

How much does it cost to run a school corporation?

IASBO School Finance Seminar

August 20, 2026



Definitions

Data

Revenues & Expenditures DOE Form 9 Data CY 2021 through CY 2025. Funds 101, 160, 180, 300, 610.

ADM DOE Fall Counts.

2025 Single Year Snapshots may not be representative of a typical year for any given school.

School Size Groups

Small	Less than 2,000 Students
Medium	2,000 to 8,000 Students
Large	8,000 or More Students

School Area Groups

Rural	Self-Reported in the IEERB collective bargaining report
Suburban	
Urban	

Key Takeaways

\$3,520



**Median Cost
per Student**

across operations accounts

\$802



**Transportation
Cost per Student**

#1 cost center within
operations accounts
(excludes bus purchase)

14.2%



**Annual P&C
Insurance Growth**

Fastest growing
operational cost center
since 2021.

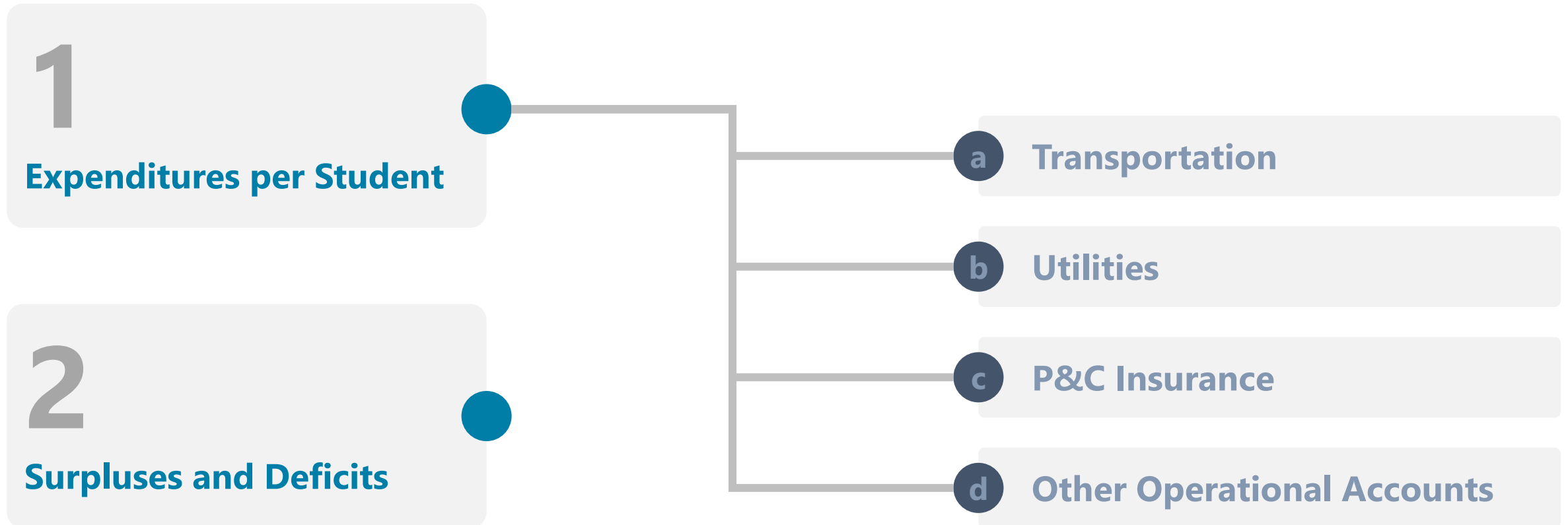
55.9%



**Share of
Corporations with
Deficit**

in 2025, a sharp increase
compared to 2024.

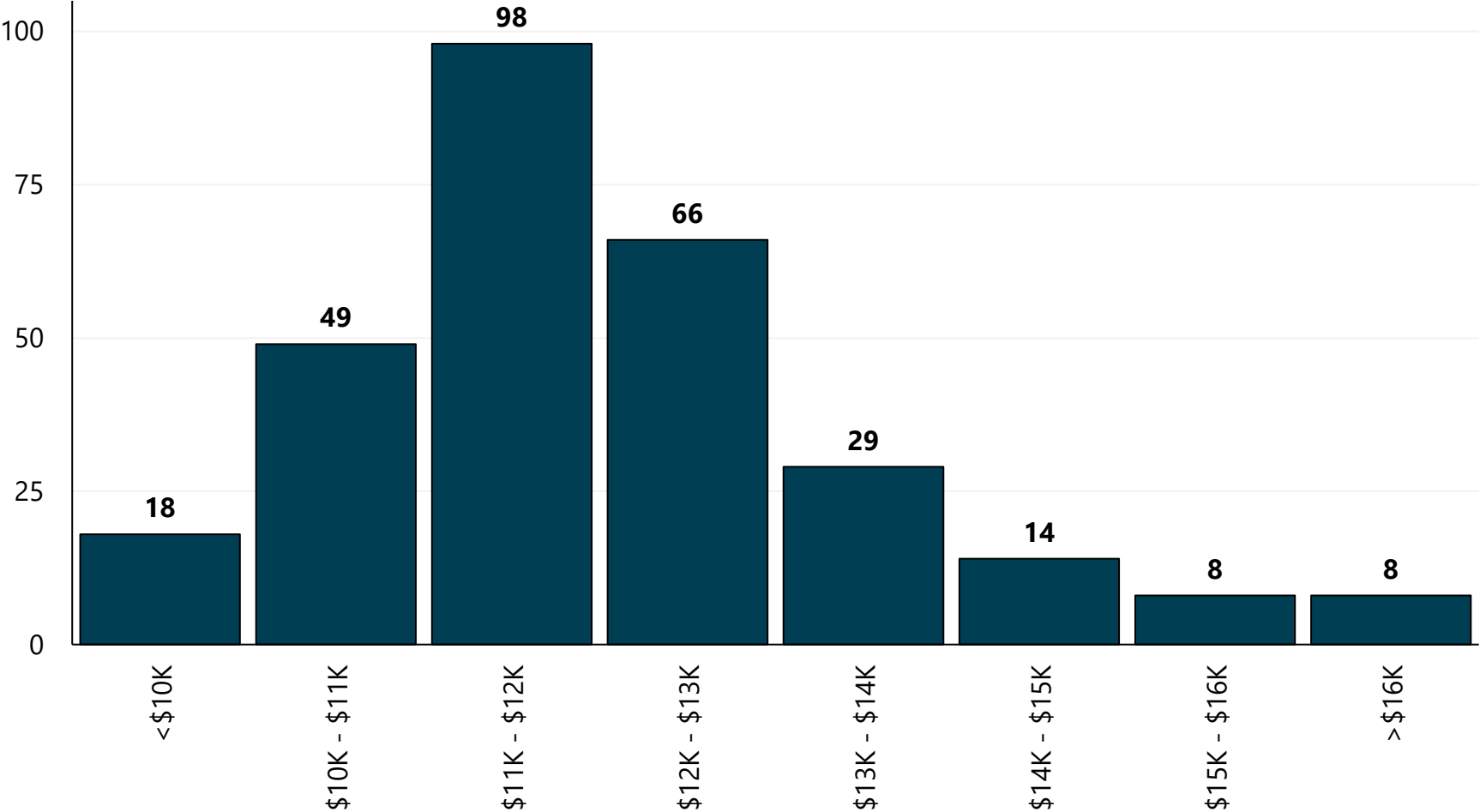
Agenda



Expenditures Per Student

Typical expenditures, normalized for student counts

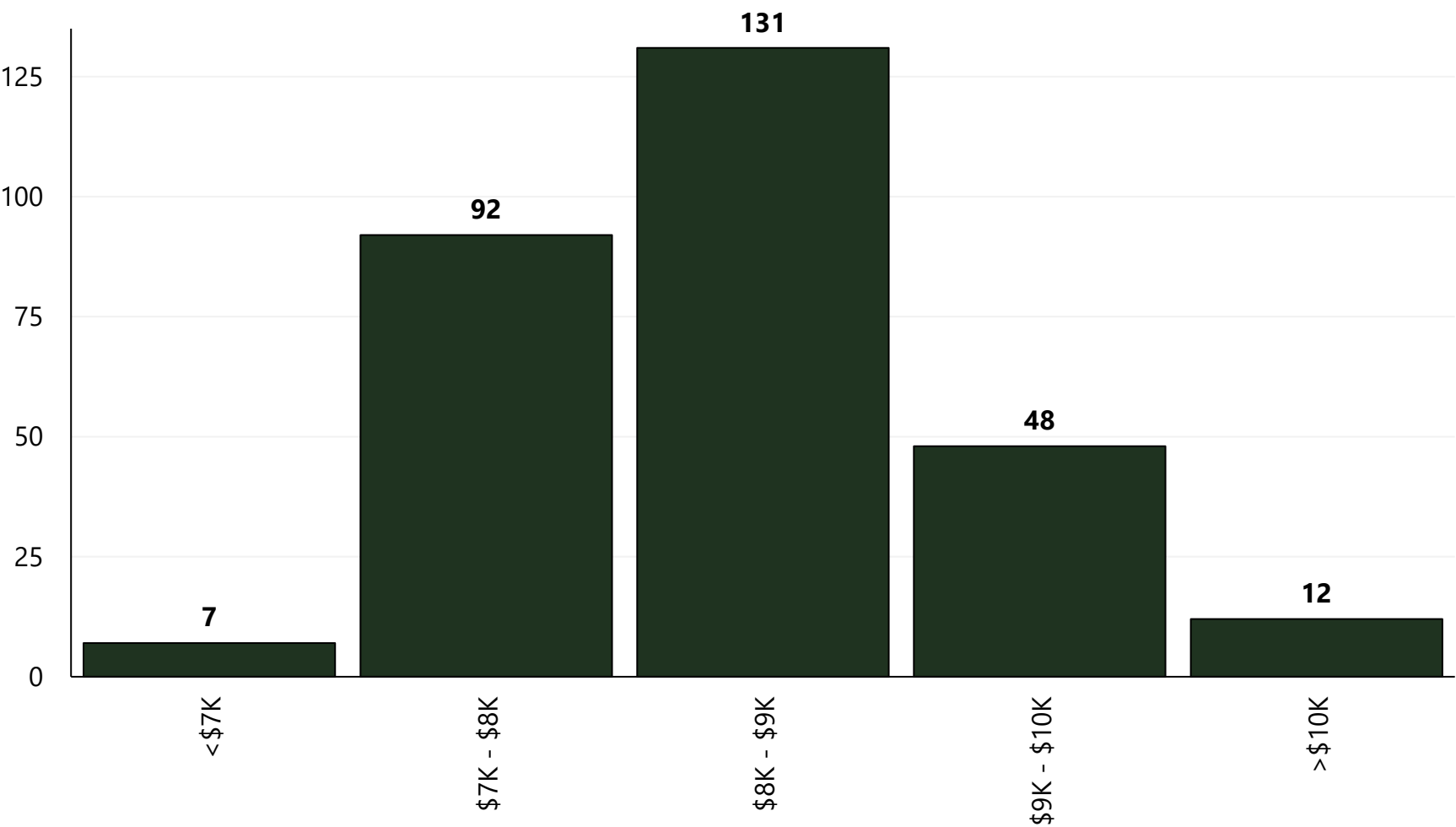
2025 Total Expenditures per Student



Total Exp per Student	
10 th Percentile	\$10,212
25 th Percentile	\$11,057
Median	\$11,822
75 th Percentile	\$12,597
90 th Percentile	\$14,049

2025 Expenditures per Student

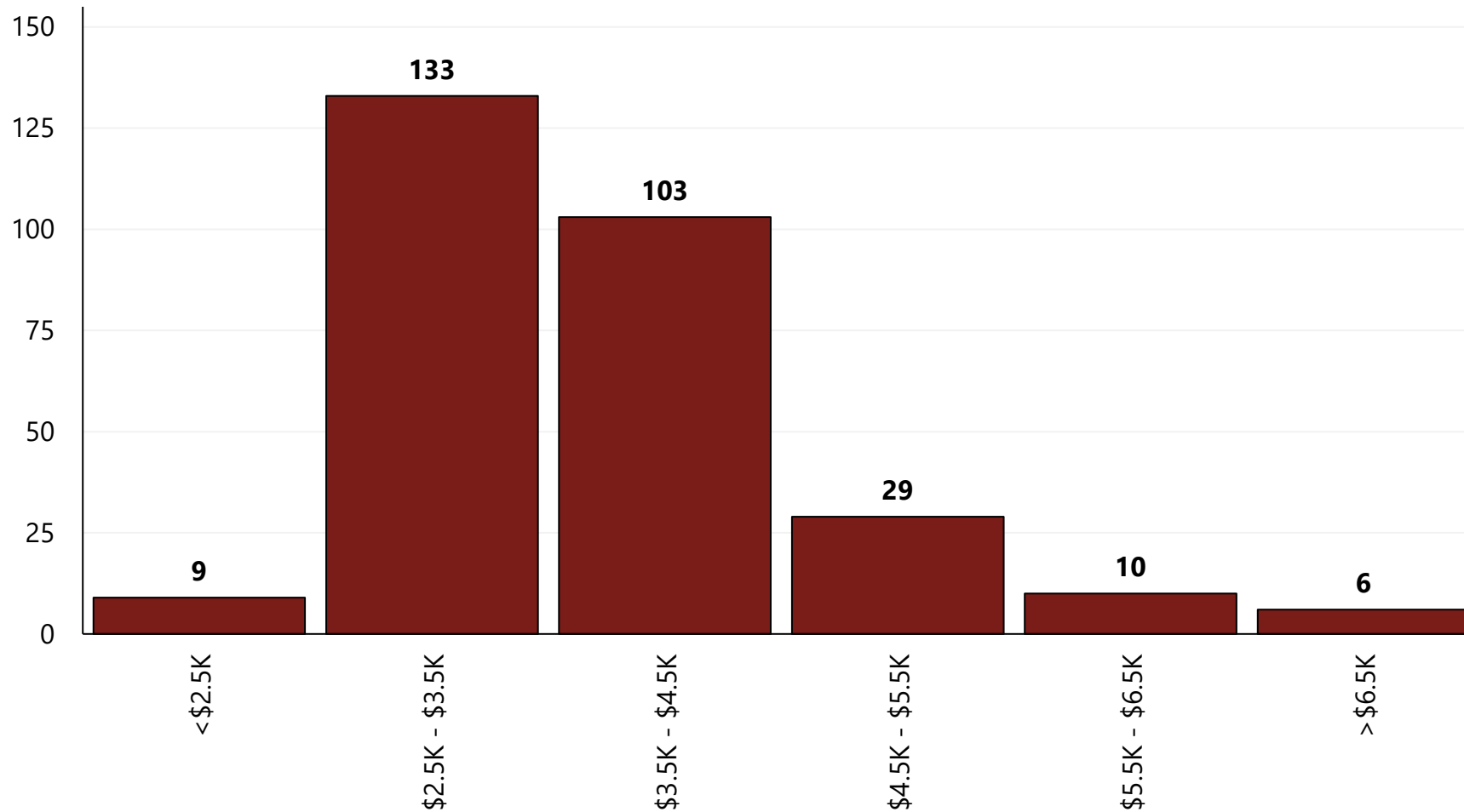
Educational Accounts



Educational Exp per Student	
10 th Percentile	\$7,392
25 th Percentile	\$7,856
Median	\$8,190
75 th Percentile	\$8,882
90 th Percentile	\$9,400

