



The Rural Center's advocacy platform, Rural Counts: 10 Strategies for Rural North Carolina's Future, is an action-oriented entrée of just, sound public policy priorities that we hope will move rural North Carolina forward. Our 2020 agenda focuses on tracking and influencing three broad issue areas that cut across the 10 Rural Counts strategies.


Expand Accessible, Affordable High-Speed Broadband

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- Provide increased funding, for implementation and administration of the broadband grant program, Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT), to greatly expand eligibility, accessibility and adoption
 - Establish a statewide broadband definition to support efforts to accurately map broadband availability
 - Encourage public-private partnerships by clarifying the ability of local governments to raise and spend funds for broadband infrastructure and to lease existing assets to private and non-profit to help expand broadband to the last mile
 - Operationalize the state-level 'dig once' policy to cut costs and increase efficiency in laying broadband infrastructure
 - Address broadband adoption rates by establishing an incentive-based program to provide low-cost options in underserved areas, fund technology access and digital literacy programs, and explores a subsidy program for low-income households

Stabilize and Transform Rural Health

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- Close the health insurance coverage gap in North Carolina
 - Expand efforts to recruit and retain rural health providers, including specialists in underserved areas of the state
 - Implement recommendations for a statewide telemedicine policy made by DHHS in 2017
 - Investigate opportunities to attract mid-level health care providers to rural areas by allowing full practice authority and increasing scope of practice
 - Explore broad-based solutions for the substance abuse crisis that address both prevention and treatment
 - Support the Healthy North Carolina 2030 attainment goals that seek to holistically address and improve the health, safety, and well-being of North Carolinians

Invest in Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development

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- Adopt a statewide small business agenda that fully addresses the needs of entrepreneurs and small businesses, with special attention on underserved areas, people of color, veterans and women small business owners
 - Promote responsible practice in the non-bank small business lending sector to create greater transparency and fairness for potential borrowers
 - Balance state economic development efforts with an added emphasis on supporting entrepreneurs and retaining existing firms
 - Address regulatory barriers that hinder entrepreneurs from starting and growing businesses
 - Increase funding and coordination of technical assistance for rural communities nurturing small business development and downtown revitalization
 - Support long-term disaster recovery and resiliency through improving small business support and strategic planning