

# **AFS Financial Group, LLC**

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## **FORM ADV PART 2A BROCHURE**

This brochure provides information about the qualifications and business practices of AFS Financial Group, LLC. If you have any questions about the contents of this brochure, contact us at 301-951-2642. 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 AFS Financial Group, LLC is available on the SEC's website at [www.adviserinfo.sec.gov](http://www.adviserinfo.sec.gov).

AFS Financial Group, LLC is a registered investment adviser. Registration with the United States Securities and Exchange Commission or any state securities authority does not imply a certain level of skill or training.

## Item 2 Summary of Material Changes

At least annually, this section will discuss only specific material changes that are made to the AFS Financial Group, LLC ("AFS") brochure and provide you with a summary of such changes. Additionally, reference to the date of the last annual update to this brochure will be provided.

Our last annual amendment filing occurred on March 12, 2021. Since that date, we made the following changes:

### **April 2021**

- Item 4 was amended to reflect an ownership change to AFS Financial Group, LLC.
- Item 4 was also updated to reflect an ownership change to Alp A. Atabek, LLC which owns AFS Financial Group, LLC.
- Item 18 was updated since our PPP loan was forgiven on March 25, 2021.

### **March 2022**

- Item 4 was updated to indicate that when making rollover recommendations, and for purposes of complying with the DOL's Prohibited Transaction Exemption 2020-02 ("PTE 2020-02") where applicable, we provide an acknowledgment that when we provide investment advice to you regarding your retirement plan account or individual retirement account, we are fiduciaries within the meaning of Title I of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act and/or the Internal Revenue Code. The way we make money creates some conflicts with your interests, so we operate under a special rule that requires us to act in your best interest and not put our interest ahead of yours.

At any time, you can obtain a copy of our updated brochure and brochure supplements, free of charge, by contacting us at 301-951-2642 and/or [olivia@afsfinancialgroup.com](mailto:olivia@afsfinancialgroup.com).

Additional information on AFS is also available via the SEC's website [www.adviserinfo.sec.gov](http://www.adviserinfo.sec.gov). The IARD number for AFS is 306979. The SEC's website also provides information about any persons affiliated with AFS who are registered, or are required to be registered, as Advisory Representatives of AFS.

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## Item 4 Advisory Business

### Description of Firm

AFS Financial Group, LLC ("AFS") is a registered investment adviser based in Bethesda, MD. We are organized as a limited liability company ("LLC") under the laws of the State of Maryland. We have been providing investment advisory services since January, 2020. We are wholly owned by Alp A. Atabek, LLC. In turn, Alp A. Atabek, LLC is primarily owned by Alp A. Atabek with Jason W. Dahl having a minority ownership.

The following paragraphs describe our services and fees. Refer to the description of each investment advisory service listed below for information on how we tailor our advisory services to your individual needs. As used in this brochure, the words "we," "our," and "us" refer to AFS Financial Group, LLC and the words "you," "your," and "client" refer to you as either a client or prospective client of our firm.

### Portfolio Management Services

We offer discretionary portfolio management services. Our investment advice is tailored to meet our clients' needs and investment objectives.

If you participate in our discretionary portfolio management services, we require you to grant our firm discretionary authority to manage your account. Discretionary authorization will allow us to determine the specific securities, and the amount of securities, to be purchased or sold for your account without your approval prior to each transaction. Discretionary authority is typically granted by the investment advisory agreement you sign with our firm and the appropriate trading authorization forms.

You may limit our discretionary authority (for example, limiting the types of securities that can be purchased or sold for your account) by providing our firm with your restrictions and guidelines in writing.

As part of our portfolio management services, we may use one or more sub-advisers to manage a portion of your account on a discretionary basis. The sub-adviser(s) may use one or more of their model portfolios to manage your account. We will regularly monitor the performance of your accounts managed by sub-adviser(s), and may hire and fire any sub-adviser without your prior approval. We may pay a portion of our advisory fee to the sub-adviser(s) we use; however, you will not pay our firm a higher advisory fee as a result of any sub-advisory relationships.

As part of our portfolio management services, in addition to other types of investments (see disclosures below in this section), we may invest your assets according to one or more model portfolios developed by our firm. These models are designed for investors with varying degrees of risk tolerance ranging from a more aggressive investment strategy to a more conservative investment approach. Clients whose assets are invested in model portfolios may not set restrictions on the specific holdings or allocations within the model, nor the types of securities that can be purchased in the model. Nonetheless, clients may impose restrictions on investing in certain securities or types of securities in their account. In such cases, this may prevent a client from investing in certain models that are managed by our firm.

### Financial Planning Services

We offer financial planning services which typically involve providing a variety of advisory services to clients regarding the management of their financial resources based upon an analysis of their individual needs. These services can range from broad-based financial planning to consultative or single subject planning. If you retain our firm for financial planning services, we will meet with you to gather information about your financial circumstances and objectives. We may also use financial planning software to determine your current financial position and to define and quantify your long-term

goals and objectives. Once we specify those long-term objectives (both financial and non-financial), we will develop shorter-term, targeted objectives. Once we review and analyze the information you provide to our firm and the data derived from our financial planning software, we will deliver a written plan to you, designed to help you achieve your stated financial goals and objectives.

Financial plans are based on your financial situation at the time we present the plan to you, and on the financial information you provide to us. You must promptly notify our firm if your financial situation, goals, objectives, or needs change.

You are under no obligation to act on our financial planning recommendations. Should you choose to act on any of our recommendations, you are not obligated to implement the financial plan through any of our other investment advisory services. Moreover, you may act on our recommendations by placing securities transactions with any brokerage firm.

### **Financial Consulting Services**

We offer financial consulting services that primarily involve advising clients on specific financial-related topics. The topics we address may include, but are not limited to, risk/assessment management, investment planning, college planning, financial organization, or financial decision making/negotiation.

### **Selection of Other Advisers**

When appropriate, we refer clients to the PPS Select Program, a Third Party Money Manager (TPMM), and/or other outside managers, for asset management services. We may recommend that you use the services of a TPMM to manage all, or a portion of, your investment portfolio. After gathering information about your financial situation and objectives, we may recommend that you engage a specific TPMM or investment program. Factors that we take into consideration when making our recommendation(s) include, but are not limited to, the following: the TPMM's performance, methods of analysis, fees, your financial needs, investment goals, risk tolerance, and investment objectives. We will monitor the TPMM(s)' performance to ensure its management and investment style remains aligned with your investment goals and objectives.

The TPMM(s) will actively manage your portfolio and will assume discretionary investment authority over your account. We will assume discretionary authority to hire and fire TPMM(s) and/or reallocate your assets to other TPMM(s) where we deem such action appropriate.

The TPMM must be appropriately licensed as an Investment Adviser with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission or state(s) in which they conduct business.

Currently, we have a relationship with Commonwealth Financial Network® ("Commonwealth") who provides access to asset management services. AFS and Commonwealth are not affiliated.

We have also entered into an agreement to offer clients access to certain programs offered by Commonwealth. Specifically, Commonwealth's PPS Custom Account Program, PPS Select Account Program, and PPS Direct Account Program are offered. In the case of the PPS Custom Account Program, we will assist you in the development of personalized asset allocation programs. In the case of the PPS Select Account Program, we will assist you in selecting a portfolio option appropriate for your risk tolerance, while portfolio management is provided by Commonwealth's Asset Management team. In the case of the PPS Direct Account Program, we offer the services of approved money management firms referred to as "Sub-Advisors" to assist in managing Client portfolios. Clients who participate in one or more of Commonwealth's PPS Programs will receive Commonwealth's Form ADV Part 2 and/or Wrap Fee Brochure, in addition to the AFS Form ADV Part 2. Clients should refer to Commonwealth's Form ADV Part 2 and/or Wrap Fee Brochure for detailed information about Commonwealth and Commonwealth's PPS Programs.

**Types of Investments**

We offer advice on equity securities, corporate debt securities (other than commercial paper), certificates of deposit, municipal securities, mutual fund shares, United States government securities, options contracts on securities, money market funds, REITs and ETFs.

