



NZ ACCOUNTING
STANDARDS
BOARD

PUBLIC BENEFIT ENTITIES' CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This Authoritative Notice was issued on 19 May 2016 by the New Zealand Accounting Standards Board of the External Reporting Board pursuant to section 12(c) of the Financial Reporting Act 2013.

This Authoritative Notice is a disallowable instrument for the purposes of the Legislation Act 2012, and pursuant to section 27(1) of the Financial Reporting Act 2013 takes effect on 16 June 2016.

Reporting entities that are subject to this Authoritative Notice are required to apply it in accordance with the effective date, which is set out in Part B.

In finalising this Authoritative Notice, the New Zealand Accounting Standards Board has carried out appropriate consultation in accordance with section 22(1) of the Financial Reporting Act 2013.

This *Public Benefit Entities' Conceptual Framework* has been issued as a result of a new international public sector conceptual framework.

This Authoritative Notice, when applied, supersedes the *Public Benefit Entities' Framework* issued in September 2014.

PUBLIC BENEFIT ENTITIES' CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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PUBLIC BENEFIT ENTITIES' CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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The *Public Benefit Entities' Conceptual Framework* is set out in Chapters 1–8. The *Public Benefit Entities' Conceptual Framework* is based on *The Conceptual Framework for General Purpose Financial Reporting by Public Sector Entities* developed and approved by the International Public Sector Accounting Standards Board.

Preface

Introduction

1. The *Public Benefit Entities' Conceptual Framework* (the PBE Conceptual Framework) establishes the concepts that are to be applied in developing Public Benefit Entity Standards (PBE Standards) applicable to the preparation and presentation of general purpose financial reports (GPFs) of public benefit entities. Public benefit entities applying PBE SFR- A (NFP) *Public Benefit Entity Simple Format Reporting – Accrual (Not-For-Profit)* or PBE SFR- A (PS) *Public Benefit Entity Simple Format Reporting – Accrual (Public Sector)* may also refer to, and consider the applicability of the definitions and concepts in the PBE Conceptual Framework to the extent that they do not conflict with those Standards.
- 1.1 Public benefit entities are defined as “Reporting entities whose primary objective is to provide goods or services for community or social benefit and where any equity has been provided with a view to supporting that primary objective rather than for a financial return to equity holders.”¹ Although both public sector and not-for-profit public benefit entities share certain characteristics, they also differ in some ways. This Preface therefore has two parts:
 - (a) Part A discusses the characteristics of public sector entities and the public sector as a whole that have influenced the development of the PBE Conceptual Framework and will influence the development of PBE Standards; and
 - (b) Part B discusses the characteristics of not-for-profit entities and the not-for-profit sector as a whole that have influenced the development of the PBE Conceptual Framework and will influence the development of PBE Standards.²

Part A: Public Sector Public Benefit Entities

2. The primary objective of most public sector entities is to deliver services to the public, rather than to make profits and generate a return on equity to investors. Consequently the performance of such entities can be only partially evaluated by examination of financial position, financial performance and cash flows. GPFs provide information to users for accountability and decision-making purposes. Therefore, users of the GPFs of public sector entities need information to support assessments of such matters as:
 - Whether the entity provided its services to constituents in an efficient and effective manner;
 - The resources currently available for future expenditures, and to what extent there are restrictions or conditions attached to their use;
 - To what extent the burden on future-year taxpayers³ of paying for current services has changed; and
 - Whether the entity’s ability to provide services has improved or deteriorated compared with the previous year.
3. Governments generally have broad powers, including the ability to establish and enforce legal requirements, and to change those requirements. Globally the public sector varies considerably in both its constitutional arrangements and its methods of operation. However, governance in the public sector generally involves the holding to account of the executive by a legislative body (or equivalent).
4. The following sections highlight characteristics of the public sector that the New Zealand Accounting Standards Board (NZASB) has considered in the development of the PBE Conceptual Framework.

The Volume and Financial Significance of Non-Exchange Transactions

5. In a non-exchange transaction, an entity receives value from another party without directly giving approximately equal value in exchange. Such transactions are common in the public sector. The level and quality of services received by an individual, or group of individuals, is not normally directly related to the level of taxes assessed. An individual or group may have to pay a charge or fee and/or may have had to

¹ XRB Standard A1 *Accounting Standards Framework* contains guidance on determining whether an entity is a public benefit entity.

² Unless otherwise stated, references to public sector entities and not-for-profit entities throughout this PBE Conceptual Framework are to public sector public benefit entities and not-for-profit public benefit entities.

³ Where appropriate, references to taxpayers and taxes in this document should be read as encompassing ratepayers and rates.

make specified contributions to access certain services. However, such transactions are, generally, of a non-exchange nature, because the amount that an individual or group of individuals obtains in benefits will not be approximately equal to the amount of any fees paid or contributions made by the individual or group. The nature of non-exchange transactions may have an impact on how they are recognised, measured, and presented to best support assessments of the entity by service recipients and resource providers.

6. Taxation is a legally mandated, compulsory non-exchange transaction between individuals or entities and the government. Tax-raising powers can vary considerably, dependent upon the relationship between the powers of the national government and those of sub-national governments and other public sector entities. International public sector entities are largely funded by transfers from national, regional and state governments. Such funding may be governed by treaties and conventions or may be on a voluntary basis.
7. Governments and other public sector entities are accountable to resource providers, particularly to those that provide resources through taxes and other compulsory transactions. Chapter 2 *Objectives and Users of General Purpose Financial Reporting* discusses the accountability objective of financial reporting.

The Importance of Public Plans and Budgets

8. Many public sector entities in New Zealand are required to prepare and make publicly available their plans for the future, including prospective financial statements. Legislation often defines the contents of that documentation. For example, the Public Finance Act 1989 requires that, as part of the Budget process, the Government present forecast financial statements to the House of Representatives and the Local Government Act 2002 requires that local authorities prepare and adopt an annual plan, which must include forecast financial statements. The planning and budgeting documents that public sector entities are required to make available to Parliament or the public assist Parliament to exercise its oversight function, and assist constituents and their elected representatives to hold the entity's management financially accountable. These planning and budgeting documents outline the projected activities of public sector entities and explain how those activities are expected to be funded. For example, in the case of the Government the forecast financial statements support the appropriation requests.
9. Information that enables users to compare financial results with public plans or budgets facilitates an assessment of the extent to which a public sector entity has met its financial objectives. Such information promotes accountability and informs decision making in subsequent periods. Many public sector entities are therefore required by legislation to report against public plans or budgets. In the case of central government entities there are also requirements to demonstrate compliance with legal requirements relating to the public finances. The needs of users for prospective financial information from public sector entities is discussed in Chapter 2.

The Nature of Public Sector Activities and the Longevity of the Public Sector

10. Many public sector activities are long term and the ability to meet commitments depends upon future taxation and contributions. Many commitments arising from public sector activities and powers to levy future taxation do not meet the definitions of a liability and an asset in Chapter 5 *Elements in General Purpose Financial Reports*. Therefore, such commitments and powers are not recognised in the financial statements.
11. Consequently, the financial statements cannot provide all the information that users need on long-term activities, particularly those delivering social benefits. The financial consequences of many decisions will have an impact many years or even decades into the future, so GPFRs containing prospective financial information on the long-term sustainability of an entity's finances and key areas of spending are necessary for accountability and decision-making purposes as discussed in Chapter 2.
12. Although political control may change regularly, nation states generally have very long existences. While they may encounter severe financial difficulties and may default on sovereign debt obligations, nation states continue to exist. If sub-national entities get into financial difficulties, national governments might act as lenders of last resort or provide large scale guarantees. The main service delivery commitments of sub-national entities may continue to be funded by a higher level of government. In other cases public sector entities that are unable to meet their liabilities as they fall due may continue to exist by restructuring their operations.
13. The going concern principle underpins the preparation of the financial statements. Interpretation of the principle needs to reflect the issues discussed in paragraphs 11 and 12.

The Nature and Purpose of Assets and Liabilities in the Public Sector

14. In the public sector, the primary reason for holding property, plant, and equipment and other assets is for their service potential rather than their ability to generate cash flows⁴. Because of the types of services provided, a significant proportion of assets used by public sector entities is specialised—for example, roads and military assets. There may be a limited market for such assets and, even then, they may need considerable adaptation in order to be used by other operators. These factors have implications for the measurement of such assets. Chapter 7 *Measurement of Assets and Liabilities in Financial Statements* discusses measurement bases for assets.
15. Public sector entities may hold items that contribute to the historical and cultural character of a nation or region—for example, art treasures, historical buildings, and other artefacts. They may also be responsible for national parks and other areas of natural significance with native flora and fauna. Such items and areas are not generally held for sale, even if markets exist. Rather, public sector entities have a responsibility to preserve and maintain them for current and future generations.
16. Governments often have powers over natural and other resources such as mineral reserves, water, fishing grounds, forests and the electromagnetic spectrum. These powers allow governments to grant licenses for the use of such resources or to obtain royalties and taxes from their use. The definition of an asset and recognition criteria are discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 *Recognition in Financial Statements*.
17. Public sector entities incur liabilities related to their service performance objectives. Many liabilities arise from non-exchange transactions and include those related to the provision of social benefits. Liabilities may also arise from governments' role as a lender of last resort and from any obligations to transfer resources to those affected by disasters. In addition many governments have obligations that arise from monetary activities such as currency in circulation. The definition of a liability and recognition criteria are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

The Regulatory Role of Public Sector Entities

18. Public sector entities have powers to regulate entities operating in certain sectors of the economy, either directly or through specifically created agencies. The underlying public policy rationale for regulation is to safeguard the public interest in accordance with specified public policy objectives. Regulatory intervention can also occur where there are market imperfections or market failure for particular services, or to mitigate against factors such as pollution, the impact of which is not transmitted through pricing. Such regulatory activities are carried out in accordance with legal processes.
19. Governments may also regulate themselves and other public sector entities. Judgement may be necessary to determine whether such regulations create rights of, and obligations on, public sector entities that require recognition as assets and liabilities, or whether the public sector entity's ability to amend such regulations has an impact on how such rights and obligations are accounted for. Chapter 5 considers rights and obligations.

Relationship to Statistical Reporting

20. Many governments produce two types of ex-post financial information: (a) government finance statistics (GFS) on the general government sector (GGS) for the purpose of macroeconomic analysis and decision making, and (b) general purpose financial statements (financial statements) for accountability and decision making at an entity level, including financial statements for the whole of government reporting entity.
21. The overarching standards for macro-economic statistics are set out in the *System of National Accounts* (SNA). The SNA is a framework for a systematic and detailed description of the national economy and its components, including the GGS. These standards are then implemented at national or regional level. GFS reporting guidelines include the International Monetary Fund's Government Finance Statistics Manual.
22. General purpose financial statements prepared in accordance with PBE Standards and GFS reports have much in common. Both reporting frameworks are concerned with (a) financial, accrual-based information, (b) a government's assets, liabilities, revenue, and expenses and (c) comprehensive information on cash flows. There is considerable overlap between the two reporting frameworks that underpin this information.

⁴ Many public sector assets will generate cash flows, but this is often not the main reason for holding them.

23. However, PBE Standards and GFS reporting guidelines have different objectives. The objectives of financial reporting by public sector entities are to provide information about the reporting entity that is useful to users of GPFs for accountability purposes and decision-making purposes. GFS reports are used to (a) analyse fiscal policy options, make policy and evaluate the impact of fiscal policies, (b) determine the impact on the economy, and (c) compare fiscal outcomes nationally and internationally. The focus is on evaluating the impact of the GGS and broader public sector on the economy, within the complete macroeconomic statistics framework.
24. The different objectives and focus on different reporting entities lead to the different treatment of some transactions and events. The international accounting profession and statistical bodies are working together with the aim of removing differences between the two accounting frameworks that are not fundamental to their different objectives and reporting entities.

Part B: Not-For-Profit Public Benefit Entities

- 24.1 Consistent with the preceding discussion of public sector public benefit entities, the primary objective of a not-for-profit public benefit entity is to provide goods or services for community or social benefit rather than for a financial return to equity holders.⁵ This primary objective means that their performance can only be partially evaluated by examination of financial position, financial performance and cash flows. GPFs provide information to users for accountability and decision-making purposes. Therefore, users of the GPFs of not-for-profit entities need information to support assessments of such matters as:
- Why the entity has been established and what the entity is seeking to achieve;
 - Whether the entity provided its services to constituents in an efficient and effective manner;
 - The resources currently available for future expenditures, and to what extent there are restrictions or conditions attached to their use;
 - Whether the entity’s ability to provide services has improved or deteriorated compared with the previous year; and
 - The ability of the entity to continue achieving its objectives.
- 24.2 The following sections highlight characteristics of the not-for-profit sector that the NZASB has considered in the development of the PBE Conceptual Framework.

The Sector

- 24.3 The not-for-profit sector is vibrant and diverse. Not-for-profit entities are active in a number of sectors including education, research, health, sport and recreation, social services, culture, environmental protection, professional and business associations, religious activities and more.

Types of Not-For-Profit Entities

- 24.4 Not-for-profit entities are set up with a purpose, or set of purposes, and are often expected to pursue such objectives beyond the lifetime of the founders. This continued existence is achieved using a variety of organisational forms (for example, incorporated societies, unincorporated entities, trusts, charitable trusts, friendly societies, industrial and provident societies and companies). Legislative oversight occurs through a range of statutes, some of which shape the sector’s organisational forms. Although some not-for-profit entities may have formal ownership instruments, this is not common in New Zealand. Not-for-profit entities may plan to generate a financial surplus, but they generally have restrictions on how a surplus may be used.

Reliance on Volunteers

- 24.5 Many not-for-profit entities rely on active participation of volunteers. Members of the governing body are normally not paid for their work, and individuals contribute considerable time and effort in delivering services and providing administrative support. The contribution that volunteers make to the not-for-profit sector is significant, and without that contribution many social services might not be available to the public.

⁵ Subsequent references to “services” in the PBE Conceptual Framework encompass “goods”.

Funding

24.6 Not-for-profit entities are often dependent on “third-party” funding – funding from a source other than the recipient of their services. For example, not-for-profit entities may rely on government grants (donations/service contracts), donations from philanthropic organisations, and donations from the public. There may also be restrictions by the provider of the funding on how the funds may be spent.

Non-Exchange Transactions

24.7 In a non-exchange transaction, an entity receives value from another party without directly giving approximately equal value in exchange. Such transactions are common in the not-for-profit sector. Service recipients may have to pay a charge or fee and/or may have had to make specified contributions to access certain services. However, such transactions are, generally, of a non-exchange nature, because the amount that service recipients obtain in benefits will not be approximately equal to the amount of any fees paid or contributions made by the recipients. Similarly not-for-profit entities receive non-exchange revenue from resource providers in the form of grants, donations or bequests. The nature of non-exchange transactions may have an impact on how they are recognised, measured and presented to best support assessments of the entity by service recipients and resource providers.

The Nature and Purpose of Assets and Liabilities in the Not-For-Profit Sector

24.8 Not-for-profit entities may hold property, plant, and equipment and other assets both for their ability to generate cash flows and for their service potential. For example, not-for-profit entities with environmental aims may hold land in order to achieve their environmental objectives. Not-for-profit entities may also hold items that contribute to the historical and cultural character of a nation or region.

Non-Financial Information

24.9 The most important part of the “story” of a not-for-profit entity is the non-financial information. It is critically important for the user of a GPFR prepared by a not-for-profit entity to be able to understand why the entity has been established, and how it is working towards achieving its financial and service performance objectives.

24.10 In the not-for-profit context, the funders of services such as donors are often removed from the delivery transaction because the output is provided to someone other than the funder. In addition, the decision about exactly what services are delivered is usually made by persons other than the funder, for example, the governing body of the delivery entity. In this situation the funders are reliant on GPFRs for information about what services have been delivered with the funding provided and information about the outcomes that entity is seeking to influence.

**CHAPTER 1: ROLE AND AUTHORITY OF THE
PBE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

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Role of the PBE Conceptual Framework

- 1.1 The Public Benefit Entities' Conceptual Framework (the PBE Conceptual Framework) establishes the concepts that underpin general purpose financial reporting (financial reporting) by public benefit entities.⁶
- 1.1.1 The role of the PBE Conceptual Framework is to:
- (a) Assist the NZASB in developing PBE Standards applicable to the preparation and presentation of general purpose financial reports (GPFs) of public benefit entities;
 - (b) Assist the NZASB in its role in commenting on the development of International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSASs) by the International Public Sector Accounting Standards Board (IPSASB); and
 - (c) Assist preparers of general purpose financial reports. For example, it may assist preparers in developing consistent accounting policies when dealing with topics that have yet to form the subject of a PBE Standard or when a Standard allows a choice of accounting policy.
- 1.1.2 Public benefit entities applying PBE SFR- A (NFP) *Public Benefit Entity Simple Format Reporting – Accrual (Not-For-Profit)* or PBE SFR- A (PS) *Public Benefit Entity Simple Format Reporting – Accrual (Public Sector)* may also refer to, and consider the applicability of the definitions and concepts in the PBE Conceptual Framework to the extent that they do not conflict with those Standards.

Authority of the PBE Conceptual Framework

- 1.2 The PBE Conceptual Framework does not establish authoritative requirements for financial reporting by public benefit entities that report in accordance with PBE Standards, nor does it override the requirements of PBE Standards. Authoritative requirements relating to the recognition, measurement and presentation of transactions and other events and activities that are reported in GPFs are specified in PBE Standards.
- 1.3 The PBE Conceptual Framework can provide guidance in dealing with financial reporting issues not dealt with by PBE Standards. In these circumstances, preparers and others can refer to and consider the applicability of the definitions, recognition criteria, measurement principles, and other concepts identified in the PBE Conceptual Framework.

General Purpose Financial Reports

- 1.4 GPFs are a central component of, and support and enhance, transparent financial reporting by public benefit entities, including public sector entities and not-for-profit entities. GPFs are financial reports intended to meet the information needs of users who are unable to require the preparation of financial reports tailored to meet their specific information needs.
- 1.5 Some users of financial information may have the authority to require the preparation of reports tailored to meet their specific information needs. While such parties may find the information provided by GPFs useful for their purposes, GPFs are not developed to specifically respond to their particular information needs.
- 1.6 GPFs are likely to comprise multiple reports, each responding more directly to certain aspects of the objectives of financial reporting and matters included within the scope of financial reporting. For example, some entities present prospective financial statements as well as historical financial statements. Entities may also present GPFs that include both financial statements and service performance information. GPFs encompass financial statements including their notes (hereafter referred to as financial statements, unless specified otherwise), and the presentation of information that enhances, complements and supplements the financial statements.
- 1.7 The scope of financial reporting establishes the boundary around the transactions, other events and activities that may be reported in GPFs. The scope of financial reporting is determined by the information needs of the primary users of GPFs and the objectives of financial reporting. The factors that determine what may be encompassed within the scope of financial reporting are outlined in the next chapter.

⁶ External Reporting Board Standard A1 *Application of the Accounting Standards Framework* (XRB A1) identifies the standards to be applied by public benefit entities that have a statutory obligation to prepare general purpose financial reports.

Applicability of the PBE Conceptual Framework

1.8 The PBE Conceptual Framework applies to financial reporting by public benefit entities that apply PBE Standards. Therefore, it applies to a wide range of public sector and not-for-profit reporting entities including:

- Government departments;
- Crown entities;
- Local authorities;
- Trusts;
- Council-controlled organisations (CCOs);
- Charities; and
- Not-for-profit companies.

CHAPTER 2: OBJECTIVES AND USERS OF GENERAL PURPOSE FINANCIAL REPORTING

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Objectives of Financial Reporting

- 2.1 The objectives of financial reporting by public benefit entities are to provide information about the entity that is useful to users of GPFRs for accountability purposes and for decision-making purposes (hereafter referred to as “useful for accountability and decision-making purposes”).
- 2.2 Financial reporting is not an end in itself. Its purpose is to provide information useful to users of GPFRs. The objectives of financial reporting are therefore determined by reference to the users of GPFRs, and their information needs.

Users of General Purpose Financial Reports

- 2.3 Public benefit entities raise resources from funders or financial supporters, (for example, taxpayers, members and donors), lenders and other resource providers for use in the provision of services to citizens and other service recipients. These entities are accountable for their management and use of resources to those that provide them with resources, and to those that depend on them to use those resources to deliver necessary services. Those that provide the resources and receive, or expect to receive, the services also require information as input for decision-making purposes.
- 2.4 Consequently, GPFRs of public benefit entities are developed primarily to respond to the information needs of service recipients and resource providers who do not possess the authority to require a public benefit entity to disclose the information they need for accountability and decision-making purposes. The legislature (or similar body) and elected or appointed representatives are also primary users of GPFRs, and make extensive and ongoing use of GPFRs when acting in their capacity as representatives of the interests of service recipients and resource providers. Therefore, for the purposes of the PBE Conceptual Framework, the primary users of GPFRs are service recipients and their representatives and resource providers and their representatives (hereafter referred to as “service recipients and resource providers”, unless identified otherwise).
- 2.5 Citizens receive services from, and provide resources to, public benefit entities. Therefore, citizens are primary users of GPFRs. Some service recipients and some resource providers that rely on GPFRs for the information they need for accountability and decision-making purposes may not be citizens—for example, residents who pay taxes and/or receive benefits but are not citizens; multilateral or bilateral donor agencies and many lenders and corporations that provide resources to, and transact with, a public benefit entity; and those that fund, and/or benefit from, the services provided by international governmental organisations. In most cases, public sector entities that provide resources to international governmental organisations are dependent on GPFRs of those organisations for information for accountability and decision-making purposes.
- 2.6 GPFRs prepared to respond to the information needs of service recipients and resource providers for accountability and decision-making purposes may also provide information useful to other parties and for other purposes. For example, statisticians, analysts, the media, financial advisors, public interest and lobby groups and others may find the information provided by GPFRs useful for their own purposes. Organisations that have the authority to require the preparation of financial reports tailored to meet their own specific information needs may also use the information provided by GPFRs for their own purposes—for example, regulatory and oversight bodies, audit institutions, subcommittees of the legislature or other governing body, central agencies and budget controllers, entity management, rating agencies and, in some cases, lending institutions and providers of development and other assistance. While these other parties may find the information provided by GPFRs useful, they are not the primary users of GPFRs. Therefore, GPFRs are not developed to specifically respond to their particular information needs.

Accountability and Decision Making

- 2.7 The primary objective of public benefit entities is to provide goods or services for community or social benefit. Services provided by public sector entities include, for example, welfare, policing, public education, national security and defence services. Services provided by not-for-profit entities and, in some cases public sector entities, include, for example, health, social welfare, housing, research, cultural, sport and recreation, environmental, employment and training, community development and religious services. Although public sector and not-for-profit entities may enter into contracts for the delivery of services, in

many cases, services are provided as a result of a non-exchange transaction⁷ and in a non-competitive environment.

- 2.8 Public benefit entities are accountable to those that provide them with resources, and to those that depend on them to use those resources to deliver services during the reporting period and over the longer term. The discharge of accountability obligations requires the provision of information about the entity's management of the resources entrusted to it for the delivery of services to constituents and others, and its compliance with legislation, regulation, or other authority that governs its service performance and other operations. Given the way in which the services provided by public benefit entities are funded (primarily by non-exchange transactions) and the dependency of service recipients on the provision of those services over the long term, the discharge of accountability obligations will also require the provision of information about such matters as the entity's service performance during the reporting period, and its capacity to continue to provide services in future periods.
- 2.9 Service recipients and resource providers will also require information as input for making decisions. For example:
- Lenders, creditors, donors, members and others that provide resources on a voluntary basis, including in an exchange transaction, make decisions about whether to provide resources to support the current and future activities of the entity. In some circumstances, elected or appointed representatives who depend on GPFs for the information they need, can make or influence decisions about the services to be provided and the resources allocated to support the delivery of those services; and
 - Taxpayers do not usually provide funds to public sector entities on a voluntary basis or as a result of an exchange transaction. In addition, in many cases, they do not have the discretion to choose whether or not to accept the services provided by a public sector entity or to choose an alternative service provider. Consequently, they have little direct or immediate capacity to make decisions about whether to provide resources to the government, the resources to be allocated for the provision of services by a particular public sector entity or whether to purchase or consume the services provided. However, service recipients and resource providers can make decisions about their voting preferences, and representations they make to elected officials or other representative bodies—these decisions may have resource allocation consequences for certain public sector entities.
- 2.10 Information provided in GPFs for accountability purposes will contribute to, and inform, decision making. For example, information about the costs, efficiency and effectiveness of past service performance the amount and sources of cost recovery, and the resources available to support future activities will be necessary for the discharge of accountability. This information will also be useful for decision making by users of GPFs, including decisions that donors and other financial supporters make about providing resources to the entity.

Information Needs of Service Recipients and Resource Providers

- 2.11 For accountability and decision-making purposes, service recipients and resource providers will need information that supports the assessments of such matters as:
- The performance of the entity during the reporting period in, for example:
 - Meeting its service performance and other operating and financial objectives;
 - Managing the resources it is responsible for;
 - Complying with relevant budgetary, legislative, and other authority regulating the raising and use of resources;
 - The liquidity (for example, ability to meet current obligations) and solvency (for example, ability to meet obligations over the long term) of the entity;

⁷ Exchange transactions are transactions in which one entity receives assets or services, or has liabilities extinguished, and directly gives approximately equally value to another entity in exchange. Non-exchange transactions are transactions in which an entity receives value from another entity without directly giving approximately equal value in exchange.

- The sustainability of the entity’s service performance and other operations over the long term, and changes therein as a result of the activities of the entity during the reporting period including, for example:
 - The capacity of the entity to continue to fund its activities and to meet its operational objectives in the future (its financial capacity), including the likely sources of funding and the extent to which the entity is dependent on, and therefore vulnerable to, funding or demand pressures outside its control;
 - The physical and other resources currently available to support the provision of services in future periods (its operational capacity); and
- The capacity of the entity to adapt to changing circumstances, whether changes in demographics or changes in domestic or global economic conditions which are likely to impact the nature or composition of the activities it undertakes and the services it provides.

2.12 The information service recipients and resource providers need for these purposes is likely to overlap in many respects. For example, service recipients will require information as input to assessments of such matters as whether:

- The entity is using resources economically, efficiently, effectively and as intended, and whether such use is in their interest;
- The range, volume and cost of services provided during the reporting period are appropriate, and the amounts and sources of their cost recoveries; and
- Current levels of revenue are sufficient to maintain the volume and quality of services currently provided.

Service recipients will also require information about the consequences of decisions made, and activities undertaken, by the entity during the reporting period on the resources available to support the provision of services in future periods, the entity’s anticipated future services and objectives, and the amounts and sources of cost recoveries necessary to support those activities.

2.13 Resource providers will require information as input to assessments of such matters as whether the entity:

- Is achieving the objectives established as the justification for the resources raised during the reporting period;
- Funded current operations from funds raised in the current period or from borrowings or other sources; and
- Is likely to need additional (or less) resources in the future, and the likely sources of those resources.

Lenders and creditors will require information as input to assessments of the liquidity of the entity and, therefore, whether the amount and timing of repayment will be as agreed. Donors will require information to support assessments of whether the entity is using resources economically, efficiently, effectively and as intended. They will also require information about the entity’s anticipated future service performance and resource needs.

Information Provided by General Purpose Financial Reports

Financial Position, Financial Performance, and Cash Flows

2.14 Information about the financial position of a public benefit entity will enable users to identify the resources of the entity and claims to those resources at the reporting date. This will provide information useful as input to assessments of such matters as:

- The extent to which management has discharged its responsibilities for safekeeping and managing the resources of the entity;
- The extent to which resources are available to support future service performance, and changes during the reporting period in the amount and composition of those resources and claims to those resources; and
- The amounts and timing of future cash flows necessary to service and repay existing claims to the entity’s resources.

- 2.15 Information about the financial performance of a public benefit entity will inform assessments of matters such as whether the entity has acquired resources economically, and used them efficiently and effectively to achieve its service performance objectives. Information about the costs of services and the amounts and sources of cost recovery during the reporting period will assist users to determine whether operating costs were recovered from, for example, taxes, user charges, donations, contributions and transfers, or were financed by increasing the level of indebtedness of the entity.
- 2.16 Information about the cash flows of a public benefit entity contributes to assessments of financial performance and the entity's liquidity and solvency. It indicates how the entity raised and used cash during the period, including its borrowing and repayment of borrowing and its acquisition and sale of, for example, property, plant, and equipment. It also identifies the cash received from, for example, taxes, donations, investments and the cash transfers made to, and received from, other public benefit organisations. Information about cash flows can also support assessments of the entity's compliance with spending mandates expressed in cash flow terms, and inform assessments of the likely amounts and sources of cash inflows needed in future periods to support service performance objectives.
- 2.17 Information about financial position, financial performance and cash flows are typically presented in financial statements. To assist users to better understand, interpret and place in context the information presented in the financial statements, GPFRs may also provide financial and non-financial information that enhances, complements and supplements the financial statements, including information about such matters as the entity's:
- Actual financial performance and financial position compared to public plans or budgets, including compliance with any legislative spending controls and other authority governing its operations;
 - Service performance during the reporting period; and
 - Expectations regarding service performance and other activities in future periods, and the long-term consequences of decisions made and activities undertaken during the reporting period, including those that may impact expectations about the future.

Depending upon the level of detail and purpose of this additional information it may be presented in the notes to the financial statements, as a separate part of the GPFR containing the financial statements or in a separate GPFR.

Plans and Budgets and Compliance with Legislation or Other Authority Governing the Raising and Use of Resources

- 2.18 Many public sector entities are required to make plans or budgets publicly available. These plans or budgets provide interested parties with financial information about the entity's operational plans for the forthcoming period, its capital needs and, often, its service performance objectives and expectations. They are used to justify the raising of resources from taxpayers and other resource providers, and may also establish the authority for expenditure of resources.
- 2.19 Although public sector entities may receive resources from donors, lenders or as a result of exchange transactions they are predominantly funded by taxes or revenue from other non-exchange transactions. The expected nature and level of funding from taxes and other non-exchange transactions is generally set out in these public plans or budgets.
- 2.20 GPFRs provide information about the financial results (whether described as "surplus or deficit," "profit or loss," or by other terms), performance and cash flows of the entity during the reporting period, its assets and liabilities at the reporting date and the change therein during the reporting period, and its service performance achievements.
- 2.21 The inclusion within GPFRs of information that assists users in assessing the extent to which revenues, expenses, cash flows and financial results of the entity comply with the estimates reflected in public plans or budgets, and the entity's adherence to relevant legislation or other authority governing the raising and use of resources, is important in determining how well a public sector entity has met its financial objectives. Such information is necessary for the discharge of a public sector entity's accountability to its constituents, enhances the assessment of the financial performance of the entity and will inform decision making.

