

Item 1 – Cover Page

# Vowels Stovern Wealth, LLC

## Form ADV Part 2A Brochure

March 13, 2023

**This Brochure provides information about the qualifications and business practices of Vowels Stovern Wealth, LLC. You should review this brochure to understand your relationship with our firm and help you determine to hire or retain us as your investment adviser. If you have any questions about the contents of this brochure, please contact us at (417) 434-9400. The information in this Brochure has not been approved or verified by the United States of America Securities and Exchange Commission (“SEC”) or by any state securities authority.**

**Additional information about Vowels Stovern Wealth also is available on the SEC’s website at [www.adviserinfo.sec.gov](http://www.adviserinfo.sec.gov). You can search this site by our firm name or by using a unique identifying number, known as a CRD number. The CRD number for Vowels Stovern Wealth is 321238.**

**Vowels Stovern Wealth is a registered investment adviser. Registration of an investment adviser does not imply any level of skill or training.**

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## Item 2 – Material Changes

This section of the brochure discusses specific material changes that have been made to the brochure since the firm's last annual update. Below is a summary of those changes:

- **Item 4 – Advisory Business – Assets Under Management**

In September 2022, the Firm's assets under management was updated to confirm our registration status with the Securities and Exchange Commission. The AUM was also updated in March 2023 and is as-of December 31, 2022.

- **Item 17 – Voting Client Securities - Class Action Litigation**

In September 2022, we updated this brochure to remove disclosures related to class action litigation services. VSW does not take authority to handle class action litigation on behalf of clients. VSW may offer assistance as to class action litigation upon a client's request, but the client always retains the responsibility for determining whether to participate in any class action litigation.

We will provide you with a Summary of Material Changes made to this brochure annually at no cost. You may receive an updated copy of this brochure at any time by contacting us at (417) 434-9400.

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## **Item 4 – Advisory Business**

### **About Our Firm**

Vowels Stovern Wealth, LLC (“VSW”) is a registered investment adviser that provides investment management and financial advisory services to individual and institutional investors to help them achieve their financial needs and goals. VSW has been a registered investment adviser since 2022. The sole shareholders of the firm are Bryan Vowels and Troy Stovern.

Our firm takes pride in providing personalized service to our clients and acknowledges that it is held to a fiduciary standard of care.

### **Types of Advisory Services We Offer**

VSW offers a variety of investment advisory services to individuals, high net worth individuals, retirement plans, trusts, estates, family entities, non-profit organizations, foundations, and businesses/corporations. These services include:

- Investment and wealth management
- Selection of independent managers
- Financial planning and consulting
- Fiduciary and non-fiduciary services for plan sponsors

We work with our clients to determine their investment objectives and risk profile and develop and execute a customized investment plan based on their individual needs and goals. VSW will utilize the financial information provided by the client to analyze and develop strategies and solutions to assist the client in meeting their financial goals. Prior to VSW rendering any of the foregoing services, clients are required to enter into one or more written advisory agreements with VSW setting forth the relevant terms and conditions of the advisory relationship.

VSW may recommend other professionals to implement our recommendations or for other types of services, such as accounting firms, law firms, business consultants, life coaches and bankers. These additional services offered by another professional are provided at an additional cost to you and are separate and distinct from VSW’s advisory services. In some cases, this creates a conflict of interest because we will have an incentive to recommend additional services based on the prospect of cross-referrals of clients from the other professional or his or her firm.

### **Investment and Portfolio Management Services**

VSW manages our clients’ portfolios on a discretionary and non-discretionary basis. Our investment and portfolio management services are tailored to the needs of our clients and are based on a comprehensive understanding of each client’s current situation, past experiences, and future goals. With this acquired knowledge we create, analyze, strategize, and implement goal-oriented

investment solutions. These solutions become our clients' investment policy. This policy and our matched strategies are designed to be risk appropriate, cost effective and tax efficient.

Our investment and wealth management services generally include a broad range of comprehensive financial planning and/or consulting services, as well as discretionary and non-discretionary management of investment portfolios.

Client assets are primarily allocated among individual equity and debt securities, exchange-traded funds ("ETFs"), mutual funds, and independent investment managers ("Investment Managers") in accordance with the client's stated investment objective and risk/volatility parameters. We may also recommend clients allocate a certain portion of their assets to alternative investments. Where appropriate, VSW may also provide advice about many types of legacy positions or other investments held in client portfolios. Clients may also engage VSW to manage and/or advise on certain investment products that are not maintained at their primary custodian, such as variable life insurance and annuity contracts and assets held in employer sponsored retirement plans and qualified tuition plans (i.e., 529 plans). In these situations, typically VSW will direct or make recommendations on a non-discretionary basis for the allocation of client assets among the various investment options available with the product. These assets are generally maintained at the underwriting insurance company or custodian for the plan trustee or administrator and clients retain responsibility for effecting trades in these accounts.

