TNI Board of Directors Meeting Summary
March 10, 2021

ROLL CALL

Directors	Present	Staff	Present
Jordan Adelson	No	Lynn Bradley	X
Aaren Alger	X	Carol Batterton	X
Steve Arms	X	Jerry Parr	X
Justin Brown	X	Suzanne Rachmaninoff	X
Kristin Brown	X	Ilona Taunton	X
David Caldwell	X	Janice Wlodarski	X
Stacie Crandall	X	Bob Wyeth	X
Bob Di Rienzo			
Jack Farrell	X		
Maria Friedman	X		
Myron Gunsalus	X		
Jessica Jensen	X		
Paul Junio	X		
Judy Morgan	X		
Patsy Root	X		
Debbie Rosano	X		
Scott Siders	X		
Nick Slawson	X		
Alfredo Sotomayor	X		
Lem Walker			
Curtis Wood	X		
Past Chair			
Sharon Mertens	X		

AGENDA

1. Welcome New Director

Jessica Jensen has been elected to her first term. The current balance, including ex-officio Directors is 5 Accreditation Body, 7 Laboratory, and 9 Other. There are no openings.

2. Officer Election (Attachment 1)

The Officers shall be a Chair, Past-Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. Other Officers may be established by the Board of Directors. The Officers, with exception of the Past-Chair, shall be elected annually at the first meeting of the newly elected Board of Directors, from among its members.

The current officers are:
- o Alfredo Sotomayor, Chair
- o Aaren Alger, Vice-Chair
- o Patsy Root, Secretary
- o Curtis Wood, Treasurer

Aaren has indicated she would like to step away from her role and Kristin Brown has volunteered to take her place. Alfredo, Patsy, and Curtis have indicated a willingness to continue to serve, but also a willingness to step aside if anyone else is interested in serving.

Motion to Approve the Officers as Presented here: Sharon Mertens
Second: Maria Friedman
Approved: Unanimous

3.   Review of Consent Agenda (Attachment 2) – Approved

4.   Mentor Initiative (Attachment 3)

The Mentor Subcommittee has completed their initial effort and has a proposed Mentor Initiative to be considered by the Board. The goal would be to have this program implemented by June 1, 2021. See Attachment 3.

Motion to approve this initiative for implementation asap: Steve Arms
Second: Scott Siders
Approved: Unanimous

5.   Reaccreditation by ANSI

ANSI's Executive Standards Council granted reaccreditation to TNI on March 5, 2021 based upon continued compliance with revised operating procedures. Specifically, SOP 2-100, Rev.3.4, Procedures Governing Standards Development, SOP 2-101, Rev. 3.1, Procedures for Expert Committee Operations and SOP 1-125, Committee Application and Membership Tracking. While being reaccredited as an SDO, TNI will still be required to undergo an additional audit under these new operating procedures. This audit would be based upon these new operating procedures. While TNI has two standards, EL V1M3, asbestos testing and EL V2 M1, General requirements for ABs, that are approaching a submittal point in the ANSI process (BSR-8), neither of these standards has utilized all of the newly revised procedures. Both were developed under a combination of the previous revisions of SOP 2-100, including Rev. 2.2 and Rev. 3.2-3.4, which would likely make them inappropriate for the follow-up ANSI audit.

While TNI will be allowed to proceed through the standards development process, no American National Standard (ANS) designation of a standard or module will be granted until the follow-up audit is completed. How exactly TNI is to navigate the ANSI requirements will be further investigated and reported to the Board.

6.   SOP 1-102 – Voting Rules for TNI Committees

The Policy Committee has significantly revised SOP 1-102 – Voting Rules for TNI Committees.

At this time there are three other voting SOPs (3-101, 4-105, and 5-102). The goal is for each program to retire their current voting SOP and use SOP 1-102 instead. It is understood that NELAP and NEFAP have some unique procedures for alternate and veto voting that still need to be documented. It was suggested that this could be done in the Committee Charter or through an SOP or Policy specific to these procedures.

An implementation date of September 9, 2021 has been proposed to give the programs time to make these changes. This SOP requires approval by the TNI Board, however, it requires additional work before it can be approved.

7.   NEFAP Performance Metrics

Below is the first quarterly metrics report for evaluating NEFAP in accordance with our strategic plan and performance metrics submitted.

