



TNI Quality Management Plan

REVISION NO: 1.0



Policy Committee Approval Date:	March 20, 2026
TNI Board of Directors Endorsed Date:	April 8, 2026
Effective Date:	April 8, 2008

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. The Structure of TNI	3
3. Roles and Responsibilities for Quality System	5
4. Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation of TNI Activities	6
5. Assuring Competencies of Individuals Carrying out TNI Activities	6
6. Information Management and Information Technology Activities	7
7. Ethics	9
8. Quality Management System Elements	9
9. Glossary	10
10. References	10
11. Document Approved Changes	10
12. Appendix 1	11

Quality Management Plan for The NELAC Institute

1.0 Introduction

This Quality Management Plan (QMP) describes the Quality Management System (QMS) within which The NELAC Institute (TNI) operates. This Plan also provides additional details about the governance and management of TNI. TNI is committed to conducting its operations within a QMS that uses a consensus process for developing goals using strategic planning, measuring accomplishments against stated goals, and meeting customer needs. TNI's customers are the users of the services it provides, and include organizations that generate environmental sampling and measurement data (e.g., laboratories and field sampling and measurement organizations,) organizations that accredit the process of generating data (Accreditation Bodies or ABs) and all other participants that have an interest in the process (e.g., other governmental agencies, consultants, vendors, data users, other environmental and/or data related organizations.) This plan is a dynamic document, subject to TNI review and revision, as deemed necessary and appropriate.

1.1 Mission of TNI

The mission of TNI is to foster the generation of reliable environmental data of known and documented quality through an open, inclusive, and transparent process that is responsive to the needs of the community.

TNI accomplishes this mission through the use of volunteers working on committees tasked with specific functions in defined program areas, under the leadership of a Board of Directors, and with staff, all of whom are part-time contract employees. TNI is organized and operated as a non-profit association, under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of the United States. TNI strives to maintain the highest standards in its corporate governance practices and abides by the code of ethics for non-profit organizations established by the Independent Sector (www.independentsector.org) and has established Corporate Governance Guidelines based on this code. The TNI Code of Ethics and the Corporate Governance Guidelines are posted on the documents page of the TNI website.

1.2 Stakeholder Groups of TNI

TNI operates on the premise that all affected stakeholders have the opportunity to fully participate in the activities of TNI. To that end, TNI has established the term "balanced representation" for the purpose of forming "consensus" in many of TNI's committees, including the Board of Directors, all standards development committees and most of its other committees. To that end, the following stakeholder groups are generally defined as:

- Accreditation Bodies and other entities that operate environmental accreditation programs,
- Accredited Organizations, including Field Sampling and Measurement Organizations (FSMOs), laboratories, and other organizations directly involved in providing sampling and environmental measurements and
- Others, including governmental agencies that do not operate accreditation programs, industry and commercial entities, data users, and any other non-accredited entities.

1.3 The Consensus Process

TNI uses consensus in accordance with rigorous democratic procedures for all its committees and the Board, and relies upon the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-119 as its underlying philosophy.

OMB Circular A-119 defines a voluntary consensus body as one having the following attributes: (i) openness; (ii) balance of interest; (iii) due process; (iv) an appeals process; and (v) consensus, which is *“general agreement, but not necessarily unanimity, and includes a process for attempting to resolve objections by interested parties, as long as all comments have been fairly considered, each objector is advised of the disposition of his or her objection(s) and the reason(s) why, and the consensus body members are given an opportunity to change their votes after reviewing the comments.”*

1.4 Funding

TNI depends upon the following funding sources to support its programs: membership dues, semi-annual and annual conference registration fees, training course fees, purchase of the TNI Standards, accreditation fees, and cooperative agreements and grants from various agencies such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Policy 1-111 describes in more detail how TNI uses its funds prudently and ethically in accordance with Circular A-122 from the Office of Management and Budget.

2.0 The Structure of TNI

TNI membership includes scientists from throughout the monitoring community, including both government and private sector participants.