VSW consults with clients on an initial and ongoing basis to assess their specific risk tolerance, time horizon, liquidity constraints and other related factors relevant to the management of their portfolios. You should promptly notify us if there are changes in your financial situation or if you wish to place any limitations on the management of your account. You may impose reasonable restrictions or mandates on the management of your account if VSW determines, in our sole discretion, the conditions would not materially impact the performance of a management strategy or prove overly burdensome to the firm's management efforts.

To the extent a client's assets are managed by an Independent Manager or are invested in a particular fund, those managers and funds will have their own investment practices. Those investment practices are described in each manager's Form ADV or fund's prospectus, or in its offering or other disclosure documents. In addition, selected money managers or funds typically have discretion to determine the type, and amount, of securities to be purchased or sold for the portion of the assets managed by the money manager or fund.

### **Selection of Independent Managers**

As part of our selection of independent managers, we offer:

- Manager due diligence
- Manager search and recommendations
- Monitoring of manager risk and performance

VSW may select certain Independent Managers to actively manage all or a portion of its clients' assets. Pursuant to the terms of the investment advisory agreement, VSW shall have the discretion to appoint and terminate these third-party advisers. The specific terms and conditions under which a client engages an Independent Manager may also be set forth in a separate written agreement with the designated Independent Manager. In addition to this brochure, clients will also receive the written disclosure documents of the respective Independent Managers engaged to manage their assets. Certain Independent Managers require a separate investment advisory agreement with the Independent Manager, while others do not. VSW evaluates a variety of information about Independent Managers, which may include the Independent Managers' public disclosure documents, materials supplied by the Independent Managers themselves and other third-party analyses it believes are reputable. To the extent possible, VSW seeks to assess the Independent Managers' investment strategies, past performance, and risk results in relation to its clients' individual portfolio allocations and risk exposure. VSW also takes into consideration each Independent Manager's management style, returns, reputation, financial strength, reporting, pricing, and research capabilities, among other factors.

Independent Managers utilized by VSW include:

- Unified managed account managers and a mutual fund advisory program available through Wells Fargo Advisors.

VSW continues to provide services relative to the discretionary or non-discretionary selection of the Independent Managers. On an ongoing basis, VSW monitors the performance of those accounts being managed by Independent Managers. VSW seeks to ensure the Independent Managers' strategies and target allocations remain aligned with clients' investment objectives and overall best interests.

### **Financial Planning and Consulting Services**

VSW offers different levels of financial planning and consulting services to help our clients identify, prioritize and work towards their goals and objectives. Our consulting services give our clients the ability to receive a broad range of financial advice and services, including specific security recommendations, for the duration of the advisory agreement.

Our process starts with an extensive review of a client's family situation, which includes assets and liabilities as well as estate, tax, and insurance needs. We then employ a risk tolerance and risk capacity-focused simulation to get a detailed cash flow analysis and proposed asset allocation. Together, this information is analyzed to develop a proposed financial plan, which is designed to be dynamic in nature, ever-evolving due to life changes, along with changes in cash flow needs, risk tolerance, time horizon, or investment objectives.

VSW's financial planning and consulting services may include any of the following topics:

- Cash Flow Analysis and Forecasting
- Risk Management
- Trust & Estate Planning
- Charitable Giving
- Education Planning
- Business Planning
- Retirement Planning
- Liability Management
- Investment Consulting
- Distribution Planning
- Tax Planning
- Insurance Review
- Next Generation Family
- Retirement Plan Consulting and Employee Benefits Analysis

While each of these services is available on a stand-alone basis, certain services may also be rendered in conjunction with investment portfolio management services as part of a comprehensive portfolio management engagement. In performing these services, VSW is not required to verify any information received from the client or from the client's other professionals (e.g., attorneys, accountants, etc.), and is expressly authorized to rely on such information. VSW may recommend clients engage the firm for additional related services, such as investment management services. These additional services are provided at an additional cost to you, which is based on the nature, extent complexity, and other characteristics of the services. This creates a conflict of interest because we will have an incentive to recommend additional advisory services based on the compensation received, rather than solely based on your needs. Implementation of financial planning recommendations is entirely at your discretion. You have complete freedom in selecting a financial adviser to assist you with implementing the recommendations made in your financial plan and are under no obligation to act on the advice of VSW. Financial planning recommendations are of a generic nature and are not limited to any specific product or service offered by a broker dealer or insurance company. Should you choose to implement the recommendations contained in the plan, VSW suggests you work closely with your attorney, accountant and/or insurance agent.

VSW will act solely in our capacity as a registered investment adviser and does not provide any legal, accounting or tax advice. You should seek the counsel of a qualified accountant and/or attorney when necessary. As part of our advisory services, we may assist clients with tax loss harvesting and will work with the client's tax specialist to answer any questions related to the client's portfolio. Any incidental tax discussions on topics, such as required minimum distributions, retirement plan contributions, etc. should be verified with your tax advisor.

