



OSAC Stakeholder Outreach Meeting: Summary Report

April 2021

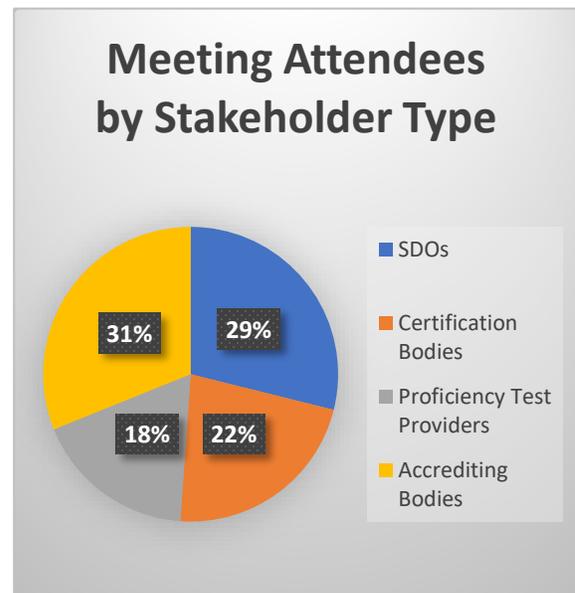
INTRODUCTION

On January 27, 2021, over 60 attendees participated in the Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) for Forensic Science's first Stakeholder Outreach Meeting. The purpose of this, and future meetings, is to formalize engagement with key stakeholder groups that advance OSAC's mission which is to strengthen the nation's use of forensic science by facilitating the development of scientifically sound standards and promoting the implementation of those standards throughout the forensic science community.

This initial meeting focused on **standards developing organizations (SDOs), proficiency testing providers, accreditation bodies, and certification bodies**. The goal of the four-hour meeting was to provide an opportunity for a dialog between these stakeholders and OSAC leadership to exchange ideas on how to better support the forensic science community. Through a series of facilitated discussions, meeting participants provided ideas, shared challenges, and identified opportunities for improvement related to the development and implementation of forensic science standards.

The feedback provided during this meeting was extremely valuable and will be used to help strengthen future collaboration opportunities with OSAC stakeholders as well as inform OSAC's future plans and priorities. The next outreach meeting is being planned for crime laboratory directors and will be held late spring. Future outreach meetings are also being planned for professional forensic science organizations and representatives from forensic science commissions and advisory boards.

This report provides summaries of the sessions and key takeaways from the meeting.





SESSION SUMMARIES

Welcome and Introductions

Laurel Farrell, Chair of the OSAC Forensic Science Standards Board (FSSB), welcomed the meeting attendees¹ and provided the opening remarks. OSAC was created to address a lack of discipline-specific forensic science standards. OSAC fills this gap by drafting proposed standards and sending them to SDOs, which further develop and publish them. The [OSAC Registry](#) contains SDO-published and OSAC-proposed standards that have passed a rigorous technical and quality review by OSAC members, including forensic science practitioners, research scientists, statisticians, and legal experts. OSAC encourages stakeholders in the forensic science community to use the standards on the Registry and implement them into their everyday practice.

Key Takeaway:

- Standards development and implementation is a community effort that requires coordination among many forensic science stakeholders.

Session 1: Standards Developing Organizations

SDOs are organizations (including professional societies, industry and trade associations and membership organizations) focused on developing, publishing, and disseminating technical standards using a consensus-based standards development process. At this session, John Paul Jones II, OSAC Program Manager, facilitated a discussion with attendees, representing four SDOs, to hear how OSAC's standard-related activities have impacted the SDO standards development process. Attendees also discussed current activities and new initiatives at their organizations related to forensic science standards development and advancement.

Key Takeaways:

- Additional education about the SDO process and the terminology used in standards development is needed by the forensic science community.
- An integrated approach to standards development, involving participation from OSAC and SDO members, is necessary. For example, SDO members should be encouraged to join OSAC efforts and OSAC members should participate in SDO activities.
- With OSAC's new streamlined structure and processes, the hope is that high-quality draft standards will get to SDOs more efficiently. The impact of OSAC's improved structure and process changes, however, is yet to be determined.
- Continued communication and engagement between OSAC and SDOs are needed to advance standards development and implementation.

¹ See Appendix 1 for a list of the meeting attendees by organization.



