



## OSAC Stakeholder Outreach Meeting: Forensic Laboratory Leaders

### Summary Report

August 2021

#### INTRODUCTION

On May 27, 2021, the Organization of Scientific Area Committees ([OSAC](#)) for Forensic Science held its second Stakeholder Outreach Meeting. The purpose of these 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 technically sound standards and encouraging their use throughout the forensic science community.

This meeting focused on forensic laboratory leaders and other key decision-makers providing forensic services. It allowed an opportunity for this stakeholder group and OSAC leadership to exchange ideas on how to better support the forensic science community. Through a series of facilitated discussions, participants shared their thoughts about current challenges and identified opportunities for improvement related to forensic science testing, quality management and standards.

The collective feedback was extremely valuable and will be used to help identify future collaboration opportunities with OSAC stakeholders as well as inform OSAC's future plans and priorities. Additional Stakeholder Outreach Meetings are being planned with professional forensic science organizations and representatives from forensic science commissions and advisory boards.

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

## MEETING SUMMARIES

### Welcome and Introductions

Ray Wickenheiser, Vice Chair of the [OSAC Forensic Science Standards Board](#) (FSSB), welcomed the meeting attendees<sup>1</sup> and provided the opening remarks.

Twenty-eight forensic laboratory leaders, representing federal, state, local and private organizations<sup>2</sup> participated in the two-hour meeting (Figure 1). These forensic laboratory leaders represented over 15 states from across the country (Figure 2).

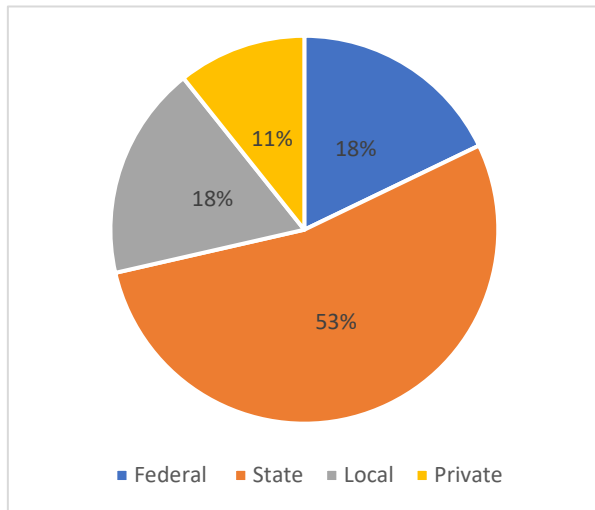


Figure 2. OSAC Stakeholder Meeting participants by organization type.



Figure 1. More than 15 states, indicated here by the orange dots, were represented at the meeting.

### OSAC Update

John Paul (JP) Jones II, OSAC Program Manager, provided a general introduction to OSAC, followed by updates on OSAC's standards activities, Registry growth, implementation efforts, and what the organization is doing to support stakeholders.

OSAC works to accelerate the development and implementation of high-quality, technically sound standards for forensic science. To carry out its mission, OSAC has over 470 members and 300 affiliates who work in forensic science laboratories and other institutions around the country. These volunteers have expertise in 22 forensic science disciplines, as well as scientific research, measurement science, statistics, policy, and law. They work together to evaluate standards for placement on the Registry and draft proposed standards that will move through the standards developing organization (SDO) process.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1 for a list of the meeting attendees.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 2 for a list of organizations.

As of this meeting, the OSAC Registry contained 53 standards, representing 15 specific forensic science disciplines. Hundreds of additional standards are in the development pipeline. OSAC encourages the forensic science community to use these SDO published and OSAC Proposed Standards, and 24 forensic laboratories have voluntarily declared that they are implementing, either fully or partially, the standards on the Registry. Some of these early Registry implementers include the Houston Forensic Science Center, Texas Forensic Science Commission, and Bode Technology. Additionally, seven forensic science professional organizations have written formal statements supporting standards development and Registry implementation. To better understand the current state of Registry implementation and what support is needed to improve it, OSAC launched a [Registry Implementation Survey](#) in June 2021. This is intended to be an annual survey and this first one focused on 46 standards that have been posted on the Registry through March 2021. The results will be shared in OSAC’s Fall Newsletter/Annual Report coming out in October 2021.

**Key Takeaways:**

- Stakeholder participation is critical for OSAC to continue its mission. OSAC encourages stakeholders to get involved in the standards development process:
  - [Apply to join OSAC](#) as member or affiliate.
  - [Provide comments](#) on standards.
  - Join the OSAC [mailing list](#) to stay informed of the latest forensic science standards activities.

