Calendar Year 2024

Grant Guidance

Advancing conformance with the FDA

Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards

Application Period: August 16 - October 11, 2023

www.neha.org/retail-grants

National Environmental Health Association

Contents

I.   Grant Program Overview

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

A.   Who Should Apply?

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

B.   New for CY 2024

For CY 2024 Grants, NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program staff worked with FDA to carefully consider the many helpful suggestions offered by SLTT jurisdictions, with the goal of continuous improvement for the program. Key changes for CY 2024 Include:

- **A Combined Track 2 Application for CY 2024:** Based on the positive feedback received after offering a combined Track 1 Development Base Grant application for CY 2023 (rolling three applications into one), we have added a combined Track 2 Development Base Grant application for CY 2024.
- **Fixed Funding for Most CY 2024 Funding:** Offered as a major innovation for CY 2024, most of the funding offered through CY 2024 grants will be based on deliverables met rather than line-item budgets and receipt-based reports. The only grants offered for CY 2024 that will require detailed budgets and receipt-based reporting will be the *Training Optional Add-Ons* (offered through Track 1 and Track 2 Development Base Grants), the *Training Optional Add-On Grant* (open to current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantees), and the *Special Projects Optional Add-On* Grant.
- **Review of all 3-Year Grants at the End of Each Year, With Potential Reductions for Funds Not Expended:** Our goals will once again be two-fold. First, to work with each 3-year grantee to make sure all deliverables from original grant applications can be met, with flexibility offered when needed. And second, to reduce award amounts when full funding is not needed to meet

original project deliverables.

For additional details, an explanation on how fixed funding will work, and the deliverables that must be met for payment under each grant type, please see Section II of this guidance: CY 2024 Grant Program Details.

C.   Grant Application Submission Deadline

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

Application links for each of the five grants will be added to the Grant Portal on **Wednesday, August 16, 2023**. All applications must be completed and successfully submitted through the Grant Portal by **Wednesday, October 11, 2023, at 7:59 p.m. EDT**.

D.   What to Expect

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

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

E.   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.

F.   Basics of the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program

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

- **Base Grant Requirement**: The first and most important requirement of the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program is that participating SLTT jurisdictions must maintain an active Base Grant. Base

grants are offered through three different funding tracks, with only Tracks 1 and 2 open for new applications in CY 2024. Each track is designed to assist jurisdictions at different levels achieve progress with the Retail Program Standards.

- **Optional Add-Ons *and* Optional Add-On Grants**: In addition to funding from a Base Grant, applicants can apply for additional funding either:
  - As *Optional Add-Ons within a Base Grant application* (both Track 1 and Track 2 Development Base Grant applications are now combined grant applications, offering funding options beyond simply the base funding), or
  - Through completing and submitting *Optional Add-On Grant applications* (Training, Mentorship, and Special Projects), available for Track 2 applicants and current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantees (details provided below).

For additional information regarding the vision of the NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model Grant Program, please visit: https://www.neha.org/retail-grants-about

G. Calendar Year (CY) 2024 Grant Program Overview

This year, the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program offers an improved application process for each available funding track. Our dedicated support team will continue to be available every step of the way. The five different grant types offered to support Calendar Year (CY) 2024 projects include:

- **Track 1 Development Base Grant (1-Year Combined Award), for:**
  - Completion of a Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards (SA9) AND a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP)
  - Additional funds are available through:
    - Mentee Optional Add-On, offering funding to be a Mentee
    - Training Optional Add-On, offering funding for up to two (2) staff members to attend an in-person Self-Assessment and Verification Audit (SA VA) Workshop
  - All through a single application

- **Track 2 Development Base Grant (1-Year Combined Award), for:**
  - Work on Continuous Improvement in Standards 1-8
  - Optional outcome to include work on Standard 9 in Pursuit of a Public Health Metric
  - Additional funds are available through:
    - Mentee Optional Add-On, offering funding to be a Mentee
    - Training Optional Add-On, offering funding to attend Retail Food Safety Training, Workshops, and Conferences

- All through a single application (new for 2024)

- **Three (3) Optional Add-On Grants**, available for Track 2 applicants and current Track 3 grantees:
  - **Mentorship Optional Add-On Grant (1-Year Award, for Track 2 and 3 applicants)**, with the option to apply to be a Mentor for Track 2 applicants (instead of choosing the Mentee Optional Add-On in the Base Grant), or to be a Mentee or a Mentor for current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantees;
  - **Training Optional Add-On Grant (1-Year Award, for current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantees only)**, to support attendance at Retail Food Safety Trainings, Workshops, and Conferences.
  - **Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant (1-Year Award, for Track 2 applicants or current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantees)**, support Integrated Food Safety System projects.

Important Note Regarding 3-Year Grant Options: Although they may be available in the future, the three-year grant types from the CY 2022 grant cycle (**Capacity Building Grants** and **Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grants**) will not be offered as new grants for the CY 2024 grant cycle.

See the following pages for summary charts with details for **CY 2024 Base Grants**, **CY 2024 Optional Add-On Grants**, and the **Maximum Number of Applications Per Applicant In Each Funding Track**.

Calendar Year (CY) 2024 Base Grant Types

Details	Track 1 Development Base Grant (1-year award)	Track 2 Development Base Grant	Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant
Open to new Applicants for CY 2024	YES	YES	NO (Existing Grantees will be in Year 3, their final project performance year, in CY 2024).
Purpose	Completion of (1) A Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards (SA9); **AND** (2) A Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP);	Required Outcome: Work on Continuous Improvement in Standards 1-8 Optional Outcome: Work on Standard 9 (Pursuit of a Public Health Metric)	N/A
Eligibility	Must be enrolled in the Retail Program Standards	(1) Must be enrolled in Retail Program Standards; (2) Have a current Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards (August 2018 or later); **AND** (3) Submit a complete Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP).	N/A
Add-Ons available within the Base Grant	(1) Mentee Optional Add-On (2) Training Optional Add-On (for in-person Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Workshop attendance only)	(1) Mentee Optional Add-On (2) Training Optional Add-On (for Retail Food Safety Training, Workshops, and Conferences)	N/A
Total Applications Required	1	1	0

