

Developing Laboratory Leaders: APHL Joins with Global Partners to Address a Growing Need

By **Jocelyn Isadore** MPH, consultant, Global Health; **Burton Wilcke, Jr.**, PhD, associate professor emeritus, University of Vermont; and **Shannon Emery**, MSPH, manager, Global Health

Across the globe, health laboratories play an essential role in human and animal disease detection, diagnosis, and control and the detection and control of environmental and agricultural pathogens, chemicals and residues. Laboratories from all sectors depend on effective leaders and collaborative systems for their success. However, advanced leadership learning opportunities designed specifically for laboratorians are not readily available, especially in low- and middle-income countries. To address this critical gap, six health organizations have united for the first time to define competencies for laboratory leadership and create a global leadership plan.

The Global Laboratory Leadership Programme (GLLP) is a multi-year collaboration between APHL, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Organisation for Animal Health and the World Health Organization. Each partner has extensive experience in laboratory strengthening within their respective mandates and together they provide a unique multi-sectoral perspective to improving laboratory systems. The GLLP will provide competency-based course materials and an implementation guide for a comprehensive laboratory leadership program.

First Steps

The partners have successfully developed a **Laboratory Leadership Competency Framework**, the first framework focused specifically on leadership competencies for laboratory scientists. It provides a three-level structure that allows step-wise progress towards the expert level of a competency. The framework can be used at the individual or institutional level as a:



The Global Laboratory Leadership Programme Partnership. Representatives from the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the World Health Organization (WHO) meet in Paris, France in January.

- Standardized reference for laboratory workforce development applicable across national and/or regional health laboratory systems
- Foundation for laboratory leadership curricula and programs
- Guidance for writing standardized job descriptions
- Guidance to develop a tool for self-assessment, observer assessment or a combination of both to identify individual or group needs and guide staff development planning
- Guidance for individuals to assess their current level of knowledge, skills and abilities, identify areas in need of improvement and plan for achieving higher levels of proficiency

Future Products

This framework will provide the foundation for the second product of the GLLP, a learning program designed to foster and mentor current and emerging

laboratory leaders to build, strengthen and sustain national laboratory systems. The learning program is flexible and may be adapted to individual country needs. Since its intent is to include all sectors and disciplines of the laboratory system in the same program, it will reinforce collaboration, communication and coordination under the One Health approach.

The GLLP partnership has successfully taken the first step to addressing gaps in laboratory leadership through the development of the Laboratory Leadership Competency Framework and all partners are committed to creating the GLLP learning package. According to CDC Division of Global Health Protection Laboratory Team Lead Dr. Leonard Peruski, “The promise and power of the GLLP is because of this collaboration. The expertise and experience provided by each of these organizations is complementary and fosters the use of best practices—a true ‘win-win’ for developing laboratory leaders to meet global needs.” ■