

# 10 Best Practices for Fieldwork Execution



Scope creep. Delays due to information obtained during walkthroughs. Standing outside the office of an audit client waiting to ask a few questions. Many of these common speedbumps that occur during fieldwork may be avoided by observing the following best practices:



## Set Expectations Early

Setting and managing expectations with the client upfront is key and helps prevent scope creep. When documenting the audit scope within an engagement letter, include an escalation and approval to expand your scope in the event any additional necessary procedures are identified during testing.



## Schedule Recurring Status Update Meetings

Proactively schedule status update meetings (ideally weekly) throughout fieldwork with all stakeholders to give updates on testing status, delays, and potential findings. This ensures the final audit report will be a summary of discussions you've already had and will help avoid last minute surprises.



## Have Walkthroughs Prior to Fieldwork

Walkthroughs should occur prior to fieldwork and before audit document request lists are sent to the client. Delays in audits usually happen when additional documentation is requested because of new information obtained during walkthroughs. Testing attributes should also be documented after walkthroughs once you have a clear understanding of the process.



## Begin Fieldwork When All Requests Are Met

Communicate to audit clients that the original fieldwork timeline is based on the assumption that all requested support is obtained by the first day of fieldwork. If there are any delays in obtaining PBCs, remind the client the engagement timeline will be impacted.

## 10 Best Practices for Fieldwork Execution *Cont'd*

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### Test Complex Areas and Prior Findings First

When determining which sections to test first, always start with complex areas and areas where there were prior audit findings. These areas are most likely to result in findings and will be most heavily scrutinized, therefore it is important to leave ample runway for follow up discussions.



### Communicate All Potential Findings as Soon as They Are Confirmed

All findings should be communicated, vetted, and agreed upon with management prior to the closing meeting so there will be no surprises. Since findings usually result in additional testing procedures as part of the confirmation process, identifying and communicating potential findings early helps ensure ample time to test if needed.



### Be in Sync with the Audit Client

When presenting findings in the closing meeting, lead with “As we discussed...” before getting into the details. This helps both your audit team and the audit client feel in sync as they communicate, leading to a smoother report issuance process.



### Keep an Audit Log

Keep an audit log of all changes made to the testing attributes, and reconcile them with the engagement scope document. Prior to the end of fieldwork, perform a reconciliation between the original testing attributes and final attributes to make sure no attributes were accidentally omitted or changed. This will help any scope creep discussions as well, if additional findings were identified during the audit which resulted in additional procedures.



### Give Yourself Time to Follow Up

Ensure workpapers are reviewed with ample time left for follow up with the client. Ideally, all testing should be complete before moving into the reporting phase of an audit.



### Rotate for Fresh Eyes

If you have a standardized audit program for different audit categories, try to rotate team members. A good balance is to have at least one subject matter expert recurring on the audit while rotating out the others. This will ensure a fresh set of eyes to help find issues that were overlooked.