CY 2024 Optional Add-On Grant Types

Details	Training Optional Add-On Grant	Mentorship Optional Add-On Grant	Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant
Open to new Applicants for CY 2024	Track 3 Only	Track 2 (Mentorship, instead of Mentee Option in the Base Grant) Track 3 Mentor or Mentee	Track 2, Track 3
Purpose	To support attendance at Retail Food Safety Trainings, Workshops, and Conferences.	To enable Mentors and Mentees to work together to pursue Retail Program Standards goals, complete site visits, and attend the year-end Mentorship Meeting.	Offers SLTT jurisdictions in Tracks 2 and 3 the opportunity to propose projects that advance the Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS).
Total Applications Required	1	1	1

Maximum Number of Applications Per Applicant In Each Funding Track

Details	Track 1	Track 2	Track 3
Maximum Number of CY 2024 Applications	1 application: Track 1 Development Base Grant, including Mentee and Training Optional Add-Ons (SA VA Workshops only)	Up to 3 applications: (1) Track 2 Development Base Grant, including Mentee and Training Optional Add-Ons (Retail Food Safety Training) (2) Mentorship Optional Add-On Grant – if choosing to be a Mentor instead of the Mentee Optional Add-On in the Base Grant (3) Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant	Up to 3 applications: (1) Training Optional Add-On Grant (Retail Food Safety Training) 2) Mentorship Optional Add-On Grant (as a Mentor OR a Mentee) (3) Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant

H. Eligibility

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

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

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

- A current Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards (August 2018 or later); AND
- A completed Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP).

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

For additional information regarding completion of a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan, please visit https://www.neha.org/retail-grants-csip

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

I. Registering for the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program

To apply for CY 2024 Grants, applicants can use the **"Access the Grant Porta**l" button found on the NEHA-FDA Retail Grants homepage starting on August 16, 2023: www.neha.org/retail-grants.

Current grantees can log in using their existing username and password. This is also true for anyone who either registered for an account and/or applied for any NEHA-FDA RFFM grants in 2021 or 2022. Both your username and password can be recovered using the "Access the Grant Portal" link.

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

1. From https://www.neha.org/retail-grants, click on the button that reads "**Access the Grant Portal."** This will take you to the Grant Portal landing page, which reads: "*Advancing Conformance with the FDA's Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards*" at the top.

2. From the Grant Portal landing page, review the text on the right side of the screen and click on "**Create an account now.**" This will open three **Eligibility Questions**, which you must answer to ensure your jurisdiction is eligible to apply for a grant through the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program.

3. Once you have completed the **Eligibility Questions** by answering "Yes" to each and click **Submit Responses**, the **Registration** page will open.

4. Complete the **Registration**, which has simple questions about your retail food regulatory jurisdiction, including:
   - Contact information for your **Organizational Point of Contact (POC)**, the person in your organization who will serve as the main point of contact for questions regarding your jurisdiction's application(s), and also the person who will receive a username and password for Grant Portal access to complete applications; and
   - Contact information for your **Authorizing Official (AO)**, who will be able to accept the requested funds if your application is approved.

5. Once you have completed and checked your entries for the Registration, click "**Submit Request**" at the bottom of the Registration page.

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

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

Program Support Team if needed.

J.   Amount of Funding Available

More than $6 million in funding is expected to be available for all grant types in CY 2024.

K.   NEHA-FDA Grant Program Support Team Contact Information

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

For additional inquiries, including technical support related to the grant application process, please contact the **NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team** via email at retailgrants@neha.org or call toll-free 1-833-575-2404.

II.   CY 2024 Grant Program Details

A.   Program Updates for CY 2024

For CY 2024 Grants, NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program staff worked with FDA to carefully consider the many helpful suggestions offered by SLTT jurisdictions, with the goal of continuous improvement for the program. While maintaining FDA's vision and goals for this funding program, the management team worked to streamline and simplify the grantmaking process wherever possible.

Following are the key changes for the CY 2024 grants offered during the Fall 2023 application period:

- **A Combined Track 2 Application for CY 2024:** Based on the positive feedback received after offering a combined Track 1 Development Base Grant application for CY 2023 (rolling three applications into one), we have added a combined Track 2 Development Base Grant application for CY 2024. The updated Track 2 Development Base Grant application now allows Track 2 applicants to request Base funding for Continuous Improvement in Standards 1-8, Optional Outcome funding for work on Standard 9 in Pursuit of a Public Health Metric, Mentee Optional Add-On funding to be a Mentee, and Training Optional Add-On funding to attend Retail Food Safety Training, Workshops, and Conferences, *all through a single application*.

  Benefits for SLTTs: The same total funding and options will once again be available for both Track 1 and Track 2 Development Base Grant applicants (as compared to CY 2023), but with a significant reduction in the number of applications and reports required at the Base Grant level.

- **Fixed Funding for Most CY 2024 Grants and Options:** Offered as a major innovation for CY 2024, most of the funding offered through CY 2024 grants will be based on deliverables met rather than line-item budgets and receipt-based reports. The only grants offered for CY 2024 that will require detailed budgets and receipt-based reporting will be the *Training Optional Add-Ons* (for Track 1 and Track 2 applicants), the *Training Optional Add-On Grant* (for current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantees), and the *Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant* (available for Track 2 applicants and current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantees).
- Fixed Funding Categories will include:
    - **Fixed Funding for Base Grants (Tracks 1 and 2),** to be used to complete a Self-

Assessment of All Nine Standards AND a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP) (Track 1), OR

To work on elements, audits, and conformance with individual Standards, and work toward completion of Standard 9 in Pursuit of a Public Health Metric (Track 2).

- o **Fixed Funding for Mentorship Optional Add-Ons and Mentorship Optional Add-On Grants**, for both Mentors and Mentees (Tracks 1, 2, and 3), to enable Mentors and Mentees to work together to pursue Retail Program Standards goals, complete site visits, and attend the year-end Mentorship Meeting. This change is expected to significantly reduce the reporting burden for all Mentees and Mentors, leaving more time to either meet your Mentee Goals or work with your Mentees.

Benefits for SLTTs: One of the clearest messages we heard from SLTTs to date has been their desire to spend less effort on budget change requests and reimbursement requests, and more time working to meet the goals of the Retail Program Standards. Moving a significant portion of the funding offered to deliverables-based funding will significantly reduce the reporting burden for most grantees.

For an explanation on how fixed funding will work and the deliverables that must be met for payment, see the description for each grant type included under the next section of this guidance (B. Payments for CY 2024 Grants).

- **Review of all 3-Year Grants at the End of Each Year**, With Potential Reductions for Funds Not Expended: As we did at the end of Grant Year 1, we will once again be reaching out to all 3-year grantees in early 2024 to review and discuss CY 2023 spending. Our goals will once again be two-fold. First, to work with each 3-year grantee to make sure all deliverables from original grant applications can be met, with flexibility offered when needed. And second, to reduce award amounts when full funding is not needed to meet original project deliverables.