**Facilitated Discussions: Needed Standards, Implementation, and Putting Standards into Practice**

Next, JP Jones led participants in a series of facilitated discussions to learn more about the challenges forensic laboratory leaders face related to standards, implementation, and quality management and to identify opportunities for improvement. Participants were asked specific questions related to three topic areas – needed standards, implementation, and how to promote the use of standards on the OSAC Registry in the forensic science community by the legal system. The discussion questions and key takeaways from each topic are below.

Needed Standards
<p><b>Discussion Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kind of standards would help your organization in its role as a forensic science service provider?</li> <li>• Is OSAC focusing on and drafting standards to meet your needs?</li> <li>• Of the standards that exist, are they too general or too prescriptive? Is OSAC striking the right balance?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Takeaways</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards relating to reporting, testimony, validation of reference materials, and laboratory management were identified as being needed.</li> <li>• ASCLD has established the <a href="#">Leadership Academy</a>, a training program for managerial personnel in forensic science laboratories, which will help to address the need for laboratory management standards.</li> </ul>

- Participants thought OSAC was making a concentrated effort to include a diversity of perspectives when drafting standards.
- The standards development process is a collaborative effort between OSAC, SDOs, and other stakeholders. To better reflect this collaboration, SDO published standards listed on the OSAC Registry should collectively be referred to as “Standards on the OSAC Registry” instead of “OSAC Standards” since OSAC is not the publisher.
- There was a divide among participants on the appropriateness of content in OSAC drafted standards. Some participants thought OSAC drafted standards were too general, while others thought they were too prescriptive. There is also an opportunity to improve the intent of standards since this is not always clear.

## Implementation

### Discussion Questions

- What challenges and concerns do you have related to implementing standards on the OSAC Registry?
- Is your organization using any tools or resources to help with implementation (e.g., gap analysis, audit checklists, etc.)?
- Are tools/resources needed? Should OSAC develop them?
- Besides submitting a Standards Implementation Declaration Form, how else can organizations let OSAC know about their implementation efforts?
- How can OSAC better communicate implementation strategies?

### Key Takeaways

- Some forensic laboratories 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).
- Clarification is needed to better understand how implementation will impact accreditation (e.g., Will a laboratory be audited to its standard operating procedures or to specific standards?)
- 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.
- It is important to ensure high-quality standards are available to the forensic science community. However, what happens when a standard is not available for a certain activity or topic? How do we address this and how might this be interpreted by the legal community?
- Support for standards implementation must come from leadership. Forensic laboratories are encouraged to incorporate implementation efforts into their strategic plans and objectives.
- Stakeholders are interested in having additional standards implementation tools and resources available. Some examples noted include:
  - Personal implementation stories – making available presentations from specific organizations and disciplines describing how they have implemented the standards on the OSAC Registry.
  - Gap analysis and risk assessment tools.
  - Implementation forms and checklists to help a laboratory document what standards are being used and why.

## Putting Standards into Practice

### Discussion Question

- Are your scientists being asked in court about OSAC or the standards listed on the Registry?

### Key Takeaways

- Generally, participants noted that their laboratory staff are not being asked in court about OSAC or the standards on the Registry. However, there were two cases – one related to DNA and another to forensic document examination – where experts were questioned in court about OSAC and standards.

## Next Steps

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

- OSAC's FSSB Reporting and Testimony Task Group will provide recommendations to the FSSB on needed standards related to reporting and testimony – IN PROGRESS.
- The OSAC Program Office will review OSAC 2021-S-0014, *Standard for Reference Collections in Wildlife Forensic Biology: Genetics and Vertebrate Morphology* to determine if it may be applicable to other disciplines as a resource related to the validation of reference materials – IN PROGRESS.
- The OSAC Program Office will work with ASCLD to see how to promote ASCLD's Leadership Academy – IN PROGRESS.
- OSAC FSSB to consider facilitating another stakeholder meeting with laboratory directors and accrediting bodies to better understand how implementation will impact accreditation – IN PROGRESS.
- FSSB Outreach & Communications Task Group will discuss how to better articulate the value proposition for implementation – NOT YET STARTED.
- The OSAC Program Office will develop resources on how to create an implementation culture NOT YET STARTED.
- The OSAC Program Office will revise the Standards Implementation Declaration Form to include options to note "partial" and "full" implementation – COMPLETE.
- FSSB will continue supporting OSAC units to develop other work products, in addition to standards – ONGOING.
- The OSAC Program Office will revamp the OSAC Registry Implementation webpage and share/develop slides related to implementation – NOT YET STARTED.