Service Performance

- 2.22 The primary objective of public benefit entities is to provide services for community or social benefit. Consequently, the financial performance of public benefit entities will not be fully or adequately reflected in any measure of financial results. Therefore, their financial results will need to be assessed in the context of their service performance.
- 2.23 In some cases, quantitative measures of the outputs and outcomes of the entity’s activities during the reporting period will provide relevant information about the entity’s service performance—for example, information about the cost, volume, and frequency of service delivery, and the relationship of services provided to the resource base of the entity. In other cases, information about service performance may need to be communicated by an explanation of the quality of particular services provided or the impact of certain services.
- 2.24 Reporting non-financial as well as financial information about service performance activities, achievements and/or outcomes during the reporting period will provide input to assessments of the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of the entity’s operations. Reporting such information is necessary for a public benefit entity to discharge its obligation to be accountable—that is, to account for, and justify its use of resources. Decisions that donors make about the allocation of resources to particular entities or purposes are also made, at least in part, in response to information about service performance during the reporting period, and future service performance objectives.

Prospective Financial and Non-Financial Information

- 2.24.1 In planning for the future, entities may prepare prospective financial statements and service performance information that reflect the projected level and mix of services. Many public sector entities are required to make prospective information publicly available. However, not-for-profit entities are not generally subject to requirements to make prospective information publicly available. The following discussion focuses on public sector entities, but aspects of the discussion may also be relevant to not-for-profit entities that make prospective financial information publicly available.
- 2.25 Given the longevity of governments and many government activities, the financial consequences of many decisions made in the reporting period may only become clear many years into the future. Financial statements which present information about financial position at a point in time and financial performance and cash flows over the reporting period will then need to be assessed in the context of the long term.
- 2.26 Decisions made by a public sector entity in a particular period about the provision of services in the future and the funding of those services can have significant consequences for:
- Constituents who will be dependent on those services in the future; and
 - Current and future generations of taxpayers and other involuntary resource providers who will provide the taxes and levies to fund the planned services and related financial commitments.
- 2.27 Information about the entity’s anticipated future services and objectives, their likely impact on the future resource needs of the entity and the likely sources of funding for such resources, will be necessary as input to any assessment of the ability of the public sector entity to meet its service performance objectives and financial commitments in the future. The disclosure of such information in GPFRs will support assessments of the sustainability of the provision of services by a public sector entity, enhance the accountability of the entity and provide additional information useful for decision-making purposes.

Explanatory Information

- 2.28 Information about the major factors underlying the financial and service performance of the entity during the reporting period and the assumptions that underpin expectations about, and factors that are likely to influence, the entity’s future performance may be presented in GPFRs. Such information will assist users to better understand and place in context the financial and non-financial information included in GPFRs, and enhance the role of GPFRs in providing information useful for accountability and decision-making purposes.

Financial Statements and Information that Enhances, Complements and Supplements the Financial Statements

- 2.29 The scope of financial reporting establishes the boundary around the transactions, other events and activities that may be reported in GPFRs. To respond to the information needs of users, the PBE Conceptual Framework reflects a scope for financial reporting that is more comprehensive than that encompassed by financial statements. It provides for the presentation within GPFRs of additional information that enhances, complements, and supplements those statements.
- 2.30 While the PBE Conceptual Framework reflects a scope of financial reporting that is more comprehensive than that encompassed by financial statements, information presented in financial statements remains at the core of financial reporting. How the elements of financial statements are defined, recognised and measured, and forms of presentation and communication that might be adopted for information included within GPFRs, is considered in other chapters of the PBE Conceptual Framework and in the development of individual PBE Standards, as appropriate.

Other Sources of Information

- 2.31 GPFRs play a significant role in communicating the information necessary to demonstrate accountability, as well as providing information useful as input for decision-making purposes. However, it is unlikely that GPFRs will provide all the information users need for accountability and decision-making purposes. For example, while comparison of actual with budget information for the reporting period may be included in the GPFRs of public sector entities, the plans and budgets issued by public sector entities provide more detailed financial and non-financial information. Public benefit entities and independent agencies also issue reports on the need for, and sustainability of, existing services and anticipated economic conditions and changes in the demographics over the medium and longer term that will influence budgets and future service needs. Consequently, service recipients and resource providers may also need to consider information from other sources, including reports on current and anticipated economic conditions, budgets and forecasts, and information about policy initiatives not reported in GPFRs.

CHAPTER 3: QUALITATIVE CHARACTERISTICS

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Introduction

- 3.1 GPFs present financial and non-financial information about economic and other phenomena. The qualitative characteristics of information included in GPFs are the attributes that make that information useful to users and support the achievement of the objectives of financial reporting. The objectives of financial reporting are to provide information useful for accountability and decision-making purposes.
- 3.2 The qualitative characteristics of information included in GPFs of public benefit entities are relevance, faithful representation, understandability, timeliness, comparability, and verifiability.
- 3.3 Pervasive constraints on information included in GPFs are materiality, cost-benefit, and achieving an appropriate balance between the qualitative characteristics.
- 3.4 Each of the qualitative characteristics is integral to, and works with, the other characteristics to provide in GPFs information useful for achieving the objectives of financial reporting. However, in practice, all qualitative characteristics may not be fully achieved, and a balance or trade-off between certain of them may be necessary.
- 3.5 The qualitative characteristics apply to all financial and non-financial information reported in GPFs, including historic and prospective information, and explanatory information. However, the extent to which the qualitative characteristics can be achieved may differ depending on the degree of uncertainty and subjective assessment or opinion involved in compiling the financial and non-financial information. The need for additional guidance on interpreting and applying the qualitative characteristics to information that extends the scope of financial reporting beyond financial statements will be considered in the development of any PBE Standards that deal with such matters.

Relevance

- 3.6 Financial and non-financial information is relevant if it is capable of making a difference in achieving the objectives of financial reporting. Financial and non-financial information is capable of making a difference when it has confirmatory value, predictive value, or both. It may be capable of making a difference, and thus be relevant, even if some users choose not to take advantage of it or are already aware of it.
- 3.7 Financial and non-financial information has confirmatory value if it confirms or changes past (or present) expectations. For example, information will be relevant for accountability and decision-making purposes if it confirms expectations about such matters as the extent to which managers have discharged their responsibilities for the efficient and effective use of resources, the achievement of specified service performance objectives, and compliance with relevant budgetary, legislative and other requirements.
- 3.8 GPFs may present information about an entity's anticipated future services, objectives and costs, and the amount and sources of the resources that are intended to be allocated to providing services in the future. Such future oriented information will have predictive value and be relevant for accountability and decision-making purposes. Information about economic and other phenomena that exist or have already occurred can also have predictive value in helping form expectations about the future. For example, information that confirms or disproves past expectations can reinforce or change expectations about financial results and service outcomes that may occur in the future.
- 3.9 The confirmatory and predictive roles of information are interrelated—for example, information about the current level and structure of an entity's resources and claims to those resources helps users to confirm the outcome of resource management strategies during the period, and to predict an entity's ability to respond to changing circumstances and anticipated future service needs. The same information helps to confirm or correct users' past expectations and predictions about the entity's ability to respond to such changes. It also helps to confirm or correct prospective financial information included in previous GPFs.

Faithful Representation

- 3.10 To be useful in financial reporting, information must be a faithful representation of the economic and other phenomena that it purports to represent. Faithful representation is attained when the depiction of the phenomenon is complete, neutral, and free from material error. Information that faithfully represents an economic or other phenomenon depicts the substance of the underlying transaction, other event, activity or circumstance—which is not necessarily always the same as its legal form.

- 3.11 In practice, it may not be possible to know or confirm whether information presented in GPFRs is complete, neutral, and free from material error. However, information should be as complete, neutral, and free from error as is possible.
- 3.12 An omission of some information can cause the representation of an economic or other phenomenon to be false or misleading, and thus not useful to users of GPFRs. For example, a complete depiction of the item “plant and equipment” in GPFRs will include a numeric representation of the aggregate amount of plant and equipment together with other quantitative, descriptive and explanatory information necessary to faithfully represent that class of assets. In some cases, this may include the disclosure of information about such matters as the major classes of plant and equipment, factors that have affected their use in the past or might impact on their use in the future, and the basis and process for determining their numeric representation. Similarly, prospective financial and non-financial information and information about the achievement of service performance objectives and outcomes included in GPFRs will need to be presented with the key assumptions that underlie that information and any explanations that are necessary to ensure that its depiction is complete and useful to users.
- 3.13 Neutrality in financial reporting is the absence of bias. It means that the selection and presentation of financial and non-financial information is not made with the intention of attaining a particular predetermined result—for example, to influence in a particular way users’ assessment of the discharge of accountability by the entity or a decision or judgement that is to be made, or to induce particular behaviour.
- 3.14 Neutral information faithfully represents the economic and other phenomena that it purports to represent. However, to require information included in GPFRs to be neutral does not mean that it is not without purpose or that it will not influence behaviour. Relevance is a qualitative characteristic and, by definition, relevant information is capable of influencing users’ assessments and decisions.
- 3.15 The economic and other phenomena represented in GPFRs generally occur under conditions of uncertainty. Information included in GPFRs will therefore often include estimates that incorporate management’s judgement. To faithfully represent an economic or other phenomenon, an estimate must be based on appropriate inputs, and each input must reflect the best available information. Caution will need to be exercised when dealing with uncertainty. It may sometimes be necessary to explicitly disclose the degree of uncertainty in financial and non-financial information to faithfully represent economic and other phenomena.
- 3.16 Free from material error does not mean complete accuracy in all respects. Free from material error means there are no errors or omissions that are individually or collectively material in the description of the phenomenon, and the process used to produce the reported information has been applied as described. In some cases, it may be possible to determine the accuracy of some information included in GPFRs—for example, the amount of a cash transfer to another entity, the volume of services delivered or the price paid for the acquisition of plant and equipment. However, in other cases it may not—for example, the accuracy of an estimate of the value or cost of an item or the effectiveness of providing particular services may not be able to be determined. In these cases, the estimate will be free from material error if the amount is clearly described as an estimate, the nature and limitations of the estimation process are explained, and no material errors have been identified in selecting and applying an appropriate process for developing the estimate.

Understandability

- 3.17 Understandability is the quality of information that enables users to comprehend its meaning. GPFRs of public benefit entities should present information in a manner that responds to the needs and knowledge base of users, and to the nature of the information presented. For example, explanations of financial and non-financial information and commentary on service performance and other achievements during the reporting period and expectations for future periods should be written in plain language, and presented in a manner that is readily understandable by users. Understandability is enhanced when information is classified, characterised, and presented clearly and concisely. Comparability also can enhance understandability.
- 3.18 Users of GPFRs are assumed to have a reasonable knowledge of the entity’s activities and the environment in which it operates, to be able and prepared to read GPFRs, and to review and analyse the information presented with reasonable diligence. Some economic and other phenomena are particularly complex and difficult to represent in GPFRs, and some users may need to seek the aid of an advisor to assist in their understanding of them. All efforts should be undertaken to represent economic and other phenomena

included in GPFRs in a manner that is understandable to a wide range of users. However, information should not be excluded from GPFRs solely because it may be too complex or difficult for some users to understand without assistance.

Timeliness

- 3.19 Timeliness means having information available for users before it loses its capacity to be useful for accountability and decision-making purposes. Having relevant information available sooner can enhance its usefulness as input to assessments of accountability and its capacity to inform and influence decisions that need to be made. A lack of timeliness can render information less useful.
- 3.20 Some items of information may continue to be useful long after the reporting period or reporting date. For example, for accountability and decision-making purposes, users of GPFRs may need to assess trends in the financial and service performance of the entity and, in the case of public sector entities, an entity's compliance with plans or budgets over a number of reporting periods. In addition, the outcome and effects of some services may not be determinable until future periods—for example, this may occur in respect of services intended to enhance the economic well-being of constituents, reduce the incidence of a particular disease, or increase literacy levels of certain age groups.

Comparability

- 3.21 Comparability is the quality of information that enables users to identify similarities in, and differences between, two sets of phenomena. Comparability is not a quality of an individual item of information, but rather a quality of the relationship between two or more items of information.
- 3.22 Comparability differs from consistency. Consistency refers to the use of the same accounting principles or policies and basis of preparation, either from period to period within an entity or in a single period across more than one entity. Comparability is the goal, and consistency helps in achieving that goal. In some cases, the accounting principles or policies adopted by an entity may be revised to better represent a particular transaction or event in GPFRs. In these cases, the inclusion of additional disclosures or explanation may be necessary to satisfy the characteristics of comparability.
- 3.23 Comparability also differs from uniformity. For information to be comparable, like things must look alike and different things must look different. An over-emphasis on uniformity may reduce comparability by making unlike things look alike. Comparability of information in GPFRs is not enhanced by making unlike things look alike, any more than it is by making like things look different.
- 3.24 Information about the entity's financial position, financial performance, cash flows, compliance with plans or budgets, relevant legislation or other authority governing the raising and use of resources, service performance achievements, and its future plans is necessary for accountability purposes and useful as input for decision-making purposes. The usefulness of such information is enhanced if it can be compared with, for example:
- Prospective financial and non-financial information previously presented for that reporting period or reporting date;
 - Similar information about the same entity for some other period or some other point in time; and
 - Similar information about other entities (for example, public benefit entities providing similar services in different jurisdictions) for the same reporting period.
- 3.25 Consistent application of accounting principles, policies and basis of preparation to prospective financial and non-financial information and actual outcomes will enhance the usefulness of any comparison of projected and actual results. Comparability with other entities may be less significant for explanations of management's perception or opinion of the factors underlying the entity's current performance.

Verifiability

- 3.26 Verifiability is the quality of information that helps assure users that information in GPFRs faithfully represents the economic and other phenomena that it purports to represent. Supportability is sometimes used to describe this quality when applied in respect of explanatory information and prospective financial and non-financial quantitative information disclosed in GPFRs—that is, the quality of information that helps assure users that explanatory or prospective financial and non-financial quantitative information

faithfully represents the economic and other phenomena that it purports to represent. Whether referred to as verifiability or supportability, the characteristic implies that different knowledgeable and independent observers could reach general consensus, although not necessarily complete agreement, that either:

- The information represents the economic and other phenomena that it purports to represent without material error or bias; or
 - An appropriate recognition, measurement, or representation method has been applied without material error or bias.
- 3.27 To be verifiable, information need not be a single point estimate. A range of possible amounts and the related probabilities also can be verified.
- 3.28 Verification may be direct or indirect. With direct verification, an amount or other representation is itself verified, such as by (a) counting cash, (b) observing marketable securities and their quoted prices, or (c) confirming that the factors identified as influencing past service performance were present and operated with the effect identified. With indirect verification, the amount or other representation is verified by checking the inputs and recalculating the outputs using the same accounting convention or methodology. An example is verifying the carrying amount of inventory by checking the inputs (quantities and costs) and recalculating the ending inventory using the same cost flow assumption (for example, average cost or first-in-first-out).
- 3.29 The quality of verifiability (or supportability if such term is used to describe this characteristic) is not an absolute—some information may be more or less capable of verification than other information. However, the more verifiable is the information included in GPFs, the more it will assure users that the information faithfully represents the economic and other phenomena that it purports to represent.
- 3.30 GPFs of public benefit entities may include financial and other quantitative information and explanations about (a) key influences on the entity’s performance during the period, (b) the anticipated future effects or outcomes of services undertaken during the reporting period, and (c) prospective financial and non-financial information. It may not be possible to verify the accuracy of all quantitative representations and explanations of such information until a future period, if at all.
- 3.31 To help assure users that prospective financial and non-financial quantitative information and explanations included in GPFs faithfully represents the economic and other phenomena that they purport to represent, the assumptions that underlie the information disclosed, the methodologies adopted in compiling that information, and the factors and circumstances that support any opinions expressed or disclosures made should be transparent. This will enable users to form judgements about the appropriateness of those assumptions and the method of compilation, measurement, representation and interpretation of the information.

Constraints on Information Included in General Purpose Financial Reports

Materiality

- 3.32 Information is material if its omission or misstatement could influence the discharge of accountability by the entity, or the decisions that users make on the basis of the entity’s GPFs prepared for that reporting period. Materiality depends on both the nature and amount of the item judged in the particular circumstances of each entity. GPFs may encompass qualitative and quantitative information about service performance achievements during the reporting period, and expectations about service performance objectives and financial outcomes in the future. Consequently, it is not possible to specify a uniform quantitative threshold at which a particular type of information becomes material.
- 3.33 Assessments of materiality will be made in the context of the legislative, institutional and operating environment within which the entity operates and, in respect of prospective financial and non-financial information, the preparer’s knowledge and expectations about the future. Disclosure of information about compliance or non-compliance with legislation, regulation or other authority may be material because of its nature—irrespective of the magnitude of any amounts involved. In determining whether an item is material in these circumstances, consideration will be given to such matters as the nature, legality, sensitivity and consequences of past or anticipated transactions and events, the parties involved in any such transactions and the circumstances giving rise to them.

- 3.34 Materiality is classified as a constraint on information included in GPFs in the PBE Conceptual Framework. In developing PBE Standards, the NZASB will consider the materiality of the consequences of application of a particular accounting policy, basis of preparation or disclosure of a particular item or type of information. Subject to the requirements of any PBE Standard, entities preparing GPFs will also consider the materiality of, for example, the application of a particular accounting policy and the separate disclosure of particular items of information.

Cost-Benefit

- 3.35 Financial reporting imposes costs. The benefits of financial reporting should justify those costs. Assessing whether the benefits of providing information justify the related costs is often a matter of judgement, because it is often not possible to identify and/or quantify all the costs and all the benefits of information included in GPFs.
- 3.36 The costs of providing information include the costs of collecting and processing the information, the costs of verifying it and/or presenting the assumptions and methodologies that support it, and the costs of disseminating it. Users incur the costs of analysis and interpretation. Omission of useful information also imposes costs, including the costs that users incur to obtain needed information from other sources and the costs that result from making decisions using incomplete data provided by GPFs.
- 3.37 Preparers expend the majority of the effort to provide information in GPFs. However, service recipients and resource providers ultimately bear the cost of those efforts—because resources are redirected from services to preparation of information for inclusion in GPFs.
- 3.38 Users reap the majority of benefits from the information provided by GPFs. However, information prepared for GPFs may also be used internally by management and result in better decision making by management. The disclosure of information in GPFs consistent with the concepts identified in the PBE Conceptual Framework and PBE Standards derived from them will enhance and reinforce perceptions of the transparency of financial reporting by public benefit entities and contribute to the more accurate pricing of their debt. Therefore, public benefit entities may also benefit in a number of ways from the information provided by GPFs.
- 3.39 Application of the cost-benefit constraint involves assessing whether the benefits of reporting information are likely to justify the costs incurred to provide and use the information. When making this assessment, it is necessary to consider whether one or more qualitative characteristic might be sacrificed to some degree to reduce cost.
- 3.40 In developing PBE Standards, the NZASB considers information from preparers, users, academics, and others about the expected nature and quantity of the benefits and costs of the proposed requirements. Disclosure and other requirements which result in the presentation of information useful to users of GPFs for accountability and decision-making purposes and satisfy the qualitative characteristics are prescribed by PBE Standards when the benefits of compliance with those disclosures and other requirements are assessed by the NZASB to justify their costs.

Balance between the Qualitative Characteristics

- 3.41 The qualitative characteristics work together to contribute to the usefulness of information. For example, neither a depiction that faithfully represents an irrelevant phenomenon, nor a depiction that unfaithfully represents a relevant phenomenon, results in useful information. Similarly, to be relevant, information must be timely and understandable.
- 3.42 In some cases, a balancing or trade-off between qualitative characteristics may be necessary to achieve the objectives of financial reporting. The relative importance of the qualitative characteristics in each situation is a matter of professional judgement. The aim is to achieve an appropriate balance among the characteristics in order to meet the objectives of financial reporting.

CHAPTER 4: REPORTING ENTITY

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Introduction

- 4.1 A public benefit reporting entity⁸ is a government or other public sector organisation, not-for-profit entity or identifiable area of activity (hereafter referred to as an entity or public benefit entity) that prepares GPFs.
- 4.2 A public benefit reporting entity may comprise two or more separate entities that present GPFs as if they are a single entity—such a reporting entity is referred to as a group reporting entity.

Key Characteristics of a Reporting Entity

- 4.3 Key characteristics of a public sector reporting entity are that:
- It is an entity that raises resources from, or on behalf of, constituents and/or uses resources to undertake activities for the benefit of, or on behalf of, those constituents; and
 - There are service recipients or resource providers dependent on GPFs of the entity for information for accountability or decision-making purposes.
- 4.3.1 Key characteristics of a not-for-profit reporting entity are that:
- It is an entity that receives resources from members, the public and/or funding organisations which it uses to undertake activities for the benefit of, or on behalf of, its members and/or community; and
 - There are service recipients or resource providers dependent on GPFs of the entity for information for accountability or decision-making purposes.
- 4.4 A government may establish and/or operate through administrative units such as ministries or departments. It may also operate through trusts, statutory authorities, government corporations and other entities with a separate legal identity or operational autonomy to undertake or otherwise support the provision of services to constituents. Not-for-profit entities operate through a variety of structures to undertake their activities. Some entities, for example, incorporated societies, charitable trust boards and companies, have a separate legal identity while others are unincorporated. Other public benefit entities may also undertake certain activities through, and may benefit from and be exposed to a financial burden or loss as a result of, the activities of entities with a separate legal identity or operational autonomy.
- 4.5 GPFs are prepared to report information useful to users for accountability and decision-making purposes. Service recipients and resource providers are the primary users of GPFs. Consequently, a key characteristic of a reporting entity, including a group reporting entity, is the existence of service recipients or resource providers who are dependent on GPFs of that entity or group of entities for information for accountability or decision-making purposes.
- 4.6 GPFs encompass financial statements and information that enhances, complements and supplements the financial statements. Financial statements present information about the resources of the reporting entity or group reporting entity and claims to those resources at the reporting date, and changes to those resources and claims and cash flows during the reporting period.
- 4.7 The factors that are likely to signal the existence of users of GPFs of a public benefit entity or group of entities include an entity having the responsibility or capacity to raise or deploy resources, the use of public money or the management of public assets or liabilities, incur liabilities, or undertake activities to achieve service performance objectives. The greater the resources that a public benefit entity raises, manages and/or has the capacity to deploy, the greater the liabilities it incurs and the greater the economic or social impact of its activities, the more likely it is that there will exist service recipients or resource providers who are dependent on GPFs for information about it for accountability and decision-making purposes. In the case of a not-for-profit entity, there is often an additional accountability aspect in relation to the special status granted to the entity (for example, the benefits associated with being a registered charity).

⁸ This definition of a reporting entity differs from that used in the Financial Reporting Act 2013. The Financial Reporting Act 2013 defines a “reporting entity” as an “entity whose financial statements, or group financial statements, reports or other information is required by any enactment to comply, or be prepared in accordance, with generally accepted accounting practice or non-GAAP standards.”

- 4.8 The preparation of GPFs is not a cost-free process. Therefore, if the imposition of financial reporting requirements is to be efficient and effective, it is important that only those public benefit entities for which such users exist are required to prepare GPFs.
- 4.9 In many cases, it will be clear whether or not there exist service recipients or resource providers that are dependent on GPFs of a public benefit entity for information for accountability and decision-making purposes. For example, such users are likely to exist for GPFs of a government at the national or local government level and for international public sector organisations. This is because these governments and organisations generally have the capacity to raise substantial resources from and/or deploy substantial resources on behalf of their constituents, to incur liabilities, and to impact the economic and/or social well-being of the communities that depend on them for the provision of services. Users are likely to exist for GPFs of a not-for-profit entity because these entities receive donations and grants from members, citizens, funders and government for the delivery of services which benefit their members and/or communities.
- 4.10 However, it may not always be clear whether there are service recipients or resource providers that are dependent on GPFs of, for example, individual government departments and agencies or identifiable areas of activity for information for accountability and decision-making purposes. Determining whether these organisations or activities should be identified as reporting entities and, consequently, be required to prepare GPFs will involve the exercise of professional judgement.
- 4.11 The government and some other public benefit entities have a separate identity or standing in law (a legal identity). However, public sector organisations, not-for-profit entities and activities without a separate legal identity may also raise or deploy resources, acquire or manage assets, incur liabilities, undertake activities to achieve service performance objectives or otherwise implement the policy of the government or national or international bodies with which they are affiliated. Service recipients and resource providers may depend on GPFs of these entities and activities for information for accountability and decision-making purposes. Consequently, a public benefit reporting entity may have a separate legal identity or be, for example, an organisation or administrative arrangement without a separate legal identity.

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Introduction

Purpose of this Chapter

- 5.1 This Chapter defines the elements used in financial statements and service performance reports and provides further explanation about those definitions.

Elements of Service Performance Reporting

- 5.1.1 Service performance is the term used to describe an entity's performance in meeting its objectives of supplying goods and services. Service performance is reported in non-financial terms, such as quantities of goods and services provided.⁹ The elements of service performance are inputs, outputs and outcomes.

Elements of Financial Statements and their Importance

- 5.2 Financial statements portray the financial effects of transactions and other events by grouping them into broad classes which share common economic characteristics. These broad classes are termed the elements of financial statements. Elements are the building blocks from which financial statements are constructed. These building blocks provide an initial point for recording, classifying and aggregating economic data and activity in a way that provides users with information that meets the objectives of financial reporting and achieves the qualitative characteristics of financial reporting while taking into account the constraints on information included in GPFRs.
- 5.3 The elements defined in this Chapter do not refer to the individual items that are recognised as a result of transactions and events. Sub-classifications of individual items within an element and aggregations of items are used to enhance the understandability of the financial statements. Presentation is addressed in Chapter 8 *Presentation in General Purpose Financial Reports*.
- 5.4 In some circumstances, to ensure that the financial statements provide information that is useful for a meaningful assessment of the financial performance and financial position of an entity, recognition of economic phenomena that are not captured by the elements as defined in this Chapter may be necessary. Consequently, the identification of the elements in this Chapter does not preclude PBE Standards from requiring or allowing the recognition of resources or obligations that do not satisfy the definition of an element identified in this Chapter (hereafter referred to as "other resources" or "other obligations") when necessary to better achieve the objectives of financial reporting.

Elements of Financial Statements Defined

- 5.5 The elements that are defined in this Chapter are:

- Assets;
- Liabilities;
- Equity;
- Revenue;
- Expense;
- Ownership contributions; and
- Ownership distributions.

Assets

Definition

- 5.6 An asset is:

A resource presently controlled by the entity as a result of a past event.

⁹ As noted in the Preface, subsequent references to "services" in this PBE Conceptual Framework encompass "goods".

A Resource

- 5.7 A resource is an item with service potential or the ability to generate economic benefits. Physical form is not a necessary condition of a resource. The service potential or ability to generate economic benefits can arise directly from the resource itself or from the rights to use the resource. Some resources embody an entity's rights to a variety of benefits including, for example, the right to:
- Use the resource to provide services;
 - Use an external party's resources to provide services, for example, leases;
 - Convert the resource into cash through its disposal;
 - Benefit from the resource's appreciation in value; or
 - Receive a stream of cash flows.
- 5.8 Service potential is the capacity to provide services that contribute to achieving the entity's objectives. Service potential enables an entity to achieve its objectives without necessarily generating net cash inflows.
- 5.9 Assets that embody service potential may include recreational, heritage, community, defence and other assets which are held by public benefit entities, and which are used to provide services to third parties. Such services may be for collective or individual consumption. Many services may be provided in areas where there is no market competition or limited market competition. The use and disposal of such assets may be restricted as many assets that embody service potential are specialised in nature.
- 5.10 Economic benefits are cash inflows or a reduction in cash outflows. Cash inflows (or reduced cash outflows) may be derived from, for example:
- An asset's use in the production and sale of services; or
 - The direct exchange of an asset for cash or other resources;

Presently Controlled by the Entity

- 5.11 An entity must have control of the resource. Control of the resource entails the ability of the entity to use the resource (or direct other parties on its use) so as to derive the benefit of the service potential or economic benefits embodied in the resource in the achievement of its service performance or other objectives.
- 5.12 In assessing whether it presently controls a resource, an entity assesses whether the following indicators of control exist:
- Legal ownership;
 - Access to the resource, or the ability to deny or restrict access to the resource;
 - The means to ensure that the resource is used to achieve its objectives; and
 - The existence of an enforceable right to service potential or the ability to generate economic benefits arising from a resource.

While these indicators are not conclusive determinants of whether control exists, identification and analysis of them can inform that decision.

Past Event

- 5.13 The definition of an asset requires that a resource that an entity presently controls must have arisen from a past transaction or other past event. The past transactions or other events that result in an entity gaining control of a resource and therefore an asset may differ. Entities can obtain assets by purchasing them in an exchange transaction or developing them. Assets may also arise through non-exchange transactions, including through the exercising of sovereign powers. The power to tax or to issue licenses and to access or restrict or deny access to the benefits embodied in intangible resources, like the electromagnetic spectrum, are examples of public sector-specific powers and rights that may give rise to assets. In assessing when an entity's control of rights to resources arise the following events may be considered: (a) a general ability to establish a power, (b) establishment of a power through a statute, (c) exercising the power to create a right, and (d) the event which gives rise to the right to receive resources from an external party. An asset arises when the power is exercised and the rights exist to receive resources.

Liabilities

Definition

5.14 A liability is:

A present obligation of the entity for an outflow of resources that results from a past event.

A Present Obligation

5.15 Public benefit entities can have a number of obligations. A present obligation is a legally binding obligation (legal obligation) or non-legally binding obligation, which an entity has little or no realistic alternative to avoid. Obligations are not present obligations unless they are binding and there is little or no realistic alternative to avoid an outflow of resources.

An Outflow of Resources from the Entity

5.16 A liability must involve an outflow of resources from the entity for it to be settled. An obligation that can be settled without an outflow of resources from the entity is not a liability.

