Sustaining the Future of Education

Afton empowers education leaders with effective financial strategies.
Always Ready for Learning Coaching Network

Finance Case Study: COVID-19 Cost Estimation Model

The Always Ready for Learning Coaching Network is a national, philanthropically-supported initiative working to ensure K-12 school district leaders find pro-bono rapid, customized guidance to help them plan for return to school safely.
The Always Ready For Learning Network brings together expert organizations from across the country to provide timely, targeted, and sustained coaching to ensure learning can happen anywhere, anytime.
Case Study
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Background
COVID-19 Cost Estimation Model – 2020

Afton worked to support a charter school network ("the Network") in the U.S. comprising five schools.

When engaging with the Network during July 2020, the school network team was beginning to understand which actions would need to be taken to operate a school under the unique conditions of a pandemic. Each of the required actions had potential cost implications, but there was no historical information or playbook to aid in cost estimation.
Considering the financial and operational challenges and uncertainty driven by COVID-19, through the ARL initiative, Afton Partners supported a charter school network in developing a simple-to-use cost estimation tool for budgeting COVID-19 expenses in FY21.
COVID-19 Cost Estimation Tool

Planning

The Charter Network needed to consider quantifying at least three different instructional delivery scenarios: in-person, fully remote, and hybrid. Each of these scenarios was affected by rapidly changing health and safety guidance from various government organizations.

Afton reviewed publicly available information and work from other organizations to create a tool to help school leaders estimate the extent of the resources required to operate under each of the three scenarios.

Lessons Learned

- **Identify operational metrics**: Think of operations from a mathematical perspective, envisioning which supplies are needed and what drives the consumption of specific supplies (e.g., consumption model).

- **Codify budgetary impact for different operating scenarios**: Supplies needed for remote learning scenarios are different from the supplies needed for hybrid or in-person ones, but the same thought process of consumption and drivers applies when estimating what would be needed in each scenario.

- **Think of the process as “building with blocks”**: To budget for an unknown operational scenario, leaders should use the characteristics and data they have available (e.g., size of building, number of rooms, cameras, number of times a supply may be used in a day) and tie these to the number of days or students that will use them. When leaders start putting this information together, they can begin to identify how many components are needed to accomplish their objectives.
Sample Dashboard Output: School-Level Budgeting Tool Overview

### School COVID-19 Expenses by GL Category ($K) - FY21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Total 449</th>
<th>School 3</th>
<th>Total 553</th>
</tr>
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<td>School 4</td>
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<td>School 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central/Other</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Legend:**
- Educational Items
- Administration
- Facilities
- Other Expenses
- General School Fund Expenses

### School Expenses by Virtual and In-Person Categories ($K) - FY21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Total 449</th>
<th>School 3</th>
<th>Total 553</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>School 5</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Legend:**
- In-person
- Virtual
COVID-19 Cost Estimation Model

Overview

Afton has anonymized a cost estimation tool, allowing schools, districts and charter networks to project one-time and recurring financial impacts of its response to Covid-19. Each type of expense item can be tied to a different driver, which aides in estimating costs (or identifying cost differences if a driver changes).

A copy of the model in Microsoft Excel format can be found here. Please refer to the “Instructions” tab for an overview of the model and general instructions for use.

*Please note that "dummy data" is being used for demonstration purposes, and the figures in this model do not represent any specific organizations.