



# PUBLIC NOTICE

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## WIRELINE COMPETITION BUREAU PROVIDES ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONCERNING THE YOUR HOME, YOUR INTERNET AND AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM NAVIGATOR PILOT PROGRAMS

### WC Docket No. 21-450

By this Public Notice, the Wireline Competition Bureau (Bureau) provides additional information concerning the Your Home, Your Internet Pilot Program and the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) Navigator Pilot Program (collectively, Pilot Programs), including guidance to assist prospective applicants in preparing to apply for participation in one or both Pilot Programs. The Bureau expects to open the Pilot Programs' application window, and expects the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau to release the Notice of Funding Opportunity (or NOFO) for Pilot Program funding, in November 2022. We will announce further information regarding the application window and other program details in the near future.

In August 2022, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC or Commission) established the Your Home, Your Internet Pilot Program to increase ACP awareness specifically among recipients of federal housing assistance<sup>1</sup> and to facilitate enrollment in the program by providing targeted assistance with completion of the ACP application.<sup>2</sup> Earlier this year, in January 2022, the Commission directed the Bureau and the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) to “conduct a one year test pilot for granting trusted, neutral third party entities [such as schools, school districts, or other local or state governmental entities] with access to the National Verifier for purposes of assisting customers with applying for the Affordable Connectivity Program” (ACP Navigator Pilot).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Federal public housing assistance recipients include recipients of Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program (Section 8 Vouchers); Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA)/Section 202/Section 811; Public Housing; and Affordable Housing Programs for American Indians, Alaska Natives or Native Hawaiians. *Affordable Connectivity Program*, Third Report and Order, WC Docket No. 21-450, FCC 22-64, at 5, para. 11 (2022) (*Your Home, Your Internet Order*).

<sup>2</sup> *Your Home, Your Internet Order* at 11-17, paras. 27-40.

<sup>3</sup> *Affordable Connectivity Program*, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, WC Docket Nos. 21-450, 20-445, FCC 22-2, at 37, para. 70 (2022) (*ACP Order*). “National Verifier” refers to the National Eligibility Verifier. The National Verifier is a centralized system established by the FCC and operated by USAC that verifies applicants' eligibility for the Affordable Connectivity Program. The National Verifier conducts automated eligibility checks using data from state and federal government databases to verify a consumer's participation in a qualifying government program as permitted by established Computer Matching Agreements (CMAs). *ACP Order*, at 34, para. 64; Universal Service Administrative Co., *Eligibility Verification*, Lifeline, <https://www.usac.org/lifeline/national-verifier/eligibility-verification/> (last visited Oct. 11, 2022). For a list of existing CMAs and their corresponding Federal Register Notices see <https://www.fcc.gov/managing-director/privacy-transparency/privacy-act-information>.

## Eligible Entities

*The Your Home, Your Internet Pilot Program.* Entities eligible to apply for the Your Home, Your Internet Pilot Program include Federal agencies; state, local, and Tribal housing agencies; tenant associations; and non-profit and community-based entities that provide ACP-related or other support for federal housing assistance recipients.<sup>4</sup> Access to the National Verifier will be allowed for a limited number of tenant associations, non-profit organizations, or community-based organizations participating in the pilot in partnership with a government entity, including a public housing agency, that provides proof and support of such partnership.<sup>5</sup> Initially, the Bureau expects to select up to 20 participants to participate in the Your Home, Your Internet Pilot Program.<sup>6</sup>

*The ACP Navigator Pilot Program.* Public and government entities, such as public schools and public school districts, and local, state, or Tribal government entities are eligible to apply for participation in the ACP Navigator Pilot Program. Examples of such eligible entities include, but are not limited to, state and local institutions of higher learning, state veterans affairs offices, state and community libraries, and Tribal schools and libraries. Non-profit organizations are not eligible to apply for the ACP Navigator Pilot Program. However, eligible government entities selected to participate in the ACP Navigator Pilot Program may enter into partnerships with neutral non-profit organizations provided that the government entity informs the Bureau in its ACP Navigator Pilot Program application that it is partnering with one or more specific non-profit organization(s) and identifies any such partner organization(s). Access to the National Verifier through the ACP Navigator Pilot is limited to actual representatives of the participating government entity, and enrollment activities through the National Verifier shall take place in the government entity's facility or other location maintained or operated by the government entity.<sup>7</sup> After reviewing applications, the Bureau expects to select up to 20 participants to participate in the ACP Navigator Pilot Program.