Past Event

5.17 To satisfy the definition of a liability, it is necessary that a present obligation arises as a result of a past transaction or other event and requires an outflow of resources from the entity. The complexity of the activities of public benefit entities means that a number of events in the development, implementation and operation of a particular activity may give rise to obligations. For financial reporting purposes it is necessary to determine whether such commitments and obligations, including binding obligations that the entity has little or no realistic alternative to avoid but are not legally enforceable (non-legally binding obligations), are present obligations and satisfy the definition of a liability. Where an arrangement has a legal form and is binding, such as a contract, the past event may be straightforward to identify. In other cases, it may be more difficult to identify the past event and identification involves an assessment of when an entity has little or no realistic alternative to avoid an outflow of resources from the entity. In making such an assessment an entity considers the relevant context.

Legal and Non-Legally Binding Obligations

5.18 Binding obligations can be legal obligations or non-legally binding obligations. Binding obligations can arise from both exchange and non-exchange transactions. An obligation must be to an external party in order to give rise to a liability. An entity cannot be obligated to itself, even where it has publicly communicated an intention to behave in a particular way. Identification of an external party is an indication of the existence of an obligation giving rise to a liability. However, it is not essential to know the identity of the external party before the time of settlement in order for a present obligation and a liability to exist.

5.19 Many arrangements that give rise to an obligation include settlement dates. The inclusion of a settlement date may provide an indication that an obligation involves an outflow of resources and gives rise to a liability. However, there are many agreements that do not contain settlement dates. The absence of a settlement date does not preclude an obligation giving rise to a liability.

Legal Obligations

5.20 A legal obligation is enforceable in law. Such enforceable obligations may arise from a variety of legal constructs. Exchange transactions are usually contractual in nature and therefore enforceable through the laws of contract or equivalent authority or arrangements. There are jurisdictions where government and public sector entities cannot enter into legal obligations, because, for example, they are not permitted to contract in their own name, but where there are alternative processes with equivalent effect. Obligations that are binding through such alternative processes are considered legal obligations in the PBE Conceptual Framework. For some types of non-exchange transactions, judgement will be necessary to determine whether an obligation is enforceable in law. Where it is determined that an obligation is enforceable in law there can be no doubt that an entity has no realistic alternative to avoid the obligation and that a liability exists.

5.21 Some obligations related to exchange transactions are not strictly enforceable by an external party at the reporting date, but will be enforceable with the passage of time without the external party having to meet further conditions—or having to take any further action—prior to settlement. Claims that are

unconditionally enforceable subject to the passage of time are enforceable obligations in the context of the definition of a liability.

- 5.22 Sovereign power is the ultimate authority of a government to make, amend and repeal legal provisions. Sovereign power is not a rationale for concluding that an obligation does not meet the definition of a liability in this PBE Conceptual Framework. The legal position should be assessed at each reporting date to consider if an obligation is no longer binding and does not meet the definition of a liability.

Non-Legally Binding Obligations

- 5.23 Liabilities can arise from non-legally binding obligations. Non-legally binding obligations differ from legal obligations in that the party to whom the obligation exists cannot take legal (or equivalent) action to enforce settlement. Non-legally binding obligations that give rise to liabilities have the following attributes:

- The entity has indicated to other parties by an established pattern of past practice, published policies, or a sufficiently specific current statement that it will accept certain responsibilities;
- As a result of such an indication, the entity has created a valid expectation on the part of those other parties that it will discharge those responsibilities; and
- The entity has little or no realistic alternative to avoid settling the obligation arising from those responsibilities.

- 5.24 In the public sector, obligations may arise at a number of points. For example, in implementing a new policy or service:

- Making a political promise such as an electoral pledge;
- Announcement of a policy;
- Introduction (and approval or adoption) of the plan or budget (which may be two distinct points);
- Obtaining legal authority to take a proposed action; and
- An appropriation becoming effective.

The early stages of implementation are unlikely to give rise to present obligations that meet the definition of a liability. Later stages, such as claimants meeting the eligibility criteria for the service to be provided, may give rise to obligations that meet the definition of a liability.

- 5.25 The point at which an obligation gives rise to a liability depends on the nature of the obligation. Factors that are likely to impact on judgements whether other parties can validly conclude that the obligation is such that the entity has little or no realistic alternative to avoid an outflow of resources include:

- The nature of the past event or events that give rise to the obligation. For example, a promise made in an election is unlikely to give rise to a present obligation because an electoral pledge very rarely creates a valid expectation on the part of external parties that the entity has an obligation that it has little or no realistic alternative to avoid settling. However, an announcement in relation to an event or circumstance that has occurred may have such political support that the government has little option to withdraw. Where the government has committed to introduce and secure passage of the necessary budgetary provision such an announcement may give rise to a non-legally binding obligation;
- The ability of the entity to modify or change the obligation before it crystallises. For example, the announcement of policy will generally not give rise to a non-legally binding obligation, which cannot be modified before being implemented. Similarly, if an obligation is contingent on future events occurring, there may be discretion to avoid an outflow of resources before those events occur; and
- There may be a correlation between the availability of funding to settle a particular obligation and the creation of a present obligation. For example, where both a budget line item has been approved and linked funding is assured through an appropriation, the availability of contingency funding or a transfer from a different level of government, a non-legally binding obligation may exist. However the absence of a budgetary provision does not itself mean that a present obligation has not arisen.

- 5.26 “Economic coercion”, “political necessity” or other circumstances may give rise to situations where, although the public benefit entity is not legally obliged to incur an outflow of resources, the economic or political consequences of refusing to do so are such that the entity may have little or no realistic alternative to avoid an outflow of resources. Economic coercion, political necessity or other circumstances may lead to a liability arising from a non-legally binding obligation.

Equity

Definition

- 5.26.1 Equity is:

The residual interest in the assets of the entity after deducting all its liabilities.

- 5.26.2 Although equity is defined as a residual, it may be sub-classified in the statement of financial position. For example, funds contributed by owners, accumulated surpluses and reserves relating to revaluations may be shown separately. Such classifications can be relevant to the decision-making needs of the users of financial statements when they indicate legal, regulatory or other restrictions on the ability of the entity to distribute its equity. They may also reflect the fact that parties with ownership interests in an entity have differing rights in relation to the distribution of surpluses or the repayment of capital.

Net Financial Position, Other Resources, and Other Obligations

- 5.27 As explained in paragraph 5.4, in some cases, in developing or revising a PBE Standard, the NZASB may determine that to achieve the objectives of financial reporting a resource or obligation that does not satisfy the definition of an element defined in the PBE Conceptual Framework needs to be recognised in the financial statements. In these cases, the PBE Standard may require or allow these resources or obligations to be recognised as other resources or other obligations, which are items additional to the elements defined in this Framework.
- 5.28 The term net financial position may be used to describe the difference between assets and liabilities after adding other resources and deducting other obligations recognised in the statement of financial position. Net financial position can be a positive or negative residual amount.

Revenue and Expense

Definitions

- 5.29 Revenue is:

Increases in the net financial position of the entity, other than increases arising from ownership contributions.

- 5.30 Expense is:

Decreases in the net financial position of the entity, other than decreases arising from ownership distributions.

- 5.31 Revenue and expense arise from exchange and non-exchange transactions, other events such as unrealised increases and decreases in the value of assets and liabilities, and the consumption of assets through depreciation and erosion of service potential and ability to generate economic benefits through impairments. Revenue and expense may arise from individual transactions or groups of transactions.

Surplus or Deficit for the Period

- 5.32 The entity’s surplus or deficit for the period is the difference between revenue and expense reported on the statement of financial performance.

Ownership Contributions and Ownership Distributions

Definitions

5.33 Ownership contributions are:

Inflows of resources to an entity, contributed by external parties in their capacity as owners, which establish or increase an interest in the equity of the entity.

5.34 Ownership distributions are:

Outflows of resources from the entity, distributed to external parties in their capacity as owners, which return or reduce an interest in the equity of the entity.

5.35 It is important to distinguish inflows of resources from owners, including those inflows that initially establish the ownership interest, and outflows of resources to owners in their capacity as owners from revenue and expense. In addition to the injections of resources and the payment of dividends that may occur, in some jurisdictions it is relatively common for assets and liabilities to be transferred between public benefit entities. Where such transfers satisfy the definitions of ownership contributions or ownership distributions they will be accounted for as such.

5.36 Ownership interests may arise on the creation of an entity when another entity contributes resources to provide the new entity with the capacity to commence operational activities. In the public sector, contributions to, and distributions from, entities are sometimes linked to the restructuring of government and will take the form of transfers of assets and liabilities rather than cash transactions. Similarly, a not-for-profit group reporting entity may undertake a restructure which involves the transfer of assets and liabilities among the entities within the group rather than cash transactions. Ownership interests may take different forms, which may not be evidenced by an equity instrument.

5.37 Ownership contributions may take the form of an initial injection of resources at the creation of an entity or a subsequent injection of resources, including those where an entity is restructured. Ownership distributions may be: (a) a return on investment; (b) a full or partial return of investment; or (c) in the event of the entity being wound up or restructured, a return of any residual resources.

CHAPTER 6: RECOGNITION IN FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

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Recognition Criteria and their Relationship to Disclosure

- 6.1 This Chapter identifies the criteria that must be satisfied in order for an element to be recognised in the financial statements. Recognition is the process of incorporating and including in amounts displayed on the face of the appropriate financial statement an item that meets the definition of an element and can be measured in a way that achieves the qualitative characteristics and takes account of the constraints on information included in GPFRs.
- 6.2 The recognition criteria are that:
- An item satisfies the definition of an element; and
 - Can be measured in a way that achieves the qualitative characteristics and takes account of constraints on information in GPFRs.
- 6.3 All items that satisfy the recognition criteria are recognised in the financial statements. In some circumstances, a PBE Standard may also specify that, to achieve the objectives of financial reporting, a resource or obligation that does not meet the definition of an element is to be recognised in the financial statements provided it can be measured in a way that meets the qualitative characteristics and constraints. Other resources and other obligations are discussed in Chapter 5 *Elements in General Purpose Financial Reports*.
- 6.4 Recognition involves an assessment of uncertainty related to the existence and measurement of the element. The conditions that give rise to uncertainty, if any, can change. Therefore, it is important that uncertainty is assessed at each reporting date.

Definition of an Element

- 6.5 In order to be recognised as an element in the financial statements an item must meet the definition of one of the elements in Chapter 5. Uncertainty about the existence of an element is addressed by considering the available evidence in order to make a neutral judgement about whether an item satisfies all essential characteristics of the definition of that element, taking into account all available facts and circumstances at the reporting date.
- 6.6 If it is determined that an element exists, uncertainty about the amount of service potential or ability to generate economic benefits represented by that element is taken into account in the measurement of that element (see paragraphs 6.7 and 6.8). Preparers review and assess all available evidence in determining whether an element exists and is recognised, whether that element continues to qualify for recognition (see paragraph 6.9), or whether there has been a change to an existing element.

Measurement Uncertainty

- 6.7 In order to recognise an item in the financial statements, it is necessary to attach a monetary value to the item. This entails choosing an appropriate measurement basis and determining whether the measurement of the item achieves the qualitative characteristics, taking into account the constraints on information in GPFRs, including that the measurement is sufficiently relevant and faithfully representative for the item to be recognised in the financial statements. The selection of an appropriate measurement basis is considered in Chapter 7 *Measurement of Assets and Liabilities in Financial Statements*.
- 6.8 There may be uncertainty associated with the measurement of many amounts presented in the financial statements. The use of estimates is an essential part of the accrual basis of accounting. A decision about the relevance and faithful representativeness of measurement involves the consideration of techniques, such as using ranges of outcomes and point estimates, and whether additional evidence is available about economic circumstances that existed at the reporting date. Disclosures can provide useful information on estimation techniques employed. There may be rare instances in which the level of uncertainty in a single point estimate is so large that the relevance and faithful representativeness of the measure is questionable even if disclosures are provided to explain estimation techniques. Under these circumstances the item is not recognised.

Disclosure and Recognition

- 6.9 The failure to recognise items that meet the definition of an element and the recognition criteria is not rectified by the disclosure of accounting policies, notes or other explanatory detail. However, disclosure can provide information about items that meet many, but not all the characteristics of the definition of an element. Disclosure can also provide information on items that meet the definition of an element but cannot be measured in a manner that achieves the qualitative characteristics sufficiently to meet the objectives of financial reporting. Disclosure is appropriate when knowledge of the item is considered to be relevant to the evaluation of the net financial position of the entity and therefore meets the objectives of financial reporting.

Derecognition

- 6.10 Derecognition is the process of evaluating whether changes have occurred since the previous reporting date that warrant removing an element that has been previously recognised from the financial statements, and removing the item if such changes have occurred. In evaluating uncertainty about the existence of an element the same criteria are used for derecognition as at initial recognition.

CHAPTER 7: MEASUREMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES IN FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

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Introduction

- 7.1 This Chapter identifies the measurement concepts that guide the NZASB in the selection of measurement bases for PBE Standards and by preparers of financial statements in selecting measurement bases for assets and liabilities where there are no requirements in PBE Standards.

The Objective of Measurement

- 7.2 The objective of measurement is:

To select those measurement bases that most fairly reflect the cost of services, operational capacity and financial capacity of the entity in a manner that is useful in holding the entity to account, and for decision-making purposes.

- 7.3 The selection of a measurement basis for assets and liabilities contributes to meeting the objectives of financial reporting by providing information that enables users to assess:
- The cost of services provided in the period in historical or current terms;
 - Operational capacity—the capacity of the entity to support the provision of services in future periods through physical and other resources; and
 - Financial capacity—the capacity of the entity to fund its activities.
- 7.4 The selection of a measurement basis also includes an evaluation of the extent to which the information provided achieves the qualitative characteristics while taking into account the constraints on information in financial reports.

Measurement Bases and their Selection

- 7.5 It is not possible to identify a single measurement basis that best meets the measurement objective at a Conceptual Framework level. Therefore, the PBE Conceptual Framework does not propose a single measurement basis (or combination of bases) for all transactions, events and conditions. It provides guidance on the selection of a measurement basis for assets and liabilities in order to meet the measurement objective.
- 7.6 The following measurement bases for assets are identified and discussed in terms of the information they provide about the cost of services delivered by an entity, the operating capacity of an entity, the financial capacity of an entity, and the extent to which they provide information that meets the qualitative characteristics:
- Historical cost;
 - Market value;
 - Replacement cost;
 - Net selling price; and
 - Value in use.

Table 1 summarises these measurement bases in terms of whether they (a) provide entry or exit values; (b) are observable in a market; and (c) whether or not they are entity-specific.¹⁰

¹⁰ In some cases a judgement has been made in classifying a particular measurement basis as observable or unobservable in a market and/or as entity or non-entity specific.

Table 1: Summary of Measurement Bases for Assets

Measurement Basis	Entry or Exit	Observable or Unobservable in a Market	Entity or Non-Entity Specific
Historical cost	Entry	Generally observable	Entity-specific
Market value in open, active and orderly market	Entry and exit	Observable	Non-entity-specific
Market value in inactive market	Exit	Dependent on valuation technique	Dependent on valuation technique
Replacement cost	Entry	Observable	Entity-specific
Net selling price	Exit	Observable	Entity-specific
Value in use	Exit ¹¹	Unobservable	Entity-specific

7.7 The following measurement bases for liabilities are identified and discussed in terms of (a) the information they provide about the cost of services delivered by an entity, the operating capacity of an entity and the financial capacity of an entity; and (b) the extent to which they provide information that meets the qualitative characteristics:

- Historical cost;
- Cost of fulfilment;
- Market value;
- Cost of release; and
- Assumption price.

Table 2 summarises these measurement bases in terms of whether they (a) provide entry or exit values; (b) are observable in a market; and (c) whether or not they are entity-specific.

Table 2: Summary of Measurement Bases for Liabilities

Measurement Basis	Entry or Exit	Observable or Unobservable in a Market	Entity or Non-Entity Specific
Historical cost	Entry	Generally observable	Entity-specific
Cost of fulfilment	Exit	Unobservable	Entity-specific
Market value in open, active and orderly market	Entry and exit	Observable	Non-entity specific
Market value in inactive market	Exit	Dependent on valuation technique	Dependent on valuation technique
Cost of release	Exit	Observable	Entity-specific
Assumption price	Entry	Observable	Entity-specific

¹¹ As pointed out in paragraph 7.66, for non-cash-generating assets the calculation of value in use may require the use of replacement cost as a surrogate.

Entry and Exit Values

- 7.8 Measurement bases may provide either entry or exit values. For assets, entry values reflect the cost of purchase. Historical cost and replacement cost are entry values. Exit values reflect the economic benefits from sale. An exit value also reflects the amount that will be derived from use of the asset. In a diversified economy entry and exit prices differ as entities typically:
- Acquire assets tailored to the entity’s particular operating requirements for which other market participants would be unwilling to pay a similar price; and
 - Incur transaction costs on acquisition.
- 7.9 Measurement bases for liabilities may also be classified in terms of whether they are entry or exit values. Entry values relate to the transaction under which an obligation is received or the amount that an entity would accept to assume a liability. Exit values reflect the amount required to fulfil an obligation or the amount required to release the entity from an obligation.

Observable and Unobservable Measures

- 7.10 Certain measures may be classified according to whether they are observable in an open, active and orderly market.¹² Measures that are observable in a market are likely to be more understandable and verifiable than measures that are not observable. They may also be more faithfully representative of the phenomena they are measuring.

Entity-Specific and Non-Entity Specific Measures

- 7.11 Measures may also be classified according to whether they are “entity-specific” or “non-entity-specific”. Measurement bases that are entity-specific reflect the economic and current policy constraints that affect the possible uses of an asset and the settlement of a liability by an entity. Entity-specific measures may reflect economic opportunities that are not available to other entities and risks that are not experienced by other entities. Non-entity-specific measures reflect general market opportunities and risks. The decision on whether to use an entity-specific or non-entity-specific measure is taken by reference to the measurement objective and the qualitative characteristics.

Level of Aggregation or Disaggregation for Measurement

- 7.12 In order to present assets and liabilities in the financial statements in a way that provides information that best meets the measurement objective and achieves the qualitative characteristics it may be necessary to aggregate or disaggregate them for measurement purposes. In assessing whether such an aggregation or disaggregation is appropriate the costs are compared with the benefits.

Measurement Bases for Assets**Historical Cost**

- 7.13 Historical cost for an asset is:

The consideration given to acquire or develop an asset, which is the cash or cash equivalents or the value of the other consideration given, at the time of its acquisition or development.

- 7.14 Historical cost is an entry, entity-specific value.¹³ Under the historical cost model assets are initially reported at the cost incurred on their acquisition. Subsequent to initial recognition, this cost may be allocated as an expense to reporting periods in the form of depreciation or amortisation for certain assets, as the service potential or ability to generate economic benefits provided by such assets are consumed over their useful lives. Following initial recognition, the measurement of an asset is not changed to reflect changes in prices or increases in the value of the asset.
- 7.15 Under the historical cost model the amount of an asset may be reduced by recognising impairments. Impairment is the extent to which the service potential or ability to generate economic benefits provided by an asset have diminished due to changes in economic or other conditions, as distinct to their

¹² The term “open, active and orderly markets” was developed by Dr. J. Alex Milburn. For example, see *Toward a Measurement Framework for Profit-oriented Entities*, published by the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants in 2012.

¹³ The term “historical cost” may also be referred to as the “cost model” or generically as “cost-based measures.”

consumption. This involves assessments of recoverability. Conversely, the amount of an asset may be increased to reflect the cost of additions and enhancements (excluding price increases for unimproved assets) or other events, such as the accrual of interest on a financial asset.

Costs of Services

7.16 Where historical cost is used, the cost of services reflects the amount of the resources expended to acquire or develop assets consumed in the provision of services. Historical cost generally provides a direct link to the transactions actually undertaken by the entity. Because the costs used are those carried forward from an earlier period without adjustment for price changes, they do not reflect the cost of assets when the assets are consumed. As the cost of services is reported using past prices, historical cost information will not facilitate the assessment of the future cost of providing services if cumulative price changes since acquisition are significant. Where plans or budgets are prepared on the historical cost basis, historical cost information demonstrates the extent to which the plan or budget has been executed.

Operational Capacity

7.17 If an asset has been acquired in an exchange transaction, historical cost provides information on the resources available to provide services in future periods, based on their acquisition cost. At the time an asset is purchased or developed, it can be assumed that the value to the entity of its service potential is at least as great as the cost of purchase.¹⁴ When depreciation or amortisation is recognised it reflects the extent to which the service potential of an asset has been consumed. Historical cost information shows that the resources available for future services are at least as great as the amount at which they are stated. Increases in the value of an asset are not reflected under the historical cost model. If an asset has been acquired in a non-exchange transaction the transaction price will not provide information on operating capacity.

Financial Capacity

7.18 The amount at which assets are stated in financial statements assists in an assessment of financial capacity. Historical cost can provide information on the amount of assets that may be used as effective security for borrowings. An assessment of financial capacity also requires information on the amount that could be received on sale of an asset, and reinvested in assets to provide different services. Historical cost does not provide this information when significantly different from current exit values.

Application of the Qualitative Characteristics

7.19 Paragraphs 7.16–7.18 explain the areas where historical cost provides relevant information in terms of its confirmatory or predictive value. Application of historical cost is often straightforward, because transaction information is usually readily available. As a result amounts derived from the historical cost model are generally representationally faithful in that they represent what they purport to represent—that is, the cost to acquire or develop an asset based on actual transactions. Estimates of depreciation and impairment used in the historical cost model, particularly for non-cash-generating assets, can affect representational faithfulness. Because application of historical cost generally reflects resources consumed by reference to actual transactions, historical cost measures are verifiable, understandable and can be prepared on a timely basis.

7.20 Historical cost information is comparable to the extent that assets have the same or similar acquisition dates. Because historical cost does not reflect the impact of price changes, it is not possible to compare the amounts of assets that were acquired at different times when prices differed in a meaningful way.

7.21 In certain circumstances the application of historical cost necessitates the use of allocations—for example where:

- Several assets are acquired in a single transaction;
- Assets are constructed by the entity itself and overheads and other costs have to be attributed; and
- The use of a flow assumption, such as first-in-first-out, is necessary when many similar assets are held. To the extent such allocations are arbitrary they reduce the extent to which the resulting measurement achieves the qualitative characteristics.

¹⁴ Where this is not the case the initial historical cost measurement will be reduced by the amount of the impairment.

Current Value Measurements

7.22 Current value measurements reflect the economic environment prevailing at the reporting date.

7.23 There are four current value measurement bases for assets:

- Market value;
- Replacement cost;
- Net selling price; and
- Value in use.

Market Value

7.24 Market value for assets is:

The amount for which an asset could be exchanged between knowledgeable, willing parties in an arm's length transaction.

7.25 At acquisition market value and historical cost will be the same, if transaction costs are ignored and the transaction is an exchange transaction. The extent to which market value meets the objectives of financial reporting and the information needs of users partially depends on the quality of the market evidence. Market evidence, in turn, depends upon the characteristics of the market in which the asset is traded. Market value is particularly appropriate where it is judged that the difference between entry and exit values is unlikely to be significant or the asset is being held with a view to sale.

7.26 In principle, market values provide useful information because they fairly reflect the value of the asset to the entity. In an open, active and orderly market (see paragraph 7.28), the asset cannot be worth less than market value as the entity can obtain that amount by selling the asset, and cannot be worth more than market value, as the entity can obtain equivalent service potential or the ability to generate economic benefits by purchasing the same asset.

7.27 The usefulness of market values is more questionable when the assumption that markets are open, active and orderly does not hold. In such circumstances it cannot be assumed that the asset may be sold for the same price as that at which it can be acquired and it is necessary to determine whether an exit price or an entry price is the more useful measure. Exit-based market values are useful for assets that are held for trading, such as certain financial instruments, but may not be useful for specialised operational assets. Furthermore, while the purchase of an asset provides evidence that the value of the asset to the entity is at least as great as its purchase price, operational factors may mean that the value to the entity may be greater. Hence market values may not reflect the value to the entity of the asset, represented by its operational capacity.

Market Values in Open, Active and Orderly Markets

7.28 Open, active and orderly markets have the following characteristics:

- There are no barriers that prevent the entity from transacting in the market;
- They are active so there is sufficient frequency and volume of transactions to provide price information; and
- They are orderly, with many well-informed buyers and sellers acting without compulsion, so there is assurance of “fairness” in determining current prices—including that prices do not represent distress sales.

An orderly market is one that is run in a reliable, secure, accurate and efficient manner. Such markets deal in assets that are identical and therefore mutually interchangeable, such as commodities, currencies and securities where prices are publicly available. In practice few, if any, markets fully exhibit all of these characteristics, but some may approach an orderly market as described.

Market Values where it cannot be assumed that Markets are Open, Active and Orderly

7.29 Markets for assets that are unique and rarely traded are not open, active and orderly: any purchases and sales are individually negotiated, and there may be a large range of prices at which a transaction might be agreed. Therefore, participants will incur significant costs to purchase or to sell an asset. In such

circumstances it is necessary to use an estimation technique to estimate the price at which an orderly transaction to sell the asset would take place between market participants at the measurement date under current market conditions.

Costs of Services

- 7.30 Revenue from services reported in financial statements is measured on the basis of prices current in the reporting period. If assets used to provide services are measured at market value, the allocation of the cost of assets to reflect their consumption in the current reporting period is based on the current market value of the asset.
- 7.31 The use of market values permits a return on assets to be determined. However, public benefit entities do not generally carry out activities with the primary objective of generating profits, and services are often provided in non-exchange transactions or on subsidised terms. Consequently there may be limited relevance in a reported return derived from exit-based market prices.
- 7.32 As noted above, revenue from providing services reported in financial statements is measured on the basis of prices current in the reporting period. Thus the surplus or deficit for a period includes price movements that take place over the period during which assets and liabilities are held, and no profit or loss is reported on the sale of an asset. Where the asset is traded on an open, active and orderly market, the existence of the market provides assurance that the entity would be able to realise the market value (and no more) at the reporting date: it is therefore unnecessary to postpone recognition of changes in value until a surplus is realised on sale. However, where assets used to provide services are not traded on open, active and orderly markets, or a close approximation to such markets, the relevance of revenue and expense related to changes in market value is more questionable.

Operational Capacity

- 7.33 Information on the market value of assets held to provide services in future periods is useful if it reflects the value that the entity is capable of deriving from assets by using them in providing or delivering services. However, if an exit-based market value is significantly lower than historical cost, market value is likely to be less relevant than the historical cost of such assets in providing information on operational capacity—such a market value is also likely to be less relevant than entry value-based current measures.

Financial Capacity

- 7.34 An assessment of financial capacity requires information on the amount that would be received on sale of an asset. This information is provided by market value.

Application of the Qualitative Characteristics

- 7.35 Values determined in open, active and orderly markets can be readily used for financial reporting purposes. The information will meet the qualitative characteristics—that is it will be relevant, representationally faithful, understandable, comparable, and verifiable. Under such market conditions entry and exit values can be assumed to be the same or very similar. Because it can be prepared quickly, such information is also likely to be timely.
- 7.36 The extent to which market values meet the qualitative characteristics will decrease as the quality of market evidence diminishes and the determination of such values relies on estimation techniques. As indicated above, exit-based market values are only likely to be relevant to assessments of financial capacity and not to assessments of the cost of services and operational capacity.

Replacement Cost

- 7.37 Replacement cost¹⁵ is:

The most economic cost required for the entity to replace the service potential of an asset (including the amount that the entity will receive from its disposal at the end of its useful life) at the reporting date.

¹⁵ The full term is “optimised depreciated replacement cost” to denote that it refers to the replacement of the service potential embodied in an asset and not the asset itself (see paragraph 7.41). The term “replacement cost” is used for economy of expression in the PBE Conceptual Framework.

- 7.38 Replacement cost differs from market value because:
- In a public benefit entity context it is explicitly an entry value that reflects the cost of replacing the service potential of an asset;
 - It includes all the costs that would necessarily be incurred in the replacement of the service potential of an asset; and
 - It is entity-specific and therefore reflects the economic position of the entity, rather than the position prevailing in a hypothetical market. For example, the replacement cost of a vehicle is less for an entity that usually acquires a large number of vehicles in a single transaction and is regularly able to negotiate discounts than for an entity that purchases vehicles individually.
- 7.39 Because entities usually acquire their assets by the most economic means available, replacement cost reflects the procurement or construction process that an entity generally follows. Replacement cost reflects the replacement of service potential in the normal course of operations, and not the costs that might be incurred if an urgent necessity arose as a result of some unforeseeable event, such as a fire.
- 7.40 Replacement cost is the cost of replacing an asset's service potential. Replacement cost adopts an optimised approach and differs from reproduction cost, which is the cost of acquiring an identical asset.¹⁶ Although in many cases the most economic replacement of the service potential will be by purchasing an asset that is similar to that which is controlled, replacement cost is based on an alternative asset if that alternative would provide the same service potential more cheaply. For financial reporting purposes, it is therefore necessary to reflect the difference in service potential between the existing and replacement asset.
- 7.41 The appropriate service potential is that which the entity is capable of using or expects to use, having regard to the need to hold sufficient service capacity to deal with contingencies. Therefore, the replacement cost of an asset reflects reductions in required service capacity. For example, if an entity owns a school that accommodates 500 pupils but, because of demographic changes since its construction, a school for 100 pupils would be adequate for current and reasonably foreseeable requirements, the replacement cost of the asset is that of a school for 100 pupils.
- 7.42 In some cases the value that will be derived from an asset will be greater than its replacement cost. However, it would not be appropriate to measure the asset at that value, as it includes benefits from future activities, rather than service potential at the reporting date. Replacement cost represents the highest potential value of an asset, as, by definition, the entity is able to secure equivalent service potential by incurring replacement cost.

Costs of Services

- 7.43 Replacement cost provides a relevant measure of the cost of the provision of services. The cost of consuming an asset is equivalent to the amount of the sacrifice of service potential incurred by that use. That amount is its replacement cost—the entity is able to restore its position to that prevailing immediately before the consumption of the asset by an outlay equal to replacement cost.
- 7.44 The costs of services are reported in current terms when based on replacement cost. Thus the amount of assets consumed is stated at the value of the assets at the time they are consumed—and not, as with historical cost, at the time they were acquired. This provides a valid basis for a comparison between the cost of services and the revenue received in the period—which are generally transactions of the current period and measured in current prices— and for assessing whether resources have been used economically and efficiently. It also provides a useful basis for comparison with other entities that report on the same basis, as asset values will not be affected by different acquisition dates, and for assessing the cost of providing services in the future and future resource needs, as future costs are more likely to resemble current costs than those incurred in the past, when prices were different (see also paragraph 7.48).

