BlackRock ETF Trust

Statement of Additional Information

Dated August 24, 2026

This Statement of Additional Information ("SAI") is not a prospectus. It should be read in conjunction with the current prospectus (the "Prospectus") for the following series of BlackRock ETF Trust (the "Trust"):

Fund	Ticker	Listing Exchange
iShares Systematic Alternatives Active ETF (the "Fund")	IALT	The Nasdaq Stock Market LLC

The Prospectus for the Fund dated August 24, 2026, as amended and supplemented from time to time, has been filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (the "Commission" or the "SEC") and can be obtained, without charge, by calling 1-800-474-2737 or by writing to the Trust's distributor, BlackRock Investments, LLC (the "Distributor" or "BRIL"), 1 University Square Drive, Princeton, NJ 08540. Capitalized terms used herein that are not defined have the same meaning as in the Prospectus, unless otherwise noted. Part I of this SAI and the portions of Part II of this SAI that relate to the Fund have been incorporated by reference into the Fund's Prospectus. The portions of Part II of this SAI that do not relate to the Fund do not form a part of the Fund's SAI, have not been incorporated by reference into the Fund's Prospectus and should not be relied upon by investors in the Fund.

The audited financial statements of the Fund are incorporated into this SAI by reference to the Fund's Annual Financial Statements and Additional Information for the fiscal period ended April 30, 2026, as filed with the SEC on Form N-CSR (the "2026 Annual Financial Statements"). You may request a copy of the 2026 Annual Financial Statements at no charge by calling 1-800-474-2737 between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Eastern time on any business day.

References to the Investment Company Act of 1940, as amended (the "Investment Company Act" or the "1940 Act"), or other applicable law, will include any rules promulgated thereunder and any guidance, interpretations or modifications by the SEC, SEC staff or other authority with appropriate jurisdiction, including court interpretations, and exemptive, no action or other relief or permission from the SEC, SEC staff or other authority.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PART I	
General Description of the Fund	1
Exchange Listing and Trading	1
Investment Objective and Policies	2
Proxy Voting Policy	8
Portfolio Holdings Information	9
Investment Policies	10
Fundamental Investment Policies	10
Non-Fundamental Investment Policies	12
Continuous Offering	13
Management	13
Trustees and Officers	13
Committees of the Board of Trustees	25
Remuneration of Trustees	28
Control Persons and Principal Holders of Securities	29
Conflicts of Interest	29
Investment Advisory, Administrative and Distribution Services	41
Investment Adviser	41
Investment Sub-Adviser	42
Portfolio Managers	42
Codes of Ethics	46
Anti-Money Laundering Requirements	46
Administrator, Custodian and Transfer Agent	47
Credit Agreement	47
Distributor	47
Securities Lending	48
Payments by BFA and its Affiliates	49
Determination of Net Asset Value	51
Brokerage Transactions	54
Additional Information Concerning the Trust	59
Shares	59
DTC as Securities Depository for Shares of the Fund	60
Distribution of Shares	61
Creation and Redemption of Creation Units	62
General	62
Fund Deposit	62
Cash Purchase Method	63
Procedures for Creation of Creation Units	63
Role of the Authorized Participant	63
Purchase Orders	64
Timing of Submission of Purchase Orders	64
Acceptance of Orders for Creation Units	65
Issuance of a Creation Unit	65
Costs Associated with Creation Transactions.	66
Redemption of Creation Units	67
Cash Redemption Method	68
Costs Associated with Redemption Transactions	68
Placement of Redemption Orders	69

	Page
Custom Baskets	71
Taxation on Creations and Redemptions of Creation Units	71
Taxes	72
Regulated Investment Company Qualifications	72
Taxation of RICs	73
Excise Tax	73
Net Capital Loss Carryforwards	73
Taxation of U.S. Shareholders	73
Sales of Shares	75
Backup Withholding	75
Sections 351 and 362	76
Taxation of Certain Derivatives	76
Qualified Dividend Income and Qualified REIT Dividends	77
Corporate Dividends Received Deduction	77
Tax-Exempt Investors and Excess Inclusion Income	78
Non-U.S. Investments	78
Passive Foreign Investment Companies	79
Reporting	79
Other Taxes	80
Taxation of Non-U.S. Shareholders	80
Miscellaneous Information	81
Counsel	81
Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm	81
Investors' Rights	82
Financial Statements	82
PART II	
Investment Risks and Considerations	II-1
Appendix A – Description of Bond Ratings	A-1
Appendix B – Proxy Voting Policies	B-1

PART I: INFORMATION ABOUT ISHARES SYSTEMATIC ALTERNATIVES ACTIVE ETF

Part I of this Statement of Additional Information ("SAI") sets forth information about iShares Systematic Alternatives Active ETF (the "Fund"), a series of BlackRock ETF Trust (the "Trust"). It includes information about the Trust's Board of Trustees (the "Board"), the advisory and management services provided to and the management fees paid by the Fund and information about other fees applicable to and services provided to the Fund. This Part I of this SAI should be read in conjunction with the Fund's Prospectus and those portions of Part II of this SAI that pertain to the Fund.

General Description of the Fund

The Fund is managed by BlackRock Fund Advisors ("BFA"), an indirect majority-owned subsidiary of BlackRock, Inc. BlackRock International Limited ("BIL" or the "Sub-Adviser"), an affiliate of BFA, serves as the sub-adviser to the Fund.

The Fund offers and issues shares at their net asset value per share ("NAV") only in aggregations of a specified number of shares (each, a "Creation Unit"), generally in exchange for a designated portfolio of securities (including any portion of such securities for which cash may be substituted) (the "Deposit Securities" or "Creation Basket"), together with the deposit of a specified cash payment (the "Cash Component"). Shares of the Fund are listed for trading on The Nasdaq Stock Market LLC (the "Listing Exchange" or "Nasdaq"), a national securities exchange. Shares of the Fund are traded in the secondary market and elsewhere at market prices that may be at, above or below the Fund's NAV. Shares are redeemable by the Fund only in Creation Units by Authorized Participants (as defined in the *Procedures for Creation of Creation Units* section of this SAI), and, generally, in exchange for portfolio securities and a Cash Amount (as defined in the *Redemption of Creation Units* section of this SAI). Creation Units typically are a specified number of shares, generally 80,000 shares or multiples thereof.

The Trust reserves the right to permit or require that creations and redemptions of shares are effected fully or partially in cash and reserves the right to permit or require the substitution of Deposit Securities in lieu of cash. Shares may be issued in advance of receipt of Deposit Securities, subject to various conditions, including a requirement that the Authorized Participant maintain with the Trust collateral as set forth in the handbook for Authorized Participants. The Trust may use such collateral at any time to purchase Deposit Securities. See the *Creation and Redemption of Creation Units* section of this SAI. Transaction fees and other costs associated with creations or redemptions that include a cash portion may be higher than the transaction fees and other costs associated with in-kind creations or redemptions. In all cases, conditions with respect to creations and redemptions of shares and fees will be limited in accordance with the requirements of SEC rules and regulations applicable to management investment companies offering redeemable securities.

Exchange Listing and Trading

A discussion of exchange listing and trading matters associated with an investment in the Fund is contained in the *Shareholder Information* section of the Fund's Prospectus. The discussion below supplements, and should be read in conjunction with, that section of the Prospectus.

Shares of the Fund are listed for trading, and trade throughout the day, on the Listing Exchange and in other secondary markets. Shares of the Fund may also be listed on certain non-U.S. exchanges. There can be no assurance that the requirements of the Listing Exchange necessary to maintain the listing of shares of the Fund will continue to be met. The Listing Exchange may, but is not required to, remove the shares of the Fund from listing if, among other things: (i) the Fund is no longer eligible to operate in reliance on Rule 6c-11 under the 1940 Act; (ii) any of the other listing requirements are not continuously maintained; (iii) following the initial 12-month period beginning upon the commencement of trading of Fund shares, there are fewer than 50 record and/or beneficial owners of shares of the Fund; or (iv) any event shall occur or condition shall exist that, in the opinion of the Listing Exchange, makes further dealings on the Listing Exchange inadvisable. The Listing Exchange will also remove shares of the Fund from listing and trading upon termination of the Fund.

As in the case of other publicly-traded securities, when you buy or sell shares of the Fund through a broker, you may incur a brokerage commission determined by that broker, as well as other charges.

The Trust reserves the right to adjust the share price of the Fund in the future to maintain convenient trading ranges for investors. Any adjustments would be accomplished through stock splits or reverse stock splits, which would have no effect on the net assets of the Fund or an investor's equity interest in the Fund.

Investment Objective and Policies

Please see the Fund's Prospectus for more information about the Fund's investment objective and policies.

Set forth below is a listing of some of the types of investments and investment strategies that the Fund may use, and the risks and considerations associated with those investments and investment strategies. Please see Part II of this SAI for further information on these investments and investment strategies. Information contained in Part II about the risks and considerations associated with investments and/or investment strategies applies only to the extent the Fund makes each type of investment or uses each investment strategy. Also set forth below is a listing of the proxy voting policy and related guidelines applicable to the Fund. Please see the *Proxy Voting Policy* section in this SAI for further information about these policies. A copy of each policy is included in Appendix B. Information that does not apply to the Fund does not form a part of the Fund's SAI and should not be relied on by investors in the Fund.

Only information that is clearly identified as applicable to the Fund is considered to form a part of the Fund's SAI.

Asset-Backed Securities	X
Asset-Based Securities	X
Precious Metal-Related Securities	X
Borrowing and Leverage	X
Cash Management	X
Collateralized Debt Obligations	X
Collateralized Bond Obligations	X
Collateralized Loan Obligations	X

Commercial Paper	X
Commodity-Linked Derivative Instruments and Hybrid Instruments	X
Qualifying Hybrid Instruments	X
Hybrid Instruments Without Principal Protection	X
Limitations on Leverage	X
Counterparty Risk	X
Convertible Securities	X
Corporate Loans	X
Direct Lending	
Credit Linked Securities	X
Debt Securities	X
Floating and Variable Rate Securities	X
Inflation-Indexed Bonds	X
Investment Grade Debt Obligations	X
High Yield Investments (“Junk Bonds”)	X
Mezzanine Investments	X
Pay-in-kind Bonds	X
Supranational Entities	X
Depositary Receipts (ADRs, EDRs and GDRs)	X
Derivatives	X
Hedging	X
Speculation	X
Risk Factors in Derivatives	X
Correlation Risk	X
Counterparty Risk	X
Credit Risk	X
Currency Risk	X
Illiquidity Risk	X
Index Risk	X
Legal Risk	X
Leverage Risk	X
Market Risk	X
Operational Risk	X
Valuation Risk	X
Volatility Risk	X
Futures	X
Swap Agreements	X
Credit Default Swaps and Similar Instruments	X
Interest Rate Swaps, Floors and Caps	X
Total Return Swaps	X

Options	X
Options on Securities and Securities Indices	X
Call Options	X
Put Options	X
Options on Government National Mortgage Association (“GNMA”) Certificates	X
Options on Swaps (“Swaptions”)	X
FLEX Options	X
Foreign Exchange Transactions	X
Spot Transactions and FX Forwards	X
Currency Futures	X
Currency Options	X
Currency Swaps	X
Digital Asset Exposure	X
Distressed Securities	X
Environmental, Social and Governance (“ESG”) Integration	X
Equity Securities	X
Real Estate-Related Securities	X
Securities of Smaller or Emerging Growth Companies	X
Tracking Stocks	
Exchange-Traded Notes (“ETNs”)	X
Foreign Investments	X
Foreign Investment Risks	X
Foreign Market Risk	X
Foreign Economy Risk	X
Currency Risk and Exchange Risk	X
Governmental Supervision and Regulation/Accounting Standards	X
Certain Risks of Holding Fund Assets Outside the United States	X
Publicly Available Information	X
Settlement Risk	X
Sovereign Debt	X
Withholding Tax Reclaims Risk	X
U.S. Economic Trading Partners Risk	X
Funding Agreements	X
Guarantees	X
Illiquid Investments	X
Index Funds	
Cash Flows; Expenses	
Tracking Error Risk	
S&P 500 Index	
Russell Indexes	
MSCI Indexes	

FTSE Indexes	
Bloomberg Indexes	
ICE BofA Indexes	
Indexed and Inverse Securities	X
Inflation Risk	X
Initial Public Offering ("IPO") Risk	X
Investment in Emerging Markets	X
Brady Bonds	X
China Investments Risk	X
Investment in Other Investment Companies	X
Exchange-Traded Funds	X
Issuer Insolvency Risk	
Lease Obligations	X
Life Settlement Investments	
Liquidity Risk Management	X
Market Risks/Recent Market Events	X
Master Limited Partnerships	X
Merger Transaction Risk	
Money Market Obligations of Domestic Banks, Foreign Banks and Foreign Branches of U.S. Banks	X
Money Market Securities	X
Mortgage-Related Securities	X
Mortgage-Backed Securities	X
Collateralized Mortgage Obligations ("CMOs")	X
Adjustable Rate Mortgage Securities	X
CMO Residuals	X
Stripped Mortgage-Backed Securities	X
Tiered Index Bonds	X
TBA Commitments	X
Mortgage Dollar Rolls	X
Net Interest Margin (NIM) Securities	
Municipal Investments	X
Risk Factors and Special Considerations Relating to Municipal Bonds	X
Description of Municipal Bonds	X
General Obligation Bonds	X
Revenue Bonds	X
Private Activity Bonds ("PABs")	X
Moral Obligation Bonds	X
Municipal Notes	X
Municipal Commercial Paper	X
Municipal Lease Obligations	X

Tender Option Bonds	X
Yields	X
Variable Rate Demand Obligations (“VRDOs”)	X
Transactions in Financial Futures Contracts on Municipal Indexes	X
Call Rights	X
Municipal Interest Rate Swap Transactions	X
Insured Municipal Bonds	X
Build America Bonds	X
Tax-Exempt Municipal Investments	X
Operational and Technology Risks	X
Participation Notes	X
Portfolio Turnover Rates	X
Preferred Stock	X
Tax-Exempt Preferred Shares	X
Trust Preferred Securities	X
Proxy Voting Policies	X
Open-End Active and Fixed Income Index Fund Proxy Voting Policy	X
BlackRock Active Investment Stewardship Climate and Decarbonization Stewardship Guidelines	
Index Equity Fund Proxy Voting Policy	
BlackRock Investment Stewardship Climate and Decarbonization Stewardship Guidelines	
Real Estate Investment Trusts (“REITs”)	X
Reference Rate Replacement Risk	X
Repurchase Agreements and Purchase and Sale Contracts	X
Restricted Securities	X
Reverse Repurchase Agreements	X
Rights Offerings and Warrants to Purchase	X
Rule 144A Securities	X
Securities Lending	X
Short Sales	X
Special Purpose Acquisition Companies	
Standby Commitment Agreements	X
Stripped Securities	X
Structured Notes	X
Taxability Risk	X
Temporary Defensive Measures	X
U.S. Government Obligations	X
U.S. Treasury Obligations	X
U.S. Treasury Rolls	X
Utility Industries	X
When-Issued Securities, Delayed Delivery Securities and Forward Commitments	X
Yields and Ratings	X
Zero Coupon Securities	X

Regulation Regarding Derivatives. The Commodity Futures Trading Commission ("CFTC") subjects advisers to registered investment companies to regulation by the CFTC if a fund that is advised by the investment adviser either (i) invests, directly or indirectly, more than a prescribed level of its liquidation value in CFTC-regulated futures, options and swaps ("CFTC Derivatives"), or (ii) markets itself as providing investment exposure to such instruments.

Due to the Fund's potential use of CFTC Derivatives above the prescribed levels, however, the Fund will be considered a "commodity pool" under the Commodity Exchange Act. Accordingly, BFA has registered as a "commodity pool operator" and is subject to CFTC regulation in respect of the Fund.

The Fund's primary vehicle for gaining exposure to the commodities markets is expected to be through investments in iShares Systematic Alternatives Active ETF Cayman, Ltd., a wholly owned subsidiary of the Fund formed in the Cayman Islands (the "Cayman Subsidiary"), which invests primarily in commodities, commodity-related instruments and other derivatives. The Cayman Subsidiary may also hold cash and invest in other instruments, including fixed-income securities, either as investments or to serve as margin or collateral for the Cayman Subsidiary's derivative positions.

Investments in the Cayman Subsidiary

The Fund may invest up to 25% of its total assets in the shares of the Cayman Subsidiary. Investments in the Cayman Subsidiary are expected to provide the Fund with exposure to the commodity markets within the limitations of Subchapter M of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, and Internal Revenue Service ("IRS") revenue rulings, as discussed below. The Cayman Subsidiary is advised by BFA. The Cayman Subsidiary (unlike the Fund) may invest without limitation in commodity-related instruments. However, the Cayman Subsidiary is otherwise subject to the same fundamental, non-fundamental and certain other investment restrictions as the Fund, including the timing and method of the valuation of the Cayman Subsidiary's portfolio investments and shares of the Cayman Subsidiary. The Cayman Subsidiary is managed pursuant to compliance policies and procedures that are the same, in all material respects, as the policies and procedures adopted by the Trust. The Cayman Subsidiary is a company organized under the laws of the Cayman Islands, and is overseen by its own board of directors, which is comprised of Trent Walker, Chief Financial Officer of the Trust, and John M. Perlowski, a Director, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Trust. The Fund is the sole shareholder of the Cayman Subsidiary and shares of the Cayman Subsidiary will not be sold or offered to other investors.

The Cayman Subsidiary invests primarily in commodity-related instruments. Although the Fund may enter into these commodity-related instruments directly, the Fund will likely gain exposure to these commodity-related instruments indirectly by investing in the Cayman Subsidiary. To the extent that BFA believes that these commodity-related instruments provide suitable exposure to the commodities market, the Fund's investments in the Cayman Subsidiary will likely increase. The Cayman Subsidiary may also hold cash and invest in other instruments, including fixed-income securities, either as investments or to serve as margin or collateral for the Cayman Subsidiary's derivative positions.

BFA will manage the assets of the Cayman Subsidiary, but receives no additional compensation for doing so. BFA will also provide certain administrative services for the Cayman Subsidiary, but will receive no additional compensation for doing so. The Cayman Subsidiary will also enter into separate contracts for the provision of advisory, custody, transfer agency and accounting agent services with the same or with affiliates of the same service providers that provide those services to the Fund.

The financial statements of the Cayman Subsidiary will be consolidated with the financial statements in the Annual and Semi-Annual Financial Statements and Additional Information of the Fund. Copies of the Fund's

annual and semi-annual reports and Annual and Semi-Annual Financial Statements and Additional Information are available at no charge upon request as indicated on the back cover of the Prospectus.

The Cayman Subsidiary is not registered under the Investment Company Act, and, unless otherwise noted in the Fund's Prospectus or this SAI, is not subject to all the investor protections of the Investment Company Act. However, the Fund wholly owns and controls the Cayman Subsidiary and the Fund and the Cayman Subsidiary are managed by BFA, making it unlikely that the Cayman Subsidiary will take action contrary to the interests of the Fund and its shareholders. The Board has oversight responsibility for the investment activities of the Fund, including the Fund's investment in the Cayman Subsidiary, and the Fund's role as sole shareholder of the Cayman Subsidiary. Except as noted above, the Cayman Subsidiary will be subject to the same investment restrictions and limitations, and follow the same compliance policies and procedures, as the Fund. The Cayman Subsidiary will be managed pursuant to compliance policies and procedures that are the same, in all material respects, as the policies and procedures adopted by the Trust. In addition, changes in the laws of the United States and/or the Cayman Islands could result in the inability of the Fund and/or the Cayman Subsidiary to operate as described in the Fund's Prospectus and this SAI, and could adversely affect the Fund. For example, the Cayman Islands does not currently impose any income, corporate or capital gains tax, estate duty, inheritance tax, gift tax or withholding tax on the Cayman Subsidiary. If Cayman Islands law changes such that the Cayman Subsidiary must pay Cayman Islands taxes, the Fund's shareholders would likely suffer decreased investment returns.

The Cayman Subsidiary intends to conduct its affairs in a manner such that it will not be subject to U.S. federal income tax. It will, however, be considered a controlled foreign corporation, and the Fund will be required to include as income annually amounts earned by the Cayman Subsidiary during that year, whether or not distributed by the Cayman Subsidiary. Furthermore, the Fund will be subject to the distribution requirement on the Cayman Subsidiary's income.

Proxy Voting Policy

The Board has delegated the voting of proxies for the Fund's securities to BFA pursuant to (i) the Open-End Active and Fixed Income Index Fund Proxy Voting Policy (the "Active Fund Proxy Voting Policy") or (ii) the Index Equity Fund Proxy Voting Policy, as applicable. Please refer to the grid above in this SAI for the policy applicable to the Fund.

With respect to funds covered by the Active Fund Proxy Voting Policy, BFA has adopted the BlackRock Active Investment Stewardship—Global Engagement and Voting Guidelines (the "BAIS Guidelines"). Certain of such funds, as listed within the Active Fund Proxy Voting Policy and as disclosed in the grid above in this SAI, follow supplemental guidelines within the BAIS Guidelines that are applicable to certain climate and decarbonization issues (the "BAIS Climate and Decarbonization Stewardship Guidelines").

With respect to funds covered by the Index Equity Fund Proxy Voting Policy, BFA has adopted the BlackRock Investment Stewardship ("BIS") Global Benchmark Policy, comprised of the Global Principles for Benchmark Policies, regional voting guidelines, and engagement priorities, which are each available upon request. In addition, certain of such funds, as listed within the Index Equity Fund Proxy Voting Policy and as disclosed in the grid above in this SAI, follow supplemental guidelines that are applicable to certain climate and decarbonization issues (the "BIS Climate and Decarbonization Stewardship Guidelines").

If the Fund invests in an underlying fund managed by BlackRock, the Fund will use its proxy voting policy when voting on proxies for the underlying fund while the underlying fund will use its proxy voting

policy when voting proxies on investments the underlying fund holds. Therefore, the Fund may use the Active Fund Proxy Voting Policy while an underlying fund may use the Index Equity Fund Proxy Voting Policy, and the opposite is also true.

Copies of the Active Fund Proxy Voting Policy, Index Equity Fund Proxy Voting Policy, the BAIS Guidelines, the Global Principles for Benchmark Policies and the BIS Climate and Decarbonization Stewardship Guidelines are attached as an appendix to this SAI. Only those guidelines that are applicable to the Fund pursuant to the Active Fund Proxy Voting Policy or the Index Equity Fund Proxy Voting Policy are considered to form a part of the Fund's SAI.

Information on how the Fund voted proxies relating to portfolio securities during the most recent 12-month period ended June 30 is available without charge, (i) at www.blackrock.com/proxyrecords and (ii) on the Commission's website at http://www.sec.gov.

Portfolio Holdings Information

On each Business Day (as defined in the *Creation and Redemption of Creation Units* section of this SAI), prior to the opening of regular trading on the Fund's primary listing exchange, the Fund discloses on its website (www.blackrock.com) certain information relating to the portfolio holdings that will form the basis of the Fund's next net asset value per share calculation.

In addition, certain information may also be made available to certain parties:

- **Communications of Data Files:** The Fund may make available through the facilities of the National Securities Clearing Corporation ("NSCC") or through posting on the www.blackrock.com, prior to the opening of trading on each business day, a list of the Fund's holdings (generally pro-rata) that Authorized Participants could deliver to the Fund to settle purchases of the Fund (*i.e.,* Deposit Securities) or that Authorized Participants would receive from the Fund to settle redemptions of the Fund (*i.e.,* Fund Securities (as defined below)). These files are known as the Portfolio Composition File and the Fund Data File (collectively, "Files"). The Files are applicable for the next trading day and are provided to the NSCC and/or posted on www.blackrock.com after the close of markets in the U.S.
- **Communications with Authorized Participants, Liquidity Providers and Certain Other Third Parties:** Certain employees of BlackRock, Inc. ("BlackRock") are responsible for interacting with Authorized Participants and liquidity providers with respect to discussing custom basket proposals as described in the *Custom Baskets* section of this SAI. As part of these discussions, these employees may discuss with an Authorized Participant or liquidity provider the securities the Fund is willing to accept for a creation, and securities that the Fund will provide on a redemption.

  BlackRock employees may also discuss portfolio holdings-related information with broker/dealers, in connection with settling the Fund's transactions, and securities lending borrowers in connection with loan transactions, each as may be necessary to conduct business in the ordinary course in a manner consistent with the disclosure in the Fund's current registration statement.
- **Communications with Listing Exchanges:** From time to time, employees of BlackRock may discuss portfolio holdings information with the applicable primary listing exchange for the Fund as needed to meet the exchange listing standards.
- **Communications with Other Portfolio Managers:** Certain information may be provided to employees of BlackRock who manage funds that invest a significant percentage of their assets in shares of an underlying fund as necessary to manage the fund's investment objective and strategy.

- **Communication of Other Information:** Certain explanatory information regarding the Files is released to Authorized Participants and liquidity providers on a daily basis, but is only done so after the Files are posted to www.blackrock.com.
- **Third-Party Service Providers:** Certain portfolio holdings information may be disclosed to Fund Trustees and their counsel, outside counsel for the Fund, auditors and to certain third-party service providers (i.e., fund administrator, custodian, proxy voting service) for which a non-disclosure, confidentiality agreement or other obligation is in place with such service providers, as may be necessary to conduct business in the ordinary course in a manner consistent with applicable policies, agreements with the Fund, the terms of the current registration statement and federal securities laws and regulations thereunder.
- **Liquidity Metrics:** "Liquidity Metrics," which seek to ascertain the Fund's liquidity profile under BlackRock's global liquidity risk methodology, include but are not limited to: (a) disclosure regarding the number of days needed to liquidate a portfolio or the portfolio's underlying investments; and (b) the percentage of the Fund's NAV invested in a particular liquidity tier under BlackRock's global liquidity risk methodology. The dissemination of position-level liquidity metrics data and any non-public regulatory data pursuant to Rule 22e-4 under the 1940 Act (including SEC liquidity tiering) is not permitted unless pre-approved. Disclosure of portfolio-level liquidity metrics prior to 60 calendar days after calendar quarter-end requires a non-disclosure or confidentiality agreement and approval of the Trust's Chief Compliance Officer. Portfolio-level liquidity metrics disclosure subsequent to 60 calendar days after calendar quarter-end requires the approval of portfolio management and must be disclosed to all parties requesting the information if disclosed to any party.

The Trust's Chief Compliance Officer or his delegate may authorize disclosure of portfolio holdings information pursuant to the above policy and procedures, subject to restrictions on selective disclosure imposed by applicable law. The Board reviews the policy and procedures for disclosure of portfolio holdings information at least annually.

Investment Policies

The Board has adopted as fundamental policies the following numbered investment policies, which cannot be changed without the approval of the holders of a majority of the Fund's outstanding voting securities. A vote of a majority of the outstanding voting securities of the Fund is defined in the Investment Company Act as the lesser of (i) 67% or more of the voting securities present at a shareholder meeting, if the holders of more than 50% of the outstanding voting securities of the Fund are present or represented by proxy, or (ii) more than 50% of the outstanding voting securities of the Fund. The Fund has also adopted certain non-fundamental investment policies, including its investment objective. Non-fundamental investment policies may be changed by the Board without shareholder approval. Therefore, the Fund may change its investment objective without shareholder approval.

Fundamental Investment Policies

The Fund may not:

1. Concentrate its investments in a particular industry, as that term is used in the Investment Company Act.
2. Borrow money, except as permitted under the Investment Company Act.
3. Issue senior securities to the extent such issuance would violate the Investment Company Act.

4. Purchase or hold real estate, except the Fund may purchase and hold securities or other instruments that are secured by, or linked to, real estate or interests therein, securities of real estate investment trusts ("REITs"), mortgage-related securities and securities of issuers engaged in the real estate business, and the Fund may purchase and hold real estate as a result of the ownership of securities or other instruments.
5. Underwrite securities issued by others, except to the extent that the sale of portfolio securities by the Fund may be deemed to be an underwriting or as otherwise permitted by applicable law.
6. Purchase or sell commodities or commodity contracts, except as permitted by the Investment Company Act.
7. Make loans to the extent prohibited by the Investment Company Act.
8. Make any investment inconsistent with the Fund's classification as a diversified company under the Investment Company Act.

Notations Regarding the Fund's Fundamental Investment Policies

The following notations are not considered to be part of the Fund's fundamental investment policies and are subject to change without shareholder approval.

With respect to the fundamental policy relating to concentration set forth in (1) above, the Investment Company Act does not define what constitutes "concentration" in an industry. The SEC staff has taken the position that investment of 25% or more of a fund's total assets in one or more issuers conducting their principal activities in the same industry or group of industries constitutes concentration. It is possible that interpretations of concentration could change in the future. The policy in (1) above will be interpreted to refer to concentration as that term may be interpreted from time to time. The policy also will be interpreted to permit investment without limit in the following: securities of the U.S. government and its agencies or instrumentalities; securities of state, territory, possession or municipal governments and their authorities, agencies, instrumentalities or political subdivisions; and repurchase agreements collateralized by any such obligations. Accordingly, issuers of the foregoing securities will not be considered to be members of any industry. There also will be no limit on investment in issuers domiciled in a single jurisdiction or country. Finance companies will be considered to be in the industries of their parents if their activities are primarily related to financing the activities of the parents. Each foreign government will be considered to be a member of a separate industry. With respect to the Fund's industry classifications, the Fund currently utilizes any one or more of the industry sub-classifications used by one or more widely recognized market indexes or rating group indexes, and/or as defined by Fund management. The policy also will be interpreted to give broad authority to the Fund as to how to classify issuers within or among industries.

With respect to the fundamental policy relating to borrowing money set forth in (2) above, the Investment Company Act permits the Fund to borrow money in amounts of up to one-third of the Fund's total assets from banks for any purpose, and to borrow up to 5% of the Fund's total assets from banks or other lenders for temporary purposes. (The Fund's total assets include the amounts being borrowed.) To limit the risks attendant to borrowing, the Investment Company Act requires the Fund to maintain at all times an "asset coverage" of at least 300% of the amount of its borrowings. Asset coverage means the ratio that the value of the Fund's total assets (including amounts borrowed), minus liabilities other than borrowings, bears to the aggregate amount of all borrowings. Borrowing money to increase portfolio holdings is known as "leveraging." Certain trading practices and investments, such as reverse repurchase agreements, may be considered to be borrowings or involve leverage and thus are subject to the Investment Company Act restrictions. In accordance with Rule 18f-4 under the Investment Company Act, when the Fund engages in reverse repurchase agreements and similar financing transactions, the Fund may either (i) maintain asset coverage of at least 300% with respect to such transactions and any other

borrowings in the aggregate, or (ii) treat such transactions as "derivatives transactions" and comply with Rule 18f-4 with respect to such transactions.

Short-term credits necessary for the settlement of securities transactions and arrangements with respect to securities lending will not be considered to be borrowings under the policy. Practices and investments that may involve leverage but are not considered to be borrowings are not subject to the policy.

With respect to the fundamental policy relating to underwriting set forth in (5) above, the Investment Company Act does not prohibit the Fund from engaging in the underwriting business or from underwriting the securities of other issuers; in fact, in the case of diversified funds, the Investment Company Act permits the Fund to have underwriting commitments of up to 25% of its assets under certain circumstances. Those circumstances currently are that the amount of the Fund's underwriting commitments, when added to the value of the Fund's investments in issuers where the Fund owns more than 10% of the outstanding voting securities of those issuers, cannot exceed the 25% cap. A fund engaging in transactions involving the acquisition or disposition of portfolio securities may be considered to be an underwriter under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the "1933 Act"). Although it is not believed that the application of the 1933 Act provisions described above would cause the Fund to be engaged in the business of underwriting, the policy in (5) above will be interpreted not to prevent the Fund from engaging in transactions involving the acquisition or disposition of portfolio securities, regardless of whether the Fund may be considered to be an underwriter under the 1933 Act or is otherwise engaged in the underwriting business to the extent permitted by applicable law.

With respect to the fundamental policy relating to lending set forth in (7) above, the Investment Company Act does not prohibit the Fund from making loans (including lending its securities); however, SEC staff interpretations currently prohibit funds from lending more than one-third of their total assets (including lending its securities), except through the purchase of debt obligations or the use of repurchase agreements. In addition, collateral arrangements with respect to options, forward currency and futures transactions and other derivative instruments (as applicable), as well as delays in the settlement of securities transactions, will not be considered loans.

The Fund is currently classified as a diversified fund under the Investment Company Act. This means that the Fund may not purchase securities of an issuer (other than (i) obligations issued or guaranteed by the U.S. Government, its agencies or instrumentalities and (ii) securities of other investment companies) if, with respect to 75% of its total assets, (a) more than 5% of the Fund's total assets would be invested in securities of that issuer or (b) the Fund would hold more than 10% of the outstanding voting securities of that issuer. With respect to the remaining 25% of its total assets, the Fund can invest more than 5% of its assets in one issuer. Under the Investment Company Act, the Fund cannot change its classification from diversified to non-diversified without shareholder approval.

Non-Fundamental Investment Policies

Under its non-fundamental investment policies, which may be changed by the Board without shareholder approval, the Fund may not:

a. Purchase securities of other investment companies, except to the extent permitted by the Investment Company Act. As a matter of policy, however, the Fund will not purchase shares of any registered open-end investment company or registered unit investment trust, in reliance on Section 12(d)(1)(F) or (G) (the "fund of funds" provisions) of the Investment Company Act, at any time the Fund has knowledge that its shares are purchased by another investment company investor in reliance on the provisions of subparagraph (G) of Section 12(d)(1).

b. Make short sales of securities or maintain a short position, except to the extent permitted by the Fund's Prospectus and SAI, as amended from time to time, and applicable law.

Unless otherwise indicated or with respect to policies adopted pursuant to Rule 35d-1 under the Investment Company Act, all limitations under the Fund's fundamental or non-fundamental investment policies apply only at the time that a transaction is undertaken. Any change in the percentage of the Fund's assets invested in certain securities or other instruments resulting from market fluctuations or other changes in the Fund's total assets will not require the Fund to dispose of an investment until BFA determines that it is practicable to sell or close out the investment without undue market or tax consequences.

Continuous Offering

The method by which Creation Units are created and traded may raise certain issues under applicable securities laws. Because new Creation Units are issued and sold by the Fund on an ongoing basis, at any point a "distribution," as such term is used in the 1933 Act, may occur. Broker-dealers and other persons are cautioned that some activities on their part may, depending on the circumstances, result in their being deemed participants in a distribution in a manner that could render them statutory underwriters and subject them to the prospectus delivery requirement and liability provisions of the 1933 Act.

For example, a broker-dealer firm or its client may be deemed a statutory underwriter if it takes Creation Units after placing an order with the Distributor, breaks them down into constituent shares and sells such shares directly to customers or if it chooses to couple the creation of new shares with an active selling effort involving solicitation of secondary market demand for shares. A determination of whether one is an underwriter for purposes of the 1933 Act must take into account all of the facts and circumstances pertaining to the activities of the broker-dealer or its client in the particular case and the examples mentioned above should not be considered a complete description of all the activities that could lead to a categorization as an underwriter.

Broker-dealer firms should also note that dealers who are not "underwriters" but are effecting transactions in shares, whether or not participating in the distribution of shares, generally are required to deliver a prospectus. This is because the prospectus delivery exemption in Section 4(a)(3) of the 1933 Act is not available in respect of such transactions as a result of Section 24(d) of the 1940 Act. Firms that incur a prospectus delivery obligation with respect to shares of the Fund are reminded that, pursuant to Rule 153 under the 1933 Act, a prospectus delivery obligation under Section 5(b)(2) of the 1933 Act owed to an exchange member in connection with a sale on the Listing Exchange generally is satisfied by the fact that the prospectus is available at the Listing Exchange upon request. The prospectus delivery mechanism provided in Rule 153 is available only with respect to transactions on an exchange.

Management

Trustees and Officers. The Board of the Trust consists of fifteen Trustees, thirteen of whom are not "interested persons" of the Trust as defined in the 1940 Act (the "Independent Trustees"). The registered investment companies advised by BFA or its affiliates (the "BlackRock-advised Funds") are organized into the BlackRock Multi-Asset Complex, the BlackRock Fixed-Income Complex, and the iShares Complex (each, a "BlackRock Fund Complex"). The Trust is included in the BlackRock Fund Complex referred to as the BlackRock Multi-Asset Complex. The Trustees also oversee as board

members the operations of the other open-end registered investment companies included in the BlackRock Multi-Asset Complex.

Biographical Information

Interested Trustees

Name and Year of Birth[1,2]	Position(s) Held (Length of Service)	Principal Occupation(s) During Past Five Years	Number of BlackRock-Advised Registered Investment Companies ("RICs") Consisting of Investment Portfolios ("Portfolios") Overseen	Public Company and Other Investment Company Directorships Held During Past Five Years
Robert Fairbairn 1965	Trustee (Since 2019)	Vice Chairman of BlackRock, Inc. since 2019; Member of BlackRock's Global Operating Committee; Co-Chair of BlackRock's Human Capital Committee; Senior Managing Director of BlackRock, Inc. from 2010 to 2019; oversaw BlackRock's Strategic Partner Program and Strategic Product Management Group from 2012 to 2019; Member of the Board of Managers of BlackRock Investments, LLC from 2011 to 2018; Global Head of BlackRock's Retail and iShares® businesses from 2012 to 2016.	76 RICs consisting of 254 Portfolios	None
John M. Perlowski[3] 1964	Trustee, President and Chief Executive Officer (Since 2019)	Senior Managing Director of BlackRock, Inc. since 2026; Managing Director of BlackRock, Inc. from 2009 to 2025; Member of BlackRock's Global Executive Committee since 2025; Head of BlackRock Global Business Operations Services since 2009; Advisory Director of Family Resource Network (charitable foundation) since 2009;	78 RICs consisting of 256 Portfolios	None

1 The address of each Trustee is c/o BlackRock, Inc., 50 Hudson Yards, New York, New York 10001.

2 Mr. Fairbairn and Mr. Perlowski are both "interested persons," as defined in the 1940 Act, of the Trust based on their positions with BlackRock, Inc. and its affiliates. Mr. Fairbairn and Mr. Perlowski are also board members of the BlackRock Fixed-Income Complex.

3 Mr. Perlowski is also a trustee of the BlackRock HPS Credit Strategies Fund and BlackRock Private Investments Fund.

Independent Trustees

Name and Year of Birth[1,2]	Position(s) Held (Length of Service)	Principal Occupation(s) During Past Five Years	Number of BlackRock-Advised Registered Investment Companies ("RICs") Consisting of Investment Portfolios ("Portfolios") Overseen	Public Company and Other Investment Company Directorships Held During Past Five Years
Mark Stalnecker 1951	Chair of the Board and Trustee (Since 2019)	Chief Investment Officer, University of Delaware from 1999 to 2013; Trustee and Chair of the Finance and Investment Committees, Winterthur Museum and Country Estate from 2005 to 2016; Member of the Investment Committee, Delaware Public Employees' Retirement System from 2002 to 2024; Member of the Investment Committee, Christiana Care Health System from 2009 to 2017; Member of the Investment Committee, Delaware Community Foundation from 2013 to 2014; Director and Chair of the Audit Committee, SEI Private Trust Co. from 2001 to 2014.	26 RICs consisting of 171 Portfolios	None
Christopher J. Ailman 1958	Trustee (Since 2024)	Principal, Ailman Advisers, since 2024; Chief Investment Officer, California State Teachers Retirement System (CalSTRS) from 2000 to 2024.	26 RICs consisting of 171 Portfolios	None

Name and Year of Birth[1,2]	Position(s) Held (Length of Service)	Principal Occupation(s) During Past Five Years	Number of BlackRock-Advised Registered Investment Companies ("RICs") Consisting of Investment Portfolios ("Portfolios") Overseen	Public Company and Other Investment Company Directorships Held During Past Five Years
Susan J. Carter 1956	Trustee (Since 2019)	Trustee, Financial Accounting Foundation from 2017 to 2021; Advisory Board Member, Center for Private Equity and Entrepreneurship at Tuck School of Business from 1997 to 2021; Director, Pacific Pension Institute from 2014 to 2018; Senior Advisor, Commonfund Capital, Inc. ("CCI") (investment adviser) in 2015; Chief Executive Officer, CCI from 2013 to 2014; President & Chief Executive Officer, CCI from 1997 to 2013; Advisory Board Member, Girls Who Invest from 2015 to 2018 and Board Member thereof from 2018 to 2022; Advisory Board Member, Bridges Fund Management from 2016 to 2018; Practitioner Advisory Board Member, Private Capital Research Institute ("PCRI") from 2017 to 2024; Lecturer in the Practice of Management, Yale School of Management from 2019 to 2025; Advisor to Finance Committee, Altman Foundation from 2020 to 2024; Investment Committee Member, Tostan since 2021; Member of the President's Counsel, Commonfund since 2023.	26 RICs consisting of 171 Portfolios	None

Name and Year of Birth[1,2]	Position(s) Held (Length of Service)	Principal Occupation(s) During Past Five Years	Number of BlackRock-Advised Registered Investment Companies ("RICs") Consisting of Investment Portfolios ("Portfolios") Overseen	Public Company and Other Investment Company Directorships Held During Past Five Years
Collette Chilton 1958	Trustee (Since 2019)	Trustee, UC Berkeley Foundation Board since 2024; Committee member, Oxford University Endowment Management since 2024; Senior advisor, Insignia since 2024; Chief Investment Officer, Williams College from 2006 to 2023; Chief Investment Officer, Lucent Asset Management Corporation from 1998 to 2006; Director, Boys and Girls Club of Boston since 2017; Director, B1 Capital since 2018.	26 RICs consisting of 171 Portfolios	None
Neil A. Cotty 1954	Trustee (Since 2019)	Bank of America Corporation from 1996 to 2015, serving in various senior finance leadership roles, including Chief Accounting Officer from 2009 to 2015, Chief Financial Officer of Global Banking, Markets and Wealth Management from 2008 to 2009, Chief Accounting Officer from 2004 to 2008, Chief Financial Officer of Consumer Bank from 2003 to 2004, Chief Financial Officer of Global Corporate Investment Bank from 1999 to 2002.	26 RICs consisting of 171 Portfolios	None
Jeffrey Jarczyk[3] 1964	Trustee (Since 2026)	Director, The Friends of the Public Garden since 2021; Executive Vice President, Chief Auditor, Fidelity Investments from 2016 to 2021; Executive Vice President, Chief Accounting Officer, Fidelity Investments from 2007 to 2016.	26 RICs consisting of 171 Portfolios	None

Name and Year of Birth[1,2]	Position(s) Held (Length of Service)	Principal Occupation(s) During Past Five Years	Number of BlackRock-Advised Registered Investment Companies ("RICs") Consisting of Investment Portfolios ("Portfolios") Overseen	Public Company and Other Investment Company Directorships Held During Past Five Years
Henry R. Keizer 1956	Trustee (Since 2019)	Director, Park Indemnity Ltd. (captive insurer) from 2010 to 2022.	26 RICs consisting of 171 Portfolios	GrafTech International Ltd. (materials manufacturing); Sealed Air Corp. (packaging); Hertz Global Holdings (car rental) from 2015 to 2021.
Cynthia A. Montgomery 1952	Trustee (Since 2019)	Professor, Harvard Business School since 1989.	26 RICs consisting of 171 Portfolios	None
Donald C. Opatrny 1952	Trustee (Since 2019)	Chair of the Board of Phoenix Art Museum since 2022 and Trustee thereof since 2018; Chair of the Investment Committee of The Arizona Community Foundation since 2022 and Trustee thereof since 2020; Director, Athena Capital Advisors LLC (investment management firm) from 2013 to 2020; Trustee, Vice Chair, Member of the Executive Committee and Chair of the Investment Committee, Cornell University from 2004 to 2019; Member of Affordable Housing Supply Board of Jackson, Wyoming from 2017 to 2022; Member, Investment Funds Committee, State of Wyoming from 2017 to 2023; Member of the Investment Committee, Mellon Foundation from 2009 to 2015; President, Trustee and Member of the Investment Committee, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum from 2007 to 2014; Trustee and Chair of the Investment Committee, Community Foundation of Jackson Hole since 2014.	26 RICs consisting of 171 Portfolios	None

Name and Year of Birth[1,2]	Position(s) Held (Length of Service)	Principal Occupation(s) During Past Five Years	Number of BlackRock-Advised Registered Investment Companies ("RICs") Consisting of Investment Portfolios ("Portfolios") Overseen	Public Company and Other Investment Company Directorships Held During Past Five Years
Lori Richards 1960	Trustee (Since 2024)	President and Trustee, SEC Historical Society since 2018; Trustee, Garrett College Foundation since 2019; Member, Vice-Chair or Chair of FINRA National Adjudicatory Council from 2019 to 2022; Director, PharmaCann, Inc. from 2021 to 2024; Director, Wahed Invest from 2022 to 2024.	26 RICs consisting of 171 Portfolios	None
Marc D. Stern[3] 1962	Trustee (Since 2026)	Chief Executive Officer and Director, Bessemer Trust from 2013 to 2026.	26 RICs consisting of 171 Portfolios	None
Kenneth L. Urish 1951	Trustee (Since 2019)	Managing Partner, Urish Popeck & Co., LLC (certified public accountants and consultants) since 1976; Past-Chairman of the Professional Ethics Committee of the Pennsylvania Institute of Certified Public Accountants and Committee Member thereof since 2007; Member of External Advisory Board, The Pennsylvania State University Accounting Department since 2001, Emeritus since 2022; Principal, UP Strategic Wealth Investment Advisors, LLC since 2013; Trustee, The Holy Family Institute from 2001 to 2010; President and Trustee, Pittsburgh Catholic Publishing Associates from 2003 to 2008; Director, Inter-Tel from 2006 to 2007; Member, Advisory Board, ESG Competent Boards since 2020.	26 RICs consisting of 171 Portfolios	None

Name and Year of Birth[1,2]	Position(s) Held (Length of Service)	Principal Occupation(s) During Past Five Years	Number of BlackRock-Advised Registered Investment Companies ("RICs") Consisting of Investment Portfolios ("Portfolios") Overseen	Public Company and Other Investment Company Directorships Held During Past Five Years
Claire A. Walton 1957	Trustee (Since 2019)	Director/Treasurer, Reading Community Trust since 2024; Advisory Board Member, Grossman School of Business at the University of Vermont since 2023; Advisory Board Member, Scientific Financial Systems from 2022 to 2025; General Partner of Neon Liberty Capital Management, LLC from 2003 to 2023; Chief Operating Officer and Chief Financial Officer of Liberty Square Asset Management, LP / Steel Partners Japan Asset Management, LP from 1998 to 2015; Director, Boston Hedge Fund Group from 2009 to 2018; Director, Massachusetts Council on Economic Education from 2013 to 2015.	26 RICs consisting of 171 Portfolios	None

1 The address of each Trustee is c/o BlackRock, Inc., 50 Hudson Yards, New York, New York 10001.

2 Independent Trustees serve until their resignation, retirement, removal or death, or until December 31 of the year in which they turn 75. The Board may determine to extend the terms of Independent Trustees on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate.

3 Mr. Jarczyk and Mr. Stern were each appointed as Trustees of the Trust effective July 1, 2026. Previously, each served as a consultant to the Independent Trustees from April 1, 2026 to July 1, 2026.

Officers Who Are Not Trustees

Name and Year of Birth[1,2]	Position(s) Held (Length of Service)	Principal Occupation(s) During Past Five Years
Jennifer McGovern 1977	Vice President (Since 2019)	Managing Director of BlackRock, Inc. since 2016.
Trent Walker 1974	Chief Financial Officer (Since 2021)	Managing Director of BlackRock, Inc. since 2019.
Jay M. Fife 1970	Treasurer (Since 2019)	Managing Director of BlackRock, Inc. since 2007.

Name and Year of Birth[1,2]	Position(s) Held (Length of Service)	Principal Occupation(s) During Past Five Years
Charles Park[3] 1967	Chief Compliance Officer (Since 2026; and from 2014-2023)	Managing Director of BlackRock, Inc. (since 2006); Chief Compliance Officer of BlackRock Advisors, LLC (since 2014) and BlackRock Fund Advisors (since 2006); Chief Compliance Officer of the iShares Complex (since 2026 and 2006-2023); Chief Compliance Officer of the BlackRock Multi-Asset Complex and the BlackRock Fixed-Income Complex (since 2026 and 2014-2023).
Lisa Belle 1968	Anti-Money Laundering Compliance Officer (Since 2019)	Managing Director of BlackRock, Inc. since 2019.
Janey Ahn 1975	Secretary (Since 2019)	Managing Director of BlackRock, Inc. since 2018.

1 The address of each Officer is c/o BlackRock, Inc., 50 Hudson Yards, New York, New York 10001.

2 Officers of the Trust serve at the pleasure of the Board.

3 Effective August 1, 2026, Charles Park succeeded Aaron Wasserman as Chief Compliance Officer.

Each Trustee's ability to perform his or her duties effectively is evidenced by his or her educational background or professional training; business, consulting, public service or academic positions; experience from service as a board member of the Trust and the other funds in the BlackRock Fund Complexes (and any predecessor funds), other investment funds, public companies, non-profit entities or other organizations; ongoing commitment to and participation in Board and Board committee (each, a "Committee") meetings, as well as his or her leadership of standing and ad hoc committees throughout the years; or other relevant life experiences.

Set forth below is a discussion of some of the experiences, qualifications and skills of each of the Trustees that support the conclusion that each Trustee should serve on the Board.

Interested Trustees

Robert Fairbairn has more than 25 years of experience with BlackRock, Inc. and over 30 years of experience in finance and asset management. In particular, Mr. Fairbairn's positions as Vice Chairman of BlackRock, Inc., Member of BlackRock's Global Operating Committee and Co-Chair of BlackRock's Human Capital Committee provide the Board with a wealth of practical business knowledge and leadership. In addition, Mr. Fairbairn has global investment management and oversight experience through his former positions as Member of BlackRock's Global Executive Committee, Global Head of BlackRock's Retail and iShares® businesses, Head of BlackRock's Global Client Group, Chairman of BlackRock's international businesses and his previous oversight over BlackRock's Strategic Partner Program and Strategic Product Management Group. Mr. Fairbairn also serves as a board member for the funds in the BlackRock Fixed-Income Complex.

John M. Perlowski's experience as Senior Managing Director of BlackRock, Inc. since 2026, Managing Director of BlackRock, Inc. from 2009 to 2025, as the Head of BlackRock Global Business Operations Services since 2009, and as President and Chief Executive Officer of the BlackRock-advised Funds provides him with a strong understanding of the BlackRock-advised Funds, their operations, and the business and regulatory issues facing the BlackRock-advised Funds. Mr. Perlowski's prior position as Managing Director and Chief Operating Officer of the Global Product Group at Goldman Sachs Asset Management, and his former service as Treasurer and Senior Vice President of the Goldman Sachs

Mutual Funds and as Director of the Goldman Sachs Offshore Funds provides the Board with the benefit of his experience with the management practices of other financial companies. Mr. Perlowski also serves as a board member for the funds in the BlackRock Fixed-Income Complex. Mr. Perlowski is a member of BlackRock's Global Executive Committee.

Independent Trustees

Christopher Ailman has more than 30 years of experience in the financial services industry, including most recently serving as Chief Investment Officer of the California State Teachers Retirement System (CalSTRS) from 2000 to June 2024 where he led its investment program. Mr. Ailman currently is a principal at Ailman Advisers. In addition, he has held various roles in the industry, including as member and chair of the asset owner committee of the Kroner Center for Financial Research, chairman of the North American Chapter of the 300 Club of Global CIOs, and co-chair of the Milken Global Capital Markets Advisory Council. These positions have provided Mr. Ailman with considerable investment expertise across asset classes and strategies, and insight and perspective on the markets and the economy. In addition, Mr. Ailman serves as a member of the Governance and Nominating Committee and the Performance Oversight Committee.

Susan J. Carter has over 35 years of experience in investment management. She has served as President & Chief Executive Officer of CCI, a registered investment adviser focused on non-profit investors, from 1997 to 2013, Chief Executive Officer of CCI from 2013 to 2014 and Senior Advisor to CCI in 2015. Ms. Carter also served as director of the Pacific Pension Institute from 2014 to 2018, trustee to the Financial Accounting Foundation from 2017 to 2021, Advisory Board Member for the Center for Private Equity and Entrepreneurship at Tuck School of Business from 1997 to 2021, Advisory Board Member for Bridges Fund Management from 2016 to 2018, Advisory Board Member for Girls Who Invest from 2015 to 2018 and Board Member thereof from 2018 to 2022, and Practitioner Advisory Board Member for PCRI from 2017 to 2024. She currently serves as Member of the President's Counsel for Commonfund. These positions have provided her with insight and perspective on the markets and the economy.

Collette Chilton has over 20 years of experience in investment management. She held the position of Chief Investment Officer of Williams College from October 2006 to June 2023. Prior to that she was President and Chief Investment Officer of Lucent Asset Management Corporation, where she oversaw approximately $40 billion in pension and retirement savings assets for the company. These positions have provided her with insight and perspective on the markets and the economy.

Neil A. Cotty has more than 30 years of experience in the financial services industry, including 19 years at Bank of America Corporation and its affiliates, where he served, at different times, as the Chief Financial Officer of various businesses including Investment Banking, Global Markets, Wealth Management and Consumer and also served ten years as the Chief Accounting Officer for Bank of America Corporation. Mr. Cotty has been determined by the Audit Committee to be an audit committee financial expert, as such term is defined in the applicable Commission rules.

Jeffrey Jarczyk is a CPA and has more than 30 years of experience in the financial services industry, including over 19 years at Fidelity Investments, where he served, at different times, as the Chief Auditor and the Chief Accounting Officer of Fidelity Investments' parent company, FMR LLC. Prior to working at Fidelity, Mr. Jarczyk was a partner at Deloitte and Arthur Andersen for approximately seventeen years. These positions have allowed him to work extensively with audit and risk committees and company executives helping to identify, manage and mitigate risks for financial services companies. Mr. Jarczyk also served as consultant to the Independent Trustees prior to becoming an Independent Trustee.

Henry R. Keizer brings over 40 years of executive, financial, operational, strategic and global expertise gained through his 35 year career at KPMG, a global professional services organization and by his service as a director to both publicly and privately held organizations. He has extensive experience with issues facing complex, global companies and expertise in financial reporting, accounting, auditing, risk management, and regulatory affairs for such companies. Mr. Keizer's experience also includes service as an audit committee chair to both publicly and privately held organizations across numerous industries including professional services, property and casualty reinsurance, insurance, diversified financial services, banking, direct to consumer, business to business and technology. Mr. Keizer is a certified public accountant and also served on the board of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. Mr. Keizer has been determined by the Audit Committee to be an audit committee financial expert, as such term is defined in the applicable Commission rules.

Cynthia A. Montgomery has served for over 20 years on the boards of registered investment companies, most recently as a member of the boards of certain BlackRock-advised Funds and predecessor funds, including the legacy Merrill Lynch Investment Managers, L.P. ("MLIM") funds. The Board benefits from Ms. Montgomery's more than 20 years of academic experience as a professor at Harvard Business School where she taught courses on corporate strategy and corporate governance. Ms. Montgomery also has business management and corporate governance experience through her service on the corporate boards of a variety of public companies. She has also authored numerous articles and books on these topics.

Donald C. Opatrny has more than 40 years of business, oversight and executive experience, including through his service as president, director and investment committee chair for academic and not-for-profit organizations, and his experience as a partner, managing director and advisory director at Goldman Sachs for 32 years. He also has investment management experience as a board member of Athena Capital Advisors LLC.

Lori Richards has more than 30 years of experience in the financial services industry, most notably as the first Director of the Office of Compliance Inspections and Examinations ("OCIE") of the Securities and Exchange Commission ("SEC") from 1995 to 2009. During 14 years as the Director of OCIE, she led the SEC's nationwide examination oversight program for advisers, mutual funds, hedge funds, broker-dealers, stock exchanges, and other industry firms. Prior to that, from 1985 to 1995, she held various roles at the SEC, including Associate Director for Enforcement for the SEC's Pacific Regional Office and executive assistant and senior advisor to then SEC Chairman Arthur Levitt. More recently, Ms. Richards served as Chief Compliance Officer of the Asset and Wealth Management global lines of business at JPMorgan Chase & Co. from 2013 to 2018 where she led its global compliance program, advised business leaders on compliance issues, oversaw risk assessment, monitoring, testing and training, and maintained relationships with regulators. In addition, Ms. Richards served as a member of the National Adjudicatory Council of the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) from 2019 to 2022 and held the chair and vice chair posts during her tenure. Prior thereto, from 2010 to 2013, she was a Principal at PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP ("PwC") and co-leader of its Asset Management Regulatory group. At PwC, she assisted a broad range of financial services clients in designing and implementing risk management and compliance programs, and preparing for new regulatory expectations. These positions have provided her with insight and perspective on the markets and the economy, as well as asset management regulation and compliance. In addition, Ms. Richards serves as a member of the Audit Committee and the Compliance Committee.

Mark Stalnecker has gained a wealth of experience in investing and asset management from his over 13 years of service as the Chief Investment Officer of the University of Delaware as well as from his various positions with First Union Corporation, including Senior Vice President and State Investment Director of First Investment Advisors. The Board benefits from his experience and perspective as the Chief Investment Officer of a university endowment and from the oversight experience he gained from service on various private and non-profit boards.

Marc D. Stern has more than 30 years of experience in investing and asset management. Mr. Stern served as the Chief Executive Officer at Bessemer Trust, a wealth management business, for 13 years. During his tenure at Bessemer Trust, Mr. Stern served on the firm's board of directors, chaired the board's trust and investment committee, and led the firm's executive committee. He also served as Bessemer's Chief Investment Officer for 8 years, where he was Chair of the Investment Policy and Strategy Committee with responsibility for overall asset allocation and investment strategy. Mr. Stern also served as Chair of the Private Clients Investment group at AllianceBernstein. These positions provide Mr. Stern with insight and perspective into investment management, the economy, and fiduciary governance. Mr. Stern also served as consultant to the Independent Trustees prior to becoming an Independent Trustee.

Kenneth L. Urish has served for over 15 years on the boards of registered investment companies, most recently as a member of the boards of certain BlackRock-advised Funds and predecessor funds, including the legacy BlackRock funds. He has over 30 years of experience in public accounting. Mr. Urish has served as a managing member of an accounting and consulting firm. Mr. Urish has been determined by the Audit Committee to be an audit committee financial expert, as such term is defined in the applicable Commission rules.

Claire A. Walton has over 25 years of experience in investment management. She has served as the Chief Operating Officer and Chief Financial Officer of Liberty Square Asset Management, LP/Steel Partners Japan Asset Management, LP from 1998 to 2015, an investment manager that specialized in long/short non-U.S. equity investments, and was an owner and General Partner of Neon Liberty Capital Management, LLC from 2003 to 2023, a firm focusing on long/short equities in global emerging and frontier markets. These positions have provided her with insight and perspective on the markets and the economy. Ms. Walton has been determined by the Audit Committee to be an audit committee financial expert, as such term is defined in the applicable Commission rules.

Board – Leadership Structure and Oversight Responsibilities

The Board has overall responsibility for the oversight of the Trust and the Fund. The Chair of the Board is an Independent Trustee, and the Chair of each Committee is an Independent Trustee. The Board has five standing Committees: an Audit Committee, a Governance and Nominating Committee, a Compliance Committee, a Performance Oversight Committee and an Ad Hoc Topics Committee. The role of the Chair of the Board is to preside at all meetings of the Board and to act as a liaison with service providers, officers, attorneys and other Trustees generally between meetings. The Chair of each Committee performs a similar role with respect to the Committee. The Chair of the Board or the Chair of a Committee may also perform such other functions as may be delegated by the Board or the Committee from time to time. The Independent Trustees meet regularly outside the presence of Fund management, in executive session or with other service providers to the Fund. The Board has regular meetings five times a year, and may hold special meetings if required before its next regular meeting. Each Committee meets regularly to conduct the oversight functions delegated to that Committee by the Board and reports its findings to the Board. The Board and each standing Committee conduct annual assessments of their oversight function and structure. The Board has determined that the Board's leadership structure is appropriate because it allows the Board to exercise independent judgment over management and to allocate areas of responsibility among Committees and the full Board to enhance effective oversight.

The Board has engaged BFA to manage the Fund on a day-to-day basis. The Board is responsible for overseeing BFA, other service providers, the operations of the Fund and associated risks in accordance with the provisions of the 1940 Act, state law, other applicable laws, the Trust's charter, and the Fund's investment objective and strategies. The Board reviews, on an ongoing basis, the Fund's performance, operations and investment strategies and techniques. The Board also conducts reviews of BFA and its role in running the operations of the Fund.

Day-to-day risk management with respect to the Fund is the responsibility of BFA or of sub-advisers or other service providers (depending on the nature of the risk), subject to the supervision of BFA. The Fund is subject to a number of risks, including investment, compliance, operational and valuation risks, among others. While there are a number of risk management functions performed by BFA and the sub-advisers or other service providers, as applicable, it is not possible to eliminate all of the risks applicable to the Fund. Risk oversight forms part of the Board's general oversight of the Fund and is addressed as part of various Board and Committee activities. The Board, directly or through a Committee, also reviews reports from, among others, management, the independent registered public accounting firm for the Fund, sub-advisers and internal auditors for BFA or its affiliates, as appropriate, regarding risks faced by the Fund and management's or the service provider's risk functions. The Committee system facilitates the timely and efficient consideration of matters by the Trustees, and facilitates effective oversight of compliance with legal and regulatory requirements and of the Fund's activities and associated risks. The Board has appointed a Chief Compliance Officer, who oversees the implementation and testing of the Trust's compliance program and reports to the Board regarding compliance matters for the Fund and its service providers. The Independent Trustees have engaged independent legal counsel to assist them in performing their oversight responsibilities.

Committees of the Board of Trustees. The members of the Audit Committee (the "Audit Committee") are Henry R. Keizer (Chair), Neil A. Cotty, Jeffrey Jarczyk, Lori Richards, Kenneth L. Urish and Claire A. Walton, all of whom are Independent Trustees. The principal responsibilities of the Audit Committee are to approve, and recommend to the full Board for approval, the selection, retention, termination and compensation of the Fund's independent registered public accounting firm (the "Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm") and to oversee the Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm's work. The Audit Committee's responsibilities include, without limitation, to (1) evaluate the qualifications and independence of the Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm; (2) approve all audit engagement terms and fees for the Fund; (3) review the conduct and results of each independent audit of the Fund's annual financial statements; (4) review any issues raised by the Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm or Fund management regarding the accounting or financial reporting policies and practices of the Fund and the internal controls of the Fund and certain service providers; (5) oversee the performance of the Fund's Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm; (6) review and discuss with management and the Fund's Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm the performance and findings of the Fund's internal auditors; (7) discuss with Fund management its policies regarding risk assessment and risk management as such matters relate to the Fund's financial reporting and controls; (8) resolve any disagreements between Fund management and the Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm regarding financial reporting; and (9) undertake such other duties and responsibilities as may from time to time be delegated by the Board to the Audit Committee. The Board has adopted a written charter for the Audit Committee. During the twelve months ended April 30, 2026, the Audit Committee met four times.

The members of the Governance and Nominating Committee (the "Governance Committee") are Cynthia A. Montgomery (Chair), Christopher J. Ailman, Susan J. Carter, Collette Chilton, Henry R. Keizer and Marc D. Stern, all of whom are Independent Trustees. The principal responsibilities of the Governance Committee are to (1) identify individuals qualified to serve as Independent Trustees of the Trust and recommend Independent Trustee nominees for election by shareholders or appointment by the Board; (2) advise the Board with respect to Board composition, procedures and committees (other than the Audit Committee); (3) oversee periodic self-assessments of the Board and committees of the Board (other than the Audit Committee); (4) review and make recommendations regarding Independent Trustee compensation; (5) monitor corporate governance matters and develop appropriate recommendations to the Board; (6) act as the administrative committee with respect to Board policies and procedures, committee policies and procedures (other than the Audit Committee) and codes of ethics as they relate to Independent Trustees; and (7) undertake such other duties and responsibilities as may from time to time be delegated by the Board to the Governance Committee.

The Governance Committee may consider nominations for Trustees made by the Fund's shareholders as it deems appropriate. Under the Trust's Bylaws, shareholders must follow certain procedures to nominate a person for election as a Trustee at a shareholder meeting at which Trustees are to be elected. Under these advance notice procedures, shareholders must submit the proposed nominee by delivering a notice to the Secretary of the Trust at its principal executive offices no earlier than the 150th day prior to such meeting and not later than 5:00 p.m., Eastern Time, on the later of the 120th day prior to such meeting or the tenth day following the day on which public announcement is first made of the date of such meeting. The Trust's Bylaws provide that notice of a proposed nomination must include certain information about the shareholder and the nominee, as well as certain other information, including a written consent of the proposed nominee to serve if elected. Reference is made to the Trust's Bylaws for more details. The Board has adopted a written charter for the Governance Committee. During the twelve months ended April 30, 2026, the Governance Committee met eleven times.

The members of the Compliance Committee (the "Compliance Committee") are Claire A. Walton (Chair), Jeffrey Jarczyk, Cynthia A. Montgomery, Donald C. Opatrny, Lori Richards and Kenneth L. Urish, all of whom are Independent Trustees. The Compliance Committee's purpose is to assist the Board in fulfilling its responsibility to oversee regulatory and fiduciary compliance matters involving the Trust, the fund-related activities of BFA and any sub-adviser and the Trust's third-party service providers. The Compliance Committee's responsibilities include, without limitation, to (1) oversee the compliance policies and procedures of the Trust and its service providers and recommend changes or additions to such policies and procedures; (2) review information on and, where appropriate, recommend policies concerning the Trust's compliance with applicable law; (3) review reports from, oversee the annual performance review of, and make certain recommendations and determinations regarding the Trust's Chief Compliance Officer (the "CCO"), including determining the amount and structure of the CCO's compensation and recommending such amount and structure to the full Board for approval and ratification; and (4) undertake such other duties and responsibilities as may from time to time be delegated by the Board to the Compliance Committee. The Board has adopted a written charter for the Compliance Committee. During the twelve months ended April 30, 2026, the Compliance Committee met four times.

The members of the Performance Oversight Committee (the "Performance Oversight Committee") are Donald C. Opatrny (Chair), Christopher J. Ailman, Susan J. Carter, Collette Chilton, Neil A. Cotty and Marc D. Stern, all of whom are Independent Trustees. The Performance Oversight Committee's purpose is to assist the Board in fulfilling its responsibility to oversee the Fund's investment performance relative to its agreed-upon performance objectives and to assist the Independent Trustees in their consideration of investment advisory agreements. The Performance Oversight Committee's responsibilities include, without limitation, to (1) review information on, and make recommendations to the full Board in respect of, the Fund's investment objective, policies and practices; (2) review information on the Fund's investment performance; (3) review information on appropriate benchmarks and competitive universes and unusual or exceptional investment matters; (4) review personnel and other resources devoted to management of the Fund and evaluate the nature and quality of information furnished to the Performance Oversight Committee; (5) recommend any required action regarding changes in fundamental and non-fundamental investment policies and restrictions, fund mergers or liquidations; (6) request and review information on the nature, extent and quality of services provided to the shareholders; (7) make recommendations to the Board concerning the approval or renewal of investment advisory agreements; and (8) undertake such other duties and responsibilities as may from time to time be delegated by the Board to the Performance Oversight Committee. The Board has adopted a written charter for the Performance Oversight Committee. During the twelve months ended April 30, 2026, the Performance Oversight Committee met five times.

The members of the Ad Hoc Topics Committee (the "Ad Hoc Topics Committee") are Mark Stalnecker (Chair) and Claire A. Walton, both of whom are Independent Trustees, and John M. Perlowski, who serves as an interested Trustee. The principal responsibilities of the Ad Hoc Topics Committee are to (1) act on routine matters between meetings of the Board; (2) act on such matters as may require urgent action between meetings of the Board; and (3) exercise such other authority as may from time to time be delegated to the Ad Hoc Topics Committee by the Board. The Board has adopted a written charter for the Ad Hoc Topics Committee. During the twelve months ended April 30, 2026, the Ad Hoc Topics Committee did not meet.

The Governance Committee has adopted a statement of policy that describes the experience, qualifications, skills and attributes that are necessary and desirable for potential Independent Trustee candidates (the "Statement of Policy"). The Board believes that each Independent Trustee satisfied, at the time he or she was initially elected or appointed a Trustee, and continues to satisfy, the standards contemplated by the Statement of Policy. Furthermore, in determining that a particular Independent Trustee was and continues to be qualified to serve as a Trustee, the Board has considered a variety of criteria, none of which, in isolation, was controlling. The Board believes that, collectively, the Independent Trustees have balanced and diverse experience, skills, attributes and qualifications, which allow the Board to operate effectively in governing the Trust and protecting the interests of shareholders. Among the attributes common to all Independent Trustees are their ability to review critically, evaluate, question and discuss information provided to them, to interact effectively with the Fund's investment adviser, sub-advisers, other service providers, counsel and the Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm, and to exercise effective business judgment in the performance of their duties as Trustees.

Information relating to each Trustee's share ownership in the Fund and in all BlackRock-advised Funds that are currently overseen by the respective Trustee ("Supervised Funds") as of December 31, 2025, except as otherwise noted, is set forth in the chart below. Amounts shown may include shares as to which a Trustee has indirect beneficial ownership, such as through participation in certain family accounts, 529 college savings plan interests, or similar arrangements where the Trustee has beneficial economic interest but not a direct ownership interest.

Name	Aggregate Dollar Range of Equity Securities in Supervised Funds
Interested Trustees	
Robert Fairbairn	Over $100,000
John M. Perlowski	Over $100,000
Independent Trustees	
Christopher J. Ailman	Over $100,000
Susan J. Carter	Over $100,000
Collette Chilton	Over $100,000
Neil A. Cotty	Over $100,000
Jeffrey Jarczyk*	None
Henry R. Keizer	Over $100,000
Cynthia A. Montgomery	Over $100,000
Donald C. Opatrny	Over $100,000
Lori Richards	None
Mark Stalnecker	Over $100,000
Marc D. Stern*	None
Kenneth L. Urish	Over $100,000
Claire A. Walton	Over $100,000

* Information is provided as of April 1, 2026, the date Mr. Jarczyk and Mr. Stern first served as consultants to the Independent Trustees.

As of December 31, 2025, (and, with respect to Mr. Jarczyk and Mr. Stern, as of April 1, 2026), none of the Independent Trustees of the Trust or their immediate family members owned directly or indirectly beneficially or of record any securities of the Fund's investment adviser, sub-advisers, principal underwriter, or any person directly or indirectly controlling, controlled by, or under common control with such entities.

Remuneration of Trustees. Each Trustee who is an Independent Trustee is paid as compensation an annual retainer of $375,000 per year for his or her services as a board member of the BlackRock-advised Funds in the BlackRock Multi-Asset Complex, including the Trust, and a $20,000 board meeting fee to be paid for each in-person board meeting attended (and may receive a board meeting fee for telephonic attendance at board meetings), for up to five board meetings held in a calendar year (compensation for meetings in excess of this number to be determined on a case-by-case basis), together with out-of-pocket expenses in accordance with a board policy on travel and other business expenses relating to attendance at meetings. The Chairs of the Audit Committee, Compliance Committee, Governance Committee and Performance Oversight Committee are paid as compensation an additional annual retainer of $45,000, respectively. The Chair of the Board is paid an additional annual retainer of $150,000.

The following table sets forth the compensation the Trust paid to the Trustees, on behalf of the Fund, for the fiscal year ended April 30, 2026 and the aggregate compensation paid to them by all BlackRock-advised Funds for the calendar year ended December 31, 2025.

Name	Compensation from the Fund	Annual Benefits Upon Retirement	Aggregate Compensation from the Fund and Other BlackRock-Advised Funds[1]
Interested Trustees			
Robert Fairbairn	None	None	None
John M. Perlowski	None	None	None
Independent Trustees			
Christopher J. Ailman	$309	None	$445,000
Susan J. Carter	$309	None	$445,000
Collette Chilton	$309	None	$445,000
Neil A. Cotty	$310	None	$467,500
Jeffrey Jarczyk[2]	$173	None	None
Henry R. Keizer[3]	$313	None	$490,000
Cynthia A. Montgomery[4]	$311	None	$490,000
Donald C. Opatrny[5]	$311	None	$490,000
Lori Richards	$309	None	$445,000
Mark Stalnecker[6]	$316	None	$595,000
Marc D. Stern[2]	$173	None	None
Kenneth L. Urish	$309	None	$445,000
Claire A. Walton[7]	$311	None	$490,000

1 For the number of BlackRock-advised Funds from which each Trustee receives compensation, see "Biographical Information" beginning on page 14.

2 Compensation includes $173 earned as a consultant to the Independent Trustees for the period April 1, 2026 to July 1, 2026.

3 Chair of the Audit Committee.

4 Chair of the Governance Committee.

5 Chair of the Performance Oversight Committee.

6 Chair of the Board and Chair of the Ad Hoc Topics Committee.

7 Chair of the Compliance Committee.

Control Persons and Principal Holders of Securities. As of August 5, 2026, the Trustees and officers of the Trust as a group owned an aggregate of less than 1% of the outstanding shares of the Fund.

Although the Trust does not have information concerning the beneficial ownership of shares held in the names of Depository Trust Company ("DTC") Participants (as defined below), as of August 7, 2026, the name and percentage ownership of each DTC Participant that owned of record 5% or more of the outstanding shares of the Fund were as follows:

Name	Address	Percentage of Ownership
National Financial Services LLC	499 Washington Boulevard 5th Floor Jersey City, NJ 07310-2010	36.95%
Charles Schwab & Co Inc.	101 Montgomery Street San Francisco, CA 94104-4122	23.11%
LPL Financial LLC	4707 Executive Drive San Diego, CA 92121-3091	16.05%
Pershing LLC	1 Pershing Plaza Jersey City, NJ 07399-0001	9.86%

Conflicts of Interest. Certain activities of BFA, BlackRock, Inc. and the other subsidiaries of BlackRock, Inc. (collectively referred to in this section as "BlackRock") and their respective directors, officers or employees, with respect to the Fund and/or other accounts managed by BlackRock, may give rise to actual or perceived conflicts of interest such as those described below.

BlackRock is one of the world's largest asset management firms. BlackRock, its subsidiaries and their respective directors, officers and employees, including the business units or entities and personnel who may be involved in the investment activities and business operations of the Fund, are engaged worldwide in businesses, including managing equities, fixed income securities, cash and alternative investments, and other financial services, and have interests other than that of managing the Fund. These are considerations of which investors in the Fund should be aware, and which may cause conflicts of interest that could disadvantage the Fund and its shareholders. These businesses and interests include potential multiple advisory, transactional, financial and other relationships with, or interests in companies and interests in securities or other instruments that may be purchased or sold by the Fund.

BlackRock may have proprietary interests in, and may manage or advise with respect to, accounts or funds (including separate accounts and other funds and collective investment vehicles) that have investment objectives identical or similar to those of the Fund and/or that engage in transactions in the same types of securities, currencies and instruments as the Fund. Such other funds or accounts may offer exposure to strategies that are identical or substantially similar to those of the Fund but with different fees and expenses, governance and structures, and/or services provided by BlackRock. BlackRock is also a major participant in the global currency, equities, swap and fixed income markets, in each case, for the accounts of clients and, in some cases, on a proprietary basis. As such, BlackRock is or may be actively engaged in transactions in the same securities, currencies, and instruments in which the Fund invests.

Such activities could affect the prices and availability of the securities, currencies, and instruments in which the Fund invests, which could have an adverse impact on the Fund's performance. Such transactions, particularly in respect of most proprietary accounts or client accounts, will be executed independently of the Fund's transactions and thus at prices or rates that may be more or less favorable than those obtained by the Fund.

When BlackRock seeks to purchase or sell the same assets for client accounts, including the Fund, the assets actually purchased or sold may be allocated among the accounts on a basis determined in its good faith discretion to be equitable. In some cases, this system may adversely affect the size or price of the assets purchased or sold for the Fund. In addition, transactions in investments by one or more other accounts managed by BlackRock may have the effect of diluting or otherwise disadvantaging the values, prices or investment strategies of the Fund, particularly, but not limited to, with respect to small capitalization, emerging market or less liquid strategies. This may occur with respect to BlackRock-advised accounts when investment decisions regarding the Fund are based on research or other information that is also used to support decisions for other accounts. When BlackRock implements a portfolio decision or strategy on behalf of another account ahead of, or contemporaneously with, similar decisions or strategies for the Fund, market impact, liquidity constraints, or other factors could result in the Fund receiving less favorable trading results and the costs of implementing such decisions or strategies could be increased or the Fund could otherwise be disadvantaged. BlackRock may, in certain cases, elect to implement internal policies and procedures designed to limit such consequences, which may cause the Fund to be unable to engage in certain activities, including purchasing or disposing of securities, when it might otherwise be desirable for it to do so. Conflicts may also arise because portfolio decisions regarding the Fund may benefit other accounts managed by BlackRock. For example, the sale of a long position or establishment of a short position by the Fund may impair the price of the same security sold short by (and therefore benefit) BlackRock or its other accounts or funds, and the purchase of a security or covering of a short position in a security by the Fund may increase the price of the same security held by (and therefore benefit) BlackRock or its other accounts or funds.

BlackRock, on behalf of other client accounts, on the one hand, and the Fund, on the other hand, may invest in or extend credit to different parts of the capital structure of a single issuer. BlackRock may pursue rights, provide advice or engage in other activities, or refrain from pursuing rights, providing advice or engaging in other activities, on behalf of other clients with respect to an issuer in which the Fund has invested, and such actions (or refraining from action) may have a material adverse effect on the Fund. In situations in which clients of BlackRock (including the Fund) hold positions in multiple parts of the capital structure of an issuer, BlackRock may not pursue certain actions or remedies that may be available to the Fund, as a result of legal and regulatory requirements or otherwise. BlackRock addresses these and other potential conflicts of interest based on the facts and circumstances of particular situations. For example, BlackRock may determine to rely on information barriers between different business units or portfolio management teams. BlackRock may also determine to rely on the actions of similarly situated holders of loans or securities rather than, or in connection with, taking such actions itself on behalf of the Fund.

In addition, to the extent permitted by applicable law, the Fund may invest its assets in other funds advised by BlackRock, including funds that are managed by one or more of the same portfolio managers, which could result in conflicts of interest relating to asset allocation, timing of Fund purchases and redemptions, and increased remuneration and profitability for BlackRock and/or its personnel, including portfolio managers.

Third parties, including service providers to BlackRock or the Fund, may sponsor events (including, but not limited to, marketing and promotional activities and presentations, educational training programs and conferences) for registered representatives, other professionals and individual investors. There is a potential conflict of interest as such sponsorships may defray the costs of such activities to BlackRock, and may provide an incentive to BlackRock to retain such third parties to provide services to the Fund.

In certain circumstances, BlackRock, on behalf of the Fund, may seek to buy from or sell securities to another fund or account advised by BlackRock. BlackRock may (but is not required to) effect purchases and sales between BlackRock clients (“cross trades”), including the Fund, if BlackRock

believes such transactions are appropriate based on each party's investment objectives and guidelines, subject to applicable law and regulation. There may be potential conflicts of interest or regulatory issues relating to these transactions which could limit BlackRock's decision to engage in these transactions for the Fund. BlackRock may have a potentially conflicting division of loyalties and responsibilities to the parties in such transactions.

BlackRock and its clients may pursue or enforce rights with respect to an issuer in which the Fund has invested, and those activities may have an adverse effect on the Fund. As a result, prices, availability, liquidity and terms of the Fund's investments may be negatively impacted by the activities of BlackRock or its clients, and transactions for the Fund may be impaired or effected at prices or terms that may be less favorable than would otherwise have been the case.

The results of the Fund's investment activities may differ significantly from the results achieved by BlackRock for its proprietary accounts or other accounts (including investment companies or collective investment vehicles) that it manages or advises. It is possible that one or more accounts managed or advised by BlackRock and such other accounts will achieve investment results that are substantially more or less favorable than the results achieved by the Fund. Moreover, it is possible that the Fund will sustain losses during periods in which one or more proprietary or other accounts managed or advised by BlackRock achieve significant profits. The opposite result is also possible.

From time to time, the Fund may be restricted from purchasing or selling securities, or from engaging in other investment activities because of regulatory, legal or contractual requirements applicable to BlackRock or other accounts managed or advised by BlackRock, and/or the internal policies of BlackRock designed to comply with such requirements. As a result, there may be periods, for example, when BlackRock will not initiate or recommend certain types of transactions in certain securities or instruments with respect to which BlackRock is performing services or when position limits have been reached. For example, the investment activities of BlackRock for its proprietary accounts and accounts under its management may limit the investment opportunities for the Fund in certain emerging and other markets in which limitations are imposed upon the amount of investment, in the aggregate or in individual issuers, by affiliated foreign investors.

In connection with its management of the Fund, BlackRock may have access to certain fundamental analysis and proprietary technical models developed by BlackRock. BlackRock will not be under any obligation, however, to effect transactions on behalf of the Fund in accordance with such analysis and models. In addition, BlackRock will not have any obligation to make available any information regarding its proprietary activities or strategies, or the activities or strategies used for other accounts managed by them, for the benefit of the management of the Fund and it is not anticipated that BlackRock will have access to such information for the purpose of managing the Fund. The proprietary activities or portfolio strategies of BlackRock, or the activities or strategies used for accounts managed by BlackRock or other client accounts could conflict with the transactions and strategies employed by BlackRock in managing the Fund.

The Fund may be included in investment models developed by BlackRock for use by clients and financial advisors. To the extent clients invest in these investment models and increase the assets under management of the Fund, the investment management fee amounts paid by the Fund to BlackRock may also increase. The net asset value and liquidity of the Fund may be impacted by purchases and sales of the Fund by model-driven investment portfolios, as well as by BlackRock itself and by its advisory clients.

In addition, certain principals and certain employees of the Fund's investment adviser are also principals or employees of other business units or entities within BlackRock. As a result, these principals and employees may have obligations to such other business units or entities or their clients

and such obligations to other business units or entities or their clients may be a consideration of which investors in the Fund should be aware.

BlackRock may enter into transactions and invest in securities, instruments and currencies on behalf of the Fund in which clients of BlackRock, or, to the extent permitted by the Commission and applicable law, BlackRock, serves as the counterparty, principal or issuer. In such cases, such party's interests in the transaction will be adverse to the interests of the Fund, and such party may have no incentive to assure that the Fund obtains the best possible prices or terms in connection with the transactions. In addition, the purchase, holding and sale of such investments by the Fund may enhance the profitability of BlackRock.

BlackRock may also create, write or issue derivatives for clients, the underlying securities, currencies or instruments of which may be those in which the Fund invests or which may be based on the performance of the Fund. Additionally, an affiliate of BlackRock will create, write or issue options, which may be based on the performance of the Fund. BlackRock has entered into an arrangement with Markit Indices Limited, the index provider for underlying fixed-income indexes used by certain iShares ETFs, related to derivative fixed-income products that are based on such iShares ETFs. Trading activity in these derivative products could also potentially lead to greater liquidity for such products, increased purchase activity with respect to these iShares ETFs and increased assets under management for BlackRock.

The Fund may, subject to applicable law, purchase investments that are the subject of an underwriting or other distribution by BlackRock and may also enter into transactions with other clients of BlackRock where such other clients have interests adverse to those of the Fund. At times, these activities may cause business units or entities within BlackRock to give advice to clients that may cause these clients to take actions adverse to the interests of the Fund. To the extent such transactions are permitted, the Fund will deal with BlackRock on an arms-length basis.

To the extent authorized by applicable law, BlackRock may act as broker, dealer, agent, lender or adviser or in other commercial capacities for the Fund. It is anticipated that the commissions, mark-ups, mark-downs, financial advisory fees, underwriting and placement fees, sales fees, financing and commitment fees, brokerage fees, other fees, compensation or profits, rates, terms and conditions charged by BlackRock will be in its view commercially reasonable, although BlackRock, including its sales personnel, will have an interest in obtaining fees and other amounts that are favorable to BlackRock and such sales personnel, which may have an adverse effect on the Fund. Index based funds may use an index provider that is affiliated with another service provider of the Fund or BlackRock that acts as a broker, dealer, agent, lender or in other commercial capacities for the Fund or BlackRock.

Subject to applicable law, BlackRock (and its personnel and other distributors) will be entitled to retain fees and other amounts that they receive in connection with their service to the Fund as broker, dealer, agent, lender, adviser or in other commercial capacities. No accounting to the Fund or its shareholders will be required, and no fees or other compensation payable by the Fund or its shareholders will be reduced by reason of receipt by BlackRock of any such fees or other amounts.

When BlackRock acts as broker, dealer, agent, adviser or in other commercial capacities in relation to the Fund, BlackRock may take commercial steps in its own interests, which may have an adverse effect on the Fund.

The Fund will be required to establish business relationships with its counterparties based on the Fund's own credit standing. BlackRock will not have any obligation to allow its credit to be used in connection with the Fund's establishment of its business relationships, nor is it expected that the Fund's counterparties will rely on the credit of BlackRock in evaluating the Fund's creditworthiness.

BlackRock Institutional Trust Company, N.A. ("BTC"), an affiliate of BFA, pursuant to SEC exemptive relief, acts as securities lending agent to, and receives a share of securities lending revenues from, the Fund. BlackRock will also receive compensation for managing the reinvestment of the cash collateral from securities lending. There are potential conflicts of interests in managing a securities lending program, including but not limited to: (i) BlackRock as securities lending agent may have an incentive to, among other things, increase or decrease the amount of securities on loan or to lend particular securities in order to generate additional risk-adjusted revenue for BlackRock and its affiliates; and (ii) BlackRock as securities lending agent may have an incentive to allocate loans to clients that would provide more revenue to BlackRock. As described further below, BlackRock seeks to mitigate this conflict by providing its securities lending clients with equal lending opportunities over time in order to approximate pro rata allocation.

As part of its securities lending program, BlackRock indemnifies the Fund and certain other clients and/or funds against a shortfall in collateral in the event of borrower default. On a regular basis, BlackRock calculates the potential dollar exposure of collateral shortfall resulting from a borrower default ("shortfall risk") in the securities lending program. BlackRock establishes program-wide borrower limits ("credit limits") to actively manage borrower-specific credit exposure. BlackRock oversees the risk model that calculates projected collateral shortfall values using loan-level factors such as loan and collateral type and market value as well as specific borrower credit characteristics. When necessary, BlackRock may adjust securities lending program attributes by restricting eligible collateral or reducing borrower credit limits. As a result, the management of program-wide exposure as well as BlackRock-specific indemnification exposure may affect the amount of securities lending activity BlackRock may conduct at any given point in time by reducing the volume of lending opportunities for certain loans (including by asset type, collateral type and/or revenue profile).

BlackRock may decline to make a securities loan on behalf of the Fund, discontinue lending on behalf of the Fund or terminate a securities loan on behalf of the Fund for any reason, including but not limited to regulatory requirements and/or market rules, liquidity considerations, or credit considerations, which may impact the Fund by reducing or eliminating the volume of lending opportunities for certain types of loans, loans in particular markets, loans of particular securities or types of securities, or for loans overall. In addition, some borrowers may prefer certain BlackRock lenders that provide additional protections against lender default that are favored by their prudential regulation.

BlackRock uses a predetermined systematic process in order to approximate pro rata allocation over time. In order to allocate a loan to a portfolio: (i) BlackRock as a whole must have sufficient lending capacity pursuant to the various program limits (*i.e.* indemnification exposure limit and borrower credit limits); (ii) the lending portfolio must hold the asset at the time a loan opportunity arrives; and (iii) the lending portfolio must also have enough inventory, either on its own or when aggregated with other portfolios into one single market delivery, to satisfy the loan request. In doing so, BlackRock seeks to provide equal lending opportunities for all portfolios, independent of whether BlackRock indemnifies the portfolio. Equal opportunities for lending portfolios does not guarantee equal outcomes. Specifically, short and long-term outcomes for individual clients may vary due to asset mix, asset/liability spreads on different securities, and the overall limits imposed by the firm.

Purchases and sales of securities and other assets for the Fund may be aggregated with orders for other BlackRock client accounts, including with accounts that pay different transaction costs solely due to the fact that they have different research payment arrangements. BlackRock, however, is not

required to aggregate orders if portfolio management decisions for different accounts are made separately, or if they determine that aggregating is not practicable or required, or in cases involving client direction.

Prevailing trading activity frequently may make impossible the receipt of the same price or execution on the entire volume of securities purchased or sold. When this occurs, the various prices may be averaged, and the Fund will be charged or credited with the average price. Thus, the effect of the aggregation may operate on some occasions to the disadvantage of the Fund. In addition, under certain circumstances, the Fund will not be charged the same commission or commission equivalent rates in connection with an aggregated order.

