



Occupational Classification and Funding Traceability

AMSI OCF1

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What Work Are We Paying For?

SUPPORT SERVICE QUALITY INITIATIVE (AMSI)

Introduction

Funding systems often describe support services with program names, billing codes, job titles, and service categories. Those labels are useful for administration, but they do not always show what work is actually being done.

That creates a simple but important question: what work are we paying for?

To answer it, we need to see the work itself: who performs it, what responsibility they carry, what result is expected, how much time and support the work requires, and what evidence shows what actually happened.

Occupational classification can help because it gives us a stable way to identify kinds of work. But a job title or occupational code is only a starting point. It does not tell us everything about a particular service, worker, or funding arrangement.

This article explains how work, responsibility, funding, evidence, and service quality can be connected without treating price or payment as proof of quality.

1. Start With the Work, Not the Label

A service may have a familiar name, but the same label can cover very different work. A “job coach,” “direct support professional,” “personal care worker,” or similar title may carry different duties, levels of responsibility, and working conditions in different organizations.

The reverse is also true. People with different titles may perform very similar work.

For that reason, an administrative label should not be treated as a complete description of a service. A useful analysis asks:

- What work is required?
- Who is expected to perform it?
- What decisions or responsibilities are attached to that work?
- What result is the work expected to support?
- What time, staffing, supervision, technology, or coordination does the work require?
- What evidence shows what was actually performed?

2. Occupation, Job, Function, and Role

Several ideas need to be kept separate. They are related, but they are not interchangeable.

Term	Plain-language meaning
Occupation	A recognized field or type of work.
Job	A particular employment arrangement with a specific employer or provider.
Occupational function	A defined part of the work that a person performs.
Support role	How a person contributes within a particular support service.
Functional scope	The practical limits of that contribution: duties, authority, responsibility, and conditions.

This distinction matters because funding may be attached to a job title or service category while the real work is more complex. One person may perform functions from more than one occupational area, or may move among several roles during the same service period.

3. Why Work Becomes Invisible

Funding and administrative systems are usually built around eligibility, authorized hours, service definitions, contracts, rates, and billing rules. These are necessary, but they can hide important parts of the actual work.

Work can become invisible when:

- one service category covers several very different kinds of work;
- a job title is used as a substitute for a real description of duties;
- coordination, documentation, travel, reassessment, or escalation are required but are not clearly funded;
- family members, supervisors, other providers, or technology perform part of the work without that contribution being visible;
- responsibility increases but the recorded service category does not change; or
- payment records are treated as proof that the expected work and results actually occurred.

When this happens, it becomes difficult to tell whether a problem comes from insufficient funding, unclear responsibility, poor organization, incorrect classification, missing evidence, or an actual service-quality problem.

4. Five Things That Should Be Traceable

A clear funding analysis should be able to follow five connected questions.

Traceability	Question
Occupational	What kind of recognized work is involved?
Work	What work was required, assigned, performed, omitted, or changed?
Responsibility	Who was authorized and responsible for each important function?
Funding	What resources were intended to support which work and service conditions?
Quality	What evidence supports the conclusion about the condition of the service?

These questions support one another, but they should not be collapsed into one measure. A payment record can show that money was authorized or paid. It does not by itself show what work was performed, what result occurred, or whether the service was of satisfactory quality.

5. What Funding Traceability Means

Funding traceability means being able to connect money and authorized resources to the work and conditions they are intended to support.

For example, funding may affect:

- staffing time and service intensity;
- continuity and replacement coverage;
- supervision and training;
- coordination among people or organizations;
- transportation and technology;
- documentation and record keeping; and
- the ability to respond when needs or conditions change.

Funding becomes relevant to service quality when there is evidence that one of these conditions materially affects the service. The important point is the pathway. We should not assume that a high payment means high quality or that a low payment means poor quality.

6. A Funding Gap Is Not Automatically a Quality Failure

Sometimes the work requires conditions that the funding arrangement does not clearly support. There may be too little funded time, no allowance for coordination, weak replacement coverage, or insufficient support for supervision or documentation.

