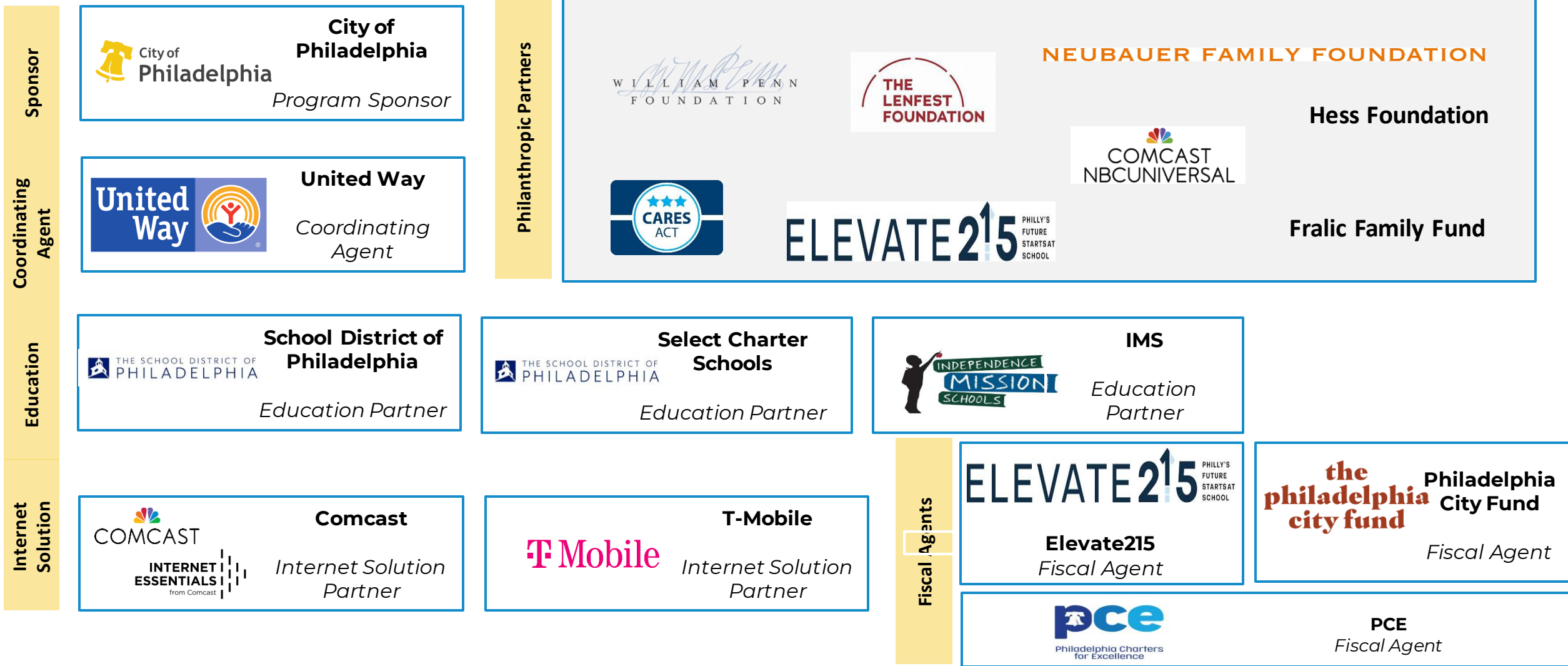# PHLConnectED

Spring 2023

City of **Philadelphia**

Philadelphia |
Case For Change

As a result of COVID-19, the School District of Philadelphia, charter schools, and other local education agencies **started the 2020 – 2021 school year in a 100% remote learning environment**.

In response, the **City of Philadelphia**, **with key public and private partners**, created and launched PHLConnectED to **provide free internet** for students so they could **fully participate in their education**.

PHLConnectED is **one initiative** within the City's **five-year Digital Equity Plan**.

