

Pricing strategy list

Matching Strategy to Mission, Context, and Goals

There is no single “right” way to price your offerings. The best pricing strategy depends on your organizational goals, the communities you serve, your cost structure, and your position in the market. As discussed in earlier sections, many model sharers fall into common pricing traps—like applying one-size-fits-all pricing, relying solely on cost calculations, or undercharging due to fear of losing partners.

A more effective approach is to be intentional: select pricing strategies that reflect the unique purpose, audience, and role of each offering within your broader earned revenue and sustainability plan.

In fact, many model sharers use different pricing strategies across their portfolio of offerings. For example:

- A high-touch, yearlong coaching program may use a cost-plus model to ensure sustainability
- A curriculum licensing package may use a value-based model aligned to market expectations
- A one-time workshop might follow a flat fee or sliding scale to maximize reach

This section introduces common pricing strategies, with practical descriptions, examples, and considerations to help you choose what fits best.

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1. Cost-Plus Pricing

What It Is

Cost-plus pricing is one of the most commonly used approaches by model sharers. You calculate the full cost of delivering your offering—including both direct and indirect expenses—and then add a markup or margin to cover additional needs like reinvestment, reserves, or subsidizing lower-paying partners.

Example in Practice

A model sharer offers school-based coaching for multilingual learner educators. To price their 2-day site visit, they calculate the total cost of delivery: coach preparation and delivery time, travel, and a portion of admin and overhead costs. Total cost = \$2,400. They add a 20% margin (\$480) to support flexibility and reinvestment, resulting in a final price of \$2,880.

Key Considerations



When this strategy works well:

- Easy to calculate and explain to internal teams or funders
- Ensures you're covering your delivery costs (as long as they're fully accounted for)
- Offers a helpful starting point for early-stage offerings or organizations new to pricing



Things to watch out for:

- May underprice offerings that have high perceived value or limited competition
- Doesn't take into account what similar organizations are charging
- Doesn't reflect your partners' ability or willingness to pay
- Markups may feel arbitrary or inflexible if not tailored to different contexts

2. Value-Based Pricing

What It Is

Value-based pricing sets your price based on how much the partner perceives your offering is worth—rather than just what it costs to deliver. This strategy centers the impact, outcomes, and uniqueness of your work, and often allows for higher prices when your service is seen as especially effective or differentiated.

Example in Practice

A model sharer offers a curriculum + training package proven to accelerate reading growth in dual-language classrooms. The actual delivery cost is \$10,000, but pilot feedback shows districts see it as a game-changer compared to less effective programs. Based on perceived value and competitor benchmarks, the organization prices it at \$15,000—reflecting its market positioning and impact.

Key Considerations



When this strategy works well:

- Helps capture more revenue from offerings with strong demand and results
- Positions your organization as high-value and outcomes-driven
- Creates flexibility to invest in innovation, reserves, or expanded reach



Things to watch out for:

- Requires strong evidence of value and clear communication to justify price
- May feel less transparent internally if cost calculations are unclear
- Could limit access unless paired with flexible pricing options (e.g., discounts, subsidies)

3. Sliding Scale Pricing

What It Is

Sliding scale pricing allows different partners to pay different amounts based on criteria such as size, budget, or need. This strategy is rooted in equity—helping ensure access for under-resourced schools or systems, while still allowing you to generate adequate revenue from better-resourced ones.

Example in Practice

A model sharer offers a virtual training series for instructional coaches. Rather than setting one fixed price, they create three pricing tiers based on partner size and Title I status:

- Small/rural districts: \$3,000
- Mid-size districts: \$5,000
- Large/urban districts: \$7,000

Key Considerations



When this strategy works well:

- Expands access and equity while maintaining overall sustainability
- Allows partners to opt into a price point that feels fair
- Builds goodwill and strengthens trust among mission-aligned communities



Things to watch out for:

- Requires clear criteria and thoughtful messaging to avoid confusion or distrust
- May leave revenue on the table if too many partners default to the lowest tier
- Can increase administrative complexity when customizing for many partners

Equity-Centered Sliding Scale Pricing Menu

Approach	How It Works	Sample Wording / Example
Pay-What-You-Can / Pay-What-Feels-Right	Participants choose their level of payment based on capacity, with no proof required. Emphasis on trust and self-assessment.	“Suggested contributions: \$50 – \$300. Choose what feels sustainable for you.” – NEP-style sliding scale National Equity Project
Dana / Generosity-Based Model	Inspired by spiritual traditions—no fee, participants contribute what moves them, supporting both teachers and community.	“No set registration fee. Please offer dana (gifts) according to your ability.” – East Bay Meditation Center East Bay Meditation Center+1
Tiered Income Brackets	Payments aligned with income or institutional budget tiers—transparent and proportional.	“For individuals/organizations with limited resources: \$150, mid-range: \$300, higher capacity: \$500+.”
Cross-Subsidy / Pay-It-Forward	Those with greater capacity pay more to subsidize lower-paying participants—explicitly framed as collective economic justice.	“Option A (supported): \$100, Option B (full cost): \$300, Option C (pay-it-forward): \$500.”
Equity-Informed Scale	Participants situate themselves along an economic justice “map” of privilege and systemic barriers, and pay accordingly.	“Please reflect on your access to resources and choose fairly—everyone paying a similar income percentage for the same offering.” – Embracing Equity model Embracing Equity

Scholarship-Reserved Slots	A set number of reduced-price spots are reserved for those with demonstrated need, administered confidentially.	“We reserve 20% of seats at reduced rate for folks with limited funding—contact us to access.”
Donor or Sponsor Subsidy	Funders or higher-capacity participants underwrite scholarships or low-cost seats for others.	“Grants from community sponsors allow us to invite grassroots community members to attend for free.”
Sliding by Access Level	Payment corresponds to the level of customization or access—ensuring essential participation remains affordable.	“Self-paced cohort: \$150–\$300; Facilitated small group: \$400–\$800; 1:1 coaching bundle: \$1,200–\$2,000.”

4. Tiered Pricing

What It Is

Tiered pricing offers multiple versions of a service at different price points, based on the level of support, features, or customization included. This strategy helps you serve a wider range of partners—including those with limited budgets—without underpricing your full-service offering.

Example in Practice

A model sharer offers professional development to schools through three tiers:

- Basic (Self-paced modules + 1 virtual session): \$2,500
- Standard (Modules + 3 virtual sessions + light coaching): \$5,000
- Premium (All of the above + in-person site visit and implementation plan): \$9,500

Key Considerations



When this strategy works well:

- Increases flexibility for partners with different budgets or needs
- Helps avoid over-discounting by offering limited versions of your service
- Encourages upselling for partners who want deeper engagement



Things to watch out for:

- Requires careful scoping to ensure each tier is cost-effective to deliver
- May confuse buyers if the differences between tiers aren't clear
- Needs strong systems to manage multiple service levels

5. Bundled Pricing

What It Is

Bundled pricing involves combining multiple offerings into a single package—usually at a slightly discounted rate compared to buying each element separately. It encourages partners to engage more deeply while helping you increase the average deal size.

Example in Practice

A model sharer offers curriculum licensing, training, and virtual coaching. Each can be purchased à la carte, but they also offer a bundled package:

- À la carte: Curriculum (\$4,000) + Training (\$6,000) + Coaching (\$5,000) = \$15,000
- Bundled package: All three for \$12,750

Key Considerations



When this strategy works well:

- Encourages greater partner investment and engagement
- Helps increase the average revenue per client
- Can streamline sales and contracting processes



Things to watch out for:

- Risk of undervaluing individual services if discounting too deeply
- May not be appealing to partners who only want one piece
- Requires internal clarity on costs and margins for bundled offerings

6. Freemium Model

What It Is

A freemium strategy offers a basic version of your offering for free, with optional paid upgrades that unlock additional value—such as deeper support, exclusive content, or expanded access. This strategy helps build awareness, lower the barrier to entry, and seed demand over time.

Example in Practice

A model sharer provides a free online toolkit for inclusive math instruction. Schools can access the core toolkit for free, but must pay to access:

- On-demand video modules: \$1,500
- Virtual facilitator training: \$3,500
- Ongoing implementation coaching: \$7,000

Key Considerations



When this strategy works well:

- Builds trust and exposure with new audiences
- Helps partners “try before they buy”
- Can generate demand for higher-tier services over time



Things to watch out for:

- Requires a clear plan to convert free users into paying ones
- May devalue your work if free offerings are too expansive
- Must ensure free services don’t create an unsustainable burden on your team

7. Pay-What-You-Can (or Pay-What-Feels-Fair)

What It Is

This strategy invites partners to choose their price—either from a suggested range or completely open-ended. It's grounded in trust, equity, and accessibility, and is most often used for smaller-scale offerings or digital resources.

Example in Practice

A model sharer hosts a monthly virtual learning session for educators on culturally responsive teaching. They suggest a payment of \$50 but offer the option to pay more, less, or nothing at all, based on participants' capacity and context.

Key Considerations



When this strategy works well:

- Signals deep commitment to access and equity
- Can build strong community goodwill and long-term loyalty
- Useful for testing content or reaching new audiences



Things to watch out for:

- Generates inconsistent revenue—less predictable for planning
- Requires clear messaging to reduce guilt or confusion
- Not ideal for high-touch services or core offerings

8. Performance-Based Pricing

What It Is

In this model, the price (or a portion of it) is tied to specific outcomes or results—like student growth, partner satisfaction, or implementation milestones. This strategy emphasizes accountability and shared success, and is usually used in more sophisticated or custom partnerships.

Example in Practice

A model sharer enters a contract with a district for implementation support. The district agrees to pay 70% of the total cost up front, with the remaining 30% tied to agreed-upon indicators—such as teacher participation rates or evidence of classroom practice shifts.

Key Considerations



When this strategy works well:

- Demonstrates confidence in your impact
- Strengthens trust and alignment with strategic partners
- Can differentiate you in competitive markets



Things to watch out for:

- Requires strong data systems and clarity on success metrics
- May create pressure to prioritize short-term wins over long-term learning
- Not recommended unless you have a proven track record and high partner trust

9. Licensing

What It Is

Licensing is a pricing strategy in which an organization grants other partners permission to use its intellectual property—such as curriculum, tools, or learning models—in exchange for a fee. This strategy is ideal for model sharers with well-developed, replicable content, and allows them to extend reach and impact without directly delivering the service themselves. License fees may be structured as a flat annual rate, per-user cost, or percentage-based royalty.

Example in Practice

A model sharer has created a research-based social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum for middle schoolers. Instead of delivering the curriculum in every district, they offer an annual site license for \$4,000 per school, which includes full access to digital curriculum materials, implementation guides, and periodic updates. Optional add-ons—like virtual coaching or community of practice access—are available at additional cost. This allows smaller districts to use the curriculum independently, while the model sharer earns revenue and maintains implementation fidelity through licensing terms.

Key Considerations



When this strategy works well:

- Enables broad impact without direct delivery
- Creates consistent revenue through renewable licensing agreements
- Keeps focus on innovation and content quality, not scaling staff



Things to watch out for:

- Requires clear agreements and guidance to protect model integrity
- May need legal, training, or tech infrastructure to support licensees
- Revenue potential depends on your content's value, uniqueness, and brand recognition

10. Subscription or Membership Pricing

What It Is

Subscription or membership pricing involves charging partners a recurring fee (monthly, quarterly, or annually) to access your offerings over time. It's best suited for services or products that deliver ongoing value—like virtual coaching, curriculum updates, or professional learning communities.

Example in Practice

A model sharer offers an annual \$1,500 subscription per school that includes access to an evolving bilingual curriculum, quarterly virtual trainings, and priority helpdesk support. Schools can renew annually to stay in the network.

Key Considerations



When this strategy works well:

- Builds predictable, recurring revenue
- Reinforces long-term partnerships and user retention
- Great for digital products, community-based models, or “always-on” support



Things to watch out for:

- Requires consistent delivery of value to justify renewals
- May need tiered offerings for different partner needs
- Can be administratively complex if scaled rapidly

11. Solidarity or Pay-It-Forward Pricing

What It Is

This equity-centered approach invites well-resourced partners to pay more than the base price to help subsidize others with fewer financial resources. It builds on shared responsibility and aligns deeply with mission-driven, justice-oriented organizations.

Example in Practice

A model sharer prices a 2-day institute at \$500 per participant—but adds an optional “solidarity rate” of \$750, with a note: *“If you’re able, this extra contribution allows us to offer scholarships to educators from under-resourced communities.”*

Key Considerations



When this strategy works well:

- Encourages generosity and equity in pricing
- Can expand access while still increasing revenue
- Deepens alignment with organizational values



Things to watch out for:

- Requires thoughtful messaging to avoid confusion or guilt
- Not all buyers will opt into paying more—unpredictable uptake
- May need clear tracking to assess how much is subsidized

12. Shared-Cost (Hybrid) Pricing

What It Is

In a shared-cost model, the cost of delivering a service is split between your organization, the partner, and possibly other funders (e.g., philanthropy). This helps maintain affordability while ensuring full cost recovery.

Example in Practice

A model sharer knows it costs \$20,000 to provide implementation support for a district. The district pays \$10,000, while a foundation grant covers the other \$10,000, allowing the organization to deliver high-impact services without stretching district budgets.

Key Considerations



When this strategy works well:

- Aligns affordability with sustainability
- Makes high-cost services feasible for smaller or lower-resourced partners
- Enables philanthropic support to stretch further



Things to watch out for:

- Requires coordination between multiple funders and systems
- Can lead to delays or inconsistencies if external funders aren't secured
- Needs careful messaging to ensure value perception isn't diluted

13. Early-Bird or Time-Based Pricing

What It Is

This strategy uses timing incentives—charging less for early registration, slower seasons, or lower-demand times. It encourages planning ahead and helps your organization better manage capacity.

Example in Practice

A model sharer offers its summer leadership institute at a discounted rate of \$3,000 for registrations before March 1. After that, the standard rate increases to \$3,500.

Key Considerations



When this strategy works well:

- Boosts early commitments and cash flow
- Smooths scheduling and planning for staff
- Encourages budgeting at optimal times for schools



Things to watch out for:

- Needs clear deadlines and consistent enforcement
- May unintentionally penalize slower-moving or under-resourced partners
- Could complicate pricing communications if not managed well

14. Competitive Pricing

What It Is

Competitive pricing involves setting your prices in relation to similar offerings in the market—aligning with, slightly undercutting, or differentiating based on value. It's often used when entering a crowded space or when buyers are comparing options.

Example in Practice

A model sharer entering the early literacy space sees that peer organizations charge \$5,000–\$6,000 for similar coaching packages. They set their initial price at \$4,750 to attract first-time adopters, with plans to increase later based on feedback and results.

Key Considerations



When this strategy works well:

- Positions your offering clearly in the market
- Useful for new programs or when value perception is still building
- Helps avoid sticker shock with procurement offices



Things to watch out for:

- May unintentionally devalue your offering if underpriced
- Can perpetuate underpricing if based on unsustainable peer rates
- Should be balanced with cost data and value-based rationale