RISK MANAGEMENT

How We Oversee & Manage Enterprise Risk

Committee Report-Outs & Full Board Discussion

Refer to GE’s 2016 Proxy Statement for Board committee changes effective March 1, 2016.
A disciplined approach to risk is important in a diversified organization like ours in order to ensure that we are executing according to our strategic objectives and that we only accept risk for which we are adequately compensated. We evaluate risk at the individual transaction level, and evaluate aggregated risk at the customer, industry, geographic and collateral-type levels, where appropriate. This section describes our risk management practices during 2015; refer to GE’s Proxy Statement for Board committee changes effective March 1, 2016.

RESPONSIBILITIES

GE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The GE Board of Directors (Board) has oversight for risk management with a focus on the most significant risks facing the Company, including strategic, operational, financial and legal and compliance risks. At the end of each year, management and the Board jointly develop a list of major risks that GE plans to prioritize in the next year. Throughout the year, the Board and the committees to which it has delegated responsibility dedicate a portion of their meetings to review and discuss specific risk topics in greater detail. Significant risks are presented and discussed in the context of the CEO’s report on operations to the Board at regularly scheduled Board meetings and at presentations to the Board and its committees by the vice chairmen, chief risk officers (CROs), general counsel and other employees.

COMMITTEES

The Board has delegated responsibility for the oversight of specific risks to Board committees as follows:

THE AUDIT COMMITTEE oversees the policies, processes and risks relating to the financial statements, the financial reporting process, compliance, auditing, and cybersecurity. The Audit Committee, discusses with management the Company’s risk assessment and risk management practices and, when reviewing and approving the annual audit plan for the Company’s and GE Capital’s internal audit functions, prioritizes audit focus areas based on their potential risk. The Audit Committee also coordinates closely with the Risk Committee and periodically meets jointly with the Risk Committee and the GE Capital Board.

THE GOVERNANCE & PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE oversees risk related to the Company’s governance structure and processes and risks arising from related-person transactions. It also reviews and discusses with management risks related to GE’s public policy initiatives and activities and positions on corporate social responsibilities, and it oversees the Company’s environmental, health and safety compliance and related risks.

THE MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT & COMPENSATION COMMITTEE oversees risk associated with management resources and structure, succession planning and management development and selection processes, and it reviews executive compensation practices at GE and GE Capital to confirm that pay arrangements incentivize leaders to improve the Company’s competitive position without encouraging excessive risk taking. The Management Development and Compensation Committee reviews and discusses, at least annually, the relationship between risk management policies and practices, corporate strategy and senior executive compensation.

THE RISK COMMITTEE assists the Board in its oversight of the Company’s risk management framework. Its role also includes the independent oversight of GE Capital, including the adequacy and effectiveness of GE Capital’s risk management function and the GE Capital Exit Plan, and the Risk Committee regularly meets jointly with the GE Capital Board throughout the year. Significant risks are also discussed in full Board updates, Audit Committee updates and during director business visits.

THE SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE oversees the direction and effectiveness of the Company’s R&D operations. It also reviews the Company’s technology and innovation strategies and approaches, including the impact on the Company’s performance, growth and competitive position. The Science & Technology Committee assists the Board in overseeing GE’s investments and initiatives in science, technology and software and reviews science and technology trends that could significantly affect the Company and the industries in which it operates.
RISK MANAGEMENT

SENIOR MANAGEMENT

The GE Board’s risk oversight process builds upon management’s risk assessment and mitigation processes, which include standardized reviews of long-term strategic and operational planning; executive development and evaluation; code of conduct compliance under the Company’s The Spirit & The Letter; regulatory compliance; health, safety and environmental compliance; financial reporting and controllership; and information technology and security.

The Corporate Risk Function is responsible for overseeing and coordinating risk assessment and mitigation on an enterprise-wide basis. It is responsible for the identification of key business risks, providing for appropriate oversight of the businesses’ management of these risks within GE Board guidelines, and enforcement through policies and procedures.

OPERATING REVIEWS

CORPORATE AUDIT STAFF & GE CAPITAL AUDIT are responsible for reviewing the governance, processes, controls and accuracy of GE’s and GE Capital’s financial and compliance reporting.

