

March 25, 2004

Re: ACIL Seal of Excellence Program Application

The 2004 ACIL Seal of Excellence Program is now underway! We welcome and encourage your participation. Our program is a unique complement to other means your laboratory may have to assess the quality of its performance. ACIL thinks of this program as the "Better Business Bureau" for our industry in that it offers an effective, third party program to benchmark and market the quality of your laboratory services.

There are some new changes in 2004 and we continue to encourage feedback from participants on any proposed changes for the program in 2005. Enclosed are the instructions, application, data integrity statement, customer surveys, and timeline. In order to become a participant in the 2004 ACIL Seal of Excellence Program, please:

1. Complete and return the application, a brief statement of qualifications and the appropriate fee, to:
Ms. Marlene Moore, Administrator
ACIL Seal of Excellence Program
P.O. Box 8032
Newark, DE 19714
2. After receipt of your application, customer surveys will be pre-printed with your laboratory name and address and mailed back to you
3. The pre-printed customer surveys must be distributed to your top clients. When completed, your clients should drop these in the mail directly to us. Place postage on the customer survey postcards and distribute the customer surveys to your top clients. When the clients complete the cards, they should drop the cards in the mail directly to us. (If your laboratory selects to use its own survey data, you must obtain approval by May 1, 2004. See enclosed for details.)
4. Submit your most recent twelve months of Proficiency Testing (PT) results for all common analyses that your laboratory currently performs or have the data submitted directly by your PT provider. Proficiency Testing results for analytes or analyte groups that are measured infrequently (less than 10% of revenue) should not be included. ASI must be notified of the PT data that represents less than 10% of the laboratory revenue. PT data may be submitted by the PT provider in AAMS (IT Toolworks) format.
5. Submit documented participation in a data integrity or quality assurance class by any of your laboratory personnel, for additional credit on your customer satisfaction score. Confirmation of registration for the ACIL Annual Meeting to be held on October 8 - 12, 2004 in Orlando, FL will qualify for this credit for the 2004 Seal of Excellence Program.
6. Submit the signed Data Integrity Statement. Please note that for laboratories that are not ACIL members, a signed ACIL Code of Ethics must also be submitted. Contact the Program Administrator for a copy of the ACIL code of ethics.

All application materials and fees are due by **June 1st, 2004**. Complete customer survey information and proficiency test information must be received by **July 15th, 2004**. If you need any assistance or have any questions about the ACIL Seal of Excellence program, I can be contacted by email (mmoore@advancedsys.com), phone (302-368-1211), or by fax (720-293-3706).

We look forward to your participation,

Marlene Moore
Program Administrator

MM/mtf
Encl.

Differentiating Environmental Laboratories

Differentiating laboratories based on quality is a challenging task. Through the ACIL Seal of Excellence Program, laboratories can access a service that provides an independent verification of their quality.

The Program was developed in 1996 to address our industry's need to improve its focus on quality issues and recognize those laboratories with exemplary quality performance. The Program does not attempt to measure data integrity, as this function is better left to auditors and other evaluation methods. However, to demonstrate our members' commitment and concern for data integrity, the ACIL Seal of Excellence Program now requires a signed and detailed Data Integrity Statement from each participant.

The ACIL Seal of Excellence Program also does not attempt to manage a complex, statistically valid system to objectively measure laboratory quality. The ACIL Seal of Excellence Program serves as a "Better Business Bureau" for environmental laboratories. It exists to complement programs such as NELAC, ISO and A2LA and to provide information that is not available from other sources.

Participants agree to provide to clients and regulators impartial information on the quality of their analysis. Over 75 laboratories in the US and abroad have participated since the program's inception.

The program includes a number of measurements that distinguish a laboratory's quality, including:

- Annual report documenting the laboratory's Customer Service and Proficiency Testing (PT) rating against peer laboratories.
- An internal QC tool. A comparison of PT results against a national database.
- Benchmarking against objective criteria.
- Clear differentiation from non-Program laboratories.
- Public assertion that they are concerned and pro-active on issues involving data integrity and ethics.
- Recognition for outstanding performance.
- Marketing leverage with potential customers and with state and federal regulators.
- The ability to use the designation, "An ACIL Seal of Excellence Participating Laboratory", in marketing efforts (i.e., including quotes, proposals, reports, print advertising and trade show displays.)
- Immediate alerts to significant customer service problems or trends.
- Improved customer relationships by involving an independent agency.
- The elimination or reduction of costs for internally conducted customer surveys.

