chalkstring

Core workflows

Last published 27.05.21

Introduction

Welcome to the Chalkstring workflow document.

This document is designed to help Chalkstring users understand the core workflows within the software. It highlights each of the main pathways all users will need to know to run a project from start to finish.

Some workflows are best practice guidance, whereas others are essential, enabling you to move onto the next stage within your project.

We have not included every possible scenario, as this document details core workflows only. It is not intended to replace training, but to provide supplementary guidance to help those users who have undergone training. to work within Chalkstring effectively.

Tips on navigating this document

Contents page

For ease of use, the contents page hyperlinks to other areas of the document. Just press the 'Ctrl' button on your keyboard and click the link for the page you want to visit.

Top of document

In the footer you'll see an arrow. To navigate back to the top of the document, double click on the footer so that it opens, and then press the 'Ctrl' button on your keyboard + click the arrow.

Benefit from best practice guidance and advice on the essential, core workflows within Chalkstring.

Contents

Introduction *1*

Chalkstring workflow *4*

Introduction: Pre-contract | offsite menu *5*

Projects *6*

1. Create new project 6
2. Project information 7

Build an assessment *8*

1. Assessment workflow 8
2. Product templates 9
3. Create a baseline assessment (including importing bills) 10
4. Takeoff 13
5. Price up an assessment 15

Import quotes *16*

Assessment review *17*

Create & submit a tender *18*

Tender decision *19*

Value engineering *20*

Introduction: Post-contract | onsite commercials *21*

Post tender review *22*

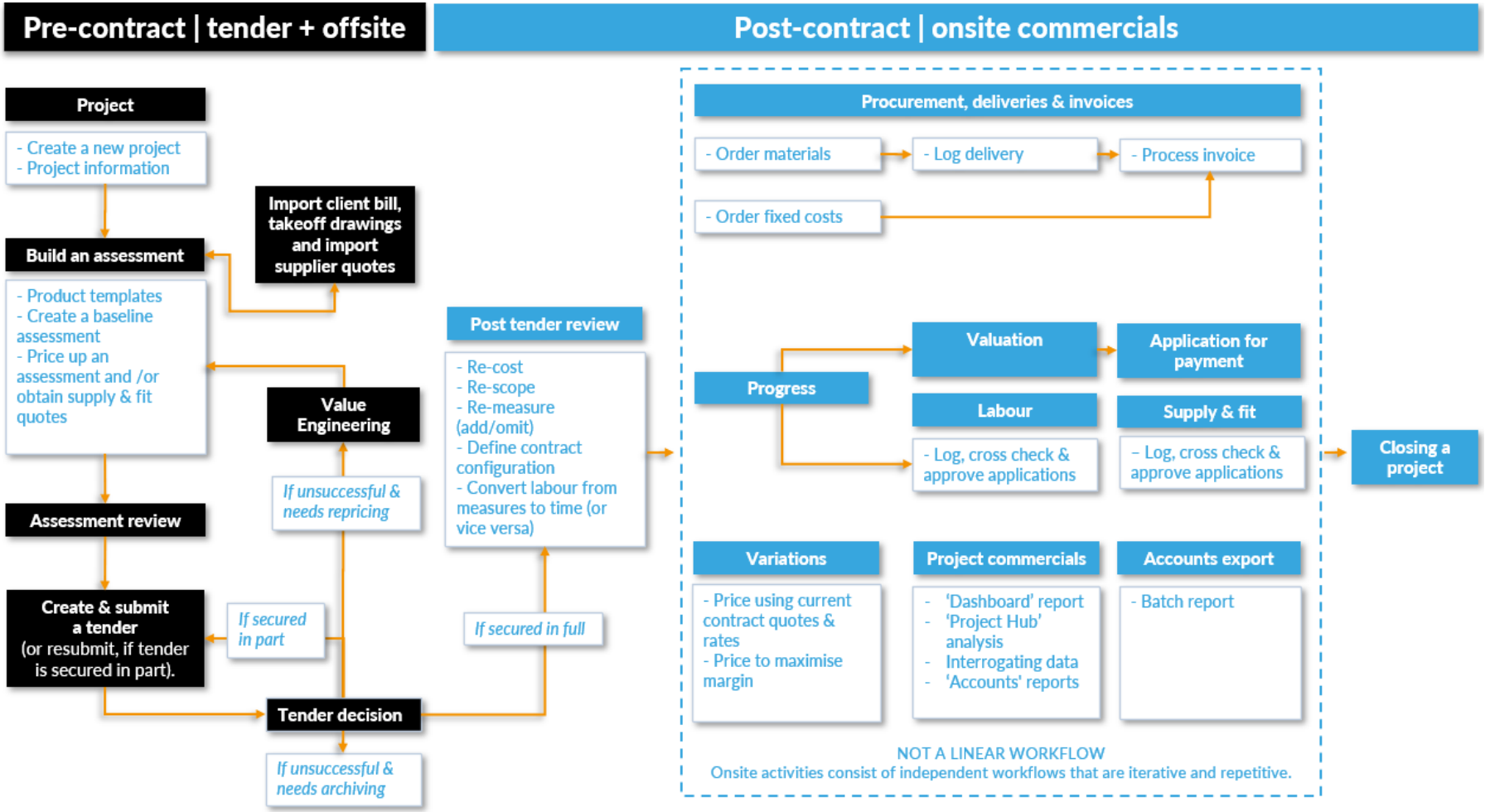
1. Re-cost 23
2. Re-scope 23

3. Configuration 24
4. Remeasure | Add / omit 24
5. Convert labour from measure to time (or vice versa) 25
Procurement, deliveries & invoices *26*
1. Workflow 26
2. Order materials 27
3. Log delivery 29
4. Process invoice 30
5. Order fixed costs 31
Progress, valuation & application for payment *32*
1. Progress 32
2. Valuation 34
3. Application for payment 35
Progress & labour applications *36*
Variations *38*
1. Pricing a variation to maximise margin 39
2. Pricing a variation using current contract scope + rates 40
Project commercials *41*
1. 'Dashboard' reports 42
2. 'Accounts' reports 44
Accounts export *44*
Closing a project *46*

Chalkstring workflow

The diagram below outlines the core Chalkstring workflows required to run a project from cradle to grave. Each workflow shown below is explained in further detail within this document. Workflows using black boxes represent the actions being done under the black 'offsite' menu and blue boxes refer to 'onsite' actions under the blue menu.

Figure 1: Core Chalkstring workflows



Introduction: Pre-contract | offsite menu

This Pre-contract' section addresses the workflows surrounding creating a project and tender, as per figure 2.

It is assumed that users of this document already understand the principles of Chalkstring and the difference between the black and blue menus, and that the black menu covers offsite functions

If you wish to know more about the 'Accounts' or the 'Dashboard' menu items, please navigate to the relevant area within this document for further explanation.

If you require guidance on other items within the black menu, such as how to add resources, materials or contacts, visit the Chalkstring User Hub for 'How to' guides.

Figure 2: Workflows under 'Pre-contract'

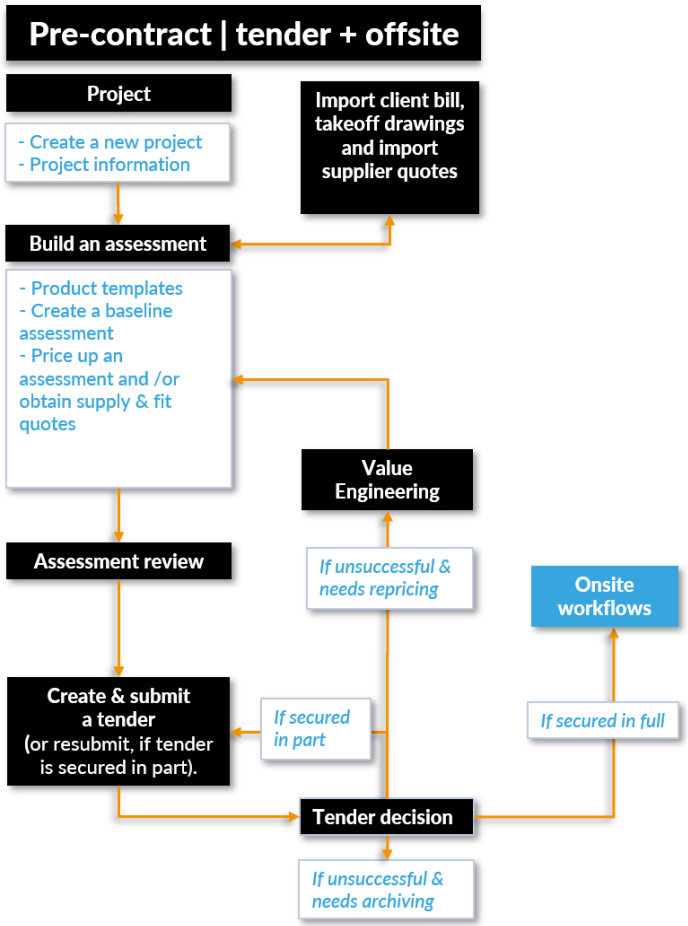
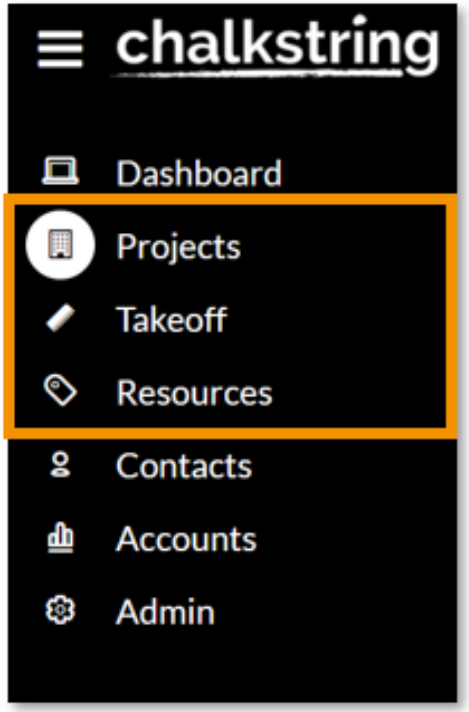


Figure 3: Black menu options covered within this section



Projects

This section includes:

1. Create new project.
2. Project information.

1. Create new project

Figure 4: How to create a new project

Additional notes

- Project Account Ref field – This is an optional field for allocating an account reference for the project. This field is used when creating an accounts 'batch export' report to reference the project – see 'Accounts Export' workflow.

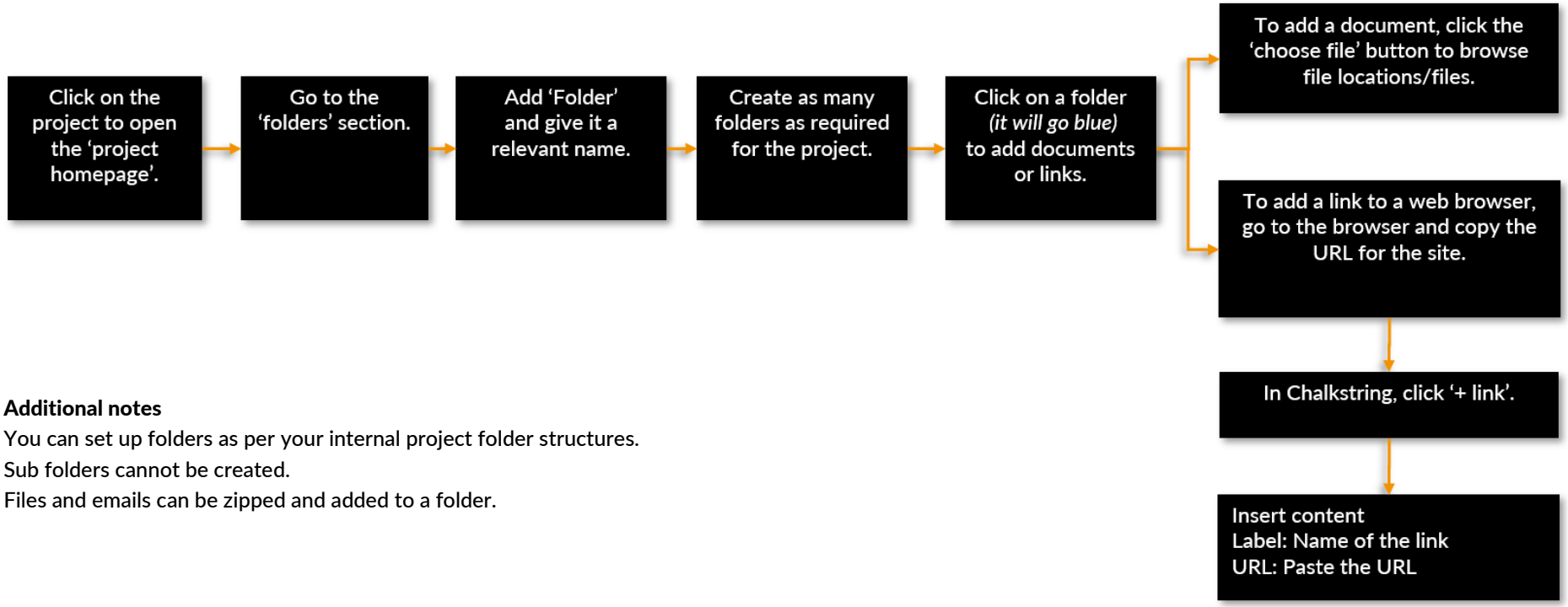
- Project Retention Percentage – This is a required field to define the percentage rate applicable for the project. This field is used to work out the retention you are levying on your applications and creates corresponding entries in the accounts batch export report – see 'Accounts Export' workflow.

- When you select a package, you will see that a tax rate has been applied to it. Chalkstring will input the default rate that most Chalkstring clients use, but you can change these if required.

2. Project information

You can save all your project information – drawings, RFIs, CVIs etc – within the 'folders' section of Chalkstring. The workflow below shows how to utilise folders. If your business wishes to use a different method for storing project information, such as Office 365 or Dropbox, you can create a link directly to that folder from within Chalkstring. It is important you define where your project information is stored so your project team knows where to save and access information.

Figure 5: Workflow for managing project information



Additional notes

You can set up folders as per your internal project folder structures.
Sub folders cannot be created.
Files and emails can be zipped and added to a folder.

