

Background

About APHL

The [Association of Public Health Laboratories \(APHL\)](#) is a national, non-profit organization that represents state and local governmental health laboratories in the United States. Its members, known as “public health laboratories,” monitor and detect health threats to protect the health and safety of Americans.

APHL collaborates with laboratory and public health partners to ensure effective monitoring, detection and response to health threats. It works closely with federal agencies, including the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Health Resources and Services Administration, Food and Drug Administration and Environmental Protection Agency to develop and execute national health initiatives. During public health emergencies, APHL operates as a coordinating center for laboratory response. APHL’s visibility greatly expanded during the COVID-19 pandemic, as public health laboratories took on an unprecedentedly public role in the early days of testing.

APHL also works around the world to develop effective national laboratory systems and expand access to quality diagnostic testing services. With over 60 years’ experience managing public health laboratory programs, it is recognized internationally as a leader in laboratory science and practice. APHL has offices in 10 countries (and counting) and supports ministries of health with consulting services, including laboratory strategic planning, twinning partnerships, laboratory information management systems, quality assurance and training.

In collaboration with its members, APHL advances laboratory systems and practices and promotes policies that support healthy communities globally. The Association serves as a liaison between the public health laboratories and federal and international agencies. It ensures that the network of public health laboratories has current and consistent scientific information to prepare for outbreaks and other public health emergencies.

APHL is organized under the laws of the District of Columbia, with its headquarters office in Silver Spring, MD. APHL is recognized as tax exempt in the United States under Section 501(c)(3) of the US Internal Revenue Code.

Who We Serve

APHL’s core [members](#) are [state and local governmental health laboratories](#) in the United States, including public health, environmental, agricultural science and food safety laboratories. Representatives from federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, corporations and interested individuals also participate in the association. International participation is expanding in response to the globalization of disease and APHL’s active global health program. APHL has over 130 member laboratories, 50 corporate partner organizations and 1,500 individuals in its network.

About the Current APHL Website

Purpose

The APHL website is a platform for pursuing many of the priorities on the association’s [strategic map](#), though it most clearly supports the following items:

- Clearly define the impact of public laboratory system services on the public’s health
- Educate key audiences about the role and impact of the public health laboratory system
- Equip the public health laboratory workforce to be adaptable to change

Additionally, as part of APHL’s Cooperative Agreement with CDC, the association is required to make public summaries of its work and any research findings (via surveys, etc.); the website is the logical and practical place for these data to live.

