

App Economics 2026

What does an AI iOS app actually cost? Run the math before you build.

15%

SMALL BIZ CUT

~\$0.25

AI / USER / MO

\$5-30

BACKEND / MO

35%

TYPICAL MARGIN

AI API pricing (per million tokens)

Haiku 4.5

\$0.80 in · \$4 out

Cheap

DEFAULT

Sonnet 4.6

\$3 in · \$15 out

Opus 4.7

\$15 in · \$75 out

Premium

Gemini Flash

\$0.30 in · \$2.50 out

Cheap

Revenue model fit

Paid up-front

Revenue stops; AI costs continue. Bad fit for AI apps.

\$0.99-\$9.99

RDR2 USES

Freemium unlock

Free + paid unlock at value moment. 3-7% conversion typical.

Indie

Subscription

Best for continuous-value apps + recurring AI cost. Highest LTV.

Power

COST CHEAT SHEET

Casual user: \$0.05/mo

Engaged: \$0.25-\$0.50

Power user: \$1-\$3

Without rate limits: \$10-\$50 ↗

MARGIN KILLER

Using Opus for every query. Switch routine work to Haiku + aggressive prompt caching = 70-90% cost cut.

WORKED: \$9.99/YR SUBSCRIPTION

- Gross/user/mo: \$0.83**
\$9.99 / 12 months
- After 15% Apple cut: \$0.71**
Small Business Program
- AI cost: -\$0.40**
Sonnet, 100K tokens/mo
- Backend: -\$0.02**
At scale, amortized
- Margin: \$0.29 / user / mo**
35% contribution margin

BREAKEVEN MATH

- Fixed costs: \$300/mo**
Subs, dev fee, tools
- Margin/user: \$0.29**
From above
- Breakeven: ~1,035 paid**
 $\$300 \div \0.29

Run your scenario: djenterprises.ai/tools/app-profitability-calculator → Interactive → Live breakeven

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