

Summary of the TNI Competency Task Force Meeting
Wednesday, June 24, 2020 1:00 pm Eastern

1. Welcome and Roll Call

The Interim Chair, Jerry Parr, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Attendance is recorded in Attachment 1. The minutes of May 27 were approved unanimously, with Aaren and Alfredo abstaining due to their absence at that meeting.

The group's Charter was approved by email vote that concluded June 18, and will be presented to the Board at its next meeting.

2. Discussion of Assessor Competency

Resources for this discussion were distributed with the meeting announcement – the IAF publication, **Generic Competence for AB Assessors: Application to ISO/IEC 17011**, and Appendix A, NELAC Basic Assessor Training, from the 2003 NELAC Standard Onsite Assessment Chapter 3.

Annex 1 of the IAF publication includes a pyramid of competency levels, as follows (listed highest to lowest in the pyramid graphic):

- Specific Standard Competencies (this will be addressed in relation to the TNI Standard, at a future meeting)
- Generic Assessment Competencies
 - Accreditation
 - Planning and Scheduling
 - Document Review
 - Onsite Assessment
 - Reporting Activities
- Professional Competencies (needed by AB but not necessarily all assessors)
 - Leadership
 - Organizational
 - Behavioral/Personal
- Foundational Competencies
 - Basic Math Skills
 - Communication Skills
 - Basic Computer Skills
 - Administrative Skills
 - Physical Capabilities

Participants spent time examining both the Foundational Competencies and the Professional Competencies, but determined that 1) the Foundational ones can be presumed to exist in an individual who has achieved a Bachelor's degree and would be confirmed during the assessor's probationary period, and 2) the Professional competencies would be evaluated during the interview process and initial performance evaluations of assessors, but that these do not need to be specifically taught as assessor training. The absence of assessor competency for these items would be identified by normal personnel evaluation mechanisms, if somehow an individual managed to qualify for the assessor position without having already acquired those skills.

Participants then discussed, item by item, the components of the Generic Assessment Competencies, and an annotated list of the items agreed upon for TNI's assessor

competency training follows here. For the Onsite category, items have been re-ordered and grouped to reflect the sequence of the assessment, rather than the alphabetical listing provided in the IAF document; other categories of KSAs are as provided therein.

Accreditation Knowledge, Skills and Abilities needed (KSAs)

- Different types of onsite assessments
- Different types of organizational structures for CABs
- Legal entity structures and the types of documents that confirm the legal status of CABs
- Different management structures
- Accreditation standards, guidance and mandatory documents / Requirements of accreditation
- Typical management systems
- Technical terms associated with scopes assessor is assessing
- Common understanding of accreditation terms and definitions (Non-conformity [NC], Opportunity for Improvement [OFI], key activity, etc.)

Planning and Scheduling KSAs – most of these are Lead Assessor Skills and may not be needed by all assessors; participants recommend no separate training for Lead Assessor role

- Typical assessment team compositions
- Typical resources required during an assessment
- Prioritizing assessments by risk areas (not in 2016 TNI Standard but will be in upcoming revision of V2M1)
- Creating sampling plans
- Preparing assessment plans (not in 2016 TNI Standard but will be in upcoming revision of V2M1)
- Providing input into the selection of the assessment team
- Assigning roles and responsibilities for the assessment team

Document Review KSAs

- Reviewing applications for accreditation and identifying appropriate documentation of legal status
- Determining the documents that will be needed for the assessment
- Checking the documents for completeness
- Determining if the documents meet the requirements
- Establishing investigative lines for the onsite assessment
- Communicating to the CAB the results of the document review
- Confirming the CAB's readiness for an onsite assessment
- Determining if submitted documents are adequate to warrant proceeding to the onsite portion of the assessment
- Determining if sufficient evidence exists to document conformity

Onsite Assessment KSAs

Preparation and Pre-Onsite Reviews

- Establishing the official channels of communication
- Conducting pre-assessment meetings
- Identifying criteria that will be used for the assessment
- Identifying technical areas and when additional expertise is needed
- Reviewing the CAB files and records
- Create records to document objective evidence gathered (throughout the assessment)
- Creating working papers, notes and completing checklists (during review and during onsite)

- Assessing the CAB against accreditation requirements (during review and during onsite)
- When to ask for escorts (safety issues, etc.)
- Assessing management systems and controls (during review and during onsite)
- Evaluating prior corrective actions (during review and during onsite)
- Assessing technical requirements (during review and during onsite)
- Assessing the CAB against accreditation requirements (during review and during onsite)
- Sampling CAB processes and records (protocols and AB criteria) (during review and during onsite)
- Managing and solving conflicts in the team (during review and during onsite)

