

Universal Service Fund Council

MEETING JULY 9, 2025

Minutes July 11, 2025 with edits

Approved on Dec. 16, 2025

Council members in attendance: (ExAB = Excused Absence) - 8 /12 members

PSC staff	USFC Members
1. Alyssa Kenney	1. Vice Chair – Michelle Reinen
2 Milena Bernardinello	2. Janet Zander
3. Damarr Purifoy	3. Brian Peters
4. Peter Jahn	4. Christopher Brophy
5. Jenna Schmidt	5. David Berka
6. Rita Hargot	6. Seon Yoon Chung
7. Sarah Curtin	7. Nicole Mauritz
	8. Leslie Spencer-Herrera
	ExAB: David Byers, Amanda Miller, John Kinstler
	Absent: John van Ooyen (due to technical issue)

1. Call to Order

Milena Bernardinello announced the the USFC has lost the Chair, as he retired, and the Vice Chair agreed to run the meeting as acting-Chairman.

2. Approval of Minutes of December 16, 2024 – *Action item 1* (attached to the meeting packet)

- Vicechair calls the motion to approve the minutes.
- Member Janet Zander moved for approval, Brian Peters and Nicole Mauritz simultaneously second.
- Vice Chair calls for vote. In favor: all. Opposed: none. Abstained: none
- Motion carried.

3. Council Member Exchange

Introductions of Members and information sharing. All 8 attending USFC members, and all 7 PSC staff introduced themselves.

4. Election of Officers

- Milena Bernardinello announced that the current Vicechair is willing to take the chair seat and that Nicole Mauritz made herself available to take the vice chair seat and call for someone to nominate the slate.
- David Berka calls to nominate the slate, and asked Nicole Mauritz if she would be willing to accept. Positive answer from Nicole.
- Vice Chair called 3 times for other nominations. None was suggested.
- Vice Chair called to vote the whole slate: In favor: all. Opposed: none. Abstained: none
- Election completed.

5. USF Programs and General Updates

General Updates: Alyssa Kenney – Bureau Director shared these updates,

- There was a court case brought about the federal Lifeline program
 - Constitutionality of USF has been challenged in a circuit court. This has been going on for a few years.
 - It was just heard by the supreme court this past week and found to be constitutional.
- Digital Equity Capacity program was terminated by Executive notice. Although not related to USF money, it would have support the purpose of USF of providing access to telecommunication.
 - All terminated grant related program and work ended on May 9.
 - Questions:
 - Brian Peters– What happened to the money?
 - A: \$13 million + \$8 – funds remain at treasury and can't be used by the state because the grant was terminated. So, funds stay with the federal government.
 -

USF Programs Updates: Milena Bernardinello, Pete Jahn, and Damarr Purifoy provided the following updates.

- Wisconsin Lifeline Program
 - Vast majority of WI Lifeline customers are receiving bundled voice and broadband services.
 - State USF Lifeline monthly reimbursement – 63 entities (20-something from TDS alone) requesting reimbursement

- Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP) Program
 - For people who have certain disabilities and need additional equipment to make full use of telecom equipment
 - Over the last 2 decades, we've seen a steady decline in vouchers.
 - Due to other technology
 - Starting to see a slight decline in vouchers
 - Partly due to cost of tech
 - Hearing from vendors that because volume of demand of devices is going down, it's hard to maintain those basic services because they usually use volume to subsidize it.
 - Cost of individual vouchers is going up.
 - Vouchers that people are able to receive depends on their disability type/s.
 - Self-indicated. Don't need a doctor's note or any kind of proof.

6. USF Grants, 2023 and 2024-25 brief updates

- TEPP Outreach
 - Promotes access to telecom equipment
 - 2-year performance period
 - 2 grants have requested extensions
 - One is a 6-month extension – due to construction delays
- Lifeline Outreach
 - Supports enrollment of the Lifeline Program
 - This is our 3rd annual round
 - In our status reports, we have requested barriers' information. Gathering this information.
- Telemedicine
 - 2-year performance period
 - We collect final reports for this grant
 - 8 applications received and awarded in 2024
 - Had one grantee withdrawn in 2025 due to chains in Medicare/Telehealth
 - Other 7 projects are continuing.
 - One project has even completed/ installed their equipment.

- We collect final reports regarding outcomes and impacts at the end of the performance period

7. Review and approval of the FY2025-6 Universal Service Fund Budget - Action item 2

- For Telemedicine, we ask for \$500,000 every year
- We decided to show the May 30 figures.
- TEPP Outreach is a non-competitive grant. We evaluated the need to increase the budget, but the grantees are fully functioning so we will not be requesting any change to this program's budget.
- Any remaining funds after provider reimbursements will be allocated to Broadband State Grants
- Lifeline – requesting \$1.5 mill this year, a rationale was presented based on trends, more outreach project, and providers' demand.
- Two-line Voice Carry-Over – trend going down. This service is fading out. Requested less money.
- Administrative cost request for increase to include some of PSC staff time to manage the program.

Universal Service Fund Proposed FY 2026 Budget - draft						
PSC USF Program	FY 2024 July 1, 2023– June 30, 2024		FY 2025 July 1, 2024 - May 31, 2025		FY 2026 July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026	
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Proposed Budget	Change 25-26
Grant Programs						
LL Outreach for Low Income Assistance	\$250,000	\$94,915	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$0
Nonprofit Access	\$500,000	\$184,951	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$0
Telemedicine Equipment	\$500,000	\$150,710	\$216,694	\$216,694	\$500,000	\$283,306
TEPP Outreach and Support Services	\$350,000	\$349,796	\$350,000	\$350,000	\$350,000	\$0
USF Grant Programs Subtotal	\$1,600,000	\$780,372	\$1,316,694	\$1,316,694	\$1,600,000	\$283,306
Provider Reimbursements						
Lifeline	\$800,000	\$757,857	\$900,000	\$839,942	\$1,005,000	\$105,000
Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP)	\$900,000	\$742,794	\$900,000	\$800,547	\$975,000	\$75,000
High Rate Assistance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Two-Line Voice Carry-over (2LVO)	\$3,000	\$693	\$1,000	\$757	\$800	(\$200)
Provider Reimbursements Subtotal	\$1,703,000	\$1,501,343	\$1,801,000	\$1,641,246	\$1,980,800	\$179,800
Administration[5]	\$252,175	\$213,229	\$252,175	\$198,133	\$302,175	\$50,000
Total	\$3,555,175	\$2,494,944	\$3,338,194	\$3,156,073	\$3,882,975	\$544,781
<i>USF remaining (of the total \$5,940,000) to be allocated to Broadband State Grants (min 2M) \$2,057,025</i>						

- Vice Chair calls a motion to vote on the 2026 budget draft: In favor: all. Opposed: none. Abstained: none
- motion passed, Budget 2025-2026 approved as proposed.

8. USF Director Announcements

- We are recruiting new USF members
 - We ask people to send Milena names of potential new members that are qualified
 - Lucky to have 3 new people join us this year and dedicating their time to serving the USFC
- Training – ask members to complete the Public Record Law training by December 2025
 - Milena will send a link and info. Keep an eye out for her message.
 - Members should follow link, complete the training, save/capture the completion certificate and send it to Milena.
 - **Next meeting – Likely third week of Dec. – to have 2025 Budget figure (week of Dec 15 to 19)**
 - A doodle poll will be sent out in November.

9. Adjourn

Vice Chair called to adjourn.