

LGFCU Excellence in Innovation Award Project Evaluation

Project ID	GG-13
Title of Program	CCDPH Environmental Health FDA Retail Program Standards Strategic Plan
Program Category	General Government
Submission Date	6/1/2017 1:45:41 PM
County	Cumberland
Employee	Rebecca Coates
Employee title	Program Standards Coordinator
Email	rcoates@co.cumberland.nc.us
County Department	Health Department
Phone	910-433-3828
Address	1235 Ramsey Street Fayetteville, NC 28301
County Manager	Amy Cannon
Supervisor	Daniel Ortiz
Implementation Date	12:00:00 AM
FLSA Designation	
Project Team Members	Buck Wilson, Cumberland County Department of Public Health - Health Director Daniel Ortiz, Cumberland County Department of Public Health - Environmental Health Director Rebecca Coates, Cumberland County Department of Public Health - Program Standards Coordinator

Description of Productivity Improvement

Cumberland County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) Environmental Health (EH) Division began implementing its FDA Retail Program Standards strategic plan in January of 2016. This strategic plan was submitted as part of a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Cooperative Research Grant funded to hire a Program Standards Coordinator. The Program Standards Coordinator was hired December 28, 2015, and began implementing the plan in January 2016. As part of this implementation, the Program Standards Coordinator was responsible for applying for additional grants, coordinating training opportunities, and working to improve EH's Food and Lodging section to achieve conformity with the FDA Retail Program Standards. During EH's first year of implementing the strategic plan, the Food and Lodging section saw a dramatic increase in completed inspections, the ability to host and attend two specialized HACCP courses, an updated and modified complaint form, as well as additional monies from other grant funding opportunities.

Description of why this project was initiated

The Cumberland County Department of Public Health Environmental Health Food and Lodging (EH F&L) section provides essential public health services to the community by safeguarding life, promoting human health and protecting the environment through the practice of modern environmental health science, the use of technology, rules, public education and above all, dedication to the public trust. The purpose of this section is to ensure that the public receives the highest quality of professional service in its implementation of the food, lodging, and institution programs; to enforce state regulations and county ordinances that address sanitation, food safety, and public health awareness in the food and lodging establishments, and institutions located in the County; investigate complaints and outbreaks; and educate consumers, industry, and others about food safety and how to reduce the occurrence of risk factors that contribute to foodborne illness. EH F&L section currently inspects 27 different types of establishments. The Environmental Health Specialists are delegated authority by the state of North Carolina to carry out the provisions of the relevant rules and regulations for permitted establishments. These are inspected at a frequency that adheres to the mandated inspection interval for the type of establishment, as found in applicable statutes and rules. The authorized agents are required to respond to complaints and requests for services as necessary. In addition to the general statutes delegating authority, Environmental Health Specialists are responsible for adhering to local ordinances governed by the Cumberland County Board of Health. CCDPH EH Division initially enrolled in the voluntary FDA Retail Program Standards in September of 2014 as a means of enhancing the local retail food regulatory program, or as Cumberland County calls it, the EH Food and Lodging section. Between September 2014 and December 2015, EH completed their initial self-assessment, or gap analysis, of all nine of the Program Standards and developed a strategic plan to ensure compliance with the Retail Program Standards over time. Part of the benefit of participating in the voluntary Retail Program Standards and implementing the strategic plan developed was an increase in risk based inspections, uniformity among Environmental Health Specialists conducting inspections, and the opportunity for specialized training in HACCP processes and verification. Since the adoption of the 2009 Food Code, which occurred in 2012, Cumberland County Environmental Health had struggled to complete mandated inspections. In addition, inspections were very inconsistent by inspector. A key function of the Retail Program Standards is achieving uniformity by conducting risk based inspections. Actively implementing the strategic plan meant that inspectors received more in depth training and quality assurance was conducted on both their inspection sheets and on their field work. This led to identifying areas for improvement in training. One such area was a significant lack of knowledge on HACCP principles. As more and more retail food service establishments are utilizing specialized processes around the country in the preparation and preservation of food, Environmental Health was able to coordinate with state and collegiate experts, host trainings made available to all regulatory or industry personnel, and have all staff attend. Furthermore, the Program Standards Coordinator developed new forms to ensure inspectors were utilizing a uniform approach to compliance and enforcement, such as forms for consumer advisory and risk control plans. Lastly, Cumberland County modified their online complaint form to conduct a trend analysis. The original complaint form captured data in a manner that was not consistent, using a method that could not track or identify any trends over time. The updated form is no longer in a simple paragraph format, and has specific fields and drop downs to allow Environmental Health to track trends. This form can be used to develop intervention strategies or training for not just Cumberland County citizens, but also its food establishments and inspectors.

