Life Actuarial (A) Task Force

June 9, 2022

Updated Exposure of NAIC Staff SOFR Recommendation

This exposure of the SOFR recommendation provides two options for for language to facilitate the replacement of Current and Long-term LIBOR-based Benchmark Swap Spread rates with similar SOFR-based rates. Option A is applicable if the availability of SOFR data is limited to a single data source and Option B is applicable if SOFR data is available from multiple data sources for both Current and Long-term benchmark swaps. Parties are asked to comment onthe use of option A or option B, or both.

Parties are also asked to opine on whether the APF should use the word “companies” or the term “appointed actuary” in option A for VM-20 Appendix 2.F.

Note this recommendation is complemented by APF 2022-04, also currently exposed.

*Please send comments to [Reggie Mazyck](mailto:rmazyck@naic.org" \t "_blank" \o "Follow link) @* [RMazyck@NAIC.Org](mailto:RMazyck@NAIC.Org) *by close of business on June 21, 2022.*

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Life Actuarial (A) Task Force

FROM: Pat Allison, NAIC Staff

DATE: May 26, 2022

RE: Recommended replacement related to APF 2022-04 Swap Spreads and LIBOR transition to SOFR

**Background**

The purpose of this memo is to recommend: 1) Secured Overnight Financing Rate (SOFR) swap spreads as the replacement for LIBOR swap spreads upon adoption by LATF, and 2) The approach to be used in calculating current and long-term swap spread curves from the date of this adoption through the remainder of 2022. These recommendations are consistent with APF 2022-04 (which would be effective for the 2023 *Valuation Manual*), which identifies the SOFR as the replacement for LIBOR, and the VM-20 Section 9.F.8.d Procedure for Setting Prescribed Gross Asset Spreads, cited below:

A current and long-term swap spread curve shall be prescribed for year one and years four and after, respectively, with yearly grading in between. The three-month and six-month points on the swap spread curves shall be the market-observable values for these tenors. Currently, this shall be the corresponding London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR) spreads over Treasuries. When the NAIC determines LIBOR is no longer effective, the NAIC shall recommend a replacement to the Life Actuarial (A) Task Force which shall be effective upon adoption by the Task Force.

The last sentence above notes that the NAIC shall recommend “a replacement”, which indicates an intent to replace the prescribed current and long-term swap spread curves with a single replacement, as opposed to continuing the NAIC’s prescription of LIBOR beyond the adoption date.

**Determination that LIBOR is no longer effective**

An American Academy of Actuaries’ extrapolation of data published on April 13 by the International Swaps and Derivatives Association (ISDA) Clarus Financial Technology[[1]](#footnote-1) shows that SOFR-based transactions are growing in popularity and can be expected to reach in July or August a two-thirds majority of newly executed USD interest rate derivatives (based on a risk-based DV01 metric). A Bloomberg February 9 article[[2]](#footnote-2) states that over two-thirds of newly executed USD interest rate swaps in January 2022 were SOFR swaps (with the floating rate based on SOFR) rather than LIBOR swaps (with the floating rate based on LIBOR). Based on the information provided in these publications, NAIC staff has determined that LIBOR is no longer effective.

Actuarial judgment may be required in the use of prescribed swap spreads (for example, in the case where companies have a financial instrument with floating rate payments based on an index that is not prescribed by the NAIC, such as 1-month SOFR or 3-month LIBOR). VM-20 Section 9.F.8.d states, in part “Interest rate swap spreads over Treasuries shall be prescribed by the NAIC for use throughout the cash-flow model *wherever appropriate* for transactions and operations…” (emphasis added).

**Recommended Replacement for Current Benchmark Swap Spreads**

Effective [TBD, potentially June 30, 2022] and through December 31, 2022, NAIC staff recommends that for each month-end date, LIBOR swap spreads shall be replaced with SOFR swap spreads[[3]](#footnote-3):

* + 3-month LIBOR spread should be replaced with 3m SOFR swap[[4]](#footnote-4) spread
  + 6-month LIBOR spread should be replaced with 6m SOFR swap spread
  + 1-year swap spread should be replaced with 1y SOFR swap spread
  + …
  + 30-year swap spread should be replaced with 30y SOFR swap spread

Option A – Add the following sentence:

Companies (The appointed actuary) shall obtain SOFR swap spreads from a nationally recognized provider of this data.

