



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY
& ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

PENNSYLVANIA CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND PERFORMANCE REPORT

(PENNSYLVANIA-CPF PR 2023)

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM
AND MULTI-PURPOSE COMMUNITY FACILITIES PROGRAM

Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority

July 2023



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority (PBDA) made significant progress in planning and preparing for its Capital Projects Fund programs during the Performance Report period. This report outlines the processes utilized by PBDA as it formatted and drafted its guidelines for the Broadband Infrastructure Program and Multi-Purpose Community Facilities Program, and how data and information will be utilized to further inform grant processes. It outlines the significant input gained through community and stakeholder conversations, which informed program guidelines and procedures.

Pennsylvania’s BIP program will deploy high-speed broadband service infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas of the Commonwealth to enhance economic development, education, health care, and emergency services. BIP grants are available to businesses, not-for-profit entities, local governments, and economic development organizations. Eligible projects include line extension and development and large-scale regional infrastructure projects.

Complying with Treasury and American Rescue Plan Act requirements, the Facilities program aims to jointly and directly enable work, education, and health monitoring and other community-facing functions. It will provide funds to construct, acquire, or improve buildings that are, or will be open to the public. Eligible applicants include community anchor institutions such as schools, libraries, recreation centers, community health centers, and other not-for-profit organizations.

Though no sub-awards have been granted as of July 31, 2023, PBDA will soon close applications for the first of its funded programs, the Broadband Infrastructure Program (BIP) and subsequently begin the application review process for that program. PBDA is prepared to open the second of its funded programs, the Multi-Purpose Community Facilities Program (Facilities) in the next 30 days. Timelines for both programs are listed below.¹

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM TIMELINE

Guidelines posted online	April 10, 2023
Application window open	May 10, 2023 – August 9, 2023
Proposed areas posted online for public review	August 23, 2023
Challenge process	August 23, 2023 – October 6, 2023
Adjudication of challenges submitted	October 7, 2023 – November 5, 2023
Results of adjudication posted online	November 6, 2023
Application review period	November – December 2023
Awards announced	January 2024

MULTI-PURPOSE COMMUNITY FACILITIES PROGRAM TIMELINE

Guidelines posted online	September 2023
Application window open	October – December 2023
Application review period	January – March 2024
Awards announced	April 2024

The Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority is an independent agency of the PA Department of Community and Economic Development, established through [PA Act 96 of 2021](#). PBDA is managed by an 11-member board of directors and is responsible for distributing federal and state monies for broadband expansion projects in unserved and underserved areas of Pennsylvania. Its efforts focus on closing Pennsylvania’s digital divide so all Pennsylvanians can be connected to affordable and reliable high-speed broadband internet, at home, at work, or on the road.

¹ Please note that program timelines are tentative and subject to change, particularly for the Facilities program, which has not yet opened for applications.



ABOUT THE PROGRAMS

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Approved Program Plan Numbers

- Broadband Infrastructure Program — CPF_GP-000147
- Multi-Purpose Community Facilities Program — CPF_GP-000308

Program Start Dates

- Broadband Infrastructure Program — April 10, 2023
- Multi-Purpose Community Facilities Program — September 2023

Program End Dates

- Broadband Infrastructure Program — December 2026
- Multi-Purpose Community Facilities Program — December 2026

Actual CPF Funds Allocated to Each Program

- Broadband Infrastructure Program — \$200,000,000.00
- Multi-Purpose Community Facilities Program — \$44,853,958.95

USES OF FUNDS

Because Pennsylvania has not yet awarded sub-grants through the BIP or Facilities programs, objectives and activities included in the approved Program Plans have not yet been implemented. PBDA aims to grant BIP awards in January 2024. The Facilities program will open for applications in September of 2023 and awards will likely be made in January or February of 2024. Once project implementation is underway, PBDA is committed to documenting performance indicators and other data that highlight key milestones achieved, outputs produced, and outcomes achieved. This information will be submitted to Treasury through subsequent Project and Expenditure Reports during the relevant reporting periods.

