The NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model Grant Program
Grant Program Guidance
Calendar Year 2022

Application Period: September 9- November 15, 2021
https://www.neha.org/retailgrants

Advancing conformance with the FDA’s Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards
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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 more 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 on a new opportunity offering ample financial support to advance conformance with the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards (VNRFRPS or Retail Program Standards).

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

NEHA-FDA RETAIL FLEXIBLE FUNDING MODEL 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.

OVERVIEW OF FUNDING

NEHA, in partnership with the FDA, will assist retail food regulatory agencies in their efforts to reduce the occurrence of foodborne illness through conformance with the Retail Program Standards. Jurisdictions will fall into three eligibility tracks based on their experience and achievements in the Retail Program Standards.
Track 1 Development Base Grant Funding (1-Year Award): Applicants who are newly enrolled in the Retail Program Standards, or who do not have a current self-assessment of all nine Standards (SA9) and a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP), can apply for Track 1 Development Base Grant funding, with the opportunity to request up to $5,000 to:

- complete an SA9 or, if they already have a current SA9,
- complete a CSIP.

Track 1 applicants will also be able to apply for two of the optional add-on grants available, including:

- Mentorship: Up to $14,000/year/grantee as a Mentee; and
- Training/Staff Development and Program Standards Engagement: Up to $7,500/year/grantee for one or more staff members to attend Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Workshops.

Track 2 Development Base Grant Funding (1-Year Award): Jurisdictions who have already completed an SA9 and a CSIP to attach to their application (guidance can be found on the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Website), can apply for Track 2 Development Base Grant funding to:

- Pursue continuous improvement with the Standards and Elements (required), receiving up to $5,000/year/grantee.
- Add a public health metric (optional), 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 an equivalent public health measure.

Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant Funding: Jurisdictions that have both a current SA9 and a completed CSIP to attach to their application, and have met and verified at least one Standard during their most recent self-assessment period will qualify to apply for Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant funding, 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 three-year funding cycle; and
NEHA-FDA RETAIL FLEXIBLE FUNDING MODEL GRANT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

• Up to $5,000 per Standard per year to maintain conformance with one or more Standards.

To select any of the above Track 3 options, applicants who have not already met Standard 9 (with Verification Audit completed and paperwork submitted to and approved by FDA) are required to select one of two public health metric variable funding rates, offering either up to $5,000 (Level 1) or up to $10,000 per year (Level 2) to complete a risk factor study, perform data collection, and analysis, and implement one or more intervention strategies based on a risk factor study or equivalent public health metric.

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

• 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; and/or
• Capacity Building: Up to $100,000/year/grantee for a three-year grant cycle.

Further details regarding supported activities, eligibility requirements, expected outcomes, and exceptions will be available on the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Website.

ELIGIBILITY

Funding is available to retail food protection agencies currently enrolled in Retail Program Standards. For more information or to enroll in the Retail Program Standards, please visit https://www.neha.org/retailgrants/enroll. Enrollment can generally be accomplished within one to three days.

Please note that enrollment in the Retail Program Standards is different and separate from registering for an account and submitting applications through the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program. The information hereafter applies to the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program.
SUBMISSION DEADLINE
All applications must be submitted electronically using the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program application portal, accessed through the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Website. Once you are registered with this program and have access to the grant portal, you will be able to view details on how to apply for each specific grant application available through the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program. Application links for each of the six grants will be added to the grant portal on the morning of Wednesday, September 9, 2021. All applications must be completed and successfully submitted through the portal by Monday, November 15, 2021, at 7:59 p.m. EST.

AMOUNT OF FUNDING AVAILABLE
More than $6 million in funding is expected to be awarded through the C.Y. 2022 NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program for applications submitted during the Fall 2021 open application period (September 9 – November 15, 2021). Project Periods for funded projects will begin in early 2022.

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 our NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team via email at retailgrants@neha.org or toll-free at (833) 575-2404.
Seven Actions for Success in the New NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model Grant Program

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 and experienced retail food subject matter experts;
- 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 Conference for Food Protection (CFP).

FDA encourages all applicants to achieve the following outcomes as they seek to complete all nine of the Retail Program Standards:

- Complete/update a self-assessment of all nine Standards (SA9) once every five years. The initial SA9 can be completed using funding from a Development (DEV) Base Grant. Repeat SA9s can be funded once every five years, using funds from either a DEV Base Grant or a Maintenance and Advancement (M&A) Base Grant.

- Meet all Elements leading to compliance with each of the nine Standards and complete a Verification Audit for each of the nine Standards (using funding from either a DEV or an M&A Base Grant).

- Achieve the Elements that will lead to conformance with Standard 9, using Public Health Metric funding available to:
  - complete a foodborne illness risk factor study or equivalent public health measure with a written summary of the data analysis (DEV Base Grant);
  - complete an evaluation of inspection data with a written summary of data analysis (DEV Base Grant);
  - develop and implement one or more intervention strategy(ies) based on a completed risk factor study or equivalent public health measure (DEV Base Grant);
  - complete a Public Health Metric based on the use of inspection data as the foundation for a risk factor study with a written summary of the data analysis and implementation of an intervention strategy(ies) based on the data analysis to improve public health outcomes (M&A Base Grant); or
  - complete a Public Health Metric based on the FDA Risk Factor Study model or equivalent public health measure with a written summary of the data analysis. 

SEVEN ACTIONS FOR SUCCESS
• Use a Mentorship Optional Add-On Grant to become a Mentor and assist other jurisdictions in making progress in the Retail Program Standards or become a Mentee to learn about and progress through the Retail Program Standards.

• Use a Training/Staff Development and Program Standards Engagement Optional Add-On Grant to advance SLTT retail food protection programs by training employees, with the goal of meeting and maintaining the requirements of Standard 2 and other Retail Program Standards.

• Use a Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant to develop a project that uses a Retail Program Standards framework that works toward an Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS), with all project deliverables and resources made available to other retail food protection programs.

• Use a Capacity Building Optional Add-On Grant to develop a three-year project or initiative that advances SLTT retail food protection programs by working with stakeholders involved in retail food safety (collaboration required) and that leverages the strengths, knowledge, tools, and other resources of collaborators to further city-wide, multi-county, regional, statewide, or national conformance with the Retail Program Standards.

Following are seven key actions to help you navigate the application process.