Additionally, we may advise you on various types of investments based on your stated goals and objectives. We may also provide advice on any type of investment held in your portfolio at the inception of our advisory relationship.

Since our investment strategies and advice are based on each client's specific financial situation, the investment advice we provide to you may be different or conflicting with the advice we give to other clients regarding the same security or investment.

**IRA Rollover Recommendations**

Effective December 20, 2021 (or such later date as the US Department of Labor ("DOL") Field Assistance Bulletin 2018-02 ceases to be in effect), for purposes of complying with the DOL's Prohibited Transaction Exemption 2020-02 ("PTE 2020-02") where applicable, we are providing the following acknowledgment to you.

When we provide investment advice to you regarding your retirement plan account or individual retirement account, we are fiduciaries within the meaning of Title I of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act and/or the Internal Revenue Code, as applicable, which are laws governing retirement accounts. The way we make money creates some conflicts with your interests, so we operate under a special rule that requires us to act in your best interest and not put our interest ahead of yours. Under this special rule's provisions, we must:

- Meet a professional standard of care when making investment recommendations (give prudent advice);
- Never put our financial interests ahead of yours when making recommendations (give loyal advice);
- Avoid misleading statements about conflicts of interest, fees, and investments;
- Follow policies and procedures designed to ensure that we give advice that is in your best interest;
- Charge no more than is reasonable for our services; and
- Give you basic information about conflicts of interest.

We benefit financially from the rollover of your assets from a retirement account to an account that we manage or provide investment advice, because the assets increase our assets under management and, in turn, our advisory fees. As a fiduciary, we only recommend a rollover when we believe it is in your best interest.

**Assets Under Management**

As of January 3, 2022, AFS Financial Group provides continuous management services for approximately \$506 million in client assets on a discretionary basis.

**Item 5 Fees and Compensation****Portfolio Management Services**

Our fee for portfolio management services is based on a percentage of the assets in your account and is set forth in the following annual fee schedule:

### Annual Fee Schedule

Assets Under Management	Annual Fee
\$0 - \$1,000,000	1.15%
Next \$2,000,000	0.95%
Next \$2,000,000	0.75%
Above \$5,000,000	0.55%

Our annual portfolio management fee is billed and payable quarterly in advance, computed as one-quarter of the annual fee based on the value of the account\* on the last business day of the previous calendar quarter. If your account does not contain sufficient funds to pay the advisory fees, we have the limited authority to sell or redeem securities in sufficient amounts to pay advisory fees. Except for ERISA and IRA accounts, you may reimburse your account for advisory fees paid to us.

If the portfolio management agreement is executed at any time other than the first day of a calendar quarter, our fees will apply on a pro rata basis, which means that the advisory fee is payable in proportion to the number of days in the quarter for which you are a client. Our advisory fee is negotiable, depending on individual client circumstances.

At our discretion, we may combine the account values of family members living in the same household to determine the applicable advisory fee. For example, we may combine account values for you and your minor children, joint accounts with your spouse, and other types of related accounts. Combining account values may increase the asset total, which may result in your paying a reduced advisory fee based on the available breakpoints in our fee schedule stated above.

We will deduct our fee directly from your account through the qualified custodian holding your funds and securities. We will deduct our advisory fee only when you have given our firm written authorization permitting the fees to be paid directly from your account. Further, the qualified custodian will deliver an account statement to you at least quarterly. These account statements will show all disbursements from your account. You should review all statements for accuracy.

\*Account values in the Commonwealth Financial Practice 360 reporting system will be used for AFS quarterly fee calculations for advisory accounts custodied at National Financial Services (NFS) and Charles Schwab & Co., Inc. ("Schwab"). Although account holdings and asset valuations should generally match, month-end market values reflected in Commonwealth's Practice 360 reporting system sometimes differ from those provided by NFS and/or Schwab on their month-end statements. The three most common reasons why these values may differ are (i) differences in the manner in which accrued interest is calculated, (ii) differences in the date upon which "as of" dividends and capital gains are reported, and (iii) differences in whether settlement date valuations or trade date valuations are used. If you have any questions or believe there are material discrepancies between your NFS custodial statement and Commonwealth's Practice 360 reporting system, please contact AFS at 301-951-2642. The Commonwealth Practice 360 report valuations are available online via your Investor 360 account or you may request a copy from your AFS Advisory Representative.

You may terminate the portfolio management agreement, without penalty, upon verbal or written notice within five (5) business days after entering into the advisory agreement with us. You will, however, be responsible for any fees and charges incurred from third parties as a result of maintaining the account, such as account maintenance or custodial fees. Thereafter, you may terminate investment advisory services upon written notice to terminate. You will be responsible for any time spent by us in providing advisory services or analyzing your situation. If you terminate investment advisory services during a



quarter, you will incur a pro rata charge for services rendered prior to the termination of the portfolio management agreement, which means you will incur advisory fees only in proportion to the number of days in the quarter for which you are a client. If you have pre-paid advisory fees that we have not yet earned, you will receive a prorated refund of those fees. Refunds will not be provided for work that has already been performed.

### **Financial Planning Services**

We charge an hourly fee up to \$425.00 for financial planning services, which is negotiable depending on the scope and complexity of the plan, your situation, and your financial objectives as well as the expertise and credentials of the service provider. An estimate of the total time/cost will be determined at the start of the advisory relationship. In limited circumstances, the cost/time could potentially exceed the initial estimate. In such cases, we will notify you and request that you approve the additional fee. A minimum of 6 hours of estimated financial planning fees are due at the inception of the relationship. The remainder is due as invoiced.

We also offer advice on single subject financial planning services at the same hourly rate.

We will not require prepayment of a fee more than six months in advance and in excess of \$1,200.

You may terminate the financial planning agreement, without penalty, upon verbal or written notice within five (5) business days after entering into the advisory agreement with us. Thereafter, you may terminate financial planning services upon written notice to terminate. You will be responsible for any time spent by us in providing advisory services or analyzing your situation. If you have pre-paid financial planning fees that we have not yet earned, you will receive a prorated refund of those fees. If financial planning fees are payable in arrears, you will be responsible for a prorated fee based on services performed prior to termination of the financial planning agreement.

### **Financial Consulting Services**

We charge an hourly fee up to \$425.00 for financial consulting services. The hourly fee is negotiable depending on the scope and complexity of the services rendered as well as the expertise and credentials of the service provider. An estimate of the total time/cost will be determined at the start of the advisory relationship. In limited circumstances, the cost/time could potentially exceed the initial estimate. In such cases, we will notify you and request that you approve the additional fee. Our consulting fees are due at the inception of the consulting relationship.

We will not require prepayment of a fee more than six months in advance and in excess of \$1,200.

You may terminate the financial consulting agreement without penalty, upon verbal or written notice within five (5) business days after entering into the advisory agreement with us. Thereafter, you may terminate financial consulting services upon written notice to terminate. If you have pre-paid financial consulting fees that we have not yet earned, you will receive a prorated refund of those fees. If additional financial consulting fees are due, you will be responsible for any remaining services performed prior to termination of the financial consulting agreement.

### **Selection of Other Advisers**

You may be required to sign an agreement directly with the recommended TPMM(s). You may terminate your advisory relationship with the TPMM according to the terms of your agreement with the TPMM. You should review each TPMM's brochure for specific information on how you may terminate your advisory relationship with the TPMM and how you may receive a refund, if applicable. You should contact the TPMM directly for questions regarding your advisory agreement with the TPMM.



### **Additional Fees and Expenses**

As part of our investment advisory services to you, we may invest, or recommend that you invest, in mutual funds and exchange traded funds. The fees that you pay to our firm for investment advisory services are separate and distinct from the fees and expenses charged by mutual funds or exchange traded funds (described in each fund's prospectus) to their shareholders. These fees will generally include a management fee and other fund expenses. You will also incur transaction charges and/or brokerage fees when purchasing or selling securities. These charges and fees are typically imposed by the broker-dealer or custodian through whom your account transactions are executed. We do not share in any portion of the brokerage fees/transaction charges imposed by the broker-dealer or custodian. To fully understand the total cost you will incur, you should review all the fees charged by mutual funds, exchange traded funds, our firm, and others. For information on our brokerage practices, refer to the *Brokerage Practices* section of this brochure.

