

# **The Role of the Finance Professional in Central Government**

## **FOREWORD**

The role of the finance professional is in a fast moving environment. Indeed, since this guide was approved for publication, the Treasury has announced the creation of Finance Director posts to replace Principal Finance Officers at the senior financial positions in government departments. The new designation *Finance Director* is therefore used throughout the text replacing that of *Principal Finance Officer*. CIPFA's work on the role of the finance professional is ongoing and CIPFA intends to produce further guidance as the wider implications and the impact of these new arrangements on the finance professional become clearer.

Since this guide was first published in 1998, there have been a number of significant changes in the central government sector both in terms of financial policy and accountability as well as in instructions and guidance. In the midst of all this change, it became clear that there was not available, in one volume, a clear outline of the requirements of the finance professional in government with signposts to best practice and more detailed information sources. Therefore, this updated guide is principally designed to meet that need.

The second purpose of this guide is to provide, in one volume, a description of the role and responsibilities of the finance professional and the qualities required for the job. The role has, over the years, become much wider than just a concern for the numbers and this is now reflected in the many different titles given to finance professionals, for example Director of Resources, Head of Support Services, Head of Finance or Director of Resource Management. Therefore, to reflect these changes, this updated guide has been produced to cover the role of the finance professional across the whole of government – departments, agencies, non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) and other government-sponsored bodies.

The guide identifies the wider remit and the nature of the responsibilities that the finance professional's post now carries across government and considers the qualities, experience and qualifications that are required to fulfil this role successfully. It is designed to provide advice and guidance to finance professionals in carrying out their strategic, policy, reporting and management roles.

Where devolution has brought individual variations to systems and procedures, this book does not cover those elements. Its focus is on the 'Westminster' part of the system and it applies to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland only in that context.

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