

# Sterling Investment Advisors, Ltd.

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ADV Part 2A, Brochure

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**This Brochure provides information about the qualifications and business practices of Sterling Investment Advisors, Ltd. (the “Registrant”). If you have any questions about the contents of this Brochure, please contact us at (610) 560-0400 or [cathyw@sterling-advisors.com](mailto:cathyw@sterling-advisors.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 Sterling Investment Advisors, Ltd. also is available on the SEC’s website at [www.adviserinfo.sec.gov](http://www.adviserinfo.sec.gov).**

**References herein to Sterling Investment Advisors, Ltd. as a “registered investment adviser” or any reference to being “registered” does not imply a certain level of skill or training.**

## Item 2           Material Changes

There have been no material changes made to this Firm Brochure since the last Annual Amendment filing on March 16, 2019.

**Sterling Investment Advisors, Ltd.’s Chief Compliance Officer, Catherine Whetstone, remains available to address any questions that a client or prospective client may have regarding the this Brochure.**

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#### **Item 4            Advisory Business**

- A. Sterling Investment Advisors, Ltd. (the “Registrant”) is a corporation formed on March 13, 2000 in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Registrant became registered as an Investment Adviser Firm in May 2006. The Registrant is owned by Timothy Flatley and Sean Flatley. Timothy Flatley is also the Registrant’s President.

B.

##### **INVESTMENT ADVISORY SERVICES**

The Registrant provides discretionary investment advisory services on a *fee* basis. Through personal discussions in which goals and objectives based on a client’s particular circumstances are established, the Registrant develops each client’s personal investment policy and creates and manages a portfolio, which may include the individual’s personal 401k assets, based on that investment policy.

##### **RETIREMENT PLAN CONSULTING**

The Registrant also provides retirement plan consulting/management services, pursuant to which it assists sponsors of self-directed retirement plans organized under the Employee Retirement Security Act of 1974 (“ERISA”). The terms and conditions of the engagement shall be set forth in a Retirement Plan Services Agreement between the Registrant and the plan sponsor.

To the extent that the plan sponsor engages the Registrant in an ERISA Section 3(21) capacity, the Registrant will assist with the selection and/or monitoring of investment options (generally open-end mutual funds and exchange traded funds) from which plan participants shall choose in self-directing the investments for their individual plan retirement accounts. If the plan sponsor chooses to engage the Registrant in an ERISA Section 3(38) capacity, Registrant may provide the same services as described above, but may also: create specific asset allocation models that Registrant manages on a discretionary basis, which plan participants may choose in managing their individual retirement account; and/or modify the investment options made available to plan participants on a discretionary basis.

##### **FINANCIAL PLANNING AND CONSULTING SERVICES (STAND-ALONE)**

The Registrant provides financial planning and/or consulting services (including investment and non-investment related matters, including personal planning, tax and cash flow planning, insurance planning, retirement planning etc.) on a stand-alone separate fee basis. Prior to engaging the Registrant to provide planning or consulting services, clients are generally required to enter into a *Financial Planning and Consulting Agreement* with Registrant setting forth the terms and conditions of the engagement (including termination), setting forth the terms and conditions of the engagement, describing the scope of the services to be provided, and the fees that are due from the client.

If requested by the client, Registrant may recommend the services of other professionals for implementation purposes, including the Registrant’s representatives in their individual capacities as registered representatives of a broker-dealer and/or licensed insurance agents. (*See* disclosure at Item 10 C) The client is under no obligation to engage the services of any such recommended professional. The client retains absolute discretion over all such implementation decisions and is free to accept or reject any recommendation from the Registrant.

If the client engages any such recommended unaffiliated professional, and a dispute arises, the client agrees to seek recourse exclusively from the engaged unaffiliated professional. At all times, the engaged licensed professional[s] (i.e. attorney, accountant, insurance agent, etc.), and not the Registrant, shall be responsible for the quality and competency of the services provided.

It remains the client's responsibility to promptly notify the Registrant if there is ever any change in their financial situation or investment objectives for the purpose of the Registrant revising its previous recommendations.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

**Limitations of Non-Investment Consulting/Implementation Services.** As indicated above, to the extent requested by a client, Registrant may provide financial planning and related consulting services. Neither the Registrant nor its investment adviser representatives assist clients with the implementation of any financial plan, unless they have agreed to do so in writing. The Registrant does not monitor a client's financial plan, and it is the client's responsibility to revisit the financial plan with the Registrant, if desired.