## Application Process

Eligible entities seeking to participate in one or both Pilot Programs must submit an application. There will be one application for both the Your Home, Your Internet and ACP Navigator Pilot Programs and applicants will be required to indicate to which program(s) they are applying. The Bureau expects that the application process will be paperless and will be conducted exclusively via an online application system. Before the application window opens, the Bureau will provide information detailing the application window period and providing the link for accessing the application system.<sup>8</sup> The Bureau expects that Pilot Program participant selections will be made based solely on the information provided in the online applications, and does not anticipate that applicants will have the opportunity to supplement their applications after submission.<sup>9</sup> The Bureau has the discretion to permit applicants to remedy incomplete or deficient applications as needed. Further, given the limited one-year length of the Pilot Programs, the Bureau anticipates that only one application window will be opened.

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<sup>4</sup> *Your Home, Your Internet Order* at 7-13, paras. 18, 21, 33.

<sup>5</sup> *Your Home, Your Internet Order* at 13-14, para. 33.

<sup>6</sup> The Commission delegated to the Bureau the option to select more than 20 Pilot participants if doing so would further the goals of the Pilot. *Your Home, Your Internet Order* at 18, para. 45.

<sup>7</sup> *ACP Order* at 37, para. 70.

<sup>8</sup> The application window for both the Your Home, Your Internet and ACP Navigator Pilot Programs will be open for at least 28 days. See *Your Home, Your Internet Order* at 18, para. 44. More information about the application window will be released in a subsequent Public Notice.

<sup>9</sup> For example, we do not anticipate conducting applicant interviews as part of the selection process.

Once eligible entities have been notified by the Bureau of their selection for one or both Pilot Programs, those selected Pilot participants requesting access to the National Verifier in connection with their Pilot Program activities must submit an Access Request form<sup>10</sup> to USAC and register in the Representative Accountability Database (RAD)<sup>11</sup> to gain access. USAC *will offer training* sessions and office hours to support Pilot participants as they prepare to register in RAD and provide application assistance via the National Verifier. Selected entities are responsible for ensuring that their employees and/or representatives who conduct activities in connection with either Pilot Program comply with ACP rules and with any terms and conditions associated with accessing the National Verifier. Pilot participants must ensure that they maintain neutrality with respect to providers by not favoring a particular provider or group of providers or restricting event participation to particular providers if multiple ACP providers serve the location.<sup>12</sup>

### **Required Application Information**

Those interested in applying for the Your Home, Your Internet or ACP Navigator Pilot Programs are encouraged to prepare by collecting the types of information outlined below.<sup>13</sup> Program requirements may vary depending on the Pilot Program to which the applicant is applying.

#### ***Applicant Information***

- Applicant entity name.
- Applicant entity type.
- Applicant entity address.
- Applicant entity phone number.
- Applicant FCC Registration Number (FCC FRN) (only if seeking grant funding).
- Applicant SAM.gov Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) (only if seeking grant funding).

#### ***Contact Information of Individual Submitting Application on Behalf of the Entity***

- Contact name.
- Contact title.
- Contact phone number.
- Contact email address.

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<sup>10</sup> See USAC's State Access Request Form, <https://www.usac.org/wp-content/uploads/lifeline/documents/forms/State-Access-Request.pdf> (last visited Oct. 11, 2022). This version of the State Access Request Form is being shared for informational purposes. The final version of the Access Request Form may vary from this version.

<sup>11</sup> See USAC, *Representative Accountability Database*, <https://www.usac.org/lifeline/rad/> (last visited Oct. 11, 2022).

