Statutory Issue Paper No. 111

Software Revenue Recognition

STATUS
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Current Authoritative Guidance for Software Revenue Recognition: SSAP No. 16R
This issue paper may not be directly related to the current authoritative statement.

Original SSAP from Issue Paper: SSAP No. 81

Type of Issue:
Common Area

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

1.   During the development of the initial Statements of Statutory Accounting Principles (SSAP) issues related to software revenue recognition were deemed to be not applicable to statutory accounting. Since the development of the initial SSAPs, significant changes have occurred in the world of technology and the opportunities available to insurance entities to license, sell, lease or otherwise market computer software have greatly expanded.

2.   Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) guidance for software revenue recognition was originally addressed in Statement of Position (SOP) 91-1, *Software Revenue Recognition*. SOP 91-1 was published to provide guidance on applying GAAP to software transactions and to narrow the range of revenue recognition practices that were in use before its issuance. Since the distribution of SOP 91-1, practice issues have been identified that are not addressed adequately in SOP 91-1. Therefore, the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) issued SOP 97-2, *Software Revenue Recognition* to replace SOP 91-1. SOP 97-2 has been modified by the issuance of SOP 98-4, *Deferral of the Effective Date of a Provision of SOP 97-2, Software Revenue Recognition* and SOP 98-9, *Modification of SOP 97-2, Software Revenue Recognition, With Respect to Certain Transactions*. SOP 97-2 has also been interpreted by the Emerging Issues Task Force (EITF) 00-3, *Application of AICPA Statement of Position 97-2 to Arrangements That Include the Right to Use Software Stored on Another Entity's Hardware*.

3.   The purpose of this issue paper is to address SOP 97-2, SOP 98-4, SOP 98-9 and EITF 00-3 and establish statutory accounting principles that are consistent with the Statutory Accounting Principles Statement of Concepts and Statutory Hierarchy (Statement of Concepts).

SUMMARY CONCLUSION:

4.   This issue paper adopts SOP 97-2 paragraphs 6 through 91 with certain modifications, SOP 98-9 paragraphs 6 through 8 and EITF 00-3. This issue paper rejects SOP 98-4 as not applicable because the effective date of the corresponding SSAP is expected to be January 1, 2002.

5.   The modifications to SOP 97-2 are as follows:

   a.   Paragraph 10 is amended to require that entities follow the guidance outlined in *SSAP No. 5—Liabilities, Contingencies and Impairments of Assets* rather than *Statement of Financial Accounting Standard* (FAS) *No. 5*, *Accounting for Contingencies*;

     b.   Paragraph 33 is amended to remove the reference to *Technical Bulletin* (TB) *No. 79-10: Fiscal Funding Clauses in Lease Agreements*;

     c.   Paragraph 57 is amended to remove the reference to *FAS No. 86, Accounting for the Costs of Computer Software to Be Sold, Leased, or Otherwise Marketed*;

     d.   Paragraph 73 is rejected as not applicable to statutory accounting.

Effective Date and Transition

6.   Upon adoption of this issue paper, the NAIC will release a Statement of Statutory Accounting Principle (SSAP) for comment. The SSAP will contain the adopted Summary Conclusion of this issue paper. Users of the Accounting Practices and Procedures Manual should note that issue papers are not represented in the Statutory Hierarchy (see Section IV of the Preamble) and therefore the conclusions reached in this issue paper should not be applied until the corresponding SSAP has been adopted by the Plenary of the NAIC. It is expected that the SSAP will contain an effective date of years beginning on or after January 1, 2002.

DISCUSSION:

7.   The modifications to SOP 97-2 were made in order to maintain consistency with current statutory accounting principles and the Statement of Concepts.

     a.   Paragraph 10 is amended because it includes a reference to FAS No. 5, *Accounting for Contingencies*. SSAP No. 5—*Liabilities, Contingencies and Impairments of Assets* contains the authoritative statutory accounting for loss contingencies;

     b.   Paragraph 33 is amended because it includes a reference to TB No. 79-10. The removal of the reference does not change the accounting prescribed in SOP 97-2 and it eliminates any possible conflict with the fact that TB No. 79-10 is rejected by SSAP No. 22 — *Leases*;

     c.   Paragraph 57 was amended because it includes a reference to FAS No. 86. Paragraph 57 is not impacted by the removal of FAS No. 86 because it is used in the context of a piece of historical evidence. SSAP No. 17 - *Preoperating and Research and Development Costs* requires all such costs to be expensed, therefore there is no capitalization experience to analyze;

     d.   Paragraph 73 was deemed to be not applicable because of the requirement to follow FAS No. 86 in the case of capitalizing funded software-development costs. This approach is inconsistent with the provisions of SSAP No. 17 and the requirement to expense such costs. The directive to expense such costs eliminates the need for this paragraph.

8.   SOP 98-4 as well as the effective date paragraphs of SOP 97-2 and SOP 98-9 were not adopted in this issue paper as it is expected that the effective date for the SSAP will be January 1, 2002.

9.   EITF 00-3 was adopted because it supports the principles adopted in SOP 97-2.

10.   SOP 97-2 includes several references to GAAP pronouncements that were deemed not applicable in the initial SSAPs. This includes Accounting Research Bulletin No. 45, *Long-Term Construction-Type Contracts*, SOP 81-1, *Accounting for Performance of Construction-Type and Certain Production-Type Contracts*, FAS No. 48, *Revenue Recognition When Right of Return Exists* and FAS 68, *Research and*

Development Arrangements. These GAAP pronouncements are deemed to be applicable to statutory accounting only to the extent that SOP 97-2 references them.

RELEVANT STATUTORY ACCOUNTING AND GAAP GUIDANCE:

Statutory Accounting

11.   In general, the initial SSAPs deemed the relevant GAAP guidance to be not applicable to statutory accounting. As discussed above, technology and the environment have changed significantly since the original SSAPs were adopted and therefore guidance is now needed.

Generally Accepted Accounting Principles

12.   *AICPA Statement of Position 97-2*, *Software Revenue Recognition* provides the following:

Conclusions

.06   The following conclusions should be read in conjunction with the Basis for Conclusions section, beginning with paragraph .93 of this SOP, and the examples in appendix A, Examples of the Application of Certain Provisions of this SOP.

Basic Principles

.07   Software arrangements range from those that provide a license for a single software product to those that, in addition to the delivery of software or a software system, require significant production, modification, or customization of software. If an arrangement to deliver software or a software system, either alone or together with other products or services, requires significant production, modification, or customization of software, the entire arrangement should be accounted for in conformity with Accounting Research Bulletin (ARB) No. 45, Long-Term Construction-Type Contracts, using the relevant guidance herein, and in SOP 81-1, Accounting for Performance of Construction-Type and Certain Production-Type Contracts.

.08   If the arrangement does not require significant production, modification, or customization of software, revenue should be recognized when all of the following criteria are met.
- Persuasive evidence of an arrangement exists.
- Delivery has occurred.
- The vendor's fee is fixed or determinable.
- Collectibility is probable.

.09   Software arrangements may provide licenses for multiple software deliverables (for example, software products, upgrades/enhancements, PCS, or services), which are termed multiple elements. A number of the elements may be described in the arrangement as being deliverable only on a when-and-if-available basis. When-and-if-available deliverables should be considered in determining whether an arrangement includes multiple elements. Accordingly, the requirements of this SOP with respect to arrangements that consist of multiple elements should be applied to all additional products and services specified in the arrangement, including those described as being deliverable only on a when-and-if-available basis.

