



# Calendar Year 2025

## Grant Guidance

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

V. Updated 09.30.2024

Application Period: October 1 – November 20, 2024

[www.neha.org/retail-grants](http://www.neha.org/retail-grants)



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## I. Grant Program Overview

One of the central features of both the health enterprise and the work of most public health regulatory programs is retail food safety. However, regulatory programs often face a significant barrier to committing time and resources to build 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 financial support to advance conformance with the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards (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 and Key Information for CY 2025

For the Calendar Year (CY) 2025 grants (including three-year grants covering CY 2025-2027), 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 grant program. Key changes for CY 2025 Include:

- **A Combined Track 3 Application:** Based on the positive feedback received after offering a combined application for Track 1 and Track 2 Development Base Grants (offering funds for completion of base activities - meeting Standards and elements - but also for Training and participation as a Mentee in the Mentorship Program), we have added a combined Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant application for CY 2025.
- **Fixed Funding for Most CY 2025 Awards and Options:** Most of the funding offered through CY 2025 grants will be based on deliverables met rather than line-item budgets and receipt-based reports. The only funds offered for CY 2025 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 and Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grants), the *Capacity Building Optional Add-On* (offered through the Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant), and the *Special Projects Optional Add-On* Grant (available to Track 2 and Track 3 applicants).
- **Three-Year Grants Will Be Open for CY 2025-2027:** Three-year Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grants will once again be offered during the current open application period.
- **A Capacity Building Optional Add-On** will also be available, offered for this cycle as an option

within the Track 3 base grant and offering substantial 3-year funding (\$300,000 – maximum of \$100,000 per year) for jurisdictions ready to make significant progress with the Retail Program Standards. At the request of many innovative jurisdictions, the Capacity Building option has been expanded to include support for Network Coordinators, personnel who can be enabled to support and encourage multi-jurisdictional progress with the Standards.

- **An updated Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant**, which has been expanded to include projects that support Retail Food Safety Networks and other mechanisms that enable multi-jurisdictional Retail Program Standards conformance.

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 2025 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 grant types will be added to the Grant Portal on **Tuesday, October 1, 2024**. All applications must be completed and successfully submitted through the Grant Portal by **Wednesday, November 20, 2024, at 7:59 p.m. ET**.

### 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, including opportunities to participate in curriculum development for the 2026 Retail Program Standards Symposium, or the request funds to attend the Conference for Food Protection (CFP) 2025 Biennial Meeting.

### E. Grant Program Goals

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

- Support strategies that reduce the occurrence of foodborne illness risk factors;

- Promote uniformity and a national Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS) by enabling jurisdictions to move toward full compliance with the Retail Program Standards; and
- Fully leverage the expertise and capacity of SLTT retail food protection agencies to meet Retail Program Standards goals.

## 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 Tracks 1, 2 and 3 open for new applications in CY 2025. 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 may also apply for additional funding either:
  - As *Optional Add-Ons within a Base Grant application* (Track 1 and Track 2 Development Base Grant applications and Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant applications are all now combined grant applications, offering funding options beyond simply the base funding), and/or
  - Through completing and submitting *Optional Add-On Grant* applications. For CY 2025 there are two add-on grant options: Mentorship / Mentor and Special Projects, available for Track 2 and Track 3 applicants (details provided below).

## G. CY 2025 Grant Program Overview

For CY 2025, 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 CY 2025 projects include:

- **Three different Base Grants**, each combined awards offering base, training, and mentee funds through a single application.
- **Two different Optional Add-On Grants**, offering additional funding opportunities for Track 2 and Track 3 base grant applicants.

See the following pages for summary charts with details for **CY 2025 Base Grants**, **CY 2025 Optional Add-On Grants**, and the **Maximum Number of Applications Per Applicant in Each Funding Track**. For full details on each grant type, including funding options and deliverables required for Fixed Award payments, be sure to see the additional information provided in Section II of this guidance: “CY 2025 Grant Program Details.”

## Calendar Year (CY) 2025 Base Grant Types

Details	Track 1 Development Base Grant (1-year award)	Track 2 Development Base Grant (1-year award)	Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant
<b>Open to new Applicants for CY 2025?</b>	YES	YES	YES
<b>Duration</b>	One-Year Award (January thru December 2025)	One-Year Award (January thru December 2025)	Three-Year Award (January 2025 thru December 2027)
<b>Eligibility Requirements</b>	Enrolled in the Retail Program Standards	(1) Enrolled in the Retail Program Standards  (2) Current Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards (August 1, 2019 or later)  (3) A complete Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP) covering long-term plans for all 9 Standards	(1) Enrolled in the Retail Program Standards  (2) Current Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards (August 2019 or later)  (3) A complete Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP) covering long-term plans for all 9 Standards  (4) You must have Met and Verified at least three different Standards within the past five years (each dated August 1, 2019 or later).
<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Required Outcomes:</b> (1) Completion of a Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards (SA9)  (2) Completion of a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP) covering long term plans, 9 standards	<b>Required Outcome:</b> (1) Continuous improvement with one or more of Standards 1-8 (progress on at least one standard is required)	<b>Required Outcomes:</b> (1) Continuous improvement with one or more of Standards 1-8 during each year of the 3-year grant period  (2) Meet and Audit at least one new standard by the end of the 3-year grant period

	<b>Track 1 Continued</b>	<b>Track 2 Continued</b>	<b>Track 3 Continued</b>
		<b>Optional Outcome:</b> (1) Work toward meeting or maintaining Standard 9	(3) Work toward meeting or maintaining Standard 9 during each year of the 3-year grant period
<b>Optional Add-Ons available within the Base Grant</b>	(1) Mentee Optional Add-On  (2) Training Optional Add-On (for in-person Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Workshops, attendance at FDA Retail Food Protection Seminars, and/or attendance at the Conference for Food Protection (CFP))	(1) Mentee Optional Add-On  (2) Training Optional Add-On (for Retail Food Safety Trainings, Workshops, and Conferences)  (3) Updated Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards (within 12 months of 5-year renewal)	(1) Mentee Optional Add-On  (2) Training Optional Add-On (for Retail Food Safety Trainings, Workshops, and Conferences)  (3) Capacity Building. Optional Add-On  (4) Updated Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards (within 12 months of 5-year renewal)
<b>Funding Available</b>	From \$5,000 to \$22,500 for one year (if all options are requested and awarded)	From \$5,000 to \$35,500 for one year (if all options are requested and awarded at the highest amounts)	From \$45,000 to \$380,500 for three years (if all options are requested and awarded at the highest amounts)
<b>Total Applications Required</b>	1	1	1



## CY 2025 Optional Add-On Grants

Details	Mentorship / Mentor Optional Add-On Grant	Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant
<b>Who Can Apply for CY 2025?</b>	Track 2 and Track 3 base grant applicants (instead of requesting funds through the Mentee Optional Add-On in the Base application)	Track 2 and Track 3 base grant applicants
<b>Purpose</b>	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 Retail Program Standards
<b>Funding Available</b>	\$12,000 to \$24,000 for 1 to 5 Mentees	Up to \$20,000
<b>Total Applications Required</b>	1 (in addition to the Base Grant application)	1 (in addition to the Base Grant application)

## Maximum Number of Applications Per Applicant in Each Funding Track

Details	Track 1	Track 2	Track 3
<b>Maximum Number of CY 2025 Applications</b>	<b>1 application:</b> (1) Track 1 Development Base Grant, including Mentee and Training Optional Add-Ons	<b>Up to 3 applications:</b> (1) Track 2 Development Base Grant, including Mentee and Training Optional Add-Ons  (2) Mentorship / Mentor Optional Add-On Grant – in lieu of the Mentee Optional Add-On in the Base Grant  (3) Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant	<b>Up to 3 applications:</b> (1) Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant, including, Mentee, Training, and Capacity Building Optional Add-Ons  2) Mentorship / Mentor Optional Add-On Grant <u>instead</u> of the Mentee Optional Add-On in the Base Grant  (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. **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.**

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 Training (SA VA Workshop, FDA Retail Food Protection Seminars, Conference for Food Protection) 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 applicants, additional requirements include both of the following:

- A current Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards (August 2019 or later); AND
- A completed Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP).

For SLTT retail food regulatory programs who wish to apply for a **Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant** and/or the **two Optional Add-On Grants** available for Track 3 applicants, additional requirements include all of the following:

- A current Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards (August 2019 or later); AND
- A completed Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP); AND
- Confirmation that at least three different Standards have been successfully Met and Audited within the past five years (August 2019 or later).

For additional information regarding completion of a new or updated Self-Assessment of All 9 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>

## I. Registering for the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program

To apply for CY 2025 Grants, applicants can use the “**Access the Grant Portal**” button found on the NEHA-FDA Retail Grants homepage until the Grant Portal closes on November 20, 2024:

[www.neha.org/retail-grants](http://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 2021-2024. Both your username and password can be recovered using the “Access the Grant Portal” link, simply by entering the email used at the time of registration.

Jurisdictions that have never registered or applied for a NEHA-FDA RFFM grant (which began in the fall of 2021) may use the same “**Access the Grant Portal**” button to register for a new account.

### 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:
  - **Organization Information**
  - 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 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.
  - Note: Whenever possible, the POC and AO should be two different individuals.
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 link to set up your 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, after you submit your application(s) to check the status of your application(s), and to access awarded grants and complete required reports.
- If you do not receive an email with a username and password link within two (2) days after registration, please check your SPAM folder, and then contact the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team.

## J. Amount of Funding Available

Approximately \$8 million is expected to be available for all grant types in CY 2025, depending on the number and quality of applications.

