

Filling a Communication Gap:

How California ELAP is Regaining Trust from its Stakeholder Communities

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Background

- ELAP moved to the State Water Board in 2014
- An Expert Review Panel performed a comprehensive review of the program
 - Their recommendations have provided a road map for improvements
- Our goal is to improve the accreditation program and California's laboratories
 - Both of which require frequent interaction with stakeholders



Goal of this Presentation

- Tell you our story
 - Hopefully you'll find our experiences useful
- Continue the conversation we have started with all of you about how to keep improving



The Old ELAP's SOP



ELAP's Clients

- Our primary clients are the ***regulatory agencies*** that use ELAP laboratory data
- We formed a committee of decision-makers from each agency to advise us



What have our clients done?

- Developed a list of their collective needs
 - They selected the 2016 TNI Standard
- Evaluated options for a new laboratory accreditation standard
 - They selected the 2016 TNI Standard
- Advised us on regulations development



Challenges with our clients

- Engagement
 - Convincing agency heads to invest staff time in this endeavor
- Lack of familiarity with laboratory practices
 - Experts in their own fields, but not ours



ELAP's Customers

- The laboratories that request accreditation from us
- We developed a communications plan directed specifically at reaching this group
 - New webpage
 - Webinars
 - Events
 - Newsletters
 - Opt-out email subscription
 - ELTAC



What is ELTAC?

- Environmental Laboratory Technical Advisory Committee
- Previously, relationship with ELAP was ineffective at best
- We revitalized the committee



Rebuilding ELTAC

- Scrapped original By-Laws and rewrote with stakeholder input
- Established new positions to represent different groups of constituents in the laboratory community
- We called for nominations and interviewed over 30 applicants



ELTAC Accomplishments

- Identified a process to work with agencies when new monitoring needs arise
- Made a recommendation on a new accreditation laboratory standard for California
- Expanded our communications network by frequently reporting out to their constituents



Challenges with ELTAC

- Very frequent meetings in the first year
- Existing relationships and biases
- Some resistance to change



Have the gains been all positive?

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- High level of engagement
- Functional partnerships
- Ownership of ELAP
- New communication pathways
- Compromise
- Trust

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- Time

Complaint Process

- We inherited over 150 complaints
 - Which were never addressed or tracked by management
- We established a process to formally resolve complaints
 - These are opportunities for us to improve
- And we are taking action to prevent complaints of the same nature in the future



Assessing Success

- Metrics
 - Are we meeting the goals identified in our communications plan?
- Feedback from our stakeholders
 - Both positive and negative
- Learning from our missteps



What's next for California?

- The “new” ELAP isn't so new anymore
- Rebrand
- Expand



Thank you!

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