

Applied Laboratory Methods PDG

Names of Attendees: NA.

Meeting Called to Order: Sunday, July 26, 2026, 10:30 a.m.

Minutes Recording Secretary: Aditi Bhadauria (ALM PDG Student Liaison).

Old Business: Julie Weller (Chairperson) called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.. and began by reviewing the IAFP Anti-Trust Guidelines. She then introduced the prior committee and the new committee members and recognized the 2026 IAFP Executive Board. Aditi Bhadauria (University of Georgia) will serve as the Student Liaison for the ALM PDG. The 2025 PDG minutes were approved, and the 2025 recommendations and board responses were reviewed.

New Business: Julie Weller provided the Executive Board update. More than 3,000 attendees registered for this year's annual meeting. Attendees were encouraged to visit the exhibit floor and speak with exhibitors and were reminded that Room 202 in the convention center was available as a quiet room. The group was encouraged to get involved with IAFP by recruiting new student and colleague members, engaging with local and regional affiliates, and joining a committee or volunteer opportunity. It was noted that IAFP is continuing to develop a podcast and is seeking sponsors. Julie thanked the LSU Food Safety Group for their work assembling materials for the meeting.

Julie reviewed the proposal statistics comparing 2025 and 2026. In 2026, the ALM PDG submitted 23 total proposals (down from 25 in 2025). As primary sponsor, 3 of 7 proposals were accepted (42%), compared with 7 of 12 (58%) in 2025. As secondary sponsor, 5 of 16 proposals were accepted (31%), compared with 8 of 13 (61%) in 2025. The overall acceptance rate was 35% in 2026 compared with 41% in 2025. Members were encouraged to consider submitting proposals that were not accepted into this year's program as webinars. Julie reviewed the accepted sessions for which the ALM PDG is the primary and secondary sponsor and encouraged attendance.

The IAFP meeting app was reviewed. Members were reminded to download the app and resync when prompted to keep event information, schedules, program details, and announcements current.

Amanda Brookhouser-Sisney led the Validation and Verification (V&V) Interest Group updates. The group formed in 2017 with a shared objective of delivering scientifically robust user

guidance on validation and verification to support broader applicability and confidence in method performance. The group's work is organized into four subgroups: Method Considerations, Inoculum Protocols, Webinars, and Laboratory Best Practices.

Amanda handed the update over to Laurie Post for the Method Consideration Subgroup. Laurie noted that the subgroup has 6 published articles, 1 in press with a scheduled publication date of September/October 2026, and 1 in preparation. Three of the published articles have won first place in the “Most-Viewed *FPT* General Interest Publication” award. She provided an overview of the article in press, “Rapid Confirmation of Presumptive Positive Pathogen Screening Test Results: Analytical and Hybrid Confirmations,” which examines whether molecular-based confirmation assays could replace culture-based confirmation with greater accuracy and speed. She then discussed the manuscript in preparation, “Pathogen Virulence Diversity and Food Safety Implications,” which addresses how targeting pathogenicity differences among species or serotypes could improve surveillance and mitigation strategies.

Julie Weller provided an update on the Inoculum Protocol Subgroup. The manuscript “Are Your Microbial Cultures Stressed? Preparing Target Inoculations for Food and Environmental Matrix Studies” provides a structured framework for designing and conducting matrix validation and verification studies that are robust, reliable, and fit for purpose. The manuscript is approximately 85% complete, with a target submission before the end of the calendar year.

Amanda Brookhouser-Sisney led the update for the Webinar Subgroup. A short tutorial was provided on how members can manage their notification preferences to ensure they receive updates on relevant content, including workshops and webinars. A recap was given of the three-part series already presented, each based on a previously published article and reformatted to reach a larger webinar audience; these are available for IAFP Members in the webinar archive. The most recent webinar was presented in January 2026 in collaboration with the Institute for the Advancement of Food and Nutrition Sciences (IAFNS). The next webinar, “Matrix Additions Part 4: Matrix Extension Study Statistics and Data Interpretation,” will cover real-life scenarios and troubleshooting. The subgroup is open to volunteers.

Amanda Brookhouser-Sisney also covered the Laboratory Best Practices Subgroup, which recently submitted a manuscript for review in *Food Protection Trends* on the objective measurement of accountability in partnerships between third-party food testing laboratories and food industry clients.