**ACTION 1 - ENROLLMENT IN THE RETAIL PROGRAM STANDARDS**

If you have not yet enrolled in the **Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards** (Retail Program Standards), enrollment is your first action to take. Enrollment in the Retail Program Standards is required to apply for funding through the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program. *(Jurisdictions already enrolled in the Retail Program Standards can skip to Step 2.)*

The following is a step-by-step process for enrollment in the Retail Program Standards, which conveys an eligible jurisdiction’s intent to actively use the Retail Program Standards as a tool to assess and improve its retail food protection program.

A jurisdiction initiates the enrollment process by:

○ analysis and implementation of an intervention strategy(ies) based on the data analysis to improve public health outcomes *(M&A Base Grant).*
Retail Program Standards Enrollment

► Step 1: Review the FDA Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards guidance online, including the Administrative Procedures.

► Step 2: Contact the FDA Regional Retail Food Safety Specialist assigned to your FDA Region, and notify them of your intent to enroll.

► Step 3: Complete FDA National Registry Report (FDA Form 3958) (PDF – 1.22MB) and submit it to your Retail Food Specialist. NOTE: When filling out the FDA form, be sure to select “Please enroll this jurisdiction in the Retail Program Standards” in Section 2.

• Once you have contacted your FDA Regional Retail Food Safety Specialist and completed and submitted FDA Form 3958, you are considered “enrolled” for the purposes of the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program and can apply for funding.

• Your jurisdiction will eventually be added to the web-based Listing of Jurisdictions Enrolled in the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards (https://www.fda.gov/food/voluntary-national-retail-food-regulatory-program-standards/listing-jurisdictions-enrolled-voluntary-national-retail-food-regulatory-program-standards), but your jurisdiction name does not need to show on this list to confirm your enrollment.

ACTION 2 – DETERMINING YOUR ELIGIBILITY AND CHOOSING AN APPLICATION TRACK THAT MEETS THE CAPACITY NEEDS AND RETAIL PROGRAM STANDARDS GOALS OF YOUR JURISDICTION

There are three different ways jurisdictions can navigate through the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program application process, with each of the potential pathways governed by specific eligibility criteria. Below are the three “Eligibility Tracks available to jurisdictions:” Track 1 Funding (Development), Track 2 Funding (Development), and Track 3 (Maintenance and Advancement).
Jurisdictions that choose the **Track 1 Funding (Development)** pathway can apply for:

- **Required Development Base Grant**, requesting up to $5,000 for:
  - Completion of a Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards (SA9), or
  - Completion of a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan based on the completed SA9; and
- **Optional Mentorship Add-On Grant**, requesting up to $14,000 to become a Mentee; and
- **Optional Training/Staff Development and Program Standards Engagement Add-On Grant**, requesting up to $7,500 to enable one or more staff members to attend a Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Workshop.

Jurisdictions that choose the **Track 2 Funding (Development)** pathway can apply for:

- **Required Development Base Grant (Development Rate)**, requesting:
  - up to $5,000 for measurable continuous improvement through the Retail
Program Standards (meeting Standards and Elements, and a Repeat self-assessment of all nine Standards when needed, up to once every five years); and

**Optional Public Health Metric Rate**, requesting:
- up to an additional $5,000 for completion of one of two Public Health Metrics, either:
  - Completion of foodborne illness risk factor study or equivalent public health measure with a written summary of the data analysis, or evaluation of inspection data with a written summary of data analysis; or
  - Development and implementation of an intervention strategy based on a completed risk factor study or equivalent public health measure.
- **NOTE**: Jurisdictions should apply for the level of work they can accomplish, during a one-year project period, toward either completion of risk factor study or equivalent (including inspectional data), or implementation of an intervention strategy. Applicants must define the action steps and progress that will be accomplished at the end of one year. They must also include an outline of additional work that must be done in the future to fully complete their proposed project. It is anticipated that NEHA-FDA RFFM grant funding will be available for 2023 and 2024, to allow jurisdictions to apply for funds to complete public health metric-focused projects that were started in 2022.

**Optional Mentorship Add-On Grant**, requesting up to $14,000 to become a Mentee or up to $24,000 to become a Mentor; and

**Optional Training/Staff Development and Program Standards Engagement Add-On Grant**, requesting up to $7,500 to enable one or more staff members to attend:
- a Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Workshop;
- Retail Food Courses offered by/on behalf of FDA;
- FDA Retail Food Seminars; and/or
- other forums that discuss or deliberate issues directly impacting the FDA Food Code of the Retail Program Standards (such as NEHA AEC, AFDO AEC, NACCHO, and CFP); and

**Optional Special Projects Add-On Grant**, requesting up to $20,000 toward an Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS) project. Grant awards in this category are expected to be limited, especially in Year 1, and jurisdictions should be cautious about planning to use funding from this category for their annual staffing plans.

**Optional Capacity Building Add-On Grant**, requesting up to $100,000 per year for the required three years for collaborative projects that leverage the strengths, knowledge, tools, and other resources of collaborators to further city-wide, multi-county, regional, statewide, or national conformance with the
Jurisdictions that choose the **Track 3 Funding (Maintenance and Advancement)** pathway can apply for:

- **Required Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant**, requesting:
  - **Public Health Metric Variable Funding Rates** (If a jurisdiction has already met Standard 9, they are not eligible for this rate, but are still eligible for the other four rates listed below.) **If a jurisdiction has not met Standard 9, they must choose one of the following options to apply for a Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant:**
    - **Level 1 Public Health Metric Variable Funding**: Up to $5,000/year/applicant. Metric based on the use of inspection data as the foundation for a risk factor study with a written summary of the data analysis and implementation of an intervention strategy(ies) based on the data analysis to improve public health outcomes.
    - **Level 2 Public Health Metric Variable Funding**: Up to $10,000/year/applicant. Metric based on the FDA Risk Factor Study model or equivalent public health measure with a written summary of the data analysis and implementation of an intervention strategy(ies) based on the data analysis to improve public health outcomes.
  - **NOTE**: Jurisdictions who have not met Standard 9 must apply to work
on a public health metric. Jurisdictions should apply for the level of work they can accomplish, during a three-year project period, toward completion of a risk factor study or equivalent (including inspectional data) and implementation of an intervention strategy, at either of the rates selected (Level 1 or Level 2). The project plan must define the action steps that will be completed for each of the three project years necessary to accomplish the level of work proposed in the application.

- **Repeat Self-Assessment Rate**: Up to $3,000 per Grantee to complete a five-year repeat self-assessment of all nine Standards. Grantees can apply for this rate once in the three-year funding cycle of this funding program.

