

Supplementary Information

Portable environment-signal detection biosensors with cell-free synthetic biosystems

Xiaomei Lin,^a Yuting Li,^a Zhixia Li,^a Rui Hua,^a Yuyang Xing^a and Yuan Lu^{a,*}

^a Key Laboratory of Industrial Biocatalysis, Ministry of Education, Department of Chemical Engineering, Tsinghua University, Beijing 100084, China.

* Corresponding authors. E-mail address: yuanlu@tsinghua.edu.cn (Yuan Lu)

Materials and methods

Synthetic genetic networks

For the constitutive expression of enzymes GusA, LacZ, and XylE, the genetic circuits were constructed by inserting *gusA*, *lacZ*, and *xylE* downstream of the PT7 promoter in pET-21b.¹⁻³ For the inducible synthetic genetic circuits, the ArsR-based or LuxR-based GusA, LacZ, and XylE expression circuits were constructed by inserting GusA, LacZ, or XylE downstream of the specifically regulated promoters in pSB3K3. To provide constitutive ArsR or LuxR expression, ArsR or LuxR was cloned downstream of the constitutive J23101 promoter, and these expression cassettes were inserted upstream to the formerly constructed pSB3K3^{4,5} (Fig. S5-S8).

Cell extract preparation

For standard cell-free expression reactions, *E. coli* Rosetta (DE3) (as well as BL21 Star (DE3), DH5 α)^{6,7} were fermented in 4 L of 2xYTP (1.6% tryptone; 1% yeast extraction; 0.5% NaCl; 40 mM K₂HPO₄; 22 mM KH₂PO₄) containing chloramphenicol (34 μ g/ml) at 37 °C, 300 rpm. Cells were harvested in the late logarithmic growth phase (~4 h, OD₆₀₀=2). Cell pellets were washed with ice-cold buffer A (14 mM magnesium glutamate; 60 mM potassium glutamate; 50 mM Tris, pH 7.7) three times. Cells were resuspended in buffer A (1 ml buffer for 1 g of wet cells) for disruption in a high-pressure homogenizer (1000 bar). Then lysate was centrifuged at 12000 x g for 10 min at 4 °C. The supernatant was incubated at 37 °C for 80 min after 3 mM DTT added and centrifuged at 12000 x g for 10 min at 4 °C again. Then it was

dialyzed in molecular porous membrane tubing (6-8 KD MWCO) for 3 h at 4 °C with magnetic stirring. The dialysate was then centrifuged at 12000 x g for 10 min at 4 °C, flash frozen, and stored at -80 °C⁸.

Cell-free reactions

Cell-free reagents for standard cell-free reaction were assembled on ice as generally described and immediately incubated at 37 °C. The general cell-free reaction mixture consisted of the following components: 30% S12 cell extract (v/v%); 30 ng/μl DNA templates; 175 mM potassium glutamate; 10 mM ammonium glutamate; 2.7 mM potassium oxalate monohydrate; 10 mM magnesium glutamate; 50 mM each of 19 amino acids without glutamic acid; 3 mM phosphoenol pyruvate (PEP); 1 mM putrescine; 1.5 mM spermidine; 0.33 mM nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide (NAD); 1.2 mM ATP; 0.86 mM each of CTP, GTP and UTP; 0.27 mM coenzyme A; 170 μg/mL tRNA; 34 μg/mL folinic; 2% PEG8000; T7 RNA polymerase prepared from BL21(DE3) cell extract.

Solution-phase cell-free reaction

For the constitutive PT7 cell-free reactions, the purified genetic circuits were added into the total 20 μL reaction as formally described and incubated at 37 °C overnight. The substrate (2 mg/mL for X-Gluc, 0.6 mg/mL for chlorophenol red-β-D-galactopyranoside and 2 mg/mL for pyrocatechol for the final concentration) was supplied to the 10-fold diluted reactions for the colorimetric analysis. The absorbance of the reactions was measured on the standard

ultraviolet spectrophotometer at 660 nm, 470 nm, and 390 nm, respectively, after diluted to 2 mL with ddH₂O.

For inducing cell-free reactions, the *arsR*- and *luxR*-based synthetic genetic circuits were supplied to the assembled reactions along with the inducer. For characterization assays, 0.2 μL arsenic ion solutions in water and AHL stock solutions in DMSO were added as the inducer (within the 20 μL total reaction volume) to give final concentrations of 0.10, 0.20, 0.25, 0.50, and 1.0 μM. The colorimetric reactions were performed in the 10-fold diluted cell-free systems after hours of incubation by adding the substrate mentioned above and measured.

Preparation of reactions and incubation

The 10 μL assembled cell-free reactions (without plasmids) were applied to 4 mm paper disc, which were then frozen at -80 °C and freeze-dried in 2 hours. Moreover, 2 mg/ml pyrocatechol as the substrate of XylE could be supplied to the cell-free reaction before the freeze-drying process. Paper discs were cut using a 4-mm puncher. The freeze-dried paper discs were stored at room temperature for days (Fig. S10). The paper reactions were rehydrated with plasmids solution coupled with inducer at the concentrations specified. Rehydrated reactions were incubated at 37 °C using the incubator. After hours of incubation, for LacZ-based colorimetric reactions, the chlorophenol red-β-D-galactopyranoside was supplied to the reaction at the final concentration of 0.6 mg/mL. The colorimetric signals of papers were collected by the camera of iPhone and analyzed by Image J software.

Fabrication of matric materials

Although the initial paper-based reactions were successful, there still might be nonspecific interactions between the cell-free components and papers or the activity loss during the freeze-drying processes, which could impede the activity of the reactions. Several commonly used protectants were used for treating papers or the cell-free reactions. For treating paper, the papers were wet with 5 % (w/w) protectants and then cut into paper discs for loading cell-free components and freeze-dried. For treating the cell-free components, the protectants were supplied to the assembled cell-free reactions at the final concentrations of 5 % (w/w) and similarly freeze-dried for the late rehydrated reactions (Fig. S1).

Measurement and analysis

After the conditional expression, images of paper discs were collected by the smartphone camera of iPhone and analyzed by Image J software.

