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

• 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?

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

-  
  - 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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