



Scientific & Technical Review Panels: FAQs

A major change in OSAC 2.0 is that the technical review of standards will happen earlier in the process, before they are sent to an SDO. Independent scientific and technical review panels (STRPs) will be established for each standard with the goal to provide: 1.) initial feedback to the drafting subcommittee on suggested improvements to the standard, and 2.) a final review of the revised standard that will result in a final report on the technical merit of the standard.

Want to know more about the new STRP process? Check out these FAQs for more information.

What standards need to go through the STRP process?

Standards that cover the following topics will need to be evaluated by an STRP:

- Method development
- Method validation
- Methods, practices and procedures
- Quality assurance
- Reports and testimony

What type of expertise is included on an STRP?

STRP members will consist of forensic science practitioners, scientific researchers, statisticians, human factors, legal and quality experts depending on the topic of the standard.

How are panel members selected?

Panel members will be selected through FSSB, SAC and SC recommendations, NIST staff suggestions, and from the OSAC application database. Members will be appointed to a panel for a finite period to complete their task and are not given a “term” as an OSAC member.

The OSAC Program Office (OPO) has responsibility for selecting the panel members and the chair. The current practice is to select the chair first and leverage their knowledge to select the other panel members. The FSSB does not have authority to approve or disapprove panel members. They can, however, express a concern with an individual (2/3 vote is needed) and OPO will select a replacement.



How are draft standards evaluated?

The FSSB developed *Instructions for Reviewers* which in the new 2.0 process, replaces the Technical Merit worksheet. This is the criteria to which standards will be evaluated. Not all elements will apply to all standards. Subcommittees should familiarize themselves with this document and its contents for aiding in standards development.

What is the STRP process?

The role of the STRP will be to discuss and assess a standard's scientific and technical merit and provide suggestions for improvements *before* it is placed on the OSAC Registry as an "OSAC Proposed Standard" and submitted to an SDO. STRP members will share their assessment by providing interim feedback back to the drafting subcommittee. The subcommittee can then make updates to the standard based on the STRP comments and will send it back to the STRP for another review. The SC may decide, however, not to revise the standard and move it to the open comment period. If the does vote to move the standard forward, the STRP will issue a final report that is shared with the public during the 30-day open comment period.

What is being piloted?

The OSAC Program Office (OPO) is piloting four different draft standards that cover a range of disciplines (e.g., DNA, toxicology, friction ridge, and facial identification.) These pilots will assist OPO in refining the steps needed for identifying and appointing panel members, testing the *Instructions for Reviewers*, exploring processes for discussing and reaching consensus and suggesting improvements back to the subcommittee, and developing the final report. All four pilot panels have been created and the initial kick-off meetings were held. We've learned some valuable lessons through these initial pilots and look forward to continuously improving the STRP process.

What standards are in the STRP queue?

Currently, OPO has received four documents (three biology standards and one seized drug standard) that will need to go through the STRP process. Creating a panel takes several weeks, so please let OPO know if your unit has documents that are ready for the STRP step in the [Registry approval process](#). OPO is developing an internal intake form where suggestions for panel members (e.g., from the SAC, FSSB, task groups, etc.) can be managed.



Please encourage your colleagues to complete an [OSAC application](#) (and check STRP!) if they would like to contribute to OSAC in this new role.

What level of the OSAC interests you as a volunteer? *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Interdisciplinary Committee ⓘ
- ☐ Scientific and Technical Review Panel ⓘ
- ☐ Subcommittee ⓘ

Have additional questions?

Visit the [Scientific & Technical Review webpage](#) for more information.

You can also email the OSAC Program Office (forensics@nist.gov) or Karen Reczek (karen.reczek@nist.gov) with any questions.