

Request for Proposals (RFP): Advancing Molecular Methods for Legionella Detection

Application Due date: December 29, 2025

Submit to: Liz Toure, Senior Specialist, Infectious Diseases (elizabeth.toure@aphl.org) with copy to infectious.diseases@aphl.org

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Summary

The Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL), in cooperation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is seeking to award one-time funding for up to four state, local or environmental public health laboratories for the purpose of advancing molecular methods for *Legionella* detection.

Background

APHL is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization that works to safeguard the public's health by strengthening public health laboratories in the United States and globally. The Association's members include state and local laboratories, state environmental and agricultural laboratories and other government laboratories that conduct testing of public health significance. To obtain more information about APHL, please visit <http://www.aphl.org>.

Legionella, the bacteria that causes Legionnaires' disease (LD) and Pontiac fever, is a genus of fastidious organisms that require specialized skills and media to isolate effectively. Detecting and investigating *Legionella* outbreaks requires specialized laboratory expertise and resources, as both clinical and environmental samples must be analyzed. Access to comprehensive testing is essential for confirming cases, identifying outbreaks quickly and guiding public health responses. While traditional culture is still necessary to generate an isolate, molecular methods for *Legionella* detection are increasingly being used concurrently or as screening tools to more quickly confirm cases and identify potential environmental sources of exposure. Multiplex PCR for *Legionella* offers a sensitive and specific method for rapid detection of multiple targets, most commonly for *Legionella* species, *L. pneumophila* and *L. pneumophila* serogroup 1. Multiplex PCR is a useful screening tool to quickly diagnose or confirm *Legionella* infection and provide helpful context for reading culture plates. While many public health laboratories have implemented multiplex PCR for *Legionella* detection in clinical specimens or isolates, some have not yet implemented this. PCR directly on environmental samples for *Legionella* detection is less utilized due to challenges with inhibition, assay design and interpretation; however there is great potential for multiplex PCR or digital PCR in this space and further evaluation of these methodologies is warranted to determine the performance and utility of these methods in public health and environmental laboratories.

APHL, in coordination with the CDC *Legionella* Lab, is excited to announce this one-time funding opportunity to advance molecular methods for *Legionella* detection in public health and environmental laboratories. The aim of this funding opportunity is twofold: to support public health laboratories to validate/implement multiplex PCR for *Legionella* clinical testing and to evaluate the use of multiplex or digital PCR for direct detection of *Legionella* in environmental samples.

Eligibility

All state or local US public health and environmental laboratories are eligible to apply for the one-time funding.

Anticipated RFP Schedule

October 27, 2025	–	RFP Issued
November 13, 2025	–	Informational Teleconference at 2:00 pm ET (optional)
November 21, 2025	–	Letter of Intent Due to APHL by 5:00 pm ET
December 29, 2025	–	RFP Responses Due to APHL by 5:00 pm ET
January 16, 2026	–	Proposal review completed
January 19 -23, 2026	–	Follow-up interviews as needed
January 27, 2026	–	Final review completed and awardees selected
February 2026	–	Anticipated Contract Start Date

APHL will communicate any modification to this anticipated schedule on APHL’s procurement website (www.aphl.org/rfp) and via an email blast to the PHLs.

Response Submittal

Confirmation of Intent to Respond

APHL requires that prospective applicants submit a brief email statement to elizabeth.toure@aphl.org and infectious.diseases@aphl.org indicating an intent to submit a proposal. APHL must receive this email by no later than **5:00pm ET on November 21, 2025**. To allow for appropriate review process planning, **a letter of intent is required for consideration.**

Final Response

APHL must receive complete responses by **5:00 pm ET on December 29, 2025**. Please see the [Proposal-Required Submissions](#) section for items that must be included in the completed proposal. Applicants should send proposals via email to elizabeth.toure@aphl.org and infectious.diseases@aphl.org.

APHL will send an email acknowledging the receipt of your application; if you do not receive an acknowledgement within 48 hours, please call Liz Toure at (240) 485-3860 to confirm receipt.

