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Costing for family planning social and behavior change programming

Breakthrough RESEARCH

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Breakthrough RESEARCH is USAID’s flagship social and behavior change (SBC) research and evaluation project to drive the generation, packaging, and use of innovative SBC research to inform programming. A six-year project (2017–2023), Breakthrough RESEARCH was led by the Population Council in collaboration with our consortium partners: Tulane University, Avenir Health, Population Reference Bureau, Institute for Reproductive Health at Georgetown University, and ideas42. Our approach was to foster collaboration and shared learning, ensure SBC programs are based in ‘what works’, elevate the impact of evidence-based SBC programs, and put evidence into practice. Breakthrough RESEARCH did this by assessing the evidence, identifying priority research questions, designing and implementing research studies to fill evidence gaps and strengthen programs, and synthesizing and packaging evidence for use.

Within the breadth of our research portfolio, Breakthrough RESEARCH had four main project legacy areas: provider behavior change (PBC); integrated SBC; advancing SBC measurement; and costing and cost-effectiveness of SBC. For each of these legacy areas, Breakthrough RESEARCH curated a legacy resource highlighting the state-of-the-art evidence and the tools and guidance produced by the project over the past six years to advance evidence-based SBC programming.

This legacy resource highlights evidence, insights, and learnings from Breakthrough RESEARCH’s work to gather, analyze, and share evidence on the costs and impacts of SBC interventions, making the case that investing in SBC is crucial for improving health, including family planning outcomes. This document is a compilation of selected resources that do not represent the full breadth of Breakthrough RESEARCH work. This document links to the available resources for more in-depth learning and understanding, including all relevant citations of the existing evidence base. For more information on Breakthrough RESEARCH’s work on SBC measurement, visit https://breakthroughactionandresearch.org/br-legacy-area-costing-cost-effectiveness-sbc/.

Breakthrough RESEARCH is demystifying costing for family planning SBC by synthesizing existing evidence, generating new evidence, and fostering evidence generation by others. Costing is the process of collecting data from various sources and analyzing it to estimate the cost of a health program or intervention. Potential sources of cost information include the process of the costing and the quality of the available sources and may include budget, program payee and purchasing records, interview, or market prices. High-quality cost data are important for budgeting, planning, monitoring, and program management. Costing is an essential component of determining the impact of SBC interventions by exploring the use of cost-recovery strategies and optimizing SBC interventions to change health behaviors and increase uptake of services.

Within this legacy resource:

- Explore key SBC costing insights from Breakthrough RESEARCH
- Learn about state-of-the-art costing evidence Breakthrough RESEARCH has generated
- Discover tools you can use for costing SBC interventions and SBC approaches in family planning programs
- Find calls to action to continue to advance evidence-based SBC costing practices

Breakthrough RESEARCH worked in 19 countries!

DID YOU KNOW

Breakthrough RESEARCH conducted 53 research studies over the past 6 years!

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Documenting the Costs of SBC Interventions for Health in Low- and Middle-Income Countries

Breakthrough RESEARCH analyzed and synthesized the existing evidence on the costs and impact of SBC interventions to support the costing needs of low- and middle-income countries. In 2010, the organization conducted a review of the SBC costing literature and identified 147 studies on SBC costs. The review found a significant shortage of cost information on social marketing and digital technologies for SBC interventions, and few cost studies on provider-focused provider training. Furthermore, the review identified 147 studies on SBC costs, methodological shortcomings, and knowledge gaps, which can be addressed in new SBC costing studies. Of the identified studies, the greater proportion of SBC costing studies are in family planning, with considerable gaps in other health areas. Geographically, SBC costing literature from Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East is limited. Comparisons between studies are challenging due to the variety of SBC interventions targeting different populations and age groups. Furthermore, the review identified a significant shortage of cost information on newer and rapidly changing forms of SBC, such as social media and other digital technologies for SBC interventions, and the cost studies on provider-focused SBC interventions, which can be addressed in new SBC costing studies.

In summary, the review has identified a significant shortage of cost information on newer and rapidly changing forms of SBC, such as social media and other digital technologies for SBC interventions, and the cost studies on provider-focused SBC interventions, which can be addressed in new SBC costing studies.

Understanding and measuring project costs is important for developing a consistent evidence base for SBC programs to support family planning programs, inform adaptive management, and ensure continued investments in evidence-based, cost-effective SBC approaches.
Investments in SBC for family planning are cost-effective.