Furthermore, although the Registrant may provide recommendations regarding non-investment related matters, such as estate planning, tax planning, and insurance, etc. the Registrant does not serve as a law firm, accounting firm, or insurance agency, and no portion of Registrant's services should be construed as legal, accounting, or insurance implementation services. Accordingly, the Registrant does not prepare estate planning documents, tax returns, or sell insurance products.

To the extent requested by a client, Registrant may recommend the services of other professionals for certain non-investment implementation purposes (i.e. attorneys, accountants, insurance agents, etc.), including representatives of the Registrant in their separate and individual registered/licensed capacities as as registered representatives of Pershe Kaplan Sterling Investments, an SEC-registered and FINRA member broker-dealer ("PKS") as discussed in Items 5.E. and 10.C. below, as well as licensed insurance agents as discussed in Item 10.C. below. The client is under no obligation to engage the services of any such recommended professional. The client retains absolute discretion over all such implementation decisions and is free to accept or reject any recommendation from Registrant and/or its representatives.

If the client engages any such recommended unaffiliated professional, and a dispute arises thereafter relative to such engagement, the client agrees to seek recourse exclusively from and against the engaged unaffiliated professional. At all times, the engaged licensed professional[s] (i.e. attorney, accountant, insurance agent, etc.), and not the Registrant, shall be responsible for the quality and competency of the services provided.

**Independent Managers.** Registrant may recommend that the client allocate a portion of a client's investment assets among unaffiliated independent investment managers ("Independent Manager(s)") in accordance with the client's designated investment objective(s). In such situations, the Independent Manager(s) will have day-to-day responsibility for the active discretionary management of the allocated assets. Registrant will continue to render investment supervisory services to the client relative to the ongoing monitoring and review of account performance, asset allocation, and client investment objectives. The Registrant generally considers the following factors when recommending

Independent Manager(s): the client's designated investment objective(s), management style, performance, reputation, financial strength, reporting, pricing, and research. The investment management fees charged by the designated Independent Manager(s) are exclusive of, and in addition to, Registrant's ongoing investment advisory fee, subject to the terms and conditions of a separate agreement between the client and the Independent Manager(s). Registrant's advisory fee is set forth in the fee schedule at Item 5 below.

**Account Aggregation Platforms.** Registrant may provide its clients with access to an online platforms hosted by "eMoney Advisor" ("eMoney") and/or ByAllAccounts, Inc. (collectively, the "Platforms"). The Platforms allows a client to view their complete asset allocation, including those assets that Registrant does not manage (the "Excluded Assets"). Registrant does not provide investment management, monitoring, or implementation services for the Excluded Assets. Therefore, Registrant shall not be responsible for the investment performance of the Excluded Assets. Rather, the client and/or their advisor(s) that maintain management authority for the Excluded Assets, and not Registrant, shall be exclusively responsible for such investment performance. The client may choose to engage Registrant to manage some or all of the Excluded Assets pursuant to the terms and conditions of an Investment Advisory Agreement between Registrant and the client. The Platforms also provides access to other types of information, including financial planning concepts, which should not, in any manner whatsoever, be construed as services, advice, or recommendations provided by Registrant. Finally, Registrant shall not be held responsible for any adverse results a client may experience if the client engages in financial planning or other functions available on the Platforms without Registrant's assistance or oversight.

**Retirement Rollovers-Conflict of Interest:** A client or prospective client leaving an employer typically has four options regarding an existing retirement plan (and may engage in a combination of these options): (i) leave the money in the former employer's plan, if permitted, (ii) roll over the assets to the new employer's plan, if one is available and rollovers are permitted, (iii) roll over to an Individual Retirement Account ("IRA"), or (iv) cash out the account value (which could, depending upon the client's age, result in adverse tax consequences). If the Registrant recommends that a client roll over their retirement plan assets into an account to be managed by the Registrant, such a recommendation creates a conflict of interest if the Registrant will earn an advisory fee on the rolled over assets. No client is under any obligation to roll over retirement plan assets to an account managed by Registrant.

**Use of Mutual Funds and Exchange Traded Funds.** While the Registrant may recommend allocating investment assets to mutual funds and exchange traded funds ("ETFs") that are not available directly to the public, the Registrant may also recommend that clients allocate investment assets to publicly-available mutual funds and ETFs that the client could obtain without engaging Registrant as an investment adviser. However, if a client or prospective client determines to allocate investment assets to publicly-available mutual funds without engaging Registrant as an investment adviser, the client or prospective client would not receive the benefit of Registrant's initial and ongoing investment advisory services.

