

**Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority**  
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**Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority**

**September 15, 2022**

**10:00 AM**

In-Person: Forest Room, Keystone Building Meeting Center

Virtual Meeting

Dial-In: +1 267-332-8737

Phone Conference ID: 945 849 909#

- I. Call to Order
- II. Approval of August 22, 2022 Meeting Minutes
- III. Election of Assistant Secretary
- IV. Sub-Committee Membership Updates and Next Steps
  - a. Data & Mapping
  - b. Technical
  - c. Workforce & Supply Chain
  - d. Outreach & Education
- V. Approval of Capital Projects Fund Grant Plan
  - a. Period of Performance
  - b. Scope of Work
  - c. Budget
- VI. Public Comment
- VII. Adjournment

*\*This meeting will be recorded, and your participation is your consent to being recorded.*

## Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority

Board Meeting Minutes

August 22, 2022

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Board members and voting designees in attendance:

- Greg Thall, Chairman
- Dr. Kyle Kopko, Center for Rural Pennsylvania
- Gladys Brown-Dutrieuille, Chairwoman of the PUC
- Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill
- Matt Franchak, on behalf of Senator John Kane
- Beth Rosentel, on behalf of Representative Pam Snyder
- Representative Carl Walker Metzgar
- Mark Critz, Department of Agriculture, on behalf of Secretary Russell Redding
- Dr. David Volkman, Department of Education, on behalf of Acting Secretary Eric Hagarty
- Matt Bembenick, Department of General Services, on behalf of Acting Secretary Joe Lee

Designees in attendance:

- Joe Witmer, Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
- Chloe Mandara, Office of Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill
- Jon Hopcraft, Office of Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill
- Phil Kirchner, Office of Representative Carl Walker Metzgar
- Pam Frontino, Center for Rural PA

Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) staff in attendance:

- Brandon Carson
- Erin Wachter
- Kalie Snyder
- Leigh Walter
- Teresa Wills
- Penny Ickes
- Paul Opiyo
- Lori Irwin

Guests in attendance:

- Nicole Ugarte, National Telecommunications and Information Administration
- Greg Gensemer, COPA Office of Administration
- Kevin Glatfelter, COPA Office of Administration
- Eric Epstein, Rock the Capital

### I. **Call to Order**

Chairman Thall called the meeting to order at 2:01 PM.

Kalie Snyder conducted a roll call of the board members and confirmed quorum.

## **II. Approval of August 11, 2022 Meeting Minutes**

Chairman Thall called for a motion to approve the minutes as presented to the board. Motion made by Representative Metzgar. Motion was seconded by Mark Critz. Chairman Thall asked for all Board members to approve or deny the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

## **III. Sub-Committee Membership**

Brandon Carson provided a refresher of the sub-committees and the work that was done to finalize the recommendation list. He also mentioned the establishment of roundtables, which will support the work of the sub-committees and allow additional input from valued stakeholders

Brandon also discussed the Board liaisons for each of the sub-committees. Acknowledging the expertise that Authority members bring and based on feedback from members, he identified the following individuals: Data & Mapping - Dr. Kyle Kopko, Technical - Joseph Witmer, Workforce & Supply Chain - Senator Kristin Philips-Hill, and Outreach & Education - Mark Critz.

Brandon outlined next steps for sub-committee engagement.

Chairman Thall thanked Brandon and team for the work done to finalize the sub-committee member lists. He then asked members of the Authority if there were any questions related to the sub-committee update. Matt Franchak agreed and shared similar sentiment as Chairman Thall.

Matt Bembenick asked if there are concerns regarding organizations represented and their potential interest in applying for funds or contracting with the Commonwealth moving forward. Brandon confirmed that all conversations with interested parties outlined the preclusion of applying for funds or contracting with the Commonwealth, should they agree to participate in sub-committees. He also acknowledged that a signed confidentiality form is required for each of the members.

Mark Critz asked if a motion is required for the sub-committee liaisons. Brandon conferred with Lori Irwin and confirmed that motion would be favorable. Chairman Thall asked if motion could be made for sub-committee board liaisons simultaneously with committee members, Lori confirmed that could be done simultaneously.

Chairman Thall asked for a motion to approve sub-committee members and Board liaisons. Motion made by Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill. Motion was seconded by Chairwoman Brown-Dutrieuille. Chairman Thall asked for Kalie Snyder to do a roll call vote of each Board member for concurrence. Motion passed unanimously.

## **IV. Public Comment**

Chairman Thall called for public comment.

Eric Epstein with Rock the Capital reiterated his request for sub-committee meetings to be sunshined. Chairman Thall commented that it is being considered and that inaction is not indicative of not sunshining but rather inability to discuss until sub-committees were established.

Mark Critz asked for confirmation on the deadline, September 1, 2022, for internet service providers to submit data to the FCC. Brandon Carson confirmed that is correct and confirmed if providers do not meet September 1, 2022 deadline, they are precluded from BEAD funds.

**V. Meeting Adjournment**

Chairman Thall called for a motion to adjourn. Motion to adjourn was made by Mark Critz. Motion seconded Dr. Kyle Kopko. Chairman Thall asked for all Board members to confirm adjournment. Meeting adjourned at 2:19 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill  
Secretary

DRAFT

<b>Data &amp; Mapping</b>		
<b>Organization</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Name</b>
Microsoft	Senior Director Govt. Affairs	Jay Summerson
Pennsylvania One Call	President & CEO	Bill Kiger
Communication Workers of America	International VP	Ed Mooney
County Commissioners Association of PA	Executive Director	Lisa Schaefer
Zingaretti Enterprises	President	Gary Zingaretti
Pennsylvania Department of Education	E-Rate Coordinator	Julie Tritt Schell (DE)
Wireless Internet Service Providers Association	State Advocacy Manager	Steve Schwerbel
PA State Association of Boroughs	Executive Director	Chris Cap

Digital equity (DE)

**DRAFT**

<b>Technical</b>		
<b>Organization</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Name</b>
Broadband Communications Association of PA	President	Todd Eachus
PA Wireless Association	President	Barb Burba-Filoreto
PA Office of Administration	Director	Frank Baier
Communications Workers of America	President	Jim Gardler
National Utilities Contractors Association	TBD	
PA Intermediate Units	Asst. Director of Educational Technology	Bill Wiedenheft (DE)
PA Telephone Association	Executive Director	Steve Samara
TBD		

Digital equity (DE)

**DRAFT**

<b>Workforce &amp; Supply Chain</b>		
<b>Organization</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Name</b>
International Brotherhood of Electric Workers	International Representative	Kris Anderson
Pennsylvania eCommerce Association	Executive Director	Russ McDaid
Pennsylvania College of Technology	Vice President, Workforce Development	Shannon Munro
PA Association of Career & Technical Administrators	Associate Director	John Pulver
PA Rural Electric Association	President & CEO	Steve Brame
PA Manufacturers' Association	Executive Director	Carl Marrara
PA Department of Labor & Industry	Special Project Director	Stephanie Perry (DE)
Fiber Broadband Association	President	Gary Bolton

Digital equity (DE)

**DRAFT**



Outreach & Education		
Organization	Title	Name
Office of Rural Health, Penn State University	Director	Lisa Davis
PA State Grange	Legislative Director	Carrie Nace
American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations	Legislative Director	Sarah Hammond
PA State Association of Township Supervisors	Director of Government Relations	Joseph Gerdes
Pennsylvania Farm Bureau	State and Local Affairs Specialist	Kyle Kotzmoyer
PA Chamber of Business & Industry	Director, Government Affairs	Kevin Sunday
Independence Public Media Foundation	President	Molly de Aguiar (DE)
PA Municipal League	Deputy Executive Director	Amy Sturges

Digital equity (DE)

**DRAFT**

## Capital Projects Fund Grant Plan Executive Summary (not to exceed two pages)

- A brief description of the objectives(s) intended to be achieved with the CPF grant funds, and the Programs expected to be funded.

