

**Applications due by 8:00 PM ET on Tuesday, October 15, 2019**



National Association of County & City Health Officials

*The National Connection for Local Public Health*

## **Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards Mentorship Program (Cohort 9)**

### **REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS TO RECEIVE MENTORSHIP**

#### **OVERVIEW**

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The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) invites all retail food regulatory programs<sup>1</sup> to submit applications to participate in a mentorship program with their peers to learn, share experiences, and acquire tools and resources related to the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards (Retail Program Standards). The overall objective of the mentorship program, now in its ninth year, is to match retail food regulatory program practitioners experienced in applying the Retail Program Standards with retail food regulatory programs newly or currently enrolled in the Retail Program Standards that are looking for assistance, guidance, tools and resources, and recommendations for conducting a self-assessment, achieving a specific standard, or achieving multiple standards. This opportunity will provide capacity building among retail food regulatory programs participating in the NACCHO Mentorship Program. Additionally, the program will help strengthen relationships between retail food regulatory programs and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). This initiative is funded by a cooperative agreement between NACCHO and FDA.

There are two separate Requests for Applications (RFA) that can be used to apply for the Mentorship Program. Applicants interested in serving as a mentor are encouraged to respond to the *Request for Applications to Become a Mentor*, which can be found on the [NACCHO Mentorship Program webpage](#). Applicants interested in receiving technical assistance and support from a mentor are encouraged to respond to this request for applications to receive mentorship. Applicants are welcome to submit applications to become a mentor and to receive mentorship; however, applicants will only be selected as either a mentor or mentee for this cohort. For more information, visit the [NACCHO Mentorship Program webpage](#).

NOTE: NACCHO and FDA staff will host an optional webinar for interested applicants on Wednesday, September 25 from 1:00-1:30 PM ET. Access the webinar at:

<https://naccho.zoom.us/j/150594147>

Dial by your location

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

Meeting ID: 150 594 147

The purpose of the webinar is to answer questions about this RFA. Please note that no new information will be shared during the webinar; as such, applicants need not wait for the optional webinar in order to begin or submit applications.

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<sup>1</sup> Includes all state, local, tribal, and territorial retail food regulatory programs

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#### **BACKGROUND**

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In 2011, the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) was signed into law and includes the most sweeping reform of U.S. food safety laws in more than 70 years. The Act aims to ensure the U.S. food supply is safe by shifting the focus from responding to contamination to preventing it. In supporting the vision for an integrated food safety system, [The Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards](#) focuses on prevention with its ultimate goal being to reduce the occurrence of factors that cause and contribute to foodborne illness. The Retail Program Standards are designed to help retail food regulatory programs enhance the services they provide to the public and provide a means of recognition for programs that meet these standards. Program managers and administrators may establish additional requirements to meet individual program needs. 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.

NACCHO's Mentorship Program is part of an ongoing effort to enhance the implementation of the Retail Program Standards by retail food regulatory programs. Participants supported under the program will receive peer-to-peer assistance and intensive technical support, thereby, advancing the practice of the standards among retail food regulatory programs. Through the mentorship program, participants will benefit from the experience of their peers in understanding how to best apply the Retail Program Standards to improve their retail food regulatory programs in the following areas. Based on the mentor applications received, the following standards may be available for guidance through the Mentorship Program:

- Standard No. 1 - Regulatory Foundation
- Standard No. 2 - Trained Regulatory Staff
- Standard No. 3 - Inspection Program Based on 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

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- Standard No. 9 - Program Assessment
- Self-Assessments

### ELIGIBILITY

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All retail food regulatory programs (e.g., state, local, territorial, and tribal) currently or newly enrolled in the Retail Program Standards are eligible to apply. Retail food regulatory programs interested in receiving guidance and mentorship in the Retail Program Standards are encouraged to apply. Applications are not eligible if the work plan submitted is similar to work that is funded through another grant (i.e., AFDO-administered Retail Program Standards Grant Program, direct cooperative agreement with FDA).

### PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

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From December 2019 through August 31, 2020, retail food regulatory programs selected as mentees will comply with the following:

- Adhere to NACCHO's [standard contract language](#) and be able to sign and return a contract to NACCHO within 30 days of receiving it. Payment will be disbursed in three invoices upon receipt of deliverables. **No modifications to the terms or contract language will be made.** Agencies that cannot agree to NACCHO's contract language should not apply for this initiative. As part of the proposal, the agency will be asked to verify that it has read NACCHO's standard contract language and has provided a copy to the individual with signing authority at the agency for advanced consideration; and
- Designate one main point of contact to serve as the project coordinator. Even if this person will not be leading all project activities, the site must designate one individual with whom NACCHO will directly communicate on all matters related to this project; this person will be responsible for submitting all deliverables, participating in conference calls, and completing evaluation activities. If there is more than one contact person, the designated contact is responsible to identify all staff involved and provide their contact information to NACCHO.

Key Deliverables and Dates (\*Note: A detailed statement of work will be disclosed upon selection of mentee and mentor participants.)

#### **1st Invoice Period (All deliverables through March 31, 2020) due April 20, 2020**

Mentee participants will receive approximately 33% of their total awarded amount during the 1<sup>st</sup> invoice period. Activities during the 1<sup>st</sup> period include participating in the mentorship program kick-off call/webinar; completing the pre-assessment evaluation; revising and finalizing work plans with the guidance of the mentor; completing a self-assessment and verification audit summary and gap analysis for standards purposed in work plan; and participating in the mentee-only sharing session.

#### **2nd Invoice Period (All deliverables between April 1, 2020 and June 30, 2020) due July 20, 2020**

Mentee participants will receive approximately 21% of their total award amount during the 2<sup>nd</sup> invoice period. Activities during the 2<sup>nd</sup> period include participating in at least one site visit with the assigned mentor and utilizing the Mentorship Program [FoodSHIELD workgroup](#) to share related tools and resources used that were helpful for all phases of the project.

#### **3rd Invoice Period (All deliverables between July 1, 2020 and August 31, 2020) due August 31, 2020**

Mentee participants will receive approximately 46% of their total award amount during the 3<sup>rd</sup> invoice period. Activities during the 3<sup>rd</sup> period include documentation of participating in regular meetings with mentors to check in and discuss progress on work plan activities (meetings should be held at least monthly from

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December-August); participating in the end-of-the year meeting in D.C.; competing the post-assessment evaluation/final report; and completing the self-assessment and verification audit summary and gap analysis for standards addressed in the work plan.

### **AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS**

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NACCHO plans to award approximately \$470,000 in total to retail food regulatory programs to participate in the mentorship program.

The program duration will be from December 1, 2019 through August 31, 2020. Ongoing technical assistance beyond the one-time funding will be available. Funding per mentee agency can reach up to \$14,000. The amount awarded to each selected mentee will be contingent on the number of eligible applications received and proposed project. NACCHO plans to announce the selected agencies on the week of November 11, 2019. Funding estimates for the overall program and for individual projects may change.

In the event the number of qualified applicants exceeds the available award funding, travel stipends may be awarded to qualified applicants who were not selected to receive award funding to participate in the program. Travel stipends will include funding for staff travel to site visits and to the end-of-the-year meeting (up to \$1,400 per jurisdiction per event). This information will not impact the determination of which qualified applicants receive award funding.

### **ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES**

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Through the mentorship program, the following anticipated outcomes are expected:

- Establish a growing network of retail food regulatory programs experienced in the implementation of the Retail Program Standards;
- Improve NACCHO's and FDA's understanding of the technical assistance needs of retail food regulatory programs around the Retail Program Standards;
- Identify strategies to improve implementation of the Retail Program Standards by all retail food regulatory programs;
- Provide a venue for retail food regulatory programs interested in the Retail Program Standards to share resources, experiences, and lessons;
- Strengthen relationships between retail food regulatory programs and FDA;
- Identify resource needs in implementing the Retail Program Standards; and
- Assist retail food regulatory programs in making progress towards conformance with the Retail Program Standards.

NACCHO's Mentorship Program is expected to improve the public health system in the jurisdictions of the retail food regulatory programs receiving and providing guidance and technical assistance. System-level outcomes likely will include staff trained in the Retail Program Standards, demonstrated retail food regulatory program capacity for future work, and improved relationships among retail food regulatory programs, NACCHO, and FDA.