**Portfolio Activity.** Registrant has a fiduciary duty to provide services consistent with the client's best interest. As part of its investment advisory services, Registrant will review client portfolios on an ongoing basis to determine if any changes are necessary based upon various factors, including, but not limited to, investment performance, mutual fund

manager tenure, style drift, and/or a change in the client's investment objective. Based upon these factors, there may be extended periods of time when Registrant determines that changes to a client's portfolio are neither necessary nor prudent. Clients nonetheless remain subject to the fees described in Item 5 below during periods of account inactivity.

**Client Obligations.** In performing its services, Registrant shall not be required to verify any information received from the client or from the client's other designated professionals, and is expressly authorized to rely thereon. Moreover, each client is advised that it remains their responsibility to promptly notify Registrant if there is ever any change in their financial situation or investment objectives for the purpose of reviewing, evaluating or revising Registrant's previous recommendations and/or services.

**Disclosure Statement.** A copy of Registrant's written disclosure statement as set forth on Part 2 of Form ADV shall be provided to each client prior to, or contemporaneously with, the execution of the *Investment Advisory Agreement*, *Financial Planning and Consulting Agreement*, or *Retirement Plan Consulting Agreement*.

- C. The Registrant shall provide investment advisory services specific to the needs of each client. Prior to providing investment advisory services, an investment adviser representative will ascertain each client's investment objective(s). Thereafter, the Registrant shall allocate and/or recommend that the client allocate investment assets consistent with the designated investment objective(s). Portfolio weighting between funds and market sectors will be determined by each individual client's needs and circumstances. The client may, at any time, impose reasonable restrictions, in writing, on the Registrant's services.
- D. The Registrant does not participate in a wrap fee program.
- E. As of December 31, 2019, the Registrant had \$445,643,881 in assets under management on a discretionary basis.

## **Item 5 Fees and Compensation**

A.

### **INVESTMENT ADVISORY SERVICES**

The Registrant shall receive an investment advisory fee based upon a percentage (%) of the market value of the assets placed under management (between negotiable and 1.00%).

**Fee Differentials:** Fees shall vary depending upon various objective and subjective factors, including but not limited to: the representative assigned to the account, the amount of assets to be invested, the complexity of the engagement, the anticipated number of meetings and servicing needs, related accounts, future earning capacity, anticipated future additional assets, and negotiations with the client. As a result, similar clients could pay different fees, which will correspondingly impact a client's net account performance. Moreover, the services to be provided by the Registrant to any particular client could be available from other advisers at lower fees. All clients and prospective clients should be guided accordingly.

Before engaging Registrant to provide investment advisory services, clients are required to enter into a discretionary *Investment Advisory Agreement*, setting forth the terms and conditions of the engagement (including termination), which describes the fees and services to be provided.

Additionally, clients who choose to engage *Independent Manager(s)* will incur a fee payable to the *Independent Manager(s)* that generally ranges between 0.50% and 1.00% of the value of the assets allocated to such *Independent Manager(s)*. In such an event, the combined fee that a client will pay to the Registrant and the *Independent Manager(s)* generally falls within the fee schedule detailed above. Such combined fee shall not, at any time, exceed 1.00% of the market value of the assets under management.

### **RETIREMENT PLAN CONSULTING**

The Registrant also provides pension consulting services, pursuant to which it assists sponsors of self-directed retirement plans with the selection and/or monitoring of investment alternatives from which plan participants shall choose in self-directing the investments for their individual plan retirement accounts. The Registrant's negotiable annual retirement consulting fee shall generally range between 0.25% and 0.75% of the market value of the plan assets.

### **FINANCIAL PLANNING AND CONSULTING SERVICES (STAND-ALONE)**

The Registrant provides financial planning and/or consulting services (including investment and non-investment related matters, including estate planning, insurance planning, etc.) on a stand-alone fee basis. Registrant's planning and consulting fees are negotiable, but generally range from \$3,000 to \$20,000 on a fixed fee basis, or at a mutually agreed upon hourly rate, depending upon the level and scope of the service(s) required and the professional(s) rendering the service(s).

