

**Tobacco and Health Trust Fund Board of Trustees**

**July 24, 2024**

**Via Microsoft Teams**

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-XLWkegFbQ>

Tobacco and Health Trust Fund Board of Trustees - Members in Attendance: Claudio Gualtieri (Chair), Anne Foley, Toni Harp, Rep. Cindy Harrison, Mathew Jasinski, Christopher Moran, Tricia Orozco, Michael Rell, Suchitra Krishnan-Sarin, Andrew Salner, and Jody Terranova

Tobacco and Health Trust Fund Board of Trustees - Members Excused: Robert Boris, Ayesha Clarke and Pareesa Charmchi Goodwin

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

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

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Minutes</b>
Welcome and introductions	Chair Claudio Gualtieri, (OPM) called the meeting to order at 10:32 A.M. Melissa Morton, (OPM) called the roll.
Adopt Minutes from April 24, 2024 Meeting	Chair Gualtieri called for a motion to adopt the minutes from the April 24, 2024 meeting. Representative Cindy Harrison made a motion to adopt. Andrew Salner seconded. During discussion Representative Harrison noted a correction was needed, to revise the line “supply of nicotine patches provided to callers has been reduced from two weeks to eight weeks” to reverse the cited numbers to accurately reflect that the reduction was from “eight weeks to two weeks”. Representative Cindy Harrison made a motion to adopt minutes as revised. Andrew Salner seconded. All in favor. Revised minutes adopted by unanimous voice vote.
Stated Goal of Today’s Meeting	Chair Gualtieri reminded members that upon approval of the Board’s FY 2023 Allocation Plan, legislative leadership for both the Appropriations and Public Health Committees requested that the Board move to a meeting cycle to align with the legislative calendar and submit the next Allocation Plan in October 2024. Therefore, the purpose of this meeting is to engage in discussion and vote on priority areas and continued utilization of CDC funding percentages to set allocations for the 2024 Trust Fund allotment of \$12 million plus additional funds available from interest earned and deobligated legacy funding from prior years. Chair Gualtieri explained that DPH and OPM will make presentations to help guide the Board’s development of the FY 2024 allocation plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Deputy Commissioner (DC) Jodi Terranova, DPH, will provide an update on the procurement process for the FY 2023 funding.</li><li>• Melissa Morton, OPM, will provide a financial report as requested by Anne Foley at the previous meeting. The report will detail interest earned and the amount of deobligated funds available from prior years.</li></ul>
Update on FY 2023 Request for Proposal (RFP) Process	DC Terranova provided the following update on the development and release of the RFP for the allocated FY 2023 funds:

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RFP has been drafted by DPH and approved by OPM and is now in final review by DPH legal staff. DC Terranova thanked Dr. Salner for serving on the RFP Drafting Committee</li> <li>• Goal is to post the RFP in August 2024 and keep it open for six to eight weeks.</li> <li>• DPH staff will be in contact with Board members who have offered to serve on the evaluation panel and will let them know they should be ready to convene in late September. Four of five Board members have already been in contact with DPH staff person, Allison Sullivan, who will be leading the evaluation process. Any other members wishing to join the evaluation team can reach out to DC Terranova <a href="mailto:jody.terranova@ct.gov">jody.terranova@ct.gov</a> and she will connect them with Allison.</li> </ul>
Report Out on Trust Fund Account Balance	<p>OPM staff, Melissa Morton, reported that there is \$14,227,611.06 available for the FY 2024 round of Tobacco and Health Trust Fund RFPs. It includes \$12 million of the 2024 tobacco allocation (pending transfer), as well \$794,071 current account balance, \$650,620 earned interest to date, \$178,078 pending period 12 interest, and \$604,042 from projects funded in previous rounds that did not materialize. The full July 2024 budget report can be found on the <a href="#">THTF meeting page</a>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In answer to a member question about timing of the annual transfer of Tobacco Settlement funds into the Trust Fund account, Melissa Morton noted that the State receives the deposit of Master Settlement funds in April of each year and then those funds must be disbursed by the Comptroller’s office to the various entities that receive portions of funding. The transfer of funds is on schedule.</li> <li>• Anne Foley asked if the Board will be staying on an October allocation plan submittal timeline or if we plan to try and submit even earlier in the fall. Melissa Morton clarified that the legislature specifically asked that the allocation plans be submitted in October. Representative Cindy Harrison added that submitting in October is key because it allows the legislature to commit the funding and account for it in January when doing budget work.</li> </ul>
Discussion and Vote on Priority Areas for Funding	<p>Chair Gualtieri informed the Board that the next step in developing the 2024 allocation plan will be for the Board to vote on the priority areas for funding. The Board may choose to once again move forward maintaining priority areas required in statute or adding additional priority areas to be considered in the next round of funding. He then introduced Melissa Morton to provide a refresher on the Board’s statutory obligations regarding the purpose and priorities for funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Melissa Morton reviewed the purpose of the THTF as defined in PA 23-92, Sec. 4(a) and the categories which the board must prioritize when developing the allocation plan as specified in PA 23-92, Sec. 4(d)(1).</li> <li>• Chair Gualtieri summarized the two decisions points before the Board. (1) Statutorily, the Board must fund according to CDC</li> </ul>

