Summary of the NELAP Accreditation Council Meeting
Monday, January 20, 2026 1:30 pm Eastern

1. Welcome and Introductions

Kristin Brown, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting at 1:30pm Eastern. Attendance is recorded in Attachment 1 – a quorum was met. The agenda is included in Attachment 2. The agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

Minutes from the 12/15/25 meeting were distributed by email. A motion was made to approve the December 15, 2025, minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Taryn and they were approved unanimously. Ilona will add the vote tally to the Module 4 comment discussion as an addition.

2. Chemistry – Module 4

The Volume 1 Module 4 comments prepared by the Committee were sent to Michelle Wade and Bob Wyeth.

3. Equivalency of TNI Assessments

No update was available.

4. Roundtable Discussions

Good for this calendar year. The schedule is through December 2026. People are encouraged to continue making progress on these.

5. New Business

1. Michele reported on the ERA PT issue. She shared that ERA has posted a notice on their website (visible when checking e-data) listing recently released PT results and indicating which studies are scheduled to be released next. The notice provides general status updates but does not suggest whether the issue will be ongoing.

   Kristin explained that toward the end of last year (last quarter), ERA's computer system went down. As a result, they were unable to electronically process several Proficiency Testing (PT) reports. Although laboratories submitted their PT results on time, ERA has had to manually enter the data, which significantly slowed processing.

   Reports are currently delayed by approximately one to two months. Several large WP studies and at least one WS study have been affected. ABs have generally agreed that if labs submitted results on time, they are considered compliant. The delay is impacting workflows because final PT evaluation reports have not yet been released.

2. Jody noted that one of her lab's was in the newspaper because the lab owner was falsifying data for certain customers for money. He is now being indicted by the grand jury. Her office found out about it because they saw it in the newspaper and then asked the Environmental Agency of Texas about it. The investigator could not share any information. Jody had experience in a previous position where they had to be notified by

a laboratory if there was an ethical violation, so she was surprised this lab did not do that. She asked how other ABs handle these issues and if they are notified.

Requirements vary by State and there is no consistent requirement across states that labs must report ethics violations directly to their AB. Overall, enforcement authority largely falls to state laws and rules**,** not solely to TNI standards**.**

- Some states (e.g., Oklahoma) require general self-reporting of significant problems, though language is often vague.
- Virginia has strict language requiring withdrawal of accreditation if data falsification is found.
- New York would treat willful violations as legal matters, potentially resulting in fines and revocation.
- Some states are considering the addition of explicit reporting requirements to their regulations. State ultimately control enforcement.

Concerns were raised about language that may be interpreted as “no enforcement if you self-report”. There was support by some for language that encourages early communication and allows ABs to assess risk and determine necessary corrective or enforcement actions.

Ilona read related language for the DRAFT Standards that QMS and LAB are still working on. She will send this language out before the next meeting. There is no explicit requirement in the Standard that labs must notify the AB of ethics violations.There are requirements about having a data integrity system, notifying affected clients and having investigation procedures that can be shared with an AB.

Many labs handle ethics investigations internally and confidentially, especially when issues are limited in scope and corrected. Larger, systemic, intentional, or criminal issues typically need to be escalated to state authorities. There was discussion about whether this confidentiality protects individuals appropriately or limits necessary oversight by the AB to ensure the issue is handled appropriately. There was concern that labs may characterize fraud as “minor lapses”. Not all labs will self-report, especially those with weak quality systems. It is also understood that simply adding a self-reporting requirement may not prevent misconduct.

The discussion led to a few considerations that will be further discussed.

- Should failure to notify an AB of an ethics violation be added as a suspension criterion in the LAB Standard?
- Should “ethical violation” be clearly defined?
- How can language encourage early reporting without implying immunity from enforcement?
- Do the current DRAFT Standards address the topic adequately.

6. Winter Forum - Boston

The group agreed that the Boston meeting was productive, including both the public working session and the Wednesday morning meetingThe opening session explaining TNI was especially appreciated, particularly for newer assessors.

