

**TNI Policy Committee Meeting Summary
Friday April 18, 2014**

1. Welcome, Roll Call and Announcements

The meeting was called to order by Alfredo at 11 am Eastern. He noted that minutes of the April 4, 2014, meeting were distributed, and any comments should be provided within a week. Attendance is recorded in Attachment 1.

2. Board Assignment to Create Process for Affirming Replacement Ex-Officio Members

With the resignation of the EPA appointed Ex Officio Board Member, Brenda Bettencourt, prior to the Board election, and the subsequent appointment of a new EPA Ex Officio Board Member, Lara Phelps, just shortly after the Board election concluded, the Board asked Alfredo to consult with the Policy Committee about how best to handle the affirmation of the EPA designee.

Participants considered the following factors:

- The former EPA person was never ratified by the membership,
- Conducting a “special election” for the purpose of ratifying this one new appointee would use excessive resources of the organization, given that the Board election was just completed, and
- The Bylaws permit the Board to appoint someone to fill a vacancy until the next election cycle.

Policy Committee believes it appropriate to accept EPA’s appointment of Lara to replace Brenda in the same fashion that the Board would accept its own appointment of a new person to fill an unexpected vacancy. Lara should be welcomed to the Board and have the same privileges as other Board members, including the Ex Officio members, until such time as her appointment can be ratified in the next election cycle, during the first three months of calendar 2015.

3. Consideration of FAQs Resulting from NELAP SIRs – are they Guidance?

Judy Morgan, Chair of the Laboratory Accreditation Systems Executive Committee (LAS EC,) had contacted Alfredo with two examples of Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) responses developed and approved by LAS EC, as a way to address Standard Interpretation Request (SIR) questions that are not actually valid requests for interpretations. She asked whether they would be considered “guidance” and thus fall under POL 1-105 and SOP 1-105 regarding guidance.

Committee consensus was that the FAQ examples provided are “process descriptions” and thus do qualify as guidance, rather than FAQs (as described in the SOP 1-105 as not being subject to that SOP.) Differing opinions were offered about whether the Policy Committee should review future FAQs originating as SIRs or if review by the relevant Expert Committee would be more appropriate, since they are more likely to address technical matters. There was also general agreement that a clear simple answer would be preferred over the use of “examples” and that, if examples are to be included, there is no question that the FAQs must be considered guidance.

All agreed that the disclaimer from the SOP 1-105 would need to be included and that the FAQs needed some form of document control (version control, perhaps), and finally agreed that review by the appropriate Expert Committee should also occur.

Alfredo agreed to contact Judy to ask that LAS EC submit a formal proposal to develop guidance, in accordance with the template in the SOP 1-105, and explained the committee’s thinking about obtaining Expert Committee review rather than Policy Committee review. NOTE: this conversation has occurred and LAS EC will be formulating its proposal to bring to Policy

Committee for the development of FAQs which exceed the breadth of the exception permitted in the SOP.

4. Minor Revision to Committee Operations SOP 1-101 to Address Chair Appointments

Several times recently, the Board has confirmed committee chair appointments of capable individuals who do not meet the requirement to be a committee member for one year prior to assuming the chair role. The SOP governing Committee Operations needs to be modified to address this circumstance.

After discussion, Bob moved and Silky seconded that §8.1 of SOP 1-101 be revised to replace “must” with “should” so that the section reads as follows:

Committees shall elect a Chair from among its Committee Members at the committee’s first meeting of the year. Except for a newly created committee, the Chair should have served in the committee as a member or associate for at least one year.

Approval of this change was unanimous. SOP 1-101, Rev 2.1, will contain this modification. Bob also asked that a technical correction be made to Appendix A of this SOP, reflecting that the Consensus Standards Development Executive Committee has three (instead of two) at-large members. There was no objection to including this correction in Rev. 2.1.

5. NEFAP SIR SOP 5-106 and Nominating SOP 5-103

John was unable to participate in this call due to a priority project, and emailed his regrets along with saying that the NEFAP Executive Committee has not met, since the previous Policy Committee meeting so that he does not have any answers yet. Jerry noted that he has confirmed with Ilona Taunton, the NEFAP Program Administrator, that while not documented, the NEFAP practice is that all recognized Accreditation Bodies (ABs) are indeed permanent members of the committee with no term limit. Participants noted that this practice should be discussed but at a time when the NEFAP person on Policy Committee can be present.