Supplementary Figures

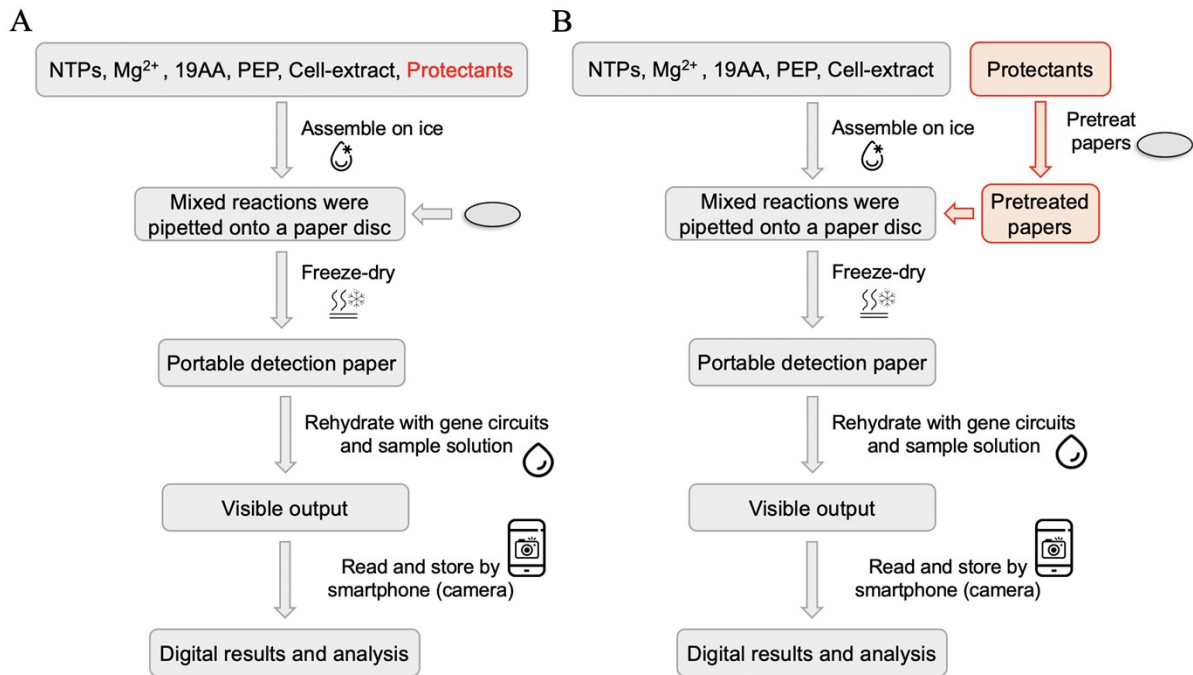


Fig. S1. Cell-free reactions. (A) Cell-free reaction components (including cell extract, NTPs, Mg²⁺, 19 amino acids, PEP, and others) and protectants were assembled on ice and put onto papers. (B) Cell-free reaction components were assembled on ice and put onto protectant-treated papers. Then the paper could be rehydrated with genetic circuits and sample solutions. The visible output could be distinguished by the naked eye or analyzed by the smartphone after photographed by the camera.

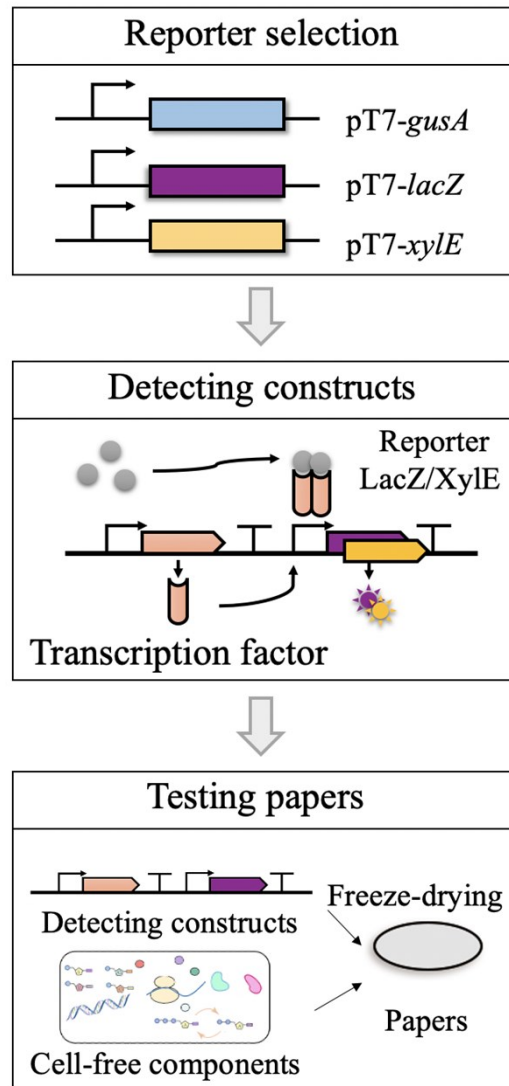


Fig. S2. The construction workflow of paper-based cell-free detecting system. The PT7 system were used for the reporter selection. The selected two reporters LacZ and XylE were constructed into the sensing genetic circuits as the reporter gene. After the construction, the detecting constructs and cell-free components were freeze-dried onto papers for the arsenic ion or 3OC12HSL detection.

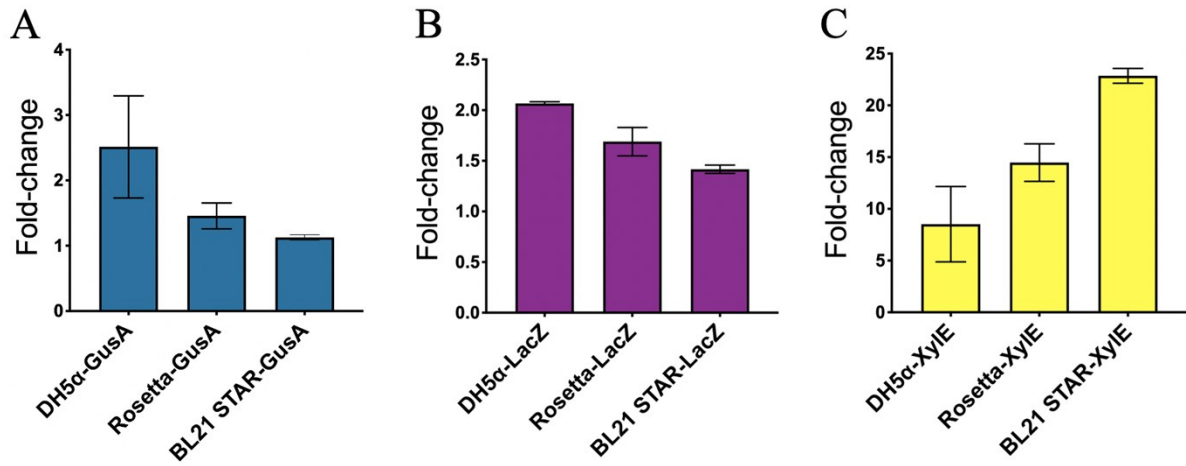


Fig. S3. The visible output change of the constitutive expression of three enzymes (GusA, LacZ, and XylE, respectively) in three cell-free systems compared to the system background control.

A

Construct name	Translation rate of RBS	Construct name	Translation rate of RBS
AL1/LL1	511335.37	AX1/LX1	273544.23
AL2/LL2	51239.36	AX2/LX2	27369.73
AL3/LL3	5140.96	AX3/LX3	2737.27
AL4/LL4	2562.85/930.76	AX4/LX4	3433.74/1144.85
AL5/LL5	50.91	AX5/LX5	27.01

