

## **Affordable Connectivity Outreach Grant Program Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. What is the purpose of the ACP Outreach Grant Program?**

The goal of the Affordable Connectivity Outreach Grant Program (ACP Outreach Grant Program) is to facilitate the promotion of the ACP and increase awareness of and participation in the ACP among eligible households. To support this goal, the FCC seeks to enlist and empower trusted community messengers to develop innovative outreach strategies to reach historically underserved and unserved communities. This includes providing those partners with the funding and resources needed to increase participation among eligible, low-income households in need of an affordable internet connection.

### **2. What are the different grant programs associated with the ACP?**

The ACP Outreach Grant Program is comprised of four complementary grant programs:

- National Competitive Outreach Program (NCOP)
- Tribal Competitive Outreach Program (TCOP)
- Your Home, Your Internet Pilot Program (YHYI) Outreach Grants
- ACP Navigator Pilot Program (NPP) Outreach Grants

The ACP Outreach Grant Program NOFO will solely focus on NCOP and TCOP. A separate NOFO was released on November 21, 2022, for applicants seeking grant funds for the BHYI and NPP pilot programs.

### **3. What are the objectives that support the ACP Outreach Grant Program goal?**

To support the ACP Outreach Grant Program goal, the FCC has identified three objectives:

- Expand and support diverse and impactful outreach efforts nationwide;
- Strengthen outreach partners nationwide by empowering them to mobilize people and organizations to help raise awareness about the ACP to eligible households; and
- Increase ACP enrollment as a result of ACP Outreach Grant Program funded activities.

### **4. What evaluation factors has the FCC prioritized for the application review process?**

For FY 2023, the FCC has prioritized the following evaluation factors for the application review process:

- The extent to which an applicant would target underserved low-income households or individuals that are not currently on a low-income broadband plan or that do not have broadband service.
- The extent to which an applicant would target outreach in communities that have low ACP participation rates, to include those that plan to target especially hard to reach populations (including minorities, persons with disabilities, persons who live in rural or Tribal areas, and others who are or have been historically underserved, marginalized, or adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality).
- In evaluating grant applications from state governmental entities or territorial governmental entities, the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB) may also consider prioritizing grants based on whether the state or territory entered into or has committed to enter into a Computer Matching Agreement (CMA) with the Universal Service Administrative Company

(USAC) for purposes of verifying the eligibility of low-income consumers for the ACP. This does not apply to non-governmental entities.

In addition, the following are examples of evaluation factors that may be used for purposes of maximizing the impact and effectiveness of the outreach grant funds:

- Experience with, and past success in, conducting outreach regarding government programs and resources, particularly providing resources and directing services (such as ACP application assistance) and education to people of color, persons with disabilities, persons who live in rural or Tribal areas, and others who are or have been historically underserved, marginalized, or adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.
- Existing, trusted relationships with the communities that grant applicants expect to target (e.g., as “trusted messengers”), or the ability to readily establish those relationships, particularly relationships with people of color, persons with disabilities, persons who live in rural or Tribal areas, and others who are or have been historically underserved, marginalized, or adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.
- Familiarity with the ACP and experience with or knowledge of bridging digital disparities and connectivity issues.
- Experience with or capability of providing multilingual outreach, including American Sign Language.
- Whether an applicant proposes a cost-share or cost match. Note: This information will be used as a tie breaker during the funding determination process.

#### **5. How much funding is available for the FY 2023 ACP Outreach Grant Program?**

The FCC will make up to \$70 million of competitive funding available under this FY 2023 ACP Outreach Grant Program NOFO. There is up to \$60 million available to fund NCOP applications and a minimum of \$10 million available to fund TCOP applications.

#### **6. What is the minimum and maximum amount of funding an applicant can request?**

The minimum (floor) amount an applicant may apply for is \$50,000, and the maximum (ceiling) amount an applicant may apply for is \$1,000,000. Applicants requesting near or at the recommended maximum funding amount of \$1,000,000 will need to demonstrate an ACP outreach and/or application assistance strategy that is multi-state, national-level, and/or regional level, with the ability to pass-through to local-based eligible entities, as applicable.

#### **7. Will there be cost sharing or matching requirements?**

There will be no cost sharing or matching requirements for applicants to the FY 2023 ACP Outreach Grant Program. However, applicants that propose a cost match or cost share may have a priority consideration, in the event of a tie, when making funding determinations. Cost share or cost match may be cash or in-kind contribution. If an applicant elects cost sharing or matching, the applicant must comply with 2 CFR 200.306.

