

Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority

April 10, 2025

10:00 AM

Continuance of meeting held on April 3, 2025 at 10:00am

This meeting is virtual only

Dial-In: +1 267-332-8737

Phone Conference ID: 137 112 488#

- I. Call to Order*
- II. Approval of the January 16, 2025, Meeting Minutes*
- III. Financial Update: January – March 2025 Expenditures*
- IV. MOU Extension and FY 2025-2026 Estimate of Expenditures*

Continuance of April 3, 2025 Meeting

- I. Call to order
- II. Approval of April 3, 2025, Meeting Minutes
- III. Digital Skills and Community Capacity Program Guidelines
- IV. Public Comment
- V. Adjournment

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

Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority (PBDA)

PBDA Board Meeting Minutes

April 10, 2025

Continuance of April 3, 2025, Meeting

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Board members:

- Secretary Uri Monson, Office of the Budget, Chairman
- Mark Critz on behalf of Secretary Redding, Department of Agriculture
- Mike Hanna on behalf of Secretary Rick Siger, Department of Community & Economic Development
- Cathy Hall on behalf of Acting Secretary Dr. Carrie Rowe, Department of Education
- Barb Burba-Filoreto on behalf of Secretary Reggie McNeil, Department of General Services
- Matt Franchak on behalf of Senator John Kane, Assistant Secretary
- Representative Rob Matzie
- Representative Carl Metzgar
- Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill, Secretary
- Joel Cheskis on behalf of Chairman Steve DeFrank, Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
- Dr. Kyle Kopko, Center for Rural Pennsylvania

Designees in attendance:

- Jon Hopcraft, Office of Senator Phillips-Hill

Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) staff:

- Brandon Carson, PBDA Executive Director
- Brandon Peters, PBDA Deputy Director
- Kalie Snyder, PBDA Outreach & Engagement Manager
- Marshall Fischer, PBDA Technology Specialist
- Tim Arthun, PBDA Policy & Program Specialist
- Charles Napier, PBDA Director of Infrastructure Programs
- Carmela Burston, BEAD Program Manager
- Dr. Stephanie Perry, PBDA Workforce and Digital Program Specialist
- Greg Alliger, PBDA Broadband Project Manager
- Julia Brinjac, PBDA Director of Digital Community Investment
- Britt Muniz, PBDA Counsel
- Sue Benedek, PBDA Counsel
- Kaitlyn Capurro, Legal Office Administrator
- Penny Ickes, Communications Director
- Felica Duger, Deputy Digital Director

Guests:

Forty-three guests attended virtually.

I. Call to Order

Chairman Monson called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m., asked Mary Markle to provide housekeeping, and to conduct roll call. Ms. Markle conducted roll call and confirmed quorum.

II. Approval of April 3, 2025, PBDA Meeting Minutes

Chairman Monson asked for questions and comments on the April 3, 2025, meeting minutes as presented to the Board. Seeing none, he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Motion was made by Mike Hanna and seconded by Matt Franchak. Motion carried.

III. Digital Skills and Community Capacity Program Guidelines

Secretary Monson invited Julia Brinjac to provide an overview of the proposed guidelines. Ms. Brinjac stated that in January 2025, Pennsylvania received over \$25 million to implement its Digital Equity Plan. The PBDA proposes a \$17 million competitive subgrant program for organizations to receive funding to further the goal of closing the digital divide. She went on to state the minimum and maximum grant awards as well eligible entities which include, not for profit organizations and community anchor institutions. Ms. Brinjac then explained that eligible projects must meet the goals of the Digital Equity Plan, including getting people online and growing digital skills. She added that projects must be for the use of Pennsylvania residents and must have measurable outputs demonstrating efficacy.

Chairman Monson asked for questions or comments from the Board. Senator Phillips-Hill stated that she'd like the guidelines posted as soon as possible; however, she asked for clarification and assurance that no state tax dollars will be used to backfill or subsidize this program should the federal government claw back these funds.

Chairman Monson indicated that the Board action is to approve the guidelines and not the approval of awards.

Senator Phillips-Hill stated that the Board will need to update its guidelines, should the NTIA make changes on how these dollars will be spent, to ensure compliance with federal guidelines.

Chair Monson noted that the PBDA is in frequent contact with NTIA. He agrees that language needs to explicitly state that the awarding of funds is subject to continued availability of federal funding.

Brandon Carson confirmed that with the approval of guidelines does not commit any funding, but it does keep the program on its required timeline. He explained that before September 30, 2025, the guidelines must be posted for 30 days, followed by the application window as well as time to evaluate applications, and prepare recommendations to the Board. Mr. Carson confirmed that the PBDA is in almost daily communication with NTIA and added that the draft guidelines were reviewed by NTIA and reflects their input. Mr. Carson stated that if there are changes at the federal level, there will be the ability to adjust.

Chairman Monson asked for a motion to approve the guidelines. Motion was made by Mike Hanna and seconded Matt Franchak.

Chairman Monson then asked for comments and questions.

Representative Metzgar stated that it has become apparent that the new administration will modify, rescind, or revoke the agreement for this fund. He stated that it is imprudent to approve guidelines that are a mismatch with policies that are on their way from the new NTIA leadership. He added that he does not believe there is any assurance that Pennsylvania tax dollars would not be used if the federal funds are clawed back. He suggested that the PBDA pursue an extension on the timeline from NTIA. He added that continuing to work on these guidelines is not the best use of PBDA's resources and is a distraction from connecting folks. He stated that he will be voting to not approve the guidelines.

Mike Hanna then conveyed DCED's support of the proposed guidelines noting that not approving these guidelines will put Pennsylvania behind other states, putting the Commonwealth at an economic disadvantage. He further added that this result will keep Pennsylvania from moving forward with the program, leaving money on the table, allowing these funds to be redistributed to other states. He encouraged the Board to vote to approve the guidelines.

Chairman Monson asked Ms. Markle to conduct a roll vote.

Board Member	Voting Designee	Vote
Chairman Monson		Yes
Secretary Redding	Mark Critz	Yes
Secretary Siger	Mike Hanna	Yes
Acting Secretary Rowe	Cathy Hall	Yes
Secretary McNeil	Barb Burba-Filoreto	Yes
Senator Kane	Matt Franchak	Yes
Representative Matzie		Yes
Representative Metzgar		No
Senator Phillips-Hill		Yes
PUC Chairman Steve DeFrank	Joel Cheskis	Yes
Dr. Kyle Kopko		Abstain

The motion did not carry.

Chairman Monson stated that with further clarity, the Board can revisit the guidelines.

IV. Public Comment

Chairman Monson asked Ms. Markle to facilitate public comment.

Jim Mercante, Chester County Digital Alliance stated that there should be a commitment from the state to promote internet inclusivity and went on to mention the educational, economic, social and health care disadvantage to those who do not have internet access.

Kris Mamula, Pittsburgh Post Gazette indicated his intention to make public comment but was inaudible.

V. Adjournment

Chairman Monson stated that the next regular Board meeting is scheduled for July 17, 2025, and called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion to adjourn was made by Mark Critz and seconded by Cathy Hall.

Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 10:23 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill
Secretary