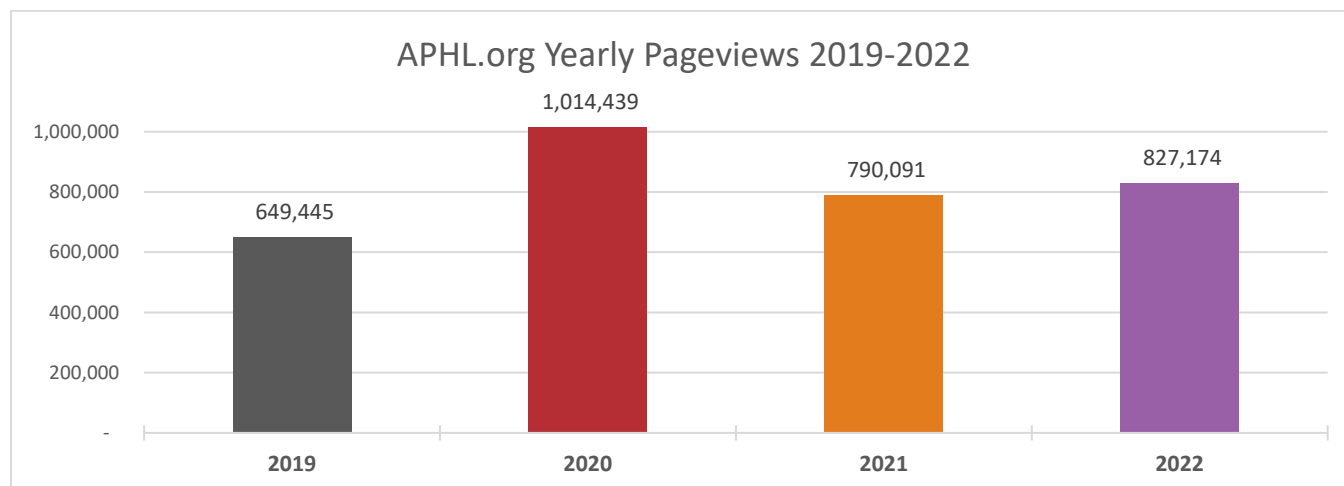
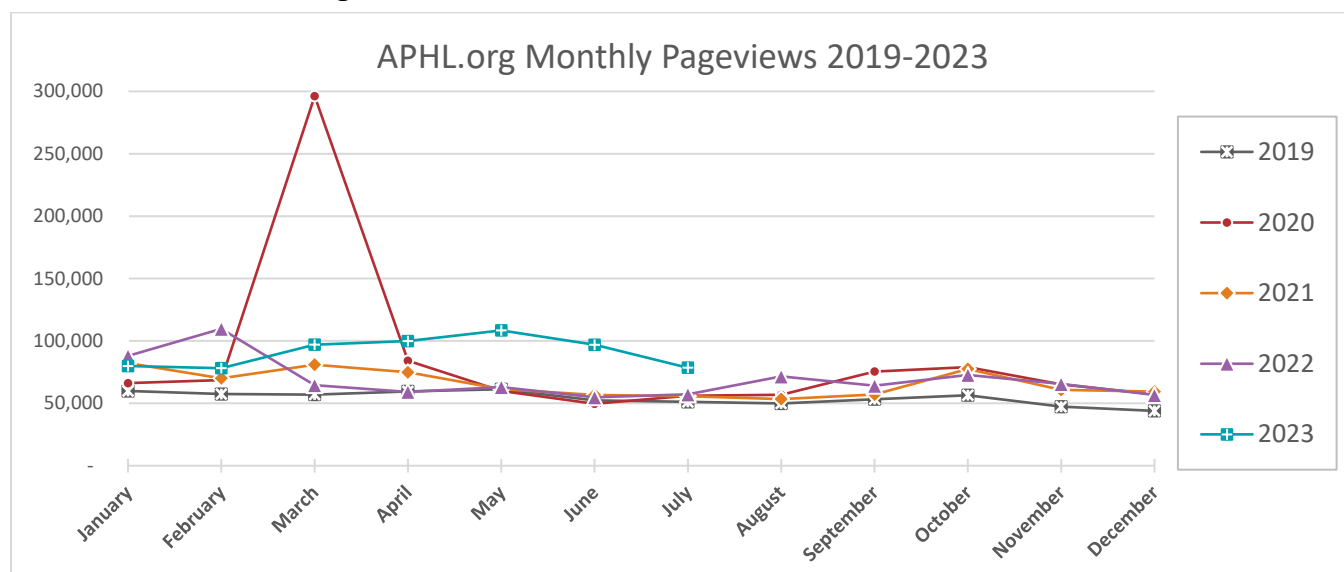
Analytics and Traffic Drivers

Snapshot of Calendar Year 2022

- Pageviews: 797,889 total, 641,945 unique
(Average views per month: ~66,500 total; 53,500 unique)
- Average Time on Page: 00:01:35
- Bounce Rate: 8.17%
- % Exit: 46.25%

Recent Drivers of Traffic to APHL.org

- COVID-19 testing information and resources: APHL's visibility greatly expanded during the COVID-19 pandemic, as public health laboratories took on an unprecedentedly public role in the early days of testing. We built out an extensive educational subsite that could meet the needs of both the laboratory staff doing the testing, and the media and policy makers who needed to understand the testing process.
- Career Pathways: A new workforce development program, Career Pathways in Public Health, was launched mid-2022.
- Meetings and Trainings: Events such as the Annual Conference or our Newborn Screening Symposium always drive a lot of traffic to the site, but since 2021 the major meetings have had a virtual component, allowing a wider audience to register and attend.



Audience and Content

We have three main audiences:

1. Member laboratory staff, industry partners
2. [APHL Career Pathways](#) participants; early career fellows and interns placed in member laboratories, their mentors (laboratory staff) and our academic partners.
3. Informed public, such as state and federal funders/partners, policy makers and the media

Our content caters to both public and technical audiences, and can roughly be broken down into two categories:

- **What the work is:**
 - High-level summary of testing-related health concerns
 - Information about work APHL does (ex., networks that APHL supports or programs we have implemented to support our member laboratories)
 - Information about what laboratories do on a topic (ex., how labs monitor and identify something, survey reports, etc.)
 - Policy/advocacy priorities of the community
 - Information about the Career Pathways program (ex., descriptions of programs, how to apply, etc.)
- **How to do the work:**
 - Technical information and resources for implementing testing, services
 - Training, conferences and events
 - Communities of practice (via [CollABorate platform](#), a connected external microsite)
 - Resources for Career Pathways program participants (ex., forms, handbooks, etc.)
 - Member-developed resources for methods or protocols (restricted access)

