

# 2012 YEAR IN REVIEW



## LABORATORY EFFICIENCIES INITIATIVE

TRANSFORMING TO A SUSTAINABLE  
PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY SYSTEM



## LABORATORY EFFICIENCIES INITIATIVE

### 2012 Year in Review

The Laboratory Efficiencies Initiative (LEI) exists to help public health laboratories improve their individual efficiency and sustainability and their collective contribution to the improved efficiency and sustainability of the nation's public health laboratory system. The inability of laboratories to maintain services can hinder outbreak investigation, emergency response, surveillance, and public health prevention programs.

Public health laboratory directors, APHL, CDC, and partners advanced the LEI on three important fronts during 2012:

- *Planning and leadership*
- *Partnership and outreach, and*
- *Products and tools.*

This was primarily a year of development and planning the direction of the initiative. Meetings and forums with public health laboratory directors were held and were crucial for determining the direction and goals of the LEI. From these forums the LEI vision and mission statements as well as the strategic plan and accompanying metrics were created. This report summarizes some of the principal LEI achievements in 2012 and the foundation they laid for continued progress in 2013.



### LABORATORY EFFICIENCIES INITIATIVE

#### The LEI Vision

A sustainable and integrated network of public health laboratories.

#### The LEI Mission

To assure that the public health laboratory network efficiently provides high-confidence scientific evidence to drive decision-making that protects and improves the health of the public.

## Planning and Leadership

### Strategic Plan

Representatives from APHL membership, APHL staff and CDC convened in the summer of 2012 to draft a 3-year LEI strategic plan with 7 strategic goals. Participants discussed opportunities and challenges present in the current fiscal environment; developed goals for the initiative; developed the mission and vision for the LEI; discussed suggested next steps for LEI; developed activities for each goal; and established metrics for each activity for the next 12 months. The final LEI strategic plan with projected activities can be viewed at [www.aphl.org/lei](http://www.aphl.org/lei).

#### Strategic Plan Goals

- I. Implement and sustain innovative laboratory management practices.
- II. Assure that public health laboratories have full informatics capability to participate in electronic information exchanges
- III. Identify and address institutional, legal and policy barriers to greater efficiency
- IV. Assure that resources, infrastructure and partnerships are adequate to meet the LEI mission
- V. Communicate, inform and educate on the critical purpose of public health laboratories and the value of LEI in sustaining them
- VI. Transform all laboratories in the public health system to a culture of efficiency
- VII. Develop a comprehensive public health laboratory workforce strategy

### Directional Planning

As a member-based initiative, leaders at APHL and CDC consulted with public health laboratory (PHL) leaders to determine the direction of the LEI.

Forty PHL directors or their senior staff, thirteen CDC leaders and APHL staff convened during the 2012 International Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases (ICEID) to hear an overview of the activities related to the LEI and to participate in a discussion on future LEI events. [View the APHL – LEI Presentation](#) from ICEID on March 12, 2012 at [www.aphl.org/lei](http://www.aphl.org/lei).

In addition, APHL hosted two laboratory director forums to provide APHL members the opportunity to discuss the direction of the LEI to meet the needs of the public health laboratories and share ideas for methods of improving the delivery of public health laboratory services at the state and system levels. [Read the Forum Summary Report](#) from spring of 2012 at [www.aphl.org/lei](http://www.aphl.org/lei).

## Leadership

The LEI Leadership Council ensures that there is a mechanism to provide resources, implement key actions, and monitor and track performance of LEI actions. The Leadership Council is responsible for deciding on implementation steps and resource use. It is also accountable for ensuring and informing that the partners' perspectives are considered and that the LEI is aligned with their goals. The Leadership Council is made up of APHL leadership, CDC leadership, and Public Health Laboratory leadership. Daily LEI activities are overseen by APHL and CDC staff.

## Partnership and Outreach

### Partners Forum

APHL hosted a Partners Forum to provide partner organizations a standing, structured opportunity to contribute to the LEI, facilitate ready exchange of information about the LEI, and find where there could be alignment of LEI activities with partner public health priorities. Representatives from the American Public Health Association (APHA), the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE), and the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) participated in the forum with APHL and CDC. [Read the LEI Partners Forum Summary](#) from December 13, 2012.