Benefits for SLTTs: Because all funding freed up by reduced award amounts is used to fund new 1-year awards, this is a team benefit, allowing more 1-year awards for Track 1, Track 2, and Track 3 applicants. A longer-term goal will benefit all partners. By keeping the Return-On-Investment high, especially with the larger grants, we are all helping to ensure that this important funding program continues.

B.   **Payments for CY 2024 Grants**

As an innovation for CY 2024, with the goal of significantly reducing the administrative burden for jurisdictions, several grant types will now utilize deliverables-based payments (Fixed Funding).

Grant types and options that will utilize Fixed Funding based on deliverables include:
- Track 1 Development Base Grants (Base funding, Mentee Optional Add-On funding)
- Track 2 Development Base Grants (Base funding, Public Health Metric Funding, Mentee Optional Add-On funding)
- Mentorship Optional Add-On Grants (Mentee and Mentor funding)

C.   **Payment for Fixed Funding Options and Grants**

To receive payment for the Fixed Funding grants or options, specified deliverables must be met for each grant type and option. Payment will be based on deliverables achieved during the project period. Expense documentation WILL NOT be required for payment of Fixed Funding outcomes and options, and your actual spending DOES NOT need to conform to the deliverables-based payment amounts. You are free to expend funds as determined by your unique needs, with the only requirement for payment being confirmation that each selected deliverable has been met. *For audit purposes, however, keep in mind that your spending must always adhere to all applicable federal subaward grant funding rules.*

Following are the deliverables that will be required for payment of **Fixed Funding options**, listed by grant type.

Track 1 Development Base Grant (with Mentee and Training / SA VA Workshop Optional Add-Ons)

- Deliverables for the Fixed Funding-based Required Outcome of a Track 1 Base Grant *
    - o Completion of a Self-Assessment of all Nine Standards (SA9) with required paperwork submitted to your FDA Retail Food Specialist; AND completion of a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan covering all nine Standards, submitted to NEHA: *Fixed Funding of $5,000*
- Deliverables for the Fixed Funding-based Mentee Optional Add-On *
    - o Achievement of the Retail Program Standards goals from your application: *Fixed Funding of $8,000*
    - o Completion of at least one site visit with your Mentor (either in your jurisdiction or theirs): *Fixed Funding of $3,000*
    - o Attendance at the required year-end Mentorship Conference: *Fixed Funding of $3,000*
- Traditional Reimbursement for the Training Optional Add-On / Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Workshops
    - o Funding for up to two staff members to attend in-person Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Workshop(s): *Up to $7,500*
    - o Note that for this option under a Track 1 Development Base Grant, a detailed budget will be required at the time of application, and receipts will be required with the Reimbursement Request (although Advance Funding is still available when needed).

Track 2 Development Base Grant (with Mentee and Training Optional Add-Ons)

- Deliverables for the Fixed Funding-based Required and Optional Outcomes of a Track 2 Base Grant *
    - o Completion of the Required Outcome section of your application (Continuous Improvement in Standards 1-8): Fixed Funding of $5,000,
    - o Completion of the Optional Outcome section of your application (Work on Standard 9 in Pursuit of a Public Health Metric): Fixed Funding of $5,000
- Deliverables for the Fixed Funding-based Mentee Optional Add-On *
    - o Achievement of the Retail Program Standards goals from your application: *Fixed Funding of $8,000*
    - o Completion of at least one site visit with your Mentor (either in your jurisdiction or theirs): *Fixed Funding of $3,000*
    - o Attendance at the required year-end Mentorship Conference: *Fixed Funding of $3,000*

- Traditional Reimbursement for the Training Optional Add-On / Retail Food Safety Training, Workshops, and Conferences
    - Funding to send staff to Retail Food Safety Training, Workshops, and Conferences: *Up to $7,500*
    - Note that for this option under a Track 2 Develop Base Grant, a detailed budget will be required at the time of application, and receipts will be required with the Reimbursement Report (although Advance Funding is still available when needed).

Mentorship Optional Add-On Grants for: Track 2 Mentor Requests, OR Current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grantee Mentee or Mentor Requests

- Deliverables for Mentorship / Mentee Optional Add-On Grants (current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantees) *
  - o Achievement of the Retail Program Standards goals from your application: *Fixed Funding of $8,000*
  - o Completion of at least one site visit with your Mentor (either in your jurisdiction or theirs): *Fixed Funding of $3,000*
  - o Attendance at the required year-end Mentorship Conference led by NACCHO: *Fixed Funding of $3,000*
- Deliverables for Mentorship / Mentor Grants (Track 2 instead of selecting the Mentee Option in the Base Grant, or current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantees *
  - o 1 Mentee: $6,000 base for mentee support + $3,000 for successful completion of the program by mentee + $3,000 for attendance at the year-end meeting = *Fixed Funding of $12,000*
  - o 2 Mentees: $6,000 base for mentee support + $6,000 for successful completion of the program by mentees + $3,000 for attendance at the year-end meeting = *Fixed Funding of $15,000*
  - o 3 Mentees: $6,000 base for mentee support + $9,000 for successful completion of the program by mentees + $3,000 for attendance at the year-end meeting = *Fixed Funding of $18,000*
  - o 4 Mentees: $6,000 base for mentee support + $12,000 for successful completion of the program by mentees + $3,000 for attendance at the year-end meeting = *Fixed Funding of $21,000*
  - o 5 Mentees: $6,000 base for mentee support + $15,000 for successful completion of the program by mentees + $3,000 for attendance at the year-end meeting = *Fixed Funding of $24,000*

* Expense documentation WILL NOT be required for payment of Fixed Funding outcomes and options, and your actual spending DOES NOT need to conform to the deliverables-based payments. You are free to expend funds as determined by your unique needs, with the only requirement for payment being confirmation that each selected deliverable has been met. *For audit purposes, however, keep in mind that your spending must always adhere to all applicable federal subaward grant funding rules.*

D. Payment for Traditional Reimbursement Options and Grants

Traditional Reimbursements still apply to several options and grants, and payment will be based on an approved budget in the grant application and detailed receipts included with a Reimbursement Request.

