THE SURPLUS

New Chairs or a New Copier?

A structured evaluation of two competing proposals for the surplus budget, scored with a Practical Suitability Index.

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The two proposals on the table

Proposal	Underlying need
A. Replace office chairs	Improve employee wellbeing, comfort, ergonomics, and the quality of the daily working environment.
B. Replace office copier	Improve operational reliability, reduce friction in shared workflows, and prevent productivity losses from equipment failures.

The real tension: this is not a choice between chairs and a copier. It is a choice between investing in the individual work experience versus investing in shared infrastructure reliability.

What each side is reasonably worried about

Chairs advocates

Employees spend hours in chairs every day. Poor seating may contribute to discomfort, fatigue, complaints, reduced morale, or ergonomic issues.

Copier advocates

An unreliable copier can create bottlenecks, interruptions, delays, and hidden productivity costs that affect multiple people at once.

Both concerns are legitimate. Neither is yet supported by measured evidence.

What we still don't know

FOR THE CHAIRS

- How old are the current chairs?
- Merely unfashionable, or actually failing ergonomically?
- Any documented complaints or health concerns?
- How many employees would benefit?
- Can all chairs be replaced within budget?

FOR THE COPIER

- How unreliable is it in practice?
- How much employee time is actually lost?
- How frequently is the copier used?
- Are there workarounds available?
- Would $4,300 fully solve the problem?

CROSS-CUTTING

- Which problem affects more people, more often?
- Wellbeing or operational efficiency?
- Expected lifespan and maintenance cost of each?
- Is either purchase more urgent?

The scoring framework

A Practical Suitability Index rewards breadth of impact, depth of impact, frequency of benefit, perceived fairness, and long-term value — without prejudging a winner. Maximum score = 100.

Criterion	Weight	Why it matters
Office Impact	30%	How much the investment improves the organisation's ability to work effectively.
Employee Reach	20%	The more employees directly affected, the stronger the case for the whole office.
Benefit Frequency	20%	Benefits felt repeatedly through the week create more value than occasional ones.
Financial Value & Longevity	20%	Expected return, lifespan, durability, maintenance cost, total value over time.
Fairness & Acceptance	10%	Whether employees see the decision as equitable and broadly beneficial.

Scoring both options

Criterion	Weight	Chairs (A)	Copier (B)	Note
Office Impact	30%	**80**	**75**	Comfort gain assumed; copier severity unknown.
Employee Reach	20%	**90**	**85**	Chairs used all day; copier shared but intermittent.
Benefit Frequency	20%	**95**	**60**	Benefit only when printing is required.
Financial Value & Longevity	20%	**70**	**80**	Replacing a known failure point reduces disruption.
Fairness & Acceptance	10%	**85**	**70**	Seating benefit is visible and personal.

Assumption: evidence is limited. We know only that chairs are used all day and need replacing, and that the copier is unreliable. All scores are provisional.

Weighted result

A. NEW OFFICE CHAIRS

84.0

out of 100

24.0 + 18.0 + 19.0 + 14.0 + 8.5

B. NEW OFFICE COPIER

74.5

out of 100

22.5 + 17.0 + 12.0 + 16.0 + 7.0

Margin: 9.5 points. Chairs deliver a benefit experienced more directly and more frequently than the copier replacement.

The strongest challenge to this result

Team Copier's case is not that the copier matters more. It is that the model may overweight visible personal benefit and underweight system-wide leverage.

Office Impact — a known problem versus an assumed one

The copier is explicitly described as unreliable, while chair problems remain unverified. Why score a known productivity issue below an assumed benefit?

Benefit Frequency — measured too narrowly

Frequency should perhaps count organisational impact, not physical contact. One chair comforts one person; one breakdown costs many people time.

The deeper criticism — the office as a system, not individuals

Chairs improve many individual experiences; a copier improves shared infrastructure that enables everyone's work. Systemic friction may be undervalued.

Testing the framework: adjusted weights

Benefit Frequency overlaps with Employee Reach, so continuous exposure counts twice. Shifting 5% to Financial Value corrects the double-count.

Criterion	Original	Adjusted
Office Impact	30%	**30%**
Employee Reach	20%	**20%**
Benefit Frequency	20%	**15%**
Financial Value & Longevity	20%	**25%**
Fairness & Acceptance	10%	**10%**

ADJUSTED SCORES

Chairs

82.25

Copier

75.50

The gap narrows from 9.5 to 6.75 points — but the chairs still lead on reach, frequency and acceptance.

Final verdict

RECOMMENDED APPROACH

Replace the office chairs

ROBUST PSI	MARGIN	CONFIDENCE
83.0 / 100	**6.75 – 9.5 pts**	**Medium**

Why it wins: the chairs outperform the copier in all three PSI models and never lose their lead when the weighting assumptions are challenged. Trade-off: highly certain day-to-day employee benefit, but a potentially important infrastructure reliability problem is left unresolved.

Confidence is medium because the severity and frequency of copier failures remain unmeasured.