

Summary of Advocacy Committee Meeting
December 3, 2009

1. Call to order

Judy Duncan called the meeting to order at 12 Noon CST. Attendance is recorded in Attachment 1. In addition to those indicated, Jack Farrell also joined the call.

2. Approval of minutes

Minutes from the 10-01-09 meeting and the 11-05-09 meeting were reviewed and approved for posting.

3. Summary of survey comments

Susan Wyatt reviewed comments from Judy Morgan's survey and organized them according to the TNI strategic plan. Actions and comments related to each strategy are shown below:

Strategy 2: Increase the number of states participating

Sixteen of the selected comments relate to implementation differences in participating states and 12 additional comments related specifically to real or perceived lack of consistency between assessors.

Action: Defer summary of items to the NELAP Board and request they dedicate resources to address these issues internally. Report on the progress toward consistency and continue the dialog with commenters on a regular basis (e.g. newsletter, conference sessions, website, and special videoconferences).

The commenters outlined five opportunities for addressing the language of the standard to improve its consistent implementation and applicability.

Action: Forward ideas to expert committees for review. Request a response from the committees. If the issue cannot be addressed as requested, do opportunities for compromise or possible training sessions exist?

The Advocacy committee agreed that comments related to assessor inconsistency should be sent to the NELAP Board along with the Consistency Improvement Task Force (CITF) and the Small Lab Advocacy Group (SLAG).

Comments related to changes in the language of the standard will be forwarded to the appropriate expert committee with a copy to Bob Wyeth, chair of the CSDB. The

transmittal letter will indicate that the Advocacy committee is not necessarily saying that a change is needed, but wants the expert committee to consider. The expert committee may just want to clarify the intent of the standard suggest ways to address the concern expressed.

Judy Duncan and Carol will work on the letters to forward these comments.

Strategy 3: Increase the number of laboratories participating.

Fourteen of the comments relate to state-specific requirements. The two main issues which deter laboratories from identifying NELAP as beneficial to them are: including state-specific requirements during assessments and lack of support for laboratory accreditation processes by the state regulatory programs. The first is an action item in 2.4, 2.5 and 3.1 of the TNI Strategic Plan.

The commenters discuss accreditation requirements imposed in excess of the requirements in the standard. Most of the 'extra' requirements relate to requirements reviewed by NELAP Accreditation Bodies on behalf of state programs using the accreditation.

Action: Work with the Technical Assistance Committee to draft training to educate the laboratories on the assessment process and the particular part of the standard that requires adherence to client requirements (i.e. regulatory program requirements).

Seven comments relate to the cost of accreditation as a deterrent for laboratories. Most state fees are set by the legislature (in state law) or the program (in regulation) and must fully support all functions of the accreditation program. The Safe Drinking Water Act and other federal programs do not require states to earmark funding to support an accreditation program.

The majority of states receive no funding from other sources, such as federal funding for Clean Water Act-NPDES programs, state funding for environmental programs, or grants from federal agencies or non-profit organizations. In addition, the funding sources for accreditation programs are not consistent from state-to-state (i.e. some states allocate funding directly to the program, others pool fees into one funding source which is then utilized by many programs), which causes disparity between set fees and difficulty in truly assessing the comparability of funding required to support an accreditation program.

Action: Advocate earmarked federal funding for accreditation. Assist states in obtaining grants for special projects. Increase support for the national database and its ability to expand to a 'one size fits all' application form.

The comments related to fees may present an education opportunity for TNI that can be addressed through FAQ's. AB accreditation fees are a state issue and not set by TNI. The Advocacy Committee could review previous fee comparison studies to understand the issue better. The comparison of state AB fee schedules will be discussed at the next meeting.

Strategy 5: Establish infrastructure to ensure TNI's future success (i.e. Strategy item 5.2 "increase the awareness of TNI and promote national accreditation").

One comment infers that the TNI Board (or perhaps one of the committees?) did not take advantage of a customer service opportunity. The commenter states TNI did not relay results of a different survey conducted more than one year ago.

Action: Determine the truthfulness of the statement. If the other survey results exist, relay the results or re-publish them. The Board should consider a newsletter article and web announcement, if appropriate. Judy Morgan presented the current survey during the national conference. If the TNI membership and interested parties need a different venue to hear the summary, the TNI Board should ensure that the summary is completed by one of the committees or Boards and determine the best venue for publicizing the action items produced. A different approach may allow the original commenter to clarify remarks or suggest other actions to address the issues they relayed.

Carol will check with Jerry to see if he is aware of any surveys done previously that were not communicated.

Judy and Carol will work on referral letters and present at the next meeting.

4. ELAB Update

Jack Farrell joined the call and gave an update of ELAB actions. Jack serves as the TNI representative on ELAB. Jack indicated that there were four major topics that ELAB had been working on:

1. Clarification on EPA updates to SW 846.
2. PT frequency – ELAB is presently getting information from various committees on this topic. This issue may be broader than just the number of PTs. The question may really be "How are PTs used?"
3. DW certification manual vs. TNI standards – The comparison table has been completed and posted on ELAB's website. Comments can be submitted directly to ELAB.
4. Small lab subcommittee – ELAB has formed a small lab committee to get input on small lab issues.

4. Outreach to EPA Regions

Lara Autry is attending the EPA RS&T Directors meeting in Denver and will advise the Advocacy Committee of any actions needed following that meeting.

5. Committee vacancies

Judy Duncan reported that five members on the Advocacy committee had expiring terms: Judy Duncan, Lara Autry, Susan Wyatt, Jim Pletl, and Marlene Moore. Judy, Lara, and Susan all expressed interest in serving another term. Marlene Moore does not want to serve again.

Judy reviewed the applications received so far and recommended that Paula Hogg and Lynn Bradley be considered for membership. Andy Eaton moved for approval of these two candidates and Aurora Shields seconded. All present voted in favor and the motion passed. Judy will notify Paula and Lynn.

6. Next meeting

The next meeting will be January 7, 2010, at 12 Noon CDT. The agenda will include:

- Referral letters for survey comments
- Outreach to EPA Regions
- Planning for Chicago meeting

Attachment 1

#	LastName	FirstName	Stakeholder Group	Present	Term
1	Autry	Lara	Other	Y	1
2	Coats	Kevin	Other	N	2
3	Conlon	Pat	Other	Y	3
4	Craig	Carl	Other	Y	2
6	Moore	Marlene	Other	N	1
7	Duncan	Judy	AB	Y	1
8	Jackson	Kenneth	Other	Y	2
9	Shields	Aurora	AB	Y	3
10	Wyatt	Susan	AB	Y	1
11	Eaton	Andy	Lab	Y	1
12	English	Zonetta	Lab	X	2
13	Perry	Michael	Lab	N	3
14	Pletl	Jim	Lab	Y	1
15	Ward	Gary	Lab	X	2
16	Wichman	Michael	Lab	Y	3
17	Schantz	Leonard	Small Lab Advocate	Y	
18	Parr	Jerry	ED	N	
19	Batterton	Carol	PA	Y	
			ASSOCIATE MEMBERS		
	McCracken	Kirstin	Lab	N	
	Morgan	Judy	Lab	N	