

NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model Grant Program

Advancing Conformance with the FDA Voluntary National Retail
Food Regulatory Program Standards

Application Guidance for the 2026-2027 Grant Year

Anticipated Project Period: April 1, 2026 – March 31, 2027

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www.neha.org/retailgrants

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Part I: Introduction

One of the central features of both the 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 capacity and reinforce uniformity among retail food regulatory programs across the country. Ultimately, the goal of retail food safety programs is to reduce foodborne illness. To overcome this barrier, the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have partnered to offer financial support to advance conformance with the [Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards \(Retail Program Standards or RPS\)](#).

Who this Program Serves

Goals and Purpose of the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program

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 SLTTs to move toward compliance with the Retail Program Standards.
- 3 Fully leverage the expertise and capacity of SLTT retail food protection agencies to meet Retail Program Standards goals.

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 (RPS). The NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program offers customizable approaches which enable retail regulatory agencies to design a program that best suits their capacity and ambitions as they work to achieve conformance with the RPS.

If your agency is new to the Retail Program Standards or the RFFM, the essential first step is enrolling in the FDA's Retail Program Standards. This is done by contacting your FDA Retail Food Specialist and completing the National Registry Report (Form 3958). Enrollment in the RPS is required before you can register for the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Portal, and it establishes the foundation for all work supported by this grant program.

Understanding your starting point helps determine the correct track. Track 1 is designed for jurisdictions beginning their RPS journey and requires only that you complete your Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards (SA9) and the Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP) during the grant period. Track 2 is intended for agencies already working in the Standards and requires a current SA9 and CSIP at the time of application. These documents—and the RPS structure they rely on—are the core tools you will use to plan, track, and demonstrate your program's progress.



Grant Program Basics

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

- All applicants must first be enrolled in the FDA Retail Program Standards before registering for the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Portal.
- **Base Grant Requirement:** A key requirement of the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program is that awarded jurisdictions **must maintain an active base grant**, which is the foundation of work supporting progress within the RPS. Base grants must remain active throughout the grant period and are a prerequisite for applying for optional grants such as Mentorship or Training funds. Base grants are offered through three different funding tracks, with only the one-year grants – **Tracks 1 and 2** – open for new applications in 2026. Each track is designed to assist jurisdictions at different levels achieve progress with the Retail Program Standards.
- For new **Track 1** applicants, the application process is intended to be simple, with only a single application for all grant options, straightforward deliverables, and streamlined reporting.
 - **Optional Grants:** In addition to funding from a base grant (which includes mentee and training options for Tracks 1 and 2), two additional grant applications are also available: a Track 3 One-Year Optional Add-On Grant offering mentee and training option; and a Mentorship/Mentor Optional Add-On Grant (available for Tracks 2 and 3 instead of applying for the mentee option).

All applications must be submitted electronically using the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Portal, accessed at www.neha.org/retail-grants. 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.

All grantees must remain in compliance with eligibility requirements throughout the entire grant period. You **must** complete your **base grant** work to be eligible for reimbursement for add-on grant activities.

Part II: 2025 Grant Program Overview

What to Expect This Cycle

For the 2026-2027 grant year, the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program offers a streamlined application process for each available funding track. Our dedicated support team will continue to be available every step of the way. Features to support 2026-2027 projects include:

- Dedicated technical assistance, advisory, and retail food safety 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).
- The Retail Program Standards Symposium (“the Symposium”) to support advancement and conformance with the Retail Program Standards.



- Combined base grants for Track 1 and Track 2, which cover base grant activities, Mentee, and Training requests.
- Combined Mentee and Training application for current Track 3 (2025-2028) grantees.
- Separate Mentor application for new Track 2 applicants or current Track 3 grantees.
- Fixed funding for most awards.

Retail Standards Assessment Tool

NEHA has developed the FDA SAVA Gap Analysis Tool into a digital, online, automated tool, called the **Retail Standards Assessment (RSA) Tool**. Using this new tool is required for **awarded** RFFM participants in the 2026-2027 grant year, for interim (mid-year) reports and final (end-of-year) reports. The use of this tool is **not** required for application. If you have already filled out the most recent SAVA Gap Analysis Tool provided by FDA, you can directly copy and paste those fields into the RSA Tool system once available. The RSA Tool was designed to complete your SA9 and CSIP in one place, based on the SAVA Gap Analysis Tool. The goal is to make it easier to track and assess your progress in the RPS. NEHA will provide multiple training sessions and video recordings and will welcome feedback on the use of this tool. Access to the tool will be granted once awarded.

