

Summary of Advocacy Committee Meeting
August 10, 2018

1. Call to order

Steve Arms called the meeting to order at 9:00 am CDT, August 10, 2018, in New Orleans, LA. Attendance is recorded in Attachment 1.

2. Approval of minutes

Minutes were not considered at this meeting.

3. Introductions

Steve Arms asked Advocacy Committee members to introduce themselves and then he presented the PowerPoint of the Advocacy Committee's role, agenda, and membership.

3. Panel discussion: The Value of Accreditation – Does Accreditation Improve Data Quality?

Steve introduced the invited panelists for the discussion: Christine Sotelo, CA ELAP, Stephanie Drier, MN DoH, Ron Coss, Orange County Sanitation District, and Curtis Wood, EPA.

Jerry Parr presented a background of the issue. He noted that it is pretty well documented that accreditation ensures competency, and that concept is embodied in the title of 17025. It is also well understood the accreditation improves documentation. However, we have never been able to make the connection between accreditation and improved data quality, other than some laboratories have stated so. The purpose of this panel is to explore some activities that might be undertaken to do so. We think we might have a unique opportunity to measure this as California moves to implement the TNI standard. Jerry suggested that areas of focus for the discussion might center around what do we mean by quality (accuracy, precision, completeness?)

Steve asked each panelist to give their thoughts on this topic. Initial comments from the panelists included:

- Christine Sotelo stated that her program is moving toward TNI accreditation because their agency partners in CA want it. They are trying to answer this question to their stakeholders, particularly small labs. She believes the value of accreditation is that it provides the user with data of known and documented quality, but does not necessarily “improve” data quality in all cases. The big question seems to be “what data quality is needed?”
- Ron Coss believes that accreditation is the “floor”, the minimum standard below which data should not be reported. He noted that without accreditation and a

quality program (system), labs cannot demonstrate quality data. He feels some labs are resisting a demonstration of quality of their data.

- Stephanie Drier stated that her state program looks at labs for capability. Her state program has instituted key performance measures or indicators of a lab's capability. The question they try to answer is "how do we know that data users and consumers are getting what they need?"
- Curtis Wood noted that as a PT provider they have a lot of data on PT performance over the years. They have evaluated the performance of labs doing 1 PT per year vs. 2 PTs per year and can show that labs doing 2 PTs are better at passing. He also noted that the CDC and FDA use PT performance as a demonstration of the benefits of accreditation. Curtis suggested that some of the measures we could look at are the number of fraud actions in states with accredited labs (are they going down?), difference in performance of labs in states with only DMRQA versus states with accreditation programs (or before and after in CA), compliance violations (may increase if data quality is better), number of QC failures (not bad if more failures, just doing a better job). Bottom line is public confidence in the data. Data is not necessarily better in all cases, but now we can demonstrate it.

Comments from the audience included:

- We should establish indicators. For example, some labs not even doing the method correctly. Records aren't kept. Are they meeting their permits or not? We should educate the public and data users on these indicators. PTs may not be a good indicator in California.
- We could look at assessment checklist deficiencies. If deficiencies go down, is this a good thing? May not necessarily have a data impact.
- If a lab is already doing well, what will they get out of accreditation?
- We should ask the data users what they value about accreditation (partner agencies).
- Documentation helps with improvement and resiliency. Documentation is valuable during analyst transition. It helps the new analyst.
- Benefit of accreditation is to the data user or the regulatory agency partner.
- We should review the TNI standard section by section and note how each section relates to quality.
- Accreditation mitigates risk. It fills the gap.

4. Highlights

Steve asked meeting participants to review the week's activities and note any issues that came up that might require action by the Advocacy Committee. Comments included:

- Christine Sotelo's presentation. Slides # 10-14 (see Attachment 2). Requested help from TNI to answer concerns of small wastewater labs that TNI standard is

not workable for their labs. The small labs believe TNI's accreditation system is not scalable for small labs. How can we help?

- Mentoring (Aaren Alger and Michelle Wade have ideas for possible mentor labs)
- Document repository with examples
- Identify small labs that have successfully achieved accreditation and can share experiences
- Trinity O'Neal can go to speak at CWEA meeting
- Organize half-day workshops on data quality (Keith Chapman has done this)
- Interview labs that have been successful
- Reach out to ABs and third party assessors to locate 10-15 small labs that will talk about different subjects and give 10-15 testimonials. Needs to be free and well-advertised. Use a series of scripted questions to elicit lab's experiences and tips. Get questions from labs about their concerns.
- Reach out to data users for their perspectives also.
- A lot of the complainers have not tapped in to existing resources.
- Can WEF and NACWA help with funding?
- Could set up an email for CA labs to ask questions
- TNI should fix the Small Lab Advocate program – need a job description

Jerry noted that TNI won't be able to meet all of CA ELAP's suggestions and expectations but we will refine these ideas further and see how we can help.

