



PACIFIC ISLAND HEALTH OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION

EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

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CONSULTANT POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT

POSITION TITLE: Regional Laboratory Program Specialist
POSITION STATUS: Short-Term Independent Consultant
POSITION PERIOD: January 1, 2024, through July 31, 2024, with possible extension contingent on funding
DUTY STATION: PIHOA Guam Office

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND: Established in 1986 by the chief health officials of the US-Affiliated Pacific Islands (USAPIs) of American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Guam, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and the Republic of Palau, the Pacific Island Health Officers' Association (PIHOA) is a 501(c)3 headquartered in Honolulu, Hawaii, with a field office in Hagåtña, Guam. PIHOA's mission is to provide, through collective action and decision-making, a credible regional voice for health advocacy in and for the Pacific.

Today, PIHOA's membership is comprised of the ministers/directors/secretaries of health (executive governing board) of the six USAPIs, their deputies and Chief Executive Officers of local public hospitals (associates), and Pacific regional professional associations (affiliates). PIHOA's Secretariat, comprised of executive, administrative, and technical staff and a number of short and long-term consultants, has been tasked to provide technical assistance to the USAPI health ministries and departments in the following health systems strengthening areas: 1) health workforce development/human resources for health; 2) epidemiology and surveillance; 3) performance improvement; 4) laboratory services; 5) regional health policy and advocacy; 6) health security; and 7) leadership development.

PIHOA Regional Laboratory Strengthening Program:

In recognition of the needs and challenges experienced by the USAPI labs impacting effective and timely detection and public health surveillance, emergency response, and program delivery, the Regional Laboratory Strengthening Initiative (RLSI) was formally endorsed and established by the USAPI health leadership in 2003 as a regional mandate to the PIHOA Secretariat to support USAPI laboratory training, capacity development, and systems improvement needs and priorities. PIHOA also conducts this work as a Permanent Coordinating Body Member of the SPC's Pacific Public Health Surveillance Network's (PPHSN) LabNet team and as a member of WHO's Pacific Health Security Working Group (PaHSec) tasked to implement the WHO's International Health Regulation's (IHR) Asia-Pacific Strategy on Emerging Diseases III (APSED III).

The goal of the program is to strengthen jurisdiction and regional USAPI lab-based public health diagnostic and surveillance capabilities through continuous laboratory workforce training and capacity development, context-appropriate systems development, improvement and expansion, and lab-based quality assurance. Toward this goal, PIHOA supports several of the Laboratory Accreditation, Quality Assurance, and Improvement activities in the region: 1) Lab Quality Management Systems (LQMS) Program. PIHOA provides technical and associated support, including assisting USAPI laboratories to develop/update their respective Lab Quality Manuals and standard operating procedures (SOPs) and provision of associate training and systems development, including implementation of quality improvement activities; and 2) Strengthening Lab Management Towards Accreditation (SLMTA) Program that focuses on non-regulated USAPI laboratories in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), and the Republic of Palau, none of which are currently accredited to any standard. The SLMTA curriculum was developed by CDC and is currently being implemented in the African region. PIHOA is the first and only agency in the Pacific to adopt and deliver SLMTA in the Pacific. It is a 5-module assessment and training program that uses the WHO's Stepwise Laboratory Quality Improvement Process Towards Accreditation (SLIPTA) Checklist as a pre-and-post-SLMTA assessment tool to track accreditation readiness progress. The SLMTA Program also requires each

laboratory to develop and implement a series of structured quality improvement projects to address any identified pre- and post-assessment findings. Once a lab has successfully completed the SLMTA program and is deemed ready, PIHOA can provide further assistance to support application submissions to an accrediting body of their choice, and if accredited, additional assistance to maintain accreditation status.

SUMMARY OF DUTIES: An experienced and qualified Regional Laboratory Program Specialist (RLPS) is being sought by the Pacific Island Health Officers Association (PIHOA) to assist in the coordination and implementation of the activities under PIHOA's Regional Laboratory Strengthening Initiative, including but not limited to 1) Coordination and implementation of the CDC's Strengthening Laboratory Management Towards Accreditation (SLMTA) program; and 2) provision of laboratory technical support to US-affiliated Pacific Island (USAPI) laboratorians as assigned by the PIHOA Regional Laboratory Strengthening Coordinator (RLSC). The RLPS will liaise and communicate directly with the PIHOA RLSC and consult with USAPI laboratory management to ensure proper joint coordination and information-sharing for the effective ongoing progress of the SLMTA initiative and other assigned tasks for laboratory capacity development in the USAPIs. The RLPS will work closely with the non-regulated laboratories in the freely associated states of the FSM (Chuuk, Pohnpei, Kosrae, Yap), the RMI, and the Republic of Palau. The overall primary objective of this consultancy will be to work in close consultation with the PIHOA RLSC and USAPI laboratory management to improve USAPI quality laboratory management systems through the provision of technical assistance and training, with the main focus on supporting the USAPI laboratory accreditation initiatives in the region.

