

NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model (RFFM) Mentorship Program

Cohort 5 Briefing Book



The NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model Grant Program provides funding to State, Local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) Retail food regulatory agencies as they advance conformance with the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards (Retail Program Standards). FDA is utilizing NEHA's strengths to assist SLTT retail food programs in their efforts to reduce the occurrence of foodborne illness risk factors and implement and attain conformance with the Retail Program Standards.



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NEHA-FDA RFFM Mentorship Program for the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards

BACKGROUND

[The Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards](#) (Retail Program Standards) serve as a guide to regulatory retail food program managers in the design and management of a retail food regulatory program and provide a means of recognition for those programs that meet these Standards. Program managers and administrators may establish additional requirements to meet individual program needs.

The Retail Program Standards are designed to help food regulatory programs enhance the services they provide to the public. When applied in the intended manner, the Retail Program Standards should:

- Identify program areas where an agency can have the greatest impact on retail food safety;
- Promote wider application of effective risk-factor intervention strategies;
- Assist in identifying program areas most in need of additional attention;
- Provide information needed to justify maintenance or increase in program budgets;
- Lead to innovations in program implementation and administration; and
- Improve industry and consumer confidence in food protection programs by enhancing uniformity within and between regulatory agencies.

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), have partnered to create a mentorship program to support ongoing efforts to increase the use of the Retail Program Standards by retail food regulatory programs. The RFFM Mentorship Program, formerly overseen by NACCHO, is now housed in the NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model (RFFM) Grant Program. Participants will receive peer-to-peer assistance and intensive technical support, thereby advancing the practice of the standards among retail food regulatory programs. Through the RFFM Mentorship Program, participants will benefit from the experience of other retail food regulatory programs in understanding how to best apply the Retail Program Standards. The [Retail Program Standards](#) focus on the following nine program areas:

- Standard No. 1 - Regulatory Foundation;
- Standard No. 2 - Trained Regulatory Staff;
- Standard No. 3 - Inspection Program Based on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) Principles;
- Standard No. 4 - Uniform Inspection Program;
- Standard No. 5 - Foodborne Illness and Food Defense Preparedness and Response;
- Standard No. 6 - Compliance and Enforcement;
- Standard No. 7 - Industry and Community Relations;
- Standard No. 8 - Program Support and Resources; and
- Standard No. 9 - Program Assessment

Participating retail food regulatory programs may also gain insight on how to best accomplish key Retail Program Standards milestones, such as the development and implementation of policies and procedures and the completion of a self-assessment. As previous participants have noted, "It is important to think of the Retail Program Standards as an on-going quality improvement program rather than something to check-off from the To-Do list." The RFFM Mentorship Program is aimed at helping retail food regulatory programs use a step-by-step approach to work on the Retail Program Standards. This step-by-step approach makes the Retail Program Standards seem less overwhelming and more achievable.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RFFM MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

The overall goal of the RFFM Mentorship Program is to match retail food regulatory programs experienced in applying the Retail Program Standards with retail food regulatory programs currently enrolled in the Retail Program Standards and looking for guidance, tools, resources, and recommendations for making progress toward conformance with the Retail Program Standards. The RFFM Mentorship Program will provide the opportunity for capacity building among the participants. Together, participants will identify ways to improve their retail food regulatory programs and achieve conformance with one or more of the Retail Program Standards. Mentors may also assist mentees in developing policies and procedures, as well as completing self-assessments.

The primary objectives of this program include:

- Establishing a growing network of retail food regulatory programs experienced in the implementation of the Retail Program Standards;
- Improving NEHA's, NACCHO's, and FDA's understanding of the technical assistance needs of retail food regulatory programs around the Retail Program Standards;
- Identifying strategies to improve implementation of the Retail Program Standards by retail food regulatory programs;
- Identifying resource needs in implementing the Retail Program Standards;
- Providing a venue for retail food regulatory programs interested in the Retail Program Standards to share resources, experiences, and lessons; and
- Strengthening relationships between retail food regulatory programs and FDA Regional Retail Food Specialists¹.

By facilitating the exchange of guidance, tools, and technical assistance, the RFFM Mentorship Program is expected to improve participants' retail food regulatory programs. Outcomes likely will include:

- Increased staff familiarity with the Retail Program Standards;
- Increased retail food regulatory program capacity for implementing continuous quality assurance and quality improvement for retail food regulatory programs; and
- Improved inspection and oversight of retail and food service establishments under the jurisdiction of the retail food regulatory program.

GOALS OF MENTORING

Through peer assistance provided by the mentors, each mentee will benefit from the expertise and experience of other retail food regulatory programs in understanding how to best apply the Retail Program Standards to improve their retail food regulatory programs. Mentors will provide guidance to help mentees make progress toward achieving conformance with the Retail Program Standards.

The guidance provided by each mentor should prepare mentees to anticipate and overcome potential barriers and challenges in implementing the Program Standards. Mentors may also provide guidance about how best to leverage existing resources and identify resource needs to achieve conformance with the Retail Program Standards. Additionally, mentors can help mentees develop content-area expertise on the Retail Program Standards. This will enable mentees to serve as formal or informal mentors to other retail food regulatory programs in the future.

¹ A list of FDA Regional Retail Food Specialists, along with their assigned states, can be found at the following link: <http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/RetailFoodProtection/ProgramStandards/ucm394716.htm>.

QUALITIES OF A MENTOR

Be Dependable: Mentors are expected to be dependable in terms of providing helpful guidance and overall participation in the RFFM Mentorship Program. In addition to the monthly conference calls with mentees, mentors are expected to communicate with mentees regularly and as needed through phone calls, email, and any other means when necessary. Mentees will be depending on their mentors to provide guidance at several points throughout the mentorship program, requiring mentors to be accessible and helpful in supporting their mentees.

Be Punctual: One of the challenges of any mentorship role is navigating the busy schedules of both the mentor and mentee(s). As such, once meeting times or communications expectations are agreed upon between mentors and mentees, mentors are expected to honor their commitment. Mentees should be able to rely upon their mentors for advice on completing different aspects of the Retail Program Standards. Punctuality and participation during calls and meetings will be important. For these same reasons, emails, phone calls, and other communications should be responded to promptly so that the mentee can make timely progress.

Effectively Communicate: Mentors should communicate with their mentees in a concise and clear manner. Ensure that expectations are clearly stated and received, potential barriers are acknowledged, and plans are developed in a collaborative manner. Expectations and deadlines should be clearly communicated between mentors and mentees on a consistent basis. Mentors should also actively communicate with their mentees to determine where potential gaps are perceived or may arise and how they can be addressed. Mentors are expected to routinely communicate with the lead staff person at the mentee sites but are also encouraged to communicate with mentee staff when appropriate and at the request of the staff lead.

Be a Role-Model / Example: One of the key expectations for the mentorship role will be to provide less experienced retail food regulatory programs with the mentor's expertise and experience with applying the Retail Program Standards. Mentors are expected to provide practical advice based on past experiences with applying Retail Program Standards. Mentors are expected to share stories and provide examples from their retail food regulatory programs and Retail Program Standard experiences—as well as examples from other retail food regulatory programs or organizations from which they have learned—to show what has and has not worked and how the mentees can learn from those experiences.

