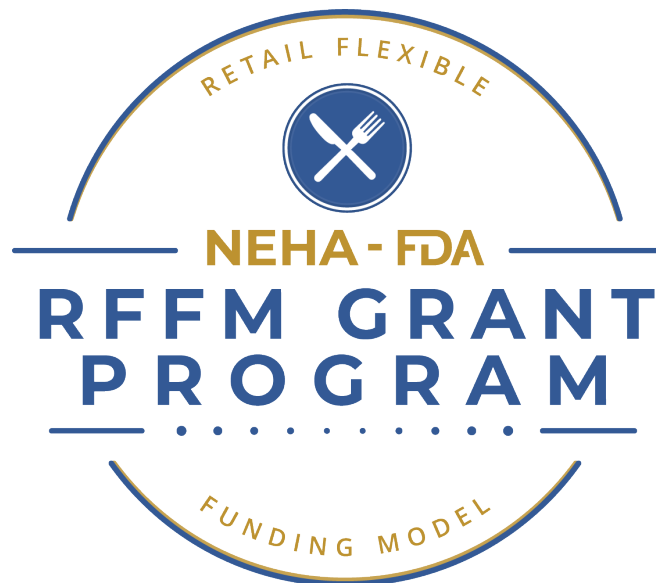


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# The NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model Grant Program Calendar Year 2023 Grant Guidance

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**Application Period: August 17 - October 12, 2022**

**<https://www.neha.org/retailgrants>**

*Advancing conformance with the FDA's  
Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards*

Updated 07/29/2022

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### I. NEHA-FDA RETAIL FLEXIBLE FUNDING MODEL GRANT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

One of the central features of both the public health enterprise and the work of most public health regulatory programs is retail food safety. However, regulatory programs often face a significant barrier to committing time and resources to build their capacity and reinforce their retail food safety programs. To overcome this barrier, the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have partnered to offer ample financial support to advance conformance with the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards (VNRFRPS or Retail Program Standards).

#### A. WHO SHOULD APPLY?

The NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model (RFFM) Grant Program is designed to support state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) retail food regulatory agencies working to achieve conformance with the Retail Program Standards. The NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program offers customizable approaches which enable retail jurisdictions to design a program that best suits their capacity and ambitions as they work to achieve conformance with the Retail Program Standards.

#### B. GRANT APPLICATION SUBMISSION DEADLINE

All applications must be submitted electronically using the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Portal, accessed at <https://www.neha.org/retailgrants>. Once registered with this program, you will have access to the Grant Portal and be able to view details on how to apply for each specific grant available through the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program.

Application links for each of the five grants (Tracks 1 and 2 plus the three add-ons) will be added to the Grant Portal on **Wednesday, August 17, 2022**. All applications must be completed and successfully submitted through the Grant Portal by **Wednesday, October 12, 2022, at 7:59 p.m. EST**.

#### C. WHAT TO EXPECT

Applicants to the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program can expect:

- Enhanced technical assistance and retail subject matter guidance throughout the grant cycle, in partnership with FDA;
- A NEHA-FDA RFFM Mentorship Program in collaboration with the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO); and
- Dedicated educational programs to address advancement and conformance with the Retail Program Standards in partnership with the Conference for Food Protection (CFP).

### D. GRANT PROGRAM GOALS

The NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program has three primary goals:

1. Support strategies that reduce the occurrence of foodborne illness risk factors;
2. Promote uniformity and a national Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS) by enabling jurisdictions to move toward full compliance with the Retail Program Standards; and
3. Fully leverage the expertise and capacity of SLTT retail food protection agencies.

### E. BASICS OF THE NEHA-FDA RFFM GRANT PROGRAM

The main features of the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program include:

- **Base Grant Requirement:** The first and most important requirement of the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program is that participating SLTT jurisdictions must maintain an active Base Grant. Base grants are offered through three different funding tracks. Each track is designed to assist jurisdictions at different levels, to achieve progress with the Retail Program Standards.
- **Three Funding Tracks:** SLTT jurisdictions enter the grant program by applying for a Base Grant through one of the following funding tracks:
  - Track 1 is for SLTT jurisdictions who are new enrollees in the Retail Program Standards, or for jurisdictions who need to restart progress after past involvement.
  - Track 2 is for SLTT jurisdictions who have completed the first important steps with the Retail Program Standards (a Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards and a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan) and are ready to begin meeting (and maintaining) the Elements that lead to achievement of the nine Standards.
  - Track 3 is a three-year Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant (not offered in the current CY 2023 grant cycle) and is designed for SLTT jurisdictions who commit to making significant progress with the Retail Program Standards.
- **Optional Add-On Grants:** For applicants who qualify for and apply for a Track 2 Development Base Grant, and for current grantees with a Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant, several Optional Add-On Grants are offered each year.

For additional information regarding the vision of the NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model Grant Program, please visit:

<https://www.neha.org/retailgrants/about>

### F. CALENDAR YEAR (CY) 2023 Grant Program Overview

This year, the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program offers an improved application process for each available funding track. Our dedicated support team will continue to be available every step of the way. The five different grant types offered to support Calendar Year (CY) 2023 projects include:

- **Track 1 Development Base Grant (1-Year Award)**, for completing a Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards (SA9) and/or a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP), with the option to request funding to be a Mentee (Mentorship Grant) and/or attend Self-Assessment and Verification Audit (SA VA) Workshops (Training Grant), **all through a single application.**
- **Track 2 Development Base Grant (1-Year Award)**, for work on Standards 1-8, and with the option to include work on Standard 9 in pursuit of a Public Health Metric.
- **Three Optional Add-On Grants**, available for Track 2 applicants and current Track 3 grantees, including:
  - **Mentorship Optional Add-On Grant (1-Year Award)**, with the option to be either a Mentor or a Mentee;
  - **Training Optional Add-On Grant (1-Year Award)**, to support Retail Program Standards training, and Staff Development and Program Standards Engagement.
  - **Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant (1-Year Award)**, to support Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS) projects.

**Important Note Regarding Last Year's 3-Year Grant Options:** Although they may be available again in the future, the three-year grant types offered in the previous grant cycle (**Capacity Building Grant** and **Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant**) will not be offered as new grants for the CY 2023 grant cycle.

### G. ELIGIBILITY

Funding is available to retail food protection agencies currently enrolled in the FDA Retail Program Standards.

Enrollment in the Retail Program Standards is the only requirement for SLTT food regulatory programs planning to apply for a **Track 1 Development Base Grant** with the optional Mentee and SA VA Workshop funding.

- For additional information and to enroll with FDA in the Retail Program Standards, please visit <https://www.neha.org/retailgrants/enrollment>.
- Enrollment can generally be accomplished within one to three days.

For SLTT retail food regulatory programs who wish to apply for a **Track 2 Development Base Grant** and/or **any of the three Optional Add-On Grants**, additional requirements include both of the following:

- A current Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards (August 2017 or later); AND
- Completion of a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP).

For additional information regarding completion of a new or updated Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards, please contact the FDA Retail Food Specialist (RFS) assigned to your geographic area. For the name and contact information of your jurisdiction's RFS please visit: <https://www.fda.gov/food/voluntary-national-retail-food-regulatory-program-standards/directory-fda-retail-food-specialists>.

For additional information regarding completion of a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan please visit <https://www.neha.org/retailgrants/CSIP>.

Please note that enrollment in the FDA Retail Program Standards is different and separate from registering for an account with the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program.