THE POLICY COMPLIANCE REVIEW BOARD is a management-level committee that further assists in assessing and mitigating risk. The Policy Compliance Review Board, members of which participated in eight compliance operating reviews in 2015, is chaired by the Company’s general counsel and includes the Chief Financial Officer and other senior-level functional leaders. It has principal responsibility for monitoring compliance matters across the Company.

GE BLUEPRINT REVIEWS are integrated business planning reviews across GE that evaluate strategic objectives, operating and organizational performance, and enterprise risks. Blueprint reviews are held at least four times per year and include the most senior GE business leaders.

GE CAPITAL’S ENTERPRISE RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE oversees the implementation of GE Capital’s risk appetite, and senior management’s establishment of appropriate systems to ensure enterprise risks are effectively identified, measured, monitored, and controlled. Additional information on GE Capital’s Enterprise Risk Management Committee can be found in the GE Capital Risk Management and Mitigation section below.

RISK MANAGERS

Risk assessment and risk management are the responsibility of management and are carried out through risk managers who are operationally integrated into each of our businesses. These risk managers bring deep domain expertise to the operations and core processes. Both risk managers and the business leadership teams have specific, enterprise risk focused goals and objectives that are aligned with our overall risk framework.

RISK MITIGATION & COMMUNICATION

Risks identified through our risk management processes are prioritized and, depending on the probability and severity of the risk, escalated as appropriate. Senior management discusses these risks periodically and assigns responsibility for them to the businesses. The assigned owners continually monitor, evaluate and report on risks for which they bear responsibility. Enterprise risk leaders within each business and corporate function are responsible to present risk assessments and key risks to senior management at least annually. We have general response strategies for managing risks, which categorize risks according to whether the Company will avoid, transfer, reduce or accept the risk. These response strategies are tailored to ensure that risk levels are within the Company’s risk appetite.
Depending on the nature of the risk involved and the particular business or function affected, we use a wide variety of risk mitigation strategies, including delegations of authority, standardized processes and strategic planning reviews, operating reviews, insurance, and hedging. As a matter of policy, we generally hedge the risk of fluctuations in foreign currency exchange rates, interest rates and commodity prices. Our service businesses employ a comprehensive tollgate process leading up to and through the execution of a contractual service agreement to mitigate legal, financial and operational risks. Furthermore, we centrally manage some risks by purchasing insurance, the amount of which is determined by balancing the level of risk retained or assumed with the cost of transferring risk to others. We manage the risk of fluctuations in economic activity and customer demand by monitoring industry dynamics and responding accordingly, including by adjusting capacity, implementing cost reductions and engaging in mergers, acquisitions and dispositions.

**GE CAPITAL RISK MANAGEMENT & MITIGATION**

GE Capital promotes a strong culture of risk management, combined with a risk framework that effectively supports appropriate risk awareness, behaviors and sound risk-based decision making. GE Capital’s risk framework recognizes that effective and comprehensive risk management must include three distinct lines of defense made up of GE Capital’s business units, Corporate Risk Management and internal audit function.

Business units own and manage risk as a first line of defense with deep risk expertise. The GE Capital Corporate Risk Management function provides independent oversight and challenge as a second line of defense. The senior risk professionals have, on average, over 30 years of experience. GE Capital Audit provides the third line of defense.

Corporate Risk Management leverages the risk infrastructure in each of GE Capital’s business units, which have adopted an approach that corresponds to GE Capital’s overall risk policies, procedures and review mechanisms. GE Capital’s risk infrastructure is designed to manage all risks relevant to its business environment that, if they materialized, could prevent GE Capital from achieving its risk objectives or result in losses. These risks comprise GE Capital’s enterprise risk universe, which includes the following risks: strategic, liquidity, credit and investment, market, compliance and operational (including financial, information technology, human resources and legal). Reputational risk is considered and managed across each of the categories.

GE Capital continues to enhance its risk management processes consistent with the heightened supervisory expectations applicable to it as a nonbank SIFI. As a result, GE Capital is executing on strategic programs and an extensive number of deliverables to improve data and reporting systems, risk and governance processes and other enterprise initiatives including capital planning, models, valuations and regulatory reporting.