Award

Funding will be distributed via a contract administered by APHL. Up to four laboratories, depending on strength of applications, funding requested, and funds available, will be selected. Award amounts will depend on the scope of the proposed project with an estimated award per site of up to \$50,000.

Use of funds: Funds may be used for activities contributing to the validation and implementation of a multiplex PCR assay (i.e., *Legionella* species, *L. pneumophila* and *L. pneumophila* serogroup 1) for clinical specimens and/or *Legionella* isolates **OR** the evaluation of multiplex or digital PCR for the detection of *Legionella* directly from environmental samples (e.g., bulk water and/or swabs). The activities should be conducted on PCR platforms and with reagents that are expected to be supported long-term. The activities may use a commercial or laboratory developed test.

Supported Projects:

- Validation and implementation of multiplex PCR for clinical specimens and/or *Legionella* isolates. Deliverables may include mid-term and final reports, a copy of the validation plan, a copy of the validation report and a copy of the new testing algorithm.
- Evaluation of multiplex or digital PCR for direct environmental bulk water and/or swab sample testing for *Legionella*. Deliverables may include mid-term and final reports, a copy of the evaluation plan (i.e., study design), a copy of the evaluation report (with performance data), publication or presentation of findings and a copy of the standard operation procedure.

Term of Project

The project term will be from approximately February 1, 2026 through September 30, 2026.

Evaluation Team

APHL staff members will conduct an initial review of all proposals for completeness. Incomplete proposals will not receive a formal evaluation.

Complete proposals will be reviewed by a team of three subject matter experts (SMEs) from CDC and a panel of three APHL members selected from non-applicant PHLs. SMEs from CDC will be identified and selected by the Associate Director of Laboratory Science (ADLS) in the CDC National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD) based on their familiarity with laboratory techniques and project requirements. APHL member experts will be identified from among the non-applicant PHLs by the APHL Program Manager, Infectious Diseases and will have expertise in the laboratory testing methods described in this RFP and familiarity with other APHL reference centers. Once potential reviewers have been identified, APHL's Senior Director, Infectious Diseases will have final approval over the review team's composition.

Conflict of Interest

APHL will ask potential reviewers to complete and sign APHL's Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement in order to disclose any real or perceived conflict of interest prior to the start of the evaluation process and to affirm that they have no conflict of interest that would preclude an unbiased and objective review of the proposals received. APHL will not select reviewers with a perceived or potential conflict of interest.

Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation team will evaluate proposals based on responses to the questions in the [Proposal – Required Submissions](#) section and will give a numeric score of up to 100 maximum points based on the scorecard template in [Appendix C](#).

Evaluation Process

The evaluation team will conduct the review via a combination of communication mechanisms (e.g., email, teleconference) between APHL's Senior Specialist, Infectious Diseases and the members of the evaluation team. APHL's Senior Specialist, Infectious Diseases will coordinate the review process and the evaluation sessions.

The reviewers may request follow-up interviews with all or some of the applicant laboratories and, following these interviews, may request supplemental information on an applicant's proposal. The

evaluation team will use these interviews and any supplemental information to clarify a laboratory's capacity 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 selections that would provide geographical spread or otherwise diversify APHL's funding allocations. In addition, the evaluation team may request documentation from APHL staff on an applicant's past performance in other capacities as part of the evaluation criteria.

Post-Evaluation Procedures

APHL staff will notify the selected PHLs within ten business days of the completion of the evaluation and will post the names of the recipients to APHL's procurement website, www.aphl.org/rfp, within three business days of the laboratories' acceptance of the award. Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification of these results by e-mail or by US mail within 30 days of the date the name of the selected applicant is posted.

All applicants are 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 APHL's procurement website.

Conditions of Award Acceptance

The selected PHLs must be able to contract directly with APHL or have an existing relationship with a third-party organization that can contract directly with APHL on behalf of the PHL. The acceptance of award by the eligible PHLs indicates that the PHL agrees with the terms laid out in the RFP.

