



Issue Brief

BCAP

BROADBAND COMMUNICATIONS
ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA

PA Broadband Development Authority

September 2023

The Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority, established by law on Dec. 22, 2021, as Act 96 of 2021, is an independent agency of the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED).

The authority is responsible for creating a statewide broadband plan and distributing federal and state funds for broadband expansion projects in unserved and underserved areas of Pennsylvania. Its efforts focus on closing Pennsylvania's digital divide so all Pennsylvanians can get connected to affordable and reliable high-speed broadband internet at home, at work, or on the road.

Executive Director – Brandon Carson

PBDA Board of Directors

- Board meets quarterly with ability to call special meetings.
- For motions to be successful, all four legislative appointees must vote in favor of the motion. One legislative appointee voting no will deem the motion failed.

Legislative Appointees

- Rep. Robert F. Matzie (D-Beaver/16th District) – House Democrat Caucus (also chairman of House Consumer Affairs, Utilities and Technology Committee)
- Rep. Carl Metzgar (R-Somerset/69th District) – House Republican Caucus (also minority chairman, House Professional Licensure Committee)
- Sen. Kristin Phillips-Hill (R-York/28th District) – Senate Republican Caucus (also vice chairman of Senate Communications and Technology Committee), Board Secretary
- Sen. John Kane (D-Philadelphia/9th District) – Senate Democrat Caucus (also minority chairman, Senate Labor and Industry Committee) Board Assistant Secretary

Cabinet Secretaries

- Secretary Uri Monson – Office of the Budget (appointed chairman by governor)
- Secretary Reggie McNeil – Department of General Services
- Secretary Dr. Khalid Mumin – Department of Education
- Secretary Rick Siger – Department of Community and Economic Development
- Secretary Russell Redding – Department of Agriculture

Others

- Stephen DeFrank – Chairman, Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
- Dr. Kyle Kopko, Executive Director, The Center for Rural Pennsylvania

Subcommittees

- Mapping

- Members: Jay Summerson, Microsoft; Bill Kiger, Pennsylvania One Call; Ed Mooney, Communications Workers of America; Lisa Schaefer, County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania; Gary Zingaretti, Zingaretti Enterprises; Julie Tritt Schell, PA Department of Education; Steve Schwerbel, Wireless Internet Service Providers Association; and Chris Cap, PA State Association of Boroughs.
- Outreach and Education
 - Members: Lisa Davis, Office of Rural Health, Penn State University; Carrie Nace, PA State Grange; Sarah Hammond (co-chair), American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations; Bailey Thumm, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau; Dan Alwine, PA Chamber of Business & Industry; Molly de Aguiar, Independence Public Media Foundation; Amy Sturges, PA Municipal League; and Joseph Gerdes, PA State Association of Township Supervisors.
- Technical
 - Members: Todd Eachus, Broadband Communications Association of PA (co-chair); Barb Burba-Filoreto, PA Wireless Association; Frank Baier, PA Office of Administration; Jim Gardler, Communications Workers of America; Shane Ellis, Pennsylvania Utility Contractors Association; Bill Wiendenheft, PA Intermediate Units; Steve Samara, PA Telephone Association; and Terry Fitzpatrick, Energy Association of Pennsylvania.
- Workforce and Supply Chain
 - Members: VACANT, International Brotherhood of Electric Workers International; Russ McDaid, eCommerce Association; Shannon Munro, Pennsylvania College of Technology; John Pulver, PA Association of Career & Technical Administrators; Steve Brame, PA Rural Electric Association; Carl Marrara, PA Manufacturers' Association; VACANT, PA Department of Labor and Industry; and Gary Bolton, Fiber Broadband Association.

The board has already received \$5 million in planning funds through the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program and over \$1.6 million in funds through the Digital Equity Act Program. These resources are being used by the Authority to build staff capacity, complete statewide mapping, and develop the relevant plans that NTIA requires prior to the distribution of implementation funds in 2024.

The funding allocations from NTIA will be based on the total number of unserved locations in the Commonwealth as compared to the number of unserved locations in the other states and territories.

Based on the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) National Broadband Map, Pennsylvania will receive \$1.16 billion in funding for broadband efforts.

To maximize the funding allocation, the Authority contracted with Penn State Extension to assist with the review of the map and development of challenge data to submit to the FCC in response to the information provided by internet service providers.

The authority must also submit two plans: Five-Year Action Plan for BEAD (submitted in August 2023) and the Digital Equity Plan. The work plan includes facilitation of roundtable discussions and a strategic planning session for the Authority's board of directors; facilitation of core planning team meetings; development and deployment of a statewide community survey; partnering with Authority staff to host in-person community outreach events to help identify locally specific barriers and inform asset mapping; development of a "Broadband Ready" framework/checklist to prepare local units of government for broadband projects and prepare for partnerships with providers; and the development of a draft framework of the BEAD Five-Year Action Plan and Digital Equity Plan.

The Authority also worked to develop its first competitive grant program to incentivize broadband deployments in underserved and underserved areas. The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocated \$10 billion to the U.S. Department of the Treasury, which established the Capital Projects Fund (CPF) Program. The CPF Program provides payments to states and territories for the purposes of critical capital projects that are in direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commonwealth was allocated \$279 million under the CPF Program, through which the Authority submitted program plans to Treasury identifying the intended use of funds. The Authority has identified three grant programs through which CPF funds will be administered: (1) \$200 million for the Broadband Infrastructure Program (BIP); (2) \$45 million for the Digital Anchor Institution Program; and (3) \$20 million for the Digital Access and Opportunity Grant Program.