Center for
RURAL
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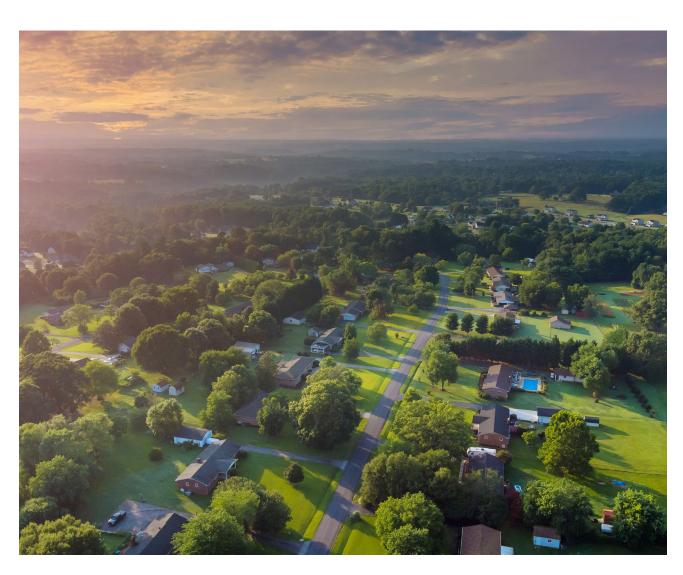
FEDERAL RESERVE BANK
PHILADELPHIA

MAY 21, 2024

Rural Economic Development Summit:

Broadband Infrastructure and Workforce Opportunities

212 LOCUST STREET, HARRISBURG, PA 17101 | HYBRID EVENT

Agenda

8:30 a.m.–9:00 a.m.   **Networking Breakfast**

9:00 a.m.–9:05 a.m.   **Welcoming Remarks**

Philip Jones, Community Engagement Associate, Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia

9:05 a.m.–10:00 a.m.   **Opening Plenary: The Economic Imperative for Participating in a Digital Economy**

Panelists will highlight the economic imperative of increasing broadband access to expand opportunity for rural residents. With unprecedented levels of federal funding flowing to communities for infrastructure, including broadband, there is a need to build community capacity and local labor forces to effectively leverage it.

- Rob Fry, General Field Representative, U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Deborah (Debbie) Kish, Vice President of Research and Workforce Development, Fiber Broadband Association
- Karen Lightman, Executive Director, Metro21: Smart Cities Institute, Carnegie Mellon University
- Brandon Peters, Deputy Director, Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority
- **MODERATOR**: Ashley Putnam, Director of the Economic Growth & Mobility Project, Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia

10:00 a.m.–10:20 a.m.   **Plenary Session: Leverage Data and Research to Uncover Needs That Exist in Pennsylvania**

Sascha Meinrath, Palmer Chair in Telecommunications at Penn State University, will share the latest on disparities in broadband speeds in Pennsylvania, and Theresa Dunne, Community Development Research Analyst at the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, will present on the digital device access across the Commonwealth.

10:20 a.m.–10:30 a.m.   **Break**

10:30 a.m.–11:30 a.m.   **Respondents' Panel**

Jim Ladlee and Harry Crissy will showcase the broadband spatial analysis tool that has informed strategic conversations in communities to support infrastructure development projects in areas currently underserved and unserved by high-speed broadband. Other panelists will reflect on using this tool and data to implement broadband deployment strategies.

- Harry Crissy, Regional Economic Resource Development Extension Agent, Penn State Extension
- Nathan Flood, President and CEO, KINBER
- Jim Ladlee, State Program Leader, Emerging and Advanced Technology, Penn State Extension
- Jerry Velázquez, President and CEO, Cumberland County (NJ) Improvement Authority
- **MODERATOR:** Christopher Ali, Pioneers Chair in Telecommunications and Professor of Telecommunications, Penn State University

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11:30 a.m.–12:15 p.m.   **Networking Lunch**

12:15 p.m.–12:45 p.m.   **Keynote Address: Expanding Economic Opportunity Around Broadband Deployment**

Aadil Ginwala, Senior Policy Advisor, University of Pittsburgh

12:45 p.m.–1:00 p.m.   **Break**

1:00 p.m.–2:00 p.m.   **Concurrent Sessions to Highlight Workforce and Investment Strategies**

CONCURRENT SESSION 1: Workforce Strategies and the Role of Rural Electric Cooperatives

Many different jobs are needed to construct, operate, and maintain the new networks built through Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program funding. The broadband industry lacks an efficient pipeline of new workers and career pathways for workers. Panelists will highlight promising workforce strategies and how rural electric cooperatives can be used to expand the broadband workforce.

