl.org).

**Each applicant must adhere to the following outline in preparing its application.** An application should be no longer than 10 double-spaced pages not including supporting documentation (such as letters of support). To maximize the score of the proposal, applicants should verify that the proposal sufficiently covers all elements that are listed in Appendix A: Evaluation/Scoring Criteria below.

### Project Description

*(not to exceed 1 page)*

Applicants must describe the project, its potential audience and include between 1 and 3 measurable learning objectives that the project will meet.

### Project Methodology

*(not to exceed 4 pages)*

Applicants should describe in detail how they will use staff to carry out the project. Applicants will outline project steps, identify materials and methods required for project completion and expected outcome(s), and will provide a detailed timeline of activities. All partners or collaborating parties or agencies must be listed in this section (see the [Special Note about Collaborative Projects](#) section of this RFP below).

Applicants are welcome to provide letters of support from organizations or partners (these letters should be attached to the application in an appendix).

## Evaluation Methods and Project Milestones

*(not to exceed 2 pages)*

Applicants should describe how the effectiveness and impact of the project will be measured and evaluated.

An applicant must include three to five measureable milestones to allow APHL to track and measure the progress of the project. The applicant must meet these milestones no later than June 30, 2018.

## Budget and Justification

*(not to exceed 3 pages)*

APHL will provide up to \$134,000 of funding in direct support to the project. Applicants must detail the use of the requested funding in its application and provide a justification of why the funds are needed.

## Special Note about Collaborative Projects

APHL will fund individual projects or events. In the event that two or more organizations want to submit a joint proposal and will work together on a collaborative project or event, the maximum funding available for that project or event remains unchanged at \$134,000. APHL will not contract with multiple organizations on an event or project, so one of the organizations must submit the application as the lead applicant and must identify any other partnering organization as a subcontractor and describe each subcontractor's role and budget.

## Project Requirements

Each selected applicant must complete the following activities during the project period (estimated start of early May 2018 with a completion date of June 30, 2018):

- a. The selected applicant must complete all milestones as outlined in the proposal. An applicant will be required to obtain APHL's prior written approval before making any change to milestones, deliverables or the overall scope of, or adjustments to the budget for the project. *If a selected applicant makes a change without first obtaining APHL's written approval, the applicant could forfeit all or part of the project funding.*
- b. Selected applicants will be required to submit progress reports or updates on meeting project milestones.
- c. Each milestone progress report must contain the following information:
  1. Information on whether the milestone was completed and, if it was, how that was accomplished (APHL will have the right to reject any progress report that simply restates or recaps the project description that was submitted in the applicant's proposal);
  2. Description of obstacles that caused the selected applicant any delay in completing its milestone and the solutions the applicant took to get back on track together with an updated milestone target for next reporting period, if applicable.

- d. In addition, the final project report due June 30, 2018 must contain the following information:
1. Analysis of current state strategy and goals
    - Key strengths and weaknesses
    - Risks and threats
    - Potential opportunities
    - Needs and gaps analysis
    - Priorities to preserve and to change
  2. Examination of stakeholder needs and expectations
  3. Outline of CDC goals and core strategies for LRN data exchange
  4. Comprehensive assessment of currently available informatics capabilities that could potentially meet the needs of the LRN
  5. LRN Data Exchange Strategic Plan and/or Roadmap

## Submission Proposals

APHL must receive complete responses by **5:00 pm ET on April 26, 2018**. Applicants may send proposals via email to [tyler.wolford@aphl.org](mailto:tyler.wolford@aphl.org).

APHL will send an email acknowledging the receipt of your application; if you do not receive an acknowledgement within 48 hours, please email the RFP point of contact above to confirm receipt.

APHL encourages applicants to review [Exhibit A - RFP Evaluation/Scoring Criteria](#) prior to submission and to verify that their proposal includes all requested information. While APHL may review, in its sole discretion, incomplete applications it will deduct points from each section of a proposal where the applicant did not provide that scoring section's complete information.

## Application Review and Evaluation Process

### Evaluation Process

APHL will conduct the entire review either at APHL headquarters office in Silver Spring, Maryland or via a combination of email communications between APHL's Senior Specialist, Laboratory Response Network and the members of the evaluation team, or among the evaluation team members via teleconference and/or webinar evaluation sessions. APHL's Senior Specialist, Laboratory Response Network will coordinate the review process and the evaluation sessions.

