Request for Proposals

PulseNet Support

www.aphl.org

8515 Georgia Ave, Suite 700
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September 14, 2015

Request for Proposals: PulseNet Support

__Application Due Date__: __October 14, 2015__

Summary

The Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL), in cooperation with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Enteric Diseases Laboratory Branch (EDLB) is seeking applicants to coordinate PulseNet Web Portal activities, analyze *Shigella* certification and proficiency tests submitted to CDC by participating PulseNet laboratories, assist with maintenance of *Salmonella* Typhimurium entries in the PulseNet *Salmonella* database and other PulseNet database tasks as assigned. Funding will be awarded via a contract with APHL.

Background

An estimated 48 million foodborne illnesses occur in the U.S. annually resulting in 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths. In order to address this significant public health problem, improvements must be made in a variety of areas but particularly in the quality and efficiency of laboratory-based surveillance for the detection of clusters of foodborne illnesses. Since its inception in 1996, PulseNet has used DNA "fingerprinting" techniques to link bacterial isolates from sick people in order to identify potential clusters (outbreaks) of foodborne illness. For almost two decades, PulseNet has detected thousands of local and multi-state outbreaks, leading to the implementations of numerous preventative measures and significant improvements to food safety as a whole. APHL and CDC are committed to assisting all PulseNet laboratories in achieving the highest quality of data to submit to the PulseNet databases. Analyzing certification and proficiency tests and performing pattern naming ensures faster, more reliable cluster detection and investigation. During the process, providing feedback to the participants regarding the quality of their work aids in improving the overall data in the national databases.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants include organizations with one or more staff members that have, or individuals with the following experience:
- Bachelor's degree in life science, or health/laboratory field; master's degree in life science or health/laboratory field preferred;
- Minimum of eight (8) years of PulseNet related work experience;
- Working knowledge and experience using BioNumerics software and the PulseNet Masterscripts;
- Working knowledge and experience using the PulseNet Web Portal; and
- Working knowledge and experience using the PulseNet PFGE protocols for certification and proficiency testing.

Anticipated RFP Schedule

At this time, APHL anticipates the following schedule:

September 14, 2015	– RFP issued
October 14, 2015	– **RFP responses due**
October 18, 2015	– Proposal review completed
October 21, 2015	– **Final review completed and PulseNet Support selected**
October 28, 2015	– **Contract finalized and PulseNet Support begins**

Any modification to this anticipated schedule will be communicated on APHL's procurement website.

Award

Funding will be distributed via the payment terms specified in the written contract between APHL and the selected organization or individual. See Term of Project below for details on the anticipated contract period. The selected applicant will perform the duties described in Appendix A – Services to be provided by PulseNet Support and specified in the contract with APHL. APHL will award funding on a sliding scale based on the qualifications and years of experience possessed by an organization's staff or an individual applicant, with minimum potential compensation in the initial contract period of $75,000 and a maximum potential compensation capped at $93,210 during this period. The organization or individual selected to serve as PulseNet Support will receive a notice of award from APHL.

Term of Project

The PulseNet Support position will be awarded an initial contract from October 28, 2015 to June 30, 2016. APHL anticipates the potential for renewals for a period of up to four (4) additional years (with each additional funding year running from July 1 to June 30) for a total of five (5) years. Each of the potential annual renewals will depend on the funding received by APHL and by CDC programmatic needs in that funding year.

Request for Proposals – Required Submissions

To apply for the PulseNet Support position, please respond to the following questions. Responses should be limited to no more than two (2) single spaced pages (font size ≥11 pt. and page margins ≥.5 inches).

1. Describe your or your staff's experience as a liaison working between two (2) groups on the development of a project.

a. Include any experience you or your staff have had coordinating extensive conference calls and meetings to insure the timelines and needs of the groups involved are being met.
   b. If any products were developed from this experience, include the nature of this as well.
2. Describe the nature and extent of any experience with Pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE).
   a. Include information on what protocols you or your staff have used and any trainings and certifications you have received.
3. Describe the nature and extent of any experience with BioNumerics and the PulseNet Masterscripts.
   a. Include information on what protocols you or your staff have used, any trainings you have received, what PulseNet databases you or your staff have worked in, any experience naming PFGE patterns and/or cluster detection.
4. Describe the nature and any experience evaluating certification and/or proficiency tests.
   a. Include information regarding record keeping and tracking of reports and any work completed.
5. Describe your or your staff's ability to troubleshoot PFGE and PFGE analysis.
   a. Include information on your or your staff's experience communicating and interacting with laboratorians either in-person, over the phone or in writing.
6. Describe your or your staff's experience using Microsoft Office, Excel, Access, and SharePoint.
7. If selected, would you or your staff be able and willing to provide bi-weekly reports on your activities via email to APHL and CDC?
8. If selected, would you or your staff be able and willing to travel domestically up to three (3) times per year?

