

# GFOA Sample Investment Policy

The purpose of this sample investment policy is to aid the general membership of the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) in the preparation of an investment policy. This sample policy is not intended to supplant an existing policy; rather, it is presented as a model to help investing entities customize a policy to fit their particular needs, constraints and capabilities. In order to accommodate the varying needs of government entities and in order to stimulate conversation at the local level, certain sections of the attached policy include examples of alternative language. These alternative examples may be used *in place of or in addition to* the first paragraph presented for that section, depending on the goals and objectives of the particular investing entity.

For additional information, please read Chapter Three of *Investing Public Funds*, second edition, a text authored by Girard Miller, with M. Corinne Larson and W. Paul Zorn, and published by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada. You are also invited to contact current staff of the GFOA Standing Committee on Cash Management for assistance in modifying and/or writing your government's investment policy. Governments should obtain counsel to ensure compliance with state and local laws, regulations, and other policies concerning the investment of public funds.

## I. Governing Authority

### *Legality*

The investment program shall be operated in conformance with federal, state, and other legal requirements, including *[insert applicable citations governing the investment of public funds]*.

## II. Scope

This policy applies to the investment of all funds, excluding the investment of employees' retirement funds. Proceeds from certain bond issues, as well as separate foundation or endowment assets, are covered by a separate policy. *[This section should be modified to specify which assets are excluded from this policy.]*

### *1. Pooling of Funds*

Except for cash in certain restricted and special funds, the [entity] will consolidate cash and reserve balances from all funds to maximize investment earnings and to increase efficiencies with regard to investment pricing, safekeeping and administration. Investment income will be allocated to the various funds based on their respective participation and in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. *[This paragraph refers to the pooling of funds within a single governmental entity and implies no reference to local government investment pools. This GFOA Sample Investment Policy is not specifically designed for use by local government investment pools, although certain portions of this sample policy may apply.]*

## III. General Objectives

The primary objectives, in priority order, of investment activities shall be safety, liquidity, and yield:

### *1. Safety*

Safety of principal is the foremost objective of the investment program. Investments shall be undertaken in a manner that seeks to ensure the preservation of capital in the overall portfolio. The objective will be to mitigate credit risk and interest rate risk.

a. Credit Risk

The [entity] will minimize credit risk, which is the risk of loss due to the failure of the security issuer or backer, by:

- Limiting investments to the types of securities listed in Section VII of this Investment Policy
- Pre-qualifying the financial institutions, broker/dealers, intermediaries, and advisers with which the [entity] will do business in accordance with Section V
- Diversifying the investment portfolio so that the impact of potential losses from any one type of security or from any one individual issuer will be minimized.

b. Interest Rate Risk

The [entity] will minimize interest rate risk, which is the risk that the market value of securities in the portfolio will fall due to changes in market interest rates, by:

- Structuring the investment portfolio so that securities mature to meet cash requirements for ongoing operations, thereby avoiding the need to sell securities on the open market prior to maturity
- Investing operating funds primarily in shorter-term securities, money market mutual funds, or similar investment pools and limiting the average maturity of the portfolio in accordance with this policy (see section VIII).

2. *Liquidity*

The investment portfolio shall remain sufficiently liquid to meet all operating requirements that may be reasonably anticipated. This is accomplished by structuring the portfolio so that securities mature concurrent with cash needs to meet anticipated demands (static liquidity). Furthermore, since all possible cash demands cannot be anticipated, the portfolio should consist largely of securities with active secondary or resale markets (dynamic liquidity). Alternatively, a portion of the portfolio may be placed in money market mutual funds or local government investment pools which offer same-day liquidity for short-term funds.

3. *Yield*

The investment portfolio shall be designed with the objective of attaining a market rate of return throughout budgetary and economic cycles, taking into account the investment risk constraints and liquidity needs. Return on investment is of secondary importance compared to the safety and liquidity objectives described above. The core of investments are limited to relatively low risk securities in anticipation of earning a fair return relative to the risk being assumed. Securities shall generally be held until maturity with the following exceptions:

- A security with declining credit may be sold early to minimize loss of principal.
- A security swap would improve the quality, yield, or target duration in the portfolio.
- Liquidity needs of the portfolio require that the security be sold.