- B. Clients may elect to have the Registrant's advisory fees and financial planning fees deducted from their custodial account. Both Registrant's *Investment Advisory Agreement* and the custodial/ clearing agreement may authorize the custodian to debit the account for the amount of the Registrant's investment advisory fee and to directly remit that management fee to the Registrant in compliance with regulatory procedures. In the limited event that the Registrant bills the client directly, payment is due upon receipt of the Registrant's invoice. The Registrant shall deduct fees and/or bill clients quarterly in advance, based upon the market value of the assets on the last business day of the previous quarter.
- C. As discussed below, unless the client directs otherwise or an individual client's circumstances require, the Registrant shall generally recommend that Charles Schwab and Co., Inc. ("Schwab") serves as the broker-dealer/custodian for client investment management assets. Broker-dealers such as Schwab charge brokerage commissions and/or transaction fees for effecting certain securities transactions. In addition to Registrant's investment management fee, brokerage commissions and/or transaction fees, clients will also incur, relative to all mutual fund and exchange traded fund purchases, charges imposed at the fund level (e.g. management fees and other fund expenses).
- D. Registrant's annual investment advisory fee shall be prorated and paid quarterly, in advance, based upon the market value of the assets on the last business day of the previous quarter. The *Investment Advisory Agreement* between the Registrant and the client will

continue in effect until terminated by either party by written notice in accordance with the terms of the *Investment Advisory Agreement*. Upon termination, the Registrant shall refund the pro-rated portion of the advanced advisory fee paid based upon the number of days remaining in the billing quarter.

- E. **Securities Commission Transactions.** In the event that the client desires, the client can engage Registrant's representatives, in their individual capacities, as a registered representatives of PKS, an SEC-registered and FINRA member broker-dealer, to implement investment recommendations on a commission basis. In the event the client chooses to purchase investment products through PKS, PKS will charge brokerage commissions to effect securities transactions, a portion of which commissions PKS shall pay to Registrant's representatives, as applicable. The brokerage commissions charged by PKS may be higher or lower than those charged by other broker-dealers. In addition, PKS, as well as Registrant's Representatives, relative to commission mutual fund purchases, may also receive additional ongoing 12b-1 trailing commission compensation directly from the mutual fund company during the period that the client maintains the mutual fund investment. The Registrant's representatives shall not collect 12b-1 trailing commissions from the same investment product(s) for which the Registrant is also charging advisory fees as described in Item 5.A. above.

1. **Conflict of Interest:** The recommendation that a client purchase a commission product from PKS presents a conflict of interest, as the receipt of commissions may provide an incentive to recommend investment products based on commissions to be received, rather than on a particular client's need. No client is under any obligation to purchase any commission products from Registrant's representatives. **The Registrant's Chief Compliance Officer, Catherine Whetstone, remains available to address any questions that a client or prospective client may have regarding the above conflict of interest.**
2. Clients may purchase investment products recommended by Registrant through other, non-affiliated broker dealers or agents.
3. The Registrant does not receive more than 50% of its revenue from advisory clients as a result of commissions or other compensation for the sale of investment products the Registrant recommends to its clients.
4. When Registrant's representatives sell an investment product on a commission basis, the Registrant does not charge an advisory fee in addition to the commissions paid by the client for such product. When providing services on an advisory fee basis, the Registrant's representatives do not also receive commission compensation for such advisory services. However, a client may engage the Registrant to provide investment management services on an advisory fee basis and separate from such advisory services purchase an investment product from Registrant's representatives on a separate commission basis.

## **Item 6            Performance-Based Fees and Side-by-Side Management**

Neither the Registrant nor any supervised person of the Registrant accepts performance-based fees.



## **Item 7           Types of Clients**

The Registrant's clients shall generally include individuals, high net worth individuals, pension and profit sharing plans, charitable organizations, and other business entities.

## **Item 8           Methods of Analysis, Investment Strategies and Risk of Loss**

A. The Registrant may utilize the following methods of security analysis:

- Charting - (analysis performed using patterns to identify current trends and trend reversals to forecast the direction of prices)
- Fundamental - (analysis performed on historical and present data, with the goal of making financial forecasts)
- Technical – (analysis performed on historical and present data, focusing on price and trade volume, to forecast the direction of prices)
- Cyclical – (analysis performed on historical relationships between price and market trends, to forecast the direction of prices)

The Registrant may utilize the following investment strategies when implementing investment advice given to clients:

- Long Term Purchases (securities held at least a year)
- Short Term Purchases (securities sold within a year)
- Options (contract for the purchase or sale of a security at a predetermined price during a specific period of time)

**Investment Risk.** Investing in securities involves risk of loss that clients should be prepared to bear. Different types of investments involve varying degrees of risk, and it should not be assumed that future performance of any specific investment or investment strategy (including the investments and/or investment strategies recommended or undertaken by Registrant) will be profitable or equal any specific performance level(s).

