

Accreditation Body Committee Meeting Tuesday May 18, 2010

Committee members present:

Jeff Flowers, Past Chair
Steve Arms
Lynn Bradley
Dan Dickinson

Kevin Kubik
Rebecca Pierrot
Bethany Piper
Sharon Mertens

Standard Interpretation Request #71

Jeff convened the meeting and requested a motion to consider the finalized response to SIR#71. Lynn moved and Steve Arms seconded such a motion to approve; brief discussion indicated consensus agreement. Steve Arms called for the vote, and the response was unanimously approved. (Dan Dickinson was not yet present and thus did not vote.)

Suspension SOP

Jeff asked Lynn to discuss the background of the “AB Suspension SOP” that this committee intends to develop. Jerry Parr had earlier requested that the Evaluation SOP for the 2009 TNI Standard include a suspension process; the evaluators considered this request at length, and realized that 1) it should be a separate SOP, referred to in the Evaluation SOP, and 2) the topic needed substantial input from the ABs themselves, and recommended that the action of suspension be discussed by the NELAP Board, to provide input about the states’ legal aspects. Since this did not occur after several Board meetings, the AB Committee (which has 4 AB representatives) determined to consider the states’ positions and draft an SOP for suspension.

Several committee members asked whether other ISO based groups recognizing ABs have suspension processes. Later research indicates that NACLA does not have such a process. ILAC does not have anything relevant in its public web pages. APLAC (Asia-Pacific Lab Accreditation Cooperation) has some language about suspension (below). Not all cooperations were searched.

- If the MRA Council resolves to suspend MRA signatory recognition of an accreditation body it shall decide also on the continued recognition of accredited conformity assessment bodies taking into account the reasons for the suspension.
- A suspension of APLAC MRA signatory status shall only be lifted after a follow-up visit, to establish that appropriate and effective corrective action has been taken, and subsequent report and recommendation from the evaluation team to the MRA Council.
- (from **APLAC MRA COUNCIL – RULES FOR OPERATION, Section 2.6**, at http://www.aplac.org/documents/mr/aplac_mr_008_issue_3.pdf)

There was earlier some concern discussed that “suspension” should have some punitive or negative effect on the AB, but this day’s discussion seemed to acknowledge that most impacts

would be felt by laboratories and the other remaining ABs, and also the non-NELAP states relying on NELAP accreditations, but not within the state AB put under suspension. Kevin indicated that if a state drinking water program did not pass its certification, it would be suspended and the Regional lab would take over testing responsibilities temporarily, but with efforts to restore the program to full recognition rapidly.

Committee consensus was that “provisional approval” with a public notification process would be preferable to “suspension” since the laboratories accredited by that AB would immediately begin demanding to know what was wrong, and when it would be fixed, in order that the labs’ accreditation status not be threatened. All agreed that this would be a far more effective approach than “suspension.” Participants also agreed that provisional approval should only be considered when uncorrected findings from an evaluation actually jeopardize the integrity of the assessment process, such as fraud or dry-assessing, systematic failure to track PTs, or a drastic shortage of assessors to handle the evident workload (this is not an all-inclusive list.) Lastly, provisional approval should be granted on a case-by-case basis with the appropriate timeline for restoring full approval set as a condition of the provisional approval. There should be some provision for other ABs to obtain additional information about labs accredited by the provisionally approved AB, whether from the AB or the labs themselves, in order to assure that continued mutual recognition would be appropriate.

Lynn will draft an SOP for this suspension/provisional approval, as part of her consulting contract, and submit it to the AB Committee at least a week before the next meeting on June 15.

Laboratory Accreditation Systems Committee Update Request

Dan Dickinson brought forward several items from the LASC’s Project Plan for the TNI Standard Implementation, to get updates that he can take back to the LASC.

First was the need for timelines for the AB renewal process. The answer is that the timelines previously used (for the NELAC Standard) are being carried forward into the Evaluation SOP for the TNI Standard, which has been in process of revision for over a year now. Dan will also provide a copy of the current draft, being worked on by the evaluators, to the LASC. The AB Committee agreed to complete this evaluation SOP by October 2010.

Second, the LASC believes that "surveillance on-site assessments" as referred to in the TNI Standard (V2M3) needs to be defined, and needs to be explained in guidance. Sharon volunteered to draft a brief page of guidance for Steve to refine, with the end product to be completed by the July committee meeting. Because ABs are obligated to perform on-site assessments every 2 years (\pm 6 months), the use of surveillance assessments (as permitted in the ISO 17011) is unlikely to occur for renewals, but might be used (as document review, perhaps) to check on previous deficiencies to ensure that corrective actions were successfully implemented. All agree that having the option to perform surveillance assessments would “be nice” if resources were available.

Next Meeting and Carry Forward Item

Bethany Piper advised the committee that she has accepted a new position outside of the AB in Pennsylvania, and that this was her last meeting. A replacement from the AB community needs to be found for her slot on the committee. **(ACTION ITEM FOR JOE!)**

The next Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, June 15, 2010, at 11:30 am EDT.