budget4cast

Standard Operating Procedure

Project Budget Management

Official admin guidance for project setup, forecasting, actual costs, reallocations, reporting, dashboards, and optional subscription features.

Document Control	Details
Owner	budget4cast Administration
Audience	Project administrators, project editors, finance users, owner representatives, developers, facility managers, and project stakeholders

1. Purpose

This SOP explains how we recommend setting up and managing construction project budgets in budget4cast. It is written for the administrators and project teams who will use budget4cast to plan budgets, enter forecasted costs, track actual costs and invoices, manage reallocations, generate reports, and share project visibility with stakeholders.

budget4cast is designed to make construction budget management easier than spreadsheet-based tracking. The platform keeps project budgets, cost forecasts, invoices, document attachments, dashboards, reports, cash flow, funding sources, and user permissions organized in one place.

2. Scope

Use this SOP for the standard workflows available in budget4cast: project setup, budget groups, budget codes, user administration, forecasted costs, actual costs and invoices, reallocations, auto forecast, cash flow, dashboard charts, funding source tracking, filtering, report downloads, and document attachments.

This SOP does not replace your organization's accounting policies, approval authority, contract requirements, or internal document control standards. When your internal controls are more specific than this SOP, follow your approved internal process while using the budget4cast workflow described here.

3. User Roles and Access Levels

budget4cast includes four access levels. We recommend assigning the lowest level of access that still allows each user to complete their work.

Access Level	Best For	What This Role Can Do	Important Limits
Administrator	System owners, project controls leads, senior project managers	Full project access, including project settings, budget code structure, user administration, budget groups, data entry, reports, dashboards, and reallocations.	Use carefully because this role can change foundational project setup.
Editor	Project managers, finance users, cost control users	Add and edit forecasted costs, actual costs, invoices, reallocations, notes, attachments, filters, and reports.	Cannot change budget code structure, project settings, or user settings.
View All	Client reviewers, finance reviewers, detailed stakeholders	Read-only access to all project data, including detailed cost information.	Cannot enter, edit, or delete data.
View Summary	Executive stakeholders or high-level reviewers	Read-only access to the Project Summary tab only.	Cannot view detailed cost tabs or edit data.

4. Core Operating Standards

Before entering live cost data, we recommend confirming the project structure and user permissions. Clean setup makes reporting, filtering, and long-term budget tracking much easier.

- ☐ Set up budget sections, budget groups, and budget codes before entering forecasted costs, actual costs, reallocations, or dashboards.
- ☐ Associate forecasted costs and actual costs with budget codes whenever possible.
- ☐ Attach supporting PDFs to forecasted costs, actual costs, invoices, reallocations, and approvals so project backup stays connected to the record.
- ☐ Enter forecasted costs before actual costs when possible. If a forecasted cost does not exist, actual costs may still be entered as unforecasted invoices.
- ☐ Apply filters before downloading reports when the report should include only selected records.
- ☐ Assign user access carefully. Only grant Administrator access when the user needs to manage project settings, users, or budget structure.
- ☐ Confirm optional subscription features such as Cash Flow and Funding Source Tracking before training users on those workflows.

5. Set Up a New Project Budget Structure

5.1 When to Use This Procedure

Use this procedure when a new project has been created in budget4cast and the project team is ready to define the budget structure.

5.2 Before You Start

- ☐ Confirm you have Administrator access.
- ☐ Confirm the approved project budget structure, including sections, budget groups, budget codes, and starting budget amounts.
- ☐ Decide whether to enter budget codes manually, copy them from an existing project, or import an example project structure.

5.3 Steps

1. Log in to budget4cast and open the project from the project list.
2. Go to Budget Groups from the left menu or project setup area.
3. Choose how you want to create the structure: manually enter budget codes, copy budget codes from an existing project, or import codes from an example project.
4. If entering codes manually, review the default sections. budget4cast commonly starts with Soft Cost, Hard Cost, and Contingency. Rename sections if your project uses different terminology.
5. Create budget groups under the appropriate section. Examples include Construction, FF&E, Architecture, and Construction Contingency.
6. Create budget codes under the correct budget group. Enter the code name, original budget amount, and associated group.
7. Repeat the process until all sections, groups, and codes are entered.
8. Reorder budget codes within a group if needed.
9. To reorder groups, select Reorder Groups and drag the groups into the preferred sequence.
10. Return to Project Summary and confirm the budget groups, budget codes, and original budget amounts appear correctly.

