

2.7.3 Access to Work Papers

Introduction

This section provides policies and guidance on:

- providing access of Audit Office (the Office) workpapers to a third party or an Audit Service Provider (ASP) with whom the Office shares responsibility for the delivery of an audit
- requesting access from a third party of their workpapers, such as a predecessor auditor.

Information in workpapers is confidential. In addition, the workpaper templates may be the intellectual property of other parties. Therefore, maintaining control of them at all times is important.

In certain circumstances, the operation of section 38 of the [Public Finance and Audit Act 1983](#) (PF&A Act) or section 425 of the [Local Government Act 1993](#) (LG Act), may require or permit the Office to provide access to workpapers to a third party (for example, due diligence reviews and opening balance reviews by a successor auditor).

Policies and guidance – providing access

Providing access to workpapers

1. All workpapers, whether in hard copy or electronic format, are the property of the Office.
2. Information in workpapers is confidential. The Office must control workpapers at all times and provide access to them only when legally permitted (refer section 38 of the PF&A Act or section 425 of the LG Act) or required.
3. Workpapers that are intellectual property (IP) of a third party must not be shared with a third party or ASP unless the Office is legally required to do so. Many workpapers are based on templates provided under licence by the Office's audit methodology supplier. The Trial Balance workbook is subject to copyright held by another audit office. Intellectual property is subject to contractual provisions and legal limitations regarding access, copying and sharing.
4. Circumstances may occur when the Office is required to provide access to its workpapers for inspection, including when required to do so by laws or an order of the court.
5. The Office may be asked to give a prospective purchaser, an existing or prospective investor, an existing or prospective lender, a principal auditor, an ASP, or a successor auditor, access to workpapers.
6. The Engagement Controller (EC) must consult with the Deputy Auditor-General before granting access to third parties other than ASPs with whom the Office shares responsibility for an audit.
7. Where legal approval is required for a third party to access, copy or share a file or workpaper, the necessary legal approval must first be obtained.

Obtaining authorisation and access letters when access is provided

8. When providing access to Office workpapers to a third party (not being an ASP), the EC must obtain written permission from appropriate client management and written agreement from the third party before providing such access.
9. 'Appendix 1 – Example Letters' of [Guidance Statement GS 011 Third Party Access to Audit Working Papers](#) should be used as the basis for obtaining written permission from the client and written agreement from the third party.
10. When providing access to Office workpapers to ASPs, ECs may provide access to prior year workpapers but must protect the IP of the Office's methodology supplier and the predecessor ASP (if applicable).

Workpapers to which the Office provides access

11. When the Office agrees to provide access to workpapers, it is appropriate to only provide such access to workpapers that disclose the results of the audit work performed. The Office does not provide access to audit programs except in those circumstances where the audit programs contain the principal evidence of risk assessments, tests of internal control, and substantive testing of the accounts.
12. The Office generally does not provide access to administrative information such as time summaries, billing data, and correspondence to and from the entity.
13. Uncertainty about whether access can be given to certain workpapers should be resolved through consultation with the Deputy Auditor-General.

Inspection of workpapers

14. Before agreeing to give access to workpapers, the EC must inspect the workpapers to ascertain if they are appropriate and do not contain extraneous information. The workpapers must then be examined thoroughly to ensure they are in an appropriate condition for review by a third party and that granting access to such workpapers is appropriate under the circumstances.
15. An Office representative must be present whenever a third party is given access to workpapers.

Request for copies

16. Requests for copies of workpapers to which the Office has provided access (other than to ASPs) must be approved by the Deputy Auditor-General. The EC or Engagement Manager must inspect the copies before giving them to the third party. A list of any copies of workpapers furnished (alternatively, a duplicate set of the copies furnished) must be maintained and filed in the entity's HPCM z file container.

Policies and guidance – requesting access

Requesting access to workpapers

17. Circumstances may occur when the Office requires access to the workpapers of a third party. Examples include predecessor auditors, internal audit providers (where the client's contract with the provider does not stipulate that internal audit workpapers become their property), and other external audit providers engaged by the client or their service provider for specific assurance engagements.
18. The EC must request access to the workpapers of a third party through appropriate client management.

Signing access letters when access is requested

19. Before being granted access, the third party may request the EC or another member of the Office to sign a letter agreeing to terms and conditions that govern access to the workpapers.
20. When the Office is requesting access to workpapers of:
 - a third party (not being an ASP) or
 - an ASP.

The EC must obtain approval from the Deputy Auditor-General before signing a letter agreeing to their terms and conditions in relation to access to their workpapers.

Effective date

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