

1 Introduced by Senator Heffernan
2 Referred to Committee on
3 Date:
4 Subject: Internal security and public safety; emergency management;
5 Technical Rescue Microgrant Program
6 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to create the
7 Technical Rescue Microgrant Program for the purpose of awarding grants to
8 fire departments, emergency medical service agencies, and technical rescue
9 agencies for specialized equipment, personal protective gear, and training.
10 This bill also proposes to appropriate \$25,000.00 from the General Fund to the
11 Department of Public Safety for purposes operating the Program and awarding
12 grants to eligible agencies.

13 An act relating to Technical Rescue Microgrant Program
14 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:
15 Sec. 1. 20 V.S.A. § 52 is added to read:
16 **§ 52. TECHNICAL RESCUE MICROGRANT PROGRAM**
17 (a) Creation of Program. There is created a Technical Rescue Microgrant
18 Program to assist Vermont fire departments, emergency medical services
19 agencies, and technical rescue agencies with the improvement of operational
20 readiness and investment in specialized equipment, personal protective gear,

1 and training. The Program shall be administered by the Department of Public
2 Safety.

3 (b) Working Group. The Technical Rescue Grant Working Group is
4 established to review applications and recommend awards to the
5 Commissioner of Public Safety. The Working Group shall be composed of the
6 following members:

7 (1) the Manager of the Vermont Urban Search and Rescue Team, who
8 shall be Chair;

9 (2) one member of the Senate Committee on Government Operations,
10 appointed by the Committee on Committees;

11 (3) one member of the House Committee on Government Operations
12 and Military Affairs, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

13 (4) a representative of a fire department, appointed by the Commissioner
14 of Public Safety; and

15 (5) a representative of an emergency medical services agency, appointed
16 by the Commissioner of Health.

17 (c) Compensation and reimbursement.

18 (1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General
19 Assembly, a legislative member of the Working Group shall be entitled to per
20 diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23.

1 These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the General
2 Assembly.

3 (2) Other members of the Working Group whose participation is not
4 supported through their employment or association shall receive per diem
5 compensation pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 1010 and reimbursement of travel
6 expenses. A per diem authorized by this subsection shall be paid from the
7 budget of the Department of Public Safety.

8 (d) Eligibility. Fire departments, emergency medical service agencies, and
9 technical rescue agencies operating within Vermont shall be eligible for
10 Program grants. Grant applicants shall demonstrate their use, planned use, or
11 need for technical rescue operations within their service area. All grant
12 applicants shall submit their application on a form adopted by the Department.

13 The Department shall prioritize grant awards for applicants that:

14 (1) maintain a memorandum of understanding with Vermont Emergency
15 Management for swiftwater rescue; or
16 (2) function as regional technical rescue teams providing services in
17 multiple jurisdictions.

18 (e) Grant award limitations. The maximum award to any applicant in a
19 given fiscal year shall be not more than \$5,000.00. The Program shall not
20 award more than \$100,000.00 in total grants in a given fiscal year.

Commented [TA1]: Sen. Heffernan, I drafted this limitation as a cap on the awards that may be granted annually. In the language you sent with the request, this was framed as a limit on the total annual appropriation by the General Assembly. As you are likely already aware, statute is not binding on future assemblies. The amount of the annual appropriation would be determined by the future iterations of General Assembly and would not be limited by this section. If you would like me to include the original language anyway, I can definitely add it back in.

1 (f) Application review and scoring. The Department shall adopt
2 procedures governing application submission, forms, review, scoring, and
3 recommendation of awards. The procedures for application scoring shall
4 include alignment with the Program priorities in subsection (b) of this section,
5 operational need, geographic service area, feasibility of the proposed project,
6 cost-effectiveness, and sustainability of the applicant's services.

7 (g) Grant recipient reporting; Department report. Each grant recipient shall
8 submit to the Department a final expenditure report, proof of purchase or
9 training completion, and a narrative description of how the grant improved the
10 recipient's technical rescue capacity. Annually on or before November 15, the
11 Department shall submit a written report to the House Committee on
12 Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on
13 Government Operations summarizing grant awards, outcomes, and Program
14 recommendations.

15 (h) Rulemaking. The Department may adopt rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A.
16 chapter 25 as needed to implement this section.

17 Sec. 2. APPROPRIATION

18 The sum of \$25,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the
19 Department of Public Safety in fiscal year 2027 for the purpose of awarding
20 grants from the Technical Rescue Microgrant Program.

Commented [TA2]: In the proposed language, this is phrased simply as "sustainability." To avoid ambiguity, I added a clarifying clause to match this term with the focus of the preceding clauses (operational need, feasibility, and cost-effectiveness). Please let me know whether this was your intent.

1 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

2 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.