### **SELECTION PROCESS**

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Applications will be reviewed by NACCHO and FDA.

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- Late applications will not be accepted.
- Incomplete applications, those submitted by ineligible applicants, or those received through any format other than the application materials provided will not be reviewed.
- Applicants will be notified of their selection status on or around the week of November 11, 2019 (via e-mail to the specified project coordinator).
- Applications will be reviewed and scored based on the following criteria:
  - Completeness in answering the questions and submission of all required documents;
  - Agency capacity to carry out the proposed activities;
  - Appropriate work plan to complete the project activities;
  - Experience in the implementation of the Retail Program Standards;
  - Appropriate staffing plan;
  - Realistic and appropriate budget; and
  - Demonstration of overall commitment.
- Each eligible application will be scored by multiple members of a review panel.
- Scores for each section are listed in the Application Form. The maximum score is 100 points. The final selection, including selecting tied participants, will be at the discretion of the project team.
- To encourage jurisdictions to conduct risk factor studies, applicants that propose working on Standard 9 (e.g., conducting a risk factor study, interpreting results, implementing intervention strategies based on the results) will automatically have 5 bonus points added to their final score.

### RFA KEY DATES

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Applicants are advised to consider the following dates.

- Request for Application Question & Answer Session:  
Wednesday, September 25 from 1:00-1:30 PM ET  
Access the webinar at:  
<https://naccho.zoom.us/j/150594147>  
Dial by your location  
+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)  
+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)  
Meeting ID: 150 594 147
- Application deadline: Tuesday, October 15, 2019 at 8:00 PM ET
- Award notification: Week of November 11, 2019 (tentative)

### APPLICATION PROCESS

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- Review the requirements and expectations outlined in this RFA and in the application.
- Applicants are urged to carefully propose a work plan that will be both meaningful and feasible to accomplish during the project timeframe.
- Read NACCHO's [standard contract language](#) and provide a copy to the individual with signing authority at the agency for advanced consideration. Participating agencies must agree to the contract language and be able to sign and return a contract to NACCHO within 30 days of receipt. **No modifications will be made.**
- Submit the application form as a **Word Document** and letter of support from health director or official (optional but strongly encouraged) as a **PDF**. The Application Form must not exceed **20 pages** (single-spaced, Times New Roman, and 12-point font). The letter of support will not count toward the page limit. Applications not in the required format and exceeding page limitations will be considered incomplete and not scored.

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- Applicants may include supporting materials in a separate appendix.
- Submit the application by 8:00 PM ET on Tuesday, October 15, 2019. Please e-mail the application material to [foodsafetyinfo@naccho.org](mailto:foodsafetyinfo@naccho.org). NACCHO will confirm receipt of e-mailed applications. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered. Please note: Applicants are welcome to submit applications to become a mentor and to receive mentorship, however, they will only be selected as either a mentor or mentee for this cohort.
- For more detailed information, refer to the Application Form on the [mentorship webpage](#).

### Mentorship Program Considerations:

- Please list any considerations that you would like NACCHO to keep in mind when matching your agency with a mentor for the mentorship program (e.g., size of jurisdiction, location, expertise, governance structure<sup>2</sup>, type of agency [state, local, territorial, or tribal], etc.).
- Please indicate if you are interested in participating in the Mentorship Program without award funding if the number of qualified applicants exceed the available award funding. (\*Note: This information will not impact the determination of which qualified applicants receive award funding. Participants that participate in the Mentorship Program without award funding will receive funding for staff travel to the site visit and end-of-the-year meeting [up to \$1,400 per jurisdiction per event].)

### Background (20 points):

Part I. Please provide information on your agency and retail food regulatory program, addressing each of the following bulleted items:

- Organization's mission statement;
- Brief description of your retail food regulatory program;
- Number of staff in the retail food regulatory program;
- Types of retail establishments regulated;
- Number of retail establishments regulated;
- Version of FDA Food Code adopted; and
- Where your agency derives regulatory authority from (e.g., local ordinance, state).

