

**Laboratory Accreditation System Executive Committee
Meeting Minutes**

Monday, December 21, 2011

FINAL

1) Roll call and approval of minutes:

Chair, Kirstin Daigle, called the TNI LAS EC meeting to order on December 21, 2011, at 1 pm EST. Attendance is recorded in Attachment A – there were 7 Executive Committee members present. Lynn Bradley also joined the call to discuss Task Force item #5.

The minutes for the October 24, 2011 meeting were reviewed. A motion was made by Mitzi to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Carol and unanimously approved.

The minutes from the November 28, 2011 meeting were reviewed. A motion was made by Carol to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Marvelyn and unanimously approved.

2) AB Task Force Assignments

Task Force Item #5:

This is AB Task Force Item #5:

5. Use of Assessments Performed by Other Accreditation Bodies

Findings

The Department of Energy (DoE) assesses laboratories to the NELAC Standard plus supplemental requirements. The Department of Defense (DoD) manages an accreditation standard that uses ILAC-recognized Accreditation Bodies that assess labs to the NELAC Standard plus supplemental requirements.

The assessment reports from DoE and the DoD ABs could be used as a way to facilitate accreditation, especially for those laboratories located in states that are not NELAP recognized ABs. To preserve integrity of assessment reports, it would be best if they were obtained directly from the DoE or the DoD AB with the permission of the laboratory, rather than indirectly from the laboratory. This option would not require any additional cost to the laboratory for the assessment unless additional parameters were needed for the NELAP accreditation. The state would still retain the authority to grant accreditation.

Next Steps to Implement This Option

- *Explore the feasibility of partnering with DoE and the DoD-approved ABs to use their assessment reports.*

Priority: High

Timeframe: Short

Suggested Lead for Implementation: NELAP Accreditation Council

Kirstin Daigle summarized the work LAS EC did on Item #5. The committee reviewed the information and agreed it was ready to forward to the NELAP AC with some minor edits. The responses received from A2LA, PJLA and LAB were similar. The term used in the conclusion needs to be changed to NELAP instead of NELAC and the acronyms need to be spelled out. The final version sent to the NELAP AC is included in Attachment B.

6. Sharing of Information and Resources

Findings

Some ABs have developed effective systems for performing routine activities required to operate and manage an accreditation program. TNI hosts an Assessment Forum and Mentor Session at each of its semiannual meeting where ideas on specific topics are shared. APHL facilitates a laboratory assessor conference call where issues are discussed in the broader community of assessors. Some laboratories have multiple primary accreditations due to the scope of their services which results in multiple assessments from different ABs.

Next Steps to Implement This Option

- (6.1) [Lead: George, Kristin and JoAnn. Dan Dickinson has done assessments with other states when it lines up and everyone benefits from it. It does not happen very often.] *Explore the use of sharing assessors, or assessment reports, between states as a way to reduce the number of assessments for a given laboratory.*
- (6.2) [Lead: Marvelyn and Kristin – See Attachment C. Dan Dickinson previously commented that all ABs have to have these items and maybe the issue is to unify the language in the forms? He didn't see the value of this item. Ann Marie added this would be helpful to a new AB.] *Develop a process for sharing example form letters for AB assessments and related activities.*
- (6.3) [Lead: Julia. Maybe a summary of these sessions should be available on the TNI website.] *Use TNI's Assessment Forum and Mentor Sessions as springboards for developing ways to share best practices among ABs.*
- (6.4) [Lead: Judy Duncan would be the contact to figure out how to work on this. Would a Discussion Board be helpful? Would access be limited to only the assessors? Kirstin will contact Judy and APHL.] *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.*

Priority: *Medium*

Timeframe: *Short term*

Suggested Lead for Implementation: *LASEC*

Kirstin described the process and format for reporting to the AB Task Force.

Mitzi thought sharing assessors and assessment reports saves costs for both the lab and the AB. Precedent includes:

- The November minutes on this topic were reviewed (6.1). DOE has worked with Texas in the past. Texas reviewed the DOE report and used the report after determining the report was sufficient, it covered the items they needed to see. They did not re-audit the lab.
- At the last DOE workshop in CA, someone who performs audits in CA asked if DOE would be interested in teaming up with CA when they come in to audits of NELAC labs. They thought this might help save the lab and state some costs. DOE is waiting to hear back on this proposal.

The group discussed possible impediments to sharing reports and assessors:

Laboratory consent is required. While most agree that laboratories would consent, there are times when it may not be advantageous to do so. Some states may not allow or be able to accept the sharing of information. Some regional drinking water programs may not allow the use of shared assessors. Ann Marie noted that sharing information could be time-consuming and/or may include proprietary information.

George summed up the conclusion stating that implementation of this option requires buy-in and the next step for the LASEC should be to pose this option to stakeholders and get their feedback.

- A discussion board would be easier to establish because systems are already in place within TNI to set something like this up. Unlike the SLAG DB, a discussion board for assessors would likely require a more formal process. The call participants thought this process needed to be open, but also limited to allow assessors to discuss situations without concern. Balanced representation would be necessary. A facilitator required to ensure resolutions are consistent with the standard.

Next Steps for #6: Kirstin will prepare draft recommendation for review by committee. Review will be done by email since the due date falls before the next LASEC call. Kirstin will ask for an extension until after the holidays.