### **Fiduciary and Non-Fiduciary Services for Plan Sponsors**

Retirement plan sponsors may retain our firm to provide advisory and consulting services for plan assets. Fiduciary services available to plan sponsors include:

- Reviewing and assisting in the establishment of investment policies and objectives on behalf of the plan
- Assistance with development of an Investment Policy Statement

- Recommending core investments to be offered to plan participants for selection by the plan sponsor.
- Recommending investment managers, within the meaning of ERISA Section 3(38), on behalf of the plan, to be offered as investment options for plan participants.
- Monitoring of the plan's investments or investment managers in accordance with the plan's Investment Policy Statement or other relevant guidelines.
- Assistance with plan design strategies and implementation of new plan design capabilities and their potential impact on the plan and plan participants..

Non-fiduciary consulting services available to plan sponsors include:

- Educating plan participants on investment options available within the plan.
- Preparation of periodic performance reports for the plan's investments.
- Assistance with monitoring the reasonableness of the fees and expenses of the plan's investments or investment managers in accordance with the plan's Investment Policy Statement or other relevant guidelines.
- Benchmarking existing plan service providers to industry peers, and where appropriate, conducting a search for new providers for the plan sponsor's consideration and providing our recommendation.

### **Portfolio Management Services for Wrap Fee Program**

VSW offers portfolio management services through a wrap fee program. A bundled or "wrap fee" program is an advisory fee program under which you pay one bundled fee to compensate VSW for portfolio management, transaction costs and custodial services. A wrap fee program may not be the lowest cost option if you would like to restrict your investments to open-end mutual funds or other long-term investment products.

### **Amount of Assets We Manage**

As of December 2022, VSW manages approximately \$308,394,368 of assets on a discretionary basis and \$84,200,011 of assets on a non-discretionary basis. The firm also has \$48,280,817 of assets under advisement. Discretionary assets under management are those for which we have an ongoing responsibility to select and make securities recommendations that are in line with your financial needs and objectives and then effect those securities transactions without first consulting you. Non-discretionary assets under management are those for which we have an ongoing responsibility to select and make securities recommendations that are in line with your financial needs and objectives and then effect those securities transactions only after consulting with you to inform you of the transaction(s) and obtaining your approval to move forward.



## Item 5 – Fees and Compensation

### How We Are Compensated for Our Advisory Services

Our fees vary among the different types of advisory services we offer and may be negotiated at our sole discretion. The specific fees and manner in which fees are charged and calculated are described in your investment advisory agreement. You should carefully review the investment advisory agreement prior to signing it.

Fees for our advisory services may be higher than fees charged by other advisers who offer similar services. You may be charged different fees than similarly situated clients for the same services. You should carefully review this brochure to understand the fees and other sources of compensation that exist among our services prior to entering into an investment advisory contract with our firm.

### Investment and Portfolio Management Services

Fees for investment and wealth management services are generally billed in advance each calendar quarter based on the market value of the assets under management/advisement on the last day of the previous calendar quarter. The maximum fee for our program is as follows:

Maximum Annual Advisory Fee
1.5%

Fees may be based on cumulative household assets under management. However, certain ERISA rules prevent householding corporate plans with personal assets for fee reductions. You should refer to your advisory agreement for your specific fee rate(s).

For investment and portfolio management services VSW provides to certain clients or for specific client holdings (e.g., held-away assets, 529 plans, etc.), we may negotiate a fee rate that differs from our standard fee.

### Selection of Other Independent Managers

Fees for other Independent Managers used to manage all or a portion of a client's account are set forth by the Independent Manager and may be included or in addition to VSW's fees. You should refer to the Independent Manager's Form ADV Part 2A Brochure for information on their fees and compensation.

### Programs Offered Through Wells Fargo Advisors

Fees for advisory programs offered through Wells Fargo Advisors are inclusive of VSW's and Wells Fargo Advisors' advisory fees and are as follows:

<b>Program</b>	<b>Program Type</b>	<b>Maximum Annual Advisory Fee</b>
Personalized Unified Managed Account	Unified Managed Account	1.75%
Fundsource	Mutual Fund Advisory Program	1.25%

You should refer to your advisory agreement for your specific fee rate(s).

Wells Fargo Advisors will calculate and directly debit advisory fees from the clients' accounts for assets within their programs. The value of assets held in any Wells Fargo Advisor program are included in the amount of total household assets used to determine VSW's advisory fees for other assets of a client that are managed by VSW.

### **Financial Planning and Consulting Services**

Fees for financial planning are billed at a fixed rate. Fees are billed either in advance or arrears based upon the needs of the client. Hourly fees generally range up to \$500 per hour. There is no minimum fee required for financial planning or consulting services; however financial planning and consulting fees shall generally not exceed \$25,000 annually.

