



2025 Annual Report

STATE OF THE COUNTIES

The year is 1975. Gerald Ford is President, the Rubik's Cube is invented and the Minnesota Vikings lose the Super Bowl. Again. But 1975 also ushered in a new era where a group of civic-minded county officials hatched the idea of a statewide association to "foster effective and efficient government for the good of all counties."

Those discussions, followed by legislative action, breathed life into the North Dakota Association of Counties (NDACo). Over the last 50 years, a lot has changed in North Dakota and at NDACo. Board members, Executive Directors and staff have all changed over the years, but one thing has never changed...the absolute dedication to ensuring county governments get the tools they need to do their jobs. The list of names responsible for the success of NDACo is too long to cover, but we can all take note of the saying "we all stand on the shoulders of giants."

In this report, we attempt to summarize all the relevant programs NDACo provides to county government, yet we are constantly testing and developing more services, like the grant assistance being provided through two partner engineering firms. We never want to lose focus on our mission to you; and regardless of where the next 50 years brings us, NDACo will be here for you! (And hopefully the Vikings can win at least one Super Bowl! 😊)



Aaron Birst
Executive Director

LEGISLATIVE SERVICES ... 1975

50 years ago, NDACo was created by the legislature to serve as the voice of all the counties in county-related policy issues. Over five decades, it has been our priority to do just that working with lawmakers, providing testimony and collecting input from you! NDACo conducts weekly member calls during session and provides weekly updates on our Legislative Blog, ndcounties.blog.

The 2025 Legislative Session was one of the most challenging and frustrating for counties with lawmakers focused on prioritizing property tax relief and reform. NDACo staff, with tremendous support from county officials across the state, were committed to steer legislation in favorable directions.

Property Tax Relief

Lawmakers, with the passage of HB 1176, provided a primary residence credit of up to \$1600, more than triple the amount of relief approved in the prior Session. The legislation also comes with a 3% cap on growth in dollars levied by property taxes. Some flexibility was provided to political subdivisions to allow the carryover of unused cap percentages and the ability to get voter approval to exceed the cap at general elections. Townships can exceed with a vote at annual meetings. This legislation has led to an extremely challenging budget cycle for local governments requiring rigorous work to implement. NDACo has provided training and guidance, and is collecting feedback on necessary technical corrections.



Transportation Funding

Distribution formulas changed but overall, our assessment is that the amount of transportation funding to counties should remain fairly level. To increase the certainty of "Prairie Dog" funding for counties, cities and townships, lawmakers moved the oil and gas revenue bucket up stream. The Legislature also increased the Flexible Transportation Fund. Fifty percent of Motor Vehicle Excise Tax will now go towards roads, with half going into the General Fund and the other half distributed into the Highway Tax Distribution Fund and the Flex Fund. The Highway Tax Distribution Fund was adjusted to 60% state, 35% counties/cities, 3.4% townships, 1.6% transits.

Public Safety

Several one-time appropriations were made to address the overcrowding of the prison system including funding for a new women's prison, temporary housing at the Missouri River Correctional Center, planning for a minimum-security male correctional facility and funding for a new state hospital. The budget includes an increase in the rate DOCR pays for housing state inmates. Lawmakers voted to continue a retention grant for local law enforcement and corrections officers. The Back the Blue grant dollars are distributed based on the number of officers employed. The 9-1-1 communications service fee was reduced from 5% to 2.5%, allowing additional dollars to be directed to the 9-1-1 system.

Health And Human Services

The ND Health and Human Services budget provided level funding for local public health units. The state's largest budget also includes investments to address behavioral health needs.

So Much More...

It's an understatement that a majority of legislation impacts counties. This report can't even touch on all the bills that NDACo was involved in. Of the 1,089 bills introduced, NDACo tracked 600 bills and identified nearly 100 of them as a priority. The NDACo Legislative Blog at ndcounties.blog includes information on those bills.

INSTITUTE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ... 1995

The Institute of Local Government (ILG), the Professional Development program of NDACo, hosted a wealth of trainings this past year. With the Legislative Session wrapped up, ILG offered a variety of legislation-related topics to keep you up-to-date and informed. Over the last 12 months, ILG has reached more than **6,000** county officials and employees with more than **70** trainings! Webinars are offered live and on-demand, which make them the ideal professional development solution for members.

ILG works with public and private partners from across the state to ensure all courses are provided by highly qualified presenters. The online library of recorded webinars offers a variety of training topics and keeps expanding. Recording requests remain strong and steady. In the past 12 months, ILG has sent out nearly **1,000** recordings. In 2025, ILG will honor around **150** hour-level award recipients, which is a large increase from last year!