Build an assessment

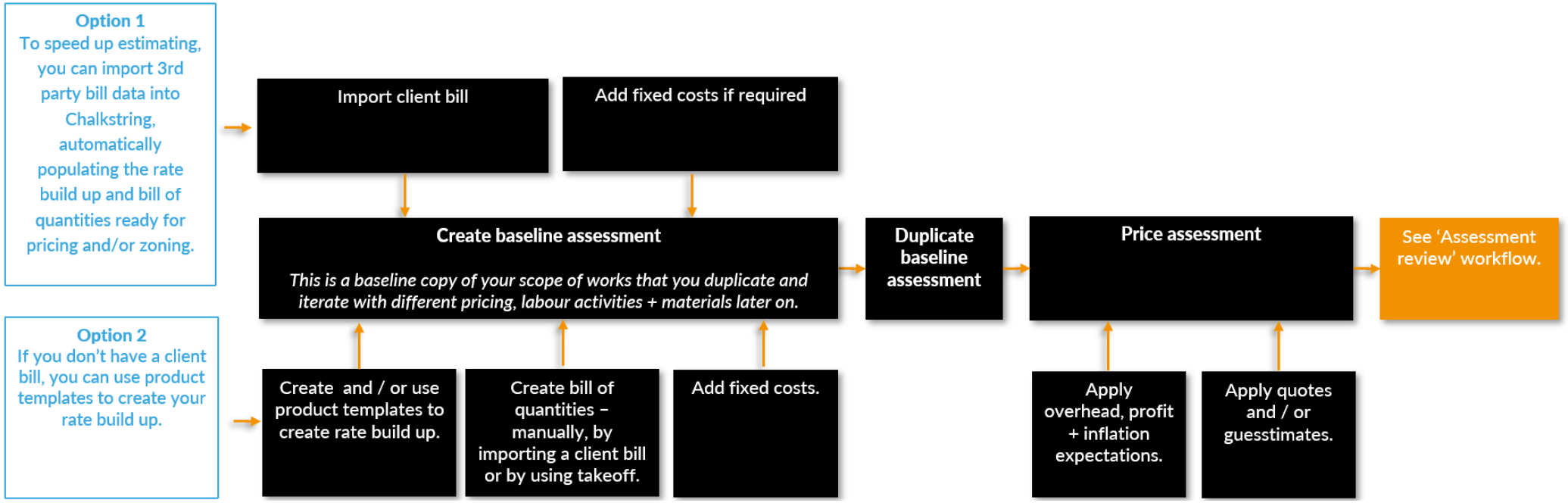
This section includes:

1. Assessment workflow.
2. Product templates.
3. Create a baseline assessment (including importing data).
4. Using takeoff.
5. Price up an assessment.

1. Assessment workflow

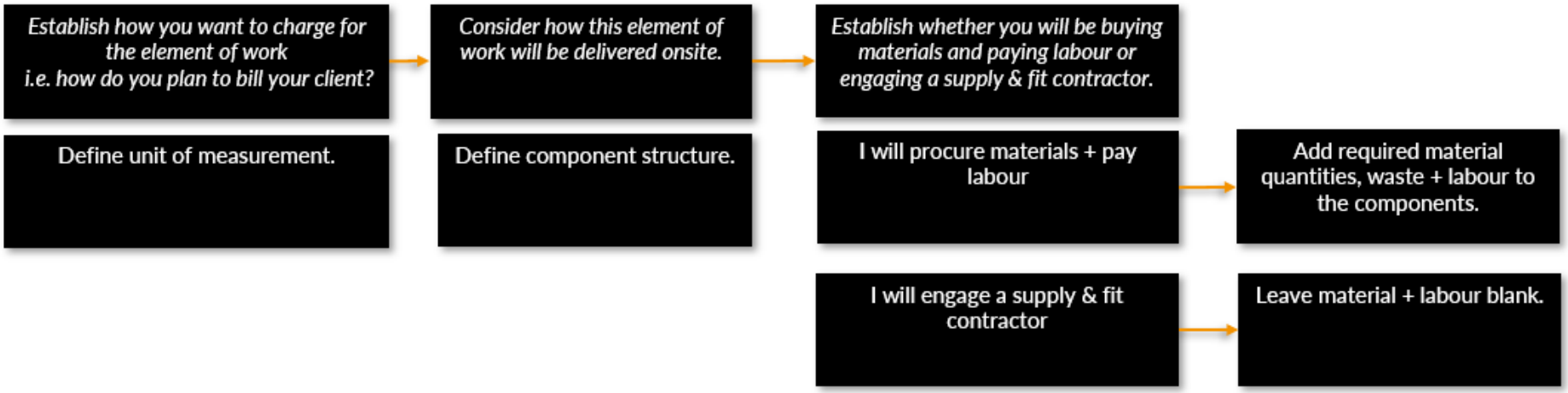
Below is the high-level workflow for building an assessment - this contains best practice to enable you to work quickly.

Figure 6: Best practice workflow for building an assessment



2. Product templates

Figure 7: How to create product templates for inclusion within the rate build up

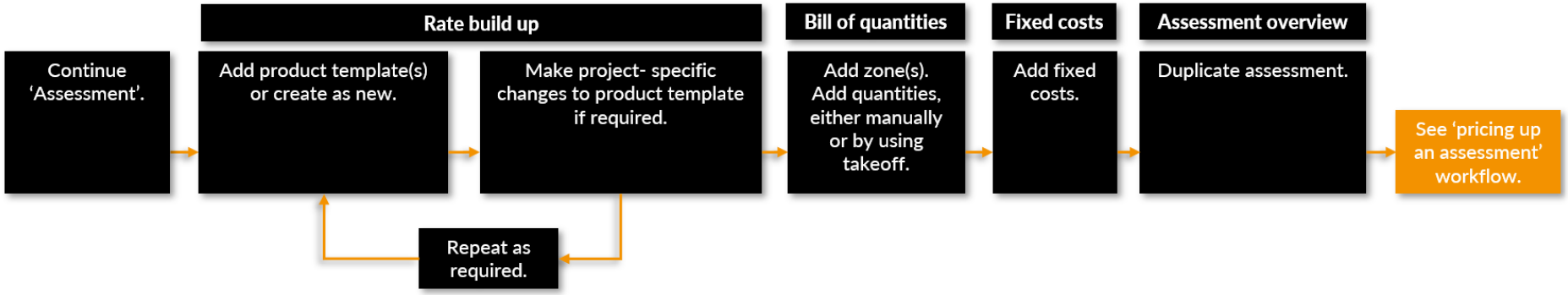


3. Create a baseline assessment

We recommend that you start by creating a baseline assessment. This is a rate build up that *only* shows the scope of works and has no commercials included. We suggest duplicating this assessment so that you can iterate different prices and labour activities and materials at a later date, much faster.

There are several ways you can create the baseline assessment –by defining the scope manually, by importing a client bill and by measuring quantities in takeoff.

Figure 8: How to create a baseline assessment by defining the scope yourself



Importing data to create your baseline assessment

You can import client bills, so that they populate your rate build up and bill of quantities. You can import up to 500 products and 1000 zones.
There are two ways you can do this, depending on the project data:

Option 1 – use this if your client bill has fewer than 50 zones (with no subzones) and quantities.
Option 2 – use this if your client bill is between 51 and 1000 zones and you have quantities.

Figure 9: Option 1

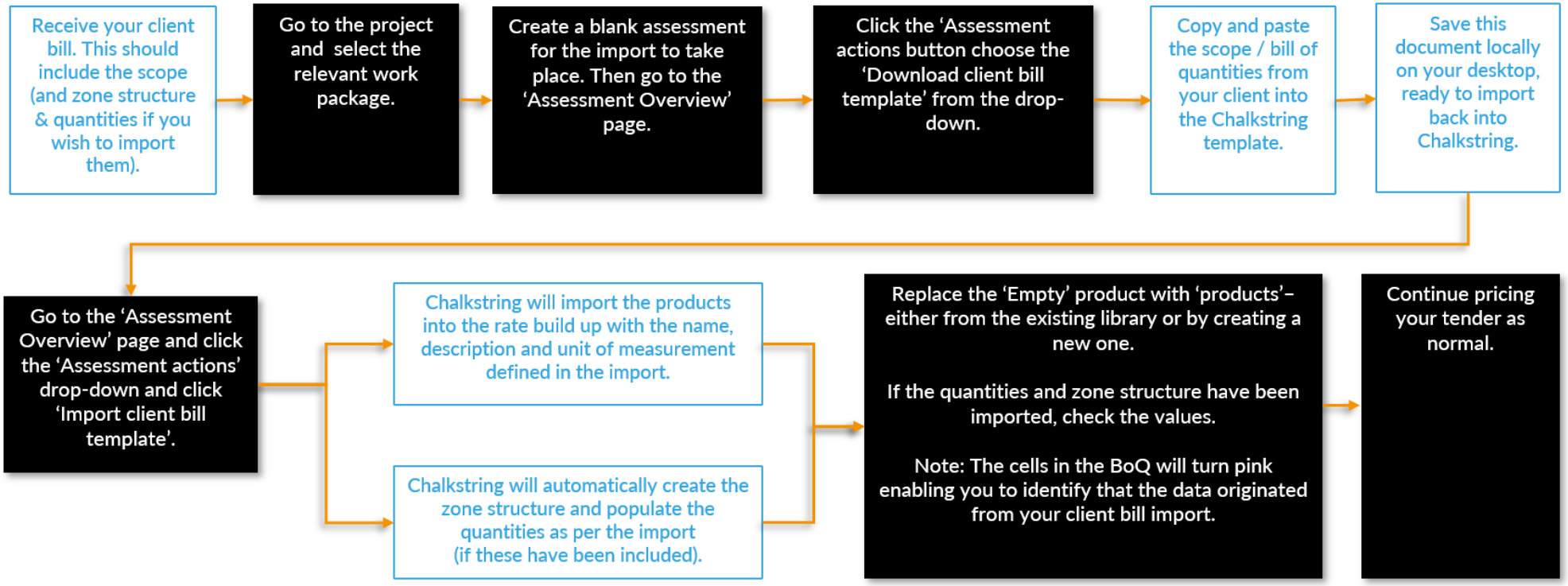
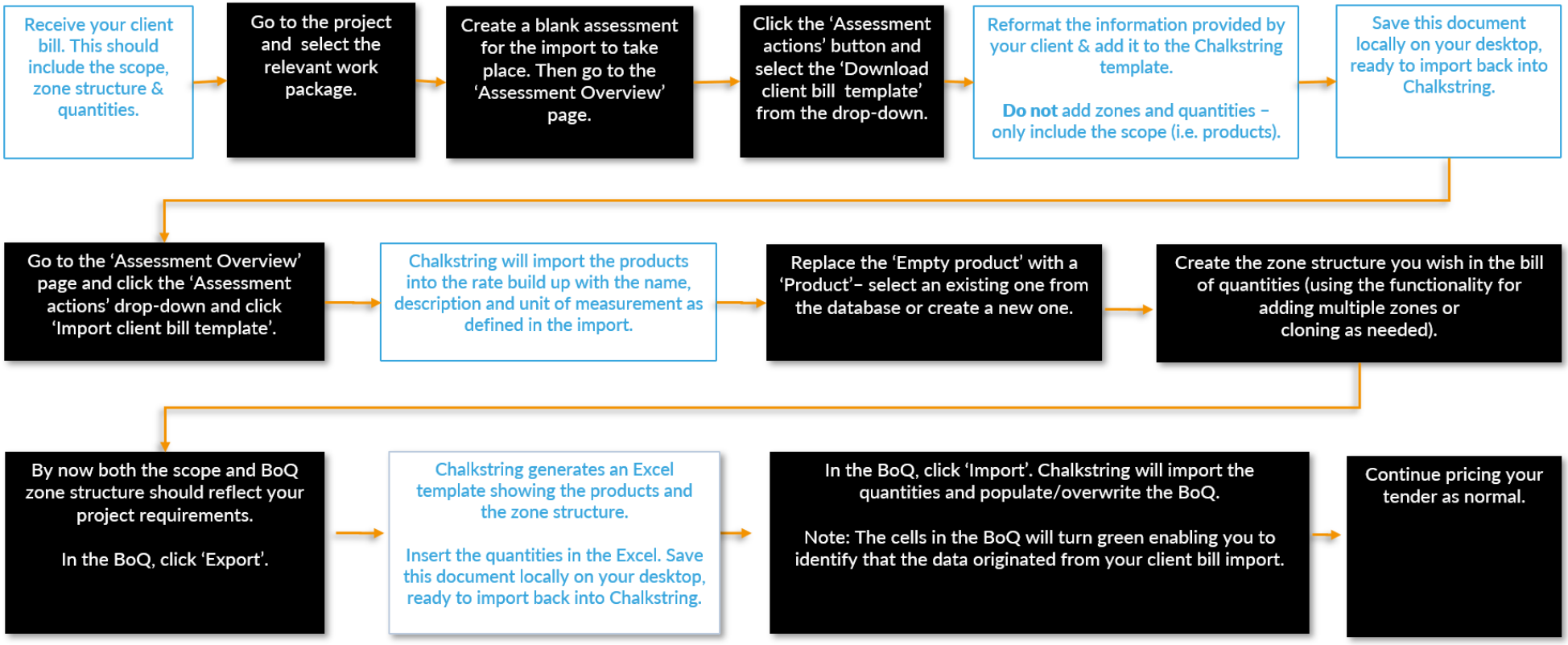


Figure 10: Option 2



4. Using Takeoff

There are two workflows for navigating to takeoff and uploading drawings. Option 1 is the recommended workflow and Option 2 is an alternative, should you wish to upload drawings in advance of setting up a project, assessment or zone structure.

Figure 11: Option 1

This is the recommended takeoff workflow, based on having your project, rate build up and zone structure set up in advance of measuring/marking up drawings.

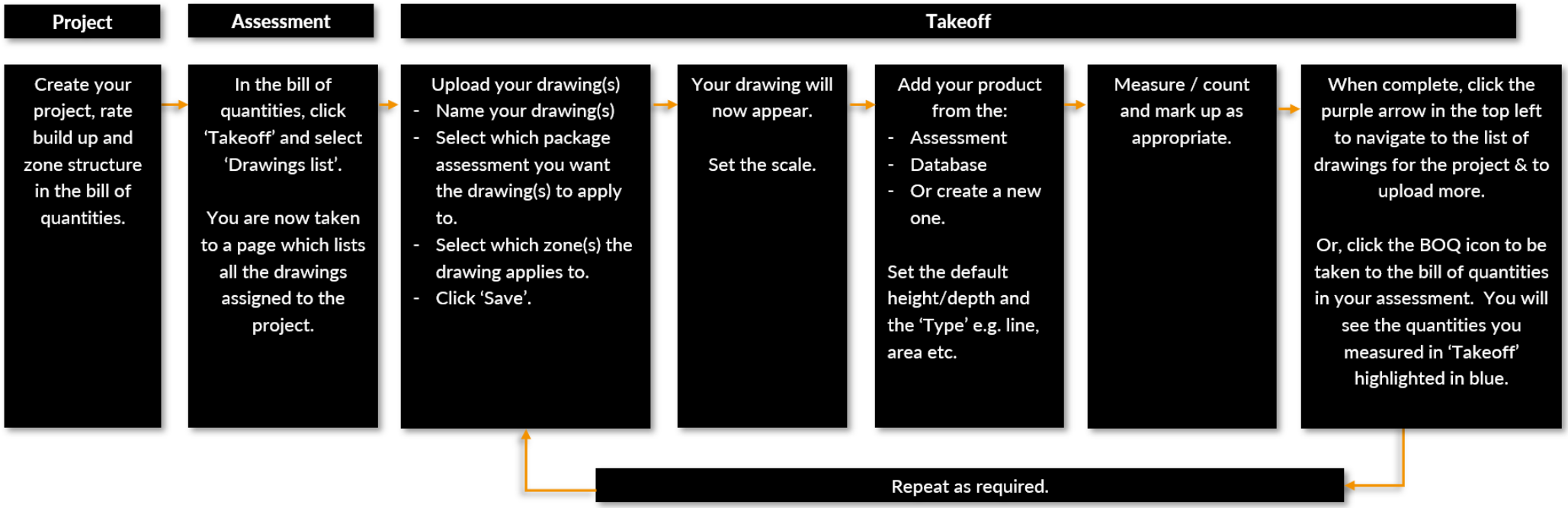
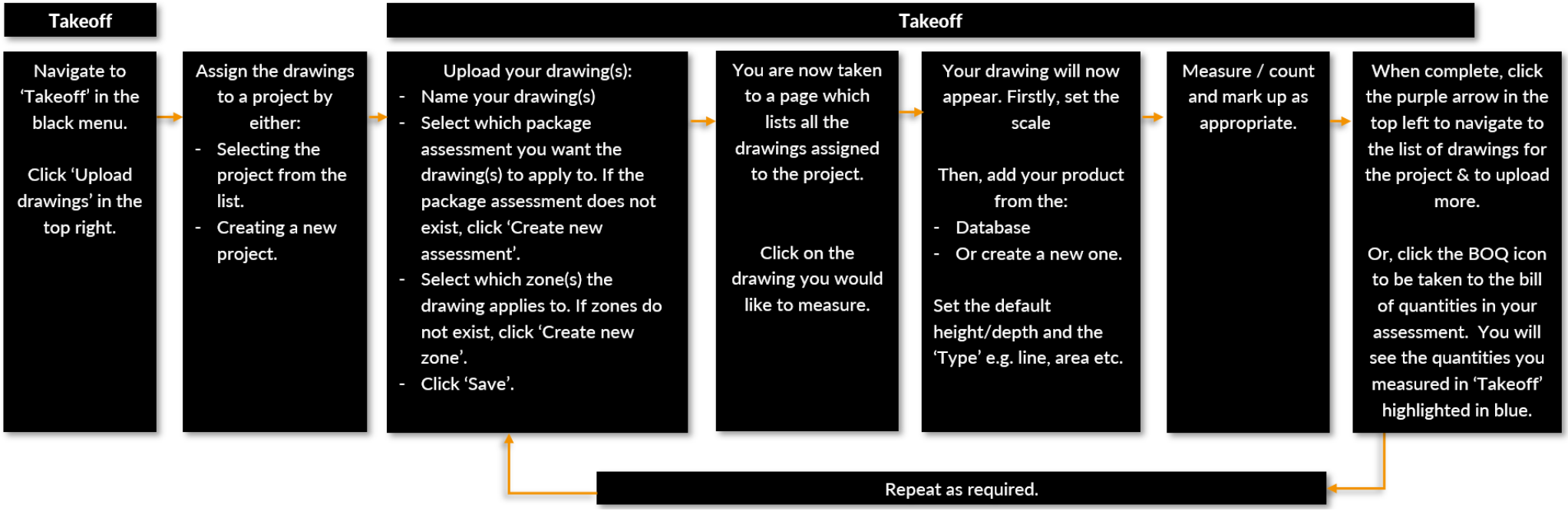


