

## Ensuring North Carolina's Economic Recovery

The recently passed American Rescue Plan Act is expected to provide tens of billions of dollars in federal support to North Carolina to mitigate harm from the COVID-19 pandemic. There will be additional recommendations that support small businesses and bolster economic development leveraging the state's share of these funds for high speed internet access, housing, water and sewer infrastructure, and other needs. To best prepare the state for full economic recovery, this budget provides state General Fund support for the following items to complement the direct aid and small business provisions of the federal stimulus package.

### Strengthening Businesses and Industry

Invests more than \$36 million over the biennium to strengthen businesses and industry in North Carolina, including \$24 million for small businesses through the One NC Small Business Fund and the Carolina Small Business Fund; \$9 million to prepare rural and economically distressed communities for an innovation-based economy; \$2 million for small and independent film makers; \$1.2 million for the Small Business Enterprise Program to address the disproportionate economic impact of COVID-19 on communities of color; and \$700,000 for staff to support agricultural growth and exports.

### Creating Clean Energy Business Opportunities

Dedicates a total of over \$15 million in FY 2021-22 to advancing clean energy development and the clean energy economy. Invests \$14.5 million for clean energy economic development, from start-up to expansion of existing businesses. Provides \$1 million for a study to understand how North Carolina communities are being impacted by the transition to a clean energy economy and to pilot strategies for supporting communities through planning, workforce development, and community engagement.

### Marketing North Carolina and its Products

Provides \$11 million over the biennium to market the state as a business destination as well as to identify new markets for North Carolinian products, including \$10 million to the Economic Development Partnership (EDPNC) of North Carolina, which increases awareness of North Carolina and draws prospective businesses and investment to the state, and \$1 million to the Department of Agriculture to develop new markets for agricultural products.

### Enhancing Customer Experience

Provides over \$1 million for positions at the Department of Commerce to improve service for current and prospective business owners, including a Web Content Manager, a Certified Sites Upgrade and Product Development Director, analytic support staff at the Labor and Economic Analysis Division, and supply chain and economic development personnel to administer the department's portfolio of clean energy programs and provide technical assistance statewide.

### Supporting Small Businesses

Invests \$780,000 over the biennium to help North Carolina's small businesses thrive. Funds \$530,000 to establish a Small Business Resources Division at the Department of Commerce to improve start-up and small firm success by partnering with local governments and economic development organizations to provide needed space, guidance, and capacity. Funds \$250,000 for additional staff at Business Link North Carolina within the EDPNC to provide small business outreach and assistance services statewide, including guidance on leveraging COVID-19 related resources.