2025 Expenditures per Non-Virtual Student

Operational Accounts

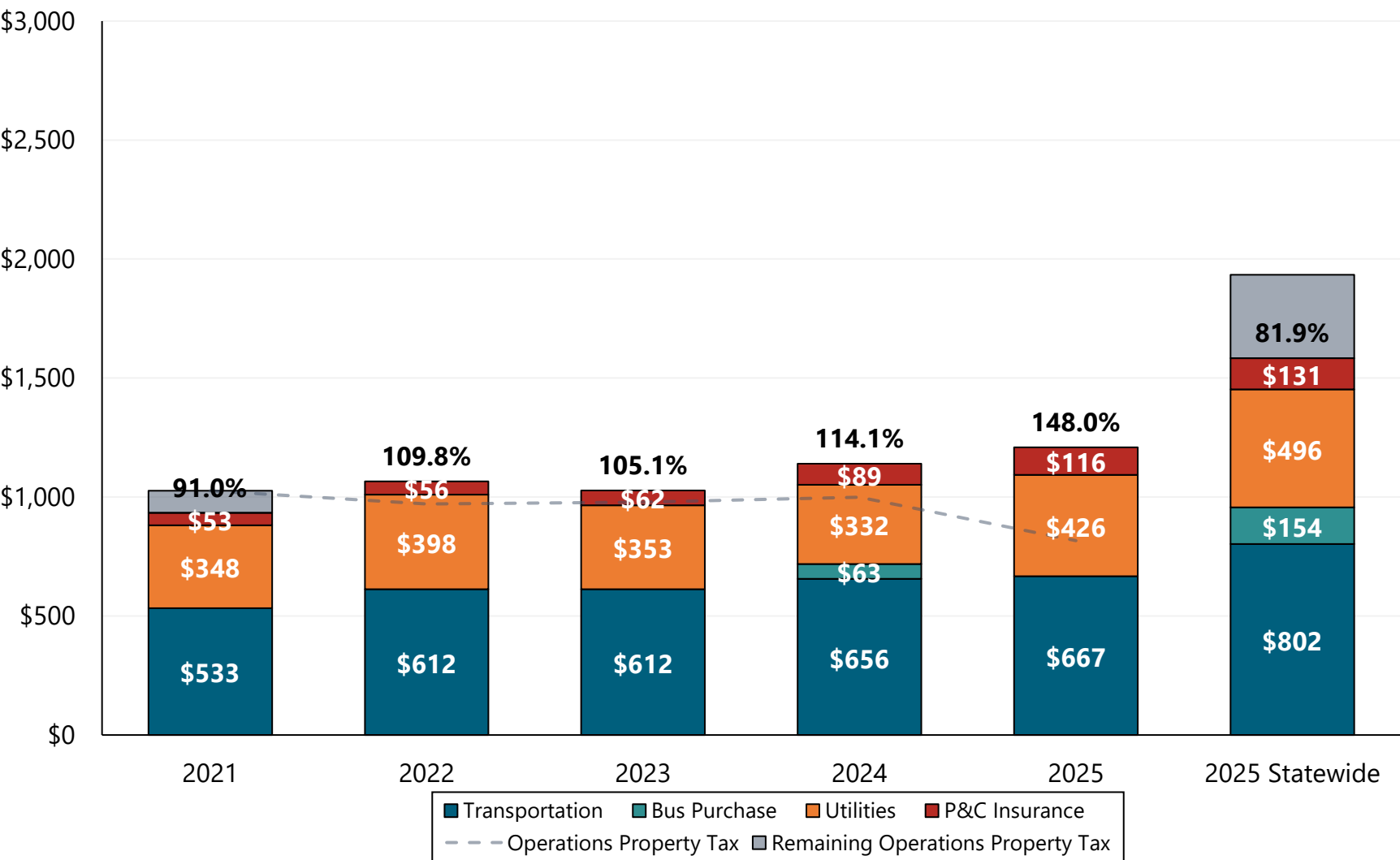


Operational Exp per Student

10 th Percentile	\$2,716
25 th Percentile	\$3,111
Median	\$3,520
75 th Percentile	\$4,131
90 th Percentile	\$4,970

Fixed Costs versus Operations Property Tax per Non-Virtual Student

Operations & Operating Referendum Funds



+5.8%

2021 – 2025 CAGR
Transportation Expenditures

+5.2%

2021 – 2025 CAGR
Utilities Expenditures

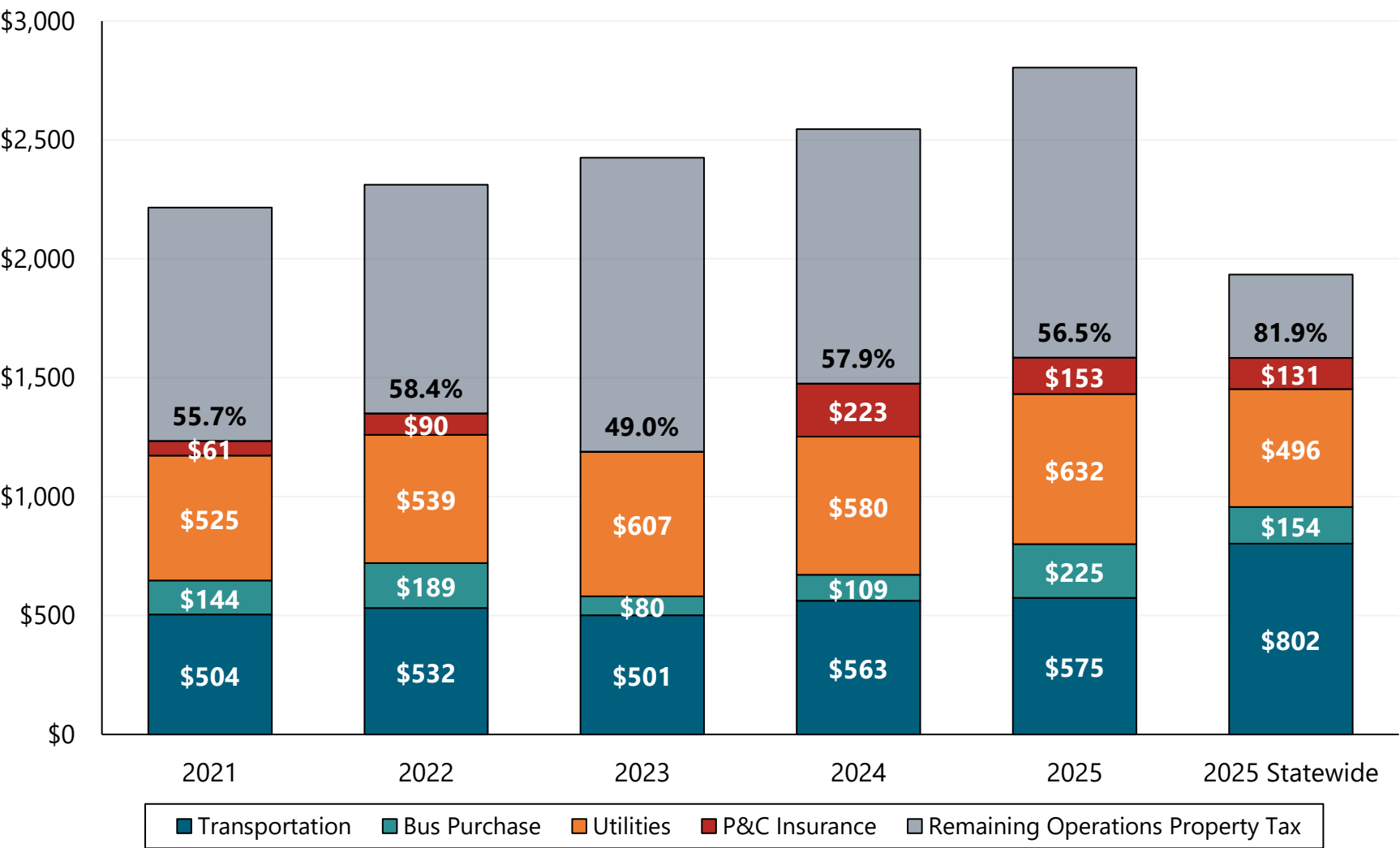
+21.8%

2021 – 2025 CAGR
P&C Insurance Expenditures

*CAGR: Compound Annual Growth Rate

Fixed Costs versus Operations Property Tax per Non-Virtual Student

Operations & Operating Referendum Funds



+3.3%
2021 – 2025 CAGR
Transportation Expenditures

+4.7%
2021 – 2025 CAGR
Utilities Expenditures

+26.1%
2021 – 2025 CAGR
P&C Insurance Expenditures

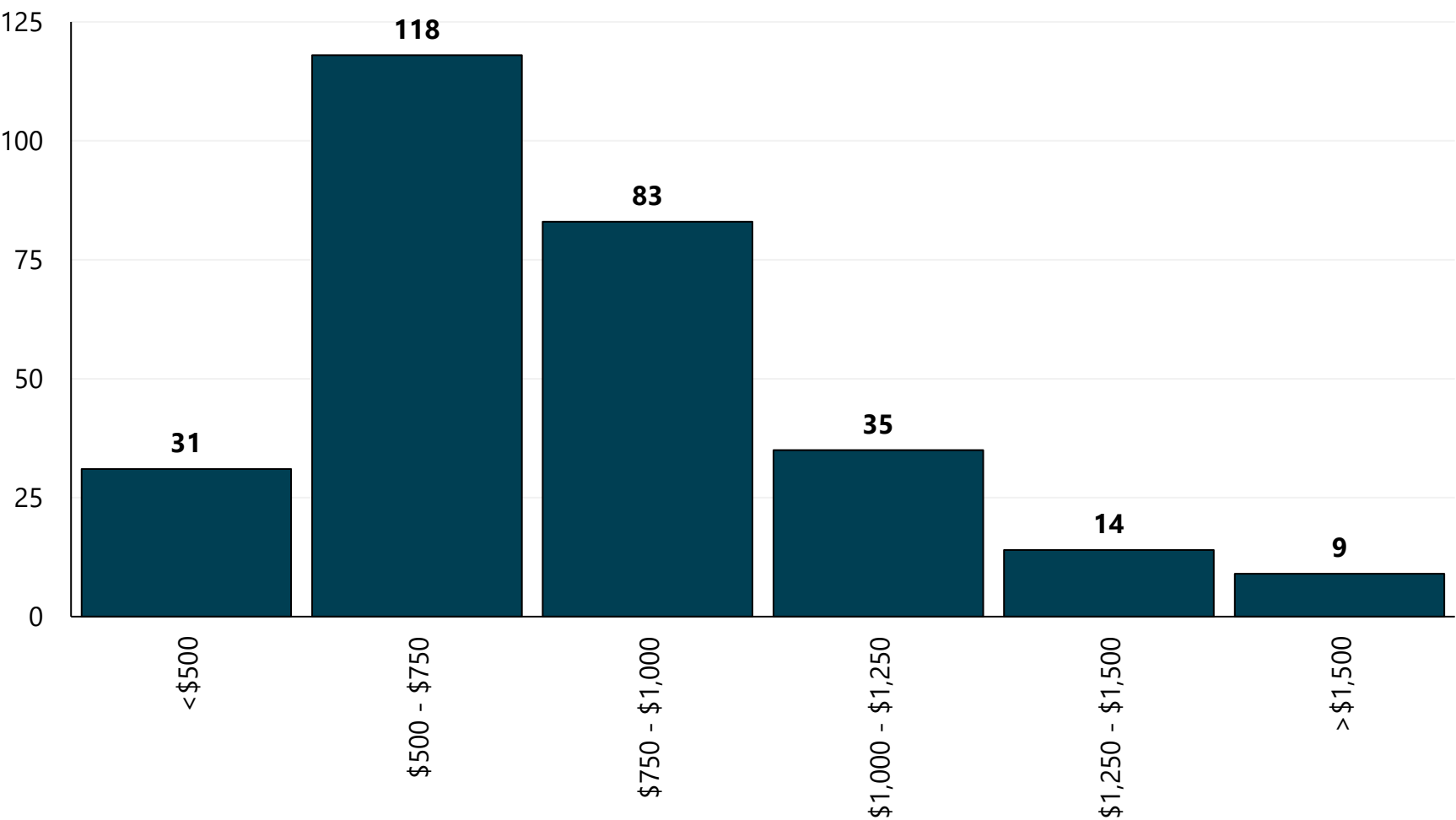
*CAGR: Compound Annual Growth Rate

Transportation Deep Dive

The cost of staff, fuel, and more

2025 Transportation Expenditures per Non-Virtual Student

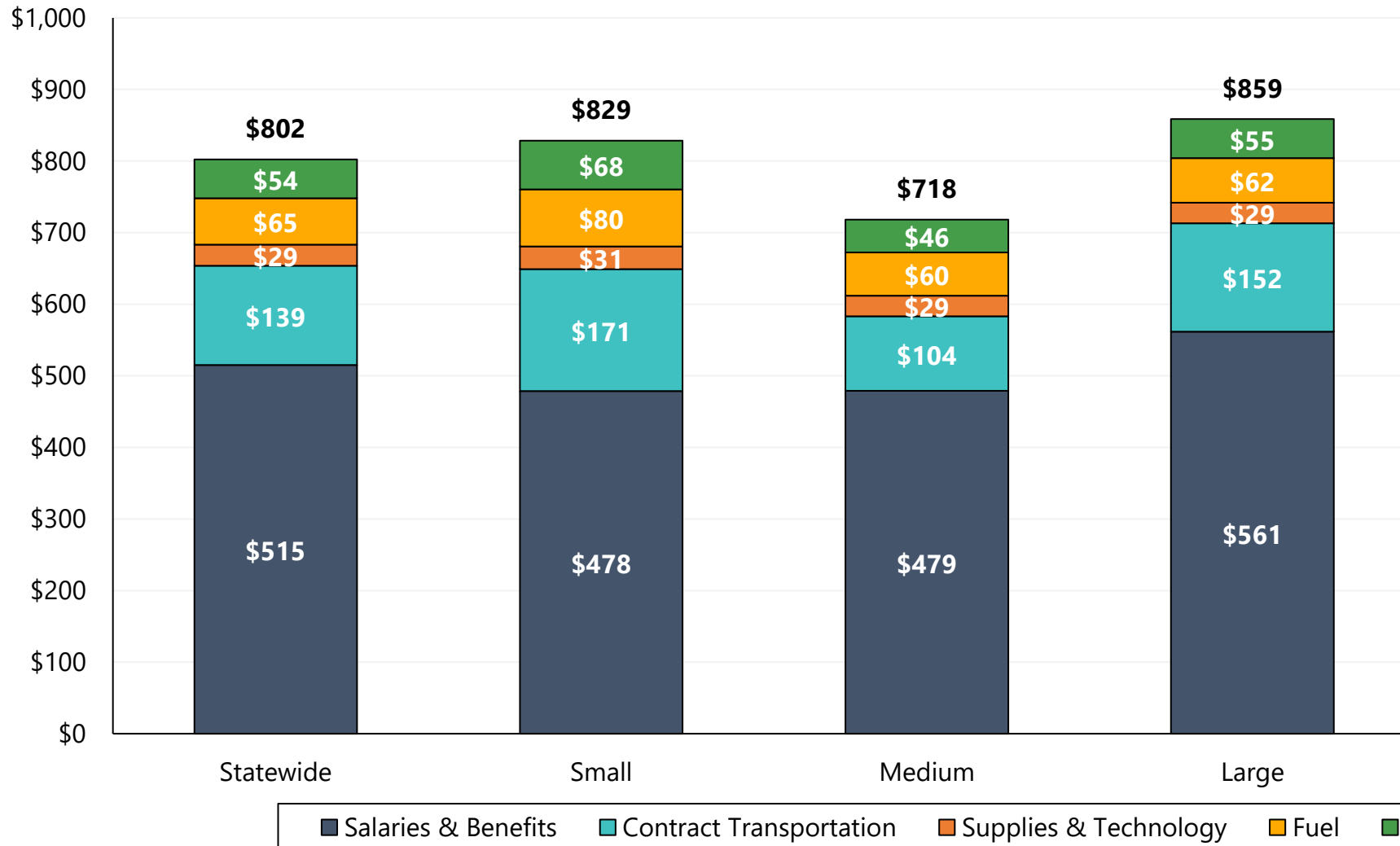
Excluding Bus Purchase



Transportation per Student	
10 th Percentile	\$492
25 th Percentile	\$611
Median	\$738
75 th Percentile	\$955
90 th Percentile	\$1,198

2025 Transportation Expenditures per Non-Virtual Student

Excluding Bus Purchase



Large and small corporations spend more on transportation than medium enrollment corporations.