PROMOTING EQUITABLE OUTCOMES AND ADDRESSING CRITICAL NEEDS

The Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority's commitment to achieving equitable outcomes through its CPF programs is demonstrated through its program guidelines for both BIP and Facilities programs. The goal of these programs is to promote the meaningful adoption and use of broadband services across targeted covered populations, including low-income households, aging populations, incarcerated individuals, veterans, individuals with disabilities, individuals with a language barrier, racial and ethnic minorities, and rural inhabitants.

To inform program planning, PBDA established four sub-committees to serve in an advisory capacity. Sub-committees are comprised of 32 total members that include industry leaders, local government organizations, and community organizations. Each sub-committee has a specific focus, including: 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 equity aspect of program development, guideline development, and implementation. More information about sub-committees is included under the "Community Engagement" section of this report.

For the BIP program, service providers will be required to participate in the Affordable Connectivity Program, or at least one low-cost option offered at speeds that are sufficient for a household with multiple users at a required speed of 100/100 Mbps.

To measure equity and address critical need at various stages of the program, Pennsylvania's CPF plans are designed to serve rural communities, redlined communities, those with persistent poverty, and the above-mentioned communities representative of the eight covered populations defined in the Digital Equity Act², as well as the organizations that serve those populations.

To guarantee that all awarded CPF grants meet affordability standards, program applications will be scored in part based on affordability components included in proposals. BIP program guidelines require applicants to describe digital equity efforts to ensure low to moderate income households in the proposed project area will have sustained and affordable access to broadband. Additionally, during application evaluation, the review team will consider whether a project would charge for costs associated with connecting locations with long distances away from telecommunications infrastructure.

The Facilities program scores projects based on whether the proposal demonstrates that it will serve populations with the greatest digital need, particularly those communities that have been historically limited and underrepresented. Facilities project proposals must also indicate whether the facility has proximate access to public transportation, to ensure that improvement or new construction of community facilities benefits all. Proposals must also include a list of stakeholders that will be significantly impacted by the project, and communities with critical need related to digital literacy and/or limited access that will be served by proposed projects.

Per Treasury requirements, PBDA will publish a description of its process for considering affordability in the project selection process for all CPF programs on its publicly accessible PBDA website.

LABOR

To promote effective and efficient delivery of high-quality projects through the Broadband Infrastructure Program, PBDA purposely designed BIP and Facilities program guidelines to include strong labor standards. For example, contractors and grantees of the Commonwealth must certify that they comply with all applicable Pennsylvania state labor and workforce safety laws. A Worker Protection and Investment Certification Form must be submitted with applications.

Applicants are required to describe their workforce development considerations, which may include the use of Registered Apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, and other apprenticeships, as well as utilization of local workers and other considerations listed in the "Fair Labor Practices and Highly Skilled Workforce" section of the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

While federal Davis-Bacon Act prevailing wage requirements do not apply to Pennsylvania's CPF programs, the Pennsylvania Prevailing Wage Act will apply. Applicants are required to include prevailing wage rates in all bid documents, specifications, and construction contracts pertaining to their proposed projects. The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry (L&I) has final authority to make prevailing wage applicability determinations.

To assist applicants in determining prevailing wage rates for proposed projects, on June 20, 2023, PBDA collaborated with L&I to host an hour-long webinar that detailed prevailing wage requirements as they relate to CPF programs and proposed projects. L&I has been a strong partner to PBDA and has actively answered questions and concerns of potential applicants.

² [Digital Equity Act](#)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CPF PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

When submitting applications for both BIP and the Facilities programs under CPF, PBDA requires applicants to list and describe key partnerships involved in project planning and implementation. The application does not require a letter of support from units of local government or any other relevant entity, but letters are strongly encouraged and will be considered when PBDA reviews and scores applications. Units of local government will have an opportunity to comment on proposed project areas, and this input will be considered by the application review team.

