

**Laboratory Accreditation System Executive Committee
Meeting Minutes**
Tuesday, January 31, 2012
Sarasota, FL

1. Roll Call and Introductions

Kirstin Daigle, Chair, Laboratory Accreditation System Executive Committee (LASEC), opened the meeting at the Forum on Laboratory Accreditation in Sarasota, FL. The following members were present: Kirstin Daigle, JoAnn Boyd, George Detsis, Carol Barrick, and Terri Grimes. Several members also joined the meeting by conference call: Ann Marie Allen, Julia Sudds

2. Discussion of Accreditation Body Task Force Recommended Option 6

Recommendation 6: Sharing of Information and Resources

Develop a system so that NELAP Accreditation Bodies (ABs) could better share information and resources.

Kirstin presented a powerpoint on the LASEC's report on Recommended Option 6 which will be posted on the TNI website. Following her presentation, the committee received comments on the various bullet points:

Explore the use of sharing assessors, or assessment reports, between States as a way to reduce the number of assessments for a given laboratory.

- Question: Can't states do this right now? Answer: Yes.
- Lab consent is necessary, however, some state and federal programs may not allow for the use of assessments performed by another agency.
- This is related to reciprocity. It is up to each state to decide whether they can accept another agency's reports and/or assessors. DW program allows use of shared assessors and reports as long as the primary makes the accreditation decision.
- LASEC believes there are significant benefits to ABs and labs, however issues like logistics, cooperation, mutual recognition, and protection of confidential information need to be addressed. Additional stakeholder input is necessary.
- In one case, state use of DoE report made the additional state audit unnecessary.
- Question: If one NELAP AB accepted another agency's audit report, would all NELAP ABs agree? There needs to full agreement from all NELAP ABs.
- There needs to be a better separation of state programs vs. NELAP accreditation. The focus here is sharing NELAP accreditation information.
- This can be done by considering the other entity as a third party assessor. It is already allowed. The state should make the call as to whether the report is acceptable for its use.

- Question: How do you reconcile differences in opinion among ABs? Who makes the final decision? Answer: If one AB makes the decision to accept, the others should not care how it was done. The decision of one AB should be good enough for all to accept.
- Follow up question: How can all ABs know how the decision is made? Answer: This practice is already occurring successfully, but not frequently. The LASEC should consider writing an SOP on how to do this. The SOP should include process for going back to the AB for more information, but not to the labs. EPA Region 6 has a good model for sharing resources for evaluating primacy labs.
- One lab in North Carolina had 30 audits last year. If NELAP accreditation is good enough and states and others are just going to share information, states that are going to use NELAP audit information without being a NELAP AB are getting a free ride. They need to be in the program.
- Question to Ann Marie: Would your state grant accreditation to a lab that had accreditation and an audit report from another state? Answer: Only from a the laboratory's resident state. The issue goes to individual state responsibility. States have to decide what they will accept from another state.
- Also have the issue of who pays for it. Some states are taking advantage of work that other states have paid for.
- DoE audits exceed the scope of NELAP audits. There is benefit in sharing audits from DoE. Also, many ABs don't like to go out of state. Sharing audits helps with this issue.
- Iowa accepts NELAP as meeting the requirements of the state program. OK is similar to Iowa.
- Having an SOP on sharing of resources will help promote this practice and deal with perceived barriers.
- Question: Why is it a state issue? Shouldn't it just be accepted if it is a NELAP accreditation? Answer: We need to look at this issue some more. Maybe some ABs are not doing a good job.
- We should look at the section of the TNI Standard that allows third party assessors. How can this sharing process fit into that allowance? We may already be most of the way there.
- There's a difference in reviewing a report and re-doing an audit. The real issue is that TNI has no leverage over ABs. Labs have the responsibility to provide feedback to the AB when they encounter problems. Maybe feedback should come to LASEC.

Develop a process for sharing example form letters for AB assessments and related activities.

- TNI has the expertise and infrastructure to develop an assessment tool kit for ABs.

Use TNI's Assessment Forum and Mentor Sessions as springboards for developing ways to share best practices among ABs.

- This is already done, but TNI needs to find a way to capture and post the information for those not in attendance.

Work with APHL to improve the sharing of information among the state assessor group by establishing a Discussion Board comparable to the Discussion Board for the Small Laboratory Advocacy Group (SLAG).

- Requires oversight and management, need to promote discussion without influence from other stakeholders.
- Question: What is an example of what cannot be open to all stakeholders? Answer: An assessor observes certain practices and wants input from other assessors about whether practice is in conformance to standard without lab interference.
- Could also be used to discuss lessons learned with the goal to improve processes.

3. Future Planning for LASEC

Jerry Parr joined the meeting and shared the vision for LASEC when TNI was organized. Jerry stated that LASEC was the vehicle to get wide stakeholder input into accreditation activities. He challenged LASEC to look into several aspects of lab accreditation, specifically:

- What does it mean to manage NELAP? This will include looking at financial information for the program, evaluations of ABs, etc.
- Should also include the Technical Assistance Committee.

Commenter: There is a serious issue in that there are some who don't have confidence in all ABs. What can be done to address this? Answer: This could be a role for the NELAP QA director. LASEC could ask the QA Director to make a presentation. LASEC could identify concerns to look into, and set goals to address issues. There should be balanced stakeholder input into the NELAP process.

Kirstin also reminded attendees that the LASEC had vacancies that needed to be filled. Applications should be sent to Jerry Parr.

The meeting was adjourned.