B. The Registrant's methods of analysis and investment strategies do not present any significant or unusual risks. However, every method of analysis has its own inherent risks. To perform an accurate market analysis the Registrant must have access to current/new market information. The Registrant has no control over the dissemination rate of market information. There can be no assurances that a forecasted change in market value will materialize into actionable and/or profitable investment opportunities.

The Registrant's primary investment strategies - Long Term Purchases, Short Term Purchases, and Trading - are fundamental investment strategies. However, every investment strategy has its own inherent risks and limitations. For example, longer term investment strategies require a longer investment time period to allow for the strategy to potentially develop. Shorter term investment strategies require a shorter investment time period to potentially develop but, as a result of more frequent trading, may incur higher transactional costs when compared to a longer term investment strategy. In general the Registrant engages infrequently in short terms investment strategies.

In addition to the fundamental investment strategies discussed above, the Registrant may also implement and/or recommend options transactions. Option strategies have a high level of inherent risk. (See discussion below).

**Options Strategies.** The use of options transactions as an investment strategy involves a high level of inherent risk. Option transactions establish a contract between two parties concerning the buying or selling of an asset at a predetermined price during a specific period of time. During the term of the option contract, the buyer of the option gains the right to demand fulfillment by the seller. Fulfillment may take the form of either selling or purchasing a security depending upon the nature of the option contract. Generally, the purchase or the recommendation to purchase an option contract by the Registrant shall be with the intent of offsetting/hedging a potential market risk in a client's portfolio.

Although the intent of the options-related transactions that may be implemented by the Registrant is to hedge against principal risk, certain of the options-related strategies (i.e. straddles, short positions, etc), may, in and of themselves, produce principal volatility and/or risk. Thus, a client must be willing to accept these enhanced volatility and principal risks associated with such strategies. In light of these enhanced risks, client may direct the Registrant, in writing, not to employ any or all such strategies for their accounts.

For detailed information on the use of options and option strategies, please refer to the Option Clearing Corp.'s Option Disclosure Document, which can be found at: <http://www.optionsclearing.com/components/docs/riskstoc.pdf>

Hard copies may be ordered by calling 1-888-678-4667 or writing OCC, 1 North Wacker Drive, Suite 500 Chicago, IL 60606.

**Covered Call Writing.** Covered call writing is the sale of in-, at-, or out-of- the money call option against a long security position held in a client portfolio. This type of transaction is used to generate income. It also serves to create downside protection in the event the security position declines in value. Income is received from the proceeds of the option sale. Such income may be reduced to the extent it is necessary to buy back the option position prior to its expiration. This strategy may involve a degree of trading velocity, transaction costs and significant losses if the underlying security has volatile price movement. Covered call strategies are generally suited for companies with little price volatility.

- C. Currently, the Registrant primarily allocates client investment assets among various individual equity (stocks), debt (bonds), fixed income securities, municipal securities, mutual funds, exchange traded funds, and/or Independent Manager(s), on a discretionary basis in accordance with the client's designated investment objective(s). In certain limited cases, Registrant may also provide investment advice about unaffiliated private investment funds as described in Item 4.B. above.

## **Item 9            Disciplinary Information**

The Registrant has not been the subject of any disciplinary actions.

## Item 10 Other Financial Industry Activities and Affiliations

- A. **Registered Representatives of PKS.** The Registrant's President and certain of the Registrant's representatives are also registered representatives of PKS, an SEC-registered and FINRA member broker-dealer.
- B. Neither the Registrant, nor its representatives, are registered or have an application pending to register, as a futures commission merchant, commodity pool operator, a commodity trading advisor, or a representative of the foregoing.
- C. **Broker Dealer.** The Registrant's President and certain of the Registrant's representatives are registered representatives of PKS, a FINRA member broker-dealer. Clients can choose to engage Registrant's President and certain of the Registrant's representatives, in their individual capacities, to effect securities brokerage transactions on a commission basis.

**Licensed Insurance Agents.** The Registrant's President and certain of the Registrant's representatives, in their individual capacities, are licensed insurance agents, and may recommend the purchase of certain insurance-related products on a commission basis. As referenced in Item 4B above, clients can engage Registrant's President and certain of the Registrant's representatives to purchase insurance products on a commission basis.

**Conflict of Interest:** The recommendation by either Registrant's President and certain related persons, that a client purchase a securities or insurance commission product presents a conflict of interest, as the receipt of commissions may provide an incentive to recommend investment products based on commissions received, rather than on a particular client's need. No client is under any obligation to purchase any commission products from Registrant's President or certain related persons. Clients are reminded that they may purchase securities and/or insurance commissions products recommended by Registrant through other, non-affiliated registered representatives of a broker/dealer or non-affiliated insurance agents. **The Registrant's Chief Compliance Officer, Catherine Whetstone, remains available to address any questions that a client or prospective may have regarding the above conflicts of interest.**

- D. The Registrant does not receive compensation, directly or indirectly, for selecting other registered investment adviser firms for clients.