The Business Case for Investing in SBC for Family Planning

Although it is generally accepted that SBC interventions are cost-saving and can be highly cost-effective, the impact of SBC interventions on cost-utility has been limited. This and other gaps provide opportunities for further research regarding the business case approach. The Business Case for Investing in Social and Behavior Change (SBC) for Family Planning highlights the business case for family planning interventions through the delivery of the following key message:

- SBC is effective in improving family planning outcomes, but results vary by setting.
- SBC costs range widely across and within intervention types.
- Family planning interventions are a highly cost-effective investment.

The business case model was then applied to hypothetical SBC investment scenarios for family planning outcomes, assessing whether and how SBC interventions can strengthen family planning programs and help these programs meet their goals. The application of the business case model to family planning outcomes provides insights into how the success, cost effectiveness, and potential benefits of SBC interventions can vary by setting. The Business Case for Investing in Social and Behavior Change (SBC) for Family Planning provides key evidence to decision makers that investing in SBC is crucial for improving health outcomes and assuring health and development impacts. The Business Case model provides rigorous evidence to key audiences to inform their advocacy.”

Cost-Effectiveness of SBC Interventions for Family Planning

- The business case approach is to capture SBC impact and cost estimates, assess the benefit of SBC to health outcomes (cost-effectiveness analysis), and transmit this evidence to key audiences to inform their advocacy efforts.
- The business case for family planning draws on nearly 200 studies of SBC interventions, assessing health and development impacts. The Business Case model was then applied to hypothetical SBC investment scenarios for family planning outcomes, assessing whether and how SBC interventions can strengthen family planning programs and help these programs meet their goals.
- The application of the business case model to family planning outcomes provides insights into how the success, cost effectiveness, and potential benefits of SBC interventions can vary by setting. The Business Case for Investing in Social and Behavior Change (SBC) for Family Planning provides key evidence to decision makers that investing in SBC is crucial for improving health outcomes and assuring health and development impacts.

Key findings include:

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Breakthrough RESEARCH has developed several resources that work in concert to provide you with tools you’ll need to better understand the costs of SBC for family planning. First, the Guidelines for Costing SBC Health Interventions outline the methodological principles of SBC costing. Next, a Pathways to SBC Impact tool allows you to explore the link between different SBC approaches and increases in mCPR to help you think about which approaches might be right for your program. An SBC Costing Tool helps you to understand how much these SBC approaches might cost. And finally, an SBC Costing Community of Practice connects you with others, allows you to ask questions and see answers, tips, and advice, and a series of case studies of practice-level data into specific costing questions.

Guidelines for Costing SBC Health Interventions

To help program planners understand the elements of costing to make it manageable, to demystify costing for programs and donors, and to encourage the continued building of the SBC costing evidence base, Breakthrough RESEARCH developed a set of 17 principles for conducting an SBC cost study organized into four categories—design, measurement, pricing, and analysis and reporting (Figure 2). These “Guidelines for Costing SBC Health Interventions” aim to increase the quantity and quality of SBC cost information and its standardization. By encouraging cost analysts to use a standardized approach based on widely accepted methodological principles, we expect the SBC costing guidelines to result in well-designed studies that plan to measure costs at the outset, to allow assessment of cost-effectiveness and benefit-cost ratios for SBC programming. Such analyses could also potentially help advocates for SBC to better make the case for greater investment in SBC programming. The guidelines lay out a consistent set of methodological principles that reflect best practice and that can underpin any SBC costing effort. Each principle begins with a link to a reference case and contains best practice recommendations, illus- 
trating concepts with SBC-specific examples and referencing in text boxes how real-life costing exercises have applied these principles. Background sections and appendices provide readers with additional information. Although technical in nature, the SBC Costing Guidelines aim to be accessible to a non-economist audience.

Costing Considerations

- Cost-effectiveness studies may not account for the full effect of SBC on attitudes, beliefs, and intentions.
- The timeframe for cost-effectiveness studies may not be long enough to see changes in health outcomes.
- Cost-effectiveness studies need to be designed to compare different SBC approaches, including any SBC versus no SBC.
- Expenditures of scale need to be taken into consideration when considering the implications of the results.
Exploring Pathways to SBC Impact

Based on the Business Case for Investing in Social and Behavior Change for Family Planning, another useful interactive tool explores the pathways through which mass media, interpersonal communication interventions, and packages of different types of SBC interventions can increase modern contraceptive use. This tool visualizes the links between SBC interventions to impact, based on the review of the literature detailed in the Business Case. The amount that an SBC intervention can increase modern contraceptive use depends on existing behaviors and attitudes, the effectiveness of the intervention, and how much the intervention is scaled up. The tool can be used for program planning, to advocate for increased investments in SBC, and to start conversations about the need to prioritize SBC investments based on country context.

