Professional Development Program Executive Committee (PDP EC)
Meeting Summary for Houston
August 5, 2026

Attendance – Voting Members: Joe Manzella, Robin Cook, Anand Mudambi, Calista Daigle, Ken Brown, Sharon Mertens

Joe prepared a presentation that he reviewed with the meeting attendees (Attachment 1).

Jack Farrell Scholarship

Joe provided some history about the scholarship and acknowledged LabWare's contribution towards the scholarship at this conference.

The first application period opened during the Boston conference and two applications were received. Joe, Sharon, Robin and Ilona formed a workgroup to work on procedures, review the application and provide a recommendation to the Committee. It was recommended that the available scholarship funds be divided evenly between the two applicants. Funds were based on donations received through March 31, 2026. The two applicants were recognized formally earlier in the day before the Plenary session. Each recipient has been provided with an Advisor to help guide them through the credentialing and training process.

<u>Lessons Learned</u>

Draft policies and procedures were used during the initial cycle, but these will now be finalized and revised based on lessons learned.

Areas identified for improvement include:

- Clarifying and formalizing the scholarship application process.
- Documenting the application review and award process to ensure consistency and fairness.
- Streamlining the distribution of scholarship funds.
- Improving ongoing scholarship administration.
- Expanding the pool of advisors available to scholarship recipients.

The Committee also plans to seek feedback from the 2026 recipients regarding their experience with the application and award process. Their feedback will be incorporated into future revisions.

<u>Scholarship Schedule</u>

The Committee discussed whether scholarship awards should continue to be presented at the August/NEMC conference or instead be presented at the winter TNI-focused meeting. The August meeting is extremely busy, while the winter meeting provides more flexibility and has a stronger TNI focus.

The attendees agreed that moving the recognition and potentially the application schedule should be explored. One consideration is the timing of credentialing examinations, which

influenced the original schedule. The Committee will determine whether the award recognition can be moved without changing the underlying application and credentialing timeline.

Fundraising and Publicity

The Committee identified a need for a more effective process for soliciting donations. Awareness of the scholarship remains relatively low, even among people attending the conference.

Potential improvements include adding a QR code for donations, simplifying online contributions, and determining the most cost-effective payment mechanism. The Committee will explore options for recurring and small-dollar donations while minimizing transaction fees.

Publicity will also be increased through conference presentations, newsletters, LinkedIn, social media, and other TNI communications. The scholarship awards presented during the conference, including the large checks, were viewed as a strong opportunity to increase awareness.

Advisors

The Committee will consider how to recruit and prepare enough advisors if the number of scholarship recipients increases in future years. Credentialing Committee members may be an important source, but previous scholarship recipients may also be able to help with this effort.

Emerging Leaders Initiative

The Committee discussed the continued development of the Emerging Leaders Initiative, formerly referred to as the "New Professionals Initiative." The name was changed because the Committee felt that "new professionals" was too restrictive. The initiative is not intended solely for people who are new to the workforce or younger professionals. It is intended to support people who are emerging into new leadership or professional roles, including individuals who may have substantial industry experience but are new to TNI or moving into a new area of responsibility.

The Committee has researched similar initiatives offered by other organizations and is considering a range of possible activities. These are still exploratory rather than finalized program components.

A pilot social activity was held during this conference when tickets to a Houston Astros game were offered to first-time TNI conference attendees. Three new attendees participated, providing an informal opportunity to meet other members and become more familiar with the organization.

The remainder of the meeting focused on how TNI can broaden professional development opportunities and reach people who do not regularly attend conferences.

- Expanding Topics Beyond Laboratory Operations
  Members suggested that future conferences could include more topics relevant to data users, municipalities, regulators, operators, and other stakeholders rather than focusing almost exclusively on laboratory methods and accreditation. Potential topics could include regulatory implementation, PFAS requirements, lead and copper requirements,

municipal compliance, data management, and other issues faced by organizations that use laboratory data.

- New Attendee Orientation and Networking
  There was strong support for providing more assistance to first-time attendees. The conference experience can be intimidating.

