

Summary of Reports to the Board of Directors

TNI Forum on Laboratory Accreditation, Chicago, IL, July 16, 2015

Attendees included:

Algers, Aaren
Arms, Steve
Bradley, Lynn
Brown, Justin
Burrows, Richard
Cook, Robin
Freedman, Maria
Junio, Paul
Kassner, Shawn
Mertens, Sharon
Morgan, Judy
Parr, Jerry
Phelps, Lara
Sotomayor, Alfredo
Taunton, Ilona
Watson, Kim
Wyeth, Bob

Sharon opened the meeting at about 4 pm and welcomed the “survivors” of the conference to the final session. She asked for reports from all the session and committee chairs, with estimates of how much time each group would like at the Tulsa conference. Summaries are below, in the order presented.

ELAB – Lara Phelps (half day)

No new issues were raised during the Open Forum part of the meeting. The Board discussed the Interagency Data Quality Task Force (IDQTF) and ELAB’s interactions with that group, and also its Method Harmonization project. The EPA believes that the most benefits for harmonization can be obtained by focusing on the future, since long established methods enshrined in regulation are exceedingly difficult to change.

Assessment Forum and Mentor Session – Jack Farrell (full day and half day, respectively)

Barbara Escobar led the planning of these sessions, which were well received and well attended. The morning session of the AF focused on writing deficiencies, findings, and non-conformances, and the concepts discussed will be summarized for posting with the meeting’s presentations as well as for possible use by LASEC for training development. The afternoon AF session was about what makes an effective QA Manager, a topic initially suggested by Scott Siders. Much good information was presented and participants clearly desired more on the topic.

Attendance at the MS was impacted by competition with NEMC sessions, but the ~25 participants were enthusiastic about the hands-on technical writing skills used to turn observations into findings. Perhaps an appropriate follow-up session would be about corrective actions and root cause determination and repair.

CSDEC and Expert Committees – Bob Wyeth

(CSDEC to be part of joint committee meeting, no separate session)

CSDEC presented to the NEMC during a session on the 2015 standard, explaining the new SOP. Participation in the combined meeting with LASEC and the NELAP AC showed clearly that communication remains the biggest issue in developing improved standards. Several action items emerged from that session. Recommend that the joint meetings continue, since that helps to set the directions for moving forward, for the Expert Committees.

Bob Wyeth noted that there is considerable interest in forming an Asbestos Expert Committee, and asked that anyone interested in being part of that (or persons who can suggest qualified participants) contact him directly.

Quality Systems – Paul Junio

(half day, for handbook)

All 13 committee members were present! The QS session worked mostly on §5.5.13.1, support equipment, but their efforts will need to be redone to match the changes to Volume 3 and the new term “lot” as used there. QS has a large parking lot of items to be addressed in the future.

PT – Shawn Kassner

(half day)

The group worked on V1M1 and V2M2 in the morning. This went well and they finished early. The afternoon session focused on Volumes 3 and 4, going through many comments from the vote, on the Voting Draft Standard (VDS.) They hope to move to the Interim Standard (IS) by the end of this calendar year.

Chemistry – Richard Burrows

(full day)

They completed review of the comments on the Detection and Quantitation standard, from the vote, but still need to edit the document itself. They received additional input from LASEC in the joint meeting, and plan to have an IS for the Detection and Quantitation standard in a few weeks.

Microbiology – Robin Cook

(half day)

Committee members reviewed the three comments from the vote. Two were editorial changes and one a formatting change, so this module is ready to move to the IS stage. For the second half of the session, they reviewed the Small Lab Handbook for microbiology issues.

Field Activities – Justin Brown

(quarter day)

They had a brief meeting about the EPA guidance and specs for sample containers, and then began working on the scope and accreditation guidance.

Radiology – Ilona Taunton for Bob Shannon

(quarter-to-half day)

The committee finished with the comments from the VDS and will soon be going to IS for its revision of the standard.

Laboratory Accreditation Body – Lynn Bradley for Carl Kircher
(half day)

This committee did not meet. By early 2016, they will begin revising V2M1 & M3, combining the modules and making some other changes desired by NELAP.

WET – Lynn Bradley for Rami Naddy
(quarter day)

This new committee did not meet.