PHL ConnectED

Key Partners

Sponsor

City of Philadelphia
Program Sponsor

Coordinating Agent

United Way
Coordinating Agent

Philanthropic Partners

WILLIAM PENN FOUNDATION

THE LENFEST FOUNDATION

NEUBAUER FAMILY FOUNDATION

Hess Foundation

COMCAST NBCUNIVERSAL

CARES ACT

ELEVATE 215 — PHILLY'S FUTURE STARTS AT SCHOOL

Fralic Family Fund

Education

School District of Philadelphia
Education Partner

Select Charter Schools
Education Partner

IMS
INDEPENDENCE MISSION SCHOOLS
Education Partner

Internet Solution

Comcast
INTERNET ESSENTIALS from Comcast
Internet Solution Partner

T-Mobile
Internet Solution Partner

Fiscal Agents

ELEVATE 215 — PHILLY'S FUTURE STARTS AT SCHOOL
Elevate215
Fiscal Agent

the philadelphia city fund
Philadelphia City Fund
Fiscal Agent

PCE Philadelphia Charters for Excellence
PCE
Fiscal Agent

Internet Connectivity

22,500+ internet connections through Comcast Internet Essentials and T-Mobile hotspots
91% K-12 households with high-speed internet home subscriptions as of summer 2021

211 Hotline

6,400+ eligibility screenings conducted
20% of callers supported with language interpretation in 9+ languages

Digital Navigators
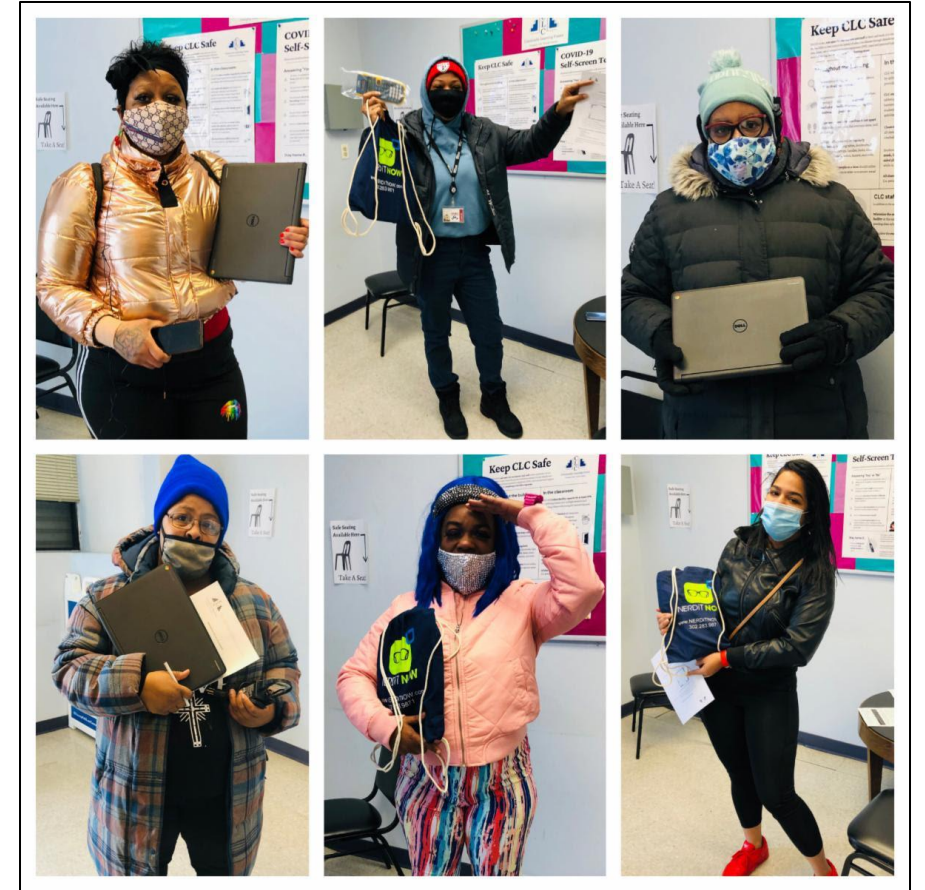
2,700+ unique callers from June 2020 - December 2022
5,168 total caller interactions

Digital Skills

220+ unique caregivers of pre-K-12 students served by digital skills classes and 1:1 support
560+ Northstar Digital Literacy badges obtained by pre-K-12 caregivers

Digital Navigator Beyond Literacy clients receiving free devices

Program Overview

City of
Philadelphia

OUR MISSION

To connect Philadelphia pre-K-12 households in need to free or low-cost internet as well as digital supports and resources so students can fully participate in their education.