Operational Capacity

- 7.45 In principle, replacement cost provides a useful measure of the resources available to provide services in future periods, as it is focused on the current value of assets and their service potential to the entity.

¹⁶ There may be cases where replacement cost equates to reproduction cost. This is where the most economic way of replacing service potential is to reproduce the asset.

Financial Capacity

- 7.46 Replacement cost does not provide information on the amounts that would be received on the sale of assets. It therefore does not facilitate an assessment of financial capacity.

Application of the Qualitative Characteristics

- 7.47 As noted above, replacement cost is relevant to assessments of the cost of services and operational capacity. It is not relevant to assessments of financial capacity. In some circumstances calculation of replacement cost is complex, and subjective judgements are required. These factors may reduce the representational faithfulness of replacement cost. In these circumstances the timeliness, comparability and verifiability of information prepared on a replacement cost basis may be affected, and replacement cost may be more costly than some alternatives. Replacement cost information may also not be straightforward to understand, particularly when that information reflects a reduction in required service capacity (see paragraph 7.41).
- 7.48 Replacement cost information is comparable within an entity as assets that provide equivalent service potential are stated at similar amounts, regardless of when those assets were acquired. In principle different entities may report similar assets at different amounts, because replacement cost is an entity-specific measure that reflects the opportunities for replacement that are available to the entity. The opportunities for replacement may be the same or similar for different public benefit entities. Where they are different, the economic advantage of an entity that is able to acquire assets more cheaply is reported in financial statements through lower asset values and a lower cost of services in order to be representationally faithful.

Net Selling Price

- 7.49 Net selling price is:
The amount that the entity can obtain from sale of the asset, after deducting the costs of sale.
- 7.50 Net selling price differs from market value in that it does not require an open, active and orderly market or the estimation of a price in such a market and that it includes the entity's costs of sale. Net selling price therefore reflects constraints on sale. It is entity-specific.
- 7.51 The potential usefulness of measuring assets at net selling price is that an asset cannot be worth less to the entity than the amount it could obtain on sale of the asset. However, it is not appropriate as a measurement basis if the entity is able to use its resources more efficiently by employing the asset in another way, for example by using it in the delivery of services.
- 7.52 Net selling price is therefore useful where the most resource-efficient course available to the entity is to sell the asset. This is the case where the asset cannot provide service potential or the ability to generate economic benefits at least as valuable as net selling price. Net selling price may provide useful information where an entity is contractually obligated to sell an asset at below market value. There may be cases where net selling price can indicate a development opportunity.

Costs of Services

- 7.53 It is not appropriate to quantify the cost of the provision of services at net selling prices. Such an approach would involve the use of an exit value as the basis of the expense reported.

Operational Capacity

- 7.54 Stating assets held for use in the provision of services at net selling price does not provide information useful to an assessment of operating capacity. Net selling price shows the amount that could be derived from an asset's sale, rather than the value of the service potential that could be derived from that asset.

Financial Capacity

- 7.55 As noted above, an assessment of financial capacity requires information on the amount that would be received on sale of an asset. Such information is provided by the use of net selling price. However, such a measure is not relevant for assets that may yield more valuable service potential by continuing to use them to deliver services.

Application of the Qualitative Characteristics

- 7.56 As indicated in paragraph 7.52 net selling price provides relevant information only where the most resource-efficient course available to the entity is to sell the asset. Assessments of net selling price may be made by reference to active markets where they exist. For major assets it may be possible and cost-effective to obtain professional appraisals. Net selling price will generally provide understandable information.
- 7.57 In most cases where net selling price is relevant, it will achieve the qualitative characteristics of faithful representation, verifiability, and timeliness.

Value in Use

- 7.58 Value in use is:

The present value to the entity of the asset's remaining service potential or ability to generate economic benefits if it continues to be used, and of the net amount that the entity will receive from its disposal at the end of its useful life.

Suitability of Value in Use

- 7.59 Value in use is an entity-specific value that reflects the amount that can be derived from an asset through its operation and its disposal at the end of its useful life. As noted in paragraph 7.42 above, the value that will be derived from an asset is often greater than its replacement cost—it is also usually greater than its historical cost. Where this is the case, reporting an asset at its value in use is of limited usefulness, as by definition, the entity is able to secure equivalent service potential at replacement cost.
- 7.60 Value in use is also not an appropriate measurement basis when net selling price is greater than value in use, as in this case the most resource-efficient use of the asset is to sell it, rather than continue to use it.
- 7.61 Therefore, value in use is appropriate where it is less than replacement cost and greater than net selling price. This occurs where an asset is not worth replacing, but the value of its service potential or ability to generate economic benefits is greater than its net selling price. In such circumstances value in use represents the value of the asset to the entity.
- 7.62 Value in use is an appropriate measurement basis for the assessment of certain impairments, because it is used in the determination of the recoverable amount for an asset or group of assets.

Costs of Services, Operational Capacity, Financial Capacity

- 7.63 Because of its potential complexity¹⁷, its limited applicability and the fact that its operationalisation in a public benefit entity context for non-cash-generating assets involves the use of replacement cost as a surrogate, value in use is generally inappropriate for determining the cost of services. Its usefulness to assessments of operational capacity is limited, and is only likely to be significant in the atypical circumstances where entities have a large number of assets that are not worth replacing, but their value in use is greater than their net selling price. This may be the case if, for example, an entity will discontinue provision of a service in the future, but the proceeds of immediate sale are less than the service potential embodied in the assets. Value in use does involve an estimate of the net amount that an entity will receive from disposal of the asset. However, its limited applicability reduces its relevance for assessments of financial capacity.

Application of the Qualitative Characteristics

- 7.64 While value in use may be used in assessments of certain impairments its relevance for financial reporting purposes is limited to the circumstances outlined in paragraph 7.61.
- 7.65 The extent to which value in use meets the other qualitative characteristics depends on how it is determined. In some cases, an asset's value in use can be quantified by calculating the value that the entity will derive from the asset assuming its continued use. This may be based on the future cash inflows related to the asset, or on cost savings that will accrue to the entity through its control of the asset. The calculation of value in use takes into account the time value of money and, in principle, the risk of variations in the amount and timing of cash flows.

¹⁷ See below paragraph 7.66

- 7.66 The calculation of value in use can be complex. Assets that are employed in cash-generating activities often provide cash flows jointly with other assets. In such cases value in use can be estimated only by calculating the present value of the cash flows of a group of assets and then making an allocation to individual assets.
- 7.67 Most assets held by public benefit entities are held with the primary objective of contributing to the provision of services, rather than to the generation of a commercial return: such assets are referred to as “non-cash-generating assets.” Because value in use is usually derived from expected cash flows, its operationalisation in such a context can be difficult. It may be inappropriate to calculate value in use on the basis of expected cash flows, because such a measure would not be faithfully representative of the value in use of such an asset to the entity. Therefore, it would be necessary to use replacement cost as a surrogate for financial reporting purposes.
- 7.68 The method of determining value in use reduces its representational faithfulness in many cases. It also affects the timeliness, comparability, understandability and verifiability of information prepared on a value in use basis.

Measurement Bases for Liabilities

- 7.69 This section discusses the measurement bases for liabilities. This section does not repeat all the discussion in the section on assets. It considers the following measurement bases:
- Historical Cost;
 - Cost of Fulfilment;
 - Market Value;
 - Cost of Release; and
 - Assumption Price.

Historical Cost

- 7.70 Historical cost for a liability is:

The consideration received to assume an obligation, which is the cash or cash equivalents, or the value of the other consideration received at the time the liability is incurred.

- 7.71 Under the historical cost model initial measures may be adjusted to reflect factors such as the accrual of interest, the accretion of discount or amortisation of a premium.
- 7.72 Where the time value of a liability is material—for example, where the length of time before settlement falls due is significant—the amount of the future payment is discounted so that, at the time a liability is first recognised, it represents the value of the amount received. The difference between the amount of the future payment and the present value of the liability is amortised over the life of the liability, so that the liability is stated at the amount of the required payment when it falls due.
- 7.73 The advantages and drawbacks of using the historical cost basis for liabilities are similar to those that apply in relation to assets. Historical cost is appropriate where liabilities are likely to be settled at stated terms. However, historical cost cannot be applied for liabilities that do not arise from a transaction, such as a liability to pay damages for a tort or civil damages. It is also unlikely to provide relevant information where the liability has been incurred in a non-exchange transaction, because it does not provide a faithful representation of the claims against the resources of the entity. It is also difficult to apply historical cost to liabilities that may vary in amount, such as those related to defined benefit pension liabilities.

Cost of Fulfilment

- 7.74 Cost of fulfilment is:

The costs that the entity will incur in fulfilling the obligations represented by the liability, assuming that it does so in the least costly manner.

- 7.75 Where the cost of fulfilment depends on uncertain future events, all possible outcomes are taken into account in the estimated cost of fulfilment, which aims to reflect all those possible outcomes in an unbiased manner.

- 7.76 Where fulfilment requires work to be done—for example, where the liability is to rectify environmental damage—the relevant costs are those that the entity will incur. This may be the cost to the entity of doing the remedial work itself, or of contracting with an external party to carry out the work. However, the costs of contracting with an external party are only relevant where employing a contractor is the least costly means of fulfilling the obligation.
- 7.77 Where fulfilment will be made by the entity itself, the fulfilment cost does not include any surplus, because any such surplus does not represent a use of the entity’s resources. Where fulfilment amount is based on the cost of employing a contractor, the amount will implicitly include the profit required by the contractor, as the total amount charged by the contractor will be a claim on the entity’s resources—this is consistent with the approach for assets, where replacement cost would include the profit required by a supplier, but no profit would be included in the replacement cost for assets that the entity would replace through self-construction.
- 7.78 Where fulfilment will not take place for an extended period, the cash flows need to be discounted to reflect the value of the liability at the reporting date.
- 7.79 Cost of fulfilment is generally relevant for measuring liabilities except in the following circumstances:
- Where the entity can obtain release from an obligation at a lower amount than cost of fulfilment, then cost of release is a more relevant measure of the current burden of a liability, just as, for an asset, net selling price is more relevant when it is higher than value in use; and
 - In the case of liabilities assumed for a consideration, assumption price (see paragraphs 7.87–7.91) is more relevant when assumption price is higher than both cost of fulfilment and cost of release.

Market Value

- 7.80 Market value for liabilities is:

The amount for which a liability could be settled between knowledgeable, willing parties in an arm’s length transaction.

- 7.81 The advantages and disadvantages of market value for liabilities are the same as those for assets. Such a measurement basis may be appropriate, for example, where the liability is attributable to changes in a specified rate, price or index quoted in an open, active and orderly market. However, in cases where the ability to transfer a liability is restricted and the terms on which such a transfer might be made are unclear the case for market values, even if they exist, is significantly weaker. This is particularly the case for liabilities arising from obligations in non-exchange transactions, because it is unlikely that there will be an open, active and orderly market for such liabilities.

Cost of Release

- 7.82 “Cost of release” is the term used in the context of liabilities to refer to the same concept as “net selling price” in the context of assets. Cost of release refers to the amount of an immediate exit from the obligation. Cost of release is the amount that either the creditor will accept in settlement of its claim, or a third party would charge to accept the transfer of the liability from the obligor. Where there is more than one way of securing release from the liability, the cost of release is that of the lowest amount—this is consistent with the approach for assets, where net selling price would not reflect the amount that would be received on sale to a scrap dealer, if a higher price could be obtained from sale to a purchaser who would use the asset.
- 7.83 For some liabilities, transfer of a liability is not practically possible and cost of release will therefore be the amount that the creditor will accept in settlement of its claim. This amount will be known if it is specified in the agreement with the creditor—for example, where a contract includes a specific cancellation clause.
- 7.84 In some cases there may be evidence of the price at which a liability may be transferred—for example, in the case of some pension liabilities. Transferring a liability may be distinguished from entering into an agreement with another party that will fulfil the entity’s obligation or bear all the costs stemming from a liability. For a liability to be transferred it is necessary that all of the creditor’s rights against the entity are extinguished. If this is not the effect of an arrangement, the liability remains a liability of the entity.

- 7.85 In assessing whether cost of release is appropriate for measuring liabilities it is necessary to consider whether release in the envisaged manner is an option that is open to the entity in practice, having regard to any consequences of obtaining release, such as damage to the entity's reputation.
- 7.86 Just as net selling price is relevant only when the most resource-efficient course available to the entity is to sell the asset, so cost of release is relevant only when the most resource-efficient course is to seek immediate release from an obligation. In particular, where cost of fulfilment is lower than cost of release, cost of fulfilment provides more relevant information than cost of release, even if it is feasible to negotiate a release from the obligation in accordance with the methods for transferring a liability in paragraph 7.84.

Assumption Price

- 7.87 "Assumption price" is the term used in the context of liabilities to refer to the same concept as replacement cost for assets. Just as replacement cost represents the amount that an entity would rationally pay to acquire an asset, so assumption price is the amount which the entity would rationally be willing to accept in exchange for assuming an existing liability. Exchange transactions carried out on arms-length terms will provide evidence of assumption price—this is not the case for non-exchange transactions.
- 7.88 In the context of an activity that is carried out with a view to profit, an entity will assume a liability only if the amount it is paid to assume the liability is greater than the cost of fulfilment or release— i.e., the settlement amount. Once that assumption price has been received by the entity, the entity has an obligation to its creditor.
- 7.89 At the time a liability is first incurred in an exchange transaction, assumption price represents the amount that was accepted by the entity for assuming the liability—it is therefore usually reasonable to assume that assumption price is the price that the entity would rationally accept for assuming a similar liability. It would charge a higher amount, if competitive pressures allowed it to do so, but it might be unwilling to accept a lower price. Just as replacement cost is a current value so, conceptually, is assumption price. There are, however, practical problems in reflecting changes in prices in obligations that are stated at assumption price.
- 7.90 A consequence of stating performance obligations at the assumption price is that no surplus is reported at the time the obligation is taken on. A surplus or deficit is reported in the financial statements in the period when fulfilment (or release) takes place, as it is the difference between the revenue arising from satisfaction of the liability and the cost of settlement.
- 7.91 An entity may have a potential obligation that is larger than assumption price. If the entity has to seek release from a contract, the other party to the contract may be able to claim recompense for losses that it will sustain, as well as the return of any amounts paid. However, provided that the entity can settle the obligation by fulfilment, it can avoid such additional obligations and it is representationally faithful to report the obligation at no more than assumption price—this is analogous to the position where an asset will yield greater benefits than replacement cost. Under such circumstances, as explained in paragraph 7.42, replacement cost rather than value in use is the most relevant measurement basis.

CHAPTER 8: PRESENTATION IN GENERAL PURPOSE FINANCIAL REPORTS

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Introduction

- 8.1 This Chapter sets out the concepts applicable to the presentation of information in GPFRs.
- 8.2 Presentation is linked to Chapters 1 to 4—the objectives of financial reporting, users’ needs, the qualitative characteristics, constraints on information included in GPFRs and the reporting entity all influence presentation decisions. For information reported in the financial statements, presentation is also linked to the definitions of the elements, recognition criteria and measurement bases identified in Chapters 5 to 7—for example:
- The definitions of the elements affect the items that can be presented in the financial statements;
 - Application of the recognition criteria affects the location of information; and
 - The selection of measurement bases impacts the information presented on measurement methodologies.

Language in which Financial Statement and Other GPFRs are Issued

- 8.3 The language (or languages) in which financial statements and other GPFRs are issued supports achievement of the objectives of financial reporting and the qualitative characteristics. All translated versions need to be faithful to the original language version. The translated version is made available to meet the needs of users with reference to:
- Legal requirements in the entity’s jurisdiction; and
 - Translation costs and benefits.

Presentation

- 8.4 Presentation is the selection, location and organisation of information that is reported in the GPFRs.
- 8.5 Presentation aims to provide information that contributes towards the objectives of financial reporting and achieves the qualitative characteristics while taking into account the constraints on information included in GPFRs. Decisions on selection, location and organisation of information are made in response to the needs of users for information about economic or other phenomena.
- 8.6 Chapter 1 explains that GPFRs are likely to comprise multiple reports, each responding more directly to certain aspects of the objectives of financial reporting and matters included within the scope of financial reporting. In addition to the financial statements, GPFRs provide information relevant to, for example, assessments of an entity’s service performance and the sustainability of its finances. The objectives of financial reporting, applied to the area covered by a particular report, guide presentation decisions for that report.
- 8.7 Presentation decisions may:
- Result in the development of a new GPCR, the movement of information between reports, or the amalgamation of existing reports; or
 - Be detailed decisions on information selection, location and organisation within a GPCR.

Presentation Decisions are Interlinked

- 8.8 Decisions on information selection, location and organisation are interlinked and, in practice, are likely to be considered together. The amount or type of information selected could have implications on whether it is included in a separate report or organised into tables or separate schedules. The following three sections separately focus on each presentation decision.

Information Selection

- 8.9 Decisions on information selection address what information is reported:
- In the financial statements; and
 - In GPFRs outside the financial statements (other GPFRs).

- 8.10 As Chapter 2 *Objectives and Users of General Purpose Financial Reporting* explains, the objectives of financial reporting are to provide information about the entity that is useful to users of GPFs for accountability and decision-making purposes. Chapter 2 describes the types of information that users need to meet the objectives of financial reporting. That description guides decisions on whether particular types of reports are needed. This Chapter focuses on the selection of information to be presented in GPFs, including financial statements and other reports.

Information Selection—Nature of Information

Nature of Information in Financial Statements

- 8.11 Users' information needs identified in Chapter 2 underpin information selection for the financial statements. Those needs include information about the financial position, financial performance and cash flows of an entity in order to:
- Enable users to identify the resources of the entity and claims on those resources at the reporting date;
 - Inform assessments of matters such as whether the entity has acquired resources economically, and used them efficiently and effectively to achieve its service performance objectives; and
 - Inform assessments of financial performance and the entity's liquidity and solvency.
- 8.12 The financial statements may also provide information that assists users in assessing the extent to which:
- An entity has met its financial objectives;
 - Revenues, expenses, cash flows and financial results of the entity comply with public plans or budgets; and
 - A public sector entity or, where relevant, another entity has adhered to relevant legislation or other authority governing the raising and use of public monies.
- 8.13 The financial statements do not report comprehensively on an entity's service performance. However information in the financial statements may provide information relevant to the financial aspects of service performance such as information about:
- Revenue, expenses and cash flows related to services; and
 - The assets and liabilities that inform users' evaluations of, for example, an entity's operational capacity or financial risks that could impact on service provision.
- 8.14 Other reports in GPFs present information additional to the financial statements. Such information could, for example, include:
- Information on the sustainability of an entity's public finances, where relevant;
 - Financial statement discussion and analysis; or
 - Service performance information.

Information Selected for Display or Disclosure

- 8.15 Information is selected for display or disclosure in GPFs. Information selected for display communicates key messages in a GPF, while information selected for disclosure makes displayed information more useful by providing detail that will help users to understand the displayed information. Disclosure is not a substitute for display.
- 8.16 Repetition of information in a GPF needs to generally be avoided. However, the same information may be both displayed and disclosed. For example, a total displayed on the face of the financial statements may be repeated in the notes, where the notes provide a disaggregation of the displayed total. Similarly the same information may be presented in different GPFs in order to address their different aims.

Information Selected for Display

- 8.17 Every GPF contains key messages that are communicated, so every GPF contains displayed information. Displayed information is kept to a concise, understandable level, so that users can focus on the key messages presented and not be distracted by detail that could otherwise obscure those messages.

Displayed information is presented prominently, using appropriate presentation techniques such as clear labelling, borders, tables and graphs.

- 8.18 The items displayed on the face of the financial statements provide information about such matters as the reporting entity's financial position, financial performance and cash flows.
- 8.19 Assessment of whether an item satisfies the recognition criteria is one of the key mechanisms in determining whether information is displayed on the face of the statement of financial position or statement of financial performance and/or disclosed either in the notes or elsewhere in the GPFs. In other cases, for example a statement of cash flows, displayed information will also support achievement of the objectives of financial reporting.
- 8.20 Developing requirements for the display of line items and totals involves balancing the standardisation of displayed information, which facilitates understandability, with information that is tailored for entity-specific factors. The aim of both standardised display requirements and entity-specific information is to ensure that information necessary to meet the objectives of financial reporting is available for all entities, while allowing information to be displayed in a manner that reflects the nature and operations of specific entities.

Information Selected for Disclosure

- 8.21 Disclosed information is likely to include:
- The basis for the displayed information, such as applicable policies or methodologies;
 - Disaggregations of displayed information; and
 - Items that share some but not all of the aspects of displayed information—for example disclosures on items that meet some, but not all, of the characteristics of the definition of an element¹⁸ or disclosures on items that meet the definition of an element, but not the recognition criterion.
- 8.22 The level of detail provided by disclosed information contributes to achievement of the objectives of financial reporting, without being excessive. Disclosed information, like displayed information, is necessary for achievement of the objectives of financial reporting.
- 8.23 Information disclosed in the notes to the financial statements:
- Is necessary to a user's understanding of the financial statements;
 - Provides information that presents the financial statements in the context of the entity and its operating environment; and
 - Generally will have a clear and demonstrable relationship to information displayed on the face of the financial statement(s) to which it pertains.
- 8.24 Information disclosed in the notes may also include:
- Entity-related factors that could influence judgements about reported information (for example, information about related parties and controlled entities or interests in other entities);
 - The basis for what is displayed (for example, information on accounting policies and measurement, including measurement methods and measurement uncertainties where applicable);
 - Disaggregations of amounts displayed on the face of the statements (for example, a break-down of property, plant and equipment into different classes);
 - Items that do not meet the definition of an element or the recognition criteria, but are important to an understanding of the entity's finances and ability to deliver services—for example, information about events and conditions, that might affect future cash flows or service potential, including their natures, possible effects on cash flows or service potential, probabilities of occurrence, and sensitivities to changes in conditions; and
 - Information that may explain underlying trends affecting displayed totals.

¹⁸ Chapter 5 *Elements in General Purpose Financial Reports*, explains that other resources and other obligations that do not meet the definition of elements may be recognised in order to contribute to the objectives of financial reporting.

Principles Applicable to Information Selection

- 8.25 Decisions about what information needs to be displayed and disclosed involve consideration of:
- The objectives of financial reporting;
 - The qualitative characteristics and constraints on information included in GPFRs; and
 - The relevant economic or other phenomena about which information may be necessary.
- 8.26 Information selection results in information that contributes to meeting the objectives of financial reporting, as applied to the area covered by a particular report, and provides the appropriate level of detail. Decisions on information selection involve information prioritisation and summarisation. Information selection avoids information overload that reduces understandability. Too much information may make it difficult for users to understand the key messages, and, consequently undermines achievement of the objectives of financial reporting.
- 8.27 Preparers, applying pronouncements and their professional judgement, are responsible for ensuring that information that meets the objectives of financial reporting and achieves the qualitative characteristics is provided in the GPFRs that they prepare.
- 8.28 Decisions on information selection require continuing and critical review. Information identified for possible selection is reviewed as it is developed and considered for presentation, with particular reference to its relevance, materiality and cost-benefit, although all the qualitative characteristics and constraints are applied to decisions on information selection. Past decisions may require reconsideration because new information may make existing information requirements redundant with the result that those items no longer achieve the qualitative characteristics and/or the constraints.
- 8.29 All material transactions, events, and other items reported are presented in a manner that conveys their substance rather than their legal or other form so that the qualitative characteristics of relevance and representational faithfulness are achieved.
- 8.30 The benefits to users of receiving information need to justify the costs to entities of collecting and presenting that information. In making this assessment it is important to consider how individual items impact on the overall view presented and the nature of the information presented. Items that may appear to have little benefit when viewed in isolation could have much greater benefit in contributing to the complete set of information presented.
- 8.31 Information needs to be presented on a sufficiently timely basis to enable users to hold management or the governing body accountable and to inform users' decisions.
- 8.32 GPFRs may include additional information derived from sources other than the financial information system. The qualitative characteristics apply to such information. The date of delivery of any such additional information needs to be as close as possible to the financial statements' reporting date, so that reported information will be timely.

Principles for Selection of Information for Display and Disclosure

- 8.33 Decisions about display or disclosure apply to both the financial statements and other GPFRs. The objectives of financial reporting are applied to the area covered by a particular report to guide the identification of information for display or disclosure. The identification of information for display and disclosure in a particular GPFR may involve the development of:
- Classification principles;
 - A list of broad types of information that are displayed and a similar list of broad types of information that are disclosed; and/or
 - Lists of specific information that preparers must display or disclose.
- 8.34 Decisions about selection of information to be displayed and disclosed are made:
- With reference to each other rather than in isolation; and
 - To effectively communicate an integrated set of information.

- 8.35 Selection decisions with respect to information in other GPFRs are made after carefully considering the relationship of the other GPFRs to the financial statements.

Information Location

- 8.36 Decisions on information location are made about which:
- Report information is located within; and
 - Component of a report information is located.
- 8.37 The location of information has an impact on information's contribution to achievement of the objectives of financial reporting and the qualitative characteristics. Location may affect the way that users interpret information and the comparability of information. Location may be used to:
- Convey the relative importance of information and its connections with other items of information;
 - Convey the nature of information;
 - Link different items of information that combine to meet a particular user need; and
 - Distinguish between information selected for display and information selected for disclosure.

Principles for Allocation of Information between Different Reports

- 8.38 Factors relevant to decisions about allocating information between the financial statements and another GPFR include:
- *Nature*: Whether the nature of the information, for example historical versus prospective, supports including the information either in the same or a different GPFR, because of considerations related to, for example, comparability and/or understandability;
 - *Jurisdiction-Specific*: Whether jurisdiction-specific factors, such as legal provisions, specify requirements on information location; and
 - *Linkage*: Whether or not the additional information envisaged needs to link very closely to information already included in an existing report. The linkages between all information need to be assessed, not only linkages between new and existing information.
- 8.39 The factors above, which are expressed from the perspective of adding information to an existing set of information, also apply to considerations of whether the grouping of existing information could be improved, which is discussed in the section on information organisation.
- 8.40 A separate GPFR may be necessary when:
- Additional user information needs, not satisfied by an existing report, are identified; and
 - A separate GPFR to meet those needs is more likely to achieve the objectives of financial reporting and the qualitative characteristics than including information in an existing report.

Principles for Location of Information within a Report

- 8.41 Paragraph 8.17 of this Chapter states that displayed information is presented prominently, using appropriate presentation techniques—location is one way to achieve this. Information location within a report ensures that displayed information is given appropriate prominence and is not obscured by more detailed and extensive disclosed information.
- 8.42 The location of information in the financial statements contributes to communicating a comprehensive financial picture of an entity.
- 8.43 For the financial statements, displayed information is shown on the face of the appropriate statement, while disclosures are in the notes. Distinguishing displayed information and disclosed information through location ensures that those items that directly relate to communicating matters, such as an entity's financial position, financial performance and cash flows, can be highlighted, with further more detailed information provided through disclosure in the notes.

- 8.44 For other GPFRs, displayed information may either be located separately from disclosed information or located in the same area, but distinguished from disclosed information and given prominence through the use of another presentation technique.

Information Organisation

- 8.45 Information organisation addresses the arrangement, grouping and ordering of information, which includes decisions on:
- How information is arranged within a GPFR; and
 - The overall structure of a GPFR.
- 8.46 Information organisation involves a range of decisions including decisions on the use of cross-referencing, tables, graphs, headings, numbering, and the arrangement of items within a particular component of a report, including decisions on item order. How information is organised can affect its interpretation by users.

Nature of Information Relevant to Organisation

- 8.47 Decisions about the organisation of information take into account:
- Important relationships between information; and
 - Whether information is for display or disclosure.

Types of Relationships

- 8.48 Important relationships include, but are not restricted to:
- Enhancement;
 - Similarity; and
 - Shared purpose.
- 8.49 *Enhancement*: Information in one place in a GPFR may be enhanced through information provided elsewhere. For example, budget, prospective and service performance information enhances information in the financial statements. Tables and graphs may be used to enhance the understanding of narrative information. Links to information reported outside the GPFRs may enhance the understandability of information reported in GPFRs.
- 8.50 *Similarity*: A relationship of similarity exists where information reported in one place is based on information reported elsewhere in the GPFRs, and the information either has not been adjusted or has had relatively minor adjustments. For example, if service performance information includes the cost of services, or the value of assets used in different services, then it may be helpful to show how those totals relate to expense and assets reported in the financial statements. Another example is the relationship between the total expense reported against budget and total expense reported in the statement of financial performance. A reconciliation between the two different amounts can enhance users' understanding of an entity's finances.
- 8.51 *Shared purpose*: A relationship of shared purpose exists where information reported in different places contributes to the same purpose. An example is where different statements and disclosures provide information needed for assessments of accountability for services delivered. Information about (a) the actual and budgeted cost of different services, (b) financial and non-financial resources used in the provision of different services, and (c) future provision of different services may be included in different places. To make the relationship between the information in different places clear, it may be appropriate to organise the information by using techniques such as common headings and referencing.
- 8.52 Relationships may exist between information in different:
- GPFRs;
 - Components within a GPFR; and
 - Parts of a single component.

Grouping of Information

8.53 The three factors noted in the section on information selection as being applicable to decisions on information location—linkage, nature of information and jurisdiction-specific considerations—also apply to considerations of whether the grouping of existing information could be improved. Decisions on effective grouping of information consider linkages between information sets, the nature of the different information sets, and, to the extent appropriate, jurisdiction-specific factors.

Principles Applicable to Information Organisation

8.54 Information organisation:

- Supports achievement of the objectives of financial reporting; and
- Helps reported information meet the qualitative characteristics.

8.55 Information organisation:

- Helps to ensure that key messages are understandable;
- Clearly identifies important relationships;
- Gives appropriate prominence to information that conveys key messages; and
- Facilitates comparisons.