### **Compensation for the Sale of Securities or Other Investment Products**

Some of our Advisory Representatives are licensed as independent insurance agents. They will earn commission-based compensation for selling insurance products, including insurance products they sell to you. Insurance commissions earned are separate and in addition to our advisory fees. This practice presents a conflict of interest because our Advisory Representatives providing investment advice on behalf of our firm who are insurance agents have an incentive to recommend insurance products to you for the purpose of generating commissions rather than solely based on your needs. You are under no obligation, contractually or otherwise, to purchase insurance products through any person affiliated with our firm.

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

We do not accept performance-based fees or participate in side-by-side management. Performance-based fees are fees that are based on a share of a capital gains or capital appreciation of a client's account. Side-by-side management refers to the practice of managing accounts that are charged performance-based fees while at the same time managing accounts that are not charged performance-based fees. Our fees are calculated as described in the *Fees and Compensation* section above, and are not charged on the basis of a share of capital gains upon, or capital appreciation of, the funds in your advisory account.

## **Item 7 Types of Clients**

We offer investment advisory services to individuals (other than high net worth individuals) and high net worth individuals.

The minimum household investment required under our Asset Management programs is generally \$1,000,000. Household values below this minimum may be accepted on an individual basis at our discretion. Such circumstances may include, but not be limited to, those situations where additional assets will soon be deposited, anticipated future earning capacity, related accounts, account composition, pre-existing client, account retention, pro bono activities, etc.

We combine account values for you and your minor children, joint accounts with your spouse, and other types of related accounts to meet the stated minimum.

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

### Our Methods of Analysis and Investment Strategies

We may use one or more of the following methods of analysis or investment strategies when providing investment advice to you:

**Charting Analysis** - involves the gathering and processing of price and volume pattern information for a particular security, sector, broad index or commodity. This price and volume pattern information is analyzed. The resulting pattern and correlation data is used to detect departures from expected performance and diversification and predict future price movements and trends.

**Risk:** Our charting analysis may not accurately detect anomalies or predict future price movements. Current prices of securities may reflect all information known about the security and day-to-day changes in market prices of securities may follow random patterns and may not be predictable with any reliable degree of accuracy.

**Technical Analysis** - involves studying past price patterns, trends and interrelationships in the financial markets to assess risk-adjusted performance and predict the direction of both the overall market and specific securities.

**Risk:** The risk of market timing based on technical analysis is that our analysis may not accurately detect anomalies or predict future price movements. Current prices of securities may reflect all information known about the security and day-to-day changes in market prices of securities may follow random patterns and may not be predictable with any reliable degree of accuracy.

**Fundamental Analysis** - involves analyzing individual companies and their industry groups, such as a company's financial statements, details regarding the company's product line, the experience and expertise of the company's management, and the outlook for the company and its industry. The resulting data is used to measure the true value of the company's stock compared to the current market value.

**Risk:** The risk of fundamental analysis is that information obtained may be incorrect and the analysis may not provide an accurate estimate of earnings, which may be the basis for a stock's value. If securities prices adjust rapidly to new information, utilizing fundamental analysis may not result in favorable performance.

**Cyclical Analysis** - a type of technical analysis that involves evaluating recurring price patterns and trends. Economic/business cycles may not be predictable and may have many fluctuations between long-term expansions and contractions.

**Risk:** The lengths of economic cycles may be difficult to predict with accuracy and therefore the risk of cyclical analysis is the difficulty in predicting economic trends and consequently the changing value of securities that would be affected by these changing trends.

**Long-Term Purchases** - securities purchased with the expectation that the value of those securities will grow over a relatively long period of time, generally greater than one year.

**Risk:** Using a long-term purchase strategy generally assumes the financial markets will go up in the long-term which may not be the case. There is also the risk that the segment of the market that you are invested in or perhaps just your particular investment will go down over time even if

the overall financial markets advance. Purchasing investments long-term may create an opportunity cost - "locking-up" assets that may be better utilized in the short-term in other investments.

**Short-Term Purchases** - securities purchased with the expectation that they will be sold within a relatively short period of time, generally less than one year, to take advantage of the securities' short-term price fluctuations.

**Risk:** Using a short-term purchase strategy generally assumes that we can predict how financial markets will perform in the short-term which may be very difficult and will incur a disproportionately higher amount of transaction costs compared to long-term trading. There are many factors that can affect financial market performance in the short-term (such as short-term interest rate changes, cyclical earnings announcements, etc.) but may have a smaller impact over longer periods of times.

**Short Sales** - Unlike a straightforward investment in stocks where you buy shares with the expectation that their price will increase so you can sell at a profit, in a "short sale" you borrow stocks from your brokerage firm and sell them immediately, hoping to buy them later at a lower price. Thus, a short seller hopes that the price of a stock will go down in the near future. A short seller thus uses declines in the market to his advantage. The short seller makes money when the stock prices fall and loses when prices go up. The SEC has strict regulations in place regarding short selling.

**Risk:** Short selling is very risky. Investors should exercise extreme caution before short selling is implemented. A short seller will profit if the stock goes down in price, but if the price of the shares increase, the potential losses are unlimited because the stock can keep rising forever. There is no ceiling on how much a short seller can lose in a trade. The share price may keep going up and the short seller will have to pay whatever the prevailing stock price is to buy back the shares. However, gains have a ceiling level because the stock price cannot fall below zero.

**Risks:** A short seller has to undertake to pay the earnings on the borrowed securities as long as the short seller chooses to keep the short position open. If the company declares huge dividends or issues bonus shares, the short seller will have to pay that amount to the lender. Any such occurrence can skew the entire short investment and make it unprofitable. The broker can use the funds in the short seller's margin account to buy back the loaned shares or issue a "call away" to get the short seller to return the borrowed securities. If the broker makes this call when the stock price is much higher than the price at the time of the short sale, then the investor can end up taking huge losses.

**Risk:** Margin interest can be a significant expense. Since short sales can only be undertaken in margin accounts, the interest payable on short trades can be substantial, especially if short positions are kept open over an extended period.

**Risk:** Shares that are difficult to borrow - because of high short interest, limited float, or any other reason - have "hard-to-borrow" fees. These fees are based on an annualized rate that can range from a small fraction of a percent to more than 100% of the value of the short trade. The hard-to-borrow rate can fluctuate substantially on a daily basis; therefore, the exact dollar amount of the fee may not be known in advance, and may be substantial.

**Margin Transactions** - a securities transaction in which an investor borrows money to purchase a security, in which case the security serves as collateral on the loan.

**Risk:** If the value of the shares drops sufficiently, the investor will be required to either deposit more cash into the account or sell a portion of the stock in order to maintain the margin requirements of the account. This is known as a "margin call." An investor's overall risk includes the amount of money invested plus the amount that was loaned to them.

**Option Writing** - a securities transaction that involves selling an option. An option is a contract that gives the buyer the right, but not the obligation, to buy or sell a particular security at a specified price on or before the expiration date of the option. When an investor sells a call option, he or she must deliver to the buyer a specified number of shares if the buyer exercises the option. When an investor sells a put option, he or she must pay the strike price per share if the buyer exercises the option, and will receive the specified number of shares. The option writer/seller receives a premium (the market price of the option at a particular time) in exchange for writing the option.

**Risk:** Options are complex investments and can be very risky, especially if the investor does not own the underlying stock. In certain situations, an investor's risk can be unlimited.

**Trading** - We may use frequent trading (in general, selling securities within 30 days of purchasing the same securities) as an investment strategy when managing your account(s). Frequent trading is not a fundamental part of our overall investment strategy, but we may use this strategy occasionally when we determine that it is suitable given your stated investment objectives and tolerance for risk. This may include buying and selling securities frequently in an effort to capture significant market gains and avoid significant losses.

**Risk:** When a frequent trading policy is in effect, there is a risk that investment performance within your account may be negatively affected, particularly through increased brokerage and other transactional costs and taxes.

