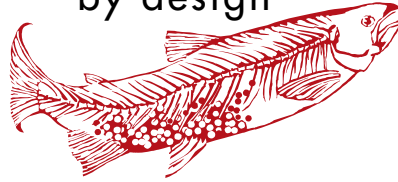


Erica Fielder Studio

interpreting our heritage

by design



since 1983

"What's My Budget?" Checklist

For Outdoor Interpretive Displays, Panels, Kiosks, and Exhibits

Erica Fielder Studio © 2010

Erica Fielder Studio [EFS] put together this Budget Checklist to help you determine an accurate and complete cost for your interpretive panel or outdoor display project.

- **Fabrication:** Why consider fabrication first? If you don't budget adequately for fabrication and stands, you may not be able to pay for a quality design. Estimate how many panels, kiosks, or exhibits you'd like, then consult with EFS to determine the appropriate materials for your project. Depending on the cost of your design work, estimate between 20% and 30% of total budget for panel fabrication and stands, not including tax and shipping.
- **Theme Building:** Themes go beyond general topics to determine what messages you'll communicate with your displays. (A topic is "mangrove trees." A theme is "mangrove trees keep our water clean.") Taking time to come up with well-thought-out themes can save an enormous amount of time in the long run and greatly improve the chances that your visitors will get something out of your displays. Please include EFS in this process so we can assist you with your writing skills. We can also do all the research and write text for you if you're short on resources or time to do it in-house.
- **Research:** Do you have complete and up-to-date documentation about your site and the topics your interpretive displays will cover? If not, will you want EFS to do research for you, or does your agency have the resources to do the research within your time line? Consider the following and budget accordingly so that your interpretive displays convey accurate, interesting, and up-to-date information.

✓ **Content:** Will EFS need to do research for the overall interpretive messages and for the text?

✓ **Illustrations:** Graphics showing historical, botanical, biological, geological, meteorological, or other scientific information will require additional research. Consider whether you have the resources to provide this information in-house, or whether EFS will need to do additional investigation.

✓ **Experts:** Do you have historians, scientists, or other experts who will be able to answer all the questions your panel process raises? If not, EFS uses a team of experts in these fields to make sure your information is accurate.

■ **Text:** If you're building interpretive displays, you have something to tell visitors. Good interpretive text conveys your message and makes a connection between your visitors and your site. Technical, textbook-y, lengthy, or poorly written text will only confuse visitors. Therefore, it's important to budget for having EFS write your text professionally. Avoid writing text by committee.

■ **Illustrations:** Original, hand-drawn, or painted illustrations tend to engage visitors longer at a display than do photos or clip art. Such illustrations also deliver a more detailed level of information than photographs. However, illustrations are more expensive than photographs, so discuss illustrations with EFS to determine the number and kind of illustrations that will work best with your panel ideas.

■ **Photographs:** If your project requires photographs, consider the following:

✓ Will your agency provide the photographs, or will EFS provide them? If your agency hires a photographer, make sure the photographer is experienced and can provide high-resolution, professional photos.

✓ If you have historic photos you plan on using, they may need cleaning and sharpening. Please do not clean and sharpen them yourself unless you have specific Photoshop skills! Better yet, give them to us to prepare for you.

■ **Maps:** Maps are expensive to create and can add to the cost of your project. Check to see whether existing maps are up to date and saved in a digital format (with layers intact) that can be opened by Adobe Illustrator. EFS can help you decide if your maps will need to be recreated.

■ **Custom or Nonstandard Mounts:** Artistic or otherwise nonstandard frames and pedestals can cost considerably more. Consult with EFS if you are considering mounts with sculptural elements. For most projects, we recommend using standard mounts created by a reputable panel fabrication company.

- **Sales Taxes:** State sales taxes will differ depending on how fabrication is purchased. Generally speaking, EFS provides a service that is usually non-taxable, while the Fabricator provides a product that is taxable. Taxes vary considerably from state to state, so find out how your state taxes interpretive projects.
- **Shipping Costs:** The cost of shipping heavy panels and frames will add dollars to your budget. Although we can't determine the final charges, we can give you an estimate.
- **Panel Installation:** Once you have your panels and stands or frames in hand, who will install them for you? Do you have a team of volunteers who can install for free? Is there an agency maintenance person who can do it? However you install your panels, make sure they comply with the current ADA guidelines. At EFS we can help you come up with the correct height and placement for panel accessibility.

Thank you for using this checklist. If you have any questions, or you'd like to suggest additions to the checklist, please don't hesitate to email us at efielder@mcn.org. May all your interpretive projects meet your budgets!



Ten Mile Bridge and Estuary, Mendocino Coast, CA, California Department of Transportation.

Samples of interpretive displays from Erica Fielder Studio. Please visit www.ericafielderstudio.com for more examples.

Point Cabrillo Light House, Sunken Ship Frolic, Mendocino Coast, CA, California Department of Parks and Recreation.