- **Continuous Improvement Rate**: Up to $3,000 per Standard per year. Applicants must identify Elements that they will achieve (within each Standard chosen) by the end of the three-year project period. This rate can be applied to Standards 1 through 8.

- **Conformance Rate**: Up to $10,000 per Standard per year. Applicants must identify Standard(s) that they will achieve AND audit by the end of the three-year project period. This rate can be applied to Standards 1 through 8.

- **Maintenance Rate**: Up to $5,000 per Standard per year that has been verified by audit. Applicants must directly link funding requests with initiatives/projects needed to maintain conformance with a Standard or Standards. This rate can be applied to Standards 1 through 9.

- **Optional Mentorship Add-On Grant**, requesting up to $14,000 to become a Mentee or up to $24,000 to become a Mentor; and

- **Optional Training/Staff Development and Program Standards Engagement Add-On Grant**, requesting up to $7,500 to enable one or more staff members to attend:
  - A Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Workshop,
  - Retail Food Courses offered by/on behalf of FDA,
  - FDA Retail Food Seminars, and/or
  - Other forums that discuss or deliberate issues directly impacting the FDA Food Code or the Retail Program Standards (such as NEHA AEC, AFDO AEC, NACCHO, and CFP); and

- **Optional Special Projects Add-On Grant**, requesting up to $20,000 toward an Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS) project. Grant awards in this category are expected to be limited, especially in Year 1, and jurisdictions should be cautious about planning to use funding from this category for their annual staffing plans.

- **Optional Capacity Building Add-On Grant**, requesting up to $100,000 per year for the required three years for collaborative projects to leverage the strengths, knowledge, tools, and other resources of collaborators to further city-wide, multi-county, regional, statewide, or national conformance with
the Retail Program Standards. Grant awards in this category are expected to be limited, especially in Year 1, and jurisdictions should be cautious about planning to use funding from this category for their annual staffing plans.

ACTION 3 – UNDERSTANDING THE TWO TYPES OF BASE GRANTS, AND THE FOUR OPTIONAL ADD-ON GRANTS

The NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program funding model was designed to assist the vast diversity of the nation's 3,000+ SLTT agencies with the primary responsibility to regulate more than one million food establishments in the United States. The RFFM offers six (6) grants of varying amounts and complexities with the goal of meeting each jurisdiction where they are, no matter how small, resource-limited, or large.

The program is broken into two distinct grant types (Figure 1):

1. Two (2) Base Grant options, which are required for each participating jurisdiction (each jurisdiction must pick one and only one Base Grant); and
2. Four (4) Optional Add-On Grants, with jurisdictions able to apply for any/all for which they are eligible.

![Diagram showing the seven actions for success](image)
Following is a brief description of each of the six (6) NEHA-FDA RFFM grant types:

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<th>Development Base Grant (One-Year Award)</th>
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<td>• Minimum Eligibility: Must be enrolled in the Retail Program Standards.</td>
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<td>• Duration: One year, with the opportunity to reapply annually.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Best For: Newly enrolled jurisdictions and other jurisdictions that do not have a current self-assessment of all nine Standards (SA9) and a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP).</td>
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<td>• Also, Ideal For: Jurisdictions who have a current SA9 (completed in September 2016 or later) have completed a CSIP and are ready to begin meeting Standards, achieving Elements, and (optionally) working on a Public Health Metric (working toward Standard 9). This choice is for jurisdictions that meet the two requirements listed (SA9 and CSIP) but has either not yet met a Standard or are not ready to make a three-year commitment to the Retail Program Standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Uses: Completion of SA9 or a CSIP (newly enrolled jurisdictions) or for making continuous improvement in the Standards (working on Standards and Elements) and pursuing one of the Public Health Metric options (completion of foodborne illness risk factor study or equivalent public health measure with a written summary of the data analysis; evaluation of inspection data with a written summary of data analysis; and/or development and implementation of an intervention strategy that is based on a completed risk factor study or equivalent public health measure).</td>
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Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant (Three-Year Award)

- Eligibility: Must be enrolled in the Retail Program Standards, have a current SA9 (completed in September 2016 or later; the jurisdiction must ensure they keep a current self-assessment during the life of the grant cycle to continue to receive funding), have met at least one (1) Standard (with audit passed and paperwork turned in to FDA), and (if a jurisdiction has not yet met Standard 9) must be prepared to work on one of the Public Health Metric options offered during their three-year project performance period.

- Duration: Must commit to a full three-year project period, with this grant type likely not available again until 2024.

- Best For: Experienced jurisdictions ready to make or continue progress through the Standards and Elements and work on one of the Public Health Metric options offered.

- Also Ideal For: Jurisdictions who need additional resources to make a more significant commitment to the Retail Program Standards.

- Uses: Activities that lead to progress in achieving the specified Elements that lead to conformance with each of the nine Retail Program Standards.

Mentorship Optional Add-On Grant (One-Year Award)

- Eligibility: Must apply for either a Development or Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant and be enrolled in the Retail Program Standards (Mentee). Must also identify and demonstrate proficiency in the Standards for which they intend to mentor other jurisdictions and identify how many jurisdictions they are capable of mentoring – not to exceed five (Mentor).

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

- Best For: Newly enrolled jurisdictions, or any jurisdiction that feels they need assistance to make progress in the Retail Program Standards (Mentee); Jurisdictions with expertise in meeting one or more Standards (Mentor).

- Uses: Continuous improvement in the Retail Program Standards.
| Training/Staff Development and Program Standards Engagement | • Eligibility: At a minimum, jurisdictions must apply for either a Development or Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant and be enrolled in the Retail Program Standards to apply for limited training (participation in a Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Workshop). Full access to the training options available through this optional add-on grant requires jurisdictions to have a current SA9 (September 2016 or later) and a CSIP.

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

• Best For: Any jurisdiction that applies for either of the Base Grants.

• Uses: Attendance at the following workshops, trainings, or conferences:
  ○ Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Workshops;
  ○ Retail Food Courses offered by FDA or on behalf of FDA (NEHA and AFDO courses);
  ○ FDA Regional Food Seminars; Forums that discuss or deliberate issues directly impacting the Food Code and/or the Retail Program Standards (National Conferences such as the AFDO, NACCHO, or NEHA Annual Education Conferences, Regional/State Affiliate Meetings, the Conference for Food Protection, etc.). |

| Special Project Optional Add-On Grant (One-Year Award) | • Minimum Eligibility: Must apply for either a Development or Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant and be enrolled in the Retail Program Standards, have a current SA9, and have completed a CSIP.