Provide Vision and Perspective: As someone who is experienced in applying the Retail Program Standards, mentors are expected to provide perspective to mentees. Many of the "lessons learned" from past experiences should be shared with mentees in order to provide a "big picture" view of what needs to be put into place to successfully apply the Retail Program Standards. Approaches, systems, and long-term capacity to meet standards should all be considerations of the mentor throughout the project and should be communicated with the mentees.

Provide Motivation: The RFFM Mentorship Program should build the confidence of the mentee to implement the Retail Program Standards with their current staff. Mentors are expected to not only provide their expertise and advice, but to also instill confidence in the retail food regulatory program to develop the capacity to progress toward meeting the Retail Program Standards at the completion of the mentorship program.



QUALITIES OF A MENTEE

Be Punctual: One of the challenges of any mentorship role is navigating the busy schedules of mentors and mentees. As such, once meeting times or communications expectations are agreed upon between mentors and mentees, mentees are expected to honor their commitment. Punctuality and participation during calls and meetings will be important. For these same reasons, emails, phone calls, and other communications should be responded to promptly. In addition, it is important that mentees meet anticipated milestones outlined in their timeline.

Effectively Communicate: Mentees are expected to come with specific questions and learning objectives. The mentors have a lot of information to share, but they will not be able to answer every question or address every issue. Mentees should have reasonable expectations of the mentors. Mentees should express their questions and needs in a concise and clear manner. Mentees and mentors should discuss expectations and potential barriers early and on a consistent basis.

Be a Role-Model / Example: As mentees gain more expertise and experience with applying the Retail Program Standards through the RFFM Mentorship Program, mentees are also expected to share the information they gain from mentors with relevant staff and leadership at their agency who are not participating in the RFFM Mentorship Program and as appropriate with neighboring jurisdictions.



NEHA-FDA RFFM Mentorship Program Pairings

Below are the finalized mentor and mentee pairings for the current cohort. Each mentor jurisdiction is listed with their assigned mentees.

Cabell-Huntington Health Department, WV

- Wayne County Health Department, WV
- Nicholas County Health Department, WV
- Webster County Health Department, WV

Chatham Health District, CT

- Erie County Department of Health, PA
- Holden Board of Health, MA
- Lexington Board of Health, MA
- Hennepin County, MN

Fairfax County Health Department, VA

- Sangamon County Department of Public Health, IL
- Whiteside County Health Department, IL
- McDonough County Health Department, IL
- Galion City Health Department, OH

Gwinnett Board of Health, GA

- Fulton County Board of Health -Environmental Health, GA
- Cherokee County Public Health Department, TX

Island County Public Health, WA

- Archuleta County Public Health Department, CO



Kansas Department of Agriculture

- Williamson County and Cities Health District, TX

Marshall County Health Department, WV

- Harrison Clarksburg Health Department, WV
- Mineral County Health Department, WV
- Preston County Health Department, WV

Mecklenburg County Health Department, NC

- Cabarrus Health Alliance, NC
- Livingston County Health Center, MO

Monongalia County Health Department, WV

- Braxton County Health Department, WV
- Jefferson County Health Department, WV
- Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department, WV
- Putnam County Health Department, WV

Northern Nevada Public Health, NV


- Municipality of Anchorage, AK

Pima County Health Department, AZ

- Arizona Department of Health Services, AZ

Richmond County Health Department, NC

- City of Appleton Department of Public Health, WI
- Wilson County Environmental Health, NC
- Davidson County Health Department, NC

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- City of Lubbock Environmental Health Department, TX

Southern Nevada Public Health, NV

- Central Nevada Health District, NV

Vineland Health Department, NJ

- Passaic County Department of Health Services, NJ
- LMAS District Health Department, MI
- Christian County Health Department, IL
- Fishers Health Department, IN

EXPECTATIONS OF RFFM MENTORSHIP PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

****NEW for 2026** Project Deliverables for Mentees:**

1. Proof of mentee participation (e.g., achievement of Retail Program Standards goals from your application)
 - a. Submission of updated Project Workplan to [RFFM Grant Portal](#)
 - b. Tracking and updating progress on the Standards via the [RSA Tool](#)
 - c. Submission of pre- and post-assessments
 - d. Completion of jurisdiction profile for End-of-Year Meeting
2. Completion of at least one site visit with your Mentor
 - a. Completion of site visit (virtual or in-person)
 - b. Submission of site visit evaluation to NACCHO

****NEW for 2026** Project Deliverables for Mentors:**

1. Proof of mentor participation
 - a. Submission of pre- and post-assessments
 - b. Submission of complete SA9 and CSIP for Track 1 Mentee(s)
 - c. Tracking and updating progress on the Standards via the [RSA Tool](#) by mentees
 - d. Completion of quarterly mentor check-in survey (e.g., record of meetings with mentees, resources shared, etc.)
2. Completion of at least one site visit with your Mentee(s)
 - a. Submission of site visit agenda to NACCHO
 - b. Completion of site visit evaluation to NACCHO

Communication among all RFFM Mentorship Participants:

- All mentors and mentees are expected to participate in a kick-off call of the RFFM Mentorship Program (**Thursday, April 30, 2026**). The call will include introductions of NACCHO, NEHA, FDA, mentors, and mentees.
- All mentors and mentees are expected to participate in mentor/mentee sharing sessions with NACCHO, NEHA, and FDA. These calls will take place throughout the project period as needed for mentors and mentees to provide updates on their progress, describe any challenges they may be facing, and to work with program staff to re-focus efforts (if necessary).
- Mentors and mentees are expected to use [FoodSHIELD](#) to share documents, tools, resources and communicate with other participants of the RFFM Mentorship Program throughout the RFFM Mentorship Program period. An FAQ/help section is available on FoodSHIELD at <https://www.foodshield.org>. More information on FoodSHIELD will be shared during the kick-off call and future NACCHO communications.

Communication between Mentors and Mentees:

- Each mentee is expected to share a copy of their action and work plans and technical assistance needs with their mentors.
- Each mentor should have an initial call with mentee(s) to revisit/revise work plan(s) and assess the needs of their mentee(s).
- After the initial call, all mentors are expected to develop a work plan that outlines how the mentor will provide guidance and mentorship to their mentees.
- Mentors are encouraged to provide mentees with their Retail Program Standards documents and forms. These products may assist the mentees in streamlining the process to meet the standards.
- Each mentor is expected to work with mentee(s) to make progress in identified Standard(s) or phase(s) as identified in the mentee's proposed work plan.
- Mentors are expected to participate in regular check-ins and other periodic electronic communications with their mentees.



Site Visits between Mentors and Mentees:

- Each mentor and their assigned mentee(s) are required to schedule at least one site visit (in-person or virtually).
- All site visits are recommended to take place between April 2026 and September 2026.
- In-person site visits: Travel costs should be included in your total budget and will be reimbursed by NEHA based on their policy.
- Virtual Site visits: See [virtual site visit guidance](#).
- NACCHO strongly encourages that the site visits be scheduled **early** in the RFFM Mentorship Program period.
- Mentors can hold joint site visits with all their mentees simultaneously.
- Mentors are expected to identify their mentee(s) areas of interest in advance of the site visit and focus on the tools, resources, and processes entailed in meeting those Retail Program Standards.
- Mentors are expected to develop an agenda, in consultation with their mentee(s), for the site visit and share the agenda at least two weeks in advance of the meeting with their mentee(s) and NACCHO staff.
- Mentors and mentees are expected to complete a site visit evaluation. NACCHO will provide instructions on how to submit site visit evaluations.
- Mentees are recommended to assemble all relevant documents to share with their mentors during the site visit (e.g., flash drive of documents).