## 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](mailto:retailgrants@neha.org) or call toll-free 1-833-575-2404.

# II. CY 2025 Grant Program Details

## A. Program Updates for CY 2025

For CY 2025 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 grant 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 2025 and CY 2025 – 2027 grants offered during the Fall 2024 application period:

- **A Combined Track 3 Application for CY 2025:** Based on the positive feedback received after offering a combined Track 1 and Track 2 Development Base Grant application for CY 2023 and CY 2024 (rolling three applications into one), we have added a combined Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant application for CY 2025. The updated Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant application now allows Track 3 applicants to request
  - Base funding for Continuous Improvement in Standards 1-8,
  - Funding for work toward meeting or maintaining Standard 9,
  - Mentorship Optional Add-On funding to be a Mentee,
  - Training Optional Add-On funding to attend Retail Food Safety Trainings, Workshops, and Conferences, and
  - Capacity Building Optional Add-On funding,**All through a single application.**

**Benefits for SLTTs:** A significant reduction in the number of applications and reports required at the Base Grant level for Track 1, Track 2, and Track 3 applicants.

- **Fixed Funding for Most CY 2025 Grants and Options:** Offered as a major innovation for CY 2025, most of the funding offered through CY 2025 grants will be based on deliverables met rather than line-item budgets and receipt-based reports. The only funding offered for CY 2025 that will require detailed budgets and receipt-based reporting will be the:
  - *Training Optional Add-Ons* (for Track 1, Track 2, and Track 3 applicants),
  - *Capacity Building Optional Add-On* (for Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base applicants), and
  - *Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant* (available for Track 2 and Track 3 applicants).

Fixed Funding Categories will include:

- **Fixed Funding for Base / Standard 9 activities in all Base grants,** to be used to complete a Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards (SA9) AND a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP) (*Track 1*), OR to work on elements, audits, and conformance with individual Standards, progress toward meeting or maintaining Standard 9, and an updated Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards once every 5 years (*Tracks 2 and 3*).
- **Fixed Funding for Mentorship Optional Add-Ons and Mentorship Optional Add-On Grants,** for both Mentors (Tracks 2 and 3) 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.

**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 2025 Grants.”

- **Additional Changes for CY 2025, and the Benefits for SLTTs:**
  - **Additional Training options for Track 1 Development Base Grantees**, to include in-person (ILT) Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Workshops, FDA Retail Food Protection Seminars, and the Conference for Food Protection (CFP) (up to \$7,500)
  - **Additional funding options have been added to the Track 2 Development Base Grant**, including two options (instead of one) for work toward meeting or maintaining Standard 9 (either \$5,000 or \$10,000 in funding, depending on the Risk Factor Study approach selected) and the option to request \$3,000 for an updated Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards (within 12 months of 5-year renewal)
  - **Mentee funding has been reduced to a Fixed Award of \$10,000 (Optional Add-On for Tracks 1, 2, 3)**, allowing for an increased number of Mentee awards.
  - **Track 3 Base funding has been reduced to a \$30,000 Fixed Award (\$10,000 per year)**, simplifying both the application and annual reporting, while also enabling a significantly increased number of jurisdictions to benefit from Track 3’s higher funding (as compared to Tracks 1 and 2) and three years of continuous funding through a single base grant.
  - **Significant funding will still be offered through the Capacity Building Add-On in Track 3 (up to \$300,000 total - \$100,000 per year), but as an option within Track 3** to assure that jurisdictions who apply for these funds have a three-year plan in place that supports significant progress toward advancement of the Retail Program Standards.
  - **The Capacity Building Optional Add-On has been expanded** to include the opportunity to fund a Retail Program Standards Coordinator, a Network Coordinator position, or to support other mechanisms that lead to measurable improvement in Retail Program Standards conformance.
  - **The Special Projects Optional Add-On includes clearer guidance** on priorities for these important and highly competitive grants.
  - **New Reporting Requirement for CY2025-2027 Grantees:** Beginning with the CY 2025 grant cycle, jurisdictions that are awarded grants through the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program will be required to use a combined MS Excel workbook that meets the requirements

for both the Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards (SA9) and the Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP). This workbook, the **Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards and Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan Development Tool (SA9 and CSIP Development Tool)**, has many benefits, but the biggest is that the information entered as the SA9 is completed or updated will be loaded directly into the CSIP portion of the tool. This automatic action will eliminate the need to transfer information from the SA9 to a separate CSIP which, over time, should provide significant benefits to state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) partners and to FDA.

**NEHA** will provide training for SLTTs on how to use the tool in early 2025. All applicants must complete the tool and submit it by the end of the CY 2025 grant cycle (December 31, 2025) as a component of the Annual or Final Progress Report. The tool will be shared with all grantees in early 2025 (as a desktop application), and a digital version with cloud-based storage will be ready for use by July 2025.

## **B. Three Base Grants Offered for CY 2025 with Multiple Funding Options**

Applicants have three combination Base Grant options in the current annual grant cycle, as outlined on the following pages.

## **C. Two Optional Add-On Grants are Offered for CY 2025**

Two Optional Add-On-Grants are offered in the current annual grant cycle: both open to Track 2 Development Base and Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base applicants.

**See the information on following pages for details on both the Base Grants and Optional Add-Ons offered during the current funding cycle.**

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

### Required and Optional Outcomes, 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 9 Standards (SA9) **AND** a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP) - *\$5,000 Fixed Funding based on deliverables met*

**Mentee Optional Add-On:** *\$10,000 Fixed Funding based on deliverables met* (see section II. E of this guidance for specific deliverables and payments)

**Training Optional Add-On:** Support for SLTT employees to attend in-person Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Workshops (maximum of 2 staff members per jurisdiction), FDA Retail Food Protection Seminars, and/or the Conference for Food Protection (CFP) – *Traditional Funding up to \$7,500*

*Note that applicants new to the Retail Program Standards are strongly encouraged to attend a Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Workshop as a top priority. The workshop is offered as an In-Person Workshop, a Virtual Workshop, and as a Self-Guided Course. No funding is needed for the virtual and self-guided options, and they do not need to be included in your grant application.*

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

**Duration:** One year (CY 2025), 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 are combined into a single application; only one application is needed for all Track 1-eligible funding

**Funding Available:** Total Track 1 funding available for CY 2025 applicants: \$5,000 to \$22,500 for one year, depending on the options selected



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

### Required and Optional Outcomes, Funding Available

The Track 2 Development Base Grant offers SLTT jurisdictions the opportunity to choose up to five funding options through a single application

**Required Outcome:** Continuous Improvement with at least one of Standards 1-8 - *\$5,000 Fixed Funding based on deliverables met*

**Optional Outcome:** Work toward meeting or maintaining Standard 9 - *\$5,000 or \$10,000 in Fixed Funding based on deliverables met*, depending on the Risk Factor Study approach used:

Risk Factor Study approaches include:

- A **Level 1 Risk Factor Study** uses the “**File Study**” approach which uses routine inspection data from inspections that have already been completed, to retroactively assess the occurrence of risk factors - *Fixed Funding of \$5,000*
- A **Level 2 FDA Risk Factor Study** uses the “**Data Collection**” approach to estimate the occurrence of risk factors using observational visits to randomly selected retail food establishments. A “Data Collection” visit has, as its sole focus, observation of food safety behaviors tied to risk factors and is completed separately from the regulatory inspection - *Fixed Funding of \$10,000*
- A third approach, also considered a **Level 2 Risk Factor Study**, is the “**Hybrid Approach**” which combines elements of the first two, by combining the data collection visit with a routine inspection. It is suggested that the data collection work occur after the routine inspection has been performed. *Fixed Funding of \$10,000*

Work to meet Standard 9 is completed over multiple years (often a 5-year cycle) and commonly includes all of the following steps:

- Year 1 – Design new (or update ongoing) Risk Factor Study, prepare materials, train staff
- Year 2 - Collect risk factor data for new (baseline) or ongoing Risk Factor Study
- Year 3 - Collect risk factor data for new (baseline) or ongoing Risk Factor Study
- Year 4 - Analyze risk factor data  
Complete data analysis report and determine interventions needed
- Year 5 - Implement interventions based on results of data analysis  
Meet and Audit Standard 9
- Year 6/1 - Process is repeated every 5 years, measuring the effectiveness of previously implemented interventions and then determining and implementing new ones for continuous improvement

**(Track 2 continued)**

**Optional Outcome** - Updated Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards within 12 months of 5-year renewal (if applicable): *Fixed Funding of \$3,000 based on deliverable met*

**Mentee Optional Add-On:** *\$10,000 Fixed Funding based on deliverables met* (see section II. E of this guidance for specific deliverables and payments)

**Training Optional Add-On:** Support for SLTT employees to attend Retail Food Safety Trainings, Workshops, and Conferences – *Traditional Funding up to \$7,500*

**Eligibility:** Enrollment in the Retail Program Standards, a current Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards (August 2019 or later), and an up-to-date Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP) covering long-term plans for all 9 Standards

**Duration:** One year (CY 2025), with the opportunity to reapply annually

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

**Up to Two Optional Add-On Grants:** Track 2 applicants are eligible to also 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

**Funding Available:** Total Track 2 funding available for CY 2025 applicants: \$5,000 to \$35,500 for one year, depending on the options selected

## Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant (3-Year Award)

### Required and Optional Outcomes, Funding Available

The Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant offers SLTT jurisdictions the opportunity to choose up to six funding options through a single application

**Required Outcome:** Continuous Improvement with at least one of Standards 1-8 (progress on at least one standard is required in each of the three project years AND at least one new standard must be met and audited by the end of the 3-year grant period) - \$30,000 (\$10,000 per year) *Fixed Funding based on deliverables met*