## Item 11 Code of Ethics, Participation or Interest in Client Transactions and Personal Trading

- A. The Registrant maintains an investment policy relative to personal securities transactions. This investment policy is part of Registrant's overall Code of Ethics, which serves to establish a standard of business conduct for all of Registrant's Representatives that is based upon fundamental principles of openness, integrity, honesty and trust, a copy of which is available upon request.

In accordance with Section 204A of the Investment Advisers Act of 1940, the Registrant also maintains and enforces written policies reasonably designed to prevent the misuse of material non-public information by the Registrant or any person associated with the Registrant.

- B. Neither the Registrant nor any related person of Registrant recommends, buys, or sells for client accounts, securities in which the Registrant or any related person of Registrant has a material ownership interest.
- C. The Registrant and/or representatives of the Registrant *may* buy or sell securities that are also recommended to clients. This practice may create a situation where the Registrant and/or representatives of the Registrant are in a position to materially benefit from the sale or purchase of those securities. Therefore, this situation creates a conflict of interest. Practices such as “scalping” (i.e., a practice whereby the owner of shares of a security recommends that security for investment and then immediately sells it at a profit upon the rise in the market price which follows the recommendation) could take place if the Registrant did not have adequate policies in place to detect such activities. In addition, this requirement can help detect insider trading, “front-running” (i.e., personal trades executed prior to those of the Registrant’s clients) and other potentially abusive practices.

The Registrant has a personal securities transaction policy in place to monitor the personal securities transactions and securities holdings of each of the Registrant’s “Access Persons”. The Registrant’s securities transaction policy requires that Access Person of the Registrant must provide the Chief Compliance Officer or his/her designee with a written report of the their current securities holdings within ten (10) days after becoming an Access Person. Additionally, each Access Person must provide the Chief Compliance Officer or his/her designee with a written report of the Access Person’s current securities holdings at least once each twelve (12) month period thereafter on a date the Registrant selects; provided, however that at any time that the Registrant has only one Access Person, he or she shall not be required to submit any securities report described above.

- D. The Registrant and/or representatives of the Registrant *may* buy or sell securities, at or around the same time as those securities are recommended to clients. This practice creates a situation where the Registrant and/or representatives of the Registrant are in a position to materially benefit from the sale or purchase of those securities. Therefore, this situation creates a conflict of interest. As indicated above in Item 11.C, the Registrant has a personal securities transaction policy in place to monitor the personal securities transaction and securities holdings of each of Registrant’s Access Persons.

## **Item 12      Brokerage Practices**

- A. In the event that the client requests that the Registrant recommend a broker-dealer/custodian for execution and/or custodial services (exclusive of those clients that may direct the Registrant to use a specific broker-dealer/custodian), Registrant generally recommends that investment management accounts be maintained at Schwab. Prior to engaging Registrant to provide investment management services, the client will be required to enter into a formal *Investment Advisory Agreement* with Registrant setting forth the terms and conditions under which Registrant shall manage the client's assets, and a separate custodial/clearing agreement with each designated broker-dealer/custodian.

Factors that the Registrant considers in recommending Schwab (or any other broker-dealer/custodian to clients) include historical relationship with the Registrant, financial strength, reputation, execution capabilities, pricing, research, and service. Although the commissions and/or transaction fees paid by Registrant's clients shall comply with the Registrant's duty to obtain best execution, a client may pay a commission that is higher

than another qualified broker-dealer might charge to effect the same transaction where the Registrant determines, in good faith, that the commission/transaction fee is reasonable. 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 Registrant will seek competitive rates, it may not necessarily obtain the lowest possible commission rates for client account transactions. The brokerage commissions or transaction fees charged by the designated broker-dealer/custodian are exclusive of, and in addition to, Registrant's investment management fee. The Registrant's best execution responsibility is qualified if securities that it purchases for client accounts are mutual funds that trade at net asset value as determined at the daily market close.

