

Evaluation Support Pricing Guidance Document

PURPOSE

This document provides a practical overview of typical cost ranges and key considerations when budgeting for evaluation, research, and consulting support. It is designed to help organizations:

- ▶ Understand why pricing varies widely
- ▶ Anticipate the true cost of evaluation work
- ▶ Build more realistic and effective budgets

This resource is also intended to support organizations in making sustainable, people-centered budgeting decisions that align evaluation investments with organizational capacity, workforce realities, and long-term learning goals.

Use Cases

This resource is designed for organizations that are looking to both build internal evaluation systems and staffing, *and* outsource specific evaluation tasks or processes. This resource can support you if:

- ▶ You are developing a grant budget that includes evaluation.
- ▶ You are preparing to hire a consultant or evaluation firm.
- ▶ You want to better understand what drives pricing differences.
- ▶ You need a “ballpark” sense of costs before scoping work.
- ▶ You are trying to better understand the internal staffing/resources required to sustain evaluation efforts.



ABOUT BSRI

BSRI was created to support informed and effective decision-making for our partners with tools, resources, and data for action. As we wind down operations, we are creating these resources for the community to continue the work. We use our guiding principles in engaging with partners and communities, putting people first through accountability and reciprocity, communicating transparently, and sharing our knowledge widely.

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This guide was developed by BSRI based on our experience supporting a wide range of evaluation and consulting engagements across nonprofit, philanthropic, and government-funded initiatives. Our work has included everything from small, short-term projects (e.g., survey design or reporting support) to large, multi-year evaluations involving multiple partners, complex data systems, and federal reporting requirements. Through these various engagements, we have observed that authentic evaluation costs transcend simple deliverables. Final pricing is frequently determined by a partner's internal readiness, existing staff bandwidth, the depth of stakeholder participation, and the intensive communication and coordination necessary to maintain a productive, collaborative relationship.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Our organization utilizes artificial intelligence (AI) tools to enhance efficiency, support data analysis, and strengthen evaluation practices. We also encourage our partners and clients to thoughtfully explore AI as a means to build future-ready evaluation capacity.

All AI use is governed by strict data privacy and ethical standards. We do not input any personally identifiable information (PII), protected health information (PHI), or other sensitive data into AI systems in a manner that would violate HIPAA or other applicable privacy regulations.

Additionally, we exclusively use licensed AI tools and platforms that explicitly prohibit the use of submitted data for model training or retention beyond the scope of the intended task. This ensures that all information remains confidential, secure, and protected. Organizations or the partners they contract with that are utilizing AI-supported workflows may also benefit from establishing internal guidance, staff training, review processes, and ethical use expectations to support thoughtful and sustainable implementation for both parties.

OVERVIEW

Pricing can feel opaque, inconsistent, or difficult to anticipate, particularly for organizations that are newer to engaging external consultants or managing evaluation scopes. Rather than prescribing a single “right” way to budget for evaluation, this guide is designed to help organizations ask better questions, make informed tradeoffs, and align resources with their actual learning and reporting needs. This document is intended to increase transparency by:

- ▶ Providing general cost ranges for common evaluation activities
- ▶ Explaining the key factors that influence pricing
- ▶ Highlighting hidden or frequently overlooked costs
- ▶ Supporting more realistic and strategic budgeting decisions

It is important to note that the ranges and examples included here are illustrative, not definitive. Costs vary significantly based on project scope, geographic context, consultant experience, and organizational readiness. This document should be used as a starting point for planning and discussion—not as a substitute for obtaining tailored quotes or developing a detailed scope of work. Remember that budgeting decisions influence not only project outcomes, but also staff workload, partnership quality, sustainability, and organizational learning capacity

Guiding Principle: Sustainable and Relationship-Centered Evaluation

Effective evaluation is not simply a transactional service or compliance requirement. Strong evaluation work depends on relationships, communication, organizational readiness, and the capacity of both internal teams and external partners to engage in thoughtful learning and decision-making processes.

Organizations often focus primarily on deliverables (e.g., reports, dashboards, or data collection tools), but the quality and usefulness of those products are deeply shaped by the time, coordination, infrastructure, and collaboration required behind the scenes. This includes staff participation, stakeholder engagement, onboarding and communication processes, data system readiness, and ongoing reflection and feedback.

Similarly, evaluation consultants and firms are not only pricing technical tasks. Pricing often reflects the labor required to support project management, partnership coordination, responsiveness, ethical practice, quality assurance, and sustainable staffing structures that allow the work to be completed thoughtfully and effectively.

Organizations should approach evaluation budgeting not as the purchase of isolated products, but as an investment in learning, infrastructure, capacity-building, and long-term organizational effectiveness. Well-scoped and appropriately resourced evaluation efforts create stronger partnerships, more useful findings, and more sustainable outcomes over time.