Communication between RFFM Mentorship Program Participants and NACCHO:

- Mentors and mentees are expected to communicate progress and any major changes to their work plans to NACCHO and NEHA.
- Mentors and mentees are required to submit work plan updates to NACCHO after meeting to discuss project goals.
- Mentors and mentees are expected to document and share lessons learned, related tools, and resources that were helpful for the project. This information will be shared with NACCHO and NEHA for dissemination to retail food regulatory programs and other interested stakeholders.
- Mentors and mentees are expected to provide feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the RFFM Mentorship Program and give suggestions for improving the program by completing an evaluation survey at the end of the program period.
- If asked, mentors and mentees are encouraged to serve as resources for current and prospective Retail Program Standards enrollees on lessons learned, as well as related tools and resources that were used to make progress toward achieving conformance with the Retail Program Standards.

After the RFFM Mentorship Program:

- As appropriate, mentors and mentees are strongly encouraged to submit applications to NACCHO's Model Practices Program. NACCHO usually accepts applications in October/November. For more information about Model Practices, visit <http://www.naccho.org/resources/model-practices>.
- As appropriate, mentors and mentees are strongly encouraged to submit poster presentations and/or session abstracts to regional, state, and national conferences.
- As appropriate, mentors and mentees are strongly encouraged to submit applications to the Samuel Crumbine Consumer Protection Award. Applications are usually accepted between December and March. For more information on the Crumbine Award, visit <https://crumbineaward.com/>.
- Mentors are strongly encouraged to reapply for funding in future years of the mentorship program. We know that this program is highly valuable to you all and NACCHO will be sure to keep program participants informed of any changes to the funding mechanism for mentorship.



EXPECTATIONS FOR SUPPORT FROM NACCHO, NEHA, AND FDA

- Guidance and technical support will be provided throughout the program period from NACCHO, NEHA, and FDA staff. **For technical support requests, please visit** email retailgrants@neha.org **or call 1-833-575-2404.**
- NACCHO staff will provide support to include facilitation of meetings, webinars, and project conference calls. NACCHO staff are also eager to join site visits, both in person and virtually.
- FDA Regional Retail Food Specialists are available to answer questions from mentors and mentees about the Retail Program Standards, including those related to the self-assessment, improvement plans, and the verification audit process.
- NEHA staff will provide information about the RFFM Grant Program, mid- and end-of-year reporting, budgets, and funding.

RETAIL PROGRAM STANDARDS RESOURCES

RFFM Mentorship Program for the Retail Program Standards Webpage

- <http://www.naccho.org/programs/environmental-health/hazards/food-safety/mentorship>
- Includes news and updates about the mentorship program, profiles on past mentorship program participants, example Retail Program Standards policies and forms from past mentorship program participants, archived sharing sessions on the Retail Program Standards, relevant NACCHO reports and articles, and NACCHO staff contacts.

FDA Retail Program Standards Webpage

- <http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/RetailFoodProtection/ProgramStandards/default.htm>
- Includes upcoming relevant events, details about the Retail Program Standards, [listing of jurisdiction enrolled in the Retail Program Standards](#), [Clearinghouse Workgroup Q&A's](#), [directory of FDA Regional Retail Food Specialists](#), funding and grants, and more.

NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model Grant Program

- <https://www.neha.org/retailgrants>
- Includes information about the program, resources, technical support, grant guidance, FAQs, and the grant portal.

RFFM Mentorship Program FoodSHIELD Workgroup

- www.foodshield.org
- NACCHO staff will invite you to the RFFM Mentorship Program FoodSHIELD workgroup.
- Access to RFFM Mentorship Program for the Retail Program Standards workgroup.
- If you have not been added to the RFFM Mentorship Program FoodSHIELD workgroup by February, please submit a request via <https://www.neha.org/retailgrants> and NACCHO staff will make sure you are added immediately.

Spreadsheet to Track Progress on the Standards

- A spreadsheet to track your agency's progress on the Retail Program Standards.
- Access the spreadsheet at www.foodshield.org under "All Cohorts" in the documents section. The document is located under the "NACCHO Admin files" folder and is named "Tracking Spreadsheet."

Example Retail Program Standards Policies and Forms from Mentorship Participants

- <http://www.naccho.org/programs/environmental-health/hazards/food-safety/mentorship>

FDA Retail Food Program Standards Resource Center on FoodSHIELD

- Intended to foster collaboration among retail food regulatory programs by enabling the sharing of tools, templates, and documents that have been developed by state, local, tribal, and territorial partners.
- Membership requests for the Retail Program Standards Resource Center on FOODSHIELD may be sent to your assigned [FDA Regional Retail Food Specialist](#).

Retail Program Standards Sharing Sessions

- <http://www.naccho.org/programs/environmental-health/hazards/food-safety/mentorship> Includes archived sharing sessions on the Retail Program Standards. Presenters include local jurisdictions and FDA staff.

Connections between Retail Program Standards and Public Health Accreditation

- Crosswalk - <http://eweb.naccho.org/prd/?na576PDF>
 - The document provides an overview of how Public Health Accreditation Board's (PHAB's) Standards and Measures and the Retail Program Standards connect. Additionally, the document provides detailed examples of where Retail Program Standards documentation may be used to meet specific PHAB documentation requirements. **This document will be updated later this year (2025). We will share the new link when it is published.**
- Podcast - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKYW3xc5aTQ&feature=youtu.be>
 - This podcast highlights how FDA's Retail Food Program Standards and PHAB's Standards and Measures complement each other and how retail food regulatory programs have applied their knowledge regarding Retail Program Standards to meet required PHAB documentation.

Council to Improve Foodborne Illness Outbreak Response (CIFOR) Resources

- [CIFOR Guidelines for Foodborne Disease Outbreak Response](#) and companion [Toolkit, Third Edition](#)

The CIFOR Guidelines serve as a comprehensive source of information on foodborne disease investigation and control for state and local health agencies. To aid in the implementation of the Guidelines, a companion Toolkit contains a series of worksheets and keys to success designed to help agencies identify which recommendations are best suited for their jurisdiction.

The CIFOR Toolkit furthers the ability of state and local health departments to understand the contents of the Guidelines, to conduct a self-assessment of their outbreak detection and investigation procedures, and to implement appropriate recommendations from the nine chapters in the *Guidelines*.
- [CIFOR's Foodborne Illness Response Guidelines for Owners, Operators and Managers of Retail Food Establishments \(Industry Guidelines\)](#)

The CIFOR Industry Guidelines are voluntary recommendations for owners, operators, and managers of retail food establishments ("Industry") to clarify Industry's role in a foodborne illness outbreak investigation. The Industry Guidelines and its tools help Industry take an active and educated role in outbreak response, thereby reducing negative economic impact to their businesses. This product was developed by the CIFOR Industry Workgroup, an ongoing public/private partnership consisting of experts from all levels of government and the food industry. The Industry Guidelines are not intended to replace pre-existing company guidelines or local, state, or federal regulations or procedures. Instead, the CIFOR Industry Guidelines are a reference document to create Industry procedures where none may exist, complement existing procedures to fill gaps and update establishment-specific procedures, and to develop specific training content for staff.