The GE Risk Committee and GE Capital Board establish GE Capital’s risk appetite and oversee its risk management framework and risk assessment and management processes. All participants in the GE Capital risk management process must comply with approval limits established by the GE Risk Committee and the GE Capital Board or within the business units pursuant to delegations of authority, and the GE Risk Committee and the GE Capital Board retain approval authority for significant acquisitions, dispositions, borrowings and investments.

GE Capital’s Enterprise Risk Management Committee (ERMC), which comprises the most senior leaders of GE Capital, oversees the implementation of GE Capital’s risk appetite, and senior management’s establishment of appropriate systems (including policies, procedures, and management committees) to ensure enterprise risks are effectively identified, measured, monitored, and controlled. The ERMC has delegated the management of specific risks to various sub-committees, including the Operational Risk Management Committee, Asset-Liability Committee, Capital Planning Committee, Allowance and Valuation Risk Committee, Credit and Investment Risk Committee, Model Risk Management Committee, New Product Introduction Committee and Compliance Committee. A similar committee structure, where appropriate, is replicated at the business unit level.

The GE Risk Committee and the GE Capital Board periodically review and approve key risk management policies and they meet with GE Capital senior management throughout the year. At these meetings, GE Capital senior management focuses on the risk issues, strategy and governance of the business.
GE Capital's Corporate Risk function, in consultation with the ERMC, updates GE Capital’s Enterprise Risk Appetite Statement annually. This document articulates the enterprise risk objectives, its key universe of risks and the supporting limit structure. GE Capital’s risk appetite is determined relative to its desired risk objectives, including, but not limited to, credit ratings, capital levels, liquidity management, regulatory assessments, earnings, dividends and compliance. GE Capital determines its risk appetite through consideration of portfolio analytics, including stress testing and economic capital measurement, experience and judgment of senior risk officers, current portfolio levels, strategic planning, and regulatory and rating agency expectations.

The Enterprise Risk Appetite Statement is presented to the GE Risk Committee and the GE Capital Board for review and approval at least annually. On a quarterly basis, the status of GE Capital’s performance against these limits is reviewed by the GE Risk Committee, the GE Capital Board and the ERMC.

GE Capital monitors its capital adequacy including through economic capital, regulatory capital, scenario analysis and enterprise stress testing methodologies. GE Capital’s economic capital methodology uses internal models to estimate potential unexpected losses across different portfolios with a confidence level equivalent to an A credit agency rating. GE Capital is also subject to the FRB’s capital adequacy framework using the standardized approach to calculate risk-weighted assets, and it uses scenario analysis and stress testing for risk, liquidity and capital adequacy assessment and management purposes and as an integral part of GE Capital’s overall planning processes. Scenario analysis and stress testing results inform key strategic portfolio decisions such as the amount of capital required to maintain minimum expected regulatory capital levels in severe but plausible stresses, capital allocation, assist in developing the risk appetite and limits and help in assessing product specific risk to guide the development and modification of product structures. The GE Risk Committee and the GE Capital Board review these results and their expected impact on capital levels and metrics. The GE Risk Committee and the GE Capital Board are responsible for overseeing overall capital adequacy, and the capital adequacy process, as well as approving GE Capital’s annual capital plan and capital actions. If GE Capital is still a non-bank SIFI on January 1, 2018, it will also become subject to stress testing and capital planning requirements under the FRB’s more formal comprehensive capital analysis and review (CCAR) regulations, enhanced leverage ratio requirements, enhanced governance requirements, daily liquidity calculations, additional reporting requirements and a market terms requirement for transactions between GE and GE Capital.

For additional information about our risks, see the Risk Factors, Regulations and Supervision and Critical Accounting Estimates sections within the MD&A.
RISK FACTORS

The following discussion of risk factors contains “forward-looking statements,” as discussed in the Forward-Looking Statements section. These risk factors may be important to understanding any statement in this Annual Report on Form 10-K or elsewhere. The following information should be read in conjunction with the Management’s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations (MD&A) section and the consolidated financial statements and related notes.

