

APHIS Veterinary Services
National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN)
2020 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 2020 funding opportunity for the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN).

In 2020, APHIS VS will make available up to \$15 million in funds to be divided between the NAHLN and National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program (NADPRP), with a target of \$5 million in funds to NAHLN. NAHLN is seeking proposals that will support projects to enhance animal agriculture emergency preparedness and response capabilities, specifically by addressing needs in the following areas: diagnostic technologies capacity, emergency preparedness, electronic data management, and laboratory-focused exercises and drills. The following information addresses basic questions regarding the 2020 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 \$15 million in funds to be divided between the NAHLN and NADPRP programs, with a target of \$5 million in 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 2019, the average NAHLN award was about \$192,000. APHIS anticipates that most awards in 2020 will range from \$30,000 to \$1,000,000.

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

Yes. 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 VS' 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 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 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 **September 14, 2020**.

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 2020 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 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 APHIS to enter into agreements that extend beyond 1 year. Project activities are anticipated to begin the first quarter of calendar year 2021 (January-March).

FUNDING PRIORITY FAQs

What are the funding priorities?

The 2020 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. *Test Method Development and Validation*

- NAHLN scope and emerging diseases: Evaluate additional reagents and equipment for use with current NAHLN standard operating procedures. Priorities are chronic wasting disease, African swine fever, classical swine fever, and foot and mouth disease. Evaluate point-of-care testing options for potential use in the NAHLN.

2. *Enhancing Emergency Preparedness*

- Equipment: Explain how equipment will enhance preparedness; be specific.
- Training: Explain how training will enhance preparedness; be specific.

3. *Electronic Data Management*

- Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) updates: Coordinate efforts to provide all laboratories access to a version of their current LIMS that includes all required data collection fields for reporting test results to NAHLN.
- Messaging support: Coordinate efforts to provide all laboratories with a mechanism to improve messaging capability. Develop tools to assist with data extraction and mapping. Work with LIMS vendors to develop user friendly interfaces. Develop solutions for data collection and submission hurdles, sending results using multiple Program object identifiers (OIDs) based on disease.

4. *Exercises and Drill*

- Develop and conduct laboratory centered exercises or drills designed to enhance disease outbreak surge testing preparedness for NAHLN.

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?

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?

The 2020 NAHLN funding opportunity calls for proposals to be awarded through a competitive process, in which an expert or team of experts evaluates 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 complete by the deadline. There is no opportunity for proposal modifications during the review process.

Is cost sharing required?

No.

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

Applicants may charge their negotiated indirect cost rate or 10 percent, whichever is lower. Indirect cost rates exceeding 10 percent are not permitted. See the [Guidelines for Use of Funds for USDA APHIS VS NADPRP and NAHLN Cooperative and Interagency Agreements](#) for details and examples.

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.

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 2020 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 completing the review process and providing funding recommendations to the USDA Secretary by late Fall 2020. APHIS will publish the 2020 NAHLN spending plan and notify applicants of their award status promptly after the spending plan is approved by the Secretary. Applicants will be notified through (1) the publication of the 2020 NAHLN spending plan on the [USDA APHIS NAHLN website](#), and (2) e-mail to applicants notifying them of their award status.

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 2020 NAHLN Funding Opportunity Announcement ([PDF](#)) provides details for applicants on how to apply.
- The 2020 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 2020 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 2020 funding opportunity?

For questions about the NAHLN 2020 Funding Opportunity or the application process and administration, e-mail christina.m.loiacono@usda.gov or connie.j.osmundson@usda.gov.