

NVLAP Assessor Training

Working for NVLAP

Presentation Overview

- Assessor roles
- Assessor assignment process
- NVLAP business practices
- Confidentiality, impartiality, and ethics

Assessor Definitions

- Lead Assessor:
 - Assessor who is given overall responsibility for specified assessment activities.
 - *Note: May also conduct the assessment of the management system and/or act as a technical assessor during the same assessment.*

Assessor Definitions

- Technical Assessor
 - Assessor who conducts the assessment of the technical competence of the laboratory for specific area(s) of the desired scope of accreditation.
 - *Note: May also conduct assessment of the management system, if deemed competent to do so.*

Assessor Definitions

- Technical Expert
 - Person assigned by NVLAP to provide specific knowledge or expertise with respect to the scope of accreditation to be assessed; is a team member who provides technical advice but is not considered as an assessor unless he/she has the relevant assessor qualifications and training

Assessor Definitions

- Technical Expert
 - *Note: Must always be accompanied by a qualified assessor; i.e., closely supervised throughout the assessment activity.*

Assessor Functions

- Lead Assessor
 - Primary Functions
 - Conducts assessment of the laboratory's management system
 - Leads and coordinates activities among team members
 - Provides advice to assessment team and information to laboratory on policies and requirements of NVLAP and regulations, if applicable

Assessor Functions

- Technical Assessor
 - Primary Functions
 - Conducts assessment of technical competence in specific areas of testing or calibration
 - Provides technical expertise *

**Does not equate to providing technical solutions to the laboratory*

Assessor Functions

- Technical Expert
 - Primary Functions
 - Provides technical expertise, such as proficiency testing, review of uncertainty analyses, and review of technical nonconformities

Assigning Assessors

- Labs are assigned based on
 - Availability
 - Convenience (geographic)
 - Test method coverage
 - Assessor's current backlog
 - Workload request
 - History of assessors at lab
- Assignments occur quarterly, in sync with renewal cycles.

Notification of On-Site Assignment

- Assessors are initially notified of their assignments by (1) receipt of on-site package, (2) communication prior to sending of package from program manager.
- On-site package contains
 - Lab's application package
 - Information from last on-site assessment (on-site report, nonconformity responses & evaluations)
 - Other pertinent information (e.g., PT results, technical issues, important emails).

NVLAP business practices: Acronyms and buzzwords

- CRADA: Cooperative Research and
Development Agreement
- UTRS: Universal Technical Resource
Services, Inc.
- NIS: NVLAP Information System
- Portal: Web-based interface to NIS

Transfer of electronic information

- Laboratories will be submitting application information through portal
- NIST email system has a file size limit
- Using Secure File Transfer System (NFILES)
- Next phase of NIS will have assessor portal

Performing assessment-related work

Do:

- Get confirmation from Program Manager before contacting a lab
- Copy Program Manager on communications with lab regarding assessment activities (e.g., document review, assessment agenda, etc.)

Don't:

- Do any work or buy tickets without a contract
- Copy NVLAP on communications with lab regarding logistics (e.g., travel arrangements, logistics, etc.)

Read the directions...

- Document review and draft agenda at least two weeks before assessment
 - Contact the lab to confirm that you have the latest and greatest before doing the review
- Confirm arrangements with team and lab 2-5 days prior
- Complete all required forms
- Submit deliverables to NVLAP ASAP
(As Soon As you want Paid)

Submission of documents and deliverables

Document/Deliverable	Send to	Issues
Estimates/quotes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">NVLAP Program Manager if using UTRSNIST procurement if in response to a solicitation	Make sure you are clear on the stage of the process before incurring any expenses
Assessment report documents	nvlap@nist.gov or NFILES if too large to email	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Include signed documentsSend separately from invoice
Invoice	tessa.beavers@nist.gov or sherrie.miller@nist.gov	Send separately from assessment report If unsure, cc: nvlap@nist.gov
On-site follow-up	NVLAP Program Manager	Do not communicate directly with lab after assessment unless instructed

Assessor records

- Update us by email to nvlap@nist.gov with any changes to email, address, employment status, etc. as soon as possible
- This includes reviewing and updating current biographical sketch on a regular basis
- Biographical sketch template is available under Assessors dropdown at www.nist.gov/nvlap

Confidentiality: Requirements for Assessors in ISO/IEC 17011

- The accreditation body (AB) shall require all personnel to commit themselves formally . . . to comply with the rules defined by the AB.
- The commitment shall consider aspects relating to confidentiality and to independence from commercial and other interests, and any existing or prior association with CABs (i.e., labs) to be assessed. (ISO/IEC 17011:2004, 6.1.4)

How do we meet this requirement?