### H. REGISTERING FOR THE NEHA-FDA RFFM GRANT PROGRAM

To apply for CY 2023 Grants, applicants can use the “**Access the Grant Portal**” button found on the NEHA-FDA Retail Grants homepage starting on August 17, 2022: <https://www.neha.org/retailgrants>.

Current grantees can log in using their existing username and password. This is also true for anyone who either registered for an account and/or applied for any NEHA-FDA RFFM grants in 2021. Both your username and password can also be recovered using the “**Access the Grant Portal**” link.

Jurisdictions that have never registered or applied for a NEHA-FDA RFFM grant (which was new in 2021) will use the same “**Access the Grant Portal**” button to register for a new account (see the following detailed instructions).

#### For new registrations for the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program:

1. From <https://www.neha.org/retailgrants>, click on the button that reads “**Access the Grant Portal**.” This will take you to the Grant Portal landing page, which reads: “*Advancing Conformance with the FDA’s Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards*” at the top.
2. From the Grant Portal landing page, review the text on the right side of the screen and click on “**Create an account now.**” This will open three **Eligibility Questions**, which you must answer to ensure your jurisdiction is eligible to apply for a grant through the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program.

3. Once you have completed the **Eligibility Questions** by answering “Yes” to each and click **Submit Responses**, the **Registration** page will open.
4. Complete the **Registration**, which has simple questions about your retail food regulatory jurisdiction, including:
  - Contact information for your **Organizational Point of Contact (POC)**, the person in your organization who will serve as the main point of contact for questions regarding this application. Registration and applications to be submitted for your organization, and who will receive a username and password for access to the Grant Portal; and
  - Contact information for your **Authorizing Official (AO)**, the person in your organization who will be able to accept the requested funds if your application is approved.
5. Once you have completed and checked your entries for the Registration, click “**Submit Request**” at the bottom of the Registration page.

Within two (2) business days of Registration, you will receive an email with your username and a password. This email will come to the POC email address you entered during Registration.

- Once you receive these credentials, you may return to <https://www.neha.org/retailgrants>, click on the button that reads: “**Access the Grant Portal**,” and use the “**Login Now**” section on the left side of the screen to access the Grant Portal.
- Be sure to save your username and password, as these credentials will be used throughout the application process, and after you submit your application(s), to check the status of your application(s), access awarded grants, and complete required reports.
- **If you do not receive an email with a username and password within two (2) days after Registration, please check your SPAM folder, and then contact the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team if needed.**

### I. AMOUNT OF FUNDING AVAILABLE

More than \$6 million in funding is expected to be available for all grant types in CY 2023.

### J. NEHA-FDA GRANT PROGRAM SUPPORT TEAM CONTACT INFORMATION

NEHA’s grant management process is designed to be people-centered with an emphasis on simplicity and accessibility. For the most up-to-date information on the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program and answers to frequently asked questions, visit our webpage: <https://www.neha.org/retailgrants/faq>.

For additional inquiries, including technical support related to the grant application process, please contact the **NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team** via email at [retailgrants@neha.org](mailto:retailgrants@neha.org) or call toll-free (833) 575-2404.



## II. CY 2023 GRANT PROGRAM DETAILS

For CY 2023 Grants, the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program staff considered the many helpful suggestions offered by SLTT jurisdictions, with the goal of improving the program. While maintaining FDA's vision and goals for this funding program, program staff worked to streamline and simplify the application process wherever possible.

Some of the important changes include:

- Dedicated applications for the two different tracks of the Development Base Grant, including:
  - An expanded **Track 1 Development Base Grant** application, offering three optional outcomes for jurisdictions new to (or restarting with) the Retail Program Standards, **all available through a single application.**
  - A simplified **Track 2 Development Base Grant** with expanded options to work on any of the four elements of Standard 9.
- Streamlined **Optional Add-On Grant** applications.
- Clear descriptions of the permissible **Outcomes** for each grant type. **For the purposes of this grant program, "Outcomes" are the measurable results that you will accomplish by the end of the grant period, helping you make progress with the Retail Program Standards.**
- Streamlined instructions in each grant application and in the Calendar Year 2023 Grant Program Guidance.

### A. TWO BASE GRANTS ARE OFFERED FOR CY 2023

Applicants have two Base Grant options offered in the current annual grant cycle.

See the following pages for details of the two Base Grants available for CY 2023.

1

## Choose the Track 1 Development Base Grant Application

*offering three funding options through a SINGLE APPLICATION*

- ✓ If you are new to the Retail Program Standards OR
- ✓ If you are experienced in the Retail Program Standards but DO NOT have a Current Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards (Aug 2017 or later) and a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP)

### Track 1 Development Base Grant (1-Year Award)

The Track 1 Development Base Grant offers SLTT jurisdictions the opportunity to choose up to three funding outcomes through a single application.

**Permissible Outcomes and Funding Available:**

- Required Outcome: Complete an SA9 and a CSIP, or just a CSIP (Up to \$5,000)
- Optional Outcome 1: Request to be a Mentee (Up to \$14,000)
- Optional Outcome 2: Request funding to send up to two staff members to attend Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Workshops (Up to \$7,500)
- **Important Note:** *No additional training can be added to a Track 1 Development Base Grant (other than sending a maximum of two jurisdictional personnel to the SA VA Workshops, when included as Optional Outcome 2).*

**Eligibility:** Must be enrolled in the Retail Program Standards.

**Duration:** One year, with the opportunity to reapply annually.

**Best For:** Newly enrolled jurisdictions and other jurisdictions that do not have both a current SA9 and a CSIP.

**Optional Add-On Grants:** Please note that for Track 1, optional add-on grants for Mentorship (Mentee) and Training (SA VA Workshop) are combined into a single application, so you do not need to apply separately.

## 2

## Choose the Track 2 Development Base Grant Application

*with the option to apply for up to three additional 1-year Optional Add-On Grants*

- ✓ If you are experienced in the Retail Program Standards AND
- ✓ Have completed a Current Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards (Aug 2017 or later) AND
- ✓ Have completed a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP)

### Track 2 Development Base Grant (1-Year Award)

The Track 2 Development Base Grant offers two Retail Program Standards outcomes.

#### Permissible Outcomes and Funding Available:

- **Required Outcome:** Work on Standards 1-8 (Up to \$5,000)
- **Optional Outcome:** Work on Elements of Standard 9 in pursuit of a Public Health Metric (Up to an additional \$5,000), to include the following expanded options:
  - Implement a risk factor study or equivalent protocol to develop a baseline survey
  - Develop and implement one or more intervention strategies aimed at mitigating the occurrence of out-of-control risk factors
  - Continue to add inspectional data to the survey instrument
  - Statistically measure the outcomes of new information compared to the baseline
- **Important Note:** *Requests for RPS training, workshops, and seminars cannot be included in your Track 2 Development Base Grant application but must be requested through a Training Optional Add-On Grant.*

**Eligibility:** Enrollment in the Retail Program Standards, a current Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards (August 2017 or later), and a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan.

**Duration:** One year, with the opportunity to reapply annually.

**Best For:** Jurisdictions ready to begin work on meeting and auditing Standards 1-9.

**Optional Add-On Grants:** CY 2023 Track 2 Development Base Grant applicants are eligible to apply for any or all of the three Optional Add-On Grants.

*For additional information on working toward meeting Standard 9 in pursuit of a Public Health Metric, please see the Public Health Metric Guidance posted on the [neha.org/retailgrants](https://www.neha.org/retailgrants) website at <https://www.neha.org/retailgrants/metrics>.*

**B. THREE OPTIONAL ADD-ON GRANTS ARE OFFERED FOR CY 2023**

Applicants in Track 2 and current Track 3 grantees can apply for any or all of the 3 Optional Add on Grants in the current annual grant cycle.

