

WEBINAR SCRIPT (17 Slides)

TITLE SLIDE

The AAFS is proud to announce a new Standards Development Organization (SDO) that is focused directly upon forensics. It is called the Academy Standards Board or ASB.

BREAK – SLIDE 2 (Presentation Approach)

Because there can be a lot of overlap in trying to describe the what and how of the new ASB standards development organization I've set up this presentation along the following approach in hopes of addressing the questions and issues that you may have. I'll give a quick background on AAFS for those who may not be familiar with the Academy, then talk about the structure of the newly formed SDO, how the consensus bodies function and their membership, and finally a work flow of how the process will go. There's a colorful flow chart at the end.

BREAK – SLIDE 3 (AAFS Background)

Before getting into the new Standards Board let me say a few words about the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. It was established in 1948. The AAFS is a multi-disciplinary professional organization that provides leadership to advance science and its application to the legal system. There are over 7,000 members who come from all 50 states and over 70 nations around the world. The objectives of the Academy are to promote professionalism, integrity, competency, and education; foster research, improve practice, and encourage collaboration in the forensic sciences. It does so via the *Journal of Forensic Sciences* (its internationally recognized scientific journal), newsletters, its website, its annual scientific meeting, the conduct of webinars and meetings, and now by sponsoring a Standards Development Organization dedicated to forensics.

BREAK – SLIDE 4 (AAFS and Standardization)

The AAFS undertook the establishment of an SDO function as part of its overall mission of leadership in the forensics fields and in response to needs identified by the legal system. As stated in the 2009 report of the National Research Council there was a clear need for improved quality assurance via standardization. The new SDO will work cooperatively with other forensic groups such as the OSAC and the FSSB.

BREAK – SLIDE 5 (AAFS Academy Standards Board)

AAFS established the standards development function as a wholly owned subsidiary company with the official title: the Academy of Forensic Sciences Academy Standards Board – or just ASB for short. The company – which is the SDO– is governed by a Board of Directors also called the Academy Standards Board.

Members are appointed from the membership of AAFS and report to the Executive Director of AAFS.

BREAK – SLIDE 6 (ASB Status)

The ASB is fully accredited for development of forensic-related standards by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). Accreditation means that standards developed by the Academy Standards Board may be submitted to ANSI to be approved as American National Standards. In order for this to happen, the ASB must conform to the policies and procedures of ANSI, including being regularly audited by them. The ASB Policies and Procedures were reviewed and accepted by ANSI as part of the accreditation process.

BREAK – SLIDE 7 (ASB Function and Operation)

The work of the ASB is done through ‘consensus bodies’ that are comprised of 7 to 25 individuals, representing different ‘interest categories’ as required by ANSI rules. These consensus bodies develop and vote on standards, technical reports and best practice recommendations in accord with the scope of work for that consensus group. The scope of the entire ASB includes any forensic standards in areas not otherwise being developed by another ANSI accredited SDO. The caveat is also an ANSI requirement.

BREAK – SLIDE 8 (ASB Secretariat)

The Secretariat (that’s me) is the link between the work of the Consensus Bodies and the ASB Board, and reports to the Board. The Secretariat is the operations manager of the SDO, ensures that it functions effectively and in accord with ANSI’s Essential Requirements, advises the Board on committee membership, reviews submissions for new or revised work and makes recommendations to the Board on these, reviews completed work prior to submission to ANSI, ensuring that documents conform to the ASB Style Guide. The Secretariat hires and manages support staff.

BREAK – SLIDE 9 (ASB Consensus Bodies - Structure)

As stated, the basic working group of the ASB are the consensus bodies. I’ll address membership in an upcoming slide. Consensus bodies are the work horses of the system. They are formed based on scope of work. Each body or committee operates according to ANSI’s Essential Requirements for balance, openness, lack of dominance, and due process. Each Consensus Body is limited to 7 to 25 members but depending on the work load may divide into subcommittees, each of which can also have 7 to 25 members.