Fees for financial planning and consulting services are due and payable as incurred. While financial planning and consulting services are available on a stand-alone basis, certain services may also be rendered in conjunction with investment portfolio management services at no additional cost as part of a comprehensive portfolio management engagement.

Factors we consider when determining our financial planning and consulting fees include, but are not limited to:

- The amount of time we expect to spend completing the financial planning or consulting services and providing related advice;
- The complexity of your goals, issues and/or needs;
- The extensiveness and complexity of the data needed regarding your personal financial information;
- Your net worth or the value of your investment accounts and/or other assets that are the subject of the financial planning or consulting services; and/or

- Special circumstances related to life changes, marital status, health or special income needs, or growth or decline of a personal business.

VSW may request a retainer to initiate financial planning and consulting services; however, we will not request the prepayment of fees more than \$1,200 in advisory fees more than six months in advance.

You may engage VSW for additional investment management services to assist with implementing one or more financial planning recommendations. You will incur additional fees if you retain our firm for such services. You have complete freedom in selecting an investment adviser to assist you in implementing any recommendations by VSW and are under no obligation to act upon the advice we provide.

For consulting services, the investment advisory agreement between VSW and the client will continue in effect until terminated by either party. For stand-alone financial planning services, the agreement between VSW and the client will terminate upon delivery of the plan or completion of the service.

### **Fiduciary and Non-Fiduciary Services for Plan Sponsors**

Fees for retirement plan sponsors are either set at a flat rate or based upon the value of the plan assets that are the subject of the consulting services and are generally payable in advance or arrears on a quarterly basis. Fees for one-time projects are payable either upon completion of the project or half paid upon execution of the agreement with the balance due upon completion of the project. A graduated fee schedule may be set by the firm for fees based on the value of plan assets, which will be described in your services agreement.

### **Payment of Fees**

Clients authorize VSW to instruct the account custodian to directly debit fees from the client's account. Accounts initiated or terminated during a calendar quarter will be charged a prorated fee.

Fees for our advisory services generally require you to pay investment advisory fees in advance of receiving services. Any pre-paid, unearned fees will be promptly refunded. If you withdraw or add more than \$250,000 to your account throughout the quarter, advisory fees will be prorated based on the number of days in the quarter services were received or the assets were under VSW's management.

- For investment and portfolio management services, refunds are calculated by taking the total advisory fee billed for the calendar quarter, dividing that amount by the number of days in the calendar quarter and multiplying that amount by the number of days services were not provided during the calendar quarter.
- For Independent Managers, the Independent Manager determines the manner in which advisory fees are billed (in advance or arrears). You should refer to the manager's Form ADV Part 2A Brochure for additional information on how fees are paid for their services.

- For financial planning and consulting services, refunds are calculated based on the value of the services that were completed prior to termination of the advisory agreement.
- Fees for fiduciary and non-fiduciary consulting services for plan sponsors are generally payable in advance or arrears. For one-time projects that are partly paid upon execution of the agreement, the amount of the refund is calculated based on the value of the services that were completed. Any earned, unpaid fees will be due and payable upon termination of the advisory contract.

### **Other Types of Fees and Expenses You May Incur**

Clients may incur certain charges imposed by custodians, brokers, third-party investments and other third parties, such as fees charged by Independent Managers, custodial fees, odd-lot differentials, transfer taxes, wire transfer and electronic fund fees, and other fees and taxes on brokerage accounts and securities transactions. Decisions to reallocate your account assets may result in you incurring a redemption fee imposed by one or more mutual funds held in your account. Mutual funds and exchange traded funds also charge internal management fees, which are disclosed in a fund's prospectus. Such charges, fees and commissions are exclusive of and in addition to VSW's fee. VSW shall not receive any portion of these commissions, fees, and costs, including any distribution or "12b-1" fees paid by the mutual funds in which your account assets are invested.

### **Other Types of Compensation We Receive**

VSW has contracted with Trade-PMR, Inc. ("Trade-PMR") for brokerage services, including trade processing, collection of management fees, marketing assistance and research. Item 12 – Brokerage Practices further describes the factors that VSW considers in selecting or recommending broker-dealers for client transactions and determining the reasonableness of their compensation (e.g., commissions).

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

VSW does not charge any performance-based fees or participate in side-by-side management.

### **Item 7 – Types of Clients**

VSW provides portfolio management services to individuals, high net worth individuals, retirement plans, trusts, estates, family entities, non-profit organizations, foundations, and businesses/corporations.

VSW generally requires a minimum initial investment of \$1,000,000 for investment management services. The firm, in its sole discretion, will accept clients based upon each client's particular circumstances.