GE’s Corporate Risk Function leverages the risk framework in each of our businesses, which have adopted an approach that corresponds to the Company’s overall risk policies, guidelines and review mechanisms. Our risk framework operates at the business and functional levels and is designed to identify, evaluate and mitigate risks within each of the risk categories below.

Our businesses routinely encounter and address risks, some of which will cause our future results to be different – sometimes materially different – than we presently anticipate. Below, we describe certain important strategic, operational, financial, and legal and compliance risks. Our reactions to material future developments as well as our competitors’ reactions to those developments will affect our future results.

STRATEGIC RISKS

Strategic risk relates to the Company’s future business plans and strategies, including the risks associated with: the global macro-environment in which we operate; mergers and acquisitions and restructuring activity; intellectual property; and other risks, including the demand for our products and services, competitive threats, technology and product innovation, and public policy.

Global macro-environment - Our growth is subject to global economic and political risks. We operate in virtually every part of the world and serve customers in approximately 180 countries. In 2015, approximately 55% of our revenue was attributable to activities outside the United States. Our operations and the execution of our business plans and strategies are subject to the effects of global competition and geopolitical risks. They are also affected by local economic environments, including inflation, recession, currency volatility, currency controls and actual or anticipated default on sovereign debt. Political changes, some of which may be disruptive, can interfere with our supply chain, our customers and all of our activities in a particular location. While some of these global economic and political risks can be hedged using derivatives or other financial instruments and some are insurable, such attempts to mitigate these risks are costly and not always successful, and our ability to engage in such mitigation may decrease or become even more costly as a result of more volatile market conditions.

M&A/restructuring - The success of our business depends on achieving our strategic objectives, including through acquisitions, joint ventures, dispositions and restructurings. With respect to acquisitions, joint ventures and restructuring actions, we may not achieve expected returns and other benefits as a result of various factors, including integration and collaboration challenges, such as personnel and technology. In addition, we may not achieve anticipated cost savings from restructuring actions, which could result in lower margin rates. For example, our anticipated returns from the Alstom acquisition include cost and growth synergy benefits over a multi-year period that we may not fully realize. We also participate in a number of joint ventures with other companies or government enterprises in various markets around the world, including joint ventures where we may have a lesser degree of control over the business operations, which may expose us to additional operational, financial, legal or compliance risks. We are selling financial assets and businesses in numerous transactions in connection with the GE Capital Exit Plan, and we also continue to evaluate the potential disposition of other assets and businesses that may no longer help us meet our objectives. When we decide to sell assets or a business, we may encounter difficulty in finding buyers or executing alternative exit strategies on acceptable terms in a timely manner, which could delay the accomplishment of our strategic objectives. Alternatively, we may dispose of a business at a price or on terms that are less than we had anticipated, or with the exclusion of assets that must be divested or run off separately. After reaching an agreement with a buyer or seller for the acquisition or disposition of a business, such as the proposed sale of Appliances to Haier, the transaction remains subject to necessary regulatory and governmental approvals on acceptable terms as well as the satisfaction of pre-closing conditions, which may prevent us from completing the transaction. Dispositions may also involve continued financial involvement in the divested business, such as through continuing equity ownership, transition service agreements, guarantees, indemnities or other current or contingent financial obligations. Under these arrangements, performance by the divested businesses or other conditions outside our control could affect our future financial results.
Intellectual property - Our intellectual property portfolio may not prevent competitors from independently developing products and services similar to or duplicative to ours.

Our patents and other intellectual property may not prevent competitors from independently developing or selling products and services similar to or duplicative of ours, and there can be no assurance that the resources invested by us to protect our intellectual property will be sufficient or that our intellectual property portfolio will adequately deter misappropriation or improper use of our technology. We could also face competition in some countries where we have not invested in an intellectual property portfolio. We also face attempts to gain unauthorized access to our IT systems or products for the purpose of improperly acquiring our trade secrets or confidential business information. The theft or unauthorized use or publication of our trade secrets and other confidential business information as a result of such an incident could adversely affect our competitive position and the value of our investment in research and development. We may be unable to secure or retain ownership or rights to use data in certain software analytics or services offerings. In addition, we may be the target of aggressive and opportunistic enforcement of patents by third parties, including non-practicing entities. Regardless of the merit of such claims, responding to infringement claims can be expensive and time-consuming. If GE is found to infringe any third-party rights, we could be required to pay substantial damages or we could be enjoined from offering some of our products and services. Also, there can be no assurances that we will be able to obtain or renew from third parties the licenses we need in the future, and there is no assurance that such licenses can be obtained on reasonable terms.

