



National Conference of State Legislatures Office of State-Federal Relations

FAA Releases Full Details on Drone Pilot Program; States Have 20 Days to Signal their Intent to Apply

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On Nov. 2, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) [formally announced](#) the full details and application process to participate in its Unmanned Aerial System (drones) pilot program. The announcement comes one week after President Donald Trump issued a [presidential memorandum](#) directing the U.S. Department of Transportation to establish such a program.

The pilot program would allow states, local, and tribal governments along with other public entities, such as airports and port authorities, to jointly propose new kinds of drone operations, with an industry partner, that go beyond existing prohibitions on certain types of operations. These include beyond-visual-line-of-sight, nighttime operations and flights over people. Most importantly, FAA noted during a follow up Q&A, that it would welcome applications that included reasonable time, place and manner restrictions as a component of the application. FAA stressed that the goal of this program was to develop a framework by which drones could be both effectively integrated into our economy while also maintaining public safety. As NCSL noted in its [official statement](#) following the president's announcement, an integral aspect of this pilot program must be the ability for states to issue such reasonable restrictions and its inclusion is a welcome step forward for this exciting technology.

If a state is interested in submitting an application, it [must](#) file a [notice of intent](#) with the FAA by Nov. 28. Following this, all applicants will be given access to an online portal to complete their application by early January. FAA will then choose a minimum of five applications 180 days after the deadline, with the pilot program lasting for a maximum of three years. **A state that does not signal its intent by Nov. 28 will not be allowed to participate in the pilot program at this time**, although, FAA noted there may be a second round of applications later.

FAA will host a webinar on Monday, Nov. 6 to provide further details and answer questions. You can register [here](#). For those states considering applying, the full application scoring rubric will be published on Nov. 8 in the federal register, which can be found [here](#).

NCSL is a member of the FAA's Drone Advisory Subcommittee that is also exploring the proper role for states when it comes to drones. We will continue to follow and report on any new developments, but please feel free to reach out to NCSL staff [Ben Husch](#) (202-624-7779) and [Kristen Hildreth](#) (202-624-3597) if you have any questions or concerns.

Key Documents

[UAS Pilot Program Overview](#)

[Notice of Intent/Application Website](#)

[Presidential Memorandum on Unmanned Aircraft Systems Integration Pilot Program](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)