<sup>12</sup> *Your Home, Your Internet Order* at 14, para. 34 (also providing that those offering application assistance through the Your Home, Your Internet Pilot Program are prohibited from accepting gifts or other incentives from ACP participating providers "that would have the effect of influencing an agency or partner to encourage consumers they are assisting to enroll with a specific provider"). Your Home, Your Internet Pilot Program participants may not "accept funding in any form, including in-kind contributions, from a participating provider or specific group of participating providers (including, but not limited to, broadband industry groups such as trade associations) for the purpose of assisting consumers in connection with the [Your Home, Your Internet] pilot."); *ACP Order* at 37, para. 70.

<sup>13</sup> To better assist the Bureau in its timely review of applications, Pilot Program applicants are encouraged to provide concise and thorough responses on their application. The actual wording on the application and the order in which the information appears on the final application form may vary from the wording and order in this Public Notice.

***Pilot Program Information***

- Name of the Pilot Program to which the applicant is applying (Your Home, Your Internet, ACP Navigator, or both).
- Estimated number of individuals the applicant intends to engage through proposed pilot activities, and estimated percentage of those individuals that may be ACP-eligible.
- Geographic areas to be served including city(ies), county(ies), and state(s), and a description of whether the areas to be served are rural,<sup>14</sup> non-rural, or lands identified as Tribal for purposes of determining eligibility for the ACP enhanced benefit.<sup>15</sup> If an applicant intends to engage in outreach activities targeted to one or more specific federally assisted housing property(ies), the applicant should also provide this information.
- Constituencies the applicant intends to serve (including federal housing assistance recipients, persons who live on Tribal lands, persons who live in rural areas, persons with disabilities, persons of color, other persons who are or who have been historically underserved, marginalized, or adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality, or other).
- Description of applicant's role in the community in which it serves, including but not limited to a description of the applicant's purpose or mission, the impact in the community the applicant intends to serve, and prior experience with assisting low-income consumers with public benefit programs.
- Description of activities the applicant proposes to conduct through the Pilot Programs (e.g., creation of new promotional materials, hands-on application assistance, or site-based outreach).
- Description of how the applicant intends to track and evaluate or measure the success of activities conducted through the Pilot Programs. We ask applicants to identify each projected outcome, subsequent milestones that will be met, and the estimated timeline within the one-year period of performance.
- Explanation of the strategies the applicant intends to use to reach low-income consumers eligible for the Affordable Connectivity Program, including goals and objectives, and how the applicant plans to target consumer outreach for the Affordable Connectivity Program.
- Description of how the proposed pilot project could benefit other entities looking to assist federal public housing assistance participants or other low-income consumers and could generate best practices and lessons learned for others with similar needs.
- Governmental entities seeking to apply to the Your Home, Your Internet Pilot Program in conjunction with a tenant association, on-site service coordinator, or non-profit or community-based organization should be prepared to demonstrate support of the partnership, including by

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<sup>14</sup> For purposes of determining rurality for the Your Home, Your Internet and ACP Navigator Pilot Programs, the Bureau will use the definition of "rural area" in section 54.600(e) of the Commission's rules for the Rural Healthcare Program. Applicants can determine whether they will serve consumers in rural areas under this definition by visiting the Eligible Rural Areas Search Tool on USAC's website. See USAC, Rural Health Care Program, Healthcare Connect Fund Program, Determine Eligibility of Your Site, Rural Look Up Tool, <https://apps.usac.org/rhc/tools/Rural/search/search.asp> (last visited Oct. 11, 2022).

<sup>15</sup> 47 CFR § 54.1800(s) (defining Tribal lands for purposes of determining eligibility for the ACP enhanced benefit as including "any federally recognized Indian tribe's reservation, pueblo, or colony, including former reservations in Oklahoma; Alaska Native regions established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (85 Stat. 668); Indian allotments; Hawaiian Home Lands – areas held in trust for Native Hawaiians by the state of Hawaii, pursuant to the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, 1920 July 9, 1921, 42 Stat. 108, et seq., as amended; and any land designated as such by the Commission for purposes of subpart E of part 54 of title [47] (or any successor regulation) pursuant to the designation process in § 54.412."). For a nationwide map showing Tribal Lands eligible for the enhanced ACP benefit, go to [https://www.affordableconnectivity.gov/wp-content/uploads/acp/documents/fcc\\_tribal\\_lands\\_map.pdf](https://www.affordableconnectivity.gov/wp-content/uploads/acp/documents/fcc_tribal_lands_map.pdf). See also, USAC, Affordable Connectivity Program, Enhanced Tribal Benefit, <https://www.affordableconnectivity.gov/do-i-qualify/enhanced-tribal-benefit/> (last visited Oct. 11, 2022).

providing information about that partnering organization, a description of the nature of the partnership; and any prior experience that the partnering organization has performing outreach to federal public housing assistance recipients.

