

FDA Announces New Cooperative Agreement Award to Build an Integrated Laboratory System to Advance the Safety of Human and Animal Food

Constituent Update June 28, 2024

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is pleased to announce the award of the three-year *Building an Integrated Laboratory System to Advance the Safety of Human and Animal Food* cooperative agreement to the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL). This cooperative agreement, which was previously awarded to APHL in 2020, is intended to enhance the capacity and capabilities of state and local human and animal food (HAF) testing laboratories – Laboratory Flexible Funding Model (LFFM) cooperative agreement program laboratories and unfunded laboratories – and strengthen and improve FDA’s efforts to prevent foodborne illnesses and minimize foodborne exposures by helping to build a national integrated laboratory system. The award is for up to \$500,000 for the first year and up to \$650,000 for the second and third years.

State and local laboratories play a critical role in achieving the national public health goals of ensuring the safety of the nation’s food supply in support of achieving a national integrated food safety system (IFSS). An IFSS is key in ensuring that immediate and coordinated public health actions are taken when food safety emergencies occur, and to prevent them from happening. State and local HAF testing laboratories are tasked with conducting investigational, surveillance, and emergency response testing in collaboration with state and local regulatory programs and play a critical role in the identification, containment, and prevention of foodborne illnesses. Effective leveraging of resources and harmonization of efforts will require extensive collaboration with relevant initiatives, including those of federal partners, national associations/organizations, and state and local partners.

Shari Shea, APHL’s Director of Food Safety, stated, “Leveraging our long history of supporting state human and animal food testing laboratories and our strong partnership with FDA, APHL believes we can efficiently achieve national public health goals through this Cooperative Agreement. Our goals include building a competent HAF Laboratory workforce, advancing an Integrated Food Safety System, providing technical assistance around accreditation and data exchange, expanding use of technology such as whole genome sequencing, and building the trust necessary for mutual reliance.”

Under the cooperative agreement, APHL will work on a number of objectives including:

- Providing trainings, workshops, and educational materials;
- Supporting laboratories in obtaining accreditation or expanding their scope for ISO 17025;
- Hosting LFFM, GenomeTrakr, and National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS) meetings;
- Developing best practice manuals and guidance documents for sample collection, analytical methodology, and compliance standards;
- Supporting information sharing initiatives between FDA and partnering laboratories.

The association has co-hosted the annual GenomeTrakr meeting and training workshops for the past five years. From these events, laboratorians gain insight and tools needed to

sequence isolates and upload data. In response to the cooperative agreement award, FDA's GenomeTrakr lead scientist Ruth Timme Ph.D. stated, "The cooperative agreement between the FDA and APHL is a critical step forward for the GenomeTrakr program. This collaboration is essential for organizing our annual meeting and training events, which are vital to maintaining skills in our public health laboratories."

More details about the cooperative agreement initiatives can be found in the Notice of Funding Opportunity at [RFA-FD-24-004: Building an Integrated Laboratory System to Advance the Safety of Human and Animal Food \(nih.gov\)](#).

For additional information, please visit [Building an Integrated Laboratory System](#) or email the Office of Partnerships in FDA's Office of Regulatory Affairs at OP.Feedback@fda.hhs.gov.