

Frequently Asked Questions
For
Local Public Health
Agreement Funding Applications

Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC)
Enhancing Detection Cooperative Agreement

Year One: May 19, 2020 -May 17, 2021



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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

- 1. We will need to re-configure workspaces. Are we allowed to purchase some desks and cubicle dividers to make workspaces that help keep us at a bit of a distance from each other?**

Response: ELC funds can be used to purchase desks and cubicle dividers for new staff. The total acquisition cost (desks and cubicles) cannot exceed \$4,999. A thorough justification must be provided in your application as to why the purchase is necessary and how the purchase supports the local health department's (LHD's) COVID-19 response activities.

Funding cannot be used to re-configure the office workspace.

- 2. Is it allowable to use both the ELC grant monies as well as the COVID-19 Crisis Response grant monies to pay the salary of a temporary 12 month grant funded position to deal with contract tracing and infection prevention?**

**For example: Total salary for 12-month contract funded position: \$50,000,
\$20,000 left from the COVID-19 Crisis Response Grant (grant expires March 2021)
\$30,000 from the ELC grant (1st year monies) + Benefits from ELC grant (1st year monies)**

Response: Funding can be used from both grants to fund the salary of a new temporary 12-month position. However, the Benefits must also be paid out of each of the two funding sources.

For example: Total salary for 12-month grant funded position: \$50,000,
\$20,000 left from the COVID-19 Crisis Response Grant (grant expires March 2021) +
Fringe Benefits on \$20,000 from the COVID-19 Crisis Response Grant.
\$30,000 from the ELC grant (1st year monies) plus Fringe benefits on \$30,000 from the ELC Grant.

- 3. In my municipality, another department is conducting outreach as part of OpenCT and providing training/requirements on wearing masks at food service establishments. Can a portion of this grant be used by another town department to support the health department mission without directly working for the Health Department and Director of Health?**

Response: Funding cannot be used by another town department. The intent of this funding is to build capacity within the Health Department.

- 4. The first full sentence under the list of funding amounts says; "This application certifies...is in compliance with the following conditions..." Question: Which of the things listed on the next few pages are "the following conditions"?**

Response: Funding can be used to address any of the five categories listed on page 1 of the funding application. At a minimum, under conditions of award, the LHD must conduct contact tracing and enter that information into the ContaCT system. Because the LHD awards vary in funding, all other activities are optional, i.e. some LHDs may undertake activities under only one or all five categories as individual funding allocations allow.

5. Can funding be used to provide additional staff with laptops and cell phones?

Response: Funding can be used to provide new staff hired under the ELC Enhancing Detection Cooperative Agreement with laptops and cell phones.

6. Some, not all, of the positions will require travel. Are we allowed to purchase two vehicles as some staff will be involved in outreach?

Response: Funding cannot be used to purchase or lease vehicles. Funding can be used for in-state mileage reimbursement. Justification must include an estimate of number of miles traveled and the mileage reimbursement rate.

7. Is everything in this agreement a requirement?

Response: Everything in this agreement is not a requirement. Please refer to question #4. The funding source is primarily meant for building epidemiology capacity in local public health for the COVID response effort.

8. The agreement language reads, “Train AND HIRE staff TO IMPROVE the capacities” – the language implies we have to hire and improve our capacities regardless of what they currently are.

Response: At a minimum, under conditions of award, the LHD is responsible for providing staff to perform contact tracing. Because the LHD awards vary in funding, all other activities are optional based on funding award. The workplan should identify the categories/activities the LHD is engaging in. The new staff needed to carry out the activities in your workplan should be reflected in the budget.

9. The agreement language reads, “Purchase supplies or engage in vendor contracts to enable testing” – there is much more detail needed here. Contracting for testing or purchasing testing supplies for us to conduct testing ourselves is going to be enormously costly depending on the level of reach we have responsibility for.

Response: This is an approved activity but not a requirement. LHDs, for instance, may choose to direct the staff supported by this funding to arrange for testing services within their jurisdiction(s) through private providers, rather than purchase testing supplies. DPH is looking for LHDs to support testing in their community, not necessarily conduct the actual testing.