- Governmental entity applicants to the ACP Navigator Pilot Program seeking to partner with one or more non-profit entity(ies) should be prepared to submit information about such entities, including a description of the non-profit's role in the geographic areas and with the constituents the applicant is applying to serve through the Pilot, and information demonstrating the non-profit's neutrality with respect to broadband service providers.
- Indication of whether the applicant intends to apply for the Your Home, Your Internet and/or ACP Navigator Pilot Grants and if so, whether the applicant's participation in either of the Pilot Programs is contingent on receipt of funding through the Pilot Grants and how much grant funding the applicant intends to request.<sup>16</sup> Specific instructions on how to apply for Pilot Grants funding will be made available through the release of a Pilot Programs-specific Notice of Funding Opportunity.

The Bureau intends to prioritize applications that: (1) will target a broad geographic area and/or large number of people in the target audiences for ACP outreach; (2) incorporate effective tracking and performance measurements to provide valuable information to the Commission; and (3) encourage participation by those in the applicant's target community(ies) that have a low participation in the Affordable Connectivity Program.<sup>17</sup> In the event that applicants submit information in their applications that they deem to be confidential, they may request that any such materials or information submitted to the Commission be withheld from public inspection pursuant to the procedures set forth in section 0.459 of the Commission's rules.<sup>18</sup>

### **Outreach Funding for Pilot Program Participants Through the Affordable Connectivity Outreach Grant Program**

Of the \$100 million designated for outreach in the *ACP Order*, the Commission established a separate budget of up to \$80 million for the Affordable Connectivity Outreach Grant Program, to include

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<sup>16</sup> An applicant's chance of being selected to participate in either or both Pilot Programs will not be impacted by its responses to questions regarding its intention to apply for pilot grant funding or whether its participation in the Pilot Program(s) is contingent on receipt of a grant through the Pilot Grants.

<sup>17</sup> See *Your Home, Your Internet Order*, at 18, para. 44 ("In order to increase participation in the Affordable Connectivity Program, our goal is to select applications that target areas with lower program participation rates and areas where application assistants or navigators will have the most impact on addressing barriers federal housing assistance recipients face when navigating the ACP application. We direct the Bureau to review applications and select entities to participate in the pilot program in a manner that ensures a geographically diverse group of pilot participants, representing both urban and rural areas."); *ACP Order* at 37, para. 70 (establishing the ACP Navigator Pilot and stating "[t]he Bureau shall determine the scope of this Pilot, and the process for identifying potential participants.").

<sup>18</sup> 47 CFR § 0.459. Applicants should be aware that federal regulations require federal awarding agencies to announce all federal awards publicly and to publish the required information about the award on a publicly available designated website. 2 CFR § 200.212(a). We also note that pursuant to the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (FFATA), certain information regarding grants and grantees are included in a public database that tracks federal funds to the final recipient level. 31 U.S.C. § 6101 note. See [USAspending.gov](https://www.usaspending.gov) (containing a vast array of other information about federal spending and recipients); OMB Memorandum, M-22-02, *New Financial Assistance Transparency Reporting Requirements* (October 21, 2022). The Commission's website will also provide publicly available information on the entities that have received awards through the Pilot Grants, which will include, at a minimum, the name of the awardee, the amount of the award, an abstract outreach project summary, and a main point of contact for the funding recipient. *Outreach Grant Program Order*, at 44, para. 82 & n.272.