Quantifiable results (sustainability, cost savings, cost avoidance and/or a higher level of service).

Indication of what resources were used and what was done with any accrued time savings

Cumberland County uses a fiscal year from July 1 to June 30 for budgetary reasons. North Carolina State Department of Health and Human Services also operates on a fiscal year budget. As such, EH's budget is based on a FY budget schedule. The FY16 budget for EH was \$1.3 million dollars for the Food and Lodging section, as well as the On-site Wastewater and Private Wells section. The FY17 budget was slightly higher, with a total of \$1.5 budgeted for that fiscal year. NC does not allow counties to levy fees for food and lodging inspections directly; however, the State levies a fee of \$125 per year. Based on the county's completed inspection percentage, a portion of these funds is awarded back to counties.

Reimbursements to Cumberland County for recent years are presented in the following:

Fiscal Year:	FY14
	FY15
	FY16
	FY17
State Reimbursement:	\$35407
	\$34402
	\$59340
	TBD
% Completed of Required Inspections:	71%
	51%
	91%
	TBD
Establishments (estimated):	1770
	2100
	2299
	2467

In FY14, EH completed 71% of the required inspections at permitted establishments, which was calculated at an estimated 1,770. The total reimbursement of \$35,407 was provided by the State at the end of that fiscal year. In FY15, EH completed 51% of the required inspections at permitted establishments, which was calculated at an estimated 2,100. That fiscal year decreased the State reimbursement total to \$34,402. Since beginning the implementation of EH's Retail Program Standards strategic plan in January 2016, a remarkable increase in completed inspections has occurred. In FY16, EH completed 91% of the required inspections at permitted establishments, which was then calculated at an estimated 2,299. The State reimbursement increased by \$24,938 from the previous fiscal year to have a total reimbursement of \$59,340. Through the implementation of the strategic plan, EH was able to complete more inspections at a larger number of permitted establishments.

Provided below is a table capturing the percentage of completed inspections at permitted establishments on a calendar year basis. As can be seen, there is a large disparity from 2014 and 2015, to 2016. No information can be reported on 2017 at this time.

Calendar Year:	2014
	2015
	2016

2017

% Completed of Required Inspections: 52%
78%
93%
TBD

As part of the EH strategic plan, the Program Standards Coordinator was also responsible for applying for additional monies through grant funding. In 2016, EH received \$15,916.20 as awards from various grant funding and in FY16, EH was awarded \$70,000 as part of the FDA Cooperative Research Grant, and \$26,000 from additional funding opportunities. These monies, either calendar or fiscal year, were utilized to pay for staff training, including the HACCP courses, necessary field and office supplies for inspectors, and the update to the complaint database (awarded in December 2015 and implemented in 2016). An estimated \$46,619 from January 2016 "“ December 2016, was utilized to pay for these enhancements, which otherwise would not have been afforded on the allocated EH FY budget.

Other descriptive information

The constant improvement and innovation seen in Cumberland's retail food safety program is astounding. One example can be seen by hosting the specialized HACCP courses in Cumberland County and opening attendance up to industry and regulatory throughout the country. Individuals from South Carolina, Wisconsin and Minnesota attended the training. Through this, Cumberland County Environmental Health provided opportunities for training that some had not been able to attend prior. One of these courses had not been offered in over ten years before Cumberland County coordinated with the state expert, and paid expenses for the instruction. Another method of innovation can be seen through the updated complaint form. All Environmental Health personnel that utilized the online data repository through the company called Custom Data Processing, Inc. (CDP), had to pay individually for updates to any online form. Cumberland County Environmental Health made specific changes to the complaint form to allow for data tracking, analysis, and trend analysis over time, which was implemented in 2016. This was then offered free of charge, at Cumberland's request, to all counties who currently have users with Custom Data Processing, Inc. (CDP). Cumberland County is utilizing its additional funds not only to benefit its own, but to assist others who may not be as fortunate. This is all done with the intent to have a more uniform, quality driven, retail food safety program throughout not just the county, but the country as well. In doing so, more establishments are being inspected at the required frequency, utilizing a consistent risk based inspection method that helps to prevent foodborne illness. Cumberland County believes that continuing to implement its strategic plan will ensure that the Environmental Health retail food safety program will consistently improve. As such, Cumberland County hopes that this nomination for the LGFCU Excellence in Innovation Award will show our passion and dedication to innovation and public health.