Grant types that will utilize Traditional Reimbursements include:
- Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grants
- Capacity Building Optional Add-On Grants
- Training funds (offered as Training Optional Add-On for Tracks 1 and 2, and through the Training Optional Add-On Grants for current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantees)
- Special Projects Optional Add-on Grants

Advance Payments are still an option for all grant types and options.

E. Two Base Grants Offered for CY 2024, both with Multiple Funding Options

Applicants have two combination Base Grant options in the current annual grant cycle, as outlined below and on the following page.

F. Three Optional Add-On Grants are Offered for CY 2024

Three Optional Add-On Grants are offered in the current annual grant cycle: two for Track 2 Development Base applicants, with all three open for current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantees. See the following pages for details.

G. No New Track 3 Grants are Available for CY 2024

Although they may be available again in the future, the three-year grant types offered in the CY 2022 grant cycle (new **Capacity Building Grants** and new **Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grants**) will not be offered for CY 2024.

Track 1 Development Base Grant (1-Year Award)

Permissible Outcomes and Funding Available

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

Required Outcome: Completion of a Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards (SA9) AND a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP) - *$5,000 fixed funding based on deliverables met*

Mentee Optional Add-On: Request to be a Mentee - *$14,000 fixed funding based on deliverables met*

Training Optional Add-On: Request funding to send up to two staff members to attend in-person Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Workshops - *Up to $7,500*

Important Note: No alternative training can be added to a Track 1 Development Base Grant (other than sending a maximum of two jurisdictional personnel to the SA VA Workshops, when included as Optional Outcome 2).

Eligibility: Must be enrolled in the Retail Program Standards.

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

Best For: Newly enrolled jurisdictions, or jurisdictions restarting with the Retail Program Standards.

Optional Add-On Grants: Please note that for Track 1, Optional Add-Ons for Mentorship (Mentee) and Training (SA VA Workshop) are combined into a single application, so you only need to complete one application for all Track 1-eligible funding.

Track 2 Development Base Grant (1-Year Award)

Permissible Outcomes and Funding Available

The Track 2 Development Base Grant offers SLTT jurisdictions the opportunity to choose up to three funding outcomes through a single application.

Required Outcome: Work on Continuous Improvement in Standards 1-8 - *$5,000 fixed funding based on deliverables met*

Optional Outcome: Work on Elements of Standard 9 in Pursuit of a Public Health Metric - $5,000 fixed funding based on deliverables met, to include any or all of the following options:

- Implement a risk factor study or equivalent protocol to develop a baseline survey.
- Develop and implement one or more intervention strategies aimed at mitigating the occurrence of out-of-control risk factors.
- Continue to add inspectional data to the survey instrument.
- Statistically measure the outcomes of new information compared to the baseline.

Mentee Optional Add-On: Request to be a Mentee - *$14,000 fixed funding based on deliverables met*

Training Optional Add-On: Request funding to send staff members to Retail Food Safety Trainings, Workshops, and Conferences - *Up to $7,500*

Eligibility: Enrollment in the Retail Program Standards, a current Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards (August 2018 or later), and a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan.

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

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

Optional Add-On Grants: CY 2024 Track 2 Development Base Grant applicants are eligible to apply for a Mentorship Optional Add-On Grant (to apply to be a Mentor instead of choosing the Mentee option in the base grant), and/or a Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant.

For additional information on working toward meeting Standard 9 in pursuit of a Public Health Metric, please see the Public Health Metric Guidance posted on the neha.org/retail-grants website at https://www.neha.org/retail-grants-metrics

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

Permissible Outcomes and Funding Available

The Training Optional Add-On Grant offers SLTT jurisdictions in Track 3 the opportunity to request funds for Retail Food Safety Trainings, Workshops, and Conferences.

Retail Food Safety Training Courses, Workshops, and Conferences: Provides funding for advancement of SLTT retail food protection programs by training employees through attendance at Retail Program Standards training, conferences, and workshops, with the goal of meeting and maintaining the requirements of Standard 2 and other Standards.

Open to current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantees, all RFFM travel funding requests for Retail Program Standards Courses, Workshops, and Conferences should be included in a jurisdiction's Training Optional Add-On Grant. Travel for these types of trainings cannot be included in an applicant's Base Grant, nor in their Mentorship application.

Note: The Training Grant awarded for a specific training does not guarantee acceptance in that particular course. In cases in which ~~where~~ a grantee cannot get a slot in a course for which they have received funding, requests for substitution of comparable Retail courses are permissible, ~~(but must be approved in advance)~~.

Jurisdictions can request up to $7,500 through a Training Optional Add-On Grant.

Eligibility: Must be a current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantee.

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

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

Project Ideas: Permissible Retail Food Safety Training Courses, Workshops, and Conferences (when there are registration fees and/or travel costs) such as:

- Self- Assessment and Verification Audit Workshops (in-person);
- FDA Retail Courses and FDA Retail Food Safety Seminars;
- Annual Educational Conferences including NEHA, AFDO, IAFP, and NACCHO;
- Partnership for Food Protection (PFP), Conference for Food Protection (CFP), and the Food Safety Summit;
- Other Conferences or Seminars with a Retail Food component; and/or
- Regional Conferences or Seminars with a Retail Food component.

Mentorship Optional Add-On Grant (1-Year Award)
Permissible Outcomes and Funding Available

The Mentorship Optional Add-On Grant offers SLTT jurisdictions in Track 2 the opportunity to apply to be a Mentor instead of choosing the Mentee option in the base grant. Current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantees can apply to be a Mentee or Mentor.

Be a Mentee $14,000 fixed funding based on deliverables met.

Be a Mentor with 1-5 Mentees, with fixed funding from $12,000 to $24,000, based on the number of Mentees.

Eligibility: Must be a CY 2024 Track 2 Development Base Grant applicant, or a current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantee.

Duration: On year, with the opportunity to reapply annually.

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

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

Permissible Outcomes and Funding Available

The Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant offers SLTT jurisdictions in Tracks 2 and 3 the opportunity to propose projects that advance the Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS). Projects that help build the Integrated Food Safety System as envisioned by the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).

Jurisdictions can request *up to $20,000* through a Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant.

Eligibility: Must be a CY 2024 Track 2 Development Base Grant applicant, or a current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantee.

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

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

Project Ideas:

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

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

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

III.   Application Instructions for CY 2024 Grants

A. Best Practices

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

- Confirm that your computer meets the minimum browser requirements to ensure security and functionality with the system. We recommend Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge, or any of the other current browsers listed at https://www.neha.org/retail-grants/systemrequirement.