Big Picture: Choosing the Right Grant

Table 1. Overview of grant types, eligibility, deliverables, and funding for the 2026-27 application period.

Grant Type	Eligibility	Outcomes/Deliverables	Funding Amount
Base Grants			
Track 1 Development Base	Enrolled in RPS	Required: Completion of SA9 and CSIP	\$5,000 Fixed Funding Up to \$17,500 for Optional Add-Ons (see below)
Track 2 Development Base	Enrolled in RPS Current SA9 (within 5 years of specified date) and CSIP	Required: Work on at least one Standard (1-8)	\$5,000 Fixed Funding
		Optional: Work toward meeting Standard 9 – Risk Factor Study	Option 1: Risk Factor Study Level 1 (Inspectional Data/File Study): \$5,000 <i>Fixed Funding</i> Option 2: Risk Factor Study Level 2 (Data Collection/Hybrid Approach): \$10,000 <i>Fixed Funding</i>
		Optional: Update SA9 if it expires within the grant year	\$3,000 Fixed Funding



			Up to \$17,500 for Optional Add-Ons (see below)
Track 3 One-Year Optional Add-On	Available for current Track 3 Grantees	Mentee and Training Optional Add-Ons	Up to \$17,500 for Optional Add-Ons (see below)
Optional Add-Ons and Grants			
Mentorship/Mentee Optional Add-On	Included as an option in Track 1 and 2 base grant applications and in the Track 3 One-Year Optional Add-On Grant application.	Required: Complete Mentorship Program	\$4,000 Fixed Funding
		Required: Complete site visit	\$3,000 Fixed Funding
		Required: Attend Mentorship EOY meeting	\$3,000 Fixed Funding
Training Optional-Add On	Included as an option in Track 1 and 2 base grant applications and in the Track 3 One-Year Optional Add-On Grant application.	Required: Approved training completed	\$7,500 Reimbursement-Based Funding (Budget submitted)
Mentorship/Mentor	Available as a separate grant application for Track 2 applicants and current Track 3 grantees.	Required: Complete Mentorship Program support of 1-5 mentees	\$6,000 (1 mentee) \$9,000 (2 mentees) \$12,000 (3 mentees) \$15,000 (4 mentees) \$18,000 (5 mentees) Fixed Funding
		Required: Complete site visit	\$3,000 Fixed Funding
		Required: Attend Mentorship EOY meeting	\$3,000 Fixed Funding
Capacity Building (3 years) grants are not open for applications in the 2026-2027 grant year.			
Special Projects grants are not open for applications in the 2026-2027 grant year.			

- ❶ Please note that all listed funding amounts represent fixed funding per deliverable unless otherwise noted (i.e. Training Optional Add-On funding).
- ❶ Be sure to review the scoring rubrics regarding grant types for which you choose. You can find these rubrics starting on page 14.



- ❶ Please be sure to review *Table 1* above to understand grant types, eligibility requirements, deliverables and outcomes, and funding levels. A summary of grant deliverables and outcomes is below.

Base Grants

Track 1: The only deliverables for a Track 1 grant are to complete your SA9 and CSIP. The RSA Tool, described on page 4, is intended to make this easier for those working in the RPS for the first time. The [CSIP](#) is a planning tool for retail food regulatory agencies to determine their approach to obtaining and maintaining compliance with the RPS. This is a fixed funding or deliverable-based grant, meaning you do not need to have a budget to receive payment, but rather you must provide proof that you completed the deliverable. *Track 1 grants are also eligible to apply for two optional add-on grants – becoming a Mentee and/or attending Self-Assessment / Verification Audit (SAVA) training described below.*