*Alternative sample language:*

The [entity's] cash management portfolio shall be designed with the objective of regularly meeting or exceeding a performance benchmark, which could be the average return on three-month U.S. Treasury bills, the state investment pool, a money market mutual fund (specify) or the average rate on Fed funds, whichever is higher. These indices are considered benchmarks for lower risk investment transactions and therefore comprise a minimum standard for the portfolio's rate of return.

The investment program shall seek to augment returns above this threshold, consistent with risk limitations identified herein and prudent investment principles. (See Section IX on performance standards and selecting a benchmark.)

#### *4. Local Considerations*

Where possible, funds may be invested for the betterment of the local economy or that of local entities within the State. The [entity] may accept a proposal from an eligible institution which provides for a reduced rate of interest provided that such institution documents the use of deposited funds for community development projects.

#### *Alternative sample language:*

The [entity] seeks to promote local economic development through various programs and activities. Included is a program of rewarding local financial institutions that increase their commitments to private economic growth and local housing investment. The government's governing board recognizes that our Linked Deposit Program might diminish short-term investment yields by xx basis points (.xx percent) in exchange for potential expansion of the tax base.

## **IV. Standards of Care**

### *1. Prudence*

The standard of prudence to be used by investment officials shall be the "prudent person" standard and shall be applied in the context of managing an overall portfolio. Investment officers acting in accordance with written procedures and this investment policy and exercising due diligence shall be relieved of personal responsibility for an individual security's credit risk or market price changes, provided deviations from expectations are reported in a timely fashion and the liquidity and the sale of securities are carried out in accordance with the terms of this policy.

The "prudent person" standard states that, "Investments shall be made with judgment and care, under circumstances then prevailing, which persons of prudence, discretion and intelligence exercise in the management of their own affairs, not for speculation, but for investment, considering the probable safety of their capital as well as the probable income to be derived."

### *2. Ethics and Conflicts of Interest*

Officers and employees involved in the investment process shall refrain from personal business activity that could conflict with the proper execution and management of the investment program, or that could impair their ability to make impartial decisions. Employees and investment officials shall disclose any material interests in financial institutions with which they conduct business. They shall further disclose any personal financial/investment positions that could be related to the performance of the investment portfolio. Employees and officers shall refrain from undertaking personal investment transactions with the same individual with whom business is conducted on behalf of the [entity].

### *3. Delegation of Authority*

Authority to manage the investment program is granted to [designated official, hereinafter referred to as investment officer] and derived from the following: [insert code citation, ordinances, charters or statutes]. Responsibility for the operation of the investment program is hereby delegated to the investment officer, who shall act in accordance with established written procedures and internal controls for the operation of the investment program consistent with this investment policy.

Procedures should include references to: safekeeping, delivery vs. payment, investment accounting, repurchase agreements, wire transfer agreements, and collateral/depository agreements. *[Please refer to GFOA's Investment Procedures Manual, 2003.]* No person may engage in an investment transaction except as provided under the terms of this policy and the procedures established by the investment officer. The investment officer shall be responsible for all transactions undertaken and shall establish a system of controls to regulate the activities of subordinate officials.

## **V. Authorized Financial Institutions, Depositories, and Broker/Dealers**

### *1. Authorized Financial Institutions, Depositories, and Broker/Dealers*

A list will be maintained of financial institutions and depositories authorized to provide investment services. In addition, a list will be maintained of approved security broker/dealers selected by creditworthiness (e.g., a minimum capital requirement of \$10,000,000 and at least five years of operation). These may include "primary" dealers or regional dealers that qualify under Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Rule 15C3-1 (uniform net capital rule).

All financial institutions and broker/dealers who desire to become qualified for investment transactions must supply the following as appropriate:

- Audited financial statements demonstrating compliance with state and federal capital adequacy guidelines
- Proof of National Association of Securities Dealers (NASD) certification (not applicable to Certificate of Deposit counterparties)
- Proof of state registration
- Completed broker/dealer questionnaire (not applicable to Certificate of Deposit counterparties)
- Certification of having read and understood and agreeing to comply with the [entity's] investment policy.
- Evidence of adequate insurance coverage.

An annual review of the financial condition and registration of all qualified financial institutions and broker/dealers will be conducted by the investment officer. (See Appendix for the GFOA Recommended Practice on "Governmental Relationships with Securities Dealers.")

