

## NEHA NEWS



## The NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model Grant Program

By Jaclyn Miller  
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Starting September 9 through November 15, 2021, the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA), in partnership with

the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), will accept applications for the NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model (RFFM) Grant Program. This new grant program offers abundant funding to assist state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) retail food regulatory agencies in their efforts to reduce the occurrence of foodborne illness and increase conformance with the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards (Retail Program Standards). Awarded jurisdictions will receive the funding needed to assess, learn, network, and grow, while advancing their retail food regulation practices.

The NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program is a tremendous opportunity to enhance retail food safety programs at the local level while transforming jurisdictions nationwide. No matter how small or short-handed, the customizable nature of this grant allows for awarded jurisdictions to both increase their effectiveness in protecting public health while making steady progress through the Retail Program Standards at a pace that best suits their situation.

Participation in this program will open the door to forward-thinking retail food safety programs that use sound science and metrics to reduce the occurrence of foodborne illness in their communities. If a jurisdiction is experiencing a shortage of full-time employees, equipment, inspection software, or funds to collaborate with industry or regulatory partners, the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program can provide the funds to meet these stagnating needs and transform operational effectiveness.

### Application Funding Tracks

Through the new NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program, jurisdictions will be able to apply for one of two base grants: Development and Maintenance & Advancement, in addition to four optional add-on grants: Mentorship, Training/Staff Development and Program Standards Engagement, Special Projects, and Capacity Building. Based on individual jurisdiction experience and achievement in the Retail Program Standards, these funding options offer three distinct eligibility tracks for application:

**1. Track 1 Development (\$5,000/year/grantee):** This track is for applicants newly enrolled in the Retail Program Standards with opportunities to request funds to complete a self-assessment of all nine Standards (SA9) or a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP). Applicants following this track will also have the option to apply for two optional add-on grants to be a mentee and/or attend one of FDA's Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Workshops.

**2. Track 2 Development (\$5,000/year/grantee):** This track is for jurisdictions with more experience that have already completed an SA9 and complete a CSIP to attach to their application to pursue continuous improvement with the Standards and Elements. These jurisdictions will also have the option to add on public health metric funding, offering up to an additional \$5,000/year/grantee, to complete a foodborne illness risk factor study or equivalent public health measure, or to develop and implement an intervention strategy based on a risk factor study or equivalent public health measure.

**3. Track 3 Maintenance & Advancement:** This track is for jurisdictions that have a current SA9, complete a CSIP, and have met and verified at least one Standard during their most recent self-assessment period, offering 3 years of funding with the following options:

- up to \$3,000 per grantee for completion of a repeat SA9;
- up to \$3,000 per Standard per year for continuous improvement (achieving Elements within one or more Standards);
- up to \$10,000 per Standard per year to achieve conformance with one or more Standards by the end of the 3-year funding cycle; and/or
- up to \$5,000 per Standard per year to maintain conformance with one or more Standards.

Track 2 and 3 applicants will also be able to apply for all four of the optional add-on grants available:

- **Mentorship:** Up to \$14,000/year/grantee for mentees and up to \$24,000/year/grantee for mentors.
- **Training/Staff Development and Program Standards Engagement:** Up to \$7,500/year/grantee.
- **Special Projects:** Up to \$20,000/year/grantee.
- **Capacity Building:** Up to \$100,000/year/grantee for a 3-year grant cycle.

Further details regarding supported activities, eligibility requirements, program resources, and actions that can be taken now to prepare a successful application can be found at the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program webpage at [www.neha.org/retailgrants](http://www.neha.org/retailgrants). Registration for the 2021 NEHA-FDA RFFM application portal will open September 1. Applications will be accepted September 9–November 15 (7:59 p.m. EST).

The NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program's success is dependent upon the success of its jurisdictions. The program is designed to be people-centered and will consistently deliver the tools, resources, and support necessary for success. Through the duration of the application and grant cycle, the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program will provide personalized support in the form of subject matter experts, webinars, Q&A sessions, and an incredibly responsive grant support team.

For questions, guidance, or direct support, please contact our NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team via email at [retailgrants@neha.org](mailto:retailgrants@neha.org) or toll-free at (833) 575-2404.

## NEHA Releases New Animated Video That Highlights Environmental Health Professionals as an Army of Unseen Protectors

By Jordan Strahle ([jstrahle@neha.org](mailto:jstrahle@neha.org))

Who makes sure that our food, water, air, homes, and communities are safe? We know that it is environmental health professionals. To most people, however, our work goes unnoticed. They trust that their water is safe to drink, that the restaurant they are eating from is clean—but they do not consider how that happens.

“Did you know that the reason our homes, schools, and communities are safe from infection and disease is because an unseen team of guardians protecting us, day and night? We are not superheroes; we’re trained scientists you may not have even heard of before. And when we are doing our job as environmental health professionals, you won’t notice us at all. We’re invisible. Problems are prevented.”

The above quote highlights the premise of this new animated video produced by NEHA that helps to expose the often overlooked and undervalued world of environmental health professionals and the ways they tirelessly work to ensure public health and safety is protected. This short video shows some of the many ways an “invisible” environmental health professional impacts and protects many of the aspects of our daily lives, from our children’s day care to our oceans. It helps to not only expose the work we do but also raises the importance of ensuring that the environmental health profession is supported in a manner consistent with other public health initiatives and programs.

This video is a bridge, connecting the public and decision makers to the work that we do every day. We encourage you to share it within your communities and help make our invisible profession visible. To learn more and view the video, please visit [www.neha.org/eh-animated-video](http://www.neha.org/eh-animated-video).