*Addressing Pennsylvania's broadband infrastructure challenges and increasing access to high-speed internet services has been – and remains – a top priority for the commonwealth, local governments, internet service providers, non-profit organizations, and many other partners statewide.*

*The Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority (PBDA) proposes to allocate \$200 million to establish and implement the Pennsylvania Broadband Infrastructure Program (Program). The Program will target locations that do not currently have access to 25/3 Mbps reliable service. Grant recipients will be required to participate in federal affordability programs and/or establish a low-cost option for consumers that meets CPF requirements. Funding extensions of existing last-mile cable modem and fiber-to-the-premise broadband networks that can be constructed quickly; and large-scale regional projects that can transform broadband availability by serving large numbers of eligible addresses, will be eligible.*

*Additionally, \$45 million will be allocated for multi-purpose community facility projects through the establishment of a Digital Anchor Institution Grant Program. The Program will offer competitive grant funding to community anchor institutions and local governments for community projects to construct, acquire, or improve buildings (shared office space, recreation centers, schools, libraries, etc.) that are, or will be open to the public and will directly enable work, education, and health monitoring at the respective facility.*

*Lastly, the Digital Access and Opportunity Grant Program will provide \$20 million to increase access to appropriate, affordable technology devices, such as laptops, tablets, desktop personal computers, and wi-fi devices. Grant funding will support institutions equipped to distribute devices and equipment through short or long-term loan programs or to be made available for use in public facilities. Many populations across the commonwealth lack the resources for device access, including low-income residents, seniors, and historically disadvantaged communities. Such communities have experienced disproportionately poor work, education, and health outcomes, in part due to lack of access to resources and opportunities in technology, with affordability being a major barrier. The cost to increase broadband adoption and improve digital literacy skills through technical assistance and training will be eligible for grant funding.*

- A narrative explaining the Recipient's rationale for allocating funds as proposed with its Allocation Table, and how the specific Programs were identified in pursuit of the stated policy purpose(s).

*With continued technology advancements and shifts to remote work and digital engagement, addressing the digital divide is key to ensuring equitable economic participation for all Pennsylvanians. Lack of technology access has been a long-known barrier to education and employment opportunities, but the limitation of in-person activities and shift to remote*

*interactions during the COVID-19 pandemic shed light on how large, and how critical, the digital access and opportunity gap is. When people lack access to technology, it denies them the opportunity to participate in essential life activities.*

*Pennsylvania's proposal to spend \$200 million for the Broadband Infrastructure Program, \$45 million for the Digital Anchor Institution Grant Program, and \$20 million for the Digital Access and Opportunity Grant Program will collectively help to address four core challenges facing Pennsylvanians' ability to access or adopt broadband: 1) broadband service infrastructure and availability; 2) digital equity and affordability; device and technology access; and digital literacy and technical support.*

- A description of the Recipient's approach for identifying critical needs and the communities to be served by the capital assets, addressing the following questions:
  - What processes did you undertake, and factors did you consider in identifying critical needs?
  - How has community engagement and public participation informed the Recipient's approach for spending CPF grant funds and planning for implementation and operation of capital assets?
  - How was equity considered in the selection of programs?

*Qualitative and quantitative data will be used to identify communities with critical needs, such as the updated FCC fabric maps, National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), BroadbandNow statistics, American Community Survey data, and the Digital Divide Index. Communities identified with critical needs will be engaged through surveys, digital equity roundtable discussions, and community outreach visits. Key themes and feedback will be incorporated into overall program attributes.*

*The Pennsylvania Broadband Office continues to engage in discussion with community leaders, organizations, and key stakeholders, holding more than 50 such meetings since May 2022. The office, in coordination with DCED's Center for Local Government Services, will also survey local communities. The office has also partnered with entities such as the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, PA Municipal League, PA Association of Township Supervisors, and the PA State Association of Boroughs to gather input on the data they've collected through local feasibility studies, survey efforts, etc.*

*Recently the PA Broadband Development Authority established four distinct sub-committees to serve the Authority in an advisory capacity. Community engagement will continue through (monthly/quarterly) sub-committee meetings. Sub-committees are made up of 32 members to include industry leaders, local government organizations, and community organizations. Each sub-committee will have a specific focus on one of the following: Data & Mapping, Technical, Workforce & Supply Chain, and Outreach & Education. A digital equity leader has been identified within each sub-committee, responsible for advising and managing the equitability aspect of program development, guidelines, and implementation. The Authority will also host Digital Equity roundtable discussions to seek public input and gain further insight into critical needs.*

## Use Code 1A - Broadband Infrastructure Projects

### Use Code 1A Questionnaire

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#### **Program Summary**

Provide a description of the Program (approximately 2 – 3 pages), including:

#### **Program Objectives and Target Capital Assets:**

*Addressing Pennsylvania's broadband infrastructure challenges and increasing access to high-speed internet services has been – and remains – a top priority for the commonwealth, local governments, internet service providers, non-profit organizations, and many other partners statewide.*

*The Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority (PBDA) proposes to allocate \$200 million in Capital Projects Fund to establish and implement the Pennsylvania Broadband Infrastructure Program (Program). The Program will ensure that the goals and objectives meet the requirements outlined in the Capital Projects Fund guidance and incorporate those of the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) and Digital Equity Programs, to the extent possible. We recognize the importance of coordination across all federal funding streams to aid in the reduction of overbuild and ensure consistency.*

*The Program will target locations that do not currently have access to 25/3 Mbps reliable service. Projects chosen for funding will be capable of delivering service at a minimum of 100/20 Mbps and scalable to symmetrical service, can be completed in a reasonable timeframe and are fully compliant with Treasury rules. Commonwealth topography requires flexibility on the technology that is used and in what region of the state. Therefore, the Program will allow for fiber and fixed-wireless networks with a priority given to fiber projects. Additionally, grant recipients will be required to participate in federal affordability programs and/or establish a low-cost option for consumers that meets CPF requirements.*