- Chad Carrick, President and CEO, REA Energy Cooperative, Inc.
- Amelia De Jesus, Vice President of Workforce Solutions, Wireless Infrastructure Association
- Debbie Kish, Vice President of Research and Workforce Development, Fiber Broadband Association
- David Stehlin, Chief Executive Officer, Telecommunications Industry Association
- MODERATOR: Amanda Bergson-Shilcock, Senior Fellow, National Skills Coalition

CONCURRENT SESSION 2: If We Build It, Will They Stay? Minding the Gap Between Policy and Infrastructure Deployment and Leveraging Innovative Investments

This panel will explore the impact of innovative financing strategies and the role of philanthropy. Panelists will also share insights around challenges and opportunities that have impacted broadband deployment.

- Dave Gibbons, Founder, Black Bear Fiber
- Jennifer Wakeman, Executive Director, DRIVE
- Brian Vo, Chief Investment Officer, Connect Humanity
- MODERATOR: Laura Dimino, Assistant Director, Center for Rural Pennsylvania

2:00 p.m.–2:15 p.m.   **Break**

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Tuesday, May 21, 2024

2:15 p.m.–3:15 p.m.   **Closing Plenary: What Are Other States Up To? Best Practices for Rural Workforce Challenges**

Experts from other states will share their coalition-building strategies in regard to supporting a rural workforce pipeline for broadband infrastructure.

- Christine Hallquist, Executive Director, Vermont Community Broadband Board
- Stephen Herzenberg, Executive Director, Keystone Research Center, and Codirector of Reimagine Appalachia
- Sharonne Navas, Cofounder and Executive Director, Equity in Education Coalition
- Natalie Roper, Director of Federal Access Center, Just Transition Fund
- **MODERATOR:** Kyle Kopko, Executive Director, Center for Rural Pennsylvania

3:15 p.m.–3:25 p.m.   **Final Reflections on Broadband and Workforce Opportunities in Pennsylvania by Brandon Carson, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority**

3:25 p.m.   **Closing Reflections by Philip Jones**

Biographies

Christopher Ali
Pioneers Chair in Telecommunications and Professor of Telecommunications, Penn State University

Christopher Ali is the Pioneers Chair in Telecommunications and a professor of telecommunications in the Bellisario College of Communications at Penn State University. An acknowledged national expert on broadband deployment, policy, and planning, he is the author of the book *Farm Fresh Broadband: The Politics of Rural Connectivity*. Based on his expertise, Ali was called to testify on broadband funding and policy programs before the Senate Commerce Committee in 2021. He has also briefed members of the House Democrats Task Force on Rural Broadband, the New York State Blue Ribbon Commission on Reimagining New York, and the Federal Communications Commission, and he has presented before numerous state and county governments. His writing on broadband and communication policy has been published in the *New York Times*, *The Hill*, *Realtor Magazine*, the Law and Political Economy Project, *Digital Beat Magazine*, GovTech, Zócalo Public Square, *Washington Monthly*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, and *The Conversation*.

Ali has a Ph.D. in communication studies from the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania.

Amanda Bergson-Shilcock
Senior Fellow, National Skills Coalition

Amanda Bergson-Shilcock is a senior fellow at National Skills Coalition, where she leads the organization's work on adult education and workforce policies to expand opportunities for U.S.-born and immigrant adults. Throughout her career, Bergson-Shilcock has worked with state and federal policymakers and skills advocates to develop policy solutions that address the challenges facing adult learners and jobseekers, including immigrant workers.

As a workforce development expert for more than a decade, Bergson-Shilcock has authored numerous publications and policy recommendations — on immigrant integration, workforce development, and adult education — that have helped educate policymakers, journalists, and the public and that inform public policy at the state and federal levels. Her policy expertise, insights, and commentary have been cited and published in local and national media outlets, including *Time*, *Fortune*, *BBC News*, *Inside Higher Ed*, *Politico*, *Business Insider*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *HR Dive*, and many others.