OPERATIONAL RISKS

Operational risk relates to risks arising from systems, processes, people and external events that affect the operation of our businesses. It includes product life cycle and execution; product safety and performance; information management and data protection and security, including cyber security; supply chain and business disruption; and other risks, including human resources and reputation.

Operations - We may face operational challenges that could have a material adverse effect on our business, reputation, financial position and results of operations, and we are dependent on maintenance of existing product lines, market acceptance of new product and service introductions and product and service innovations for continued revenue and earnings growth.

We produce highly sophisticated products and provide specialized services for both our and third-party products that incorporate or use leading-edge technology, including both hardware and software. While we have built extensive operational processes to ensure that our product design, manufacture and servicing, and other services that we provide, meet the most rigorous quality standards, there can be no assurance that we or our customers or other third parties will not experience operational process failures or other problems, including through cyber attacks and other intentional acts, that could result in potential product, safety, regulatory or environmental risks. Despite the existence of crisis management or business continuity plans, operational failures or quality issues, including as a result of organizational changes, attrition or labor relations, could have a material adverse effect on our business, reputation, financial position and results of operations. For projects where we take on the full scope of engineering, procurement, construction or other services, the potential risk is greater that operational, quality or other issues at particular projects could adversely affect GE’s results of operations. In addition, the markets in which we operate are subject to technological change and require skilled talent. Our long-term operating results depend substantially upon our ability to continually develop, introduce, and market new and innovative products and services, to modify existing products and services, to customize products and services, to respond to technological change and to deliver products, services and outcomes in line with our projected performance and/or cost estimates.

Cybersecurity - Increased cybersecurity requirements, vulnerabilities, threats and more sophisticated and targeted computer crime could pose a risk to our systems, networks, products, solutions, services and data.

Increased global cybersecurity vulnerabilities, threats and more sophisticated and targeted cyber-related attacks pose a risk to the security of GE’s and its customers’, partners’, suppliers’ and third-party service providers’ products, systems and networks and the confidentiality, availability and integrity of GE’s and its customers’ data. While we attempt to mitigate these risks by employing a number of measures, including employee training, monitoring and testing, and maintenance of protective systems and contingency plans, we remain potentially vulnerable to additional known or unknown threats. We also may have access to sensitive, confidential or personal data or information in certain of our businesses that is subject to privacy and security laws, regulations and customer-imposed controls. Despite our efforts to protect sensitive, confidential or personal data or information, we may be vulnerable to material security breaches, theft, misplaced or lost data, programming errors, employee errors and/or malfeasance that could potentially lead to the compromising of sensitive, confidential or personal data or information, improper use of our systems, software solutions or networks, unauthorized access, use, disclosure, modification or destruction of information, defective products, production downtimes and operational disruptions. In addition, a cyber-related attack could result in other negative consequences, including damage to our reputation or competitiveness, remediation or increased protection costs, litigation or regulatory action.
RISK FACTORS

Supply chain - Significant raw material shortages, supplier capacity constraints, supplier production disruptions, supplier quality and sourcing issues or price increases could increase our operating costs and adversely impact the competitive positions of our products.

Our reliance on third-party suppliers, contract manufacturers and service providers, and commodity markets to secure raw materials, parts, components and sub-systems used in our products exposes us to volatility in the prices and availability of these materials, parts, components, systems and services. Some of these suppliers or their sub-suppliers are limited- or sole-source suppliers. A disruption in deliveries from our third-party suppliers, contract manufacturers or service providers, capacity constraints, production disruptions, price increases, or decreased availability of raw materials or commodities, including as a result of catastrophic events, could have an adverse effect on our ability to meet our commitments to customers or increase our operating costs. Quality and sourcing issues experienced by third-party providers can also adversely affect the quality and effectiveness of our products and services and result in liability and reputational harm.