6. NELAP SIR SOP 3-105

The committee reviewed this document section by section, with the following comments:

§1.5 – may need rewording depending on how the successful proposal for approval of guidance (formerly referred to as FAQs) is phrased, but should note that clarifications may be fulfilled in accordance with the Guidance SOP 1-105.

§3 – should also cite the Guidance SOP 1-105.

§4.3 – needs to be clear what sort of question qualifies as an interpretation request, perhaps by adding a phrase like “where the language of the standard is not clear” or moving §5.1.2.4 to the definition itself. The definition should also note that “how to” and “method interpretations” are not SIRs.

§4.4 – recommend eliminating the second sentence of this section. May need rewording depending on how the successful proposal for approval of guidance (formerly referred to as FAQs) is phrased

§5.1.2.4 – whether or not these criteria are moved to the definition (§4.3), §5.1.2.4 would be better phrased by use of the word “clear” than “apparent” and by including the phrase “the language [of the standard] is subject to different interpretations.”

§5.2.2, second bullet – no “requirements” for a clarification are spelled out. Recommend removing the term “requirement” and replacing with a more generic phrase, such as “is it better addressed as a clarification than a SIR?”

§5.2.2 – make specific reference to the criteria as detailed in §5.1.2.

A general observation is that dual use of the term SIR introduces confusion into the document. SIR is used to refer both to 1) the incoming request and 2) the reviewed and accepted requests which will undergo the SIR resolution procedure. Since not all incoming requests retain the SIR designation and go through the resolution procedure, the committee recommends finding a way to distinguish the submissions from those accepted as being SIRs, and using different terminology for the two phases.

At this point, the allotted time for the meeting was over. Review will begin again with §5.2.3, at the next Policy Committee meeting.

7. Next Steps

Finalizing the review of NEFAP SIR SOP 5-106 awaits John's feedback on the rationale for the dispute resolution process.

Finalizing the review of NEFAP Nominating SOP 5-103 awaits John's feedback on the actual practices of populating the committee, as highlighted above.

Alfredo to send request for review of POL 5-100 to NEFAP EC.

Make minor amendments to the Committee Operations SOP 1-101 as noted. These need not be re-adopted by the Board, but will be noted in the Program Report.

Resume review of SOP 3-105.

7. Next Meeting

Policy Committee will meet again on Friday May 2, 2014, at 11 am Eastern. Teleconference information and an agenda will be circulated in advance of the meeting.

Action Items are included in Attachment B and Attachment C includes a listing of reminders.

Attachment A

Name/Affiliation	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	Lab and FSMO	No
Patrick Brumfield Sigma-Aldrich RTC, Laramie, WY patrick.brumfield@sial.com	PT Executive Committee	No
Silky Labie Env. Lab. Consulting & Technology, LLC Tallahassee, FL elcatllc@centurylink.net		Yes
John Moorman South Florida Water Management District West Palm Beach, FL jmoorma@sfwmd.gov	NEFAP Executive Committee	No
Mei Beth Shepherd mbshep@sheptechserv.com		Yes
Susan Wyatt, Vice Chair Minnesota DOH, St. Paul, MN susan.wyatt@state.mn.us	NELAP AC	No
Bob Wyeth Retired 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

Attachment B

Action Items – TNI Policy Committee

	Action Item	Who	Expected Completion	Comments/Completion
34	Review NELAC chapter 6 for needed policies and SOPs, applicable to the AC	Susan	3/15/13	Pending with AC – initial discussions occurred October 7
58	Prepare formal comments on SOP 3-102 for return to NELAP AC	Lynn/Alfredo	3/7/14	April 21, 2014
59	Prepare formal comments on SOP 5-106 for return to NEFAP EC, after John returns results of research into rationale for deferring SIR appeals to CSD PEC	John, then Lynn/Alfredo	April 2014	
60	Send request for review of POL 5-100 to NEFAP EC	Alfredo	April 2014	
61	Clarify practices of NEFAP EC	John	April 2014	
62	Edit and change Revision number of SOP 1-101	Jerry/Lynn	April 2014	

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.
6	New Committee Charter format should include listing for Executive Director as ex officio member for all committees (per Bylaws.)	9/20/13	Charter format to be upgraded to address committee annual budgets later this year
7	Next revision of Pol 1-122 include addition of a sentence addressing the possibility of additional stakeholder categories.	2/21/14	Committees may add an additional stakeholder category with approval of TNI Board
8	When the CSD PEC charter is next updated, it should clarify which committees have added stakeholder categories and note that Board approval is required and was obtained for including those additional representatives in the committee(s.)	2/21/14	