

THE FORESIGHT PROGRAM

Dr. Tom Witt

West Virginia University College of Business and Economics

Managers of scientific laboratories see themselves as scientists first, and managers second; consequently, they tend to devalue the managerial aspects of their jobs. Forensic laboratory managers are no different, but the stakes may be much higher given the importance of quality science to the criminal justice system. The need for training and support in forensic laboratory management has been recognized for many years but little has been done to transition the tools of business to the forensic laboratory environment. This session will introduce the audience to the FORESIGHT Project, an innovative way to use simple business metrics to evaluate forensic services, improve effectiveness and quality, and provide the supporting information to request or justify additional resources. The FORESIGHT Project is now being used in major forensic laboratories in the U.S. and Canada. The process involves standardizing definitions for functional areas of the laboratory and metrics to evaluate work processes, thereby linking financial information to work tasks and functions. Laboratory managers can then assess resource allocations, efficiencies, and value of services—the mission is to measure, preserve what works, and change what does not. The session provides results from Project FORESIGHT noting the use of its analytical tools to measure performance and how the participating laboratories began to change what didn't work, as well as learning best practices from their peers.