#### **Program History:**

*Most aspects of this Program are directly modeled after Pennsylvania's Unserved High-Speed Broadband (UHSB) Program, which was established pursuant to Act 132 of 2020, known as the Unserved High-Speed Broadband Funding Program Act. This Act charged the Commonwealth Financing Authority (CFA) with establishing and implementing the program and allocated \$10 million in state funding for the purpose of awarding grants to nongovernmental entities for the facilitation of deploying high-speed broadband service infrastructure in unserved areas of the commonwealth. The UHSB received over \$38MM in requests for funding through 63 different submitted applications. The CFA awarded 19 projects which will connect over 4,000 homes and businesses in hard-to-reach areas of the commonwealth. For additional details on the UHSB Program, applications received, and challenges that were upheld, please visit this [link](#).*

#### **Project Approach, Project Eligibility and Selection Criteria:**

*Eligible entities are those defined as local units of government, non-profits, and private entities. Additionally, the commonwealth will support covered partnerships consisting of one more of the above entities and a provider of internet service. Per Treasury guidance, the Program will prioritize projects that involve broadband networks owned, operated by or affiliated with local governments, non-profits, and cooperatives, and commitments to serving entire communities.*

*Applications will be accepted under two distinct categories: 1) line extension and development; and 2) large scale regional infrastructure projects.*

- 1. The line extension category will fund extensions of existing last-mile cable modem and fiber-to-the-premise broadband networks that can be constructed quickly. Internet service providers are eligible if they have an existing fiber-to-the-premise or cable network offering service of at least 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload to mass-market users that can be extended to eligible premises in the commonwealth. Network infrastructure deployed using Program funds must be scalable to symmetrical 100 Mbps service.*
- 2. The large-scale regional project category is designed for projects that can transform broadband availability across a significant portion of the commonwealth by serving large numbers of eligible addresses. Applicants may be private for-profit or non-profit corporations, partnerships, or municipalities, counties, or affiliated organizations (economic development corporations, regional planning and development councils, etc.). Regional consortia of local governments may participate.*

*Eligible projects shall consist of the deployment of wired and/or fixed wireless high-speed broadband service infrastructure in unserved areas of the Commonwealth. An unserved area is defined as a designated geographic area in which households or businesses do not have access to at least 25 Mbps download speed 3 Mbps upload speed.*

*Upon completion, the project must, at minimum:*

- Deliver service that reliably meets or exceeds symmetrical download and upload speeds of 100 Mbps. If it would be impracticable, because of geography, topography, or excessive cost, for a project to deliver services at such a speed, the project must be designed so that it reliably meets or exceeds 100 Mbps download speeds and between 20 Mbps and 100 Mbps upload speeds and be scalable to a minimum of 100 Mbps symmetrical.*
- Ensure affordability by participating in a federal program that provides low-cost options to consumers (i.e. ACP) and/or establish a low-cost option for consumers based that meetings CPF guidance.*

*Eligible project costs include:*

- a) Pre-project development costs and uses, including data-gathering, feasibility studies, community engagement and public feedback processes, equity assessments and planning, and needs assessments; permitting, planning, architectural design, engineering design, and work related to environmental, historical, and cultural reviews.*

- b) *Ancillary costs necessary to operationalize and put the capital assets to full use, including costs to increase broadband adoption and improve digital literacy.*
- c) *Acquisition of land, rights of way, and easements necessary to construct high-speed broadband service infrastructure and related appraisal and transaction costs.*
- d) *Construction of high-speed broadband service infrastructure, including but not limited to fiberoptic cables and towers.*
- e) *Purchase and installation of equipment related to the deployment of high-speed broadband service infrastructure.*
- f) *Clearing and preparation of land necessary to construct high-speed broadband service infrastructure.*
- g) *Test of service costs.*
- h) *Bond costs associated with the deployment of high-speed broadband infrastructure. Bond financing costs are not eligible costs.*
- i) *Administrative costs of the applicant to administer the grant are limited to 2% of the grant award. Administrative costs include costs to complete the grant application, advertising costs, legal, as well as documented staff expenses.*
- j) *Project contingencies associated with the construction of the project are limited to 5% of the actual construction costs. No other contingencies shall be included as eligible project costs.*

*Grants will be awarded based upon a scoring system, which will be released to the public at least 30 days before the beginning of the application period. When weighing or scoring an application, the following criteria will be considered:*

- a) *The size and scope of the unserved or underserved area to be deployed.*
- b) *The experience, technical ability and financial capability of the applicant to successfully deploy high-speed broadband service infrastructure and provide high-speed broadband service.*
- c) *The extent to which federal, state or local government funding support is necessary to develop and deploy high-speed broadband infrastructure in an economically feasible manner in the proposed project area.*
- d) *The quality and sustainability of low-cost alternatives.*
- e) *The extent to which the project involves broadband networks owned, operated by or affiliated with local governments, non-profits, and cooperatives, and commitments to serving entire communities.*
- f) *The proportion of the capital pledged by the applicant to finance the project.*
- g) *Whether the project meets the minimum speed thresholds as required by Treasury, or scalability to meet the 100 symmetrical requirements.*
- h) *An affidavit that no grant funding shall be used in such a manner as to result in an overbuild.*
- i) *An affidavit that an applicant shall ensure that a contractor or subcontractor performing construction, reconstruction, demolition, repair or maintenance work on a high-speed broadband service infrastructure project meets the requirements listed within Act 96 of 2021.*
- j) *Other factors which the Authority determines to be reasonable and appropriate.*

**Application Process:**

To apply for funding, the applicant must submit the electronic on-line Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) Single Application for Assistance located at [www.esa.dced.state.pa.us](http://www.esa.dced.state.pa.us). Required supplemental information of these guidelines (see Appendix A), must be attached electronically to the application as directed on the Addenda tab within the Single Application for Assistance website. Technical needs regarding the submission of the on-line application will be provided through DCED customer service. Within ten (10) business days following the close of the application period, the Authority will provide a summary of all grant applications on the Program page for the purpose of collecting challenges to the proposed project areas.

**Describe the Program timeline and list Program milestones to be achieved each year.**

The Program will be implemented over four years. The following chart provides a view of year-over-year program milestones. Subsequent grant rounds will open as necessary, based on program demand.

2023	2024	2025	2026
Quarter 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Announce Program</li> <li>Publish grant guidelines and application material</li> <li>Open application window</li> </ul> Quarter 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and score applications</li> <li>Execute grant agreements</li> <li>Formally announce awards</li> </ul> Quarter 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If needed, open a second grant application window, review/score applications, execute grant agreements</li> </ul> Quarter 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project financial audits</li> <li>Project monitoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project Financial Audits</li> <li>Program/Project Governance</li> <li>Project Monitoring</li> <li>Evaluate Program Success</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project Financial Audits</li> <li>Program/Project Governance</li> <li>Project Monitoring</li> <li>Evaluate Program Success</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project Financial Audits</li> <li>Program/Project Governance</li> <li>Project Monitoring</li> <li>Evaluate Program Success</li> <li>Program Closeout</li> </ul>

**List the Program website, guidance documents, or rules, if applicable. Provide links or attachments if available.**

Upon approval from Treasury, the Program will be listed on the PA Broadband Development Authority website at [Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority - PA Department of Community & Economic Development](http://Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority - PA Department of Community & Economic Development)

**Eligibility**

Explain why the communities identified to be served by Broadband Infrastructure Projects have a critical need for those projects as is related to access, affordability, reliability, and/or consistency. Recipients are encouraged to invest in projects that are designed to provide service to households.