Large corporations:

- 65.4% Personnel
- 7.2% Fuel

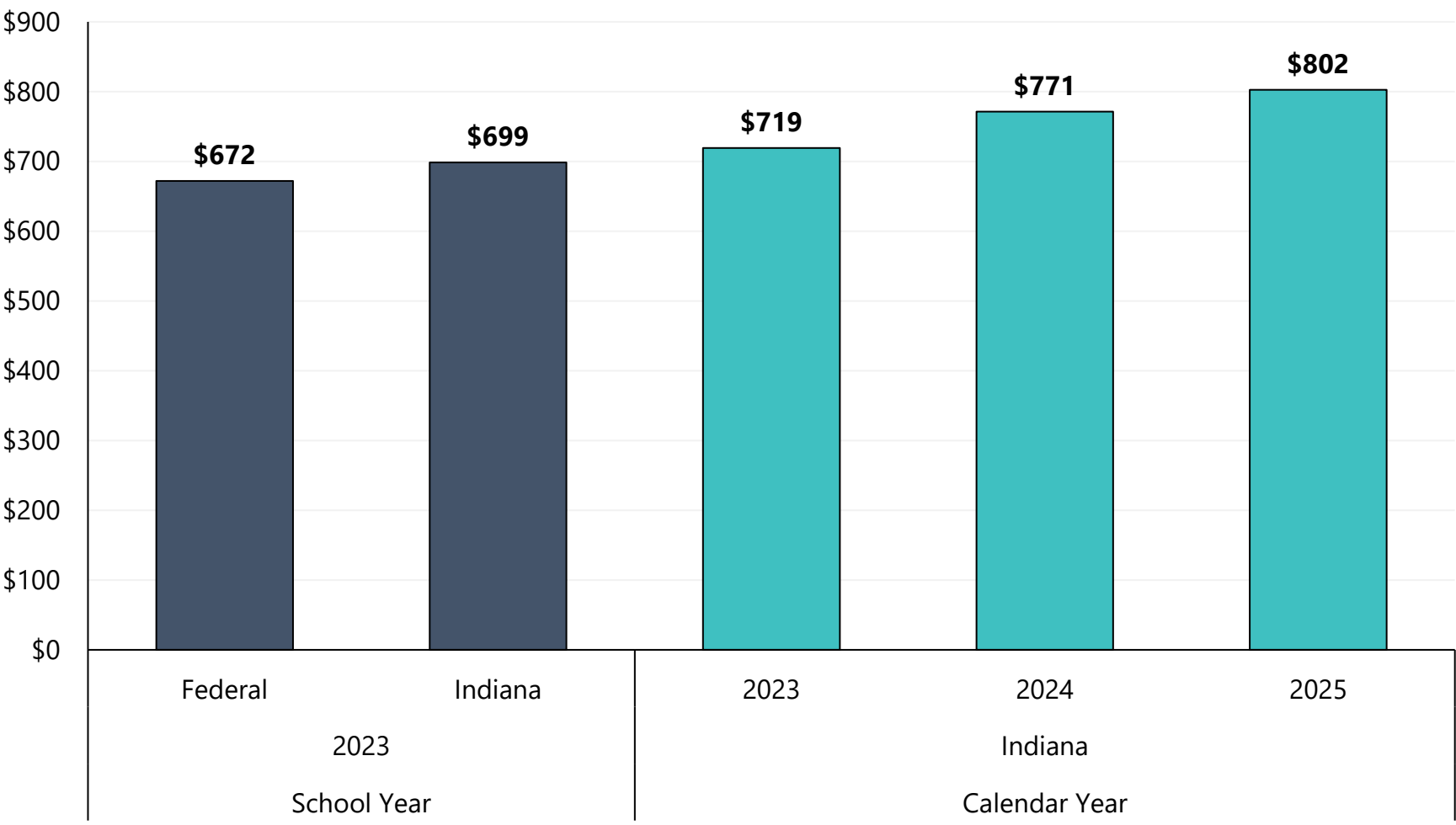
Small corporations:

- 57.7% Personnel
- 9.6% Fuel

Contracting appears to correlate with higher costs.

Transportation Expenditures per Non-Virtual Student

Excluding Bus Purchase



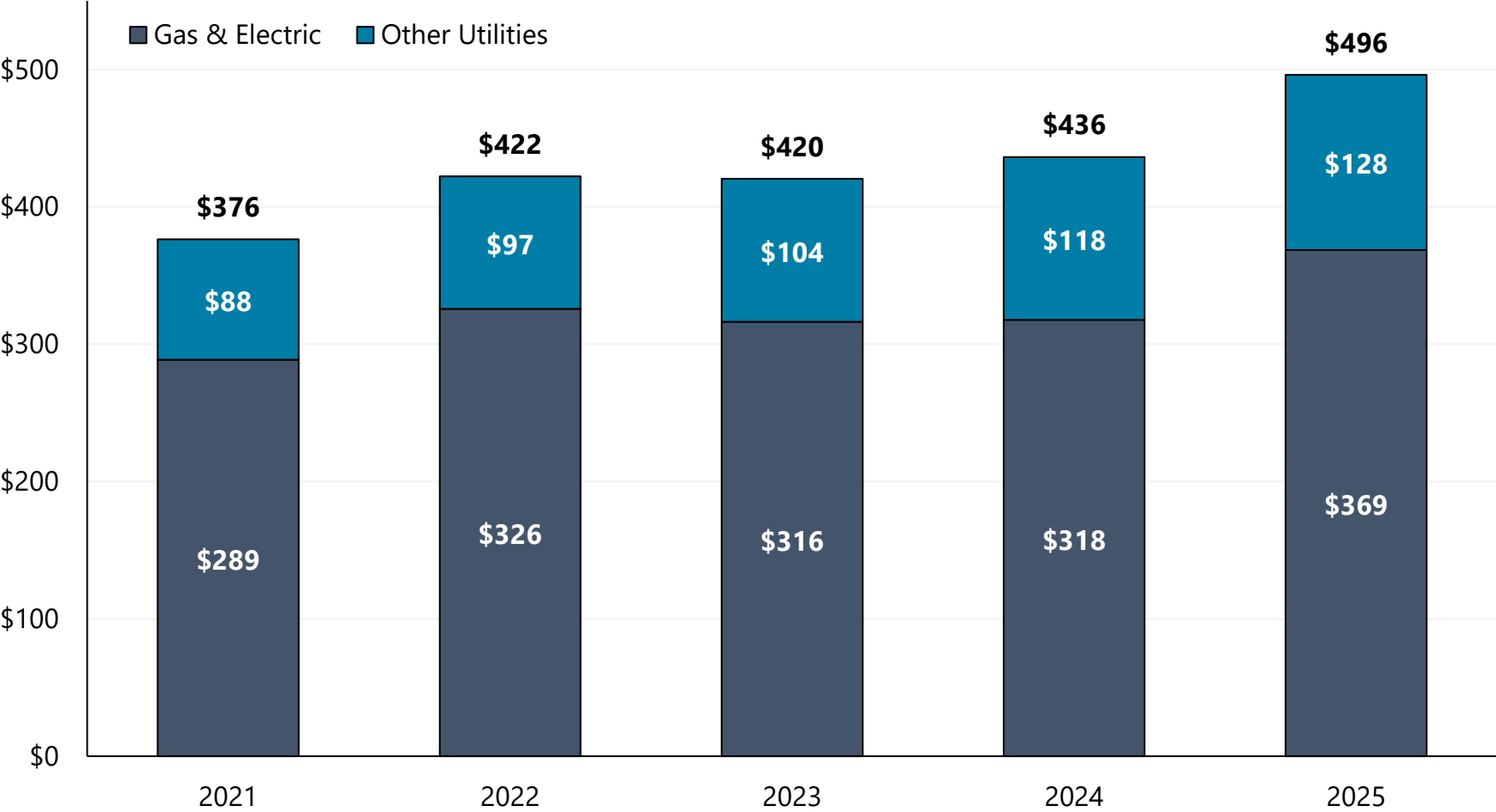
Indiana school corporations spent about **4%** more than the typical school corporation in the 22-23 school year.

Source: NESC Revenues and Expenditures for Public and Secondary Education, published April 2025.

Utilities

Electric and gas expenditures

Utility Expenditures per Non-Virtual Student



+6.3%

Gas & Electric CAGR
2021 to 2025

+9.8%

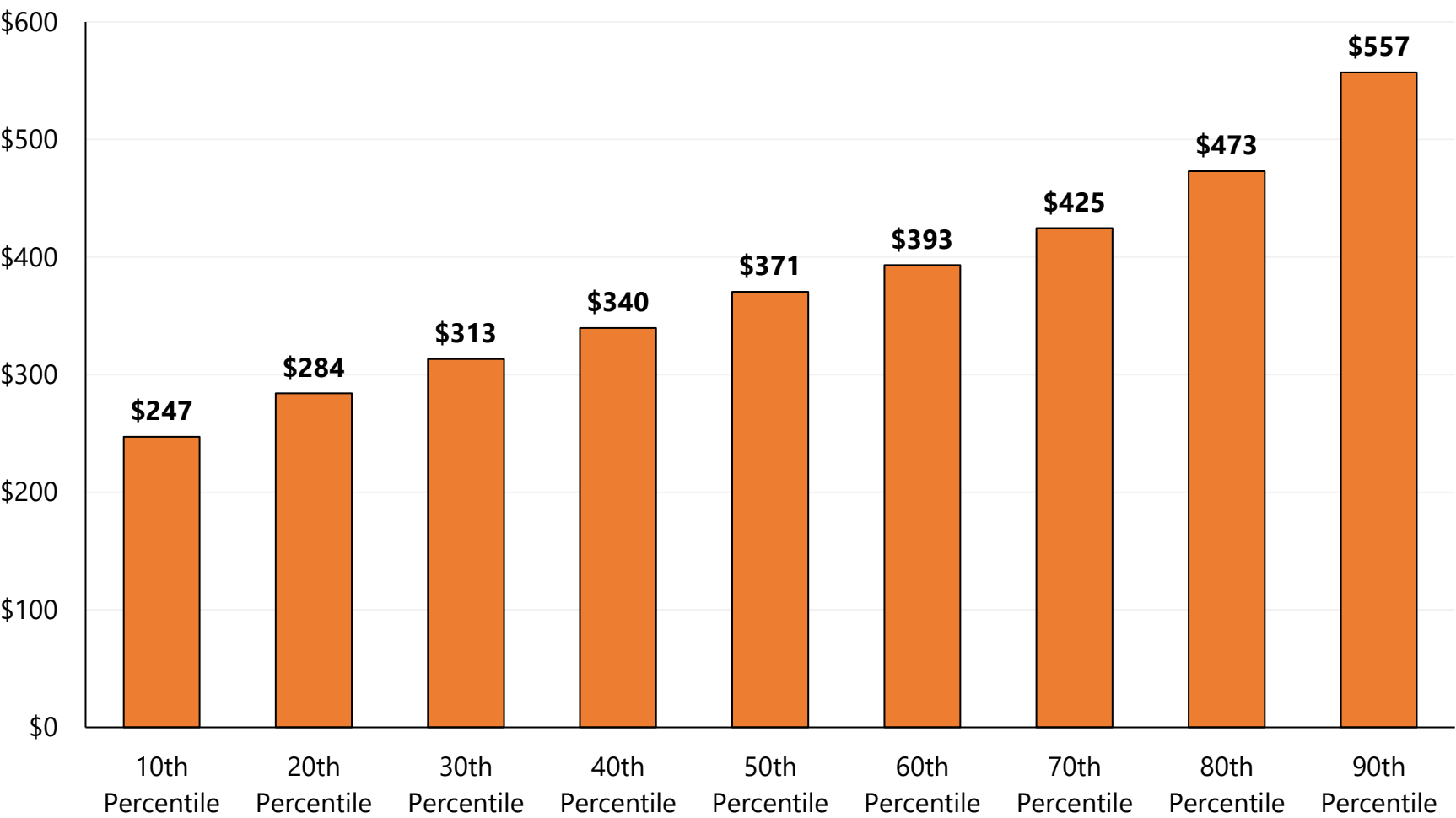
Other Utilities CAGR
2021 to 2025

+7.1%

Total Utilities CAGR
2021 to 2025

2025 Utility Expenditures per Non-Virtual Student

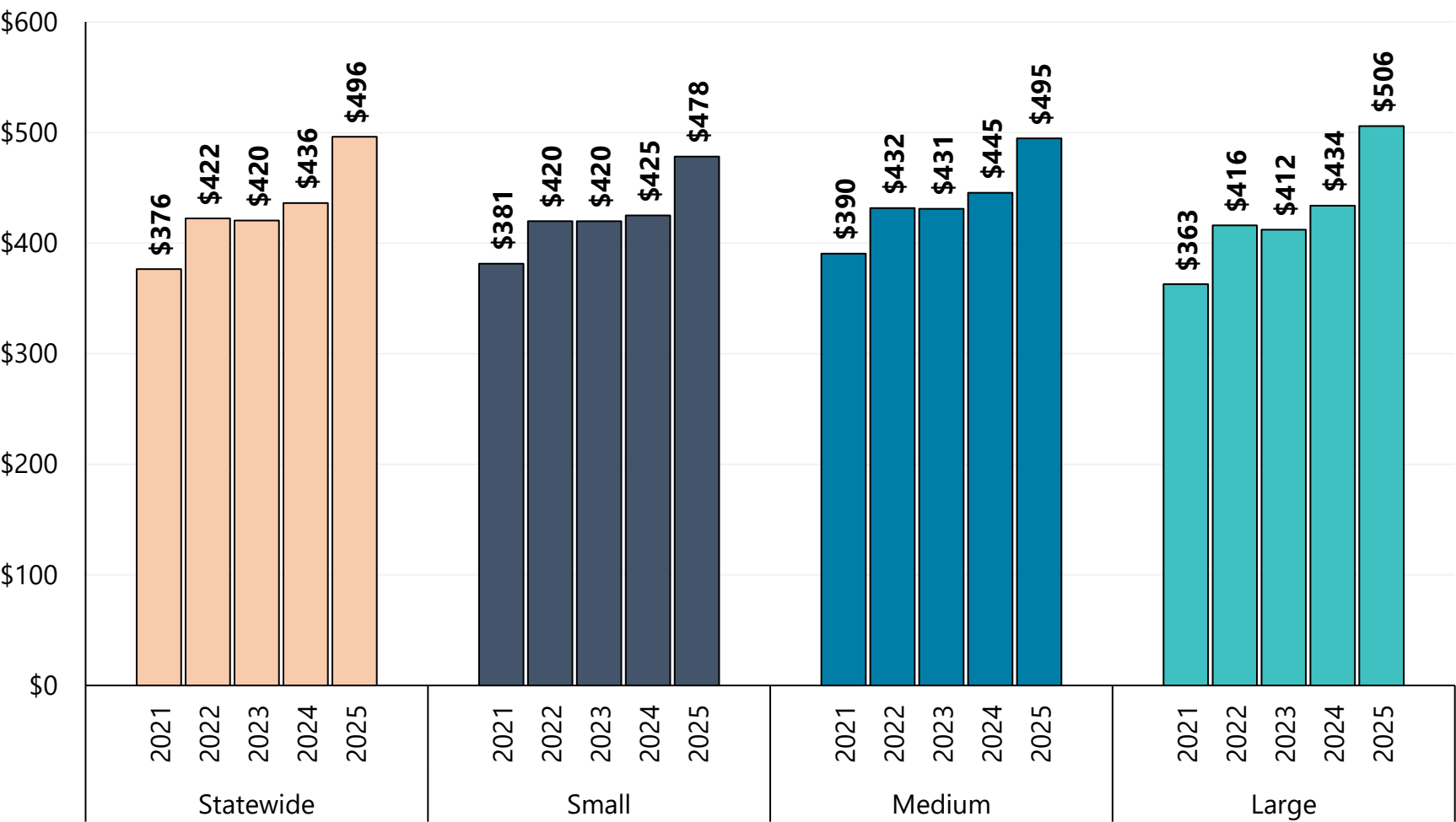
Distribution of electric and gas expenditures



Gas & Electric per Student	
10 th Percentile	\$247
25 th Percentile	\$298
Median	\$371
75 th Percentile	\$442
90 th Percentile	\$557

Cost Escalation – Utilities per Non-Virtual

Expenditure growth by ADM grouping and statewide, 2021 - 2025



+5.82%

2021 to 2025
Small Schools CAGR

+6.09%

2021 to 2025
Medium Schools CAGR

+8.66%

2021 to 2025
Large Schools CAGR

Utilities Management Example

A simple first analysis that the District can perform in-house

Utility Expenditures

Using a simple in-house analysis to kickstart deeper conversations

Building	Annual Electric Costs	Square Footage	Cost / Square Foot
Washington Elementary School	\$100,000	100,000	\$1.00
Adams Elementary School	\$80,000	95,000	\$0.84
Jefferson Elementary School	\$120,000	105,000	\$1.14
Madison Middle School	\$400,000	250,000	\$1.60
Monroe High School	\$500,000	400,000	\$1.25

A Superintendent or Business Manager can perform a simple cost per square footage analysis using strictly financial data.

