

**ITEM 1: COVER PAGE FOR PART 2A OF FORM ADV:  
FIRM BROCHURE  
March 2020**



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MENLO PARK, CA 94025**

**STEPHEN P. PHILPOTT,  
CHIEF COMPLIANCE OFFICER**

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**This brochure provides information about the qualifications and business practices of Nelson Roberts Investment Advisors, LLC. If you have any questions about the contents of this brochure, please contact us by telephone at (650) 322-4000 or email at [sphilpott@nelsonroberts.com](mailto:sphilpott@nelsonroberts.com). The information in this brochure has not been approved or verified by the United States Securities and Exchange Commission or by any State Securities Authority.**

**Additional information about Nelson Roberts Investment Advisors, LLC also is available on the SEC's website at [www.adviserinfo.sec.gov](http://www.adviserinfo.sec.gov).**

**Please note that the use of the term "registered investment adviser" and description of Nelson Roberts Investment Advisors, LLC and/or our associates as "registered" does not imply a certain level of skill or training. You are encouraged to review this Brochure and Brochure Supplements for our firm's associates who advise you for more information on the qualifications of our firm and our employees.**

## Item 2: Material Changes to Our Part 2A of Form ADV

Nelson Roberts Investment Advisors, LLC is required to advise you of any material changes to our Firm Brochure ("Brochure") from our last annual update, identify those changes on the cover page of our Brochure or on the page immediately following the cover page, or in a separate communication accompanying our Brochure. We must state clearly that we are discussing only material changes since the last annual update of our Brochure, and we must provide the date of the last annual update of our Brochure.

Since the last annual amendment filed, the following changes have been made:

- Steve Philpott's ownership has increased to 5%.
- Our firm now offer Retirement Plan Consulting services.
- Charles Schwab & Co., Inc. ("Schwab") and TD Ameritrade, Inc. ("TD Ameritrade"), recently eliminated transaction fees for U.S. listed equities and exchange traded funds.
- TD Ameritrade announced that it will be acquired by Charles Schwab & Co., Inc. The acquisition is expected to be completed in the summer of 2020. We will provide additional information about the acquisition as it becomes available.

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## Item 4: Advisory Business

A. Description of our advisory firm, including how long we have been in business and our principal owner(s)<sup>1</sup>.

We are dedicated to providing individuals and other types of clients with a wide array of investment advisory services. Our firm is a limited liability company formed in the State of California. Our firm has been in business as an investment adviser since 2004 and is owned by Brian Roberts, Brooks Nelson, and Stephen Philpott.

B. Description of The Types of Advisory Services We Offer.

(i) Comprehensive Portfolio Management:

Our comprehensive portfolio management service encompasses asset management as well as providing financial planning/financial consulting to clients. It is designed to assist clients in meeting their financial goals through the use of financial investments. We conduct at least one, but sometimes more than one meeting (in person if possible, otherwise via telephone conference) with clients in order to understand their current financial situation, existing resources, financial goals, and tolerance for risk. Based on what we learn, we propose an investment approach to the client. We may propose an investment portfolio, consisting of exchange traded funds, mutual funds, individual stocks or bonds, or other securities. Upon the client's agreement to the proposed investment plan, we work with the client to establish or transfer investment accounts so that we can manage the client's portfolio. Once the relevant accounts are under our management, we review such accounts on a regular basis and at least quarterly. We may periodically rebalance or adjust client accounts under our management. If the client experiences any significant changes to his/her financial or personal circumstances, the client must notify us so that we can consider such information in managing the client's investments.

(ii) Financial Planning:

We provide a variety of financial planning services to individuals, families and other clients regarding the management of their financial resources based upon an analysis of client's current situation, goals, and objectives. Generally, such financial planning services will involve preparing a financial plan based on the client's financial goals and objectives. This planning may encompass one or more of the following areas: Investment Planning, Retirement Planning, Estate Planning, Charitable Planning, Education Planning, Mortgage/Debt Analysis, Insurance Analysis, Lines of Credit Evaluation, and Personal Financial Planning.

Our written financial plans rendered to clients usually include general recommendations for a course of activity or specific actions to be taken by the clients. For example,

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that: (1) For purposes of this item, our principal owners include the *persons* we list as owning 25% or more of our firm on Schedule A of Part 1A of Form ADV (Ownership Codes C, D or E). (2) If we are a publicly held company without a 25% shareholder, we simply need to disclose that we are publicly held. (3) If an individual or company owns 25% or more of our firm through subsidiaries, we must identify the individual or parent company and intermediate subsidiaries. If we are a state-registered adviser, on Form ADV Part 2A Page 2, we must identify all intermediate subsidiaries. If we are an SEC-registered adviser, we must identify intermediate subsidiaries that are publicly held, but not other intermediate subsidiaries.

recommendations may be made that the clients begin or revise investment programs, create or revise wills or trusts, obtain or revise insurance coverage, commence or alter retirement savings, or establish education or charitable giving programs. It should also be noted that we refer clients to an accountant, attorney or other specialist, as necessary for non-advisory related services. For written financial planning engagements, we provide our clients with a written summary of their financial situation, observations, and recommendations. Plans are typically completed within six (6) months of the client signing a contract with us, assuming that all the information and documents we request from the client are provided to us promptly. Implementation of the recommendations will be at the discretion of the client.