In addition to webinars, ILG continues to offer training with member conventions and on site by request. ILG trainings are listed on the NDACo website at www.ndaco.org/ilg.

MEMBER SERVICES ... 1975

While you might say *everything* we do at NDACo is a member service, there are certain activities that are designed solely to keep us in close touch with county officials to be sure we are meeting their needs.

County Tours

With a goal to visit every county every three years, select NDACo staff, along with the NDACo and NDCCA presidents and other board officers tour several counties per year. From September 2024 to August 2025, the tours visited 17 counties: Adams, Bowman, Burke, Cavalier, Dickey, Divide, Hettinger, LaMoure, Mountrail, Pembina, Ransom, Richland, Sargent, Slope, Towner, Walsh and Williams Counties.

Events

Our winter/legislative gathering continued to evolve this year. After transitioning from the **County Officials Academy** to **County Day at the Capitol** for the 2023 Session, we joined forces with our local government partners (cities, parks, townships and school boards) to co-host the **Local Government Capitol Connection** in 2025. The new event was a smashing success.

Our **Annual Conference** serves as the primary training and networking event for all county officials. In October 2025, we'll be celebrating the 50th Anniversary of NDACo with the theme of a County Fair!

Communications

We keep in touch through the *County News* and *County Leader Letter*, and on social media and encourage counties to connect with us so we can also follow their accounts.

- Website – www.ndaco.org
- Facebook – facebook.com/ndcounties
- YouTube – youtube.com/ndcounties
- Legislative Blog – ndcounties.blog

JUVENILE JUSTICE SERVICES ... 1986

The ND Division of Juvenile Services, a division of the ND Department of Corrections, continues to contract with NDACo to employ Juvenile Justice Specialist Lisa Jahner. This position is federally mandated by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP Act). In that role, Lisa is responsible for coordinating the development and implementation of North Dakota's strategic plan for addressing the needs of at-risk youth, working with federal/state/local officials on best practices and policies, and staffing the Governor's advisory group established pursuant to the JJDP Act to provide leadership and direction.

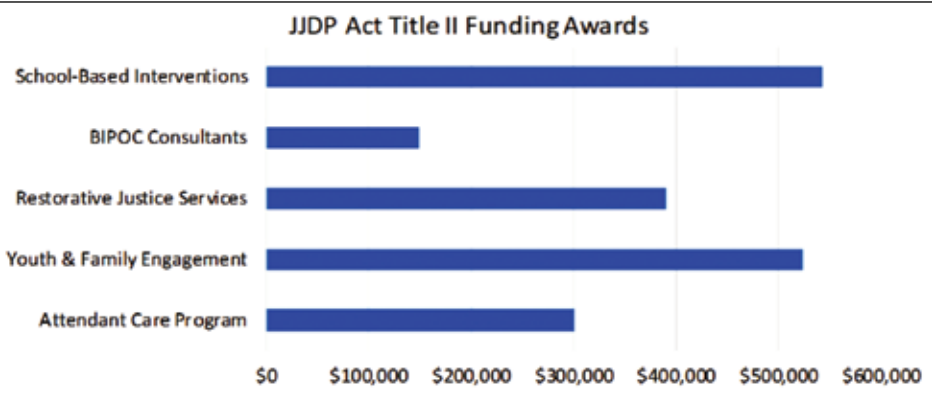
North Dakota's FY2024-26 strategic plan, found at www.ndaco.org/SAG, established two priority goals to direct the work of the advisory group as well as \$1.8 m in federal funding. The two priority goals are to:

1. Reduce youth incarceration through community-based alternatives; and
2. Improve outcomes for youth and families by supporting alternatives to system involvement.

The Attendant Care Program will continue to be supported under goal 1 as a collaborative effort with counties and cities, with additional resources to assist youth and families with connection to services and supports. The plan also includes support for behavioral interventions in schools, increasing the response to mental health issues, and reducing barriers to services for youth and families.

Almost \$2 m in federal funding has been awarded for local programs and services under the previous strategic plan, as detailed in the following chart. The overall goal of the funding is to prevent child welfare and/or juvenile justice system involvement.

With the award of several federal discretionary grants in addition to the JJDP Act Title II funding, NDACo is currently administering close to \$4.0 million in federal juvenile justice grant funds. Almost all of this funding goes out to local government or community-based service organizations.