Track 2: The only required deliverable for a Track 2 grant is to (1) make progress in at least one Standard (Standards 1-8). There is an optional deliverable, if chosen, to (2) make progress on meeting Standard 9, which provides the option to do a Level 1 **or** Level 2 Risk Factor Study. The **Level 1 Risk Factor Study** uses the “File Study” approach, which uses existing routine inspection data to retroactively assess the occurrence of risk factors. This level is funded at a fixed rate of \$5,000. The **Level 2 Risk Factor Study** uses the “Data Collection” approach to estimate the occurrence of risk factors using observational visits to randomly selected retail food establishments. A “**hybrid**” approach, which is considered Level 2, also includes elements of Level 1 by combining data collection visit with routine inspectional data. Level 2 is funded at a fixed rate of \$10,000. The final optional deliverable for Track 2, if chosen, is to (3) update your jurisdiction’s SA9 if it expires during the grant period, within 12 months of expiration. Track 2 is also a fixed funding or deliverable-based grant. *Track 2 grant applicants may also apply for the optional add-ons of Training and/or Mentor/Mentee grants described below.*

Track 3: New Track 3 base grants will not be awarded this year, but current Track 3 recipients may apply for the optional add-ons of Training and/or Mentor/Mentee grants described below.

Optional Add-On: Mentorship Program

The goal of the Mentorship Program, managed in partnership with the National Association for County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), is to provide an opportunity for retail food regulatory jurisdictions to connect and learn from each other. Awarded Mentors with experience working in the RPS and/or meeting Standards are paired with 1-5 Mentees to support their retail food safety goals.

Mentorship (Mentee): There are three required deliverables for a Mentee: (1) Complete the Mentorship Program by participating in scheduled calls and logging work completed with your Mentor; (2) Complete a site visit with your Mentor, preferably in-person; and (3) Attend the Mentorship Program End of Year meeting, hosted by NEHA, NACCHO, and FDA (date and location will be announced).



Mentorship (Mentor): There are three required deliverables for a Mentor: (1) Complete the Mentorship Program by participating in scheduled calls and logging work completed with 1-5 assigned Mentees; (2) Complete a site visit with your Mentee, preferably in-person; and (3) Attend the Mentorship Program End of Year meeting, hosted by NEHA, NACCHO, and FDA (date and location will be announced).

Optional Add-On: Training

Training: You may apply for up to \$7,500 for your staff to attend approved training. Track 1 applicants may only apply to attend a scheduled Self-Assessment and Verification Audit (SAVA) workshop. Track 2 applicants and existing Track 3 grantees may apply for approved training attendance within the project year, which are listed in the application and on the [RFFM Resources](#) webpage. For new Track 1 and 2 applications, the Training grant is part of your base grant application. For existing Track 3 grantees, the Training grant application is available in your grant portal. A budget must be submitted, and this grant is reimbursement-based.

Before You Apply

Step 1: Understand the Program Structure

The chart below provides a quick overview of each grant type, including eligibility, required deliverables, and available funding. Review it to confirm which track matches your agency's current status in the Retail Program Standards.

