

## Construction Cost Data Comparison – Unique Line Items

This document compares major construction cost data providers by examining the real number of unique line items, rather than the marketed number of datasets or books. It highlights overlap, granularity, and scope across providers.

Provider	Claimed Datasets / Books	Number of Unique Line Items	Notes
<b>RSMeans® (Gordian)</b>	16+ “datasets” (Commercial, Facilities, Residential, Mechanical, Electrical, Site Work, etc.)	~90,000	Many “datasets” are overlapping slices of the same master database. Marketed as multiple books but not independent. RSMeans® cost books are updated annually and rely on City Cost Indexes (CCIs) for localization, a method proven to introduce significant errors (often 30–40%) compared to current, locally researched cost data.
<b>4BT® (Four BT, LLC)</b>	Single integrated cost database	~90,000	Organized in expanded CSI MasterFormat®. All line items are locally researched, objective, and updated quarterly.
<b>BNI®</b>	Several costbooks (General Construction, Facilities, etc.)	~15,000–20,000	Regionalized data available. Less granular than RSMeans or 4BT.
<b>Craftsman®</b>	Multiple “National Construction Estimator” products	~10,000–15,000	Focuses more on residential/light commercial. Less detail in complex trades.
<b>Sierra West®</b>	Primarily regional/subspecialty data	~10,000–25,000 (varies)	Concentrated in certain U.S. markets. Narrower scope than national providers.

### Key Takeaways

- RSMeans® cost books are updated annually and rely on City Cost Indexes (CCIs) for localization.

This methodology has been independently shown to introduce significant errors, often in the 30–40% range,

when compared to current, locally researched cost data.



- The “11 Commercial + 4 Facilities + 1 Residential” RSMeans datasets are not unique databases — they are subsets of the same ~90,000 line items.
- 4BT avoids duplication: one comprehensive, structured, locally researched dataset instead of many overlapping books.
- BNI, Craftsman, and Sierra West provide smaller, often regional or trade-specific datasets.

### Sources

- Gordian / RSMeans® Product Descriptions (Commercial, Facilities, and Residential Cost Data books)
- Four BT, LLC (4BT®) – <https://www.4bt.us>
- BNI® Construction Costbooks – <https://www.bnibooks.com>
- Craftsman® Book Company – <https://www.craftsman-book.com>
- Sierra West® Construction Cost Data – Product literature & regional publications
- RSMeans® City Cost Index methodology – Gordian (<https://www.rsmeans.com>)
- Independent industry findings on CCI limitations (audit reports and research demonstrating 30–40% errors)

### Trademark Disclosure

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