

Diverse Revenue Streams for Schools: Boost Financial Sustainability



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Multiple sources of income keep your MAT running smoothly in the face of disruptions and unforeseen circumstances.
- Centralizing things reduces costs and risks.
- There are a few out-of-the-box ways you can ethically bring in additional revenue.

Money makes the world go round, and education is no different.

Proper funding means higher quality education, adequate staffing, new education programs, better support for students with disabilities, and more.

But, relying on government funding alone often means you don't have the total revenue you need to accomplish your goals.

That's why multiple income streams are crucial to success in a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT).

Diversifying revenue streams isn't just a safeguard against financial uncertainty; it's a strategy to ensure consistency, innovation, and sustainability across all schools within the trust.

By exploring multiple income sources, MATs can pool resources, drive trust-wide initiatives, and create financial resiliency for long-term success.

The Importance of Diverse Revenue Streams

Operating multiple schools under one umbrella means balancing diverse financial needs, from maintaining your infrastructure to funding learning resources and staff development.

A setback in one school could quickly ripple across the entire trust, affecting the ability to maintain consistent standards of excellence.

Diversified revenue streams allow your MAT to strategically allocate funds, start new projects, and have adequate revenue reserves to protect against financial uncertainty.

If you have a successful fundraiser at one academy, you can reinvest the surplus into another school that needs additional support.

This strengthens the overall trust but also allows individual schools to thrive.

Key Revenue Streams for Schools

Key Revenue Streams for Schools



Government Funding
and Grants



Fundraisers



Shared Services
Across Schools



Cross-School
Partnerships and
Sponsorships



Facility Rentals

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• **Government Funding and Grants**

Public funding is essential for MATs, but it requires carefully navigating everything to meet the needs of multiple schools.

You can maximize grants by focusing on financing specific projects, like STEM programs, teacher training, or energy-efficient building upgrades.

You can use multi-school grants to address trust-wide infrastructure needs.

It's also a good idea to centralize your grant-writing expertise with skilled grant writers who work across schools to ensure the applications align with trust-wide goals.

• **Fundraisers**

MATs have the advantage of scale compared to individual schools, making centralized fundraising efforts particularly effective.

Organizing trust-wide events like charity galas or virtual auctions can generate a lot of income while engaging the community.

Building a dedicated fundraising team for your MAT can ensure well-coordinated and impactful fundraisers.

▪ **Shared Services Across Schools**

MATs can save costs—and even generate income—through shared services.

Centralizing functions such as IT support, procurement, or catering allows the trust to leverage economies of scale, reducing operational expenses while improving service quality.

▪ **Cross-School Partnerships and Sponsorships**

Corporate partnerships can benefit multiple schools in a single agreement.

Technology companies could sponsor IT upgrades across all schools, or a sports equipment brand could sponsor extracurricular programs.

These arrangements improve both funding and the educational experience. Local businesses can get additional exposure and improve their brand reputation by supporting education.

▪ **Facility Rentals**

Within your MAT, chances are you have various facilities like sports fields, auditoriums, and, of course, classrooms that you can use to generate revenue when not in use.

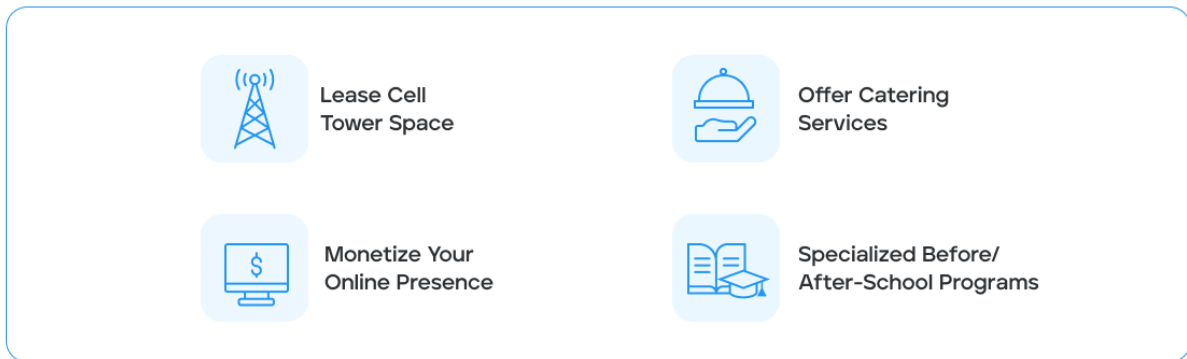
Offering these spaces for community events or corporate training sessions is an easy way to create steady income while building stronger community ties.