Proposal – Required Submissions

To be considered for selection, an interested PHL must submit a letter of intent to apply (due 11/21/2025) and a proposal (due 12/29/2025) with the following items:

- **A completed response to the application questions, found in [Appendix A](#).**
 - Responses should be limited to no more than five (5) single-spaced pages (font size \geq 11pt and page margins of \geq 1 inch).
- **An itemized budget, see budget guidance in [Appendix B](#).**
 - Please limit your budget response to no more than one (1) single-spaced page. The budget is not included in the five (5) page limit.

All submissions must comply with the requirements set out in the [Additional Information and Deadlines for Application Submission](#) below.

Additional Information and Deadlines for Application Submission

Applicants must direct all questions to the APHL Senior Specialist, Infectious Diseases, Liz Toure (elizabeth.toure@aphl.org) and infectious.diseases@aphl.org. APHL will post questions received, together with the answers provided by APHL or CDC staff to APHL's procurement website (www.aphl.org/rfp).

To allow for appropriate review process planning, a letter of intent is required for consideration. Letters should be submitted by email to Liz Toure (elizabeth.toure@aphl.org) and infectious.diseases@aphl.org no later than **5:00 pm ET on Friday, November 21, 2025**.

Applications should be submitted to Liz Toure at APHL (elizabeth.toure@aphl.org) and infectious.diseases@aphl.org no later than **5:00 pm ET on Monday, December 29, 2025**. APHL will send an email acknowledging the receipt of your application; if you do not receive an acknowledgement within two business days, call Liz Toure at 240-485-3860 to confirm receipt.

APHL will hold an optional teleconference on **Thursday, November 13, 2025 at 2:00 pm ET**. The purpose of this call will be to provide a brief overview of the project and to allow potential applicants to ask CDC and APHL questions. Please come with questions prepared.

Teleconference call-in information is below. Please contact elizabeth.toure@aphl.org or infectious.diseases@aphl.org no later than 12:00 pm ET on Wednesday, November 12, 2025 if you would like to be sent the calendar invitation.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://aphl.zoom.us/j/83375110177?pwd=IRuFaU8dvNeJ7s2C8nAmcHMHZfwbR5.1>

Meeting ID: 833 7511 0177

Passcode: 137757

Call-in Information

One tap mobile: +13017158592,,83375110177#,,,,*137757# US

Appendix A: Application

Proposals should include responses to the questions below, including each aspect of the question and should clearly indicate what question is being answered:

1. **Current Testing Capability:** Describe the laboratory's existing clinical and/or environmental *Legionella* testing capabilities to include, test method(s) performed, current testing algorithm and the currently available equipment that will be leveraged for this project. Describe how completion of this project will be balanced with existing workload.
2. **Staffing:** Describe the qualifications and experience of existing laboratory staff trained to perform *Legionella* testing (current methods and molecular methods you propose to validate/implement or evaluate) including familiarity with validation and/or evaluation of new test methods. If staff have experience with the proposed method as applied to a different pathogen, describe this experience. Describe any relevant staff training that will be required to implement or evaluate the new protocol.
3. **Problem Statement:** Please provide a brief explanation of why these one-time funds are needed and, if relevant, briefly document challenges you've encountered with your current testing algorithm. Explain how implementing or evaluating molecular methods for *Legionella* detection will improve clinical or environmental *Legionella* detection and positively impact the detection and surveillance of *Legionella* in your jurisdiction and, if evaluating a new method, other *Legionella* laboratories. Please also provide the volume of *Legionella* tests performed in your laboratory in the last year and number of Legionnaires' disease outbreak investigations the laboratory has been engaged in over the last three years.
4. **Detailed Description of Approach:** Provide a description of how your laboratory intends to use the one-time funding to validate/implement or evaluate molecular methods for *Legionella* detection. Please address:
 - a. **Test Method:** Please describe the test method and specific procedure that will be validated/implemented or evaluated (multiplex PCR or digital PCR) and the sample types to be included in the validation or evaluation.
 - b. **Validation/Implementation or Evaluation Plans:** Please describe your plans for validation/implementation or evaluation of the molecular method including the estimated timeline and plans for validation/implementation (reference/comparator method, how will discrepancies be resolved, etc.), or for evaluation (reference/comparator method, criteria that will be used to determine if the evaluation is successful, etc.). When estimating the timeline, please consider the time required for approvals and LIMS modifications for implementation of a new test. Please indicate how stakeholders will be informed of any implemented testing changes.
 - c. **Samples/Isolates:** Describe the number and types of positive and negative clinical and/or environmental samples and/or isolates you will use in these studies and how they will be obtained. If samples will be contrived, please describe that plan.
 - d. **Testing algorithm:**
 - i. **Validation/Implementation only:** Provide the anticipated *Legionella* testing algorithm for when the new method is implemented and estimate new turnaround times.
 - ii. **Evaluation only:** Assuming that the evaluation is successful, describe how the method could be incorporated into a *Legionella* testing algorithm if the new method were to be implemented and estimate how the new method would affect turnaround times. Please describe whether the assay is intended to rule in or rule out samples for further testing (i.e., will results be used for rapid