(iii) Retirement Plan Consulting:

Our firm provides retirement plan consulting services to employer plan sponsors on an ongoing basis. Generally, such consulting services consist of assisting employer plan sponsors in establishing, monitoring and reviewing their company's participant-directed retirement plan. As the needs of the plan sponsor dictate, areas of advising may include:

- Establishing an Investment Policy Statement – Our firm will assist in the development of a statement that summarizes the investment goals and objectives along with the broad strategies to be employed to meet the objectives.
- Investment Options – Our firm will work with the Plan Sponsor to evaluate existing investment options and make recommendations for appropriate changes.
- Asset Allocation and Portfolio Construction – Our firm will develop strategic asset allocation models to aid Participants in developing strategies to meet their investment objectives, time horizon, financial situation and tolerance for risk.
- Investment Monitoring – Our firm will monitor the performance of the investments and notify the client in the event of over/underperformance and in times of market volatility.
- Participant Education – Our firm will provide opportunities to educate plan participants about their retirement plan offerings, different investment options, and general guidance on allocation strategies.

In providing services for retirement plan consulting, our firm does not provide any advisory services with respect to the following types of assets: employer securities, real estate (excluding real estate funds and publicly traded REITS), participant loans, non-publicly traded securities or assets, other illiquid investments, or brokerage window programs (collectively, “Excluded Assets”). All retirement plan consulting services shall be in compliance with the applicable state laws regulating retirement consulting services. This applies to client accounts that are retirement or other employee benefit plans (“Plan”) governed by the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, as amended (“ERISA”). If the client accounts are part of a Plan, and our firm accepts appointment to provide services to such accounts, our firm acknowledges its fiduciary standard within the meaning of Section 3(21) or 3(38) of ERISA as designated by the Retirement Plan Consulting Agreement with respect to the provision of services described therein.

C. Explanation of whether (and, if so, how) we tailor our advisory services to the individual needs of clients, whether clients may impose restrictions on investing in certain securities or types of securities.

(i) Individual Tailoring of Advice to Clients:

We offer individualized investment advice to clients utilizing the following services offered by our firm: Comprehensive Portfolio Management. Additionally, we offer general investment advice to clients utilizing our Financial Planning and Consulting service offered by our firm.

(ii) Ability of Clients to Impose Restrictions on Investing in Certain Securities or Types of Securities:

We usually do not allow clients to impose restrictions on investing in certain securities or types of securities due to the level of difficulty this would entail in managing their account. In the instance that we would allow restrictions, it would be limited to our Comprehensive Portfolio Management service. We do not manage assets through our other services.

(iii) Furthermore, our firm has engaged the services of Chicago Clearing Corporation ("CCC"). Clients will elect in exhibit C of the service agreement if they wish to retain the services of CCC who will act on their behalf in the event of class action litigation in exchange for 20% of the resolution.

D. Participation in Wrap Fee Programs.

We do not offer wrap fee programs.

E. Disclosure of the amount of client assets we manage on a discretionary basis and the amount of client assets we manage on a non-discretionary basis as of December 31, 2019.

We manage \$675,268,230 on a discretionary basis and \$0 on a non-discretionary basis.

## Item 5: Fees & Compensation

We are required to describe our brokerage, custody, fees and fund expenses so you will know how much you are charged and by whom for our advisory services provided to you.

A. Description of how we are compensated for our advisory services provided to you.

(i) Comprehensive Portfolio Management:

Assets Under Management	Annual Percentage of Assets Charge
First \$3,000,000	1.00%
Next \$2,000,000	0.75%
Over \$5,000,000	0.50%

Our firm's fees are billed on a pro-rata annualized basis quarterly in advance based on the value of your account on the last day of the previous quarter. Clients may aggregate their accounts for the purpose of calculating –our fees and the pro-rata share will be borne by each account. In situations where we are asked to provide financial planning for a client and we are managing only a portion of their liquid assets, financial planning and asset management services will be billed separately, fees to be charged for these services shall be based on a fee schedule negotiated and listed on the clients agreements. Additionally, in the case of multi-generational family relationships we may negotiate fees to apply a single rate that considers the sum total of family assets in order to determine the tier to which the fees apply. .

(ii) Financial Planning:

We charge on an hourly fee for financial planning services to clients who do not hire us for discretionary asset management. The total estimated fee, as well as the ultimate fee that we charge you, is based on the scope and complexity of our engagement with you. Our hourly fees are \$350/principal hour for financial advisors.

B. Description of whether we deduct fees from clients' assets or bill clients for fees incurred.

(i) Comprehensive Portfolio Management:

Fees will generally be automatically deducted from your managed account\*. As part of this process, you understand and acknowledge the following:

- a) Your independent custodian sends statements at least quarterly to you showing all disbursements for your account, including the amount of the advisory fees paid to us;
- b) You provide authorization permitting us to be directly paid by these terms;
- c) If we send a copy of our invoice to you, we send a copy of our invoice to the independent custodian at the same time we send the invoice to you;
- d) If we send a copy of our invoice to you, our invoice includes a legend that urges the client to compare information provided in their statements with those from the qualified custodian in account opening notices and subsequent statements sent to the client for whom the adviser opens custodial accounts with the qualified custodian as required by paragraph (a) (2) of Rule 206(4)-2 under the Investment Advisers Act of 1940.

\*In rare cases, we will agree to direct bill clients.

(ii) Financial Planning:

We require a retainer of fifty-percent (50%) of the ultimate financial planning with the remainder of the fee directly billed to you and due to us within thirty (30) days of your financial plan being delivered to you. In all cases, we will not require a retainer exceeding \$1,200 when services cannot be rendered within 6 (six) months.

