



Report of the Vermont State Auditor

December 17, 2009

**AUDITOR'S SURVEY
OF SHARED
SERVICES IN
VERMONT SCHOOL
SYSTEMS**

**Thomas M. Salmon, CPA
Vermont State Auditor
Rpt. No. 09-6**

Mission Statement

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**THOMAS M. SALMON, CPA
STATE AUDITOR**



**STATE OF VERMONT
OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR**

December 17, 2009

The Honorable James H. Douglas
Governor

The Honorable Shap Smith
Speaker of the House of Representatives

The Honorable Peter Shumlin
President Pro Tempore of the Senate

Mr. Armando Vilaseca
Commissioner, Vermont Department of Education

Dear Colleagues,

Attached is a report on a survey we recently conducted regarding the types and extent of shared services in Vermont schools. **Sharing services means that individual school districts or central offices reach out beyond themselves to a variety of organizations and people to maintain or enhance their educational offerings and administrative operations.**

We undertook this study because, at a time of economic difficulty and more public scrutiny of education costs, there was little information available about all the ways Vermont school districts cooperate with partners of all types to provide business, administrative and educational services. Such information might support leaders as they review options for sharing opportunities or look at the cost savings and efficiencies of those already in place.

We sent the survey information to 60 of 63 Vermont school superintendents (omitting three small technical school districts). **Forty-nine of 60 organizations (81.7%) completed the survey.** We thank them for their cooperation. Ten respondents represented supervisory districts (unions with one superintendent and one school board) and 39 were from supervisory unions (unions with a single superintendent and multiple school boards).

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In looking at the responses to our 32-question survey, we noted, among other findings:

There are many types of shared services now in place in Vermont schools systems, the respondents told us, whether managed by a central supervisory office, or in more decentralized ways. Twenty-two of 49 respondents (44.9%) said their sharing partners included one or more schools outside of their own supervisory union or district, which is very positive.

Eighteen entities reported they began a new shared service in the 2009-10 school year, but these efforts appear to be generally small in scale. New sharing often starts with unplanned staff changes. For example, when a maintenance director of one districts in a supervisory union left his post earlier this year, it provided the superintendent with a chance to ask his local boards to share a maintenance director to provide better leadership and supervision of staff – which they endorsed. Further, in reviewing the “one best reason for starting this new shared service,” none of the 18 reports indicated “budget pressure.” The most popular reason (cited by 6 of 18 respondents, or 33.3%) was: “provides new resources to support curriculum, instruction, assessment and staff.”

Many superintendents and business managers (42 of 49, or 85.7%) noted that “we generally support sharing of services where possible and practical,” but **only 4 of 49 (8.2%) indicated that “we have written policies and procedures requiring or encouraging shared services.”** Fifteen of the 49 respondents (30.6%) noted “**we are usually very cautious about shared services** and typically require analysis that significant cost savings are sustainable before proceeding.”

Nearly half (22 of 49) agreed that their entities “regularly evaluate the costs and benefits of our most important ongoing shared service arrangements.” However, only 16 of 43 (37.2%) respondents to an accountability question said they tracked financial savings of existing shared services.

Twenty-six respondents (53.1%) provided examples of data or indicators used to monitor existing shared arrangements. These included comments such as “just observational data at this point” and “more qualitative measures” and “IEP and parent meetings” and “auditors come every year and cover all shared arrangements.” Generally, the indicators listed suggest that detailed tracking of results to measure performance is not the standard approach. We have included our *21 Recommended Practices for Performance Measurement* (Appendix II) as an aid for people interested in improving the way they track results of shared services.

While the new 2009-10 school year shared services appear modest, 20 of 49 respondents (40.8%) made notes on possible services for future sharing in the next year or two, ranging from copier contracting to larger projects such as creating a union middle school.

In fact, 27 of 43 respondents to a question about their level of shared services, or **62.8%**, indicated **“we could be participating in more sharing of services.”**

This enthusiasm for more sharing is heartening, but was often tempered by history and experience; as one respondent noted, **“Until there is a change in governance structures, local control issues will impede progress in sharing resources.”** Another e-mailed me after the survey, saying: “No local board wants to close a small school which would deprive the town of the central identity its school provides. However, our **board members are forward thinking and they want to explore all ways of collaborating** to provide enhanced instructional opportunity for students and contained costs.”

The survey report largely speaks for itself; we have included it and all the verbatim comments added by respondents in the Appendix section. One goal of our project was to produce an **“inventory of possibilities”** for school and community leaders to consider as budget pressures build, which I think we accomplished. We appreciate that some school leaders took the extra time to add their clarifying remarks as well as insights about the whole process of sharing services.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Salmon CPA

Thomas M. Salmon, CPA
Vermont State Auditor

cc: Committee on Education, House of Representatives
Committee on Education, Vermont State Senate
Jeff Francis, Executive Director, Vermont Superintendents Association

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Abbreviations

ARRA	American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009
CSAC	Counseling Service of Addison County
DOE	Department of Education
EEE	Essential Early Education
ELL	English Language Learner
ESL	English as a Second Language
FDA	Foodservice Directors Association
FTE	Full time equivalent

Contents

FY	Fiscal Year
GAGAS	Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
IT	Information Technology
LAPDA	Lamoille Area Professional Development Academy
NECAP	New England Common Assessment Program
NEKMH	Northeast Kingdom Mental Health
NCCC	North Country Career Center
OT	Occupational Therapy
PT	Physical Therapy
RFP	Request for Proposals
SD	Supervisory District
SQS	School Quality Standards
SRO	Student Resource Officer
SU	Supervisory Union
VTC	Vermont Technical College

Introduction

Today Vermont's economy and state government finances are experiencing numerous challenges, recently causing educational and State financial leaders to urge local school boards to consider various cost containment measures in planning their budgets for the 2010-11 school year.

On a statewide basis, expenditures in Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 for Pre-K through grade 12 public education, capital outlay and equipment, debt service and other educational services were approximately \$1.5 billion, serving 280 school districts and 95,339 publicly funded students.

According to the *Center for Evaluation and Education Policy*, research has documented that consolidated purchasing and shared services between school corporations can be effective in reducing costs related to administration, non-instructional, and instructional services.

Another state's Department of Education offers this definition:

“Shared Services” means any educational or administrative service required to be performed by a district board of education in which the school district, with board approval, is able and willing to share in the costs and benefits of that service with another district board of education, municipality, or other governmental unit ... but does not include sending/receiving relationships.

A 2005 report by the Reason Foundation and Deloitte Research noted that “school districts have barely scratched the surface in terms of tapping into the cost savings potential and other benefits from shared service arrangements.” The report also noted:

Sharing services creates the economies of scale and consistency of process and results that come with more centralized models. It also allows districts to maintain the benefits of decentralized control, allowing individual administrators to retain oversight of curriculum, education, and other aspects of non-shared processes. By sharing processes that aren't mission-critical while still retaining local control of the most important aspects of education, shared services can bring the best of big and small [school systems].

While sharing services appears to offer opportunities for Vermont schools to make better use of public resources, there is little data on the full range of ways that Vermont school leaders share services today. Other states routinely gather data on this subject. In Indiana, for example, the Department of Education must annually conduct a survey of consolidated purchasing and shared services among school districts, including estimates of financial savings.

To help determine the types and extent of shared services among school districts, supervisory unions and other entities, the Auditor's Office determined to start with a survey of Vermont superintendents on the issue.

The primary objective of our audit effort was to:

Determine the range of reported shared services in Vermont supervisory unions (SUs) and supervisory districts (SDs) and attitudes of leaders regarding selected aspects of shared services.

Scope and Methodology

In planning this effort, we met with officials of the Vermont Department of Education (DOE) and the executive director and members of the Vermont Superintendents Association to learn about existing summaries of shared services, if any. We reviewed research and reports of shared educational services in other states.

We decided to survey 60 superintendents (omitting three small technical education supervisory unions). Under Vermont state law, the superintendent is the chief executive officer for each school board in the supervisory district and must carry out the policies adopted by the school board relating to the educational or business affairs of the school district. In our opinion, we believed they would know about key shared services in all school districts, though school principals would likely have day-to-day knowledge about their implementation and management.

After determining to conduct an online survey, we asked DOE officials, an outside survey expert, four current superintendents and two former superintendents to review the draft survey and to suggest changes to the questions or format.

The resulting revised survey, which sought to determine the range of shared services in Vermont schools and the attitudes of superintendents toward certain aspects of shared services, was tested online and then “launched” on October 7, 2009 via e-mails to 60 superintendents with directions and a description of the project. Access to the survey was closed on Friday, November 6, 2009.

A limitation on the validity of survey results comes from the fact that we made only a small number of telephone calls to confirm survey details with respondents. In other words, we placed high reliance upon the submissions of the superintendents who are highly respected educational professionals.

Except for the exceptions described below, we performed this audit from September to November 2009 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards which require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. The standards that we did not follow require that we (1) obtain comments from responsible officials of the audited entity and (2) be subject to a peer review. We did not follow the former requirement because no particular department or agency was specifically audited; rather, the audit was designed to gather information and opinions from school superintendents. We also did not make recommendations to any entity. With respect to the peer review requirement, auditing standards require that our system of quality control for performance audits should undergo a peer review every three years. Because of fiscal considerations, we have opted to postpone the peer review of our performance audits until 2011. Notwithstanding these exceptions from generally accepted government auditing standards, we believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Highlights: Report of the Vermont State Auditor

Title: Auditor's Survey of Shared Services in Vermont School Systems

(December 17, 2009, Rpt. No. 09-6)

Why We Did This Audit

With a weakened Vermont economy, declining student enrollment in public schools, and decreased revenues at the State government level, the costs of education are coming under greater scrutiny.

We believe that education leaders and the public might benefit from learning more about examples of shared school services and about opportunities that school leaders are seizing to provide better services and to be more efficient. Successful sharing strategies may ultimately direct more funds to priority instructional needs.

What We Recommend

This report makes no recommendations.

Findings

Forty-nine of 60 supervisory unions contacted participated in the survey, a response rate of 81.7%.