BlackRock, unless prohibited by applicable law, may cause the Fund or account to pay a broker or dealer a commission for effecting a transaction that exceeds the amount another broker or dealer would have charged for effecting the same transaction in recognition of the value of brokerage and research services provided by that broker or dealer. Under the European Union Markets in Financial Instruments Directive (Directive 2014/65/EU) and Markets in Financial Instruments Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 600/2014) ("MiFID II"), EU investment managers, including BIL, pay for research from brokers and dealers directly out of their own resources, rather than through client commissions.

Subject to applicable law, BlackRock may select brokers that furnish BlackRock, the Fund, other BlackRock client accounts or personnel, directly or through correspondent relationships, with research or other appropriate services which provide, in BlackRock's view, appropriate assistance to BlackRock in the investment decision-making process (including with respect to futures, fixed-price offerings and OTC transactions). Such research or other services may include, to the extent permitted by law, research reports on companies, industries and securities; economic and financial data; financial publications; proxy analysis; trade industry seminars; computer data bases; research-oriented software and other services and products.

Research or other services obtained in this manner may be used in servicing any or all of the Fund and other BlackRock client accounts, including in connection with BlackRock client accounts other than those that pay commissions to the broker relating to the research or other service arrangements. Such products and services may disproportionately benefit other BlackRock client accounts relative to the Fund based on the amount of brokerage commissions paid by the Fund and such other BlackRock client accounts. For example, research or other services that are paid for through one client's commissions may not be used in managing that client's account. In addition, other BlackRock client accounts may receive the benefit, including disproportionate benefits, of economies of scale or price discounts in connection with products and services that may be provided to the Fund and to such other BlackRock client accounts. To the extent that BlackRock uses soft dollars, it will not have to pay for those products and services itself.

BlackRock, unless prohibited by applicable law, may endeavor to execute trades through brokers who, pursuant to such arrangements, provide research or other services in order to ensure the continued receipt of research or other services BlackRock believes are useful in its investment decision-making process. BlackRock may from time to time choose not to engage in the above described arrangements to varying degrees. BlackRock, unless prohibited by applicable law, may also enter into commission sharing arrangements under which BlackRock may execute transactions through a broker-dealer and request that the broker-dealer allocate a portion of the commissions or commission credits to another firm that provides research to BlackRock. To the extent that BlackRock engages in commission sharing arrangements, many of the same conflicts related to traditional soft dollars may exist.

BlackRock may utilize certain electronic crossing networks ("ECNs") (including, without limitation, ECNs in which BlackRock has an investment or other interest, to the extent permitted by applicable

law) in executing client securities transactions for certain types of securities. These ECNs may charge fees for their services, including access fees and transaction fees. The transaction fees, which are similar to commissions or markups/markdowns, will generally be charged to clients and, like commissions and markups/markdowns, would generally be included in the cost of the securities purchased. Access fees may be paid by BlackRock even though incurred in connection with executing transactions on behalf of clients, including the Fund. In certain circumstances, ECNs may offer volume discounts that will reduce the access fees typically paid by BlackRock. BlackRock will only utilize ECNs consistent with its obligation to seek to obtain best execution in client transactions.

BlackRock owns a minority interest in, and is a member of, Members Exchange ("MEMX"), a newly created U.S. stock exchange. Transactions for the Fund may be executed on MEMX if third party brokers select MEMX as the appropriate venue for execution of orders placed by BlackRock traders on behalf of the Fund. In addition, transactions in Fund shares may be executed on MEMX if third party brokers select MEMX as the appropriate venue for the execution of such orders.

BlackRock has adopted policies and procedures designed to prevent conflicts of interest from influencing proxy voting decisions that it makes on behalf of advisory clients, including the Fund, and to help ensure that such decisions are made in accordance with BlackRock's fiduciary obligations to its clients. Nevertheless, notwithstanding such proxy voting policies and procedures, actual proxy voting decisions of BlackRock may have the effect of favoring the interests of other clients or businesses of other divisions or units of BlackRock, provided that BlackRock believes such voting decisions to be in accordance with its fiduciary obligations. For a more detailed discussion of these policies and procedures, see the Proxy Voting Policy section in this SAI.

It is also possible that, from time to time, BlackRock and/or its advisory clients (including other funds and separately managed accounts) may, subject to compliance with applicable law, purchase and hold shares of the Fund. Increasing the Fund's assets may enhance investment flexibility and diversification and may contribute to economies of scale that tend to reduce the Fund's expense ratio. BlackRock reserves the right, subject to compliance with applicable law, to sell into the market or redeem in Creation Units through an Authorized Participant at any time some or all of the shares of the Fund acquired for its own accounts or the account of a BlackRock advisory client. A large sale or redemption of shares of the Fund by BlackRock itself or a BlackRock advisory client could significantly reduce the asset size of the Fund, which might have an adverse effect on the Fund's liquidity, investment flexibility, portfolio diversification, expense ratio or ability to comply with the listing requirements for the Fund.

It is possible that the Fund may invest in securities of, or engage in transactions with, companies in which BlackRock has significant debt or equity investments or other interests. The Fund may also invest in issuances (such as structured notes) by entities for which BlackRock provides and is compensated for cash management services relating to the proceeds from the sale of such issuances. In making investment decisions for the Fund, BlackRock is not permitted to obtain or use material non-public information acquired by any unit of BlackRock, in the course of these activities. In addition, from time to time, the activities of BlackRock may limit the Fund's flexibility in purchases and sales of securities. As indicated below, BlackRock may engage in transactions with companies in which BlackRock-advised funds or other clients of BlackRock have an investment.

BlackRock and its personnel and other financial service providers may have interests in promoting sales of the Fund. With respect to BlackRock and its personnel, the remuneration and profitability relating to services to and sales of the Fund or other products may be greater than remuneration and profitability relating to services to and sales of certain funds or other products that might be provided or offered. BlackRock and its sales personnel may directly or indirectly receive a portion of the fees and commissions charged to the Fund or its shareholders. BlackRock and its advisory or other personnel

may also benefit from increased amounts of assets under management. Fees and commissions may also be higher than for other products or services, and the remuneration and profitability to BlackRock and such personnel resulting from transactions on behalf of or management of the Fund may be greater than the remuneration and profitability resulting from other funds or products.

BlackRock may provide valuation assistance to certain clients with respect to certain securities or other investments and the valuation recommendations made for such clients' accounts may differ from the valuations for the same securities or investments assigned by the Fund's pricing vendors, especially if such valuations are based on broker-dealer quotes or other data sources unavailable to the Fund's pricing vendors. While BlackRock will generally communicate its valuation information or determinations to the Fund's pricing vendors and/or fund accountants, there may be instances where the Fund's pricing vendors or fund accountants assign a different valuation to a security or other investment than the valuation for such security or investment determined or recommended by BlackRock.

As disclosed in more detail in the Determination of Net Asset Value section in this SAI, when market quotations are not readily available or are believed by BFA to be unreliable, the Fund's investments are valued at fair value by BFA. BFA has been designated as the Fund's valuation designee pursuant to Rule 2a-5 under the Investment Company Act and acts through BFA's Rule 2a-5 Committee (the "2a-5 Committee"), with assistance from other BFA pricing committees and in accordance with BFA's policies and procedures (the "Valuation Procedures"). When determining a "fair value price," the 2a-5 Committee seeks to determine the price that the Fund might reasonably expect to receive from the current sale of that asset or liability in an arm's-length transaction. The price generally may not be determined based on what the Fund might reasonably expect to receive for selling an asset or liability at a later time or if it holds the asset or liability to maturity. While fair value determinations will be based upon all available factors that BFA deems relevant at the time of the determination, and may be based on analytical values determined by BFA using proprietary or third party valuation models, fair value represents only a good faith approximation of the value of an asset or liability. The fair value of one or more assets or liabilities may not, in retrospect, be the price at which those assets or liabilities could have been sold during the period in which the particular fair values were used in determining the Fund's NAV. As a result, the Fund's sale or redemption of its shares at NAV, at a time when a holding or holdings are valued by the 2a-5 Committee at fair value, may have the effect of diluting or increasing the economic interest of existing shareholders and may affect the amount of revenue received by BFA with respect to services for which it receives an asset-based fee.

To the extent permitted by applicable law, the Fund may invest all or some of its short term cash investments in any money market fund or similarly-managed private fund advised or managed by BlackRock. In connection with any such investments, the Fund, to the extent permitted by the Investment Company Act, may pay its share of expenses of a money market fund or other similarly-managed private fund in which it invests, which may result in the Fund bearing some additional expenses.

BlackRock and its directors, officers and employees, may buy and sell securities or other investments for their own accounts and may have conflicts of interest with respect to investments made on behalf of the Fund. As a result of differing trading and investment strategies or constraints, positions may be taken by directors, officers and employees of BlackRock that are the same, different from or made at different times than positions taken for the Fund. To lessen the possibility that the Fund will be adversely affected by this personal trading, the Fund, BFA and BlackRock each have adopted a Code of Ethics in compliance with Section 17(j) of the Investment Company Act that restricts securities trading in the personal accounts of investment professionals and others who normally come into possession of information regarding the Fund's portfolio transactions. Each Code of Ethics is also available on the EDGAR Database on the Commission's Internet site at http://www.sec.gov, and copies may be obtained, after paying a duplicating fee, by e-mail at publicinfo@sec.gov.

BlackRock will not purchase securities or other property from, or sell securities or other property to, the Fund, except that the Fund may in accordance with rules or guidance adopted under the Investment Company Act engage in transactions with another fund or accounts that are affiliated with the Fund as a result of common officers, directors, or investment advisers or pursuant to exemptive orders granted to the Fund and/or BlackRock by the Commission. These transactions would be effected in circumstances in which BlackRock determined that it would be appropriate for the Fund to purchase and another client of BlackRock to sell, or the Fund to sell and another client of BlackRock to purchase, the same security or instrument on the same day. From time to time, the activities of the Fund may be restricted because of regulatory requirements applicable to BlackRock and/or BlackRock's internal policies designed to comply with, limit the applicability of, or otherwise relate to such requirements. A client not advised by BlackRock would not be subject to some of those considerations. There may be periods when BlackRock may not initiate or recommend certain types of transactions, or may otherwise restrict or limit its advice in certain securities or instruments issued by or related to companies for which BlackRock is performing advisory or other services or has proprietary positions. For example, when BlackRock is engaged to provide advisory or risk management services for a company, BlackRock may be prohibited from or limited in purchasing or selling securities of that company on behalf of the Fund, particularly where such services result in BlackRock obtaining material non-public information about the company (e.g., in connection with participation in a creditors' committee). Similar situations could arise if personnel of BlackRock serve as directors of companies the securities of which the Fund wishes to purchase or sell. However, if permitted by applicable law, and where consistent with BlackRock's policies and procedures (including the necessary implementation of appropriate information barriers), the Fund may purchase securities or instruments that are issued by such companies, are the subject of an advisory or risk management assignment by BlackRock, or where personnel of BlackRock are directors or officers of the issuer.

BlackRock has adopted and implemented policies and procedures that are designed to address potential conflicts that arise in connection with the advisory services BlackRock provides to the Fund and other clients. Certain BlackRock advisory personnel may take views, and make decisions or recommendations, that are different than or opposite those of other BlackRock advisory personnel. Certain portfolio management teams within BlackRock may make decisions or take (or refrain from taking) actions with respect to clients they advise in a manner different than or adverse to the decisions made or the actions taken (or not taken) by the Fund's portfolio management teams. The various portfolio management teams may not share information with each other, including as a result of certain information barriers and other policies, and will not have any obligation or other duty to do so.

BlackRock has established certain information barriers and other policies to address the sharing of information between different businesses within BlackRock, including with respect to personnel responsible with managing portfolios and voting proxies with respect to certain index equity portfolios versus those responsible for managing portfolios and voting proxies with respect to all other portfolios. As a result of information barriers, certain units of BlackRock generally will not have access, or will have limited access, to certain information and personnel, including senior personnel, in other units of BlackRock, and generally will not manage the funds with the benefit of information possessed by such other units. Therefore, BlackRock may not be able to review potential investments for the Fund with the benefit of information held by certain areas of BlackRock.

BlackRock may determine to move certain personnel, businesses, or business units from one side of an information barrier to the other side of the information barrier. In connection therewith, BlackRock personnel, businesses, and business units that were moved will no longer have access to the information and personnel from the side of the information barrier from which they were moved. Information obtained in connection with such changes to information barriers may limit or restrict the ability of BlackRock to engage in or otherwise effect transactions on behalf of the Fund (including purchasing or selling securities that BlackRock may otherwise have purchased or sold for a client in

the absence of a change to an information barrier). Information barriers may not have their intended impact due to, for example, changes in applicable law or inadvertent crossings of the barriers, and actions by personnel on one side of a barrier may impact the potential actions of personnel on the other side of a barrier.

Although the information barriers are intended to allow for independent portfolio management decision-making and proxy voting among certain BlackRock businesses, the investment activities of BlackRock for BlackRock clients, as well as BlackRock's proprietary accounts, may nonetheless limit the investment strategies and rights of other clients (including the Fund). As BlackRock's assets under management increases, BlackRock clients may face greater negative impacts due to ownership restrictions and limitations imposed by laws, regulations, rules, regulators, or issuers. For example, in certain circumstances where a BlackRock client invests in securities issued by companies that operate in certain industries (e.g., banking, insurance, and utilities) or in certain emerging or international markets, or are subject to regulatory or corporate ownership restrictions (e.g., with mechanisms such as poison pills in place to prevent takeovers), or where a BlackRock client invests in certain futures and derivatives, there may be limits on the aggregate amount invested by BlackRock for its clients and BlackRock's proprietary accounts that may not be exceeded without the grant of a license or other regulatory or corporate approval, order, consent, relief, waiver or non-disapproval or, if exceeded, may cause BlackRock or its clients to be subject to enforcement actions, disgorgement of share ownership or profits, regulatory restrictions, complex compliance reporting, increased compliance costs or suffer disadvantages or business restrictions. In light of certain restrictions, BlackRock may also seek to make indirect investments (e.g., using derivatives) on behalf of its clients to receive exposure to certain securities in excess of the applicable ownership restrictions and limitations when legally permitted that will expose such clients to additional costs and additional risks, including any risks associated with investing in derivatives. There may be limited availability of derivatives that provide indirect exposure to an impacted security. BlackRock clients can be subject to more than one ownership limitation depending on each client's holdings, and each ownership limitation can impact multiple securities held by the client. Certain clients or shareholders may have their own overlapping obligations to monitor their compliance with ownership limitations across their investments.

If certain aggregate ownership thresholds are reached either through the actions of BlackRock or a BlackRock client or as a result of corporate actions by the issuer, the ability of BlackRock on behalf of clients to purchase or dispose of investments, or exercise rights (including voting) or undertake business transactions, may be restricted by law, regulation, rule, or organizational documents or otherwise impaired. For example, to meet the requirements of an ownership limitation or restriction, a client may be unable to purchase or directly hold a security the client would otherwise purchase or hold. The limitation or restriction may be based on the holdings of other BlackRock clients instead of the specific client being restricted. For index funds, this means a fund may not be able to track its index as closely as it would if it was not subject to an ownership limitation or restriction because the fund cannot acquire the amount of the impacted security included in its index. BlackRock on behalf of its clients may limit purchases, sell existing investments, utilize indirect investments, utilize information barriers, or otherwise restrict, forgo, or limit the exercise of rights (including transferring, outsourcing, or limiting voting rights or forgoing the right to receive dividends) when BlackRock, in its sole discretion, deems it appropriate in light of potential regulatory or other restrictions on ownership or other consequences resulting from reaching investment thresholds. These types of restrictions could negatively impact a client's performance or ability to meet its investment objective.

When BlackRock or a BlackRock client is subject to an ownership limitation, BlackRock may in its discretion seek permission from the applicable issuers or regulators to exceed the limitation. However, there is no guarantee that permission will be granted, or that, once granted, it will not be modified or revoked at a later date with minimal or no notice. The issuer and/or regulator may also require that BlackRock on behalf of itself and its clients take or refrain from taking certain actions in connection with

the approval, order, consent, relief or non-disapproval, which BlackRock may accept if it believes the benefits outweigh the costs and may limit BlackRock from taking actions that it otherwise would take. In those circumstances where ownership thresholds or limitations must be observed, BlackRock seeks to allocate limited investment opportunities equitably among clients, taking into consideration benchmark weight and investment strategy. BlackRock may adopt certain controls designed to prevent the occurrence of a breach of any applicable ownership threshold or limits, including, for example, when ownership in certain securities nears an applicable threshold, BlackRock may limit additional purchases in such securities or remove such securities from the list of Deposit Securities to be delivered to the Fund in connection with purchases of Creation Units of the Fund. If client holdings of an issuer exceed an applicable threshold and BlackRock is unable to obtain relief to enable the continued holding of such investments, it may be necessary to reduce these positions to meet the applicable limitations and BlackRock or such client may be subject to regulatory actions. In these cases, the investments will be sold in a manner that BlackRock deems fair and equitable over time.

Ownership limitations are highly complex. It is possible that, despite BlackRock's intent to either comply with or be granted permission to exceed ownership limitations, it may inadvertently breach a limit or violate the corporate or regulatory approval, order, consent, relief or non-disapproval that was obtained.

In addition to the foregoing, other ownership thresholds may trigger reporting requirements to governmental and regulatory authorities, and such reports may entail the disclosure of the identity of a client or BlackRock's intended strategy with respect to such security or asset.

BlackRock may not serve as an Authorized Participant in the creation and redemption of the Fund and other BFA-advised ETFs.

Under an ETF Services Agreement, the Fund has retained BRIL, an affiliate of BFA, to perform certain order processing, Authorized Participant communications, and related services in connection with the issuance and redemption of Creation Units ("ETF Services"). BRIL has engaged Citibank, N.A. ("Citibank") as a subcontractor to provide certain ETF Services. BRIL retains a portion of the standard transaction fee received from Authorized Participants on each creation or redemption order from the Authorized Participant for the ETF Services provided. BlackRock collaborated with, and received payment from, Citibank on the design and development of the ETF Services platform. Citibank has, and may, from time to time, develop additional relationships with BlackRock or funds managed by BFA and its affiliates.

In order to defray transaction expenses and protect against possible shareholder dilution, the Fund may collect certain fees from Authorized Participants in connection with cash substitutions for creation and redemption transactions. While BlackRock uses good faith estimates of the expected costs to the Fund in determining the rates for fees collected by the Fund related to creation and redemption activity, BlackRock may have incentives to improve Fund performance through the collection of these fees. As these charges are based on estimates, where the charges exceed actual transaction costs incurred by the Fund, Fund performance could improve as a result. BlackRock has established processes to oversee the determination of these estimates in an effort to mitigate this conflict.

BlackRock may maintain securities indices. To the extent permitted by applicable laws, the Fund may seek to license and use such indices as part of its investment strategy. Index based funds that seek to track the performance of securities indices also may use the name of the index or index provider in the fund name. Index providers, including BlackRock (to the extent permitted by applicable law), may be paid licensing fees for use of their index or index name. In instances where BlackRock charges a unitary management fee, BlackRock may have a financial incentive to use a BlackRock index that is less costly to BlackRock than a third party index. BlackRock may benefit from the Fund using

BlackRock indices by creating increasing acceptance in the marketplace for such indices. BlackRock is not obligated to license its indices to the Fund and the Fund is under no obligation to use BlackRock indices. Any fund that enters into a license for a BlackRock index cannot be assured that the terms of any index licensing agreement with BlackRock will be as favorable as those terms offered to other licensees.

BlackRock may enter into contractual arrangements with third-party service providers to the Fund (e.g., custodians, administrators and index providers) pursuant to which BlackRock receives fee discounts or concessions in recognition of BlackRock's overall relationship with such service providers. BlackRock may also enter into contractual arrangements with such service providers pursuant to which BlackRock incurs additional costs if the service provider's services are terminated with respect to the Fund. To the extent that BlackRock is responsible for paying service providers out of its fees that it receives from the Fund, the benefits of lower fees, including any fee discounts or concessions, or any additional savings, may accrue, in whole or in part, to BlackRock, which could result in conflicts of interest relating to the use or termination of service providers to the Fund. In addition, conflicts of interest may arise with respect to contractual arrangements with third-party service providers to the Fund, or the selection of such providers, particularly in circumstances where BlackRock is negotiating on behalf of both funds that have a unitary management fee and those that do not or different service providers have different fee structures.

Conflicts of interest may arise as a result of simultaneous investment management of multiple client accounts by BlackRock's investment professionals. For example, differences in the advisory fee structure may create the appearance of actual or potential conflicts of interest because such differences could create pecuniary incentives for BlackRock to favor one client account over another.

BlackRock owns or has an ownership interest in certain trading, portfolio management, operations and/or information systems used by Fund service providers. These systems are, or will be, used by the Fund service provider in connection with the provision of services to accounts managed by BlackRock and funds managed and sponsored by BlackRock, including the Fund, that engage the service provider (typically the custodian). The Fund's service provider remunerates BlackRock for the use of the systems. The Fund service provider's payments to BlackRock for the use of these systems may enhance the profitability of BlackRock.

BlackRock's receipt of fees from a service provider in connection with the use of systems provided by BlackRock may create an incentive for BlackRock to recommend that the Fund enter into or renew an arrangement with the service provider.

In recognition of a BlackRock client's overall relationship with BlackRock, BlackRock may offer special pricing arrangements for certain services provided by BlackRock. Any such special pricing arrangements will not affect Fund fees and expenses applicable to such client's investment in the Fund.

Present and future activities of BlackRock and its directors, officers and employees, in addition to those described in this section, may give rise to additional conflicts of interest.

Investment Advisory, Administrative and Distribution Services

Investment Adviser. BFA serves as investment adviser to the Fund pursuant to an investment advisory agreement between the Trust, on behalf of the Fund, and BFA (the "Investment Advisory Agreement"). BFA is a California corporation indirectly owned by BlackRock, Inc. and is registered as an investment adviser under the Investment Advisers Act of 1940, as amended. Under the Investment Advisory Agreement, BFA, subject to the supervision of the Board and in conformity with the stated investment policies of the Fund, manages and administers the Trust and the investment of the Fund's assets. BFA is responsible for making investment decisions for the Fund.

Pursuant to the Investment Advisory Agreement, BFA may, from time to time, in its sole discretion and to the extent permitted by applicable law, appoint one or more sub-advisers, including, without limitation, affiliates of BFA, to perform investment advisory or other services with respect to the Fund. In addition, BFA may delegate certain of its investment advisory functions under the Investment Advisory Agreement to one or more of its affiliates to the extent permitted by applicable law. BFA may terminate any or all sub-advisers or such delegation arrangements in its sole discretion upon appropriate notice at any time to the extent permitted by applicable law.

BFA is responsible, under the Investment Advisory Agreement, for substantially all expenses of the Fund, including the cost of transfer agency, custody, fund administration, legal, audit and other services. BFA is not responsible for, and the Fund will bear the cost of, the management fees, interest expenses, taxes, expenses incurred with respect to the acquisition and disposition of portfolio securities and the execution of portfolio transactions, including brokerage commissions, distribution fees or expenses, litigation expenses and any extraordinary expenses (as determined by a majority of the Independent Trustees).

For its investment advisory services to the Fund, BFA is paid a management fee by the Fund, based on a percentage of the Fund's average daily net assets, at an annual rate of 0.99%.

BFA has contractually agreed to waive a portion of its management fees in an amount equal to the aggregate Acquired Fund Fees and Expenses, if any, attributable to investments by the Fund in other equity and fixed-income mutual funds and ETFs advised by BFA or its affiliates through June 30, 2028.

BFA has also contractually agreed to waive a portion of its management fees by an amount equal to the aggregate Acquired Fund Fees and Expenses, if any, attributable to investments by the Fund in money market funds advised by BFA or its affiliates through June 30, 2028. The agreement (with respect to either waiver) may be terminated upon 90 days' notice by a majority of the non-interested trustees of the Trust or by a vote of a majority of the outstanding voting securities of the Fund.

BFA may also from time to time voluntarily waive and/or reimburse other fees or expenses in order to limit total annual fund operating expenses (excluding acquired fund fees and expenses, if any). Any such voluntary waiver or reimbursement may be eliminated by BFA at any time.

The following table sets forth the management fee (net of any applicable waivers) the Fund paid BFA for the period noted.

Fund Inception Date	Management Fees Paid Net of Waivers for the Fiscal Year Ended April 30, 2026
December 9, 2025	$408,103

The Investment Advisory Agreement with respect to the Fund continues in effect for two years from its effective date, and thereafter is subject to annual approval by (i) the Board, or (ii) the vote of a majority of the outstanding voting securities (as defined in the 1940 Act) of the Fund, provided that in either event such continuance also is approved by a majority of the Board members who are not interested persons (as defined in the 1940 Act) of the Fund, by a vote cast in person at a meeting called for the purpose of voting on such approval.

The Investment Advisory Agreement with respect to the Fund is terminable without penalty, on 60 days' notice, by the Board or by a vote of the holders of a majority of the Fund's outstanding voting securities (as defined in the 1940 Act). The Investment Advisory Agreement is also terminable upon 60 days' notice by BFA and will terminate automatically in the event of its assignment (as defined in the 1940 Act).

Investment Sub-Adviser. Pursuant to the Investment Advisory Agreement between BFA and the Trust entered into on behalf of the Fund, BFA may from time to time, in its sole discretion, to the extent permitted by applicable law, appoint one or more sub-advisers, including, without limitation, affiliates of BFA, to perform investment advisory services with respect to the Fund. In addition, BFA may delegate certain of its investment advisory functions under the Investment Advisory Agreement to one or more of its affiliates to the extent permitted by applicable law. BFA may terminate any or all sub-advisers or such delegation arrangements in its sole discretion at any time to the extent permitted by applicable law.

BFA has entered into a sub-advisory agreement (the "Sub-Advisory Agreement") with BIL, an affiliate of BFA, with respect to the Fund. BIL is a registered investment adviser, organized in 1995, located in the U.K.

Subject to the supervision and oversight of the Board and BFA, BIL is primarily responsible for execution of securities transactions and the management of specified assets outside the U.S. and Canada in the Fund's portfolio.

Pursuant to the Sub-Advisory Agreement, BFA pays BIL for services it provides for that portion of the Fund for which it acts as sub-adviser a monthly fee at an annual rate equal to a percentage of the management fee paid to BFA under the Investment Advisory Agreement.

Unless earlier terminated as described below, the Sub-Advisory Agreement will remain in effect for an initial two year period and from year to year if approved annually (i) by the Board or by a vote of a majority of the Fund's outstanding voting securities and (ii) by a majority of the Trustees who are not parties to such agreement or interested persons (as defined in the 1940 Act) of any such party.

The Sub-Advisory Agreement is terminable without penalty, on 60 days' notice, by the Board or by a vote of the holders of a majority of the Fund's outstanding voting securities (as defined in the 1940 Act) and will terminate automatically in the event of its assignment (as defined in the 1940 Act).

Portfolio Managers. As of April 30, 2026, the individuals named as Portfolio Managers in the Fund's Prospectus were also primarily responsible for the day-to-day management of other BlackRock funds and certain other types of portfolios and/or accounts as follows:

Raffaele Savi

Types of Accounts	Number	Total Assets
Registered Investment Companies	37	$53.56 Billion
Other Pooled Investment Vehicles	68	64.58 Billion
Other Accounts	19	40.72 Billion

Richard Mathieson

Types of Accounts	Number	Total Assets
Registered Investment Companies	34	$41.44 Billion
Other Pooled Investment Vehicles	359	49.97 Billion
Other Accounts	47	78.44 Billion

Jeffrey Rosenberg

Types of Accounts	Number	Total Assets
Registered Investment Companies	8	$13.12 Billion
Other Pooled Investment Vehicles	6	1.79 Billion
Other Accounts	0	0

Stephanie Lee

Types of Accounts	Number	Total Assets
Registered Investment Companies	3	$ 34.16 Billion
Other Pooled Investment Vehicles	4	421.4 Million
Other Accounts	0	0

Pursuant to BFA's policy, investment opportunities are allocated equitably among the Fund and other portfolios and accounts. For example, under certain circumstances, an investment opportunity may be restricted due to limited supply in the market, legal constraints or other factors, in which event the investment opportunity will be allocated equitably among those portfolios and accounts, including the Fund, seeking such investment opportunity. As a consequence, from time to time the Fund may receive a smaller allocation of an investment opportunity than it would have if the Portfolio Managers and BFA and its affiliates did not manage other portfolios or accounts.

Like the Fund, the other portfolios or accounts for which the Portfolio Managers are primarily responsible for the day-to-day portfolio management generally pay an asset-based fee to BFA or its affiliates, as applicable, for its advisory services. One or more of those other portfolios or accounts, however, may pay BFA or its affiliates a performance-based fee in lieu of, or in addition to, an asset-based fee for its advisory services. A portfolio or account with a performance-based fee would pay BFA or its affiliates a portion of that portfolio's or account's gains, or would pay BFA or its affiliates more for its services than would otherwise be the case if BFA or any of its affiliates meets or exceeds specified performance targets. Performance-based fee arrangements could present an incentive for BFA or its affiliates to devote greater resources, and allocate more investment opportunities, to the portfolios or accounts that have those fee arrangements, relative to other portfolios or accounts, in order to earn larger fees. Although BFA and each of its affiliates have an obligation to allocate resources and opportunities equitably among portfolios and accounts and intend to do so, shareholders of the Fund should be aware that, as with any group of portfolios and accounts managed by an investment adviser and/or its affiliates pursuant to varying fee arrangements, including performance-based fee arrangements, there is the potential for a conflict of interest, which may result in the Portfolio Managers favoring those portfolios or accounts with performance-based fee arrangements.

The tables below show, for each Portfolio Manager, the number of portfolios or accounts of the types set forth in the above tables and the aggregate of total assets in those portfolios or accounts with respect to which the investment management fees are based on the performance of those portfolios or accounts as of April 30, 2026:

Raffaele Savi

Types of Accounts	Number of Other Accounts with Performance Fees Managed by Portfolio Manager	Aggregate of Total Assets
Registered Investment Companies	0	$ 0
Other Pooled Investment Vehicles	11	27.86 Billion
Other Accounts	3	4.68 Billion

Richard Mathieson

Types of Accounts	Number of Other Accounts with Performance Fees Managed by Portfolio Manager	Aggregate of Total Assets
Registered Investment Companies	0	$ 0
Other Pooled Investment Vehicles	5	3.36 Billion
Other Accounts	9	14.94 Billion

Jeffrey Rosenberg

Types of Accounts	Number of Other Accounts with Performance Fees Managed by Portfolio Manager	Aggregate of Total Assets
Registered Investment Companies	0	$ 0
Other Pooled Investment Vehicles	1	152.4 Million
Other Accounts	0	0

Stephanie Lee

Types of Accounts	Number of Other Accounts with Performance Fees Managed by Portfolio Manager	Aggregate of Total Assets
Registered Investment Companies	0	$ 0
Other Pooled Investment Vehicles	1	207.6 Million
Other Accounts	0	0

Portfolio Manager Compensation Overview

The discussion below describes the Portfolio Managers' compensation as of April 30, 2026.

BlackRock, Inc.'s financial arrangements with its portfolio managers, its competitive compensation and its career path emphasis at all levels reflect the value senior management places on key resources. Compensation may include a variety of components and may vary from year to year based on a number of factors. The principal components of compensation include a base salary, a performance-based discretionary bonus, participation in various benefits programs and one or more of the incentive compensation programs established by BlackRock, Inc.

Base compensation. Generally, portfolio managers receive base compensation based on their position with the firm.

Discretionary Incentive Compensation – Messrs. Savi and Mathieson and Ms. Lee. Discretionary incentive compensation is a function of several components: the performance of BlackRock, Inc., the performance of the portfolio manager's group within BlackRock, the investment performance, including risk-adjusted returns, of the firm's assets under management or supervision by that portfolio manager relative to predetermined benchmarks, and the individual's performance and contribution to the overall performance of these portfolios and BlackRock. Among other things, BlackRock's Chief Investment Officers make a subjective determination with respect to each portfolio manager's compensation based on the performance of the Funds and other accounts managed by each portfolio manager relative to the various benchmarks. Performance is generally assessed over trailing 1-,3-, and 5-year periods relative to applicable benchmarks. The performance of Messrs. Savi and Mathieson and Ms. Lee is not measured against a specific benchmark.

Discretionary Incentive Compensation – Mr. Rosenberg. Discretionary incentive compensation is a function of several components: the performance of BlackRock, Inc., the performance of the portfolio manager's group within BlackRock, the investment performance, including risk-adjusted returns, of the firm's assets under management or supervision by that portfolio manager relative to predetermined benchmarks, and the individual's performance and contribution to the overall performance of these portfolios and BlackRock. In most cases, these benchmarks are the same as the benchmark or benchmarks against which the performance of the Funds or other accounts managed by the portfolio managers are measured. Among other things, BlackRock's Chief Investment Officers make a subjective determination with respect to each portfolio manager's compensation based on the performance of the Funds and other accounts managed by each portfolio manager relative to the various benchmarks. Performance of fixed income funds is measured on a pre-tax and/or after-tax basis over various time periods including 1-, 3- and 5- year periods, as applicable. With respect to the portfolio manager, the benchmark for the Fund and other accounts is ICE BofA 3-Month U.S. Treasury Bill Index; FTSE 3-Month U.S. Treasury Bill Index.

Distribution of Discretionary Incentive Compensation. Discretionary incentive compensation is distributed to portfolio managers in a combination of cash, deferred BlackRock, Inc. stock awards, and/or deferred cash awards that notionally track the return of certain BlackRock investment products.

Portfolio managers receive their annual discretionary incentive compensation in the form of cash. Portfolio managers whose total compensation is above a specified threshold also receive deferred BlackRock, Inc. stock awards annually as part of their discretionary incentive compensation. Paying a portion of discretionary incentive compensation in the form of deferred BlackRock, Inc. stock puts compensation earned by a portfolio manager for a given year "at risk" based on BlackRock's ability to sustain and improve its performance over future periods. In some cases, additional deferred BlackRock, Inc. stock may be granted to certain key employees as part of a long-term incentive award

to aid in retention, align interests with long-term shareholders and motivate performance. Deferred BlackRock, Inc. stock awards are generally granted in the form of BlackRock, Inc. restricted stock units that vest pursuant to the terms of the applicable plan and, once vested, settle in BlackRock, Inc. common stock. The portfolio managers of this Fund have deferred BlackRock, Inc. stock awards.

For certain portfolio managers, a portion of the discretionary incentive compensation is also distributed in the form of deferred cash awards that notionally track the returns of select BlackRock investment products they manage, which provides direct alignment of portfolio manager discretionary incentive compensation with investment product results. Deferred cash awards vest ratably over a number of years and, once vested, settle in the form of cash. Only portfolio managers who manage specified products and whose total compensation is above a specified threshold are eligible to participate in the deferred cash award program.

Other Compensation Benefits. In addition to base salary and discretionary incentive compensation, portfolio managers may be eligible to receive or participate in one or more of the following:

Incentive Savings Plans — BlackRock, Inc. has created a variety of incentive savings plans in which BlackRock, Inc. employees are eligible to participate, including a 401(k) plan, the BlackRock Retirement Savings Plan (RSP), and the BlackRock Employee Stock Purchase Plan (ESPP). The employer contribution components of the RSP include a company match equal to 50% of the first 8% of eligible pay contributed to the plan capped at $5,000 per year, and a company retirement contribution equal to 3-5% of eligible compensation up to the Internal Revenue Service limit ($360,000 for 2026). The RSP offers a range of investment options, including registered investment companies and collective investment funds managed by the firm. BlackRock, Inc. contributions follow the investment direction set by participants for their own contributions or, absent participant investment direction, are invested into a target date fund that corresponds to, or is closest to, the year in which the participant attains age 65. The ESPP allows for investment in BlackRock, Inc. common stock at a 5% discount on the fair market value of the stock on the purchase date. Annual participation in the ESPP is limited to the purchase of 1,000 shares of common stock or a dollar value of $25,000 based on its fair market value on the purchase date. All of the eligible portfolio managers are eligible to participate in these plans.

As of April 30, 2026, the Portfolio Managers did not beneficially own shares of the Fund.

Codes of Ethics. The Trust, BFA, the Sub-Adviser and the Distributor have adopted codes of ethics pursuant to Rule 17j-1 under the 1940 Act. The codes of ethics permit personnel subject to the codes of ethics to invest in securities, subject to certain limitations, including securities that may be purchased or held by the Fund. Each code of ethics is available by contacting BlackRock at the telephone number on the back cover of the Fund's Prospectus or by accessing the EDGAR Database on the SEC's Internet site at http://www.sec.gov, and copies may be obtained, after paying a duplicating fee, by e-mail at publicinfo@sec.gov.

Anti-Money Laundering Requirements. The Fund is subject to the USA PATRIOT Act (the "Patriot Act"). The Patriot Act is intended to prevent the use of the U.S. financial system in furtherance of money laundering, terrorism or other illicit activities. Pursuant to requirements under the Patriot Act, the Fund may request information from Authorized Participants to enable it to form a reasonable belief that it knows the true identity of its Authorized Participants. This information will be used to verify the identity of Authorized Participants or, in some cases, the status of financial professionals; it will be used only for compliance with the requirements of the Patriot Act.

The Fund reserves the right to reject purchase orders from persons who have not submitted information sufficient to allow the Fund to verify their identity. The Fund also reserves the right to

redeem any amounts in the Fund from persons whose identity it is unable to verify on a timely basis. It is the Fund's policy to cooperate fully with appropriate regulators in any investigations conducted with respect to potential money laundering, terrorism or other illicit activities.

Administrator, Custodian and Transfer Agent. State Street Bank and Trust Company ("State Street") serves as administrator, custodian and transfer agent for the Fund under the Master Services Agreement and related Service Schedule (the "Service Module"). State Street's principal address is One Congress Street, Suite 1, Boston, MA 02114. Pursuant to the Service Module for Fund Administration and Accounting Services with the Trust, State Street provides necessary administrative, legal, tax and accounting and financial reporting services for the maintenance and operations of the Trust and the Fund. In addition, State Street makes available the office space, equipment, personnel and facilities required to provide such services. Pursuant to the Service Module for Custodial Services with the Trust, State Street maintains, in separate accounts, cash, securities and other assets of the Trust and the Fund, keeps all necessary accounts and records and provides other services. State Street is required, upon the order of the Trust, to deliver securities held by State Street and to make payments for securities purchased by the Trust for the Fund. State Street is authorized to appoint certain foreign custodians or foreign custody managers for Fund investments outside the U.S. Pursuant to the Service Module for Transfer Agency Services with the Trust, State Street acts as a transfer agent for the Fund's authorized and issued shares of beneficial interest, and as dividend disbursing agent of the Trust. As compensation for these services, State Street receives certain out-of-pocket costs, transaction fees and asset-based fees which are accrued daily and paid monthly by BFA. BFA pays the compensation because it has agreed to pay these operating expenses under the Investment Advisory Agreement as described therein.

Credit Agreement. The Trust, on behalf of the Fund, along with certain other funds managed by BlackRock Fund Advisors and its affiliates ("Participating Funds"), is a party to a 364-day, $2.4 billion credit agreement with a group of lenders, which facility terminates on April 8, 2027, unless otherwise extended or renewed (the "Credit Agreement"). Excluding commitments designated for certain Participating Funds, the Participating Funds, including the Fund, can borrow up to an aggregate commitment amount of $1.75 billion at any time outstanding, subject to asset coverage and other limitations as specified in the Credit Agreement. The Fund may borrow under the Credit Agreement to meet shareholder redemptions and for other lawful purposes. However, the Fund may not borrow under the Credit Agreement for leverage. The Fund may borrow up to the maximum amount allowable under its current Prospectus and SAI, subject to various other legal, regulatory or contractual limits. Borrowing results in interest expense and other fees and expenses for the Fund which may impact the Fund's net expenses. The costs of borrowing may reduce the Fund's return. The Fund is charged its pro rata share of upfront fees and commitment fees on the aggregate commitment amount based on its net assets. If the Fund borrows pursuant to the Credit Agreement, the Fund will be charged interest at a variable rate.

Distributor. The Distributor's principal address is 50 Hudson Yards, New York, NY 10001. Shares are continuously offered for sale by the Fund through the Distributor or its agent only in Creation Units, as described in the Prospectus and below in the *Creation and Redemption of Creation Units* section of this SAI. Fund shares in amounts less than Creation Units are generally not distributed by the Distributor or its agent. The Distributor or its agent will arrange for the delivery of the Prospectus and, upon request, this SAI to persons purchasing Creation Units and will maintain records of both orders placed with it or its agents and confirmations of acceptance furnished by it or its agents. The Distributor is a broker-dealer registered under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the "1934 Act"), and a member of the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, Inc. ("FINRA"). The Distributor is also licensed as a broker-dealer in all 50 U.S. states, as well as in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia.

The Distribution Agreement for the Fund provides that it may be terminated at any time, without the payment of any penalty, on at least 60 days' prior written notice to the other party following (i) the vote

of a majority of the Independent Trustees, or (ii) the vote of a majority of the outstanding voting securities (as defined in the 1940 Act) of the Fund. The Distribution Agreement will terminate automatically in the event of its assignment (as defined in the 1940 Act).

The Distributor may also enter into agreements with securities dealers ("Soliciting Dealers") who will solicit purchases of Creation Units of Fund shares. Such Soliciting Dealers may also be Authorized Participants (as described below), Depository Trust Company ("DTC") participants and/or investor services organizations.

BFA or its affiliates may, from time to time and from its own resources, pay, defray or absorb costs relating to distribution, including payments out of its own resources to the Distributor, or to otherwise promote the sale of shares.

Securities Lending. To the extent that the Fund engages in securities lending, the Fund conducts its securities lending pursuant to an exemptive order from the Commission permitting it to lend portfolio securities to borrowers affiliated with the Fund and to retain an affiliate of the Fund as securities lending agent. To the extent that the Fund engages in securities lending, BTC acts as securities lending agent for the Fund, subject to the overall supervision of BFA, pursuant to a written agreement (the "Securities Lending Agency Agreement"). BTC administers the lending program in accordance with guidelines approved by the Board.

The Fund retains a portion of the securities lending income and remits the remaining portion to BTC as compensation for its services as securities lending agent. Securities lending income is generally equal to the total of income earned from the reinvestment of cash collateral (and excludes collateral investment fees as defined below), and any fees or other payments to and from borrowers of securities. As securities lending agent, BTC bears all operational costs directly related to securities lending. The Fund is responsible for fees in connection with the investment of cash collateral received for securities on loan in money market funds advised by BFA or its affiliates, and such fees will not be subject to any waivers (the "collateral investment fees"); however, BTC has agreed to reduce the amount of securities lending income it receives in order to effectively limit the collateral investment fees the Fund bears to an annual rate of 0.04%. Such money market fund shares will not be subject to a sales load, distribution fee or service fee.

To the extent that the Fund invests cash collateral in a non-government money market fund, the Fund may be subject to a discretionary liquidity fee of up to 2% on all redemptions. Discretionary liquidity fees may be imposed or terminated at any time at the discretion of the board of directors of the money market fund, or its delegate, if it is determined that such fee would be, or would not be, respectively, in the best interest of the money market fund. Additionally, the Fund will be subject to a mandatory liquidity fee if the money market fund's total net redemptions on a single day exceed 5% of the money market fund's net assets, unless the liquidity costs are de minimis (*i.e.*, less than one basis point (0.01%)). The money market fund will determine the size of the mandatory liquidity fee by making a good faith estimate of certain costs the money market fund would incur if it were to sell a pro rata amount of each security in the portfolio to satisfy the amount of net redemptions on that day. There is no limit to the size of a mandatory liquidity fee. If the money market fund cannot estimate the costs of selling a pro rata amount of each portfolio security in good faith and supported by data, it is required to apply a default liquidity fee of 1% on the value of shares redeemed on that day. The imposition of any such discretionary or mandatory liquidity fee would reduce the Fund's returns on securities lending.

Under the securities lending program, the Fund is categorized into one of several specific asset classes. The determination of the Fund's asset class category (fixed-income, domestic equity, international equity or fund of funds), each of which may be subject to a different fee arrangement, is based on a methodology agreed to by the Trust and BTC.

Pursuant to the securities lending agreement effective January 1, 2026: (i) the Fund retains 82% of securities lending income (which excludes collateral investment fees); and (ii) this amount can never be less than 70% of the sum of securities lending income plus collateral investment fees.

In addition, commencing the business day following the date that the aggregate securities lending income earned across the BlackRock Multi-Asset Complex in a calendar year exceeds specified thresholds, the Fund, pursuant to the current securities lending agreement, will receive for the remainder of that calendar year securities lending income as follows: (i) 85% of securities lending income (which excludes collateral investment fees); and (ii) this amount can never be less than 70% of the sum of securities lending income plus collateral investment fees.

Prior to January 1, 2026, the Fund was subject to the same securities lending fee arrangement.

The services provided to the Fund by BTC, in the most recent fiscal year ended April 30, 2026, primarily included the following:

(1) selecting borrowers from an approved list of borrowers and executing a securities lending agreement as agent on behalf of the Fund with each such borrower;

(2) negotiating the terms of securities loans, including the amount of fees;

(3) directing the delivery of loaned securities;

(4) monitoring the daily value of the loaned securities and directing the payment of additional collateral or the return of excess collateral, as necessary;

(5) investing cash collateral received in connection with any loaned securities;

(6) monitoring distributions on loaned securities (for example, interest and dividend activity);

(7) in the event of default by a borrower with respect to any securities loan, using the collateral or the proceeds of the liquidation of collateral to purchase replacement securities of the same issue, type, class and series as that of the loaned securities; and

(8) terminating securities loans and arranging for the return of loaned securities to the Fund at loan termination.

The following table shows the dollar amounts of income and fees/compensation related to the securities lending activities of the Fund during its most recent fiscal year ended April 30, 2026.

Gross Income from securities lending activities	**$**	**2,668**
Fees and/or compensation for securities lending activities and related services		
Securities lending income paid to BTC for services as securities lending agent	$	16
Cash collateral management expenses not included in securities lending income paid to BTC	$	29
Administrative fees not included in securities lending income paid to BTC	$	0
Indemnification fees not included in securities lending income paid to BTC	$	0
Rebates (paid to borrowers)	$	2,501
Other fees not included in securities lending income paid to BTC	$	0
Aggregate fees/compensation for securities lending activities	**$**	**2,546**
Net Income from securities lending activities	**$**	**122**

Payments by BFA and its Affiliates. BFA and/or its affiliates ("BFA Entities") pay certain broker-dealers, registered investment advisers, banks and other financial intermediaries ("Intermediaries") for certain activities related to the Fund and other funds or products sponsored and/or advised by BFA Entities (collectively for purposes of this section, the "Products"). BFA Entities make these payments

from their own assets and not from the assets of the Fund. Although a portion of BFA Entities' revenue comes directly or indirectly in part from fees paid by the Fund or other Products (including, if applicable, any underlying Products held by the Fund), these payments do not increase the price paid by investors for the purchase of shares of, or the cost of owning, the Fund or other Products. BFA Entities make payments for Intermediaries' participation in activities that are designed to make registered representatives, other professionals and individual investors more knowledgeable about exchange-traded products, including the Fund and other Products, or for other activities, such as participation in marketing activities and presentations, educational training programs, conferences, the development of technology platforms and reporting systems ("Education Costs"). BFA Entities also make payments to Intermediaries for certain printing, publishing and mailing costs or materials relating to the Fund or other Products ("Publishing Costs"). In addition, BFA Entities make payments to Intermediaries that make shares of the Fund or other Products available to their clients, in some cases at a waived or reduced commission rate or ticket charge, develop new products that feature iShares, create educational content about the Fund or other Products that is featured on an Intermediary's platform, or otherwise promote the Fund or other Products. BFA Entities may also reimburse expenses or make payments from their own assets to Intermediaries or other persons in consideration of services or other activities that the BFA Entities believe may benefit the business of the BFA Entities or facilitate investment in the Fund or other Products. Payments of the type described above are sometimes referred to as revenue-sharing payments.

Payments to an Intermediary may be significant to the Intermediary, and amounts that Intermediaries pay to your salesperson or other investment professional may also be significant for your salesperson or other investment professional. Because an Intermediary may make decisions about which investment options it will recommend or make available to its clients, what services to provide for various products or what marketing content to make available to its clients based on payments it receives or is eligible to receive, such payments may create conflicts of interest between the Intermediary and its clients. These financial incentives may cause the Intermediary to recommend the Fund or other Products or otherwise promote the Fund or other Products over other investments. The same conflicts of interest and financial incentives exist with respect to your salesperson or other investment professional if he or she receives similar payments from his or her Intermediary firm.

In addition to the payments described above, BFA Entities have developed proprietary tools, calculators and related interactive or digital content that is made available through the www.blackrock.com website at no additional cost to Intermediaries. BlackRock may configure these tools and calculators and localize the content for Intermediaries as part of its customary digital marketing support and promotion of the Fund or other Products.

As of March 1, 2013, BFA Entities have contractual arrangements to make payments (in addition to payments for Education Costs or Publishing Costs) to one Intermediary, Fidelity Brokerage Services LLC ("FBS"). Effective June 4, 2016, this relationship was expanded to include National Financial Services, LLC ("NFS"), an affiliate of FBS. Pursuant to this special, long-term and significant arrangement (the "Marketing Program"), FBS, NFS and certain of their affiliates (collectively "Fidelity") have agreed, among other things, to actively promote certain funds and Products to customers, investment professionals and other intermediaries and in advertising campaigns as the preferred exchange-traded product, to offer certain funds and Products in certain Fidelity platforms and investment programs, in some cases at a waived or reduced commission rate or ticket charge, and to provide marketing data to BFA Entities. BFA Entities have agreed to facilitate the Marketing Program by, among other things, making certain payments to FBS and NFS for marketing and implementing certain brokerage and investment programs. Upon termination of the arrangement, the BFA Entities will make additional payments to FBS and/or NFS based upon a number of criteria, including the overall success of the Marketing Program and the level of services provided by FBS and NFS during the wind-down period.

In addition, BFA Entities have entered into other contractual arrangements with Intermediaries and certain other third parties that the BFA Entities believe may benefit the business of the BFA Entities or facilitate investment in the Fund or certain Products. Such agreements can include payments by BFA Entities to such Intermediaries and third parties for data collection and provision, technology support, platform enhancement, or educational content, co-marketing and cross-promotional efforts. In certain cases, such payments to Intermediaries are subject to certain minimum payment levels or tiered payments. With respect to certain funds and Products, payments by the BFA Entities may take the form of, among other things, "due diligence" payments for an Intermediary's review of such funds and Products; payment for providing employee training and information relating to such funds and Products; fees for access (in some cases on a preferential basis) to an Intermediary's registered representatives, salespersons or other personnel, fees for maintaining an Intermediary's investor platform, "shelf space" payments for making such funds and Products available on the Intermediary's platform or fees for providing assistance in promoting the sale of such funds and Products. In such cases, the payments to Intermediaries may be tiered or based on a percentage of the value of the funds and Products held by customers of the applicable Intermediary and may also be subject to minimum payment levels. Payments made pursuant to such arrangements may vary in any year and may be different for different Intermediaries and third parties and may reflect different services provided. As of the date of this SAI, the Intermediaries and other third parties (or their respective affiliates) receiving one or more types of the contractual payments described above include (in addition to FBS and NFS): &Partners, Advisor Credit Exchange, AE Wealth Management, LLC, American Enterprise Investment Services, Inc., Avantax Investment Services, Inc., BNY Mellon Capital Markets, LLC, BNY Mellon Performance & Risk Analytics, LLC, Cetera Financial Group, Inc., Charles Schwab & Co., Inc., Clearstream Fund Centre AG, Commonwealth Equity Services, LLC, Dorsey Wright and Associates, LLC, Dynasty Financial Partners LLC, E*Trade Securities LLC, Envestnet Asset Management, Inc., iCapital Markets LLC, Interactive Brokers LLC, LPL Financial LLC, Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Incorporated, MML Investors Services, LLC, Morgan Stanley Smith Barney LLC, Northwestern Mutual Investment Services, LLC, Orion Portfolio Solutions, LLC, Pershing LLC, Raymond James Financial Services, Inc., Riskalyze, Inc., Rockefeller Financial LLC, Sanctuary Wealth Group, LLC, UBS Financial Services Inc., Wells Fargo Clearing Services, LLC and Wells Fargo Advisors Financial Network, LLC. Any additions, modifications, or deletions to Intermediaries and other third parties listed above that have occurred since the date of this SAI are not included in the list.

Further, BFA Entities make Education Costs and Publishing Costs payments to other Intermediaries that are not listed in the immediately preceding paragraph. BFA Entities may determine to make such payments based on any number of metrics. For example, BFA Entities may make payments at year-end or other intervals in a fixed amount, an amount based upon an Intermediary's services at defined levels or an amount based on the Intermediary's net sales of one or more Products, including the Fund, in a year or other period, any of which arrangements may include an agreed-upon minimum or maximum payment, or any combination of the foregoing. **Please contact your salesperson or other investment professional for more information regarding any such payments or financial incentives his or her Intermediary firm may receive. Any payments made, or financial incentives offered, by the BFA Entities to an Intermediary may create the incentive for the Intermediary to encourage customers to buy shares of the Fund or other Products.**

The Fund may participate in certain market maker incentive programs of a national securities exchange in which an affiliate of the Fund would pay a fee to the exchange used for the purpose of incentivizing one or more market makers in the securities of the Fund to enhance the liquidity and quality of the secondary market of securities of the Fund. The fee would then be credited by the exchange to one or more market makers that meet or exceed liquidity and market quality standards with respect to the securities of the Fund. Each market maker incentive program is subject to approval from the SEC. Any such fee payments made to an exchange will be made by an affiliate of the Fund solely for the benefit of the Fund and will not be paid from any Fund assets. Other funds managed by BFA may also participate in such programs.

Determination of Net Asset Value

Valuation of Shares. The NAV for the Fund is generally calculated as of the close of regular trading hours on the New York Stock Exchange ("NYSE") (normally 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time) on each business day the NYSE is open. Valuation of assets held by the Fund is as follows:

Equity Investments. Equity securities traded on a recognized securities exchange (e.g., NYSE), on separate trading boards of a securities exchange or through a market system that provides contemporaneous transaction pricing information (each an "Exchange") are valued using information obtained via independent pricing services, generally at the Exchange closing price or if an Exchange closing price is not available, the last traded price on that Exchange prior to the time as of which the assets or liabilities are valued. However, under certain circumstances, other means of determining current market value may be used. If an equity security is traded on more than one Exchange, the current market value of the security where it is primarily traded generally will be used. In the event that there are no sales involving an equity security held by the Fund on a day on which the Fund values such security, the prior day's price will be used, unless BFA determines that such prior day's price no longer reflects the fair value of the security, in which case such asset would be treated as a Fair Value Asset (as defined below).

Fixed-Income Investments. Fixed-income securities are generally valued using bid prices provided by dealers or prices (including evaluated prices) supplied by the Fund's approved independent third-party pricing services, each in accordance with the Valuation Procedures. The pricing services may use valuation models that utilize certain inputs and assumptions to derive values, including transaction data (e.g., recent representative bids and offers), credit quality information, perceived market movements, news, and other relevant information and by other methods, which may include consideration of: yields or prices of securities of comparable quality, coupon, maturity and type; indications as to values from dealers; general market conditions; and/or other factors and assumptions. Pricing services generally value fixed-income securities assuming orderly transactions of an institutional round lot size, but the Fund may hold or transact in such securities in smaller, odd lot sizes. Odd lots of securities in certain asset classes may trade at lower prices than institutional round lots, and the value ultimately realized when the securities are sold could differ from the prices used by the Fund. The amortized cost method of valuation may be used with respect to debt obligations with 60 days or less remaining to maturity unless such method does not represent fair value. Certain fixed-income investments, including asset-backed and mortgage related securities, may be valued based on valuation models that consider the estimated cash flows of each tranche of the issuer, establish a benchmark yield and develop an estimated tranche specific spread to the benchmark yield based on the unique attributes of the tranche.

Options, Futures, Swaps and Other Derivatives. Exchange-traded equity options (except ETF options, equity index options or those that are customized) for which market quotations are readily available are valued at the mean of the last bid and ask prices as quoted on the Exchange or the board of trade on which such options are traded. In the event that there is no mean price available for an exchange traded equity option held by the Fund on a day on which the Fund values such option, the last bid (long positions) or ask (short positions) price, if available, will be used as the value of such option. If no bid or ask price is available on a day on which the Fund values such option, the prior day's price will be used, unless BFA determines that such prior day's price no longer reflects the fair value of the option, in which case such option will be treated as a Fair Value Asset. Customized exchange-traded equity options, ETF options, equity index options and OTC derivatives, may be valued using a mathematical model which may incorporate a number of market data factors. Financial futures contracts and options thereon, which are traded on exchanges, are valued at their last sale price or

settle price as of the close of such exchanges. Swap agreements and other derivatives are generally valued daily based upon quotations from market makers or by a pricing service in accordance with the Valuation Procedures.

Underlying Funds. Shares of underlying open-end funds that are not traded on an exchange (including money market funds) are valued at NAV. Shares of underlying exchange-traded closed-end funds or other ETFs will be valued at their most recent closing price.

General Valuation Information. Prices obtained from independent third-party pricing services, broker-dealers or market makers to value the Fund's securities and other assets and liabilities are based on information available at the time the Fund values its assets and liabilities. In the event that a pricing service quotation is revised or updated subsequent to the day on which the Fund valued such security, the revised pricing service quotation generally will be applied prospectively. Such determination will be made considering pertinent facts and circumstances surrounding the revision.

The price the Fund could receive upon the sale of any particular portfolio investment may differ from the Fund's valuation of the investment, particularly for assets that trade in thin or volatile markets or that are valued using a fair valuation methodology or a price provided by an independent pricing service. As a result, the price received upon the sale of an investment may be less than the value ascribed by the Fund, and the Fund could realize a greater than expected loss or lesser than expected gain upon the sale of the investment. The Fund's ability to value its investment may also be impacted by technological issues and/or errors by pricing services or other third-party service providers.

In the event that application of the methods of valuation discussed above result in a price for a security which is deemed not to be representative of the fair market value of such security, the security will be valued by, under the direction of or in accordance with a method approved by BFA, the Fund's valuation designee, as reflecting fair value. All other assets and liabilities (including securities for which market quotations are not readily available) held by the Fund (including restricted securities and private market investments, as applicable) are valued at fair value as determined in good faith by BFA pursuant to the Valuation Procedures. Any assets and liabilities which are denominated in a foreign currency are translated into U.S. dollars at the prevailing market rates.

Fair Value. When market quotations are not readily available or are believed by BFA to be unreliable, the Fund's investments are valued at fair value ("Fair Value Assets"). Fair Value Assets are valued by BFA in accordance with the Valuation Procedures. Pursuant to Rule 2a-5 under the Investment Company Act, the Board has designated BFA as the valuation designee for the Fund. BFA may reasonably conclude that a market quotation is not readily available or is unreliable if, among other things, a security or other asset or liability does not have a price source due to its complete lack of trading, if BFA believes a market quotation from a broker-dealer or other source is unreliable (e.g., where it varies significantly from a recent trade, or no longer reflects the fair value of the security or other asset or liability subsequent to the most recent market quotation), or where the security or other asset or liability is only thinly traded or due to the occurrence of a significant event subsequent to the most recent market quotation. For this purpose, a "significant event" is deemed to occur if BFA determines, in its reasonable business judgment, that an event has occurred after the close of trading for an asset or liability but prior to or at the time of pricing the Fund's assets or liabilities, is likely to cause a material change to the last exchange closing price or closing market price of one or more assets held by, or liabilities of, the Fund. On any day the NYSE is open and a foreign market or the primary exchange on which a foreign asset or liability is traded is closed, such asset or liability will be valued using the prior day's price, provided that BFA is not aware of any significant event or other information that would cause such price to no longer reflect the fair value of the asset or liability, in which case such asset or liability would be treated as a Fair Value Asset. For certain foreign assets, a third-party vendor supplies evaluated, systematic fair value pricing based upon the movement of a

proprietary multi-factor model after the relevant foreign markets have closed. This systematic fair value pricing methodology is designed to correlate the prices of foreign assets in one or more non-U.S. markets following the close of the local markets to the prices that might have prevailed as of the Fund's pricing time.

BFA's Rule 2a-5 Committee is responsible for reviewing and approving methodologies by investment type and significant inputs used in the fair valuation of Fund assets or liabilities. In addition, the Fund's accounting agent assists BFA by periodically endeavoring to confirm the prices it receives from all third-party pricing services, index providers and broker-dealers. BFA regularly evaluates the values assigned to the securities and other assets and liabilities of the Fund.

When determining the price for a Fair Value Asset, BFA will seek to determine the price that the Fund might reasonably expect to receive from the current sale of that asset or liability in an arm's-length transaction on the date on which the asset or liability is being valued, and does not seek to determine the price the Fund might reasonably expect to receive for selling an asset or liability at a later time or if it holds the asset or liability to maturity. Fair value determinations will be based upon all available factors that BFA deems relevant at the time of the determination, and may be based on analytical values determined by BFA using proprietary or third-party valuation models.

Fair value represents a good faith approximation of the value of an asset or liability. When determining the fair value of an investment, one or more fair value methodologies may be used (depending on certain factors, including the asset type). For example, the investment may be initially priced based on the original cost of the investment or, alternatively, using proprietary or third-party models that may rely upon one or more unobservable inputs. Prices of actual, executed or historical transactions in the relevant investment (or comparable instruments) or, where appropriate, an appraisal by a third-party experienced in the valuation of similar instruments, may also be used as a basis for establishing the fair value of an investment.

The fair value of one or more assets or liabilities may not, in retrospect, be the price at which those assets or liabilities could have been sold during the period in which the particular fair values were used in determining the Fund's NAV. As a result, the Fund's sale or redemption of its shares at NAV, at a time when a holding or holdings are valued at fair value, may have the effect of diluting or increasing the economic interest of existing shareholders.

The Fund's annual audited financial statements, which are prepared in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America ("US GAAP"), follow the requirements for valuation set forth in Financial Accounting Standards Board Accounting Standards Codification Topic 820, "Fair Value Measurements and Disclosures" ("ASC 820"), which defines and establishes a framework for measuring fair value under US GAAP and expands financial statement disclosure requirements relating to fair value measurements.

Generally, ASC 820 and other accounting rules applicable to funds and various assets in which they invest are evolving. Such changes may adversely affect the Fund. For example, the evolution of rules governing the determination of the fair market value of assets or liabilities, to the extent such rules become more stringent, would tend to increase the cost and/or reduce the availability of third-party determinations of fair market value. This may in turn increase the costs associated with selling assets or affect their liquidity due to the Fund's inability to obtain a third-party determination of fair market value.

Brokerage Transactions

Subject to policies established by the Board, BFA is primarily responsible for the execution of the Fund's portfolio transactions and the allocation of brokerage. BFA does not execute transactions through any particular broker or dealer, but seeks to obtain the best net results for the Fund, taking into account certain factors set out below. While BFA generally seeks reasonable trade execution costs, the Fund does not necessarily pay the lowest spread or commission available, and payment of the lowest commission or spread is not necessarily consistent with obtaining the best price and execution in particular transactions. Subject to applicable legal requirements, BFA may select a broker based partly upon brokerage or research services provided to BFA and its clients, including the Fund. In return for such services, BFA may cause the Fund to pay a higher commission than other brokers would charge if BFA determines in good faith that the commission is reasonable in relation to the services provided.

In selecting brokers or dealers to execute portfolio transactions, BFA and the Sub-Adviser seek to obtain the best price and most favorable execution for the Fund, taking into account a variety of factors including: (i) the size, nature and character of the security or instrument being traded and the markets in which it is purchased or sold; (ii) the desired timing of the transaction; (iii) BFA's knowledge of the expected commission rates and spreads currently available; (iv) the activity existing and expected in the market for the particular security or instrument, including any anticipated execution difficulties; (v) the full range of brokerage services provided; (vi) the broker's or dealer's capital; (vii) the quality of research and research services provided; (viii) the reasonableness of the commission, dealer spread or its equivalent for the specific transaction; and (ix) BFA's knowledge of any actual or apparent operational problems of a broker or dealer.

Section 28(e) of the 1934 Act ("Section 28(e)") permits an investment adviser, under certain circumstances, to cause an account to pay a broker or dealer a commission for effecting a transaction that exceeds the amount another broker or dealer would have charged for effecting the same transaction in recognition of the value of brokerage and research services provided by that broker or dealer. This includes commissions paid on riskless principal transactions in securities under certain conditions.

Brokerage and research services include: (1) furnishing advice as to the value of securities, including pricing and appraisal advice, credit analysis, risk measurement analysis, performance and other analysis, as well as the advisability of investing in, purchasing or selling securities, and the availability of securities or purchasers or sellers of securities; (2) furnishing analyses and reports concerning issuers, industries, securities, economic factors and trends, portfolio strategy, and the performance of accounts; and (3) effecting securities transactions and performing functions incidental to securities transactions (such as clearance, settlement, and custody). BFA believes that access to independent investment research is beneficial to its investment decision-making processes and, therefore, to the Fund. BFA, unless prohibited by applicable law, may participate in client commission arrangements under which BFA may execute transactions through a broker-dealer and request that the broker-dealer allocate a portion of the commissions or commission credits to another firm that provides research to BFA. BFA believes that research services obtained through soft dollar or commission sharing arrangements enhance its investment decision-making capabilities, thereby increasing the prospects for higher investment returns. BFA will engage only in soft dollar or commission sharing transactions that comply with the requirements of Section 28(e).

Under MiFID II, EU investment managers, including BIL, pay for any research out of their own resources and not through soft dollars or commission sharing arrangements. BFA regularly evaluates

the soft dollar products and services utilized, as well as the overall soft dollar and commission sharing arrangements to ensure that trades are executed by firms that are regarded as best able to execute trades for client accounts, while at the same time providing access to the research and other services BFA views as impactful to its trading results.

BFA, unless prohibited by applicable law, may utilize soft dollars and related services, including research (whether prepared by the broker-dealer or prepared by a third-party and provided to BFA by the broker-dealer) and execution or brokerage services within applicable rules and BFA's policies to the extent that such permitted services do not compromise BFA's ability to seek to obtain best execution. In this regard, the portfolio management investment and/or trading teams may consider a variety of factors, including the degree to which the broker-dealer: (a) provides access to company management; (b) provides access to their analysts; (c) provides meaningful/insightful research notes on companies or other potential investments; (d) facilitates calls on which meaningful or insightful ideas about companies or potential investments are discussed; (e) facilitates conferences at which meaningful or insightful ideas about companies or potential investments are discussed; or (f) provides research tools such as market data, financial analysis, and other third-party related research and brokerage tools that aid in the investment process.

Research-oriented services for which BFA, unless prohibited by applicable law, might pay with Fund commissions may be in written form or through direct contact with individuals and may include information as to particular companies or industries and securities or groups of securities, as well as market, economic, or institutional advice and statistical information, political developments and technical market information that assists in the valuation of investments. Except as noted immediately below, research services furnished by brokers may be used in servicing some or all client accounts and not all services may be used in connection with the fund or account that paid commissions to the broker providing such services. In some cases, research information received from brokers by mutual fund management personnel, or personnel principally responsible for BFA's individually managed portfolios, is not necessarily shared by and between such personnel. Any investment advisory or other fees paid by the Fund to BFA are not reduced as a result of BFA's receipt of research services. In some cases, BFA may receive a service from a broker that has both a "research" and a "non-research" use. When this occurs BFA makes a good faith allocation, under all the circumstances, between the research and non-research uses of the service. The percentage of the service that is used for research purposes may be paid for with client commissions, while BFA will use its own funds to pay for the percentage of the service that is used for non-research purposes. In making this good faith allocation, BFA faces a potential conflict of interest, but BFA believes that its allocation procedures are reasonably designed to ensure that it appropriately allocates the anticipated use of such services to their research and non-research uses.

Under MiFID II, investment managers in the EU, including BIL, are not able to use soft dollars to pay for research from brokers. Investment managers in the EU are required to either pay for research out of their own profit and loss or agree with clients to have research costs paid by clients through research payment accounts that are directly funded or funded by a specific client research charge collected alongside execution commissions, provided that the payments for research are unbundled from the payments for execution. BIL will pay for any research out of its own resources and not through soft dollars or commission sharing arrangements. Payments of commissions to brokers who are affiliated persons of the Fund will be made in accordance with Rule 17e-1 under the Investment Company Act.

From time to time, the Fund may purchase new issues of securities in a fixed price offering. In these situations, the broker may be a member of the selling group that will, in addition to selling securities, provide BFA with research services. FINRA has adopted rules expressly permitting these types of arrangements under certain circumstances. Generally, the broker will provide research "credits" in

these situations at a rate that is higher than that available for typical secondary market transactions. These arrangements may not fall within the safe harbor of Section 28(e).

The Fund anticipates that its brokerage transactions involving foreign securities generally will be conducted primarily on the principal stock exchanges of the applicable country. Foreign equity securities may be held by the Fund in the form of depositary receipts, or other securities convertible into foreign equity securities. Depositary receipts may be listed on stock exchanges, or traded in OTC markets in the United States or Europe, as the case may be. American Depositary Receipts, like other securities traded in the United States, will be subject to negotiated commission rates.

The Fund may invest in certain securities traded in the OTC market and intends to deal directly with the dealers who make a market in the particular securities, except in those circumstances in which better prices and execution are available elsewhere. Under the Investment Company Act, persons affiliated with the Fund and persons who are affiliated with such affiliated persons are prohibited from dealing with the Fund as principal in the purchase and sale of securities unless a permissive order allowing such transactions is obtained from the Commission. Since transactions in the OTC market usually involve transactions with the dealers acting as principal for their own accounts, the Fund will not deal with affiliated persons in connection with such transactions. However, an affiliated person of the Fund may serve as its broker in OTC transactions conducted on an agency basis provided that, among other things, the fee or commission received by such affiliated broker is reasonable and fair compared to the fee or commission received by non-affiliated brokers in connection with comparable transactions.

OTC issues, including most fixed-income securities such as corporate debt and U.S. Government securities, are normally traded on a “net” basis without a stated commission, through dealers acting for their own account and not as brokers. The Fund will primarily engage in transactions with these dealers or deal directly with the issuer unless a better price or execution could be obtained by using a broker. Prices paid to a dealer with respect to both foreign and domestic securities will generally include a “spread,” which is the difference between the prices at which the dealer is willing to purchase and sell the specific security at the time, and includes the dealer’s normal profit.

Purchases of money market instruments by the Fund are made from dealers, underwriters and issuers. The Fund does not currently expect to incur any brokerage commission expense on such transactions because money market instruments are generally traded on a “net” basis with dealers acting as principal for their own accounts without a stated commission. The price of the security, however, usually includes a profit to the dealer.

Securities purchased in underwritten offerings include a fixed amount of compensation to the underwriter, generally referred to as the underwriter’s concession or discount. When offered securities are purchased or sold directly from or to an issuer, no commissions or discounts are paid, except where required by local markets.

BFA or the Sub-Adviser may seek to obtain an undertaking from issuers of commercial paper or dealers selling commercial paper to consider the repurchase of such securities from the Fund prior to maturity at their original cost plus interest (sometimes adjusted to reflect the actual maturity of the securities), if it believes that the Fund’s anticipated need for liquidity makes such action desirable. Any such repurchase prior to maturity reduces the possibility that the Fund would incur a capital loss in liquidating commercial paper, especially if interest rates have risen since acquisition of such commercial paper.

Investment decisions for the Fund and for other investment accounts managed by BFA and the other Affiliates are made independently of each other in light of differing conditions. BFA allocates

investments among client accounts in a fair and equitable manner over time. A variety of factors will be considered in making such allocations. These factors include: (i) investment objectives or strategies for particular accounts, including sector, industry, country or region and capitalization weightings; (ii) tax considerations of an account; (iii) risk or investment concentration parameters for an account; (iv) supply or demand for a security at a given price level; (v) size of available investment; (vi) cash availability and liquidity requirements for accounts; (vii) regulatory restrictions; (viii) minimum investment size of an account; (ix) relative size of account; and (x) such other factors as may be approved by BlackRock's general counsel. Moreover, investments may not be allocated to one client account over another based on any of the following considerations: (i) to favor one client account at the expense of another; (ii) to generate higher fees paid by one client account over another or to produce greater performance compensation to BlackRock; (iii) to develop or enhance a relationship with a client or prospective client; (iv) to compensate a client for past services or benefits rendered to BlackRock or to induce future services or benefits to be rendered to BlackRock; or (v) to manage or equalize investment performance among different client accounts. Equity securities will generally be allocated among client accounts within the same investment mandate on a pro rata basis. All allocations of equity securities will be subject, where relevant,

Initial public offerings ("IPOs") of securities may be over-subscribed and subsequently trade at a premium in the secondary market. In these situations, the supply of securities available for client accounts is often less than the amount of securities the accounts would otherwise take. In order to allocate these investments fairly and equitably among client accounts over time, each portfolio manager or a member of his or her respective investment team will indicate to BFA's trading desk their level of interest in a particular offering with respect to eligible client accounts for which that team is responsible. IPOs of U.S. equity securities will be identified as eligible for particular client accounts that are managed by portfolio teams who have indicated interest in the offering based on market capitalization of the issuer of the security and the investment mandate of the client account and in the case of international equity securities, the country where the offering is taking place and the investment mandate of the client account. Generally, shares received during the IPO will be allocated among participating client accounts within each investment mandate on a *pro rata* basis. In situations where supply is too limited to be allocated among all accounts for which the investment is eligible, portfolio managers may rotate such investment opportunities among one or more accounts so long as the rotation system provides for fair access for all client accounts over time. Other allocation methodologies that are considered by BFA to be fair and equitable to clients may be used as well.

Because different accounts may have differing investment objectives and policies, BFA may buy and sell the same securities at the same time for different clients based on the particular investment objective, guidelines and strategies of those accounts. For example, BFA may decide that it may be entirely appropriate for a growth fund to sell a security at the same time a value fund is buying that security. To the extent that transactions on behalf of more than one client of BFA or the other Affiliates during the same period increase the demand for securities being purchased or the supply of securities being sold, there may be an adverse effect on price. For example, sales of a security by BlackRock on behalf of one or more of its clients may decrease the market price of such security, adversely impacting other BlackRock clients that still hold the security. If purchases or sales of securities arise for consideration at or about the same time that would involve the Fund or other clients or funds for which BFA or another Affiliate act as investment manager, transactions in such securities will be made, insofar as feasible, for the respective funds and clients in a manner deemed equitable to all.

In certain instances, BFA may find it efficient for purposes of seeking to obtain best execution, to aggregate certain contemporaneous purchases or sale orders of its advisory accounts and advisory accounts of affiliates. In general, all contemporaneous trades for client accounts under management by the same portfolio manager or investment team will be aggregated in a single order if the trader believes the aggregated trade would provide each client with an opportunity to achieve a more

favorable execution at a potentially lower execution cost. The costs associated with a aggregated order will be shared pro rata among the clients in the aggregated order. Generally, if an order for a particular portfolio manager or management team is filled at several different prices through multiple trades, all accounts participating in the order will receive the average price except in the case of certain international markets where average pricing is not permitted. While in some cases this practice could have a detrimental effect upon the price or value of the security as far as the Fund is concerned, in other cases it could be beneficial to the Fund. Transactions effected by BFA or the other Affiliates on behalf of more than one of its clients during the same period may increase the demand for securities being purchased or the supply of securities being sold, causing an adverse effect on price. The trader will give the aggregated order to the broker-dealer that the trader has identified as being able to provide the best execution of the order. Orders for purchase or sale of securities will be placed within a reasonable amount of time of the order receipt and aggregated orders will be kept bunched only long enough to execute the order.

The Fund will not purchase securities during the existence of any underwriting or selling group relating to such securities of which BFA, BRIL or any affiliated person (as defined in the Investment Company Act) thereof is a member except pursuant to procedures adopted by the Board in accordance with Rule 10f-3 under the Investment Company Act. In no instance will portfolio securities be purchased from or sold to BFA, BRIL or any affiliated person of the foregoing entities except as permitted by Commission exemptive order or by applicable law.

The table below sets forth the brokerage commissions paid by the Fund for the fiscal period noted.

Fund Inception Date	Brokerage Commissions Paid During the Fiscal Period Ended April 30, 2026
December 9, 2025	$16,990

As of April 30, 2026, the Fund held no securities of its regular brokers or dealers (as defined in Rule 10b-1 under the Investment Company Act) or their parents whose shares were purchased during the period December 9, 2025 (commencement of operations) to April 30, 2026.

The Fund's purchase and sale orders for securities may be combined with those of other investment companies, clients or accounts that BlackRock manages or advises. If purchases or sales of portfolio securities of the Fund and one or more other accounts managed or advised by BlackRock are considered at or about the same time, transactions in such securities are allocated among the Fund and the other accounts in a manner deemed equitable to all by BlackRock. In some cases, this procedure could have a detrimental effect on the price or volume of the security as far as the Fund is concerned. However, in other cases, it is possible that the ability to participate in volume transactions and to negotiate lower transaction costs will be beneficial to the Fund. BlackRock may deal, trade and invest for its own account in the types of securities in which the Fund may invest. BlackRock may, from time to time, effect trades on behalf of and for the account of the Fund with brokers or dealers that are affiliated with BFA, in conformity with the 1940 Act and SEC rules and regulations. Under these provisions, any commissions paid to affiliated brokers or dealers must be reasonable and fair compared to the commissions charged by other brokers or dealers in comparable transactions. The Fund will not deal with affiliates in principal transactions unless permitted by applicable SEC rules or regulations, or by SEC exemptive order.

The portfolio turnover rate is calculated by dividing the lesser of the Fund's annual sales or purchases of portfolio securities (exclusive of purchases or sales of U.S. Government securities and all other securities whose maturities at the time of acquisition were one year or less) by the monthly average value of the securities in the portfolio during the year. A high rate of portfolio turnover results in certain

tax consequences, such as increased capital gain dividends and/or ordinary income dividends, and in correspondingly greater transaction costs in the form of dealer spreads and brokerage commissions, which are borne directly by the Fund.

Additional Information Concerning the Trust

Shares. The Trust is an open-end management investment company registered with the SEC under the 1940 Act. The offering of the Trust's shares is registered under the 1933 Act.

The Trust was organized as a Delaware statutory trust on October 31, 2018 and is authorized to have multiple series or portfolios, each called a fund. The Trust issues shares of beneficial interests in each fund with no par value. The Board may establish and designate additional funds. This SAI relates solely to the Fund.

Each whole share issued by a fund has a pro rata interest in the assets of that fund. Shares have no preemptive, exchange, subscription or conversion rights and are freely transferable. Each share is entitled to participate equally in dividends and distributions declared by the Board with respect to the relevant fund, and in the net distributable assets of such fund on liquidation.

Each share has one vote with respect to matters upon which the shareholder is entitled to vote. In any matter submitted to shareholders for a vote, each fund shall hold a separate vote, provided that shareholders of all affected funds will vote together when: (i) required by the 1940 Act, or (ii) the Trustees determine that the matter affects the interests of more than one fund.

Under Delaware law, the Trust is not required to hold an annual meeting of shareholders unless required to do so under the 1940 Act. The policy of the Trust is not to hold an annual meeting of shareholders unless required to do so under the 1940 Act. All shares (regardless of the fund) have noncumulative voting rights in the election of members of the Board. Under Delaware law, Trustees of the Trust may be removed by vote of the shareholders.

Following the creation of the initial Creation Unit(s) of shares of a fund and immediately prior to the commencement of trading in such fund's shares, a holder of shares may be a "control person" of the fund, as defined in Rule 0-1 under the 1940 Act. A fund cannot predict the length of time for which one or more shareholders may remain a control person of the fund.

Shareholders may make inquiries by writing to BlackRock ETF Trust, c/o BlackRock Investments, LLC, 1 University Square Drive, Princeton, NJ 08540.

Absent an applicable exemption or other relief from the SEC or its staff, beneficial owners of more than 5% of the shares of a fund may be subject to the reporting provisions of Section 13 of the 1934 Act and the SEC's rules promulgated thereunder. In addition, absent an applicable exemption or other relief from the SEC or its staff, officers and trustees of a fund and beneficial owners of 10% of the shares of a fund ("Insiders") may be subject to the insider reporting, short-swing profit and short sale provisions of Section 16 of the 1934 Act and the SEC's rules promulgated thereunder. Beneficial owners and Insiders should consult with their own legal counsel concerning their obligations under Sections 13 and 16 of the 1934 Act and existing guidance provided by the SEC staff.

In accordance with the Trust's current Agreement and Declaration of Trust (the "Declaration of Trust"), the Board may, without shareholder approval (unless such shareholder approval is required by applicable law, including the 1940 Act), authorize certain funds to merge, reorganize, consolidate, sell all or substantially all of their assets, or take other similar actions with, to or into another fund. The Trust or a fund may be terminated by a majority vote of the Board. Although the shares are not automatically redeemable upon the occurrence of any specific event, the Declaration of Trust provides that the Board will have the unrestricted power to alter the number of shares in a Creation Unit. Therefore, in the event of a termination of the Trust or a fund, the Board, in its sole discretion, could determine to permit the shares to be redeemable in aggregations smaller than Creation Units or to be individually redeemable. In such circumstance, the Trust or a fund may make redemptions, for cash or for a combination of cash and securities. Further, in the event of a termination of the Trust or a fund, the Trust or a fund might elect to pay cash redemptions to all shareholders, with an in-kind election for shareholders owning in excess of a certain stated minimum amount.

DTC as Securities Depository for Shares of the Fund. Shares of the Fund are represented by securities registered in the name of DTC or its nominee and deposited with, or on behalf of, DTC.

DTC was created in 1973 to enable electronic movement of securities between its participants ("DTC Participants"), and NSCC was established in 1976 to provide a single settlement system for securities clearing and to serve as central counterparty for securities trades among DTC Participants. In 1999, DTC and NSCC were consolidated within the Depository Trust & Clearing Corporation ("DTCC") and became wholly-owned subsidiaries of DTCC. The common stock of DTCC is owned by the DTC Participants, but NYSE and FINRA, through subsidiaries, hold preferred shares in DTCC that provide them with the right to elect one member each to the DTCC board of directors. Access to the DTC system is available to entities, such as banks, brokers, dealers and trust companies, that clear through or maintain a custodial relationship with a DTC Participant, either directly or indirectly ("Indirect Participants").

Beneficial ownership of shares is limited to DTC Participants, Indirect Participants and persons holding interests through DTC Participants and Indirect Participants. Ownership of beneficial interests in shares (owners of such beneficial interests are referred to herein as "Beneficial Owners") is shown on, and the transfer of ownership is effected only through, records maintained by DTC (with respect to DTC Participants) and on the records of DTC Participants (with respect to Indirect Participants and Beneficial Owners that are not DTC Participants). Beneficial Owners will receive from or through the DTC Participant a written confirmation relating to their purchase of shares. The laws of some jurisdictions may require that certain purchasers of securities take physical delivery of such securities in definitive form. Such laws may impair the ability of certain investors to acquire beneficial interests in shares of the Fund.

Conveyance of all notices, statements and other communications to Beneficial Owners is effected as follows. Pursuant to the Depositary Agreement between the Trust and DTC, DTC is required to make available to the Trust upon request and for a fee to be charged to the Trust a listing of the shares of the Fund held by each DTC Participant. The Trust shall inquire of each such DTC Participant as to the number of Beneficial Owners holding shares, directly or indirectly, through such DTC Participant. The Trust shall provide each such DTC Participant with copies of such notice, statement or other communication, in such form, number and at such place as such DTC Participant may reasonably request, in order that such notice, statement or communication may be transmitted by such DTC Participant, directly or indirectly, to such Beneficial Owners. In addition, the Trust shall pay to each such DTC Participant a fair and reasonable amount as reimbursement for the expenses attendant to such transmittal, all subject to applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.

Share distributions shall be made to DTC or its nominee, Cede & Co., as the registered holder of all shares of the Trust. DTC or its nominee, upon receipt of any such distributions, shall credit immediately

DTC Participants' accounts with payments in amounts proportionate to their respective beneficial interests in shares of the Fund as shown on the records of DTC or its nominee. Payments by DTC Participants to Indirect Participants and Beneficial Owners of shares held through such DTC Participants will be governed by standing instructions and customary practices, as is now the case with securities held for the accounts of customers in bearer form or registered in a "street name," and will be the responsibility of such DTC Participants.

The Trust has no responsibility or liability for any aspect of the records relating to or notices to Beneficial Owners, or payments made on account of beneficial ownership interests in such shares, or for maintaining, supervising or reviewing any records relating to such beneficial ownership interests, or for any other aspect of the relationship between DTC and the DTC Participants or the relationship between such DTC Participants and the Indirect Participants and Beneficial Owners owning through such DTC Participants. DTC may decide to discontinue providing its service with respect to shares of the Trust at any time by giving reasonable notice to the Trust and discharging its responsibilities with respect thereto under applicable law. Under such circumstances, the Trust shall take action to find a replacement for DTC to perform its functions at a comparable cost.

Distribution of Shares. In connection with the Fund's launch, the Fund will be seeded through the sale of one or more Creation Units by the Fund to one or more initial investors. Initial investors participating in the seeding may be Authorized Participants, a lead market maker or other third party investor or an affiliate of the Fund or the Fund's adviser. Each such initial investor may sell some or all of the shares underlying the Creation Unit(s) held by them pursuant to the registration statement for the Fund (each, a "Selling Shareholder"), which shares have been registered to permit the resale from time to time after purchase. The Fund will not receive any of the proceeds from the resale by the Selling Shareholders of these shares.

Selling Shareholders may sell shares owned by them directly or through broker-dealers, in accordance with applicable law, on any national securities exchange on which the shares may be listed or quoted at the time of sale, through trading systems, in the OTC market or in transactions other than on these exchanges or systems at fixed prices, at prevailing market prices at the time of the sale, at varying prices determined at the time of sale, or at negotiated prices. These sales may be effected through brokerage transactions, privately negotiated trades, block sales, entry into options or other derivatives transactions or through any other means authorized by applicable law. Selling Shareholders may redeem the shares held in Creation Unit size by them through an Authorized Participant.

Any Selling Shareholder and any broker-dealer or agents participating in the distribution of shares may be deemed to be "underwriters" within the meaning of Section 2(a)(11) of the 1933 Act, in connection with such sales.

Any Selling Shareholder and any other person participating in such distribution will be subject to applicable provisions of the 1934 Act and the rules and regulations thereunder.

Creation and Redemption of Creation Units

General. The Trust issues and sells shares of the Fund only in Creation Units on a continuous basis through the Distributor or its agent, without a sales load, at a price based on the Fund's NAV next determined after receipt, on any Business Day (as defined below), of an order received by the Distributor or its agent in proper form. On days when the Listing Exchange closes earlier than normal, the Fund may require orders to be placed earlier in the day. The following table sets forth the number

of shares of the Fund that constitute a Creation Unit for the Fund and the approximate value of such Creation Unit as of August 1, 2026:

Shares Per Creation Unit	Approximate Value Per Creation Unit (U.S.$)
80,000	$2,257,812

In its discretion, the Trust reserves the right to increase or decrease the number of the Fund's shares that constitute a Creation Unit. The Board reserves the right to declare a split or a consolidation in the number of shares outstanding of the Fund, and to make a corresponding change in the number of shares constituting a Creation Unit, in the event that the per share price in the secondary market rises (or declines) to an amount that falls outside the range deemed desirable by the Board.

A "Business Day" with respect to the Fund is any day the Fund is open for business, including any day when it satisfies redemption requests as required by section 22(e) of the 1940 Act. The Fund is open for business any day on which the Listing Exchange on which the Fund is listed for trading is open for business. As of the date of this SAI, the Listing Exchange observes the following holidays, as observed: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Presidents' Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

Fund Deposit. The consideration for purchase of Creation Units of the Fund generally consists of Deposit Securities and the Cash Component computed as described below. Together, the Deposit Securities and the Cash Component constitute the "Fund Deposit," which will be applicable (subject to possible amendment or correction) to creation requests received in proper form. The Fund Deposit represents the minimum initial and subsequent investment amount for a Creation Unit of the Fund. Such Fund Deposit is applicable, subject to any adjustments as described below, to purchases of Creation Units of shares of the Fund until such time as the next-announced Fund Deposit is made available.

The Cash Component is an amount equal to the difference between the NAV of the shares (per Creation Unit) and the "Deposit Amount," which is an amount equal to the market value of the Deposit Securities, and serves to compensate for any differences between the NAV per Creation Unit and the Deposit Amount. Payment of any stamp duty or other similar fees and expenses payable upon transfer of beneficial ownership of the Deposit Securities are the sole responsibility of the Authorized Participant purchasing the Creation Unit.