- For a screenshot of each of the grant applications utilized by this program, please see APPENDIX A of this guidance document.

- When responding to each question in the application, particularly the long character fields that allow 1,000 or more characters (which include spaces), many applicants find it helpful to develop this information in a word processing document, and then cut and paste the information into the appropriate fields in the grant application. This may be especially helpful if you have internet connection issues or have limited time to access the Grant Portal.

- Once you begin to type (or copy and paste) information into the Grant Portal, be sure to periodically click the **"Save and Continue"** button at the bottom of the screen. When leaving the application with the intent of returning to finish your work later, use the **"Save and Close"** button. Saved applications may be accessed by clicking "Draft Applications" under the "Applications" heading in the menu on the left panel of your dashboard.

- Do not click the "Submit" button until your application is complete. If you inadvertently hit "Submit" before your application is complete, contact the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team before the application submittal deadline, and your application can be moved back to the "Draft" state for further editing. Just remember that it will then have to be resubmitted before the submission deadline.

B. Apply for a Base Grant (Track 1 and Track 2 Applicants)

Jurisdictions interested in applying for one or more grants for CY 2024, and who do not already have a Track 3 Base Grant, must first apply for either a Track 1 or Track 2 Development Base Grant. To apply:

1. Be sure that you are both enrolled in the Retail Program Standards (see the link in Appendix A of this Grant Guidance, under "Enrolling in the Retail Program Standards") and, separately, registered for the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program (see the Registering for the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program section of this guidance).

2. Determine the Track for which you are eligible and that will best meet the needs of your jurisdiction.

3. If you plan to apply for the Track 2 Development Base Grant, be sure that you have a current Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards (SA9) (August 2018 or later), and that you have completed a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP).

4. If you have completed a Project Implementation Plan (PIP), have it handy, as you will be able to copy and paste the PIP text into the Grant Portal in response to grant application questions. If you have not already completed a PIP, your answers to the grant application questions in the Grant Portal will create a PIP that meets FDA's requirements.

5. From the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Website (https:// www.neha.org/retail-grants), log into the Grant Portal.
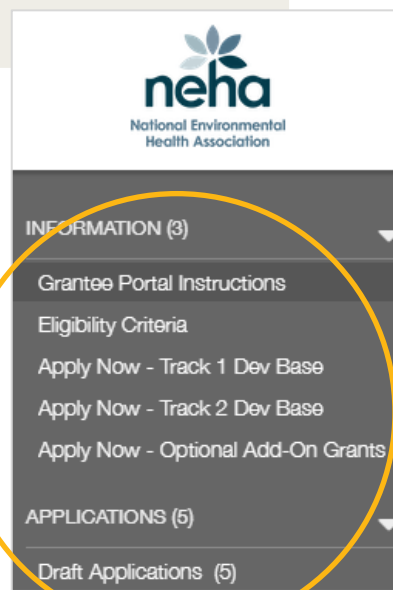
NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Home

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) work in partnership to administer the NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model (RFFM) Grant Program. The program provides funding to State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial (SLTT) retail food regulatory agencies as they advance conformance with the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards (Retail Program Standards). FDA is utilizing our strengths to assist SLTT retail food programs in their efforts to reduce the occurrence of foodborne illness risk factors and implement and attain conformance with the Retail Program Standards.

Grant applicants and existing users can access the grant portal by logging in to the Grant Portal.

Access the Grant Portal

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

neha
National Environmental
Health Association

INFORMATION (3)

Grantee Portal Instructions
Eligibility Criteria
Apply Now - Track 1 Dev Base
Apply Now - Track 2 Dev Base
Apply Now - Optional Add-On Grants

APPLICATIONS (5)

Draft Applications (5)

7. If you would like to review the requirements for each of the three application tracks, click on the "Eligibility Criteria" button at the top of the left menu in your Grant Portal. Keep in mind that only Tracks 1 and 2 are open to new base grant applicants for CY 2024.

8. When you have determined which development base grant you would like to apply for, click on the button labeled "Apply Now -Track (1 or 2) Dev Base."

9. Your selected base grant application will open.
Please fully answer each application question and be sure to hit "Save and Continue" often.

10. If you need to leave your application before you are ready to submit, simply hit "Save and Close." You can come back to the Grant Portal any time before the submission deadline, and then finish and submit your application.
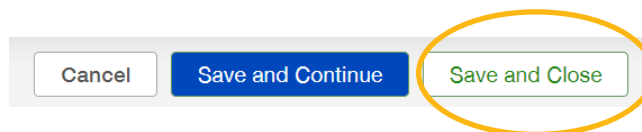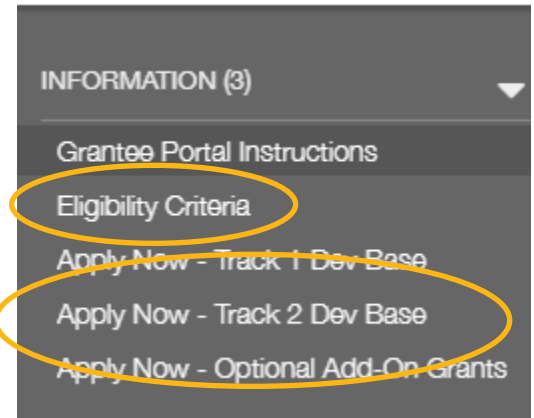
11. Once you have completed all the application fields, including the addition of the required budget worksheet(s), simply click on "Save and Close," and you will see your completed application open on the screen. Take the opportunity to do one final review of your finished application.

12. When you are satisfied with all the entries in your application, scroll to the bottom of the application and click on "Submit."

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

14. If you do not receive confirmation of your submission, please check your SPAM folder, and then contact the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team at retailgrants@neha.org or call toll-free 1-833-575-2404 if needed, before the end date of the open application period.

15. If you are applying for the Track 2 Development Base Grant, be sure to come back to the Grant

Portal when you have completed your base grant application and consider applying for one or more of the Optional Add-On Grants.

16. Be sure to complete and submit all of your applications by October 11, 2023, at 7:59 p.m. EST and wait for funding determination (expected in early December 2023).

Confirming Application Submittal

To confirm that your application(s) submitted correctly:

- Give the Grant Portal time to refresh after hitting submit (or even log out and log back in) and navigate to the "Requests" section of the left menu.
- After refreshing, a submitted application should no longer be in the "Pending Requests" section, but in the "Submitted Requests" section.
- Each application submitted will trigger an automated "Thank you for applying" email message, sent to the POC email address entered in the application.