PKS will be provided with trade data and account information for all client accounts held at Schwab, due to compliance obligations. **The Registrant's Chief Compliance Officer, Catherine Whetstone, remains available to address any questions that a client or prospective client may have regarding the above arrangement.**

1. Research and Additional Benefits

Although not a material consideration when determining whether to recommend that a client utilize the services of a particular broker-dealer/custodian, Registrant receives from Schwab (or another broker-dealer/custodian, investment platform, unaffiliated investment manager, mutual fund sponsor, or vendor) without cost (and/or at a discount) support services and/or products, certain of which assist the Registrant to better monitor and service client accounts maintained at such institutions. Included within the support services that may be obtained by the Registrant may be investment-related research, pricing information and market data, software and other technology that provide access to client account data, compliance and/or practice management-related publications, discounted and/or gratis consulting services, discounted and/or gratis attendance at conferences, discounted and/or gratis software, meetings, and other educational and/or social events, marketing support, computer hardware and/or software and/or other products used by Registrant in furtherance of its investment advisory business operations.

As indicated above, certain of the support services and/or products received may assist the Registrant in managing and administering client accounts. Others do not directly provide such assistance, but rather assist the Registrant to manage and further develop its business enterprise.

There is no corresponding commitment made by the Registrant to Schwab or any other entity to invest any specific amount or percentage of client assets in any specific mutual funds, securities or other investment products as a result of the above arrangement.

Additional Benefits Received

Registrant has and may continue to receive certain Additional Benefits that may or may not be offered to the Registrant again in the future. The Registrant is currently receiving a \$2,000 discount from Schwab toward the cost of Schwab's PortfolioCenter® software for the benefit of the Registrant, which Registrant uses to help effectively manage its clients' accounts. The Registrant has no expectation that these Additional Benefits will be offered again; however, the Registrant reserves the right to negotiate for these Additional Benefits in the future. Schwab provides the Additional Benefits to Registrant in its sole discretion and at its own expense. The

Additional Benefits are generally provided on an unsolicited basis. The recommendation by Registrant or its representatives that a client select Schwab as designated broker-dealer/custodian for their accounts or transfer their account assets from another broker-dealer/custodian to Schwab presents a conflict of interest, because Registrant had and may continue to have the incentive to make such a recommendation based on its interest in receiving the Additional Benefits to benefit its business interests, rather than based on clients' interest in receiving the best value in custody services and the most favorable execution of transactions.

**The Registrant's Chief Compliance Officer, Catherine Whetstone, remains available to address any questions that a client or prospective client may have regarding the above arrangement and any corresponding conflict of interest such arrangement may create.**

2. The Registrant does not receive referrals from broker-dealers.
3. The Registrant does not generally accept directed brokerage arrangements (when a client requires that account transactions be effected through a specific broker-dealer). In such client directed arrangements, the client will negotiate terms and arrangements for their account with that broker-dealer, and Registrant will not seek better execution services or prices from other broker-dealers or be able to "batch" the client's transactions for execution through other broker-dealers with orders for other accounts managed by Registrant. As a result, client may pay higher commissions or other transaction costs or greater spreads, or receive less favorable net prices, on transactions for the account than would otherwise be the case.

In the event that the client directs Registrant to effect securities transactions for the client's accounts through a specific broker-dealer, the client correspondingly acknowledges that such direction may cause the accounts to incur higher commissions or transaction costs than the accounts would otherwise incur had the client determined to effect account transactions through alternative clearing arrangements that may be available through Registrant. Higher transaction costs adversely impact account performance.

Transactions for directed accounts will generally be executed following the execution of portfolio transactions for non-directed accounts.

**The Registrant's Chief Compliance Officer, Catherine Whetstone, remains available to address any questions that a client or prospective client may have regarding the above arrangement.**

- B. To the extent that the Registrant provides investment management services to its clients, the transactions for each client account generally will be effected independently, unless the Registrant decides to purchase or sell the same securities for several clients at approximately the same time. The Registrant may (but is not obligated to) combine or "bunch" such orders to obtain best execution, to negotiate more favorable commission rates or to allocate equitably among the Registrant's clients differences in prices and commissions or other transaction costs that might have been obtained had such orders been placed independently. Under this procedure, transactions will be averaged as to price and will be allocated among clients in proportion to the purchase and sale orders placed for

each client account on any given day. The Registrant shall not receive any additional compensation or remuneration as a result of such aggregation.