TIMELINE

The mentorship program period is April 1, 2026, through March 31, 2027. Please make note of the following timeline and events.

Event	Deadline / Date
Notice of Awards	April 2026
Kick-Off Call	April 30, 2026
Submit Mentorship Pre-Assessment Submit Workplan Revisions (if applicable)	May 29, 2026
Mentor Check-In Survey (#1)	Week of June 1
Sharing Sessions	June/September 2026
Conduct Site Visits (submit site-visit evaluation)	May-September 2026*
Mentor Check-In Survey (#2)	Week of September 1
NEHA Interim Progress Reports Due	October 15, 2026
Mentor Check-In Survey (#3)	Week of December 1
Mentorship Jurisdiction Profile	Week of January 25, 2027
End-of-Year Meeting (Virtual)	February 2027
Submit Mentorship Post-Assessment Grant Performance Period Ends	March 31, 2027
NEHA Final Progress Reports Due	May 14, 2027

*It is recommended that site visits are completed by September 30, 2026.



PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

NACCHO Contacts

NACCHO Support Team

Email: retailgrants@neha.org

Contact for general questions, technical assistance, site visits, FoodSHIELD, sharing sessions, End-of-Year meeting

NEHA Contacts

NEHA-FDA RFFM Support Team

Email: retailgrants@neha.org

Phone: 1-833-575-2404 (toll-free)

Contact for general questions, applications, budgets, workplans

FDA Contacts

Maribeth Niesen

Project Officer

Phone: 513-262-4731 & Email: maribeth.niesen@fda.hhs.gov

FDA Retail Food Specialists

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

Mentors and mentees should email retailgrants@neha.org for any questions regarding the RFFM Grant Program, including the mentorship program. NEHA and NACCHO staff will ensure that inquiries are answered in a timely manner. Please refer to the following diagram for a visual of how inquiries are received.



Email from mentors & mentees with questions regarding the Retail Flexible Funding Model Grant Program



NACCHO Staff
General questions, TA, FoodSHIELD, sharing sessions, End-of-Year meeting



NEHA Staff
General questions, budgets, workplans

GUIDANCE FOR SITE VISITS

Timeline It's strongly recommended that site visits take place between 4/1/2026 and 9/30/2026.

Meeting Requirements

- The site visit hours do not have to occur within the same day and can be spread across multiple days.
- The site visit(s) should be **separate** from the regular check-in meetings with your mentor/mentee(s).

What is needed for site visit?

To accommodate a virtual site visit, you will need a device, an internet connection, and app or video capabilities.

- **Device**
If you are the person who is visiting remotely, the first piece of equipment you will need is a computer, tablet, or phone. You will also need someone at the physical site using their phone or tablet to connect with you.
- **App or Video Capabilities**
You may need to use Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or other video/conferencing software to make this work. For relationship building, consider having video turned on so all virtual participants can see one another.
- **Agenda**
A set agenda prior to the site visit. Mentors and mentees should both provide input on the agenda.
- **Supporting Materials**
Share all materials that will be discussed during the meeting prior to the site visit.
- **Tech Team Leader**
During the site visit, participants will want to focus on the content of the meeting, not the tech connections. Identify someone on your staff (mentee and mentors) to serve as the technical "expert" for the virtual site visit. If necessary, have them participate in any necessary tutorials or training that the web conferencing provider offers. When the site visit occurs, have your tech team leader sit in on the event to keep tabs on the quality of the event and troubleshoot when problems arise.

NACCHO Support

- NACCHO staff are available to assist in the site visit. Support includes:
 - Zoom and Microsoft Teams meeting capabilities (if your jurisdiction does not have video/conferencing capabilities)
 - On-site support if requested at least four weeks prior to the site visit and subject to staff availability.

FDA Support

- FDA staff may be available to attend site visits depending on availability.
- Reach out to your Retail Food Specialist if you are interested in having them join your site visit.

Resources for Virtual Site Visits

- [NACCHO Introduction to Virtual Facilitation for Collaboration](#)
- <https://www.ncfp.org/2015/09/24/what-are-some-tips-for-creating-virtual-site-visits/>



General Site Visit Tips

- Share documents with mentor prior to the site visit.
- Take notes during the site visit.
- Use electronic documentation versus pen and paper. Electronic documents are easily shared.
- Document any problems/issues and share during site visit.
- If possible, bring at least two staff members to the site visit.
- Conduct a mini-self assessment prior to the site visit and share results with mentor.
- Review your mentor's policies and information provided and be prepared with questions.
- Narrow your focus to a few standards so you can concentrate on getting advice for conforming to those standards.

EXAMPLE IN-PERSON SITE VISIT AGENDA

Tuesday April 24

Evening Travel from Airport

Wednesday April 25

8:00 AM Quick tour of Health Department

EH Training Seminar

8:30 AM Meet & Greet

9:00 AM Introductions

9:10 AM Presentation – Passing Parasites: A Rare Foodborne Giardiasis Outbreak at a Restaurant

10:00 AM BREAK

10:10 AM Building a Food Safety Program of Excellence

11:00 AM BREAK

11:10 AM Meet with Staff to discuss Standard 2 – Training & Certification (Part 1 - Training)

12:15 PM LUNCH

1:00 PM Meet with Staff to discuss Standard 2 – Training & Certification (Part 2 - Certification)

Food Safety Advisory Council

2:15 PM Introductions

2:25 PM Discussion of 2022 Foodborne Illness Data

2:55 PM Discussion of Action Plan to Address Suggestions for Program Improvement Made by Respondents to the Customer Service Evaluation

3:25 PM Progress Report on Food Safety Guidance Manual

3:40 PM Meeting Wrap Up

3:45 PM Adjournment

4:00 PM Meet with staff to discuss Standard 2 – Training & Certification (Part 3 – Self Assessment)

5:00 PM Adjourn for the Day

6:00 PM – 9:00 PM Dinner and Walking Tour



Thursday April 26

8:30 AM Check Out of Hotel

9:00 AM Meet with staff to discuss Standard 6 – Enforcement (Part 1 – Compliance & Enforcement Policies)

10:15 AM BREAK

10:30 AM Meet with staff to discuss Standard 6 – Enforcement (Part 2 – Documentation & Self-Assessment)

11:45 AM LUNCH

12:30 PM Meet with staff to Discuss Standard 5 - Foodborne Illness Investigation (Part 1 – Policy & Practice)

1:45 PM BREAK

2:00 PM Meet staff to Discuss Standard 5 - Foodborne Illness Investigation (Part 2 – Example Investigation, Self-Assessment)

3:15 PM Depart for Airport

** If you have any interesting or unique inspections, bringing mentees along to see your processes and any procedures you have developed can be very impactful**

