

June 14, 2013

## Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board

## REPORTING ENTITY

## Statement of Federal Financial Accounting Standards

## Exposure Draft

## Railroad Retirement Board Comments

Q1. The Board is proposing three inclusion principles for an organization to be included in the government-wide GPFFR:

- ☐ An organization with an account or accounts listed in the *Budget of the United States Government: Analytical Perspectives—Supplemental Materials* schedule entitled “Federal Programs by Agency and Account” unless the organization is a non-federal organization receiving federal financial assistance
- ☐ An organization in which the federal government holds a majority ownership interest
- ☐ An organization that is controlled by the federal government with risk of loss or expectation of benefit

In addition, the Board is proposing that an organization be included in the government-wide GPFFR if it would be misleading to exclude it even though it does not meet one of the three inclusion principles.

**a. Do you agree or disagree with each of the inclusion principles? Please provide the rationale for your answer.**

*RRB Response: Agree*

**b. Do you believe the inclusion principles, and the related definitions and indicators, are helpful and clear? Please provide the rationale for your answer.**

*RRB Response: Agree*

**c. Do you agree or disagree that an organization should be included in the GPFFR if it would be misleading to exclude it even though it does not meet one of the three inclusion principles? Please provide the rationale for your answer.**

*RRB Response : Agree*

**d. Do you agree the inclusion principles can be applied to all organizations, such as the Federal Reserve System, Federally Funded Research and Development Centers, Government Sponsored Enterprises, museums, and others, to determine whether such organizations should be included in the government-wide GPFFR? Please provide the rationale for your answer.**

*RRB Response : No comment.*

Q2. The Board proposes distinguishing between two types of organizations in GPFFRs and this distinction will ultimately determine how they are reported: consolidation entities and disclosure organizations. Consolidation entities generally are (1) financed by taxes or other non-exchange revenue as evidenced by their inclusion in the budget, (2) governed by the Congress and/or the President, (3) imposing or may impose risks and rewards on the federal government, and/or (4) providing goods and services on a non-market basis. In contrast, disclosure organizations are those that (1) receive limited or no funding from general tax revenues, (2) have less direct involvement, and influence, by the Congress and/or the President, (3) impose limited risks and rewards on the federal government, and/or (4) are more likely to provide goods and services on a market basis.

The Board proposes consolidation entities be consolidated in the government-wide financial statements and the information about disclosure organizations be disclosed in notes. The Board also proposes that certain factors and objectives be considered in determining the information about disclosure organizations to be disclosed in notes. The Statement allows flexibility in the information presented as long as the disclosure objectives are met. The Statement also provides examples of information that may meet objectives.

Refer to paragraphs 37- 53 and 64-77 of the proposed standards and paragraphs A30-A54, A62-A63 and A71-A81 in Appendix A - Basis for Conclusions for a discussion and related explanation.

**a. Do you agree or disagree with the concept of distinguishing between consolidation entities and disclosure organizations? Please provide the rationale for your answer.**

*RRB Response : Modification: We suggest another category which is "modified consolidated entity". In this instance, an entity would have its net assets combined in the balance sheet and Statement of Social Insurance (if appropriate) of the Federal Report and information about disclosure organizations be disclosed in notes. In this instance, the entity would provide its audited net asset figure to the appropriate federal government agency for inclusion in the agency's financial statements and the FR. This separate category would be applicable to the situation that our agency incurs in relation to NRRIT (non-federal govt entity).*

#### National Railroad Retirement Investment Trust

The NRRIT was established by the Railroad Retirement and Survivors' Improvement Act of 2001 (RRSIA). The sole purpose of the NRRIT is to manage and invest railroad retirement assets. The NRRIT is a tax-exempt entity, independent from the Federal Government and not subject to Title 31, United States Code (USC). The NRRIT is domiciled in and subject to the laws of the District of Columbia.

