

**Tobacco and Health Trust Fund (THTF) Board of Trustees**

**January 28, 2026**

**Via Microsoft Teams**

**The meeting was recorded and can be viewed in its entirety at this link**

[https://youtu.be/7QH\\_8eOGP9k](https://youtu.be/7QH_8eOGP9k)

Tobacco and Health Trust Fund Board of Trustees - Members in Attendance: Claudio Gaultieri (Chair), Robert Boris, Pareesa Charmchi Goodwin, Samuel Hahn, Toni Harp, Cindy Harrison, Steven Hernandez, Suchithra Krishnan-Sarin, Mathew Jasinski, John McArdle, Christopher Moran, Tricia Orozco, Michael Rell, Andrew Salner.

Tobacco and Health Trust Fund Board of Trustees - Members Excused: Ayesha Clark, Anne Foley, Commissioner Manisha Juthani.

Board of Trustees Staff: Melissa Morton, Office of Policy and Management (OPM) and Sharica Rose (OPM).

Others Present: Deputy Commissioner Lisa Morrissey, Department of Public Health (DPH) for Commissioner Manisha Juthani; Kathy Boucher, Decker; Andrew Kesin, Decker; Clare Bradley, IPRO; Patricia Gagliano, IPRO and Mary Beth Conroy, IPRO.

Meeting called to order by Chair Gaultieri at 10:32 A.M.

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Minutes</b>
<b>Welcome and introductions</b>	Chair Claudio Gaultieri, (OPM) called the meeting to order at 10:32 A.M. Melissa Morton, (OPM) called the roll.
<b>Adopt Minutes from October 22, 2025, Meeting</b>	Chair Gaultieri called for a motion to adopt the minutes from the October 22, 2025, meeting. Christopher Moran made a motion to adopt. Samuel Hahn seconded. No discussion. Fourteen in favor, zero opposed, and zero abstentions. Motion approved. Minutes adopted.
<b>Stated Goal of Today's Meeting</b>	Chair Gaultieri reviewed the agenda and goals for the meeting. He noted that two Tobacco and Health Trust Fund (THTF) grantees will be featured to provide presentations.
<b>Trust Fund Account Update</b>	Sharica Rose, Fiscal Administrative Officer, OPM, shared an account balance update and detailed interest earned as of December 31, 2025. The full presentation can be found on the <a href="#">Tobacco and Health Trust Fund website</a> . The following are highlights from the Presentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The total approved allocation for FY23 and FY24 is \$26,394,776. Of the approved allocation, \$23,914,285 has been awarded, leaving a balance of \$2,480,491 FY24 funds.</li><li>• To date, \$15,099,959 has been drawn down by DPH leaving an account balance of \$12,380,249.64 that includes \$1,085,432.64 of interest earned from 10/1/24 through 9/30/25.</li></ul>
<b>Decker</b>	Chair Gaultieri welcomed DPH Deputy Commissioner Morrissey to introduce the Mass-Reach Health Communication & Research vendor, Decker. Deputy Commissioner Morrissey expressed her enthusiasm to have Decker showcase their framework around communication and

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<b>Decker</b>	<p>population outreach, and introduced Decker to provide their presentation.</p> <p>Kathy Boucher, President, and Andrew Kesin, Senior Vice President of Decker, presented an overview of services and marketing updates in support of Mass-Reach Health Communication &amp; Research. The full presentation can be found on the <a href="#">Tobacco and Health Trust Fund website</a>. The following are highlights of the project presentation:</p> <p>Decker will use THTF grant funding to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop media planning through interim digital campaigns for Commit To Quit and VapeFreeCT. The campaigns will target Connecticut (CT) adult residents ages 25-64 with emphasis on at-risk populations through social media static and video ads, as well as target CT teens ages 13-18 and young adults ages 19-25.</li> <li>• Conduct consumer research by engaging teens, parents, and adults statewide to uncover insights that drive stronger nicotine prevention and cessation efforts with effective advertising. Phase 1 of the consumer research will consist of 14 virtual focus groups through online qualitative discussions and phase 2 will offer a quantitative online survey through creative testing.</li> <li>• As part of the discovery phase, in-depth interviews are conducted with contractors and local public health departments to better understand how tobacco and vaping behaviors show up in community settings, how hands-on work with youth, schools, healthcare providers and families reveal motivations, resistance points, and communication gaps, etc.</li> <li>• Explore partnership opportunities with CT Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) that could extend tobacco and vaping prevention messaging into athletic and academic environments—leveraging CIAC's events, student networks, and digital reach to engage youth in authentic, performance-oriented ways.</li> </ul> <p><b>Discussion</b></p> <p>A question-and-answer period followed the presentation. Below are the highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Michael Rell shared his enthusiasm of Decker's outreach and partnership with CIAC middle and high school student athletes and also encourages support through leadership conferences and college age athletes to support and engage with younger kids.</li> <li>• Suchithra Krishnan-Sarin suggested reviewing federal mass-communication campaigns that have been done with the Food and Drug Administration and other organizations to see what content areas could be helpful, moving forward. Andrew Kesin of Decker advised that they have referred to federal media mass-communication campaigns such as the Truth Initiative Campaign,</li> </ul>