Part II. Briefly list and describe your familiarity with the Retail Program Standards. When applicable, please include the following information:

- When your agency enrolled in the Retail Program Standards;
- If you are newly enrolled or do not have any experience in the Retail Program Standards, indicate which Standards or phases you plan to work on initially;
- Standard(s) you have met (for each standard met, please indicate if your self-assessment was verified by a verification audit);
- Standards you have not met, but are currently working toward meeting;
- Any work that you have done or any work under way related to implementation of the Retail Program Standards.
- If you have participated in the NACCHO mentorship program in previous cohorts, describe any work that was completed (including any work not completed and why) during the mentorship program period.

### Project Description (40 points):

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<sup>2</sup> Local = All local health departments (LHDs) in state are units of local government; State = All LHDs in state are units of state government; Shared = All LHDs in state governed by both state and local authorities; Mixed = LHDs in state have more than one governance type

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Submit a work plan for your agency's participation in the mentorship program, describing how you plan to achieve conformance with specific Standards, or how you plan to achieve conformance with specific elements within a Standard. For the period between December 2019 and August 31, 2020, the work plan should include goals, objectives, activities, expected outcomes, and a timeline with a month-by-month description of key tasks and milestones for project completion, and specific deliverables.<sup>3</sup> Note: applicants that propose working on Standard 9 (e.g., conducting a risk factor study, interpreting results, implementing intervention strategies based on the results) will automatically have 5 bonus points added to their final score.

### Statement of Need (25 points):

Part I. Describe the need for mentorship on the Retail Program Standards in your jurisdiction. Please include the following information:

- What kind of technical assistance will you require to complete the work plan described in the project description?
- Describe challenges or barriers that your agency is facing in making progress with the work plan described in the project description.

Part II. Briefly describe how working with a mentor in the Mentorship Program will move forward efforts to achieve your work plan described in the project description. Please also describe other resources in your jurisdiction and/or state that may be available to support these efforts.

### Staffing Plan (15 points):

Describe the proposed staffing plan and list the following for all retail food regulatory program personnel that may participate in the mentorship program:

- Names of lead staff and staff members;
- Background information on each staff member, including experience in food safety and experience in the Retail Program Standards; and
- Each staff member's role and responsibilities for the mentorship program. Please provide detailed information about the expected role for each staff member assigned to work on this project.

### Budget Request:

Funding per mentee retail food regulatory program is up to \$14,000. The amount awarded to each selected mentee will be contingent on the number of eligible applications received and project proposed. Applicants must complete the budget narrative.

Please see the attached sample budget narrative for guidance in submitting a detailed budget narrative. Fill out the attached budget narrative form provided. The budget narrative should be consistent with the goals, objectives, and activities proposed within the application. Items that may be included in the request for funds are staff salary and fringe benefits, phone/facsimile, postage, field supplies, travel to relevant trainings or workshops, and contractual fees. Project funds can support the purchase of field supplies if the purchase meets the needs outlined in the application and will help to achieve replicable knowledge. If additional funds and/or resources will be leveraged, please describe them. *Funds cannot be used for the purchase or upkeep of office equipment. Additionally, project funds cannot be used to purchase food or beverages.*

Please note that the awards are categorized as consultants, disbursed in three invoice periods upon receipt of

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<sup>3</sup>Applications are not eligible if the work plan submitted is similar to work that is funded through another grant (i.e., AFDO-administered Retail Program Standards Grant Program).

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deliverables. The purpose of the budget narrative is to demonstrate that the applicant has considered appropriate funding needed to accomplish the work it has proposed.

**Additionally, please note that travel expenses for staff members to attend a site visit with the mentor and the end-of-the-year meeting MUST be included in the budget.**

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

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Questions about the mentorship program, request for application, and application can be directed to:

Tiara Smith  
Program Analyst, Environmental Health  
202-507-4249  
[tsmith@naccho.org](mailto:tsmith@naccho.org)

Amy Chang  
Senior Program Analyst, Environmental Health  
(202) 507-4221  
[achang@naccho.org](mailto:achang@naccho.org)

Jennifer Li  
Senior Advisor  
(202) 507-4242  
[jli@naccho.org](mailto:jli@naccho.org)