The identity and number or par value of the Deposit Securities change pursuant to changes in the composition of the Fund's portfolio and as rebalancing adjustments and corporate action events are reflected from time to time by BFA with a view to the investment objective of the Fund. The composition of the Deposit Securities may also change in response to adjustments to the weighting or composition of the component securities constituting the Fund's portfolio.

The Fund Deposit may also be modified to minimize the Cash Component by redistributing the cash to the Deposit Securities portion of the Fund Deposit through "systematic rounding." The rounding methodology "rounds up" position sizes of securities in the Deposit Securities (which in turn reduces the cash portion). However, the methodology limits the maximum allowed percentage change in weight and share quantity of any given security in the Fund Deposit.

Fund Deposits may also be modified to position a fund towards a forward index rebalance to reflect revisions that account for index additions, deletions, and re-weights.

The Trust may, in its sole discretion, substitute a "cash in lieu" amount to be added to the Cash Component to replace any Deposit Security in certain circumstances, including: (i) when instruments are not available in sufficient quantity for delivery, (ii) when instruments are not eligible for transfer through DTC or the clearing process (as discussed below), (iii) when instruments that the Authorized Participant (or an investor on whose behalf the Authorized Participant is acting) are not able to be traded due to a trading restriction, (iv) when delivery of the Deposit Security by the Authorized Participant (or by an investor on whose behalf the Authorized Participant is acting) would be restricted under applicable securities or other local laws, (v) in connection with distribution payments to be made by the Fund, or (vi) in certain other situations.

Cash Purchase Method. Although the Trust does not generally permit full cash purchases of Creation Units of its funds, when partial or full cash purchases of Creation Units are available or specified for the Fund, they will be effected in essentially the same manner as in-kind purchases thereof. In the case of a partial or full cash purchase, the Authorized Participant must pay the cash equivalent of the Deposit Securities it would otherwise be required to provide through an in-kind purchase, plus the same Cash Component required to be paid by an in-kind purchaser.

Procedures for Creation of Creation Units. To be eligible to place orders with the Distributor and to create a Creation Unit of the Fund, an entity must be: (i) a "Participating Party," *i.e.*, a broker-dealer or other participant in the clearing process through the Continuous Net Settlement System of the NSCC (the "Clearing Process"), a clearing agency that is registered with the SEC, or (ii) a DTC Participant, and must have executed an agreement with the Distributor, with respect to creations and redemptions of Creation Units ("Authorized Participant Agreement") (discussed below). A member or participant of a clearing agency registered with the SEC which has a written agreement with the Fund or one of its service providers that allows such member or participant to place orders for the purchase and redemption of Creation Units is referred to as an "Authorized Participant." All shares of the Fund, however created, will be entered on the records of DTC in the name of Cede & Co. for the account of a DTC Participant.

Role of the Authorized Participant. Creation Units may be purchased only by or through a member or participant of a clearing agency registered with the SEC, which has a written agreement with the Fund or one of its service providers that allows such member or participant to place orders for the purchase and redemption of Creation Units. Such Authorized Participant will agree, pursuant to the terms of such Authorized Participant Agreement and on behalf of itself or any investor on whose behalf it will act, to certain conditions, including that such Authorized Participant will make available in advance of each purchase of shares an amount of cash sufficient to pay the Cash Component, once the net asset value of a Creation Unit is next determined after receipt of the purchase order in proper form, together with the transaction fees described below. An Authorized Participant, acting on behalf of an investor, may require the investor to enter into an agreement with such Authorized Participant with respect to certain matters, including payment of the Cash Component. Investors who are not Authorized Participants must make appropriate arrangements with an Authorized Participant. Investors should be aware that their particular broker may not be a DTC Participant or may not have executed an Authorized Participant Agreement and that orders to purchase Creation Units may have to be placed by the investor's broker through an Authorized Participant. As a result, purchase orders placed through an Authorized Participant may result in additional charges to such investor. The Trust does not expect to enter into an Authorized Participant Agreement with more than a small number of DTC Participants. A list of current Authorized Participants may be obtained from the Distributor. The Distributor has adopted guidelines regarding Authorized Participants' transactions in Creation Units that are made available to all Authorized Participants. These guidelines set forth the processes and standards for Authorized Participants to transact with the Distributor and its agents in connection with creation and redemption transactions. In addition, the Distributor may be appointed as the proxy of the Authorized Participant and may be granted a power of attorney under its Authorized Participant Agreement.

Purchase Orders. To initiate an order for a Creation Unit, an Authorized Participant must submit to the Distributor or its agent an irrevocable order to purchase shares of the Fund, in proper form, generally before 4:00 p.m., Eastern time on any Business Day to receive that day's NAV. The Distributor or its agent will notify BFA and the custodian of such order. The custodian will then provide such information to any appropriate sub-custodian. Procedures and requirements governing the delivery of the Fund Deposit are set forth in the procedures handbook for Authorized Participants and may change from time to time. Investors, other than Authorized Participants, are responsible for making arrangements for a creation request to be made through an Authorized Participant. The Distributor or its agent will provide a list of current Authorized Participants upon request. Those placing orders to purchase Creation Units through an Authorized Participant should allow sufficient time to permit proper submission of the purchase order to the Distributor or its agent by the Cutoff Time (as defined below) on such Business Day.

The Authorized Participant must also make available on or before the contractual settlement date, by means satisfactory to the Fund, immediately available or same day funds estimated by the Fund to be sufficient to pay the Cash Component next determined after acceptance of the purchase order, together with the applicable purchase transaction fees. Those placing orders should ascertain the deadline for cash transfers by contacting the operations department of the broker or depositary institution effectuating the transfer of the Cash Component. This deadline is likely to be significantly earlier than the Cutoff Time of the Fund. Investors should be aware that an Authorized Participant may require orders for purchases of shares placed with it to be in the particular form required by the individual Authorized Participant.

The Authorized Participant is responsible for any and all expenses and costs incurred by the Fund, including any applicable cash amounts, in connection with any purchase order.

Timing of Submission of Purchase Orders. An Authorized Participant must submit an irrevocable order to purchase shares of the Fund generally before 4:00 p.m., Eastern time on any Business Day in order to receive that day's NAV. Creation Orders must be transmitted by an Authorized Participant in the form required by the Fund to the Distributor or its agent pursuant to procedures set forth in the Authorized Participant Agreement. Economic or market disruptions or changes, or telephone or other communication failure, may impede the ability to reach the Distributor or its agent or an Authorized Participant. Orders to create shares of the Fund that are submitted on the Business Day immediately preceding a holiday or a day (other than a weekend) when the equity markets in the relevant non-U.S. market are closed may not be accepted. The Fund's deadline specified above for the submission of purchase orders is referred to as the Fund's "Cutoff Time." The Distributor or its agent, in their discretion, may permit the submission of such orders and requests by or through an Authorized Participant at any time (including on days on which the Listing Exchange is not open for business) via communication through the facilities of the Distributor's or its agent's proprietary website maintained for this purpose. Purchase orders and redemption requests, if accepted by the Trust, will be processed based on the NAV next determined after such acceptance in accordance with the Fund's Cutoff Times as provided in the Authorized Participant Agreement and disclosed in this SAI.

Acceptance of Orders for Creation Units. Subject to the conditions that (i) an irrevocable purchase order has been submitted by the Authorized Participant (either on its own or another investor's behalf) and (ii) arrangements satisfactory to the Fund are in place for payment of the Cash Component and any other cash amounts which may be due, the Fund will accept the order, subject to the Fund's right (and the right of the Distributor and BFA) to reject any order until acceptance, as set forth below.

Once the Fund has accepted an order, upon the next determination of the net asset value of the shares, the Fund will confirm the issuance of a Creation Unit, against receipt of payment, at such net asset value. The Distributor or its agent will then transmit a confirmation of acceptance to the Authorized Participant that placed the order.

The Fund reserves the right to reject or revoke a creation order transmitted to it by the Distributor or its agent provided that a rejection or revocation of a creation order does not violate Rule 6c-11 under the Investment Company Act. For example, the Fund may reject or revoke a creation order transmitted to it by the Distributor or its agent if (i) the order is not in proper form; (ii) the investor(s), upon obtaining the shares ordered, would own 80% or more of the currently outstanding shares of the Fund; (iii) the Deposit Securities delivered do not conform to the identity and number of shares specified, as described above; (iv) acceptance of the Deposit Securities is not legally required or would, in the opinion of counsel, be unlawful; or (v) circumstances outside the control of the Fund, the Distributor or its agent and BFA make it impracticable to process purchase orders. The Distributor or its agent shall notify a prospective purchaser of a Creation Unit and/or the Authorized Participant acting on behalf of such purchaser of its rejection of such order. The Fund, State Street, the sub-custodian and the Distributor or its agent are under no duty, however, to give notification of any defects or irregularities in the delivery of Fund Deposits nor shall any of them incur any liability for failure to give such notification.

Issuance of a Creation Unit. Except as provided herein, a Creation Unit will not be issued until the transfer of good title to the Fund of the Deposit Securities and the payment of the Cash Component have been completed. When the sub-custodian has confirmed to the custodian that the securities included in the Fund Deposit (or the cash value thereof) have been delivered to the account of the relevant sub-custodian or sub-custodians, the Distributor or its agent and BFA shall be notified of such delivery and the Fund will issue and cause the delivery of the Creation Unit. Creation Units are generally issued on a "T+1 basis" (*i.e.*, one Business Day after trade date). The Fund reserves the right to settle Creation Unit transactions on a basis other than T+1, as applicable. For example, the Fund reserves the right to settle Creation Unit transactions on a basis other than T+1 in order to accommodate non-U.S. market holiday schedules, the occurrence of a holiday in the U.S. bond market that is not a holiday observed in the U.S. equity market, to account for different treatment among non-U.S. and U.S. markets of dividend record dates and dividend ex-dates (*i.e.*, the last date the holder of a security can sell the security and still receive dividends payable on the security sold) and in certain other circumstances consistent with applicable law.

To the extent contemplated by an Authorized Participant Agreement with the Distributor, the Fund will issue Creation Units to such Authorized Participant, notwithstanding the fact that the corresponding Fund Deposits have not been received in part or in whole, in reliance on the undertaking of the Authorized Participant to deliver the missing Deposit Securities as soon as possible, which undertaking shall be secured by such Authorized Participant's delivery and maintenance of collateral as set forth in the handbook for Authorized Participants. The Trust may use such collateral at any time to buy Deposit Securities for the Fund. Such collateral must be delivered no later than the time specified by the Fund or its custodian on the contractual settlement date. Information concerning the Fund's current procedures for collateralization of missing Deposit Securities is available from the Distributor or its agent. The Authorized Participant Agreement will permit the Fund to buy the missing Deposit Securities at any time and will subject the Authorized Participant to liability for any shortfall between the cost to the Fund of purchasing such securities and the collateral including, without limitation, liability for related brokerage, borrowings and other charges.

In certain cases, Authorized Participants may create and redeem Creation Units on the same trade date and in these instances, the Fund reserves the right to settle these transactions on a net basis or require a representation from the Authorized Participants that the creation and redemption transactions are for separate beneficial owners. All questions as to the number of shares of each security in the Deposit Securities and the validity, form, eligibility and acceptance for deposit of any securities to be delivered shall be determined by the Fund and the Fund's determination shall be final and binding.

Costs Associated with Creation Transactions. A standard creation transaction fee is imposed to offset the transfer and other transaction costs associated with the issuance of Creation Units.

Under an ETF Services Agreement, the Fund has retained BRIL, an affiliate of BFA, to perform certain order processing, Authorized Participant communications, and related services in connection with the issuance and redemption of Creation Units ("ETF Services"). BRIL will receive from an Authorized Participant a standard transaction fee on each creation order, which consists of (1) a fee for providing the ETF Services (the "ETF Servicing Fee") and (2) transfer, processing and other transaction costs charged by the Fund custodian in connection with the issuance of Creation Units for such creation order ("Custody Transaction Costs"). BRIL is entitled to retain the ETF Servicing Fee pursuant to the ETF Services Agreement, but BRIL will reimburse any Custody Transaction Costs to the Fund custodian according to the amounts invoiced by such custodian.

The ETF Servicing Fee is a flat fee per order regardless of the number of Creation Units being purchased, which amount will vary among different BlackRock-advised funds based on a number of factors, including the complexity of the order and the types of securities or instruments included in a fund's Creation Basket, among other variables. The ETF Servicing Fee may be equal to zero in certain instances, such as for creation transactions that consist solely of cash. The actual Custody Transaction Costs vary per order based on the number of trades, underlying markets and settlement locations associated with the issuance of a Creation Unit. The following table sets forth the actual creation transaction fee that was charged on August 1, 2026. The actual fee that was or would have been charged to an Authorized Participant in connection with a creation order will vary over time depending on the factors discussed above, and may be higher than the fee set forth below.

In order to defray transaction expenses for the Fund and protect against possible shareholder dilution, if a creation transaction consists solely or partially of cash, the Authorized Participant may also be required to cover (up to the maximum amount shown below) certain brokerage, tax, foreign exchange, execution and other costs and expenses related to the execution of trades resulting from such transaction (which may, in certain instances, be based on a good faith estimate of transaction costs based on historical data or other inputs, at BlackRock's discretion, and may include part or all of the spread between the expected bid and offer side of the market and anticipated market impact). However, the Fund is not obligated to trade identical securities to the securities identified by BlackRock in estimating these transaction and other costs and expenses. In certain cases, BlackRock or an affiliate may determine in its discretion to deviate from the regular charge, subject to the maximum amounts shown below.

Authorized Participants will also bear the costs of transferring the Deposit Securities to the Fund. Certain fees/costs associated with creation transactions may be waived in certain circumstances. Investors who use the services of a broker or other financial intermediary to acquire Fund shares may be charged a fee for such services.

The following table sets forth the Fund's actual creation transaction fee as of August 1, 2026 and maximum additional charge (as described above):

Standard Creation Transaction Fee*	Maximum Additional Charge**
$151.25	3%

* The standard creation transaction fee consists of the ETF Servicing Fee and Custody Transaction Costs. The standard creation transaction fee may vary over time depending on the factors discussed above, and may be higher than the fee set forth above.

** As a percentage of the net asset value per Creation Unit.

Redemption of Creation Units. Shares of the Fund may be redeemed by Authorized Participants only in Creation Units at their NAV next determined after receipt of a redemption request in proper form by

the Distributor or its agent and only on a Business Day. The Fund will not redeem shares in amounts less than Creation Units. There can be no assurance, however, that there will be sufficient liquidity in the secondary market at any time to permit assembly of a Creation Unit. Investors should expect to incur brokerage and other costs in connection with assembling a sufficient number of shares to constitute a Creation Unit that could be redeemed by an Authorized Participant. Beneficial owners also may sell shares in the secondary market.

The Fund generally redeems Creation Units for Fund Securities. Please see the *Cash Redemption Method* section below and the following discussion summarizing the in-kind method for further information on redeeming Creation Units of the Fund.

The Fund publishes the designated portfolio of securities (including any portion of such securities for which cash may be substituted) that will be applicable to redemption requests received in proper form (as defined below) on that day ("Fund Securities" or "Redemption Basket"), and an amount of cash (the "Cash Amount," as described below) in order to effect redemptions of Creation Units of the Fund. Such Fund Securities and Cash Amount will remain in effect until such time as the next announced composition of the Fund Securities and Cash Amount is made available. The Fund Securities and Cash Amount are subject to possible amendment or correction. Fund Securities received on redemption may not be identical to Deposit Securities that are applicable to creations of Creation Units. Procedures and requirements governing redemption transactions are set forth in the handbook for Authorized Participants and may change from time to time.

Unless cash redemptions are available or specified for the Fund, the redemption proceeds for a Creation Unit generally consist of Fund Securities, plus the Cash Amount, which is an amount equal to the difference between the net asset value of the shares being redeemed, as next determined after the receipt of a redemption request in proper form, and the value of Fund Securities, less a redemption transaction fee (as described below).

The Trust may, in its sole discretion, substitute a "cash in lieu" amount to replace any Fund Security in certain circumstances, including: (i) when the delivery of a Fund Security to the Authorized Participant (or to an investor on whose behalf the Authorized Participant is acting) would be restricted under applicable securities or other local laws or due to a trading restriction, (ii) when the delivery of a Fund Security to the Authorized Participant would result in the disposition of the Fund Security by the Authorized Participant due to restrictions under applicable securities or other local laws, (iii) when the delivery of a Fund Security to the Authorized Participant would result in unfavorable tax treatment, (iv) when a Fund Security cannot be settled or otherwise delivered in time to facilitate an in-kind redemption, or (v) in certain other situations. The amount of cash paid out in such cases will be equivalent to the value of the substituted security listed as a Fund Security. In the event that the Fund Securities have a value greater than the NAV of the shares, a compensating cash payment equal to the difference is required to be made by or through an Authorized Participant by the redeeming shareholder. The Fund generally redeems Creation Units for Fund Securities, but the Fund reserves the right to utilize a cash option for redemption of Creation Units. The Fund may, in its sole discretion, provide such redeeming Authorized Participant a portfolio of securities that differs from the exact composition of the Fund Securities, but does not differ in NAV. The Redemption Basket may also be modified to minimize the Cash Component by redistributing the cash to the Fund Securities portion of the Redemption Basket through systematically rounding. The rounding methodology allows position sizes of securities in the Fund Securities to be "rounded up," while limiting the maximum allowed percentage change in weight and share quantity of any given security in the Redemption Basket. Redemption Baskets may also be modified to position a fund towards a forward index rebalance to reflect revisions that account for index additions, deletions, and re-weights.

Cash Redemption Method. Although the Trust does not generally permit full cash redemptions of Creation Units of its funds, when partial or full cash redemptions of Creation Units are available or

specified for the Fund, they will be effected in essentially the same manner as in-kind redemptions thereof. In the case of partial or full cash redemption, the Authorized Participant receives the cash equivalent of the Fund Securities it would otherwise receive through an in-kind redemption, plus the same Cash Amount to be paid to an in-kind redeemer.

Costs Associated with Redemption Transactions. A standard redemption transaction fee is imposed to offset transfer and other transaction costs that may be incurred by the Fund.

As described above, under an ETF Services Agreement, the Fund has retained BRIL, an affiliate of BFA, to perform certain ETF Services. BRIL will receive from an Authorized Participant a standard transaction fee on each redemption order, which consists of (1) the ETF Servicing Fee and (2) Custody Transaction Costs. BRIL is entitled to retain the ETF Servicing Fee pursuant to the ETF Services Agreement, but BRIL will reimburse any Custody Transaction Costs to the Fund custodian according to the amounts invoiced by such custodian.

The ETF Servicing Fee is a flat fee per order regardless of the number of Creation Units being redeemed, which amount will vary among different BlackRock-advised funds based on a number of factors, including the complexity of the order and the types of securities or instruments included in a fund's Redemption Basket, among other variables. The ETF Servicing Fee may be equal to zero in certain instances, such as for redemption transactions that consist solely of cash. The actual Custody Transaction Costs vary per order based on the number of trades, underlying markets, and settlement locations associated with the redemption of a Creation Unit. The following table sets forth for the Fund an estimate of the redemption transaction fee that would have been charged as of August 1, 2026 if the Fund had redeemed a Creation Unit on that date. The actual fee that was or would have been charged to an Authorized Participant in connection with a redemption order will vary over time depending on the factors discussed above, and may be higher than the fee set forth below.

In order to defray transaction expenses for the Fund and protect against possible shareholder dilution, if a redemption transaction consists solely or partially of cash, the Authorized Participant may also be required to cover (up to the maximum amount shown below) certain brokerage, tax, foreign exchange, execution and other costs and expenses related to the execution of trades resulting from such transaction (which may, in certain instances, be based on a good faith estimate of transaction costs based on historical data or other inputs, at BlackRock's discretion, and may include part or all of the spread between the expected bid and offer side of the market and anticipated market impact). However, the Fund is not obligated to trade identical securities to the securities identified by BlackRock in estimating these transaction and other costs and expenses. In certain cases, BlackRock or an affiliate may determine in its discretion to deviate from the regular charge, subject to the maximum amounts shown below.

Authorized Participants will also bear the costs of transferring the Fund Securities from the Fund to their account on their order. Certain fees/costs associated with redemption transactions may be waived in certain circumstances. Investors who use the services of a broker or other financial intermediary to dispose of Fund shares may be charged a fee for such services.

The following table sets forth the Fund's estimated redemption transaction fee as of August 1, 2026 and maximum additional charge (as described above):

Standard Redemption Transaction Fee*	Maximum Additional Charge**
$151.25	2%

* The standard redemption transaction fee consists of the ETF Servicing Fee and Custody Transaction Costs. The standard redemption transaction fee may vary over time depending on the factors discussed above, and may be higher than the fee set forth above. Estimated fee as of August 1, 2026.

** As a percentage of the net asset value per Creation Unit.

Placement of Redemption Orders. Redemption requests for Creation Units of the Fund must be submitted to the Distributor or its agent by or through an Authorized Participant. An Authorized Participant must submit an irrevocable request to redeem shares of the Fund generally before 4:00 p.m., Eastern time on any Business Day in order to receive that day's NAV. On days when the Listing Exchange closes earlier than normal, the Fund may require orders to redeem Creation Units to be placed earlier that day. Investors, other than Authorized Participants, are responsible for making arrangements for a redemption request to be made through an Authorized Participant. The Distributor or its agent will provide a list of current Authorized Participants upon request.

The Authorized Participant must transmit the request for redemption in the form required by the Fund to the Distributor or its agent in accordance with procedures set forth in the Authorized Participant Agreement. Investors should be aware that their particular broker may not have executed an Authorized Participant Agreement and that, therefore, requests to redeem Creation Units may have to be placed by the investor's broker through an Authorized Participant who has executed an Authorized Participant Agreement. At any time, only a limited number of broker-dealers will have an Authorized Participant Agreement in effect. Investors making a redemption request should be aware that such request must be in the form specified by such Authorized Participant. Investors making a request to redeem Creation Units should allow sufficient time to permit proper submission of the request by an Authorized Participant and transfer of the shares to the Fund's transfer agent; such investors should allow for the additional time that may be required to effect redemptions through their banks, brokers or other financial intermediaries if such intermediaries are not Authorized Participants.

A redemption request is considered to be in "proper form" if: (i) an Authorized Participant has transferred or caused to be transferred to the Fund's transfer agent the Creation Unit redeemed through the book-entry system of DTC so as to be effective by the Listing Exchange closing time on any Business Day on which the redemption request is submitted; (ii) a request in form satisfactory to the Fund is received by the Distributor or its agent from the Authorized Participant on behalf of itself or another redeeming investor within the time periods specified above; and (iii) all other procedures set forth in the Authorized Participant Agreement are properly followed.

Upon receiving a redemption request, the Distributor or its agent shall notify the Fund and the Fund's transfer agent of such redemption request. The tender of an investor's shares for redemption and the distribution of the securities and/or cash included in the redemption payment made in respect of Creation Units redeemed will be made through DTC and the relevant Authorized Participant to the Beneficial Owner thereof as recorded on the book-entry system of DTC or the DTC Participant through which such investor holds, as the case may be, or by such other means specified by the Authorized Participant submitting the redemption request.

A redeeming Authorized Participant, whether on its own account or acting on behalf of a Beneficial Owner, must maintain appropriate security arrangements with a qualified broker-dealer, bank or other custody providers in each jurisdiction in which any of the portfolio securities are customarily traded, to which account such portfolio securities will be delivered.

Deliveries of redemption proceeds by the Fund are generally made within one Business Day (*i.e.*, "T+1"). However, the Fund reserves the right to settle redemption transactions on a basis other than T+1, including a shorter settlement period, if necessary or appropriate under the circumstances and compliant with applicable law. Delayed settlement may occur due to a number of different reasons, including, without limitation, settlement cycles for the underlying securities, unscheduled market closings, an effort to link distribution to dividend record dates and ex-dates and newly announced holidays. For example, the Fund reserves the right to settle redemption transactions on a basis other than T+1 in order to

accommodate non-U.S. market holiday schedules, the occurrence of a holiday in the U.S. bond market that is not a holiday observed in the U.S. equity market, to account for different treatment among non-U.S. and U.S. markets of dividend record dates and dividend ex-dates (*i.e.*, the last date the holder of a security can sell the security and still receive dividends payable on the security sold) and in certain other circumstances consistent with applicable law.

If the Fund includes a foreign investment in its basket, and if a local market holiday, or series of consecutive holidays, or the extended delivery cycles for transferring foreign investments to redeeming Authorized Participants prevents timely delivery of the foreign investment in response to a redemption request, the Fund may delay delivery of the foreign investment more than seven days if the Fund delivers the foreign investment as soon as practicable, but in no event later than 15 days.

If neither the Authorized Participant nor the Beneficial Owner on whose behalf the Authorized Participant is acting has appropriate arrangements to take delivery of Fund Securities in the applicable non-U.S. jurisdiction and it is not possible to make other such arrangements, or if it is not possible to effect deliveries of Fund Securities in such jurisdiction, the Fund may in its discretion exercise its option to redeem such shares in cash, and the Beneficial Owner will be required to receive its redemption proceeds in cash. In such case, the investor will receive a cash payment equal to the net asset value of its shares based on the NAV of the Fund next determined after the redemption request is received in proper form (minus a redemption transaction fee and additional charges specified above to offset the Fund's brokerage and other transaction costs associated with the disposition of Fund Securities). Redemptions of shares for Fund Securities will be subject to compliance with applicable U.S. federal and state securities laws and the Fund (whether or not it otherwise permits cash redemptions) reserves the right to redeem Creation Units for cash to the extent that the Fund cannot lawfully deliver specific Fund Securities upon redemptions or cannot do so without first registering the Fund Securities under such laws.

To the extent contemplated by an Authorized Participant's agreement with the Distributor or its agent, in the event an Authorized Participant has submitted a redemption request in proper form but is unable to transfer all or part of the Creation Unit to be redeemed to the Fund, at or prior to the time specified by the Fund or its custodian on the Business Day after the date of submission of such redemption request, the Distributor or its agent will accept the redemption request in reliance on the undertaking by the Authorized Participant to deliver the missing shares as soon as possible. Such undertaking shall be secured by the Authorized Participant's delivery and maintenance of collateral as set forth in the handbook for Authorized Participants. Such collateral must be delivered no later than the time specified by the Fund or its custodian on the Business Day after the date of submission of such redemption request and shall be held by State Street and marked-to-market daily.

The fees of State Street and any sub-custodians in respect of the delivery, maintenance and redelivery of the collateral shall be payable by the Authorized Participant. The Authorized Participant Agreement permits the Fund to acquire shares of the Fund at any time and subjects the Authorized Participant to liability for any shortfall between the aggregate of the cost to the Fund of purchasing such shares, plus the value of the Cash Amount, and the value of the collateral together with liability for related brokerage and other charges. Because the portfolio securities of the Fund may trade on exchange(s) on days that the Listing Exchange is closed or are otherwise not Business Days for the Fund, shareholders may not be able to redeem their shares of the Fund, or purchase or sell shares of the Fund on the Listing Exchange on days when the NAV of the Fund could be significantly affected by events in the relevant non-U.S. markets.

The right of redemption may be suspended or the date of payment postponed with respect to the Fund: (i) for any period during which the Listing Exchange is closed (other than customary weekend and holiday closings); (ii) for any period during which trading on the Listing Exchange is suspended or

restricted; (iii) for any period during which an emergency exists as a result of which disposal of the shares of the Fund's portfolio securities or determination of its net asset value is not reasonably practicable; or (iv) in such other circumstance as is permitted by the SEC.

Custom Baskets. Creation and redemption baskets may differ and the Fund may accept "custom baskets." A custom basket may include any of the following: (i) a basket that is composed of a non-representative selection of the Fund's portfolio holdings; (ii) a representative basket that is different from the initial basket used in transactions on the same business day; or (iii) a basket that contains bespoke cash substitutions for a single Authorized Participant. The Fund has adopted policies and procedures that govern the construction and acceptance of baskets, including heightened requirements for certain types of custom baskets. Such policies and procedures provide the parameters for the construction and acceptance of custom baskets that are in the best interests of the Fund and its shareholders, establish processes for revisions to, or deviations from, such parameters, and specify the titles and roles of the employees of BFA who are required to review each custom basket for compliance with those parameters. In addition, when constructing custom baskets for redemptions, the tax efficiency of the Fund may be taken into account. The policies and procedures distinguish among different types of custom baskets that may be used and impose different requirements for different types of custom baskets in order to seek to mitigate against potential risks of conflicts and/or overreaching by an Authorized Participant. BlackRock has established a governance process to oversee basket compliance for the Fund, as set forth in the Fund's policies and procedures.

Taxation on Creations and Redemptions of Creation Units. An Authorized Participant generally will recognize either gain or loss upon the exchange of Deposit Securities for Creation Units. This gain or loss is calculated by taking the market value of the Creation Units purchased over the Authorized Participant's aggregate basis in the Deposit Securities exchanged therefor. However, the IRS may apply the wash sales rules to determine that any loss realized upon the exchange of Deposit Securities for Creation Units is not currently deductible. Authorized Participants should consult their own tax advisors.

Similarly, an Authorized Participant generally will recognize either gain or loss upon the redemption of the Creation Units. If the Creation Units are held as capital assets, current U.S. federal income tax laws dictate that capital gain or loss realized from the redemption of the Creation Units will generally create long-term capital gain or loss if the Authorized Participant held the Creation Units for more than one year and short-term capital gain or loss if the Authorized Participant held the Creation Units for one year or less.

Taxes

The following is a summary of certain material U.S. federal income tax considerations regarding the purchase, ownership and disposition of shares of the Fund. This summary does not address all of the potential U.S. federal income tax consequences that may be applicable to the Fund or to all categories of investors, some of which may be subject to special tax rules. Current and prospective shareholders are urged to consult their own tax advisors with respect to the specific U.S. federal, state, local and non-U.S. tax consequences of investing in the Fund. The summary is based on the laws and judicial and administrative interpretations thereof in effect on the date of this SAI, all of which are subject to change, possibly with retroactive effect.

Regulated Investment Company Qualifications. The Fund intends to qualify for treatment as a separate RIC under Subchapter M of the Internal Revenue Code. To qualify for treatment as a RIC, the Fund must annually distribute at least 90% of its investment company taxable income (which includes

dividends, interest and net short-term capital gains) and meet several other requirements. Among such other requirements are the following: (i) at least 90% of the Fund's annual gross income must be derived from dividends, interest, payments with respect to securities loans, gains from the sale or other disposition of stock or securities or non-U.S. currencies, other income (including, but not limited to, gains from options, futures or forward contracts) derived with respect to its business of investing in such stock, securities or currencies, and net income derived from interests in qualified publicly-traded partnerships (*i.e.,* partnerships that are traded on an established securities market or tradable on a secondary market, other than partnerships that derive at least 90% of their income from interest, dividends, capital gains and other traditionally permitted RIC income); and (ii) at the close of each quarter of the Fund's taxable year, (a) at least 50% of the market value of the Fund's total assets must be represented by cash and cash items, U.S. government securities, securities of other RICs and other securities, with such other securities limited for purposes of this calculation in respect of any one issuer to an amount not greater than 5% of the value of the Fund's assets and not greater than 10% of the outstanding voting securities of such issuer, and (b) not more than 25% of the value of the Fund's total assets may be invested in the securities (other than U.S. government securities or the securities of other RICs) of any one issuer, of two or more issuers of which 20% or more of the voting stock is held by the Fund and that are engaged in the same or similar trades or businesses or related trades or businesses, or the securities of one or more qualified publicly-traded partnerships.

The Fund may be able to cure a failure to derive at least 90% of its income from the sources specified above or a failure to diversify its holdings in the manner described above by paying a tax and/or by disposing of certain assets. If, in any taxable year, the Fund fails one of these tests and does not timely cure the failure, the Fund will be taxed in the same manner as an ordinary corporation and distributions to its shareholders will not be deductible by the Fund in computing its taxable income.

Although, in general, the passive loss rules of the Internal Revenue Code do not apply to RICs, such rules do apply to a RIC with respect to items attributable to interests in qualified publicly-traded partnerships. The Fund's investments in partnerships, including in qualified publicly-traded partnerships, may result in the Fund being subject to state, local, or non-U.S. income, franchise or withholding tax liabilities.

Taxation of RICs. As a RIC, the Fund will not be subject to U.S. federal income tax on the portion of its taxable investment income and capital gains that it distributes to its shareholders, provided that it satisfies a minimum distribution requirement. To satisfy the minimum distribution requirement, the Fund must distribute to its shareholders at least the sum of (i) 90% of its "investment company taxable income" (*i.e.*, income other than the excess of its net realized long-term capital gain over its net realized short-term capital loss), plus or minus certain adjustments, and (ii) 90% of its net tax-exempt income for the taxable year. The Fund will be subject to income tax at regular corporate rates on any taxable income or gains that it does not distribute to its shareholders. If the Fund fails to qualify for any taxable year as a RIC or fails to meet the distribution requirement, all of its taxable income will be subject to tax at regular corporate income tax rates without any deduction for distributions to shareholders, and such distributions generally will be taxable to shareholders as ordinary dividends to the extent of the Fund's current and accumulated earnings and profits. In such event, distributions to individuals should be eligible to be treated as qualified dividend income and distributions to corporate shareholders generally should be eligible for the dividends received deduction. Although the Fund intends to distribute substantially all of its net investment income and its capital gains for each taxable year, the Fund may decide to retain a portion of its income or gains. The Fund will be subject to U.S. federal income taxation and excise taxation (as described below) to the extent it does not distribute all (or, in the case of the excise tax, substantially all) of such income or gains. In certain circumstances, including in instances where the operational cost of the distribution would exceed the amount of the income or excise tax, BFA or an affiliate may voluntarily pay the tax on behalf of the Fund or reimburse the Fund for the tax. If the Fund fails to qualify as a RIC in any year, it must pay out its earnings and

profits accumulated in that year in order to qualify again as a RIC. If the Fund fails to qualify as a RIC for a period greater than two taxable years, the Fund may be required to recognize any net built-in gains with respect to certain of its assets (*i.e.*, the excess of the aggregate gains, including items of income, over aggregate losses that would have been realized with respect to such assets if the Fund had been liquidated) if it qualifies as a RIC in a subsequent year.

Excise Tax. The Fund will be subject to a 4% excise tax on certain undistributed income if it does not distribute to its shareholders in each calendar year at least 98% of its ordinary income for the calendar year plus at least 98.2% of its capital gain net income for the 12 months ended October 31 of such year. For this purpose, however, any ordinary income or capital gain net income retained by the Fund that is subject to corporate income tax will be considered to have been distributed by year-end. In addition, the minimum amounts that must be distributed in any year to avoid the excise tax will be increased or decreased to reflect any underdistribution or overdistribution, as the case may be, from the previous year.

Net Capital Loss Carryforwards. Net capital loss carryforwards may be applied against any net realized capital gains in each succeeding year, until they have been reduced to zero.

In the event that the Fund were to experience an ownership change as defined under the Internal Revenue Code, the loss carryforwards and other favorable tax attributes of the Fund, if any, may be subject to limitation.

Taxation of U.S. Shareholders. Dividends and other distributions by the Fund are generally treated under the Internal Revenue Code as received by the shareholders at the time the dividend or distribution is made. However, any dividend or distribution declared by the Fund in October, November or December of any calendar year and payable to shareholders of record on a specified date in such a month shall be deemed to have been received by each shareholder on December 31 of such calendar year and to have been paid by the Fund not later than such December 31, provided such dividend is actually paid by the Fund during January of the following calendar year.

The Fund intends to distribute annually to its shareholders substantially all of its investment company taxable income and any net realized long-term capital gains in excess of net realized short-term capital losses (including any capital loss carryovers). However, if the Fund retains for investment an amount equal to all or a portion of its net long-term capital gains in excess of its net short-term capital losses (including any capital loss carryovers), it will be subject to a corporate tax (at a flat rate of 21%) on the amount retained. In that event, unless the retained amount is deemed to be de minimis or the applicable tax is otherwise reimbursed by BFA or an affiliate, the Fund will generally designate such retained amounts as undistributed capital gains in a notice to its shareholders who (a) will be required to include in income for U.S. federal income tax purposes, as long-term capital gains, their proportionate shares of the undistributed amount, (b) will be entitled to credit their proportionate shares of the tax paid by the Fund on the undistributed amount against their U.S. federal income tax liabilities, if any, and to claim refunds to the extent their credits exceed their liabilities, if any, and (c) will be entitled to increase their tax basis, for U.S. federal income tax purposes, in their shares by an amount equal to the excess of the amount in clause (a) over the amount in clause (b). Organizations or persons not subject to U.S. federal income tax on such capital gains will be entitled to a refund of their pro rata share of such taxes paid by the Fund upon filing appropriate returns or claims for refund with the IRS.

Distributions of net long-term capital gains, if any, that the Fund reports as capital gains dividends are taxable as long-term capital gains, whether paid in cash or in shares and regardless of how long a shareholder has held shares of the Fund. All other dividends of the Fund (including dividends from short-term capital gains) from its current and accumulated earnings and profits (“regular dividends”) are generally subject to tax as ordinary income, subject to the discussion of qualified dividend income

below. Long-term capital gains are eligible for taxation at a maximum rate of 15% or 20% for non-corporate shareholders, depending on whether their income exceeds certain threshold amounts.

If an individual receives a regular dividend qualifying for the long-term capital gains rates and such dividend constitutes an "extraordinary dividend," and the individual subsequently recognizes a loss on the sale or exchange of stock in respect of which the extraordinary dividend was paid, then the loss will be long-term capital loss to the extent of such extraordinary dividend. An "extraordinary dividend" on common stock for this purpose is generally a dividend (i) in an amount greater than or equal to 10% of the taxpayer's tax basis (or trading value) in a share of stock, aggregating dividends with ex-dividend dates within an 85-day period, or (ii) in an amount greater than 20% of the taxpayer's tax basis (or trading value) in a share of stock, aggregating dividends with ex-dividend dates within a 365-day period.

Distributions in excess of the Fund's current and accumulated earnings and profits will, as to each shareholder, be treated as a tax-free return of capital to the extent of a shareholder's basis in shares of the Fund, and as a capital gain thereafter (if the shareholder holds shares of the Fund as capital assets). Distributions in excess of the Fund's minimum distribution requirements, but not in excess of the Fund's current and accumulated earnings and profits, will be taxable to shareholders and will not constitute nontaxable returns of capital. Shareholders receiving dividends or distributions in the form of additional shares should be treated for U.S. federal income tax purposes as receiving a distribution in an amount equal to the amount of money that the shareholders receiving cash dividends or distributions will receive and should have a cost basis in the shares received equal to such amount.

A 3.8% U.S. federal Medicare contribution tax is imposed on net investment income, including, but not limited to, interest, dividends, and net gain from investments, of U.S. individuals with income exceeding $200,000 (or $250,000 if married and filing jointly) and of estates and trusts.

Investors considering buying shares just prior to a dividend or capital gain distribution should be aware that, although the price of shares purchased at that time may reflect the amount of the forthcoming distribution, such dividend or distribution may nevertheless be taxable to them. If the Fund is the holder of record of any security on the record date for any dividends payable with respect to such security, such dividends will be included in the Fund's gross income not as of the date received but as of the later of (a) the date such security became ex-dividend with respect to such dividends (*i.e.*, the date on which a buyer of the security would not be entitled to receive the declared, but unpaid, dividends); or (b) the date the Fund acquired such security. Accordingly, in order to satisfy its income distribution requirements, the Fund may be required to pay dividends based on anticipated earnings, and shareholders may receive dividends in an earlier year than would otherwise be the case.

In certain situations, the Fund may, for a taxable year, defer all or a portion of its net capital loss (or if there is no net capital loss, then any net long-term or short-term capital loss) realized after October and its late-year ordinary loss (defined as the sum of (i) the excess of post-October foreign currency and passive foreign investment company ("PFIC") losses over post-October foreign currency and PFIC gains and (ii) the excess of post-December ordinary losses over post-December ordinary income) until the next taxable year in computing its investment company taxable income and net capital gain, which will defer the recognition of such realized losses. Such deferrals and other rules regarding gains and losses realized after October (or December) may affect the tax character of shareholder distributions.

Sales of Shares. Upon the sale or exchange of shares of the Fund, a shareholder will realize a taxable gain or loss equal to the difference between the amount realized and the shareholder's basis in shares of the Fund. A redemption of shares by the Fund will be treated as a sale for this purpose. Such gain or loss will be treated as capital gain or loss if the shares are capital assets in the shareholder's hands and will be long-term capital gain or loss if the shares are held for more than one year and short-term

capital gain or loss if the shares are held for one year or less. Any loss realized on a sale or exchange will be disallowed to the extent the shares disposed of are replaced, including replacement through the reinvesting of dividends or capital gains distributions, or by an option or contract to acquire substantially identical shares, within a 61-day period beginning 30 days before and ending 30 days after the disposition of the shares. In such a case, the basis of the shares acquired will be increased to reflect the disallowed loss. Any loss realized by a shareholder on the sale of Fund shares held by the shareholder for six months or less will be treated for U.S. federal income tax purposes as a long-term capital loss to the extent of any distributions or deemed distributions of long-term capital gains received by the shareholder with respect to such share. The Medicare contribution tax described above will apply to the sale of Fund shares.

If a shareholder incurs a sales charge in acquiring shares of the Fund, disposes of those shares within 90 days and then, on or before January 31 of the following calendar year, acquires shares in a mutual fund for which the otherwise applicable sales charge is reduced by reason of a reinvestment right (*e.g.*, an exchange privilege), the original sales charge will not be taken into account in computing gain or loss on the disposition of the original shares to the extent the subsequent sales charge is reduced. Instead, the disregarded portion of the original sales charge will be added to the tax basis of the newly acquired shares. Furthermore, the same rule also applies to a disposition of the newly acquired shares made within 90 days of the second acquisition. This provision prevents shareholders from immediately deducting the sales charge by shifting their investments within a family of mutual funds.

Backup Withholding. In certain cases, the Fund will be required to withhold at a 24% rate and remit to the U.S. Treasury such amounts withheld from any distributions paid to a shareholder who: (i) has failed to provide a correct taxpayer identification number; (ii) is subject to backup withholding by the IRS; (iii) has failed to certify to the Fund that such shareholder is not subject to backup withholding; or (iv) has not certified that such shareholder is a U.S. person (including a U.S. resident alien). Backup withholding is not an additional tax and any amount withheld may be credited against a shareholder's U.S. federal income tax liability.

Sections 351 and 362. The Trust, on behalf of the Fund, has the right to reject an order to create Creation Units of the Fund if the Authorized Participant (or group of Authorized Participants) would, upon obtaining the Creation Units, own 80% or more of the outstanding shares of the Fund and if, pursuant to Sections 351 and 362 of the Internal Revenue Code, the Fund would have a basis in the Deposit Securities different from the market value of such Deposit Securities on the date of deposit. If the Fund's basis in such Deposit Securities on the date of deposit was less than market value on such date, the Fund, upon disposition of the Deposit Securities, would recognize more taxable gain or less taxable loss than if its basis in the Deposit Securities had been equal to market value. It is not anticipated that the Trust will exercise the right of rejection except in a case where the Trust determines that accepting the order could result in material adverse tax consequences to the Fund or its shareholders. The Trust also has the right to require information necessary to determine beneficial share ownership for purposes of the 80% determination.

Taxation of Certain Derivatives. The Fund's transactions in zero coupon securities, non-U.S. currencies, forward contracts, options and futures contracts (including options and futures contracts on non-U.S. currencies), to the extent permitted, will be subject to special provisions of the Internal Revenue Code (including provisions relating to "hedging transactions" and "straddles") that, among other consequences, may affect the character of gains and losses realized by the Fund (*i.e.*, may affect whether gains or losses are ordinary or capital), accelerate recognition of income to the Fund and defer Fund losses. These rules could therefore affect the character, amount and timing of distributions to shareholders. These provisions also (a) may require the Fund to mark-to-market certain types of the positions in its portfolio (*i.e.*, treat them as if they were closed out at the end of each year) and (b) may cause the Fund to recognize income without receiving cash with which to pay dividends or make

distributions in amounts necessary to satisfy the distribution requirements for avoiding income and excise taxes. The Fund will monitor its transactions, will make the appropriate tax elections and will make the appropriate entries in its books and records when it acquires any zero coupon security, non-U.S. currency, forward contract, option, futures contract or hedged investment in order to mitigate the effect of these rules and prevent disqualification of the Fund as a RIC.

The Fund's investments in so-called "Section 1256 contracts," such as regulated futures contracts, most non-U.S. currency forward contracts traded in the interbank market and options on most security indexes, are subject to special tax rules. All Section 1256 contracts held by the Fund at the end of its taxable year are required to be marked to their market value, and any unrealized gain or loss on those positions will be included in the Fund's income as if each position had been sold for its fair market value at the end of the taxable year. The resulting gain or loss will be combined with any gain or loss realized by the Fund from positions in Section 1256 contracts closed during the taxable year. Provided such positions were held as capital assets and were not part of a "hedging transaction" nor part of a "straddle," 60% of the resulting net gain or loss will be treated as long-term capital gain or loss, and 40% of such net gain or loss will be treated as short-term capital gain or loss, regardless of the period of time the positions were actually held by the Fund.

As a result of entering into swap contracts, the Fund may make or receive periodic net payments. The Fund may also make or receive a payment when a swap is terminated prior to maturity through an assignment of the swap or other closing transaction. Periodic net payments will generally constitute ordinary income or deductions, while termination of a swap will generally result in capital gain or loss (which will be a long-term capital gain or loss if the Fund has been a party to the swap for more than one year). With respect to certain types of swaps, the Fund may be required to currently recognize income or loss with respect to future payments on such swaps or may elect under certain circumstances to mark such swaps to market annually for tax purposes as ordinary income or loss.

Qualified Dividend Income and Qualified REIT Dividends. For non-corporate shareholders, distributions by the Fund of investment company taxable income (including any short-term capital gains), whether received in cash or shares, will be taxable either as ordinary income or as qualified dividend income, which is eligible to be taxed at long-term capital gain rates to the extent the Fund receives qualified dividend income on the securities it holds and the Fund reports the distribution as qualified dividend income. Qualified dividend income is, in general, dividend income from taxable U.S. corporations and certain non-U.S. corporations (*e.g.*, non-U.S. corporations that are not PFICs and which are incorporated in a possession of the U.S. or in certain countries with a comprehensive tax treaty with the U.S., or the stock of which is readily tradable on an established securities market in the U.S. (where the dividends are paid with respect to such stock)). Substitute payments received by the Fund with respect to dividends paid on securities lent out will not be qualified dividend income.

A dividend from the Fund will not be treated as qualified dividend income to the extent that: (i) the shareholder has not held the shares on which the dividend was paid for 61 days during the 121-day period that begins on the date that is 60 days before the date on which the shares become ex-dividend with respect to such dividend or the Fund fails to satisfy those holding period requirements with respect to the securities it holds that paid the dividends distributed to the shareholder (or, in the case of certain preferred stocks, the holding requirement of 91 days during the 181-day period beginning on the date that is 90 days before the date on which the stock becomes ex-dividend with respect to such dividend); (ii) the Fund or the shareholder is under an obligation (whether pursuant to a short sale or otherwise) to make related payments with respect to substantially similar or related property; or (iii) the shareholder elects to treat such dividend as investment income under Section 163(d)(4)(B) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Dividends received by the Fund from a REIT or another RIC may be treated as qualified dividend income only to the extent the dividend distributions are attributable to qualified dividend income

received by such REIT or other RIC. It is expected that dividends received by the Fund from a REIT and distributed to a shareholder generally will be taxable to the shareholder as ordinary income. However, a non-corporate taxpayer who is a direct REIT shareholder may claim a 20% "qualified business income" deduction for ordinary REIT dividends, and a RIC may report dividends as eligible for this deduction to the extent the RIC's income is derived from ordinary REIT dividends (reduced by allocable RIC expenses). A shareholder may treat the dividends as such provided the RIC and the shareholder satisfy applicable holding period requirements. A dividend from the Fund will not be treated as qualified REIT dividend income to the extent that: (i) the shareholder has not held the shares on which the dividend was paid for at least 46 days during the 91-day period that begins on the date that is 45 days before the date on which the shares become ex-dividend with respect to such dividend or the Fund fails to satisfy those holding period requirements with respect to the share of REIT stock it holds that paid the dividends distributed to the shareholder; or (ii) the Fund or the shareholder is under an obligation (whether pursuant to a short sale or otherwise) to make related payments with respect to substantially similar or related property. Distributions by the Fund of its net short-term capital gains will be taxable as ordinary income.

Corporate Dividends Received Deduction. For corporate shareholders, dividends paid by the Fund that are attributable to dividends received by the Fund from U.S. corporations may qualify for the U.S. federal dividends received deduction and the Fund reports the distribution as eligible for such deduction. A 46-day minimum holding period during the 90-day period that begins 45 days prior to ex-dividend date (or 91-day minimum holding period during the 180-day period beginning 90 days prior to ex-dividend date for certain preference dividends) during which risk of loss may not be diminished is required for the applicable shares, at both the Fund and shareholder level, for a dividend to be eligible for the dividends received deduction. Dividends received by the Fund from a REIT are not eligible for the dividends received deduction. In addition, dividends received by the Fund from another RIC may be eligible for such deduction only to the extent the dividends received from such RIC would themselves qualify for the dividends received deduction.

Tax-Exempt Investors and Excess Inclusion Income. Under current law, the Fund serves to block unrelated business taxable income ("UBTI") from being realized by its tax-exempt shareholders. UBTI includes unrelated debt-financed income, which generally consists of income and gains derived by a tax-exempt investor from the disposition of property that has been acquired with borrowed money. A tax-exempt shareholder could realize UBTI by virtue of its investment in the Fund if the shareholder borrows money to acquire its shares fund.

Certain types of income received by the Fund from REITs, real estate mortgage investment conduits, taxable mortgage pools or other investments may cause the Fund to report some or all of its distributions as "excess inclusion income." To Fund shareholders, such excess inclusion income may: (i) constitute taxable income, as UBTI for those shareholders who would otherwise be tax-exempt such as individual retirement accounts, 401(k) accounts, Keogh plans, pension plans and certain charitable entities; (ii) not be offset by otherwise allowable deductions for tax purposes; (iii) not be eligible for reduced U.S. withholding for non-U.S. shareholders even from tax treaty countries; and (iv) cause the Fund to be subject to tax if certain "disqualified organizations," as defined by the Internal Revenue Code, are Fund shareholders. If a charitable remainder annuity trust or a charitable remainder unitrust (each as defined in Section 664 of the Internal Revenue Code) has UBTI for a taxable year, a 100% excise tax on the UBTI is imposed on the trust.

The Fund tries to avoid investing in REITs that are expected to generate excess inclusion income, but the Fund may not always be successful in doing so. Because information about a REIT's investments may be inadequate or inaccurate, or because a REIT may change its investment program, the Fund may not be successful in avoiding the consequences described above. Avoidance of investments in REITs that generate excess inclusion income may require the Fund to forego otherwise attractive investment opportunities.

Non-U.S. Investments. Under Section 988 of the Internal Revenue Code, gains or losses attributable to fluctuations in exchange rates between the time the Fund accrues income or receivables or expenses or other liabilities denominated in a non-U.S. currency and the time the Fund actually collects such income or pays such liabilities are generally treated as ordinary income or ordinary loss. In general, gains (and losses) realized on debt instruments will be treated as Section 988 gain (or loss) to the extent attributable to changes in exchange rates between the U.S. dollar and the currencies in which the instruments are denominated. Similarly, gains or losses on non-U.S. currency, non-U.S. currency forward contracts and certain non-U.S. currency options or futures contracts denominated in non-U.S. currency, to the extent attributable to fluctuations in exchange rates between the acquisition and disposition dates, are also treated as ordinary income or loss unless the Fund were to elect otherwise.

The Fund may be subject to non-U.S. income taxes withheld at the source. The Fund, if permitted to do so, may elect to "pass through" to its investors the amount of non-U.S. income taxes paid by the Fund provided that the Fund held the security on the dividend settlement date and for at least 15 additional days immediately before and/or thereafter, with the result that each investor with respect to shares of the Fund held for a minimum 16-day holding period at the time of deemed distribution will (i) include in gross income, even though not actually received, the investor's pro rata share of the Fund's non-U.S. income taxes, and (ii) either deduct (in calculating U.S. taxable income, but only for investors who itemize their deductions on their personal tax returns) or credit (in calculating U.S. federal income tax) the investor's pro rata share of the Fund's non-U.S. income taxes. Withholding taxes on dividends on non-U.S. securities while such securities are lent out by the Fund are not eligible for non-U.S. tax credit pass through. Taxes not "passed through" for tax purposes will not be available to shareholders for foreign tax credit purposes. A non-U.S. person invested in the Fund in a year that the Fund elects to "pass through" its non-U.S. taxes may be treated as receiving additional dividend income subject to U.S. withholding tax. A non-U.S. tax credit may not exceed the investor's U.S. federal income tax otherwise payable with respect to the investor's non-U.S. source income. For this purpose, shareholders must treat as non-U.S. source gross income (i) their proportionate shares of non-U.S. taxes paid by the Fund and (ii) the portion of any dividend paid by the Fund that represents income derived from non-U.S. sources; the Fund's gain from the sale of securities will generally be treated as U.S.-source income. Certain limitations will be imposed to the extent to which the non-U.S. tax credit may be claimed. If your Fund shares are loaned pursuant to securities lending arrangements, you may lose the ability to use any non-U.S. tax credits passed through by the Fund or to treat Fund dividends (paid while the shares are held by the borrower) as qualified dividends. Regarding a short sale with respect to shares of the Fund, substitute payments made to the lender of such shares may not be deductible under certain circumstances. Consult your financial intermediary or tax advisor.

The Fund may file refund claims in various countries to recover taxes withheld on dividend income. Whether or when the Fund will receive a tax refund is within the control of the individual country. Pending confirmatory guidance from the IRS, the refunds received may reduce the Fund's pass-through of foreign tax credits in such year and potentially future years or may result in the Fund paying an IRS compliance fee to cover the effect of the tax credits previously passed through to shareholders on refunded foreign taxes.

Passive Foreign Investment Companies. If the Fund purchases shares in PFICs, it may be subject to U.S. federal income tax on a portion of any "excess distribution" or gain from the disposition of such shares even if such income is distributed as a taxable dividend by the Fund to its shareholders. Additional charges in the nature of interest may be imposed on the Fund in respect of deferred taxes arising from such distributions or gains.

If the Fund were to invest in a PFIC and elect to treat the PFIC as a "qualified electing fund" under the Internal Revenue Code, in lieu of the foregoing requirements, the Fund would be required to include in income each year a portion of the ordinary earnings and net capital gains of the qualified electing fund,

even if not distributed to the Fund, and such amounts would be subject to the 90% and excise tax distribution requirements described above. In order to make this election, the Fund would be required to obtain certain annual information from the PFICs in which it invests, which may be difficult or impossible to obtain.

Alternatively, the Fund may make a mark-to-market election that would result in the Fund being treated as if it had sold and repurchased its PFIC stock at the end of each year. In such case, the Fund would report any such gains as ordinary income and would deduct any such losses as ordinary losses to the extent of previously recognized gains. The election must be made separately for each PFIC owned by the Fund and, once made, would be effective for all subsequent taxable years, unless revoked with the consent of the IRS. By making the election, the Fund could potentially ameliorate the adverse tax consequences with respect to its ownership of shares in a PFIC, but in any particular year may be required to recognize income in excess of the distributions it receives from PFICs and its proceeds from dispositions of PFIC stock. The Fund may have to distribute this "phantom" income and gain to satisfy the 90% distribution requirement and to avoid imposition of the 4% excise tax.

The Fund will make the appropriate tax elections, if possible, and take any additional steps that are necessary to mitigate the effects of these rules.

Reporting. If a shareholder recognizes a loss with respect to the Fund's shares of at least $2 million in any single taxable year or $4 million in any combination of taxable years for an individual shareholder or $10 million in any single taxable year or $20 million in any combination of taxable years for a corporate shareholder, the shareholder must file with the IRS a disclosure statement on IRS Form 8886. Direct shareholders of portfolio securities are in many cases exempted from this reporting requirement, but under current guidance, shareholders of a RIC are not exempted. The fact that a loss is reportable under these regulations does not affect the legal determination of whether the taxpayer's treatment of the loss is proper. Shareholders should consult their tax advisors to determine the applicability of these regulations in light of their individual circumstances.

Other Taxes. Dividends, distributions and redemption proceeds may also be subject to additional state, local and non-U.S. taxes depending on each shareholder's particular situation.

Taxation of Non-U.S. Shareholders. Dividends paid by the Fund to non-U.S. shareholders (other than a pass-through entity to the extent owned by U.S. persons) are generally subject to withholding tax at a 30% rate or a reduced rate specified by an applicable income tax treaty to the extent derived from investment income and short-term capital gains. Dividends paid by the Fund from net tax-exempt income or long-term capital gains are generally not subject to such withholding tax. In order to obtain a reduced rate of withholding, a non-U.S. shareholder will be required to provide an IRS Form W-8BEN or IRS Form W-8BEN-E certifying its entitlement to benefits under a treaty. The withholding tax does not apply to regular dividends paid to a non-U.S. shareholder who provides an IRS Form W-8ECI, certifying that the dividends are effectively connected with the non-U.S. shareholder's conduct of a trade or business within the U.S. Instead, the effectively connected dividends will be subject to regular U.S. income tax as if the non-U.S. shareholder were a U.S. shareholder. A non-U.S. corporation receiving effectively connected dividends may also be subject to additional "branch profits tax" imposed at a rate of 30% (or lower treaty rate). A non-U.S. shareholder who fails to provide an IRS Form W-8BEN, IRS Form W-8BEN-E or other applicable form may be subject to backup withholding at the appropriate rate.

Except as discussed below, properly-reported dividends are generally exempt from U.S. federal withholding tax where they (i) are paid in respect of the Fund's "qualified net interest income" (generally, the Fund's U.S. source interest income, other than certain contingent interest and interest from obligations of a corporation or partnership in which the Fund is at least a 10% shareholder or partner, reduced by expenses that are allocable to such income), (ii) are paid in respect of the Fund's

“qualified short-term capital gains” (generally, the excess of the Fund’s net short-term capital gain over the Fund’s long-term capital loss for such taxable year) or (iii) are paid in respect of the Fund’s interest income earned on municipal and other tax-exempt securities. However, depending on its circumstances, the Fund may report all, some or none of its potentially eligible dividends as interest-related dividends, short-term capital gains dividends or exempt-interest dividends and/or treat such dividends, in whole or in part, as ineligible for this exemption from withholding. In order to qualify for this exemption from withholding, a non-U.S. shareholder will need to comply with applicable certification requirements relating to its non-U.S. status (including, in general, furnishing an IRS Form W-8BEN, IRS Form W-8BEN-E or substitute Form). In the case of shares held through an intermediary, the intermediary may withhold even if the Fund reports the payment as qualified net interest income or qualified short-term capital gain. Non-U.S. shareholders should contact their intermediaries with respect to the application of these rules to their accounts.

Special rules may apply to a foreign shareholder receiving a Fund distribution if at least 50% of the Fund’s assets consist of U.S. real property interests, including certain REITs and U.S. real property holding corporations (as defined in the Internal Revenue Code and Treasury regulations). Fund distributions that are attributable to gain from the disposition of a U.S. real property interest will be taxable as ordinary dividends and subject to withholding at a 30% or lower treaty rate if the foreign shareholder held no more than 5% of the Fund’s shares at all times during the one-year period ending on the date of the distribution. If the foreign shareholder held at least 5% of the Fund’s shares at any time during the one-year testing period, the distribution would be treated as income effectively connected with a trade or business within the U.S. and the foreign shareholder would be subject to withholding tax at a rate of 21% and would generally be required to file a U.S. federal income tax return.

Similar consequences would generally apply to a foreign shareholder’s gain on the sale of Fund shares if at least 50% of the Fund’s assets consist of U.S. real property interests, unless the Fund is domestically controlled (meaning that more than 50% of the value of the Fund’s shares is held by U.S. shareholders) or the foreign shareholder owns no more than 5% of the Fund’s shares at all times during the five-year period ending on the date of sale. Finally, a domestically controlled Fund may be required to recognize a portion of its gain on the in-kind distribution of certain U.S. real property interests. Shareholders that are nonresident aliens or foreign entities are urged to consult their own tax advisors concerning the particular tax consequences to them of an investment in the Fund.

A foreign shareholder may also be subject to certain “wash sale” rules to prevent the avoidance of the tax filing and payment obligations discussed above through the sale and repurchase of Fund shares.

Separately, a 30% withholding tax is currently imposed on U.S.-source dividends, interest and other income items paid to: (i) foreign financial institutions, including non-U.S. investment funds; and (ii) certain other foreign entities. To avoid withholding, foreign financial institutions will need to: (i) enter into agreements with the IRS that state that they will provide the IRS information, including the names, addresses and taxpayer identification numbers of direct and indirect U.S. account holders; comply with due diligence procedures with respect to the identification of U.S. accounts; report to the IRS certain information with respect to U.S. accounts maintained; agree to withhold tax on certain payments made to non-compliant foreign financial institutions or to account holders who fail to provide the required information; and determine certain other information concerning their account holders, or (ii) in the event an intergovernmental agreement and implementing legislation are adopted, provide local revenue authorities with similar account holder information. Other foreign entities may need to report the name, address, and taxpayer identification number of each substantial U.S. owner or provide certifications of no substantial U.S. ownership unless certain exceptions apply.

Shares of the Fund held by a non-U.S. shareholder at death will be considered situated within the U.S. and subject to the U.S. estate tax.

The foregoing discussion is a summary of certain material U.S. federal income tax considerations only and is not intended as a substitute for careful tax planning. Purchasers of shares should consult their own tax advisors as to the tax consequences of investing in such shares, including consequences under state, local and non-U.S. tax laws. Finally, the foregoing discussion is based on applicable provisions of the Internal Revenue Code, regulations, judicial authority and administrative interpretations in effect on the date of this SAI. Changes in applicable authority could materially affect the conclusions discussed above, and such changes often occur.

Miscellaneous Information

Counsel. Ropes & Gray LLP, located at 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York 10036, is counsel to the Trust.

Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm. PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, located at Two Commerce Square, 2001 Market Street, Suite 1800, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103, serves as the Trust's independent registered public accounting firm, audits the Fund's financial statements, and may perform other services.

Investors' Rights. The Fund relies on the services of BFA and its other service providers, including the Distributor, administrator, custodian and transfer agent. Further information about the duties and roles of these service providers is set out in this SAI. Investors who acquire shares of the Fund are not parties to the relevant agreement with these service providers and do not have express contractual rights against the Fund or its service providers, except certain institutional investors that are Authorized Participants may have certain express contractual rights with respect to the Distributor under the terms of the relevant Authorized Participant Agreement. Investors may have certain legal rights under federal or state law against the Fund or its service providers. In the event that an investor considers that it may have a claim against the Fund, or against any service provider in connection with its investment in the Fund, such investor should consult its own legal advisor.

By contract, Authorized Participants irrevocably submit to the non-exclusive jurisdiction of any New York State or U.S. federal court sitting in New York City over any suit, action or proceeding arising out of or relating to the Authorized Participant Agreement. Jurisdiction over other claims, whether by investors or Authorized Participants, will turn on the facts of the particular case and the law of the jurisdiction in which the proceeding is brought.

Financial Statements

The audited financial statements, financial highlights and notes thereto in the Fund's Annual Financial Statements and Additional Information for the fiscal period ended April 30, 2026, as filed with the SEC on Form N-CSR (the "2026 Annual Financial Statements"), are incorporated in this SAI by reference. No other parts of the 2026 Annual Financial Statement are incorporated by reference herein. The 2026 Annual Financial Statements have been audited by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP. The report of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP is incorporated herein by reference. Such 2026 Annual Financial Statements have been incorporated herein in reliance upon the report of such firm given their authority as experts in accounting and auditing. Additional copies of the Fund's annual and semi-annual reports to shareholders and the Fund's Annual and Semi-Annual Financial Statements and Additional Information may be obtained at no charge by telephoning the Distributor at the telephone number appearing on the front page of this SAI.

PART II

Throughout this Statement of Additional Information ("SAI"), each BlackRock-advised fund may be referred to as a "Fund" or collectively with others as the "Funds." Certain Funds may also be referred to as "Municipal Funds" if they invest certain of their assets in municipal investments described below.

Each Fund is organized either as a Maryland corporation, a Massachusetts business trust or a Delaware statutory trust. In each jurisdiction, nomenclature varies. For ease and clarity of presentation, shares of common stock and shares of beneficial interest are referred to herein as "shares" or "Common Stock," holders of shares of Common Stock are referred to as "shareholders," the trustees or directors of each Fund are referred to as "Directors," the boards of trustees/directors of each Fund are referred to as the "Board of Directors" or the "Board," BlackRock Advisors, LLC, BlackRock Fund Advisors or their respective affiliates is the investment adviser or manager of each Fund and is referred to herein as the "Manager" or "BlackRock," and the investment advisory agreement or management agreement applicable to each Fund is referred to as the "Management Agreement." Each Fund's Articles of Incorporation or Declaration of Trust, together with all amendments thereto, is referred to as its "charter." The Investment Company Act of 1940, as amended, is referred to herein as the "Investment Company Act." The Securities Act of 1933, as amended, is referred to herein as the "Securities Act." The Securities and Exchange Commission is referred to herein as the "Commission" or the "SEC."

Certain Funds are "feeder" funds (each, a "Feeder Fund") that invest all or a portion of their assets in a corresponding "master" portfolio (each, a "Master Portfolio") of a master limited liability company (each, a "Master LLC"), a mutual fund that has the same objective and strategies as the Feeder Fund. All investments are generally made at the level of the Master Portfolio. This structure is sometimes called a "master/feeder" structure. A Feeder Fund's investment results will correspond directly to the investment results of the underlying Master Portfolio in which it invests. For simplicity, this SAI uses the term "Fund" to include both a Feeder Fund and its Master Portfolio.

Certain information contained herein may not be relevant to a particular Fund.

Investment Risks and Considerations

Set forth below are descriptions of some of the types of investments and investment strategies that one or more of the Funds may use, and the risks and considerations associated with those investments and investment strategies. Please see each Fund's prospectuses (the "Prospectus") and the "Investment Objective and Policies," "Investment Objectives and Policies" or "Investment Strategies and Risks of the Fund" section, as applicable, of Part I of this SAI for further information on each Fund's investment policies and risks. Information contained in this section about the risks and considerations associated with a Fund's investments and/or investment strategies applies only to those Funds specifically identified in Part I of this SAI as making each type of investment or using each investment strategy (each, a "Covered Fund"). Information that does not apply to a Covered Fund does not form a part of that Covered Fund's SAI and should not be relied on by investors in that Covered Fund. Only information that is clearly identified as applicable to a Covered Fund is considered to form a part of that Covered Fund's SAI.

Asset-Backed Securities. Asset-backed securities are securities backed by home equity loans, installment sale contracts, credit card receivables or other assets. Asset-backed securities are

"pass-through" securities, meaning that principal and interest payments — net of expenses — made by the borrower on the underlying assets (such as credit card receivables) are passed through to a Fund. The value of asset-backed securities, like that of traditional fixed-income securities, typically increases when interest rates fall and decreases when interest rates rise. However, asset-backed securities differ from traditional fixed-income securities because of their potential for prepayment. The price paid by a Fund for its asset-backed securities, the yield the Fund expects to receive from such securities and the average life of the securities are based on a number of factors, including the anticipated rate of prepayment of the underlying assets. In a period of declining interest rates, borrowers may prepay the underlying assets more quickly than anticipated, thereby reducing the yield to maturity and the average life of the asset-backed securities. Moreover, when a Fund reinvests the proceeds of a prepayment in these circumstances, it will likely receive a rate of interest that is lower than the rate on the security that was prepaid. To the extent that a Fund purchases asset-backed securities at a premium, prepayments may result in a loss to the extent of the premium paid. If a Fund buys such securities at a discount, both scheduled payments and unscheduled prepayments will increase current and total returns and unscheduled prepayments will also accelerate the recognition of income which, when distributed to shareholders, will be taxable as ordinary income. In a period of rising interest rates, prepayments of the underlying assets may occur at a slower than expected rate, creating maturity extension risk. This particular risk may effectively change a security that was considered short- or intermediate-term at the time of purchase into a longer term security. Since the value of longer-term securities generally fluctuates more widely in response to changes in interest rates than does the value of shorter-term securities, maturity extension risk could increase the volatility of the Fund. When interest rates decline, the value of an asset-backed security with prepayment features may not increase as much as that of other fixed-income securities, and, as noted above, changes in market rates of interest may accelerate or retard prepayments and thus affect maturities.

Asset-Based Securities. Certain Funds may invest in debt, preferred or convertible securities, the principal amount, redemption terms or conversion terms of which are related to the market price of some natural resource asset such as gold bullion. These securities are referred to as "asset-based securities." A Fund will purchase only asset-based securities that are rated, or are issued by issuers that have outstanding debt obligations rated, investment grade (for example, AAA, AA, A or BBB by S&P Global Ratings ("S&P") or Fitch Ratings ("Fitch"), or Baa by Moody's Investors Service, Inc. ("Moody's") or commercial paper rated A-1 by S&P or Prime-1 by Moody's) or by issuers that the Manager has determined to be of similar creditworthiness. Obligations ranked in the fourth highest rating category, while considered "investment grade," may have certain speculative characteristics and may be more likely to be downgraded than securities rated in the three highest rating categories. If an asset-based security is backed by a bank letter of credit or other similar facility, the Manager may take such backing into account in determining the creditworthiness of the issuer. While the market prices for an asset-based security and the related natural resource asset generally are expected to move in the same direction, there may not be perfect correlation in the two price movements. Asset-based securities may not be secured by a security interest in or claim on the underlying natural resource asset. The asset-based securities in which a Fund may invest may bear interest or pay preferred dividends at below market (or even relatively nominal) rates. Certain asset-based securities may be payable at maturity in cash at the stated principal amount or, at the option of the holder, directly in a stated amount of the asset to which it is related. In such instance, because no Fund presently intends to invest directly in natural resource assets, a Fund would sell the asset-based security in the secondary market, to the extent one exists, prior to maturity if the value of the stated amount of the asset exceeds the stated principal amount and thereby realize the appreciation in the underlying asset.

Precious Metal-Related Securities. A Fund may invest in the equity and other securities of companies that explore for, extract, process or deal in precious metals (*e.g.*, gold, silver and platinum), and in asset-based securities indexed to the value of such metals. Such securities may be purchased when they are believed to be attractively priced in relation to the value of a company's precious metal-related

assets or when the values of precious metals are expected to benefit from inflationary pressure or other economic, political or financial uncertainty or instability. Based on historical experience, during periods of economic or financial instability the securities of companies involved in precious metals may be subject to extreme price fluctuations, reflecting the high volatility of precious metal prices during such periods. In addition, the instability of precious metal prices may result in volatile earnings of precious metal-related companies, which may, in turn, adversely affect the financial condition of such companies. The major producers of gold include the Republic of South Africa, Russia, Canada, the United States, Brazil and Australia. Sales of gold by Russia are largely unpredictable and often relate to political and economic considerations rather than to market forces. Economic, financial, social and political factors within South Africa may significantly affect South African gold production.

Borrowing and Leverage. Each Fund may borrow as a temporary measure for extraordinary or emergency purposes, including to meet redemptions or to settle securities transactions. Certain Funds will not purchase securities at any time when borrowings exceed 5% of their total assets, except (a) to honor prior commitments or (b) to exercise subscription rights when outstanding borrowings have been obtained exclusively for settlements of other securities transactions.

Certain Funds may also borrow in order to make investments, to the extent disclosed in such Fund's Prospectus. The purchase of securities while borrowings are outstanding will have the effect of leveraging the Fund. Such leveraging increases the Fund's exposure to capital risk, and borrowed funds are subject to interest costs that will reduce net income. The use of leverage by a Fund creates an opportunity for greater total return, but, at the same time, creates special risks. For example, leveraging may exaggerate changes in the net asset value ("NAV") of Fund shares and in the yield on the Fund's portfolio. Although the principal of such borrowings will be fixed, the Fund's assets may change in value during the time the borrowings are outstanding. Borrowings will create interest expenses for the Fund that can exceed the income from the assets purchased with the borrowings. To the extent the income or capital appreciation derived from securities purchased with borrowed funds exceeds the interest the Fund will have to pay on the borrowings, the Fund's return will be greater than if leverage had not been used. Conversely, if the income or capital appreciation from the securities purchased with such borrowed funds is not sufficient to cover the cost of borrowing, the return to the Fund will be less than if leverage had not been used and, therefore, the amount available for distribution to shareholders as dividends will be reduced. In the latter case, the Manager in its best judgment nevertheless may determine to maintain the Fund's leveraged position if it expects that the benefits to the Fund's shareholders of maintaining the leveraged position will outweigh the current reduced return.

Certain types of borrowings by a Fund may result in the Fund being subject to covenants in credit agreements relating to asset coverage, portfolio composition requirements and other matters. It is not anticipated that observance of such covenants would impede the Manager from managing a Fund's portfolio in accordance with the Fund's investment objectives and policies. However, a breach of any such covenants not cured within the specified cure period may result in acceleration of outstanding indebtedness and require the Fund to dispose of portfolio investments at a time when it may be disadvantageous to do so.

Each Fund may at times borrow from affiliates of the Manager, provided that the terms of such borrowings are no less favorable than those available from comparable sources of funds in the marketplace.

Cash Management. Generally, the Manager will employ futures and options on futures to provide liquidity necessary to meet anticipated redemptions or for day-to-day operating purposes. However, if considered appropriate in the opinion of the Manager, a portion of a Fund's assets may be invested in certain types of instruments with remaining maturities of 397 days or less for liquidity purposes. Such

instruments would consist of: (i) obligations of the U.S. Government, its agencies, instrumentalities, authorities or political subdivisions ("U.S. Government Securities"); (ii) other fixed-income securities rated Aa or higher by Moody's or AA or higher by S&P or, if unrated, of comparable quality in the opinion of the Manager; (iii) commercial paper; (iv) bank obligations, including negotiable certificates of deposit, time deposits and bankers' acceptances; and (v) repurchase agreements. At the time the Fund invests in commercial paper, bank obligations or repurchase agreements, the issuer or the issuer's parent must have outstanding debt rated Aa or higher by Moody's or AA or higher by S&P or outstanding commercial paper, bank obligations or other short-term obligations rated Prime-1 by Moody's or A-1 by S&P; or, if no such ratings are available, the instrument must be of comparable quality in the opinion of the Manager. For more information on money market instruments, see "Money Market Securities" below.

Collateralized Debt Obligations. Certain Funds may invest in collateralized debt obligations ("CDOs"), which include collateralized bond obligations ("CBOs"), collateralized loan obligations ("CLOs") and other similarly structured securities. CDOs are types of asset-backed securities. A CBO is ordinarily issued by a trust or other special purpose entity ("SPE") and is typically backed by a diversified pool of fixed-income securities (which may include high risk, below investment grade securities) held by such issuer. A CLO is ordinarily issued by a trust or other SPE and is typically collateralized by a pool of loans, which may include, among others, domestic and non-U.S. senior secured loans, senior unsecured loans, and subordinate corporate loans, including loans that may be rated below investment grade or equivalent unrated loans, held by such issuer. Investments in a CLO organized outside of the United States may not be deemed to be foreign securities if the CLO is collateralized by a pool of loans, a substantial portion of which are U.S. loans. Although certain CDOs may benefit from credit enhancement in the form of a senior-subordinate structure, over-collateralization or bond insurance, such enhancement may not always be present, and may fail to protect a Fund against the risk of loss on default of the collateral. Certain CDO issuers may use derivatives contracts to create "synthetic" exposure to assets rather than holding such assets directly, which entails the risks of derivative instruments described elsewhere in this SAI. CDOs may charge management fees and administrative expenses, which are in addition to those of a Fund.

For both CBOs and CLOs, the cash flows from the SPE are split into two or more portions, called tranches, varying in risk and yield. The riskiest portion is the "equity" tranche, which bears the first loss from defaults from the bonds or loans in the SPE and serves to protect the other, more senior tranches from default (though such protection is not complete). Since it is partially protected from defaults, a senior tranche from a CBO or CLO typically has higher ratings and lower yields than its underlying securities, and may be rated investment grade. Despite the protection from the equity tranche, CBO or CLO tranches can experience substantial losses due to actual defaults, downgrades of the underlying collateral by rating agencies, forced liquidation of the collateral pool due to a failure of coverage tests, increased sensitivity to defaults due to collateral default and disappearance of protecting tranches, market anticipation of defaults as well as investor aversion to CBO or CLO securities as a class. Interest on certain tranches of a CDO may be paid in kind or deferred and capitalized (paid in the form of obligations of the same type rather than cash), which involves continued exposure to default risk with respect to such payments.

The risks of an investment in a CDO depend largely on the type of the collateral securities and the class of the CDO in which a Fund invests. Normally, CBOs, CLOs and other CDOs are privately offered and sold, and thus are not registered under the securities laws. However, an active dealer market may exist for CDOs, allowing a CDO to qualify for Rule 144A transactions. In addition to the normal risks associated with fixed-income securities and asset-backed securities generally discussed elsewhere in this SAI, CDOs carry additional risks including, but not limited to: (i) the possibility that distributions from collateral securities will not be adequate to make interest or other payments; (ii) the risk that the collateral may default or decline in value or be downgraded, if rated by a nationally

recognized statistical rating organization ("NRSRO"); (iii) a Fund may invest in tranches of CDOs that are subordinate to other tranches; (iv) the structure and complexity of the transaction and the legal documents could lead to disputes among investors regarding the characterization of proceeds; (v) the investment return achieved by the Fund could be significantly different than those predicted by financial models; (vi) the lack of a readily available secondary market for CDOs; (vii) the risk of forced "fire sale" liquidation due to technical defaults such as coverage test failures; and (viii) the CDO's manager may perform poorly.

Commercial Paper. Certain Funds may purchase commercial paper. Commercial paper purchasable by each Fund includes "Section 4(a)(2) paper," a term that includes debt obligations issued in reliance on the "private placement" exemption from registration afforded by Section 4(a)(2) of the Securities Act. Section 4(a)(2) paper is restricted as to disposition under the Federal securities laws, and is frequently sold (and resold) to institutional investors such as the Fund through or with the assistance of investment dealers who make a market in the Section 4(a)(2) paper, thereby providing liquidity. Certain transactions in Section 4(a)(2) paper may qualify for the registration exemption provided in Rule 144A under the Securities Act. Most Funds can purchase commercial paper rated (at the time of purchase) "A-1" by S&P or "Prime-1" by Moody's or when deemed advisable by a Fund's Manager or sub-adviser, "high quality" issues rated "A-2", "Prime-2" or "F-2" by S&P, Moody's or Fitch, respectively.

Commercial paper is generally considered to be short-term unsecured debt of corporations. Like all fixed income securities, commercial paper prices are susceptible to fluctuations in interest rates. If interest rates rise, commercial paper prices will decline and vice versa. However, the short-term nature of a commercial paper investment generally makes it less susceptible to volatility than many other fixed income securities because interest rate risk typically increases as maturity lengths increase. Commercial paper tends to yield smaller returns than longer-term corporate debt because securities with shorter maturities typically have lower effective yields than those with longer maturities.

Commodity-Linked Derivative Instruments and Hybrid Instruments. Certain Funds seek to gain exposure to the commodities markets primarily through investments in hybrid instruments. Hybrid instruments are either equity or debt derivative securities with one or more commodity-dependent components that have payment features similar to a commodity futures contract, a commodity option contract, or a combination of both. Therefore, these instruments are "commodity-linked." They are considered "hybrid" instruments because they have both commodity-like and security-like characteristics. Hybrid instruments are derivative instruments because at least part of their value is derived from the value of an underlying commodity, futures contract, index or other readily measurable economic variable.

The prices of commodity-linked derivative instruments may move in different directions than investments in traditional equity and debt securities when the value of those traditional securities is declining due to adverse economic conditions. As an example, during periods of rising inflation, debt securities have historically tended to decline in value due to the general increase in prevailing interest rates. Conversely, during those same periods of rising inflation, the prices of certain commodities, such as oil and metals, have historically tended to increase. Of course, there cannot be any guarantee that these investments will perform in that manner in the future, and at certain times the price movements of commodity-linked instruments have been parallel to those of debt and equity securities. Commodities have historically tended to increase and decrease in value during different parts of the business cycle than financial assets. Nevertheless, at various times, commodities prices may move in tandem with the prices of financial assets and thus may not provide overall portfolio diversification benefits. Under favorable economic conditions, the Fund's investments may be expected to under-perform an investment in traditional securities. Over the long term, the returns on the Fund's investments are expected to exhibit low or negative correlation with stocks and bonds.

Qualifying Hybrid Instruments. Certain Funds may invest in hybrid instruments that qualify for exclusion from regulation under the Commodity Exchange Act and the regulations adopted thereunder. A hybrid instrument that qualifies for this exclusion from regulation must be "predominantly a security." A hybrid instrument is considered to be predominantly a security if (a) the issuer of the hybrid instrument receives payment in full of the purchase price of the hybrid instrument, substantially contemporaneously with delivery of the hybrid instrument; (b) the purchaser or holder of the hybrid instrument is not required to make any payment to the issuer in addition to the purchase price paid under subparagraph (a), whether as margin, settlement payment, or otherwise, during the life of the hybrid instrument or at maturity; (c) the issuer of the hybrid instrument is not subject by the terms of the instrument to mark-to-market margining requirements; and (d) the hybrid instrument is not marketed as a contract of sale of a commodity for future delivery (or option on such a contract) subject to applicable provisions of the Commodity Exchange Act. Hybrid instruments may be principal protected, partially protected, or offer no principal protection. A principal protected hybrid instrument means that the issuer will pay, at a minimum, the par value of the note at maturity. Therefore, if the commodity value to which the hybrid instrument is linked declines over the life of the note, the Fund will receive at maturity the face or stated value of the note. With a principal protected hybrid instrument, the Fund will receive at maturity the greater of the par value of the note or the increase in its value based on the underlying commodity or index. This protection is, in effect, an option whose value is subject to the volatility and price level of the underlying commodity. The Manager's decision whether to use principal protection depends in part on the cost of the protection. In addition, the protection feature depends upon the ability of the issuer to meet its obligation to buy back the security, and, therefore, depends on the creditworthiness of the issuer. With full principal protection, the Fund will receive at maturity of the hybrid instrument either the stated par value of the hybrid instrument, or potentially, an amount greater than the stated par value if the underlying commodity, index, futures contract or economic variable to which the hybrid instrument is linked has increased in value. Partially protected hybrid instruments may suffer some loss of principal if the underlying commodity, index, futures contract or economic variable to which the hybrid instrument is linked declines in value during the term of the hybrid instrument. However, partially protected hybrid instruments have a specified limit as to the amount of principal that they may lose.

Hybrid Instruments Without Principal Protection. Certain Funds may invest in hybrid instruments that offer no principal protection. At maturity, there is a risk that the underlying commodity price, futures contract, index or other economic variable may have declined sufficiently in value such that some or all of the face value of the hybrid instrument might not be returned. The Manager, at its discretion, may invest in a partially protected principal structured note or a note without principal protection. In deciding to purchase a note without principal protection, the Manager may consider, among other things, the expected performance of the underlying commodity futures contract, index or other economic variable over the term of the note, the cost of the note, and any other economic factors that the Manager believes are relevant.

Limitations on Leverage. Some of the hybrid instruments in which a Fund may invest may involve leverage. To avoid being subject to undue leverage risk, a Fund will seek to limit the amount of economic leverage it has under any one hybrid instrument that it buys and the leverage of the Fund's overall portfolio. A Fund will not invest in a hybrid instrument if, at the time of purchase: (i) that instrument's "leverage ratio" exceeds 300% of the price increase in the underlying commodity, futures contract, index or other economic variable or (ii) the Fund's "portfolio leverage ratio" exceeds 150%, measured at the time of purchase. "Leverage ratio" is the expected increase in the value of a hybrid instrument, assuming a one percent price increase in the underlying commodity, futures contract, index or other economic factor. In other words, for a hybrid instrument with a leverage factor of 150%, a 1% gain in the underlying economic variable would be expected to result in a 1.5% gain in value for the hybrid instrument. Conversely, a hybrid instrument with a leverage factor of 150% would suffer a 1.5% loss if the underlying economic variable lost 1% of its value. "Portfolio leverage ratio" is defined as the

average (mean) leverage ratio of all instruments in a Fund's portfolio, weighted by the market values of such instruments or, in the case of futures contracts, their notional values. A Fund may at times or from time to time decide not to use leverage in its investments or use less leverage than may otherwise be allowable.

Counterparty Risk. A significant risk of hybrid instruments is counterparty risk. Unlike exchange-traded futures and options, which are standard contracts, hybrid instruments are customized securities, tailor-made by a specific issuer. With a listed futures or options contract, an investor's counterparty is the exchange clearinghouse. Exchange clearinghouses are capitalized by the exchange members and typically have high investment grade ratings (*e.g.*, ratings of AAA or AA by S&P). Therefore, the risk is small that an exchange clearinghouse might be unable to meet its obligations at maturity. However, with a hybrid instrument, a Fund will take on the counterparty credit risk of the issuer. That is, at maturity of the hybrid instrument, there is a risk that the issuer may be unable to perform its obligations under the structured note.

Convertible Securities. A convertible security is a bond, debenture, note, preferred stock or other security that may be converted into or exchanged for a prescribed amount of common stock or other equity security of the same or a different issuer within a particular period of time at a specified price or formula. A convertible security entitles the holder to receive interest paid or accrued on debt or the dividend paid on preferred stock until the convertible security matures or is redeemed, converted or exchanged. Before conversion, convertible securities have characteristics similar to nonconvertible income securities in that they ordinarily provide a stable stream of income with generally higher yields than those of common stocks of the same or similar issuers, but lower yields than comparable nonconvertible securities. The value of a convertible security is influenced by changes in interest rates, with investment value declining as interest rates increase and increasing as interest rates decline. The credit standing of the issuer and other factors also may have an effect on the convertible security's investment value. Convertible securities rank senior to common stock in a corporation's capital structure but are usually subordinated to comparable nonconvertible securities. Convertible securities may be subject to redemption at the option of the issuer at a price established in the convertible security's governing instrument.

The characteristics of convertible securities make them potentially attractive investments for an investment company seeking a high total return from capital appreciation and investment income. These characteristics include the potential for capital appreciation as the value of the underlying common stock increases, the relatively high yield received from dividend or interest payments as compared to common stock dividends and decreased risks of decline in value relative to the underlying common stock due to their fixed-income nature. As a result of the conversion feature, however, the interest rate or dividend preference on a convertible security is generally less than would be the case if the securities were issued in nonconvertible form.

In analyzing convertible securities, the Manager will consider both the yield on the convertible security relative to its credit quality and the potential capital appreciation that is offered by the underlying common stock, among other things.

Convertible securities are issued and traded in a number of securities markets. Even in cases where a substantial portion of the convertible securities held by a Fund are denominated in U.S. dollars, the underlying equity securities may be quoted in the currency of the country where the issuer is domiciled. As a result, fluctuations in the exchange rate between the currency in which the debt security is denominated and the currency in which the share price is quoted will affect the value of the convertible security. With respect to convertible securities denominated in a currency different from that of the underlying equity securities, the conversion price may be based on a fixed exchange rate established at the time the security is issued, which may increase the effects of currency risk. As described below,

a Fund is authorized to enter into foreign currency hedging transactions in which it may seek to reduce the effect of exchange rate fluctuations.

Apart from currency considerations, the value of convertible securities is influenced by both the yield on nonconvertible securities of comparable issuers and by the value of the underlying common stock. The value of a convertible security viewed without regard to its conversion feature (*i.e.*, strictly on the basis of its yield) is sometimes referred to as its "investment value." To the extent interest rates change, the investment value of the convertible security typically will fluctuate. At the same time, however, the value of the convertible security will be influenced by its "conversion value," which is the market value of the underlying common stock that would be obtained if the convertible security were converted. Conversion value fluctuates directly with the price of the underlying common stock. If the conversion value of a convertible security is substantially below its investment value, the price of the convertible security is governed principally by its investment value. To the extent the conversion value of a convertible security increases to a point that approximates or exceeds its investment value, the price of the convertible security will be influenced principally by its conversion value. A convertible security will sell at a premium over the conversion value to the extent investors place value on the right to acquire the underlying common stock while holding a fixed-income security. The yield and conversion premium of convertible securities issued in Japan and the Euromarket are frequently determined at levels that cause the conversion value to affect their market value more than the securities' investment value.

