MEETING SUMMARY

Member Section: CORP – Roundtable – Budget/Forecasting

Date: August 18, 2026

Quick Recap

> The roundtable covered how participating organizations approach budgeting and forecasting — the tools they build in, how far out they forecast, how they handle scenario planning, and how budgets get presented to leadership. A substantial part of the conversation turned to artificial intelligence: which tools participants are testing, how those tools compare for financial work, and how organizations are managing token costs and setting guardrails around adoption.

Summary

Budgeting and Forecasting Tools

The tools in use varied widely across the group. One organization runs an EPM system alongside Oracle Fusion. Another works entirely in Excel and QuickBooks, with quarterly reviews. A participant managing private equity funds builds ten-year forecasts in Excel, while another organization uses Solver. Two participants described formula-driven Excel models, one of them a system with a separate spreadsheet for each department that rolls up into a master budget. One participant also described using the user-defined books feature in Intacct to hold forecasting adjustments, which makes it possible to track changes over time without affecting the general ledger.

Forecast Horizons and Practices

How far out organizations forecast depends heavily on the business. A private equity firm maintains a ten-year forecast covering both the funds and the management company, which informs fundraising timing and team planning. Another organization budgets one year formally but forecasts the following two years internally for strategic planning. A third rolls budgets forward in Solver and adjusts as needed — an approach that works well given the relatively stable monthly income they receive from hospital premiums.

Scenario Planning and Volatility

Scenario planning came up in the context of real disruption rather than theory. One participant described managing significant volatility through an acquisition, where the decision to stop running two businesses in parallel forced rapid adjustments to the budget. The broader point was that the value of scenario work tends to show up when circumstances change faster than the annual cycle allows for.

AI Tools in Use

Several participants are actively testing AI tools. One noted that QuickBooks now offers features for analyzing budget trends and flagging anomalies, and described running the same prompts through three different AI tools to compare the responses. In comparing tools directly, the group found Claude performed better on financial tasks, while Copilot was stronger at searching legal documents and building Excel-based solutions, largely because of its Microsoft integration. Token cost came up as a practical constraint, with one participant preferring to spend tokens on higher-value work rather than on detailed cost-benefit analyses of individual tasks.

Reporting, Dashboards, and AI-Assisted Research

One participant shared her experience using AI for meeting recaps and financial research, stressing the importance of asking for cited references so results can be verified. She also described rebuilding dashboard reporting in Power BI after implementing a new membership database. On reporting formats more generally, another participant produces a one-page summary for management covering key fluctuations and forecasting detail.

Presenting Budgets: Assumptions and Drivers

Participants who present to boards and leadership said they focus on assumptions and key drivers rather than walking through the budget itself. For construction and real estate development, for example, the primary driver is simply the number of active or planned sites. This raised an open question the group did not fully resolve: how consistently teams surface risk and the assumptions sitting behind the numbers when budgets are presented.

AI Governance, Costs, and Other Budget Pressures

The closing discussion turned to pressures on the budget itself. Concerns were raised about uncontrolled adoption of AI tools across an organization and the need for clearer guardrails; one SEC-regulated participant described a formal approval process for any AI tool. Token pricing remains an open uncertainty, though one organization reported managing AI costs successfully through careful token allocation since beginning implementation in February. Health insurance costs for smaller companies also came up, with one participant using an outside human capital firm to manage them. Another suggested exploring AI adoption with tax and audit firms as a way to reduce fees while improving service. The session closed on integrations with QuickBooks Online, including tools used for construction draws and payroll.