Participation & Requirements

The ACIL Seal of Excellence Program is open to all laboratories. Participating laboratories submit an application and a brief Statement of Qualifications to the Program Administrator. Upon meeting all program requirements, a laboratory is registered as a participating laboratory by the Program Administrator. The ACIL Seal of Excellence Laboratory Program requirements are:

- 1) The company must agree to abide by the Program's Code of Ethics. Current ACIL members in good standing have already completed the Ethics Statement as part of their membership. Non-ACIL participants are required to sign the ACIL Code of Ethics Statement.
- 2) The company must agree to abide by the Program's Data Integrity Statement. All participants, including ACIL members in good standing, must read, understand and sign the ACIL Seal of Excellence Data Integrity Statement as part of their participation.

- 3) The laboratory must submit the hardcopy of all PT data from the original PT provider reports or have the data submitted electronically by the PT provider directly to the Program Administrator. The PT data for a period of twelve months (August 2003 to July 2004) should include at least two rounds of testing. The PT data must include those analyses from which the laboratory derives at least 10% of its revenue, for all testing areas that the laboratory is actively performing analysis. The laboratory may notify their PT provider to submit data directly to the Program Administrator using the standard format for designated AAMS Import Fields.
- 4) Each laboratory must submit one Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire to each of its top 40 clients based on a ranking of annual client income to each laboratory. The Program Administrator must receive or obtain data for a minimum of 20 questionnaires for each participating laboratory.
- 5) Laboratories are instructed specifically to not select their favorite clients for distribution of the surveys. All surveys must be sent to the attention of the client-contracting officer or to the person who receives the majority of laboratory reports. In the interest of confidentiality, the Program Administrator will not maintain any lists of client names.
- 6) Any documented proof of participation in a data integrity or quality system external training seminar or conference contributes to the overall customer satisfaction score. This credit will be two tenths of a point for each ACIL sponsored event, and one tenth of a point for each non-ACIL sponsored event per laboratory. Confirmation of registration for the ACIL Annual Meeting in October 2004 qualifies for this credit.
- 7) The laboratory must make known to clients its participation in the ACIL Seal of Excellence Laboratory Program and be willing to have the summary information collected by ACIL Seal of Excellence Laboratory Program made publicly available.
- 8) The laboratory must be responsive to inquiries from the Program Administrator regarding issues that arise from the operation of the program.
- 9) The laboratory must permit access to its facility by Program employees or their designees, if requested. The purpose of these visits is to verify the information provided in the Statement of Qualifications. The visit is not a full-scale audit of laboratory capabilities.
- 10) The laboratory must be current on its annual ACIL Seal of Excellence Laboratory Program fee.
- 11) The laboratory must agree to follow advertising and marketing requirements when using the ACIL Seal of Excellence Laboratory Program name and/or logo.
- 12) Participants are encouraged to recommend program changes and acknowledge that the Program is evolving and will require changes as it proceeds.

Annual Customer Survey Response Summaries

An essential part of the ACIL Seal of Excellence program is the compilation of data from the customer survey forms. The customer is asked to evaluate the laboratory's performance on data quality, customer service, technical expertise, overall value, and timeliness. The Program Administrator receives the customer survey forms.

The Program Administrator retains no customer information. To ensure that client-specific information will not be revealed to competitors, the Program Administrator and ACIL have signed a customer data confidentiality agreement. The agreement states that the Program Administrator or ACIL can use no information received as part of this program outside of this program. No specific information about a laboratory or its customers will be released to ACIL members.

Laboratories that would like to participate in the program but already survey their clients to evaluate customer satisfaction and timeliness may request a review of their client survey by the Program Administrator.

If you already perform a similar customer survey, please submit a request for review by the Program Administrator. A review of your survey and a method to ensure an equivalent data comparison to the current ACIL Seal of Excellence survey will be documented. The Program Administrator will prepare a report on the equivalency of the questions and numeric values for the ACIL Environmental Section Board. This Board must approve the use of the laboratory internal survey for determination of the customer satisfaction and timeliness performance criteria. The criteria that at least 20 surveys must be returned and used to develop the numeric values remain the same. The criteria for achieving the minimum scores for participation also remain the same.

Statistics Report

Annually the Program Administrator will summarize the responses for each laboratory. The annual report will include:

- Summary customer survey results. This section includes how its customers rate the laboratory in all key operational categories.
- A statistical summary of customer survey responses for each survey question, comparing the mean of the participating laboratory to the mean and range of all ACIL Seal of Excellence laboratories as a group.
- Summary results of the last 12 months of PT studies. A statistical summary for each PT study and for all PT's as a group.
- A comparison of the participating laboratory's mean PT score to the mean and range of all ACIL Seal of Excellence Laboratories as a group, and to the historical performance of the laboratory community as a whole.
- The ranking for your laboratory for each survey question category.

ACIL Seal of Excellence Laboratory Reports

ACIL Seal of Excellence Laboratory Reports are generated for a prospect, client or regulator who contacts the Program Administrator and requests information about a laboratory. The Program Administrator then responds to the request by sending a written report that includes:

- Description of the laboratory, including the year the laboratory was founded, identification of key personnel, range, capabilities, facility size, certifications held, and any specialty services offered, as provided to the Program Administrator by the laboratory.
- Information on how to contact the laboratory for price quotes, responses to Requests for Proposals or other information.

