Alliance to Stop Foodborne Illness
Mentorship Program Overview

Mentorship Program

The Alliance Mentorship Program is a year-long, virtual workshop designed for small and medium-sized food companies to improve their food safety culture through direct support from global brands.

“Small and medium” are defined as a company with annual sales of less than $1 billion USD.

Applications for the class of 2027 will be accepted from September 8 – October 6, 2026

Selected mentees will begin working in January 2027.

Description

The Alliance Mentorship Program is an annual initiative whereby 3-5 small to medium sized food companies will receive 12 months of mentorship from leading global brands.

Mentees will work through the award-winning Food Safety Culture Toolkit to assess and improve all aspects of their organization’s food safety culture.

Mentees will attend a virtual, monthly meeting to share best practices and troubleshoot collective roadblocks.

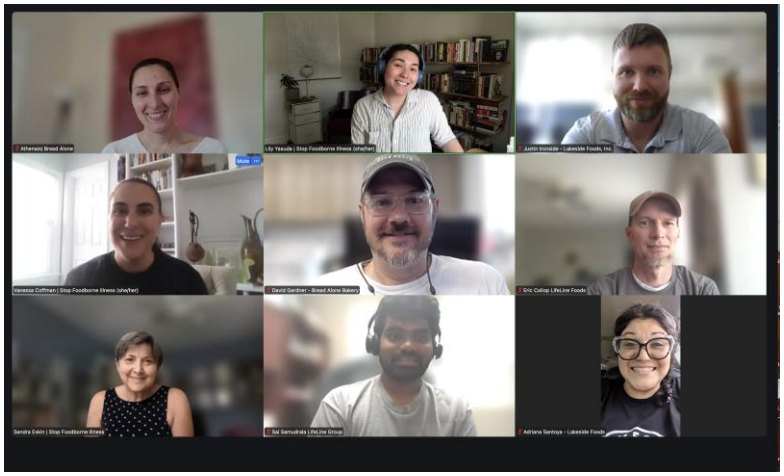
Each month will also include a special guest speaker, who will give a 20-minute presentation on key topics such as storytelling and communication tools, assessments and rewards and recognition programs.

Mentees will have access to exclusive food safety culture working groups, virtual and in-person planning meetings, and various other events to socialize, network and learn from industry leaders.

Monthly sessions will be led by one or more Alliance member companies or partners. The Alliance has 25+ members who represent a wide swath of retail, manufacturing, food service, service providers and trade associations.

Eligibility

- Applicants must apply in teams of two (2)
    - Both applicants must work for the SAME food company, and be interested in collectively striving to improve their company's food safety culture
- Applicants must be fluent in English
- Applicants must be willing and able to attend:
        - 12, one-hour-long meetings via Zoom (one per month for 12 months)
        - 1-2 "check-ins" throughout the year with the program organizers
        - 1 "exit interview" reflecting on the individual's experience in the program
- ***Companies must have less than $1 billion in annual sales to be considered***



Above: Class of 2026 mentees from Bread Alone Bakery, Lakeside Foods and Lifeline Foods.

Commitment

- The 2027 Mentorship Program will take place from January – December 2027
    - If chosen, participants are required to attend a monthly, 75-minute meeting via Zoom.
        - This meeting will consist of:
            - Structured feedback on and discussion of a single section (AKA "module") of the Alliance's Food Safety Culture Toolkit
            - A presentation from an Alliance member on the module topic, with an emphasis on best practices or actionable learnings from the speaker's company.
            - A Q&A for Mentees to ask the speaker questions and gain insight on best practices.
- Mentees will be required to attend all meetings
- Mentees will work through the Toolkit from beginning to end over the course of 12 months and report back to provide targeted feedback
- Each month will be dedicated to a specific module of the Toolkit, with that theme or topic being explored throughout the month

Application & Selection Process

- Applications must be submitted by a pair (2) of individuals agreeing to participate together on behalf of the same company
- Application will consist of:
    - A **cover letter** written by both applicants detailing WHO they are, WHY they want to participate and WHAT they hope to get out of the program
    - Applicant **resumes** detailing relevant work history in food safety
        - Semifinalists will attend a 15-minute zoom interview for Alliance staff to assess engagement, answer questions and ensure a personality fit within the program

A NOTE ON AI:

We understand the allure of AI tools when it comes to preparing application materials.

However, we strongly discourage the use of AI to write program cover letters.

The cover letter is an opportunity to speak candidly about who you are and why you want to participate in the program. Our staff genuinely wants to get to know you, to understand your "why" of food safety and gain some insight into specific areas of you'd like to work on (i.e. retaining seasonal staff, engaging senior leaders, creating effective communications, etc.)

We are not expecting award-winning prose, and would much prefer a letter that helps us get to know you and your team than one that is "perfect" and written by AI.

We hope you consider this an opportunity to share a bit of yourself on the page.

Mentee Commitment & Responsibilities

- Mentees will attend monthly meetings as outlined above
- Mentees will agree to provide written testimonial of how the mentorship program and/or implementation of the Toolkit has positively impacted their company's food safety culture

Questions? Concerns?

Please reach out to Alliance Deputy Director Lily Yasuda.

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