

Executive Summary

Technical Rescue Microgrant Program

This bill establishes the Technical Rescue Microgrant Program within the Vermont Department of Public Safety to strengthen emergency response capabilities across the state. The program provides small, targeted grants to Vermont fire departments, emergency medical service agencies, and technical rescue teams for specialized equipment, personal protective equipment (PPE), and training that directly support technical rescue operations.

The Program would be administered by the Department of Public Safety, with grant applications reviewed by a Technical Rescue Grant Working Group composed of legislative members, subject-matter experts, and public safety representatives. The Working Group would evaluate applications and recommend awards to the Commissioner of Public Safety based on operational need, feasibility, cost-effectiveness, sustainability, and alignment with statewide technical rescue priorities.

Eligible applicants must operate within Vermont and demonstrate an existing or anticipated need for technical rescue services. Priority consideration is given to agencies that maintain a memorandum of understanding with Vermont Emergency Management for swiftwater rescue or that function as regional technical rescue teams serving multiple jurisdictions.

Individual grant awards are capped at \$5,000 per applicant per fiscal year, with total annual program awards not to exceed \$100,000. The bill proposes an initial \$25,000 General Fund appropriation in fiscal year 2027 to launch the program and begin awarding grants. As discussed with the committee these funds could be adjusted with the allotment of funding. In the bill language you will kind of see my initial ask be requested as well as the higher dollar amount that came from discussion this would need to be ironed out in language.

Grant recipients must submit expenditure documentation and a narrative report demonstrating how awarded funds improved their technical rescue capacity. The Department of Public Safety is required to submit an annual report to the House and Senate Committees on Government Operations summarizing grant awards, outcomes, and program recommendations. The Act would take effect on July 1, 2026.