- Early implementation of the 2016 standard. Can we identify what can be done early? Only a few things can't be done early. Judy and Silky, using Ilona's notes, will prepare a newsletter article. Need to mention that we are moving to 2016 version of ISO/IEC 17011 also.
- Make Vanessa's presentation on Florida's 3rd party assessors into an article.
- Mitzi will write an article on the difficulty of assessing a lab in a state with poorly written regulations. There is only the method to base findings on.
- Five things in a good standard: flexible, auditable, practical and essential, widely applicable, and appropriate. This can be newsletter side bar.
- ELAB will finalize some things in September and October that might be newsworthy including a response to EPA's response to the recommendation on the DW officers' certification course and a recommendation on procedures for implementing new DW methods.
- Look into Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program (SERDP) for potential funding.
- Mentor Session –Data Integrity Issues. Ilona has notes and Lynn will try to develop into a practical document. (Need clarification on this)
- PT Executive Committee – straw vote on one vs. two PTs. Still favored 2. May need to re-visit PT position statement in light of this.
- WET – outreach to DMRQA coordinator. No action need by Advocacy right now.
- ISO 17025 – The Board needs to be polled before we state a position about how to proceed. If there's no consensus among the expert committees, we may not

Remaining articles, authors and deadlines will be determined at the September meeting. Martina McGarvey will be the editor for the spring newsletter.

6. Next meeting

The next teleconference meeting of the Advocacy Committee will be on Thursday, September 6, 2018, at 12 Noon Central time.

Attachment 1

	Name	Stakeholder Group	Present/Absent
1.	Lara Phelps	EPA (Other)	Present
2.	Steve Arms	Other	Present
3.	Lynn Bradley	Other	Present
4.	Martina McGarvey	AB	Present
5.	Stacie Crandall	Lab	Absent
6.	Zonetta English	Lab	Present
7.	Marlene Moore	Other and NEFAP	Present
8.	Janice Willey	Federal	Present
9.	Trinity O'Neal	Lab	Present
10.	Robin Cook	Lab	Present
11.	Sharon Mertens	Lab	Present
12.	Teresa Coins	Lab	Absent
13.	Ron Coss	Lab	Present
	Associate Members		
	Kirstin Daigle	Lab	Absent
	Judy Morgan	Lab	Absent
	JoAnn Boyd	Lab and FAC	Absent
	Celeste Crowley	AB	Absent
	Keith Chapman	Other	Absent
	Andrea Teal	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	Devon Morgan	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	Bob Pullano	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	Lee Wolf	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	Paul Junio	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	Lily Sanchez	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	Silky Labie	Other	Absent
	Elizabeth Turner	Lab	Absent
	Stephanie Drier	AB	Present
	Staff		
	Jerry Parr	TNI ED	Present
	Carol Batterton	TNI PA	Present

Anti-TNI Sentiment

- Is still very strong in California
 - Among at least half our laboratories
- Many believe TNI is only additional documentation requirements and provides no benefit to the laboratory or to end data user
 - Don't recognize importance of Quality Management System
 - They aren't convinced that TNI is scalable to small laboratories

• We need your help addressing this attitude

10

Host Ambassador Workshops

- Bring speakers from TNI laboratories to talk with their peers in California
 - From TNI-accredited municipal and small laboratories
 - Not TNI administrators
- Share experiences and benefits/challenges
 - Answer questions and provide real life experience
 - Tips for implementation

• Create a presence in California

- Speak at California conferences

11

Bring NEMC Back to California

- Make technical expertise at NEMC more accessible to CA laboratories
 - Show from that TNI is more than just the standard
- Offer conference scholarships
 - To reach those whose agencies cannot afford to send them
- Offer member pricing to CA laboratories
- Sponsor sessions that focus on scalability

12

Scalability and Communications Campaign

- Many do not believe that the standard is scalable for small laboratories
 - Who need TNI's expertise to show how
- Work with our laboratory technical advisory committee to address specific concerns
 - Please be our guests at the next meeting on November 13th
- Let's work together to communicate with CA laboratories

13

The Spirit of TNI

- TNI strives to raise the bar and continuously improve
 - You are industry leaders
- California needs your support
 - And there is much to be gained on both sides from CA's participation in the consensus process

14