



Environmental Lab Accreditation Program

Fiscal Impact (\$000s)	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
State Government Special Rev				
Expenditures	(290)	(290)	(290)	(275)
Revenues	(290)	(290)	(290)	(290)
Net Fiscal Impact	0	0	0	15

Summary

This proposal seeks to authorize the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) to contract with qualified and approved entities to assess environmental laboratories in the state as part of the Environmental Lab Accreditation Program (ELAP) overseen by MDH. Current national and international standards will be used to select assessors. This proposal will result in a reduction in fees for lab accreditation.

Background

MDH currently operates an Environmental Lab Accreditation Program. The program ensures that a laboratory has the policies, procedures, equipment, and practices to produce reliable data in the analysis of environmental samples.

The accreditation process involves five main activities: application, proficiency testing, training, on-site laboratory assessments (inspections) and general program administration functions.

The laboratory assessment portion of the program involves an on-site assessment of the laboratory by a qualified laboratory assessor every two years. Laboratories are required to address any

deficiencies identified during the on-site assessment.

All of these components, along with any enforcement actions, must be monitored and documented, and comprise the administrative functions of the accreditation program.

Proposal

The department proposes to establish partnerships with individuals and organizations willing to perform the assessment activities, with the department retaining an oversight role. The remaining activities, such as review of assessments, proficiency testing, monitoring of corrective actions, laboratory training, and all administrative functions will continue to be performed by the department.

Because independent assessors will perform the assessment tasks, the fees associated with this activity should be removed from the overall fee paid to the department. Instead, laboratories will pay the assessor body directly. The estimated reduction is 40 percent of the annual accreditation fees (i.e., base fee, test category fee and out-of-state

For more information:

Legislative Liaison Matthew Collie, 651-201-5808
 Communications Director Michael Schommer, 651-201-4998

administrative fee). Additional fees for other activities remain unchanged.

The department will establish a selection committee to recommend approval of qualified applicants. The selection committee will reflect a broad spectrum of interests, including municipalities and small businesses. The department will publish a list of approved assessors recommended by the selection committee and meeting the department's need for the expertise. Laboratories may choose any qualified assessor or group of assessors from the list.

Rationale

Maintaining a viable environmental laboratory inspection program is critical to the citizens of this state and the MDH mission of ensuring the health of Minnesotans through protecting our environment. Federal agencies and other states already use a similar approach. In addition, professional organizations with members representing a wide range of laboratories and accreditation programs encourage the use of independent assessment bodies.

It is anticipated that cost-savings may be realized by laboratories of all sizes. Smaller laboratories may be able to negotiate costs lower than the amount saved from the existing fees because the fees charged by the department are normalized by category of tests rather than by the number of tests actually performed at each facility. Larger laboratories may also benefit as they will be able to select assessors from the list the laboratory already employs for assessments at their laboratory in compliance with regulations in other states, with client requirements or with federal programs. (One assessment may serve dual purposes.)

For more information:

Legislative Liaison Matthew Collie, 651-201-5808
Communications Director Michael Schommer, 651-201-4998