5.4 Admin Notes

- ☐ After importing codes from an example project or an existing project, you will edit that structure in place rather than returning to a blank manual setup.
- ☐ Delete options are removed when a group or code has dependent structure or data. This protects existing project history.
- ☐ Only Administrators should change the original budget structure and project setup.

6. Invite and Manage Users

Use this procedure when adding internal team members, client users, reviewers, or stakeholders to a project.

11. From Project Summary, click Invite Users. You can also access the same user administration area from Project Settings.
12. Enter the user’s email address.
13. Select the appropriate access level: Administrator, Editor, View All, or View Summary.
14. Click Send Invitation.
15. The user will receive an email with instructions. If they already have a budget4cast account, the project will appear in their project list.

Need	Recommended Access
Configure budget codes, budget groups, project settings, or users	Administrator
Enter costs, invoices, reallocations, attachments, and notes	Editor
Review all project data without editing	View All
Review only the Project Summary tab	View Summary

16.

7. Enter Forecasted Costs

Forecasted costs are the planned and expected costs for the project. In budget4cast, these can include commitments, change requests, approved changes, uncommitted costs, and other configurable cost types. Forecasted costs are the foundation for projected cost-at-completion and over/under budget visibility.

16. Open the project and go to the Forecasted Costs tab.
17. Select the forecasted cost type. Common examples include Commitment, Change Request, Approved Change, and Uncommitted. Your available values may be configured in Project Settings.
18. Associate the cost with an existing budget code. If needed, split the cost across multiple budget codes.
19. Select or enter the vendor.
20. Enter the cost amount.
21. Enter the cost date.
22. Add a description and notes if they will help future reviewers understand the record.
23. Attach one or more PDFs, such as contracts, approvals, scopes, or backup documentation.
24. Click Add to save the forecasted cost.
25. Confirm the saved record appears with the correct budget code, type, amount, vendor, date, notes, and attachments.

7.1 Editing, Duplicating, Deleting, and Reporting

- Use Edit to correct or update a forecasted cost.
- Use Duplicate when creating a similar record; then revise the duplicated information before saving.
- Use Delete only when a record was entered in error and deletion is permitted by your organization’s controls.
- Use Show Filters to narrow the list before downloading a PDF or CSV report.

- When downloading a report, choose the columns to include and decide whether attached PDFs should be appended.

8. Enter Actual Costs and Invoices

Actual costs record invoices and incurred project costs. In budget4cast, actual costs may be linked to an existing forecasted cost or entered as an unforecasted invoice when no forecasted cost exists.

26. Open the project and go to the Actual Costs tab.
27. In the Add Entry area, select the related forecasted cost when applicable. If no forecasted cost applies, leave the selection set to None to enter an unforecasted invoice.
28. Review the summary information for the selected forecasted cost, including current budget and spending information.
29. Enter the invoice date. Use the calendar picker if helpful.
30. Enter the invoice number if applicable.
31. Enter the disbursement register number if your process uses one. This is commonly an integer tied to a monthly or quarterly pay package.
32. Enter a description if additional context is useful.
33. Enter the invoice amount.
34. Enter the retainage amount, if any.
35. If the invoice has been paid, enter the payment date.
36. Attach one or more PDFs, typically the invoice and supporting backup.
37. Click Add to save the actual cost.
38. Confirm the record appears in the actual cost list with the correct paid or unpaid status.

8.1 Mark an Invoice as Paid

39. Locate the unpaid actual cost in the list.
40. Click Edit.
41. Enter the payment date.
42. Click Save.
43. Confirm the payment date is displayed and the paid status is updated.

8.2 Invoice Upload Guidance

When invoice upload is available in your workflow, use it to reduce manual entry and keep invoice information connected to the correct project record. Always review the populated fields before saving so invoice date, invoice number, amount, retainage, payment information, budget code, and attached PDF are accurate.

9. Enter Budget Reallocations

Reallocations adjust the current budget during the project. budget4cast keeps the original budget visible while current budget amounts reflect approved transfers, increases, and reductions.

Type	Use This When	Effect
Transfer	Moving money between two budget codes, often from contingency to another budget code.	One budget code decreases and another increases by the same amount.
Increase	Adding budget to a budget code.	The selected budget code current budget increases.
Reduction	Reducing budget from a budget code.	The selected budget code current budget decreases.

