



Tip sheet: Costing

What is costing and economic analysis?

Economic analyses are designed to inform decision-making by providing information on affordability, sustainability, and supporting dissemination of results. Cost estimates can range from informal to rigorous, depending on the needs of the project. They can be made when planning an intervention, during implementation, and/or when considering sustainment or scale-up of results.

Why is this step important?

- When considering a new project, one of the most important factors for decision-makers is the cost of adoption, replication, and/or sustainment of the program or intervention.

What costs should be included?

- **Activities drive costs:** Staff time is the main expense; include engagement, implementation, labor, technology, and interventions.
- **Costs can be predicted:** Process mapping clarifies who does what and identifies key activities.
- **Exclude research-only costs:** Remove expenses that won't occur outside the study.

Key Steps

1. Design your economic analysis with a user perspective (e.g. the health system, a clinic, patients) in mind.
2. Develop a data collection instrument and build it into your data collection plans.
3. Develop a process map (flow diagram) of your intervention to identify relevant activities, resources, and staffing.
4. Complete analyses and share estimates on "What will it cost to sustain or replicate this effort?" with partners.

Pro Tips

- *Ask what information would be most helpful to sites considering adopting your intervention.*
- *Think about costs broadly; include user burdens.*
- *Conduct periodic quality checks on cost collection and tracking.*
- *Adapt data collection instruments as needed*
- *Ask yourself: do the data make sense?*
- *Look for ways to align cost data collection with other assessments to boost efficiency.*
- *Consult with an economist or expert when considering a complex analysis.*

Common Pit Falls

1. Not engaging an expert when pursuing more complicated analyses or when publishing.
2. Failing to think about costs and your economic evaluation early and often.
3. Using a burdensome or impractical data collection method.

Actions to Avoid Them

1. Connect with an economist when approaching complex analyses or publishing.
2. Plan for costing from the outset.
3. Look for existing data collection templates to modify and consider staff burden to track.