### Outreach

Promoting the LEI to stakeholders is crucial to the success and future of the initiative. Outreach and communications for the LEI has occurred through many different channels.

#### Promotional Materials

- The [LEI Fact Sheet](#) was created to promote the LEI and provide a quick reference on the tools and resources available to increase laboratory efficiency.
- APHL created the [LEI website](#), which is updated quarterly for the sharing of the many LEI activities and publications. In addition, CDC also maintains an LEI website.
- A procurement list-serve was created to provide members with opportunities to ask questions and share best practices related to procurement.
- The [Laboratory Efficiencies Initiative Policy Fact Sheet](#) was used to educate policymakers about the LEI.
- A standard PowerPoint presentation was developed for use by APHL and CDC for sharing information with others about the LEI and its activities.
- A call for papers for a Public Health Reports supplement was conducted, with many articles focusing on efficiencies to be published in the summer of 2013.
- APHL published articles on the LEI in APHL's [Lab Matters](#) including:
  - [“The Laboratory Efficiencies Initiative”](#)
  - [“LEI: Encouraging Efficient Management Practices”](#)
  - [“Laboratories Make Good Use of Innovations Grants”](#)

## APHL 2012 Annual Meeting Presentations

- Informational posters on [Creating a Sustainable Public Health Laboratory System](#) and on [Improving Management of States Test Service Data](#) were jointly created by APHL and CDC and presented at the annual meeting.
- A list of posters presented at the annual meeting on topics related to the LEI can be viewed at [www.aphl.org](http://www.aphl.org).
- The APHL annual meeting session “Laboratory Consolidation and Shared Testing, Potential Practices for Laboratory Efficiencies” gave an overview of the LEI and potential practices in alignment with LEI objectives.
- Other APHL annual meeting sessions related to the LEI, including the accompanying presentations, are available at [www.aphl.org/lei](http://www.aphl.org/lei).

## LEI Representation and Presentations at Other Venues

- Presentations were made by LEI leadership through different outlets across the nation to educate audiences about the background of LEI and the importance of increasing efficiencies for sustainability, including:
  - Several APHL committee meetings, Silver Spring, MD
  - Senior laboratory staff meeting of the Texas Department of State Health Services, Austin, TX, August 15, 2012
  - Sustaining Public Health Capacity in an Age of Austerity, Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, Washington, DC, September 10, 2012
  - APHL Corporate Leadership Council Executive Leadership Meeting, St. Paul, MN, September 11, 2012
  - Canadian Public Health Laboratory Network, Winnipeg, MB, October 2, 2012
  - Laboratory Response Network Meeting, Denver, CO, October 10, 2012
  - National Laboratory Training Network (NLTN) Public Health Series Teleconference, November 7, 2012
  - APHL president presented at the California Association of Public Health Laboratory Directors meeting, Sacramento, CA, October 31, 2012

## Meetings and Consultations

The LEI addresses the potential effects of decreased funding such as a diminished ability of laboratories to maintain services, which could hinder outbreak investigation, emergency response, surveillance, and public health prevention programs. Due to the encompassing nature of the LEI, meetings were held to address a variety of issues that public health laboratories face.

- Through its National Center for Public Health Laboratory Leadership (NCPHLL), APHL convened a meeting focused on procurement improvement strategies. The purpose of the meeting was to identify models to improve purchasing of laboratory equipment and supplies and explore ways that APHL and other stakeholders can improve the procurement process. [Read the APHL – NCPHLL Procurement Meeting Summary](#) from January 19-20, 2012.

