

Summary of the Laboratory Accreditation Body Expert Committee Meeting

August 21, 2026

1pm Eastern

1. Welcome and Roll Call

Aaren Alger, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1pm Eastern. The attendance is recorded in Attachment 1 – 8 Voting Members and 4 Associate members. A quorum was met.

The agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

The July meeting minutes will be reviewed by email.

2. Houston Summer Meeting

Aaren asked that people who attended the Houston meeting share their thoughts. Ilona noted that the recording for the first half of the meeting did not work, but Carol took notes that are being included in Attachment 2 to these minutes. Ilona will prepare a summary of the Houston meeting and incorporate Carol's notes and information from the second half of the recording.

Assessor Education and Experience Requirements

The Committee revisited the extensive discussion from the Houston meeting regarding the education and experience requirements for assessors. There were recommendations that the standard should better emphasize the value of relevant experience.

The Committee discussed concerns raised by third-party assessors during the Houston meeting regarding the educational requirements. Ryan clarified that the concern came primarily from individual third-party assessors who perform assessments for accreditation bodies, rather than from the non-governmental accreditation bodies themselves. Some assessors expressed the view that formal education should not be a requirement and that their organizations rely heavily on internal training.

Committee members expressed concern that internal training practices vary among organizations and therefore cannot necessarily serve as a consistent or measurable qualification. Several Committee members emphasized that the standard needs to establish minimum qualifications that can be applied consistently across organizations. The Committee's discussion centered on the principle that assessor work is not an entry-level position. Assessors need sufficient technical knowledge and experience to understand laboratory processes, communicate effectively with laboratory personnel, evaluate technical work, and distinguish between actual requirements and an individual laboratory's preferred practices.

Several Committee members shared experiences with assessors who appeared to lack sufficient technical or scientific understanding. Examples included assessors relying heavily on checklists without understanding analytical principles, interpreting

requirements based on how another laboratory operated, and making findings without adequately considering applicable regulations or methods. These experiences reinforced the Committee's concern that assessors need both technical competence and the ability to evaluate the work of others.

Definition of Relevant Laboratory Experience

It was questioned whether educationally based work experiences should count toward laboratory experience requirements. Carol described her cooperative education experience, in which she alternated academic semesters with full-time employment in laboratory settings. Her work included chemistry-related positions at a water treatment plant. Although the work was completed while she was technically a student, it involved substantial, paid laboratory employment and was substantially different from ordinary laboratory coursework. The Committee generally agreed that this type of experience should be recognized.

Carol agreed to develop proposed language addressing this issue before the next meeting.

Evaluating the Work of Others

Cathy shared language from DGS job descriptions that distinguishes higher-level scientific positions by emphasizing the ability to evaluate or judge the work of others. The Committee found this concept useful because assessor responsibilities involve more than simply performing laboratory work; assessors must evaluate the work performed by others.

The Committee discussed using this concept in a note or explanatory language rather than making it a rigid qualification requirement. The intent would be to help readers understand why assessor qualifications need to demonstrate a level of experience beyond entry-level laboratory work.

Cathy cautioned that the language should not require someone to have previously performed the exact function of evaluating others if their prior experience has nevertheless given them the ability to perform that function.

Cathy agreed to locate and provide the relevant job-description language so that it can be considered for inclusion.

Possible TNI Assessor Credential

The Committee discussed whether a future TNI assessor credential could be used as an alternative to some of the college-level STEM coursework requirements. Ilona explained that the credential currently under development for technical specialists is intended to address both technical knowledge and applicable TNI requirements. A future assessor credential could potentially build on that foundation while adding material specific to performing assessments, such as writing nonconformities and understanding the assessor role.

There was general interest in using such a credential, there was concern that it did not exist at this point. Ilona noted that the Quality Management Systems standard already

uses language allowing an applicable TNI credential to substitute for certain college-level STEM coursework. The Committee discussed potentially using a similar structure for assessor qualifications. Ilona agreed to look into this and provide some possible language options.

This could be an additional pathway that would combine an appropriate TNI credential with a greater amount of relevant experience. Six to eight years of experience were discussed as possible numbers.