public health response with all samples still being processed for culture, or would only positive samples be cultured?).

5. **Measuring Success:** Please describe at least one, and up to three, specific and measurable objectives that allow for assessment of impact and sustainability (as applicable) of the project. Describe the sustainability plan for the method including resources that will be available to support the method after implementation/evaluation?
6. **Budget:** Provide a line-item budget reflecting the requested funding amount. Refer to Appendix B for more details. For each category of funding requested (supplies/reagents, staff time, etc.), include a brief description of how the requested items support the proposed activities. Please limit your budget response to no more than one (1) single-spaced page.

Appendix B: Budget Guidance

Budgets should be prepared to reflect costs through September 30, 2026. Budgets should be divided into the line items shown below. A guideline for each line item is described for preparation of the budget and justifications.

Supplies/Reagents

Provide a total supply budget and list each item included in that budget. Listing the cost of individual items is appreciated. Provide justification for each item and describe how it will be used to implement or evaluate molecular methods for *Legionella* detection. General laboratory or safety supplies not specifically used for *Legionella* testing, such as gloves, pipettes, lab coats, etc., are not appropriate for this award.

Equipment/Instrumentation

Equipment costs generally cannot be supported, unless it is for ancillary equipment costing less than \$5,000. Maintenance costs for equipment are allowable and should be listed in the "Other" category.

Staff time

A portion of staff time can be supported with this one-time funding. Provide the name(s) and role(s) of staff in the project as well as requested amount of funds.

Other

This category contains items not included in the previous budget categories. Appropriate items include, but are not limited to, relevant IT expenses, maintenance contracts, shipping expenses associated with obtaining samples/isolates for validation, and training costs. Individually list each item and the amount requested and provide justification for how the item will be used to implement or evaluate molecular testing for *Legionella* detection.

Appendix C: Score Card (For Completion by Reviewers Only – Applicants Do Not Need to Complete)

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

Category/Question	Maximum Value	Score	Comments (REQUIRED)
<p>1. Considering the proposed approach - does the applicant demonstrate the capacity, capability (Question 1) and appropriate staffing (Question 2) to validate/implement OR evaluate a new molecular assay for <i>Legionella</i> detection?</p> <p><i>Consider the following: Does the applicant have appropriate equipment and expertise, and/or the ability to obtain additional training required to perform the testing method?</i></p> <p>No issues or concerns: Applicant has capacity and capability to execute their proposed plan (20 points). Minor concerns: There are minor concerns about the applicant's capacity and capability and/or ability to execute the proposal (15-19 points). Moderate concerns: There is missing information and/or there are moderate concerns about the applicant's capacity and capability to execute the proposed plan (10-14 points). Major concerns: There are major concerns about the applicant's capacity and capability and/or ability to execute the proposed plan (1-9 points). Applicant will not be able to execute plans based on the information provided (0 points).</p>	20		
<p>2a. For implementation/validation proposals only: Does the applicant provide a clear explanation and justification for how validating/implementing molecular methods for <i>Legionella</i> detection will improve clinical <i>Legionella</i> detection and positively impact the ability to detect and/or respond to Legionella outbreaks? (Question 3)</p> <p>Applicant expresses significant and appropriate need: Jurisdiction has not currently implemented the specific proposed assay, demonstrates how funds would improve the testing program, and has a significant burden of legionnaires' disease (17-25 points). Applicant expresses appropriate and moderate need: Jurisdiction demonstrates how funds would improve current <i>Legionella</i> testing and has a moderate burden of legionnaires' disease (8-16 points). Applicant expresses minimal need: Jurisdiction has minimal burden of legionnaires' disease or fails to demonstrate why funds are needed to implement the proposed assay but has reasonable request to utilize funds (1-7 points). Insufficient information to assess need (0 points).</p>	25		