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

• Best For: Experienced jurisdictions prepared to work toward building an Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS). |
• Project Ideas:
  ○ Development of a new inspection or investigation course for retail programs
  ○ Development of a system to collaborate with FDA and other agencies through I.T. 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 (a new method, idea, protocol, tool/resource);
  ○ Produces outcome data and/or a product and lessons learned that could be shared with FDA and other stakeholders;
  ○ Reflects and promotes inter-agency communication, collaboration, coordination, accountability, transparency, and sharing of information;
  ○ Supports the FDA mission and vision for building mutual reliance in an IFSS under 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.
Minimum Eligibility: Must apply for either a Development or Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant and be enrolled in the Retail Program Standards, have a current SA9, and have completed a CSIP.

Duration: Must commit to a full three-year project period. Jurisdictions are eligible for this three-year grant even if they are applying for the one-year Development Base Grant, but they will have to apply again for Development Base Grants in years 2 and 3.

Best For: Collaborative projects aimed at leveraging the strengths, knowledge, tools, and other resources of collaborators to further city-wide, multi-county, regional, statewide, or national conformance with the Retail Program Standards.

Uses: Continuous improvement in the Retail Program Standards.

Minimum Eligibility: Must apply for either a Development or Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant and be enrolled in the Retail Program Standards, have a current SA9, and have completed a CSIP.

Duration: Must commit to a full three-year project period. Jurisdictions are eligible for this three-year grant even if they are applying for the one-year Development Base Grant, but they will have to apply again for Development Base Grants in years 2 and 3.

Best For: Collaborative projects aimed at leveraging the strengths, knowledge, tools, and other resources of collaborators to further city-wide, multi-county, regional, statewide, or national conformance with the Retail Program Standards.

Use of Funding: Capacity-Building Projects should advance conformance with the Retail Program Standards and include collaboration among multiple SLTT jurisdictions and/or between an enrolled jurisdiction(s) and a retail food non-governmental partner (e.g., academia, industry, associations).
• Project Ideas: Projects may include, but are not limited to:
  ○ Development of programs and/or processes that focus on advancing the delivery and accessibility of cross-training events with multiple jurisdictions to further conformance with the Standards;
  ○ Development of processes or approaches that facilitate the delivery of Food Code Standardizations that meet the intent of the Standard 2 criteria within multiple jurisdictions;
  ○ Processes and forums that facilitate the engagement of multiple jurisdictions and other stakeholder groups toward a goal of adopting the most current version of the FDA Food Code;
  ○ Research and implementation of an agreement with one or more SLTT jurisdictions for data sharing related to inspections or laboratory analyses;
  ○ Collaborate with other SLTTs to develop uniform inspection procedures and protocols;
  ○ Collaborate with enrolled SLTT jurisdiction to conduct verification audits and reviews of conformance with a Standard(s);
  ○ Development and implementation of workgroups, committees, or similar advisory boards to discuss and address retail food protection issues among multiple SLTT jurisdictions;
  ○ Create products/program innovations that others can use to support their work in measurable improvements with the Program Standards;
  ○ Development or purchase of new types of software that can assist with the tracking of projects developed toward conforming with Standards that can be shared or interface with other jurisdictions; or
  ○ Purchase and use innovative technologies that will facilitate continuous improvement among jurisdictions toward conformance with the Standard(s).
ACTION 4 - COMPLETING A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT PLAN, TO BE ATTACHED TO YOUR BASE GRANT APPLICATION

A Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP) is a requirement for all application pathways except Track 1 Development Funding, where activities are limited to completion of a self-assessment of all nine Standards (SA9) or completion of a CSIP, becoming a mentee, and limited training (attendance at a Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Workshop).

The CSIP is a helpful tool to manage work through the Retail Program Standards, should address all Elements determined as “not met” in your current SA9, and must include:

• identification of individual Element(s) not met for Standard(s) not yet met by your jurisdiction,

• improvements needed (action steps/tasks) to address Standard(s) and Element(s) not yet met,

• personnel responsible for each action step/task, and

• target completion dates for each action step/task.

There is no set format for the required CSIP, so your jurisdiction can develop one that best meets your individual needs. The CSIP is considered a multi-year planning document intended to serve as a resource tool that jurisdictions can use, and there is no standard format or procedure for the CSIP. Jurisdictions can also use external templates to construct their CSIP to best meet their needs.

If your jurisdiction determines it will need a CSIP for the Fall 2021 application period, the following is a simple process we suggest.

Completing Your Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP)

► **Step 1:** Review the FDA Guidance and optional template for the CSIP found here: [https://www.neha.org/sites/default/files/retailgrants/CSIP_Template2.docx](https://www.neha.org/sites/default/files/retailgrants/CSIP_Template2.docx).

► **Step 2:** Determine the best format and plan for your CSIP, one that meets your individual jurisdictional needs, and develop your CSIP using MS Word, PDF, MS Excel, project management software, or another standard format.

► **Step 3:** During the NEHA-FDA RFFM Fall 2021 application period, attach the CSIP to your Base Grant application in the section provided.
The CSIP that you attach to your NEHA-FDA RFFM Base Grant application should not impact your application review score. Although required, the CSIP is intended to be a flexible tool to help you successfully navigate through the Retail Program Standards.

FDA Guidance explaining the purposes of both the CSIP and the Project Implementation Plan (PIP) can be found here: https://www.neha.org/sites/default/files/retail-grants/CSIP_and_PIP_Guidance.docx.

A template for the PIP, which, when developed, can be used as a resource to cut and paste key information into your grant application(s), can be found here: https://www.neha.org/sites/default/files/retailgrants/PIP_Template.docx.

ACTION 5 – REGISTERING FOR THE NEHA-FDA RFFM GRANT PROGRAM PORTAL

The NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Portal will open for Registration on September 1, 2021. Jurisdictions who intend to apply for any of the six (6) available grants in Fall 2021 need to register, as this is a new grant program and a newly built system.

To Register for the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Portal:

1. From https://www.neha.org/retailgrants, click on the button that reads “Access to the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Portal.” This will take you to the grant portal landing page, which reads: “Welcome to the NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model Registration Portal” at the top.

2. From the grant portal landing page, read 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, the Registration page will open. (If you do not pass the Eligibility Questionnaire, it may be because you are not yet enrolled in the Retail Program Standards. If you represent a retail food protection agency and are not yet enrolled with the Retail Program Standards, please see Step 1 above, “Enrollment in the Retail Program Standards.” If you have any other questions about eligibility, please contact the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team at retailgrants@neha.org or toll-free (833) 575-2404.