*Those subgrantees identified to be awarded funds through this program, must meet the requirements outlined above which include projects with targeted locations lacking access to reliable wireline 25/3 Mbps service. Communities without reliable broadband service are at an extreme disadvantage compared to those that are connected and residents in those communities cannot participate in the digital economy on a level playing field. The entire commonwealth was adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but those communities lacking access to reliable broadband service have suffered disproportionately with a lack of access to opportunities such as distance learning, remote work, and telehealth. The fact that this program will require service providers to participate in affordability programs such as the ACP, or at minimum, offer their own low-cost option, will greatly benefit community access to these opportunities.*

#### What quantitative and qualitative data informed this Program Plan?

*The below is a non-exhaustive list of data that will be used to inform the program plan:*

- *FCC form 477 data*
- *Interpretation of FCC 477 data*
- *Ookla speed test data*
- *Comments by ISPs regarding the UHSB program*
- *Input from local governments and organizations*
- *Broadband survey results*
- *Infrastructure data requested from and provided by ISPs who service the commonwealth*

How has, or how will the Recipient identify communities with critical needs? In the response, describe any community engagement and public participation that has informed the definition of critical need for this Program, including efforts to solicit input from and/or partner with communities. How was equity considered in the design of this program and how will equity be considered in the selection of projects and the distribution of funds?

*The Pennsylvania Broadband Office continues to engage in discussion with community leaders, organizations, and key stakeholders, holding more than 50 such meetings since May 2022. The office, in coordination with DCED's Center for Local Government Services, will also survey local communities. The office has also partnered with entities such as the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, PA Municipal League, PA Association of Township Supervisors, and the PA State Association of Boroughs to gather input on the data they've collected through local feasibility studies, survey efforts, etc.*

*Recently the PA Broadband Development Authority established four distinct sub-committees to serve the Authority in an advisory capacity. Community engagement will continue through (monthly/quarterly) sub-committee meetings. Sub-committees are made*



*up of 32 members to include industry leaders, local government organizations, and community organizations. Each sub-committee will have a specific focus on one of the following: Data & Mapping, Technical, Workforce & Supply Chain, and Outreach & Education. A digital equity leader has been identified within each sub-committee, responsible for advising and managing the equitability aspect of program development, guidelines, and implementation. The Authority will also host Digital Equity roundtable discussions to seek public input and gain further insight into critical needs.*

*The program will also have a scoring mechanism that will include consideration of things like community impact, total overall households served through infrastructure buildout, and sustainability and functionality of low-cost options.*

*Additionally, Penn State Extension created a broadband map that represents FCC data, in terms of broadband service, for the purpose of enabling bidders to better estimate their project costs in providing service to locations not having broadband services as defined by the FCC (25/3 Mbps). At a census block level, it represents blocks that were deemed eligible for assistance through the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) auction. Extension's map also includes reserve prices at the census block group level, as well as the number of eligible sites within the block group. The map identifies existing structure, transmission lines, substation, and tower data, and provides measuring tools to assist with estimating. Penn State Extension continues to raise awareness of the need for broadband expansion within the commonwealth by engaging local leaders and service providers with an end goal to increase the map's capabilities and provide more granular, address level data.*

**How is the program designed so that it does not duplicate investments from enforceable federal or state funding commitments for reliable wireline service at speeds of at least 100 Mbps of download speed and 20 Mbps of upload speed (e.g., program requirement, state law, process)?**

*Before awarding grant funds under this Program, the Authority will ensure a transparent, evidence-based and expeditious challenge process under which an entity eligible to be an applicant may challenge a proposed project on the grounds that awarding a grant to the applicant will result in an overbuild.*

*Applicable information from applications will be posted on the Program webpage and will then be opened for a specified challenge period. Below is an outline of the challenge process for the Program, designed to allow fair and equitable consideration to all applicants and challengers.*

*High-speed broadband service providers serving households and businesses within a proposed project area may challenge an application on the grounds that granting an award to the applicant will result in the deployment of high-speed broadband infrastructure in an area that is served by speeds of at least 100 Mbps symmetrical or at minimum, 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload, with scalability to 100 Mbps symmetrical. Additionally, for an area to be considered served, service at or exceeding 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload with scalability to meet 100 Mbps symmetrical, must be available to all residential customers in the defined area.*

*All challenges collected are subject to public disclosure, except for the specific location of infrastructure assets. Feedback regarding existing service, construction, or future builds to be considered when reviewing applications, supporting evidence and documentation must be provided. Comments with insufficient evidence or documentation will not be considered. Commenters may be asked to provide additional information and/or work with the Office to validate service availability.*

*Planned service to a proposed project area is eligible for the purpose of a challenge if state or federal funds have been awarded and the provider has committed to providing service to the areas using these state or federal funds. Federally and state funded areas with existing agreements to build service to, or are currently served with, access to internet at speeds less than 100/20 Mbps are eligible for funding under the Program.*

*Areas adjacent to state or federally funded areas may be eligible for a challenge if the challenger demonstrates existing awards will cover the adjacent area. If an incumbent provider serves one side of a roadway, but will not connect the other side, that unserved side of the road is eligible for funding. In these instances, the applicant must prove the incumbent provider will not connect the unserved side of the roadway. The challenger must commit to serving the adjacent areas at speeds equal to or greater than the Program minimum deployment speed.*

*Applicants will be given three (3) weeks to respond to challenges from the final day of challenge submissions. The Authority will review the challenge and responses to determine if the proposed project will result in overbuild. A list of valid challenges and the project areas affected will be posted to the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority's website.*

### **Program Administration**

**Describe the Recipient's approach for ensuring compliance with award requirements, including performance measurement and subrecipient monitoring.**

*The Pennsylvania Broadband Office will put into place a robust set of procedures and requirements to measure performance and monitor subrecipient use of funds for intended purposes. Announcement for the program will include detailed information regarding award recipients' requirements to cooperate with oversight activities.*

*The below is a non-exhaustive list of activities:*

- Review of expenses and requests for reimbursement*
- Quarterly progress reporting to meet state and federal obligations*
- Field audits to verify capital project construction progress, completeness, and quality*
- Participation in state broadband asset mapping requests*

*Guides to key state and federal requirements and technical assistance will be provided once contracts are executed, to orient subrecipients to their obligations. The Office intends to maintain regular contact with awardees through required submission of data about the proposed capital project through its design and construction stages, through quarterly progress reports, and*

*through reimbursement requests to be supported by detailed descriptions of expenses incurred against budgeted amounts. Oversight will include field inspections, review of records, and expenses submitted for reimbursement. The Office intends to withhold at least 10% of grant amounts until projects are fully complete.*