Figure 12: Option 2

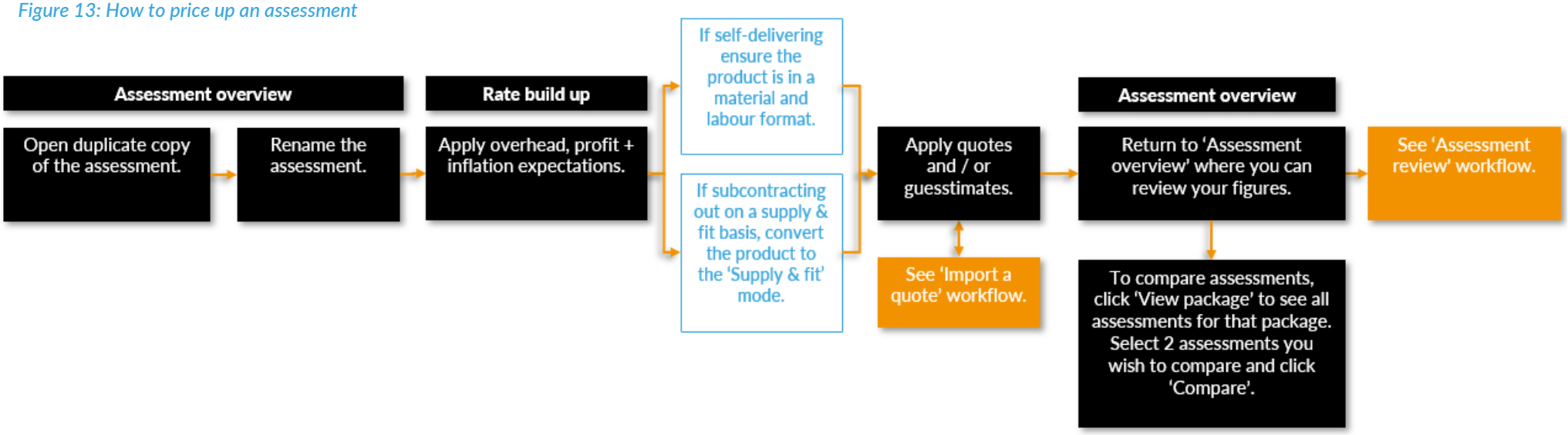
This is an alternative workflow, to be used if you have not set up your project in advance or if you are adding drawings to a project but you have not yet set up the assessment or zone structure.



5. Price up an assessment

If you followed step 3, you will now have one assessment that is a specification compliant bid with no pricing. You can now apply quotes, guesstimates and profit expectations to the duplicate assessment.

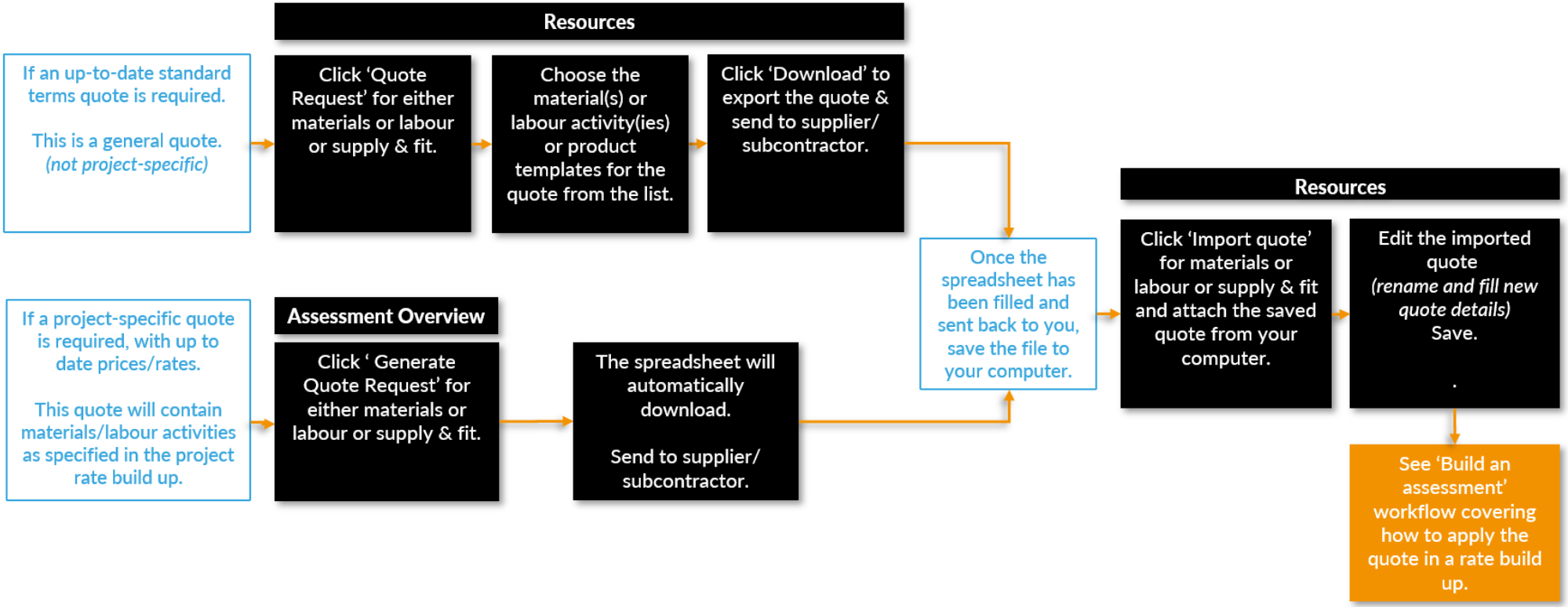
Figure 13: How to price up an assessment



Import quotes

Generating and importing quotes is an independent process from creating an assessment, but you will need to be able to add new pricing as required. This workflow explains the different scenarios by which you will generate quote requests.

Figure 14: How to generate and import quotes using a Chalkstring template



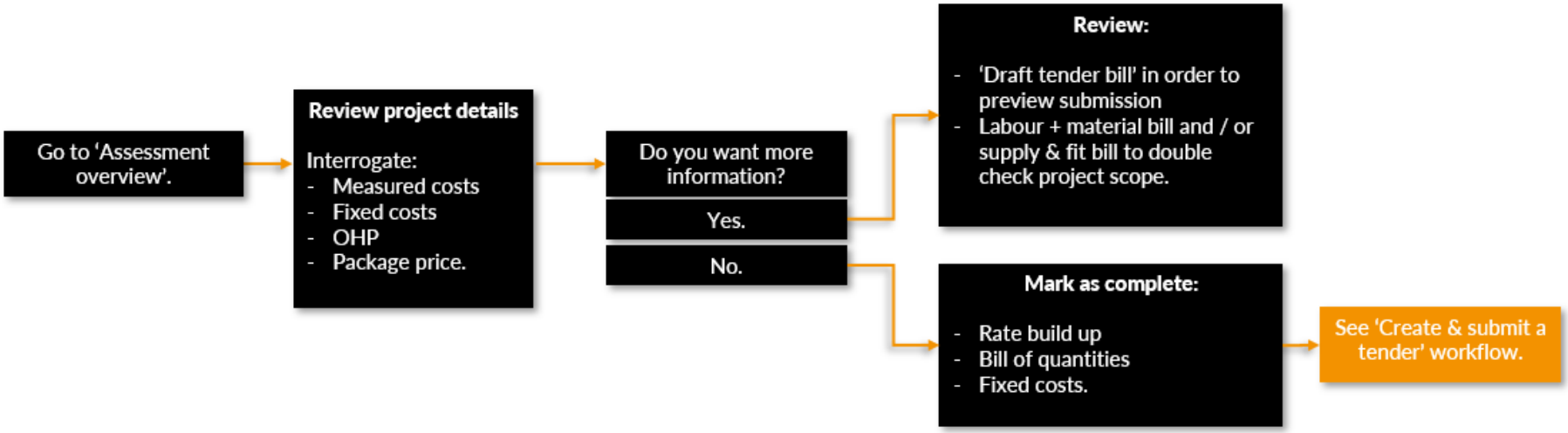
Additional notes

This process uses a Chalkstring template to generate a quote request. It is important your supplier completes this template so that you can upload the quote into Chalkstring with minimal effort. The process is the same for material and labour quotes.

Assessment review

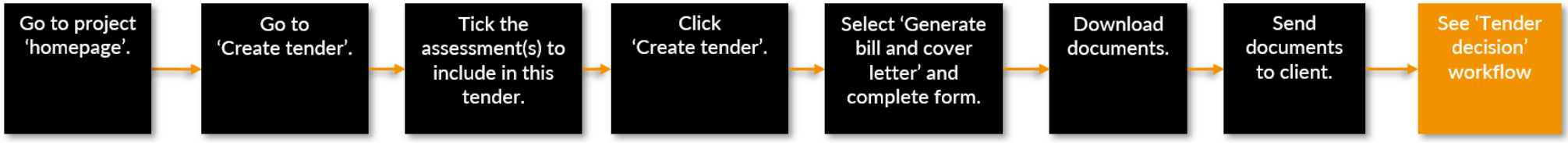
Before creating your tender, we recommend you review the assessment. This enables you to check that your scope, costs, OHP and prices are correct.

Figure 15: How to review your assessment



Create & submit a tender

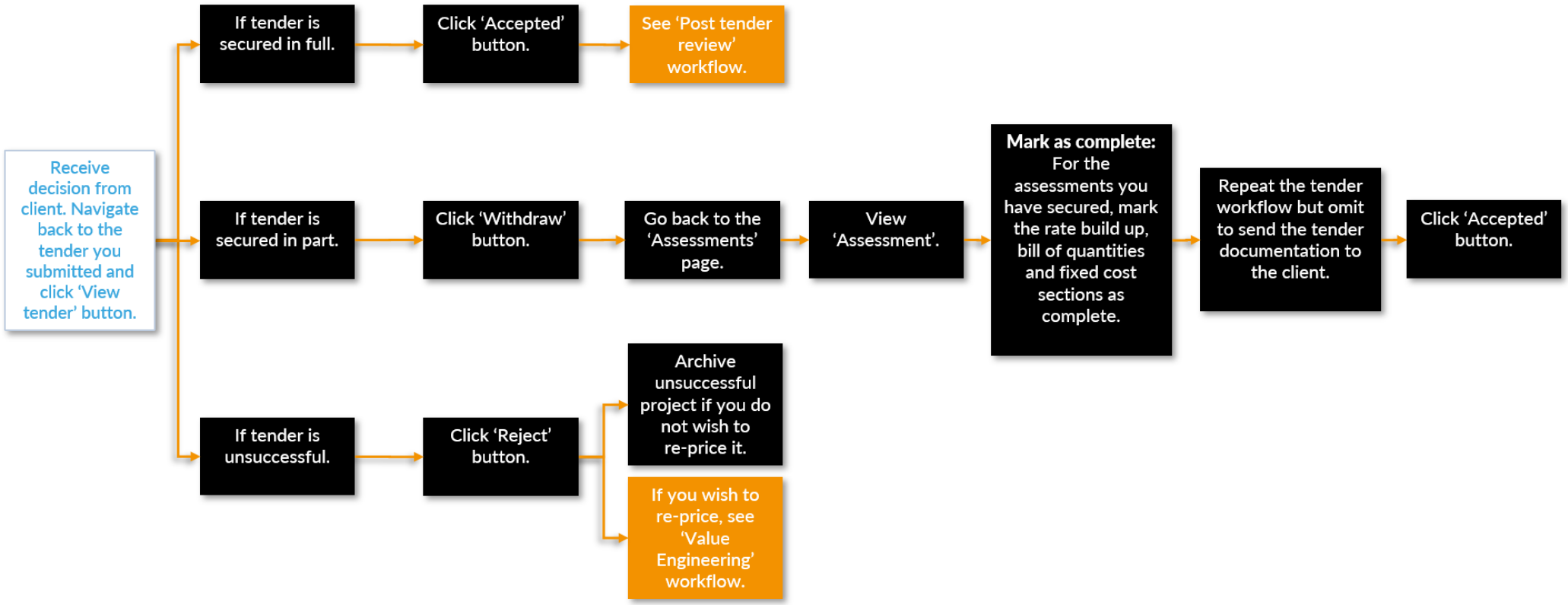
Figure 16: How to create tender documentation



Tender decision

There are different processes depending on whether you have won the entire tender, part of it or you have been unsuccessful. The workflow below outlines what to do in in the event of each scenario.