Boston Summary:
The NELAP AC met to review major accomplishments from 2025, discuss priorities for 2026, and address ongoing accreditation and standards development efforts impacting

NELAP-recognized accreditation bodies. Key accomplishments included significant collaboration with the Quality Management Systems Committee on the development of new technical specialist qualification language, continued revisions to the NELAP evaluation process, detailed review of Volume 1 Module 4, and ongoing responses to Standard Interpretation Requests.

The Council also highlighted the success of inter-state assessor roundtable discussions, which have improved communication, consistency, and peer learning among assessors across accreditation programs. Several states reported program updates, including staffing additions, laboratory relocations, and expanded capabilities for conducting out-of-state assessments following adoption of the 2016 standard.

A substantial portion of the meeting focused on proposed technical specialist qualification revisions and their potential impacts on accreditation programs and laboratories. Discussions centered on increasing flexibility in qualification pathways through combinations of education, experience, and optional credentialing while maintaining competency standards. Participants noted that implementation may vary by state due to differences in regulatory frameworks and existing statutory requirements. Council members also discussed the importance of balancing workforce development needs with consistent technical competency expectations, particularly as laboratories continue to face staffing and succession challenges. Additional discussion addressed future assessor qualification updates and the need for clearer guidance around defining and evaluating relevant experience.

The Council also conducted an initial review of the Mutual Recognition Policy governing relationships between primary and secondary accreditation bodies. Discussion focused on clarifying responsibilities related to secondary accreditations, accreditation scope transparency, database reporting requirements, and dispute resolution processes. Members acknowledged variations in state practices and agreed additional policy review and refinement will likely be needed after final technical specialist language is adopted.

Looking ahead to 2026, the Council identified policy and procedure revisions, continued standards implementation work, evaluation process improvements, and ongoing collaboration with TNI committees as primary priorities.

7. Technical Specialist Exemptions Discussion

Significant discussion focused on how technical specialist exemptions should be handled between primary and secondary Accreditation Bodies (ABs). Concern was raised that labs may receive an exemption from their primary AB but fail to notify or apply for exemption with secondary ABs.

Current language in the DRAFT Standard requires labs to receive exemptions from each accrediting body, but members felt it may not clearly require notification during secondary applications. Suggestions to address this concern included:

- Requiring labs to explicitly request and receive exemptions from each AB.
- Adding application language requiring labs to disclose existing exemptions.
- Updating applications to include a direct question about exemption status.

Ilona will bring concerns regarding wording clarity to the Quality Management Systems Committee for further review. When a lab has received a TS exemption from their primary accrediting body and an application for secondary accreditation is completed, this

exemption must be noted in the application and a request for the same exemptions must be submitted.

Are there any issues related to mutual recognition that need to be considered in this discussion.

8. SOP on Disputes Update

Kathy provided an update on revisions to the Dispute SOP. The SOP was simplified and clarified to better define what constitutes a dispute and how it is handled. A three-member team selected by the TNI Board would address qualifying disputes.

Draft revisions have been submitted for review by Kristin and Michelle before broader distribution.

Ilona suggested looking at NEFAP's approach to separating evaluation-related disputes from other disputes. Evaluation disputes are addressed in the Evaluation SOP.

9. New Business

Amy Suggitt asked about using TEAMS to share checklists and other information. Ilona will look into this provide an update at the next meeting.

A question about sending newsletters to accredited laboratories was raised. Taryn shared that her program sends quarterly newsletters and offered to share examples.Some programs may need approval prior to distribution; others have discretion to send directly.

10. Next Meeting

The next NELAP AC meeting is scheduled for February 17, 2026, at 1 PM Eastern due to the holiday on the 16th.

Kristin adjourned the meeting at 3:00PM Eastern.