#### **8. When are applications due for the FY 2023 ACP Outreach Grant Program?**

Applicants will have 60 days to complete and submit their grant application from the time of NOFO release on November 10, 2022. Complete applications must be received electronically through

<https://www.grants.gov> no later than 11:59 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST) on January 9, 2023. Late applications will not be accepted.

### **9. What types of applications will not be accepted?**

Applications or portions thereof submitted through postal mail, courier, email, facsimile, or other means will not be accepted.

### **10. What are the application requirements for the FY 2023 ACP Outreach Grant Program?**

Eligible applicants must submit a complete application to the FCC for funding consideration before the application submission deadline, which consists of standard forms and program-specific form:

- Standard Forms:
  - Form SF-424 – Application for Federal Assistance
  - Form SF-424A – Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs
  - Standard Form LLL – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable)
  - Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable)
- Program-Specific Form:
  - ACP Outreach Grant Program Application Template

### **11. Where can an applicant access application forms and instructions?**

To access application forms and instructions, go to <https://www.grants.gov> under Assistance Listing (CFDA) Number: 32.011 - Affordable Connectivity Outreach Grant Program.

### **12. When will funding determination and announcement be made?**

The FCC anticipates processing and announcing ACP Outreach Grant Program awards on or before March 10, 2023. Selected grantees can anticipate receiving a Notice of Award through the GrantSolutions system no later than March 31, 2023.

### **13. How will grant applications be reviewed?**

To ensure compliance with the applicable federal statutes and regulations as well as appropriately determine the impact of proposed projects against the ACP Outreach Grant Program's goal, objectives, and priorities, submitted applications will undergo the following three step review process:

- **Eligibility** (Compliance) review to determine if the applicant is eligible and submitted a complete application package;
- **Merit** review to determine the quality of proposed projects against program objectives, activities, and costs/budget using pre-determined criteria and federal reviewer scores
- **Risk Review** to determine fiscal stability of an applicant using many factors including, the quality of the management systems, history of grant performance, and audit reports and findings.

### **14. Who is eligible to apply for a NCOP or TCOP Outreach Grant Program award?**

For FY 2023, eligible entities may include the following diverse range of governmental and non-governmental organizations to serve as outreach partners to persons who live in low-income households:

- State governments (including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico);
- U.S. Territory governments
- Local governments and subdivisions;
- Tribal governments and subdivisions

- Public housing agencies;
- Tribal designated housing entities;
- Social service providers;
- Education organizations;
- Workforce development training organizations;
- Non-profit organizations;
- Community-based organizations;
- Community anchor institutions;
- Public service organizations; and
- Consortia of the entities listed above.

**15. Who is ineligible to apply for a NCOP or TCOP Outreach Grant Program award?**

Broadband providers and their subsidiaries, affiliates, representatives, contractors, and agents will not be eligible to participate in the ACP Outreach Grant Program or receive awards, either as grantees, pass-through entities, or subrecipients. Additional ineligible entities include broadband industry groups and trade associations that represent broadband providers; entities that are debarred, suspended, or otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participation in federal assistance programs or activities; and entities that are ineligible by statute (such as 501(c)(4) non-profit organizations that engage in lobbying activities or organizations that are indebted to the United States and have judgment liens filed against them).

For municipal broadband providers, the exclusion of broadband providers and their affiliates, subsidiaries, or representatives from eligibility does not extend to separate arms of the municipality that do not maintain, manage, or operate the municipal broadband network.

Refer to Section V – Federal Award Information, G. Ineligible Entities for additional information and definition of key terms in the NOFO.

**16. What is the period of performance for the FY 2023 ACP Outreach Grant Program?**

Eligible entities must expend awarded funding against their approved projects and supporting milestones within 24 months (2 years). The projected period of performance start date(s) is March 2023, and the projected period of performance end date is March 2025. Grantees should reference their Notice of Award for exact start and end dates for their period of performance.

**17. Will extensions to a grantee’s period of performance be allowed?**

Due to the competitive funding determination of the ACP Outreach Grant Program, only no-cost (i.e., extending project period without additional funding) period of performance extensions will be considered. No-cost extensions to the initial period of performance will only be considered through formal, written requests to the recipient’s FCC Grants Management Specialist and must contain specific justifications as to why an extension is required. Refer to the ACP Outreach Grant Program NOFO for more information.

