



Equitable Research Partnerships Toolkit

Tool 12: Research Costs Listing

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Research is typically funded through specific grants which always cover the direct costs of research such as transport, consumables and research staff salaries. However, the full cost of doing research in a Global North-South partnership includes indirect costs such as those related to developing the partnership, renting or using facilities, and/or paying salaries of non-research staff (e.g. administrative).

All research institutions need to account for and recover these costs in research budgets. But unlike universities in the Global North, universities and research institutions in the global South rarely receive funding from their governments to cover indirect costs of doing research. Therefore, before applying for funding, it is important to integrate all projected direct and indirect in a research project budget calculation.

Why use the Research Costs Listing tool?

Use this tool to identify the full range of costs that may be involved in implementing research through a partnership. This tool addresses equity by:

1. Explicitly identifying the full range of costs involved in participating in a research partnership or project. This is especially helpful for institutions and researchers from the Global Southern.
2. Increasing the likelihood that Globally Southern institutions will be able to recover the full cost of doing research.

When to use the Research Costs Listing tool?

Phase	Rating	Descriptions
Planning	••	The tool may be used in the planning stage of a research partnership, to understand the costs involved in developing and maintaining the partnership.
Implementing	•••	The tool is designed to be used in the implementing stage, where partners may be designing research projects and preparing budgets for funding applications.
Disseminating	•	The tool could be adapted for use in the disseminating stage, to examine the costs involved in disseminating research results.



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Sustaining ●● The tool is also intended to be used in the sustaining phase to identify costs that will need to be covered in future research projects.

Ratings

●●● Designed for this stage | ●● Can be used as is in this stage | ● Can be adapted for use in this stage

How long does it take to use the Research Costs Listing tool?

Rapid approach

- The tool could be used by an individual or small group, to rapidly brainstorm the costs involved in research, in as little as 15-30 minutes.

Intensive approach

- A meeting of two to three hours would be required for a group to develop a comprehensive list of the costs involved in developing a research partnership, and/or implementing a research project, and discussing the equity implications of research costing.

What resources do you need to use the Research Costs Listing tool?

- [Research Costs Information slides](#)
- [Research Costs List template](#)
- Face-to-face or virtual meeting space
- Facilitator and notetaker
- Stationery or electronic devices for developing research cost lists

Tips for using the Research Costs Listing tool

You may wish to read [Five keys to improving research costing and pricing in low- and middle-income countries](#) as background to prepare for using this tool.



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- It may be useful to see the following examples of eligible and ineligible costs from research funders:
 - [Wellcome Trust](#) (click the “What we offer” link)
 - [Science for Africa Foundation](#)
 - [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office](#)
- Budget templates provide insights into how funders may request a budget to be prepared. However, while looking at examples, remember that funders typically have their own budget templates and often require budgets for research funding applications to be prepared using these:
 - [International Growth Centre Budget template](#)
 - [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office](#)
 - [United Nations Economic and Social Commission for the Asia Pacific](#)

How to use the Research Costs Listing tool?

- Download and display the [Research Costs Information slides](#).
- Present the three slides which detail:
 - Definitions of direct and indirect costs
 - Examples of direct and indirect cost categories and items
- Display the [Research Costs List template](#) using a projector (face-to-face implementation) or screen sharing facility (virtual implementation)
- If there are more than eight participants, it might be useful to split into smaller groups (use breakout rooms if implementing virtually). Different groups may look at direct or indirect costs, or specific cost categories, or each group may consider all the costs and compare the costs they came up with.
- As participants share potential costs involved in establishing a research partnership and/or implementing a research project:
 - Discuss whether each suggested cost is a direct or indirect cost, and which cost category it fits within.
 - Enter a description of each cost into the corresponding sections of the Research Costs List.
- Highlight (e.g. place an asterisk or use a different colour text) any costs for which the category is not clear. You can then discuss these with a research manager or funder.



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- When all the costs have been categorised and listed, ask participants to discuss the equity implications of recovering, or not recovering, either the full cost of research overall, or for particular items on the list. See below for suggested questions.

Suggested questions to explore when using the Research Costs Listing tool

- Who would benefit, and who would lose, if this cost was not recovered through the research budget?
- What are the equity implications of not recovering this cost through the research budget?
- Have costs for translating research results into positive social impacts been listed? What are the equity implications of recovering these costs?

Tips for using the Research Costs Listing tool

- Use the completed research costs list to:
 - Prepare a budget for a grant application. Seek assistance from research managers or the research office, if these are available at your institution.
 - Start a conversation with research funders about the full cost of doing research.

Expected outputs and outcomes from using the Research Costs Listing tool

Outputs

- Implementing this tool will produce a comprehensive list of the costs involved in developing a research partnership and/or project.

Outcomes

- Increased awareness of the range of indirect costs involved in doing research.
- Improved recovery of indirect research costs in grant funding.



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Completed example of the Research Costs Listing tool

The [completed example lists](#) costs anticipated by research partners who intend to conduct a study of mosquito genetics to inform malaria prevention interventions. The partners have listed all anticipated costs and used red text to highlight costs that they were not sure how to categorise.

In the discussion about the equity implications of unrecovered costs, the partners highlighted that it would be inequitable not to recover any of the indirect costs. For example, not covering the costs of finances and procurement would mean that additional staff could not be hired, and that existing staff would be overworked. The finances and procurement work would not be done in a timely or proper manner.

The partners based in the Global South also highlighted the potential inequities in not funding the direct costs of developing laboratory infrastructure. In the absence of funding for these direct costs, it would not be possible for the genetic testing to be performed at the Globally Southern institution nor for their academics to develop testing skills and/or conduct the tests themselves. Data (mosquito samples) could not be stored at the Southernly institution. This would be inequitable because it would mean much of the intellectual work involved in the research project, and the intellectual property resulting from it, would be done/ owned, by the Globally Northern Institution.

References and further reading for the Research Costs Listing tool

- Development of this tool has been informed by: ESSENCE, on Health Research, 2020. *Five keys to improving research costing and pricing in low- and middle-income countries- ESSENCE Good Practice Document*. Retrieved from https://tdr.who.int/docs/librariesprovider10/essence/essence-fivekeys2nded2020-pdf.pdf?sfvrsn=9f37e717_8&download=true