

Farm Bill Section 12101 National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN)
2019 Funding Opportunity: NAHLN Enhancement Cooperative Agreements

Frequently Asked Questions

October 2019 version 1

The United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Veterinary Services (VS) announced an open period to apply for 2019 funding for the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN). Through this funding opportunity, VS is soliciting proposals for projects to enhance animal agriculture emergency preparedness and response capabilities specifically by addressing needs of the NAHLN in the following areas: diagnostic technologies and procedures, testing capacity, and electronic reporting and data transmission. The following information addresses basic questions regarding the initial phase of NAHLN funding.

How much funding is available in the initial phase?

In calendar year 2019, APHIS is making available up to \$10M to be divided between NAHLN and the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program (NADPRP) programs.

Who can apply for NAHLN Enhancement funds?

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

What must be included with the proposal submission?

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

Are labs required to submit a Letter of Intent?

No.

Is there a limit on the length of the proposal?

The only limit is on the Executive Summary, which must describe the project in 500 words or less.

What is the period of performance?

Up to 24 months. Congress provided NAHLN funds as no-year money, allowing us to enter into agreements that extend beyond one year. Project activities are anticipated to begin the first quarter of calendar year 2020 (January-March).

When are proposal applications due?

NAHLN must receive applications by 11:59 pm Pacific Daylight Saving Time on **October 25, 2019**.

May eligible entities submit or contribute to more than one proposal?

Yes. Those directly associated with a NAHLN approved laboratory may contribute to multiple applications and engage on multiple project proposals.

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

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

Individual proposals addressing each priority are preferred.

How do applicants apply for funds?

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

What are the funding priorities?

The 2019 NAHLN funding opportunity includes four priorities specific to activities identified for enhancement of the NAHLN (listed in no particular order):

1. **Test Procedures, reference materials and equipment.** Evaluate, validate and implement new sample types, equipment and technologies for the purpose of improving detection of foreign animal and emerging diseases.
2. **Laboratory biosafety and biosecurity levels.** Enhance biosecurity and biosafety procedures and capacity in NAHLN laboratories.
3. **Interconnected electronic reporting and transmission of data.** Expand and standardize the ability of all NAHLN laboratories to provide test results in a real-time manner through electronic messaging and developing methods for electronic integration of test results with other sources of animal health records.
4. **Enhancement of laboratory emergency preparedness.** Develop and support tools and plans which promote preparedness in NAHLN laboratories and their States for responding to an adverse animal health event. Identify, procure and apply tools to enhance NAHLN laboratory surge and response capacity.

What are some examples of activities that VS might fund for this 2019 opportunity?

Priority 1:

- Develop a tool, algorithm or assay to screen for NAHLN scope diseases or emerging diseases.
- Develop a tool or assay to screen aggregate sample types (bulk tank milk, oral fluids, etc.) for NAHLN scope diseases or emerging diseases.

Priority 2:

- Build testing capacity in an existing BSL3 facility for the purpose of improving detection of NAHLN scope diseases or emerging diseases.

- Develop processes for rapidly inactivating live pathogens in the field that would be compatible with high throughput testing methods upon arrival at the lab.

Priority 3:

- Facilitate the upgrades needed by NAHLN laboratories using similar information management systems (LIMS) to meet the NAHLN requirements for electronic messaging.
- Facilitate the upgrades needed by NAHLN laboratories using similar LIMS to capture and electronically message all required data elements (list available upon request).
- Improve the ability and efficiency of providing field data (pre-accessioning) to the laboratory for active and/or passive surveillance.
- Develop and expand ability to incorporate use of barcodes in accessioning in accessioning and/or sampling.

Priority 4:

- Build capacity for the purpose of improving surveillance and detection of foreign animal and emerging diseases by supporting laboratory equipment purchases that directly enhance laboratory response capacity to address specific NAHLN scope disease or emerging disease testing.
- Build testing capacity through laboratory equipment purchases that focus on new technology to directly enhance surveillance, surge and response testing capacity of specific NAHLN scope diseases or emerging diseases.

Can these examples of activities be moved to different priorities than what they are listed under here?

Yes.

What are other funding considerations?

- Successful projects will meet the criteria described in Section E. Proposal Review Information, of the 2019 NAHLN Funding Opportunity announcement.
- Applicants should describe in the work plan and financial plan the anticipated involvement by APHIS personnel that is 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.

Will Farm Bill agreements 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.

Will the labs currently receiving funding through NIFA for their Infrastructure cooperative agreements also be funded by NIFA for the Farm Bill?

No. All NAHLN Farm Bill cooperative agreements will be funded by APHIS.

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

The 2019 NAHLN funding opportunity calls for proposals to be awarded through cooperative / interagency agreements using a competitive funding process.

Competitive funding is a process of proposal selection based on the evaluation by a reviewer or team of reviewers. Funding is based on the merits of the application, and recipients are not pre-determined.

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 complete and polished proposal by the deadline because there is no opportunity for proposal modifications during the review process.

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.

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

If it 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. Only NAHLN approved laboratories may submit a proposal. However, a foreign entity may contribute to a proposal submitted from a NAHLN lab. The proposal should describe the necessity and added value to engage foreign collaborators to accomplish the proposed activities. Further levels of evaluation may be necessary.

Will some entities automatically receive set amounts of funding?

No. The funding process is competitive with funding decisions based on 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.

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

VS anticipates that most awards for 2019 NAHLN projects will range from \$50,000 up to \$1,000,000 each. Proposals submitted for funding over \$1,000,000 will be expected to be collaborative and provide strong deliverables.

