

			Project Requests for State Funds		
Project Title	Priority Ranking	Funding Source	2026	2028	2030
BCA Bemidji Regional Office and Laboratory Expansion	1	GO	\$ 46,833	\$ 0	\$ 0
Total Project Requests			\$ 46,833	\$ 0	\$ 0
General Obligation Bonds (GO) Total			\$ 46,833	\$ 0	\$ 0

BCA Bemidji Regional Office and Laboratory Expansion**AT A GLANCE****2026 Request Amount:** \$46,833**Priority Ranking:** 1**Project Summary:** The Minnesota Department of Public Safety's Bureau of Criminal Apprehension is requesting \$46.833 million in general obligation bonds to acquire land, design, construct, furnish, and equip the renovation and expansion of the Bemidji Regional Facility located in Bemidji, MN.**Project Description**

This project includes renovating the 26,000 square foot Bemidji Regional Office and Forensic Science Laboratory and a 27,000 square foot expansion. The renovation and expansion project will provide additional space and resources to support the increases in demand for investigatory and laboratory analysis for criminal investigations in the northern region of Minnesota. This project will also increase available training space for use by BCA training, local law enforcement, and for informational sessions to various groups and community members. Pre-design for this renovation and expansion was completed in 2021.

Project Rationale

The Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) is the state's criminal investigative law enforcement agency providing specialized investigative assistance in complex criminal cases, forensic laboratory testing and analysis, maintenance and dissemination of criminal justice information and records, and law enforcement training to local, state, and federal partners in all 87 counties statewide.

The BCA headquarters location is in St. Paul, a regional laboratory and facility location is in Bemidji, and funding for construction of a new southern regional facility in Mankato was appropriated by the Minnesota Legislature in 2025. In addition, the BCA maintains 11 investigative field offices co-located with local law enforcement across Minnesota to provide support to criminal justice partners and an evidence drop-off and limited drug testing in St. Cloud.

The Bemidji regional facility was built in 2001 with the goal to provide equitable services and response times to those served in the northern portion of the state. Over the past 24 years, this facility has provided exceptional services in support of northern Minnesota criminal justice efforts. However, the existing facility is no longer adequate to address the needs of the region as the service demands continue to increase in volume and complexity. Staffing has more than doubled since 2001, and renovation and expansion of the existing facility is needed to continue providing critical services in northern Minnesota.

BCA anticipates the new Mankato facility will be at full capacity shortly after opening with

approximately 50 employees. Despite the additional space at the new location, the BCA is also over capacity at its headquarters location by more than 150 staff. There is a critical need for the renovation and addition in Bemidji so that BCA can continue delivering essential forensic science services.

When the Bemidji facility first opened, the forensic laboratory was staffed with less than 10 full-time employees (FTE) and has since grown to 27 FTEs who provide forensic analysis in firearms, latent prints, biology, chemistry, and crime scene response. The demand for forensic services on this laboratory has grown from approximately 5,060 items submitted in 2003 to more than 12,000 items in 2024. The addition of Rapid DNA technology, the firearms database program, and digital and multimedia evidence analysis capabilities, as well as increased expedited evidence screening services, have further challenged the limited space for staff, equipment, and specialized space.

Crime labs throughout the nation continue to experience dramatic increases in requests for forensic science services. The BCA is no exception to this upward trend and is currently experiencing large backlogs due to the number of requests and reliance on forensic evidence in criminal investigations and court proceedings. The overall demand for forensic testing has increased over the last decade. For example, the demand for DNA analysis has increased steadily every year with an overall increase of five times in the last two decades; controlled substance submissions have become larger and more complex; and requests for analysis of digital media evidence, which was unheard of ten years ago, continue to exceed current capacity.

The BCA Investigations Division currently has ten special agents and four analysts located in the Bemidji regional office. These agents work closely with all law enforcement agencies in the northern portion of the state. Currently, this office lacks an interview room, secure evidence vault, and polygraph room. There is a critical need to expand digital evidence examination, but there is no space available to expand these services. This expansion would allow specialized investigative functions such as polygraph exams, facial reconstruction, digital evidence examination, audio/video enhancement, and 3D scanner data review and preparation, to be conducted within this new facility.

With the formation of the Force Investigations Unit in recent years, the BCA has shifted resources to northern Minnesota to be more efficient and responsive when it's requested to investigate an officer involved shooting or use of force case. This unit should remain physically separated from local law enforcement so that there are no conflicts of interest when called upon to investigate these crimes.

The BCA is also statutorily responsible for providing law enforcement training throughout the state of Minnesota. Although the Bemidji facility has some training space, it is too small for most training classes. The pre-design planning of a renovated and expanded Bemidji facility includes a significant increase in space allotted for training activities. By expanding BCA training opportunities, the BCA would be able to accommodate local law enforcement more efficiently by significantly reducing costs associated with lodging, drive time, and duty backup coverage associated with required continuing education.

Project Timeline

Pre-design: Completed June 2021

Design: September 2026 to May 2027

Bidding & Award: June 2027 to August 2027

Construction: September 2027 to August 2028

Occupancy: September 2028

Other Considerations

None.

Impact on Agency Operating Budgets

This project will add an additional 27,000 square feet of space. The projected lease rate for FY27 is \$29.45. The expansion will increase the lease costs by an additional \$795,150 per year. It is expected that the Department of Administration will pay all utilities and include that cost as part of the lease rate.

Description of Previous Appropriations

None.

2024 Governor Recommendation - \$4.061 million

2025 Governor Recommendation - \$4.203 million

Project Contact Person

Dana Gotz

Deputy Superintendent

651-793-1007

dana.gotz@state.mn.us