### Evaluation Team

APHL staff, led by the Senior Specialist, Laboratory Response Network, will conduct an initial review of all proposals. Once potential reviewers have been identified, APHL's Director of Public Health Preparedness and Response will have final approval over the review team's composition.

### Evaluation Criteria

APHL will evaluate proposals based on responses to the requirements set out in the [Application Requirements](#) section above, and will provide a numeric score of up to 100 maximum points based on the scorecard template set out in [Exhibit A - RFP Evaluation/Scoring Criteria](#).

## Post-Evaluation Process

The selected applicant will be notified by APHL staff within seven business days of the completion of the evaluation and APHL will post the names of the recipient to APHL's procurement [website](#) on the same day. APHL will provide unsuccessful applicants with notification of the results by e-mail or by U.S. mail within 30 days of the date the name of the selected applicant is posted.

All applicants will be entitled to utilize APHL's RFP Appeals Process to formulate a protest regarding alleged irregularities or improprieties during the procurement process. Specific details of this policy are located on the procurement website.

## Conditions of Award Acceptance

The eligible applicant must be able to contract directly with APHL or have an existing relationship with a third-party organization that can contract directly with APHL on behalf of the awardee. Applicants must agree to comply with expectations outlined in this RFP.

## Conflict of Interest

APHL will ask potential reviewers to complete and sign APHL's **Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement** in order to disclose any real or perceived conflict of interest prior to the start of the evaluation process and to affirm that they have no conflict of interest that would preclude an unbiased and objective review of the proposals received. A copy of the disclosure statement and the related Fiduciary Responsibility and Conflict of Interest Policy is attached as [Exhibit B: Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form and Policy](#). APHL will not select reviewers with a perceived or potential conflict of interest. Once potential reviewers have been identified, APHL's Director, Health Preparedness and Response will have final approval over the review team's composition.

## Questions

Please direct all questions via email to Tyler Wolford, Senior Specialist, Laboratory Response Network at [tyler.wolford@aphl.org](mailto:tyler.wolford@aphl.org). **APHL must receive all questions by 5:00 PM ET April 19, 2018.** APHL will respond directly to the questions on an individual basis as they are received. APHL anticipates that it will then also post each question, together with the answers, to APHL's procurement website within two business days of the date APHL provided the answer(s) to the individual.

## Appendix A. RFP Evaluation/Scoring Criteria

### Application Evaluation

Applications for each activity will be evaluated individually against the specific criteria listed below. Each member of the evaluation team will evaluate proposals and assign a numeric score from zero to the maximum value indicated in each criteria area below. The maximum score a submission may receive is 100 points.

#### Project description and submission - (25 points)

- High (18-25 points)
  - All components of the RFP are addressed
  - Describes how stakeholders will be involved
  - Provides a comprehensive assessment strategy of available informatics capabilities
  - Submission is within the page limit
- Moderate (9-17 points)
  - All components of the RFP are addressed
  - Describes how stakeholders will be involved
  - Provides basic assessment strategy of available informatics capabilities
  - Submission is within the page limit
- Low (1-8 points)
  - Some components of the RFP are addressed
  - Does not describe how stakeholders will be involved
  - Provides basic assessment strategy of available informatics capabilities
  - Submission is not within the page limit
- No Response (0 points)

#### Project specific methodology goals and objectives – (30 points)

- High (21-30 points)
  - Demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the subject
  - Has extensive experience in the subject area and project methodology
  - Clearly defines measurable goals for success
- Moderate (11-20 points)
  - Demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the subject
  - Has some experience in the subject area and project methodology
  - Clearly defines measurable goals for success
- Low (1-10 points)
  - Demonstrates a basic understanding of the subject
  - Does not have experience in the subject or project methodology
  - Does not clearly define measurable goals for success
- No Response (0 points)