9-1-1 SERVICES ... 1991

Next Generation 9-1-1 JPA

NDACo has continued to work on the elimination of legacy 9-1-1 circuits from wireline and VoIP service providers. These circuits have been migrating to IP-based communications which provide a more reliable way to connect the caller with 9-1-1 centers. NDACo continues to collaborate with all service providers on the tasks that will be required of them to deliver their customer's calls to public safety answering points (PSAPs) in North Dakota. North Dakota PSAPs are also beginning the transition to the NENA i3 Protocol which will position them to take full advantage of Next Generation 9-1-1 technologies.

Collection and Distribution of 9-1-1 Fees JPA

As stated in the Legislative section above, the 2025 Legislature reduced the administrative fees that wireline, wireless and VoIP service providers retain from the 9-1-1 surcharge. The return on this decrease approximates to over \$400,000 in additional revenue back to counties for 9-1-1 services. The program continues to operate at a highly efficient level. For the coming year, NDACo will be doing more research to ensure that counties are receiving all funds that they are due.

COUNTY EMPLOYER GROUP ... 1996

For the purpose of "worker's comp," all county employees are covered together – over 7,000 employees in one group, rather than 53 separate employers. This saves money, time and administration.

CEG saves money and lives in three important ways:

1. **Safety Training:** To help prevent workplace injuries, the CEG trained about 7,000 employees on safety topics ranging from drug-free workplaces to slips, trips, and falls to bloodborne pathogens. Twenty-seven counties participated in specialized computer-based training and logged over 10,000 hours through online training, including completing nearly 4,000 computer-based safety training courses.
2. **Risk Management** Through the implementation of effective claims management and risk management programs and practices counties have realized discounts of up to 30% in worker's comp premiums. Fifty-six risk managers assist the CEG with compliance issues such as investigations, inspections, injury reporting, and injury prevention, among other duties.
3. **Transitional Return-to-Work Program:** CEG handled **300** claims in 2024, **22 fewer** than in 2023 (and 2023 was lower than 2022.) **Fewer claims = fewer injuries!**

We're proud that CEG's indemnity claim (lost time) is less than half of the average cost of other North Dakota employers, according to ND Workforce. CEG is one of our earliest and most successful programs, a fine example of how we work for the good of all counties.

NRG TECHNOLOGY SERVICES ... 2000

NRG is a subsidiary of NDACo, developed to support the IT needs of all North Dakota counties. NRG's owners are all North Dakota counties.

NRG works directly with the state's IT department, NDIT, on issues that affect all counties. They meet every six weeks to discuss latest issues and collaborate on resolutions to ensure continuity of services across the state.

NRG's Account Manager has been attending the County Tours with NDACo staff to spread awareness of the purpose of NRG and listen to feedback from all the counties.

NRG's President sits on the Criminal Justice Information Sharing Board and the State's Cybersecurity Collaboration Committee. As resources become available, NRG purchases government bonds to help support local governments with financing their projects.

All Human Service Zones should now be using Microsoft 365, provided through DHHS and NDIT, for email. They also have access to Teams messaging and phones for increased collaboration.

NRG currently provides IT support for 18 courthouses, as well as a variety of individual county officials throughout the state. They also support a number of cities, police departments, non-profit organizations, associations and financial institutions.

The tagline *Stress-Free IT means their customers let them worry about managing their ever-changing and complex IT infrastructures.*

TRAFFIC SAFETY
RESOURCE PROSECUTOR ... 2006

The Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor (TSRP) position is a partnership with the ND Department of Transportation, in our common goal of making our state’s roadways safer. Peter Halbach serves as the TSRP. In the past year, Peter has traveled the state, training 632 law enforcement officers and 62 prosecutors, in addition to hearing officers and judges on topics such as:

- Impaired driving administrative hearings
- Lake Region State College’s Peace Officer Training Program
- Impaired Driving Conference
- Intoxilyzer Classes at the Attorney General’s Crime Lab
- Several classes at the Law Enforcement Training Academy.

In addition to chairing the Impaired Driving Task Force, Peter has been a resource to the Crime Lab, NDHP, other law enforcement agencies and prosecutors. Peter is also involved with a committee addressing distracted driving and is working with a national committee to develop a curriculum for Distracted Driving prosecutions. Beyond our borders, he has also presented at the Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) in-service and presented on impaired driving related hearings at the National Association of Hearing Officials (NAHO) national conference in Savannah.

VISION ZERO
OUTREACH PROGRAM ... 2011

NDACo continues its strong partnership with the ND Department of Transportation (NDDOT) through the Vision Zero Outreach Program.

This statewide initiative now includes six regional Outreach Coordinators who are actively working to build local partnerships, deliver education and resources, and coordinate community-based efforts to help achieve the Vision Zero goal of eliminating motor vehicle crash fatalities and significantly lowering serious injuries on North Dakota roads.