The NEFAP EC determined that the plan is best executed by two subcommittees formed in January 2021, that are focused on specific components of the plan: a training subcommittee and a marketing subcommittee. Though slow to initiate, the groups have been meeting frequently (weekly and bi-weekly) since inception and we anticipate progress to be realized soon from their efforts. The efforts of these Subcommittees should start developing returns on some of the metrics over the next quarter. We anticipate the primary progress and growth to take place during the final two quarters when the committees have had time to fully implement the components of the plan. A detailed description of the activities of the subcommittees to date is included in the Program Reports.

Metric	Target by December 2021	Current
Increase number of FSMO applications	8	0
Increase in FSMO membership within TNI	10% Increase	TBD
Develop revenue generating training sessions	3	0
Develop multiple non-revenue generating training clips or informational media to promote paid sessions	2	0
Increase in number of people completing NEFAP/Field training courses in TNI	10	0
Increase in number of FSMO Standard Purchases	11	0
Increase NEFAP related revenue	$1,500 increase	0
Increase in presentations given external to TNI	3	0
Increase in published promotions (articles/white paper)	1	0
Increase in social media presence	20 posts on various formats	0
Increase in web traffic to NEFAP page	?	TBD
Increase in participation in EC meetings	75% attendance	54%
Increase in associate members (NEFAP EC & FAC)	6 new associates (there are 12 existing)	3
Inquiries from stakeholders into program (NEFAP EC & FAC)	3	3

8.   Update of Committee Charters

The Policy Committee is asking each committee to update their committee charter and provide it to the Policy Committee by May 5, 2021 so these can be on the agenda for the May meeting.

It has been suggested that due to the schedules of when meetings occur, the due date will be moved to June 2nd. There should only be a few charters for the Board to review.

However, objectives have already been reviewed and approved for 2021. This will go back to Policy and they will decide what needs to be done in terms of charter updates – to be updated or just reviewed.

ATTACHMENT 1
2021 Board of Directors

First	Last	Organization	Stakeholder	Subgroup	AB	Lab	Other	2022	2023	2024
2021 TNI Board (effective 3-10-2021)					Balance			Term Expiration		
Aaren	Alger	Alger Consulting & Technology	Other	Consulting			1		1	
Steve	Arms	Florida DOH (Retired)	Other				1	1		
Justin	Brown	Environmental Monitoring & Technology	Accredited Organization	FSMO		1			1	
Kristin	Brown	Utah DOH	AB	NELAP AB	1				1	
David	Caldwell	Oklahoma DEQ	AB	NELAP AB	1				1	
Stacie	Crandall	HRSD	Accredited Organization	Municipal		1		1		
Bob	DiRienzo	ALS	Accredited Organization	Commercial		1				1
Jack	Farrell	Analytical Excellence	Other	Consulting			1			1
Maria	Friedman	California ELAP	AB	Non-NELAP	1					1
Myron	Gunsalus	Kansas DHE	AB	NELAP AB	1					1
Jessica	Jensen	KC Water	Accredited Organization	Municipal		1				1
Paul	Junio	Northern Lake Services	Accredited Organization	Commercial		1		1		
Judy	Morgan	Pace Analytical	Accredited Organization	Commercial		1		1		
Patsy	Root	IDEXX	Other	Vendor			1		1	
Scott	Siders	self-employed	Other				1	1		
Nick	Slawson	A2LA	AB	NGAB	1				1	
Alfredo	Sotomayor	MMSD	Accredited Organization	Municipal		1		1		
Curtis	Wood	ERA	Other	PT Provider			1			1
EX-Officio										
Jordan	Adelson	US Navy	Other	Federal			1			
Debbie	Rosano	DOE	Other	Federal			1			
Lem	Walker	USEPA OST	Other	Federal			1			
					5	7	9	6	6	6
Non-Voting										
Sharon	Mertens	MMSD								

ATTACHMENT 2
CONSENT AGENDA; March 10, 2021

1.   Approval of February Minutes

2.   Use of Power DMS

In 2018, TNI began using Power DMS, a document management application. The goal at that time was to use this as our primary system for managing documents, including standards development. We quickly realized DMS was a complex application to use, but continued to pursue it. We since have discovered many organizations will not allow unauthorized applications to be installed, which meant that we could not use it effectively for standards development for managing other key documents. At a staff meeting in February we discussed the use of this application compared to using Dropbox. The strong consensus was that Dropbox is much easier to use, but that maybe it is easier for our IT Administration to post documents on the website. After talking to William Daystrom, we have found he also considers Power DMS much more complicated than using Dropbox.