An engineer or architect can conduct a deeper analysis of a building's infrastructure.

Potential solutions:

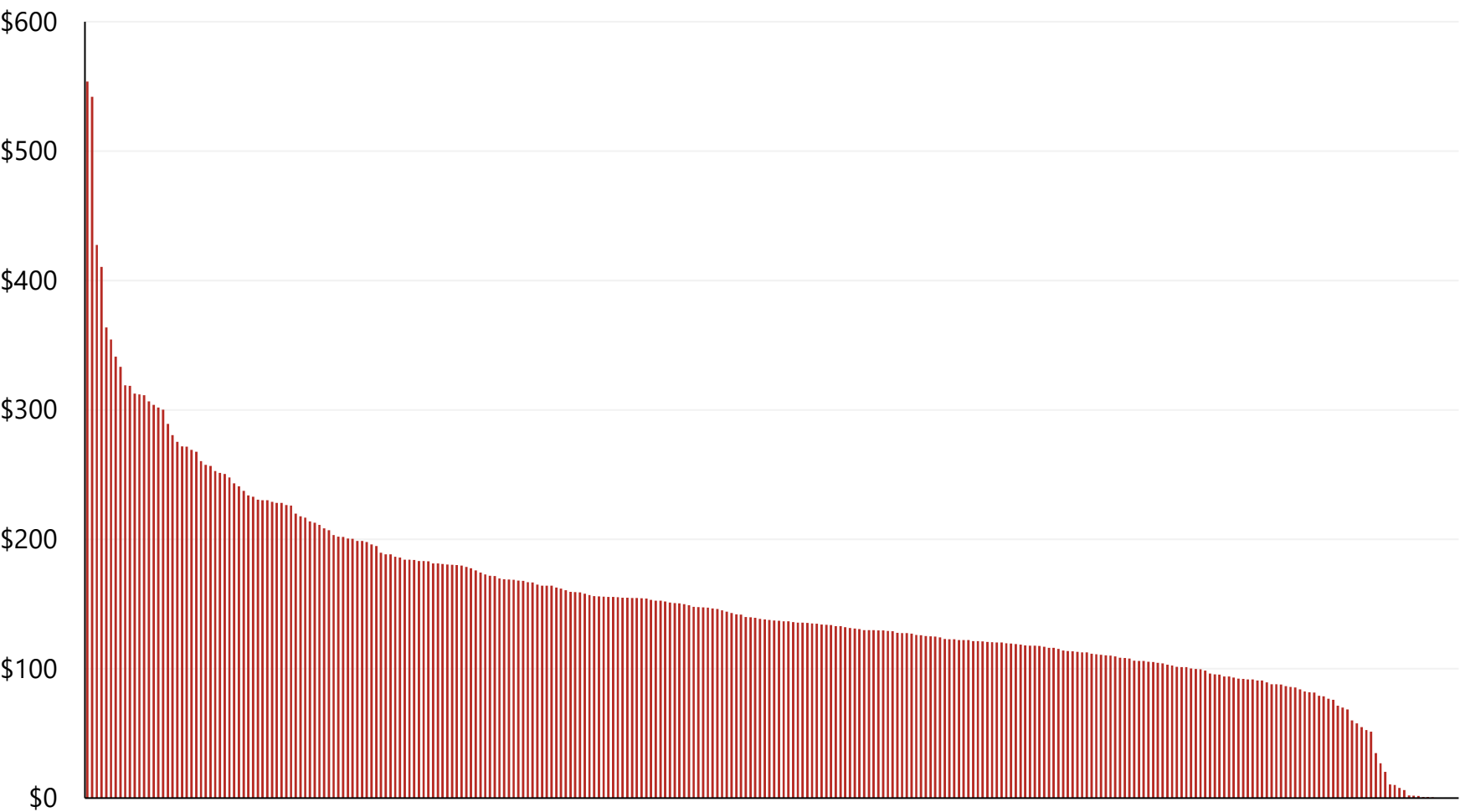
- Controls optimization
- Retrocommissioning
- Demand management
- Equipment upgrades or replacement

Property & Casualty Insurance

The cost to insure your facilities and activities

P&C Insurance Expenditures per Non-Virtual Student

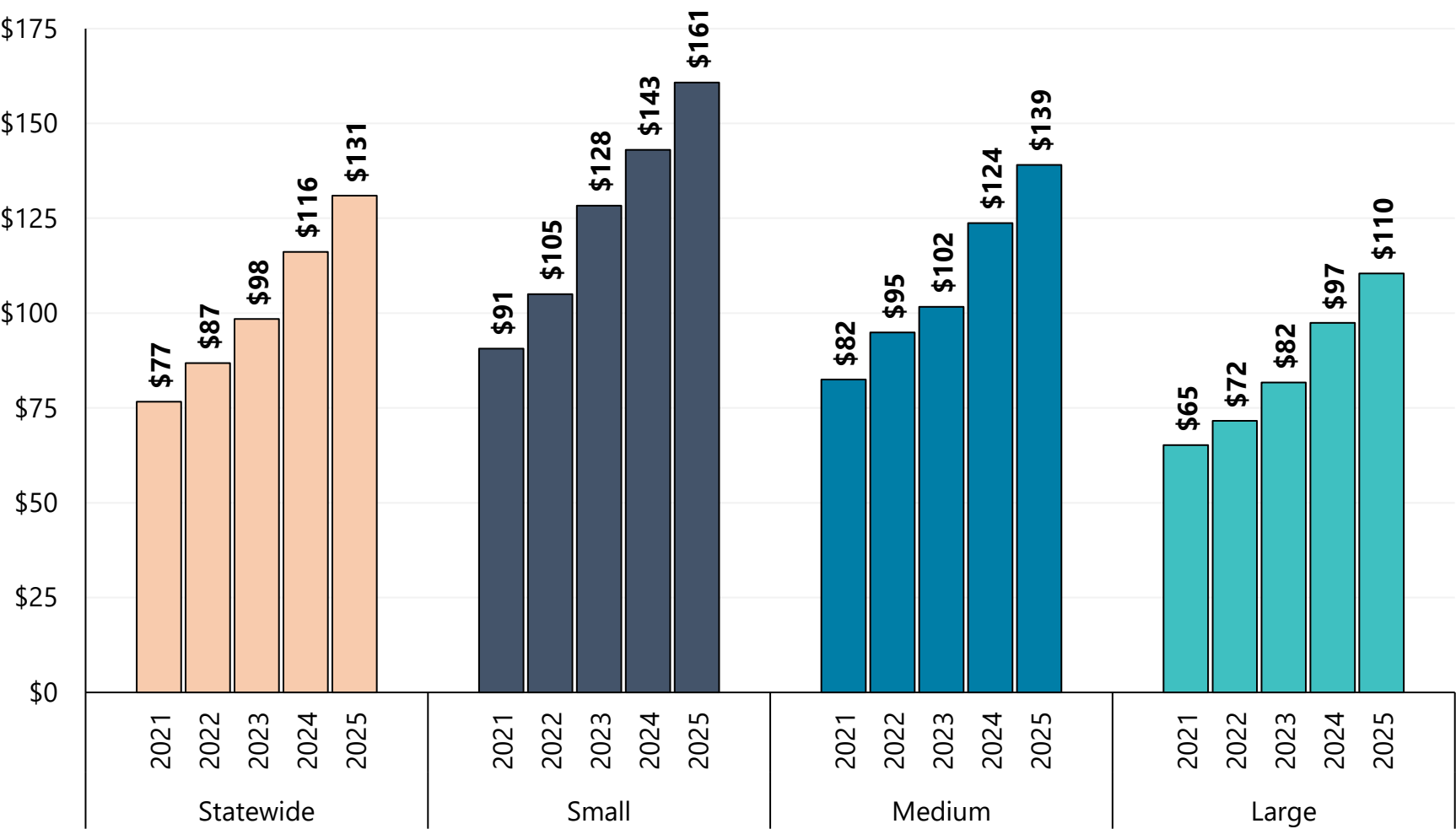
All Indiana School Corporations



P&C Insurance per Student	
10 th Percentile	\$79
25 th Percentile	\$110
Median	\$138
75 th Percentile	\$183
90 th Percentile	\$251