BREAK – SLIDE 10 (Consensus Body- Function)

Each consensus body (or committee, if you like) is responsible for developing, reviewing, and maintaining standards under its jurisdiction. The consensus body is

the sole group responsible for the technical content of the standards, technical reports or best practice guides that it promulgates. The consensus body responds to all comments, and conducts its business online in a system provided for by ASB. We have contracted with Kavi for that system and have hired staff knowledgeable in the Kavi system.

BREAK – SLIDE 11 (Membership)

Membership on Consensus Bodies is free and the resulting standards are free of charge as well. Under ANSI rules, membership cannot be restricted to specific groups or expertise or on the basis of money. It is acceptable to limit the number of members on a committee. An accredited SDO must identify interest categories so that committees are balanced and avoid dominance. Therefore ALL interested persons, companies and organizations can apply for membership on one or more consensus bodies. The ASB reviews applications for membership and takes into consideration, among other things, the 'Interest category' of the applicant. 'Interest categories.' is a term that is used by ANSI to describe different types of participants in the standards development process. Each interest category includes a specific type of organization or person that would have an interest in the standard. This is to ensure the fair and equitable consideration of multiple viewpoints.

BREAK – SLIDE 12 (Interest Categories)

The ASB has established eight interest categories. Laboratories and/or Testing facilities which for forensic-related analyses generally in support of the Government; Government users – which can be Federal, state or local); Industry users, which includes private laboratories and testing facilities not performing the majority of their work at the request of Government; Producers; Consumer Groups; Academia; Subject Matter Experts; and General Interest. It may not be possible to have exactly equal representation among all of these categories in each Consensus Group, depending upon the subject area being addressed; however, the ASB will strive to get as broad a distribution of persons and organizations as possible to serve as members of each Consensus Group.

BREAK – SLIDE 13 (Application for membership)

Anyone interested in becoming a member of an ASB consensus body committee submits an application to the ASB. ASB is in the process of finalizing the format for applications and they will be available soon – so watch for that on the website! When an application is received it is reviewed by the ASB and approves membership based upon:

- + The need for active participation by each interest category;
- + The potential for achieving or maintaining balance and non-dominance in representation;

- + The extent of interest expressed by the applicant and the applicant's willingness to participate actively;
- + The qualifications of any representatives identified by an applicant organization, company or government agency; and
- + The qualifications of members who are considered subject matter specialists.

For example, an interested person or organization notifies the Secretariat if they wish to participate in a Consensus Group. The Secretariat works with the applicant to determine the best match of interest category to the person or organization. The Secretariat then forwards the application to the Board, which reviews all of the applications and selects the members of the Consensus Body. Key factors include level of representation in each interest category; minimizing the possibility of dominance; interest of the applicant; general qualifications – including any direct and material interest in the subject area addressed by the Consensus Group; and for Subject Matter Experts, the specific qualifications of the individual.

The ASB must ensure to the maximum extent possible that the ANSI procedures for openness, balance, lack of dominance and due process are met.

BREAK – SLIDE 14 (ASB Standard Style Format)

Before we get into the final piece – the actual work flow – let's view the output, that is, what an ASB standard looks like and must contain. ASB standards have a specific format. There must be a cover page, title page, foreword, acknowledgements and Table of Contents – as in most documents. The foreword contains a description of how the standard originated, if there have been any revisions since it was first issued and what those revisions addressed, and if there are any known patent issues related to the content of the standard.

The Scope is short and concise – briefly stating the target use and what the standard covers.

Normative References is a section that lists any standards or documents that are referenced in their entirety or in part as being required for conformance to this standard. For instance, if a standard refers to images being allowed in JPEG2000 format, the ASB standard does not have to fully specify the JPEG2000 format. It can include a reference to the appropriate document of the Joint Photographic Experts Group.

All terms and acronyms must be clearly defined. This section is designed to provide an easy reference for such terms.

