

While the cost of operating m4RH or a system like it will vary depending on the context, it will be important to budget for the following major line items:

Programming

These are the fees a technology partner charges to program the software that supports the technological communication between individual users and the m4RH service or a service like it. These costs will differ depending on the technology partner and whether m4RH will be adapted for a new setting or a new service will be developed. The current m4RH service operating in Kenya and Tanzania uses open-source coding; therefore, there may be an opportunity to reduce overall programming costs if an implementing organization or technology partner has the capacity to adapt the code.

Cost of SMS

In Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda, m4RH is provided free to users, which means some entity must cover the cost of the text messages that are sent and received. In the pilot, m4RH's technology partner negotiated bulk SMS rates with mobile phone providers that ranged from US\$0.03-0.06 per SMS. These costs will vary from country to country and by user volume. Programs also must consider their promotional strategy when budgeting for SMS costs because the type and scale of promotion dramatically influences use of m4RH—and thus the number of SMS sent and received. Similarly, additional SMS must be budgeted if programs opt to conduct monitoring and evaluation via SMS (see “evaluation” section of the tool).

Short Code Lease

A short code (a 3-5 digit telephone number) must be leased from the local communications commission, usually on an annual basis. Costs in the pilot ranged from approximately US\$ 1,500-2,000. It is worth considering the possibility that obtaining a short code may be more easily achieved by working with a technology partner or local aggregator.

Promotion

Different promotional strategies have variable costs and must be considered in the budget. Printed materials are likely to be the least expensive; In Kenya and Tanzania 100 posters, 200 flyers and 1200 palm cards cost approximately US\$2,500 per country. Promotional costs may be shared by partners.