Task Force Item #7

7. Surveillance Assessments

Findings

ISO 17011 allows for surveillance assessments, defined as a set of activities, except reassessment, to monitor the continued fulfillment by accredited [laboratories] of requirements for accreditation. This term is defined in the TNI Standard, but cannot be used to extend the frequency of a full reassessment due to the requirement in Volume 2,

Module 3 for a full reassessment to be performed every two years. Surveillance assessments could assist ABs in managing their program as fewer reassessments would need to be performed on a two year cycle. This approach could also lead to a reduction in the cost of the program which could be passed on to the laboratories.

Some commenters supported the concept of revising the Standard to allow for surveillance assessments while others were opposed. Commenters believe there should be a formal and objective risk-based process and consistent criteria for implementing such a system.

Next Steps to Implement This Option

- *Form a task force to investigate how surveillance assessments could be implemented in a formal and objective process with consistent criteria.*
- *Develop a model on how surveillance assessments could be used to extend the frequency of a full reassessment for more than two years.*
- *Use the results from this effort to develop a recommendation on changing Volume 2.*

Priority: Medium

Timeframe: Long term

Suggested Lead for Implementation: Task Force with representatives from Accreditation Body Committee, Onsite Committee and LASEC

The workgroup discussed at the last meeting will be reporting on this item.

3) New Business

- Sarasota Meeting: Will meet in January to discuss the presentation to be given.

4) Next Meeting

The next meeting will be planned for Monday, January 23rd at noon EST.

Action Items are included in Attachment C.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 pm EST. (Motion to adjourn – Kirstin. Second – Unnown. Unanimously approved.)

Attachment A**PARTICIPANTS
TNI LABORATORY ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE**

Member	Affiliation	Contact Information
Ann Marie Allen Present	Massachusetts, Non-nelap AB	T: 978-682-5237 x333 E: ann.marie.allen@state.ma.us
Aaren Alger Absent	Pennsylvania DEP	T: 717-346-8212 E: aaalger@state.pa.us
Jo Ann Boyd Absent	Southwest Research Institute, Lab	T: 210-522-2169 E: jboyd@swri.org
Carol Barrick Present	Mosaic, LLC, Lab	T: 813-361-6911 E: cabarrick@msn.com
Kristin Brown Present	Utah Bureau of Lab Improvement, AB	T: 801-965-2540 E: kristinbrown@utah.gov
George Detsis Present	Department of Energy, Government	T: 301-903-1488 E: george.detsis@eh.doe.gov
Dan Dickinson Absent	New York DOH, AB	T: 518 485-5570 E: dmd15@health.state.ny.us
Kirstin Daigle – Chairperson Present	TestAmerica	T: 802-660-1990 Kirstin.Daigle@testamericainc.com
Terri Grimes Absent	Pinellas County Utilities, Municipal Lab	T: 727-5822302 E: tgrimes@co.pinellas.fl.us
Marvelyn Humphrey Present	USEPA Region 6, EPA	T: 281-983-2140 E:
Roger Kenton Absent	Eastman Chemical Company, Lab	T: 903-237-6882 E: rogerk@eastman.com
Judy Morgan Absent	Environmental Science Corporation, Lab	T: 615-773-9657 E: jmorgan@envsci.com
Mitzi Miller Present	Dade Moeller & Associates	T: 509-531-0255 E: mitzi.miller@moellerinc.com
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Ilona Taunton Present	TNI Program Administrator	T: 828-712-9242 E: ilona.taunton@nelac-institute.org

Attachment B

AB Task Force #5

Use of Assessments Performed By Other Accreditation Bodies (AB)

Lead: NELAP Accreditation Council (AC)

The following information is provided to the NELAP AC Council from the LASEC. This information was gathered by members of the LASEC by contact from other Accreditation Bodies, specifically those ABs associated with DOE or DoD.

DOECAP (Department of Energy Consolidated Audit Program): Laboratories may release the DOECAP audit reports to whomever they choose but these reports cannot be released directly to another AB by the agency because the distribution of these audit reports and associated corrective action plans (CAP) and their contents are OUO labeled within the Federal Government. The policy is articulated by the DOE's Office of General Counsel and is in place to protect possible proprietary information that may be included in these documents.

DoD (Department of Defense; 3rd Party ABs (A2LA, L.A.B & ACLASS): A2LA, LAB responded and Perry Johnson responded to the inquiry. Each AB responded that the audit reports could only be released to another AB with consent from the laboratory. The laboratory however, may release the report to other parties at their discretion. The ABs are obligated to maintain contracts with their clients and some of these contracts require that information be retained confidential. This contract requirement could not be maintained if after release of the report to a NELAC AB, the report becomes classified as public domain.

Conclusion: The AC needs to determine if the NELAP ABs can partner with DOE and DOD to use their assessment reports. The LASEC cannot provide a recommendation in this regard but generally agrees that the AC should evaluate these reports to determine if the content and format are readily understood, can be applied to the NELAP program and otherwise meet their requirements. The information provided by the federal programs and contracted accreditation bodies indicate that NELAP ABs would likely need to obtain the assessment reports directly from the laboratory instead of from the AB to ensure all policy and contractual obligations of the AB are satisfied.

Attachment C

Action Items – LAS EC

	Action Item	Who	Expected Completion	Actual Completion / Comments
2	Work on references for SIRs in 2009 SIR database.	Judy Ilona (Jerry)	Establish date at next meeting.	Jerry was not able to locate the work he did.
6	Prepare a lab perspective on sharing of audits.	Judy JoAnn	11-28-11	Post-poned to December Meeting.
9	Summarize the work done on number 5 and forward for LAS EC approval. Then distribute to NELAP AC.	Kirstin	12/15/11	Complete
10	Contact Judy and APHL regarding 6.4.	Kirstin	12/15/11	