Before You Start

You have accessed the CPQ&R because of an interest in getting better data on costs of your current early learning program and possibly to model different policy options. You will be most successful in using the CPQ&R if you identify early learning cost and funding questions to be answered while utilizing the CPQ&R. Questions to consider include:

> *What is the existing structure of the current early learning system?*
>
> *What is it we would like to change or accomplish?*

There are lots of questions that will drive your approach to using the CPQ&R. Some of the most common are:

> *Do we want to maintain the current quality level of the program?*
> *Do we want to expand the number of children served?*
> *Do we want to increase the length of day children attend the program?*
> *Do we want to enhance the quality of the program?*

Think about what can be realistically accomplished and the timeframe for which you will work to achieve these goals. Who on your team will help to achieve these goals?

Once you have established the purpose for using the CPQ&R, you will want to establish a CPQ&R Team to help answer funding questions and collect the existing data. This information will be input into the CPQ&R Implementation Plan to help answer your questions and move toward your established early learning system goals.

Gathering the CPQ&R Team

The CPQ&R Team should include key personnel to help in the Implementation Plan. It is important to revisit your purpose for using the CPQ&R and consider what team members will help with the necessary data collection, funding determinations or help in setting goals. For instance, if your goal is to increase the number of students with special needs in early learning settings, you will want to include a team member from special education. Team members to consider may include:

> The CPQ&R is pre-loaded with demographic information in Worksheet C and default unit cost estimates in Worksheet B so users can immediately begin using the calculator. Users can change these default input assumptions as they see fit to better represent the cost data they have available. In cases where the user does not (yet) possess such data, the defaults in the calculator will support the CPQ calculations.

- Staff working on the implementation of publicly funded early learning programs.
- Staff specializing in the quality of early learning implementation (members of QRIS systems or in charge of accreditation or curricula reviews).
- Personnel working on the budget or content of early learning, child care subsidy, Head Start, Adult Child and Food Nutrition Programs, Title I, or special education.
- Staff working on teacher certification/qualifications, teacher salary data collection, number of certified teachers, etc.
- A team member with moderate knowledge using EXCEL spreadsheets.

After the CPQ&R team has been selected, you will want the team to begin to gather the required data to input into the CPQ&R. It is suggested that the team use the CPQ&R Data Checklist and assign roles for each section of the data gathering. The team should consider where the data currently exists and where have we answered these data questions previously (i.e. NIEER State of Preschool yearbook). In addition, the team should attempt to prioritize the data collection, focusing first on those cost categories which they believe will have the greatest impact on cost.