



# SC EMS Association

## 2021/2022 SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Advocacy, Collaboration, Education

### Abstract

This document is intended to exemplify current Emergency Medical Services (EMS) unmet needs, workforce concerns, and education disparities and provide meaningful solutions that can be enacted by increasing funding to the SCEMSA.

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## Overview

South Carolina EMS, like many other states across the nation, is facing unprecedented challenges. Labor shortages and workforce concerns are amongst the most substantial threats to our industry, however, we also face issues related to cost of service delivery versus reimbursement, shifting payer alignments, and awareness of EMS career opportunities which further exacerbate our access to develop our workforce pipeline. Affordable EMS education is a cornerstone of this discussion.

The EMS landscape in our state is comprised of approximately 278 EMS agencies, over 10,000 certified professionals, around 1100 permitted EMS ambulances and we respond to over 1.2 million calls for service a year or just over 3200 per day. These EMS agencies are public/governmental, private, air ambulance, fire and hospital based, and non-transporting. The EMS culture is diverse and often fractured due to our infancy as a profession in comparison to other allied services as well as lack of state level infrastructure to advocate for the needs of EMS systems and collaborate to share best practices and system development.

To this end, the South Carolina EMS Association (SCEMSA) has worked diligently over the past few years to identify the barriers to EMS system improvement and workforce concerns and identify innovative solutions to ensure the sustainability of our statewide EMS network. As an all-volunteer, membership funded and driven organization we have proven capable of achieving many of our goals and addressing unmet needs. Beginning in 2018, the SCEMSA partnered with the South Carolina Office of Healthcare Workforce to publish one of the nation's first statewide assessments of the EMS Workforce. This was followed in 2019 by a similar assessment of the EMS Education Pipeline in South Carolina which again garnered national recognition. We have partnered with numerous other stakeholders to include the South Carolina Hospital Association, South Carolina Office of Rural Health, South Carolina Emergency Management Division, and more to ensure that EMS has a seat at the table for critical conversations. We on boarded our first full time employee in April of this year and as a result have worked closely with the South Carolina Technical College System to improve access, reduce costs, and raise awareness of EMS career opportunities.

While these successes have demonstrated the need for a statewide presence for the SCEMSA, there is still much work to be done. Throughout the coronavirus pandemic EMS systems demonstrated our adaptability and versatility and we have emerged as safety net provider within the healthcare spectrum; specifically public health. Our association is poised to lead the nation in developing and implementation of novel solutions such as asynchronous EMS education, robust recruitment strategies to fill the education pipeline, addressing pay parity issues, and providing professional development opportunities to ensure long-term sustainability. In order to accomplish these tasks, we ask for your consideration in funding our organization so that we may be on par with other professional associations across our state. Our state possesses some of the best and brightest EMS minds in the nation. All that is needed is a spark for the SCEMSA and the great state of South Carolina to emerge as a national leader in addressing EMS concerns that no other state has yet to address. Within this document is our plan for expansion and our request for sustainable funding to address the immediate needs of this vital industry.

The return on this investment will be measured quite simply by alleviating critical workforce issues, increasing EMS awareness and ensuring a qualified pipeline of talent to mitigate the aging and decreasing workforce, while improving the EMS system delivery models statewide.

### **What can the General Assembly do to support the future of South Carolina EMS?**

The SCEMSA is requesting startup, one time funding for enhancing our education systems infrastructure and continuation of our statewide awareness and recruitment campaign. We are also seeking recurring funding to sustain our existing staffing while adding additional critical needs positions to achieve our mission of mitigating workforce demands both current and future.

As detailed above the SCEMSA is poised to leverage the collective voice of all aspects of EMS in delivering value to our citizens, visitors and other stakeholders. The pandemic illustrated the crucial lack of prioritization and infrastructure investment in EMS, both nationwide and here in South Carolina. In an effort to both address ongoing unmet needs and anticipating the future role EMS will play in the delivery of healthcare, the SCEMSA is seeking funding for both one time investments and reoccurring funding. The initial one time funding will be used to address the most pressing issue for EMS integrity in our state, EMS workforce and education infrastructure. To ensure equity and inclusion in these efforts the SCEMSA is committed to leveraging technology to completely revamp and modernize EMS education across all of our 46 counties.

The recurring funding will be used to sustain the most crucial component of our plan, our people. Engaging, hiring and retaining top talent and the best minds in this space is absolutely vital to make EMS in South Carolina the best it can be and a national and global leader in the space. Lack of full time staff has been documented through our research and through conversations with peer organizations statewide, as the number 1 issue holding EMS back in our state. As the EMS industry faces significant headwinds from the pandemic, skyrocketing costs, downward pressure on margins from decreased reimbursement from payors and a move from fee for service payment to value based compensation human capital dedicated to ensuring EMS has a driving seat at the table for these conversations has never been needed more. The SCEMSA is seeking investment in both senior association leadership in the form of a Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operations Officer and Chief Financial Officer to guide our statewide stakeholders through these rough waters strategically. We are also looking for funding to support operational roles, like workforce development coordinators, education coordinators and administrative support. The sustainable funding of these vital positions will be looked upon in history as a defining moment for the development of EMS 2.0 in South Carolina.

The SCEMSA is currently invested into expansion of EMS career awareness and opportunities in the K-12 system, we are working closely with the South Carolina Technical College System to leverage partnerships to expand EMS education, and we are actively working to increase EMS awareness, however, we require funding support to adequately staff our organization for success.