8.56 Related information is linked through the use of consistent headings, presentation order, and/or other methods appropriate to the relationship and type of information. Where links are to information reported outside the GPFRs it is important that:

- Links to information from other sources do not undermine a GPFR's achievement of the qualitative characteristics; and
- The issuance date of any such linked information is as close as possible to the financial statements' reporting date so that reported information will be timely.

Comparability

8.57 Information organisation takes into account the benefits of consistent presentation over time. Consistent presentation supports users' ability to understand information and facilitates their access to information. It helps to achieve the qualitative characteristic of comparability.

Principles for Information Organisation within the Financial Statements

8.58 Information displayed on the face of the financial statements is usually organised into numeric totals and sub-totals. Its organisation provides a structured overview of such matters as the reporting entity's financial position, financial performance and cash flows.

8.59 For the financial statements, relationships may exist between:

- Subsets of displayed amounts or changes in displayed amounts and their impact on an entity's financial position, financial performance and/or cash flows;
- Different displayed amounts in different financial statements, which all reflect the impact of a common external event, or contribute together towards an understanding of an aspect of the entity's financial position or financial performance; and
- Displayed amounts and related note disclosures that provide information that explains or could otherwise support users' understanding of displayed items.

8.60 The organisation of information in financial statements includes decisions on:

- The type and number of statements;
- Disaggregation of totals into meaningful subcategories;
- Ordering and grouping of items displayed within each statement;
- Identification of aggregates (additive and subtractive); and
- Identification of other information for inclusion on the face of the statement.

- 8.61 Information disclosed in the notes to the financial statements is organised so that relationships to items reported on the face of the financial statements are clear. The notes are an integral part of the financial statements.

Principles for Organisation of Information within Other GPFRs

- 8.62 As is the case for the financial statements, information organisation in other GPFRs helps to ensure that key messages conveyed by displayed information are understandable. Presentation that clearly identifies important relationships is likely to enhance the extent to which a report:
- Meets the objectives of financial reporting; and
 - Achieves the qualitative characteristics.
- 8.63 Linking related information helps users to find important information. Some information is more understandable when organised into graphs, charts, tables, ratios or key performance indicators. Other information may be presented more effectively in narrative form. Information organisation supports users' understanding of linkages between information within the same GPFR.
- 8.64 Information organisation facilitates comparisons such as making clear when items are similar or dissimilar. Inter-period comparability is facilitated by avoiding changes to the way that information is organised for the same entity from year to year unless such changes enhance relevance and understandability. Inter-entity comparisons are facilitated when different reporting entities organise the information they present in similar ways.

Basis for Conclusions

This Basis for Conclusions accompanies, but is not part of, the PBE Conceptual Framework.

Preface

Introduction

- BC1. Consistent with the Accounting Standards Framework, the PBE Conceptual Framework is based on *The Conceptual Framework for General Purpose Financial Reporting by Public Sector Entities* (the Conceptual Framework) developed and approved by the International Public Sector Accounting Standards Board (IPSASB). The New Zealand Accounting Standards Board (NZASB) has considered the appropriateness of the IPSASB's Conceptual Framework for application by Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 public benefit entities in New Zealand and has made some modifications, as discussed in this Basis for Conclusions. For example, the language has been generalised to refer to all public benefit entities and references to not-for-profit entities have been included. The NZASB considers that the IPSASB's Conceptual Framework is generally appropriate for public benefit entities in New Zealand, except as discussed in this Basis for Conclusions.
- BC2. The NZASB decided that the IPSASB's Basis for Conclusions on each Chapter of the Conceptual Framework would be useful for public benefit entities using the PBE Conceptual Framework and agreed to include the IPSASB's Basis for Conclusions in the PBE Conceptual Framework. The IPSASB presented its Basis for Conclusions separately on each chapter. The NZASB has grouped the IPSASB's Basis for Conclusions in a single section.

Addition of Part B: Not-for-Profit Entities

- BC3. The IPSASB develops standards for public sector entities. The IPSASB included a Preface in its Conceptual Framework to provide context for readers about the key characteristics of public sector entities that the IPSASB considered in developing the Conceptual Framework. The NZASB develops standards for public benefit entities, which include both public sector public benefit entities and not-for-profit public benefit entities. Because the characteristics of public sector entities can differ from those of not-for-profit entities, the NZASB decided to discuss the key characteristics of public sector entities and not-for-profit entities in separate sections of the Preface.

Approved Budget

- BC4. The Preface to the IPSASB's Conceptual Framework included a discussion of the "approved budget" and the IPSASB made a number of references to the approved budget throughout the Conceptual Framework. The NZASB noted that, in a New Zealand context, many public sector entities have a requirement to make plans or budgets publicly available and subject to various forms of public scrutiny, but these plans or budgets are not normally referred to as an approved budget. The NZASB therefore modified this discussion, and subsequent references to the approved budget in other Chapters, to reflect the New Zealand context.

Explanatory Guides

- BC5. The IPSASB Conceptual Framework refers to the concepts in the Conceptual Framework being applied in developing IPSASs and Recommended Practice Guides (RPGs) and states that the concepts in the Conceptual Framework do not override the requirements in IPSASs and RPGs. The NZASB noted that PBE Standards and the PBE Conceptual Framework, when issued, have legal status under the Financial Reporting Act 2013. However, explanatory guides issued by the NZASB do not have legal status. The NZASB therefore decided not to refer to explanatory guides when discussing the application of the PBE Conceptual Framework.

Chapter 1 Role and Authority of the PBE Conceptual Framework

- BC6. The NZASB's discussion of the role of the PBE Conceptual Framework is broader than the discussion in the IPSASB's Conceptual Framework. The NZASB has also acknowledged the role of the PBE Conceptual Framework in assisting it to comment on the IPSASB's proposals and in assisting preparers of general purpose financial reports.

- BC7. The NZASB has replaced the IPSASB’s examples of entities that might use the Conceptual Framework with New Zealand examples.

Chapter 2 Objectives and Users of General Purpose Financial Reporting

- BC8. Chapter 2 of the IPSASB’s Conceptual Framework included a discussion of “service delivery achievements” and the IPSASB made a number of references to service delivery throughout the Conceptual Framework. The NZASB noted that, in a New Zealand context, the term service performance is widely used and understood. The NZASB therefore modified this discussion, and subsequent references to service delivery to reflect the New Zealand context.
- BC9. Chapter 2 of the IPSASB’s Conceptual Framework included a discussion on prospective financial and non-financial information. The NZASB noted that, in planning for the future, both public sector and not-for-profit entities are likely to use prospective financial statements. However, not-for-profit entities are less likely to make that information publicly available in a GPFR. The NZASB acknowledged this difference in the discussion on prospective financial and non-financial information.

Chapter 3 Qualitative Characteristics

- BC10. The NZASB did not make any significant modifications to Chapter 3 of the IPSASB’s Conceptual Framework.

Chapter 4 Reporting Entity

- BC11. The NZASB made two modifications to Chapter 4 of the IPSASB’s Conceptual Framework:
- (a) Although some activities may be regarded as separate reporting entities in New Zealand, they are not commonly referred to as ‘programmes’. The IPSASB’s references to ‘programmes’ as potential reporting entities have therefore been omitted.
 - (b) Paragraph 4.7 explains that there is often an additional accountability aspect for not-for-profit entities in relation to the special status granted to them, for example, the benefits associated with being a registered charity.

Chapter 5 Elements in General Purpose Financial Reports

Elements of Service Performance Reporting

- BC12. Chapters 5 to 7 of the IPSASB’s Conceptual Framework focus only on the definition, recognition and measurement of the elements of financial statements. The IPSASB decided to focus on the elements of financial statements in these chapters because it had not yet issued standards-level guidance on service performance reporting. The NZASB noted that the previous PBE Framework had referred to the elements of service performance reporting and agreed that the PBE Conceptual Framework should specify the elements of service performance reporting.

Revenue

- BC13. Respondents to the NZASB’s Exposure Draft noted that the IPSASB’s Conceptual Framework and the PBE Conceptual Framework define and describe ‘revenue’ as an element. Respondents also noted that the equivalent element in the New Zealand Equivalent to the IASB Conceptual Framework for Financial Reporting 2010 (NZ Framework) is ‘income’. The definition of income in that framework encompasses both revenue (which arises in the course of the ordinary activities of an entity) and gains (being other items that meet the definition of income and which may, or may not, arise in the ordinary course of the ordinary activities of an entity). Respondents expressed concern regarding the difference in terminology used by the two international standard setting bodies and the potential for this to be confusing. The NZASB acknowledged this concern but noted that the difference is longstanding and the decision to base PBE Standards on IPSASs required the adoption of the IPSASB’s defined term

Equity

- BC14. The IPSASB did not define equity as an element of financial statements. It defined revenue, expense, assets, liabilities, contributions by owners and distributions to owners. It also used the term “net financial position” to describe the residual of assets less liabilities, adjusted for any other resources or obligations recognised in the statement of financial position. The IPSASB’s reasons for not establishing an element

equivalent to net financial position are set out in paragraphs BC5.66 to BC5.68 in its Basis for Conclusions on Chapter 5. One reason was that the IPSASB was concerned that the terms “residual interest” and “ownership interest” can be misunderstood or misinterpreted. That led it to the conclusion that net financial position is a residual amount that should not be defined. However, the IPSASB acknowledged that the terms “residual interest” and “ownership interest” have been used in some jurisdictions.

- BC15. The NZASB considered that a definition of equity is required for completeness. The NZASB noted that the previous Conceptual Frameworks used in New Zealand had included a definition of equity, the definition of a PBE refers to equity, and that the term has wide acceptance in New Zealand. The NZASB noted that PBE Standards currently use the term “net assets/equity” and considered whether this should be the defined term. Given that the term equity was the defined term used in the previous PBE Framework, the NZASB considered that it was appropriate for New Zealand PBEs. This led to using the term equity, rather than net financial position, in the definitions of ownership contributions and ownership distributions.

Other Resources and Other Obligations

- BC16. The NZASB noted that the IPSASB’s Conceptual Framework left open the possibility of the IPSASB issuing IPSASs that require or allow the recognition of resources or obligations that do not satisfy the definition of an element. The IPSASB indicated that the recognition of such items would be limited to circumstances where it was considered necessary to ensure that the financial statements provide information that is useful for a meaningful assessment of the financial performance and financial position of an entity. The NZASB had concerns about the possibility of recognising an item that does not meet the definition of an element. However, at the point that the NZASB was approving the PBE Conceptual Framework, the IPSASB had not applied this concept at a standards level. The NZASB agreed to retain reference to other resources and other obligations in paragraph 5.4 in the PBE Conceptual Framework, but to note that it would carefully consider any future requirements in IPSASs to recognise an item that did not meet the definition of an element.

Statement of Financial Performance

- BC17. The IPSASB’s Conceptual Framework refers to revenue and expense being reported in the statement of financial performance. The NZASB considered whether the PBE Conceptual Framework should instead refer to the statement of comprehensive revenue and expense, which is the statement referred to throughout PBE Standards. The NZASB decided not to change the titles of statements used in the IPSASB’s Conceptual Framework on the grounds that it would be appropriate to wait until the IPSASB considers the presentation of revenue and expenses in the financial statements in the context of a review of IPSAS 1 *Presentation of Financial Statements*. The NZASB will continue to monitor projects of both the IPSASB and the IASB which may have implications for the PBE Conceptual Framework. In particular, the NZASB will continue to monitor any conceptual work developments in relation to the meaning of financial performance.

Chapter 6 Recognition in Financial Statements

- BC18. The NZASB did not make any significant modifications to Chapter 6 of the IPSASB’s Conceptual Framework.

Chapter 7 Measurement of Assets and Liabilities in Financial Statements

- BC19. The NZASB did not make any significant modifications to Chapter 7 of the IPSASB’s Conceptual Framework. The NZASB acknowledged that some of the discussion in the Chapter (for example, the section on replacement cost) might be used more in a public sector context but considered that it could also be useful for not-for-profit entities.

Chapter 8 Presentation in General Purpose Financial Reports

- BC20. The NZASB did not make any significant modifications to Chapter 8 of the IPSASB’s Conceptual Framework.

IPSASB Basis for Conclusions

This Basis for Conclusions accompanies, but is not part of, the Conceptual Framework.

Chapter 1 Role and Authority of the Conceptual Framework

Role and Authority of the Conceptual Framework

- BC1.1 The Conceptual Framework identifies the concepts that the IPSASB will apply in developing IPSASs and RPGs intended to assist preparers and others in dealing with financial reporting issues. IPSASs specify authoritative requirements. IPSASs and RPGs are developed after application of a due process which provides the opportunity for interested parties to provide input on the specific requirements proposed, including their compatibility with current practices in different jurisdictions.
- BC1.2 The Conceptual Framework underpins the development of IPSASs. Therefore, it has relevance for all entities that apply IPSASs. GPFs prepared at the whole-of-government level in accordance with IPSASs may also consolidate all governmental entities whether or not those entities have complied with IPSASs in their GPFs.

Special Purpose Financial Reports

- BC1.3 Standard setters often describe as “special purpose financial reports” those financial reports prepared to respond to the requirements of users that have the authority to require the preparation of financial reports that disclose the information they need for their particular purposes. The IPSASB is aware that the requirements of IPSASs have been (and may continue to be) applied effectively and usefully in the preparation of some special purpose financial reports.

General Purpose Financial Reports

- BC1.4 The Conceptual Framework acknowledges that, to respond to users’ information needs, GPFs may include information that enhances, complements, and supplements the financial statements. Therefore, the Conceptual Framework reflects a scope for financial reporting that is more comprehensive than that encompassed by financial statements. Chapter 2, *Objectives and Users of General Purpose Financial Reporting*, identifies the objectives of financial reporting and the primary users of GPFs. It also outlines the consequences of the primary users’ likely information needs for what may be encompassed within the scope of financial reporting.

Chapter 2 Objectives and Users of General Purpose Financial Reporting

Primary User Groups

- BC2.1 In developing the Conceptual Framework, the IPSASB sought views on whether the Conceptual Framework should identify the primary users of GPFs. Many respondents to the initial Consultation Paper¹⁹ expressed the view that the Framework should identify the primary users of GPFs, and the IPSASB should focus on the information needs of those primary users in developing IPSASs. The IPSASB was persuaded by these views.

Identifying the Primary User Groups

- BC2.2 Conceptual Framework Exposure Draft 1, *Conceptual Framework for General Purpose Financial Reporting by Public Sector Entities: Role, Authority and Scope; Objectives and Users; Qualitative Characteristics; and Reporting Entity* (the Exposure Draft), identified service recipients and their representatives, and resource providers and their representatives as the primary users of GPFs. It explained that, while the IPSASB will develop IPSASs and RPGs on the contents of GPFs to respond to the information needs of these primary users, GPFs may still be used by others with an interest in financial reporting, and may provide information of use to those other users.

¹⁹ Consultation Paper, *Conceptual Framework for General Purpose Financial Reporting by Public Sector Entities: The Objectives of Financial Reporting; The Scope of Financial Reporting; The Qualitative Characteristics of Information Included in General Purpose Financial Reports; The Reporting Entity*.

BC2.3 Many respondents to the Exposure Draft expressed support for the identification of service recipients and their representatives and resource providers and their representatives as the primary users of GPFs. However, others were of the view that the public, citizens or legislature should be identified as the primary or most important users of GPFs of public sector entities. They explained that this is because governments are primarily accountable to the citizens or their representatives and, in many jurisdictions, the legislature and individual members of parliament (or similar representative body) acting on behalf of citizens are the main users of GPFs. Some respondents also expressed the view that only resource providers and their representatives should be identified as the primary users of GPFs of public sector entities. They explained that it is unlikely that GPFs would be able to respond to the information needs of all users, and resource providers are likely to have the greatest interest in GPFs. Therefore, identifying resource providers as the primary user group will allow the IPSASB to focus more sharply on the information needs of a single user group. They also noted that GPFs prepared to respond to the information needs of resource providers are likely to also provide information useful to other potential users.

BC2.4 The IPSASB acknowledges that there is merit in many of the proposals made by respondents regarding the identity of the primary users of GPFs of public sector entities, particularly as they apply to governments in many jurisdictions. However, given the objectives of financial reporting by public sector entities, the IPSASB remains of the view that the primary users of GPFs of public sector entities should be identified as service recipients and their representatives and resource providers and their representatives. This is because:

- Governments and other public sector entities are accountable to those that depend on them to use resources to deliver necessary services, as well as to those that provide them with the resources that enable the delivery of those services; and
- GPFs have a significant role in the discharge of that accountability and the provision of information useful to those users for decision-making purposes.

As such, GPFs should be developed to respond to the information needs of service recipients and their representatives and resource providers and their representatives as the primary users. In addition, the Conceptual Framework will apply to governments and a potentially wide range of other public sector entities in many different jurisdictions, and to international governmental organizations. Consequently, it is not clear that identification of other user groups as the primary users of GPFs will be relevant, and operate effectively, for all public sector entities across all jurisdictions.

BC2.5 The IPSASB accepts that some information in GPFs may be of more interest and greater use to some users than others. The IPSASB also accepts that, in developing IPSASs and RPGs, it will need to consider and, in some cases, balance the needs of different groups of primary users. However, the IPSASB does not believe that such matters invalidate the identification of both service recipients and their representatives and resource providers and their representatives as the primary users of GPFs.

BC2.6 The IPSASB's views on the relationship between the primary user groups identified by respondents, and service recipients and resource providers are further elaborated below.

Citizens

BC2.7 The IPSASB acknowledges the importance of citizens, the public and their representatives as users of GPFs, but is of the view that classifying citizens as service recipients and resource providers provides a basis for assessing their potential information needs. This is because citizens encompass many individuals with a potentially wide range of diverse information needs—focusing on the information needs of citizens as service recipients and resource providers enables the IPSASB to draw together those diverse interests and explore what information needs GPFs should attempt to respond to. The IPSASB is also of the view that, in developing IPSASs, it is appropriate that it has the capacity to consider the information needs of a range of service recipients and resource providers who may not be citizens (including donors and lenders) and do not possess the authority to require a public sector entity to disclose the information they need for accountability and decision-making purposes.

Resource Providers

BC2.8 The IPSASB agrees that GPFs directed at the provision of information to satisfy the information needs of resource providers will also provide information useful to other potential users of GPFs. However,

the IPSASB is of the view that the Conceptual Framework should make clear its expectation that governments and other public sector entities should be accountable to both those that provide them with resources and those that depend on them to use those resources to deliver necessary and/or promised services. In addition, it has been noted that in some jurisdictions resource providers are primarily donors or lenders that may have the authority to require the preparation of special purpose financial reports to provide the information they need.

- BC2.9 As noted at paragraph BC2.4, the IPSASB has formed a view that both service recipients and resource providers and their representatives are primary users of GPFs. The IPSASB is of the view that the Conceptual Framework should not exclude citizens who may be interested in GPFs in their capacity as service recipients from the potential users of GPFs, or identify their information needs as less important than those of resource providers. The IPSASB is also of the view that it is not appropriate that donors, lenders, and others that provide resources on a voluntary or involuntary basis to governments and other public sector entities be excluded as potential users of GPFs, or that their information needs be identified as less important than those of service recipients.

The Legislature

- BC2.10 The IPSASB is of the view that the legislature or similar governing body is a primary user of GPFs in its capacity as a representative of service recipients and resource providers. The legislature, parliaments, councils and similar bodies will also require information for their own specific accountability and decision-making purposes, and usually have the authority to require the preparation of detailed special purpose financial and other reports to provide that information. However, they may also use the information provided by GPFs, as well as information provided by special purpose financial reports, for input to assessments of whether resources were used efficiently and as intended and in making decisions about allocating resources to particular government entities, programs or activities.
- BC2.11 Individual members of the legislature or other governing body, whether members of the government or opposition, can usually require the disclosure of the information they need for the discharge of their official duties as directed by the legislature or governing body. However, they may not have the authority to require the preparation of financial reports that provide the information they require for other purposes, or in other circumstances. Consequently, they are users of GPFs, whether in their capacity as representatives of service recipients and resource providers in their electorate or constituency, or in their personal capacity as citizens and members of the community.

Other User Groups

- BC2.12 In developing the Conceptual Framework, the IPSASB considered a wide range of other potential users of GPFs, including whether special interest groups and their representatives, or those transacting with public sector entities on a commercial or non-commercial basis or on a voluntary or involuntary basis (such as public sector and private sector resource providers) should be identified as separate user groups. The IPSASB is of the view that identifying service recipients and their representatives and resource providers and their representatives as the primary users of GPFs will respond appropriately to the information needs of subgroups of service recipients and resource providers.
- BC2.13 The information provided by GPFs may be useful for compiling national accounts, as input to statistical financial reporting models, for assessments of the impact of government policies on economic activity and for other economic analytical purposes. However, GPFs are not developed specifically to respond to the needs of those who require information for these purposes. Similarly, while those that act as advisors to service recipients or to resource providers (such as citizen advocacy groups, bond rating agencies, credit analysts and public interest groups) are likely to find the information reported in GPFs useful for their purposes, GPFs are not prepared specifically to respond to their particular information needs.

The Objectives of Financial Reporting

- BC2.14 Many respondents to the Exposure Draft agreed that the provision of information useful for both accountability and decision-making purposes should be identified as the objectives of financial reporting by public sector entities. Some respondents advocated that only accountability be identified as the single or dominant objective of financial reporting by public sector entities; other respondents

advocated that decision making should be identified as the single objective. However, the IPSASB remains of the view that users of GPFs of public sector entities will require information for both accountability and decision-making purposes.

BC2.15 Some respondents to the Exposure Draft advocated that the link between accountability and decision making be more clearly articulated and the public sector characteristics that underpinned the IPSASB's views on the objectives of financial reporting by public sector entities be identified. The IPSASB has responded positively to these proposals. The Framework has been restructured and clarifications added.

BC2.16 The explanation of accountability and its relationship to decision making and GPFs has also been strengthened. In this context, the IPSASB acknowledges that the notion of accountability reflected in this Framework is broad. It encompasses the provision of information about the entity's management of the resources entrusted to it, and information useful to users in assessing the sustainability of the activities of the entity and the continuity of the provision of services over the long term. The IPSASB is of the view that this broad notion of accountability is appropriate because citizens and other constituents provide resources to governments and other public sector entities on an involuntary basis and, for the most part, depend on governments and other public sector entities to provide needed services over the long term. However, the IPSASB also recognizes that it is unlikely that GPFs will provide all the information that service recipients and resource providers need for accountability and decision-making purposes.

The Scope of Financial Reporting—Financial Statements and Information that Enhances, Complements and Supplements the Financial Statements

BC2.17 Many respondents to the Exposure Draft expressed support for the scope of financial reporting and its explanation as proposed by the IPSASB, with some identifying matters for clarification and others noting that projects dealing with the broader scope issues would need to provide guidance on application of the qualitative characteristics such as verifiability and comparability. Other respondents did not support the scope of financial reporting being broader than financial statements, expressing concern that:

- The proposed broad scope dealt with matters which were outside the Terms of Reference of the IPSASB that were in effect at that time; and
- Guidance on matters outside the financial statements, such as non-financial and prospective information, is appropriately a matter for individual governments, or governing bodies or other authority.

Some respondents to the Exposure Draft also expressed concern that the scope was too sharply focused on the financial statements, and that additional guidance on non-financial information and sustainability reporting be included in the Conceptual Framework.

BC2.18 The IPSASB remains of the view that it is necessary that the Conceptual Framework reflect a scope for financial reporting that is more comprehensive than that encompassed by financial statements. This is because:

- The primary objective of governments and other public sector entities is to deliver services to constituents rather than to generate profits;
- Citizens and other eligible residents are dependent on governments and other public sector entities to provide a wide range of services on an on-going basis over the long term. The activities of, and decisions made by, governments and other public sector entities in a particular reporting period can have significant consequences for future generations of service recipients and future generations of taxpayers and other involuntary resource providers; and
- Most governments and other public sector entities operate within spending mandates and financial constraints established through the budgetary process. Monitoring implementation of the approved budget is the primary method by which the legislature exercises oversight, and citizens and their elected representatives hold the government's management financially accountable.

BC2.19 Consequently, the performance of public sector entities in achieving their financial and service delivery objectives can be only partially evaluated by examination of their financial position at the reporting

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date, and financial performance and cash flows during the reporting period. The IPSASB is of the view that, to respond to users' need for information for accountability and decision-making purposes, the Conceptual Framework should enable GPFs to encompass the provision of information that allows users to better assess and place in context the financial statements. Such information may be communicated by separate reports that present financial and non-financial information about the achievement of the entity's service delivery objectives during the reporting period; its compliance with approved budgets and legislation or other authority governing the raising and use of resources; and prospective financial and non-financial information about its future service delivery activities, objectives, and resource needs. In some cases, information about these matters may also be presented in notes to the financial statements.

- BC2.20 In making decisions about financial reporting requirements or guidance that extend the information presented in GPFs beyond financial statements, the IPSASB will consider the benefits of the information to users and the costs of compiling and reporting such information.

Limiting the Scope of Financial Reporting

- BC2.21 Some respondents who agreed that the scope of financial reporting should extend beyond the financial statements expressed concern that the scope as proposed in the Exposure Draft was too open ended and/or not adequately explained or justified—in some cases proposing that the scope be limited to enhancement of matters recognized in the financial statements.
- BC2.22 The IPSASB has responded to these concerns by clarifying the linkages between the scope of financial reporting and users' information needs, and including additional explanation of the relationship between users' information needs and the information that GPFs may provide in response. In addition, the IPSASB has clarified that the scope of general purpose financial reporting is limited to the financial statements and information that enhances, complements and supplements the financial statements. Consequently, what is included in the more comprehensive scope of financial reporting will be derived from financial statements, and limited to matters that assist users to better understand and put in context the information included in those statements.

Resource Considerations, Authoritative Requirements and Audit Status

- BC2.23 Many respondents, whether supportive or opposed to the proposals in the Exposure Draft, expressed concern that dealing with "broad scope" issues would absorb too much of the IPSASB's resources and limit its ability to deal with financial statement issues. Some respondents to the Exposure Draft also:
- Advocated that the Conceptual Framework clarify that authoritative requirements would only be developed for financial statement matters, broader scope issues being the subject of guidelines; and
 - Expressed concern about the audit implications of including non-financial information and prospective information in GPFs.
- BC2.24 While the IPSASB can develop IPSASs which include authoritative requirements, it is not inevitable that it will do so. For example, the IPSASB's publications also include RPGs and other documents intended to assist the financial reporting community to respond to particular financial reporting issues. All IPSASB documents which include authoritative requirements or guidance on the presentation of information in GPFs, whether as part of the financial statements or enhancements to those statements, will be subject to full due process. Therefore, in developing authoritative or other guidance on the presentation of information that broadens the scope of financial reporting, the IPSASB will need to respond to constituent concerns about the proposed technical content and authority of the guidance.
- BC2.25 The IPSASB acknowledges the concern of respondents regarding the deployment of the IPSASB's resources to broad scope issues. However, information presented in financial statements remains at the core of financial reporting and, therefore, will remain the primary focus of the IPSASs and RPGs developed by the IPSASB. Consequently, the standards development work program of the IPSASB will continue to respond to users' need for better financial reporting of transactions and other events that are reported in the financial statements.
- BC2.26 The IPSASB is of the view that it is not the role of the Conceptual Framework, or the IPSASs and RPGs that may be developed consistent with the concepts reflected in the Framework, to attempt to establish the level of audit assurance that should be provided to particular aspects of GPFs. The

qualitative characteristics provide some assurance to users about the quality of information included in GPFs. However, responsibilities for the audit of financial statements and other components of GPFs will be established by such matters as the regulatory framework in place in particular jurisdictions and the audit mandate agreed with and/or applying to the entity.

Chapter 3 Qualitative Characteristics

Qualitative Characteristics of Information Included in General Purpose Financial Reports

- BC3.1 In developing IPSASs, the IPSASB receives input from constituents on, and makes judgments about, information that best satisfies the objectives of financial reporting and should be included in GPFs. In making those judgments, the IPSASB considers the extent to which each of the qualitative characteristics can be achieved. Disclosure and other requirements are included in IPSASs only when the information that results from their application is considered to satisfy the qualitative characteristics and the cost-benefit constraint identified in the Conceptual Framework.
- BC3.2 Some respondents to the Exposure Draft expressed concern about the application of the qualitative characteristics to all matters that may be presented in GPFs, particularly those matters that may be presented in reports outside the financial statements. The IPSASB understands this concern. The IPSASB acknowledges that IPSASs and RPGs that deal with the presentation in GPFs of information outside the financial statements may need to include additional guidance on the application of the qualitative characteristics to the matters dealt with.
- BC3.3 IPSASs and RPGs issued by the IPSASB will not deal with all financial and non-financial information that may be included in GPFs. In the absence of an IPSAS or RPG that deals with particular economic or other phenomena, assessments of whether an item of information satisfies the qualitative characteristics and constraints identified in the Conceptual Framework, and therefore qualifies for inclusion in GPFs, will be made by preparers compiling the GPFs. Those assessments will be made in the context of achieving the objectives of financial reporting, which in turn have been developed to respond to users' information needs.
- BC3.4 Having in place accounting systems and processes that are appropriately designed and are operated effectively will enable management to gather and process evidence to support financial reporting. The quality of these systems and processes is a key factor in ensuring the quality of financial information that the entity includes in GPFs.

Other Qualitative Characteristics Considered

- BC3.5 Some respondents to the Exposure Draft expressed the view that additional qualitative characteristics should be identified. Those qualitative characteristics included "sincerity," "true and fair view," "credibility," "transparency," and "regularity".
- BC3.6 The IPSASB notes that "sincerity" as used in financial reporting has a similar meaning to "true and fair". The IPSASB is of the view that sincerity, true and fair view, credibility, and transparency are important expressions of the overarching qualities that financial reporting is to achieve or aspire to. However, they do not exist as single qualitative characteristics on their own—rather, achieving these qualities is the product of application of the full set of qualitative characteristics identified in the Conceptual Framework, and the IPSASs that deal with specific reporting issues. Consequently, while important characteristics of GPFs, they are not identified as separate individual qualitative characteristics in their own right. The IPSASB is also of the view that the notion of "regularity" as noted by some respondents is related to the notion of "compliance" as used in the Conceptual Framework—therefore, regularity is not identified as an additional qualitative characteristic.