**Required Outcome:** Work toward meeting or maintaining Standard 9 during each of the three project years - \$15,000 or \$30,000 (\$5,000 or \$10,000 per year) *Fixed Funding based on deliverables met, depending on the Risk Factor Study approach used*

Risk Factor Study approaches include:

- A **Level 1 Risk Factor Study** uses the “**File Study**” approach which uses routine inspection data from inspections that have already been completed, to retroactively assess the occurrence of risk factors. *Fixed Funding of \$5,000 per year*
- A **Level 2 FDA Risk Factor Study** uses the “**Data Collection**” approach to estimate the occurrence of risk factors using observational visits to randomly selected retail food establishments. A “Data Collection” visit has, as its sole focus, observation of food safety behaviors tied to risk factors and is completed separately from the regulatory inspection. *Fixed Funding of \$10,000 per year*
- A third approach, also considered a **Level 2 Risk Factor Study**, is the “**Hybrid Approach**” which combines elements of the first two, by combining the data collection visit with a routine inspection. It is suggested that the data collection work occur after the routine inspection has been performed. *Fixed Funding of \$10,000 per year*

The work required to meet Standard 9 is completed over multiple years (often a 5-year cycle) and commonly includes each of the following steps:

- Year 1 – Design new (or update ongoing) Risk Factor Study, prepare materials, train staff
- Year 2 - Collect risk factor data for new (baseline) or ongoing Risk Factor Study
- Year 3 - Collect risk factor data for new (baseline) or ongoing Risk Factor Study
- Year 4 - Analyze risk factor data  
Complete data analysis report and determine interventions needed
- Year 5 - Implement interventions based on results of data analysis  
Meet and Audit Standard 9

**(Track 3 continued)**

**Optional Outcome** - Updated Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards within 12 months of 5-year renewal (if applicable): *Fixed Funding of \$3,000 based on deliverable met*

**Mentee Optional Add-On:** Request to be a Mentee (one-year award with the opportunity to reapply annually), *\$10,000 fixed funding based on deliverables met* (see section II. E of this guidance for specific deliverables and payments) (CY 2025 only)

**Training Optional Add-On:** Support for SLTT employees to attend Retail Food Safety Trainings, Workshops, and Conferences (one year award with the opportunity to reapply annually) – *Traditional Funding up to \$7,500 (CY 2025 only)*

**Capacity Building Optional Add-On:** Traditional Funding up to \$300,000 over three years (maximum of \$100,000 per year)

- **Capacity Building Purpose:** Capacity Building projects are focused on supporting personnel costs through a new hire, support of an existing position, or support of multiple positions (not to exceed 1.0 FTE), or for other mechanisms that lead to measurable improvement in Retail Program Standards conformance
- **Project examples** include support for a Retail Program Standards Coordinator position, a Network Coordinator or other position that supports multi-jurisdictional RPS conformance, a staff person (or persons) supporting both Retail Program Standards and network coordination goals, or other projects that lead to measurable improvement in Retail Program Standards conformance
- Over time, as a jurisdiction increases in experience and moves closer to meeting all nine Standards, funded personnel are encouraged to take on the role of a Network Coordinator or otherwise support activities that will enable multiple jurisdictions to increase conformance with the Retail Program Standards
- Projects that plan to expand conformance with the Retail Program Standards beyond their own jurisdictions, through support of Retail Program Standards Networks, the NEHA-FDA Mentorship Program, or by other means are likely to score well during the application review.
- Funded jurisdictions must develop a Sustainability Plan as part of their three-year project, for maintaining RPS gains after staff turnover and if future FTE funding is limited
- Capacity Building funding is expected to be highly competitive; priority will be given to applications that best demonstrate Retail Program Standards growth
- Applicants should be sure to clearly outline long-term jurisdictional plans to conform with most or all of the 9 Retail Program Standards

**(Track 3 continued)**

- Note that for this option under a Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant, a detailed budget will be required at the time of application, and receipts/proof of expenditures will be required with each Interim Reimbursement Request (as needed) or Annual and Final Progress Reports

**Eligibility:** Enrollment in the Program Standards, a current SA9 (August 2019 or later), an up-to-date Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP) covering long-term plans for all 9 Standards, and having successfully Met and Audited three different Standards within the past five years (to be confirmed according to FDA data)

**Duration:** Three years (CY 2025, CY 2026, CY2027)

**Best For:** Jurisdictions with recent experience meeting and auditing Standards (minimum of three in the last 5 years), and with plans for continued progress conforming with, and/or supporting other jurisdictions who are working to conform with, the Retail Program Standards.

**Optional Add-On Grants:** CY 2025 Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement 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.

**Funding Available:** Total Track 3 funding available for CY 2025 applicants: \$45,000 to \$380,500 over three years, depending on the options selected

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

### Permissible Outcomes and Funding Available

***The Mentorship / Mentor Optional Add-On Grant offers SLTT jurisdictions in Track 2 or Track 3 the opportunity to apply to be a Mentor instead of choosing the Mentee option in their base grant.*** Awarded jurisdictions will serve as Mentors for 1-5 Mentee jurisdictions in the NEHA-FDA RFFM Mentorship Program (managed in partnership with NACCHO). Please see the latest version of the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Guidance for specific Mentor deliverables and payments.

***Note for Mentor applicants who are also applying for a Capacity Building Optional Add-On in their Track 3 base grant:*** For applicants who are awarded Capacity Building funds, Mentor applications will be considered alongside the approved Capacity Building outcomes. Funding for the Mentor application will only be considered if the Capacity Building outcomes are different and distinct from the Mentor outcomes (focused on different jurisdictions, distinct outcomes, etc.).

*Depending on the number and quality of applications received, consideration may also be given to the total number of Capacity Building and Mentor applications received from a single state (or a single geographic area). We encourage jurisdictions in the same state or geographic area to collaborate during the application phase. This will ensure that all Capacity Building and Mentor applications submitted are the strongest possible, demonstrating both growing partnerships and significant Retail Program Standards growth.*

**Required Outcomes:** Serve as a Retail Program Standards Mentor for 1-5 Mentees, with *Fixed Funding from \$12,000 to \$24,000 based on the number of Mentees (see section II. E of this guidance for specific deliverables and payments)*

**Eligibility:** Must be a CY 2025 Track 2 Development Base Grant or a Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant applicant, and must have declined to apply for the Mentee Optional Add-On in your Base Grant

**Duration:** One year (CY 2025), with the opportunity to reapply annually

**Best For:** Jurisdictions with experience in the Retail Program Standards who are willing to help other jurisdictions make progress in conforming with the Standards

**Funding Available:** \$12,000 to \$24,000 *Fixed Funding based on deliverables met for CY 2025, depending on the number of Mentees*

## 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 Retail Program Standards, with the greater goal of supporting the Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS).**

An IFSS provides the vision, guiding principles, and key components of a coordinated approach to food safety and includes the implementation of seamless partnerships and operations among federal, state, local, territorial, and tribal agencies, and other partners. The IFSS encourages interactions and collaborations with strategic partners, as their input and the lessons learned are critical to achieving the public health mission of realizing a safer food supply.

Funding to pilot / implement innovative SLTT ideas that advance the Retail Program Standards continues to be the most successful aspect of Special Projects Grants, and we look forward to the many new project ideas we expect to be submitted for this competitive funding category.

**Although they will be considered on an equal basis with all submittals, for CY 2025 we want to encourage projects that support sustainable Retail Food Safety Networks.** Successful networks have been shown to significantly improve compliance with the Standards by enabling collaboration, resource sharing, and coaching by those further along in conformance with the Standards. Networks encourage nearby or similar jurisdictions to enroll in and align with the Retail Program Standards, which is key to ensuring quality food safety regulations remain a growing priority nationwide.

**Required Outcomes:** Projects with specific outcomes that advance the Retail Program Standards, support Retail Food Safety Networks, or other projects that support the IFSS mission of a safe and sustainable food supply. *Traditional Funding up to \$20,000*

**Eligibility:** Must be a CY 2025 Track 2 Development Base Grant or a CY 2025 Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant applicant

**Duration:** One year (CY 2025), with the opportunity to reapply annually

**Best For:** Experienced jurisdictions prepared to work toward advancing the Retail Program Standards and supporting the Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS).

#### **Project Ideas:**

- Support for collaborative activities between and among members of one or more Retail Program Standards Networks
- 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 activities

## (Special Projects continued)

**Project Aspects to Consider:** When developing a Special Projects proposal, please ensure your project addresses as many of the following as possible.

- Consists of robust, high-quality data integration and analysis systems and information sharing mechanisms among partners
- Introduces an innovative approach (new method, idea, protocol, resource)
- Leverages the resources, experience, subject matter expertise, and efforts among partners to create an integrated global food safety network that will achieve the best public health outcome
- Supports a coordinated and comparable regulatory system of inspection, surveillance, investigation, enforcement, and response
- Improves response capabilities to foodborne illness outbreaks, recalls, and food emergencies
- Incorporates the most current public and environmental health and regulatory science and data available
- 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)
- Supports national or external (outside of applicant's jurisdiction) capacity/capability development for prevention, intervention, or response

**Funding Available:** Traditional Funding up to \$20,000 for CY 2025



## D. Capacity Building Optional Add-On / Additional Details

For the CY 2025-2027 funding cycle, Capacity Building funds are once again being offered to allow jurisdictions to request substantial funding - up to \$300,000 (a maximum of \$100,000 per year) - for projects that will further the goals of the Retail Program Standards. For this round of funding, Capacity Building funds are being offered as optional add-on funds within the Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant. This will ensure that jurisdictions requesting this significant investment have plans to fully integrate their Capacity Building activities with other funded Retail Program Standards activities. It will also ensure that Capacity Building awardees have base grant support in place for the entire 3-year period for this funding, without having to reapply each year.

