Project Director – Genomic Surveillance

Focus: Viral Metagenomics & Scientific Leadership

Position Summary

The Project Director will provide scientific leadership for the GeoSentinel Network's (GeoSentinel) growing genomic surveillance project portfolio. The primary focus for this position is overseeing the development and implementation of an international genomic surveillance strategy. The Project Director will be responsible for defining the scientific vision, technical framework, and analytical strategy for such activities, while leveraging and coordinating expertise across GeoSentinel.

This work will be in coordination with the U.S. Centers for Control and Prevention (CDC) and aims to modernize existing public health surveillance systems to include advanced molecular detection and metagenomic next-generation sequencing (mNGS). GeoSentinel (a collaboration between CDC and the International Society of Travel Medicine) is a global, clinical-care–based surveillance and research network of travel and tropical medicine sites that monitors infectious diseases and other adverse health events that affect international travelers. The network has been awarded funds to focus on molecular and genomic pathogen identification in ill returning travelers. The current phase of work will prioritize travelers presenting with febrile or respiratory illness that remain undiagnosed following routine evaluation. The planned methodology involves collection of clinical specimens from patients without a diagnosis at GeoSentinel sites for further multi-pathogen molecular testing, followed by metagenomic, pathogen-agnostic testing if needed. Results will be rapidly integrated with other national and international surveillance efforts, including those led by the CDC, to strengthen pathogen detection and biosurveillance capacity. Building a laboratory network capable of sharing specimens and data is key to the success of this project.

This will be a **part-time, fixed-term position** (anticipated ~30–40% FTE for ~12+ months), designed for an established scientist who will work closely with

a full-time Project Manager responsible for day-to-day operations. The salary range for this position is 60,000 USD to 80,000 USD annualized for part-time (calculated from a 200,000 USD full-time equivalent rate).

Our preference is for candidates available immediately. The current award supports employment through **August 30, 2027**, with anticipated opportunities for extension pending additional funding.

Key Responsibilities

Scientific Leadership & Strategy

- Serve as the scientific lead for GeoSentinel's genomic surveillance projects, with emphasis on viral metagenomics, agnostic testing approaches, and molecular surveillance.
- Define and refine the scientific scope of genomic surveillance projects within GeoSentinel, including pathogen focus (initially viral), specimen types (e.g., blood, serum, respiratory), and analytical priorities.
- Lead development of the scientific and technical framework for genomic surveillance projects.

Protocol & Pipeline Development

- Oversee the design and drafting of core scientific protocols, including sample collection, processing, and storage; metagenomic sequencing strategies; and bioinformatics analysis.
- Provide subject-matter expertise on bioinformatics analysis (molecular epidemiology) integration, including how GeoSentinel-generated data will interface with external (e.g., CDC) data aggregation systems.
- Ensure scientific rigor, feasibility, and alignment with project objectives.

Network & Expert Coordination

- Convene and coordinate scientific experts across the GeoSentinel Network to harmonize methodologies and leverage laboratory expertise and analytic capacity.
- Facilitate consensus-building among laboratory hubs, , recognizing heterogeneity in lab expertise and infrastructure, while ensuring efficient pipeline development and quality control
- Serve as the primary scientific liaison between GeoSentinel leadership, participating laboratories, and external partners (e.g., CDC).

Oversight & Reporting

- Provide scientific oversight to the Project Manager, offering guidance on technical decisions, troubleshooting, and prioritization.
- Report progress, challenges, and scientific outputs to the GeoSentinel Scientific Council and leadership.
- Contribute to scientific deliverables, including interim reports, final technical summaries, and manuscripts as appropriate.

Required Qualifications

- PhD, MD, or equivalent advanced degree in virology, microbiology, genomics, bioinformatics, or a closely related field.
- Demonstrated expertise in genomic surveillance, molecular biology, viral metagenomics, and agnostic pathogen detection approaches.
- Strong understanding of sequencing pipelines and bioinformatics concepts (hands-on coding not required, but conceptual fluency essential).
- Experience working across multi-site or international research networks.
- Ability to commit a defined, limited percentage of time while maintaining an external primary appointment.

Preferred Qualifications

- Prior experience designing or leading genomic surveillance or metagenomics programs.
- Familiarity with domestic (US) and international public health laboratory systems and data-sharing frameworks.
- Experience working with CDC or other national public health agencies.

How to Apply

Applications will be accepted through 10 June 2026. Following the application deadline, all submissions will undergo an initial review using standardized evaluation criteria to ensure a fair, objective, and consistent assessment process. Selected candidates will advance to a formal interview process, which may include multiple rounds of structured interviews, skills or project-based assessments, and reference checks. Final selection decisions will be based on overall qualifications, demonstrated experience, interview performance, and alignment with the needs and goals of the project/organization.

Interested candidates should submit a cover letter and current CV to Jaclyn Simon at jsimon@istm.org no later than 10 June 2026. The cover letter should outline the candidate's relevant experience, qualifications, and interest in the position.

To learn more about ISTM and GeoSentinel, visit us at istm.org and geosentinel.org.