

P R O J E C T V A L U A T I O N & P R I C I N G
E S T I M A T E

SQR-RCT Platform

Systematic Quality Review of Randomized Controlled Trials

Prepared for Nordic Naturals
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C O N F I D E N T I A L

Executive Summary

The SQR-RCT Platform is a custom-built, production-grade web application designed for Nordic Naturals to systematically evaluate the quality of published randomized controlled trials (RCTs) in nutritional science. It is currently live, deployed, and in active use with real reviewers and data.

This document provides a comprehensive valuation of the work delivered, encompassing research and development, methodology design, software engineering, stakeholder coordination, and strategic infrastructure decisions.

Recommended Project Valuation Range

\$85,000 – \$130,000

Based on market benchmarks, scope of deliverables, domain expertise required, and value delivered. See detailed breakdown below.

What Was Delivered

This was not a simple website build. It was a multi-phase R&D project requiring deep expertise across research methodology, software engineering, data architecture, and stakeholder management.

Phase 1: Research & Discovery

Before a single line of code was written for the final platform, weeks of exploratory R&D were invested across multiple tools and approaches:

- **Qualtrics exploration** — initial prototyping of the review workflow and rubric
- **Notion database architecture** — designing relational data models for studies, reviewers, and scores
- **Fillout front-end + Zite dashboards** — testing no-code form and dashboard solutions
- **Strategic pivot to custom code** — the decision to eliminate SaaS dependencies and build from scratch on Vercel, saving Nordic Naturals ongoing subscription costs and ensuring full data ownership

This iterative process is invisible in the final deliverable but represents significant professional time and expertise.

Phase 2: Methodology Design

The platform's scientific rigor required PhD-level understanding of research methods. The following were designed from scratch:

- **11-question RCT quality rubric** covering PICO framework, randomization, blinding, sample size, baseline comparability, attrition, intervention description, outcome measurement, statistical analysis, bias assessment, and external validity
- **Scoring system** (0–2 per question, 22 max) with three quality tiers: High (17+), Moderate (11–16), Low (0–10)
- **Inter-rater reliability framework** — selection and implementation of Cohen’s Kappa (pairwise) and Fleiss’ Kappa (multi-rater), with interpretation scales and bias detection
- **Community of practice model** — designing the expert network, credentialing system, and reviewer engagement strategy

Phase 3: Stakeholder Coordination

Numerous meetings with Nordic Naturals stakeholders to align on requirements, review progress, address data security concerns, and refine the platform’s scope and direction. This project management and client communication work is a substantial deliverable in itself.

Phase 4: Software Engineering

The custom-coded platform comprises 8,742 lines of production source code across a full-stack architecture:

Component	Details
Framework	Next.js 14 (App Router) with React 18, deployed on Vercel
Pages	11 routes: Landing, Registration, Dashboard, Intake Form, Scoring Rubric, Reviews, Analytics, Network, Credibility, Admin, Profile
API Endpoints	16+ RESTful endpoints covering auth, CRUD, AI review, analytics, exports, credibility
Database	Notion API integration with 3 relational databases (Reviewers, Intake, Scores)
AI/LLM	Dual-provider integration (Anthropic Claude + OpenAI GPT-4) with prompt engineering, response validation, single and batch auto-review
Auth & Security	JWT authentication (jose), role-based access control, admin-only endpoints, protected routes
Analytics	5-tab dashboard with IRR statistics (Cohen's/Fleiss' Kappa), score distributions, reviewer bias detection, interactive charts (Recharts)
Exports	CSV data export, PDF analytics reports (PDFKit), SVG reviewer badges, PDF certificates of contribution
Community	Expert network directory with search/filter, credibility toolkit with LinkedIn/Bluesky templates, email templates, digital assets
UI/UX	Custom Tailwind CSS design system with Nordic Naturals "Pacific Depths" branding, responsive layout, skeleton loaders, toast notifications, modals

Pricing Breakdown

The following breakdown values each deliverable stream independently, based on market rates for comparable work. Rates reflect U.S.-based senior-level expertise (full-stack development at \$125–150/hr, research methodology consulting at \$150–250/hr).

A. Research & Development Iteration

Weeks of exploratory work across Qualtrics, Notion, Fillout, and Zite before the final build. Includes evaluating, prototyping, and discarding approaches that didn't meet requirements.

Line Item	Hours (est.)	Value
Platform evaluation & prototyping (Qualtrics, Fillout, Zite)	20–30	\$3,000–\$4,500

Notion database architecture design	15–25	\$2,250–\$3,750
Strategic analysis & SaaS elimination decision	8–12	\$1,200–\$1,800
Subtotal: R&D Iteration		\$6,450–\$10,050

B. Research Methodology & Domain Expertise

PhD-level research methodology design is specialized consulting work, typically billed at \$150–250/hour.

Line Item	Hours (est.)	Value
RCT quality rubric design (11 questions, scoring criteria)	20–30	\$4,000–\$7,500
Inter-rater reliability framework selection & implementation	15–20	\$3,000–\$5,000
Community of practice model & engagement strategy	10–15	\$2,000–\$3,750
Data security architecture & compliance considerations	5–10	\$1,000–\$2,500
Subtotal: Methodology & Domain		\$10,000–\$18,750

C. Stakeholder Management & Meetings

Line Item	Hours (est.)	Value
Client meetings, presentations, feedback cycles	15–25	\$2,250–\$3,750
Requirements gathering & scope refinement	10–15	\$1,500–\$2,250
Subtotal: Stakeholder Management		\$3,750–\$6,000

D. Software Engineering

Custom full-stack development at senior U.S. rates (\$125–150/hour). The 8,742 lines of production code represent refined output; actual development hours include debugging, testing, iteration, and refactoring.