OUR VISION

All pre-K-12 households in Philadelphia have the internet access and digital tools and skills needed for students to fully participate in their education.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

QUALITY SERVICE

- Supports are accessible in a timely fashion and are communicated with care
- Supports are technology/solution agnostic
- Families can efficiently navigate services and supports
- Household autonomy is prioritized
- Program operations and reporting are transparent and clearly communicated
- Program adopts a continuous improvement model

PARTNERSHIP

- Family and school-centered
- Partner expertise and household experience guide program operations
- Partners serve as trusted messengers in their networks
- Program elevates family engagement and feedback

RACIAL AND ECONOMIC EQUITY

- Outreach and engagement prioritizes Black, Latinx, and low-income pre-K-12 households

PHLConnectED: Pre-K-12 Internet Access

Free and low-cost internet promotion and enrollment support via the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), T-Mobile hotspots, and other solutions

Local education agency partnerships to support household internet and device access and digital skills resources

211 hotline as a household entry point to access digital resources and schedule a digital navigation appointment

1-on-1 digital navigation services offered in-person and remotely for households to determine their best digital access solutions

Will there be a lapse in my internet service if I transition from PHLConnectED sponsored service to ACP?

- The last day of PHLConnectED sponsored service is **July 31, 2023**.

- After July 31st, PHLConnectED families with **Comcast Internet Essentials** will need to **pay $9.95 per month starting in the next billing cycle**. If these families do not apply for and enroll in ACP before July 31st, their internet service will not change, but they will be responsible for paying the $9.95 monthly bill.

- After July 31st, **T-Mobile service will turn off for all hotspots** distributed to PHLConnectED families. If these families do not apply for and enroll in ACP before July 31, 2023, they will experience a lapse in internet service.

AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

FIND OUT IF YOU ARE ELIGIBLE AT GETACP.ORG/PHL

The **Affordable Connectivity Program** is a Federal Communications Commission benefit program to help all U.S. households access or keep their internet.

Eligible households in Philadelphia can receive:

- A discount of up to $30 per month towards broadband service; and

- A discount of up to $100 to buy a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers. A household must contribute between $10 and $50 toward the device cost.

AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

A household is eligible if a member of the household meets at least *one* of the criteria below:

1. Participates in the Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program, including at U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Community Eligibility Provision schools;

> **Note: All School District of Philadelphia households are eligible for ACP under this provision**

2. **Has an income that is at or below 200%** of the **Federal Poverty Guidelines** OR participates in certain assistance programs, such as:

- SNAP, Medicaid, Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program (Section 8 Vouchers), Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA)/202/811, Public Housing, SSI, WIC, or Lifeline;

3. **Has received a Federal Pell Grant** during the current award year;

4. **Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating provider's existing low-income program.** i.e. Is already enrolled in Comcast Internet Essentials.

AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM STEPS TO APPLY

Check your eligibility

- Use the pre-enrollment wizard at **getacp.org/phl** to check your eligibility on your phone or on a computer; **OR**

- Dial 2-1-1 to speak to a Resource Navigator who can tell you if you are likely eligible.

Apply online

- Go to **affordableconnectivity.gov.**

- Login or create a new account. If you apply online you may be able to receive immediate approval. It will take you to the **Lifeline National Verifier**. It is the same application for Lifeline and ACP.

- You will need an **email address** to apply online. You will be asked to create a profile with a password.

- You may be required to upload documents.

Apply by mail

- Print **Application Instructions**.

- Print **Application**.