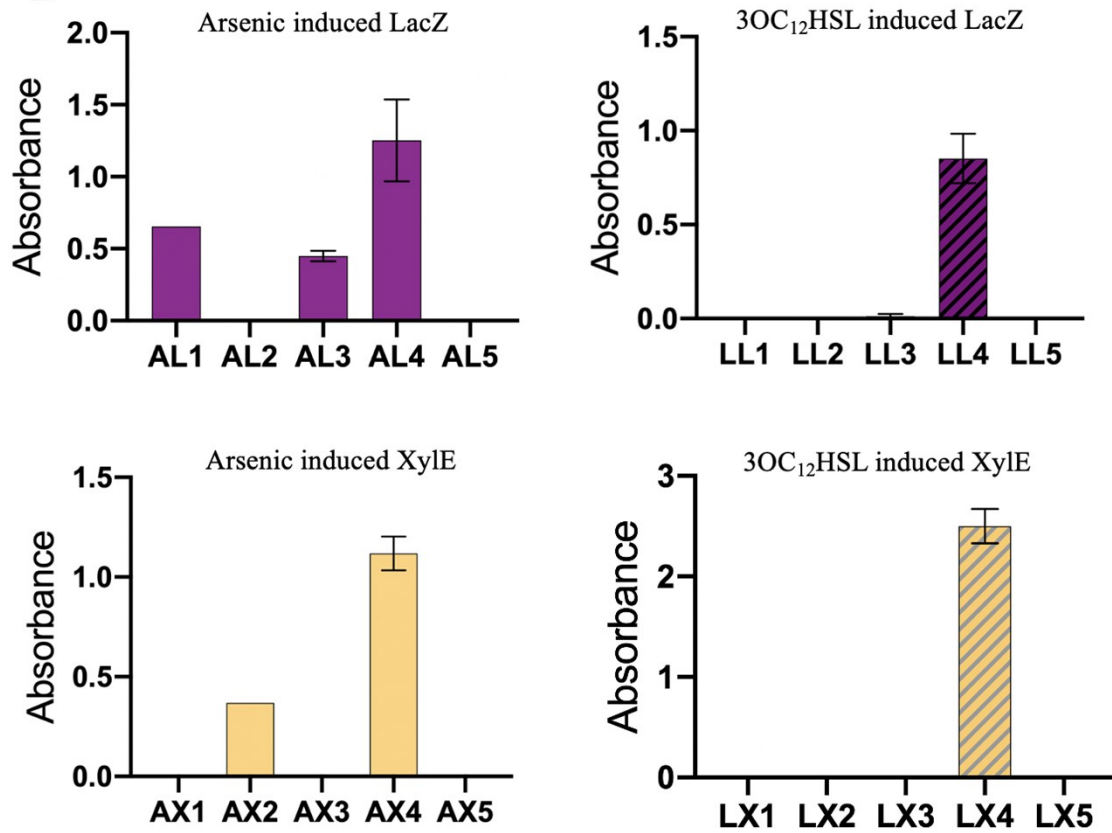
B

Fig. S4. The selection of RBS for the reporter LacZ and Xyle. (A) RBS of LacZ or Xyle was predicted and selected from the Salis RBS tools software in a range of predicted expression rate relative to LacZ or Xyle^{9,10}. (B) The constructs with different RBS were tested in the cell-free reactions with 1 μ M inducer. The constructs with AL4, LL4, AX4, and LX4 presented the high signal output.

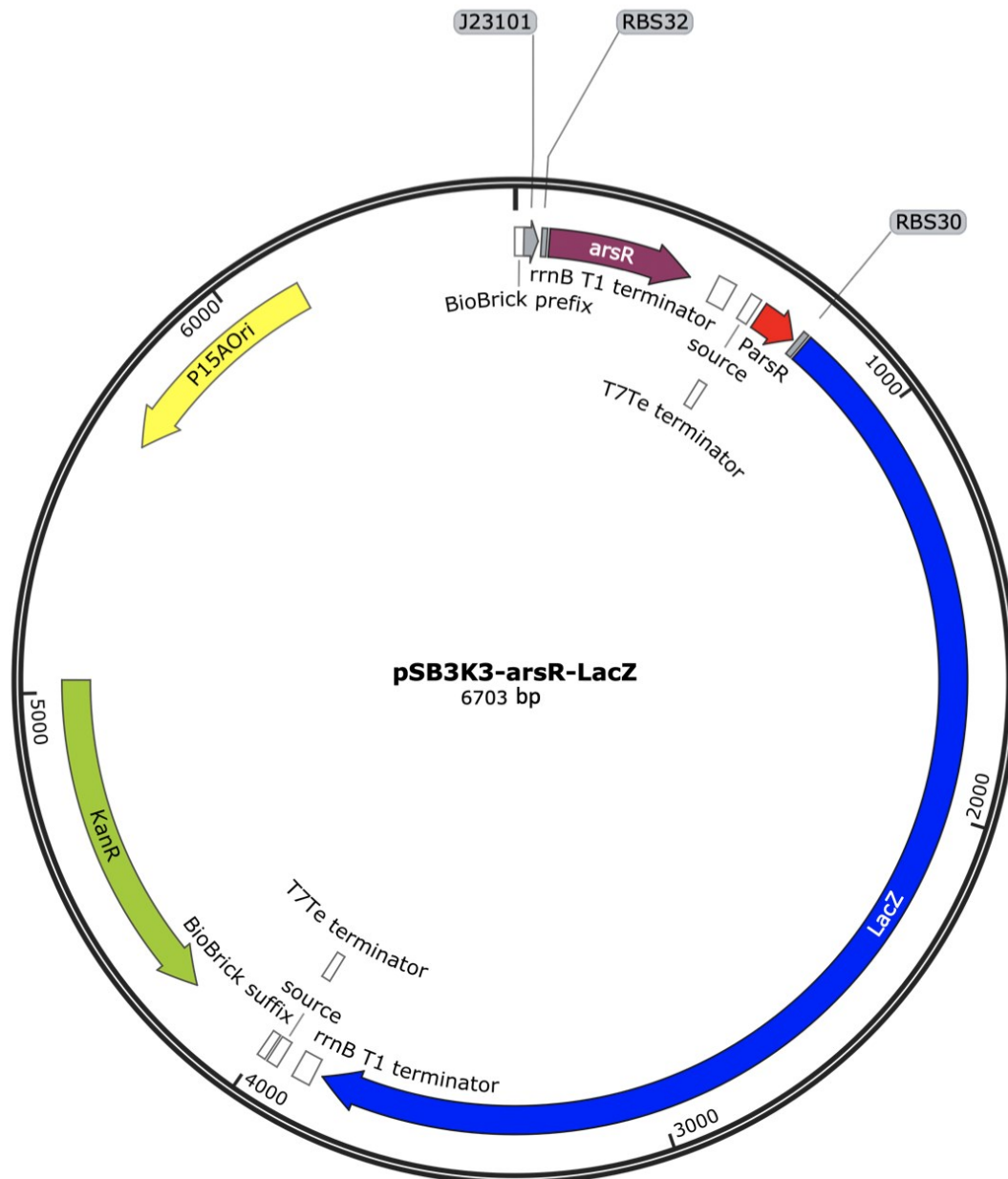


Fig. S5. The plasmid map of LacZ-based arsenic ion sensing operon. Detailed DNA or amino acid sequences were shown in supplementary tables.