Respondents indicated significant sharing of services. Of services being provided, managed and budgeted solely by a supervisory union's central office (Q. 3), only one respondent reported no sharing. The most frequently shared services reported were business services, benefits management, grants management, Medicaid billing, insurance, audit contracts, office space, curriculum development, and Essential Early Education (EEE).

Of services provided and paid for in partnership with others (Q. 5), the most frequently shared services reported were transportation, special education, teacher professional development, information technology (IT) administration and staffing, curriculum development, and heating fuel purchasing. Other findings and observations include:

- Eighteen entities (36.7% of all respondents) reported they began a new shared service in the 2009-10 school year, but these efforts appear to be small-scale in nature.
- Thirty-nine of 49 entities reported at least one type of outsourcing to a business or consultants, with transportation (29 reports), food service (17) and technology (12) the leading functions outsourced. The 10 organizations not reporting any outsourcing had combined non-instruction expenditures of approximately \$119 million in FY 2008, suggesting areas for review to determine if outsourcing of some services can improve services, reduce costs, or both.
- Superintendents appear to be open to more sharing, as 27 of 43 respondents (62.8%) indicated "we could be participating in more sharing of services."
- Respondents indicated strong backing (76.1%) for increased state support and funding to help identify and implement new shared services, but that support dropped (to 43.9%) for providing one-time financial incentives for new shared services to local residential taxpayers.

Finding 1

Almost all supervisory unions and supervisory districts share some services; 22 of 49 respondents reported sharing with schools outside their union or district.

Forty-nine of 60 supervisory unions contacted participated in the survey, a response rate of 81.7%.

Respondents reported that many types of service sharing are taking place. Respondents noted that in supervisory districts (SDs) with only one board, the central office plays a dominant role. “As a single district,” said one, “all services are budgeted and managed, to some extent, by the central office.”

Of services being provided, managed and budgeted *solely by a supervisory union’s central office* (Q. 3), only one respondent reported no sharing. Some of the most frequently shared services reported included:

- benefits management (85.7%);
- consolidated federal grants management (79.6%);
- insurance (73.5%);
- school business services such as payroll, accounts payable, budgeting (71.4%);
- administrative office spaces (71.4%);
- school-based Medicaid health services billing (67.4%);
- audit contracts (65.3%);
- curriculum development (61.2%); and
- Essential Early Education (61.2%).

Of services provided and paid for *in partnership with others* (Q. 5), some of the most frequently shared services reported included:

- transportation (59.2%);
- special education (34.7%);
- teacher professional development (34.7%);
- information technology (IT) administration and staffing (34.7%);
- curriculum development (30.6%);
- and heating fuel purchasing (28.6%).

One superintendent of schools in six communities, with a total of seven boards, described the IT shared services this way, “We hire the technicians such as the network administrators and we take care of the infrastructure. The schools decide how to employ technology.” Central office costs in this situation are apportioned through a per capita formula.

One superintendent with six local school boards and a supervisory union board, highlighted key sharing this way: “The supervisory union negotiated a common teachers’ contract, and shares curriculum and special education leadership. The grade level teachers within the SU plan together across all schools. Most business office functions are shared. All schools design and implement the spending of Titles [grant] monies collaboratively. School administrators meet twice monthly with the superintendent and continually strive to provide a common, higher quality educational experience for students.”

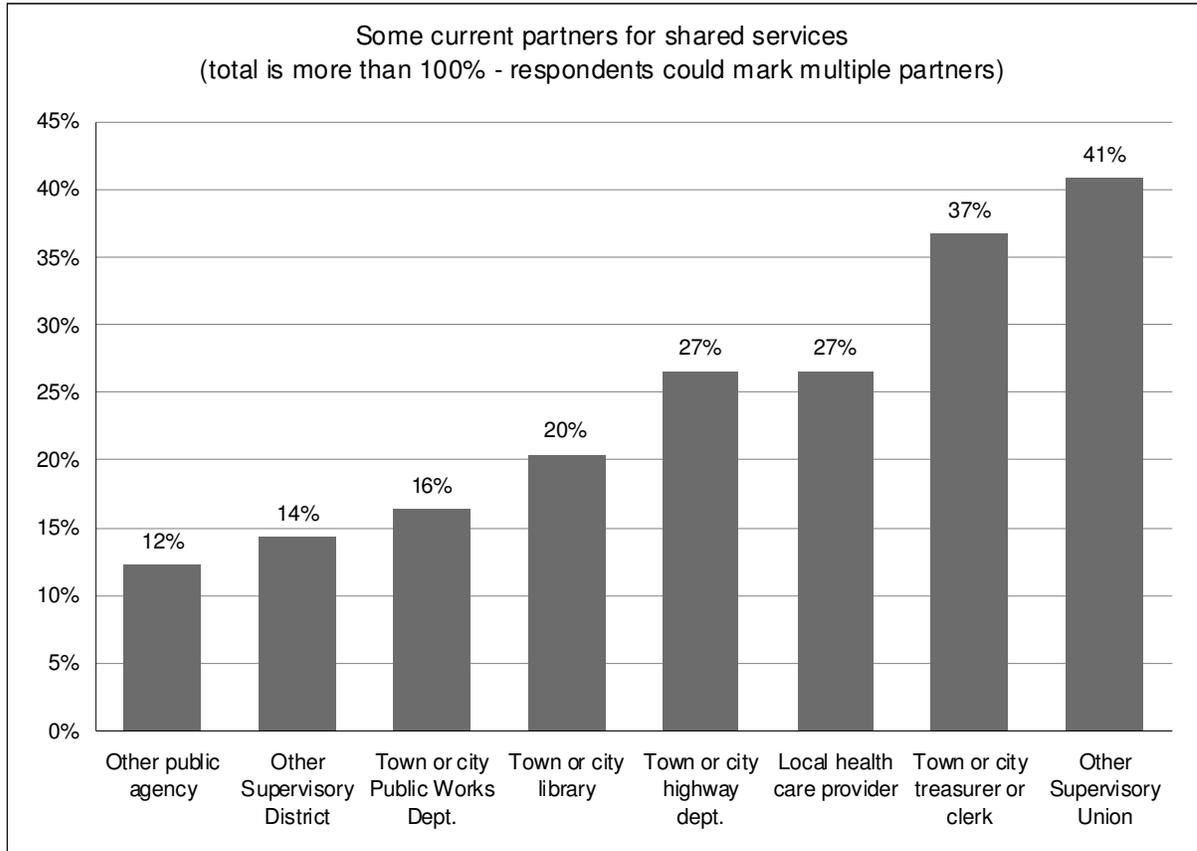
Some of the other shared services not included in the survey checklist, but cited by respondents, included legal services; a multi-district 403(b) plan; unified policy development; after-school programming; and coordinating all criminal background checks for staff, faculty, substitutes and community volunteers.

Also noted was the Green Mountain Forest Collaborative, comprised of five supervisory unions in central Vermont, whose bids on goods, food and maintenance have saved approximately \$17 million in 7 years, according to one superintendent.

Twenty-two of 49 respondents (44.9%) said their sharing partners included one or more schools outside of their own supervisory union or district (Q. 1). Other partners cited included:

- Town or city recreation department (53.1%);
- Local non-profit youth organization (96%);
- Town or city treasurer’s or clerk’s office (36.7%);
- Town or city public works or maintenance department (16.3%) and
- Local health care center or provider (26.5%).

Figure 1: Shared Services Partners



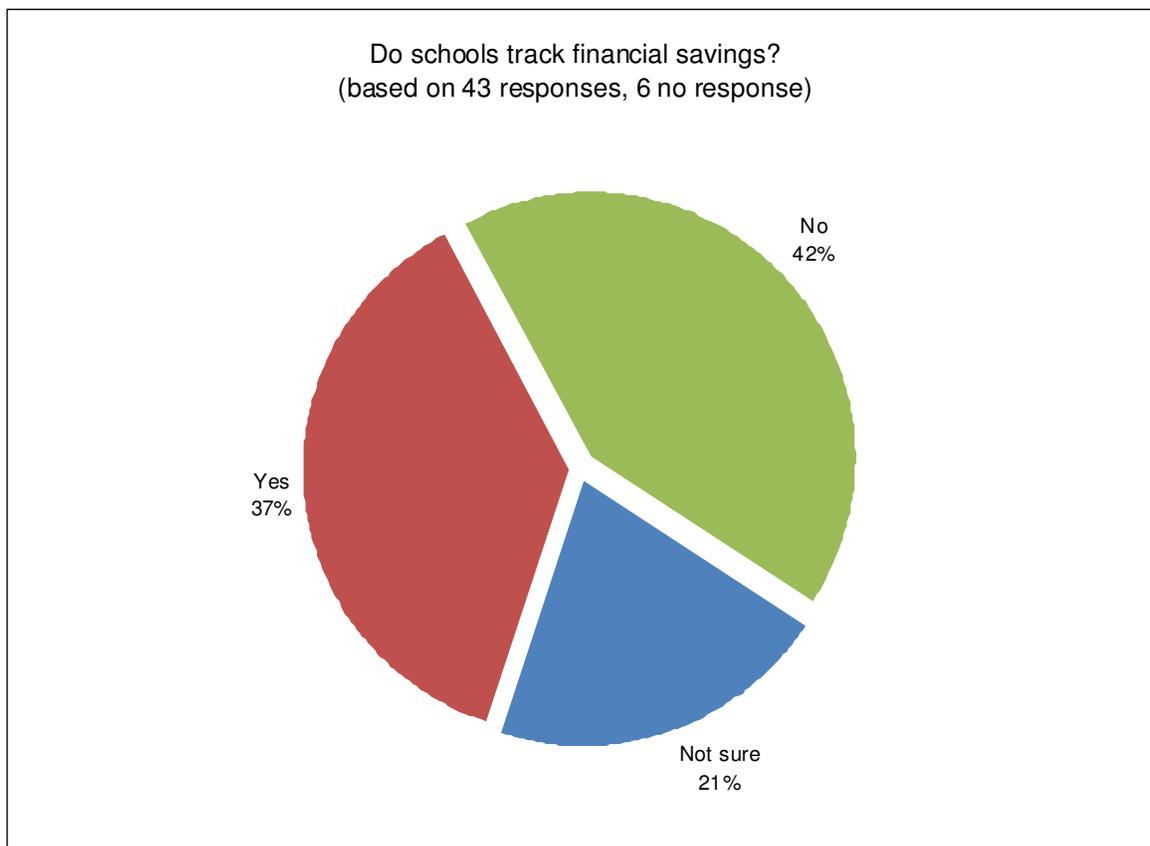
Respondents also mentioned large-scale sharing efforts such as the Foodservice Directors Association (FDA), comprised of approximately 125 member schools, which coordinates about \$6 million of competitive purchasing of food, milk, bread and supplies for member schools' food service operations each year.