Accordingly, we are planning to go back to our old system of using Dropbox. This will require a more complicated file naming system and a document control spreadsheet to be kept current, but we were able to do that before 2018. We have initiated this process and all Policies and SOPs have now been moved out of Power DMS back into the TNI Dropbox. Jerry will organize a conference call with the 15 or so individuals who will be part of this activity in March.

3.   Paycheck Protection Loan

Our bank has informed us we do not qualify for the second round of funding as 1099 employees cannot be considered. We do not know if we can be considered in the bill being debated this week.

4.   [RESERVED]

5.   CONSENSUS STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT REPORT

5.1   CSDP Executive Committee

- The TNI Glossary work group continues to prepare a comparison document of all definitions presented in TNI documents and the current glossary as completed last year. Relevant ISO standards definitions are also being included as appropriate. The work group is also collating definitions from TNI ABs to ensure consistency with State rules and regulations. The plan for further review was determined to be more efficient if we segregated those definitions from the Standard (i.e., those which are the only enforceable terms for the ABs), and harmonize these definitions and/or request Expert Committees to include the potential changes to these definitions when making modifications to their Modules. Other definitions in TNI documents (i.e., SOP, Guidance Documents, Policy documents) will then be addressed, but should be more readily resolved as changes will not require utilization of the lengthier Standard Development process.

- Current training materials for Expert Committee members and Chairs is outdated and the CSDEC has undertaken the task of preparing new training materials. Efforts to finalize a training webinar specific to Expert Committee members including the Chairs nears completion and is anticipated to be available in the 1st quarter of 2021. Committee member training will be mandatory and attendance at webinars will be documented and appropriately recorded. While the materials being prepared are specific to the Expert Committees, it is believed that this training will provide a "template" for other committee training materials to be developed by others, likely under the auspices of the Policy Committee.

- The CSDEC is also developing revised Internal Auditing Checklists for itself and its Expert committees based primarily on changes to SOPs 2-100 (Standards Development), 2-101 (Expert Committee Operation) and 1-125 (Committee Member Tracking).

5.2   Asbestos Committee

The Asbestos Expert committee has completed development and approval of their Draft Standard (EL V1M3) and all required accompanying documentation. The Draft Standard materials were posted (12/22/2020) on the TNI website, as well being provided to all required TNI personnel and Committees, and Non-TNI members who are interested in and/or potentially impacted by the changes in the Standard. The DS is subsequently in its 90-day comment period, which will close March 21, 2021. No comments have been received to date nor were any received in the virtual committee meeting during the TNI Winter Meeting. A BSR-8 will be submitted to ANSI in the near future.

5.3   Chemistry Committee

The Chemistry Committee continues to seek resolution of a number of SIRs from the LASEC; two new SIRs regarding additional issues of DL/LOQ generation and calibration verification, were addressed by the committee in February. The committee continues discussion of potential issues regarding modifications to Module 4. While the entire module will be examined as per SOP 2-100, at this point in time, the primary issues facing the committee relate to reconsideration of the language and/or clarification of the requirements for Initial and Continuing Demonstration of Capabilities for the laboratory and individual analysts, and detection limit and calibration language clarifications.

5.4   Laboratory Accreditation Body Committee

While awaiting the close of the formal comment period on the V2M1 Draft Standard, LAB has created and color-coded a checklist from the current version of the Draft Standard. As most of the standard will stand even as comments are reviewed and addressed after the March 30 deadline, any revisions to the Draft Standard can simply be inserted as needed. As of this writing, only three sets of comments have been submitted, but based on the NELAP AC discussion, more are anticipated. The Chair is the FL representative on the NELAP AC and thus has heard all of the discussions so far. Individual commenters may be invited to join the LAB meetings when their comments are addressed, as several individuals have informally requested this.

5.5   Microbiology Committee

- The Committee has started updating language in their Standard based on all the feedback they have received. They talked about updates to Section 1.7.3.1 regarding testing of supplies when received at the location of use.

- The Committee started work on updating their Charter. They will be adding something to emphasize the importance of documenting all steps of the standard development process and updating voting requirements.

