



**IWEA  
Laboratory  
Committee**

***Laboratory Excellence Award***

---

**Guidelines for Applicants**

---

Thank you for choosing to be a part of the Indiana Water Environment Association  
*Laboratory Excellence Award* program.

- A. ELIGIBILITY
- B. HOW TO PREPARE
- C. WHAT TO EXPECT
- D. SCORING
- E. CODE OF CONDUCT

2022 IWEA Laboratory Committee

Written by:  
Leah Leimbacher  
Laboratory Committee Chair

The IWEA *Laboratory Excellence Award* recognizes those laboratories that demonstrate a high level of commitment to good laboratory practice and accurate data reporting. All municipal and industrial wastewater treatment laboratories are eligible for the award. The IWEA Laboratory Committee presents the award during the annual IWEA Conference to those laboratories scoring above the established minimum levels. The program requires an on-site visit by members of the Laboratory Committee. The visit will last approximately 2-4 hours and is pre-scheduled to fit your working hours during the months of March through May. During the visit, our inspectors will examine your laboratory records and equipment. An inspection checklist developed by the Laboratory Committee is used to rate your laboratory conformance to established good laboratory practices. The Laboratory Committee encourages your participation in this very worthwhile program and looks forward to visiting your laboratory. For questions about this Award and assistance with getting your laboratory prepared we encourage you to contact the Laboratory Audit Manager or the Laboratory Chair person. It's our goal to help you achieve excellence.

For the purposes of this document the terminology Inspection and Audit, Inspector and Auditor, will be used interchangeably.

## A. ELIGIBILITY

1. The application for the *Laboratory Excellence Award* can be found on IWEA's website and must be submitted by **February 22<sup>nd</sup>** of the current year.
2. All municipal and industrial wastewater laboratories doing testing for pollution elimination discharge permits are eligible for the award. However,
3. To be considered for the *Laboratory Excellence Award*, your facility must be testing a minimum number of discharge permit analytes 'in-house' (meaning, in your laboratory or at your facility). The number of analytes are determined according to the facility's discharge permit class:

Facility Class	1, A	2, B	3, C	4, D
Minimum # of Analytes	2	3	4	5

Analytes counted as tested 'in-house' will be inspected for procedure and quality control against the criteria established in the checklist.

### AMENDMENT<sup>10/4/2023</sup> IMPLEMENT <sup>1/1/2025</sup>

*If a participant is running a parameter in their lab and it is on their NPDES Permit and reported on their DMR, it is a required part of the LEA inspection.*

For questions regarding qualifying analytes please reach out to the Laboratory Chair person or the Laboratory Audit Manager.

## B. HOW TO PREPARE

1. Confused on where to start? The Laboratory Committee is committed to helping you achieve excellence. You may first schedule a free consultation visit and a Laboratory Committee person will come out to your facility to meet with you and review your lab.

Please contact the Committee Chair person, this information and the Laboratory Committee member list can be found on the IWEA website.

2. Available to you is the checklist used by the auditors. Please download this checklist from the IWEA website. Review the scoring criteria and the composition of each section. Align your laboratory practices to meet the specified criteria.
3. Performing a self-audit using the *Laboratory Excellence Award* checklist is highly recommended.

### C. WHAT TO EXPECT

1. Your inspector will reach out to you via email to arrange your inspection. You should pick a day and time (morning or afternoon) that best works for your lab. A person in the lab will need to have some time available for questions. However, the inspector will not need to be assisted the entire time during the inspection.
2. Have material ready for review such as Quality Control documentation, water quality testing, Data Sheets (Bench Sheets), Temperature Logs, Performance Results, MDL Studies, SOPs, control charts, etc.
3. The inspector will spend time reviewing your documents; reading your SOPs, reviewing your MDLs, checking bench sheets, chain of custody forms/process.
4. The inspector will do a walk-through of your laboratory, checking your equipment; refrigerators, incubators, meters, spectrometers, thermometers, hoods, balances, and safety equipment, etc. As well as inspecting your buffers, standards, and reagents. And your inspector may observe the analyst performing methods used in your lab at the benchtop.

### D. SCORING

The scoring for each element is as follows:

Scoring Key			
Always	4	Seldom	1
Usually	3	Never	0
Sometimes/ Occasionally	2	Not Applicable	NA

1. This is an Excellence Award and *always* means *always*. For example, if your lab is *always* meeting a certain criteria, you will receive a 4. If your lab isn't *always* meeting that criteria but *usually* does, you will receive a 3.
2. The best way to ensure you will score high is to be very familiar with all aspects of the checklist and perform the objectives.

3. The inspector will send graded results of your inspection to the Audit Manager. You should receive a copy of your graded results from the Audit Manager within 2 weeks of your inspection.

## **E. CODE OF CONDUCT**

1. You are volunteering for this award and that is amazing! Your inspector is volunteering also. Professionalism between colleagues is important and expected. The auditor is there to offer assistance and help you achieve excellence.
2. Your auditor will ask you to clarify things that may be in question. This is your opportunity to offer supporting documents or proof of records. A discussion is welcomed and you are encouraged to explain your laboratory process and provide documentation. Your inspector will take your discussion into consideration when grading you.
3. If you contest a grading aspect of your inspection during the audit, ask yourself- *is my lab meeting the objective in any capacity?* If so, fully explain your lab process that meets the criteria to the auditor. The auditor will note this on your inspection form.
4. Major scoring disputes will go to the Laboratory Chair person or the Audit Manager, who will bring the discussion to the Laboratory Committee before your audit is finalized. The Committee will ultimately decide. Laboratory Committee decisions are final.