Cost Escalation – Property & Casualty Insurance – Per Non-Virtual

Expenditure growth by ADM grouping and statewide, 2021 - 2025



+15.4%

2021 to 2025
Small Schools CAGR

+13.9%

2021 to 2025
Medium Schools CAGR

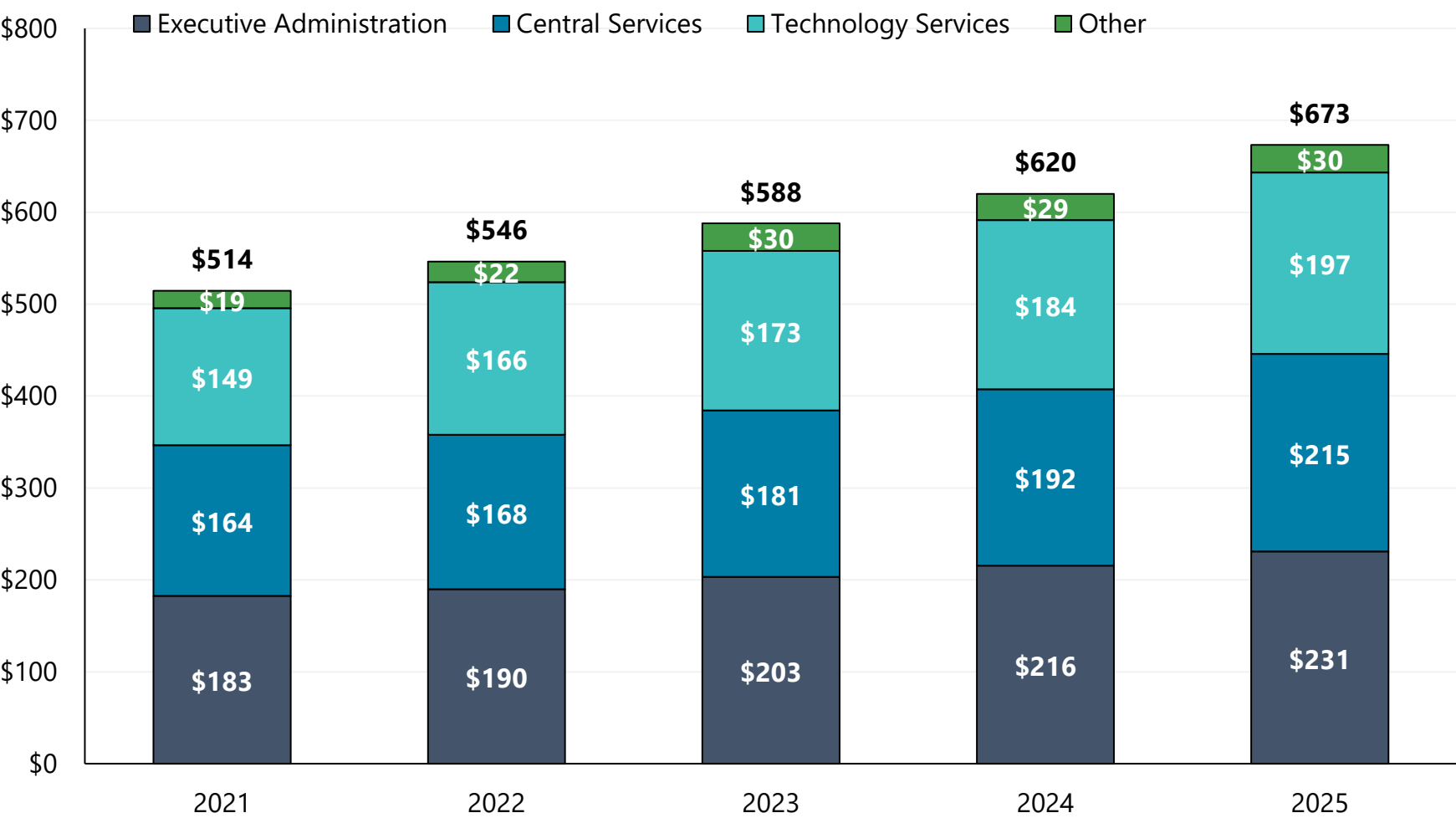
+14.1%

2021 to 2025
Large Schools CAGR

Everything else in the Operational Accounts

Capital Projects, Technology, Central Office, Technology and More

Administrative Expenditures per Non-Virtual Student



+6.0%

Executive Admin CAGR
2021 to 2025

+7.0%

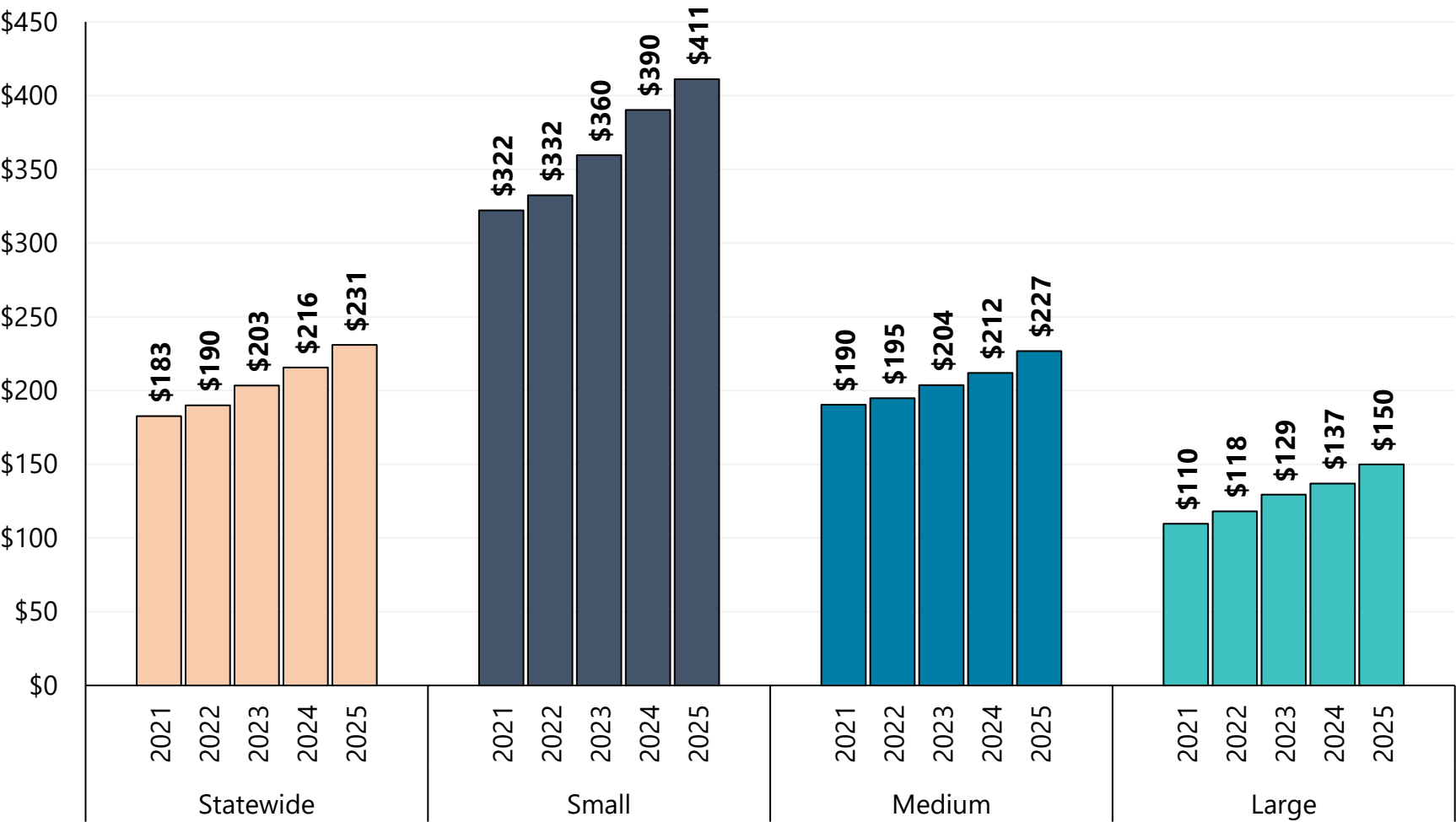
Central Services CAGR
2021 to 2025

+7.3%

Technology CAGR
2021 to 2025

Cost Escalation – Executive Administration

Expenditure growth by ADM grouping and statewide, 2021 - 2025



+6.3%

2021 to 2025
Small Schools CAGR

+4.5%

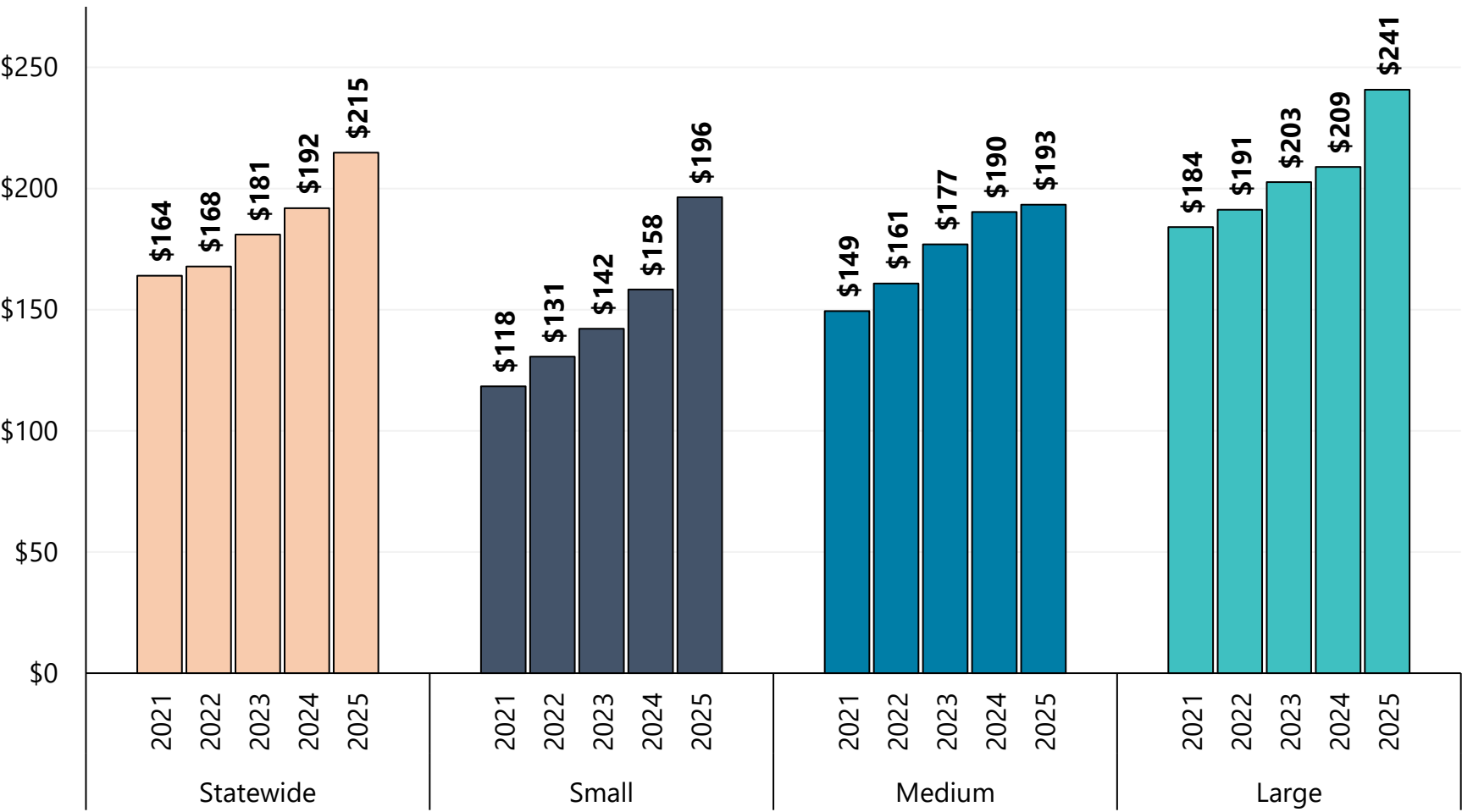
2021 to 2025
Medium Schools CAGR

+8.1%

2021 to 2025
Large Schools CAGR

Cost Escalation – Central Services

Expenditure growth by ADM grouping and statewide, 2021 - 2025



+13.5%

2021 to 2025
Small Schools CAGR

+6.7%

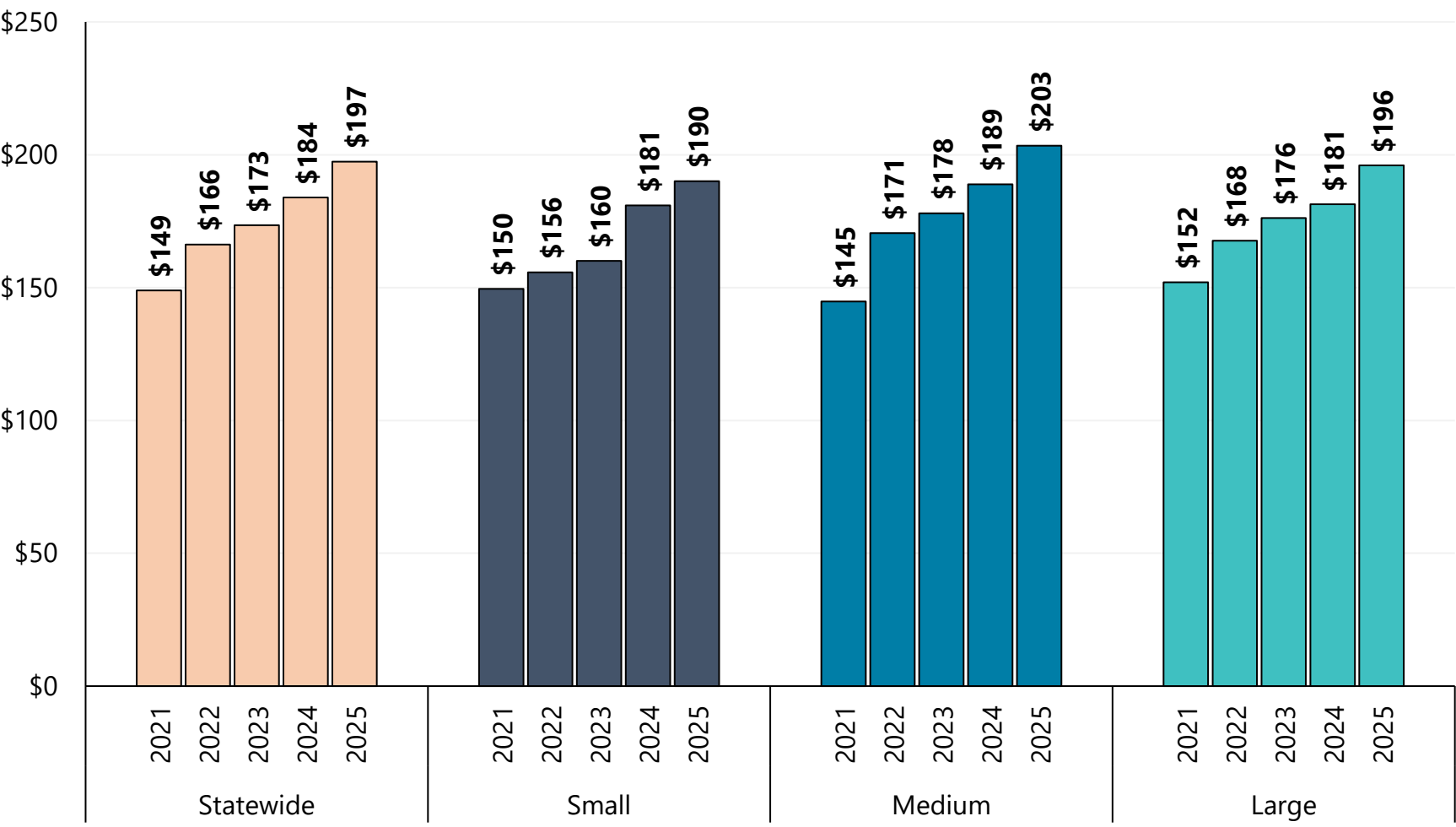
2021 to 2025
Medium Schools CAGR

+6.9%

2021 to 2025
Large Schools CAGR

Cost Escalation – Technology Services

Expenditure growth by ADM grouping and statewide, 2021 - 2025



+6.2%
2021 to 2025
Small Schools CAGR

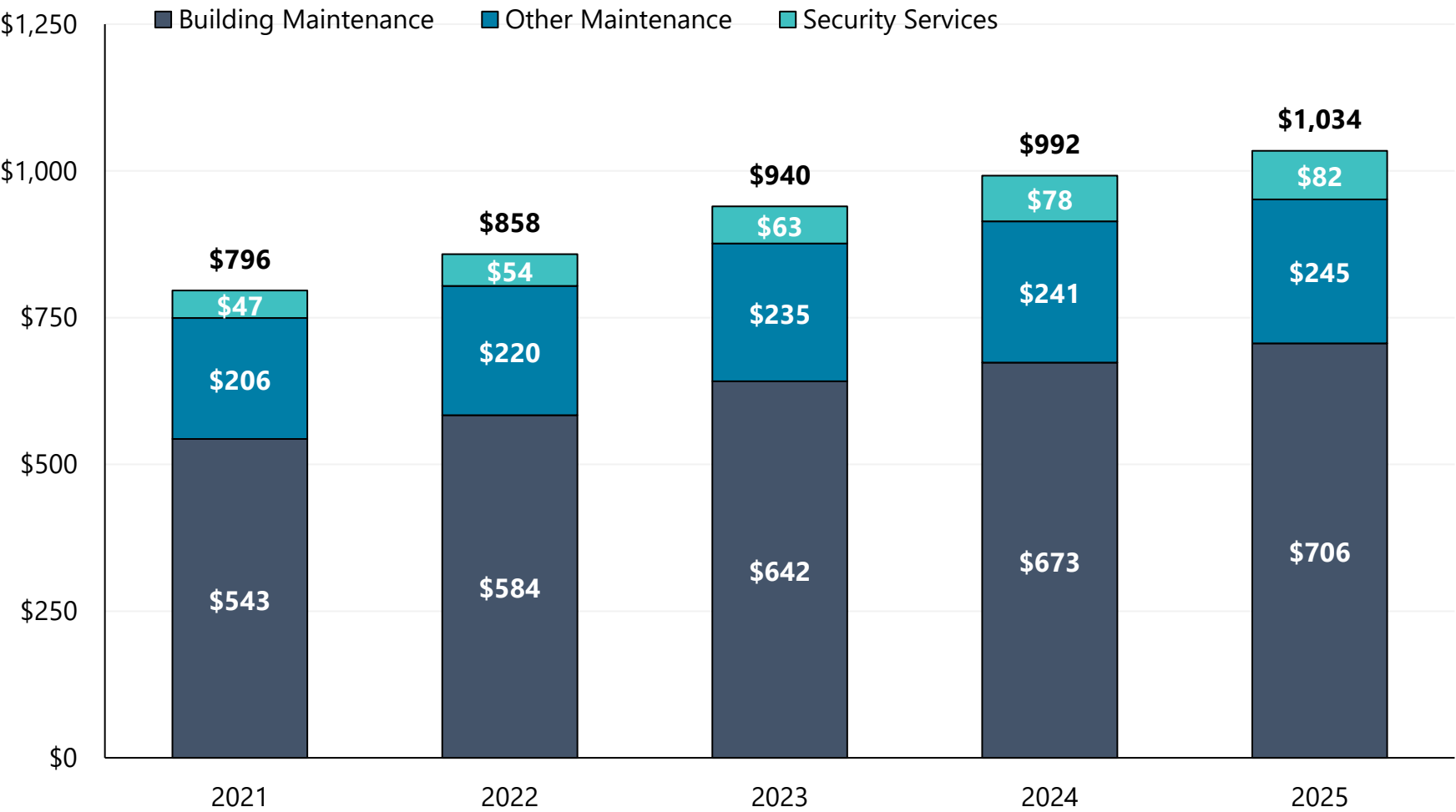
+8.9%
2021 to 2025
Medium Schools CAGR

+6.6%
2021 to 2025
Large Schools CAGR

Capital Projects Example

Industry standards help quantify the amount districts might budget for their facilities

Capital Projects per Non-Virtual Student



+6.8%

*Building Maintenance CAGR
2021 to 2025*

+4.5%

*Other Maintenance CAGR
2021 to 2025*

+15.2%

*Security Services CAGR
2021 to 2025*

Capital Project Expenditure Planning

Using benchmarks to analyze a district's investments into its facilities

The National Center on School Infrastructure recommends that a district spend around **7% of its Current Replacement Value (CRV)** on capital projects.

CRV = Cost to replace the district's facilities, built to current standards.

NCSI's formula is more detailed than described here, factoring in depreciation rates and local construction costs.

An Architect and Construction Management team can assist with facility assessments and cost estimates.

Illustrative School District

Combined Building Square Footage	1,000,000 sq feet
Illustrative Cost per Square Foot	\$500
Current Replacement Value	\$500,000,000
x Depreciation Rate	7%
Benchmark Annual Investment	\$35,000,000

Facility needs are heavily dependent on local conditions, including facility age and condition, enrollment trends, equipment efficiency and effectiveness, and much more.