FINANCIAL RISKS

Financial risk relates to our ability to meet financial obligations and mitigate exposure to broad market risks, including volatility in foreign currency exchange rates and interest rates and commodity prices; credit risk; and liquidity risk, including risk related to our credit ratings and our availability and cost of funding. Credit risk is the risk of financial loss arising from a customer or counterparty failure to meet its contractual obligations. We face credit risk in our industrial businesses, as well as in our GE Capital investing, lending and leasing activities and derivative financial instruments activities. Liquidity risk refers to the potential inability to meet contractual or contingent financial obligations (whether on- or off-balance sheet) as they arise, and could potentially impact an institution’s financial condition or overall safety and soundness.

Economy/counter-parties - A deterioration of conditions in the global economy, the major industries we serve or the financial markets, or the soundness of financial institutions and governments we deal with, may adversely affect our business and results of operations.

The business and operating results of our industrial businesses have been, and will continue to be, affected by worldwide economic conditions, including conditions in the air and rail transportation, power generation, oil and gas, renewables, healthcare, home building and other major industries we serve. Existing or potential customers may delay or cancel plans to purchase our products and services, including large infrastructure projects, and may not be able to fulfill their obligations to us in a timely fashion as a result of business deterioration, cash flow shortages, low oil prices or difficulty obtaining financing due to slower global economic growth and other challenges affecting the global economy. In particular, the airline industry is highly cyclical, and the level of demand for air travel is correlated to the strength of the U.S. and international economies. An extended period of slow growth in the U.S. or internationally that results in the loss of business and leisure traffic could have a material adverse effect on our airline customers and the viability of their business. Service contract cancellations or customer dynamics such as early aircraft retirements, reduced electricity demand in our Power and Renewable Energy businesses or declines in orders, project commencement delays and pricing pressures on our Oil & Gas business from low oil prices could affect our ability to fully recover our contract costs and estimated earnings. Further, our vendors may be experiencing similar conditions, which may impact their ability to fulfill their obligations to us. If slower growth in the global economy continues for a significant period or there is significant deterioration in the global economy, our results of operations, financial position and cash flows could be materially adversely affected.

If conditions in the financial markets deteriorate, there can be no assurance that we will be able to recover fully the value of certain assets, including goodwill, intangibles and tax assets. Deterioration in the economy and in default and recovery rates could require us to increase allowances for loan losses, impairments or write-offs, which, depending on the amount of the increase, could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial position and results of operations.

In addition, GE Capital has exposure to many different industries and counterparties, including sovereign governments, and routinely executes transactions with counterparties in the financial services industry, including brokers and dealers, commercial banks, investment banks and other institutional clients. Many of these transactions expose GE Capital to credit risk in the event of default of its counterparty or client. In addition, GE Capital’s credit risk may be increased when the value of collateral held cannot be realized through sale or is liquidated at prices insufficient to recover the full amount of the loan or derivative exposure due to it. GE Capital also has exposure to these financial institutions in the form of cash on deposit and unsecured debt instruments held in its investment portfolios. GE Capital has policies relating to credit rating requirements and to exposure limits to counterparties (as described in Notes 20 and 27 to the consolidated financial statements), which are designed to limit credit and liquidity risk. There can be no assurance, however, that any losses or impairments to the carrying value of financial assets would not materially and adversely affect GE’s or GE Capital’s business, financial position and results of operations.
RISK FACTORS

Funding access/costs - Failure to maintain our credit ratings, or conditions in the financial and credit markets, could adversely affect our access to capital markets, funding costs and related margins, liquidity and competitive position.