Session 2: Certification Bodies & Proficiency Testing Providers

Certification bodies confirm that an individual has acquired and demonstrated specialized knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs). Proficiency testing (PT) providers supply the appropriate testing materials (the characteristics of which are not known to the participants) to forensic science service providers in order to verify that its operations are effective, and the quality of the work is being maintained. At this session, JP Jones facilitated a discussion with attendees, representing seven certification bodies and four proficiency testing providers, to better understand the familiarity these stakeholders have with OSAC draft standards, if they have incorporated standards into their programs, and the gaps that exist in standards that could better support certification and proficiency testing needs.

Key Takeaways:

- Individuals seeking certification are evaluated based on their specialized knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs), not whether they know the requirements of certain standards. As such, while certification bodies are aware of forensic science standards, they are not referencing specific standards in certification examination questions.
- Some PT providers are taking specific standards into consideration when designing proficiency tests. These stakeholders noted that having an available list of PT-related standards would be helpful.
- There is room to grow and improve relationships between OSAC and these stakeholder groups.

Session 3: Accreditation Bodies

Accreditation bodies provide third-party evaluation of a laboratory's management system for conformance to accreditation requirements and competence to perform the services provided. JP Jones facilitated the final discussion with attendees, representing six accreditation bodies, to hear if forensic science service providers are adding standards to their standard operating procedures and scope of accreditation and to better understand the current challenges with auditing to discipline-specific forensic science standards.

Key Takeaways:

- Many forensic science service providers are not implementing standards because there is not a requirement to do so.
- Standards implementation is a heavy lift – there is a financial burden (e.g., maintaining laboratory equipment, accreditation costs) and other resource obligations (e.g., time taken away from case work for additional training and audits).



- Many other industries incorporate specific standards as published, usually test methods, into their scope of accreditation under ISO 17025. The forensic science field, however, is not familiar with this type of model (i.e., forensic science service providers are audited to their own standard operating procedures). Therefore, more awareness and education about how the forensic science accreditation process is currently executed versus how it is performed in other industries would be helpful. This further understanding may provide insight on whether the forensic science industry can incorporate other valuable quality efforts from external industries.
- Additional assessors and training will be needed for assessors to learn and be able to audit against discipline-specific forensic science standards that are being promoted by OSAC.
- Standards development and implementation takes time. As a community, we are trying to get forensic science standards in place. Once they are in place, it will take time to implement them and advance the field. A clear path forward has not been identified, and a long-term plan for implementation is needed.

Next Steps

OSAC and the FSSB have identified the following action items from this Stakeholder Outreach Meeting and are working to address them:

- Develop various training resources related to standards and the development process.
- Work with stakeholders to ensure proposed standards are being drafted in the SDO's required format.
- Enhance the OSAC Registry webpage to provide more public awareness that an OSAC Proposed Standard may be revised during the SDO process and include a link to the name of the SDO that will be working on each OSAC Proposed Standard on the Registry.
- Provide additional information on standards that are in development or planned for development to aid these stakeholders
 - **COMPLETE** – OSAC has made this information available on its website. To see a list of the standards under development or planned for development, see the OSAC Standards Activities on the [OSAC website](#) or visit the [OSAC Work Products](#) webpage.
- Encourage all meeting attendees, or their organizations, to receive the [OSAC Standards Bulletin](#).
 - To receive the Standards Bulletin and other OSAC updates, [join our mailing list](#).
- Identify an [OSAC Preferred Term](#) for practitioner/examiner/analyst/technician/scientist to bring consistency to standards being published.
- Evaluate the role that OSAC should play in the development of “checklists” and/or examples to support standards on the OSAC Registry.
- Develop a long-term strategic plan for implementation of the standards on the OSAC Registry.



Appendix 1 – Meeting Attendees by Organization

Standards Developing Organizations

- AAFS Standards Board (ASB)
- American Dental Association (ADA)
- American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM)
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO) (U.S. Technical Advisory Group)

Certification Bodies

- American Board of Criminalistics (ABC)
- American Board of Forensic Toxicology (ABFT)
- Association of Firearms & Tool Mark Examiners (AFTE)
- International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI)
- International Association of Coroners & Medical Examiners (IACME)
- International Association for Identification (IAI)
- International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN)

Proficiency Testing Providers

- Collaborative Testing Services (CTS)
- College of American Pathologists (CAP)
- Forensic Assurance
- Ron Smith and Associates

Accreditation Bodies

- A2LA
- American Board of Forensic Toxicology (ABFT)
- ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB)
- International Accreditation Service (IAS)
- National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME)
- National Volunteer Laboratory Accreditation Program (NVLAP)
- Perry Johnson Laboratory Accreditation Inc. (PJLA)

Other Organizations

- American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS)
- Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations (CFSO)
- OSAC Forensic Science Standards Board (FSSB) members
- OSAC FSSB Outreach Task Group members
- National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)