Certain Independent Managers may impose more restrictive account requirements than VSW. In such instances, VSW may alter its corresponding account requirements to accommodate those of the Independent Managers.

## **Item 8 – Methods of Analysis, Investment Strategies**

### **Methods of Analysis and Investment Strategies**

VSW carefully constructs a risk-adjusted, tax-efficient, and cost-effective asset allocation strategy based on a client's unique cash flow needs, stated return and risk profile. Security selection is based on qualitative, quantitative, technical, and relative strength metrics. Portfolio holdings are constantly monitored and adjusted as market conditions and our clients' circumstances dictate. Clients may hold or retain other types of assets as well and VSW may offer advice regarding those various assets as part of our services. Advice regarding such assets generally will not involve asset management services.

VSW predominantly utilizes a combination of active and passive strategies to allocate client assets primarily among publicly traded securities, such as stocks, bonds, ETFs, mutual funds and/or separately managed portfolios. Nevertheless, individual client circumstances may dictate the use of other types of securities, actively managed portfolios, or alternative investments. Depending upon the client's financial needs, strategies implemented might include long term purchases (securities held at least a year), short term purchases (securities sold within a year), margin transactions, and other securities transactions.

### **Risk of Loss**

Investing in securities involves risk of loss that you should be prepared to bear. All investments present the risk of loss of principal – the risk that the value of securities (e.g., stocks, mutual funds, ETFs, bonds, etc.), when sold or otherwise disposed of, may be less than the price paid for the securities. Even when the value of the securities when sold is greater than the price paid, there is the risk that the appreciation will be less than inflation. In other words, the purchasing power of the proceeds may be less than the purchasing power of the original investment. There is no guarantee that investment recommendations made by VSW will be successful. We cannot assure that your account will increase, preserve capital, or generate income, nor can we assure that your investment objectives will be realized. Although all investments involve risk, our investment advice seeks to limit risk through diversification among various asset classes.

We may recommend a variety of security types for your account in an effort to achieve your individual needs and goals. This may include, but is not limited to, stocks, bonds, ETFs, open-end and closed-end mutual funds, hedge funds, private equity funds, venture capital funds, advisory accounts, real estate investment trusts, or other private alternative or other investment funds. An investment in such other funds or managers may present risks specific to the particular investment

vehicle, such as long-term illiquidity, redemption notice periods or other restrictions on redemptions, capital calls, or periodic taxable income distribution.

Described below are the material risks associated with investing in the types of securities we generally use in client accounts:

### **Equity Securities**

In general, prices of equity securities (common, convertible preferred stocks and other securities whose values are tied to the price of stocks, such as rights, warrants and convertible debt securities) are more volatile than those of fixed-income securities. The prices of equity securities could decline in value if the issuer's financial condition declines or in response to overall market and economic conditions. Investments in smaller companies and mid-size companies may involve greater risk and price volatility than investments in larger, more mature companies.

### **Fixed-Income Securities**

The return and principal value of bonds fluctuate with changes in market conditions. Fixed-income securities are subject to interest rate risk and credit quality risk. The market value of fixed-income securities generally declines when interest rates rise, and an issuer of fixed-income securities could default on its payment obligations. Changes in interest rates generally have a greater effect on bonds with longer maturities than on those with shorter maturities. If bonds are not held to maturity, they may be worth more or less than their original value. Credit risk refers to the possibility that the issuer of a bond will not be able to make principal and/or interest payments. High yield bonds, also known as "junk bonds," carry higher risk of loss of principal and income than higher rated investment grade bonds.

### **Exchange-Traded Funds (ETFs)**

ETFs are typically investment companies that are legally classified as open-end mutual funds or unit investment trusts. ETFs differ from traditional mutual funds in that ETF shares are listed on a securities exchange. Shares can be bought and sold throughout the trading day like shares of other publicly traded companies. ETF shares may trade at a discount or premium to their net asset value. This difference between the bid price and ask price is often referred to as the "spread." The spread varies over time based on the ETF's trading volume and market liquidity. It is generally lower if the ETF has high trading volume and market liquidity and higher if the ETF has low trading volume and market liquidity. Liquidity risks are higher for ETFs with a large spread. ETFs may be closed and liquidated at the discretion of the issuing company.

### **Mutual Funds**

Mutual funds may invest in different types of securities, such as value or growth stocks, real estate investment trusts, corporate bonds, or U.S. government bonds. There are risks associated with each asset class.

An investment in a money market fund is not insured or guaranteed by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or any other governmental agency. Although money market funds seek to preserve the value of your investment at \$1.00 per share, it is possible to lose money by investing in the fund. Redemption is at the current net asset value, which may be more or less than the original cost. Aggressive growth funds are most suitable for investors willing to accept price per share volatility since many companies that demonstrate high growth potential can also be high risk. Income from tax-free mutual funds may be subject to local, state and/or the alternative minimum tax.