Thirty of 42 respondents (71.4%) noted they regularly monitor the delivery of services from sharing arrangements (Q. 23), but only 16 of 43 respondents (37.2%) said they track financial savings from their shared services (Q.22).

Twenty-six respondents (53.1%) provided examples of data or indicators used to monitor existing shared arrangements (Q. 24). Some monitoring appeared informal, as reflected by comments such as "just observational data at this point" and "more qualitative measures" and "IEP and parent meetings" and "auditors come every year and cover all shared arrangements."

Generally, the indicators listed suggest that careful, detailed tracking of results to measure performance is not a widespread approach. Additional audit steps would be required to provide greater assurance that the effectiveness of shared services and possible financial savings are being assessed by individual supervisory unions.

Figure 2: Percentage of Schools that Track Financial Savings



We have included our 21 Recommended Practices for Performance Measurement (Appendix II) as an aid for people interested in for improving the way they track results of shared services.

Finding 2

Eighteen of 49 respondents reported a new shared service for the 2009-10 school year

Eighteen of 49 respondents (36.7%) reported (Q. 9) they began a new shared service in the 2009-10 school year, but these efforts appear to be generally small-scale, and opportunistic in nature.

The more modest initiatives (Q. 10) included functions or jobs such as: sharing of an ELL teacher; having the town librarian work at the school; copier leasing or purchasing; after-school transportation provided by a local youth coalition; sharing a maintenance director; and two schools working together to hire a full-time position for technology integration, thereby attracting a single employee for two part-time positions.

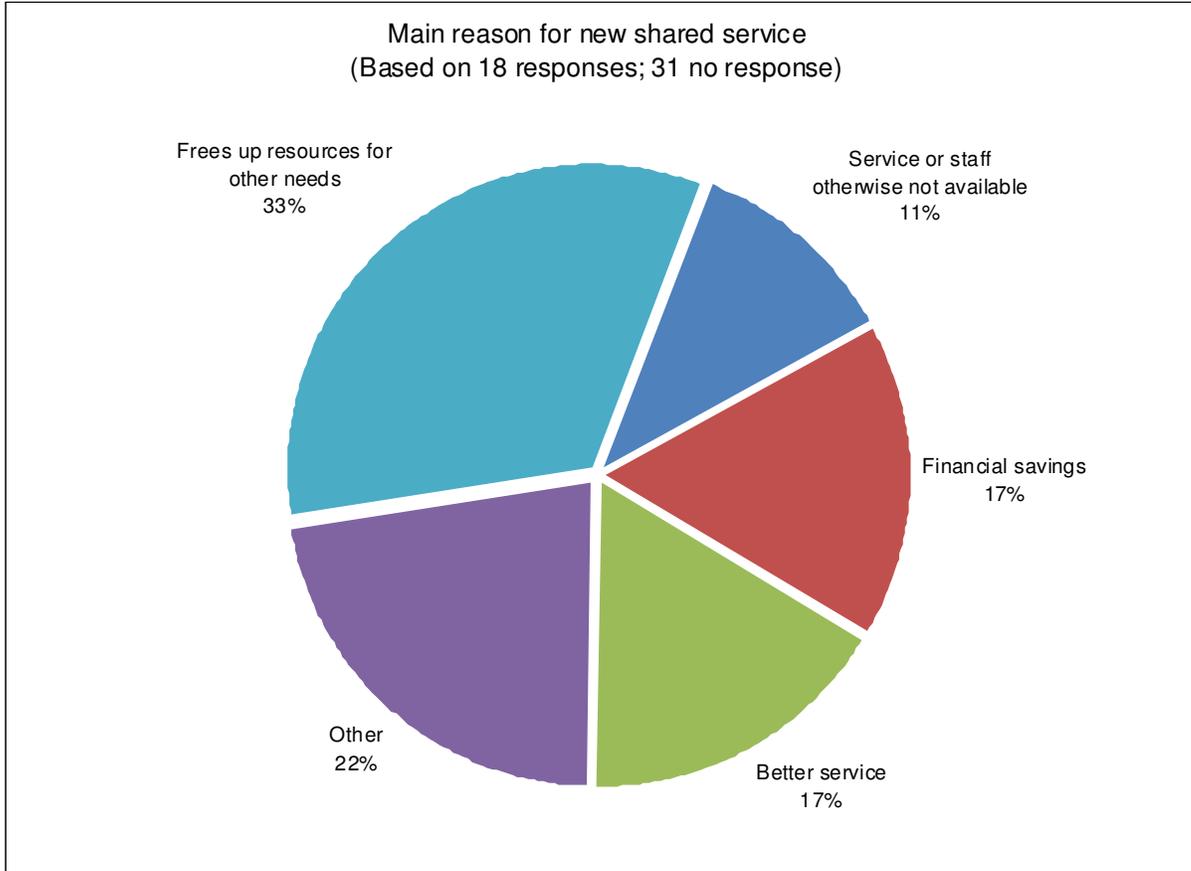
A superintendent noted that often new sharing requests come from district schools on the heels of staffing issues. “Someone leaves who is hard to replace, and then they ask the central office for help,” she said.

Another superintendent, with two large elementary school districts, cited the instance when a long-serving maintenance director left school employment. The superintendent convinced the other district’s school board to share its maintenance director, who now supervises plant operations in both districts.

Another new shared service developed when a town’s youth coalition group approached the superintendent of schools about providing a late bus so that more at-risk youth could participate in after-school programs such as homework clubs. The coalition agreed to pay for the bus service, the superintendent said. “We pay for the bus and send them an invoice, and they pay the invoice,” he summarized.

As to the one best reason for starting the new shared service (Q. 11), the leading factor was “provides new resources to support curriculum, instruction assessment and staff” (6 of 18 respondents, or 33% of those who gave a reason for the new service.) The factor “budget pressure” was not checked by any of the 18 respondents who replied to this query.

Figure 3: Leading Factors in Deciding to Execute a Shared Service



Twenty-one of 49 respondents (42.9%) indicated their organization had initiated a shared service in the 2007-08 or 2008-09 school years (Q. 13). Examples cited included, among others: a fuel purchase collaborative with area towns and districts; sharing a telecom system with the town; sharing music, art and behavioral consultants; sharing a music teacher with another SU; sharing special education vans; and a program for gifted and talented students shared by three schools.

Eleven of 49 entities (22.5%) reported they had declined to participate in a shared service proposal in the last 5 years (Q. 25). One example cited (Q. 26) was a proposed joint fuel bid that was declined because “one town refused to go with cheaper costs due to local provider and history with service.” A business manager told us a joint RFP (request for proposals) with another supervisory union for roofing repairs was abandoned because the distance between the two campuses was too far to produce savings in a bid. The primary reasons cited (Q. 27) for not participating were lack of willing

partners; lack of agreement by boards; and the perception that sharing would mean loss of control or identity.

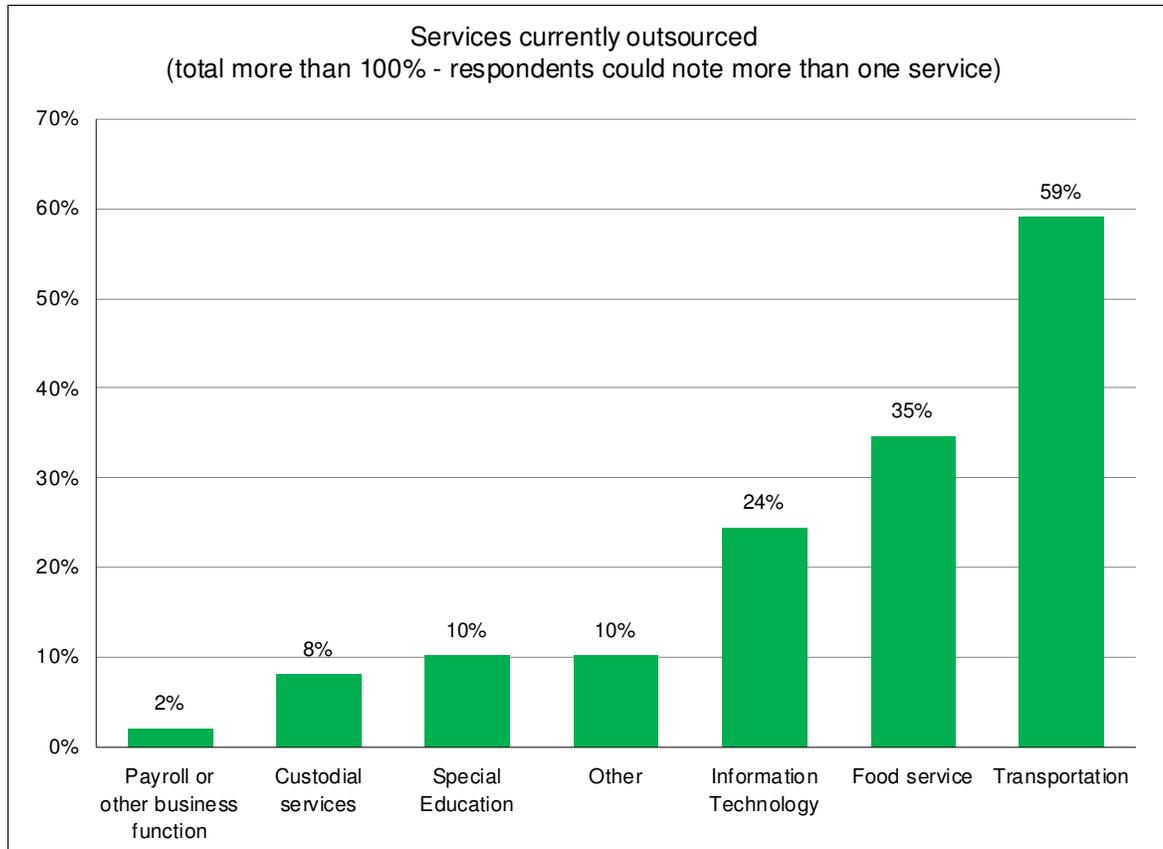
Finding 3

Thirty-nine of 49 respondents reported at least one form of outsourcing

Thirty-nine of 49 respondents (79.6%) reported at least one instance of outsourcing (Q. 19). Twenty-nine (59.2%) said they were outsourcing transportation, and 17 (34.7%) were outsourcing some part of their food service operation. Other examples of outsourcing, reported in verbatim comments, included energy management services; vocation education to regional technical education centers; grounds maintenance; and professional development planning.