Attachment 1 - Roster

STATE	REPRESENTATIVE	PRESENT
FL	Carl Kircher T: 904-791-1574 E: carl.kircher@flhealth.gov	Yes (Left at 2:05pm Eastern)
	Alternate: Paul Legge (904)791-1582 E: Paul.Legge@flhealth.gov	No
IL	Millie Rose T: 217-557-0220 E: mildred.rose@illinois.gov	No
KS	Carissa Robertson Carissa.Robertson@ks.gov (785) 291-3162	Yes

	Alternate: Paul Harrison paul.harrison@ks.gov (785) 296-1656	No
	For information purposes: Amy Suggitt Amy.Suggitt@ks.gov	Yes
	For information purposes: Matthew Jones Matthew.jones@ks.gov Timothy Canfield. No	No
LA DEQ	Tramecha Rankins E: tramecha.rankins@la.gov 225-219-3247	Yes
	Paul Bergeron E: paul.bergeron@la.gov	No
MN	Windsor Molnar Windsor.Molnar@state.mn.us 651-201-3702	No
	Alternate: Lynn Boysen E: lynn.boysen@state.mn.us	Yes
NH	Brian Lamarsh (603) 271-2998 F: (603) 271-5171 Brian.M.Lamarsh@des.nh.gov	Yes
NJ	Michele Potter T: (609) 984-3870 F: (609) 777-1774 E: michele.potter@dep.nj.gov	Yes
	Alternate : Rachel Ellis E: rachel.ellis@dep.nj.gov	No
NY	Amy Steuerwald 518-473-0748 E: amy.steuerwald@health.ny.gov	Yes
	Alternate: Gretchen Welfinger Gretchen.Welfinger@health.ny.gov	Yes
	For Information only: Derek Symula derek.symula@health.ny.gov	No
OK	Taryn Hurley Taryn.hurley@deq.ok.gov (405) 702-1006	Yes
	Alternate: Ryan Lerch Ryan.Lerch@deq.ok.gov (405) 702-1020	No

OR	Steve Jetter T: 503-505-2672 E: steven.jetter@oha.oregon.gov	Yes
	Alternate: Lizbeth Garcia 971 865 0443 E: Lizbeth.garcia@dhsoha.state.or.us	No
	Included for information purposes: Ryan Pangelinan E: Ryan.pangelinan@dhsoha.state.or.us	No
PA	Annmarie Beach E: anbeach@pa.gov T: 717-346-8212	Yes
TX	Jody Koehler (512) 239-1990 Jody.Koehler@tceq.texas.gov	Yes
	Steve Gibson (512) 239-1316 Steve.Gibson@tceq.texas.gov	No
UT	Kristin Brown T: (801) 965-2540 F: (801) 965-2544 E: kristinbrown@utah.gov	Yes
VA	Cathy Westerman T: 804-648-4480 ext.391 E: cathy.westerman@dgs.virginia.gov	Yes
	Alternate: Shane Wyatt shane.wyatt@dgs.virginia.gov	No
NELAP AC PA and EC	Ilona Taunton Ilona.taunton@nelac-institute.org	Yes
EPA Liaison	Michella Karapondo Karapondo.michella@epa.gov	Yes
CA	Christine Sotelo Christine.Sotelo@waterboards.ca.gov	No
CA	Christopher Hand Christopher.Hand@Waterboards.ca.gov	No
AR	Brie Lusk brie.lusk@arkansas.gov	No
NV	Jasmine Curiel jcuriel@ndep.nv.gov	No
WV	Justin Carpenter justin.d.carpenter@wv.gov	No

Attachment 2 – Agenda for Meeting

NELAP AC MEETING – January 20, 2025
1:30PM Eastern
See Link Below

1. Roll Call

2. Review and Approval of the Agenda

3. Minutes review.

4. Review of Boston, MA Winter Forum Conference

5. Equivalency of TNI Assessments
    - Update?

6. Technical Specialist – Provide any comments to QMS?

7. Update of Mutual Recognition Policy

8. Roundtable Discussions

9. New Business

Attachment 3 – Summary of Comments on Volume 1 Module 4

To:
Michelle Wade (Chair)
Robert Wyeth (Program Administrator)

Please accept the comments attached that were prepared and voted on by the NELAP AC. Please let me know if you need any additional information.

I am still waiting for a few more votes before I can send the NELAP EC (LASEC) comments. I believe that they will be approved, but it may not happen until Monday.

Thanks,
Ilona

(Note – The Excel table sent with DRAFT minutes will be converted to a PDF and inserted here when posted.)