.10   If an arrangement includes multiple elements, the fee should be allocated to the various elements based on vendor-specific objective evidence of fair value, regardless of any separate prices stated within the contract for each element. Vendor-specific objective evidence of fair value is limited to the following:
- The price charged when the same element is sold separately
- For an element not yet being sold separately, the price established by management having the relevant authority; it must be probable that the price, once established, will not change before the separate introduction of the element into the marketplace

The amount allocated to undelivered elements is not subject to later adjustment. However, if it becomes probable that the amount allocated to an undelivered element will result in a loss on

that element of the arrangement, the loss should be recognized pursuant to FASB Statement No. 5, Accounting for Contingencies. When a vendor's pricing is based on multiple factors such as the number of products and the number of users, the amount allocated to the same element when sold separately must consider all the factors of the vendor's pricing structure.

.11   If a discount is offered in a multiple-element arrangement, a proportionate amount of that discount should be applied to each element included in the arrangement based on each element's fair value without regard to the discount. However, as discussed in paragraph .37, no portion of the discount should be allocated to any upgrade rights. Moreover, to the extent that a discount exists, the residual method described in paragraph .12 attributes that discount entirely to the delivered elements.

.12   If sufficient vendor-specific objective evidence does not exist for the allocation of revenue to the various elements of the arrangement, all revenue from the arrangement should be deferred until the earlier of the point at which (a) such sufficient vendor-specific objective evidence does exist or (b) all elements of the arrangement have been delivered. The following exceptions to this guidance are provided.

- If the only undelivered element is PCS, the entire fee should be recognized ratably (see paragraphs .56 through .62).
- If the only undelivered element is services that do not involve significant production, modification, or customization of software (for example, training or installation), the entire fee should be recognized over the period during which the services are expected to be performed (see paragraphs .63 through .71).
- If the arrangement is in substance a subscription, the entire fee should be recognized ratably (see paragraphs .48 and .49).
- If the fee is based on the number of copies, the arrangement should be accounted for in conformity with paragraphs .43 through .47.
- There may be instances in which there is vendor-specific objective evidence of the fair values of all undelivered elements in an arrangement but vendor-specific objective evidence of fair value does not exist for one or more of the delivered elements in the arrangement. In such instances, the fee should be recognized using the residual method, provided that (a) all other applicable revenue recognition criteria in this SOP are met and (b) the fair value of all of the undelivered elements is less than the arrangement fee. Under the residual method, the arrangement fee is recognized as follows: (a) the total fair value of the undelivered elements, as indicated by vendor-specific objective evidence, is deferred and (b) the difference between the total arrangement fee and the amount deferred for the undelivered elements is recognized as revenue related to the delivered elements.

.13   The portion of the fee allocated to an element should be recognized as revenue when the criteria in paragraph .08 of this SOP are met with respect to the element. In applying those criteria, the delivery of an element is considered not to have occurred if there are undelivered elements that are essential to the functionality of the delivered element, because the customer would not have the full use of the delivered element.

.14   No portion of the fee (including amounts otherwise allocated to delivered elements) meets the criterion of collectibility if the portion of the fee allocable to delivered elements is subject to forfeiture, refund, or other concession if any of the undelivered elements are not delivered. In order for the revenue related to an arrangement to be considered not subject to forfeiture, refund, or other concession, management must intend not to provide refunds or concessions that are not required under the provisions of the arrangement.   All available evidence should be considered to determine whether the evidence persuasively indicates that the revenue is not subject to forfeiture, refund, or other concession. Although no single item of evidence may be persuasive, the following additional items should be considered:

- Acknowledgment in the arrangement of products not currently available or not to be delivered currently
- Separate prices stipulated in the arrangement for each deliverable element

- Default and damage provisions as defined in the arrangement
- Enforceable payment obligations and due dates for the delivered elements that are not dependent on the delivery of the future deliverable elements, coupled with the intent of the vendor to enforce rights of payment
- Installation and use of the delivered software
- Support services, such as telephone support, related to the delivered software being provided currently by the vendor

Regardless of the preceding, the vendor's historical pattern of making refunds or other concessions that were not required under the original provisions (contractual or other) of other arrangements should be considered more persuasive than terms included in the arrangement that indicate that no concessions are required.

Evidence of an Arrangement

.15   Practice varies with respect to the use of written contracts. Although a number of sectors of the industry rely upon signed contracts to document arrangements, other sectors of the industry that license software (notably the packaged software sector) do not.

.16   If the vendor operates in a manner that does not rely on signed contracts to document the elements and obligations of an arrangement, the vendor should have other forms of evidence to document the transaction (for example, a purchase order from a third party or on-line authorization). If the vendor has a customary business practice of utilizing written contracts, evidence of the arrangement is provided only by a contract signed by both parties.

.17   Even if all other requirements set forth in this SOP for the recognition of revenue are met (including delivery), revenue should not be recognized on any element of the arrangement unless persuasive evidence of an arrangement exists.

Delivery

.18   The second criterion in paragraph .08 for revenue recognition is delivery. The principle of not recognizing revenue before delivery applies whether the customer is a user or a reseller. Except for arrangements in which the fee is a function of the number of copies, delivery is considered to have occurred upon the transfer of the product master or, if the product master is not to be delivered, upon the transfer of the first copy. For software that is delivered electronically, the delivery criterion of paragraph .08 is considered to have been met when the customer either (a) takes possession of the software via a download (that is, when the customer takes possession of the electronic data on its hardware), or (b) has been provided with access codes that allow the customer to take immediate possession of the software on its hardware pursuant to an agreement or purchase order for the software. In such cases, revenue should be recognized if the other criteria of paragraph .08 have been satisfied.

.19   Paragraphs .20 through .25 provide guidance on determining whether delivery is considered to have occurred in certain kinds of software transactions.

Customer Acceptance

.20   After delivery, if uncertainty exists about customer acceptance of the software, license revenue should not be recognized until acceptance occurs.

Determining Delivery—Multiple Copies of Software Products Versus Multiple Licenses

.21   Arrangements to use multiple copies of a software product under site licenses with users and to market multiple copies of a software product under similar arrangements with resellers should be distinguished from arrangements to use or market multiple single licenses of the same software.

- In the former kind of arrangement, duplication is incidental to the arrangement and the delivery criterion is met upon the delivery of the first copy or product

master. The vendor may be obligated to furnish up to a specified number of copies of the software, but only if the copies are requested by the user. The licensing fee is payable even if no additional copies are requested by the user or reseller. If the other criteria in this SOP for revenue recognition are met, revenue should be recognized upon delivery of the first copy or product master. The estimated costs of duplication should be accrued at that time.

- In the latter kind of arrangement, the licensing fee is a function of the number of copies delivered to, made by, or deployed by the user or reseller. Delivery occurs and revenue should be recognized as the copies are made by the user or sold by the reseller if the other criteria in this SOP for revenue recognition are met.

Delivery Other Than to the Customer

.22 Delivery should not be considered complete unless the destination to which the software is shipped is the customer's place of business or another site specified by the customer. In addition, if a customer specifies an intermediate site but a substantial portion of the fee is not payable until the delivery by the vendor to another site specified by the customer, revenue should not be recognized until the delivery is made to that other site.