Figure 17: How to process a tender decision



Additional notes

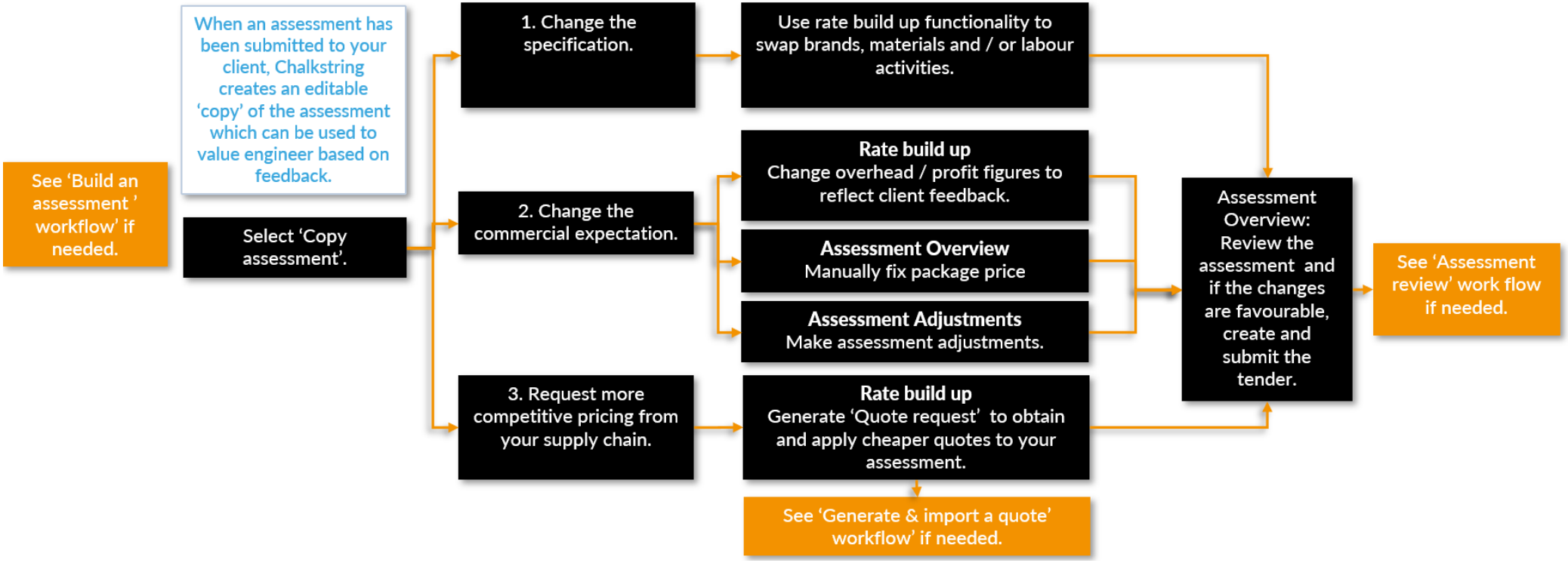
When you click 'Accept', any assessments that have takeoff drawings associated with them, will be transferred to the onsite project enabling you to tag 'Issues' to specific locations on the drawings.

Value engineering

You can value engineer your assessment for many reasons such as:

- Your client has given feedback on an assessment which requires a change in specification e.g. you must use British Gypsum materials or use specific labourers.
- You and your client have agreed a set package price, or you want to apply a main contractor discount (MCD).
- You want to achieve a lower package price through cheaper quotes.

Figure 18: How to value engineer



Additional notes

Value Engineering on a supply & fit basis will typically need to take place prior to securing the contract (as you will have decided which contractor you plan to use prior to submitting the tender).

Introduction: Post-contract | onsite commercials

This Post-contract' section addresses managing onsite commercials, as per figure 15. If you require further information on other menu items, such as 'Costs' or 'Roles', please visit the Chalkstring User Hub for further information.

Figure 19: Workflows covered under 'Post-contract'

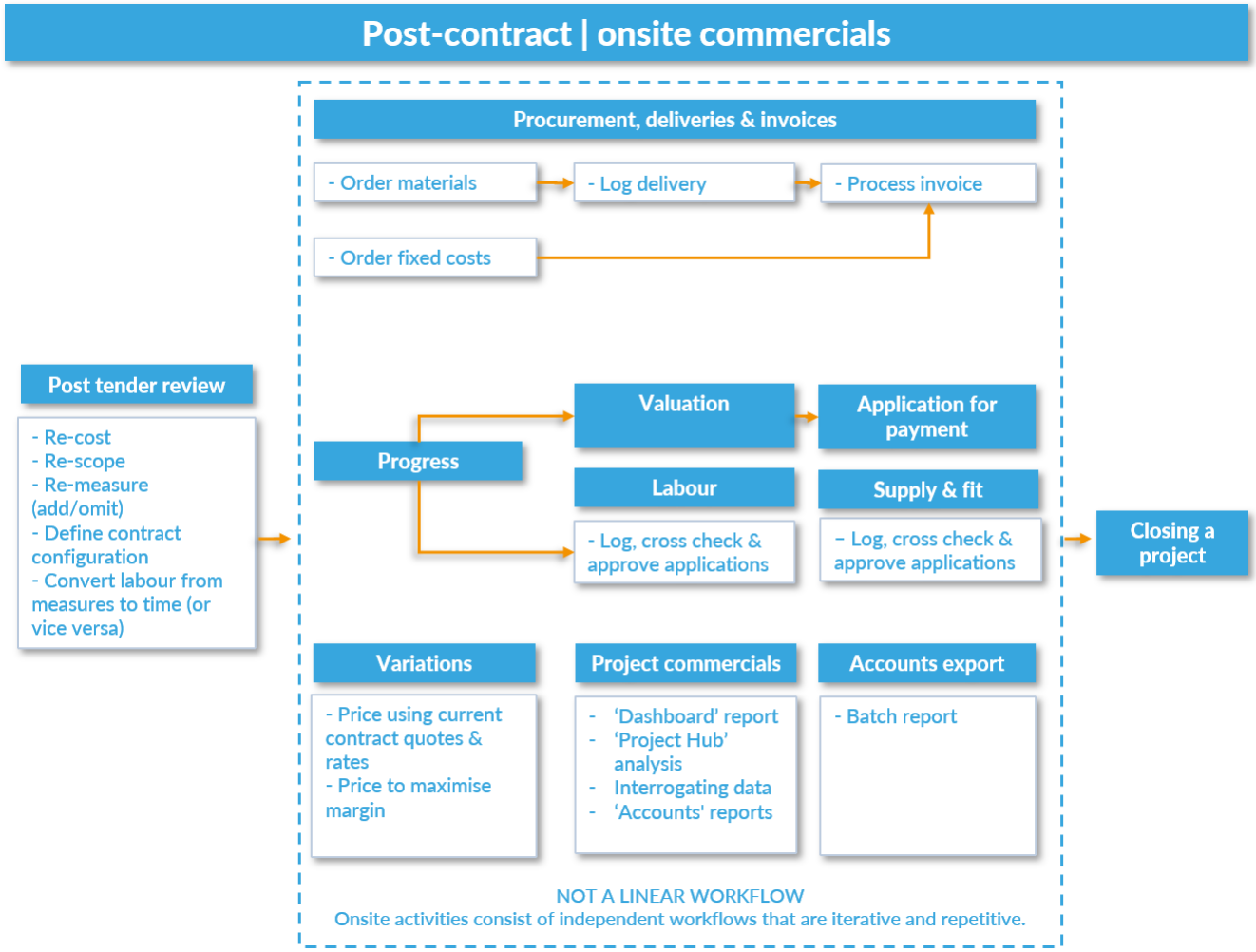
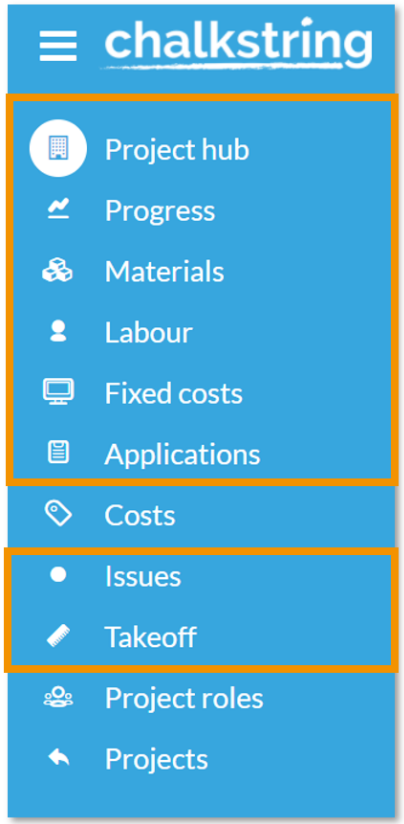


Figure 20: Blue menu options covered within this section



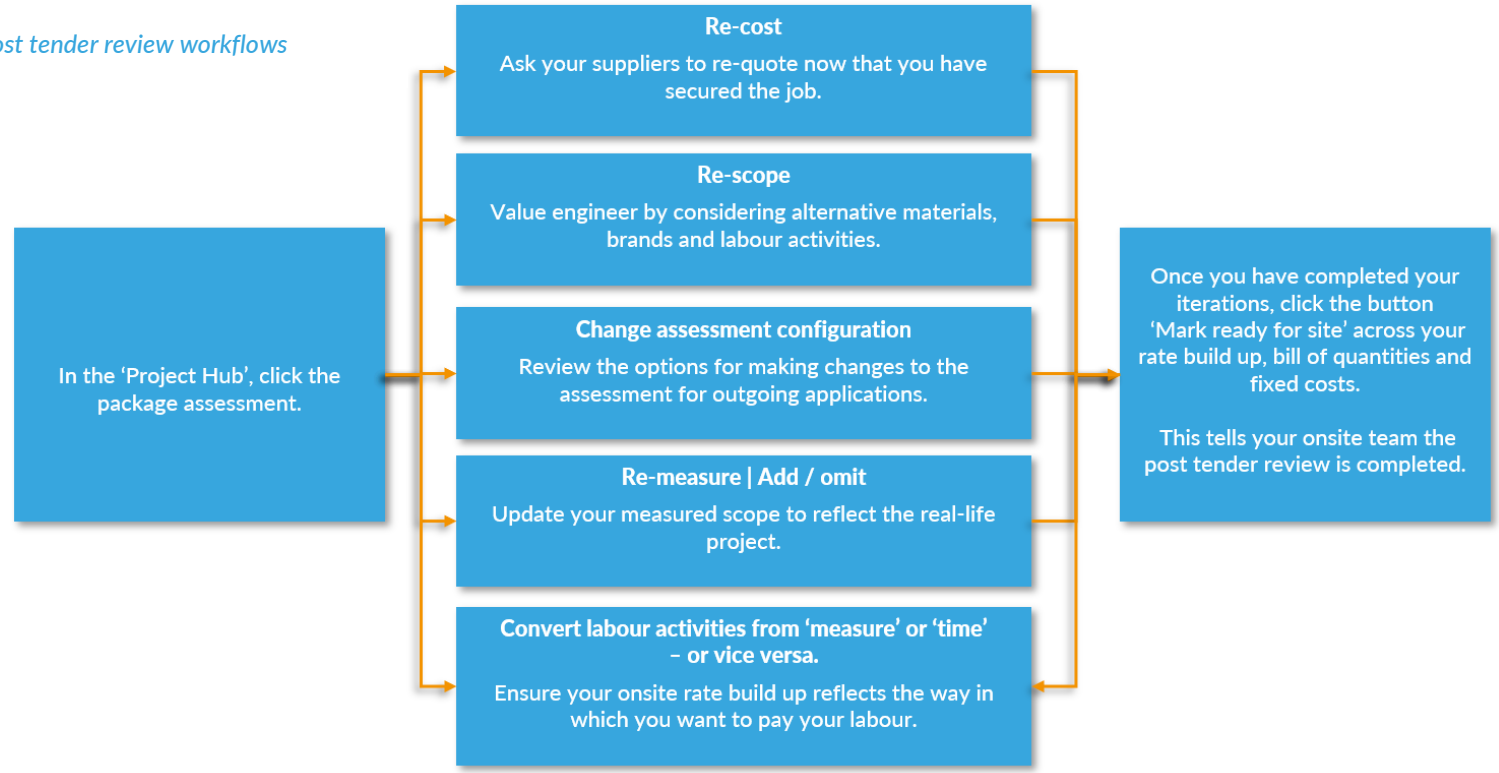
Post tender review

This section includes:

1. **Re-cost.**
2. **Re-scope.**
3. **Remeasure.**
4. **Configuration.**
5. **Convert labour from measures to time (or vice versa).**

There are several independent workflows you can follow at post tender review to maximise margin and to ensure the tendered for project reflects the real-life version.

Figure 21: Different post tender review workflows

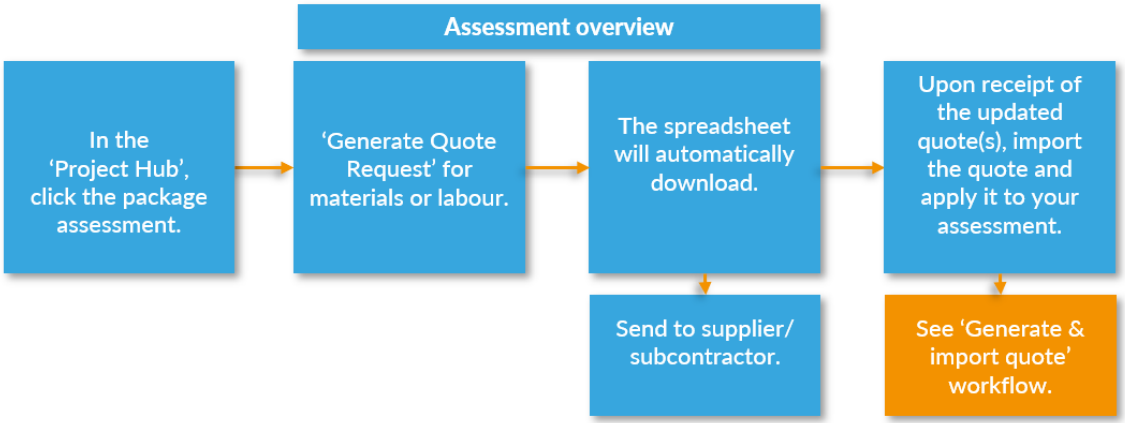


These processes are more suited projects where you are self-delivering.

1. Re-cost

Now that you have secured the job, you may wish to request more competitive pricing from your suppliers.

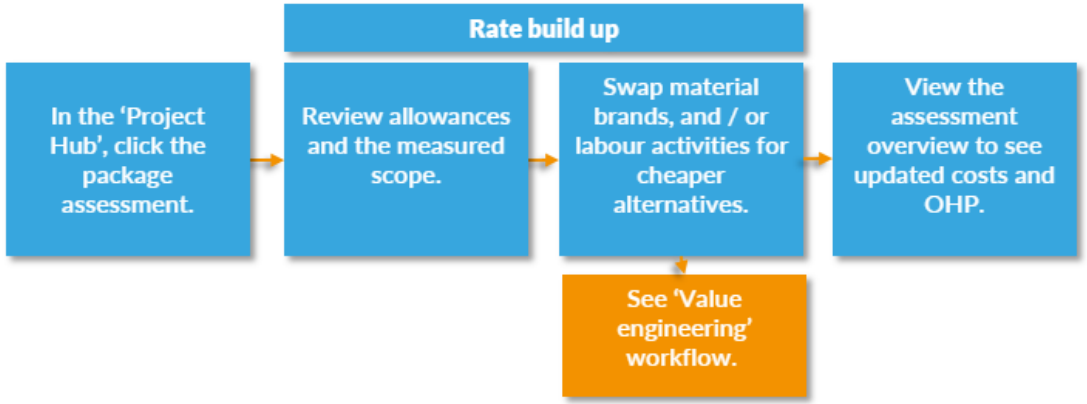
Figure 22: Re-cost workflow



2. Re-scope

Value engineer by considering alternative materials, brands and labour activities.