C. Description of any other types of fees or expenses clients may pay in connection with our advisory services, such as custodian fees or mutual fund expenses.

Clients will incur transaction charges for trades executed in their accounts. These transaction fees are separate from our fees and will be disclosed by the firm that the trades are executed through. It is important to note, however, that Charles Schwab & Co., Inc. ("Schwab") and TD Ameritrade, Inc. ("TD Ameritrade") do not charge transaction fees on Domestic Stocks and ETF transactions. Also, clients will pay the following separately incurred expenses, which we do not receive any part of: charges imposed directly by a mutual fund, index fund, or exchange traded fund which shall be disclosed in the fund's prospectus (i.e., fund management fees and other fund expenses).

- D. We must disclose if client's advisory fees are due quarterly in advance. Explain how a client may obtain a refund of a pre-paid fee if the advisory contract is terminated before the end of the billing period. Explain how you will determine the amount of the refund.

We charge our advisory fees quarterly in advance. In the event that you wish to terminate our services, we will require a thirty day (30) written notice. We will refund the unearned portion of our advisory fee to you. You need to contact us in writing and state that you wish to terminate our services. Upon receipt of your letter of termination, we will proceed to close out your account and process a pro-rata refund of unearned advisory fees.

E. Commissionable Securities Sales.

We do not sell securities for a commission. In order to sell securities for a commission, we would need to have our associated persons registered with a broker-dealer. We have chosen not to do so.

## **Item 6: Performance-Based Fees & Side-By-Side Management**

We do not charge performance fees to our clients.

## **Item 7: Types of Clients & Account Requirements**

We have the following types of clients:

- Individuals and High Net Worth Individuals;
- Trusts, Estates or Charitable Organizations;
- Pension and Profit Sharing Plans;
- Other Investment Advisers

Our requirements for opening and maintaining accounts or otherwise engaging us:

- We generally require a minimum account balance of \$1,000,000 for our Comprehensive Portfolio Management service. Generally, this minimum account balance requirement is not negotiable and would be required throughout the course of the client's relationship with our firm. We have the discretion to waive the account minimum. Accounts of less than \$1,000,000 may be set up when the client and our firm anticipate the client will add additional funds to the accounts bringing the total to \$1,000,000 within a reasonable time. Other exceptions will apply to employees of Advisor and their relatives, or relatives of existing clients



## Item 8: Methods of Analysis, Investment Strategies & Risk of Loss

- A. Description of the methods of analysis and investment strategies we use in formulating investment advice or managing assets.

Methods of Analysis:

- Fundamental

Investment Strategies We Use:

- Long Term Purchases (Securities Held At Least a Year);
- Short Term Purchases (Securities Sold Within a Year);

**Please Note:**

Investing in securities involves risk of loss that clients should be prepared to bear. While the stock market may increase and your account(s) could enjoy a gain, it is also possible that the stock market may decrease and your account(s) could suffer a loss. Furthermore, the bond positions that we hold are subject to interest rate risk and credit risk. It is important that you understand the risks associated with investing in the stock and bond markets, are appropriately diversified in your investments, and ask us any questions you may have.

- B. Our practices regarding cash balances in client accounts, including whether we invest cash balances for temporary purposes and, if so, how.

We generally invest client's cash balances in money market funds, FDIC Insured Certificates of Deposit, high-grade commercial paper and/or government backed debt instruments. Ultimately, we try to achieve the highest return on our client's cash balances through relatively low-risk conservative investments. In most cases, at least a partial cash balance will be maintained in a money market account so that our firm may debit advisory fees for our services related to comprehensive portfolio management service, as applicable.

## Item 9: Disciplinary Information

We are required to disclose whether there are legal or disciplinary events that are material to a client's or prospective client's evaluation of our advisory business or the integrity of our management.

We have determined that our firm and management have nothing to disclose under the aforementioned standard.

## Item 10. Other Financial Industry Activities & Affiliations

We have no other financial industry activities and affiliations to disclose.

## Item 11: Code of Ethics, Participation Or Interest in Client Transactions & Personal Trading

- A. Brief description of our Code of Ethics adopted pursuant to SEC rule 204A-1 and offer to provide a copy of our Code of Ethics to any client or prospective client upon request.

We recognize that the personal investment transactions of members and employees of our firm demand the application of a high Code of Ethics and require that all such transactions be carried out in a way that does not endanger the interest of any client. At the same time, we believe that if investment goals are similar for clients and for members and employees of our firm, it is logical and even desirable that there be common ownership of some securities.

Therefore, in order to prevent conflicts of interest, we have in place a set of procedures (including a pre-clearing procedure) with respect to transactions effected by our members, officers and employees for their personal accounts<sup>2</sup>. In order to monitor compliance with our personal trading policy, we have a securities transaction reporting system for all of our associates which is reviewed annually.

Furthermore, our firm has established a Code of Ethics which applies to all of our associated persons. An investment adviser is considered a fiduciary. As a fiduciary, it is an investment adviser's responsibility to provide fair and full disclosure of all material facts and to act solely in the best interest of each of our clients at all times. We have a fiduciary duty to all clients. Our fiduciary duty is considered the core underlying principle for our Code of Ethics which also includes Insider Trading and Personal Securities Transactions Policies and Procedures. We require all of our supervised persons to conduct business with the highest level of ethical standards and to comply with all federal and state securities laws at all times. Upon employment or affiliation and at least annually thereafter, all supervised persons will sign an acknowledgement that they have read, understand, and agree to comply with our Code of Ethics. Our firm and supervised persons must conduct business in an honest, ethical, and fair manner and avoid all circumstances that might negatively affect or appear to affect our duty of complete loyalty to all clients. This disclosure is provided to give all clients a summary of our Code of Ethics. However, if a client or a potential client wishes to review our Code of Ethics in its entirety, a copy will be provided promptly upon request.

