



CPB1-2026

CAN PRICE BE A QUALITY INDICATOR?

Price, Funding, Value, and Support Service Quality State Determination

AMSI Analytical Publication within the Whole Quality Methodology

Updated Edition - August 2026

AMERICAN SUPPORT STANDARDS INITIATIVE

Abstract

Price is often placed beside service measures as though it were one more Quality Indicator. This is understandable because people receiving support, families, providers, payers, regulators, and policymakers must all consider affordability, reimbursement, sustainability, and value. Nevertheless, price does not describe a dimension of Function Realization, the Support Work performed, the Support Result realized, or the actual Support Service Quality State. It is an economic variable, not a Quality Indicator.

CPB1 updates the AMSI position using the stabilized Whole Quality architecture. The analysis begins with a declared Support Service Quality Object, its Support Intended Functions and Support Intended Results, Boundaries, Interfaces, Service Period, Core Quality Factors, Core Quality Indicators, Context-Specific Quality Outcome Criteria, Critical Service Conditions, and Evidence basis. Price, cost, funding, reimbursement, and budget are then examined as economic and Reference-Layer conditions that may support or constrain Function Realization without becoming quality itself.

The principal conclusion is narrow but important: price cannot serve as a Quality Indicator, a Context-Specific Quality Outcome Criterion, or Evidence of a satisfactory Support Service Quality State merely because it is low, high, approved, paid, or within a target range. Funding conditions may still be quality-relevant when they materially affect time, continuity, Competence, coordination, technology, access, Evidence, or another condition needed for Function Realization. Their effect must be demonstrated rather than assumed.

Controlled distinction	Meaning in CPB1
Quality Indicator	An observable sign associated with a Quality Factor and derived from the declared Quality Object, Intended Functions and Results, and relevant Failure-Mode Families.
Price	The monetary amount charged, paid, reimbursed, authorized, or budgeted. It is an economic variable and does not establish the Quality State.
Funding support condition	A Reference-Layer or economic condition that may enable, restrict, delay, fragment, transfer, or make unsustainable the conditions needed for Function Realization.
Actual Support Service Quality State	The Evidence-supported interpreted condition of the declared Support Service Quality Object during the stated Service Period and within the declared claim Boundary.

Terminology note. CPB1 uses “quality-support gap” as explanatory language for a visible difference between required quality conditions and supported realization conditions. It is not a new WQI Root Concept or AMSI Applied Concept.

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1 Purpose and Analytical Position

CPB1 addresses a specific classification question: can price be included within the Quality Indicator architecture used to determine Support Service Quality? The answer is no. Price may be essential to purchasing, policy, access, sustainability, and value analysis, but it does not perform the methodological function of a Quality Indicator.

The article retains the practical insight of the earlier edition while aligning it with the stabilized relationship among WQI Root Concepts, AMSI Applied Concepts, Core Standards, Context Guides, and AMSI SCM1. The broader structural relationship between funding architecture and required quality conditions is examined in AMSI QCS1, Support-Service Quality vs Funding. CPB1 remains the narrower article explaining why price must not be placed inside the quality-indicator set.

1.1 Relationship to the AMSI document architecture

WQI_VOC1 provides the authoritative Whole Quality Root Concepts. AMSI VOC1 provides the authoritative Applied Concepts for support services. WQS1 explains Whole Quality in Support Services. AMSI ORF1 governs occupational anchoring and Functional Scope. Core Standards define invariant Core Quality Factors and Core Quality Indicators. Context Guides provide bounded Context-Specific Interpretation and develop Context-Specific Quality Outcome Criteria. AMSI SCM1 governs Evidence evaluation, Support Service Quality State determination, verification, decision, bounded claims, and certification where separately authorized.

CPB1 is an analytical publication. It does not redefine those concepts, set reimbursement rates, prescribe funding levels, establish entitlements, or create a certification rule. It applies the stabilized architecture to one recurring analytical error: treating a monetary amount as if it directly indicated service quality.