2

3

**Three Optional Add-On Grants Available for Tracks 2 and 3**

*Jurisdictions EITHER applying for a Track 2 Development Base Grant OR with a current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant can apply for up to three 1-year Optional Add-On Grants, including*

- ✓ **Mentorship Optional Add-On Grant**, offering the opportunity to be either a Mentor or a Mentee
- ✓ **Training Optional Add-On Grant**, offering the opportunity to request funds for Retail Program Standards Training, Staff Development and Program Standards Engagement Training, and Virtual Training Equipment
- ✓ **Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant**, offering financial support for Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS) projects

See the following pages for additional details of the three Optional Add-On grants available for CY 2023.

### **Mentorship Optional Add-On Grant (1-Year Award)**

The Mentorship Optional Add-On Grant offers SLTT jurisdictions in Tracks 2 and 3 the opportunity to request funds to be a Mentee, or to Mentor up to five SLTT jurisdictions.

**Permissible Outcomes and Funding Available:**

- Be a Mentee (Up to \$14,000)
- Be a Mentor with 1-5 Mentees (Up to \$24,000)

**Eligibility:** Must be a CY 2023 Track 2 Development Base Grant applicant, or a current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantee.

**Duration:** One year, with the opportunity to reapply annually.

**Best For:** Jurisdictions who seek assistance with their work in the Retail Program Standards (Mentee applicants), or jurisdictions with experience in the Retail Program Standards who are willing to help other jurisdictions make progress (Mentor applicants).

**Project Ideas:**

*Mentees:*

- Receive assistance in completing a Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards and/or a CSIP, with the option to also begin making progress through elements of one or more of the Retail Program Standards.
- Acceptable budget line items include personnel costs (for employees or contractors), equipment, and supplies required to meet your planned project outcomes.
- Additionally, your budget should include estimated travel funds for all necessary staff from your jurisdiction to make one site visit to your Mentoring jurisdiction, AND estimated travel funds for up to two staff members to attend the year-end National Mentorship Meeting hosted by NACCHO (note that this is a change from last year).
- No other travel costs should be included in your Mentee Budget Worksheet.

*Mentors:*

- Assist 1 to 5 mentees in completing their Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards and their CSIP.
- Assist 1 to 5 mentees in working on and/or meeting one or more of the Retail Program Standards, with a particular emphasis on Standards where the Mentor has specific experience and expertise.
- Acceptable budget line items include personnel costs (for employees or contractors), equipment, and supplies required to meet your planned project.
- Additionally, your budget should include estimated travel funds for up to two staff members to attend the year-end National Mentorship Meeting hosted by NACCHO (note that this is a change from last year).
- No other travel costs should be included in your Mentor Budget Worksheet.

### Training Optional Add-On Grant (1-Year Award)

The Training Optional Add-On Grant offers SLTT jurisdictions in Tracks 2 and 3 the opportunity to request funds for Retail Program Standards training support.

#### Permissible Outcomes and Funding Available:

- **Training Courses, Workshops, and Conferences:** Provides funding for advancement of SLTT retail food protection programs by training employees through attendance at Retail Program Standards training, conferences, and workshops, with the goal of meeting and maintaining the requirements of Standard 2 and other Standards.
- **Staff Development and Program Standard Engagement Trainings:** See the *Project Ideas* section below for examples.
- **Virtual Training Equipment:** Funding for purchases specifically for virtual trainings focusing on helping a jurisdiction advance with the Retail Program Standards.
- For Track 2 and 3 Applicants, all RFFM travel funding requests for Retail Program Standards Course, Workshops, and Conferences *should* be included in a jurisdiction's Training Optional Add-On Grant. Travel for these types of trainings *cannot* be included in an applicant's Base Grant application, nor in their Mentorship application.
- Note that a Training Grant awarded for a specific training does not guarantee acceptance in that particular course. In cases where a grantee cannot get a slot in a course for which they have received funding, requests for substitution of comparable Retail courses are permissible.
- Jurisdictions can request up to \$7,500 through a Training Optional Add-On Grant.

**Eligibility:** Must be a CY 2023 Track 2 Development Base Grant applicant, or a current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantee.

**Duration:** One year, with the opportunity to reapply annually.

**Best For:** Jurisdictions working on their Standard 2 training requirements.

#### Project Ideas:

- Permissible **Training Courses, Workshops, and Conferences** (when there are registration fees and/or travel costs) such as:
  - Self- Assessment and Verification Audit Workshops (virtual or in-person); FDA Retail Courses; FDA Retail Food Safety Seminars; Annual Educational Conferences including NEHA, AFDO, IAFF, and NACCHO; Partnership for Food Protection (PFP); Conference for Food Protection (CFP); Food Safety Summit; Other Conferences or Seminars with a Retail Food component; Regional Conferences or Seminars with a Retail Food component.
- Examples of permissible **Staff Development and Program Standards Engagement Trainings** include: Funding for a Retail Food training course delivered in a jurisdiction for multiple inspectors; Regional or Statewide Retail Food training courses.
- Examples of permissible **Virtual Training Equipment** purchases include: Laptops that support modern browsers and major learning platforms (Zoom, WebEx, Blackboard, Moodle, etc.); External video cameras or microphones; Additional monitors.

### Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant (1-Year Award)

The Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant offers SLTT jurisdictions in Tracks 2 and 3 the opportunity to propose projects that advance the Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS).

#### Permissible Outcomes and Funding Available:

- Projects that help build the Integrated Food Safety System as envisioned by the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).
- Jurisdictions can request up to \$20,000 through a Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant.

**Eligibility:** Must be a CY 2023 Track 2 Development Base Grant applicant, or a current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantee.

**Duration:** One year, with the opportunity to reapply annually.

**Best For:** Experienced jurisdictions prepared to work toward building the Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS).

#### Project Ideas:

- Development of a new inspection or investigation course for Retail Food regulatory programs.
- Development of a system to collaborate with FDA and other agencies through IT information sharing.
- Development of a new electronic risk-based inspection program that can increase efficiency and effectiveness.
- Development of best practices or piloting of innovative approaches, technology, or tools related to inter-agency data sharing, communication, and coordination during prevention, intervention, and response.

**Project Elements to Consider:** When developing a Special Project proposal, please assure your project addresses as many of the following as possible:

- Addresses an Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS) issue or problem;
- Incorporates the most current public and environmental health and regulatory science and data available;
- Introduces an innovative approach (new method, idea, protocol, resource);
- Produces outcome data and/or a product and lessons learned that could be shared with FDA and other stakeholders;
- Reflects and promotes interagency communication, collaboration, coordination, accountability, transparency, and sharing of information;
- Supports the FDA mission and vision for building mutual reliance in an IFSS under the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA);
- Focuses on prevention, intervention, or response activities; and
- Supports national or external (outside of applicant's jurisdiction) capacity/capability development for prevention, intervention, or response.

**C. NO NEW TRACK 3 GRANTS ARE AVAILABLE FOR CY 2023**

Although they may be available again in the future, the three-year grant types offered in the previous grant cycle (**Capacity Building Grant** and **Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant**) will not be offered as new grants for CY 2023.