## Appendix 1 – Meeting Attendees

### Forensic Laboratory Leaders

- Barry Baker, Acting Director, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Cheryl Carreiro, Assistant Director, Connecticut Forensic Science Laboratory, Connecticut State Police
- Dave Fluty, Executive Director of U.S. Customs and Border Protection Laboratory and Scientific Services
- Debbie Glidewell, Director, Defense Forensic Science Center (DFSC) – U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Laboratory (USACIL)
- Wesley Grose, Crime Laboratory Director, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
- Linda Jackson, Director, Virginia Department of Forensic Science
- Steven Johnson, Supervising Criminalist – Firearms and Latent Print Comparisons, Washoe County Sheriff
- Eva King, Quality Assurance Director, Wisconsin State Crime Laboratories
- Catherine Knutson, Deputy Superintendent – State Lab System Director, Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension
- Rick Lautenbach, Forensic Services Laboratory, Target
- Keith Lawyer, Forensic Services Bureau, Assistant Bureau Chief, New Jersey State Police
- Patricia Manzollillo, Laboratory Director, U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) Forensic Laboratory Services
- Jennifer McNair, Chief of the Utah Department of Public Safety Bureau of Forensic Services, Utah Department of Public Safety
- Scott McWilliams, Crime Laboratory Director, Wyoming State Crime Laboratory – Division of Criminal Investigation
- Robert Middleberg, Senior Vice President of Quality Assurance and Regulatory Affairs, NMS Labs
- Barry Miller, Bureau Director, California Department of Justice Bureau of Forensic Services
- Brady Mills, Chief of Crime Laboratory Division, Texas Department of Public Safety
- Jeff Nye, Director of Michigan State Police Forensic Science Division
- Joseph Petersack, Director New Jersey State Police Office of Forensic Sciences
- Michal Pierce, Quality Director, Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences
- Eric Pokorak, Acting Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- Mark Powell, Crime Laboratory Manager, San Francisco Police Department
- T.L. Price, Laboratory Director, Kansas Bureau of Investigation
- Robyn Quinn, Director, Crime Laboratory Division, Office of Attorney General (North Dakota)
- Kristin Sasinouski, Technical Leader, Bode Technology
- Stephanie Stoiloff, Commander, Forensic Services Bureau, Miami-Dade Police Department
- Jody Wolf, Director, Phoenix Crime Laboratory
- Dustin (Tate) Yeatman, Crime Laboratory Director, Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office

### **OSAC FSSB/Outreach & Communications Task Group Members**

- Karin Athanas, Outreach & Communications TG member
- Allison Getz, OSAC Program Office, Outreach & Communications TG member
- Melissa Gische, FSSB member
- Stephen Greene, FSSB member
- Steve Johnson, Outreach & Communications TG member
- John Paul (JP) Jones II, OSAC Program Manager, Outreach & Communications TG member
- David Kaye, FSSB Executive Secretary
- Sarah Kerrigan, Outreach & Communications TG member
- Karen Reczek, FSSB member and Outreach & Communications TG Chair
- Jeri Roper-Miller, FSSB and Outreach & Communications TG member
- Jeff Salyards, FSSB member
- Donna Sirk, OSAC Program Office, Outreach & Communications TG member
- Mark Stolorow, Outreach & Communications TG member
- Chris Taylor, FSSB and Outreach & Communications TG member
- Ray Wickenheiser, FSSB Vice Chair and Outreach & Communications TG member

## **Appendix 2 –Organizations**

### **Federal Agencies**

- Defense Forensic Science Center (DFSC) – U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Laboratory (USACIL)
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) Forensic Laboratory Services
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

### **State**

- California Department of Justice Bureau of Forensic Services
- Connecticut State Police
- Crime Laboratory Division, Office of Attorney General (Bismarck, ND)
- Kansas Bureau of Investigation
- Michigan State Police
- Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension - Forensic Science Services
- New Jersey State Police
- San Francisco Police Department
- Texas Department of Public Safety
- Utah Department of Public Safety
- Virginia Department of Forensic Science
- Washoe County Sheriff (Nevada)
- Wisconsin State Crime Laboratories
- Wyoming State Crime Lab - Division of Criminal Investigation

**Local**

- Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences
- Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
- Miami-Dade Police Department, Forensic Services Division
- Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office
- Phoenix Crime Laboratory

**Private**

- Bode Technology
- Target
- NMS Labs