Ilona also discussed specialized credentials or badges, including examples related to radiochemistry and microbiology. These examples highlighted situations where an individual may have substantial technical training but not traditional laboratory employment in the discipline. The Committee agreed that such situations may require further consideration rather than an immediate change to the standard.

Quality Assurance Experience

The Committee considered a suggestion from Windsor (NELAP AB – Minnesota) that all assessors should have at least one year of experience performing quality-related activities. Though this could be helpful, Aaren noted that the standard already includes required training addressing quality management system requirements and that adding a universal one-year experience requirement could unnecessarily narrow the pool of qualified assessors.

Assessor Qualifications — Next Draft

The Committee generally viewed the existing education and experience structure as sound, with targeted revisions rather than a complete rewrite.

The immediate approach will be to:

- Clarify that substantive cooperative education or internship experience may count as laboratory experience.
- Consider explanatory language regarding the assessor's ability to evaluate the work of others.
- Add, if appropriate, an alternative pathway involving a future TNI assessor credential and an associated experience requirement.
- Retain flexibility in how quality-related experience is interpreted.

Review of Additional Comments in Houston

- Section 6.1.3 — Evaluation of Comprehension

Carol reported a comment suggesting that the notes preceding Section 6.1.3 be removed because they provide guidance on how comprehension may be evaluated.

Aaren explained that the note was added in response to earlier comments that the standard did not explicitly allow an examination as a means of evaluating comprehension. The intent was to make clear that an examination is an available option, not to require it.

- Section 6.2.2.3 — Conflicts of Interest

The Committee discussed whether the laboratory should have a role in determining whether a disclosed conflict of interest is acceptable.

The discussion recognized that a conflict may not necessarily make an assessment impossible in every circumstance. A potential conflict could be disclosed and then evaluated by the appropriate parties.

Aaren suggested language along the lines of requiring assessors to disclose real or perceived conflicts before conducting an assessment and making those disclosures available to the laboratory and accreditation body for determination of appropriate next steps.

The Committee agreed that the section should be reconsidered and potentially reworded to make the respective responsibilities clearer.

- **Section 6.2.3.1 — Minimum Number of Assessors**

The Committee revisited discussion regarding whether the standard should establish a specific minimum number or metric for assessors.

A request had been made for the standard to define such a metric, but Aaren indicated that the Committee had previously determined that establishing a universal minimum would not be practical.

- **Section 6.4.1.1 — Assessment Reports and Accreditation Body Review**

Concerns focused on the timing, review, approval, and release of assessment reports.

The Committee discussed concerns raised by third-party assessors and laboratories regarding the time required to complete and release reports. Laboratories expressed a preference for receiving reports promptly, particularly because they may need the final wording of findings to begin corrective action and because delays can create problems when staff involved in the assessment are no longer available.

The Committee also discussed the distinction between the assessor who performs an assessment and the accreditation body that has authority for the accreditation process. Members generally agreed that the accreditation body must retain responsibility for reviewing and approving assessment reports, even when assessments are performed by third-party assessors. Can an assessor give a preliminary report to the lab? The authority of the report belongs to the AB. It is still their job is to review and approve it.

The discussion clarified that this does not necessarily mean that the individual identified as the accreditation body must personally review every report. Several accreditation bodies delegate report review to qualified staff within the accreditation body organization. Examples were discussed from Minnesota, New York, and other programs.

The Committee also discussed situations in which a report may be provided to a laboratory before the accreditation body's review is complete, with subsequent review and correction if necessary. The relationship between such practices and the proposed 45-day requirement remains an issue requiring clarification.

Amy provided information from the Accreditation Council discussions, including material indicating that the responsibility for the accreditation process remains with the accreditation body and cannot simply be delegated outside of the accreditation body. She agreed to provide or identify the relevant meeting notes and EPA-related language so the committee can ensure that the standard accurately reflects the interpretation.

The Committee recognized that the issue has significant operational implications and agreed that the existing language should be reviewed in light of the documented Accreditation Council discussion before further changes are made.