Our investment strategies and advice may vary depending upon each client's specific financial situation. As such, we determine investments and allocations based upon your predefined objectives, risk tolerance, time horizon, financial information, liquidity needs and other various suitability factors. Your restrictions and guidelines may affect the composition of your portfolio. **It is important that you notify us immediately with respect to any material changes to your financial circumstances, including for example, a change in your current or expected income level, tax circumstances, or employment status.**

Generally, we will not perform quantitative or qualitative analysis of individual securities. Instead, we will advise you on how to allocate your assets among various classes of securities or third party money managers. We primarily rely on investment model portfolios and strategies developed by the third party money managers and their portfolio managers. We may replace/recommend replacing a third party money manager if there is a significant deviation in characteristics or performance from the stated strategy and/or benchmark.

### **Tax Considerations**

Our strategies and investments may have unique and significant tax implications. However, unless we specifically agree otherwise, and in writing, tax efficiency is not our primary consideration in the management of your assets. Regardless of your account size or any other factors, we strongly recommend that you consult with a tax professional regarding the investing of your assets.

Custodians and broker-dealers must report the cost basis of equities acquired in client accounts. Your custodian will default to the First-In First-Out ("FIFO") accounting method for calculating the cost basis of your investments. You are responsible for contacting your tax advisor to determine if this accounting method is the right choice for you. If your tax advisor believes another accounting method is more

advantageous, provide written notice to our firm immediately and we will alert your account custodian of your individually selected accounting method. Decisions about cost basis accounting methods will need to be made before trades settle, as the cost basis method cannot be changed after settlement.

### **Risk of Loss**

Investing in securities involves risk of loss that you should be prepared to bear. We do not represent or guarantee that our services or methods of analysis can or will predict future results, successfully identify market tops or bottoms, or insulate clients from losses due to market corrections or declines. We cannot offer any guarantees or promises that your financial goals and objectives will be met. Past performance is in no way an indication of future performance.

### **Other Risk Considerations**

When evaluating risk, financial loss may be viewed differently by each client and may depend on many different risks, each of which may affect the probability and magnitude of any potential losses. The following risks may not be all-inclusive, but should be considered carefully by a prospective client before retaining our services.

**Liquidity Risk:** The risk of being unable to sell your investment at a fair price at a given time due to high volatility or lack of active liquid markets. You may receive a lower price or it may not be possible to sell the investment at all.

**Credit Risk:** Credit risk typically applies to debt investments such as corporate, municipal, and sovereign fixed income or bonds. A bond issuing entity can experience a credit event that could impair or erase the value of an issuer's securities held by a client.

**Inflation and Interest Rate Risk:** Security prices and portfolio returns will likely vary in response to changes in inflation and interest rates. Inflation causes the value of future dollars to be worth less and may reduce the purchasing power of a client's future interest payments and principal. Inflation also generally leads to higher interest rates which may cause the value of many types of fixed income investments to decline.

**Horizon and Longevity Risk:** The risk that your investment horizon is shortened because of an unforeseen event, for example, the loss of your job. This may force you to sell investments that you were expecting to hold for the long term. If you must sell at a time that the markets are down, you may lose money. Longevity Risk is the risk of outliving your savings. This risk is particularly relevant for people who are retired, or are nearing retirement.

### **Recommendation of Particular Types of Securities**

We recommend various types of securities and we do not primarily recommend one particular type of security over another since each client has different needs and different tolerance for risk. Each type of security has its own unique set of risks associated with it and it would not be possible to list here all of the specific risks of every type of investment. Even within the same type of investment, risks can vary widely. However, in very general terms, the higher the anticipated return of an investment, the higher the risk of loss associated with the investment. A description of the types of securities we may recommend to you and some of their inherent risks are provided below.

**Money Market Funds:** A money market fund is technically a security. The fund managers attempt to keep the share price constant at \$1/share. However, there is no guarantee that the share price will stay at \$1/share. If the share price goes down, you can lose some or all of your principal. The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission ("SEC") notes that "While investor losses in money market funds have been rare, they are possible." In return for this risk, you should earn a greater return on your cash than you would expect from a Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation ("FDIC") insured



savings account (money market funds are not FDIC insured). Next, money market fund rates are variable. In other words, you do not know how much you will earn on your investment next month. The rate could go up or go down. If it goes up, that may result in a positive outcome. However, if it goes down and you earn less than you expected to earn, you may end up needing more cash. A final risk you are taking with money market funds has to do with inflation. Because money market funds are considered to be safer than other investments like stocks, long-term average returns on money market funds tends to be less than long term average returns on riskier investments. Over long periods of time, inflation can eat away at your returns.

**Certificates of Deposit:** Certificates of deposit ("CD") are generally a safe type of investment since they are insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Company ("FDIC") up to a certain amount. However, because the returns are generally low, there is risk that inflation outpaces the return of the CD. Certain CDs are traded in the market place and not purchased directly from a banking institution. In addition to trading risk, when CDs are purchased at a premium, the premium is not covered by the FDIC.

**Municipal Securities:** Municipal securities, while generally thought of as safe, can have significant risks associated with them including, but not limited to: the credit worthiness of the governmental entity that issues the bond; the stability of the revenue stream that is used to pay the interest to the bondholders; when the bond is due to mature; and, whether or not the bond can be "called" prior to maturity. When a bond is called, it may not be possible to replace it with a bond of equal character paying the same amount of interest or yield to maturity.

**Bonds:** Corporate debt securities (or "bonds") are typically safer investments than equity securities, but their risk can also vary widely based on: the financial health of the issuer; the risk that the issuer might default; when the bond is set to mature; and, whether or not the bond can be "called" prior to maturity. When a bond is called, it may not be possible to replace it with a bond of equal character paying the same rate of return.

**Stocks:** There are numerous ways of measuring the risk of equity securities (also known simply as "equities" or "stock"). In very broad terms, the value of a stock depends on the financial health of the company issuing it. However, stock prices can be affected by many other factors including, but not limited to the class of stock (for example, preferred or common); the health of the market sector of the issuing company; and, the overall health of the economy. In general, larger, better established companies ("large cap") tend to be safer than smaller start-up companies ("small cap") are but the mere size of an issuer is not, by itself, an indicator of the safety of the investment.

**Cash Management:** We manage cash balances in your account based on the yield and the financial soundness of the money markets, and other short-term instruments. At times (during low interest rate periods), our management fee will exceed the yield from the money market or other short-term instruments.

**Mutual Funds and Exchange Traded Funds:** Mutual funds and exchange traded funds ("ETF") are professionally managed collective investment systems that pool money from many investors and invest in stocks, bonds, short-term money market instruments, other mutual funds, other securities, or any combination thereof. The fund will have a manager that trades the fund's investments in accordance with the fund's investment objective. While mutual funds and ETFs generally provide diversification, risks can be significantly increased if the fund is concentrated in a particular sector of the market, primarily invests in small cap or speculative companies, uses leverage (i.e., borrows money) to a significant degree, or concentrates in a particular type of security (i.e., equities) rather than balancing the fund with different types of securities. ETFs differ from mutual funds since they can be bought and sold throughout the day like stock and their price can fluctuate throughout the day. The returns on

mutual funds and ETFs can be reduced by the costs to manage the funds. Also, while some mutual funds are "no load" and charge no fee to buy into, or sell out of, the fund, other types of mutual funds do charge such fees which can also reduce returns. Mutual funds can also be "closed end" or "open end". So-called "open end" mutual funds continue to allow in new investors indefinitely whereas "closed end" funds have a fixed number of shares to sell which can limit their availability to new investors.

ETFs may have tracking error risks. For example, the ETF investment adviser may not be able to cause the ETF's performance to match that of its Underlying Index or other benchmark, which may negatively affect the ETF's performance. In addition, for leveraged and inverse ETFs that seek to track the performance of their Underlying Indices or benchmarks on a daily basis, mathematical compounding may prevent the ETF from correlating with performance of its benchmark. In addition, an ETF may not have investment exposure to all of the securities included in its Underlying Index, or its weighting of investment exposure to such securities may vary from that of the Underlying Index. Some ETFs may invest in securities or financial instruments that are not included in the Underlying Index, but which are expected to yield similar performance.