The Requirements are the 'heart' of the standard. This is where the majority of the text will be. The exact format of this section may vary according to the specific type of standard being developed. However, sections and paragraphs should be clearly numbered for ease of reference.

Standards must identify if the content as a whole is suitable for certification purposes. Not all standards are written for certification. However, requirements within any standard should identify conformance indicators for the specific requirements. Conformance requirements are a major part of many standards. For instance, a particular type of test may demonstrate conformance. If there is not conformance requirement or one is not yet developed, this section shall state such.

Annexes to the standard can contain the scientific and operational rationale or may refer to an accompanying Technical Report developed separately by the consensus body. The annex section also includes bibliographical information and, if desired, additional non-normative terms.

Formats for the Technical Reports and Best Practices are similar, but do not have Normative References.

BREAK – SLIDE 15 (Overall Process)

Now we're ready to put all the pieces together and consider how the entire process works. It's pretty straightforward. A New Work Item Proposal is proposed (either by an existing Consensus Body or by an outside organization such as OSAC or organizations like the International Association for Identification or others), which states in general terms what the document would address and why it is needed and if anything else like it exists. Along with the suggestion for a new work item, an outside group may propose that a standard, technical report or best practice recommendation be based upon a document that they provide. Naturally, all copyright issues must be resolved before work proceeds.

If a base document is submitted, the Consensus Body will review the document to determine its acceptability as the basis for a standard, a technical report or a best practice guide. All document outputs of the ASB must meet certain basic requirements, such as the use of unambiguous, clear and concise language; conformance to the ASB style guide for documents; and for standards - conform to ANSI requirements on commercial terms and intellectual property.

ANSI and the ASB both have regulations in place to ensure that the development of documents is an open process. Meetings of the consensus body and all subgroups are open to all members and others having a direct and material interest. At least three weeks' public notice of regularly scheduled meetings of the consensus body shall be given. However, all voting is restricted to members of the Consensus Body.

A principle of both ANSI and the ASB is non-dominance by any single interest category, individual or organization. The goal is to ensure that there is a fair and equitable consideration of all viewpoints.

After the Consensus Body finishes working on the document, the Secretariat reviews it for style and process and submits it to ANSI for a public comment period of 45 days. For the last 30 days of that period, the Consensus Body is balloted and (hopefully) approves a document by 2/3 majority. The committee must respond to

negative comments from the public comment period and from the committee ballot and make a good faith attempt to resolve issues. If no comments are deemed to be of a nature that would require substantive revisions to the document, the Secretariat submits the final standard and any comment resolutions to ANSI and requests that the standard be approved as an American National Standard. If substantial changes are made to the document, a second public comment period may be necessary. Committee members are able to change their votes as well.

Technical Reports and Best Practice Recommendations don't require a public comment period or resolution of negative comments. ASB may choose to submit technical reports to be registered by ANSI.

When all is done, ANSI approves or registers the documents. ASB posts them for public access. There is no fee for the document.

BREAK – SLIDE 16 (Graph)

This slide shows the process in more detail. The orange section is the normal flow, right down to the submission to ANSI (in purple) and publication (in green). The yellow section illustrates that there is a process for revision if substantive comments are received during the balloting and, for standards from the public review period. Members of the consensus body have the ability to change their vote based upon the content of the revision in such a case.

Note that the entire process ends if the consensus body does not approve the document with a 2/3 majority. Note that ANSI has the right to reject a document for ANS approval based on lack of conformance to process, but that is rare. They are interested in ensuring that the voting was performed correctly, that there is proper representation in the consensus body and that the comment resolution process was followed, if applicable.

It looks complicated, but in most circumstances, it is very straightforward.

BREAK – SLIDE 17

If you have questions, please contact me, Brad Wing. I am best reached by e-mail. The address is BWing@AAFS.Org.

We at the ASB look forward to working with the Forensics community in developing standards and related documents.