HIRING & BUDGETS

Contractor quote and budget workbook

Compare the work behind each price, resolve allowances and keep changes in one clear record.

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Start with one shared scope

A useful comparison begins before the price table. Write one description of the finished result and send it to every bidder. Name the rooms or surfaces involved, what stays, what must be removed, and who supplies the main materials. Attach the same photos and dimensions to each request. Keep assumptions visible instead of asking contractors to guess what you mean.

The FTC recommends written estimates that identify the work, materials, completion date and price. Use that as your minimum comparison structure. A larger number may cover preparation, disposal or finish work that another proposal leaves out. Ask for a written explanation of differences before negotiating the headline price.

- Give the scope a date and revision number.
- Keep the original estimate beside the comparison sheet.
- Use “unknown” when an item is missing; enter zero only when it is confirmed.

Separate the quote from your spending plan

Track three figures: the contractor’s quoted amount, confirmed additional costs outside that amount, and unresolved items. Your own spending limit is a fourth figure, not proof that a contractor can complete the work for that sum. A reserve you choose for uncertainty is a planning choice; it is not a charge already owed.

Known comparison subtotal = quoted amount + confirmed additions + confirmed allowance adjustments − confirmed credits. Keep taxes or disposal in the base amount when already included. Do not add them a second time.

Ask what an allowance actually covers

An allowance is a named placeholder within the proposal. Record the included amount, quantity and unit, and whether it covers only the item or also delivery, tax and installation. Ask how selection changes are priced and whether an unused balance produces a credit. Do not assume a credit or markup from subtraction alone.

Illustrative scope example: one bathroom quote includes the vanity and delivery, while another includes a vanity allowance with delivery by the owner. Obtain a delivery quote and the allowance adjustment terms before treating the proposals as comparable. No local market price is implied by this example.

Question	Answer to obtain
Exact item and quantity	Model/finish or selection deadline
Included allowance	Amount, unit and included services
Above or below allowance	Written charge/credit and markup terms
Change approval	Who approves cost and schedule before work

Keep a short change record

When the scope changes, record the request, reason, amount, effect on timing and written approval reference. Keep proposed changes separate from accepted changes. Ask what happens if opening a wall or removing a finish reveals additional work. A running total is useful only when it shows which amounts have actually been confirmed.

Worksheet: compare the same job

Project / scope revision: _____ Comparison date: _____

Write a quote reference in each column. Use the notes space for exclusions rather than squeezing them into the total.

Quote comparison

Item	Quote A	Quote B	Quote C
Business / quote date			
Written base amount			
Confirmed additions			
Confirmed allowance adjustment			
Confirmed credits			
Known subtotal			
Unpriced work / open questions			
Start / duration / expiry			

Before choosing a proposal

- Confirm the business identity, relevant license and insurance evidence with the appropriate sources.
- Ask for the same named materials and finish level in every revised quote.
- Record payment stages, cleanup and the written warranty or callback process.
- Resolve open prices and responsibilities; keep each answer with the estimate.

Decision and follow-up

Question / next action	Owner / reply date
Most important remaining scope gap	
Allowance or credit to confirm	
Documents still needed	

Sources and edition

Primary references checked 2026-11-28. Worksheet prompts and examples are original editorial resources. Recheck live official records and quoted prices for your project.

FTC: home improvement estimates
https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-avoid-home-improvement-scam