- B. If our firm or a related person invests in the same securities (or related securities, e.g., warrants, options or futures) that our firm or a related person recommends to clients, we are required to describe our practice and discuss the conflicts of interest this presents and generally how we address the conflicts that arise in connection with personal trading.

See Item 11A of this Brochure.

- C. If our firm or a related person recommends securities to clients, or buys or sells securities for client accounts, at or about the same time that you or a related person buys or sells the same securities for our firm's (or the related person's own) account, we are required to describe our

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<sup>2</sup> For purposes of the policy, our associate's personal account generally includes any account (a) in the name of our associate, his/her spouse, his/her minor children or other dependents residing in the same household, (b) for which our associate is a trustee or executor, or (c) which our associate controls, including our client accounts which our associate controls and/or a member of his/her household has a direct or indirect beneficial interest in.

practice and discuss the conflicts of interest it presents. We are also required to describe generally how we address conflicts that arise.

See Item 11A of this Brochure.

## Item 12: Brokerage Practices

A. Description of the factors that we consider in selecting or recommending broker-dealers for client transactions and determining the reasonableness of their compensation (e.g., commissions).

1. Research and Other Soft Dollar Benefits. If we receive research or other products or services other than execution from a broker-dealer or a third party in connection with client securities transactions ("soft dollar benefits"), we are required to disclose our practices and discuss the conflicts of interest they create. Please note that we must disclose all soft dollar benefits we receive, including, in the case of research, both proprietary research (created or developed by the broker-dealer) and research created or developed by a third party.

Our firm has an arrangement with the Institutional Division of Charles Schwab & Co., Robert W. Baird & Co. Incorporated, Shareholders Service Group, Inc., TD Ameritrade Institutional, and US Bank N.A., (collectively the "Broker-Dealers"). Under the arrangement with the Broker-Dealers we receive services which include, among others, brokerage, custodial, administrative support, record keeping and related services that are intended to support our firm in conducting business and in serving the best interests of our clients but that may benefit our firm.

- a. Explanation of when we use client brokerage commissions (or markups or markdowns) to obtain research or other products or services, and how we receive a benefit because our firm does not have to produce or pay for the research, products or services.

As part of the arrangement described in Item 12A1, the Broker-Dealers also make certain research and brokerage services available at no additional cost to our firm. These services include certain research and brokerage services, including research services obtained by the Broker-Dealers directly from independent research companies, as selected by our firm (within specific parameters). Research products and services provided by the Broker-Dealers to our firm may include research reports on recommendations or other information about, particular companies or industries; economic surveys, data and analyses; financial publications; portfolio evaluation services; financial database software and services; computerized news and pricing services; quotation equipment for use in running software used in investment decision-making; and other products or services that provide lawful and appropriate assistance by the Broker-Dealers to our firm in the performance of our investment decision-making responsibilities. The aforementioned research and brokerage services are used by our firm to manage accounts for which we have investment discretion. Without this arrangement, our firm might be compelled to purchase the same or similar services at our own expense.

- b. Incentive to select or recommend a broker-dealer based on our interest in receiving the research or other products or services, rather than on our clients' interest in receiving best execution.

As a result of receiving the services discussed in 12A(1)a of this Firm Brochure for no additional cost, we may have an incentive to continue to use or expand the use of Broker-Dealer's services. Our firm examined this potential conflict of interest when we chose to enter into the relationship with the Broker-Dealers and we have determined that the relationship is in the best interest of our firm's clients and satisfies our client obligations, including our duty to seek best execution.

The Broker-Dealers charge brokerage commissions and transaction fees for effecting certain securities transactions (i.e., transaction fees are charged for certain no-load mutual funds, commissions are charged for individual equity and debt securities transactions). It is important to note however that Schwab and TD Ameritrade do not charge transaction fees or brokerage commissions on Domestic Stock and ETF transactions. The Broker-Dealers enable us to obtain many no-load mutual funds without transaction charges and other no-load funds at nominal transaction charges. The Broker-Dealers' commission rates are generally discounted from customary retail commission rates. However, the commission and transaction fees charged by the Broker-Dealers may be higher or lower than those charged by other custodians and broker-dealers.

- c. Causing clients to pay commissions (or markups or markdowns) higher than those charged by other broker-dealers in return for soft dollar benefits (known as paying-up).

Our clients may pay a commission to the Broker-Dealers that is higher than another qualified broker dealer might charge to effect the same transaction where we determine in good faith that the commission is reasonable in relation to the value of the brokerage and research services received. In seeking best execution, the determinative factor is not the lowest possible cost, but whether the transaction represents the best qualitative execution, taking into consideration the full range of a broker-dealer's services, including the value of research provided, execution capability, commission rates, and responsiveness. Accordingly, although we will seek competitive rates, to the benefit of all clients, we may not necessarily obtain the lowest possible commission rates for specific client account transactions.

