



SOP TITLE	Roles and Responsibilities of TNI Ambassadors
SOP NO.	1-126
REVISION NO	0
PROGRAM	Administration

SOP Approval Dates

	Initial Approval	Last Revision	Last Review
Committee: Advocacy	11/3/2022		
Program	NA		
Policy Committee Review	6/8//2023		
TNI Board of Directors Endorsement	NA (6/14/2023)		
Effective Date	11/3/2022		

1.0 Purpose and Applicability

This document applies to all Ambassadors appointed by TNI's Advocacy Committee.

2.0 Summary

TNI plans to have designated Ambassadors to all non-NELAP state environmental laboratory certification programs. Ambassadors are individuals willing to represent TNI to the non-NELAP state to which they are appointed. They are asked to form a mutually beneficial relationship with the assigned state program(s) and their laboratory association(s). The goal is to ensure that the non-NELAP state certification program, and the laboratories it serves, are aware of both TNI's ongoing activities and any new TNI programs. Ambassadors are also asked to inform TNI of any changes in the state certification program.

3.0 Related Documents

TNI Strategic Plan

4.0 Definitions

[reserved]

5.0 Procedure

- 5.1 TNI Ambassadors shall be appointed upon mutual agreement among the individual, the Advocacy Committee Chair and the TNI Executive Director. Being an Ambassador is a voluntary role and best suited to active TNI members who are familiar with TNI's programs.

Ambassadors should be active TNI members, who are also active in other groups, such as state advisory groups or state lab associations and who are advocates for lab accreditation.

- 5.2 Once appointed, the Chair of TNI's Board of Directors shall send a letter of introduction to the appropriate certification program manager in the state to which the Ambassador is appointed. See sample letter in Appendix A.

- 5.3 The Ambassador then follows up with personal communication to affirm his or her role as Ambassador and offers to make periodic contact for information sharing in the future. This initial contact may use the talking points found in Appendix B.

Specifically, communications between the Ambassador and the state representative should focus on the following topics:

- 5.3.1 Keep state accreditation/certification programs informed about TNI activities.
- 5.3.2 Serve as a conduit for information to TNI about state program developments.
- 5.3.3 Find out what the state program's needs are and ask how TNI can help (resource issues, training, technical information, database, etc.).
- 5.3.4 Clear up misconceptions about how national accreditation works.
- 5.3.5 Identify any barriers the state may have in establishing an accreditation program consistent with national standards.

6.0 Updating TNI Management on Activities of Ambassadors

The Advocacy Committee Chair (or designated representative) shall periodically convene a teleconference meeting of all TNI Ambassadors for the purpose of updating TNI management and other Ambassadors about the status of the states represented, and to share tips and tools for engaging with state officials and laboratory organizations. A summary of these discussions will be shared with the Executive Director and the Advocacy Committee.

7.0 References

None.

8.0 SOP Approved Changes

Revision No.	Effective Date	Description of Change
0	11/3/2022	

Appendix A – Sample Letter of Introduction (on TNI Letterhead)

[date]

Name and Address of Appropriate State Official

VIA EMAIL TO [Email address to which the letter will be sent]

Dear [State official];

In an effort to expand our communication with non-NELAP laboratory accreditation and certification programs, The NELAC Institute (TNI) is implementing a state ambassadors program. The role of the TNI ambassadors will be to provide direct communication with state program staff. In the implementation of this program, we would like to invite your state to participate.

The TNI ambassadors to states will:

- Keep state accreditation/certification programs informed about TNI activities
- Serve as a conduit for information to TNI about state program developments
- Learn about state program needs and ask how TNI can help (resource issues, training, technical information, database, etc.)
- Answer questions about how the national environmental laboratory accreditation program works
- Identify any barriers the state may have in establishing an accreditation program consistent with national standards

_____[Name of Ambassador]____ has agreed to be the TNI ambassador to your state. _____[name]_____ will be contacting you in the near future to discuss how the program works and what communication arrangement will work best for your state. If you have any question in the meantime, please feel free to contact _____[name]_____.