Relevance

- BC3.7 The Conceptual Framework explains that financial and non-financial information is relevant if it is capable of making a difference in achieving the objectives of financial reporting. As part of its due process the IPSASB seeks input on whether the requirements of a proposed IPSAS or any proposed RPGs are relevant to the achievement of the objectives of financial reporting—that is, are relevant to the discharge of the entity's obligation to be accountable and to decisions that users may make.

Faithful Representation

- BC3.8 The Conceptual Framework explains that to be useful information must be a faithful representation of the economic and other phenomena that it purports to represent. A single economic or other phenomenon may be faithfully represented in many ways. For example, the achievement of particular service delivery objectives may be depicted (a) qualitatively through an explanation of the immediate and anticipated longer term outcomes and effects of the service delivery program, (b) quantitatively as a measure of the volume and cost of services provided by the service delivery program, or (c) by a combination of both qualitative and quantitative information. Additionally, a single depiction in GPFs may represent several economic phenomena. For example, the presentation of the item “plant and equipment” in a financial statement may represent an aggregate of all of an entity’s plant and equipment, including items that have different functions, that are subject to different risks and opportunities and that are carried at amounts based on estimates that may be more or less complex and reliable.
- BC3.9 Completeness and neutrality of estimates (and inputs to those estimates) and freedom from material error are desirable, and some minimum level of accuracy is necessary for an estimate to faithfully represent an economic or other phenomenon. However, faithful representation does not imply absolute completeness or neutrality in the estimate, nor does it imply total freedom from error in the outcome. For a representation of an economic or other phenomenon to imply a degree of completeness, neutrality, or freedom from error that is impracticable for it to achieve would diminish the extent to which the information faithfully represents the economic or other phenomenon that it purports to represent.

Faithful Representation or Reliability

- BC3.10 At the time of issue of the Exposure Draft, Appendix A of IPSAS 1, *Presentation of Financial Statements*, identified “reliability” as a qualitative characteristic. It described reliable information as information that is “free from material error and bias, and can be depended on by users to represent faithfully that which it purports to represent or could reasonably be expected to represent.” Faithful representation, substance over form, neutrality, prudence and completeness were identified as components of reliability. The Conceptual Framework uses the term “faithful representation” rather than “reliability” to describe what is substantially the same concept. In addition, it does not explicitly identify substance over form and prudence as components of faithful representation.
- BC3.11 Many respondents to the Exposure Draft supported the use of faithful representation and its explanation in the Exposure Draft, in some cases explaining that faithful representation is a better expression of the nature of the concept intended. Some respondents did not support the replacement of reliability with the term faithful representation, expressing concerns including that faithful representation implies the adoption of fair value or market value accounting, and reliability and faithful representation are not interchangeable terms.
- BC3.12 The use of the term “faithful representation”, or “reliability” for that matter, to describe this qualitative characteristic in the Conceptual Framework will not determine the measurement basis to be adopted in GPFs, whether historical cost, market value, fair value or another measurement basis. The IPSASB does not intend that use of faithful representation be interpreted as such. The measurement basis or measurement bases that may be adopted for the elements of financial statements are considered in Chapter 7, *Measurement of Assets and Liabilities in Financial Statements*. The qualitative characteristics will then operate to ensure that the financial statements faithfully represent the measurement basis or bases reflected in GPFs.
- BC3.13 The IPSASB appreciates the concern of some respondents that the use of a different term may be interpreted to reflect different, and even lesser, qualities to those communicated by the term reliability. However, the IPSASB is of the view that explanation in the Framework that “Faithful representation is attained when the depiction of the phenomenon is complete, neutral, and free from material error”, and the elaboration of these key features will protect against the loss of any of the qualities that were formerly reflected in the use of the term reliability.
- BC3.14 In addition, the IPSASB has been advised that the term “reliability” is itself open to different interpretations and subjective judgments, with consequences for the quality of information included in GPFs. The IPSASB is of the view that use of the term “faithful representation” will overcome problems in the interpretation and application of reliability that have been experienced in some

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jurisdictions without a lessening of the qualities intended by the term, and is more readily translated into, and understood in, a wide range of languages.

Substance over Form and Prudence

- BC3.15 Some respondents to the Exposure Draft expressed concern that substance over form and prudence are not identified as qualitative characteristics or that their importance is not sufficiently recognized or explained. Some also noted that prudence need not be incompatible with the achievement of neutrality and faithful representation.
- BC3.16 The Conceptual Framework explains that “Information that faithfully represents an economic or other phenomenon depicts the substance of the underlying transaction, other event, activity or circumstance—which is not necessarily always the same as its legal form.” Therefore substance over form remains a key quality that information included in GPFRs must possess. It is not identified as a separate or additional qualitative characteristic because it is already embedded in the notion of faithful representation.
- BC3.17 The IPSASB is of the view that the notion of prudence is also reflected in the explanation of neutrality as a component of faithful representation, and the acknowledgement of the need to exercise caution in dealing with uncertainty. Therefore, like substance over form, prudence is not identified as a separate qualitative characteristic because its intent and influence in identifying information that is included in GPFRs is already embedded in the notion of faithful representation.

Understandability

- BC3.18 Although presenting information clearly and concisely helps users to comprehend it, the actual comprehension or understanding of information depends largely on the users of the GPFRs.
- BC3.19 Some economic and other phenomena are particularly complex and difficult to represent in GPFRs. However, the IPSASB is of the view that information that is, for example, relevant, a faithful representation of what it purports to represent, timely and verifiable should not be excluded from GPFRs solely because it may be too complex or difficult for some users to understand without assistance. Acknowledging that it may be necessary for some users to seek assistance to understand the information presented in GPFRs does not mean that information included in GPFRs need not be understandable or that all efforts should not be undertaken to present information in GPFRs in a manner that is understandable to a wide range of users. However, it does reflect that, in practice, the nature of the information included in GPFRs is such that all the qualitative characteristics may not be fully achievable at all times for all users.

Timeliness

- BC3.20 The IPSASB recognizes the potential for timely reporting to increase the usefulness of GPFRs for both accountability and decision-making purposes, and that undue delay in the provision of information may reduce its usefulness for these purposes. Consequently, timeliness is identified as a qualitative characteristic in the Conceptual Framework.

Comparability

- BC3.21 Some degree of comparability may be attained by maximizing the qualitative characteristics of relevance and faithful representation. For example, faithful representation of a relevant economic or other phenomenon by one public sector entity is likely to be comparable to a faithful representation of a similar relevant economic or other phenomenon by another public sector entity. However, a single economic or other phenomenon can often be faithfully represented in several ways, and permitting alternative accounting methods for the same phenomenon diminishes comparability and, therefore, may be undesirable.
- BC3.22 Some respondents to the Exposure Draft expressed concern that the explanation of the relationship between comparability and consistency may be read as presenting an obstacle to the on-going development of financial reporting. This is because enhancements in financial reporting often involve a revision or change to the accounting principles, policies or basis of preparation currently adopted by the entity.

BC3.23 Consistent application of the same accounting principles, policies and basis of preparation from one period to the next will assist users in assessing the financial position, financial performance and service delivery achievements of the entity compared with previous periods. However, where accounting principles or policies dealing with particular transactions or other events are not prescribed by IPSASs, achievement of the qualitative characteristic of comparability should not be interpreted as prohibiting the entity from changing its accounting principles or policies to better represent those transactions and events. In these cases, the inclusion in GPFs of additional disclosures or explanation of the impact of the changed policy can still satisfy the characteristics of comparability.

Verifiability

BC3.24 Verifiability is the quality of information that helps assure users that information in GPFs faithfully represents the economic and other phenomena that it purports to represent. While closely linked to faithful representation, verifiability is identified as a separate qualitative characteristic because information may faithfully represent economic and other phenomena even though it cannot be verified with absolute certainty. In addition, verifiability may work in different ways with faithful representation and other of the qualitative characteristics to contribute to the usefulness of information presented in GPFs—for example, there may need to be an appropriate balance between the degree of verifiability an item of information may possess and other qualitative characteristics to ensure it is presented in a timely fashion and is relevant.

BC3.25 In developing the qualitative characteristics identified in the Framework, the IPSASB considered whether “supportability” should be identified as a separate characteristic for application to information presented in GPFs outside the financial statements. The IPSASB is of the view that identifying both verifiability and supportability as separate qualitative characteristics with essentially the same features may be confusing to preparers and users of GPFs and others. However, the Conceptual Framework does acknowledge that supportability is sometimes used to refer to the quality of information that helps assure users that explanatory information and prospective financial and non-financial information included in GPFs faithfully represent the economic and other phenomena that they purport to represent.

BC3.26 Some respondents to the Exposure Draft expressed concern about the application of verifiability to the broad range of matters that may be presented in GPFs outside the financial statements, particularly explanatory information about service delivery achievements during the reporting period and qualitative and quantitative prospective financial and non-financial information. The IPSASB is of the view that the Conceptual Framework provides appropriate guidance on the application of verifiability in respect of these matters—for example it explains that verifiability is not an absolute and it may not be possible to verify the accuracy of all quantitative representations and explanations until a future period. The Framework also acknowledges that disclosure of the underlying assumptions and methodologies adopted for the compilation of explanatory and prospective financial and non-financial information is central to the achievement of faithful representation.

Classification of the Qualitative Characteristics and Order of their Application

BC3.27 Some respondents to the Exposure Draft expressed the view that the Conceptual Framework should identify:

- Relevance and faithful representation as fundamental qualitative characteristics, and explain the order of their application; and
- Comparability, verifiability, timeliness, and understandability as enhancing qualitative characteristics.

They noted that this would provide useful guidance on the sequence of application of the qualitative characteristics and reflect the approach adopted by the International Accounting Standards Board.

BC3.28 In developing the qualitative characteristics, the IPSASB considered whether some characteristics should be identified as fundamental and others identified as enhancing. The IPSASB also considered whether the order of application of the characteristics should be identified and/or explained. The IPSASB is of the view that such an approach should not be adopted because, for example:

- Matters identified as “fundamental” may be perceived to be more important than those identified as “enhancing”, even if this distinction is not intended in the case of the qualitative

characteristics. As a result, there may be unintended consequences of identifying some qualitative characteristics as fundamental and others as enhancing;

- All the qualitative characteristics are important and work together to contribute to the usefulness of information. The relative importance of a particular qualitative characteristic in different circumstances is a matter of professional judgment. As such, it is not appropriate to identify certain qualitative characteristics as always being fundamental and others as having only an enhancing or supporting role, or to specify the sequence of their application, no matter what information is being considered for inclusion in GPFRs, and irrespective of the circumstances of the entity and its environment. In addition, it is questionable whether information that is not understandable or is provided so long after the event as not to be useful to users for accountability and decision-making purposes could be considered as relevant information—therefore, these characteristics are themselves fundamental to the achievement of the objectives of financial reporting; and
- GPFRs of public sector entities may encompass historical and prospective information about financial performance and the achievement of service delivery objectives over a number of reporting periods. This provides necessary input to assessments of trends in service delivery activities and resources committed thereto—for such trend data, reporting on a comparable basis may be as important as, and cannot be separated from, faithful representation of the information.

Constraints on Information Included in General Purpose Financial Reports

Materiality

- BC3.29 At the time of issue of the Exposure Draft, Appendix A of IPSAS 1 described materiality with similar characteristics to that described in the Conceptual Framework, but identified materiality as a factor to be considered in determining only the relevance of information. Some respondents to the Exposure Draft noted that materiality may be identified as an aspect of relevance.
- BC3.30 The IPSASB has considered whether materiality should be identified as an entity-specific aspect of relevance rather than a constraint on information included in GPFRs. As explained in the Conceptual Framework, and subject to requirements in an IPSAS, materiality will be considered by preparers in determining whether, for example, a particular accounting policy should be adopted or an item of information should be separately disclosed in the financial statements of the entity.
- BC3.31 However, the IPSASB is of the view that materiality has a more pervasive role than would be reflected by its classification as only an entity-specific aspect of relevance. For example, materiality relates to, and can impact, a number of the qualitative characteristics of information included in GPFRs. Therefore, the materiality of an item should be considered when determining whether the omission or misstatement of an item of information could undermine not only the relevance, but also the faithful representation, understandability or verifiability of financial and non-financial information presented in GPFRs. The IPSASB is also of the view that whether the effects of the application of a particular accounting policy or basis of preparation or the information content of separate disclosure of certain items of information are likely to be material should be considered in establishing IPSASs and RPGs. Consequently, the IPSASB is of the view that materiality is better reflected as a broad constraint on information to be included in GPFRs.
- BC3.32 The IPSASB considered whether the Conceptual Framework should reflect that legislation, regulation or other authority may impose financial reporting requirements on public sector entities in addition to those imposed by IPSASs. The IPSASB is of the view that, while a feature of the operating environment of many public sector (and many private sector) entities, the impact that legislation or other authority may have on the information included in GPFRs is not itself a financial reporting concept. Consequently, it has not identified it as such in the Conceptual Framework. Preparers will, of course, need to consider such requirements as they prepare GPFRs. In particular, legislation may prescribe that particular items of information are to be disclosed in GPFRs even though they may not be judged to satisfy a materiality threshold (or cost-benefit constraint) as identified in the Conceptual Framework. Similarly, the disclosure of some matters may be prohibited by legislation because, for example, they relate to matters of national security, notwithstanding that they are material and would otherwise satisfy the cost-benefit constraint.

Cost-Benefit

- BC3.33 Some respondents to the Exposure Draft expressed concern that the text of the proposed Conceptual Framework does not specify that entities cannot decide to depart from IPSASs on the basis of their own assessments of the costs and benefits of particular requirements of an IPSAS. The IPSASB is of the view that such specification is not necessary. This is because, as noted in paragraph 1.2 of the Conceptual Framework, authoritative requirements relating to recognition, measurement, and presentation in GPFs are specified in IPSASs. GPFs are developed to provide information useful to users and requirements are prescribed by IPSASs only when the benefits to users of compliance with those requirements are assessed by the IPSASB to justify their costs. However, preparers may consider costs and benefits in, for example, determining whether to include in GPFs disclosure of information in addition to that required by IPSASs.
- BC3.34 Some respondents to the Exposure Draft also expressed concern that the proposed Conceptual Framework did not recognize that cost-benefit trade-offs may differ for different public sector entities. They are of the view that acknowledgement of this may provide a useful principle to be applied when considering differential reporting issues. The IPSASB has considered these matters and determined that the Conceptual Framework will not deal with issues related to differential reporting, including whether the costs and benefits of particular requirements might differ for different entities.
- BC3.35 In the process of developing an IPSAS or RPG, the IPSASB considers and seeks input on the likely costs and benefits of providing information in GPFs of public sector entities. However, in some cases, it may not be possible for the IPSASB to identify and/or quantify all benefits that are likely to flow from, for example, the inclusion of a particular disclosure, including those that may be required because they are in the public interest, or other requirement in an IPSAS. In other cases, the IPSASB may be of the view that the benefits of a particular requirement may be marginal for users of GPFs of some public sector entities. In applying the cost-benefit test to determine whether particular requirements should be included in an IPSAS in these circumstances, the IPSASB's deliberations may also include consideration of whether imposing such requirements on public sector entities is likely to involve undue cost and effort for the entities applying the requirements.

Chapter 4 Reporting Entity**Key Characteristics of a Reporting Entity**

- BC4.1 The concept of the reporting entity is derived from the objectives of financial reporting by public sector entities. The objectives of financial reporting by public sector entities are to provide information about the entity that is useful to users of GPFs for accountability and decision-making purposes.
- BC4.2 Reporting entities prepare GPFs. GPFs include financial statements, which present information about such matters as the financial position, performance and cash flows of the entity, and financial and non-financial information that enhances, complements and supplements the financial statements. Therefore, a key characteristic of a public sector reporting entity is the existence of service recipients or resource providers who are dependent on GPFs of a government or other public sector entity for information for accountability or decision-making purposes.

Legislation, Regulation or Other Authority

- BC4.3 The Exposure Draft did not specify which public sector entities should be identified as a reporting entity or group reporting entity and, therefore, be required to prepare GPFs. It noted that the public sector organizations and programs that are to prepare GPFs will be specified in legislation, regulation or other authority, or be determined by relevant authoritative bodies in each jurisdiction.
- BC4.4 Some respondents expressed the view that while legislation or other authority may, in practice, specify which entities are to prepare GPFs, the Conceptual Framework should focus on the concept of the reporting entity, identify key features of that concept and provide guidance on the principles and factors that should be considered in determining whether a reporting entity exists. The IPSASB was persuaded by these arguments and has refocused its discussion on an explanation of the concept of the reporting entity.

Interpretation and Application

- BC4.5 Some respondents expressed concern that the characteristics of a reporting entity as explained in the Exposure Draft may be interpreted to identify particular activities or segments of an organization as separate reporting entities. These segments or activities would then be required to prepare GPFs in accordance with all IPSASs. Some respondents also noted that it was not clear how the guidance in the Exposure Draft applied to public sector organizations other than governments including, for example, international public sector organizations.
- BC4.6 The IPSASB has responded to these concerns. The Framework explains that preparation of GPFs is not a cost-free process. It also:
- Includes additional guidance on the factors that are likely to signal the existence of service recipients or resource providers who are dependent on GPFs of a government or other public sector entity for information for accountability or decision-making purposes; and
 - Notes the likely implications of these factors for the identification of a range of public sector organizations, programs and activities as reporting entities, including government departments and agencies and international public sector organizations.
- BC4.7 The Conceptual Framework acknowledges that in some cases it may be necessary to exercise professional judgment in determining whether particular public sector entities should be identified as a reporting entity. In exercising that judgement, it should be noted that, in certain circumstances, IPSASs respond to users' needs for information about particular programs or activities undertaken by a government or other public sector reporting entity by providing for separate disclosures within the GPFs of that government or other public sector reporting entity²⁰. Jurisdictional factors such as the legislative and regulatory framework in place and institutional and administrative arrangements for the raising of resources and the delivery of services are also likely to inform deliberations on whether it is likely that service recipients and resource providers dependent on GPFs of particular public sector entities exist.

The Group Reporting Entity

- BC4.8 The Exposure Draft outlined the circumstances that would justify the inclusion of an entity or activity within a public sector group reporting entity. It explained that:
- A government or other public sector entity may (a) have the authority and capacity to direct the activities of one or more other entities so as to benefit from the activities of those entities, and (b) be exposed to a financial burden or loss that may arise as a result of the activities of those entities; and
 - To satisfy the objectives of financial reporting, GPFs of a group reporting entity prepared in respect of a government or other public sector entity should include that government (or other public sector entity) and the entities whose activities it has the authority and capacity to direct, when the results of such direction can (a) generate financial or other benefits for the government (or other public sector entity), or (b) expose it to a financial burden or loss.
- BC4.9 Many respondents to the Exposure Draft noted their agreement with the IPSASB's view of the criteria that should be satisfied for inclusion in a public sector group reporting entity. However, other respondents expressed their concern about the potential interpretation and application of the criteria in particular circumstances. In some cases, they noted that the Framework would need to provide additional application guidance if it was to be effective in dealing with circumstances not dealt with in IPSASs. A number of respondents also expressed the view that the criteria to be satisfied for inclusion in a group reporting entity were more appropriately addressed and resolved at the standards level, where those criteria and their consequences could be tested across a range of circumstances, and supported with specific examples of the circumstances likely to exist in many jurisdictions.
- BC4.10 The IPSASB found these concerns persuasive. It has reconstructed and drawn together its discussion of the reporting entity and group reporting entity to focus on the principles underlying the identification

²⁰ For example, International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSASs) such as IPSAS 18, *Segment Reporting* and IPSAS 22, *Disclosure of Financial Information about the General Government Sector* provide a mechanism to satisfy users' need for information about particular segments or sectors of an entity without their identification as separate reporting entities.

of a public sector reporting entity—whether that reporting entity comprises a single public sector entity or a group of entities. The identification of the criteria to be satisfied for inclusion in a group reporting entity consistent with these principles will then be developed and fully explored at the standards level.

Chapter 5 Elements in General Purpose Financial Statements

Scope of Chapter

- BC5.1 Respondents to the Consultation Paper, *Elements and Recognition in Financial Statements* (the Consultation Paper), questioned why the IPSASB was only addressing elements for the financial statements in this phase of the Framework. They suggested that IPSASB should also develop elements for economic and other phenomena in the more comprehensive areas of financial reporting outside the financial statements. The IPSASB acknowledges the merits of these views and the need to develop such elements in the future. However, the IPSASB decided that in order to put its future standard-setting activities for the financial statements on a sound and transparent footing it is important to deal firstly with the development of elements for the financial statements.
- BC5.2 The IPSASB acknowledges a view that cash inflows and cash outflows should be defined as elements of the cash flow statement. The IPSASB took the view that cash inflows and cash outflows are components of the elements identified in this Chapter, and that further guidance should be provided at standards level.

Assets

A Resource

- BC5.3 A resource provides benefits to an entity in the form of service potential or the ability to generate economic benefits. In reaching its conclusions on the nature of a resource the IPSASB considered whether the benefits of the resource must have already flowed to an entity in order for a resource to exist. However, the IPSASB concluded that resources themselves embody benefits—benefits that can be accessed by the entity that controls the rights to these benefits. The IPSASB also considered the nature of the benefits (see paragraphs BC5.7 and BC5.8) and control (see paragraphs BC5.9-BC5.14).

Unconditional Rights and Executory Contracts

- BC5.4 Unconditional rights to resources typically result from contracts or other binding arrangements that require provision of resources to the entity in the future. The IPSASB notes that there can be a large number of such rights and acknowledged that unconditional rights that represent service potential or the ability to generate economic benefits that are controlled by the entity as a result of a past event give rise to assets. Whether such assets are recognized depends on whether the recognition criteria have been satisfied. The IPSASB concluded that the consequences of application of the definition of an asset to unconditional rights should be addressed at standards level.
- BC5.5 Executory contracts are binding arrangements where there is an unconditional right to receive resources and an equal present obligation to transfer resources to the counterparty in the future. Public sector entities are likely to engage in a large number of such arrangements. The IPSASB acknowledges the view that such arrangements may give rise to both assets and liabilities, as there is a right to receive resources and a present obligation to sacrifice resources, which the entity has no realistic alternative to avoid.
- BC5.6 The IPSASB also acknowledges the view that recognizing assets and liabilities from executory contracts would involve the inclusion of potentially very large amounts of assets and liabilities in the statement of financial position and the statement of financial performance and that this may conflict with the qualitative characteristic of understandability. Whether assets and liabilities arise from rights and obligations in executory contracts will be determined by an assessment of whether those rights and obligations satisfy the definitions of elements and recognition criteria identified in the Conceptual Framework. Such assessments, and the approach to presentation in the financial statements of any elements arising from executory contracts, are considered at standards level.

Service Potential and Economic Benefits

- BC5.7 The term “service potential” has been used to identify the capacity of an asset to provide services in accordance with an entity’s objectives. The term “economic benefits” has been used to reflect the ability

of an asset to generate net cash inflows. Some argue that economic benefits includes service potential. Others argue that service potential includes economic benefits—a further view is that the terms can be used interchangeably. The IPSASB considered whether the explanation of a resource should include a reference to both service potential and the ability to generate economic benefits.

- BC5.8 The IPSASB noted that many respondents to the Consultation Paper and Exposure Draft supported inclusion of a specific reference to service potential as a characteristic of an asset, because of the service delivery objectives of most public sector entities. The IPSASB therefore concluded that the explanation of a resource should include both the terms “service potential” and “economic benefits”. This approach acknowledges that the primary objective of most public sector entities is to deliver services, but also that public sector entities may carry out activities with the sole objective of generating net cash inflows.

Control

- BC5.9 The IPSASB considered whether control is an essential characteristic of an asset or whether other indicators should be identified as essential characteristics of an asset including:

- Legal ownership;
- The right to access, and to restrict or deny the access of external parties to, the resource;
- The means to ensure that the resources are used to achieve the entity’s objectives; and
- The existence of enforceable rights to service potential or economic benefits arising from a resource.

The IPSASB acknowledges the views of those who argue that control may be difficult to apply in some cases because it requires judgement to assess whether control exists. In addition, control can be erroneously applied to a resource in its entirety and not to the individual benefits that accrue from the resource. However, notwithstanding such difficulties, the IPSASB concluded that control is an essential characteristic of an asset because the presence of control facilitates the association of an asset with a specific entity.

- BC5.10 Legal ownership of a resource, such as a property or item of equipment, is one method of accessing the service potential or economic benefits of an asset. However, rights to service potential or the ability to generate economic benefits may exist without legal ownership of the underlying resource. For example, the rights to service potential or the ability to generate economic benefits through the holding and use of leased property are accessed without legal ownership of the leased asset itself. Therefore, legal ownership of the resource is not an essential characteristic of an asset. Legal ownership is, however, an indicator of control.

- BC5.11 The right to access a resource may give an entity the ability to determine whether to:
- Directly use the resource’s service potential to provide services to beneficiaries;
 - Exchange the resource for another asset, such as cash; or
 - Use the asset in any of the other ways that may provide services or generate economic benefits.

- BC5.12 While access to a resource is crucial, there are resources to which an entity has access which do not give rise to assets, such as air. Therefore, the ability to access a resource must be supplemented by the ability to deny or restrict the access of others to that resource—for example, (a) an entity might decide whether to set an entrance fee to a museum and restrict access to those who do not pay the fee, and (b) government may control a natural resource under its land to which it can restrict the access of others. Legally enforceable claims to specific resources, such as a right of access to a road or a right to explore land for mineral deposits, could represent an asset to the holder. However, an entity may be able to access the service potential or ability to generate economic benefits associated with a resource in ways that do not require legal rights. The IPSASB took the view that the factors identified in paragraph BC5.9 are likely to be indicators of the existence of control rather than essential characteristics of the definition of an asset.

- BC5.13 The IPSASB also considered whether the economic ownership approach is a viable alternative to the control approach. The economic ownership approach focuses on an entity’s exposure to the underlying economic attributes that contribute to an asset’s value to the entity. Some respondents to the Exposure Draft, *Elements and Recognition in Financial Statements*, in supporting the control approach,

commented on the complexity of the economic ownership approach. The IPSASB concluded that the economic ownership approach is subjective and difficult to operate, and therefore rejected this approach.

- BC5.14 The IPSASB considered whether an analysis of exposure to the risks and rewards of ownership is a useful indicator of control. The control approach focuses on the power of the entity to direct how the resource is used in order to benefit from the service potential and/or ability to generate economic benefits embodied in the resource. The risks and rewards approach focuses on an entity's exposure to the underlying economic attributes that contribute to an asset's value to the entity and the related risks. Consideration of the risks and rewards associated with particular transactions and events, and which party to any transaction or event bears the majority of those risks and rewards, may be relevant and useful in identifying the nature of the asset controlled by parties to the transaction or event. It may also be useful in determining how to quantify and associate the economic rights and obligations with particular parties. However, it is not of itself an indicator of the party that controls an asset. The IPSASB therefore decided not to include the risks and rewards of ownership as an indicator of control.

Past Event

- BC5.15 Some respondents to the Consultation Paper and Exposure Draft argued that identification of a past transaction or other event which gives rise to the asset should be an essential characteristic of the definition of an asset. Others take the view that the identification of a past event is not necessary and should not therefore be an essential characteristic. They consider that such a requirement places undue emphasis on identifying the past event that gave rise to an asset. Such emphasis may be a distraction and lead to debates about which event is the triggering event instead of the more important issue of whether rights to resources exist at the reporting date. Those who take this view consider that the essential characteristic of an asset should be the existence of a resource. Some may accept that a past event provides useful supporting evidence of the existence of an asset, but not that it should be an essential characteristic.
- BC5.16 Many respondents took the view that a past event should be identified as an essential characteristic of the definition of an asset. The IPSASB agrees with these respondents—in particular, that the complex nature of many public sector programs and activities means that there are a number of points at which control of a resource might arise. Therefore, the IPSASB concluded that identification of the appropriate past event is crucial in identifying whether an asset exists.
- BC5.17 The powers and rights of government are particularly significant for the identification of assets. The power to tax and issue licenses, and other powers to access or to deny or restrict access to the benefits embodied in intangible resources like the electromagnetic spectrum, are examples of sovereign powers. It is often difficult to determine when such powers give rise to a right that is a resource and asset of the entity.
- BC5.18 A government's power to establish a right to levy a tax or fee, for example, often begins a sequence of events that ultimately results in the flow of economic benefits to the government. The IPSASB considered two views of when an asset arises from the powers and rights of government to levy a tax or fee. The first view is that the government has an inherent power to tax at every reporting date and, therefore, that the general ability to levy taxes or fees is an asset. Proponents of this view accept that such an asset is unlikely to be capable of faithfully representative measurement, but argue that this should not deflect from an acknowledgement that government has a perpetual asset. The contrary view is that the power to levy taxes and fees must be converted into a right by legal means, and that such a right must be exercised or exercisable in order for an asset to come into existence. Many respondents to the Consultation Paper and Exposure Draft supported this latter view. The IPSASB agrees with these respondents. In particular, the IPSASB concluded that a government's inherent powers do not give rise to assets until these powers are exercised and the rights exist to receive service potential or economic benefits.

Liabilities

A Present Obligation

- BC5.19 In considering when obligations are present obligations, the IPSASB accepts that a legal obligation gives rise to a present obligation. In some jurisdictions, public sector entities are not permitted to enter

into certain legal arrangements, but there are equivalent mechanisms that give rise to a present obligation. Such mechanisms are considered legally binding. The IPSASB then considered how to classify obligations that are not legal obligations. The IPSASB noted that “constructive obligation” is a term embedded in standard-setting literature globally and has been used in IPSASs. However, it has proved difficult to interpret and apply in a public sector context. Therefore, the IPSASB considered alternative terminology, for example the term “a social or moral duty or requirement.” The IPSASB has concerns that the term “social” might be confused with political values and that the term “moral obligations” risks a perception that standard setters and preparers are arbiters of morality. Therefore, the IPSASB decided that making a distinction between “legally binding” and “non-legally binding obligations” is the most straightforward and understandable approach. The IPSASB considered and rejected the view that the term “non-legally binding obligations” might be interpreted as referring to obligations, the legality of which is questionable. Paragraphs BC5.30-BC5.34 discuss non- legally binding obligations and explain their meaning for the purposes of the Conceptual Framework.

- BC5.20 In the context of a present obligation, the IPSASB considered whether “conditional” and “unconditional” obligations, “stand-ready obligations” and “performance obligations” might be present obligations.