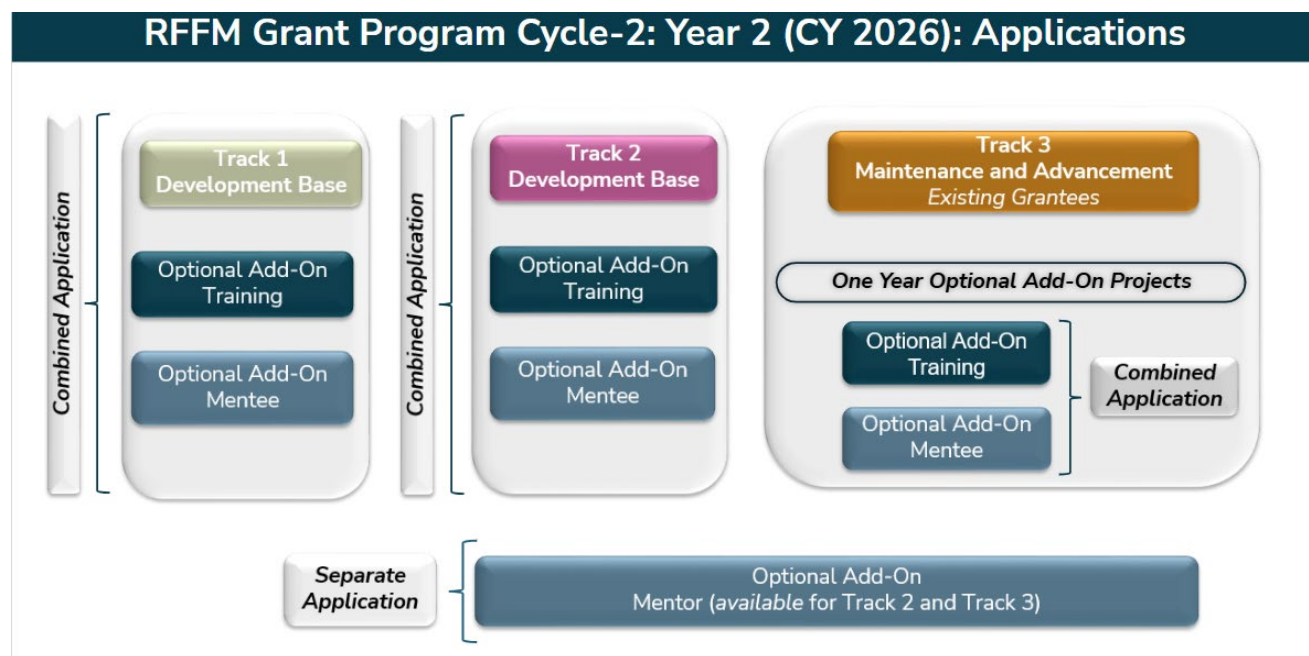


Figure 1. Available grant applications in 2026-27.



Step 2: Determine Your Eligibility

The NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program is designed for retail food regulatory agencies. If your jurisdiction regulates retail food safety, you may be eligible to apply for funding.

Track 1 Eligibility

- Enrolled in the FDA Retail Program Standards
- ❗ **Helpful hint!** This is the first action to take to participate in the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program. To enroll in the FDA Retail Program Standards, review the [Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards Guidance](#), find and contact your [FDA Retail Food Specialist](#), and complete the [FDA National Registry Report \(Form 3958\)](#). For more information on how to enroll, please visit [Retail Program Standards Enrollment](#).
- ❗ **Don't forget!** Enrolling in the FDA Retail Program Standards is different from registering for the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program portal. Enrollment in the FDA Retail Program Standards is a prerequisite for program registration.

Track 2 Eligibility

- Enrolled in the FDA Retail Program Standards
- Current Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards (SA9) submitted to the FDA in the last 5 years (must be valid through February 12, 2021)
- Current Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP) attached to application
- ❗ For more information on the completion of a new or updated SA9, please contact the FDA Retail Food Specialist (RFS) assigned to your geographic area. You can find that information here: [Directory of FDA Retail Food Specialists | FDA](#).
- ❗ For more information on the completion of CSIP, please visit [Completing Your Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan](#).

Optional Add-On Eligibility

Add-on grants are part of a combined application with the base grants. Eligibility requirements are as follows:

- **Mentorship (Mentee):** Must apply for a Track 1 or 2 base grant or have a current Track 3 base grant.
- **Mentorship (Mentor):** Must apply for a Track 2 base grant or have a current Track 3 base grant.
- **Training:** Must apply for a Track 1 or 2 base grant or have a current Track 3 base grant.

All grantees must remain in compliance with eligibility requirements throughout the entire grant period. You **must** complete your **base grant** work to be eligible for reimbursement for add-on grant activities.



Step 3: Plan Your Timeline

The application window for the 2026-2027 project period is **January 5, 2026**, to **February 12, 2026**. Award notifications are anticipated to be distributed in late March 2026. We strongly recommend you register early for the application portal if your program has not already registered (see Part II, *Completing the Application*, Step 2). The project period is expected to begin on **April 1, 2026**.

What You'll Need to Apply

Technical Requirements

- Internet connection and compatible browser (Chrome, Edge, Firefox)
- Word processor for drafting responses offline

Application Materials Checklist

- ✓ Track 1 – Verifiable enrollment in the Retail Program Standards
- ✓ Track 2 – Current Self-Assessment of all 9 Standards (SA9), (must be valid through February 12, 2021)
- ✓ Track 2 – Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP)
- ✓ Track 2 – Training Optional Add-On Budget (if applying)

Completing the Application

Step 1: Review Best Practices and Pitfalls

Best Practices

- Draft longer responses offline in a Word document. Check application template for word count limits.
- **Save** frequently and return to an application by clicking **Draft Application** on the left panel.
- Do not click **Submit** until your application is complete.
- Contact the NEHA-FDA RFFM team if a submitted application needs editing at retailgrants@neha.org.

Watch Out! Pitfalls to Avoid

- Submitting without meeting eligibility (see Part II, *Before you Apply*, Step 2).
- Failing to save drafts.
- Overlooking the fixed funding vs. reimbursement-based funding rules (see Part III, *Fixed Funding vs. Traditional Reimbursement*).
- Using unallowable budget items (see Part III, *Allowable Costs and Non-Allowable Costs*).

