



MANAGER'S TOOLKIT

Hold, Fold, or Modify? What to Do When the Turnaround Grant Runs Out

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DMC MANAGER'S TOOLKIT

Hold, fold, or modify? What to do when the turnaround grant runs out.

Most turnaround efforts start with a large infusion of funds, often in the form of a multi-year grant. As school improvement grants, school redesign funds, and Race to the Top dollars start to run dry, many turnaround efforts are challenged as to how to continue new initiatives without the extra funds. This five-step process can help minimize the impact of lost funds and help maintain the best of the new initiatives.

1 Itemize how the extra funding was used

How exactly was the extra money used? Be sure to include all costs, such as the cost of benefits, transportation, and materials.

PROGRAM, STAFF, OR INITIATIVE	TOTAL COST	NUMBER OF STUDENTS IMPACTED	COST/ STUDENT
a.			
b.			
c.			
d.			
e.			

2 Calculate (or estimate) how much each initiative raised achievement

Not every new effort is worth continuing. The end of funding is a great time to assess what is really helping students. Calculate or estimate the effect on achievement of each of the initiatives you listed in Step 1.

PROGRAM, STAFF, OR INITIATIVE	WHAT DATA MEASURES SUCCESS?	RESULTS
a.		
b.		
c.		
d.		
e.		

3 Consider the cost-benefit trade-offs

Plot the different turnaround efforts based on their total cost and the impact they have had on student learning. In which quadrant does each of the initiatives fall? This is an easy proxy for academic return on investment.



4 Adjust to the new funding levels

A few decisions might become obvious:

- Low-impact/low-cost efforts can be dropped without much loss to students.
- Low-impact/high-cost efforts are usually best to drop.
- High-impact/low-cost efforts should be maintained and can likely be funded from the regular budget.

The management challenge is how to maintain high-impact/high-cost efforts. Careful analysis should be conducted: (1) costs associated with the effort should be dissected to determine whether some cost elements can be removed or adjusted without undermining the program, and (2) an examination should be conducted as to which types of students are getting the most benefit; scaling back and refocusing the effort can help cut costs while retaining significant benefits.

5 Look for funds in the operating budget by repeating this analysis

This exercise can quickly reveal which programs are important to maintain. While turnaround funding is no longer available to support these critical initiatives, funds can often be freed up by cutting other non-grant-funded efforts in the operating budget that have a lower impact on student achievement. Districts sometimes unintentionally link a program too tightly to its funding. Conducting this analysis for every major program or strategy in the school or district can reveal which programs are worth holding, folding, or modifying.