Education SUPERHIGHWAY

AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

Event Toolkit

A Guide to ACP Awareness and Enrollment Events

2023 | **No Home Left Offline**



CLOSE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

It is estimated that approximately 17 million U.S. households have access to the internet but can't afford to connect. To help close the digital divide, the federal government allocated $14.2 billion to the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), a benefit that provides eligible households with a monthly discount on home internet, making many plans available at little or no cost.

Community Partners can play a vital role in connecting these communities by implementing outreach strategies designed to increase awareness of and enrollment in the ACP.

HOW CAN COMMUNITY PARTNERS HELP CONNECT HOUSEHOLDS?

To close the digital divide, we need to ensure that unconnected households know about the ACP and that it is easy for them to enroll in the program. Community Partners are uniquely positioned to assist in overcoming these barriers by spreading awareness of the benefit through trusted communication channels and providing support at in-person events.

Awareness

- In many communities, 75% of eligible households are unaware of the Affordable Connectivity Program.
- Lack of awareness that many ISPs offer 'free with ACP' service plans.
- Difficulty understanding ACP eligibility requirements.

Trust

- Skeptical about government programs and free services.
- Worried about unexpected costs if the subsidy ends.
- Concerned about sharing personal information for eligibility confirmation.

Enrollment

- Lack of internet access and language barriers make it difficult to access the ACP's online sign-up processes.
- The ACP application is long (30-45 minutes) and complex.
- 45% of applications are rejected, and many more fail to complete the application process.

NEED HELP GETTING STARTED?

EducationSuperHighway's Affordable Connectivity Program Event Toolkit is designed to be a helpful step-by-step guide that includes best practices to make your ACP awareness and enrollment events as impactful as possible. It contains planning considerations, marketing resources, and an event worksheet designed to support organizations in planning events geared toward increasing awareness and enrollment in the benefit.



STEP 1 | PLAN

There are many ways to ensure that community members are aware of the ACP benefit and have taken steps to enroll. Events hosted by Community Partners have proven particularly successful and, while this toolkit will focus on the logistics of a comprehensive enrollment event, you may want to start with a lower-lift awareness event to begin engaging with community members.

Considerations:

- Will you host an awareness or enrollment event?
- Will you partner with other organizations on this event?
- How many community members do you expect to engage at this event?
- What is the most convenient time and day for community members to attend this event?

Once you've answered the above questions, plan your event staffing, site logistics, and timeline using our Enrollment Event Outline, an editable resource designed to guide your planning.

AWARENESS EVENTS

- **AUDIENCE:** Individuals from eligible households that have yet to hear about or decide to enroll in the ACP. They will likely want additional information on other resources such as digital literacy support and connected devices.

- **GOAL:** Increase awareness of the ACP benefit and understanding of the documentation needed to apply, as well as introduce or reinforce the benefits of getting connected.

- **KEY ACTIVITY:** Provide information about the ACP benefit, encourage participants to visit the pre-enrollment tool, GetACP.org, and collect contact information for follow-up. This is also a great opportunity to learn more about their experiences with Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and ease any concerns community members may have. Learn more about GetACP.org.

Resources:

- General ACP Awareness Postcard
- GetACP.org Postcard
- Post-Event Support Flyer

Note: Hosting an event is just one of many ways to raise awareness of the ACP benefit. Community Partners can also use social media channels, existing communication lists, door knocking, posting flyers, and more to spread the word. Visit our PromoteACP: Resource Hub for customizable materials designed to raise awareness in your community. Materials are available in 14 languages.

ENROLLMENT EVENTS

- **AUDIENCE:** Individuals from eligible households that have yet to apply for the ACP benefit and are prepared to apply with their documentation.
- **GOAL:** Guide community members through the ACP application process and, when possible, apply the individual's ACP Application code to an internet plan.
- **KEY ACTIVITY:** Support attendees through the application process and troubleshoot any issues. When possible, equip event staff with camera-ready devices to assist with uploading documentation.

Resources:

- ACP Event Postcard
- Post-Event Support Flyer
- Enrollment Assistance Handbill

Note: Additional materials, such as large-format signage, are available online. Use our PromoteACP: Resource Hub for customizable materials to increase ACP enrollment in your community. Materials are available in 14 languages.

EVENT NOTES

Make sure to understand the audiences you are trying to reach and take note of the trusted voices within those communities. Providing collateral that is familiar (i.e., materials that integrate the community and/or organizational logo) are key to building trust in the event and the ACP.



STEP TWO | PREPARE FOR YOUR EVENT

Many individuals and organizations may need to work together to create a successful event. By equipping staff and partner organizations with information on the ACP enrollment process, you will create an event that feels supportive and impactful.

PREPARE YOUR PARTNERS

If you are partnering with other community partners on your event, there are a few considerations to ensure success. Partnership roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined and fit within the mission of the organizations.

Considerations:

- How familiar is the organization with the ACP benefit?
- Is the partner better equipped to raise awareness or support enrollment?
- If utilizing partner staff or space:
  - What kind of events does the space/organization typically host?
  - Are these events remote or in person?
  - What is the capacity of the space?
  - What support materials can be provided for the space?
- What resources does this organization typically provide to the community?
- How does the organization communicate within the community?
- Can the organization provide support in more than one language?