The **NVLAP Declaration** addresses:

- compliance with NVLAP policies, procedures, and rules
- confidentiality
- consultancy
- impartiality
- conflict of interest and prior associations with labs

NVLAP Declaration and other forms used by assessors are located on the NVLAP website



NVLAP DECLARATION (for NVLAP staff, assessors, and technical experts)

This is to acknowledge that I understand my responsibilities as a representative of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and the National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program (NVLAP) in carrying out my duties.

I hereby commit myself to the following:

- I agree to comply with the policies, procedures, and rules set forth by NVLAP while working for or on behalf of NVLAP.

I agree to maintain my awareness of NIST Handbook 150, ISO/IEC 17025, ISO/IEC 17011, and other appropriate requirements documents.

- I agree to maintain confidentiality of all information relating to applications, assessments, and accreditations of laboratories. I will hold in strict confidence all information, proprietary or otherwise, obtained during on-site assessments of laboratories. I agree to maintain this confidentiality even after I am no longer working for or on behalf of NVLAP.

I understand that I may reveal information about individual laboratories only to NVLAP, the laboratory itself, and members of a NVLAP assessment team or NVLAP review panel.

- I agree not to offer consultancies or services to laboratories that might compromise my impartiality during any phase of the accreditation or decision-making process.
- For each laboratory about which I obtain information, I agree to be free of any commercial or financial interests or other pressures or conflicts of interest that might cause me to act in other than an impartial or nondiscriminatory manner.

For each laboratory about which I obtain information, I agree to keep NVLAP informed, in a timely manner, of any activities, affiliations, or relationships that might compromise my adherence to commitments made in this declaration. This includes informing NVLAP of any prior association with any laboratory to be assessed or evaluated.

For employees of the Executive Branch of the U.S. Federal Government:

- I am aware of the rules for employee responsibilities and conduct as set forth in The U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, 5 CFR Part 2635, *Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch*.

Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____

Consultancy and Impartiality

- What is consultancy?
 - Participation in any of the activities of a laboratory subject to accreditation (ISO/IEC 17011:2004, 3.11)
- Examples:
 - preparing or producing manuals or procedures for a lab
 - giving specific advice or training towards development & implementation of a lab's management system and/or operational procedures
 - telling a lab *how* to resolve a specific nonconformity
 - promoting specific vendors and/or their products or services

More on Consulting & Impartiality

- Nothing shall be said or implied that would suggest accreditation would be simpler, easier, faster or less expensive if any specified person or consultancy were used (ISO/IEC 17011: 2004, 4.3.6).
- It's okay to provide generic (i.e., not lab-specific) advice/training to groups of labs.

Safeguarding Confidentiality

- NVLAP's policy is to protect the confidentiality of all information obtained during the assessment process.
- NVLAP may not disclose information about a particular lab without the lab's written consent (except where required by law).
- Confidentiality is essential!

Information to Keep Confidential

Confidential information includes:

- Assessment paperwork and electronic files
- Discussions about the assessment, whether they take place on-site or afterwards with team members or NVLAP staff
- Names of labs that you assess and when you assess them
- Proficiency testing results

How to Protect Information

- Breaches of confidentiality are serious!
- Precautions include:
 - Using an email address that is not shared by others (including family members)
 - Keeping lab-related information out-of-sight and locked when not in use
 - Returning or destroying materials when they are no longer needed

Conflict of Interest

- It is the assessor's responsibility to advise NVLAP **before the on-site** of any real or perceived conflict of interest with an assigned laboratory (see Declaration).
- Examples include past connections with a lab, competitive position between assessor and lab, financial interest of family member.

Ethical Concerns – Q & A

- May the lab pay for my lunch?
 - Plan to pay for all meals; however, the provision of an inexpensive lunch is acceptable if it is the lab's customary practice for visitors.
- What should I do if the lab presents me with a gift?
 - A small gift or token of appreciation may be accepted if not excessive in value (e.g., company marketing items such as a pen or a mug).

Ethical Concerns – More Q & A

- Who do I contact if I am uncomfortable and not sure what to do?
 - Discuss with Lead Assessor, or call your NVLAP Program Manager.
- You can always tactfully decline what is being offered.
- Common sense and awareness of usual business practice within the culture is the best guide.

In a Nut Shell . . .

Avoid any situation
that might be
construed as undue or
improper influence
upon assessment
findings



Confidentiality Q & A

- You save your assessor reports on the hard drive of your laptop. Your spouse uses that same laptop to check Facebook.
- Is this a breach of confidentiality?



Confidentiality Q & A



Yes. All electronic files containing assessment information must be kept secure and confidential.

Confidentiality Q & A

- You're on a team assessment. During lunch, you discuss with the other assessors the lab you assessed last month and where you're going next.
- Is this a breach of confidentiality?



Confidentiality Q & A



Yes. Even if laboratory personnel are not present, you should not discuss other assessments with anyone outside of the NVLAP staff.

Recent confidentiality issues

- Nondisclosure agreements with laboratories
- Labs using information from assessment reports in promotional materials