These Outreach Coordinators have established connections in every region of the state and play a critical role in promoting the core Vision Zero strategies of education, enforcement, engineering, and emergency response. One key success has been the addition of **13 Vision Zero Schools**. These schools commit to fostering a culture where traffic safety is a priority, and motor vehicle fatalities and serious injuries are recognized as preventable and unacceptable. Participating schools empower both staff and students to model safe driving behaviors and take personal responsibility behind the wheel.

North Dakota’s Vision Zero approach is built on a foundation of shared responsibility between individuals, communities, and government agencies—and is guided by strategies proven to save lives, including:

- Widespread public education/outreach
- Infrastructure/road safety improvements
- High visibility enforcement of existing laws
- Technology advancements
- Working with the legislature to ensure state laws represent best practices in traffic safety.

The goal of Vision Zero is clear: **zero fatalities, zero excuses.**

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
SYSTEM (GIS) PROGRAM ... 2022

Since the GIS Program was launched in 2022, the program has evolved but still has counties as it’s priority. The program is continuing to support NDIT’s State Parcel Program with the goal of helping counties across the state to meet and surpass the standards put forth by the state.

1. Beginning new initiatives and outreach to increase knowledge in the interest of making accurate, clean data available
2. Strengthening relationships with the State of North Dakota by co-chairing the 2026 ND Geospatial Summit.

The program supports counties with a qualified GIS professional who helps empower counties to maximize use of their GIS software and available data. As with other NDACo programs, the GIS Program is envisioned not to replace county employees or vendor relationships, but as a support for counties to help them kick start or improve how they use this exciting technology.

The scope of work being done with counties under contract includes:

- District and precinct maps for interoffice and public use
- Answering questions and providing assistance with projects
- Working closely with the State Parcel Program to complete outreach and maintenance tasks.

Goals for the future include:

- Continuing education, training and networking
- Forming NDACo GIS Standing Committee; create space for county GIS professionals to learn from one another and ultimately set a standard for data across the state.
- Expanding the GIS Program to increase productivity and reach
- Informing counties and other agencies about the applications and importance of GIS.

Board of Directors

The NDACo Board of Directors is made up of one commissioner for each region and one representative from each member association.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Mountrail County Commissioner

Chad Kaiser
1st Vice President
Stutsman County Sheriff

Nick Moser
2nd Vice President
Cavalier County Commissioner

Kim Jacobson
3rd Vice President
Agassiz Valley Human Service
Zone Director

Jayme Tenneson
Past President
Griggs County State’s Attorney

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Region 1
Williams County Commissioner

Aaron Mork
Region 4
Nelson County Commissioner

Tony Grindberg
Region 5
Cass County Commissioner

Becky Hagel
Region 6
Foster County Commissioner

Jamee Folk
Region 7
Mercer County Commissioner

Scott Ouradnik
Region 8
Slope County Commissioner

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ND County Auditors’
and Treasurers’ Association
Auditor Representative
Sheridan County Auditor

Erica Johnsrud
ND County Auditors’
and Treasurers’ Association
Treasurer Representative
McKenzie County Auditor/Treasurer

Tiffany Harr
ND County Clerks of
District Court Association
Eddy County Clerk of
District Court/Recorder/PIO

Dana Larsen
ND Association of County Engineers
Ward County Highway Engineer

Kelly Palm
ND County Records Association
Griggs County Clerk of
District Court/Recorder

Josh Frey
ND State’s Attorneys Association
Nelson & Towner County State’s Attorney

