

AB 107 CDPH/CAPHLD LabAspire Public Health Laboratory Director Fellowship Program 2024-2027

Available Funding

There is \$3,200,000 available in AB 107 for the three-year term 2024-2027 for CDPH Laboratory Field Services (LFS)-approved state and Local Health Jurisdiction (LHJ) Public Health Laboratories for LabAspire training of Public Health Laboratory Directors (PHLDs).

Overview

The LabAspire Public Health Laboratory Director Fellowship Program, overseen by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Center for Laboratory Sciences (CLS) and the California Association of Public Health Laboratory Directors (CAPHLD), trains and prepares qualified professionals to direct California Public Health Laboratories. The LabAspire Fellowship is open to certified California Public Health Microbiologists (PHMs) with any of the following combinations of experience and education:

1. Currently working as a Public Health Laboratory Assistant Director, Manager, or Supervisor;
2. Currently working as Public Health Laboratory line staff with two or more years of high-complexity laboratory testing experience; and/or
3. Holding a doctoral degree in a scientific discipline related to medical microbiology or public health.

LabAspire Fellowships are typically funded for up to three years, but completion time varies depending on the Fellow's experience, background and rate of progress through program requirements. Fellowship participation must demonstrate satisfactory progress to be renewed annually. Fellows are expected to provide progress reports, take board examinations and meet program benchmarks to continue in the Fellowship.

Mission

The LabAspire Public Health Laboratory Director Fellowship Program is designed to provide financial and technical support for experienced professionals to complete the state and federal requirements to qualify for Public Health Laboratory Director positions in California. The fellowship provides the required supervisory experience and/or advanced degree for the fellow while providing workforce capacity for the Public Health Laboratory network.

Program Specifics

The LabAspire Fellowship provides experience in administrative and technical skills needed to lead a public health laboratory for doctoral candidates, and doctoral education opportunities for experienced managers and high-complexity testing staff. Fellows work full-time in sponsoring California Public Health Laboratories as Assistant Laboratory Directors, Managers or Supervisors. Training includes regulatory requirements, laboratory budgeting and finance, laboratory administration, safety, quality assurance, technical problem solving, personnel and networking with public health partners. Program training may also include rotations at other health departments, clinical or public health laboratories, and related programs. Sponsoring Public Health Laboratories are responsible for supervising their Fellows' training and reporting on progress towards completing program requirements.

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LabAspire Fellows are trained for a vital leadership role in Public Health

The California Public Health Laboratory system is comprised of the State Public Health Laboratories and 28 local Public Health Laboratories. Each laboratory requires a qualified Public Health Laboratory Director to assume administrative and technical responsibility of laboratory operations. The LabAspire Public Health Laboratory Director Training Program provides fundamental training for aspiring Public Health Laboratory Directors and has successfully prepared candidates to assume leadership roles at both the local and state Public Health Laboratory levels. Public Health Laboratory Directors provide public health leadership for labs that are the forefront of laboratory diagnostics.

“The LabAspire Program was instrumental in helping me gain the experience I needed in order to meet the qualifications to become a Public Health Laboratory Director in California. The program offered opportunities to gain additional technical and supervisory experience necessary for board certification, and work with experienced mentors who guided me throughout my learning experience, and beyond.”

Zenda Berrada, PhD, D(ABMM), PHLD(ABB)

California Department of Public Health, Microbial Diseases Laboratory Branch Chief

Program Benefits

Fellows may receive annual compensation that includes benefits and an allowance for professional development. Sponsoring laboratories are responsible for budgeting the fellowship costs as necessary for their local jurisdiction. Fellows may be recruited as new employees, or sponsoring laboratories may choose to request grant funding to support existing internal candidates.

Eligibility Requirements

The LabAspire Fellowship program is open to US citizens and permanent residents. **Applicants must possess a California Public Health Microbiologist (PHM) certificate.** Applicants may possess either a Doctoral degree (PhD, DrPH, ScD, MD*, DO*, or DVM*) in a scientific discipline such as biology, microbiology, chemistry or medicine; or a combination of a Masters’ or Bachelors’ degree in a scientific discipline such as biology, microbiology or chemistry and 2 or more years of high-complexity laboratory testing experience in a California Public Health Laboratory, including experience as a PHL Assistant Director, Manager or Supervisor.

*Applicants with an MD, DO or DVM must be licensed to practice in the state of California.

Applicants with a Master’s or Bachelor’s degree are accepted on the basis of their enrollment in an accredited United States university graduate program to meet the education and training requirements for approved certification boards for Laboratory Directors of High Complexity Testing. At this time, the only online graduate program meeting these requirements specifically is the University of South Florida DrPH in Public Health and Clinical Laboratory Science and Practice. Applications to enroll in graduate programs that are not specifically designed to meet certification board requirements will need to be vetted by the LabAspire Committee and approved on a case-by-case basis.

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LabAspire Fellowships renew every year. Fellows will be required to provide progress reports, which may include academic transcripts; take board certification exams for Laboratory Directors of High Complexity Testing, such as the American Board of Bioanalysis (ABB) or American Board of Medical Microbiology (ABMM); and meet program benchmarks to continue in the program. CDPH-LFS will assist with regulatory compliance by reviewing Fellows' qualifications for board eligibility as needed.

For more information about approved certification boards for Laboratory Directors of High Complexity Testing: https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/CLIA/Certification_Boards_Laboratory_Directors.html

Application Process

Application forms and instructions are available on the California Association of Public Health Laboratory Directors (CAPHLD) website, www.CAPHLD.org or by request from Hnusrat@sfsu.edu and CAPHLD.LabAspire@gmail.com. Applicants should submit electronic applications and materials to CAPHLD.LabAspire@gmail.com, Wilfred.Velasco@cdph.ca.gov, Amanda.Moe@cdph.ca.gov and Katya.Ledin@cdph.ca.gov. As long as funding is available, CDPH will continue to accept applications on an ongoing basis through **December 31, 2026**.

Only complete applications will be reviewed. Applications will be reviewed by a panel representing CDPH and CAPHLD Committee members, which may contact Fellowship candidates and sponsoring laboratories for additional materials and interviews as needed. The same forms are used both for new applications and annual renewals.

LabAspire Fellowship Applications

The LabAspire Fellowship application includes a narrative statement, a letter of recommendation and references, curriculum vitae, copies of licenses and certifications, copies of transcripts from all degree-granting institutions, and proof of US citizenship or permanent residency. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure all materials are received by CDPH and CAPHLD.

Sponsoring Laboratory Applications

The sponsoring laboratory application includes statement of intent, documentation of laboratory certification, training plan, training budget and letter of support from the local health jurisdiction.

Questions

For questions, please contact the LabAspire Program Coordinator, Dr. Hamida Nusrat at Hnusrat@sfsu.edu, CAPHLD.LabAspire@gmail.com and Dr. Katya Ledin at Katya.Ledin@cdph.ca.gov.