  Ideas:

  - A short, informal gathering for first-time attendees, particularly at the winter TNI meeting.
  - A pre-conference webinar explaining how the conference works, what the committees do, and how attendees can participate.
  - Earlier distribution of a welcome letter with practical suggestions for navigating the conference.
  - A voluntary "buddy" system connecting new attendees with more experienced participants. The idea of assigning buddies may be more practical at smaller winter meetings. A pool of volunteers could include committee members, board members, recent conference attendees, etc.
  - Identifying experienced, approachable members with a button or other visible marker indicating that they are available to answer questions.
  - Providing first-time attendees with an optional sticker or other identifier if they want to be recognized as new participants.It was noted that previous attempts to identify new attendees directly on badges received some negative feedback because some people felt singled out.
  - Provide brief personal stories from relatively recent first-time attendees during orientation sessions. These stories could help normalize the feeling of being overwhelmed and demonstrate how people became involved in TNI.

- Committee Orientation
  Every committee should provide a brief explanation at the beginning of its meetings describing what the committee does, its role within TNI, and how new participants can contribute.

- Leadership and Non-Technical Skills
  Professional development should extend beyond technical laboratory knowledge. Attendees in the meeting expressed interest in leadership, communication, conflict management, interpersonal skills, supervision, career development, and other "people skills." There was also interest in eventually developing a structured curriculum in which participants could complete technical and leadership components and earn a certificate, badge, or similar recognition.

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- Knowledge Transfer and Succession Planning
  The importance of succession planning was noted as experienced professionals retire or leave the industry. There is concern that significant institutional knowledge is being lost as experienced laboratory managers, quality assurance personnel, operators, assessors, and other professionals leave the workforce. New personnel may be placed into positions previously held by individuals with decades of experience and receive little structured knowledge transfer.

Potential professional development activities could address this through peer mentoring, position-specific forums, succession planning resources, and discussions about lessons learned from experienced professionals.

- Training for Assessors and Accreditation Bodies
  The Committee was encouraged to consider professional development specifically for assessors and accreditation-body personnel. Existing TNI material on assessments and evaluations, including training on soft skills and nonconformances, was noted as a possible foundation.

Quality Time with TNI

The Committee revisited the concept of "Quality Time with TNI," a proposed virtual program intended to bring some of the benefits of the TNI conference to people who cannot regularly attend in person.

The concept would likely involve quarterly webinars of approximately 60–90 minutes. Possible session formats include:

- Meet a Member: Informal conversations with TNI members about their careers, experiences, challenges, and paths through the industry.
- Ask an AB: Opportunities for participants to ask accreditation-body representatives questions in a less formal environment.
- Hot Topics: Discussions of current technical, regulatory, or industry issues.
- Technical Tips and Tricks: Peer-to-peer discussions of practical solutions and approaches that have worked in individual laboratories.

Members noted that virtual sessions could also benefit people who do attend conferences but may be uncomfortable approaching others in person.

The importance of creating an environment where laboratories can discuss practical solutions openly was emphasized. One suggestion was to not include AB attendance, allowing laboratories to discuss challenges and solutions without concern that comments could affect future assessments.

Next Steps

For the scholarship, the immediate priorities are to finalize policies and procedures, improve the application and review processes, determine the most effective donation mechanisms, increase publicity, recruit additional advisors, and determine whether the award schedule should be moved to the winter meeting.

For the Emerging Leaders Initiative, the committee will continue gathering feedback, define the specific needs the initiative should address, develop policies and procedures, and begin pilot activities.

Professional Development Program Executive Committee (PDP EC)

Wednesday, August 5

13:00 – 15:00

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Today's Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Update on the Jack Farrell Scholarship
- Update on the Emerging Leaders Initiative
- Open Discussion

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PDP EC Mission

To oversee TNI's efforts to enhance the knowledge, skills, and abilities of individuals involved in environmental sampling and measurements.

The program includes these components:

- Credentials
- Training
- Emerging Professionals
- Scholarship Administration

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PDP EC Voting Members

- Joe Manzella (Chair) – Orange County Sanitation District
- Sharon Mertens (Vice-Chair) – Mertens Consulting, LLC
- Kenneth Brown – City of Escondido
- Robin Cook – City of Daytona Beach
- Calista P. Daigle – Pace Analytical Services, LLC
- Theresa Johnson – McCampbell Analytical, Inc.
- Harold Longbaugh – City of Houston
- Littia Mann – Vermont Department of Health Laboratory
- Duncan Millar – International Accreditation Service (IAS)
- Anand Mudambi – US EPA (Retired)
- Elizabeth Turner – Eurofins Environment Testing
- Michelle Wade – Wade Consulting & Solutions