Never trust leaving all your eggs in one basket. Don't be afraid to get creative in the ways you earn income for your MAT, but always involve key stakeholders, including parents and other community members.

Possible Alternative Revenue Streams

These ideas may or may not make sense based on your demographics and specific school district situation, but they are still worth mentioning, just in case they are possible for you.

■ Possible Alternative Revenue Streams



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• Lease Cell Tower Space

Since schools are often exempt from local regulations around height restrictions, they are an attractive option for cell service providers.

It may be possible to install a cell tower on the roof of one or more schools within your MAT or district and earn income from it.

Carriers manage constructing and maintaining structures that hide the towers by blending them in with the surroundings.

Though some parents were upset about the arrangement, which was terminated in 2017, a contract with Prince George County in Maryland called for over 70 towers in a plan that “could net” the public school district \$2.5 million over 5 years.

Before choosing an option like this, get feedback from your local community.

• **Monetize Your Online Presence**

Don't be afraid to sell advertising on your MAT or school district website to increase school revenue.

Work exclusively with advertisers offering products aligned with your mission and educational message, and you may be surprised at what kind of funding you can bring in.

• **Offer Catering Services**

If you have a school or multiple schools in your district with a culinary arts program, it may make sense to offer catering services.

Dysart Schools in Arizona food service department does just that to bring in extra income.

• **Specialized Before/After-School Programs**

The possibilities are endless here since you can teach anything from music to fitness or cooking classes.

You can maximize earning potential by opening courses to students and parents.

To enrich overall learning, consider offering life skills courses for high school students, such as career planning, or personal finance.

Smarter Financial Processes for MATs

MATs often have complex revenue streams, and with multiple schools to manage, you need efficient financial systems to stay on track.

Accounts Payable (AP) automation is one of the best ways to do this.

It automates invoice approvals, reconciliations, and payment processes to reduce administrative overhead, improve accuracy, and provide real-time financial insights.

For instance, a MAT managing multiple vendors for facility upgrades across numerous schools can use AP automation to streamline payments—the resulting time and cost savings free up staff to focus on strategic financial planning and growth initiatives.

Digital Transformation and MAT Revenue Innovation

Digital innovation opens up new opportunities for MATs to diversify revenue across their schools.

It also makes it easier to connect with broader communities and effectively address unique educational challenges.

■ Digital Transformation and MAT Revenue Innovation



Online Platforms
for Donations



Virtual Learning
Platforms



Community-Focused
Projects

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• **Online Platforms for Donations**

Centralized donation platforms allow the trust to engage with a broader donor base, ensuring consistent funding for school-wide initiatives.

• **Virtual Learning Platforms**

MATs can develop online learning programs that generate income while aligning with their educational mission.

These programs can reach students outside of traditional areas.

Make classes available to students outside your school with a course audit program.

It's an excellent option for homeschooling parents to expand their curriculum without investing a lot of extra time and resources.

It's also ideal for families that need the freedom and flexibility virtual school offers.

In the United States, Bryn Mawr School offers a high school program for girls, completely online, boosting enrollment with new students they wouldn't be able to engage in person.

• **Community-Focused Projects**

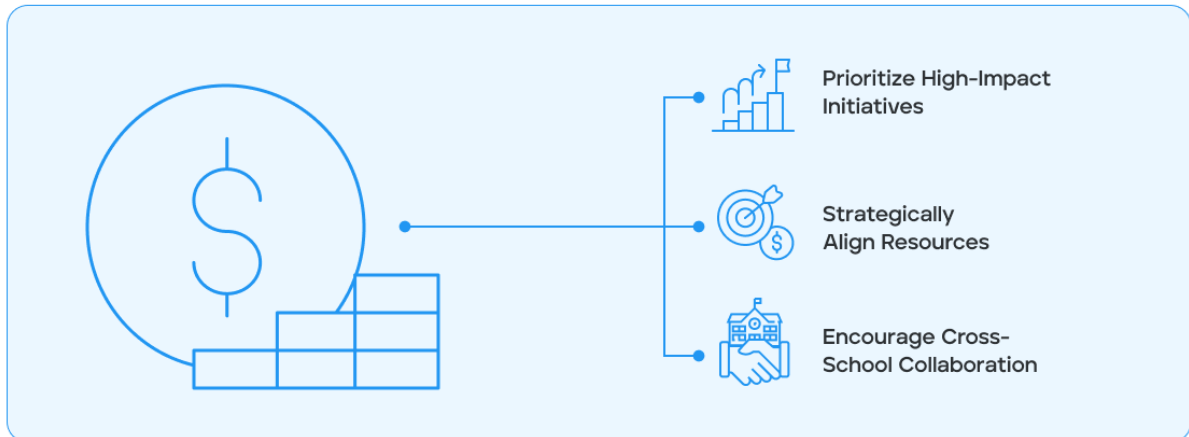
MATs can implement blended learning initiatives for adult education or professional training.