**Real Estate Investment Trust:** A real estate investment trust ("REIT") is a corporate entity which invests in real estate and/or engages in real estate financing. A REIT reduces or eliminates corporate income taxes. REITs can be publicly or privately held. Public REITs may be listed on public stock exchanges. REITs are required to declare 90% of their taxable income as dividends, but they actually pay dividends out of funds from operations, so cash flow has to be strong or the REIT must either dip into reserves, borrow to pay dividends, or distribute them in stock (which causes dilution). After 2012, the IRS stopped permitting stock dividends. Most REITs must refinance or erase large balloon debts periodically. The credit markets are no longer frozen, but banks are demanding, and getting, harsher terms to re-extend REIT debt. Some REITs may be forced to make secondary stock offerings to repay debt, which will lead to additional dilution of the stockholders. Fluctuations in the real estate market can affect the REIT's value and dividends.

**Options Contracts:** Options are complex securities that involve risks and are not suitable for everyone. Option trading can be speculative in nature and carry substantial risk of loss. It is generally recommended that you only invest in options with risk capital. An option is a contract that gives the buyer the right, but not the obligation, to buy or sell an underlying asset at a specific price on or before a certain date (the "expiration date"). The two types of options are calls and puts:

A call gives the holder the right to buy an asset at a certain price within a specific period of time. Calls are similar to having a long position on a stock. Buyers of calls hope that the stock will increase substantially before the option expires.

A put gives the holder the right to sell an asset at a certain price within a specific period of time. Puts are very similar to having a short position on a stock. Buyers of puts hope that the price of the stock will fall before the option expires.

Selling options is more complicated and can be even riskier.

The option trading risks pertaining to options buyers are:

- Risk of losing your entire investment in a relatively short period of time.
- The risk of losing your entire investment increases if, as expiration nears, the stock is below the strike price of the call (for a call option) or if the stock is higher than the strike price of the put (for a put option).



- European style options which do not have secondary markets on which to sell the options prior to expiration can only realize its value upon expiration.
- Specific exercise provisions of a specific option contract may create risks.
- Regulatory agencies may impose exercise restrictions, which stops you from realizing value.

The option trading risks pertaining to options sellers are:

- Options sold may be exercised at any time before expiration.
- Covered Call traders forgo the right to profit when the underlying stock rises above the strike price of the call options sold and continues to risk a loss due to a decline in the underlying stock.
- Writers of Naked Calls risk unlimited losses if the underlying stock rises.
- Writers of Naked Puts risk unlimited losses if the underlying stock drops.
- Writers of naked positions run margin risks if the position goes into significant losses. Such risks may include liquidation by the broker.
- Writers of call options could lose more money than a short seller of that stock could on the same rise on that underlying stock. This is an example of how the leverage in options can work against the option trader.
- Writers of Naked Calls are obligated to deliver shares of the underlying stock if those call options are exercised.
- Call options can be exercised outside of market hours such that effective remedy actions cannot be performed by the writer of those options.
- Writers of stock options are obligated under the options that they sold even if a trading market is not available or that they are unable to perform a closing transaction.
- The value of the underlying stock may surge or ditch unexpectedly, leading to automatic exercises.

Other option trading risks are:

- The complexity of some option strategies is a significant risk on its own.
- Option trading exchanges or markets and option contracts themselves are open to changes at all times.
- Options markets have the right to halt the trading of any options, thus preventing investors from realizing value.
- Risk of erroneous reporting of exercise value.
- If an options brokerage firm goes insolvent, investors trading through that firm may be affected.
- Internationally traded options have special risks due to timing across borders.

Risks that are not specific to options trading include market risk, sector risk and individual stock risk. Option trading risks are closely related to stock risks, as stock options are a derivative of stocks.

## Item 9 Disciplinary Information

We are required to disclose the facts of any legal or disciplinary events that are material to a client's evaluation of our advisory business or the integrity of our management. We do not have any required disclosures under this item.

## Item 10 Other Financial Industry Activities and Affiliations

### Arrangements with Affiliated Entities

We are affiliated with AFS 401k Retirement Services LLC through common control and ownership. If you are in need of pension consulting services, we will recommend that you use the services of our affiliate if appropriate for your needs. Our advisory services are separate and distinct from the fees paid to our affiliate for those services.

Referral arrangements with an affiliated entity present a conflict of interest for us because we may have a direct or indirect financial incentive to recommend an affiliated firm's services. While we believe that compensation charged by an affiliated firm is competitive, such compensation may be higher than fees charged by other firms providing the same or similar services. You are under no obligation to use the services of any firm we recommend, whether affiliated or otherwise, and may obtain comparable services and/or lower fees through other firms.

### Recommendation of Other Advisers

We may recommend that you use a third party money manager ("TPMM") based on your needs and suitability. We will not receive separate compensation, directly or indirectly, from the TPMM for recommending that you use their services. Moreover, we do not have any other business relationships with the recommended TPMM(s). Refer to the *Advisory Business* section above for additional disclosures on this topic.

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

### Description of Our Code of Ethics

We strive to comply with applicable laws and regulations governing our practices. Therefore, our Code of Ethics includes guidelines for professional standards of conduct for persons associated with our firm. Our goal is to protect your interests at all times and to demonstrate our commitment to our fiduciary duties of honesty, good faith, and fair dealing with you. All persons associated with our firm are expected to adhere strictly to these guidelines. Advisory Representatives associated with our firm are also required to report any violations of our Code of Ethics. Additionally, we maintain and enforce written policies reasonably designed to prevent the misuse or dissemination of material, non-public information about you or your account holdings by persons associated with our firm.

Clients or prospective clients may obtain a copy of our Code of Ethics by contacting us at the telephone number on the cover page of this brochure.

### Participation or Interest in Client Transactions

Neither our firm nor any persons associated with our firm has any material financial interest in client transactions beyond the provision of investment advisory services as disclosed in this brochure.

### Personal Trading Practices

Our firm or persons associated with our firm may buy or sell the same securities that we recommend to you or securities in which you are already invested. A conflict of interest exists in such cases because we have the ability to trade ahead of you and potentially receive more favorable prices than you will receive. To mitigate this conflict of interest, it is our policy that neither our firm nor persons associated with our firm shall have priority over your account in the purchase or sale of securities.

## **Aggregated Trading**

Our firm or Advisory Representatives associated with our firm may buy or sell securities for you at the same time we or persons associated with our firm buy or sell such securities for our own account. We may also combine our orders to purchase securities with your orders to purchase securities ("aggregated trading"). Refer to the *Brokerage Practices* section in this brochure for information on our aggregated trading practices.

A conflict of interest exists in such cases because we have the ability to trade ahead of you and potentially receive more favorable prices than you will receive. To eliminate this conflict of interest, it is our policy that neither our firm nor persons associated with our firm shall have priority over your account in the purchase or sale of securities.

## **Item 12 Brokerage Practices**

We recommend the brokerage and custodial services of Commonwealth/National Financial Services ("NFS") and Charles Schwab & Co., Inc. ("Schwab") (whether one or more "Custodian"). Your assets must be maintained in an account at a "qualified custodian," generally a broker-dealer or bank. In recognition of the value of the services the Custodian provides, you may pay higher commissions and/or trading costs than those that may be available elsewhere.

In initially selecting Commonwealth/NFS and Schwab, we conducted due diligence. We examined the ability to service you, staying power as a company, industry reputation, reporting ability, trading platform, products and services available, technology resources, and educational resources. We consider the commissions to be reasonable in comparison to the value provided although they may be higher or lower as compared to other firms.