Invite any event support staff to complete the LearnACP: Affordable Connectivity Program certification to ensure familiarity with the ACP enrollment process.

Examples of how to make the most of the partnership include:

COLLABORATE

- Schedule recurring meetings, event updates, and/or email communications in advance of the event
- Create a budget and list of funding needs

COORDINATE

- Train staff
- Prepare event tasks
- Determine setup and breakdown logistics
- Order any food, beverages, and utensils

PROMOTE

- Launch a joint social media campaign for event promotion
- Post informative Q&As about the event
- Post flyers in the event space and at nearby locations

PREPARE YOUR EVENT STAFF

- Has everyone completed the LearnACP: Affordable Connectivity Program certification course to understand the basics on how to enroll community members?
- Have I shared an agenda and event flow with all event staff?
- Do my event staff know each other or have a way they can comfortably communicate with one another?
- Have internal staff been introduced to any external partners?
- Are tasks assigned as reasonably as possible, considering staff availability?*
- Do we have an internal understanding of shared language (using proper pronouns for event staff, and using empowering and accessible language when referring to programs, etc.)?



If you have event staff that can only commit to a short block of time, consider assigning set-up, breakdown, or other low capacity ACP support tasks such as handing out postcards.

Considerations:

- Assign event staff to time-bound shifts* to ensure full coverage for the event
- Ensure you have staff who can support in the predominant languages of the community
- Assign event staff roles in advance†

*The enrollment process can take up to 30-45 minutes per applicant to complete.
† View sample roles and responsibilities in our Enrollment Event Outline.

PREPARE YOUR SPACE (COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS)

It is important that community members, event staff, and partner organizations feel safe at the event. Partners may have existing policies in place that should be followed to create a safe and inviting environment for all participants.

Considerations:

- Ensure all shared spaces, restrooms, and equipment are cleaned and sanitized before/after each event.
- Have PPE on site for staff and attendees.
- Ensure the Event Lead has all event staff contact information, in case of emergency.
- Provide free/low-cost parking, if possible, or information on nearby public transportation.

PREPARE FOR INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS

Including Internet Service Providers can help community members fully complete the ACP enrollment process at the event.

Considerations:

- Do you have staff capacity to monitor ISPs to ensure they are connecting community members to “free with ACP” or low cost with ACP plans and adequately supporting enrollment?
- Are the ISPs registered to participate in the ACP? Check USAC to verify by zip code.
- How do community members perceive ISPs?

If you’ve decided to invite ISPs to the event, review the available providers in your area by checking BroadbandNow.com. When multiple providers are available in your area, it is important to invite multiple ISPs, including the most used in your area, so residents have the opportunity to apply their ACP Application code to the plan of their choosing.

Follow these helpful guidelines to engage ISPs, set parameters, and prepare them for their role in the event.

Make sure event participants can access plan speed and price information at the event by providing the Available Plans Postcard and Internet Speeds Postcard.



STEP THREE | PROMOTE YOUR EVENT

Begin to promote the event by spreading the word to community members. Use our PromoteACP: Resource Hub to download customizable marketing materials.



Many of the materials encourage individuals to visit GetACP.org, EducationSuperHighway's pre-enrollment tool, to determine if the household is eligible for the benefit, what documents they will need when applying, and find free-with-ACP plans in their area. **Having these qualifying documents available at the event will allow for a more successful enrollment process.**

When engaging in **on-the-ground promotion**, it is essential to choose high-traffic times within your community space. Consider local gathering spaces such as grocery stores, laundromats, and community centers in your outreach plan.

When engaging in **social media promotion**, use your official social media accounts to raise awareness of the event and ask participating partners to repost/share posts on their platforms to elevate reach.

Resources

Outreach Channels for Consideration
Social Media Toolkit for Community Partners



OUTREACH BEST PRACTICE

Include a phone number on printed materials for community members to contact with questions.

STEP FOUR | HOST YOUR EVENT

The time for your event has arrived!

EVENT FLOW



Station 1
Collect community member contact information for follow-up and impact tracking

Select a data-tracking tool to collect attendee names, contact information, and ACP application progress. Use our Enrollment Event Tracker and Script or create your own. **This is highly recommended to measure community impact and engagement.**



Station 2
Complete the ACP application with the community member

- Bookmark bit.ly/ACP-App on the enrollment device for ease of use and provide applicants with the Enrollment Assistance Handbill to write down their login information.
- Guide the community member through the application process, making sure to note the individual application status,and Application ID number if they complete the process, in your chosen data tracking tool.
- Ensure the applicant has the contact information for their chosen Internet Service Provider and information on the selected plan, regardless of application status.



Station 3
Once confirmation is received (during or after the event), help the applicant apply their ACP Application code to a new or existing internet plan

This is the final step to start receiving the ACP benefit. Many community members require assistance complete this step.