- **Section 7.3.4 — Reciprocity**

Near the end of the meeting, the Committee identified a concern regarding Section 7.3.4, specifically language stating that a secondary accreditation body must acknowledge receipt of information. There was concern that the wording could be interpreted as requiring the secondary accreditation body to accept or recognize the information rather than simply acknowledge receipt.

Because this issue was raised near the end of the Houston discussion, there was not enough time for a full discussion. The Committee agreed that the issue should be taken back to the Accreditation Council/accreditation bodies for additional consideration.

Aaren asked Kathy, Amy, and Millie to bring the Section 7.3.4 language to the attention of the other Accreditation Council members and return any concerns to the Committee.

3. Documentation of ISO Language Changes

The Committee needs to complete the documentation associated with changes from ISO language. Ilona, Ryan, and Millie have developed a table identifying areas where ISO language was deleted or significantly modified. The justification portion of the table still needs to be completed.

4. Summary of Changes Table

Millie has begun preparing a summary of changes between the previous version of the standard and the current revised Draft version. This summary will be needed before the Draft Standard can be posted.

5. New Business

None

6. Next Meeting

The next planned teleconference meeting will be September 18, 2026, at 1pm Eastern.
(Addition: The meeting was rescheduled to September 25, 2026.)

Aaren adjourned the meeting at 2:35pm Eastern.

Attachment 1 LAB Expert Committee Roster

Name/Email		Affiliation	Present 7/9 - Quorum
Aaren Alger, Chair Aaren.s.alger@gmail.com		Other – Alger Consulting & Training	Yes
Socorro Baldonado sbaldonado@mwdeh2o.com		Lab – Metropolitan Water District, La Verne, CA	Yes
Kathryn Chang Kathryn.chang@et.eurofins.us		LAB – Eurofins	Yes
Sviatlana Haubner Sviatlana.Haubner@cincinnati-oh.gov		LAB – Cincinnati Metropolitan Sewer District	Yes
Michella Karapondo Karapondo.michella@epa.gov		Other – EPA OGWDW TSC/Cincinnati	No
Ryan Lerch Ryan.lerch@deq.ok.gov		AB – OK DEQ	Yes
Michael Perry mperry@labworks.com		Other - Labworks, Inc.	Yes
Millie Rose Mille.Rose@illinois.gov		AB – IL EPA	Yes
Amy Steuerwald amy.steuerswald@health.ny.gov		AB – NY DOH	Yes
Program Administrator: Ilona Taunton Ilona.taunton@nelac-institute.org	N/A	TNI	Yes
Associate Members:			
Paul Bergeron Paul.bergeron@la.gov		AB – LDEQ	No
Debbie Bond dbond@southernco.com		LAB – Alabama Power	No
Nilda Cox nilda.cox@et.eurofinsus.com		Lab – Eurofins Eaton Analytical LLC	No
Yumi Creason ycreason@pa.gov		Other	No
Taryn Hurley taryn.hurley@deq.ok.gov		AB – OK DEQ	No
Paul Junio paul.junio@pacelabs.com		LAB – Pace Labs, Inc.	No
LeeAnn Kline lkline@mjureider.com		M J Reider Associates	Yes
Jasmina Kuljanac Jasmina.Kuljanac@stpete.org		City of St. Petersburg Water Resources Department (Florida)	No
Marlene Moore mmore@advancedsys.com		Other – Advanced Systems, Inc., Newark, DE	No
Zaneta Popovska zpopovska@anab.org		AB – ANAB	No

Mei Beth Shepherd mbshep@sheptechserv.com		Other – Shepherd Technical Services	No
Nicholas Slawson nslawson@a2la.org		AB – A2LA	No
Carl Kircher		AB - Florida	Yes
Cathy Westerman cathy.westerman@dgs.virginia.gov		AB – VA DCLS	No
Carol Gebhart carol.gebhart@alsglobal.com		ALS	Yes
Vanessa Hayes vanessah@ide-tech.com		IDE - Americas	Yes

Attachment 2: Houston Meeting Summary – August 3, 2026

There were recording issues with the first half of the meeting, but written notes from attendees are being shared. Presentation slides are included below. Many of these items were discussed during the August 21, 2026 meeting.