<p>2b. For evaluation proposals only: Does the applicant provide a clear explanation and justification for how evaluating molecular methods for <i>Legionella</i> detection will improve environmental <i>Legionella</i> detection and positively impact the ability to detect and/or respond to <i>Legionella</i> outbreaks? (Question 3)</p> <p>Applicant expresses significant and appropriate justification: Jurisdiction demonstrates how the proposed method would significantly improve <i>Legionella</i> outbreak response within and/or beyond the jurisdiction (17-25 points).</p> <p>Applicant expresses appropriate and moderate justification: Jurisdiction demonstrates how the proposed method would moderately improve <i>Legionella</i> outbreak response within the jurisdiction but does not mention how it could be used beyond the jurisdiction (8-16 points).</p> <p>Applicant expresses minimal justification: Jurisdiction fails to demonstrate why the proposed method is needed but has reasonable request to utilize funds (1-7 points).</p> <p>Insufficient information to assess justification (0 points).</p>			
<p>3. Does the applicant provide a sufficiently detailed, rigorous and achievable plan for validation/implementation or evaluation of the proposed molecular method? Does the applicant provide a timeline for implementation/evaluation of the new method that aligns with the project period? (Question 4)</p> <p>No issues or concerns: Sufficient information and appropriate approach that can be completed within the project period (25 points).</p> <p>Minor concerns: Some information missing to fully assess, some minor concerns with approach and/or the timeline appears to be overly ambitious given the project period (17-24 points).</p> <p>Moderate concerns: Information missing to fully assess plan and/or moderate concerns with the approach (8-16 points).</p> <p>Major concerns: Significant information missing to fully assess plan and/or major concerns with the approach (1-7 points).</p> <p>Insufficient information to assess plan and/or inappropriate approach (0 points)</p>	25		
<p>4. Does the applicant provide at least one and up to three specific, measurable objective(s) that will enable them to assess the impact of the funding? Does the sustainability plan describe adequate resources to continue support for the proposed method(s)? (Question 5)?</p> <p>No concerns with stated objective(s)/sustainability: Objective(s) are appropriate, clear, specific, and measurable. Describes an adequate sustainability plan with sufficient resources to support the method in the future (15-20 points).</p> <p>Minor to moderate concerns with objective(s)/sustainability: Objective(s) may not be totally appropriate, clear, specific, or</p>	20		

<p>measurable but are generally acceptable to measure impact. Describes a sustainability plan but has limited resources to support the method in the future (9-14 points).</p> <p>Major concerns with objective(s)/sustainability: Objective(s) are not entirely appropriate, clear, specific, or measurable and would be difficult to use for measuring success/impact. Sustainability plan is unclear and/or does not have resources to support the method in the future(1-8 points).</p> <p>Objective(s) not provided and/or don't address sustainability (0 points).</p>			
<p>5. Does the applicant provide an appropriate budget for the requested funding? (Question 6)</p> <p>No concerns with budget (10 points).</p> <p>Minor to moderate concerns with budget (5-9 points).</p> <p>Major Concerns with budget (1-4 points).</p> <p>Budget not appropriate for proposal (0 points).</p>	10		
TOTAL SCORE	100		

DO NOT COMMENT