2. Access the Grant Portal

Use the “Grant Portal” link at www.neha.org/retailgrants to log in or register. New users must create an account and respond to the eligibility questions. Returning grantees can log in with existing credentials.



3. Complete and Submit Your Application

Select the appropriate grant track, complete all required fields, and save frequently. Only click *Submit* when your application is final. You will receive an email confirmation once the portal processes the submission. If revisions are needed, you will be notified and can update your application in the “Applications Needing Updates” section.

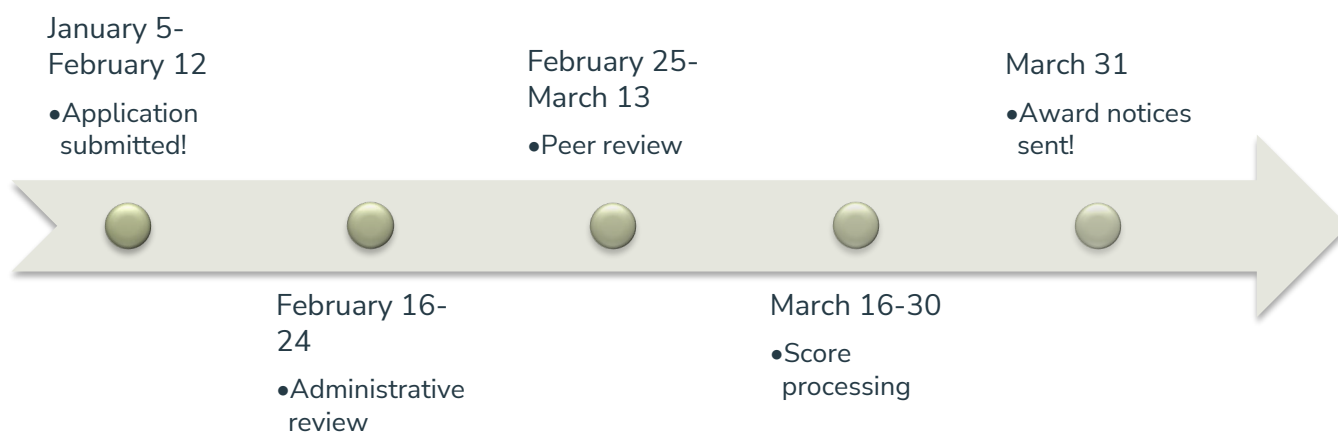
Confirming Application Submittal

Give the grant portal time to refresh after hitting **Submit** then navigate to the *REQUESTS* section on the left menu. The submitted application should show up in the **Submitted Applications** page. Each application submitted will trigger an automated “*Thank you for applying*” email, sent to the **POC** email address. Please note that applicants will receive an email confirmation for each separate application submitted.

If you cannot confirm submittal of your application(s), please contact the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team for assistance at retailgrants@neha.org or toll-free at 1-833-575-2404.

You've Submitted Your Application! Now What?

Here is a timeline of what to expect after you have reviewed and submitted your application:



Review Process

Administrative Review

Submitted applications will first be processed through the administrative review by NEHA staff and the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team.

If an application requires administrative clarification, the applicant will be notified via email. Each application needing clarification or revisions will be returned to the grant portal and accessible under **Applications Needing Updates**. Details of application deficiencies will be included in the email notification, and the same information will be appended to the returned application. The applicant will be given the opportunity to provide updated information within 7 business days after receiving the notification.



Applications identified during this process that are not in compliance with the **Eligibility Requirements** (Part II, Step 2) will not move forward.

Peer Review

Each base grant application that passes the administrative review will be scored by FDA and NEHA retail food advisors. Reviewers must acknowledge that they have no conflicts of interest before reviews begin.

Funding allocations will be determined by the NEHA-FDA RFFM Joint Advisory Group and will be based on federal funding levels and the number of quality applications.

Reminder: Per grant rules, applicants who are not awarded a base grant cannot be awarded any of the optional add-on grants.

