



Make an informed choice.

Questions to ask your contract lab representative.

The right contract lab can help you supplement staffing needs, provide you with independent, unbiased technical expertise and may even offer time-saving advantages.

In addition to touring their laboratory, here are some questions you may want to ask your contract lab partner to help you build a solid foundation for a productive relationship.

Accreditations and Regulations:

- Is your contract lab ISO/IEC 17025 accredited?
- Does your lab have regulatory body approvals and audits (e.g., the USDA for AMS school lunch program)?

Methods:

- What is the scope of your methods, both ISO and non-ISO?
- Does your lab run accredited methods?
- What is the method verification process for each matrix my company will be submitting?
- How can your lab demonstrate to my company that the method is fit for purpose?
- How are methods selected?
- Are rapid methods available for a faster time to result?
- If an accredited method is not listed on your scope, can it be added to align to our company's food safety plan?
- Does your lab have capabilities to outsource for other needs we might have, either within your laboratory network or partner laboratories?

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Data Management:

- What Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) system do you utilize?
- How do you verify the integrity of our data?
- How long are records retained?
- How do you protect the confidentiality of our data?

Placing Orders and Result Delivery:

- How are sample results communicated once available, and what is the approval process for releasing results?
- What are the lead time requirements for customer samples from ordering to result communication?

Customer Service:

- What type of support will we receive from our sales representative, as well as customer service?
- Does this include technical support (consulting), or is that an additional charge?
- Does your firm offer educational events and professional development opportunities for my team?
- Are challenge studies or audit support offered if needed?

Pricing:

- How are test prices determined and what is my total cost to outsource?
- If test volume increases, does price per test decrease based on economies of scale?
- Are sample collection materials included in the cost per test?
- What are the standard payment terms?

Ask for a COA:

Ask for a sample COA and check that the following information is included:

- Relevant dates (samples received, testing initiated, results reported)
- Method reference for each test
- Temperature of sample upon arrival to lab
- Testing laboratory for each analysis, if they outsource any of it
- Sample size/units of measure for result (e.g., /g or /ml for quantitative tests, 25g, 375g etc., for qualitative tests)
- Test results
- Signature of responsible party at the laboratory

Developing a strong partnership with your contract laboratory is critical if your company has chosen to outsource some or all of your quality and food safety testing. The lab you hire must be trusted to serve as a strategic partner.

Notes



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