Option B – Do not include the additional sentence shown for Option A.

In Table J, NAIC staff shall clarify that from the adoption date current benchmark swap spreads are SOFR swap spreads. [Drafting Note: The tables will be labeled to indicate they contain SOFR swap spreads.

**Recommended Replacement for Long-Term Benchmark Swap Spreads**

Effective on the adoption date by the Life Actuarial (A) Task Force of SOFR swap spreads as the replacement for swap spreads previously prescribed and through December 31, 2022, NAIC staff recommends the following approach for the calculation of long-term benchmark swap spreads, consistent with APF 2022-04:

Option A

1. Extract daily swap spread data over the prescribed observation period (rolling 15-year period) ending on the last business day of the quarter from a nationally recognized provider of this data. If the data source provides swap rates rather than swap spreads, convert the daily swap rate for each maturity to a swap spread by subtracting the corresponding maturity Treasury yield from the swap rate.

Option B

1. Extract daily swap spread data over the prescribed observation period (rolling 15-year period) ending on the last business day of the quarter from at least two nationally recognized providers of this data. If the data source provides swap rates rather than swap spreads, convert the daily swap rate for each maturity to a swap spread by subtracting the corresponding maturity Treasury yield from the swap rate.
2. Calculate SOFR swap spreads as follows for each business day on or after the effective date of the adoption by the Life Actuarial (A) Task Force of SOFR swap spreads as the replacement for swap spreads previously prescribed:
   1. For each maturity “m” = 0.25, 0.5, 1 … 30 years, and business day “u”:

SOFR swap spread(m,u) = SOFR swap rate(m,u) - Treasury yield(m,u).

1. Calculate SOFR swap spreads as follows for each business day before the effective date of the adoption by the Life Actuarial (A) Task Force of SOFR swap spreads as the replacement for swap spreads previously prescribed, utilizing Bloomberg’s 2021-03-05 published USD Spread Adjustments:
2. For each maturity “m” = 3 or 6 months, and business day “u”,
   * 1. SOFR swap spread(3 months,u) = LIBOR swap spread(3 months,u) - 0.26161% (the USD 3-month Spread Adjustment)
     2. SOFR swap spread(6 months,u) = LIBOR swap spread(6 months,u) - 0.42826% (the USD 6-month Spread Adjustment)
   1. For each maturity “m” = 1 … 30 years, and business day “u”:

SOFR swap spread(m,u) = LIBOR swap spread(m,u) - 0.26161% (the USD 3-month Spread Adjustment)

Option A

Delete item 4 below. It would not apply, since data would come from one source.

Option B

Keep item 4 below, data would come from more than one source and averaging would apply.

1. Average the swap spread data from the data sources by maturity over the prescribed observation (rolling 15-year period).
2. Calculate the Long-Term Benchmark Swap Spreads as the 85% conditional mean for each of the 32 maturity categories (three-month, six-month, one-year, two-year, … 30-year) using the same business trading days as were used in the 85% conditional mean for long-term bonds spreads.
3. Publish the Long-Term Benchmark Swap Spreads in a table. Among tables published on the NAIC website (See Subsection H), Table J shows Long-Term Benchmark Swap Spreads

In Table J, NAIC staff shall clarify that from the adoption date forward, long-term benchmark swap spreads are SOFR swap spreads. [Drafting Note: The tables will be labeled to indicate they contain SOFR swap spreads.

1. See “The Percentage of DV01” chart accessible via “The Charts” link within this ISDA-Clarus 2022-04-13 publication: <https://www.clarusft.com/latest-data-shows-sofr-trading-soaring/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See “Growth in SOFR Swaps Volume” within this 2022-02-09 Bloomberg article: <https://www.bloomberg.com/professional/blog/sofr-liquidity-eclipses-libor/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. During 2021 the swap market evolved such that the definition of a standard n-year interest rate swap changed in January 2022 to be a SOFR swap from the LIBOR swap. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 3-month and 6-month SOFR swap rates are defined herein as the fixed rate one party pays at the end of three months or six months in exchange for receiving at such time 3-month SOFR or 6-month SOFR, calculated on a compounded in arrears basis. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)