Smarter School Spending

Identify Top Savings Options

There are 3 steps to identifying **high-potential** opportunities for resource reallocation

A — **Review full list of 31 potential opportunities**

B — **Screen the 31 opportunities to identify the opportunities that are likely to have the highest potential for your district**

C — **Conduct "shallow dive" of the 10-15 opportunities with the highest potential for savings**

At the end of the process, your district will have identified 3-6 high-potential opportunities that will identify sufficient savings to pay for your priorities. More in-depth analysis will still be needed to confirm and operationalize the opportunities.

A There are two main types of resource reallocation opportunities

Key Questions
Can the district free up funds for its strategic priorities?
Can the district increase the impact of current spending at little or no additional cost, thus reducing the need to free up funds for priorities?

Cost Savings Options: Screening and Sizing Tool

A list of 31 potential opportunities can help reveal opportunities otherwise overlooked

A

Reducing operational costs

1. Can the district free up funds from **general education transportation**?
2. Can the district free up funds from **energy expenditures**?
3. Can the district free up funds from **maintenance services**?
4. Can the district free up funds from **custodial services**?
5. Can the district free up funds from **food services**?
6. Can the district free up funds from **classroom and other instructional technology**?

Rethinking service delivery models for students who struggle

7. Can the district address **mild special needs** differently?
8. Can the district free up funds from **paraprofessional positions**?
9. Can the district free up funds by increasing the impact of **intervention teaching positions**?
10. Can the district free up funds from **special education teaching positions**?
11. Can the district free up funds from **speech and language therapist positions**?
12. Can the district increase the impact of **Title I spending**?
13. Can the district free up funds by reducing reliance on **out-of-district special education placements**?
14. Can the district free up funds by reducing its reliance on **alternative schools** for students with behavioral challenges?

Maximizing revenue

16. Can the district increase federal **Medicaid** reimbursement for health-related student services?

Boosting the impact and cost-effectiveness of professional development for teachers

17. Can the district free up funds from **professional development expenditures**?
18. Can the district provide **more professional development opportunities** for core teachers at little or no additional cost?
19. Can the district **increase the impact of the coaching model** at little to no additional cost?
20. Can the district free up funds from **instructional coaching positions**?

A list of 31 potential opportunities can help reveal opportunities otherwise overlooked

A

Examining staffing levels of non-instructional staff

21 Can the district free up funds from **central office spending**?

22 Can the district free up funds from **school-based administrator positions** and/or increase the impact of existing positions?

23 Can the district free up funds from **clerical support positions**?

24 Can the district free up funds from **library/media specialist positions** and/or increase the impact of existing positions?

25 Can the district free up funds from **guidance counselor positions**?

Using instructional time more cost-effectively

26 Can the district free up funds associated with **teacher absences**?

27 Can the district free up funds from **extended school day and/or year** programs?

28 Can the district free up funds from **blended learning and/or online classes** and/or increase the impact at little or no additional cost?

Managing class size

29 Can the district free up funds by managing class sizes differently at the **elementary schools**?

30 Can the district free up funds by managing class sizes differently at the **middle schools**?

31 Can the district free up funds by managing class sizes differently at the **high schools**?

This list is not meant to be comprehensive, but these 31 ideas can help your district identify opportunities that may have otherwise not been considered.

B Conduct a "quick and simple" assessment of *all* 31 potential opportunities for resource reallocation

What is the goal?

- This step in the process can help districts consider opportunities that at first glance may not have seemed to have high potential, but are in fact worthy of further investigation

What are the tools?

- A set of 31 Screening Tools will prompt your district to answer a few, straightforward questions that do not require data collection

Who should be involved?

- A wide group of district administrators, including all relevant department heads and well as their "second-in-commands," who have a detailed knowledge of current practices

How long should it take?

- Screening the opportunities should not take longer than a half a day, provided the right people are in the room

How are the tools scored?

- After completing the Screening Tools, districts will have a score for each opportunity. The score indicates whether or not districts should consider exploring the opportunity further using the Sizing Tools and other analyses. It is not worth completing the Sizing Tool for any opportunity that scores fewer than 50 points. The higher the score, the greater the potential opportunity. Sizing up to 15 of the highest-scoring opportunities should be ample to identify the highest-leverage opportunities

Cost Savings Options: Screening and Sizing Tool

B Complete the Screening Tools to identify opportunities that may be relevant and are worthy of further consideration and analysis

SCREENING TOOL 1

Can the district free up funds from general education transportation?