Don Flaherty
ND Association of
Assessing Officers
Dickey County Tax Director

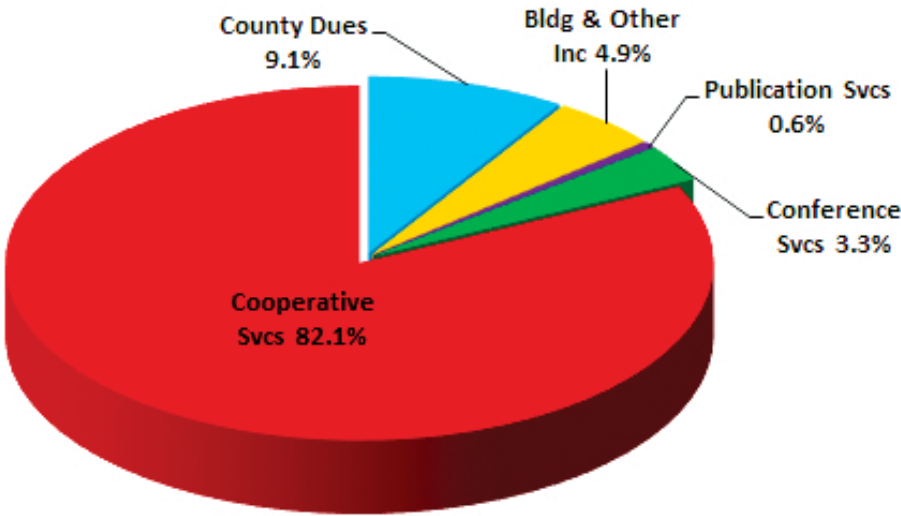
EX OFFICIO MEMBERS

Robert Wilson
NACo Board Representative
Cass County Administrator

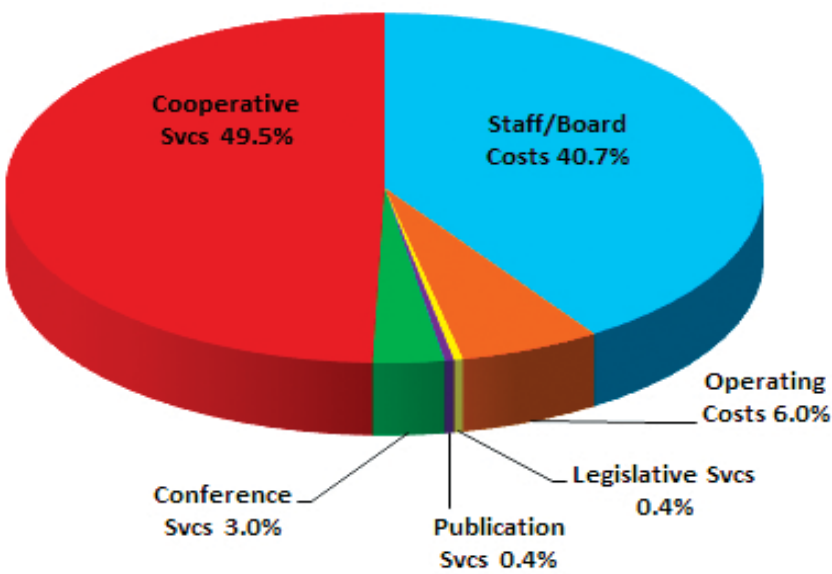
Stanley Dick
NACo Board Representative
Cavalier County Commissioner

Joan Hollekim
ND County Commissioners
Association President
Mountrail County Commissioner

NDACo 2025 Budgeted Revenues



NDACo 2025 Budgeted Expenses





INTERSTATE
ENGINEERING

Professionals You Need, People You Trust.

BUILT ON COMMUNITY

Embracing a collaborative team approach, Interstate Engineering focuses on building for tomorrow. From projects to career paths, Interstate Engineering knows the best approach to any accomplishment is to collaborate, celebrate success, and grow for tomorrow.



ENGINEERING



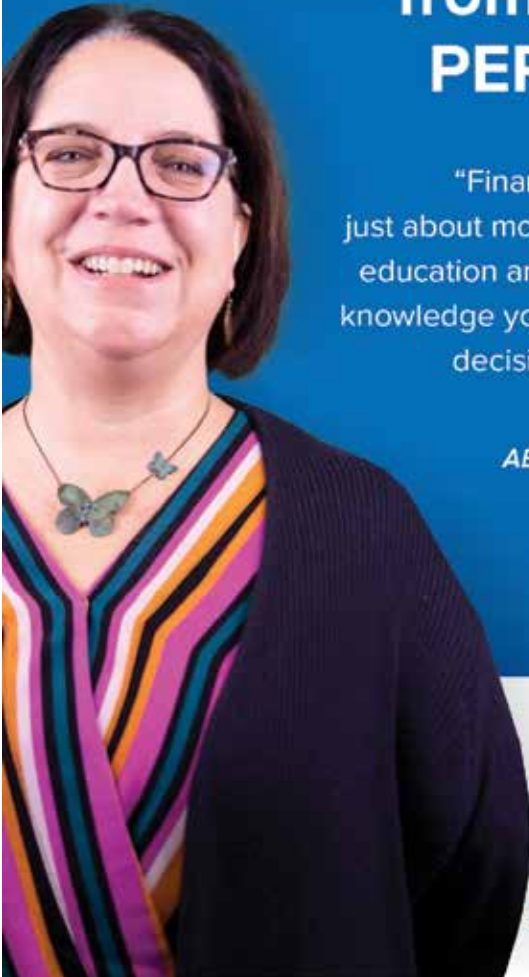
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“Financial plans are more than just about money. They’re really about education and providing you with the knowledge you need to make the best decisions for your community.”

Miranda Kleven, PE,
AE2S Special Projects Engineer



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