The content above is presented within webpages, but also within documents (usually PDFs) hosted on the site. These documents are both [official publications](#) (reports, fact sheets, etc.), as well as more ad-hoc documents (flyers, agendas, etc.) that are linked to for more information. We also share and promote content from external sites, such as the [Annual Report](#), [Lab Matters magazine](#) and the [APHL blog](#).

Site Infrastructure and Management

Current CMS and Design History

The website is built on Microsoft SharePoint 2013 with customized styling sheets and workflows. The website has single sign-on with our association management system (AMS), MC Trade, which helps with user and resource access management. The current website structure allows for public and restricted access based on groups and it also allows for data collection via forms. The last substantial redesign was in 2016; this brought it relatively up to date but didn't really "modernize" the site.

Site Management

The website is primarily managed internally, with a division of labor that spans three groups:

- Information Systems team manages site structure/code-based tasks and any customization needs
- Marketing and Communications team oversees content and site organization, image management, etc.
- Programmatic staff responsible for maintaining content under their team/group's sub site(s); only have editing rights to their specific site.

It is essential that APHL retains the ability to directly manage/manipulate the site content, rather than relying on an outside vendor for all changes.

Site Permissions/Access

There are some features on the website that are only accessible when signed in; accounts are free, but permissions vary by need/type of access. Can include lists or whole pages. Examples:

- [MyAPHL page](#): sign-in required to access page, shows an individual's APHL resources, communities, etc.
- [Member Resource Center](#): This list displays member-generated resources, so access is restricted to those with the "member benefits" tag on their MC Trade profile.

External Sites

APHL has several external sites/platforms beyond the main aphl.org site. Unless otherwise noted, these sites have a single sign-on via MC Trade which allows for continuity/interoperability; a new website would need to retain existing single sign-on capabilities.

We have no plans to remove MC Trade as our AMS. The other external sites do not necessarily need to be part of a website overhaul, but consolidation might be appropriate for some platforms, such as the Blog and Annual Report.

See [Appendix](#) for a list of external sites.

Current Challenges

- **Lack of a grand strategy/vision for the website**
 - Content is produced for multiple audiences by multiple programs, so style and content does not feel consistent across the site
 - No broad SEO strategy
 - No systemic content monitoring, review, archiving (webpages, documents, publications, links, etc.), so content can easily become outdated
 - Challenge to publicize or prioritize member resources (the "how to do the work" items) while still maintaining engagement with our wider post-COVID audience ("about the work")
- **Sub-par user experience**
 - Site navigation is not intuitive, and information silos require many click throughs to find what they need
 - Site was not built with accessibility in mind
- **Sub-par design capabilities**
 - Rigid formatting options and site/page structure
 - Not mobile friendly: non-adaptive/scalable images, page header and menu take away space from content
 - Photo/image integration into main text fields is clunky, not scalable or dynamic
 - No ability to have dynamic/interactive graphics
 - Limited support for advertisements
 - Difficult to adapt to audience needs and new technology without building new custom-coded features

About the Project

Our Vision

APHL aims to create a thoughtfully designed website that embodies the APHL brand and the qualities that make it unique: **leading-edge science, innovative programs, quality service and high standards of excellence** (See Appendix for full branding summary), and addresses the major challenges experienced with the current site. The new site will:

- Have clearly defined audiences and makes it simple to differentiate between audiences/needs (such as “about the work” and “how to do the work” content or resources)
- Have an intuitive user experience, with clear navigation and quick access to essential resources; ideally users will be able to find the information they seek in three clicks or less
- Be secure, fast and have large storage capacity
- Allow for design and maintenance flexibility to quickly respond to time-sensitive situations
- Be adaptive (mobile-friendly), with the ability to incorporate more dynamic or interactive elements.

Scope of Work

This project will be broken down into six stages of work:

1. Website Needs Assessment
2. CMS Selection
3. Website Design
4. Website Build
5. Website Launch
6. Maintenance

These stages do not have to happen in distinct succession, though each stage should build on the previous stages. Below is our projected scope of work, though details may be subject to change upon vendor recommendation and/or research of more optimal solutions. In your proposal, please feel free to suggest alternatives.