3

**Track 3 is Not Open to New Applicants  
for CY 2023**

*Jurisdictions with a current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant, however, have the option to apply for up to three additional 1-year Optional Add-On Grants*



### III. APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR CY 2023 GRANTS

#### A. BEST PRACTICES

Following are a few best practices when applying for one or more grants through the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Portal:

- Confirm that your computer meets the minimum browser requirements to ensure security and functionality with the system. We recommend Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge, or any of the other current browsers listed at <https://www.neha.org/retailgrants/systemrequirement>.
- For a screenshot of each of the grant applications utilized by this program, please see APPENDIX A of this guidance document.
- When responding to each question in the application, particularly the long character fields that allow 1,000 or more characters (which include spaces), many applicants find it helpful to develop this information in a word processing document, and then cut and paste the information into the appropriate fields in the grant application. This may be especially helpful if you have internet connection issues or have limited time to access the Grant Portal.
- Once you begin to type (or copy and paste) information into the Grant Portal, be sure to periodically click the **“Save and Continue”** button at the bottom of the screen. When leaving the application with the intent of returning to finish your work later, use the **“Save and Close”** button. Saved applications may be accessed by clicking **“Draft Applications”** under the **“Applications”** heading in the menu on the left panel of your dashboard.
- Do not click the **“Submit”** button until your application is complete. If you inadvertently hit **“Submit”** before your application is complete, contact the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team before the application submittal deadline, and your application can be moved back to the **“Draft”** state for further editing. Just remember that it will then have to be resubmitted before the submission deadline.

#### B. APPLY FOR A BASE GRANT (Track 1 and Track 2 Applicants)

Jurisdictions interested in applying for one or more grants for CY 2023, and who do not already have a Track 3 Base Grant, must first apply for either a Track 1 or Track 2 Development Base Grant.

To apply:

1. Be sure that you are both enrolled in the Retail Program Standards (see the link in Appendix A of this Grant Guidance, under **“Enrolling in the Retail Program Standards”**) and, separately, registered for the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program (see the REGISTERING FOR THE NEHA-FDA RFFM GRANT

## PROGRAM RULES AND REQUIREMENTS

- PROGRAM section of this guidance).
2. Determine the Track for which you are eligible and that will best meet the needs of your jurisdiction.
  3. If you plan to apply for the Track 2 Development Base Grant, be sure that you have a current Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards (SA9) (August 2017 or later), and that you have completed a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP).
  4. If you have completed a Project Implementation Plan (PIP), have it handy, as you will be able to copy and paste the PIP text into the Grant Portal in response to grant application questions. If you have not already completed a PIP, your answers to the grant application questions in the Grant Portal will create a PIP that meets FDA's requirements.
  5. From the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Website (<https://www.neha.org/retailgrants>), log into the Grant Portal.



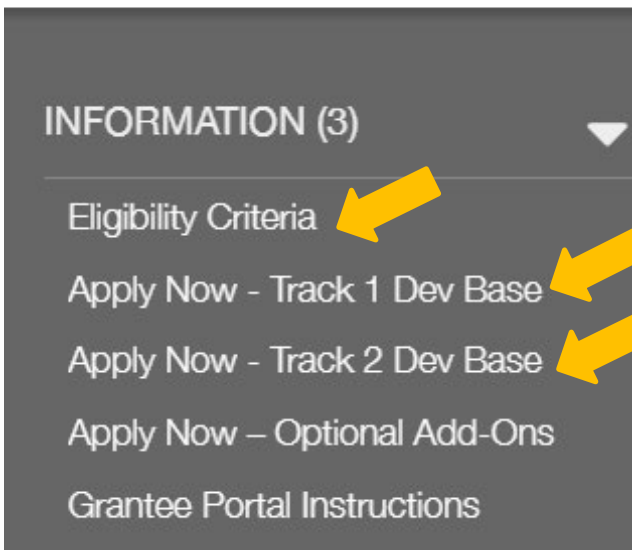
[Home](#) > [Retail Food Safety Regulatory Training Needs Assessment](#) > NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model Grant Program  

## NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model Grant Program

Access the Grant Portal

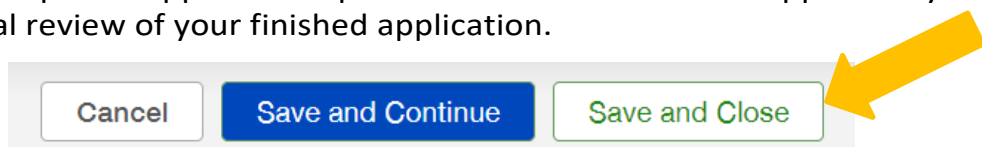


6. From your Grant Portal landing page, the left menu allows you to complete all required actions of the NEHA- FDA RFFM Grant Program, from application through your final report.

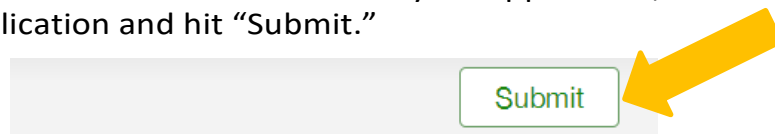


7. If you would like to review the requirements for each of the three application tracks, click on the “Eligibility Criteria” button at the top of the left menu in your Grant Portal. Keep in mind that only Tracks 1 and 2 are open to new base grant applicants for CY 2023.
8. When you have determined which base grant you would like to apply for, click on the button labeled “Apply Now -Track (1 or 2) Base Grant.”
9. Your selected base grant application will open. Please fully answer each application question and be sure to hit “Save and Continue” often.
10. If you need to leave your application before you are ready to submit, simply hit “Save and Close.” You can come back to the Grant Portal any time before the submission deadline, and then finish and submit your application.

11. Once you have completed all the applications fields, including the addition of the required budget worksheet(s), simply hit “Save and Close,” and you will see your completed application open on the screen. Take the opportunity to do one final review of your finished application.



12. When you are satisfied with all the entries in your application, scroll to the bottom of the application and hit “Submit.”



13. Before leaving the Grant Portal, allow your screen to refresh (you may have to click on one or more “Update Available” pop-ups), and assure your application moves from the “Draft Applications” section of the Grant Portal to the “Submitted Applications (Under Review)” section. You should also receive a system generated email confirming the submittal of each application shortly

## PROGRAM RULES AND REQUIREMENTS

after it is submitted.

14. If you do not receive confirmation of your submission, please check your SPAM folder, and then contact the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team at [retailgrants@neha.org](mailto:retailgrants@neha.org) or call toll-free (833) 575-2404 if needed, before the end date of the open application period.

**CONFIRMING APPLICATION SUBMITTAL:** To confirm that your application submitted correctly.

- Give the Grant Portal time to refresh (or even log out and log back in) and navigate to the “Requests” section of the left menu.
- After refreshing, a submitted application should no longer be in the “Pending Requests” section, but in the “Submitted Requests” section.
- Each application submitted will trigger an automated “Thank you for applying” email message, sent to the POC email address entered in the application.
- **Note that applicants will receive a confirmation for each application submitted. For example, applicants applying for a Track 2 Development Base Grant, a Mentorship Grant, and a Training Grant will receive three (3) individual emails, each referring to the specific grant submitted.**
- If you cannot confirm submittal of your application, please reach out to the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team for assistance at [retailgrants@neha.org](mailto:retailgrants@neha.org) or toll free (833) 575-2404.

15. If you are applying for the Track 2 Development Base Grant, be sure to come back to the Grant Portal when you have completed your base grant application and consider applying for one or more of the Optional Add-On Grants.
16. Be sure to complete and submit all of your applications by October 12, 2022, at 7:59 p.m. EST and wait for funding determination (expected in early December 2022).