### **Item 13          Review of Accounts**

- A. For those clients to whom Registrant provides investment supervisory services, account reviews are conducted on an ongoing basis by the Registrant's Principals and/or representatives. All investment supervisory clients are advised that it remains their responsibility to advise the Registrant of any changes in their investment objectives and/or financial situation. All clients (in person or via telephone) are encouraged to review financial planning issues (to the extent applicable), investment objectives and account performance with the Registrant on an annual basis.
- B. The Registrant may conduct account reviews on an other than periodic basis upon the occurrence of a triggering event, such as a change in client investment objectives and/or financial situation, market corrections and client request.
- C. Clients are provided, at least quarterly, with written transaction confirmation notices and regular written summary account statements directly from the broker-dealer/custodian and/or program sponsor for the client accounts. The Registrant may also provide a written periodic report summarizing account activity and performance.

### **Item 14          Client Referrals and Other Compensation**

- A. As referenced in Item 12.A.1 above, the Registrant receives economic benefits from Schwab including support services and/or products without cost (or at a discount).

There is no corresponding commitment made by the Registrant to Schwab or any other entity to invest any specific amount or percentage of client assets in any specific mutual funds, securities or other investment products as a result of the above arrangement.

**The Registrant's Chief Compliance Officer, Catherine Whetstone, remains available to address any questions that a client or prospective client may have regarding the above arrangement and any corresponding conflict of interest any such arrangement may create.**

- B. If a client is introduced to the Registrant by either an unaffiliated or an affiliated solicitor, Registrant may pay that solicitor a referral fee in accordance with the requirements of Rule 206(4)-3 of the Investment Advisers Act of 1940, and any corresponding state securities law requirements. Any such referral fee shall be paid solely from the Registrant's investment management fee, and shall not result in any additional charge to the client. If the client is introduced to the Registrant by an unaffiliated solicitor, the solicitor, at the time of the solicitation, shall disclose the nature of their solicitor relationship, and shall provide each prospective client with a copy of the Registrant's written Brochure with a copy of the written disclosure statement from the solicitor to the client disclosing the terms of the solicitation arrangement between the Registrant and the solicitor, including the compensation to be received by the solicitor from the Registrant.

## Item 15 Custody

The Registrant shall have the ability to have its advisory fee for each client debited by the custodian on a quarterly basis. Clients are provided, at least quarterly, with written transaction confirmation notices and regular written summary account statements directly from the broker-dealer/custodian and/or program sponsor for the client accounts. The Registrant may also provide a written periodic report summarizing account activity and performance.

To the extent that the Registrant provides clients with periodic account statements or reports, the client is urged to compare any statement or report provided by the Registrant with the account statements received from the account custodian.

The account custodian does not verify the accuracy of the Registrant's advisory fee calculation.

In addition, certain clients have established asset transfer authorizations which permit the qualified custodian to rely upon instructions from the Registrant to transfer client funds or securities to third parties. These arrangements are disclosed at ADV Part 1, Item 9, but in accordance with the guidance provided in the SEC's February 21, 2017 Investment Adviser Association No-Action Letter, the affected accounts are not subject to an annual surprise CPA examination.

**The Registrant's Chief Compliance Officer remains available to address any questions that a client or prospective client may have regarding custody-related issues.**

## Item 16 Investment Discretion

The client can determine to engage the Registrant to provide investment advisory services on a discretionary basis. Prior to the Registrant assuming discretionary authority over a client's account, client shall be required to execute an *Investment Advisory Agreement*, naming the Registrant as client's investment adviser, granting the Registrant authority to buy, sell, or otherwise effect investment transactions involving the assets in the client's name found in the discretionary account.

Clients who engage the Registrant on a discretionary basis may, at any time, impose restrictions, **in writing**, on the Registrant's discretionary authority (i.e. limit the types/amounts of particular securities purchased for their account, exclude the ability to purchase securities with an inverse relationship to the market, limit or proscribe the Registrant's use of margin, etc.).

## Item 17 Voting Client Securities

- A. The Registrant does not vote client proxies. Clients maintain exclusive responsibility for: (1) directing the manner in which proxies solicited by issuers of securities owned by the client shall be voted, and (2) making all elections relative to any mergers, acquisitions,



tender offers, bankruptcy proceedings or other type events pertaining to the client's investment assets.

- B. Clients will receive their proxies or other solicitations directly from their custodian. Clients may contact the Registrant to discuss any questions they may have with a particular solicitation.

## **Item 18          Financial Information**

- A. The Registrant does not solicit fees of more than \$1,200, per client, six months or more in advance.
- B. The Registrant is unaware of any financial condition that is reasonably likely to impair its ability to meet its contractual commitments relating to its discretionary authority over certain client accounts.
- C. The Registrant has not been the subject of a bankruptcy petition.

**The Registrant's Chief Compliance Officer, Catherine Whetstone, remains available to address any questions that a client or prospective client may have regarding the above disclosures and arrangements.**