



# PUBLIC NOTICE

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## RECHARTERING OF THE PRECISION AGRICULTURE CONNECTIVITY TASK FORCE AND REQUEST FOR NOMINATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

### GN Docket No. 19-329

The Federal Communications Commission (Commission or FCC) is seeking nominations for membership on the Task Force for Reviewing Connectivity and Technology Needs of Precision Agriculture in the United States (Task Force), a federal advisory committee that provides advice and recommendations to the Commission on accelerating the deployment of broadband Internet access service on unserved agriculture land to promote precision agriculture, including nominations for membership on one of its working groups.<sup>1</sup> The Task Force will perform duties and submit reports consistent with sections 12511(b)(3)(A) and (b)(5) of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, Pub. L. 115-334, 132 Stat 4490 (2018 Farm Bill). Along with the statutory requirements, we intend that the work of the Task Force and its working groups will include consideration of how connectivity can improve sustainability in agricultural production.<sup>2</sup> Following consultation with the General Services Administration (GSA), the Commission anticipates renewing the charter of the Task Force with an expected starting date no later than December 2, 2023 and a termination date of January 1, 2025.<sup>3</sup>

**Nominations for membership to the Task Force or its working groups should be submitted to the FCC no later than September 20, 2023. Procedures for submitting nominations are set forth below, and applications should be sent by email to [PrecisionAgTF@fcc.gov](mailto:PrecisionAgTF@fcc.gov).**

### MISSION

In consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture (Secretary), or a designee of the Secretary, and in collaboration with public and private stakeholders in the agriculture and technology fields, the Task Force will continue to:

- identify and measure current gaps in the availability of broadband Internet access service on agricultural land;

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<sup>1</sup> The four Working Groups are: (1) Mapping and Analyzing Connectivity on Agricultural Lands; (2) Examining Current and Future Connectivity Demand for Precision Agriculture; (3) Encouraging Adoption of Precision Agriculture and Availability of High-Quality Jobs on Connected Farms; and (4) Accelerating Broadband Deployment on Unserved Agricultural Lands. These Working Groups may change at the discretion of the FCC Chairwoman.

<sup>2</sup> See U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, *Sustainable Agricultural Productivity Growth: What, Why and How* (visited Aug. 8, 2023), <https://www.usda.gov/oce/sustainability/spg-faqs>.

<sup>3</sup> Pursuant to statute, the Task Force will terminate on January 1, 2025. 2018 Farm Bill, sec. 12511(b)(6).

- develop policy recommendations to promote the rapid, expanded deployment of broadband Internet access service on unserved agricultural land, with a goal of achieving reliable capabilities on 95 percent of agricultural land in the United States by 2025;
- promote effective policy and regulatory solutions that encourage the adoption of broadband Internet access service on farms and ranches and promote precision agriculture;
- recommend specific new rules or amendments to existing rules of the Commission that the Commission should issue to achieve the goals and purposes of the policy recommendations described in the second bullet in this list;
- recommend specific steps that the Commission should take to obtain reliable and standardized data measurements of the availability of broadband Internet access service as may be necessary to target funding support, from future programs of the Commission dedicated to the deployment of broadband Internet access service, to unserved agricultural land in need of broadband Internet access service; and
- recommend specific steps that the Commission should consider to ensure that the expertise of the Secretary and available farm data are reflected in future programs of the Commission dedicated to the infrastructure deployment of broadband Internet access service and to direct available funding to unserved agricultural land where needed.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, the Task Force will continue to annually submit to the Chairwoman of the Commission a report, which shall be made public, that details:

- the status of fixed and mobile broadband Internet access service coverage of agricultural land;
- the projected future connectivity needs of agricultural operations, farmers, and ranchers; and
- the steps being taken to accurately measure the availability of broadband Internet access service on agricultural land and the limitations of current, as of the date of the report, measurement processes.<sup>5</sup>

## BACKGROUND

The Task Force is organized under, and operates in accordance with, the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA).<sup>6</sup> As permitted by FACA, the Task Force is authorized to facilitate its work through informal subcommittees or other subgroups of the Task Force typically known as “working groups,” which shall report their activities and recommendations to the Task Force as a whole.

Consistent with Executive Order 14035 (June 25, 2021) and other governing law, the Commission values and welcomes opportunities to increase diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility on its federal advisory committees. The Commission’s federal advisory committees strive for a membership that reflects the diversity of the American people. For the Task Force, we strongly encourage applications for membership from diverse or historically underrepresented groups, including Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers, as that term is defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Id.*, sec. 12511(b)(3)(A).

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*, sec. 12511(b)(5).