**The intent of Capacity Building Optional Add-On funding for CY 2025-2027 is to support personnel that have primary responsibility for increasing conformance with the Retail Program Standards, through a new hire, support for an existing position, or support for multiple positions (not to exceed 1.0 FTE), or for other mechanisms that lead to measurable improvement in Retail Program Standards conformance.**

**Over time, as a jurisdiction increases in experience and moves closer to meeting a majority of the 9 Standards, funded personnel are encouraged to take on the role of a Network Coordinator or otherwise support activities that will enable multiple jurisdictions to increase conformance with the RPS.**

**Capacity Building funding is expected to be highly competitive, and priority will be given to applications that best demonstrate Retail Program Standards growth.** Applicants should be sure to clearly outline long-term jurisdictional plans to conform with most or all of the 9 Retail Program Standards in the Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP) that must be attached to the Track 3 application. Additionally, projects that plan to expand conformance with the Retail Program Standards beyond a single jurisdiction, through support of Retail Program Standards Networks, the NEHA-FDA Mentorship Program, or by other means, are likely to score well during the application review.

**Due to funding limitations, total Capacity Building funds awarded to a single state (or in a single geographic area) may need to be limited, based on the number and quality of applications received.** We encourage jurisdictions in the same state or geographic area to collaborate during the application phase. This will ensure that all Capacity Building applications submitted are the strongest possible, demonstrating significant Retail Program Standards growth.

**As part of a three-year project, Capacity Building applicants are asked to focus their project on one of four distinct purposes,** with corresponding outcomes that must be met for each selected purpose.

Following are the allowable purposes and required outcomes for each of the four Capacity Building

options:

1. **Support for a Retail Program Standards (RPS) Coordinator position**, with the primary purpose of assisting the funded jurisdiction in making significant Retail Program Standards progress.

**By the end of the three-year project period**, jurisdictions that intend to use the Capacity Building Optional Add-On to support an RPS Coordinator must:

- Maintain any Standards already met (a minimum of three Standards, a requirement for all Track 3 grantees) \*;
- Meet and audit a minimum of two new Standards, in addition to the one new Standard met requirement for all track 3 Grantees \*\* (a total of three new Standards met and audited); and
- **Be maintaining a minimum of six (6) Standards.** (Be sure to indicate which three new Standards you plan to meet and audit by the end of the grant period, and three or more Standards you have already met and plan to maintain, in the “Required Outcome for a Track 3 Base Grant” section of the application.)
- Funded jurisdictions must develop a **Sustainability Plan** as part of their three-year project, for maintaining RPS gains after staff turnover and if future FTE funding is limited. NEHA will provide a template, guidance, and assistance with this requirement, shortly after awards are made.

Applicants that meet all nine Standards in year one or two of the three-year project period are encouraged to begin working to help other jurisdictions increase RPS conformance through networking activities, the NEHA-FDA RFFM Mentorship Program (which will require a separate, annual application), or through other means. If this scenario applies to your jurisdiction, be sure to provide details in the “Capacity Building Other Outcomes” section of the application.

*\* If any Standards that have been previously met become unattainable due to regulatory changes or other reasons, a detailed explanation and an action plan must be included in the relevant annual report.*

*\*\* If your jurisdiction has already met all 9 Standards, or all that are attainable according to your jurisdiction’s current legal framework, please explain in your application.*

2. **Support for a Network Coordinator position**, with the primary purpose of leading or supporting a Retail Program Standards Network that enables multiple jurisdictions to make measurable Retail Program Standards progress.

**By the end of the three-year project period**, jurisdictions that intend to use the Capacity Building Optional Add-On to support a Network Coordinator must:

- Maintain any Standards already met (a minimum of three Standards, a requirement for all Track 3 grantees);
- Meet and audit a minimum of one new Standard (the requirement for all Track 3 grantees);

- Work to support a minimum of four enrolled (or newly enrolled) jurisdictions as part of an RPS Network (be sure to indicate specific goals for a minimum of four network jurisdictions you plan to recruit and/or support, in the “Network Outcomes” section below); and
  - **Be maintaining a minimum of four (4) Standards.** (Be sure to indicate which new Standard you plan to meet and audit by the end of the grant period, and three or more Standards you have already met and plan to maintain, in the “Required Outcome for a Track 3 Base Grant” section of the application.)
  - Funded jurisdictions must develop a **Sustainability Plan** as part of their three-year project, for maintaining RPS gains after staff turnover and if future FTE funding is limited. NEHA will provide a template, guidance, and assistance with this requirement, shortly after awards are made.
3. **Support for a combined RPS and Network Coordinator position**, with a focus on achieving and supporting both internal and external Retail Program Standards progress.

**By the end of the three-year project period**, jurisdictions that intend to use the Capacity Building Optional Add-On to support a Combined RPS and Network Coordinator must:

- Maintain any Standards already met (a minimum of three Standards, a requirement for all Track 3 grantees);
  - Meet and audit a minimum of one new Standard, in addition to the one new Standard met requirement for all track 3 grantees (a total of two new Standards met and audited);
  - Work to support a minimum of two enrolled (or newly enrolled) jurisdictions as part of an RPS Network (be sure to indicate specific goals for a minimum of two network jurisdictions you plan to recruit and/or support, in the “Network Outcomes” section below); and
  - **Be maintaining a minimum of five (5) Standards.** (Be sure to indicate which two new Standards you plan to meet and audit by the end of the grant period, and three or more Standards you have already met and plan to maintain, in the “Required Outcome for a Track 3 Base Grant” section of the application.)
  - Funded jurisdictions must develop a **Sustainability Plan** as part of their three-year project, for maintaining RPS gains after staff turnover and if future FTE funding is limited. NEHA will provide a template, guidance, and assistance with this requirement, shortly after awards are made.
4. **Other Retail Program Standards (RPS) Conformance Projects**
- Other RPS Conformance Projects must clearly state the value proposition for their funding request, which must increase RPS conformance, ideally beyond a single jurisdiction.
  - The Project Improvement Plan within the Track 3 base grant application must clearly describe one or more measurable project outcomes that will lead to increased RPS conformance, ideally beyond a single jurisdiction.

- Funded jurisdictions must develop a **Sustainability Plan** as part of their three-year project, for maintaining RPS gains after staff turnover and if future FTE funding is limited. NEHA will provide a template, guidance, and assistance with this requirement, shortly after awards are made.

**The Capacity Building Optional Add-On is offered as Traditional Reimbursement funding**, requiring a detailed budget and budget justification in the application, and expense details provided / receipts submitted for all annual expenditures with each Annual Progress Report. Permissible uses of funding for a Capacity Building Optional Add-On include FTE funding (up to 1.0 FTE), other costs needed to support a funded position during the three-year duration of the project, or costs that support an “Other RPS Conformance Project.”

## E. Payments for CY 2025 Grants

As in CY 2024, with the goal of significantly reducing the administrative burden for jurisdictions, several grant types will continue to utilize deliverables-based payments (Fixed Funding) in CY 2025. **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, Optional funding for work toward meeting or maintaining Standard 9, funding to update the Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards, Mentee Optional Add-On funding)
- Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grants (Base funding, Standard 9 funding, funding to update the Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards, Mentee Optional Add-On funding)
- Mentorship Optional Add-On Grants (Mentor funding)

## F. Payments 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.* Although the default payment method is fixed payments and reimbursement once the project is complete, grantees may also request Interim Reimbursement Requests or Advance Payments as needed.

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

## Track 1 Development Base Grant Deliverables (including Mentee and Training Optional Add-Ons)

- **Required Outcomes: Completion of a Self-Assessment of all 9 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 \**
- **Mentee Optional Add-On**
  - Achievement of the Retail Program Standards goals from your application: *Fixed Funding of \$4,000 \**
  - Completion of at least one site visit with your Mentor (either in your jurisdiction or theirs): *Fixed Funding of \$3,000 \**
  - Attendance by one or two staff members at the required year-end Mentorship Conference: *Fixed Funding of \$3,000 \**
- **Traditional Reimbursement for the Training Optional Add-On** requires a detailed budget in the application, and details provided / receipts submitted for all travel costs with the Final Progress Report. Allowable Track 1 travel includes:
  - Funding for up to two staff members to attend in-person Self-Assessment and Verification Audit Workshop(s)
  - Attendance at the CY 2025 FDA Retail Food Protection Seminars
  - Attendance at the CY 2025 Conference for Food Protection (CFP)
  - *Traditional Reimbursement of up to a maximum of \$7,500*
- **Total Track 1 funding available for CY 2025:** \$5,000 to \$22,500 for one year, depending on the options selected

## Track 2 Development Base Grant Deliverables (including Mentee and Training Optional Add-Ons)

- **Required Outcome - Continuous Improvement with at least one of Standards 1-8:** Fixed Funding of \$5,000
- **Optional Outcome - Work toward meeting or maintaining Standard 9:** *Fixed Funding of \$5,000 or \$10,000 \**, depending on the Risk Factor Study approach used:
  - **Level 1 Risk Factor Study** uses the “**File Study**” approach which uses routine inspection data from inspections that have already been completed, to retroactively assess the occurrence of risk factors. *Fixed Funding of \$5,000 \**
  - **Level 2 FDA Risk Factor Study** uses the “**Data Collection**” approach to estimate the occurrence of risk factors using observational visits to randomly selected retail food establishments. A “Data Collection” visit has, as its sole focus, observation of food safety

behaviors tied to risk factors and is completed separately from the regulatory inspection.