Veronica Kays from AOAC INTERNATIONAL presented updates on AOAC microbiological standards. She reviewed AOAC's science programs, including standards development, method conformity assessment, and integrated programs, and introduced the newly launched Performance Tested Consumables program, which provides certification criteria for critical lab consumables. She provided an update on the Microbiology Method Validation Guidance (MMVG) initiative, which aims to update and expand AOAC OMA Appendix J to address additional validation topics and support global alignment. The initiative includes 96 volunteers across three subgroups: Qualitative Detection Methods (Culturable Bacteria), Analytical Confirmation, and Quantitative Methods (Culturable Bacteria), with participation from government agencies, technology providers, manufacturers, and academia, and international liaisons including authorities in France and the Netherlands. She also reviewed SPADA (Stakeholder Program for Agent Detection Assays) sequencing initiatives, including the 2026 publication of SMPR 2026.01 for metagenomic sequencing. QR codes were provided to join the subgroups. Members interested in participating were invited to do so.

Julie Weller reviewed the 2027 call for proposals. The 2027 annual meeting will be held in Kansas City, Missouri. The workshops, symposia, and roundtables submission deadline is September 29, 2026, and the abstract submission deadline is January 12, 2027. It was noted that IAFP Europe has moved to an every-other-year format, with symposia and roundtable submissions due September 21, 2026, and abstracts due October 19, 2026. Julie reviewed the symposia and roundtable guidelines and reiterated the importance of proposal quality over quantity. Priority is given to proposals addressing safety and microbial quality of foods; viruses and parasites, retail food safety, epidemiology and public health; non-microbiology food safety issues; general applied food safety microbiology; general food protection for the future; and developments in food safety education. Members were encouraged to consider new and emerging topics not covered in the last two years.

Julie announced the call for Vice Chair nominations. The position is a four-year commitment, consisting of two years as Vice Chair followed by two years as Chair, and requires an active IAFP membership. The Vice Chair assists the Chair with meetings, emails, and conference calls before succeeding the Chair. Nominations will be collected through the end of the calendar year by email to Julie Weller and Amanda Brookhouser-Sisney, with voting to open in March 2027.

The floor was then opened for discussion of symposium and roundtable ideas for the 2027 annual meeting, with attendees asked to introduce themselves before speaking. Jeff Kornacki

suggested a session on approaches to bridge the gap between indicator organisms and pathogens, covering both genotypic and phenotypic methods and the challenge of high false positives. A second topic Jeff suggested was “When is a positive a positive”, a spin off a symposium in this year’s agenda. Julie Weller raised the development of standards for microplastics in food, noting that the European PDG has expressed interest in the topic. Rachel Binet (FDA) raised the topic of dietary supplement testing and the performance of pathogen detection methods in dietary supplement matrices, noting this is an ongoing discussion at the FDA. David Legan (Eurofins) raised the challenge of detecting pathogens that are rare or difficult to find in a matrix, such as *C. botulinum* in infant formula and *Cyclospora* in produce, where sampling and method sensitivity limit detection, and suggested collaboration with the viral and parasite and other related PDGs. Melanie Downs (University of Nebraska-Lincoln) raised food allergen topics, including end-user guidance for sampling and data interpretation, and Julie Weller noted gluten as a related area. Laurie Post offered to send the ideas out to the group to determine how to collaborate. The submission deadline was noted as the end of September.

The recommendations were the last item discussed and are listed below. No questions were raised after the recommendations, and the meeting concluded at 11:27 a.m.

Recommendations to the Executive Board:

1. The ALM PDG recommends that IAFP add an additional parallel track on one or more days of the meeting to accommodate the continued growth in the size of the IAFP meeting and to allow for additional sessions.
2. The ALM PDG recommends that IAFP make the registration and check-in barcode available in a format that can be added directly to Apple Wallet or Google Wallet, rather than sending multiple separate barcode emails, to simplify check-in and reduce email clutter.

Next Meeting Date: Sunday, July 26, 2027, Kansas City, MO.

Meeting Adjourned: 11:27 a.m.

Chairperson Name: Julie Weller.