
Controlling Spend on Building and Civil Works: Variance, Forecast and Cash Flow Course

25 – 29 July 2027
Zoom





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Programme Summary

Controlling spend on building and civil works is the subject of this one-week training course for project directors and commercial leaders at managerial level, ending in a cost control pack for one live project. Budgets are rarely lost in one event; they leak through uncommitted change, late cost reports and forecasts that repeat the plan. The programme moves from the budget baseline to variance reporting, forecast final cost, variations and cash flow, using cases from buildings, roads and utilities. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme on controlling spend on building and civil works to mixed-organisation cohorts.

The Business Case

Cost surprises tend to reach a sponsor late, after commitments are made and the cheapest options have gone. Leaders who see cost reports that separate paid, committed and forecast spend can act while a choice still exists. The programme builds that habit and applies it to a project from the participant's own portfolio.

- Forecast Accuracy: Improves as cost to complete is built from commitments and trends instead of the original plan.
- Budget Leakage: Falls as variations pass through a gate that records cost and time before approval.
- Cash Position: Stays predictable as payment timing is forecast against the programme of work.

Principles and Evidence Base

- ISO 21508 Earned Value Management: Supplies the measures of planned, earned and actual cost used to quantify variance, applied in Sessions 2 and 3.
- Time Value of Money: Underpins the discounting and timing of payments in cash flow forecasts, applied in Session 4.
- Cost Breakdown Logic: Divides the budget into controllable elements that match the work and the contract, applied in Session 1.
- Exception Reporting Logic: Directs attention to items that move outside agreed tolerance, applied in Sessions 2 and 5.

Intended Participants

- Project directors who own the budget and approve forecasts.
- Cost and commercial managers who prepare cost reports and valuations.
- Site and contract managers who commit spend and instruct changes.
- Owner representatives who review contractor cost data and payment applications.
- Finance partners who convert project forecasts into funding and cash plans.

Typical settings include developers, contractors, public works bodies and engineering consultancies.



Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to construct a budget baseline and cost breakdown that match the work and the contract.
2. Participants will be able to evaluate variance using planned, earned and actual cost measures.
3. Participants will be able to construct a forecast final cost from commitments, trends and remaining work.
4. Participants will be able to prioritise variations by cost, time and approval authority.
5. Participants will be able to diagnose weak points in a cash flow forecast.
6. Participants will be able to justify corrective action to a sponsor using cost evidence.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Controlling Spend: Budget Baseline and Breakdown

What is the approved budget, and how is it divided so that it can be controlled?

- Cost Breakdown Structure
- Budget Baseline Register
- Contingency and Allowance Schedule
- Cost Code Map
- Commitment Log Design

Day 2: Variance and Cost Reports

How is variance measured and reported so that decisions follow?

- ISO 21508 Earned Value Management Method
- Variance Analysis Table
- Cost Report Template
- Progress Measurement Rule
- Accrual Cut-Off Check

Day 3: Forecast Final Cost

How is the cost to complete forecast and tested?

- Cost to Complete Build-Up
- Forecast Final Cost Model
- Trend Register
- Risk Allowance Draw-Down Record
- Forecast Challenge Review



Day 4: Variations, Change Control and Cash Flow

How do variations and payments move cost and cash?

- Variation Impact Assessment
- Change Approval Gate
- Payment Application Check
- Cash Flow Forecast Curve
- Time Value of Money Test

Day 5: Cost Control Pack for One Live Project

Do the earlier tools give one cost control pack that a sponsor can rely on?

- Applying the Session 1 Budget Baseline Register
- Testing the Session 2 Cost Report Template
- Reviewing the Session 3 Forecast Final Cost Model
- Checking the Session 4 Cash Flow Forecast Curve
- Completing the Cost Control Pack

Methodology

The programme uses a data workshop on one prepared project with a budget, a commitment ledger, progress records, variation requests and payment applications. Participants build each report from the data, record assumptions in a common format and compare results in small groups, then apply the same tools to a project from their own organisation.

- Suggested activity: Rebuilding a cost report so that paid, committed and forecast spend are separate.
- Suggested activity: Forecasting final cost for a road package with two open variations.
- Suggested activity: Testing a cash flow curve against a delayed payment certificate.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes a cost control pack for one live project. It holds a budget baseline, a cost report, a variance analysis, a forecast final cost, a variation log with approval gates and a cash flow forecast. The pack is used at work to brief the project sponsor and to agree corrective action at the next cost review.



Frequently Asked Questions

Is controlling spend on building works suitable for leaders without a cost engineering background?

Yes. Controlling spend on building and civil works is taught through a worked project and plain explanation. The training assumes experience of managing or sponsoring construction projects, but no cost engineering qualification.

Which references does controlling spend on building and civil works rest on?

Controlling spend on building and civil works rests on ISO 21508 for earned value management and on the time value of money for cash flow, together with cost breakdown logic and exception reporting logic.

How is the pack from controlling spend on building works used at work?

You use the cost control pack to brief your project sponsor, agree corrective action at cost reviews and show how each forecast and variation was built.

How does controlling spend on building works differ from cost estimating training?

Controlling spend on building works concentrates on holding a budget, reporting variance and forecasting during delivery, while cost estimating training concentrates on pricing work before a tender or budget is set.