Note: Applicants will receive a confirmation for each application submitted. For example, applicants applying for a Track 2 Development Base Grant and a Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant will receive three (3) individual emails, each referring to the specific grant submitted.

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

C. Apply for One or More of the Three Optional Add-On Grants

I.

Track 2 Applicants and Current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grantees
Once you have completed a base grant application, even if you have not yet fully submitted it, feel free to begin completing one or more of the Optional Add-On Grant applications available for Track 2 applicants and Track 3 grantees. Some applicants prefer to complete all of the applications they have chosen to apply for, leaving them in the "Draft Applications" section of the Grant Portal until all are complete. Each application

must then be submitted individually, one at a time, before the deadline.

To apply for one or more Optional Add-On Grants

1. Log back into your Grant Portal and click on the "Apply Now - Optional Add-On Grants" button. Scroll down and select any of the three Optional Add-On Grants available and use the same procedures you used to apply for the base grant.

2. When you finish one of the Optional Add-On Grant applications, you can either complete and submit it or leave it in the "Draft Applications" section of your Grant Portal.

3. Repeat instructions 1 through 3 until you have completed all the Optional Add-On grants that are of interest to your jurisdiction.

4. Be sure to complete and submit all of your "Draft Applications" before the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program application deadline and confirm that they have moved to the "Submitted Requests" area of your Grant Portal.

5. If you have any questions or needs, either during the application submittal process or after submittal, please reach out to the **NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team** at retailgrants@neha.org or 1-(833) 575-2404.
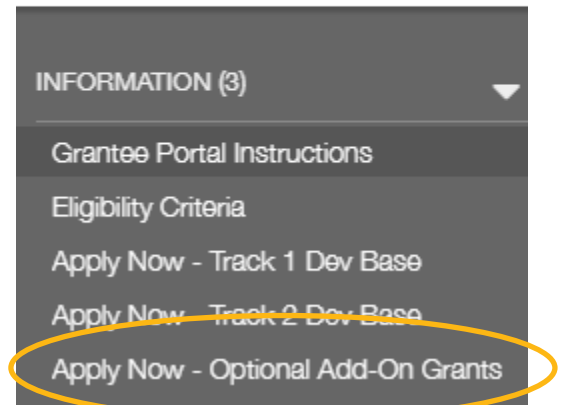
IV.   Program Rules and Requirements

A. Allowable Costs

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

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

B. Non-Allowable Costs

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

- Vehicles: Costs associated with procurement of vehicles are not allowed.
- Construction: Costs for construction and/or remodeling of physical structures are not allowed.
- Food: Expenses for food, snacks, meals, beverages, and catering (other than per diem for travelers) are not permitted for any grant.
- Uniforms: Uniforms and branded clothing are not allowed.
- Promotional items and costs are generally prohibited unless they provide a direct food safety benefit. Examples of prohibited items: gift bags, logo items (pens, note pads, shirts,

hats), gift cards, etc.

- Personnel costs are not permissible through Training Optional Add-Ons (Tracks 1 and 2) nor through Training Optional Add-On Grants (current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement grantees).

- Travel and training requests for **Track 1 Development Base Grant applicants** are limited to estimated travel funds to send up to two personnel to in-person Self-Assessment and Audit Verification Workshops.

- **For Track 2 applicants and current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantees**, Travel and Training requests for *Retail Program Standards Courses, Workshops, and Conferences* should be made through a Training Optional Add-On option or grant application.

- For courses leading to a professional certification, exam, test, credentialing and/or certification fees may not be paid with grant funds. For example, the testing and certification fees to become a Certified Professional Food Safety (CP-FS) are not allowable. However, as stated in the Allowable Costs section above, materials, registration fees, and online course fees for this type of training can be paid with grant funds.

- Membership fees for local, regional, or national organizations, even if such membership fees reduce the cost of training and/or conference fees, may not be paid with grant funds. One exception is the for Conference for Food Protection since registration for the biennial meeting automatically includes dues payment for the new biennium.

- Any expenses reimbursed under other cooperative agreements, grants, contracts, and/or other funding mechanisms must remain distinct and separate from any award of the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program.

C. Allowable and Non-Allowable Costs Related to Travel

Travel costs requested through Training Optional Add-On funding (through Track 1 and Track 2 Development Base Grants) or through a Training Optional Add-On Grant (current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantees) must adhere to the following general guidelines (contact the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team with specific travel-related questions not covered below):

- Receipts are required for all travel expenses except meals, which will be reimbursed on a federal per diem basis (unless your agency has a different and required per diem policy). The General Services Agency (GSA) Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE) breakdown may be accessed at https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates/mie-breakdown .

- Hotels will be reimbursed at actual room cost plus any applicable tax during dates of travel and should be booked at the most economical rate practical. Incidental lodging expenses (Internet, etc.) beyond room, parking, and tax will not be reimbursed.

- Air travel must be taken by the most economical domestic fare available. First or business class air travel, and fees for seat upgrades, are not authorized.
- Baggage fees may be reimbursed with a receipt.
- Travel insurance, whether offered by an airline or a separate provider, is not reimbursable under this grant program.
- Reimbursement for use of a private automobile shall be at the prevailing federal rate, reimbursed for map mileage to and from the venue, and shall not exceed the cost of advance purchase air travel to the destination.
- Reimbursement for a pool/company/government vehicle shall be at the prevailing federal rate for pool/company/government vehicles, reimbursed for map mileage to and from the venue, and shall not exceed the cost of advance purchase of air travel to the destination.

D. Travel Funds for Training

Expectations for training requested with any of the grants offered through this program:

- Funded training participants should plan to complete all course prerequisites and pre-course materials as required for each funded course.
- Travel plans (including flights) should be scheduled to allow participants to arrive on time for each day of the course, and to stay through the stated course end-time on the last day.
- Participants are expected to fully participate in each course and achieve successful completion of all funded courses.
- **When Travel Goes Bad**: When a participant does not attend or successfully complete a funded course, reimbursement for travel expenses will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Grantees may be responsible for travel costs when a participant:
  - Does not meet course prerequisites or complete pre-course 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.

E. General Program Rules and Requirements

- Funding is available for state, local, tribal, and territorial retail food regulatory programs, and can be used for activities that allow programs to achieve progress toward Retail Program Standards milestones and/or Standards.

