

Item Title: National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) Grant

Specific Action Requested:

That the Board of Commissioners accepts and appropriates \$63,500 into the Grants and Donations fund from the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) to advance staff training and the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards through March 31, 2028.

Item Summary:

Purpose: In accordance with the North Carolina Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act, the Board of Commissioners must approve all amendments that increase the budget for a fund.

Background: The FDA Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards (Program Standards) provide a national benchmark of quality improvement for local jurisdictions to evaluate and improve food safety programs. The goal of the Program Standards is to reduce risk factors that contribute to foodborne illness in food service facilities. To incentivize participation in the Program Standards, National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) awards FDA-funded grants for training and projects that support quality assurance and uniformity of inspections in jurisdictions.

In April 2025, NEHA awarded Wake County a one-year Training Grant totaling \$3,500 and Maintenance and Advancement Grant totaling \$60,000 to be used from April 2025 to March 2028. The Maintenance and Advancement Grant will fund the department's efforts to maintain, update, and improve the FDA Retail Food Program Standards 1-8, as well as complete a Risk Factor Study to maintain compliance with FDA Standard 9 – Program Assessment.

Strategic Plan: This action supports Foundations of Service Goal 3: By 2029, 10% more residents will agree that Wake County provides high-quality, fair, and equitable services.

Fiscal Impact: This agreement provides \$63,500 to be appropriated in the Grants and Donations Fund for Program Standards participation through FY 2028. There is no matching funds requirement.

Additional Information:

In calendar years 2022, 2023, and 2024, Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) received Board of Commissioner approval to appropriate NEHA Maintenance and Advancement Grants that were used to purchase supplies and equipment for the department. In addition, the funds were used to provide educational and immediate intervention materials for retail food service facilities within Wake County.

For the project period April 1, 2025, through March 31, 2028, the grant will positively impact Environmental Health and Safety's (EH&S) strategic objectives to better serve Wake County residents, including strengthening governance structures and processes that preserve ethics, accountability, and effective decision-making by assessing the effectiveness of our program. This will enable us to develop and implement intervention strategies within Health and Human Services Department and for Wake County businesses. EH&S will benefit from:

- Identifying program areas where EH&S can have the greatest impact on retail food safety
- Promoting wider application of effective risk-factor intervention strategies
- Lead to innovations in program implementation and administration
- Improving industry and consumer confidence in food protection programs by enhancing uniformity within our department and with other regulatory agencies
- Providing resources for staff and Wake County businesses and tools for effective, safe, and efficient service delivery
- Synergies with previous grants received to maintain a sustainable Standards Program

The breakdown for the current project period is as follows:

Project Period	Training	Maintenance and Advancement
Year 1: April 1, 2025 - March 31, 2026	\$3,500	\$20,000
Year 2: April 1, 2026 - March 31, 2027		\$20,000
Year 3: April 1, 2027 - March 31, 2028		\$20,000
Total Funding	\$3,500	\$60,000

Examples of Previous NEHA Grant-Funded Achievements:

- Following conference presentations by other local jurisdictions, Wake County EH&S developed similar educational campaigns for new and existing food service facilities to increase compliance and reduce foodborne illness risk factors.
- Wake County EH&S networked with other North Carolina local agencies of similar size resulting in a shared Mentorship Grant in CY 2023 to build internal capacity

for training and program assessments. As a result, 100% of EH&S field staff now meet federal training standards for food safety regulators, an increase from 10% in 2021.

- Conference attendance provided insight into proposed laws or rules and the operational impact as stated by the proposing agency. A continued presence at conferences provides opportunities for leadership staff to serve on national committees to represent Wake County.
- Wake County EH&S staff shared best practices for advancing the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards to national audiences through panel discussions and breakout session presentations.

Attachments:

1. Award Letter for NEHA Grant
2. Budget Memo FY2026 – Grants and Donations Fund