

# MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY BUREAU OF CRIMINAL APPREHENSION

## MINNESOTA BCA BEMIDJI REGIONAL OFFICE EXPANSION AND RENOVATION

<b>2026 request amount:</b>	<b>\$46,833,000</b>
<b>Project summary:</b>	<b>The Minnesota Department of Public Safety's Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) is requesting state funds to acquire land, design, construct, furnish and equip the renovation and expansion of the BCA Bemidji Regional Office in Bemidji, Minnesota.</b>

The 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. The BCA Bemidji Regional Office was built in 2001 with the goal of providing equitable services and response times to communities in the northern portion of the state.

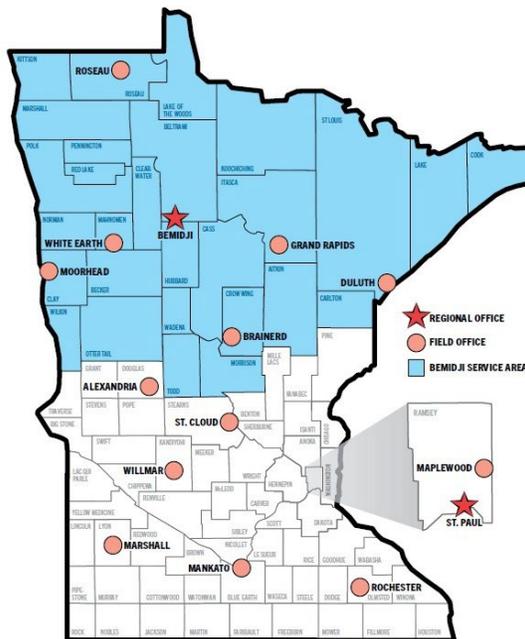
The renovation and expansion project will provide additional space and resources to support increases in demand for investigative response, forensic laboratory analysis for criminal investigations and training and meeting needs. The state has already invested in pre-design for this renovation and expansion, which was completed in 2021. This project encompasses the following:

- Renovating the existing 26,000 square foot facility
- Adding a 27,000 square foot expansion

### Housing the people and equipment to get the job done

The BCA includes a St. Paul headquarters, the Bemidji Regional Office, and construction of the new Mankato Regional Office was appropriated by the Minnesota Legislature in 2025. The BCA also maintains

11 investigative field offices co-located with local law enforcement across Minnesota and an evidence drop-off and limited drug testing in St. Cloud.



In the 24 years since the Bemidji Regional Office was built, service demands have continued to increase in volume and complexity and the BCA more than doubled staff since 2001 to keep pace with the needs of the region. As a result, the existing space is no longer adequate.

In addition, BCA anticipates the new Mankato facility will be at full capacity shortly after opening and the BCA headquarters is overcapacity by more than 150 staff. There is a critical need now for the renovation and addition in Bemidji so that BCA has the facility space necessary to continue delivering timely, essential services to northern Minnesota communities.



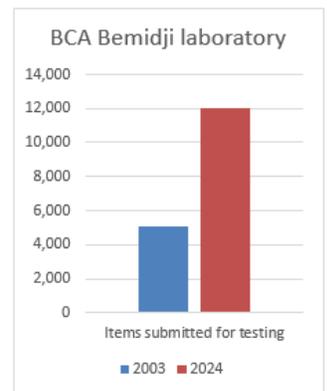
## Responding to Minnesota's evolving needs

BCA is considered the leader in specialized investigative services and forensic testing and analysis for the state and wants to continue to be a collaborative partner with local agencies statewide to prevent and solve crimes. To keep up with trends, technology, and demands for services, BCA urgently needs more space as it deals with current deficiencies and projected needs for the future.

- More efficient deployment of services to meet the needs of current and future caseloads.
- Improved turnaround times for case investigations and evidence testing.
- More efficient investigative processes for local law enforcement and the county attorneys they work with ultimately benefits Minnesota residents.

### Improved laboratory testing capacity

The Bemidji facility opened in 2001 with a forensic laboratory staffed by fewer than 10 full-time employees (FTE). It has grown to 27 FTEs who provide forensic analysis in firearms, latent prints, biology, chemistry and crime scene response. The demand for forensic services has more than doubled over the past 21 years. In 2003, 5,060 items were submitted to the BCA's Bemidji laboratory for testing. In 2024, more than 12,000 items were submitted. The addition of Rapid DNA technology, the firearms database program, and Digital and Multimedia Evidence (DME) analysis capabilities, as well as increased expedited evidence screening services further challenge the limited space for staff, equipment and specialized space.



The BCA, like crime labs across the nation, is experiencing large backlogs due to the number of requests for forensic testing services and reliance on forensic evidence in criminal investigations and court proceedings. The demand for DNA analysis, for example, has increased steadily every year with an overall increase of five times in the past 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.

### Expanded investigative services and response

The BCA Investigations Division has 10 special agents and 4 analysts located in the Bemidji who work closely with law enforcement agencies in the northern portion of the state. But the office lacks an interview room, secure evidence vault and polygraph room. There is a critical need to expand digital evidence examination, but no space to do so. 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.

The BCA positioned Force Investigations Unit resources in northern Minnesota to provide more efficient response to officer-involved shootings or use of force. This unit should remain physically separated from local law enforcement so that there are no conflicts of interest when investigating these incidents.

### Improved efficiency through training options

The BCA is statutorily responsible for providing law enforcement training throughout the state of Minnesota. Existing training space at the Bemidji facility is too small for most training classes. The pre-design plan for a renovated and expanded Bemidji facility includes a significant increase in space for training activities. By expanding training opportunities in Bemidji, the BCA would be able to significantly reduce local agency costs associated with lodging, drive time and duty backup coverage associated with required continuing education.