
Construction Change Order Tracker

Template for Documenting Scope Changes and Cost Impacts

Prepared by Hawkey Church Management Inc.

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Hawkey Church Management Inc. (HCMI) provides expert construction management services for churches and religious organizations across Ontario. With decades of experience guiding congregations through the building process, we combine construction expertise with a deep understanding of ministry needs.

Construction Change Order Tracker

Change orders are an inevitable part of any construction project. They occur when the scope, cost, or schedule of the work must be modified after the contract has been signed. While some change orders are unavoidable, effective tracking and management can prevent budget overruns and schedule delays that derail church building projects.

This guide provides templates and best practices for documenting and managing change orders throughout your construction project. Proper change order management protects your congregation's investment and maintains a clear record of all project decisions.

***HCMI TIP:** As your construction manager, HCMI tracks all change orders through our project management system and provides your building committee with regular updates. This template can serve as your committee's own tracking tool to complement our reporting.*

Understanding Change Orders

What Triggers a Change Order?

Change orders typically arise from one of these situations:

- **Owner-requested changes:** The building committee decides to modify finishes, add features, or change the layout after the contract is signed
- **Design errors or omissions:** The drawings or specifications contained mistakes or missing information that must be corrected during construction
- **Unforeseen site conditions:** Conditions discovered during construction that differ from what was anticipated (e.g., rock, contaminated soil, underground utilities)
- **Code or regulation changes:** Building code updates or inspector requirements that were not reflected in the original design
- **Value engineering:** Cost-saving modifications proposed by the contractor or construction manager that change the original scope

The Approval Process

Every change order should follow a formal approval process, regardless of size:

- Contractor submits a written change order request with detailed cost and schedule impact
- Construction manager reviews the request for accuracy and reasonableness
- Building committee reviews and discusses the change order
- Authorized signatories approve or reject in writing
- Approved change orders are incorporated into the project budget and schedule

Establish clear dollar thresholds for approval authority. For example, the project manager may approve changes under \$2,000, changes between \$2,000 and \$10,000 require the building committee chair's approval, and changes over \$10,000 require full committee approval.

HCM TIP: Never allow work to proceed on a verbal change order. All changes must be documented in writing with costs agreed upon before the work begins. Verbal agreements are the most common source of construction disputes.

Change Order Log Template

Use this log to track all change orders throughout the project. Maintain a running total of approved changes and their cumulative impact on the project budget.

CO #	Date	Description	Requested By	Cost Impact	Schedule	Status	Approved By
001	Mar 12	Upgrade sanctuary flooring from laminate to engineered hardwood per committee request	Owner	+\$18,500	+0 days	Approved	J. Smith
002	Mar 28	Additional soil excavation required due to unexpected clay layer at foundation	Contractor	+\$7,200	+3 days	Approved	J. Smith
003	Apr 15	Add conduit for future audio-visual system expansion in fellowship hall ceiling	Owner	+\$3,100	+0 days	Approved	B. Chair
004	May 2	Relocate HVAC ductwork to accommodate revised ceiling design in nursery area	Architect	+\$4,800	+2 days	Approved	B. Chair
005	May 18	Substitute specified roofing material with equivalent product due to supply chain delay	Contractor	-\$1,200	-5 days	Approved	J. Smith
006	Jun 3	Add emergency generator connection panel and transfer switch for critical systems	Owner	+\$12,400	+4 days	Pending	—

Change Order Summary Template

This summary should be updated after each change order is approved and presented to the building committee at every meeting.

Category	Amount
Original Contract Value	\$1,850,000
Total Approved Change Orders (5)	+\$32,400
Total Pending Change Orders (1)	+\$12,400
Revised Contract Value (Approved)	\$1,882,400

Category	Amount
Revised Contract Value (Including Pending)	\$1,894,800
Original Contingency Budget (10%)	\$185,000
Contingency Used to Date	\$32,400
Contingency Remaining	\$152,600 (82.5%)
Net Schedule Impact (Approved)	+0 days
Net Schedule Impact (Including Pending)	+4 days

HCMI TIP: A healthy contingency budget for church construction in Ontario is 10% of the contract value. If your contingency drops below 50% before the project is 75% complete, consider pausing owner-requested changes and focusing contingency funds on unforeseen conditions only.

Tips for Minimizing Change Orders

While some change orders are unavoidable, the following practices can significantly reduce their frequency and impact:

- **Invest in thorough design:** Complete and detailed drawings reduce errors and omissions. Do not rush the design phase to save time.
- **Conduct a comprehensive site investigation:** Geotechnical reports, environmental assessments, and utility locates before design begins.
- **Finalize decisions before construction:** Lock down all material selections, finishes, fixtures, and equipment before breaking ground.
- **Hold regular coordination meetings:** Weekly on-site meetings with the contractor, architect, and construction manager catch issues early.
- **Review shop drawings carefully:** Shop drawing review is your last chance to catch discrepancies before materials are fabricated.
- **Limit decision-makers:** Designate 2–3 authorized individuals who can approve changes. Too many voices lead to scope creep.
- **Document everything:** Keep written records of all site meetings, decisions, and discussions. Memory is unreliable when disputes arise.
- **Use allowances wisely:** For items not yet selected at contract time (e.g., light fixtures), set realistic allowances based on market pricing.

HCMI TIP: HCMI's construction management process includes detailed pre-construction planning specifically designed to minimize change orders. Our clients typically experience change orders totaling less than 5% of the contract value—well below the industry average of 10–15%.