

Why Does an Advance PT Survey Matter?

How Early Laboratory Participation Can Shape Better-Value PT Schemes

A Technical Perspective by Boxplot Analyser Private Limited – PTP Division, India

When a PT Provider conducts an advance survey for upcoming Proficiency Testing (PT) schemes, it may initially appear to be a simple exercise to understand which schemes laboratories may participate in.

In reality, an advance PT survey can be much more valuable.

It creates an opportunity for laboratories to communicate their genuine future requirements before the PT programme is finalised, while giving the PT Provider valuable information for technical, operational and commercial planning.

In other words: **The laboratory provides the direction; the PT Provider gets the opportunity to plan better.**

This can ultimately contribute to better-value, more relevant and more sustainable PT programmes.

1. Better Early Planning Can Improve Cost Efficiency

An advance indication of laboratory interest gives a PT Provider more time to plan a scheme properly.

Early information can assist with:

- PT item procurement and preparation;
- quantity planning;
- technical feasibility assessment;
- homogeneity and stability considerations, where applicable;
- packaging and distribution;
- resource allocation;
- participant capacity; and
- statistical planning.

This is very different from receiving an on-demand request at the last moment.

When a PT Provider has reasonable visibility of potential participation, resources can potentially be planned more efficiently.

This may contribute to better cost efficiency, which can ultimately support more competitive participation fees.

Therefore, an advance survey is not only useful to the PT Provider. It can potentially benefit the laboratory financially as well.

2. Laboratory Feedback Can Improve PT Scheme Designing

A PT Provider may have an initial PT calendar or development plan, but laboratory feedback can provide an important reality check.

For example, laboratories may indicate stronger interest in:

- a particular matrix;
- a specific test parameter;
- a different testing method;
- a new testing area;
- a different PT frequency; or
- a PT scheme that is currently not part of the Provider's mainstream programme.

Such feedback allows the PT Provider to evaluate whether adjustments to its future programme would be technically and commercially worthwhile.

Therefore, the laboratory is not merely responding to a survey.

It is potentially contributing to the design of future PT opportunities.

3. Survey Responses Demonstrate Genuine Laboratory Interest

When laboratories take the time to respond to an advance survey, they communicate something valuable:

“This area of PT is relevant to our laboratory.”

If several laboratories independently express interest in the same testing area, the PT Provider obtains stronger evidence that there is a genuine participant base.

This can give the Provider greater confidence to invest technical and operational resources in developing that area.

Conversely, very limited interest may indicate that developing a particular scheme at that stage may not be practical.

Thus: Meaningful survey responses help a PTP distinguish genuine demand from assumed demand.

4. Early Feedback Can Encourage Future Expansion of PT Scope

A PT Provider cannot realistically develop every possible PT scheme simultaneously.

New PT schemes may require:

Technical feasibility → PT item development → participant interest → resource planning → scheme execution

An advance survey can provide one of the most important inputs in this process:

Evidence of participant interest.

If laboratories repeatedly demonstrate genuine demand for particular testing areas, the information can encourage the PT Provider to explore new PT schemes, additional matrices or broader testing scopes in the future.

This can ultimately benefit the wider laboratory community.

Today's survey response can help create tomorrow's PT opportunity.

5. It Helps Laboratories Plan Their Own Annual PT Participation

The benefit of an advance survey is not limited to the PT Provider.

It can also become a practical annual planning tool for the laboratory.

By reviewing the proposed or indicative PT programme early, a laboratory can consider its:

- accreditation and scope requirements;
- regulatory or customer requirements;
- internal quality objectives;
- previous PT participation;
- testing workload;
- staff availability;
- annual PT budget;
- required parameters; and
- preferred participation frequency.

The laboratory can then categorise its requirements into:

Essential PT schemes

Parameters requiring regular participation.

Priority PT schemes

Areas where additional external performance verification is desirable.

New / developmental schemes

Testing areas the laboratory may introduce or strengthen.

Optional schemes

Schemes that can be considered depending on budget and operational feasibility.

This helps move the laboratory from reactive PT participation to planned PT participation.

Instead of:

“A PT scheme has been announced. Should we participate?”

the laboratory can plan:

“These are the PT activities we expect to require during the year; let's plan our participation accordingly.”

This can help manage annual PT expenditure, laboratory workload, staff planning and quality objectives more effectively.

6. Early Engagement Can Create Better Commercial Consideration

There is also a practical commercial benefit to early engagement.

A laboratory that responds to an advance survey and subsequently participates in a related PT scheme has contributed to the Provider's early understanding of demand.

This does not create an automatic entitlement to a discount or preferential price.

However, where commercially appropriate, a PT Provider may recognise the value of such early engagement through better commercial consideration, early nomination opportunities or other participant-focused benefits.

The principle is simple:

Early engagement helps build a relationship before the transaction takes place.

The laboratory is not merely waiting for the PT scheme to be launched; it is contributing to the information that helped the Provider assess and develop the opportunity.

7. It Helps Avoid “Nobody Asked for It” PT Schemes

Developing a PT scheme requires technical effort, resources and investment.

If a Provider develops a scheme without sufficient evidence of laboratory interest, there is always a possibility of limited participation.

That is not an efficient use of resources.

Advance surveys help the Provider identify where laboratories have realistic and genuine requirements.

This allows resources to be directed towards PT schemes that have a stronger possibility of meaningful participation.