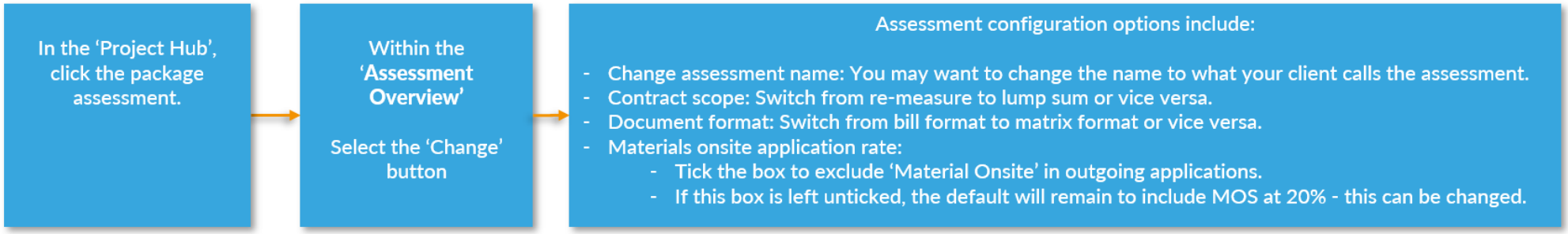
Figure 23: Re-scope workflow (Value engineering at post tender review)



3. Configuration

You can make several changes to the assessment including the name, contract scope, bill format and whether to include or exclude material onsite.

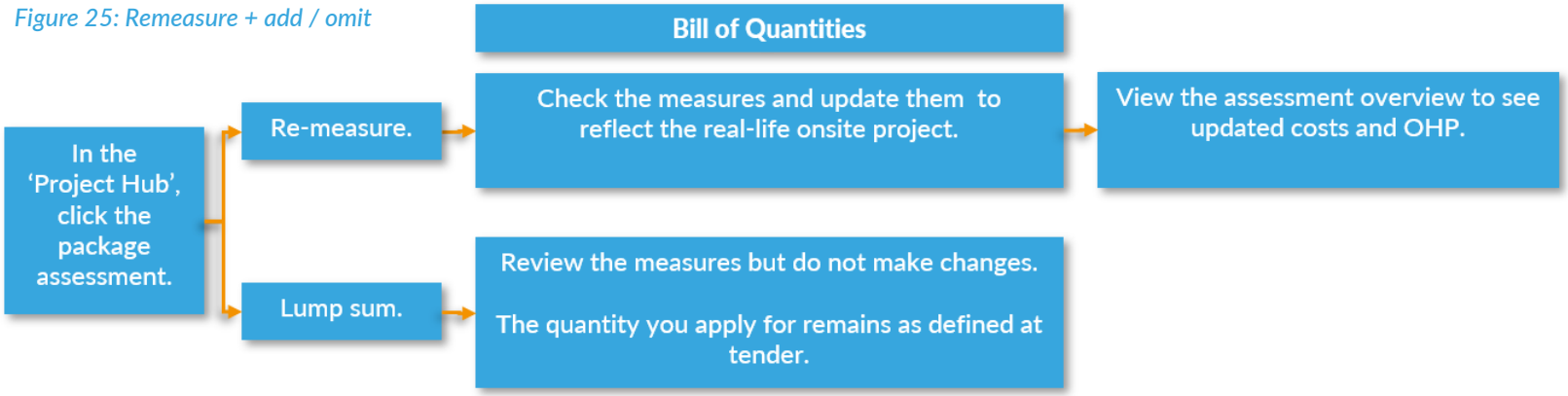
Figure 24: Change assessment configuration



4. Remeasure | Add / omit

The recommended process within Chalkstring is to always ensure the quantities in your live bill of quantities are as accurate as possible in relation to what you are required to build - these form the basis of your projected costs and margins.

Figure 25: Remeasure + add / omit



Additional notes

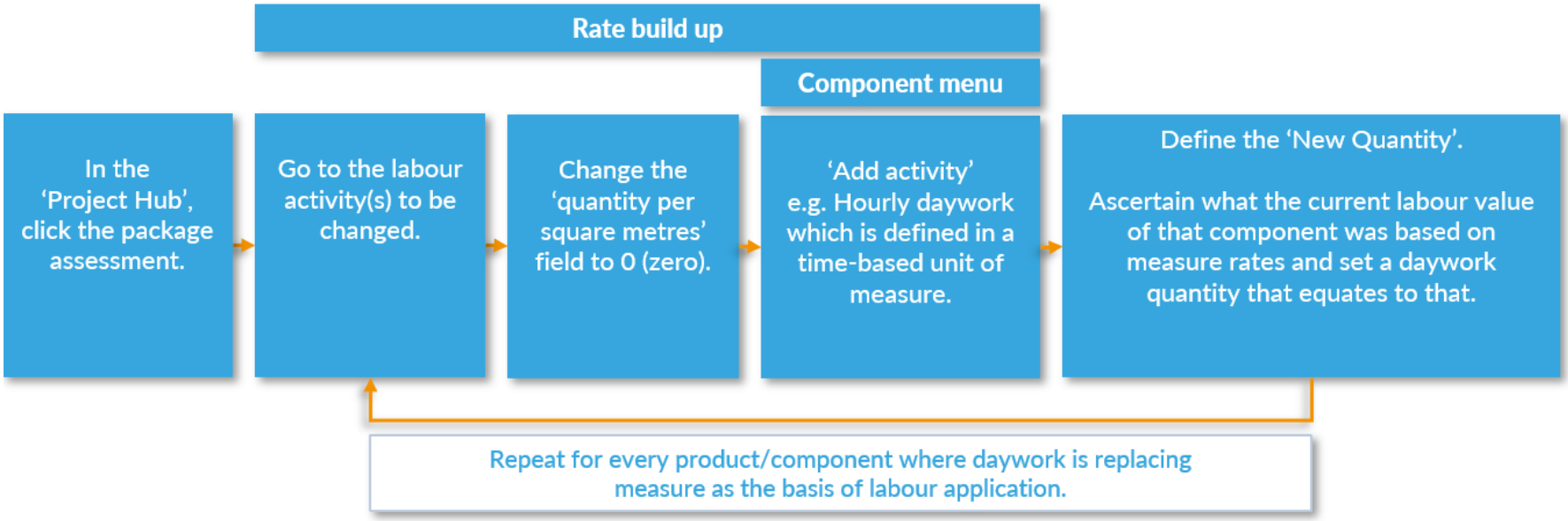
These changes will affect outgoing applications and will impact the revenue progress displayed on the 'Package progress' chart within the 'Project Hub' for material onsite.

For example: The value of MOS revenue is directly related to this section and the costs will be incurred regardless of your ability to be paid for them or at what mark up.

5. Convert labour from measure to time (or vice versa)

At tender stage, you may have priced labour using a measure i.e. metre squared - but you may wish to pay labour on a day rate (or vice versa). The workflow below explains how to make this conversion.

Figure 26: Converting labour from measure to time



Additional notes

We recommend going through this process once the project is onsite but preferably before works have started and labour payments have been made. Also consider whether this change should apply to the single component or whether it should be made across the entire rate build up.

Procurement, deliveries & invoices

This section includes:

1. Workflow.
2. Order materials.
3. Log delivery.
4. Process invoice.
5. Order fixed costs.

1. Workflow

Figure 27: How procurement, deliveries and invoices interact

2. Order materials

Here are two processes for placing material orders. Figure 28 addresses placing orders when the project has been taken onsite. 29 addresses the need to place orders before the project has been taken onsite i.e. for enabling or early works.

Figure 28: How to place material orders

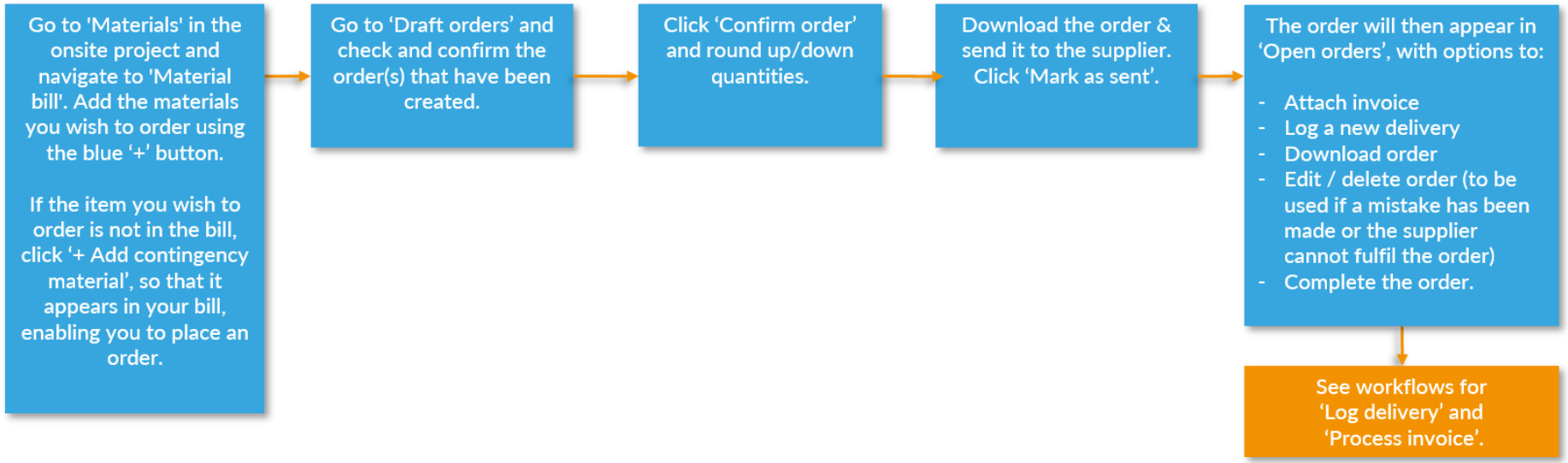
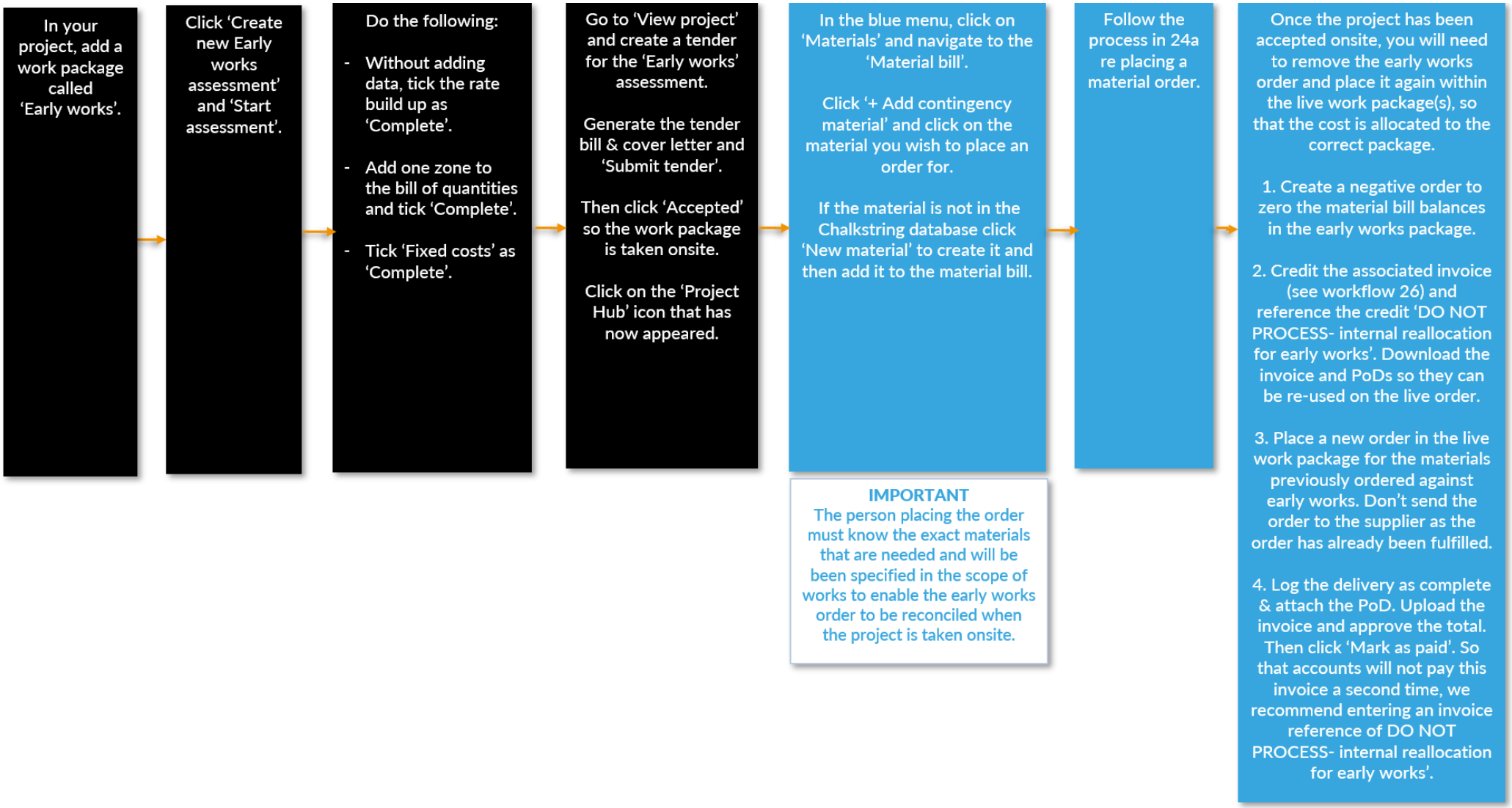


Figure 29: How to place material orders for enabling works (also known as Early Works)

There may be instances where you must place orders for materials prior to the project being taken onsite e.g. for enabling or early works. The process below outlines how to place the order and how to allocate it to the correct work package, once the project has been taken onsite.