- Jurisdictions must be enrolled in the Retail Program Standards to apply for any grants through this program (this is a separate step from registering for the Grant Portal). For instructions on how to enroll in the Retail Program Standards, go to https://www.neha.org/retail-grants/enrollment. Enrollment can generally be accomplished within one to three days but must be completed and verified with FDA by October 11, 2023, to qualify for this annual grant program.

- Jurisdictions that applied for funding and/or were awarded funding through any previous FDA Retail Program Standards funding program ARE eligible to apply for grants through the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program. Just be sure that all new applications submitted through this program are distinct and separate from past applications and funded activities.

- 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/retail-grants/systemrequirement.

- When completing the online application, any character count restrictions noted in the application include spaces.

- All applications must be made through the online NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Portal by October 11, 2023, at 7:59 p.m. EST. All required fields in each application (including POC, organization, budget, and proposal information) must be clear and complete.

F. RPS Specific Program Rules and Requirements

- **Current Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards (SA9):** Other than for Track 1 Development Base Grant applications, applicants are required to have a current Self-Assessment of all Nine Standards (SA9). To meet this eligibility requirement, your most recent SA9 must have been completed in August 2018 or later. Unless it was completed within the past 90 days, in most cases the updated self-assessment date for your jurisdiction should be reflected on FDA's website (unless your jurisdiction has opted out): https://www.fda.gov/food/voluntary-national-retail-food-regulatory-program-standards/listing-jurisdictions-enrolled-voluntary-national-retail-food-regulatory-program-standards .

- **Requirement to Keep Your SA9 Current**: Be aware of when your SA9 will pass the five-year

mark, so that you can complete the required update to stay eligible for the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program. If you were awarded a three-year grant through this program (the Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant and/or the Capacity Building Optional Add-On Grant), it is your responsibility to assure that your SA9 remains current.

- **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 Optional Add-On Grants will be in jeopardy of cancellation. For grantees that have been awarded both a Track 2 Development Base Grant (a one-year award) and a Capacity Building Grant (a three-year award), it is the awarded jurisdiction's responsibility to apply for Development Base Grants in years two and three of this grant program, to assure that their Capacity Building Grant remains eligible for continuation.

- **Who to Contact:** If you anticipate any problems impacting attendance at (or completion of) a funded course, please contact the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team at retailgrants@neha.org or toll-free 1-833-575-2404 as early as possible. We will work with FDA to promptly resolve any issues.

G. Award Terms and Conditions

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

- The Grantee must complete the full scope of work and all tasks outlined in the approved grant application by the Project End Date entered on the grant application unless the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team grants a written exception for the grant award.
- Any changes to project scope, tasks, deliverables, or expenses must be approved in advance and in writing by the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team.
- An Annual or Final Progress Report must be submitted through the online Grant Portal no later than 45 days after the end of each year's project period (you will receive automated reminders from the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grants Management System).
- Along with each Annual or Final Progress Report, the grantee must also submit a Reimbursement Request and provide a full accounting of all expenditures made with funds

from each grant, accompanied by the documentation specified in the Reporting and Payment Instructions posted on the NEHA Retail Grants website.

V.   Application Review Process

Each application to the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program must be submitted through the Grant Portal at https://www.neha.org/retail-grants. https://www.neha.org/retail-grants 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.

A. Administrative Review

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

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

B. Peer Review

- Each application that passes the Administrative Review will be scored by either two or three FDA and/or NEHA Subject Matter Expert reviewers, depending on the application type.
- Reviewers must acknowledge that they have no conflicts of interest (prior or current professional affiliation with the applicant jurisdictions) before reviews begin.
- Projects will be scored and will compete for funding with applications of the same type (Track 1 Development Base Grant, Track 2 Development Base Grant, Mentorship Optional Add-On, etc.).
- Funding allocations for each application type will be determined by the NEHA-FDA RFFM Joint Advisory Group and will be based on 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 program requirements and goals as possible, until program funding is exhausted.

- Applicants who are not awarded a Base Grant cannot be awarded any of the Optional Add-On Grants, so particular emphasis should be placed on submitting a solid and compelling Base Grant application.

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

Track 1 Development Base Grant Combined Application
Peer Review Scoring Guide

Project Lead and Project Personnel (20%)

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

Project Implementation Plan (80%)

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

The applicant directly links their Project Completion Plan (one of the fields that makes up the PIP) with measurable improvement in the Retail Program Standards.

Optional Outcomes

Each Optional Outcome offered in Track 1 will be scored separately. Selecting one or more Optional Outcomes <u>will</u> <u>not</u> increase the chance of receiving a Track 1 Development Base Grant Award.

(If Selected by Applicant) Mentee Optional Add-On

Looking at the application as a whole, the applicant appears prepared to receive the full benefits of being accepted as a Mentee. Work on at least one element of individual Retail Program Standards, in addition to simply completing a Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards (SA9) and a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP), is encouraged, but not required, for Track 1 applicants who choose the Mentee option.

(If Selected by Applicant) Training Optional Add-On

Plans for the "sending up to two of staff members to one or more of the in-person FDA Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Workshops" are clear and complete.
Applicant describes a clear and compelling description of both the need for workshop attendance, and how their jurisdiction will benefit from attendance by specific staff members.

Track 2 Development Base Grant Combined Application
Peer Review Scoring Guide

Project Lead and Project Personnel (20%)

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

Project Implementation Plan (80%)

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

The applicant directly links their Project Completion Plan (one of the fields that makes up the PIP) with measurable improvement in the Retail Program Standards.

Optional Outcome and Add-Ons

Optional Outcome and Add-Ons in Track 2 will be scored separately. Selecting one or more of the following deliverables will not increase the chance of receiving a Track 2 Development Base Grant Award.

(If Selected by Applicant) Optional Outcome - Work Toward Meeting Standard 9

Plans for Work on Standard 9 in Pursuit of a Public Health Metric are clear and complete.

(If Selected by Applicant) Mentee Optional Add-On

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

(If Selected by Applicant) Training Optional Add-On

Plans for supporting staff to attend Retail food safety training courses, workshops, and conferences for CY 2024 are clear and complete.

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

Current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantees only, since Track 1 and 2 applicants apply for this funding as an option in their Development Base Grant application

Project Lead and Project Personnel (20%)

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

Project Implementation Plan (50%)

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

The applicant directly links their Project Completion Plan (one of the fields that makes-up the PIP) with measurable improvement in the Retail Program Standards.

Mentee Program Plans (30%)

The Jurisdiction's Mentorship Need, as described in the application, can be met by the current design of the Mentorship Program.