Individuals eligible for membership include any individual who has an interest in sampling or measurement or other accreditation issues in the private, public or academic sectors, so long as they agree to the TNI's Code of Ethics. Organizations eligible for membership include any company, academic institution, or governmental agency. Each individual and organizational member is categorized as one of the three stakeholder groups, according to affiliation and field of professional effort. TNI promotes inclusiveness and its staff, Directors and volunteers reflect a variety of interests and viewpoints in order to enrich its programmatic effectiveness. The organization promotes the inclusiveness of all potential stakeholders in its hiring, retention, promotion, board recruitment, committee member appointments, and constituencies served.

2.1 Management of TNI

TNI's activities are managed and governed by its Board of Directors (Board.) This Board is ultimately responsible for the QMS of TNI as it develops and implements the Strategic Plan of the organization through the program and committee structure described herein.

The Board has supervision, control and direction of the affairs of TNI to determine its policies or changes within the limits of the law or the Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation. The Board actively pursues TNI's mission and has discretion in the disbursement of its funds. Also, the Board does not have authority to supersede the authority of core programs without due cause. Due cause is limited to activities that would be inconsistent with the TNI Bylaws or put the organization at unacceptable financial or legal risk, as determined by the Board.

The Executive Committee of the Board consists of its Officers – the Chair, Past-Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. The Executive Committee advises and aids the Executive Director in all matters concerning TNI's interests and the management of TNI's business.

The Executive Director has day-to-day operational responsibility for TNI, including carrying out TNI's goals and policies. The Executive Director attends all Board meetings, reports on the progress of The NELAC Institute, answers questions of Board members, and carries out other duties as designated by the Board. The Executive Director is a non-voting member of all TNI committees, as is the Chair of the Board.

2.2 Core Programs

There are five “core” programs described in the TNI Bylaws. Each core program is managed by an Executive Committee such that all interests are represented. The Executive Committee role is to provide strategic direction, growth, and fiscal management of the program.

TNI Core Programs
1. Consensus Standards Development
2. National Environmental Field Activities
3. National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation
4. Proficiency Testing
5. Professional Development

The core programs work in cooperation toward a common vision, as defined by the organization’s Strategic Plan (see below.) Each core program has the authority to establish policies and procedures for the program, make decisions and operate independently with the exception of the following restrictions:

- All policies are reviewed by the Policy Committee to ensure policies from different core programs are not in conflict with each other. TNI SOP 1-116, Development and Approval of TNI Policies and SOPs, addresses the creation of policies and procedures for the organization.
- Each core program provides monthly reports to the Board describing progress towards the goal of the program. The Board provides feedback to the program for future efforts.

Each core program establishes strategic goals and objectives that are reviewed by the Board to ensure that the goals and objectives are aligned with TNI’s mission and the overall Strategic Plan.

2.3 Administration

Administration consists of a number of committees that work across all TNI programs to support TNI’s efforts. These committees ensure an infrastructure exists to support the core programs. See Appendix 1 for a list of these committees with their responsibilities and membership.

3.0 Roles and Responsibilities for Quality Management System

3.1 Board of Directors

The Board has ultimate responsibility for the structure and oversight of TNI’s QMS. The Chair has operational responsibility for the QMS and is the senior manager for quality. This individual holds ultimate responsibility for determining whether any particular issue or aspect of the QMS should be brought to the attention of the entire Board for resolution.

The Board has a diverse composition including representation from all stakeholder groups and many different viewpoints within those groups. Typically included are elected individuals from state and non-governmental ABs, laboratories, field sampling entities, proficiency test providers, private organizations, assessors and appointed representatives of invited federal agencies.

Each new Director is provided an “orientation for new Directors” that includes an introduction to TNI’s QMS and a briefing on the current QMP.

The Board may, upon advice or suggestions from the Board members, Committees or other organizations or individuals, create new groups to address future needs that meet the TNI Mission and Strategic Plan.

3.2 Executive Director

The Executive Director has day-to-day responsibility for TNI and has authority to enter into contracts for TNI.

The Executive Director is responsible for ensuring all administrative, organizational, and program-specific activities under their authority comply with the requirements of this QMP. The Executive Director, or designee, also performs outreach presentations and meetings with interested parties to share TNI's goals and objectives, status of the TNI standards, and new program initiatives.