44. Open the Reallocations tab.
45. Select Transfer, Increase, or Reduction.

46. For a transfer, select the source and destination budget codes.
47. Enter the amount.
48. Enter the date.
49. Select or enter the cause if your project uses cause tracking.
50. Add a description and notes as needed.
51. Attach approval backup or supporting documentation.
52. Click Add to save the reallocation.
53. Confirm the reallocation appears in the list, including the email address of the user who entered it.
54. Return to Project Summary and confirm the current budget reflects the reallocation.

9.1 Controls

- ☐ Editors and Administrators can enter reallocations and change current budget values.
- ☐ Only Administrators should change the original budget in project setup.
- ☐ Use filters to review reallocations by type, cause, budget code, or date range.
- ☐ Use Edit or Delete only in accordance with your approval and audit requirements.

10. Use Auto Forecast

Auto Forecast is designed for early project setup and planning. When enabled for a budget code, it keeps projected over/under at zero by creating or adjusting an uncommitted cost that consumes the remaining budget. This helps prevent early project summaries from appearing artificially under budget before all planned costs have been entered.

55. Open the Project Summary tab.
56. Locate the Auto Forecast column, often labeled AF.
57. Click the X or checkbox for the desired budget code.
58. Confirm the projected over/under changes to zero.
59. Enter forecasted costs for that budget code as they become known.
60. Return to Project Summary and confirm Auto Forecast adjusts the uncommitted cost downward as forecasted costs are added.
61. To turn Auto Forecast off, click the checkmark again.
62. Confirm the artificial uncommitted cost is removed and the projected over/under reflects the entered project data.

- ☐ Use Auto Forecast when planned costs are not yet fully entered.
- ☐ Turn Auto Forecast off when the budget code should show the true projected over/under based only on entered data.
- ☐ Explain Auto Forecast to stakeholders before sharing reports that rely on it.

11. Use Cash Flow

Cash Flow is available when enabled in the subscription. Use this feature to create spending profiles and compare budgeted cash flow against actual cost activity over time.

63. Open the Cash Flow tab from the left menu.
64. Select a budget code.
65. Review the budget amount and project month range.
66. Choose a spending profile type. Straight Line spreads budget evenly across months. S Curve places lower spend at the beginning and end, with more spend in the middle.
67. Adjust monthly forecasted spending by dollar amount or percentage as needed.
68. Review the monthly and cumulative graphs to confirm the profile is reasonable.
69. Repeat for each budget code that requires a spending profile.

When actual costs are entered against budget codes, they appear in the cash flow view so users can compare forecasted cash spending to actual spending.

11.1 Add Cash Flow Charts to the Dashboard

70. Go to the Dashboard tab.
71. Click Add Chart.
72. Choose a monthly or cumulative cash flow chart.
73. Select whether the chart should show the full project or a specific budget group.
74. Add the chart and use Arrange Charts to place it where you want it.

12. Use Funding Source Tracking

Funding Source Tracking is available when enabled in the subscription. Use it when a project needs to track forecasted costs and actual costs by funding source.

75. From Project Summary, click Edit Funding Sources.
76. Create each funding source required for the project.
77. Assign a budget to each funding source.
78. Save the funding source setup.
79. Return to Project Summary and open Funding Sources Summary to review funding source-level budget, forecasted cost, invoice, and summary information.
80. When entering forecasted costs or actual costs, assign the appropriate funding source.
81. Review Funding Sources Summary periodically to confirm costs are assigned correctly.

13. Use the Graphical Dashboard

The Dashboard gives users a graphical view of the project. Available charts may include cash flow, budget allocations, percentage complete, and other project visuals depending on the enabled features.

82. Open the Dashboard tab.
83. Click Add Chart.
84. Select the chart type.
85. Choose whether the chart should show the entire project or a specific budget group.
86. Choose full-width or half-width display.
87. Save or add the chart.
88. Use Arrange Charts to drag charts into the preferred order.
89. Use the Export link on a chart when the chart needs to be used in another program.
90. Click the X next to a chart to remove it from the dashboard.

14. Standard Reporting Procedure

Use this procedure whenever exporting budget, forecasted cost, or actual cost information for review, finance, stakeholder reporting, or project backup.