STAFF:

- Jerry Parr – TNI
- Ilona Taunton – Program Administrator, TNI Training Coordinator

Meeting Time:

3rd Tuesday of each month, 11 am Eastern

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PDP EC Membership

- Openings for 3 voting members
  - No balance requirements
- Associate membership available



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Professional Development Program

Objectives

1. Establish and implement guidance, policies, procedures and tools necessary to implement the program.
   - **Success Measures:**
     - Review and approve policies or SOPs developed by committees
     - Develop new policies or SOPs needed by the program.

2. Provide oversight and guidance to the Credentials and Training committees.
   - **Success Measure:**
     - The Credential and Training committees are accomplishing their stated objectives

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Professional Development Program

Objectives (cont'd)

3. Establish the Jack Farrell scholarship.
   - **Success Measures:**
     - Policies and procedures to implement the scholarship are developed.
     - Funds are awarded consistent with established procedures.
4. Establish a new professionals' initiative.
   - **Success Measure:**
     - To be determined.

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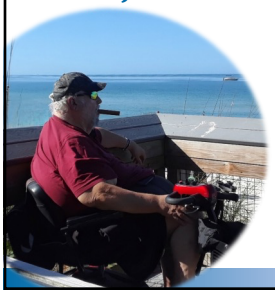
Professional Development Program

Objectives (cont'd)

5. Investigate opportunities to identify funding to support the program.
   - **Success Measures:**
     - The program is financially self-sufficient.
6. With the assistance of the Program Administrator, prepare and deliver an Annual Report for the previous year and Work Plan for the coming year for the annual meeting or when requested by the Executive Director.
   - **Success Measure:**
     - Activities and progress provided within the Annual Report and Work Plan design and any subsequent revisions are approved by the TNI Board.

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Jack Farrell Scholarship Update



Background

- Established in March 2025 in memory of Jack Farrell
- Goal is to support individuals pursuing TNI credentials
- Funded entirely by donations from individuals and vendors

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Jack Farrell Scholarship Update

Success Measures

1. Policies and procedures to implement the scholarship are developed

- Draft policies have been written to outline the following
  - Scholarship application process
  - Application review process
  - Awarding of scholarship funds
  - Ongoing scholarship administration

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Jack Farrell Scholarship Update

2. Funds are awarded consistent with established procedures

- Summary of the 2026 scholarship award process:
  - Application period opened 1/14/2026
  - Application period ended 3/15/2026
  - Application period extended to 4/1/2026
  - Two applicants
    - Award decision: $1,695 to each awardee
    - Awardees notified on 6/3/2026
    - Applicants have begun their coursework

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Jack Farrell Scholarship Update



Next steps:

- Finalize the scholarship process policies and procedures
- Revise the application process based on lessons learned
- Work on an improved process for soliciting donations
- Publicize, publicize, publicize!
- Continue to support our two 2026 awardees
- Accept new applications in January 2027

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Professional Development Program



Objectives

Establish a new professionals' initiativ

- **Success Measure:**
  - To be determined.

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Professional Development Program

Emerging Leaders Initiative

- Purpose
  - To empower emerging leaders in the environmental sampling and analysis field by fostering a supportive community that cultivates leadership, encourages continuous learning and improvement, and promotes meaningful connection among professionals across the entire organization.



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Professional Development Program

Emerging Leaders Initiative

- What does an "emerging leaders initiative" look like?
  - Mentorship opportunities
  - Engagement programs
  - Career development resources
  - Networking
  - Recognition programs
  - Inclusive membership
  - Active participation
  - Educational initiatives

EMERGING LEADERS INITIATIVE

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Professional Development Program

Summary

- Training and credentialing committees are doing excellent work
- Jack Farrell AEX Scholarship is up and running
- Emerging Leaders initiative is being developed

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Professional Development Program

What's next?

- Jack Farrell Scholarship
  - Finalize policies and procedures
  - Prepare for 2027 application process
- Emerging Leaders initiative
  - Develop policies and procedures
  - Pilot events will follow

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Open Discussion

We welcome input on any topic, to include:

- Committee membership
- Scholarships
- Emerging Leaders
- Professional development
- Outreach

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Contact TNI
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