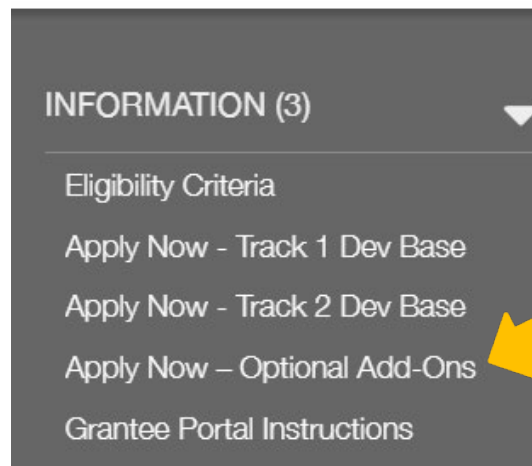
### **C. APPLY FOR ONE OR MORE OF THE THREE OPTIONAL ADD-ON GRANTS (Track 2 APPLICANTS and Track 3 GRANTEES)**

Once you have completed a base grant application, even if you have not yet fully submitted it, feel free to begin completing one or more of the Optional Add-On Grant applications available for Track 2 applicants and Track 3 grantees. Some applicants prefer to complete all the applications they have chosen to apply for, leaving them in the “Draft Applications” section of the Grant Portal until all are complete. Each application must then be submitted individually, one at a time, before the deadline.

## PROGRAM RULES AND REQUIREMENTS

To apply for one or more Optional Add-On Grants:

1. Log back into your Grant Portal and click on the “Apply Now - Optional Add-On Grants” button.



2. Scroll down and select any of the three Optional Add-On Grants available and use the same procedures you used to apply for the base grant.
3. When you finish one of the additional add-on grant applications, you can either complete and submit it or leave it in the “Draft Applications” section of your Grant Portal.
4. Repeat instructions 1 through 3 until you have completed all the optional add-on grants that are of interest to your jurisdiction.
5. Be sure to complete and submit all of your “Draft Applications” before the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program application deadline and confirm that they have moved to the “Submitted Requests” area of your Grant Portal.
6. If you have any questions or needs, either during the application submittal process or after submittal, please reach out to the **NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team** at [retailgrants@neha.org](mailto:retailgrants@neha.org) or (833) 575-2404.

## IV. PROGRAM RULES AND REQUIREMENTS

### A. ALLOWABLE COSTS

Allowable costs for subawards made through the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program include the following categories, when used to achieve required and optional project outcomes. Be sure to use the Budget Justification section(s) to explain how the requested expenditures will enable achievement of project outcomes.

Allowable categories include:

- Personnel costs, including the share of salaries and fringe benefits dedicated to an approved project, are permissible for all grant types (**except Training Optional Add-On Grants**);
- Contractual and/or contractor costs;
- Training costs for local training of staff (for example – Standardization Training) including travel, registration fees, speaker fees, contractual fees, and audiovisual materials (*but note that costs for individual travel to Retail Program Standards Training Courses, Workshops, and Conferences may only be requested through a Training Optional Add-On Grant*).
- For online or in-person courses leading a professional certification, course fees and materials may be paid with grant funds. Please note: there are some exclusions for costs associated with this type of course, listed in the Non-Allowable Costs section below.
- Purchase/rental/maintenance/shipping of Supplies and Equipment; and
- Purchase and/or development of information technology, equipment, software, or support.
- Indirect costs are permissible for all grant categories based on a signed and current federal cost rate agreement, or at the de minimis rate of 10%. (The Office of Management and Budget provides additional guidance on the de minimis rate at <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-E/subject-group-ECFRd93f2a98b1f6455/section-200.414> (see paragraph f).

### B. NON-ALLOWABLE COSTS

Certain expense and cost categories are not allowable under the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program. Please note the following restrictions:

- Vehicles: Costs associated with procurement of vehicles are not allowed.
- Construction: Costs for construction and/or remodeling of physical structures are not allowed.
- Food: Expenses for food, snacks, meals, beverages, and catering (other than per diem for travelers) are not permitted for any grant.

## PROGRAM RULES AND REQUIREMENTS

- Uniforms: Uniforms and branded clothing are not allowed.
- Promotional items and costs are generally prohibited unless they provide a direct food safety benefit. Examples of prohibited items: gift bags, logo items (pens, note pads, shirts, hats), gift cards, etc.
- Personnel costs are not permissible through Training Optional Add-On Grants (for Track 2 and 3), nor as part of Optional Outcome 2 - Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Workshops (Track 1).
- Travel and training requests for **Track 1 Development Base Grant applicants** are limited to the specifically approved travel and training in their Track 1 Development Base Grant application. These include:
  - As part of Optional Outcome 1 Mentee - Estimated travel funds for all necessary staff from your jurisdiction to make one site visit to your Mentoring jurisdiction, AND estimated travel funds for up to two staff members to attend the year-end National Mentorship Meeting hosted by NACCHO (note that this is a change from last year).
  - As part of Optional Outcome 2 – Funding to send up to two personnel to Self-Assessment and Audit Verification Workshops (in-person or virtual).
  - Track 1 applicants are not eligible for the Training Optional Add-On Grant, nor any other training costs.
- **For Track 2 applicants and Track 3 grantees**, Travel and Training requests for *Retail Program Standards Courses, Workshops, and Conferences* should be made through a Training Optional Add-On Grant application. These costs are not allowable as part of Base Grants and Mentorship Optional Add-On Grants.
- For courses leading to a professional certification, exam, test, credentialing and/or certification fees may not be paid with grant funds. For example, the testing and certification fees to become a Certified Professional Food Safety (CP-FS) are not allowable. However, as stated in the Allowable Costs section above, materials, registration fees, and online course fees for this type of training can be paid with grant funds.
- Membership fees for local, regional, or national organizations, even if such membership fees reduce the cost of training and/or conference fees, may not be paid with grant funds. One exception is the for Conference for Food Protection since registration for the biennial meeting automatically includes dues payment for the new biennium.
- Any expenses reimbursed under other cooperative agreements, grants, contracts, and/or other funding mechanisms must remain distinct and separate from any award of the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program.

### C. ALLOWABLE AND NON-ALLOWABLE COSTS RELATED TO TRAVEL

- **Funding for Travel:** Travel costs in any grant type should adhere to the following general guidelines (contact the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team with specific travel-related questions not covered below):
  - Receipts are required for all travel expenses except meals, which will be reimbursed on a federal per diem basis (unless your agency has a different and required per diem policy). The General Services Agency (GSA) Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE) breakdown may be accessed at <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates/mie-breakdown>.
  - Hotels will be reimbursed at actual room cost plus any applicable tax during dates of travel and should be booked at the most economical rate practical. Incidental lodging expenses (Internet, etc.) beyond room, parking, and tax will not be reimbursed.
  - Air travel must be taken by the most economical domestic fare available. First or business class air travel, and fees for seat upgrades, are not authorized.
  - Baggage fees may be reimbursed with a receipt.
  - Travel insurance, whether offered by an airline or a separate provider, is not reimbursable under this grant program.
  - Reimbursement for use of a private automobile shall be at the prevailing federal rate, reimbursed for map mileage to and from the venue, and shall not exceed the cost of advance purchase air travel to the destination.
- **Travel Funds for Training:** Expectations for training requested with any of the grants offered through this program:
  - Funded training participants should plan to complete all course prerequisites and pre-course materials as required for each funded course.
  - Travel plans (including flights) should be scheduled to allow participants to arrive on-time for each day of the course, and to stay through the stated course end-time on the last day.
  - Participants are expected to fully participate in each course and achieve successful completion of all funded courses.
- **When Travel Goes Bad:** When a participant does not attend or successfully complete a funded course, reimbursement for travel expenses will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Grantees may be responsible for travel costs when a participant:
  - Does not meet course prerequisites or complete pre-course



## PROGRAM RULES AND REQUIREMENTS

assignments;

- Arrives late for a course without prior permission and/or acceptable justification;
- Does not fulfill all course requirements or fails to achieve satisfactory completion of a course; or
- Leaves early without permission granted in advance by the course lead.