**18. What are the funding restrictions and prohibitions placed on ACP Outreach Grant Program?**

The following are restrictions and prohibitions that apply to grant and sub-grant recipients:

- Service provider neutrality of grant-funded outreach activities
- Transfer of funds within ACP Outreach Grant sub-programs

- Prohibition of supplanting other outreach funding
- Prohibition of service provider in-kind contributions for funded outreach
- Prohibition of profit, and fees or charges to eligible households
- Prohibition of commissions or compensation linked to ACP applications or enrollment
- Prohibition of remote enrollment assistance
- Prohibition of lobbying

### **19. What are allowable costs?**

Costs funded through the Outreach Grant Program must be necessary, reasonable, and allocable to the award.

A list of allowable cost categories is included in Section VII – Funding Restrictions, Prohibitions, and Allowable Costs (Table 4) in the NOFO. The list is not comprehensive but is meant to demonstrate types of outreach and ACP application assistance activities that are deemed effective in reaching ACP-eligible households.

### **20. What are unallowable costs?**

Unallowable costs are those that are deemed not necessary, unreasonable, nor allocable to the award based on the Goal and Objectives of the ACP Outreach Grant Program. Further, Federal Cost Principles prohibit certain activities when using grant funds because they are a form of federal financial assistance.

A list of unallowable cost categories is included in Section VII – Funding Restrictions, Prohibitions, and Allowable Costs (Table 5) of the NOFO. This list is not intended to be all-inclusive.

### **21. Are there reporting requirements post award for the ACP Outreach Grant Program?**

Grant recipients must submit performance progress reports (PPR) and federal financial reports (FFR) electronically on a quarterly basis. Please refer to Section X. Post Award Reporting Requirements in the NOFO for specifics on PPRs and FFRs.

### **22. Why will the FCC monitor all grant awards both financially and programmatically?**

The FCC will monitor recipients to ensure that administrative processes, policies and procedures, budgets, and other related award criteria are meeting federal government-wide regulations. Aside from reviewing quarterly financial and programmatic reports, the FCC may also conduct enhanced monitoring through desk reviews, onsite monitoring visits, or both. Enhanced monitoring will identify areas where the recipient may need technical assistance, corrective actions, or other support.

### **23. Is there an easy way to find all Internet Service Providers in an area?**

The [Companies Near Me Tool](#) can be used to access a list of [ACP provider\(s\)](#) serving an area.

### **24. What resources will be available to grant recipients when conducting ACP outreach?**

An [ACP Consumer Outreach Toolkit](#) is available with resources grant recipients can use and tailor to their communities and outreach activities. Additional ACP outreach resources will be published here at [www.fcc.gov/acp-grants](http://www.fcc.gov/acp-grants).

## **FAQ Updates as of December 5, 2022:**

### **25. Are individuals eligible to apply for any of the ACP Outreach Grants?**

No, individuals are not eligible to apply for any of the ACP Outreach grants, to include NCOP, TCOP, YHYI, and NPP. Only eligible governmental and non-governmental entities are eligible to apply.

### **26. Are tribes that own their own Internet Service Providers and who provide broadband for their communities not eligible for this grant?**

For municipal broadband providers, and this would apply to tribal organizations as well, the exclusion of broadband providers and their affiliates, subsidiaries, or representatives from eligibility does not extend **to separate arms of the municipality that do not maintain, manage, or operate the municipal broadband network.** Meaning, if it's a separate arm of the tribe or municipal broadband provider that does NOT maintain, manage, or operate the tribal broadband network, then that separate, independent arm is eligible to apply.

### **27. Does the \$500,000 State minimum only go to the State or could it also go to organizations within the State and count towards the \$500,000 minimum?**

The \$500,000 State minimum is for any eligible governmental and non-governmental entity within the state. (For example, if the combined funding requested from eligible governmental and non-governmental organizations in Wisconsin is \$2,000,000, then at least \$500,000 in grant funding is allocated for qualified organizations within that State, with the actual funding amounts awarded contingent upon the application review outcome.)

### **28. Will all applications go through all three review processes? To include applications that are from States or Territories where the total funding requested is at or below the minimum?**

Yes, as a matter of due diligence, all eligible applications will go through all three review processes. And this is to ensure applicants are eligible and compliant with application submission requirements, proposed projects align with the program's objectives, activities and cost/budget criteria, and pass the risk review prior to making a funding determination.