EXAMPLE VIRTUAL SITE VISIT AGENDA

Day 1

9:30 AM – 10:00 AM	30 min	Welcome and Introductions	Full group
10:00 AM – 11:00 AM	60 min	Standard 4 – Uniform Inspection program	Full group
11:00 AM – 12:00 PM	60 min	Temporary Food Establishment Planning	Full group
12:00 PM – 12:30 PM	30 min	LUNCH & NETWORKING	
12:30 PM – 1:30 PM	60 min	Standard 2 – Trained Regulatory Staff	Full group

Day 2

9:30 AM – 10:30 AM	60 min	Standard 9 – Program Assessment/Risk Factor Study	Full group
10:30 AM – 11:00 AM	30 min	FoodSHIELD Review	Full group
11:00 AM – 12:00 PM	60 min	Individual meeting time - Mentee & Mentor	Full group
12:00 PM – 12:30 PM	30 min	LUNCH & NETWORKING	
12:30 PM – 1:30 PM	60 min	Standard 3 – Inspection Program Based on HACCP Principles	Full group

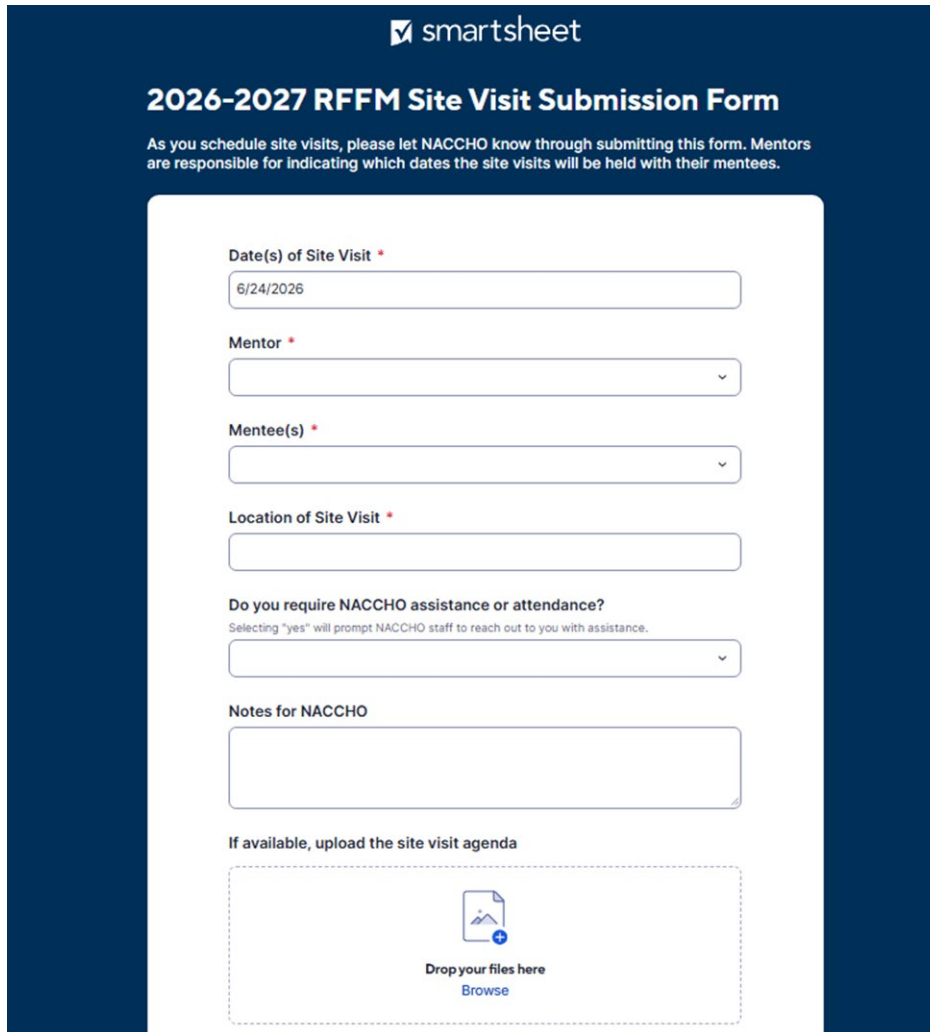
SUBMITTING SITE VISIT DATES AND LOCATIONS

Site Visit Form Submission Instructions

Purpose of the form: For NACCHO to manage and track site visits and related TA requests

Feel free to email Lema Mansoury with any Smartsheet form questions (lmansoury@naccho.org)

1. Access the site visit submission form [link](#)



The screenshot shows a Smartsheet form titled "2026-2027 RFFM Site Visit Submission Form". The form is set against a dark blue background with the Smartsheet logo at the top. Below the title, there is a brief instruction: "As you schedule site visits, please let NACCHO know through submitting this form. Mentors are responsible for indicating which dates the site visits will be held with their mentees." The form contains several input fields: a date field with "6/24/2026" entered, a dropdown menu for "Mentor", another dropdown menu for "Mentee(s)", a text field for "Location of Site Visit", a dropdown menu for "Do you require NACCHO assistance or attendance?" with a note below it stating "Selecting 'yes' will prompt NACCHO staff to reach out to you with assistance.", a text area for "Notes for NACCHO", and a file upload section with a dashed border, a file icon, and the text "Drop your files here" and "Browse".

2. Select the date of the site visit:

Date(s) of Site Visit *
6/24/2026

3. Select mentor:

Date(s) of Site Visit *
6/24/2026

Mentor *
Cabell-Huntington Health Department, WV
Cabell-Huntington Health Department, WV
Chatham Health District, CT
Fairfax County Health Department, VA
Gwinnett Board of Health, GA
Island County Public Health, WA

4. Select mentee(s):

Date(s) of Site Visit *
6/24/2026

Mentor *
Cabell-Huntington Health Department, WV

Mentee(s) *
Wayne County Health Department, WV
 Preston County Health Department, WV
 Putnam County, WV
 Sangamon County Department of Public Health, IL
 Wayne County Health Department, WV
 Webster County Health Department, WV

5. Input location of site visit (example: virtual, or if in-person provide location)

Date(s) of Site Visit *

6/24/2026

Mentor *

Cabell-Huntington Health Department, WV

Mentee(s) *

Wayne County Health Department, WV

Location of Site Visit *

Cabell-Huntington Health Department

6. If you require NACCHO assistance or attendance select “yes” and provide additional information in the notes section:

Date(s) of Site Visit *

6/24/2026

Mentor *

Cabell-Huntington Health Department, WV

Mentee(s) *

Wayne County Health Department, WV

Location of Site Visit *

Cabell-Huntington Health Department

Do you require NACCHO assistance or attendance?

Selecting “yes” will prompt NACCHO staff to reach out to you with assistance.

Yes

Notes for NACCHO

template for the site visit agenda would be helpful

7. If you have a draft agenda available, feel free to upload it with your submission:

Mentee(s) *

Wayne County Health Department, WV

Location of Site Visit *

Cabell-Huntington Health Department

Do you require NACCHO assistance or attendance?

Selecting "yes" will prompt NACCHO staff to reach out to you with assistance.

Yes

Notes for NACCHO

A template for the site visit agenda would be helpful

If available, upload the site visit agenda

Test Agenda.docx
13 KB



Drop your files here
Browse

Questions about the form? Contact us at foodsafetyinfo@naccho.org.