the allocation of up to \$5 million in grants for each Pilot Program available specifically for eligible entities participating in the Your Home, Your Internet or ACP Navigator Pilot Programs. Pilot Program applicants may have independent sources of funding and are not required to apply for funding from the Commission in order to carry out their Pilot Program activities. Pilot applicants seeking to apply for a grant through the Commission's Pilot Grants to support Pilot Program outreach activities must submit a separate short-form grant application, and will need to disclose in their Pilot Program application whether their participation is contingent on receiving such funding. Pilot participants may not receive grant funding for any activities that are already funded by another source.<sup>19</sup>

To minimize the administrative burden for applicants seeking both to participate in a Pilot Program and to request Pilot Grants for Pilot activities, such applicants will only need to complete an additional short-form grant application.<sup>20</sup> For Pilot applicants that are also seeking Pilot Grants funding for their Pilot activities, the Your Home, Your Internet and ACP Navigator Pilot Programs' application will act as the applicant's narrative justification to support the applicant's request for grant funding. Accordingly, to be considered for Pilot Grants funding to support their Pilot activities, Pilot applicants will only need to submit a short-form grant application (consisting of the standard grant template and detailed budget) in Grants.gov after the Pilot Grants application window opens.

The Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Your Home, Your Internet and ACP Navigator Pilot Grants will provide information on submitting the application for Pilot Grants funding through Grants.gov and outline the specific information that Pilot applicants will need to submit in order to be considered for grant funding for their Pilot activities. Pilot applicants seeking grant funding for non-Pilot activities will need to complete a full grant application through Grants.gov, as published in the Outreach Grant Program NOFO.

Your Home, Your Internet and ACP Navigator Pilot Program applicants are not required to seek grant funding through the Pilot Grants. Applicants that will not rely on grant funding through the Pilot Grants for their Pilot outreach activities may receive an earlier notice of approval to participate in either or both Pilots. If an applicant is selected to participate in one or both Pilot Programs and is awarded funding through the Pilot Grants, the applicant will be notified of their selection and grant award or awards before they are required to conduct any Pilot Programs outreach activities. The Bureau will announce a uniform period for the performance of the Your Home, Your Internet and ACP Navigator Pilot Programs. Selected applicants will be notified of a start and end date for the period of performance. We expect entities selected to participate in Pilot Programs to begin their Pilot activities as soon as practicable during the period of performance. The Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Your Home,

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<sup>19</sup> Applicants can apply for funds under the Pilot Grants for Pilot Program activities and apply for funds under the Outreach Grant Program for ACP outreach activities that are not Pilot Program activities. *Affordable Connectivity Program*, Second Report and Order, WC Docket No. 21-450, at 27, para. 47 (2022) (*Outreach Grant Program Order*); *Your Home, Your Internet Order* at 10, para. 23. An applicant is not permitted to receive duplicative funding for the same outreach activity, however. *Outreach Grant Program Order* at 14 and 33, para. 26, 61. For example, an applicant cannot receive funding from both the Outreach Grant program and another source to cover the same activity. Similarly, an applicant cannot apply for Pilot Grants funding for a Pilot Program activity and then later claim that it is for, or use the funding for, a non-Pilot Program activity that would be otherwise supportable under the Outreach Grant program.

<sup>20</sup> See generally *Outreach Grant Program Order* (establishing the Affordable Connectivity Outreach Grant Program, which will provide funding to eligible entities, based on a competitive application process, for outreach to increase awareness of and encourage participation in the Affordable Connectivity Program among eligible households). And while we understand applicants may wish to pursue funding for distinct activities or activities conducted over distinct periods of time through the Pilot Program and the broader Outreach Grant Program, we remind potential applicants that they cannot receive funding, or be paid twice, for the same activity. See *Outreach Grant Program Order*, at 14, 33, paras. 26 and 61.

Your Internet and ACP Navigator Pilot Grants is expected to be released in November 2022. The Bureau expects that the application window for the Pilot Programs and the application window for Pilot Grants will open around the same time to minimize administrative burdens to potential applicants and to facilitate streamlined start and end dates for Pilot Program participants.

**Registering for an FCC Registration Number and Registering in the System for Award Management and with Grants.gov (For Pilot Applicants Seeking Grant Funding)**

If an entity intends to apply for grant funding to carry out their proposed Pilot activities, the applicant must first obtain an FCC Registration Number (FRN) and be registered with the System for Award Management and Grants.gov.