- d. Disclosure of whether we use soft dollar benefits to service all of our clients' accounts or only those that paid for the benefits, as well as whether we seek to allocate soft dollar benefits to client accounts proportionately to the soft dollar credits the accounts generate.

Although the investment research products and services that may be obtained by our firm will generally be used to service all of our clients, a brokerage commission paid by a specific client may be used to pay for research that is not used in managing that specific client's account.

- e. Description of the types of products and services our firm or any of our related persons acquired with client brokerage commissions (or markups or markdowns) within our last fiscal year.

We are required to specifically describe to our clients the types of products or services that we are acquiring and to permit them to evaluate possible conflicts of interest. Our description must be more detailed for products or services that do not qualify for the safe

harbor in Section 28(e) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, such as those services that do not aid in investment decision-making or trade execution. Merely disclosing that we obtain various research reports and products is not specific enough.

In addition to the benefits described in Item 12A1 of this Brochure, the Broker-Dealers also makes available to our firm products and services that help manage and administer clients' accounts. These include software and other technology (and related technological training) that provide access to client account data (such as trade confirmations and account statements), facilitate trade execution (and allocation of aggregated trade orders for multiple client accounts), provide research, pricing information and other market data, facilitate payment of our fees from clients' accounts, and assist with back-office training and support functions, recordkeeping and client reporting. Many of these services generally may be used to service all or some substantial number of our accounts, including accounts not maintained at the Broker-Dealers. While, as a fiduciary, our firm endeavors to act in our clients' best interests, Adviser's recommendation/requirement that clients maintain their assets in accounts at the Broker-Dealers may be based in part on the benefit to our firm of the availability of some of the foregoing products and services and other arrangements and not solely on the nature, cost, or quality of custody and brokerage services provided by the Broker-Dealers, which may create a potential conflict of interest.

The availability of these services from Schwab benefits us because we do not have to produce or purchase them. We don't have to pay for Schwab's services. Schwab has also agreed to pay up to \$21,500 we would otherwise incur for technology, research, marketing, and compliance consulting products. These services are not contingent upon us committing any specific amount of business to Schwab in trading commissions. This creates an incentive to recommend/require that you maintain your account with Schwab, based on our interest in receiving Schwab's services that benefit our business and Schwab's payment for services for which we would otherwise have to pay rather than based on your interest in receiving the best value in custody services and the most favorable execution of your transactions. This is a potential conflict of interest. We believe, however, that our selection of Schwab as custodian and broker is in the best interests of our clients. Our selection is primarily supported by the scope, quality, and price of Schwab's services (see "How we select brokers/ custodians") and not Schwab's services that benefit only us.

We would have to obtain the aforementioned services and products for cash if we did not have soft dollars available to pay for them. As a result of receiving such products and services for no cost, we may have an incentive to continue to place client trades through broker-dealers that offer soft dollar arrangements. This interest conflicts with the clients' interest of obtaining the lowest commission rate available. Therefore, we must determine in good faith, based on the best execution policy stated above that such commissions are reasonable in relation to the value of the services provided by such executing broker-dealers.

- f. Explanation of the procedures we used during our last fiscal year to direct client transactions to a particular broker-dealer in return for soft dollar benefits we received.

All soft dollars arrangements must be approved in writing by our Chief Compliance Officer. A brief description of the purpose of the soft dollar arrangement outlining the benefits received by our firm and clients along with any noted concerns about increased costs to our clients and how such concerns were alleviated will be maintained on file. Our Chief Compliance Officer undertakes a review of parties which propose to pay our firm in soft dollars and analyzes a number of criteria. When deciding whether to approve or disapprove of a soft dollar relationship, the following criteria is reviewed: the broker-dealer's business reputation and financial position and our ability to consistently execute orders professionally and on a cost effective basis, provide prompt and accurate execution reports, prepare timely and accurate confirms, deliver securities or cash proceeds promptly and provide meaningful research services that are useful to us in investment decision-making or other desired and appropriate services. Our Chief Compliance Officer also annually reviews all our soft dollar relationships for appropriateness, benefits to our clients, etc.

As a fiduciary, we have an obligation to obtain "best execution" of clients' transactions under the circumstances of the particular transaction. Consequently, notwithstanding the safe harbor provided under Section 28(e), no allocation for soft dollar payments shall be made unless best execution of the transaction is reasonably expected to be obtained.

2. Brokerage for Client Referrals. If we use client brokerage to compensate or otherwise reward brokers for client referrals, we must disclose this practice, the conflicts of interest it creates, and any procedures we used to direct client brokerage to referring brokers during the last fiscal year (i.e., the system of controls used by us when allocating brokerage).

Our firm does not receive brokerage for client referrals.

3. Directed Brokerage.
  - a. If we routinely recommend, request or require that a client directs us to execute transactions through a specified broker-dealer, we are required to describe our practice or policy. Further, we must explain that not all advisers require their clients to direct brokerage. If our firm and the broker-dealer are affiliates or have another economic relationship that creates a material conflict of interest, we are further required to describe the relationship and discuss the conflicts of interest it presents by explaining that through the direction of brokerage we may be unable to achieve best execution of client transactions, and that this practice may cost our clients more money.

In certain instances, clients may seek to limit or restrict our discretionary authority in making the determination of the brokers with whom orders for the purchase or sale of securities are placed for execution, and the commission rates at which such securities transactions are effected. Clients may seek to limit our authority in this area by directing that transactions (or some specified percentage of transactions) be executed through specified brokers in return for portfolio evaluation or other services deemed by the client to be of value. Any such client direction must be in writing (often through our advisory agreement), and may contain a representation from the client that the arrangement is permissible under its governing laws and documents, if this is relevant.