### *2. Minority and Community Financial Institutions*

From time to time, the investment officer may choose to invest in instruments offered by minority and community financial institutions. In such situations, a waiver to certain parts of the criteria under Paragraph 1 may be granted. All terms and relationships will be fully disclosed prior to purchase and will be reported to the appropriate entity on a consistent basis and should be consistent with state or local law. These types of investment purchases should be approved by the appropriate legislative or governing body in advance.

## **VI. Safekeeping and Custody**

### *1. Delivery vs. Payment*

All trades of marketable securities will be executed by delivery vs. payment (DVP) to ensure that securities are deposited in an eligible financial institution prior to the release of funds.

### *2. Safekeeping*

Securities will be held by a [centralized] independent third-party custodian selected by the entity as evidenced by safekeeping receipts in the [entity's] name. The safekeeping institution shall annually

provide a copy of their most recent report on internal controls (Statement of Auditing Standards No. 70, or SAS 70).

### *3. Internal Controls*

The investment officer is responsible for establishing and maintaining an internal control structure designed to ensure that the assets of the [entity] are protected from loss, theft or misuse. Details of the internal controls system shall be documented in an investment procedures manual and shall be reviewed and updated annually. The internal control structure shall be designed to provide reasonable assurance that these objectives are met. The concept of reasonable assurance recognizes that (1) the cost of a control should not exceed the benefits likely to be derived and (2) the valuation of costs and benefits requires estimates and judgments by management.

The internal controls structure shall address the following points:

- Control of collusion
- Separation of transaction authority from accounting and recordkeeping
- Custodial safekeeping
- Avoidance of physical delivery securities
- Clear delegation of authority to subordinate staff members
- Written confirmation of transactions for investments and wire transfers
- Dual authorizations of wire transfers
- Development of a wire transfer agreement with the lead bank and third-party custodian

Accordingly, the investment officer shall establish a process for an annual independent review by an external auditor to assure compliance with policies and procedures or alternatively, compliance should be assured through the [entity] annual independent audit.

#### *Alternative sample language:*

The investment officer shall establish a system of internal controls, which shall be documented in writing. The internal controls shall be reviewed by the investment committee, where present, and with the independent auditor. The controls shall be designed to prevent the loss of public funds arising from fraud, employee error, misrepresentation by third parties, unanticipated changes in financial markets, or imprudent actions by employees and officers of the [entity.]

## **VII. Suitable and Authorized Investments**

### *1. Investment Types*

Consistent with the GFOA Policy Statement on State and Local Laws Concerning Investment Practices, the following investments will be permitted by this policy and are those defined by state and local law where applicable:

- U.S. Treasury obligations which carry the full faith and credit guarantee of the United States government and are considered to be the most secure instruments available;
- U.S. government agency and instrumentality obligations that have a liquid market with a readily determinable market value;
- Canadian government obligations (payable in local currency);
- Certificates of deposit and other evidences of deposit at financial institutions,
- Bankers' acceptances;
- Commercial paper, rated in the highest tier (e.g., A-1, P-1, F-1, or D-1 or higher) by a nationally recognized rating agency;

- Investment-grade obligations of state, provincial and local governments and public authorities;
- Repurchase agreements whose underlying purchased securities consist of the aforementioned instruments;
- Money market mutual funds regulated by the Securities and Exchange Commission and whose portfolios consist only of dollar-denominated securities; and
- Local government investment pools either state-administered or developed through joint powers statutes and other intergovernmental agreement legislation.

Investment in derivatives of the above instruments shall require authorization by the appropriate governing authority. (See the GFOA Recommended Practice on "Use of Derivatives by State and Local Governments," 2002.)

### *2. Collateralization*

Where allowed by state law and in accordance with the GFOA Recommended Practices on the Collateralization of Public Deposits, full collateralization will be required on all demand deposit accounts, including checking accounts and non-negotiable certificates of deposit. (See GFOA Recommended Practices in Appendix.)

### *3. Repurchase Agreements*

Repurchase agreements shall be consistent with GFOA Recommended Practices on Repurchase Agreements. (See GFOA Recommended Practices in Appendix.)