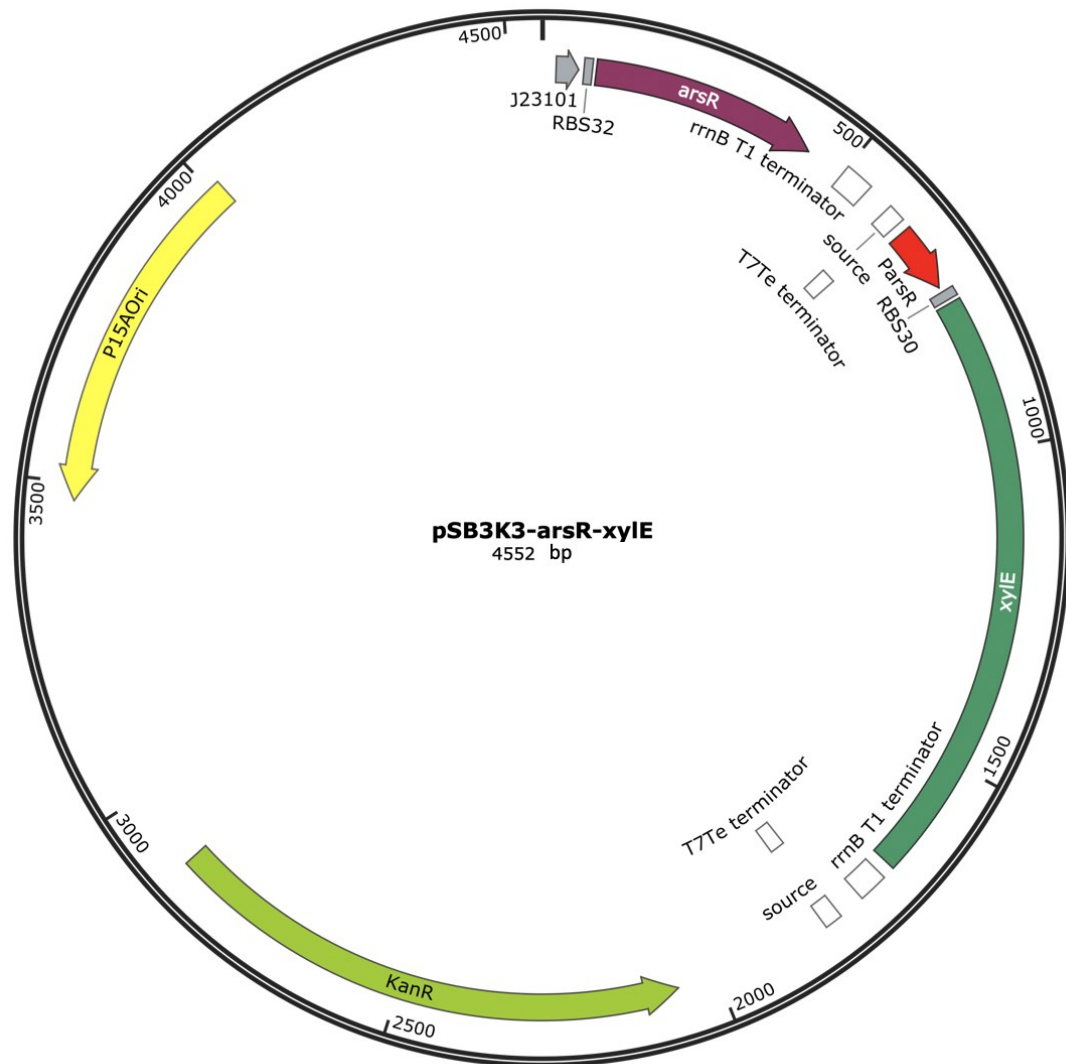


Fig. S6. The plasmid map of XylE-based arsenic ion sensing operon. Detailed DNA or amino acid sequences were shown in supplementary tables.

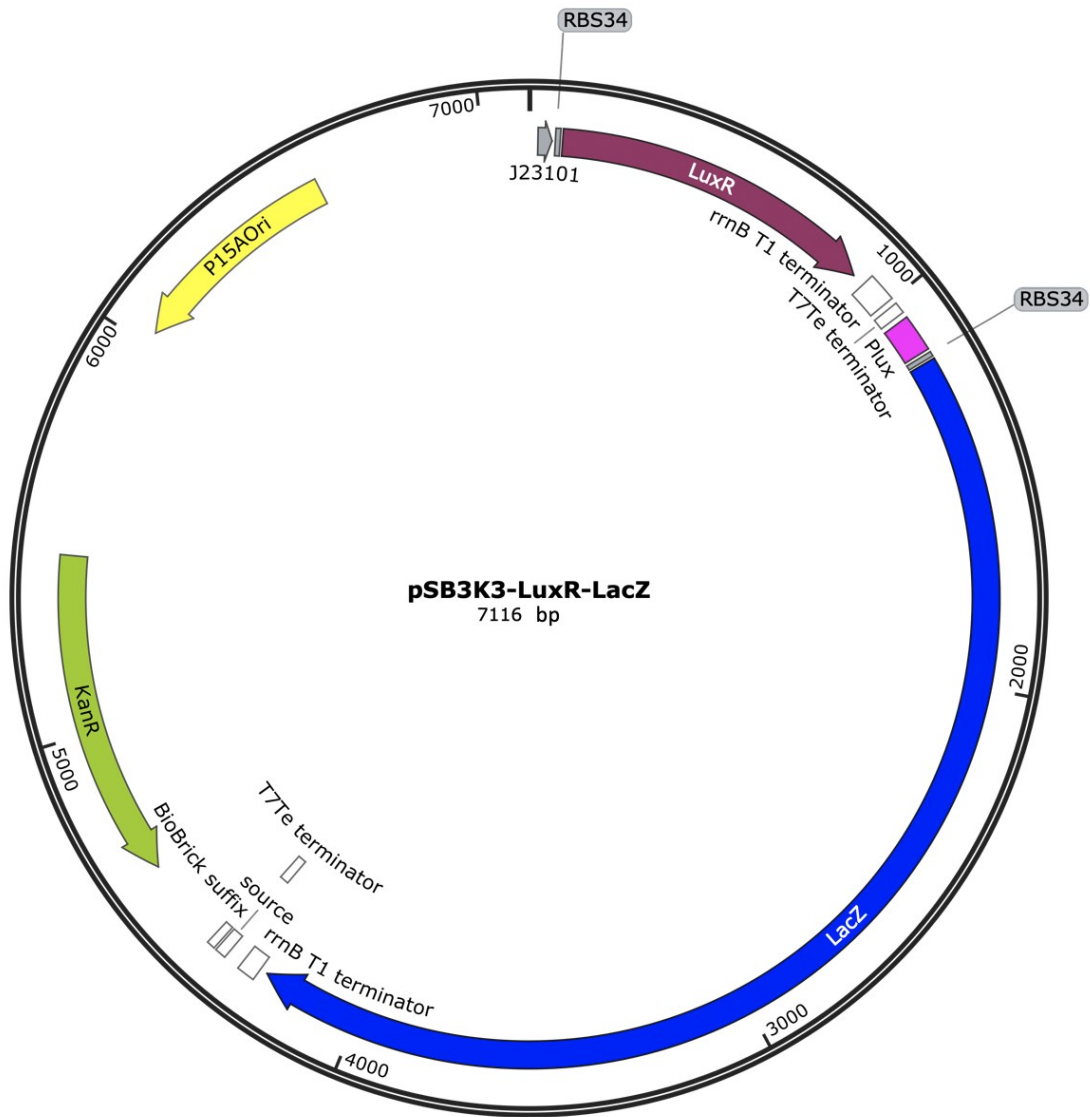


Fig. S7. The plasmid map of LacZ-based AHL sensing operon. Detailed DNA or amino acid sequences were shown in supplementary tables.