Scoring

Track 1 Base Application (with Mentee and Training Options)

Scoring Section	Weighted Percentage	Scoring Description
Project Lead and Project Personnel	20%	Project roles are clearly defined for the project lead, project support team, and any “to be filled” positions. The qualifications and contributions of the key project team members are likely to lead the project to success and achievement of the outcomes in the Project Implementation Plan (PIP).
Project Implementation Plan (PIP)	80%	The PIP is clearly defined with a project completion plan and action steps that are measurable and achievable during the project period. The applicant links their project completion plan with measurable improvement in the Retail Program Standards. Considering the applicant’s history with the Retail Program Standards, the details in their PIP, and the personnel and resources requested and committed to the proposed project, the project is likely to success and achieve the outcomes described in the PIP.
Mentee Optional Add-On		A separate administrative review will assign an <i>impact score</i> , which may be used to prioritize funding if needed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High impact: First-time applicants with clear plans that will lead to measurable Retail Program Standards conformance. • Medium impact: Applicants who have participated in the Mentee program for one year in the recent past with clear plans. • Low impact: Applicants who have been a Mentee for more than two years in the recent past.
Training Optional Add-On		A separate administrative review will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation that plans for staff to attend a SAVA workshop are clear and complete.



		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confirmation that only allowable courses are included in the request.• Verification that the budget is appropriate. <p>Funding amounts will be determined using the comprehensive base grant score.</p>
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Track 2 Base Application (with Updated SAg, Mentee, and Training Options)

Scoring Section	Weighted Percentage	Scoring Description
Project Lead and Project Personnel	20%	Project roles are clearly defined for the project lead, project support team, and any “to be filled” positions. The qualifications and contributions of the key project team members are likely to lead the project to success and achievement of the outcomes in the Project Implementation Plan (PIP).
Project Implementation Plan (PIP)	80%	The PIP is clearly defined with a project completion plan and action steps that are measurable and achievable during the project period. The applicant links their project completion plan with measurable improvement in the Retail Program Standards. Considering the applicant’s history with the Retail Program Standards, the details in their PIP, and the personnel and resources requested and committed to the proposed project, the project is likely to success and achieve the outcomes described in the PIP.
Optional Outcome: Work toward meeting or maintaining Standard 9		Administrative reviews to confirm plans for work toward meeting or maintaining Standard 9 are clear and complete. <i>Selecting an optional deliverable will not increase the chance of being awarded a Track 2 grant.</i>
Mentee Optional Add-On		A separate administrative review will assign an <i>impact score</i> , which may be used to prioritize funding if needed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High impact: First-time applicants with clear plans that will lead to measurable Retail Program Standards conformance. • Medium impact: Applicants who have participated in the Mentee program for one year in the recent past with clear plans. • Low impact: Applicants who have been a Mentee for more than two years in the recent past.
Training Optional Add-On		A separate administrative review will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation that plans for staff to attend retail food safety training courses, workshops, and conferences are clear and complete. • Confirmation that only allowable courses are included in the request. • Verification that the budget is appropriate. Funding amounts will be determined using the comprehensive base grant score.



Mentorship/ Mentor Application

Since the Mentor application is separate from all base grant applications, it is scored separately. Only **Track 2 applicants** and **current Track 3 grantees** are eligible to apply to be a Mentor.

Scoring Section	Weighted Percentage	Scoring Description
Project Lead and Project Personnel	20%	Project roles are clearly defined for the project lead, project support team, and any “to be filled” positions. The qualifications and contributions of the key project team members are likely to lead the project to success and achievement of the outcomes in the Project Implementation Plan (PIP).
Project Implementation Plan (PIP)	50%	The PIP is clearly defined with a project completion plan and action steps that are measurable and achievable during the project period. The applicant links their project completion plan with measurable improvement in the Retail Program Standards. Considering the applicant’s history with the Retail Program Standards, the details in their PIP, and the personnel and resources requested and committed to the proposed project, the project is likely to success and achieve the outcomes described in the PIP.
Mentor Program Plans	30%	The applicant demonstrates expertise in at least some of the specific steps required for progress through Retail Program Standards (SA9, CSIP, meeting elements and Standards, verification audits). As a whole, the applicant appears to be prepared to serve as a Mentor.

Current Track 3 grantees can apply for Training and Mentee funds through a combined add-on application in the portal. Track 3 Training and Mentee applications are scored according to the same administrative process as Tracks 1 and 2 described above.