### **How We Select Brokers/Custodians**

We seek to use a custodian/broker who will hold your assets and execute transactions on terms that are, overall, most advantageous when compared to other available providers and their services. We consider a wide range of factors, including, among others:

- Combination of transaction execution services and asset custody services
- Capability to execute, clear and settle trades (buy and sell securities for your account)
- Capability to facilitate transfers and payments to and from accounts (wire transfers, check requests, etc.)
- Breadth of available investment products (stocks, bonds, mutual funds, exchange-traded funds [ETFs], limited partnerships)
- Availability of investment research and tools that assist us in making investment decisions.
- Quality of services
- Competitiveness of the price of those services and willingness to negotiate the prices
- Reputation, financial strength, and stability
- Prior service to us and our other clients
- Availability of other products and services that benefit us

### **Your Brokerage and Custody Costs--Commonwealth/NFS**

For our clients' accounts that we maintain via NFS, AFS and NFS generally do not charge you separately for custody services but are compensated by charging you commissions or other fees on trades that are executed or settled into your account. Commonwealth's commission rates applicable to our client accounts were negotiated based on the condition that our clients collectively maintain a total of at least \$50,000,000 of their assets in accounts at NFS. For client accounts at Commonwealth, this commitment benefits you because the overall commission rates you pay are lower than they would be

otherwise. Because of these factors, in order to minimize your trading costs, we have Commonwealth (via NFS) execute applicable trades for your account(s). We have determined that having Commonwealth/NFS execute trades is consistent with our duty to seek "best execution" of your trades. Best execution means the most favorable terms for a transaction based on all relevant factors, including those listed above (see "How We Select Brokers/Custodians").

### **Products and Services Available to Us from Commonwealth and NFS**

Commonwealth provides us with various products and services that enable us to both serve our clients and grow our business. Commonwealth (through their disclosed clearing relationships with NFS) provide us and our clients with access to its brokerage services— trading, custody, reporting, and related services. Commonwealth also makes available various support services. Some of those services help us manage or administer our clients' accounts; while others help us manage and grow our business. Following is a more detailed description of Commonwealth's support services:

#### *Services That Benefit You*

Commonwealth's brokerage services include access to a broad range of investment products, execution of securities transactions by Commonwealth's clearing firms, and custody of client assets via their clearing firms. The investment products available through Commonwealth include some to which we might not otherwise have access or that would require a significantly higher minimum initial investment by our clients. Commonwealth's services described in this paragraph generally benefit you and your account.

#### *Services That May Not Directly Benefit You*

Commonwealth also makes available to us other products and services that benefit us but may not directly benefit you or your account. These products and services assist us in managing and administering our clients' accounts. They include investment research, both Commonwealth's and that of third parties. We use this research to service all or a substantial number of our clients' accounts, including accounts not maintained at Commonwealth. In addition to investment research, Commonwealth also makes available software and other technology that:

- Provide access to client account data (such as duplicate trade confirmations and account statements)
- Facilitate trade execution
- Provide pricing and other market data
- Facilitate payment of our fees from our clients' accounts
- Assist with back-office functions, recordkeeping and client reporting

#### *Services That Generally Benefit Only Us*

Commonwealth also offers other services intended to help us manage and further develop our business enterprise. These services include:

- Complementary or discounted attendance at conferences and events
- Consulting on technology, compliance, legal and business needs
- Publications and conferences on practice management and business succession

#### *Our Interest in Commonwealth's Services*

Our relationship with Commonwealth requires that we maintain a certain level of assets within Commonwealth's program. This creates an incentive to recommend that you establish and maintain your account with Commonwealth, based on our interest in receiving Commonwealth's services that benefit our business 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 conflict of interest. To mitigate the

conflict, this disclosure is provided to you. As a fiduciary, we must act in your best interests. We believe that our selection of NFS (via Commonwealth) as custodian and broker is in the best interests of our clients for the trades we execute there.

Our selection is primarily supported by the scope, quality, and price of Commonwealth's and NFS' services (see "How We Select Brokers/Custodians") and not their services that benefit only us.

### **Research and Other Soft Dollar Benefits**

Products and services that we receive from Commonwealth consist of research data and analyses, financial publications, recommendations, or other information about particular companies and industries (through research reports and otherwise), and other products or services (e.g., software and data bases) that provide lawful and appropriate assistance to our firm in the performance of our investment decision-making responsibilities. Consistent with applicable rules, brokerage products and services consist primarily of computer services and software that permit our firm to effect securities transactions and perform functions incidental to transaction execution. We use such products and services in our general investment decision making, not just for those accounts for which commissions may be considered to have been used to pay for the products or services.

The test for determining whether a service, product or benefit obtained from or at the expense of a broker constitutes "research" under this definition is whether the service, product, or benefit assists our firm in investment decision-making for discretionary client accounts. Services, products, or benefits that do not assist in investment decision-making for discretionary client accounts do not qualify as "research." Also, services, products or benefits that are used in part for investment decision-making for discretionary client accounts and in part for other purposes (such as accounting, corporate administration, record-keeping, performance attribution analysis, client reporting, or investment decision-making for the firm's own investment accounts) constitute "research" only to the extent that they are used in investment decision-making for discretionary client accounts.

We have instituted certain procedures governing soft dollar relationships including preparation of a brokerage allocation budget, mandated reporting of soft dollar irregularities, annual evaluation of soft dollar relationships, and an annual review of our brochure to ensure adequate disclosures of conflicts of interest regarding our soft dollar relationships.

### **Economic Benefits**

As a registered investment adviser, we have access to the institutional platform of NFS. As such, we will also have access to research products and services from NFS. These products are in addition to any benefits or research we pay for with soft dollars, and may include financial publications, information about particular companies and industries, research software, and other products or services that provide lawful and appropriate assistance to our firm in the performance of our investment decision-making responsibilities. Such research products and services are provided to all investment advisers that utilize the institutional services platforms NFS, and are not considered to be paid for with soft dollars. However, you should be aware that the commissions charged by NFS for a particular transaction or set of transactions may be greater than the amounts another broker who did not provide research services or products might charge.

### **The custodian and brokers we use--Schwab**

AFS does not maintain custody of your assets that we manage, although we may be deemed to have custody of your assets if you give us authority to withdraw assets from your account (see Item 15—Custody, below). Your assets must be maintained in an account at a "qualified custodian," generally a broker-dealer or bank. When appropriate, we recommend that our clients use Charles Schwab & Co., Inc. (Schwab), a registered broker-dealer, member SIPC, as the qualified custodian.

We are independently owned and operated and are not affiliated with Schwab. Schwab will hold your assets in a brokerage account and buy and sell securities when we instruct them to. While we recommend that you use Schwab as custodian/broker, you will decide whether to do so and will open your account with Schwab by entering into an account agreement directly with them. Conflicts of interest associated with this arrangement are described below as well as in Item 14 (Client referrals and other compensation). You should consider these conflicts of interest when selecting your custodian.

We do not open the account for you, although we may assist you in doing so. Even though your account is maintained at Schwab, and we anticipate that appropriate trades will be executed through Schwab, we can still use other brokers to execute trades for your account as described below (see "Your brokerage and custody costs").

### **Your brokerage and custody costs**

For our clients' accounts that Schwab maintains, Schwab generally does not charge you separately for custody services but is compensated by charging you commissions or other fees on trades that it executes or that settle into your Schwab account. Certain trades (for example, many mutual funds and ETFs) may not incur Schwab commissions or transaction fees. Schwab is also compensated by earning interest on the uninvested cash in your account in Schwab's Cash Features Program. Schwab's commission rates applicable to our client accounts were negotiated. In addition to commissions, Schwab charges you a flat dollar amount as a "prime broker" or "trade away" fee for each trade that we have executed by a different broker-dealer but where the securities bought or the funds from the securities sold are deposited (settled) into your Schwab account. These fees are in addition to the commissions or other compensation you pay the executing broker-dealer. Because of this, in order to minimize your trading costs, we have Schwab execute most trades for your account.

We are not required to select the broker or dealer that charges the lowest transaction cost, even if that broker provides execution quality comparable to other brokers or dealers. Although we are not required to execute all trades through Schwab, we have determined that having Schwab execute applicable trades is consistent with our duty to seek "best execution" of your trades. Best execution means the most favorable terms for a transaction based on all relevant factors, including those listed above (see "How we select brokers/custodians"). By using another broker or dealer you may pay lower transaction costs.