These programs can generate additional revenue while addressing community needs.

How to Scale Revenue Diversity Without Burdening Staff

Managing multiple revenue streams across various schools can seem daunting, but with the right approach, you can ensure staff remains focused on their core roles.

How to Scale Revenue Diversity Without Burdening Staff



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• **Prioritize High-Impact Initiatives**

Start with the moves that produce tangible results with minimal effort.

This could be centralized strategies, such as well-planned trust-wide fundraising campaigns or targeted grant applications that could deliver immediate benefits while requiring fewer resources than more complex projects.

This could look like focusing on your alumni network to hit an early fundraising goal using your existing connections while perfecting your process for broader efforts.

This method generates the critical initial funds but builds confidence and abilities for more significant initiatives with time.

• **Strategically Align Resources**

You must strategically allocate staff and resources to keep your revenue-generating activities from disrupting day-to-day operations.

Appointing a dedicated fundraising leader or development officer to oversee everything for the entire trust provides a single point of contact

for all financial initiatives.

The person in this role can oversee grant writing, donor engagements, and corporate sponsorships while collaborating with individual schools.

A MAT-wide financial team allows you to centralize administrative tasks so school-level staff can focus on core responsibilities.

Structured adjustments like this keep your revenue efforts streamlined and integrated with the trust's operations without adding more stress or workload.

• **Encourage Cross-School Collaboration**

Collaboration across schools within the trust amplifies strengths while ensuring best practices are shared and applied equally across the board.

Establish specialized committees for particular projects.

Allow one school to focus on facility rental management while another handles developing the catering program.

Each school takes charge of part of the revenue sources and reports back to that centralized point of contact.

You get pooled resources and shared responsibility to keep anyone from being overburdened by executing large-scale projects. A bonus?

Foster a culture of mutual support and innovation.

Long Term-Financial Planning for MATs

Securing long-term financial stability requires MATs to go beyond reactive strategies, proactively building a roadmap that aligns revenue opportunities with trust-wide objectives and allows for adaptation as circumstances evolve.

• **Develop a Cohesive Plan**

Create a trust-wide financial roadmap to ensure consistency and

alignment across schools.

This multi-year plan should consider each academy's unique needs while factoring in trust-wide priorities like technology investments or infrastructure upgrades across all the K12 schools.

Maybe you plan renovation projects over several years and pair them with targeted fundraising or grant applications to keep operations going without disrupting budgets.

▪ **Continuously Monitor Progress**

Use data analytics and regular financial reviews to assess revenue stream performance and identify improvement areas.

This way, you can see which projects are the most successful and which may need refinement or replacement.

For instance, if you develop a community-focused digital course and don't get the expected enrollment, you can analyze feedback to adjust the course structure or target audience.

▪ **Leverage Technology**

Invest in financial planning tools tailored to the needs of MATs to simplify processes and enhance strategic decision-making.

Software tailored to the scale and complexity of a trust's operations streamlines budgeting, forecasting, and performance tracking processes.

You could use a centralized financial platform to allocate funds across schools based on your up-to-date, real-time data.

This way, you get transparency in decision-making and reduce risk.

Final Thoughts

For Multi-Academy Trusts, diversifying revenue streams is key to thriving in an

increasingly complex educational landscape.

By centralizing fundraising, leveraging shared services, and adopting innovative digital tools, MATs can enhance financial sustainability while driving collaboration and innovation across schools.

The path to financial stability requires careful planning but offers immense rewards through enriched education, consistent quality, and greater resilience.

Start today by identifying the revenue opportunities that align with your trust's goals and scaling them strategically.

Doing so can secure a brighter future for all your academies and the students they serve.

What's your goal today?

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