Capital Project Expenditure Planning

Using benchmarks to analyze a district's investments into its facilities



Measure Current Spending



Assess Facilities



Beware Deferred Maintenance



Invest Strategically

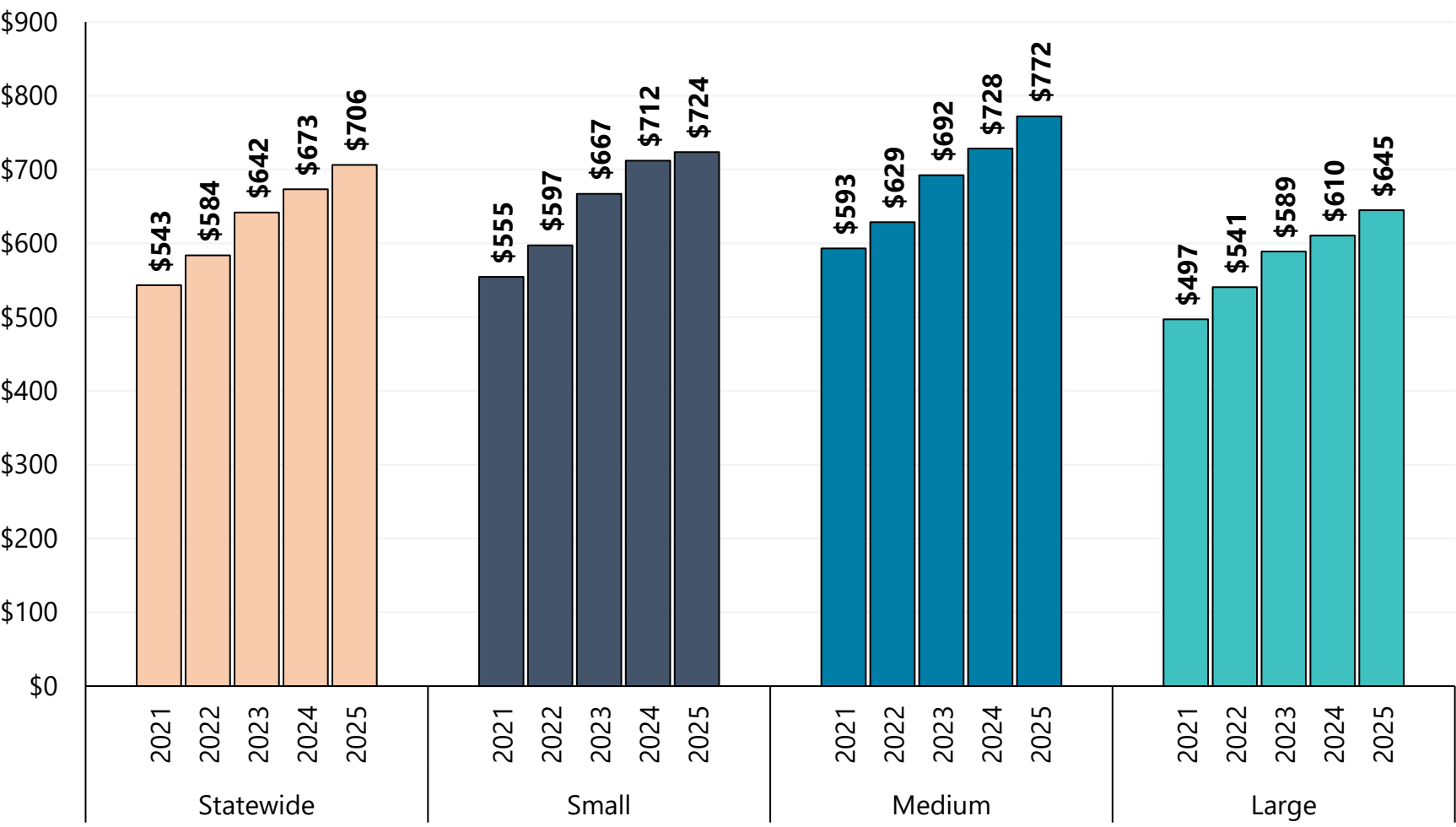
Consider measuring facilities expenditures against peers and industry benchmarks.

An architect or engineer can assist with facility assessments. A construction manager can assist with cost estimates.

Capital project investments may come from the Operations and/or Construction Funds.

Cost Escalation – Building Maintenance

Expenditure growth by ADM grouping and statewide, 2021 - 2025

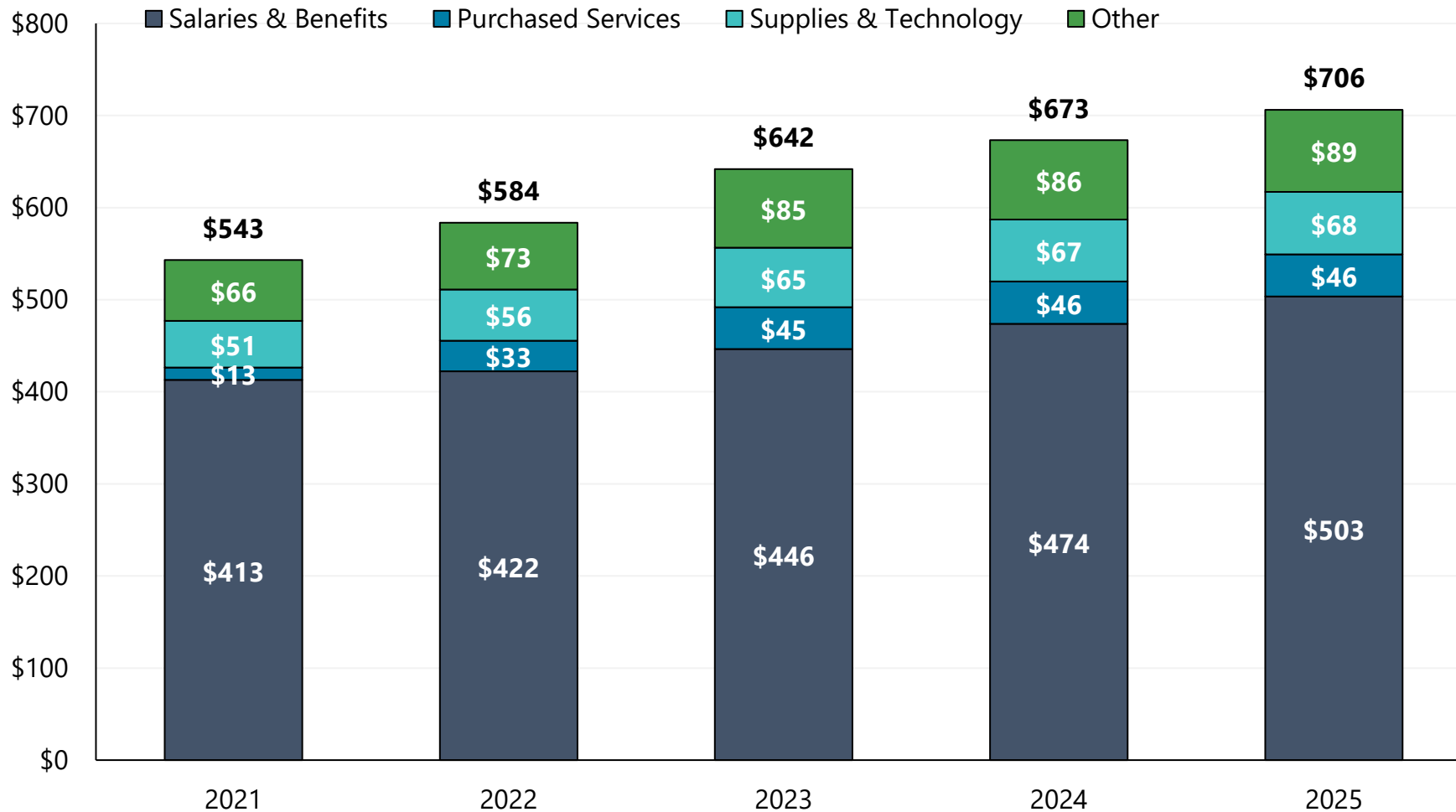


+6.9%
2021 to 2025
Small Schools CAGR

+6.8%
2021 to 2025
Medium Schools CAGR

+6.7%
2021 to 2025
Large Schools CAGR

Building Maintenance Expenditures per Non-Virtual Student



+5.1%

*Salaries & Benefits CAGR
2021 to 2025*

+36.0%

*Purchased Services CAGR
2021 to 2025*

+7.6%

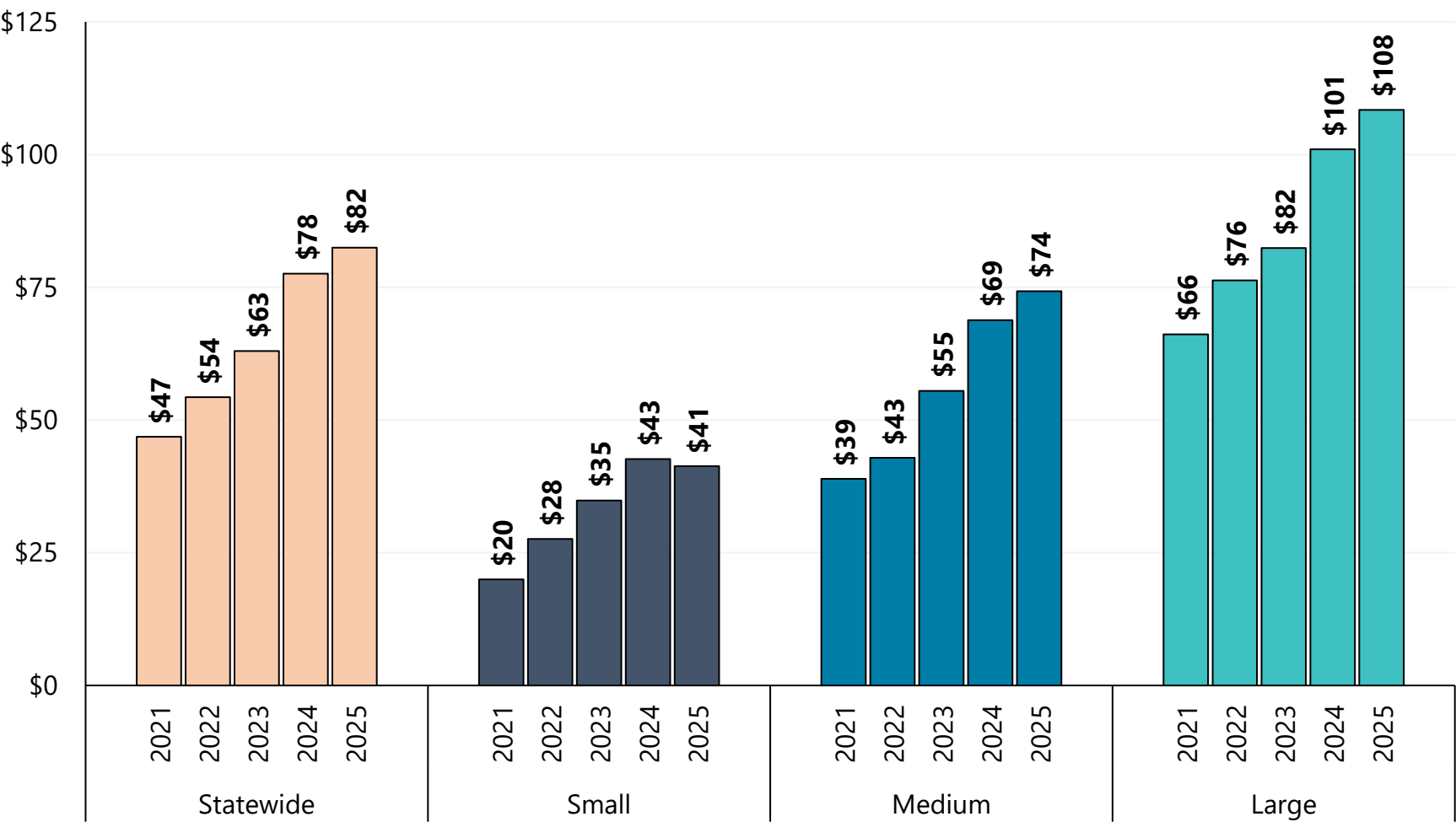
*Supplies & Tech CAGR
2021 to 2025*

+7.7%

*Other CAGR
2021 to 2025*

Cost Escalation – Security Services

Expenditure growth by ADM grouping and statewide, 2021 - 2025



+19.9%

2021 to 2025
Small Schools CAGR

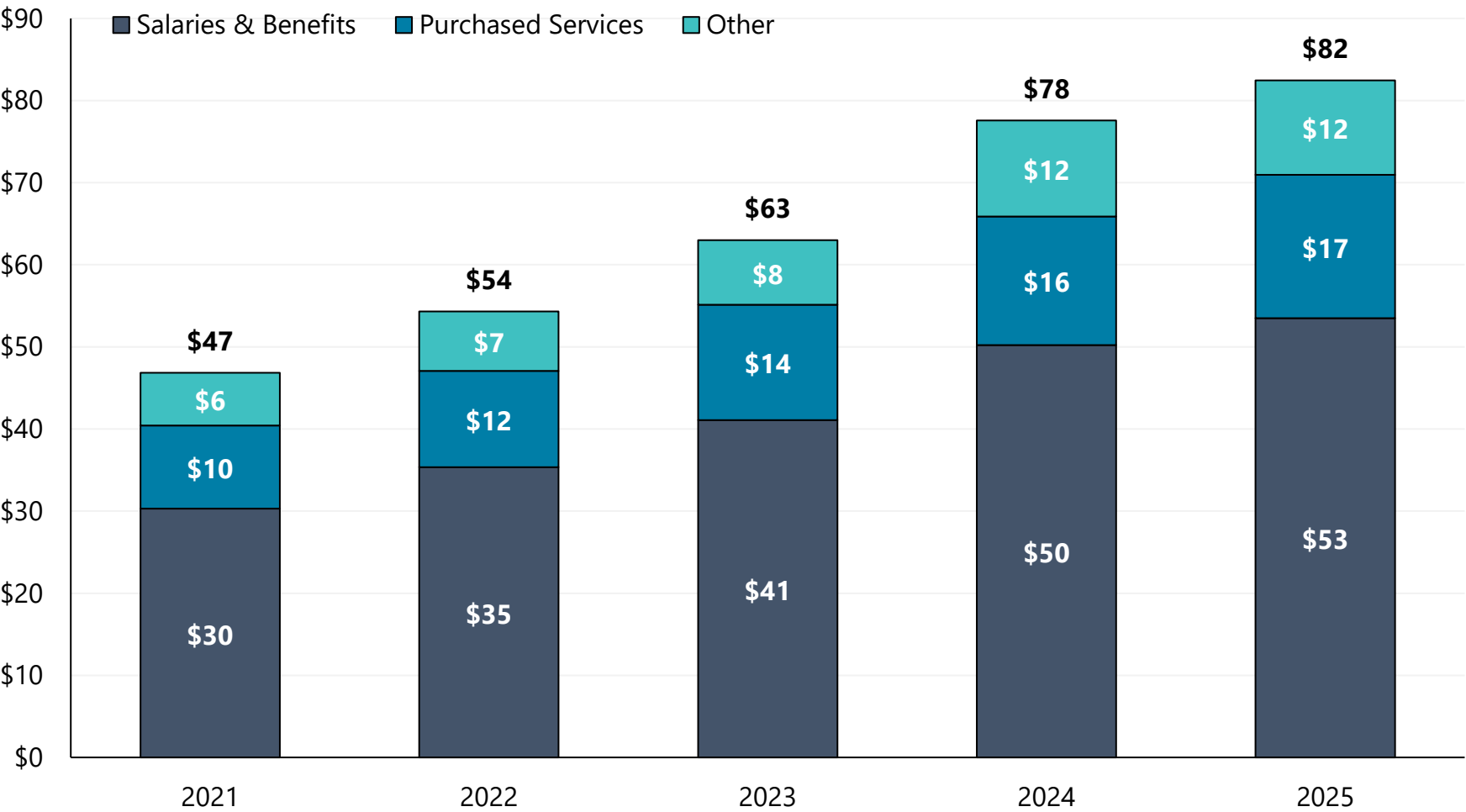
+17.5%

2021 to 2025
Medium Schools CAGR

+13.1%

2021 to 2025
Large Schools CAGR

Security Services Expenditures per Non-Virtual Student



+15.3%

Salaries & Benefits CAGR
2021 to 2025

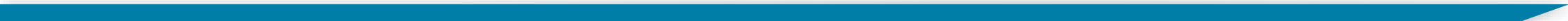
+14.6%

Purchased Services CAGR
2021 to 2025

+15.7%

Other CAGR
2021 to 2025

How individual factors impact large expenditures

A solid blue horizontal bar with a slight 3D effect, extending across the width of the slide below the title.

Some factors are difficult to control



Building Age



Utility Rates



Fuel Prices



PERF/TRF Contribution Rates

School corporations encounter many costs and environmental factors over which they have little or no control.

A school corporation must plan for and around these factors.

An increase in utility rates, fuel prices, or PERF/TRF contribution rates may require cost offsets in other district cost centers.

Some factors provide moderate degrees of control



Utility Usage



Water Levels



Health Insurance Premiums

Certain costs can be constrained, but only to a limited degree.

