



North Dakota Legislative Council

Prepared for the Emergency Response Services Committee
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GRANT FUNDING FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Senate Bill No. 2332 (2025) provides for a Legislative Management study of grant funding for emergency services and public safety. The study must include a review of the amount of grant funding needed, potential funding sources, entities to be eligible to receive a grant, types of expenses to be eligible for reimbursement through a grant program, the appropriate agency to administer a grant program, and options to establish a grant program oversight committee.

BACKGROUND

The original version of Senate Bill No. 2332 created a legacy earnings emergency services and public safety fund and an advisory board. The legacy earnings emergency services and public safety fund would have received \$25 million in legacy fund earnings each biennium. The advisory board included representation from firefighters, law enforcement, and emergency medical services (EMS). The advisory board would have been responsible for awarding grants from the legacy earnings emergency services and public safety fund. The Department of Emergency Services would have been responsible for the distribution and administration of the grant program. This bill was changed to the study that is referenced.

STATE ASSISTANCE FOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) administers the EMS assistance grants and grants for training. During the 2023-25 biennium, DHHS approved 92 rural EMS assistance grants totaling \$13,947,169. These grants can be used for operational expenses such as staffing, equipment, fuel, and other needs. The grants ranged in size from \$233 to \$391,967 and averaged \$151,600. Additional training grants were approved for \$846,000. The Department of Health and Human Services disbursed a total of \$14,700,308 of which \$6,575,308 was from the general fund, \$1,125,000 from the insurance tax distribution fund, and \$7,000,000 from the community health trust fund. For the 2025-27 biennium, the Legislative Assembly appropriated \$15,000,000 for these grants, of which \$6,895,000 is from the general fund, \$7,000,000 is from the community health trust fund and \$1,125,000 from the insurance tax distribution fund. As of May 6, 2025, there are 255 licensed EMS agencies in North Dakota, including 16 advanced support ground ambulances, 101 basic life support ground ambulances, 10 critical care air ambulances, 5 industrial ambulance services, 110 quick response units, and 13 substations of basic life support ground ambulances. The quick response units include fire departments, North Dakota Highway Patrol, police departments, and special units like the Dakota Zoo, Nodak Speedway, and Huff Hills volunteer ski patrol. Four of the critical care air ambulances are located outside of North Dakota, in addition to one advanced life support ground ambulance and 2 basic life support ambulances, all in border areas.

STATE ASSISTANCE FOR FIRE DISTRICTS AND DEPARTMENTS

The Insurance Department administers the insurance tax payments to fire departments. The Legislative Assembly, in Senate Bill No. 2211 (2023), provided a continuing appropriation for payments to fire departments and districts from the insurance tax distribution fund, in accordance with provisions of North Dakota Century Code Section 18-04-05. Previously, the funding was specifically appropriated to the Insurance Commissioner each biennium. The following is a summary of the amounts appropriated by the Legislative Assembly in prior bienniums and an estimate of the 2025-27 biennium payments to fire departments and districts:

Biennium	Total Payments
2015-17 biennium	\$15,681,207
2017-19 biennium	\$14,235,561
2019-21 biennium	\$17,989,505
2021-23 biennium	\$19,588,470
2023-25 biennium	\$28,051,308
2025-27 biennium (estimated)	\$29,317,488

North Dakota Century Code Section 18-03-07, directs the Insurance Commissioner to pay \$1.2 million from the insurance regulatory trust fund to the North Dakota Firefighter's Association by August 1 of each year.

STATE ASSISTANCE FOR LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

House Bill No. 1307 (2023) and House Bill No. 1193 (2025) each appropriated \$3.5 million to the Attorney General for the purpose of a peace officer and correctional officer appreciation grant program. The 2023 bill was a "back the blue" grant to assist local law enforcement agencies with workforce recruitment and retention. The 2025 version included correctional officers employed by all city and county law enforcement agencies. Both bills provided the funds for retention and recruitment bonuses and tuition and fee payments on behalf of law enforcement trainees.