*Fixed Funding of \$10,000*

- **A third approach, also considered a Level 2 Risk Factor Study**, is the “**Hybrid Approach**” which combines elements of the first two, by combining the data collection with a routine inspection. It is suggested that the data collection work occurs after the routine inspection has been performed. *Fixed Funding of \$10,000 \**
- **Optional Outcome - Updated Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards** within 12 months of 5-year renewal: *Fixed Funding of \$3,000 \**
- **Mentee Optional Add-On**
  - Achievement of the Retail Program Standards goals from your application: *Fixed Funding of \$4,000 \**
  - Completion of at least one site visit with your Mentor (either in your jurisdiction or theirs): *Fixed Funding of \$3,000 \**
  - Attendance by one or two staff members at the required year-end Mentorship Conference: *Fixed Funding of \$3,000 \**
- **Traditional Reimbursement for the Training Optional Add-On** requires a detailed budget in the application, and details provided / receipts submitted for all travel costs with the Interim Reimbursement or Annual / Final Progress Report.
  - Allowable training includes Retail Food Safety Training, Workshops, and Conferences offered during Calendar Year 2025.
  - *Up to a maximum of \$7,500*
- **Total Track 2 funding available for CY 2025:** \$5,000 to \$35,500 for one year, depending on the options selected

### Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant Deliverables (with Mentee and Training Optional Add-Ons)

- **Required Outcome - Continuous Improvement with at least one of Standards 1-8** (each year of the three-year grant period): *Fixed Funding of \$30,000 (\$10,000 per year) \**
- **Required Outcome - Work toward meeting or maintaining Standard 9:** *Fixed Funding of \$15,000 or \$30,000 \* (\$5,000 or \$10,000 per year)* depending on the Risk Factor Study approach used:
  - **Level 1 Risk Factor Study** uses the “**File Study**” approach which uses routine inspection data from inspections that have already been completed, to retroactively assess the occurrence of risk factors. *Fixed Funding of \$15,000 (\$5,000 per year) \**
  - **Level 2 FDA Risk Factor Study** uses the “**Data Collection**” approach to estimate the occurrence of risk factors using observational visits to randomly selected retail food establishments. A “Data Collection” visit has, as its sole focus, observation of food safety

behaviors tied to risk factors and is completed separately from the regulatory inspection.

*Fixed Funding of \$10,000 \**

- **A third approach, also considered a Level 2 Risk Factor Study**, is the “**Hybrid Approach**” which combines elements of the first two, by combining the data collection with a routine inspection. It is suggested that the data collection work occur after the routine inspection has been performed. *Fixed Funding of \$30,000 (\$10,000 per year) \**
- **Optional Outcome - Updated Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards** within 12 months of 5-year renewal: *Fixed Funding of \$3,000 \**
- **Mentee Optional Add-On**
  - Achievement of the Retail Program Standards goals from your application: *Fixed Funding of \$4,000 \**
  - Completion of at least one site visit with your Mentor (either in your jurisdiction or theirs): *Fixed Funding of \$3,000 \**
  - Attendance by one or two staff members at the required year-end Mentorship Conference: *Fixed Funding of \$3,000 \**
  - Funding is for CY 2025 only, with competitive opportunities to apply again for Mentee funding in CY 2026 and CY 2027
- **Traditional Reimbursement for a Training Optional Add-On** requires a detailed budget in the application, and details provided / receipts submitted for all travel costs with the Final Progress Report.
  - Allowable training includes Retail Food Safety Training, Workshops, and Conferences offered during Calendar Year 2025.
  - *Traditional funding for one year, up to a maximum of \$7,500*
  - Funding is for CY 2025 only, with competitive opportunities to apply again for Training funding in CY 2026 and CY 2027
- **Traditional Reimbursement for a Capacity Building Optional Add-On** requires a detailed budget in the application, and details provided / receipts submitted for all expenditures.
  - Allowable costs are those that enable significant progress in conforming with the Retail Program Standards. Examples include personnel support through a new hire, support of an existing position, or support of multiple positions (not to exceed 1.0 FTE), or costs that support an “Other RPS Conformance Project.”
  - Over time, as a jurisdiction increases in experience and moves closer to meeting all nine Standards, funded personnel are encouraged to take on the role of a Network Coordinator or otherwise support activities that will enable multiple jurisdictions to increase conformance with the Retail Program Standards.
  - Note that for this option, under a Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant, a detailed budget will be required at the time of application, and receipts/proof of expenditures



will be required with each Interim Reimbursement Request (as needed) or Annual and Final Progress Reports.

- Traditional Funding up to \$300,000 over three years (maximum of \$100,000 per year).
- **Total Track 3 funding available for CY 2025 - 2027:** \$45,000 to \$380,500 over three years, depending on the options selected

#### **Mentorship / Mentor Optional Add-On Grants (available for Track 2 and Track 3 Applicants)**

- Deliverables for Mentorship / Mentor Grants (available for Track 2 or Track 3 applicants, instead of selecting the Mentee Option in the Base Grant application)
  - 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 \**
  - 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 \**
  - 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 \**
  - 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 \**
  - 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 \**

#### **Special Projects Optional Add-On Grants (available for Track 2 and Track 3 Applicants)**

- Deliverables for Special Projects Grants (available for Track 2 and Track 3 applicants) should be specified in your grant application, with a detailed budget and justification included.
- Expenditure details and receipts/proof of expenditures will be required with each Interim Reimbursement Request (as needed) and/or in the Final Progress Reports.
- Projects must focus on either advancement of the Retail Program Standards, support for Retail Program Standards Networks, or both.
- Traditional funding for one year, up to a maximum of \$20,000

\* 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.*

## G. Payments for Traditional Reimbursement Options and Grants

*Traditional Reimbursements still apply to several options and grants (as indicated in the previous section), and payment will be based on an approved budget in the grant application and detailed receipts included with an Interim Reimbursement Request (as needed) or an Annual or Final Progress Report.*

### Grant types that will utilize Traditional Reimbursements include:

- Training funds (offered as a one-year Training Optional Add-On in the Base Grant for Tracks 1, 2, and 3)
- Capacity Building Optional Add-On (offered as a three-year optional add-on in the Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant)
- Special Projects Optional Add-on Grants

**Interim and Advance Payments** are still an option for all grant types and options, as needed and requested.

## III. Application Instructions for CY 2025 Grants

### A. Best Practices

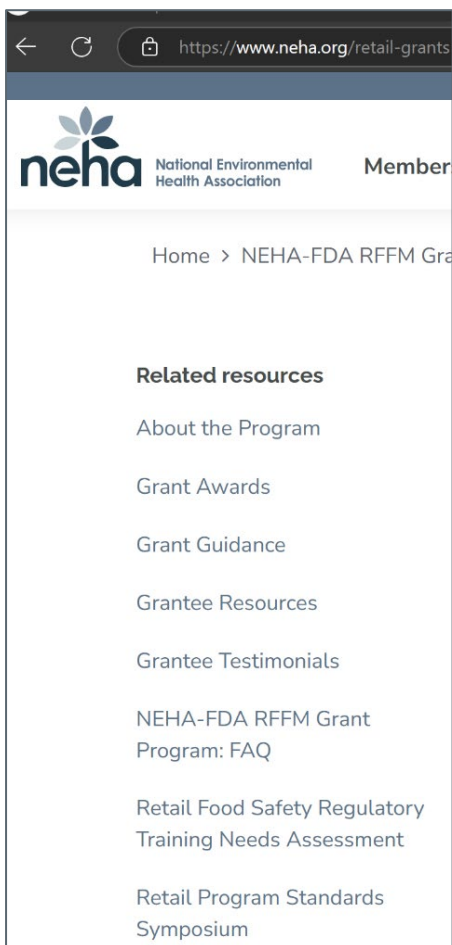
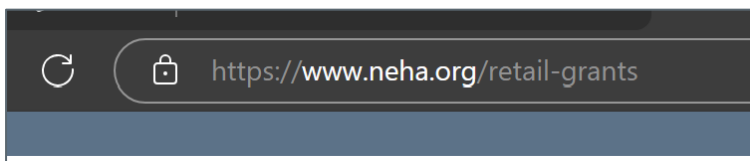
Following are a few best practices when applying for one or more grants through the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Portal:

- 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 B 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”** button at the bottom of the screen. When leaving the application with the intent of returning to finish your work later, use the **“Save”** 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.

