



Not the Big Easy: The NELAC Institute's (TNI) Journey to Recognize Non-Government Accreditation Bodies (NGABs)

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Roadmap

- The pressures of 2008
- TNI's Accreditation Body (AB) Task Force
- TNI's process to recognize NGABs
- Current NGAB recognition and accreditation activities
- Lessons Learned





The 2008 Crisis

- State ABs face financial stress, budget cuts, and financial scrutiny of operations.
 - No growth
 - Freezes
 - Mandated reductions
 - Travel restrictions





It Starts to Show...

- Some ABs are unable to provide services in a timely manner:
 - Application review
 - Initial and renewal assessments
 - Assessment reports
 - Approval of reciprocal accreditations
 - Review of PT data





It Definitely Shows...

- Laboratories are unable to secure needed accreditations.
- Some ABs stop granting primary accreditations to out-of-state laboratories.
- Out-of-state travel restricted or eliminated.
- EPA and non-NELAP states notice.





TNI's Response

- When in doubt...
 - Form a task force
- TNI Board charters AB Task Force in 2010.





AB Task Force

- Balanced representation of stakeholders
- Issued report in June 2011
- Developed multiple solutions to assist ABs in eight areas.
 - The last area considered focused on NGABs.





Recommendation on NGABs

- Develop process to allow NGABs to:
 - Offer accreditations that would be accepted by NELAP and non-NELAP ABs.
- Suggested that a NGAB could be a separate, but closely affiliated organization to TNI.
- Assigned a “medium” priority with a “long term” timeframe for implementation.





And Then...

- When in doubt...
 - Form another task force: AB Task Force II; focused solely on NGABs
 - Form another Workgroup: NGAB Workgroup established when AB Task Force II ends
 - Form another committee: the TNI NGAB Recognition Committee (TNRC)





Collaboration

- During the last stretch, the TNRC and the NGAB Workgroup held joint meetings to:
 - Complete an evaluation SOP.
 - Consider options for performing NGAB on-site evaluations.
 - Determine best location within TNI structure for TNRC and NGAB recognition activities.





Key Considerations and Decisions

- TNI would not become an NGAB.
 - Existing NGABs could apply to become recognized by TNI.
- Decoupled the recognition of NGABs from mandatory reciprocity.
- NGABs would not be members of the state ABs' Accreditation Council (NELAP AC).





More Key Considerations and Decisions

- NGABs would be evaluated for recognition following the same procedures used for state ABs.
- NGABs and state ABs would have and use different recognition and accreditation seals.
- NGAB recognition program would be self-supported.





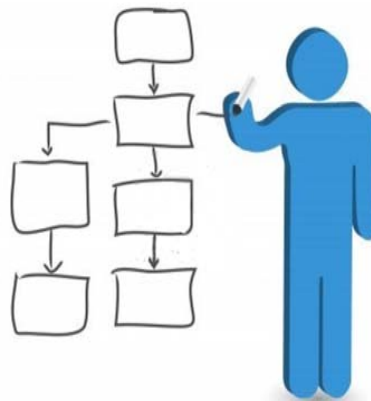
Location, Location, Location

- TNRC initially solely reporting to TNI Board of Directors.
- NGAB application and recognition activities were not strictly a new program.
- NGABs also recognize:
 - Providers under the Proficiency Testing (PT) Program.
 - Field Sampling and Measurement Organizations (FSMOs) under the National Environmental Field Activities Program (NEFAP).



What to Do?

- When in doubt...
 - Form a new program?
 - Oh no!
 - Restructure, of course.
 - Redefine functions.