### **Products and services available to us from Schwab**

Schwab Advisor Services™ is Schwab's business serving independent investment advisory firms like us. They provide us and our clients with access to their institutional brokerage services (trading, custody, reporting, and related services), many of which are not typically available to Schwab retail customers. However, certain retail investors may be able to get institutional brokerage services from Schwab without going through us. Schwab also makes available various support services. Some of those services help us manage or administer our clients' accounts, while others help us manage and grow our business. Schwab's support services are generally available on an unsolicited basis (we don't have to request them) and at no charge to us. Following is a more detailed description of Schwab's support services:

#### *Services that benefit you*

Schwab's institutional brokerage services include access to a broad range of investment products, execution of securities transactions, and custody of client assets. The investment products available through Schwab include some to which we might not otherwise have access or that would require a significantly higher minimum initial investment by our clients. Schwab's services described in this paragraph generally benefit you and your account.



#### *Services that do not directly benefit you*

Schwab also makes available to us other products and services that benefit us but do not directly benefit you or your account. These products and services assist us in managing and administering our clients' accounts and operating our firm. They include investment research, both Schwab's own and that of third parties. We use this research to service all or a substantial number of our clients' accounts, including accounts not maintained at Schwab. In addition to investment research, Schwab also makes available software and other technology that:

- Provide access to client account data (such as duplicate trade confirmations and account statements)
- Facilitate trade execution and allocate aggregated trade orders for multiple client accounts
- Provide pricing and other market data
- Facilitate payment of our fees from our clients' accounts
- Assist with back-office functions, recordkeeping, and client reporting

#### *Services that generally benefit only us*

Schwab also offers other services intended to help us manage and further develop our business enterprise. These services include:

- Educational conferences and events
- Consulting on technology and business needs
- Consulting on legal and related compliance needs
- Publications and conferences on practice management and business succession
- Access to employee benefits providers, human capital consultants, and insurance providers
- Marketing consulting and support
- 

Schwab provides some of these services itself. In other cases, it will arrange for third-party vendors to provide the services to us. Schwab also discounts or waives its fees for some of these services or pays all or a part of a third party's fees. Schwab also provides us with other benefits, such as occasional business entertainment of our personnel. If you did not maintain your account with Schwab, we would be required to pay for these services from our own resources.

#### *Our interest in Schwab's services*

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. The fact that we receive these benefits from Schwab is an incentive for us to recommend the use of Schwab rather than making such a decision based exclusively on your interest in receiving the best value in custody services and the most favorable execution of your transactions. This is a conflict of interest. We believe, however, that taken in the aggregate, our [selection/recommendation] 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.

#### **Brokerage for Client Referrals**

We do not receive client referrals in exchange for cash or other compensation, such as brokerage services or research.

Although we primarily recommend that our clients use NFS or Schwab as a qualified custodian, at times, we may utilize other qualified custodians to hold your assets. We are independently owned and operated and are not affiliated with NFS, Schwab or any other qualified custodian. The qualified



custodian will hold your assets in a brokerage account and buy and sell securities with our instruction. While we will recommend a qualified custodian to hold your assets, you will decide whether to do so and will open the account directly at the qualified custodian with our assistance.

Periodically, we will review alternative custodians in the marketplace to ensure NFS and Schwab are meeting our duty to provide best execution for your accounts. The review will include a comparison that involves evaluating criteria such as overall expertise, cost competitiveness, and financial condition. The quality of execution will be reviewed through trade journal evaluations. However, best execution does not simply mean the lowest transaction cost. Therefore, no single criteria will validate nor invalidate a custodian, but rather, all criteria taken together will be used in evaluating the current custodian.

Additionally, some product sponsors such as investment companies provide support to AFS and our Advisory Representatives. Such support includes research, educational information, and monetary support for due-diligence trips and client events. We receive a benefit because we do not have to pay for the research, products, or services. This additional compensation presents a conflict of interest because AFS or your Advisory Representative has a greater incentive to make available, recommend, or make investment decisions regarding investments for your account that provide such additional compensation to us. Further information regarding fees and charges assessed to you by investment products you purchase is available in the appropriate product prospectus, statement of additional information, and/or offering document.

### **Aggregated Trades**

We combine multiple orders for shares of the same securities purchased for discretionary advisory accounts we manage (this practice is commonly referred to as "aggregated trading"). We will then distribute a portion of the shares to participating accounts in a fair and equitable manner. Generally, participating accounts will pay a fixed transaction cost regardless of the number of shares transacted. In certain cases, each participating account pays an average price per share for all transactions and pays a proportionate share of all transaction costs on any given day. In the event an order is only partially filled, the shares will be allocated to participating accounts in a fair and equitable manner, typically in proportion to the size of each client's order. Accounts owned by our firm or persons associated with our firm may not participate in aggregated trading with your accounts.

## **Item 13 Review of Accounts**

If you are participating in the Portfolio Management Services you will be invited to participate in at least an annual review or as agreed by you and your Advisory Representative. You may request more frequent reviews and set thresholds for triggering events that would cause a review to take place. Your Advisory Representative will monitor for changes or shifts in the economy, changes to the management and structure of a mutual fund or company in which your assets are invested, and market shifts and corrections.

If you are participating solely in Financial Planning Services you will not receive regular reviews. We recommend you have at least an annual review and update to any plans. However, the time and frequency of the reviews of financial plans is solely your decision. Other than the initial plan or analysis, there will be no other reports issued.

You are advised that you must notify your Advisory Representative promptly of any changes to your financial goals, objectives or financial situation as such changes may require your Advisory Representative to review the portfolio allocation and make recommendations for changes.

You will be provided statements at least quarterly direct from the account custodian. Furthermore, you will receive confirmations of all transactions occurring direct from the account custodian. Additionally, in most cases, we will provide you with a consolidated report of your managed account. You should compare the report with statements received direct from the account custodian. Should there be any discrepancy the account custodian's report will prevail.

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

We receive economic benefits from a non-client in connection with providing investment advice or other advisory services to you. Through our participation in certain programs or use of a custodian we are entitled to receive economic benefits. As part of our fiduciary duty, we endeavor at all times to put the interests of our clients first. Clients should be aware, however, that the receipt of economic benefits by our firm from a non-client in and of themselves creates a potential conflict of interest and may influence our choice in providing services to your account. This arrangement does not cause our clients to pay any additional transaction fees beyond those that are traditionally charged by our firm and/or other service providers.

Refer to the *Brokerage Practices* section above for disclosures on research and other benefits we may receive resulting from our relationship with your account custodian.

As disclosed under the *Fees and Compensation* section in this brochure, Advisory Representatives providing investment advice on behalf of our firm are licensed insurance agents. For information on the conflicts of interest this presents, and how we address these conflicts, refer to the *Fees and Compensation* section.

Commonwealth offers our Advisory Representatives educational, training, and other programs if they meet certain sales production goals. This may include the payment or reimbursement of travel, meals, and lodging expenses for attendees. Payment/reimbursement of expenses is not contingent upon sales targets or contests, but rather on the total amount of production. This additional compensation presents a conflict of interest because we or your Advisory Representative has a greater incentive to make available, recommend, or make investment decisions regarding investments for your account that enable our Advisory Representatives to meet the production goals noted above. Further information regarding fees and charges assessed to you by investment products you purchase is available in the appropriate product prospectus, statement of additional information, and/or offering document.

We receive an economic benefit from Commonwealth/NFS in the form of the support, products and services Commonwealth/NFS make available to us as well as other investment advisers whose clients maintain their accounts on Commonwealth's platform. These products and services, how they benefit us, and the related conflicts of interest are described in Item 12 of this brochure.