## Program Evaluation/Timeline - (25 points)

- High (18-25 points)
  - Describes plan for evaluation of project effectiveness
  - Includes appropriate evaluation metrics for the project
  - Project timeline meets the final deadline described in the RFP
- Moderate (9-17 points)
  - Describes plan for evaluation of project effectiveness
  - Includes limited evaluation metrics for the project
  - Project timeline meets the final deadline described in the RFP
- Low (1-8 points)
  - Describes plan for evaluation of project effectiveness
  - Does not include appropriate evaluation metrics for the project
  - Project timeline exceeds final deadline described in the RFP
- No Response (0 points)

## Budget and Justification – (20 points)

- High (14-20 points)
  - Budget is within the maximum funding amount available
  - Adequate and reasonable allocation of resources and program staff
  - Includes number, qualifications (e.g. Curriculum Vitaes, Resumes), duties and responsibilities, and time allocation of proposed staff
- Moderate (7-13 points)
  - Budget is within the maximum funding amount available
  - Adequate and reasonable allocation of resources and program staff
  - Does not fully address number, qualifications, duties and responsibilities, and time allocation of proposed staff
- Low (1-6 points)
  - Budget exceeds maximum funding amount available
  - Does not describe a reasonable allocation of resources and program staff
  - Does not include number, qualifications, duties and responsibilities, and time allocation of proposed staff
- No Response (0 points)

## Appendix B: Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement and Policy

# Association of Public Health Laboratories Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement

**Applicability:** Disclosure of the following information is required of all Officers, Directors, committee members, staff members and other volunteers who have been designated and who have accepted responsibility to act on behalf of APHL ("APHL Personnel"). Please answer the following questions and, where indicated, include the same information for your immediate family members (your parents, your spouse or partner, your children and your spouse/partner's parents).

APHL will keep your completed disclosure statement in the corporate records of the association.

1. Please list the name, address, phone number, email address and type of business of your current employer. If you are self-employed, please note that below and provide us with the address, phone number, email address and type of business you operate.

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2. Do you, or does any family member, currently serve as an officer, director, committee member, or other volunteer (or work as an employee of or a paid consultant to) any organization serving the interest of laboratory science or public health laboratories other than APHL or your state or local laboratory?

Yes                       No

If yes, please list the organization(s) and provide detail on your or your family member's interest or position in the organization(s).

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3. Do you, or any family member, have an existing or potential interest in, or compensation arrangement with, any third party providing goods or services to APHL, or with which APHL is currently negotiating?

Yes                       No

If the answer is yes, please provide the name of the organization below and describe in detail the nature of the position held.

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4. Please note any other financial or business interest you may have with any organization serving the interests of public health laboratories.

**If you have none, please check this box:**

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5. Do you, or does any family member, have any other interest or affiliation that is likely to compromise your ability to provide unbiased and undivided loyalty to APHL, or that could come in conflict with your official duties as an Officer, Director, committee member, staff member or other volunteer who has been designated and who has accepted responsibility to act on behalf of APHL?

**Yes**                       **No**

If you answered yes, please describe in detail below the nature of each such interest or affiliation.

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6. If you are currently aware of any actual or possible conflict of interest that might otherwise hamper your ability to serve APHL to your best ability and with the highest degree of care, loyalty and obedience – ***including any potential conflict you or a family member may have with one or more of the RFP applicants*** – please describe them in detail below.

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7. Do you agree that so long as you are an Officer, Director, committee member, staff member or other volunteer who has been designated and who has accepted responsibility to act on behalf of APHL you will immediately disclose to the other Directors and/or Officers or, for staff members, the Executive Director and/or General Counsel the nature of any interest or affiliation which you may hereafter acquire, which is in or is likely to become in conflict with your official duties with APHL?

**Yes**

**No**

**YOU MUST READ THIS SECTION AND THEN SIGN BELOW**

I acknowledge that I have received and read APHL's Fiduciary Responsibility and Conflict of Interest Policy (the Policy). I have listed all my relevant fiduciary responsibilities and affiliations, and I have identified any actual or potential conflict of interest on this Disclosure Statement and I agree to abide by the Policy. I understand that it is my responsibility to inform APHL in writing of any change in circumstances relating to the Policy and this Disclosure Statement.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# APHL Fiduciary Responsibility and Conflict of Interest Policy

## 1. Policy Statement and Purpose

The members of the APHL Board of Directors understand the importance of serving APHL to the best of their ability and with the highest degree of obedience, loyalty and care. Accordingly, the Board adopts the following policy for APHL Officers and Directors, all staff, committee members, and other volunteers who have been designated and who have accepted responsibility to act on behalf of APHL ("APHL Personnel").