NEHA is also pleased to announce that the video was selected for screening on-demand at the American Public Health Association (APHA) Film Festival at the APHA 2021 Annual Meeting and Expo being held October 23–27. The video was selected from a large number of submissions and was judged to be of high quality and interest. We are excited to be able to share the video to a larger audience during the APHA Film Festival.

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Blog Series

By Jonna Ashley ([jashley@neha.org](mailto:jashley@neha.org))

As environmental health professionals, you are navigating new ways of working with and serving your communities. All too often in times of change and uncertainty, diversity, equity, and inclusion are deprioritized as we make sense of new realities. It is imperative in these difficult times to center on diversity and highlight those who are making efforts to be inclusive where they live and work.

The latest blog series from NEHA shines a light on members who are prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion in their everyday jobs. In telling the stories of these individuals we aim to support the field in building awareness while driving action towards equity and inclusion.

This limited member spotlight series on the A Day in Life of an EH Professional Blog highlights four members who are working in a variety of ways to better represent and communicate with the people in their communities. They are leveraging their leadership positions on committees, within universities, at health departments, and with international companies to connect with a diverse range of people to advocate for underserved and racial-ethnic minority groups. A common thread in each story is the concept of relationship building. Whether it is the relationship between environmental health professionals and local politicians or the relationship between a regulator and a restaurant owner, each of these members understands the value of listening, learning, and treating others with respect.

You can read the member spotlight stories of Thomas Gillam-Shaffer, Daniel Oerther, Joan Peterson, and Brian Zamora on the A Day in Life of an EH Professional Blog at [www.neha.org/dei-blog-series](http://www.neha.org/dei-blog-series). While these stories focus on leaders, environmental health professionals in all stages of their careers can enact diversity initiatives in large and small ways.

We invite you to submit your story idea to be featured on the blog. NEHA’s membership team will work with you to turn a summary of your work into a compelling blog story that can be shared nationally and at the local level. To learn more and submit your ideas, please contact Membership Manager Jonna Ashley at [jashley@neha.org](mailto:jashley@neha.org).



## The Retail Food Safety Regulatory Association Collaborative Releases Food Code Adoption Toolkit and Interactive Food Code Adoption Map

By Terryn Laird ([tlaird@neha.org](mailto:tlaird@neha.org))

The Retail Food Safety Regulatory Association Collaborative (Collaborative) is pleased to announce the release of the Food Code Adoption Toolkit and interactive Food Code Adoption Map. The Toolkit is a living resource that provides research, resources, and support to decision makers looking to adopt the most recent versions of the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) *Food Code* to regulate the retail segment of the food industry. The interactive Food Code Adoption Map is a reference reflecting statutory or regulatory adoption of the FDA *Food Code* at the state level as of January 2021.

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The *Food Code* is a model code for safeguarding public health against instances of foodborne illness and is a scientifically sound, technical resource that can be used to regulate the retail segment of the food industry. Increasing the number of state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) regulating bodies that have adopted the two most recent versions of the FDA *Food Code* is one of the primary aims of the Collaborative. Adoption of the latest versions of the *Food Code* is associated with many benefits including assurance that food safety regulations reflect the most current science available and will evolve to reflect new science, knowledge, and emerging technologies.

The Toolkit was developed to provide information and resources to SLTT agencies looking to adopt more recent versions of the FDA *Food Code*. The Toolkit provides background on *Food Code* adoption and features letters of support from six national associations, three industry associations, and four regulatory programs. It also provides a list of resources, places to go for support, and an area to provide additional tools and resources from Toolkit viewers.

The Food Code Adoption Map provides a quick reference for stakeholders to quickly visualize which FDA *Food Code* version has been adopted, as well as easily accessible information on statutory and regulatory citations, most recent effective or amended dates, and agencies with regulatory authority.

View the Food Code Adoption Toolkit and the Food Code Adoption Map on the Collaborative's website at [www.retailfood-safetycollaborative.org/tools/national-food-code-adoption-toolkit](http://www.retailfood-safetycollaborative.org/tools/national-food-code-adoption-toolkit).

### NEHA Staff Profile

As part of tradition, NEHA features new staff members in the *Journal* around the time of their 1-year anniversary. These profiles give you an opportunity to get to know the NEHA staff better and to learn more about the great programs and activities going on in your association. This month we are pleased to introduce you to one NEHA staff member. Contact information for all NEHA staff can be found on pages 52 and 53.



### Becky Labbo

My interests in psychology started at a young age and remained throughout my education. I received my bachelor's degree in psychology and my master's degree in educational psychology. My career path took me down the road of research and evaluation. It was during my first job as a research assistant that I realized I liked that side of programs. I'm simply a very logical, analytical person who always asks

for the facts and data. I want to learn about the reasons and causes of things and use knowledge and information for improvement and to make decisions. My family often jokes that they don't need to read reviews because I have painstakingly researched the pros and cons for just about everything we buy, from cars to laundry detergent.

I have spent the last 20-plus years in program evaluation with about 7 years focused on K-12 education and teacher preparation and the latter 14 years in the realm of school wellness focused on the whole child. When I saw the opportunity with NEHA it felt like an ideal fit. Even though environmental health is new to me, I believe there is an intersection between the health of our environment and personal wellness. One does not happen without the other. My position at NEHA is as evaluation coordinator within the Program and Partnership Development Department. In this role, I will not only work to ensure evaluation is incorporated in all that NEHA does but also use this information to show our successes and to improve our programs to make a positive footprint.

I am a proud Colorado native! True to where I live, I love the mountains. In the summer you will find me hiking, enjoying a good patio, and attending live music at the best music venue in the world, Red Rocks. My family and I are avid skiers so in the winter you will find us at our favorite Colorado ski resorts. And of course, in addition to my husband and two kids, I stay busy trying to tire out our beloved goldendoodle, Cosmo Kramer. 🐶

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