Why Do Costs Vary?

Evaluation and research services are highly customized products, not standardized ones, as they are project and organization-specific. Two projects with similar goals can differ in cost by tens of thousands of dollars, depending on how the work is structured. Key drivers of variability include:

- ▶ Level of technical expertise required (e.g., basic reporting vs. advanced statistical modeling)
- ▶ Scope and number of deliverables
- ▶ Data availability and quality
- ▶ Stakeholder coordination needs
- ▶ Timeline constraints (e.g., expedited work often costs more)

Important: Lower cost does not always mean lower quality, but very low-cost evaluation often results in limited usability, minimal insight, or compliance-only reporting.

What Factors Influence Consulting Pricing?

1. Scope of Work

Scopes of work are often the single biggest cost driver, and an unclear or evolving scope increases coordination burden and cost over time. Keep in mind that:

- ▶ Clearly defined, narrow tasks → lower cost
- ▶ Open-ended or evolving scopes → higher cost
- ▶ Multi-component projects (data + reporting + facilitation) → significantly higher cost

Scopes must be clearly considered in direct relation to your internal capacity to support and manage any external work. This means factoring in staff capacity across programmatic and administrative roles, organizational readiness for evaluation work and potential consultants, and internal infrastructure needed to support evaluation and data-driven decisions.

2. Level of Technical Skill

Typically, rates increase with specialization. Entry-level or generalist work, such as basic data tracking or simple reporting, will be on the lower end, whereas mid-level skills like survey design and data analysis will be more moderate in price. Advanced evaluation skills, such as statistical modeling, experimental design, or comprehensive reporting, will be priced on the higher end.

3. Time vs. Deliverable-Based Pricing

Services will generally be priced by the hour or by deliverable, and both the organization and the consultant can negotiate what makes the most sense.

- ▶ Hourly: Flexible, but pricing can be unpredictable to get to a finished product.
- ▶ Fixed deliverables: More predictable, but often priced with a buffer.

4. Data Readiness

Organizations with strong data systems will typically pay less for evaluation services and have greater clarity in defining their evaluation needs and scope. Clean and structured data is indicative of lower costs, whereas disorganized or inconsistent data will lead to a higher cost due to cleaning and restructuring.

5. Stakeholder Engagement Requirements

Some organizations prefer frequent points of communication during the evaluation process, which means time and resources will need to be accounted for. In short, more meetings, feedback loops, and coordination will mean more hours or higher-cost deliverables (consultants will factor these hours into their pricing). Additionally, multi-partner projects often cost more than single-organization work due to additional coordination across people and meetings.

6. Timeline

Finally, work planned in advance with cushioned timelines will require less urgency and is usually less expensive to implement. If the timeline is short or expedited, work will generally cost more because the firm or consultants will need to pause other obligations to prioritize your organization's needs.

Pricing Estimates¹

Common Evaluation Activities	Typical Cost Ranges
Evaluation tool or Survey design	\$1,000 - \$3,000
Data cleaning + analysis	\$1,500 - \$7,500
Basic evaluation report	\$2,500 - \$5,000
Focus group (design, facilitation, analysis, summary)	\$3,000 - \$5,000 per group
Comprehensive evaluation (multi-component)	\$10,000 - \$25,000
Ongoing evaluation support (monthly retainer)	\$2,000 - \$10,000/month
Consultant Type	Typical Hourly Range
Junior/Entry-level	\$30 - \$60/hour
Mid-level	\$50 - \$120/hour
Senior/Specialized expert	\$100 - \$180/hour
Evaluation firm (comprehensive)	\$150 - \$300/hour

Technology and data infrastructure costs can vary widely depending on team size, data volume, security needs, and whether nonprofit pricing applies. The list below is intended to give partners a practical budgeting starting point for the core tools organizations are most likely to need to support evaluation, reporting, collaboration, secure data management, and basic document workflows. Some funders require reporting/data processes in a specific portal that is new to your organization. If this is the case, remember to factor in additional resources and time to become acquainted with the new system, and to build in protocols for onboarding and training new staff.

To keep this section digestible, the table below focuses on the main tools most relevant to continuing evaluation-related work, with Adobe Acrobat and AI included as useful but optional add-ons. Prices are also subject to change over time, and vendors may update their pricing, packaging, or discount structures, so this table should be used as a planning guide rather than a substitute for a current quote.

¹ These are general estimates for high-quality, professional evaluation work. Rates vary widely by region, consultant experience, and project complexity.