There were 10 organizations (one SD and 9 SUs) reporting no outsourcing. These entities had Pre-K through 12 current expenditures in FY 2008 of approximately \$300 million; of this amount, approximately \$119 million was reported by the Department of Education as non-instruction expenditures, suggesting areas to review for possible service improvements or cost savings through competitive bidding of some non-instruction functions.

Figure 4: Types of Services Currently Outsourced



One of these superintendents said the greatest barrier to outsourcing is “herding all the different boards.” The superintendent noted that another difficulty stems from that fact the central office has historically been “at the service of the individual schools rather than leading. This tradition requires the superintendent today to exert a leadership role and force schools and boards to see themselves and act as one organization.”

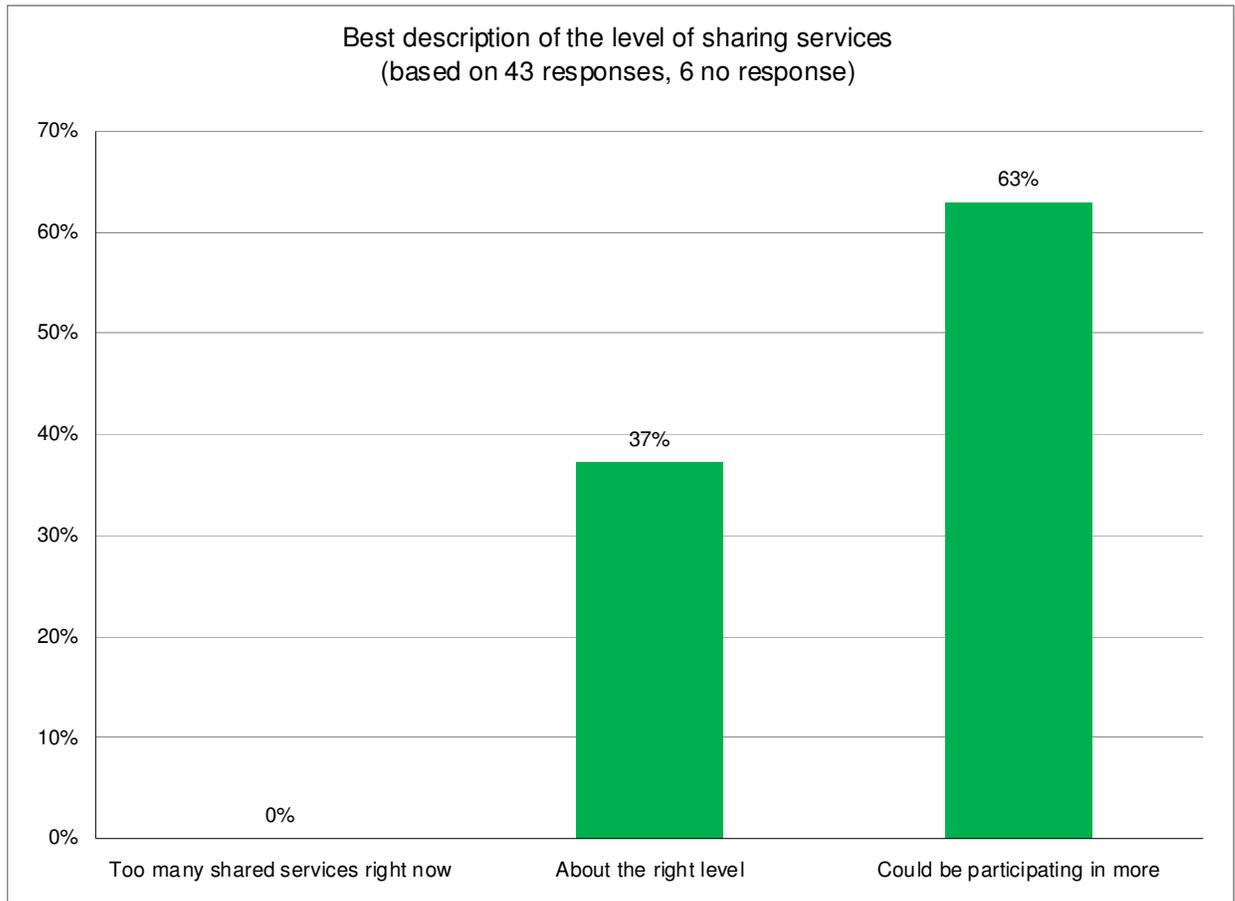
Finding No. 4

Superintendents open to more shared services, but are cautious

Forty-two of 49 respondents (85.7%) indicated a positive outlook toward the sharing of school services (Q. 28) by noting, “We generally support sharing of services where possible and practical.”

Further, of 43 respondents noting their level of sharing (Q. 7), 62.8% said “we could be participating in more sharing of services.” For example, a special education coordinator in Chittenden County said autism services could possibly be regionalized.

Figure 5: Respondents' Views of Current Level of Shared Services



A superintendent said there is more willingness to cooperate today than 10 years ago when “each principal was alone, doing everything.” Today, the superintendent noted, principals will push each other to think about shared services and more and more cooperation.”

No organization reported it was involved in “too many shared services right now,” and 16 of 43 respondents, or 37.2%, said “we are participating at about the right level of shared services with other entities.”

One superintendent gave an example of the difficulty in developing more shared services in a union with multiple local boards. The superintendent proposed hiring an electrician to support maintenance staff in all schools but could not get all boards to go along. A business manager in Chittenden County noted that different pay levels in different districts for substitute teachers is an obstacle to sharing.

Another superintendent of four schools and five school boards, noted that business services could likely be handled more efficiently at the central office with a different governance structure. Currently the central office pays all expenses but then bills the local schools for their costs and then they reimburse the central office. “It’s a lot of back and forth now, whereas with one system it would be quicker and easier,” the superintendent noted.

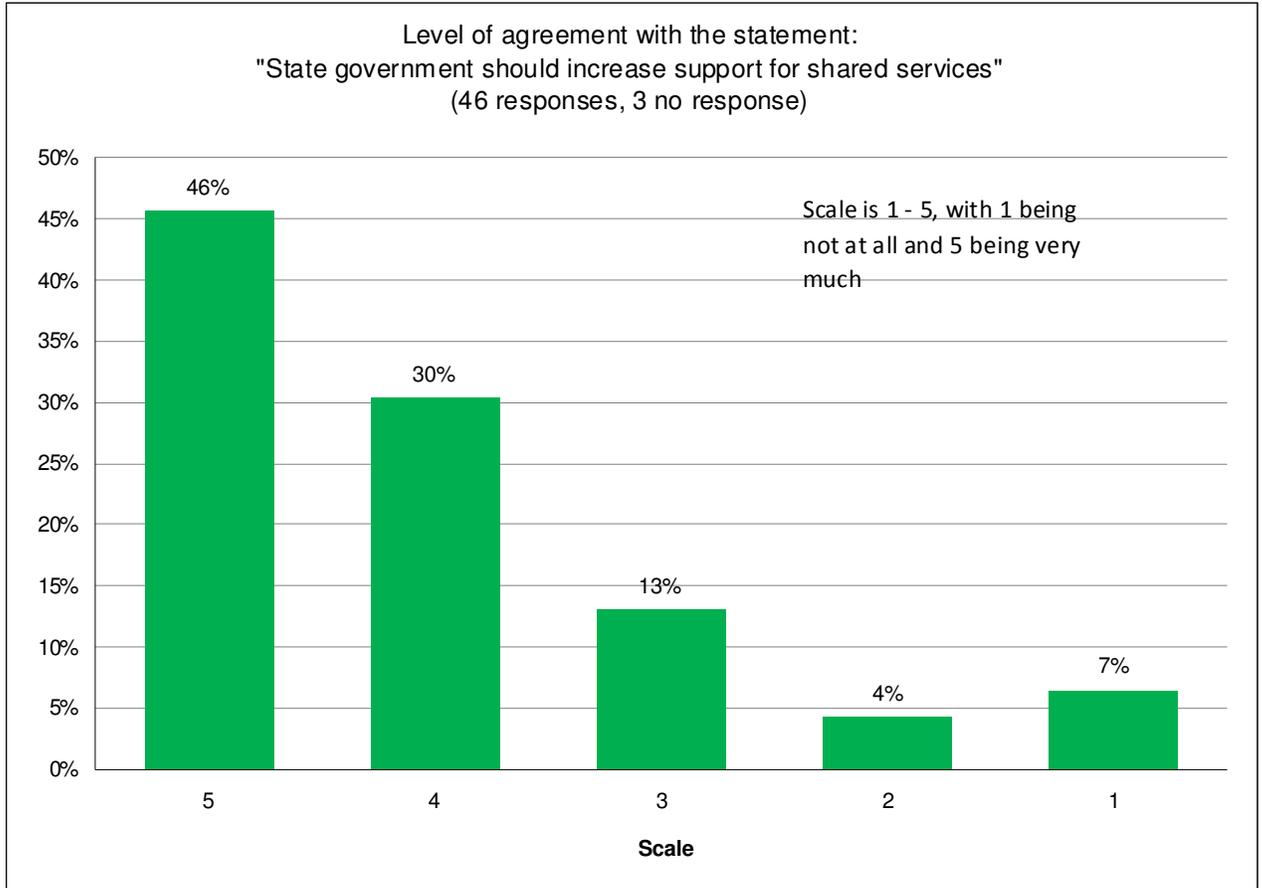
Despite the interest in sharing, there is some worry that greater cooperation might result in some schools closing. One superintendent e-mailed a comment after the survey, saying: “No local board wants to close a small school which would deprive the town of the central identity its school provides. However, our board members are forward thinking and they want to explore all ways of collaborating to provide enhanced instructional opportunity for students and contained costs.”