Delivery Agents

.23 Vendors may engage agents, often referred to as fulfillment houses, to either duplicate and deliver or only deliver software products to customers. Revenue from transactions involving delivery agents should be recognized when the software is delivered to the customer. Transferring the fulfillment obligation to an agent of the vendor does not relieve the vendor of the responsibility for delivery. This is the case even if the vendor has no direct involvement in the actual delivery of the software product to the customer.

Authorization Codes

.24 In a number of software arrangements, vendors use authorization codes, commonly referred to as keys, to permit customer access to software that otherwise would be restricted. Keys are used in a variety of ways and may serve different purposes. For example, permanent keys may be used to control access to the software, or additional permanent keys may be necessary for the duplication of the software. Temporary keys may be used for the same purposes and also may be used to enhance the vendor's ability to collect payment or to control the use of software for demonstration purposes.

.25 In software arrangements involving the use of keys, delivery of a key is not necessarily required to satisfy the vendor's delivery responsibility. The software vendor should recognize revenue on delivery of the software if all other requirements for revenue recognition under this SOP and all of the following conditions are met.

- The customer has licensed the software and the vendor has delivered a version of the software that is fully functional except for the permanent key or the additional keys (if additional keys are used to control the reproduction of the software).
- The customer's obligation to pay for the software and the terms of payment, including the timing of payment, are not contingent on delivery of the permanent key or additional keys (if additional keys are used to control the reproduction of the software).
- The vendor will enforce and does not have a history of failing to enforce its right to collect payment under the terms of the original arrangement.

In addition, if a temporary key is used to enhance the vendor's ability to collect payment, the delivery of additional keys, whether temporary or permanent, is not required to satisfy the vendor's delivery responsibility if (a) the above conditions are met and (b) the use of a temporary key in such circumstances is a customary practice of the vendor. Selective issuance of

temporary keys might indicate that collectibility is not probable or that the software is being used only for demonstration purposes.

Fixed or Determinable Fees and Collectibility

.26   The other prerequisites in paragraph .08 for revenue recognition are that (a) the vendor's fee is fixed or determinable and (b) collectibility is probable. A software licensing fee is not fixed or determinable if the amount is based on the number of units distributed or copied, or the expected number of users of the product. Revenue recognition for variable-pricing arrangements is discussed in paragraphs .43 through .47 of this SOP. Additionally, if an arrangement includes (a) rights of return or (b) rights to refunds without return of the software, FASB Statement No. 48 requires that conditions that must be met in order for the vendor to recognize revenue include that the amount of future returns or refunds can be reasonably estimated.

Factors That Affect the Determination of Whether a Fee is Fixed or Determinable and Collectible

.27   A number of arrangements that call for fixed or determinable payments, including minimum royalties or license fees from resellers, specify a payment period that is short in relation to the period during which the customer is expected to use or market the related products. Other arrangements have payment terms that extend over a substantial portion of the period during which the customer is expected to use or market the related products. Because a product's continuing value may be reduced due to the subsequent introduction of enhanced products by the vendor or its competitors, the possibility that the vendor still may provide a refund or concession to a creditworthy customer to liquidate outstanding amounts due under the original terms of the arrangement increases as payment terms become longer.

.28   For the reason cited in paragraph .27 any extended payment terms in a software licensing arrangement may indicate that the fee is not fixed or determinable. Further, if payment of a significant portion of the software licensing fee is not due until after expiration of the license or more than twelve months after delivery, the licensing fee should be presumed not to be fixed or determinable. However, this presumption may be overcome by evidence that the vendor has a standard business practice of using long-term or installment contracts and a history of successfully collecting under the original payment terms without making concessions. In such a situation, a vendor should consider such fees fixed or determinable and should recognize revenue upon delivery of the software, provided all other conditions for revenue recognition in this SOP have been satisfied.

.29   If it cannot be concluded that a fee is fixed or determinable at the outset of an arrangement, revenue should be recognized as payments from customers become due (assuming all other conditions for revenue recognition in this SOP have been satisfied).

.30   For reseller arrangements, the following factors also should be considered in evaluating whether the fixed or determinable fee and collectibility criteria for revenue recognition are met.
- Business practices, the reseller's operating history, competitive pressures, informal communications, or other factors indicate that payment is substantially contingent on the reseller's success in distributing individual units of the product.
- Resellers are new, undercapitalized, or in financial difficulty and may not demonstrate an ability to honor a commitment to make fixed or determinable payments until they collect cash from their customers.
- Uncertainties about the potential number of copies to be sold by the reseller may indicate that the amount of future returns cannot be reasonably estimated on delivery; examples of such factors include the newness of the product or marketing channel, competitive products, or dependence on the market potential of another product offered (or anticipated to be offered) by the reseller.
- Distribution arrangements with resellers require the vendor to rebate or credit a portion of the original fee if the vendor subsequently reduces its price for a product and the reseller still has rights with respect to that product (sometimes referred to as price protection). If a vendor is unable to reasonably estimate

future price changes in light of competitive conditions, or if significant uncertainties exist about the vendor's ability to maintain its price, the arrangement fee is not fixed or determinable. In such circumstances, revenue from the arrangement should be deferred until the vendor is able to reasonably estimate the effects of future price changes and the other conditions of this SOP have been satisfied.

.31   Customer Cancellation Privileges. Fees from licenses cancelable by customers are neither fixed nor determinable until the cancellation privileges lapse. Fees from licenses with cancellation privileges expiring ratably over the license period are considered to become determinable ratably over the license period as the cancellation privileges lapse. In applying the provisions of this paragraph, obligations related to warranties for defective software, including warranties that are routine, short-term, and relatively minor, should be accounted for in conformity with FASB Statement No. 5. Additionally, short-term rights of return, such as thirty-day money-back guarantees, should not be considered cancellation privileges; the related returns should be accounted for in conformity with FASB Statement No. 48.

.32   Fiscal Funding Clauses. Fiscal funding clauses sometimes are found in software license arrangements in which the licensees are governmental units. Such clauses generally provide that the license is cancelable if the legislature or funding authority does not appropriate the funds necessary for the governmental unit to fulfill its obligations under the licensing arrangement.

.33   Consistent with FASB Technical Bulletin No. 79-10, Fiscal Funding Clauses in Lease Agreements, a software licensing arrangement with a governmental unit containing a fiscal funding clause should be evaluated to determine whether the uncertainty of a possible license arrangement cancellation is a remote contingency. If the likelihood is assessed as remote, the software licensing arrangement should be considered noncancelable. Such an assessment should include the factors discussed in paragraphs .27 and .28 of this SOP. If the likelihood is assessed as other than remote, the license should be considered cancelable, thus precluding revenue recognition. A fiscal funding clause with a customer other than a governmental unit that is required to include such a clause creates a contingency that precludes revenue recognition until the requirements of the clause and all other provisions of this SOP have been satisfied.

Multiple-Element Arrangements

.34   As discussed in paragraph .09, multiple-element arrangements to which contract accounting does not apply may include customer rights to any combination of additional software deliverables, services, or PCS. If contract accounting does not apply, individual elements in such arrangements should be accounted for in accordance with paragraphs .08 through .14. Paragraphs .35 through .73 provide guidance on the application of those paragraphs to multiple-element arrangements.