Evaluation Team

APHL staff, led by the Lead Specialist, PulseNet QA, will conduct an initial review of all proposals for completeness. Any incomplete application on the proposal due date specified in Anticipated RFP Schedule section above will not be considered and will not receive a formal evaluation.

Complete proposals will be reviewed by a team of three (3) PulseNet subject matter experts (SMEs) from CDC EDLB and one (1) APHL member. SMEs will be identified and selected by the Lead Specialist, PulseNet QA based on their familiarity with PulseNet PFGE laboratory techniques and project requirements. Once potential reviewers have been identified, APHL's Senior Director Public Health Systems will have final approval over the review team's composition.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on responses to the questions above and will receive a numeric score of up to 100 maximum points based on the scorecard template in Appendix B.

Applicants will be given preference based on more extensive experience and subject matter expertise.

Some of the ranking categories listed on the scorecard template in Appendix B require no explanation (such as "no experience"). The remaining ranking categories noted on the scorecard template have the following meaning:

- "Excellent" – The applicant exceeds expectations and has extensive experience performing the tasks described.
- "High" – The applicant meets or exceeds expectations for capacity and has extensive experience performing the tasks similar to the ones described and would easily be able to translate that experience to this project.
- "Moderate" – The applicant has some experience with the tasks described.
- "Low" – The applicant may not have sufficient experience with the tasks described.

Evaluation Process

The entire review will be conducted via a combination of email communications between APHL's Lead Specialist, PulseNet QA and the members of the evaluation team or among the evaluation team members and teleconference sessions. APHL's Lead Specialist, PulseNet QA will coordinate the review process and the evaluation sessions.

The reviewers may request follow-up interviews with all or some of the applicants and, following these interviews, may request supplemental information on the applicant's proposal. These interviews and any supplemental information would clarify an applicant's knowledge and/or experience in one or more of the evaluation criteria or to explain other information contained in an applicant's proposal.

There will be no formal evaluation performed by a member of APHL staff. In cases where all other evaluation criteria are substantially similar, APHL will have the ability to advise the evaluation team on an applicant's past performance or in other capacities noted in this RFP as part of the evaluation criteria.

Post-Evaluation Procedures

The selected applicant will be notified by APHL staff within ten (10) business days of the completion of the evaluation and the name of the recipient will be posted to APHL's procurement website, www.aphl.org/rfp on the same day. Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification of these results by email or by U.S. mail within 30 days of the date the name of the winning applicant is posted.

All applicants will be 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 the procurement website.

Conditions of Award Acceptance

The eligible applicant must be able to contract directly with APHL. The selected applicant must agree to comply with duties, services and expectations outlined in Appendix A.

All questions should be posted to this RFP's page on APHL's procurement website (www.aphl.org/rfp). In order to post questions, an applicant will be required to establish a free, no-cost account on aphl.org. Once posted, APHL's Lead Specialist, PulseNet QA, or another member of APHL's Food Safety Department will respond to the questions on the procurement website. APHL will endeavor to respond to questions within two (2) business days of their initial positing.

Applications should be submitted to Jennifer Adams at APHL (jennifer.adams@aphl.org; 8515 Georgia Ave Suite 700, Silver Spring, MD, 20910; telephone: 240-485-2795; fax: 240-485-2700). For electronic submissions, please copy foodsafety@aphl.org. Applications must be received at APHL, attention Jennifer Adams by close of business October 14, 2015. Either electronic or physical submission is acceptable. APHL will send an email acknowledging the receipt of your application; if you do not receive an acknowledgement within 48 hours, call 240-485-2795 to confirm receipt.

Appendix A: Services to be provided by PulseNet Support

- Act as a liaison between groups working on the development of a PulseNet web portal. This includes coordination with public health laboratories, Carnegie Mellon University, CDC, APHL, and USDA-FSIS. This also involves coordinating extensive conference calls and meetings with APHL members to insure that their needs are met with the creation of the Web Portal as well as the tools that come with it.

- Under direction of the PulseNet USA Database Unit Chief, in conjunction with the *Salmonella* Database Team at CDC, and according to CDC guidelines, name all *Salmonella* Typhimurium and variant (I 4,[5],12:i:-) PFGE patterns that are submitted to the *Salmonella* National Database. Additionally name all patterns without serotype information that have been given the "JPXX01" or other designated codes in the *Xba*I pattern name. Patterns should be named at a rate of at least 12 patterns per hour. Typhimurium and its variants account for the most patterns in the PulseNet national *Salmonella* database; in addition, Typhimurium is quite diverse. It is essential for these patterns to be named to allow for cluster detection at both the local and national levels. APHL members rely on these pattern names to determine pattern frequencies over time to aid in outbreak investigations and prioritization of clusters to be investigated.