Finding No. 5

Superintendents support financial incentives for sharing more services, but not one-time financial incentives for local residential taxpayers

Respondents indicated strong support (76.1%) for increased state support and funding to help identify and implement new shared services (Q. 29), but support dropped (to 43.9%) for providing one-time financial incentives for new shared services to local residential taxpayers (Q. 31).

Figure 6: Views on Need for Increased State Support for Shared Services



One respondent noted that “state incentives are difficult to structure so that they provide equal opportunity to the different organizational structures and school cultures. New research on motivation does not support the idea of the effectiveness of such incentives. The state would be better off providing consulting support to assist districts who want to overcome the obstacles to shared services. It is not the desire that is stopping sharing, it is the obstacles,” this superintendent noted.

Another respondent noted that “One-time reductions are meaningless. Combine school districts into more efficient organizational units, Pre-K to 12, and pay 100% of transportation, building renovations and construction. Make it real,” the respondent said.

Conclusion

Vermont’s supervisory unions and supervisory districts have reported a wide-ranging array of shared services among schools, districts and supervisory unions. More than half of the entities said they could be doing more sharing, and a majority supports additional state assistance in identifying and implementing programs to share more school and administrative functions.

Nearly half of respondents stated that they “regularly evaluate the costs and benefits of our most important ongoing shared service arrangements.” However, only 16 of 43 (37.2%) respondents said they tracked financial savings of existing shared services.

Twenty-six respondents (53.1%) provided examples of data or indicators used to monitor existing shared arrangements (Q. 24). These included comments such as “just observational data at this point” and “more qualitative measures” and “IEP and parent meetings” and “auditors come every year and cover all shared arrangements.” These types of indicators suggest that detailed tracking of results to measure performance is not a widespread approach in evaluating the effectiveness and economy of shared services. Additional audit steps would be required to provide greater assurance that the effectiveness of shared services and possible financial savings are being assessed by individual supervisory unions.

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In accordance with 32 VSA §163, we are also providing copies of this report to the Secretary of the Agency of Administration, Commissioner of the Department of Finance and Management, and the Department of Libraries. In addition, the report will be made available at no charge on the State Auditor's web site, <http://auditor.vermont.gov/>.

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

Field Summary for Q1:		
Many supervisory Unions and Supervisory Districts have services, programs or staff where the costs and benefits are shared with one of more entities. As you reflect on your organization today, please indicate ANY of your current partners for shared services:		
Answer	Count	Percentage
Other schools in our union or district	40	81.63%
Other schools outside of our union or district	22	44.90%
Other Supervisory Union	20	40.82%
Other Supervisory District	7	14.29%
Town or city recreation department	26	53.06%
Town or city library	10	20.41%
Town or city highway department	13	26.53%
Town or city public works or maintenance department	8	16.33%
Town or city treasurer's or clerk's office	18	36.73%
Local health care center or provider	13	26.53%
Local non-profit youth organization	47	95.92%
Other public agency or office	6	12.24%

Field Summary for Q2:		
Please briefly note any other organizations you are sharing services with, and the nature of the shared services:		
Answer	Count	Percentage
Answer	17	34.69%
No answer	32	65.31%

Field Summary for Q3:		
Please indicate ANY of the service areas below that are being provided, or managed, and budgeted solely by the Central Office of your SU or SD – for example, a project or service that has been bid out of the central office with a central office contract and is part of the central office operating budget.		
Answer	Count	Percentage
Transportation operation	15	30.61%
Transportation contract RFP and contract award	16	32.65%
Non-bus vehicle acquisition and maintenance	8	16.33%
Administrative office spaces	35	71.43%
General administrative staff	29	59.18%
School Principal	6	12.24%
School Assistant Principal	5	10.20%

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

Other school administrative staff	9	18.37%
Purchasing of heating fuel	25	51.02%
Purchasing of educational supplies	13	26.53%
Purchasing of maintenance supplies	12	24.49%
Textbook selection and purchasing	11	22.45%
Special education	19	38.78%
Consolidated Federal grants (e.g., Title I)	37	75.51%
Other grants	33	67.35%
PT, OT, speech & other therapy services	27	55.10%
School-based Medicaid health services billing	33	67.35%
Alternative education programs	12	24.49%
Pre-K programs	26	53.06%
Essential Early Education (EEE)	30	61.22%
After-school programs	15	30.61%
Counseling services	6	12.24%
Nurse staff or health services	8	16.33%
Administrator professional development	21	42.86%
Teacher professional development	24	48.98%
Curriculum development	30	61.22%
Teacher coaching	14	28.57%
Teacher mentoring programs	26	53.06%
Supervision/Evaluation of staff	11	22.45%
Food service operation, hiring, purchases	8	16.33%
Food service RFP and contract award	9	18.37%
Facility maintenance	11	22.45%
Facility maintenance RFP and contract award	10	20.41%
Capital planning	13	26.53%
Teacher contract negotiation	29	59.18%
Staff contract negotiation	27	55.10%
Vocational education services	6	12.24%
Music teaching staff	9	18.37%
Art teaching staff	9	18.37%
Reading specialists	10	20.41%
Physical education staff	9	18.37%
Library and/or media center staffing	8	16.33%
Audio-visual equipment purchasing and management	10	20.41%
IT network administration and staffing	25	51.02%

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

Computer and database licensing and subscription fees	20	40.82%
Web site design, maintenance, or fees	18	36.73%
School business services such as payroll, accounts payable, budgeting	35	71.43%
Benefits management	42	85.71%
State or federal grant administration and reporting	39	79.59%
Insurance (general liability, worker's compensation, etc.)	36	73.47%
Telephone and/or Internet service	22	44.90%
Copier acquisition or leasing	30	61.22%
Audit RFP and contract	32	65.31%
Athletic fields, gymnasium, etc	7	14.29%
Auditorium, theatre space, etc	6	12.24%
School resource officer	5	10.20%
General security services	6	12.24%

Field Summary for Q4:		
Please briefly note any other key services managed solely by the supervisory union or district central office:		
Answer	Count	Percentage
Answer	14	28.57%
No answer	35	71.43%
Field Summary for Q5:		
Please indicate ANY of the service areas below where the service or staffing is provided and paid for in partnership with others. (Service can be educational or administrative, where costs and benefits are shared with one or more school entities, city, town or other organizations and where the cost is not entirely in the central office budget nor is it billed back to the central office.)		
Answer	Count	Percentage
Transportation operation	14	28.57%
Transportation contract RFP and contract award	15	30.61%
Non-bus vehicle acquisition and maintenance	3	6.12%
Administrative office spaces	7	14.29%
General administrative staff	6	12.24%
School Principal	1	2.04%
School Assistant Principal	1	2.04%
Other school administrative staff	4	8.16%

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

Purchasing of heating fuel	14	28.57%
Purchasing of educational supplies	9	18.37%
Purchasing of maintenance supplies	8	16.33%
Textbook selection and purchasing	9	18.37%
Special education	17	34.69%
Consolidated Federal grants (e.g., Title I)	11	22.45%
Other grants	11	22.45%
PT, OT, speech & other therapy services	13	26.53%
School-based Medicaid health services billing	8	16.33%
Alternative education programs	12	24.49%
Pre-K programs	13	26.53%
Essential Early Education (EEE)	14	28.57%
After-school programs	12	24.49%
Counseling services	12	24.49%
Nurse staff or health services	10	20.41%
Administrator professional development	15	30.61%
Teacher professional development	17	34.69%
Curriculum development	15	30.61%
Teacher coaching	6	12.24%
Teacher mentoring programs	10	20.41%
Supervision/Evaluation of staff	9	18.37%
Food service operation, hiring, purchases	11	22.45%
Food service RFP and contract award	10	20.41%
Facility maintenance	9	18.37%
Facility maintenance RFP and contract award	8	16.33%
Capital planning	11	22.45%
Teacher contract negotiation	7	14.29%
Staff contract negotiation	7	14.29%
Vocational education services	4	8.16%
Music teaching staff	8	16.33%
Art teaching staff	7	14.29%
Reading specialists	10	20.41%
Physical education staff	7	14.29%
Library and/or media center staffing	5	10.20%
Audio-visual equipment purchasing and management	3	6.12%
IT network administration and staffing	17	34.69%
Computer and database licensing and subscription fees	14	28.57%
Web site design, maintenance, or fees	13	26.53%

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

School business services such as payroll, accounts payable, budgeting	11	22.45%
Benefits management	7	14.29%
State or federal grant administration and reporting	5	10.20%
Insurance (general liability, worker's compensation, etc.)	11	22.45%
Telephone and/or Internet service	11	22.45%
Copier acquisition or leasing	11	22.45%
Audit RFP and contract	10	20.41%
Athletic fields, gymnasium, etc	3	6.12%
Auditorium, theatre space, etc	1	2.04%
School resource officer	5	10.20%
General security services	1	2.04%
Field Summary for Q6:		
Please briefly note any other services provided in partnership with other schools, districts or other organizations.		
Answer	Count	Percentage
Answer	9	18.37%
No answer	40	81.63%

