

APHIS Veterinary Services
National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN)
2021 NAHLN Funding Opportunity Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) is announcing the 2021 funding opportunity for the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN).

In 2021, APHIS VS will make available up to \$17.5 million in funds to be divided between the NAHLN and National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program (NADPRP), with a target of \$5 million to NAHLN with \$2.5 of that provided through a competitive process. NAHLN is seeking proposals that will support projects that will focus on: (1) Increasing capacity for disease testing, (2) Increasing capability to handle surge samples, (3) Enhancing laboratory emergency preparedness. The following information addresses basic questions regarding the 2021 NAHLN funding opportunity. For additional information, the full funding announcement, and instructions for applicants, visit the [USDA APHIS NAHLN website](#).

FUNDING FAQs

How much funding is available through this opportunity?

APHIS VS will make available up to \$17.5 million in funds to be divided between the NAHLN and NADPRP programs, with a target of \$2.5 million in competitive funds to NAHLN.

Who can apply for funds?

Individuals directly associated with a NAHLN approved laboratory are eligible to submit one or more proposals.

How much funding does APHIS expect to award to individual applicants?

In 2020, the average NAHLN award was about \$170,000. APHIS anticipates that most awards in 2021 will range from \$30,000 to \$500,000.

Are there limitations on the activities for which Farm Bill Section 12101 funds can be used?

Yes. The list of funding restrictions is available in the [Guidelines for Use of Funds](#) for USDA APHIS VS NADPRP and NAHLN Cooperative and Interagency Agreements.

Is there further clarification on the use of Farm Bill Section 12101 funds for personnel costs?

It is not VS' intent to prescribe an applicant's approach to satisfying personnel needs to complete activities associated with the NAHLN Enhancement proposals. APHIS recommends applicants use caution when hiring or funding personnel with NAHLN funds because there is no guarantee of future funding beyond the project's performance period. Funds made available to cooperators via the NAHLN Farm Bill opportunity may only be used to support the activities described in the agreement work plan and are only available for the agreement performance period. Work and financial plans should clearly describe the activities to be performed and the time period of the activity for personnel resources.

Examples: It may be appropriate to fund personnel whose salary is generated from extramural agreements or to fund a portion of an employee's salary that is only funded to work 9 out of 12 months of the year. It would NOT be appropriate to hire a new position with an intent to support that position with NAHLN funds beyond the agreement performance period.

Will some entities automatically receive set amounts of funding?

No. The funding process for this opportunity is competitive, with funding decisions based on the quality of proposals received. High quality proposals are those that strongly support the priorities and address the needs, considerations, and evaluation criteria described in the funding opportunity.

APPLICATION FAQs**When are proposal applications due?**

NAHLN must receive applications by 11:59 pm Eastern Daylight Saving Time on **August 6, 2021**.

How do applicants apply for funds?

Applicants must submit proposals through email to both:
christina.m.loiacono@usda.gov and connie.j.osmundson@usda.gov.

The complete NAHLN 2021 Funding Opportunity Announcement, links to template forms, and additional information can be found on the [USDA APHIS NAHLN website](#).

Are labs required to submit a Letter of Intent?

No.

What must be included with the proposal submission?

- Project proposal Work Plan
- Project proposal detailed Financial Plan
- Copy of the current Indirect Cost Rate Agreement if claiming indirect costs and an Indirect Cost Rate has been negotiated

Is there a limit on the length of the proposal document?

The total application is limited to 25 pages and the Executive Summary is limited to 250 words.

What is the period of performance?

Up to 24 months. Congress provided NAHLN Farm Bill funds as no-year money, allowing APHIS to enter into agreements that extend beyond 1 year. Project activities are anticipated to begin the first quarter of calendar year 2022 (January-March).

FUNDING PRIORITY FAQs**What are the funding priorities?**

The 2021 NAHLN funding opportunity priorities are limited to the areas described below. Only proposals that address these funding priorities will be considered eligible for review.

1. Increasing capacity for disease testing focused on currently approved protocols, test development and validation* and on rapid sequencing of emerging threats.
2. Increasing capability to handle surge samples through improving sample entry and tracking, Laboratory Information Management Systems (LIMS) enhancement, and electronic messaging of results.
3. Enhancing laboratory emergency preparedness by developing local and regional cooperation for regulatory testing through targeted outreach and exercise.

**All point of care assay projects must be submitted to the Joint NADPRP/NAHLN funding opportunity announcement.*

If a lab would like to address multiple priorities should they all be included in one proposal or should multiple proposals be submitted?

Each proposal is limited to only one priority.

Will partial funding of a request/priority on a proposal be considered?

Yes.

What are other funding considerations?

Applicants will be checked against the System for Award Management (SAM) to ensure they have not been disbarred or suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from covered transactions by any Federal department or agency.

Within the context of addressing the priorities described above, applicants are encouraged to develop proposals that:

- Address known gaps or problems identified through exercises and events, including COVID-19.
- Build on existing tools and techniques and enhance scientifically based innovation.
- Describe in the work plan and financial plan the anticipated involvement by APHIS personnel needed to complete the proposed activity (excluding VS personnel to administer or oversee the agreement). VS intends to collaborate with recipients to successfully complete activities that are funded via this opportunity. However, due to limited availability of personnel, VS encourages proposals, where possible, that are not contingent on VS participation. APHIS personnel may not be compensated for their participation by Farm Bill funds.

AGREEMENT FAQs

Will Farm Bill funding impact the NAHLN Infrastructure agreements?

No. All VS Farm Bill agreements will be distinct and separate from the NAHLN Infrastructure agreements that are funded with appropriated funds.

What is competitive funding and how does it work in a cooperative agreement?