Prior to joining National Skills Coalition in 2015, Bergson-Shilcock served as vice president of policy and evaluation at the nonprofit Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians in Philadelphia. In that role, she led the Welcoming Center's policy and communications work on adult education, workforce, and economic development issues. She also served as policy and communications director for IMPRINT, a national coalition of nonprofit organizations focusing on the integration of immigrant professionals.

Bergson-Shilcock has a bachelor's degree from the University of Pennsylvania, where she studied American Civilization with an emphasis on minority populations. She is based in Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.

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Chad Carrick
President and CEO, REA Energy Cooperative, Inc.

Chad Carrick is president and CEO of REA Energy Cooperative, Inc.; In The Stix Broadband; and REA Energy Services. He has sat on many diverse boards and currently sits on the Indiana County Chamber of Commerce Board. With over 22 years of utility experience in construction and retail, he is responsible for large and small sustainable utility projects. His mission is to provide electrical and broadband solutions to rural citizens in Indiana and Cambria counties. He is also very active in workforce development, working with local STEAM Academies to develop future utility workers.

Carrick was born and raised in western Pennsylvania. He has an M.B.A. from Point Park University, a B.S. in finance from Saint Vincent College, and a certificate in project management from Carlow University.

Brandon Carson
Executive Director, Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority

Brandon Carson is executive director of the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority. He has more than 15 years of experience working in nonprofit 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. In his current role, Carson is working to develop and implement the state's broadband mission to foster and create equitable, affordable, and robust high-speed broadband services connecting Pennsylvania for the 21st century and beyond. He is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Broadband Office and leads an outstanding team dedicated to closing the digital divide in Pennsylvania.

Harry Crissy
Regional Economic Resource Development Extension Agent, Penn State Extension

Harry Crissy is a regional economic resource development extension agent for Penn State Extension in northcentral Pennsylvania. He works with communities, individuals, and government bodies to identify and implement strategies conducive to both economic growth and environmental health. Crissy is a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) accredited professional (LEED Neighborhood Development, LEED for Homes, LEED Building Design and Construction) and has worked domestically and internationally on development projects aimed at improving the circumstances of populations from all economic strata.

His recent geoanalytic work includes efforts aimed at improving broadband access to unserved and underserved communities. By reducing the asymmetry of information between industry and consumers, this work intends to reduce marketplace friction and create a more inclusive understanding of investment and

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partnership opportunities involving public resources. By working directly with industry and partnering with public bodies at the local, state, and national levels, Penn State Extension has been able to create an evolving educational instrument to enable industry actors and public leaders to develop projects aimed at resolving infrastructure shortcomings.

Crissy's academic research concentration (two master of science degrees) at Penn State University focused on economic sustainability and consumers' willingness to pay in tourism and service-related industries. He is a certified geospatial intelligence analyst and has a professional master certification from Villanova University in applied project management that has provided the necessary skills to actualize development concepts. He has been working as a regional extension agent for the past 17 years with three different land grant universities and a broad variety of small business and public leaders.

Amelia De Jesus

Vice President of Workforce Solutions, Wireless Infrastructure Association

Amelia De Jesus is the vice president of workforce solutions at the Wireless Infrastructure Association (WIA), leading the development of WIA's workforce solutions as the association focuses on developing America's highly skilled, diverse broadband workforce through innovative sector partnerships.

De Jesus has an impressive career spanning over two decades, and she brings a wealth of experience to her role. Before her tenure at WIA, she was national vice president at Crown Castle, demonstrating her leadership and strategic management prowess. Her professional journey encompasses diverse roles with operators, service providers, and infrastructure giants, showcasing a comprehensive understanding of the telecommunications landscape. A leader in the industry, she also served as president of the WIA-affiliated Women's Wireless Leadership Forum from 2017 to 2019, solidifying her commitment to advancing opportunities for women in the industry. Her passion for mentorship and advocacy is evident in her continuous efforts to coach and support youth and women in their professional journeys.

Beyond her professional commitments, De Jesus is an avid enthusiast of competitive sports. Her love for soccer is a personal passion and extends to her role as the vice chair on the board of Terminus Legion, Atlanta United FC's first supporter group. In addition to her involvement in sports, De Jesus finds time to give back to the community through volunteer work. She actively engages with Meals by Grace and the Children's Restoration Network, further illustrating her dedication to making a positive impact on her community.