The major debt rating agencies routinely evaluate our debt. This evaluation is based on a number of factors, which include financial strength as well as transparency with rating agencies and timeliness of financial reporting. As of December 31, 2015, GE and GE Capital’s long-term unsecured debt credit rating from Standard and Poor’s Ratings Service (S&P) was AA+ (the second highest of 22 rating categories) with a negative outlook. The long-term unsecured debt credit rating from Moody’s Investors Service (Moody’s) for GE and for GE Capital was A1 (the fifth highest of 21 credit ratings), both with stable outlooks. As of December 31, 2015, GE and GE Capital’s short-term credit rating from S&P was A-1+ (the highest rating category of six categories) and from Moody’s was P-1 (the highest rating category of four categories). There can be no assurance that we will be able to maintain our credit ratings and failure to do so could adversely affect our cost of funds and related margins, liquidity, competitive position and access to capital markets. Various debt and derivative instruments, guarantees and covenants would require posting additional capital or collateral in the event of a ratings downgrade, which, depending on the extent of the downgrade, could have a material adverse effect on our liquidity and capital position.

Furthermore, to the extent that we rely on the availability of the unsecured debt markets to access funding for term and commercial paper maturities for 2016 and beyond, external conditions in the financial and credit markets may limit the availability of funding at particular times or increase the cost of funding, which could affect our overall profitability. Factors that may affect the availability of funding or cause an increase in our funding costs include decreased capacity and increased competition among commercial paper issuers, and potential impacts arising in the United States, Europe or China from developments in sovereign debt situations, currency movements or other potential market disruptions. If GE or GE Capital’s cost of funding were to increase, it may adversely affect our competitive position and result in lower net interest margins, earnings and cash flows as well as lower returns on shareholders’ equity and invested capital.

Social costs - Sustained increases in pension and healthcare benefits costs may reduce our profitability.

Our results of operations may be positively or negatively affected by the amount of income or expense we record for our defined benefit pension plans. GAAP requires that we calculate income or expense for the plans using actuarial valuations. These valuations reflect assumptions about financial market and other economic conditions, which may change based on changes in key economic indicators. The most significant year-end assumptions we use to estimate pension expense for 2016 are the discount rate and the expected long-term rate of return on the plan assets. In addition, we are required to make an annual measurement of plan assets and liabilities, which may result in a significant reduction or increase to equity. At the end of 2015, the GE Pension Plan was underfunded, on a GAAP basis, by $16.9 billion, and the GE Supplementary Pension Plan, an unfunded plan, had a projected benefit obligation of $6.1 billion. Although GAAP expense and pension funding contributions are not directly related, key economic factors that affect GAAP expense would also likely affect the amount of cash we would contribute to pension plans as required under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA). Failure to achieve expected returns on plan assets driven by various factors, which could include a continued environment of low interest rates or sustained market volatility, could also result in an increase to the amount of cash we would be required to contribute to pension plans. In addition, there may be upward pressure on the cost of providing healthcare benefits to current employees and retirees. Although we have actively sought to control increases in these costs, there can be no assurance that we will succeed in limiting cost increases, and continued upward pressure could reduce our profitability. For a discussion regarding how our financial statements can be affected by our pension and healthcare benefit obligations, see the Other Consolidated Information – Postretirement Benefit Plans section and Notes 12 and 27 to the consolidated financial statements. See also the Critical Accounting Estimates – Pension Assumptions section for a discussion regarding how our financial statements can be affected by our pension plan accounting policies.

LEGAL & COMPLIANCE RISKS

Legal and compliance risk relates to risks arising from the government and regulatory environment and action, including resulting from the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act; and legal proceedings and compliance with integrity policies and procedures, including those relating to financial reporting, environmental health and safety. Government and regulatory risk includes the risk that the government or regulatory actions will impose additional cost on us or cause us to have to change our business models or practices.
RISK FACTORS

Regulatory - We are subject to a wide variety of laws, regulations and government policies that may change in significant ways.