1:30 – 3pm

- ANSI OK with taking language of 17011 out where needed, but will need to have a Preface table that explains the changes to 17011
- Section 6.1.2.8 added a) and b) but it confuses the issue
 - PJLA suggested to remove
 - ORELAP suggested to have the AB define the criteria for their "authorizing role / group" rather than must "read"
- Assessor Qualifications discussion
 - Windsor = all qualification options should have at least 1 year experience in quality
 - Suggestion to define "routine duties related to quality assurance" = what counts and what doesn't (i.e. maintaining accreditation status with applications and notifications may not be the type of experience versus someone that has actively managed an internal auditing and control of nonconforming work system)
- Suggest to remove note right before 6.1.3 since the note is a "how". There are other ways to evaluate comprehension and too much guidance will restrict creativity (I think this was from me).
- 6.2.2.3 Present possible conflicts and lab decides if it is or not
 - The AB will provide a list of potential conflicts with the assessor team proposed and labs decide if it is or not since sometimes labs are ok with using an Assessor that may have a conflict due to the value gained from their insight and experience. AB shouldn't be deciding this for the lab. They just need to identify potential conflict.
 - Perhaps a conflict will only exist for a certain time (for example if an Assessor worked at a lab 10 years ago vs 1 year ago).
- 6.2.3.1 TNI (aka LAB) should define the metric for what is the minimal # of assessors per scope of audit
- 6.4.1.1 make clear that if you are issuing the accreditation you have to make the final decision
 - This could create a potential issue by preventing Auditors (aka contracted ones) from releasing reports to the lab as AB would need to review and release (happening in FL)
 - 45 days is not appropriate and delays the accreditation response to findings too long
 - Suggested by ORELAP that this is a contract issue between the AB and the contracted assessors with not making the due dates for the assessment team tight enough to allow sufficient review period by the AB. This needs to be adjusted so lab is still getting report in 30 days
- 7.3.4 asked to have a new requirement added that secondary AB can't request additional evidence and not reject the decision for accreditation
 - Will not apply to State specific criteria

- (Carol suggestion, when there are state specific criteria outside TNI program, then labs would need to apply directly to the State as primary for those sections / methods)

3pm – 5pm

Assessor Qualifications: Education and Experience

The Committee continued its discussion regarding proposed education and experience requirements for assessors, particularly whether a bachelor's degree should be required.

- Members questioned whether formal education is critical for assessor competence. It was noted that a degree may provide scientific theory and critical-thinking skills but does not necessarily demonstrate practical knowledge of laboratory methods, standards, regulations, or assessment practices.
- There was support for recognizing relevant experience as an alternative or complement to formal education. One concept discussed was allowing reduced education requirements when an individual has substantial relevant experience and receives additional observation or evaluation.
- "Experience" is difficult to quantify. Simply having many years in a laboratory does not establish that an individual has experience with quality assurance, specific analytical disciplines, or conducting assessments.
- The Committee discussed aligning assessor qualifications more closely with the requirements for technical specialists. If an assessor does not personally meet the technical requirements for a particular discipline, another appropriately qualified individual could potentially participate in the assessment, with the assessor being observed or mentored.
- Graduate education was discussed as potentially providing additional scientific understanding and critical-thinking capability, particularly when assessing technologies or methods outside an individual's direct hands-on experience.
- What constitutes a "scientific discipline," including whether engineering, psychology, and other STEM-related fields should qualify under proposed language.
- Cooperative education, internships, apprenticeships, and other laboratory work performed as part of an undergraduate program were identified as examples that could unintentionally be excluded by wording requiring a specific amount of laboratory experience "not associated with undergraduate coursework."
- The group also discussed the value of quality-assurance experience beyond routine analytical work. Examples included data validation, performance investigations, proficiency testing, control-chart evaluation, and other activities that demonstrate understanding of laboratory operations.

Assessor Competence and Evaluation

It was noted that qualifications alone may not reliably establish whether someone is an effective assessor.

