

Summary of Accreditation Body Committee Meeting November 18, 2008

1. Roll Call and Introductions

Committee chair Jeff Flowers called the meeting to order at 12:00 PM on November 18, 2008. Members present included: Linda Geddes, Steve Arms, Sharon Mertens, Joe Aiello, and Jane Wilson. Ann Marie Allen was present as an invited participant.

2. Minutes

Minutes from October 28, 2008 were approved with editorial revisions (Steve A. motion/Linda G. second).

3. Discussion

The AB committee discussed the following:

Review TNI Associate/Affiliate

Ann Marie Allen joined the group to aid the Associate/Affiliate recognition discussion. The goal is to provide a means to recognize the many ways that states utilize the TNI programs and standards short of being ABs. It would help TNI to be able to demonstrate it provides benefits to a larger community than the 13 recognized ABs.

Concerns expressed to date:

Roles/responsibilities of affiliate/associate vs full ABs

Don't want to lose current ABs in process

How to distinguish from full ABs while providing tangible benefit

Joe Aiello has provided strawman spreadsheet on how to differentiate the categories.

What about a state like Georgia that doesn't have a formal accrediting body? The terms associate and affiliate were borrowed from ILAC, but we need further definition of what they mean or need to develop terms unique to TNI. There may be other potential categories that need to be described.

The categories could be assigned by definition, rather than an organization signing up, or could a fee system that differentiates categories. Doing by definition could benefit TNI by being able to recognize the broader use of the TNI standards/programs. There is a differentiation between a statement of fact (e.g., a state uses the NELAC standard), vs applying a label to an entity that should apply for recognition by providing sweat equity or money. There may be some liability in applying a label to someone who hasn't applied or asked for any recognition.

The group discussed Judy Morgan's surveys of state programs. Steve didn't think Judy's survey covered this topic specifically.

Would anyone apply for this distinction and what benefits would it provide? Does it provide additional credibility? States that are in the process of becoming ABs could be eligible to be associates, e.g. participate on evaluation teams might be one component. It would provide the opportunity to take baby steps toward becoming a full AB.

Sharon noted this is really describing a program offering that would have a cost associated with being administered by TNI. We need a management decision on process, maintenance of information, etc. Where does it fall within TNI structure, e.g., are these entities potential voting/non-voting members of NELAP Board? The committee needs to continue to develop the national program as it was envisioned but can recognize interim steps that embody the spirit of a national program. Some direction should come from NELAP – Steve A and Joe A will talk to NELAP Board. AB can also develop a more precise description or vision of the program and look at available models. Sit should be a formal, step-wise program that open doors for entities not currently participating as full ABs. Sharon will do some research on other models, etc.

LASC Guidance Needs

The committee reviewed the 5 items in the spreadsheet from LASC for follow up.

- 1) Acronyms – can add a table to standard that defines acronyms as an editorial change. Jeff will ask about acronyms at CSDB meeting this week as this probably goes across TNI volumes.
- 2) The committee discussed how to address small programs that are run by one person. This is a performance/QS based system, so there is intentional flexibility in how to meet some of the requirements. LASC may have misinterpreted the AB committee intent such that guidance is needed.
- 3) This comment affects AB appointment for adjudication of complaints. Is there a need to provide guidance on other ways to achieve the intent? There is already a note in the standard.
- 4) Clarification on surveillance schedule and renewal timelines is needed. This is derived from ISO language. Surveillance could be unannounced and more informal. Reassessment is more formal.
- 5) Definition was left purposely vague (ISO definition) to allow NELAP flexibility.

What is timeline/format for guidance documents? Jeff will talk to Jerry about those issues.

Sharon will develop response to item 2 and Steve will develop response to item 3. Formal response is not needed for the others.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 1:58 pm.