4. Complete the Registration, which has a few simple organizational questions about your retail food protection jurisdiction, your Organizational Point of Contact (POC) (the person in your organization who will serve as the main point of contact for questions regarding this organizational Registration and applications to
be submitted for your organization, and who will receive a username and password for access to the grant portal) and your Authorizing Official (the person in your organization that 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, hit “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 NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Application 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. In rare cases, emails can be filtered out or sent to a spam folder. If you do not receive an email with a username and password within two (2) days after Registration, please contact the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team for assistance.

**ACTION 6 – APPLY FOR A BASE GRANT**

Jurisdictions interested in applying for one or more grants through the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program must first apply for one of the two required base grants.

To apply:

1. Be sure that you are both enrolled in the Retail Program Standards (Action 1) and registered for this grant program (Action 5).

2. Determine which Track you are eligible to apply through (Action 2) and which track (and its corresponding grants) will best meet the needs of your jurisdiction (Action 3).

3. If you apply for one of the higher-level base grants (Track 2 or Track 3), be sure that you have already completed your Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (Action 4).

4. If you have completed a Written Project Implementation Plan (WPIP), have it handy, as you will be able to copy and paste plan elements into the grant portal in response to grant application questions. Your answers to the grant application questions will create a WPIP that meets FDA’s requirements, built into your application.
5. From the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Website (https://www.neha.org/retailgrants), log into the Grant Program Portal.

6. From your Grantee 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. Click on the “Eligibility Criteria” button at the top of the left menu in your Grantee Portal if you would like to review the requirements for each of the three application tracks.

8. When you have determined which track you would like to apply through, click on the button labeled “Apply Now - Track (1, 2, or 3)”. 

9. Your first application through this program must be for a base grant, so click on the button for the base grant in the Track you have selected.
10. Your selected base grant application will open. Please fully answer each application question and be sure to hit “Save and Continue” often.

11. If you need to leave your application before you are ready to submit, simply hit “Save and Close.”
MAINTENANCE AND ADVANCEMENT
GRANT APPLICATION

General Project Information

Organization:
Location:
Point of Contact:
Confirm Point of Contact:

Point of Contact (POC)
The POC is the person in your organization who should be contacted regarding questions about your application. Please confirm your POC twice in the fields above.

Authorizing Official Verification
The Authorizing Official is the person in your organization who provides supervisory oversight for this grant opportunity (often an organization’s Financial or Grants Management Official). Below is the Authorizing Official contact information we have on record for your organization. Please verify below if this information is still current and correct.

Authorizing Official (AO):
AO Title:
AO Phone:
AO Email Address:
12. 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. Once you are satisfied with all the entries in your application, scroll to the bottom of the application and hit “Submit.”
CONFIRMING APPLICATION SUBMITTAL: To confirm that your application submitted correctly.

- Give your Grantee Portal time to refresh (you can even log out and log back in) and navigate to the “Requests” section of the left menu.
- After refreshing, your submitted application should no longer be in the “Pending Requests” section, but in the “Submitted Requests” section.
- You should also have received an automated “Thank you for applying” email message, sent to the POC email address entered in your application, for every application you submit.
- 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 or toll free (833) 575-2404.

ACTION 7 – APPLY FOR ONE OR MORE OF THE FOUR OPTIONAL ADD-ON GRANTS

Once you have completed a base grant application, even if you have not yet submitted it, feel free to begin completing one or more of the optional add-on grant applications available in the eligibility Track you have selected. Some applicants like to complete all the applications they have chosen to apply for, leaving them in the “Pending Requests” section of the Grantee Portal, and then submit them together (they still must be submitted individually, one at a time) before the deadline. To apply for one or more optional add-on grants:

1. Log back into your Grantee Portal, and once again, click on the “Apply Now -Track (1, 2, or 3)” button for the same Track you used to apply for a base grant.
2. Scroll down and select any optional add-on grants available in your chosen track and use the same procedures you used to apply for the base grant (See Action 6 – instructions 10-12).
3. When you finish one of the additional add-on grant applications, you can either complete and submit it or leave it in the “Pending Requests” section of your Grantee 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 submit all of your “Pending Requests” before the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program application deadline and confirm that they have moved to the “Submitted Requests” area of your Grantee Portal (see Action 6 – instruction 12, including the “CONFIRMING APPLICATION SUBMITTAL text box).

6. If you have any questions or needs during the application submittal process (or after submittal), please reach out to the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team as often as needed at retailgrants@neha.org or toll-free (833) 575-2404.
Determining A “Not-To-Exceed Amount for Your Three-Year Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant Budget

One of the key advantages of applying for the three-year Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant is the opportunity to develop a project plan and a corresponding three-year budget that meets the goals and needs of your jurisdiction. Because this grant type is only being offered during the Fall 2021 open application period, offering three-year grants with project periods encompassing Calendar Years 2022, 2023, and 2024, interested and eligible jurisdictions must apply in the current grant cycle to take advantage of this opportunity. See Actions 2 and 3 on the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Website for complete eligibility information.

Please review the following guidelines and examples to help you determine the “Not-To-Exceed” three-year budget amount for your specific project proposal. Feel free to reach out to the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team with any questions at retailgrants@neha.org or toll-free (833) 575-2404.

Important note: The calculated “Not-To-Exceed” amount for your three-year project budget represents the upper limit of funding possible, based on your proposed project plan. Not all applicants will need this amount of funding, and your budget must be based on your actual needs while considering the specific outcomes and objectives outlined in your application. For your project budget to be approved, all costs must be justified and reasonable based on the particular needs of your jurisdiction as you work to implement your three-year project plan.

Factors that Impact Your Three-Year Project Budget

There are five rates that apply to the different Standard-based outcomes associated with a Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant application.

- The rate that applies to each Standard your jurisdiction chooses to work on (Continuous Improvement, Conformance, Maintenance, etc.) is determined by whether you work on the Standard, plan to meet and audit the Standard by the end of the project period, or are maintaining a Standard previously met, as noted below.
- The rate that applies to each Standard (Continuous Improvement, Conformance, Maintenance, etc.) does not change but is used for each of the three project years.
- Finally, the maximum funding for each of the Standard-based outcomes in your proposed project are added together to determine your three-year “Not-To-
Exceed” project budget.

