

Unit 14 – Change control



Unit 14 - Learning Objectives

To gain an understanding of:

- What a change is
- How to apply a change control process
- What questions to ask when assessing a change request

Change control process

Change control is the process through which all requests to change the baseline of a project are identified, evaluated and approved, rejected or deferred (APM BoK).

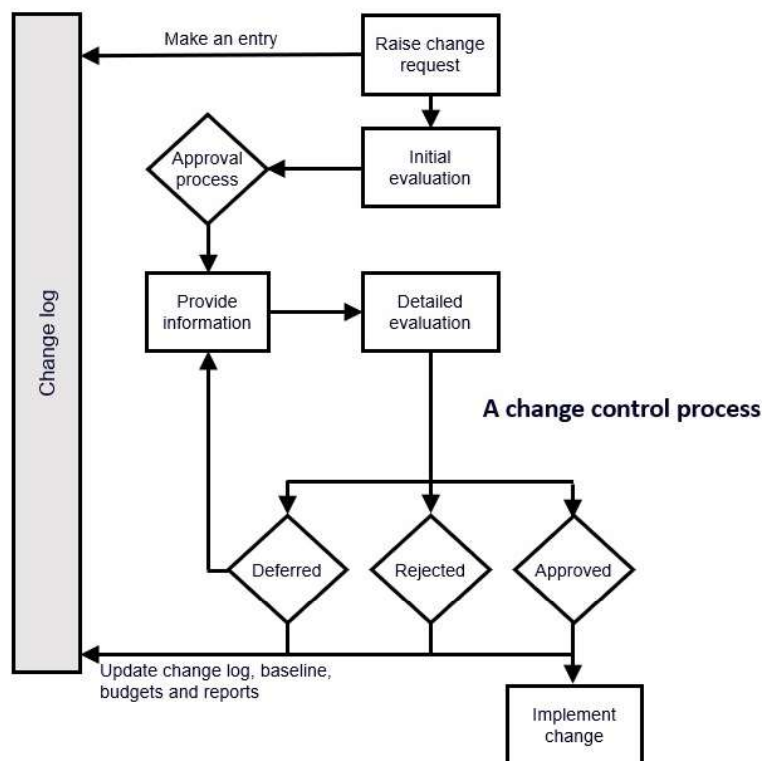
Change requests may arise as a result of:

- Issues arise or risk materialise
- New or change in stakeholder requirements
- New regulations
- Plans no longer valid

Managing requests for change is a major success factor in project management. Where there is ineffective change control there exists a high probability of scope creep, problems caused by the effects of poorly understood impact on other parts of the project, contractual conflict, increased costs and loss of stakeholder confidence.

Managing requests for change in a controlled way allows the sponsor to both understand the implications of change and make more informed decisions regarding responses.

The following process/steps are used to implement change control:



Raise and log a change request

Requests for change should be logged in the change log (or change register). In a controlled environment, change requests should be submitted in a structured and agreed method such as a request for change (RFC) form. This encourages the initiator of the change to inform the project manager of the reason for the change and any additional information that will help the project manager to assess it. Formal capture ensures that all change requests are documented, which both avoids them being overlooked and allows reporting on change status to senior management.

Initial evaluation

The change request is reviewed to consider if it is worthwhile evaluating in more detail or should be rejected at this early stage. Approval may be needed to complete detailed evaluation. This may be because of the cost and time required to complete the investigation (e.g. where specialist involvement is required to investigate the change) or the delegated limits that the project manager has been given.

An example is where a customer is considering a change to a product being developed by a supplier. The supplier realises that detailed evaluation of the change request will be expensive and time consuming and therefore asks if the customer is willing to pay for detailed evaluation.

Detailed evaluation

Subject matter experts may need to be used to complete this step and therefore may need planning before commencement. An example of this is structural analysis of a technical component. The proposed change should be evaluated in terms of impact including:

- Success criteria and baseline
- Benefits
- Scope
- Quality
- Time
- Cost
- Resources
- Risk
- Stakeholder engagement

This stage may also identify options for responding to the change request. Where this is the case, the impact on the plans and business case of those options should be assessed to allow an informed decision to be made.

Recommendation

The evaluated change request is now escalated with recommendation to the sponsor and/or wider governance board to approve, reject or defer the change. The sponsor is accountable for ensuring that a decision is made and communicated.

Some changes may be deferred so that progress and completion of a project is not interrupted. This may follow introduction of a change freeze (a decision point after which no more changes will be implemented). It may be more convenient to consider changes post transition during upgrades and outages.

The decision must be documented in the change log to provide an audit trail of decisions and to ensure that communication can take place.

Escalating the change request supports project governance by ensuring that the right level of authority is applied.

Update plans and implement

If the change is approved, plans and other technical documents must be updated to reflect the change. Configuration records must also be updated to reflect their current status such as version number. This ensures everyone understands what products are in use. Other configuration items may need to be changed as well.

The change must be communicated to affected stakeholders, implemented through appropriate planned actions and monitored through to completion.

Learning Objectives

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