The NRRIT is comprised of a Board of seven Trustees, three selected by railroad labor unions and three by railroad companies. The seventh Trustee is an independent Trustee selected by the other six. Members of the Board of Trustees are not considered officers or employees of the Government of the United States.

The RRSIA authorizes the NRRIT to invest railroad retirement assets in a diversified investment portfolio in the same manner as those of private sector retirement plans. Prior to the RRSIA, investment of railroad retirement assets was limited to U.S. Government securities.

The NRRIT and the RRB are separate entities. The RRB remains a Federal agency and continues to have full responsibility for administering the railroad retirement program, including eligibility determinations and the calculation of benefit payments. The NRRIT has no powers or authority over the administration of benefits under the railroad retirement program. Under the RRSIA, the NRRIT is required to act solely in the interest of the RRB, and through it, the participants and beneficiaries of the programs funded under the RRA. The RRSIA does not delegate any authority to the RRB with respect to day-to-day activities of the NRRIT, but the RRSIA provides that the RRB may bring a civil action to enjoin any act or practice of the NRRIT that violates the provisions of the RRSIA or to enforce any provision of the RRSIA.

Under the RRSIA, the financial statements of the NRRIT are required to be audited annually by an independent public accountant. In addition, the NRRIT must submit an annual management report to the Congress on its operations, including a Statement of Financial Position, a Statement of Operations, a Statement of Cash Flows, a Statement on Internal Accounting and Administrative Control Systems, the independent auditor's report, and any other information necessary to inform the Congress about the operations and financial condition of the NRRIT. A copy of the annual report must also be submitted to the President, the RRB, and the Director of OMB.

- b. Do you agree or disagree with the attributes used to make the distinction between consolidation entities and disclosure organizations? Please provide the rationale for your answer and identify additional attributes, if any, that you believe should be considered.**

*RRB Response : See a. above*

- c. Do you agree or disagree that, assuming the organizations are determined to be organizations included in the GPFFRs, the attributes are adequate to make a determination of whether organizations such as the Federal Reserve System, Federally Funded Research and Development Centers, museums, and others are consolidation entities or disclosure organizations? Please provide the rationale for your answer and identify any organizations you believe the attributes could not be adequately applied to, and additional attributes, if any, you believe are needed to address these organizations.**

*RRB Response : No comment.*

- d. Do you agree or disagree with:**
- i. the factors to be considered in making judgments about the extent of appropriate disclosures (see par. 69),**
  - ii. the objectives for disclosures (see par. 72), and**
  - iii. the examples provided (see par. 73)?**

*RRB Response: Agree*

Q3. The Board proposes each component reporting entity report in its GPFFR organizations for which it is

accountable; that includes consolidation entities and disclosure organizations administratively assigned to it. Administrative assignments can be identified by evaluating:

- ☐ the scope of the budget process,
- ☐ whether accountability is established within a component reporting entity, or
- ☐ rare instances of other significant relationships such that it may be misleading to exclude an organization not administratively assigned based on the previous two principles.

The Board recognizes that in rare instances it also may be misleading to include an organization that is administratively assigned to a reporting entity based on the above principles. In such cases, the organization may be excluded.

Refer to paragraphs 54-63 of the proposed standards and paragraphs A55-A61 in Appendix A - Basis for Conclusions for a discussion and related explanation.

- a. Do you agree or disagree that each component reporting entity should report in its GPFFR organizations for which it is accountable, which includes consolidation entities and disclosure organizations administratively assigned to it? Please provide the rationale for your answers.**

*RRB Response : Agree*

- b. Do you agree or disagree that administrative assignments can be identified as provided in paragraphs 54-63? Please provide the rationale for your answers.**

*RRB Response : Agree*

Q4. The Statement provides for each reporting entity (the government-wide and component reporting entities) to consolidate financial information for all consolidation entities for which it is accountable without regard to funding source (for example, appropriations or donations). For certain organizations, such as museums and performing arts organizations, this may lead to consolidating funds from sources such as donations that are presently not consolidated in the government-wide GPFFR. Refer to paragraphs 54-64 of the proposed standards and paragraph A19 in Appendix A - Basis for Conclusions for a discussion and related explanation.