- Print **Household Worksheet**.

- Complete and mail back application and household worksheet to:

- ACP Support Center
  PO Box 7081
  London, KY 40742

After you apply

- Once you apply, you will receive an approval code or be prompted to submit more information.

- If you are eligible you will need to use the **approval code** when you contact an Internet Service Provider so they can verify that your application is approved and get you the discount.
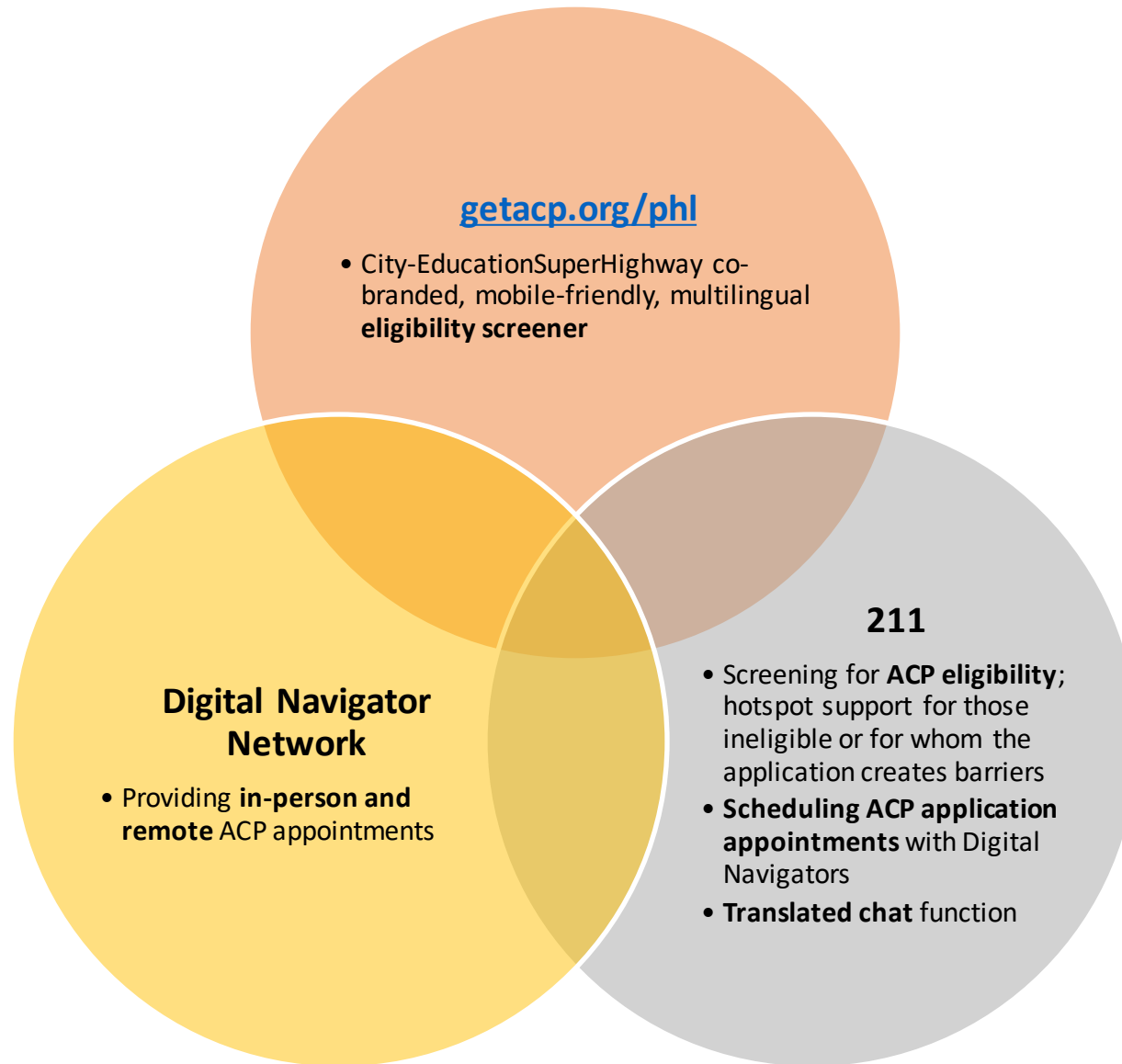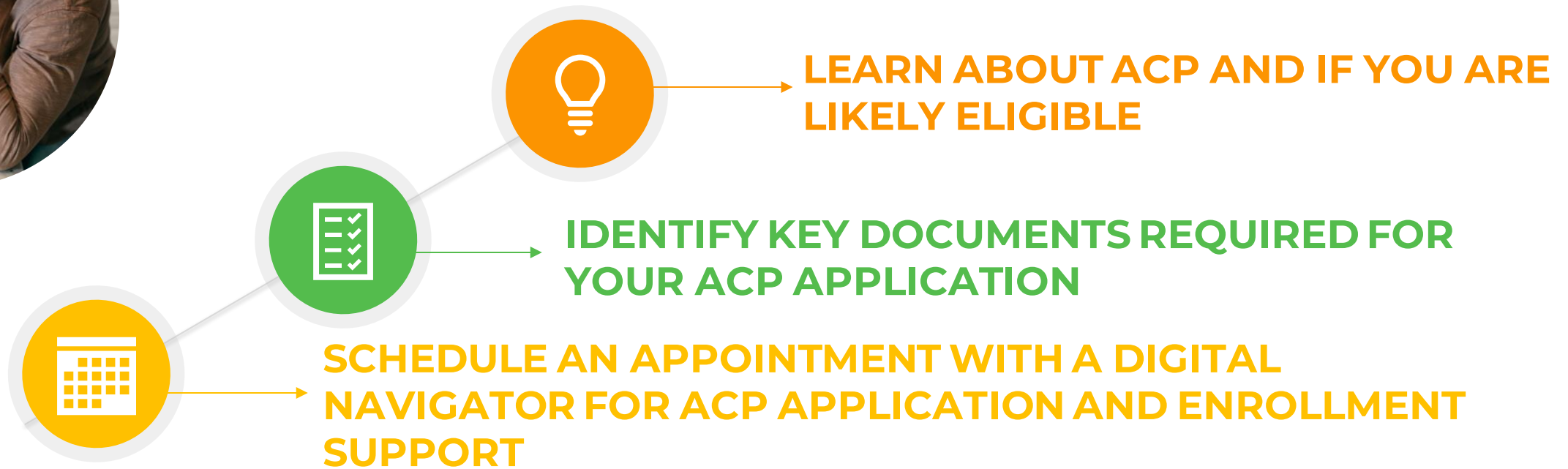
211 Hotline & Digital Navigators