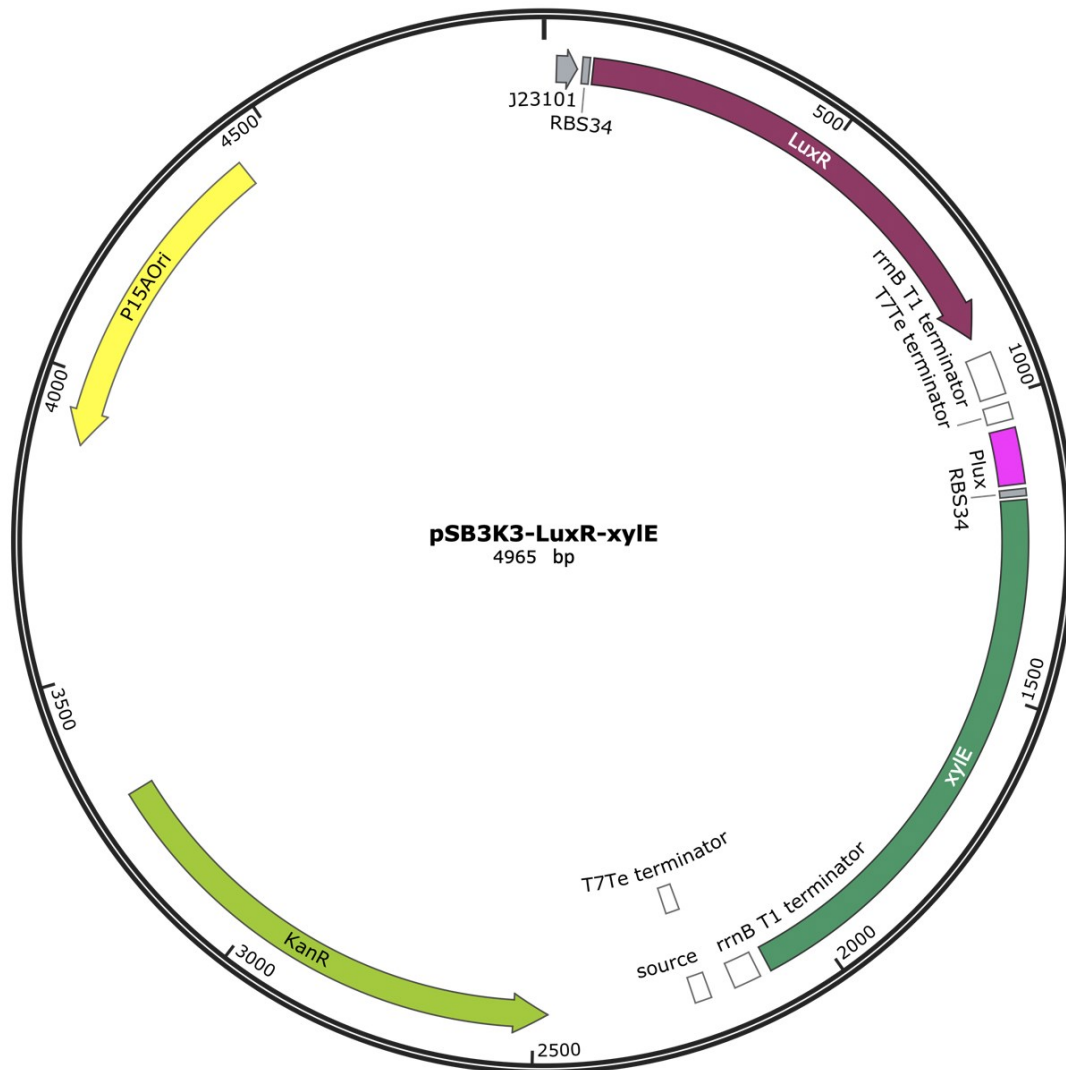


Fig. S8. The plasmid map of XylE-based AHL sensing operon. Detailed DNA or amino acid sequences were shown in supplementary tables.

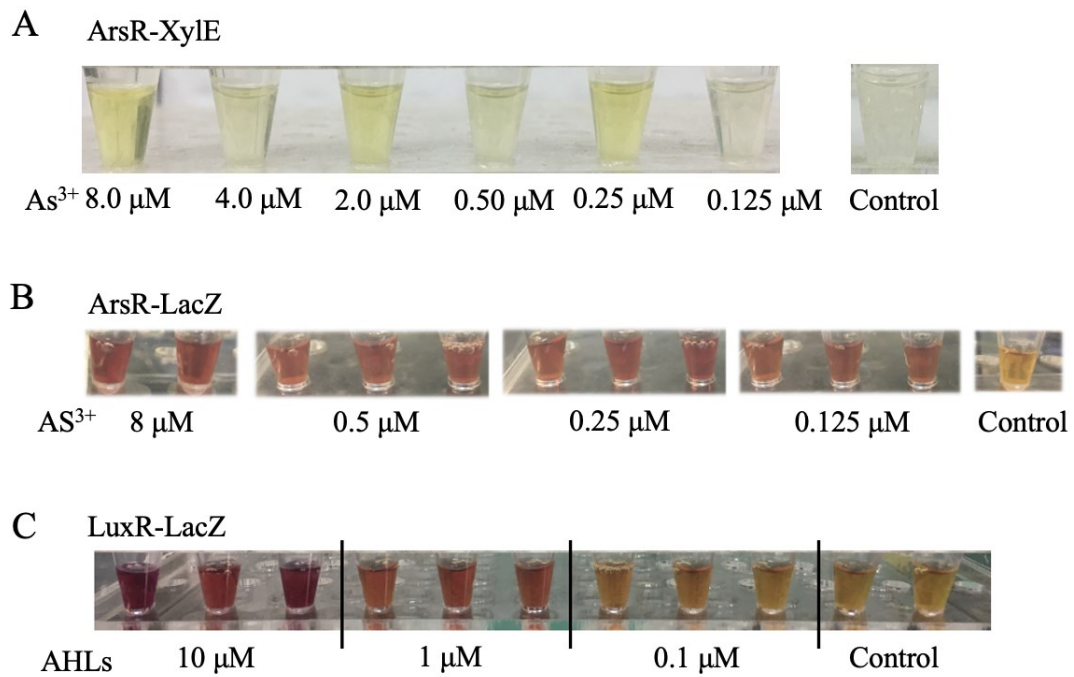


Fig. S9. Pictures of solution-phase *in vitro* sensing systems response to arsenic ion and AHL. (a) Pictures of the ArsR-XylE-based sensing system response to arsenic ion. (b) Pictures of ArsR-LacZ-based sensing system response to arsenic ion. (c) Pictures of LuxR-LacZ-based sensing system response to AHL.

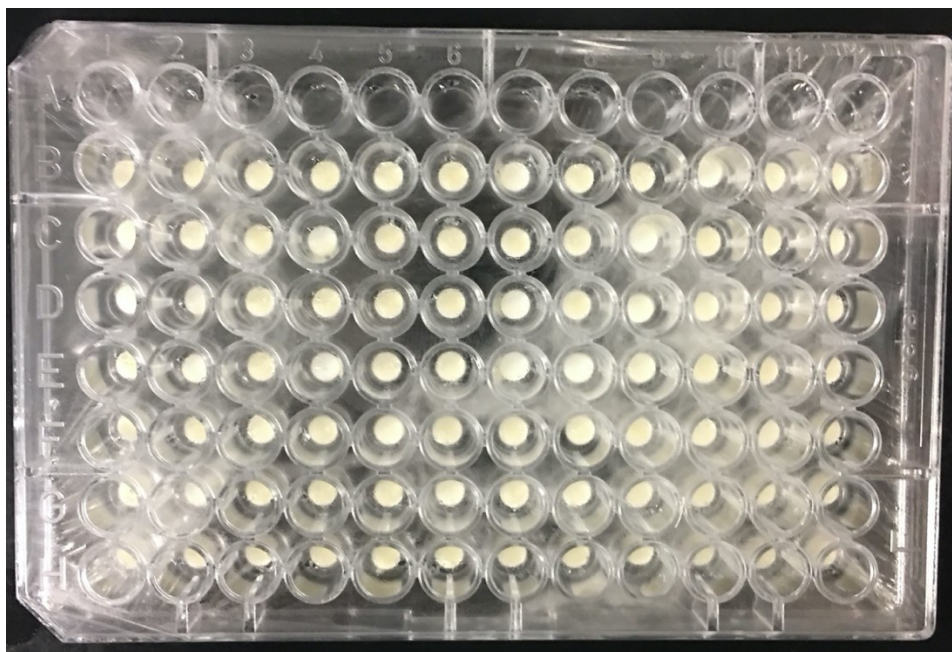


Fig. S10. Picture of freeze-dried *in vitro* sensing paper discs that were stored in the 96-well plate at room temperature. The 4 mm paper discs were put into the wells and embedded with 10 μ L assembled cell-free reactions with free-drying.