Additional Software Deliverables and Rights to Exchange or Return Software

.35   As part of a multiple-element arrangement, a vendor may agree to deliver software currently and to deliver additional software in the future. The additional deliverables may include upgrades/enhancements or additional software products. Additionally, a vendor may provide the customer with the right to exchange or return software, including the right to transfer software from one hardware platform or operating system to one or more other platforms or operating systems (a platform-transfer right).

.36   Upgrades/enhancements. As part of a multiple-element arrangement, a vendor may agree to deliver software currently and provide the customer with an upgrade right for a specified upgrade/enhancement.   The upgrade right may be evidenced by a specific agreement, commitment, or the vendor's established practice.   (Rights to receive unspecified upgrades/enhancements on a when-and-if-available basis are PCS, as it has been redefined in this SOP.) The upgrade right should be accounted for as a separate element in accordance with

paragraphs .08 through .14. Guidance on the application of those paragraphs to multiple-element software arrangements that include upgrade rights is given in paragraphs .37 and .38.

.37 If a multiple-element arrangement includes an upgrade right, the fee should be allocated between the elements based on vendor-specific objective evidence of fair value. The fee allocated to the upgrade right is the price for the upgrade/enhancement that would be charged to existing users of the software product being updated. If the upgrade right is included in a multiple-element arrangement on which a discount has been offered (see paragraph .11), no portion of the discount should be allocated to the upgrade right. If sufficient vendor-specific evidence exists to reasonably estimate the percentage of customers that are not expected to exercise the upgrade right, the fee allocated to the upgrade right should be reduced to reflect that percentage. This estimated percentage should be reviewed periodically. The effect of any change in that percentage should be accounted for as a change in accounting estimate.

.38 The amount of the fee allocated to the upgrade right should be recognized as revenue when the conditions in paragraphs .08 through .14 are met. If sufficient vendor-specific objective evidence does not exist for the allocation of the fee to the upgrade right, revenue from the arrangement should be deferred until the earlier of the point at which (a) such sufficient vendor-specific objective evidence does exist or (b) all elements of the arrangement have been delivered.

.39 Additional Software Products. As part of a multiple-element arrangement, a vendor may agree to deliver software currently and deliver specified additional software products in the future. The rights to these additional products may be included either in the terms of a PCS arrangement or in a separate agreement. Even if the rights to the additional software products are included in a PCS arrangement, the revenue allocable to the additional software products should be accounted for separately from the PCS arrangement as an element of a multiple-element arrangement.

.40 Multiple-element arrangements that include rights to undelivered additional software products that are not subscriptions (see paragraphs .48 and .49) should be accounted for in accordance with paragraphs .08 through .14 of this SOP. Guidance on the application of those paragraphs to such arrangements is provided in paragraphs .41 through .47 below.

.41 The fee from the arrangement should be allocated among the products based on vendor-specific objective evidence of fair value. The allocation should be based on the relative sales prices (determined pursuant to paragraphs .10 and .11 of this SOP) of the products. If vendor-specific objective evidence of fair value does not exist, paragraph .12 of this SOP requires that all revenue from the arrangement be deferred until the earlier of the point at which (a) such sufficient vendor-specific objective evidence does exist or (b) all elements of the arrangement have been delivered. The fee allocated to the additional software products should not be reduced by the percentage of any customers that are not expected to exercise the right to receive additional software products.

.42 If the arrangement is based on a price per product (not a price per copy), the portion of the fee allocated to a product should be recognized as revenue when the product is delivered, assuming all other provisions of paragraphs .08 through .14 of this SOP are met.

.43 Some fixed fee license or reseller arrangements provide customers with the right to reproduce or obtain copies at a specified price per copy (rather than per product) of two or more software products up to the total amount of the fixed fee. A number of the products covered by the arrangement may not be deliverable or specified at the inception of the arrangement. Although the price per copy is fixed at the inception of the arrangement, an allocation of the arrangement fee to the individual products generally cannot be made, because the total revenue allocable to each software product is unknown and depends on the choices to be made by the customer and, sometimes, future development activity while the arrangement is in effect. Nevertheless, as discussed in paragraph .46 of this SOP, in certain situations, revenue can be

allocated to the products that are undeliverable or not specified at the inception of the arrangement.

.44   In arrangements in which no allocation can be made, until the first copy or product master of each product covered by the arrangement has been delivered to the customer assuming the provisions of paragraphs .08 through .14 of this SOP are met, revenue should be recognized as copies of delivered products either (a) are reproduced by the customer or (b) are furnished to the customer if the vendor is duplicating the software. Once the vendor has delivered the product master or the first copy of all products covered by the arrangement, any licensing fees not previously recognized should be recognized. (At that point, only duplication of the software is required to satisfy the vendor's delivery requirement. As discussed in paragraph .21 of this SOP, duplication of the software is incidental to the arrangement, and delivery is deemed to have occurred upon delivery of the product master or first copy.) When the arrangement terminates, the vendor should recognize any licensing fees not previously recognized.

.45   The revenue from the kind of arrangements discussed in paragraph .44 should not be recognized fully until at least one of the following conditions is met.
*   Delivery is complete for all products covered by the arrangement.
*   The aggregate revenue attributable to all copies of the software products delivered is equal to the fixed fee, provided that the vendor is not obligated to deliver additional software products under the arrangement.

.46   Nevertheless, certain arrangements that include products that are not deliverable at the inception impose a maximum number of copies of the undeliverable product(s) to which the customer is entitled. In such arrangements, a portion of the arrangement fee should be allocated to the undeliverable product(s). This allocation should be made assuming that the customer will elect to receive the maximum number of copies of the undeliverable product(s).

.47   The revenue allocated to the delivered products should be recognized when the product master or first copy is delivered. If, during the term of the arrangement, the customer reproduces or receives enough copies of these delivered products so that revenue allocable to the delivered products exceeds the revenue previously recognized, such additional revenue should be recognized as the copies are reproduced or delivered. The revenue allocated to the undeliverable product(s) should be reduced by a corresponding amount.

.48   As part of a multiple-element arrangement with a user, a vendor may agree to deliver software currently and to deliver unspecified additional software products in the future (including unspecified platform transfer rights that do not qualify for exchange accounting as described in paragraphs .50 through .55). For example, the vendor may agree to deliver all new products to be introduced in a family of products over the next two years. These arrangements are similar to arrangements that include PCS in that future deliverables are unspecified. Nevertheless, they are distinguished from arrangements that include PCS because the future deliverables are products, not unspecified upgrades/enhancements.

.49   The software elements of the kinds of arrangements discussed in paragraph .48 should be accounted for as subscriptions. No allocation of revenue should be made among any of the software products, and all software product-related revenue from the arrangement should be recognized ratably over the term of the arrangement beginning with delivery of the first product. If the term of the arrangement is not stated, the revenue should be recognized ratably over the estimated economic life of the products covered by the arrangement, beginning with delivery of the first product. An intent on the part of the vendor not to develop new products during the term of the arrangement does not relieve the vendor of the requirement to recognize revenue ratably over the term of the arrangement, beginning with the delivery of the first product.

.50   Rights to Exchange or Return Software. As part of an arrangement, a software vendor may provide the customer with the right to return software or to exchange software for products with no more than minimal differences in price, functionality, or features. The accounting for

returns is significantly different from the accounting for exchanges. Although it is sometimes difficult to determine whether a transaction is a return or exchange of software, the fact that the software is not returned physically does not preclude accounting for the transaction as either an exchange or as a return. If the software is not returned physically and the customer contractually is entitled to continue to use the previously delivered software, the arrangement should be accounted for in the manner prescribed in the section herein entitled "Additional Software Products" (see paragraphs .39 through .49). If the software is not returned physically and the customer contractually is not entitled to continue to use the previously delivered software, the transaction should be accounted for either as a return or as an exchange, as discussed in the following paragraphs.