The laboratory has the right to review the reports being sent by the Program Administrator and submit comments.

Recognition of Excellence

Participating laboratories are recognized in a variety of ways.

- Participants are notified in advance that the ACIL Seal of Excellence Program has minimum standards for successful participation and for identification as an ACIL Seal of Excellence participant. These standards are an average PT score of 90 percent or better on laboratory analytical competencies, Timeliness of greater than 3.0 or higher, and an average customer satisfaction index of 3.0 or better.
- Each participant will confidentially receive its overall ranking in the program and for specific evaluation categories group mean scores are provided for comparison.

- All laboratory participants are recognized as participating in the program. Laboratories will be listed alphabetically without reference to any categories or ranking of performance. ACIL will publish the listing of the laboratories recognized as meeting the criteria as a Seal of Excellence Participant.
- Average group performance in several categories such as PT scores, quality, service, value, timeliness and overall satisfaction will be communicated to the interested public and comparisons made, where possible, with industry and government norms. The objective is to clearly differentiate program participants as a group from non-participating labs.
- In October 2004, at the 67th Annual ACIL Meeting, the Environmental Sciences Section Board will provide a Special Recognition Certificate to the 10 highest scoring laboratories in each of these areas: PT scores, Timeliness and Overall Customer Satisfaction.

The recognition for the PT scores will be based on the total number of analytes attempted. 5 recognitions for participants with an average number of analytes attempted of greater than or equal to 100, and 5 recognitions for PT scores with an average number of analytes attempted of less than 100.
- The recognition information for all categories will be made available to groups outside ACIL, such as other professional organizations and the press. ACIL will publish the listing of the 10 laboratories recognized in each of the three categories: Proficiency Testing, Timeliness, and Overall Customer Satisfaction. Both PT categories will be grouped as one listing of ten laboratories. Each recognition listing will be an alphabetical listing of the top scoring laboratories for that category.
- Individual award recipients are welcome to publish or announce their awards to their customers or prospective customers by their own means.

Costs to Participating Laboratories

The annual fee for program participation is \$500 per ACIL member laboratory and \$1200 for non-member laboratories.

A laboratory is defined as a specific facility, certified or accredited by one or more recognized accrediting authorities.

Companies that have more than one laboratory site (i.e., network laboratory companies) may elect to have some or all of their laboratories participate. A separate fee will be charged for each laboratory site. This Program is a cost-effective method to identify laboratories capable of producing high quality data on a consistent basis.

Questions

If you have any questions regarding the ACIL Seal of Excellence Program, please contact the ACIL Seal of Excellence Program Administrator, Ms. Marlene Moore, c/o Advanced Systems, Inc. P.O. Box 8032, Newark, DE 19714, (302) 368-1211, fax (720) 293-3706 or by email (mmoore@advancedsys.com).

Highlights from the 2003 Program

- 70 laboratories participated
- Average number of surveys returned per laboratory is 23
- Average score on the Customer Survey was 3.41 (out of a 4.0)
- Average score on the Timeliness was 3.39 (out of a 4.0)
- Average score on PT samples was 96.8%

Highlights from the 2002 Program

- 42 laboratories participated
- Average number of surveys returned per laboratory is 22
- Average score on the Customer Survey was 3.61 (out of a 4.0)
- Average score on the Timeliness was 3.30 (out of a 4.0)
- Average score on PT samples was 96.7%

ACIL SEAL OF EXCELLENCE LABORATORY PROGRAM

Application Form

Registration as a Participating Laboratory

This application is for a single laboratory facility. Please submit additional applications for additional facilities. Participating laboratories must be certified or accredited by one or more state agencies and participate in proficiency testing programs for areas of core competence.

Laboratory Name:	_____	Contact:	_____
Address:	_____	Title:	_____
Telephone Number:	_____	Email:	_____

Laboratory Information:	Network ID:	
Year Founded: _____	Facility Size (sq. ft.): _____	Number of Staff: _____
Annual Revenue (Previous Year):	<input type="checkbox"/> Greater than \$3.0M	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$3.0M

Range of Capabilities:							
GC/MS	<input type="checkbox"/>	IR	<input type="checkbox"/>	FTIR	<input type="checkbox"/>	Air	<input type="checkbox"/>
GC	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wet Chemistry	<input type="checkbox"/>	Soil	<input type="checkbox"/>	Industrial Waste	<input type="checkbox"/>
ICP/MS	<input type="checkbox"/>	Field Services	<input type="checkbox"/>	Drinking Water	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
ICP	<input type="checkbox"/>	HPLC	<input type="checkbox"/>	Waste Water	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
AA	<input type="checkbox"/>	IC	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ground Water	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____

