Request for Applications: Enhanced Testing Capacity for Vector-Borne Diseases in Public Health Laboratories

Submit to: Anne Gaynor (Anne.Gaynor@aphl.org) with copy to infectious.diseases@aphl.org

Summary

The Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL), in cooperation with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Division of Vector-borne Diseases, is seeking to award one-time funding for state or local public health laboratories (PHLs) for the purpose of establishing and/or enhancing testing capacity for the diagnosis of vector-borne diseases to meet your jurisdictional testing needs. The aim of this funding opportunity is to assist PHLs with an aspect of implementation or expansion of Vector-borne Disease (VBD) testing that is otherwise not feasible currently and is not otherwise already funded.

Funds may be used for activities contributing to implementation or expansion of laboratory capacity for VBD testing in the public health laboratory. Below we have highlighted some specific projects that might be timely for public health laboratories.

- implement molecular testing of mosquito pools or ticks to inform VBD surveillance
- validate a new or alternative IgM assay for the detection of antibodies to West Nile virus (WNV), St. Louis encephalitis virus (SLEV) or Eastern equine encephalitis virus (EEEV) (as a replacement for CDC MIA assays)
- modify a currently available method to improve accessibility to testing which could include adding a new specimen type, extending the stability studies or onboarding new instrumentation. Specific examples could include: validating whole blood for WNV PCR, transitioning PCR assays to newer CDC prioritized nucleic acid extraction and PCR platforms, transitioning CDC MIA's to a new bead-based platform (as Bioplex 200 reaches end of life)

Additionally, laboratories may choose to use a portion of the funds to update existing laboratory information management systems (LIMS) or add electronic laboratory reporting (ELR) messaging to streamline reporting and improve turnaround time of data to healthcare providers and other stakeholders for the **identified prioritized projects described above.**

Anticipated RFP Schedule

November 9, 2026	RFP Issued
December 10, 2026	RFP Responses Due
December 18, 2026	Final review completed and awardees selected
February 1, 2027	Estimated Contract Start Date

APHL will communicate any modification to this anticipated schedule on APHL's procurement website (www.aphl.org/rfp) and via an email blast to public health laboratories.

Response Submittal

APHL must receive complete responses by **11:59 pm EDT on the date listed in the Anticipated RFP Schedule above**. Please see Application-Required Submissions section for items that must be included in the completed proposal. Applicants may send proposals via email to anne.gaynor@aphl.org with a copy to infectious.diseases@aphl.org.

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

Eligibility

All state or local US public health laboratories are eligible to apply for one-time funding.

Award

Funding will be distributed via a contract administered by APHL. APHL will fund up to five laboratories depending on strength of applications, funding requested, and funds available. A final progress report will be required as a final deliverable. Award amounts will depend on the scope of the proposed project with an estimated award per site of $10,000-$20,000.

Use of Funds: Below are several examples of the types of activities that may be appropriate. You may also propose other activities if they are aimed at improving VBD diagnostic capability or capacities, not listed below.

- Purchase supplies necessary to implement a testing method
- Perform verification studies to implement new method(s) or transition from one method to another
- Evaluate assays to expand testing services to include additional specimen types or storage conditions
- Work with program to provide outreach to clinical laboratories and/or physicians on collection of appropriate clinical specimens
- Modify current testing workflows to enable more efficient testing and reporting

- Modify existing laboratory information management systems (LIMS) or electronic laboratory reporting (ELR) messaging to streamline reporting and improve turnaround time of data to healthcare providers and other stakeholders

Note: Funds may NOT be used to contract with an outside facility to provide testing services.

Term of Project

From date of contract signing (approximately February 1, 2027) through May 31, 2027. Please note that May 31, 2027, is a firm deadline for the funding; all proposed projects must be feasible to completed by that date. No exceptions can be granted with regard to this deadline. A final progress report will be required as a final deliverable. We do anticipate funding projects with a small, feasible scope. Up to 50% of the proposed amount will be made available at the start of the project and 50% upon completion of a final report.

Evaluation Team

APHL staff members will conduct an initial review of all proposals for completeness. Incomplete proposals will not receive a formal evaluation. Complete proposals will be reviewed using the scorecard in Appendix B by a team of three subject matter experts (SMEs). Once potential reviewers have been identified, APHL's Senior Director, Infectious Diseases will have final approval over the review team's composition.