91. Open the tab that contains the information to report, such as Forecasted Costs or Actual Costs.
92. Use Show Filters when the report should include only selected records.
93. Apply filters and verify the on-screen list shows the correct records.
94. Click Download Report.
95. Select CSV when the report will be used in Excel or another spreadsheet tool.
96. Select PDF when the report will be distributed as a fixed-format report.
97. Choose the columns to include.
98. Choose whether attached PDFs should be appended.
99. Download, name, and store the report according to your document control process.
100. Clear filters after the export unless the filtered view should remain active.

15. Data Quality Checklist

- ☐ Budget structure matches the approved work breakdown structure.
- ☐ Each budget group is assigned to the correct section.
- ☐ Each budget code has the correct original budget amount.
- ☐ Forecasted costs are assigned to the correct budget code and vendor.
- ☐ Forecasted cost type is correct and consistent with project definitions.
- ☐ Actual costs are linked to forecasted costs when applicable.
- ☐ Unforecasted invoices are intentionally entered as unforecasted and are not caused by missing forecast data.
- ☐ Invoice date, invoice number, disbursement register, amount, retainage, and payment date are complete where applicable.
- ☐ Required PDFs are attached to forecasted costs, actual costs, and reallocations.
- ☐ Reallocations include appropriate cause, description, date, and documentation.
- ☐ Auto Forecast is enabled only where appropriate and understood by reporting recipients.
- ☐ Cash flow profiles are reviewed for reasonableness and updated when project timing changes.
- ☐ Funding sources are assigned consistently when the feature is enabled.
- ☐ Dashboard charts match the intended reporting audience.
- ☐ Reports are exported only after filters and columns are verified.

16. Common Issues and Recommended Resolutions

Issue	Likely Cause	Recommended Resolution
Cannot delete a budget group or budget code	The group or code has underlying structure or data.	Edit the structure in place or consult the project Administrator before making changes.
Projected over/under looks misleading early in setup	Not all planned costs have been entered.	Consider Auto Forecast until forecasted costs are fully entered.
Invoice has no related forecasted cost	The invoice is unforecasted or the forecasted cost has not been entered.	Link to an existing forecasted cost when possible, or leave as None only when intentionally entering an unforecasted invoice.
User cannot change budget codes or settings	User does not have Administrator access.	An Administrator must make the setup change or update the user's access if appropriate.
Dashboard chart appears in the wrong location	The chart was added to the bottom or has not been arranged.	Use Arrange Charts and drag the chart to the desired location.
Funding source fields are not available	Funding Source Tracking may not be enabled.	Confirm subscription features with the budget4cast administrator or budget4cast contact.
Cash flow fields are not available	Cash Flow may not be enabled.	Confirm subscription features and upgrade if needed.

17. Recommended Training Sequence

101. Begin with a short overview of the project, the budget structure, and why budget4cast is being used.
102. Train Administrators on project setup, budget groups, budget codes, project settings, and user administration.
103. Train Editors on forecasted costs, actual costs, invoice entry, reallocations, document attachments, filters, and reports.

104. Train View All and View Summary users on navigation, Project Summary review, dashboard review, and exported reports.
105. Train advanced users on Auto Forecast, Cash Flow, Funding Source Tracking, and dashboard configuration when those features are enabled.
106. Have each user complete a sample workflow in a demo project before working in a live project.
107. Review data quality and attachment expectations before granting production access.

18. Suggested File Naming Conventions

budget4cast allows supporting documents to stay attached to the related record. We recommend using consistent file names so documents remain easy to identify outside the platform as well.

Item	Suggested Format	Example
Forecasted cost backup	Project_BudgetCode_Vendor_CostType_YYYYMMDD.pdf	SchoolA_ARCH101_ABCDesign_Commitment_20260617.pdf
Invoice backup	Project_BudgetCode_Vendor_InvoiceNumber_YYYYMMDD.pdf	SchoolA_MECH201_XYZMechanical_INV1007_20260617.pdf
Reallocation approval	Project_Reallocation_Type_BudgetCode_YYYYMMDD.pdf	SchoolA_Reallocation_Transfer_CONT001_20260617.pdf
Exported report	Project_ReportType_Filter_YYYYMMDD.pdf/csv	SchoolA_ActualCosts_PaidInvoices_20260617.pdf