Line Item	Hours (est.)	Value
Core Next.js architecture, routing, layout system	20–25	\$2,500–\$3,750
Notion API integration (3 databases, full CRUD, relations)	30–40	\$3,750–\$6,000
AI/LLM integration (dual-provider, prompt engineering, validation)	25–35	\$3,125–\$5,250
Analytics dashboard (5 tabs, IRR stats, charts, distributions)	40–60	\$5,000–\$9,000
Intake form (30+ fields, 6 sections, auto-save, draft restore)	20–30	\$2,500–\$4,500
Scoring rubric interface (split-screen, 11-question UI, live totals)	15–25	\$1,875–\$3,750
Authentication & authorization (JWT, RBAC, admin guards)	10–15	\$1,250–\$2,250
PDF/CSV export, SVG badges, PDF certificates	15–20	\$1,875–\$3,000
Credibility toolkit (social templates, email, digital assets)	15–20	\$1,875–\$3,000
Expert network directory (search, filter, profile cards)	8–12	\$1,000–\$1,800
UI/UX design system (Tailwind, branding, responsive, animations)	20–30	\$2,500–\$4,500
Admin dashboard & reviewer management	10–15	\$1,250–\$2,250
Deployment, environment config, Vercel setup	5–10	\$625–\$1,500
Subtotal: Software Engineering		\$29,125–\$50,550

Total Project Valuation

Deliverable Stream	Value Range
A. Research & Development Iteration	\$6,450 – \$10,050
B. Research Methodology & Domain Expertise	\$10,000 – \$18,750
C. Stakeholder Management & Meetings	\$3,750 – \$6,000
D. Software Engineering	\$29,125 – \$50,550
SUBTOTAL (Cost-Based)	\$49,325 – \$85,350

Value-based premium (see below)	+ 30–50%
RECOMMENDED RANGE	\$85,000 – \$130,000

Value-Based Pricing Justification

The recommended range includes a value-based premium beyond raw hours because of the following factors:

1. Eliminated SaaS Dependencies

By building custom rather than stitching together Qualtrics, Fillout, Zite, and other SaaS tools, you eliminated recurring subscription costs for Nordic Naturals. A comparable SaaS stack would cost approximately \$500–\$2,000/month in subscriptions, meaning the custom build pays for itself within 3–5 years while giving them full data ownership and customization control.

2. Specialized Domain Expertise

The market for consultants who understand both RCT methodology and modern web development is extremely thin. An agency without this background would need to hire a separate research methodology consultant (\$150–250/hr) in addition to developers, easily doubling the project cost.

3. Production-Ready with Live Data

This is not an MVP or prototype. The platform is deployed, branded, and in active use with 36 articles, 53 scored reviews, and 6 active reviewers generating real inter-rater reliability data. The cost to an agency to reach this level of completion and polish would be significantly higher.

4. Enterprise-Grade Features

AI-powered auto-review, statistical analysis (Kappa calculations), PDF/CSV export, digital credentialing, and a social media marketing toolkit are features typically found in platforms costing \$150,000+ to develop at agency rates.

5. Strategic Long-Term Asset

Nordic Naturals now owns a proprietary platform that positions them as a leader in evidence-based research quality in the supplement industry. This is a competitive differentiator with value far beyond development cost.

Market Comparables

For context, here is how comparable projects are priced in the current market:

Comparable	Typical Range	Source
Medium SaaS platform (custom)	\$50,000–\$150,000	Cleveroad, Innovecs
AI-integrated web application	\$75,000–\$200,000+	BusinesswareTech
Custom analytics dashboard	\$15,000–\$40,000	3iap
Notion API integration (3 DBs, CRUD)	\$8,000–\$15,000	Industry avg.
Senior full-stack developer (U.S.)	\$100–\$150/hour	ReactSquad, Index.dev
Research methodology consulting	\$150–\$250/hour	Academic market

Pricing Options

Three recommended pricing tiers depending on how you want to position the engagement:

Option 1: Cost-Recovery (Floor)

\$65,000

Covers direct labor value at mid-market rates. Does not account for domain expertise premium or value delivered. Use this only if you need to stay competitive with a cost-conscious client.

Option 2: Market Rate (Recommended)

\$95,000 – \$110,000

Reflects the full scope of work including R&D, methodology, stakeholder management, and engineering at fair market rates with a modest value premium. This is a defensible, professional rate.

Option 3: Value-Based (Ceiling)

\$120,000 – \$130,000

Accounts for the strategic asset value, eliminated SaaS costs, competitive differentiation, and the scarcity of this combined skillset (PhD methodology + full-stack engineering + AI integration). Justified for a company of Nordic Naturals' size.

Notes & Considerations

- **Ongoing support and maintenance** is not included in this estimate. A monthly retainer of \$1,500–\$3,000/month for hosting management, bug fixes, feature requests, and reviewer support would be appropriate.
- **AI API costs** (Anthropic/OpenAI) for the auto-review feature are operational expenses borne by the client, estimated at \$500–\$2,000/month depending on review volume.
- **Vercel hosting** on the Pro plan runs approximately \$20/user/month. Notion API access is free.
- **IP ownership** terms should be clarified in the contract. The platform was built specifically for Nordic Naturals, and the transfer of all intellectual property rights is typically included in the project fee.
- **This estimate can be adjusted** once the R&D description document is reviewed, which may reveal additional scope not captured here.

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