

Summary of the TNI Competency Task Force Meeting  
Wednesday, October 28, 2021 1:00 pm Eastern

1. Welcome and Roll Call

Aaren welcomed everyone to the meeting. Attendance is recorded in Attachment 1. The minutes from September 22 were approved by acclamation.

2. October Meeting with NELAP AC and Follow-Up

Jerry presented the latest version of Option 3 to the NELAP Accreditation Council at its October meeting, in hopes of gaining full acceptance there so that this updated concept can be handed off to Quality Systems Expert Committee for inclusion in the next revision of V1M2 (with wordsmithing as that committee deems appropriate). The updated version was generally well received (version 9 was shared with the NELAP AC), and one AB provided several useful suggestions about changing terminology to “Technical Expert” and more.

However, in the days after the AC meeting, one AB expressed intent to retain the original Technical Manager concept in its operations, while another expressed disappointment that Option 1 was no longer considered a possibility. Program management from Minnesota’s Environmental Lab Accreditation Program were invited to this call to further discuss their concerns, and Stephanie Drier did participate. MN ELAP would prefer that laboratories be able to determine what they need (staff qualifications and experience) to meet the requirements of the TNI Standard, and expressed strong objections to having to count credit hours for the lab. MN would prefer that labs have some sort of checklist, maintained at the lab for privacy reasons, which demonstrates staffing compliance with lab-determined qualifications and experience.

Aaren expressed her strong feelings that the wording of the draft implied that verification of the qualifications seemed to be put on the applicant. Aaren stated that Accreditation Body should be responsible for verifying the educational qualifications came from an accredited university if an accredited degree is necessary. Also, participants noted that degrees from non-U.S. schools are very difficult to verify, and it is even harder to determine whether the non-U.S. school was accredited.

Other discussion points included whether assessors or the AB would verify credentials, particularly for replacement employees after a lab’s initial accreditation, and the difficulty of establishing whether a college was meaningfully accredited, particularly for institutions no longer in existence, as well as the need to identify degrees from “diploma mills” (purchased with no coursework requirements) and equivalent meaningless accrediting organizations.

The discussion came full circle with a reminder that our goal was to open up more possible candidates for TD/TM/TE positions by focusing on experience rather than educational qualification. Realistically, NELAP ABs are reluctant to spend the effort to evaluate experience on an individual basis, as that is quite time-consuming, and prefer a check-the-box method of evaluation (college degree, x years of work in lab), so that the Task Force’s most useful contribution might be some way of showing that an individual’s experience is sufficient. This is where TNI’s consideration of a credentialing program can support the new concept.

Other issues discussed concerned redefining the coursework and experience needed for “limited testing” in chemistry and microbiology, but as that discussion continued, we realized that this Task Force is only making a recommendation to the expert committee, not providing final definitive language, and it will be better left to the Quality Systems Expert Committee to fine-tune those details. The QS Chair, Debbie, agreed that the expert committee would be discussing those details exhaustively, regardless of the details recommended by this Task Force.

3. New Business

None.

4. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Competency Task Force will be on **Wednesday, December 1, 2021, at 1 pm Eastern**. An agenda and any necessary documents will be sent in advance of the meeting. This meeting will begin focusing on the content of the joint session planned for conference, with the Training Committee and the Credentialing Subcommittee, to explain, explore and receive feedback about a potential credentialing program.

The November meeting date falls on the eve of Thanksgiving Day, thus the rescheduled date. The regularly scheduled December 22 meeting date is not cancelled, as it may be needed to prepare for the planned joint session with one or more expert committees at conference in mid-January.

Attachment 1

Competency Task Force Roster

NAME		EMAIL	AFFILIATION	Present?	
Aaren	Alger	aaren@alger-consulting.com	Alger Consulting & Tech.	Yes	1
Paul	Banfer	paul.banfer@eisc.net	EISC	Yes	2
Kenneth	Brown	kbrown@escondido.org	City of Escondido	Yes	3
Julia	Caprio	JKlensCaprio@Geosyntec.com	Geosyntec	No	4
Patricia	Carvajal	pmcarvajal@sara-tx.org	San Antonio River Authority	Yes	5
Yumi	Creason	ycreason@pa.gov	Pennsylvania DEP	Yes	6
Kirstin	Daigle	<a href="mailto:Kirstin.daigle@pacelabs.com">Kirstin.daigle@pacelabs.com</a>	Pace Laboratories	No	7
Steve	Drielak	drielak-associates@usa.net	Drielak & Associates	Yes	8
Amanda	Dutko	adutko@fairwaylaboratories.com	Fairway Laboratories	No	9
Stacey	Fry	sfry@babcocklabs.com	Babcock Laboratories	No	10
Kitty	Kong	Kitty.Kong@chevron.com	Chevron	No	11
Kimberly	Kostzer	kkostzer@coca-cola.com	Coca-Cola	No	12
Silky	Labie	elcatllc@centurylink.net	ELCAT	No	13
Harold	Longbaugh	Harold.Longbaugh@houstontx.gov	City of Houston	Yes	14
Mike	Michaud	Mike.michaud@abilenetx.gov	City of Abilene	No	15
Mitzi	Miller	Mitzi.Miller@nv5.com	NV5	No	16
Jerry	Parr	jerry.parr@nelac-institute.org	The NELAC Institute	Yes	17
Sharon	Robinson	Sharon.Robinson@doh.nj.gov	New Jersey DOH	No	18
Joann	Slavin	Joann.slavin@health.ny.gov	NY ELAP	Yes	19
Alfredo	Sotomayor	asotomayor@mmsd.com	MMSD	Yes	20
Elizabeth	Turner	Elizabeth.turner@pacelabs.com	Pace Labs, Inc.	No	21
<b>Associate Members</b> (for TM/TD activities):					
Debbie	Bond	DBOND@southernco.com	Alabama Power	Yes	22
Michelle	Wade	mwade@a2lawpt.org	A2LA Workplace Training	No	23
<b>Guest:</b>					
Stephanie	Drier	<a href="mailto:Stephanie.Drier@state.mn.us">Stephanie.Drier@state.mn.us</a>	MN ELAP		
<b>Program Administrator:</b>					
Lynn	Bradley	The NELAC Institute	Lynn.bradley@nelac-institute.org	Yes	