Field Summary for Q7:		
Which of the following best describes the level of shared services participation at your SU or SD?		
Answer	Count	Percentage
No answer	6	12.24%
We are participating at about the right level of shared services with other entities.	16	32.65%
We are participating in too many shared services right now.	0	0.00%
We could be participating in more sharing of services.	27	55.10%

Field Summary for Q8:		
Please add any clarifying comments:		
Answer	Count	Percentage
Answer	16	32.65%
No answer	33	67.35%
Field Summary for Q9:		

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

For the 2009-2010 school year, is your SU or SD involved in any NEW shared services?		
Answer	Count	Percentage
No answer	6	12.24%
Yes	18	36.73%
No	25	51.02%
Field Summary for Q10:		
If yes, please briefly describe one of the shared services being implemented for the 2009-2010 school year:		
Answer	Count	Percentage
Answer	17	34.69%
No answer	32	65.31%
Field Summary for Q11:		
If yes, please indicate the ONE best reason for starting this new shared service:		
Answer	Count	Percentage
No answer	31	63.27%
Budget pressure	0	0.00%
Service or staff otherwise not available	2	4.08%
Clear financial savings	3	6.12%
Better service possible	3	6.12%
Reduced workload for our staff	0	0.00%
Board or administration initiative	0	0.00%
Encouragement from another SU or SD	0	0.00%
Provides new resources to support curriculum, instruction, assessment and staff	6	12.24%
Other	4	8.16%
Field Summary for Q12:		
Please add any clarifying comment:		
Answer	Count	Percentage
Answer	9	18.37%
No answer	40	81.63%
Field Summary for Q13:		
Did you initiate any new shared services in the 07-08, or 08-09 school years?		
Answer	Count	Percentage
No answer	12	24.49%
Yes	21	42.86%

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

No	16	32.65%
Field Summary for Q14:		
If yes, please briefly describe these efforts:		
Answer	Count	Percentage
Answer	20	40.82%
No answer	29	59.18%
Field Summary for Q15:		
Are you involved in any contractual agreements with other Supervisory Unions or Supervisory Districts (e.g., for food service, transportation, supplies, alternative education, professional staff, etc.)?		
Answer	Count	Percentage
No answer	6	12.24%
Yes	17	34.69%
No	26	53.06%
Field Summary for Q16:		
If yes, please briefly describe the purpose of the agreement(s):		
Answer	Count	Percentage
Answer	17	34.69%
No answer	32	65.31%
Field Summary for Q17:		
Are you involved in a 'joint schools agreement' or other service that requires the approval of the Commissioner of Education and/or the State Board of Education (e.g., early education, autism projects, etc.)?		
Answer	Count	Percentage
No answer	6	12.24%
Yes	6	12.24%
No	37	75.51%
Field Summary for Q18:		
If yes, please briefly note the organizations with which you are involved and the nature of the agreements:		
Answer	Count	Percentage
Answer	5	10.20%
No answer	44	89.80%

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

Field Summary for Q19:		
Please indicate any service below that you are currently outsourcing to a business or consultant(s):		
Answer	Count	Percentage
A routine business service, such as payroll or other business function	1	2.04%
Transportation	29	59.18%
Custodial services	4	8.16%
Food service	17	34.69%
Technology (e.g. network management, software management)	12	24.49%
Special Education	5	10.20%
Other	5	10.20%
Field Summary for Q20:		
Please briefly describe any other significant outsourcing:		
Answer	Count	Percentage
Answer	17	34.69%
No answer	32	65.31%
Field Summary for Q21:		
Please describe any significant services that your SU or SD is considering, or might consider, for new partnerships in the next year or two.		
Answer	Count	Percentage
Answer	20	40.82%
No answer	29	59.18%
Field Summary for Q22:		
In general, does your SU or SD track financial savings of your existing shared services?		
Answer	Count	Percentage
No answer	6	12.24%
Yes	16	32.65%
No	18	36.73%
Not sure	9	18.37%
Field Summary for Q23:		
In general, does your SU or SD regularly monitor the delivery of services from your existing sharing arrangements?		
Answer	Count	Percentage

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

No answer	7	14.29%
Yes	30	61.22%
No	5	10.20%
Not sure	7	14.29%
Field Summary for Q24:		
If yes, please provide examples of data or indicators you track to monitor existing shared arrangements:		
Answer	Count	Percentage
Answer	26	53.06%
No answer	23	46.94%
Field Summary for Q25:		
Has your SU or SD declined to participate in a shared service proposal in the last 5 years?		
Answer	Count	Percentage
No answer	6	12.24%
Yes	11	22.45%
No	23	46.94%
Not sure	11	22.45%
Field Summary for Q26:		
If Yes, briefly describe the proposal(s):		
Answer	Count	Percentage
Answer	9	18.37%
No answer	40	81.63%
Field Summary for Q27:		
Please indicate ANY of the reasons below that apply to your decision not to participate in the shared service proposal above:		
Answer	Count	Percentage
Lack of willing partners	11	22.45%
After review, costs appeared too high	8	16.33%
Perception existed that sharing would mean loss of control or identity	12	24.49%
Legal or insurance obstacles	0	0.00%
Scheduling or calendar problems	4	8.16%
Geographical obstacles	4	8.16%
Not all boards could agree	12	24.49%
Not clear enough money would be saved	9	18.37%

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

Problems with staffing or funding the shared service	4	8.16%
Lack of financial or management capacity to implement the project	6	12.24%
Did not align with the resources needed to support curriculum and instruction	0	0.00%
Did not align with the resources needed for professional development	0	0.00%

Field Summary for Q28:		
Please indicate ANY statement below that applies to your Board/s and/or administration today:		
Answer	Count	Percentage
We generally support sharing of services where possible and practical.	42	85.71%
We have written policies and procedures requiring or encouraging shared services.	4	8.16%
We are usually very cautious about shared services and typically require analysis that significant cost savings are sustainable before proceeding.	15	30.61%
We regularly evaluate the costs and benefits of our most important ongoing shared service arrangements.	22	44.90%
We regularly report to the staff and public about the costs and benefits of shared services.	10	20.41%
Field Summary for Q29:		
On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not at all, and 5 being very much, how much do you agree with this statement: Vermont State government should increase support and funding to assist in the identification and implementation of specific shared service opportunities in Vermont education.		
Answer	Count	Percentage
No answer	3	6.12%
1	3	6.12%
2	2	4.08%
3	6	12.24%
4	14	28.57%
5	21	42.86%
Field Summary for Q30:		
On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not at all, and 5 being very much, how much do you agree with this statement: The State should provide financial incentives to local school boards that implement new shared service arrangements.		

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

Answer	Count	Percentage
No answer	4	8.16%
1	5	10.20%
2	2	4.08%
3	3	6.12%
4	8	16.33%
5	27	55.10%

Field Summary for Q31:

On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not at all, and 5 being very much, how much do you agree with this statement: The State should provide financial incentives for significant new shared service arrangements in the form of one-time education property tax reductions to local residential taxpayers.

Answer	Count	Percentage
No answer	9	18.37%
1	10	20.41%
2	2	4.08%
3	10	20.41%
4	4	8.16%
5	14	28.57%

Field Summary for Q32:

Please use the space below for additional thoughts which might help us understand your experiences with shared services. Thank you.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Answer	19	38.78%
No answer	30	61.22%

VERBATIM TEXT COMMENTS OF SELECTED SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q. 2 Please briefly note any other organizations you are sharing services with, and the nature of the shared services:

SAU 23 (NH), Transportation Contract.

Special education service throughout the union, student evaluations, clinical service, administrative supports. Behavior Specialist services throughout the SU.

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

We have some excellent examples of articulations agreements with higher education (Norwich, Dartmouth, VTC, and UVM). We also work closely with the Randolph Area Prevention Partnership and many others. We also formed the Green Mountain Forest Collaborative in 2003, which serves common needs and interests of 5 supervisory unions located in central Vermont.

Town Clerk - fiscal & payroll; Milton Youth Coalition; Benefits planning - 403(b).

We have a direct Federal Safe Schools Healthy Students grant that partners with many human services agencies.

We house the recreation department and share facilities. We have up to 15 slots at the Lincoln School pre-school program for 4 year olds, who, due to our partnership established 2 years ago, are part of our child count.

CSAC - Dept of mental health.

The recreation department actually falls under one of our districts. Our Food Service Director is co-chair of an organization known as the Foodservice Directors Association (FDA). FDA negotiates contracts that benefit dozens of schools beyond our SU.

We are working on a plan to share services with SAU 7 in NH. Within SAU 7 and ENSU there are 3 K-12 systems that are all suffering from declining enrollment and increased per pupil costs.

New England Tropical Conservatory; Bennington Museum; Bennington Center for the Arts; Tutorial Center; United Counseling Services, and more.

Five town clerks; One town select board.

Clara Martin mental health services.

In the past the SU has done bulk purchases of heating fuel and also supplies for some surrounding towns.

Parks Place, a local non-profit; also shared snow removal and space.

Colleges, private educational entities.

Q. 4 Please briefly note any other key services managed solely by the supervisory union or district central office:

Almost all, if not all, of the above are administered and/or bid out of the central office. Many of the areas, however are dispersed to individual school building budgets and do not appear in the central office budget.

As a single district, all services are budgeted and managed, to some extent, by the central office.

We are a single district SU. We do everything for everyone.

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

We developed and implemented a very good 403(b) plan across 7 supervisory unions and districts. The number involved continues to grow.

While our facilities management is in-house, we contract out for all custodial services.

Legal services.

The Central Office provides for or manages many service areas, but the budgets are spread amongst the districts - which explains why there aren't more check marks.

Some of the above are controlled out of the central office, but part of the Canaan School District budget only (example transportation).

We are a single district so the above could all be checked off as central office. We do follow expenditures by our three schools as well.

Unified policy development.

Human resource management including mandatory criminal record checking for staff, faculty, substitutes, and community volunteers.

We bid out many items and services for all of our school districts but the funding comes from the individual district budgets. This is a more accurate reflection for recording expenses within the various cost centers.

After-school programming - 1 clinical social worker.

ELL Teacher - School Psychology Services - Special Education Administration.