**Do you agree or disagree that each component reporting entity (for example, museums) and the government-wide reporting entity should consolidate in their entirety organizations for which it is accountable without regard to funding source, including those receiving appropriations and donations? Please provide the rationale for your answers.**

*RRB Response : See Q2 a.*

Q5. For consolidation entities, the Statement proposes that FASAB and Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) based information should be consolidated without conversion of FASB-based information to a FASAB basis.

Refer to paragraphs 65- 66 of the proposed standards and paragraphs A66-A70 in Appendix A - Basis for Conclusions for a discussion and related explanation.

**Do you agree or disagree that consolidation of FASAB and FASB based information without conversion for consolidation entities is appropriate? Please provide the rationale for your answers.**

*RRB Response : No comment*

Q6. Central banking (through the Federal Reserve System) is a unique federal responsibility with distinctive characteristics. The proposed standards do not specify that the central banking system be included in GPFFRs or whether, if included, it would be classified as a consolidation entity or a disclosure organization. Because of the unique nature and magnitude of central banking transactions, and the fact there is only one organization of this type, the Board proposes certain minimum disclosures regarding the central banking system. These disclosures would be required in addition to any other reporting requirements regarding the central banking system. The information should be disclosed in the government-wide GPFFR and the GPFFR of any reporting entity to which it may be primarily associated with or administratively assigned. Depending on the circumstances, some of the minimum disclosures may have been addressed in other requirements. The resultant disclosures should be integrated so that concise, meaningful, and transparent information is provided and information is not repetitive.

Refer to paragraph 77 of the proposed standards and paragraphs A30-A37 in Appendix A - Basis for Conclusions for a discussion and related explanation.

**a.Do you agree or disagree with the minimum disclosures for the central banking system or believe there are additional disclosures that should be considered? Please provide the rationale for your answer.**

*RRB Response: No comment.*

**b. Do you believe there are other significant organizations for which minimum disclosures should be made? Please specify which entities, if any, and the nature of disclosures and provide the rationale for your answer.**

*RRB Response: No comment.*

Q7. The Board proposes a definition of related parties and disclosures for related parties where the relationship is of such significance that it would be misleading to exclude disclosures about the relationship. The proposal also provides a list of the types of organizations that generally would or would not be considered related parties.

Refer to paragraphs 78 -87 of the proposed standards and paragraphs A82-A84 in Appendix A – Basis for Conclusions for a discussion and related explanation.

**a. Do you agree or disagree with the related parties definition and requirements? Please provide the rationale for your answer.**

*RRB Response : Agree*

**b. Do you agree or disagree with the list of the types of organizations that generally would be considered related parties? Please provide the rationale for your answer.**

*RRB Response : Agree*

**c. Are there additional organizations that generally should be considered related parties? Please provide the rationale for your answer.**

*RRB Response : No comment*

**d. Do you agree or disagree with the list of exclusions? Please provide the rationale for your answer.**

*RRB Response : Agree*

**e. Are there additional exclusions that should be considered? Please provide the rationale for your answer.**

*RRB Response : No comment*

Q8. The Board proposes conforming changes to Statement of Federal Financial Accounting Concepts (SFFAC) 2, *Entity and Display*, to rescind or amend language to remove criteria for determining what organizations are required to be included in a federal reporting entity's GPFFR from the concepts statement because criteria will be in a statement of federal financial accounting standards. Refer to paragraphs 88-101 of the proposed standards and paragraphs A85-A88 in Appendix A - Basis for Conclusions for a discussion and related explanation.