De Jesus is a credible and influential figure in the telecommunications sector, bringing together a powerful blend of leadership, experience, and genuine commitment to fostering diversity and growth within the industry. As a thought leader and advocate, she continues to shape the future of workforce solutions in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

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Laura Dimino

Assistant Director, Center for Rural Pennsylvania

Laura R. Dimino is the assistant director of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania. She joined the Center in December 2022 and oversees the Center's Research Grants Program, along with coordinating and developing external projects and Center initiatives. Before joining the Center, Dimino was the associate provost at Central Penn College, where she also served as director of institutional assessment and accreditation. In addition, Dimino previously served as a public affairs program analyst at the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency and as assistant director of academic programs at Temple University.

Dimino has a doctorate and a master's degree, both in political science, from the University of Rochester and a bachelor's degree from Clark University.

Theresa Dunne

Community Development Research Analyst, Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia

Theresa Dunne is a community development research analyst in the Community Development and Regional Outreach Department at the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. Her research interests lie at the intersection of community development and public health. Currently, she works on topics related to digital equity and device access, equitable wealth in the city of Philadelphia, and the broad economic impacts of anchor institutions on regional economies. Dunne's research has examined disparities in digital device access across Pennsylvania to help state and local policymakers understand where gaps exist. The findings inform a national effort to expand access to broadband and digital devices to underserved communities.

Before joining the Bank, Dunne interned at the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance, where she conducted housing research and data analysis on community change in Baltimore. In that role, Dunne developed skills in helping local leaders and community members easily access and use data to inform their decisions.

Dunne has a master's degree in urban planning from the University of Illinois and a B.A. in history from the College of Wooster.

Nathan Flood

President and CEO, KINBER

Nathan Flood was named KINBER's president and CEO in 2020, after serving as the organization's interim president and CEO and vice president overseeing daily operations and working closely with its board of directors. Under Flood's leadership and guidance, KINBER negotiated the sale of its assets; positioned itself for long-term financial sustainability; created Keystone REN LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of KINBER focused on research and education networking; and provided input on state and national policy discussions around broadband.

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Recently, Flood has provided the vision and direction for KINBER's strategic future focused on sustainable impacts to the Commonwealth in digital equity and inclusion, working with the broader community to have positive collaborations during this transformative period.

Prior to joining KINBER, he served as deputy secretary for the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and as chief of staff in the Pennsylvania Senate.

Flood's experience in economic and community development and technology includes service on the Warwick Township Planning Commission, the Pennsylvania State Transportation Innovation Council, and the Regional Advisory Committee for the Southwestern Pennsylvania Connected initiative.

He currently serves on the boards of Keystone REN LLC; The Quilt; ELA Group, Inc.; and an engineering ESOP, as well as serving as a past chair of the Pennsylvania Integrated Library System and as the current chair of the Natural Streams Foundation.

In addition to his leadership roles in and out of KINBER, Flood is active in his community, having served on his local planning commission, volunteered with the Masonic Center of Lancaster County, and mentored his daughter's youth soccer team and dance studio.

Rob Fry
General Field Representative, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Rob Fry currently serves as the general field representative for the Rural Utility Service, Telecom Division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), covering New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, as well as all of New England, for the past five years. Fry has been with USDA Rural Development for 14 years, serving as a management and program analyst, loan and grant analyst, and community programs specialist.

Prior to joining Rural Development, Fry was employed in the private sector for 20 years in commercial lending. He is a graduate of King's College in Wilkes Barre, PA, with a degree in marketing.

Dave Gibbons
Founder, Black Bear Fiber

Dave Gibbons is the founder of Black Bear Fiber and the owner of Centre WISP, a fiber and wireless internet service provider (ISP) that provides service primarily to underserved areas in central Pennsylvania. A lifelong entrepreneur, Gibbons has been involved in building and operating small ISPs since 2015. Centre WISP has grown from serving one small wireless broadband territory in 2015 to providing wireless service through many dozens of towers across seven counties, and gigabit fiber service to thousands of customers, today.