Because each mutual fund owns different types of investments, performance will be affected by a variety of factors. The value of your investment in a mutual fund will vary from day to day as the values of the underlying investments in a fund vary. Such variations generally reflect changes in interest rates, market conditions and other company and economic news. These risks may become magnified depending on how much a fund invests or uses certain strategies. A fund's principal market segment(s), such as large-cap, mid-cap or small-cap stocks, or growth or value stocks may underperform other market segments or the equity markets as a whole.

You can find additional information regarding these risks in the fund's prospectus.

### **International Investing**

The risks of investing in foreign securities include loss of value as a result of political or economic instability; nationalization, expropriation or confiscatory taxation; changes in foreign exchange rates and foreign exchange restrictions; settlement delays; and limited government regulation (including less stringent reporting, accounting, and disclosure standards than are required of U.S. companies). These risks may be greater with investments in emerging markets. Certain investments utilized by VSW may also contain international securities.

### **Cash and Cash Equivalents**

A portion of your assets may be invested in cash or cash equivalents to achieve your investment objective, provide ongoing distributions, and/or take a defensive position. Cash holdings may result in a loss of market exposure.

### **Alternative Investments**

Alternative investments are illiquid investments and do not trade on a national securities exchange. Alternative investments typically include investments in direct participation program securities (partnerships, limited liability companies, business development companies or real estate investment trusts), commodity pools, private equity, private debt, or hedge funds. Alternative investments are subject to various risks, such as illiquidity and property devaluation based on adverse economic and/or real estate market conditions.

Alternative investments are not suitable for all investors. Investors considering an investment strategy utilizing alternative investments should understand that alternative investments are generally considered speculative in nature and may involve a high degree of risk, particularly if concentrating investments in one or few alternative investments. These risks are potentially greater and substantially different than those associated with traditional equity or fixed income investments. Additional information regarding these risks can be found in the product's prospectus or offering documents.

## **Item 9 – Disciplinary Information**

As a registered investment adviser, VSW is required to disclose all material facts regarding any legal or disciplinary events that would be material to your evaluation of our firm or the integrity of our management. VSW has no disciplinary information to report.

## **Item 10 – Other Financial Industry Activities and Affiliations**

VSW has no other financial industry activities or affiliates.

## **Item 11 – Code of Ethics, Participation in Client Transactions and Personal Trading**

### **Our Code of Ethics**

VSW is committed to providing investment advice with the utmost professionalism and integrity. Our firm strives to identify manage and/or mitigate conflicts of interest and has adopted policies, procedures, and oversight mechanisms to address conflicts of interest. We have adopted a Code of Ethics that emphasizes our fiduciary obligation to put client interests first and is designed to ensure personal securities transactions, activities, and interests of employees will not interfere with the responsibilities to make decisions in the best interest of clients. All supervised persons of our firm must acknowledge and comply with our Code of Ethics. We will provide a copy of our Code of Ethics to any client or prospective client upon request.

### **Participation in Client Transactions**

VSW does not affect principal or agency cross securities transactions for client accounts. VSW also does not cross trades between client accounts. Principal transactions are generally defined as transactions where an adviser, acting as principal for its own account or the account of an affiliated broker-dealer, buys from or sells a security to an advisory client. An agency cross transaction is defined as a transaction where a person acts as an investment adviser in relation to a transaction in



which the investment adviser, or any person controlled by or under common control with the investment adviser, acts as broker for both the advisory client and for another person on the other side of the transaction. Agency cross transactions may arise where an adviser is dually registered as a broker-dealer or has an affiliated broker-dealer.

### **Employee Personal Trading**

Supervised persons of VSW may purchase or sell the same security that we recommend for investment in client accounts. This creates a conflict of interest as there is a possibility that employees of our firm might benefit from market activity by a client in a security held by the employee. Our Code of Ethics is designed to assure that the personal securities transactions, activities and interests of the employees of VSW will not interfere with making decisions in the best interest of advisory clients and implementing such decisions while, at the same time, allowing employees to invest for their own accounts. Under the Code of Ethics, certain classes of securities have been designated as exempt transactions, based upon a determination that these would not materially interfere with the best interest of VSW's clients. Our Code of Ethics also places restrictions on our employees' personal trading activities. These restrictions include, but are not limited to, a prohibition on trading based on non-public information and pre-clearance requirements for certain types of transactions. Employee trading is continually monitored under the Code of Ethics in an effort to prevent conflicts of interest between VSW and our clients.

Certain affiliated accounts may trade in the same securities with client accounts on an aggregated basis when consistent with VSW's obligation of best execution. In such circumstances, the affiliated and client accounts will share commission costs equally and receive securities at a total average price. VSW will retain records of the trade order (specifying each participating account) and its allocation, which will be completed prior to the entry of the aggregated order. Completed orders will be allocated as specified in the initial trade order. Partially filled orders will be allocated on a pro rata basis. Any exceptions will be explained on the order.

