

Membership Committee

Names of Members Present: Angela Walla (Chair), Alexis Hamilton (Vice Chair), Michael Batz, Stephanie Brown, Caio Carvalho, Jessica Danzeisen, Dale Grinstead, Sheetal Jha, Caitlin Karolenko, Susan Linn, Aaron Pleitner, Robert Price, Andre Shaw, Jr., Sara Starck, Lily Yang.

Board/Staff Present: Pamela Wilger.

Meeting Called to Order: Sunday, July 26, 2026 at 3:00 p.m.

Minutes Recording Secretary: Alexis Hamilton.

Old Business: Last year's meeting minutes were unanimously approved with no additions. This year's meeting agenda was approved unanimously with no additions. The committee discussed its mission statement, and Committee Chair Angela Walla reviewed committee membership expectations to include attending semiannual meetings and subcommittee structure emphasizing targeted initiative work. Previous Membership Committee and Welcome Ad-hoc Committee initiatives were reviewed (e.g., Peer to Peer Program, annual meeting tip sheets, Pre-Conference Webinar).

New Business: The need for a membership status update with more granular data about members (e.g., career stage, career sector, domestic/international) was emphasized. IAFP Board Representative Pamela Wilger confirmed this was requested of the Board and expected by October after a software migration that may risk historical data. Two retention tactics were discussed: automatic renewal (need to know whether it is or would be opt-in or opt-out) and offering free six-month membership to conference registrants who are not members.

Brainstorming activity identified several recruitment ideas: targeted advertising for local/small businesses near annual meeting cities, tiered or discounted membership rates for those businesses/individuals for the year of the conference, cross-pollination with affiliate groups with adjacent interests (e.g., IFT, NEHA, CFP), and outreach to extension and county-level regulators who face funding barriers. Group membership packages (e.g., company packages),

multi-year memberships, buy-one-get-one student discounts, and swag/merch as passive recruitment tools were also proposed.

Leveraging recorded sessions as targeted advertising (free for attendees, paid for non-members) was suggested as a low-effort way to reach local businesses and lapsed members.

Benefits webinar series (highlighting journals, awards, leadership pathways, affiliate groups) was carried over from the Welcome Ad Hoc Committee as a priority, with a suggestion to keep it publicly accessible rather than behind a paywall to maximize recruitment impact. Ambassador program and social media collaboration with food safety content creators (particularly engaging students) was identified as a promising outreach strategy. Speed networking event modeled on "speed dating" proposed for the annual meeting and virtually, to help new and returning members find connections (seen as addressing the intangible "find your people" value that drives long-term retention).

Bylaws Committee is proposing cumulative membership counting so lapsed members who rejoin are not reset to new-member status, with DEI implications noted for career breaks and award eligibility. Survey of current and lapsed members agreed upon as a committee deliverable, with objectives to understand retention barriers, value perception, and demographic breakdowns by career sector; outreach to non-members also proposed via a public-facing version. Retention and recruitment framed as two distinct problems: retention signals a failure to deliver ongoing value (or potential resource availability changes), while recruitment requires targeted outreach. Automatic membership renewal was identified as the single highest-priority fix for lapse driven by inertia. Committee Chair Angela Walla and Committee Vice-Chair Alexis Hamilton will compile ideas and send to committee members as a survey in *IAFP Connect* to identify highest value activities for the upcoming year that committee members will rank for involvement.

Recommendations to the Executive Board:

1. Accurate, granular membership data are needed to identify target areas for improving recruitment and retention of IAFP Members. The Committee requests these data by October so that this committee can review and present the data at the next meeting to identify effective committee activities.

2. Support distributing a membership survey and facilitating focus groups are needed to identify barriers to membership, better understand the value and benefits members receive, and gather feedback from new members, long-term members, and individuals who choose not to renew their membership. This committee proposes to develop the survey, focus group protocols, and overall methodology, but it needs the Executive Board's assistance with dissemination and participant recruitment.
3. Clarity about budget requests and how IAFP prefers these be presented and approved is also requested. Many of this committee's recommendations and/or activities will require a financial investment (e.g., marketing costs) to effectively implement.

Next Meeting Date: Sunday, July 18, 2027, Kansas City MO. And to be scheduled via *IAFP Connect* at the mid-year point.

Meeting Adjourned: 4:26 p.m.

Chairperson Name: Angela Walla.