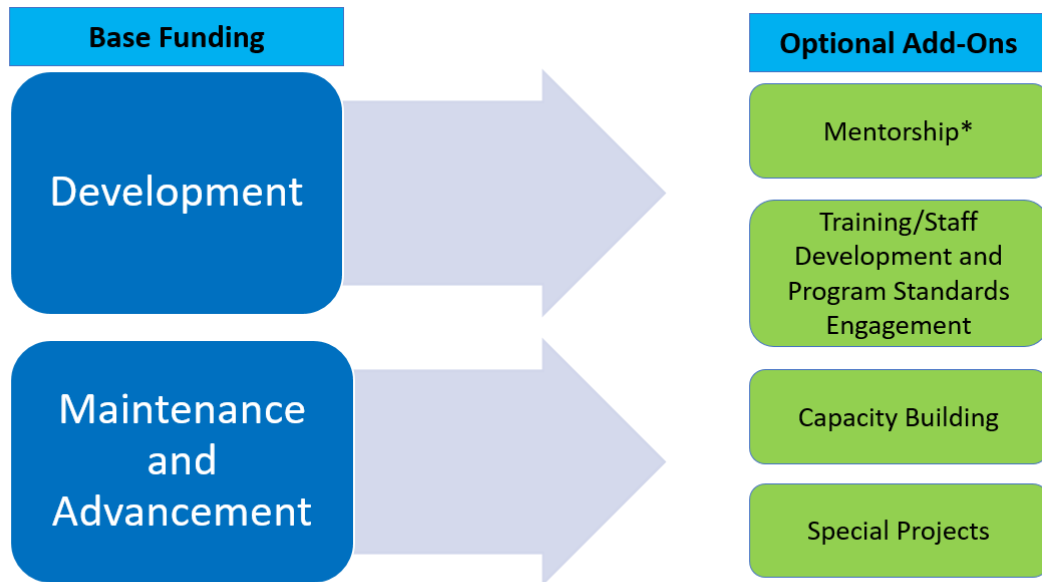


Guidance for Jurisdictions with Comprehensive Strategic Improvement and Project Implementation Plans under the Retail Flexible Funding Model

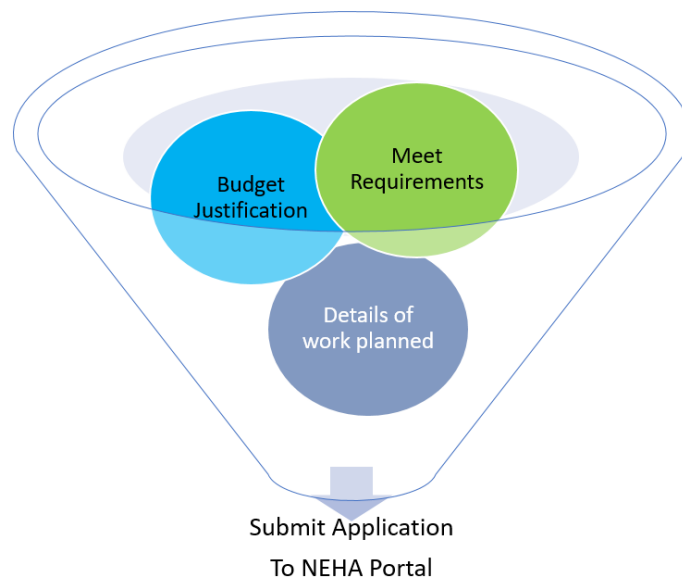
This document is intended to serve as guidance for state, local, tribal and territorial (SLTT) partners to complete a Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (CSIP) and a Project Implementation Plan (PIP) for eligibility under the Retail Flexible Funding Model (RFFM).

RETAIL FLEXIBLE FUNDING MODEL



*Applicants may be recommended for initial gateway into the mentorship program based on application review

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The RFFM consists of base funding, either the Development base box or the Maintenance and Advancement base box. Jurisdictions must choose one of these base categories to apply through and there are different criteria for each. For example, if a jurisdiction applies for base box funding and meets the requirements, they may apply for optional work in the areas of mentorship, training/staff development, program standards engagement, capacity building and special projects. Any application for funding should include a **budget justification** and **detail of planned work**, such as a project implementation plan (PIP) and a comprehensive strategic improvement plan (CSIP). This detailed plan of work will include information on specific work activities, when they will be completed, and who is responsible for ensuring they are completed. A detailed plan of work is required for all applications, but the optional add-ons specifically also require the PIP because those projects may not be detailed in the CSIP.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND A PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN UNDER THE RFFM?