8. For a receipt of your response click "send me a copy" and add your email:

6/24/2026

Mentor *

Cabell-Huntington Health Department, WV

Mentee(s) *

Wayne County Health Department, WV

Location of Site Visit *

Cabell-Huntington Health Department

Do you require NACCHO assistance or attendance?

Selecting "yes" will prompt NACCHO staff to reach out to you with assistance.

Yes

Notes for NACCHO

A template for the site visit agenda would be helpful

If available, upload the site visit agenda



Drop your files here
Browse

Questions about the form? Contact us at foodsafetyinfo@naccho.org.

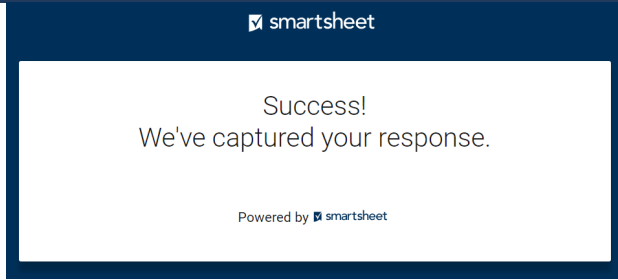
Send me a copy of my responses

Email Address *

ES

Submit

9. Click submit and you are done!



10. Your confirmation email will look like this:



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FOODSHIELD DOCUMENT NAMING CONVENTION

Document Naming Convention: "Standard#_Description_JurisdictionName_Cohort#"

Example 1: "S1_Policyfortempworker_MainCounty_9"

Example2: "S1_SA_MainCounty_9"

***Be sure to follow the naming convention outlined in the briefing book. The naming convention will be used by NACCHO to identify which jurisdictions have submitted their documents to the workgroup and used to confirm that invoice deliverables were met.** [FoodSHIELD Document Uploading/Viewing Instructions](#)

Log-In Instructions

1. Go to: <https://www.foodshield.org>
2. Sign In
3. Enter email address in the blank box titled "Email"
4. Enter password in the blank box titled "Password:"

5. Click on the green “sign in” button.
6. Once logged-in, click on “View Groups”
7. Click on the workgroup “(All Cohorts) RFFM Mentorship Program for the FDA Retail Program Standard Mentorship Program.”

*Note: If you have trouble logging in, please click on “Forgot Password” on the login page. If you still are having trouble, please contact helpdesk@foodshield.org.

VIEWING DOCUMENTS: INSTRUCTIONS

1. To view the documents, click on the “Documents” link on the top portion of the browser.














The screenshot shows a web application interface for the "(All Cohorts) NACCHO Mentorship Program for the FDA Retail Program Standard". The top navigation bar includes links for "Documents", "Meetings", "Communications", "About", "Calendars", "Members", "News Feeds", "Polls", "More Apps", and "Admin". The "Documents" link is circled in red. The main content area is titled "Activity" and shows a list of document uploads for 8/31/20, all by Jeanne Garbarino. The right sidebar contains "Latest News" and "Point of Contact" information.

2. The “document” link will bring you to the documents page. Documents are in folders that are categorized according to the different Retail Program Standards or categories (e.g., “Standard 1”, “Standard 2”, etc.).




Documents Folder View Icon View List View

Home

Show 25 entries Search:

File List	Author	Version	Date
 FDA Resources			09/09/14
 In-Person Meeting Materials			09/05/14
 Mentorship Resources			11/12/13
 NACCHO Admin Files			11/12/13
 Self Assessment			11/12/13
 Standard 1			11/12/13
 Standard 2			11/12/13
 Standard 3			11/12/13
 Standard 4			11/12/13
 Standard 5			11/12/13
 Standard 6			11/12/13
 Standard 7			11/12/13
 Standard 8			11/12/13

Upload Files:
Existing Document

Create Online:
  

















Add Folder
Zip Files

3. To view the documents in the folder, click on the folder link. The documents available in the folder will be listed. Click on the name of the document to learn more about it.




Documents Folder View Icon View List View

Home / Standard 3

Show 25 entries Search:

File List	Author	Version	Date
↑ Up Folder...			
 CHC-BEH-Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands-TPCHD			07/08/20
 Fairfax County Health Department			06/24/14
 Thomas Jefferson Health District Standard 3			08/26/14
 West Hartford-Bloomfield Health			08/20/20
 Corrective Action Guidelines (Vineland m	Jeanne Garbarino	1.0	08/31/20 
 Risk Assessment SOP.docx	Deanna Copeland	1.0	07/16/20 
 Risk Assessment Calculation WorkflowFINA	Deanna Copeland	1.0	07/16/20 
 S3_Corrective Action Plan_GwinnettNewton	Deanna Glisson	1.0	07/14/20 
 S3_Compliance Procedures_GwinnettNewtonR	Deanna Glisson	1.0	07/14/20 
 S3_Informal Time Frame for Routine Inspe	Deanna Glisson	1.0	07/14/20 

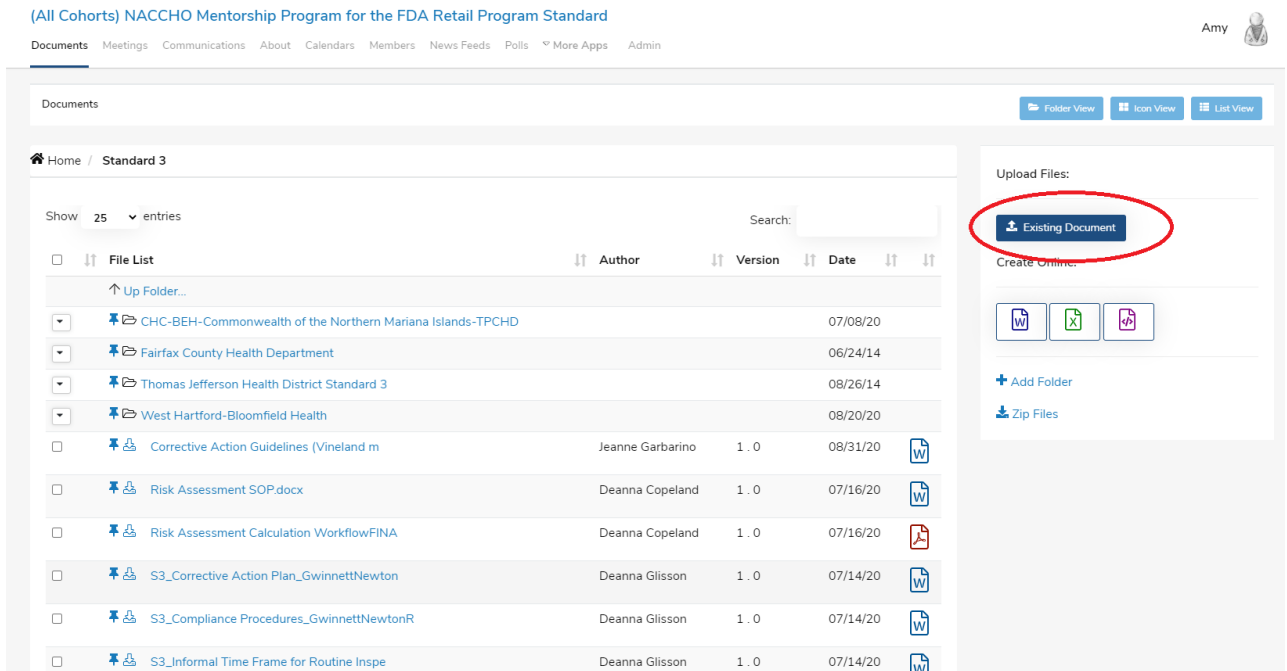
Upload Files:
Existing Document

Create Online:
  