**The narrative should also discuss the Recipient's institutional, managerial, and financial capability necessary to ensure proper planning, management, and completion of any such Project.**

*The Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority is staffed by the Pennsylvania Broadband Office within the PA Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED). DCED has extensive institutional, managerial, and financial capability within the agency and extensive experience in establishing and implementing grant programs and administering funds in compliance with federal funding obligations.*

*Brandon Carson, Executive Director, has more than 15 years of experience working in non-profit and local government management advancing community and economic development projects and initiatives across Pennsylvania. Most recently, he has focused his efforts on increasing access to affordable broadband services in unserved and underserved areas. Brandon is experienced with grants oversight and broadband deployment in the commonwealth's most hard to reach areas. The Office continues to onboard staff, including a Grants Manager, and an Infrastructure Manager, which will aid in proper planning, management, and completion of this project plan.*

**How will you incorporate participation of and engagement with the communities with critical needs to shape Program implementation and operations?**

*As mentioned above, the purpose of our sub-committees is to garner feedback and comments on the work of the Authority. That includes the design and implementation of program guidelines and processes. We also anticipate holding roundtable discussions, program overview webinars, and offering technical assistance to ensure we are engaging as much local level feedback from our areas of most need. Additionally, the Authority is equipped with a wide range of industry and local leader relationships that can assist in additional engagement with local communities.*

**PROGRAM BUDGET****Broadband Infrastructure Administrative Costs**

	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>
2a. Administering the CPF funds (by the Recipient)	\$ -	\$ 99,466.26	\$ 108,697.96	\$ 110,871.92	\$ 113,089.35	\$ 115,351.14
2b. Technical assistance to potential subrecipients	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 200,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ -
2c. Complying with grant administration and audit requirements	\$ -	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 46,304.05	\$ 48,790.13	\$ 51,285.93	\$ 28,000.00
2d. Operating expenditure (including Community Outreach)	\$ -	\$ 33,091.27	\$ 63,428.19	\$ 63,628.19	\$ 63,828.19	\$ 43,936.91
Sub-Grantee Administrative Costs	\$ -	\$ 209,095.50	\$ 348,492.50	\$ 348,492.50	\$ 278,794.00	\$ 209,095.50
<b>2. Total Program Administrative Costs (not to exceed amounts listed in source of Funding)</b>	\$ -	\$ 361,653.03	\$ 766,922.70	\$ 671,782.74	\$ 606,997.47	\$ 396,383.55

Use Code 1C - Multi-Purpose Community Facility Projects  
Use Code 1C Questionnaire

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**Program Summary**

Provide a description of the program (approximately 2 – 3 pages), including:

**Program Objectives:**

*The Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority (Authority) plans to allocate \$45 million of Capital Projects Fund dollars for multi-purpose community facility projects, through the establishment of a Digital Anchor Institution Grant Program (Program). This will be a new grant program, established and administered by the Authority, and staffed by the Pennsylvania Broadband Office (Office) within the Department of Community and Economic Development.*

*The Program will offer competitive grant funding to community anchor institutions and units of local government for community projects to construct, acquire, or improve buildings (shared office space, recreation centers, schools, libraries, etc.) that are, or will be open to the public and will directly enable work, education, and health monitoring at the respective facility.*

*With continued technology advancements and shifts to remote work and digital engagement, addressing the digital divide is key to ensuring equitable economic participation for all Pennsylvanians. Lack of technology access has been a long-known barrier to education and employment opportunities, but the limitation of in-person activities and shift to remote interactions during the COVID-19 pandemic shed light on how large, and how critical, the digital access and opportunity gap is.*

*When people lack access to technology, it denies them the opportunity to participate in essential life activities, including:*

- *Education access across the K-12 and postsecondary sectors;*
- *Entry to employment, including finding a job and using online application platforms, as well as basic technology skills qualifications;*
- *Opportunities to work remotely;*
- *Access to telemedicine for both physical and behavioral health needs;*
- *Participation in civic life and access to government services; and*
- *The ability to stay connected with family and friends.*

*Many Pennsylvanians without affordable access rely upon community anchor institutions such as schools, libraries, recreation centers, community health centers, and other non-profit organizations, or buildings owned or operated by units of local government, to participate in this increasingly digitized society. Further, many community members face challenges to include limited English proficiency, limited digital literacy skills, or physical or intellectual disabilities. Community anchor institutions are local trusted partners with deep-rooted relationships within the community to support these challenges.*

*At the same time, technology continues to evolve, workforce needs, and requirements change, and the physical infrastructure owned or operated by community anchor institutions and units of local government continues to age or deteriorate, often under circumstances of limited financial resources with which to make capital improvements for the benefit of the communities served.*

### **Target Capital Assets:**

*Target capital assets include, but not limited to, community anchor institutions such as schools, libraries, recreation centers, community health centers, and other non-profit organization buildings, or buildings owned or operated by units of local government.*

*In accordance with Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund guidance from U.S. Treasury, eligible projects under this Program will include, but not limited to:*

- *Projects to construct or improve full-service community schools that provide academic programming to their students and adult education in communities; health monitoring to students and the community; and workforce training or career counseling services that provide members of the community with tools and resources needed to engage in the workforce, including digital literacy training programs.*
- *Projects to construct or improve libraries that provide public access to the internet for purposes including work, education, and health monitoring such as offering digital skills education and training programs and support for members of the community wishing to engage in virtual learning.*
- *Projects to construct or improve community health centers that, in addition to engaging in health monitoring, provide a broader range of services to the communities they serve, including access to job counseling employment services, as well as health education classes, telehealth appointments, or internship programs for medical professionals.*

### **Program's History:**

*This will be a new grant program, established and administered by the Authority, and staffed by the Pennsylvania Broadband Office (Office) within the Department of Community and Economic Development.*

### **Approach for carrying out the program:**

*The Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority will develop guidelines and a grant application for this Program, upon approval from Treasury. Upon completion of guidelines and grant application material, the Authority will formally and publicly announce the Program. Grants will be competitively awarded, with at least two application windows.*

*Quarterly progress reports will be submitted to the Office and regularly reviewed. As federal reports are developed, the Office will show adherence to performance and budgetary milestones. All projects will be managed in a developed standard format assigning project and program managers as needed to oversee the implementation of the Program from*

*planning and design to the execution and closeout. Projects that experience challenges will be resolved as laid out in the grant agreement.*

**Project Eligibility and Selection Criteria:**

*Selection criteria for target projects will be outlined in the grant guidelines, but will include, at minimum:*

- *Whether the proposed capital project will provide services or activities that directly enable work, education, and health monitoring for at least five years from the completion of the project;*
- *How the proposal addresses critical needs of the communities to be served;*
- *Clearly delineated measurement of outputs and outcomes for the proposed capital improvement;*
- *Whether the facility is publicly accessible to the community;*
- *Whether the proposed capital project will reach unserved and underserved populations with the greatest digital need, particularly those communities that have had historically limited broadband internet access, with the intention of ensuring those populations have the requisite skills to take advantage of expanded broadband access resulting from the infrastructure law.*

