

12 QUESTIONS

BEFORE THE NEXT CYCLE

Non-Profit Finance Cycle Readiness Checklist

12 questions to review before the next budget, forecast or reporting cycle begins.

HOW TO USE THIS

Choose one real recurring process - the annual budget, a restricted-fund forecast, the monthly trustee pack or another output - and work through the questions with the people involved.

1

OUTPUT

2

STRUCTURE

3

PROCESS

4

TRACEABILITY

1 - OUTPUTS & ACCOUNTABILITY

Start with what finance must produce

The checklist is most useful when it is applied to one real output rather than the whole finance environment at once.

- 1

What must finance produce at the end of this cycle?

Name the recurring output: annual budget, trustee pack, restricted-fund forecast, management report or another defined requirement.
- 2

Who needs the output?

Management, trustees, funders, programme leads, service managers, auditors or other stakeholders may need different views of the same underlying position.
- 3

Which reporting dimensions must be visible?

Consider programme, fund/grant, site, department, entity, project or other dimensions that the output needs to preserve.

DIMENSIONS TO CHECK

- ☐

 Programme
- ☐

 Fund / grant
- ☐

 Site
- ☐

 Department
- ☐

 Entity
- ☐

 Project

PROMPT If the output requires a view the plan does not capture, note it here.

2 - FUNDING & ASSUMPTIONS

Check the assumptions behind the plan

Funding terms, timing and planning assumptions can create work later if they are not visible from the beginning.

4

Which income or funding assumptions need updating?
Identify the grants, contracts, donations, membership, fundraising or other income assumptions that may change during the cycle.

5

Do any grant or contract periods sit outside the financial year?
Note awards that begin or end mid-year, span more than one budget cycle or have separate funder reporting periods.

6

Are restricted commitments, allocations or funding conditions represented clearly enough for finance to monitor them?
Consider committed spend, eligible expenditure, match funding, overhead allocations and other conditions relevant to the organisation.

QUICK CHECK

Can finance see both the organisation-year view and the relevant funding-period view without rebuilding the numbers?

PROMPT

Which assumption is most likely to change during the year?

3 - PEOPLE & PROCESS

Make responsibilities visible before the cycle starts

The quality of the final output depends on how information moves between contributors, finance and approvers.

- 7

Who contributes information to the cycle?
List the budget holders, programme managers, service leads, department owners or other colleagues who provide figures or assumptions.

- 8

Is ownership clear for each input or assumption?
Finance should know who is responsible for providing, reviewing and updating each material input.

- 9

How are reviews, approvals, comments and changes managed?
Record how inputs move from preparation through review and approval, and how commentary or revisions are retained.

MAP THE HAND-OFF

Contributor

➡

Finance review

➡

Approval

➡

Final output

PROMPT

Where does finance currently spend the most time chasing or reconciling?

4 - ACTUALS, FORECASTS & TRACEABILITY

Test how easily finance can explain the number

The process is easier to manage when plan, actuals, forecast changes and supporting detail remain connected.

- 10

Can actual performance be compared with the relevant budget or forecast without remapping?

Check whether the same programmes, funds, departments, sites or other dimensions remain usable across plan and actuals.
- 11

When the forecast changes, can finance see what changed and why?

Look for retained assumptions, comments, versions and approvals rather than only the latest total.
- 12

Can a final figure be traced back to its supporting detail quickly?

Choose one material number and test the route back to the source data, calculation, input or explanation behind it.

ONE-NUMBER TEST

- ☐

Where did it start?
- ☐

Who reviewed it?
- ☐

What changed?
- ☐

Which version is current?

PROMPT Which question is hardest to answer today?

ACTION PAGE

Choose one improvement before the next cycle

Use the answers from the previous pages to decide what to preserve, what to improve and what you would want to test.

1

KEEP

What already works well?

Keep the parts of the process that are clear, repeatable and trusted.

2

FIX

Which manual step causes the most effort?

Choose one area where repeated coordination or reconciliation adds avoidable work.

3

TEST

Which part would you want to see in a tailored Solver demonstration?

Use one recurring requirement as the demonstration scenario.

BRING ONE RECURRING FINANCE PROCESS TO SOLVER UK

We can demonstrate the relevant structure around the process your finance team already needs to run.



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