



Joint Meeting Narrative Summary

Date: Wednesday, May 13, 2026

Time: 4:30 to 5:30 PM

Meeting Purpose: Joint Meeting of the Virginia Broadband Council and the State Telehealth Plan Advisory Group

Meeting Location: Virginia Guest House and Virtual

Invitees (open to the public)

- [Members and Staff of the Broadband Council of Virginia](#)
- [Members and Staff of the Virginia State Telehealth Plan Advisory Group](#)

Meeting Summary

The Virginia Broadband Council and the State Telehealth Plan Advisory Group convened for a joint discussion focused on the relationship between broadband access, telehealth adoption, digital literacy, infrastructure resilience, and public policy. Participants reflected on the ways Virginia can continue advancing broadband and telehealth goals amidst shifting federal priorities, implementation challenges, and persistent access barriers in rural and underserved communities.

Bipartisan Initiative and Policy Context

The meeting opened with an open-floor discussion about the current policy environment and the importance of maintaining bipartisan momentum around broadband and telehealth. Speakers noted that broadband investments in Virginia have historically benefited from support across party lines and emphasized that the Commonwealth is well positioned to lead because of the collaborative leadership already in place. Participants also acknowledged challenges associated with changes in federal administration, federal constraints on state-level action, and emerging questions around artificial intelligence (AI), including the need for appropriate guardrails as AI tools evolve.

Discussion also highlighted federal agencies that have played important roles in advancing telemedicine, including the FCC, HHS, and HRSA. Participants recognized that federal direction continues to influence what states can implement, but they also pointed to Virginia's strong cross-sector partnerships as an opportunity to keep moving shared goals forward.



Broadband Infrastructure and Telehealth Challenges

Participants discussed the central role of broadband infrastructure in expanding access to health care. Health care was described as a key driver of public broadband use, particularly in communities where reliable connectivity can directly affect access to services. At the same time, the group noted that technology adoption requires more than infrastructure alone. Education, comfort, trust, and digital health literacy are all necessary for residents and providers to use telehealth effectively.

The group reflected on the rapid increase in telehealth use during the COVID-19 pandemic, when telehealth became a routine part of care delivery and helped reduce some adoption barriers. However, participants noted that telehealth use has not remained as high as many had hoped. Several reasons were discussed, including limited digital literacy, provider discomfort with newer technologies, and persistent barriers tied to geography, income, education, and trust.

Participants emphasized that trust is especially important in communities that feel overlooked or underserved. Community-based clinics, local champions, and people with lived experience were identified as critical messengers. The group agreed that data remains important, but personal stories and trusted local voices are often what change opinions, build confidence, and encourage residents to try telehealth services.

Funding, Geography, and Resilience Barriers

The discussion then turned to the practical barriers that continue to affect broadband deployment and telehealth access. Participants noted that some families still lack the basic equipment and infrastructure needed to connect, including reliable electricity in some cases. The group also raised concerns about income disparities, accessibility, and the ways unconscious bias can compound health challenges, including in areas such as maternal health. Funding delays and uncertainty around BEAD nondeployment resources were identified as major concerns. Participants noted that these resources were expected to help address gaps in access, equipment, and digital literacy, but that the timing remains unclear. The group also expressed support for approaches that allow residents to retain equipment after completing digital literacy training, recognizing that long-term access depends on both connectivity and the tools needed to use it.

Geography and infrastructure conditions were also discussed as significant barriers. Participants cited permitting issues involving state agencies, railroads, and VDOT; the need for continued dialogue with state agencies and federal delegation support; and the difficulty of deploying broadband in parts of Southwest Virginia where topography limits underground infrastructure. The group also noted that many rural areas may have only one provider, creating vulnerability during natural disasters.



Recent disaster experiences underscored the importance of resilience. Participants referenced challenges during Helene, including limited generator availability and the need for resilience hubs that include both power and internet connectivity. The group discussed the value of county-level extension hubs where patients and families could receive support, services, and resources during emergencies and in routine care settings.

Budget and Planning Considerations

The group discussed the importance of budget support for the Virginia Department of Health to advance telehealth planning and implementation. Participants emphasized that successful telehealth expansion requires coordination across systems, attention to operational readiness, and sustained support for communities that face overlapping barriers to health care, broadband access, and emergency preparedness.

Shared Priorities and Desired Outcomes

Participants identified several priorities for future work. These included strengthening coordinated care and tying systems together more effectively. The group emphasized the importance of not leaving anyone behind and ensuring that technology enhances, rather than replaces, human connection.

Additional priorities included considering social drivers of health; advancing permitting roundtables as part of BEAD requirements; preserving Medicaid access wherever possible; and expanding broadband access to rural Virginia, farm families, and potential veterinary telehealth applications for agricultural communities.

Overall, the meeting reinforced that broadband and telehealth are closely connected to health access, community trust, emergency resilience, and economic opportunity. Participants agreed that Virginia has strong partnerships and bipartisan support to continue this work, but that implementation will require sustained coordination, funding clarity, infrastructure solutions, and community-centered outreach.