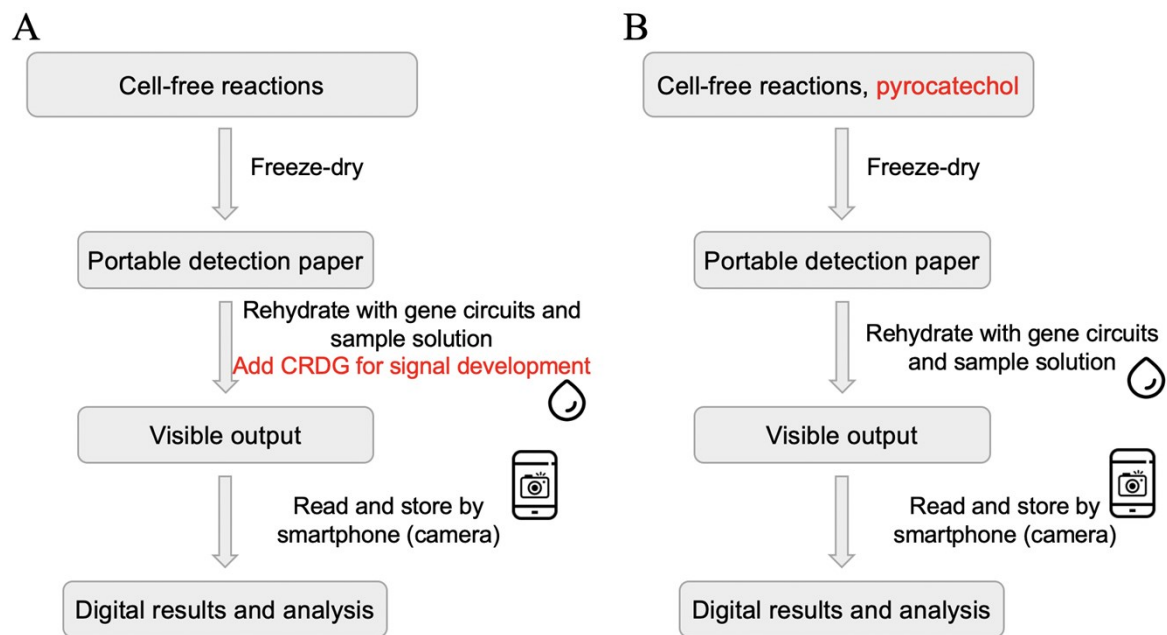


Fig. S11. The procedure of adding the two analytes of LacZ and XylE. (A) The analyte of LacZ was added after the detecting reaction for the signal development. (B) The analyte of XylE were preadded into the cell-free systems before freeze-dried onto the papers.

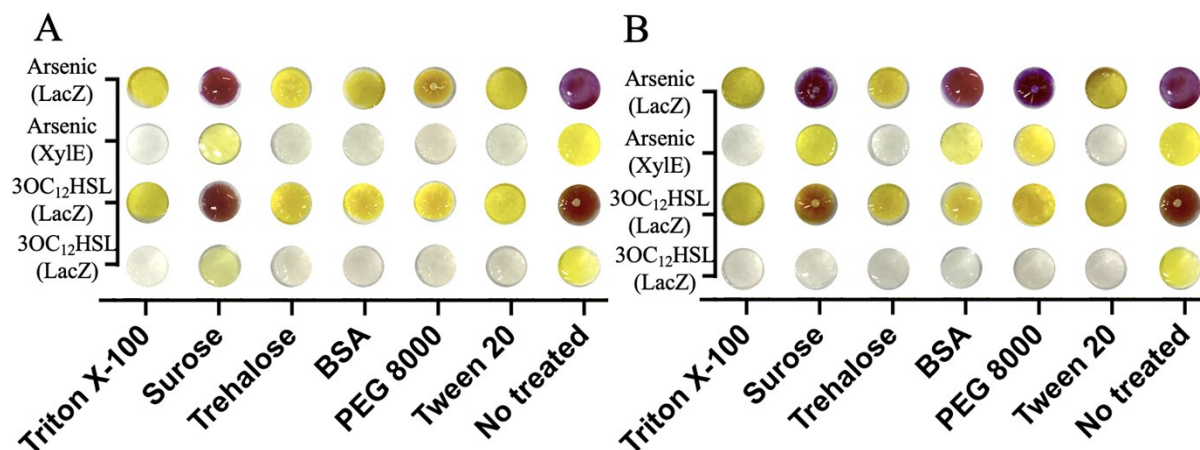


Fig. S12. Pictures of paper discs after inducible incubation. (A) Testing paper discs that were pretreated with cell-free reactions before freeze-dried. (B) Testing paper discs that were treated with different protectants.

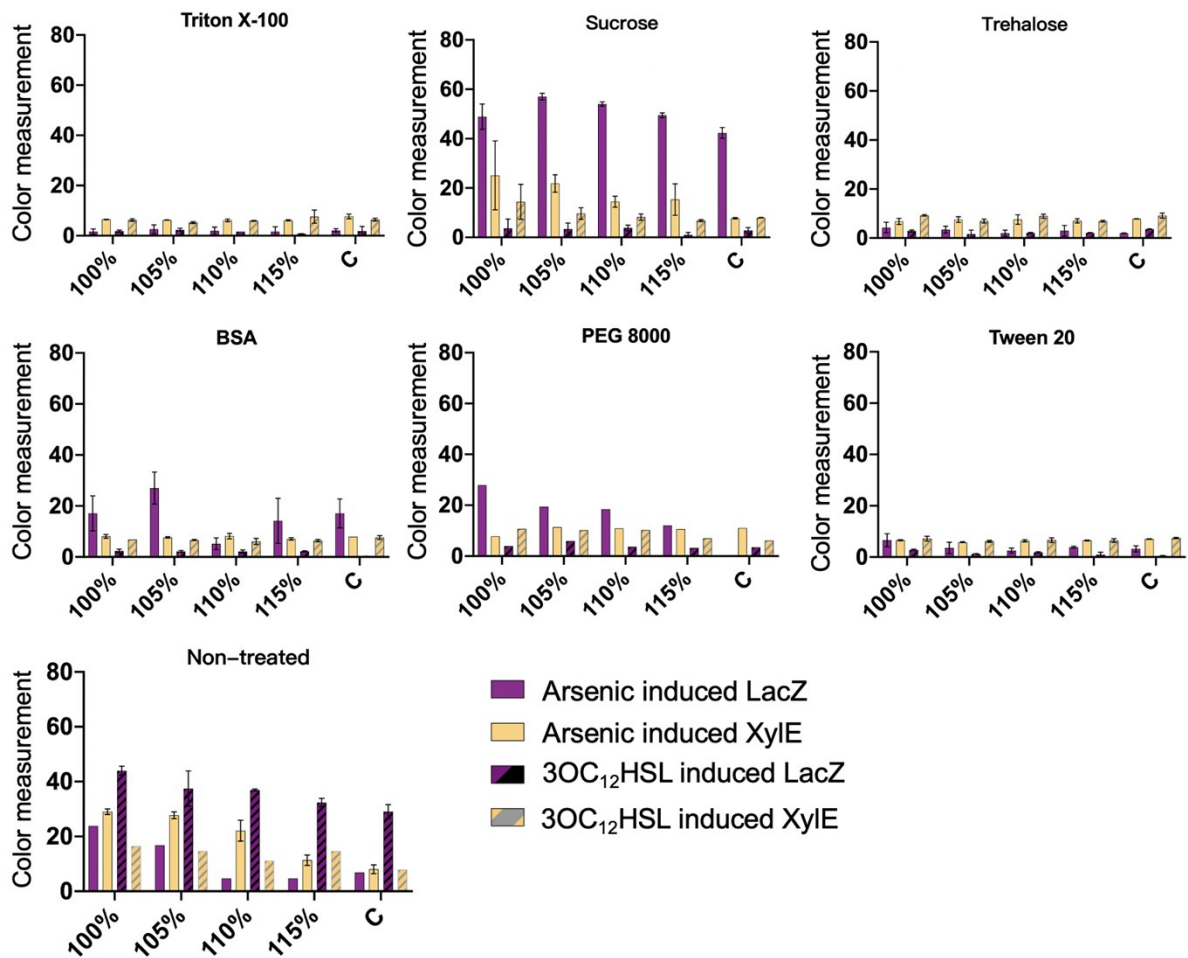


Fig. S13. Cell-free reactions on protectant-treated papers were rehydrated with water of 100%, 105%, 110%, and 115% volume of original cell-free reaction. Cell-free reactions on the sucrose or PEG 8000-treated papers developed the signal.