5.6   Proficiency Testing Committee

As previously reported, the PTEC had reserved its final voting member of the Committee for an AB. The February PTEC meeting resulted in the election of Ryan Pangelinan from the State of Oregon, who applied for committee participation following the winter meeting. Finally, the committee continues to develop work plans focusing on needed changes to Module 1, including review of ISO 17011, 17025, 17034, and 17043 for consistency with the TNI standard. The committee will also begin to look at EL V2M2, EL V3 and EL V4 for any needed updates or modifications to these standards. These latter standards will have to initiate the revision process or be reaffirmed through the ANSI process by 11/29/2021.

5.7   Quality Systems Committee

- The Committee continued to work on updates to the Recommended Changes Summary table based on feedback received during the virtual conference. The Committee is still debating what to do with SOP requirements. A number of people would prefer requirements be included.

- The Committee has added Stephanie Atkins (Lab) as a new member.

- The Committee received and finished up work on SIR 401 (microliter syringes and what is acceptable to use). They also just received and finished up SIR 392 (indication of calibration status).

- The current and past QS Chairs worked with Ilona to finalize the template that the new Module 2 Standard will be based on 2016 language combined into the new ISO 17025:2017 language. This now allows the Committee to begin updating language based on all the feedback they have received.

- A workgroup is being developed to start working on specific sections of the new Standard while the Committee continues to tackle the controversial topics: technical manager, SOP requirements, Quality Manual, etc.

5.8   Radiochemistry Committee

- The Committee worked on language while they reviewed the recommendations for changes to the Standard, so Terry was able to insert the new language into the new Standard this past month when they didn't meet. The changes are being reviewed by a workgroup and then the entire Committee will review it for a possible vote after one more change is made in response to an SIR.

- The Committee received two SIRs:
  - SIR 399 (Question about Section 1.7.3.5.f and how client requirements can take precedence over requirements of the Standard). This opened up a discussion on what Module 2 requires so that will be included in the response. This question raised some issues on the language in Section 1.7.3.5.f, so the wording of this section will be updated in the new Standard to make it clear Module 2 requirements must be met.
  - SIR 403 (Question about Radiation Measurement Batches) – Complete.

5.9   Stationary Source Audit Sample Committee

The Committee reviewed the comments from the public webinar held on February 16, 2021 and discussed next steps to starting the revision of the Standard.

5.10   Whole Effluent Toxicity Committee

- The WET Committee continues its efforts to contribute to improvement of the WET Assessor Training that was conducted in fall of 2019 and is developing a Data Interpretation Training, planned for early fall of 2021. The teleconference meetings are largely devoted to revising the WET module, V1M7.

- Jerry has been asked to clarify the expected outcomes of a review of WET methods and method codes that was requested some months ago, as committee members are uncertain whether these two tasks are different perspectives of the same activity or actually expected to create different products.

6.   NEFAP

6.1   NEFAP Executive Committee

- Nominations to join the NEFAP Executive Committee are now open until March 15, 2021.

- The Marketing Subcommittee has been meeting weekly and already has completed the first task, development of a survey to identify training needs among existing accredited FSMOs that the training subcommittee can use as a start point for their survey. The group will now begin looking at website utilization from a marketing perspective and has reached out to William to discuss use of search engine optimization tools to promote the program. The group is also working on the start of a social media plan and guidelines for posting of material in the upcoming weeks.

- The Training subcommittee is meeting twice a month and working on a list of possible classes. They should have at least one class ready for development by the end of this month. They are also starting to work on long term development and finalizing their Subcommittee Scope.

- The Committee will continue to re-start its effort on updating SOPs. TNI is working on a Voting SOP it hopes all TNI Committees will be able to use, so NEFAP will review this SOP and decide if they still need a voting SOP. NEFAP currently has Veto procedures it may not need.

- The NEFAP Nomination Committee has posted a request for new members on the TNI website. Applications can be sent through 3/15/21. New members should be in place the first week of April 2021.

6.2   Field Activities Expert Committee (FAC)

- The Committee completed its public webinar on February 19, 2021. There were 34 attendees. Two attendees asked to join the Committee as associates.

- The Chairs worked with Ilona to finalize the template that the new Volume 1 Standard will be based on 2014 language combined into the new ISO 17025:2017 language. This now allows the Committee to begin updating language based on all the feedback they have received.

