

**OMB Control No. # 693-0031 – NIST Generic Request for Customer Service-Related Data Collections**

**NVLAP ASSESSOR QUESTIONNAIRE**

**FOUR STANDARD SURVEY QUESTIONS**

**1. Explain who will be surveyed and why the group is appropriate to survey.**

The National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program (NVLAP) accredits testing and calibration laboratories that comply with the NVLAP Procedures and General Requirements (15 CFR 285). Each laboratory undergoes an on-site assessment, which is conducted by one or more NVLAP technical assessors. In accordance with the international standard for accreditation bodies, ISO/IEC 17011:2004, *Conformity assessment—General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies*, clause 6.3, the accreditation body (NVLAP) must establish procedures for monitoring the performance and competence of the technical assessors involved in the assessment process. The Assessor Questionnaire is mailed to a laboratory following its on-site assessment to determine the laboratory's perception of the assessor's performance. This supports NVLAP's mission to deliver high-quality, value-driven accreditation services to testing and calibration laboratories. It also ensures that NVLAP fulfills the requirements of ISO/IEC 17011:2004 — with which compliance is mandatory for NVLAP's recognition under Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs) with ILAC (International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation), APLAC (Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation), and IAAC (Inter American Accreditation Cooperation).

**2. Explain how the survey was developed including consultation with interested parties, pre-testing, and responses to suggestions for improvement.**

Questions in this survey are based upon international auditing guidelines found in ISO 19011, *Guidelines for auditing management systems*, ILAC-G11, *ILAC Guidelines on Qualifications and Competence of Assessors and Technical Experts*, as well as the requirements for assessors set forth in ISO/IEC 17011, 6.2. The criteria that NVLAP uses for the selection and qualification of NVLAP assessors were also considered during the development of the survey. NVLAP believes that the survey questions satisfactorily cover the critical performance areas to be monitored and serve as a simple tool for the ongoing monitoring of assessor performance.

**3. Explain how the survey will be conducted, how customers will be sampled if fewer than all customers will be surveyed, expected response rate, and actions your agency plans to take to improve the response rate.**

All NVLAP-participating laboratories are sent an Assessor Questionnaire upon the completion of an on-site assessment. On-site assessments are conducted before an initial laboratory accreditation, during the first renewal year, and every two years thereafter. NVLAP rotates assessors among the laboratories; therefore, laboratories will not evaluate the same assessor after every assessment.

All laboratories who undergo an on-site assessment have an opportunity to complete the questionnaire; therefore, there is no sampling.

Questionnaires are distributed monthly to the laboratories receiving assessments during the prior month. A log is kept by NVLAP to track questionnaires sent and returned. The response rate is projected to be 50% to 60%, based upon the actual FY 2011 response rates. This rate is expected to continue, if not increase, as the laboratories are keenly interested in receiving high quality accreditation services so that purchasers and regulators will have confidence in their services.

Since this is an ongoing survey (i.e., a laboratory will receive a questionnaire for each assessor after every assessment), NVLAP does not wish to place additional burden upon a laboratory by sending it multiple follow-up requests. Instead, the use of the survey as a feedback tool is reinforced at the assessment exit meeting, which is conducted at the laboratory facility at the close of the assessment. Consideration will be given to distributing the questionnaire at the exit meeting, along with the on-site assessment report, as a means to improve the response rate. Web-based data collection methodologies will also be explored.

**4. Describe how the results of the survey will be analyzed and used to generalize the results to the entire customer population.**

The results are used for the monitoring of individual assessor performance. No statistical techniques are used to generalize the results to the entire assessor population. Returned questionnaires are reviewed by the respective NVLAP Program Managers (manager of the laboratory accreditation program for which the laboratory was assessed). Information is used to provide feedback, coaching, and training to assessors, as necessary. Questionnaires are placed in individual assessor record files and stored in a confidential and secure environment.