.51 If the rights discussed in the previous paragraph are offered to users (but not resellers), the exchanges are analogous to "exchanges by ultimate customers of one item for another of the same kind, quality, and price . . . [that] are not considered returns" described in footnote 3 of FASB Statement No. 48. Conversely, exchanges by users of software products for dissimilar software products or for similar software products with more than minimal differences in price, functionality, or features are considered returns, and revenue related to arrangements that provide users with the rights to make such exchanges should be accounted for in conformity with FASB Statement No. 48. If the other product(s) is not available at the time the initial product is delivered, there should be persuasive evidence that demonstrates there will be no more than minimal differences in price, features, or functionality among the products in order for the right to qualify as a right to exchange. Additionally, if the vendor expects to incur a significant amount of development costs related to the other product, the other product should be considered to have more than a minimal difference in functionality.

.52 As part of a multiple-element arrangement, a vendor may grant a user a platform-transfer right. Depending on the circumstances, the exercise of a platform-transfer right may represent an exchange, a return, or additional software products for accounting purposes. If the customer contractually is entitled to continue to use the software that was delivered originally (in addition to the software that is to be delivered for the new platform), the platform transfer right should be accounted for in the manner prescribed in the section herein entitled "Additional Software Products" (see paragraphs .39 through .49).

.53 If, as part of a multiple-element arrangement, a vendor offers a user (not a reseller) a platform-transfer right, and the provisions of paragraphs .08 through .14 of this SOP are met, the revenue from the software license should be recognized upon the initial delivery of the software, and the exercise of the platform-transfer right should be treated as an exchange, if the platform-transfer right —

- Is for the same product (see paragraph .54)
- Does not increase the number of copies or concurrent users of the software product available under the license arrangement.

.54 Products are considered to be the same product if there are no more than minimal differences among them in price, features, and functions, and if they are marketed as the same product, even though there may be differences arising from environmental variables such as operating systems, databases, user interfaces, and platform scales. Indicators of "marketed as the same product" include (a) the same product name (although version numbers may differ) and (b) a focus on the same features and functions.

.55 As part of their standard sales terms or as a matter of practice, vendors may grant resellers the rights to exchange unsold software for other software (including software that runs on a different hardware platform or operating system). Because the reseller is not the ultimate customer (see paragraph .51), such exchanges, including those referred to as stock balancing arrangements, should be accounted for as returns. Arrangements that grant rights to make such exchanges should be accounted for in conformity with FASB Statement No. 48, even if the vendors require the resellers to purchase additional software to exercise the exchange rights.

Postcontract Customer Support

.56   Software arrangements may include the right to PCS. PCS includes the right to receive PCS services or unspecified upgrades/enhancements, or both, offered to users or resellers. A vendor may develop historical patterns of regularly providing all customers or certain kinds of customers with the services or unspecified upgrades/enhancements normally associated with PCS, or may anticipate doing so, even though there is no written contractual obligation or the stipulated PCS term commences at some date after delivery. In those situations, an implied PCS arrangement exists that commences upon product delivery. For purposes of applying the guidance in this SOP, PCS includes a vendor's expected performance based on such patterns, even if performance is entirely at the vendor's discretion and not pursuant to a formal agreement.

.57   If a multiple-element software arrangement includes explicit or implicit rights to PCS, the total fees from the arrangement should be allocated among the elements based on vendor-specific objective evidence of fair value, in conformity with paragraph .10. The fair value of the PCS should be determined by reference to the price the customer will be required to pay when it is sold separately (that is, the renewal rate). The portion of the fee allocated to PCS should be recognized as revenue ratably over the term of the PCS arrangement, because the PCS services are assumed to be provided ratably. However, revenue should be recognized over the period of the PCS arrangement in proportion to the amounts expected to be charged to expense for the PCS services rendered during the period if—
   •   Sufficient vendor-specific historical evidence exists demonstrating that costs to provide PCS are incurred on other than a straight-line basis. In making this determination, the vendor should take into consideration allocated portions of cost accounted for as research and development (R&D) costs and the amortization of costs related to the upgrade-enhancement capitalized in conformity with FASB Statement No. 86, Accounting for the Costs of Computer Software to Be Sold, Leased, or Otherwise Marketed. Such costs should be considered as part of the costs to provide PCS.
   •   The vendor believes that it is probable that the costs incurred in performing under the current arrangement will follow a similar pattern.
Because the timing, frequency, and significance of unspecified upgrades/enhancements can vary considerably, the point at which unspecified upgrades/enhancements are expected to be delivered should not be used to support income recognition on other than a straight-line basis.

.58   If sufficient vendor-specific objective evidence does not exist to allocate the fee to the separate elements and the only undelivered element is PCS, the entire arrangement fee should be recognized ratably over (a) the contractual PCS period (for those arrangements with explicit rights to PCS) or (b) the period during which PCS is expected to be provided (for those arrangements with implicit rights to PCS).

.59   PCS revenue may be recognized together with the initial licensing fee on delivery of the software if all of the following conditions are met.
   a.   The PCS fee is included with the initial licensing fee.
   b.   The PCS included with the initial license is for one year or less.
   c.   The estimated cost of providing PCS during the arrangement is insignificant.
   d.   Unspecified upgrades/enhancements offered during PCS arrangements historically have been and are expected to continue to be minimal and infrequent.
If PCS revenue is recognized upon the delivery of the software, the vendor must accrue all estimated costs of providing the services, including upgrades/enhancements. Upgrades/enhancements are not developed solely for distribution to PCS customers; revenues are expected to be earned from providing the enhancements to other customers as well. Therefore, costs should be allocated between PCS arrangements and other licenses.

.60   A determination that unspecified upgrades/enhancements offered during the PCS arrangement are expected to be minimal and infrequent should be evidenced by the patterns of minimal and infrequent unspecified upgrades/enhancements offered in previous PCS

arrangements. A conclusion that unspecified upgrades/enhancements are expected to be minimal and infrequent should not be reached simply because unspecified upgrades/enhancements have been or are expected to be offered less frequently than on an annual basis. Regardless of the vendor's history of offering unspecified upgrades/enhancements to initial licensees, PCS should be accounted for separately from the initial licensing fee if the vendor expects to offer upgrades/enhancements that are greater than minimal or more than infrequent to the users or resellers of the licensed software during the PCS arrangement.

.61   Postdelivery Telephone Support at No Additional Charge. Postdelivery telephone support provided to users by the vendor at no additional charge should be accounted for as PCS, in conformity with this SOP, regardless of whether the support is provided explicitly under the licensing arrangement. Although such telephone support may be offered or available for periods exceeding one year, if the vendor has established a history of providing substantially all the telephone support within one year of the licensing or sale of the software, the PCS may be considered to have a term of one year or less in applying paragraph .59, item (b) of this SOP. Accordingly, revenue allocable to telephone support may be recognized together with the initial licensing fee on delivery of the software if all the conditions in paragraph .59 of this SOP are met. This provision applies only to telephone support provided at no additional charge. If revenue allocable to telephone support is recognized together with the licensing fee on delivery, the vendor should accrue the estimated cost of providing that support.