*Continued stakeholder engagement feedback will shape future guidelines around the Program to ensure projects meet a critical need, are directly enabling work, education and health monitoring, and whether the projects are reaching unserved and underserved populations with the greatest digital need.*

**Application Process:**

*Once the Program is announced, there will be an application window where participants will be able to submit projects that meet the selection criteria outlined in the program guidelines. Applicants will need to provide information related to their current involvement and experience providing services to the community that directly enable work, education, and health monitoring. Applicants will also be asked how they will sustain their services once the grant program has been completed.*

**Describe the Program timeline and list Program milestones to be achieved each year.**

*The Digital Anchor Institution Grant Program will be implemented as a four-year program. The following chart provides a view of year-over-year program milestones.*

2023	2024	2025	2026
Quarter 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Announce Program</li> <li>Publish grant guidelines and application material</li> <li>Open application window</li> </ul> Quarter 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and score applications</li> <li>Execute grant agreements</li> <li>Formally announce awards</li> </ul> Quarter 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If needed, open a second grant application window, review/score applications, execute grant agreements</li> </ul> Quarter 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project financial audits</li> <li>Project monitoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project Financial Audits</li> <li>Program/Project Governance</li> <li>Project Monitoring</li> <li>Evaluate Program Success</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project Financial Audits</li> <li>Program/Project Governance</li> <li>Project Monitoring</li> <li>Evaluate Program Success</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project Financial Audits</li> <li>Program/Project Governance</li> <li>Project Monitoring</li> <li>Evaluate Program Success</li> <li>Program Closeout</li> </ul>

List the Program Website, guidance documents, or rules, if applicable. Provide links or attachments if available.

Upon approval from Treasury, the Digital Anchor Institution Grant Program will be listed on the PA Broadband Development Authority website at [Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority - PA Department of Community & Economic Development](#)

**Eligibility**

How will the program directly enable work, as defined in the Guidance?

Grant funding through Pennsylvania’s Digital Anchor Institution Grant Program will directly enable community anchor institutions and local governments to help members of the community, at all stages of life, engage in employment, search for employment, conduct job interviews, and develop critical skills and knowledge necessary to become employed. This includes enabling community anchor institutions to undergo building projects, renovations, or technical upgrades necessary for the public to participate in career counseling programs, workforce training programs, as well as learn how to use the internet to search for and apply to jobs.

How will the program directly enable education, as defined in the Guidance?

Grant funding under this program will enable education-related opportunities by affording community anchor institutions the ability to offer student and adult learners the ability to participate in school, academic programming, extracurricular activities, social development programs, internships, or other professional development training opportunities. For example,



*the program will enable grant recipients to improve or acquire physical infrastructure necessary to offer shared classroom space with upgraded technology necessary for virtual classroom instruction.*

### **How will the program directly enable health monitoring, as defined in the Guidance?**

*Grant recipients under this program can make physical improvements or additions to their infrastructure to better facilitate individual health monitoring, either physical or behavioral. Members of the community will have access to telemedicine appointment meeting space with a healthcare provider, or in-person community health screening opportunities.*

### **Explain why the communities identified to be served by the Multi-Purpose Community Facilities Projects have a critical need for those projects.**

*In Philadelphia alone, an estimated 100,000 households, including 12,000 K-12 households remain disconnected. This correlates to areas with high poverty, senior citizens, low-income residents, and those who primarily speak Spanish significantly lagging in broadband adoption.*

*Community anchor institutions are critical resources for children and residents. Using the Philadelphia example, the City's network of over 150 recreation centers reaches every neighborhood and offers safe, engaging spaces for education and workforce programming, but IT site assessments conducted at over 80 recreation centers identified poor internet connectivity as a barrier to programming.*

*From a statewide perspective, capital project funding will offer libraries a needed boost to make improvements that will increase broadband connections, accessibility upgrades, staffed computer labs, and small group or individual study or meeting rooms (also for telehealth). Pennsylvania's Keystone Fund grants are used to help public libraries build new facilities, renovate older buildings, and make services more accessible. In five Keystone grant rounds (2016-2021), 174 applications were received, requesting a total of \$41,304,022. Of those, 111 (or 64%) were funded in the amount of \$26,010,635. Of those applications received, 63 (or 36%) were not funded, in the amount of \$15,293,387. There are many more libraries in need of capital improvements that may not have applied due to other barriers.*

### **What quantitative and qualitative data informed this Program Plan?**

*According to several of the most recent Federal Communications Commission's Broadband Deployment Reports, approximately 600,000 to 800,000 Pennsylvanians lack access to robust, reliable, high-speed internet. As this information is self-reported by service providers according to census tracts, the reality of infrastructure deployment, affordability, and achieving the 25/3 Mbps connection speeds may not be fully captured.*

*Other sources demonstrate that at least 2.6 million Pennsylvania residents in 1.3 million (26%) households – including 25% of Latinx and 35% of Black American households do not have high-speed internet <sup>1</sup> and may lack the skills to effectively use it, driven by the following factors:*

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey Microdata

- **Infrastructure availability:** At least 250,000 locations do not have access to 25/3 Mbps, and an additional 140,000 locations do not have access to 100/20 Mbps internet due to lack of available infrastructure<sup>2</sup>
- **Affordability:** Approximately 537,500 households (9.7%) do not have access to a wired low-cost home high-speed internet subscription (ranks as 18<sup>th</sup> lowest percentage in U.S.)<sup>3</sup>
- **Devices:** There are an estimated 1.6 million households (31.2%) without a computer and smart phone (ranks as 34<sup>th</sup> lowest % in U.S.)<sup>4</sup>
- **Digital Literacy:** As many as 1.2 million (14.6%) adults may lack the digital literacy required to begin taking advantage of critical digital services.<sup>5</sup>

*Over the next year, the Authority will conduct a digital equity needs assessment, including a comprehensive assessment of the baseline from which Pennsylvania is working and the identification of the barriers to digital equity faced generally and by unserved communities in Pennsylvania. The Authority will also develop an asset inventory, including current resources, programs, and strategies that promote digital equity, as well as existing digital equity plans and programs already in place at the local level.*

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<sup>2</sup> Proprietary data set from CostQuest

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey Microdata

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey Microdata

<sup>5</sup> National Center for Education Statistics

<b>Digital Anchor Institution Program Administrative Costs</b>						
	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>
2a. Administering the CPF funds (by the Recipient)	\$ -	\$ 149,199.39	\$ 163,046.94	\$ 166,307.87	\$ 169,634.03	\$ 173,026.71
2b. Technical assistance to potential subrecipients	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 300,000.00	\$ 150,000.00	\$ 150,000.00	\$ -
2c. Complying with grant administration and audit requirements	\$ -	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 33,000.00	\$ 36,000.00	\$ 39,000.00	\$ 93,583.30
2d. Operating expenditure (including Community Outreach)	\$ -	\$ 49,636.91	\$ 95,142.28	\$ 95,442.28	\$ 95,742.28	\$ 65,905.37
Sub-Grantee Administrative Costs	\$ -	\$ 313,643.25	\$ 522,738.75	\$ 522,738.75	\$ 418,191.00	\$ 313,643.25
<b>2. Total Program Administrative Costs (not to exceed amounts listed in source of Funding)</b>	\$ -	\$ 542,479.55	\$ 1,113,927.97	\$ 970,488.90	\$ 872,567.31	\$ 646,158.63

