



# Occupational Classification and Funding Traceability

## What Work Are We Paying For?

*Why systems lose track of work — and what that does to quality, funding, price, and accountability*

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**American Support Standards Initiative (AMSI) is an applied Whole-Quality initiative under the Whole-Quality Institute (WQI). Within WQI, AMSI applies the Whole-Quality method to personal and social support services by making service quality visible through defined service quality objects, work performed, results produced, service boundaries, evidence, Quality Outcome Criteria, and bounded Quality Claim Statements.**

## Overview

Funding systems pay for services. Pricing systems assign value to services. But both depend on something more basic: what work is actually being done, what result is produced, and what service quality state must be supported.

In many support-service systems, this question is not clearly answered. Funding and pricing are often attached to program names, service categories, job titles, administrative rules, or reimbursement codes. These labels may be necessary for administration, but they do not always describe the real work performed or the results produced for the person receiving support.

This creates a gap between what is funded, what people actually do, what results are produced, and what quality state the service is expected to realize. When that gap exists, funding becomes hard to trace, price becomes hard to interpret, and quality-support needs become invisible.

This publication updates the original OCF1 analysis by connecting occupational classification and funding traceability to the AMSI/WQI quality-state logic and to the related IQI distinction between quality, funding, price, and asset worth. The central point is simple: funding and price can be interpreted responsibly only after the service quality object, work, result, boundary, and required quality state are made visible.

## 1. Work Is Real — Labels Are Not Enough

People do real work every day. They assist with daily living, support behavior, help people participate in work and community life, coordinate with others, monitor stability, and respond to changing needs. This work exists independently of program labels, funding categories, job titles, or billing codes.

Programs and employers define jobs, but jobs do not fully define the work. A job title may hide different work, and the same work may appear under different job titles. To understand what is really happening, a stable work reference is needed.

That is what occupational classification, including the SOC system, provides: a consistent way to identify types of work independent of how programs label them. Occupational classification anchors the definition of work before funding or price is interpreted.

## **2. Service Quality State Must Be Determined Before Funding Can Be Interpreted**

Under AMSI logic, a service consists of work performed together with the result produced. The service quality state is the interpreted condition of that service in relation to defined Quality Outcome Criteria, evidence, service boundary, and evaluation period.

Funding does not define this quality state. Price does not define it either. Funding and price become meaningful only when they can be connected to the service quality state they are expected to support.

The practical sequence should therefore be:

- identify the support service quality object;
- identify the occupational work actually performed;
- identify the result expected or produced;
- define the service boundary and relevant context;
- determine the required service quality state using Quality Factors, Indicators, Outcome Criteria, and evidence;
- then ask whether funding, price, staffing, supervision, continuity, technology, and documentation are sufficient to support that quality state.

When this sequence is reversed, funding labels determine what is visible. The system may pay for a service category without knowing whether the funded work can actually realize the required quality state.

## **3. Why Systems Lose Track of Work**

Most funding systems were not built around occupations. They were built around eligibility, service definitions, administrative structures, program categories, and reimbursement rules. As a result, a system may say “this funding supports this service,” without clearly saying which occupational work is being performed within that service.

Over time, this produces confusion. The same work is called different things. Different work is grouped together. Payment does not match actual responsibility. Service intensity may be reduced without being named. Higher-skill work may be hidden inside a lower-paid category.

The system may still run, but accountability weakens. It becomes difficult to know whether a funding amount supports the work needed to produce the required result.

## **4. Blended Work Is Normal, Not Exceptional**

In real life, support work is often blended. One worker, in one job, may provide personal care, behavioral support, employment support, communication support, transportation assistance, medication reminders within permitted scope, family coordination, and documentation.

This is not an exception. It is typical. But many funding systems assume one role, one category, and one rate. When real work is more complex than the category, parts of the work become unclear, unpaid, or misclassified.

Occupational classification does not eliminate blended work. It makes blended work visible. It allows the system to say: this job includes work from these occupational domains, in these proportions or contexts, producing these results. Only then can funding and price be interpreted responsibly.

## **5. Where Price Enters — and Where Confusion Begins**

Price is always present: wages, hourly rates, reimbursement levels, administrative costs, and provider payment models. It is tempting to treat price as a signal of quality or as a Quality Indicator. But price does not describe what work is done, how well it is done, what result is achieved, or whether the service quality state is supported.