Providing transportation for students is often very costly. Some districts have reduced spending on transportation by switching to lower-cost providers, making routing more efficient, and/or better utilizing their fleet of buses.

Note: This opportunity includes general education transportation, and does not include special education transportation

Instructions: Answer the questions below about the district. For each one, there is a drop-down menu in the yellow-shaded cell to its right. Please select the score that corresponds to the points for your answer choice. The scores will automatically sum at the bottom to give your total points.

Read the notes and instructions carefully

	Question	Answers	Points	Score
1	Does the district transport students to charter schools and/or parochial schools?	Yes, 10% or more of all students	20	
		No or less than 10% of all students	0	
2	Does the district transport many general education students in grades 7-12 in school buses?	Yes	30	
		No	0	
3	Does the district transport general education students who are not mandated under state law?	Yes	30	
		No	0	
4	Does the district utilize routing software to create new bus routes each year?	Yes	0	
		No	50	
5	Has the district created new school assignment policies for students in the past five years?	Yes	20	
		No	0	
6	Has the district changed transportation providers in the past 5 years?	Yes	0	
		No	20	
7	Has spending on transportation increased in the past 3 years?	Yes, in proportion to the overall budget	0	
		Yes, in great[illegible]udget	[illegible]	
		No, or in sm[illegible]	0	
		Do not know	40	
8	Do most buses have monitors?	Yes	20	
		No	0	
9	Can the district easily and accurately produce transportation reports that include duration of each run and the number of students on each run in the morning and afternoon on any given day and are these reports used to adjust routes or stops?	Yes	0	
		No	30	
10	Do most buses make more than one run in the morning and more than one run in the afternoon?	Yes	0	
		No	50	
		Do not know	50	
			Total points	0

Answer straight-forward questions about your district…

…And select the score that corresponds to the points for your answer choice

Your total score will automatically sum at the bottom of the page

The 10-15 highest scoring opportunities should be investigated further using the sizing tools.

C Conduct a "shallow" dive of the 10-15 opportunities previously identified as high potential using the sizing tools

What is the goal?	– This step in the process can help identify the 3-6 opportunities that may have the highest potential financial impact for your district
What are the tools?	– Sizing Tools can help your district roughly estimate the financial impact of the 10-15 high-potential opportunities that were identified using the Screening Tools. They can help to create momentum for deeper analysis, especially for opportunities that would otherwise be overlooked due to misconceptions about their potential financial impact. Rough estimates of potential financial impact are based on benchmarking, best practice, and the experiences of other districts who have implemented the opportunities
Who should be involved?	– The Chief Financial Officer should coordinate the shallow dive, seeking input and data from knowledgeable parties (including the action team), as needed
How long should it take?	– The Sizing Tool for each opportunity may take up 2-4 hours to complete, and will require collecting data that is easily accessible for most districts

The Sizing Tools can identify opportunities that are worth further analysis, but are not intended to replace a "deep dive." More rigorous analysis is required to confirm the potential financial impact of the most promising opportunities and shed light on how to operationalize the opportunities.

Cost Savings Options: Screening and Sizing Tool

C Complete the Sizing Tools to identify which opportunities are worthy of a "deeper dive," because they have the highest potential financial impact

SIZING TOOL 1

Can the district free up funds from general education transportation?

Note: The Sizing Tools can identify opportunities that are worth further analysis, but are not intended to replace a "deep dive." More rigorous analysis is required to accurately estimate the potential financial impact of the most promising opportunities.

Instructions: Please fill in all yellow-shaded areas. (They are currently filled in with example data.) White-shaded areas calculate automatically.

Part 1. Input data	
Total number of buses	100
Total number of daily runs (morning and afternoon)	200
Total annual spending on buses	$6,000,000

Part 2. Compare transportation costs to other districts and estimate funds freed up	
Cost per bus	$60,000
Cost per bus in other districts	$50,000
Estimated funds freed up by matching cost per bus in other districts	**$1,000,000**

Part 3. Compare number of daily runs to other districts and estimate funds freed up	
Daily runs per bus	2
Daily runs per bus in other districts	4
Estimated maximum funds freed up by matching daily runs per bus in other districts	**$3,000,000**

Notes: (1) Funds freed up may be less depending on the structure of compensation to drivers as well as other state or local factors; (2) Only include general education transportation in this analysis

Source: Council for Great City Schools, Managing for Results 2012

Read the notes and instructions carefully

Fill in yellow-shaded cells with district data

All other cells will automatically update with rough estimates of the potential financial impact of the opportunities

Notes at the bottom of the page provide additional caveats and considerations