

**APHL  
Lab Director Transitions Guide  
Online Toolkit**

**[Headline]**

**Model Job Description**

*How to accurately relay what's needed for the job*

*This model job description, developed by APHL, can be used to form a basis for handbooks, in creating recruitment materials, and in evaluating both candidates and working directors. It's a blueprint of the basics—scope, qualifications, and duties and responsibilities—and can be adapted for your specific search.*

**Position description or scope of work**

- Manages, leads and directs the public health laboratory program for the county/city/state of \_\_\_\_\_
- Provides vision and leadership to chart the strategic direction of the laboratory in collaboration with other state agencies, local public health laboratories and the clinical laboratory community
- Ensures that the laboratory provides relevant, accurate scientific data essential for disease prevention and control, environmental protection, addressing legal issues, developing public health policy and responding to statewide public health threats caused by common or emerging biological, chemical and radiological agents, including those that may be disseminated through deliberate acts of terrorism
- Responsible for the fiscal integrity of the laboratory

**Minimum qualifications**

An applicant must have demonstrated leadership skills with administrative and management experience in a field of science relevant to the application of scientific methods to conduct applied research and detect, identify and investigate biological and chemical threats to public health.

Must be familiar with and have evidence of the ability to apply:

- Epidemiologic principles (e.g., infectious/communicable diseases and acute and chronic disease epidemiology)
- Health risk assessment encompassing biological and chemical agents
- Public health policy
- Quality assurance
- Statistical analysis
- Public health law
- Budgetary and personnel techniques

Must have one of the following qualifications:

- Hold a doctorate degree in a laboratory science and have at least three years of managerial experience in microbiology, chemistry and/or public health laboratory science

- Possess a medical doctor degree with certification in anatomical and/or clinical pathology, plus management/supervisory training programs, with experience in public health operations and management

To qualify as high complexity, a CLIA laboratory director must meet one of the following:

- Hold a doctorate and be board-certified by a recognized clinical or pathology board
- Have an MD with two years clinical laboratory experience
- Meet state legislative requirements by having been a CLIA high-complexity laboratory director in 1992

Equivalent experience as a laboratory program manager (with CLIA requirement met by contract) may be considered. For a full list of CLIA Lab Director Responsibilities, visit [the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services website](http://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/CLIA/CLIA_Brochures.html), and download Brochure #7.

**Comment [k1]:** [http://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/CLIA/CLIA\\_Brochures.html](http://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/CLIA/CLIA_Brochures.html)

In addition, an applicant must have:

- Ability to develop and implement organizational plans and manage people to accomplish prescribed objectives
- The scientific and medical skills necessary to consult with physicians, legislators and the general public
- Adequate skills to communicate plans, budgets and public health ideas orally and in writing
- The medical, epidemiologic and scientific skills needed to analyze medical and public health problems, interprets results and data, and organize responses for state public health policy, plans and actions

### **General duties and responsibilities**

- Oversees staff and operations of the state public health laboratory (SPHL) to assure that all services are relevant to public health, meet the highest quality standards, comply with state and federal requirements, serve customer and stakeholder needs and are cost effective
- Provides leadership to managers and supervisors responsible for staff in various scientific and support units of the laboratory
- Oversees and assumes ultimate responsibility for personnel management programs, including manpower planning, recruitment, orientation and training
- Oversees and assumes ultimate responsibility for management of the physical plant so that it operates in a technically and legally appropriate manner
- Serves as the *Laboratory Director* in compliance with CLIA regulations
- Serves as the *Responsible Official* in compliance with the federal select agent rule
- Oversees the development, implementation and evaluation of laboratory policies, goals and objectives
- Assures compliance with state policies
- Assures that appropriate testing, technology, customer service and technical support are available to support public health programs

- Provides leadership to plan, implement and evaluate new or modified procedures as necessary
- Maintains federal certification of the SPHL in accord with CLIA, select agent regulations and all other applicable federal and state laws (e.g., regulations issued by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Food and Drug Administration)
- Responsible for the SPHL budget: oversees budget development; reviews expenditures and resource allocation; assures fiscal integrity
- Develops and maintains effective communications with a variety of state and federal agencies, including **[add state agency names here]**, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the EPA, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and others as appropriate
- Develops collaborative efforts with clinical laboratories throughout the state
- Represents the state health department locally and nationally on laboratory issues
- As a member of the state health department's senior management team, identifies SPHL needs and roles necessary to meet public health objectives
- Presents and discusses the role of the SPHL with community groups, as necessary
- Manages a statewide laboratory program with **[insert number here]** affiliated or regional laboratories **[if applicable]**
- Coordinates a statewide laboratory system with **[insert number here]** affiliated laboratories **[if applicable]**