Price reflects funding rules, cost structures, labor markets, geography, administrative burden, workforce scarcity, and policy choices. It belongs to the economic domain. Quality belongs to the service domain: work performed and results produced against defined criteria.

This does not make price unimportant. Price is important because it may support, distort, fragment, or prevent quality. But price is not quality itself.

## **6. Initial Price and Lifecycle Support Needs**

A low initial price may appear efficient while hiding future quality-support needs. In support services, the “lifecycle” is not a physical asset lifecycle but the ongoing continuity of support over time: onboarding, relationship formation, worker competence, supervision, documentation, reassessment, crisis prevention, transition support, and maintenance of stable results.

If the initial price does not support these lifecycle conditions, the system may appear affordable at the beginning but produce later costs through turnover, instability, emergency interventions, lost participation, health deterioration, or repeated service failure.

Therefore, the relevant question is not only “What is the price?” The better question is: “Does this price and funding arrangement support the work, continuity, competence, evidence, and lifecycle maintenance required for the service quality state?”

## **7. Funding Traceability as a Quality-Support Condition**

Funding traceability means being able to connect funding to the work and support conditions it is expected to enable. It does not mean that funding becomes a Quality Indicator. It means that funding must be mapped to the service quality state.

A funding arrangement should make visible whether it supports:

- the occupational work actually required;
- the time and intensity needed to produce the expected result;
- the competence and supervision needed for safe and effective performance;
- continuity of support and relationship stability;
- documentation and evidence sufficient to support a bounded quality claim;
- reassessment and adjustment when the person's needs or context change.

Where these conditions are not supported, the gap should be visible as a quality-support gap, not hidden as a mere budget constraint.

## **8. Price, Value, and Worth Are Not the Same as Quality**

The IQI work on infrastructure quality and asset worth clarifies a useful distinction for AMSI. Worth or value may be influenced by quality, but it does not define quality. In support services, price and value should be interpreted after the service quality state is understood.

A service may have a low price and poor quality because the work needed for the required result is not supported. A service may have a higher price because it includes more complex work, higher competence, continuity, supervision, or evidence requirements. Without work and result traceability, the price cannot be interpreted fairly.

This means price may be relevant to value analysis, affordability analysis, purchasing decisions, and policy design. But it should not be used as a substitute for identifying work, evaluating results, or determining the service quality state.

## **9. Why This Matters**

If we do not clearly identify work, we cannot connect work to results, compare services fairly, explain differences in price, identify quality-support gaps, or determine whether funding supports the required quality state.

This affects everyone:

- people receiving support, because required work may be invisible or unsupported;
- workers, because real responsibilities may not be reflected in pay or classification;
- providers, because expectations may exceed funded capacity;
- funders, because payment may follow labels rather than real work and results;
- regulators and oversight bodies, because compliance may be visible while quality-support gaps remain hidden.

## **10. A Practical Shift: Make Work and Quality State Clear**

The solution is not to make funding systems more complicated. The solution is to make the basic dependency chain visible: occupation, work, result, service, quality state, evidence, and then funding support.

A practical system should begin by asking:

- What work is actually being done?

- Which occupation or occupations describe that work?
- What result is expected or produced?
- What service quality state is required?
- What evidence is needed to support that determination?
- Does the funding and price structure support the required work, result, continuity, and evidence?
- Where are the quality-support gaps?

When these questions are answered in order, funding becomes traceable, differences in price become explainable, and quality can be discussed without confusing it with cost.

## Conclusion

Funding and pricing systems depend on something they often do not clearly define: the work itself.

When work is not clearly identified, funding becomes disconnected, price becomes difficult to interpret, and service quality state becomes harder to support. Price does not measure quality. It reflects economic conditions around the service and may also reflect the consequences of quality failure or the cost of preventing such failure.

The problem is not price. The problem is using price in place of clearly identified work, properly evaluated results, evidence-supported quality determination, and visible quality-support needs.

When work is aligned with occupations and connected to results, the system becomes clearer. Funding becomes traceable. Price can be understood for what it is: part of the economic context that should support the service quality state, not a measure of quality itself.

**Final line:** If work is not clearly identified, neither funding nor price can be clearly understood — and the service quality state cannot be responsibly supported.

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