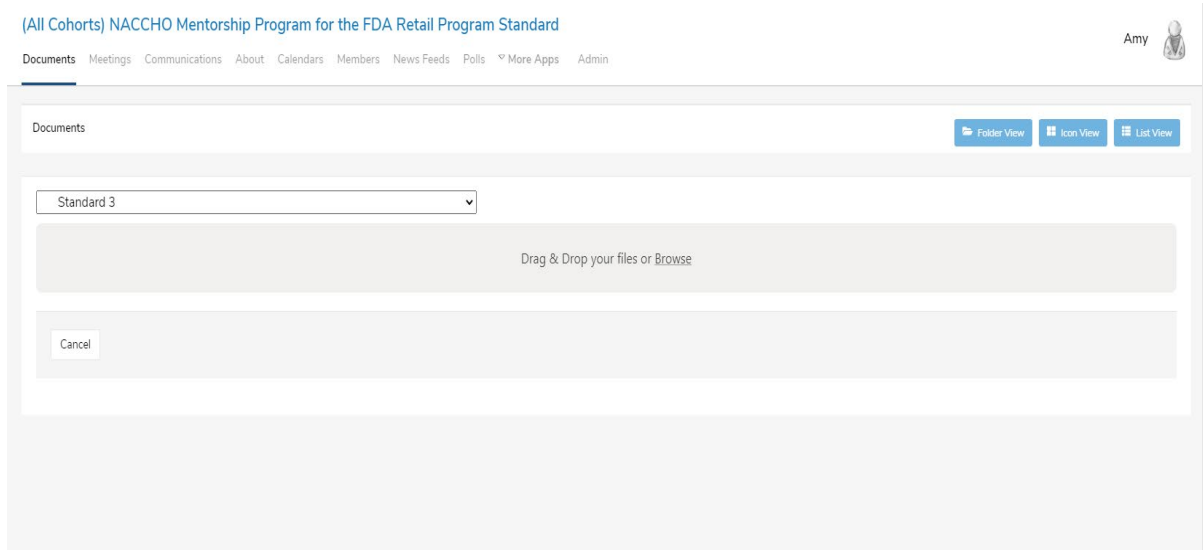
Add Folder
Zip Files

UPLOADING DOCUMENTS: INSTRUCTIONS

1. While in the documents webpage, click on the blue box titled "Existing Document."



2. The Document Uploader page will appear. You can drag and drop files into the box "Drag & Drop your files or Browse."

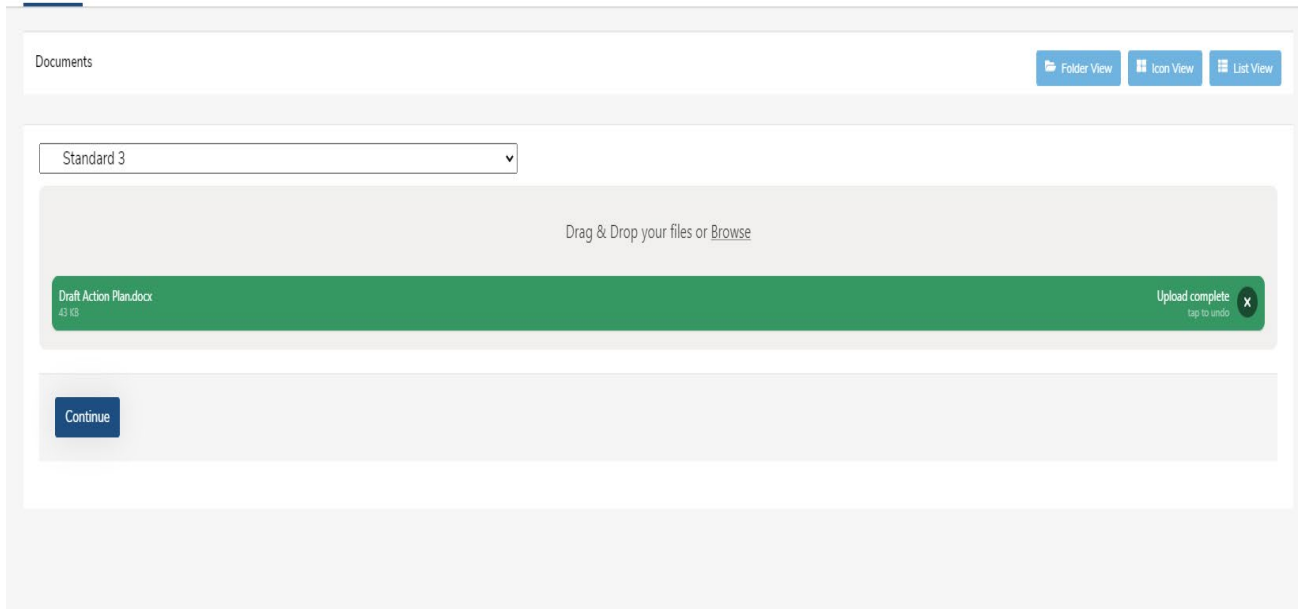


- The files will appear in the middle of the screen and show each one's name. Select a folder in the drop-down box to upload the document and click "continue."

(All Cohorts) NACCHO Mentorship Program for the FDA Retail Program Standard

Amy 

Documents Meetings Communications About Calendars Members News Feeds Polls More Apps Admin

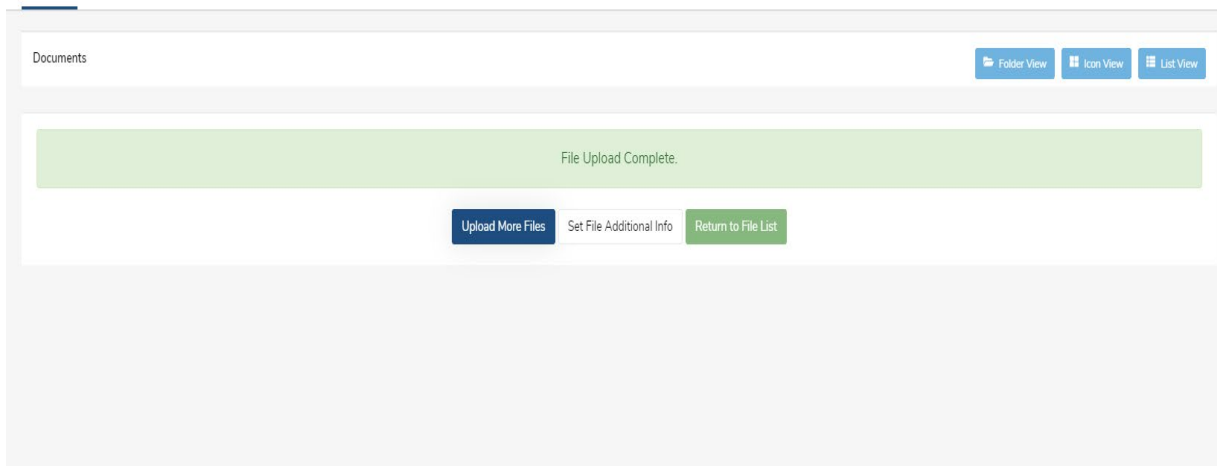


- Click on the button "Set File Additional Info" to give the document a title and other settings.

