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Cost Estimation in Public Health Services & Systems Research

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Cost Estimation in Public Health Services & Systems Research

Glen P. Mays, Ph.D., MPH

Preparedness Cost Estimation Expert Panel
U.S. Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE)
3 June 2015
“Poor costing systems have disastrous consequences. It is a well-known management axiom that what is not measured cannot be managed or improved. Since providers misunderstand their costs, they are unable to link cost to process improvements or outcomes, preventing them from making good decisions....Poor cost measurement [leads] to huge cross-subsidies across services...Finally, poor measurement of costs and outcomes also means that effective and efficient providers go unrewarded.”

Toward a deeper understanding of costs in public health

2012 Institute of Medicine Recommendations

- Identify the components and **costs of a minimum package** of public health services
  - Foundational capabilities
  - Basic programs
- Implement a **national chart of accounts** for tracking spending and flow of funds
- Expand **research on costs and effects** of public health delivery

Tools of the trade

- Prospective “expected cost” methods (micro-costing)
  - Vignettes
  - Surveys with staff and/or administrators
  - Delphi group processes

- Concurrent “implementation cost” methods (micro-costing)
  - Time studies with staff
  - Activity logs with staff
  - Direct observation

- Retrospective “cost accounting” methods (micro-costing or gross-costing)
  - Administrative records, financial reports, billing data
  - Decomposition, allocation or modeling
  - Surveys with staff and/or administrators
Examples: Program Costing

Arkansas Community Connector Program

- Use community health workers & public health infrastructure to identify people with unmet social support needs
- Connect people to home and community-based services & supports
- Link to hospitals and nursing homes for transition planning
- Use Medicaid and SIM financing, savings reinvestment
- Costing with electronic time logs

Felix, Mays et al. 2011
http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/30/7/1366.abstract
Examples: Program Costing

By Holly C. Felix, Glen P. Mays, M. Kathryn Stewart, Naomi Cottoms, and Mary Olson

THE CARE SPAN

Medicaid Savings Resulted When Community Health Workers Matched Those With Needs To Home And Community Care

Felix, Mays et al. 2011
http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/30/7/1366.abstract
Examples: Program Costing

Three Year Aggregate Estimates

- Combined Medicaid spending reductions: $3.515 M
- Program implementation costs: $0.896 M
- Net savings: $2.629 M
- ROI: $2.92

Felix, Mays et al. 2011
http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/30/7/1366.abstract
Examples: Gross Costing
Performance and Efficiency in Local Public Health Delivery Systems

- Expenditures per capita
- % of recommended activities performed

Expenditures per capita

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of delivery system</th>
<th>Comprehensive</th>
<th>Conventional</th>
<th>Limited</th>
<th>Very limited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expenditures per capita</td>
<td>$60</td>
<td>$70</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>$40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mays et al. Milbank Quarterly 2010
http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2888010/
Ongoing work: Public Health Delivery and Cost Studies (DACS)

- Set of 11 ongoing studies conducted by PBRNs
- Focus on 1 or more public health services: communicable disease control, chronic disease prevention, environmental health protection
- Estimate costs and cost variation across multiple institutional and community settings
- Identify factors that drive variation in costs
- Use standardized approaches to cost measurement and cost analysis: DO, time logs, manager surveys
Ongoing work: Costing Foundational Public Health Services

- Prospective “expected cost” & retrospective “cost accounting” methods
- Sampling strategy to empirically estimate scaling
  - Stratify based on state-local administrative structure
  - Sample based on population strata and density (rural/urban)
- Vignette-based questions for each domain
  - Elicit quantity, FTE and labor cost, non-labor cost, indirect cost components
  - Elicit staff time allocation across service areas
  - Elicit expectations about current level of attainment of each service
- Use “fuzzy set” costing approach to deal with uncertainty
  - Upper and lower bounds, most likely values
  - Monte Carlo simulation

Estimating the Costs of Foundational Public Health Capabilities: A Recommended Methodology
Available at http://works.bepress.com/glen_mays/128/
Costing Foundational Services: Estimation of “projected” costs from current attainment ratings

A. Cost at current attainment level
B. Projected cost of full attainment

Costing Foundational Services: Current vs. Projected Costs with Simulated Uncertainty Parameters

Current Costs

Projected Costs

Estimated Resource Gap

Estimated the Costs of Foundational Public Health Capabilities: A Recommended Methodology Available at http://works.bepress.com/glen_mays/128/
Transforming policy & practice with cost estimation

- Align resources with preventable disease burden
- Identify and address inequities in resources
- Improve productivity and efficiency
- Demonstrate value: linking costs to outcomes
- Strengthen fiscal policy: financing mechanisms
For More Information

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