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Aadil Ginwala

Senior Policy Advisor, University of Pittsburgh

Aadil Ginwala is senior policy advisor to the chief information officer at the University of Pittsburgh. His focus is the economic growth and social benefit potential possible from universal affordable high-speed internet access, especially in the context of ensuring next-generation, cutting-edge speeds and affordability for the city of Pittsburgh, the broader western Pennsylvania region, and the Commonwealth as a whole.

Previously, Ginwala served as chief of staff of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) in the Department of Commerce as a political appointee of President Biden and Secretary Raimondo. He was a leader of the agency when it was charged, in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, with distributing $46 billion to ensure affordable high-speed internet for every American and was instrumental in designing the rules for the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program.

Prior to joining NTIA, Ginwala served in the Obama White House from 2015 until the end of the administration; while there, he worked on the launch of the $400 million Advanced Wireless Research Initiative, a public-private partnership focused on developing technologies for 5G and beyond that is now administered by the National Science Foundation as the Platforms for Advanced Wireless Research. He also helped organize interagency work to finalize a northeastern Pennsylvania regulation to streamline deployment of broadband through federal lands as well as a program comment for historical preservation by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. In addition, Ginwala worked closely with the National Economic Council and other White House agencies on tribal and rural broadband and attempts to close the digital divide and homework gap.

Between leaving the Obama administration and joining NTIA, Ginwala was the founder and chief executive officer of an artificial intelligence startup in the healthcare space in Pittsburgh, PA.

Ginwala has a law degree and bachelor's degree from Harvard Law School and Harvard University, respectively, and is a proud alumnus of the Peace Corps.

Christine Hallquist

Executive Director, Vermont Community Broadband Board

Christine Hallquist is the executive director of the Vermont Community Broadband Board and is charged with getting every Vermont address connected to fiber optic internet, making it affordable and maximizing the position social impact of those investments. Hallquist started her career with Digital Equipment Corporation, working in power systems design and manufacturing. She then started consulting in business process redesign and worked with companies such as Honda to optimize the entire process of new product development. Later, she became chief executive officer of Vermont Electric Cooperative (VEC), taking the company from bankruptcy to being an A+ rated utility.

The VEC board of directors was also interested in providing broadband services, and Hallquist worked with many different technologies, including radio, spread spectrum (power line communications), satellite, and cellular.

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In 2018, she became Vermont's Democratic candidate for governor.

In early 2019, Hallquist formed a Canadian joint-venture company to develop a porous silicon battery that would provide three times the energy density of lithium ion.

Stephen Herzenberg
Executive Director, Keystone Research Center, and Codirector, Reimagine Appalachia

Stephen Herzenberg has been executive director of Keystone Research Center (KRC) since December 1995. He is also the codirector of the Reimagine Appalachia campaign, for which he has coauthored an introductory overview on broadband and a brief on principles for state broadband policies. KRC has helped shape and implement Pennsylvania workforce policies related to industry partnerships and apprenticeship for over two decades. Herzenberg has published widely on economic and labor market issues and also on the construction industry, including two pieces in 2023. His recent writings for national audiences include recommendations to the Biden administration on how to achieve progress on Sustainable Development Goal #8; a chapter in *The Many Futures of Work* on how the labor movement might grow again; and the KRC 2019 report, *Towards an AI Economy That Works for All*. He is also the coauthor of *New Rules for a New Economy: Employment and Opportunity in Postindustrial America*.

Herzenberg has a Ph.D. in economics from MIT.

Philip Jones
Community Engagement Associate, Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia

Philip Jones is a community engagement associate in the Philadelphia Fed's Community Development and Regional Outreach Department. He focuses on building and supporting cross-sector partnerships to advance equitable solutions to a region or community's economic challenges.

Jones is passionate about ensuring that residents have access to safe and affordable homes. Before joining the Bank, he worked for the Fair Housing Rights Center in southeastern Pennsylvania, where he advocated for equal access to housing opportunities for all people. It was here that he learned about the inequities that exist in securing credit or home loans in marginalized communities and how building awareness of available programs and services within these communities was key to helping to address these challenges.

Through his work as the director of legislative affairs for Pennsylvania State Representative Stephen Kinsey, Jones also gained experience building relationships and working with leaders and community partners across the state to address key issues. He organized the first-ever legislative policy hearing at a Pennsylvania state correctional facility focused on the social benefits and economic advantages of granting compassionate release of the geriatric incarcerated population.