<sup>6</sup> 5 U.S.C. App. 2.

<sup>7</sup> USDA Economic Research Service, *Socially Disadvantaged, Beginning, Limited Resource, and Female Farmers and Ranchers* (visited Aug. 8, 2023), <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/socially-disadvantaged-beginning-limited-resource-and-female-farmers-and-ranchers/> (“The USDA defines socially disadvantaged farmers

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All members will have an initial and continuing obligation to disclose any interests in, or connections to, persons or entities that are, or will be, regulated by or have interests before the Commission and shall promptly report to the Designated Federal Officer (DFO) any changes in representation during their tenure on the federal advisory committee.

Please note this *Public Notice* is not intended to be the exclusive method by which the Commission will solicit nominations to identify qualified candidates; however, all candidates for membership on the Task Force will be subject to the same evaluation criteria.

### **WHO MAY APPLY FOR MEMBERSHIP**

The Commission seeks applications from:

- agricultural producers representing diverse geographic regions and farm sizes, including owners and operators of farms of less than 100 acres;
- agricultural producers representing tribal agriculture;
- Internet service providers, including regional or rural fixed and mobile broadband Internet access service providers and telecommunications infrastructure providers;
- representatives from the electric cooperative industry;
- representatives from the satellite industry;
- representatives from precision agriculture equipment manufacturers, including drone manufacturers, manufacturers of autonomous agricultural machinery, and manufacturers of farming robotics technologies;
- representatives from State and local governments; and
- representatives with relevant expertise in broadband network data collection, geospatial analysis, and coverage mapping.<sup>8</sup>

Voting members of the Task Force shall be selected by the Chairwoman of the Commission, in consultation with the Secretary and appropriate Commission staff. The Task Force shall be composed of not more than 15 voting members. The Secretary, or a designee of the Secretary, serves as an ex-officio, nonvoting member of the Task Force.

Voting members will be selected to balance the expertise and viewpoints that are necessary to address effectively the issues to be considered by the Task Force, consistent with the requirements under the statute establishing the Task Force, and will serve as representatives from one of the working groups specified above.

### **OBLIGATIONS OF MEMBERS AND TASK FORCE MEETINGS**

Voting members and working group members will serve at the discretion of the Chairwoman of the Commission. All members must be willing to commit to the final term of service from the date of the recharter of the Task Force until its termination, and voting members should be willing and able to attend at least three (3) one- or two-day plenary Task Force meetings during the Task Force's term. Voting

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and ranchers (SDFRs) as those belonging to groups that have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice. SDFRs include farmers who are Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Hispanic or Latino, and Asian or Pacific Islander. For some but not all USDA programs, the SDFR category also includes women.”).

<sup>8</sup> 2018 Farm Bill, sec. 12511(b)(4)(A).

members will be expected to participate in deliberations of at least one (1) working group. The time commitment for participation in any working group may be substantial.

Meetings of the full Task Force will be open to the public, and timely notice of each meeting shall be published in the Federal Register and further publicized through other appropriate vehicles. All such meetings will be held either at the Commission's headquarters in Washington, D.C. or virtually and will be fully accessible to individuals with disabilities. However, working group meetings may be conducted informally, using suitable technology to facilitate the meetings, subject to oversight by the DFO of the Task Force.

#### **APPLICATION PROCEDURES AND DEADLINES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL NOMINATIONS**

**All nominations should be received by the Commission as soon as possible, but no later than September 20, 2023. All nominations, including the requisite statements listed below, should be submitted by email to [PrecisionAgTF@fcc.gov](mailto:PrecisionAgTF@fcc.gov).**

No specific nomination form is required; however, each nomination for service on the Task Force or one of its working groups must include the following information:

- Name, title, and organization of the nominee; Nominee's mailing address, e-mail address, and telephone number;
- A description of the organization's business, including the business sector or other interests that are relevant to the business of the Task Force, and a statement of the benefit of having the organization represented on the Task Force or a working group;
- A statement summarizing the nominee's qualifications and reasons why the nominee should be appointed to the Task Force or a working group, including a brief narrative detailing the nominee's involvement in issues relevant to the Task Force as well as a current resume of the nominee;
- A statement by the organization indicating a willingness to have its representative serve on the Task Force or working group for its full term, attend at least three Task Force meetings if chosen for membership on the Task Force, and participate in at least one working group; and
- An acknowledgement that neither the organization nor its representative will receive reimbursement of travel expenses or honoraria from the Task Force.