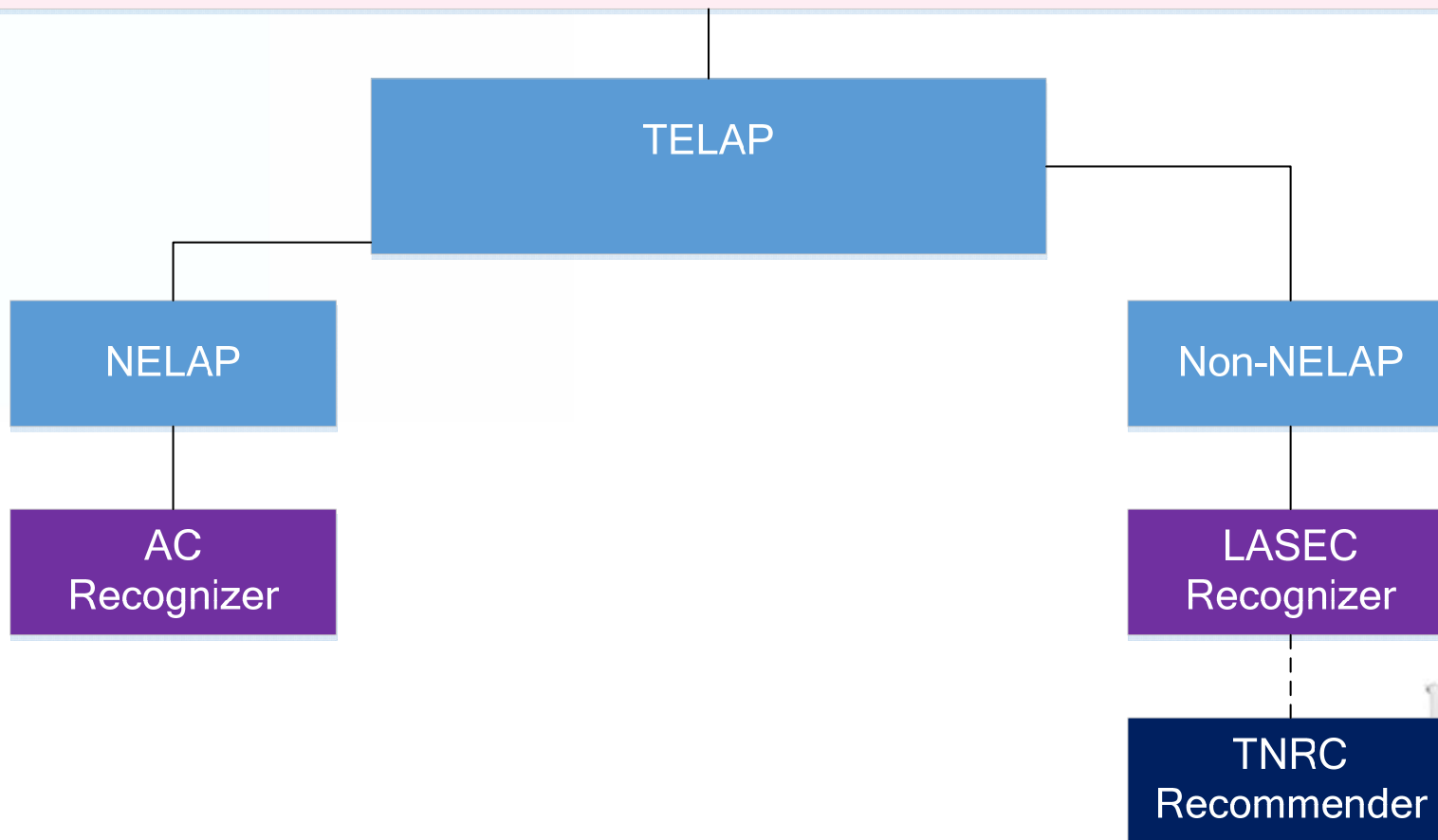


New

- TNI Environmental Laboratory Program
 - Government (NELAP) and non-government component
 - TNRC recommender of NGABs
 - Laboratory Accreditation System Executive Committee (LASEC) recognizer of NGABs
 - Accreditation Council manages state AB recognitions



Core Programs Division
Recognition Activities





Other Programs

- Similar interaction between TNR and a program executive committee:
 - TNRC recommends, Executive Committee recognizes.



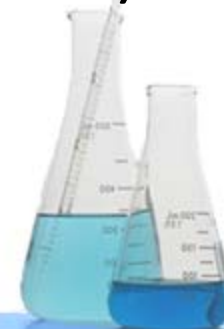
programs





And Then, There Were Three

- Seven years after the formation of the first AB Task Force, TNI has recognized three NGABs to accredit environmental laboratories:
 - American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA)
 - ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board (ANAB)
 - Perry Johnson Laboratory Accreditation (PJLA)





Consolidation

- TNI would like to consolidate NGAB on-site evaluation visits.
 - One on-site would cover evaluation for all programs for which an NGAB is recognized.
 - Started effort with a combined SOP for NEFAP and PT Provider recognition. Will eventually include environmental laboratory accreditation program.





And...

- NGABs have started accrediting environmental laboratories to the TNI Standard.
- Processed and completed an application from a new (to TNI) NGAB.
 - Expected recognition later this year
- Exploring harmonization of evaluation frequency between NELAP ABs and NGABs.





Lessons Learned

- Seven years is a nanosecond in the government and not-for-profit world.
- When people ask for help, there is no guarantee they will like your preferred brand of aid.
- One size does not fit all, but a plethora of variants conspires against welcoming another one.
- If you build it, maybe no one will show up.
- It's my party and I cry if I want to.





More Lessons Learned

- Privatization almost became the “p” word.
- A central negative can derail years of progress by just following club rules.
- There will always be an England and an Office of Drinking Water.
- All want parity, but no one admits being inferior.
- To reach the finish line, you must go through the groan zone.



And Now....