.62   PCS Granted by Resellers. An arrangement in which a vendor grants a reseller the right to provide unspecified upgrades/enhancements to the reseller's customers is an implied PCS arrangement between the vendor and the reseller, even if the vendor does not provide direct telephone support to the reseller's customers. If sufficient vendor-specific objective evidence does not exist to allocate the fee to the software and the PCS, revenue from both the licensing arrangement and the PCS should be recognized ratably over the period during which PCS is expected to be provided.

Services

.63   Certain arrangements include both software and service elements (other than PCS-related services). The services may include training, installation, or consulting. Consulting services often include implementation support, software design or development, or the customization or modification of the licensed software.

.64   If an arrangement includes such services, a determination must be made as to whether the service element can be accounted for separately as the services are performed. Paragraph .65 discusses the criteria that must be considered in making such a determination. If the nature of the services is such that the service element does not qualify for separate accounting as a service, contract accounting must be applied to both the software and service elements included in the arrangement. Paragraphs .74 through .91 of this SOP address the application of contract accounting to software arrangements.

.65   In order to account separately for the service element of an arrangement that includes both software and services, sufficient vendor-specific objective evidence of fair value must exist to permit allocation of the revenue to the various elements of the arrangement (as discussed in paragraphs .10 and .12). Additionally, the services (a) must not be essential to the functionality of any other element of the transaction and (b) must be described in the contract such that the total price of the arrangement would be expected to vary as the result of the inclusion or exclusion of the services.

.66   If an arrangement includes services that meet the criteria of paragraph .65 for separate accounting, revenue should be allocated among the service and software elements of the contract. This allocation should be based on vendor-specific objective evidence of fair values. (Fair values are not necessarily the same as any separate prices stated for the separate elements of the arrangement.) Revenue allocated to the service element should be recognized

as the services are performed or, if no pattern of performance is discernible, on a straight-line basis over the period during which the services are performed.

.67   If vendor-specific objective evidence of the fair value does not exist to allocate a portion of the fee to the service element, and the only undelivered element is services that do not involve significant production, modification, or customization of the software (for example, training or installation), the entire arrangement fee should be recognized as the services are performed. If no pattern of performance is discernible, the entire arrangement fee should be recognized on a straight-line basis over the period during which the services are performed.

.68   An important factor to consider in determining whether the services are essential to the functionality of any other element is whether the software included in the arrangement is considered core or off-the-shelf software. Core software is software that a vendor uses in creating other software. It is not sold as is because customers cannot use it unless it is customized to meet system objectives or customer specifications. Off-the-shelf software is software that is marketed as a stock item that can be used by customers with little or no customization.

.69   Software should be considered off-the-shelf software if it can be added to an arrangement with insignificant changes in the underlying code and it could be used by the customer for the customer's purposes upon installation. Actual use by the customer and performance of other elements of the arrangement is not required to demonstrate that the customer could use the software off-the-shelf. If significant modifications or additions to the off-the-shelf software are necessary to meet the customer's purpose (for example, changing or making additions to the software, or because it would not be usable in its off-the-shelf form in the customer's environment), the software should be considered core software for purposes of that arrangement. If the software that is included in the arrangement is not considered to be off-the-shelf software, or if significant modifications or additions to the off-the-shelf software are necessary to meet the customer's functionality, no element of the arrangement would qualify for accounting as a service, and contract accounting should be applied to both the software and service elements of the arrangement.

.70   Factors indicating that the service element is essential to the functionality of the other elements of the arrangement, and consequently should not be accounted for separately, include the following.
- The software is not off-the-shelf software.
- The services include significant alterations to the features and functionality of the off-the-shelf software.
- Building complex interfaces is necessary for the vendor's software to be functional in the customer's environment.
- The timing of payments for the software is coincident with performance of the services.
- Milestones or customer-specific acceptance criteria affect the realizability of the software-license fee.

.71   Judgment is required in determining whether the obligation to provide services in addition to the delivery of software should be accounted for separately as a service element. Services that qualify for accounting as a service element of a software arrangement always are stated separately and have one or more of the following characteristics.
- The services are available from other vendors.
- The services do not carry a significant degree of risk or unique acceptance criteria.
- The software vendor is an experienced provider of the services.
- The vendor is providing primarily implementation services, such as implementation planning, loading of software, training of customer personnel, data conversion, building simple interfaces, running test data, and assisting in the development and documentation of procedures.
- Customer personnel are dedicated to participate in the services being performed.

.72   Funded Software-Development Arrangements. Software-development   arrangements that are fully or partially funded by a party other than the vendor that is developing the software typically provide the funding party with some or all of the following benefits:

- Royalties payable to the funding party based solely on future sales of the product by the software vendor (that is, reverse royalties)
- Discounts on future purchases by the funding party of products produced under the arrangement
- A nonexclusive sublicense to the funding party, at no additional charge, for the use of any product developed (a prepaid or paid-up nonexclusive sublicense)

.73   A funded software-development arrangement within the scope of FASB Statement No. 68, Research and Development Arrangements, should be accounted for in conformity with that Statement.   If the technological feasibility of the computer software product pursuant to the provisions of FASB Statement No. 86 has been established before the arrangement has been entered into, FASB Statement No. 68 does not apply because the arrangement is not a research and development arrangement. Accounting for costs related to funded software-development arrangements is beyond the scope of this SOP.   However, if capitalization of the software-development costs commences pursuant to FASB Statement No. 86, any income from the funding party under a funded software-development arrangement should be credited first to the amount of the development costs capitalized. If the income from the funding party exceeds the amount of development costs capitalized, the excess should be deferred and credited against future amounts that subsequently qualify for capitalization. Any deferred amount remaining after the project is completed (that is, when the software is available for general release to customers and capitalization has ceased) should be credited to income.

Contract Accounting

.74   If an arrangement to deliver software or a software system, either alone or together with other products or services, requires significant production, modification, or customization of software, the service element does not meet the criteria for separate accounting set forth in paragraph .65. The entire arrangement should be accounted for in conformity with ARB No. 45, using the relevant guidance in SOP 81-1.   Nevertheless, transactions that normally are accounted for as product sales should not be accounted for as long-term contracts merely to avoid the delivery requirements normally associated with product sales for revenue recognition.

.75   In applying contract accounting, the vendor must use either the percentage-of-completion method or the completed-contract method. The determination of the appropriate method should be made according to the recommendations in paragraphs 21 through 33 of SOP 81-1.

.76   Segmentation. Software contracts may have discrete elements that meet the criteria for segmenting in paragraphs 39 through 42 of SOP 81-1. If a contract is segmented, each segment is treated as a separate profit center.   Progress-to-completion for each segment should be measured in conformity with paragraphs .78 through .80 of this SOP.

.77   Some vendors of arrangements that include software combined with services or hardware or both do not identify the elements separately and do not sell them separately because of agreements with their suppliers. Other vendors who are not restricted by such agreements nevertheless bid or negotiate software and other products and services together. Arrangements that do not meet the segmentation criteria in paragraph 40 of SOP 81-1 are prohibited from being segmented, unless the vendor has a history of providing the software and other products and services to customers under separate arrangements and the arrangement meets the criteria in paragraph 41 of SOP 81-1.

.78   Measuring Progress-to-Completion Under the Percentage-of-Completion Method. Paragraph 46 of SOP 81-1 describes the approaches to measuring progress on contracts (or

segments thereof) under the percentage-of-completion method. Those approaches are grouped into input and output measures, as follows.