Additionally, BIP program guidelines requires that applicants notify local government representatives for all projects proposed within their jurisdictions, so those leaders may submit input during the challenge and local government comment periods during application review.

Applications will be evaluated based on whether the project includes an outreach plan to ensure high adoption rates in proposed areas upon the completion of the project. PBDA has encouraged BIP projects that involve broadband networks owned, operated by, or affiliated with local governments, non-profits, and cooperatives, and commitments to serving entire communities. These factors will also be taken into consideration by the review team during application evaluation.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH STRATEGIES

The Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority continuously conducts thorough community engagement to inform its guidelines and processes for implementing CPF programs. PBDA has established partnerships with key statewide stakeholders, including the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, The Pennsylvania Municipal League, the Pennsylvania Association of Township Supervisors, and the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs to gather data and input, and to gain local perspective on broadband-related needs. Examples of these efforts include facilitation of bi-weekly Stakeholder Working Group meetings (members include government, provider, and non-profit stakeholders); participation in bi-weekly Statewide Digital Equity Broadband Coalition meetings (members include digital equity stakeholders representing interest groups throughout the Commonwealth); and facilitation of monthly Outreach and Education Sub-Committee meetings (one of four sub-committees formed by PBDA that include representation from the PBDA board of directors, a digital equity professional, and other relevant stakeholders³ to advise PBDA on best practices for incorporating community perspectives into broadband planning). Individual engagement with stakeholders, particularly those representing covered populations, occurs on an ongoing basis.

Throughout the spring of 2023, PBDA hosted a series of Community Conversations and Roundtable events to engage constituents and local government representatives in discussions about broadband use and experiences, and to provide information about the Commonwealth's work to develop an actionable plan. These events took place throughout the Commonwealth, in both urban and rural areas. Events have produced meaningful and insightful conversation and have been attended by 324 individuals as of June 30, 2023.

To advise the grant implementation process and to advise program guidelines, PBDA launched a Statewide Broadband Connectivity and Digital Access Survey in June 2023 to gain insight on public perspective for closing the digital divide through broadband access. [The survey can be accessed through this link: www.surveymonkey.com/r/PA_BCDA](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PA_BCDA). To enable accessibility, the survey is available in Spanish, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Russian, Vietnamese, and Korean. Paper copies were distributed at the Community Conversation and Roundtable events, and paper copies of Braille surveys are also available. As of June 30, 2023, 2,808 individuals had completed the survey. Survey results are analyzed regularly by PBDA staff and will inform future planning efforts.

PBDA board and sub-committee meetings are open to the public, with an open comment period scheduled during each. PBDA has a CPF-specific email account that enables direct communication between the public and PBDA staff, as well as an email distribution list of more than 2,500 contacts. Major announcements and updates from PBDA are announced regularly through email distribution.

³ Appointed Outreach & Education Sub-Committee members include representatives from the PA Chamber of Business & Industry, PA State Grange, PA Office of Rural Health, PA State Association of Township Supervisors, American Federation of Labor and Congress PA Farm Bureau, Independence Public Media Foundation, and the PA Municipal League. The sub-committee is facilitated by PBDA's Outreach & Engagement Manager.

In addition to individual conversations with key stakeholders, when drafting guidelines for the BIP and Facilities programs, PBDA released surveys to its email distribution list asking for input on key program features, such as appropriate level of match requirement, minimum and maximum grant award amounts, how the term “affordable” should be defined in regard to the programs, and how the challenge process for BIP should be conducted. This method of public outreach was key for determining these non-Treasury mandated aspects of the programs.

All community engagement efforts are ongoing and will inform decisions throughout Pennsylvania’s participation in CPF programs.

CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLIANCE

The Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority has not yet issued sub-grants under any approved CPF program. However, the Commonwealth is committed to enforcing responsibilities under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act when providing financial assistance to eligible sub-grant entities. This will be documented through the collection of data and information from recipients for post-award compliance reviews, including narratives, questionnaires, and assurances to describe Title VI compliance status and any other requests from Treasury.



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