The Executive Director provides a copy of this document to the Board, committee chairs, PAs, and, as requested, other interested parties.

3.3 Program Administrators

Program Administrators (PAs) are individuals assigned by the Executive Director to provide staff support to TNI's core programs. As such, PAs:

- Ensure the policies and decisions of TNI, as they relate to each program, are implemented.
- Assist the program committees and subcommittees in achieving their goals.
- Ensure publication of information relating to the program.
- Provide monthly reports to the Board on progress of the program towards goals.
- Assist in the preparation of an annual budget for the program.
- Perform other such duties as may be assigned by the Executive Director.

All program administrators must be familiar with this Quality Management Plan, and whenever revisions are made, will be required to review it anew by the Executive Director.

3.4 Other TNI Staff

Determination of whether other staff have particular roles for the QMS will be at the discretion of the Executive Director based on preferences and needs of the individual programs for which staff have programmatic responsibilities, in consultation with the Chair of the Board.

Note: TNI staff work as contract employees, i.e., an individual with whom TNI has formalized a personal services contract, paid hourly but with some latitude regarding the activities to be conducted. This is in contrast to a vendor where there will be a clearly defined activity and product to be delivered as discussed in Section 5.2.

3.5 Committee Members

Committee members are volunteers with knowledge about the area to which they volunteer. They work to ensure that the practices of this QMP are implemented within the committee in which they participate. Once it is available, all committee chairs and vice chairs must have taken TNI's QMS training course within 6 months of appointment.

3.6 General Membership

All members of TNI are made aware the requirement to adhere to the TNI Ethics Policy upon joining TNI, or upon renewing their membership (for existing members, to occur annually.)

4.0 Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation of TNI Activities

4.1 Strategic Planning

From its inception, TNI has employed strategic planning to determine the process and timeline for accomplishing its goals. This ensures that TNI's activities are appropriate and aligned with its stated mission and helps ensure the quality of its activities and work products.

Planning begins with a five-year strategic plan developed by the TNI Board and senior staff. TNI's current Strategic Plan contains core strategies that have 3-5 specific goals each. Each goal then has several objectives with a particular committee or individual assigned responsibility and a specific target date for completion.

4.2 Implementation

Each committee has a Charter describing the general composition, mission and measurable expected outcomes, which is based on the TNI strategic plan and approved by either the program Executive Committee or TNI Board, as appropriate.

At the TNI annual meeting, each committee provides an annual report on their plan of work for the coming year as part of an overall report to the membership. These annual reports are reviewed and approved by the Board using its normal processes for approval of documents as described in the TNI Bylaws. These reports and plans for the committees are the Implementation Plan for the Strategic Plan.

Note: See SOPs 1-101, Operation of TNI Committees, and 2-101, Operation of Expert Committees.

4.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

Progress is assessed through monthly Program Reports to the TNI Board, provided by the Program Administrators and distributed to the Board by the Executive Director, and, as noted in section 4.2, the committees provide annual reports to the TNI Board and membership at the TNI annual meeting. The Board evaluates the monthly and annual committee reports and responds or takes action(s) as appropriate.

5.0 Ensuring Competencies of Individuals Carrying out TNI Activities

5.1 Staff and Volunteers

A PA must have a bachelor's degree with experience in the environmental and/or accreditation fields.

The performance of all TNI staff is assessed continually through on-going discussions with the Executive Director and committee chairs. In lieu of annual performance reviews, periodic staff meetings are held to address aspects of performance, including assignments of PAs to committees, as appropriate. Performance issues are addressed as they arise.

An effective peer selection process is used to ensure that volunteers are appropriately knowledgeable. The applicant provides qualifications to allow Individual committees to make selections based on the qualifications provided. If committee members do not participate regularly or contribute effectively to the Committee's efforts, the individual may be removed from the committee roster and replaced.

5.2 Vendors

For certain activities needed to fulfill TNI's mission, certain individuals or companies (vendors) are used to carry out specialized functions. This type of activity is different than the ongoing personal services contracts with individuals considered "TNI staff." Typically, contracts with vendors are of limited scope with clearly defined activities and deliverables. Examples of this would be database creation, development and presentation of training for a particular purpose or even expertise in a particular software package for some activity.