Editorial Alignment Note (August 2026). This edition aligns CPB1 with the stabilized August 2026 Whole Quality and AMSI document architecture, including WQI_VOC1, AMSI VOC1, WQS1, AMSI ORF1, the applicable Core Standards and Context Guides, and AMSI SCM1. The update strengthens architectural traceability and terminology without changing the article's analytical conclusion that price is an economic variable rather than a Quality Indicator.

Framework Principle. The Support Service Quality Object framework is the governing conceptual model for this analysis. CPB1 interprets price, cost, funding, reimbursement, budget, value, and worth only in relation to a declared Support Service Quality Object, its Support Intended Functions and Support Intended Results, its Boundaries and Interfaces, and the Evidence-supported conditions of Function Realization. CPB1 does not establish an alternative quality methodology.

2 Quality Architecture Comes Before Price

2.1 The declared Support Service Quality Object

Quality cannot be interpreted until the Support Service Quality Object is declared with sufficient clarity. The object may concern one Interaction, one Episode, one Service Period, one Support Service Arrangement, a coordinated arrangement, or another bounded service whole. Its description identifies the Person Receiving Support, Support Workers, Support Work, Support Results, Intended Functions and Results, Boundaries, Interfaces, responsibilities, Service Context, applicable Reference Layer, Evidence sources, Assumptions, Uncertainty, and intended Support Service Quality Claim Boundary.

Declaring the object first is necessary because price has meaning only in relation to something bounded that is being purchased, reimbursed, or supported. Without a sufficiently described object, comparisons may silently combine different Support Work, responsibilities, Service Periods, risks, Evidence requirements, and intended Results. The apparent price comparison would then be precise numerically but methodologically indeterminate.

The declared Scale controls whether a person, organization, technology, funding arrangement, responsibility, or service component is treated as part of the Quality Object, as an internal constituent, or as an external condition connected through an Interface. Price analysis shall therefore remain traceable to the declared object and shall not silently broaden its Scale or Claim Boundary.

The controlling AMSI relationship is conceptual: Support Work + Support Result = Support Service. Price is not one of these constituent terms. A payment may exist without adequate Work or a satisfactory Result. A favorable Result may occur despite an inadequate payment arrangement because a worker, family, provider, or community resource temporarily supplies unsupported Work. Neither condition allows price to define the Support Service Quality State.

Internal Boundaries organize the constituent parts of the declared Support Service Quality Object, while Internal Interfaces describe the interactions through which those parts contribute to Function Realization. The External Boundary separates the declared object from payers, markets, regulators, suppliers, family or natural supports, and other external systems. External Interfaces make visible how those systems may enable, constrain, delay, fragment, or otherwise influence the service without automatically becoming part of the declared object.

2.2 Required quality conditions and the actual Quality State

The earlier expression “required Quality State” can obscure an important distinction. The Quality State is the actual Evidence-supported interpreted condition of the declared object. What may be required or expected are Support Intended Functions, Support Intended Results, Quality Outcome Criteria, Critical Service Conditions, authorized Work, continuity arrangements, Evidence conditions, and other realization requirements established by the governing documents and Reference Layer.

Price analysis therefore occurs after the required quality conditions have been identified and after the object has been sufficiently described. The analysis may ask whether the economic arrangement supports those conditions, but the actual Support Service Quality State must still be determined from Evidence-Supported Findings. A funding limitation is not automatic proof of poor quality, and a temporarily favorable Result is not automatic proof of adequate funding.

Before price or funding is interpreted, Structural Checkpoints should confirm that the Support Service Quality Object, Scale, Service Period, Support Service Arrangement, participants, Support Work, Support Results, Support Intended Functions and Results, Boundaries, Interfaces, responsibilities, Context, Evidence basis, Assumptions, Uncertainty, and intended Support Service Quality Claim Boundary are sufficiently described. Structural Checkpoints confirm completeness; they are not Quality Factors, Quality Indicators, economic indicators, or Quality State determinations.

Structural Checkpoints protect the analysis from a category error at its starting point. Where the object, Scale, Boundaries, Interfaces, responsibilities, or intended claim remain unclear, the same price may appear to refer to materially different services. The appropriate response is to refine, restrict, or defer the analysis—not to use the monetary amount as a substitute for the missing object description.