(All Cohorts) NACCHO Mentorship Program for the FDA Retail Program Standard

Amy 

Documents Meetings Communications About Calendars Members News Feeds Polls More Apps Admin



- Rename the file under "Document Title" to fit the file naming convention.
Document Naming Convention "Standard#_Description_JurisdictionName_Cohort#"
Example 1: "S1_Policyfortempworker_MainCounty_9"
Example 2: "S1_SA_MainCounty_9"

6. Click on “yes” for the option to log view/downloads for the document. Click on the green button “next”.

(All Cohorts) NACCHO Mentorship Program for the FDA Retail Program Standard

Documents Meetings Communications About Calendars Members News Feeds Polls More Apps Admin

Amy 

Setting Details for File 1 of 1: Draft Action Plan.docx

Required Information	Optional Information
<p>Subscribe and Receive Notices of Changes??</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No</p> <p>Allow Comments and Discussion?</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No</p>	<p>Document Title?</p> <p>Draft Action Plan.docx</p> <p>File Priority</p> <p><input type="text"/></p> <p>Log Views/Downloads?</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No</p> <p>Email Document Access Log Weekly?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No</p> <p>Document Expires</p> <p><input type="text"/></p> <p>Description</p> <p><input type="text"/></p>
<p>Security Settings</p> <p>Keep private to just you?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No</p> <p>Prevent Downloading?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No</p> <p>Securely Encrypt the file?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No</p>	

7. Document(s) have now been uploaded.

RFFM MENTORSHIP PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS/LESSONS LEARNED FROM PREVIOUS PARTICIPANTS

Mentors

Establishing a relationship with mentees

- Mentors should contact mentees as soon as possible once they receive pairing information and begin the process of getting to know mentees and goals.
- Mentors should schedule virtual meetings with mentees immediately following the Kick-Off Call to begin focusing the project goals of their mentees, updating their workplans, and completing their initial assessment of progress using the SAVA Gap Analysis Tool.
- Mentors should utilize regular conference meetings to establish relationships with the mentees and to continuously shape activities and goals for the mentorship program.
- Mentors should use agendas for meetings to help engage mentees.

Site Visits

- Mentors do not have to feel pressured to be perfect!
- Mentors have found it useful to schedule at least two days for in-person site visits.
- Schedule the site visits as early as possible in the mentorship program period.
- Share interesting experiences that you can provide in your jurisdiction (unique inspections or plan reviews, meetings with teams that work on the Standards, etc.)
- If possible and within budget, conduct more than one site visit (one early and one later in the program period).
- If possible, invite all mentees to participate in the site visit instead of conducting individual site visits.
- Depending on your site visit goals, it may be beneficial for the mentor to travel to the mentee for the site visit.
- Review mentee's goals and the Standards they are seeking assistance on before the site visit.
- Be flexible with the schedule/time allotted for site visits.
- Identify practices around the Standards within your jurisdiction that may be unique that your mentees can participate in during site visits (Food Advisory Groups for Standard 7, Plan Review Processes, Training Meetings, etc.)
- Be ready to share the paperwork you have related to the Standards.
- Have an agenda for the site visit based off discussions with your mentees around their needs.
- Allow time for speakers that can address emerging food safety issues at the national level.
- Provide resources on USB drives.
- Provide examples of each Standard of interest and how they were met.

General

- Effectively communicate the importance of gathering and recording all documentation available and/or missing when conducting the self-assessment. This will set up a strong foundation for future work on the Standards.
- Mentors should not feel like they failed if their mentees are not able to meet a particular Standard. You have helped put the mentee in a good position to meet the Standard moving forward.
- Mentors should provide an overview of all the Standards to mentees to help them start thinking about the Standards on the whole and about what pieces are missing in their program so they can develop a game plan.

Mentees

General


- There is value in being paired with a mentor who has similar state regulations or a mentor from a different state. Working with a jurisdiction in another state can be helpful because it provides you with a different perspective on conforming to the Standards.
- Visit and look at resources on FoodSHIELD. It will save you a lot of time.
- Use a step-by-step approach. Looking at the Standards as a whole can be overwhelming, so it is important to step back, prioritize, and break apart the different components of each Standard to make it achievable.
- It is acceptable to say that they do not meet a Standard, but also take credit for what has been achieved.
- Don't reinvent the wheel. Working on the Standards can be resource intensive. By working together and sharing policies, forms, ideas, and expertise between EH units, the resources needed to implement the Standards are substantially reduced.
- The Standards take a considerable amount of time to understand and implement. Many times, you must stop and create new policies and forms before you can begin to move forward again. Documentation, organization, and patience are critical to the completion of any Standard.
- Having a full-time permanent data analyst position for each health district would make it easier for health districts to meet the FDA Regulatory Food Standards.
- All staff members have something to offer and are likely willing to actively participate.
- It is critical to gain the support of the Board of Health or other governing bodies with jurisdiction over the agency trying to develop the Standards.
- It is beneficial to have the support of the participating retail food regulatory program's Clerical, Public Relations, IT, and finance department for the mentorship program.
- The mentorship program is very fast paced, so it is extremely important to have a person in charge who is experienced in project management.

Standard Specific

- Conduct a risk factor study (Standard 9) shortly after conducting a self-assessment. This will help measure the impacts made from conforming to the Retail Program Standards.
- Recommend meeting Standard 2 before working on Standard 6.
- Standard 1 is a little less challenging if a health department is working with the most recent FDA Food Code. If a jurisdiction does not have a compliance and enforcement chapter as stringent as the FDA's, this could pose a challenge in meeting the requirements.

Site visit

- Share documents with mentor prior to the site visit.
- Take notes during the site visit.
- Use electronic documentation versus pen and paper. Electronic documents are easily shared.
- Document any problems/issues and share during site visit.
- If possible, bring at least two staff members to the site visit.
- Conduct a mini-self assessment prior to the site visit and share results with mentor.
- Review your mentor's policies and information provided and be prepared with questions.
- Narrow your focus to a few Standards so you can concentrate on getting advice for conforming to those standards.
- Ask questions. This is a great opportunity to immerse yourself in someone else's agency and program, make the most of it.

- 
- Have fun! Site visits are a great way to build your network of food safety professionals throughout the country. You will see these folks at conferences and meetings for years to come, so spend some time getting to know them and enjoy the time working together.

Sustaining Efforts in the Retail Program Standards

- It is important to not only continue to support the existing champions, but also find ways to develop new champions at the local level.
- Incorporate the Standards into your agency's strategic plans.
- Incorporate the Standards into individual work plans for staff.
- Recognize and celebrate the wins in meeting a Standard or parts of a Standard.
- Collaborate as a team with your staff.
- Collaborate with other enrolled jurisdictions.
- Make connections between the Retail Program Standards and broader agency initiatives (e.g., Public Health Accreditation).