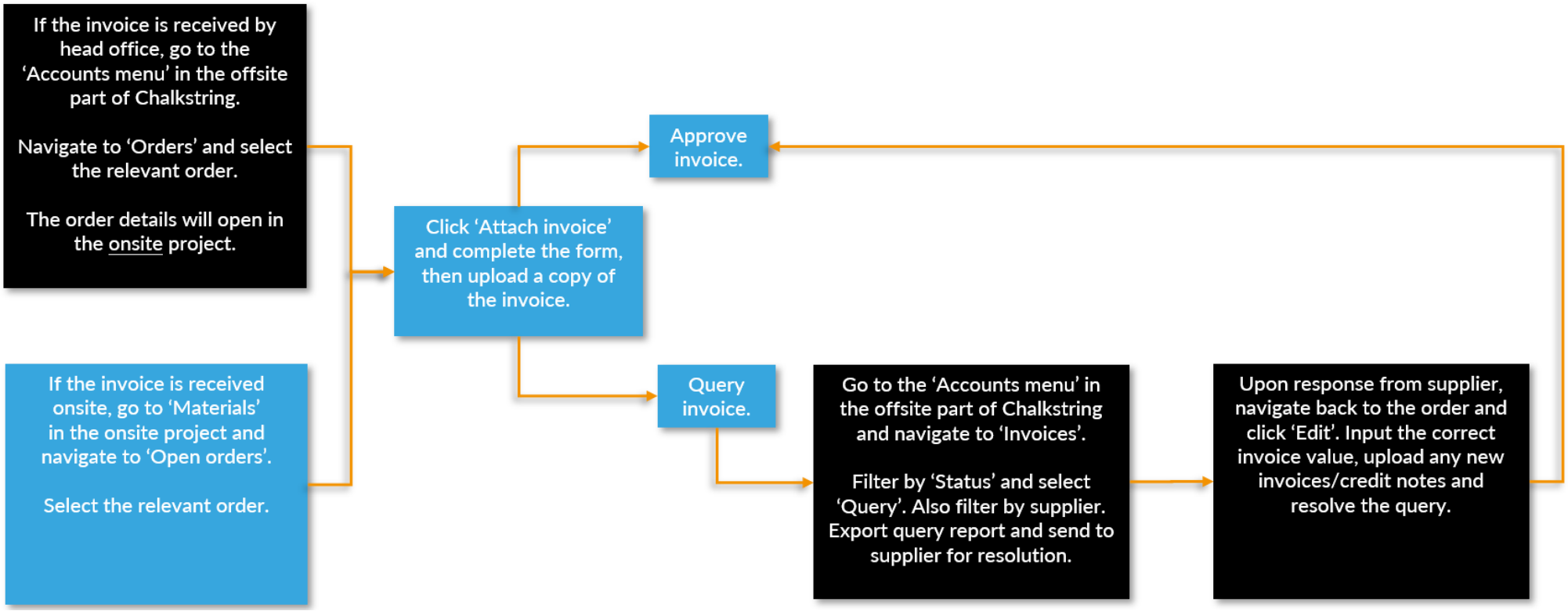


3. Log delivery

Figure 30: How to log a delivery

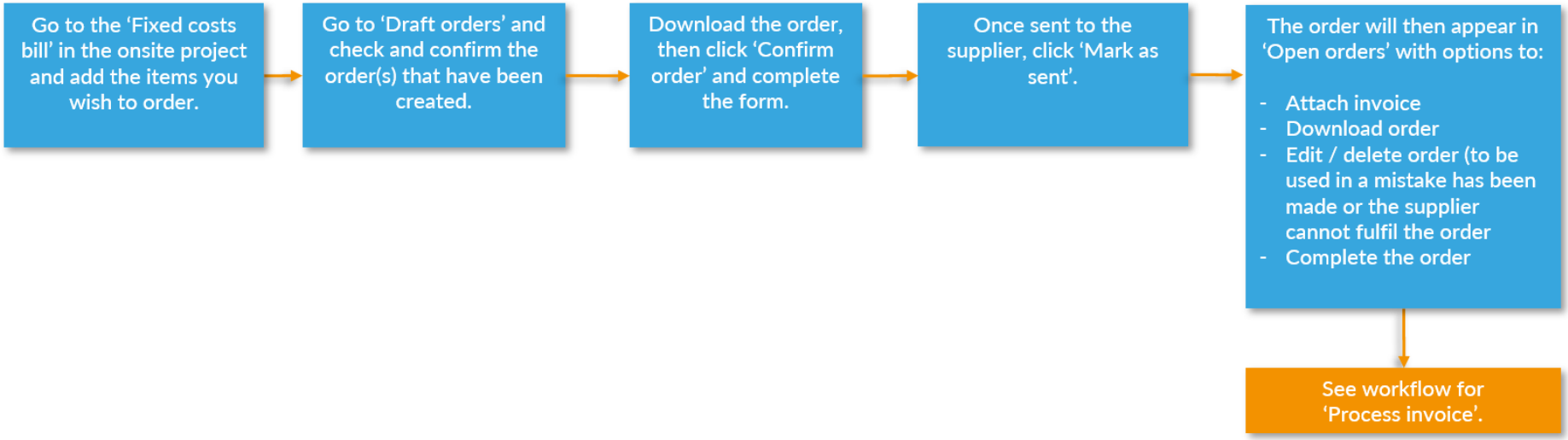
4. Process invoice

Figure 31: How to process an invoice, including approval and querying



5. Order fixed costs

Figure 32: How to order fixed costs



Progress, valuation & application for payment

This section includes:

1. Progress.
2. Issues & takeoff drawings.
3. Valuation.
4. Application for payment.

1. Progress

Figure 33: How to log progress for both measured work and fixed costs

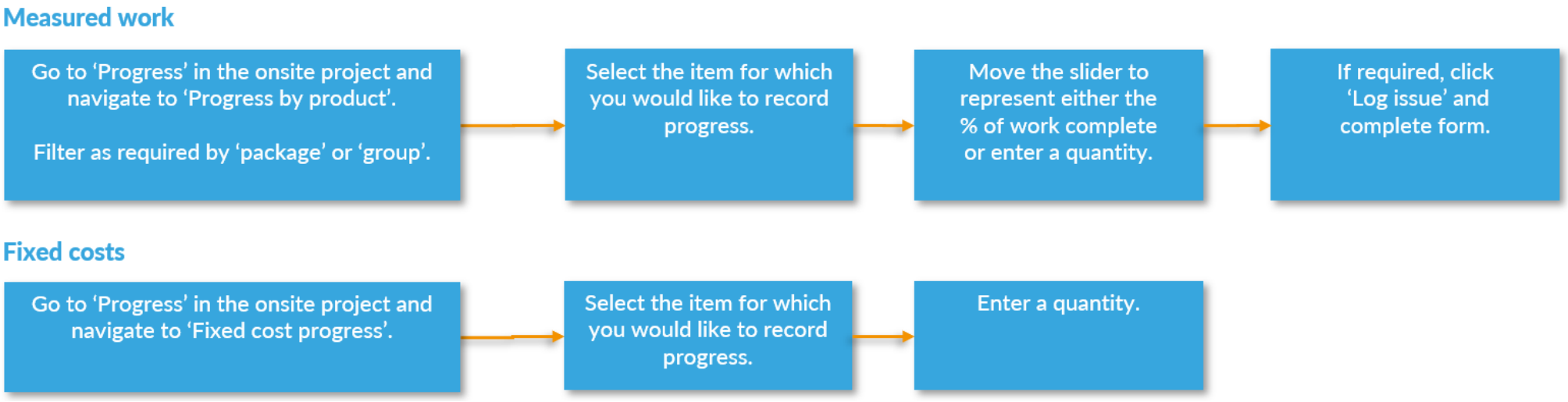
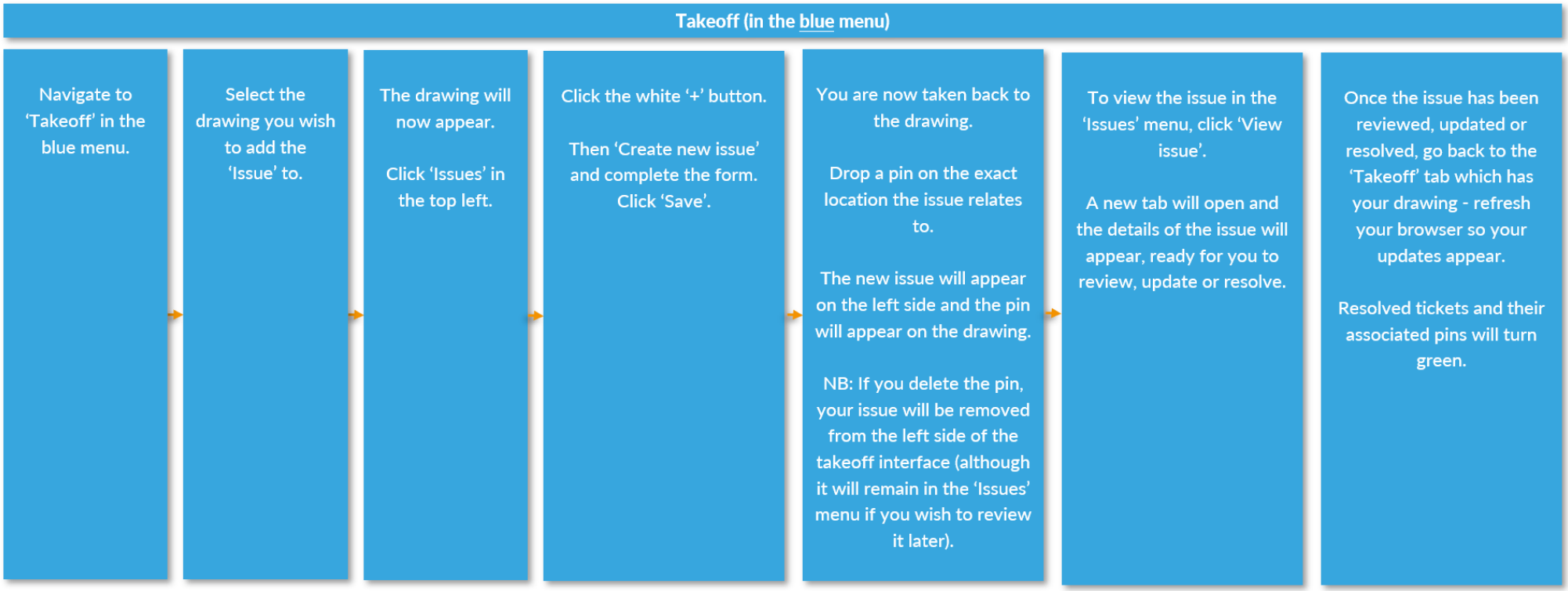


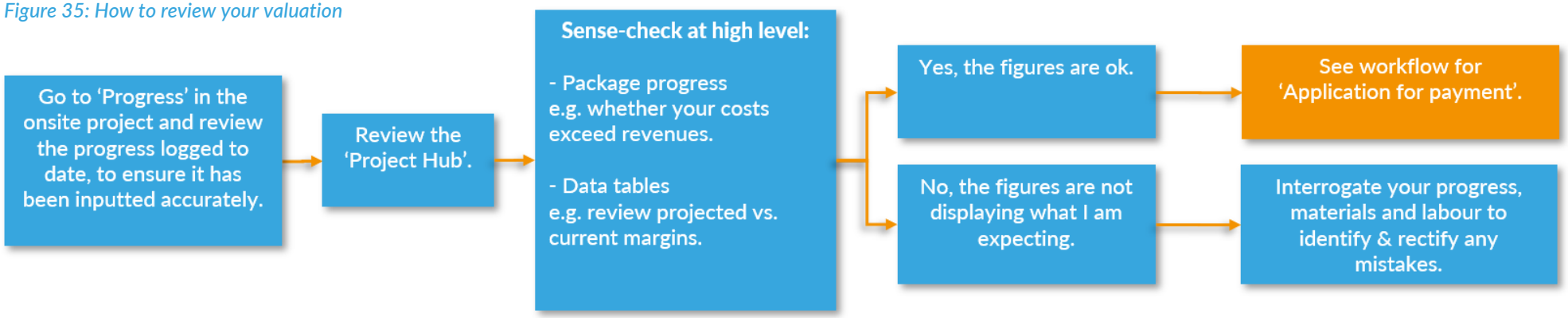
Figure 34: How to log 'Issues' and specify a location in 'Takeoff'



2. Valuation

By updating progress, Chalkstring will automatically provide a real-time valuation. We recommend you always review this – sense checking the figures - before creating your application for payment.

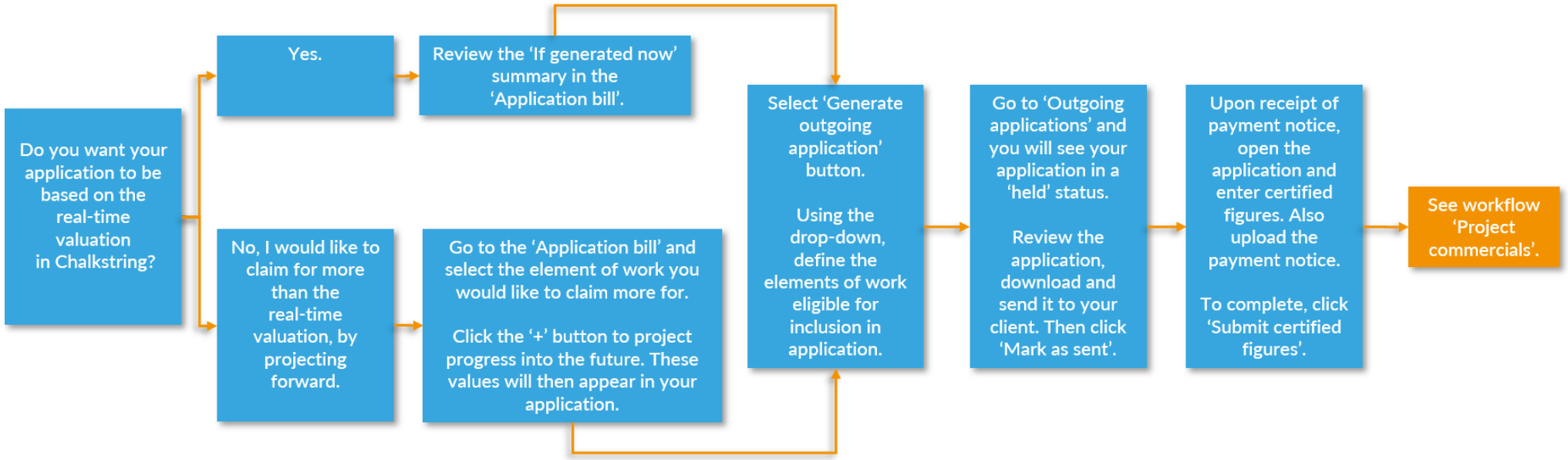
Figure 35: How to review your valuation



3. Application for payment

For total flexibility, Chalkstring gives you to two options for handling an application for payment – you can either base it on the real-time valuation or project forward. Projecting forward is useful if you need to project costs/revenues to the end of the month, or you want to over-inflate your applications in order to secure more money early in the contract.

Figure 36: How to create an application for payment



Progress & labour applications

Progress should be updated as per the workflow on page 25, before you process a labour or supply & fit application. See 31a for processing a labour only application at 31b for managing a supply & fit application.