We provide appropriate disclosure in writing to clients who direct trades to particular brokers, that with respect to their directed trades, they will be treated as if they have retained the investment discretion that we otherwise would have in selecting brokers to effect transactions and in negotiating commissions and that such direction may adversely affect our ability to obtain best price and execution. In addition, we will inform you in writing that your trade orders may not be aggregated with other clients' orders and that direction of brokerage may hinder best execution.

### **Special Considerations for ERISA Clients**

A retirement or ERISA plan client may direct all or part of portfolio transactions for its account through a specific broker or dealer in order to obtain goods or services on behalf of the plan. Such direction is permitted provided that the goods and services provided are reasonable expenses of the plan incurred in the ordinary course of its business for which it otherwise would be obligated and empowered to pay. ERISA prohibits directed brokerage arrangements when the goods or services purchased are not for the exclusive benefit of the plan. Consequently, we will request that plan sponsors who direct plan brokerage provide us with a letter documenting that this arrangement will be for the exclusive benefit of the plan.

- b. If we permit a client to direct brokerage, we are required to describe our practice. If applicable, we must also explain that we may be unable to achieve best execution of your transactions. Directed brokerage may cost clients more money. For example, in a directed brokerage account, you may pay higher brokerage commissions because we may not be able to aggregate orders to reduce transaction costs, or you may receive less favorable prices on transactions.

See Item 12A(3) of this Brochure.

- B. Discussion of whether, and under what conditions, we aggregate the purchase or sale of securities for various client accounts in quantities sufficient to obtain reduced transaction costs (known as bunching). If we do not bunch orders when we have the opportunity to do so, we are required to explain our practice and describe the costs to clients of not bunching.

We perform investment management services for various clients. There are occasions on which portfolio transactions may be executed as part of concurrent authorizations to purchase or sell the same security for numerous accounts served by our firm, which involve accounts with similar investment objectives. Although such concurrent authorizations potentially could be either advantageous or disadvantageous to any one or more particular accounts, they are affected only when we believe that to do so will be in the best interest of the effected accounts. When such concurrent authorizations occur, the objective is to allocate the executions in a manner which is deemed equitable to the accounts involved. In any given situation, we attempt to allocate trade executions in the most equitable manner possible, taking into consideration client objectives, current asset allocation and availability of funds using price averaging, proration and consistently non-arbitrary methods of allocation.

## **Item 13: Review of Accounts or Financial Plans**

- A. Review of client accounts or financial plans, along with a description of the frequency and nature of our review, and the titles of our employees who conduct the review.

We review accounts on at least a weekly basis for our clients subscribing to our Comprehensive Portfolio Management service. The nature of these reviews is to learn whether clients' accounts are in line with their investment objectives, appropriately positioned based on market conditions, and investment policies, if applicable. Only our Portfolio Managers will conduct reviews.

Financial Planning clients do not receive reviews of their written plans unless they take action to schedule a financial consultation with us. We do not provide ongoing services to financial planning clients, but are willing to meet with such clients upon their request to discuss updates to their plans, changes in their circumstances, etc.

- B. Review of client accounts on other than a periodic basis, along with a description of the factors that trigger a review.

We may review client accounts more frequently than described above. Among the factors which may trigger an off-cycle review are major market or economic events, the client's life events, requests by the client, etc.

- C. Description of the content and indication of the frequency of written or verbal regular reports we provide to clients regarding their accounts.

We provide quarterly reports to our clients that are specific to their portfolio. Our quarterly reports are available electronically or in hardcopy at our client's discretion. Verbal reports to clients take place on at least an annual basis when we meet with clients who subscribe to our Comprehensive Portfolio Management service.

As also mentioned in Item 13A of this Brochure, Financial Planning clients do not receive written or verbal updated reports regarding their financial plans unless they separately contract with us for a post-financial plan meeting or update to their initial written financial plan.

#### **Item 14: Client Referrals & Other Compensation**

- A. If someone who is not a client provides an economic benefit to our firm for providing investment advice or other advisory services to our clients, we must generally describe the arrangement. For purposes of this Item, economic benefits include any sales awards or other prizes.

We may recommend that a client in need of brokerage and custodial services utilize Institutional Division of Charles Schwab & Co., TD Ameritrade Institutional, or US Bank ("Broker-Dealer") among others. It may be the case that the recommended broker charges a higher fee than another broker charges for a particular type of service, such as commission rates. Clients may utilize the broker/dealer of their choice and have no obligation to purchase or sell securities through such broker as our firm recommends.



In selecting a broker/dealer, we will endeavor to select those broker/dealers that will provide the best services at the lowest commission rates possible. The reasonableness of commissions is based on several factors, including the broker/dealer's ability to provide professional services, competitive commission rates, volume discounts, execution price negotiations, and other services. When consistent with our firm's fiduciary duty of best execution, the firm will direct trades to any of the suggested broker/dealers listed above.

Some clients may instruct us to use one or more particular broker/dealers for the transactions in their accounts. Clients who may want to direct our firm to use a particular broker/dealer should understand that this might prevent us from effectively negotiating brokerage compensation on their behalf. This arrangement may also prevent us from obtaining the most favorable net price and execution. Thus, when directing brokerage business, clients should consider whether the commission expenses, execution, clearance, and settlement capabilities that they will obtain through their broker/dealer are adequately favorable in comparison to those that our firm would otherwise obtain for its clients.