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Jones, a lifelong resident of Philadelphia, has a B.A. in political science and international relations from Albright College.

Deborah (Debbie) Kish
Vice President of Research and Workforce Development, Fiber Broadband Association

Deborah Kish is the vice president of research and workforce development for the Fiber Broadband Association (FBA). In her role, she is leading FBA's research initiatives as well as "OpTIC™" (Optical Telecom Installer Certification), FBA's fiber optic technician certification program. Prior to joining FBA, she spent over 20 years as an analyst at Gartner covering broadband, telecom switching, signaling, and security topics, along with advising thousands of service provider and vendor clients about product and service strategy.

Kyle Kopko
Executive Director, Center for Rural Pennsylvania

Kyle C. Kopko is the executive director of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania. He joined the Center in July 2020. Prior to joining the Center, Kopko served as associate dean of institutional effectiveness, research, and planning and associate professor of political science at Elizabethtown College. Kopko has authored or coauthored more than 50 publications, including two university press books. His research has received national and international media attention in outlets such as the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, *CNN*, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and Fox News Channel.

Kopko has a law degree from the University of New Hampshire Franklin Pierce School of Law; a Ph.D. and an M.A., both in political science, from the Ohio State University; and a B.A. in political science from Elizabethtown College.

Jim Ladlee
State Program Leader, Emerging and Advanced Technology, Penn State Extension

Jim Ladlee is honored to serve as the state program leader for emerging and advanced technology with Penn State Extension. In this role, he guides the development and implementation of cutting-edge initiatives in areas including blockchain, broadband, geospatial intelligence, mixed reality, artificial intelligence, connected device infrastructure, and more. His expertise in strategic development, stakeholder engagement, applied research, spatial and workforce analysis, and education has been instrumental in leading and supporting significant efforts in broadband, community and economic development, entrepreneurship, energy development, and technology outreach and applied research.

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Prior to his current role, Ladlee was the assistant director of programs for the Energy, Business, and Community Vitality Unit, where he successfully led a dedicated team of 32 Extension professionals spread across Pennsylvania. He has been privileged to engage with a diverse group of stakeholders, from farmers and businesses to communities and nonprofits, both locally and globally.

Ladlee is dedicated to simplifying the complexities associated with technology development, integration, utilization, adoption, and equity. His commitment to uncovering and disseminating science-based solutions aims to empower informed data-driven decisions, enhancing the efficiency, growth, competitiveness, and profitability of industries such as farming, food, agriculture, energy, environment, and natural resources. Further, his work engages and supports vibrant communities, driving innovation and inclusivity in technology, research, and education.

Karen Lightman

Executive Director, Metro21: Smart Cities Institute, Carnegie Mellon University

Karen Lightman is the interim executive director of Safety21 and the executive director of Metro21: Smart Cities Institute at Carnegie Mellon University. She is an internationally recognized leader in building and supporting communities based on emerging technologies. Her diverse background spans the consumer, military, healthcare, manufacturing, and automotive sectors. Lightman is ranked by *EETimes* as one of the top 25 "Women in Tech." She is a passionate advocate and spokesperson for technology solutions to real-world problems and has held several board positions for the MetroLab Network, including her current role as treasurer.

Lightman has an M.S. in public policy and management from Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz College and a B.A. from the University of Vermont.

Sascha Meinrath

Palmer Chair in Telecommunications, Penn State University

Sascha Meinrath is the Palmer Chair in Telecommunications at Penn State University and director of X-Lab, an innovative think tank focusing on the intersection of vanguard technologies and public policy. He was previously vice president of the New America Foundation, where he founded the Open Technology Institute in 2008 and built it into one of the largest public interest tech policy organizations in Washington, D.C. He also founded the Commotion Wireless Project, which works around the globe to strengthen communities by providing tools to build their own local communications infrastructures, and cofounded Measurement Lab, a global online platform for researchers to deploy internet measurement tools that empower the public and key decision-makers with useful information about broadband connectivity.

Meinrath was elected as an Ashoka Fellow for Social Entrepreneurship in 2012 and is a recipient of the Public Knowledge IP3 Award for excellence in public interest advocacy, in addition to receiving other awards and acknowledgements. He is widely published in both academic and media outlets, including *Critical Studies in*

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Media Communications, the *Journal of Communications Law and Policy*, the *Journal of Internet Law*, the *Journal of Community Informatics, IEEE Internet Computing Magazine, The Hill, Time Magazine, Slate*, and many others.