Holders of convertible securities generally have a claim on the assets of the issuer prior to the common stockholders but may be subordinated to other debt securities of the same issuer. A convertible security may be subject to redemption at the option of the issuer at a price established in a charter provision, indenture or other governing instrument pursuant to which the convertible security was issued. If a convertible security held by a Fund is called for redemption, the Fund will be required to redeem the security, convert it into the underlying common stock or sell it to a third party. Certain convertible debt securities may provide a put option to the holder, which entitles the holder to cause the security to be redeemed by the issuer at a premium over the stated principal amount of the debt security under certain circumstances.

A Fund may also invest in synthetic convertible securities. Synthetic convertible securities may include either Cash-Settled Convertibles or Manufactured Convertibles. "Cash-Settled Convertibles" are instruments that are created by the issuer and have the economic characteristics of traditional convertible securities but may not actually permit conversion into the underlying equity securities in all circumstances. As an example, a private company may issue a Cash-Settled Convertible that is convertible into common stock only if the company successfully completes a public offering of its common stock prior to maturity and otherwise pays a cash amount to reflect any equity appreciation. "Manufactured Convertibles" are created by the Manager or another party by combining separate securities that possess one of the two principal characteristics of a convertible security, *i.e.*, fixed-income ("fixed-income component") or a right to acquire equity securities ("convertibility component"). The fixed-income component is achieved by investing in nonconvertible fixed-income securities, such as nonconvertible bonds, preferred stocks and money market instruments. The convertibility component is achieved by investing in call options, warrants, or other securities with equity conversion features ("equity features") granting the holder the right to purchase a specified quantity of the underlying stocks within a specified period of time at a specified price or, in the case of a stock index option, the right to receive a cash payment based on the value of the underlying stock index.

A Manufactured Convertible differs from traditional convertible securities in several respects. Unlike a traditional convertible security, which is a single security that has a unitary market value, a Manufactured Convertible is comprised of two or more separate securities, each with its own market value. Therefore, the total "market value" of such a Manufactured Convertible is the sum of the values of its fixed-income component and its convertibility component.

More flexibility is possible in the creation of a Manufactured Convertible than in the purchase of a traditional convertible security. Because many corporations have not issued convertible securities, the Manager may combine a fixed-income instrument and an equity feature with respect to the stock of the issuer of the fixed-income instrument to create a synthetic convertible security otherwise unavailable in the market. The Manager may also combine a fixed-income instrument of an issuer with an equity feature with respect to the stock of a different issuer when the Manager believes such a Manufactured Convertible would better promote a Fund's objective than alternative investments. For example, the Manager may combine an equity feature with respect to an issuer's stock with a fixed-income security of a different issuer in the same industry to diversify the Fund's credit exposure, or with a U.S. Treasury instrument to create a Manufactured Convertible with a higher credit profile than a traditional convertible security issued by that issuer. A Manufactured Convertible also is a more flexible investment in that its two components may be purchased separately and, upon purchasing the separate securities, "combined" to create a Manufactured Convertible. For example, the Fund may purchase a warrant for eventual inclusion in a Manufactured Convertible while postponing the purchase of a suitable bond to pair with the warrant pending development of more favorable market conditions.

The value of a Manufactured Convertible may respond to certain market fluctuations differently from a traditional convertible security with similar characteristics. For example, in the event a Fund created a Manufactured Convertible by combining a short-term U.S. Treasury instrument and a call option on a stock, the Manufactured Convertible would be expected to outperform a traditional convertible of similar maturity that is convertible into that stock during periods when Treasury instruments outperform corporate fixed-income securities and underperform during periods when corporate fixed-income securities outperform Treasury instruments.

Corporate Loans. Certain Funds may invest in corporate loans. Corporate loans are generally non-investment grade floating rate instruments. Usually, they are freely callable at the issuer's option. Certain Funds may invest in fixed and floating rate loans ("Loans") arranged through private negotiations between a corporate borrower or a foreign sovereign entity and one or more financial institutions or institutional investors ("Lenders"). A Fund may invest in such Loans in the form of participations in Loans ("Participations") and assignments of all or a portion of Loans from third parties ("Assignments"). A Fund considers these investments to be investments in debt securities for purposes of its investment policies. Participations typically will result in the Fund having a contractual relationship only with the Lender, not with the borrower. The Fund will have the right to receive payments of principal, interest and any fees to which it is entitled only from the Lender selling the Participation and only upon receipt by the Lender of the payments from the borrower. In connection with purchasing Participations, the Fund generally will have no right to enforce compliance by the borrower with the terms of the loan agreement relating to the Loans, nor any rights of set-off against the borrower, and the Fund may not benefit directly from any collateral supporting the Loan in which it has purchased the Participation. As a result, the Fund will assume the credit risk of both the borrower and the Lender that is selling the Participation. In the event of the insolvency of the Lender selling the Participation, the Fund may be treated as a general creditor of the Lender and may not benefit from any set-off between the Lender and the borrower. The Fund will acquire Participations only if the Lender interpositioned between the Fund and the borrower is determined by the Fund's manager to be creditworthy. When the Fund purchases Assignments from Lenders, the Fund will acquire direct rights against the borrower on the Loan, and will not have exposure to a counterparty's credit risk. The Funds may enter into Participations and Assignments on a forward commitment or "when-issued" basis, whereby a Fund would agree to purchase a Participation or Assignment at set terms in the future. For more information on forward commitments and when-issued securities, see "When-Issued Securities, Delayed Delivery Securities and Forward Commitments" below.

A Fund may have difficulty disposing of Assignments and Participations. In certain cases, the market for such instruments may lack sufficient liquidity, and therefore the Fund anticipates that in such cases such instruments could be sold only to a limited number of institutional investors. The lack of a sufficiently liquid secondary market may have an adverse impact on the value of such instruments and on the Fund's ability to dispose of particular Assignments or Participations in response to a specific economic event, such as deterioration in the creditworthiness of the borrower.

Leading financial institutions often act as agent for a broader group of Lenders, generally referred to as a syndicate. The syndicate's agent arranges the loans, holds collateral and accepts payments of principal and interest. Failure by the syndicate agent to fulfill its obligations may delay or adversely affect receipt of payment by the Fund.

The Loans in which the Fund may invest are subject to the risk of loss of principal and income. Although borrowers frequently provide collateral to secure repayment of these obligations they do not always do so. If they do provide collateral, the value of the collateral may not completely cover the borrower's obligations at the time of a default. If a borrower files for protection from its creditors under the U.S. bankruptcy laws, these laws may limit a Fund's rights to its collateral. In addition, the value of collateral may erode during a bankruptcy case. In the event of a bankruptcy, the holder of a Loan may not recover its principal, may experience a long delay in recovering its investment and may not receive interest during the delay.

Transactions in corporate loans may settle on a delayed basis. As a result, the proceeds from the sale of corporate loans may not be readily available to make additional investments or to meet a Fund's redemption obligations. To the extent the extended settlement process gives rise to short-term liquidity needs, a Fund may hold additional cash, sell investments or temporarily borrow from banks and other lenders.

In certain circumstances, Loans may not be deemed to be securities under certain federal securities laws. Therefore, in the event of fraud or misrepresentation by a borrower or an arranger, Lenders and purchasers of interests in Loans, such as the Funds, may not have the protection of the anti-fraud provisions of the federal securities laws as would otherwise be available for bonds or stocks. Instead, in such cases, parties generally would rely on the contractual provisions in the Loan agreement itself and common-law fraud protections under applicable state law.

Direct Lending. The Fund may act as the originator for direct loans and engage in direct lending. Direct loans between the Fund and a borrower may not be administered by an underwriter or agent bank. The Fund may provide financing to commercial borrowers directly or through companies acquired (or created) and owned by or otherwise affiliated with the Fund. The terms of the direct loans are negotiated with borrowers in private transactions. Furthermore, a direct loan may be secured or unsecured.

In determining whether to make a direct loan, the Fund will rely primarily upon the creditworthiness of the borrower and/or any collateral for payment of interest and repayment of principal. The risks associated with direct loans are substantially similar to those associated with investing in corporate loans. In making a direct loan, the Fund is exposed to the risk that the borrower may default or become insolvent and, consequently, that the Fund will lose money on the loan. Furthermore, direct loans may subject the Fund to liquidity and interest rate risk and certain direct loans may be deemed illiquid. Direct loans are not publicly traded and may not have a secondary market. The lack of a secondary market for direct loans may have an adverse impact on the ability of the Fund to dispose of a direct loan and/or to value the direct loan.

When engaging in direct lending, the Fund's performance may depend, in part, on the ability of the Fund to originate loans on advantageous terms. In originating loans, the Fund will compete with a

broad spectrum of lenders. Increased competition for, or a diminishment in the available supply of, qualifying loans could result in lower yields on such loans, which could reduce Fund performance.

As part of its lending activities, the Fund may originate loans to companies that are experiencing significant financial or business difficulties, including companies involved in bankruptcy or other reorganization and liquidation proceedings. Although the terms of such financing may result in significant financial returns to the Fund, they involve a substantial degree of risk. The level of analytical sophistication, both financial and legal, necessary for successful financing to companies experiencing significant business and financial difficulties is unusually high.

Credit Linked Securities. Among the income producing securities in which a Fund may invest are credit linked securities, which are issued by a limited purpose trust or other vehicle that, in turn, invests in a derivative instrument or basket of derivative instruments, such as credit default swaps, interest rate swaps and other securities, in order to provide exposure to certain fixed-income markets. For instance, a Fund may invest in credit linked securities as a cash management tool in order to gain exposure to a certain market and/or to remain fully invested when more traditional income producing securities are not available.

Like an investment in a bond, investments in these credit linked securities represent the right to receive periodic income payments (in the form of distributions) and payment of principal at the end of the term of the security.

However, these payments are conditioned on the issuer's receipt of payments from, and the issuer's potential obligations to, the counterparties to the derivative instruments and other securities in which the issuer invests. For instance, the issuer may sell one or more credit default swaps, under which the issuer would receive a stream of payments over the term of the swap agreements provided that no event of default has occurred with respect to the referenced debt obligation upon which the swap is based. If a default occurs, the stream of payments may stop and the issuer would be obligated to pay the counterparty the par (or other agreed upon value) of the referenced debt obligation. This, in turn, would reduce the amount of income and principal that a Fund would receive. A Fund's investments in these instruments are indirectly subject to the risks associated with derivative instruments, including, among others, credit risk, default or similar event risk, counterparty risk, interest rate risk, leverage risk and management risk. It is also expected that the securities will be exempt from registration under the Securities Act. Accordingly, there may be no established trading market for the securities and they may constitute illiquid investments.

Debt Securities. Debt securities, such as bonds, involve credit risk. This is the risk that the issuer will not make timely payments of principal and interest. The degree of credit risk depends on the issuer's financial condition and on the terms of the debt securities. Changes in an issuer's credit rating or the market's perception of an issuer's creditworthiness may also affect the value of a Fund's investment in that issuer. Credit risk is reduced to the extent a Fund limits its debt investments to U.S. Government Securities.

All debt securities, however, are subject to interest rate risk. This is the risk that the value of the security may fall when interest rates rise. If interest rates move sharply in a manner not anticipated by Fund management, a Fund's investments in debt securities could be adversely affected and the Fund could lose money. In general, the market price of debt securities with longer maturities will go up or down more in response to changes in interest rates than will the market price of shorter-term debt securities.

During periods of rising interest rates, the average life of certain fixed-income securities is extended because of slower than expected principal payments. This may lock in a below-market interest rate and

extend the duration of these fixed-income securities, especially mortgage-related securities, making them more sensitive to changes in interest rates. As a result, in a period of rising interest rates, these securities may exhibit additional volatility and lose value. This is known as extension risk.

The value of fixed-income securities in the Funds can be expected to vary inversely with changes in prevailing interest rates. Fixed-income securities with longer maturities, which tend to produce higher yields, are subject to potentially greater capital appreciation and depreciation than securities with shorter maturities. The Funds are not restricted to any maximum or minimum time to maturity in purchasing individual portfolio securities, and the average maturity of a Fund's assets will vary.

Floating and Variable Rate Securities. Certain Funds may invest in debt instruments that pay a variable coupon rate. Securities with floating or variable interest rates can be less sensitive to interest rate changes than securities with fixed interest rates, but may decline in value if their interest rates do not rise as much, or as quickly, as interest rates in general. Conversely, floating rate securities will not generally increase in value if interest rates decline. The impact of interest rate changes on floating rate investments is typically mitigated by the periodic interest rate reset of the investments. Benchmark interest rates used for floating and variable rate securities may not accurately track market interest rates.

Inflation-Indexed Bonds. Certain Funds may invest in inflation-indexed bonds, which are fixed-income securities or other instruments whose principal value is periodically adjusted according to the rate of inflation. Two structures are common. The U.S. Treasury and some other issuers use a structure that accrues inflation into the principal value of the bond. Most other issuers pay out the Consumer Price Index ("CPI") accruals as part of a semi-annual coupon.

Inflation-indexed securities issued by the U.S. Treasury have maturities of five, ten or thirty years, although it is possible that securities with other maturities will be issued in the future. The U.S. Treasury securities pay interest on a semi-annual basis, equal to a fixed percentage of the inflation-adjusted principal amount. For example, if a Fund purchased an inflation-indexed bond with a par value of $1,000 and a 3% real rate of return coupon (payable 1.5% semi-annually), and inflation over the first six months was 1%, the mid-year par value of the bond would be $1,010 and the first semi-annual interest payment would be $15.15 ($1,010 times 1.5%). If inflation during the second half of the year resulted in the whole year's inflation equaling 3%, the end-of-year par value of the bond would be $1,030 and the second semi-annual interest payment would be $15.45 ($1,030 times 1.5%).

If the periodic adjustment rate measuring inflation falls, the principal value of inflation-indexed bonds will be adjusted downward, and, consequently, the interest payable on these securities (calculated with respect to a smaller principal amount) will be reduced. Repayment of the original bond principal upon maturity (as adjusted for inflation) is guaranteed in the case of U.S. Treasury inflation-indexed bonds, even during a period of deflation. However, the current market value of the bonds is not guaranteed, and will fluctuate. Certain Funds may also invest in other inflation related bonds which may or may not provide a similar guarantee. If a guarantee of principal is not provided, the adjusted principal value of the bond repaid at maturity may be less than the original principal. In addition, if the Fund purchases inflation-indexed bonds offered by foreign issuers, the rate of inflation measured by the foreign inflation index may not be correlated to the rate of inflation in the United States.

The value of inflation-indexed bonds is expected to change in response to changes in real interest rates. Real interest rates, in turn, are tied to the relationship between nominal interest rates and the rate of inflation. Therefore, if inflation were to rise at a faster rate than nominal interest rates, real interest rates might decline, leading to an increase in value of inflation-indexed bonds. In contrast, if nominal interest rates increased at a faster rate than inflation, real interest rates might rise, leading to a decrease in value of inflation-indexed bonds. There can be no assurance, however, that the value of inflation-indexed bonds will be directly correlated to changes in interest rates.

While these securities are expected to be protected from long-term inflationary trends, short-term increases in inflation may lead to a decline in value. If interest rates rise due to reasons other than inflation (for example, due to changes in currency exchange rates), investors in these securities may not be protected to the extent that the increase is not reflected in the bond's inflation measure.

In general, the measure used to determine the periodic adjustment of U.S. inflation-indexed bonds is the Consumer Price Index for Urban Consumers ("CPI-U"), which is calculated monthly by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The CPI-U is a measurement of changes in the cost of living, made up of components such as housing, food, transportation and energy. Inflation-indexed bonds issued by a foreign government are generally adjusted to reflect a comparable inflation index, calculated by that government. There can be no assurance that the CPI-U or any foreign inflation index will accurately measure the real rate of inflation in the prices of goods and services. Moreover, there can be no assurance that the rate of inflation in a foreign country will be correlated to the rate of inflation in the United States.

Any increase in the principal amount of an inflation-indexed bond will be considered taxable ordinary income, even though investors do not receive their principal until maturity.

Investment Grade Debt Obligations. Certain Funds may invest in "investment grade securities," which are securities rated in the four highest rating categories of an NRSRO or deemed to be of equivalent quality by a Fund's Manager. Certain Funds may invest in debt securities rated Aaa by Moody's or AAA by S&P. It should be noted that debt obligations rated in the lowest of the top four ratings (*i.e.*, "Baa" by Moody's or "BBB" by S&P) are considered to have some speculative characteristics and are more sensitive to economic change than higher rated securities. If an investment grade security of a Fund is subsequently downgraded below investment grade, the Fund's Manager will consider such an event in determining whether the Fund should continue to hold the security. Subject to its investment strategies, there is no limit on the amount of such downgraded securities a Fund may hold.

See Appendix A to this SAI for a description of applicable securities ratings.

High Yield Investments ("Junk Bonds").

Non-investment grade or "high yield" fixed-income or convertible securities commonly known to investors as "junk bonds" are debt securities that are rated below investment grade by the major rating agencies or are securities that Fund management believes are of comparable quality. While generally providing greater income and opportunity for gain, non-investment grade debt securities may be subject to greater risks than securities which have higher credit ratings, including a high risk of default, and their yields will fluctuate over time. High yield securities will generally be in the lower rating categories of recognized rating agencies (rated "Ba" or lower by Moody's or "BB" or lower by S&P) or will be non-rated. The credit rating of a high yield security does not necessarily address its market value risk, and ratings may from time to time change, positively or negatively, to reflect developments regarding the issuer's financial condition. High yield securities are considered to be speculative with respect to the capacity of the issuer to timely repay principal and pay interest or dividends in accordance with the terms of the obligation and may have more credit risk than higher rated securities.

The major risks in junk bond investments include the following:

- Junk bonds may be issued by less creditworthy companies. These securities are vulnerable to adverse changes in the issuer's industry and to general economic conditions. Issuers of junk bonds may be unable to meet their interest or principal payment obligations because of an economic downturn, specific issuer developments or the unavailability of additional financing.
- The issuers of junk bonds may have a larger amount of outstanding debt relative to their assets than issuers of investment grade bonds. If the issuer experiences financial stress, it may be

unable to meet its debt obligations. The issuer's ability to pay its debt obligations also may be lessened by specific issuer developments, or the unavailability of additional financing. Issuers of high yield securities are often in the growth stage of their development and/or involved in a reorganization or takeover.

- Junk bonds are frequently ranked junior to claims by other creditors. If the issuer cannot meet its obligations, the senior obligations are generally paid off before the junior obligations, which will potentially limit a Fund's ability to fully recover principal or to receive interest payments when senior securities are in default. Thus, investors in high yield securities have a lower degree of protection with respect to principal and interest payments than do investors in higher rated securities.
- Junk bonds frequently have redemption features that permit an issuer to repurchase the security from a Fund before it matures. If an issuer redeems the junk bonds, a Fund may have to invest the proceeds in bonds with lower yields and may lose income.
- Prices of junk bonds are subject to extreme price fluctuations. Negative economic developments may have a greater impact on the prices of junk bonds than on those of other higher rated fixed-income securities.
- Junk bonds may be less liquid than higher rated fixed-income securities even under normal economic conditions. Under certain economic and/or market conditions, a Fund may have difficulty disposing of certain high yield securities due to the limited number of investors in that sector of the market. There are fewer dealers in the junk bond market, and there may be significant differences in the prices quoted for junk bonds by the dealers, and such quotations may not be the actual prices available for a purchase or sale. Because junk bonds are less liquid than higher rated bonds, judgment may play a greater role in valuing certain of a Fund's portfolio securities than in the case of securities trading in a more liquid market.
- The secondary markets for high yield securities are not as liquid as the secondary markets for higher rated securities. The secondary markets for high yield securities are concentrated in relatively few market makers and participants in the markets are mostly institutional investors, including insurance companies, banks, other financial institutions and mutual funds. In addition, the trading volume for high yield securities is generally lower than that for higher rated securities and the secondary markets could contract under adverse market or economic conditions independent of any specific adverse changes in the condition of a particular issuer. Under certain economic and/or market conditions, a Fund may have difficulty disposing of certain high yield securities due to the limited number of investors in that sector of the market. An illiquid secondary market may adversely affect the market price of the high yield security, which may result in increased difficulty selling the particular issue and obtaining accurate market quotations on the issue when valuing a Fund's assets. Market quotations on high yield securities are available only from a limited number of dealers, and such quotations may not be the actual prices available for a purchase or sale. When the secondary market for high yield securities becomes more illiquid, or in the absence of readily available market quotations for such securities, the relative lack of reliable objective data makes it more difficult to value a Fund's securities, and judgment plays a more important role in determining such valuations.
- A Fund may incur expenses to the extent necessary to seek recovery upon default or to negotiate new terms with a defaulting issuer.
- The junk bond markets may react strongly to adverse news about an issuer or the economy, or to the perception or expectation of adverse news, whether or not it is based on fundamental analysis. Additionally, prices for high yield securities may be affected by legislative and regulatory developments. These developments could adversely affect a Fund's NAV and investment practices, the secondary market for high yield securities, the financial condition of issuers of these

securities and the value and liquidity of outstanding high yield securities, especially in a thinly traded market. For example, federal legislation requiring the divestiture by federally insured savings and loan associations of their investments in high yield bonds and limiting the deductibility of interest by certain corporate issuers of high yield bonds adversely affected the market in the past.

- The rating assigned by a rating agency evaluates the issuing agency's assessment of the safety of a non-investment grade security's principal and interest payments, but does not address market value risk. Because such ratings of the ratings agencies may not always reflect current conditions and events, in addition to using recognized rating agencies and other sources, the Manager or sub-adviser performs its own analysis of the issuers whose non-investment grade securities a Fund holds. Because of this, the Fund's performance may depend more on the Manager's or sub-adviser's own credit analysis than in the case of mutual funds investing in higher-rated securities.

In selecting non-investment grade securities, the Manager or sub-adviser considers factors such as those relating to the creditworthiness of issuers, the ratings and performance of the securities, the protections afforded the securities and the diversity of the Fund. The Manager or sub-adviser continuously monitors the issuers of non-investment grade securities held by the Fund for their ability to make required principal and interest payments, as well as in an effort to control the liquidity of the Fund so that it can meet redemption requests. If a security's rating is reduced below the minimum credit rating that is permitted for a Fund, the Fund's adviser or sub-adviser will consider whether the Fund should continue to hold the security.

In the event that a Fund investing in high yield securities experiences an unexpected level of net redemptions, the Fund could be forced to sell its holdings without regard to the investment merits, thereby decreasing the assets upon which the Fund's rate of return is based.

The costs attributable to investing in the junk bond markets are usually higher for several reasons, such as higher investment research costs and higher commission costs.

Mezzanine Investments. Certain Funds, consistent with their restrictions on investing in securities of a specific credit quality, may invest in certain high yield securities known as mezzanine investments, which are subordinated debt securities which are generally issued in private placements in connection with an equity security (*e.g.*, with attached warrants). Such mezzanine investments may be issued with or without registration rights. Similar to other high yield securities, maturities of mezzanine investments are typically seven to ten years, but the expected average life is significantly shorter at three to five years. Mezzanine investments are usually unsecured and subordinate to other obligations of the issuer.

Pay-in-kind Bonds. Certain Funds may invest in pay-in-kind, or PIK, bonds. PIK bonds are bonds which pay interest through the issuance of additional debt or equity securities. Similar to zero coupon obligations, pay-in-kind bonds also carry additional risk as holders of these types of securities realize no cash until the cash payment date unless a portion of such securities is sold and, if the issuer defaults, a Fund may obtain no return at all on its investment. The market price of pay-in-kind bonds is affected by interest rate changes to a greater extent, and therefore tends to be more volatile, than that of securities which pay interest in cash. Additionally, current U.S. federal tax law requires the holder of pay-in-kind bonds to accrue income with respect to these securities prior to the receipt of cash payments. To maintain its qualification as a regulated investment company and avoid liability for U.S. federal income and excise taxes, each Fund may be required to distribute income accrued with respect to these securities and may have to dispose of portfolio securities under disadvantageous circumstances in order to generate cash to satisfy these distribution requirements.

Supranational Entities. A Fund may invest in debt securities of supranational entities. Examples of such entities include the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank), the European Steel and Coal Community, the Asian Development Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. The government members, or "stockholders," usually make initial capital contributions to the supranational entity and in many cases are committed to make additional capital contributions if the supranational entity is unable to repay its borrowings. There is no guarantee that one or more stockholders of a supranational entity will continue to make any necessary additional capital contributions. If such contributions are not made, the entity may be unable to pay interest or repay principal on its debt securities, and a Fund may lose money on such investments.

Depositary Receipts (ADRs, EDRs and GDRs). Certain Funds may invest in the securities of foreign issuers in the form of Depositary Receipts or other securities convertible into securities of foreign issuers. Depositary Receipts may not necessarily be denominated in the same currency as the underlying securities into which they may be converted. The Fund may invest in both sponsored and unsponsored American Depositary Receipts ("ADRs"), European Depositary Receipts ("EDRs"), Global Depositary Receipts ("GDRs") and other similar global instruments. ADRs typically are issued by an American bank or trust company and evidence ownership of underlying securities issued by a foreign corporation. EDRs, which are sometimes referred to as Continental Depositary Receipts, are receipts issued in Europe, typically by foreign banks and trust companies, that evidence ownership of either foreign or domestic underlying securities. GDRs are depositary receipts structured like global debt issues to facilitate trading on an international basis. In addition to investment risks associated with the underlying issuer, Depositary Receipts expose a Fund to additional risks associated with the non-uniform terms that apply to Depositary Receipt programs, credit exposure to the depository bank and to the sponsors and other parties with whom the depository bank establishes the programs, currency risk and the risk of an illiquid market for Depositary Receipts. Unsponsored ADR, EDR and GDR programs are organized independently and without the cooperation of the issuer of the underlying securities. Unsponsored programs generally expose investors to greater risks than sponsored programs and do not provide holders with many of the shareholder benefits that come from investing in a sponsored Depositary Receipt. Available information concerning the issuer may not be as current as for sponsored ADRs, EDRs and GDRs, and the prices of unsponsored ADRs, EDRs and GDRs may be more volatile than if such instruments were sponsored by the issuer. Depositary Receipts are generally subject to the same risks as the foreign securities that they evidence or into which they may be converted. Investments in ADRs, EDRs and GDRs present additional investment considerations as described under "Foreign Investment Risks."

Derivatives.

General. Each Fund may use instruments referred to as derivatives, which are financial instruments that derive their value from one or more securities, commodities (such as gold or oil), currencies (including bitcoin and ether), interest rates, credit events or indices (a measure of value or rates, such as the S&P 500 Index or the prime lending rate) or other reference asset. Derivatives may allow a Fund to increase or decrease the level of risk to which the Fund is exposed more quickly and efficiently than with other transactions. Certain Funds may use derivatives to maintain a portion of their long and short positions. Unless otherwise permitted, no Fund may use derivatives to gain exposure to an asset or asset class it is prohibited by its investment restrictions from purchasing directly. As described below, derivatives can be used for hedging or speculative purposes. Funds will engage in transaction-level payment netting, *i.e.*, the payment obligations of derivatives contracts are netted against one another with the Fund receiving or paying, as the case may be, only the net amount of the two payment streams.

Hedging. Each Fund may use derivatives for hedging purposes, in which a derivative is used to offset the risks associated with other Fund holdings. Losses on other investments may be substantially

reduced by gains on a derivative that reacts in an opposite manner to market movements. Although hedging may reduce losses, it may also reduce or eliminate gains. In addition, hedging may cause losses if the market moves in an unanticipated manner, or if the cost of the derivative outweighs the benefit of the hedge. The effectiveness of hedging may be reduced by correlation risk, *i.e.*, the risk that changes in the value of the derivative will not match those of the holdings being hedged as expected by a Fund, which may result in additional losses to the Fund. The inability to close or offset derivatives could also reduce the effectiveness of a Fund's hedging. There is no assurance that a Fund's hedging will be effective. No Fund is required to use derivatives to hedge.

Speculation. Certain Funds may also use derivatives for speculative purposes to seek to enhance returns. The use of a derivative is speculative if the Fund is primarily seeking to achieve gains, rather than offset the risk of other positions. To the extent a Fund invests in a derivative for speculative purposes, the Fund will be fully exposed to the risks of loss of that derivative, which may sometimes be greater than the derivative's cost, and the potential for loss in certain cases may be unlimited.

Regulation of Derivatives.

Rule 18f-4 Under the Investment Company Act. Rule 18f-4 under the Investment Company Act permits a Fund to enter into Derivatives Transactions (as defined below) and certain other transactions notwithstanding the restrictions on the issuance of "senior securities" under Section 18 of the Investment Company Act. Section 18 of the Investment Company Act, among other things, prohibits open-end funds, including the Funds, from issuing or selling any "senior security," other than borrowing from a bank (subject to a requirement to maintain 300% "asset coverage").

Under Rule 18f-4, "Derivatives Transactions" include the following: (1) any swap, security-based swap (including a contract for differences), futures contract, forward contract, option (excluding purchased options), any combination of the foregoing, or any similar instrument, under which a Fund is or may be required to make any payment or delivery of cash or other assets during the life of the instrument or at maturity or early termination, whether as margin or settlement payment or otherwise; (2) any short sale borrowing; (3) reverse repurchase agreements and similar financing transactions (e.g., recourse and non-recourse tender option bonds, and borrowed bonds), if a Fund elects to treat all of these transactions as Derivatives Transactions under Rule 18f-4; and (4) when-issued or forward-settling securities (e.g., firm and standby commitments, including to-be-announced ("TBA") commitments, and dollar rolls) and non-standard settlement cycle securities, unless such transactions meet the Delayed-Settlement Securities Provision (as defined below under "— When-Issued Securities, Delayed Delivery Securities and Forward Commitments").

Unless a Fund is relying on the Limited Derivatives User Exception (as defined below), the Fund must comply with Rule 18f-4 with respect to its Derivatives Transactions. Rule 18f-4, among other things, requires a Fund to adopt and implement a comprehensive written derivatives risk management program ("DRMP") and comply with a relative or absolute limit on Fund leverage risk calculated based on value-at-risk ("VaR"). The DRMP is administered by a "derivatives risk manager," who is appointed by the Fund's Board, including a majority of the independent Directors, and periodically reviews the DRMP and reports to the Fund's Board.

Rule 18f-4 provides an exception from the DRMP, VaR limit and certain other requirements if a Fund's "derivatives exposure" is limited to 10% of its net assets (as calculated in accordance with Rule 18f-4) and the Fund adopts and implements written policies and procedures reasonably designed to manage its derivatives risks (the "Limited Derivatives User Exception").

Dodd-Frank Regulations. The Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act ("Dodd-Frank"), enacted in July 2010, includes provisions that comprehensively regulate the over-the-counter

("OTC") derivatives markets for the first time. While the Commodity Futures Trading Commission ("CFTC") and other U.S. regulators have adopted many of the required Dodd-Frank regulations, certain regulations have only recently become effective and other regulations remain to be adopted. The full impact of Dodd-Frank on the Funds remains uncertain.

Many OTC derivatives dealers are required to register with the CFTC as "swap dealers" and/or with the SEC as "security-based swap dealers". Registered swap dealers and security-based swap dealers are subject to various regulatory requirements, including, but not limited to, margin, recordkeeping, reporting, transparency, position limits, limitations on conflicts of interest, business conduct standards, minimum capital requirements and other regulatory requirements, which indirectly impact the Funds that enter into transactions with them.

The CFTC requires that certain interest rate swaps and certain credit default swaps must be executed in regulated markets and be submitted for clearing to regulated clearinghouses. The SEC is also expected to impose similar requirements on certain security-based derivatives in the future. OTC derivatives trades submitted for clearing are subject to minimum initial and variation margin requirements set by the relevant clearinghouse, as well as margin requirements mandated by the CFTC, SEC and/or federal prudential regulators. In addition, futures commission merchants ("FCMs"), who act as clearing members on behalf of customers for cleared OTC derivatives and futures contracts, also have discretion to increase a Fund's margin requirements for these transactions beyond any regulatory and clearinghouse minimums subject to any restrictions on such discretion in the documentation between the FCM and the customer. These regulatory requirements may make it more difficult and costly for the Funds to enter into highly tailored or customized transactions, potentially rendering certain investment strategies impossible or not economically feasible. If a Fund decides to execute and clear cleared OTC derivatives and/or futures contracts through execution facilities, exchanges or clearinghouses, either indirectly through an executing broker, clearing member FCM or as a direct member, a Fund would be required to comply with the rules of the execution facility, exchange or clearinghouse and other applicable law.

With respect to cleared OTC derivatives and futures contracts and options on futures, a Fund will not face a clearinghouse directly but rather will do so through a FCM that is registered with the CFTC and/or SEC and that acts as a clearing member. A Fund may face the indirect risk of the failure of another clearing member customer to meet its obligations to its clearing member. Such scenario could arise due to a default by the clearing member on its obligations to the clearinghouse simultaneously with a customer's failure to meet its obligations to the clearing member.

Clearing member FCMs are required to post initial margin to the clearinghouses through which they clear their customers' cleared OTC derivatives and futures contracts, instead of using such initial margin in their businesses, as was widely permitted for OTC derivatives before Dodd-Frank. While an FCM may require its customer to post initial margin in excess of clearinghouse requirements, and certain clearinghouses may share a portion of their earnings on initial margin with their clearing members, some portion of the initial margin that is passed through to the clearinghouse does not generate earnings for the FCM. The inability of FCMs to earn the same levels of returns on initial margin for cleared OTC derivatives as they could earn with respect to non-cleared OTC derivatives may cause FCMs to charge higher fees, or provide less favorable pricing on cleared OTC derivatives than swap dealers will provide for non-cleared OTC derivatives. Furthermore, customers, including the Funds, are subject to additional fees payable to FCMs with respect to cleared OTC derivatives, which may raise the cost to Funds of clearing as compared to trading non-cleared OTC derivatives bilaterally.

With respect to uncleared swaps, registered swap dealers and security-based swap dealers are required to exchange variation margin with a Fund and may be required by applicable regulations to collect (and in some cases exchange) initial margin with a Fund. Both initial and variation margin may

be comprised of cash and/or securities, subject to applicable regulatory haircuts and other restrictions. Shares of investment companies (other than certain money market funds) may not be posted as collateral under applicable regulations.

The CFTC, certain foreign regulators, and many futures exchanges have established (and continue to evaluate and monitor) speculative position limits ("position limits") on the maximum speculative position which any person, or group of persons acting in concert, may hold or control in particular contracts. In addition, U.S. federal position limits apply to swaps that are economically equivalent to futures contracts on certain agricultural, metals and energy commodities. All positions owned or controlled by the same person or entity, even if in different accounts, must be aggregated for purposes of complying with the speculative limits. Thus, even if a Fund does not intend to exceed applicable position limits, it is possible that different clients managed by the Manager and its affiliates may be aggregated for this purpose. Therefore, the trading decisions of the Manager may have to be modified and positions held by a Fund liquidated in order to avoid exceeding such limits. The modification of investment decisions or the elimination of open positions, if it occurs, may adversely affect the profitability of a Fund. A violation of position limits could also lead to regulatory action materially adverse to a Fund's investment strategy. A Fund may also be affected by other regimes, including those of the European Union and United Kingdom, and trading venues that impose position limits on commodity derivative contracts.

Additional Regulation of Derivatives. Regulatory bodies outside the U.S. have also passed, proposed, or may propose in the future, legislation similar to Dodd-Frank or other legislation that could increase the costs of participating in, or otherwise adversely impact the liquidity of, participating in the commodities markets. For example, the European Market Infrastructure Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 648/2012) ("EMIR") introduced certain requirements in respect of OTC derivatives including: (i) the mandatory clearing of OTC derivative contracts declared subject to the clearing obligation; (ii) risk mitigation techniques in respect of uncleared OTC derivative contracts, including the mandatory margining of uncleared OTC derivative contracts; and (iii) reporting and recordkeeping requirements in respect of all derivatives contracts. By way of further example, the European Union Markets in Financial Instruments Directive (Directive 2014/65/EU) and Markets in Financial Instruments Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 600/2014) (together "MiFID II"), which have applied since January 3, 2018, govern the provision of investment services and activities in relation to, as well as the organized trading of, financial instruments such as shares, bonds, units in collective investment schemes and derivatives. In particular, MiFID II requires European Union Member States to apply position limits to the size of a net position a person can hold at any time in commodity derivatives traded on European Union trading venues and in "economically equivalent" OTC contracts. If the requirements of EMIR and MiFID II apply, the cost of derivatives transactions is expected to increase.

In addition, regulations adopted by global prudential regulators that are now in effect require certain prudentially regulated entities and certain of their affiliates and subsidiaries (including swap dealers) to include in their derivatives contracts and certain other financial contracts, terms that delay or restrict the rights of counterparties (such as the Funds) to terminate such contracts, foreclose upon collateral, exercise other default rights or restrict transfers of credit support in the event that the prudentially regulated entity and/or its affiliates are subject to certain types of resolution or insolvency proceedings. Similar regulations and laws have been adopted in non-U.S. jurisdictions that may apply to a Fund's counterparties located in those jurisdictions. In particular, in the United Kingdom and the European Union, governmental authorities could reduce, eliminate or convert to equity the liabilities to a Fund of a counterparty experiencing financial difficulties (sometimes referred to as a "bail in"). It is possible that these requirements, as well as potential additional related government regulation, could adversely affect a Fund's ability to terminate existing derivatives contracts, exercise default rights or satisfy obligations owed to it with collateral received under such contracts.

Regulatory changes or actions may alter the nature of an investment in bitcoin or ether futures or restrict the use of bitcoin or ether or the operations of digital asset networks or exchanges on which bitcoin or ether trades in a manner that adversely affects the price of such digital asset futures, which could adversely impact a Fund.

Risk Factors in Derivatives.

There are significant risks that apply generally to derivatives transactions, including:

Correlation Risk — the risk that changes in the value of a derivative will not match the changes in the value of the portfolio holdings that are being hedged or of the particular market or security to which the Fund seeks exposure. There are a number of factors which may prevent a derivative instrument from achieving the desired correlation (or inverse correlation) with an underlying asset, rate or index, such as the impact of fees, expenses and transaction costs, the timing of pricing, and disruptions or illiquidity in the markets for such derivative instrument.

Counterparty Risk — the risk that a derivatives transaction counterparty will be unable or unwilling to make payments or otherwise honor its obligations to a Fund and the related risks of having concentrated exposure to such a counterparty. In particular, derivatives traded in OTC markets often are not guaranteed by an exchange or clearing corporation and often do not require payment of margin, and to the extent that the Fund has unrealized gains in such instruments or has deposited collateral with its counterparties the Fund is at risk that its counterparties will become bankrupt or otherwise fail to honor their obligations. A Fund will typically attempt to minimize counterparty risk by engaging in OTC derivatives transactions only with creditworthy entities that have substantial capital or that have provided the Fund with a third-party guaranty or other credit support. When a Fund enters into a derivatives transaction that is centrally cleared (whether mandatorily or voluntarily), the Fund is subject to the credit risk of the clearing house and the clearing member through which it holds its cleared position. Credit risk of market participants with respect to derivatives that are centrally cleared is concentrated in a few clearing houses and increasingly fewer clearing members. It is not clear how an insolvency proceeding of a clearing house would be conducted and what impact an insolvency of a clearing house would have on the financial system. Also, a Fund will not be fully protected in the event of the bankruptcy of a Fund's clearing member because the Fund would be limited to recovering only a pro rata share of the funds held by the clearing member on behalf of customers by account class for cleared derivatives. Although a clearing member is required to segregate assets from customers with respect to cleared derivatives positions from the clearing member's proprietary assets, if a clearing member does not comply with the applicable regulations, or in the event of fraud or misappropriation of customer assets by a clearing member, a Fund could have only an unsecured creditor claim in an insolvency of the clearing member with respect to the assets held by the clearing member.

Credit Risk — the risk that the reference entity in a credit default swap or similar derivative will not be able to honor its financial obligations.

Currency Risk — the risk that changes in the exchange rate between two currencies will adversely affect the value (in U.S. dollar terms) of a derivative.

Illiquidity Risk — the risk that certain securities or instruments may be difficult or impossible to sell at the time or at the price desired by a Fund in connection with payments of margin, collateral, or settlement payments. There can be no assurance that a Fund will be able to unwind or offset a derivative at its desired price, in a secondary market or otherwise. It may, therefore, not be possible for the Fund to unwind its position in a derivative without incurring substantial losses (if at all). Certain OTC derivatives, including swaps and OTC options, involve substantial illiquidity risk. Illiquidity may also make it more difficult for a Fund to ascertain a market value for such derivatives. A Fund will,

therefore, acquire illiquid OTC derivatives (i) if the agreement pursuant to which the instrument is purchased contains a formula price at which the instrument may be terminated or sold, or (ii) for which the Manager anticipates the Fund can receive on each business day at least two independent bids or offers, unless a quotation from only one dealer is available, in which case that dealer's quotation may be used. The illiquidity of the derivatives markets may be due to various factors, including congestion, disorderly markets, limitations on deliverable supplies, the participation of speculators, government regulation and intervention, and technical and operational or system failures. In addition, the liquidity of a market in an exchange-traded derivative contract may be adversely affected by "daily price fluctuation limits" established by the exchanges which limit the amount of fluctuation in an exchange-traded contract price during a single trading day. Once the daily limit has been reached in the contract, no trades may be entered into at a price beyond the limit, thus preventing the liquidation of open positions. Prices have in the past moved to the daily limit on a number of consecutive trading days with little to no trading. If it is not possible to close an open derivative position entered into by the Fund, the Fund would continue to be required to make daily cash payments of variation margin in the event of adverse price movements. In such a situation, if the Fund has insufficient cash, it may have to sell portfolio securities to meet daily variation margin requirements at a time when it may be disadvantageous to do so. Fund's investment in digital asset futures may involve illiquidity risk, as digital asset futures are not as heavily traded as other futures given that the digital asset futures market is relatively new.

Index Risk — if the derivative is linked to the performance of an index, it will be subject to the risks associated with changes in that index. If the index changes, the Fund could receive lower interest payments or experience a reduction in the value of the derivative to below the price that the Fund paid for such derivative.

Legal Risk — the risk of insufficient documentation, insufficient capacity or authority of counterparty, or legality or enforceability of a contract.

Leverage Risk — the risk that a Fund's derivatives transactions can magnify the Fund's gains and losses. Relatively small market movements may result in large changes in the value of a derivatives position and can result in losses that greatly exceed the amount originally invested.

Market Risk — the risk that changes in the value of one or more markets or changes with respect to the value of the underlying asset will adversely affect the value of a derivative. In the event of an adverse movement, a Fund may be required to pay substantial additional margin to maintain its position or the Fund's returns may be adversely affected.

Operational Risk — the risk related to potential operational issues, including documentation issues, settlement issues, systems failures, inadequate controls and human error.

Valuation Risk — the risk that valuation sources for a derivative will not be readily available in the market. This is possible especially in times of market distress, since many market participants may be reluctant to purchase complex instruments or quote prices for them. Exchanges where bitcoin or ether is traded (which are the source of the price(s) used to determine the cash settlement amount for a Fund's bitcoin or ether futures) have experienced technical and operational issues, making bitcoin prices unavailable at times. In addition, the cash market in bitcoin or ether has been the target of fraud and manipulation, which could affect the pricing of bitcoin or ether futures contracts.

Volatility Risk — the risk that the value of derivatives will fluctuate significantly within a short time period. In particular, bitcoin, ether, bitcoin futures and ether futures have generally exhibited significant price volatility relative to more traditional asset classes. Bitcoin and ether futures may also experience significant price volatility as a result of the market fraud and manipulation noted above.

Types of Derivatives Transactions.

A Fund may enter into derivatives transactions in accordance with its investment guidelines and restrictions, including the following:

Futures.

A Fund may enter into futures contracts ("futures") and options on futures contracts. Futures are standardized, exchange-traded contracts that require a purchaser to take delivery, and a seller to make delivery, of a specified amount of an asset at a specified future date and price. Upon purchasing or selling a futures contract, a Fund is required to deposit initial margin equal to a percentage of the contract value. Futures contracts are marked to market daily for the duration of the contract, and the Fund will either post additional margin or be entitled to a payment, as applicable, based on the mark-to-market movement of the contract.

A Fund may sell a futures contract prior to the completion of its term to limit its risk of loss from a decline in the market value of portfolio holdings correlated with the futures contract. However, in the event the market value of the portfolio holdings correlated with the futures contract increases rather than decreases, a Fund will realize a loss on the futures position and a lower return on the portfolio holdings than would have been realized without the purchase of the futures contract.

The purchase of a futures contract may provide a Fund a lower cost alternative to purchasing securities or commodities directly. In the event that such securities or commodities decline in value or a Fund determines not to complete an anticipatory hedge transaction relating to a futures contract, however, the Fund may realize a loss relating to the futures position.

Futures contracts are also subject to position limits. In order to comply with position limits, a Fund may be required to liquidate positions or may not be able to fully implement trading instructions. Any such liquidation or limited implementation could result in substantial costs to a Fund. See "— Regulation of Derivatives — Dodd-Frank Regulations" above.

A Fund is also permitted to purchase or sell call and put options on futures contracts, including financial futures and stock indices. Generally, these strategies would be used under the same market and market sector conditions (*i.e.*, conditions relating to specific types of investments) in which the Fund entered into futures transactions. A Fund may purchase put options or write call options on futures contracts and stock indices in lieu of selling the underlying futures contract in anticipation of a decrease in the market value of its securities. Similarly, a Fund can purchase call options, or write put options on futures contracts and stock indices, as a substitute for the purchase of such futures contracts to hedge against the increased cost resulting from an increase in the market value of securities which the Fund intends to purchase.

To maintain greater flexibility, a Fund may invest in instruments which have characteristics similar to futures contracts. These instruments may take a variety of forms, such as debt securities with interest or principal payments determined by reference to the value of a security, an index of securities or a commodity at a future point in time. The risks of such investments could reflect the risks of investing in futures and securities, including volatility and illiquidity.

Futures contracts and options on futures contracts are subject to significant correlation risk, leverage risk, illiquidity risk, market risk and counterparty risk with respect to a Fund's futures broker or the clearinghouse. See "— Risk Factors in Derivatives" above.

Certain Funds may invest in futures based on carbon "allowances." Under certain regulatory regimes, a limit is set by a regulator, such as a government entity, on the total amount of specific greenhouse

gases, such as CO2, that can be emitted by regulated entities, such as manufacturers or energy producers. The regulator then may issue or sell individual "emission allowances" to regulated entities, which can then be traded on the open market. Commodity futures contracts linked to the value of emission allowances are known as "carbon futures."

The price for carbon futures contracts is based on a number of factors, including the supply of and the demand for carbon futures contracts. Changes in law, market conditions and expectations, position limits, collateral requirements, and other factors each can impact the supply of and demand for carbon futures contracts. The market for carbon futures contracts is still developing and may be subject to periods of illiquidity. During such times it may be difficult or impossible to buy or sell a position at the desired price. Market disruptions or volatility can also make it difficult to find a counterparty willing to transact at a reasonable price and sufficient size.

Swap Agreements.

A Fund may enter into swap agreements for hedging purposes or speculative purposes. Swap agreements are OTC contracts entered into primarily by financial institutions and institutional investors which may or may not be cleared by a central clearinghouse. In a standard "swap" transaction, two parties agree to exchange the returns earned or realized from one or more underlying assets or rates of return, which may be adjusted for an interest factor. The gross returns to be exchanged or "swapped" between the parties are generally calculated with respect to a "notional amount," *e.g.*, the return or increase in value of a particular dollar amount invested at a particular interest rate, in a particular foreign currency, or in a "basket" of securities representing a particular index. The notional amount of the swap agreement is only used to calculate the obligations that the parties to a swap agreement have agreed to exchange. A Fund's obligations (or rights) under a swap agreement will generally be equal only to the net amount to be paid or received under the agreement based on the relative values of the positions held by each party to the agreement. Swaps that are not cleared involve substantial counterparty risk. A Fund will typically attempt to mitigate this counterparty risk by entering into swap agreements only with creditworthy entities that have substantial capital or that have provided the Fund with a third-party guaranty or other credit support. A Fund's ability to use swap agreements may be restricted by the tax rules applicable to registered investment companies.

Credit Default Swaps and Similar Instruments. Certain Funds may enter into credit default swaps and similar instruments. Credit default swaps are standardized agreements in which the protection "buyer" pays the protection "seller" an up-front payment, or a periodic stream of payments, over the term of the contract, provided generally that no credit event on a reference obligation has occurred. If a credit event occurs, the seller generally must pay the buyer the difference between the notional amount of the contract and the value of a portfolio of securities issued by the reference entity. A Fund may be either the buyer or seller in the transaction. The Funds may enter into credit default swaps that reference the obligations of a single entity ("single-name CDS") or the obligations of entities that make up an index ("index CDS"). References to "credit default swaps" shall collectively refer to single-name CDS and index CDS.

Credit default swaps have as reference obligations one or more securities or loans that are not currently held by a Fund. In circumstances in which a Fund does not own the securities or loans that are deliverable under a credit default swap, the Fund is exposed to the risk that deliverable securities will not be available in the market, or will be available only at unfavorable prices, as would be the case in a so-called "short squeeze." In certain instances of issuer defaults or restructurings, it has been unclear under the standard industry documentation for credit default swaps whether or not a "credit event" triggering the seller's payment obligation had occurred. Certain initiatives adopted by derivatives market participants, including the International Swaps and Derivatives Association ("ISDA"), are designed to implement uniform settlement terms into standard credit default swap documentation, as

well as refine the practices for the transparent conduct of the credit default swap market generally. Among these initiatives are the ISDA Credit Derivatives Determination Committee and the implementation of market-wide cash settlement protocols applicable to all market-standard credit default swaps. These initiatives are intended to reduce both the uncertainty as to the occurrence of credit events and the risk of a "short squeeze" by providing that the ISDA Credit Derivatives Determinations Committee will make determinations as to whether a credit event has occurred, establish an auction to determine a settlement price and identify the deliverable securities for purposes of the auction, although the ISDA Credit Derivatives Determinations Committee may in certain limited circumstances refrain from doing so. In the event the ISDA Credit Derivatives Determinations Committee cannot reach a timely resolution with respect to a "credit event" or otherwise does not establish a cash settlement auction, a Fund may not be able to realize the full value of the credit default swap upon a default by the reference entity. Furthermore, a Fund may enter into certain credit default swaps or similar instruments that may not be covered by these initiatives.

If a Fund is a buyer, it will lose the payments made under the terms of the credit default swap and recover nothing should no credit event occur. If a Fund is a seller and a credit event occurs, the value of any deliverable obligation received by the Fund or the amount of cash settlement received by the Fund pursuant to the relevant cash settlement auction, together with the up-front or periodic payments previously received, may be less than the amount it pays to the buyer, resulting in a loss of value to the Fund. A Fund that sells credit default swaps incurs leveraged exposure to the credit of one or more reference entities and is subject to many of the same risks it would incur if it were holding debt securities issued by the relevant reference entity. However, a Fund will not have any legal recourse against any reference entity and will not benefit from any collateral securing the reference entity's debt obligations. In the event the ISDA Credit Derivatives Determinations Committee does not establish a cash settlement auction and identify the relevant deliverable securities or loans, the credit default swap buyer will have broad discretion to select which of the reference entity's debt obligations to deliver to the Fund following a credit event and will likely choose the obligations with the lowest market value in order to maximize the payment obligations of the Fund. In addition, credit default swaps generally trade on the basis of theoretical pricing and valuation models, which may not accurately value such swap positions when established or when subsequently traded or unwound under actual market conditions.

Dodd-Frank requires that certain index CDS be executed in regulated markets and submitted for clearing to regulated clearinghouses. See "— Derivatives — Regulation of Derivatives — Dodd-Frank Regulations" above. Other single-name CDS and index CDS are permitted, although not required, to be cleared through regulated clearinghouses. The Funds clear all credit default swaps that are subject to mandatory clearing and may voluntarily clear some, but not all, of the other credit default swaps not subject to mandatory clearing. The Funds face counterparty risk with respect to the clearinghouse when entering into cleared single-name CDS and cleared index CDS. The Funds face significant counterparty risk with respect to their counterparties to non-cleared credit default swaps and similar instruments. A Fund typically will enter into non-cleared credit default swaps and similar instruments with swap dealers and creditworthy entities that have substantial capital or that have provided the Fund with a third-party guaranty or other credit support.

In certain instances, a Fund may enter into bespoke credit default swaps or similar instruments either as protection buyer or protection seller. While these contracts are similar in their operation to the market-standard credit default swaps described above, they are less standardized and instead have bespoke or tailored features. For example, as compared to market-standard credit defaults, the range of "credit events" triggering settlement of such bespoke contracts may be narrower or broader, any such triggered contracts are settled by physical delivery of the underlying security or loan to or by the Fund rather than by way of cash settlement, and there may be a wider range of securities as the reference obligations and/or deliverable obligations.

In addition, credit default swaps and similar instruments generally involve greater risks than if a Fund had invested in the reference obligation directly and are subject to significant credit risk, correlation risk, leverage risk, illiquidity risk and market risk. See "— Risk Factors in Derivatives" above.

Interest Rate Swaps, Floors and Caps. Certain Funds may enter into OTC derivatives in the form of interest rate swaps and interest rate caps and floors. As described in further detail below, a Fund may enter into these transactions primarily to preserve a return or spread on a particular investment or portion of its holdings, as a duration management technique, to protect against an increase in the price of securities a Fund anticipates purchasing at a later date, or for speculation to increase returns.

Dodd-Frank requires that certain interest rate swaps be executed in regulated markets and submitted for clearing to regulated clearinghouses. See "— Regulation of Derivatives — Dodd-Frank Regulations" above. Other interest rate swaps are permitted, although not required, to be cleared. Most of the interest rate swaps entered into by the Funds are cleared. The Funds face counterparty risk with respect to the clearinghouse when entering into cleared interest rate swaps.

The Funds face significant counterparty risk with respect to their counterparties to non-cleared interest rate swaps and interest rate caps and floors. The typical counterparties for a Fund's non-cleared interest rate derivatives transactions are swap dealers and other creditworthy entities that have substantial capital or that have provided the Fund with a third-party guaranty or other credit support. If the Fund's counterparty defaults on such a transaction, a Fund will have contractual remedies with respect to the transaction, but there can be no guarantee that the Fund will be successful in enforcing such remedies. The market for interest rate swaps is relatively liquid in comparison with other similar instruments traded in the interbank market. A Fund may be limited in its ability to enter into certain interest rate derivatives due to applicable income tax requirements.

Interest rate swaps are transactions in which each party makes periodic interest payments based on a fixed or variable interest rate, index or asset in return for periodic payments from its counterparty based on a different fixed or variable interest rate, index or asset.

The purchase of an interest rate floor entitles the purchaser, to the extent that a specified index falls below a predetermined interest rate, to receive payments of interest on a notional principal amount from the party selling such interest rate floor.

The purchase of an interest rate cap entitles the purchaser, to the extent that a specified index rises above a predetermined interest rate, to receive payments of interest on a notional principal amount from the party selling such interest rate cap.

A Fund may enter into an interest rate swap to effectively exchange with another party their respective commitments to pay or receive interest, *e.g.*, an exchange of fixed rate payments for floating rate payments. For example, if a Fund holds a mortgage-backed security with an interest rate that is reset only once each year, it may swap the right to receive interest at this fixed rate for the right to receive interest at a rate that is reset every week. This would enable a Fund to offset a decline in the value of the mortgage-backed security due to rising interest rates but would also limit its ability to benefit from falling interest rates. Conversely, if a Fund holds a mortgage-backed security with an interest rate that is reset every week and it would like to lock in what it believes to be a high interest rate for one year, it may swap the right to receive interest at this variable weekly rate for the right to receive interest at a rate that is fixed for one year. Such a swap would protect the Fund from a reduction in yield due to falling interest rates and may permit the Fund to enhance its income through the positive differential between one week and one year interest rates, but would preclude it from taking full advantage of rising interest rates.

Gains from transactions in interest rate swaps distributed to shareholders will be taxable as ordinary income or, in certain circumstances, as long term capital gains to shareholders.

Interest rate swaps and interest rate caps and floors may be subject to correlation risk, leverage risk, illiquidity risk and market risk. See "— Risk Factors in Derivatives" above.

Total Return Swaps. Total return swaps are contracts in which one party agrees to make periodic payments to the other party based on the return of the assets underlying the contract in exchange for periodic payments based on a fixed or variable interest rate or the total return from different underlying assets. The return of the assets underlying the contract includes both the income generated by the asset and the change in market value of the asset. The asset underlying the contract may include a specified security, basket of securities or securities indices. Total return swaps on a specified security, basket of securities or securities indices may sometimes be referred to as "contracts for difference."

Total return swaps may be used to obtain exposure to a security or market without owning or taking physical custody of such security or investing directly in such market. Upon entering into a total return swap, a Fund is required to deposit initial margin but the parties do not exchange the notional amount. As a result, total return swaps may effectively add leverage to the Fund's portfolio because the Fund would be subject to investment exposure on the notional amount of the swap.

Total return swaps are subject to significant correlation risk, leverage risk, illiquidity risk, market risk and counterparty risk. See "— Risk Factors in Derivatives" above.

Options.

Options on Securities and Securities Indices. A Fund may engage in transactions in options on individual securities, baskets of securities or securities indices, or particular measurements of value or rates, such as an index of the price of treasury securities or an index representative of short-term interest rates. Such investments may be made on exchanges and in the OTC markets. In general, exchange-traded options have standardized exercise prices and expiration dates and require the parties to post margin against their obligations, and the performance of the parties' obligations in connection with such options is guaranteed by the exchange or a related clearing corporation. OTC options have more flexible terms negotiated between the buyer and the seller, but are subject to greater credit risk. OTC options also involve greater illiquidity risk.

A Fund may also engage in transactions in options which have additional features that result in different payment structures and/or expirations (commonly referred to as exotic options). For example, barrier options are exotic options that can only be exercised (or automatically expire) if the price of the underlying asset reaches one or more predetermined levels on or before expiration. Binary options are another example of exotic options which have a fixed all-or-nothing payout if one or more predetermined conditions are met. Exotic options are typically traded in OTC markets.

There are several risks associated with transactions in options on securities and indexes. For example, there are significant differences between the securities and options markets that could result in an imperfect correlation between these markets, causing a given transaction not to achieve its objectives. In addition, a liquid market for particular options, whether traded OTC or on a national securities exchange ("Exchange") may be absent for reasons which include the following: there may be insufficient trading interest in certain options; restrictions may be imposed by an Exchange on opening transactions or closing transactions or both; trading halts, suspensions or other restrictions may be imposed with respect to particular classes or series of options or underlying securities; unusual or unforeseen circumstances may interrupt normal operations on an Exchange; the facilities of an Exchange or the Options Clearing Corporation may not at all times be adequate to handle current

trading volume; or one or more Exchanges could, for economic or other reasons, decide or be compelled at some future date to discontinue the trading of options (or a particular class or series of options), in which event the market on that Exchange (or in that class or series of options) would cease to exist, although outstanding options that had been issued by the Options Clearing Corporation as a result of trades on that Exchange would continue to be exercisable in accordance with their terms.

Each of the options exchanges has established limitations governing the maximum number of call or put options on the same asset that may be bought or written by a single investor, whether acting alone or in concert with others (regardless of whether such options are written on the same or different exchanges or are held or written on one or more accounts or through one or more brokers). Under these limitations, option positions of all investment companies advised by the Manager are combined for purposes of these limits. Pursuant to these limitations, an exchange may order the liquidation of positions and may impose other sanctions or restrictions. These position limits may restrict the number of listed options that a Fund may buy or sell.

Call Options. A Fund may purchase call options on any of the types of securities or instruments in which it may invest. A purchased call option gives a Fund the right to buy, and obligates the seller to sell, the underlying security at the exercise price at any time during the option period. A Fund also may purchase and sell call options on indices. Index options are similar to options on securities except that, rather than taking or making delivery of securities underlying the option at a specified price upon exercise, an index option gives the holder the right to receive cash upon exercise of the option if the level of the index upon which the option is based is greater than the exercise price of the option.

A written call option is covered if a Fund holds a call on the same security or index as the call written where the exercise price of the call held is (i) equal to or less than the exercise price of the call written, or (ii) greater than the exercise price of the call written provided the difference is maintained by the Fund in assets which are not considered illiquid investments under the Funds' Liquidity Program (as defined below) ("liquid assets") designated on the Manager's or the sub-adviser's books and records to the extent required by Commission guidelines.

A Fund may write (*i.e.*, sell) covered call options on the securities or instruments in which it may invest and to enter into closing purchase transactions with respect to certain of such options. A covered call option is an option in which a Fund, in return for a premium, gives another party a right to buy specified securities owned by the Fund at a specified future date and price set at the time of the contract. The principal reason for writing call options is the attempt to realize, through the receipt of premiums, a greater return than would be realized on the securities alone. By writing covered call options, a Fund gives up the opportunity, while the option is in effect, to profit from any price increase in the underlying security above the option exercise price. In addition, a Fund's ability to sell the underlying security will be limited while the option is in effect unless the Fund enters into a closing purchase transaction. A closing purchase transaction cancels out a Fund's position as the writer of an option by means of an offsetting purchase of an identical option prior to the expiration of the option it has written. Covered call options also serve as a partial hedge to the extent of the premium received against the price of the underlying security declining.

A Fund may write (*i.e.*, sell) uncovered call options on securities or instruments in which it may invest but that are not currently held by the Fund. The principal reason for writing uncovered call options is to realize income without committing capital to the ownership of the underlying securities or instruments. When writing uncovered call options, a Fund must deposit and maintain sufficient margin with the broker-dealer through which it made the uncovered call option as collateral to ensure that the securities can be purchased for delivery if and when the option is exercised. During periods of declining securities prices or when prices are stable, writing uncovered calls can be a profitable strategy to increase a Fund's income with minimal capital risk. Uncovered calls are riskier than covered calls

because there is no underlying security held by a Fund that can act as a partial hedge. Uncovered calls have speculative characteristics and the potential for loss is unlimited. When an uncovered call is exercised, a Fund must purchase the underlying security to meet its call obligation. There is also a risk, especially with preferred and debt securities that lack sufficient liquidity, that the securities may not be available for purchase. If the purchase price exceeds the exercise price, a Fund will lose the difference.

Put Options. A Fund may purchase put options to seek to hedge against a decline in the value of its securities or to enhance its return. By buying a put option, a Fund acquires a right to sell the underlying securities or instruments at the exercise price, thus limiting the Fund's risk of loss through a decline in the market value of the securities or instruments until the put option expires. The amount of any appreciation in the value of the underlying securities or instruments will be partially offset by the amount of the premium paid for the put option and any related transaction costs. Prior to its expiration, a put option may be sold in a closing sale transaction and profit or loss from the sale will depend on whether the amount received is more or less than the premium paid for the put option plus the related transaction costs. A closing sale transaction cancels out a Fund's position as the purchaser of an option by means of an offsetting sale of an identical option prior to the expiration of the option it has purchased. A Fund also may purchase uncovered put options.

A Fund also may write (*i.e.*, sell) put options on the types of securities or instruments that may be held by the Fund. A Fund will receive a premium for writing a put option, which increases the Fund's return.

A Fund also may write (*i.e.*, sell) uncovered put options on securities or instruments in which it may invest but with respect to which the Fund does not currently have a corresponding short position or has not deposited as collateral cash equal to the exercise value of the put option with the broker-dealer through which it made the uncovered put option. The principal reason for writing uncovered put options is to receive premium income and to acquire such securities or instruments at a net cost below the current market value. A Fund has the obligation to buy the securities or instruments at an agreed upon price if the price of the securities or instruments decreases below the exercise price. If the price of the securities or instruments increases during the option period, the option will expire worthless and a Fund will retain the premium and will not have to purchase the securities or instruments at the exercise price.

Options on Government National Mortgage Association ("GNMA") Certificates. The following information relates to the unique characteristics of options on GNMA Certificates. Since the remaining principal balance of GNMA Certificates declines each month as a result of mortgage payments, a Fund, as a writer of a GNMA call holding GNMA Certificates as "cover" to satisfy its delivery obligation in the event of exercise, may find that the GNMA Certificates it holds no longer have a sufficient remaining principal balance for this purpose. Should this occur, a Fund will purchase additional GNMA Certificates from the same pool (if obtainable) or other GNMA Certificates in the cash market in order to maintain its "cover."

A GNMA Certificate held by a Fund to cover an option position in any but the nearest expiration month may cease to represent cover for the option in the event of a decline in the GNMA coupon rate at which new pools are originated under the FHA/VA loan ceiling in effect at any given time. If this should occur, a Fund will no longer be covered, and the Fund will either enter into a closing purchase transaction or replace such Certificate with a certificate that represents cover. When a Fund closes its position or replaces such Certificate, it may realize an unanticipated loss and incur transaction costs.

Options on Swaps ("Swaptions"). A swaption gives a counterparty the option (but not the obligation) to enter into a new swap agreement or to shorten, extend, cancel or otherwise modify an existing swap agreement, at a designated future time on specified terms. A Fund may write (*i.e.*, sell) and purchase put and call swaptions. Depending on the terms of the particular option agreement, a Fund will generally incur a greater degree of risk when it writes a swaption than it will incur when it purchases a

swaption. When a Fund purchases a swaption, it risks losing only the amount of the premium it has paid should it decide to let the option expire unexercised. However, when a Fund writes a swaption, upon exercise of the option the Fund will become obligated according to the terms of the underlying agreement and the potential for loss may be unlimited. Certain swaptions are permitted, although not required, to be cleared.

A Fund will likely enter into these transactions to preserve a return or spread on a particular investment or portion of its portfolio or to protect against any increase in the price of securities the Fund anticipates purchasing at a later date. A Fund generally will use these transactions for hedging purposes, not for speculation.

Swaptions may be subject to correlation risk, leverage risk, illiquidity risk and market risk. See "— Risk Factors in Derivatives" above.

FLEX Options. FLEX Options are customized option contracts available through national securities exchanges that are guaranteed for settlement by the Options Clearing Corporation ("OCC"). FLEX Options are listed on a U.S. national securities exchange. FLEX Options provide investors with the ability to customize assets referenced by the options, exercise prices, exercise styles (i.e., American-style, exercisable any time prior to the expiration date, or European-style, exercisable only on the option expiration date) and expiration dates, while achieving price discovery in competitive, transparent auctions markets and avoiding the counterparty exposure of OTC options positions. Each option contract entitles the holder thereof to purchase (for the call options) or sell (for the put options) shares of the reference asset at the strike price. A Fund's portfolio may include several types of FLEX Options, including both purchased and written put and call options (as further described below). The FLEX Options are all European style options, which means that they are exercisable at a predetermined specified price (the "strike price") only on the FLEX Option's expiration date.

The OCC guarantees performance by each of the counterparties to the FLEX Options, becoming the "buyer for every seller and the seller for every buyer", reducing counterparty risk for clearing members and options traders. Although guaranteed for settlement by the OCC, FLEX Options are still subject to counterparty risk with the OCC and subject to the risk that the OCC may fail to perform the settlement of the FLEX Options due to bankruptcy or other adverse reasons. A Fund bears the risk that the OCC will be unable or unwilling to perform its obligations under the FLEX Options contracts.

Subject to determination by the Securities Committee of the OCC, adjustments may be made to the FLEX Options for certain events (collectively, "Corporate Actions") specified in the OCC's by-laws and rules: certain stock dividends or distributions, stock splits, reverse stock splits, rights offerings, distributions, reorganizations, recapitalizations, or reclassifications with respect to an underlying security, or a merger, consolidation, dissolution or liquidation of the issuer of the underlying security. According to the OCC's by-laws, the nature and extent of any such adjustment is to be determined by the OCC's Securities Committee, in light of the circumstances known to it at the time such determination is made, based on its judgment as to what is appropriate for the protection of investors and the public interest, taking into account such factors as fairness to holders and writers (or purchasers and sellers) of the affected options, the maintenance of a fair and orderly market in the affected options, consistency of interpretation and practice, efficiency of exercise settlement procedures, and the coordination with other clearing agencies of the clearance and settlement of transactions in the underlying interest.

Certain Considerations Regarding Options. The FLEX Options in which each Fund may invest will be options on an exchange-traded fund ("ETF") or the S&P 500 Index (together with such ETF, a "Reference Asset"). As such, the value of a Fund's FLEX Options will fluctuate with changes in the value of the securities held by the ETF, and thus the ETF's share price. In addition to the value of

the ETF, the value of an option, in general, will reflect, among other things, the time remaining until expiration (the end of the Outcome Period), the relationship of the exercise price to the market price of the Reference Asset, and general market conditions. Options that expire unexercised have no value.

The puts and calls on the Reference Asset entitle the purchaser of the option the right to purchase (for a call option) or sell (for a put option) the Reference Asset at a predetermined specified price (the "strike price"). When a Fund writes a call on the Reference Asset, it receives a premium and agrees that the purchaser of the call, upon exercise of the call, will receive from the Fund the delivery of a specified number of shares of the ETF in exchange for the strike price. When a Fund buys a call on the Reference Asset, it pays a premium and has the same rights to such call as indicated above. When a Fund buys a put on the Reference Asset, it pays a premium and has the right to require the seller of the put, upon the Fund's exercise of the put, to deliver the specified number of shares of the ETF in exchange for the strike price. When a Fund writes a put on the Reference Asset, it receives a premium and the purchaser of the put has the right to require the Fund to deliver the specified number of shares of the ETF in exchange for the strike price.

Although each Fund will generally utilize FLEX Options that are physically settled, a Fund may also utilize FLEX Options that are cash-settled. Cash-settled options give the holder the right to receive an amount (or owe an amount) of cash upon the exercise of the option. Gain or loss depends on changes in the value of the ETF's share price relative to the strike price for a given option contract. The amount of cash is equal to the difference between the closing price of the ETF's share price and the exercise price of the option contract times a specified multiple ("multiplier"), which determines the total value for each point of such difference.

Risks of Options on the Reference Assets. If a Fund has purchased an option and exercises it before the closing value for that day is available, it runs the risk that the level of the Reference Asset may subsequently change. If such a change causes the exercised option to fall out of the money, the applicable Fund will be required to pay the difference between the closing Reference Asset value and the exercise price of the option (times the applicable multiplier) to the assigned writer.

Foreign Exchange Transactions.

A Fund may enter into spot foreign exchange transactions, forward foreign exchange transactions ("FX forwards") and currency swaps, purchase and sell currency options, currency futures and related options thereon (collectively, "Currency Instruments") for purposes of hedging against the decline in the value of currencies in which its portfolio holdings are denominated against the U.S. dollar or, with respect to certain Funds, to seek to enhance returns.

Such transactions could be effected to hedge with respect to foreign dollar denominated securities owned by a Fund, sold by a Fund but not yet delivered, or committed or anticipated to be purchased by a Fund. As an illustration, a Fund may use such techniques to hedge the stated value in U.S. dollars of an investment in a yen-denominated security. For example, the Fund may purchase a foreign currency put option enabling it to sell a specified amount of yen for dollars at a specified price by a future date. To the extent the hedge is successful, a loss in the value of the yen relative to the dollar will tend to be offset by an increase in the value of the put option. To offset, in whole or in part, the cost of acquiring such a put option, the Fund may also sell a call option which, if exercised, requires it to sell a specified amount of yen for dollars at a specified price by a future date (a technique called a "straddle"). By selling such a call option in this illustration, the Fund gives up the opportunity to profit without limit from increases in the relative value of the yen to the dollar. "Straddles" of the type that may be used by a Fund are considered hedging transactions. Certain Funds have a fundamental investment restriction that restricts currency option strategies.

Hedging transactions involving Currency Instruments involve substantial risks, including correlation risk. A Fund's use of Currency Instruments to effect hedging strategies is intended to reduce the volatility of the NAV of the Fund's shares; however, the use of such hedging strategies will not prevent the NAV of the Fund's shares from fluctuating. Moreover, although Currency Instruments will be used with the intention of hedging against adverse currency movements, transactions in Currency Instruments involve the risk that anticipated currency movements will not be accurately predicted and that the Fund's hedging strategies will be ineffective. To the extent that a Fund hedges against anticipated currency movements that do not occur, the Fund may realize losses and decrease its total return. Furthermore, a Fund will only engage in hedging activities from time to time and may not be engaging in hedging activities when movements in currency exchange rates actually occur.

In connection with its trading in forward foreign currency contracts, a Fund will contract with a foreign or domestic bank, or foreign or domestic securities dealer, to make or take future delivery of a specified amount of a particular currency. There are no limitations on daily price moves in such forward contracts, and banks and dealers are not required to continue to make markets in such contracts. There have been periods during which certain banks or dealers have refused to quote prices for such forward contracts or have quoted prices with an unusually wide spread between the price at which the bank or dealer is prepared to buy and that at which it is prepared to sell. Governmental imposition of currency controls might limit any such forward contract trading. With respect to its trading of forward contracts, if any, a Fund will be subject to counterparty risk. Any such failure to perform by a counterparty would deprive the Fund of any profit potential or force the Fund to cover its commitments for resale, if any, at the then market price and could result in a loss to the Fund.

It may not be possible for a Fund to hedge against currency exchange rate movements, even if correctly anticipated, in the event that (i) the currency exchange rate movement is so generally anticipated that the Fund is not able to enter into a hedging transaction at an effective price, or (ii) the currency exchange rate movement relates to a market with respect to which Currency Instruments are not available and it is not possible to engage in effective foreign currency hedging. The cost to a Fund of engaging in foreign currency transactions varies with such factors as the currencies involved, the length of the contract period and the market conditions then prevailing. Since transactions in foreign currency exchange usually are conducted on a principal basis, no fees or commissions are involved.

A Fund will not hedge a currency in excess of the aggregate market value of the securities that it owns (including receivables for unsettled securities sales), or has committed to purchase or anticipates purchasing, which are denominated in such currency.

Spot Transactions and FX Forwards. FX forwards are OTC contracts to purchase or sell a specified amount of a specified currency or multinational currency unit at a specified price and specified future date. Spot foreign exchange transactions are similar but are settled in the current, or "spot", market. A Fund will enter into foreign exchange transactions for purposes of hedging either a specific transaction or a portfolio position, or, with respect to certain Funds, to seek to enhance returns. FX forwards involve substantial currency risk, credit risk and liquidity risk. A Fund may enter into a foreign exchange transaction for purposes of hedging a specific transaction by, for example, purchasing a currency needed to settle a security transaction or selling a currency in which the Fund has received or anticipates receiving a dividend or distribution. A Fund may enter into a foreign exchange transaction for purposes of hedging a portfolio position by selling forward a currency in which a portfolio position of the Fund is denominated or by purchasing a currency in which the Fund anticipates acquiring a portfolio position in the near future. A Fund may also hedge a currency by entering into a transaction in a Currency Instrument denominated in a currency other than the currency being hedged (a "cross-hedge"). A Fund will only enter into a cross-hedge if the Manager believes that (i) there is a demonstrably high correlation between the currency in which the cross-hedge is denominated and the currency being hedged, and (ii) executing a cross-hedge through the currency in which the cross-hedge is denominated will be

significantly more cost-effective or provide substantially greater liquidity than executing a similar hedging transaction by means of the currency being hedged.

A Fund may also engage in proxy hedging transactions to reduce the effect of currency fluctuations on the value of existing or anticipated holdings of portfolio securities. Proxy hedging is often used when the currency to which the Fund is exposed is difficult to hedge, or to hedge against the U.S. dollar. Proxy hedging entails entering into a forward contract to sell a currency whose changes in value are generally considered to be linked to a currency or currencies in which some or all of the Fund's securities are, or are expected to be, denominated, and to buy U.S. dollars. Proxy hedging involves some of the same risks and considerations as other transactions with similar instruments. Currency transactions can result in losses to the Fund if the currency being hedged fluctuates in value to a degree or in a direction that is not anticipated. In addition, there is the risk that the perceived linkage between various currencies may not be present, including during the particular time that a Fund is engaging in proxy hedging.

A Fund may also cross-hedge currencies by entering into forward contracts to sell one or more currencies that are expected to decline in value relative to other currencies to which the Fund has or in which the Fund expects to have portfolio exposure. For example, a Fund may hold both Canadian government bonds and Japanese government bonds, and the Manager or sub-adviser may believe that Canadian dollars will deteriorate against Japanese yen. The Fund would sell Canadian dollars to reduce its exposure to that currency and buy Japanese yen. This strategy would be a hedge against a decline in the value of Canadian dollars, although it would expose the Fund to declines in the value of the Japanese yen relative to the U.S. dollar.

Some of the forward non-U.S. currency contracts entered into by the Funds are classified as non-deliverable forwards ("NDFs"). NDFs are cash-settled, short-term forward contracts that may be thinly traded or are denominated in non-convertible foreign currency, where the profit or loss at the time at the settlement date is calculated by taking the difference between the agreed upon exchange rate and the spot rate at the time of settlement, for an agreed upon notional amount of funds. All NDFs have a fixing date and a settlement date. The fixing date is the date at which the difference between the prevailing market exchange rate and the agreed upon exchange rate is calculated. The settlement date is the date by which the payment of the difference is due to the party receiving payment. NDFs are commonly quoted for time periods of one month up to two years, and are normally quoted and settled in U.S. dollars. They are often used to gain exposure to and/or hedge exposure to foreign currencies that are not internationally traded.

Currency Futures. A Fund may seek to enhance returns or hedge against the decline in the value of a currency through use of currency futures or options on currency futures. Currency futures are similar to forward foreign exchange transactions except that futures are standardized, exchange-traded contracts while forward foreign exchange transactions are traded in the OTC market. Currency futures involve substantial currency risk as well as the risks discussed above in "— Futures."

Currency Options. A Fund may seek to enhance returns or hedge against the decline in the value of a currency through the use of currency options. Certain Funds have fundamental investment restrictions that permit the purchase of currency options, but prohibit the writing of currency options. Currency options are similar to options on securities. For example, in consideration for an option premium the writer of a currency option is obligated to sell (in the case of a call option) or purchase (in the case of a put option) a specified amount of a specified currency on or before the expiration date for a specified amount of another currency. A Fund may engage in transactions in options on currencies either on exchanges or OTC markets. Such transactions in options may include exotic options on currencies, which are typically traded in OTC markets and have additional features that result in different payment structures and/or expirations. Where a Fund is permitted to write currency options, it may write covered

call options on up to 100% of the currencies in its portfolio. See "— Options" above. Currency options involve substantial currency risk, and may also involve credit, leverage or illiquidity risk.

Currency Swaps. A Fund may enter into currency swaps in order to protect against currency fluctuations or to hedge portfolio positions. Currency swaps are transactions in which one currency is simultaneously bought for a second currency on a spot basis and sold for the second currency on a forward basis. Currency swaps involve the exchange of the rights of a Fund and another party to make or receive payments in specified currencies, and typically require the delivery of the entire principal value of one designated currency in exchange for the other designated currency. As a result, the entire principal value of a currency swap is subject to the risk that the other party to the swap will default on its contractual delivery obligations.

Digital Asset Exposure. Digital assets, such as bitcoin and ether, are created and transmitted through the operations of peer-to-peer networks of computers, known as nodes, that operate on cryptographic computer-code based logic, called a protocol. Digital assets are part of a new and rapidly changing industry, and the further development of digital asset networks is subject to a variety of factors that are difficult to evaluate. Digital assets are relatively new assets with limited histories.

Risks Related to Digital Assets. Digital assets were only introduced within the past 15 years, and the value of such digital assets is subject to a number of factors relating to the capabilities and development of blockchain technologies, such as the recentness of their development, their dependence on the internet and other technologies, their dependence on the role played by users, developers, miners and validators and the potential for malicious activity. Given the recentness of the development of digital asset networks, digital assets may not function as intended and parties may be unwilling to use digital assets, which would dampen the growth, if any, of digital asset networks.

The trading prices of many digital assets, including bitcoin and ether, have experienced extreme volatility in recent periods and may continue to do so. Extreme volatility in the future, including further declines in the trading prices of bitcoin and ether, could have a material adverse effect on the value of such digital asset investments. The value of digital assets is subject to a number of factors relating to their fundamental investment characteristics, including the fact that digital assets are bearer instruments and loss, theft, destruction, or compromise of the associated private keys could result in permanent loss of the asset, and the capabilities and development of blockchain technologies such as the Bitcoin or Ethereum blockchain.

The opaque nature of the digital asset market poses asset verification challenges for market participants, regulators and auditors and gives rise to an increased risk of manipulation and fraud, including the potential for Ponzi schemes, bucket shops and pump and dump schemes. Digital assets have in the past been used to facilitate illicit activities. If a digital asset was used to facilitate illicit activities, businesses that facilitate transactions in such digital assets could be at increased risk of potential criminal or civil liability or lawsuits, or of having banking or other services cut off, and such digital asset could be removed from digital asset platforms. Any of the aforementioned occurrences could adversely affect the price of the relevant digital asset, the attractiveness of the respective blockchain network and investments in digital assets.

If a malicious actor or botnet (a volunteer or hacked collection of computers controlled by networked software coordinating the actions of the computers) obtains control of more than 50% of the processing power dedicated to mining on the Bitcoin network, it may be able to alter the Bitcoin blockchain on which transactions in bitcoin rely by constructing fraudulent blocks or preventing certain transactions from completing in a timely manner, or at all. The malicious actor or botnet could also control, exclude or modify the ordering of transactions.

The Ethereum network is currently vulnerable to several types of attacks, including a:

- ">33% attack" where, if a validator or group of validators were to gain control of more than 33% of the total staked ether on the Ethereum network, a malicious actor could temporarily impede or delay block confirmation or even cause a temporary fork in the blockchain. This is believed to be temporary, as the Ethereum network's inactivity leak would be expected to eventually penalize the attacker enough for the chain to finalize again (i.e., the honest majority would be expected to reclaim 2/3rd stake as the attacker's stake is penalized). However, it is not believed that with 33% control, a malicious actor could engage in double-spending or fraudulent block propagation.
- ">50% attack" where, if a validator or group of validators acting in concert were to gain control of more than 50% of the total staked ether on the Ethereum network, a malicious actor would be able to gain full control of the Ethereum network and the ability to manipulate future transactions on the blockchain, including censoring transactions, double-spending and fraudulent block propagation, potentially for an extended period or even permanently. In theory, the minority non-attackers might reach social consensus to reject blocks proposed by the malicious majority attacker, reducing the attacker's ability to engage in malicious activity, but there can be no assurance this would happen or that non-attackers would be able to coordinate effectively.
- ">66% attack" where, if a validator or group of validators acting in concert were to gain control of more than 66% of the total staked ether on the Ethereum network, a malicious actor could permanently and irreversibly manipulate the blockchain, including censorship, double-spending and fraudulent block propagation. The attacker could finalize their preferred chain without any consideration for the votes of other stakers and could also revert finalized blocks.

The largest bitcoin and ether wallets are believed to hold, in aggregate, a significant percentage of the bitcoins and ether in circulation. Moreover, it is possible that other persons or entities control multiple wallets that collectively hold a significant number of bitcoins or ether, even if they individually only hold a small amount, and it is possible that some of these wallets are controlled by the same person or entity. As a result of this concentration of ownership, large sales or distributions by such holders could have an adverse effect on the market price of bitcoin or ether.

Risks Related to Digital Assets as a Means of Payment. Digital assets such as bitcoin and ether have only recently become selectively accepted as a means of payment by retail and commercial outlets, and use of bitcoins or ether by consumers to pay such retail and commercial outlets remains limited. Banks and other established financial institutions may refuse to process funds for bitcoin or ether transactions; process wire transfers to or from digital asset platforms, bitcoin- or ether-related companies or service providers; or maintain accounts for persons or entities transacting in bitcoin or ether. As a result, the prices of bitcoin or ether may be influenced to a significant extent by speculators, and thus contributing to price volatility that makes retailers less likely to accept such digital assets as a form of payment in the future.

In addition, as the speed of digital asset transactions and the number of transactions that can be processed lags behind growth in the use of digital asset networks, average fees and settlement times may increase considerably. For example, the Bitcoin network and Ethereum network have been, at times, at capacity, which has led to increased transaction fees. Increased fees and decreased settlement speeds could preclude certain uses for bitcoin or ether (e.g., micropayments), and could reduce demand for, and the price of, bitcoin or ether. Bitcoin or Ethereum transactions are typically not reversible without the consent and active participation of the recipient of the transaction. Once a transaction has been verified and recorded in a block that is added to the Bitcoin or Ethereum blockchain, an incorrect transfer or theft of bitcoin generally will not be reversible and a holder of

bitcoin or ether, such as an ETP (as defined below), may not be capable of seeking compensation for any such transfer or theft.

Risks Related to the Digital Asset Markets. Bitcoin and ether were among the first cryptographic digital assets to gain global adoption and critical mass. In general, digital asset networks, including the Bitcoin network, the Ethereum network and other cryptographic and algorithmic protocols governing the issuance of digital assets represent a new and rapidly evolving industry that is subject to a variety of factors that are difficult to evaluate. In addition, many consortiums and financial institutions are also researching and investing resources into private or permissioned smart contract platforms rather than open platforms like the Bitcoin network or the Ethereum network. Competition from the emergence or growth of alternative digital assets and smart contracts platforms, such as Solana, Avalanche, Polkadot, or Cardano, could have a negative impact on the demand for, and price of, bitcoin or ether and thereby adversely affect the value of the bitcoin- or ether-related investments.

In the past, bugs, defects and flaws in the source code for digital assets have been exposed and exploited, including flaws that disabled some functionality for users, exposed users' personal information and/or resulted in the theft of users' digital assets. The cryptography underlying digital asset networks or digital assets could prove to be flawed or ineffective, or developments in mathematics and/or technology, including advances in digital computing, algebraic geometry and, in particular, quantum computing, could result in such cryptography becoming ineffective. In any of these circumstances, a malicious actor may be able to compromise the security of digital asset networks or take a holder's digital assets.

Quantum computing technology is an emerging phenomenon which, because it is still developing, makes it difficult to predict its ultimate effect on the future value of bitcoin, ether and other digital assets. However, if quantum computing technology is able to advance and significantly increase its capacity relative to the capacity of today's leading quantum computers, it could potentially undermine the viability of many of the cryptographic algorithms used across the world's information technology infrastructure, including the cryptographic algorithms used for cryptocurrencies like bitcoin and ether.

In particular, cryptocurrency networks such as the Bitcoin and Ethereum networks rely on public-key cryptography, including elliptic-curve signature schemes, to authorize transfers, and, in the case of the Ethereum network, also to secure the digital signatures used by validators to support its proof-of-stake consensus mechanism and certain cryptographic commitments and proofs used to verify data on, and support applications built on, the network. A sufficiently advanced quantum computer could potentially derive private keys from public keys that have been revealed on-chain or exposed during the process of initiating, broadcasting or confirming transactions. The extent of this risk may depend on, among other things, address or account types, whether addresses or accounts are reused, whether public keys have been exposed, the timing and manner of transfers, and the wallet-generation, key-management and transaction-signing practices of the applicable cryptocurrency custodian(s) and other service providers. If quantum computing is able to advance in this manner, the cryptography underlying a cryptocurrency network could become ineffective, which could compromise the security of that network, including, in the case of a network such as Ethereum, its consensus mechanism, or allow a malicious actor to compromise wallets holding cryptocurrencies, resulting in losses to the owners of such wallets.

While various actors in the digital asset communities are taking steps to enable the use of post-quantum or quantum-resistant cryptographic algorithms, there is no guarantee that new post-quantum or quantum-resistant architectures will be built and appropriate transitions will be implemented across the relevant networks (including, in the case of Ethereum, its multiple layers) at scale in a timely manner, or that any such transition would occur without bugs, security vulnerabilities, increased transaction costs, reduced network functionality or other disruption. Any such changes could require

the achievement of broad consensus within the relevant network community and a fork (or multiple forks), and there can be no assurance that such consensus would be achieved or the changes implemented successfully or without comprising the security of a cryptocurrency network.

In addition, because a significant amount of bitcoin and ether is held in addresses or accounts whose public keys have already been exposed, a sufficiently advanced quantum computer could be used to misappropriate those assets undermining confidence in the affected network and depressing the price of the underlying cryptocurrency, which would adversely affect the value of cryptocurrency holdings. Moreover, normal operations and functionality of digital asset networks may be negatively affected such that it is no longer attractive to users, miners, validators or other stakeholders, thereby dampening demand for such digital assets. Even if a cryptocurrency other than bitcoin or ether were affected by similar circumstances, any reduction in confidence in the source code or cryptography underlying digital assets generally could negatively affect demand for cryptocurrencies and therefore adversely affect the value of cryptocurrency holdings.

Digital Asset ETPs. The Fund may acquire shares in exchange-traded products ("ETPs") that seek to reflect generally the performance of the price of bitcoin or ether by directly holding bitcoin ("Bitcoin ETPs") or ether ("Ether ETPs"), including shares of a Bitcoin ETP or Ether ETP sponsored by an affiliate of BlackRock. The Fund will only invest in Bitcoin ETPs or Ether ETPs that are listed and traded on national securities exchanges. A Bitcoin ETP or an Ether ETP is not an investment company registered under the Investment Company Act of 1940, as amended, and therefore does not have the same investor protections as a registered investment company.

