

DHS Science and Technology Directorate

Integrated Consortium of Laboratory Networks

Overview

The Integrated Consortium of Laboratory Networks (ICLN) was established by a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) signed in 2005 and updated in 2012. Senior officials of federal agencies from ten departments and independent agencies with primary responsibility for current and emerging laboratory response networks as well as those with strong supporting roles, joined together to endorse the laboratory network organizational framework. Establishing a laboratory network system to strengthen early detection and consequence management is consistent with Homeland Security Presidential Directives 9, 10, 21, and 22.

The ICLN MOA charters two major interagency groups, the Joint Leadership Council (JLC) and the Network Coordinating Group (NCG) as well as technical subgroups. The JLC, which comprises senior leaders from each of the agencies, is charged with assuring the appropriate strategy is in place to support an effective all-hazard laboratory response capability.

The NCG is composed of operational leaders from individual laboratory networks and other representatives of signatory departments. The NCG promotes enhanced commonality and integration of network functions. The technical subgroups review and address key issues and requirements of the networks (e.g., agent prioritization, methods development and standards, proficiency testing, quality assurance, accreditation, information management, forensic analysis, external outreach).

Objectives/Deliverables

The goal of this effort is to create a system of laboratory networks capable of integrated and coordinated response to and consequence management of acts of terrorism and other major incidents, while maximizing limited resources. This program will enable optimized national laboratory preparedness by improving coordination of laboratory response to incidents and by promoting common standards across laboratory response assets of multiple federal agencies.

As a part of this effort, an Integrated Response Architecture (IRA) was created to provide a framework of roles and responsibilities across the ICLN response matrix and outline appropriate concepts of operations and protocols. The IRA includes a standard operating procedure (SOP) that addresses how networks within the ICLN will coordinate when responding to an incident. To further enhance communication and coordination during an incident or event, the ICLN developed a secure, password protected web portal. The ICLN

Portal (www.icln.org) offers the capability to host databases; email communications to a restricted list of participants; provide an area for document storage and management and make available webinar services as well as many other functions. A data exchange utility (DEU) enables the transfer of large sets of data among the networks. The SOP, Portal and DEU are tested through regular tabletop exercises.

Additionally, the ICLN performs Confidence Building Competency Tests (CBCT) that inform assessments of specific aspects of the interoperability of laboratory networks to determine their ability to provide surge support to each other during a large scale event. Specific aspects of interoperability explored as part of a CBCT include the ability to perform a non-routine method at an acceptable level of quality and the ability to combine information from several networks using prescribed data communication procedures.

Customers, Users, Partners, and Stakeholders

Signatory departments and agencies to the MOA include the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Justice and State and the Environmental Protection Agency.

