

7.5: Change Control Process

The monitoring and controlling process is a constant process starting at the very beginning of the project, and it finishes when the project is closed out. Monitoring and controlling involves regularly measuring progress on a project to ensure it continues meeting objectives and addressing current organizational needs. Project managers monitor the project work by collecting project performance data, producing performance measures, and reporting and disseminating performance information. Then, they compare actual performance with planned performance, analyze variances and assess trends to affect process improvements, and finally evaluate possible alternatives and recommend appropriate corrective action as needed^[1].

In order to manage the control process effectively, projects must have a change management plan and a configuration management plan which are sub-plans of the overall project management plan. A change management plan provides the direction for managing the change control process and documents the roles and responsibilities of the approval authority or the change control board if available. The configuration management plan describes the configurable items of the project and identifies the items that will be recorded and updated so that the product of the project remains consistent and operable^[2]. Therefore, these plans guide project managers and teams while they need to make a change in the project, and configure primarily the product scope.

When we find a problem, we can't just make a change since we should evaluate possible alternatives and consider risk response strategies and the availability of contingency reserves. What if corrective actions exceed our schedule or budget constraints? We need to evaluate triple constraint elements (scope, schedule, and cost) and other constraints such as resources and quality. Compromising the quality of the outcomes and deliverables would endanger the approval process, and hence lead to a project failure. Therefore, we have to figure out if it is worth making the change. Change control is a set of procedures that let us make changes in an organized way.

Anytime we need to make a change to our project management plan, we need to start with a change request. This request is generally in the form of a document. Any change to the project needs to be documented so we can figure out what needs to be done, by when, and by whom. Any stakeholder can request a change. Once the change request is documented, it is submitted to a change control board, in particular, if the project is within a program or portfolio, and this necessitates the submission of change requests exceeding a specified cost. A change control board is a group of people who consider changes for approval. Not every change control system has a board. The change control system is designed based on various factors such as the size and complexity of the project, organizational policies, business field, and contract requirements. The change requests are generally submitted to the project sponsor by the project manager for review and approval. The project manager is responsible to monitor the change process from the very beginning to the very end. Putting the recommended changes through change control will help us evaluate the impact and update all the necessary documents. Not all changes are approved, but if the changes and repairs are approved, we send them back to the team to put them in place.

Table 7.2: Change Request Form Template

Project Name:	
Project Number:	
Project Manager:	
Requestor Name:	
Request Date:	
Resolution Requested	
Description of Change:	
Reason for Change:	
Impact on Scope and/or Deliverables:	
Impact on Resources and Quality:	

Impact on Time and Cost:		
Disposition of Change Resolution:	Accepted:	Denied:
Project Manager Name & Signature	Date: _____	
Project Sponsor Name & Signature	Date: _____	

Change requests (Table 7.2) are made to modify documents, deliverables, and baselines. They are issued to expand, adjust, or reduce project scope, product scope, or quality requirements and schedule or cost baselines. They can include corrective actions, preventive actions, defect repairs, and updates^[3]. Project teams may need to assess the product and project scope, and this may require the teams to discuss the issues with stakeholders to determine if there is a need to revise requirements or add new ones.

In order to keep the track of change requests and actions taken, a “Project Change Request Tracking Log” (Table 7.3) can be held along with an “Issue Log”.

Although monitoring and controlling process is performed throughout the project, most of the effort would be expended especially during the execution (implementation) phase. Resources outside the core project team are assigned, and costs are usually the highest during this phase. Besides, scheduling issues would arise in this phase as project activities are carried out and human and physical resources are assigned. Project managers experience the greatest conflicts over the schedule in this phase. Some activities may take longer than estimated. Some risks may occur creating schedule slippages. Project managers first apply techniques without the need for a change request if triple constraints aren’t affected. Nevertheless, project managers should implement a holistic approach by taking into account all constraints and knowledge areas.

Table 7.3: Project Change Request Tracking Log Template

Project Change Request Tracking Log									
Project Name:									
Project Manager									
Submission Data			Impact Analysis			PM Review and Approval			
Request#	Submitted By:	Date	Date Assigned to Analyst	Assigned to	Date Analysis Completed	Date Reviewed	Committee Decision	Date Approved	Date Request Integrated into Project Plan

1. Project Management Institute. (2017). A guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK guide) (6th ed.). Project Management Institute. ↩
2. Project Management Institute. (2017). A guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK guide) (6th ed.). Project Management Institute. ↩
3. Project Management Institute. (2017). A guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK guide) (6th ed.). Project Management Institute. ↩

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