Futures on Digital Assets. The Fund may invest in futures on Bitcoin and futures on Ethereum. See "Derivatives—General," "Derivatives—Regulation of Derivatives" and "Derivatives—Risk Factors in Derivatives" below.

Distressed Securities. A Fund may invest in securities, including loans purchased in the secondary market, that are the subject of bankruptcy proceedings or otherwise in default or in risk of being in default as to the repayment of principal and/or interest at the time of acquisition by the Fund or that are rated in the lower rating categories by one or more nationally recognized statistical rating organizations (for example, Ca or lower by Moody's and CC or lower by S&P or Fitch) or, if unrated, are in the judgment of the Manager of equivalent quality ("Distressed Securities"). Investment in Distressed Securities is speculative and involves significant risks.

A Fund will generally make such investments only when the Manager believes it is reasonably likely that the issuer of the Distressed Securities will make an exchange offer or will be the subject of a plan of reorganization pursuant to which the Fund will receive new securities in return for the Distressed Securities. However, there can be no assurance that such an exchange offer will be made or that such a plan of reorganization will be adopted. In addition, a significant period of time may pass between the time at which a Fund makes its investment in Distressed Securities and the time that any such exchange offer or plan of reorganization is completed. During this period, it is unlikely that a Fund will receive any interest payments on the Distressed Securities, the Fund will be subject to significant uncertainty as to whether or not the exchange offer or plan of reorganization will be completed and the Fund may be required to bear certain extraordinary expenses to protect and recover its investment. Therefore, to the extent the Fund seeks capital appreciation through investment in distressed securities, the Fund's ability to achieve current income for its shareholders may be diminished. The Fund also will be subject to significant uncertainty as to when and in what manner and for what value the obligations evidenced by the distressed securities will eventually be satisfied (*e.g.*, through a liquidation of the obligor's assets, an exchange offer or plan of reorganization involving the distressed securities or a payment of some amount in satisfaction of the obligation). Even if an exchange offer is made or plan of reorganization is adopted with respect to Distressed Securities held by a Fund, there

can be no assurance that the securities or other assets received by a Fund in connection with such exchange offer or plan of reorganization will not have a lower value or income potential than may have been anticipated when the investment was made or no value. Moreover, any securities received by a Fund upon completion of an exchange offer or plan of reorganization may be restricted as to resale. Similarly, if a Fund participates in negotiations with respect to any exchange offer or plan of reorganization with respect to an issuer of Distressed Securities, the Fund may be restricted from disposing of such securities. To the extent that a Fund becomes involved in such proceedings, the Fund may have a more active participation in the affairs of the issuer than that assumed generally by an investor. The Fund, however, will not make investments for the purpose of exercising day-to-day management of any issuer's affairs.

Environmental, Social and Governance ("ESG") Integration. Although a Fund does not seek to implement a specific sustainability objective, strategy or process unless disclosed in its Prospectus, Fund management will consider ESG factors as part of the investment process for the Fund. Fund management views ESG integration as the practice of incorporating financially material ESG data or information into investment processes with the objective of enhancing risk-adjusted returns. These ESG considerations will vary depending on a Fund's particular investment strategies and may include consideration of third-party research as well as consideration of proprietary BlackRock research across the ESG risks and opportunities regarding an issuer. The ESG characteristics utilized in a Fund's investment process are anticipated to evolve over time and one or more characteristics may not be relevant with respect to all issuers that are eligible for investment.

Certain of these considerations may affect a Fund's exposure to certain companies or industries. While Fund management views ESG considerations as having the potential to contribute to a Fund's long-term performance, there is no guarantee that such results will be achieved.

Equity Securities. Certain Funds may invest in equity securities, which include common stock and, for certain Funds, preferred stock (including convertible preferred stock); bonds; stock purchase warrants and rights; equity interests in trusts; general and limited partnerships and limited liability companies; and depositary receipts. Stock markets are volatile. The price of equity securities will fluctuate and can decline and reduce the value of a portfolio investing in equities. The price of equity securities fluctuates based on changes in a company's financial condition and overall market and economic conditions. The value of equity securities purchased by the Fund could decline if the financial condition of the companies the Fund invests in decline or if overall market and economic conditions deteriorate. They may also decline due to factors that affect a particular industry or industries, such as labor shortages or increase in production costs and competitive conditions within an industry. In addition, they may decline due to general market conditions that are not specifically related to a company or industry, such as real or perceived adverse economic conditions, changes in the general outlook for corporate earnings, changes in interest or currency rates or generally adverse investor sentiment.

From time to time certain of the Funds may invest in shares of companies through initial public offerings ("IPOs"). IPOs have the potential to produce, and have in fact produced, substantial gains for certain Funds. There is no assurance that any Fund will have continued access to profitable IPOs and therefore investors should not rely on these past gains as an indication of future performance. The investment performance of a Fund during periods when it is unable to invest significantly or at all in IPOs may be lower than during periods when it is able to do so. In addition, as a Fund increases in size, the impact of IPOs on its performance will generally decrease. Securities issued in IPOs are subject to many of the same risks as investing in companies with smaller market capitalizations. Securities issued in IPOs have no trading history, and information about the companies may be available for very limited periods. In addition, the prices of securities sold in IPOs may be highly volatile or may decline shortly after the initial public offering.

The Funds may invest in companies that have relatively small market capitalizations. These organizations will normally have more limited product lines, markets and financial resources and will be dependent upon a more limited management group than larger capitalized companies. In addition, it is more difficult to get information on smaller companies, which tend to be less well known, have shorter operating histories, do not have significant ownership by large investors and are followed by relatively few securities analysts. The securities of smaller capitalized companies are often traded in the OTC markets and may have fewer market makers and wider price spreads. This may result in greater price movements and less ability to sell a Fund's investment than if the Fund held the securities of larger, more established companies.

For a discussion of the types of equity securities in which your Fund may invest and the risks associated with investing in such equity securities, see your Fund's Prospectus. Certain of the Funds may also invest in shares of private companies, which are subject to the risks of "Illiquid Investments" and "Restricted Securities" described below.

Real Estate-Related Securities. Although no Fund may invest directly in real estate, certain Funds may invest in equity securities of issuers that are principally engaged in the real estate industry. Such investments are subject to certain risks associated with the ownership of real estate and with the real estate industry in general. These risks include, among others: possible declines in the value of real estate; risks related to general and local economic conditions; possible lack of availability of mortgage funds or other limitations on access to capital; overbuilding; risks associated with leverage; market illiquidity; extended vacancies of properties; increase in competition, property taxes, capital expenditures and operating expenses; changes in zoning laws or other governmental regulation; costs resulting from the clean-up of, and liability to third parties for damages resulting from, environmental problems; tenant bankruptcies or other credit problems; casualty or condemnation losses; uninsured damages from floods, earthquakes or other natural disasters; limitations on and variations in rents, including decreases in market rates for rents; investment in developments that are not completed or that are subject to delays in completion; and changes in interest rates. To the extent that assets underlying a Fund's investments are concentrated geographically, by property type or in certain other respects, the Fund may be subject to certain of the foregoing risks to a greater extent. Investments by a Fund in securities of companies providing mortgage servicing will be subject to the risks associated with refinancings and their impact on servicing rights.

In addition, if a Fund receives rental income or income from the disposition of real property acquired as a result of a default on securities the Fund owns, the receipt of such income may adversely affect the Fund's ability to retain its tax status as a regulated investment company because of certain income source requirements applicable to regulated investment companies under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (the "Code").

Securities of Smaller or Emerging Growth Companies. Investment in smaller or emerging growth companies involves greater risk than is customarily associated with investments in more established companies. The securities of smaller or emerging growth companies may be subject to more abrupt or erratic market movements than larger, more established companies or the market average in general. These companies may have limited product lines, markets or financial resources, or they may be dependent on a limited management group.

Investments in smaller or emerging growth companies may involve greater risks and thus may be considered speculative. Full development of these companies and trends frequently takes time.

Small cap and emerging growth securities will often be traded only in the OTC market or on a regional securities exchange and may not be traded every day or in the volume typical of trading on a national securities exchange. As a result, the disposition by a Fund of portfolio securities to meet redemptions

or otherwise may require the Fund to make many small sales over a lengthy period of time, or to sell these securities at a discount from market prices or during periods when, in Fund management's judgment, such disposition is not desirable.

The process of selection and continuous supervision by Fund management does not guarantee successful investment results. Careful initial selection is particularly important in this area as many new enterprises have promise but lack certain of the fundamental factors necessary to prosper. Investing in small cap and emerging growth companies requires specialized research and analysis.

Fund management believes that relatively small companies may have the opportunity to develop into significant business enterprises. A Fund may invest in securities of small issuers in the relatively early stages of business development that have a new technology, a unique or proprietary product or service, or a favorable market position.

Equity securities of specific small cap issuers may present different opportunities for long-term capital appreciation during varying portions of economic or securities market cycles, as well as during varying stages of their business development. The market valuation of small cap issuers tends to fluctuate during economic or market cycles.

Tracking Stocks. A tracking stock is a separate class of common stock whose value is linked to a specific business unit or operating division within a larger company and is designed to "track" the performance of such business unit or division. The tracking stock may pay dividends to shareholders independent of the parent company. The parent company, rather than the business unit or division, generally is the issuer of tracking stock. However, holders of the tracking stock may not have the same rights as holders of the company's common stock.

Exchange-Traded Notes ("ETNs"). Certain Funds may invest in ETNs. ETNs are generally notes representing debt of the issuer, usually a financial institution. ETNs combine aspects of both bonds and ETFs. An ETN's returns are based on the performance of one or more underlying assets, reference rates or indexes, minus fees and expenses. Similar to ETFs, ETNs are listed on an exchange and traded in the secondary market. However, unlike an ETF, an ETN can be held until the ETN's maturity, at which time the issuer will pay a return linked to the performance of the specific asset, index or rate ("reference instrument") to which the ETN is linked minus certain fees. Unlike regular bonds, ETNs do not make periodic interest payments, and principal is not protected.

The value of an ETN may be influenced by, among other things, time to maturity, level of supply and demand for the ETN, volatility and lack of liquidity in underlying markets, changes in the applicable interest rates, the performance of the reference instrument, changes in the issuer's credit rating and economic, legal, political or geographic events that affect the reference instrument. ETNs are subject to credit risk and the value of the ETN may drop due to a downgrade in an issuer's credit rating, despite the underlying reference instrument remaining unchanged. When a Fund invests in ETNs, it will bear its proportionate share of any fees and expenses borne by the ETN.

An ETN that is tied to a reference instrument may not replicate the performance of the reference instrument. ETNs also incur certain expenses not incurred by their applicable reference instrument. Some ETNs that use leverage may, at times, be illiquid and may be difficult to purchase or sell at a fair price. Levered ETNs are subject to the same risk as other instruments that use leverage in any form. While leverage allows for greater potential return, the potential for loss is also greater. Finally, additional losses may be incurred if the investment loses value because, in addition to the money lost on the investment, the loan still needs to be repaid.

Because the return on the ETN is dependent on the issuer's ability or willingness to meet its obligations, the value of the ETN may change due to a change in the issuer's credit rating, despite no

change in the underlying reference instrument. The market value of ETN shares may differ from the value of the reference instrument. This difference in price may be due to the fact that the supply and demand in the market for ETN shares at any point in time is not always identical to the supply and demand in the market for the assets underlying the reference instrument that the ETN seeks to track.

There may be restrictions on the Fund's right to redeem its investment in an ETN, which are generally meant to be held until maturity. The Fund's decision to sell its ETN holdings may be limited by the availability of a secondary market. An investor in an ETN could lose some or all of the amount invested.

ETNs are also subject to tax risks. The Internal Revenue Service (the "IRS") may not accept, and a court may not uphold, how the Funds characterize and treat ETNs for tax purposes. The timing and character of income and gains derived by a Fund from investments in ETNs may be affected by future legislation.

Foreign Investments.

Foreign Investment Risks. Certain Funds may invest in foreign securities, including securities from issuers located in emerging market countries. These securities may be denominated in U.S. dollars or in a foreign currency. Investing in foreign securities involves risks not typically associated with investing in securities of companies organized and operated in the United States that can increase the chances that a Fund will lose money.

Securities issued by certain companies organized outside the United States may not be deemed to be foreign securities (but rather deemed to be U.S. securities) if (i) the company's principal operations are conducted from the U.S., (ii) the company's equity securities trade principally on a U.S. stock exchange, (iii) the company does a substantial amount of business in the U.S. or (iv) the issuer of securities is included in the Fund's primary U.S. benchmark index.

In addition to equity securities, foreign investments of the Funds may include: (a) debt obligations issued or guaranteed by foreign sovereign governments or their agencies, authorities, instrumentalities or political subdivisions, including a foreign state, province or municipality; (b) debt obligations of supranational organizations; (c) debt obligations of foreign banks and bank holding companies; (d) debt obligations of domestic banks and corporations issued in foreign currencies; (e) debt obligations denominated in the Euro; and (f) foreign corporate debt securities and commercial paper. Such securities may include loan participations and assignments, convertible securities and zero-coupon securities.

Dividends or interest on, or proceeds from the sale of, foreign securities may be subject to foreign withholding taxes.

To the extent that the underlying securities or other instruments held by a Fund trade on foreign exchanges or in foreign markets that are closed when the securities exchange on which the Fund's shares trade is open, there are likely to be deviations between the current price of such an underlying security and the last quoted price for the underlying security (i.e., the Fund's quote from the closed foreign market). The impact of a closed foreign market on a Fund is likely to be greater where a large portion of the Fund's underlying securities or other instruments trade on that closed foreign market or when the foreign market is closed for unscheduled reasons. These deviations may result in premiums or discounts to certain Funds' NAVs that may be greater than those experienced by other ETFs.

Foreign Market Risk. Funds that may invest in foreign securities offer the potential for more diversification than a Fund that invests only in the United States because securities traded on foreign

markets have often (though not always) performed differently from securities traded in the United States. However, such investments often involve risks not present in U.S. investments that can increase the chances that a Fund will lose money. In particular, a Fund is subject to the risk that, because there are generally fewer investors on foreign exchanges and a smaller number of shares traded each day, it may be difficult for the Fund to buy and sell securities on those exchanges. In addition, prices of foreign securities may fluctuate more than prices of securities traded in the United States. Investments in foreign markets may also be adversely affected by governmental actions such as the imposition of punitive taxes or tariffs. In addition, economic conditions, such as volatile currency exchange rates and interest rates, political events, military action and other conditions may, without prior warning, lead to the governments of certain countries, or the U.S. Government with respect to certain countries, prohibiting or imposing substantial restrictions through capital controls and/or sanctions on foreign investing in the capital markets or certain industries in those countries. Capital controls and/or sanctions may include the prohibition of, or restrictions on, the ability to own or transfer currency, securities, derivatives or other assets and may also include retaliatory actions of one government against another government, such as seizure of assets. Any of these actions could severely impair a Fund's ability to purchase, sell, transfer, receive, deliver or otherwise obtain exposure to foreign securities and assets, including the ability to transfer the Fund's assets or income back into the United States, and could negatively impact the value and/or liquidity of such assets or otherwise adversely affect a Fund's operations, causing the Fund to decline in value. Other potential foreign market risks include exchange controls, difficulties in pricing securities, defaults on foreign government securities, difficulties in enforcing favorable legal judgments in foreign courts, and political and social conditions, such as diplomatic relations, confiscatory taxation, expropriation, limitation on the removal of funds or assets, or imposition of (or change in) exchange control regulations. Legal remedies available to investors in certain foreign countries may be less extensive than those available to investors in the United States or other foreign countries. In addition, changes in government administrations or economic or monetary policies in the United States or abroad could result in appreciation or depreciation of portfolio securities and could favorably or adversely affect a Fund's operations.

Foreign Economy Risk. The economies of certain foreign markets often do not compare favorably with that of the United States with respect to such issues as growth of gross national product, reinvestment of capital, resources, and balance of payments position. Certain such economies may rely heavily on particular industries or foreign capital and are more vulnerable to diplomatic developments, the imposition of economic sanctions against a particular country or countries, changes in international trading patterns, trade barriers, and other protectionist or retaliatory measures.

Currency Risk and Exchange Risk. Because foreign securities generally are denominated and pay dividends or interest in foreign currencies, the value of a Fund that invests in foreign securities as measured in U.S. dollars will be affected favorably or unfavorably by changes in exchange rates. Generally, when the U.S. dollar rises in value against a foreign currency, a security denominated in that currency loses value because the currency is worth fewer U.S. dollars. Conversely, when the U.S. dollar decreases in value against a foreign currency, a security denominated in that currency gains value because the currency is worth more U.S. dollars. This risk, generally known as "currency risk," means that a stronger U.S. dollar will reduce returns for U.S. investors while a weak U.S. dollar will increase those returns. Currency exchange rates can also be affected unpredictably by intervention by U.S. or foreign governments or central banks, or the failure to intervene, or buy currency controls or political developments in the United States or abroad.

Governmental Supervision and Regulation/Accounting Standards. Many foreign governments supervise and regulate stock exchanges, brokers and the sale of securities less than does the United States. Some countries may not have laws to protect investors comparable to the U.S. securities laws. For example, some foreign countries may have no laws or rules against insider trading. Insider trading occurs when a person buys or sells a company's securities based on nonpublic information about that

company. Accounting standards in other countries are not necessarily the same as in the United States. If the accounting standards in another country do not require as much detail as U.S. accounting standards, it may be harder for Fund management to completely and accurately determine a company's financial condition. In addition, the U.S. Government has from time to time in the past imposed restrictions, through penalties and otherwise, on foreign investments by U.S. investors such as the Fund. If such restrictions should be reinstituted, it might become necessary for the Fund to invest all or substantially all of its assets in U.S. securities. Also, brokerage commissions and other costs of buying or selling securities often are higher in foreign countries than they are in the United States. This reduces the amount the Fund can earn on its investments.

Certain Risks of Holding Fund Assets Outside the United States. A Fund generally holds its foreign securities and cash in foreign banks and securities depositories. Some foreign banks and securities depositories may be recently organized or new to the foreign custody business. In addition, there may be limited or no regulatory oversight over their operations. Also, the laws of certain countries may put limits on a Fund's ability to recover its assets if a foreign bank or depository or issuer of a security or any of their agents goes bankrupt. In addition, it is often more expensive for a Fund to buy, sell and hold securities in certain foreign markets than in the United States. The increased expense of investing in foreign markets reduces the amount a Fund can earn on its investments and typically results in a higher operating expense ratio for the Fund as compared to investment companies that invest only in the United States.

Publicly Available Information. In general, less information is publicly available with respect to foreign issuers than is available with respect to U.S. companies. Most foreign companies are also not subject to the uniform accounting and financial reporting requirements applicable to issuers in the United States. While the volume of transactions effected on foreign stock exchanges has increased in recent years, it remains appreciably below that of the New York Stock Exchange. Accordingly, a Fund's foreign investments may be less liquid than, and their prices may be more volatile than, comparable investments in securities in U.S. companies. In addition, there is generally less government supervision and regulation of securities exchanges, brokers and issuers in foreign countries than in the United States.

Settlement Risk. Settlement and clearance procedures in certain foreign markets differ significantly from those in the United States. Supervisory authorities may also be unable to apply standards which are comparable with those in the United States. Foreign settlement procedures and trade regulations also may involve certain risks (such as delays in payment for or delivery of securities) not typically generated by the settlement of U.S. investments.

Communications between the United States and emerging market countries may be unreliable, increasing the risk of delayed settlements or losses of security certificates in markets that still rely on physical settlement. Settlements in certain foreign countries at times have not kept pace with the number of securities transactions; these problems may make it difficult for a Fund to carry out transactions. If a Fund cannot settle or is delayed in settling a purchase of securities, it may miss attractive investment opportunities and certain of its assets may be uninvested with no return earned thereon for some period. If a Fund cannot settle or is delayed in settling a sale of securities, it may lose money if the value of the security then declines or, if it has contracted to sell the security to another party, the Fund could be liable to that party for any losses incurred.

Because of uncertainties in the operation of settlement systems in individual markets, competing claims may arise in respect of securities held by or to be transferred to a Fund. Compensation schemes may not exist or may otherwise be limited or inadequate to meet the Fund's claims in case of such event.

Sovereign Debt. Investment in sovereign debt can involve a high degree of risk. The governmental entity that controls the repayment of sovereign debt may not be able or willing to repay the principal and/or interest when due in accordance with the terms of such debt. A governmental entity's willingness or ability to repay principal and interest due in a timely manner may be affected by, among other factors, its cash flow situation, the extent of its foreign reserves, the availability of sufficient foreign exchange on the date a payment is due, the relative size of the debt service burden to the economy as a whole, the governmental entity's policy towards the International Monetary Fund and the political constraints to which a governmental entity may be subject. Governmental entities may also be dependent on expected disbursements from foreign governments, multilateral agencies and others abroad to reduce principal and interest arrearages on their debt. The commitment on the part of these governments, agencies and others to make such disbursements may be conditioned on the implementation of economic reforms and/or economic performance and the timely service of such debtor's obligations. Failure to implement such reforms, achieve such levels of economic performance or repay principal or interest when due may result in the cancellation of such third parties' commitments to lend funds to the governmental entity, which may further impair such debtor's ability or willingness to timely service its debts. Consequently, governmental entities may default on their sovereign debt.

Holders of sovereign debt may be requested to participate in the rescheduling of such debt and to extend further loans to governmental entities. In the event of a default by a governmental entity, there may be few or no effective legal remedies for collecting on such debt.

Withholding Tax Reclaims Risk. A Fund may file claims to recover foreign withholding taxes on dividend and interest income (if any) received from issuers in certain countries and capital gains on the disposition of stocks or securities where such withholding tax reclaim is possible. Whether or when a Fund will receive a withholding tax refund is within the control of the tax authorities in such countries. Where a Fund expects to recover withholding taxes, the net asset value of the Fund generally includes accruals for such tax refunds. Each Fund regularly evaluates the probability of recovery. If the likelihood of recovery materially decreases, due to, for example, a change in tax regulation or approach in the foreign country, accruals in a Fund's net asset value for such refunds may be written down partially or in full, which will adversely affect the Fund's net asset value. Shareholders in a Fund at the time an accrual is written down will bear the impact of the resulting reduction in net asset value regardless of whether they were shareholders during the accrual period. Conversely, if a Fund receives a tax refund that has not been previously accrued, shareholders in the Fund at the time of the successful recovery will benefit from the resulting increase in the Fund's net asset value. Shareholders who sold their shares prior to such time will not benefit from such increase in the Fund's net asset value.

U.S. Economic Trading Partners Risk. The United States is a significant, and in some cases the most significant, trading partner of, or foreign investor in, certain countries in which a Fund may invest. As a result, economic conditions of such countries may be particularly affected by changes in the U.S. economy. A decrease in U.S. imports or exports, new trade and financial regulations or tariffs, changes in the U.S. dollar exchange rate or an economic slowdown in the United States may have a material adverse effect on a country's economic conditions and, as a result, securities to which the Fund has exposure. Circumstances could arise that could prevent the timely payment of interest or principal on U.S. Government debt, such as reaching the legislative "debt ceiling." Such non-payment would result in substantial negative consequences for the U.S. economy and the global financial system.

There are strained relations between the United States and a number of foreign countries, including traditional allies, such as certain European countries, and historical adversaries, such as North Korea, Iran, China and Russia. If these relations were to worsen, it could adversely affect U.S. issuers as well as non-U.S. issuers that rely on the United States for trade. The United States has also experienced

increased internal unrest and discord. If these trends were to continue, it may have an adverse impact on the U.S. economy and many of the issuers in which a Fund may invest.

Funding Agreements. Certain Funds may invest in Guaranteed Investment Contracts and similar funding agreements. In connection with these investments, a Fund makes cash contributions to a deposit fund of an insurance company's general account. The insurance company then credits to the Fund on a monthly basis guaranteed interest, which is based on an index. The funding agreements provide that this guaranteed interest will not be less than a certain minimum rate. The purchase price paid for a funding agreement becomes part of the general assets of the insurance company, and the contract is paid from the general assets of the insurance company. Generally, funding agreements are not assignable or transferable without the permission of the issuing insurance companies, and an active secondary market in some funding agreements does not currently exist.

Guarantees. A Fund may purchase securities which contain guarantees issued by an entity separate from the issuer of the security. Generally, the guarantor of a security (often an affiliate of the issuer) will fulfill an issuer's payment obligations under a security if the issuer is unable to do so.

Illiquid Investments. Each Fund may not acquire any illiquid investment if, immediately after the acquisition, a Fund would have invested more than 15% of its net assets in illiquid investments. An illiquid investment is any investment that a Fund reasonably expects cannot be sold or disposed of in current market conditions in seven calendar days or less without the sale or disposition significantly changing the market value of the investment. Liquid investments may become illiquid after purchase by a Fund, particularly during periods of market turmoil. There can be no assurance that a security or instrument that is deemed to be liquid when purchased will continue to be liquid for as long as it is held by a Fund, and any security or instrument held by the Fund may be deemed an illiquid investment pursuant to the Fund's liquidity risk management program. A Fund's illiquid investments may reduce the returns of the Fund because it may be difficult to sell the illiquid investments at an advantageous time or price. In addition, if a Fund is limited in its ability to dispose of illiquid investments during periods when shareholders are redeeming or selling their shares or the Fund's net assets otherwise shrink, the Fund will need to dispose of liquid securities to meet redemption requests and illiquid securities will become a larger portion of the Fund's holdings. If illiquid investments exceed 15% of a Fund's net assets, the Liquidity Rule (as defined below) and the Liquidity Program (as defined below) will require that certain remedial actions be taken. Illiquid investments may trade at a discount from comparable liquid investments. Investment of a Fund's assets in illiquid investments may restrict the ability of the Fund to dispose of its investments in a timely fashion and for a fair price as well as its ability to take advantage of market opportunities. The risks associated with illiquidity will be particularly acute where a Fund's operations require cash, such as when the Fund redeems shares or pays dividends, and could result in the Fund borrowing to meet short-term cash requirements or incurring capital losses on the sale of illiquid investments.

Index Funds.

Cash Flows; Expenses. The ability of each Fund to satisfy its investment objective depends to some extent on the Manager's ability to manage cash flow (primarily from purchases and redemptions and distributions from the Fund's investments). The Manager will make investment changes to a Fund's portfolio to accommodate cash flow while continuing to seek to replicate the total return of the Fund's target index. Investors should also be aware that the investment performance of each index is a hypothetical number which does not take into account brokerage commissions and other transaction costs, custody and other costs of investing, and any incremental operating costs (e.g., transfer agency and accounting costs) that will be borne by the Funds. Finally, since each Fund seeks to replicate the total return of its target index, the Manager generally will not attempt to judge the merits of any particular security as an investment.

Tracking Error Risk. A Fund may be subject to tracking error, which is the divergence of the Fund's performance from that of the Underlying Index. Tracking error may occur because of differences between the securities and other instruments held in the Fund's portfolio and those included in the Underlying Index, pricing differences (including, as applicable, differences between a security's price at the local market close and the Fund's valuation of a security at the time of calculation of the Fund's net asset value), differences in transaction costs incurred by the Fund, the Fund's holding of uninvested cash, differences in timing of the accrual of or the valuation of dividends or other distributions, interest, the requirements to maintain pass-through tax treatment, portfolio transactions carried out to minimize the distribution of capital gains to shareholders, changes to the Underlying Index or the costs to the Fund of complying with various new or existing regulatory requirements. These risks may be heightened during times of increased market volatility or other unusual market conditions. In addition, tracking error may result because the Fund incurs fees and expenses, while the Underlying Index does not.

When an issuer is introduced by an index provider into an index tracked by a Fund, the Manager may conduct an analysis on such issuer's securities to identify and screen for outlier high risk behavior (such as rapid or unusual price growth that does not appear to be supported by publicly available information on the business and assets of the issuer, unusual or significant short interest or lending activity, negative sentiment, suspended trading or incorrect free-float calculations, which could be indicators of possible irregularities, miscalculations or even fraud). If it identifies such behavior, the Manager may, where appropriate, alert the index provider as to the alleged issue. The index provider has sole discretion for the determination as to whether to continue to include the issuer's securities in the rebalancing of its index. If the securities continue to be included in the index, the Manager may underweight or exclude such securities from a Fund's portfolio and, if it does so, such Fund will be subject to increased tracking error due to the divergence in the securities included in its portfolio from its underlying index. The application of the abovementioned analysis and screening to a Fund and its Underlying Index is in the sole discretion of the Manager and its affiliates (without any guarantees). The analysis and screening may not exclude any or all high risk securities from an Underlying Index or a Fund's portfolio, and the inclusion of such securities will result in an adverse impact to the Fund's net asset value if one or more such securities declines in value.

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Indexed and Inverse Securities. A Fund may invest in securities that provide a potential return based on a particular index of value or interest rates. For example, a Fund may invest in securities that pay interest based on an index of interest rates. The principal amount payable upon maturity of certain securities also may be based on the value of the index. To the extent a Fund invests in these types of securities, the Fund's return on such securities will be subject to risk with respect to the value of the particular index: that is, if the value of the index falls, the value of the indexed securities owned by the Fund will fall. Interest and principal payable on certain securities may also be based on relative changes among particular indices. A Fund may also invest in so-called "inverse floating obligations" or "residual interest bonds" on which the interest rates vary inversely with a floating rate (which may be reset periodically by a Dutch auction, a remarketing agent, or by reference to a short-term tax-exempt interest rate index). A Fund may purchase synthetically-created inverse floating rate bonds evidenced by custodial or trust receipts. Generally, income on inverse floating rate bonds will decrease when interest rates increase, and will increase when interest rates decrease. Such securities have the effect of providing a degree of investment leverage, since they may increase or decrease in value in response to changes, as an illustration, in market interest rates at a rate that is a multiple of the rate at which fixed-rate securities increase or decrease in response to such changes. As a result, the market

values of such securities will generally be more volatile than the market values of fixed-rate securities. To seek to limit the volatility of these securities, a Fund may purchase inverse floating obligations that have shorter-term maturities or that contain limitations on the extent to which the interest rate may vary. Certain investments in such obligations may be illiquid. The Manager believes that indexed and inverse floating obligations represent flexible portfolio management instruments for a Fund that allow the Fund to seek potential investment rewards, hedge other portfolio positions or vary the degree of investment leverage relatively efficiently under different market conditions. A Fund may invest in indexed and inverse securities for hedging purposes or to seek to increase returns. When used for hedging purposes, indexed and inverse securities involve correlation risk. Furthermore, where such a security includes a contingent liability, in the event of an adverse movement in the underlying index or interest rate, a Fund may be required to pay substantial additional margin to maintain the position.

The Funds may invest up to 10% of their total assets in leveraged inverse floating rate debt instruments ("inverse floaters"). Inverse floaters are securities the potential of which is inversely related to changes in interest rates. In general, the return on inverse floaters will decrease when short-term interest rates increase and increase when short-term rates decrease. Municipal tender option bonds, both taxable and tax-exempt, which may include inverse floating rate debt instruments, (including residual interests thereon) are excluded from this 10% limitation.

Inflation Risk. Like all funds, the Funds are subject to inflation risk. Inflation risk is the risk that the present value of assets or income from investments will be less in the future as inflation decreases the value of money. As inflation increases, the present value of a Fund's assets can decline as can the value of a Fund's distributions. Inflation rates may change frequently and significantly due to a number of potential factors, including, among others, unexpected economic shifts or changes in fiscal or monetary policies.

Initial Public Offering ("IPO") Risk. The volume of IPOs and the levels at which the newly issued stocks trade in the secondary market are affected by the performance of the stock market overall. If IPOs are brought to the market, availability may be limited and a Fund may not be able to buy any shares at the offering price, or if it is able to buy shares, it may not be able to buy as many shares at the offering price as it would like. In addition, the prices of securities involved in IPOs are often subject to greater and more unpredictable price changes than more established stocks. IPOs have the potential to produce substantial gains. A Fund may hold shares from an IPO for only a short period of time given possible price volatility. This may result in increased portfolio turnover and expenses, such as commissions and transaction costs, and potentially result in taxable gains that the Fund will subsequently distribute to shareholders. There is no assurance that any Fund will have access to profitable IPOs and therefore investors should not rely on any past gains from IPOs as an indication of future performance. The investment performance of a Fund during periods when it is unable to invest significantly or at all in IPOs may be lower than during periods when it is able to do so. In addition, as a Fund increases in size, the impact of IPOs on its performance will generally decrease. Securities issued in IPOs are subject to many of the same risks as investing in companies with smaller market capitalizations. Securities issued in IPOs have no trading history, and information about the companies may be available for very limited periods.

Investment in Emerging Markets.

General.

Certain Funds may invest in the securities of issuers domiciled in various countries with emerging capital markets. Unless otherwise provided in a Fund's Prospectus, a country with an emerging capital market is any country that is (i) generally recognized to be an emerging market country by the international financial community, such as the International Finance Corporation, or determined by the World Bank to have a low, middle or middle upper income economy; (ii) classified by the United

Nations or its authorities to be developing; and/or (iii) included in a broad-based index that is generally representative of emerging markets. Countries with emerging markets can be found in regions such as Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe and Africa.

Investments in the securities of issuers domiciled in countries with emerging capital markets involve certain additional risks that do not generally apply to investments in securities of issuers in more developed capital markets, such as (i) low or non-existent trading volume, resulting in market illiquidity and increased volatility in prices for such securities, as compared to securities of comparable issuers in more developed capital markets; (ii) uncertain national policies and social, political and economic instability, increasing the potential for expropriation of assets, confiscatory taxation, high rates of inflation or unfavorable diplomatic developments; (iii) possible fluctuations in exchange rates, differing legal systems and the existence or possible imposition of exchange controls, custodial restrictions or other foreign or U.S. Governmental laws or restrictions applicable to such investments; (iv) national policies that may limit a Fund's investment opportunities such as restrictions on investment in issuers or industries deemed sensitive to national interests; and (v) the lack or relatively early development of legal structures governing private and foreign investments and private property. In addition to withholding taxes on investment income, some countries with emerging markets may impose differential capital gains taxes on foreign investors.

Political and economic structures in emerging market countries may be undergoing significant evolution and rapid development, and these countries may lack the social, political and economic stability characteristic of more developed countries. In such a dynamic environment, there can be no assurance that any or all of these capital markets will continue to present viable investment opportunities for a Fund. In the past, governments of such nations have expropriated substantial amounts of private property, and most claims of the property owners have never been fully settled. There is no assurance that such expropriations will not reoccur. In such an event, it is possible that a Fund could lose the entire value of its investments in the affected market. As a result the risks described above, including the risks of nationalization or expropriation of assets, may be heightened. In addition, unanticipated political or social developments may affect the value of investments in these countries and the availability to a Fund of additional investments. The small size and inexperience of the securities markets in certain of these countries and the limited volume of trading in securities in these countries may make investments in the countries illiquid and more volatile than investments in more established markets.

Also, there may be less publicly available information about issuers in emerging markets than would be available about issuers in more developed capital markets, and such issuers may not be subject to accounting, auditing and financial reporting standards and requirements comparable to those to which U.S. companies are subject. In certain countries with emerging capital markets, reporting standards vary widely. As a result, traditional investment measurements used in the United States, such as price/earnings ratios, may not be applicable. Emerging market securities may be substantially less liquid than, and more volatile than, those of mature markets, and company shares may be held by a limited number of persons. This may adversely affect the timing and pricing of the Fund's acquisition or disposal of securities.

Practices in relation to settlement of securities transactions in emerging markets involve higher risks than those in developed markets, in part because a Fund will need to use brokers and counterparties that are less well capitalized, and custody and registration of assets in some countries may be unreliable. The possibility of fraud, negligence, undue influence being exerted by the issuer or refusal to recognize ownership exists in some emerging markets, and, along with other factors, could result in ownership registration being completely lost. A Fund would absorb any loss resulting from such registration problems and may have no successful claim for compensation.

Investment in non-dollar denominated securities including securities from issuers located in emerging market countries may be on either a currency hedged or unhedged basis, and the Funds may hold

from time to time various foreign currencies pending investment or conversion into U.S. dollars. Some of these instruments may have the characteristics of futures contracts. In addition, certain Funds may engage in foreign currency exchange transactions to seek to protect against changes in the level of future exchange rates which would adversely affect the Fund's performance. These investments and transactions involving foreign securities, currencies, options (including options that relate to foreign currencies), futures, hedging and cross-hedging are described under "Derivatives."

Risks of Investing in Asia-Pacific Countries. In addition to the risks of foreign investing and the risks of investing in developing markets, the developing market Asia-Pacific countries in which a Fund may invest are subject to certain additional or specific risks. Certain Funds may make substantial investments in Asia-Pacific countries. In many of these markets, there is a high concentration of market capitalization and trading volume in a small number of issuers representing a limited number of industries, as well as a high concentration of investors and financial intermediaries. Many of these markets also may be affected by developments with respect to more established markets in the region such as in Japan and Hong Kong. Brokers in developing market Asia-Pacific countries typically are fewer in number and less well capitalized than brokers in the United States. These factors, combined with the U.S. regulatory requirements for open-end investment companies and the restrictions on foreign investment discussed below, result in potentially fewer investment opportunities for a Fund and may have an adverse impact on the investment performance of the Fund.

Many of the developing market Asia-Pacific countries may be subject to a greater degree of economic, political and social instability than is the case in the United States and Western European countries. Such instability may result from, among other things: (i) authoritarian governments or military involvement in political and economic decision-making, including changes in government through extra-constitutional means; (ii) popular unrest associated with demands for improved political, economic and social conditions; (iii) internal insurgencies; (iv) hostile relations with neighboring countries; and (v) ethnic, religious and racial disaffection. In addition, the governments of many of such countries, such as Indonesia, have a substantial role in regulating and supervising the economy. Another risk common to most such countries is that the economy is heavily export oriented and, accordingly, is dependent upon international trade. The existence of overburdened infrastructure and obsolete financial systems also presents risks in certain countries, as do environmental problems. Certain economies also depend to a significant degree upon exports of primary commodities and, therefore, are vulnerable to changes in commodity prices that, in turn, may be affected by a variety of factors.

The legal systems in certain developing market Asia-Pacific countries also may have an adverse impact on the Fund. For example, while the potential liability of a shareholder in a U.S. corporation with respect to acts of the corporation is generally limited to the amount of the shareholder's investment, the notion of limited liability is less clear in certain emerging market Asia-Pacific countries. Similarly, the rights of investors in developing market Asia-Pacific companies may be more limited than those of shareholders of U.S. corporations. It may be difficult or impossible to obtain and/or enforce a judgment in a developing market Asia-Pacific country.

Governments of many developing market Asia-Pacific countries have exercised and continue to exercise substantial influence over many aspects of the private sector. In certain cases, the government owns or controls many companies, including the largest in the country. Accordingly, government actions in the future could have a significant effect on economic conditions in developing market Asia-Pacific countries, which could affect private sector companies and a Fund itself, as well as the value of securities in the Fund's portfolio. In addition, economic statistics of developing market Asia-Pacific countries may be less reliable than economic statistics of more developed nations.

In addition to the relative lack of publicly available information about developing market Asia-Pacific issuers and the possibility that such issuers may not be subject to the same accounting, auditing and

financial reporting standards as U.S. companies, inflation accounting rules in some developing market Asia-Pacific countries require companies that keep accounting records in the local currency, for both tax and accounting purposes, to restate certain assets and liabilities on the company's balance sheet in order to express items in terms of currency of constant purchasing power. Inflation accounting may indirectly generate losses or profits for certain developing market Asia-Pacific companies.

Satisfactory custodial services for investment securities may not be available in some developing Asia-Pacific countries, which may result in the Fund incurring additional costs and delays in providing transportation and custody services for such securities outside such countries.

Certain developing Asia-Pacific countries, such as the Philippines, India and Turkey, are especially large debtors to commercial banks and foreign governments.

Natural disasters in Asia-Pacific countries, and the resulting damage, could have a severe and negative impact on a Fund's investment portfolio and, in the longer term, could impair the ability of issuers in which the Fund invests to conduct their businesses in the manner normally conducted.

Fund management may determine that, notwithstanding otherwise favorable investment criteria, it may not be practicable or appropriate to invest in a particular developing Asia-Pacific country. A Fund may invest in countries in which foreign investors, including management of the Fund, have had no or limited prior experience.

Restrictions on Foreign Investments in Asia-Pacific Countries. Some developing Asia-Pacific countries prohibit or impose substantial restrictions on investments in their capital markets, particularly their equity markets, by foreign entities such as a Fund. As illustrations, certain countries may require governmental approval prior to investments by foreign persons or limit the amount of investment by foreign persons in a particular company or limit the investment by foreign persons to only a specific class of securities of a company which may have less advantageous terms (including price and shareholder rights) than securities of the company available for purchase by nationals. There can be no assurance that a Fund will be able to obtain required governmental approvals in a timely manner. In addition, changes to restrictions on foreign ownership of securities subsequent to a Fund's purchase of such securities may have an adverse effect on the value of such shares. Certain countries may restrict investment opportunities in issuers or industries deemed important to national interests.

The manner in which foreign investors may invest in companies in certain developing Asia-Pacific countries, as well as limitations on such investments, also may have an adverse impact on the operations of a Fund. For example, a Fund may be required in certain of such countries to invest initially through a local broker or other entity and then have the shares purchased re-registered in the name of the Fund. Re-registration may in some instances not be able to occur on a timely basis, resulting in a delay during which a Fund may be denied certain of its rights as an investor, including rights as to dividends or to be made aware of certain corporate actions. There also may be instances where a Fund places a purchase order but is subsequently informed, at the time of re-registration, that the permissible allocation of the investment to foreign investors has been filled, depriving the Fund of the ability to make its desired investment at that time.

Substantial limitations may exist in certain countries with respect to a Fund's ability to repatriate investment income, capital or the proceeds of sales of securities by foreign investors. A Fund could be adversely affected by delays in, or a refusal to grant, any required governmental approval for repatriation of capital, as well as by the application to the Fund of any restrictions on investments. It is possible that certain countries may impose currency controls or other restrictions relating to their currencies or to securities of issuers in those countries. To the extent that such restrictions have the effect of making certain investments illiquid, securities may not be available for sale to meet

redemptions. Depending on a variety of financial factors, the percentage of a Fund's portfolio subject to currency controls may increase. In the event other countries impose similar controls, the portion of the Fund's assets that may be used to meet redemptions may be further decreased. Even where there is no outright restriction on repatriation of capital, the mechanics of repatriation may affect certain aspects of the operations of a Fund (for example, if funds may be withdrawn only in certain currencies and/or only at an exchange rate established by the government).

In certain countries, banks or other financial institutions may be among the leading companies or have actively traded securities available for investment. The Investment Company Act restricts a Fund's investments in any equity securities of an issuer that, in its most recent fiscal year, derived more than 15% of its revenues from "securities related activities," as defined by the rules thereunder. These provisions may restrict a Fund's investments in certain foreign banks and other financial institutions.

Political and economic structures in emerging market countries may be undergoing significant evolution and rapid development, and these countries may lack the social, political and economic stability characteristic of more developed countries. Some of these countries may have in the past failed to recognize private property rights and have at times nationalized or expropriated the assets of private companies. As a result the risks described above, including the risks of nationalization or expropriation of assets, may be heightened. In addition, unanticipated political or social developments may affect the value of investments in these countries and the availability to a Fund of additional investments in emerging market countries. The small size and inexperience of the securities markets in certain of these countries and the limited volume of trading in securities in these countries may make investments in the countries illiquid and more volatile than investments in Japan or most Western European countries. There may be little financial or accounting information available with respect to issuers located in certain emerging market countries, and it may be difficult to assess the value or prospects of an investment in such issuers.

The expense ratios of the Funds investing significantly in foreign securities can be expected to be higher than those of Funds investing primarily in domestic securities. The costs attributable to investing abroad are usually higher for several reasons, such as the higher cost of custody of foreign securities, higher commissions paid on comparable transactions on foreign markets and additional costs arising from delays in settlements of transactions involving foreign securities.

Risks of Investments in Russia. A Fund may invest a portion of its assets in securities issued by companies located in Russia. The Russian securities market suffers from a variety of problems described above in "Investment in Emerging Markets" not encountered in more developed markets. The Russian securities market is relatively new, and a substantial portion of securities transactions in Russia are privately negotiated outside of stock exchanges. The inexperience of the Russian securities market and the limited volume of trading in securities in the market may make obtaining accurate prices on portfolio securities from independent sources more difficult than in more developed markets.

Because of the underdeveloped state of Russia's securities markets and banking and telecommunication systems, settlement, clearing and registration of securities transactions are subject to additional risks. Prior to 2013, there was no central registration system for equity share registration in Russia and registration was carried out either by the issuers themselves or by registrars located throughout Russia. These registrars may not have been subject to effective state supervision or licensed with any governmental entity. In 2013, Russia established the National Settlement Depository ("NSD") as a recognized central securities depository, and title to Russian equities held through the NSD is now based on the records of the NSD and not on the records of the local registrars. Although the implementation of the NSD has enhanced the efficiency and transparency of the Russian securities market, loss still can occur. Additionally, issuers and registrars remain prominent in the validation and approval of documentation requirements for corporate action processing in Russia, and, because the

documentation requirements and approval criteria vary between registrars and issuers, there remain inconsistent market standards in the Russian market with respect to the completion and submission of corporate action elections. To the extent that a Fund suffers a loss relating to title or corporate actions relating to its portfolio securities, it may be difficult for the Fund to enforce its rights or otherwise remedy the loss. Russian securities laws may not recognize foreign nominee accounts held with a custodian bank, and as a result the custodian may be considered the ultimate owner of securities held on behalf of their clients. A Fund also may experience difficulty in obtaining and/or enforcing judgments in Russia.

In addition, Russia continues to assert its influence in the region through economic and military measures, as it did with Georgia in the summer of 2008 and the Ukraine in 2014 and 2022. Russia launched a large-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. The extent and duration of the military action, resulting sanctions and resulting future market disruptions, including declines in its stock markets and the value of the ruble against the U.S. dollar, are impossible to predict. Any such disruptions caused by Russian military action or other actions (including cyberattacks and espionage) or resulting actual and threatened responses to such activity, including purchasing and financing restrictions, boycotts or changes in consumer or purchaser preferences, sanctions, tariffs or cyberattacks on the Russian government, Russian companies or Russian individuals, including politicians, may impact Russia's economy and Russian issuers of securities in which the Fund invests. Actual and threatened responses to such activity, including purchasing restrictions, sanctions, tariffs or cyberattacks on the Russian government or Russian companies, may impact Russia's economy and Russian issuers of securities in which the Fund invests. Actual and threatened responses to such military action may also impact the markets for certain Russian commodities, such as oil and natural gas, as well as other sectors of the Russian economy, and may likely have collateral impacts on such sectors globally.

Governments in the United States and many other countries (collectively, the "Sanctioning Bodies") have imposed economic sanctions, which can consist of prohibiting certain securities trades, certain private transactions in the energy sector, asset freezes and prohibition of all business, against certain Russian individuals, including politicians, and Russian corporate and banking entities. The Sanctioning Bodies, or others, could also institute broader sanctions on Russia, including banning Russia from global payments systems that facilitate cross-border payments. These sanctions, or even the threat of further sanctions, may result in the decline of the value and liquidity of Russian securities, a weakening of the ruble or other adverse consequences to the Russian economy. These sanctions have resulted and may continue to result in the immediate freeze of Russian securities and/or funds invested in prohibited assets, impairing the ability of a Fund to buy, sell, receive or deliver those securities and/or assets. Sanctions could also result in Russia taking counter measures or retaliatory actions which may further impair the value and liquidity of Russian securities.

Risks of Investing in Saudi Arabia. The ability of foreign investors (such as a Fund) to invest in Saudi Arabian issuers is new and untested. Such ability could be restricted or revoked by the Saudi Arabian government at any time, and unforeseen risks could materialize due to foreign ownership in such securities. In addition, the Capital Market Authority ("CMA") places investment limitations on the ownership of Saudi Arabian issuers by foreign investors, including a limitation on a Fund's ownership of any single issuer listed on the Saudi Arabian Stock Exchange, which may prevent a Fund from investing in accordance with its strategy and contribute to tracking error against the Underlying Index. These restrictions may be changed or new restrictions, such as licensing requirements, special approvals or additional foreign taxes, may be instituted at any time. A Fund may not be able to obtain or maintain any such licenses or approvals and may not be able to buy and sell securities at full value. Major disruptions or regulatory changes could occur in the Saudi Arabian market, any of which could negatively impact a Fund. These risks may be exacerbated, compared to more developed markets, given the limited history of foreign investment in the Saudi Arabian market. Investments in Saudi

Arabia may also be subject to loss due to expropriation or nationalization of assets and property or the imposition of restrictions on additional foreign investments and repatriation of capital. Such heightened risks may include, among others, restrictions on and government intervention in international trade, confiscatory taxation, political instability, including authoritarian and/or military involvement in governmental decision making, armed conflict, crime and instability as a result of religious, ethnic and/or socioeconomic unrest. Saudi Arabia has privatized, or has begun the process of privatizing, certain entities and industries. Newly privatized companies may face strong competition from government-sponsored competitors that have not been privatized. In some instances, investors in newly privatized entities have suffered losses due to the inability of the newly privatized entities to adjust quickly to a competitive environment or changing regulatory and legal standards or, in some cases, due to re-nationalization of such privatized entities. There is no assurance that similar losses will not recur. Further, under income tax laws imposed by the Department of Zakat and Income Tax, dividends paid by a Saudi Arabian company to foreign stockholders are generally subject to a 5% withholding tax (different tax rates may apply pursuant to an applicable treaty). Saudi Arabia is highly reliant on income from the sale of petroleum and trade with other countries involved in the sale of petroleum, and its economy is therefore vulnerable to changes in foreign currency values and the market for petroleum. As global demand for petroleum fluctuates, Saudi Arabia may be significantly impacted.

Like most Middle Eastern governments, the government of Saudi Arabia exercises substantial influence over many aspects of the private sector. Although liberalization in the wider economy is underway, in many areas it has lagged significantly: restrictions on foreign ownership persist, and the government has an ownership stake in many key industries. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that Saudi Arabia is governed by an absolute monarchy. Saudi Arabia has historically experienced strained relations with economic partners worldwide, including other countries in the Middle East due to geopolitical events. Incidents involving a Middle Eastern country's or the region's security, including terrorism, may cause uncertainty in their markets and may adversely affect its economy and a Fund's investments. Governmental actions in the future could have a significant effect on economic conditions in Saudi Arabia, which could affect private sector companies and a Fund, as well as the value of securities in a Fund's portfolio. Any economic sanctions on Saudi Arabian individuals or Saudi Arabian corporate entities, or even the threat of sanctions, may result in the decline of the value and liquidity of Saudi Arabian securities, a weakening of the Saudi riyal or other adverse consequences to the Saudi Arabian economy. In addition, Saudi Arabia's economy relies heavily on cheap, foreign labor, and changes in the availability of this labor supply could have an adverse effect on the economy.

The securities markets in Saudi Arabia may not be as developed as those in other countries. As a result, securities markets in Saudi Arabia are subject to greater risks associated with market volatility, lower market capitalization, lower trading volume, illiquidity, inflation, greater price fluctuations, uncertainty regarding the existence of trading markets, governmental control and heavy regulation of labor and industry. Shares of certain Saudi Arabian companies tend to trade less frequently than those of companies on exchanges in more developed markets. Such infrequent trading may adversely affect the pricing of these securities and a Fund's ability to sell these securities in the future. Current regulations in Saudi Arabian markets may require a Fund to execute trades of securities through a single broker. As a result, the Manager will have less flexibility to choose among brokers on behalf of a Fund than is typically the case for investment managers.

Although the political situation in Saudi Arabia is largely stable, Saudi Arabia has historically experienced political instability, and there remains the possibility that the stability will not hold in the future or that instability in the larger Middle East region could adversely impact the economy of Saudi Arabia. Instability may be caused by military developments, government interventions in the marketplace, terrorism, extremist attitudes, attempted social or political reforms, religious differences, or other factors. Additionally, anti-Western views held by certain groups in the Middle East may influence government policies regarding foreign investment. Further developments in U.S. relations

with Saudi Arabia and other Middle-Eastern countries may affect these attitudes and policies. The U.S. is a significant, and in some cases the most significant, trading partner of, or foreign investor in, Saudi Arabia. As a result, economic conditions of Saudi Arabia may be particularly affected by changes in the U.S. economy. A decrease in U.S. imports or exports, new trade and financial regulations or tariffs, changes in the U.S. dollar exchange rate or an economic slowdown in the U.S. may have a material adverse effect on the economic conditions of Saudi Arabia and, as a result, securities to which the Fund has exposure. Political instability in North Africa and the larger Middle East region has caused significant disruptions to many industries. Continued political and social unrest in these areas may negatively affect the value of securities in a Fund's portfolio.

Certain issuers located in Saudi Arabia may operate in, or have dealings with, countries subject to sanctions and/or embargoes imposed by the U.S. Government and the United Nations and/or countries identified by the U.S. Government as state sponsors of terrorism. As a result, an issuer may sustain damage to its reputation if it is identified as an issuer which operates in, or has dealings with, such countries. A Fund, as an investor in such issuers will be indirectly subject to those risks.

Risks of Investing in Venezuela. Investment in Venezuela may subject a Fund to legal, regulatory, political, currency, security, expropriation and/or nationalization of assets and economic risk specific to Venezuela. Venezuela is extremely well endowed with natural resources, including oil and natural gas, and its economy is heavily dependent on export of natural resources to key trading partners. Any act of terrorism, an armed conflict or a breakdown of a key trading relationship that disrupts the production or export of natural resources will likely negatively affect the Venezuelan economy. The government continues to control key sectors of the economy, including upstream oil and gas production, and has sought to increase its role in key sectors, such as telecommunications and steel. Meanwhile, ambiguities in the investment environment remain, such as continued high levels of bureaucracy and corruption, large macroeconomic imbalances, and political and policy uncertainty. Friction continues between the governments of the U.S. and Venezuela. The U.S. has imposed economic sanctions, which consist of asset freezes and sectoral sanctions, on certain Venezuelan individuals and Venezuelan corporate entities, and on the Venezuelan government. The U.S. could also institute broader sanctions on Venezuela. The U.S. has also taken military action against Venezuela in an effort to effect regime change. Military action, sanctions, or even the threat of further military action and sanctions, may result in the decline of the value and liquidity of Venezuelan securities, a weakening of the bolivar or other adverse consequences to the Venezuelan economy. These sanctions impair the ability of a Fund to buy, sell, receive or deliver those securities and/or assets. Additional sanctions against Venezuela may in the future be imposed by the U.S. or other countries. These factors, among others, can have a negative impact on a Fund's investments.

Brady Bonds. Certain Funds may invest in Brady Bonds. A Fund's emerging market debt securities may include emerging market governmental debt obligations commonly referred to as Brady Bonds. Brady Bonds are securities created through the exchange of existing commercial bank loans to sovereign entities for new obligations in connection with debt restructurings under a debt restructuring plan introduced by former U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, Nicholas F. Brady (the "Brady Plan"). Brady Plan debt restructurings have been implemented in a number of countries, including: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Jordan, Mexico, Niger, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Vietnam. Beginning in the early 2000s, certain countries began retiring their Brady Bonds, including Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, the Philippines, and Venezuela.

Brady Bonds may be collateralized or uncollateralized, are issued in various currencies (primarily the U.S. dollar) and are actively traded in the OTC secondary market. Brady Bonds are not considered to be U.S. Government Securities. U.S. dollar-denominated, collateralized Brady Bonds, which may be fixed rate par bonds or floating rate discount bonds, are generally collateralized in full as to principal by

U.S. Treasury zero-coupon bonds having the same maturity as the Brady Bonds. Interest payments on these Brady Bonds generally are collateralized on a one-year or longer rolling-forward basis by cash or securities in an amount that, in the case of fixed rate bonds, is equal to at least one year of interest payments or, in the case of floating rate bonds, initially is equal to at least one year's interest payments based on the applicable interest rate at that time and is adjusted at regular intervals thereafter. Certain Brady Bonds are entitled to "value recovery payments" in certain circumstances, which in effect constitute supplemental interest payments but generally are not collateralized. Brady Bonds are often viewed as having three or four valuation components: (i) the collateralized repayment of principal at final maturity; (ii) the collateralized interest payments; (iii) the uncollateralized interest payments; and (iv) any uncollateralized repayment of principal at maturity (the uncollateralized amounts constitute the "residual risk").

Brady Bonds involve various risk factors described above associated with investing in foreign securities, including the history of defaults with respect to commercial bank loans by public and private entities of countries issuing Brady Bonds. In light of the residual risk of Brady Bonds and, among other factors, the history of defaults, investments in Brady Bonds are considered speculative. There can be no assurance that Brady Bonds in which the Funds may invest will not be subject to restructuring arrangements or to requests for new credit, which may cause the Funds to suffer a loss of interest or principal on any of its holdings.

China Investments Risk.

Investments in securities of companies domiciled in the People's Republic of China ("China" or the "PRC"), including certain Hong Kong-listed and U.S.-listed securities, involve a high degree of risk and special considerations not typically associated with investing in the U.S. securities markets. Such heightened risks include, among others, an authoritarian government, popular unrest associated with demands for improved political, economic and social conditions, the impact of regional conflict on the economy and hostile relations with other countries.

Military conflicts, either in response to internal social unrest or conflicts with other countries, could disrupt economic development. The Chinese economy is vulnerable to the long-running disagreements and religious and nationalist disputes with Tibet and the Xinjiang region. Since 1997, there have been tensions between the Chinese government and many people in Hong Kong who perceive China as tightening control over Hong Kong's semi-autonomous liberal political, economic, legal, and social framework. Protests and unrest have increased tensions even further. Due to the interconnected nature of the Hong Kong and Chinese economies, this instability in Hong Kong may cause uncertainty in the Hong Kong and Chinese markets. China has a complex territorial dispute regarding the sovereignty of Taiwan and has made threats of invasion. Taiwan-based companies and individuals are significant investors in China. The continuing hostility between China and Taiwan may have an adverse impact on the value of the Fund's investments in China or Taiwan, may cause a suspension in a Fund's ability to trade in certain securities or other assets or may otherwise make such investments impracticable or impossible. Any escalation of hostility between China and Taiwan would likely have a significant adverse impact on the value of the Fund's investments in both countries and the region. In addition, China has strained international relations with Japan, India, the Philippines and other neighbors due to territorial disputes, historical animosities and other defense concerns. Frictions between China and the Philippines in the South China Sea pose a risk of escalation potentially leading to military conflict. Additionally, China is alleged to have participated in state-sponsored cyberattacks against foreign companies and foreign governments. Actual and threatened responses to such activity and strained international relations, including purchasing restrictions, sanctions, tariffs or cyberattacks on the Chinese government or Chinese companies, may impact China's economy and Chinese issuers of securities in which a Fund invests. China could be affected by military events on the Korean peninsula or internal instability within North Korea. These situations may cause uncertainty in the Chinese market and may adversely affect the performance of the Chinese economy.

The Chinese government has implemented economic reforms in order to liberalize trade policy, promote foreign investment in the economy, reduce government control of the economy and develop market mechanisms. However, the Chinese government still exercises substantial influence over many aspects of the private sector and may own or control many companies. Chinese companies, such as those in the financial services or technology sectors, and potentially other sectors in the future, are subject to the risk that Chinese authorities can intervene in their operations and structure. The Chinese government continues to maintain a major role in economic policymaking and investing in China involves risk of loss due to expropriation, nationalization, confiscation of assets and property or the imposition of restrictions on foreign investments and on repatriation of capital invested.

The Chinese government may intervene in the Chinese financial markets, such as by the imposition of trading restrictions, a ban on "naked" short selling or the suspension of short selling for certain stocks. This may affect market price and liquidity of these stocks, and may have an unpredictable impact on the investment activities of the Funds. Furthermore, such market interventions may have a negative impact on market sentiment which may in turn affect the performance of the securities markets and as a result the performance of the Funds.

In addition, there is less regulation and monitoring of Chinese securities markets and the activities of investors, brokers and other participants than in the United States. Accordingly, issuers of securities in China, including Chinese companies that are listed on U.S. exchanges, are not subject to the same degree of regulation as are U.S. issuers with respect to such matters as insider trading rules, tender offer regulation, accounting standards or auditor oversight, stockholder proxy requirements and the requirements mandating timely and accurate disclosure of information. Securities markets in China are in the process of change and further development. This may lead to trading volatility, difficulty in the settlement and recording of transactions and difficulty in interpreting and applying the relevant regulation. Custodians may not be able to offer the level of service and safe-keeping in relation to the settlement and administration of securities in China that is customary in more developed markets. In particular, there is a risk that a Fund may not be recognized as the owner of securities that are held on behalf of the Fund by a sub-custodian.

There may be significant obstacles to obtaining information necessary for investigations into or litigation against Chinese companies, and shareholders may have limited legal remedies. The Funds do not select investments based on investor protection considerations.

The Chinese government historically took positions that prevented the U.S. Public Company Accounting Oversight Board ("PCAOB") from inspecting the audit work and practices of accounting firms in mainland China and Hong Kong for compliance with U.S. law and professional standards. On August 26, 2022, the PCAOB signed a Statement of Protocol with the China Securities Regulatory Commission and the Ministry of Finance of the PRC, which marked the first step toward opening access for the PCAOB to inspect and investigate registered public accounting firms headquartered in mainland China and Hong Kong completely in accordance with U.S. law. However, as this development is relatively recent, the implementation of the Statement of Protocol remains to be tested. Audits performed by PCAOB-registered accounting firms in mainland China and Hong Kong may be less reliable than those performed by firms subject to PCAOB inspection. Accordingly, information about the Chinese securities in which the Funds invest may be less reliable or complete. Under amendments to the Sarbanes-Oxley Act enacted in December 2020, which requires that the PCAOB be permitted to inspect the accounting firm of a U.S.-listed Chinese issuer, Chinese companies with securities listed on U.S. exchanges may be delisted if the PCAOB is unable to inspect the accounting firm.

The Renminbi ("RMB") is currently not a freely convertible currency and is subject to foreign exchange control policies and repatriation restrictions imposed by the Chinese government. The imposition of currency controls may negatively impact performance and liquidity of the Funds as capital may become

trapped in the PRC. The Funds could be adversely affected by delays in, or a refusal to grant, any required governmental approval for repatriation of capital, as well as by the application to the Funds of any restrictions on investments. Investing in entities either in, or which have a substantial portion of their operations in, the PRC may require the Funds to adopt special procedures, seek local government approvals or take other actions, each of which may involve additional costs and delays to the Funds. The Fund may also incur costs in connection with conversions between U.S. dollars and RMB, as well as in connection with conversions between the two separate types of RMB, the onshore RMB ("CNY") and the offshore RMB ("CNH").

Many Chinese companies listed on U.S. exchanges use variable interest entities or "VIEs" in their structure as a result of foreign ownership restrictions. In a VIE structure, a Chinese operating company establishes a shell company in another jurisdiction to issue stock to public shareholders. When a VIE structure is used by a Chinese company to list its stock in the U.S., instead of owning the equity securities of the Chinese company, the U.S.-listed shell company directly or indirectly enters into contracts with the Chinese operating company under Chinese law. These contracts provide the U.S.-listed shell company with only economic exposure to the Chinese company and do not represent equity ownership in the operating company.

While VIEs are a longstanding practice that is well known to Chinese officials and regulators, they have not been formally recognized under Chinese law. The Chinese government has provided guidance to and placed restrictions on Chinese-based companies raising capital offshore, including through VIEs. In 2023, the China Securities Regulatory Commission ("CSRC") released new rules that permit the use of VIE structures, provided they abide by Chinese laws and register with the CSRC. The rules, however, may cause Chinese companies to undergo greater scrutiny and add costs to VIE structures. Intervention, rulemaking or guidance by the Chinese government with respect to VIE structures or the non-enforcement of VIE-related contractual rights could significantly affect the operating company's business in China, the enforceability of the U.S.-listed shell company's contractual arrangements with the Chinese company and the value of the U.S.-listed stock. Further, the VIE contractual arrangement would likely be subject to Chinese law and jurisdiction, and remedies available to the U.S.-listed shell company are uncertain and could be ineffective. In addition to the risk of government intervention, investments through a VIE structure are subject to the risk that the China-based company (or its officers, directors, or Chinese equity owners) may breach those contractual arrangements, or Chinese law changes in a way that adversely affects the enforceability of these arrangements, or those contracts are otherwise not enforceable under Chinese law, in which case the Fund may suffer significant losses on its investments through a VIE structure with little or no recourse available. Any change in the operations of entities in a VIE structure, the status of VIE contractual arrangements or the legal or regulatory environment in China, generally or with respect to specific industries, could result in significant, and possibly permanent and/or total, losses to a Fund.

While the Chinese economy has experienced past periods of rapid growth, there is no assurance that such growth rates will recur. Other economic challenges for China include indebtedness, weak consumer demand, trade tensions, and an aging population. China continues to face pressure from its trading partners over its exporting of its excess industrial capacity and overall approach to economic management. China's economy is heavily dependent on export growth. Reduction in spending on Chinese products and services, supply chain diversification, institution of additional tariffs, sanctions or other trade barriers (including as a result of heightened trade tensions between China and the United States or in response to actual or alleged Chinese cyber activity) or a downturn in any of the economies of China's key trading partners may have an adverse impact on the Chinese economy and the companies in which a Fund invests. Certain Chinese companies (which may change from time to time) are directly or indirectly subject to economic or trade restrictions imposed by the U.S. or other governments due to national security, human rights or other concerns of such government. For example, certain foreign technology companies are subject to U.S. export controls as those companies

are believed to pose a risk to U.S. interests. The U.S. also bans imports of goods produced in certain regions of China or by certain Chinese companies due to concerns about forced labor. Such restrictions may have unanticipated and adverse effects on the Chinese economy and companies. Any action that targets Chinese financial markets or securities exchanges could interfere with orderly trading, delay settlement or cause market disruptions. Certain companies may be subject to economic or trade restrictions (but not investment restrictions) imposed by the U.S. or other governments due to national security, human rights or other concerns of such government. So long as these restrictions do not include restrictions on investments, the Fund may invest in such companies.

The tax laws and regulations in the PRC are subject to change, including the issuance of authoritative guidance or enforcement, possibly with retroactive effect. The interpretation, applicability and enforcement of such laws by PRC tax authorities are not as consistent and transparent as those of more developed nations, and may vary over time and from region to region. The application and enforcement of PRC tax rules could have a significant adverse effect on a Fund and its investors, particularly in relation to capital gains withholding tax imposed upon non-residents. In addition, the accounting, auditing and financial reporting standards and practices applicable to Chinese companies may be less rigorous, and may result in significant differences between financial statements prepared in accordance with PRC accounting standards and practice and those prepared in accordance with international accounting standards.

From time to time and in recent years, China has experienced outbreaks of infectious illnesses and the country may be subject to other public health threats, infectious illnesses, diseases or similar issues in the future. Any spread of an infectious illness, public health threat or similar issue could reduce consumer demand or economic output, result in market closures, travel restrictions or quarantines, and generally have a significant impact on the Chinese economy, which in turn could adversely affect a Fund's investments.

Risk of Investing through Stock Connect.

General. China A-shares are equity securities of companies domiciled in China that trade on Chinese stock exchanges such as the Shanghai Stock Exchange ("SSE"), the Shenzhen Stock Exchange ("SZSE") and the Beijing Stock Exchange ("BSE") ("A-shares"). Foreign investment in A-shares on the SSE and SZSE is not permitted, other than pursuant to available exceptions, such as through a qualified foreign investor approved pursuant to the relevant mainland China laws and regulations as may be promulgated and/or amended from time to time ("QFI").

Investment in eligible exchange traded funds and A-shares listed and traded on the SSE or SZSE ("Stock Connect Securities") is also permitted through the Shanghai-Hong Kong Stock Connect program or the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Stock Connect program, as applicable (each, a "Stock Connect" and collectively, "Stock Connects"). Each Stock Connect is a securities trading and clearing links program established by The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited ("SEHK"), the Hong Kong Securities Clearing Company Limited ("HKSCC"), the SSE or SZSE, as applicable, and China Securities Depository and Clearing Corporation Limited ("CSDCC") that aims to provide mutual stock market access between the PRC and Hong Kong by permitting investors to trade and settle shares on each market through their local securities brokers. Under Stock Connects, a Fund's trading of Stock Connect Securities listed on the SSE or SZSE, as applicable, would be effectuated through its Hong Kong broker and a securities trading service company established by SEHK.

Although no individual investment quotas or licensing requirements apply to investors in Stock Connect, trading through a Stock Connect's Northbound Trading Link is subject to daily investment quota limitations which require that buy orders for Stock Connect Securities be rejected once the daily quota is exceeded (although a Fund will be permitted to sell their Stock Connect Securities regardless

of the quota). These limitations may restrict a Fund from investing in Stock Connect Securities on a timely basis, which could affect the Fund's ability to effectively pursue its investment strategy. Investment quotas are also subject to change. Investment in Stock Connect Securities through a Stock Connect is subject to trading, clearance and settlement procedures that could pose risks to a Fund. Stock Connect Securities purchased through Stock Connects generally may not be sold or otherwise transferred other than through Stock Connects in accordance with applicable rules. For example, the PRC regulations require that in order for an investor to sell any Stock Connect Securities on a certain trading day, there must be sufficient Stock Connect Securities in the investor's account before the market opens on that day. If there are insufficient Stock Connect Securities in the investor's account, the sell order will be rejected by the SSE or SZSE, as applicable. SEHK carries out pre-trade checking on sell orders of certain stocks listed on the SSE market ("SSE Securities") or SZSE market ("SZSE Securities") of its participants (i.e., stock brokers) to ensure that this requirement is satisfied. While shares must be designated as eligible to be traded under a Stock Connect, those shares may also lose such designation, and if this occurs, such shares may be sold but cannot be purchased through a Stock Connect. In addition, Stock Connects will only operate on days when both the Chinese and Hong Kong markets are open for trading, and banking services are available in both markets on the corresponding settlement days. Therefore, an investment in Stock Connect Securities through a Stock Connect may subject a Fund to a risk of price fluctuations on days when the Chinese market is open, but a Stock Connect is not trading. Moreover, day (turnaround) trading is not permitted on the Stock Connect Securities market. If an investor buys Stock Connect Securities on day "T," the investor will only be able to sell the Stock Connect Securities on or after day T+1. Further, since all trades of Stock Connect Securities must be settled in RMB, investors must have timely access to a reliable supply of offshore RMB, which cannot be guaranteed. There is also no assurance that RMB will not be subject to devaluation. Any devaluation of RMB could adversely affect a Fund's investments. If a Fund holds a class of shares denominated in a local currency other than RMB, the Fund will be exposed to currency exchange risk if the Fund converts the local currency into RMB for investments in Stock Connect Securities. A Fund may also incur conversion costs.

Stock Connect Securities held through the nominee structure under a Stock Connect will be held through HKSCC as nominee on behalf of investors. The precise nature and rights of a Fund as the beneficial owner of the SSE Securities or SZSE Securities through HKSCC as nominee is not well defined under the PRC laws. There is a lack of a clear definition of, and distinction between, legal ownership and beneficial ownership under the PRC laws and there have been few cases involving a nominee account structure in the PRC courts. The exact nature and methods of enforcement of the rights and interests of a Fund under the PRC laws is also uncertain. In the unlikely event that HKSCC becomes subject to winding up proceedings in Hong Kong, there is a risk that the SSE Securities or SZSE Securities may not be regarded as held for the beneficial ownership of a Fund or as part of the general assets of HKSCC available for general distribution to its creditors. Notwithstanding the fact that HKSCC does not claim proprietary interests in the SSE Securities or SZSE Securities held in its omnibus stock account in the CSDCC, the CSDCC as the share registrar for SSE- or SZSE-listed companies will still treat HKSCC as one of the shareholders when it handles corporate actions in respect of such SSE Securities or SZSE Securities. HKSCC monitors the corporate actions affecting SSE Securities and SZSE Securities and keeps participants of Central Clearing and Settlement System ("CCASS") informed of all such corporate actions that require CCASS participants to take steps in order to participate in them. Investors may only exercise their voting rights by providing their voting instructions to HKSCC through participants of CCASS. All voting instructions from CCASS participants will be consolidated by HKSCC, who will then submit a combined single voting instruction to the relevant SSE- or SZSE-listed company. As a result, a Fund may suffer difficulties or delays in enforcing its rights in SSE Securities or SZSE Securities.

Hong Kong's Investor Compensation Fund is established to pay compensation to investors of any nationality who suffer pecuniary losses as a result of default of a licensed intermediary or authorized

financial institution in relation to exchange-traded products in Hong Kong. For defaults occurring on or after January 1, 2020, Hong Kong's Investor Compensation Fund covers investors' losses in relation to securities (i) that are traded on the SSE or the SZSE and (ii) in respect of which an order for sale or purchase is permitted to be routed through the Northbound Trading Link of a Stock Connect. On the other hand, since a Fund carries out Northbound trading through securities brokers in Hong Kong but not PRC brokers, it is not protected by the China Securities Investor Protection Fund in the PRC.

Market participants are able to participate in Stock Connects subject to meeting certain information technology capability, risk management and other requirements as may be specified by the relevant exchange and/or clearing house. Further, the "connectivity" in Stock Connects requires routing of orders across the border of Hong Kong and the PRC. This requires the development of new information technology systems on the part of SEHK and exchange participants. There is no assurance that the systems of SEHK and market participants will function properly or will continue to be adapted to changes and developments in both markets. In the event that the relevant systems fail to function properly, trading in Stock Connect Securities through Stock Connects could be disrupted.

The Shanghai-Hong Kong Stock Connect program launched in November 2014 and the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Stock Connect program launched in December 2016. Each program does not have an extensive operating history. New or revised regulations may be issued from time to time by the regulators and stock exchanges in China and Hong Kong in connection with operations, legal enforcement and cross-border trades under Stock Connects. In addition, there can be no assurance that Stock Connect will not be discontinued. A Fund may be adversely affected as a result of such changes. Furthermore, the securities regimes and legal systems of China and Hong Kong differ significantly and issues may arise from the differences on an on-going basis. In the event that the relevant systems fail to function properly, trading in both markets through Stock Connects could be disrupted and a Fund's ability to achieve its investment objective may be adversely affected. In addition, a Fund's investments in Stock Connect Securities through Stock Connects are generally subject to Chinese securities regulations and listing rules, among other restrictions. Further, different fees, costs and taxes are imposed on foreign investors acquiring Stock Connect Securities through Stock Connects, and these fees, costs and taxes may be higher than comparable fees, costs and taxes imposed on owners of other securities providing similar investment exposure.

Suspension Risk. SSE Securities and SZSE Securities may only be bought from, or sold to, a Fund at times when the relevant SSE Securities and SZSE Securities may be sold or purchased on the relevant Chinese stock exchange. The SSE Securities and SZSE Securities markets have a higher propensity for trading suspensions than many other global equity markets. Each of the SEHK, SSE and SZSE reserves the right to suspend trading of SSE Securities and SZSE Securities purchased on the Stock Connects if necessary for ensuring an orderly and fair market and ensuring that risks are managed prudently. Consent from the relevant regulator would be sought before a suspension of Northbound trading is triggered. The relevant PRC government authority may also impose "circuit breakers" and other measures to halt or suspend Northbound trading. Where a suspension in the Northbound trading through Stock Connect is effected, the Fund's ability to access the PRC market will be adversely affected. Trading suspensions in certain stocks could lead to greater market execution risk and costs for a Fund. The SSE and SZSE currently apply a daily price limit, generally set at 10%, of the amount of fluctuation permitted in the prices of the relevant SSE Securities and SZSE Securities during a single trading day. The daily price limit refers to price movements only and does not restrict trading within the relevant limit. There can be no assurance that a liquid market on an exchange will exist for any particular SSE Security or SZSE Security or for any particular time.

Risk of Investing in the China Interbank Bond Market through Bond Connect. A Fund may invest directly in the domestic bond market in the PRC (the "China Interbank Bond Market") through the northbound trading of Bond Connect ("Bond Connect"). Bond Connect is an initiative launched in July

2017 for mutual bond market access between the PRC and Hong Kong, established by the China Foreign Exchange Trade System & National Interbank Funding Centre ("CFETS"), China Central Depository & Clearing Co., Ltd ("CDCC"), Shanghai Clearing House ("SCH"), Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited ("HKEX") and Central Moneymarkets Unit ("CMU"). Under the prevailing regulations in the PRC, eligible foreign investors are allowed to invest in the bonds circulated in the China Interbank Bond Market through Bond Connect. Eligible foreign investors may submit trade requests for bonds circulated in the China Interbank Bond Market through offshore electronic bond trading platforms (such as Tradeweb), which will in turn transmit their requests for quotation to CFETS. CFETS will send the requests for quotation to a number of approved onshore dealers (including market makers and others engaged in the market making business) in the PRC. The approved onshore dealer(s) will respond to the requests for quotation via CFETS and CFETS will send their responses to those eligible foreign investors through the same offshore electronic bond trading platforms. Once the eligible foreign investor accepts the quotation, the trade is concluded on CFETS.

The settlement and custody of bonds traded in the China Interbank Bond Market under Bond Connect will be effected through the settlement and custody link between CMU, as an offshore custody agent, and CDCC and SCH, as onshore custodians and clearing institutions in the PRC. Under the settlement link, CDCC or SCH will effect gross settlement of confirmed trades onshore and CMU will process bond settlement instructions from CMU members on behalf of eligible foreign investors in accordance with its relevant rules. Since the introduction in August 2018 of delivery versus payment (DVP) settlement in respect of Bond Connect, the movement of cash and securities is carried out simultaneously on a real-time basis. Pursuant to the prevailing regulations in the PRC, CMU, as the offshore custody agent recognized by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, will open omnibus nominee accounts with the onshore custody agent recognized by the People's Bank of China (*i.e.*, CDCC and SCH). All bonds traded by eligible foreign investors through Bond Connect will be registered in the name of CMU, which will hold such bonds as a nominee owner. Therefore, a Fund will be exposed to custody risks with respect to CMU. In the remote event of a CDCC or SCH default, CMU's liabilities in Bond Connect bonds under its market contracts with clearing participants will be limited to assisting clearing participants in pursuing their claims against CDCC or SCH. The Fund may suffer delay in the recovery process or may not fully recover its losses from CDCC or SCH. In addition, as the relevant filings, registration with the People's Bank of China, and account opening have to be carried out by third parties, including CMU, CDCC, SCH, and CFETS, a Fund is subject to the risks of default or errors on the part of such third parties.

The precise nature and rights of a Fund as the beneficial owner of the bonds traded in the China Interbank Bond Market through CMU as nominee is not well-defined under PRC law. There is a lack of a clear definition of, and distinction between, legal ownership and beneficial ownership under PRC law and there have been few cases involving a nominee account structure in the PRC courts. The exact nature and methods of enforcement of the rights and interests of a Fund under PRC law are also uncertain.

Market volatility and potential lack of liquidity due to low trading volume of certain bonds in the China Interbank Bond Market may result in prices of certain bonds traded on such market fluctuating significantly. A Fund investing in such market is therefore subject to liquidity and volatility risks. The bid-ask spreads of the prices of such securities may be large, and a Fund may therefore incur significant costs and may suffer losses when selling such investments. The bonds traded in the China Interbank Bond Market may be difficult or impossible to sell, which may impact a Fund's ability to acquire or dispose of such securities at their expected prices.

Investing in the China Interbank Bond Market through Bond Connect is also subject to regulatory risks. The relevant rules and regulations are subject to change, which may have potential retrospective effect, and there can be no assurance that Bond Connect will not be discontinued or abolished. Furthermore, the securities regimes and legal systems of China and Hong Kong differ significantly and

issues may arise based on these differences. In the event that the relevant authorities suspend account opening or trading on the China Interbank Bond Market, a Fund's ability to invest in the China Interbank Bond Market will be adversely affected and limited. In such event, the Fund's ability to achieve its investment objective will be negatively affected and, after exhausting other trading alternatives, the Fund may suffer substantial losses as a result. Further, if Bond Connect is not operating, a Fund may not be able to acquire or dispose of bonds through Bond Connect in a timely manner, which could adversely affect the Fund's performance.

Trading through Bond Connect is performed through newly developed trading platforms and operational systems. There is no assurance that such systems will function properly or will continue to be adapted to changes and developments in the market. In the event that the relevant systems fail to function properly, trading through Bond Connect may be disrupted. A Fund's ability to trade through Bond Connect (and hence to pursue its investment strategy) may therefore be adversely affected. In addition, where a Fund invests in the China Interbank Bond Market through Bond Connect, it may be subject to risks of delays inherent in the order placing and/or settlement systems.

Bond Connect trades are settled in Chinese currency, the RMB, which is currently restricted and not freely convertible. As a result, a Fund will be exposed to currency risk, and it cannot be guaranteed that investors will have timely access to a reliable supply of RMB.

Tax Risk — Withholding Income Tax Risk.

According to PRC tax regulations, a 10% withholding income tax is imposed on PRC sourced dividends and interests from non-government bonds paid to a non-PRC tax resident enterprise, unless the rate is reduced under an applicable tax treaty. From a technical perspective, withholding income tax is also applicable to capital gains realized by foreign investors on the disposal of PRC equity interests.

There are however certain tax exemptions available, some temporary in nature, highlighted below.

On November 14, 2014, the Ministry of Finance ("MoF"), China Securities Regulatory Commission and the State Taxation Administration ("STA"), acting with State Council's approval, jointly released Circular 79, which temporarily exempts Qualified Foreign Institutional Investors ("QFIIs") and Renminbi Qualified Foreign Institutional Investors ("RQFIIs") from tax on capital gains derived from the trading of shares and other equity interest investments on or after November 17, 2014. Subsequently, Circulars 81 and 127 were issued to temporarily exempt tax on capital gains derived from trading of equity securities of companies domiciled in the PRC that trade on Chinese stock exchanges ("A-Shares") through the Shanghai-Hong Kong Stock Connect program or the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Stock Connect program, as applicable (each, a "Stock Connect" and collectively, "Stock Connects"). The duration of the temporary exemptions is not stated in the circulars and is subject to termination by the PRC tax authorities with or without notice.

On November 22, 2018, the MoF and STA jointly issued Circular 108 which states that foreign institutional investors are temporarily exempt from withholding income tax with respect to interest income on bonds derived from the PRC bond market from November 7, 2018 to November 6, 2021. On November 22, 2021, the MoF and STA issued Public Notice 34 to extend the temporary exemption from November 7, 2021 to December 31, 2025. On January 15, 2026, it was announced via Public Notice No. 5 of 2026 that the exemption was extended through December 31, 2027.

Value Added Tax ("VAT") Risk — From May 1, 2016, VAT applies to certain income derived by the Fund, including PRC sourced interest income on non-government bonds and trading gains.

There are however certain tax exemptions available, some temporary in nature, highlighted below.

VAT exemptions currently apply to capital gains from trading of QFII and RQFII products, A-Shares traded on the Stock Connects and debt securities traded in the China Interbank Bond Market.

On November 7, 2018, the MoF and STA jointly issued Circular 108 which states that foreign institutional investors are temporarily exempt from VAT with respect to interest income on bonds derived from the PRC bond market from November 7, 2018 to November 6, 2021. On November 22, 2021, the MoF and STA jointly issued Public Notice 34 to extend the temporary exemption from November 7, 2021 to December 31, 2025. However, on July 31, 2025, the MoF and STA jointly issued Public Notice No 4 of 2025, stating that VAT will apply with respect to interest income derived from treasury bonds, local government bonds and financial bonds issued on or after August 8, 2025. It is understood that Public Notice No 4 of 2025 does not supersede the afore-mentioned exemption for foreign institutional investors. This exemption was extended through December 31, 2027.

Any changes in PRC tax law, future clarifications thereof, and/or subsequent retroactive enforcement by the PRC tax authorities may result in a loss which could be material to the Fund. There is a risk the PRC tax authorities may withdraw the temporary tax exemptions in the future and seek to collect taxes realized on the sale of A-Shares or PRC sourced interest income on non-government bonds received by the Fund without giving any prior notice. If the temporary tax exemptions are withdrawn, any taxes may be directly borne by or indirectly passed on to the Fund and may result in a substantial impact to its net asset value. As with any net asset value adjustment, investors may be advantaged or disadvantaged depending on when the investors purchased and/or sold the shares of the Fund. There will be no retrospective restatement of the Fund's net asset value.

BlackRock will keep the provisioning policy for tax liability under review and may, in its discretion from time to time, make a provision for potential tax liabilities if in its opinion such provision is warranted or as further clarified by the PRC in notifications.

Investment in Other Investment Companies. Each Fund may, subject to applicable law, invest in other investment companies (including investment companies managed by BlackRock and its affiliates), including money market funds and ETFs, which are typically open-end funds or unit investment trusts listed on a stock exchange. Under Section 12(d)(1)(A) of the Investment Company Act, however, a Fund may invest up to 10% of its total assets in securities of other investment companies (measured at the time of such investment). In addition, under Section 12(d)(1)(A) of the Investment Company Act a Fund may not acquire securities of an investment company if such acquisition would cause the Fund to own more than 3% of the total outstanding voting stock of such investment company and a Fund may not invest in another investment company if such investment would cause more than 5% of the value of the Fund's total assets to be invested in securities of such investment company. (These limits do not restrict a Feeder Fund from investing all of its assets in shares of its Master Portfolio.) In addition to the restrictions on investing in other investment companies discussed above, under Section 12(d)(1)(C) of the Investment Company Act a Fund may not invest in a registered closed-end investment company if such investment would cause the Fund and other BlackRock-advised investment companies to own more than 10% of the total outstanding voting stock of such closed-end investment company. Pursuant to Section 12(d)(1)(G) of the Investment Company Act, these percentage limitations do not apply to investments in affiliated investment companies, including ETFs, subject to certain conditions. In addition, a Fund may be able to rely on certain rules under the Investment Company Act to invest in shares of money market funds or other investment companies beyond the statutory limits noted above, but subject to certain conditions.

As with other investments, investments in other investment companies are subject to market and selection risk.

Shares of investment companies, such as closed-end fund investment companies, that trade on an exchange may at times be acquired at market prices representing premiums to their NAVs. In addition,

investment companies held by a Fund that trade on an exchange could trade at a discount from NAV, and such discount could increase while the Fund holds the shares. If the market price of shares of an exchange-traded investment company decreases below the price that the Fund paid for the shares and the Fund were to sell its shares of such investment company at a time when the market price is lower than the price at which it purchased the shares, the Fund would experience a loss.

In addition, if a Fund acquires shares in investment companies, including affiliated investment companies, shareholders would bear both their proportionate share of expenses in the Fund and, indirectly, the expenses of such investment companies. Such expenses, both at the Fund level and acquired investment company level, would include management and advisory fees, unless such fees have been waived by BlackRock. Please see the relevant Fund's Prospectus to determine whether any such management and advisory fees have been waived by BlackRock. Investments by a Fund in wholly owned investment entities created under the laws of certain countries will not be deemed an investment in other investment companies. Pursuant to guidance issued by the staff of the Commission, fees and expenses of money market funds used for the investment of cash collateral received in connection with loans of Fund securities are not treated as "acquired fund fees and expenses," which are fees and expenses charged by other investment companies and pooled investment vehicles in which a Fund invests a portion of its assets.

To the extent shares of a Fund are held by another fund, the ability of the Fund itself to purchase other funds may be limited. In addition, a fund-of-funds (*e.g.*, an investment company that seeks to meet its investment objective by investing significantly in other investment companies) may be limited in its ability to purchase underlying funds if such underlying funds themselves own shares of underlying funds.

A number of publicly traded closed-end investment companies have been organized to facilitate indirect foreign investment in developing countries, and certain of such countries, such as Thailand, South Korea, Chile and Brazil, have specifically authorized such funds. There also are investment opportunities in certain of such countries in pooled vehicles that resemble open-end investment companies. The restrictions on investments in securities of investment companies set forth above may limit opportunities for a Fund to invest indirectly in certain developing countries.

Issuer Insolvency Risk. Certain Funds' potential exposure to financially or operationally troubled issuers involves a high degree of credit and market risk, which may be heightened during an economic downturn or recession. Should an issuer of securities held by a Fund become involved in a bankruptcy proceeding, reorganization or financial restructuring, a wide variety of considerations make an evaluation of the outcome of the Fund's exposure to the issuer uncertain.

During the period of a bankruptcy proceeding, reorganization or financial restructuring, it is unlikely that a Fund will receive any interest payments on the securities of the issuer. A Fund will be subject to significant uncertainty as to whether the reorganization or restructuring will be completed, and the Fund may bear certain extraordinary expenses to protect and recover its investment. A Fund will also be subject to significant uncertainty as to when and in what manner and for what value the obligations evidenced by the securities of the issuer held by the Fund will eventually be satisfied.