#### **Examples of duties and responsibilities**

- Oversees testing of microbiological agents for diseases such as HIV, influenza, Lyme disease, tuberculosis, foodborne diseases, meningitis, Legionnaire's disease, West Nile encephalitis, rabies, sexually transmitted diseases and agents of bioterrorism
- Oversees chemical and toxicology testing for lead levels in children and environmental samples
- Monitors appropriate aspects of the newborn screening program and other programs of public health significance (e.g., alcohol and drug testing of persons involved in fatal traffic accidents)
- Oversees testing for chemical, radiological or microbiological contamination of the environment
- Assures that laboratory units meet applicable federally mandated requirements, such as EPA safe drinking water regulations and FDA milk sanitation rules
- Oversees and approves laboratory improvement programs and implementation of state and federal licensure laws, likely involving site inspections, proficiency testing and training
- Directs the **[list any non-typical testing program, such as cancer cytology]** testing program, as deemed appropriate by state public health officials **[if applicable]**
- Oversees the maintenance of the **[insert number here]** square-foot physical plant housing the SPHL and valued at **[\$[insert number here]** million
- Oversees the development and implementation of policies/procedures for the daily operation of the SPHL to assure efficient and effective laboratory operations

- Coordinates the activities of state's Laboratory Response Network to provide rapid and effective laboratory services in support of the response to bioterrorism, naturally occurring infectious disease outbreaks and other public health threats and emergencies
- Encourages and approves special projects/investigations, as well as their publication in the scientific literature
- Determines, recommends and/or provides the laboratory support needed for various health department programs and activities
- Serves as a liaison with public and private agencies regarding relevant public health and clinical laboratory matters
- Represents the department locally and nationally on laboratory matters
- Reviews and makes recommendations on all matters bearing upon public health and clinical laboratory services, including legislation, local health department plans, department contracts for laboratory services and other matters as assigned
- Directs the conduct of conferences, public hearings and meetings on laboratory issues
- Evaluates the need for and consequences of new laboratory and regulatory policies and proposes such policies as appropriate
- Monitors and evaluates national policy initiatives for integration into laboratory plan development
- Oversees the development of grant applications, memoranda of understanding, contracts, program budgets and responses to specific information requests and assures their consistency with department goals and objectives
- Oversees the implementation of personnel, budget and fiscal reporting systems required to support SPHL operations and compliance with department and administrative directives
- Makes decisions regarding program budget priorities and spending plans and allocates funds based on department and administration budget directives
- Determines overall staffing needs of the SPHL; interviews and selects applicants for senior-level positions; assigns work and determines work priorities; rates and signs performance evaluations for designated subordinates; investigates employee complaints and recommends decisions on formal grievances; evaluates the training needs of subordinates
- Effectively integrates public health preparedness and bioterrorism response program services and priorities with overall bureau programs and priorities

### **Authority**

The SPHL director assumes overall responsibility for:

- Use and distribution of program budgets, personnel and equipment
- Determination of diagnostic/analytical services provided by the SPHL
- Determination of agencies/individuals served by the SPHL
- Determination of workshops/seminars to be sponsored by the SPHL
- Laboratory objectives/work programs
- SPHL compliance with federal and state quality assurance programs
- On-site evaluation/proficiency testing of clinical and environmental laboratories
- Determination of acceptance performance on proficiency test/audit samples

- Development of requests for new funding

**Knowledge, skills and abilities**

- Skills in effective leadership, management and administration
- Basic knowledge of public health principles
- Working knowledge of bacteriology, virology, serology, parasitology, mycology and chemistry as they relate to the functions of the public health laboratory, with comprehensive knowledge in at least one of these fields
- Scientific skills to interpret a variety of standard test procedures
- Thorough knowledge of research and investigative techniques
- Ability to analyze scientific data to reach a conclusion
- Thorough knowledge of analytical and statistical procedures as applied to laboratory testing procedures
- Comprehensive knowledge of budgeting and cost allocation
- Ability to organize data and to write detailed reports with recommendations
- Ability to work with various departmental program managers to attain agreed-upon goals
- Extensive interpersonal skills, including the ability to reason with individuals and groups to lead them to appropriate conclusions or actions
- Ability to prioritize, schedule, assign and monitor completion of assignments
- Ability to approach problems in a logical and proactive manner
- Ability to communicate complex information to a variety of audiences
- Ability to apply the principles of Total Quality Management and Continuous Quality Improvement
- Understanding of the ISO Certification processes