

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Texas Agricultural Finance Authority
Meeting Minutes
October 23, 2025

Board Members Present:

Ted Conover, Chairman
Justin Tucker, Vice-Chairman (virtual)
Aaron Weichman
Barry Smith (virtual)
Brian McCuistion (virtual)
Craig Davis
Georgina Macias (virtual)
John Crew (virtual)
Sarah Burnett (virtual)

Guests Present:

Andy Prahoda
Aaron Nelsen (virtual)
Brant Wilbourn (virtual)
Kara Bishop (virtual)
Kelley Green (virtual)
Kody Bessent (virtual)
Robert Braden (virtual)
Tracy Tomascik (virtual)

TDA Staff Present:

Bradine Griffiths
CJ Balderrama
Danielle Mitchell (virtual)
Emily Daly
Julia Rico
Karen Reichek
Kat Neilson
Kelly Sara
Mindy Fryer
Nicole Caston
Susan Maldonado

- I. **Call to Order.** Ted Conover called the meeting to order at 9:34 am.
- II. **Roll Call and Confirmation of Quorum.** Mindy Fryer called roll and confirmed a quorum.
- III. **Opening Remarks.** No Opening Remarks provided.
- I. **Discussion and Possible Action relating to approval of meeting minutes for the September 25, 2025 board meeting.** Ted Conover called for a motion to approve the previous meeting minutes. Barry Smith motioned; Aaron Weichman seconded; the motion passed unanimously.
- IV. **Public Comment.** Members of the public were invited to provide comments throughout the meeting's agenda.

- V. **Discussion and Possible Action relating to State of Texas Fiscal Year 2026 Budget.** No significant activities have occurred. No motion or vote was taken by the Board on this agenda item.
- VI. **Discussion and Possible Action relating to TAFE bonding authority.** No discussion was taken by the Board on this agenda item.
- VII. **TDA updates, if applicable, relating to rule review and/or revision of TAFE's administrative rules located at Texas Administrative Code, Title 4, Part 1, Chapter 28.**
- No motion or vote was taken by the Board on this agenda item.
- VIII. **Discussion and Possible Action relating to presentation of TAFE overview by TDA staff including, but not limited to, discussion of program history, outstanding obligations, and recommendations for the following TAFE programs, along with additional program-specific subject matter specified below:**
- Mindy Fryer presented an overview of the following items. No motion or vote was taken by the Authority on these agenda items.
- a) Agricultural Loan Guarantee –outstanding obligations, types of loans, and composition of loan guarantee portfolio;
 - b) Municipal Finance- outstanding obligation; and
 - c) Interest Rate Reduction/Young Farmer Interest Rate Reduction – outstanding obligations.
- IX. **Discussion and Possible Action relating to House Bill 43 program development, including but not limited to the following:**
- a) Agriculture Production Grant Program**

Mindy provided an update noting the draft producer application is based on the former Young Farmer Grant (YFG) Program. Additional questions have been added to better identify the proposed project and its intended outcomes. The Board further discussed eligibility criteria, financial documentation requirements, operational viability, desire to understand an applicant's education and experience, business plan, and budget details. A motion was made by Barry Smith to approve the draft Agriculture Production Grant Program application as presented. Sarah Burnett seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. No comments were received regarding the scoring rubric.
 - b) Pest, Disease Control, and Depredation Program**

Karen explained that the application was modeled after similar existing programs and currently limits eligibility to three specific entities as defined by statute. Discussion focused on whether to broaden or limit the program's reach. The statute specifically identifies three eligible entities; however,

these entities may partner with others. Barry Smith expressed satisfaction with the application draft and motioned to approve the Pest, Disease Control, and Depredation Program (PDCDP) application as drafted. Any additional changes will be presented to the Board at a future meeting. Justin Tucker seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

c) First Handler Program

Karen invited feedback on the initial draft designed to assist first handlers lacking access to other disaster relief programs. Mindy clarified that the intent is to support entities such as rice dryers, cotton gins, and grain elevators that suffer operational losses due to natural disasters. Discussion highlights including better defining first handlers, eligible entities, financial documentation, and other requirements to prevent fraudulent applications. Barry Smith made a motion to direct staff to incorporate Board feedback and present a revised draft at the next meeting. Aaron Weichman seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

d) Other Program

There will be a fourth grant program that will target agriculture value added/service providers. Staff will have the draft template available at next meeting. Karen requested that any suggestions be emailed to TDA.

X. Discussion and Possible Action relating to the next meeting date.

November 20, 2025, and December 18, 2025, were agreed to be future meeting dates. No motion or vote was taken by the Board on this agenda item.

II. Discussion and Possible Action relating to other business raised at meeting to be placed on next agenda: Ted Conover called for additional business to be placed on the agenda. No motion or vote was taken by the Board on this agenda item.

III. Executive Session (as necessary): The Board did not conduct an executive session.

IV. Adjourn: Ted Conover called for a motion to adjourn. Justin Tucker motioned; Sarah Burnett seconded; the meeting adjourned at 11:15 AM.