



A Manager's Guide

Exhibit Cost Estimating Planning, Design & Fabrication



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There's no mystery in preparing a first draft exhibit cost estimate when you have the experience and records to access, from past and current exhibit planning, design and fabrication projects. This guide will provide you with the information and confidence you need to set an exhibit planning, design and fabrication estimate for budgeting or fundraising purposes. The following steps and notes will assist you with your budget estimate preparation.

Step 1 – Determine your envisioned level of media use. This is an important factor in determining your first draft exhibit budget. Extensive use of digital media is going to be expensive. At this early stage of planning it will be difficult to define specifics on your media use but consider your subject matter, objectives and intended audience to determine the most appropriate amount of media.

Step 2 – Identify the square footage of your exhibit space. Get out there with a tape measure and start measuring. If you have access to scaled architectural drawings of the space, just as good. Measure once and measure it again for confirmation of accuracy.

Step 3 – Multiply your total square footage by the corresponding cost range for your media level. The square foot cost ranges provided in this guide cover fees for planning, design, fabrication and installation of a permanent exhibit.

Recognize that your cost estimate is only an estimate until content and media programs are fully defined and you receive proposals from your exhibit planning, design and fabrication consultants. Keep in mind also that your final project cost will be impacted by the amount of research required, interpretive development, media hardware and media software, and your project schedule. The cost ranges provided will help you set a realistic first draft exhibit budget. If you have any comments or questions please feel free to contact me, Steve Ferretti.

Estimated Exhibit Square Foot Cost Ranges

Media Use Level	Planning + Design	Fabrication + Installation	Total Cost Range
Low-level Digital Media Hands-on	150. - 175.	150. - 225.	\$300. - \$400.
Mid-level Digital Media Interactivity	200. - 300.	200. - 250.	\$400. - \$550.
High-level Digital Media Interactivity	300. - 400.	250. - 300.	\$550. - \$700.

Additional Notes for Budget Estimating

1. Cost ranges are for budget estimating purposes only. Actual cost will vary based on the amount of interactive digital media hardware and related programming (software) required.
2. Other factors that impact actual project cost include content research beyond client resources, photographic usage fees, original photography, original illustrations and original video production.

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