A written CSIP is based on the results of a completed self-assessment and documents measurable continuous improvement with the Voluntary National Retail Regulatory Retail Food Program Standards (VNRFRPS). Essentially the CSIP is a long-term (multi-year) project plan that guides the work of the regulatory retail food program toward meeting the requirements of the Standard(s) not met. The plan may also include tasks related to maintenance of Standards in full conformance.

A written PIP is focused, short-term and executable. It can be based on the CSIP and the results of a self-assessment or written for special projects and other priorities that will help the jurisdiction move toward conformance. While a PIP may provide similar information to the CSIP, it asks the SLTT to identify specific needs and resources, drilling down on how they will execute the action items using the funding.

All RFFM applications must have a PIP that outlines the details of how the jurisdiction will use the funding to accomplish their goals. Not every funding project is specified in a jurisdiction's CSIP. For example, if a jurisdiction is sending somebody to CFP or NEHA, although it assists that jurisdiction in other ways, it doesn't necessarily fill a gap identified in the CSIP. However, FDA will still need to have the information from the applicant that outlines the details of who's going, what are they doing, who's responsible, how much it's going to cost, how much time, and the resources they're going to need. The PIP explains these specifics.

Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan- *(you've thought about what you want to do and laid out your plans)* listed in Development base box & Maintenance and Advancement box

- SLTT jurisdictions, funded or not, should develop a CSIP based on results of completed SA
- CSIP describes how they will define measurable improvement and measure progress
- Should include all elements not met in SA and identify timeframes, personnel, and other needs for implementation
- May also include tasks related to maintenance of Standards in full conformance
- Must specifically address timeframe for completing a risk factor study or equivalent
- Covers multiple years of work on the VNRFRPS, may extend past funding period
- No formal form associated with the CSIP, jurisdictions can use what best fits their needs

Project Implementation Plan- *(project outline for how you are using the grant funding)* listed in additional add-on

- Includes time frames, personnel, and other resources necessary to achieve continuous measurable improvement related to the funding project
- May not be called out specifically in the jurisdiction's CSIP (applicant may not yet have a CSIP in place)
- Written PIP with all the info above allows applications to be judged on merit
- Examples:
 - SLTT jurisdiction in development phase applies for training funds to attend SAVA workshop in order to complete self-assessment
 - SLTT jurisdiction in maintenance or development phase applies for funds to attend CFP or NEHA, not directly tied to the Standards and may not be listed in their CSIP

WHEN IS A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT PLAN NEEDED FOR THE RFFM?

A jurisdiction must have a completed self-assessment and a **written comprehensive strategic improvement plan** to apply for Development base box funds to work on continuous improvement and a public health metric, all funding opportunities in the Maintenance and Advancement box and optional add-on funding opportunities.

Development Base Box:

- CSIPs are vitally important with or without funding. If a self-assessment has been completed, a jurisdiction can proactively develop a CSIP to ensure they have a direction on their efforts to achieve work on the standards and an idea where they might apply for future grant funding. If a jurisdiction does not have a CSIP, they must apply for funding to work on the plan before applying for funds to work on continuous improvement. Once a jurisdiction has both a self-assessment and a CSIP, then they can apply for funding to work on continuous improvement.

Maintenance and Advancement Base Box:

- Requirements needed to apply for funding in this box: a current self-assessment, a CSIP, and at least one standard met and verified by an auditor.

WHY IS A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT PLAN NEEDED FOR THE RFFM?

Effective strategic planning defines the vision for where the program is going, or not going. It provides focus and direction for how the program intends to achieve its goals, while managing the implementation of its plan. Strategies should map objectives and actionable steps, foster innovative thinking, and anticipate (and mitigate) potential future pitfalls.

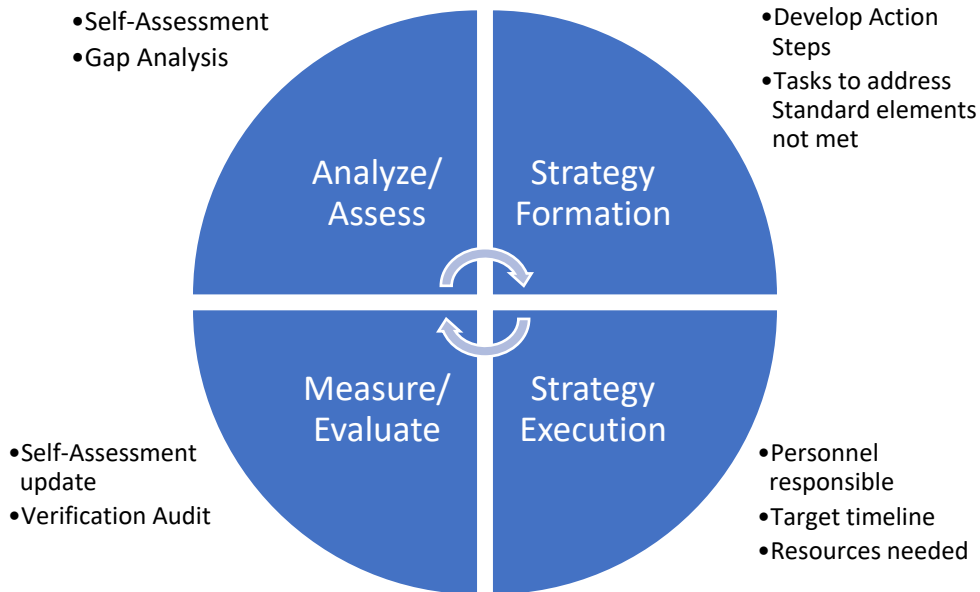
Benefits of planning:

- Sets up a sense of direction, allowing programs to be proactive rather than reactive
- Improves ability to obtain resources, enhance program sustainment
- Increases operational efficiency, assists in not wasting time or duplicating resources
- Provides motivation for staff
- Sets performance standards, promotes goal achievement
- Allows for flexibility to address roadblocks

A CSIP should answer these questions:

- **WHERE** do we want to go? (goals/deliverables)
 - Mission and goals are identified through the VNRFRPS self-assessment. Maintain focus on priorities and integrate strategic work into the program's daily activities so that the strategic priorities do not become burdensome to staff. Both should blend together.
- **WHAT** are we doing? (actions/tasks)
 - This is the specific strategy to accomplish goals above, where key resources are identified, direction is set, and the team is aligned.
 - Should include all elements not met in the self-assessment
 - May also include tasks related to maintenance of Standards in full conformance
- **WHO** does what? (key personnel)
 - Value network is established: program management, key employees (e.g., training standard, program standards coordinator), stakeholders, board members. Creating ownership of the plan throughout drives collaboration and is a foundation for strategic dialogue to adapt to changing internal and external conditions.
- **WHEN** will action steps be started and completed? (target completion date)
 - Outlining a roadmap for all collective action steps/tasks within the plan ensures that adequate resources are available at each step along the way and the program is not overwhelmed at any given point.
 - Must specifically address timeframe for completing a risk factor study or equivalent
 - Covers multiple years of work on the VNRFRPS, and may extend past the application funding period
- **HOW** did we do?
 - A method of tracking performance and measuring success is vital to the process to know whether goals have been achieved or not. The CSIP describes how to define measurable improvement and measure progress.

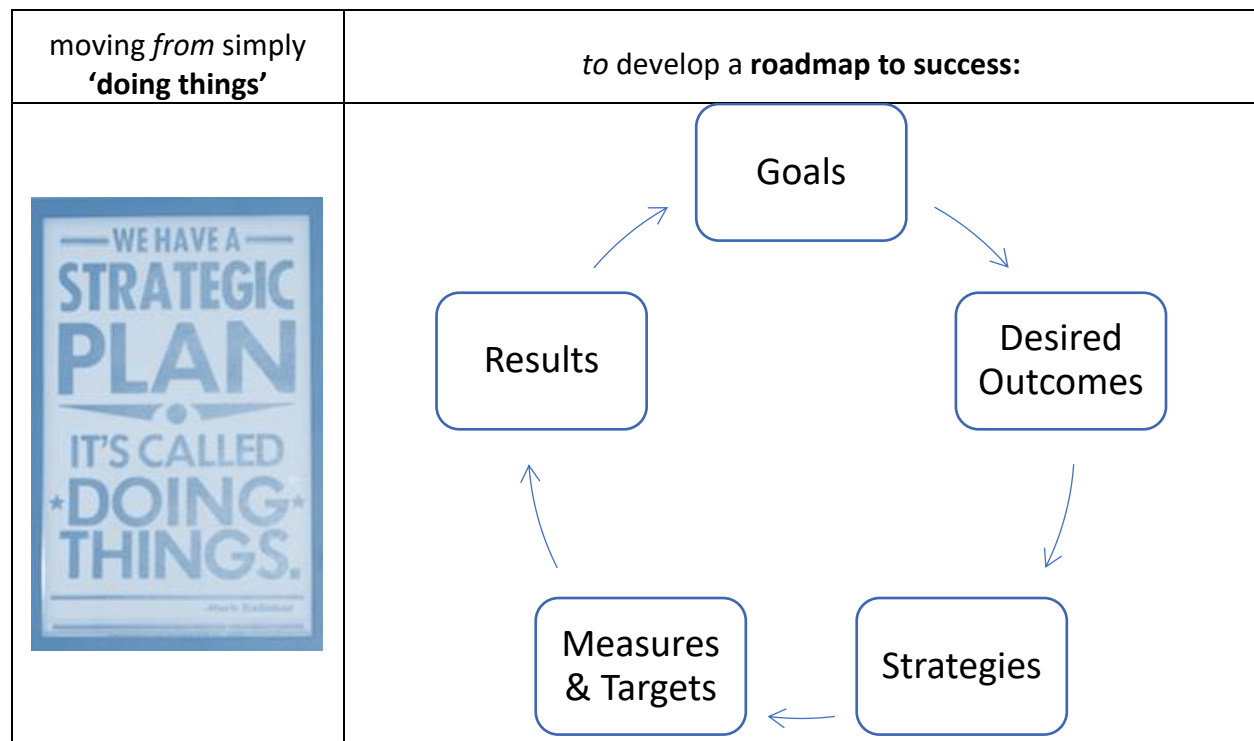
The VNRFPRS fit well with the CSIP framework of the RFFM, so that this is not *extra work* but a more clearly defined **roadmap to success**. This process is very streamlined with the requirements outlined within the Administrative Procedures and each Standard of the VNRFPRS:



WHAT ARE OUTCOMES OF THE VNRFPRS FOR SLTT JURISDICTIONS?

- 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
- Improve industry and consumer confidence in food protection programs by enhancing uniformity within and between regulatory agencies

The goal of FDA’s National Retail Food Team is to assist SLTT jurisdictions from moving beyond the point of enrollment in the VNRFRPS to making significant conformance with the individual Standards.



HOW CAN JURISDICTIONS GET STARTED IMPLEMENTING A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT PLAN?

Tips for Getting Started:

- **Complete a Self-Assessment of all 9 Standards.** This gives a framework to start with when it comes to developing a CSIP because it provides a comprehensive baseline review of the food safety program and identifies gaps using the VNRFRPS. Using the gap analysis from their self-assessment, they can identify program needs and then establish program priorities and plans to address those needs as resources become available.
- **Pair with Mentor.** SLTT jurisdictions can apply for RFFM Mentee funding under the Development box prior to having a CSIP developed. Less experienced SLTT jurisdictions can benefit greatly from participating in the Mentorship Program as a Mentee where they can receive assistance with a specific part or whole Standard(s) from a more experienced SLTT jurisdiction who can provide knowledge and guidance in the area of need.
- Form **Program Standards networks** with other SLTT partners for the purpose of sharing information and resources. This can be helpful for jurisdictions of any experience level, as learning from peers through sharing ideas and strategies can be a valuable approach to foster innovation. Engage your FDA Retail Food Specialist to assist with bringing jurisdictions together and utilize FoodShield to form a group where the network can share resources, materials, network and communicate together.

- **Utilize templates*** to assess priorities, timelines, capacity:
 - Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan Template (blank)
 - Written Project Implementation Plan Template (blank)
 - Written Comprehensive Strategic Improvement Plan (filled example)
 - Written Project Implementation Plan (filled example)

* These templates are provided examples, jurisdictions can use the example CSIP & PIP templates provided or use their own format/template that best meets their needs. Please contact your Retail Food Specialist for copies of these example documents.

Strategies to leverage current work:

- Is the jurisdiction already enrolled in public health accreditation with the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB)? A strategic plan is required for PHAB accreditation. What can the agency use from the work already done here?
 - PHAB Standard 5.3:
 - 5.3.1 Conduct a department strategic planning process
 - 5.3.2 Adopt a department strategic plan
 - 5.3.3 Implement the department strategic plan
 - A health department’s strategic plan focuses on the entire health department. Health department programs may have program-specific strategic plans that complement and support the health department’s organizational strategic plan. For the purposes of the CSIP requirement with the RFFM, it is specific to a jurisdiction’s retail food program with the intent to advance conformance with the VNRFPRS.
- Outside of PHAB accreditation, does the jurisdiction otherwise have an existing organizational strategic or operational plan that can be leveraged for the RFFM and VNRFPRS conformance?

RESOURCES

- Contact your [Retail Food Specialist](#)
 - Ask your Specialist how to register for [FoodShield](#) and join the Retail Food Program Standards Resource Center
 - Request example CSIP/PIP templates (blank and written sample scenario)
- Listen to the [RFFM Recorded Presentation](#)
 - Consider the following in how to prepare for applying for the RFFM:
 - Determine which base box your jurisdiction would like to apply?
 - What eligibility requirements are needed for that base box?
 - Do you have all the requirements? What do you need to work on to be prepared?
 - What optional add-on boxes might you like to apply for?
 - What eligibility requirements are needed for the optional add-on boxes?
- Check out [PHAB Standards and Measures - Standard 5.3 \(ASTHO\)](#)