



January 18, 2017

Ms. Wendy M. Payne
Executive Director
Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board
Mailstop 6H19
441 G Street, NW, Suite 6814
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Payne:

On behalf of the Association of Government Accountants (AGA), the Financial Management Standards Board (FMSB) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments to the Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board (FASAB) on its September 26, 2016 exposure draft entitled *Leases: An amendment of Statement of Federal Financial Accounting Standards (SFFAS) 5, Accounting for Liabilities of the Federal Government and SFFAS 6, Accounting for Property, Plant, and Equipment*. The FMSB is comprised of 22 members (list attached) with accounting and auditing backgrounds in federal, state and local government, as well as academia and public accounting. The FMSB reviews and responds to proposed standards and regulations of interest to AGA members. Local AGA chapters and individual members are also encouraged to comment separately.

The FMSB has reviewed the exposure draft and overall supports the adoption of this standard by the FASAB and have answered the questions requested by FASAB.

Q1. The Board is proposing to define a **lease** as a contract or agreement that conveys the right to use a nonfinancial asset (the underlying asset) for a period of time in an exchange transaction. The current lease standards, Statement of Federal Financial Accounting Standards (SFFAS) 5, *Accounting for Liabilities of the Federal Government* and SFFAS 6, *Accounting for Property, Plant, and Equipment*, do not specifically define a lease. SFFAS 5 and SFFAS 6 only define a capital lease as a “lease that transfers substantially all the benefits and risks of ownership to the lessee.” The Board believes that the more concise definition being proposed is broad enough to capture the diversity of federal leasing activities. The proposed lease definition is presented in paragraph 9 and further explained in paragraph A15.

Do you agree or disagree with the proposed definition of lease presented in paragraph 9 and further explained in paragraph A15? Please provide the rationale for your answer.

We agree with the proposed definition.

Q2.

The Board is proposing that the **lease term** be determined as the period during which a lessee has a noncancelable right to use an underlying asset (referred to as the noncancelable period) plus each option period if it is probable, based on all relevant factors, that the lessee will exercise that option to extend the lease. The lease term proposal also provides guidance on the noncancelable period and on how specific provisions (such as fiscal funding/cancellation clauses and month-to-month lease holdovers) should be applied. The proposed lease term requirements are presented in paragraphs 14 – 18 and further explained in paragraphs A16 – A18.

Do you agree or disagree with the proposed guidance on determining the lease term as presented in paragraphs 14 - 18 and further explained in A16 – A18? Please provide the rationale for your answer.

We agree that it's a reasonable approach since FASAB has frequently used the term "probable," and is employing its own definition of "probable". However, it should be noted as a result of this definition a state or local government, private or not-for-profit entity will have accounting information that is asymmetrical to the FASAB's definition of "probable". (We understand the GASB may conclude on a "reasonably certain" threshold).

Q3. The Board is proposing that at the beginning of the lease term, a lessee should recognize a lease liability and a property, plant, and equipment right-to-use lease asset (the lease asset), except for intragovernmental and short-term leases. The proposed lease recognition requirements are presented in paragraph 19.

Do you agree or disagree with the proposed lessee recognition of a lease at the beginning of the lease term as presented in paragraph 19? Please provide the rationale for your answer.

We agree.

Q4. The Board is proposing that a lessee should measure the **lease liability** initially at the present value of payments to be made for the lease term. In addition, the measurement of the lease liability should include the several types of payments that might be required by a lease. The proposed lease liability measurement and recognition requirements are presented in paragraphs 21– 29 and further explained in paragraphs A20 – A21.

Do you agree or disagree with the proposed lessee measurement and recognition of the lease liability as presented in paragraphs 21 - 29 and further explained in paragraphs A20 – A21? Please provide the rationale for your answer.

We agree that present value is the best approach determining the value of the asset and liability. It is a systematic and rational way to determine the value of a series of payments over a long-term, resulting in the retirement of a liability at an incremental borrowing rate.