- The Committee has voted in Patrick Selig (AB), Bill Guyton (FSMO), Hong Yu (Lab/FSMO), Shannon Swantek (Other), and Adam Sasfran (FSMO). A request for approval is being sent to the CSDP Chair.

7.   NELAP

7.1   Accreditation Council

- One evaluation (New York) is completed, one is awaiting corrective action response(s), two are undergoing Technical Review and review of lab files, two have submitted applications awaiting review, and two applications are yet to be submitted.

- The Council cancelled its February 1 meeting but held an informal discussion about the V2M1 Draft Standard on February 16; there will be no minutes of this meeting. The regularly scheduled March meeting was largely devoted, again, to informal discussion (i.e., no specifics recorded); individual AB representatives will submit formal comments on V2M1 but did not want their deliberative conversations documented. The March meeting concluded with a short discussion about the transition to a "national program" for proficiency testing. As PTPEC no longer requests or requires approval of new FoPT tables, the Council is requesting that a formal comment period be established prior to actual implementation of revised FoPT tables, in a fashion similar to the standards

development process, since V1M1 essentially makes the FoPT tables part of the standard. PTPEC has been advised of this request and committed to formal modification(s) of its procedures.

- The implementation status of the 2016 Standard is unchanged from January, when updated information about state rulemakings was provided.

7.2   Laboratory Accreditation Systems Executive Committee

LASEC continues its revision of the SIR Management process, SOP 3-105. It seems as if every time one piece changes, a new and desired modification appears, so the process continues to improve. LASEC members have been requested to review the V2M1 Draft Standard but thus far, no comments have been received. If none are received by the March 18 meeting, LASEC will have no formal comments to submit.

8.   PROFICIENCY TESTING PROGRAM

- A WET FoPT Subcommittee is being formed. Shawn has reached out to Rami Naddy (Chair, WET Expert Committee) for recommend members.

- FoPT tables are were updated with the PTRL definition and Shawn is looking at analyte number updates for HEM and HEM-Silica Gel Treated. There were some concerns raised about procedures for updating analyte numbers because of the potential enormous update that providers, states, and labs need to make. This led to a decision to pull SOP 4-107 from Policy review and make a few updates before resubmission to Policy. Effective dates for the new FoPT tables will be discussed next month after Shawn has a chance to check with PT Providers and other stakeholders on timing to make the changes.

- PFAS Analyte Request Application: The data has been requested from PT Providers to start working on this analyte request application.

9   ADMINISTRATION

9.1   Advocacy Committee

- The target publication date for the next newsletter is June 1 and articles will be due May 1. Lynn Bradley is the editor.

- The committee reviewed a preliminary draft update of the "State of National Accreditation" report. After discussion, they decided that the draft was too detailed. The committee suggested that two documents may be needed. One would be a much shorter, executive summary type document to present to high level administrators at EPA or other agencies. Another document more detailed will be prepared for presentation to technical staff. The emphasis will be on what we've done and why it's important, recognizing that we have a new message and new opportunities to reach key people in EPA and other organizations.

- The Committee reviewed and approved the Mentoring subcommittee's recommendations document for the TNI Board's consideration.

9.2   Policy Committee

- The Committee completed its update to SOP 1-102 (Decision Making Rules for TNI Committees). The goal will be to have all TNI Programs use it for their voting procedures. A DRAFT memo to this effect was worked on so the Programs can review the new SOPs impact and make appropriate changes. The SOP and implementation plan will be discussed by the TNI Board during the March 2021 meeting.

- The Committee decided to delay the due date for Charters to May 6, 2021. Charters are to be submitted to Patsy Root (Chair) and Ilona so the Committee can review them on May 7, 2021 and prepare a recommendation to the Board that will be reviewed during their May meeting.

- Jerry will review new document control procedures with the key individuals that he, Patsy and Ilona have been working on. The Committee plans to review SOPs 1-104 (Control of TNI Documents) and 1-116 (Development and Approval of TNI Policies and SOPs) to document changes to control procedures.

9.3   Training Committee

- Training Committee:
  - The Training Materials Review and Training Opportunities workgroup met a couple of times this month. The Training Material Review workgroup has already started reviewing trainings to see if any references are out of date. They had to initially gain approval from each of the trainers to review their material by completing a confidentiality statement. The Training Opportunities Workgroup has 10 classes they are working on. They will meet next Monday to finalize language that Ilona will insert into an RFP for training that should go out by the end of the month.
  - Ilona has started working on a webcast for people interested in providing Training to the TNI community. The expected completion date will be mid-April.