We may receive research and execution related services from the Broker-Dealers to assist our firm in managing its accounts. These services and products would include financial publications, pricing information and other products or services. Such research and execution related services are offered to all investment advisers who utilize these firms. However, the commissions charged by these parties may be higher than those charged by a broker who does not provide the aforementioned research and execution related services.

- B. If our firm or a related person directly or indirectly compensates any person who is not our employee for client referrals, we are required to describe the arrangement and the compensation.

Our firm does not pay referral fees (non-commission based) to independent solicitors (non-registered representatives) for the referral of their clients to our firm in accordance with Rule 206 (4)-3 of the Investment Advisers Act of 1940.

## Item 15: Custody

- A. If our firm has custody of client funds or securities and a qualified custodian as defined in SEC rule 206(4)-2 or similar state rules (for example, a broker-dealer or bank) does not send account statements with respect to those funds or securities directly to our clients, our firm must disclose that we have custody and explain the risks that clients will face because of this.

Representatives of our firm act as a trustee or Power of Attorney to client assets. As such, our firm is deemed to have custody. The client funds and securities of which our firm has custody are verified by actual examination at least once during each calendar year by an independent public accountant ("IPA") registered with the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board ("PCAOB"), at a time that is chosen by the accountant without prior notice or announcement to our firm and that is irregular from year to year.

- B. If we have custody of client funds or securities and a qualified custodian sends quarterly, or more frequent, account statements directly to our clients, we are required to explain that you will receive account statements from the broker-dealer, bank, or other qualified custodian and that you should carefully review those statements.

We encourage our clients to raise any questions with us about the custody, safety or security of their assets. The custodians we do business with will send you independent account statements listing your account balance(s), transaction history and any fee debits or other fees taken out of your account.

### **Standing Letters of Authorization**

The SEC issued a no-action letter ("Letter") with respect to the Rule 206(4)-2 ("Custody Rule") under the Investment Advisers Act of 1940 ("Advisers Act"). The letter provided guidance on the Custody Rule as well as clarified that an adviser who has the power to disburse client funds to a third party under a standing letter of instruction ("SLOA") is deemed to have custody. As such, our firm has adopted the following safeguards in conjunction with the account custodian:

- The client provides an instruction to the qualified custodian, in writing, that includes the client's signature, the third party's name, and either the third party's address or the third party's account number at a custodian to which the transfer should be directed.
- The client authorizes the investment adviser, in writing, either on the qualified custodian's form or separately, to direct transfers to the third party either on a specified schedule or from time to time.
- The client's qualified custodian performs appropriate verification of the instruction, such as a signature review or other method to verify the client's authorization, and provides a transfer of funds notice to the client promptly after each transfer.
- The client has the ability to terminate or change the instruction to the client's qualified custodian.
- The investment adviser has no authority or ability to designate or change the identity of the third party, the address, or any other information about the third party contained in the client's instruction.
- The investment adviser maintains records showing that the third party is not a related party of the investment adviser or located at the same address as the investment adviser.
- The client's qualified custodian sends the client, in writing, an initial notice confirming the instruction and an annual notice reconfirming the instruction.

### **Item 16: Investment Discretion**

If we accept discretionary authority to manage securities accounts on behalf of clients, we are required to disclose this fact and describe any limitations our clients may place on our authority. The following procedures are followed before we assume this authority:

Our clients need to sign a discretionary investment advisory agreement with our firm for the management of their account. This type of agreement only applies to our Comprehensive Portfolio Management clients. We do not take or exercise discretion with respect to our other clients.

### **Item 17: Voting Client Securities**

- A. If we have, or will accept, proxy authority to vote client securities, we must briefly describe our voting policies and procedures, including those adopted pursuant to SEC Rule 206(4)-6.

## **Introduction**

Rule 206(4)-6 under the Advisers Act requires every investment adviser to adopt and implement written policies and procedures, reasonably designed to ensure that the adviser votes proxies in the best interest of its clients. The Rule further requires the adviser to provide a concise summary of the adviser's proxy voting process and offer to provide copies of the complete proxy voting policy and procedures to clients upon request. Lastly, the Rule requires that the adviser disclose to clients how they may obtain information on how the adviser voted their proxies.

Our firm votes proxies for a great majority of its clients, and therefore has adopted and implemented these Proxy Voting Policy and Procedures. Any questions about this document should be directed to the Compliance Officer or Chief Executive Officer.

## **Policy**

It is the policy of our firm to vote client proxies in the interest of maximizing Shareholder Value. To that end, our firm will vote in a way that it believes, consistent with its fiduciary duty, will cause the value of the issue to increase the most or decline the least. Consideration will be given to both the short and long term implications of the proposal to be voted on when considering the optimal vote.

Any general or specific proxy voting guidelines provided by an advisory client or its designated agent in writing will supersede this policy. Clients may opt to vote their proxies or have their proxies voted by an independent third party or other named fiduciary or agent, at the client's cost.

## **Procedures for Voting of Proxies & Recordkeeping**

1. Our firm relies on each client's custodian to deliver each proxy to us. It is the custodian's responsibility to send all proxies for any client that has delegated proxy voting to the firm. The custodian is also responsible for excluding the proxies of clients who have opted to vote their own proxies or who have delegated the vote to an independent third party. Additionally, it is the custodian's responsibility to exclude the proxies of any client that terminates the services of our firm.