City of Philadelphia

Streamlined Referrals and Support

getacp.org/phl

- City-EducationSuperHighway co-branded, mobile-friendly, multilingual **eligibility screener**

211

- Screening for **ACP eligibility**; hotspot support for those ineligible or for whom the application creates barriers
- **Scheduling ACP application appointments** with Digital Navigators
- **Translated chat** function

Digital Navigator Network

- Providing **in-person and remote** ACP appointments

What to Expect When You Dial 2-1-1

Press 8 for language services

LEARN ABOUT ACP AND IF YOU ARE LIKELY ELIGIBLE

IDENTIFY KEY DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR YOUR ACP APPLICATION

SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT WITH A DIGITAL NAVIGATOR FOR ACP APPLICATION AND ENROLLMENT SUPPORT

Who Are the City's Digital Navigators?

A "Digital Navigator" acts as a **digital support staff** who **provides remote or in-person one-to-one dedicated support to** households **around accessing and using technology**.

Beyond Literacy

215-474-1235

info@beyondliteracy.org

Digital Navigators are available Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

ExCITe Center at Drexel University

267-217-3508

navigator@excitecenter.org

You can also send a text message. Digital Navigators are available Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

SEAMAAC

215-867-9732

seamaacdigitalnavigator@seamaac.org

You can also send a text message in English or Spanish. Interpreters are available for most languages on helpline calls.