Q. 6 Please briefly note any other services provided in partnership with other schools, districts or other organizations:

We have a formal collaborative agreement with several surrounding school districts to offer specialized special education services for which we are both the host site and fiscal agent. All cooperating districts share in the overall costs. These include a specialized program for behaviorally challenged students, a program for autistic children and a program for multi-handicapped children.

We have lots of partners, but most bill us for services. It is still more cost effective than having the expertise on staff.

The Green Mountain Forest Collaborative as stated above.

Overlap may be confusing, however, some of these categories have sub-categories that could be shared while others are sole. Our SU collaborates frequently.

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

Many of the areas above are planned or managed by Central Office, but the costs are shared between districts.

We are contracting with the Town Library to oversee the school library this year. This is a one year test that is going very well and saving the town - \$20,000. Our vocational programs are satellite offerings of the NCCC. Central Office costs are shared with the Town. Curriculum development is coordinated between the Central Office and the School District.

Opportunities in Learning Program Alternative and Special Education Day Program.

Social workers; city rec department; child care; local child centers; DPW crossing guards; use of facilities for city; electrician services for the city; School resource officer.

Behavior Interventionists, Home School Coordinators, Social Worker.

Q. 8 Please add any clarifying comments [related to the level of shared services participation at your SU or SD]:

We continue to work with all of our partners to find ways to streamline our operating expenses and find collaborative solutions to our problems. This includes surrounding school districts and our town.

It would be much easier and more economic if we were a unified school district with one board, one contract, and shared purchasing power as in essence one entity.

Given the governance structure I have and its limitations, I am pretty much stretching our capacity on shared services. I am always interested and willing to explore ways to collaborate and save. It would take considerably more than this survey to describe exactly what we have done and to demonstrate how much money we have saved through our efforts.

Curriculum development IT planning.

Where possible we look to share services if it is not too time consuming and we have willing partners. The town used to plow parking areas in winter, but now do not have the staff, money or inclination.

Shared services can save money in many cases, but also drive an administrative burden - especially with separate districts.

We are looking for more ways to share services. Problems include: SQS, licensing requirements between NH and VT, politics, etc.

As a single district we already centralize everything.

Doing more shared services would require a shift in priorities within the SU office or a slight addition in personnel (.2FTE) to devote to the potential increased service.

Particularly with regard to special ed services, the SU could take a larger role.

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

We feel that we reap many benefits from collaborating as noted above but would entertain looking at additional shared services.

Our SU has a strong history of centralized services. Our business, transportation and special education service are most significant.

Sometimes sharing is beneficial and in some cases counter-productive. When there is not a clear authority, sharing is conflictual.

There are definite areas where this would be beneficial, but is a challenge to build a consensus as to which ones. I would want, however, to move toward these areas with caution - not throwing out all old systems at one moment.

We are researching this as we speak. While we think this is the right level, we are looking into any other ideas that might arise.

We regularly review and consider opportunities for cost savings through cooperation between districts within the supervisory union and with towns.

Q. 10 If yes, please briefly describe one of the shared services being implemented for the 2009-2010 school year:

Linking Learning to Life shares the cost of an internship placement coordinator.

Copiers; behavior specialists.

Milton Youth Coalition supports transportation for after-school programs and supports some after-school activities; outdoor club at Middle School.

Currently negotiating with the town on an SRO (Student Resource Officer).

Sharing of maintenance director for leadership/supervision of staff across the SU, rather than have individual maintenance director in each school district

The library situation is new and if the DOE does not let it continue it will be for one year only.

BT SD involved with Head Start.

Partner relationships for 21st Century Learning Communities grant.

Purchase and operation of vans, 90% special education and 10% general education.

PT service delivery.

Technology integration.

21st Century grant.

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

District bus routes.

Newly funded positions for special education as well as a math and literacy coach are being shared by all districts within the Supervisory Union. The new positions are being funded by ARRA Federal Recovery Funds for a period of two years.

Increased shared IT services through ARRA funds.

ELL Teacher.

Fuel, SU Benefit Pkg.

Q. 12 Please add any clarifying comment [related to the best reason for starting this new shared service]:

LLL brings experience that we do not have.

This is my first year in the district so I cannot be as helpful as I would like on this survey.

Only way to get it done! No one was willing to take it on alone.

Also provides for better service and coordination.

Clear financial savings with better services offered.

Serves more kids.

ARRA stimulus funds that (fortunately) we were able to apply to a capital investment.

Increased educational opportunities in summer and after school.

Additional resources from the ARRA grants for Title I and Special Education are being directed to high priority areas of need.

Q. 14 If yes, please briefly describe these efforts [related to new shared services in the 07-08 or 08-09 school years]:

We participate in a greatly expanded fuel purchase collaborative with several area towns and school districts.

Shared telecom system with the town.

Collaborative recreation programs with the city recreation department.

Shared music, art, and behavioral consultants.

Partnership with regional lab to bring in algebra for 8th graders at no cost. Pooling of local and federal resources across schools for Curriculum Mapping Program throughout the SU.

Copy paper, office supplies and computer purchases.

Propane purchases.

Gifted and talented program shared by three schools. Preschool partnership with Head Start.

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

We invited the Recreation Department to join us when their facility was closing. We wrote a grant forming the partnership with the Lincoln School and their early education programs.

Share music teacher with another SU.

Photocopier leasing; Collective bargaining.

One copier lease & one copier service contract; more IT personnel move under the SU to provide service to all districts.

Provided for consolidation of IT services and leadership within the SU.

We consolidated transportation assessments based on total SU costs and charged districts based on hours of service needed.

We began sharing part time staff (art, P.E., etc.) among school districts, with the districts agreeing to give the part-time teacher benefits according to their total FTE between schools. Each school pays their portion.

Food Service Director works for 5 schools (3 districts), 4 school districts declined to participate.

The special education vans as mentioned above.

We purchased copier agreements for all schools and central office through one bid.

The Supervisory Union hired a full-time psychologist for the 2008-2009 year and all districts have benefited from better services as well as budget savings for psychological services.

Itinerant teachers, bus contract for union school district members.

Q. 16 If yes, please briefly describe the purpose of the [contractual] agreement(s) [with other Supervisory Unions or Supervisory Districts]:

Multi-year transportation contract.

Rutland Regional School High School Choice - Act 150 Shared benefits for shared psychologist.

Special education and alternative education program.

We share after-school program management.

Music teacher.

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

We supervise and house a special education collaborative for behaviorally challenged children and for learning impaired children who are high school age.

Early Education programs.

Special Education services for another SU.

Vocational programs through NCCC.

A collaborative arrangement for intensive services support with another SU.

Transportation to the Barre Technical Center with Montpelier SD.

We have an early education collaborative with Franklin Central S.U.

Special Education regional programs and Opportunities in Learning Program.

EEE. (Early Essential Education)

Occupational therapy services.

We run an alternative program and two other districts purchase a portion of the program as opposed to slots. Homeless transportation is also a shared expense.

Transportation, OT and PT.

Q. 18 If yes, please briefly note the organizations with which you are involved and the nature of the agreements:

We host and manage a collaborative program for: multi-handicapped children; autistic children; behaviorally challenged children; and also the Career and Technical Center.

Early education per ACT 62.

We received a waiver from Commissioner Vilaseca to let the town librarian teach "media studies" to students at Canaan Schools.

The above Early Ed collaborative.

Joint contract for Brookline and Newfane School Boards, starting Oct. 1, 2009.

Q. 20 Please briefly describe any other significant outsourcing:

Energy management services.

Vocational education to regional tech centers.

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

We try not to outsource because we have been able to save considerably by doing it ourselves. We have examined outsourcing transportation, payroll services, and technology. No one can touch our expense ratios. We do outsource some SPED services because we cannot attract staff (e.g. Speech, OT/PT, Counseling etc.).

We have purchased 2 services: *Aesop* (for leave processing and substitute placement) and *My Learning Plan* (for professional development processing and development of options).

At the school level, three schools use a bus service, several contract for computer repairs. We partner with human services in an autism collaborative and we have a contract with Lyndon Institute as our designated high school, all six local districts.

Photocopier purchasing.

For clarification... Technology refers to telephone and telecommunications contracts. Special Ed refers to social workers, physical therapists, etc. Other refers to 403(b) & 457(b) support.

School Clinician through NEKMH. OT, PT, ESL through North Country Education Services (Gorham, NH).

Grounds maintenance.

The Abbey Group provides cafeteria services for Sheldon and Swanton.

OT and PT and psychological services.

All of our districts outsource the food service programs with the exception of one. As of this time the SU deals with three contractors. The annual transportation budget for the districts within the SU totals more than \$1 million. These services are bid out on a regular basis but the problem is that there is not much competition for contracted transportation services. This area could be an area with potentially substantial savings with assistance from the State with consolidation and operating more locally managed transportation possibly on a countywide basis. It may be worth exploring. Technology is another area where most districts are "on their own," support and expertise from the State could and would be beneficial.

Some level of consultation and support in conjunction with central office services.

Consultant to coordinate professional development in the SU. Approximately 2 days/week.

Student specific special education services; professional development, primarily with LAPDA.

Related services for special education.

Q. 21 Please describe any significant services that your SU or SD is considering, or might consider, for new partnerships in the next year or two:

PT/OT.

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

Business services with the city. Expanded high school choice agreements.

Professional development with other SUs.

Want to look at online courses as a resource to provide more academic options for the students here in our rural communities - am looking at some possible partnerships in that area.

Educational supplies.

Well, for 8 years I have been working with my 6 school boards with considerable success to collaborate and work across districts. To date, we have consolidated and collaborated in Transportation, Finance, Maintenance, and Technology. We have also developed one set of policies, one set of collective agreements, one set of procedures, one Vision/Mission, etc.

Copier contract as a Supervisory Union.

We are looking forward to exploring all areas of collaboration but none have been specifically identified, for example education delivery for middle school students.

Consolidation of business services and student transportation at the supervisory union level.

Special Education transportation under the SU instead of each district.

Maintenance; Transportation; Specialized positions.

