**The Affordable Care Act and Health Care Market Reforms:**

**Implications for Public Health Laboratories**

**Final Report**

***Give a description of your project, stating the research question that your project addressed and how that question was answered by your project (i.e. “What is the impact of the public health laboratory system on the public’s health?”, “What does the ideal PHL system look like”, or “What does it mean that there is a public health laboratory workforce shortage and what solutions are available?)***

The project convened multi-disciplinary forums throughout Iowa to evaluate and forecast the impact of the ACA on the PHL system and to provide strategic recommendations. Prior to the forums, stakeholders had given little thought to the laboratory role within the ACA and how the provisions would impact programs the laboratory supports and raised many questions as to how the laboratory system can prepare for the changes to come. Predicted impacts include a shift in funding priorities leading to programmatic changes, test volume shifts which may impact revenue, and a transformation of the role of the public health laboratory within the reformed healthcare framework. A complete analysis of the discussion and predicted impacts from these forums can be found in the report **“**The Affordable Care Act and Health Care Market Reforms: Implications for Public Health Laboratories, An Iowa Assessment”. Specific methodology for development of forum invitation list, agenda, background information, and other logistics can be found in the final analysis report.

***Include details on how each milestone was met.***

Specific methodology for development of forum invitation list, agenda, background information, and other logistics can be found in the final analysis report.

***Explain any changes or modifications to the project.***

Pre and post event evaluations were not conducted as the format of the forum did not support forum evaluations. Participants were informally asked to provide feedback which was overwhelmingly positive. Additionally an overview of a demonstration project was not provided. The assumption going into the forums was that there would be some information available as to what impact the ACA would have on public health laboratories. However, it was quickly discovered that the role of the PHL had not been explored on a national, state, or local level and therefore the question was more involved than was anticipated. Conversations primarily focused on identifying gaps and the exploration of potential impacts. Follow up forums will have to be conducted to further explore this subject. The breadth of the conversation also went beyond what was originally planned therefore our recommendations are broader in scope than we anticipated. Once the impacts are fully realized more targeted recommendations can be developed.

***Describe any budget changes that occurred during the course of the project.***

There are no budget changes to report.

***List any partnerships with other public health agencies, academia, or other types of laboratories formed through this project.***

The invitation list was developed with careful forethought to support robust conversation and ensure a diverse representation of public health laboratory system stakeholders. Participants included representatives from:

Iowa Health System

Mercy Hospital, Des Moines

Iowa Department of Public Health, Office of Health Care Transformation and Office of Rural Health

Des Moines University

Iowa Public Health Association

Iowa Counties Public Health Association and Webster County Health Department

Pioneer ACO Pilot, Trimark

Iowa Hospital Association

Iowa Primary Care Association

Minnesota Department of Health

Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene

University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics

Johnson County Public Health

Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center

UI College of Public Health, Health Management and Policy

Scott County Health Department

Mercy Medical Center, Sioux City

Iowa Statewide Poison Control Center

Sioux City Fire Department

Siouxland District Health Department

***Will your laboratory sustain the project? If so, how? Or are additional funds needed?***

The laboratory intends to continue this conversation to address this important issue. The SHL will likely convene additional forums for strategic planning purposes with stakeholders as the ACA is implemented in its entirety and the impacts to the public health laboratory system are fully felt and understood. SHL will likely seek additional funding sources to continue this work. As current president of the Iowa Public Health Association, Bonnie Rubin is continuing this discussion at the state’s local public health regional meetings. SHL will also continue to seek funds through APHA to continue this work at the public health system level.

***Were there gaps in the overall project that had not been anticipated? If so what were they?***

The question had implications for many of the stakeholders than were not anticipated and therefore there was much discussion as to how the role of the system was going to have to change to accommodate the provisions of the ACA.

***Discuss lessons-learned and what you might have done differently.***

The project required significantly more time than was planned, particularly in the discovery, background phase. The topic is very complex and because there is almost no material available it took a great deal of time to research background information to become aware of the issues and then condense the important items into a short document to educate participants. Furthermore, because much of the discussion of the ACA has focused on primary care, Medicaid, and insurance companies it was difficult to convince stakeholders that there was a need for there to be a discussion about the role of public health laboratories within the new framework or that they were going to be impacted. In short, the participants did not know enough about the topics to offer solutions. A series of forums conducted over a longer period of time should be planned where key stakeholders can be educated and become aware of the issues and over time develop recommendations. APHL may want to consider sponsoring a director level forum focused on the ACA and its impacts with an ongoing process for directors to share new initiatives and changes in response to health reform issues. Finally, the level of support received from the consultant group was not helpful as was planned. In the future contracting a consulting group with little knowledge of the system should be avoided.

***Describe areas for improvement if you were to do this project again.***

See paragraph above.

***How satisfied were you with APHL’s support and guidance during the grant fiscal period?***

SHL was satisfied with APHL’s support during the grant. The SharePoint site was easy to navigate and reporting expectations were communicated effectively.

***How many participants received and/ or used materials created?***

Each of the 24 participants will receive the final analysis report. In addition, the SHL has had approximately 10 requests for the material from people who did not attend. The background material developed for the forum was shared at the 2012 APHL meeting in Seattle and the analysis report will also be shared with APHL members on the member resource center and therefore will reach a large audience.

***How many individuals and/ or sites participated?***

24 individuals representing 21 stakeholder sites participated in the forum.

***Did participants find the information useful?***

Participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive, many of whom expressed interest in participating in follow-up events. Participants expressed that the topic of discussion was timely, relevant, and worthwhile. See notes from the forum for specific comments.

**What impact did the project have on participants’ knowledge of the laboratory practices addressed and**

**How did participants/ the targeted audience use or plan to use the information for laboratory improvement?**

The primary success of the forum was to educate the participants on the threat of impacts of the ACA for public health laboratories and programs. Many of the stakeholders who participated simply had not realized that their programs and organizations were going to be impacted and assumed that if there were impacts someone was preparing for them. These forums highlighted the need for planning and discussions to start now. The forums also served to educate non laboratorians of the issues facing the laboratory system from a public health and clinical perspective. This information was particularly beneficial to stakeholders who use laboratory data and do not realize that continued budget cuts and other challenges facing laboratory medicine may result in an erosion of necessary services.