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

NAHLN will request input from sources including VS-NVSL, VS-Commodity staff, VS-CEAH, MRP-IT, USDA Office of Homeland Security, USDA Office of the Chief Scientist to form ad hoc review panels. The selection criteria and process are described in detail in the funding opportunity announcement. Final funding decisions are made by the Secretary.

What is the timeline to review the submitted proposals? When will applicants be notified if they were awarded funds, and when will funds be awarded?

VS anticipates completing the review process and providing the Secretary with a draft spending plan by early-December. Applicants will be notified of their award status by email promptly after the spending plan is approved by the Secretary. VS anticipates that program funds will be made available for project activity to begin the first quarter of the calendar year 2020 (January – March).

Are there restrictions on Farm Bill Section 12101 funding?

Yes. Project funds must be obligated by the recipient during the performance period as identified in the Notice of Award.

NAHLN funds may not be used for the following:

- Construction of a new building or facility or the acquisition or expansion (renovation) of an existing building or facility, including site grading, improvement and architect fees. If you cannot uninstall/remove an object/upgrade it is not eligible.
- Hiring new permanent staff positions.
- Projects or activities associated with VS-State-Industry cooperative programs that are typically supported through appropriated funds, including activities typically funded via APHIS Veterinary Services' annual umbrella agreements and animal disease traceability 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 National Animal Health Laboratory (NAHLN) Network Enhancement proposals. VS recommends applicants use caution when hiring or funding personnel with NAHLN funds because there is no guarantee of future NAHLN 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.

Is cost-sharing required?

No.

What is the percentage of allowable overhead a cooperator may charge in NAHLN agreements?

Section 12101 of the 2018 Farm Bill restricts indirect costs charged against a cooperative agreement to the lesser of; 10 percent of the total Federal funds provided under this cooperative agreement or the indirect cost rate applicable to the recipient as established by law (this is the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate).

Are travel costs eligible through the Farm Bill agreement?

Yes. Please include a specific travel plan in the proposal. This does not guarantee approval.

Can Farm Bill funds be used for the purchase of equipment?

Yes.

Should equipment under \$5,000 be listed under the equipment or supplies category?

Supplies.

Should equipment over \$5,000 be included in the indirect cost calculation?

That depends on what is included in the current negotiated Indirect Cost Agreement for each entity.

Can maintenance/service agreements be funded by the Farm Bill for currently owned equipment and/or for equipment purchased using Farm Bill funds?

Maintenance costs can be included but only for equipment used for the project and only through the term of the agreement.

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

Yes.

Will only test development for confirmatory testing be considered or would point of care test development be also be considered?

Point of care test development would also be considered.

Would a proposal standardizing electronic language across the network be eligible for consideration?

Yes.

Would replacement of a lab’s LIMS system be considered?

Yes.

Would BSL3 training be eligible even if the lab’s BSL3 facilities are not yet completed?

Yes. This does not guarantee approval. Remember that the Farm Bill funds may not be used to complete the building of the BSL3 facility. Training for BSL4 is not allowed.

Does the cooperator own the “product” of the cooperative agreement?

Based on the Bayh Dole Law that, paraphrased, states that ownership goes to the inventor but if the Federal government pays for the work that results in a product or protectable property then the results must be reported to the Federal government and the Feds have rights (without cost or profit) to use the product.

The cooperative agreements awarded to successful proposals will have a clause that includes the following or close to it:

The Recipient shall report Invention Disclosures and Utilization information electronically via i-Edison Web Interface at: www.iedison.gov prior to the time of application for any patent or invention which is paid for in any manner or any percentage of funds provided by APHIS. This duty is not limited to the period during the Agreement, but may arise at any time during or subsequent to the Agreement. APHIS reserves to itself a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to use and authorize others to use Subject Invention(s)/invention(s) produced under this Agreement for Government purposes. The term “Invention” means any invention or discovery which is or maybe patentable or otherwise protectable or any novel variety of plant which is or may be protectable under the Plant Variety Protection Act (7 U.S.C. 2321 *et seq*). The term “Subject Invention” means any invention or other intellectual property conceived or first reduced to practice under this Agreement that is patentable or otherwise protectable under title 35 of the United States Code, or 7 U.S.C. 2321. APHIS also retains the ability to force utilization of patented invention(s) set forth in 35 U.S.C. 203 and paragraph (j) of the clause at Sec. 401.14.

Whom can applicants talk to regarding questions about the NAHLN 2019 funding opportunity?

For questions about the NAHLN 2019 Funding Opportunity or the application process and administration, e-mail christina.m.loiacono@usda.gov and connie.j.osmundson@usda.gov.

What are considered as emerging diseases?

Emerging disease would be defined as a disease, infection, or infestation in domestic or wild animals that is a threat to terrestrial animals, aquatic animals, or humans, and meets one of the following criteria:

- (1) An unknown agent that is causing disease in a herd/flock/premises and has the potential to result in a significant animal or public health impact, and applied diagnostic tests have yielded negative or non-definitive results; or,
- (2) A newly identified agent that is causing disease in a herd/flock/premises and has the potential to cause significant animal or public health impact, or is occurring in multiple herds/flocks/premises; or,

(3) A previously identified or known pathogenic agent that has a change in epidemiology, such as unexpected production impacts or morbidity/mortality over a previously defined range for the agent, expanded host range, or change in geography of an agent with the potential to cause a significant animal or public health impact.