Q5. The Board is proposing that the future lease payments should be discounted using the rate the lessor charges the lessee, which may be the interest rate implicit in the lease. If the rate cannot be reasonably estimated by the lessee, the lessee's incremental borrowing rate (the estimated rate that would be charged for borrowing the lease

payment amounts for the lease term) should be used. The specific proposed requirement is presented in paragraph 23.

- a. **Do you agree or disagree that the rate the lessor charges the lessee, which may be the interest rate implicit in the lease, should be used to measure the future lease payments as presented in paragraph 23? Please provide the rationale for your answers.**

We agree the implicit rate is a cost to the lessee and should be presented accordingly. (See item b herein).

- b. **Do you agree or disagree that the lessee's incremental borrowing rate should be used to measure the future lease payments when the lessor rate cannot be reasonably estimated by the lessee as presented in paragraph 23? Please provide the rationale for your answers.**

While we agree that the "Treasury borrowing rate for securities of similar maturity to the term of the lease," we are not sure what FASAB was trying to communicate when stating "unless the entity has its own borrowing authority" and would ask FASAB to provide clarification on how that statement would affect the lease process, as it is not discussed in the Basis for Conclusions.

- Q6.** The Board is proposing that the lessee should remeasure the lease liability at subsequent financial reporting dates if certain changes have occurred and are expected to significantly affect the amount of the lease liability. The Board is also proposing that the lease asset should generally be adjusted by the same amount when the corresponding lease liability is remeasured based on those changes. Additionally, if the change reduces the carrying value of the lease asset to zero, any remaining amount should be reported in the flows statement as a gain. The proposed lessee requirements for remeasurement are presented in paragraphs 25 – 29, 33, and further explained in paragraph A19.

- a. **Do you agree or disagree with the circumstances when the lessee must remeasure the lease liability as presented in paragraph 25? Please provide the rationale for your answer.**

We agree with the re-measurement for the reasons the FASAB states in paragraph 25. However, paragraph A19 does not provide a rationale for re-measuring the asset. There is a basis in FASAB concepts for re-measurement as stated in SFFAC 7 the FASAB identified the "advantages and disadvantages of reporting initial amounts and *remeasured amounts* and of applying different measurement attributes," but *did not draw any conclusions* "as to which measurement approach or attribute" may be preferable either in general or in particular circumstances. Such conclusions are the *province of the standard-setting process*, in the course of which the concepts in this Statement will be considered on a project-by-project basis, along with cost-benefit considerations and other practical reporting concerns that may arise under different alternatives." [par. 22, emphasis added]

- b. **Would the requirements triggering remeasurement cause undue costs? Please provide the rationale for your answer.**

While we believe that remeasurement can cause additional costs it is hard to ascertain the magnitude of the costs since each entity's leases are unique and depend on the type and the number of leases. We highly encourage FASAB to keep the remeasurements requirements to the minimum, focusing on those items that would have the material effect on the lease amount.

- c. Do you agree or disagree with the effect of the remeasurement on the carrying value of the lease asset as presented in paragraph 33 and further explained in paragraph A19? Please provide the rationale for your answer.**

We agree with the re-measurements on the carrying value but recommend FASAB provide additional explanations in Paragraph A19 regarding what was considered in determining the list in A19.

- Q7.** The Board is proposing that a lessee should measure the lease asset initially as the sum of (1) the amount of the initial measurement of the lease liability, (2) lease payments made to the lessor at or before the beginning of the lease, less any lease incentives received from the lessor, and (3) initial direct costs that are ancillary charges necessary to place the lease asset into service. The proposed lessee lease asset measurement and recognition requirements are presented in paragraphs 30 – 34 and further explained in paragraph A22.

Do you agree or disagree with the proposed lessee measurement and recognition of the lease asset as presented in paragraphs 30 - 34 and further explained in paragraph A22? Please provide the rationale for your answer.