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	<p>and they will continue to monitor federal marketing campaigns as a guide.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Samuel Hahn asked if nicotine pouches are in the scope of the current mass-communication outreach as it relates to performance enhancement. Kathy Boucher of Decker responded that all nicotine cessation productions will be addressed during consumer research and focus groups.</li> <li>• Steven Hernandez asked if peer-to-peer leadership with younger students would be a focus point during media-outreach. Kathy Boucher of Decker advised that it is their goal to reach the younger audience through digital and social channels, grassroots events, and partnership with CIAC to support authentic peer-to-peer communication. Members also noted reaching out to you through non-sports channels such as drama clubs.</li> <li>• Tricia Orozco asked if there are plans to partner with school-based health centers and public schools throughout CT. Deputy Commissioner Morrissey advised that DPH have been discussing ways to expand and embed funding within school-based health centers around deterring youth from initiating tobacco products or to help navigate towards cessation, while providing access to the marketing campaigns.</li> </ul>
IPRO	<p>Chair Gaultieri invited DPH Deputy Commissioner Morrissey to introduce the Surveillance and Evaluation vendor, IPRO to provide a project overview of their program evaluation proposal. Deputy Commissioner Morrissey conveyed her excitement to have IPRO on board to evaluate the work of Component 1, State and Community Interventions and Component 3, Cessation Interventions.</p> <p>Mary Beth Conroy, MPH, Senior Director, Project Coordinator of IPRO presented an overview of their evaluation plan and services. The full presentation can be found on the <a href="#">Tobacco and Health Trust Fund website</a>. The following are highlights of the presentation:</p> <p>As a nonprofit organization for nearly 40 years, IPRO works with government agencies, providers and patients to implement innovative programs that bring policy ideas to life. IPRO has made creative use of clinical expertise, emerging technology and data solutions to improve the way the healthcare system works.</p> <p>IPRO will use THTF grant funding as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct comprehensive evaluations of Component 1, State &amp; Community Interventions, and Component 3, Cessation Interventions project contractors.</li> </ul>

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<b>IPRO</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Track progress toward program goals, while evaluation assesses implementation and outcomes. Together, these data guide program and policy decisions, demonstrate effectiveness, reduce disparities, and engage stakeholders.</li> <li>• Assess each project's implementation fidelity, reach, equity, and outcomes.</li> <li>• Deliver training on data collection, security protocols, and evidence-based tobacco control evaluation practices.</li> <li>• Through collaboration, prioritize evaluation questions using a weighted rubric and tier thresholds to focus on what is most actionable and feasible to start.</li> <li>• Use of data sources are supported by diverse and multiple data sources including contract/grantee logs, rosters, surveys, digital analytics, referral data, policy documentation and surveillance system data such as Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) and others.</li> <li>• Conduct routine checks for completeness, timeliness and validity and transparently document limitations and their implications. This is a continuous quality of improvement model, and the interim findings are shared back with the program to inform refinements in real time.</li> </ul> <p><b>Discussion</b></p> <p>A question-and-answer period followed the presentation. Below are the highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suchithra Krishnan-Sarin asked if the BRFSS and YRBS are still being conducted due to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funding limitations. Deputy Commissioner Morrissey responded that the CDC funding support for the BRFSS and YRBS data set is presently expected for another year, however, unexpected changes could occur.</li> </ul>
<b>Update on FY 2023 and FY 2024 Contracts</b>	<p>Chair Gaultieri introduced DPH Deputy Commissioner Morrissey to provide a high-level update on contract development for projects funded with FY 2023 and FY 2024 THTF dollars.</p> <p>Deputy Commissioner Morrissey shared a verbal overview of contract development and advised that an in-depth presentation will be provided during the next THTF meeting.</p> <p><b>FY 2023 Contract Status</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two (2) contracts are presently with the Attorney General's Office for review, and all other contracts have been executed.</li> </ul>

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<b>Update on FY 2023 and FY 2024 Contracts</b>	<p><b><u>FY 2024 Contract Update</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All contracts are moving through the execution phase, with six (6) contracts currently pending final review.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Discussion</u></b></p> <p>A question-and-answer period followed the presentation. Below are the highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deputy Commissioner Morrissey expressed that she is optimistic that DPH can share with the Board during the next meeting, that all contracts have been executed and she looks forward to more Grantee presentations. Additionally, she welcomed feedback from the Board on today's presentations, as well as any future concerns or thoughts on tasks to consider should there be a loss of funding at the federal level. Chair Gualtieri conveyed his appreciation DPH's progress and the pairing of the Grantee presentations involving the creative work of the mass-communication research and extensive data points that the evaluator's shared as fantastic deliverables.</li> </ul>
<b>Discussion of Next Steps</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standing Agenda Items</li> <li>FY 26 Allocation Update</li> <li>Grantee Presentation</li> </ol>	<p>Chair Gualtieri previewed future agenda items for the next meeting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DPH to provide updates on budget, projects and contract status and a full THTF account balance update from OPM.</li> <li>The Governor's budget will be presented on February 4, 2026, before a joint session of the General Assembly.</li> <li>Board members are invited to reach out to Chair Gualtieri and Melissa Morton if they have other items that they would like addressed at a future meeting.</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Discussion</u></b></p> <p>A question-and-answer period followed the presentation. Below are the highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Michael Rell asked if it is expected that the FY 2026 THTF allocation will be \$12 million dollars or if the allocation fluctuates year to year. Chair Gualtieri responded that legislature established in statute a set \$12 million for deposit into the Trust Fund account, however, legislature and/or the Governor could recommend changes.</li> </ul>
<b>Public Comment</b>	<p>Representative Cristin McCarthy Vahey expressed gratitude for the ongoing work of the Board and encouraged advocates to continue educating legislators on the importance of tobacco prevention and cessation programs on public health and to provide the funding that supports it.</p>
<b>Adjourn</b>	<p><b><u>VOTE:</u></b> Chair Gualtieri called for a motion to adjourn. Michael Rell made a motion to adjourn. Chair Gualtieri seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 11:41 A.M.</p>