

NEHA NEWS

Listening, Learning, and Leading: Your Voice Shapes Our Future

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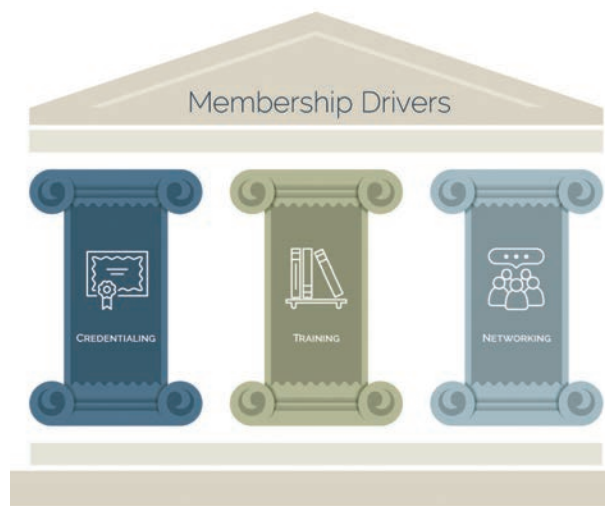
Early in 2025, we asked our members how we can better serve the environmental public health profession. Nearly 1,000 of you answered—and what you told us is transforming how we work. The results were both encouraging and insightful. You shared your challenges, your priorities, and your vision for what the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) can do for you. Now, we are taking that feedback and turning it into action.

What Drives You: The Core of Our Membership

When asked why you join and renew with NEHA, three priorities stood out: 1) credentialing, 2) training and continuing education, and 3) professional networking (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1

Top Three Priorities That Drive Membership With the National Environmental Health Association



Credentialing remains the foundation. Whether maintaining your Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian (REHS/RS) or Certified Professional–Food Safety (CP-FS) credentials, these credentials demonstrate professional competence and are often required for employment. One member shared, “I worked hard to obtain my REHS/RS, and I believe it conveys a level of professionalism.”

Maintaining those credentials, however, requires ongoing learning. You described our continuing education as “quick, easy, and convenient for busy managers” and praised training that

helps preserve certification. You are staying current in a field that constantly evolves.

You also value our advocacy for the profession and our role in elevating environmental health’s visibility and supporting policies that protect public health. Beyond credentials and training, you need connection. One member wrote, “I love the community. I’m reminded I’m not alone in this crazy world of public health.” Another member stated, “We are stronger collectively than individually.”

What Is Working—and What Needs Improvement

We asked you to evaluate our services based on value and satisfaction. Our highest ratings were for credentialing, advocacy, our E-Learning platform, and the Annual Educational Conference & Exhibition. The *Journal of Environmental Health* and other educational offerings also received positive ratings.

We also found significant opportunities to broaden our reach. Services such as funding opportunities, scholarships, and awards require improved visibility. Many members were unaware of some of these services. As one member stated, “More communication regarding services offered. If you don’t announce it, people won’t know.”

Our Online Community offers clear growth potential. Although most members are aware of its existence, more than one half use it only rarely or not at all. The main reason? Most members who don’t use it were unaware of what it provides. You have told us it needs better onboarding, regular promotion, and more practical content.

The Training You Need: Beyond the Basics

When we asked what resources would help advance your career, training opportunities ranked highest, followed by professional networking and credentials. The details of your requests show where this profession is moving (Figure 2).

Food safety remains the top need, but you want advanced topics such as HACCP (hazard analysis critical control points), risk-based inspections, specialized techniques (e.g., sous vide, fermentation), emerging food technologies, and allergen management.

Water and wastewater systems have become priorities. You need training in onsite wastewater treatment, well water quality and testing, drinking water safety, stormwater management, and recreational water inspections.