Evaluation Process

The evaluation team will conduct the review via a combination of communication mechanisms (e.g., email, teleconference). The reviewers may request follow-up interviews with all or some of the applicants and, following these interviews, may request supplemental information on an applicant's proposal. The evaluation team will use these interviews and any supplemental information to clarify an applicant's capacity or experience in one or more of the evaluation criteria, or to explain other information contained in an applicant's proposal.

Post-Evaluation Procedures

APHL staff will notify the selected vendor within 10 business days of the completion of the evaluation and will post the name of the recipient to APHL's procurement website, www.aphl.org/rfp, within three business days of the vendor's acceptance of the award. Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification of these results by e-mail or by US mail within 30 days of the date the name of the selected applicant is posted. All applicants are 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 APHL's procurement website.

Application– Required Submissions

To be considered for selection, the public health laboratory must submit a proposal that responds to the following questions. Responses should be limited to no more than six (6) double-space pages total

(font size ≥ 11pt and page margins of ≥ 1 inch) submitted as a single PDF no later than **December 10, 2026, at 11:59pm ET** to anne.gaynor@aphl.org and infectious.diseases@aphl.org

- Letter from your Laboratory Director approving the project (1 page)
- Application: Please review and respond to every question unless otherwise indicated (6 pages)
  1. **Problem Statement:** Please provide a brief explanation (3-5 sentences) of why these one- time funds are needed. Explain how the proposed project will improve and positively impact the VBD program in your jurisdiction.
  2. **Current Testing Capability and Capacity:** If this is a replacement method, please briefly describe your current testing capacity and workflow for the proposed pathogens including the test method, volume and specimen types as applicable. If this is a new method, briefly describe your expectations for testing volume and meeting jurisdictional need.
  3. **Staffing:** Describe the qualifications and experience of existing laboratory staff that will be involved with the project, including familiarity with development, evaluation and implementation of the type of methods you are proposing. Describe any relevant staff training that will be required to evaluate the new protocols or testing capacity.
  4. **Detailed Description of Approach**: Provide a description of how your laboratory intends to use the one-time funding Please address:
     a. **Test Method:** Please describe the testing method(s) that will be evaluated including targeted organism(s) and loci (if known), currently available equipment that will be leveraged and/or if new equipment is required and describe your ability to procure such equipment in a timely manner.
     b. **Evaluation Plans**: Please describe your plans for evaluation of the new method including the estimated timeline, plans for validation, reference/comparator method, how discrepancies will be resolved, and criteria that will be used to determine if the assay will be implemented in the laboratory. When estimating the timeline, please consider the time required for approvals and LIMS modifications, should the evaluation and validation be successful.
     c. **Specimens:** Describe the types of specimens you will use in these studies and how they will be obtained.
     d. **Sustainability:** Please provide a brief description of how these one-time funds will be leveraged to generate sustainable testing capacity in your laboratory and be sure to address how testing will be funded in the future. Please also comment on how implemented changes will be communicated to clients and partners and how you envision the test being used.
  5. **Measuring Success:** Please describe at least one, and up to three, specific and measurable objectives that allow for assessment of impact and sustainability of the project.
  6. **Budget:** Provide a line-item budget reflecting the requested funding amount. Refer to

Appendix A for more details. For each category of funding requested (supplies, travel, training materials, etc.), include a brief description of how the requested items support the proposed activities. Please limit your response to no more than one (1) single-spaced page. For acceptable use of funds see Award.

- **Complete Appendix A:** **(Word Version)**

Additional Information and Deadlines for Application Submission

Applicants must direct all questions to APHL at (infectious.diseases@aphl.org). Questions received from interested PHLs, together with the answers provided by APHL or CDC staff will be posted to APHL's procurement website associated with the specific RFP (www.aphl.org/rfp). APHL will try to post responses on a rolling basis, within 1 business day of receipt of the question.

Applications are due to Anne Gaynor at APHL (anne.gaynor@aphl.org) with a copy to infectious.diseases@aphl.org by **11:59 pm EDT on the date listed in the Anticipated RFP Schedule above**. APHL will send an email acknowledging receipt of your application. If you do not receive an acknowledgement within two (2) business days, call 240-485-2739 to confirm receipt.