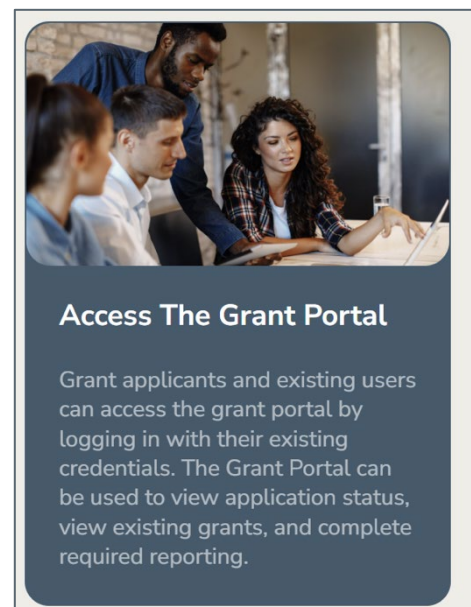
## B. NEHA-FDA RFFM Homepage

The NEHA-FDA RFFM Homepage can be accessed via the web address below:



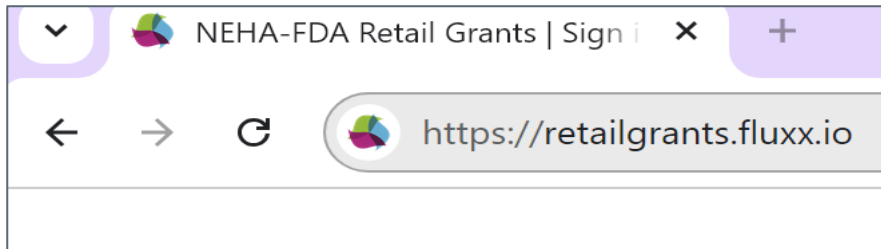
From the NEHA-FDA RFFM Homepage, you have access to multiple grant program- related resources on the left menu.

You can also access the grant portal by clicking on the image, as shown below. This will take you directly to the Grant Program Landing Page.



## C. Grant Program Landing Page

The Grant Program Landing Page can be accessed through the NEHA-FDA RFFM Homepage, as described above, or by going directly to the web address shown below:



 A screenshot of the NEHA-FDA Retail Grants landing page. At the top, it says "PROGRAM FUNDING MODEL" with a logo. Below that, it says "Advancing Conformance with the Regulatory". There is a login section titled "Login (all fields required)" with input fields for "Username" and "Password", a "Sign in" button, and a link for "Forgot Password?".

From the Grant Program Landing Page, existing users can log in to the grant portal with the same username and password used in previous years, on the left side of the screen. If you have forgotten your password, it can be reset anytime by clicking “Forgot Password?”

 A screenshot of a modal window titled "Create or Forgot Password/Login". It says "You must be logged in to access this page". There is an input field for "Email" and buttons for "Cancel" and "Submit".

New applicants should select the “Create an Account Now” link on the right side of the screen.

### Voluntary National Retail Food Standards

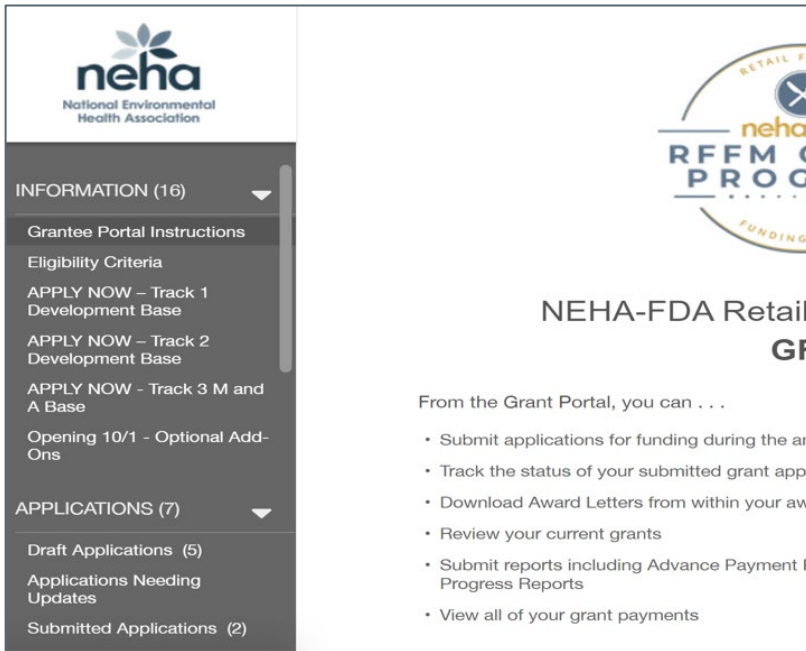
For complete program information including grant guidance, or to contact us, please visit: [NEHA.org/Retail-Grants](https://NEHA.org/Retail-Grants).

For Recent Applicants/Existing Users: Please login using your username and password to apply again, check the disposition of your submitted application(s), file reports, or request payment. If you have forgotten your username or password, please [reset it here](#).

For New Users/First Time Applicants: Please select "Create an Account Now" link below to register for the grant program.

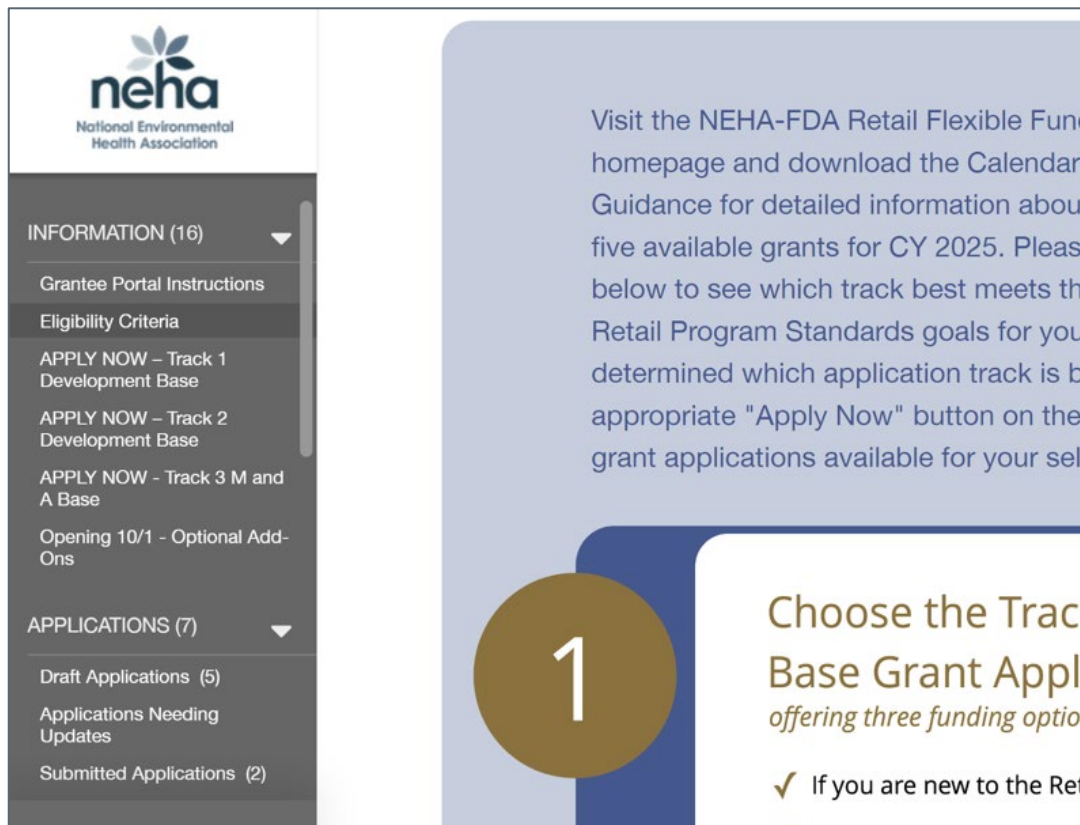
[Create an Account Now](#)

## D. The Grant Portal

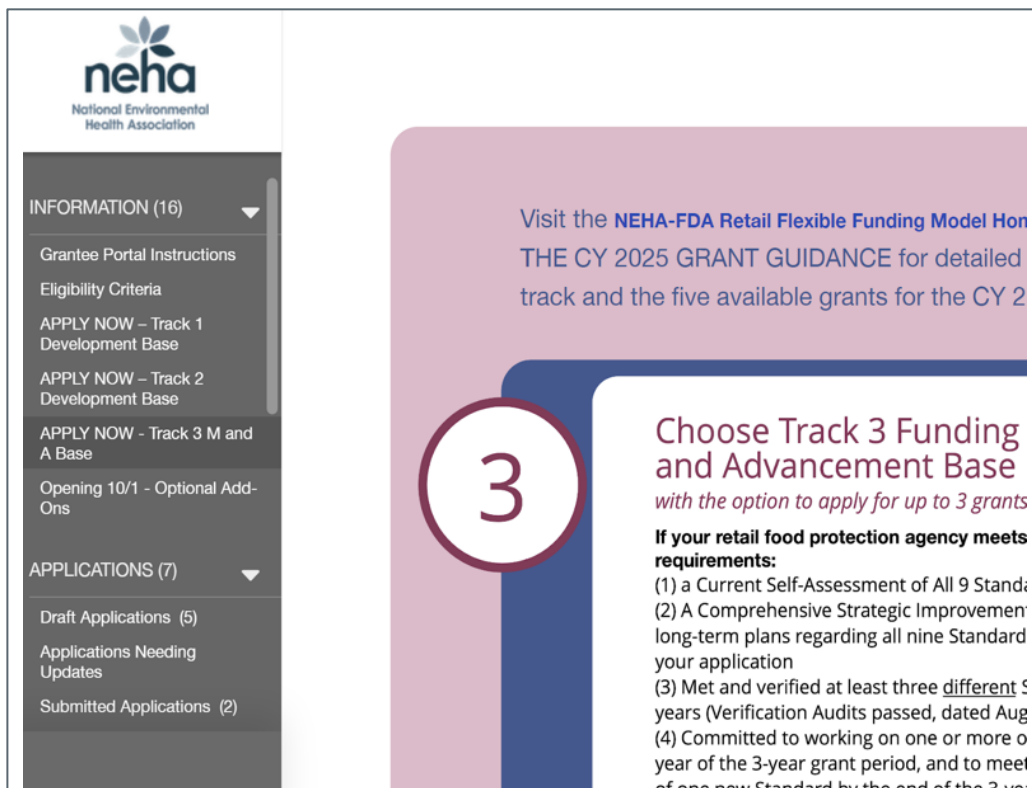


After logging in on the Grant Program Landing Page, you will be taken to the grant portal. From your Grant Portal, the left menu allows you to complete all required actions of the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program, from application through your final report.