3 What a Quality Indicator Does

3.1 Derivation and methodological role

A Quality Factor is a dimension of Function Realization that must remain visible and controllable. A Quality Indicator makes that Factor observable. In an AMSI Core Standard, a Core Quality Indicator remains linked to the Support Intended Functions and Support Intended Results, relevant Failure-Mode Families, and the declared support-service domain. Context Guides then interpret the Indicator and develop Context-Specific Quality Outcome Criteria for a bounded Service Context.

Examples include observable conditions related to protection from foreseeable harm, continuity and accuracy of support-relevant information, personhood and autonomy, employment stability, daily-life

functioning, infection and contamination control, or practice within Functional Scope. These Indicators concern the service and its Function Realization. Price does not.

An Indicator therefore performs an observational role within the quality architecture. Evidence may support a favorable, unfavorable, limited, or indeterminate Finding against that Indicator and its applicable criteria, but the Indicator is not itself the Evidence and a single Finding is not the overall Quality State. Price lacks this methodological relationship to a Quality Factor, which is why it cannot enter the Indicator set merely because it is measurable.

3.2 Why price fails the Quality Indicator test

Price fails the methodological test for a Quality Indicator for several independent reasons:

- It is not derived from the Support Intended Function, Support Intended Result, or relevant Failure-Mode Families.
- It does not make a Quality Factor observable. The same price can accompany very different Work, Results, risks, contexts, and Quality States.
- Its value is shaped by wage markets, reimbursement formulas, bargaining power, geography, procurement rules, administrative structures, taxes, provider cost models, and other economic conditions that may be external to the declared object.
- It has no stable directional meaning for quality. A higher price is not inherently favorable, and a lower price is not inherently unfavorable.
- It can be compliant with an approved rate or target while Critical Service Conditions remain unsatisfied, Evidence remains insufficient, or the actual Quality State remains adverse or indeterminate.

For the same reasons, price should not be converted into a Context-Specific Quality Outcome Criterion. A criterion such as “the service is delivered within the approved price range” describes an economic or contractual condition, not the expected quality result of the Support Service Quality Object.

4 Price, Cost, Funding, Value, and Worth

Economic terms should be distinguished before they are related to quality. They answer different questions and should not be collapsed into one indicator set.

Term	What it describes	Proper analytical use
Price	Amount charged, paid, reimbursed, authorized, or budgeted.	Purchasing, reimbursement, affordability, budgeting, and economic comparison.
Cost	Resources consumed to provide, coordinate, sustain, and evidence the service.	Cost accounting, workforce, operational, and sustainability analysis.
Funding	Arrangement through which resources are authorized, paid, or made available.	Eligibility, rate, service-unit, timing, exclusion, and sustainability analysis.
Value	Relationship between Evidence-supported quality or results and resources used.	Policy, purchasing, comparison, and planning after quality is visible.
Worth	Broader judgment about importance, usefulness, or long-term significance.	Ethical, strategic, personal, social, or policy judgment; not quality determination.
Support Service Quality	Evidence-supported Quality State of the declared Support Service Quality Object.	Quality State determination and bounded Support Service Quality Claim Statement.

Value is therefore not another name for quality. A value analysis requires at least two visible sides: the Evidence-supported quality or result side and the resource side. When quality has not been determined, a value calculation may merely compare price with incomplete, assumed, or administratively convenient outputs.

5 Why Price Does Not Establish Quality

A low-priced service may be poor, satisfactory, or strong. A high-priced service may also be poor, satisfactory, or strong. The price alone cannot distinguish among these states. It does not reveal whether Support Work was timely, competent, respectful, continuous, person-directed, safe, or within Functional Scope. It does not reveal whether the intended Support Result occurred, remained stable, was delayed, was shared with other contributors, or was not realized.

Approved payment is likewise not Evidence of a satisfactory Support Service Quality State. It may be Evidence that a funding condition, contract, authorization, or billing event existed. Its relevance to quality depends on how that condition affected the declared object and whether Evidence connects it to Work, Results, Interfaces, criteria, and Critical Service Conditions.