Conducting opening meetings

- Presenting the assessment team/CAB personnel
- Presenting an explanation of the assessment methodology
- Confirming assessment plans
- Confirming the scope of accreditation
- Explaining that the assessment is a sampling process (not everything was reviewed)
- How to confirm confidentiality of the process

During the onsite

- Conducting interviews (need to consider possibility of remote assessments and conducting remote interviews when addressing this)
- Observing CAB processes
- How to determine if an assessment should be aborted
- Extending sampling in case of nonconformance
- Judging the effectiveness of corrective actions (from prior assessment, when required)

At end of onsite before the closing meeting

- Confirming completion of the assessment plan
- Confirming the objectives of the assessment were met
- Reviewing team member roles and responsibilities for closing meeting

Conducting closing meetings

- Communicating preliminary findings to CAB
- Confirming the methods of reporting
- Presenting and reviewing findings
- Determining if requirements have been met
- Explaining the next steps (appeal procedures, post-assessment processes, final decision schedule/timeline, potential follow-up assessments, etc.)
- Techniques for providing positive feedback (and throughout the process, but most important here)
- How to thank the participants

After the Onsite

- Reviewing and finalizing the nonconformances
- Writing CAB nonconformances and opportunities for improvement
- Grading findings (if required)
- Describing the final assessment conclusions
- Prepare reports

Evaluating the Corrective Action Response (not all ABs have assessors involved in this, if they are contractors)

- Obtaining written acknowledgement of the nonconformance
- Evaluating adequacy of proposed corrective actions to address non-conformances

Reporting Activities KSAs

- Evaluating assessment team members
- Demonstrating knowledge of personnel evaluation methods
- Producing a clear and concise report that reflects the assessment and the findings
- Creating a report on the performance (and conformance) of the CAB with reference to the accreditation criteria
- Reporting conclusions and recommendations of the assessment that reflect the overall assessment and report content

Participants also identified items from the 2003 NELAC Standard (Chapter 3 Appendix A) that should also be included:

Ethical Conduct of Assessors -- participants should know the NELAC expectations and requirements for assessor conduct.

- Professional Conduct of Assessors
- Defining, Determining, and Avoiding Conflicts of Interest for Assessors

Interviewing Techniques -- communication skills, including effective questioning techniques; methods for gathering information in an objective and professional manner; and potential ethical concerns.

- Utility of Interviews During Laboratory Assessments
- Interview Structure
- Verbal and Non- Verbal Communication
- Modes of Gathering Information
- Ways of Asking Questions
- Dealing with Difficult Interviewees

Handling Assessment Challenges -- useful conflict resolution tools

- Dealing with Improper Practices and potentially Illegal Activities
- Dealing with Unexpected Circumstances
- Technical Disagreements
- Absence of Key Laboratory Personnel
- Hostile Reception
- Conduct of Assessors During On- site Assessments

From the discussion, Jerry agreed to investigate further two items of interest. He will look into credentialing – what’s involved, how to relate it to the training and issuance of a certificate – and also inquire whether the Non-governmental ABs are legally obligated to report instances of suspected (or identified) misconduct found during an assessment.

At the July meeting, the above list of KSAs should be reviewed and affirmed, and then participants will address the items for Specific Standard Competencies for the TNI Standard.

4. Next Meeting

The next teleconference meeting will be Wednesday, July 22, 2020, at 1:00 pm Eastern. An agenda and any documents will be distributed prior to the meeting.

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
Bob	Di Rienzo	Bob.DiRienzo@ALSGlobal.com	ALS Global	Yes	6
Steve	Drielak	drielak-associates@usa.net	Drielak & Associates	Yes	7
Amanda	Dutko	adutko@fairwaylaboratories.com	Fairway Laboratories	No	8
Stacey	Fry	sfry@babcocklabs.com	Babcock Laboratories	Yes	9
Kitty	Kong	Kitty.Kong@chevron.com	Chevron	No	10
Kimberly	Kostzer	kkostzer@coca-cola.com	Coca-Cola	No	11
Silky	Labie	elcatllc@centurylink.net	ELCAT	Yes	12
Harold	Longbaugh	Harold.Longbaugh@houston.tx.gov	City of Houston	Yes	13
Emily	Mellot	emmellott@pa.gov	Pennsylvania DEP	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
Curtis	Wood	curtis_wood@waters.com	ERA, A Waters Company	No	22
Program Administrator:					
Lynn	Bradley	The NELAC Institute	Lynn.bradley@nelac-institute.org	Yes	