**Travel reimbursement will likely be made** for circumstances beyond a participant's control, including:

- Weather;
- Canceled or delayed flights;
- Illness; or
- Emergencies (when approved by the course lead).

Late arrivals for FDA courses will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the course lead. When necessary, efforts to reschedule will be made for situations outside a participant's control.

### D. GENERAL PROGRAM RULES AND REQUIREMENTS

- Funding is available for state, local, tribal, and territorial retail food regulatory programs, and can be used for activities that allow programs to achieve progress toward Retail Program Standards milestones and/or Standards.
- Jurisdictions must be enrolled in the Retail Program Standards to apply. For instructions on how to enroll in the Retail Program Standards, <https://www.neha.org/retailgrants/enrollment>. Enrollment can generally be accomplished within one to three days but must be completed and verified with the FDA by October 12, 2022, to qualify for this annual grant program.
- Jurisdictions that applied for funding and/or were awarded funding through any previous FDA Retail Program Standards funding program ARE eligible to apply for grants through the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program. Just be sure that all new applications submitted through this program are distinct and separate from past applications and funded activities.

## PROGRAM RULES AND REQUIREMENTS

- Maximum number of applications: Jurisdictions should coordinate internally to ensure they do not exceed the maximum number of applications for their chosen funding track:
  - Track 1 Development Base Grant applicants can submit only one (1) application during this annual funding cycle, as the Track 1 application combines all available Track 1 outcomes (SA9, CSIP, Mentee, and SA VA Workshops) in a single application.
  - Track 2 Development Base Grant applicants can submit up to four (4) applications - one (1) Base Grant application and up to three (3) Optional Add-On Grant applications - during the current grant cycle.
  - Current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grantees can submit up to three (3) Optional Add-On Grant applications during the current grant cycle.
- Applications from a single jurisdiction may be made by a single Point of Contact (POC), or multiple POCs.
- For reasons of security and functionality, jurisdictions are required to complete all grant applications online using a modern, up-to-date browser. Users may access links to download these browsers at <https://www.neha.org/retailgrants/systemrequirement>.
- When completing the online application, any character count restrictions noted in the application include spaces.
- All applications must be made through the online NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Portal by October 12, 2022, at 7:59 p.m. EST. All required fields in each application (including POC, organization, budget, and proposal information) must be clear and complete.

### E. RPS SPECIFIC PROGRAM RULES AND REQUIREMENTS

- **Current Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards (SA9):** Other than for Track 1 Development Base Grant applications, applicants are required to have a current Self-Assessment of all Nine Standards (SA9). To meet this eligibility requirement, your most recent SA9 must have been completed in August 2017 or later. Unless it was completed within the past 90 days, in most cases (unless your jurisdiction has opted out) the updated self-assessment for your jurisdiction should be reflected on FDA's website: <https://www.fda.gov/food/voluntary-national-retail-food-regulatory-program-standards/listing-jurisdictions-enrolled-voluntary-national-retail-food-regulatory-program-standards>.

- **Funding Eligibility to Update Your SA9:** Jurisdictions may request funding to complete a repeat (updated) SA9 through Track 2 or Track 3 but may only receive update funding from FDA once every five years.
- **Requirement to Keep Your SA9 Current:** Be aware of when your SA9 will pass the five-year mark, so that you can complete the required update to stay eligible for the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program. If you were awarded a three-year grant through this program (the Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant and/or the Capacity Building Optional Add-On Grant), it is your responsibility to assure that your SA9 remains current.
- **Support is available to complete or update your SA9** through all three funding tracks and should be done during the fifth/final year of the five-year self-assessment period.
- **Requirement to Have a Base Grant in Place to Remain Eligible for Optional Add-On Grants:** Once awards under the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program have been made, all grantees must have an active Base Grant in place (either a Development Base Grant or a Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant) to remain eligible for open Optional Add-On Grants. During the performance period of open awards, if a Base Grant is cancelled for any reason (at the request of the Grantee or due to non-performance), all open Additional Add-On Grants will be in jeopardy of cancellation. For grantees that have been awarded both a Track 2 Development Base Grant (a one-year award) and a Capacity Building Grant (a three-year award), it is the awarded jurisdiction's responsibility to apply for Development Base Grants in years two and three of this grant program, to assure that their Capacity Building Grant remains eligible for continuation.
- **Who to Contact:** If you anticipate any problems impacting attendance at (or completion of) a funded course, please contact the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team at [retailgrants@neha.org](mailto:retailgrants@neha.org) or toll-free (833) 575-2404 as early as possible. We will work with FDA to resolve any issues promptly.

## F. AWARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS

By applying for the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program, your agency has made an assurance that it will comply with all applicable federal statutes and regulations in effect during the grant period, including applicable parts of 45 CFR Parts 74 and 92. Awards will be based upon the submitted and approved project applications and are subject to the following conditions:

- The Grantee must complete the full scope of work and all tasks outlined in the approved grant application by the Project End Date entered on the grant application, unless the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team grants a written exception for the grant award.

## PROGRAM RULES AND REQUIREMENTS

- Any changes to project scope, tasks, deliverables, or expenses must be approved in advance and in writing by the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team.
- An Annual or Final Progress Report must be submitted through the online Grant Portal no later than 45 days after the end of each year's project period (you will receive automated reminders from the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grants Management System).
- Along with each Annual or Final Progress Report, the grantee must also submit a Reimbursement Request and provide a full accounting of all expenditures made with funds from each grant, accompanied by the documentation specified in the Reporting and Payment Instructions posted on the NEHA Retail Grants website.

## V. APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

Each application to the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program must be submitted individually through the Grant Portal, accessed through the grant program website at <https://www.neha.org/retailgrants>. Applicants will receive an automated email notification after each successful application is submitted. If you do not receive an automated email upon submission of one or more of your applications, which should arrive within 15 minutes of submission, please check your spam email folder. If you cannot find the automated email(s), please contact the **NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team** at [retailgrants@neha.org](mailto:retailgrants@neha.org) or toll-free at 1-833-575-2404 before the application deadline.

### A. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

Once all applications are submitted and the Grant Portal has closed, applications will be processed through an Administrative Review, as follows:

- Each application that is received by the grant program deadline will undergo the Administrative Review.
- If an application requires minor administrative clarification, the applicant will be notified via the organizational POC's email address that was entered on the application.
  - Each application needing clarification will be returned to the applicant's Grant Portal and will be accessible through the "Applications Needing Updates" link found in the "Applications" section of the left menu in the Grant Portal.
  - Details of any application deficiencies will be included in the email notification sent to the POC, and the same information will be appended to the returned application.
  - The applicant will be given the opportunity to provide updated or clarifying information within seven (7) business days after receipt of the notification.
- Applications identified during the Administrative Review that are not in compliance with the Program Rules and Requirements will not move forward.
- Applications that pass the Administrative Review will move to the Peer Review.