Non-Substitutability is important here. A favorable price, complete billing record, or approved authorization cannot compensate for an unresolved critical safety failure, loss of dignity, service outside authorized Functional Scope, or another failed Critical Service Condition. Conversely, favorable service performance during a limited period does not prove that the funding architecture is adequate or sustainable.

6 When Funding Becomes Quality-Relevant

Price and funding are not quality, but they may become quality-relevant support conditions. Funding rules, contracts, authorizations, rates, service units, payment timing, documentation requirements, and procurement conditions commonly belong to the applicable Reference Layer. They affect Function Realization when they materially enable, restrict, delay, fragment, transfer, distort, or make unsustainable the Work and conditions needed by the declared object.

Funding ordinarily belongs to the economic domain and the external Reference Layer. Its quality relevance arises through declared External Interfaces and an Evidence-supported pathway to time, continuity, Competence, coordination, access, technology, supervision, documentation, Evidence continuity, or another condition needed for Function Realization. Boundary Transparency and Interface Transparency are therefore necessary to distinguish the funding condition itself from the quality condition it may affect.

The pathway may cross several External Interfaces before it affects the declared object. For example, a payer decision may alter a provider's staffing arrangement, which may alter continuity or supervision, which may then affect Support Work and Support Results. Interface Transparency requires that these intermediate relationships remain visible rather than attributing the final condition directly to price or payment alone.

Examples include whether the arrangement supports sufficient time for person-directed interaction; continuity and replacement coverage; Competence development and supervision; coordination across Interfaces; travel and access; technology, equipment, or interpretation; documentation and Evidence continuity; and timely response to changing conditions. The material relationship must be demonstrated. A low rate, denied request, or budget limit is not by itself a complete quality finding.

Funding records may therefore become Evidence concerning a funding support condition. They do not become direct Evidence that a Core Quality Indicator is favorable or that the Quality State is satisfactory. The Evidence chain should show the funding condition, the Work or realization condition affected, the applicable Indicator or Criterion, the Result or Quality State implication, and any alternative explanation, Assumption, Uncertainty, or unresolved gap.

7 The “Acceptable Price Range” Problem

Defining an acceptable price range does not transform price into a quality measure. A service may fall within the range and still fail applicable criteria. A service may exceed the range because the declared

object requires greater intensity, continuity, travel, communication support, specialized Competence, technology, coordination, Evidence, or risk control than the price model anticipated.

A price range constrains or guides spending. It does not show whether the Support Intended Functions and Support Intended Results were realized. When the sequence is reversed, the price ceiling becomes the hidden maximum definition of quality. Required Work is then narrowed to what is reimbursable, unsupported contributions become invisible, and a funding limit may be mistaken for an acceptable quality boundary.

A responsible analysis asks three separate questions: What quality conditions are required for this declared object? What conditions does the funding architecture support? What Quality State is demonstrated by the Evidence? Only after those questions are answered should price reasonableness, affordability, or value be interpreted.

These questions are related but not interchangeable. The first identifies the quality architecture and expected realization conditions; the second examines economic support; and the third determines the actual Evidence-supported condition. Keeping them separate prevents an approved rate from being treated as proof of adequacy and prevents an adverse funding condition from being treated as proof of poor service without an evidenced pathway to Function Realization.

8 Service Period, Continuity, and Lifecycle Support

Support services are not always one-time transactions. Their quality may depend on relationship knowledge, continuity, follow-up, adaptation, replacement coverage, information transfer, coordination, supervision, and response to changing needs across a Service Period. A low initial or unit price may appear efficient while failing to support the lifecycle conditions needed for stable Function Realization.

A claim based on one favorable Interaction should not be extended to a recurring arrangement without Evidence concerning the broader Service Period. Similarly, a temporary Quality State sustained by unpaid family effort, staff overextension, provider subsidy, or deferred maintenance should not be used to infer that the funding architecture can sustain the same state. Conditions of continued validity and foreseeable Assumption Drift should remain visible.