## **Item 12 – Brokerage Practices**

### **Selection and Recommendation of Broker-Dealers**

Though VSW recommends brokers with which we have negotiated pricing on behalf of our clients, we do not have discretionary authority to select brokers. We endeavor to recommend broker-dealers that will provide the best services at the lowest commission rates possible. The reasonableness of commissions is based on the broker's ability to provide professional services, competitive commission rates, research and other services that will help our firm provide investment management services to clients. VSW may recommend brokers who provide useful research and securities transaction services even though a lower commission may be charged by a broker who offers no research services and minimal securities transaction assistance.

We have negotiated competitive pricing and services with Trade-PMR, Inc. (“Trade-PMR”) for brokerage back-office and trade execution services. Trade-PMR clears trades and custodies assets at First Clearing Corp. (“FCC”). First Clearing Corp. is a trade name used by Wells Fargo Clearing Services, LLC., a non-bank affiliate of Wells Fargo & Company. Trade-PMR and FCC are members of SIPC and are unaffiliated registered broker-dealers and FINRA members. The brokerage commissions and/or transaction fees charged by the broker-dealer are included in VSW’s advisory fee. VSW regularly reviews the reasonableness of the compensation received by the broker-dealers used for executing client transactions in an effort to ensure that our clients receive favorable execution consistent with our fiduciary duty. Factors which VSW considers in recommending broker-dealers to clients include, but is not limited to, their respective financial strength, reputation, execution, pricing, research, and service. The commissions and/or transaction fees charged by these brokers may be higher or lower than those charged by other broker-dealers.

The commissions paid by VSW’s clients are intended to be consistent with our duty to obtain “best execution.” However, a client may pay a commission that is higher than what another qualified broker-dealer might charge to affect the same transaction when VSW determines, in good faith, that the commission is reasonable in relation to the value of the brokerage and research services received. In seeking best execution, the determinative factor is not the lowest possible cost, but whether the transaction represents the best qualitative execution, taking into consideration the full range of a broker-dealer’s services, including among others, execution capability, commission rates, and responsiveness. Consistent with the foregoing, while VSW will seek competitive rates, it may not necessarily obtain the lowest possible commission rates for client transactions.

Independent Managers selected to manage clients' assets will generally also request the discretion to select brokers and negotiate commissions on behalf of a client. VSW will not have control over trading execution by such managers. Clients should review the Form ADV disclosure documents of such managers regarding their trading practices.

### **Products & Services Available to Us from Broker-Dealers**

The broker-dealers and custodians we recommend to clients provide VSW with access to institutional trading and custody services, which are typically not available to retail investors. These brokerage and custodial services include the execution of securities transactions, custody, research, and access to mutual funds and other investments that are otherwise generally available only to institutional investors or would require a significantly higher minimum initial investment. Other benefits we may receive include receipt of duplicate client confirmations and bundled duplicate statements; access to a trading desk that exclusively services its participants; access to block trading, which provides the ability to aggregate securities transactions and then allocate the appropriate shares to client accounts; and access to an electronic communication network for client order entry and account information.

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

VSW does not participate in soft-dollar relationships.

## **Brokerage for Client Referrals**

When recommending broker-dealers for the execution of client securities transactions, VSW does not consider whether we will receive any client referrals from the broker-dealer or any other third-party.

## **Directed Brokerage**

As VSW will not request the discretionary authority to determine the broker-dealer to be used or the commission rates to be paid, clients must direct VSW as to the broker-dealer to be used. The commissions and transaction fees charged by these broker-dealers could be higher or lower than those charged by other custodians and broker-dealers. When directing the use of a particular broker-dealer, it should be understood that VSW will not have authority to negotiate commissions among various broker-dealers or obtain volume discounts. As such, best execution may not be achieved. Not all investment advisers require clients to direct the use of specific broker-dealers

## **Aggregation of Orders**

VSW will generally block trades where possible and when advantageous to clients. Certain trades will be effected independently when aggregating the transaction with other client transactions is not possible or advantageous to clients. The blocking of trades permits the trading of aggregate blocks of securities composed of assets from multiple client accounts where transaction costs are shared equally and on a pro-rated basis between all accounts included in the block. Block trading allows us to execute equity or fixed income trades in a timely, equitable manner and to reduce overall commission charges to clients. Clients who do not provide VSW with discretion will not participate in block trades, and their trades in similar securities will be placed with brokers after trades for discretionary accounts. Accounts owned by supervised persons of our firm may participate in block trading with your accounts; however, these individuals will not be given preferential treatment of any kind.

