



U.S. Approaches to Laboratory Accreditation and Conformity Assessment - ILAC 2002

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Multiple U.S. Approaches

- **Multiple approaches for regulatory and procurement responsibilities**
- **No broad, cross-cutting U.S. Law on metrology, accreditation and/or conformity assessment**
- **Programs developed in response to specific U.S. Congressional mandates**
- **Desire to verify competence of laboratory to provide credible test data to comply with regulation or procurement action**

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Common Factors? Few

The approach to conformity assessment and laboratory accreditation is often determined by specific requirements in the legislation

Agencies select an approach determined by mandate and experience

No overarching requirement to use specific standards such as ISO/IEC 17025 or Guides 58, 61, 62, and 65

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Direct Accreditation by Federal Agencies

- **Dep't of Agriculture (USDA) accredits inspection programs for agricultural products, meat and poultry quality**
- **Dep't of Defense (DOD) accredits inspection programs for qualified military products**
- **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) accredits laboratories which test water quality and vehicular emissions**
- **Health and Human Services (HHS) accredits laboratories which monitor toxicology; Milk quality; Human specimens**

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External Accreditation Programs

- **EPA recognizes**
 - **A2LA and AIHA as competent to accredit laboratories to test for lead in environmental samples**
 - **NVLAP as competent to accredit laboratories to test for asbestos in materials used in schools**
- **OSHA recognizes**
 - **AIHA as competent to accredit laboratories to test for asbestos in workplaces**

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Additional External Programs

- **FCC recognizes**
 - **A2LA, NVLAP and any foreign accreditation body recognized under a government to government agreement to accredit laboratories to test for electromagnetic compatibility**
- **The Energy Star (EPA and DOE) program recognizes**
 - **NVLAP and any MRA partner to accredit laboratories to test residential lighting fixtures for energy efficiency**

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National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act (NTTAA)

- **Directs Federal Agencies to use consensus technical standards developed by voluntary consensus standards bodies**
 - if agencies do not use these standards, must explain their reasons to Congress
- **Directs NIST to coordinate Federal standards and conformity assessment activities with those of the private sector**
 - Goal is to minimize duplication and redundancy

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NIST NTTAA Role: Guidance and Coordination

- **Annual Reports on Federal Activities in standards and conformity assessment**
- **Conformity Assessment Guidance, Federal Register, August 2000**
 - Agencies to coordinate conformity assessment activities to eliminate unnecessary duplication and complexity
 - Encourage Federal agencies to consider NACLA
- **Work with regulators on specific issues related to conformity assessment and standards**
 - Strengthen awareness, participation

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Laboratory Accreditation

- **Historically, no central U.S. organization**
 - **Overlapping and redundant assessments**
- **National Cooperation for Laboratory Accreditation (NACLA) created in 1998,**
- **NIST MOU with NACLA recognizes process for recognizing competent laboratory accreditation bodies – can support Trade Agreements**
- **NACLA Recognition process provides framework for recognizing general technical competence and competence to accredit laboratories to specific technical requirements**

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Next Steps

- **Monolithic U.S. acceptance of one approach to conformity assessment unlikely**
- **Lessen duplication by assuring agencies that their regulatory and procurement needs can be met through greater coordination**
 - **Recognize agency mandates to protect health, safety and the environment**
 - **Provide evidence that accreditation can ensure accurate, reliable test and calibration data for the scope of a particular mandate**

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Challenge to ILAC

- **Consider developing procedures and methods (including checklists) that recognize competence to accredit laboratories in specific fields of testing**
 - **Analogous to current recognition for calibration and testing**
- **Consider provisions for including government officials in evaluation of accreditation bodies**
 - **Increase agency comfort with soundness of accreditation bodies to oversee laboratory competence**

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Challenge to Governmental Authorities

- **Understand potential benefits provided by competent accreditation bodies**
- **Realize potential contribution of partnerships between agencies and accreditation bodies to goal of “one standard, one test of conformance, world wide acceptance”**

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Challenge to All

- **Increase dialogue between accreditation community and government authorities**
- **Demonstrate value of accreditation as tool to enhance and oversee laboratory competence**
- **Minimize need for additional testing and calibration, both domestically and internationally, while ensuring competence**

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