



General Meeting, 4/30/2025, 1:00 pm

Zoom meeting

1. Welcome

- a. A Welcome poll was answered by attendees prior to the start of the meeting. The poll question was: What are the main food safety issues you think affect lowans? Attendees could select the following answers (more than one selection was allowed), and the numbers after each show the totals these answers were selected:
 - i. Unapproved source, 7
 - ii. Unlicensed operators, 10: **#2**
 - iii. Lack of food safety education for operators, 18: **#1**
 - iv. Not enough inspectors, 8: **#3**
 - v. Not enough federal funding, 7
 - vi. Other, 2
- b. 38 total attendees in the meeting

2. Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals & Licensing (DIAL) Update –

Mark Speltz, DIAL

- a. DIAL now has 39 full time staff, 1 temporary worker, and 2 interns. There are no vacancies at DIAL. Mark shared the DIAL org chart to show how the Food Safety Bureau is arranged.
- b. Mark described the legislative bills still live during the rest of this session, including:
 - i. HF 1006 – Processing Plant Fees
 1. Creates a food processing plant classification for farms or private residences storing and selling processed meat or poultry from animals raised by the licensee.
 2. Sets license fee at \$75
 - ii. HF 1032 – Grocer and Local Food Grants
 1. Promotes expanding local foods in underserved communities and increasing capacity for local foods in Iowa. Does not directly impact the Food Safety Bureau
 - iii. HF 998 / SF 632 – Agriculture Matters
 1. Exempts Home Food Processing Establishments from obtaining a license from IDALS Meat and Poultry Inspection Bureau for certain activities. Consistent with the exemption for grocery stores and restaurants.
 - iv. HSB 222 – Raw Milk Distribution



1. Expands raw milk distribution beyond the raw milk dairy to farmers markets and grocery stores.
- c. Mark described the reduction in grant funds from FDA next fiscal year for the Rapid Response Team (reduction of 60%) and the Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Standards & Food Safety Task Force grant (reduction of 53%). The reduction in funds will not require a reduced work force at DIAL, but only reduce the grant deliverables, activities and reporting requirements.
 - i. There are no changes to the FDA Inspection Contract (for manufactured food firms) or the USDA COOL contract.
- d. DIAL has received the new FDA Retail Program Standards Grant. Only six jurisdictions out of 45 received this grant.
- e. Mark explained Iowa had been selected as a pilot state for the System for Agriculture, Food, Health, E-Inspections and Registration (SAFHER) licensing and inspection database, however, FDA eliminated federal funding for this in December 2024. The project was more than 80% complete at the time, however, the Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO) continued development with existing funds to get the system to 90% completion. Iowa is currently pursuing implementation of SAFHER without federal support.
- f. Mark summarized upcoming and current activities, including RAGBRAI and state fair inspections, other summer events and farmers market inspections, Iowa Administrative Code Red Tape Review, and updating the DIAL website.

3. RRT Update - Thao Schlichte, DIAL

- a. Thao described the grant deliverables for fiscal year 2026, including: annual RRT exercises, conducting and documenting After Action Reviews (AARs), foodborne illness investigations and environmental assessments.
- b. Thao summarized the history of the IowaSic foodborne illness complaint line, launched in 2016. Since its launch, Iowa HHS has received over 2600 illness complaints and investigated 200 outbreaks.
- c. Thao showed a graphic illustrating total complaints received in Iowa from 2020-2024. 2023 had the highest total complaints received, 2532. 2024 was lower than 2022 and 2023. Illness complaint numbers remain fairly consistent, hovering between 230-244.
- d. RRT will activate ICS for RAGBRAI this summer. This remains DIAL's ICS exercise to maintain emergency response skills. DIAL will be responsible for RAGBRAI inspections over three days this year. RAGBRAI will run July 19-26 this year.
- e. The Food Emergency Response Plan (FERP), last updated in 2017, is being updated with the assistance of the Center for Food Security and Public Health, and the Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine. The team of partners has been working with the editors during the review and update process. The goal is to have the document completed by June 30, 2025. The FERP applies to large-scale food-related incidents only.



4. Task Force Member Survey Presentation - Ellen Ciarimboli, Hy-Vee, Inc.

- a. Ellen presented on the results of the member survey issued to all Task Force members. It was issued after the November 12, 2024 General meeting. Eight responses, out of 79 members who received the survey. 62.5% were affiliated with a regulatory agency (local, state or federal), and 37,5% were affiliated with academia.
- b. Most respondents had been members of the Task Force five years or less (75%).
- c. Respondents wished to have flexibility to have meetings both in-person or virtual.
- d. The speaker topics of most interest, in order of selection:
 - i. Recalls of food and food ingredients in Iowa – How do recalls work?
 - ii. Traceability Rule
 - iii. Novel Foods and/or Processes
 - iv. Small Businesses (very small food processors or other small businesses)
 - v. Comments after these topics included inviting a speaker to talk about how FSMA applies to animal food, and another suggested Dr. Ben Chapman (NC State University) to speak.
- e. Respondents also requested the Task Force work on the following resources, which they feel are most needed in Iowa:
 - i. Pre-recorded webinars
 - ii. Multi-day conference
 - iii. Printed materials
 - iv. Focus group / toolkit
- f. Respondents also suggested inviting new members to the Task Force from grain industry organizations and large franchise industry partners.
- g. Final comments on the survey suggested working with the Iowa Environmental Health Association to put together a multi-day training or event, and include more industry involvement in the Task Force.
- h. There was an opportunity for discussion after Ellen’s presentation. Jay Ellingson said Jennifer McIntire presented to his organization in the past on Traceability. He suggested she would be a helpful presenter. She presented at the National Convenience Stores convention.
- i. Kristin Esch is also on the traceability rules group for produce. Mike Nordos also said he has presented before and offered his services. Even though the traceability rule is postponed until at least 2028, it is something the members seem interested in learning more about.
- j. Mark Speltz asked in the chat if the Task Force would resend the survey to get more respondents. Merri Cross answered it could be in the future, but would be updated or refined. The members seemed in favor of this idea.
- k. The last page of the presentation listed the Advisory Board members.

