

FAQs

Q: Read through the announcement last night. Appears that FSIS is going toward BSL 3/ Select agent laboratories. There are quite a few items that we don't really qualify. I know we have a call on Monday, but I was hoping for some clarification.

A: Write your proposal to explain all of what you can do from the requirements, including any formal agreements or MOU's with sister agencies in your State who would provide a capacity or capability your lab does not.

Q: I read the FSIS FERN CAP D. Application and Submission Information and I would like to confirm that the applicant laboratory must be FERN approved in at least two disciplines.

A: Yes. In the FERN portal, the LabDir database need to reflect that your laboratory is approved for at least 2 testing disciplines (microbiology, chemistry, radiochemistry).

Q: My reading of today's posting on Grants.gov is that the funding opportunity named in the subject line is separate and distinct from the FDA's Laboratory Flexible Funding Model; is that correct?

A: Yes. This announcement is through the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service and is separate from the FDA Laboratory Flexible Funding Model (LFFM).

Q: Is there a template for the proposal?

A: There is no template for the written proposal.

Q: Will you expect successful labs to provide services in two or more of the disciplines, or simply to have capabilities in disciplines besides the one their proposal is focused on? Specifically, do we need to submit a joint proposal that includes chemistry or microbiology components in addition to a radiochemistry one?

A: Laboratories will need to perform work in 2 of the 3 disciplines. This would include activities that fall under the required projects and projects from the additional project list.

Q: Are there any FSIS FERN preferences for microbiological instrument platforms in the next 5 years?

A: No. However, we are aware that there are newer PCR platforms available and that some methods will need to be validated on those new platforms. We are also aware that new platforms for isolate confirmation, such as MALDI-TOF based systems, are also increasing in popularity and that the validation of those instruments would also be necessary.

Q: What does it mean to be FERN-approved for the micro, chem, or radiochem disciplines to be eligible to apply for this grant?

A: In the FERN portal, the LabDir database needs to reflect that your laboratory is approved for at least 2 testing disciplines (microbiology, chemistry, radiochemistry). Approval is given after FERN NPO accepts a laboratory submitted checklist in that discipline.

Q: Will laboratories need to perform multiple projects from the additional projects list?

A: Proposal should include at least 1 additional project for each discipline in which the laboratory is going to perform work for the cooperative agreement (ex. 1 project in the microbiology area, and 1 project in the radiochemistry area would be acceptable for a laboratory to propose).

Q: I noticed the chemistry challenge tests were not included in the list of required activities. Are they still of interest?

A: With the increase in samples from National Special Security Events (NSSE) and the regular PT schedule, surveillance samples, and capability and capacity exercise, the challenge samples were not include as a regular activity at this time.

Q: The FDA has ICP-MS and LC-MS courses, what is FSIS looking for in the proposal for new courses, just something like the FDA courses?

A: FSIS is looking for more streamlined, FERN method focused courses allowing participants hands-on instrument, food prep, and troubleshooting experience.

Q: Is the sampling for the surveillance tied to the MFRPS program

A: No, samples for the surveillance activities will be submitted by FSIS personnel or collected at retail by the award recipient, as prescribed by each surveillance event.