An organizational applicant nominating a representative to serve on its behalf on the Task Force or a working group must submit a written confirmation by an authorized person (e.g., organization or company official) that such organization or company wants the nominee to represent it. The nominating official must possess the executive authority or hold a sufficiently high-level position with the organization to select a representative whose actions will be legally binding on the organizational applicant. For example, this confirmation may be in the following format: "I am [insert official's name], the [insert official's title] at the [insert name of organization - e.g., company, government entity, trade association, *etc.*], with responsibilities for [concise description of position]. My organization would like [insert proposed member's name], who is currently [an employee of/consultant/attorney to the company] to serve as our representative on the Commission's Task Force for Reviewing Connectivity and Technology Need of Precision Agriculture in the United States."

For nominees seeking to represent an entity that is a party to an FCC contract or subcontract or providing services for the benefit of the FCC under contract or subcontract, or in the case of any applicant or nominee who is individually a party to such a contract or providing services for the benefit of the FCC under such a contract, the nomination must include the following:

- A general description of the contract/agreement;

- A description of the product/services that the applicant provides pursuant to the contract/agreement;
- A list of all parties to the contract/agreement;
- The name of the Commission contracting officer (if known); and,
- A certification made by the applicant or nominee that the applicant or nominee has provided written notice to the contracting officer and the FCC Manager, Contracts and Purchasing Center, that the applicant or representative nominee, as applicable, has applied for membership on the Commission's Task Force.

In addition, organizational nominees are required to disclose whether they represent clients before the FCC or represent clients in matters that may come before the Task Force, other than representing the organizational applicant that has nominated the proposed representative for service on the Task Force. Each nominee shall provide with the application all details of any such representation.

#### **APPLICATION PROCEDURES FOR INDIVIDUALS TO SERVE AS SGE MEMBERS**

As appropriate, members may also be appointed for their individual expertise as "Special Government Employees" (SGEs). Applicants possessing expertise or perspectives of interest to the Task Force who have requested to serve in an individual capacity as an SGE shall be eligible only if they are not federally registered lobbyists. SGEs are subject to a variety of restrictions under the conflict-of-interest statutes, 18 U.S.C. § 203 et seq., and the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, 5 C.F.R. Part 2635. SGEs must file confidential employee financial disclosure reports prior to beginning their service and annually thereafter. SGEs will also be subject to ethics restrictions in section 4(b) of the Communications Act, 47 U.S.C. § 154(b), and in the Commission's rules, 47 CFR Part 19 and 5 CFR Parts 3901 and 3902.

**Nominations should be submitted to the Commission as soon as possible, but no later than September 20, 2023. All nominations, including the requisite statements listed below, should be submitted by e-mail to [PrecisionAgTF@fcc.gov](mailto:PrecisionAgTF@fcc.gov).**

Individuals seeking to serve as SGE members of the Task Force or one of its working groups should include the following application information:

- Name and title of the applicant; current mailing address, email address, and telephone number;
- A statement summarizing the applicant's qualifications and reasons why the applicant should be appointed to the Task Force or a working group. That statement shall include the individual's specific knowledge or expertise that is relevant to the work of the Task Force, including a statement that the applicant is not a registered lobbyist (as noted above, financial and other additional disclosures may also be required);
- A statement that the applicant does not have a contractual or other financial agreement (including as a subcontractor) with the Task Force;
- A statement indicating a willingness to serve on the Task Force or a working group for its full term, a commitment to attend at least three meetings per year if chosen for the Task Force, and a commitment to participate in at least one working group;
- An acknowledgement that the individual will not be entitled to receive reimbursement of travel expenses or payment of honoraria or other compensation from the Commission;
- A current resume;
- A statement that the applicant does not have clients with matters before the FCC or with matters which may come before the Task Force.

**ACCESSIBLE FORMATS AND FURTHER INFORMATION**

To request materials in accessible formats for people with disabilities (Braille, large print, electronic files, audio format), send an e-mail to [fcc504@fcc.gov](mailto:fcc504@fcc.gov) or call the Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau at 202-418-0530 (voice).

Additional information about the Task Force is available here, <https://www.fcc.gov/task-force-reviewing-connectivity-and-technology-needs-precision-agriculture-united-states>, or please contact Christi Shewman, Designated Federal Officer, at (202) 418-0646, or [Christi.Shewman@fcc.gov](mailto:Christi.Shewman@fcc.gov); Emily Caditz, Deputy Designated Federal Officer, at (202) 418-2268, or [Emily.Caditz@fcc.gov](mailto:Emily.Caditz@fcc.gov); Thomas Hastings, Deputy Designated Federal Officer, at (202) 418-1343, or [Thomas.Hastings@fcc.gov](mailto:Thomas.Hastings@fcc.gov).

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