Break (1:40-1:55 pm)



5. Iowa Food Protection Task Force Governance Guidelines - Michelle Boyd, DIAL

- a. The Iowa Food Protection Task Force Advisory Board has worked on a governance guidelines document since June 2024. The document was reviewed section by section for suggestions of updates or edits to be made during this portion of the meeting.
- b. Membership Structure
 - i. During the discussion on the makeup of the Board, Penny Brown Huber asked what is a “general member”.
 - ii. The definition was discussed and approved to add to the Membership Structure of the Governance Guidelines.
 - iii. Discussion also centered on how someone can become a general member. Merri explained she invites folks from organizations as she comes across them, and informs them on the purpose of the Task Force. Merri said if anyone in the meeting had ideas on folks to invite to share their name, agency and email address with her. One member at this point shared the name of someone she has been working with on public policy issues including food safety, work force, and environmental regulations.
- c. Advisory Board Structure
 - i. Jay Ellingson asked why there are three Members At Large and not more. During the discussion, Tim Link asked what is considered a quorum for the Board meetings.
 1. Michelle replied there must be 4 Board members present to vote on official business. If there are only 3 Board members present during a meeting, the vote is tabled until the next meeting.
 2. Language was added to a later section regarding votes during Board meetings (see Meetings – Advisory Board Meeting notes below).
 - ii. Discussed making reference to the DIAL Liaison/Board advisor in a general manner, without specifically mentioning the DIAL Assistant Bureau Chief. There are several references to this in the document.
 1. Merri made one change in this section to a wording that was acceptable to the members present, but all remaining references will be updated throughout the document, and will be approved at the May Advisory Board meeting.
- d. Meetings – Advisory Board Meeting
 - i. Tim Link and Denise Morrison discussed the quorum at Board meetings and what should the Board do if there is a tie vote in the meeting.
 1. Upon further discussion, language was added to this section of the document addressing tie votes (tabling the vote to the next Board meeting, or voting by email at the discretion of the Board).
- e. Committees



- i. Discussion centered on the name of a potential committee in the list, called “Legislative Advocacy”. Mark Speltz said any grant-funded group is not allowed to advocate bills at legislature. The members agreed upon changing this to “Stakeholder Education”.
- f. After updates to the Guidelines were completed, a poll was launched to vote on the document as amended. All respondents (27) replied Yes, they approve. This was more than 2/3 of meeting attendees (there needed to be at least 23 Yes votes).
- g. Merri explained the document will be reviewed at the May Advisory Board meeting and will then be issued to the Task Force members after that meeting.

6. Home Food Processing Operator Survey - Tenesha Stubblefield, DIAL

- a. Tenesha presented on the history of the HFPE legislation, the overview of the HFPE program, and the results of the Operator Survey and the survey issued to HFPE inspectors (local and state).
- b. Action items for DIAL as a result of the responses from the HFPE Operator Survey
 - i. The DIAL website is undergoing updates for easier accessibility to templates, forms, and FAQs for operators.
 - ii. A new contact form for inquiries will go straight to the appropriate individual.
 - iii. Videos for industry have been created, providing an overview of the HFPE process.
 - iv. SOP templates are available.
 - v. There are online guides for submitting license applications and renewals.
 - vi. There will be a new licensing portal in the future, for easier use by applicants.
- c. Action items for DIAL as a result of the responses from the HFPE Virtual Inspections survey
 - i. DIAL will keep virtual HFPE inspections as an option
 - ii. Different video platforms will remain an option
 - iii. All documents are undergoing review for potential simplification and streamlining
 - iv. HFPE flow charts are now available to map out the entire process
 - v. The HFPE inspector webinar series is available on FoodSHIELD for inspectors, for training purposes
 - vi. FoodSHIELD also has videos for industry that inspectors can share

7. Open Discussion

- a. The floor was opened to attendees for Open Discussion, to introduce themselves if this was their first meeting, or provide updates on their agency or organization since the last General Membership meeting.



- i. Sarah Bowman introduced herself. She used to work with the Iowa Poultry Association and now works for FUELlowa, taking Jim Ewing's place on the Task Force.
- ii. Amy Jones introduced herself. She is teaching food safety classes through Iowa State University-Extension throughout north Iowa.
- iii. Tim Link, City of Dubuque Public Health, introduced himself and explained he is the new President of the Iowa Environmental Health Association. He was a sanitarian in Dubuque for 30 years.

Meeting adjourned 3:44 pm

Merri Cross, Task Force Board Secretary

DIAL