Website Needs Assessment

The vendor will work closely with a small group of APHL staff (APHL Web Workgroup) and solicit input from key informants within the association’s staff, members and partners to identify audience needs. The findings from these assessments will inform CMS selection and website organization and design concepts:

- Identification of aphl.org’s strengths/successes and weaknesses/challenges, including, but not limited to:
 - Site structure
 - Content organization
 - User experience
 - Navigation
 - Site management
- Clarification of the website’s overarching purpose
- Definition of key audiences and design/organization suggestions for best serving their conflicting needs
- Options to address or improve major weaknesses/challenges in new website
- Assess options for re-incorporating select external sites into new website

CMS Selection

The vendor will help the APHL Web Workgroup select the most appropriate CMS platform for the site, based on the findings from the needs assessment and administrative/maintenance needs. Please note that there is a **strong preference to avoid open-source CMS options**, such as WordPress.

The vendor will:

- Identify up to five viable options for a new CMS platform
- Present pros/cons for selected CMS platforms to APHL Web Workgroup; the Workgroup will choose top two or three platforms for further review
- Conduct demonstrations with APHL Web Workgroup for their top-choice CMS platforms.

Website Design

- Site Architecture
 - Produce site map of current website
 - Produce up to three high-level site maps for new site (depending on scope of organizational changes)
- Accessibility and User Experience (UX)
 - Site must be 508 compliant
 - Use UX principles to guide design choices
- Navigation
 - Provide outlines (up to 3) for site navigation organization
 - Provide wireframes (up to 3) for site navigation design options, including mobile view
- Wireframes
 - Master page layout (header/footer, global navigation, other universal elements)
 - Individual page layouts (up to 8), such as:
 - APHL.org Home Page (L1)
 - Subsite home page (L2)
 - Standard content pages (L3); up to three template options
 - Blog
 - Specialty content pages (e.g., Gallery or resource lists, interactive documents, event sites w/ options for meeting-specific branding)
 - Mobile view layouts for L1, L2 and L3 pages
- Design Concepts
 - Provide three design concepts for L1, L2 and L3 pages, for desktop and mobile view.
 - Design concept for blog (if merging into new site), with social media integration
 - Include several rounds of revisions
- Component Blocks

Identify options for up to 20 customizable or interactive design elements (webparts, plug-ins, etc.), such as:

 - Featured content (e.g., image carousel, 2nd tier highlighted content)
 - Featured/promoted resources, stories (e.g., filterable resource lists (images, documents, links, etc.), blog stories, publications, social feeds, upcoming events, etc.)
 - Dynamic content options (e.g., expandable/collapsible sections, forms, surveys, applications, dashboards, maps, event registration)
 - Graphics (e.g., icons, images, video, etc.)

Website Build

- Infrastructure and Security
 - Provide staging and production environment
 - Plugins to be updated in staging environment and pushed to production after testing
 - Cookie Management and custom acknowledgment messages
 - Integrate with APHL's AMS (MC Trade)
 - Single sign-on capability with external sites (at least the ones that already have this feature)
 - Ability to use AMS data to manage access to areas of the site
 - Provide a security mechanism to protect CMS
 - Provide back-up solutions for entire database
 - Provide versioning history for page updates and if applicable approval workflow before publishing
 - Provide role-based access control to CMS – if possible, the ability to create custom roles
 - Provide mechanism to integrate with APHL's data collection systems
 - Testing and implementation of Google Analytics, Google Tag Manager, and Google Search console in production environment.
- Development and Production
 - Determine site hosting needs; APHL is not limited to current hosting infrastructure
 - If in-house hosting is recommended, provide system requirements for optimal performance
 - Ensure optimal page load time
 - Install and configure staging and live environments
- Design Implementation
 - Wireframe/design review and recommendations as needed
 - Develop elements for and subsequently build templates for the page layouts (L1, L2, L3s, etc.) and up to 20 component blocks in the CMS
 - Initial quality assurance for responsiveness, along with other accessibility, feature, bug and user-flow testing
 - Create workflows/guidelines for page updates and image uploads
 - Incorporate any responsive styling, including breakpoints as needed, where the layout changes with screen size
- SEO Strategy and Implementation
 - Review proposed site design, site architecture and URL structure; provide specific recommendations to improve search engine optimization (SEO)
 - Perform SEO technical audit; make corrections as needed
- Content Migration: Migrate content from old to new site

Website Launch

- Testing
 - Test and validate desktop and mobile layouts to ensure proper styling, formatting and functioning, review media paths and monitor security
 - Conduct accessibility/508 audit, make corrections as needed
 - Post-launch stability monitoring
- Training: Two remote training sessions on CMS for applicable APHL staff

- Site Launch
 - Move site from staging server to a live environment
 - Set up page redirects for up to 40 key original aphl.org webpages
 - Archive old site for up to two years

Website Maintenance

- Create maintenance plan for system upgrades, bug fixes, etc.
- Other ad-hoc updates/troubleshooting or trainings, as needed

Payment Options

APHL will pay the vendor based on progress of the project.