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	<p>recognized best practice categories but has discretion in the distribution of funds between the categories. The Board can choose to allocate funds to each category using the CDC recommended percentage distributions, as was done for the FY 2023 plan, or adjust the percentages for the allocation amounts ; and (2) the Board may choose to allocate funds recognizing only the four priority areas established by the legislature, or decide to add additional priority areas, which would necessarily dilute the amount of funds available to support each of the statutorily-mandated priority areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suchitra Krishnan-Sarin asked about the Board’s focus being on only nicotine and cigarettes and not other products such as vaping and other tobacco products. Chair Gualtieri reminded members that after creation of the Board, we worked with the Public Health committee to put forward a solution to ensure that nicotine prevention and cessation extends more broadly to include vaping.</li> <li>• Toni Harp asked when we will have data available on the programs we have funded in order to inform future allocation decisions. DC Terranova informed members that the RFP to secure a third-party evaluator is part of the procurement process currently underway. At this time no projects have been funded as the RFP will be posted in August and that includes a third-party evaluator to examine the programs that ultimately receive an award. Looking at early 2025 for all contracts to be in place. She offered that DPH does have some other data sources the Board can look at over the next year or two to see if numbers are improving while we wait for the evaluator to have data available. Ms. Harp requested at a future meeting that DPH review the data that they have now so that the Board has a sense of where the state is from a public health perspective. Melissa Morton reminded members of data previously presented to them by DPH last spring when developing the 2023 allocation plan.</li> </ul> <p><u>VOTE:</u> Motion made by Anne Foley to maintain statutorily prescribed priority areas without additions and seconded by Chris Moran. All in favor. Motion carried and priority areas adopted.</p>
Discussion and Vote on Funding Allocations	<p>Chair Gualtieri reminded members that now the priority areas have been confirmed, the Board’s next decision point is to set the funding allocation percentages across the statutorily adopted CDC funding categories: (1) state and community interventions; (2) communication methods to disseminate health information to a wide audience; (3) cessation interventions; (4) surveillance and evaluation; and (5) infrastructure, administration and management. He invited DC Terranova to provide an overview of the CDC recommended allocation amount by category.</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DC Terranova reviewed the CDC recommended best practice funding ratios by category. She reminded members that the FY 2023 Allocation Plan allocated funds according to this breakdown and reviewed what the Board has funded in each of these categories in the past.</li> </ul> <p>Highlights of the ensuing discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members discussed the FY 2023 allocation amount for mass-reach health communication and were reminded that although there was discussion about the possibility of increasing the funding percentage in this category, there was no agreement on categories from which to make a funding reduction. Therefore, members voted to maintain the CDC recommended ratios for all categories. It was also clarified that mass-reach health communications are part of the RFP process.</li> <li>• Members discussed the potential pros and cons of using a portion of 2024 funds to incentivize business to stop selling tobacco and nicotine products as well as whether the Board may wish to consider making policy recommendations to the Public Health Committee regarding such incentivization strategies. One concern raised was the ethical nature of providing monetary incentives to companies who have chosen to continue selling tobacco and nicotine products when so many corporations have already taken such proactive public health action and ceased selling these products. Scoping such incentives to only apply to small businesses was suggested. Suchitra Krishnan-Sarin reminded members that many gas stations have contracts with tobacco companies, so that would be a financial loss for them. In addition, advertising at the pump about smoking cessation and then having all of the products available in the store is a disconnect and requires a comprehensive strategy.</li> <li>• Michael Rell noted the need to maximize the use of social media, especially if our goal is to reach teenagers. Suchitra Krishnan-Sarin agreed social media outreach to youth is important but is regulated by the FCC. There are federal implications for everything surrounding social media so it may be difficult for the state to get into that area.