**Do you agree or disagree with the conforming changes to SFFAC 2? Please provide the rationale for your answer.**

*RRB Response : Agree with having the changes in one place in the accounting guidance.*

Q9. The Board proposes the Statement and Amendments to SFFAC 2, *Entity and Display*, be effective for periods beginning after September 30, 2016. Refer to paragraph 102 of the proposed standards.

**Do you agree or disagree with this effective date? Please provide the rationale for your answer.**

*RRB Response : Disagree. Reporting entities should be given additional time, especially if consolidation is necessary. Propose the change be effective for periods beginning after September 30, 2020.*

Q10. The Statement provides two non-authoritative appendices to assist users in the application of the proposed standards. The Flowchart at Appendix B is a tool that can be used in applying the principles established. The Illustrations at Appendix C offer hypothetical examples that may be useful in understanding the application of the standards.

Refer to Appendix B-Flowchart and Appendix C-Illustration.

**a. Do you agree the appendices are helpful in the application of the proposed standards?**

*RRB Response : Agree*

**b. Do you believe the appendices should remain after the Statement is issued?**

*RRB Response : Agree*

**c. Do you believe there should be any changes or additional examples regarding the illustrations that would be useful in understanding the application of the standards? Please provide rationale to support your answer.**

*RRB Response : no*

**Q11. Are there other unique situations that should be addressed within this Statement? Please explain fully and also how the situation is not addressed by this Statement when considered in its entirety.**

*RRB Response : Yes. We have a unique situation due to reporting of net assets for NRRIT (non-federal government entity). We may not be able to provide the audited figures for consolidation to the Federal government agency in time to meet the 45 day time table for submission to the Department of the Treasury due to timing of completing agency's financial statements audited position before the data is provided to Treasury and non-federal government entity's audited position of net assets included in agency's financial statements.*

Q12. One member has an alternative view regarding receiverships, conservatorships, and interventions. The Board member does not believe receiverships, conservatorships, and intervention organizations should be equated with other disclosure organizations. He believes guidance in the proposed standards gives the impression that these organizations are part of the federal government. Further, he believes all types of interventions should be addressed in the Board's project on risk assumed.

The other members believe the proposed standards appropriately distinguish between consolidation entities and disclosure organizations including receiverships, conservatorships, and interventions resulting in ownership or control. The Board deliberated alternatives regarding such organizations, including creating an "exception" similar to the approach taken in SFFAC 2, but determined an exception would be rules-based rather than principles-based. Such an exception would require more detailed guidance, or "rules," to aid in determining whether ownership or control of such organizations is expected or intended to be permanent.

Instead, the proposed standards establish principles for when relationships with organizations create a need for accountability, and how information should be included in GPFFRs. The Board believes it is important to address



these relationship matters in a single Statement of Federal Financial Accounting Standards and has not proposed exceptions. The Board also addresses in this proposed Statement whether organizations are required to apply the GAAP hierarchy for federal reporting entities. Disclosure organizations are not required to apply the GAAP hierarchy for federal reporting entities and this should avoid giving the impression that all disclosure organizations included in GPFFRs are federal reporting entities or "part of the federal government." To further avoid giving this impression, the Board clarified that it is not the purpose of this Statement of Federal Financial Accounting Standards to assist in determining what entities are "part of the federal government" for legal or political purposes.

Refer to paragraphs 7, 13-14, 41, 49-53, and 65 of the proposed standards and paragraphs A1-A2, A9-A11, A20-A23, A30-A31, A44-A54, and A89-A93 in Appendix A – Basis for Conclusions for a discussion and related explanation.

**a. Do you agree or disagree with the alternative view that the proposed standards should not equate receiverships, conservatorships, and interventions with other disclosure organizations to avoid an inference that they are part of the Federal government? Please provide the rationale for your answer.**

*RRB Response :* No comments at this time.

**b. Do you agree or disagree with the alternative view that the guidance for all interventions, regardless of type, should be presented in a single Statement of Federal Financial Accounting Standard? Please provide the rationale for your answer.**

*RRB Response :* No comments at this time.