Even if a plan of reorganization or restructuring is adopted with respect to the securities of the issuer held by the Fund, there can be no assurance that the securities or other assets received by a Fund in connection with such plan of reorganization or restructuring will not have a lower value or income potential than may have been anticipated or no value. A Fund may be unable to enforce its claims or rights in any collateral or may have its claims or security interest in any collateral challenged, disallowed or subordinated to the claims or security interests of other creditors. In addition, amendments to the U.S. Bankruptcy Code or other relevant laws could alter the expected outcome or introduce greater uncertainty regarding the outcome of the Fund's securities holdings in the issuer. In a bankruptcy proceeding, a reorganization or restructuring, the securities of the issuer held by a Fund could be

re-characterized or a Fund may receive different securities or other assets, including equity securities. These types of equity securities include, but are not limited to: common stock; preferred stock (including convertible preferred stock); bonds, notes and debentures convertible into common or preferred stock; stock purchase warrants and rights; equity interests in trusts; and depositary receipts. Equity securities are subject to changes in value, and their value may be more volatile than those of other asset classes. Holders of equity securities are subject to more risk than holders of debt securities because the status of equity holders is subordinate to debtholders in an issuer's capital structure. The value of equity securities received by a Fund could decline if the financial condition of the issuer deteriorates or if overall market and economic conditions, or conditions within the issuer's region or industry, deteriorate.

To the extent that a Fund receives other assets in connection with a bankruptcy proceeding, reorganization or financial restructuring, the Fund may also be subject to additional risks associated with the assets received. One example of assets that a Fund could receive is an interest in one or more loans made to the issuer as part of a workout agreed to by a consortium of lienholders and creditors of the issuer. A Fund may receive such interests in loans to the extent permitted by the Investment Company Act.

Securities or other assets received in a reorganization or restructuring typically entail a higher degree of risk than investments in securities of issuers that have not undergone a reorganization or restructuring and may be subject to heavy selling or downward pricing pressure after completion of the reorganization or restructuring. The post-reorganization/restructuring assets and securities may also be illiquid and difficult to sell or value. If a Fund participates in negotiations with respect to a plan of reorganization or restructuring with respect to securities of the issuer held by a Fund, the Fund also may be restricted from disposing such securities for a period of time. If a Fund becomes involved in such proceedings, the Fund may have more active participation in the affairs of the issuer than that assumed generally by an investor.

Lease Obligations. A Fund may hold participation certificates in a lease, an installment purchase contract, or a conditional sales contract ("lease obligations"). The Manager will monitor the credit standing of each borrower and each entity providing credit support and/or a put option relating to lease obligations.

Life Settlement Investments. A Fund may invest in life settlements, which are sales to third parties, such as the Fund, of existing life insurance contracts for more than their cash surrender value but less than the net benefits to be paid under the policies. When a Fund acquires such a contract, it pays the policy premiums in return for the expected receipt of the net benefit as the beneficiary under the policy. Investments in these contracts involve certain risks, including liquidity risk, credit risk of the insurance company, and inaccurate estimations of life expectancy of the insured individuals (viators). These policies may be considered illiquid because they are bought and sold in a secondary market through life settlement agents. Also, in the event of a bankruptcy of the insurance carrier for a policy, the Fund may receive reduced or no benefits under the contract. A Fund seeks to minimize credit risk by investing in policies issued by a diverse range of highly-rated insurance carriers. Furthermore, a Fund may encounter losses on its investments if there is an inaccurate estimation of the life expectancies of viators. A Fund intends to reduce this life expectancy risk by investing only in contracts where the life expectancy was reviewed by an experienced actuary, as well as by diversifying its investments across viators of varying ages and medical profiles. In addition, it is unclear whether the income from life settlements is qualifying income for purposes of the IRS 90% gross income test a Fund must satisfy each year to qualify as a regulated investment company. A Fund intends to monitor its investments to ensure that the Fund remains qualified as a regulated investment company.

Liquidity Risk Management. Rule 22e-4 under the Investment Company Act (the "Liquidity Rule") requires open-end funds, such as the Funds, to adopt a liquidity risk management program and enhance disclosures regarding fund liquidity. As required by the Liquidity Rule, the Funds have implemented a liquidity risk management program (the "Liquidity Program"), and the Boards of

Directors of the Funds, including a majority of the independent Directors, have appointed the Manager as the liquidity risk program administrator of the Liquidity Program. Under the Liquidity Program, the Manager assesses, manages, and periodically reviews each Fund's liquidity risk and classifies each investment held by a Fund as a "highly liquid investment," "moderately liquid investment," "less liquid investment" or "illiquid investment." The Liquidity Rule defines "liquidity risk" as the risk that a Fund could not meet requests to redeem shares issued by the Fund without significant dilution of the remaining investors' interests in the Fund. The liquidity of a Fund's portfolio investments is determined based on relevant market, trading and investment-specific considerations under the Liquidity Program. To the extent that an investment is deemed to be an illiquid investment or a less liquid investment, a Fund can expect to be exposed to greater liquidity risk.

Master Limited Partnerships. Certain Funds may invest in publicly traded master limited partnerships ("MLPs") which are limited partnerships or limited liability companies taxable as partnerships. MLPs may derive income and gains from the exploration, development, mining or production, processing, refining, transportation (including pipelines transporting gas, oil, or products thereof), or the marketing of any mineral or natural resources. MLPs generally have two classes of owners, the general partner and limited partners. When investing in an MLP, a Fund intends to purchase publicly traded common units issued to limited partners of the MLP. The general partner is typically owned by a major energy company, an investment fund, the direct management of the MLP or is an entity owned by one or more of such parties. The general partner may be structured as a private or publicly traded corporation or other entity. The general partner typically controls the operations and management of the MLP through an up to 2% equity interest in the MLP plus, in many cases, ownership of common units and subordinated units. Limited partners own the remainder of the partnership, through ownership of common units, and have a limited role in the partnership's operations and management.

MLPs are typically structured such that common units and general partner interests have first priority to receive quarterly cash distributions up to an established minimum amount ("minimum quarterly distributions" or "MQD"). Common and general partner interests also accrue arrearages in distributions to the extent the MQD is not paid. Once common and general partner interests have been paid, subordinated units receive distributions of up to the MQD; however, subordinated units do not accrue arrearages. Distributable cash in excess of the MQD paid to both common and subordinated units is distributed to both common and subordinated units generally on a pro rata basis. The general partner is also eligible to receive incentive distributions if the general partner operates the business in a manner which results in distributions paid per common unit surpassing specified target levels. As the general partner increases cash distributions to the limited partners, the general partner receives an increasingly higher percentage of the incremental cash distributions. A common arrangement provides that the general partner can reach a tier where it receives 50% of every incremental dollar paid to common and subordinated unit holders. These incentive distributions encourage the general partner to streamline costs, increase capital expenditures and acquire assets in order to increase the partnership's cash flow and raise the quarterly cash distribution in order to reach higher tiers. Such results benefit all security holders of the MLP.

MLP common units represent a limited partnership interest in the MLP. Common units are listed and traded on U.S. securities exchanges, with their value fluctuating predominantly based on prevailing market conditions and the success of the MLP. Certain Funds intend to purchase common units in market transactions. Unlike owners of common stock of a corporation, owners of common units have limited voting rights and have no ability to annually elect directors. In the event of liquidation, common units have preference over subordinated units, but not over debt or preferred units, to the remaining assets of the MLP.

Merger Transaction Risk. A Fund may buy stock of the target company in an announced merger transaction prior to the consummation of such transaction. In that circumstance, a Fund would expect

to receive an amount (whether in cash, stock of the acquiring company or a combination of both) in excess of the purchase price paid by the Fund for the target company's stock. However, a Fund is subject to the risk that the merger transaction may be canceled, delayed or restructured, in which case a Fund's holding of the target company's stock may not result in any profit for the Fund and may lose significant value.

Money Market Obligations of Domestic Banks, Foreign Banks and Foreign Branches of U.S. Banks. Certain Funds may purchase bank obligations, such as certificates of deposit, notes, bankers' acceptances and time deposits, including instruments issued or supported by the credit of U.S. or foreign banks or savings institutions having total assets at the time of purchase in excess of $1 billion. These obligations may be general obligations of the parent bank or may be limited to the issuing branch or subsidiary by the terms of a specific obligation or by government regulation. The assets of a bank or savings institution will be deemed to include the assets of its domestic and foreign branches for purposes of a Fund's investment policies. Investments in short-term bank obligations may include obligations of foreign banks and domestic branches of foreign banks, and also foreign branches of domestic banks.

To the extent consistent with their investment objectives, a Fund may invest in debt obligations of domestic or foreign corporations and banks, and may acquire commercial obligations issued by Canadian corporations and Canadian counterparts of U.S. corporations, as well as Europaper, which is U.S. dollar-denominated commercial paper of a foreign issuer.

Money Market Securities. Certain Funds may invest in a broad range of short-term, high quality, U.S. dollar-denominated instruments, such as government, bank, commercial and other obligations that are available in the money markets. In particular, the Funds may invest in:

(a) U.S. dollar-denominated obligations issued or supported by the credit of U.S. or foreign banks or savings institutions with total assets in excess of $1 billion (including obligations of foreign branches of such banks);

(b) high quality commercial paper and other obligations issued or guaranteed by U.S. and foreign corporations and other issuers rated (at the time of purchase) A-2 or higher by S&P, Prime-2 or higher by Moody's or F-2 or higher by Fitch, as well as high quality corporate bonds rated (at the time of purchase) A or higher by those rating agencies;

(c) unrated notes, paper and other instruments that are of comparable quality to the instruments described in (b) above as determined by the Fund's Manager;

(d) asset-backed securities (including interests in pools of assets such as mortgages, installment purchase obligations and credit card receivables);

(e) securities issued or guaranteed as to principal and interest by the U.S. Government or by its agencies or authorities and related custodial receipts;

(f) dollar-denominated securities issued or guaranteed by foreign governments or their political subdivisions, agencies or authorities;

(g) funding agreements issued by highly-rated U.S. insurance companies;

(h) securities issued or guaranteed by state or local governmental bodies;

(i) repurchase agreements relating to the above instruments;

(j) municipal bonds and notes whose principal and interest payments are guaranteed by the U.S. Government or one of its agencies or authorities or which otherwise depend directly or indirectly on the credit of the United States;

(k) fixed and variable rate notes and similar debt instruments rated MIG-2, VMIG-2 or Prime-2 or higher by Moody's, SP-2 or A-2 or higher by S&P, or F-2 or higher by Fitch;

(l) tax-exempt commercial paper and similar debt instruments rated Prime-2 or higher by Moody's, A-2 or higher by S&P, or F-2 or higher by Fitch;

(m) municipal bonds rated A or higher by Moody's, S&P or Fitch;

(n) unrated notes, paper or other instruments that are of comparable quality to the instruments described above, as determined by the Fund's Manager under guidelines established by the Board; and

(o) municipal bonds and notes which are guaranteed as to principal and interest by the U.S. Government or an agency or instrumentality thereof or which otherwise depend directly or indirectly on the credit of the United States.

Mortgage-Related Securities.

Mortgage-Backed Securities. Mortgage-backed securities represent interests in pools of mortgages in which payments of both principal and interest on the securities are generally made monthly, in effect "passing through" monthly payments made by borrowers on the residential or commercial mortgage loans that underlie the securities (net of any fees paid to the issuer or guarantor of the securities). Mortgage-backed securities differ from other forms of debt securities, which normally provide for periodic payment of interest in fixed amounts with principal payments at maturity or specified call dates.

Mortgage-backed securities are subject to the general risks associated with investing in real estate securities; that is, they may lose value if the value of the underlying real estate to which a pool of mortgages relates declines. In addition, investments in mortgage-backed securities involve certain specific risks. These risks include the failure of a party to meet its commitments under the related operative documents, adverse interest rate changes and the effects of prepayments on mortgage cash flows. Mortgage-backed securities are "pass-through" securities, meaning that principal and interest payments made by the borrower on the underlying mortgages are passed through to a Fund. Accordingly, the value of mortgage-backed securities in which a Fund invests may be particularly sensitive to changes in prevailing interest rates, and, like other fixed income investments, the ability of a Fund to utilize these instruments successfully may depend in part upon the ability of the Manager to forecast interest rates and other economic factors correctly. The value of mortgage-backed securities, like that of traditional fixed-income securities, typically increases when interest rates fall and decreases when interest rates rise. However, mortgage-backed securities differ from traditional fixed-income securities because of their potential for prepayment without penalty. The price paid by a Fund for its mortgage-backed securities, the yield the Fund expects to receive from such securities and the weighted average life of the securities are based on a number of factors, including the anticipated rate of prepayment of the underlying mortgages. In a period of declining interest rates, borrowers may prepay the underlying mortgages more quickly than anticipated, thereby reducing the yield to maturity and the average life of the mortgage-backed securities. Moreover, when a Fund reinvests the proceeds of a prepayment in these circumstances, it will likely receive a rate of interest that is lower than the rate on the security that was prepaid.

To the extent that a Fund purchases mortgage-backed securities at a premium, mortgage foreclosures and principal prepayments may result in a loss to the extent of the premium paid. If a Fund buys such securities at a discount, both scheduled payments of principal and unscheduled prepayments will increase current and total returns and will accelerate the recognition of income, which, when distributed to shareholders, will be taxable as ordinary income. In a period of rising interest rates, prepayments of the underlying mortgages may occur at a slower than expected rate, creating maturity extension risk. This particular risk may effectively change a security that was considered short- or intermediate-term at

the time of purchase into a long-term security. Since the value of long-term securities generally fluctuates more widely in response to changes in interest rates than that of shorter-term securities, maturity extension risk could increase the inherent volatility of the Fund. Under certain interest rate and prepayment scenarios, a Fund may fail to recoup fully its investment in mortgage-backed securities notwithstanding any direct or indirect governmental or agency guarantee.

There are currently three types of mortgage pass-through securities: (1) those issued by the U.S. Government or one of its agencies or instrumentalities, such as the Government National Mortgage Association ("Ginnie Mae"), the Federal National Mortgage Association ("Fannie Mae") and the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation ("Freddie Mac"); (2) those issued by private issuers that represent an interest in or are collateralized by pass-through securities issued or guaranteed by the U.S. Government or one of its agencies or instrumentalities; and (3) those issued by private issuers that represent an interest in or are collateralized by whole mortgage loans or pass-through securities without a government guarantee but that usually have some form of private credit enhancement.

Ginnie Mae is a wholly owned U.S. Government corporation within the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Ginnie Mae is authorized to guarantee, with the full faith and credit of the U.S. Government, the timely payment of principal and interest on securities issued by the institutions approved by Ginnie Mae (such as savings and loan institutions, commercial banks and mortgage banks), and backed by pools of Federal Housing Administration ("FHA")-insured or Veterans' Administration ("VA")-guaranteed mortgages. Pass-through certificates guaranteed by Ginnie Mae (such certificates are also known as "Ginnie Maes") are guaranteed as to the timely payment of principal and interest by Ginnie Mae, whose guarantee is backed by the full faith and credit of the United States. Ginnie Mae certificates also are supported by the authority of Ginnie Mae to borrow funds from the U.S. Treasury Department to make payments under its guarantee. Mortgage-related securities issued by Fannie Mae include Fannie Mae guaranteed Mortgage Pass-Through Certificates (also known as "Fannie Maes"), which are guaranteed as to timely payment of principal and interest by Fannie Mae. They are not backed by or entitled to the full faith and credit of the United States, but are supported by the right of Fannie Mae to borrow from the U.S. Treasury Department. Fannie Mae was established as a federal agency in 1938 and in 1968 was chartered by Congress as a private shareholder-owned company. Mortgage-related securities issued by Freddie Mac include Freddie Mac Mortgage Participation Certificates (also known as "Freddie Macs" or "PCs"). Freddie Mac is a stockholder-owned corporation chartered by Congress in 1970. Freddie Macs are not guaranteed by the United States or by any Federal Home Loan Banks and do not constitute a debt or obligation of the United States or of any Federal Home Loan Bank. Freddie Macs entitle the holder to timely payment of interest, which is guaranteed by Freddie Mac. Freddie Mac guarantees either ultimate collection or timely payment of all principal payments on the underlying mortgage loans. While Freddie Mac generally does not guarantee timely payment of principal, Freddie Mac may remit the amount due on account of its guarantee of ultimate payment of principal at any time after default on an underlying mortgage, but in no event later than one year after it becomes payable.

Private mortgage pass-through securities are structured similarly to Ginnie Mae, Fannie Mae, and Freddie Mac mortgage pass-through securities and are issued by originators of and investors in mortgage loans, including depository institutions, mortgage banks, investment banks and special purpose subsidiaries of the foregoing.

Pools created by private mortgage pass-through issuers generally offer a higher rate of interest than government and government-related pools because there are no direct or indirect government or agency guarantees of payments in the private pools. However, timely payment of interest and principal of these pools may be supported by various forms of insurance or guarantees, including individual loan, title, pool and hazard insurance and letters of credit. The insurance and guarantees are issued by governmental entities, private insurers and the mortgage poolers. The insurance and guarantees and

the creditworthiness of the issuers thereof will be considered in determining whether a mortgage-related security meets a Fund's investment quality standards. There can be no assurance that the private insurers or guarantors can meet their obligations under the insurance policies or guarantee arrangements. Private mortgage pass-through securities may be bought without insurance or guarantees if, through an examination of the loan experience and practices of the originator/servicers and poolers, the Manager determines that the securities meet a Fund's quality standards. Any mortgage-related securities that are issued by private issuers have some exposure to subprime loans as well as to the mortgage and credit markets generally.

In addition, mortgage-related securities that are issued by private issuers are not subject to the underwriting requirements for the underlying mortgages that are applicable to those mortgage-related securities that have a government or government-sponsored entity guarantee. As a result, the mortgage loans underlying private mortgage-related securities may, and frequently do, have less favorable collateral, credit risk or other underwriting characteristics than government or government-sponsored mortgage-related securities and have wider variances in a number of terms including interest rate, term, size, purpose and borrower characteristics. Privately issued pools more frequently include second mortgages, high loan-to-value mortgages and manufactured housing loans. The coupon rates and maturities of the underlying mortgage loans in a private-label mortgage-related securities pool may vary to a greater extent than those included in a government guaranteed pool, and the pool may include subprime mortgage loans. Subprime loans refer to loans made to borrowers with weakened credit histories or with a lower capacity to make timely payments on their loans. For these reasons, the loans underlying these securities have had in many cases higher default rates than those loans that meet government underwriting requirements.

The risk of non-payment is greater for mortgage-related securities that are backed by mortgage pools that contain subprime loans, but a level of risk exists for all loans. Market factors adversely affecting mortgage loan repayments may include a general economic turndown, high unemployment, a general slowdown in the real estate market, a drop in the market prices of real estate, or an increase in interest rates resulting in higher mortgage payments by holders of adjustable rate mortgages.

Privately issued mortgage-related securities are not traded on an exchange and there may be a limited market for the securities, especially when there is a perceived weakness in the mortgage and real estate market sectors. Without an active trading market, mortgage-related securities held in a Fund's portfolio may be particularly difficult to value because of the complexities involved in assessing the value of the underlying mortgage loans.

Collateralized Mortgage Obligations ("CMOs"). CMOs are debt obligations collateralized by residential or commercial mortgage loans or residential or commercial mortgage pass-through securities. Interest and prepaid principal are generally paid monthly. CMOs may be collateralized by whole mortgage loans or private mortgage pass-through securities but are more typically collateralized by portfolios of mortgage pass-through securities guaranteed by Ginnie Mae, Freddie Mac, or Fannie Mae. The issuer of a series of CMOs may elect to be treated as a Real Estate Mortgage Investment Conduit ("REMIC"). All future references to CMOs also include REMICs.

CMOs are structured into multiple classes, often referred to as a "tranche," each issued at a specific adjustable or fixed interest rate, and bearing a different stated maturity date and each must be fully retired no later than its final distribution date. Actual maturity and average life will depend upon the prepayment experience of the collateral, which is ordinarily unrelated to the stated maturity date. CMOs often provide for a modified form of call protection through a de facto breakdown of the underlying pool of mortgages according to how quickly the loans are repaid. Monthly payment of principal received from the pool of underlying mortgages, including prepayments, is first returned to investors holding the shortest maturity class. Investors holding the longer maturity classes usually

receive principal only after the first class has been retired. An investor may be partially protected against a sooner than desired return of principal because of the sequential payments.

Certain issuers of CMOs are not considered investment companies pursuant to a rule adopted by the Commission, and a Fund may invest in the securities of such issuers without the limitations imposed by the Investment Company Act on investments by a Fund in other investment companies. In addition, in reliance on an earlier Commission interpretation, a Fund's investments in certain other qualifying CMOs, which cannot or do not rely on the rule, are also not subject to the limitation of the Investment Company Act on acquiring interests in other investment companies. In order to be able to rely on the Commission's interpretation, these CMOs must be unmanaged, fixed asset issuers, that: (1) invest primarily in mortgage-backed securities; (2) do not issue redeemable securities; (3) operate under general exemptive orders exempting them from all provisions of the Investment Company Act; and (4) are not registered or regulated under the Investment Company Act as investment companies. To the extent that a Fund selects CMOs that cannot rely on the rule or do not meet the above requirements, the Fund may not invest more than 10% of its assets in all such entities and may not acquire more than 3% of the voting securities of any single such entity.

A Fund may also invest in, among other things, parallel pay CMOs, sequential pay CMOs, and floating rate CMOs. Parallel pay CMOs are structured to provide payments of principal on each payment date to more than one class, concurrently on a proportionate or disproportionate basis. These simultaneous payments are taken into account in calculating the final distribution date of each class. Sequential pay CMOs generally pay principal to only one class at a time while paying interest to several classes. A wide variety of REMIC Certificates may be issued in the parallel pay or sequential pay structures. These securities include accrual certificates (also known as "Z-Bonds"), which only accrue interest at a specified rate until all other certificates having an earlier final distribution date have been retired and are converted thereafter to an interest-paying security. Floating rate CMOs are securities whose coupon rate fluctuates according to some formula related to an existing market index or rate. Typical indices would include the eleventh district cost-of-funds index ("COFI"), one-year Treasury yields, and ten-year Treasury yields.

Classes of CMOs also include planned amortization classes ("PACs") and targeted amortization classes ("TACs"). PAC bonds generally require payments of a specified amount of principal on each payment date. The scheduled principal payments for PAC Certificates generally have the highest priority on each payment date after interest due has been paid to all classes entitled to receive interest currently. Shortfalls, if any, are added to the amount payable on the next payment date. The PAC Certificate payment schedule is taken into account in calculating the final distribution date of each class of PAC. In order to create PAC tranches, one or more tranches generally must be created that absorb most of the volatility in the underlying mortgage assets. These tranches (often called "supports" or "companion" tranches) tend to have market prices and yields that are more volatile than the PAC classes.

TACs are similar to PACs in that they require that specified amounts of principal be applied on each payment date to one or more classes of REMIC Certificates. A PAC's payment schedule, however, remains in effect as long as prepayment rates on the underlying mortgages do not exceed certain ranges. In contrast, a TAC provides investors with protection, to a certain level, against either faster than expected or slower than expected prepayment rates, but not both. TACs thus provide more cash flow stability than a regular sequential paying class, but less than a PAC. TACs also tend to have market prices and yields that are more volatile than PACs.

Adjustable Rate Mortgage Securities. Adjustable rate mortgage securities ("ARMs") are pass-through securities collateralized by mortgages with adjustable rather than fixed rates. ARMs eligible for inclusion in a mortgage pool generally provide for a fixed initial mortgage interest rate for a set number of scheduled monthly payments. After that schedule of payments has been completed, the interest rates are subject to periodic adjustment based on changes to a designated benchmark index.

ARMs contain maximum and minimum rates beyond which the mortgage interest rate may not vary over the lifetime of the security. In addition, certain ARMs provide for additional limitations on the maximum amount by which the mortgage interest rate may adjust for any single adjustment period. In the event that market rates of interest rise more rapidly to levels above that of the ARM's maximum rate, the ARM's coupon may represent a below market rate of interest. In these circumstances, the market value of the ARM security will likely have fallen.

Certain ARMs contain limitations on changes in the required monthly payment. In the event that a monthly payment is not sufficient to pay the interest accruing on an ARM, any such excess interest is added to the principal balance of the mortgage loan, which is repaid through future monthly payments. If the monthly payment for such an instrument exceeds the sum of the interest accrued at the applicable mortgage interest rate and the principal payment required at such point to amortize the outstanding principal balance over the remaining term of the loan, the excess is then used to reduce the outstanding principal balance of the ARM.

CMO Residuals. CMO residuals are derivative mortgage securities issued by agencies or instrumentalities of the U.S. Government or by private originators of, or investors in, mortgage loans, including savings and loan associations, homebuilders, mortgage banks, commercial banks, investment banks, and special purpose entities of the foregoing. The cash flow generated by the mortgage assets underlying a series of CMOs is applied first to make required payments of principal and interest on the CMOs and second to pay the related administrative expenses and any management fees of the issuer. The residual in a CMO structure generally represents the interest in any excess cash flow remaining after making the foregoing payments. Each payment of such excess cash flow to a holder of the related CMO residual represents income and/or a return of capital. The amount of residual cash flow resulting from a CMO will depend on, among other things, the characteristics of the mortgage assets, the coupon rate of each class of CMO, prevailing interest rates, the amount of administrative expenses and the prepayment experience on the mortgage assets. In part, the yield to maturity on the CMO residuals is extremely sensitive to prepayments on the related underlying mortgage assets, in the same manner as an interest-only class of stripped mortgage-related securities. In addition, if a series of a CMO includes a class that bears interest at an adjustable rate, the yield to maturity on the related CMO residual will also be extremely sensitive to changes in the level of the index upon which interest rate adjustments are based. In certain circumstances, a Fund may fail to recoup fully its initial investment in a CMO residual.

CMO residuals are generally purchased and sold by institutional investors through one or more investment banking firms acting as brokers or dealers. Transactions in CMO residuals are generally completed only after careful review of the characteristics of the securities in question. In addition, CMO residuals may or, pursuant to an exemption therefrom, may not have been registered under the Securities Act. Residual interests generally are junior to, and may be significantly more volatile than, "regular" CMO and REMIC interests. CMO residuals, whether or not registered under the Securities Act, may be subject to certain restrictions on transferability.

Stripped Mortgage-Backed Securities. A Fund may invest in stripped mortgage-backed securities ("SMBSs") issued by agencies or instrumentalities of the United States. SMBSs are derivative multi-class mortgage-backed securities. SMBS arrangements commonly involve two classes of securities that receive different proportions of the interest and principal distributions on a pool of mortgage assets. A common variety of SMBS is where one class (the principal only or PO class) receives some of the interest and most of the principal from the underlying assets, while the other class (the interest only or IO class) receives most of the interest and the remainder of the principal. In the most extreme case, the IO class receives all of the interest, while the PO class receives all of the principal. While a Fund may purchase securities of a PO class, a Fund is more likely to purchase the securities of an IO class. The yield to maturity of an IO class is extremely sensitive to the rate of principal payments

(including prepayments) on the related underlying assets, and a rapid rate of principal prepayments in excess of that considered in pricing the securities will have a material adverse effect on an IO security's yield to maturity. If the underlying mortgage assets experience greater than anticipated payments of principal, a Fund may fail to recoup fully its initial investment in IOs. In addition, there are certain types of IOs that represent the interest portion of a particular class as opposed to the interest portion of the entire pool. The sensitivity of this type of IO to interest rate fluctuations may be increased because of the characteristics of the principal portion to which they relate. As a result of the above factors, a Fund generally will purchase IOs only as a component of so called "synthetic" securities. This means that purchases of IOs will be matched with certain purchases of other securities, such as POs, inverse floating rate CMOs or fixed rate securities; as interest rates fall, presenting a greater risk of unanticipated prepayments of principal, the negative effect on a Fund because of its holdings of IOs should be diminished somewhat because of the increased yield on the inverse floating rate CMOs or the increased appreciation on the POs or fixed rate securities.

Tiered Index Bonds. Tiered index bonds are forms of mortgage-related securities. The interest rate on a tiered index bond is tied to a specified index or market rate. So long as this index or market rate is below a predetermined "strike" rate, the interest rate on the tiered index bond remains fixed. If, however, the specified index or market rate rises above the "strike" rate, the interest rate of the tiered index bond will decrease. Thus, under these circumstances, the interest rate on a tiered index bond, like an inverse floater, will move in the opposite direction of prevailing interest rates, with the result that the price of the tiered index bond may be considerably more volatile than that of a fixed-rate bond.

TBA Commitments. Certain Funds may enter into "to be announced" or "TBA" commitments. TBA commitments are forward agreements for the purchase or sale of securities, including mortgage-backed securities for a fixed price, with payment and delivery on an agreed upon future settlement date. The specific securities to be delivered are not identified at the trade date. However, delivered securities must meet specified terms, including issuer, rate and mortgage terms. When the Fund enters into a TBA commitment for the sale of mortgage-backed securities for a fixed price, with payment and delivery on an agreed upon future settlement date (which may be referred to as having a short position in such TBA securities), the Fund may or may not hold the types of mortgage-backed securities required to be delivered. See "— When-Issued Securities, Delayed Delivery Securities and Forward Commitments" below.

Mortgage Dollar Rolls. Certain Funds may invest in mortgage dollar rolls. In a mortgage dollar roll transaction, a Fund sells mortgage-backed securities for delivery in the current month and simultaneously contracts to repurchase substantially similar securities on a specified future date. The securities that are repurchased will bear the same interest rate and a similar maturity as those sold, but pools of mortgages collateralizing those securities may have different prepayment histories than those sold. During the period between the sale and repurchase, a Fund will not be entitled to receive interest and principal payments on the securities sold. Proceeds of the sale will be invested in additional instruments for the Fund, and the income from these investments will generate income for the Fund. If such income does not exceed the income, capital appreciation and gain or loss that would have been realized on the securities sold as part of the dollar roll, the use of this technique will diminish the investment performance of a Fund compared with what the performance would have been without the use of dollar rolls.

Each mortgage dollar roll transaction is accounted for as a sale or purchase of a portfolio security and a subsequent purchase or sale of a substantially similar security in the forward market. Transactions in mortgage dollar rolls may increase trading costs and portfolio turnover.

In the event the buyer of the securities under a mortgage dollar roll files for bankruptcy or becomes insolvent, a Fund's use of the proceeds of the current sale portion of the transaction may be restricted

pending a determination by the other party, or its trustee or receiver, whether to enforce the Fund's obligation to purchase the similar securities in the forward transaction.

A Fund may engage in dollar roll transactions to enhance returns. Successful use of mortgage dollar rolls may depend upon the Manager's ability to correctly predict interest rates and prepayments. Dollar rolls involve the risk that the market value of the securities subject to a Fund's forward purchase commitment may decline below, or the market value of the securities subject to a Fund's forward sale commitment may increase above, the exercise price of the forward commitment. Dollar rolls are speculative techniques that can be deemed to involve leverage. There is no assurance that dollar rolls can be successfully employed.

Rule 18f-4 under the Investment Company Act permits a Fund to enter into when-issued or forward-settling securities (e.g., dollar rolls and firm and standby commitments, including TBA commitments) and non-standard settlement cycle securities notwithstanding the limitation on the issuance of senior securities in Section 18 of the Investment Company Act, provided that the transaction meets the Delayed-Settlement Securities Provision (as defined below under "— When-Issued Securities, Delayed Delivery Securities and Forward Commitments"). If a when-issued, forward-settling or non-standard settlement cycle security does not satisfy the Delayed-Settlement Securities Provision, then it is treated as a Derivatives Transaction under Rule 18f-4. See "— Derivatives — Regulation of Derivatives — Rule 18f-4 under the Investment Company Act" above.

Net Interest Margin (NIM) Securities. A Fund may invest in net interest margin ("NIM") securities. These securities are derivative interest-only mortgage securities structured off home equity loan transactions. NIM securities receive any "excess" interest computed after paying coupon costs, servicing costs and fees and any credit losses associated with the underlying pool of home equity loans. Like traditional stripped mortgage-backed securities, the yield to maturity on a NIM security is sensitive not only to changes in prevailing interest rates but also to the rate of principal payments (including prepayments) on the underlying home equity loans. NIM securities are highly sensitive to credit losses on the underlying collateral and the timing in which those losses are taken.

Municipal Investments.

Certain Funds may invest in obligations issued by or on behalf of states, territories and possessions of the United States and the District of Columbia and their political subdivisions, agencies and instrumentalities, the payments from which, in the opinion of bond counsel to the issuer, are excludable from gross income for U.S. federal income tax purposes ("Municipal Bonds"). Certain of the Municipal Funds may also invest in Municipal Bonds that pay interest excludable from gross income for purposes of state and local income taxes of the designated state and/or allow the value of a Fund's shares to be exempt from state and local taxes of the designated state ("State Municipal Bonds"). The Municipal Funds may also invest in securities not issued by or on behalf of a state or territory or by an agency or instrumentality thereof, if the Manager believes such securities to pay interest excludable from gross income for purposes of U.S. federal income tax and state and local income taxes of the designated state and/or state and local personal property taxes of the designated state ("Non-Municipal Tax-Exempt Securities"). Non-Municipal Tax-Exempt Securities could include trust certificates or other instruments evidencing interest in one or more long-term municipal securities. Non-Municipal Tax-Exempt Securities also may include securities issued by other investment companies that invest in municipal bonds, to the extent such investments are permitted by applicable law. Non-Municipal Tax-Exempt Securities that pay interest excludable from gross income for U.S. federal income tax purposes will be considered "Municipal Bonds" for purposes of a Municipal Fund's investment objective and policies. Non-Municipal Tax-Exempt Securities that pay interest excludable from gross income for purposes of U.S. federal income tax and state and local income taxes of a designated state and/or allow the value of a Fund's shares to be exempt from state and local personal property taxes of that

state will be considered “State Municipal Bonds” for purposes of the investment objective and policies of each of California Municipal Opportunities Fund, New Jersey Municipal Bond Fund, New York Municipal Opportunities Fund and Pennsylvania Municipal Bond Fund.

Risk Factors and Special Considerations Relating to Municipal Bonds. The risks and special considerations involved in investment in Municipal Bonds vary with the types of instruments being acquired. Investments in Non-Municipal Tax-Exempt Securities may present similar risks, depending on the particular product. Certain municipal instruments in which a Fund may invest may be characterized as derivatives.

The value of Municipal Bonds generally may be affected by uncertainties in the municipal markets as a result of legislation or litigation, including legislation or litigation that changes the taxation of Municipal Bonds or the rights of Municipal Bond holders in the event of a bankruptcy. Municipal bankruptcies are rare and certain provisions of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code governing such bankruptcies are unclear. Further, the application of state law to Municipal Bond issuers could produce varying results among the states or among Municipal Bond issuers within a state. These uncertainties could have a significant impact on the prices of the Municipal Bonds in which a Fund invests.

Description of Municipal Bonds.

Municipal Bonds include debt obligations issued to obtain funds for various public purposes, including the construction of a wide range of public facilities, refunding of outstanding obligations and obtaining funds for general operating expenses and loans to other public institutions and facilities. In addition, certain types of bonds are issued by or on behalf of public authorities to finance various privately owned or operated facilities, including certain facilities for the local furnishing of electric energy or gas, sewage facilities, solid waste disposal facilities and other specialized facilities. Such obligations are included within the term Municipal Bonds if the interest paid thereon is excluded from gross income for U.S. federal income tax purposes and any applicable state and local taxes. Other types of private activity bonds, the proceeds of which are used for the construction, equipment or improvement of privately operated industrial or commercial facilities, may constitute Municipal Bonds, although the current U.S. federal tax laws place substantial limitations on the size of such issues. The interest on Municipal Bonds may bear a fixed rate or be payable at a variable or floating rate. The two principal classifications of Municipal Bonds are “general obligation” and “revenue” or “special obligation” bonds, which latter category includes private activity bonds (“PABs”) (or “industrial development bonds” under pre-1986 law).

General Obligation Bonds. General obligation bonds are secured by the issuer’s pledge of its full faith, credit and taxing power for the payment of principal and interest. The taxing power of any governmental entity may be limited, however, by provisions of its state constitution or laws, and an entity’s creditworthiness will depend on many factors, including potential erosion of its tax base due to population declines, natural disasters, declines in the state’s industrial base or inability to attract new industries, economic limits on the ability to tax without eroding the tax base, state legislative proposals or voter initiatives to limit ad valorem real property taxes and the extent to which the entity relies on federal or state aid, access to capital markets or other factors beyond the state’s or entity’s control. Accordingly, the capacity of the issuer of a general obligation bond as to the timely payment of interest and the repayment of principal when due is affected by the issuer’s maintenance of its tax base.

Revenue Bonds. Revenue bonds are payable only from the revenues derived from a particular facility or class of facilities or, in some cases, from the proceeds of a special excise tax or other specific revenue source such as payments from the user of the facility being financed; accordingly, the timely payment of interest and the repayment of principal in accordance with the terms of the revenue or special obligation bond is a function of the economic viability of such facility or such revenue source.

Revenue bonds issued by state or local agencies to finance the development of low-income, multi-family housing involve special risks in addition to those associated with municipal bonds generally, including that the underlying properties may not generate sufficient income to pay expenses and interest costs. Such bonds are generally non-recourse against the property owner, may be junior to the rights of others with an interest in the properties, may pay interest that changes based in part on the financial performance of the property, may be prepayable without penalty and may be used to finance the construction of housing developments which, until completed and rented, do not generate income to pay interest. Increases in interest rates payable on senior obligations may make it more difficult for issuers to meet payment obligations on subordinated bonds.

PABs. PABs are, in most cases, tax-exempt securities issued by states, municipalities or public authorities to provide funds, usually through a loan or lease arrangement, to a private entity for the purpose of financing construction or improvement of a facility to be used by the entity. Such bonds are secured primarily by revenues derived from loan repayments or lease payments due from the entity, which may or may not be guaranteed by a parent company or otherwise secured. PABs generally are not secured by a pledge of the taxing power of the issuer of such bonds. Therefore, an investor should understand that repayment of such bonds generally depends on the revenues of a private entity and be aware of the risks that such an investment may entail. The continued ability of an entity to generate sufficient revenues for the payment of principal and interest on such bonds will be affected by many factors including the size of the entity, its capital structure, demand for its products or services, competition, general economic conditions, government regulation and the entity's dependence on revenues for the operation of the particular facility being financed.

Moral Obligation Bonds. "Moral obligation" bonds are normally issued by special purpose public authorities. If an issuer of moral obligation bonds is unable to meet its obligations, the repayment of such bonds becomes a moral commitment but not a legal obligation of the state or municipality that created the special purpose public authority that issued the bonds.

Municipal Notes. Municipal notes are shorter term municipal debt obligations. They may provide interim financing in anticipation of tax collection, bond sales or revenue receipts. If there is a shortfall in the anticipated proceeds, repayment on the note may be delayed or the note may not be fully repaid, and a Fund may lose money.

Municipal Commercial Paper. Municipal commercial paper is generally unsecured and issued to meet short-term financing needs. The lack of security presents some risk of loss to a Fund since, in the event of an issuer's bankruptcy, unsecured creditors are repaid only after the secured creditors out of the assets, if any, that remain.

Municipal Lease Obligations. Also included within the general category of Municipal Bonds are certificates of participation ("COPs") issued by government authorities or entities to finance the acquisition or construction of equipment, land and/or facilities. The COPs represent participations in a lease, an installment purchase contract or a conditional sales contract (hereinafter collectively called "lease obligations") relating to such equipment, land or facilities. Municipal leases, like other municipal debt obligations, are subject to the risk of non-payment. Although lease obligations do not constitute general obligations of the issuer for which the issuer's unlimited taxing power is pledged, a lease obligation is frequently backed by the issuer's covenant to budget for, appropriate and make the payments due under the lease obligation. However, certain lease obligations contain "non-appropriation" clauses, which provide that the issuer has no obligation to make lease or installment purchase payments in future years unless money is appropriated for such purpose on a yearly basis. Although "non-appropriation" lease obligations are secured by the leased property, disposition of the property in the event of foreclosure might prove difficult. These securities represent a type of financing that has not yet developed the depth of marketability associated with more conventional securities. Certain investments in lease obligations may be illiquid.

The ability of issuers of municipal leases to make timely lease payments may be adversely impacted in general economic downturns and as relative governmental cost burdens are allocated and reallocated among federal, state and local governmental units. Such non-payment would result in a reduction of income to a Fund, and could result in a reduction in the value of the municipal lease experiencing non-payment and a potential decrease in the NAV of a Fund. Issuers of municipal securities might seek protection under the bankruptcy laws. In the event of bankruptcy of such an issuer, a Fund could experience delays and limitations with respect to the collection of principal and interest on such municipal leases and a Fund may not, in all circumstances, be able to collect all principal and interest to which it is entitled. To enforce its rights in the event of a default in lease payments, a Fund might take possession of and manage the assets securing the issuer's obligations on such securities, which may increase a Fund's operating expenses and adversely affect the NAV of a Fund. When the lease contains a non-appropriation clause, however, the failure to pay would not be a default and a Fund would not have the right to take possession of the assets. Any income derived from a Fund's ownership or operation of such assets may not be tax-exempt. In addition, a Fund's intention to qualify as a "regulated investment company" under the Code, may limit the extent to which a Fund may exercise its rights by taking possession of such assets, because as a regulated investment company a Fund is subject to certain limitations on its investments and on the nature of its income.

Tender Option Bonds. Certain Funds may invest in residual inverse floating rate interest tender option bonds ("TOB Residuals"), which are derivative interests in Municipal Bonds. The TOB Residuals in which the Funds will invest pay interest or income that, in the opinion of counsel to the issuer, is exempt from regular U.S. federal income tax. BlackRock will not conduct its own analysis of the tax status of the interest or income paid by TOB Residuals held by the Funds, but will rely on the opinion of counsel to the issuer. Although volatile, TOB Residuals typically offer the potential for yields exceeding the yields available on fixed rate Municipal Bonds with comparable credit quality. The Funds may invest in TOB Residuals for the purpose of using economic leverage.

TOB Residuals represent beneficial interests in a special purpose trust formed for the purpose of holding Municipal Bonds contributed by one or more funds (a "TOB Trust"). A TOB Trust typically issues two classes of beneficial interests: short-term floating rate interests ("TOB Floaters"), which are sold to third-party investors, and TOB Residuals, which are generally issued to the fund(s) that transferred Municipal Bonds to the TOB Trust. The Funds may invest in both TOB Floaters and TOB Residuals. TOB Floaters may have first priority on the cash flow from the Municipal Bonds held by the TOB Trust and are enhanced with a liquidity support arrangement from a third-party Liquidity Provider (defined below) which allows holders to tender their position at par (plus accrued interest). A Fund, as a holder of TOB Residuals, is paid the residual cash flow from the TOB Trust. A Fund that contributes the Municipal Bonds to the TOB Trust is paid the cash received by the TOB Trust from the sale of the TOB Floaters, less certain transaction costs, and typically will invest the cash to purchase additional Municipal Bonds or other investments permitted by its investment policies. If a Fund ever purchases all or a portion of the TOB Floaters sold by the TOB Trust, it may surrender those TOB Floaters together with a proportionate amount of TOB Residuals to the TOB Trust in exchange for a proportionate amount of the Municipal Bonds owned by the TOB Trust.

Other BlackRock-advised funds may contribute Municipal Bonds to a TOB Trust into which a Fund has contributed Municipal Bonds. If multiple BlackRock-advised funds participate in the same TOB Trust, the economic rights and obligations under the TOB Residual will generally be shared among the funds ratably in proportion to their participation in the TOB Trust.

The Municipal Bonds transferred to a TOB Trust typically are high grade Municipal Bonds. In certain cases, when Municipal Bonds transferred are lower grade Municipal Bonds, the TOB Trust transaction includes a credit enhancement feature that provides for the timely payment of principal and interest on the bonds to the TOB Trust by a credit enhancement provider. The TOB Trust would be responsible for

the payment of the credit enhancement fee and a Fund, as a TOB Residual holder, would be responsible for reimbursement of any payments of principal and interest made by the credit enhancement provider.

The TOB Residuals held by a Fund generally provide the Fund with the right to cause the holders of a proportional share of the TOB Floaters to tender their notes to the TOB Trust at par plus accrued interest. Thereafter, the Fund may withdraw a corresponding share of the Municipal Bonds from the TOB Trust. This transaction, in effect, creates exposure for the Fund to the entire return of the Municipal Bonds in the TOB Trust, with a net cash investment by the Fund that is less than the value of the Municipal Bonds in the TOB Trust. This multiplies the positive or negative impact of the Municipal Bonds' return within the Fund (thereby creating leverage). The leverage within a TOB Trust depends on the value of the Municipal Bonds deposited in the TOB Trust relative to the value of the TOB Floaters it issues.

A Fund may invest in highly leveraged TOB Residuals. A TOB Residual generally is considered highly leveraged if the principal amount of the TOB Floaters issued by the related TOB Trust exceeds 75% of the principal amount of the Municipal Bonds owned by the TOB Trust.

The TOB Trust may be collapsed without the consent of a Fund upon the occurrence of tender option termination events ("TOTEs") and mandatory termination events ("MTEs"), as defined in the TOB Trust agreements. TOTEs include the bankruptcy or default of the issuer of the Municipal Bonds held in the TOB Trust, a substantial downgrade in the credit quality of the issuer of the Municipal Bonds held in the TOB Trust, failure of any scheduled payment of principal or interest on the Municipal Bonds, and a judgment or ruling that interest on the Municipal Bonds is subject to U.S. federal income taxation. MTEs may include, among other things, a failed remarketing of the TOB Floaters, the inability of the TOB Trust to obtain renewal of the liquidity support agreement, and a substantial decline in the market value of the Municipal Bonds held in the TOB Trust. Upon the occurrence of a TOTE or an MTE, a TOB Trust would be liquidated with the proceeds applied first to any accrued fees owed to the trustee of the TOB Trust, the remarketing agent of the TOB Floaters and the Liquidity Provider (defined below). In the case of an MTE, after the payment of fees, the holders of the TOB Floaters would be paid senior to the TOB Residual holders (*i.e.*, the Fund). In contrast, in the case of a TOTE, after payment of fees, the holders of TOB Floaters and the TOB Residual holders would be paid pro rata in proportion to the respective face values of their certificates.

A Fund may invest in a TOB Trust on either a non-recourse or recourse basis. TOB Trusts are typically supported by a liquidity facility provided by a third-party bank or other financial institution (the "Liquidity Provider") that allows the holders of the TOB Floaters to tender their TOB Floaters in exchange for payment of par plus accrued interest on any business day (subject to the non-occurrence of a TOTE described above). Depending on the structure of the TOB Trust, the Liquidity Provider may purchase the tendered TOB Floaters, or the TOB Trust may draw upon a loan from the Liquidity Provider to purchase the tendered TOB Floaters.

When a Fund invests in TOB Trusts on a non-recourse basis, and the Liquidity Provider is required to make a payment under the liquidity facility, the Liquidity Provider will typically liquidate all or a portion of the Municipal Bonds held in the TOB Trust and then fund the balance, if any, of the amount owed under the liquidity facility over the liquidation proceeds (the "Liquidation Shortfall"). If a Fund invests in a TOB Trust on a recourse basis, it will typically enter into a reimbursement agreement with the Liquidity Provider pursuant to which the Fund is required to reimburse the Liquidity Provider the amount of any Liquidation Shortfall. As a result, if the Fund invests in a recourse TOB Trust, the Fund will bear the risk of loss with respect to any Liquidation Shortfall. If multiple BlackRock-advised funds participate in any such TOB Trust, these losses will be shared ratably, in proportion to their participation in the TOB Trust.

Under accounting rules, Municipal Bonds of a Fund that are deposited into a TOB Trust are investments of the Fund and are presented on the Fund's Schedule of Investments and outstanding TOB Floaters issued by a TOB Trust are presented as liabilities in the Fund's Statement of Assets and Liabilities. Interest income from the underlying Municipal Bonds is recorded by a Fund on an accrual basis. Interest expense incurred on the TOB Floaters and other expenses related to remarketing, administration, trustee and other services to a TOB Trust are reported as expenses of a Fund. In addition, under accounting rules, loans made to a TOB Trust sponsored by a Fund may be presented as loans of the Fund in the Fund's financial statements even if there is no recourse to the Fund's assets.

For TOB Floaters, generally, the interest rate earned will be based upon the market rates for Municipal Bonds with maturities or remarketing provisions that are comparable in duration to the periodic interval of the tender option. Since the tender option feature has a shorter term than the final maturity or first call date of the underlying Municipal Bonds deposited in the TOB Trust, the holder of the TOB Floaters relies upon the terms of the agreement with the financial institution furnishing the liquidity facility as well as the credit strength of that institution. The risk associated with TOB Floaters, however, may be increased in the current market environment as a result of recent downgrades to the credit ratings, and thus the perceived reliability and creditworthiness, of many major financial institutions, some of which sponsor and/or provide liquidity support to TOB Trusts. This in turn may reduce the desirability of TOB Floaters as investments, which could impair the viability or availability of TOB Trusts.

Rule 18f-4 under the Investment Company Act permits a Fund to enter into TOB Trust transactions, reverse repurchase agreements and similar financing transactions (e.g., borrowed bonds) notwithstanding the limitation on the issuance of senior securities in Section 18 of the Investment Company Act, provided that the Fund either (i) complies with the 300% asset coverage ratio with respect to such transactions and any other borrowings in the aggregate, or (ii) treats such transactions as Derivatives Transactions under Rule 18f-4. See "— Derivatives — Regulation of Derivatives — Rule 18f-4 under the Investment Company Act" above.

Developments in the TOB Trust Market. In response to the restrictions imposed by section 619 of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (the "Volcker Rule"), market participants have developed a structure for TOB Trusts designed to ensure that no banking entity is sponsoring the TOB Trust for purposes of the Volcker Rule. Specifically, a Fund will establish, structure and "sponsor" the TOB Trusts in which it holds TOB Residuals. In such a structure, certain responsibilities that previously belonged to the sponsor bank will be performed by, or on behalf of, a Fund. A Fund may utilize service providers in meeting these responsibilities. It is possible that regulators could take positions that could limit the market for such structured TOB Trust transactions or a Fund's ability to hold TOB Residuals. Under this TOB Trust structure, a Fund has certain additional duties and responsibilities, which may give rise to certain additional risks including, but not limited to, compliance, securities law and operational risks.

Under this structure, service providers to a TOB Trust, such as administrators, liquidity providers, trustees, and remarketing agents, act at the direction of, and as agent of, a Fund as the TOB Residual holder. Similar to the traditional tender option bond structure, a Fund deposits Municipal Bonds into the TOB Trust in exchange for TOB Residuals, the TOB Trust then issues and sells TOB Floaters to third-party investors, and the proceeds of the sale of the TOB Floaters is distributed to such TOB Residual holders (*i.e.*, the Fund). Tendered TOB Floaters continue to be supported by a remarketing agent and a liquidity facility. However, the remarketing agent does not purchase tendered TOB Floaters for its own account in the event of a failed remarketing, which may increase the likelihood that a TOB Trust will need to be collapsed and liquidated in order to purchase the tendered TOB Floaters. In the event of a failed remarketing of TOB Floaters, the Liquidity Provider, at its option, may advance a loan to the TOB Trust the proceeds of which would be used by the TOB Trust to purchase the

tendered TOB Floaters. The Liquidity Provider is not obligated to advance such a loan. The TOB Trust would be the borrower with respect to any such loan. Any loans made by a Liquidity Provider will be secured by the purchased TOB Floaters held by the TOB Trust.

Similar to the traditional structure for TOB Trusts, a Fund may hold either non-recourse TOB Residuals or recourse TOB Residuals under this structure. In the event of a Liquidation Shortfall, there would generally be no contractual recourse to the Fund's assets if the Fund holds a non-recourse TOB Residual. However, as described above, a Fund would bear the risk of loss with respect to any Liquidation Shortfall if it holds a recourse TOB Residual.

The SEC and various federal banking and housing agencies adopted credit risk retention rules for securitizations (the "Risk Retention Rules"), which took effect in December 2016. The Risk Retention Rules require the sponsor of a TOB Trust to retain at least 5% of the credit risk of the underlying assets supporting the TOB Trust's Municipal Bonds. The Risk Retention Rules may adversely affect the Fund's ability to engage in TOB Trust transactions or increase the costs of such transactions in certain circumstances.

TOB Trust transactions constitute an important component of the municipal bond market. Accordingly, implementation of the Volcker Rule may adversely impact the municipal market, including through reduced demand for and liquidity of municipal bonds and increased financing costs for municipal issuers. Any such developments could adversely affect the Funds. The ultimate impact of these rules on the TOB market and the overall municipal market is not yet certain.

Yields. Yields on Municipal Bonds are dependent on a variety of factors, including the general condition of the money market and of the municipal bond market, the size of a particular offering, the financial condition of the issuer, the maturity of the obligation and the rating of the issue. The ability of a Fund to achieve its investment objective is also dependent on the continuing ability of the issuers of the securities in which the Fund invests to meet their obligations for the payment of interest and principal when due. There are variations in the risks involved in holding Municipal Bonds, both within a particular classification and between classifications, depending on numerous factors. Furthermore, the rights of owners of Municipal Bonds and the obligations of the issuer of such Municipal Bonds may be subject to applicable bankruptcy, insolvency and similar laws and court decisions affecting the rights of creditors generally and to general equitable principles, which may limit the enforcement of certain remedies.

Variable Rate Demand Obligations ("VRDOs"). VRDOs are tax-exempt obligations that contain a floating or variable interest rate adjustment formula and a right of demand on the part of the holder thereof to receive payment of the unpaid principal balance plus accrued interest upon a short notice period not to exceed seven days.

There is the possibility that because of default or insolvency the demand feature of VRDOs may not be honored. The interest rates are adjustable at periodic intervals to some prevailing market rate for similar investments, such adjustment formula being calculated to maintain the market rate of the VRDOs at approximately the par value of the VRDOs on the adjustment date. The adjustments typically are based upon the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association ("SIFMA") Index.

Because of the interest rate adjustment formula on VRDOs, VRDOs are not comparable to fixed rate securities. During periods of declining interest rates, a Fund's yield on a VRDO will decrease and its shareholders will forego the opportunity for capital appreciation. During periods of rising interest rates, however, a Fund's yield on a VRDO will increase and the Fund's shareholders will have a reduced risk of capital depreciation.

Transactions in Financial Futures Contracts on Municipal Indexes. The Municipal Funds and certain other funds deal in financial futures contracts based on a long-term municipal bond index developed by the Chicago Board of Trade ("CBT") and The Bond Buyer (the "Municipal Bond Index"). The Municipal Bond Index is comprised of 40 long-term, actively traded tax-exempt municipal revenue and general obligation bonds. Each bond included in the Municipal Bond Index must be rated A or higher by Moody's or S&P and must have a remaining maturity of 19 years or more. Twice a month new issues satisfying the eligibility requirements are added to, and an equal number of old issues are deleted from, the Municipal Bond Index. The value of the Municipal Bond Index is computed daily according to a formula based on the price of each bond in the Municipal Bond Index, as evaluated by six dealer-to-dealer brokers.

The Municipal Bond Index futures contract is traded only on the CBT. Like other contract markets, the CBT assures performance under futures contracts through a clearing corporation, a nonprofit organization managed by the exchange membership that is also responsible for handling daily accounting of deposits or withdrawals of margin.

The particular municipal bonds comprising the index underlying the Municipal Bond Index financial futures contract may vary from the bonds held by a Municipal Fund. As a result, a Municipal Fund's ability to hedge effectively all or a portion of the value of its Municipal Bonds through the use of such financial futures contracts will depend in part on the degree to which price movements in the index underlying the financial futures contract correlate with the price movements of the Municipal Bonds held by the Fund. The correlation may be affected by disparities in the average maturity, ratings, geographical mix or structure of a Municipal Fund's investments as compared to those comprising the Municipal Bond Index and general economic or political factors. In addition, the correlation between movements in the value of the Municipal Bond Index may be subject to change over time as additions to and deletions from the Municipal Bond Index alter its structure. The correlation between futures contracts on U.S. Government Securities and the Municipal Bonds held by a Municipal Fund may be adversely affected by similar factors and the risk of imperfect correlation between movements in the prices of such futures contracts and the prices of Municipal Bonds held by a Municipal Fund may be greater. Municipal Bond Index futures contracts were approved for trading in 1985. Trading in such futures contracts may tend to be less liquid than trading in other futures contracts. The trading of futures contracts also is subject to certain market risks, such as inadequate trading activity, which could at times make it difficult or impossible to liquidate existing positions.

Call Rights. A Fund may purchase a Municipal Bond issuer's right to call all or a portion of such Municipal Bond for mandatory tender for purchase (a "Call Right"). A holder of a Call Right may exercise such right to require a mandatory tender for the purchase of related Municipal Bonds, subject to certain conditions. A Call Right that is not exercised prior to maturity of the related Municipal Bond will expire without value. The economic effect of holding both the Call Right and the related Municipal Bond is identical to holding a Municipal Bond as a non-callable security. Certain investments in such obligations may be illiquid.

Municipal Interest Rate Swap Transactions. In order to hedge the value of a Fund against interest rate fluctuations or to enhance a Fund's income, a Fund may enter into interest rate swap transactions such as Municipal Market Data AAA Cash Curve swaps ("MMD Swaps") or Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association Municipal Swap Index swaps ("SIFMA Swaps"). To the extent that a Fund enters into these transactions, the Fund expects to do so primarily to preserve a return or spread on a particular investment or portion of its portfolio or to protect against any increase in the price of securities the Fund anticipates purchasing at a later date. A Fund intends to use these transactions primarily as a hedge rather than as a speculative investment. However, a Fund also may invest in MMD Swaps and SIFMA Swaps to enhance income or gain or to increase the Fund's yield, for example, during periods of steep interest rate yield curves (*i.e.*, wide differences between short-term and long-term interest rates).

A Fund may purchase and sell SIFMA Swaps in the SIFMA swap market. In a SIFMA Swap, a Fund exchanges with another party their respective commitments to pay or receive interest (*e.g.*, an exchange of fixed rate payments for floating rate payments linked to the SIFMA Municipal Swap Index). Because the underlying index is a tax-exempt index, SIFMA Swaps may reduce cross-market risks incurred by a Fund and increase a Fund's ability to hedge effectively. SIFMA Swaps are typically quoted for the entire yield curve, beginning with a seven day floating rate index out to 30 years. The duration of a SIFMA Swap is approximately equal to the duration of a fixed-rate Municipal Bond with the same attributes as the swap (*e.g.*, coupon, maturity, call feature).

A Fund may also purchase and sell MMD Swaps, also known as MMD rate locks. An MMD Swap permits a Fund to lock in a specified municipal interest rate for a portion of its portfolio to preserve a return on a particular investment or a portion of its portfolio as a duration management technique or to protect against any increase in the price of securities to be purchased at a later date. By using an MMD Swap, a Fund can create a synthetic long or short position, allowing the Fund to select the most attractive part of the yield curve. An MMD Swap is a contract between a Fund and an MMD Swap provider pursuant to which the parties agree to make payments to each other on a notional amount, contingent upon whether the Municipal Market Data AAA General Obligation Scale is above or below a specified level on the expiration date of the contract. For example, if a Fund buys an MMD Swap and the Municipal Market Data AAA General Obligation Scale is below the specified level on the expiration date, the counterparty to the contract will make a payment to the Fund equal to the specified level minus the actual level, multiplied by the notional amount of the contract. If the Municipal Market Data AAA General Obligation Scale is above the specified level on the expiration date, a Fund will make a payment to the counterparty equal to the actual level minus the specified level, multiplied by the notional amount of the contract.

In connection with investments in SIFMA and MMD Swaps, there is a risk that municipal yields will move in the opposite direction than anticipated by a Fund, which would cause the Fund to make payments to its counterparty in the transaction that could adversely affect the Fund's performance.

Insured Municipal Bonds. Bonds purchased by a Fund may be covered by insurance that guarantees that interest payments on the bond will be made on time and the principal will be repaid when the bond matures. Either the issuer of the bond or the Fund purchases the insurance. Insurance is expected to protect the Fund against losses caused by a bond issuer's failure to make interest or principal payments. However, insurance does not protect the Fund or its shareholders against losses caused by declines in a bond's market value. Also, the Fund cannot be certain that any insurance company does not make these payments. In addition, if the Fund purchases the insurance, it may pay the premiums, which will reduce the Fund's yield. The Fund seeks to use only insurance companies with claims paying ability, financial strength, or equivalent ratings of at least investment grade. However, if insurance from insurers with these ratings is not available, the Fund may use insurance companies with lower ratings or stop purchasing insurance or insured bonds. If a bond's insurer fails to fulfill its obligations or loses its credit rating, the value of the bond could drop.

Build America Bonds. If a Fund holds Build America Bonds, the Fund may be eligible to receive a U.S. federal income tax credit; however, the issuer of a Build America Bond may instead elect to receive a cash payment directly from the federal government in lieu of holders such as the fund receiving a tax credit. The interest on Build America Bonds is taxable for U.S. federal income tax purposes. If the Fund does receive tax credits from Build America Bonds or other tax credit bonds on one or more specified dates during the fund's taxable year, and the Fund satisfies the minimum distribution requirement, the Fund may elect for U.S. federal income tax purposes to pass through to shareholders tax credits otherwise allowable to the Fund for that year with respect to such bonds. A tax credit bond is defined in the Code as a "qualified tax credit bond" (which includes a qualified forestry conservation bond, a new clean renewable energy bond, a qualified energy conservation bond, or a qualified zone academy

bond, each of which must meet certain requirements specified in the Code), a "Build America Bond" (which includes certain qualified bonds issued before January 1, 2011) or certain other specified bonds. If the Fund were to so elect, a shareholder would be required to include in income and would be entitled to claim as a tax credit an amount equal to a proportionate share of such credits, and such amount would be subject to withholding provisions of the Code. Certain limitations may apply on the extent to which the credit may be claimed.

Tax-Exempt Municipal Investments. Certain Funds may hold tax-exempt municipal investments which may be in the form of tender option bonds, variable rate demand obligations, participations, beneficial interests in a trust, partnership interests or other forms. These investments are described in greater detail above in this section. Some of the structures used by certain Funds include interests in long-term fixed-rate municipal debt obligations, held by a trustee or custodian, that are coupled with tender option, demand and other features when the tax-exempt municipal investments are created. Together, these features entitle the holder of the interest to tender (or put) the underlying municipal debt obligation to a third party at periodic intervals and to receive the principal amount thereof.

In some cases, municipal debt obligations are represented by custodial receipts evidencing rights to receive specific future interest payments, principal payments, or both, on the underlying securities held by the custodian. Under such arrangements, the holder of the custodial receipt has the option to tender the underlying securities at their face value to the sponsor (*e.g.*, a Fund, or a bank or broker-dealer or other financial institution), which is paid periodic fees equal to the difference between the securities' fixed coupon rate and the rate that would cause the securities, coupled with the tender option, to trade at par on the date of a rate adjustment.

A participation interest gives the Fund an undivided interest in a Municipal Bond in the proportion the Fund's participation bears to the total principal amount of the Municipal Bond, and typically provides for a repurchase feature for all or any part of the full principal amount of the participation interest, plus accrued interest. Trusts and partnerships are typically used to convert long-term fixed rate high quality bonds of a single state or municipal issuer into variable or floating rate demand instruments.

The Municipal Bond Funds may hold participation interests and custodial receipts for municipal debt obligations which give the holder the right to receive payment of principal subject to the conditions described above. The IRS has not ruled on whether the interest received on tax-exempt municipal investments in the form of participation interests or custodial receipts is tax-exempt, and accordingly, purchases of any such interests or receipts are based on the opinions of counsel to the sponsors of such derivative securities. Neither a Fund nor its investment adviser or sub-advisers will review the proceedings related to the creation of any tax-exempt municipal investments or the basis for such opinions.

Operational and Technology Risks. The Fund and the entities with which it interacts directly or indirectly are susceptible to operational and technology risks, including those related to human errors, processing errors, communication errors, systems failures, cybersecurity incidents, and the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning ("AI"), which may result in losses for the Fund and its shareholders or impair the Fund's operations. These entities include, but are not limited to, the Fund's adviser, administrator, distributor, other service providers (e.g., index and benchmark providers, accountants, custodians, and transfer agents), financial intermediaries, counterparties, market makers, Authorized Participants, listing exchanges, other financial market operators, and governmental authorities, as applicable. Operational and technology risks for the issuers in which the Fund invests could also result in material adverse consequences for such issuers and may cause the Fund's investments in such issuers to lose value. The Fund may incur substantial costs in order to mitigate operational and technology risks.

Cybersecurity incidents can result from deliberate attacks or unintentional events against an issuer in which the Fund invests, the Fund or any of its service providers. They include, but are not limited to,

gaining unauthorized access to systems, misappropriating assets or sensitive information, corrupting or destroying data, and causing operational disruption. Geopolitical tension may increase the scale and sophistication of deliberate attacks, particularly those from nation states or from entities with nation state backing. Cybersecurity incidents may result in any of the following: financial losses; interference with the Fund's ability to calculate its NAV; disclosure of confidential information; impediments to trading; submission of erroneous trades by the Fund or erroneous subscription or redemption orders; the inability of the Fund or its service providers to transact business; violations of applicable privacy and other laws; regulatory fines; penalties; reputational damage; reimbursement or other compensation costs; and other legal and compliance expenses. Furthermore, cybersecurity incidents may render records of the Fund, including records relating to its assets and transactions, shareholder ownership of Fund shares, and other data integral to the Fund's functioning, inaccessible, inaccurate or incomplete. Power outages, natural disasters, equipment malfunctions and processing errors that threaten information and technology systems relied upon by the Fund or its service providers, as well as market events that occur at a pace that overloads these systems, may also disrupt business operations or impact critical data. Recent advances in AI technology pose risks to the Fund and its portfolio investments. These advancements could harm the Fund and its portfolio investments by reducing the demand for both the technology and software offerings of the Fund's portfolio investments. Additionally, these advancements could significantly disrupt the Fund's portfolio investments and subject them to increased competition, which could have a material adverse effect on business, financial condition, and results of operations. AI technology advancements, including efficiency improvements, without related increases in the adoption and development of such technologies, could also negatively impact demand for, and the valuation of, digital infrastructure assets.

The Fund and its portfolio investments could be exposed to the risks of AI technology if third-party service providers or any counterparties, whether or not known to the Fund, also use AI technology in their business activities. The Fund and its service providers may not be in a position to control the use of AI technology in third-party products or services.

Use of AI technology could include the input of confidential information in contravention of applicable policies, contractual or other obligations or restrictions, resulting in such confidential information becoming accessible by other third-party AI technology applications and users.

Independent of its context of use, AI technology is generally highly reliant on the collection and analysis of large amounts of data, may incorporate biased or inaccurate data, and it is not possible or practicable to incorporate all relevant data into the models that AI technology utilizes to operate. Certain data in such models will inevitably contain a degree of inaccuracy and error, or could otherwise be inadequate or flawed, which would be likely to degrade the effectiveness of AI technology. The output or results of any such AI technologies may therefore be incomplete, erroneous, distorted or misleading. Further, AI tools may lack transparency as to how data is utilized and how outputs are generated. AI technologies may also allow the unintended introduction of vulnerabilities into infrastructures and applications. To the extent that the Fund or its portfolio investments are exposed to the risks of AI technology use, any such inaccuracies or errors could have adverse impacts on the Fund or its investments.

Regulations related to AI technology could also impose certain obligations and costs related to monitoring and compliance. For example, in April 2023, the Federal Trade Commission, U.S. Department of Justice, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission released a joint statement on artificial intelligence demonstrating interest in monitoring the development and use of automated systems and enforcement of their respective laws and regulations. In October 2023, an executive order established new standards for AI safety and security. In addition to the U.S. regulatory framework, in 2024, the EU adopted the Artificial Intelligence Act, which applies to certain AI technology and the data used to train, test, and deploy them, which

may create additional compliance burdens, higher administrative costs, and significant penalties should the Fund, the adviser, or the Fund's portfolio investments fail to comply.

AI technology and its applications, including in the investment and financial sectors, continue to develop rapidly, and it is impossible to predict the future risks that may arise from such developments. The full extent of current or future risks related thereto is not possible to predict, and the Fund may not be able to anticipate, prevent, mitigate, or remediate all of the potential risks, challenges, or impacts of such changes.

While the Fund's service providers are required to have appropriate operational, information security and cybersecurity risk management policies and procedures, their methods of risk management may differ from those of the Fund in the setting of priorities, the personnel and resources available or the effectiveness of relevant controls. The Fund and its adviser seek to reduce these risks through controls, procedures and oversight, including establishing business continuity plans and risk management systems. However, there are inherent limitations in such plans and systems, including the possibility that certain risks that may affect the Fund have not been identified or may emerge in the future; that such plans and systems may not completely eliminate the occurrence or mitigate the effects of operational or information security disruptions or failures or of cybersecurity incidents; or that prevention and remediation efforts will not be successful or that incidents will go undetected. The Fund cannot control the systems, information security or other cybersecurity of the issuers in which it invests or its service providers, counterparties, and other third parties whose activities affect the Fund.

Lastly, the regulatory climate governing cybersecurity and data protection is developing quickly and may vary considerably across jurisdictions. Regulators continue to develop new rules and standards related to cybersecurity and data protection. Compliance with evolving regulations can be demanding and costly, requiring substantial resources to monitor and implement required changes.

Participation Notes. A Fund may buy participation notes from a bank or broker-dealer ("issuer") that entitle the Fund to a return measured by the change in value of an identified underlying security or basket of securities (collectively, the "underlying security"). Participation notes are typically used when a direct investment in the underlying security is restricted due to country-specific regulations.

The Fund is subject to counterparty risk associated with each issuer. Investment in a participation note is not the same as investment in the constituent shares of the company. A participation note represents only an obligation of the issuer to provide the Fund the economic performance equivalent to holding shares of an underlying security. A participation note does not provide any beneficial or equitable entitlement or interest in the relevant underlying security. In other words, shares of the underlying security are not in any way owned by the Fund. However, each participation note synthetically replicates the economic benefit of holding shares in the underlying security. Because a participation note is an obligation of the issuer, rather than a direct investment in shares of the underlying security, a Fund may suffer losses potentially equal to the full value of the participation note if the issuer fails to perform its obligations. A Fund attempts to mitigate that risk by purchasing only from issuers determined to be creditworthy.

The counterparty may, but is not required to, purchase the shares of the underlying security to hedge its obligation. A Fund may, but is not required to, purchase credit protection against the default of the issuer. When the participation note expires or a Fund exercises the participation note and closes its position, the Fund receives a payment that is based upon the then-current value of the underlying security converted into U.S. dollars (less transaction costs). The price, performance and liquidity of a participation note are all linked directly to the underlying security. A Fund's ability to redeem or exercise a participation note generally is dependent on the liquidity in the local trading market for the security underlying the participation note.

Portfolio Turnover Rates. A Fund's annual portfolio turnover rate will not be a factor preventing a sale or purchase when the Manager believes investment considerations warrant such sale or purchase. Although certain Funds will use an approach to investing that is largely a passive, indexing approach, such Funds may engage in a substantial number of portfolio transactions. With respect to these Funds, the rate of portfolio turnover will be a limiting factor when the Manager considers whether to purchase or sell securities for a Fund only to the extent that the Manager will consider the impact of transaction costs on a Fund's tracking error. Portfolio turnover may vary greatly from year to year as well as within a particular year. High portfolio turnover (*i.e.*, 100% or more) may result in increased transaction costs to a Fund, including brokerage commissions, dealer mark-ups and other transaction costs on the sale of the securities and reinvestment in other securities. The sale of a Fund's securities may result in the recognition of capital gain or loss. Given the frequency of sales, such gain or loss will likely be short-term capital gain or loss. These effects of higher than normal portfolio turnover may adversely affect a Fund's performance.

Preferred Stock. Certain Funds may invest in preferred stocks. Preferred stock has a preference over common stock in liquidation (and generally dividends as well) but is subordinated to the bond holders and other creditors in all respects. As a general rule, the market value of preferred stock with a fixed dividend rate and no conversion element varies inversely with interest rates and perceived credit risk, while the market price of convertible preferred stock generally also reflects some element of conversion value. Because preferred stock is junior to debt securities and other obligations of the issuer, deterioration in the credit quality of the issuer will cause greater changes in the value of a preferred stock than in a more senior debt security with similar stated yield characteristics. Unlike interest payments on debt securities, preferred stock dividends are payable only if declared by the issuer's board of directors. Preferred stock also may be subject to optional or mandatory redemption provisions.

Tax-Exempt Preferred Shares. Certain Funds may invest in preferred interests of other investment funds that pay dividends that are exempt from regular U.S. federal income tax. Such funds in turn invest in municipal bonds and other assets that pay interest or make distributions that are exempt from regular U.S. federal income tax, such as revenue bonds issued by state or local agencies to fund the development of low-income, multi-family housing. Investment in such tax-exempt preferred shares involves many of the same issues as investing in other investment companies. These investments also have additional risks, including illiquid investments risk, the absence of regulation governing investment practices, capital structure and leverage, affiliated transactions and other matters, and concentration of investments in particular issuers or industries. The Municipal Bond Funds will treat investments in tax-exempt preferred shares as investments in municipal bonds.

Trust Preferred Securities. Certain Funds may invest in trust preferred securities. Trust preferred securities are typically issued by corporations, generally in the form of interest bearing notes with preferred securities characteristics, or by an affiliated business trust of a corporation, generally in the form of beneficial interests in subordinated debentures or similarly structured securities. The trust preferred securities market consists of both fixed and adjustable coupon rate securities that are either perpetual in nature or have stated maturity dates.

Trust preferred securities are typically junior and fully subordinated liabilities of an issuer and benefit from a guarantee that is junior and fully subordinated to the other liabilities of the guarantor. In addition, trust preferred securities typically permit an issuer to defer the payment of income for five years or more without triggering an event of default. Because of their subordinated position in the capital structure of an issuer, the ability to defer payments for extended periods of time without default consequences to the issuer, and certain other features (such as restrictions on common dividend payments by the issuer or ultimate guarantor when full cumulative payments on the trust preferred securities have not been made), these trust preferred securities are often treated as close substitutes for traditional preferred securities, both by issuers and investors.

Trust preferred securities include but are not limited to trust originated preferred securities ("TOPRS®"); monthly income preferred securities ("MIPS®"); quarterly income bond securities ("QUIBS®"); quarterly income debt securities ("QUIDS®"); quarterly income preferred securities ("QUIPS℠"); corporate trust securities ("CORTS®"); public income notes ("PINES®"); and other trust preferred securities.

Trust preferred securities are typically issued with a final maturity date, although some are perpetual in nature. In certain instances, a final maturity date may be extended and/or the final payment of principal may be deferred at the issuer's option for a specified time without default. No redemption can typically take place unless all cumulative payment obligations have been met, although issuers may be able to engage in open-market repurchases without regard to whether all payments have been paid.

Many trust preferred securities are issued by trusts or other special purpose entities established by operating companies and are not a direct obligation of an operating company. At the time the trust or special purpose entity sells such preferred securities to investors, it purchases debt of the operating company (with terms comparable to those of the trust or special purpose entity securities), which enables the operating company to deduct for tax purposes the interest paid on the debt held by the trust or special purpose entity. The trust or special purpose entity is generally required to be treated as transparent for U.S. federal income tax purposes such that the holders of the trust preferred securities are treated as owning beneficial interests in the underlying debt of the operating company. Accordingly, payments on the trust preferred securities are treated as interest rather than dividends for U.S. federal income tax purposes. The trust or special purpose entity in turn would be a holder of the operating company's debt and would have priority with respect to the operating company's earnings and profits over the operating company's common shareholders, but would typically be subordinated to other classes of the operating company's debt. Typically a preferred share has a rating that is slightly below that of its corresponding operating company's senior debt securities.

Real Estate Investment Trusts ("REITs"). In pursuing its investment strategy, a Fund may invest in shares of REITs. REITs possess certain risks which differ from an investment in common stocks. REITs are financial vehicles that pool investor's capital to purchase or finance real estate. REITs may concentrate their investments in specific geographic areas or in specific property types, *i.e.*, hotels, shopping malls, residential complexes and office buildings.

REITs are subject to management fees and other expenses, and so a Fund that invests in REITs will bear its proportionate share of the costs of the REITs' operations. There are three general categories of REITs: Equity REITs, Mortgage REITs and Hybrid REITs. Equity REITs invest primarily in direct fee ownership or leasehold ownership of real property, which derive most of their income from rents. Mortgage REITs invest mostly in mortgages on real estate, which may secure construction, development or long-term loans; the main source of their income is mortgage interest payments. Hybrid REITs hold both ownership and mortgage interests in real estate.

Investing in REITs involves certain unique risks in addition to those risks associated with investing in the real estate industry in general. The market value of REIT shares and the ability of the REITs to distribute income may be adversely affected by several factors, including rising interest rates, changes in the national, state and local economic climate and real estate conditions, occupancy and rental rales, perceptions of prospective tenants of the safety, convenience and attractiveness of the properties, the ability of the owners to provide adequate management, maintenance and insurance, the cost of complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act, increased competition from new properties, the impact of present or future environmental legislation and compliance with environmental laws, failing to maintain their exemptions from registration under the Investment Company Act, changes in real estate taxes and other operating expenses, adverse changes in governmental rules and fiscal policies, adverse changes in zoning laws and other factors beyond the control of the issuers of the REITs. To the extent that assets underlying a REIT are concentrated geographically, by property type, or in certain other respects, these risks may be heightened.

In addition, distributions received by a Fund from REITs may consist of dividends, capital gains and/or return of capital. As REITs generally pay a higher rate of dividends (on a pre-tax basis) than operating companies, to the extent application of the Fund's investment strategy results in the Fund investing in REIT shares, the percentage of the Fund's dividend income received from REIT shares will likely exceed the percentage of the Fund's portfolio which is comprised of REIT shares. Ordinary REIT dividends received by the Fund and distributed to the Fund's shareholders will generally be taxable as ordinary income and will not constitute "qualified dividend income." However, a non-corporate taxpayer who is a direct REIT shareholder may claim a 20% "qualified business income" deduction for ordinary REIT dividends, and a regulated investment company may report dividends as eligible for this deduction to the extent the regulated investment company's income is derived from ordinary REIT dividends (reduced by allocable regulated investment company expenses). A shareholder may treat the dividends as such provided the regulated investment company and the shareholder satisfy applicable holding period requirements.

REITs (especially mortgage REITs) are also subject to interest rate risk. Rising interest rates may cause REIT investors to demand a higher annual yield, which may, in turn, cause a decline in the market price of the equity securities issued by a REIT. Rising interest rates also generally increase the costs of obtaining financing, which could cause the value of a Fund's REIT investments to decline. During periods when interest rates are declining, mortgages are often refinanced. Refinancing may reduce the yield on investments in mortgage REITs. In addition, since REITs depend on payment under their mortgage loans and leases to generate cash to make distributions to their shareholders, investments in REITs may be adversely affected by defaults on such mortgage loans or leases.

Investing in certain REITs, which often have small market capitalizations, may also involve the same risks as investing in other small capitalization companies. REITs may have limited financial resources, and their securities may trade less frequently and in limited volume and may be subject to more abrupt or erratic price movements than larger company securities. Historically, small capitalization stocks, such as REITs, have been more volatile in price than the larger capitalization stocks such as those included in the S&P 500 Index. The management of a REIT may be subject to conflicts of interest with respect to the operation of the business of the REIT and may be involved in real estate activities competitive with the REIT. REITs may own properties through joint ventures or in other circumstances in which the REIT may not have control over its investments. REITs may incur significant amounts of leverage.

Market Risks/Recent Market Events. Securities may decline in value due to factors affecting securities markets generally or particular industries represented in the markets. The value of a security may decline due to general market conditions, economic trends or events that are not specifically related to a company or to factors that affect a particular industry or industries, or factors that affect a particular issuer or issuers, exchange, country, group of countries, region, market, industry, group of industries, sector or asset class. The success of a Fund's activities could be affected by interest rates, availability of credit, inflation rates, economic uncertainty, changes in laws, trade barriers, economic sanctions, currency exchange controls, and local, regional or global events such as war, acts of terrorism, natural and environmental disasters, the spread of infectious illness or other public health issues, recessions, or other events could have a significant impact on a Fund and its investments. During a general economic downturn in the securities markets, multiple asset classes may be negatively affected. These factors may affect the level and volatility of securities prices and the liquidity of a Fund's investments, which could impair the Fund's profitability or result in losses. A Fund may maintain substantial trading positions that can be adversely affected by the level of volatility in the financial markets; the larger the positions, the greater the potential for loss. Unpredictable or unstable market conditions may result in reduced opportunities to find suitable investments to deploy capital or make it more difficult to exit and realize value from a Fund's existing investments. It is important to understand that a Fund can incur material losses even if it reacts quickly to difficult market conditions

and there can be no assurance that a Fund will not suffer material adverse effects from broad and rapid changes in market conditions.

Periods of unusually high volatility in the financial markets and restrictive credit conditions, sometimes limited to a particular sector or a geography, can occur. Some countries, including the United States, have adopted and/or are considering the adoption of more protectionist trade policies, a move away from the tighter financial industry regulations that followed the financial crisis of 2008, and/or substantially reducing corporate taxes. The exact shape of these policies is still being considered, but the equity and debt markets may react strongly to expectations of change, which could increase volatility, especially if the market's expectations are not borne out. A rise in protectionist trade policies, and the possibility of changes to some international trade agreements, could affect the economies of many nations in ways that cannot necessarily be foreseen at the present time. In addition, geopolitical and other risks, including environmental and public health, may add to instability in world economies and markets generally. Economies and financial markets throughout the world are increasingly interconnected. As a result, whether or not a Fund invests in securities of issuers located in or with significant exposure to countries experiencing economic, political and/or financial difficulties, the value and liquidity of the Fund's investments may be negatively affected by such events.

Governments and regulators may take actions that affect the regulation of the Fund or the instruments in which the Fund invests, or the issuers of such instruments, in ways that are unforeseeable. Future legislation or regulation or other governmental actions could limit or preclude the Fund's abilities to achieve its investment objectives or otherwise adversely impact an investment in the Fund. Recent policy initiatives undertaken by the U.S. government have the potential to impact international relations, trade agreements and the overall regulatory environment in ways that could create uncertainty and instability in domestic and global markets, and could adversely affect the investment performance of the Fund. In particular, actions taken by the U.S. government in respect of international trade relations could lead to trade wars, increased costs for imported goods, disruptions in supply chains, reduced foreign investment, and instability in regions where the Fund invests. Political and diplomatic events within the United States, including a contentious domestic political environment, changes in political party control of one or more branches of the U.S. Government, the U.S. Government's inability at times to agree on a long-term budget and deficit reduction plan, the threat of a U.S. Government shutdown, and disagreements over, or threats not to increase, the U.S. Government's borrowing limit (or "debt ceiling"), as well as political and diplomatic events abroad, may affect investor and consumer confidence and may adversely impact financial markets and the broader economy, perhaps suddenly and to a significant degree. A downgrade of the ratings of U.S. Government debt obligations, or concerns about the U.S. Government's credit quality in general, could have a substantial negative effect on the U.S. and global economies. For example, concerns about the U.S. Government's credit quality may cause increased volatility in the stock and bond markets, higher interest rates, reduced prices and liquidity of U.S. Treasury securities, and/or increased costs of various kinds of debt. Moreover, although the U.S. Government has honored its credit obligations, there remains a possibility that the United States could default on its obligations. The consequences of such an unprecedented event are impossible to predict, but it is likely that a default by the United States would be highly disruptive to the U.S. and global securities markets and could significantly impair the value of the Fund's investments.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in significant market volatility, exchange suspensions and closures, declines in global financial markets, higher default rates, supply chain disruptions, and a substantial economic downturn in economies throughout the world. The impact of this coronavirus, and other epidemics and pandemics that may arise in the future, could affect the economies of many nations, individual companies and the market in general in ways that cannot necessarily be foreseen at the present time. These health crises may be short term or long term, and may exacerbate other pre-existing political, social and economic risks, disrupt normal market conditions and operations, and

negatively impact performance. In addition, the impact of infectious diseases in emerging developing or emerging market countries may be greater due to less established health care systems.

Legal and Regulatory Risks. The Manager is part of a larger firm with multiple business lines active in multiple jurisdictions that are governed by a multitude of legal systems and regulatory regimes, some of which are new and evolving. As a result, the Funds and the Manager and its affiliates are subject to extensive and sophisticated legal, tax and regulatory risks, including changing laws and regulations, developing interpretations of such laws and regulations, as well as existing laws, and increased scrutiny by regulators and law enforcement authorities. Unexpected economic, political, regulatory and diplomatic events within the United States and abroad can trigger new and complex regulations that the Manager and/or the Funds may need to comply with. The implementation of changes to comply with current and/or new regulations applicable to the Funds and/or the Manager could have a material adverse effect on the Funds (including by imposing material costs on the Funds, reducing profit margins, reducing investment opportunities or by otherwise restricting the Funds and/or the Manager).

Tariff and Trade Policy Risks. Some countries, including the U.S., have adopted more protectionist trade policies. The U.S. government recently altered its approach to international trade policy, resulting in significant impacts on international trade relations, certain tax and immigration policies, and other aspects of the national and international political and financial landscape. The rise in protectionist trade policies, slowing economic growth, changes to some major international trade agreements, risks associated with trade agreements between the U.S. and the European Union, and the risks associated with trade negotiations between the U.S. and China, could affect the economies of many nations in ways that cannot necessarily be foreseen at the present time.

Global trade disruption, significant introductions of trade barriers, and bilateral trade frictions, together with any future downturns in the global economy resulting therefrom, could adversely affect the financial performance of a Fund and its investments. Trade policy may be an ongoing source of instability, potentially resulting in significant currency fluctuations and/or having other adverse effects on international markets, international trade agreements, and/or other existing cross-border cooperation arrangements (whether economic, tax, fiscal, legal, regulatory, or otherwise). To the extent trade disputes escalate globally, there could be additional significant impacts on the sectors or industries in which a Fund invests and other adverse impacts on a Fund's overall performance.

Geographic Risks. Some of the companies in which the Fund invests may be located in, or otherwise connected to, parts of the world affected by natural disasters such as severe heat, earthquakes, tornadoes, volcanic eruptions, wildfires, droughts, floods, hurricanes or tsunamis, and are economically sensitive to environmental events. In addition, issuers may be impacted by security concerns with respect to a country or region, such as war and other types of conflict, terrorism, strained international relations and territorial disputes. Any of these events may adversely affect the issuers, markets and economies to which a Fund is exposed, which may adversely affect the value of the Fund.

Reference Rate Replacement Risk. A Fund's investments, payment obligations and financing terms may be based on floating rates, such as the Secured Overnight Financing Rate ("SOFR"), Sterling Overnight Interbank Average Rate ("SONIA"), and other similar types of reference rates ("Reference Rates"). The elimination of a Reference Rate or any other changes or reforms to the determination or supervision of a Reference Rate could have an adverse impact on the market for, or value of, any instruments (including debt instruments and certain derivative instruments) or payments linked to those Reference Rates. In addition, any substitute Reference Rate and any pricing adjustments imposed by a regulator or by counterparties or otherwise may adversely affect a Fund's performance and/or net asset value.

The London Interbank Offered Rate ("LIBOR") had historically been used extensively in the U.S. and globally as a "benchmark" or "reference rate" for various commercial and financial contracts, including

corporate and municipal bonds, bank loans, asset-backed and mortgage-related securities, interest rate swaps and other derivatives. Instruments in which a Fund may have historically paid interest at floating rates based on LIBOR or may have been subject to interest caps or floors based on LIBOR. The Funds and issuers of instruments in which a Fund invests may have also historically obtained financing at floating rates based on LIBOR. In connection with the global transition away from LIBOR led by regulators and market participants as a result of benchmark reforms, LIBOR was last published on a representative basis at the end of June 2023. Alternative Reference Rates to LIBOR have been established in most major currencies and markets in these alternative rates are continuing to develop (*e.g.*, SOFR for USD-LIBOR and SONIA for GBP-LIBOR). While the transition from LIBOR has gone relatively smoothly, residual risks associated with the transition may remain that may impact markets or particular investments and, as such, the full impact of the transition on the Funds or the financial instruments in which the Funds invest cannot yet be fully determined.