Custodians send the proxy information to our firm by mail or by email. The proxy notices refer to an account number or master account number. If it refers to a master account, the notice may incorporate the proxies of multiple clients. Sometimes the notices include the number of shares. Also on this notice is a ProxyVote.com control number. ProxyVote.com is a service of Broadridge Financial Solutions, Inc. that the custodians that hold client assets of the firm use to process proxies.

2. The Portfolio Operations Manager shall receive all proxy materials and will be responsible for ensuring that proxies are voted and submitted in a timely manner. The Portfolio Operations Manager, using ProxyVote.com, enters the control number and then votes the proxy online.
3. In the event that no client, who has delegated proxy voting authority to our firm, has asked to vote their proxy in a way that is different from the way that our firm intends to vote, then

all proxy votes will be recorded and the following information as recorded on ProxyVote.com will be maintained:

- a. The name of the issuer of the portfolio security;
  - b. The shareholder meeting date;
  - c. The "For holders as of date";
  - d. The Council on Uniform Securities Identification Procedures ("CUSIP") number for the portfolio security;
  - e. A brief identification of the matter voted on;
  - f. Whether the Recommendation of the Board of Directors was for or against the proposed matter;
  - g. How our firm casts its vote (e.g., for or against proposal, or abstain; for or withhold regarding election of directors);
4. Clients, who have delegated proxy voting to our firm, may on any issue, opt to direct our firm to vote the proxy that represents their shares differently than the way our firm has concluded it should vote all other proxies. Should this happen, then in addition to the information listed above, a specific record is kept listing the number of shares held by each client and how each related proxy was voted.
  5. Our firm will vote proxies according to the policies set forth above. Our firm may also elect to abstain from voting if it deems such abstinence in its clients' best interests.
  6. Our firm will maintain the documentation described above for a period of not less than five (5) years, the first two (2) years at its principal place of business. The Portfolio Operations Manager will be responsible for following the procedures and for ensuring that the required documentation is retained.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The Compliance Officer or Chief Executive Officer will reasonably try to assess any material conflicts between our firm's interests and those of its clients with respect to proxy voting.

Our firm realizes that due to the difficulty of predicting and identifying all material conflicts, it must rely on its employees to notify the Compliance Officer or Chief Executive Officer of any material conflict that may impair our firm's ability to vote proxies in an objective manner. Upon such notification, the Chief Executive Officer will notify its legal counsel of the conflict who will recommend an appropriate course of action.

In addition, any attempts by others within our firm to influence the voting of client proxies in a manner that is inconsistent with the proxy voting policy shall be reported to the Chief Executive Officer. The Chief Executive Officer should then report the attempt to legal counsel.

### **Client Request to Review Proxy Votes:**

- Clients are permitted to request the proxy voting record for the 5-year period prior to their request.
- Any request, whether written (including e-mail) or oral, received by any employee of our firm, must be promptly reported to the Compliance Officer or Chief Executive Officer. All written requests will be retained in the permanent file.

- The Compliance Officer or Chief Executive Officer will record the identity of the client, the date of the request, and the disposition (e.g., provided a written or oral response to client's request, referred to third party, not a proxy voting client, other dispositions, etc.) in a suitable place.
- In order to facilitate the management of proxy voting record keeping process, and to facilitate dissemination of such proxy voting records to clients, the Compliance Officer or Chief Executive Officer will distribute to any client requesting proxy voting information the complete proxy voting record of our firm, for the period requested. Reports containing proxy information of only those issuers held by a certain client will not be created or distributed.

Any report disseminated to a client(s) will contain the following legend:

"This report contains the full proxy voting record of Adviser NELSON ROBERTS INVESTMENT ADVISORS, LLC. If securities of a particular issuer were held in your account on the date of the shareholder meeting indicated, your proxy was voted in the direction indicated (absent your expressed written direction otherwise)."

- Our firm will furnish the information requested, free of charge, to the client within a reasonable time period (within 10 business days). The firm will maintain a copy of the written record provided in response to client's written (including e-mail) or oral request. A copy of the written response should be attached and maintained with the client's written request, if applicable and maintained in the permanent file.

### **Proxy Solicitation**

As a matter of practice, it is our firm's policy to not reveal or disclose to any client how the Adviser may have voted (or intends to vote) on a particular proxy until after such proxies have been counted at a shareholder's meeting. Our firm will never disclose such information to unrelated third parties.

The Chief Executive Officer is to be promptly informed of the receipt of any solicitation from any person to vote proxies on behalf of clients. At no time may any employee accept any remuneration in the solicitation of proxies. The Chief Executive Officer shall handle all responses to such solicitations.

## **Item 18: Financial Information**

- A. If we require or solicit prepayment of more than \$1,200 in fees per client, six months or more in advance, we must include a balance sheet for our most recent fiscal year.

We do not require nor do we solicit prepayment of more than \$1,200 in fees per client, six months or more in advance. Therefore, we have not included a balance sheet for our most recent fiscal year.

- B. If we are an SEC-registered adviser and have discretionary authority or custody of client funds or securities, or we require or solicit prepayment of more than \$1,200 in fees per client, six months or more in advance, we must disclose any financial condition that is reasonably likely to impair our ability to meet contractual commitments to clients.

We have nothing to disclose in this regard.

- C. If we have been the subject of a bankruptcy petition at any time during the past ten years, we must disclose this fact, the date the petition was first brought, and the current status.

We have nothing to disclose in this regard.