Figure 37: How to process a labour application – labour only

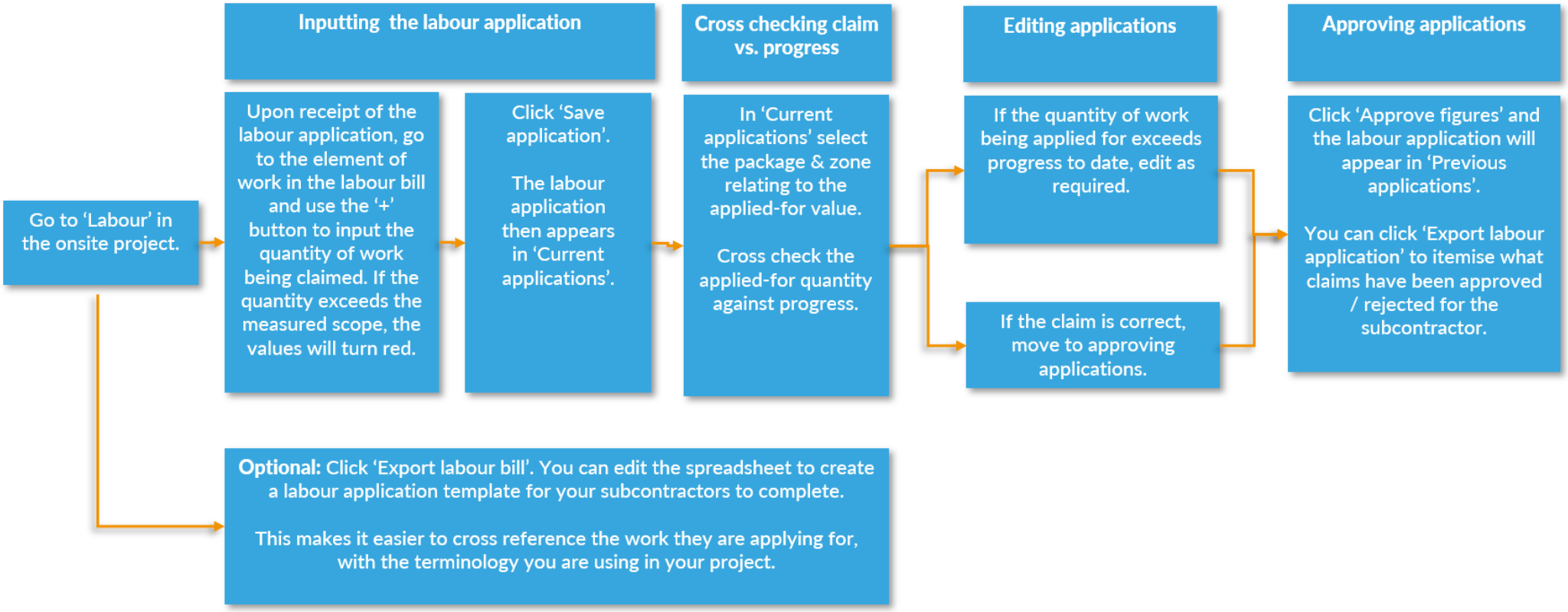
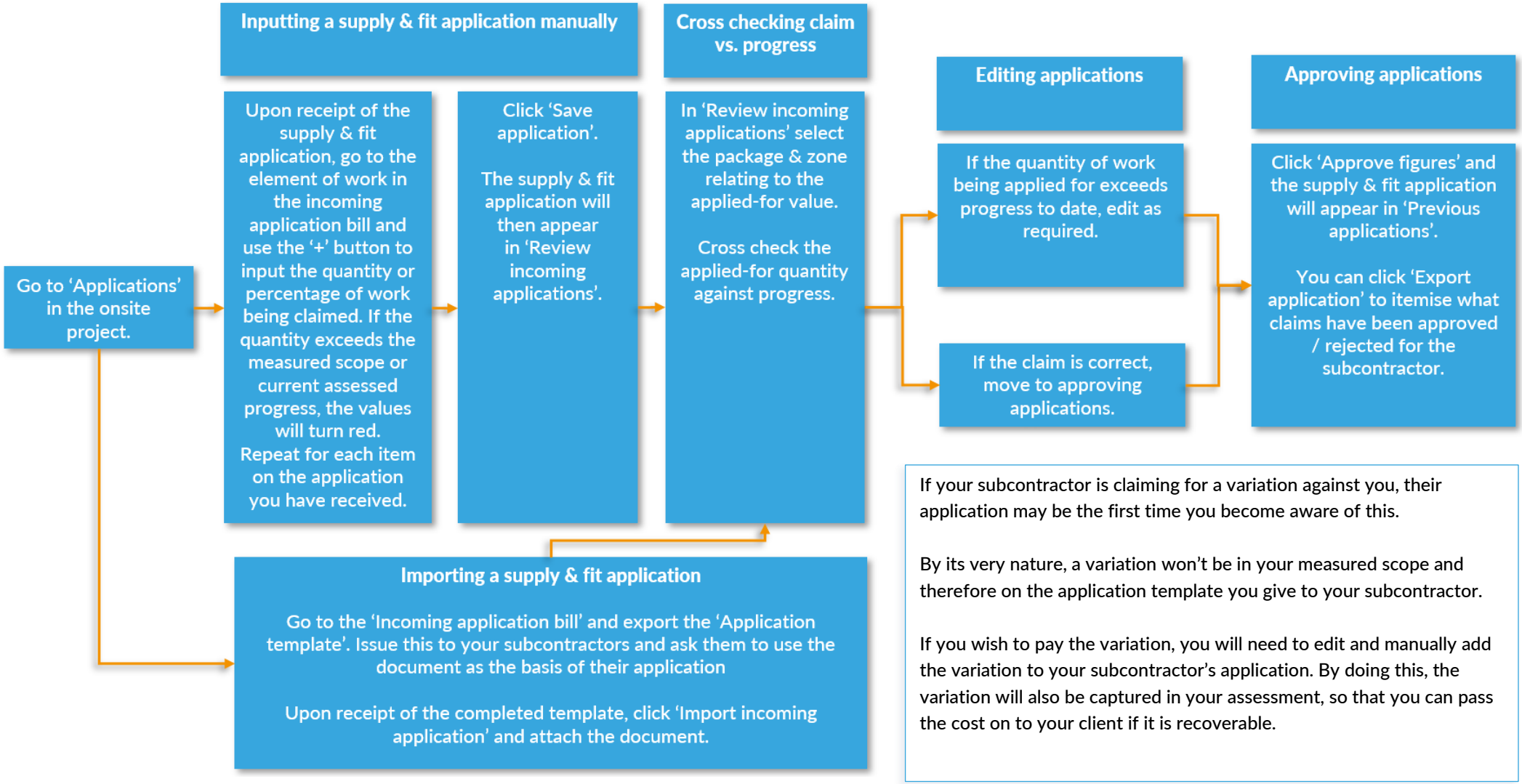


Figure 38: How to process incoming application – supply & fit contractors



If your subcontractor is claiming for a variation against you, their application may be the first time you become aware of this.

By its very nature, a variation won't be in your measured scope and therefore on the application template you give to your subcontractor.

If you wish to pay the variation, you will need to edit and manually add the variation to your subcontractor's application. By doing this, the variation will also be captured in your assessment, so that you can pass the cost on to your client if it is recoverable.

Variations

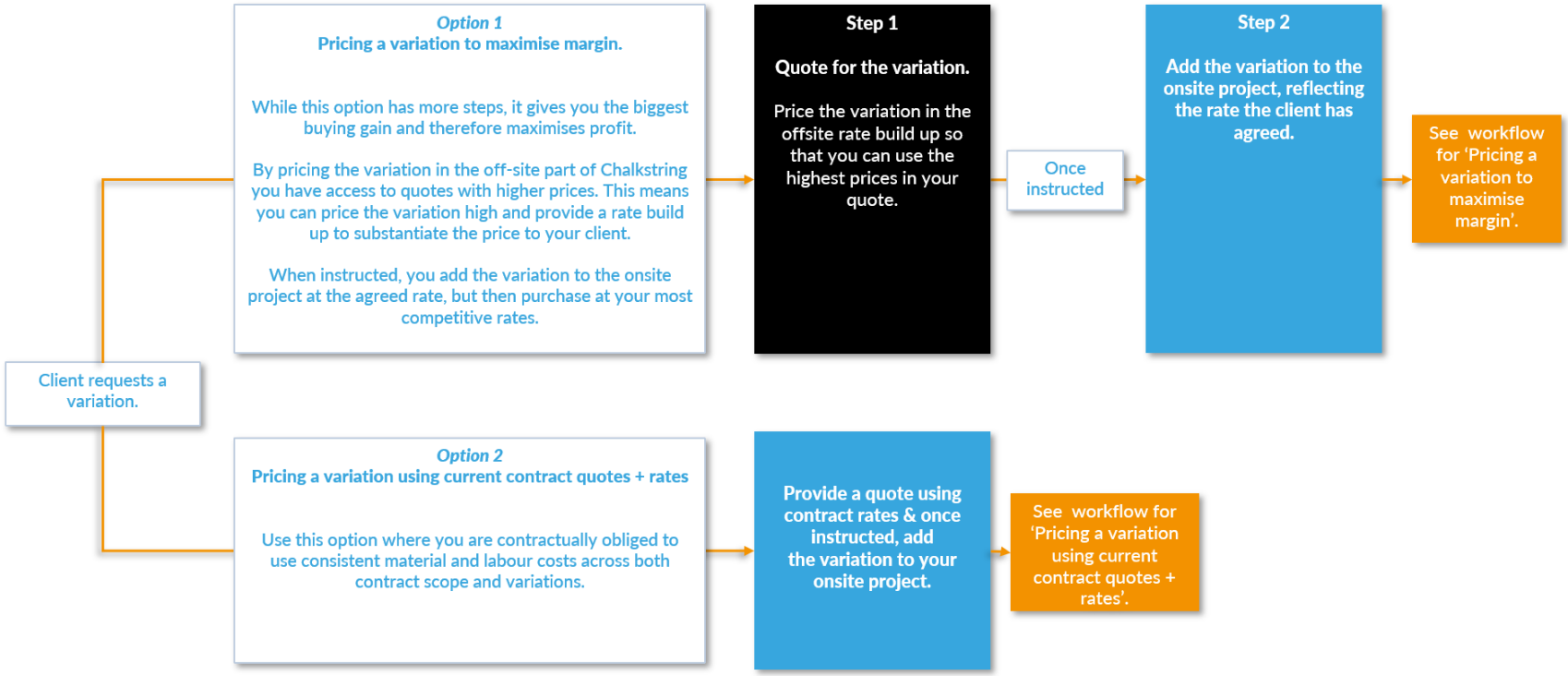
This section includes:

1. **Pricing a variation to maximise margin.**
2. **Pricing a variation using current contract scope + rates.**

There are two options for pricing variations as detailed in figure 39. Like with many clients, you may wish to use option 1 and maximise margin on variations by quoting the highest prices available to you. You would therefore price this in the offsite menu and then, once instructed, add the variation to your onsite project at the rate agreed with the client.

If you plan to price the variation in line with the current contract scope - e.g. same rate, OHP, waste etc – you will want to quote from within the onsite rate build up. By doing this, Chalkstring will quote based on the buying prices in your real-life project. This is option 2.

Figure 39: 2 options for pricing variations



1. Pricing a variation to maximise margin

This is a two-step process:
Step 1 – Price the variation in the offsite menu.
Step 2 – Upon instruction, add the variation to the onsite project .

Figure 40: Step 1 – Pricing the variation in the offsite menu

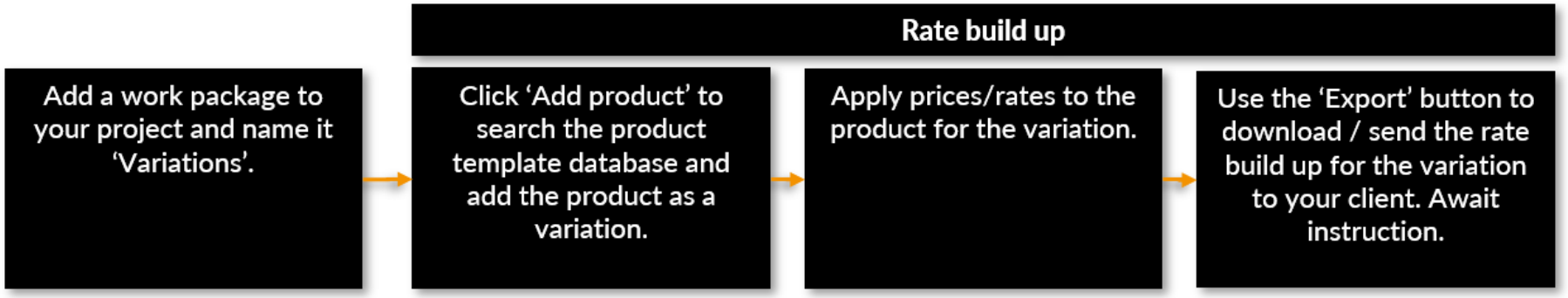
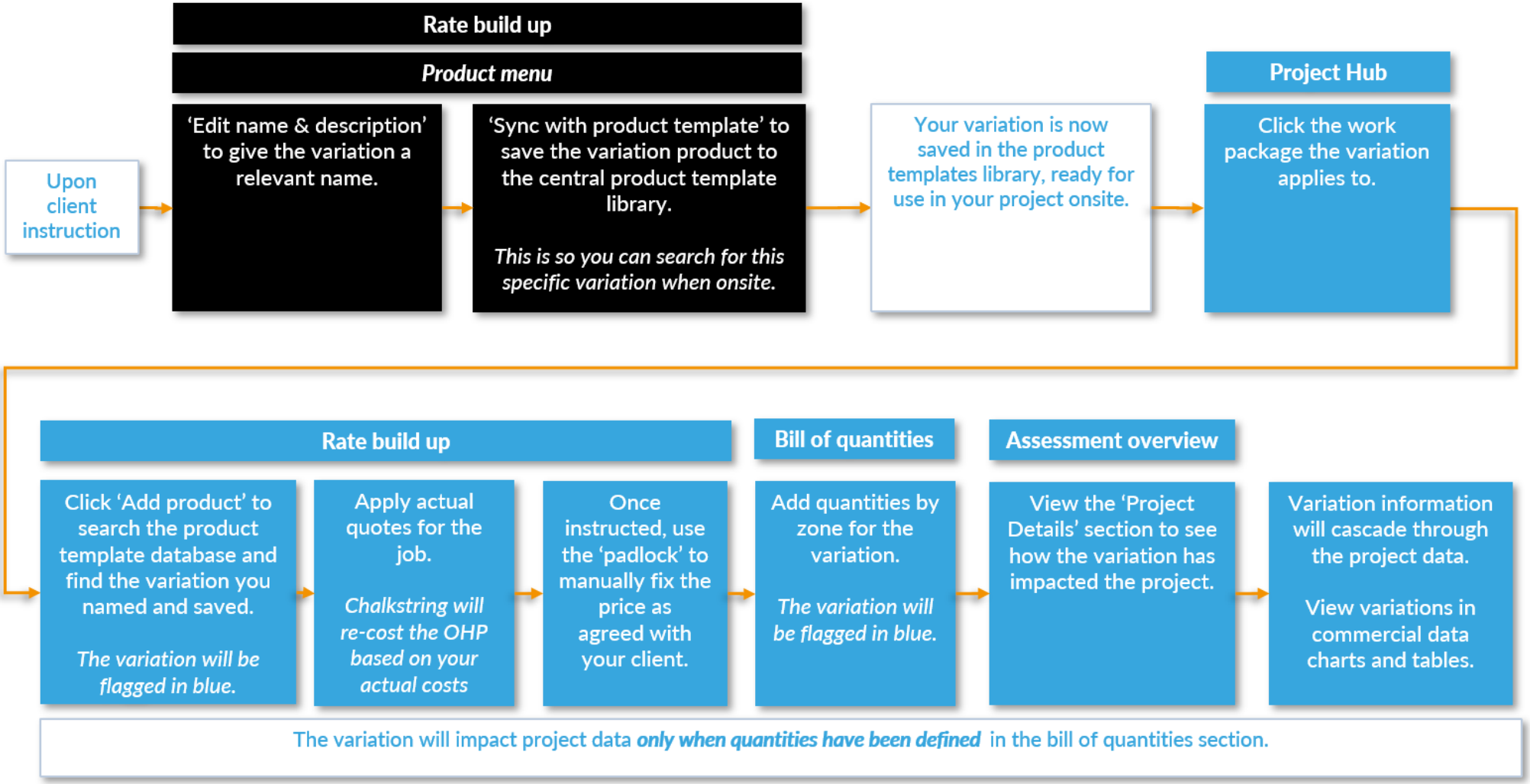
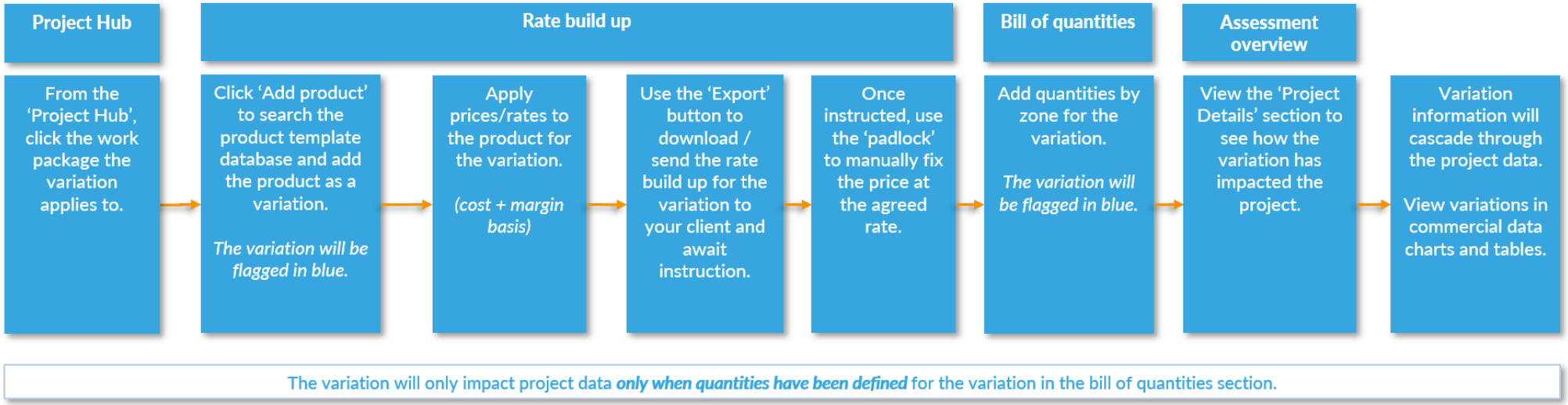