### B. PEER REVIEW

- Each application that passes the Administrative Review will be scored by either two or three FDA and/or NEHA Subject Matter Expert reviewers, depending on the application type.
- Reviewers must acknowledge they have no conflicts of interest (prior or current professional affiliation with the applicant jurisdictions) before reviews begin.
- Projects will be scored and will compete for funding with applications of the same type (Track 1 Development Base Grant, Track 2 Development Base Grant, Mentorship Optional Add-On, etc.).
- Funding allocations for each application type will be determined by the NEHA-FDA RFFM Joint Advisory Group and will be based upon the total number and overall quality of applications of each type.
- The highest scoring applications for each application type will be funded, although the goal of this program is to fund as many applications that meet the requirements and goals of this program as possible, until program funding is exhausted.
- Applicants who are not awarded a Base Grant cannot be awarded any of the Optional Add-On Grants, so particular emphasis should be placed on submitting a solid and compelling Base Grant application.

**Peer Review Scoring** will be completed using the scoring guides found on the following pages:

## Track 1 Development Base Grant Peer Review Scoring Guide

### A. PROJECT LEAD AND PROJECT PERSONNEL (20%)

- Project roles are clearly defined for the Project Lead, Project Team Members, and any “to be filled” positions.

### B. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (60%)

- The Project Implementation Plan (PIP) section of the application is clearly defined, with a Project Completion Plan, Action Steps, Individual Leads, and a Completion Date that are measurable and achievable during the project period.
- The applicant directly links their Project Completion Plan (one of the fields that make up the PIP) with measurable improvement in the Retail Program Standards.

### C. BUDGET WORKSHEET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION (20%)

- When looked at as a whole, the Budget Worksheet(s) and Budget Justification(s) provide enough detail to show that the requested funding will support the proposed project plans.
- The budget resources requested are appropriate and necessary for successful completion of the proposed project.

### D. OPTIONAL OUTCOME 1 MENTORSHIP/MENTEE & OPTIONAL OUTCOME 2 SA VA WORKSHOP ATTENDANCE – *Note: Each Optional Outcome will be scored, ranked, and funded separately. Selecting one or more Optional Outcomes will not increase the chance of receiving a Track 1 Development Base Grant Award.*

- (If selected by applicant) **Optional Outcome 1 - Mentorship/Mentee:**
  - The Jurisdiction’s Mentorship Need, as described in the application, can be met by the current design of the Mentorship Program.
  - Looking at the application as a whole, the applicant appears prepared to receive the full benefits of being accepted as a Mentee.
- (If selected by applicant) **Optional Outcome 2 - SA VA Workshop:**
  - Plans for the “sending up to two of staff members to one or more of the in-person or virtual FDA Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Workshops” are clear and complete.

## Track 2 Development Base Grant Peer Review Scoring Guide

### **A. PROJECT LEAD AND PROJECT PERSONNEL (20%)**

- Project roles are clearly defined for the Project Lead, Project Team Members, and any “to be filled” positions.

### **B. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (60%)**

- The Project Implementation Plan (PIP) section of the application is clearly defined, with a Project Completion Plan, Action Steps, Individual Leads, and a Completion Date that are measurable and achievable during the project period.
- The applicant directly links their Project Completion Plan (one of the fields that make up the PIP) with measurable improvement in the Retail Program Standards.

### **C. BUDGET WORKSHEET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION (20%)**

- When looked at as a whole, the Budget Worksheet(s) and Budget Justification(s) provide enough detail to show that the requested funding will support the proposed project plans.
- The budget resources requested are appropriate and necessary for successful completion of the proposed project.

### **D. OPTIONAL OUTCOME/WORK ON ELEMENTS OF STANDARD 9 IN PURSUIT OF A PUBLIC HEALTH METRIC – *Note: This Optional Outcome will be scored, ranked, and funded separately, and will not increase the chance of receiving a Track 2 Development Base Grant Award.***

- (If selected by applicant) Plans for the Optional Outcome (work on Standard 9) are clear and complete.



## **Mentorship/MENTEE Optional Add-On Grant Peer Review Scoring Guide**

### **A. PROJECT LEAD AND PROJECT PERSONNEL (10%)**

- Project roles are clearly defined for the Project Lead, Project Team Members, and any “to be filled” positions.

### **B. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (50%)**

- The Project Implementation Plan (PIP) section of the application is clearly defined, with a Project Completion Plan, Action Steps, Individual Leads, and a Completion Date that are measurable and achievable during the project period.
- The applicant directly links their Project Completion Plan (one of the fields that make up the PIP) with measurable improvement in the Retail Program Standards.

### **C. MENTEE PROGRAM PLANS (30%)**

- The Jurisdiction’s Mentorship Need, as described in the application, can be met by the current design of the Mentorship Program.
- Looking at the application as a whole, the applicant appears to be prepared to receive the full benefits of being accepted as a Mentee.

### **D. BUDGET WORKSHEET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION (10%)**

- When looked at as a whole, the Budget Worksheet(s) and Budget Justification(s) provide enough detail to show that the requested funding will support the proposed project plans.
- The budget resources requested are appropriate and necessary for successful completion of the proposed project.

## **Mentorship/MENTOR Optional Add-On Grant Peer Review Scoring Guide**

### **A. PROJECT LEAD AND PROJECT PERSONNEL (10%)**

- Project roles are clearly defined for the Project Lead, Project Team Members, and any “to be filled” positions.

### **B. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (50%)**

- The Project Implementation Plan (PIP) section of the application is clearly defined, with a Project Completion Plan, Action Steps, Individual Leads, and a Completion Date that are measurable and achievable during the project period.
- The applicant directly links their Project Completion Plan (one of the fields that make up the PIP) with measurable improvement in the Retail Program Standards.

### **C. MENTOR PROGRAM PLANS (30%)**

- The applicant demonstrates expertise in at least some of the specific steps required for progress through the Retail Program Standards (Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards, Completion of a CSIP, Meeting Elements and Standards, Verification Audits).
- Looking at the application as a whole, the applicant appears to be prepared to serve as a Mentor.

### **D. BUDGET WORKSHEET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION (10%)**

- When looked at as a whole, the Budget Worksheet(s) and Budget Justification(s) provide enough detail to show that the requested funding will support the proposed project plans.
- The budget resources requested are appropriate and necessary for successful completion of the proposed project.

## Training Optional Add-On Grant Peer Review Scoring Guide

### **A. PROJECT LEAD AND PROJECT PERSONNEL (10%)**

- Project roles are clearly defined for the Project Lead, Project Team Members, and any “to be filled” positions.

### **B. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (20%)**

- The Project Implementation Plan (PIP) section of the application is clearly defined, with a Project Completion Plan, Action Steps, Individual Leads, and a Completion Date that are measurable and achievable during the project period.
- The applicant directly links their Project Completion Plan (one of the fields that make up the PIP) with measurable improvement in the Retail Program Standards.

### **C. TRAINING OUTCOMES (60%) – *Note: Selecting more than one Training Outcome will not increase your overall chances of receiving a Training Optional Add-On Grant.***

- (If selected by applicant) Plans for the “Training Courses, Workshops, and Conferences” are clear and complete.
- (If selected by applicant) Plans for the “Staff Development and Program Standards Engagement Training” are clear and complete.
- (If selected by applicant) Plans for the “Virtual Training Equipment” are clear and complete.

### **D. BUDGET WORKSHEET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION (10%)**

- When looked at as a whole, the Budget Worksheet(s) and Budget Justification(s) provide enough detail to show that the requested funding will support the proposed project plans.
- The budget resources requested are appropriate and necessary for successful completion of the proposed project.