### **29. Is the TCOP an infrastructure grant program?**

No, it is NOT an infrastructure grant program. The goal of the TCOP, similar to the NCOP, is to enlist outreach partners to conduct ACP outreach and application assistance to eligible households to connect to broadband internet where the service already exists today.

### **30. Do any of the ACP grants provide subsidized internet service? Or can outreach partners use grant funding to assist eligible households with internet-related costs?**

No, none of the ACP outreach grants (NCOP, TCOP, YHYI, NPP) may be used to provide subsidized internet service to eligible households. This includes the use of grant funds to provide funding assistance to eligible households with any aspect of their internet costs. (Note: The Affordable Connectivity Program *does* provide subsidized internet service to eligible, low-income households.)

### **31. If an organization intends to have subrecipients, what sections of the application need to be completed?**

Per the ACP Outreach Grant Program NOFO, if your organization intends to have subrecipients, then complete the Project Narrative – Subrecipients/Pass-Through Entity as well as the Project Management

and Milestones – Subrecipients/Pass-Through Entity sections of the Application Template to account for a consolidated proposal for all the subrecipients.

Additionally, as part of the Applicant Information section of the Application Template, the applicant is required to provide all the intended subrecipients' names and Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). If the application is selected for an award, then all financial award data pertaining to the grantee and all sub-grantees must be reported as part of quarterly federal financial reporting requirements.

**32. What is the difference between a contractor and a sub-recipient?**

The applicant must refer to [§ 200.331](#) when making a determination to have a subrecipient or a contractor to carry out a portion of the federal grant award. The applicant, or pass-through entity, must make a case-by-case determinations whether each agreement it makes for the disbursement of federal program funds casts the party receiving the funds in the role of a subrecipient or a contractor. Generally, the grantee establishes a *relationship* with the subrecipient *to carry out a portion of the federal award* and reports out progress in relation to the ACP Outreach Grant Program's objectives and measures. Conversely, the grantee establishes a *procurement relationship*, normally through a competitive process, with a contractor for the purpose of obtaining goods and services in relation to *the grantee's role in carrying out grant-funded activities*.

**33. Can in-kind contributions of staff time meet the cost-sharing matching requirement of the grant?**

Cost share or cost match is **not a requirement** for the ACP Outreach Grant Program, it is optional and will only be considered as a tie-breaker when making funding determinations. And staff time that is not grant funded but supports grant-funded activities can be used as in-kind contributions.

**34. Will there be some form of ACP Outreach Grant Program training offered to grantees, specifically training on how to assist individuals in the application process?**

Once the funding determination is announced, grantees may submit a request to [ACPspeakers@fcc.gov](mailto:ACPspeakers@fcc.gov) to request: "Train-the-Trainer" training.

**35. How many awards on the higher end of the spectrum will be given (i.e. \$1 Million) and what is the average award per grant?**

We cannot say since this is the first grant program and first round of funding opportunity the Commission is administering, and we do not have any baseline data.

**36. Does the ACP Outreach Grant Program grant application require a vote from a city council or governing board?**

This is a situational question and depends on what requirements exist at the local, regional, state level. If the entity's municipality require an approval of a grant application prior to submission to the federal granting agency, then the entity must follow such requirements. Proof of city, regional, or state support (i.e., Letter of Support) or approval is not a requirement for this grant program and will not impact the entity's application when being considered for funding.

**37. Where can I find enrollment-related data for ACP?**

For more information, visit USAC's website to get ACP enrollment data by state, county, or zip code at <https://www.usac.org/about/affordable-connectivity-program/acp-enrollment-and-claims-tracker/>.

**38. Is it possible to get less money than originally applied for?**

Yes, this is possible and may occur for a couple of reasons. One, during the budget review, the FCC may determine that part(s) of the applicant's budget request may not be allowable or reasonable and as a result, adjust the applicant's funding request. Two, in the event there are applicants with the same score and they all cannot be fully funded at the requested amount due to the amount of funding remaining, then those specific applicants may receive partial funding until all available grant funds are exhausted.

**39. Who is reviewing applications?**

The FCC will review grant applications.

**40. Is remote ACP application assistance to eligible households allowed?**

No, the ACP application assistance to eligible households must be done in-person. Entities may provide *process* assistance to eligible households remotely, meaning, explaining the ACP enrollment process to eligible households. But assisting eligible households with completing and submitting their ACP application **MUST** be done in-person.