Proposals submitted to the 2021 NAHLN funding opportunity will be reviewed and selected for funding through a competitive process, in which a team of subject matter experts will evaluate the merits of each proposal using pre-determined criteria. The selection criteria are described in the NAHLN Funding Opportunity Announcement. Funding is based on the merits of the application, and recipients are not pre-determined. Final decisions are made by USDA.

NAHLN funds projects using cooperative or interagency agreements. Cooperative agreements include substantial involvement between the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity and the non-Federal entity in carrying out the activity funded by the Federal award. Interagency agreements define the cooperative work between Federal agencies.

When cooperative agreements are awarded through a competitive process, applicants must submit a completed proposal packet by the deadline. There is no opportunity for proposal modifications during the review process.

Is cost sharing required?

No. Cost sharing, matching, or cost participation is not required for these NAHLN Farm Bill projects. If an applicant includes contributions as part of a cost share in their budget proposal and it is accepted by APHIS VS, the commitment of funds becomes legally binding, must be reported on the SF-425, and is subject to audit. Additional information about cost sharing is available in the [Guidelines for Use of Funds](#) for APHIS Veterinary Services Farm Bill Cooperative Agreements.

What is the limit on indirect cost (administrative costs)?

NAHLN approved laboratories should calculate your indirect costs based on the following information:

- **Institutes of Higher Education (Non-Profits):** Eligible cooperator's assessment of indirect costs are limited to not more than 10 percent of total direct costs or the application of their indirect cost rate agreement, whichever is less. The applicant must submit a copy of its fully executed current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, negotiated by its recognized Federal Agency ([2 CFR Part 200.19](#)), when indirect costs are assessed in the budget. Indirect cost rates exceeding 10 percent are not allowed. Eligible entities must notify sub-applicants of the limit on indirect costs, in its request for proposals/applications, so that indirect costs requested by sub-applicants plus indirect administration costs requested by the eligible entity do not exceed 10 percent of the total request for Federal funds.
- **State entity:** Eligible cooperator's assessment of indirect costs are NOT limited but should be assessed based on the proper application of their indirect cost rate agreement. The applicant must submit a copy of its fully executed current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, negotiated by its recognized Federal Agency ([2 CFR Part 200.19](#)), when indirect costs are assessed in the budget.

PROPOSAL FAQs

Can I submit more than one proposal?

Yes. Those directly associated with a NAHLN approved laboratory may contribute to multiple applications and engage on multiple project proposals. Each proposal, however, may only address one priority. Applicants should realistically consider their ability to successfully complete multiple projects in the same time frame.

Example: NAHLN lab representatives may contribute to group proposal(s) and submit one or more proposals from their own NAHLN laboratory.

Can several different proposal ideas for projects that support the 2021 funding priorities be combined into one big proposal?

No. Applicants must submit separate proposals – and separate proposal work plans – for each project. This helps reviewers score each project on its individual merits, and it increases the likelihood that a strong proposal will be funded.

Can a NAHLN lab work with other labs in their region?

Yes. Any NAHLN lab can collaborate with any other NAHLN lab or non-NAHLN lab on a proposal.

If multiple labs are collaborating, how should the proposal be submitted?

If there is one project with each lab doing a similar task, submit one proposal from the main lab and subcontract the other labs. If the project has multiple parts, and each lab is taking a different task, then each lab may submit their own proposal if this is preferred.

Can NAHLN labs partner with non-NAHLN entities?

Yes. The NAHLN lab may sub-contract with a non-NAHLN entity. The agreement will be with the NAHLN lab and the lab will be responsible for any compensation to the non-NAHLN partner.

May a foreign entity submit a proposal?

No. However, a foreign entity may contribute to a domestic entity's proposal. The proposal should describe the necessity and added value to engage foreign collaborators to accomplish the proposed activities.

Can someone from the private sector apply?

No. However, a private sector entity may contribute to a proposal submitted by an eligible applicant. The proposal should describe the necessity and added value to engage private sector collaborators to accomplish the proposed activities.

How are proposals reviewed and who reviews them? Who makes the final decision?

Application packages that meet the minimum eligibility criteria described in the [NAHLN Funding Opportunity Announcement](#) will be reviewed by a team of reviewers. USDA will consider the review team's recommendations in making final funding determinations. Reviewers are subject matter experts nominated by APHIS VS or by the NAHLN Executive Committee. Final funding decisions are made by USDA.

What is the timeline for review of submitted proposals? When will applicants be notified of award status, and when will funds be awarded?

APHIS anticipates announcing the list of awarded projects by the last quarter of calendar year 2021. APHIS will publish the 2021 Spending Plan and List of Projects and notify applicants of their award status promptly after the spending plan is approved by USDA. Applicants will be notified by email and through the publication of the NAHLN spending plan on the [USDA APHIS NAHLN website](#). APHIS intends to award funds to selected projects by the end of 2021.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FAQs**Where are the websites located with this information?**

- The [USDA APHIS NAHLN website](#) includes all information and links related to this funding opportunity.
- The 2021 NAHLN Funding Opportunity Announcement ([PDF](#)) provides details for applicants on how to apply.
- The 2021 NAHLN Work Plan template ([Word](#)) - Applicants must submit a project proposal Work Plan that includes all information outlined in this template. Applicants are encouraged, but not required, to use this template.
- The 2021 NAHLN Financial Plan template ([Excel](#)) - Applicants must submit a project proposal Financial Plan that includes all information outlined in this template. Applicants are encouraged, but not required, to use this template.

Who can applicants contact regarding questions about the NAHLN 2021 funding opportunity?

For questions about the NAHLN 2021 Funding Opportunity or the application process and administration, e-mail christina.m.loiacono@usda.gov or connie.j.osmundson@usda.gov.