
Advanced Budgeting and Rolling Forecasts Training Course

19 – 23 October 2026
Rome





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Programme Summary

Advanced budgeting and rolling forecasts is a five-day training course for senior finance leaders working at strategic level, culminating in a forecasting redesign blueprint for their own organisation. Many annual budgets lose relevance within months of approval, absorb finance capacity through repeated reforecasting and sit apart from strategy. The approach replaces the static cycle with driver-based models, a rolling forecast horizon, scenario analysis and measured forecast quality, then addresses the leadership needed to make the change hold. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme in advanced budgeting and rolling forecasts.

The Business Case

When the budget is the only forward view, resource decisions rest on assumptions that have already changed. Finance teams spend weeks consolidating detail that adds little predictive value, and executives lose confidence in the numbers. Organisations that forecast from operational drivers on a rolling horizon, measure forecast error openly and keep targets separate from forecasts can move resources sooner and with fewer surprises.

- **Forecast Reliability:** Reduces error and systematic bias in revenue, cost and cash projections through regular accuracy reviews.
- **Planning Cycle Effort:** Shortens the time spent on consolidation and reforecasting by modelling fewer, higher-impact drivers.
- **Speed of Resource Reallocation:** Lets budgets and capital move between initiatives as assumptions change, rather than waiting for the next annual cycle.

Principles and Evidence Base

- **Driver-Based Planning:** Links financial outcomes to the operational and capacity drivers that cause them, applied in Session 2 to model each participant's business.
- **Rolling Forecast Practice:** Projects a constant horizon of four to six quarters refreshed at fixed intervals, with distinct roles for target, budget and forecast, applied in Session 3.
- **Forecast Accuracy Measurement:** Uses MAPE, MdAPE, bias and tracking signal to separate random error from systematic optimism, applied in Session 4.
- **Forecast Value Add:** Tests whether each step and manual adjustment in the forecasting process improves accuracy, used in Session 4 to simplify the process.



Intended Participants

- Leaders accountable for the annual budget cycle and the forecasts presented to executive committees and boards.
- Heads of planning functions moving from a static annual budget to a rolling, driver-based process.
- Senior budget holders who must defend resource requests and explain variances against shifting assumptions.
- Finance leaders responsible for linking operating plans to strategy and capital allocation.
- Controllers who oversee consolidation, reporting calendars and planning tools.

The programme serves finance, strategy, commercial and operations functions in energy, banking, government entities and manufacturing.

Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to diagnose the structural weaknesses of their current budgeting and forecasting cycle.
2. Participants will be able to construct a driver-based model that links operational activity to financial outcomes.
3. Participants will be able to design a rolling forecast process with a defined horizon, cadence, ownership and level of detail.
4. Participants will be able to evaluate forecast accuracy and bias using standard error measures and set accuracy tolerances.
5. Participants will be able to construct scenario and sensitivity analyses that inform capital allocation decisions.
6. Participants will be able to justify a redesigned planning process to executive colleagues and lead its adoption.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Diagnosing the Budget Cycle

Why does the annual budget lose relevance, and where does the current cycle fail?

- Planning Maturity Assessment of the Current Cycle
- Separating Targets, Budgets and Forecasts
- Budget Gaming, Sandbagging and Optimism Bias
- Mapping Strategy to Operating Plans
- Activity-Based and Output Budgets as Alternatives

Day 2: Driver-Based Planning and Modelling

Which few drivers explain most of the financial outcome, and how are they modelled?



- Identifying Value Drivers Through Pareto Analysis
- Capacity-Sensitive Driver Relationships
- Driver Tree Construction for Revenue and Cost
- Model Architecture: Spreadsheet, BI and Planning Platforms
- Validating Driver Assumptions Against Historical Data

Day 3: Rolling Forecasts: Horizon, Cadence and Ownership

How should a rolling forecast be structured so that it stays current without overloading finance?

- Setting the Forecast Horizon and Refresh Cadence
- Level of Detail and Materiality Thresholds
- Forecast Ownership Across Business Units
- Integrating Cash Flow and Balance Sheet Projections
- Transition Roadmap From Annual Budget to Rolling Forecast

Day 4: Forecast Quality, Scenarios and Capital Allocation

How reliable are the forecasts, and how should uncertainty shape investment decisions?

- MAPE, MdAPE, Bias and Tracking Signal
- Forecast Value Add Analysis of Process Steps
- Scenario Planning With Trigger Points
- Sensitivity Analysis and Tornado Charts
- Reallocating Capital Using Net Present Value

Day 5: Leading Change in Budgeting and Forecasting

How are the methods combined into a redesigned process that executives will adopt?

- Applying the Maturity Diagnosis to a Target Process Design
- Testing the Driver Model Against a Live Scenario
- Setting Accuracy Tolerances and FP&A Review Roles
- Executive Budget Negotiation Simulation
- Forecasting Redesign Blueprint Presentation

Methodology

The programme is built around data workshops using participants' own budgets, forecasts and variance history. Participants diagnose their current cycle, build driver models, measure past forecast error and test scenarios, then defend their proposals in peer review that mirrors an executive committee or investment board.



- Suggested activity: Calculating MAPE and bias on two years of a participant's own forecasts against actuals.
- Suggested activity: Building driver trees for a utility and a retail bank and comparing which drivers dominate.
- Suggested activity: Negotiating a mid-year budget reallocation in a simulated executive committee after a demand shock.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes a forecasting redesign blueprint for their own organisation. It contains a maturity diagnosis, a driver tree with key assumptions, a rolling forecast calendar with owners and horizon, accuracy measures and tolerances, and scenarios with trigger points, ready to present to the chief financial officer or executive committee as a transition plan.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does advanced budgeting and rolling forecasts training suit leaders who already run a budget cycle?

Yes. It assumes you already own or prepare an annual budget and report variances. It builds on that experience to redesign the process around drivers, rolling horizons and measured forecast quality, rather than teaching budget preparation.

Which methods underpin advanced budgeting and rolling forecasts training?

The content rests on driver-based planning, rolling forecast practice, forecast accuracy measures such as MAPE, MdAPE, bias and tracking signal, and Forecast Value Add analysis of each forecasting step.

How is the blueprint from advanced budgeting and rolling forecasts training used at work?

You can present it to your chief financial officer or executive committee as the transition plan from a static annual budget to a rolling, driver-based forecast, then use its accuracy measures in each review.

How does advanced budgeting and rolling forecasts training differ from a core budgeting and cost control course?

Advanced budgeting and rolling forecasts training assumes the fundamentals are in place. Core courses cover budget preparation, cost control and variance basics; this one redesigns the forecasting process, measures its accuracy and links it to capital allocation.