Figure 41: Step 2– Pricing the variation in your onsite project once instructed



2. Pricing a variation using current contract scope + rates

Figure 42: How to price a variation using your onsite project rates



Project commercials

This section includes:

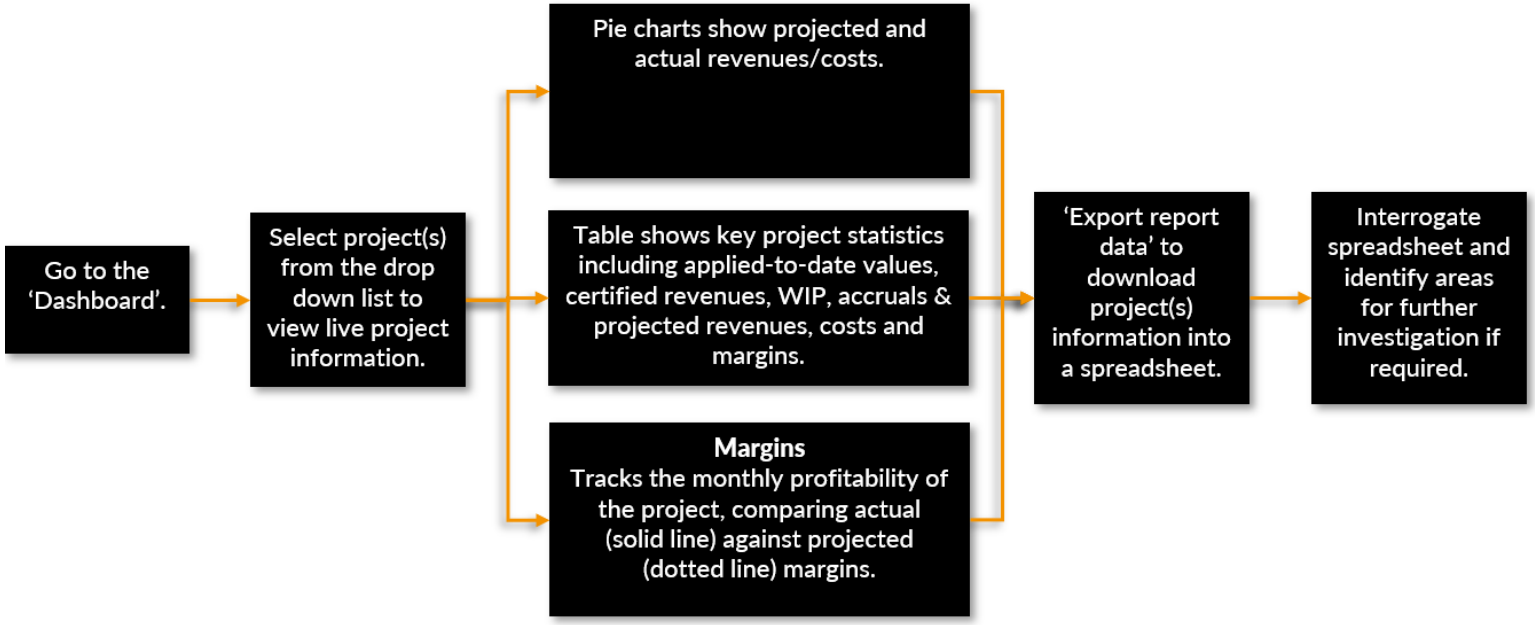
1. ‘Dashboard’ reports.
2. ‘Accounts’ reports.

1. ‘Dashboard’ reports

The ‘Dashboard’ is in the black offsite menu and provides a summary report on single or multiple projects. This high-level report enables you to check the overall health of your project(s). Some clients like to review their projects on a monthly basis and download the project reports for use in management meetings.

Figures 43 and 44 address how to use the ‘Dashboard’ report and interrogate project data if required.

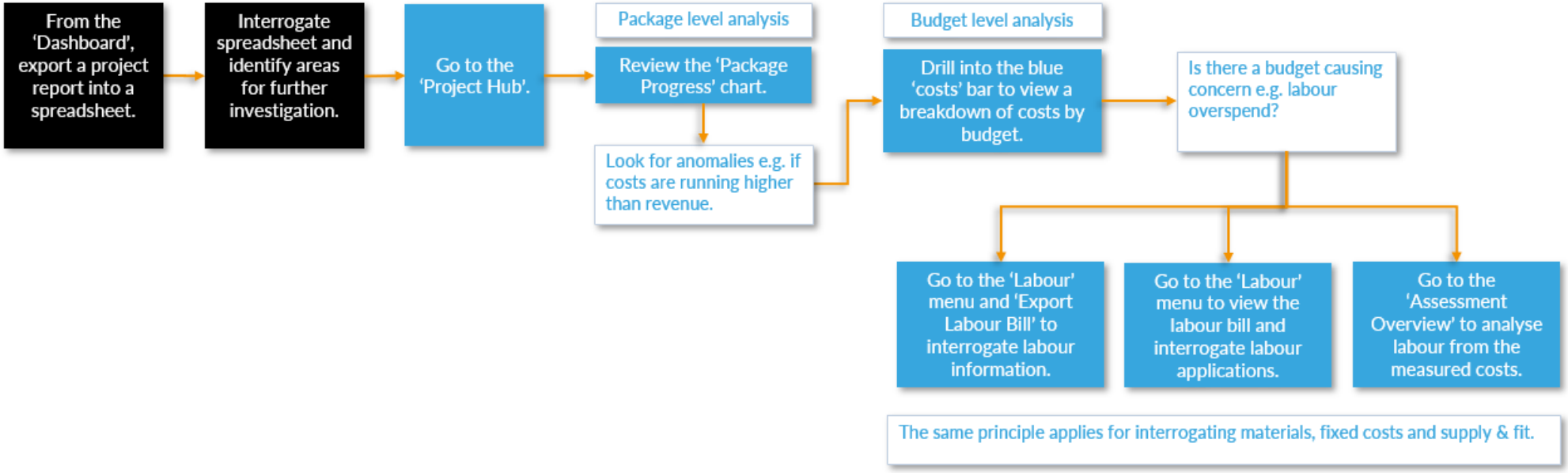
Figure 43: Introducing the ‘Dashboard’



There are many reasons why you may wish to interrogate project data – regardless, the principle for analysing data at a granular level is the same for labour, fixed costs, materials and supply & fit.

The workflow below is a scenario-based example whereby AB Contracting Ltd has reviewed the project data and there is an unexpected value relating to the cost to date – they think the labour may have been inputted incorrectly. The workflow demonstrates how they should drill into the detail to identify the issue.

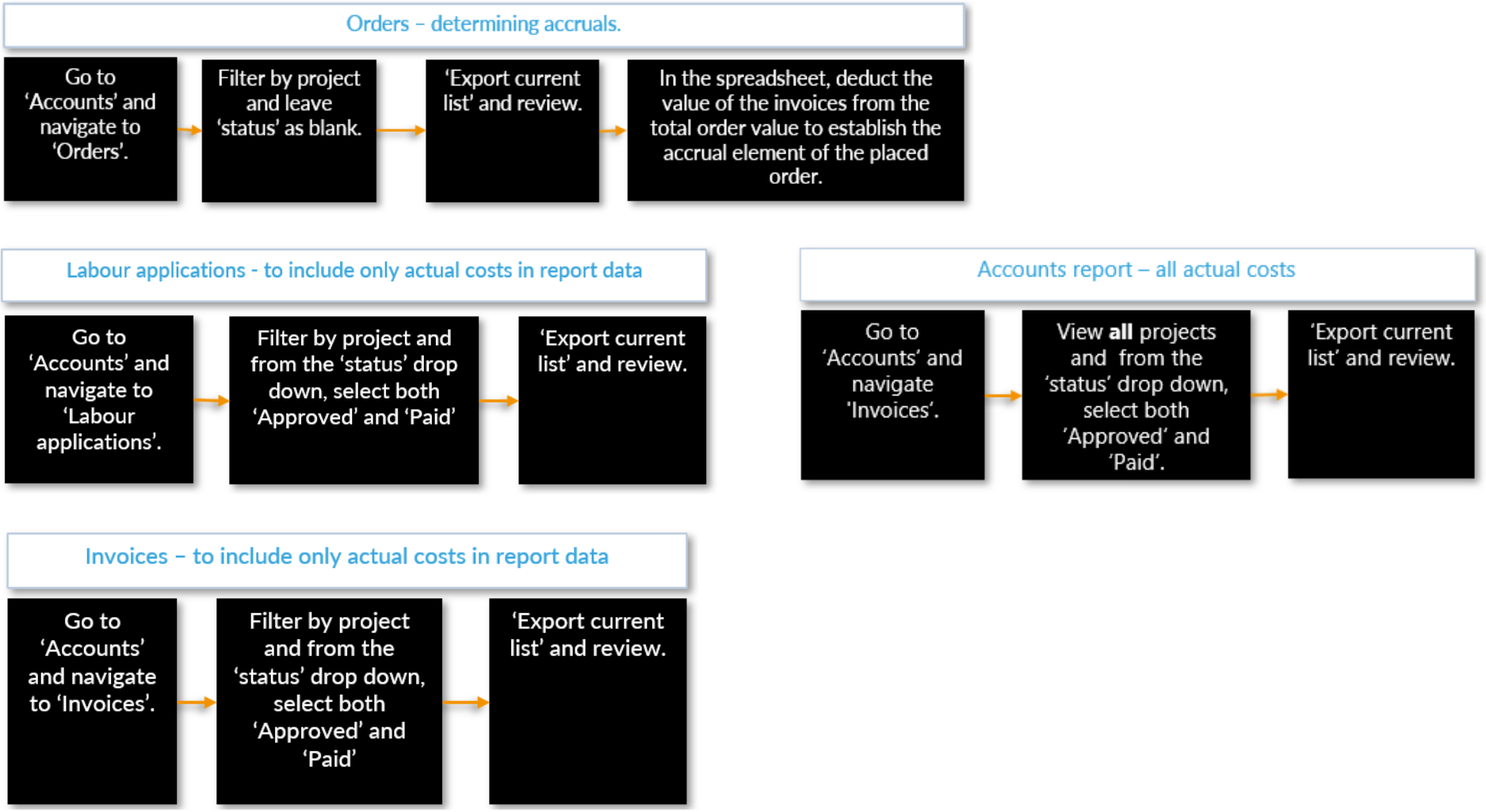
Figure 44: Interrogating project data



2. ‘Accounts’ reports

You can extract data to provide multiple reports that help the accounts function. Below are **just a few examples** of the types of reports you can extract by using filters.
Note: Chalkstring can only report on the data that is inputted into the software. If your business runs additional reports or allocates costs outside of Chalkstring, this will not be reported on.

Figure 45: Accounts reports



Accounts export

Chalkstring is not an accounting tool, but it stores all the invoices, labour applications, incoming and outgoing applications for payment, and external costs that have been approved. Chalkstring provides an export document called a 'batch export' that details all these project-related costs and revenues that inform your sales and purchase ledger.

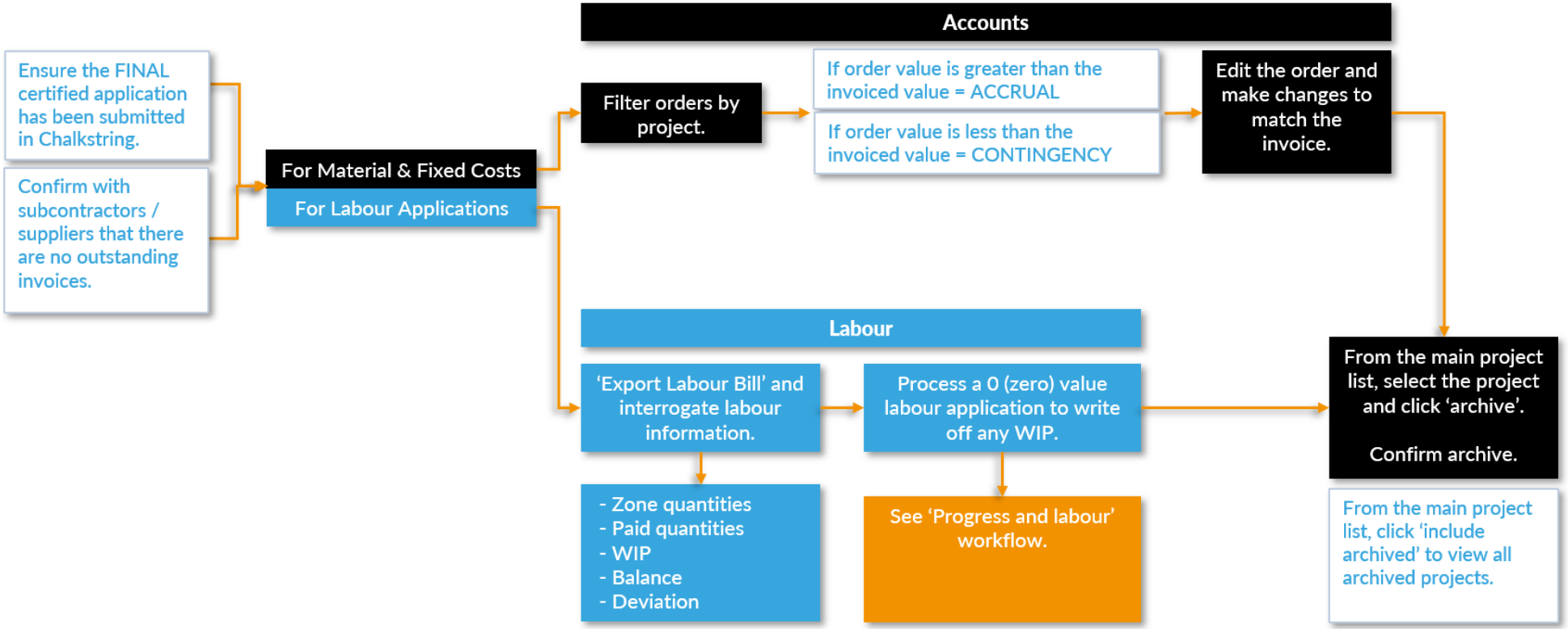
Figure 46: How to create a batch export

Additional information

If you receive an 'error report', it means your report is missing key information such as a nominal code or a reference, which will need to be rectified within Chalkstring. Once completed, you can then run the report again, free of errors.

Closing a project

Figure 47: How to close a project



Additional information

Chalkstring does not include WIP in the last certified application pie chart, so the effect of writing off labour WIP is negligible. Some clients like to write off WIP as a housekeeping task, but this can be time-consuming and isn't necessary from a Chalkstring perspective.