Project Timeline

Targeting site launch by the end of 2025, with a post-launch period of one to two years for ad-hoc updates and troubleshooting. Exact timing will depend on start of contract, the exact scope of work outlined in the contract and the speed/capacity of the vendor, but the following is a tentative timeline:

Dec. 2023Finalize contract

Jan.–May 2024.....Website Needs Assessment stage

May 6-9, 2024.....*APHL Annual Conference (Not a deliverable date, but potential APHL staff blackout time with limited staff bandwidth in month leading up to conference; could also be an opportunity to access members in person)*

May–July 2024 CMS platform selection

July–Dec. 2024..... Website Design stage

Jan.–July 2025..... Website Build stage

July–Dec. 2025..... Website Launch stage

See the RFP Process and Timeline > RFP Schedule section for more proposal-specific dates.

Evaluation Criteria

Once submission has closed, APHL's Evaluation Team will use the following criteria to determine which applicant best responded to the requirements in the RFP. APHL will not change or modify evaluation criteria after receipt of offers.

Category	Criteria	Possible Points
Company Overview	Years of relevant experience	25
	Size of Team	15
	Association or non-profit experience within last five years	15
	Project Management System	20
	Communications process	20
	Continuity Plan	20
	Portfolio Examples	25
	Company Overview Total Possible Score	140
Ability To Complete the Project	Stage 1: Assessment	50
	Stage 2: CMS	50
	Stage 3: Design	50
	Stage 4: Build	50
	Stage 5: Launch	50
	Tasks contracted out	20
	Ability to Complete Project Total Possible Score	270
Specific Expertise / Capabilities	Accessibility	40
	UX	40
	Site Security	25
	CMS options	50
	Third-party Site Single Sign-on	25
	Third-party Site Integration	15
	Social Media Integration	15
	Analytics options	10
	SEO	15
	Expertise Total Possible Score	235
Project Overview	Timeline to start project	25
	Timeline for completion	15
	Round(s) of edits	15
	Adaptability to change	15
	Project Overview Total Possible Score	70
Cost	Stage 1: Assessment	25
	Stage 2: CMS	25
	Stage 3: Design	25
	Stage 4: Build	25
	Stage 5: Launch	25
	Extras	15
	Cost Total Possible Score	140

A member of APHL's Evaluation Team will respond directly to the questions on an individual basis, as questions are received. While APHL will endeavor to answer questions within one business day of receipt, additional time may be needed depending on the query or concern raised.

APHL is unlikely to answer questions received after the stated deadline, unless the query or concern raises a substantial issue that could affect multiple applicants and may be answered without impacting the application submission and review process. Should APHL opt to answer any late questions, APHL will post the question and answer to APHL's procurement website and will not respond directly to the sender.

Contacts

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Appendix

APHL's External Websites and Microsites

- **APHL Submission Portal** (via RQ Awards)
 - Purpose: Hosts applications for fellowships, internships, award nominations, etc.
 - Access: Single Sign-on with aphl.org
 - **Open to integration with aphl.org**
- **CollABorate Online Communities**
 - Purpose: Online communities of practice, message boards, etc.
 - Access: Single Sign-on with aphl.org
 - **Open to integration with aphl.org**
- **Annual Report**
 - Purpose: microsite hosting an interactive report, updated on a yearly basis and built by an outside designer
 - Access: No sign-in required to access content
 - **Open to integration with aphl.org**
- **APHL Blog** (via WordPress)
 - Purpose: publish stories and other content. Stories are also featured on aphl.org via query webparts
 - Access: No sign-in required to access content
 - **Open to integration with aphl.org**
- **Career Center**
 - Purpose: external job postings from members or partners
 - Access: No sign-in required to access job postings; independent sign-in required to post jobs or resumes
- **APHL Jobs** (via iCIMS)
 - Purpose: internal job postings, interviewing and onboarding processes
 - Access: No sign-in required to access job postings; independent sign-in required to post jobs or resumes
- **APHL Learning Center**
 - Purpose: host on-demand trainings (webinars, interactive courses, etc.), track individual's progress on courses, credits, etc.
 - Access: Single Sign-on with aphl.org
- **NewSTEPS**
 - Purpose: The Newborn Screening Technical assistance and Evaluation Program (NewSTEPS) is an APHL program that supports state newborn screening programs; the website is a resource center that hosts a large data repository and generates data visualizations.
 - Access: No sign-in required to access main site; independent sign-in required to access state-specific data or other specific visualizations, or to update a state's profile information
- **Datapult**
 - Purpose: Datapult is a wholly owned subsidiary and LLC of APHL and is a 501(c)(3) company.
 - Access: No sign-in required