For instance, every building has a baseline level of electric and natural gas usage, even when vacant. However, school corporations may invest in energy efficiency projects as a means to reduce utility usage.

In the same way, school corporations compete in a market for staff. Wages may be managed to a degree, but the corporation also must remain competitive to retain and attract employees.

Some factors provide higher degrees of control



Employee Headcount



Device Type & Purchase Cycle



Facility Projects

Certain costs are more manageable than others, even if they come with challenges.

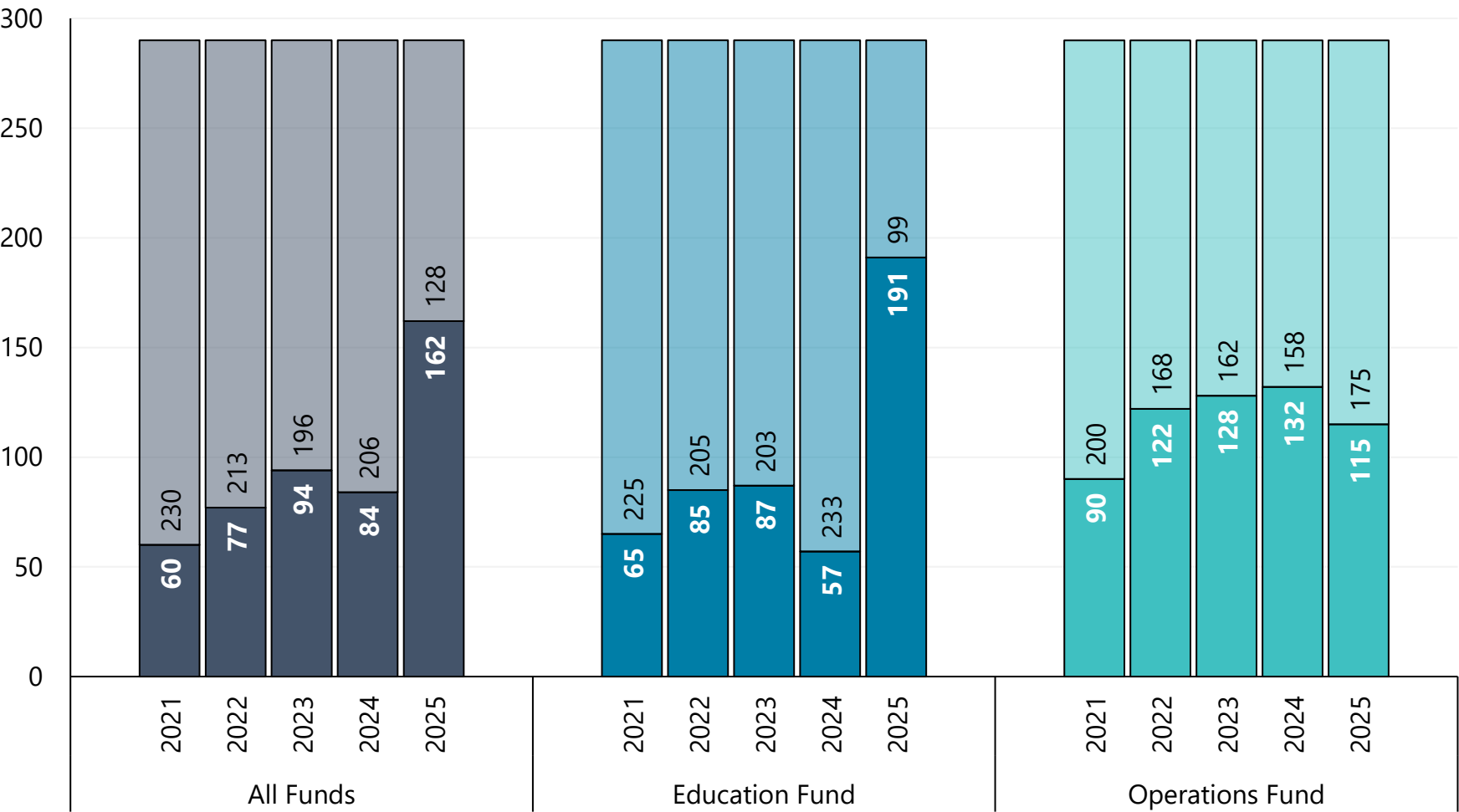
To a reasonable extent, school corporations may determine the count of teachers, administrators, and support staff. Managing staff count comes with non-financial costs, but doing so is one of the most significant variables that a corporation can control.

How do you measure where you are?

Start by evaluating your recent financials

Count of Corporations Running a Deficit

Calendar Year



55.9%

Schools with 2025 Deficit
All Funds

65.9%

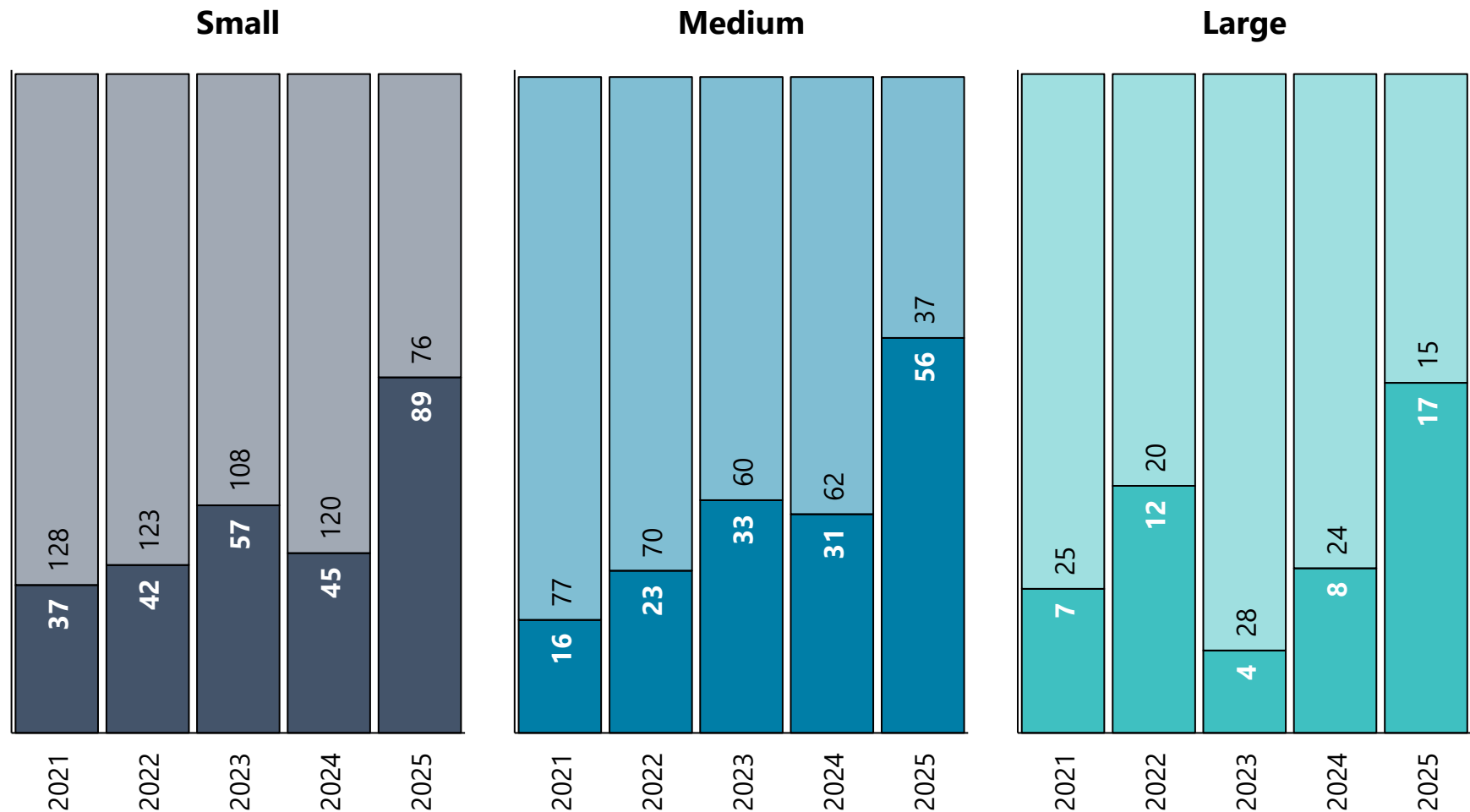
Schools with 2025 Deficit
Education Fund

39.7%

Schools with 2025 Deficit
Operations Fund

Count of Corporations with Deficit – All Operating Funds

Calendar Year



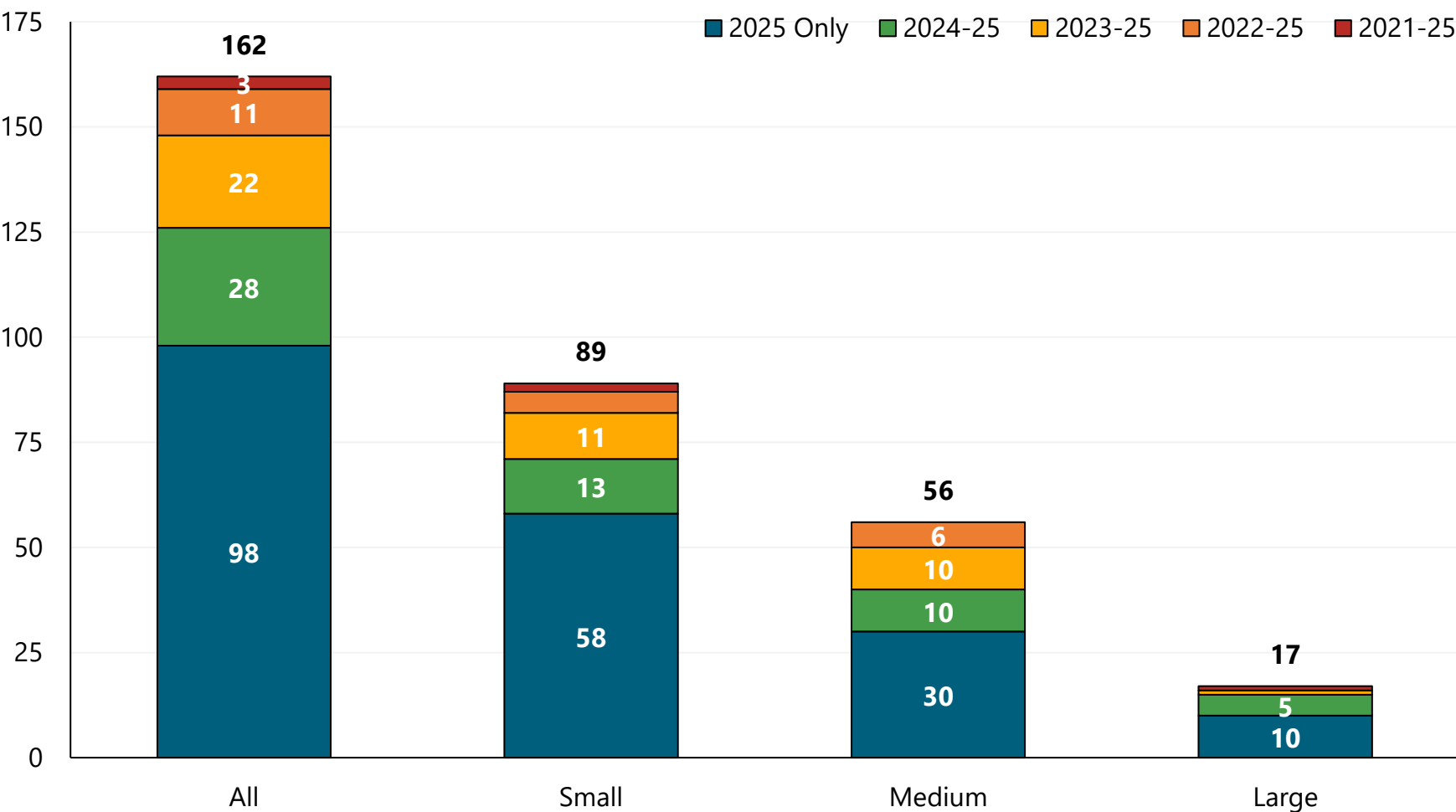
53.9%
Schools with 2025 Deficit
Small Schools

60.2%
Schools with 2025 Deficit
Medium Schools

53.1%
Schools with 2025 Deficit
Large Schools

Count of Corporations with Deficit for Consecutive Years – All Operating Funds

Calendar Year



53.9%

Schools with 2025 Deficit
Small Schools

60.2%

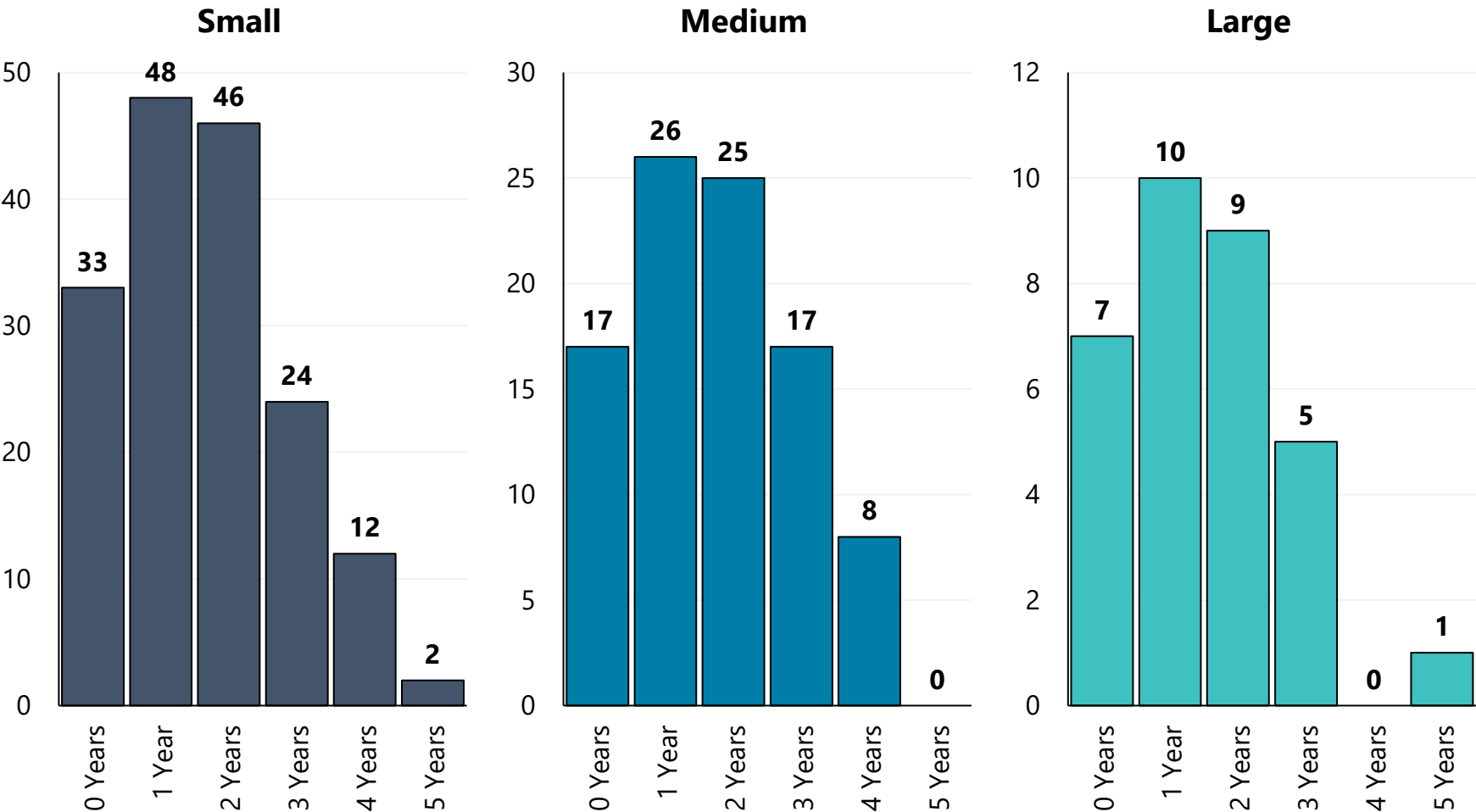
Schools with 2025 Deficit
Medium Schools