## **VIII. Investment Parameters**

### *1. Diversification*

The investments shall be diversified by:

- limiting investments to avoid overconcentration in securities from a specific issuer or business sector (excluding U.S. Treasury securities),
- limiting investment in securities that have higher credit risks,
- investing in securities with varying maturities, and
- continuously investing a portion of the portfolio in readily available funds such as local government investment pools (LGIPs), money market funds or overnight repurchase agreements to ensure that appropriate liquidity is maintained in order to meet ongoing obligations. (See the GFOA Recommended Practice on "Diversification of Investments in a Portfolio" in Appendix.)

### ***Alternative samples:***

#### *1. Diversification*

It is the policy of the [entity] to diversify its investment portfolios. To eliminate risk of loss resulting from the over-concentration of assets in a specific maturity, issuer, or class of securities, all cash and cash equivalent assets in all [entity] funds shall be diversified by maturity, issuer, and class of security. Diversification strategies shall be determined and revised periodically by the investment committee/investment officer for all funds except for the employee retirement fund.

In establishing specific diversification strategies, the following general policies and constraints shall apply: Portfolio maturities shall be staggered to avoid undue concentration of assets in a specific maturity sector. Maturities selected shall provide for stability of income and reasonable liquidity.

For cash management funds:

- Liquidity shall be assured through practices ensuring that the next disbursement date and payroll date are covered through maturing investments or marketable U.S. Treasury bills.
- Positions in securities having potential default risk (e.g., commercial paper) shall be limited in size so that in case of default, the portfolio's annual investment income will exceed a loss on a single issuer's securities.
- Risks of market price volatility shall be controlled through maturity diversification such that aggregate price losses on instruments with maturities exceeding one year shall not be greater than coupon interest and investment income received from the balance of the portfolio.
- The investment committee/investment officer shall establish strategies and guidelines for the percentage of the total portfolio that may be invested in securities other than repurchase agreements, Treasury bills or collateralized certificates of deposit. The committee shall conduct a quarterly review of these guidelines and evaluate the probability of market and default risk in various investment sectors as part of its considerations.

***AND/ OR***

The following diversification limitations shall be imposed on the portfolio:

- Maturity: No more than xx percent of the portfolio may be invested beyond 12 months, and the weighted average maturity of the portfolio shall never exceed one year.
- Default risk: No more than xx percent of the overall portfolio may be invested in the securities of a single issuer, except for securities of the U.S. Treasury. No more than xx percent of the portfolio may be invested in each of the following categories of securities:
  - a) Commercial paper,
  - b) Negotiable certificates of deposit,
  - c) Bankers' acceptances,
  - d) Any other obligation that does not bear the full faith and credit of the United States government or which is not fully collateralized or insured and
  - e) No more than xx percent of the total portfolio may be invested in the foregoing instruments at any time.
- Liquidity risk: At least xx percent of the portfolio shall be invested in overnight instruments or in marketable securities which can be sold to raise cash in one day's notice.

***2. Maximum Maturities***

To the extent possible, the [entity] shall attempt to match its investments with anticipated cash flow requirements. Unless matched to a specific cash flow, the [entity] will not directly invest in securities maturing more than five (5) years from the date of purchase or in accordance with state and local statutes and ordinances. The [entity] shall adopt weighted average maturity limitations (which often range from 90 days to 3 years), consistent with the investment objectives.

Reserve funds and other funds with longer-term investment horizons may be invested in securities exceeding five (5) years if the maturities of such investments are made to coincide as nearly as practicable with the expected use of funds. The intent to invest in securities with longer maturities shall be disclosed in writing to the legislative body. (See the GFOA Recommended Practice on

"Maturities of Investments in a Portfolio" in Appendix.)

Because of inherent difficulties in accurately forecasting cash flow requirements, a portion of the portfolio should be continuously invested in readily available funds such as local government investment pools, money market funds, or overnight repurchase agreements to ensure that appropriate liquidity is maintained to meet ongoing obligations.

### 3. *Competitive Bids*

The investment officer shall obtain competitive bids from at least two brokers or financial institutions on all purchases of investment instruments purchased on the secondary market.