APHL Branding Guidelines

Note: The following guidelines are just for informational purposes and do not need to be incorporated into the submitted proposal.

APHL has established branding and graphic standards to create a visual identity for the association. By assuring consistent standards, we raise APHL's visibility among target audiences, as our customers come to associate our "look" with our commitment to strengthening public health laboratory science and practice. The standards also reinforce those qualities that make APHL unique: **leading-edge science, innovative programs, quality service and high standards of excellence**. Like a flag, the standards identify our products while representing our collective achievements, values and aspirations.

APHL Colors

APHL has two primary colors: **TEAL** and **RUST**.

Primary Colors

Colors		RGB	CMYK	Hex Code
APHL Teal		R 0, G 160, B 175	C 100, M 0, Y 31, K 7	#009999
APHL Rust		R 180, G 46, B 52	C 0, M 90, Y 72, K 29	#990000
Black		R 0, G 0, B 0	C 0, M 0, Y 0, K 100	#000000

Secondary Colors

Secondary colors should be used sparingly but are helpful in presentations or graphics where a variety of colors may be needed (e.g., icons, charts).

Primary Color Gradients

Colors		RGB	CMYK	Hex Code
Teal - Light		R 163, G 204, B 204	C 36, M 7, Y19, K 0	#A3CCCC
Teal - Medium		R 0, G 110, B 121	C 90, M 42, Y45, K 14	#006E79
Teal - Dark		R 0, G 80, B 87	C 93, M 53, Y54, K 33	#005057
Rust - Light		R 243, G 209, B 210	C 3, M 20, Y10, K 0	#F3D1D2
Rust - Dark		R 134, G 34, B 38	C 29, M 95, Y85, K 33	#862226

Secondary Colors

Colors		RGB	CMYK	Hex Code
Green		R 104, G 189, B 73	C 63, M 0, Y97, K 0	#68BD49
Yellow		R 235, G 171, B 33	C 7, M 35, Y100, K 0	#EBAB21
Orange		R 227, G 124, B 29	C 8, M 61, Y100, K 0	#E37C1D
Purple		R 153, G 96, B 167	C 44, M 73, Y0, K 0	#9960A7

APHL Logos

The APHL logo is the foundation of the association's identity, and the most visible component of our organization's brand. The following guidelines outline the correct and consistent use of the association's logo.

Logo Type	Logo	Use
Full logo (long), Teal and Rust		Preferred option For use on white or very light solid colors. Use any file type on white; PNG or EPS only over colors.
Full logo (long), Black		Use on light color(s). Use only as PNG or EPS to retain transparent background.
Full logo (long), White		Use on dark color(s). Use only as PNG or EPS to retain transparent background.
Short logo (acronym)		Use in conjunction with a long logo or on its own if space is an issue. Color options: • Teal: Preferred option; use on white or light solid colors. Use any file type on white; PNG or EPS only over colors. • Black: Use on light color(s); PNG or EPS only. • White: Use on dark color(s); PNG or EPS only.

APHL Official Fonts

Helvetica Neue Family: Headers, Callouts

The Helvetica Neue typestyle was selected for titles, headers and extra "callout" information because of its crispness, simplicity and versatility. There are a variety of weights to suit your needs. The kerning for the type should be between -3 and -10.

Franklin Gothic Family: Body Text

The Franklin Gothic typestyle was selected to be used for body copy because of its readability. The kerning for the type should be a consistent -3.

Alternative Fonts

Alternative to Helvetica for title/head font: Franklin Gothic Demi or Franklin Gothic Medium

Alternative to Franklin Gothic for body font: Arial