This time dimension is essential because price and funding arrangements may support one Interaction while failing to support continuity across the full Service Period. Conversely, a temporary shortfall may be absorbed through other declared resources without immediately changing the observed Quality State. The determination should therefore distinguish the current state, the sustainability of that state, and the economic conditions on which continued validity depends.

9 Safety, Risk, and Economic Consequences

Quality failures may create risk, and risk may later produce economic consequences. Avoidable harm, health deterioration, loss of functional stability, crisis events, employment loss, service interruption, staff turnover, legal exposure, emergency response, or institutionalization may all generate cost. This creates the appearance that price or cost directly measures quality.

The analytical sequence is different: a quality-relevant condition affects Function Realization; failure may create risk; risk may produce consequences; consequences may later be expressed economically. Economic consequences can be important Evidence for policy and value analysis, but they occur at a different layer from the Core Quality Indicator that made the quality condition observable.

Domain	Primary question	Illustrative outputs
Quality	What is the Evidence-supported condition of the declared Support Service Quality Object?	Quality Factor interpretations, Critical-Condition review, Support Service Quality State, bounded claim.
Risk	What may happen if quality-relevant conditions fail or remain uncertain?	Likelihood, consequence, exposure, escalation, loss of function, harm.

Domain	Primary question	Illustrative outputs
Economic	What resources are charged, consumed, authorized, constrained, or lost?	Price, cost, budget, reimbursement, funding, financial consequence.
Value	What relationship exists between Evidence-supported results or Quality State and resources used?	Comparative value, sustainability, purchasing or policy analysis.

10 Quality-Support Gaps and Responsible Attribution

Where the conditions required for Function Realization are not supported by the funding arrangement, the difference may be described as a quality-support gap. This does not mean that every desired activity must be funded or that unlimited resources are required. It means that the unsupported condition, its materiality, the responsible Boundary or Interface, and the resulting limitation should remain visible.

Examples may include insufficient paid time for person-directed support; unstable staffing and avoidable turnover; lack of paid coordination; inadequate training or supervision; delayed authorization; missing replacement coverage; lack of accessible communication or transportation support; insufficient Evidence time; or a service unit that excludes necessary Interfaces. These conditions should not be hidden by stating that the service met its price target.

Attribution must remain fair. A Support Worker or provider should not be assigned sole responsibility for a condition controlled by a payer or authorization system. A funding limitation should not excuse Work that was within the actor's authority, Functional Scope, Competence, and available resources. Shared conditions should be described as shared. Where the relationship cannot be supported by sufficient Evidence, the finding should remain unresolved or indeterminate.

A quality-support gap is therefore an analytical finding about the relationship between required realization conditions and the support made available for them. It is not automatically a failed Core Quality Indicator, an adverse Support Service Quality State, or proof that one party caused the condition. The affected Boundary, Interface, responsibility, available alternatives, and Evidence basis must be identified before attribution or claim language is finalized.

11 Separation of Analytical Categories

Different variables may appear on the same dashboard or evaluation form without becoming the same type of indicator. Conceptual separation protects both quality and economic analysis.

Category	What it examines	Proper use
Core Quality Indicators	Observable dimensions of Function Realization established by the Core Standard.	Support Service Quality State determination through applicable criteria and Evidence.
Context-Specific Quality Outcome Criteria	Expected context-bounded states or results that make Core Indicators interpretable.	Evidence-Supported Findings within a declared Context, Service Period, and claim Boundary.
Economic indicators	Price, cost, rates, reimbursement, budget, funding, affordability, and resource use.	Economic feasibility, planning, purchasing, and sustainability analysis.
Value metrics	Relationship between Evidence-supported quality or results and resources used.	Policy, purchasing, comparative planning, and improvement analysis.
Funding-support findings	Evidence-supported findings about whether funding conditions enable or constrain Function Realization.	Attribution, redesign, negotiation, advocacy, and transparent claim limitations.

The problem is not that economic measures are unimportant. The problem arises when they are placed inside the quality-indicator set and allowed to trade off against quality. A low price should not offset an

adverse Critical Service Condition, and an expensive arrangement should not receive favorable quality treatment merely because it consumes more resources.