- Meeting attendees emphasized the importance of observing assessors in actual assessments and evaluating how they apply standards, interact with laboratories, handle disagreements, and demonstrate technical knowledge.
- One proposal was to establish objective assessor-evaluation criteria, potentially using a checklist or scoring methodology, rather than relying entirely on subjective judgments about whether an assessor is "good."
- It was noted that an assessor could meet formal education and experience requirements yet still perform poorly, while an individual without a traditional degree could demonstrate strong competence through experience and observed performance.
- There was interest in an approach where education and experience establish eligibility, but an individual would not function independently as an assessor until successfully evaluated or observed by a qualified assessor.
- Assessors need both technical competence and interpersonal skills. Effective assessments were described as opportunities for constructive exchange and improvement rather than simply identifying deficiencies.
- Several attendees noted that laboratories need to be able to challenge an assessor's interpretation respectfully and have a productive discussion supported by the applicable standard, records, and evidence.

Feedback on Assessor Performance

The Committee discussed the importance of obtaining meaningful feedback from laboratories regarding assessor performance.

- Laboratory surveys were viewed as an important mechanism for ABs to identify assessors who consistently perform well or poorly.
- Laboratories may be reluctant to provide negative feedback because of concerns about retaliation or adverse consequences, even where retaliation is not permitted.
- A suggestion was made to make surveys mandatory or otherwise establish a stronger mechanism for ensuring feedback reaches the AB.
- Participants also discussed alternative mechanisms, such as allowing laboratories to communicate concerns directly to the AB and establishing a documented process for identifying recurring assessor-performance problems.
- It was recognized that feedback mechanisms need to have impartiality and avoid turning the AB into an organization that informally "ranks" individual assessors.

Testing and Credentialing of Assessors

The Committee considered whether assessor testing or formal credentialing should be considered.

- There was general recognition that some form of testing can demonstrate baseline competence, but concern was expressed about overly narrow testing—for example, requiring separate tests for individual methods such as BOD, pH, or COD.
- A broader discipline-based assessment, such as wet chemistry, titrimetry, spectrophotometry, organic chemistry, or microbiology, was viewed as potentially more meaningful.

- Existing drinking-water certification/training programs were discussed as examples of discipline-based competency mechanisms that some jurisdictions already recognize.
- The possibility of a formal credential was raised, particularly because TNI is developing technical-specialist credentialing concepts that may be similar to assessor qualifications.
- At least one participant expressed reservations about credentialing generally, emphasizing that formal credentials can create an appearance of competence without necessarily establishing actual performance capability.

Conflicts of Interest and Impartiality

The Committee reviewed proposed changes to Sections 6.2.2.1 through 6.2.2.3.

- The Committee agreed that the wording in 6.2.2.1 could be simplified by using a single opening requirement that assessors and technical experts "must" meet the applicable requirements, rather than repeating "must" throughout multiple subsequent provisions.
- The term "technical experts" was clarified as referring to a defined role supporting an assessment under the oversight of assessors.
- Language concerning interests or relationships that could affect impartiality was discussed.
- The Committee discussed gifts and nominal items such as lunch. Participants noted that state ethics laws and AB policies may differ, making it difficult for the TNI standard to establish a universal monetary threshold.
- The Committee generally favored allowing applicable AB ethics policies and governmental requirements to govern these situations rather than creating an unnecessarily prescriptive standard.

Conflict-of-interest disclosure

The proposed requirement that assessors have "no conflict of interest" generated significant discussion.

- Attendees noted that a literal "no conflicts" requirement could be impractical, particularly in small programs where qualified experts may have worked with many laboratories or organizations.
- An alternative approach discussed was requiring assessors to disclose potential conflicts and allowing the AB and/or laboratory to evaluate whether the disclosed relationship presents an actual impediment to the assessment.
- Examples included an assessor who worked for a laboratory many years earlier, has a professional relationship with laboratory personnel, or has another historical connection that may or may not affect impartiality.
- Attendees favored a practical, assessment-specific disclosure process rather than requiring assessors to maintain an exhaustive list of every conceivable relationship.
- The Committee also discussed whether conflicts should have a defined duration following employment or other relationships with a laboratory.
- The Committee agreed to revisit the wording to better address disclosure, evaluation, and resolution of potential conflicts.