</li> <li>• Chair Gualtieri posed to members whether they wish to maintain funding percentages at CDC best practice percentages, given that we have no new data since the creation of the 2023 plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Dr. Andrew Salner spoke in favor of maintaining the CDC best practice ratios until such time as we have evaluation data available.</li> <li>○ Chair Gualtieri reminded members that the board has flexibility to move funds between the categories within 15% or \$50,000, whichever is less. Anne Foley said that she encourages OPM and DPH to submit a legislative</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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	<p>change to increase the \$50,000 cap or remove reference to it altogether, as it is extremely low. Chair Gualtieri said it would be helpful to have experience demonstrating how close we were to the \$50,000 threshold and what challenges it created. He also noted we should then look at when the \$50,000 threshold was established and whether it simply needs to be increased for inflation.</p> <p><u>VOTE:</u> Chair Gualtieri called for a motion to approve the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund Allocation Plan set in accordance with CDC Best Practices. Toni Harp made the motion. Tricia Orozco seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.</p> <p>Chair Gualtieri raised for the Board’s consideration the idea of setting aside an amount of dedicated funding within the adopted CDC categories to ensure continuity of funding for initiatives with evidence-based track records of success, specifically the QuitLine. He noted that advocates have made clear to him that consistency matters, and that people need to know there is a resource they can count on, and providers need to know they will maintain a referral base. Continuity of funding is critical to the ongoing success of programs. Given that 2024 is the last allocation that the Board has before needing to go through another budget cycle to determine additional funds, Mr. Gualtieri strongly suggested that within the cessation category totaling \$5.6 million, the Board allocate \$2 million for continued operations of the QuitLine for another four years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DC Terranova explained the \$500,000 per year operating cost was arrived at by examining invoices DPH has received from the Quitline April 2023 – April 2024.</li> <li>• There was discussion regarding the need for upfront funding and if it was because the Board did not expect to receive additional funding in the next budget cycle. Chair Gualtieri emphasized that since the budget cycle occurs every two years, this provides stability in a key evidence-based cessation program. Many members spoke in support of the Quitline, its effectiveness, and the need to ensure continued funding of the Quitline.</li> <li>• Members engaged in discussion around the funding amount and whether the Board should fund for two years at \$1 million rather than four years at \$2 million to ensure there were enough cessation funds remaining to continue any successful programs started with 2023 funds. Pros and Cons of two versus four-year contracts were discussed and members ultimately came to a consensus that funding the Quitline at \$2 million for four years of operation made sense.</li> <li>• Dr. Andrew Salner requested a presentation on the new Quitline vendor at a future meeting. Michael Rell echoed this request. DC Terranova agreed.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members engaged in discussion regarding how to allocate the \$2 million and the advantages and drawbacks of either (1) taking the \$2 million off the top of the total allocation and then distributing the balance according to CDC recommended percentages, thereby resulting in an increase in the cessation line and slight decreases in other categories or (2) leaving all categories at the CDC recommended distribution ratios and subtracting the \$2 million for Quitline from the 40% recommended cessation allocation and leaving all other categories at level funding percentages. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Dr Andrew Salner and Suchitra Krishnan-Sarin shared concern about using so much of the cessation funding for the QuitLine and thereby limiting what is available to other programs. They supported taking the Quitline funding off the top prior to applying the CDC percentages. Ms. Krishnan-Sarin suggested for the next round, perhaps the Board should consider creating a separate funding category just for the QuitLine.