- A key component of LEI is the collection and reporting of data and information related to the capabilities, capacities, organization, and services of state and local public health laboratories. APHL and the CDC held a follow-up meeting to a 2011 consultation to continue to explore the feasibility of a joint data collection process and to develop an implementation framework for an efficient data gathering and reporting process. [Read the APHL - CDC Meeting Summary](#) from the data consultation on April 6, 2012.
- APHL and CDC convened a focus group to develop strategies for improving testing platform selection and implementation in state and local public health laboratories. [Read the Strategic Selection of Platforms Summary Report](#) from April 11, 2012.
- APHL and CDC hosted a joint meeting with representatives from state and local public health laboratories and other interested subject matter experts within CDC to identify methodologies to improve PHL informatics capabilities on a national level. The discussion centered on CDC's proposal to develop a business case that would support PHLs in their requests for investment in laboratory informatics. [Read the APHL - CDC Meeting Summary](#) from the May 8-9, 2012 Informatics Meeting.
- APHL convened a legislative policy meeting to identify the legal and policy barriers and potential solutions for public health laboratories to achieve greater efficiency. Participants discussed public policy issues such as the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, the role of federal funding in state and local laboratory operations, and what actions federal, state and local laboratories can take to improve public policy decisions that have an impact on their operations. [Read the Policy Meeting Summary](#) from August 17, 2012.
- APHL and CDC convened a workgroup in October 2012 to address the lack of defined public health laboratory workforce competencies, which is a major gap in workforce development. The workgroup's efforts build upon draft leadership and management competencies for Public Health, Environmental, and Agricultural Laboratory (PHEAL) workers begun by the APHL Workforce Development Committee. The meeting kicked off a year-long project to develop cross-cutting and technical competencies to address multiple member needs such as determining appropriate job descriptions, evaluating personnel based on standardized criteria, and developing career ladders for the public health laboratory workforce.

## Products and Tools

During 2012, APHL and CDC completed and released five LEI products for public health laboratory leaders and initiated development of three additional products scheduled for distribution in 2013.

Resources developed in 2012 addressed quality improvement practices, laboratory services changes, legal considerations for shared services, and billing.

- Innovations in Quality Public Health Laboratory Practice Awards were provided through APHL cooperative agreement funding from LEI, Laboratory Systems and Standards (LSS) and the Informatics programs as a resource for laboratories to make quality improvement changes in 2010, 2011 and 2012. The projects demonstrated

the type of laboratory efficiency management practices consistent with the goals of the LEI. For these projects, laboratories were encouraged to create or further develop partnerships with other public health agencies, academia, or other types of laboratories.

- APHL and CDC created “A Practical Guide to Assessing and Planning Implementation of Public Health Laboratory Service Changes” as a resource for assessing and planning laboratory changes to strengthen the public health laboratory system. Directors and managers of public health laboratories can use this guide as they assess and, if they so choose, implement changes in the models of their laboratories’ testing services. Read [“A Practical Guide to Assessing and Planning Implementation of Public Health Laboratory Service Changes.”](#)
- “An Overview of Legal Considerations in Assessing Multijurisdictional Sharing of Public Health Laboratory Testing Services” was created in May of 2012 as a resource for public health laboratory directors in assessing potential legal issues related to sharing testing services with other jurisdictions. Read the [overview of legal considerations](#) for sharing of public health testing services.
- APHL collaborated with the National Coalition of STD Directors (NCSD) and the Michigan Department of Community Health to host the webinar “Moving Toward Third-Party Billing and Revenue Generation in Public Health: An Emerging Model from Michigan” on June 22, 2012. Access the [webinar and accompanying materials](#).
- APHL conducted two Lean training sessions and developed a [webinar](#) on the Lean process and accompanying success stories. The sessions and webinar show how to increase workplace efficiency by eliminating waste such as mistakes and rework, excess inventory, unnecessary transporting and unnecessary motion.

Development of the following three additional products began in 2012 and will be completed in 2013:

- A test directory that will be collected and aggregated by APHL to create a national picture of public health laboratory test services,
- An informatics self-assessment, and
- A practical guide that presents information about laws and other policies that facilitate, or in some cases may impede, sharing of testing services among states’ public health laboratories. The guide was recommended by the APHL Policy Committee in August 2012 and is scheduled for completion and distribution to APHL members in Fall 2013.



8515 Georgia Avenue, Suite 700  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
Phone: 240.485.2745  
Fax: 240.485.2700  
[www.aphl.org](http://www.aphl.org)

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