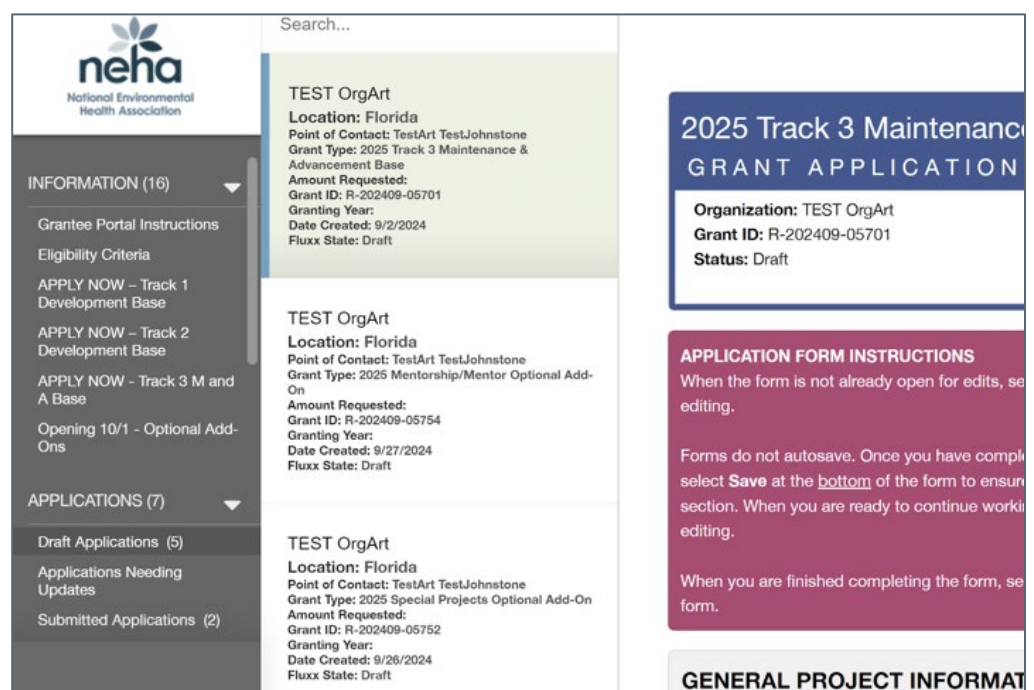
From here, you can view Eligibility Criteria for each base grant type (Tracks 1, 2, and 3).




Once you have determined which CY 2025 Base Grant you would like to apply for, you can select “Apply Now” next to Track 1, Track 2, or Track 3 to complete the application. If eligible, you may also select either of the two Optional Add-On Grants by clicking “Apply Now” and the grant type.



To access saved, Draft Applications that have not yet been submitted, select “Draft Applications” from the left menu. Then select the Draft application you want to work on from the middle column (which shows a thumbnails with summary information for each Draft you have created).



[Edit](#)


## 2025 Track 3 Maintenance & Advancement Base

### GRANT APPLICATION

<b>Organization:</b> TEST OrgArt	<b>Amount Requested:</b>
<b>Grant ID:</b> R-202409-05701	<b>Start Date:</b>
<b>Status:</b> Draft	<b>End Date:</b>

**APPLICATION FORM INSTRUCTIONS**

When the form is not already open for edits, select **Edit** at the top of the form to open for editing.

Forms do not autosave. Once you have completed each section of the application, be sure to select **Save** at the bottom of the form to ensure your work is saved, before moving to the next section. When you are ready to continue working, select **Edit** at the top of the form to open for editing.

When you are finished completing the form, select **Save** and then **Submit** at the bottom of the form.

**GENERAL PROJECT INFORMATION**

Once you have selected the draft application you wish to work on, you can then select the “Edit” button in the top right corner to continue to make changes to the application.

Use the “Save” button in the bottom right corner to save your work often (it will not auto-save). When you are ready to submit your application(s), click “Save” and then click the “Submit” button which will appear at the bottom of the form. You can view any submitted applications by clicking “Submitted Applications” on the left menu.

## 2025 Track 3 Maintenance & Advancement Base

### GRANT APPLICATION

<b>Organization:</b> TEST OrgArt	<b>Amount Requested:</b>
<b>Grant ID:</b> R-202409-05701	<b>Start Date:</b>
<b>Status:</b> Draft	<b>End Date:</b>

**APPLICATION FORM INSTRUCTIONS**

When the form is not already open for edits, select **Edit** at the top of the form to open for editing.

Forms do not autosave. Once you have completed each section of the application, be sure to select **Save** at the bottom of the form to ensure your work is saved, before moving to the next section. When you are ready to continue working, select **Edit** at the top of the form to open for editing.

When you are finished completing the form, select **Save** and then **Submit** at the bottom of the form.

**GENERAL PROJECT INFORMATION**

[Cancel](#)
[Save](#)



## 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 two (2) 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](mailto:retailgrants@neha.org) or toll free 1-833-575-2404.

## E. Allowable and Non-Allowable Costs and Fixed Funding Grants / Options

The following grants and options are now offered with Fixed Funding payments based on deliverables met:

- Track 1 Base and Mentee funds (but not Training funds)
- Track 2 Base, Standard 9, Updated SA9, and Mentee Funds (but not Training funds)
- Track 3 Base, Standard 9, Updated SA9, and Mentee Funds (but not Training and Capacity Building funds)
- Mentorship Mentor Optional Add on Grant funding

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

## F. Allowable Costs (Applicable to Training, Capacity Building, and/or Special Projects Funding)

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

- Personnel costs, including the share of salaries and fringe benefits dedicated to an approved project, are permissible for all grant types (**except Training Optional Add-On funding**);
- Contractual and/or contractor costs;
- Training costs for local training of staff (for example – Standardization Training) including travel, registration fees, speaker fees, contractual fees, and audiovisual materials (**but note that costs for individual travel to Retail Program Standards Training Courses, Workshops, and Conferences may only be requested through Training Optional Add-Ons**).
- For online or in-person courses leading to a professional certification, course fees and materials may be paid with grant funds (but please note that there are some exclusions for costs associated with this type of course, listed in the Non-Allowable Costs section below).
- Purchase/rental/maintenance/shipping of Supplies and Equipment; and
- Purchase and/or development of information technology equipment/software/support.
- Indirect costs are permissible for all grant categories based on a signed and current federal cost rate agreement, or at the updated de minimis rate of 15% (effective Oct 1, 2024).

## G. Non-Allowable Costs

Certain expense and cost categories are not allowable under either Federal Rules or NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program rules. **The Federal Rules apply to all grants and options, for audit purposes.** The remaining rules listed apply only to Training Optional Add-On, Capacity Building Optional Add-On, and/or Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant funding). Please note the following restrictions:

- Vehicles: Costs associated with procurement of vehicles are not allowed. **(Federal Rule)**
- Construction: Costs for construction and/or remodeling of physical structures are not allowed. **(Federal Rule)**
- Food: Expenses for food, snacks, meals, beverages, and catering (other than per diem for travelers) are not permitted for any grant. **(Federal Rule)**
- Funding from any RFFM grant (Base Grants, Optional Add-Ons, Optional Add-On Grants) cannot be used to fund positions with the primary purpose of performing retail food or other inspections.
- Uniforms: Uniforms and branded clothing are not allowed.
- Promotional items and costs are generally prohibited unless they provide a direct food safety benefit. Examples of prohibited items: gift bags, logo items (pens, note pads, shirts, hats), gift



cards, etc.

- Personnel costs are not permissible through Training Optional Add-Ons (Tracks 1, 2, or 3).
- 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, FDA Retail Food Protection Seminars, and Conference for Food Protection (CFP).
- **For Track 2 and Track 3 applicants**, Travel and Training requests for *Retail Program Standards Courses, Workshops, and Conferences* should be made through the Training Optional Add-On section of the base grant application.
- For courses leading to a professional certification, exam, test, credentialing, and/or certification fees may not be paid with grant funds. For example, the testing and certification fees to become a Certified Professional Food Safety (CP-FS) are not allowable. However, as stated in the Allowable Costs section above, materials, registration fees, and online course fees for this type of training can be paid with grant funds.
- Membership fees for local, regional, or national organizations, even if such membership fees reduce the cost of training and/or conference fees, may not be paid with grant funds. One exception is 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. **(Federal Rule)**

## H. Allowable and Non-Allowable Costs Related to Travel

Travel costs requested through Training Optional Add-On funding 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 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.

## I. 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 course completion; 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.

## J. 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 November 20, 2024 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 November 20, 2024, at 7:59 p.m. EST. All required fields in each application (including POC, organization, budget, and proposal information) must be clear and complete.

## K. Retail Program Standards-Specific Program Rules and Requirements

- **Current Self-Assessment of All 9 Standards (SA9):** Other than for Track 1 Development Base Grant applications, applicants are required to have a current Self-Assessment of all 9 Standards (SA9). To meet this eligibility requirement, your most recent SA9 must have been completed in August 2019 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 canceled 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 who are 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 subsequent years of this grant program, to assure that their Capacity Building Grant remains eligible for continuation.

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

## L. 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). The Annual or Final Progress Report will 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.

## IV. 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](mailto:retailgrants@neha.org) or toll-free at 1-833-575-2404 before the application deadline.