## **Item 13 – Review of Accounts**

Accounts at VSW are reviewed on a periodic basis. This informal review includes assessing client goals and objectives, monitoring the account, and addressing the need to rebalance, as necessary. Individual securities held in client accounts are periodically monitored by the firm, while any selected third-party managers are monitored on a quarterly basis. Accounts are reviewed in the context of each client's stated investment objectives and guidelines. More frequent reviews may be triggered by material changes to a client's individual circumstances, market conditions, tax law changes or the political or economic environment.

VSW may also review tax-planning needs, cash-flow needs, as well as charitable giving, insurance, and estate planning as part of our ongoing client reviews. Reviews are tailored to the services we provide to you, as well as your individual needs and goals. We encourage you to discuss your needs, goals, and objectives with us and keep us informed of any changes. If you engage our firm for

ongoing investment advisory services, we will contact you at least annually to determine whether there have been any changes to your financial situation or investment objectives and whether you wish to impose any reasonable restrictions on the management of your account or reasonably modify any existing restrictions. At this time, we will advise you of any account changes we feel are necessary to help you stay on track with meeting your financial goals and consider whether the current services provided by our firm continue to be suitable for your needs.

As a convenience to our clients, in addition to reporting on clients' financial assets, at a client's request we may prepare a performance report for the client's accounts or a global consolidated report that may also include certain non-financial assets (e.g., real assets). In such instances, VSW relies on the client to provide current and accurate price or other valuation information for those assets to be included in the client's consolidated account report. In no instance are non-financial assets included in any performance reporting. VSW does not independently verify, and expressly disclaims responsibility for, the accuracy of any non-financial asset values clients provided to us to include in their reporting.

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

### **Other Compensation Arrangements**

VSW receives compensation from the broker-dealer used for your account and your account custodian in the form of access to electronic systems that assist us in the management of client accounts, as well as research, software and other technology that provide access to client account data (such as trade confirmations and account statements), pricing information and other market data, facilitate trade execution (and allocation of aggregated trade orders for multiple client accounts), and client reporting capabilities. Your account custodian also offers us discounts for products and services offered by vendors and third-party service providers, such as software and technology solutions. These economic benefits create a conflict of interest in that it gives our firm an incentive to recommend one broker-dealer or custodian over another that does not provide similar electronic systems, support, or services. We address this conflict of interest by disclosing to our clients the types of compensation that our firm receives so clients can consider this when evaluating our firm. It is important that you consider the fees, level of service and investment strategies, among other factors, when selecting an investment manager.

### **Client Referrals**

VSW does not pay any referral fees to other individuals for referring clients to our firm.

## **Item 15 – Custody**

When you establish a relationship with our firm for investment management services, your assets will be maintained by a bank, broker -dealer, mutual fund transfer agent or other such institution deemed a 'qualified custodian' by the SEC. We rely on the custodian to price and value assets,

execute and clear transactions, maintain custody of assets in your account and perform other custodial functions. VSW does not maintain physical possession of any client account assets. Clients' assets must be held by a bank, broker dealer, mutual fund transfer agent or other such institution deemed a qualified custodian. We utilize FCC as the qualified custodian for client accounts.

You will receive monthly and/or quarterly account statements directly from the qualified custodian. VSW may also provide you with written quarterly performance reports for your account. We urge you to carefully review your account statements and compare the account balances with the balances reflected on any performance report you may receive from our firm for accuracy. Balances on our reports may vary slightly from custodial statements due to differences in accounting procedures, reporting dates, valuation methodologies of certain securities or other operational factors. You should promptly notify us if you do not receive account statements from your custodian at least quarterly or if you believe the information on your account statements is inaccurate.

### **Item 16 – Investment Discretion**

VSW typically has investment discretion over clients' securities accounts. Investment discretion is the authority to determine the securities or other assets to purchase or sell on behalf of an account. Investment discretion may also include the authority to select or terminate a third-party asset manager. This authority is exercised in a manner consistent with your stated investment objective for the particular account. You must provide written authorization to our firm before we can assume discretionary authority over your account. Any investment guidelines or restrictions you would like to place on your account must be provided to VSW in writing.

Clients that wish to maintain discretion over their accounts should understand that VSW cannot effect any account transactions without first obtaining your consent.

### **Item 17 – Voting Client Securities**

As a general policy, VSW does not have any authority to and does not vote proxies on behalf of advisory clients. Clients retain the responsibility for receiving and voting proxies for any and all securities maintained in client portfolios. VSW may provide advice to clients regarding the clients' voting of proxies.

### **Item 18 – Financial Information**

As a registered investment adviser, VSW is required to provide you with certain financial information about our firm.

**Prepayment of Fees**

We do not require or solicit prepayment of more than \$1,200 in fees per client, six months or more in advance.

**Our Financial Condition**

We do not have any financial commitment that is reasonably likely to impair our contractual commitments to our clients, nor has our firm ever been the subject of a bankruptcy proceeding.