10. The agreement language reads, “In collaboration with state partners, coordinate and engage in agreements with...labs to successfully meet the testing demands...” – again, much more detail is needed here. The whole budget could easily be allocated for lab expenses if we want to actually meet the testing demand at the level needed to minimize the spread of COVID.

Response: This is an approved activity but not a requirement.

- 11. The agreement language reads, “...with regional community resource coordinators to support individuals with self-quarantine needs.” Question: Does this mean that we can/are to use this funding to help people with food, rent, etc. to address loss of income associated with being self-quarantined? The Community Resource Coordinators did not receive adequate funding to do this themselves – again, does that mean at some point when there are no other resources to support needs someone will say “well you received that funding...” We recognize the very real need to fill the financial gap that many will face if they are requested to stay home from work for 14 days but we are worried about how quickly this funding could be spent without other financial resources in this area.**

Response: Funds cannot be used to address loss of income associated with being self-quarantined such as food, rent, etc. Funds can be used for costs associated with testing and monitoring isolated individuals.

Note: Crisis Cooperative Agreement funds may allow for funds to be used to address food-related needs associated with self-isolation or self-quarantine. FEMA reimbursement may allow for funds to be used to address loss of income needs associated with being self-quarantined.

- 12. The agreement language reads, “Ensure adequate staffing and expertise to promote and enforce Reopen Connecticut” – concerned about how general this is. The Reopen Connecticut “process” is driven by the Governor's office and DECD; Question: Is there an expectation that local health departments become the subject matter experts regarding the interpretation up the Governor's Executive Orders and the Sector Guidance Rules?**

Response: Funds should be used to support the LHD’s ability to educate their community partners about the sector guidelines and to engage in delegated enforcement if necessary. ReOpen parameters and guidelines for public health facilities are under the direction and enforcement of LHDs and are associated with preventing the spread of disease.

- 13. Under the allowable expenses section of the agreement, I have a question: This section provides for the hiring of certain positions; are other positions that would be beneficial to the COVID response ineligible for funding, i.e. community social worker, community health worker, or CHES?**

Response: Other proposed new positions that would be beneficial to the COVID response will be considered and should be included in your application with a thorough justification on how the position will support disease control efforts and enhance epidemiology and disease detection activities.

- 14. Under the list that says “Requirements as condition of funding” can you provide guidance? Some things on there we do not currently regulate sports/fitness facilities, outdoor recreational activities and events, etc. Will the relevant executive order be modified to reflect this change?**

Response: DPH is not looking for LHDs to go outside of current guidance of Executive Orders. LHDs are often looked to for technical assistance by businesses that may not fall within the sectors you regulate.

15. On the signature page, we are certifying that “monies granted will not be used to substitute for funds budgeted for the LHD under the normal budgetary process” – Please provide clarification on what this sentence means.

Response: Supplanting of funds is not allowed. Existing funds used to support a current program/project and its activities may not be displaced by federal funds, and then reallocated for other organizational expenses.

16. On page 3 of the ELC Enhancing Detection Cooperative Agreement Document, the last bullet under allowable expenses is, “Costs associated with testing and monitoring isolated individuals to prevent spread of infection, including homeless, shelter operations, and essential municipal staff”. Can “costs associated” include expenses for operating an isolation or quarantine facility for unsheltered homeless who are positive for SARS-CoV-2? (e.g. staffing, rental expenses, utilities, PPE, food, toiletries)

Response: See Response to Question #11 above.

17. Can money be spent on supplies/equipment such as a tent for drive through mass vaccination clinics?

Response: The purpose of the funding should be to reduce the transmission of the disease by conducting investigations and rapidly identifying cases within a community. A tent/shelter could be part of supporting an effort to set up local rapid testing sites or temporary testing clinics. Before an LHD allocates ELC funding to purchase tents or other shelters, the LHD should first coordinate with local and regional emergency management on the purchase of assets to determine if ELC funds is necessary before committing those funds. ELC funds can be used to purchase items with a total acquisition cost not to exceed \$4,999. A thorough justification must be provided in your application as to why the purchase is necessary and how the purchase supports the local health department’s COVID-19 response activities.

18. The guidance suggest that we may “hire staff” (temporary contact tracing, epidemiologist, public health nurse, infection prevention). Must those positions be city staff positions (salary and fringe) or may they be contracted?