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How do Digital Navigators Assist Residents?

Helping to complete enrollment into ACP, Lifeline, or other programs

Helping to find free or low-cost devices and connecting those devices to the Internet
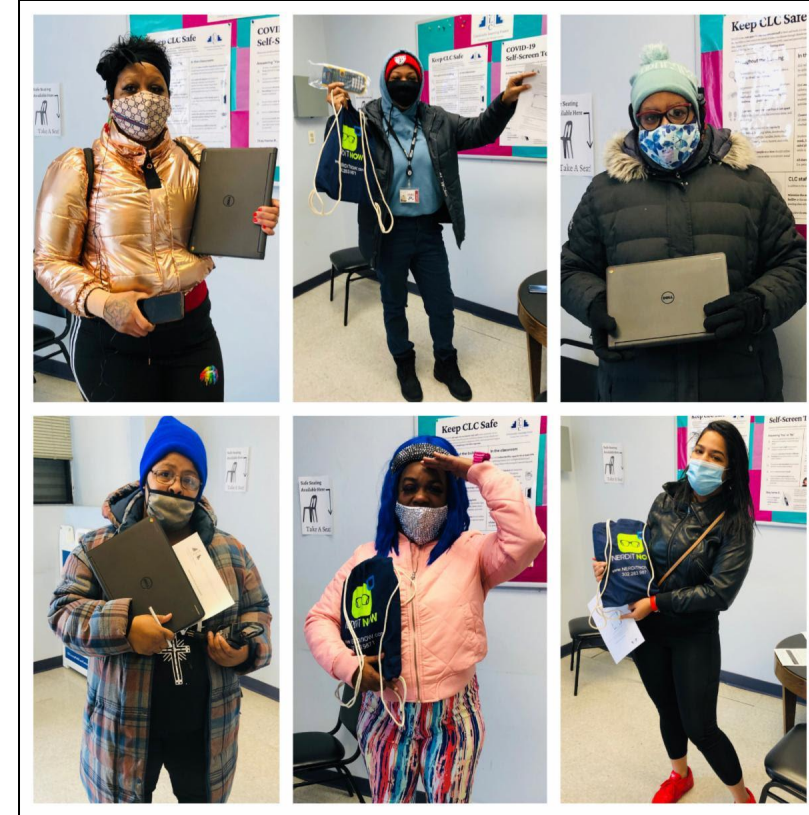
Troubleshooting Internet connectivity issues

Orienting individuals on how digital tools work

Supporting families on filling out forms or other on-demand online tasks

Referring families to digital skills classes

Beyond Literacy clients receiving free devices

Appendix and FAQs

City of Philadelphia

Help Us Get Families Internet Access

01

FIND OUT IF YOU ARE ELIGIBLE AND APPLY

Go to getacp.org/phl

02

DIAL 2-1-1 TO GET SUPPORT

Get pre-screened for ACP and schedule an enrollment appointment with a Digital Navigator

03

PROMOTE TRUST WITHIN COMMUNITIES

ACP is a federal program that does not require a Social Security Number to apply; if your household is not eligible, we will provide your child a T-Mobile hotspot

What is PHLConnectED?

PHLConnectED is the City's initiative to help pre-K–12 families get access to free or low-cost internet.

PHLConnectED helps families:

- Apply to the federal government's Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)

- Connect with a Digital Navigator for one-on-one support with accessing and using technology, and

- Access other digital supports and resources available across the City

AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM: Important FAQs
Read more on the **FCC's Consumer FAQ**

1. **Do I have to submit documents to verify my identity?**

   Yes. You do NOT have to submit a social security card. You can upload other documents, such as an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN).

2. **Do I have to apply online?**

   No. You can apply using a **paper application** and submit the required documents by mail. This document is in English and **Spanish**.