Program/Software	Cost range
Qualtrics Strategic Research	Starts around \$420/month or \$5,040/year. Entry pricing is published for 1,000 responses shared across all users, but actual pricing is affected by the number of users and survey response volume / engagements, so organizations with more complex needs should request a quote. Nonprofit pricing: Inquire directly.
Tableau Creator	About \$75/user/month or \$900/user/year. Best for dashboard creation, visual reporting, and interactive data products. Nonprofit pricing: Yes.
NVivo	Inquire directly. Best for qualitative coding, thematic analysis, and mixed-methods work. Annual or team-based licensing is often more practical for collaboration than perpetual licensing. Nonprofit pricing: Inquire directly.
Otter.ai Pro	About \$16.99/user/month or \$99.96/user/year. Best for transcription, searchable notes, summaries, and action items. Team/business pricing may be higher. Nonprofit pricing: Yes.
Zoom Workplace Pro	About \$15.99/user/month or \$191.88/user/year. Best for video meetings, screen sharing, recording, and recurring virtual collaboration. Annual billing terms should still be confirmed directly with Zoom. Nonprofit pricing: Yes.
Google Workspace (includes Google Drive)	About \$14-\$22/user/month or \$168-\$264/user/year. This is the live working environment for email, calendars, shared drives, storage, document collaboration, forms, and meetings. Most organizations choose one primary collaboration ecosystem rather than budgeting for multiple ecosystems. Nonprofit pricing: Yes.
Microsoft 365 Business (OneDrive / SharePoint / Teams)	About \$6-\$22/user/month or \$72-\$264/user/year. This is the live working environment for email, files, cloud storage, chat, meetings, and collaboration in a Microsoft-based environment. Most organizations choose one primary collaboration ecosystem rather than budgeting for multiple ecosystems. Nonprofit pricing: Yes.
Webroot	Inquire directly. Best for antivirus, malware prevention, and endpoint security. Business pricing depends on product selection and deployment needs, so organizations should confirm current pricing directly with the vendor. Nonprofit pricing: Inquire directly.

Program/Software	Cost range
Spanning for Google Workspace (managed backup / recovery)	About \$190/month or \$2,280/year. This is not general cloud storage. It is the backup and recovery layer that protects historical versions of email, files, shared drives, calendars, and related data. Lower-cost alternatives may include SysCloud Backup, Afi Backup, Backupify, or Keepit. Nonprofit pricing: Inquire directly.
IT support / troubleshooting	Varies based on hours used. A reasonable planning guideline is about \$90/hour , but actual rates vary depending on the provider and the complexity of the work. Nonprofit pricing: Inquire directly.
Adobe Acrobat for teams <i>(optional but useful)</i>	About \$16.99-\$23.99/license/month or \$203.88-\$287.88/license/year. Best for creating, editing, reviewing, signing, and collaborating on PDFs. Nonprofit pricing: Yes.
AI assistant (e.g., ChatGPT Business or Claude Team) <i>(optional but useful)</i>	About \$20-\$25/user/month or \$240-\$300/user/year. Useful for drafting, summarizing, brainstorming, analysis support, and workflow acceleration. Different tools may fit different writing, branding, or research workflows. Nonprofit pricing: Yes.

Nonprofit pricing varies by vendor and eligibility status. Where a nonprofit program or discount is publicly indicated, the table notes **Yes**; where nonprofit pricing may exist but is not clearly posted, the table notes **Inquire directly**. This section is intended as a budgeting starting point, not a substitute for obtaining a current quote tailored to an organization’s scope, team size, and technical needs.

Common Budgeting Mistakes and Tips

There are some common budgeting mistakes BSRI has seen organizations make (including us!). We hope these tips will help organizations better anticipate hidden operational and coordination needs associated with evaluation work. This could be especially helpful for organizations newer to engaging external evaluation support.

- ▶ Start with your priority questions, not your budget.
- ▶ Fund fewer, higher-quality activities rather than spreading resources too thin.
- ▶ Consider phasing work (e.g., Year 1: data setup, Year 2: outcomes evaluation).
- ▶ Build in a 10–20% buffer for unexpected and evolving project needs.
- ▶ Align evaluation scope with actual decision-making needs, not just reporting requirements.
- ▶ Account for technology implementation orientation and training time.
- ▶ Budget for BOTH reporting and infrastructure.

Don't overlook the additional time your team will spend on meetings and coordination, providing data and context, reviewing drafts and outputs, and managing timelines and deliverables. And don't assume that minimal compliance funding will yield deep strategic revelations

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Evaluation is an investment in learning, accountability, and decision-making. It should not be solely about meeting compliance requirements. Well-scoped, appropriately funded evaluations improve program quality, strengthen funding applications, and support long-term sustainability. Underfunding the work will most certainly lead to staff frustration, missed opportunities for improvement, and lessened impact over time.