We agree the right to use the asset meets the FASAB asset definition. The obligation to make the lease payments meets the FASAB definition of a liability. We also agree with paragraph A22 that: "PP&E assets generally are measured at historical cost, which is the amount paid for those assets. Therefore, measuring the lease asset based on the lease liability is consistent with historical cost accounting applicable to PP&E."

- Q8.** The Board is proposing that at the beginning of the lease term, a lessor should recognize a lease receivable and deferred revenue, except for intragovernmental and short-term leases. The proposed requirements for the measurement and recognition of the lessor lease receivable and deferred revenue are presented in paragraphs 36 – 48 and further explained in paragraphs A23 - A24.

Do you agree or disagree with the proposed lessor measurement and recognition of the lease receivable and deferred revenue as presented in paragraphs 36 - 48 and further explained in paragraphs A23 - A24? Please provide the rationale for your answer.

We agree.

- Q9.** The Board is proposing to define a short-term lease as a lease that, at the beginning of the lease, has a maximum possible term under the contract/agreement of 24 months or less, including any options to extend, regardless of its probability of being exercised. The proposed requirements for the measurement and recognition of a short-term lease are presented in paragraphs 59 – 61 and further explained in paragraph A25.

Do you agree or disagree with the proposed definition and measurement and recognition of a short-term lease as presented in paragraphs 59 - 61 and further explained in paragraph A25? Please provide the rationale for your answer.

We agree that aligning the lease short-term exception with the PP&E standard (asset – 24 months or more) is logical and practical. The reporting will reduce implementation costs in the first year.

- Q10.** The Board is proposing to establish distinct standards for intragovernmental leases. An intragovernmental lease is a contract or agreement that conveys the right to use an asset (the underlying asset) for a period of time in exchange for consideration occurring within a consolidation entity or between two or more consolidation entities as defined under SFFAS 47, Reporting Entity. The proposed requirements for the measurement, recognition, and disclosure of intragovernmental leases are presented in paragraphs 75 – 95 and further explained in paragraphs A26 - A29.

Do you agree or disagree with the proposed definition, measurement, recognition, and disclosures of intragovernmental leases as presented in paragraphs 75 - 95 and further explained in paragraphs A26 - A29? Please provide the rationale for your answer.

We agree but believe FASAB doesn't provide a strong enough basis for the conclusion other than pragmatism and cost containment. Based on a GSA presentation, "the Board agreed that intragovernmental leases should be accounted for differently than leases between federal entities and non-federal entities. The Board agreed that a simplified approach for recognizing intragovernmental leases would be pragmatic and cost efficient." While we are in favor of cost savings, we believe more rationale is needed.

- Q11.** The Board is proposing that leases unexpired at the beginning of the reporting period in which the standard is implemented be recognized and measured using the facts and circumstances that exist at the beginning of the reporting period. The proposed implementation requirements are presented in paragraphs 99 -100.

Do you agree or disagree with the proposed prospective implementation approach as presented in paragraphs 99 - 100? Please provide the rationale for your answer.

We agree the prospective implementation approach is the most efficient and cost effect when implementing the proposed standard.

- Q12.** The Board is proposing that the requirements of this Statement be effective for reporting periods beginning after September 30, 2018. The proposed effective date is presented in paragraph 101.

Do you agree or disagree with the proposed effective date as presented in paragraph 101? Please provide the rationale for your answer.

With various proposed exposure drafts and new standards issued we highly encourage FASAB to review the timing of all the new standards and if needed to extend the implementation date of this proposed standard.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this document and will be pleased to discuss this letter with you at your convenience. If there are any questions regarding the comments in this letter, please contact Lealan Miller, CGFM, FMSB Chair, at lmiller@eidebailly.com or at 208-383-4756.

Sincerely,



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Chair- AGA Financial Management Standards Board

Association of Government Accountants
Financial Management Standards Board

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