



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROJECTION ASSUMPTION GUIDELINES

Projection Assumption Guidelines Development

1. Who develops the Projection Assumption Guidelines?

The Projection Assumption Guidelines (PAG) Committee is responsible for the ongoing maintenance and annual update of the Projection Assumption Guidelines (Guidelines) published jointly by the FP Canada Standards Council™ and Institut québécois de planification financière (IQPF).

The Guidelines are developed and maintained by the Projection Assumption Guidelines Committee and approved by the Standards Panel.

The Standards Panel is an independent panel of the FP Canada Standards Council™, and is composed of CFP professionals, licensed financial planners from the province of Québec and at least one public member. The Standards Panel is responsible for and has delegated responsibility from the Board over:

- the FP Canada Standards Council Standards of Professional Responsibility, including associated guidance;
- the Competency Profile, Body of Knowledge and Projection Assumption Guidelines, to ensure that they fulfill FP Canada's mandate; and
- the FP Canada Standards Council PAG Committee which is responsible for maintaining and updating the Projection Assumption Guidelines.

Additional information can be found here: <https://www.fpcanada.ca/about-fp-canada/fp-canada-committees-and-panels>

2. Who is on the Projection Assumption Guidelines Committee?

The Projection Assumption Guidelines Committee typically includes members who are CFP and/or Pl. Fin. professionals, actuaries, economists, and CFA credentialed individuals. All members have extensive financial planning experience, represented across multiple financial planning areas.

Current members include Nathalie Bachand, A.S.A., F.Pl.; Derek Dedman, CFP®, CFA; Martin Dupras, A.S.A., F.Pl., M.Fisc., ASC; Daniel Laverdière, A.S.A., F.Pl. and A. Kim Young, CFP®, FCIA.

3. How are the Guidelines Developed?

The Projection Assumption Guidelines are established using a variety of reliable and publicly available external data sources, as well as results from a Survey of responses from Canadian investment and financial services firms. They do not represent the individual opinions of the members of the Projection Assumption Guidelines Committee, IQPF or FP Canada. Using numerous sources of data eliminates the potential bias that may be created by relying on any single source.

4. How frequently are the Guidelines updated?

The Projection Assumption Guidelines are updated annually and are typically released in late April.

5. What data sources does the Projection Assumption Guidelines Committee rely on to develop the Guidelines?

The Projection Assumption Guidelines Committee uses four sources to arrive at the projected long-term rates of return, which are the CPP actuarial report, the QPP actuarial report, the FP Canada/IQPF industry Survey, and 50 years of Historical Data on asset returns and inflation.

Although some of the assumptions set out in the Guidelines may change from time to time, this does not mean that projections based on previously published assumptions are no longer valid. In fact, projections are considered valid at the time of preparation.

6. What is the purpose of the Addendum?

The Addendum accompanies the Projection Assumption Guidelines. It provides links to sources, data and calculations used in the development of assumptions for inflation and each specified asset class presented in the Guidelines. The Addendum is provided for transparency and replicability of the Guidelines by financial planners and firms. It is also updated each year with the release of the Projection Assumption Guidelines.

7. Why are historical past rates of return used in calculating the projected rates of return?

The Projection Assumption Guidelines use a blend of forecasting and backcasting, with the greater weight placed on future assumptions (QPP and CPP actuarial analysis and the 2019 FP Canada/IQPF survey). A 25% weight is placed on historical real returns. Projecting the future by relying solely on historical returns would suggest an expectation that the future will mirror the past. This is not the expectation. While precise future projections should not be made based solely on past performance, that does not justify the complete exclusion of the long-term historical return experience.

Use of the Projection Assumption Guidelines

1. Why should I use the Projection Assumption Guidelines for my financial planning clients?

The use of the Projection Assumption Guidelines is strongly encouraged to promote trust and confidence in the financial planner's projections, given the Guidelines' objectivity and basis in reliable sources.

The Guidelines are intended as a guide and are appropriate for making long-term (10 plus years) financial projections that are free from the potential biases of financial planners. Predicting the direction the economy will take and how financial markets will evolve is a difficult exercise, requiring the integration of a large number of variables and highly sophisticated valuation models.

To protect themselves and their clients, financial planners are encouraged to rely on these Guidelines. The use of the Guidelines provides clients with a set of reasonable assumptions that can be supported by sound methods and practice.

When presenting financial projections to clients, it is important to disclose the assumptions and rates being used in the preparation of the projections, and to be able to support them as sound and reasonable.

2. As a licensed financial planner, am I required to use the rates in the Projection Assumption Guidelines?

The use of the Projection Assumption Guidelines is beneficial for both the financial planning professional and the client. It provides a level of protection for financial planners since their projections are based on sound assumptions that can be defended. For clients, the Guidelines provide rates of return that are transparent and objective, based on reliable sources.

That said, financial planners are in the best position to understand their clients' unique circumstances. Because every client situation is different, assumptions that vary from the Guidelines may be used. It is also important to note that the Guidelines do not contemplate personal risk profiles. Since an individual's risk profile or change in risk profile may have consequences at least as significant as, or more significant than the rate of return guidelines used in developing financial projections, sound risk assessments are critical.

Assumptions may also differ from the Guidelines based on local market peculiarities. As an example, projections of education costs, which tend to be impacted by local market differences, may justify using an inflation rate that differs from the Guidelines. Projections of salary increases may justify an inflation rate that differs from the Guidelines, where clients give good reason for the change.

For shorter term financial projections (less than 10 years), financial planners may use actual rates of return on fixed term investments held to maturity.