Vendors are selected through the use of either a Request for Proposal (RFP) or by an unsolicited proposal. The RFP process is made by public distribution throughout the environmental data community, publication on the TNI website, and/or by targeted solicitations.

An impartial entity evaluates the proposals to select the proposal most capable of successfully completing the tasks, taking into account the cost estimates, qualifications, relevance, timing, and experience.

Awards are overseen and monitored by the Executive Director, or designee, to ensure TNI funds are disbursed appropriately and the quality of the work product(s) meets the needs and expectations of the project. If required, a vendor must agree to a non-disclosure agreement and also provide, as needed, sufficient information to ensure that no conflicts of interest exist. The TNI staff person may include volunteers to assist in assessing whether the work products are acceptable. Volunteers must agree to non-disclosure and conflict of interest requirements, as needed.

Note: See Policy 1-113, Accounting Policies and Procedures for Administration of Assistance Agreements: Procurement Policy, for more information.

6.0 Information Management and Information Technology Activities

6.1 Web Site Maintenance

The Information Technology (IT) Administrator has overall responsibility for design and content of the TNI website.

The IT Administrator receives day-to-day supervision from the Executive Director about website design and database content and operation. Duties are described in a standard training procedure.

The IT Administrator also exercises professional judgment about items submitted for posting and consults with the Executive Director if there are any concerns to be resolved before a specific document is posted to the website.

6.2 TNI Databases

There are multiple tables used by TNI and include, but not limited to, Laboratory Accreditation Management System (LAMS), analyte and method codes, TNI memberships, and Fields of Proficiency Testing tables (FoPTs) used by TNI programs. Contents of the tables are maintained by the IT Administrator, LAMS Administrator, or their designee, or the committee responsible for the information.

6.3 Control of Standard Training Procedures

Standard Training Procedures are internal documents used by TNI staff to ensure an effective knowledge management system exists. These documents are stored in a secure on-line system with access by individuals authorized by the TNI Executive Director. To ensure business continuity, at least 3 TNI staff must have access to these files. These documents are not subject to the document control requirements in SOP 1-104.

6.4 Document Control

SOP 1-104, Control of TNI Documents, provides the requirements for document control within TNI.

6.5 Records Maintenance

Policy 1-104, Management of Records, is followed for all TNI records. The Secretary of TNI acts as the custodian for all TNI records, in charge of their storage and disposal and may delegate such custody to Program Administrators or other staff, as warranted.

7.0 Ethics

TNI is committed to maintaining the highest standards of ethics in all of its operations. To become a member of TNI, one must agree to abide by TNI's Code of Ethics. The specific ethical policies that members are expected to follow are set forth in the Policies 1-102, Ethical Conduct of Members, and 1-107, Membership Code of Ethics. Ethical obligations of non-TNI members are defined in contractual agreements.

8.0 Quality Management System Elements

8.1 Continuous Improvement

TNI is committed to improving program and organizational effectiveness and developing mechanisms to promote learning from its activities. These mechanisms include, but are not necessarily limited to, review of key documents by the Policy Committee, creating task forces to address specific issues, routine strategic planning, and special sessions at TNI meetings.

8.2 Management Reviews

TNI performs periodic management review of key governance, finance, and programmatic activities according to SOP 1-133.

8.3 External Audits

Entities outside of TNI may perform audits of Financial Reports and Consensus Standards Development Program (CSDP) activities. Any independent organization follows their own auditing procedures and corrective action processes during their evaluations.

The TNI Board reviews all reports and corrective actions resulting from external audits.

8.4 Corrective Actions

Corrective actions are taken to eliminate the cause of an existing non-conformity, defect or other undesirable situation in order to prevent recurrence. Deficiencies cited in management reviews, customer complaints or external audits are documented and require corrective action. Corrective actions taken are appropriate for the magnitude of the problem and the degree of risk to the organization.

The corrective action process starts with an initial investigation and determination of root cause(s) of the problem. Records are maintained to show that the root cause(s) was identified and a plan for correction is presented and implemented.

