

Charlie Perusse – State Budget Director
State Budget Update

Question 1: Is OSBM addressing any of the State Auditors expectations vs NCPRO guidance?

Answer 1: In response to CARES Act funding, state governments across the country have had to develop ways to distribute, track, and oversee these funds to maximize benefits to their residents while also remaining in compliance with all applicable federal laws and regulations. The North Carolina Pandemic Recovery Office (NCPRO) was created to help fulfill that obligation for North Carolina. Since its inception in the late-spring of 2020, NCPRO has created numerous tools to support state and federal tracking and reporting requirements, including compliance with US Treasury Inspector General requests and audits.

NCPRO has provided ongoing technical assistance and guidance to state government agencies, local governments, nonprofits, and hospitals. We work to remain in compliance with state law and the federal requirements and guidance, while also assisting North Carolinians as they cope with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Question 2: As an economic impact, what is being done for connectivity for rural communities? The pandemic has put into sharp relief the disparity between urban and rural communities for internet connectivity, which hurts the rural community economically, as well as for educational issues for the children?

Answer 2: Expanding connectivity across the state of North Carolina has been a goal for state government for several years, but the pressure exerted by the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the urgency of these efforts. [North Carolina's Broadband Infrastructure Office](#) has several resources and initiatives to foster the expansion of broadband and maintains the state's broadband plan. Funding for grants and other programs focused on connectivity is expected to continue to be a priority in 2021.

In addition, this year the state committed \$40 million for distanced learning activities including installing Wi-Fi routers in school buses, providing home internet access points, and purchasing computers for K-12 students and teachers.

At the federal level, the recently passed federal \$900 billion coronavirus relief package provides additional funds to the Federal Communications Commission to expand broadband, including specific funds for bringing broadband access to rural and underserved areas.

This is an area of public policy we anticipate seeing continued efforts to address in 2021 and beyond.