

USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service



FSIS FERN Cooperative Agreements

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USDA/FSIS FERN Division Cooperative Agreements

- **Enhancement of Food Emergency Response Network Laboratory Testing Capability for Microbiological Threat Agents.**
- FSIS FERN Division cooperative agreements
 - target State, Local, and tribal **FERN** labs
 - augment microbiological threat agent testing capacities
 - expand the numbers of member laboratories

Important Dates

- Federal Register Notice published **April 20, 2005, Vol. 70, No. 75, Pages 20517-20521.**
- Proposals were due **June 20, 2005.**
- Cooperators whose project proposals are selected for further development will need to reach agreement with FSIS on details to permit establishment of the cooperative agreement no later than **July 30, 2005**
- FSIS will review and respond to proposals by **August 3, 2005**

FSIS Cooperative Agreements

- Validate Interim FERN Microbiological methods posted on eLEXNET
- Utilize FSIS and FDA regulated food matrices for validation and surveillance studies

FSIS Cooperative Agreements

- Interactive process between cooperators and FSIS FERN to produce useful deliverables
- Provide data through eLEXNET for use by FERN labs

Selection Criteria

- Proposal's merit toward FERN needs
 - Methodology – Matrices and Agents
 - Timeline and deliverables
- Strategic geographic locations
- National Benefit – How can FERN be strengthened by proposal?
- Cost/benefit analysis - future utility

Expectations

- Enhance FERN lab capacity
 - Supplies and Equipment
 - Participate in training opportunities
- Perform method validations
- Submit data to FERN via eLEXNET

Expectations

- Participation in PT Programs
- Participation in incident response scenarios or surveillance exercises
- Promote regional participation and cooperation

Future Plans

- Selections for this round will be made soon
- The process will be ongoing with yearly agreements in the future

Future Plans

- Labs not selected this year should not despair...opportunities for funding are planned for the future