SOFR is intended to be a broad measure of the cost of borrowing funds overnight in transactions that are collateralized by U.S. Treasury securities . SOFR is calculated based on transaction-level repo data collected from various sources. For each trading day, SOFR is calculated as a volume-weighted median rate derived from such data. Because SOFR is a financing rate based on overnight secured funding transactions, it differs fundamentally from LIBOR. LIBOR is intended to be an unsecured rate that represents interbank funding costs for different short-term maturities or tenors. It is a forward-looking rate reflecting expectations regarding interest rates for the applicable tenor. Thus, LIBOR is intended to be sensitive, in certain respects, to bank credit risk and to term interest rate risk. In contrast, SOFR is a secured overnight rate reflecting the credit of U.S. Treasury securities as collateral. Thus, it is largely insensitive to credit-risk considerations and to short-term interest rate risks. SOFR is a transaction-based rate, and it has been more volatile than other benchmark or market rates, such as three-month LIBOR, during certain periods. For these reasons, among others, there is no assurance that SOFR, or rates derived from SOFR, will perform in the same or similar way as LIBOR would have performed at any time, and there is no assurance that SOFR-based rates will be a suitable substitute for LIBOR. SOFR has a relatively limited history, having been first published in April 2018. The future performance of SOFR, and SOFR-based Reference Rates, cannot be predicted based on SOFR's history or otherwise. Levels of SOFR in the future may bear little or no relation to historical levels of SOFR, LIBOR or other rates. There can also be no assurance that SOFR will not be discontinued or fundamentally altered in a manner that is materially adverse to the interests of the Fund.

In addition, interest rates or other types of rates and indices which are classified as "benchmarks" have been the subject of ongoing national and international regulatory reform, including under the European Union ("EU") regulation on indices used as benchmarks in financial instruments and financial contracts (known as the "Benchmarks Regulation"). The Benchmarks Regulation has been enacted into United Kingdom ("UK") law by virtue of the EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018 (as amended), subject to amendments made by the Benchmarks (Amendment and Transitional Provision) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (SI 2019/657) and other statutory instruments. Following the implementation of these reforms, the manner of administration of benchmarks has changed and may further change in the future, with the result that relevant benchmarks may perform differently than in the past, the use of benchmarks that are not compliant with the new standards by certain supervised entities may be restricted, and certain benchmarks may be eliminated entirely. Such changes could cause increased market volatility and disruptions in liquidity for instruments that rely on or are impacted by such benchmarks. Additionally, there could be other consequences which cannot be predicted.

Repurchase Agreements and Purchase and Sale Contracts. Under repurchase agreements and purchase and sale contracts, the other party agrees, upon entering into the contract with a Fund, to repurchase a security sold to the Fund at a mutually agreed-upon time and price in a specified currency, thereby determining the yield during the term of the agreement.

A purchase and sale contract differs from a repurchase agreement in that the contract arrangements stipulate that securities are owned by the Fund and the purchaser receives any interest on the security paid during the period. In the case of repurchase agreements, the prices at which the trades are conducted do not reflect accrued interest on the underlying obligation; whereas, in the case of purchase and sale contracts, the prices take into account accrued interest. A Fund may enter into "tri-party" repurchase agreements. In "tri-party" repurchase agreements, an unaffiliated third-party custodian maintains accounts to hold collateral for the Fund and its counterparties and, therefore, the Fund may be subject to the credit risk of those custodians.

Some repurchase agreements and purchase and sale contracts are structured to result in a fixed rate of return insulated from market fluctuations during the term of the agreement, although such return may be affected by currency fluctuations. However, in the event of a default under a repurchase agreement or under a purchase and sale contract, instead of the contractual fixed rate, the rate of return to the Fund would be dependent upon intervening fluctuations of the market values of the securities underlying the contract and the accrued interest on those securities. In such event, the Fund would have rights against the seller for breach of contract with respect to any losses arising from market fluctuations following the default.

Both types of agreement usually cover short periods, such as less than one week, although they may have longer terms, and may be construed to be collateralized loans by the purchaser to the seller secured by the securities transferred to the purchaser. In the case of a repurchase agreement, as a purchaser, a Fund's Manager or sub-adviser will monitor the creditworthiness of the seller, and a Fund will require the seller to provide additional collateral if the market value of the securities falls below the repurchase price at any time during the term of the repurchase agreement. The Fund does not have this right to seek additional collateral as a purchaser in the case of purchase and sale contracts. The Fund's Manager or sub-adviser will mark-to-market daily the value of the securities. Securities subject to repurchase agreements (other than tri-party repurchase agreements) and purchase and sale contracts will be held by the Fund's custodian (or sub-custodian) in the Federal Reserve/Treasury book-entry system or by another authorized securities depository.

In the event of default by the seller under a repurchase agreement construed to be a collateralized loan, the underlying securities are not owned by the Fund but only constitute collateral for the seller's obligation to pay the repurchase price. Therefore, the Fund may suffer time delays and incur costs or possible losses in connection with disposition of the collateral. If the seller becomes insolvent and subject to liquidation or reorganization under applicable bankruptcy or other laws, a Fund's ability to dispose of the underlying securities may be restricted. Finally, it is possible that a Fund may not be able to substantiate its interest in the underlying securities. To minimize this risk, the securities underlying the repurchase agreement will be held by the applicable custodian at all times in an amount at least equal to the repurchase price, including accrued interest. If the seller fails to repurchase the securities, a Fund may suffer a loss to the extent proceeds from the sale of the underlying securities are less than the repurchase price.

In any repurchase transaction to which a Fund is a party, collateral for a repurchase agreement may include cash items and obligations issued by the U.S. Government or its agencies or instrumentalities. For certain Funds, however, collateral may include instruments other than cash items and obligations issued by the U.S. Government or its agencies or instrumentalities, including securities that the Fund could not hold directly under its investment strategies without the repurchase obligation.

The type of collateral underlying repurchase agreements may also pose certain risks for a Fund. Lower quality collateral and collateral with longer maturities may be subject to greater price fluctuations than higher quality collateral and collateral with shorter maturities. If the repurchase agreement counterparty were to default, lower quality collateral may be more difficult to liquidate than higher quality collateral. Should the counterparty default and the amount of collateral not be sufficient to cover the counterparty's repurchase

obligation, a Fund would retain the status of an unsecured creditor of the counterparty (*i.e.*, the position the Fund would normally be in if it were to hold, pursuant to its investment policies, other unsecured debt securities of the defaulting counterparty) with respect to the amount of the shortfall. As an unsecured creditor, a Fund would be at risk of losing some or all of the principal and income involved in the transaction.

Regulations adopted by global prudential regulators require certain bank-regulated counterparties and certain of their affiliates to include in certain financial contracts, including many repurchase agreements and purchase and sale contracts, terms that delay or restrict the rights of counterparties, such as a Fund, to terminate such agreements, take foreclosure action, exercise other default rights or restrict transfers of credit support in the event that the counterparty and/or its affiliates are subject to certain types of resolution or insolvency proceedings. It is possible that these requirements, as well as potential additional government regulation and other developments in the market, could adversely affect a Fund's ability to terminate existing repurchase agreements and purchase and sale contracts or to realize amounts to be received under such agreements. The SEC has also finalized rules that will require certain transactions involving U.S. Treasuries, including repurchase agreements, to be centrally cleared. Compliance with these rules is expected to be required by the middle of 2027. Although the impact of these rules on the Funds is difficult to predict, they may reduce the availability or increase the costs of such transactions and may adversely affect a Fund's performance.

Restricted Securities. A Fund may invest in or hold securities that are not registered under the Securities Act ("restricted securities"), which may include securities in private companies and Rule 144A Securities. Restricted securities may be sold in private placement transactions between issuers and their purchasers, including through private negotiated transactions between the issuer and their purchasers, such as the Funds, and may be neither listed on an exchange nor traded in other established markets. In many cases, privately placed securities may not be freely transferable under the laws of the applicable jurisdiction or due to contractual restrictions on resale. Some of these securities are new and complex, and trade only among institutions; the markets for these securities are still developing and may not function as efficiently as established markets. Typically, investments in private companies are in restricted securities that are not traded in public markets and subject to substantial holding periods, so that a Fund may not be able to resell some of its holdings for extended periods, which may be several years. There can be no assurance that a Fund will be able to realize the value of such restricted securities in a timely manner or at all. As a result of the absence of a public trading market and the potential bespoke nature on certain transactions, restricted securities may be deemed to be illiquid investments or less liquid investments and may be more difficult to value than publicly traded securities. To the extent that restricted securities may be resold in privately negotiated transactions, the prices realized from the sales, due to lack of liquidity, could be less than those originally paid by the Fund or less than their fair market value. The amount of any discount may vary depending on the security type, the character of the issuer, which party (if any) will bear the expenses of registering the restricted security, and prevailing market conditions. In addition, issuers whose securities are not publicly traded or who are not otherwise publicly listed may not be subject to the disclosure and other investor protection requirements that may be applicable if their securities were publicly traded. If any privately placed securities held by a Fund are required to be registered under the securities laws of one or more jurisdictions before being resold, the Fund may be required to bear the expenses of registration. Where registration is required for restricted securities, a considerable time period may elapse between the time the Fund decides to sell the security and the time it is actually permitted to sell the security under an effective registration statement. If during such period, adverse market conditions were to develop, the Fund might obtain less favorable pricing terms than when it decided to sell the security. In addition, the Fund may be deemed to be an "underwriter" for purposes of the Securities Act when selling restricted securities. If so, the Fund may be liable to purchasers of the restricted securities if the registration statement prepared by the issuer, or the corresponding prospectus, is materially inaccurate or misleading. Transactions in restricted securities may entail other transaction costs that are higher than those for transactions in unrestricted securities. Certain of the

Fund's investments in private placements may consist of direct investments and may include investments in smaller, less seasoned issuers, which may involve greater risks. Issuers of restricted securities may not be subject to SEC reporting requirements, may not be required to maintain their accounting records in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, and may not be required to maintain effective internal controls over financial reporting. As a result, BlackRock may not have timely or accurate information about the business, financial condition and results of operations of such issuers, and investments in securities of such issuers may involve a high degree of business and financial risk and may result in substantial losses to the Fund. Such issuers may also have limited product lines, markets or financial resources, or they may be dependent on a limited management group.

Certain restricted securities may represent limited investment opportunities and each shareholder's proportionate investment exposure to such limited investment opportunities may be reduced proportionately as the Fund's net assets grow from new or additional investments made in the Fund by other shareholders. The issuer of a private placement may later register those shares for public sale in an IPO, but there is no guarantee that an IPO will ever be completed. Even after an IPO, there may be a limited trading market for securities of that issuer, including any direct investment by a Fund, or the Fund may be subject to contractual limitations on its ability to resell its existing securities following an IPO. The inability of an applicable issuer of a restricted security to complete an IPO or offer other liquidity opportunities to the Fund and other investors will extend the holding period of a Fund's investments, potentially indefinitely, and may adversely affect the value of the investments. In making investments in such securities, a Fund may obtain access to material nonpublic information, which may restrict the Fund's ability to conduct portfolio transactions in such securities. The activity of identifying, completing, and realizing upon attractive investments in restricted securities is highly competitive and involves a high degree of uncertainty. A Fund will be competing for investments against other similarly situated investors. It is possible that competition for appropriate investment opportunities may increase, thus potentially reducing the number of investment opportunities available to a Fund and adversely affecting the terms upon which investments can be made. There is no assurance that investment opportunities for restricted securities will be available at any given time or at a level desired by a Fund, especially as that Fund grows in size.

There may not be a readily available market value for a Fund's restricted securities (in particular, restricted securities issued by private companies), and thus may be considered "illiquid." Each Fund values restricted securities in accordance with BlackRock's valuation policies and procedures, which are designed to value investments such that they accurately reflect fair value. Due to the inherent uncertainty and subjectivity of determining the fair value of investments that do not have a readily available market value, the fair value of a Fund's private investments may differ significantly from the values that would have been used had a readily available market value existed for such investments and may differ materially from the amounts the Fund may realize on any dispositions of such investments. Differences in the value of the Fund's private investments could result in the Fund's shareholder transactions being effected at a NAV that does not accurately reflect the underlying value of the Fund's portfolio, potentially resulting in the dilution of shareholder interests and increasing opportunities for shareholder arbitrage. The values used by the Fund to price its restricted securities may also differ from those used by other investment companies and investors to price the same restricted securities. In addition, the impact of changes in the market environment and other events on the fair values of a Fund's investments that have no readily available market values may differ from the impact of such changes on the readily available market values for the Fund's other investments. A Fund's NAV could be adversely affected if the Fund's determinations regarding the fair value of the Fund's investments were materially higher than the investment's actual market or fair value or the values that the Fund ultimately realizes upon the disposal of such investments.

See also risks discussed under "Illiquid Investments."

Reverse Repurchase Agreements. A Fund may enter into reverse repurchase agreements with the same parties with whom it may enter into repurchase agreements. Under a reverse repurchase agreement, a Fund sells securities to another party and agrees to repurchase them at a particular date and price. A Fund may enter into a reverse repurchase agreement when it is anticipated that the interest income to be earned from the investment of the proceeds of the transaction is greater than the interest expense of the transaction.

The use of reverse repurchase agreements may be regarded as leveraging and, therefore, speculative. Furthermore, reverse repurchase agreements involve the risks that (i) the interest income earned in the investment of the proceeds will be less than the interest expense, (ii) the market value of the securities retained in lieu of sale by a Fund may decline below the price of the securities the Fund has sold but is obligated to repurchase, (iii) the market value of the securities sold will decline below the price at which the Fund is required to repurchase them and (iv) the securities will not be returned to the Fund.

In addition, if the buyer of securities under a reverse repurchase agreement files for bankruptcy or becomes insolvent, such buyer or its trustee or receiver may receive an extension of time to determine whether to enforce a Fund's obligations to repurchase the securities and the Fund's use of the proceeds of the reverse repurchase agreement may effectively be restricted pending such decision.

Rule 18f-4 under the Investment Company Act permits a Fund to enter into reverse repurchase agreements and similar financing transactions (e.g., recourse and non-recourse tender option bonds, borrowed bonds) notwithstanding the limitation on the issuance of senior securities in Section 18 of the Investment Company Act, provided that the Fund either (i) complies with the 300% asset coverage ratio with respect to all such transactions and any other borrowings in the aggregate, or (ii) treats all such transactions as Derivatives Transactions under Rule 18f-4. See "— Derivatives — Regulation of Derivatives — Rule 18f-4 under the Investment Company Act" above. The SEC has also finalized rules that will require certain transactions involving U.S. Treasuries, including reverse repurchase agreements, to be centrally cleared. Compliance with these rules is expected to be required by the middle of 2027. Although the impact of these rules on the Funds is difficult to predict, they may reduce the availability or increase the costs of such transactions and may adversely affect a Fund's performance.

Additionally, regulations adopted by global prudential regulators require certain bank-regulated counterparties and certain of their affiliates to include in certain financial contracts, including many reverse repurchase agreements, terms that delay or restrict the rights of counterparties, such as a Fund, to terminate such agreements, take foreclosure action, exercise other default rights or restrict transfers of credit support in the event that the counterparty and/or its affiliates are subject to certain types of resolution or insolvency proceedings. It is possible that these requirements, as well as potential additional government regulation and other developments in the market, could adversely affect a Fund's ability to terminate existing reverse repurchase agreements or to realize amounts to be received under such agreements.

Rights Offerings and Warrants to Purchase. Certain Funds may participate in rights offerings and may purchase warrants, which are privileges issued by corporations enabling the owners to subscribe to and purchase a specified number of shares of the corporation at a specified price during a specified period of time. Subscription rights normally have a short life span to expiration. The purchase of rights or warrants involves the risk that a Fund could lose the purchase value of a right or warrant if the right to subscribe to additional shares is not exercised prior to the rights' and warrants' expiration. Also, the purchase of rights and/or warrants involves the risk that the effective price paid for the right and/or warrant added to the subscription price of the related security may exceed the value of the subscribed security's market price such as when there is no movement in the level of the underlying security. Buying a warrant does not make the Fund a shareholder of the underlying stock. The warrant holder has no voting or dividend rights with respect to the underlying stock. A warrant does not carry any right

to assets of the issuer, and for this reason investments in warrants may be more speculative than other equity-based investments.

Rule 144A Securities. A Fund may purchase securities that can be offered and sold only to "qualified institutional buyers" pursuant to Rule 144A under the Securities Act. See "Restricted Securities" above.

Securities Lending. Each Fund may lend portfolio securities to certain borrowers that BlackRock determines to be creditworthy, including borrowers affiliated with BlackRock. The borrowers provide collateral that is maintained in an amount at least equal to the current market value of the securities loaned. No securities loan shall be made on behalf of a Fund if, as a result, the aggregate value of all securities loans of the particular Fund exceeds one-third of the value of such Fund's total assets (including the value of the collateral received). A Fund may terminate a loan at any time and obtain the return of the securities loaned. Each Fund receives, by way of substitute payment, the value of any interest or cash or non-cash distributions paid on the loaned securities that it would have otherwise received if the securities were not on loan.

With respect to loans that are collateralized by cash, the borrower may be entitled to receive a fee based on the amount of cash collateral. The Funds are compensated by any positive difference between the amount earned on the reinvestment of cash collateral and the fee paid to the borrower. In the case of collateral other than cash, a Fund is compensated by a fee paid by the borrower equal to a percentage of the market value of the loaned securities. Any cash collateral received by the Fund for such loans, and uninvested cash, may be reinvested in certain short-term instruments either directly on behalf of the Fund or through one or more joint accounts or money market funds, including those affiliated with BlackRock; such investments are subject to investment risk.

Securities lending involves exposure to certain risks, including operational risk (*i.e.*, the risk of losses resulting from problems in the settlement and accounting process), "gap" risk (*i.e.*, the risk of a mismatch between the return on cash collateral reinvestments and the fees each Fund has agreed to pay a borrower), foreign exchange risk (*i.e.*, the risk of a shortfall at default when a cash collateral investment is denominated in a currency other than the currency of the assets being loaned due to movements in foreign exchange rates), and credit, legal, counterparty and market risks (including the risk that market events, including but not limited to corporate actions, could lead a Fund to lend securities that are trading at a premium due to increased demand, or to recall loaned securities or to lend less or not at all, which could lead to reduced securities lending revenue). If a Fund were to lend out securities that are subject to a corporate action and commit to the borrower a particular election as determined by the Fund's investment adviser, the benefit the Fund would receive in respect of committing to such election may or may not be less than the benefit the Fund would have received from making a different election in such corporate action. If a securities lending counterparty were to default, a Fund would be subject to the risk of a possible delay in receiving collateral or in recovering the loaned securities, or to a possible loss of rights in the collateral. In the event a borrower does not return a Fund's securities as agreed, the Fund's ability to participate in a corporate action event may be impacted, or the Fund may experience losses if the proceeds received from liquidating the collateral do not at least equal the value of the loaned security at the time the collateral is liquidated, plus the transaction costs incurred in purchasing replacement securities. This latter event could trigger adverse tax consequences for a Fund. A Fund could lose money if its short-term investment of the collateral declines in value over the period of the loan. Substitute payments received by a Fund representing dividends paid on securities loaned out by the Fund will not be considered qualified dividend income, and distributions by the Fund of such substitute payments will not constitute qualified dividend income. Additionally, substitute payments received by a Fund representing qualified REIT dividends paid on REIT securities loaned out by the Fund will not be considered qualified REIT dividends, and distributions by the Fund of such substitute payments will not be eligible for a 20% deduction currently available for ordinary REIT dividends paid to non-corporate shareholders provided certain other

requirements are satisfied. The securities lending agent will take into account the tax effects on shareholders caused by these differences in connection with a Fund's securities lending program. Substitute payments received on tax-exempt securities loaned out will not be tax-exempt income. There could also be changes in the status of issuers under applicable laws and regulations, including tax regulations, that may impact the regulatory or tax treatment of loaned securities and could, for example, result in a delay in the payment of dividend equivalent payments owed to a Fund (as permitted by applicable law).

Regulations adopted by global prudential regulators require certain bank-regulated counterparties and certain of their affiliates to include in certain financial contracts, including many securities lending agreements, terms that delay or restrict the rights of counterparties, such as the Fund, to terminate such agreements, foreclose upon collateral, exercise other default rights or restrict transfers of credit support in the event that the counterparty and/or its affiliates are subject to certain types of resolution or insolvency proceedings. It is possible that these requirements, as well as potential additional government regulation and other developments in the market, could adversely affect the Fund's ability to terminate existing securities lending agreements or to realize amounts to be received under such agreements. Prudential regulation may also favor lenders that can provide additional protections, such as liens that are exercisable upon lender default, to bank borrowers. Certain Funds expect to provide additional protections to bank borrowers, where permitted pursuant to a Fund's investment policies and if BlackRock believes doing so is in the best interest of the Fund.

The SEC has adopted a rule that will require reporting and public disclosure of securities loan transaction information (not including party names); this may include, but is not limited to, information about securities loans entered into in connection with short sales. Compliance with this rule is expected to be required late 2028, although in response to the outcome of a legal challenge against the rule, the SEC may amend the rule and/or delay the current expected compliance date.

Short Sales. Certain Funds may make short sales of securities, either as a hedge against potential declines in value of a portfolio security or to realize appreciation when a security that the Fund does not own declines in value. Certain Funds have a fundamental investment restriction prohibiting short sales of securities unless they are "against-the-box." In a short sale "against-the-box," at the time of the sale, the Fund owns or has the immediate and unconditional right to acquire the identical security at no additional cost. When a Fund makes a short sale, it borrows the security sold short and delivers it to the broker-dealer through which it made the short sale. A Fund may have to pay a fee to borrow particular securities and is often obligated to turn over any payments received on such borrowed securities to the lender of the securities.

A Fund secures its obligation to replace the borrowed security by depositing collateral with the broker-dealer, usually in cash, U.S. Government Securities or other liquid securities similar to those borrowed. With respect to uncovered short positions, a Fund is required to deposit similar collateral with its custodian, if necessary, to the extent that the value of both collateral deposits in the aggregate is at all times equal to at least 100% of the current market value of the security sold short. Depending on arrangements made with the broker-dealer from which the Fund borrowed the security, regarding payment received by the Fund on such security, a Fund may not receive any payments (including interest) on its collateral deposited with such broker-dealer.

Because making short sales in securities that it does not own exposes a Fund to the risks associated with those securities, such short sales involve speculative exposure risk. A Fund will incur a loss as a result of a short sale if the price of the security increases between the date of the short sale and the date on which the Fund replaces the borrowed security. As a result, if a Fund makes short sales in securities that increase in value, it will likely underperform similar mutual funds that do not make short sales in securities. A Fund will realize a gain on a short sale if the security declines in price between

those dates. There can be no assurance that a Fund will be able to close out a short sale position at any particular time or at an acceptable price. Although a Fund's gain is limited to the price at which it sold the security short, its potential loss is limited only by the maximum attainable price of the security, less the price at which the security was sold and may, theoretically, be unlimited.

A Fund may also make short sales "against the box" without being subject to such limitations.

A Fund must comply with Rule 18f-4 under the Investment Company Act with respect to its short sale borrowings, which are considered Derivatives Transactions under the Rule. See "— Derivatives — Regulation of Derivatives — Rule 18f-4 under the Investment Company Act" above.

Short sales are also subject to certain SEC regulations and certain European Union and United Kingdom regulations (under which there are restrictions on net short sales in certain securities). If the SEC or regulatory authorities in other jurisdictions were to adopt additional restrictions regarding short sales, they could restrict a Fund's ability to engage in short sales in certain circumstances, and the Fund may be unable to execute its investment strategy as a result. In response to market events, the SEC and regulatory authorities in other jurisdictions may adopt (and in certain cases, have adopted) bans or other restrictions on short sales of certain securities or on derivatives and other hedging instruments used to achieve a similar economic effect. Such bans or other restrictions may make it impossible for a Fund to execute certain investment strategies and may have a material adverse effect on the Fund's ability to generate returns.

Special Purpose Acquisition Companies. A Fund may invest in stock, warrants, rights and other interests issued by special purpose acquisition companies ("SPACs") or similar special purpose entities that pool funds to seek potential acquisition opportunities, including the "founder's" shares and warrants described below. A SPAC is a publicly traded company that raises investment capital via an IPO for the purpose of identifying and acquiring one or more operating businesses or assets. In connection with forming a SPAC, the SPAC's sponsors acquire "founder's" shares, generally for nominal consideration, and warrants that will result in the sponsors owning a specified percentage (typically 20%) of the SPAC's outstanding common stock upon completion of the IPO. At the time a SPAC conducts an IPO, it has selected a management team but has not yet identified a specific acquisition opportunity. Unless and until an acquisition is completed, a SPAC generally invests its assets in U.S. Government securities, money market securities and cash. If an acquisition that meets the requirements for the SPAC is not completed within a pre-established period of time, the invested funds are returned to the SPAC's public shareholders, the warrants expire, and the "founder's" shares and such warrants become worthless. Because SPACs and similar entities are in essence "blank check" companies without operating histories or ongoing business operations (other than identifying and pursuing acquisitions), the potential for the long-term capital appreciation of their securities is particularly dependent on the ability of the SPAC's management to identify and complete a profitable acquisition. There is no guarantee that the SPACs in which a Fund invests will complete an acquisition or that any acquisitions completed by the SPACs in which a Fund invests will be profitable. Some SPACs may pursue acquisitions only within certain industries or regions, which may ultimately lead to an increase in the volatility of their prices following the acquisition. In addition, some of these securities may be considered illiquid and/or subject to restrictions on resale.

Standby Commitment Agreements. Standby commitment agreements commit a Fund, for a stated period of time, to purchase a stated amount of securities that may be issued and sold to that Fund at the option of the issuer. The price of the security is fixed at the time of the commitment. At the time of entering into the agreement, the Fund is paid a commitment fee, regardless of whether or not the security is ultimately issued. A Fund will enter into such agreements for the purpose of investing in the security underlying the commitment at a price that is considered advantageous to the Fund.

There can be no assurance that the securities subject to a standby commitment will be issued, and the value of the security, if issued, on the delivery date may be more or less than its purchase price. Since the issuance of the security underlying the commitment is at the option of the issuer, the Fund may bear the risk of a decline in the value of such security and may not benefit from an appreciation in the value of the security during the commitment period.

The purchase of a security pursuant to a standby commitment agreement and the related commitment fee will be recorded on the date on which the security can reasonably be expected to be issued, and the value of the security thereafter will be reflected in the calculation of a Fund's NAV. The cost basis of the security will be adjusted by the amount of the commitment fee. In the event the security is not issued, the commitment fee will be recorded as income on the expiration date of the standby commitment.

Standby commitments will only be entered into with dealers, banks and broker-dealers which, in the Manager's or sub-adviser's opinion, present minimal credit risks. A Fund will acquire standby commitments solely to facilitate portfolio liquidity and not to exercise its rights thereunder for trading purposes. Standby commitments will be valued at zero in determining NAV. Accordingly, where a Fund pays directly or indirectly for a standby commitment, its cost will be reflected as an unrealized loss for the period during which the commitment is held by such Fund and will be reflected as a realized gain or loss when the commitment is exercised or expires.

Stripped Securities. Stripped securities are created when the issuer separates the interest and principal components of an instrument and sells them as separate securities. In general, one security is entitled to receive the interest payments on the underlying assets (the interest only or "IO" security) and the other to receive the principal payments (the principal only or "PO" security). Some stripped securities may receive a combination of interest and principal payments. The yields to maturity on IOs and POs are sensitive to the expected or anticipated rate of principal payments (including prepayments) on the related underlying assets, and principal payments may have a material effect on yield to maturity. If the underlying assets experience greater than anticipated prepayments of principal, a Fund may not fully recoup its initial investment in IOs. Conversely, if the underlying assets experience less than anticipated prepayments of principal, the yield on POs could be adversely affected. Stripped securities may be highly sensitive to changes in interest rates and rates of prepayment.

Structured Notes. Structured notes and other related instruments purchased by a Fund are generally privately negotiated debt obligations where the principal and/or interest is determined by reference to the performance of a specific asset, benchmark asset, market or interest rate ("reference measure"). Issuers of structured notes generally include corporations and banks. The interest rate or the principal amount payable upon maturity or redemption may increase or decrease, depending upon changes in the value of the reference measure. The terms of a structured note may provide that, in certain circumstances, no principal is due at maturity and, therefore, may result in a loss of invested capital by a Fund. The interest and/or principal payments that may be made on a structured product may vary widely, depending on a variety of factors, including the volatility of the reference measure.

Structured notes may be positively or negatively indexed, so the appreciation of the reference measure may produce an increase or a decrease in the interest rate or the value of the principal at maturity. The rate of return on structured notes may be determined by applying a multiplier to the performance or differential performance of reference measures. Application of a multiplier involves leverage that will serve to magnify the potential for gain and the risk of loss.

The purchase of structured notes exposes a Fund to the credit risk of the issuer of the structured product. Structured notes may also be more volatile, less liquid, and more difficult to price accurately than less complex securities and instruments or more traditional debt securities. The secondary market for structured notes could be illiquid making them difficult to sell when the Fund determines to sell

them. The possible lack of a liquid secondary market for structured notes and the resulting inability of the Fund to sell a structured note could expose the Fund to losses and could make structured notes more difficult for the Fund to value accurately.

Taxability Risk. Certain of the Funds intend to minimize the payment of taxable income to shareholders by investing in tax-exempt or municipal securities in reliance at the time of purchase on an opinion of bond counsel to the issuer and, in the case of derivative securities, sponsors' counsel, that the interest paid on those securities will be excludable from gross income for U.S. federal income tax purposes. Such securities, however, may be determined to pay, or have paid, taxable income subsequent to the Fund's acquisition of the securities. In that event, the IRS may demand that the Fund pay U.S. federal income taxes on the affected interest income, and, if the Fund agrees to do so, the Fund's yield could be adversely affected. In addition, the treatment of dividends previously paid or to be paid by the Fund as "exempt interest dividends" could be adversely affected, subjecting the Fund's shareholders to increased U.S. federal income tax liabilities. If the interest paid on any tax-exempt or municipal security held by the Fund is subsequently determined to be taxable, the Fund will dispose of that security as soon as reasonably practicable. In addition, future laws, regulations, rulings or court decisions may cause interest on municipal securities to be subject, directly or indirectly, to U.S. federal income taxation or interest on state municipal securities to be subject to state or local income taxation, or the value of state municipal securities to be subject to state or local intangible personal property tax, or may otherwise prevent the Fund from realizing the full current benefit of the tax-exempt status of such securities. Any such change could also affect the market price of such securities, and thus the value of an investment in the Fund.

Temporary Defensive Measures. As a temporary defensive measure, including to respond to adverse market, economic, political or other conditions, a Fund may depart from its principal investment strategies and may invest without limitation in cash, high quality money market instruments, or other short term investments. Certain Funds may also invest in cash and other such instruments pending investment or to meet anticipated redemption requests. High quality money market instruments include U.S. Government obligations, U.S. Government agency obligations, dollar denominated obligations of foreign issuers, bank obligations, including U.S. subsidiaries and branches of foreign banks, corporate obligations, commercial paper, repurchase agreements and obligations of supranational organizations. Generally, such obligations will mature within one year from the date of settlement but may mature within two years from the date of settlement. Temporary defensive measures may affect a Fund's ability to achieve its investment objective.

U.S. Government Obligations. A Fund may purchase obligations issued or guaranteed by the U.S. Government and U.S. Government agencies and instrumentalities. Obligations of certain agencies and instrumentalities of the U.S. Government are supported by the full faith and credit of the U.S. Treasury. Others are supported by the right of the issuer to borrow from the U.S. Treasury; and still others are supported only by the credit of the agency or instrumentality issuing the obligation. No assurance can be given that the U.S. Government will provide financial support to U.S. Government-sponsored instrumentalities if it is not obligated to do so by law. Certain U.S. Treasury and agency securities may be held by trusts that issue participation certificates (such as Treasury income growth receipts and certificates of accrual on Treasury certificates). These certificates, as well as Treasury receipts and other stripped securities, represent beneficial ownership interests in either future interest payments or the future principal payments on U.S. Government obligations. These instruments are issued at a discount to their "face value" and may (particularly in the case of stripped mortgage-backed securities) exhibit greater price volatility than ordinary debt securities because of the manner in which their principal and interest are returned to investors.

Examples of the types of U.S. Government obligations that may be held by the Funds include U.S. Treasury Bills, Treasury Notes and Treasury Bonds and the obligations of the Federal Housing

Administration, Farmers Home Administration, Export-Import Bank of the United States, Small Business Administration, Ginnie Mae, Fannie Mae, Federal Financing Bank, General Services Administration, Student Loan Marketing Association, Central Bank for Cooperatives, Federal Home Loan Banks, Freddie Mac, Federal Intermediate Credit Banks, Federal Land Banks, Farm Credit Banks System, Maritime Administration, Tennessee Valley Authority and Washington D.C. Armory Board. The Funds may also invest in mortgage-related securities issued or guaranteed by U.S. Government agencies and instrumentalities, including such instruments as obligations of Ginnie Mae, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

U.S. Treasury Obligations. Treasury obligations may differ in their interest rates, maturities, times of issuance and other characteristics. Obligations of U.S. Government agencies and authorities are supported by varying degrees of credit but generally are not backed by the full faith and credit of the U.S. Government. No assurance can be given that the U.S. Government will provide financial support to its agencies and authorities if it is not obligated by law to do so.

U.S. Treasury Rolls. Certain Funds may invest in U.S. Treasury rolls. In a U.S. Treasury roll transaction, the Fund sells a treasury security to a counterparty with a simultaneous agreement to repurchase the same security at an agreed upon price and future settlement date. U.S. Treasury roll transactions may incrementally adjust the average maturity of a Fund's portfolio and increase the interest yield on the Fund's portfolio by extending the average maturity of the portfolio in a normal yield curve environment. During the period before the settlement date of a U.S. Treasury roll, a Fund continues to earn interest on the securities it is selling; however, it does not earn interest on the securities it is purchasing until after the settlement date. A Fund could suffer an opportunity loss if the counterparty to the U.S. Treasury roll transaction failed to perform its obligations on the settlement date.

The market value of the securities that a Fund is required to purchase may decline below the agreed upon purchase price of those securities. U.S. Treasury rolls are speculative techniques that can be deemed to involve leverage. There is no assurance that U.S. Treasury rolls can be successfully employed.

Utility Industries. Risks that are intrinsic to the utility industries include difficulty in obtaining an adequate return on invested capital, difficulty in financing large construction programs during an inflationary period, restrictions on operations and increased cost and delays attributable to environmental considerations and regulation, difficulty in raising capital in adequate amounts on reasonable terms in periods of high inflation and unsettled capital markets, technological innovations that may render existing plants, equipment or products obsolete, the potential impact of natural or man-made disasters, increased costs and reduced availability of certain types of fuel, occasional reduced availability and high costs of natural gas for resale, the effects of energy conservation, the effects of a national energy policy and lengthy delays and greatly increased costs and other problems associated with the design, construction, licensing, regulation and operation of nuclear facilities for electric generation, including, among other considerations, the problems associated with the use of radioactive materials and the disposal of radioactive wastes. There are substantial differences among the regulatory practices and policies of various jurisdictions, and any given regulatory agency may make major shifts in policy from time to time. There is no assurance that regulatory authorities will, in the future, grant rate increases or that such increases will be adequate to permit the payment of dividends on common stocks issued by a utility company. Additionally, existing and possible future regulatory legislation may make it even more difficult for utilities to obtain adequate relief. Certain of the issuers of securities held in the Fund's portfolio may own or operate nuclear generating facilities. Governmental authorities may from time to time review existing policies and impose additional requirements governing the licensing, construction and operation of nuclear power plants. Prolonged changes in climatic conditions can also have a significant impact on both the revenues of an electric and gas utility as well as the expenses of a utility, particularly a hydro-based electric utility.

Companies in the utilities sector may be adversely affected by changes in exchange rates, domestic and international competition, and governmental limitations on rates charged to customers. The value of regulated utility debt securities and, to a lesser extent, equity securities, tends to have an inverse relationship to the movement of interest rates and therefore may lead to volatility in performance.

Utility companies in the United States and in foreign countries are generally subject to regulation. In the United States, most utility companies are regulated by state and/or federal authorities. Such regulation is intended to ensure appropriate standards of service and adequate capacity to meet public demand. Generally, prices are also regulated in the United States and in foreign countries with the intention of protecting the public while ensuring that the rate of return earned by utility companies is sufficient to allow them to attract capital in order to grow and continue to provide appropriate services. There can be no assurance that such pricing policies or rates of return will continue in the future.

The nature of regulation of the utility industries continues to evolve both in the United States and in foreign countries. In recent years, changes in regulation in the United States increasingly have allowed utility companies to provide services and products outside their traditional geographic areas and lines of business, creating new areas of competition within the industries. In some instances, utility companies are operating on an unregulated basis. Because of trends toward deregulation and the evolution of independent power producers as well as new entrants to the field of telecommunications, non-regulated providers of utility services have become a significant part of their respective industries. The Manager believes that the emergence of competition and deregulation will result in certain utility companies being able to earn more than their traditional regulated rates of return, while others may be forced to defend their core business from increased competition and may be less profitable. Reduced profitability, as well as new uses of funds (such as for expansion, operations or stock buybacks) could result in cuts in dividend payout rates. As deregulation allows utility companies to diversify outside of their original geographic regions and their traditional lines of business, utilities companies may engage in riskier ventures. Therefore, deregulation may eliminate restrictions on the maximum level of profits of certain utility companies, but may also subject these companies to greater risk of loss. The Manager seeks to take advantage of favorable investment opportunities that may arise from these structural changes. Of course, there can be no assurance that favorable developments will occur in the future.

Foreign utility companies are also subject to regulation, although such regulations may or may not be comparable to those in the United States. Foreign utility companies may be more heavily regulated by their respective governments than utilities in the United States and, as in the United States, generally are required to seek government approval for rate increases. In addition, many foreign utilities use fuels that may cause more pollution than those used in the United States, which may require such utilities to invest in pollution control equipment to meet any proposed pollution restrictions. Foreign regulatory systems vary from country to country and may evolve in ways different from regulation in the United States.

A Fund's investment policies are designed to enable it to capitalize on evolving investment opportunities throughout the world. For example, the rapid growth of certain foreign economies will necessitate expansion of capacity in the utility industries in those countries. Although many foreign utility companies currently are government-owned, thereby limiting current investment opportunities for a Fund, the Manager believes that, in order to attract significant capital for growth, foreign governments are likely to seek global investors through the privatization of their utility industries. Privatization, which refers to the trend toward investor ownership of assets rather than government ownership, is expected to occur in newer, faster-growing economies and in mature economies. Of course, there is no assurance that such favorable developments will occur or that investment opportunities in foreign markets will increase.

The revenues of domestic and foreign utility companies generally reflect the economic growth and development in the geographic areas in which they do business. The Manager will take into account

anticipated economic growth rates and other economic developments when selecting securities of utility companies.

Electric. The electric utility industry consists of companies that are engaged principally in the generation, transmission and sale of electric energy, although many also provide other energy-related services. In the past, electric utility companies, in general, have been favorably affected by lower fuel and financing costs and the full or near completion of major construction programs. In addition, many of these companies have generated cash flows in excess of current operating expenses and construction expenditures, permitting some degree of diversification into unregulated businesses. Some electric utilities have also taken advantage of the right to sell power outside of their traditional geographic areas. Electric utility companies have historically been subject to the risks associated with increases in fuel and other operating costs, high interest costs on borrowings needed for capital construction programs, costs associated with compliance with environmental and safety regulations and changes in the regulatory climate. As interest rates declined, many utilities refinanced high cost debt and in doing so improved their fixed charges coverage. Regulators, however, lowered allowed rates of return as interest rates declined and thereby caused the benefits of the rate declines to be shared wholly or in part with customers. In a period of rising interest rates, the allowed rates of return may not keep pace with the utilities' increased costs. The construction and operation of nuclear power facilities are subject to strict scrutiny by, and evolving regulations of, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and state agencies which have comparable jurisdiction. Strict scrutiny might result in higher operating costs and higher capital expenditures, with the risk that the regulators may disallow inclusion of these costs in rate authorizations or the risk that a company may not be permitted to operate or complete construction of a facility. In addition, operators of nuclear power plants may be subject to significant costs for disposal of nuclear fuel and for decommissioning such plants.

The rating agencies look closely at the business profile of utilities. Ratings for companies are expected to be impacted to a greater extent in the future by the division of their asset base. Electric utility companies that focus more on the generation of electricity may be assigned less favorable ratings as this business is expected to be competitive and the least regulated. On the other hand, companies that focus on transmission and distribution, which is expected to be the least competitive and the more regulated part of the business, may see higher ratings given the greater predictability of cash flow.

A number of states are considering or have enacted deregulation proposals. The introduction of competition into the industry as a result of such deregulation has at times resulted in lower revenue, lower credit ratings, increased default risk, and lower electric utility security prices. Such increased competition may also cause long-term contracts, which electric utilities previously entered into to buy power, to become "stranded assets" which have no economic value. Any loss associated with such contracts must be absorbed by ratepayers and investors. In addition, some electric utilities have acquired electric utilities overseas to diversify, enhance earnings and gain experience in operating in a deregulated environment. In some instances, such acquisitions have involved significant borrowings, which have burdened the acquirer's balance sheet. There is no assurance that current deregulation proposals will be adopted. However, deregulation in any form could significantly impact the electric utilities industry.

Telecommunications. The telecommunications industry today includes both traditional telephone companies, with a history of broad market coverage and highly regulated businesses, and cable companies, which began as small, lightly regulated businesses focused on limited markets. Today these two historically different businesses are converging in an industry that is trending toward larger, competitive national and international markets with an emphasis on deregulation. Companies that distribute telephone services and provide access to the telephone networks still comprise the greatest portion of this segment, but non-regulated activities such as wireless telephone services, paging, data transmission and processing, equipment retailing, computer software and hardware and internet

services are becoming increasingly significant components as well. In particular, wireless and internet telephone services continue to gain market share at the expense of traditional telephone companies. The presence of unregulated companies in this industry and the entry of traditional telephone companies into unregulated or less regulated businesses provide significant investment opportunities with companies that may increase their earnings at faster rates than had been allowed in traditional regulated businesses. Still, increasing competition, technological innovations and other structural changes could adversely affect the profitability of such utilities and the growth rate of their dividends. Given mergers and proposed legislation and enforcement changes, it is likely that both traditional telephone companies and cable companies will continue to provide an expanding range of utility services to both residential, corporate and governmental customers.

Gas. Gas transmission companies and gas distribution companies are undergoing significant changes. In the United States, interstate transmission companies are regulated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which is reducing its regulation of the industry. Many companies have diversified into oil and gas exploration and development, making returns more sensitive to energy prices. In the recent decade, gas utility companies have been adversely affected by disruptions in the oil industry and have also been affected by increased concentration and competition. In the opinion of the Manager, however, environmental considerations could improve the gas industry outlook in the future. For example, natural gas is the cleanest of the hydrocarbon fuels, and this may result in incremental shifts in fuel consumption toward natural gas and away from oil and coal, even for electricity generation. However, technological or regulatory changes within the industry may delay or prevent this result.

Water. Water supply utilities are companies that collect, purify, distribute and sell water. In the United States and around the world the industry is highly fragmented because most of the supplies are owned by local authorities. Companies in this industry are generally mature and are experiencing little or no per capita volume growth. In the opinion of the Manager, there may be opportunities for certain companies to acquire other water utility companies and for foreign acquisition of domestic companies. The Manager believes that favorable investment opportunities may result from consolidation of this segment. As with other utilities, however, increased regulation, increased costs and potential disruptions in supply may adversely affect investments in water supply utilities.

Utility Industries Generally. There can be no assurance that the positive developments noted above, including those relating to privatization and changing regulation, will occur or that risk factors other than those noted above will not develop in the future.

When-Issued Securities, Delayed Delivery Securities and Forward Commitments. A Fund may purchase or sell securities that it is entitled to receive on a when-issued basis. A Fund may also purchase or sell securities on a delayed delivery basis or through a forward commitment (including on a TBA (to be announced) basis). These transactions involve the purchase or sale of securities by a Fund at an established price with payment and delivery taking place in the future. The Fund enters into these transactions to obtain what is considered an advantageous price to the Fund at the time of entering into the transaction.

Pursuant to recommendations of the Treasury Market Practices Group, which is sponsored by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, a Fund or its counterparty generally will be required to post collateral when entering into certain forward-settling transactions, including without limitation TBA transactions. FINRA rules have also been implemented that include mandatory margin requirements for the TBA market with limited exceptions. The collateralization of TBA trades is intended to mitigate counterparty credit risk between trade and settlement, but could increase the cost of TBA transactions and impose added operational complexity.

There can be no assurance that a security purchased on a when-issued basis will be issued or that a security purchased or sold on a delayed delivery basis or through a forward commitment will be

delivered. Also, the value of securities in these transactions on the delivery date may be more or less than the price paid by the Fund to purchase the securities. The Fund will lose money if the value of the security in such a transaction declines below the purchase price and will not benefit if the value of the security appreciates above the sale price during the commitment period.

If deemed advisable as a matter of investment strategy, a Fund may dispose of or renegotiate a commitment after it has been entered into, and may sell securities it has committed to purchase before those securities are delivered to the Fund on the settlement date. In these cases the Fund may realize a taxable capital gain or loss.

When a Fund engages in when-issued, TBA or forward commitment transactions, it relies on the other party to consummate the trade. Failure of such party to do so may result in the Fund's incurring a loss or missing an opportunity to obtain a price considered to be advantageous.

The market value of the securities underlying a commitment to purchase securities, and any subsequent fluctuations in their market value, is taken into account when determining the market value of a Fund starting on the day the Fund agrees to purchase the securities. The Fund does not earn interest on the securities it has committed to purchase until they are paid for and delivered on the settlement date.

Rule 18f-4 under the Investment Company Act permits a Fund to enter into when-issued or forward-settling securities (e.g., firm and standby commitments, including TBA commitments, and dollar rolls) and non-standard settlement cycle securities notwithstanding the limitation on the issuance of senior securities in Section 18 of the Investment Company Act, provided that the Fund intends to physically settle the transaction and the transaction will settle within 35 days of its trade date (the "Delayed-Settlement Securities Provision"). If a when-issued, forward-settling or non-standard settlement cycle security does not satisfy the Delayed-Settlement Securities Provision, then it is treated as a Derivatives Transaction under Rule 18f-4. See "— Derivatives — Regulation of Derivatives — Rule 18f-4 under the Investment Company Act" above.

Regulations adopted by global prudential regulators require certain bank-regulated counterparties and certain of their affiliates to include in certain financial contracts, including many agreements with respect to when-issued, TBA and forward commitment transactions, terms that delay or restrict the rights of counterparties, such as a Fund, to terminate such agreements, foreclose upon collateral, exercise other default rights or restrict transfers of credit support in the event that the counterparty and/or its affiliates are subject to certain types of resolution or insolvency proceedings. It is possible that these requirements, as well as potential additional government regulation and other developments in the market, could adversely affect a Fund's ability to terminate existing agreements with respect to these transactions or to realize amounts to be received under such agreements.

Yields and Ratings. The yields on certain obligations are dependent on a variety of factors, including general market conditions, conditions in the particular market for the obligation, the financial condition of the issuer, the size of the offering, the maturity of the obligation and the ratings of the issue. The ratings of Moody's, Fitch and S&P represent their respective opinions as to the quality of the obligations they undertake to rate. Ratings, however, are general and are not absolute standards of quality. Consequently, obligations with the same rating, maturity and interest rate may have different market prices. Subsequent to its purchase by a Fund, a rated security may cease to be rated. A Fund's Manager or sub-adviser will consider such an event in determining whether the Fund should continue to hold the security.

Zero Coupon Securities. Zero coupon securities are securities that are sold at a discount to par value and do not pay interest during the life of the security. The discount approximates the total amount of

interest the security will accrue and compound over the period until maturity at a rate of interest reflecting the market rate of the security at the time of issuance. Upon maturity, the holder of a zero coupon security is entitled to receive the par value of the security.

While interest payments are not made on such securities, holders of such securities are deemed to have received income ("phantom income") annually, notwithstanding that cash may not be received currently. The effect of owning instruments that do not make current interest payments is that a fixed yield is earned not only on the original investment but also, in effect, on all discount accretion during the life of the obligations. This implicit reinvestment of earnings at a fixed rate eliminates the risk of being unable to invest distributions at a rate as high as the implicit yield on the zero coupon bond, but at the same time eliminates the holder's ability to reinvest at higher rates in the future. For this reason, some of these securities may be subject to substantially greater price fluctuations during periods of changing market interest rates than are comparable securities that pay interest currently. Longer term zero coupon bonds are more exposed to interest rate risk than shorter term zero coupon bonds. These investments benefit the issuer by mitigating its need for cash to meet debt service, but also require a higher rate of return to attract investors who are willing to defer receipt of cash.

A Fund accrues income with respect to these securities for U.S. federal income tax and accounting purposes prior to the receipt of cash payments. Zero coupon securities may be subject to greater fluctuation in value and less liquidity in the event of adverse market conditions than comparably rated securities that pay cash interest at regular intervals.

Further, to maintain its qualification for pass-through treatment under the U.S. federal tax laws, a Fund is required to distribute income to its shareholders and, consequently, may have to dispose of other, more liquid portfolio securities under disadvantageous circumstances or may have to leverage itself by borrowing in order to generate the cash to satisfy these distributions. The required distributions may result in an increase in a Fund's exposure to zero coupon securities.

In addition to the above-described risks, there are certain other risks related to investing in zero coupon securities. During a period of severe market conditions, the market for such securities may become even less liquid. In addition, as these securities do not pay cash interest, a Fund's investment exposure to these securities and their risks, including credit risk, will increase during the time these securities are held in the Fund's portfolio.

Suitability. (All Funds)

The economic benefit of an investment in any Fund depends upon many factors beyond the control of the Fund, the Manager and its affiliates. Each Fund should be considered a vehicle for diversification and not as a balanced investment program. The suitability for any particular investor of a purchase of shares in a Fund will depend upon, among other things, such investor's investment objectives and such investor's ability to accept the risks associated with investing in securities, including the risk of loss of principal.

Investment Restrictions. (All Funds)

See "Investment Restrictions" or "Investment Policies," as applicable in each Fund's SAI for the specific fundamental and non-fundamental investment restrictions adopted by each Fund. In addition to those investment restrictions, each Fund is also subject to the restrictions discussed below.

Each Fund's investments will be limited in order to allow the Fund to qualify as a "regulated investment company" for purposes of the Code. See "Dividends and Taxes — Taxes" or "Taxes." To qualify, among other requirements, each Fund will limit its investments so that, at the close of each quarter of the taxable year, (i) at least 50% of the market value of each Fund's assets is represented by cash,

securities of other regulated investment companies, U.S. Government Securities and other securities, with such other securities limited, in respect of any one issuer, to an amount not greater in value than 5% of the Fund's assets and not greater than 10% of the outstanding voting securities of such issuer and (ii) not more than 25% of the value of its assets is invested in the securities (other than U.S. Government Securities or securities of other regulated investment companies) of any one issuer, any two or more issuers that the Fund controls and that are determined to be engaged in the same or similar trades or businesses or related trades or businesses or in the securities of one or more qualified publicly traded partnerships (*i.e.*, partnerships that are traded on an established securities market or tradable on a secondary market, other than partnerships that derive 90% of their income from interest, dividends, capital gains and other traditionally permitted mutual fund income). For purposes of this restriction, the Municipal Funds generally will regard each state and each of its political subdivisions, agencies or instrumentalities and each multi-state agency of which the state is a member as a separate issuer. Each public authority that issues securities on behalf of a private entity generally will also be regarded as a separate issuer, except that if the security is backed only by the assets and revenues of a non-government entity, then the entity with the ultimate responsibility for the payment of interest and principal may be regarded as the sole issuer.

Foreign government securities (unlike U.S. Government Securities) are not exempt from the 5%, 10% and 25% diversification requirements of the Code discussed above, and the securities of each foreign government issuer are considered to be obligations of a single issuer. These tax-related limitations may be changed by the Directors of a Fund to the extent necessary to comply with changes to the U.S. federal tax requirements. A Fund that is "diversified" under the Investment Company Act must satisfy the foregoing 5% and 10% requirements with respect to 75% of its total assets.

APPENDIX A

Description of Bond Ratings

A rating is generally assigned to a fixed-income security at the time of issuance by a credit rating agency designated as a nationally recognized statistical rating organization ("NRSRO") by the Securities and Exchange Commission ("SEC"). While NRSROs may from time to time revise such ratings, they undertake no obligation to do so, and the ratings given to securities at issuance do not necessarily represent ratings which would be given to these securities on a particular subsequent date.

NRSROs may rate specific investments (*e.g.*, bonds), issuers (*e.g.*, corporations, governments and financial institutions) and/or programs (*e.g.*, commercial paper programs). However, certain types of investments may not be rated by NRSROs, such as certain government/sovereign obligations, US agency securities, commercial paper, time deposits at financial institutions, and derivative instruments such as credit default swaps. For these types of investments, as well as US Treasury securities (some of which are not rated), where an NRSRO has not rated the specific investment but has rated the investment's issuer, program, financial institution or underlying reference asset, BlackRock Advisors, LLC, BlackRock Fund Advisors or their respective affiliates ("BlackRock") may consider the investment to have the same NRSRO rating as its issuer, program, financial institution or underlying reference asset, as applicable. In the case of municipal securities, where one NRSRO provides multiple ratings for the same security (*e.g.*, "underlying," "insured" and/or "enhanced" ratings), BlackRock may consider the security to have the highest of the multiple ratings.

New issue securities (regardless of type) may not be rated by an NRSRO at the time of their initial offering. Preliminary prospectuses or term sheets for new issue securities may include an expected rating for the security (as determined by the underwriter and/or issuer) or an NRSRO rating for the issuer of the security. If applicable, when deciding whether to purchase a new issue security that has not yet been rated by an NRSRO, BlackRock may attribute an expected rating to the security based on: (i) the expected rating of the security set forth in the preliminary prospectus or term sheet for the security; (ii) the NRSRO's rating for the issuer of the security set forth in the preliminary prospectus or term sheet for the security; or (iii) with respect to asset-backed securities, the rating of a prior issuance having a similar structure or the same sponsor.

Where the investment objective of a fund is to track the performance of an index that includes credit ratings eligibility criteria as part of its index methodology, the fund may purchase any security within the index, such security having been determined by the index provider as meeting its credit ratings eligibility criteria. The credit ratings practices of an index provider may differ from BlackRock's practices, as described above. Further, the fund may invest, directly or indirectly, in securities that are not rated by a rating agency or securities with a credit rating that differs from the credit rating specified in its index methodology in various circumstances, including where a security is downgraded but not yet removed from an index, following the removal of a security from an index prior to its sale by the fund or as a result of a corporate action or restructuring affecting an issuer of a security held by the fund.

Fixed-income securities which are unrated may expose the investor to risks with respect to capacity to pay interest or repay principal which are similar to the risks of lower-rated speculative bonds (although BlackRock may deem such unrated securities to be of higher quality). Evaluation of these securities is dependent on BlackRock's judgment, analysis and experience in the evaluation of such securities.

Investors should note that the assignment of a rating to a security by an NRSRO may not reflect the effect of recent developments on the issuer's ability to make interest and principal payments or on the likelihood of default.

Securities deemed to be high yield are rated below Baa3 by Moody's and below BBB- by S&P Global Ratings and Fitch. Other terms used to describe such securities include "lower rated bonds," "non-investment grade bonds," "below investment grade bonds," and "junk bonds."

The descriptions below relate to general long-term and short-term obligations of an issuer.

A Description of Moody's Investors Service, Inc.'s ("Moody's") Global Rating Scales

Credit ratings are assigned on Moody's global long-term and short-term rating scales and are forward-looking opinions of the relative credit risks of financial obligations issued by non-financial corporates, financial institutions, structured finance vehicles, project finance vehicles, and public sector entities. Moody's defines credit risk as the risk that an entity may not meet its contractual financial obligations as they come due and any estimated financial loss in the event of default or impairment. The contractual financial obligations addressed by Moody's ratings are those that call for, without regard to enforceability, the payment of an ascertainable amount, which may vary based upon standard sources of variation (*e.g.*, floating interest rates), by an ascertainable date. Moody's rating addresses the issuer's ability to obtain cash sufficient to service the obligation, and its willingness to pay. Moody's ratings do not address non-standard sources of variation in the amount of the principal obligation (*e.g.*, equity indexed), absent an express statement to the contrary in a press release accompanying an initial rating. Long-term ratings are assigned to issuers or obligations with an original maturity of eleven months or more and reflect both on the likelihood of a default or impairment on contractual financial obligations and the expected financial loss suffered in the event of default or impairment. Short-term ratings are assigned for obligations with an original maturity of thirteen months or less and reflect both on the likelihood of a default or impairment on contractual financial obligations and the expected financial loss suffered in the event of default or impairment. Moody's issues ratings at the issuer level and instrument level on both the long-term scale and the short-term scale. Typically, ratings are made publicly available although private and unpublished ratings may also be assigned.

Moody's differentiates structured finance ratings from fundamental ratings (*i.e.*, ratings on nonfinancial corporate, financial institution, and public sector entities) on the global long-term scale by adding (sf) to all structured finance ratings. The addition of (sf) to structured finance ratings should eliminate any presumption that such ratings and fundamental ratings at the same letter grade level will behave the same. The (sf) indicator for structured finance security ratings indicates that otherwise similarly rated structured finance and fundamental securities may have different risk characteristics. Through its current methodologies, however, Moody's aspires to achieve broad expected equivalence in structured finance and fundamental rating performance when measured over a long period of time.

Description of Moody's Global Long-Term Rating Scale

Aaa	Obligations rated Aaa are judged to be of the highest quality, subject to the lowest level of credit risk.
Aa	Obligations rated Aa are judged to be of high quality and are subject to very low credit risk.
A	Obligations rated A are judged to be upper-medium grade and are subject to low credit risk.
Baa	Obligations rated Baa are judged to be medium-grade and subject to moderate credit risk and as such may possess certain speculative characteristics.

Ba	Obligations rated Ba are judged to be speculative and are subject to substantial credit risk.
B	Obligations rated B are considered speculative and are subject to high credit risk.
Caa	Obligations rated Caa are judged to be speculative of poor standing and are subject to very high credit risk.
Ca	Obligations rated Ca are highly speculative and are likely in, or very near, default, with some prospect of recovery of principal and interest.
C	Obligations rated C are the lowest rated and are typically in default, with little prospect for recovery of principal or interest.

Note: Moody's appends numerical modifiers 1, 2, and 3 to each generic rating classification from Aa through Caa. The modifier 1 indicates that the obligation ranks in the higher end of its generic rating category; the modifier 2 indicates a mid-range ranking; and the modifier 3 indicates a ranking in the lower end of that generic rating category. Additionally, a "(hyb)" indicator is appended to all ratings of hybrid securities issued by banks, insurers, finance companies, and securities firms.

By their terms, hybrid securities allow for the omission of scheduled dividends, interest, or principal payments, which can potentially result in impairment if such an omission occurs. Hybrid securities may also be subject to contractually allowable write-downs of principal that could result in impairment. Together with the hybrid indicator, the long-term obligation rating assigned to a hybrid security is an expression of the relative credit risk associated with that security.

Description of Moody's Global Short-Term Rating Scale

P-1	Ratings of Prime-1 reflect a superior ability to repay short-term obligations.
P-2	Ratings of Prime-2 reflect a strong ability to repay short-term obligations.
P-3	Ratings of Prime-3 reflect an acceptable ability to repay short-term obligations.
NP	Issuers (or supporting institutions) rated Not Prime do not fall within any of the Prime rating categories.

Description of Moody's U.S. Municipal Short-Term Debt and Demand Obligation Ratings

Moody's uses the global short-term Prime rating scale for commercial paper issued by U.S. municipalities and nonprofits. These commercial paper programs may be backed by external letters of credit or liquidity facilities, or by an issuer's self-liquidity.

For other short-term municipal obligations, Moody's uses one of two other short-term rating scales, the Municipal Investment Grade ("MIG") and Variable Municipal Investment Grade ("VMIG") scales discussed below.

MIG Ratings

Moody's uses the MIG scale for U.S. municipal cash flow notes, bond anticipation notes and certain other short-term obligations, which typically mature in three years or less. Under certain circumstances, Moody's uses the MIG scale for bond anticipation notes with maturities of up to five years.

MIG Scale

MIG 1	This designation denotes superior credit quality. Excellent protection is afforded by established cash flows, highly reliable liquidity support, or demonstrated broad-based access to the market for refinancing.
MIG 2	This designation denotes strong credit quality. Margins of protection are ample, although not as large as in the preceding group.
MIG 3	This designation denotes acceptable credit quality. Liquidity and cash-flow protection may be narrow, and market access for refinancing is likely to be less well-established.
SG	This designation denotes speculative-grade credit quality. Debt instruments in this category may lack sufficient margins of protection.

VMIG Ratings

In the case of variable rate demand obligations ("VRDOs"), a two-component rating is assigned. The components are a long-term rating and a short-term payment obligation rating. The long-term rating addresses the issuer's ability to meet scheduled principal and interest payments. The short-term payment obligation rating addresses the ability of the issuer or the liquidity provider to meet any purchase-price payment obligation resulting from optional tenders ("on demand") and/or mandatory tenders of the VRDO. The short-term demand obligation rating uses the VMIG scale. VMIG ratings with liquidity support use as an input the short-term Counterparty Risk Assessment of the support provider, or the long-term rating of the underlying obligor in the absence of third party liquidity support. Transitions of VMIG ratings of demand obligations with conditional liquidity support differ from transitions on the Prime scale to reflect the risk that external liquidity support will terminate if the issuer's long-term rating drops below investment grade.

Moody's typically assigns the VMIG short-term demand obligation rating if the frequency of the demand feature is less than every three years. If the frequency of the demand feature is less than three years but the purchase price is payable only with remarketing proceeds, the short-term demand obligation rating is "NR".

Industrial development bonds in the US where the obligor is a corporate may carry a VMIG rating that reflects Moody's view of the relative likelihood of default and loss. In these cases, liquidity assessment is based on the liquidity of the corporate obligor.

VMIG Scale

VMIG 1	This designation denotes superior credit quality. Excellent protection is afforded by the superior short-term credit strength of the liquidity provider and structural and legal protections.
VMIG 2	This designation denotes strong credit quality. Good protection is afforded by the strong short-term credit strength of the liquidity provider and structural and legal protections.
VMIG 3	This designation denotes acceptable credit quality. Adequate protection is afforded by the satisfactory short-term credit strength of the liquidity provider and structural and legal protections.
SG	This designation denotes speculative-grade credit quality. Demand features rated in this category may be supported by a liquidity provider that does not have a sufficiently strong short-term rating or may lack the structural or legal protections.

Description of S&P Global Ratings ("S&P"), a Division of S&P Global Inc., Issue Credit Ratings

An S&P issue credit rating is a forward-looking opinion about the creditworthiness of an obligor with respect to a specific financial obligation, a specific class of financial obligations, or a specific financial program (including ratings on medium-term note programs and commercial paper programs). It takes into consideration the creditworthiness of guarantors, insurers, or other forms of credit enhancement on the obligation and takes into account the currency in which the obligation is denominated. The opinion reflects S&P's view of the obligor's capacity and willingness to meet its financial commitments as they come due, and this opinion may assess terms, such as collateral security and subordination, which could affect ultimate payment in the event of default.

Issue credit ratings can be either long-term or short-term. Short-term issue credit ratings are generally assigned to those obligations considered short-term in the relevant market, typically with an original maturity of no more than 365 days. Short-term issue credit ratings are also used to indicate the creditworthiness of an obligor with respect to put features on long-term obligations. S&P would typically assign a long-term issue credit rating to an obligation with an original maturity of greater than 365 days. However, the ratings S&P assigns to certain instruments may diverge from these guidelines based on market practices.

Issue credit ratings are based, in varying degrees, on S&P's analysis of the following considerations:

- The likelihood of payment—the capacity and willingness of the obligor to meet its financial commitments on an obligation in accordance with the terms of the obligation;
- The nature and provisions of the financial obligation, and the promise S&P imputes; and
- The protection afforded by, and relative position of, the financial obligation in the event of a bankruptcy, reorganization, or other arrangement under the laws of bankruptcy and other laws affecting creditors' rights.

An issue rating is an assessment of default risk but may incorporate an assessment of relative seniority or ultimate recovery in the event of default. Junior obligations are typically rated lower than senior obligations, to reflect lower priority in bankruptcy, as noted above. (Such differentiation may apply when an entity has both senior and subordinated obligations, secured and unsecured obligations, or operating company and holding company obligations.)

Long-Term Issue Credit Ratings*

AAA	An obligation rated 'AAA' has the highest rating assigned by S&P. The obligor's capacity to meet its financial commitments on the obligation is extremely strong.
AA	An obligation rated 'AA' differs from the highest-rated obligations only to a small degree. The obligor's capacity to meet its financial commitments on the obligation is very strong.
A	An obligation rated 'A' is somewhat more susceptible to the adverse effects of changes in circumstances and economic conditions than obligations in higher-rated categories. However, the obligor's capacity to meet its financial commitments on the obligation is still strong.
BBB	An obligation rated 'BBB' exhibits adequate protection parameters. However, adverse economic conditions or changing circumstances are more likely to weaken the obligor's capacity to meet its financial commitments on the obligation.

BB, B, CCC, CC, and C	Obligations rated ‘BB’, ‘B’, ‘CCC’, ‘CC’, and ‘C’ are regarded as having significant speculative characteristics. ‘BB’ indicates the least degree of speculation and ‘C’ the highest. While such obligations will likely have some quality and protective characteristics, these may be outweighed by large uncertainties or major exposure to adverse conditions.
BB	An obligation rated ‘BB’ is less vulnerable to nonpayment than other speculative issues. However, it faces major ongoing uncertainties or exposure to adverse business, financial, or economic conditions that could lead to the obligor’s inadequate capacity to meet its financial commitments on the obligation.
B	An obligation rated ‘B’ is more vulnerable to nonpayment than obligations rated ‘BB’, but the obligor currently has the capacity to meet its financial commitments on the obligation. Adverse business, financial, or economic conditions will likely impair the obligor’s capacity or willingness to meet its financial commitments on the obligation.
CCC	An obligation rated ‘CCC’ is currently vulnerable to nonpayment and is dependent upon favorable business, financial, and economic conditions for the obligor to meet its financial commitments on the obligation. In the event of adverse business, financial, or economic conditions, the obligor is not likely to have the capacity to meet its financial commitments on the obligation.
CC	An obligation rated ‘CC’ is currently highly vulnerable to nonpayment. The ‘CC’ rating is used when a default has not yet occurred but S&P expects default to be a virtual certainty, regardless of the anticipated time to default.
C	An obligation rated ‘C’ is currently highly vulnerable to nonpayment, and the obligation is expected to have lower relative seniority or lower ultimate recovery compared with obligations that are rated higher.
D	An obligation rated ‘D’ is in default or in breach of an imputed promise. For non-hybrid capital instruments, the ‘D’ rating category is used when payments on an obligation are not made on the date due, unless S&P believes that such payments will be made within five business days in the absence of a stated grace period or within the earlier of the stated grace period or 30 calendar days. The ‘D’ rating also will be used upon the filing of a bankruptcy petition or the taking of similar action and where default on an obligation is a virtual certainty, for example due to automatic stay provisions. A rating on an obligation is lowered to ‘D’ if it is subject to a distressed debt restructuring.

* Ratings from ‘AA’ to ‘CCC’ may be modified by the addition of a plus (+) or minus (-) sign to show relative standing within the rating categories.

Short-Term Issue Credit Ratings

A-1	A short-term obligation rated ‘A-1’ is rated in the highest category by S&P. The obligor’s capacity to meet its financial commitments on the obligation is strong. Within this category, certain obligations are designated with a plus sign (+). This indicates that the obligor’s capacity to meet its financial commitments on these obligations is extremely strong.
A-2	A short-term obligation rated ‘A-2’ is somewhat more susceptible to the adverse effects of changes in circumstances and economic conditions than obligations in higher rating categories. However, the obligor’s capacity to meet its financial commitments on the obligation is satisfactory.

A-3 A short-term obligation rated 'A-3' exhibits adequate protection parameters. However, adverse economic conditions or changing circumstances are more likely to weaken an obligor's capacity to meet its financial commitments on the obligation.

B A short-term obligation rated 'B' is regarded as vulnerable and has significant speculative characteristics. The obligor currently has the capacity to meet its financial commitments; however, it faces major ongoing uncertainties that could lead to the obligor's inadequate capacity to meet its financial commitments.

C A short-term obligation rated 'C' is currently vulnerable to nonpayment and is dependent upon favorable business, financial, and economic conditions for the obligor to meet its financial commitments on the obligation.

D A short-term obligation rated 'D' is in default or in breach of an imputed promise. For non-hybrid capital instruments, the 'D' rating category is used when payments on an obligation are not made on the date due, unless S&P believes that such payments will be made within any stated grace period. However, any stated grace period longer than five business days will be treated as five business days. The 'D' rating also will be used upon the filing of a bankruptcy petition or the taking of a similar action and where default on an obligation is a virtual certainty, for example due to automatic stay provisions. A rating on an obligation is lowered to 'D' if it is subject to a distressed debt restructuring.

Description of S&P's Municipal Short-Term Note Ratings

An S&P U.S. municipal note rating reflects S&P's opinion about the liquidity factors and market access risks unique to the notes. Notes due in three years or less will likely receive a note rating. Notes with an original maturity of more than three years will most likely receive a long-term debt rating. In determining which type of rating, if any, to assign, S&P's analysis will review the following considerations:

- Amortization schedule—the larger the final maturity relative to other maturities, the more likely it will be treated as a note; and
- Source of payment—the more dependent the issue is on the market for its refinancing, the more likely it will be treated as a note.

S&P's municipal short-term note rating symbols are as follows:

SP-1 Strong capacity to pay principal and interest. An issue determined to possess a very strong capacity to pay debt service is given a plus (+) designation.

SP-2 Satisfactory capacity to pay principal and interest, with some vulnerability to adverse financial and economic changes over the term of the notes.

SP-3 Speculative capacity to pay principal and interest.

D 'D' is assigned upon failure to pay the note when due, completion of a distressed debt restructuring, or the filing of a bankruptcy petition or the taking of similar action and where default on an obligation is a virtual certainty, for example due to automatic stay provisions.

Description of Fitch Ratings' ("Fitch") Credit Ratings Scales

Fitch publishes credit ratings that are forward-looking opinions on the relative ability of an entity or obligation to meet financial commitments. Issuer default ratings (IDRs) are assigned to corporations,

sovereign entities, financial institutions such as banks, leasing companies and insurers, and public finance entities (local and regional governments). Issue level ratings are also assigned, often include an expectation of recovery and may be notched above or below the issuer level rating. Issue ratings are assigned to secured and unsecured debt securities, loans, preferred stock and other instruments, Structured finance ratings are issue ratings to securities backed by receivables or other financial assets that consider the obligations' relative vulnerability to default.

Fitch's credit ratings relating to issuers are an opinion on the relative ability of an entity to meet financial commitments, such as interest, preferred dividends, repayment of principal, insurance claims or counterparty obligations. Credit ratings relating to securities and obligations of an issuer can include a recovery expectation. Credit ratings are used by investors as indications of the likelihood of receiving the money owed to them in accordance with the terms on which they invested. The agency's credit ratings cover the global spectrum of corporate, sovereign financial, bank, insurance, and public finance entities (including supranational and sub-national entities) and the securities or other obligations they issue, as well as structured finance securities backed by receivables or other financial assets.

The terms "investment grade" and "speculative grade" have established themselves over time as shorthand to describe the categories 'AAA' to 'BBB' (investment grade) and 'BB' to 'D' (speculative grade). The terms investment grade and speculative grade are market conventions and do not imply any recommendation or endorsement of a specific security for investment purposes. Investment grade categories indicate relatively low to moderate credit risk, while ratings in the speculative categories either signal a higher level of credit risk or that a default has already occurred.

Fitch may also include issues relating to a rated issuer that are not and have not been rated on its web page. Such issues are also denoted as 'NR'.

Credit ratings express risk in relative rank order, which is to say they are ordinal measures of credit risk and are not predictive of a specific frequency of default or loss.

Fitch's credit ratings do not directly address any risk other than credit risk. In particular, ratings do not deal with the risk of a market value loss on a rated security due to changes in interest rates, liquidity and other market considerations. However, in terms of payment obligation on the rated liability, market risk may be considered to the extent that it influences the ability of an issuer to pay upon a commitment.

Ratings nonetheless do not reflect market risk to the extent that they influence the size or other conditionality of the obligation to pay upon a commitment (for example, in the case of index-linked bonds).

In the default components of ratings assigned to individual obligations or instruments, the agency typically rates to the likelihood of non-payment or default in accordance with the terms of that instrument's documentation. In limited cases, Fitch may include additional considerations (*i.e.* rate to a higher or lower standard than that implied in the obligation's documentation).

The primary credit rating scales can be used to provide a rating of privately issued obligations or certain note issuance programs or for private ratings. In this case the rating is not published, but only provided to the issuer or its agents in the form of a rating letter.

The primary credit rating scales may also be used to provide ratings for a more narrow scope, including interest strips and return of principal or in other forms of opinions such as credit opinions or rating assessment services. Credit opinions are either a notch- or category-specific view using the primary rating scale and omit one or more characteristics of a full rating or meet them to a different

standard. Credit opinions will be indicated using a lower case letter symbol combined with either an '*' (*e.g.* 'bbb+*') or (cat) suffix to denote the opinion status. Credit opinions will be point-in-time typically but may be monitored if the analytical group believes information will be sufficiently available. Rating assessment services are a notch-specific view using the primary rating scale of how an existing or potential rating may be changed by a given set of hypothetical circumstances. While credit opinions and rating assessment services are point-in-time and are not monitored, they may have a directional watch or outlook assigned, which can signify the trajectory of the credit profile.

Description of Fitch's Long-Term Corporate Finance Obligations Rating Scales

Ratings of individual securities or financial obligations of a corporate issuer address relative vulnerability to default on an ordinal scale. In addition, for financial obligations in corporate finance, a measure of recovery given default on that liability is also included in the rating assessment. This notably applies to covered bonds ratings, which incorporate both an indication of the probability of default and of the recovery given a default of this debt instrument. On the contrary, Ratings of debtor-in-possession ("DIP") obligations incorporate the expectation of full repayment.

The relationship between the issuer scale and obligation scale assumes a generic historical average recovery. Individual obligations can be assigned ratings higher, lower, or the same as that entity's issuer rating or issuer default rating ("IDR"), based on their relative ranking, relative vulnerability to default or based on explicit Recovery Ratings.

As a result, individual obligations of entities, such as corporations, are assigned ratings higher, lower, or the same as that entity's issuer rating or IDR, except DIP obligation ratings that are not based off an IDR. At the lower end of the ratings scale, Fitch publishes explicit Recovery Ratings in many cases to complement issuer and obligation ratings.

Fitch long-term obligations rating scales are as follows:

AAA	Highest Credit Quality. 'AAA' ratings denote the lowest expectation of default risk. They are assigned only in cases of exceptionally strong capacity for payment of financial commitments. This capacity is highly unlikely to be adversely affected by foreseeable events.
AA	Very High Credit Quality. 'AA' ratings denote expectations of very low default risk. They indicate very strong capacity for payment of financial commitments. This capacity is not significantly vulnerable to foreseeable events.
A	High Credit Quality. 'A' ratings denote expectations of low default risk. The capacity for payment of financial commitments is considered strong. This capacity may, nevertheless, be more vulnerable to adverse business or economic conditions than is the case for higher ratings.
BBB	Good Credit Quality. 'BBB' ratings indicate that expectations of default risk are currently low. The capacity for payment of financial commitments is considered adequate, but adverse business or economic conditions are more likely to impair this capacity.
BB	Speculative. 'BB' ratings indicate an elevated vulnerability to default risk, particularly in the event of adverse changes in business or economic conditions over time; however, business or financial flexibility exists that supports the servicing of financial commitments.

B	Highly Speculative. 'B' ratings indicate that material default risk is present, but a limited margin of safety remains. Financial commitments are currently being met; however, capacity for continued payment is vulnerable to deterioration in the business and economic environment.
CCC	Substantial Credit Risk. 'CCC' ratings indicate very low margin for safety. Default is a real possibility.
CC	Very High Levels of Credit Risk. 'CC' ratings indicate default of some kind appears probable.
C	Exceptionally High Levels of Credit Risk. 'C' ratings indicate default or default-like process has begun, or for a closed funding vehicle, payment capacity is irrevocably impaired.
RD	Restricted Default. 'RD' ratings indicate an issuer that in Fitch's opinion has experienced an uncured payment default or distressed debt exchange on a bond, loan or other material financial obligation, but has not entered into bankruptcy filings, administration, receivership, liquidation, or other formal winding-up procedure, and has not otherwise ceased operating.
D	Default. 'D' ratings indicate an issuer that in Fitch's opinion has entered into bankruptcy filings, administration, receivership, liquidation or other formal winding-up procedure or that has otherwise ceased business and debt is still outstanding.

Within rating categories, Fitch may use modifiers. The modifiers "+" or "-" may be appended to a rating to denote relative status within major rating categories.

For example, the rating category 'AA' has three notch-specific rating levels ('AA+'; 'AA'; 'AA–'; each a rating level). Such suffixes are not added to 'AAA' ratings and ratings below the 'CCC' category. For the short-term rating category of 'F1', a '+' may be appended.

Description of Fitch's Short-Term Ratings Assigned to Issuers and Obligations

A short-term issuer or obligation rating is based in all cases on the short-term vulnerability to default of the rated entity and relates to the capacity to meet financial obligations in accordance with the documentation governing the relevant obligation. Short-term deposit ratings may be adjusted for loss severity. Short-term ratings are assigned to obligations whose initial maturity is viewed as "short term" based on market convention. Typically, this means up to 13 months for corporate, sovereign, and structured obligations and up to 36 months for obligations in U.S. public finance markets.

Fitch short-term ratings are as follows:

F1	Highest Short-Term Credit Quality. Indicates the strongest intrinsic capacity for timely payment of financial commitments; may have an added "+" to denote any exceptionally strong credit feature.
F2	Good Short-Term Credit Quality. Good intrinsic capacity for timely payment of financial commitments.
F3	Fair Short-Term Credit Quality. The intrinsic capacity for timely payment of financial commitments is adequate.
B	Speculative Short-Term Credit Quality. Minimal capacity for timely payment of financial commitments, plus heightened vulnerability to near term adverse changes in financial and economic conditions.

C	High Short-Term Default Risk. Default is a real possibility.
RD	Restricted Default. Indicates an entity that has defaulted on one or more of its financial commitments, although it continues to meet other financial obligations. Typically applicable to entity ratings only.
D	Default. Indicates a broad-based default event for an entity, or the default of a short-term obligation.

APPENDIX B

Open-End Active and Fixed Income Index Fund Proxy Voting Policy

Procedures Governing Delegation of Proxy Voting to Fund Advisers

Effective Date: January 1, 2025

Applies to the following types of Funds registered under the 1940 Act:

☐ Index Equity Mutual Funds and Exchange-Traded Funds
☒ Open-End Active and Fixed Income Index Mutual Funds and Exchange-Traded Funds
☐ Money Market Funds
☐ Closed-End Funds
☐ Other

Objective and Scope

Set forth below is the Open-End Active and Fixed Income Index Fund Proxy Voting Policy.

Policy / Document Requirements and Statements

The Boards of Trustees/Directors ("Directors") of certain open-end funds (the "Funds") advised by BlackRock Fund Advisors or BlackRock Advisors, LLC ("BlackRock"), have the responsibility for the oversight of voting proxies relating to portfolio securities of the Funds, and have determined that it is in the best interests of the Funds and their shareholders to delegate the responsibility to vote proxies to BlackRock, subject to the principles outlined in this Policy, as part of BlackRock's authority to manage, acquire and dispose of account assets, all as contemplated by the Funds' respective investment management agreements.

BlackRock has adopted the BlackRock Active Investment Stewardship Global Engagement and Voting Guidelines (as from time to time amended, the "Guidelines") governing proxy voting by active and fixed income index Funds managed by BlackRock. The Guidelines include "climate and decarbonization" guidelines which apply to the Funds listed in Appendix A, if any.

BlackRock will cast votes on behalf of each of the Funds covered by this policy on specific proxy issues in respect of securities held by each such Fund (or may refrain from voting) in accordance with the Guidelines.

Conflicts Management

BlackRock Active Investment Stewardship ("BAIS") maintains policies and procedures that seek to prevent undue influence on BlackRock's proxy voting activity and to mitigate material conflicts of interest in the exercise of proxy voting responsibilities. Potential material conflicts, and the resultant potential for undue influence, might be due to a relationship between the investee company (or any shareholder proponent or dissident shareholder) and BlackRock, BlackRock's affiliates or employees, or a Fund or a Fund's affiliates. BlackRock has taken certain steps to mitigate potential conflicts, which are outlined in detail in the Guidelines. In mitigating conflicts, BAIS will adhere to the Guidelines.

In certain instances, BAIS will engage an independent third-party voting service provider to make proxy voting recommendations as a further safeguard to avoid potential conflicts of interest, to satisfy regulatory compliance requirements, or as may be otherwise required by applicable law.

With respect to the relationship between securities lending and proxy voting, shares on loan cannot be voted and BlackRock may determine to recall them for voting, as guided by BlackRock's fiduciary responsibility to act in clients' financial interests. The Guidelines set forth BlackRock's approach to recalling securities on loan in connection with proxy voting.

Reports to the Board

BlackRock will report on an annual basis to the Directors on (1) a summary of the proxy voting process as applicable to the Funds covered by this policy in the preceding year together with a representation that all votes were in accordance with the Guidelines and (2) any material changes to the Guidelines, including material changes to conflicts management practices, that have not previously been reported.

Appendix A

BlackRock U.S. Carbon Transition Readiness ETF
BlackRock World ex U.S. Carbon Transition Readiness ETF

BlackRock Active Investment Stewardship

Global Engagement and Voting Guidelines

Effective as of January 2026

BlackRock®

Contents

Overview 3
Introduction to BlackRock 4
About BlackRock Active Investment Stewardship 4
Our approach to stewardship within active equities 5
Our approach to stewardship within fixed income 5
Boards of Directors 6
Executive compensation 9
Non-executive director compensation 10
Capital structure 10
Transactions and special situations 11
Corporate reporting, risk management and audit 12
Shareholder rights and protections 14
Shareholder proposals 15
Corporate political activities 15
Material sustainability-related risks and opportunities 16
Key stakeholders 16
Climate and decarbonization investment objectives 16
Appendix 1: How we fulfil and oversee our active investment stewardship responsibilities 18

Overview

This document provides high level guidance on how BlackRock Active Investment Stewardship (BAIS) views corporate governance matters that are commonly put to a shareholder vote, or on which investors engage with issuers.[1] BAIS works in partnership with BlackRock's investment teams, excluding index equity[2], providing expertise on investment stewardship and engaging with companies alongside and on behalf of those teams when appropriate. The team is responsible for establishing voting guidelines for the active equity platform, providing vote recommendations and operationalizing voting decisions. The guidance informs the voting recommendations BAIS makes to BlackRock's active portfolio managers. It applies to active equity holdings in BlackRock's fundamental equity, systematic equity and multi-asset solutions strategies. It also may apply to holdings in BlackRock's index and active fixed income strategies, to the extent those strategies hold voting securities or conduct issuer engagements. The guidelines are not prescriptive as active portfolio managers have discretion as to how they integrate these guidelines within their investment processes in light of their clients' or funds' investment objectives. There are separate, independently developed principles and voting policies that are applied to BlackRock's index equity investments by a distinct and independent function, BlackRock Investment Stewardship.

1 This document includes BAIS' benchmark policy, which covers nearly all active equity holdings in BlackRock's fundamental equity, systematic equity and multi-asset solutions strategies. The benchmark policy also may apply to holdings in BlackRock's index and active fixed income strategies, to the extent those strategies hold voting securities or conduct issuer engagements. This document also includes BAIS' decarbonization policy, which covers holdings in BlackRock active funds that have climate and decarbonization objectives in addition to financial objectives.

2 BlackRock segmented active and index equity investment functions, including stewardship, in January 2025 as part of a strategic initiative to unlock the full breadth of the firm's active and private markets capabilities for clients. As a result, there are two stewardship teams, which operate independently of one another and have separate voting policies.

Introduction to BlackRock

BlackRock's mission is to help more people invest better. The money BlackRock manages is not its own — it belongs to BlackRock's clients, many of whom make their own asset allocation and portfolio construction decisions. As a fiduciary, BlackRock invests on clients' behalf to help them meet their investment objectives. The firm does this by understanding clients' long-term investment objectives and offering choice on how and where they wish to invest their money. BlackRock then helps clients seek the best risk-adjusted returns based on those choices, underpinning this work with research, data and analytics.

At BlackRock, investment stewardship is core to our role as an asset manager and a fiduciary to our clients. As stewards of our clients' assets, we engage with companies to discuss the corporate governance and business practices that, in our experience, support companies in delivering durable, risk-adjusted financial returns over time. We are committed to building strong relationships through constructive, ongoing dialogue with the boards and executive management of the companies in which our clients are invested.

About BlackRock Active Investment Stewardship

BlackRock Active Investment Stewardship (BAIS) is a specialist team within the Portfolio Management Group and manages BlackRock's stewardship engagement and voting on behalf of clients invested in active strategies globally. BAIS is also responsible for engagement with issuers in index fixed income strategies, where appropriate. Our activities are informed by these Global Engagement and Voting Guidelines (the "Guidelines") and insights from active investment analysts and portfolio managers, with whom we work closely in engaging companies and voting at shareholder meetings.

Engagement with public companies is the foundation of our approach to stewardship within fundamental active investing.[3] Through direct dialogue with company leadership, we seek to understand their businesses and how they manage risks and opportunities to deliver durable, risk-adjusted financial returns. Portfolio managers and stewardship specialists may engage jointly or independently on material corporate governance matters. Our discussions focus on topics relevant to a company's success over time, including governance and leadership, corporate strategy, capital structure and financial performance, operations and material sustainability-related risks, as well as macro-economic, geopolitical and sector dynamics. We aim to be constructive investors and are generally supportive of management teams that have a track record of financial value creation. We aim to build and maintain strong relationships with company leadership based on open dialogue and mutual respect.

Different active equity strategies may implement these voting guidelines differently, as a result of the latitude each portfolio manager has to make independent voting decisions on their holdings. For example, BAIS will generally vote the holdings in Systematic Active Equity portfolios in accordance with these guidelines. We provide voting recommendations to fundamental equity portfolio managers, who may determine to vote differently based on each portfolio's investment objectives and strategy.

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[3] On February 11, 2025, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) staff issued updated guidance for shareholders to maintain their eligibility to report their beneficial ownership under Schedule 13G of the Exchange Act. We comply fully with these requirements and do not engage with portfolio companies for the purpose, or with the effect, of changing or influencing control of the company.

These guidelines discuss BAIS' views on corporate governance topics on which we may engage with management teams and board directors[4] and on matters that routinely come to a shareholder vote. We recognize that accepted corporate governance norms can differ across markets, and believe these guidelines represent globally applicable elements of governance that support a company's ability to manage material risks and opportunities and deliver financial returns to investors. Generally, we believe companies should observe accepted corporate governance norms within their local markets or, particularly in markets without well-established norms, aspire to widely recognized international best practices. As one of many minority shareholders, BlackRock cannot — and does not try to — direct a company's strategy or its implementation. We look to companies to provide disclosures that explain how their approach to corporate governance best aligns with the financial interests of their investors.

Our approach to stewardship within active equities

Voting at a company's shareholder meeting is a right of share ownership and a core principle of corporate governance. The voting rights attached to clients' holdings are an important mechanism for investors to express support for, or concern about, a company's performance. As a fiduciary, BlackRock is legally required to make proxy voting determinations, on behalf of clients who have delegated voting authority to us, in a manner consistent with BlackRock's contractual arrangements with clients and funds.

In general, we tend to support the recommendations of the board of directors and management. As indicated below, we may vote against management recommendations when we have concerns about how companies are serving the financial interests of our clients as their shareholders. BAIS takes a globally consistent approach to voting but considers the different corporate governance regulations and norms across markets. Votes are determined on a case-by-case basis, in the context of a company's situation and the investment mandate we have from clients. Please see page 19 for more information about how we fulfill and oversee our investment stewardship responsibilities for BlackRock's non-index equity strategies.[5]

Our approach to stewardship within fixed income

Although fixed income investors do not have the right to vote at shareholder meetings, issuer engagement is a component of fixed income investment strategies at BlackRock, particularly for those with sustainability objectives in addition to financial objectives. Most corporate governance-related fixed income engagements are undertaken in conjunction with the active investment stewardship team, and often active equity investors. In addition to the topics listed below, engagement with fixed income investment teams may help inform an issuer's approach to structuring specialist issuances and the standard terms and information in bond documentation.

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4 References to the board, board directors or non-executive directors should be understood to include supervisory boards and their members, where relevant.

5 Non-index equity strategies include active equity holdings in BlackRock's fundamental equity, systematic equity and multi-asset solutions strategies, as well as holdings in BlackRock's index and active fixed income strategies, to the extent those strategies hold voting securities or conduct issuer engagements.