In all cases, assumptions used should be documented, with sound rationale, and clearly communicated to clients.

3. Is it a breach of professional responsibilities to use rates other than those in the Projection Assumption Guidelines?

The use of the Projection Assumption Guidelines is beneficial for both the financial planning professional and the client. It provides a level of protection for financial planners since their projections are based on sound assumptions that can be defended. For clients, the Guidelines provide rates of return that are transparent and objective, based on reliable sources.

Financial planners are encouraged to use and rely on these Guidelines.

That said, financial planners are in the best position to understand their clients' unique circumstances. Because every client situation is different, assumptions that vary from the Guidelines may be used. In addition, for shorter term financial projections (less than 10 years), financial planners may use actual rates of return on fixed term investments held to maturity.

There may be instances when it is appropriate to deviate from the rates of return provided in the Guidelines. If this occurs, the financial planner should document the rates used and the rationale to ensure the assumptions are both sound and supported. These assumptions should be discussed with clients to ensure they understand them and are comfortable with their use.

Questions Regarding the Projected Rates in the Projection Assumption Guidelines

1. Do the rates of return include inflation?

The rates of return shown in section 4 of the Projection Assumption Guidelines are gross nominal rates that have been adjusted to include inflation. For the guidelines that are based on historical data, the adjustment is based on the guideline for future inflation. The Addendum which accompanies the Guidelines details the calculation behind the rates of return.

2. What about the impact of income tax on portfolio returns?

The rates of return presented in the Projection Assumption Guidelines do not include income tax. The Guidelines state that income tax is a consideration for non-registered assets.

The client's asset allocation will help determine the type of investment income to be earned. Historically, from 25% to 50% of overall equity returns has been made up of dividends. The Guidelines suggest that for equity holdings, it might be appropriate to divide the return into two categories: dividends and capital gains, and suggest that 33% of the return be taxed as dividend income and the balance as realized and unrealized (deferred) capital gains.

Determining the income tax liability on investment income earned in a non-registered account will require additional work by the financial planner to factor in the preferred tax treatment on Canadian dividend income and realized capital gains, as well as the client's tax rate.

3. Why are the short-term assets and fixed-income rates so high?

The assumptions for short-term and fixed-income assets represent a long-term view of what level of return could be earned by these two asset classes. They do not represent short-term expectancy.

4. Why are the rates of return on equities so low?

The assumptions for equity assets represent a long-term view of what level of return could be earned by this asset class. They do not represent short-term expectancy. Different rates of return are provided for Canadian equities, foreign developed market equities and emerging market equities.

5. Why are the longevity assumptions so long?

The Projection Assumption Guidelines present several levels for the probability of survival and recommend projection periods to the age that an individual has only one chance in four to reach. This period is longer than life expectancy to add security to financial planning exercises.

When presenting financial projections to clients, it is important to disclose the assumptions being used in the preparation of the projections, and to be able to support them as sound and reasonable.

6. In section 5 of the Projection Assumption Guidelines document, the sample application uses a single fee charge, but what if there are other fees?

The rates of return are presented before any fee expenses. The fee amount used in the sample application is meant to be an example only, and not a directive on an expected charge amount.

Any fees paid by the clients need to be subtracted from the rates of return to arrive at their net return. Fees paid by clients can include a variety of different costs, such as, commissions, trailing fees, advisory fees, custodian fees, redemption fees, transaction costs, and management expenses ratio fees. All fees paid by the clients, either directly or indirectly, needed to be factored into the calculation to arrive at their actual return net of costs.

7. Do the different portfolios shown in section 5 of the Projection Assumption Guidelines document provide a recommendation on asset allocation?

No, the sample application is not intended to offer a suggestion or recommendation on asset allocation.

Section 5 of the Projection Assumption Guidelines is included to illustrate how the projected rates can be applied when different asset groups are held in an investment portfolio. The sample application is not meant to be a recommendation for asset weightings, but rather to show how to use the rates for various investment holdings.

Questions Regarding the Asset Groups Not Included in the Projection Assumption Guidelines

1. The rate of inflation in the Projection Assumption Guidelines is not consistent with the growth in real estate values in my region. What rate should I use when preparing projections for my clients?

The Projection Assumption Guidelines are intended to be used when making long-term projections of 10 years or more, and are meant to look beyond the current day rate environment. Although the inflation experience in your region today may exceed the inflation rate in the Guidelines, this may not be the case over the next 20 or 30 years.

The Guidelines provide rates of return for the main asset classes—short-term assets, Canadian fixed --income, Canadian equities, foreign developed market equities (including U.S. equities and Europe, Australia and Far East equities) and emerging market equities.

However, the Guidelines do not provide a rate of return for real estate. When making assumptions around real estate growth, it is important to consider an appropriate starting valuation for the property and use an inflation-based assumption that is suitable based on the local market context.

When presenting financial projections to clients, it is important to disclose the assumptions and rates being used in the preparation of the projections, and to be able to support them as sound and reasonable.

2. What rate of return should be used for preferred shares?

The projected fixed-income rate of return in the Projection Assumption Guidelines can also be applied to preferred share holdings. Please note that this is not an opinion regarding the volatility of preferred shares versus fixed-income securities and that preferred shares can have different characteristics that can impact their pricing.

3. What rate of return should be used for currencies?

The Projection Assumption Guidelines do not provide for exchange rates since the net long-term effect of changes in exchange rates is generally nil. Financial planners should develop sensitivity analysis to illustrate and assess the potential ramifications of changes in exchange rates. Clients who may require income in a foreign currency may wish to maintain assets in that foreign currency to avoid foreign exchange rate risk.