## **Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant Peer Review Scoring Guide**

### **A. PROJECT LEAD AND PROJECT PERSONNEL (10%)**

- Project roles are clearly defined for the Project Lead, Project Team Members, and any “to be filled” positions.

### **B. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (20%)**

- The Project Implementation Plan (PIP) section of the application is clearly defined, with a Special Projects Completion Plan, Action Steps, Individual Leads, and a Completion Date that are measurable and achievable during the project period.

### **C. SPECIAL PROJECTS COMPLETION PLAN (60%)**

- The Special Project Completion Plan (the first component of the PIP) describes a project that works towards an Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS).
- The Special Project Completion Plan (again, the first component of the PIP) ensures that all project deliverables and resources developed can be made available to other retail food protection programs.

### **D. BUDGET WORKSHEET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION (10%)**

- When looked at as a whole, the Budget Worksheet(s) and Budget Justification(s) provide enough detail to show that the requested funding will support the proposed project plans.
- The budget resources requested are appropriate and necessary for successful completion of the proposed project.

## PROGRAM RULES AND REQUIREMENTS

**Award Discretion:** The NEHA-FDA RFFM Joint Advisory Group (JAG) has discretion when making award decisions and can approve changes to number of reviewers or reviews, funding amount, priority, project period, and other aspects of SLTT grants to ensure this funding program meets the FDA's intended goals.

Final award decisions are made by the FDA Project Officer for the FDA Cooperative Agreement that funds this program, considering both the scoring information provided and input from the Joint Advisory Group.

Applicants will be notified via a system-generated email regarding the status of each of their applications, whether funded or declined.

Reviewer feedback (without reviewer names) is provided to applicants upon request.

## VI. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

As with the application process, the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Portal is used for project reporting, with the goal of keeping the reporting burden low for grantees. All reports must be submitted through the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Portal, accessed through the grant program website at <https://www.neha.org/retailgrants>.

### A. REPORTING AND REIMBURSEMENT INSTRUCTIONS

The full NEHA-FDA RFFM *Reporting and Payment Instructions* are posted on the NEHA Retail Grants website at: <https://www.neha.org/retailgrants/payment>. The instructions, downloadable as a PDF, provide additional details for each of the summary sections below.

### B. ADVANCE PAYMENT AND REIMBURSEMENT REQUESTS

Funds under this program are generally awarded on a reimbursement basis after the following documents are submitted:

1. Annual Progress Report (3-year grants) or a Final Progress Report (1-year grants) AND
2. Reimbursement Request (with expenditure documentation attached)

These documents will be approved by the NEHA finance team, but exceptions will be made based on the needs of the jurisdiction.

Direct Deposit will be available for payments to jurisdiction who choose to register for this option. Advance Payments are available for any grant type, when requested and then approved by the NEHA Finance Team.

It will not be necessary to register for eRA Commons nor with the Payment Management System (PMS) to receive funds through this grant program. Payments will be made directly by NEHA to awarded jurisdictions.

### C. INTERIM PROGRESS REPORTS

An Interim Progress Report will be required for each award made through this program to assure that each funded project remains on track for timely completion. Grantees will receive email reminders and due dates from the grant management system, sent to the POC email address that was entered during the application process.

### D. ANNUAL AND FINAL PROGRESS REPORTS

An Annual Progress Report (for 3-year awards) or Final Progress Report (for 1-year Awards) is required for all grants at the end of each 1-year project period and should document completion of all project deliverables. An Annual or Final Progress Report must be submitted through the online Grant Portal no later than

## PROGRAM RULES AND REQUIREMENTS

45 days after the end of each year's project period (you will receive automated reminders from the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grants Management System).

Along with each Annual or Final Progress Report, the grantee must also submit a Reimbursement Request and provide a full accounting of all expenditures made with funds from each grant, accompanied by the documentation specified in the Reporting and Payment Instructions posted on the NEHA Retail Grants website.

### **E. BUDGET UPDATES AND CHANGES TO PROJECT SCOPE**

Any changes to project scope, tasks, deliverables, or expenses must be approved in advance and in writing by the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team. If final expenditures vary from your latest approved budget, you will be required to list variances from the approved budget and provide a brief explanation for each variance. All changes to the project budget must be submitted in advance of the actual expense via email to [retailgrants@neha.org](mailto:retailgrants@neha.org). *Note that changes to your budget are not approved until you receive confirmation via email from the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team.*

## VII. APPENDIX A - IMPORTANT WEB LINKS

### A. NEHA-FDA RFFM GRANT PROGRAM HOMEPAGE

<https://www.neha.org/retailgrants>

All the information for this grant program, including the latest information, program updates, and access to the Grant Portal, can be found at this site.

### B. CONTACTING THE NEHA-FDA RETAIL PROGRAM GRANT SUPPORT TEAM

If you have any questions or needs, either during the application submittal process or after submittal, please reach out to the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team at [retailgrants@neha.org](mailto:retailgrants@neha.org) or (833) 575-2404.

### C. FDA RETAIL PROGRAM STANDARDS INFORMATION

<https://www.fda.gov/food/voluntary-national-retail-food-regulatory-program-standards/voluntary-national-retail-food-regulatory-program-standards-november-2019>

This is a link to the official FDA site, with comprehensive information regarding the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards (the Retail Program Standards).

### D. ENROLLING IN THE RETAIL PROGRAM STANDARDS

<https://www.neha.org/retailgrants/enrollment>

If your jurisdiction is not already registered, visit this site for information and links to register in the FDA Retail Program Standards. Registration is required to be eligible for this grant program and must be completed by October 12, 2022, to be eligible for this year's grant program. If you are not already enrolled, consider enrolling today.

### E. FDA RETAIL FOOD SPECIALISTS

<https://www.fda.gov/food/voluntary-national-retail-food-regulatory-program-standards/directory-fda-retail-food-specialists>

Find the name and contact information for the FDA Retail Food Specialist assigned to your geographic area. This person can assist your jurisdiction with registration and guidance as you pursue conformance with the Retail Program Standards.

### F. NEHA-FDA RETAIL FLEXIBLE FUNDING MODEL GRANT PORTAL

The Grant Portal can be accessed through the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program homepage at <https://www.neha.org/retailgrants>, by hitting the button labeled **"Access the Grant Portal."** This button leads directly to the Grant Portal where you can register and apply for grants for this FDA-funded opportunity. The portal will be open for new applications from August 17, 2022, until 7:59 p.m. EST on October 12, 2022.



**G. DOWNLOAD A MODERN BROWSER**

<https://www.neha.org/retailgrants/systemrequirement>

The NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Portal has minimum requirements for security and functionality reasons. Utilize this link to access and download a modern browser that is compatible with the system. Contact your jurisdiction's information technology office for assistance.

## VIII. APPENDIX B – SAMPLE APPLICATION TEMPLATES AND BUDGET EXAMPLES

For CY 2023 NEHA-FDA RFFM grant application templates and budget examples that must be completed and submitted through the Grant Portal, please visit: <https://www.neha.org/retailgrants/applicationtemplates>.

Each of the posted templates can be printed out for planning purposes or for use in seeking prior approval for submission of applications from your agency.

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# The NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model Grant Program Calendar Year 2023 Grant Guidance

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**Application Period: August 17- October 12, 2022**

**<https://www.neha.org/retailgrants>**

*Advancing conformance with the FDA's  
Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards*