

Applications due by 11:59 PM ET on Tuesday, October 13, 2020



Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards Mentorship Program (Cohort 10)

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS TO BECOME A MENTOR

OVERVIEW

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) invites all retail food regulatory programs¹ 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, in its tenth 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, making progress on 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 U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). This initiative is funded by a cooperative agreement between NACCHO and FDA.

There are **two** separate Requests for Applications (RFAs) that can be used to apply for the Mentorship Program. Applicants interested in serving as a mentor are encouraged to respond to this request for applications to become a mentor. Applicants interested in receiving technical assistance and support from a mentor are encouraged to respond to the *Request for Applications to Receive Mentorship*, which can be found on the [NACCHO Mentorship Program webpage](#). 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 Thursday, September 24 from 2:30-3:00 PM ET. Access the webinar at:

<https://naccho.zoom.us/j/98492600359?from=msft>

Dial by your location

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

+1 301 715 8592 US (Germantown)

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

Meeting ID: 984 9260 0359

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.

¹ Includes all state, local, tribal, and territorial food regulatory programs

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BACKGROUND

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.

- 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
- 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 becoming a mentor in the Retail Program Standards Mentorship Program are encouraged to apply. Participants in previous mentorship program cohorts are eligible to apply.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

From November 16, 2020 through August 31, 2021, retail food regulatory programs selected as mentors 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. (Note: NACCHO has a specific contract template as approved by the State's General Counsel for applicants from the states of FL and TX. Please email us for a copy should you need it.) **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 the team's contact information to NACCHO.

Tentative Key Activities and Deliverables (*Note: A detailed deliverable schedule will be disclosed upon selection of mentee and mentor participants.)

Payment will be disbursed in three invoices upon receipt of deliverables.

1st Invoice Period (All deliverables through March 31, 2021) due April 15, 2021

Mentor participants may receive approximately 58% of their total awarded amount during the 1st invoice period. Activities during the 1st period may include participating in the mentorship program kick-off call/webinar; completing the mentor pre-assessment evaluation; providing guidance to mentee(s) to revise and finalize work plans; providing guidance to mentee(s) in completing a self-assessment and verification audit summary and gap analysis for standards proposed in work plan; participating in the mentor-only sharing sessions; participating in at least one site visit with assigned mentee(s); and holding at least four regular check-in meetings with each assigned mentee(s).

2nd Invoice Period (All deliverables between April 1, 2021 and June 30, 2021) due July 15, 2021

Mentor participants may receive approximately 13% of their total award amount during the 2nd invoice period. Activities during the 2nd period may include holding at least two regular check-in meetings with each assigned mentee(s) 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, 2021 and August 31, 2021) due September 15, 2021

Mentor participants may receive approximately 29% of their total award amount during the 3rd invoice period. Activities during the 3rd period may include holding one regular meeting with each mentee(s) to check in and discuss progress on mentee work plan activities; participating in the all cohort end-of-the year meeting; completing the post-assessment evaluation/final report; and providing guidance to mentee(s) on completing the self-assessment and verification audit summary and gap analysis for standards addressed in work plan(s).

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AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS

NACCHO plans to award approximately \$465,000 in total to retail food regulatory programs to participate in the mentorship program.

The program duration will be from November 16, 2020 through August 31, 2021. Ongoing technical assistance beyond the one-time funding will be available. Funding per mentor retail food regulatory program is anticipated to range from \$12,000-22,000. The amount awarded to each selected mentor will be contingent on the number of eligible applications received. NACCHO plans to announce the selected agencies on or around the week of November 9, 2020. Funding estimates for the overall program and for individual projects may change.

Please refer to the following breakdown for the approximate range of anticipated funding based on the number of mentee retail food regulatory programs an applicant is willing to mentor.

Mentoring one (1) retail food regulatory program: \$12,000

Mentoring two (2) retail food regulatory programs: \$15,000

Mentoring three (3) retail food regulatory programs: \$18,000

Mentoring four (4) retail food regulatory programs: \$22,000

Mentors may request one, two, three, or four mentees. The final number of mentees assigned to a mentor will depend on the number of applications received and the type of mentoring requested. (*Note: Mentoring more than four (4) mentees will be at the discretion of NACCHO and FDA.)

*Note: An additional travel stipend (up to of \$1,400 per mentor-mentee pairings) for site visit meeting(s) will be reimbursed by NACCHO, separate from the awarded amount.

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

Through the mentorship program, the following 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 programs capacity for future work, and improved relationships among retail food regulatory programs, NACCHO, and FDA.

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SELECTION PROCESS

Applications will be reviewed by NACCHO and FDA.