</li> <li>○ Anne Foley noted her full support of funding the QuitLine for four years and noted that it is a cornerstone of the Board’s work. For that reason, she favors not taking the Quitline funding off the top but instead allocating 100% of funding according to the CDC recommended distribution ratios and deducting Quitline funding from the total cessation pot. It is a good use of the cessation funds. She also favors this approach because historically the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund dollars can be viewed as an attractive option to address other budget needs during legislative session and the QuitLine is such a critical and important program that she is comfortable putting a four-year commitment in place.</li> <li>○ Members were reminded that during the 2024 legislative session the FY 2025 deposit to the Trust Fund was suspended. This one-year suspension allows the Board to catch-up. The next allocation would come in April 2026.</li> <li>○ Chair Gualtieri and DC Terranova reminded members that DPH was able to piece together various sources of federal funding to continue funding the QuitLine during the years when the allocations to the Trust Fund had ceased. However, that resulted in a reduction to the supply of cessation products that could be provided to callers. Representative Cindy Harrison expressed her support for continued funding and the need for the QuitLine to have the necessary resources to be able to provide callers with eight weeks of cessation assistance</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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	<p>products to increase their chances of success with quitting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Chair Gualtieri called on each member to express their opinion regarding whether to take the \$2 million for QuitLine off the top before formulating a motion and going to a formal vote. All members in favor, with exception of Anne Foley. Anne Foley expressed strong support for QuitLine and its continued funding. Her concern was that by taking the full \$2 million off the top, it would decrease amounts available in the other categories, especially Mass-Health Outreach and State and Local Interventions.</li> </ul> <p><u>VOTE:</u> Anne Foley made a motion to dedicate \$2 million for QuitLine to ensure four years of sustainability for that contract. All in favor. Motion Carried.</p> <p><u>VOTE:</u> Chair Gualtieri made a motion to take \$2 million for QuitLine off the top, apply the CDC percentages to the remaining balance and then add the \$2 million to the cessation category. Christopher Moran seconded. 8 in favor. 1 opposed. 0 abstentions. Motion carried.</p> <p><u>VOTE:</u> Anne Foley made a motion to continue to dedicate the Infrastructure, Administration and Management dollars to DPH and to allocate Surveillance and Evaluation dollars to the entity selected through the 2023 RFP process to ensure continuity of evaluation services. Suchitra Krishnan-Sarin Seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.</p>
Discussion of Next Steps	None
Public Comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senator Anwar shared three comments: (1) He cautioned members that the tobacco industry is going to heavily market their other products as part of cessation efforts and the Board will want to be intentional that cessation funding does not go back to the companies that caused the problem. (2) He also shared that the legislature routinely hears from gas station and convenience stores that they are small businesses and ceasing the sale of tobacco products jeopardizes their sustainability. He suggested that a grant program, starting as a pilot, to assist good actors would be helpful. (3) He thanked the Board for its work and stated that it is extending the lives of Connecticut residents.</li> <li>• Chair Gualtieri acknowledged Dr. Samuel Hahn from Yale, who joined the meeting as a guest today but is currently undergoing the vetting process to receive a formal appointment to the Board. The Chair welcomed comments from Dr. Hahn. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Dr. Hahn said he looks forward to the opportunity to serve on this Board. As a cardiologist he is attuned to the devastating consequences to the population from</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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	<p style="text-align: center;">tobacco use and he thanked the Board for its excellent work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ruth Canovi, American Lung Association informed members that she has advocated for this funding and it is heartwarming to hear the thoughtful conversations that Board members have had today. She noted that she has been talking to Chair Gualtieri about sustainability of funding and spoke in favor of not just trying to continue funding at current levels but continuing to push for additional funds. Chair Gualtieri invited Ruth to share state and/or national data that can better support our work and encouraged her to suggest future agenda items.</li> </ul>
Adjourn	<p><u>VOTE:</u> Chair Gualtieri called for a motion to adjourn. Representative Cindy Harrison made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Michael Rell. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 12:11 P.M.</p>