



Policy TITLE:	Relationship of NELAP AB Certificates of Recognition and the NELAP Evaluation Process
Policy NO.:	3-102
REVISION NO:	0
Program	NELAP

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I. PURPOSE AND APPLICABILITY

This policy describes the relationship between issuance of Certificates of Recognition and the three-year evaluation cycle for the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) Accreditation Bodies (ABs.)

II. DEFINITIONS

Certificate of Recognition: the document that officially designates a NELAP AB as being “approved” to accredit laboratories to the standard adopted by the NELAP AC. A certificate is valid for three (3) years, so that the evaluation process occurs every three years for each AB.

Evaluation Team (ET): a team comprised of the LE, other State AB and/or EPA representatives, and any other technical evaluators approved by the NELAP AC to conduct a review of an AB for the purposes of granting NELAP recognition to the AB.

Lead Evaluator (LE): the chosen member of the ET who provides direction for the ET and is responsible for issuing the written final recommendation regarding AB recognition, based on input from the entire team.

NELAP Accreditation Body (AB): The state organization having responsibility and accountability for accreditation, recognized by the NELAP AC to accredit laboratories in the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program.

NELAP Accreditation Council (AC): The body within NELAP comprised of one individual and one alternate from each recognized Accreditation Body, appointed by the AB, and holding final authority for implementation of the program for the accreditation of environmental laboratories.

III. RELATED DOCUMENTS

NELAP Evaluation SOP 3-102

IV. CERTIFICATES OF RECOGNITION

Beginning with the start of The NELAC Institute's (TNI's) fiscal year 2019, in October 2018, all NELAP ABs in good standing will be issued a Certificate of Recognition. "Good standing" means that the AB's most recent evaluation was satisfactory and that its continued recognition was approved by the NELAP Accreditation Council (AC) at the conclusion of that evaluation.

New certificates will be issued annually to each AB in NELAP, contingent upon the most recent evaluation being satisfactory and assuming that the AB wishes to continue with the program. Previously, new certificates were issued only at the completion of the evaluation process, regardless of time elapsed since the previous certificate was issued.

V. NELAP EVALUATION CYCLE CHANGES RESULTING FROM THIS POLICY

The NELAP ABs are evaluated approximately once every three years, in accordance with the NELAP Evaluation SOP 3-102, by a team of peers led by a Lead Evaluator (LE) who is contracted to The NELAC Institute. Depending on the wishes of the EPA region in which the AB is located (the states are divided into ten EPA regions), this team may include EPA regional staff.

The timing and team composition for these evaluations has shifted since the inception of NELAP. The AC finds that, with one single LE and an alternate LE for instances where conflict of interest may be present, it is desirable and practical to formally schedule these evaluations on a regular basis over the three year cycle, rather than have each evaluation begin at some date dependent on the conclusion of a prior evaluation.

Thus, beginning with the evaluation cycle that starts in November, 2019, NELAP ABs will be scheduled to receive their renewal letters (requesting renewal applications) at intervals of two months, in the order in which their evaluations were concluded during the 2016-2019 cycle of evaluations. This interval will permit the LE to schedule the steps of the evaluation, as described in SOP 3-102, on a systematic basis, and will enable the individual ABs to proceed through the process on a more clearly defined schedule.

VI. CONTINUED MEMBERSHIP IN NELAP AC

As documented in SOP 3-102, the final step of an AB evaluation is the decision of the NELAP AC concerning whether to accept the recommendation of the evaluation team, for continued recognition, as presented by the LE. In the unexpected event that the evaluation is unsatisfactory, and the NELAP AC accepts a recommendation not to renew an AB's recognition, then the NELAP AC will determine a suitable amount of time for laboratories to seek primary accreditation with a different AB and, based on that determination, set an "end date" for the AB's then-currently-valid Certificate of Recognition. In this case, the Certificate issued to that NELAP AB would expire on the date determined by the NELAP AC, regardless of the "normal" annual expiration date on the Certificate when it was issued.

Policy Approved Changes

Revision No.	Effective Date	Description of Change
0	10/1/18	