SCOPE OF POSITION

1. **Reports To** the PIHOA Regional Laboratory Strengthening Coordinator (RLSC)
2. **Geographic Areas of Responsibility:** US-affiliated Pacific Islands (USAPI)
3. **Fiscal Responsibilities:** None
4. **Signature Authorities:** No; all vendor and other contracts will require prior approval and be signed off by the PIHOA Executive Director and/or assigned PIHOA Technical Staff.
5. **Level of Interaction:** Must be able to work independently and in collaboration with other team members and diverse project stakeholders across the USAPIs laboratory management, USAPIs health leadership, CDC, and PIHOA. The position will interact with a wide array of multi-disciplinary team members working across multiple locations and may include interactions with national, state, and regional health leadership, including the USAPI Directors and Secretaries of Health and regional technical partners.

MAJOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES/DELIVERABLES

As directed by the Regional Laboratory Strengthening Coordinator (RLSC), the RLPS will:

1. Develop a work plan in coordination with the PIHOA RLSC for the continuation of the SLMTA Initiative in the FSM, RMI, and the Republic of Palau, that outlines the timeline of the current SLMTA initiatives in the USAPI laboratories to their target training completion date;
2. Set up a schedule for laboratory audits in the FSM (Pohnpei, Chuuk, Kosrae, and Yap), RMI (Majuro and Ebeye), and Palau, using the WHO's Stepwise Laboratory Improvement Towards Accreditation (SLIPTA) Checklist;
3. Compile audit reports and share audit findings with supporting recommendations with the relevant USAPI laboratory management and their respective health leadership;
4. The RLPS will assist in all project tasks as directed by the RLSC and/or PIHOA Executive Director, including, but not limited to, the daily administration of program-related functions and tasks, assistance with coordination/implementation of program activities and stakeholder planning meetings, and administrative monitoring, including 1) Provide technical assistance to the Association of USAPI Laboratories (AUL) for the implementation of the AUL Action Plan; and compilation of HR and medical laboratory workforce plans; 2) Promote excellence in laboratory services and provide technical assistance for a) the implementation of LQMS criteria towards implementation activities such as the review and endorsement of Hospital Lab Quality Manuals, and assist the USAPI laboratories to develop, endorse and publish their Laboratory Handbooks;
5. Work closely with USAPI laboratory management and their respective health leadership, assigned PIHOA technical staff, and other advisors to plan, implement, monitor, and report on all SLMTA tasks and assigned

PIHOA Regional Laboratory Initiative activities to ensure program objectives, activity timelines, and performance indicators are met in a timely and quality manner. This includes the development of a program implementation plan and performance monitoring framework for each calendar year;

6. Assist the PIHOA RLSC with infectious disease and AMR lab surveillance in the USAPI by collation and submission of periodic lab surveillance reports through established communication platforms (e.g., PIHOA website, PACNET-Lab, etc.)
7. Assist the PIHOA RLSC to provide additional technical support to USAPI laboratories for the following, as required: diagnostic rapid testing support/training for outbreak-prone diseases; support logging, packing, and shipping of clinical specimens related to potential outbreaks for off-island confirmation, including quality assurance and lab assessments to ensure adherence to IATA/ISO requirements;
8. Provide training to maintain certification of IATA Shipping Trainers for each USAPI lab;
9. Assist in ongoing training and quality assessments to maintain biosafety levels and engage in continuous quality improvement in each of the USAPI labs, and to ensure USAPI labs maintain the ability to properly pack and ship food, environmental, chemical, and radiologic specimens for testing (i.e. shipment to CDC Fort Collins, or Guam Public Health and Environmental Health Labs);
10. Work with the RLSC, relevant PIHOA technical staff, and regional partners (e.g. CDC, SPC, WHO, Global Strategic Solutions for Health, and Association of Public Health Laboratories) to continue to support the build-up/expansion and quality improvement of Guam's Department of Public Health and Social Services Public Health and Environmental Health Laboratories as BSL 2+ diagnostic reference labs for outbreak-prone/infectious and other emerging diseases to interested USAPI labs;
11. Support the RLSC to plan and coordinate activities to improve infection prevention and control status in the USAPIs;
12. Strengthen and enhance infection prevention and control in USAPI labs by Conducting microbiology and infection control prevention training for the USAPI laboratories and technical assistance in reviewing and/or compiling the Chuuk State Hospital Infection Control Guidelines and the Lab Biosafety Manual;
13. Support RLSC to engage and coordinate with USAPI Laboratory Managers and regional technical partners to ensure USAPI laboratories have effective and efficient mechanisms, systems, and capacities to support lab-based testing and timely public health alerts/surveillance of outbreak-prone/infectious/emerging diseases;
14. Collate and submit periodic reports to the USAPI laboratory management and health leadership and RLSC that provide qualitative and quantitative summary progress against agreed program tasks, timelines, and milestones;
15. Plan and coordinate mid- and end-of-project evaluation/after-action review efforts in consultation with the USAPI laboratory management concerned. Such report will be shared with the health leadership concerned, PIHOA Executive Director, and the RLSC; and,
16. Perform any other duties as assigned in accordance with the PIHOA regional laboratory initiative objectives.

REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Submission of monthly invoices for payment and programmatic progress reports outlining activity and performance indicator completion status, including additional Duty Travel/Trip/Training Reports, and other relevant documentation providing evidence of work progress.
2. Submission of allowable travel reimbursable receipts as needed (calling/internet cards, airport tax, excess luggage, car rental fuel, etc.).
3. When completed, submission of all final and approved deliverables and reports.

ANTICIPATED PROJECT OUTPUTS (DELIVERABLES):

1. SLMTA Initiative Training Reports
2. Regional Laboratory Initiative Training Reports
3. Lab Quality Assessment Reports
4. Duty Travel Trip Reports
5. Infectious Disease Lab Surveillance Reports
6. AMR Lab Surveillance Reports

PRIMARY QUALIFICATIONS

1. **Education:** Minimum of Bachelor's degree in medical laboratory science or microbiology/infectious diseases. A postgraduate diploma and/or Master's degree in the relevant area of health sciences or public health is desirable (or equivalent professional experience).
2. **Job Experience:** Minimum 3 to 5 years of work experience in a diagnostic/clinical laboratory, microbiology or infectious diseases and/or public health microbiology. Experience working as a clinical laboratory quality assurance manager and/or lab management is preferred.
3. **Job Knowledge:** Advanced knowledge of the lab quality management system, CLSI and ISO laboratory standards, US CLIA regulations, laboratory accrediting institutions, biosafety and shipping of hazardous materials (especially infectious substances), and principles of infection prevention and control.
4. **Abilities and Skills:** Must have excellent English and written communication and report-writing skills. Must possess skills and experience as a training instructor/facilitator. Must have intermediate to advanced computer literacy, and be proficient in Microsoft Office applications. Must understand vague and implicit instructions and react favorably and in an open and diplomatic manner in all work situations. Must be able to communicate in a positive and professional manner. Must be mentally adaptable and flexible in dealing with a variety of people from a variety of different circumstances, languages, cultural beliefs and practices, and health knowledge. Must be proactive, and able to work in an intense work environment with multiple competing tasks and deadlines and possess excellent time management skills.
5. **Travel:** Must be willing and able to travel in the US and internationally, when required, with possible long durations away from home duty station. Must have a valid passport and be willing and able to travel in the US, Pacific region, and internationally. PIHOA does not cover passport and visa expenses. The position will require travel from home base for both short and long periods, and possibly to multiple locations under one travel period.
6. **Citizenship Requirements:** Candidate must possess a valid passport that enables work and residence in the US or freely associated states, and travel to the US and other USAPI sites, preferably a US passport, US Green Card, or other relevant visa type. Please note that PIHOA does not cover expenses related to acquiring a work visa or passport.
7. **Other Requirements:** PIHOA reserves the right to conduct security checks on successful applicants. Though not required, it is highly advised to have a valid driver's license.

PHYSICAL/MENTAL DEMANDS: This consultancy may require prolonged sitting and some standing, walking, kneeling, and bending, requires eye-hand coordination and manual dexterity sufficient to operate computer keyboard and office equipment; and travel to resource-limited and/or rural and jungle/atoll/mountainous environments. Requires occasional lifting up to 45 pounds.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS/OTHER DEMANDS: Given the nature of PIHOA work in the Pacific region and travel requirements for the consultancy services, PIHOA consultants/contractors may potentially be exposed to vector-borne and local infectious diseases, inclement weather conditions, high humidity, intense heat, and sun. Successful candidates must be flexible, adaptable, and able to work in resource-limited, rural island environments with limited public infrastructure and communications, and often less than 1 to 2-star accommodations with little to no disability access.

COMPENSATION: Commensurate with qualifications and experience. Relocation travel airfare, per diem, and associated transit travel lodging between home base and duty station may be covered by PIHOA if the candidate is not currently in Guam at the commencement and conclusion of the consultancy period. Fringe and other benefits are not covered under PIHOA consultancy contracts. Consultants are required to submit monthly invoices for payment with accompanying progress reports that outline the status of deliverables.

TERM OF POSITION: This vacancy is considered a short-term consultancy with a contract effective date of January 1, 2024, through July 31, 2024, with the possibility of renewal/extension based on performance and funding agency approval.

APPLICATION: Submit the following electronically with attention to the PIHOA Contracts Management Officer (keleiser@pihoa.org):

1. **Letter of Interest** that outlines your overall qualifications and professional experience in response to the Primary Qualifications listed above;
2. **Curriculum Vitae or Resume**; and
3. **Minimum of three (3) professional references** - these references must be from current and past employment supervisors based on the last 8-10 years of employment.

For any specific inquiries relating to the scope of work of the consultancy, please direct them to the Regional Laboratory Strengthening Coordinator (vasitiu@pihoa.org).