

CDC & APHL Cooperative Agreement OE20-2001 Performance Summary

Reporting Period: July 2020 – June 2021

OE20-2001: Enhancing Public Health Laboratory Capabilities and Increasing Capacity

[OE20-2001](#) enhances the effectiveness and operations of public health laboratories (PHLs), individually and as part of a national system. This Cooperative Agreement (CoAg) supports four key strategies and activities to increase the capabilities and capacities of PHLs in nine focus areas. It builds on past and present CoAgS between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the [Association of Public Health Laboratories \(APHL\)](#).



Strategy 1

Science, Management and Operations



Strategy 2

Policy, Partnership and Communications



Strategy 3

Training and Capacity Building



Strategy 4

Laboratory Quality, Safety, and Informatics

Focus Areas

- A. Foundational Leadership and Support
- B. Environmental Health
- C. Foodborne, Waterborne, and Environmentally Transmitted Diseases
- D. Infectious Diseases
- E. Informatics
- F. Newborn Screening and Genetics
- G. Preparedness and Response
- H. Quality and Safety Systems
- I. Workforce Development

Selected Strategies and Activities

Policy, Partnership and Communications



- Develop policies and issues analyses to promote PHL interests.
- Facilitate information exchange and dissemination between the laboratory community and other partners and audiences in public health, healthcare and beyond.
- Collect and analyze information, create content, and disseminate products to inform target audiences about the role of PHLs and the tools and resources available to them.

Training and Capacity Building



- Identify training and workforce development needs among laboratory professionals across diverse settings.
- Develop curriculum frameworks, training, and workforce development resources for laboratory professionals across diverse settings.
- Design and implement programs to strengthen the PHL workforce pipeline.

Laboratory Quality, Safety, and Informatics



- Develop and implement solutions and standards to improve data exchange and interoperability.
- Improve the practice of laboratory quality and safety in public health laboratories.
- Employ emerging methodologies and process improvements in public health laboratories.
- Provide technical assistance to PHLs and other partners.
- Identify and address gaps in laboratory preparedness and responses to public health threats.

About the Recipient: Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL)



APHL works to strengthen laboratory systems serving the public's health in the United States and globally. Its members, known as "public health laboratories," monitor, detect, and respond to health threats. With over 20 years' experience in more than 30 countries, APHL is recognized internationally as a leader in public health laboratory science and practice.

Focus Area Performance Measure Highlights July 2020 – June 2021



Training and Capacity Building

9,459

Total number of participants in webinars, seminars, courses, and associated leadership activities.

90%

Percent of surveyed participants reported an increase in knowledge.

Inaugural

"Boot Camp" to prepare PHL Professionals for board certification exams was completed, with an average of 15-30 participants per session.

77%

Response rate for a COVID-19 training needs assessment (see "Highlights" section below for additional information).

Success Stories and Lessons Learned

Implementation Successes

Emerging Leader Program:

- Recruited 13th cohort, with virtual delivery: 12 participants in the fall class and 10 participants in the spring class. Peer-to-peer coaches recruited and matched with program participants.

COVID-19 Laboratory Associate Program

- Designed and launched a program to fast-track workforce support to APHL member laboratories. 30 COVID Associates were recruited to assist PHLs in specific areas of pre-analytical, analytical, and post-analytical phases of testing.

APHL-CDC Laboratory Fellowship Program

- Conducted a fellowship redesign to continue strengthening the overarching administrative framework and to prepare for significant expansion.

Implementation Challenges

- Travel restrictions and shift in priorities due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- APHL staffing shortages.
- APHL members experiencing competing priorities and unable to participate in lengthy or time-intensive training opportunities during the pandemic (e.g., "Boot Camp" board certification training; New Laboratory Director Orientation).

Highlights

A COVID-19 training needs assessment was completed with a 77% response rate. Results were analyzed and prioritized for developing action plans.

PHL Type	Percentage
Local PHLs	39%
State PHLs	61%
Territorial PHLs	0%

Implementation Solutions

- Adapted to changing needs during the pandemic by pivoting to a virtual format. For example, Packing & Shipping in-person courses were transitioned to Saf-T-Pak virtual seminars. Additionally, the Public Health Laboratory Training Conference was held virtually in June 2021.
- While activities were delayed due to the pandemic, many activities (e.g., development of curriculum frameworks) are expected to be accomplished in the next CoAg year.