Sincerely,

Alfredo Sotomayor, Chair
TNI Board of Directors

Appendix B – Talking Points for Initial Contact Between Ambassador and State Official(s)

TNI and the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program

Verify that we have the correct state agency (or association) contact (?)

Who is TNI?

- A 501(c)3 non-profit organization.
- A member organization managed by a Board of Directors.
- A voluntary consensus standards development organization accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

The NELAC Institute

National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP)

- Purpose is to establish and implement a program for the accreditation of environmental laboratories

Program components:

- The recognition of accreditation bodies
- The adoption of acceptance limits for proficiency testing, and
- The adoption of consensus standards for use in the program

Website

- www.nelac-institute.org
- How to navigate the website – free webinar - https://www.nelac-institute.org/content/load_edu.php?id=224
- Reference to all state programs - <https://www.nelac-institute.org/content/abdb.php>

NELAP

- 14 active Accreditation Bodies in 14 states
- Accredits over 1200 laboratories
 - US states and territories
 - Canadian provinces
 - US military lab in South Korea

The NELAP Accreditation Council

- Consistent with other international recognition programs, decisions to recognize ABs and enforce the program are performed by mutual recognition
- This means, only those organizations that choose to participate as ABs may be involved in key decisions
 - Recognition of ABs
 - Enforcement
 - Standards adoption
 - Standards interpretation

NELAP Accreditation Council

- One representative and one alternate from each NELAP-recognized Accrediting Body
- Each representative and alternate is officially appointed by the Accreditation Body to represent their state program
- A chairperson is selected by the members of the Council
- EPA designee as an Ex-Officio member
- Program administrator to help with administrative functions

Council Duties

- Final authority for implementation of the program for the accreditation of environmental laboratories
- Implements the policies and procedures that govern the operation of this program, and
- Responsible for ensuring the successful implementation of the program

Authority

- The authority to administer an accreditation program comes from state statute and regulation
- In accordance with ISO 17011, all accreditation decisions, including the handling of appeals, rest with the AB
- EPA continues to have a key oversight function for drinking water
- TNI provides the infrastructure to facilitate communication, consistency, and reciprocity

Implementation

- NOT the role of TNI
- NELAP ABs adopt standards voluntarily
 - Select scope of accreditation
 - Select voluntary or mandatory nature of program
 - Select types of laboratories to be accredited
 - May use third party assessors, and
 - May assess fees
- NELAP ABs must comply with the standards
 - Accept reciprocity
 - Use trained assessors, and
 - Refrain from adding supplemental requirements

The TNI Standard

- Strengths
 - Uses ISO 17025 quality system approach
 - Adds specificity to improve clarity and help with consistency for environmental testing
 - Allows flexibility in meeting requirements
 - Represents best professional practice
 - Allows for multiple Accreditation Bodies to implement consistently, and
 - Includes data integrity component missing from 17025

Management Requirements

- Implement a quality system
- Management requirements
- Documents and records
- Internal assessments, and
- System controls and improvements

Comparable to ISO 9000, these requirements are good management practices to ensure analyses are performed in an orderly and structured way.

Technical Requirements

- Technical competence of staff
- Validity and appropriateness of test methods
- Traceability of measurements
- Instrument calibration
- Testing environment
- Sampling, handling and transportation of samples

- Quality assurance of test data, and
- Reporting

These requirements focus on ensuring reliable and accurate data.

Options for Non-NELAP States

- Apply to become a NELAP AB
- Develop and implement a state program
- Implement a drinking water only program
- Accept certifications from NELAP ABs
- Incorporate some or all of the TNI Standard into state program
- Enter into mutual recognition agreements with other non-NELAP states

The Advantages of NELAP

- Uses a consensus standard that is widely recognized as the gold standard for environmental laboratory accreditation
- Peer oversight to ensure all participating ABs are competent to operate accreditation programs
- Utilizes TNI infrastructure (Assessor training, National database, Fields of Proficiency Testing, etc.) to leverage resources
- NELAP-recognized ABs get to fully participate in the process

The NELAC Institute

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