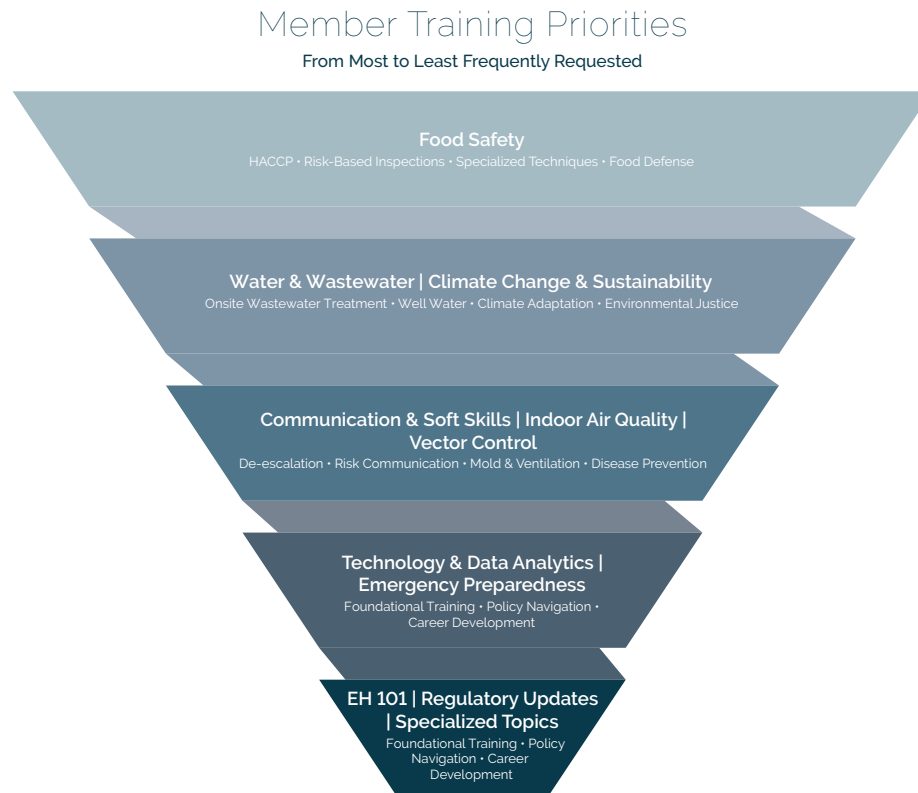
Climate change and environmental sustainability highlight a significant training need. You are seeking training on climate adaptation and mitigation, environmental justice connections to public health, and disaster preparedness amid environmental change.

Communication and soft skills appeared repeatedly. You need conflict resolution and de-escalation techniques, public messaging strategies, risk communication, and leadership development. As one respondent noted, there is a pressing need for “de-escalation, conflict resolution, public messaging, professionalism.”

You also requested training in indoor air quality and healthy homes, vector control and zoonotic diseases, body art oversight,

FIGURE 2

Training Priorities Identified by Members of the National Environmental Health Association



Understanding Member Priorities

- 1 **Foundation Level:** Food safety remains the most frequently requested training topic, with emphasis on advanced techniques and emerging technologies.
- 2 **High Priority:** Water systems and climate change represent critical infrastructure and emerging environmental challenges.
- 3 **Medium-High Priority:** Communication skills, indoor air quality, and vector control address both technical and interpersonal professional needs.
- 4 **Emerging Needs:** Technology integration and emergency preparedness reflect the profession's modernization and expanded role.
- 5 **Foundational Support:** Basic training and career development resources help build the next generation of environmental health professionals.

Key Insight: The pyramid structure shows that while food safety remains the cornerstone of environmental health training, members need comprehensive development across all levels—from foundational skills to emerging challenges like climate change and AI integration.

Note. EH = environmental health; HACCP = hazard analysis critical control point.

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technology and data analytics (including AI, GIS, and data dashboards), regulatory updates, emergency preparedness, and foundational “Environmental Health 101” content for new professionals.

What You Want to Know: Information Priorities

We asked what types of information you need regularly. Training opportunities topped the list of information needs, reinforcing that continuous learning is imperative. Other priorities included updates to the environmental health practice and science, as well as updates to national and state policies, technology, and career and job opportunities.

As careers progress, needs evolve. Early-career professionals seek job opportunities and career development, mid-career professionals focus on practice updates and technology trends, and experienced professionals with ≥15 years in the profession prioritize mentorship and strategic leadership. The shift moves from “How do I advance?” to “How do I contribute?” and ultimately to “How do I shape the future of this field?”

The Policy Gap: Where We Must Lead

We asked which policy issues your agencies are currently addressing and which ones you believe we should prioritize. Traditional areas like food safety regulations, emergency preparedness, and water quality remain important. Several emerging issues have come to the forefront as key areas where you would like NEHA to take the lead, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, renewable energy and sustainability, environmental justice and health equity, and indoor air quality. The message is clear—we need to lead on tomorrow’s environmental health challenges.

The Daily Struggles: Challenges You Face

Your responses about challenges revealed the realities of environmental health work.

- Chronic understaffing topped the list. You are doing more with less, often without enough support. One member described the challenges of “high turnover, lack of succession planning, and difficulty recruiting/retaining qualified professionals.”
- Funding constraints restrict what you can achieve.
- Public trust and perception became a key challenge. Post-pandemic distrust has led to “widespread misunderstanding of environmental public health roles” and “hostility and misinformation.”
- Training and development gaps persist, with “staff often left to self-train due to shortages and minimal organizational support.”
- Mental health and burnout are taking a toll, with members reporting “low morale, isolation, and emotional fatigue” and “pressure to do more with less while environmental public health work is undervalued.”