- Under direction of the PulseNet USA Database Unit Chief, in conjunction with the *Salmonella* Database Team at CDC, and according to CDC guidelines, report all clusters of *Salmonella* Typhimurium, I 4,[5],12:i:- and other needed serotype patterns to the *Salmonella* Database Team at CDC for review. This will assist PulseNet in providing faster alerts to APHL members on the emergence of potential outbreaks involving these serotypes.

- Under the direction of the PulseNet USA Database Unit Chief, maintain BioNumerics PulseNet client databases for *Shigella sp.* and *Shigella flexneri* in *My Documents* in order to analyze incoming *Shigella* certification sets. Using the existing record keeping system, analyze submitted certification gels. Keep detailed records of work completed, including date of submission and date of evaluation for each person who submits certification results and for each laboratory that submits proficiency results. Records will be kept in the certification and proficiency testing databases on the PulseNet network drive at CDC. In addition, send the APHL Lead Specialist, PulseNet QA a list of *Shigella* (and any other designated organisms) certification/proficiency results (Excel spreadsheet).Using existing report templates, maintain records and submit appropriate reports to the designated Database Manager for review with appropriate CDC staff. Completion of individual certification reports is expected to be carried out in one hour or less. Certification is the way in which APHL members may access the PulseNet national databases. It is essential for APHL members to meet all the requirements of the certification process if they are to have access to the PulseNet databases.

- Under the direction of the PulseNet USA Database Unit Chief, and in conjunction with the CDC Database Team at CDC, interact with PulseNet laboratorians to resolve

problems and/or improve quality of database submissions, when appropriate. Assist the labs as they work on developing projects or attempt to address issues unique to their lab. The level of expertise needed for this function can only be found with years of experience. This helps improve the quality of the data and therefore improves the data that is provided to APHL members.

- Under the direction of the PulseNet USA Database Unit Chief, monitor the *E. coli* and *Listeria* (and potentially other organisms in the future) forums on the PulseNet/OutbreakNet SharePoint site on designated weekends, holidays and other days/times as deemed necessary. Perform functions as described in "SharePoint_weekend_check.doc" on the PulseNet network drive.

- Using existing report templates, analyze *Shigella* (and other designated organisms) proficiency sets that have been submitted to PulseNet by state and local public health laboratories and by international and federal agency PulseNet Laboratories. Create reports on the analysis of the above submissions and keep detailed records of work completed on the PulseNet network drive, including date of submission and date of evaluation for each person who submits certification results and for each laboratory that submits proficiency results. Records will be kept in the certification and proficiency testing database and on the PulseNet network drive at CDC. Keep detailed records of work completed, including date of submission and date of evaluation for each person who submits certification results and for each laboratory that submits proficiency results. Records will be kept in the certification and proficiency testing database on the PulseNet network drive at CDC. Proficiency testing is the way in which APHL members maintain their access the PulseNet national databases. It is essential for all PulseNet participating laboratories to meet all the requirements associated with this process if they are to maintain access to the national database.

- Provide bi-weekly reports to APHL, the PulseNet USA Database Unit Chief and the Chief of PulseNet USA via e-mail using an Excel-based progress report template. Maintain data security as directed by APHL and the Chief of PulseNet USA.

Appendix B: PulseNet Support Score Card

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

Category	Maximum Value	Score	Comments
1. Does the applicant have sufficient experience working as a liaison between two groups on the development of a project? Consider experience coordinating conference calls and meetings and if any final products were developed from their experience. Excellent = 9-10; High = 7-8 Moderate = 4-6; Low = 1-3; No experience = 0	10		
2. Does the applicant have sufficient experience with PFGE? Consider experience with described method(s), any trainings received or taught and any certifications. Excellent = 16-20; High = 11-15; Moderate = 6-10; Low = 1-5; No experience = 0	20		
3. Does the applicant have sufficient experience with BioNumerics and the PulseNet Masterscripts? Consider experience with described method(s), any trainings received or taught and any certifications. Excellent = 16-20; High = 11-15; Moderate = 6-10; Low = 1-5; No experience = 0	20		
4. Does the applicant have sufficient experience with evaluating certifications and/or proficiency tests? Consider all aspects of the process including record keeping and organization of reports. Excellent = 16-20; High = 11-15; Moderate = 6-10; Low = 1-5; No experience = 0	20		
5. Does the applicant have sufficient experience troubleshooting PFGE and PFGE analysis? Consider the communication aspect.	20		

Excellent = 16-20; High = 11-15; Moderate = 6-10; Low = 1-5; No experience = 0			
6. Does the applicant have working knowledge using Microsoft Office products such as Excel, Access and SharePoint? Excellent = 9-10; High = 7-8 Moderate = 4-6; Low = 1-3; No experience = 0	10		
TOTAL SCORE	**100**		