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## *Appendix D*

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### **Guidelines for Distinguishing Between Supplies and Equipment**

One common accounting challenge districts face is that of distinguishing between supplies and equipment, between equipment and improvement of grounds, and between equipment/building fixtures and service systems. Nevertheless, districts must correctly identify each expenditure if they are to achieve the necessary uniformity of accounting.

Whether an item should be classified as equipment or as supplies is determined on the basis of the length of time the item is serviceable and on its contribution to the value of the district. For example, supplies are constantly being consumed and replaced without increasing the value of the physical properties of the district. Equipment has relatively permanent value, and its purchase increases the value of the physical assets of the district.

Expenditures made by districts for equipment, improvement of sites, building fixtures and service systems are charged as capital outlay; expenditures for supplies are charged as current expense. The purchase of equipment either as direct purchase or lease-purchase must be recorded in object classification 6400, Equipment.

Supplies are items of expendable nature that are consumed or worn out, deteriorate in use, or are easily broken, damaged or lost. Examples include paper, pencils, cleaning materials, nails, scissors, test tubes, and keys.

Items that have a relatively short service life (less than one year) and that, therefore, must be replaced frequently are also charged as supplies. Examples include brooms, tools, and rubber stamps.

Computer software and hardware could fall into either category, supplies or equipment, depending on the cost and useful life. To determine which category of expenditure an item belongs, follow the questions and/or guidelines listed below.

Some articles clearly cannot be classified as either supplies or equipment. They have the characteristics of equipment, but they have a low unit cost or are frequently lost, broken or worn out and replaced in normal use. To obtain uniformity, the district should assign items to the various classifications on the basis of the answers to the questions in the list below:

1. Does the item lose its original shape and appearance with use?
2. Is it consumable, with a normal service life of less than one year?

3. Is it easily broken, damaged, or lost in normal use?
4. Is it usually more feasible to replace it with an entirely new unit than to repair it?
5. Is it an inexpensive item? Does the small unit cost make it inadvisable to inventory the item? See *Education Code* Section 81600.

If the answer to one of the above five questions is yes, the item should be classified as a supply item and the expenditure should be recorded within object classification 4000. If all answers are no, the item should be classified under object classification 6400, Equipment.

Another method of distinguishing equipment from supplies is to follow the useful flowchart below.

**Guidelines for Distinguishing Equipment from Supply Items**  
(Listed in Priority Order)

Lasts more than one year	⇒	NO	
↓ YES			
Repair rather than replace	⇒	NO	
↓ YES			
Independent unit rather than being incorporated into another unit item	⇒	NO	At first NO item is declared to be SUPPLY
↓ YES			
Cost of tagging and inventory small percent of item cost	⇒	NO	
↓ YES			

**EQUIPMENT**

By way of example, let us classify both a personal computer and a calculator. The computer is likely to last more than one year, and if it did break down, it is most likely to be repaired. The calculator may last more than one year, but in the event that the calculator stopped working, it

Would be replaced, not repaired. Thus, it would be declared a supply. Although it is not necessary to continue down the list of other criteria, note that many of them support the classification of calculator as supply rather than equipment. It would not be subject to special control, because the cost of keeping inventory on it would represent a large percentage of the cost. Nor is the cost in excess of the minimum dollar value established by the Budget and Accounting Manual. All of these criteria strengthen the classification of calculators as supplies.

**Employee Benefits:** Amounts paid by an employer on behalf of employees. Examples are group health or life insurance payments, contributions to employee retirement, district share of O.A.S.D.I. (Social Security) taxes, and workers' compensation payments. These amounts are not included in the gross salary, but are over and above. While not paid directly to employees, they are a part of the total cost of employees.

**Encumbrances:** Commitments related to unperformed (executory) contracts for goods or services. Used in budgeting, encumbrances are not GAAP expenditures or liabilities, but represent the estimated amount of expenditures ultimately to result if unperformed contracts in process are completed.

**Enterprise Funds:** A subgroup of the Proprietary Funds Group used to account for operations when the governing board has decided either that the total cost of providing goods and services on a continuing basis (expenses including depreciation) be financed or recovered primarily through user charges; or that the periodic determination of revenues earned, expenses incurred, and/or net income is appropriate for capital maintenance, public policy, management control, accountability, or other purposes.

**Entitlement:** The amount of payment to which an entity is entitled pursuant to an allocation formula contained in applicable statutes.

**Entry:** (1) The record of a financial transaction in its appropriate book of account. (2) The act of recording a transaction in the books of account.

**Equipment:** Tangible property with a purchase price of at least \$200 and a useful life of more than one year, other than land or buildings and improvements thereon. (See Appendix D, Guidelines for Distinguishing Between Supplies and Equipment.)

**Estimated revenue:** Expected receipt or accruals of moneys from revenue or nonrevenue sources during a given period.

**Expendable Trust Fund:** A Trust Fund whose resources, including both principal and earnings, may be expended. Expendable Trust Funds are accounted for in essentially the same manner as governmental funds.