3. **What kind of internet service can I use this benefit toward?**
   - You can use this benefit for *fixed, in-home broadband* such as Comcast Internet Essentials, Xfinity, or Verizon FIOS.
   - You can also use this benefit toward a *wireless mobile hotspot* offered by several providers such as T-Mobile or AT&T.
   - You can also use this benefit toward your *wireless mobile phone plan* if your mobile phone provider is participating in the benefit.

4. **Can I apply for the Affordable Connectivity Program if I have a past due balance with the provider?**

   Yes, eligible consumers with a past due balance or a balance in collections are eligible for the benefit.

5. **Can I sign up for the Affordable Connectivity Program if I am already a customer or if I was a customer in the past?**

   Yes, the benefit is available to eligible new, prior and existing customers of participating providers.

6. **How does the $100 device benefit work?**
   - Participating internet service providers can be reimbursed up to $100 if they supply a connected device to a household, provided the household pays more than $10 but less than $50 for the device. In other words, to take advantage of this benefit, it must be done through your participating internet service provider, and you must contribute a portion of the cost. **Not all Internet Service Providers are offering devices**. If you need a device, you must get your device and your internet through the same provider.
   - The device benefit is limited to **a laptop, a desktop computer, or a tablet**. It does not include cell phones, large phones, or "phablets" that can make cellular calls.

AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM: Important FAQs

Read more on the **FCC's Consumer FAQ**

6. **Can I receive both the Affordable Connectivity Program and Lifeline benefits at the same time?**

   Yes. You can also combine these benefits with other state and local benefits where available. They can be applied to the same qualifying service or separately to a Lifeline service and an Affordable Connectivity Program service with the same or different providers. For example, an eligible household could have a Lifeline-supported mobile phone service and a separate home internet service that is supported through the Affordable Connectivity Program.

7. **If I currently use the lifeline program, do I have to apply again for the ACP?**

   No. If you are currently in the Lifeline program, you do not need to apply again for the ACP. You can apply your Lifeline and ACP benefit to the same or to separate service.

8. **Can my roommate and I each get a monthly discount?**

   The Affordable Connectivity Program is limited to one monthly service discount per household, which is defined as any individual or group of individuals who are living together at the same address and share income and expenses. Learn more and find a household worksheet at AffordableConnectivity.gov/do-i-qualify/what-is-a-household/.

9. **If the service plan I pick is $25 per month, do I get the extra money?**

   No. The provider is only reimbursed for the cost of the plan up to $30 per eligible household.

10. **If the plan I pick is more than the monthly discount for internet service, do I pay the extra myself?**

    Yes. You are responsible for any amount over $30 per month for internet service under the Affordable Connectivity Program.

What if I'm not eligible for ACP?

FAQs

Many Philadelphia pre-K-12 households are eligible for ACP. If your household is not eligible, PHLConnectED will distribute T-Mobile hotspots to your pre-K-12 students at a 1:1 ratio.

What if I'm already using my ACP benefit?

A Digital Navigator can help you understand your options and your next steps. You can contact a Digital Navigator for more help.

How long will eligible families have free or low-cost internet access?

- Families receiving the ACP benefit will need to recertify their benefit **after one year**.

- Student households with a T-Mobile hotspot through PHLConnectED will reverify their eligibility **every six months**.

I currently have internet. How do I switch to PHLConnectED?

PHLConnectED can help you apply for the ACP benefit if you aren't already using it. If you're eligible for ACP, you can apply the benefit to your **existing internet plan** OR you can choose a new internet provider and apply your benefit to a **new plan**.

T-Mobile hotspots are reserved for families that are **not eligible** for ACP or **cannot apply** for ACP.

How long does it take to get connected to the internet after I've been told I'm eligible?

If you're approved for ACP, you need to **give your ACP approval code to the internet service provider you choose**. They will apply that code to your **next billing cycle**.

If your child receives a T-Mobile hotspot, they will turn the hotspot on, connect their device, and use the internet on their device.

I am not a native English speaker and need to talk to someone in [Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian, ...]. What number can I call?

You can call the 211 hotline, which is available in over 150 languages and dialects. When you dial 2-1-1, press 8 for language services.

Digital Navigators also use interpretation services on their helpline calls.