Rural professionals face compounded challenges, including lower pay, geographic isolation, difficulty recruiting staff, and limited access to training.

What We Are Doing: Eight Strategic Actions

Your feedback is not sitting in a report somewhere. We have identified eight priority areas for immediate action:

1. **Closing education gaps.** We are developing foundational training for new and mid-career professionals and expanding content on emerging topics such as climate change, environmental justice, and vector control. We are creating crossover content that serves both regulatory and industry audiences.
2. **Improving communication.** We are strengthening the Online Community with improved onboarding, clear feature guides, and regular promotion, while launching broader awareness campaigns that highlight our programs, scholarships, awards, and funding opportunities.
3. **Strengthening credentialing.** We are creating more targeted marketing for the REHS/RS and CP-FS credentials, exploring bundled training and credential packages for employers, and improving preparation support.
4. **Expanding industry engagement while strengthening regulatory partnerships.** We are strengthening collaboration between regulators and industry by expanding training, credentialing, and tailored resources that meet the needs of both groups, which builds a more aligned, capable, and resilient workforce.
5. **Supporting workforce resilience.** Workforce well-being remains a top concern. We currently offer programming that supports workforce resilience, helping members navigate daily challenges and build long-term career sustainability. We also are working to expand these opportunities even further.
6. **Strengthening affiliates and local engagement.** We are launching an affiliate recovery and support program, featuring mentorship from strong affiliates, succession planning tool kits, and an increased national staff presence at local conferences.
7. **Staying responsive to the marketplace.** When training sells out, it signals unmet demand. We are developing systems to identify unmet demand and respond flexibly.
8. **Elevating advocacy.** We are considering ways to align our government affairs work more closely with member priorities. Particular attention will be given to issues such as climate change, environmental justice, and renewable energy, ensuring our advocacy efforts reflect what matters most to you.

Moving Forward Together

The 2025 survey confirms what we have always known: Environmental public health professionals are dedicated, resilient, and essential. You protect communities from threats most people never see.

NEHA exists to support that work. Your feedback ensures we are not guessing at what you need—we are listening, learning, and leading based on what you have told us matters most.

Thank you for taking the time to share your voice. Together, we are building a stronger profession.



Paving the Way for Modern Data Systems in Environmental Public Health

Environmental public health professionals are navigating an era characterized by complex environmental challenges and more frequent public health emergencies. These realities require faster, smarter, and more connected responses based on reliable data.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has acknowledged this nationwide challenge and has prioritized data modernization as a key part of its Data Modernization Initiative. The initiative encourages the development of interoperable, real-time, and integrated data systems that improve surveillance, support better decision-making, and bolster public health preparedness across various fields—including environmental health.

Aligned with these priorities, we have introduced a timely new resource: *Modernizing Data Systems in Environmental Public Health: A Blueprint for Action*. This guide was created to help

environmental public health agencies and practitioners overcome challenges related to infrastructure, workforce development, data accessibility, and system interoperability. It functions as both an introduction and a practical roadmap. The guide is intended to familiarize readers with key concepts in data modernization and offer clear strategies for applying those principles to meet today's complex public health needs.

The guide is organized into seven sections that build a clear understanding of how to modernize environmental public health data systems:

1. Introduction to Data Modernization and Environmental Health Informatics
2. Data Literacy and Foundational Skills
3. Core Principles of Data Modernization
4. Essential Tools and Technologies for Data Modernization
5. Lessons From the Field—Case Studies and Strategic Insights
6. Emerging Strategies and Technologies in Data Modernization
7. Charting the Path Forward: Strategic Guidance and the Road to Implementation

Each section combines theory and practice, providing real-world examples, practical strategies, and versatile tools created for jurisdictions of all sizes and capabilities.

We sincerely thank all contributors, reviewers, and partners whose expertise shaped this resource. *Modernizing Data Systems in Environmental Public Health: A Blueprint for Action* is more than just a guide—it is a call to action. By adopting data modernization, environmental public health professionals can strengthen their systems, enhance response capacity, and safeguard community health nationwide.

Learn more about our data and informatics resources at www.neha.org/informatics-tracking. You can also access the new guide directly at <https://pubs.neha.org/modernizing-data-systems>. 🌿

The food industry moves fast.

The **Certified Professional–Food Safety (CP-FS)** credential keeps you up-to-date with the rapidly changing food industry and tells your community that you know the science and practice to keep them safe.

Learn the requirements:

neha.org/cpfs-credential