Meinrath is at the forefront of D.C. policy debates over how Congress and the White House should rein in the cybersecurity-industrial complex. He serves as a board member for the American Indian Policy Institute and Brave New Software Foundation, among others, and he is a member of the advisory councils for the Calyx Institute and Whistleblower Aid. He is also the cofounder and coordinator of the Civil Liberties Coalition.

Meinrath's research is a testament to his lifelong commitment to promoting social and economic justice; it focuses on broadband connectivity, distributed communications, digital feudalism, digital craftsmanship, telecommunications and spectrum policy, cybersecurity and privacy, and the impacts of disruptive technology.

Sharonne Navas

Cofounder and Executive Director, Equity in Education Coalition

Sharonne Navas is the cofounder and executive director of the Equity in Education Coalition. The first American-born child of immigrant parents from Guatemala and El Salvador, she understands, and values, the complexity of being multilingual and multicultural in America.

Past professions include being a community organizer with Stand for Children; executive director of Para Los Niños; assistant director of development for NARAL Pro-Choice America; deputy executive director for Ayuda, Inc.; and development coordinator for the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty.

In 2010, Navas was appointed as commissioner for the Washington State Commission on Hispanic Affairs, and in 2016, she was appointed to the board of trustees of Green River College. She was an advisory member for Thrive By Five's "Talk, Love, Play" initiative, a cohort member of Thrive by Five's "Advancing Racial Equity Theory of Change in Early Learning," and a committee member of the Washington State Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee. Navas also volunteers for the South King Council of Human Services, was a board member of the League of Education Voters, and is on the steering committee of the Southeast Seattle Education Coalition.

Navas has a B.A. in psychology and sociology from St. John's University.

Brandon Peters

Deputy Director, Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority

Brandon Peters joined the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority as deputy director in May 2023. He brings 10 years of planning and community development experience, mostly focused on transportation programming and broadband development. As deputy director, Peters works alongside the executive director and an expanding team of specialists in their mission to bring high-speed affordable internet to all Pennsylvanians.

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Ashley Putnam
Director of the Economic Growth & Mobility Project, Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia

Ashley Putnam is the director of the Economic Growth & Mobility Project (EGMP), a strategic initiative of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia dedicated to promoting equal access to economic opportunity. EGMP is a multilevel effort to bring about entrepreneurial solutions to achieve inclusive economic growth and create pathways out of poverty in communities across the Third District and the nation. Before joining the Bank, Putnam served as the economic development adviser for the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development in New York City, where she facilitated the coordination between economic and workforce development. In previous roles, Putnam founded and directed a fellowship program connecting young people to policy research and service on issues of urban poverty. She also served at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, America Works of New York, and the Women's City Club of New York.

Putnam has a master's degree in public administration from New York University's Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service and a B.A. from Barnard College.

Natalie Roper
Director of Federal Access Center, Just Transition Fund

Natalie Roper is director of the Federal Access Center of the Just Transition Fund, conducting strategic outreach and support to help coal communities secure funding for local economic solutions. She previously worked as executive director of Generation West Virginia for seven years, developing and leading a diverse set of programs and policy initiatives to expand economic opportunity in the state. Specifically, she designed workforce development and broadband expansion initiatives that now serve as national models for other rural communities. Her experience also includes developing and leading bipartisan policy coalitions that led to successful passage of legislation expanding internet access, accelerating entrepreneurship, and driving local community development. Through all of this work, she saw firsthand what is possible when people most impacted by transition are at the center of developing solutions, and she brings this on-the-ground experience and understanding to her work at the Fund.

Roper has an M.P.P. and a B.A. from the University of Virginia.

David Stehlin
Chief Executive Officer, Telecommunications Industry Association

David S. Stehlin joined the Telecommunications Industry Association (TIA) as chief executive officer in September 2019. He brings more than 30 years of experience leading the development and implementation of key business and technology strategies in the information communications technology (ICT) industry. TIA

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represents more than 400 companies around the globe while developing critical standards and advocating for the industry with federal and state governments.