You can help community members finalize this step by using one of the following methods:

1. Invite Internet Service Providers to the event to help residents apply the ACP Application code to their internet plan.
2. Have event staff assigned to help community members complete this step at the event.
3. Follow up with community members after the event to confirm they've completed this step.

If you've decided to invite ISPs to the event, make sure the providers are ready to apply the ACP Application code to both new or existing plans with little effort for the participant. Ensure each provider in attendance has a designated area and their own staff on hand to assist with ACP inquiries and other bill help.

If event staff are assigned to help community members apply the ACP Application code to their plan, make sure they have access to a phone and the contact information for the relevant providers. They may need to assist community members in calling the ISP to apply their ACP Application code to their new or existing internet plan. Community members will likely need their ISP account information and will be prompted to verify their identity on that call. Some service providers may have an additional application for the community member to complete.

If you are following up with community members after the event, provide them with the contact information for the chosen ISP. Remember to collect the community member's contact information to follow up on their enrollment process or offer additional support, as needed.

Event Day Considerations

TEAMWORK

Assign one staff member to work with each community member at Stations 1 and 2 in the event flow.

ACCESS TO DEVICE

Each enrollment support staff member will need access to a laptop or tablet with the ability to take photos. This will be used to upload documentation to the application as needed. Be mindful of the event set-up to ensure privacy for each applicant due to the personal nature of the information being shared.

PRIVACY

Due to the personal nature of information being shared during the application process, ensure privacy for each applicant throughout the flow of the event. Remember to delete any photos taken between applicants.

OUTDOOR LOGISTICS

If the event is outdoors, use mobile hotspots to ensure stable connectivity throughout the event.

PREPARE

View an extensive list of event materials to consider in our Enrollment Event Outline.

Remember to include the contributions of partner organizations.

USAC SUPPORT

Enrollment support staff should be prepared to contact USAC agents if application issues arise. USAC can be reached at 1-877-384-2575, then press 1 → 1 → 5 → 0.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUPPORTING PREVIOUSLY UNCONNECTED HOUSEHOLDS

While some of your event attendees will already have an internet connection and want to use the ACP benefit to reduce their monthly bill, many attendees will be looking to get connected for the first time. For community members who do not currently have an internet connection, it is important to provide support through both the ACP application and signing up with an ISP. Help the individual determine the internet speeds that will best fit their needs with the Internet Speeds Postcard and identify plans available in their area that match those needs by visiting BroadbandNow.com.

- Download the Available Internet Plans Postcard and fill in information on the plans in your area that are free or low cost with the ACP. This is a great resource to provide at the event.
- Provide contact information or follow-up opportunities to the community member to ensure continued support.
- If the attendee is unable to complete the process or is unsure of what plan to select at the time of the event, make sure they understand that their ACP code will expire in 90 days.

STEP FIVE | EVENT FOLLOW-UP

Congratulations on hosting a successful support event!

Don't forget, community members may need additional support and resources after the event. Staff should use the collected contact information to follow up via text or call to check in with applicants. This is especially important for those who did not complete the application or were unable to apply their ACP Application code to an internet plan during the event. Also, consider using existing communications channels, such as newsletters or social media, to continue to promote the ACP benefit and support available to those that were unable to attend the event.

Considerations:

- Seek feedback from community members to improve future events.
- Offer an event debrief for event staff.
- Share event impact on social media and/or with partner organizations.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT RESOURCES

Connecting households to the internet is a major step toward digital equity, however many applicants may also need assistance with both device access and digital literacy skills.

CONNECTED DEVICES

While the ACP benefit offers a $100 credit towards a connected device, many Internet Service Providers do not participate in the program, leaving applicants in need of support to find a device.

Consider directing community members to one of the following organizations that provide connected devices based on similar criteria to the ACP benefit:

PCs for People EveryoneOn Human-I-T

You can also assist applicants in finding a local organization that provides low-cost devices, using search terms such as “refurbished device” or “low-cost device.”

Digital Literacy

If a community member needs support in understanding how to effectively use their internet connection and device, research local libraries for digital literacy courses. Many recreation centers also offer computer classes and digital literacy support to community members. Local organizations focusing on digital equity may also offer these courses. Use terms like “digital literacy classes” or “digital equity” to search for organizations. These organizations can be invited to events or you can offer their collateral at events.

If there are no local classes being offered, the following national organizations offer support on topics like basic digital literacy, the Internet, and online protection and security. Many courses go on to develop workforce skills, and sometimes offer a certificate for completion:

- Northstar
- PCs for People
- EveryoneOn
- Cyber-Seniors
- Goodwill Industries



About EducationSuperHighway

EducationSuperHighway is a national non-profit with the mission to close the digital divide for the 17 million households that have access to the internet but can't afford to connect. We focus on America's most unconnected communities, where more than 25% of people don't have internet.

From 2012 to 2020, we led the effort that closed the classroom connectivity gap. In 2013, only 10% of students had access to digital learning in their classrooms. Today, thanks to an unprecedented bipartisan effort by federal, state, and school district leaders, supported by K-12 advocacy organizations, the classroom connectivity gap is closed – 47 million students are connected, and 99.3% of America's schools have a high-speed broadband connection.