The Five Rates include:

1. **Continuous Improvement Rate (up to $3,000 per Standard per year):** How many Standards will you work on but not fully achieve and audit during your three-year proposed project period (completion of some but not all Elements for the Standard[s])? Do not include Standard 9, which is either covered by the Public Health Metric Variable Funding Rate question above or the Maintenance Rate below. “Not-To-Exceed” funding for this outcome = number of Standards you will “Partially Achieve” by the end of your three-year project period x $3,000 per Standard per year.

2. **Conformance Rate (up to $10,000 per Standard per year):** How many Standards do you plan to achieve (Standard met, audit completed and passed, paperwork turned in to FDA) during your proposed project? Again, do not include Standard 9, which is covered by the Public Health Metric Variable Funding Rate question above or the Maintenance Rate below. “Not-To-Exceed” funding for this outcome = number of Standards you will “Meet & Audit” by the end of your three-year project period x $10,000 per Standard per year.

3. **Maintenance Rate (up to $5,000 per Standard per year):** How many Standards had you met before the start of your project for which you plan to use project funds to maintain conformance during your three-year project period? If you have already met Standard 9 (and any other Standards) AND you plan to use project funds to work to maintain conformance for the Standard(s), please include Standard 9 in your count for this entry. “Not-To-Exceed” funding for this outcome = number of Standards you will work to “Maintain” during your three-year project period x $5,000 per Standard per year.

4. **Repeat Self-Assessment Rate (up to $3,000 total):** If you plan to complete a repeat self-assessment of all nine Standards during your three-year project period – you are required to keep your self-assessment current (i.e., updated every five years) during your three-year project – funding for this outcome will be up to $3,000 for the three-year project period (not per year).

5. **Public Health Metric Variable Funding Rate (up to $0, $5,000, or $10,000 per year):** If you HAVE already met Standard 9 before the beginning of the project period proposed in your application, your jurisdiction is not eligible for this funding rate, and funding for this outcome will be $0. If you HAVE NOT already achieved Standard 9, you MUST choose EITHER Public Health Metric Variable Funding Rate Level 1 (up to $5,000 per year) OR Public Health Metric Variable Funding Rate Level 2 (up to $10,000 per year) to apply for a Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant. “Not-To-Exceed” funding for this outcome will be up to $0, $5,000, or $10,000 per year.
Examples – “Not-To-Exceed” Maintenance and Advancement Budgets for Two Jurisdictions With Different Scopes of Work

**Example #1: Jurisdiction A** is relatively new to the Retail Program Standards and is proposing a modest project plan to:

- pursue Standards 3 and 4, achieving some but not all elements (Continuous Improvement Rate);
- maintain Standard 2, which they have already met (Maintenance Rate); and
- complete a Risk Factor Study and one Intervention Strategy and meet the other requirements of the Public Health Variable Funding Rate Level 1.

They do not need a repeat self-assessment since they just updated theirs in 2020.

**Jurisdiction A has a “Not-To-Exceed” 3-year budget, calculated as follows:** $6,000 per year (Continuous Improvement Rate of $3,000 per Standard for two Standards) + $5,000 per year (Maintenance Rate of $5,000 per Standard for one Standard) + $5,000 per year (Public Health Variable Funding Rate Level 1) = up to **$16,000 per year, and up to $48,000 over 3 years ($16,000 per year x 3 years)**. *The actual budget submitted by the jurisdiction may be lower, as it will need to be justified and meet Jurisdiction A’s demonstrated needs.*

**Example #2: Jurisdiction B** is further along in the Retail Program Standards, with a more ambitious project plan to:

- meet and audit Standards 5, 6 and 7 – one in each project year (Conformance Rate);
- maintain Standards 1, 2 and 3, which they have already met (Maintenance Rate);
- complete a repeat self-assessment in project year 2, since their current one will hit the five-year mark during 2023; and
- complete an FDA Risk Factor Study and one Intervention Strategy and meet the other requirements of the Public Health Variable Funding Rate Level 2.

**Jurisdiction B has a “Not-To-Exceed” 3-year budget, calculated as follows:** $30,000 per year (Conformance Rate of $10,000 per Standard for three Standards) + $15,000 per year (Maintenance Rate of $5,000 per Standard for three Standards) + $10,000 per year (Public Health Variable Funding Rate Level 2) = up to **$55,000 per year (and an additional $3,000 in project year 2 for their repeat self-assessment), and up to $168,000 over 3 years ($55,000 per year x 3 years + $3,000)**. *Again, the actual budget submitted may be lower, as it will need to be justified and meet Jurisdiction B’s demonstrated needs.*
Program Rules, Terms, and Conditions

ALLOWABLE COSTS
Allowable costs for subawards made through the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program include personnel costs (salaries and fringe benefits dedicated to an approved project – permissible for all grant types except Training/Staff Development and Program Standards Engagement Add-On Grants), contractual costs, training costs, travel costs, registration fees, speaker fees, contractual fees, audiovisual materials, 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 de minimis rate of 10%. (The Office of Management and Budget provides additional guidance on the de minimis rate at https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=5a32387e087a2cd0368f361f5afb9ec6&m c=true&node=se2.1.200_1414&rgn=div8.)

For training courses leading to a professional certification, materials, registration fees, and online course fees 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).

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, and catering (other than per diem for travelers) are not permitted for any grant.
• Uniforms: Uniforms and branded clothing are not allowed.

Personnel costs are not permissible for Training/Staff Development and Program Standards Engagement 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 fees to
become a Certified Professional Food Safety (CP-FS) are not allowed. However, as stated in the Allowable Costs section above, materials, registration fees, and online course fees for this type of course may 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.

Other Agreements, Grants, & Funding Sources: 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.

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), logo shirts, uniforms, gift cards, etc.
Program Rules and Requirements

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 the programs to complete a self-assessment of all nine Standards (the first step required after enrollment in the VNRFPS, also referred to in this document as the Retail Program Standards) or 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, visit https://www.neha.org/retailgrants/action-1. Enrollment can generally be accomplished within one to three days but must be completed and verified by the FDA by November 15, 2021, 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 applications submitted through this new program are distinct and separate from any activities funded through other grant programs.

- Jurisdictions may apply for funding for up to five (5) grants through the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program - one (1) Base Grant (a Development Base Grant or a Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant) and up to four (4) Additional Add-On Grants (based on your jurisdiction’s eligibility).

- Jurisdictions should coordinate internally to ensure they do not exceed the maximum number of five applications – one Base Grant application and up to four 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 include spaces.

