

Checklist: 10 sure-fire ways to avoid scope creep

In today's work environment of ever-changing technologies and increasingly complex stakeholder demands, it's almost impossible for a project to avoid changes along its lifecycle. But that doesn't mean resigning yourself to scope creep. Instead, follow these proven ways to manage, monitor and control scope from the outset of a project, checking off each item as you go:



1. Clearly define the project's objectives

- Document your project's clear and agreed problem statement.
- Outline exactly what it is you are trying to fix through this project, and the steps you will take to achieve success.
- Bring these objectives to key stakeholders and ensure they are clearly articulated and agreed upon.



2. Be clear and measurable with your intentions

- Avoid using unmeasurable terms in your project documentation - such as 'better', 'faster', 'cheaper' and 'more efficient'.
- Use clear, agreed-upon metrics that can be tested against and that all stakeholders can understand.



3. Implement Work Breakdown Structures (WBS)

- Break down the project into smaller components to help clarify key deliverables.
- Assign which deliverables are 'in' and 'out' of scope.
- Get your team members on board to outline what the project should be doing and what it should not be doing.
- Share the WBS with stakeholders to encourage project buy-in.



4. Identify and document product specifications

- Ensure requirements for each deliverable are documented and agreed to.
- Document and agree the acceptance/quality criteria for every deliverable.
- Assign team members to be the 'reviewer' and 'approver' for each deliverable.



5. Create a change control process

- Implement a change control process that allows for change requests to be submitted before being approved or denied.
- For requests that require senior management approval, ensure you have conducted an impact analysis. This allows the approvers to examine the change requests together with options and recommendations.
- Ensure all approved changes are documented.
- Re-baseline the project to incorporate approved changes.
- Consider using a support function to help (your PMO or external experts).



6. Assign team members to a Change Authority

Often it can take a long time to obtain formal change request approvals, which may hold up the project.

- Consider having a Change Authority in place to maintain momentum.
- Ensure you have the right people on the Change Authority who can make decisions and can contribute technically and pragmatically.



7. Consider the value of a change budget

- Consider a change budget if you are managing a dynamic project where you expect lots of changes (this will help to ensure the budget doesn't blow out).
- Keep this 'pot of money' separate – make sure it's ring-fenced!
- Communicate the golden rule to stakeholders: if they want to make a change, they must fund it. (Don't dip into your contingency reserve for stakeholder changes that weren't agreed on.)



8. Keep stakeholders engaged over the project's life

- Set up an initial kick-off meeting and then subsequent project catch-up with stakeholders to gain support and clarify the project's scope (and what's out-of-scope).
- Get those who analyse change requests, conduct impact analyses and manage approvals to stay in regular communication with stakeholders.
- Communicate any changes to all stakeholders. Remember: not all changes are bad, and stakeholders will be happy to learn about positive shifts in the project.



9. Carry out an assurance review on the project

- Reflect on where you are throughout the project's lifecycle, and ask a series of questions to clarify how the project is faring:
 - Where are we along the project's journey?
 - Where should we be at this stage?
 - Is all the documentation up-to-date and representative of the current baseline?
- Consider an external [project health check](#) by the PMO to make sure you stay on top of targets, or contact PM-Partners for an unbiased assessment.



10. Develop a culture of continual learning and development

- Ensure everyone on your team understands project management, as well as the definition of risks, assumptions, constraints and change.
- Create a project delivery framework or methodology – or adapt what you have – to better suit your environment.
- Encourage team members to grow their knowledge of project management processes.

Scope creep can hamper even the most straightforward project no matter your experience as a project manager. So, plan ahead, ensure all stakeholders agree on what will be delivered, and put processes in place to keep inevitable changes in check.

PM-Partners has the expertise and [accredited courses for project practitioners](#) to ensure your team eliminates scope creep and keeps kicking goals on every project. [Contact the experts](#) at PM-Partners today or call 1300 70 13 14 to find out more.