The laboratory therefore helps not only itself, but also contributes to a more demand-driven PT programme.

8. It Creates a Positive Environment for Future PT Development

Perhaps the greatest long-term benefit is the creation of a positive feedback loop:



This is how an advance survey can become more than a questionnaire.

It can become a communication channel between laboratories and the PT Provider for developing future PT programmes.

A Small Request Today Can Have a Larger Impact Tomorrow

An advance PT survey may take only a few minutes for a laboratory to complete.

But collectively, the responses can help a PT Provider understand:

What laboratories need

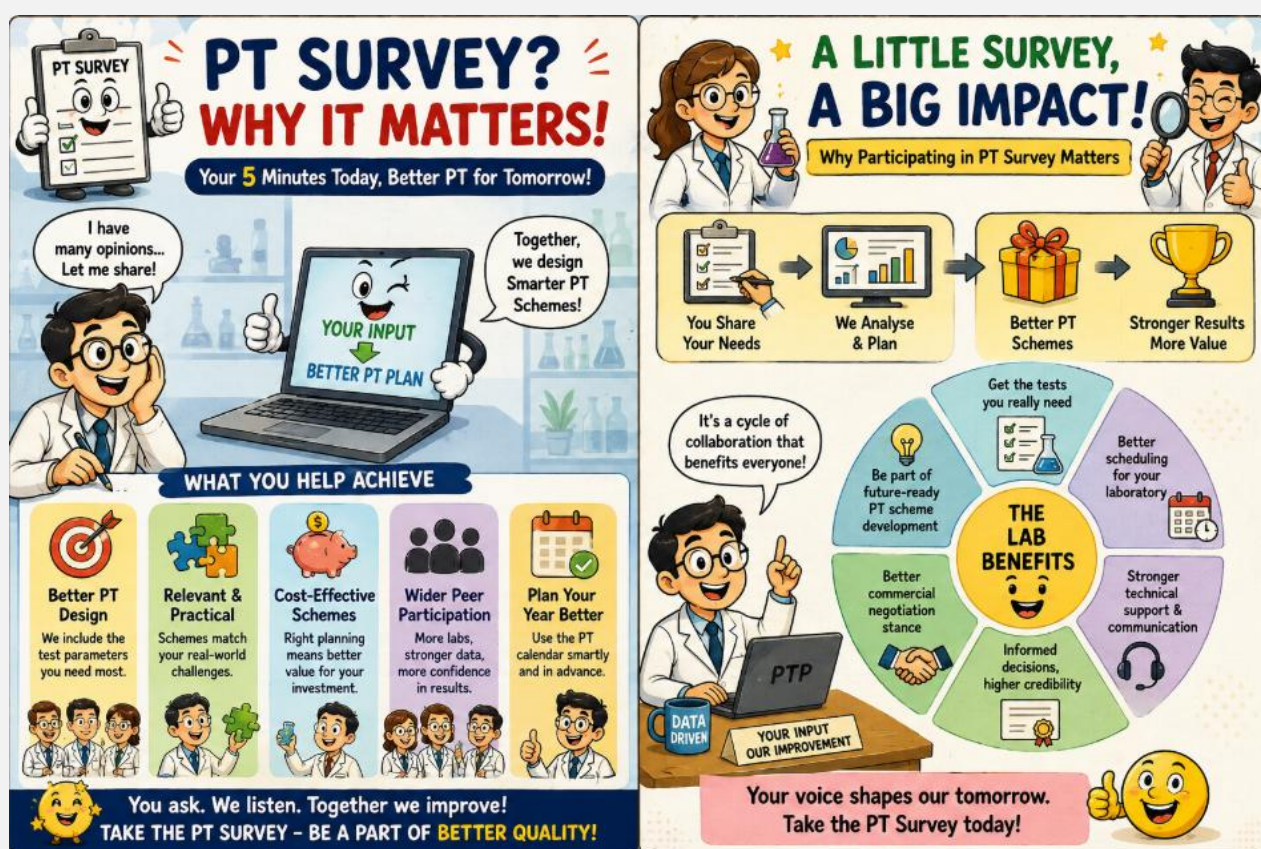
When they may need it

Which schemes have genuine demand

Where new PT opportunities may be required

How resources can be planned efficiently

At the same time, the laboratory gets an early opportunity to review its own PT requirements and prepare a realistic annual participation plan.



Therefore, an advance survey should not simply be viewed as:

“The PTP wants to know what we might buy next year.”

It can instead be viewed as:

“The PTP is asking laboratories what they genuinely need so that future PT programmes can be planned more effectively.”

The final perspective by Boxplot Analyser Private Limited – PTP Div.

At Boxplot Analyser Private Limited – PTP Division, we believe that the development of PT programmes should be guided by a combination of technical feasibility, laboratory requirements, participant interest, resource planning and sustainable cost efficiency.

Our objective is not simply to increase the number of PT schemes. It is to develop technically meaningful and practically useful PT opportunities that laboratories can realistically participate in.

For this reason, genuine laboratory feedback through an advance PT survey can be valuable to both sides.

For the PT Provider: Better visibility → Better planning → Better resource utilisation → Better programme development.

For the Laboratory: Early visibility → Better annual planning → Relevant PT choices → Potentially better value.

Don't wait for the PT calendar to tell you what is available.

Tell the PT Provider what you genuinely need — and help shape what becomes available.