Stehlin has also been instrumental in the leadership of multiple public and private networking companies, including acting as chief executive officer of MRV Communications, chief executive officer of Ceterus Networks, and president of Overture Networks. He has a keen understanding of how to navigate the business, technology, and government factors that affect our industry. Prior to starting his career in the ICT industry, Stehlin was a captain in the U.S. Marine Corps.

Stehlin has an M.B.A. from National University in San Diego, CA, and a B.S. from the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD.

Jerry Velázquez

President and CEO, Cumberland County Improvement Authority

With over 30 years of public and private development experience, Jerry Velázquez brings an innovative and collaborative development approach to his role as president and CEO of the Cumberland County Improvement Authority. He leads all development and redevelopment initiatives and coordinates the overall economic development strategy for Cumberland County, NJ, along with being responsible for the organization's financial management, project coordination, personnel, daily operations, and oversight. Velázquez is currently coordinating more than $100 million in project construction on behalf of the Authority, including projects for Cumberland, Cape May, and Salem counties. He is also responsible for all aspects of the Authority's landfill operations.

Velázquez has incomparable practical experience in community redevelopment and business attraction and in leveraging financial and technical resources to revitalize communities. He has assembled a team with expertise in economic development, landfill and construction management, and financing and technology, enabling the Authority to secure project investments of over $700 million in the last five years.

His comprehensive knowledge of the field includes public/private financing structures; mezzanine financing; job training programs; infrastructure improvements; industrial site redevelopment; brownfield remediation; community engagement; stakeholder management; financial analysis; project design, coordination, and implementation; and construction/property management, and he has identified and secured more than $2 billion in overall project and development funding.

Velázquez is responsible for the creation of more than 40 shared service agreements with other public entities/authorities, municipalities, school districts, counties, and private entities. As the former executive director of the highly successful Federal Empowerment Zone in Cumberland County, he has worked directly in and with public sector agencies of all levels of government. Forging development and economic recovery solutions in new and creative ways is the hallmark of his approach.

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Brian Vo

Chief Investment Officer, Connect Humanity

Brian Vo serves as Connect Humanity's chief investment officer in leading investment efforts to structure the right type of financing solution that meets the needs of organizations advancing digital equity. He collaborates with Connect Humanity's partners, communities, and social enterprises alike to understand connectivity barriers, local context and needs, and the implications of the appropriate blend of impact finance. Vo has over 17 years of investment and strategy experience, with more than $7 billion of direction transactions, including private equity and impact debt and equity.

Previously, Vo was the vice president of social investment and innovative finance at Pact, Inc., a global development nongovernmental organization. He led the Pact Ventures team to deploy impact capital that accelerated Pact's theory of change through creative financing vehicles, like market-based incentive structures, early-stage investments, and structured project-based financing that enabled evidence-based interventions. Prior to Pact, he was a director at Quantified Ventures, where he designed outcomes-based transactions for nonprofit and for-profit social enterprises. With McKinsey & Company's Strategy/Corporate Finance and Public/Social Sector Practices, Vo advised clients on a range of topics, including economic development, growth strategies, capital allocation, operational turnarounds, and transaction structuring. Previously, he was with Macquarie's Private Equity Group and Jefferies & Company Investment Bank.

Vo also sits on the board of directors at Pacific Community Ventures; Public Knowledge; and iF, A Foundation for Radical Possibility. He has an M.B.A. and B.S. from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

Jennifer Wakeman

Executive Director, DRIVE

Jennifer Wakeman is the executive director of DRIVE and has lived in the Susquehanna Valley since 1995. Her career has covered a variety of fields, from agriculture to television and radio.

Before coming to DRIVE, Wakeman was the news director at Sunbury Broadcasting Corporation. With more than 20 years of volunteer experience with area nonprofits, she has a strong commitment to the communities and families in the Susquehanna Valley. She is the chair of Focus Central Pennsylvania, a seven-county marketing organization committed to bringing new capital investment to the region, and was recently appointed to the Pennsylvania Workforce Development Board by Governor Josh Shapiro. Wakeman also serves on the boards of the Pennsylvania Economic Development Association and the National Rural Economic Developers Association, and she is the treasurer of the SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority. She is a past president of RiverStage Community Theatre and a member and former board president of the Susquehanna Valley Chorale.

Wakeman has a bachelor of science degree from Washington and Lee University.

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