

Budgeting for Evaluation:

Key Factors to Consider

Knowing how much to budget for an evaluation requires an understanding of the evaluation process and of the various factors that might influence costs. In simple terms, the amount of money that you will need depends on the scope and complexity of both the program to be evaluated and the evaluation itself.

SCOPE refers to factors such as the size and reach of the program or project to be evaluated, the evaluation focus, the number of evaluation questions, the evaluation time period, whether and how stakeholders will be involved, and the number and type of reports that will be required.

COMPLEXITY refers to factors such as the nature of the evaluation questions, the type of evaluation design needed to answer each evaluation question, the number of participants and sites to be included in the evaluation, data collection methods, frequency and duration of data collection, and data management and analysis requirements.

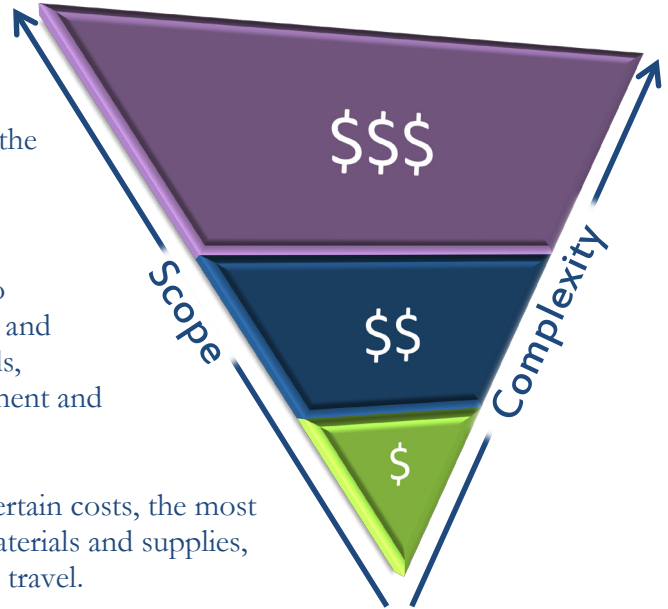
No matter the scope or complexity, all evaluations require certain costs, the most significant of which is staffing. Other likely costs include materials and supplies, computer equipment and software, and local or out-of-town travel.

If necessary, the cost of different types of evaluations can be roughly estimated in terms of a percentage of the program or project budget, as follows:

- Low cost = <10%
- Moderate cost = 10-20%
- High cost = >20%

Ideally, you should estimate evaluation costs in absolute dollar amounts, after carefully considering scope and complexity in the context of the specific evaluation needs. The *Evaluation Cost Considerations Worksheet* included in this brief can help you think about the different factors affecting the scope and complexity of an evaluation. In the worksheet, evaluation elements are assigned relative costs based on how they may affect staffing, supplies, travel, etc. The list of evaluation elements presented in the worksheet is not exhaustive and the different categories are not mutually exclusive; the goal is to help you think more deliberately about the factors affecting costs in an evaluation.

Instructions for completing the worksheet: As you think about your evaluation, check off each item you will need, calculate your score for each row by summing the items across all three columns (e.g., 1 point for items in column one, 2 points for column two, and 3 points for column three), and then calculate your total score. The scores ranges give you an idea of the relative cost of your evaluation, keeping in mind that the actual cost will depend on factors such as labor rates and travel costs. Note: In some rows (e.g., Interview Mode) you might pick no items or only one item across all three columns, while in other rows you might pick multiple items in multiple columns.



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This brief was prepared as part of the Center to Improve Project Performance (CIPP) operated by Westat for the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) under contract number ED-OSE-13-C-0049. The project officer is Dr. Patricia Gonzalez. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government. Suggested citation: Lammert, J. D., & Fiore, T. A. (2015). *Budgeting for evaluation: Key factors to consider*. Rockville, MD: Westat.

