

TNI Policy Committee Meeting Summary Friday, October 19, 2012

1. Welcome, Roll Call and Announcements

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 11 am Eastern. Attendance is recorded in Appendix A. Alfredo noted that the Minutes of the September 21 meeting are now approved for posting as final and requested comments on the October 5 minutes.

Alfredo reminded committee members to please send their individual committee affiliations to him, so that he can ensure adequate representation across TNI programs. He also noted that the e-vote for the financial SOPs is completed, and all are approved for presentation to the Board, probably at its November 14 meeting.

Alfredo asked participants to share information about items that might require Policy Committee attention in future meetings:

- An SOP for Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for TNI training is in development; this will be an Administrative SOP.
- The Consensus Standards Development Program is revising SOP 2-100, "Procedures Governing Standards Development," to address the corrective actions proposed by the Corrective Action Workgroup and approved by the TNI Board.
- The Technical Advisory Committee has determined that its course on using the Quality Control (QC) requirements of the TNI ELS Standard to address the QC requirements of EPA's Method Update Rule (MUR) will be an overview, not a detailed step-by-step presentation. The MUR's QC requirements are creating anxiety in the laboratory community.

Discussion of the new Chemistry and Microbiology Expert Committees led to a brief discussion about the existence of a Radiological Expert Committee and EPA Region 5's divestiture of handling certification of labs for "rad" testing of drinking water.

2. New Complaint Submission

The first complaint was submitted using the new form on the TNI Website. Since this particular complaint was about a technical difficulty with a web form, the staff person addressed it by referral to the IT Committee and the webmaster, and it was completed within a matter of hours. However, the Policy Committee was asked to approve that staff will have the flexibility to address "trivial" complaints directly without involving any committee, where this is feasible. Consensus of those present was that the Program Administrator will have the freedom to handle this type of issue directly, even when submitted as a formal complaint.

3. Review of Draft Policy 1-109, "Whistleblower Protection"

This policy was drafted as response to one of the items in IRS Form 990, which all non-profits are required to file annually. It also relates to TNI's Complaint Resolution SOP 1-106.

Committee members discussed how the policy might interact with the complaint process and also noted multiple instances where language in the draft was not relevant to TNI's operations, as follows:

- References to “employment” are inappropriate as TNI has no employees, only contract staff and volunteer members. These occur mostly in section III.
- Remove the superfluous first “and” in the last sentence of section III.
- For section VI, replace “audit committee” with appropriate reference, probably “finance committee.”
- For section VII, there is no “code,” so this should reference TNI’s governance documents.
- For Section VIII, there is presently no way for a complaint to be submitted anonymously, although it can be done confidentially.
- Some report of the outcome of investigation into a whistleblower complaint ought to be required.

Jerry will redraft the policy, omitting references to processing of complaints (which are addressed in the SOP, above) and its review will be an action item on the November 2 Policy Committee call.

4. SOP 1-107, “Operations of TNI Advocacy Committee”

Discussion of this draft SOP revealed that it is constructed from the Committee Operations SOP 1-101, with a few additional items – 7.1.2, 7.1.6, 8.1 and 8.4. Participants agreed that special needs of individual committees can be addressed by adding appendices to the “main” Committee Operations SOP, rather than repeating most of its 8 pages for each committee to document the differences.

Jerry will re-draft the items particular to the Advocacy Committee as an appendix, and asked committee members to consider what items are unique about the Policy Committee that ought to be included in an additional appendix, and be prepared to discuss at the next meeting.

Section 11 of the Committee Operations SOP refers to committees following the decision rules referenced in SOP 1-102, “Decision Making Rules for TNI Committees and Boards.” However, SOP 1-102 merely discusses options that any committee may choose from, but leaves each committee to choose its own rules. **Robert’s Rules** is widely employed as the “default” option, but nowhere is that documented, and few committees document their decision rules. This will be added to the “Backburner” list in Appendix C.

5. Pending Items

Review of the modified draft of the Whistleblower Policy and a draft appendix to the Committee Operations SOP, with “unique” Advocacy Committee characteristics are both carried over to the next meeting of the Policy Committee.

Jerry will update the priority list of documents awaiting Policy Committee review and approval, to adjust for the items already addressed. He noted that the NEFAP Evaluation SOP and three others are still highest priorities for now.

6. Action Items

See Attachment B.

7. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Policy Committee will be November 2, 2012 at 11 pm Eastern. Action Items are included in Attachment B and Attachment C includes a listing of reminders.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 pm Eastern.

Attachment A

Name/Affiliation NOTE: Please check your email and notify Lynn of correct one. Shown here is the TNI member contact but is not always the one used to contact you for Policy Committee meetings.	Representing	Present
Alfredo Sotomayor, Chair Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources, Madison, WI alfredo.sotomayor@Wisconsin.gov	TNI Board	Yes
JoAnn Boyd Southwest Research Institute, San Antonio, TX jboyd@swri.org		Yes
Patrick Brumfield Sigma-Aldrich RTC, Laramie, WY patrick.brumfield@sial.com	PT Executive Committee	No
Gary Dechant Analytical Quality Associates, Inc. Grand Junction, CO gldechant@aol.com		Yes
Silky Labie Env. Lab. Consulting & Technology, LLC Tallahassee, FL labie@comcast.net		Yes
John Moorman South Florida Water Management District West Palm Beach, FL jmoorma@sfwmd.gov	NEFAP Executive Committee	Yes
Mei Beth Shepherd mbshep@sheptechserv.com	Associate Member	No
Susan Wyatt Minnesota DOH, St. Paul, MN susan.wyatt@state.mn.us	NELAP AC	Yes
Bob Wyeth Pace Analytical Services, Inc., West Seneca, NY rfwyeth@yahoo.com	CSD Executive Committee	Yes
Jerry Parr (ex-officio) Executive Director, TNI Jerry.Parr@nelac-institute.org		Yes
Lynn Bradley, Program Administrator The NELAC Institute (Staunton, VA) lynn.bradley@nelac-institute.org		Yes
Guest: none		

Attachment B

Action Items – TNI Policy Committee

	Action Item	Who	Expected Completion	Comments/ Completion
22	Send finance SOPs for voting per pass-through process	Alfredo	For 10/9/12 Board Meeting	Sent 10/5/12 – voting complete and all are approved as of 10/19/12
26	Draft statement re “abstentions” for committee review and then sending to all committee chairs	Jerry	10/31/12	Pending AST review
27	Update priority list of items pending Policy Committee review	Jerry	10/31/12	
28	Revise Policy 1-19, Whistleblower Protection	Jerry	for 11/2/12 meeting	
29	Develop Attachment or Appendix to Committee Operations SOP 1-101 with the identified “unique” characteristics of Advocacy Committee (from draft SOP 1-109)	Jerry	For 11/2/12 meeting?	
30				

Attachment C

Backburner / Reminders – TNI Policy Committee

	Item	Meeting Reference	Comments
1.	Look into need to include something about review schedule in all SOPs.	3/20/12	
2	Include mention of abstentions in SOP 1-102 revision (or elsewhere,) to ensure that intentional choice of appropriate wording is made in committee decision making choices	10/5/12	
3	In SOP 1-101, "Committee Operations," or else SOP 1-102, "Decision Making...", some mention of "default" decision making rules would be beneficial, since most committees do not have documentation of their decision processes.	10/22/12	SOP 1-102 discusses various options and situations where one might work better than others, but SOP 1-101 refers to 1-102 as if it sets a default.