

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 17025 accredited?
- □ Does your lab have regulatory body approvals and audits (e.g., the SCC Standard's Council of Canada)?

Methods:

Notes

- ☐ 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?
- \square 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?

Sa	mple Collection:	La	b Operations:		
i 	Are sample collection materials included in the price per test? If so, what kind of sample collection materials are provided?		☐ How often are internal method or system audits performed?		
			Are external audits for ISO 17025 performed? If so, how regularly?		
			Can you provide details about your internal lab environmental monitoring program?		
	When choosing the appropriate neutralizing buffer, is the sanitizer used in my plant taken into consideration?		What is your lab's mitigation protocol?		
			How are corrective actions and root causes addressed and what is the expected timeline?		
	Can we use our own sampling devices? If so, is the device used in our facility compatible with testing done?		What controls are in place in your operational process to reduce the element of human error, such as automation?		
			What steps does your company take to reduce waste and operate in a sustainable manner?		
			Does your lab have separation from raw to processed samples?		
	gistics: What time should we expect the courier to arrive to pick up the cooler?		How does your lab prevent cross-contamination and verify that this program is effective?		
			How does your lab verify a positive result was not an in-lab contamination (e.g., green fluorescent protein [GFP]-tagged pathogens)?		
	Is the courier internal to		Is your staff properly trained on aseptic technique?		
	your company or is it a third-party courier?		What are your staff training methods and how is proficiency of all technicians maintained? How often are technicians retrained or audited?		
	Are all courier vehicles temperature controlled?		What are your hours of operation and what are the days/times at which the lab will accept samples?		
	What process of auditing is done on third-party couriers (e.g., background checks, driving records, etc.)?		Under what circumstances can your lab accommodate emergency samples?		
			What is the backup plan in the event of emergencies at the lab (power outages, weather incidents, system shutdowns, etc.)?		
	Notes				

	ata Management:	Pr	icing:
	What Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) system do you utilize?		How are test prices determined and what is my total cost to outsource?
	How do you verify the integrity of our data?		If test volume increases, does price per test decrease
	How long are records retained?		based on economies of scale?
	How do you protect the confidentiality of our data?		Are sample collection materials included in the cost per test?
PI	acing Orders and Result Delivery:		What are the standard payment terms?
	How are sample results communicated once available, and what is the approval process for releasing results?	As	sk for a COA:
	What are the lead time requirements for customer samples from ordering to result communication?	Ask for a sample COA and check that the following information is included:	
_			Relevant dates (samples received, testing initiated, results reported)
C	ustomer Service:		Method reference for each test
	What type of support will we receive from our sales		Temperature of sample upon arrival to lab
	representative, and customer service? Does this include technical support (consulting), or is		Testing laboratory for each analysis, if they outsource any of it
	that an additional charge? Does your firm offer educational events and		Sample size/units of measure for result (e.g., /g or /ml for quantitative tests, 25 g, 375 g etc., for qualitative tests)
	professional development opportunities for my team? Are challenge studies or audit support offered if needed?		Test results
Ц			Signature of responsible party at the laboratory
	veloping a strong partnership with your contract labora ne or all of your quality and food safety testing. The lab	-	
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