

# Labs Helping Labs:

## The Story of A California Mentor Initiative

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Jacob Oaxaca

*Senior Environmental Scientist*

*California Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program*



# Objectives of this Presentation



THE STORY



THE PROGRESS



THE LESSONS

# The California Story

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- California was the worst program in the nation
  - We withdrew from TNI in 2014
- We have been fixing ourselves, but one big problem remains
  - Insufficient accreditation standard
- We are proposing the 2016 TNI Standard in our draft regulations

# Fear of TNI

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- Lots of resistance to the proposal
  - Labs fear closure because of the cost of implementing new quality system requirements
- We wanted to find a positive approach to calming fears
  - Speakers from other out-of-state TNI municipal labs
  - Education
  - Implementation assistance
- Our efforts had some effect, but opposition was still strong

# A Bright Idea

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- We envisioned partnerships between experienced labs and small labs who wanted to adopt a laboratory quality management system
- Mentorship has proven success and positive outcomes
- We just needed willing participants

# Off to a Slow Start

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- When conceived in 2017, there was little interest
  - Energy was being put into fighting against TNI instead
- We discussed with our technical advisory committee and posted on our website
- No takers

# Finally, a bite!

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- It wasn't until 2018 that ACIL approached ELAP about mentoring labs interested in implementing a quality management system
- ELAP facilitated the partnerships
  - Worked with mentors to establish goals and a plan
- The result
  - 7 mentees paired with an expert mentor on a journey to implement a quality management system in their laboratory

# Goals



Connect labs to the resources they need



Deepen understanding of the help our labs need



Implement quality management system in CA

# Participants

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## *Mentors*

- Bruce Godfrey, Montrose Environmental
- Diane Anderson, APPL
- Brad Meadows, Babcock Laboratories
- Nilda Cox, Eurofins Eaton Analytical

## *Mentee Laboratories*

- Five small municipal laboratories
- One medium public health lab
- One medium commercial lab

*Thank you to TNI and Jerry Parr for providing support*



**Your Mentor, I am**

# The Plan

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- Each lab had an initial onsite meeting with their mentor
  - Included a gap analysis against existing quality system, if any
- Collaborative development of timeline and plan
- Mentors delivered critical tools to mentees
- As-needed support via phone and email
- Assessment by CA ELAP

# The Tools

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2016 TNI  
Standard

TNI Lab  
Manager  
Training Course

TNI Small Lab  
Handbook

TNI  
Community

# Progress So Far

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- 5 of 7 labs are implementing with the TNI quality management system
  - It took them less than a year
  - None added staff because of TNI
- 2 are still pending our assessment
  - We anticipate being able to assess them within the next few months

**“TNI brought structure to my lab.”**

*“It does improve data quality.”*

*“It’s an insurance policy for the lab and the Water District.”*

*“I should have been doing this all along.”*

**“After implementation it got easier.”**

*“Doing a little bit at a time is important.”*

**“My data quality is better.”**

*“The paperwork was not as bad as we thought.”*

**“No problem at all”.**

*“Three years is plenty of time.”*

**“You don’t need to be running a lab if you can’t do this basic stuff.”**

*“It’s a pain, but I get why we do it.”*

**“The Quality Manual template was essential.”**

# Takeaways

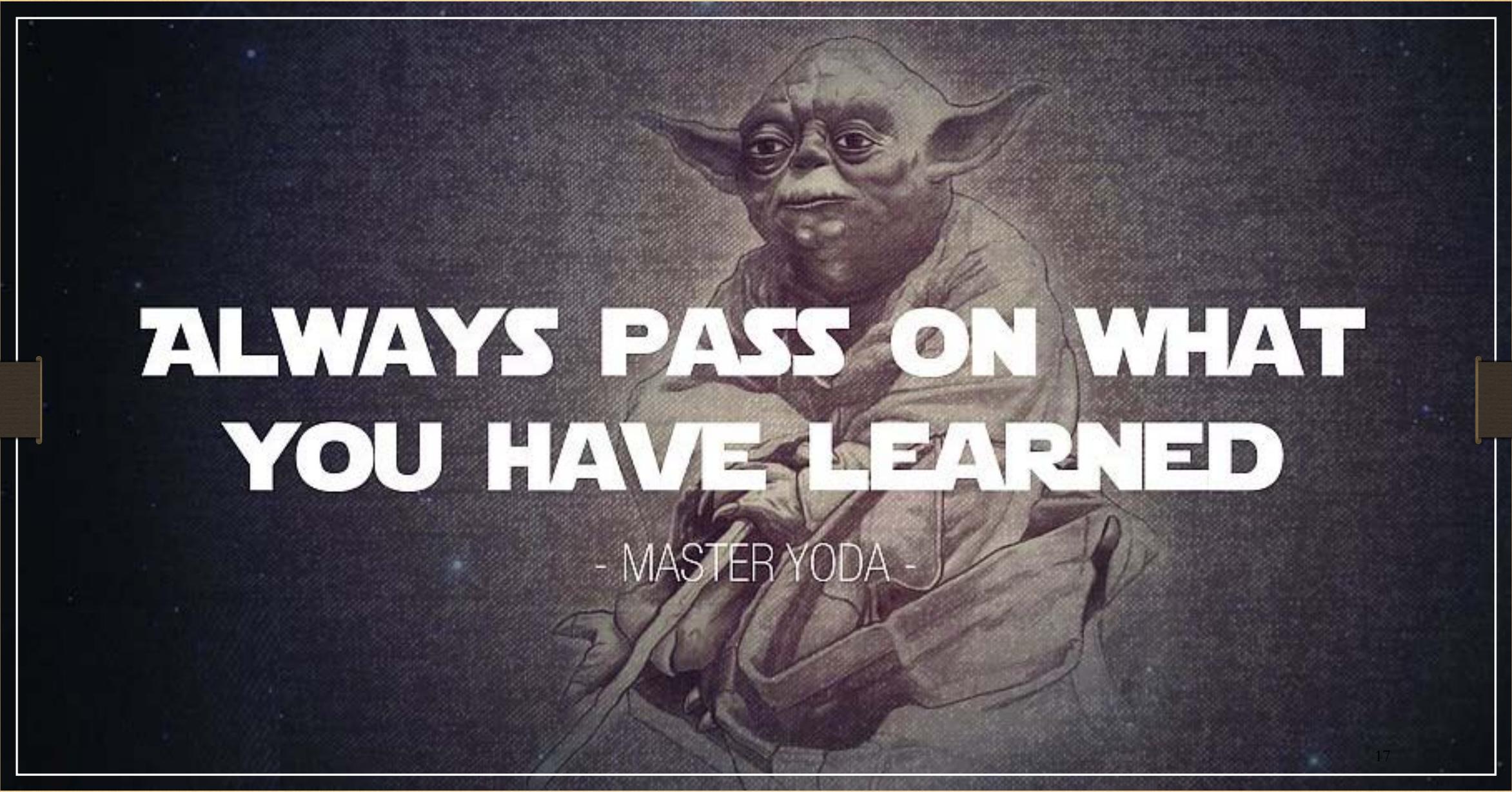
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- There is a wide range of abilities and starting points
- Small labs can implement the TNI Standard without hiring new staff
  - Having the right tools and resources is critical for success
- Attitude plays a big role

# Labs Helping Labs

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- Mentorship is an incredibly powerful tool
- The TNI community possesses the knowledge and experience to make this transition easier for other labs
- Another round of mentors just signed on to help 11 more labs
  - We hope to develop a program with you before TNI comes to CA in 2020



**ALWAYS PASS ON WHAT  
YOU HAVE LEARNED**

- MASTER YODA -