CIPP Evaluation Cost Considerations Worksheet

Evaluation Element	Low Cost (1 point/item)	Moderate Cost (2 points/item)	High Cost (3 points/item)	Score
Evaluation Design Elements				
Focus of Formative Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Participant satisfaction — Project implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Outputs (e.g., satisfaction, quality, relevance) — Implementation fidelity (key components, activities, outputs, possibly some direct outcomes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Intervention fidelity that includes mediators, intermediate outcomes 	_____
Focus of Summative Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Changes in participant satisfaction — Changes in existing data (e.g., student scores on state tests) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Short-term outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Intermediate/long-term outcomes — Comparative outcomes (e.g., treatment vs. control groups) — Causal attribution 	_____
Evaluation Study Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Non-experimental (descriptive study, basic qualitative methods) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Non-experimental (case studies, advanced qualitative methods) — Simple quasi-experiment (QED, e.g., basic comparison study) — Single-case design (SCD; reversal design) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Complex QED (e.g., with matching, multiple comparison groups) — Randomized controlled trial (RCT) — Multi-site or cluster RCT — SCD (multiple baseline, alternating treatment design) 	_____
# of Participants/Sites, Sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Small target population — 1-2 sites — Simple sampling plan (e.g., purposive, simple random) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Moderate-size target population — 3-5 sites — Somewhat complex sampling plan (e.g., stratified) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Large target population — >5 sites — Highly complex sampling plan (e.g. stratified, clustered, weighted) 	_____
Data Collection Elements				
Document review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Limited document search — Basic document summaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Extensive document search — Detailed document summaries — Limited document synthesis — Limited qualitative analysis of documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Extensive document synthesis — Extensive qualitative analysis of documents 	_____
Survey (existing or new)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Existing (available, no changes needed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Existing (fee to use) — Existing (some changes needed) — New survey (with limited pilot testing & no validation study) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — New survey (with extensive pilot testing) — New survey (with validation) 	_____
Survey mode of administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Simple online (e.g., basic Survey Monkey survey) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Customized online survey (e.g. customized Survey Monkey with skip patterns) — Self-administered paper-and-pencil survey (few respondents) — Telephone survey (few respondents, brief responses) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Customized online survey with integrated data management (e.g., survey with highly complex skip patterns & linkages to data management system) — Self-administered paper-and-pencil survey (many respondents) — Telephone survey (many respondents, lengthy responses) 	_____
Survey non-response follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Limited email follow-up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Extensive email follow-up — Limited telephone follow-up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Extensive telephone follow-up — Mail follow-up with reminder cards 	_____
Interview mode	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Online 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Telephone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Face-to-face^a 	_____
Interview type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Structured (i.e., asking specific, close-ended questions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Semi-structured (i.e., asking some close-ended & some open-ended questions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Unstructured (i.e., asking open-ended questions, with focus potentially varying by respondent) 	_____
Interview data capture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Interviewer takes notes during interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Interview recorded & transcribed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Note-taker present at interview 	_____
Observation location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Local^a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Driving distance (overnight)^a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Long-distance (air travel required)^a 	_____

Evaluation Element	Low Cost (1 point/item)	Moderate Cost (2 points/item)	High Cost (3 points/item)	Score
Observation protocol	— Checklist (i.e., specific activities or behaviors to observe; limited training required)	— Guided/structured protocol (i.e., general categories of activities or behaviors to observe; some content knowledge and training required)	— Unstructured protocol (i.e., open-ended with focus varying by site; deep content knowledge and/or extensive training required)	_____
Assessments	— Existing (conducted at no cost to evaluation)	— Administer small scale pre-post assessments (with no specialized credential or training required) ^b	— Administer large scale pre-post assessments ^b — Administer repeated assessments ^b — Administer assessments (with specialized credential or training required)	_____
Data Collection Frequency & Duration	— Limited frequency (1 time per year or less)	— Moderate frequency (2 or 3 times per year) — Multi-year, but not annual	— Frequent data collection (4 or more times per year) — Annual, or longitudinal data collection	_____
Data Management Elements				
Data management software & hardware	— New software required (low cost) — New hardware required (low cost)	— New software required (moderate cost) — New hardware required (moderate cost)	— New software required (high cost) — New software required (high cost)	_____
Data control & cleaning	— Limited need for data quality control (i.e., multiple choice items; data collected electronically, etc.) — Limited need for data cleaning (i.e., few duplicate records & outliers, little need for coding, etc.)	— Moderate need for data quality control (i.e., multiple choice with some write-in; some field scoring of assessments; some missing data, etc.) — Moderate need for data cleaning (i.e., moderate number of duplicate records & outliers, need to recode some data, etc.)	— Extensive need for data quality control (i.e., open-ended questions; field scoring of assessments; need to merge & reconcile diverse databases; extensive missing data, etc.) — Extensive need for data cleaning (i.e., extensive duplicates & outliers, extensive recoding needed, etc.)	_____
Data Entry	— Automated data entry (e.g., online survey)	— Data entry mostly automated, with some need for hand entry	— Data entry entirely by hand	_____
Database	— Existing database	— Create new database with limited functionality/data sharing	— Create new database with multi-user functionality/data sharing	_____
Data Analysis Elements				
Type of analysis	— Basic descriptive quantitative analysis (e.g., frequencies, t-tests, chi-square tests, ANOVA) — Very limited qualitative analysis	— Intermediate quantitative analysis (e.g., regression, ANCOVA) — Somewhat limited qualitative analysis	— Advanced quantitative analysis (e.g., HLM, SEM) — Extensive qualitative analysis	_____
Data analysis software	— New software required (low cost)	— New software required (moderate cost)	— New software required (high cost)	_____
Technical expertise for analysis	— Existing staff have all needed expertise	— External consultant needed to conduct some analysis or train existing staff	— External consultant needed to conduct most or all analysis or to provide extensive staff training & support	_____
Reporting Elements				
Reporting frequency	— Annual report only	— Interim & annual reports	— Monthly, interim, & annual reports	_____
Types of presentations/audiences	— Oral evaluation updates — Presentations to project staff only	— Policy briefs (limited audiences) — Presentations to project staff & few stakeholders	— Policy briefs (multiple audiences) — Presentations to project staff & multiple stakeholders	_____
Low Cost (<36 points); Moderate Cost (36-79 points); High Cost (≥80 points)			Total Score	_____

Notes: a. Cost = frequency x travel cost; b. Cost = frequency x number of assessment instruments