## A. Administrative Review

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

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

## B. Peer Review

- Each application that passes the Administrative Review will be scored by either two or three FDA and/or NEHA Subject Matter Expert reviewers, depending on the application type.
- Reviewers must acknowledge 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

#### **Comprehensive Score: Project Lead and Project Personnel (20%)**

Project roles are clearly defined for the Project Lead, Project Support Team, and any “to be filled” positions. The qualifications and contributions of the Project Lead, Project Support Team, and other key team members are likely to lead to project success and achievement of the project outcomes in the Project Implementation Plan (PIP).

#### **Comprehensive Score: Project Implementation Plan (80%)**

The Project Implementation Plan (PIP) section of the application is clearly defined, with a Project Completion Plan and Action Steps that are measurable and achievable during the project period. The applicant directly links their Project Completion Plan (one of the fields that make up the PIP) with measurable improvement in the Retail Program Standards. Considering the applicant’s past history with the Retail Program Standards, the details in their Project Implementation Plan (PIP), and the personnel and resources requested and committed to the proposed project, the project is likely to succeed and achieve the project outcomes covered in the PIP.

#### **Optional Outcomes**

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

#### **(If Selected by Applicant) Mentee Optional Add-On**

A separate administrative review will be completed with an “Impact Score” added, which may be used to prioritize Mentee funding (if needed). First-time applicants to the Mentee program in the recent past (CY22-24), with clear plans that will lead to measurable Retail Program Standards conformance, will be considered “High Impact.” Applicants in the Mentee program for one year in the recent past, with clear plans, will be considered “Medium Impact.” Applicants who have been in the Mentee program for two or more years in the recent past, with clear plans, will be considered “Lower Impact.”

#### **(If Selected by Applicant) Training Optional Add-On**

A separate administrative review will be completed, to include the following. Confirmation that plans for supporting staff to attend Retail Food Safety Training Courses, Workshops, and Conferences are clear and complete (budget and date estimates are fine, with detailed estimates preferred). Confirmation that only allowable courses are included in the training request (Courses, Workshops, or Conferences with a significant Retail Program Standards component). Funding amounts will be determined using an application’s comprehensive base grant score.

## Track 2 Development Base Grant Combined Application

### Peer Review Scoring Guide

#### **Comprehensive Score: Project Lead and Project Personnel (20%)**

Project roles are clearly defined for the Project Lead, Project Support Team, and any “to be filled” positions. The qualifications and contributions of the Project Lead, Project Support Team, and other key team members are likely to lead to project success and achievement of the project outcomes in the Project Implementation Plan (PIP).

#### **Comprehensive Score: Project Implementation Plan (80%)**

The Project Implementation Plan (PIP) section of the application is clearly defined, with a Project Completion Plan and Action Steps that are measurable and achievable during the project period. The applicant directly links their Project Completion Plan (one of the fields that make up the PIP) with measurable improvement in the Retail Program Standards. Considering the applicant’s past history with the Retail Program Standards, the details in their Project Implementation Plan (PIP), and the personnel and resources requested and committed to the proposed project, the project is likely to succeed and achieve the project outcomes covered in the PIP.

#### **Optional Outcome and Add-Ons**

Optional Outcome and Add-Ons 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 or maintaining Standard 9**  
Plans for work toward meeting or maintaining Standard 9 are clear and complete.

#### **(If Selected by Applicant) Mentee Optional Add-On**

A separate administrative review will be completed with an “Impact Score” added, which may be used to prioritize Mentee funding (if needed). First-time applicants to the Mentee program in the recent past (CY22-24), with clear plans that will lead to measurable Retail Program Standards conformance, will be considered “High Impact.” Applicants in the Mentee program for one year in the recent past, with clear plans, will be considered “Medium Impact.” Applicants who have been in the Mentee program for two or more years in the recent past, with clear plans, will be considered “Lower Impact.”

#### **(If Selected by Applicant) Training Optional Add-On**

A separate administrative review will be completed, to include the following. Confirmation that plans for supporting staff to attend Retail Food Safety Training Courses, Workshops, and Conferences are clear and complete (budget and date estimates are fine, with detailed estimates preferred). Confirmation that only allowable courses are included in the training request (Courses, Workshops, or Conferences with a significant Retail Program Standards component). Funding amounts will be determined using an application’s comprehensive base grant score.



## Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant Combined Application

### Peer Review Scoring Guide

#### **Comprehensive Score: Project Lead and Project Personnel (20%)**

Project roles are clearly defined for the Project Lead, Project Support Team, and any “to be filled” positions. The qualifications and contributions of the Project Lead, Project Support Team, and other key team members are likely to lead to project success and achievement of the project outcomes in the Project Implementation Plan (PIP).

#### **Comprehensive Score: Project Implementation Plan (80%)**

The Project Implementation Plan (PIP) section of the application is clearly defined, with a Project Completion Plan and Action Steps that are measurable and achievable during the project period. The applicant directly links their Project Completion Plan (one of the fields that make up the PIP) with measurable improvement in the Retail Program Standards. Considering the applicant’s past history with the Retail Program Standards, the details in their Project Implementation Plan (PIP), and the personnel and resources requested and committed to the proposed project, the project is likely to succeed and achieve the project outcomes covered in the PIP.

#### **Optional Add-Ons**

Optional Add-Ons will be scored separately. Selecting on or more of the following deliverables will not increase the chance of receiving a Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant Award.

#### **(If Selected by Applicant) Mentee Optional Add-On**

A separate administrative review will be completed with an “Impact Score” added, which may be used to prioritize Mentee funding (if needed). First-time applicants to the Mentee program in the recent past (CY22-24), with clear plans that will lead to measurable Retail Program Standards conformance, will be considered “High Impact.” Applicants in the Mentee program for one year in the recent past, with clear plans, will be considered “Medium Impact.” Applicants who have been in the Mentee program for two or more years in the recent past, with clear plans, will be considered “Lower Impact.”

#### **(If Selected by Applicant) Training Optional Add-On**

A separate administrative review will be completed, to include the following. Confirmation that plans for supporting staff to attend Retail Food Safety Training Courses, Workshops, and Conferences are clear and complete (budget and date estimates are fine, with detailed estimates preferred). Confirmation that only allowable courses are included in the training request (Courses, Workshops, or Conferences with a significant Retail Program Standards component). Funding amounts will be determined using an application’s comprehensive base grant score.



## Track 3 Maintenance and Advancement Base Grant Combined Application Peer Review Scoring Guide – Continued

### **(If Selected by Applicant) Capacity Building Optional Add-On**

Because of the significant resources available through a Capacity Building Optional Add-On, a limited number of these add-ons will likely be granted. Careful consideration of each Capacity Building proposal will be given during the Peer Review process. Well-designed projects that are likely to lead to significant Retail Program Standards progress have the highest likelihood of success.

**Capacity Building: Likelihood of Success (50%)** Considering the applicant's past history with the Retail Program Standards, the details in their Project Implementation Plan (PIP), and the personnel and resources requested and committed to the proposed project, the project is likely to succeed and achieve the project outcomes covered in the PIP.

**Capacity Building: Retail Program Standards Improvements (50%)** A successful project and completion of all PIP outcomes will lead to significant and measurable improvements in Retail Program Standards conformance/maintenance.

## Mentorship /MENTOR Optional Add-On Grant

### Peer Review Scoring Guide

*Track 2 and Track 3 Applicants when chosen INSTEAD of selecting the Mentee Optional Add-On in their Base Grant application.*

#### **Project Lead and Project Personnel (20%)**

Project roles are clearly defined for the Project Lead, Project Support Team, and any “to be filled” positions. The qualifications and contributions of the Project Lead, Project Support Team, and other key team members are likely to lead to project success and achievement of the project outcomes in the Project Implementation Plan (PIP).

**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 9 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.

## Special Projects Optional Add-On Grant

### Peer Review Scoring Guide

*Open to Track 2 and Track 3 applicants*

#### **Project Lead and Project Personnel (10%)**

Project roles are clearly defined for the Project Lead, Project Support Team, and any “to be filled” positions. The qualifications and contributions of the Project Lead, Project Support Team, and other key team members are likely to lead to project success and achievement of the project outcomes in the Project Implementation Plan (PIP).

#### **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 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.

### **C. 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.

## V. 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 Interim Reimbursement Requests

Funds under this program are generally awarded on a reimbursement basis after either an Annual Progress Report (3-year grants) or a Final Progress Report (1-year grants), with expenditure documentation attached when required, are submitted and approved by the NEHA Finance Team. However, exceptions will be made based on the needs of the jurisdiction. Grantees may request an Advance Payment (before any expenses have been incurred) or an Interim Reimbursement Request (once some expenses have been incurred, but before completion of the project). Interim Reimbursement Requests are not required but are available to support jurisdictions who need to receive payment before the end of the project period. Please contact the grantee support team should you need either an Advance Payment or Interim Reimbursement.

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).

As a component of the Annual or Final Progress Report, you will 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 also 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](mailto:retailgrants@neha.org). *Note that changes to your budget are not approved until you receive confirmation via email from the NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team.*

## VI. 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, program updates, and access to the Grant Portal, can be found at this site.

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

If you have 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](mailto: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 November 20, 2024 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. 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-support> to access and download a modern browser that is compatible with the system. Contact your jurisdiction's information technology office for assistance.

### G. Grant Application Forms

For examples of the CY 2025 NEHA-FDA RFFM application forms that must be completed and submitted through the Grant Portal, please visit: <https://www.neha.org/retail-grants-guidance>