Our access to Commonwealth's products and services is not conditioned on our firm or our Advisory Representatives giving particular investment advice, such as buying particular securities for our clients. Product vendors recommended by us may provide monetary and non-monetary assistance for the purposes of funding marketing, distribution, business and client development, educational enhancement and/or due diligence reviews incurred by us or our Advisory Representatives relating to the promotion or sale of the product vendor's products or services. We do not select products as a result of the receipt or potential receipt of any monetary or non-monetary assistance. Our due diligence of a product does not take into consideration any assistance it may receive. While the receipt of products or services is a benefit for you and us, it also presents a conflict of interest. We attempt to mitigate this conflict of interest by:

- Informing you of conflicts of interest in our disclosure document and agreement;
- Maintaining and abiding by our Code of Ethics which requires us to place your interests first and foremost;
- Advising you of the right to decline to implement our recommendations and the right to choose other financial professionals for implementation.

We receive an economic benefit from Schwab in the form of the support products and services it makes available to us and other independent investment advisors whose clients maintain their accounts at Schwab. You do not pay more for assets maintained at Schwab as a result of these arrangements. However, we benefit from the referral arrangement because the cost of these services would otherwise be borne directly by us. You should consider these conflicts of interest when selecting a custodian. The products and services provided by Schwab, how they benefit us, and the related conflicts of interest are described above (see Item 12—Brokerage Practices).

## Item 15 Custody

As paying agents for our firm, NFS or Schwab will directly debit your account(s) for the payment of our advisory fees. This ability to deduct our advisory fees from your accounts causes our firm to exercise limited custody over your funds or securities. We do not have physical custody of any of your funds and/or securities. Your funds and securities will be held with a bank, broker-dealer, or other qualified custodian. You will receive account statements from the qualified custodian(s) holding your funds and securities at least quarterly. The account statements from NFS or Schwab will indicate the amount of our advisory fees deducted from your account(s) each billing period. You should carefully review account statements for accuracy.

### Wire Transfer and/or Standing Letter of Authorization

Our firm, or Advisory Representatives, may effect wire transfers from client accounts to one or more third parties designated, in writing, by the client without obtaining written client consent for each separate, individual transaction, as long as the client has provided us with written authorization to do so. Such written authorization is known as a Standing Letter of Authorization. An adviser with authority to conduct such third party wire transfers has access to the client's assets, and therefore has custody of the client's assets in any related accounts.

However, we do not have to obtain a surprise annual audit, as we otherwise would be required to by reason of having custody, as long as we meet the following criteria:

1. You provide a written, signed instruction to the qualified custodian that includes the third party's name and address or account number at a custodian;
2. You authorize us in writing to direct transfers to the third party either on a specified schedule or from time to time;
3. Your qualified custodian verifies your authorization (e.g., signature review) and provides a transfer of funds notice to you promptly after each transfer;
4. You can terminate or change the instruction;
5. We have no authority or ability to designate or change the identity of the third party, the address, or any other information about the third party;
6. We maintain records showing that the third party is not a related party to us nor located at the same address as us; and
7. Your qualified custodian sends you, in writing, an initial notice confirming the instruction and an annual notice reconfirming the instruction

AFS complies with the conditions of the safe harbor provisions and is therefore exempt from the annual surprise exam requirement for Advisers that have custody.

## **Item 16 Investment Discretion**

Before we can buy or sell securities on your behalf, you must first sign our discretionary management agreement and the appropriate trading authorization forms.

You may grant our firm discretion over the selection and amount of securities to be purchased or sold for your account(s) without obtaining your consent or approval prior to each transaction. You may specify investment objectives, guidelines, and/or impose certain conditions or investment parameters for your account(s). For example, you may specify that the investment in any particular stock or industry should not exceed specified percentages of the value of the portfolio and/or restrictions or prohibitions of transactions in the securities of a specific industry or security. Refer to the *Advisory Business* section in this brochure for more information on our discretionary management services.

## **Item 17 Voting Client Securities**

We will not vote proxies on behalf of your advisory accounts. At your request, we may offer you advice regarding corporate actions and the exercise of your proxy voting rights. If you own shares of applicable securities, you are responsible for exercising your right to vote as a shareholder.

In most cases, you will receive proxy materials directly from the account custodian. However, in the event we were to receive any written or electronic proxy materials, we would forward them directly to you by mail, unless you have authorized our firm to contact you by electronic mail, in which case, we would forward any electronic solicitations to vote proxies.

## **Item 18 Financial Information**

We will not require you to prepay more than \$1,200 and six or more months in advance of receiving the advisory service.

We do not have any financial condition or impairment that would prevent us from meeting our contractual commitments to you.

We have not filed a bankruptcy petition at any time in the past ten years.

## **Item 19 Requirements for State-Registered Advisers**

We are a federally registered investment adviser; therefore, we are not required to respond to this item.

## Item 20 Additional Information

### Trade Errors

In the event a trading error occurs in your account, our policy is to restore your account to the position it should have been in had the trading error not occurred. Depending on the circumstances, corrective actions may include canceling the trade, adjusting an allocation, and/or reimbursing the account.

### Class Action Lawsuits

We do not determine if securities held by you are the subject of a class action lawsuit or whether you are eligible to participate in class action settlements or litigation nor do we initiate or participate in litigation to recover damages on your behalf for injuries as a result of actions, misconduct, or negligence by issuers of securities held by you.

### IRA Rollover Considerations

As part of our investment advisory services to you, we may recommend that you withdraw the assets from your employer's retirement plan and roll the assets over to an individual retirement account ("IRA") that we will manage on your behalf. If you elect to roll the assets to an IRA that is subject to our management, we will charge you an asset based fee as set forth in the agreement you executed with our firm. This practice presents a conflict of interest because persons providing investment advice on our behalf have an incentive to recommend a rollover to you for the purpose of generating fee based compensation rather than solely based on your needs. You are under no obligation, contractually or otherwise, to complete the rollover. Moreover, if you do complete the rollover, you are under no obligation to have the assets in an IRA managed by our firm.

Many employers permit former employees to keep their retirement assets in their company plan. Also, current employees can sometimes move assets out of their company plan before they retire or change jobs. In determining whether to complete the rollover to an IRA, and to the extent the following options are available, you should consider the costs and benefits of:

1. Leaving the funds in your employer's (former employer's) plan.
2. Moving the funds to a new employer's retirement plan.
3. Cashing out and taking a taxable distribution from the plan.
4. Rolling the funds into an IRA rollover account.

Each of these options has advantages and disadvantages and before making a change we encourage you to speak with your CPA and/or tax attorney.

If you are considering rolling over your retirement funds to an IRA for us to manage here are a few points to consider before you do so:

1. Determine whether the investment options in your employer's retirement plan address your needs or whether you might want to consider other types of investments.
  1. Employer retirement plans generally have a more limited investment menu than IRAs.
  2. Employer retirement plans may have unique investment options not available to the public such as employer securities, or previously closed funds.
2. Your current plan may have lower fees than our fees.
  1. If you are interested in investing only in mutual funds, you should understand the cost structure of the share classes available in your employer's retirement plan and how the costs of those share classes compare with those available in an IRA.
  2. You should understand the various products and services you might take advantage of at an IRA provider and the potential costs of those products and services.
3. Our strategy may have higher risk than the option(s) provided to you in your plan.

4. Your current plan may also offer financial advice.
5. If you keep your assets titled in a 401k or retirement account, you could potentially delay your required minimum distribution beyond age 72.
6. Your 401k may offer more liability protection than a rollover IRA; each state may vary.
  1. Generally, federal law protects assets in qualified plans from creditors. Since 2005, IRA assets have been generally protected from creditors in bankruptcies. However, there can be some exceptions to the general rules so you should consult with an attorney if you are concerned about protecting your retirement plan assets from creditors.
7. You may be able to take out a loan on your 401k, but not from an IRA.
8. IRA assets can be accessed any time; however, distributions are subject to ordinary income tax and may also be subject to a 10% early distribution penalty unless they qualify for an exception such as disability, higher education expenses or the purchase of a home.
9. If you own company stock in your plan, you may be able to liquidate those shares at a lower capital gains tax rate.
10. Your plan may allow you to hire us as the manager and keep the assets titled in the plan name.

It is important that you understand the differences between these types of accounts and to decide whether a rollover is best for you. Prior to proceeding, if you have questions contact your investment adviser representative, or call our main number as listed on the cover page of this brochure.