
TIP SHEET: BUDGETING FOR EVALUATION

No matter what kind of evaluation you are doing, there are costs involved. These costs fall into several main categories: staffing, materials and supplies, equipment (e.g. recording devices, computer hardware and accessories), and travel. Budgeting is therefore an important part of the evaluation planning process. While you may not be able to estimate all costs in advance, there are a few key considerations that can help you to establish a basic evaluation budget.

1. Evaluation purpose and audience

The purpose of your evaluation and its intended audience(s) will largely determine how costly it will be. Are you seeking insights that your program staff and leadership can use for planning? If this is the central goal of your evaluation, you may be able to keep your work internal and your costs relatively low. If, on the other hand, you are conducting an impact study for funders and other external stakeholders, then your costs may be considerably higher.

2. Evaluation team

Do you have capacity within your organization to carry out evaluation activities? If you are conducting a low-stakes evaluation and can complete the work internally, this will generally cost less than an evaluation that involves an external evaluation consultant. This is not always the case, though, as evaluation consultants can often perform evaluation tasks more efficiently than program staff or other internal stakeholders.

3. Data collection approach

Will your evaluation draw on existing data (e.g. program attendance or school records), or is original data collection required? Surveys, interviews, and focus groups are great ways to find out how people experience your program, they can be time consuming and therefore costly to conduct. Also, if you will need translation services or other kinds of cultural outreach to communities, these costs should be factored in.

4. Data analysis approach

Your approach to analysis will also drive your costs. If your evaluation needs to be highly rigorous, and requires the use of comparison group data or sophisticated analytic techniques, it will cost more than a more straightforward descriptive approach.

5. Dissemination of results

How will you share the results of your evaluation? Will you need a formal report to share with stakeholders? Will you travel to a conference to present your findings? Even if the answer to these questions is no, you should budget staff time to review evaluation findings and plan for their use.

For more information:

Pell Institute (2016). "Create a budget." *Evaluation Toolkit*. Retrieved from <http://toolkit.pellinstitute.org/evaluation-guide/plan-budget/develop-a-budget/>