Appendix A: Information Required for Potential Contract (In Case of Award)

***Completion of this Appendix does not indicate an award will be made but will expedite APHL's ability to get a draft contract for review. ***

1. **Contract Signer**: Person within your organization who will sign the Work Order Agreement on behalf of your organization.

Name:	
Title:	
Phone Number:	
Email Address:	

2. **Contract Notice**: Person within your organization who can receive and sign legal notices. This person should receive the draft contract and who will work to initiate your internal review process.

Name:	
Title:	
Address line 1:	
Address line 2	
Address line 3:	
Address line 4:	
Locality (City, Town, etc)	
Region (State, Province, etc)	
Postcode (ZIP code, etc)	
Country	
Phone Number:	
Email Address:	
Fax Number (if available):	

3. **Contract Work Order**: Person within your organization to contact for project information (project manager)

Name:	

Title:	
Address line 1:	
Address line 2	
Address line 3:	
Address line 4:	
Locality (City, Town, etc)	
Region (State, Province, etc)	
Postcode (ZIP code, etc)	
Country	
Phone Number:	
Email Address:	
Fax Number (if available):	

Appendix B: Scorecard

The following table is a copy of the score card that will be used to evaluate RFP responses.

Category/Question	Maximum Value	Score	Comments
1. Considering the proposed approach -does the applicant demonstrate the capacity, capability to complete the proposed work? *Consider the following: Does the applicant have appropriate expertise and programmatic infrastructure and/or the ability to obtain additional equipment, supplies, or training required to perform the testing method? Does the applicant provide a timeline for evaluation of the new method that aligns with the project period?* **No issues or concerns:** Applicant has the required expertise and programmatic infrastructure or will build capacity and capability to execute their proposed plans within established timelines (25 points). **Minor concerns:** There are minor concerns about the applicant's ability to execute the proposal within the proposed timeline (20-24 points). **Moderate concerns:** There is missing information and/or there are moderate concerns about the applicant's ability to execute the proposal within the proposed timeline (10-19 points). **Major concerns:** There are major concerns about the applicant's capacity and capability to execute the proposal within the proposed timeline (1-9 points). **Applicant will not be able to evaluate plans based on the information provided** (0 points)	25		

2. Does the applicant provide a sufficiently detailed and achievable plan for the proposed project. **No issues or concerns:** Sufficient information and appropriate approach (30 points). **Minor concerns:** Some information missing to fully assess and/or some minor concerns with approach (20-29 points). **Moderate concerns:** Information missing to fully assess plan and/or moderate concerns with the approach (10-19 points). **Major concerns:** Significant information missing to fully assess plan and/or major concerns with the approach (1-9 points). **Insufficient information to assess plan and/or inappropriate approach** (0 points)	30		
3. Does the applicant provide a clear explanation and justification for how these funds will improve capacity in their jurisdiction? **Applicant expresses significant and appropriate need:** Jurisdiction demonstrates how funds would improve the jurisdiction and testing program and it aligns with priority projects outlined in the RFP (20-25 points), **Applicant expresses appropriate and moderate need:** Jurisdiction demonstrates how funds would improve VBD testing program, not a priority project but reasonable request (11-19 points), **Applicant expresses minimal need**: Justification for funding is minimal or explanation is not sufficient (1-10 points) **Insufficient information to assess need (0 points).**	25		

4. Does the applicant provide at least one and up to three specific, measurable objective(s) that will enable them to assess the impact of the funding? **No concerns with stated objective(s):** Objective(s) are appropriate, clear, specific, and measurable, with a well thought out plan for sustainability of testing (10 points). **Minor to moderate concerns with objective(s):** Slight concern with plan for sustainability or defined objective(s) but displays an ability to measure impact (5-9 points). **Major concerns:** Project likely lacks sustainability and / or objective(s) are not entirely appropriate, clear, specific, or measurable and would be difficult to use for measuring success/impact (1-4 points). **Sustainability not addressed and / or objective(s) not provided and/or don't address impact** (0 points).	10		
6. Does the applicant provide an appropriate budget for the requested funding? (Question 6) **No concerns with budget** (10 points). **Minor to moderate concerns with budget** (5-9 points). **Major Concerns with budget** (1-4 points). **Budget not appropriate for proposal** (0 points).	10		
TOTAL SCORE	100	_____	