## **IX. Reporting**

### 1. *Methods*

The investment officer shall prepare an investment report at least quarterly [*or monthly*], including a management summary that provides an analysis of the status of the current investment portfolio and the individual transactions executed over the last quarter [*or month*]. This management summary will be prepared in a manner which will allow the [entity] to ascertain whether investment activities during the reporting period have conformed to the investment policy. The report should be provided to the entity's chief administrative officer, the legislative body, the investment committee and any pool participants. The report will include the following:

- Listing of individual securities held at the end of the reporting period.
- Realized and unrealized gains or losses resulting from appreciation or depreciation by listing the cost and market value of securities over one-year duration that are not intended to be held until maturity (in accordance with Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) requirements).
- Average weighted yield to maturity of portfolio on investments as compared to applicable benchmarks.
- Listing of investment by maturity date.
- Percentage of the total portfolio which each type of investment represents.

### *Alternative sample:*

1. The investment officer shall submit quarterly an investment report that summarizes recent market conditions, economic developments and anticipated investment conditions. The report shall summarize the investment strategies employed in the most recent quarter, and describe the portfolio in terms of investment securities, maturities, risk characteristics and other features. The report shall explain the quarter's total investment return and compare the return with budgetary expectations. The report shall include an appendix that discloses all transactions during the past quarter: The report shall be in compliance with state law and shall be distributed to the investment committee and others as required by law.

Each quarterly report shall indicate any areas of policy concern and suggested or planned revision of investment strategies. Copies shall be transmitted to the independent auditor.

Within 40 days of the end of the fiscal year, the investment officer shall present a comprehensive annual report on the investment program and investment activity. The annual report shall include 12-month and separate quarterly comparisons of return and shall suggest policies and improvements that might be made in the investment program. Alternatively, this

report may be included within the [entity] annual Comprehensive Annual Financial Report.

2. *Performance Standards*

The investment portfolio will be managed in accordance with the parameters specified within this policy. The portfolio should obtain a market average rate of return during a market/economic environment of stable interest rates. A series of appropriate benchmarks shall be established against which portfolio performance shall be compared on a regular basis. The benchmarks shall be reflective of the actual securities being purchased and risks undertaken, and the benchmarks shall have a similar weighted average maturity as the portfolio.

*Alternative sample:*

The [entity's] cash management portfolio shall be designed with the objective of regularly meeting or exceeding a selected performance benchmark, which could be the average return on three-month U.S. Treasury bills, the state investment pool, a money market mutual fund [specify] or the average rate of Fed funds. These indices are considered benchmarks for lower risk investment transactions and therefore comprise a minimum standard for the portfolio's rate of return.

3. *Marking to Market*

The market value of the portfolio shall be calculated at least quarterly [or monthly] and a statement of the market value of the portfolio shall be issued at least quarterly [or monthly]. This will ensure that review of the investment portfolio, in terms of value and price volatility, has been performed consistent with the GFOA Recommended Practice on "Mark-to-Market Practices for State and Local Government Investment Portfolios and Investment Pools." (See GFOA Recommended Practices in Appendix.) In defining market value, considerations should be given to the GASB Statement 31 pronouncement.

**X. Policy Considerations**

1. *Exemption*

Any investment currently held that does not meet the guidelines of this policy shall be exempted from the requirements of this policy. At maturity or liquidation, such monies shall be reinvested only as provided by this policy.

*Alternative sample:*

Any investment currently held that does not meet the guidelines of this policy shall be temporarily exempted from the requirements of this policy. Investments must come in conformance with the policy within six months of the policy's adoption or the governing body must be presented with a plan through which investments will come into conformance.

2. *Amendments*

This policy shall be reviewed on an annual basis. Any changes must be approved by the investment officer and any other appropriate authority, as well as the individuals charged with maintaining internal controls.

**XI. Approval of Investment Policy**

The investment policy shall be formally approved and adopted by the governing body of the [entity] and reviewed annually.

## **XII. List of Attachments**

The following documents, as applicable, are attached to this policy:

- Listing of authorized personnel,
- Relevant investment statutes and ordinances,
- Listing of authorized broker/dealers and financial institutions,
- Internal Controls
- Glossary

## **XIII. Other Documentation**

- Master Repurchase Agreement, other repurchase agreements and tri-party agreements,
- Broker/Dealer Questionnaire,
- Credit studies for securities purchased and financial institutions used,
- Safekeeping agreements,
- Wire transfer agreements,
- Sample investment reports,
- Methodology for calculating rate of return,
- GFOA Recommended Policies.