Specialty Services:	_____
Key Personnel:	_____
	Name Title

	Name Title

For Information, Call:	_____
	Name Title

Certifications Held:	_____

Participation fee is \$500 for ACIL members, \$1200 for non-members. Make checks payable to "ACIL, Inc." and submit application with payment to:

Ms. Marlene Moore, Program Administrator
ACIL Seal of Excellence Program
P.O. Box 8032, Newark, DE 19714

Please submit twelve months (August 2003 to July 2004) of PT data for all areas of core competence, where available, and any other recent voluntary PT studies. Areas of core competence are those analyses that represent greater than 10% of the laboratory's annual revenue. Copies of PT provider reports or electronic data directly from the PT provider are required.

ACIL Seal of Excellence

DATA INTEGRITY STATEMENT

Officials of each participating laboratory must agree that it will be their policy to abide by the following data integrity statements, and affirm this by signature below.

- 1) The laboratory has an annual ethics training course for all analysts that covers training in areas of improper manual integration, time traveling, improper calibration manipulation, etc.
- 2) All analysts must sign a contract that they have received this ethics training course and confirm that that they will not perform unethical/fraudulent practices and will report to corporate management any unethical/fraudulent practices performed by their co-workers.
- 3) The laboratory maintains a defined early detection program that provides surveillance of analytical staff and specifically searches raw data and/or electronic media for questionable analytical practices.
- 4) The laboratory documents and defines the nature of an early warning detection program.
- 5) Records of disciplinary actions must be maintained and any corrective actions are recorded on a case by case basis.
- 6) An Ethics SOP must be maintained by the laboratory that clearly defines the ethical behavior that is expected of all analysts and that expresses zero tolerance on the part of management for improper analysis.

Laboratory Name

Signature of Contact

Name of Contact

ACIL Seal of Excellence 2004

TIMELINE / PROCESS SUMMARY

(Award in October)

1. The application is due by **June 1, 2004** to be eligible for the awards to be announced in October. Completed applications received after **August 1, 2004** may not be included in the October award.

Complete application consists of:

- Completed Application Package
- Signed ACIL Code Of Ethics (Non-members of ACIL)
- Signed ACIL Data Integrity Statement
- One Year of Proficiency Testing Studies (August 2003 – July 2004)
Hard copy reports of all PT data submitted by laboratory or
PT provider automatically submits electronic reports of PT data
Notification of analytes that are less than 10% of the laboratory revenue
- A Minimum of Twenty Customer Satisfaction Forms completed and returned
directly to the Program Administrator by the laboratory's customers
Laboratory survey data compiled by Program Administrator
- Full Payment

Each participating laboratory site must submit a completed package to be considered. Laboratories with multiple sites must submit multiple packages.

2. All participating laboratories receive the program status letter in July, requesting any needed information by August 15th.
3. The ACIL Environmental Sciences Section Board reviews the award recommendation of the Program Administrator during September.
4. The Program Administrator will send notices to all participating laboratories and ACIL presents the Listing of Participants for the Seal of Excellence program during the October conference.
5. The Program Administrator mails renewal notices and requirements to the current participants in February 2005.

**THE NEXT PAGE IS AN EXAMPLE OF SURVEY POSTCARDS YOU
WILL RECEIVE FOR MAILING TO YOUR CLIENTS.**

**ASI WILL SUPPLY PREPRINTED POSTCARDS TO THE CONTACT
PERSON WITHIN TWO WEEKS OF RECEIPT OF YOUR PAID
APPLICATION**

ACIL Seal of Excellence Laboratory Program

WE NEED YOUR OPINION! *Please fill out and return this form.*

Please check the box that best expresses your opinion of this laboratory's performance.

- | | Excellent | Satisfied | Fair | Poor |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. How do you rate the data quality? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. How do you rate the laboratory's customer service? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. How do you rate the technical expertise of the laboratory and its staff? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. How do you rate the value received? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. How do you rate the Timeliness of your report? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. As compared to the Timeliness of all other laboratories? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Additional Comments:

If you have any questions,
Please contact the
(Optional) Your Name: _____
(302) 368-1211

Program Administrator at:

Thanks for your help.

ACIL Seal of Excellence Laboratory Program

WE NEED YOUR OPINION! *Please fill out and return this form.*

Please check the box that best expresses your opinion of this laboratory's performance.

- | | Excellent | Satisfied | Fair | Poor |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. How do you rate the data quality? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. How do you rate the laboratory's customer service? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. How do you rate the technical expertise of the laboratory and its staff? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. How do you rate the value received? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. How do you rate the Timeliness of your report? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. As compared to the Timeliness of all other laboratories? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Additional Comments:

If you have any questions,
Please contact the
(Optional) Your Name: _____
(302) 368-1211

Program Administrator at:

Thanks for your help.