**Fiscal Facts: Greater Collaboration May Help Fox Valley Fire, EMS Agencies Address Shared Challenges**

Amid mounting service demands and an already strong cooperative spirit, fire and emergency

medical service (EMS) agencies in Wisconsin’s Fox Valley could benefit from additional

collaboration in key areas, a Wisconsin Policy Forum report finds.

Fire and emergency medical service (EMS) agencies across Wisconsin are stressed, facing fiscal

challenges, increasing service demands, tightening labor markets, and upheaval related to the

COVID-19 pandemic.

Fire departments in Wisconsin’s Fox Valley, while generally enjoying a higher level of staffing and resources compared to their peers elsewhere, are not immune to these pressures. Several Fox Valley fire chiefs recently approached the Forum to help them consider options to further enhance this collaboration as a means of promoting greater efficiency and teamwork.

The new report responds to that request, covering a range of service-sharing options for

fire departments serving Appleton, Grand Chute, Kaukauna, Neenah-Menasha, and Oshkosh. The departments already support each other for training and through mutual aid arrangements, and some have extended those arrangements further.

Our analysis focused on five specific areas that may hold the potential to pursue even greater levels of collaboration: training, special operations, community risk reduction, fleet maintenance, and EMS quality control and oversight. The report models specific opportunities for collaboration in each of these categories. Within each area we considered, we present options that would allow the departments to

start small and build over time toward more comprehensive collaborations.

On the other end of the spectrum, should the five departments and their respective municipalities ultimately wish to “go big,” then they might consider a single Fox Valley Fire Resources Bureau to regionalize the large array of support or specialized services addressed in this report.

Intergovernmental cooperation can be time-consuming and resource-intensive. Yet, our previous

research on service sharing has demonstrated it is worth the investment, particularly in regions like the

Fox Valley where trust and positive working relationships already provide a foundation.

*This information is a service of the Wisconsin Policy Forum, the state’s leading resource for nonpartisan state and local government research and civic education. Learn more at* [*wispolicyforum.org*](https://wispolicyforum.org/research/state-tax-burden-up-but-overall-burden-still-falling/)*.*