Scoring Section	Weighted Percentage	Scoring Description
Mentee Optional Add-On		<p>A separate administrative review will assign an <i>impact score</i>, which may be used to prioritize funding if needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High impact: First-time applicants with clear plans that will lead to measurable Retail Program Standards conformance. Medium impact: Applicants who have participated in the Mentee program for one year in the recent past with clear plans. <p>Low impact: Applicants who have been a Mentee for more than two years in the recent past.</p>



Training Optional Add-On		<p>A separate administrative review will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation that plans for staff to attend retail food safety training courses, workshops, and conferences are clear and complete. • Confirmation that only allowable courses are included in the request. • Verification that the budget is appropriate. <p>Funding amounts will be determined using the comprehensive base grant score.</p>
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Other Award Information

The NEHA-FDA RFFM Joint Advisory Group (JAG) uses discretion when making award decisions. The JAG may approve changes to the number of peer reviews, funding amounts, funding priorities, project period, and other aspects of grants to ensure this funding program meets FDA's intended goals. Final award decisions are made by the FDA Project Officer for the Cooperative Agreement, considering both the scoring information and recommendations from the JAG. Applicants will be notified via a system-generated email regarding the status of each application, whether funded or declined. Reviewer feedback may be provided upon applicant request.

NEHA-FDA RFFM grantees are expected to complete reporting in the middle of the grant year and the end of the grant year. Details on reporting requirements, reimbursement requests, and advance payment requests will be communicated once awarded.

Part III: Funding Rules

Retail Program Standards Funding Requirements

Current Self-Assessment of all 9 Standards (SA9) and CSIP:

- Other than for Track 1, applicants are required to have a current SA9 and CSIP throughout the project year. To meet this eligibility requirement, your most recent SA9 must have been completed in **February 2021 or later**. Unless it was completed within the last 90 days, in most cases the updated SA9 date will be reflected on the FDA's [Listing of Jurisdictions Enrolled in the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards](#) website.
- **Please be aware of when your SA9 will pass the five-year mark so you can complete the required update to stay eligible for the program. If it will pass the five-year mark during the current application/grant period (February 12, 2026 - March 31, 2027, be sure to request the Updated SA9 Optional Add-On and update your SA9 as an objective of your annual project period.**

Active Base Grant in Good Standing:

- Once awards have been made, all grantees must have an active base grant in place to remain eligible for optional grants. During the performance period of open awards, if a base grant is canceled for any reason, all open optional grants will be canceled. Grantees are only eligible for reimbursement of optional add-on grant deliverables if their base grant remains in good standing throughout the project year.



Fixed Funding vs. Traditional Reimbursement

Deliverable-Based (Fixed Funding) Grants

This section is for the following **fixed funding** grant types:

- Track 1 Base and Mentee Optional Add-On,
- Track 2 Base; Standard 9, Updated SA9, and Mentee Optional Add-Ons (but not Training), and
- Mentorship/Mentor Grant (Tracks 2 and 3).

To receive payment for fixed funding grants, specified deliverables must be met for each grant type and option. Grantees are free to expend funds as determined by their unique needs, with the only requirement for payment being confirmation that each approved and funded deliverable has been met. The Allowable and Non-Allowable cost information listed below does not apply to the Fixed Funding grants and options – with one caveat: For audit purposes, keep in mind that spending must always adhere to all applicable federal subaward grant funding rules. We have noted which of the non-allowable costs are federal rules in the Non-Allowable Costs section below.

Please note most of the objectives for current Track 3 base grantees (other than Training and Capacity Building Optional Add-Ons, awarded in 2025, also follow fixed funding rules. Please refer to the 2025-26 *Grant Guidance* and the 2025-26 *Post-Award Guidance* on our [website](#) for more information.

Reimbursement-Based Grants

This section is for the following **reimbursement-based** grant type:

- Training, and
- Capacity Building.

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 funding),
- 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 Training Optional Add-Ons),
- For online or in-person courses leading to a professional certification, course fees and materials may be paid with grant funds (but please note that 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/support.

Indirect costs are permissible for all grant categories based on a signed and current federal cost rate agreement, or at the updated de minimis rate of 15% (effective Oct 1, 2024).

Allowable Costs

To receive payment for the **fixed funding** grants, specified deliverables must be met for each grant type and option. Payment will be based on deliverables achieved during the project period. Expense documentation is **not** required for payment of fixed funding outcomes, and your actual spending does not need to conform to the deliverable-based payments. You may use funds according to your specific needs, with payment issued once each selected deliverable is confirmed as complete. For audit purposes, however, please keep in mind that your spending must always adhere to all applicable federal subaward grant funding rules.