12 Practical Application and Claim Discipline

12.1 Controlled application sequence

The controlled dependency is: Support Service Quality Object and Scale -> Structural Checkpoints -> Support Intended Functions and Results -> Core Quality Factors and Core Quality Indicators -> Context-Specific Quality Outcome Criteria -> Evidence and Evidence-Supported Findings -> Quality Factor Interpretation and Critical Service Condition Review -> Support Service Quality State determination -> bounded Support Service Quality Claim Statement -> separate price, cost, funding, value, and worth analysis.

Each stage narrows and disciplines the next. The declared object and Structural Checkpoints establish what may be examined; the governing quality architecture establishes what must be interpreted; Evidence supports Findings; Findings support Quality Factor Interpretation and the Quality State determination; and only that bounded determination permits a responsible comparison with price, funding, cost, value, or worth. Reversing the sequence allows an economic limit to become an undeclared substitute for quality.

A proportionate CPB1 analysis can follow this sequence:

1. Declare and describe the Support Service Quality Object, Service Period, Service Context, participants, Boundaries, Interfaces, responsibilities, and intended claim scope.
2. Complete Structural Checkpoints and refine or restrict the object where essential elements remain unclear.
3. Identify the governing Support Intended Functions, Support Intended Results, Core Quality Factors, Core Quality Indicators, Context-Specific Quality Outcome Criteria, and Critical Service Conditions.
4. Determine what Support Work, continuity, Competence, coordination, technology, access, and Evidence conditions are needed for Function Realization.
5. Identify the price, cost, funding, reimbursement, budget, or value variable being examined and classify it correctly as an economic or Reference-Layer condition.
6. Evaluate whether and how that condition materially supports or constrains the required realization conditions.
7. Collect and evaluate Evidence concerning actual Work, Results, Interfaces, criteria, Critical Service Conditions, Assumptions, Uncertainty, and the actual Support Service Quality State.
8. Formulate separate quality, funding-support, and value findings, preserving responsible attribution and unresolved conditions.
9. Issue any Support Service Quality Claim Statement only from the supporting Quality State determination and within the declared Claim Boundary.

12.2 Claims and communication

A Support Service Quality Claim Statement should not state or imply that quality is satisfactory merely because the service was delivered within an approved price, reimbursement rate, budget line, service unit, or funding category. It should not state that quality is poor solely because the price is low or funding is limited. The claim must remain derived from the Evidence-supported Quality State determination.

Price and funding may be reported alongside the claim as economic context or as an Evidence-supported funding-support finding. The communication should identify the declared object, Service Period, applicable criteria, Evidence basis, Assumptions, Uncertainty, Critical Service Conditions, Unresolved Conditions, material funding dependencies, responsibility Boundaries, and conditions of continued validity. Where the economic arrangement limits what can be claimed, the claim should be restricted rather than broadened by assumption.

The communication should also distinguish the claim from the accompanying economic analysis. A bounded Support Service Quality Claim Statement communicates the Evidence-supported condition of the declared object; a funding-support finding explains an evidenced economic dependency or constraint; and a value conclusion compares visible quality or Results with resources. Combining these conclusions into one statement would obscure both their different bases and their different limits.

13 Conclusion

Price cannot function as a Quality Indicator because it does not make a Quality Factor observable and does not determine the Support Service Quality State. It describes an economic condition. Cost, funding, reimbursement, budget, value, and worth are also legitimate analytical subjects, but they answer questions different from the question of quality.

The Whole Quality sequence is therefore quality-first but not funding-blind. The Support Service Quality Object and required realization conditions are declared first. The actual Quality State is determined from Evidence. Price and funding are then examined for their material relationship to Function Realization, sustainability, attribution, and value. This sequence prevents monetary limits from silently redefining quality while still making funding-related constraints and responsibilities visible.

The practical conclusion is simple: quality should not be inferred from price, and price should not be ignored when it materially shapes the conditions under which quality must be realized. The two domains should be connected through a transparent Evidence chain, not collapsed into one indicator.

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