Use Code 1B - Digital Connectivity Technology Projects  
Use Code 1B Questionnaire

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**Program Summary**

Provide a description of the program (approximately 2 – 3 pages), including:

**Program Objectives:**

*The Digital Access and Opportunity Grant Program (Program) will provide \$20 million to increase access to appropriate, affordable technology devices, such as laptops, tablets, desktop personal computers, and wi-fi devices.*

*With continued technology advancements and shifts to remote work and digital engagement, addressing the digital divide is key to ensuring equitable economic participation for all Pennsylvanians. Lack of technology access has been a long-known barrier to education and employment opportunities, but the limitation of in-person activities and shift to remote interactions during the COVID-19 pandemic shed light on how large, and how critical, the digital access and opportunity gap is. The pandemic demonstrated that having a working internet device in a household was a necessity, especially for students and working adults. Devices such as laptops, desktop computers, and tablets allow users to fully participate in work, school, and health monitoring activities.*

*Many populations across the commonwealth lack the resources for device access, including low-income residents, seniors, and historically disadvantaged communities. Such communities have experienced disproportionately poor work, education, and health outcomes, in part due to lack of access to resources and opportunities in technology, with affordability being a major barrier.*

*Grant funding will support institutions equipped to distribute devices and equipment (equipment installed as part of public wi-fi infrastructure, such as access points, repeaters, and routers) to members of the public through short or long-term loan programs or to be made available for use in public facilities. Ownership of the devices and equipment must be maintained by the grant recipient, not the end user.*

*Because many residents also need low-cost or free technical support to ensure devices are working properly, grant recipients will be required to offer some form of technical assistance or training to end users. The cost to increase broadband adoption and improve digital literacy skills will be eligible for grant funding, as such a cost is necessary to operationalize and fully utilize the device.*

**Target Capital Assets:**

*The Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority will partner with schools, libraries, municipalities, CareerLinks and workforce/training organizations, non-profits, and other*

*community anchor institutions to bring affordable device access opportunities to Pennsylvanians – for loan in their home, or for use in public spaces. The Authority will partner with institutions that have the administrative capability to implement device distribution based on program guidelines. Devices will include laptops, tablets, desktop personal computers, and wi-fi devices within the facilities mentioned above.*

### **Program’s History:**

*The Digital Access and Opportunity Grant Program is a new grant program, to be established and administered by the Authority, which is staffed by the Pennsylvania Broadband Office (Office) within the Department of Community and Economic Development.*

### **Approach for carrying out the program:**

*The Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority will develop guidelines and a grant application for this Program, upon approval from Treasury. Upon completion of guidelines and grant application material, the Authority will formally and publicly announce the Program. Grants will be competitively awarded.*

*Quarterly progress reports will be submitted to the Office and regularly reviewed. As federal reports are developed, the Office will show adherence to performance and budgetary milestones. All projects will be managed in a developed standard format assigning project and program managers as needed to oversee the implementation of the Program from planning and design to the execution and closeout. Projects that experience challenges will be resolved as laid out in the grant agreement.*

### **Project Eligibility and Selection Criteria:**

*Continued stakeholder engagement feedback will shape future guidelines around the Program to ensure projects meet a critical need, are directly enabling work, education and health monitoring, and whether the projects are reaching unserved and underserved populations with the greatest digital need.*

*Target projects will meet the Program’s eligibility based on the criteria of improving device access and adoption in communities with a critical need, based on affordability and lack of access. The Authority will identify areas that lack digital equity, literacy and have barriers to broadband adoption. Demographics (economic distress factor, BIPOC, digital equity, rural vs. urban, social vulnerability, etc.) and key project attributes (i.e., affordability, cost) will be evaluated.*

*Selection criteria for target projects will be outlined in the grant guidelines, but will include, at minimum:*

- *Whether the proposed project will provide services or activities that directly enable work, education, and health monitoring;*
- *Whether the proposed project will offer technical assistance or training to the end users;*

- How the proposal addresses critical needs of the communities to be served;
- Clearly delineated measurement of outputs and outcomes for the proposed project;
- Whether sub-recipients have a demonstrated capability to administer a device distribution program;
- Whether the proposed project will reach unserved and underserved populations with the greatest digital need, particularly those communities that are historically disadvantaged with the intention of ensuring those populations have the requisite skills to take advantage of expanded broadband access resulting from the infrastructure law.

**Application Process:**

Describe the Program timeline and list Program milestones to be achieved each year.

The Digital Access and Opportunity Grant Program will be implemented as a four-year program. The following chart provides a view of year-over-year program milestones.

2023	2024	2025	2026
Quarter 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Announce Program</li> <li>• Publish grant guidelines and application material</li> <li>• Open application window</li> </ul>	Quarter 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and score applications</li> <li>• Execute grant agreements</li> <li>• Formally announce awards</li> </ul> Quarter 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If needed, open a second grant application window, review/score applications, execute grant agreements</li> </ul> Quarter 3 and 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project financial audits</li> <li>• Project monitoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Financial Audits</li> <li>• Program/Project Governance</li> <li>• Project Monitoring</li> <li>• Evaluate Program Success</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Financial Audits</li> <li>• Program/Project Governance</li> <li>• Project Monitoring</li> <li>• Evaluate Program Success</li> <li>• Program Closeout</li> </ul>

List the Program Website, guidance documents, or rules, if applicable. Provide links or attachments if available.

Upon approval from Treasury, the Digital Access and Opportunity Grant Program will be listed on the PA Broadband Development Authority website at [Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority - PA Department of Community & Economic Development](#)

**Eligibility**

Explain why the communities identified to be served by Digital Connectivity Technology Projects have a critical need for those projects. Please refer to the guidance for more information on what should be included in this response.