For **reimbursement funding**, payment is based on an **approved budget** in the grant application and **detailed receipts** included with your Interim Reimbursement Request (as needed) or an Annual or Final Progress Report.

Please see **Table 1** for a list of grant types, outcomes, and funding amounts.

Non-Allowable Costs

Certain expenses and cost categories are not allowable under either **Federal Rules** or **NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program** rules. The *Federal Rules* apply to all grants and options. The remaining rules listed apply to new (2026-27) **Training** grants, and current **Capacity Building** grants. Please note the following restrictions:

- Vehicles: Costs associated with procurement of vehicles are not allowed. (**Federal Rule**)
- Construction: Costs for construction and/or remodeling of physical structures are not allowed. (**Federal Rule**)
- Food: Expenses for food, snacks, meals, beverages, and catering (other than per diem for travelers) are not permitted for any grant. (**Federal Rule**)
- Funding from any RFFM grant cannot be used to fund positions with the primary purpose of performing retail food or other inspections.
- 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 grants.
- Travel and Training requests for Retail Program Standards Courses, Workshops, and Conferences should be made through the Training Optional Add-On section of the base grant application.
- 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 for the 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. **(Federal Rule)**

Travel Rules

If you are requesting Training grant funds, you must submit a budget that includes travel costs associated with your grant. **Travel costs** requested through **Training** grants must 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 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 for map mileage to and from the venue and shall not exceed the cost of advance purchase air travel to the destination.
- Reimbursement for a pool/company/government vehicle shall be at the prevailing federal rate for pool/company/government vehicles, reimbursed for map mileage to and from the venue, and shall not exceed the cost of advance purchase of air travel to the destination.

Below is a list of expectations for **Training** requested with any of the grants offered through this program:

- Participants should plan to complete all course prerequisites and pre-course materials as required for each funded course.
- Travel plans 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 and complete each course.
- Grantees may be responsible for travel costs when a participant:



- Does not meet course prerequisites or complete pre-course assignments;
- Arrives late for a course without prior permission and/or acceptable justification;
- Does not fulfill all course requirements or fails to achieve satisfactory course completion; or
- Leaves early without permission granted in advance by the course lead.
- Late arrivals for FDA courses will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the course lead.

Reporting

NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program participants are required to complete an Interim Progress (mid-year) Report and a Final or Annual Progress Report (end-of-year). Interim Project Reports are expected to be due 6 months after the grant period starts (October 15, 2026); Final and Annual Progress Report are due 45 days after the grant period ends (May 14, 2027). These reports are where you provide information on the status of your grant deliverables and are used as part of the documentation to provide payments. **Reporting for this program has been structured to be low-burden and time-efficient.** Failure to submit reports by the stated deadlines may delay payments. More information on specific reporting requirements will be outlined in your Notice of Award (NOA) and in the Post-Award Guidance.

Award Terms and Conditions

By applying for and/or receiving funding through 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.
- 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**. The Annual or Final Progress Report will provide a full account 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.



Resources and Support

NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Home Page: <https://www.neha.org/retail-grants> All of the latest information, program updates, and access to the Grant Portal, can be found at this site.

Direct Link to Grant Portal: https://retailgrants.fluxx.io/user_sessions/new If you have questions or needs, during the application submittal process or after submittal, please reach out to the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team at retailgrants@neha.org or 1-833-575-2404.

FDA Retail Program Standards Info: [FDA RPS page](#) 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].

Enrollment in the Retail Program Standards: [Enroll now](#) 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 February 12, 2026, to be eligible for this year's grant program. If you are not yet enrolled, consider enrolling today.

FDA Retail Food Specialists: [FDA RFS Directory](#) Find the name and contact information for the FDA Retail Food Specialist assigned to your geographic area. This person can assist your jurisdiction as you pursue conformance with the Retail Program Standards.

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

Consider participating in one of our informational webinars! You will learn how to navigate the application portal and be able to ask questions about the application process.

- Thursday, December 11, 2025, from 11 am – 12 pm MT: [Register here](#).
- Thursday January 22, 2026, from 11 am – 12 pm MT: [Register here](#).

Please check www.neha.org/retail-grants for the most up-to-date information.