- Current Classes being worked on:
  - Good Laboratory Practice – Internal Audits – Part II (ANAB) – Ilona met with ANAB for an update. They will be making the requested updates to this class and then it will be available as a self-paced course. No additional update.
  - Progress is being made on ANAB's new course: Risk Based Thinking in the Environmental Laboratory. This will be a 10-hour class. ANAB asked to delay the dates for this class and has not rescheduled yet. People are asking about this type of class and Melanie from ANAB has been informed.
  - Marlene and Ilona are still discussing evaluator training for the NEFAP/PTP Evaluations. It looks like this training will need to be completed during the summer.
  - A new training has been submitted by the WET Expert Committee: Whole Effluent Toxicity (WET) Testing – Data Interpretation Training. They are now planning to do the class in Fall 2021.
  - The Training Opportunities Workgroup will be recommending 10 courses so that an RFP for training can be distributed late March or early April.
  - The NEFAP Training Subcommittee is working on at least one course for Spring.

9.4   Forum on Environmental Accreditation

No action until August.

9.5   National Environmental Monitoring Conference

- At the last Steering Committee meeting, we tentatively agree to purse a hybrid meeting as previously discussed. We will make the final decision in April.

- We plan to allow presenters to be present either in-person or virtually. Currently it is running about 50:50

- If all goes well, registration will open on May.

- The hotel is very flexible regarding the room block and food minimums.

- We have received 178 abstracts, 147 for oral presentations and 31 posters.

9.6   NGAB

No action.

10.   TASK FORCES AND OTHER EFFORTS

10.1   Competency Task Force

- Based on anticipated comments on the V2M1 Draft Standard, in particular the training requirements for assessors, and new information from conference about the relationship of competency and qualifications, the Task Force determined to set aside its effort to document competency for assessors until V2M1 is settled and the relationship between competency and qualifications can be better understood. This is a delay, not an abandonment, of the assessor project.

- For now, the Task Force will undertake to the Technical Director role, paying particular attention to the "technical" aspects of that role, and separating out the "management" functions, as these latter functions can be performed by individuals other than the Technical Director.

10.2   Consumables Task Force

The Task Force is continuing in the process of listing and classifying critical products, supplies and services. This information collection effort is utilizing a previously approved spreadsheet for this purpose. Inputs from all Task Force members are being received and collated by the Task Force Chair. The February meeting resulted in further defining elements of the first area of concern, general products and supplies required for all laboratories. The work of the Task Force will require an extended effort prior to the production of any "product" whether in the form of Guidance and/or a recommendation for a standing Expert Committee. The sheer volume of items to be properly classified and for which purchasing guidelines need to be developed is extensive. The Task Force currently anticipates continuing meetings with TNI Stakeholders during public meetings and the sharing of information as the segments of the specific area of critical supplies and services are developed.

11.   MEMBERSHIP

- On 2/12/21 Suzanne sent out emails to all members who have had expired memberships since Sept 1, 2020. Of the 118 emails sent out, 45 renewed or requested invoices in response to the reminder for a total of $5475. In addition, we received feedback from an additional 6 people who are no longer interested due to change in circumstances, 2 who will not renew but would like to remain on the mailing list, and 4 email corrections.

- On 3/2/21 Suzanne sent out emails to all members whose memberships had expired since February 12, 2021. Of the 21 expired memberships, 3 have renewed in response to the reminder for a total of $350.

- Overall, reflects a 35% return of members who were contacted. Considering the relatively brief time (less than 1 hour on each event) spent on contacting the members and processing additional information, as well as keeping our membership robust, it is a worthwhile process to continue.

11.1   Active Members: 1070

11.2   97 New and Renewed Memberships

11.3   35 Expired Memberships

ATTACHMENT 3

TNI Mentoring Initiative
Subcommittee Recommendations

Background

Based on the success of the mentoring effort initiated by California's Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (ELAP), TNI's Board of Directors included exploration of a mentoring initiative for TNI in the 2020-2025 strategic plan. In April 2020, the TNI Board formed a Mentoring Subcommittee under the Advocacy Committee with Jacob Oaxaca from California ELAP as Chair. The TNI Board directed the subcommittee to provide a mentoring plan for approval within the next 12 months. The subcommittee's charter directed them to:

> *Explore and make recommendations on developing a financially sustainable laboratory mentoring plan that helps laboratories seeking to implement and maintain a quality management system based on the TNI standard.*

Recommendations

The Mentoring Subcommittee is pleased to provide the TNI Board with the following recommendations.

Proposed Process

- Laboratories interested in having a mentor will contact TNI through the Mentor Initiative webpage.
- The laboratory will be asked to complete a questionnaire which will be used to facilitate pairing the laboratory with a Mentor.
- After receiving the questionnaire, TNI will host an initial meeting (teleconference) with the laboratory to:
  - Review basic information about the laboratory, including the scope of their testing and where they are in terms of developing a Quality Management System .
  - Discuss objectives and expectations of the mentor effort.
  - Obtain commitment of the laboratory being mentored.
- TNI will begin the pairing process by forwarding the questionnaire completed by the laboratory to a selected list of potential volunteer mentors. Mentors must volunteer through the TNI web page and provide qualifications. The laboratory will assess any conflict of interest and decide on a mentor.
- Once a Mentor is chosen, TNI will facilitate a meeting with the two Parties to review and discuss the Mentoring Agreement.
- After the two parties acknowledge the Mentoring Expectations, mentoring can begin and will continue until one party or the other ends the relationship.
- Laboratories are not prohibited from entering into Consulting Agreements with mentors to provide additional services not covered by TNI's Mentor initiative.

Questionnaire for laboratories

- What type of testing does the laboratory perform?
- What type of samples does the laboratory analyze?
- Does the laboratory perform sample collection?
- Does the laboratory plan to seek accreditation to the TNI standard? Within 1 year? 3 years? Implement a Quality Management System, but not seek accreditation?
- Is the laboratory run by paper or electronic system such as a LIMS?
- Status of a Quality Management System?
- What does the laboratory need help with?

Mentoring Agreement

Laboratory Expectations:
- Provide scope of work and information/documentation as requested by the Mentor.
- Commit resources necessary to pursue implementation of a TNI-compliant Quality Management System.
- Not hold TNI or the Mentor liable if accreditation is not achieved.
- Understand that the Mentor is not a consultant and will serve in an advisory role only (i.e., the Mentor will not take any action on behalf of the laboratory)

Mentor Expectations:
- Maintain professional and ethical standards while serving as a Mentor.
- Serve only in an advisory role while acting as a Mentor.
- Keep all information and sensitive materials observed or made aware of completely confidential.
- Avoid any action that could be considered a Conflict of Interest.

TNI Expectations:
- Host an initial meeting with the laboratory.
- Review the laboratory's responses to the questionnaire, assessing available resources, and determining if the parties should move forward.
- Provide the name(s) of the potential Mentors to the laboratory to assess any conflict of interest.
- Only assign a Mentor that is acceptable to the laboratory.

Other Options

In some cases, laboratories may be able to find the help they need without entering into a mentoring agreement. TNI has many resources available on its website and the subcommittee did not feel that any additional resources need to be developed at this time. However, the Mentoring webpage should clearly identify the existing resources and direct laboratories to them. These existing resources include:

- Training courses,
- Small Laboratory Handbook,
- 2016 Quality Manual Template,
- Checklists,
- Implementation guidance, guidance documents, and Standard interpretation Requests,
- Assessor training courses and
- Small Laboratory Advocate (SLA) and SLA LinkedIn page.

Financial Sustainability

The bulk of the administration of this initiative will be performed by TNI volunteers and volunteer mentors. To be eligible to participate in the TNI Mentoring Initiative, at least one employee in the mentored laboratory must be a member of TNI and the Mentor must also be a TNI member. We anticipate that the revenue generated from membership dues will off-set any incidental costs of this initiative.

Timeline for Implementation

Recommendations for a TNI laboratory mentoring initiative were presented at the TNI Virtual Winter Conference to receive and evaluate feedback. Final recommendations are being presented for approval at the March TNI Board meeting. If approved, TNI staff will begin implementation which will include:

- Initiating the Mentoring Initiative webpage,
- Forming a small committee to receive applications from laboratories and potential mentors and facilitate pairing, and
- Launching the program by June 1, 2021.