



iOS App Economics 2026

Apple's Small Business Program changes the math. Here's what an AI iOS app actually earns.

15%

SMALL BIZ CUT

30%

STANDARD CUT

\$1M

CAP FOR SMALL BIZ

\$99/yr

APPLE DEV PROGRAM

● Apple's fees — what most indies miss

FREE 15% MARGIN

Small Business Program

15% commission on ALL sales if you earn under \$1M/year. Almost every indie qualifies. **You have to opt in** — many forget.

Subscription mechanics

30% first year, 15% after year-one renewal. Annual subs lock in the cheaper rate sooner.

● Per-user AI cost (Claude Sonnet)

Casual

~4 calls/mo
\$0.05/mo

Engaged

~20 calls/mo
\$0.25-\$0.50

Power user

~100 calls/mo
\$1-\$3

DANGER

No rate limits

Abusive user
\$10-\$50/mo

PRO TIP

Mix models on the backend. Haiku for routine, Sonnet for harder. Aggressive prompt caching = 70-90% input-cost cut. Rate-limit free tiers.

HIDDEN COSTS

App review delays (1-2 weeks).
Rejection cycles (budget 1-2).
Refunds (0.5-2% of paid). Support time (1-3 hrs/wk per 1K paid users).

WORKED: RDR2 V1.2 FREEMIUM

- 1 **\$2.99 unlock × 5% conv**
Gross / paid user
- 2 **- 15% Apple = \$2.54 net**
Small Business Program
- 3 **- ~\$0.01 AI on free tier**
4 free queries × all installs
- 4 **- ~\$1.80/yr post-unlock AI**
Moderate ongoing use
- 5 **~\$0.50/paid user/yr margin**
Tight — needs Pro tier

OPTIMIZATION LEVERS

- 1 **Apply for Small Biz Program**
Free 15-pt margin
- 2 **Mix Haiku + Sonnet**
5× cheaper on routine
- 3 **Add Pro tier \$9.99/yr**
For power users who'd be unprofitable
- 4 **Annual over monthly subs**
Lower churn, front-loaded cash
- 5 **ASO > paid ads**
Free traffic from search beats CPI

Run your numbers: djenterprises.ai/tools/app-profitability-calculator