Supplementary Tables

Table S1 DNA sequences of expression elements involved in two sensing systems

Gene name	Sequence
<i>P_{ars}</i>	CCAACTCAA AATT CACACCTATTACCTTCCTCTGCACTTACACAT TCGTTAAGTCATATATGTTTTTGACTTATCCGCTTCGAAGAGAGA CACTACCTGCAA
<i>arsR</i>	ATGTCATTTCTGTTACCCATCCAATTGTTCAA AATTCTTGCTGAT GAAACCCGTCTGGGCATCGTTTTACTGCTCAGCGAACTGGGAGA GTTATGCGTCTGCGATCTCTGCACTGCTCTCGACCAGTCGCAGCC CAAGATCTCCCGCCACCTGGCATTGCTGCGTGAAAGCGGGCTAT TGCTGGACCGCAAGCAAGGTAAGTGGGTT CATTACCGCTTATCA CCGCATATTCCAGCATGGGCGGCGAAAATTATTGATGAGGCCTG GCGATGTGAACAGGAAAAGGTT CAGGCGATTGTCCGCAACCTGG CTCGACAAA AACTGTTCCGGGGACAGTAAGAACATTTGCAGTTAA
<i>P_{lux}</i>	ACTATTGTATCGCTGGGAATACAATTACTTAACATAAGCACCTG TAGGATCGTACAGGTTTACGCAAGAAAATGGTTTGTTATAGTCG AATAT
<i>luxR</i>	ATGATATATAACACGCAAAA AACTTGCGACAAA CAATAGGTAAGG ATAAAGAGATGGGTATGAAAA ACATAAATGCCGACGACACATA CAGAATAATTAATAAAA AATTAAAGCTTG TAGAAGCAATAATGATA TTAATCAATGCTTATCTGATATGACTAAA AATGGTACATTGTGAAT ATTATTTACTCGCGATCATTTATCCTCATTCTATGGTTAAATCTG ATATTTCAATTCTAGATAATTACCCTAAAA AATGGAGGCAATAT TATGATGACGCTAATTTAATAAAA ATATGATCCTATAGTAGATTAT TCTAACTCCAATCATT CACCAATTAATTGGAATATATTTGAAAAC AATGCTGTAAATAAAA AATCTCCAAATGTAATTAAGAAGCGAA AACATCAGGTCTTATCACTGGGTTTAGTTTCCCTATTCATACGGC TAACAATGGCTTCGGAATGCTTAGTTTTGCACATTCAGAAAAAG ACA ACTATATAGATAGTTTATTTTTACATGCGTGTATGAACATAC CATT AATTGTTCCCTTCTCTAGTTGATAATTATCGAAAAATAAATA TAGCAAATAATAAATCAAACAACGATTTAACCAAAAAGAGAAAA AGAATGTTTAGCGTGGGCATGCGAAGGAAAAAGCTCTTGGGATA TTTCAAAAATATTAGGCTGCAGTGAGCGTACTGTCACCTTTCCATT TAACCAATGCGCAAATGAAACTCAATACAACAAACCGCTGCCAA AGTATTTCTAAAGCAATTTTAACAGGAGCAATTGATTGCCATA CTTAAAAAATTAA
<i>gusA</i>	ATGTTACGTCCTGTAGAAACCCCAACCCGTGAAATCAAAA AACT CGACGGCCTGTGGGCATTCAGTCTGGATCGCGAAA AACTGTGGAA TTGATCAGCGTTGGTGGGAAAGCGCGTTACAAGAAAGCCGGGC

	<p>AATTGCTGTGCCAGGCAGTTTTTAACGATCAGTTCGCCGATGCAG ATATTCGTAATTATGCGGGCAACGTCTGGTATCAGCGCGAAGTC TTTATAACCGAAAGGTTGGGCAGGCCAGCGTATCGTGCTGCGTTT CGATGCGGTCACTCATTACGGCAAAGTGTGGGTCAATAATCAGG AAGTGATGGAGCATCAGGGCGGCTATACGCCATTTGAAGCCGAT GTCACGCCGTATGTTATTGCCGGGAAAAGTGTACGTATCACCGT TTGTGTGAACAACGAACTGAACTGGCAGACTATCCCGCCGGGAA TGGTGATTACCGACGAAAACGGCAAGAAAAAGCAGTCTTACTTC CATGATTTCTTTAACTATGCCGGGATCCATCGCAGCGTAATGCTC TACACCACGCCGAACACCTGGGTGGACGATATCACCGTGGTGAC GCATGTGCGCGAAGACTGTAACCACGCGTCTGTTGACTGGCAGG TGGTGGCCAATGGTGATGTCAGCGTTGAACTGCGTGATGCGGAT CAACAGGTGGTTGCAACTGGACAAGGCACTAGCGGGACTTTGCA AGTGGTGAATCCGCACCTCTGGCAACCGGGTGAAGGTTATCTCT ATGAACTGTGCGTACAGCCAAAAGCCAGACAGAGTGTGATATC TACCCGCTTCGCGTCGGCATCCGGTCAGTGGCAGTGAAGGGCGA ACAGTTCCTGATTAACCACAAACCGTTCTACTTTACTGGCTTTGG TCGTCATGAAGATGCGGACTTGCCTGGCAAAGGATTCGATAACG TGCTGATGGTGCACGACCACGCATTAATGGACTGGATTGGGGCC AACTCCTACCGTACCTCGCATTACCCTTACGCTGAAGAGATGCTC GACTGGGCAGATGAACATGGCATCGTGGTGATTGATGAAACTGC TGCTGTGCGCTTTAACCTCTCTTTAGGCATTGGTTTTCGAAGCGGG CAACAAGCCGAAAGAACTGTACAGCGAAGAGGCAGTCAACGGG GAAACTCAGCAAGCGCACTTACAGGCGATTAAAGAGCTGATAG CGCGTGACAAAAACCACCCAAGCGTGGTGATGTGGAGTATTGCC AACGAACCGGATACCCGTCCGCAAGGTGCACGGGAATATTTGCG GCCACTGGCGGAAGCAACGCGTAAACTCGACCCGACGCGTCCG ATCACCTGCGTCAATGTAATGTTCTGCGACGCTCACACCGATAC CATCAGCGATCTCTTTGATGTGCTGTGCCTGAACCGTTATTACGG ATGGTATGTCCAAAGCGGCGATTTGGAAACGGCAGAGAAGGTA CTGGAAAAAGA ACTTCTGGCCTGGCAGGAGAACTGCATCAGCC GATTATCATCACCGAATACGGCGTGGATAACGTTAGCCGGGCTGC ACTCAATGTACACCGACATGTGGAGTGAAGAGTATCAGTGTGCA TGGCTGGATATGTATCACCGCGTCTTTGATCGCGTCAGCGCCGTC GTCGGTGAACAGGTATGGAATTTGCGCGATTTTGGCACCCTCGCA AGGCATATTGCGCGTGGCGGTAACAAGAAAGGGATCTTCACTC GCGACCGCAAACCGAAGTCGGCGGCTTTTCTGCTGCAAAAACGC TGGACTGGCATGAACTTCGGTGAAAAACCGCAGCAGGGAGGCA AACAATGA</p>
<i>lacZ</i>	<p>ATGACCATGATTACGGATTCACTGGCCGTCGTTTTACAACGTCGT GACTGGGAAAACCCTGGCGTTACCCA ACTTAATCGCCTTGCAGC ACATCCCCCTTTCGCCAGCTGGCGTAATAGCGAAGAGGCCCGCA</p>