53.1%

Schools with 2025 Deficit
Large Schools

Count of Corporations with Deficit – All Operating Funds

Calendar Year



53.9%

Schools with 2025 Deficit
Small Schools

60.2%

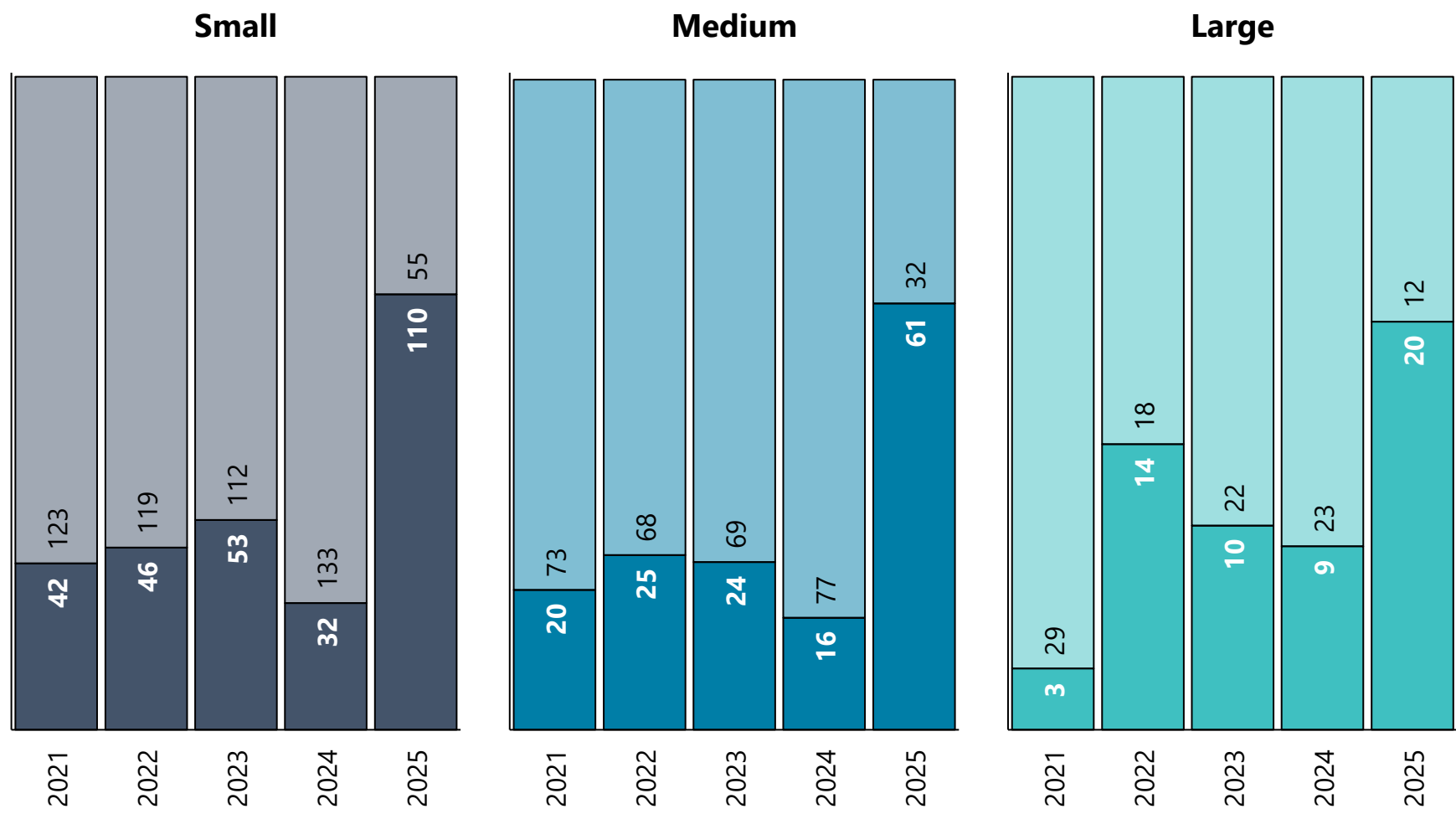
Schools with 2025 Deficit
Medium Schools

53.1%

Schools with 2025 Deficit
Large Schools

Count of Schools with Deficit – Education Fund

Calendar Year



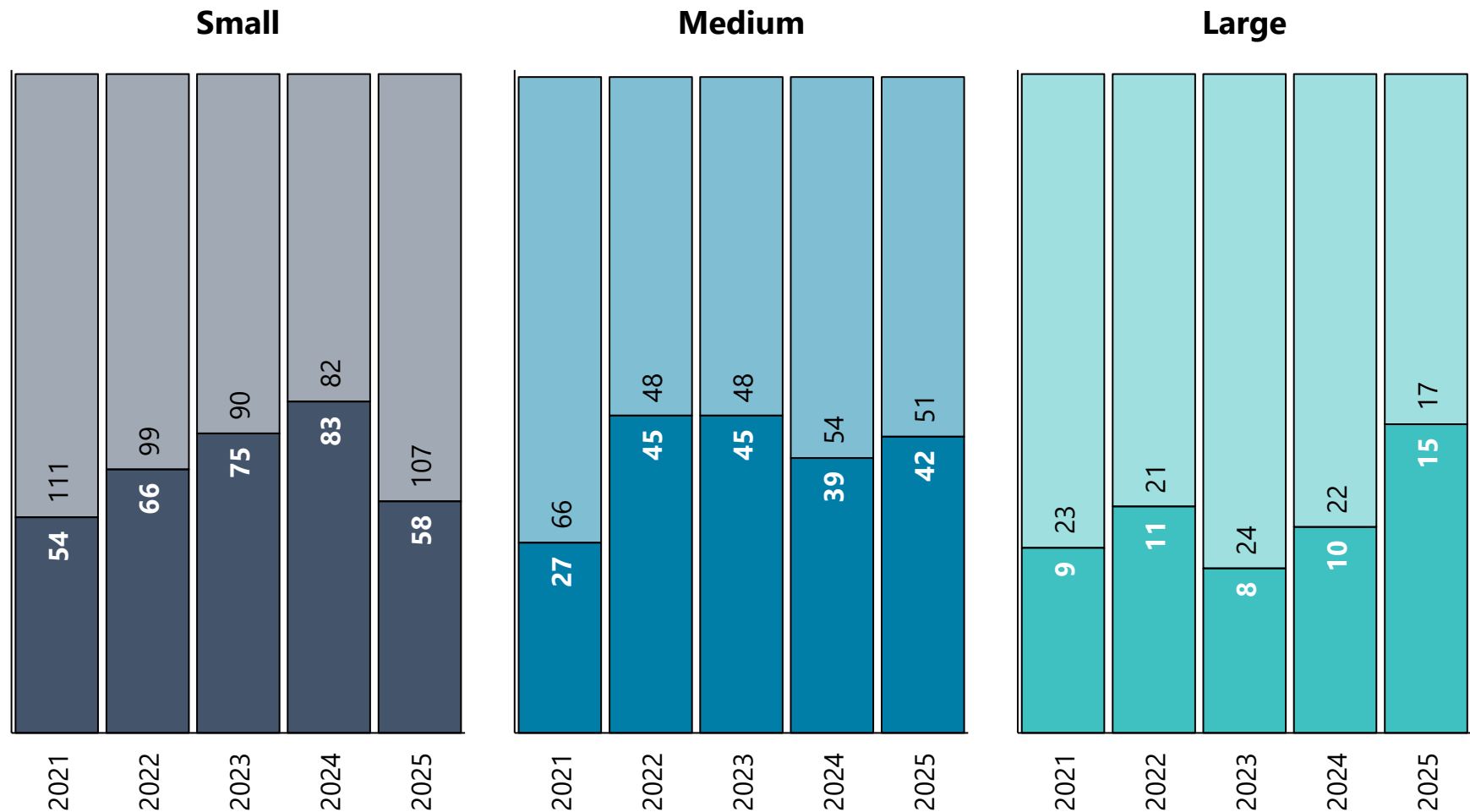
66.7%
Schools with 2025 Deficit
Small Schools

65.6%
Schools with 2025 Deficit
Medium Schools

62.5%
Schools with 2025 Deficit
Large Schools

Count of Schools with Deficit – Operations Fund

Calendar Year



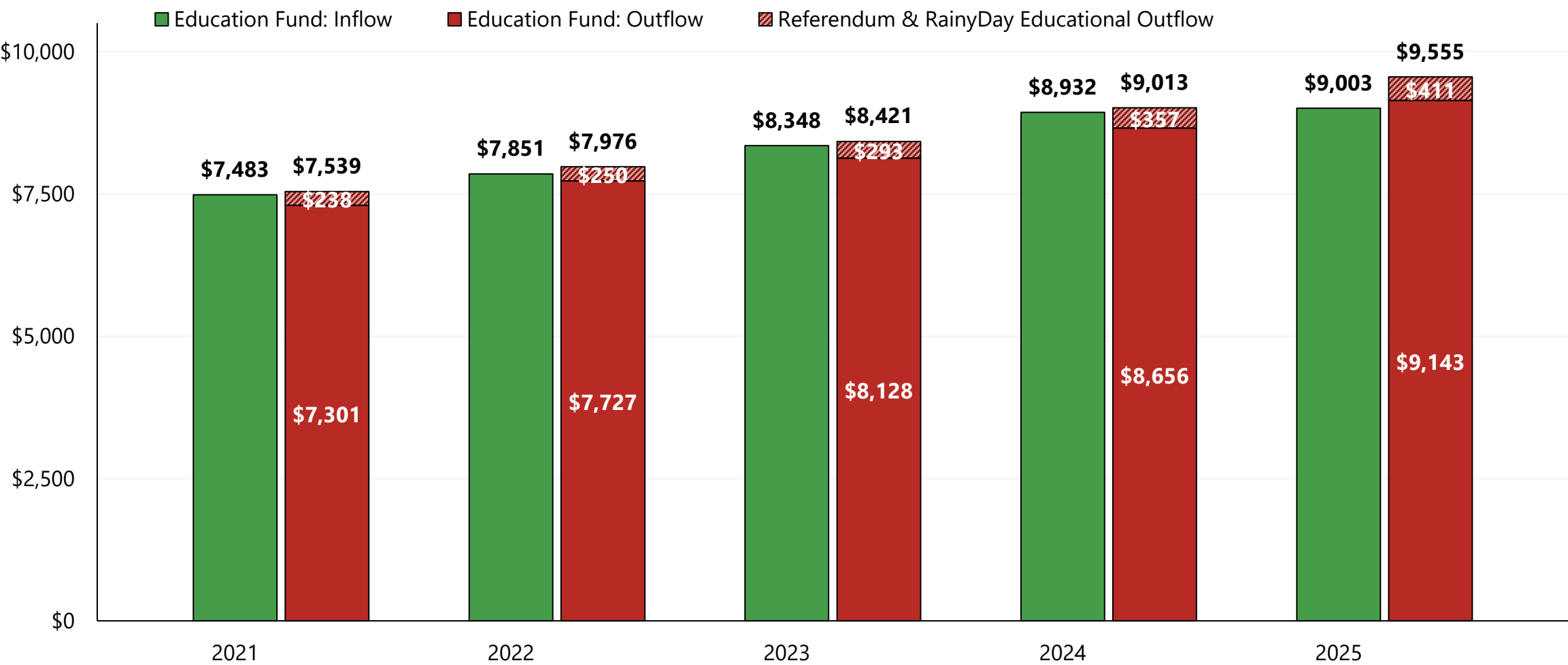
35.2%
Schools with 2025 Deficit
Small Schools

45.2%
Schools with 2025 Deficit
Medium Schools

46.9%
Schools with 2025 Deficit
Large Schools

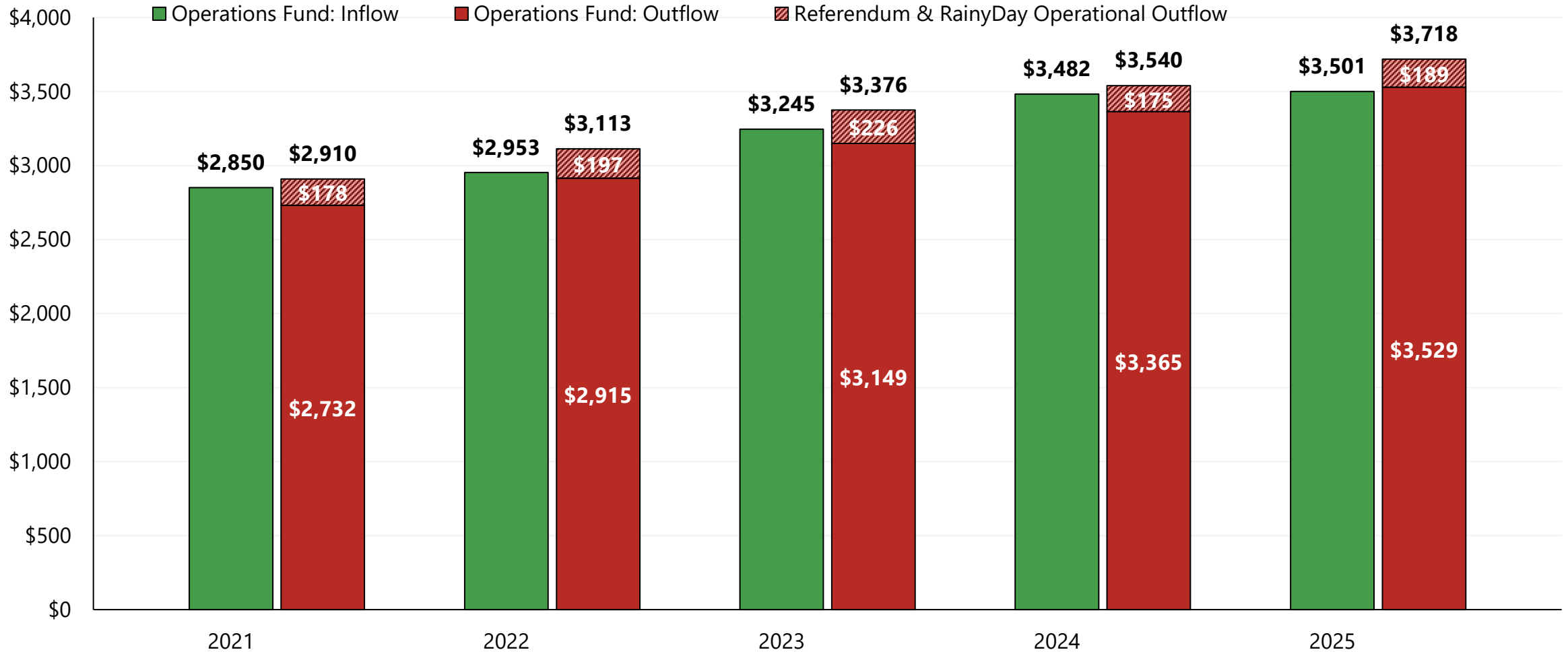
Statewide Trends: Education Fund – per Total ADM

Calendar Years 2021 - 2025



Statewide Trends: Operations Fund – per Non-Virtual ADM

Calendar Years 2021 - 2025



Summary

Strategic Planning and District Considerations

Key Takeaways

\$3,520



**Median Cost
per Student**

across operations accounts

\$802



**Transportation
Cost per Student**

#1 cost center within
operations accounts
(excludes bus purchase)

14.2%



**Annual P&C
Insurance Growth**

Fastest growing
operational cost center
since 2021.

55.9%



**Share of
Corporations with
Deficit**

in 2025, a sharp increase
compared to 2024.

POLICY ANALYTICS – SCHOOL SERVICES TEAM

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*Director of Data
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Tracy Boss

Project Coordinator

Addie Hanchett

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