SSAS – no report

PTPEC – Maria Friedman
(half day)

The Field of Proficiency Testing (FoPT) tables for chemistry and solid & chemical materials (SCM) have been changed. The non-potable water and SCM tables await AC approval. The revised Drinking Water FoPT table awaits EPA's decision about vinyl chloride. The WET FoPT table is awaiting input from the WET Expert Committee (formerly the members of PTPEC's WET FoPT subcommittee.) A few new analytes have been requested, for addition to the appropriate FoPT tables, and these await approval from the NELAP AC. The SOP subcommittee awaits feedback from Policy Committee reviews of the provisional versions of the SOPs.

NELAP AC – Aaren Alger
(quarter day for AC, half day for joint meeting)

In the morning session, Dan Hickman gave updates on the generic application as well as LAMS. Then the group talked about options for updating the evaluation process and streamlining it to lower costs. The afternoon joint session was lively, with some progress about "sticking points" in the Calibration and Detection and Quantitation standards, as well as an update on changes just made to the PT modules/volumes.

LASEC – Judy Morgan
(quarter day for LASEC, half day for joint meeting)

The morning session was a discussion of reviews of the standards that have taken place thus far, and the recommendations made. The Asbestos and WET modules (revised and approved in 2012) are recommended for adoption, and this will be transmitted to the NELAP AC soon. Additional suggestions for these two modules have been transmitted to CSDEC for the next round of revisions. Also, the Standards Review SOP 3-106 revisions were discussed, in light of the reviews underway now and those coming soon. The afternoon session is discussed above.

NEFAP – Kim Watson
(quarter-to-half day)

Enthusiasm for NEFAP seems renewed, and there are new members, so that the executive committee is now eight FSMOs, four ABs and four "others." They finalized advice from the strategic planning committee and are looking for ways to collaborate with the Non-governmental AB (NGAB) TNI Recognition Committee (TNRC.)

NGAB – Alfredo Sotomayor

(quarter day)

The group discussed next steps: a mini-marketing effort for the program, working with Advocacy Committee; accepting applications August 1 through September 15; conducting on-sites in the fall with recommendations to the TNRC in winter; and hopefully, announcing recognitions in Tulsa.

Advocacy Committee – Steve Arms

(couple of hours)

The committee discussed its mid-October newsletter, with Stacie Metzler as editor, and also its progress on the high priority objectives from the TNI Strategic Plan. Details of the pilot plan to recruit “ambassadors” for non-NELAP states were reviewed as well as the TNI-update letter to EPA’s Forum on Environmental Measurements (FEM.) They reviewed progress on the Handbook on Good Practices, noting that sixteen chapters now have editors, with five or six of the chapters having a first draft completed.

Nominating Committee – Steve Arms

(no meeting)

This committee did not meet but Steve noted that they are seeking candidates for the Board election to coincide with the winter meeting in Tulsa. This is several months earlier than previous Board elections have been.

Information Technology – Jerry Parr for John Kuhn

(meeting length not specified)

They discussed the Method Compendium, which continues to increase its capability, and deserves additional publicity, since this is a tremendously valuable resource for the entire environmental laboratory community. Its methods are neatly tucked into the analytical methods portion of LAMS, and copies are provided in the database, unless copyright issues interfere, in which case a link to the purchase site is provided. Dan Hickman discussed the status of LAMS, and the few states that still need to enter their fields of accreditation; all demographic data are available now. The second half of this meeting was devoted to the generic application, which is nearly ready for beta-testing, and will soon be handed back to the LAB Expert Committee as being what the Database Development Plan promised to provide.

Conference Planning – Jerry Parr

This group discussed the NEMC portion of the conference in Orange County, CA. The NEMC Steering Committee wants to extend that meeting through noon on Friday. They also sketched out broad terms the schedule for the Tulsa conference, three days with training on Thursday. Jerry expressed his hope that NELAP will be able to recognize OK as a NELAP AB at that meeting. TNI will probably offer lab accreditation and radiology training on Thursday, following.

Kim Watson noted that this conference had good representation from EPA, and then Sharon Mertens thanked the TNI staff and the volunteers who make the organization function before adjourning the meeting.