- 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 9, 2020 (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;
 - 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 have worked 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

Applicants are advised to consider the following dates.

- Request for Applications Question & Answer Session:
Thursday, September 24 from 2:30-3:00 PM ET. Access the webinar at:
<https://naccho.zoom.us/j/98492600359?from=msft>
Dial by your location
+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)
+1 301 715 8592 US (Germantown)
+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)
+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)
+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)
+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)
Meeting ID: 984 9260 0359
- Application deadline: Tuesday, October 13, 2021 at 11:59 PM ET
- Award notification: Week of November 9, 2020 (tentative)

APPLICATION PROCESS

- 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 be able to sign and return a contract to NACCHO within 30 days of receiving it. (Note: NACCHO has a specific contract template as approved by the State's General Counsel for applicants from State of FL and TX. Please email us for a copy should

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you need it.) **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

- 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.
- Applicants may include supporting materials in a separate appendix.
- Submit the application by **11:59 PM ET by Tuesday, October 13, 2020**. Please e-mail the application materials to foodsafetyinfo@naccho.org. NACCHO will confirm receipt of e-mailed applications. If you do not receive a confirmation of receipt, email Tiara Smith at tsmith@naccho.org. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered. Please note: Applicants are welcome to submit applications to both become a mentor and to receive mentorship, however, they may 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 retail food regulatory program with mentee retail food regulatory program(s) for the mentorship program (e.g., size of jurisdiction, location, governance structure², type of agency [state, local, territorial, or tribal], etc.).
- Please indicate if you have any or anticipate travel restrictions during the mentorship program period (November 16, 2020 through August 31, 2021).
- Please indicate the number of retail food regulatory programs your health department is willing to mentor:
 - one (1) retail food regulatory program: \$12,000
 - two (2) retail food regulatory programs: \$15,000
 - three (3) retail food regulatory programs: \$18,000
 - four (4) retail food regulatory programs: up to \$22,000

Background (20 points):

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;
- Number and types of retail establishments regulated;
- Version of FDA Food Code adopted; and
- Where your agency derives regulatory authority from (i.e., local ordinance, state).

² 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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Qualifications (60 points):

The following questions will ask you to list and describe your agency's expertise and experience with the Retail Program Standards.

Part I. Standard(s) in which you have expertise and experience

- a. Please list each Standard in which you have expertise and experience. Note: applicants that have worked 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.
- b. Provide a description of your agency's expertise and experience for each listed Standard.
- c. Please indicate which Standard(s) have been self-assessed and which standard(s) have been confirmed through a verification audit.

Part II. Describe your retail food regulatory program's experience conducting a self-assessment.

Part III. Describe your retail food regulatory program's experience conducting a Verification Audit for another agency (please indicate which standards and briefly describe your experience).

Part IV. Describe any additional work that your retail food regulatory program has done, or any work under way, related to implementation of the Retail Program Standards.

Part V. Describe any relevant experience your retail food regulatory program has in providing mentorship related to the Retail Program Standards, as well as contributions that your agency has made in assisting peer retail food regulatory programs. If you have participated as a mentor in the NACCHO mentorship program, include details on which Standards you have provided guidance on and the progress the mentee(s) achieved.

Part VI. Describe how participation in the mentorship program will be helpful to your retail food regulatory program, including:

- a. How your retail food regulatory program would benefit;
- b. How the staff serving as mentors would benefit (e.g., professional growth/development); and
- c. Include a brief description of your ideal mentor-mentee relationship.

Staffing Plan (20 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 mentor retail food regulatory program is anticipated to range from \$12,000-22,000. The budget narrative total should equal \$12,000, \$15,000, \$18,000, or \$22,000 depending on the number of mentees your program has proposed to mentor.

Please see the sample budget narrative attached to the application 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

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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 or gift cards.*

Please note that the awards are categorized as consultants, disbursed in three invoice periods upon receipt of deliverables. All funds should be spent within the project period, November 16, 2020 – August 31, 2021. **The purpose of the budget narrative is to demonstrate that the applicant has considered appropriate funding needed to accomplish the work it has proposed and to confirm that all costs proposed are allowable costs within the performance period.**

Additionally, please note that travel expenses for staff members from participants to attend a site visit with the mentor **do not** need to be included in the budget. Costs incurred for the site visit meeting (up to \$1,400 per jurisdiction) will be reimbursed by NACCHO, separate from the awarded amount to selected retail food regulatory programs to participate in the mentorship program. Participants that choose to send multiple staff members and/or anticipate spending above the \$1,400 amount to the site visit meeting should budget additional staff travel in their proposed awarded budgets.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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

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