

Item Title: Accept and Appropriate National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) Grant

Specific Action Requested:

That the Board of Commissioners accepts and appropriates \$4,000 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.

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 2026, NEHA awarded Wake County a Training Grant totaling \$4,000 for April 2026 to March 2027. This is a yearly add-on grant to the three-year NEHA Maintenance and Advancement grant awarded to Wake in 2025. The Training Grant will fund conference attendance for EH&S staff.

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; and Growth, Land Use and Environment Goal 1: Between 2024 and 2029, 97% of growth and development will be directed toward cities and towns that provide municipal services, transportation, and utilities.

Fiscal Impact: This agreement provides the Department of Public Health \$4,000 to be appropriated in the Grants and Donations Fund for Program Standards participation through FY 2027. There is no matching funds requirement.

Additional Information:

In calendar year 2025, Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) received Board of Commissioner approval to appropriate NEHA Maintenance and Advancement and Training Add-On 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 and technical training for EH&S staff.

For the project period April 1, 2026, through March 31, 2027, the Training Add-On 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 sending leadership staff members to the NEHA Annual Educational Conference. These staff members will disseminate guidance and knowledge gained both in the field and at staff meetings. Participation in the conference will:

- Expand staff expertise and skills
- Strengthen Wake EH&S network by connecting with peers, mentors, and partners who share our commitment to public health
- 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
- Synergize 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	\$4,000	\$20,000
Year 3: April 1, 2027 - March 31, 2028		\$20,000
Total Funding	\$7,500	\$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 Calendar Year 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. NEHA-FDA Retail Grants Award Letter Training Add On 2026
2. Budget Memo – FY2026 Grants and Donations Fund