> ▪ Input measures are made in terms of efforts devoted to a contract. They include the methods based on costs and on efforts expended. Output measures are made in terms of results achieved. They include methods based on units produced, units delivered, contract milestones, and value added. For contracts under which separate units of output are produced, progress can be measured on the basis of units of work completed.

For software contracts, an example of an input measure is labor hours; an example of an output measure is arrangement milestones, such as the completion of specific program modules.

.79   If, as discussed in paragraph .76 of this SOP, a software contract includes a discrete element that meets the segmentation criteria of SOP 81-1, the method chosen to measure progress-to-completion on the element should be the method that best approximates progress-to-completion. Progress-to-completion on separate elements of the same software arrangement may be measured by different methods. The software vendor should choose measurement methods consistently, however, so that it uses similar methods to measure progress-to-completion on similar elements.

.80   Output measures, such as value-added or arrangement milestones, may be used to measure progress-to-completion on software arrangements, but many companies use input measures because they are established more easily. As noted in paragraph 47 of SOP 81-1, "The use of either type of measure requires the exercise of judgment and the careful tailoring of the measure to the circumstances." Further, paragraph 51 of SOP 81-1 states that

> The acceptability of the results of input or output measures deemed to be appropriate to the circumstances should be periodically reviewed and confirmed by alternative measures that involve observation and inspection. For example, the results provided by the measure used to determine the extent of progress may be compared to the results of calculations based on physical observations by engineers, architects, or similarly qualified personnel. That type of review provides assurance somewhat similar to that provided for perpetual inventory records by periodic physical inventory counts.

.81   Input Measures. Input measures of progress-to-completion on arrangements are made in terms of efforts devoted to the arrangement and, for software arrangements, include methods based on costs, such as cost-to-cost measures, and on efforts expended, such as labor hours or labor dollars. Progress-to-completion is measured indirectly, based on an established or assumed relationship between units of input and productivity. A major advantage of input measures is that inputs expended are easily verifiable. A major disadvantage is that their relationship to progress-to-completion may not hold if inefficiencies exist or if the incurrence of the input at a particular point does not indicate progress-to-completion.

.82   Costs incurred should be included in measuring progress-to-completion only to the extent that they relate to contract performance. Items not specifically produced for the arrangement, such as hardware purchased from third parties or off-the-shelf software, should not be included in the measurement of progress-to-completion.

.83   Labor hours often are chosen as the basis for measuring progress-to-completion, because they closely approximate the output of labor-intensive processes and often are established more easily than output measures. Core software requires labor-intensive customization. Therefore, labor hours provide a good measure of progress-to-completion on elements of software arrangements that involve the customization of core software.

.84   If the measurement of progress-to-completion is based primarily on costs, the contribution to that progress of hardware and software that were produced specifically for the arrangement may be measurable and recognizable before delivery to the user's site. For example, efforts to install, configure, and customize the software may occur at the vendor's site.

The costs of such activities are measurable and recognizable at the time the activities are performed.

.85   Output Measures. Progress on arrangements that call for the production of identifiable units of output can be measured in terms of the value added or milestones reached. Although progress-to-completion based on output measures is measured directly from results achieved, thus providing a better approximation of progress than is provided by input measures, output measures may be somewhat unreliable because of the difficulties associated with establishing them.

.86   In order for the value added to be verifiable, the vendor must identify elements or subcomponents of those elements. If output measures are neither known nor reasonably estimable, they should not be used to measure progress-to-completion.

.87   If value added by off-the-shelf software is to be included in the measurement of progress-to-completion, such software cannot require more than minor modifications and must be usable by the customer for the customer's purpose in the customer's environment. If more than minor modifications or additions to the off-the-shelf software are necessary to meet the functionality required under the arrangement terms, either by changing or making additions to the software, or because the software would not be usable by the customer in its off-the-shelf form for the customer's purpose in the customer's environment, it should be accounted for as core software.

.88   Value added by the customization of core software should be included in the measurement of progress-to-completion of the customization and installation at the user's site. However, if the installation and customization processes are divided into separate output modules, the value of core software associated with the customization of a module should be included in the measurement of progress-to-completion when that module is completed.

.89   Contract milestones may be based on contractual project plans. Contractual provisions generally require the performance of specific tasks with the approval or acceptance by the customer; project plans generally schedule inspections in which the project's status is reviewed and approved by management. The completion of tasks that trigger such inspections are natural milestones because they are subject to relatively independent review as an intrinsic part of the project management process.

.90   Considerations other than progress-to-completion affect the amounts that become billable at particular times under many arrangements. Accordingly, although the achievement of contract milestones may cause arrangement revenues to become billable under the arrangement, the amounts billable should be used to measure progress-to-completion only if such amounts indeed indicate such progress.

.91   The milestones that are selected to measure progress-to-completion should be part of the management review process. The percentage-of-completion designated for each milestone should be determined considering the experience of the vendor on similar projects.

.92   This SOP is effective for transactions entered into in fiscal years beginning after December 15, 1997. Earlier application is encouraged as of the beginning of fiscal years or interim periods for which financial statements or information have not been issued. Retroactive application of the provisions of this SOP is prohibited.

13.   *AICPA Statement of Position 98-4, Deferral of the Effective Date of a Provision of SOP 97-2, Software Revenue Recognition* provides the following:

Conclusions

.05   The second sentences of paragraphs 10, 37, 41, and 57 of SOP 97-2, which limit what is considered VSOE [vendor-specific objective evidence] of the fair value of the various elements in a multiple-element arrangement, and the related examples noted in paragraph .03 of this SOP

need not be applied to transactions entered into before fiscal years beginning after March 15, 1999.

.06   All other provisions of SOP 97-2, including the remainder of paragraph 10, should be applied as stated in SOP 97-2. Accordingly, this SOP does not alter the requirements that (a) any allocation of the fee in a multiple-element arrangement to the various elements should be based on the fair values of each element, (b) those fair values must be supported by VSOE, and (c) in instances where there is insufficient VSOE of the fair values of each element to allow for an allocation of revenue to each element, all revenue from the arrangement should be deferred pursuant to paragraph 12 of that SOP.

Effective Date and Transition

.07   This SOP is effective as of March 31, 1998. If an enterprise had applied SOP 97-2 in an earlier period for financial statements or information already issued prior to the promulgation of this SOP, amounts reported in those financial statements or as part of that information may be restated to reflect the deferral of the effective date of the second sentences of paragraphs 10, 37, 41, and 57 of SOP 97-2 and the related examples noted in paragraph .03 of this SOP.

14.   *AICPA Statement of Position 98-9, Modification of SOP 97-2, Software Revenue Recognition, With Respect to Certain Transactions* provides the following:

Conclusions

.06   The following changes are made to SOP 97-2.

a.   The following sentence is added to the end of paragraph 11 of SOP 97-2.

Moreover, to the extent that a discount exists, the residual method described in paragraph 12 [of SOP 97-2] attributes that discount entirely to the delivered elements.

b.   The following is added to the end of paragraph 12 of SOP 97-2.

