

Engagement with DOE National Labs

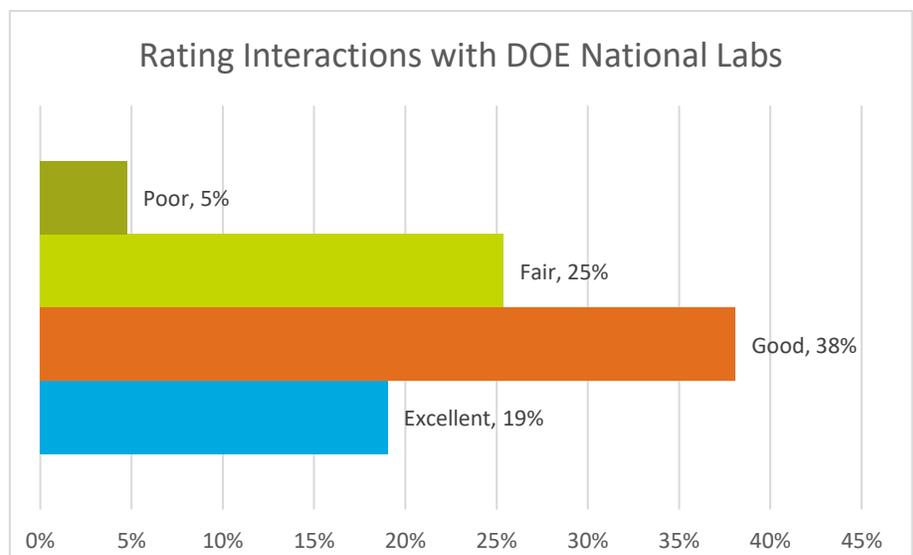
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UIDP member organizations across the spectrum have an interest in partnering with Department of Energy National Labs. The 17 labs possess tremendous resources, ranging from specialized instruments and facilities and to world-class researchers and technologies. UIDP fielded a survey of its U.S.-based members to learn about their experiences with these partnerships. UIDP also hosted several sessions at [UIDPConnect 2021](#) to explore opportunities, challenges, and creative ways to partner.

The drivers behind these relationships vary; both **contracted research** and **joint pursuit of government funding** outstripped other areas of potential partnership as top areas of interest for working with DOE labs. **Instrumentation access** was ranked third out of four and generated only half of the interest that contracted research did.

We asked respondents to rate their interactions with the national labs overall. **While a majority said these experiences are either good or excellent (57%), a fair minority ranked them below average (25% fair, 5% poor).** Clearly our members have had largely positive experiences with these partners as 57% responded that the collaboration could be rated good or excellent.

“The labs are easy to work with, however, it is not uncommon that their preferred agreements contain conditions that are not standard for university acceptance.”



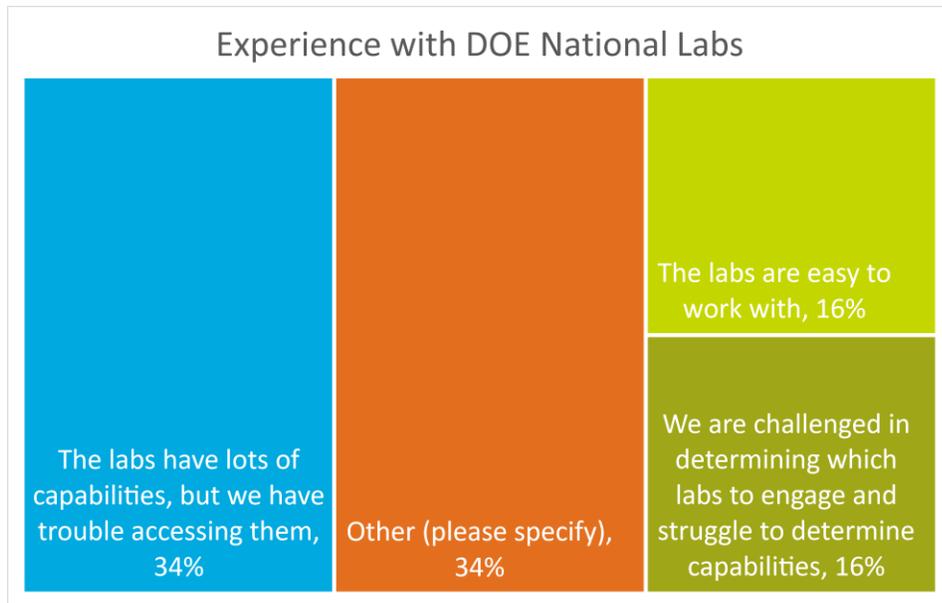
UIDP asked how respondents initially engaged with the lab. By and large, relationships with the labs were initiated through professional networks or referrals (56%). Only 5% said they used a website portal and only 3% responded to a director’s letter. A large number of “other” responses noted other personal engagement efforts, such as faculty requesting to work with a national lab or engagement with lab staff at a professional conference.

A number of respondents said their experience working with the labs was positive overall, but barriers to access and collaboration remain. Only 16% of respondents thought that the labs were easy to work with over the course of their relationship. The majority of respondents cited a variety of barriers in working effectively with the national labs, including correctly determining and accessing research capabilities, negotiating contracts, and navigating inefficient processes.

“Scientists at National Labs are friendly and helpful. Our major stumbling block is inflexibility on IP, data ownership, IP, and other elements of agreements.”

UIDP members expressed a strong desire to work with DOE National Labs in their future endeavors.

Positive comments were accompanied by hopeful statements around needed improvements in collaboration and contracting areas such as data ownership, intellectual property rights, publication, and timely review and processing. Standard terms and templates across different labs could improve the ability to collaborate with the DOE National Labs. Difficulty with getting joint submissions approved in a timely manner was also a stumbling block.



“Negotiating the terms of the agreements is probably the most cumbersome part of working with national labs. Standard terms that all institutions of higher education can accept would be nice as well as carve outs for state institutions that cannot by law accept indemnification or other governing laws. Some national labs also have intellectual property and publication language that needs to be negotiated while others have a very good standard template, it would be nice to have these all in sync, especially if the labs all fall under that same federal agency to alleviate so many delays in negotiation.”

“The paperwork is onerous and often involves various offices. Perhaps filing the paperwork once annually would reduce the administrative burden of completing and negotiating terms.”