- All applications must be made through the online NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Portal by November 15, 2021, at 7:59 p.m. EST. All required fields in each application (including POC, organization, budget, and proposal information) must be clear and complete.
SPECIFIC PROGRAM RULES AND REQUIREMENTS

• **Current Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards:** Other than for the grants offered through *Track 1 Funding (Development)*, applicants are required to have a current self-assessment of all nine Standards. To meet this eligibility requirement, your most recent self-assessment of all nine Standards must have been completed in September 2016 or later. Unless it was completed within the past 90 days, the updated self-assessment 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](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 Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards:** Jurisdictions may request funding to complete a repeat (updated) self-assessment of all nine Standards though Track 2 or Track 3 but may only receive update funding from FDA once every five years.

• **Requirement to Keep Your Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards Current:** Be aware of when your self-assessment of all nine Standards will pass the five-year mark, so that you can complete the required update to stay eligible for the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program each year. If you are awarded one or both three-year grants 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 self-assessment of all nine Standards remains current. Funding is available to complete or update your self-assessment of all nine Standards through all three funding tracks and should be done during the fifth/final year of the self-assessment.

• **Requirement to Have Met One Standard During Your Most Recent Self-Assessment Period, to Qualify for a Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant:** Applicants must have a current self-assessment of all nine Standards (Sept. 2016 or later) and meet a minimum of one Standard that has been met and verified by audit, or confirmed as still being met, during their most recent self-assessment period. For jurisdictions that have recently completed their repeat self-assessment of all nine Standards but have not yet re-confirmed at least one of those Standards by verification audit, they may still apply for a Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant but must provide a plan to complete an audit within 6-months of the completion date of their repeat self-assessment of all nine Standards.

• **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 may also 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.

• **Funding for Travel**: Travel costs 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 [http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/101518](http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/101518).
  
  ○ 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 is to be taken by the most economical domestic fare available. First or business class air travel is not authorized. Baggage fees may be reimbursed with a receipt.
  
  ○ 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 six grants offered:
  
  ○ 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 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.

**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 or toll-free (833) 575-2404 as early as is practical. We will work with FDA to resolve any issues promptly.

**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 Programmatic POC grants a written exception for the grant award (this person will be named in the grant award letter).
- Any changes to project scope, tasks, deliverables, or expenses must be approved in advance and in writing by the NEHA Programmatic Point of Contact.
- A Final Project Report must be submitted through the online Grant Program Portal no later than 45 days after the Project End Date (you will receive automated reminders from the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grants Management System). As part of the Final Report, the Grantee must provide a full accounting of all expenditures made with funds from this grant, accompanied by the documentation specified in the Reporting Requirements section of this document.
Application Review Process

Each application to the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program must be submitted individually through the grant program portal, accessed through the grant program website at https://www.neha.org/retailgrants. Jurisdictions can submit up to five applications – one base grant and up to four optional add-on grants – depending on their level of achievement in the Retail Program Standards.

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 or toll-free at 1-833-575-2404 before the application deadline.

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 grantee portal and will be accessible through the “Applications Needing Updates” link found in the “Applications” section of the left menu, in the grantee 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.
APPLICATION PEER REVIEW

During the Peer Review:

• Each application will be scored by either two or three retail support staff reviewers, depending on the application type.

• Projects will be scored and will compete for funding with applications of the same type (Development Base Track 1, Development Base Track 2, Maintenance and Advancement Base, 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.

• In year one of this program, emphasis will be placed upon funding as many Base Grants as possible.

• 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 following scoring guide.

A. PROJECT DETAILS (30%) – Does the Project Summary clearly align with the specific goals for the application type? Do the project Action Steps outline the work necessary to complete the proposed project? Do identified project personnel, including new hires if applicable, have clearly defined project roles? Do project personnel have the expertise necessary to enable successful completion of the proposed project?

B. PROJECT OUTCOMES (40%) – Are the proposed Project Outcomes clearly defined, with Action Steps that are both measurable and achievable within the project period? Does the applicant provide a clear description of how the jurisdiction plans to measure progress in the Retail Program Standards? Does the applicant clearly define measurable improvement with the Retail Program Standards, specifically for their jurisdiction? Does the applicant directly link their project plans with their definition of measurable improvement with the Retail Program Standards?

C. BUDGET WORKSHEET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION (20%) – Are the requested Budget resources appropriate and necessary for successful completion of the proposed project? Are all requested funds allowable costs? Considering the specific
needs and challenges of the jurisdiction as outlined in their Budget Justification, is the proposed budget reasonable and cost-effective?

**D. ABILITY TO ADVANCE THE RETAIL PROGRAM STANDARDS (10%)** – Overall, has the jurisdiction proposed a project that is achievable during the project period, and will advance the goals of the Retail Program Standards?

The Joint Advisory Group 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 scores and notes will be made available upon request by the applicant.
Reporting Requirements

As with the application process, the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program 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 Program Portal, accessed through the grant program website at https://www.neha.org/retail-grants.

Funds under this program are generally awarded on a reimbursement basis after an Interim or Final Report is submitted and approved, 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, and advance payments are available when needed and approved by the NEHA Finance Team. It will not be necessary to register for eRA Commons nor with the Payment Management System to receive funds through this grant program. Payments will be made directly by NEHA to awarded jurisdictions.

INTERIM REPORT REQUIREMENTS
An Interim 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. The NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team is available whenever needed and can be contacted at retailgrants@neha.org or toll-free at 1-833-575-2404.

Interim Reports must include the following information:
1. A brief description of the status of your project.
2. A list of any obstacles that could prevent you from achieving the project objectives or project outcomes listed in your application, with an action plan to overcome those obstacles.
3. An accounting of any expected changes from the project budget submitted with your application. Prior to any change in expenditures, grantees must submit a change. All changes to the project budget must be submitted via email to retailgrants@neha.org. Note that requested changes from the original budget submitted with your application are not approved until you receive confirmation via email from the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program POC listed on your Award Letter. Changes that result in an overall increase above the total amount listed in your award letter are not permitted.
4. Any assistance you require to assure successful completion of your project, including achievement of all project objectives and project outcomes. If assistance is needed, describe the nature of the assistance and the person, group, or agency best equipped to offer such assistance.

5. Additional information, as needed, for your specific grant(s).

**FINAL REPORT REQUIREMENTS**

A Final Report is required for all grant categories and should document completion of all project deliverables. The Final Report is due no later than 45 days after the end of the project period listed in your application.

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. Note that changes to your budget are not approved until you receive confirmation via email from the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program POC listed on your Award Letter.
How to Apply for Funding

1. Carefully review the details of this NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Guidance document.

2. Verify that you are enrolled in the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards (Retail Program Standards) by checking the following list: [https://www.fda.gov/food/voluntary-national-retail-food-regulatory-program-standards/listing-jurisdictions-enrolled-voluntary-national-retail-food-regulatory-program-standards](https://www.fda.gov/food/voluntary-national-retail-food-regulatory-program-standards/listing-jurisdictions-enrolled-voluntary-national-retail-food-regulatory-program-standards). Your jurisdiction should be listed, along with the date of your enrollment, the status of your latest Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards (which must have been completed in September 16 or later to apply for most of the grants offered through this program), and the status of your achievement with any of the nine Retail Program Standards. If the FDA-posted list has any errors or omissions, please contact the FDA Regional Food Specialist assigned to your geographic area at: [https://www.fda.gov/food/voluntary-national-retail-food-regulatory-program-standards/directory-fda-retail-food-specialists](https://www.fda.gov/food/voluntary-national-retail-food-regulatory-program-standards/directory-fda-retail-food-specialists).

3. Gather the required information necessary to answer the questions listed in the *Step-by-Step Application Guidance* (below), along with your Written project Implementation Plan (WPIP) and if you have one, your Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP - required for most grants through this program). For information on completing a WPIP or a CSIP, please visit the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program homepage at [https://www.neha.org/retailgrants](https://www.neha.org/retailgrants).

4. 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](https://www.neha.org/retailgrants/systemrequirement).

5. Complete one or more online applications (one Base Grant and up to four Additional Add-On Grants per jurisdiction) accessing the grant program portal, using the **Access the Grant Program Portal** button found on the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program homepage at [https://www.neha.org/retailgrants](https://www.neha.org/retailgrants).

6. Submit your applications by the November 15, 2021 7:59 p.m. EST deadline and wait for funding determination (expected in February 2022).
Step-by-Step Application Guidance

BEST PRACTICES

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

- Develop in advance your Written Project Improvement Plan (WPIP) and, if applying for all but the basic level grants through this program, your Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP). Many applicants find it helpful to develop this information in a word processing or spreadsheet document, and then cutting and pasting the information into the appropriate fields on grant portal. This may be especially helpful if you have Internet connection issues or have limited time to access the portal. For information on completing a WPIP or a CSIP, please visit the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program homepage at https://www.neha.org/retailgrants.

- For a screenshot of each of the grant applications utilized by this program, please see Appendix A of this Grant Program Guidance document.

- Once you begin to type (or copy and paste) information into the 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 and finishing your work later, use the “Save and Close” button. Saved applications may be viewed 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 select “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 re-submitted before the submission deadline.

STEP 1 – ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONNAIRE

From https://www.neha.org/retailgrants, select the button “New User Registration” and take the Eligibility Questionnaire.

STEP 2 – ACCOUNT REGISTRATION

If you answered “Yes” to all three questions on the Eligibility Questionnaire in Step 1, a registration form will appear. Use this form to complete basic information about your Organization, your Organizational Point of Contact (POC) for this grant program, and your organization’s Authorizing Official (AO).
The POC should be the person in your organization who will serve as the main point of contact for questions regarding this organizational registration and any applications to be submitted on behalf of your organization; the POC will receive a username and a link to set up a password for access to the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program funding applications. The AO is the person in your organization that will be able to authorize a contract to accept the requested funds if your application is approved.

Be sure to click on “Submit Request” at the bottom of the registration form, after all fields are completed. You will immediately receive confirmation of your submission, on your computer screen.

**STEP 3 – RECEIVE YOUR USERNAME AND PASSWORD**

Within two (2) business days of registration, you will receive an email with a username and a link to set up a password. This email will be sent to the POC email address you entered during registration. Once you receive these credentials, you may log into the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Portal and begin working on your application(s).

Be sure to save your username and password, as these credentials will be used after you submit to check the status of your application(s). In rare cases, some emails are filtered out or sent to spam folders. If you do not receive an email with your username and password within two (2) days of registration, please contact the NEHA-FDA-RFFM Grant Program Support Team.

Please note: If you register for a new account between September 1 and September 8, 2021, your account will be activated on or around September 9 (the day the grant program portal opens to accept applications). You will not receive the email with your username and password link prior to September 9, 2021.

**STEP 4 – APPLY FOR ONE BASE GRANT AND UP TO FOUR ADDITIONAL ADD-ON GRANTS**

Complete your grant application(s) by utilizing your username and password to log into the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Portal at https://www.neha.org/retail-grants. A single POC from a jurisdiction may apply for up to five grants, one Base Grant and up to four of the Optional Add-On Grants, based on your jurisdiction’s eligibility. Each jurisdiction MUST first apply for one of the two Base Grants offered, to be eligible to apply for any of the Optional Add-On Grants.
STEP 5 – SAVE AND SUBMIT

Each application that you choose to submit through this grant program must be completed and submitted separately through the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Portal.

Applications cannot be submitted until you complete all required fields. Once you have completed all fields for an application, 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. Once you are satisfied with all the entries in your application, scroll to the bottom of the application and hit “Submit.”

Before leaving the grant application 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 portal to the “Submitted Applications (Under Review)” section. You should also receive a system generated email confirming the submittal of each application, shortly after it is submitted (if you do not receive a confirming email, please check your email SPAM folder).

If you do not receive confirmation of your submission, please contact the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team at retailgrants@neha.org or toll-free at 1-833-575-2404, before the end date of the open application period.
Appendix A - Important Web Links

NEHA-FDA RETAIL FLEXIBLE FUNDING MODEL GRANT PROGRAM HOMEPAGE
https://www.neha.org/retailgrants
All the information for this grant program, including the latest information and program updates, and access to the grant portal, can be found at this site.

FDA RETAIL PROGRAM STANDARDS INFORMATION
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].

ENROLLING IN THE RETAIL PROGRAM STANDARDS
https://www.neha.org/retailgrants/action-1
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 November 15, 2021 to be eligible for this year’s grant program. If you are not already enrolled, consider enrolling today.

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.

NEHA-FDA RETAIL FLEXIBLE FUNDING MODEL GRANT PROGRAM PORTAL
The grant program 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 Program Portal. This button leads directly to the grant portal where you can register and apply for grants for this FDA-funded opportunity. The
The grants management 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.
The NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model Grant Program
Grant Program Guidance
Calendar Year 2022

Application Period: September 9 - November 15, 2021
https://www.neha.org/retailgrants

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