There may be instances in which there is vendor-specific objective evidence of the fair values of all undelivered elements in an arrangement but vendor-specific objective evidence of fair value does not exist for one or more of the delivered elements in the arrangement. In such instances, the fee should be recognized using the residual method, provided that (a) all other applicable revenue recognition criteria in this SOP [SOP 97-2] are met and (b) the fair value of all of the undelivered elements is less than the arrangement fee. Under the residual method, the arrangement fee is recognized as follows: (a) the total fair value of the undelivered elements, as indicated by vendor-specific objective evidence, is deferred and (b) the difference between the total arrangement fee and the amount deferred for the undelivered elements is recognized as revenue related to the delivered elements.

c.   The following example is added to appendix A of SOP 97-2, following "Multiple Element Arrangements—Products and Services—Example 3."

Multiple Element Arrangements—Products and Services—Example 4

Facts
A vendor sells software product A for $950. The license arrangement for product A always includes one year of "free" PCS. The annual renewal price of PCS is $150.
Revenue Recognition
Assuming that, apart from the lack of vendor-specific objective evidence of the fair value of the delivered software element, all applicable revenue recognition criteria in this SOP [SOP 97-2] are met, revenue in the amount of $150 should be deferred and recognized in

income over the one-year PCS service period. Revenue of $800 should be allocated to the software element and recognized upon delivery of the software.

Discussion
Vendor-specific objective evidence of the fair value of the software does not exist because the software is never sold separately. Consequently, sufficient vendor-specific objective evidence of fair value does not exist for the allocation of revenue to the various elements based on their relative fair values. Paragraph 12 of this SOP [SOP 97-2] states, however, that the residual method should be used when there is vendor-specific objective evidence of the fair values of all undelivered elements; all other applicable revenue recognition criteria in this SOP [SOP 97-2] are met; and the fair value of all of the undelivered elements is less than the total arrangement fee.

If there had been vendor-specific objective evidence of the fair value of the delivered software but not of the undelivered PCS, the entire arrangement fee would be deferred and recognized ratably over the contractual PCS period in accordance with paragraphs 12 and 58 [of SOP 97-2].

.07   Paragraph 5 of SOP 98-4, Deferral of the Effective Date of a Provision of SOP 97-2, Software Revenue Recognition, is replaced with the following.

The second sentences of paragraphs 10, 37, 41, and 57 of SOP 97-2 which limit what is considered VSOE [vendor-specific objective evidence] of the fair value of the various elements in a multiple-element arrangement, and the related examples noted in paragraph 3 of this SOP [SOP 98-4] need not be applied to transactions entered into before fiscal years beginning after March 15, 1999.

.08   All provisions of SOP 97-2 for software transactions outside the scope of this SOP and all other provisions of SOP 97-2 for transactions within the scope of this SOP should be applied as stated in SOP 97-2.

Effective Date and Transition

.09   The provisions of this SOP that extend the deferral of the application of certain passages of SOP 97-2 are effective December 15, 1998. All other provisions of this SOP are effective for transactions entered into in fiscal years beginning after March 15, 1999. Earlier adoption is permitted as of the beginning of fiscal years or interim periods for which financial statements or information has not been issued. Retroactive application of the provisions of this SOP is prohibited.

15.   *EITF 00-3: Application of AICPA Statement of Position 97-2 to Arrangements That Include the Right to Use Software Stored on Another Entity's Hardware* provides the following:

EITF 00-3 ISSUE

1.   In connection with the licensing of software products, some vendors are offering arrangements in which end users of the software do not take possession of the software. Rather, the software application resides on the vendor's or a third party's hardware, and the customer accesses and uses the software on an as-needed basis over the Internet or via a dedicated line ("hosting").

2.   Structurally, the form of those arrangements may be split into two elements-(a) the right to use software and (b) the hosting service. The arrangements may or may not include a license right to the software and the customer may or may not have an option to take delivery of the software.

3.   SOP 97-2 establishes standards for recognition of revenue for licensing, selling, leasing, or otherwise marketing computer software. The scope of SOP 97-2 includes arrangements that provide for multiple deliverables (for example, software products and services), which are termed

multiple elements.   Under SOP 97-2, if an arrangement includes multiple elements, the fee should be allocated to the various elements based on vendor-specific objective evidence (VSOE) of fair value and recognized when certain criteria are met.   One of the criteria for revenue recognition is that delivery has occurred. In addition, if a multiple-element arrangement includes both software and services, the portion of the fee allocable to the services is recognized separately as the services are performed, provided certain criteria are met.

4.   The issues are:

Issue 1—Whether SOP 97-2 applies to arrangements that require the vendor to host the software.

Issue 2—Whether SOP 97-2 applies to arrangements in which the customer has an option to take delivery of the software. If so, when does delivery of the software occur and how does the vendor's hosting obligation impact revenue recognition?

EITF 00-3 DISCUSSION

5.   The Task Force reached a consensus that a software element covered by SOP 97-2 is only present in a hosting arrangement if the customer has the contractual right to take possession of the software at any time during the hosting period without significant penalty 1 and it is feasible for the customer to either run the software on its own hardware or contract with another party unrelated to the vendor to host the software. Therefore, SOP 97-2 only applies to hosting arrangements in which the customer has such an option. Arrangements that do not give the customer such an option are service contracts and are outside the scope of SOP 97-2. The Task Force observed that hosting arrangements that are service arrangements may include multiple elements that affect how revenue should be attributed.

6.   The Task Force also reached a consensus that for those hosting arrangements in which the customer has the option, as described above, to take possession of the software, delivery of the software occurs when the customer has the ability to take immediate possession of the software. The Task Force observed that if the software element is within the scope of SOP 97-2, all of the SOP's requirements for recognizing revenue, including VSOE of fair value and the requirement that the fee allocated to the software element not be subject to forfeiture, refund, or other concession, must be met in order to recognize revenue upon delivery for the portion of the fee allocated to the software element. The portion of the fee allocated to the hosting element should be recognized as the service is provided.   The Task Force noted that hosting arrangements that are, pursuant to this Issue, within the scope of SOP 97-2 may also include other elements, such as specified or unspecified upgrade rights, in addition to the software product and the hosting service.

7.   The Task Force observed that if the vendor sells, leases, or licenses software that is within the scope of SOP 97-2, then the development costs of such software should be accounted for in accordance with Statement 86. Conversely, if the vendor never sells, leases, or licenses the software in an arrangement within the scope of SOP 97-2, then the software is utilized in providing services and the development costs of the software should be accounted for in accordance with SOP 98-1. However, if during such software's development or modification, the vendor develops a substantive plan to sell, lease, or otherwise market the software externally, the development costs of the software should be accounted for in accordance with Statement 86.

EITF 00-3 STATUS

8.   No further EITF discussion is planned.

RELEVANT LITERATURE:

Statutory Accounting
- Statutory Accounting Principles Statement of Concepts and Statutory Hierarchy
- *SSAP No. 5—Liabilities, Contingencies and Impairments of Assets*
- *SSAP No. 17—Preoperating and Research and Development Costs*
- *SSAPs No. 22—Leases*

Generally Accepted Accounting Principles
- *AICPA Statement of Position 97-2: Software Revenue Recognition*
- *AICPA Statement of Position 98-4: Deferral of the Effective Date of a Provision of SOP 97-2, Software Revenue Recognition*
- *AICPA Statement of Position 98-9: Modification of SOP 97-2, Software Revenue Recognition, With Respect to Certain Transactions*
- *EITF 00-3: Application of AICPA Statement of Position 97-2 to Arrangements That Include the Right to Use Software Stored on Another Entity's Hardware*

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