Transportation.

We would like to start sharing teachers and staff with SAU 7 in NH. For example, we could have a foreign language teacher that worked mornings in one school and afternoons in another.

Food Service.

Joint bus contact between 2 schools and contractor.

We've talked about facilities management and purchasing but it is unlikely we will pursue either.

Windham may seek a joint contract partner with another elementary school district. Transportation, combine school and public resources for busing.

We have been considering a joint or union middle school between Rockingham and Westminster. The Westminster Board has decided against it for the time being.

More with town public works department and also possible greater collaboration with recreation department.

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

We are expanding collaborative professional development opportunities with two other SUs in our region through LAPDA and with the VT DOE.

Q. 24 If yes, please provide examples of data or indicators you track to monitor existing shared arrangements:

More qualitative measures - success of service, attendance and performance of shared employee, etc.

IEP and parent meetings. Use of recreational programs.

The only big thing we do has to do with the bus company. We help them set routes, review costs, talk about performance, etc.

I use data on everything. And I use data in many different forms and ratios whether it be expenses per student, to cost per mile. Without tracking services and program costs, it would be impossible to determine their viability. Moreover, it would be impossible to do what we have with our budgets and surpluses in the past 8 years if we did not utilize data tracking systems.

Business manager reviews through contact with sites.

Allocation of employee time, cost comparisons of running programs to alternative

Auditors come every year and cover all shared arrangements.

Budgets and tuition rates. Program completion rates.

Actual expenditures to budget Special Education student service hours per staff FTE.

Most of our shared service is between districts and we adjust cost shares based on changes in square footage, number of computers, number of staff, number of students, etc.

Review of work orders, services, and costs.

Just observational data at this point. We will survey the staff in the future.

FTEs needed pre- and post-sharing; HR costs pre- and post-sharing; Opportunity costs pre- and post-sharing; (e.g., amount of time principals can serve as instructional leaders instead of facilities managers).

We bid out contracts to keep cost outlay competitive.

NECAP, financial, teacher participation.

Monitor and evaluation.

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

Financials, timesheets.

Contracts management.

Shared busing is reflected in reduced costs to our schools per our transportation agreement.

We keep extensive data on the Early Education program regarding numbers of students, special educational services, age, town, etc.

IEP performance.

Costs and services - also quality.

For the newly funded psychologist's position we have tracked services provided at the district level and the computed hourly rate for our psychologist versus the going rates for contracted psychologists. We have also tracked contracted service savings for technology support versus having those positions filled by full-time employees.

We check for services rendered before payment. Similarly our partner districts never pay unless satisfied.

Fiscal data, student performance data.

Track vendor & employee time spent in each school, track usage of products or services.

Q. 26 If Yes, briefly describe the proposal(s) [in which you declined to participate]:

Transportation.

We have refused to officially join LAPDA. While our teachers utilize LAPDA services, we cannot justify the cost of membership in LAPDA.

Proposed Consolidation of Copier Service Agreement. Decided to wait.

Fuel Bid; one town refused to go with cheaper costs due to "local" provider and history with service.

Food service contract, SU wide contract negotiations, shared personnel.

Shared transportation of special education students - cancelled because of poor service.

We have completed the bidding process for fuel for the towns and our schools. Some of the towns and schools have opted out of this process.

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

City currently provides crossing guards and has asked us to provide it instead. City has asked us to provide IT services, but the expense to us would be too great. Researched having city plow lots, but the scheduling of the plowing would affect the running of schools. Trying a partnership with the recreation department but there are many territorial issues and contract hurdles to overcome.

Q. 32 Please use the space below for additional thoughts which might help us understand your experiences with shared services. Thank you.

State incentives are difficult to structure so that they provide equal opportunity to the different organizational structures and school cultures. New research on motivation does not support the idea of the effectiveness of such incentives. The State would be better off providing consulting support to assist districts who want to overcome the obstacles to shared services. It is not the desire that is stopping sharing, it is the obstacles.

Being a Supervisory District we are already totally integrated among schools. We routinely check on the State pricing under master contracts and see that we can get better prices than the State has negotiated. I have come to believe that this is because at the instant of buying, we as an immediate buyer command a greater power to get a discount in order to close a sale or win a bid. The State's negotiated discounts or prices are more like AAA's or AARP's modest discounts that are available to a class of buyer. That's useful, of course, but not nearly as powerful as an immediate bidding sale environment can create when a school employee gets on the phone and asks for price quotes on an immediate purchase.

As a county superintendent in another state I received all school nursing services through the County Health department and had a pilot program in several low income schools where we provided offices for the Department of Social Services in exchange for service delivery in the school.

Not to be rude, but the State usually messes things up when they try to use "cookie cutter" approaches to solve problems across all school districts in the same manner. I could list several examples of how good intentions actually end up costing more money or have little to no utility. Vermont's current governance structure in Education, its Legislation, and its past practices are extremely prohibitive to implementing best governance and management practices. It takes longevity, know how, and a good degree of luck to be able to convince 6 independent school boards to collaborate and work together for the benefit of all.

The main problem I have experienced over a 20-year time period is that when you share staff, a large portion of their work day is spent on the road traveling between school buildings instead of working with kids, especially once you are out of Chittenden County.

One-time reductions are meaningless. Combine school districts into more efficient organizational units pre-K to 12 and pay 100% of transportation and building renovations and construction. Make it real.

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

If it makes sense, SUs will share services without additional incentives that will have to be paid from somewhere. Instead, we'd advocate for the State to drive governance changes.

Until there is a change in governance structures, local control issues will impede progress in sharing resources.

The State needs to get rid of school districts that do not have schools. That is step number one to substantial long-term savings.

There are all kinds of ways the state could help schools by helping with contracted services, software, technology, to name a few. We have a very "old" approach to acquiring resources in Vermont that should be changed. Thanks for doing this survey!

Cost savings is the most important incentive and in some cases the only one that is paid attention to. However, when it comes to local control and independence, many boards are irrational even when there are financial incentives

I believe that any savings for shared services would make only an infinitesimal change in local tax rates, given the tiny impact on the overall budget. I still believe that this information will be used by politicians (Tom Salmon included) to criticize schools and to cast their business practices in a bad light.

The major issue in the past has been the perception by local school boards that they need autonomy from the SU.

We purchase copier paper as an SU and share the cost among five schools. We bid for fuel with some of the towns. We share a tractor with Franklin. The elementary schools share busing costs with the high school.

As one of the smallest supervisory districts, we constantly look to be fiscally responsible and educationally sound. We are a nationally recognized school district that focuses on quality; the last 3 years budgets averaged 1.7% increase. The cost of education is important, but so is quality. Education is really expensive if the quality is not there.

The incentives provided by the State should be implemented on a more permanent basis. Incorporating the savings into a formula that impacts that tax rate would not be transparent enough for taxpayers! A formula for an annual lump sum credit to districts would be more beneficial. The State should provide more support for establishing some intensive special education programs when local populations prohibit districts and Supervisory Unions from developing local cost effective and cost efficient programs. Example: autism programs, etc.

Appendix I – Survey Text and Responses

Our state motto is Freedom and Unity - a perfect paradox to describe the management challenge/opportunity of supervisory unions. The key is in balancing the level of central authority and local autonomy. It is important to consider the context of each SU and actually each school within an SU. Developing an extended school community that promotes collaboration and a sense of interdependence and reciprocity is essential. State, school and community leaders need to monitor the tension between local control and centralized authority throughout the full continuum of decision making and policy development.

Local boards are suspicious of any money promises from the state. After two failures we passed a bond issue without State support.

Appendix II – 21 Recommended Practices for Performance Measurement

21 RECOMMENDED PRACTICES for Performance Measurement in Local & State Government	
Standard 1: <u>Goals and Measures Are in Place</u> The operating organization has goals and measures that gauge the effectiveness and efficiency of major programs and operations. Best practices include:	
1.1	The organization has established one or more goals that describes what it is trying to achieve.
1.2	The organization’s goals and major programs and operations are aligned.
1.3	The organization's goals were developed through a strategic planning process that resulted in a written plan.
1.4	The organization’s current goals are consistent with those in its strategic plan.
1.5	All goals have one or more relevant measures.
1.6	The organization has a mix of measures, such as outcome, intermediate outcome, output, and efficiency measures, that demonstrate progress towards intended results and the economic use of resources.
1.7	The organization’s measures are quantified or quantifiable.
Standard 2: <u>Actual Results Are Tracked</u> The organization tracks actual results against performance targets and validates the reliability of such data. Best practices include:	
2.1	Suitable numerical targets are established for every measure at least annually.
2.2	The organization tracks actual results for each measure.
2.3	The organization compares actual results to targets on at least an annual basis.
2.4	The organization has identified the methods and sources for the collection of actual results, including relevant limitations.
2.5	The organization has documentation that supports its actual results.
2.6	The organization has processes to validate that actual performance results are accurate and reliable.
Standard 3: <u>Results Are Reported</u> The organization is regularly reporting performance measurement data for each of its goals [to a Select Board, School Board, or other public oversight body, citizen group, etc.]. Best practices include:	
3.1	As part of performance report(s) the organization includes one or more goals related to its major programs or operations.
3.2	As part of performance report(s) the organization includes a description of the strategies that it will be pursuing to meet its goals.
3.3	As part of performance report(s) the organization includes measures that are linked to reported goals.

Appendix II – 21 Recommended Practices for Performance Measurement

	21 RECOMMENDED PRACTICES for Performance Measurement in Local & State Government
3.4	As part of performance report(s) the organization includes a variety of measure types, such as outcome, intermediate outcome, output, and efficiency measures.
3.5	The goals and measures reported are generally consistent from year-to-year.
3.6	As part of performance report(s) the organization includes future targets for each reported measure.
3.7	As part of performance report(s) the organization includes a comparison of its prior years' numerical targets to its actual results for each reported measure.
3.8	As part of performance report(s) the organization incorporates a narrative explanation of its results, including, when applicable, (1) an analysis of why a target was not met and corrective actions being taken and (2) relevant data limitations.