



February 17, 2023

NIST Special Programs Office
Dr. Sivaraj Shayam-Sunder

Dear Sir,

The members of the NIST Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) Forensic Science Standards Board (FSSB) write in complete support of NIST fully funding the Standards Development Organization (SDO) competitive grant directed by the Chips and Science Act of 2022. As you know, OSAC supports the development of non-governmental, consensus-based, forensic science standards that are so critical to forensic science community.

A very important component of the creation of standards is the development of American National Standards through a consensus-based process according to international American National Standards Institute standards and the National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act. The standards drafted by the OSAC go to SDOs for community public comment and adjudication in a balanced consensus-based process. Without the independent SDO organizations, the work of the OSAC cannot be completed nor effectively implemented. SDOs in the forensic science space that need federal support must be assisted by all available means, including grants, so that OSAC can complete its mission to support the development of standards.

The SDOs must be supported financially through either charging for the standards, requiring a subscription or having some other revenue stream. It is essential that these standards are widely available to forensic science laboratories, practitioners, officers of the court, and other forensic science stakeholders. As such, Congress has provided an avenue for NIST to support these SDOs to make the standards available at no cost to the community through providing the forensic science SDOs with public funding.

Utilizing this funding through NIST to provide SDO generated OSAC Registry Standards at no charge is a critically important initiative. Unfettered access to forensic standards not only supports public Forensic Science Service Providers, justice system officials and stakeholders, but other scientists, education programs and students, victims and civil rights representatives, and those impacted by the justice system. There has been a large investment in forensic science standards to improve the quality and transparency of forensic science; therefore, no barriers should exist for free, open access to these products. There should be no economic barrier to justice enabled by access to forensic standards. Forensic standards support equal and open justice for all.

We therefore request NIST to support and implement the grant for unfettered access to SDO approved standards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ray Wickenheiser". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ray Wickenheiser
Chair, Forensic Science Standards Board (FSSB), OSAC, on behalf of the FSSB