*Obtaining an FCC Registration Number (FRN).* All applicants that intend to seek grant funding, like all other entities doing business with the Commission, must register for an FRN in the Commission Registration System (CORES). An FRN is a 10-digit number that is assigned to a business or individual registering with the FCC. This unique FRN is used to identify the registrant's business dealings with the FCC. To register with CORES, please use the following link: <https://apps.fcc.gov/cores/userLogin.do>. The first step to setting up an account in CORES is creating a username and account in the FCC User Registration System using the following link: <https://apps2.fcc.gov/fccUserReg/pages/login.htm>. Before the account is activated, the user will receive an automated email titled "FCC Account Request Verification" and must verify its account email address as prompted. Once the user is logged in to CORES, the user should select the "Register New FRN" or "Associate Username to FRN" option as applicable from the menu options that appear and provide the information as prompted by CORES. Users will need to provide their taxpayer identification number or TIN to register. The TIN is a nine-digit number that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) requires of all individuals, businesses, and other employers to identify their tax accounts with the IRS. Once the user provides the information required in CORES and clicks "Submit," CORES will generate a new FRN or associate the user's existing FRN with its account.

*SAM Registration.* In addition to submitting a separate short-form application for grant funding, all entities that intend to apply for an outreach grant will need to register, and maintain an active registration, with the System for Award Management (SAM). SAM is a web-based, government-wide application that collects, validates, stores, and disseminates business information about the federal government's partners in support of federal awards, grants, and electronic payment processes. With data in SAM the Commission has an authoritative source for information necessary to provide funding to applicants and to ensure accurate reporting pursuant to the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, as amended by the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014 (collectively the Transparency Act or FFATA/DATA Act).<sup>21</sup> Only grantees registered in SAM with an active registration will be able to receive reimbursement for outreach grants from the Affordable Connectivity Fund.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, participating grantees may be subject to reporting requirements. To

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<sup>21</sup> Pub. L. No. 109-282, 120 Stat. 1186 (2006) and Pub. L. No. 113-101, 128 Stat. 114 (2014), codified as 31 U.S.C. § 6101 note. In August 2020, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) updated the rules governing compliance with the Transparency Act as part of wider ranging revisions to title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations. 85 FR 49506 (published Aug. 13, 2020) (including revisions to 2 CFR Parts 25, 170, 183, and 200). OMB explained that the SAM registration requirements were expanded "beyond grants and cooperative agreements to include other types of financial assistance" to ensure compliance with FFATA. 85 Fed. Reg. 49506 at 49517.

<sup>22</sup> It is strongly recommended that unregistered potential grant applicants start the registration process immediately because it may take up to 10 business days for the registration to become active and an additional 24 hours before the registration information is available in other government systems. To register with the system, go to <https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration> and provide the requested information.

the extent that participating grantees subaward the grant, as defined by FFATA/DATA Act regulations, such grantees may be required to submit data on those subawards.<sup>23</sup>

*Grants.gov Registration.* Parties that intend to apply for Pilot Grants funding must also register with Grants.gov. Parties can find information concerning Grants.gov registration at <https://www.Grants.gov/web/grants/register.html>.<sup>24</sup> To register with Grants.gov, the party must already have a Unique Entity Identifier from SAM.gov.

For more information regarding the Affordable Connectivity Outreach Grant Program, please email [ACPgrants@fcc.gov](mailto:ACPgrants@fcc.gov).

### **Additional Information**

For further information regarding the Your Home, Your Internet and ACP Navigator Pilot Programs, please send an email to [ACPPilots@fcc.gov](mailto:ACPPilots@fcc.gov). Additional information concerning both the Your Home, Your Internet and ACP Navigator Pilot Programs will be posted at the following link: <https://www.fcc.gov/acp-pilots>.

As stated above, the Bureau will announce further information regarding the application window and other program details when available.

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<sup>23</sup> 2 CFR Part 170, App. A.

<sup>24</sup> Applicants needing technical assistance with Grants.gov can call the customer support hotline 24 hours per day, 7 days per week (except federal holidays) at (800) 518-4726 or email [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov).