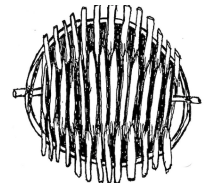


Nature Program Pricing and Valuation Worksheet

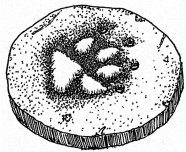


Introduction: This worksheet can help you determine some of the key factors that YOUR program can use to understand how to value your programs, camps, sessions or retreats. You will have to make your own decisions about how you feel about your work, and how you want to be seen by your customer, and you'll also have to do some market research at the local and regional level to actually achieve some numbers that can help you find your 'sweet spot' in your pricing and valuation.

My Mission: The purpose of this worksheet is to help you to ultimately make more money in your work as a 'forest educator', so I want to be perfectly transparent about this up front. If you like working at your current price point and are reluctant to change anything about how you run your programs, that is 100% fine with me. However, the reason I am offering this process is because I believe that almost ALL nature based educational experiences are underpriced, for what they deliver, both in the short term and long term impact that they have on the individual, family and community wide levels.



The Problem: When we undervalue our programs, we unknowingly keep our work from being taken seriously. We also perpetuate a cycle of scarcity and struggle at almost every level of our profession. This happens as a result of the mental patterns and perspectives that our mentors, leaders and instructors have passed down to us as well. We can also struggle because we believe a set of stories about our clients, students, campers and adults that are often skewed in a poverty mindset or our outright untrue. These mindsets are difficult to break (I know about this from my 3 and a half decades of personal experience.)



The Solution: To break this pattern and mindset, we need to do two things. The first is to get actual data to break down the stories that we have made up or repeated in our minds that are holding us back, that are built from the actual costs/expenses that we incur as we do this work.

The second is to understand the powerful outcomes and results that we get for our clients, and how it impacts their lives.

And third, we need to explore our income and opportunities.

Note: This process won't necessarily mean that you can suddenly double your program price in your market/community. Sometimes, it's just not possible, especially if you live in an area that is very low income, with a slow economy. In this scenario, this process will allow you to see your situation for what it is, and then give you an opportunity to make a series of decisions for yourself and your business. You might choose to move to an area that is more affluent so you can get paid what will support you and your family. You might shift your marketing messaging to reach different clients who will pay more for your services. You might decide to team up with other organizations who share your values and increase your numbers and bottom line. You might ask for funding to supplement your income shortfalls so you can take care of yourself without having to increase your current prices. The best plan is to have good data and explore your options with a grounded, realistic strategy that insures you will get your needs met as well as your staff and your family.

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The value of your program consists of a number of factors, some of which are 'hard numbers' and some are 'soft' or subjective, more malleable perceptions.

Step One in this process is determining your **direct** and **indirect** costs of running your specific unique program, camp or retreat:

Direct Costs: *These are costs that are incurred for your immediate program expenses. They can be separated by each individual program or they can be combined for the entire season or year.*

Staff Payroll and Payroll Costs, Craft Supplies, Program Food, Fuel, Heating, Program Supplies, Maintenance & Repairs, First Aid Supplies, Tools, etc.

Indirect Costs: *These are costs that are part of your business that are essential to the success of your work but are not specific to each individual program, retreat or camp. These costs are shared by ALL of your programs, and must be included in your overall expenses.*

Land/Space Rental, Lease or Mortgage, Electric, Insurance, Internet/Wifi, Website/Domain Hosting, Virtual Assistant, Online Services like Canva/Constant Contact/Aweber/online booking services, Stripe or other online payment service, your computer/laptop/phone/tablet, Bookkeeping/Accounting Services, Vehicle, Office Supplies, Trainings & Certifications, phone services, Postage, Advertising, Promotional Merchandise/Giveaways, Presentations & Outreach Programs, Networking Events, Professional Organizations & Meetings, etc.

Note: If your work is supported by a parent organization or non-profit that provides some of these expenses, you **MUST** get realistic estimates of those expenses so you can determine the **TRUE** cost of offering this work regardless of who pays for them. Otherwise, your valuation/prices will always be off. Ballpark estimates are okay for this worksheet.

- You should have most of this information already as part of your ongoing business accounting, so if possible, you should use **ACTUAL** data and numbers, not estimates. If you are just starting out and you haven't run anything yet, it's okay to make your best guess on these costs.
- If you are just starting out, try to find someone who is running a similar program and ask them to help you get a realistic idea of how much these costs are going to be for your work in your area.

Fill out the worksheet on the next page to the best of your ability. If you don't know what some are, you can take your best guess, and then you can adjust it as you get real numbers later.

Do the best you can, and don't **LOW-BALL** it by being an optimist. In almost **ALL** cases, these costs **ALL** go up over time, sometimes very quickly and without warning, so being realistic is going to help you **NOT STRUGGLE** in the future if that happens.

Part of being a good Forest Educator Director and Leader is the ability to have contingency plans in place for safety in your program as well as in the financial aspects of your work, and it starts here. Staying grounded and forward thinking is vital to your long term success.

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Step One: Determining Your Program's Direct and Indirect Expenses

Direct Program Expenses: These are specific to the program you are running.

Staff Salaries
Payroll Expenses
Craft and Art Supplies
Program Supplies
Tools & Materials
Books/Videos/Journals/Printing
First Aid Kit/Supplies/Staff Training
Contingency Fund for Unexpected Surprise Items
Portable Toilets Rental/Cleaning Supplies
Program Food/Snacks/Kitchen Staff/Catering
Gas/Vehicle Expenses/Mileage Reimbursement

Gather these numbers and add 15-20% to the total to support any unexpected costs that might arise before, during and after your program.

Your Total Direct Program Expenses: _____

If needed, do one of these for **each program you run**, if their expenses are different or not easily combined. This way, you can start to understand why certain programs are priced the way they are based on those differences.

Indirect Program Expenses: These are costs that are part of the entire business budget, which need to be factored in so each program can pay a pro-rated share.

Lease/Rent/Mortgage for Program Space or Land
Electric/Heat/Cooling/Utilities
Internet-Wifi/Website Domain & Hosting/Email List/Zoom, Canva, Stripe Account, etc.
Phone/Cell Phone
Business Consulting/Training/Mentoring/Support
Virtual Assistant/Bookkeeping/Accounting/Legal/Tax Support
Administrative Hours for Staff or Assistant to Register Students, Update Website, Social Media Posts, Hiring Process, etc.
Insurance/Liability, etc
Office Supplies/Printing/Copying/Desk/Chairs/Office Equipment
Subscriptions/Memberships/Staff Searching
T-shirts/Stickers/Hats/Water Bottles/Promotional Items

Gather these numbers or create estimates for them based on current prices for these items. Take the total of your indirect expenses and add 15-20% to the total to account for inflation or other unexpected expenses.

Your Total Indirect Program Expenses: _____

Combined Total of All Program & Indirect Expenses: _____

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Okay, at this point, we need to Celebrate! That was a lot of work! Congratulations for your effort to put this together. Please know that this WILL pay off as we go through this process.

Mindset Check Question:

How do you feel getting all of these number together and added up? Does it feel clarifying & exciting? Does it feel worrisome and overwhelming? Anxious? Freeing? All of these feelings are okay, and it's okay to feel them and talk about it, and get support, if needed. It can be hard as we begin making steps towards positive change.

Step Two: Determining **YOUR** salary/cost/expenses

It's important to remember that NONE of this incredible and valuable work with children, teens or adults will happen unless **we are making this happen**. **WE** are the **ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT** that makes the 'forest program' engine run.

It's important to include all of your needs in our budgeting, which means we need to know what that means on a financial level.

Add up the following monthly personal expenses: (Use a separate sheet of paper if needed.)

Monthly Rent/Mortgage
 Monthly Utilities/Electric/Heat/Internet
 Monthly Food Costs
 Monthly Cell Phone Service
 Monthly Credit Card Payments
 Monthly Streaming Services Payments
 Monthly Car Payment/Insurance
 Monthly Gas/Fuel/Repair/Inspection/Maintenance/Tires
 Monthly Clothing/Household Items
 Monthly Student Loan Payments
 Monthly Health Care/Health Insurance/Medication Costs
 Monthly Pet Food/Care Costs
 Other Monthly Expenses
 Saving for yearly travel/vacation
 Saving for 'nest egg' or retirement

Your Total Monthly Personal Expenses: _____

Total ANNUAL Personal Expenses (x12) : _____

Please Note: If you share your expenses with a partner/roommate or family member, please include the **FULL** amount of YOUR expenses, as if they are NOT contributing. This means if the rent is \$1,200 per month and you are paying \$600, list the \$1,200 as your rent anyway, because it's the likely amount you would need if you lose that support. This will give you a true estimate of what your financial needs are, and the amount you save from your 'deal' can go into savings for car repair, first and last month's rent if you need to move at some future point or possibly a down payment on your own land or house purchase.

Total Yearly Forest Program Expense:

Annual Personal Expenses + Program Expenses + Indirect Program Expenses = \$ _____

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Step Three: Program Pricing & Valuation Research

This step is important to demonstrate what the price range is for programs similar to yours, that serve similar clients as you, to show you both the low end and high end in your area or region.

Pick five (5) programs that are a match for your current nature based offerings.

In other words, if you run a nature based **day camp** in the summer, find five other **day camps**. Don't pick nature based **OVERNIGHT** camps to compare, because they are very, very different in expenses and pricing!

If you have several different types of program, like, a preschool or kindergarten as well as workshops and also camps, try to find 3-5 similar programs for **EACH** one.

| Program Name | Price per student/client: | Notes: |
|--------------|---------------------------|--------|
| 1. _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2. _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3. _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4. _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5. _____ | _____ | _____ |

Your notes about each program can include their capacity and other factors that can greatly influence why they are priced at what they are. (Do they serve 10 students at a time? Do they serve 200 at a time? How many sessions do they run the entire year? Do they receive grant funding or donations or have any corporate sponsorships? Are they supported by a larger parent organization that keeps their prices much lower than others in your area? How are they different than yours in important ways?) You can use a full sheet of paper for each one, if you like.

Bonus Points are given if you call the program and talk to the director or staff and ask them these questions, so you can get a real picture of their organization, rather than making guesses. But don't do it 'on the sly' by posing as a potential parent, because, they can see your number and name and it's not cool especially if they find out. If you do talk to a current client/parent who knows them, take their impressions with a grain of salt and know that their info may be skewed in ways that are significant.

Remember that we are trying to understand WHY they are pricing their programs they way they do, and we aren't trying to discover 'dirty laundry' or get into gossip or anything that doesn't have integrity and honesty.

Please don't skip this step. It's vital to get data/real numbers, and to understand those numbers and why they might be different than yours.

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Step Four: Understanding Customer Perception & Valuation

This step is partly about the way YOU see your work and it's value, and also how your STUDENT or client or participant sees your work and it's value.

This is the most 'subjective' part of this process, and it's also incredibly important, because it has to do with how you position your service or program in the eyes of your students. It can dramatically change how they see and understand their value of your work and it's results.

I think it's best to illustrate how this works using one of my own camps as an example.

Hawk Circle Wilderness Summer Camp

Price for Camper (One Week): **\$1,200**

Number of Campers per Session: **12-15**

Approximate Program Income: **\$14,400-18,000** (not deducting for camp scholarships)

Facilities & Features: Camper Cabins, 200+ Private Acres, Freshly Prepared Healthy Meals, Staff/Instructors Trained in Wilderness Skills, Adventure, Community and Leadership Building Skills, Positive Camper Attention.

At our most basic level, these are the factual description of what we do:

- Residential Summer Youth Camp in Upstate NY
- Childcare for Youth with Activities
- Nature Skills & Crafts Programs
- Themed Wilderness Experiences

(These are straightforward, easy to quantify and measure for basic 'expenses' based pricing. We can look at other programs to see how they compare at this basic level.)

The outcomes and results we aim to deliver:

- Build Confidence & Self Esteem
- Create Opportunities for Building Friendships & Relationship Skills
- Leadership, Problem-Solving Skills, Failure and Success Challenges
- Artistic, Creative and Innovative Crafts & Projects
- Building a profound relationship with Nature
- Introducing Opportunities to Build a Positive Work Ethic and Attention to Detail
- Opportunities to 'Enter the Flow'
- Rites of Passage Experiences & Self Awareness & Discovery

(These are subjective values that are more difficult to categorize and evaluate for us as directors because they are not necessarily something that we are 'guaranteeing' that our campers will achieve or get.)

Now it's time to ask and answer some very important questions. (See Next Page)

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Question: Do we want to be seen as a ‘**Basic Overnight Camp**’ or as a ‘**Human Development/Leadership Experience Wilderness Camp**’?

Question: Does the fact that we **don’t** have a swimming pool, 16 passenger vans for field trips or a rock climbing wall mean that we feel that we can’t charge as much as those other camps that DO have those features?

Question: Is our **lack** of pool/van/field trips something that is **built into** our program experience by **design**, or is it because we can’t afford those things?

Question: Is offering a small program that creates opportunities for those leadership experiences and personal development aspects as it’s main intention/mission **enough to justify our reasoning for our higher pricing**, even compared to camps with many more features and facilities?

Question: How do we create and maintain our **messaging** to reflect our mission and values to inform parents who are looking for these kinds of programs for their children/teens? What are the aspects of our messages that are most desirable for parents & campers that can insure that they feel good about what they are purchasing?

Note: *These questions are directly related to our Hawk Circle Camp. Your program’s questions may be tweaked in different ways to reflect your own values and specific features.*

The bottom line is that you get to choose how your program is positioned and perceived, and which values/outcomes & results you deliver.

You can be seen as an **Artist** camp, or a **Writers** camp, or a **Leadership** camp, or a **Naturalist** camp, or a **Self-Esteem** building camp, or _____ fill in the blank.

YOU can control the narrative of how your program is ‘**seen as**’ by your clients and the public in general.

This understanding directly influences the way you and your work is perceived & valued, which directly relates to how your pricing is understood and accepted.

For Hawk Circle, our small group size demonstrated to our camper parents that we were committed to personal attention & quality instruction. Less ‘features’ meant that we were focused on designing experiences that build upon each element and eliminates distractions that detract from that end result. Our experienced instructors meant that our skills and activities were authentic, real and not ‘keeping campers busy’ kind of stuff.

In retrospect, we probably could have increased our camp tuition by \$500-700 and it would have probably helped us get more campers because parents would see this as being a more valuable experience rather than the bargain that it was for 35 years!

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Step Four Worksheet:

List your program(s) below and indicate what the outcomes are that your clients receive, and the kinds of benefits that you provide to your families/students. This can be a comprehensive list that can include everything from a parental email each week updating them on your work with their children to inner growth and communication skills, etc.

Be as thorough as you can. You can include some of your staff as well as parents if that helps.

List your top five 'outcomes' here in a sentence form.

Outcome/Benefit One:

Outcome/Benefit Two:

Outcome/Benefit Three:

Outcome/Benefit Four:

Outcome/Benefit Five:

Now begin writing down questions that you need to answer like I demonstrated in the example of Hawk Circle Camp. (Write down as many as you can, on an additional page if needed.)

Question One:

Question Two:

Question Three:

Question Four:

Question Five:

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Step Five: Putting Everything Together

At this point, we need to pull all of these ideas together and see what we are dealing with. To do this, we need to include our data and our 'subjective values' and see how things stack up.

Let's bring in the total program expenses from the bottom of page 4.

Total Yearly Program Expense: \$ _____

Add 25% of this total to this number: \$ _____

This should be your projected **income goal** for all of your combined programs, and also include grant income, donations and other sales.

If this is a scary amount, that's okay. It's normal if you are used to doing everything you can to keep your costs as low as possible, to feel a little weird or awkward about it.

Let's look at your program income, and see how it stacks up. Use your **typical program attendance average**, not your maximum capacity, so you can have a 'real world' picture:

| <u>Program Name</u> | <u>Program Price</u> | <u>Average Group Size</u> | <u>Total Income</u> |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| One: _____ | Price per Student: \$ _____ | X (number of students) = | \$ _____ |
| Two: _____ | Price per Student: \$ _____ | X (number of students) = | \$ _____ |
| Three: _____ | Price per Student: \$ _____ | X (number of students) = | \$ _____ |
| Four: _____ | Price per Student: \$ _____ | X (number of students) = | \$ _____ |
| Five: _____ | Price per Student: \$ _____ | X (number of students) = | \$ _____ |

Estimated Total Income from ALL Programs = \$ _____

Subtract the Total Yearly Program Expenses + 25% = \$ _____

+/- Profit/Loss = \$ _____

Is this final amount a positive number? If the answer is yes, then this is good news. If you can fill your programs each year to the average or maximum student capacity and keep your costs contained to your budgeting estimates, you are doing great!

If this final amount is a negative, then you have a few different options. It's not bad if that's the case. It just means you have to make some decisions on how you might increase your income to make it a positive. Our last step is going to look at those options.

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Step Six: Brainstorming Your Program Sustainability

Okay, at this point, you are thinking about a few things: **One**, increasing your income to get all of your expenses covered. **Two**, you are thinking about how YOU value your work and your programs. **Three**, you are maybe thinking about how your CLIENTS value your work, and the outcomes you offer them.

Think carefully about your questions from **Step Four/page 8**. Do you feel that your program price is comparable to the value of the outcomes you provide?

Think also about your Program Pricing Research Data from Step Three. Is your program pricing on the low, middle or high end of those programs that are similar to yours?

Helpful Questions:

- Do you feel comfortable raising your price to make your program sustainable?
- What is the biggest concern you have about raising your price?
- Could you create a program that has a larger group size that would bring in enough income to meet your budget shortfall?
- Do you feel that your ability to achieve those outcomes will be impacted negatively if you increase your group size? (To make more income.)
- Do you feel like you could offer **one or two** of your current programs at a **premium price** that could make up the difference in your income shortfall?
- Can you realistically offer **another program** that wouldn't take up too much of your time and resources away from what you are already doing?
- Can you **fundraise** to make up the budget shortfall? List all sources you can for this.
- Is there a possibility of doing some kind of collaboration with another organization or agency that shares your values and could use your help and expertise?

At this point, **all options** should be on the table, and it's important to brainstorm freely, without making any decisions or crossing any ideas out of hand. If you have a good idea, write it down, and do the math for it, including both income and expenses (estimates) so you can see it's potential impact very clearly.

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I usually do a few things that help my creativity flow during the 'brainstorming' process.

Rule Number One: In the first session, ALL IDEAS ARE TO BE LISTED/SHARED and RECORDED, NO MATTER HOW STRANGE. DO NOT EDIT THEM OR DISCARD THEM!

Rule Number Two: Bring in friends, business supporters with experience, and even former students who are willing to be helpful. You never know where a great idea will come from!

Rule Number Three: Before you start the session, do something fun and exciting that will make you all laugh and play. Video games. Twister. Connect Four. Chinese Checkers with running play by play announcers. Get loud and play some different kinds of music too.

You want to get your energy flowing, and you want to see things from different and unique perspectives, so you aren't stuck in an 'everyday' kind of mindset.

Rule Number Four: Give people the simplest, most easily understood version of the problem. Think something like "I need twenty more students to fill my program" or "I need to find a way to get \$14K to meet next year's budget". Don't make it complicated.

Then give people paper/pens and **fifteen minutes** to write down their **first ten ideas**.

Then share them out loud with everyone, recording them/listing them so they are visual.

Then repeat, getting ten more. Do this at least **four times**.

If you have four people brainstorming, you should have 200 ideas listed. Note which ones are doubles/repeats, but again, NO EDITING OR CRITIQUING AT THIS STAGE!!!!

Rule Number Five: **Save all of your notes**, sticky notes, poster board, white board drawings and anything else that comes from this first session. Again, don't edit them or 'narrow them down' at this stage. Not all of these ideas may be feasible, but they can still be a catalyst for new ways of things that can help you springboard to even better ideas. Take turns writing ideas down for each other as you share.

Rule Number Six: Take breaks, have some great food, keep having fun in between. Nerf battles are always recommended! Feed our brains, and then, when you are finished, sleep on these ideas. Give everyone copies of them so they can keep 'percolating' on them overnight.

Rule Number Seven: Have a meeting and begin narrowing down some of these ideas. Try to get down to 15-20 of the most promising ones at the end of two hours. Again, stay positive and playful and hopeful and BELIEVE that this is going to work. Trust and faith in our abilities to find solutions is critical here.

• Take your best three ideas, and run with them. Do some research and begin setting things in motion as soon as you can. Make whatever changes you need to get them to work. Update your website, your social media marketing offers and your yearly business plan, and start putting it into action!

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Final Thoughts/Request for Feedback

If you enjoyed this worksheet and found it helpful to you, please **send me an email** and let me know your story and how things turned out. I love hearing about any insights you had while doing this process, and what kinds of 'AHA' moments you might have discovered, too.

If you struggled with parts of this, or get stuck doing this process, and really could use some help, please contact me at the email at the bottom of the page, and we can set up a time to connect and help you get moving in the right direction.

Thank you for the work you do, and for your willingness to try this process, which might be challenging and very new to some of you, and for making a difference in the lives of so many people!

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