**20 QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL BOARDS TO ASK ABOUT BUDGET DEVELOPMENT & EXPENDITURE MONITORING**

These questions are derived from the good practice principles and elements of budgeting and expenditure monitoring we used to develop the objectives and criteria for our recent report, *Improving Budgeting and Expenditure Management in the Public Education System*. School boards may find this useful as a self-assessment tool to gauge the state of their practices, and identify areas where improvements may be needed.

**School District ## - (insert name)**

**(date)**

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| **QUESTIONS** | **ANSWERS** |
| **Developing and communicating strategic plans** | |
| 1. Is our school district effectively monitoring the needs of the community and changes in our environment? 2. How well have we identified our opportunities and challenges in delivering on our mission? 3. Have we developed the right blend of goals and strategies to be successful? 4. Are we engaging our stakeholders effectively in our strategic planning efforts? 5. Have we properly approved, communicated, and adopted our Strategic Plan? |  |
| **QUESTIONS** | **ANSWERS** |
| **Developing appropriate budgets** | |
| 1. Do we have a sound process for preparing and adopting our annual budget, including stakeholder consultations? 2. Have we developed detailed operational plans and evaluated our financial risks and options? 3. Have we made and communicated our required budgeting decisions? 4. Has management demonstrated that our budget is a consolidation of all approved responsibility centre budgets? |  |
| **QUESTIONS** | **ANSWERS** |
| **Monitoring and reporting on budget performance** | |
| 1. Are we clear about the roles and responsibilities for the budgeting process? 2. Can we demonstrate that management and finance staff have received adequate training, are competent, and set up to succeed? Is their performance appropriately monitored? 3. Are we getting timely, reliable information on spending compared to plans? 4. Are we getting timely and reliable information on actual and forecasted costs, including spending pressure points? 5. Are we getting budget reports in advance of meetings that help us monitor management’s financial performance? 6. Are we set up to make timely decisions to adjust operational and capital spending plans as required? 7. Are we effectively engaging and communicating with our stakeholders about our budget performance and rationale for changes? |  |
| **QUESTIONS** | **ANSWERS** |
| **Effective spending controls** | |
| 1. Can management demonstrate to us that controls in place for information provided on actual costs is accurate, and reflects the most recent transactions? 2. Do we have confidence that the controls over expenditures, especially areas with the highest budgetary impact, such as salaries, are adequate and effective? 3. Are we comfortable with the current checks and balances to limit expenditure authorities, with the right balance of control and flexibility? 4. Can management demonstrate to us that there is adequate segregation of duties in the district to reduce the change of fraud and errors? |  |