Conditional and Unconditional Obligations

- BC5.21 An unconditional obligation is one that stands on its own, independent of future events. Unconditional obligations give rise to liabilities if the definition of a liability is satisfied. A conditional obligation involves the possible occurrence of a future event, which may or may not be under the control of the reporting entity. The IPSASB concluded that it is possible for conditional obligations to give rise to liabilities as defined in the Conceptual Framework. Determining whether a conditional obligation satisfies the definition of a liability will involve consideration of the nature of the obligation and the circumstances in which it has arisen. Given the complexity of public sector programs and activities, identifying the past event (or events), which has (have) resulted in the entity having little or no realistic alternative to avoid an outflow of resources, often may not be straightforward. Guidance on whether conditional obligations that exist in particular arrangements or circumstances may give rise to liabilities consistent with the definitions identified in the Conceptual Framework is a standards-level issue.
- BC5.22 A variety of terms are used to describe present obligations that may arise from, or exist in conjunction with, conditional obligations in particular circumstances. Amongst these are stand ready-obligations and performance obligations. The characteristics of these obligations and the conclusions reached by the IPSASB in the context of the Conceptual Framework are outlined below.

Stand-Ready Obligations

- BC5.23 Stand-ready obligations are a type of conditional obligation. Stand-ready obligations require an entity to be prepared to fulfill an obligation if a specified uncertain future event outside the entity’s control occurs (or fails to occur). The term stand-ready obligation is used to describe a liability that may arise in certain contractual circumstances, such as those related to insurance, certain financial instruments such as a derivative contract in a loss position, and for warranties where the entity has an obligation to transfer resources if a specified future event occurs (or does not occur). In such circumstances, there may be an identifiable past event and an outflow of resources from the entity, although the exact identity of the party to whom settlement will be made will not generally be known.
- BC5.24 The Consultation Paper included a discussion of stand-ready obligations. Many respondents found the distinction between a stand-ready obligation and other conditional obligations ambiguous. The Exposure Draft explained that the term stand-ready obligation is not widely used in the public sector, and does not work well in certain public sector circumstances, and suggested that whether a stand-ready obligation gave rise to a liability is a standards-level issue. Some respondents did not agree with the explanation in the Exposure Draft, and expressed a view that the Conceptual Framework should provide guidance for use at the standards level on whether stand-ready obligations can give rise to liabilities in certain circumstances.
- BC5.25 A public sector entity’s obligation to transfer resources to another entity in particular circumstances that may occur in the future includes, for example, as a potential lender of last resort and in support of programs that provide a wide range of social benefits. The existence of an obligation to transfer resources to another party in these circumstances may be dependent on ongoing satisfaction of a number

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of conditions of differing significance and nature that are subject to change by the government or public sector entity. The IPSASB is of the view that the circumstances in which liabilities arise as a consequence of the obligation of a public sector entity to transfer resources to other parties consistent with the terms of programs, and how such liabilities should be described and accounted for, should be considered at the standards level consistent with the principles established in the Conceptual Framework. The IPSASB decided that the Conceptual Framework should not resolve whether all obligations that might be classified as stand-ready meet the definition of a liability. The IPSASB also decided not to use the term “stand-ready obligation” in the Conceptual Framework.

Performance Obligations

- BC5.26 A performance obligation is an obligation in a contract or other binding arrangement between an entity and an external party to transfer a resource to that other party. Performance obligations are often explicitly stated in a contract or other arrangement. Not all performance obligations are explicit. For example, a statutory requirement may give rise to an implicit performance obligation of a public sector entity that is additional to the terms of an agreement or contract.
- BC5.27 A performance obligation also arises when an entity enters into an arrangement whereby it receives a fee and, in return, provides an external party with access to an asset of the government. The IPSASB concluded that it is not necessary to identify a specific external party for a performance obligation to arise, but it is important to analyze such obligations in order to determine whether they include a requirement to provide an outflow of resources. Obligations that require an entity to provide access to a resource, but do not entail an outflow of resources do not give rise to liabilities. However, obligations that require an entity to forgo future resources may be liabilities. Performance obligations are often conditional obligations. Determining whether such obligations give rise to liabilities is dependent upon the terms of particular binding agreements and may vary between jurisdictions. The IPSASB concluded that the circumstances under which performance obligations give rise to liabilities should be considered at standards level.

Past Event

- BC5.28 The IPSASB considered whether the definition of a liability should require the existence of a past transaction or other event. Some take the view that identification of a past event is not an essential characteristic of a liability, and that, consequently, there is no need for the definition of a liability to include a reference to a past event. These commentators argue that there may be many possible past events and that establishing the key past event is likely to be arbitrary. They suggest that the identification of a past event is not a primary factor in determining whether a liability exists at the reporting date. This view mirrors the opposition to the inclusion of a past event in the definition of an asset, which is discussed in paragraphs BC5.15-BC5.18.
- BC5.29 The IPSASB acknowledges this view, but also noted that many respondents to the Consultation Paper and Exposure Draft consider that a past event is a characteristic of a liability. The IPSASB agrees with the view that the complexity of many public sector programs and activities and the number of potential points at which a present obligation might arise means that, although challenging, identification of the past event that gives rise to a liability is critical in determining when public sector liabilities should be recognized.

Little or No Realistic Alternative to Avoid

- BC5.30 Some respondents to the Exposure Draft expressed concerns that the phrase “little or no realistic alternative to avoid” in the description of a present obligation is open to different interpretations. They proposed removal of the words “little or” from this phrase in order to reduce the potential for misinterpretation. The IPSASB considered this proposal. The IPSASB was concerned that such a change might be interpreted as establishing a threshold test of virtual certainty in determining whether a present obligation exists. The IPSASB considers such a threshold too high. Consequently, the IPSASB confirmed that a present obligation is a legally binding or non-legally binding requirement that an entity has little or no realistic alternative to avoid.
- BC5.31 Determining when a present obligation arises in a public sector context is complex and, in some cases, might be considered arbitrary. This is particularly so when considering whether liabilities can arise from obligations that are not enforceable by legal or equivalent means. In the context of programs to

deliver social benefits there are a number of stages at which a present obligation can arise and there can be significant differences between jurisdictions, even where programs are similar, and also over time within the same jurisdiction—for example, different age cohorts may have different expectations about the likelihood of receiving benefits under a social assistance program. Assessing whether a government cannot ignore such expectations and therefore has little or no realistic alternative to transfer resources may be subjective. This gives rise to concerns that such subjectivity undermines consistency in the reporting of liabilities, and can also impact adversely on understandability. Some therefore take the view that an essential characteristic of a liability should be that it is enforceable at the reporting date by legal or equivalent means.

- BC5.32 A converse view is that where a government has a record of honoring obligations, failing to recognize them as liabilities leads to an overstatement of that government’s net financial position. According to this view, if a government has a consistent record of raising citizen expectations through publicly-announced obligations to provide financial support—for example to the victims of natural disasters—and has met such obligations in the past, a failure to treat such obligations as liabilities is not in accordance with the objectives of financial reporting, and leads to the provision of information that does not meet the qualitative characteristics of faithful representation and relevance.
- BC5.33 On balance, the IPSASB agrees with those who argue that, in the public sector, liabilities can arise from binding obligations that the entity has little or no realistic alternative to avoid, even if they are not enforceable in law. The IPSASB decided to use the term “non-legally binding obligations” for such obligations in the Conceptual Framework. However, the IPSASB acknowledges the views of those who are skeptical that liabilities can arise from obligations that are not legally enforceable. Consequently, paragraph 5.23 of this Chapter identifies the attributes that a non-legally binding obligation is to possess for it to give rise to a liability.
- BC5.34 The wide variation in the nature of public sector programs and operations, and the different political and economic circumstances of jurisdictions globally, means that categorical assertions of the circumstances under which obligations not enforceable in law become binding and give rise to present obligations are inappropriate. However, the IPSASB is of the view that present obligations are extremely unlikely to arise from election pledges. This is because electoral pledges will very rarely, (a) create a valid expectation on the part of external parties that the entity will honor the pledge, and (b) create an obligation which the entity has no realistic alternative but to settle. Therefore the Framework includes a presumption that liabilities do not arise from electoral pledges. However, it is accepted that in practice a government with a large majority will be better placed to enact intended legislation than a minority government, and that there may be infrequent circumstances where a government announcement in such circumstances might give rise to a liability. In assessing whether, in these circumstances, a non-legally binding obligation gives rise to a liability the availability of funding to settle the obligation may be an indicator. This is discussed in paragraph 5.25.

Sovereign Power to Avoid Obligations

- BC5.35 The sovereign power to make, amend and repeal legal provisions is a key characteristic of governments. Sovereign power potentially allows governments to repudiate obligations arising from both exchange and non-exchange transactions. Although in a global environment such a power may be constrained by practical considerations, there are a large number of examples of governments defaulting on financial obligations over the last century. The IPSASB considered the impact of sovereign power on the definition of a liability. The IPSASB concluded that failing to recognize obligations that otherwise meet the definition of a liability on the grounds that sovereign power enables a government to walk away from such obligations would be contrary to the objectives of financial reporting and, in particular, may conflict with the qualitative characteristics of relevance and faithful representation. Many respondents to the Consultation Paper and the Exposure Draft supported this position. The IPSASB therefore concluded that the determination of the existence of a liability should be by reference to the legal position at the reporting date.

Commitments

- BC5.36 Commitment accounting procedures are a central component of budgetary control for public sector entities in many jurisdictions. They are intended to assure that budgetary funds are available to meet the government’s or other public sector entity’s responsibility for a possible future liability, including intended or outstanding purchase orders and contracts, or where the conditions for future transfers of

funds have not yet been satisfied. Commitments which satisfy the definition of a liability and the recognition criteria are recognized in financial statements, in other cases information about them may be communicated in notes to the financial statements or other reports included in GPFRs. The IPSASB concluded that commitment accounting might be addressed in the future when dealing with elements for the more comprehensive areas of general purpose financial reporting outside the financial statements.

Net Financial Position, Other Resources and Other Obligations²¹

BC5.37 This section of the Basis for Conclusions outlines the IPSASB’s approach to models of financial performance to be reported in the financial statements, and specifically the treatment of deferred inflows and deferred outflows.

Consultation Paper, Elements and Recognition in Financial Statements

BC5.38 The Consultation Paper discussed two contrasting approaches to financial performance:

- An approach that measures financial performance as the net result of all changes in the entity’s resources and obligations during the period. This was described as the asset and liability-led approach; and
- An approach that measures financial performance as the result of the revenue inflows and expense outflows more closely associated with the operations of the current period. This was described as the revenue and expense-led approach.

BC5.39 The Consultation Paper noted that the two different approaches could lead to different definitions of the elements related to financial performance and financial position. The revenue and expense-led approach is strongly linked to the notion of inter-period equity. Inter-period equity refers to the extent to which the cost of programs and providing services in the reporting period is borne by current taxpayers and current resource providers. The asset and liability-led approach is linked to the notion of changes in resources available to provide services in the future and claims on these resources as a result of period activity.

BC5.40 A further section of the Consultation Paper discussed *Other Potential Elements* and pointed out that, if IPSASB adopted the revenue and expense-led approach, IPSASB would need to address deferred flows. Under this approach, deferred flows are items that do not meet the proposed definitions of revenue and expense, but which are nevertheless considered to affect the financial performance of the period. The Consultation Paper identified three options for dealing with such flows:

- Defining deferred inflows and deferred outflow as elements on the statement of financial position;
- Broadening the asset and liability definitions to include items that are deferrals; or
- Describing deferred flows as sub-classifications of net assets/net liabilities (subsequently referred to as the residual amount).

BC5.41 The Consultation Paper had two specific matters for comment on these areas. The first asked constituents to indicate whether they preferred the asset and liability-led approach or revenue and expense-led approach and to indicate their reasons. The second asked whether deferred inflows and deferred outflows need to be identified on the statement of financial position. If respondents supported identification on the statement of financial position they were asked to indicate which of the three approaches in paragraph BC5.40 they supported.

BC5.42 The responses to these specific matters for comment were inconclusive. A small majority of respondents expressing a view favored the asset and liability-led approach. However, a number of respondents who supported the asset and liability-led approach also indicated that they favored identifying deferrals on the statement of financial position. The IPSASB took these views into account at Exposure Draft stage.

²¹ As noted in the NZASB’s Basis for Conclusions on the PBE Conceptual Framework, the NZASB replaced some references to net financial position in the IPSASB’s Conceptual Framework with references to equity.

Exposure Draft, Elements and Recognition in Financial Statements

BC5.43 The Exposure Draft expressed a view that it is important to be able to distinguish flows that relate to the current reporting period from those that relate to specified future reporting periods. The Exposure Draft therefore proposed the following definitions of a deferred inflow and a deferred outflow:

- *A deferred inflow is an inflow of service potential or economic benefits provided to the entity for use in a specified future reporting period that results from a non-exchange transaction and increases net assets; and*
- *A deferred outflow is an outflow of service potential or economic benefits provided to another entity or party for use in a specified future reporting period that results from a non-exchange transaction and decreases net assets.*

BC5.44 The two key features of these definitions were:

- The proposed elements were restricted to non-exchange transactions; and
- The flows had to be related to a specified future period.

BC5.45 The IPSASB’s rationale for including these characteristics were as risk-avoidance measures to reduce the possibility of deferred inflows and deferred outflows being used widely as smoothing devices, and to ensure that deferred inflows and deferred outflows are not presented on the statement of financial position indefinitely. The Exposure Draft included two Alternative Views. The first Alternative View considered the meaning of net financial position to be unclear in light of the combined impact of deferred inflows and deferred outflows. The second Alternative View disagreed with the view that deferred inflows and deferred outflows should be identified and recognized as separate elements and expressed a view that these flows meet the definitions of revenue and expense.

BC5.46 Many respondents disagreed with defining deferred inflows and deferred outflows as elements. Some expressed reservations about the implications for alignment with the International Accounting Standards Board’s Conceptual Framework, and International Financial Reporting Standards more generally. A number of respondents considered that the proposed approach did not reflect economic reality and that it would be more difficult to determine an objective basis for deferring revenue and expense under the revenue and expense-led approach. Nevertheless, a number of respondents also expressed the view that information on flows relating to particular reporting periods has information value.

BC5.47 The rationale for restricting the definitions to non-exchange transactions was challenged as conceptually weak both by respondents who favored defining deferred inflows and deferred outflows as elements and those opposed to these proposed elements. Respondents also disagreed with the restriction to specified time periods, because it would potentially lead to the different accounting treatment of very similar transactions dependent upon whether a specific period was identified—a grant without conditions receivable by an entity to finance its general activities for a five year period would have met the definition of a deferred inflow, whereas a similar grant for a future unspecified period would have met the definition of revenue.

Finalizing the Elements Chapter

BC5.48 The IPSASB considered that it needed to balance the limited support for the proposals on deferred flows in the Exposure Draft, and the perceived needs of users for information about flows relating to particular reporting periods.

BC5.49 The IPSASB therefore considered five options (A–E below) in responding to input from the due process and its perception of users’ information needs:

- A. Defining deferred inflows and deferred outflows as elements in a more principles-based manner and not specifying the financial statements in which the elements are to be recognized. As such, the Conceptual Framework would not predetermine the presentation of the elements;
- B. Deriving the definitions of revenue and expense from the asset and liability definitions;
- C. Broadening the asset and liability definitions;

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- D. Accepting that certain economic phenomena that do not meet the definition of any element may need to be recognized in financial statements in order to meet the objectives of financial reporting; and
- E. Reporting inflows and outflows that provide service potential or economic benefits, but do not affect assets and liabilities as defined in the Framework and reporting inflows and outflows that do not affect revenue and expense.
- BC5.50 The IPSASB does not consider that defining deferred inflows and deferred outflows as elements in Option A is justified in light of the objections that respondents had made to the proposals in the Exposure Draft. The IPSASB therefore rejected Option A.
- BC5.51 The IPSASB considered two variants of Option B. In the first variant deferred flows would be taken directly to surplus/deficit, while in the second variant deferred flows would initially be taken to residual amount and then recycled to surplus/deficit in the period that time stipulations occur.
- BC5.52 The IPSASB considers that taking deferred flows directly to surplus/deficit under the first variant of Option B may not produce information that is representationally faithful of an entity's sustainable performance and therefore does not meet the objectives of financial reporting. The second variant of Option B relies on recycling and, in the view of some IPSASB members would have implicitly introduced the notion of "other comprehensive income" into the Framework. The IPSASB has strong reservations about such a development. For these reasons the IPSASB rejected Option B.
- BC5.53 The IPSASB noted that Option C would require changes to the definitions of an asset and a liability so that:
- The definition of an asset would include resources that an entity does not control; and
 - The definition of a liability would include obligations that are not present obligations.
- The IPSASB considers that such changes would distort the essential characteristic of an asset—that an entity controls rights to resources—and the essential characteristic of a liability—that an entity has a present obligation for an outflow of resources. In the view of the IPSASB this would make assets and liabilities less easily understandable. Adoption of such an option would also be a departure from globally understood definitions of an asset and a liability. For these reasons the IPSASB rejected Option C.
- BC5.54 Option E was a hybrid approach that involved components of the other four options. It would allow reporting of inflows and outflows that provide service potential or economic benefits, but would not affect the definitions of an asset and liability and the reporting of inflows and outflows that do not affect revenue and expense as defined in the Framework. The idea of this approach was to acknowledge that further conceptual thinking on financial performance is necessary.
- BC5.55 Option D is broader than Option E because it is not necessarily restricted to deferred flows, but could encompass broader economic phenomena—for example obligations that are not present obligations, because, although they contain performance obligations, it is not clear that they require an outflow of resources. Option D acknowledges that there may be circumstances under which the six elements defined in the Conceptual Framework may not provide all the information in the financial statements that is necessary to meet users' needs. In the view of the IPSASB it is transparent to acknowledge that other items may be recognized. Unlike Option A, Option D does not involve defining additional elements, and, unlike Option C, Option D does not involve modification of generally understood definitions of an asset and a liability.
- BC5.56 The IPSASB concluded that Option D provides the most transparent approach. The overarching term "other economic phenomena" is used in the introductory section of this Chapter to describe such items and the more detailed terms "other obligations" and "other resources" are used subsequently. Option D also enhances the accountability of the IPSASB because the circumstances under which other obligations and other resources will be recognized will be determined at standards level and explained in the Bases for Conclusions of specific standards.

Financial Statements

- BC5.57 Net financial position is the aggregate of an entity's net assets (assets minus liabilities) and other resources and other obligations recognized in the statement of financial position at the reporting date.

Where resources and obligations other than those that meet the definition of the elements are recognized in the financial statements, the amounts reported as net assets and net financial position will differ. In these circumstances, the interpretation of net financial position will be determined by reference to the nature of the other resources and other obligations recognized in the financial statements under the relevant IPSAS.

- BC5.58 The IPSASB considered whether it should use both the terms “net assets” and “net financial position” in the Conceptual Framework. The IPSASB acknowledges a view that net assets is a generally understood term. However, the IPSASB considered that using both terms could be confusing and therefore decided to use the term “net financial position” to indicate the residual amount of an entity.

Revenue and Expense

Gross or Net Increase in “Net Financial Position” in Definition of Revenue

- BC5.59 The IPSASB considered whether the definition of revenue should specify that the increase in net financial position is “gross” or “net”. The IPSASB acknowledges that a gross approach might not be appropriate in areas such as the disposal of property, plant, and equipment where such an approach would require the full disposal proceeds to be recognized as revenue, rather than the difference between the disposal proceeds and the carrying amount. Conversely, a net approach might be similarly inappropriate in certain circumstances—for example, the sale of inventory. The IPSASB concluded that whether the increase in net financial position represented by revenue is presented gross or net should be determined at standards level, dependent on which treatment better meets the objectives of financial reporting.

Distinguishing Ordinary Activities from Activities outside the Ordinary Course of Operations

- BC5.60 Some standard setters structure their definitions of elements so that, for example, inflows and outflows arising from transactions and events relating to activities in the ordinary course of operations are distinguished from inflows and outflows that relate to activities outside the ordinary course of operations. An example of this approach is to define revenue and expense as elements that relate to an entity’s “ongoing major or central operations”, and to define gains and losses as elements that relate to all other transactions, events and circumstances giving rise to increases or decreases in net assets.²²
- BC5.61 The IPSASB acknowledges that distinguishing transactions and events related to the ordinary course of operations from transactions and events outside the ordinary course of operations can provide useful information for users of the financial statements. Therefore, it may be useful to adopt the terms “gains and losses” to reflect inflows and outflows from transactions and events outside the ordinary course of operations. However, the IPSASB is of the view that, conceptually, gains and losses do not differ from other forms of revenue and expense, because they both involve net increases or decreases of assets and/or liabilities. The IPSASB also noted that many respondents to the Consultation Paper and Exposure Draft shared this view. Therefore the IPSASB decided not to define gains and losses as separate elements.

Ownership Interests in the Public Sector

- BC5.62 As discussed in more detail in BC5.66-BC5.70, the IPSASB considered whether, and, if so, under what circumstances, ownership interests exist in the public sector and whether transactions related to ownership interests should be excluded from the definitions of revenue and expense. Because transactions with owners, in their role as owners, are different in substance to other inflows and outflows of resources the IPSASB concluded that it is necessary to distinguish flows relating to owners from revenue and expense. Therefore ownership contributions and ownership distributions are defined as elements and excluded from the definitions of revenue and expense.

Surplus or Deficit in the Reporting Period

- BC5.63 This Chapter states that the difference between revenue and expense is the entity’s surplus or deficit for the period. The IPSASB considered whether it should provide explanatory guidance on the interpretation of surplus or deficit. The IPSASB discussed a view that public sector entities have

²² See, for example, Financial Accounting Standards Board, Statement of Financial Accounting Concepts No. 6, *Elements of Financial Statements*.

operating and funding models. According to this view a surplus provides an indicator of the ability of the entity to:

- Reduce demands for resources from resource providers;
- Increase either the volume and/or quality of services to recipients;
- Reduce debt (where an entity has debt-raising powers); or
- A combination of these factors.

BC5.64 Conversely a deficit provides an indicator of:

- The need to increase demands on resources from resource providers;
- Reduce either the volume and/or quality of services to recipients;
- Increase debt (where an entity has debt-raising powers); or
- A combination of these factors.

BC5.65 The IPSASB acknowledges that there is a need for greater clarity on the meaning of surplus or deficit in the public sector, and therefore that aspects of the above approach might be developed further in the future. However, the IPSASB considered the concept of an operating and funding model or business model is not well developed in the public sector, and that developing an operating and funding model appropriate for all public sector entities is problematic. Therefore, the IPSASB decided not to include guidance on the interpretation of surplus or deficit in the Conceptual Framework.

Ownership Contributions, and Ownership Distributions

BC5.66 The IPSASB considered whether net financial position is a residual amount, a residual interest or an ownership interest. The IPSASB acknowledges the view that the interest of resource providers and service recipients in the long-term efficiency of the entity, its capacity to deliver services in the future and in the resources that may be available for redirection, restructuring or alternative disposition is similar to an ownership interest. The IPSASB also accepts that the terms “residual interest” and “ownership interest” have been used in some jurisdictions to characterize third parties’ interests in net assets. The term “residual interest” indicates that service recipients and resource providers have an interest in the capability of the entity to finance itself and to resource future operations. The term “ownership interest” is analogous to the ownership interest in a private sector entity and, for some, indicates that the citizens own the resources of the public sector entity and that government is responsible to the citizens for the use of those resources. Some supporters of this approach argue that it emphasizes the democratic accountability of governments.

BC5.67 The IPSASB is of the view that the term “residual interest” may also suggest that service recipients and resource providers have a financial interest in the public sector entity. Similarly the term “ownership interest” may suggest that citizens are entitled to distributions from the public sector entity and to distributions of resources in the event of the entity being wound up. The IPSASB therefore concluded that the terms “residual interest” and “ownership interest” can be misunderstood or misinterpreted, and that net financial position is a residual amount that should not be defined.

BC5.68 However, the IPSASB acknowledges that part of net financial position can in certain circumstances be an ownership interest. Such instances may be evidenced by the entity having a formal equity structure. However, there may be instances where an entity is established without a formal equity structure, with a view to sale for operation as a commercial enterprise or by a private sector not-for-profit entity. An ownership interest can also arise from the restructuring of government or public sector entities, such as when a new government department is created. The IPSASB therefore considered whether ownership interests should be defined as an element. The IPSASB acknowledges the view that identifying the resources (or claims on future resources) attributable to owners provides information useful for accountability and decision-making purposes. The IPSASB concluded that such interests can be identified through the sub-classification of net financial position. However, the IPSASB also concluded that it is important to distinguish inflows of resources from owners and outflows of resources to owners, in their role as owners, from revenue, expense, other resources and other obligations. Therefore, ownership contributions and ownership distributions are defined as elements. Detailed guidance to support the assessment of whether certain inflows and outflows of resources satisfy the definitions of

ownership contributions and ownership distributions will be developed at standards level, as appropriate.

Chapter 6 Recognition in Financial Statements

Recognition and its Relationship to the Definition of the Elements

- BC6.1 The IPSASB considered whether recognition criteria should be integrated in definitions of the elements. The IPSASB acknowledges the view that the inclusion of recognition criteria in definitions of the elements enables preparers to consider all the factors that must be taken into account in evaluating whether an item of information is recognized as an element in the financial statements. However, the IPSASB is of the view that while there is overlap in factors to be considered in determining whether an item satisfies the definition of an element and whether that element qualifies for recognition, recognition should be considered as a distinct stage in the financial reporting process. This is because recognition is broader than whether the definition of an element is satisfied. The IPSASB also noted that few respondents to the Consultation Paper and Exposure Draft supported the integration of recognition criteria in element definitions. After considering the input from the due process, the IPSASB concluded that the definitions of elements should not include recognition criteria.
- BC6.2 In determining whether an element should be recognized there are two types of uncertainty that need to be considered. The first is uncertainty about whether the definition of an element has been satisfied. The second is measurement uncertainty—whether the element can be measured in a manner that achieves the qualitative characteristics. Measurement uncertainty is considered if it is determined that the definition of an element has been met. While recognition is viewed as a distinct stage in the accounting process, matters relevant to an assessment of uncertainty over the existence of an element will have been considered in determining whether the item satisfies the definition of an element.

Satisfying the Definition of an Element

- BC6.3 The IPSASB considered whether, in dealing with uncertainty over the existence of an element, standardized probability threshold criteria should be adopted, or whether all available evidence should be used to make neutral judgements about an element's existence.
- BC6.4 Standardized evidence thresholds filter out items that have a low probability of resulting in an inflow or outflow of service potential or the ability to generate economic benefits. Such items may have high monetary values, even though the probability of existence may be low. Some consider that it is more appropriate to disclose such items rather than to recognize them. Threshold criteria are also justified on cost grounds, because only after a preparer has formed an initial judgement about whether those threshold criteria have been met does that preparer consider how that element should be measured.
- BC6.5 The IPSASB formed a view that the adoption of thresholds for recognition purposes risks omitting information that is relevant and faithfully representative, because similar information items may be treated in different ways dependent upon relatively small differences in the probability of a flow of benefits. The IPSASB acknowledges that such risks can also exist for approaches which do not specify thresholds for recognition. This is because preparers will make their own assessments of the circumstances or "the threshold" that justifies recognition, and those assessments can change for different items and over time. However, the IPSASB concluded that, on balance, an approach that is based on an assessment of all available evidence in determining whether an element exists and takes account of uncertainty about the flows of service potential or the ability to generate economic benefits in measurement is a more appropriate response to the uncertainty faced by preparers of financial statements. It is more likely to result in the recognition of information that satisfies the qualitative characteristics than the establishment of an arbitrary threshold that must be adhered to. Guidance may be provided at standards level on dealing with circumstances in which there is significant uncertainty about whether an element exists in particular circumstances, and therefore whether it would satisfy the criteria for recognition.
- BC6.6 The IPSASB explored whether uncertainty about the existence of an element is specific to certain characteristics of assets and liabilities—in particular for assets whether an entity controls rights to a resource and for liabilities whether an entity has little or no realistic alternative to avoid an outflow of service potential or economic benefits. The rationale for such a view is that these are the essential characteristics of an asset and a liability where uncertainty is likely to arise.

- BC6.7 The IPSASB is of the view that, uncertainty relates to more than just these characteristics. There might also be uncertainty about the existence of a present obligation and a past event for liabilities and, for assets whether a resource that generates future economic benefits or service potential presently exists, rather than a future resource or future right to a resource. As noted in paragraph BC6.2, these matters will also have been considered in determining whether an item satisfies the definition of an element.

Derecognition

- BC6.8 The IPSASB considered whether the same criteria should be used for initial recognition and derecognition. Many of the respondents to the Consultation Paper and the Exposure Draft supported the use of the same criteria for derecognition as for initial recognition. The IPSASB concluded that adopting different recognition criteria would conflict with the qualitative characteristic of consistency as it would result in the recognition of items with different standards of evidence for their existence. Therefore, the same recognition criteria should be used for initial recognition and derecognition.

Chapter 7 Measurement of Assets and Liabilities in Financial Statements

The Role of Measurement in the Conceptual Framework

- BC7.1 The IPSASB decided that the initial focus of the Conceptual Framework should be on measurement of the elements for the financial statements in order to put future standard setting activities for the financial statements on a sound and transparent footing. While a few respondents to the Consultation Paper, *Measurement of Assets and Liabilities in Financial Statements* (the Consultation Paper), questioned this approach, the IPSASB considered that the original rationale for restricting the scope of this phase was sound and reaffirmed it.

