

# OSAC Registry Implementation Strategy Sessions: Recap Report

## August 2019

The mission of the Organization of Scientific Area Committees for Forensic Science (OSAC) is not only to facilitate the creation of high-quality standards but to also encourage the wide-spread implementation of standards throughout the forensic science community. In August 2018, the OSAC's Forensic Science Standards Board (FSSB) published the [OSAC Registry Implementation Plan](#) which describes various strategies and stakeholders OSAC may leverage to promote and implement the approved standards listed on the OSAC Registry.

OSAC's initial Registry implementation efforts will focus on crime laboratories and other forensic science service providers. Mark Stolorow, an Affiliate Member of the FSSB Outreach and Communications Task Group, facilitated 30-minute meetings with each of OSAC's 25 subcommittees during the July 2019 All-Hands Meetings in Orlando, FL to help identify the benefits, challenges, perspectives and needs that crime laboratories and other forensic science service providers may encounter when implementing the approved standards on the OSAC Registry.

This report provides a snapshot of the current thoughts regarding implementation, summarizes the key insights collated from the subcommittee feedback and provides a roadmap for next steps in response to the following four questions:

- What is the value proposition for the forensic science community in implementing OSAC standards?
- How is implementation perceived by lab managers, quality managers, and by practitioners?
- What are the obstacles to implementation and what guidance can the subcommittee members provide to mitigate the challenges?
- If lab personnel perceive the implementation of standards to be competing with productivity and backlog reduction, how can we identify positive benefits of sufficient value to counter and succeed in addressing those concerns?

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### Summary of Key Findings: Implementation Insights

- Every subcommittee is unique in that each has a different set of challenges, resource needs, legal requirements, and states of their disciplines that impact their ability to effectively implement the standards on the OSAC Registry.
- Not all subcommittees feel a sense of urgency because they currently do not have standards on the OSAC Registry impacting their disciplines.
- People outside OSAC still don't know about OSAC and the standards that are available on the Registry and under development at SDOs.
- It's likely that we have underestimated the number of labs who have embarked on the implementation journey.
- Implementation is going to take time and an "incremental" approach is recommended to avoid implementation overload.

- We need to be proactive (vs. reactive) when it comes to implementation. The goal is to move from compliance to commitment (i.e., from mandate to collaborate).
- With the help of the QIC Task Group, provide clarification on partial implementation (e.g., What does it mean? Is it acceptable with accrediting bodies? How will labs be audited if they implement parts of standards?)
- **Value Proposition** – To address the criticism of the 2009 National Academies of Science (NAS) Report that forensic science disciplines lacked uniform standards, the standards on the OSAC Registry will serve as the highest quality forensic science standards endorsed by the field. Benefits to implementing the standards on the OSAC Registry include:
  - Improving consistency within and across disciplines,
  - Positively increasing the impact of admissibility and expert testimony in courts of law and,
  - Improving the overall quality of evidence analysis by reducing the risk of error.
- **Communication** – We need to spread the word throughout OSAC as a whole and to specific subcommittee members to champion implementation efforts. Opportunities for improvement include:
  - Reach out to labs/practitioners to tell us their current progress toward implementation (e.g., include a call to action in future In Briefs/Newsletters/direct email requests).
  - Develop fact sheets/printables/FAQs and share on OSAC website and provide:
    - Definitions/terminology (e.g., standards vs. guidelines)
    - List of Tier I-IV documents and define difference among tiers
    - List of Registry documents (at year end beginning with 2016)
    - Benefits of standards implementation
    - Evolution of SDO developed standards approved for the OSAC Registry
  - Write articles and press releases highlighting labs that have implemented standards on the OSAC Registry and post on website.
  - Develop PowerPoint slides/FAQs/How-to Guides and other tools that describe the implementation process that labs can share with management.
  - Highlight implementation efforts in social media communications.
  - Highlight implementation efforts/information in future Newsletters and In Brief communications.
- **Outreach** – We need to “professionalize” the industry and reach out to more SDOs, accrediting bodies, police departments, etc. to make them aware of what OSAC is doing.
  - Arrange for laboratory directors and quality managers of laboratories that have implemented standards on the OSAC Registry to write articles and travel to professional forensic science organizations and make presentations to tell their stories about how they succeeded in implementing OSAC standards.
  - OSAC could support paying for SC champions who would want to present at professional organization conferences.
  - Hold additional implementation workshops at large meetings/events to educate attendees, explain the Registry and gather more feedback and insight into the challenges and benefits of implementation.

- Participation by OPO as exhibitors at large meeting/conferences to share information about OSAC and standards on the Registry and how to implement (print and share the fact sheets/printables/FAQs mentioned above).
- Consider establishing an OSAC “consultation support” service to help organizations with implementation efforts.
- Recruit implementation facilitators to help other forensic science service providers through the implementation process.
- Compile a list of targeted stakeholders mentioned in the SC interviews as part of future outreach efforts.
- **Challenges to Implementation:**
  - Main challenges to implementation include a lack of resources (e.g., time, money, staff), however, there were many diverse challenges identified as well.
  - Laboratory management might view standards implementation as a priority too low for consideration. There is a lack of urgency with some jurisdictions and too few standards on the Registry that directly impact operations.
  - In most jurisdictions, there is no regulatory authority mandating implementation (i.e., If it’s not mandatory, who has the authority to make labs do it other than the laboratory director?)

### Roadmap – Implementation Next Steps

- Recruit implementation champions using the laboratories/organizations currently listed on the Implementer Tracker.
- Prepare champions/ambassadors for outreach (i.e., provide them with the tools, language, financial resources to help them spread the word).
- Prepare and prioritize the places for champions/ambassadors to target their outreach efforts:
  - Professional forensic science organizations
  - Law enforcement organizations
  - Forensic science laboratories
  - Thought leaders/innovators
- Use social media campaigns to enhance impact.
- Work with NIST’s Public Affairs Office (PAO) to develop a video/visual outreach.
- Work with PAO and graphic artist to develop the briefcase of selling tools. PAO might have some suggestions based on the outreach efforts being worked on for the new SI Unit Rollout.
- Share implementation efforts on OSAC website (e.g., make implementation tracker publicly available, identify labs with the ribbon, highlight the labs with a spotlight piece on website or literature; quarterly newsletters spotlight on what, who, where).
- Request and encourage continuous feedback to maintain current implementation tracking information for all forensic science service providers in the U.S.