

Assessing Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Cost of Service



Case Study

The Client

North County Regional Fire Authority
Stanwood, WA

The Project

A cost analysis for providing mutual and automatic aid for fire and EMS responses, including ambulance transport and fire protection services.

The Opportunity

North County Regional Fire Authority (NCRFA) provides fire protection and EMS response to an area north of Seattle, WA, that consists of suburban communities surrounded by a vast rural landscape. Established in 2008, the organization has expanded since its inception, enabling it to expand its services and develop into a dependable response agency that offers services through mutual and automatic aid to its primary coverage region and additional local towns. Coinciding with this growth has been the need to evaluate the costs associated with providing services to areas that do not directly contribute to NCRFA's tax base. Public Consulting Group (PCG) was selected by the NCRFA to formulate a cost-of-service analysis that encompassed both fire and EMS cost impacts based on its local communities and area fire and EMS districts.

The Solution

To provide an extensive cost analysis, PCG evaluated the three departments that NCRFA had previously established contracts with for providing services, analyzing their call volume and response expense data. Using computer-aided design (CAD) data and the Ground Emergency Medical Transportation (GEMT) settlement data, PCG established

costs for NCRFA to provide services both per hour and per response. This analysis provided a comparison of each district's service contract fees and benchmarked it to the actual services provided (demand/volume) by the NCRFA

The Result

Through this analysis, it was determined that the NCRFA has been providing three hours of mutual aid services for every one hour that they had been receiving, there had been a significant net loss to the organization as a result. In evaluating the three departments NCRFA had contracts with, it was determined that one of the agencies warranted a significant increase in their annual fees, while the other two had appropriate fee structures in place.

Following the cost analysis, PCG made several impactful recommendations for how to proceed with future contract negotiations. Implementing the recommendations would provide a cost recovery of nearly \$1,000,000 to the organization. More importantly, implementing those recommendations ensures a more equitable approach to mutual aid and prevents the NCRFA community from being forced to subsidize the care of other districts.

To learn more about PCG's fire and EMS consulting services, including studies like the one conducted for North County Regional Fire Authority, contact us today.



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