

General Guidelines and Information about Analytical Communities

Definition, Composition, and Development of an AOAC Community

An AOAC community is a group of individuals interested in a specific scientific or analytical area that networks, engages the international, federal, and state governments, academia, industry, business, and trade groups; identifies stakeholders and prioritizes issues of concern; and works to provide solutions to method-based needs and global problems.

In order to get recognition of their community, a request to establish a community needs to be submitted to the AOAC Board of Directors for approval. This request should include issues, key community stakeholders, and needs within the community. AOAC encourages each community to create a Terms of Reference (TOR) for composition, organization, and for overall policies and procedures ensuring a more formal and sustainable relationship.

Stakeholders are individuals that have a “stake” in the analytical interest of the community and are not necessarily providing funding.

Community's Role

Communities used to identify methods in need of validation and either submit validation fees or have those fees paid for by an industry or government contract. Their focus was not based on voluntary consensus or the overall global needs of the community. The focus was on individual methods.

AOAC realized the fee for method model was not meeting the needs of all communities. Part of our experience has shown that there is a need for consensus standards and method development. The communities benefit two-fold:

- By building a voluntary consensus-based standard, it addresses a global concern across the community. The types of methods will be examined based on the needs of the community. Multiple methods can be compared to the standard. The community has input on the expertise on the standard in which method is developed. Once the bar has been set, the standard, the method will be validated against that bar. Standards as well as the method will be published. There is a level playing field across all segments of the community, which helps to facilitate industry engagement. No one group gets priority over another. Community members will participate in every aspect of the process.
- Communities are provided the opportunity to invest in themselves and seek a return. It is an investment in good science. Individuals need to decide on

whether or not they have a “stake” in the community. Do the global issues identified impact my economy or my business? Is this issue large enough that it is worth investing?

The community model has evolved over the past few years. Government agencies can no longer subsidize the work of the communities. It must be a partnership whereby industry is engaged. There is so much work to be done that one segment of a community can not do it alone. There are many different pieces that make up a community puzzle and are impacted by various factors. Financial constraints, imports, exports, trade issues, and etc. all affect the community. AOAC must invest its resources wisely. The same economic factors that affect the community, also affect AOAC. Therefore, community leaders must be responsible for creating an organized group of individuals focused on identifying the needs of the entire community, recruiting and engaging community members to diversify, and identifying industry and government interested in partnering with the community.

AOAC’s Role and Support

AOAC values all of the communities and their members. Within the communities, AOAC believes that there are limitless issues and concerns. It would be impossible to tackle all of the issues at one time. AOAC needs the communities to identify their emerging needs and issues and to identify key stakeholders in which AOAC can leverage its networks to engage industry and government to help secure funding. In addition, AOAC has also initiated a Business and Liaison Advisory Committee (BLAC) to provide strategic guidance on business directions and liaisons with other organizations. The BLAC is the group responsible for recommending to the Board of Directors strategic business investments.

Communities can look to AOAC to help facilitate the volunteer consensus process and method validation. In return they receive benefits:

- OMA status or method approvals
- Standards development
- Outreach to AOAC Members
- Access to Journal of AOAC INTERNATIONAL (JAOAC)
- Papers published in JAOAC
- Contribute expertise
- Membership benefits
- Volunteer Expertise
 - OMB
 - Methods Committees
- Laboratory Proficiency Testing
- Professional Development
- Training

- Access to AOAC Sections
- Instant network of over 3,000 members worldwide

AOAC Resources

AOAC provides forums for members to network with other members in their community. Since 1884, the AOAC Annual Meeting and Exposition has been the venue for communities to network with current members and to encourage non-members to get involved. eCommunities is available at no cost for communities to reach out to AOAC Members. The AOAC allows communities to provide a web page for their communities to post information. *Inside Laboratory Management, ILM*, is another forum available to provide in-depth articles about community activity. Communities are urged to use *ILM* as means to provide information to all members. The Referee Section is currently being redesigned to accommodate community stakeholder group activities in support of voluntary consensus.

AOAC Members serve as a valuable resource. Communities can look to the Board of Directors, the Official Methods Board, the AOAC Sections, and the overall Membership for direction and advice. Within each of the AOAC groups, there are some success stories communities can learn from and gain valuable insight on developing the community into a thriving success.

AOAC Staff are available to help with your questions and provide advice on how to take your community to the next level; developing a stakeholder group. AOAC Staff is an excellent resource for stakeholder development. Over the last several years, AOAC has been quite successful in bringing groups together and providing solutions to global problems.

Role of the Official Methods Board (OMB)

After the AOAC Board of Directors approves the Terms of Reference (TOR) of the community, the OMB will appoint a liaison to the community. The OMB liaison to the community will facilitate communication between the two groups and update the OMB on issues of interest. The OMB should provide guidance and assistance to the communities on analytical issues and should provide direction on presenting these issues to the AOAC Board of Directors for consideration. If approved by the AOAC Board of Directors, the OMB serves as the conduit to help resolve the community's issue.