The Objective of Measurement

- BC7.2 The IPSASB considered whether a specific measurement objective should be developed. The IPSASB initially took the view that a separate measurement objective was unnecessary, because a measurement objective might compete with, rather than complement, the objectives of financial reporting and the qualitative characteristics. Accordingly, Exposure Draft, *Measurement of Assets and Liabilities in Financial Statements* (the Exposure Draft), proposed factors relevant to the selection of a measurement basis consistent with the objectives of financial reporting and the qualitative characteristics, but did not include a measurement objective.
- BC7.3 Consistent with this approach the Exposure Draft proposed that the Conceptual Framework would not seek to identify a single measurement basis (or combination of bases) for all circumstances. The IPSASB acknowledged that proposing a single measurement basis to be used in all circumstances would clarify the relationship between different amounts reported in the financial statements—in particular, it would allow the amounts of different assets and liabilities to be aggregated to provide meaningful totals. However, the IPSASB is of the view that there is no single measurement basis that will maximize the extent to which financial statements meet the objectives of financial reporting and achieve the qualitative characteristics.
- BC7.4 The Exposure Draft included an Alternative View which proposed a measurement objective on the grounds that a Conceptual Framework that does not connect the objective of measurement with the objectives of financial reporting is incomplete and would limit the ability of the IPSASB to make consistent decisions about measurement across financial reporting standards and over time. Further, in the absence of a measurement objective, the Alternative View considered that there is a risk that different and/or inappropriate measurement bases could be used to measure similar classes of assets and liabilities. The Alternative View proposed the following measurement objective:
- To select those measurement attributes that most fairly reflect the financial capacity, operational capacity and cost of services of the entity in a manner that is useful in holding the entity to account, and for decision-making purposes.*
- BC7.5 Many respondents, while generally in favor of the approach in the Exposure Draft, supported the Alternative View. The IPSASB also acknowledges the view that the Conceptual Framework’s approach to measurement should be aspirational and that the Conceptual Framework should identify a single

measurement basis underpinned by an ideal concept of capital²³. The IPSASB accepts that the operating capability concept is relevant and could be developed for public sector entities with a primary objective of delivering services. However, adoption of such a measurement objective involves a virtually explicit acknowledgement that current cost measures are superior to historical cost measures in representing operational capacity when financial position is reported. For the reasons discussed in paragraphs BC7.15–BC7.19, the IPSASB considers that historical cost measures often meet the measurement objective and therefore should be given appropriate emphasis in the Conceptual Framework.

BC7.6 Subsequently the IPSASB was persuaded by the views of those who argue that a measurement objective is necessary in order to guide standard-level decisions on the selection of measurement bases. However, the IPSASB notes that assets and liabilities contribute to the financial performance and financial position of entities in different ways and that such an assessment should be based on the extent to which they contribute to financial capacity and operational capacity. The IPSASB concluded that linking a measurement basis to an ideal concept of capital might unduly restrict the choice of measurement bases. The IPSASB therefore rejected the view that adoption of measurement objective should be based on an ideal concept of capital and reaffirmed its view that a mixed measurement approach is appropriate for standard-setting in the public sector.

BC7.7 The IPSASB considered whether the measurement objective proposed in the Alternative View was appropriate. Some argued that the proposed measurement objective was too aligned to current value measures. However the IPSASB formed a view that the reference to “cost of services” provides a sufficient link to historical cost, because the cost of services can be determined using both historical cost and current value measures. The IPSASB therefore adopted the following measurement objective with only a minor modification from that proposed in the Alternative View:

To select those measurement bases that most fairly reflect the cost of services, operational capacity and financial capacity of the entity in a manner that is useful in holding the entity to account, and for decision-making purposes.

BC7.8 The IPSASB also notes that the disadvantages of using different measurement bases may be minimized by:

- Selecting different measurement bases only where this is justified by economic circumstances, thereby ensuring that assets and liabilities are reported on the same basis where circumstances are similar; and
- Requiring transparent presentation and disclosure to ensure that the measurement bases used and the amounts reported on each basis are clear.

Initial and Subsequent Measurement

BC7.9 A measurement basis needs to be selected both when an asset or liability is recognized for the first time—initial measurement— and when it is reported in the financial statements of a later period—subsequent measurement. Some accounting policies are expressed in a way that may suggest that different principles apply to initial and subsequent measurement. For example, an asset may initially be recognized at transaction price and subsequently at a current value. The IPSASB therefore considered whether the Conceptual Framework should discuss initial and subsequent measurement separately.

BC7.10 One reason why different measurement bases may be specified for initial and subsequent measurement is that the basis to be used for subsequent measurement is not available at the time of initial measurement. This is particularly common in the public sector where assets are sometimes contributed, or provided on subsidized terms, or in exchange for other non-cash assets. In such a case the value of the transaction may be unknown, and if the asset is to be subsequently accounted for at an entry value such as historical cost or replacement cost, another basis has to be specified for initial measurement as a surrogate for the amount at which the asset would be stated if purchased on arm’s-length terms. Surrogates may also be required for the initial measurement of assets acquired before the introduction of accrual accounting where the transaction price is not known. The use of surrogates that meet the

²³ Such concepts of capital include invested money capital, current cash equivalents and operating capability.

measurement objective and the qualitative characteristics is an application of a measurement basis rather than a departure from it.

- BC7.11 Another reason for an apparent difference in initial and subsequent measurement arises where an asset is to be accounted for at a current value, and the transaction price is deemed to reflect the particular current measurement basis that will be used. In such a case, specifying that the asset is to be initially recognised at transaction price makes it clear that that application of the policy will not result in the recognition of revenue and expense on initial recognition—“day one” gains or losses. In principle, the same measurement basis is used for both initial and subsequent recognition—the requirements for each are specified differently in order to assist understanding.
- BC7.12 The IPSASB concluded that, in principle, the same considerations apply to initial and subsequent measurement. Accordingly the discussion in this Chapter is applicable to both situations.

Entry and Exit Values: Value in Use

- BC7.13 Measurement bases can be classified according to whether they provide an entry or exit perspective. As discussed in paragraph 7.8 entry values reflect the cost of purchase and exit values reflect either:

- The economic benefits from immediate sale; or
- The amount that will be derived from the asset from its use and subsequent sale.

The IPSASB is of the view that awareness of whether a measurement basis is an entry or exit value is useful in determining which measurement basis best meets the measurement objective.

- BC7.14 The IPSASB considered whether value in use should be classified as an entry value or an exit value. For a cash-generating asset value in use involves a discounted cash flow model using expected cash flows from the sale of good and services. For non-cash-generating assets value in use uses replacement cost as a surrogate—replacement cost is an entry value. This led some to express a view that for a non-cash-generating asset value in use has an entry perspective while an asset is being used and an exit perspective when sold—in this view a failure to indicate that value in use contains both entry and exit perspectives does not reflect public sector circumstances. The IPSASB acknowledges this view, but does not think that the use of replacement cost as a surrogate to calculate value in use means that value in use becomes an entry value. The IPSASB therefore concluded that value in use is an exit value for both cash-generating and non-cash-generating assets.

Measurement Bases for Assets

Historical Cost

- BC7.15 Historical cost is a widely applied measurement basis in many jurisdictions. Many respondents to the Consultation Paper and the Exposure Draft advocated the continued widespread use of historical cost as a measurement basis, mostly in combination with other measurement bases. They supported this view by reference to the accountability objective and the understandability and verifiability of historical cost. They also noted that, because historical cost is widely adopted in combination with other measurement bases, its continued use avoids the costs that would arise if a future revision of a current standard that requires or permits historical cost were to require the use of a different measurement basis.
- BC7.16 Some respondents considered that historical cost information provides a highly relevant basis for the reporting of the cost of services because the link between historical cost and the transactions actually undertaken by the entity is particularly important for an assessment of accountability. In particular, historical cost provides information that resource providers can use to assess the fairness of the taxes they have been assessed, or how the resources that they have otherwise contributed in a reporting period have been used.
- BC7.17 The IPSASB agrees that, in many contexts, it is relevant to provide information on the transactions actually carried out by the entity, and accepts that users are interested in the cost of services based on actual transactions. Historical cost provides information on what services actually cost in the reporting period, rather than what they will cost in the future; pricing decisions based on historical cost information may promote fairness to consumers of services.
- BC7.18 The IPSASB also acknowledged the views of those who consider that the use of historical cost facilitates a comparison of actual financial results and the approved budget. The IPSASB accepts that

budgets may often be prepared on a historical cost basis and that where this is the case historical cost enhances comparison against budget.

- BC7.19 The IPSASB also acknowledged a contrary view: that assessing and reporting the cost of providing services in terms of the value that has been sacrificed in order to provide those services provides useful information for both decision making and accountability purposes. Because historical cost does not reflect the value of assets at the time they are consumed, it does not provide information on that value in circumstances where the effect of price changes is significant. The IPSASB concluded that it is important that the Conceptual Framework responds to both these contrasting perspectives.

Market Value and Fair Value

- BC7.20 The Exposure Draft did not propose fair value as a measurement basis. Rather it proposed market value, which was defined in the same way as fair value in the IPSASB's literature at the time the Conceptual Framework was developed. A number of respondents challenged the omission of fair value as a measurement basis. They pointed out that fair value is a measurement basis that is defined and used in specifying measurement requirements by many global and national standard setters and that a definition of fair value had been used extensively in IPSASB's literature. Many supporters of fair value considered that the definition should be an exit value as defined in International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).²⁴
- BC7.21 The IPSASB's rationale for the approach proposed in the Exposure Draft was that fair value is similar to market value and the inclusion of both measurement bases could be confusing to users of financial statements. The IPSASB also noted that fair value in IFRS is explicitly an exit value—unlike the definition of fair value in the IPSASB's literature at the time the Conceptual Framework was developed. Therefore, the relevance of fair value in the public sector is likely to be primarily limited to providing information on financial capacity, rather than on providing information on operating capacity and the cost of services. In addition, in this Chapter replacement cost is a measurement basis in its own right, rather than a valuation technique to determine fair value.
- BC7.22 In the public sector many assets are specialized and differences in entry and exit prices are therefore significant. Where an asset will provide future services or economic benefits with a greater value than the asset's exit price, a measure reflecting exit values is not the most relevant basis. Where the most resource efficient course is to sell the asset—because the value of the services that it will provide or the expected cash flows from use is not as great as the value receivable from sale, the most relevant measurement basis is likely to be net selling price, which reflects the costs of sale and, although likely to be based on market evidence, does not assume the existence of an open, active and orderly market.
- BC7.23 In considering the merits of fair value as a measurement basis, the IPSASB accepted that fair value provides a relevant basis for assessing a financial return. Where assets are stated at fair value, financial performance can be assessed in the context of the return implicit in market values. However, public sector activities are not generally carried out with a view to obtaining a financial return, so the relevance of assessing any such return is limited.
- BC7.24 In finalizing the measurement chapter the IPSASB considered three main options in dealing with this issue:
- Adopt an exit value-based definition of fair value;
 - Retain the definition of fair value in IPSAS prior to the development of the Conceptual Framework; or
 - Include market value, rather than fair value, as a measurement basis as proposed in the Exposure Draft.
- BC7.25 Adopting an exit value-based definition of fair value would have meant using a definition that is not well aligned with the objectives of most public sector entities—the delivery of services rather than the generation of cash flows. It is questionable whether exit value-based measures would provide relevant information for many assets held for their operational capacity and for liabilities where it is not feasible to transfer the liability.

²⁴ IFRS 13, *Fair Value Measurement*, provides the definition of fair value.

- BC7.26 Including the IPSASB's current definition of fair value or a slightly modified version of that definition in the Conceptual Framework would have meant that two global standard setters would have different conceptual definitions of the same term.
- BC7.27 The IPSASB acknowledged that not including fair value as a measurement basis would have implications for the IPSASB's extant literature at the time the Conceptual Framework was finalized, because a number of IPSAS's contained fair value in measurement requirements or options.
- BC7.28 On balance, the IPSASB concluded that, rather than include an exit value-based definition of fair value, or a public sector specific definition of fair value, the Conceptual Framework should include market value as a measurement basis rather than fair value. The IPSASB sees fair value as a model to represent a specific measurement outcome. The IPSASB may carry out further work at standards level to explain how the measurement bases in this Chapter align with fair value, as implemented in IFRS.

Replacement Cost, Net Selling Price and Value in Use

- BC7.29 Because, the objective of public sector entities is to deliver services, often in non-exchange transactions, rather than to make profits many non-financial assets are held for operational purposes. Furthermore, many of these assets are specialized and unlikely to be purchased or sold in open, active and orderly markets. Market value facilitates an assessment of financial capacity and operational capacity where operational assets are not specialized and are traded in open, active and orderly markets. However, current measurement bases other than market value are necessary in order to provide useful information on the cost of services and operational capacity where assets are specialized and where market-based information is limited.
- BC7.30 In evaluating measurement bases that provide the most useful information for specialized operational assets the IPSASB sought a basis that reflects the continuing provision of goods and services by public sector entities. The most appropriate basis for such assets is one that provides information on the cost of service potential that is attributable to an asset.
- BC7.31 The IPSASB considered reproduction cost as a potential measurement basis. Reproduction cost is easily understandable. However, it reflects the cost of obtaining an identical asset, rather than the cost of replacing the service potential provided by an asset. Therefore, reproduction cost may reflect features of assets that no longer serve any economic purpose and its use may exaggerate the value of an asset. Replacement cost avoids this risk because it is based on the most economic cost required for the entity to replace the service potential of an asset. While accepting that the calculation of replacement cost may in some cases be complex and involve subjective judgments, the IPSASB concluded that replacement cost is the current value measurement basis that often best meets the measurement objective and achieves the qualitative characteristics. The IPSASB acknowledged that guidance will be necessary at standards level on the approach to implementation of replacement cost.
- BC7.32 The IPSASB acknowledged that replacement cost will not always be an appropriate measurement basis for specialized operational assets. There may be circumstances where an entity no longer intends to continue to operate an asset. In such circumstances replacement cost is not a useful measurement basis, because it would not be rational for the entity to replace the service potential provided by an asset. The IPSASB therefore considered the appropriate measurement basis for such circumstances. Under these circumstances an entity-specific measurement basis that reflects the constraints on sale for an entity and provides an exit value is more appropriate. The IPSASB concluded that net selling price best meets the measurement objective. Net selling price is therefore included as a measurement basis in this Chapter. Net selling price also provides information that meets the measurement objective, where an entity is contractually required, or in a binding arrangement, to sell an asset at below market value, perhaps in order to meet a social or political objective.
- BC7.33 In order to provide a complete analysis of the circumstances under which public sector entities operate, the IPSASB also considered the situation where it would not be rational for an entity to seek to replace the service potential embodied in an asset, but it is still more rational for the entity to continue to operate the asset than to sell it immediately. Value in use includes the cash flows or service potential from continued operation of the asset and the proceeds of sale. The IPSASB therefore concluded that value in use should be included as a potential measurement basis. The IPSASB acknowledged that this measurement basis is not straightforward to operationalize in a non-cash-generating context, and that, in determining value in use, it might therefore be necessary to use replacement cost as a surrogate.

Fair Value Model

- BC7.34 As indicated in paragraph BC7.20 the Exposure Draft did not propose fair value as a measurement basis in its own right. However, it proposed the fair value measurement model as a method of estimating a measurement where it had been determined that market value is the appropriate measurement basis, but the market is inactive or otherwise not open or orderly.
- BC7.35 A minority of respondents to the Exposure Draft supported the fair value measurement model. Some of these respondents thought that the IPSASB should provide further details of its application. Others were supportive of the model, but suggested that a detailed measurement model would be inappropriate for the Conceptual Framework—some of these respondents considered that it should be addressed as a standards-level estimation technique. Many respondents put forward a view that fair value should be proposed as a measurement basis in its own right using the IFRS definition, while others wanted more detail on approaches to estimating fair value to complement its adoption as a measurement basis. Conversely, other respondents expressed a view that fair value is inappropriate for the public sector
- BC7.36 The IPSASB found the views of those who considered the fair value model too low level for the Conceptual Framework persuasive. The IPSASB also accepted the view of those respondents who felt that not defining fair value as a measurement basis, but reintroducing fair value through the model was confusing. The IPSASB therefore decided not to include the fair value model in the final chapter.

Deprival Value Model

- BC7.37 The Consultation Paper discussed the deprival value model as a rationale for selecting a current value basis. Some respondents expressed reservations—in particular that the model would be costly and impose a disproportionate burden on preparers to have to consider three possible measurement bases for each asset that is reported. A number of respondents also considered that it is overly complex. A view was also expressed that the deprival value model unduly exaggerates the qualitative characteristic of relevance and neglects the other qualitative characteristics.
- BC7.38 Although the IPSASB recognized that the deprival value model has been adopted successfully in some jurisdictions, the IPSASB acknowledged such reservations in whole or part. The IPSASB therefore included the deprival value model in the Exposure Draft as an optional method of choosing between replacement cost, net selling price, and value in use where it had been decided to use a current measurement basis, but the appropriate basis could not be identified by reference to the objectives of financial reporting and the qualitative characteristics.
- BC7.39 Although a minority of respondents to the Exposure Draft were highly supportive of the deprival value model, many respondents continued to express reservations about the model's complexity. The IPSASB also acknowledged a technical ambiguity in the deprival value model—if net selling price is higher than replacement cost a development opportunity might be indicated and that users should be provided with this information, which the deprival value model would not do. Due to these factors the IPSASB decided not to include the deprival value model in the Conceptual Framework. However, some of the insights provided by the model in its analysis of the relationship between replacement cost, net selling price and value in use have been retained—for example, that it is inappropriate to measure an asset at replacement cost if the higher of net selling price or value in use is lower than replacement cost.

Symbolic Values

- BC7.40 In some jurisdictions certain assets are recognized on the statement of financial position at symbolic values, typically one unit of the presentation currency. This treatment is adopted in order to recognize assets on the face of the statement of financial position when it is difficult to obtain a valuation. Supporters of symbolic values consider that they provide useful information to users of financial statements and facilitate a linkage between asset management and accounting processes.
- BC7.41 The IPSASB acknowledges that such an approach is intended to provide useful information. However, the majority of IPSASB members took the view that symbolic values do not meet the measurement objective, because they do not provide relevant information on financial capacity, operational capacity or the cost of services. The majority of the IPSASB concluded that the decision whether to recognize an item as an asset should be made following an assessment of whether the item meets the definition of an asset and recognition criteria in Chapter 5, *Elements in Financial Statements*, and Chapter 6, *Recognition in Financial Statements*. The IPSASB also accepted that, in cases where, it is impossible

or very costly to obtain a valuation, it is important that the information to be provided through disclosures is carefully considered at standards level.

Measurement Bases for Liabilities

Assumption Price and Cost of Release

- BC7.42 The IPSASB acknowledged the views of those who noted that, as many services are provided by public sector entities in non-exchange transactions there will often not be an assumption price. The IPSASB accepted that the circumstances under which assumption price will meet the measurement objective are limited. However, insurance and similar obligations, such as financial guarantees, are liabilities where assumption price might provide relevant and faithfully representative information. In such cases liabilities might be revalued at assumption price to reflect changes in risk premiums following initial recognition.
- BC7.43 Some respondents to the Exposure Draft also questioned whether cost of release should be included. The IPSASB acknowledged that in many cases in the public sector, particularly for non-exchange transactions, there is unlikely to be a cost of release, because there will not be an external party willing to accept the transfer of a liability from the obligor for a specified amount. Even where a cost of release can be determined the external party is unlikely to accept a sum lower than cost of fulfillment in settlement. Therefore, liabilities arising from non-exchange transactions are likely to be measured at the cost of fulfillment, and this will often be the only practical and relevant measurement basis. Nevertheless the IPSASB decided to retain assumption price and cost of release as measurement bases in the Conceptual Framework as there may be limited circumstances where these measurement bases meet the measurement objective.

Other Issues

- BC7.44 The Consultation Paper sought the views of respondents on the following two issues related to measurement:
- The treatment of an entity's own credit risk and changes in value attributable to changes in an entity's own credit risk; and
 - Whether the measurement of an asset should reflect only the service potential relating to its existing use, or whether the measurement of an asset should include the incremental value relating to its possible alternative use.
- BC7.45 The majority of respondents who commented on these issues considered that they were more appropriately dealt with at standards level rather than in the Conceptual Framework. The IPSASB concurred with this view, and these issues are accordingly not addressed in the Conceptual Framework. The IPSASB noted that where a market value is used to measure a liability it is necessary to consider the treatment of the entity's own credit risk.

Chapter 8 Presentation in General Purpose Financial Reports

Concepts Applicable to Presentation in GPFs

- BC8.1 This Chapter describes concepts applicable to presentation in GPFs, including both financial statements and additional information that enhances, complements, and supplements the financial statements. During development of this Chapter some respondents to the Consultation Paper, *Presentation in General Purpose Financial Reports* (the Consultation Paper), and the Exposure Draft, *Presentation in General Purpose Financial Reports* (the Exposure Draft), argued that the IPSASB should focus exclusively on the financial statements. Some respondents who supported the proposed more comprehensive approach considered that the resulting concepts should also be sufficiently detailed to address issues particular to financial statements.
- BC8.2 The IPSASB considers that effective presentation of information in both financial statements and other GPFs is very important in meeting the objectives of financial reporting. Presentation of information in other GPFs raises particular challenges for the IPSASB and preparers, which makes the development of applicable concepts essential to guide the development of presentation requirements in both IPSASs and RPGs. Nevertheless, the IPSASB acknowledged the need to provide concepts that are sufficiently detailed for application to the financial statements. Therefore this Chapter describes

presentation concepts for all GPFs, and sets out the concepts applicable to financial statements in more depth.

Presentation in the Financial Statements

- BC8.3 The further detail provided on financial statements responds, as noted above, to the need to ensure that the concepts proposed are applicable to the financial statements. However, this Chapter does not propose the number or type of financial statements that should be specified in IPSASs and RPGs. This approach acknowledges that, internationally, some preparers treat the “primary” financial statements as a minimum requirement, with flexibility for the preparer to add further statements—for example, additional statements that list commitments or public sector debt—to the financial statements required by IPSASs. It is also consistent with the need to avoid over-specification at the Conceptual Framework level.
- BC8.4 This Chapter also does not attempt to identify a list of information that should be included in the financial statements, including the notes. This means that the presentation concepts applicable to the financial statements will remain relevant as changes occur in areas such as:
- The type of information required to adequately meet the objectives of financial reporting;
 - The information technology available to present information in GPFs; and
 - The type of economic or other phenomena on which financial statements present information.

Language in which Financial Statements and Other GPFs are issued

- BC8.5 Some respondents to the Exposure Draft expressed a view that the language (or languages) in which the financial statements and other GPFs are issued has implications for whether they will support achievement of the objectives of financial reporting and achieve the qualitative characteristics. Responding to this concern the IPSASB decided that this Chapter should address the language(s) in which GPFs are issued. The quality of any translation will impact on the usefulness of a GPF to users who depend on that translation. The quality of translation should be sufficient to ensure that the translated version(s) are faithful to the original language version. A faithful translation enables users to obtain the same understanding as that of an original language speaker reading the original language version.

Presentation, Display and Disclosure

- BC8.6 During development of this Chapter descriptions of “presentation”, “display”, “disclosure”, “core information”, and “supporting information” were proposed. Respondents had different views on whether the descriptions were appropriate. There was significant support for the description of presentation, which covered the selection, location and organization of information. Some respondents opposed the introduction of such descriptions, because they considered that the terms “presentation” and “disclosure” have been widely used by standard setters and have generally accepted meanings. Some respondents to the Exposure Draft advocated the alignment of the IPSASB’s terminology with the presentation terminology for the financial statements under development by the International Accounting Standards Board in its project to update its Conceptual Framework.
- BC8.7 The IPSASB considers that having terminology that applies to all information included in GPFs, rather than just the financial statements, may prevent full alignment with terminology that relates only to the financial statements. If the term “presentation” applies to information that conveys key messages in the financial statements, then extending the same term to other information included in GPFs changes the meaning of the term. The term “display” signals that information that conveys key messages can be selected for either the financial statements or other information included in GPFs.
- BC8.8 The IPSASB is of the view that the distinction between presentation and disclosure used in some jurisdictions, where presentation applies to the process of reporting information on the face of a statement and disclosure applies to the process of reporting information in the notes, is inadequate for presentation concepts for GPFs. Distinctions focused on the financial statements have limited usefulness and may be confusing for other GPFs outside the financial statements. In the context of the financial statements, display and disclosure support a clear distinction between the process of reporting information on the face of a financial statement—display—and that of reporting information

in the notes to the statements—disclosure. For these reasons the IPSASB retained the descriptions of presentation, display and disclosure proposed in the Exposure Draft with revised explanations.

- BC8.9 The description of presentation proposed in the Consultation Paper included both what presentation is—information selection, location and organization—and what presentation should do—it should meet the objectives of financial reporting, the needs of users, and achieve the qualitative characteristics. After further consideration the IPSASB decided that separation of these two areas would better facilitate consideration of presentation issues. Therefore presentation is described as information selection, location and organization. There is also a description of what presentation aims to achieve, which is to provide information that contributes to the objectives of financial reporting, and achieves the qualitative characteristics while taking into account the constraints on information included in GPFRs.
- BC8.10 Some respondents considered the distinction between core and supporting information proposed in the Consultation Paper implied that information in the notes to the financial statements is less important than information on the face of a statement and that it created a hierarchy. Although the IPSASB did not intend to imply that supporting information is less important than core information the IPSASB acknowledged such concerns. The IPSASB therefore reconsidered the need for a distinction between core and supporting information and concluded that incorporating the ideas related to these two types of information into the descriptions of display and disclosure within each GPFR would be more appropriate. Consequently the terms core information and supporting information were not retained in the Exposure Draft and the descriptions of display and disclosure were revised to explain what types of information would be displayed and what disclosed, without the implication that one type of information is more important than the other. This approach is reflected in this Chapter.
- BC8.11 The IPSASB also considered whether all GPFRs contain both information for display and information for disclosure, and whether it is possible to have a GPFR that only contains information for disclosure. Because key messages exist for each type of GPFR, and information to convey those key messages needs to be displayed, the IPSASB concluded that all GPFRs contain both information for display and information for disclosure.

Overall Approach to Presentation

- BC8.12 The Consultation Paper proposed an approach to presentation of:
- Focusing on user needs to identify presentation objectives;
 - Applying the qualitative characteristics to presentation decisions; and
 - Identifying separate presentation concepts—the proposed concepts were Concept 1: Select information that meets user needs, satisfies the cost-benefit test, and is sufficiently timely; Concept 2: Locate information to meet user needs; and Concept 3: Organize information to make important relationships clear and support comparability.

The Consultation Paper also proposed that presentation objectives should be established at the standards level, for application to particular reports or reporting topics.

- BC8.13 Respondents generally agreed that the needs of users and achievement of the qualitative characteristics were important for presentation decisions. They supported the development of presentation objectives, but advocated that such objectives should be included in the Conceptual Framework, rather than just at standards level. Although they generally agreed that separate presentation concepts should be developed, a significant number of respondents disagreed with the three presentation concepts proposed. Some respondents disagreed with the way that the three presentation concepts emphasized particular qualitative characteristics or constraints on information included in GPFRs. They argued that other qualitative characteristics or constraints should be addressed. Others argued that the concepts added little, if anything, to the discussion of the qualitative characteristics and constraints on information included in GPFRs in Chapter 3, *Qualitative Characteristics*.
- BC8.14 On balance the IPSASB concluded that a simpler, more focused approach, which directly applied the concepts in Chapters 1–4 to presentation decisions was appropriate. The IPSASB is of the view that decisions on information selection, location and organization are made in response to the needs of users for information about economic or other phenomena. Presentation decisions are made to seek to achieve the objectives of financial reporting, and they involve application of the qualitative characteristics and constraints on information included in GPFRs.

- BC8.15 Presentation decisions may be either (a) decisions that may result in development of a new report, movement of information between reports, or the amalgamation of existing reports; or, (b) detailed decisions on information selection, location and organization related to information within a report. It is useful to distinguish between these two types of presentation decisions in the context of the more comprehensive scope of financial reporting discussed in Chapter 2. Both types of decisions are important and there is no intention to convey a hierarchy. The difference is one of breadth or sequencing of decisions—for example, a decision to create a new report conveys that a broad set of information will be presented. The subsequent, more specific decisions will address what is presented within that report and are equally important.
- BC8.16 The need to distinguish between the display and disclosure of information is a further important aspect of the IPSASB’s overall approach to presentation. An example of a detailed decision within a report is a decision about whether information should be displayed on the face of a financial statement or disclosed in the notes.

Presentation Objectives

- BC8.17 As stated above, in the Consultation Paper the IPSASB proposed the development of “presentation objectives” to guide presentation decisions. Although many respondents supported identifying presentation objectives the IPSASB decided against the inclusion of presentation objectives in this Chapter, because they would create an unnecessary additional layer of objectives beneath the objectives of financial reporting in Chapter 2. Development of a second layer of presentation objectives could be confusing and detract from the objectives of financial reporting. This approach was proposed in the Exposure Draft and was generally supported by respondents.

Application of the Qualitative Characteristics and Constraints

- BC8.18 During development of this Chapter many respondents supported application of the qualitative characteristics to presentation decisions. However, some respondents expressed reservations that the constraints on information included in GPFRs had not been properly integrated into the overall approach to presentation. The IPSASB agrees that the constraints apply to presentation decisions. They are therefore included in the overall approach to presentation and in subsequent discussion of the application of the three presentation decisions.

Presentation Concepts

- BC8.19 After considering respondents’ concerns about the three presentation concepts proposed in the Consultation Paper and possible further changes to address those concerns, the IPSASB concluded that the ideas in the three concepts were adequately addressed through application of the qualitative characteristics and constraints on information included in GPFRs to presentation decisions. Therefore, in the Exposure Draft the IPSASB replaced the three presentation concepts proposed in the Consultation Paper with a revised description of the application of the qualitative characteristics and constraints on information included in GPFRs to presentation decisions. Respondents to the Exposure Draft generally supported the direct application of the concepts established in Chapters 1–4, rather than development of an intermediary set of either presentation concepts or presentation objectives.

Information Organization: Links to External Information

- BC8.20 Chapter 2 of the Conceptual Framework explains that users of GPFRs may also need to consider information from other sources, including reports on current and anticipated economic conditions, budgets and forecasts, and information about government policy initiatives not reported in GPFRs. The IPSASB considered whether GPFRs should include links to such information. Although the IPSASB acknowledged the risk that such information may not achieve the qualitative characteristics, the IPSASB concluded that such links can support understandability. Therefore, provided information from external sources does not undermine achievement of the qualitative characteristics the IPSASB concluded that GPFRs might include links to such information.

Part B

Effective Date

This Authoritative Notice is effective for financial statements covering periods beginning on or after 1 January 2017. Earlier application is permitted provided an entity has applied, or is applying, PBE Standards, PBE SFR- A (NFP) *Public Benefit Entity Simple Format Reporting – Accrual (Not-For-Profit)* or PBE SFR- A (PS) *Public Benefit Entity Simple Format Reporting – Accrual (Public Sector)*.