



## Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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June 23, 2010

TO: Members  
Joint Committee on Finance

FROM: Bob Lang, Director

SUBJECT: Health Services: Governor's Section 13.10 Request for the Use of Federal Stimulus Funding for Electronic Laboratory Reporting for Diseases -- Agenda Item II

The Governor requests that the Joint Committee on Finance approve the expenditure of \$200,000 in 2010-11 from moneys that may be received under the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), to enable clinical care programs to exchange electronic laboratory data with public health programs in Wisconsin.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Department of Health Services (DHS) operates a web-based data system to facilitate the reporting, investigation, and surveillance of communicable diseases in Wisconsin. This system, known as the Wisconsin Electronic Data Surveillance System (WEDSS), contains data collected from the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene (WSLH), Wisconsin-based clinical laboratories, and national laboratories.

Over the past three years, WSLH has worked with DHS to establish a system of electronic laboratory reporting (ELR). ELR allows certain laboratory results to be entered into WEDSS automatically allowing data to be exchanged more efficiently and securely. WSLH and DHS have identified approximately 30 Wisconsin-based clinical laboratories that are sufficiently large to make ELR implementation cost effective. Currently, 19 of these laboratories, one national laboratory, and WSLH report data to WEDSS using ELR. If awarded, DHS and WSLH would use these federal funds to implement ELR at the remaining eight to ten Wisconsin-based clinical laboratories identified by DHS and WSLH, the three remaining national laboratories, and to integrate the WSLH system with the State of Minnesota reporting network.

## **ANALYSIS**

The epidemiology and laboratory capacity for infectious diseases (ELC) grant program was created under ARRA to enhance and advance infrastructure and interoperability support for public health laboratories. ELC is a competitive grant program open to all 50 states plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Republic of Palau, and the five largest U.S. cities. Total grant program funding is \$5,000,000 and it is expected that up to 25 grants ranging in value from \$100,000 to \$600,000 will be awarded. Grant funds will be distributed to recipients over a period of two years. While award decisions are not anticipated until September, 2010, DHS and WSLH expect that Wisconsin will be awarded a grant of \$200,000 annually for two years through this program.

If received, the majority of the grant funding (\$188,125 annually) would be used to fund the salary and fringe benefits costs associated with two new project positions. Currently, WSLH has one program specialist and one IT staff person dedicated to ELR implementation. If this federal grant money is received, WSLH would hire one additional laboratory staff person and one additional IT staff person. These two staff positions would be charged with the implementation of ELR at the remaining laboratories and the integration of the WSLH system with the State of Minnesota reporting network. It is anticipated that these tasks will be completed within the two year grant period and that no additional funds will be required to support these positions in the future.

In addition, WSLH has budgeted \$20,000 for enhancements to its laboratory information management system (LIMS) related to ELR implementation. WSLH is currently in the process of upgrading its existing 20 year-old LIMS. These grant funds would be used to purchase certain non-standard add-ons that would support ELR capabilities. The remainder of the grant funds (\$3,750) would be used for related travel and other administrative costs at DHS and WSLH.

The Governor has requested that the Committee approve the expenditure of \$200,000 in federal grant funds in 2010-11. However, as it is anticipated that funding will be received in both 2010-11 and 2011-12, the Committee may wish to approve the expenditure of those funds in both years. Conversely, as funds have yet to be awarded to DHS and WSLH for these purposes, the Committee may wish to deny the request at this time. If the Committee denies the request, DHS would have to submit another request to the Committee under s. 13.10 if and when such grant funds are awarded.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Approve the expenditure of \$200,000 in 2010-11 and 2011-12 from moneys received under the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to enable clinical care programs to exchange electronic laboratory data with WSLH and DHS.
2. Deny the request.

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