Our businesses are subject to regulation under a wide variety of U.S. federal and state and non-U.S. laws, regulations and policies. There can be no assurance that laws, regulations and policies will not be changed in ways that will require us to modify our business models and objectives or affect our returns on investments by restricting existing activities and products, subjecting them to escalating costs or prohibiting them outright. In particular, substantial revisions that U.S. and non-U.S. governments are undertaking or considering in areas such as the regulation and supervision of bank and non-bank financial institutions, consumer lending, foreign exchange intervention in response to currency volatility, trade controls, the over-the-counter derivatives market and tax laws and regulations may have an effect on GE’s, GE Capital’s or other regulated subsidiaries’ structure, operations, sales, liquidity, capital requirements, effective tax rate and performance. For example, efforts by public and private sectors to control the growth of healthcare costs may lead to lower reimbursements and increased utilization controls related to the use of our products by healthcare providers. Continued government scrutiny, including reviews of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (U.S. FDA) medical device pre-market authorization and post-market surveillance processes, may impact the requirements for marketing our products and slow our ability to introduce new products, resulting in an adverse impact on our business. Furthermore, we have been, and expect to continue, participating in U.S. and international governmental programs, which require us to comply with strict governmental regulations. Inability to comply with these regulations could adversely affect our status in these projects and adversely affect our results of operations, financial position and cash flows.

Dodd-Frank - Under the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, we are subject to prudential oversight by the Federal Reserve, as a result of GE Capital’s designation as a nonbank systemically important financial institution (nonbank SIFI), which subjects us to increased and evolving regulatory requirements.

GE Capital is a nonbank SIFI and as a result is subject to Federal Reserve Board (FRB) supervision. On July 20, 2015 the FRB published a final order that applies enhanced prudential standards to GE Capital as a nonbank SIFI. The final order staggered the application of the enhanced prudential standards with the first set of standards becoming applicable on January 1, 2016 and the second set becoming applicable on January 1, 2018. Under the standards applicable on January 1, 2016 GE Capital became subject to the FRB’s capital adequacy framework using the standardized approach to calculate risk-weighted assets, as well as to the maintenance of a 90% liquidity coverage ratio until December 31, 2016 and a 100% ratio thereafter. If GE Capital is still a nonbank SIFI on January 1, 2018 the second set of enhanced prudential standards will apply. These standards would include stress testing and capital planning requirements under the FRB’s more formal comprehensive capital analysis and review (CCAR) regulations, enhanced leverage ratio requirements, enhanced governance requirements, daily liquidity calculations, additional reporting requirements and a market terms requirement for transactions between GE and GE Capital. GE Capital plans to file an application with the FSOC in early 2016 to terminate the FSOC’s designation of GE Capital as a nonbank SIFI, but the timeline for the FSOC to act on the application will be uncertain and a favorable FSOC decision is not assured. Until the FSOC approves the termination of GE Capital’s designation as a nonbank SIFI, GE Capital will remain subject to regulatory requirements and, depending on the timing of favorable FSOC action, may need to delay planned cost reductions and potential capital distributions.

Legal proceedings - We are subject to legal proceedings and legal compliance risks.

We are subject to a variety of legal proceedings and legal compliance risks in virtually every part of the world, including the matters described in the Legal Proceedings section. We, our representatives, and the industries in which we operate are subject to continuing scrutiny by regulators and other governmental authorities, which may, in certain circumstances, lead to enforcement actions, changes in business practices, fines and penalties or the assertion of private litigation claims and damages. Since closing our acquisition of Alstom’s Thermal, Renewables and Grid businesses in November 2015, we are also subject to legal proceedings and legal compliance risks in connection with legacy matters involving those businesses that were previously outside our control and that we are now independently assessing. In addition to commercial disputes arising in the ordinary course of business, there are Alstom legacy matters in a number of jurisdictions that include alleged anti-competitive activities or improper payments. Although the alleged conduct predated our acquisition of the relevant Alstom businesses, we may nevertheless be held liable for fines, judgments or settlements in connection with currently pending or future proceedings. Additionally, we and our subsidiaries are subject to remedial actions to clean up contaminated sites as required by federal and state laws, such as the dredging of a stretch of the upper Hudson River in New York State that we completed in 2015 and anticipated remediation for a stretch of the Housatonic River in Massachusetts, as described in the Environmental Matters section. While we believe that we have adopted appropriate risk management and compliance programs, the global and diverse nature of our operations and the current enforcement environment mean that legal and compliance risks will continue to exist with respect to our continuing and discontinued operations, and additional legal proceedings and other contingencies, the outcome of which cannot be predicted with certainty, will arise from time to time.