The TNI Executive Director ensures that corrective actions are discharged within the agreed upon time frame and monitors implementation and documentation of the corrective action to assure that the corrective actions were effective.

8.5 Complaints

Anyone who has a concern about TNI's activities, actions, or procedures may file a complaint using the process described in SOP 1-106, General Complaint Resolution Process. Complaints are tracked and reviewed to identify any needed corrective actions.

8.6 Disputes and Appeals

Each TNI program Executive Committee has a procedure for handling complaints and management of appeals received by the program.

9.0 Glossary

The TNI Policy Committee is responsible for overall maintenance of the Glossary, as defined in SOP 1-130.

10.0 References

TNI Bylaws

Office of Management and Budget Circular A-119, Federal Participation in the Development and Use of Voluntary Consensus Standards and in Conformity Assessment Activities, February 10, 1998

TNI Policies and SOPs, available at <http://nelac-institute.org/content/policy.php>

TNI Standard Training procedures available to selected staff in a secure on-line storage system

11.0 Document Approved Changes

Version	Effective Date	Description of Change
0.0	6/3/16	
0.1	2/22/17	Added Section 10.0 Glossary as a reserved section. Renumbered sections 10 and 11.
1.0		Significant changes throughout as documented in the March 11, 2026 Board minutes

Appendix 1: Administrative Committees

Advocacy Committee

The purpose of the Advocacy Committee is to promote and support TNI's core programs. The Advocacy Committee consists of 10 to 16 members. A TNI Director chairs this committee.

The Advocacy Committee:

- Manages relationships with other organizations (e.g., ACIL, AWWA, WEF) that have an interest in accreditation issues,
- Manages relationships with EPA program offices,
- Develops presentations and papers to promote national accreditation,
- Develops presentations and papers to promote TNI,
- Provides outreach at national, regional and local meetings,
- Assists with publication of the member newsletter, and
- Helps plan and organize two meetings per year to allow TNI members and the public the opportunity to discuss topics related to laboratory accreditation.

EMS Steering Committee

The Steering Committee for the Environmental Measurement Symposium role is to provide guidance to the Symposium by setting the date and location of the Symposium, reviewing the budget, and acting upon other related matters. This Steering Committee consists of the Symposium Chair, key TNI individuals with specific responsibilities, and five to ten other key individuals representing stakeholder interests such as universities, laboratories, vendors, and state agencies. The Steering Committee is formed at the end of the current year's Symposium to begin preparing for the next year's meeting. This group then meets periodically by conference call throughout the year to provide advice to the TNI staff that carry out the day-to-day activities. The Steering Committee is not involved in any day-to-day activities, but sets the general direction for the conference and monitors key actions.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee consists of at least three (3) Individual Members appointed by the Board Chair whose duty shall be to perform an annual review of the TNI financial records and report the results to the Board. The Chair of this committee is the Treasurer. This Committee also:

- Develops an annual budget for review by the TNI Board,
- Provides periodic reports to the Board on the status of TNI's finances,
- Provides contract and proposal review as needed,
- Makes financial decisions that affect TNI, and
- Publishes an annual Financial Report.

Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee consists of the immediate Past Chair of the Board and two other individuals appointed by the Past Chair whose duty is to develop a slate of candidates for election to the TNI Board. From time to time, this group may be asked to recommend candidates for other committees or task groups as requested by the Board. See SOP 1-108.

Policy Committee

Under the direction of the Board, the committee serves as a resource for the development and review of policies, Standard Operating Procedures and related documents to ensure conformance to the TNI mission. The chair of the Policy Committee is the Secretary of the TNI Board. The Policy Committee consists of at least one member from each core program, one TNI Director, and one at-large member. Other at-large members may be added. See SOP 1-116. The Policy Committee:

- Reviews policies, SOPs and related documents from all programs for conformity with respect to style and for consistency with one another and with the overall mission of TNI;
- Develops general policies, SOPs and related documents for TNI (e.g., travel reimbursement, purchasing, conflict of interest, etc.);
- Reviews and evaluates requests for policies, SOPs and related documents received from the membership and others and provides a recommendation to the Board; and
- Receives and manage complaints against TNI.