That mismatch is important, but it should be described carefully. A funding gap is not automatically proof that the service failed. Other resources may have compensated for it. At the same time, the absence of a documented funding problem is not proof that the service was good.

The actual service still has to be examined: what work occurred, what results were achieved, what conditions affected the service, and what evidence supports the conclusion.

7. Price, Cost, Funding, Value, and Quality Are Different

Concept	What it tells us
Price or rate	How much is charged, paid, reimbursed, authorized, or budgeted.
Cost	What resources are actually consumed in providing and sustaining the service.
Funding	How resources are authorized or made available.
Quality	The evidence-supported condition of the service being evaluated.
Value	The relationship between results or quality and the resources used.

A higher price may reflect more complex work, scarce labor, stronger continuity, more supervision, geography, administration, or inefficiency. A lower price may reflect efficiency, reduced scope, hidden unpaid work, lower intensity, or unsupported conditions.

Price alone cannot tell us which explanation is correct. We first need to understand the work and the evidence behind it.

8. Evidence: What Actually Happened?

Good traceability depends on evidence that fits the question being asked. Useful sources may include job descriptions, service plans, work assignments, schedules, time records, observations, interviews, supervision and training records, communication records, billing records, and documented results.

No single record answers every question. A billing record may show that a service was paid for, but not who actually performed the work. A job description may show expected duties, but not what happened on a particular day. A service note may describe an activity, but not prove that the worker had the required authority or competence.

Where several people, organizations, technologies, or family members contribute to the same result, the analysis should show what can be attributed confidently and what remains uncertain.

9. A Practical Sequence

A simple review can proceed in this order:

1. Define the service being examined and the period of time covered.
2. Identify the occupations, jobs, functions, and support roles involved.
3. Describe the actual work and the responsibilities attached to it.
4. Identify blended or shared work and contributions from other people, organizations, or technology.

5. Map the funding arrangement to the time, staffing, supervision, coordination, documentation, and other conditions the work requires.
6. Collect evidence about what was actually performed and what results occurred.
7. Evaluate the service quality using the applicable quality requirements and evidence.
8. Only then interpret funding sufficiency, price, cost, and value.

The order matters. If we begin with the payment amount, we may confuse price with quality. If we begin with the work and follow it through responsibility, evidence, and results, the funding can be interpreted much more fairly.

10. Why This Matters to Different Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Useful question
Person receiving support	Is the work needed for the service visible and adequately supported?
Support worker	Do the title, duties, time, responsibility, and expectations match the work actually performed?
Provider or employer	Can staffing, supervision, coordination, documentation, and funding be connected to the service expected?
Payer or funder	Does the funded category describe the real work and conditions, or only an administrative label?
Regulator or oversight body	Do the records show the real service arrangement, or only administrative compliance?
Evaluator	Can the evidence and conclusions be traced to the correct service, work, people, period, and conditions?

Conclusion

Funding systems can only be understood properly when the work behind them is visible. A program name, job title, billing code, or payment amount is not enough.

Occupational classification gives a useful starting point, but the analysis must continue to the actual functions, responsibilities, time, service conditions, results, and evidence. Only then can we ask whether the funding arrangement realistically supports the work.

The central idea is simple: first identify the work and the service that must be delivered; then determine what actually happened and what quality was achieved; only after that should price, cost, funding, and value be interpreted.

Relationship to the AMSI Framework

This article is an explanatory publication of the Support Service Quality Initiative (AMSI). It uses the initiative's established concepts for describing support services, occupational functions, evidence, and quality determination. It does not create a funding formula, set reimbursement rates, assign an official occupational classification, or replace applicable law, contracts, payer rules, professional standards, or service plans.

Readers who need the formal methodology should use the applicable AMSI standards and guides. This article is intended to explain the funding-and-work problem in plain language rather than repeat the full standards architecture.

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