## 2. Individual Duty and Annual Disclosure

APHL Personnel will avoid any conflict of interest with APHL. APHL Personnel will not profit personally from their affiliation with APHL, or favor the interests of themselves, relatives, friends or other affiliated organizations over the interests of APHL. As used in this Policy, "Conflict of interest" includes any actual, apparent, and potential conflict of interest.

Upon commencing service with APHL, each APHL Personnel will file with the Board an annual statement disclosing all material business, financial, and organizational interests and affiliations they or persons close to them have which could be construed as related to the interests of APHL or the profession of public health laboratory science. Each APHL Personnel has an obligation to make an additional disclosure if a conflict of interest arises in the course of the individual's service to APHL, whether arising out of his/her employment, consulting, investments, or any other activity. These disclosures will be documented promptly in writing and recorded in the Board minutes and corporate records.

## 3. Procedure

Whenever APHL considers a matter, which presents an actual, apparent, or potential conflict of interest for APHL Personnel, the interested individual will fully disclose his/her interest in the matter, including the nature, type, and extent of the transaction or situation and the interest of the individual or that individual's relatives, friends or other affiliated organizations. The Board, after consultation with counsel as appropriate, will determine whether an actual and material conflict exists and, if so, what is the appropriate course of action under this policy and the Board vote will be recorded in the minutes.

Any Board member having a conflict of interest must either (i) voluntarily abstain from and be disqualified from participation in all deliberation and voting on all Board actions relating to the situation or matter that gives rise to the conflict of interest, or (ii) ask the Board to determine whether an apparent or potential conflict of interest is considered by the Board to be an actual and material conflict. In the event that the Board member in question requests that the Board evaluate the apparent or potential conflict, that Board member will abstain and be disqualified from participating in (and voting on) the determination of whether the issue presents an actual and material conflict. If the Board determines that an actual and material conflict exists, the Board member in question will abstain from all voting on, and will be disqualified from participation in all deliberation concerning all Board actions relating to the conflict of interest. The vote will be recorded in the minutes.

These procedures will neither prevent the interested individual from briefly stating his/her position on the matter, nor preclude him/her from answering pertinent questions of Board members, since his/her knowledge may be of assistance to the Board's deliberations.

APHL Personnel must be cautious and protective of the assets of APHL and insure that they are used in the pursuit of the mission of APHL. The association's policy requires APHL Personnel to avoid transactions in which APHL personnel may have a significant financial interest in any property which APHL purchases, or a direct or indirect interest in a supplier, selected applicant, consultant, or other entity with which APHL does business. The Board, after consultation with counsel as appropriate, will determine whether an actual and material conflict exists and, if so, determine whether the transaction is nonetheless favorable to APHL before considering whether to approve it.

#### 4. Other Duties and Obligations

Whenever any APHL Personnel discovers an opportunity for business advantage which is relevant to the activities of APHL, the opportunity belongs to APHL and the individual must present this opportunity to the Board. Only once the Board determines not to pursue the matter and relinquishes the opportunity may the individual consider it a matter of possible personal benefit.

APHL Personnel may not accept favors or gifts exceeding \$75.00 from anyone who does business with APHL.

All APHL Personnel will keep confidential those APHL matters designated confidential. APHL Personnel are prohibited from disclosing information about APHL to those who do not have a need to know or whose interest may be adverse to APHL, either inside or outside APHL, and are prohibited from using in any way such information for personal advantage to the detriment of APHL.

All APHL Personnel who participate in APHL activities, including committee activities and international consultation activities, must be adequately prepared to fully participate as their position descriptions require and will do so in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations of their respective state or territory and APHL's Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, and corporate policies. The APHL Board will read and understand the association's Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, corporate policies and financial statements, and routinely verify that all state, federal, and local tax payments, registrations and reports have been filed in a timely and accurate manner.

Board members will never exercise authority on behalf of APHL except when acting in meetings with the full Board or the Executive Committee or as authorized by the Board. If any member of the Board has significant doubts about a course of action of the Board, he or she must clearly raise the concern with the Executive Director and the Board and, when appropriate, seek independent expert advice.