PREVIOUS REPORTS AND STUDIES

In June 2011, a report was received by the interim Human Services Committee titled, *A Crisis and Crossroad in Rural North Dakota Emergency Medical Services*. This study was completed by SafeTech Solutions, LLP, from Isanti, Minnesota. The full report is available on the Legislative Council website at [North Dakota Rural EMS Improvement Project](#). The executive summary of the report cited the following seven topics to address the needs of rural EMS:

- **Recognizing that the roots and future of rural EMS in North Dakota are local.** Today, the important decisions about rural EMS in terms of who provides it, how it is provided, and the quantity and level of care are all made locally. Each area or region of the state has unique needs and resources, and no single solution fits all services or areas.
- **Developing the capacity of local ambulance service leaders.** The local ambulance service leader is one of the most important roles in North Dakota rural EMS. Investing in the development of local leadership helps local services develop the capacity to address their unique challenges locally. The best-run rural ambulance services in North Dakota have stable, prepared, respected, and proactive leadership.
- **Facilitating collaboration between ambulance services.** Many services will not be sustainable on their own and will need to develop regional approaches to leadership, education, resource deployment, staffing, funding and medical direction. Some of the best efforts that address this crisis in North Dakota involve collaboration and regional approaches.
- **Telling a simple, unified story about rural EMS.** To obtain the appropriate attention and support, rural EMS in North Dakota will need to tell a collective story about this crisis, the real cost of operating ambulance services and the emerging financial and workforce needs. This story will need to be told repeatedly to EMS providers, taxpayers, voters and municipal, township, county and state government in the coming years.
- **Ongoing EMS workforce planning and development.** To ensure that rural EMS has enough human resources in coming years, the practice of workforce planning and development will need to be promoted and led at a state level.
- **Measuring simple, practical and meaningful indicators of system performance.** To ensure the performance of rural EMS continues to be strong through this change and into the future, measurement and monitoring of such things as response reliability, chute times, the numbers of active rural EMS workers, and the delivery of appropriate clinical care should occur at local, regional and state levels.

- **Connecting rural EMS with healthcare and public safety.** EMS straddles healthcare and public safety and has the ability to function in both arenas. Rural EMS must continue to explore how it might broaden its services and employ its personnel by exploring cross-training possibilities in roles such as community paramedics or other roles compatible with EMS.

In August 2019, the North Dakota EMS Association (NDEMSEA) worked with Strengthen ND to develop a 5-year strategic vision called North Dakota EMS Vision 2025. The plan focused on three broad areas of staffing, reimbursement, and education. The report established the following four goals:

- By 2025, EMS stakeholders will elevate the perception and visibility of EMS throughout North Dakota.
- By 2025, EMS stakeholders will create and deploy an advocacy initiative to educate communities and support long-term EMS sustainability.
- By 2025, EMS stakeholders will improve the quality of EMS education and maximize available education opportunities.
- By 2025, EMS stakeholders will foster partnerships to create and facilitate expanded efficiencies for operational, staffing and administrative, and service capabilities for local EMS service.

PROPOSED STUDY PLAN

The following is the proposed study plan for the committee's consideration:

1. Receive information from DHHS regarding the current grant programs for emergency services and public safety.
2. Receive information from the Department of Emergency Services regarding the distribution and administration of any funding provided to local emergency services and public safety agencies.
3. Receive information from the Attorney General's office regarding current grant programs for law enforcement.
4. Receive information from the Insurance Commissioner regarding grant programs for the Firefighter's Association and fire districts and departments.
5. Receive information from the North Dakota Emergency Management Association regarding the source and amount of funding for emergency services and public safety programs and any issues or concerns with the current level of funding.
6. Receive information from the North Dakota Emergency Medical Services Association regarding the source and amount of funding for EMS programs and any issues or concerns with the current level of funding.
7. Receive information from the ND Firefighter's Association regarding the source and amount of funding for the firefighter association and for fire districts and departments and any issues or concerns with the current level of funding.
8. Develop recommendations and any bill drafts necessary to implement the recommendations.
9. Prepare a final report for submission to the Legislative Management.