Looking at the application as a whole, the applicant appears to be prepared to receive the full benefits of being accepted as a Mentee.

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

Track 2 Applicants when chosen INSTEAD of selecting the Mentee Optional Add-On in their Base Grant application, OR current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantees

Project Lead and Project Personnel (20%)
Project roles are clearly defined for the Project Lead, Project Team Members, and any "to be filled" positions.

Project Implementation Plan (50%) The Project Implementation Plan (PIP) section of the application is clearly defined, with a Project Completion Plan, Action Steps, Individual Leads, and a Completion Date that are measurable and achievable during the project period.
The applicant directly links their Project Completion Plan (one of the fields that makes up the PIP) with measurable improvement in the Retail Program Standards.

Mentor Program Plans (30%)
The applicant demonstrates expertise in at least some of the specific steps required for progress through the Retail Program Standards (Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards, Completion of a CSIP, Meeting Elements and Standards, Verification Audits). Looking at the application as a whole, the applicant appears to be prepared to serve as a Mentor.

Training Optional Add-On Grant
Peer Review Scoring Guide

Current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantees only, since Track 1 and 2 applicants can request this funding as an option in their Development Base Grant applications.

Project Lead and Project Personnel

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

Project Implementation Plan

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

The applicant directly links their Project Completion Plan (one of the fields that makes up the PIP) with measurable improvement in the Retail Program Standards.

Training Outcomes

Note: Selecting more than one Training Outcome <u>will not</u> increase your overall chances of receiving a Training Optional Add-On Grant.

(If selected by applicant) Plans for the "Training Courses, Workshops, and Conferences" are clear and complete.

Budget Worksheet and Budget Justification

When looked at as a whole, the Budget Worksheet(s) and Budget Justification(s) provide enough detail to show that the requested funding will support the proposed project plans.

The budget resources requested are appropriate and necessary for successful completion of the proposed project.

Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant

Peer Review Scoring Guide

Track 2 applicants and Current Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base grantees only.

Project Lead and Project Personnel (10%)

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

Project Implementation Plan (20%)

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

Special Projects Completion Plan (60%)

The Special Project Completion Plan (the first component of the PIP) describes a project that works towards an Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS).

The Special Project Completion Plan (again, the first component of the PIP) ensures that all project deliverables and resources developed can be made available to other retail food protection programs.

Budget Worksheet and Budget Justification (10%)

When looked at as a whole, the Budget Worksheet(s) and Budget Justification(s) provide enough detail to show that the requested funding will support the proposed project plans.

The budget resources requested are appropriate and necessary for successful completion of the proposed project.

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

Final award decisions are made by the FDA Project Officer for the FDA Cooperative Agreement that funds this program, considering both the scoring information provided and input from the Joint Advisory Group. Applicants will be notified via a system-generated email regarding the status of each of their applications, whether funded or declined. Reviewer feedback (without reviewer names) is provided to applicants upon request

VI. Reporting Requirements

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

A. Reporting and Reimbursement Instructions

The full NEHA-FDA RFFM *Reporting and Payments* instructions page is posted on the NEHA Retail Grants website at: https://www.neha.org/retail-grants/payment. The instructions, downloadable as a PDF, provide additional details for each of the summary sections below.

B. Advance Payment and Reimbursement Requests

Funds under this program are generally awarded on a reimbursement basis after both an Annual Progress Report (3-year grants) or a Final Progress Report (1-year grants) AND a Reimbursement Request (with expenditure documentation attached) are submitted and approved by the NEHA Finance Team, but exceptions will be made based on the needs of the jurisdiction.

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

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

C. Interim Progress Reports

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

D. Annual and Final Progress Reports

An Annual Progress Report (for 3-year awards) or Final Progress Report (for 1-year Awards) is required for all grants at the end of each 1-year project period and should document completion of all project deliverables. An Annual or Final Progress Report must be submitted through the online

Grant Portal no later than 45 days after the end of each year's project period (you will receive automated reminders from the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grants Management System).

Along with each Annual or Final Progress Report, the grantee must also submit a Reimbursement Request, which will allow you to certify whether you have completed your planned project deliverables (Fixed Award funding), and/or provide a full accounting of all expenditures made with funds from each grant (Traditional Reimbursements), accompanied by the documentation specified in the *Reporting and Payments* instructions page posted on the NEHA Retail Grants website. See section II B. of this Grant Guidance.

E. Budget Updates and Changes to Project Scope

Any changes to project scope, tasks, deliverables, or expenses must be approved in advance and in writing by the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team. For the grants and options that use the Traditional Reimbursement process, 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 Support Team.*

VII.   Appendix A - Important Web Links

A. NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Homepage

https://www.neha.org/retail-grants

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

B. Contacting the NEHA-FDA Retail Program Grant Support Team

If you have questions or needs, during the application submittal process or after submittal, please reach out to the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team at retailgrants@neha.org or 1-833-575-2404.

C. FDA Retail Program Standards Information

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

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

D. Enrolling in the Retail Program Standards

https://www.neha.org/retail-grants-enroll

If your jurisdiction is not already registered, visit this site for information and links to register in the FDA Retail Program Standards. Registration is required to be eligible for this grant program and must be completed by October 11, 2023 to be eligible for this year's grant program. If you are not already enrolled, consider enrolling today.

E. FDA Retail Food Specialists

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

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

F. NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model Grant Portal

The Grant Portal can be accessed through the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program homepage at https://www.neha.org/retail-grants, using the "Access the Grant Portal" button. This button

leads directly to the Grant Portal where you can register and apply for grants for this FDA-funded opportunity. The portal will be open for new applications from August 16, 2023 until 7:59 p.m. EST on October 11, 2023.

G. Download a Modern Browser

The NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Portal has minimum requirements for security and functionality reasons. Utilize this link: https://www.neha.org/retail-grants-tech-supportto access and download a modern browser that is compatible with the system. Contact your jurisdiction's information technology office for assistance.

VIII.   Appendix B – Sample Application Forms

A. Grant Application Forms

For examples of the CY 2024 NEHA-FDA RFFM application forms that must be completed and submitted through the Grant Portal, please visit: https://www.neha.org/retail-grants-guidance

B. Budget Example

For examples of the CY 2024 NEHA-FDA RFFM grant application forms and budget examples that must be completed and submitted through the Grant Portal, please visit: https://www.neha.org/retail-grants-guidance

Each of the posted forms or budget examples can be printed for planning purposes, or for use in seeking prior approval for submission of applications from your agency.