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TGAGCGTGGTGGTTATGCCGATCGCGTCACACTACGTCTGAACG
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CGCGCCCGCTGATCCTTTGCGAATACGCCACGCGATGGGTAAAC
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GATAACGAGCTCCTGCACTGGATGGTGGCGCTGGATGGTAAGCC

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<i>xyIE</i>	<p>ATGAACAAAGGCGTTATGCGCCCGGGTCATGTGCAACTGCGCGT GCTGGATATGAGCAAAGCGCTGGAACATTATGTGGAACTGCTGG GCCTGATTGAAATGGATCGCGATGATCAGGGCCGCGTGTATTTA AAAGCGTGGACCGAGGTGGATAAATTTAGCCTGGTGCTGCGCGA AGCAGATGAACCGGGCATGGATTTTATGGGCTTTAAGGTGGTGG ATGAAGATGCGCTGCGCCAGTTAGAACGTGATCTGATGGCGTAT GGCTGCGCGGTGGAACAATTACCTGCGGGCGAACTGAATAGCTG TGGTCGTCGCGTTCGTTTTCAAGCGCCTAGCGGCCATCATTTTGA ACTGTACGCGGACAAAGAATATAACCGGCAAATGGGGCCTGAAC GATGTGAACCCTGAAGCATGGCCGCGCGATTTAAAAGGTATGGC GGCGGTGCGTTTTGATCATGCGCTGATGTATGGCGATGAACTGC CGGCGACCTATGATCTGTTTACCAAAGTGCTGGGCTTTTATCTGG CGGAACAGGTGCTGGATGAAAACGGCACTCGCGTGGCGCAATTT TTAAGCCTGAGCACCAAAGCGCATGATGTGGCGTTTATTCATCA TCCGGAAAAAGGCCGCTGCATCATGTGAGCTTTCATCTGAAAA CCTGGGAAGATCTGTTACGCGCGGGCGGATCTGATTAGCATGACC GATACCAGCATTGATATTGGCCCGACCCGTCATGGCTTAACCCA</p>

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Table S2 Amino acid sequences of proteins involved in two sensing systems

Protein name	Sequence
ArsR	MSFLLPIQLFKILADETRLGIVLLLSELGELCVCDLCTALDQSQPKI SRHLALLRESGLLLDRKQGWVHYRLSPHIPAWAAKIIDEAWRCE QEKVQAIVRNLARQNCSGDSKNICS*
LuxR	MIYNTQNLRQTIGKDKEMGMKNINADDTYRIINKIKACRSNNDIN QCLSDMTKMVHCEYYLLAIYPHSMVKS DISILDNYPKKWRQYY DDANLIKYPDIVDYSNSNHSPINWNIFENNAVNKKSPNVIKEAKTS GLITGFSFPIHTANNGFGMLSAHSEKDNYIDSLFLHACMNIPLIVP SLVDNYRKINIANNKSNNDLTKREKECLAWACEGKSSWDISKILG CSERTVTFHLTNAQMKLNTTNRCQSISKAILTG AIDCPYFKN*
GusA	MLRPVETPTREIKKLDGLWAFSLDRENCGIDQRWWESALQESRAI AVPGSFNDQFADADIRNYAGNVWYQREVFIPKGWAGQRIVLRFD AVTHYGKVVVNNQEVMEHQGGYTPFEADVTPYVIAGKSVRITV CVNNELNWQTIPPGMVIDDENGKKKQSYFHDFNYAGIHRVVML YTPNTWVDDITVVTHVAQDCNHASVDWQVVANGDVSVELRDA DQQVVATGQGTSGTLQVNVPHLWQPGEGYLYELCVTAKSQTEC DIYPLRVGIRSAVKGEQFLINHKKPFYFTGFGRHEDADLRGKGF NVLMVHDHALMDWIGANSYRTSHYPYAEEMLDWADEHGIVVID ETAAVGFNLSLIGGFEAGNPKELYSEEAVNGETQQAHLQAIKELI ARDKNHPSVVMWSIANEPDTRPQGAREYFAPLAEATRKLDPTRPI TCVNVMFCD AHTDTISDLFDVLCNRYYGWYVQSGDLETAEKVL EKELLAWQEKLHQPIITEYGVDTLAGLHSMYTD MWSEEYQCAW LDMYHRVFDRVSAVVGEQVWNFADFATSQGILRVGGNKKGIFTR DRKPKSAAFLQKRWTGMNFGKPKQQGGKQ*
LacZ	MTMITDSLAVVLQRRDWENPGVTQLNRLAAHPPFASWRNSEEAR TDRPSQQLRSLNGEWRFAWFPAPEAVPESWLECDLPEADTVVPS NWQM HGYDAPIYTNVTYPITVNPFFVPTENPTGCYSLTFNVD ESWLQEGQTRIFDGVNSAFHLWCNGRWVGYGQDSRLPSEFDLSAFLR AGENRLAVMVLRWSDGSYLEDQDMWRMSGIFRDVSL LHKPTTQI SDFHVATR FNDDFSRAVLEAEVQMC GELRDYLRVTVSLWQGETQ VASGTAPFGGEIIDERGGYADRVT LRLNVENPKLWSAEIPNLYRA VVELHTADGTLIEAEACDVGFREVRIENGLLLLNGKPLLIRGVNRH EHHPLHGQVMDEQTMVQDILLMKQNNFN AVRC SHYPNHPLWYT LCDRYGLYVVD EANIETHGMVPMNRLTDDPRWLPAMSERVTRM VQRDRNHPSVIIWSLGNESGHGANHDALYRWIKSVDP SRPVQYEG GGADTTATDIICPMYARVDEDQPFPAVPKWSIKKWL SLPGETRPLI LCEYAHAMGNSLGGFAKYWQAFRQY PRLQGGFVWDWVDQSLIK YDENGNPWSAYGGDFGDTPNDRQFCMNGLVFADRTPHPALTEA KHQQQFFQFRLSGQTIEVTSEYLF RHSDNELLHWMVALDGKPLAS

	<p>GEVPLDVAPQGKQLIELPELPQPESAGQLWLTVRVVPQNATAWSE AGHISAWQQWRLAENLSVTLPAASHAIPLTTSEMDFCIELGNKR WQFNRQSGFLSQMWIGDKKQLLTPLRDQFTRAPLDNDIGVSEATR IDPNAWVERWKAAGHYQAEAALLQCTADTLADAVLITTAHAWQ HQGKTLFISRKTYRIDGSGQMAITVDVEVASDTPHPARIGLNCQLA QVAERVNWLGLGPQENYPDRLTAACFDRWDLPLSDMYTPYVFPS ENGLRCGTRELNYGPHQWRGDFQFNISRYSSQQLMETSHRLLH AEEGTWLNIDGFHMGIGGDDSWSPSVSAEFQLSAGRYHYQLVWC QK*</p>
XylE	<p>MNKGVMRPGHVQLRVLDMSKALEHYVELLGLIEMDRDDQGRVY LKAWTEVDKFSVLREADEPGMDFMGFKVVDEDALRQLERDLM AYGCAVEQLPAGELNSCGRRVRFQAPSGHHFELYADKEYTGKW GLNDVNPEAWPRDLKGMAAVRFDHALMYGDELPTYDLFTKVL GFYLAEQVLDENGTRVAQFLSLSTKAHDVAFIHHPEKGRLLHHVSF HLETWEDLLRAADLISMTDTSIDIGPTRHGLTHGKTIYFFDPSGNR NEVFCGGDYNYPDHKPVTTDQLGKAIFYHDRILNERFMTVLT*</p>

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