*The Authority will consider any available data to validate critical needs including but not limited to documentation of existing broadband internet service performance and pricing; federal and/or state collected broadband data, such as the American Community Survey, the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration's Indicators of Broadband Need Map, or the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Qualified Census Tracts, related to internet use, device ownership, income, and poverty; community surveys; and reports from community organizations.*

*The critical need will be based on the lack of digital literacy and access to devices in economically distressed communities, based on stakeholder engagement and data gathering efforts.*

### **What quantitative and qualitative data informed this Program Plan?**

*According to several of the most recent Federal Communications Commission's Broadband Deployment Reports, approximately 600,000 to 800,000 Pennsylvanians lack access to robust, reliable, high-speed internet. As this information is self-reported by service providers according to census tracts, the reality of infrastructure deployment, affordability, and achieving the 25/3 Mbps connection speeds may not be fully captured.*

*Other sources demonstrate that at least 2.6 million Pennsylvania residents in 1.3 million (26%) households – including 25% of Latinx and 35% of Black American households do not have high-speed internet <sup>1</sup> and may lack the skills to effectively use it, driven by the following factors:*

- **Infrastructure availability:** *At least 250,000 locations do not have access to 25/3 Mbps, and an additional 140,000 locations do not have access to 100/20 Mbps internet due to lack of available infrastructure<sup>2</sup>*
- **Affordability:** *Approximately 537,500 households (9.7%) do not have access to a wired low-cost home high-speed internet subscription (ranks as 18<sup>th</sup> lowest percentage in U.S.)<sup>3</sup>*
- **Devices:** *There are an estimated 1.6 million households (31.2%) without a computer and smart phone (ranks as 34<sup>th</sup> lowest % in U.S.)<sup>4</sup>*
- **Digital Literacy:** *As many as 1.2 million (14.6%) adults may lack the digital literacy required to begin taking advantage of critical digital services.<sup>5</sup>*

*Over the next year, the Authority will conduct a digital equity needs assessment, including a comprehensive assessment of the baseline from which Pennsylvania is working and the identification of the barriers to digital equity faced generally and by unserved communities in Pennsylvania. The Authority will also develop an asset inventory, including current resources, programs, and strategies that promote digital equity, as well as existing digital equity plans and programs already in place at the local level.*

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey Microdata

<sup>2</sup> Proprietary data set from CostQuest

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey Microdata

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey Microdata

<sup>5</sup> National Center for Education Statistics

How has, or how will the Recipient identify communities with critical needs? In the response, describe any community engagement and public participation that has informed the definition of critical need for this Program, including efforts to solicit input from and/or partner with communities. How was equity considered in the design of this program and how will equity be considered in the selection of projects and the distribution of funds?

*Qualitative and quantitative data will be used to identify communities with critical needs, such as the updated FCC fabric maps, National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), BroadbandNow statistics, American Community Survey data, and the Digital Divide Index. Communities identified with critical needs will be engaged through surveys, digital equity roundtable discussions, and community outreach visits. Key themes and feedback will be incorporated into overall program attributes.*

*The Pennsylvania Broadband Office continues to engage in discussion with community leaders, organizations, and key stakeholders, holding more than 50 such meetings since May 2022. The office, in coordination with DCED's Center for Local Government Services, will also survey local communities. The office has also partnered with entities such as the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, PA Municipal League, PA Association of Township Supervisors, and the PA State Association of Boroughs to gather input on the data they've collected through local feasibility studies, survey efforts, etc.*

*Recently the PA Broadband Development Authority established four distinct sub-committees to serve the Authority in an advisory capacity. Community engagement will continue through (monthly/quarterly) sub-committee meetings. Sub-committees are made up of 32 members to include industry leaders, local government organizations, and community organizations. Each sub-committee will have a specific focus on one of the following: Data & Mapping, Technical, Workforce & Supply Chain, and Outreach & Education. A digital equity leader has been identified within each sub-committee, responsible for advising and managing the equitability aspect of program development, guidelines, and implementation. The Authority will also host Digital Equity roundtable discussions to seek public input and gain further insight into critical needs.*

*The program will also have a scoring mechanism that will include consideration of things like community impact, and the extent to which the project will ultimately reach unserved and underserved populations with the greatest digital need, particularly those communities that have had historically limited broadband internet access.*

## **Program Administration**

Describe the Recipient's approach for ensuring compliance with award requirements, including performance measurement and subrecipient monitoring.

*The Pennsylvania Broadband Office will put into place a robust set of procedures and requirements to measure performance and monitor subrecipient use of funds for intended*



*purposes. Announcement for the program will include detailed information regarding award recipients' requirements to cooperate with oversight activities.*

*The below is a non-exhaustive list of activities:*

- *Review of expenses and requests for reimbursement*
- *Quarterly progress reporting to meet state and federal obligations*
- *Field audits to verify capital project construction progress, completeness, and quality*
- *Participation in state broadband asset mapping requests*

*Guides to key state and federal requirements and technical assistance will be provided once contracts are executed, to orient subrecipients to their obligations. The Office intends to maintain regular contact with awardees through required submission of data about the proposed capital project through its design and construction stages, through quarterly progress reports, and through reimbursement requests to be supported by detailed descriptions of expenses incurred against budgeted amounts. Oversight will include field inspections, review of records, and expenses submitted for reimbursement. The Office intends to withhold at least 10% of grant amounts until projects are fully complete.*

**The narrative should also discuss the Recipient's institutional, managerial, and financial capability necessary to ensure proper planning, management, and completion of any such Project.**

*The Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority is staffed by the Pennsylvania Broadband Office within the PA Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED). DCED has extensive institutional, managerial, and financial capability within the agency and extensive experience in establishing and implementing grant programs and administering funds in compliance with federal funding obligations.*

*Brandon Carson, Executive Director, has more than 15 years of experience working in non-profit and local government management advancing community and economic development projects and initiatives across Pennsylvania. Most recently, he has focused his efforts on increasing access to affordable broadband services in unserved and underserved areas. Brandon is experienced with grants oversight and broadband deployment in the commonwealth's most hard to reach areas. The Office continues to onboard staff, including a Grants Manager, and an Infrastructure Manager, which will aid in proper planning, management, and completion of this project plan.*

**How will you incorporate participation of and engagement with the communities with critical needs to shape Program implementation and operations?**

*As mentioned above, the purpose of our sub-committees is to garner feedback and comments on the work of the Authority. That includes the design and implementation of program guidelines and processes. We also anticipate holding roundtable discussions, program overview webinars, and offering technical assistance to ensure we are engaging as much local level feedback from our areas of most need. Additionally, the Authority is equipped with a wide*

*range of industry and local leader relationships that can assist in additional engagement with local communities.*

DRAFT

**Digital Technology Connectivity Program Administrative Costs**

	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>
2a. Administering the CPF funds (by the Recipient)	\$ -	\$ 248,665.65	\$ 271,744.89	\$ 277,179.79	\$ 282,723.39	\$ 288,377.85
2b. Technical assistance to potential subrecipients	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 500,000.00	\$ 250,000.00	\$ 250,000.00	\$ -
2c. Complying with grant administration and audit requirements	\$ -	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 95,830.80	\$ 100,986.35	\$ 107,480.37	\$ 112,642.20
2d. Operating expenditure (including Community Outreach)	\$ -	\$ 82,728.19	\$ 158,570.47	\$ 159,070.46	\$ 159,570.46	\$ 109,842.28
Sub-Grantee Administrative Costs	\$ -	\$ 522,738.75	\$ 871,231.25	\$ 871,231.25	\$ 696,985.00	\$ 522,738.75
<b>2. Total Program Administrative Costs (not to exceed amounts listed in source of Funding)</b>	\$ -	\$ 904,132.59	\$ 1,897,377.41	\$ 1,658,467.85	\$ 1,496,759.22	\$ 1,033,601.08