Assessment Team Size and Duration

The Committee discussed requirements concerning the number of assessors and the amount of time necessary to conduct an assessment.

- Participants agreed that assessment duration should reflect the actual scope and circumstances rather than being calculated through a rigid one-size-fits-all formula.
- Factors identified as affecting assessment duration included:
 - Scope and complexity of accreditation.
 - Assessor experience and efficiency.
 - Assessor familiarity with the laboratory.
 - Laboratory organization and ability to retrieve records.
 - Complexity of the methods and disciplines being assessed.
- The possibility of TNI or the Accreditation Council developing guidance on recommended assessor numbers for particular scopes was suggested rather than including highly prescriptive requirements in the standard.
- The Committee indicated that the proposed language would be taken back for further review.

Outsourcing and Subcontracting — Section 6.4.1.1

The Committee reviewed proposed language stating that portions of the accreditation process may be outsourced, but that review, approval, issuance of assessment reports, and accreditation decisions must remain with the AB.

- The intent is to ensure that an AB retains responsibility for its accreditation decisions and does not effectively outsource the authority to make those decisions.
- An attendee noted that accreditation decisions are already specifically addressed elsewhere, so repeating that requirement in 6.4.1.1 may be unnecessary.
- Significant discussion focused on the distinction between:
 - subcontracted assessors,
 - third-party organizations conducting assessments,
 - primary accreditation bodies,
 - secondary accreditation bodies, and
 - organizations that prepare assessment reports on behalf of an AB.
- Attendees identified situations in which third-party assessors currently issue reports that are subsequently reviewed and approved by the AB. The proposed wording could change that practice by requiring the AB itself to issue the assessment report.
- The Committee agreed that this section needs another review.
- The distinction between an assessor preparing a report and an AB formally issuing or approving the report will need to be made clear.

Assessment Report Timing

The Committee discussed a proposed increase in the report-issuance period from 30 to 45 days.

- The proposed 45-day period was explained as being related primarily to allowing the AB time to review an assessment report prepared by an assessor or third party before the report is formally issued by the AB.
- Several attendees opposed extending the overall period to 45 days, noting that longer deadlines can unintentionally result in work taking longer simply because additional time is available.
- Some attendees stated that 30 days is already longer than necessary and emphasized that assessment findings are more reliable when documented while the assessment is still fresh.
- One proposed solution was to address the timing problem through contracts with third-party assessors, requiring them to complete reports sufficiently early for the AB to review them.
- The Committee may reconsider the 45-day provision and distinguish contractual deadlines for assessors from the standard's requirements for AB report issuance. This would need to be discussed.

Changes in Laboratory Personnel and Reciprocity

The Committee reviewed proposed requirements concerning notification of changes in key laboratory personnel.

- The proposed language would require laboratories to notify their AB of specified staffing changes, such as changes to a technical manager.
- The primary AB would be required to evaluate the notification and supporting information and determine whether the new individual meets applicable qualifications.
- The AB would then be required to communicate its decision to the laboratory within 30 days of receiving the notification.
- Secondary ABs would acknowledge the notification and rely on the primary AB's determination under the proposed reciprocity concept.
- Participants expressed concern that differences in state laws and regulations could make complete automatic acceptance impractical.
- Examples were discussed where a primary AB may approve an individual's qualifications while a secondary AB may identify requirements under its own jurisdiction that appear different.
- The group discussed a possible approach based on verification of the primary AB's approval and communication between ABs rather than requiring each secondary AB to independently re-evaluate the same qualification.
- Further review was identified as necessary to ensure the proposed reciprocity language does not conflict with state-specific requirements.

ISO 17011 Changes and Proposed Removals

Ilona presented a table comparing existing ISO 17011-related language with proposed changes and potential removals.

- The table is intended to show the relevant clause, existing language, proposed change, and rationale.
- Attendees were encouraged to review the table and identify provisions that should not be removed.
- The rationale column is still being developed and that comments at this stage would be particularly useful.
- The table is expected to become part of the supporting material associated with the revised standard, with formatting to be cleaned up to avoid unnecessary expansion of the document.