Response: ELC Enhanced Detection positions do not have to be city staff positions within the Health Department (salary and fringe) and may be contracted. Any contracted positions would be considered Subcontractors. The LHD must provide a justification for the services and/or activities that the subcontractor will perform that support the LHD’s ELC Enhancing Detection Work Plan. The subcontractor detail form must also be completed indicating the name of subcontractor, rate of pay and/or funding detail for the services being provided.

19. Are LHDs expected to do all the activities outlined under Requirements as condition for funding? The work plan on page 9 seems to indicate that we may do 1 or all 5 categories.

Response: See Response to Question #4 above.

20. Item number 2 page 2 (strengthen laboratory testing volume and capacity), can you elaborate more on the expectations?

Response: See Response to Question #9 above.

21. Can further explanation be provided regarding "costs associated with testing and monitoring isolated individuals to prevent spread of infection, including homeless, shelter operations, and essential municipal staff"? Would funding an isolation space for the homeless (i.e. hotel rooms) fit under this category?

Response: See Response to Question #11 above.

22. Can we use funds to pay for existing employees' salaries for contact tracing and efforts?

Response: See Response to Question #15 above.

23. Can we purchase a commercial/portable vaccine refrigerator/freezer, our clinic is currently an outpatient clinic?

Response: ELC funds can be used to purchase items with a total acquisition cost not to exceed \$4,999. A thorough justification must be provided in your application as to why the purchase is necessary and how the purchase supports the local health department's (LHD's) COVID-19 response activities.

ELC funds used to support vaccine storage, temperature monitoring devices and handling must follow the Connecticut Vaccine Program (CVP) storage and handling specifications as detailed:

<https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Immunizations/CVP---Information-for-Providers>

24. Is the cost of \$4,999 for one new employee for a new workspace, for example if I have two new COVID staff and they need a workspace is that money per person?

Response: \$4,999 is the maximum to be allocated for new workspaces regardless of the number of new employees.

25. What is the start date that funds will be eligible for?

Response: May 19, 2020

26. What other supplies can be purchased that the ELC funds would pay for? For example, gloves, Zoom conference payment.

Response: All purchases must support the work plan activities consistent with the five areas outlined in the funding application. A thorough justification must be provided in your application as to why the purchase is necessary and how the purchase supports the local health department's COVID-19 response activities.

27. Do I complete a budget for the entire project period (30 months) or for the current budget period only (12 months)?

Response: Complete your budget for the current budget period May 19, 2020 to May 17, 2021

28. Can ELC funding be used to purchase KINSA thermometers?

Response: Yes, the purchase of KINSA thermometers is an eligible expense.

29. Should the name of the LHD contact tracing point of contact be included in the funding application?

Response: Yes, the LHD point of contact for contact tracing should be included in the Budget Justification.

30. Is it allowable to use funding to contract with our FQHC to provide mobile testing at various locations throughout the city? IE our homeless shelter, senior community living buildings (not LTC), at faith-based organizations, etc.?

Response: The FQHCs are paid by the state to conduct testing for hard-to-reach populations. The DPH wants to ensure that we are not collectively being double billed for the same service. As such, if you engage in negotiations with the FQHC to support a mobile option (e.g., transportation of people to the FQHC or paying an additional charge for the FQHC to be mobile) you may include that in your proposed budget.

31. The grant indicates that we should hire an epidemiologist and I am 100% on board with that but it seems DPH is requiring us to hire a full-time epidemiologist. The hiring process and practices are very challenging and so if we attempted this, we would not get anyone on board until maybe a year from now as well as the salary requirements etc. would almost consume the entire award. I have been reaching out to Epidemiology programs in schools of public health to contract with them and there is interest. Is this an acceptable solution?

Response: There is no requirement to hire full-time staff. See Response to Question #18 above.

32. I want to hire a PT public health nurse for contact tracing/epidemiology work to build capacity. Would I have to have them hired prior to applying or can we hire them after the grant is approved?

Response: You can hire the person after the funding application is approved. When completing the application, on the Salary/Fringe Position Schedule, include position title, and for name use to be determined.