SBC Costing Tool

To assist SBC implementers, donors, and researchers with planning and budgeting, Breakthrough RESEARCH developed an interactive SBC Costing Tool. This downloadable workbook allows users to select the characteristics of an SBC intervention to generate a range of estimated unit costs that can then be used to either estimate the potential reach of an intervention based on a given budget, or estimate an intervention budget based on an intended reach. The embedded user guide walks through five steps to use the tool and estimate intervention reach or estimate budget.

Costing Tool

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A fourth brief provides an overview of the costs for scaling-up interventions. A brief on how to consider the appropriate denominator for these types of interventions and what costs need to be captured. In particular, attention needs to be paid to costing, given the unique nature of social media platforms. The brief details important issues and practices for SBC costing. The first brief, Costing Social and Behavior Change Programming—The Role of the Denominator, explains how costs can be linked to denominators for comparisons with other interventions. The brief examines three types of denominators (see below for details). The brief also provides examples of tools that can support the SBC Costing Community of Practice and others working on costing of SBC interventions. The brief details how to consider the appropriate denominator for these types of interventions and what costs need to be captured. In particular, attention needs to be paid to costing, given the unique nature of social media platforms. The brief details important issues and practices for SBC costing. The first brief, Costing Social and Behavior Change Programming—The Role of the Denominator, explains how costs can be linked to denominators for comparisons with other interventions. The brief examines three types of denominators (see below for details). The brief also provides examples of tools that can support the SBC Costing Community of Practice and others working on costing of SBC interventions.

**EXAMPLES OF DENOMINATORS USED TO CALCULATE SBC UNIT COSTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denominator</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Percentage of women of reproductive age that received SBC intervention</td>
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<td>Provider trained</td>
<td>Percentage of providers trained as a result of SBC intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Number of SMS messages sent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person campaign recall participating</td>
<td>Number of individuals exposed to SBC content via a social media platform</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Number of individuals informed about SBC intervention</td>
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<td>Number of family planning users</td>
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<td>Number of couple years protected by contraceptive method</td>
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<td>New family planning adopter</td>
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<td>Number of disability-adjusted life years averted</td>
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<td>Number of healthy life years saved</td>
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**Costs**

- **Initial costs**: These are direct costs associated with the initial start-up phase, which is defined as the time from the project initiation until the project begins broad implementation. When conducting a costing of an SBC intervention, it is useful to capture these initial costs separately and allocate them appropriately over the project initiation until the project begins broad implementation. When conducting a costing of an SBC intervention, it is useful to capture these initial costs separately and allocate them appropriately over the project initiation until the project begins broad implementation.

- **Post-start-up costs**: These costs are incurred after the initial start-up phase and include all costs for the remaining life of the intervention. By examining start-up costs separately, the post-start-up implementation costs can be captured more accurately. The brief examines how to capture the appropriate denominator for these types of interventions and what costs need to be captured. In particular, attention needs to be paid to costing, given the unique nature of social media platforms. The brief details important issues and practices for SBC costing. The first brief, Costing Social and Behavior Change Programming—The Role of the Denominator, explains how costs can be linked to denominators for comparisons with other interventions. The brief examines three types of denominators (see below for details). The brief also provides examples of tools that can support the SBC Costing Community of Practice and others working on costing of SBC interventions.

- **Engagement**

  - The number of times people engaged with a specific social media interaction, such as reactions, comments, shares, mentions, likes, etc.

- **Views**

  - The total number of views on a social media platform, the number of times the video was viewed, which can be further subdivided based on the amount of time spent viewing the content (e.g., at least 30 seconds, complete view).

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Breakthrough RESEARCH is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the terms of cooperative agreement no. AID-OAA-A-17-00018. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the Breakthrough RESEARCH and Population Council and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

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Breakthrough RESEARCH catalyzes social and behavior change by conducting state-of-the-art research and evaluation and promoting evidence-based solutions to improve health and development programs around the world. Breakthrough RESEARCH is a consortium led by the Population Council in partnership with Avenir Health, ideas42, Institute for Reproductive Health at Georgetown University, Population Reference Bureau, and Tulane University.