Boards of Directors

Roles and responsibilities

There is widespread consensus that the foundation of good corporate governance is an effective board of directors that is able to advise and supervise management in an independent and objective manner.[6]

We look to the board of directors (hereafter the "board") to have an oversight role in the establishment and realization of a company's strategy, purpose and culture. These constructs are interdependent and, when aligned, can better position a company to be resilient in the face of a changing business environment, help reduce the risks of corporate or employee misconduct, and attract and retain the caliber of workers necessary to deliver financial performance over time.

In overseeing the management of the company, the board ensures the necessary resources, policies and procedures are in place to help management meet its strategic objectives within an agreed risk tolerance.

One of the most important responsibilities of the board is to appoint, and remove as necessary, the chief executive officer ("CEO"). In addition, the board plays a meaningful role in monitoring the performance of the CEO and other key executives, determining executive compensation, ensuring a rigorous audit, overseeing strategy execution and risk management and engaging with shareholders, and other stakeholders, as necessary.

Composition and effectiveness

Appointment process

A formal and transparent process for identifying and appointing director candidates is critical to ensuring the board is composed of directors with the appropriate mix of skills and experience. Generally, the board or a sub-committee determines the general criteria given the company's circumstances (e.g., sector, maturity, geographic footprint) and any additional criteria for a specific role being filled (e.g., financial expertise, industry track record). To inform the process, we encourage companies to review the skills and experience of incumbent directors to identify any gaps and whether the skills and experience of a director candidate would be additive. We welcome disclosures that explain how the board considered different skills and experience to ensure that the directors collectively can be effective in fulfilling their responsibilities. We assess a company's board composition against that of its peer group and local market requirements.

Shareholders periodically vote to elect directors to serve on the board. We do not prescribe any particular board composition in our engagements or voting but seek to understand how well placed a board is to act in investors' interests. We may vote against the election of the most senior independent director, or the chair of the relevant committee, where a company has not demonstrated it has an appointment process that results in a high functioning board with the appropriate complement of skills and experience amongst the directors to support strong financial performance over time. We may vote against newly nominated directors who do not seem to have the appropriate skills or experience to contribute to the board's effectiveness.

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[6] See the Corporate Governance Codes of Germany, Japan, and the UK, as well as the corporate governance principles of the US Business Roundtable as examples.

Independence

Director independence from management, significant shareholders or other stakeholders (e.g., government or employees) is of paramount importance to the protection of the interests of minority shareholders such as BlackRock's clients. We consider it good practice for at least half the directors to be independent and free from conflicts of interest or undue influence.[7] This also helps to ensure that board committees are composed of a sufficient number of independent directors. Companies domiciled in markets with a higher threshold for board independence should meet those local requirements.

We may vote against the election of non-independent directors if the board does not have a sufficient balance of independence. We may also vote against the election of the chair of the committee responsible for board composition if this is a perennial issue.

Independent board leadership

Practices across markets differ, as do board structures, but we observe two main approaches to independent board leadership. One is a non-executive, independent chair of the board who is responsible for leading the board in the effective exercise of its duties. The other is a lead or senior independent director, who is responsible for coordinating with the other non-executive directors and working closely with the executive chair on the board agenda and other board procedures. In this case, the executive chair and the lead independent director work together to ensure the board is effectively fulfilling its responsibilities. In our view, the independent leader of the board, and/or the chair of a relevant committee, should be available to investors to discuss governance matters such as CEO succession, executive pay, and board performance. We look to boards to explain their board leadership model and how it serves the interests of shareholders.

We may vote against the election of the chair of the committee responsible for board composition if there is not an identified independent leader of the board with clear responsibilities for board performance. We may vote against the most senior independent director if the board has a policy of not engaging with shareholders.

Tenure and succession

In our view, it is good practice for boards to establish the length of time a director would normally be expected to serve, in line with market norms where those exist. We find it helpful when companies disclose their approach to director tenure particularly around the contributions of directors who have served for longer periods than typically provided for under local practice. In our experience, long-serving directors could become less independent given their long-term relationship with management and involvement in past board decisions.

Succession planning for board roles helps achieve the appropriate cadence of turnover that balances renewal through the regular introduction of directors with fresh perspectives and expertise with continuity through the retention of directors with long-term knowledge of the board and company.

In markets where there is not specific director tenure guidance from regulation or corporate governance best practices, we may vote against the election of the chair of the committee responsible for board composition if a company does not clearly disclose its approach to director tenure and board

[7] Common impediments to independence may include but are not limited to: current or recent employment at the company or a subsidiary; being, or representing, a shareholder with a substantial shareholding in the company; interlocking directorships; lengthy tenure, and having any other interest, business, or other relationship which could, or could reasonably be perceived to, materially interfere with a director's ability to act in the best interests of the company and shareholders.

renewal. We may vote against the election of directors who have served for more years than is typical in markets with specific guidance, where the case for their continued service is not evident.

Capacity

To be effective and engaged, directors need to have the time and energy to commit to the role. In our view, an effective board will assess the ability of its members to maintain an appropriate focus on board matters and the company taking into consideration competing responsibilities. We recognize that board leadership roles vary across markets in responsibilities and required time commitment but note that they are generally more intensive than a standard directorship. We will take local norms and practices into consideration when making our voting determinations across markets.

We may vote against the election of directors who do not seem to have sufficient capacity to effectively fulfil their duties to the board and company.

Director elections

Regular election of directors, ideally annually, supports director accountability to shareholders. A classified board structure[8] may be justified by a company when it needs consistency and stability during a time of transition, or on the basis of its business model (e.g., a non-operating company such as closed-end funds).

Shareholders should have the opportunity to evaluate nominated directors individually rather than in bundled slates. We look to companies to provide sufficient information on each director standing for election so that shareholders can assess their capabilities and suitability. We will generally not support the election of directors whose names and biographical details have not been disclosed sufficiently in advance of the shareholder meeting.

Each director's appointment should be dependent on receiving a simple majority of the votes cast at the shareholder meeting. Where a company's practices differ, we look to the board to provide a detailed explanation as to how its approach best serves investors' interests.

We may vote for shareholder or management proposals seeking to establish annual election of directors and/or a simple majority vote standard for director elections. We may vote against all the directors standing for election as part of a single slate if we have concerns about the profile or performance of an individual director.

Committees

Many boards establish committees to focus on specific responsibilities of the board such as audit and risk, governance and human capital, and executive compensation, amongst other matters. We do not prescribe to companies what committees they should establish, but we seek to understand the board's rationale for the committee structure it determines is appropriate. We note that, in some markets, regulation requires such committees. The responsibilities of each committee should be clear, and the board should ensure that all critical matters are assigned either to the full board or to one of the committees. It is helpful to investor understanding when the board discloses the structure,

[8] A classified board divides the directors into classes with different overlapping terms. As a result, only one class of directors stands for election in any one year.

membership, proportion of independent directors, and responsibilities of each committee. The responsibilities we typically see assigned to the three most common committees include:

- Audit and risk – oversight responsibilities for the integrity of financial reporting, risk management and compliance with legal and regulatory requirements; may also play an oversight role in relation to the internal audit function and whistleblowing mechanisms.
- Nominating, governance and human capital – oversight responsibilities for corporate governance principles and practices of the company, including the periodic review of board performance; responsibility for succession planning for CEO and key board roles, as well as the director appointment process; may also have oversight responsibilities for human capital management strategies, including corporate culture and purpose.
- Executive compensation – determines the compensation policies and programs for the CEO and other executive officers, approves annual awards and payments under the policies; may also have oversight responsibilities for firm-wide compensation policies.

We may vote against the election of the chair of the committee or other directors serving as committee members to convey concerns about how a committee has undertaken its responsibilities. We may vote against the election of the most senior non-executive director if there is not a clearly disclosed approach to board committees.

Board and director evaluation

We consider it best practice for companies to conduct an annual review of the performance of the board, the committees, the chair and individual directors. Periodically, this review could be undertaken by an independent third party able to bring objective perspectives to the board on governance and performance. We encourage companies to disclose their approach to and the objectives of evaluations, including any changes made to the board's approach as a result.

Access to independent advice

To support the directors in effectively fulfilling their duties to the company and shareholders, they should have access to independent advice. In certain circumstances, it may be helpful to boards to retain independent third parties to advise on critical matters. These might include new industry developments such as emergent and disruptive technology, operating events with material consequences for the company's reputation and/or performance, or significant transactions. Board committees may similarly retain third parties to advise them on specialist matters such as audit, compensation and succession planning.

Executive compensation

Boards play an important role in establishing compensation arrangements that enable the company to recruit, retain and reward the caliber of executive management necessary to lead and operate the company to deliver superior financial returns over time. We focus on alignment between variable pay and a company's financial performance.

Generally, executive compensation arrangements have four components: base salary, annual bonus that rewards performance against short-term metrics, incentives — most often share-based- that reward performance against long-term metrics, and pensions and benefits. In our observation, base salary, pensions and benefits are largely set relative to market norms and benchmarks. The annual bonus and share-based incentive, or variable pay plans, tend to be tailored to the company, its sector and long-term strategy, as well as the individuals the board is seeking to recruit and motivate.

Recognizing the unique circumstances of each company, we determine whether to support a company's approach to executive compensation on a case-by-case basis. We rely on companies providing sufficient quantitative and qualitative information in their disclosures to enable shareholders to understand the compensation arrangements and assess the alignment with investors' interests. Features we look for in compensation arrangements include:

- Fixed pay components, including base salary, benefits and prerequisites that are appropriate in the context of the company's size, sector and market.
- Variable pay subject to performance metrics that are closely linked to the company's short- and long-term strategic objectives.
- Long-term incentives that motivate sustained performance across a multi-year period.
- A balance between fixed and variable pay, short- and long-term incentives, and specific instruments (cash and equity awards) that promotes pay program durability and seldom necessitates one-off, discretionary payments.
- Pay outcomes that are consistent with the returns to investors over the relevant time period.
- Board discretion, if allowed within the variable pay arrangements, to be used sparingly, responsibly and transparently.
- A requirement, that participants in long-term share-based incentive plans build a meaningful shareholding in the company within a defined time period, as determined by the board or relevant board committee.
- Change of control provisions that appropriately balance the interests of executives and shareholders.
- Clawback or malus provisions that allow the company to recoup or hold back variable compensation from individuals whose awards were based on fraudulent activities, misstated financial reports, or executive misconduct.
- Severance arrangements that protect the company's interests but do not cost more than is contractual.

We may vote against proposals to introduce new share-based incentives, approve existing policies or plans, or approve the compensation report where we do not see alignment between executive compensation arrangements and our clients' financial interests. When there is not an alternative, or where there have been multi-year issues with compensation misaligned with performance, we may vote against the election of the chair of the responsible committee, or the most senior independent director.

Non-executive director compensation

Companies generally pay non-executive directors an annual retainer or fee in cash, shares or a combination of the two. Some companies also pay additional fees for service on board committees or in board leadership roles. We do not support non-executive directors participating in performance-based incentive plans as doing so may create a conflict of interest and undermine their independence from management, whom they oversee.

Capital structure

Boards are responsible for ensuring senior executive leadership has established a capital strategy that achieves appropriate capital allocation in support of long-term financial resilience.

Where company practices diverge from those set out below, we look for companies to disclose why they view these practices to be aligned with shareholders' interests. We may vote against management proposals seeking capital-related authorities, or the election of the most senior independent director, if we have concerns about a company's approach. We may also support a shareholder proposal seeking conversion of shares with differentiated voting rights to a one-share, one-vote standard.

Share issuance

We assess requests for share issuance for particular transactions on a case-by-case basis. We will generally support authorities to issue shares when subject to pre-emptive rights, and up to 20% absent pre-emptive rights. We consider it good practice for companies to seek regular approval of these authorities to allow shareholders to take into consideration how prior authorities were used, as well as the current circumstances of the company and the market environment.

Share buybacks

We assess share buyback proposals in the context of the company's disclosed capital management strategy and management's determination of the appropriate balance between investment that supports the long-term growth of the company and returning cash to investors. We also take into consideration the effect of a buyback program on the company's balance sheet and executive compensation arrangements and the price at which shares are repurchased relative to market price. We consider it good practice for companies to seek regular approval of these authorities to allow shareholders to take into consideration how prior authorities were used, as well as the current circumstances of the company and the market environment.

Dividends

We generally defer to management and the board on dividend policy but may engage to seek further clarification where a proposed dividend appears out of line with the company's financial position.

Differentiated voting rights

We prefer companies to adopt a one-share, one-vote structure for share classes with the same economic exposure. Certain companies, particularly those new to public markets, could make the case to adopt a differentiated voting rights structure, or dual class stock. In those situations, we encourage companies to evaluate and seek approval for their capital structure on a periodic basis.

Transactions and special situations

We monitor developments in transactions and special situations closely and undertake our own detailed analyses of proposals.

Mergers and acquisitions

We evaluate proposed mergers or acquisitions by assessing the financial outcome for our clients as minority shareholders. Management should provide an assessment of the proposed transaction's strategic and financial rationale, along with its execution and operational risks. We review each transaction independently based on these factors and the degree to which the transaction enhances shareholder value. The board might consider establishing an ad hoc transaction committee to undertake an independent assessment of a significant merger or acquisition, in advance of making its recommendation to shareholders.

We will vote against transactions that, in our assessment, do not advance our clients' financial interests.

Anti-takeover defenses

In principle, we do not support companies using anti-takeover defenses, also known as poison pills or shareholder rights plans, as they can entrench management and boards which have not delivered long-term shareholder value. By exception, a poison pill may be supported if its purpose is to delay a takeover that is considered sub-optimal and enable management to seek an improved offer. Similarly, management could make the case to use a poison pill to block a shareholder activism campaign that may be counter to the interests of other investors. Defense mechanisms introduced in these circumstances should be limited in term and threshold, and also be closely monitored by the independent members of the board. We consider it good practice for companies to put to a shareholder vote any mechanisms expected to be in place for more than 12 months.

Shareholder activism

When companies are the focus of an activism campaign, we may communicate with the activist to understand their analysis and objectives, once they have publicly disclosed their campaign. We may also engage with company management and possibly board members, especially those the activist may be seeking to replace. In our assessment, we evaluate various factors, including the concerns raised by the activist and the case for change; the quality of both the activist's and management's plans; and the qualifications of each party's candidates. We evaluate each contested situation by assessing the potential financial outcome for our clients as minority shareholders.

We may support board candidates nominated by a shareholder activist if BAIS, in its independent judgment, or the relevant portfolio manager has determined that there is a case for change to enhance shareholder value, or if the incumbent board members do not demonstrate the relevant skills and expertise or have a poor track record of protecting shareholders' interests.

Significant shareholders and related party transactions

Boards of companies with affiliated shareholders or directors should give equitable consideration to the interests of all shareholders when evaluating related party transactions.

We consider it good practice for transactions with related parties, such as significant shareholders or companies affiliated with the public company, to be disclosed in detail and conducted on terms similar to what would objectively have been agreed with a non-related party. In our view, such transactions should be reviewed and approved by the independent members of the board, and if voted on, only disinterested shareholders should vote.

Corporate reporting, risk management and audit

Investors depend on corporate reporting, both regulatory and voluntary, to understand a company's strategy, its implementation and financial performance, as well as to assess the quality of management and operations and potential for the company to create shareholder value over time. We consider it good practice for the board to oversee corporate reporting and the policies and procedures underpinning the internal audit function and external audit.

A company's financial reporting should provide decision-useful information for investors, and other stakeholders, on its financial performance and position. It should provide an accurate and balanced assessment of the risks and opportunities the company faces in realizing its long-term strategy.

Accordingly, the assumptions made by management and reviewed by the auditor in preparing the financial statements should be reasonable and justified. Financial statements should be prepared in accordance with globally developed reporting standards and any divergence from generally accepted accounting principles should be explained in detail and justified. Accounting restatements should be explained in detail and any remedial actions, and the implications of these, disclosed.

In this context, audit committees play a vital role in a company's financial reporting system by providing independent oversight of the accounts, material financial and, where appropriate to the jurisdiction, non-financial information, internal control frameworks and Enterprise Risk Management systems. In our view, effective audit committee oversight strengthens the quality and reliability of a company's financial statements and provides an important level of reassurance to shareholders. Audit committees should have a procedure in place for assessing the independence of the auditor and the quality of the external audit process annually.

Similarly, we encourage companies to disclose material sustainability-related factors that are integral to how a company manages risks or generates revenue. BAIS finds it helpful to our understanding when companies provide robust, standardized disclosures on their material sustainability-related risks and opportunities. The International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) is one entity working to meet these objectives through its reporting standards, which may be helpful to companies in preparing such reports.[9] However, we do not mandate any specific disclosure framework, and note that companies in certain jurisdictions are subject to mandatory reporting requirements under standards specified by policy makers.[10]

Companies should establish robust risk management and internal control processes appropriate to the company's business, risk tolerance, and regulatory environment. A credible whistleblowing system for employees, and potentially other stakeholders, can be a useful mechanism for ensuring that senior management and the board are aware of potential misconduct or breaches in risk management and internal control processes.

A comprehensive audit conducted by an independent audit firm contributes to investor confidence in the quality of corporate reporting. It is helpful when the audit report gives some insight into the scope and focus of the audit, as well as any critical audit matters identified and how these were resolved. A comprehensive and effective audit is time and resource intensive, and the audit fee should be commensurate. Fees paid to the audit firm for non-audit consulting should not exceed the audit fee to a degree that may prompt concerns about the independence of the audit. The audit committee should explain its position on auditor tenure and how it confirmed that the auditor remained independent.

We may vote against the election of the responsible directors if corporate reporting is insufficient or there are material misstatements in financial reports. In markets where relevant, we may vote against a proposal to approve the financial statements or the discharge of the board when we are concerned about the quality of corporate reporting or the audit. We may vote against proposals to appoint the auditor, ratify the audit report, or approve the audit fee if we are concerned about the auditor's independence, the quality of the audit, or there are material misstatements in financial reports and the board has not established reasonable remediation plans.

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9 The ISSB is an independent standard-setting body within the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) Foundation. Please refer to the IFRS website to learn more about the framework and standards S1 "General Requirements for Disclosure of Sustainability-related Financial Information" and S2 "Climate-related Disclosures."

10 See, for examples, https://www.ifrs.org/news-and-events/news/2025/06/ifrs-foundation-publishes-jurisdictional-profiles-issb-standards/ and https://finance.ec.europa.eu/capital-markets-union-and-financial-markets/company-reporting-and-auditing/company-reporting/corporate-sustainability-reporting_en

Shareholder rights and protections

General shareholder meetings

Companies normally have an annual general meeting of shareholders at which routine and non-routine items of business are discussed and voted on by shareholders in attendance or submitting proxy votes. Companies should disclose materials relevant to the shareholder meeting sufficiently in advance so that shareholders can take them into consideration in their voting decisions. Many companies offer shareholders the option of participating in the meeting virtually which, whilst welcome, should not limit the rights of shareholders to participate as they would during an in-person meeting.

We may vote against directors when materials related to the business of the shareholder meeting are not provided in a timely manner or do not provide sufficient information for us to make an informed voting decision. We may vote against directors if the format of the shareholder meeting does not accommodate reasonable shareholder participation.

Bylaw amendments

We review bylaw amendments proposed by management on a case-by-case basis and will generally support those that are aligned with the interests of minority shareholders. Any material changes to the bylaws should be explained in detail and put to a shareholder vote.

We may vote against bylaw amendments that reduce shareholder rights and protections or introduce additional burdens. We may vote against directors if material changes are made to the bylaws without shareholder approval.

If not provided for in the relevant corporate law, company bylaws should allow shareholders, individually or as a group, with a meaningful shareholding, the right to call a special meeting of shareholders. The shareholding required to exercise this right should balance its utility with the cost to the company of holding special meetings.

If not provided for in the relevant corporate law, company bylaws should allow shareholders, individually or as a group, with a meaningful shareholding, the right to nominate directors to the company's board. The threshold for this right should be set so that shareholders can exercise it without being unduly disruptive to the board's own nomination process.

Whilst we would not use either of these rights ourselves, we see them as important accountability mechanisms. We may vote for a shareholder proposal seeking the addition of either of these provisions to a company's bylaws.

Change of domicile

We generally defer to management on proposals to change a company's domicile as long as the rationale for doing so is consistent with the company's long-term strategy and business model and the related costs are immaterial.

We may vote against directors or a proposal to change a company's domicile where it does not seem aligned with our clients' financial interests.

Changes to a company's purpose or the nature of its business

Plans to materially change the nature of a company's business or its purpose should be disclosed and explained in the context of long-term strategy and business dynamics. Such changes may significantly alter an investor's views on the suitability of a company for their investment strategy or portfolio.

Where relevant, we may vote against proposals to change a company's purpose or the nature of its business if the board has not provided a credible argument for change.

Shareholder proposals

Shareholders in many markets, who meet certain eligibility criteria, have the right to submit proposals to the general shareholder meeting asking a company to take a particular course of action subject to the proposal being supported by a majority of votes cast at the meeting. The topics raised can address a range of matters that may be relevant to a company's business.

We vote on these proposals on a case-by-case basis. We assess the relevance of the topic raised to a company's business and its current approach, whether the actions sought are consistent with shareholders' interests, and what impact the proposal being acted upon might have on financial performance.

Our general approach where we have concerns about a company's governance, disclosures or performance is to engage to understand the apparent difference in perspective. If we are concerned a company is not acting in shareholders' financial interests, we may vote against the election of directors. We may support a relevant shareholder proposal if doing so is aligned with our clients' financial interests. We generally do not support shareholder proposals that are legally binding on the company, seek to alter a company's strategy or direct its operations, or are unrelated to how a company manages risk or generates financial returns.

BlackRock is subject to rules, regulations, agency guidance and contractual agreements that place restrictions and limitations on how we can interact with the companies in which we invest on behalf of our clients, including our ability to submit shareholder proposals. We do not submit shareholder proposals but can vote, on behalf of clients who authorize us to do so, on proposals put forth by others.

Corporate political activities

A corporation's ability to engage in the policy process is subject to rules and regulations set by the jurisdictions in which they engage. When a corporation reports material financial risk related to policy and or regulatory changes, BAIS may seek to understand how it is addressing the material risk identified. We seek to understand how companies engage in corporate political activities and ensure that their participation is consistent with their public statements on policy matters material to the company's long-term strategy. The board should be aware of the approach taken by management on corporate political activities as there can be reputational risks arising from inconsistencies between a company's policy engagement and stated policy positions. Companies should, as a minimum, meet all regulatory disclosure requirements on political activities. We may engage a company where we would like to better understand its approach to policy engagement, where relevant.

To mitigate the risk of inconsistencies, companies may wish to assess the alignment between their policy priorities and the policy positions of the trade associations of which they are active members and any engagements undertaken by trade associations on behalf of members.

We may support a relevant shareholder proposal, or vote against directors, where a company's disclosures are insufficient to address the material risk it has identified.

Material sustainability-related risks and opportunities

We seek to understand how companies manage the material risks and opportunities inherent in their business operations. In our experience, sustainability-related factors[11] that are relevant to a company's business or material to its financial performance, are generally operational considerations embedded into day-to-day management systems. Certain sustainability issues may also inform long-term strategic planning, for example, investing in product innovation in anticipation of changing consumer demand or adapting supply chains in response to changing regulatory requirements.

We recognize that the specific sustainability-related factors that may be financially material or business relevant will vary by company business model, sector, key markets, and time horizon, amongst other considerations. From company disclosures and our engagement, we aim to understand how management is identifying, assessing and integrating material sustainability-related risks and opportunities into their business decision-making and practices. Doing so helps us undertake a more holistic assessment of a company's potential financial performance and the likely risk-adjusted returns of an investment.

We may vote against directors or support a relevant shareholder proposal if we have concerns about how a company is managing or disclosing its approach to material sustainability-related risks that may impact financial returns.

Key stakeholders

In our view, companies should understand and take into consideration the interests of the various parties on whom they depend for their success over time. It is for each company to determine their key stakeholders based on what is material to their business and long-term financial performance. For many companies, key stakeholders include employees, business partners (such as suppliers and distributors), clients and consumers, regulators, and the communities in which they operate. Companies that appropriately balance the interests of investors and other stakeholders are, in our experience, more likely to be financially resilient over time.

Climate and decarbonization investment objectives

Certain active BlackRock funds have climate and decarbonization objectives in addition to financial objectives. Consistent with the objectives of those investment strategies, our stewardship activity in relation to the holdings in those funds differs in some respects from BAIS' benchmark guidelines, which are described above. Specifically, for those funds' holdings, we look to investee companies to demonstrate that they are aligned with a decarbonization pathway that means their business model would be viable in a low-carbon economy, i.e., one in which global temperature rise is limited to 1.5°C

[11] By material sustainability-related risks and opportunities, we mean the drivers of risk and financial value creation in a company's business model that have an environmental or social dependency or impact. Examples of environmental issues include, but are not limited to, water use, land use, waste management, and climate risk. Examples of social issues include, but are not limited to, human capital management, impacts on the communities in which a company operates, customer loyalty, and relationships with regulators. It is our view that well-managed companies will effectively evaluate and manage material sustainability-related risks and opportunities relevant to their businesses. Governance is the core means by which boards can oversee the creation of durable financial value over time. Appropriate risk oversight of business-relevant and material sustainability-related considerations is a component of a sound governance framework.

above pre-industrial levels. In addition, clients in separately managed accounts may instruct BlackRock to apply these guidelines to their holdings. Both in the case of funds and separately managed accounts, these guidelines are only implemented upon explicit selection and approval by the applicable fund board or client.

These decarbonization stewardship guidelines focus on companies which produce goods and services that contribute to real world decarbonization or have a carbon intensive business model and face outsized impacts from the low carbon transition, based on reported and estimated scopes 1, 2, and 3 greenhouse gas emissions. These companies should provide disclosures that set out their governance, strategy, risk management processes and metrics and targets relevant to decarbonization. It is helpful to investors' understanding when these disclosures include an explanation of the decarbonization scenarios a company is using in its near- and long-term planning, as well as its scope 1, scope 2 and material scope 3 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and reduction targets for scope 1 and 2 emissions.

Under these climate- and decarbonization-specific guidelines, BAIS may recommend a vote against directors or support for a relevant shareholder proposal if a company does not appear to be adequately acting to address or disclosing material climate-related risks, consistent with the parameters set out in these climate- and decarbonization-specific guidelines. We may recommend supporting shareholder proposals seeking information relevant to a company's stated low-carbon transition strategy or targets that the company does not currently provide and that would be helpful to investment decision-making. We would not recommend support for shareholder proposals that seek to constrain board or management decision-making or direct specific business or strategic decisions. As under the BAIS benchmark approach, the active portfolio managers are ultimately responsible for voting consistent with their investment mandate and fund objectives. For the funds and accounts in scope, voting on matters not related to climate risk and the energy transition is undertaken in line with BAIS' benchmark guidelines.

Appendix 1: How we fulfil and oversee our investment stewardship responsibilities

Oversight

The Global Head of BAIS has primary oversight of and responsibility for the team's activities, including voting in accordance with the BlackRock Active Investment Stewardship Global Engagement and Voting Guidelines (the "Guidelines"), which require the application of professional judgment and consideration of each company's unique circumstances, as well as input from active investors. BAIS is independent from BlackRock Investment Stewardship in our engagement and voting activities, reporting lines, and oversight.

The Stewardship Leaders Group, comprised of senior active investors and other relevant stakeholders in BlackRock's legal, public policy, sustainability and communications teams, helps shape the firm's approach to investment stewardship on non-index equity investment strategies. The Group may advise on and review amendments to BAIS' policies and practices. It does not determine voting decisions, which are the responsibility of BAIS and the relevant active equity investors.

BAIS carries out engagement with companies in collaboration with active investment colleagues, executes proxy votes, and conducts vote operations (including maintaining records of votes cast) in a manner consistent with the Guidelines. BAIS also conducts research on corporate governance issues and participates in industry discussions to contribute to and keep abreast of important developments in the corporate governance field. BAIS may use third parties for certain of the foregoing activities and performs oversight of those third parties (see "Use and oversight of third-party vote services providers" below).

Voting guidelines and vote execution

BlackRock votes on proxy issues when our clients authorize us to do so. We carefully consider the voting items submitted to funds and other fiduciary account(s) (Fund or Funds) for which we have voting authority. BlackRock votes (or refrains from voting) for each Fund for which we have voting authority based on our evaluation of the alignment of the voting items with the long-term economic interests of our clients, in the exercise of our independent business judgment, and without regard to the relationship of the issuer (or any shareholder proponent or dissident shareholder) to the Fund, the Fund's affiliates (if any), BlackRock or BlackRock's affiliates, or BlackRock employees (see "Conflicts management policies and procedures," below).

When exercising voting rights, BAIS will normally vote on specific proxy issues in accordance with the Guidelines, although portfolio managers have the right to vote differently on their holdings if they determine doing so is more aligned with the investment objective and financial interests of clients invested in the funds they manage.

The Guidelines are not intended to be exhaustive. BAIS applies the Guidelines on a case-by-case basis, in the context of the individual circumstances of each company and the specific issue under review. As such, the Guidelines do not indicate how BAIS will vote in every instance. Rather, they reflect our view about corporate governance issues generally, and provide insight into how we typically approach issues that are commonly put to a shareholder vote. The Guidelines are reviewed annually and updated as necessary to reflect changes in market practices, developments in corporate governance and feedback from companies and clients. In this way, BAIS aims to maintain policies that explain our approach to governance practices most aligned with clients' long-term financial interests.

In certain markets, proxy voting involves logistical issues which can affect BAIS' ability to vote such proxies, as well as the desirability of voting such proxies. These issues include, but are not limited to: i) untimely notice of shareholder meetings; ii) restrictions on a foreigner's ability to exercise votes; iii) requirements to vote proxies in person; iv) "share-blocking" (requirements that investors who exercise their voting rights surrender the right to dispose of their holdings from the point at which votes are submitted until after the after the shareholder meeting has occurred); v) potential difficulties in translating the proxy; vi) regulatory constraints; and vii) requirements to provide local agents with powers of attorney to facilitate voting instructions. We are not supportive of impediments to the exercise of voting rights such as share-blocking or overly burdensome administrative requirements.

BlackRock votes proxies in these situations on a "best-efforts" basis. In addition, BAIS may determine that it is generally in the interests of BlackRock's clients not to vote proxies (or not to vote our full allocation) if the costs (including but not limited to opportunity costs associated with share-blocking constraints) associated with exercising a vote are expected to outweigh the benefit the client would derive by voting on the proposal.

Voting Choice

BlackRock offers Voting Choice, a program that provides eligible clients with more opportunities to participate in the proxy voting process where legally and operationally viable.

Voting Choice is currently available for eligible clients invested in certain institutional pooled funds in the U.S., UK, and Canada that use systematic active equity (SAE) and multi-asset strategies. In addition, institutional clients in separately managed accounts (SMAs) are eligible for BlackRock Voting Choice regardless of their investment strategies.[12]

As a result, the shares attributed to BlackRock in company share registers may be voted differently depending on whether our clients have authorized BAIS to vote on their behalf, have authorized BlackRock to vote in accordance with a third-party policy, or have elected to vote shares in accordance with their own policy. Our clients have greater control over proxy voting because of Voting Choice.[13]

Use and oversight of third-party vote services providers

Third-party vote services providers — or proxy research firms — provide research and recommendations on proxy votes, as well as voting infrastructure. BlackRock contracts primarily with the vote services provider ISS and leverages its online platform to supply research and support voting, record keeping, and reporting processes. We also use Glass Lewis' research and analysis as an input into our voting process. It is important to note that, although proxy research firms provide important data and analysis, BAIS does not rely solely on their information or follow their voting recommendations. A company's disclosures, our engagements and voting, investment colleagues' insights and our Guidelines are important inputs into our voting decisions on behalf of clients.

Given the large universe of actively held companies, BAIS employs the proxy services provider to streamline the voting process by making voting recommendations based on BAIS' Guidelines when the items on a shareholder meeting agenda are routine. Agenda items that are not routine are referred back to BAIS to assess, escalate as necessary to the relevant portfolio managers and vote. BAIS reviews and can override the recommendations of the vote services provider at any time prior to the

[12] With Voting Choice, SMAs have the ability to select from a set of voting policies from third-party proxy advisers the policy that best aligns with their views and preferences. BlackRock can then use its proxy voting infrastructure to cast votes based on the client's selected voting policy.

[13] BlackRock does not disclose client information, including a client's selection of proxy policy, without client consent.

vote deadline. Both BAIS and the vote services provider actively monitor securities filings, research reports, company announcements, and direct communications from companies to ensure awareness of supplemental disclosures and proxy materials that may require a modification of votes.

BAIS closely monitors the third-party vote services providers we contract with to ensure that they are meeting our service level expectations and have effective policies and procedures in place to manage potential conflicts of interest. Our oversight of service providers includes regular meetings with client service teams, systematic monitoring of vendor operations, as well as annual due diligence meetings in accordance with BlackRock's firmwide policies.

Conflicts management policies and procedures

BlackRock maintains policies and procedures that seek to prevent undue influence on BAIS' proxy voting activity. Such influence might stem from any relationship between the investee company (or any shareholder proponent or dissident shareholder) and BlackRock, BlackRock's affiliates, a Fund or a Fund's affiliates, or BlackRock employees. The following are examples of sources of perceived or potential conflicts of interest:

- BlackRock clients who may be issuers of securities or proponents of shareholder resolutions
- BlackRock business partners or third parties who may be issuers of securities or proponents of shareholder resolutions
- BlackRock employees who may sit on the boards of public companies held in Funds managed by BlackRock
- Significant BlackRock, Inc. investors who may be issuers of securities held in Funds managed by BlackRock
- Securities of BlackRock, Inc. or BlackRock investment funds held in Funds managed by BlackRock
- BlackRock, Inc. board members who serve as senior executives or directors of public companies held in Funds managed by BlackRock

BlackRock has taken certain steps to mitigate perceived or potential conflicts including, but not limited to, the following:

- Adopted these Guidelines which are designed to advance our clients' long-term financial interests in the companies in which BlackRock invests on their behalf
- Established a reporting structure that separates BAIS from employees with sales, vendor management, or business partnership roles. In addition, BlackRock seeks to ensure that all engagements with corporate issuers, dissident shareholders or shareholder proponents are managed consistently and without regard to BlackRock's relationship with such parties. Clients or business partners are not given preferential treatment or differentiated access. BAIS prioritizes engagements based on factors including, but not limited to, our need for additional information to make a more informed voting decision or to better understand a company's perspectives on financially material risks and opportunities. Within the normal course of business, BAIS may engage directly with BlackRock clients, business partners and/or third parties, and/or with employees with sales, vendor management, or business partnership roles, in discussions regarding our approach to stewardship, general corporate governance matters, client reporting needs, and/or to otherwise ensure that proxy-related client service levels are met

- Determined to engage, in certain instances, an independent third-party voting service provider to make proxy voting recommendations as a further safeguard to avoid perceived or potential conflicts of interest, to satisfy regulatory requirements, or as may be otherwise required by applicable law. In such circumstances, the independent third-party voting service provider provides BlackRock with recommendations, in accordance with the Guidelines, as to how to vote such proxies. BlackRock uses an independent third-party voting service provider to make proxy voting recommendations for shares of BlackRock, Inc. and companies affiliated with BlackRock, Inc. BlackRock may also use an independent third-party voting service provider to make proxy voting recommendations for certain perceived or potential conflicts of interest, including:
    - public companies that include BlackRock employees on their boards of directors
    - public companies of which a BlackRock, Inc. board member serves as a senior executive or a member of the board of directors
    - public companies that are the subject of certain transactions involving BlackRock Funds
    - public companies that are joint venture partners with BlackRock, and
    - public companies when legal or regulatory requirements compel BlackRock to use an independent third-party voting service provider

In selecting an independent third-party voting service provider, we assess several characteristics, including but not limited to: independence, an ability to analyze proxy issues and make recommendations in the economic interest of our clients in accordance with the Guidelines, reputation for reliability and integrity, and operational capacity to accurately deliver the assigned recommendations in a timely manner. We may engage more than one independent third-party voting service provider, in part to mitigate potential or perceived conflicts of interest at a single voting service provider.

Securities lending

If authorized, BlackRock acts as a securities lending agent on behalf of its clients. Securities lending is a well-regulated practice that contributes to capital market efficiency. It also enables funds to generate additional returns which in turn may allow fund providers to offset fund expenses.

With regard to the relationship between securities lending and proxy voting, BlackRock cannot vote shares on loan and may determine to recall them to allow for voting. This decision is guided by our fiduciary duty as an asset manager to our clients in helping them achieve their investment goals. While this has occurred in a limited number of cases, the decision to recall securities on loan as part of BlackRock's securities lending program in order to vote is based on an evaluation of various factors that include, but are not limited to, assessing potential securities lending revenue alongside the potential long-term financial value to clients of voting those securities (based on the information available at the time of recall consideration). BAIS works with active portfolio managers, as well as colleagues in the Securities Lending team, to evaluate the costs and benefits to clients of recalling shares on loan.

In almost all instances, BlackRock anticipates that the potential long-term financial value to clients of voting shares would not warrant recalling securities on loan. However, in certain instances, BlackRock may determine, in our independent business judgment as a fiduciary, that the value of voting outweighs the securities lending revenue loss to clients and would therefore recall shares to be voted in those instances.

Periodically, BlackRock reviews our process for determining whether to recall securities on loan in order to vote and may modify it as necessary.

Reporting and vote transparency

BAIS is committed to transparency in the stewardship work we do on behalf of clients. We inform clients about our engagement and voting policies and activities through direct communication and disclosure on our website.

NM0926U-5886997-229/266

Want to know more?

blackrock.com/stewardship | ContactActiveStewardship@blackrock.com

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Index Equity Fund Proxy Voting Policy

Procedures Governing Delegation of Proxy Voting to Fund Advisers

Effective Date: January 1, 2025

Applies to the following types of Funds registered under the 1940 Act:

☒ Index Equity Mutual Funds and Exchange-Traded Funds
☐ Open-End Active and Fixed Income Index Mutual Funds and Exchange-Traded Funds
☐ Money Market Funds
☐ Closed-End Funds
☐ Other

Objective and Scope

Set forth below is the Index Equity Fund Proxy Voting Policy.

Policy / Document Requirements and Statements

The Boards of Trustees/Directors ("Directors") of certain open-end funds (the "Funds") advised by BlackRock Fund Advisors or BlackRock Advisors, LLC ("BlackRock"), have the responsibility for the oversight of voting proxies relating to portfolio securities of the Funds, and have determined that it is in the best interests of the Funds and their shareholders to delegate the responsibility to vote proxies to BlackRock, subject to the principles outlined in this Policy, as part of BlackRock's authority to manage, acquire and dispose of account assets, all as contemplated by the Funds' respective investment management agreements.

BlackRock has adopted the BlackRock Investment Stewardship Global Benchmark Policy (as from time to time amended, the "Guidelines") governing proxy voting by index equity Funds managed by BlackRock, except for the iShares Core S&P 500 ETF. In addition, BlackRock has adopted guidelines and procedures (as from time to time amended, the "BlackRock Climate and Decarbonization Stewardship Guidelines") governing proxy voting for matters covered in the BlackRock Climate and Decarbonization Stewardship Guidelines by the Funds listed in Appendix A.

BlackRock will cast votes on behalf of each of the Funds covered by this policy on specific proxy issues in respect of securities held by each such Fund (or may refrain from voting) in accordance with the Guidelines and the BlackRock Climate and Decarbonization Stewardship Guidelines, as applicable.

Conflicts Management

BlackRock Investment Stewardship ("BIS") maintains policies and procedures that seek to prevent undue influence on BlackRock's proxy voting activity and to mitigate material conflicts of interest in the exercise of proxy voting responsibilities. Potential material conflicts, and the resultant potential for undue influence, might be due to a relationship between the investee company (or any shareholder proponent or dissident shareholder) and BlackRock, BlackRock's affiliates or employees, or a Fund or a Fund's affiliates. BlackRock has taken certain steps to mitigate potential conflicts, which are outlined in detail in the Guidelines. In mitigating conflicts, BIS will adhere to the Guidelines.

In certain instances, BIS will engage an independent third-party voting service provider to make proxy voting recommendations as a further safeguard to avoid potential conflicts of interest, to satisfy regulatory compliance requirements, or as may be otherwise required by applicable law.

With respect to the relationship between securities lending and proxy voting, shares on loan cannot be voted and BlackRock may determine to recall them for voting, as guided by BlackRock's fiduciary responsibility to act in clients' financial interests. The Guidelines set forth BlackRock's approach to recalling securities on loan in connection with proxy voting.

Reports to the Board

BlackRock will report on an annual basis to the Directors on (1) a summary of the proxy voting process as applicable to the Funds covered by this policy in the preceding year together with a representation that all votes were in accordance with the Guidelines and the BlackRock Climate and Decarbonization Stewardship Guidelines, as applicable (2) any material changes to the Guidelines and the BlackRock Climate and Decarbonization Stewardship Guidelines, including material changes to conflicts management practices, that have not previously been reported.

Appendix A

iShares Climate Conscious & Transition MSCI USA ETF
iShares ESG Advanced MSCI EAFE ETF
iShares ESG Advanced MSCI EM ETF
iShares ESG Advanced MSCI USA ETF
iShares ESG MSCI EM Leaders ETF
iShares ESG MSCI USA Leaders ETF
iShares MSCI ACWI Low Carbon Target ETF
iShares MSCI KLD 400 Social ETF
iShares MSCI USA ESG Select ETF
iShares Paris-Aligned Climate MSCI USA ETF
iShares Paris-Aligned Climate MSCI World ex USA ETF

BlackRock Investment Stewardship

Global Principles for Benchmark Policies

Effective as of January 2026

BlackRock®

Contents

Introduction to BlackRock Investment Stewardship 3

Philosophy on investment stewardship 3

Key governance topics 5

Boards and directors 5

Auditors and audit-related issues 8

Capital structure, mergers, acquisitions, asset sales, and other special situations 9

Executive compensation and benefits 10

Shareholder protections and other corporate governance matters 11

Shareholder proposals 11

Material sustainability-related risks and opportunities 12

BlackRock's oversight of its investment stewardship activities 14

Voting Choice 16

Reporting and vote transparency 17

NM0926U-5886997-235/266

Introduction to BlackRock Investment Stewardship

At BlackRock, investment stewardship serves as a link between our clients and the companies they invest in and is one of the ways we fulfill our fiduciary responsibilities as an asset manager on their behalf. BlackRock offers a range of proxy voting policies to reflect clients' individual investment choices and goals.

BlackRock Investment Stewardship (BIS) is responsible for stewardship activities in relation to clients' assets invested in index equity strategies. BIS takes a long-term approach in our stewardship efforts, reflecting the investment horizons of the majority of our clients. BIS does this through:

1. **Engaging with the boards and management of companies** in which clients are invested to deepen our understanding of a company's business model, including how they are overseeing material business risks and opportunities over time, and to help inform our voting on behalf of clients.[1]
2. **Voting at shareholder meetings** on management and shareholder proposals for clients who have authorized BIS to vote on their behalf.
3. **Contributing to industry dialogue on stewardship** to share our perspectives on matters that may impact our clients' investments.
4. **Reporting on our activities to inform clients** about our stewardship efforts on their behalf through a range of publications on our website and direct client communications.

This document provides an overarching explanation of the principles that guide our approach to engaging and voting on corporate governance matters and other material risks and opportunities under BIS' Benchmark Policies. The BIS Benchmark Policies – which are comprised of the BIS Global Principles, regional voting guidelines, and Engagement Priorities – apply to clients' assets invested through index equity strategies, take a financial materiality-based approach, and are focused solely on advancing clients' long-term financial interests.[2]

Philosophy on investment stewardship

Sound governance is critical to a company's ability to create long-term financial value. We maintain global principles on corporate governance, which guide our approach to stewardship across jurisdictions, while recognizing the unique characteristics of the different markets where companies operate.

Setting, executing, and overseeing strategy are the responsibility of management and the board. As one of many minority shareholders in public companies, BlackRock does not direct a company's strategy or its implementation, nor how they should manage material business risks. Our role, on behalf of clients as long-term investors, is to better understand how corporate leadership is managing material risks and capitalizing on opportunities to help protect and enhance the company's ability to deliver long-term financial returns.

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1 On February 11, 2025, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) staff issued updated guidance for shareholders to maintain their eligibility to report their beneficial ownership under Schedule 13G of the Exchange Act. We comply fully with these requirements and do not engage with portfolio companies for the purpose, or with the effect, of changing or influencing control of any company.

2 Alongside the Global Principles and regional voting guidelines, BIS publishes Engagement Priorities which reflect the five themes on which we most frequently engage companies, where they are relevant, as these can be a source of material business risk or opportunity.

NM0926U-5886997-236/266

Stewardship in practice

The assets BlackRock manages belong to our clients, which include public and private pension plans, insurers, official institutions, endowments, universities, charities, family offices, wealth managers, and ultimately, the individual investors that they serve. Through stewardship, we assess how companies are creating long-term financial value to serve our clients, many of whom are saving for long-term goals, such as retirement. Our stewardship program – including when engaging with companies and voting at shareholder meetings on behalf of clients – is conducted from a long-term investor perspective and takes a financial materiality-based approach, focused solely on advancing clients' long-term financial interests.

BIS engages with the boards and management of companies in which clients are invested to deepen our understanding of a company's business model, including how they are overseeing material business risks and opportunities over time, and to help inform our voting on behalf of clients. Engagements provide companies with the opportunity to share their perspectives on topics that, in BIS' experience, impact the long-term financial returns BlackRock's clients depend on to meet their financial goals.

Voting at a company's shareholder meeting is a right of share ownership and a core principle of corporate governance. As a fiduciary, BlackRock is legally required to make proxy voting determinations in a manner that is consistent with the investment objectives of clients who have delegated voting authority to us. BIS' Benchmark Policies, and the vote decisions made consistent with those policies, reflect our reasonable and independent judgment of what is in the long-term financial interests of clients. Our vote decisions are often informed by several factors, including in-depth analysis of company disclosures, comparisons against industry peers, third-party research, and, where appropriate, engagement with companies.

Generally, BIS supports the vote recommendations of the board of directors and management at companies which have sound corporate governance and deliver strong financial returns over time. When we determine it is in our clients' financial interests to convey concern to companies through voting, we may do so in two forms: we might not support the election of directors or other management proposals, or we might not support management's voting recommendation on a shareholder proposal.

Shareholder rights

BlackRock's global approach as a shareholder on behalf of our clients is underpinned by certain rights attached to shareholding in most markets, as established by corporate laws, regulations, and listing rules.[3] For example, in most markets, shareholders have the right to:

- Vote to elect, remove, and nominate directors, approve the appointment of the auditor, and amend the corporate charter or bylaws.
- Vote on key board decisions that are material to the protection of their investment, including but not limited to, changes to the purpose of the business, dilution levels, and pre-emptive rights.
- Access sufficient and timely information on governance, strategic, and business matters – where such matters are material – to make informed decisions.

[3] Examples include: Government of Canada, "Canada Business Corporations Act," amended 2024; European Union, "Shareholder Rights Directive II," 2017; and the China Securities Regulatory Commission, "Code of Corporate Governance for Listed Companies in China," 2001. Websites accessed in December 2025.

NM0926U-5886997-237/266

Key governance topics

In our experience, there are certain globally applicable elements of corporate governance that contribute to a company's ability to create long-term financial value for shareholders. These are topics that shareholders may have the ability to vote on at shareholder meetings. These areas include:

- Boards and directors
- Auditors and audit-related issues
- Capital structure, mergers, acquisitions, asset sales, and other special situations
- Executive compensation
- Shareholder protections and other significant corporate governance matters
- Shareholder proposals

The BIS Benchmark Policies are not prescriptive but rather are applied on a pragmatic basis, taking into consideration a number of company-specific factors, including the sector, market, and business environment within which companies operate.

At the regional level, it is our view that companies should observe the accepted corporate governance standards in their domestic market at a minimum, and we ask that, if they do not, they explain how their approach better supports durable, long-term financial value creation. Our regional voting guidelines explain how the BIS Global Principles inform our voting decisions in relation to common ballot items for shareholder meetings in those markets.[4]

Boards and directors

Oversight role of the board

Companies whose boards are comprised of appropriately qualified, engaged directors with professional characteristics relevant to a company's business enhance the board's ability to add long-term financial value and serve as the voice of shareholders in board discussions. In our view, a strong board gives a company a competitive advantage, providing valuable oversight and contributing to the most important management decisions that support long-term financial performance.

For this reason, our investment stewardship efforts focus on the effectiveness of the board of directors. We engage, as necessary, with members of the board's nominating and/or governance committee to assess whether governance practices and board composition are effective given a company's business model, sector, market, and the business environment in which a company is operating.

We consider it good practice when the board establishes and maintains a framework of robust and effective governance mechanisms that supports its oversight of the company's strategy and operations, consistent with the long-term financial interests of investors. This includes having clear descriptions of the role of the board and the committees of the board and how directors engage with and oversee management, as well as disclosure of material risks that may affect a company's long-term strategy and how management is effectively identifying, managing, and mitigating such risks.

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[4] Our regional voting guidelines reflect these different market standards and norms. Depending on the market, generally accepted practice is informed by corporate law, market regulation, best practices, and industry initiatives, amongst other factors. BIS carries out engagement with companies, executes proxy votes, and conducts vote operations (including maintaining records of votes cast) in a manner consistent with the relevant regional voting guidelines.

Understanding management's long-term strategy and the milestones against which investors should assess its implementation is central to our approach. If any strategic targets are significantly missed or materially restated, we find it helpful when company disclosures provide a detailed explanation of the changes and an indication of the board's role in reviewing the revised targets. We look to the board to articulate the effectiveness of these mechanisms in overseeing the management of business risks and opportunities and the fulfillment of the company's strategy.

Where a company has not adequately disclosed or demonstrated that its board has fulfilled these corporate governance and risk oversight responsibilities, we may consider not supporting the election of directors who, in our assessment, have particular responsibility for the issues.

When casting vote decisions on behalf of clients on the election of directors, some of the factors that speak to the board's effectiveness as a group include the relevance of individual directors' qualifications and skillsets, as well as directors' capacity and other time commitments, and how these factors may contribute to the company's financial performance. We look to boards to establish formal and transparent processes for nominating directors that reflect the company's long-term strategy and business model.

In the section titled "Board quality and effectiveness" below, we provide more detail about our approach to board composition and how it underpins board effectiveness and long-term financial value creation.

Regular accountability through director elections

The election of directors to the board is a right of shareholders and an important signal of support for, or concern about, the performance of the board in overseeing and advising management. To ensure accountability for their decisions on behalf of shareholders, directors should stand for election on a regular basis, ideally annually.[5] Annual director elections allow shareholders to reaffirm their support for, or concerns about, board members' decisions in a timely manner. When board members are not elected annually, we consider it good practice for boards to have a rotation policy to ensure that, through a board cycle, all directors have had their appointment re-confirmed, with a proportion of directors being put forward for election at each shareholder meeting.

Board quality and effectiveness

Regular director elections also give boards the opportunity to adjust their composition in an orderly way to reflect developments in the company's strategy and the market environment. In our view, it is beneficial for new directors to be brought onto the board periodically to refresh the group's thinking, while supporting both continuity and appropriate succession planning. We consider the average overall tenure of the board and seek a balance between the knowledge and experience of longer-serving directors and the fresh perspectives of directors who joined more recently.

We appreciate when companies regularly review and assess how directors nominated for election contribute to the effectiveness of the board. In our view, the company's assessment should consider a number of factors, including each director's independence and time commitments, as well as the breadth and relevance of director experiences and skillsets, and how these collectively contribute to the board's effectiveness in advising and overseeing management in delivering long-term financial returns.

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[5] In most markets, directors stand for re-election on an annual or triennial basis, as determined by corporate law, market regulation or voluntary best practice.

Director independence

Director independence – from management, significant shareholders, or other related parties – is a central tenet of sound corporate governance across markets.[6] We look to boards to have a sufficient number of independent directors, free from conflicts of interest or undue influence, to ensure objectivity in the decision-making of the board and its ability to oversee management. We generally consider it good practice for independent directors to make a majority of the board, or in the case of controlled companies, at least one-third.

Common impediments to independence may include but are not limited to:

- Current or recent employment at the company or a subsidiary
- Being, or representing, a shareholder with a substantial shareholding in the company
- Interlocking directorates
- Having any other interest, business, or other relationship which could, or could reasonably be perceived to, materially interfere with a director's ability to act in the best interests of the company and shareholders

In our experience, boards are most effective at overseeing and advising management when there is a senior, independent board leader. This director may chair the board, or, where the chair is also the CEO (or is otherwise not independent), be designated as a lead independent director. The role of this director is to support independent board members in fulfilling their oversight responsibilities effectively by shaping the agenda, ensuring adequate information is provided to the board, and encouraging independent director participation in board deliberations. We appreciate when the lead independent director or another appropriate director is available to meet with shareholders to explain and contextualize a company's approach as a situation warrants.

Boards may face matters that could involve conflicts of interest for executives or affiliated directors, or that require additional focus. It is our view that objective oversight of such matters is best achieved when the board forms committees with a majority of independent directors, depending on market norms and a company's ownership structure. In many markets, these committees of the board specialize in audit, director nominations, and compensation matters, among others. An ad hoc committee might also be formed to decide on a special transaction, particularly one involving a related party, or to investigate a significant adverse event.

Sufficient capacity

As the role and expectations of a director are increasingly demanding, directors must be able to commit an appropriate amount of time to board and committee matters. It is important that directors have the capacity to meet all of their responsibilities – including when there are unforeseen events – and therefore, we consider it best practice when they don't take on an excessive number of roles that would impair their ability to fulfill their duties.

Board composition

In assessing board composition, we take into account a company's board size, business model, strategy, market capitalization, and ownership structure, as well as the market in which the company operates. We find it helpful when companies explain how their approach to board composition supports the company's governance practices.

6 For example, please see: Tokyo Stock Exchange, "Japan's Corporate Governance Code," June 11, 2021; Financial Reporting Council, "UK Corporate Governance Code," January 2024, accessed in December 2025.

When nominating directors to the board, we look to companies to provide sufficient information on the individual candidates so that shareholders can assess the capabilities and suitability of each individual nominee and their fit within overall board composition. These disclosures should explain how the collective experience and expertise of the board, as well as the particular skillsets of individual directors, aligns with the company's long-term strategy. Highly qualified, engaged directors with professional characteristics relevant to a company's business and strategy enhance the ability of the board to add value and be the voice of shareholders in board discussions.

It is in this context that we are interested in a variety of experiences, perspectives, and skillsets in the board room. We see it as a means of avoiding "group think" in the board's exercise of its responsibilities to advise and oversee management. We note that in many markets, policymakers have set board gender diversity goals which we may discuss with companies, particularly if there is a risk their board composition may be misaligned.

Auditors and audit-related issues

BIS recognizes the critical importance of financial statements to provide a complete and accurate portrayal of a company's financial condition. Accordingly, we look for the assumptions made by management, and reviewed by the auditor in preparing the financial statements, to be reasonable and justified.

We view the audit committee, or its equivalent, as responsible for overseeing the management of the independent auditor and the internal audit function at a company. The committee plays an important role in a company's financial reporting system by providing independent oversight of the accounts, material financial, and, where appropriate to the jurisdiction, non-financial information and internal control frameworks. Moreover, in the absence of a dedicated risk committee, these committees can provide oversight of Enterprise Risk Management systems.[7] In our view, effective audit committee oversight strengthens the quality and reliability of a company's financial statements and provides an important level of reassurance to shareholders.

We look to audit committees, or their equivalent, to have clearly articulated charters that set out their responsibilities. Additionally, having a rotation plan can periodically refresh the committee membership and introduce new perspectives. We recognize that audit committees will rely on management, internal audit, and the independent auditor to fulfill their responsibilities. However, we look to committee members to demonstrate they have relevant expertise to monitor and oversee the audit process and related activities.

We take particular note of unexplained changes in reporting methodology, cases involving significant financial restatements, or ad hoc notifications of material financial weakness. In this respect, we look to audit committees to provide timely disclosure on the remediation of key and critical audit matters identified either by the external auditor or internal audit function.

The integrity of financial statements depends on the auditor being free of any impediments that could compromise its ability to serve as an effective check on management. To that end, it is important that auditors are, and are seen to be, independent. Where an audit firm provides services to the company in addition to the audit, we look for the fees earned to be disclosed and explained. We look for audit

[7] Enterprise Risk Management is a process, effected by the entity's board of directors, management, and other personnel, applied in strategy setting and across the enterprise, designed to identify potential events that may affect the entity, and manage risk to be within the risk appetite, to provide reasonable assurance regarding the achievement of objectives. Please see: The Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (COSO), "Enterprise Risk Management," 2023, accessed in December 2025.

NM0926U-5886997-241/266

committees to have in place a procedure for assessing the independence of the auditor and the quality of the external audit process on an annual basis.

Comprehensive disclosure provides investors with an understanding of the company's long-term operational risk management practices and, more broadly, the quality of the board's oversight. We look to the audit or risk committee to periodically review the company's risk assessment and risk management policies and the significant risks and exposures identified by management, the internal auditors or the independent auditors, and management's steps to address them. In the absence of detailed disclosures, we may conclude that companies are not adequately managing risk.

Capital structure, mergers, acquisitions, asset sales, and other special situations

The capital structure of a company is critical to shareholders as it impacts the value of their investment and the priority of their interest in the company relative to that of other equity or debt investors. Pre-emptive rights are a key protection for shareholders against the dilution of their interests.

In principle, we have concerns with the creation of a share class with equivalent economic exposure and differentiated voting rights. As a result, BIS generally supports bylaw amendments that introduce the adoption of "one share, one vote" for registered shareholders.

However, we recognize that in certain markets, at least for a period of time, companies may have a valid reason for listing dual classes of shares with differentiated voting rights. In our view, such companies should review these share class structures on a regular basis or as company circumstances change. Additionally, they should seek shareholder approval of their capital structure on a periodic basis via a management proposal at the company's shareholder meeting. The proposal should give unaffiliated shareholders the opportunity to affirm the current structure or establish mechanisms to end or phase out controlling structures at the appropriate time, while minimizing costs to shareholders.

In assessing mergers, asset sales, or other special situations, BIS' primary consideration is the long-term financial interests of our clients as shareholders, and so we will review any proposed transaction with that objective in mind. Typically, we review factors such as whether the proposed transaction has the unanimous support of the board and has been negotiated at arm's length, and whether the board or management has clearly explained its economic and strategic rationale. We may also seek reassurance from the board that the financial interests of executives and/or board members in a given transaction have not adversely affected their ability to place shareholders' interests before their own. Where the transaction involves related parties, the recommendation to support should come from the independent directors, a best practice in most markets, and ideally, the terms should have been assessed through an independent appraisal process. In addition, it is good practice that it be approved by a separate vote of the non-conflicted parties.

As a matter of sound governance practice, shareholders should have a right to dispose of company shares in the open market without unnecessary restriction. In our view, corporate mechanisms designed to limit shareholders' ability to sell their shares are contrary to basic property rights. Such mechanisms can serve to protect and entrench interests other than those of the shareholders. In our view, shareholders are broadly capable of making decisions in their own best interests. We encourage any shareholder rights plans proposed by a board to be subject to shareholder approval upon introduction and periodically thereafter.

Executive compensation and benefits

Executive compensation is an important tool used by companies to support long-term financial value creation. A well-structured compensation policy rewards the successful delivery of strategic, operational, and/or financial goals; encourages an appropriate risk appetite; and aligns the interests of shareholders and executives through equity ownership.[8]

We look for a clear link between variable pay and operational and financial performance that support sustained financial value creation for our clients as shareholders. We appreciate when performance targets incorporate ambitious objectives, and the corresponding metrics are aligned with the company's strategy and business model. BIS does not have a position on whether companies choose to use sustainability-related criteria in compensation structures, but, where they are included, we look to companies to be as rigorous as they would be in setting other financial or operational targets. We appreciate when long-term incentive plans encompass timeframes that: 1) are distinct from annual executive compensation structures and metrics, and 2) encourage the delivery of strong financial results over a period of years.

We consider it best practice when board members responsible for designing and approving executive compensation carefully consider the company's specific circumstances. Factors to consider may include the company's risk profile, the environment it operates in, and the individuals the board is trying to attract and retain. We look to the compensation committees to guard against contractual arrangements that would entitle executives to material compensation for early termination of their employment. Finally, we look for pension contributions and other deferred compensation arrangements to be reasonable in light of market practices or the company's business and executive compensation strategies.

We are not supportive of one-off or special bonuses unrelated to company or individual performance. Where discretion has been used by the compensation committee, or its equivalent, we appreciate disclosure relating to how and why the discretion was used, and how the adjusted outcome is aligned with the interests of shareholders. In addition, we acknowledge that the use of peer group evaluation by compensation committees can help ensure competitive pay. However, we encourage companies to clearly explain how compensation outcomes have rewarded performance rather than solely base increases in total compensation on peer benchmarking.

We consider the inclusion of building clawback provisions into incentive plans as good practice. Such provisions could require executives to forgo awards when compensation was based on faulty financial statements or deceptive business practices, or when their behavior caused material financial harm to shareholders, material reputational risk to the company, or resulted in a criminal investigation.

In our view, non-executive directors should be compensated in a manner that is commensurate with the time and effort expended in fulfilling their professional responsibilities. Additionally, these compensation arrangements should not risk compromising directors' independence or aligning their interests too closely with those of the management, whom they are charged with overseeing.

When assessing compensation proposals, BIS reviews companies' disclosures to determine whether the board's approach to executive compensation is rigorous in light of the company's stated long-term corporate strategy and specific circumstances, as well as local market and policy developments.

[8] The terms "compensation," "remuneration," and "pay" are used interchangeably to describe the same concept in different markets.

When our analysis indicates that executive compensation is misaligned with company performance, BIS may not support management's proposals to approve compensation, where they are on the agenda. We may also not support members of the compensation committee or equivalent board members for poor compensation practices or structures.

Shareholder protections and other corporate governance matters

Corporate form

In our view, it is the responsibility of the board to determine the corporate form that is most appropriate given the company's purpose and business model.[9] We look to companies proposing to change their corporate form to a public benefit corporation, or similar entity, to put it to a shareholder vote if not already required to do so under applicable law. We appreciate when supporting documentation from companies or shareholders proposing to alter the corporate form clearly explains how the interests of shareholders and different stakeholders would be impacted as well as the accountability and voting mechanisms that would be available to shareholders. We generally support management proposals if our analysis indicates that shareholders' financial interests are adequately protected. Corporate form shareholder proposals are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Shareholder proposals

In most markets, shareholders can submit proposals to be voted on at a company's shareholder meeting, as long as certain requirements are met. Shareholder proposals span a wide range of topics, including governance reforms, capital management, and changes in the management or disclosure of sustainability-related risks. These proposals have a varying degree of relevance for companies across sectors, locations, and business models.

BIS takes a case-by-case approach to voting on shareholder proposals and maintains a singular focus on the proposal's implications for long-term financial value creation for shareholders. Our analysis considers whether a shareholder proposal addresses a material risk that may impact a company's long-term financial performance. BIS may support shareholder proposals that request disclosures that help us, as long-term investors on behalf of our clients, better understand the material risks and opportunities companies face and how they are managing them, especially where this information is additive given the company's existing disclosures. We look for consistency between the specific request formally made in the proposal, the supporting documentation, and the proponents' other communications on the issues. We also assess the company's practices and disclosures and the costs and benefits to the company of meeting the request made in the proposal. We take into consideration a company's governance practices and disclosures against those of their peers.

BIS does not support shareholder proposals that we view as inconsistent with long-term financial value or that seek to micromanage companies. We take into consideration the legal effect of the proposal, as shareholder proposals may be advisory or legally binding depending on the jurisdiction, while others may make requests that would be deemed illegal in a given jurisdiction.

In our experience, it is helpful when companies disclose the names of the proponent or organization that has submitted or advised on the proposal. We recognize that some shareholder proposals bundle topics and/or specific requests. Further, the proponent's supporting statement may refer to topics that are not directly related to the request made in the proposal. In voting on behalf of clients, we must vote

[9] Corporate form refers to the legal structure by which a business is organized.

yes or no on the proposal as phrased by the proponent. Therefore, when we vote in support of a proposal, we are not necessarily endorsing every element of the proposal or the reasoning, objectives, or supporting statement of the proponent. We may support a proposal for different reasons than those put forth by the proponent, when we believe that overall it may advance our clients' long-term financial interests.

BlackRock is subject to certain rules, regulations, agency guidance, and contractual agreements that place restrictions and limitations on how BlackRock can interact with the companies in which we invest on behalf of our clients. BlackRock does not nominate directors for board elections or submit shareholder proposals to companies. Non-compliance with these requirements could adversely affect BlackRock's ability to serve its clients' interests.

Material sustainability-related risks and opportunities

Appropriate oversight of material risks and opportunities, including material sustainability-related risks and opportunities, is an important component of having an effective governance framework that supports durable, long-term financial value creation.[10]

We look to companies to provide robust disclosure that allows investors to effectively evaluate companies' strategy and business practices related to material sustainability-related risks and opportunities. We find it helpful when companies' disclosures demonstrate that they have a resilient business model that integrates material sustainability-related risks and opportunities into their strategy, risk management, and metrics and targets, including industry-specific metrics.

Standardized disclosure of sustainability-related data supports investors in making informed decisions. The International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) standards, IFRS S1 and S2, represent one such approach to standardization that we find useful in our analysis.[11] However, we do not mandate any specific disclosure framework companies should use, and recognize that companies may report using different standards, some of which may be required by regulation. In such cases, we ask that companies highlight the metrics that are industry- or company-specific.

We also recognize that companies may be phasing in reporting over several years. We do not prescribe timelines regarding when companies should make sustainability-related disclosures but appreciate it when companies produce them sufficiently in advance of their shareholder meeting, to the best of their abilities, to provide investors with time to assess the data and make informed voting decisions.

Industry initiatives on managing specific operational risks may also provide useful guidance to companies on best practices and disclosures. While not a voting item, we find it helpful to our understanding of investment risk when companies disclose any relevant global sustainability-related

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10 By material sustainability-related risks and opportunities, we mean the drivers of risk and financial value creation in a company's business model that have an environmental or social dependency or impact. Examples of environmental issues include, but are not limited to, water use, land use, waste management, and climate risk. Examples of social issues include, but are not limited to, human capital management, impacts on the communities in which a company operates, customer loyalty, and relationships with regulators.

11 The ISSB is an independent standard-setting body within the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) Foundation. The standards build on the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) framework and the standards and metrics developed by the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB), which have both converged under the ISSB. Please refer to the IFRS website to learn more about the framework and standards S1 "General Requirements for Disclosure of Sustainability-related Financial Information" and S2 "Climate-related Disclosures." Websites accessed in December 2025.

NM0926U-5886997-245/266

standards adopted, the industry initiatives in which they participate, any peer group benchmarking undertaken, and any assurance processes to help investors understand their approach to sustainable and responsible business practices.

Climate and nature-related risk

Many companies are assessing how to navigate the low-carbon transition while delivering long-term financial value to investors. For companies facing material climate-related risks, we find it helpful when they publicly disclose, consistent with their business model and sector, how they intend to deliver long-term financial performance through the low-carbon transition, including where available, their transition plan.[12, 13] From company disclosures and engagement, we seek to understand the strategies companies have in place to manage material risks to, and opportunities for, their long-term business model associated with a range of climate-related scenarios.

Recognizing the value of these disclosures, certain markets such as the European Union mandate large companies to disclose such climate-related financial information, while in other jurisdictions these disclosures are viewed as best practice in the market.

The ISSB standards provide one such framework that can assist investors in assessing company-specific climate-related risks and opportunities, and informing investment decisions. Such disclosures also provide investors with insights into how companies are managing the risks associated with a transition to a low-carbon economy by managing their own carbon emissions or emissions intensities to the extent financially practicable.

The ISSB standards, for example, contemplate disclosures on how companies are setting short-, medium- and long-term targets, ideally science-based where these are available for their sector, for scope 1 and 2 greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) reductions and to demonstrate how their targets are consistent with the long-term financial interests of their investors.

While we recognize that regulators in some markets are moving to mandate certain disclosures, at this stage, we view scope 3 emissions differently from scopes 1 and 2, given methodological complexity, regulatory uncertainty, concerns about double-counting, and lack of direct control by companies. We welcome disclosures and commitments that companies choose to make regarding material scope 3 emissions and recognize that these are provided on a good-faith basis as methodology develops.

In addition to climate-related risks and opportunities, for companies whose strategies, operations or supply chains are materially reliant on natural capital, nature-related risks and opportunities may affect

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12 We have observed that more companies are developing such plans, and public policymakers in certain markets are signaling their intentions to require them or already have requirements in place, such as Australia, Brazil, and the European Union (please see the International Transition Plan Network for information). We view transition plans as a method for a company to both internally assess and externally communicate its long-term strategy, ambition, objectives, and actions to create financial value through the global transition towards a low-carbon economy. Across the landscape there remains divergence on the objectives of such plans and the details they should contain. While transition plans can be helpful disclosure, BIS does not make the preparation and production of transition plans a voting issue. BIS may engage companies that have chosen to publish a transition plan to understand their planned actions and resource implications. Website accessed in December 2025.

13 For more information, please see our commentary "Climate-related risks and a low-carbon transition," December 2025.

their ability to generate long-term financial returns.[14] For these companies, we rely on disclosures to understand how their strategies consider nature-related impacts and dependencies and to assess how the board oversees these risks.[15]

Companies' impact on their workforce, supply chains, and communities

Companies determine their key stakeholders based on what is material to their business and long-term financial performance. For many companies, key stakeholders include employees, business supply chains, clients and consumers, regulators, and the communities in which they operate.

In our experience, companies that invest in the relationships that are critical to their strategic objectives are more likely to deliver durable, long-term financial performance. By contrast, we have found that poor relationships may create adverse impacts that could expose companies to legal, regulatory, operational, and reputational risks. This is particularly relevant to a company's workforce, which is central to long-term financial value creation.[16]

As a long-term shareholder on behalf of our clients, we find it helpful when companies disclose how they have identified their key stakeholders and considered their interests in business decision-making. In addition to understanding broader stakeholder relationships, BIS finds it helpful when companies discuss how they consider the needs of their workforce today, and the skills required for their future business strategy. We are also interested in understanding how the board monitors and engages on these matters, given it is well positioned to ensure that the approach taken by management is informed by and aligns with the company's strategy. BIS does not direct a company's policies or practices, which are the responsibility of management and the board.

In addition, we find it helpful when companies disclose their approach to addressing material adverse impacts that could arise from their business practices and affect critical relationships with their stakeholders. We encourage companies to implement, to the extent appropriate, monitoring processes (often referred to as due diligence) to identify and mitigate potential adverse impacts and grievance mechanisms to remediate any actual adverse material impacts.

We look to boards to oversee management's approach to addressing material risks related to key stakeholders and may convey concerns about board oversight in our voting on director elections or supporting a business relevant shareholder proposal when, in our assessment, the board is not acting in shareholders' long-term financial interests.

BlackRock's oversight of its investment stewardship activities

BIS' governance structure supports oversight and accountability of stewardship-related activities on behalf of clients at the global and regional level.

At the top of this governance structure, the risk-focused BIS Global Oversight Committee (the Committee) supports BIS' regulatory responsibilities in relation to proxy voting, including adherence to

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14 For more information, please see our commentary "Our approach to engagement on natural capital," December 2025.

15 Given the growing awareness of the materiality of these issues for certain businesses, enhanced reporting on a company's natural capital dependencies and impacts would aid investors' understanding. The recommendations of the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) may prove useful to some companies. We recognize that some companies may report using different standards, which may be required by regulation, or one of a number of other private sector standards. TNFD-aligned reporting is not a voting issue. Website accessed in December 2025.

16 For more information, please see our commentary "Our approach to engagement on human capital management," December 2025.

policies and procedures as well as market-level stewardship requirements. The Committee reviews and approves amendments to the Global Principles and regional voting guidelines. The Committee also reviews periodic reports regarding the votes cast by BIS on behalf of clients, as well as updates on material process issues, procedural changes, and other risk oversight considerations. The Committee is chaired by the Global Heads of the Investment Stewardship function and its members include senior BlackRock executives with legal, risk, and other experience relevant to team oversight who are independent from the investment stewardship function.

The Global Heads have primary oversight of BIS' activities globally, including voting in accordance with the Global Principles and regional voting guidelines. At the regional level, three regional Heads for the Americas, APAC, and EMEA oversee BIS' activities for their specific markets.

Vote execution

BIS votes proxies on behalf of index equity funds and accounts when authorized by our clients. We have processes in place to consider all proxies for which we have voting authority, and submit voting decisions, or refrain from voting when logistical issues arise (see below). The BIS Benchmark Policies – and the vote decisions made consistent with those policies – reflect our reasonable and independent judgment and are made without regard to the relationship between the issuer of the proxy (or any shareholder proponent or dissident shareholder) and the Fund, the Fund's affiliates (if any), BlackRock or BlackRock's affiliates, or BlackRock employees (see "Conflicts management policies and procedures," below).

In certain markets, proxy voting involves logistical issues which can affect BIS' ability to vote, as well as the cost of voting such proxies on behalf of our clients. These issues include, but are not limited to: 1) untimely notice of shareholder meetings; 2) restrictions on a foreigner's ability to exercise votes; 3) requirements to vote proxies in person; 4) "share-blocking" (requirements that investors who exercise their voting rights surrender the right to dispose of their holdings from the point at which votes are submitted until after the after the shareholder meeting has occurred); 5) potential difficulties in translating the proxy; 6) regulatory constraints; and 7) requirements to provide local agents with powers of attorney to facilitate voting instructions. We are not supportive of impediments to the exercise of voting rights such as share-blocking or overly burdensome administrative requirements.

BIS votes proxies in these situations on a "best-efforts" basis. In addition, BIS may determine that it is generally in the interests of BlackRock's clients not to vote proxies (or not to vote our full allocation) if the costs (including but not limited to opportunity costs associated with share-blocking constraints) associated with exercising a vote are expected to outweigh the benefit the client would derive by voting on the proposal.

Conflicts management policies and procedures

BIS is a dedicated function whose responsibilities are separate from BlackRock's sales, business partnership or enterprise-level vendor management activities.

BlackRock maintains policies and procedures that are designed to prevent undue influence on BIS' proxy voting activity. Such influence might stem from any relationship between the investee company (or any shareholder proponent or dissident shareholder) and BlackRock, BlackRock's affiliates, a Fund or a Fund's affiliates, or BlackRock employees.

For information on how BIS manages conflicts of interest, please see our disclosure.

Securities lending

When authorized, BlackRock acts as a securities lending agent on behalf of its clients. Lending securities enables BlackRock to increase the returns in clients' portfolios, and BlackRock's lending agreements allow it to recall securities out on loan at any time. BlackRock (or any other lender) does not retain voting rights for securities out on loan. Entitlements associated with the lent securities (dividends, coupons, etc.), while on loan are paid back to the lender of the security as stipulated in industry standard legal agreements.

With regard to the relationship between securities lending and proxy voting, BlackRock cannot vote shares on loan and may determine to recall them for voting, as guided by our fiduciary duty as an asset manager to our clients in helping them achieve their investment goals. While this has occurred in a limited number of cases, the decision to recall securities on loan as part of BlackRock's securities lending program in order to vote is based on an evaluation of various factors that include, but are not limited to, assessing potential securities lending revenue alongside the potential long-term financial value to clients of voting those securities (based on the information available at the time of recall consideration).[17] BIS works with colleagues in the Securities Lending and Risk and Quantitative Analysis teams to evaluate the costs and benefits to clients of recalling shares on loan.

In almost all instances, BlackRock anticipates that the potential long-term financial value to clients of voting shares would be less than the potential revenue the loan may provide clients. However, in certain instances, BlackRock may determine, in our independent business judgment as a fiduciary, that the value of voting outweighs the securities lending revenue loss to clients and would therefore recall shares to be voted in those instances. It is important to note that the majority of lendable assets in the market at any given time are not out on loan.

Periodically, BlackRock reviews our process for determining whether to recall securities on loan in order to vote and may modify it as necessary.

Voting Choice

BlackRock offers Voting Choice, a program that provides eligible clients with more opportunities to participate in the proxy voting process, where legally and operationally viable.[18]

Voting Choice is currently available for eligible clients invested in certain institutional pooled funds in the U.S., UK, Ireland, Canada, and Switzerland that utilize index equity investment strategies, as well as eligible clients in certain institutional pooled funds in the U.S., UK, Canada, and Switzerland that use systematic active equity (SAE) strategies. In addition, institutional clients in separately managed accounts (SMAs) continue to be eligible for BlackRock Voting Choice regardless of their investment

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17 Recalling securities on loan can be impacted by the timing of record dates. In the U.S., for example, the record date of a shareholder meeting typically falls before the proxy statements are released. Accordingly, it is not practicable to evaluate a proxy statement, determine that a vote has a material impact on a fund and recall any shares on loan in advance of the record date for the annual meeting. As a result, managers must weigh independent business judgement as a fiduciary, the benefit to a fund's shareholders of recalling loaned shares in advance of an estimated record date without knowing whether there will be a vote on matters which have a material impact on the fund (thereby forgoing potential securities lending revenue for the fund's shareholders) or leaving shares on loan to potentially earn revenue for the fund (thereby forgoing the opportunity to vote).

18 BlackRock will determine eligibility criteria under this program based upon, among other things, local market regulation and practice, cost considerations, operational risk and/or complexity, and financial considerations, including the decision to lend securities.

strategies.[19] Voting Choice is also available for eligible U.S. retail shareholder accounts invested in BlackRock's largest U.S. exchange-traded fund.[20]

As a result, the shares attributed to BlackRock portfolios in company share registers may be voted differently depending on whether our clients have authorized BIS to vote on their behalf, have authorized BIS to vote in accordance with a third-party policy, or have elected to vote shares in accordance with their own policy. Our clients have greater control over proxy voting because of Voting Choice.[21]

Reporting and vote transparency

We are committed to transparency of the stewardship work we do on behalf of clients. We inform clients about our engagement and voting policies and activities through direct communication and through disclosure on our website. We make public our regional voting guidelines for the benefit of clients and the companies in which we invest on their behalf. We also publish commentaries to share our approach to engagement on our five engagement priorities, as well as quarterly reports detailing our proxy voting and engagement activities.

19 With Voting Choice, SMA clients have the ability to select the policy that best aligns with their views and preferences from a set of voting policies from third-party proxy advisers. BlackRock can then use its proxy voting infrastructure to cast votes for the SMA based on the client's selected voting policy.

20 Read more about BlackRock Voting Choice on our website.

21 BlackRock does not disclose client information, including a client's selection of proxy policy, without client consent.

Want to know more?

blackrock.com/stewardship | contactstewardship@blackrock.com

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BlackRock Investment Stewardship

Climate and Decarbonization Stewardship Guidelines

Effective as of January 2026

BlackRock®

Contents

Introduction to BlackRock Investment Stewardship 3
Stewardship for clients with investment objectives relating to the low-carbon transition 3
The Climate and Decarbonization Stewardship Guidelines 4
Understanding the investment implications of the transition to a low-carbon economy 4
The Guidelines' design principles 5
Voting approach under the Guidelines 5
Related matters 10
Appendix 1 12
Appendix 2 13

NM0926U-5886997-253/266

Introduction to BlackRock Investment Stewardship

At BlackRock, investment stewardship serves as a link between our clients and the companies they invest in and is one of the ways we fulfill our fiduciary responsibilities as an asset manager on their behalf. BlackRock offers a range of proxy voting policies to reflect clients' individual investment choices and goals.

BlackRock Investment Stewardship (BIS) is responsible for stewardship activities in relation to clients' assets invested in index equity strategies. BIS takes a long-term approach in our stewardship efforts, reflecting the investment horizons of the majority of our clients. BIS does this through:

1. **Engaging with the boards and management of companies** in which clients are invested to deepen our understanding of a company's business model, including how they are overseeing material business risks and opportunities over time, and to help inform our voting on behalf of clients.[1]
2. **Voting at shareholder meetings** on management and shareholder proposals for clients who have authorized BIS to vote on their behalf.
3. **Contributing to industry dialogue on stewardship** to share our perspectives on matters that may impact our clients' investments.
4. **Reporting on our activities to inform clients** about our stewardship efforts on their behalf through a range of publications on our website and direct client communications.

Stewardship for clients with investment objectives relating to the low-carbon transition[2, 3]

Some of our clients are pursuing decarbonization as an investment objective, including many of our largest European clients, who have made net zero commitments.[4] To support our clients' unique and varied investment objectives, in July 2024, BlackRock launched the Climate and Decarbonization Stewardship program.

The Climate and Decarbonization Stewardship team (the dedicated team) applies these proxy voting guidelines (the Guidelines) to those funds that BlackRock offers to clients that have climate and decarbonization objectives and where the funds' respective governing body has explicitly approved the application of the Guidelines (referred to in this document as "in-scope funds").[5] Separately managed account (SMA) clients have a range of options, including instructing BlackRock to apply these Guidelines to their SMA holdings.

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1 On February 11, 2025, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) staff issued updated guidance for shareholders to maintain their eligibility to report their beneficial ownership under Schedule 13G of the Exchange Act. We comply fully with these requirements and do not engage with portfolio companies for the purpose, or with the effect, of changing or influencing control of any company.

2 BlackRock has heard from a growing number of clients globally that they have made, or are planning to make, commitments to align their investment strategies with the transition to a low-carbon economy. This stewardship option helps those clients meet their climate and decarbonization investment objectives and is part of BlackRock's commitment to offer clients choice.

3 Key climate, decarbonization and low-carbon transition related terms used in these Guidelines are explained in appendix 1.

4 Includes a select group of our largest client relationships. Net zero commitments are sourced from respective company websites, as of January 2025.

5 A list of approved funds is on BlackRock's website here.

The Climate and Decarbonization Stewardship Guidelines

These Guidelines set out the dedicated team's approach to engaging and voting on matters related to climate risks and the transition to a low-carbon economy at companies that are held by in-scope funds and accounts that apply these Guidelines.

The Guidelines differ from the Benchmark Policies in that they consider, in addition to financial objectives, companies' strategies to align with the transition to a low-carbon economy. They also incorporate the more ambitious goal of the Paris Agreement – namely to limit average global temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.[6]

The Guidelines apply primarily to companies in sectors that play an important role in the transition to a low-carbon economy. This includes companies which produce goods and services that contribute to real world decarbonization or have a carbon intensive business model and face outsized impacts from the low-carbon transition, particularly those representing the major sources of scopes 1, 2, and 3 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions across companies held by in-scope funds and accounts that have selected the Guidelines.[7]

For companies and matters not related to climate and transition risks, the dedicated team follows BIS' Benchmark Policies.[8] In addition, for clients who do not direct BlackRock to prioritize climate risks and decarbonization as an investment objective, BIS undertakes our stewardship responsibilities in line with our Benchmark Policies, with a sole focus on advancing those clients' long-term financial interests. This includes consideration of climate-related risks and opportunities in a company's business model, where material to the company's ability to deliver long-term financial returns.

Please see Appendix 2, which sets out the key differences between the BIS Benchmark Policies and these Guidelines on items related to climate risk and the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Understanding the investment implications of the transition to a low-carbon economy

Research from the BlackRock Investment Institute (BII) highlights that changing government policy, technology, and consumer and investor preferences are driving the transition to a low-carbon economy, but sectors and markets can decarbonize at varying speeds given the dynamic and uncertain nature of technological feasibility, consumer demand, and government policies, among other factors.[9,10]

To better understand the shape and speed of a transition to a low-carbon economy, BlackRock has developed the BlackRock Investment Institute Transition Scenario (BIITS), powered by Aladdin® technology. BIITS is a research-based, analytical forecast of how the low-carbon transition is most likely to play out based on what we know and expect today. It can help inform a top-down assessment of a company's business risk arising from the transition. BII based its key assumptions on rigorous research, and the input of BlackRock's portfolio managers and other experts.

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6 United Nations Climate Change, "The Paris Agreement," accessed in December 2025.

7 These companies may already be low-carbon operators or be demonstrating momentum in reducing emissions in their operations, providing key inputs or goods and services that support real world decarbonization, or pivoting their current business model to contribute to the transition to a low-carbon economy.

8 The BIS Benchmark Policies – which are comprised of the BIS Global Principles, regional voting guidelines, and Engagement Priorities – apply to clients' assets invested through index equity strategies, take a financial materiality-based approach, and are focused solely on advancing clients' financial interests.

9 BII's latest research shows that while decarbonization continues, its pace is increasingly uneven across sectors and regions, and overall slower than previously expected.

10 BlackRock, "Evolving energy transition, evolving opportunities," February 2025.

These Guidelines draw from the proprietary insights generated by BIITS and Aladdin Climate®, BlackRock's Risk and Quantitative Analysis Group, and the broader BIS team to help inform and guide engagement and voting activities on behalf of clients invested in in-scope funds and SMAs. [11] In doing so, the dedicated team takes into consideration the fact that the necessary data to assess individual companies currently has limitations, but is improving.

The Guidelines' design principles

The framework of these Guidelines is designed to:

- **Prioritize sectors and companies that play an important role in the transition to a low-carbon economy:** This includes companies which produce goods and services that contribute to real world decarbonization or have a carbon intensive business model and face outsized impacts from the low-carbon transition.
- **Apply a nuanced approach to our analysis that acknowledges the unevenness of the low-carbon transition across sectors and markets**: The Guidelines take into consideration the varying speeds at which sectors and markets are decarbonizing based on technological feasibility, consumer demand, government policy, regulatory frameworks and other factors. Further, the Guidelines recognize that these factors are uncertain and dynamic.
- **Take a long-term, pragmatic approach to the low-carbon transition that minimizes disruption to portfolio companies and their key stakeholders:** The Guidelines recognize the challenges that many companies face in adapting their business models to the low-carbon transition. It reflects a view that a smooth transition – where companies adapt while continuing to deliver financial returns – is a better long-term investment outcome and less disruptive to other key stakeholders than a disorderly transition. Further, the Guidelines consider the differences between the actions and outcomes over which company management has influence, and those it does not.
- **Focus on useful, contextualized disclosures that help inform investors views, while recognizing data limitations:** Under the Guidelines, the dedicated team looks for disclosures that outline key milestones and dependencies underpinning the company's low-carbon transition strategy, explain the trade-offs required to adapt the business model, and include relevant data and narrative.
- **Consistency with the participating clients' position as a minority investor:** The boards and executive leadership of companies determine a company's strategy and its implementation. Under the Guidelines, the dedicated team makes decisions on how to engage companies and vote proxies independently, based on its professional judgment of the priorities and outcomes most aligned with participating clients' investment objectives.

Voting approach under the Guidelines[12]

When evaluating each voting item across management or shareholder proposals, the dedicated team applies a case-by-case approach that reflects the uneven pace of the low-carbon transition across sectors and markets, and acknowledges the distinction between what company management can influence and what lies beyond its control. As a result, voting decisions – on behalf of in-scope funds

[11] Aladdin® Climate is a suite of climate analytics including forward-looking scenario analysis and net zero alignment analytics. Aladdin® is a proprietary investment and risk management platform.

[12] These Guidelines are not intended to limit the analysis of individual issues at specific companies or provide a guide as to how the dedicated team will engage and/or vote in every instance. The Guidelines are applied by the dedicated team with discretion, on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the range of issues and facts specific to the company, as well as individual ballot items at shareholder meetings.

and SMAs – on similar proposals included on different companies' shareholder meeting agendas may vary depending on company, sector, or market-specific circumstances.

Consistent with the investment objective of each fund or account that has selected these Guidelines, the dedicated team will look to the companies to demonstrate the following:

Corporate Disclosures[13]

In the context of these Guidelines, the dedicated team looks for companies to provide sufficient disclosure to assess whether the company's strategy is aligned with the low-carbon transition. As a general point, the team looks to companies that are important to the transition to a low-carbon economy to explain the strategy and governance frameworks that they have determined most appropriate, which may include:

(1) a low-carbon transition strategy to demonstrate their alignment with the ambition to limit average global temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. This would typically include a long-term strategy to achieve net-zero GHG emissions by 2050, with appropriate near- and medium-term milestones to assess their progress.

(2) low-carbon transition-related reporting. Standardized disclosure of sustainability-related data supports investors in making informed decisions. The International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) standards, IFRS S1 and S2, represent one such approach to standardization that the dedicated team finds useful in its analysis.[14], [15] IFRS S1 addresses the general requirements of sustainability reporting and IFRS S2 sets out the disclosures that provide investors with decision-useful information about a company's most significant climate- and low-carbon transition-related risks and opportunities. This includes receiving independent, third-party assurances, as audit and assurance standards are developed.

(3) scope 1 and scope 2, and most significant scope 3 GHG emissions.[16], [17] In addition, the dedicated team looks to companies to disclose their emissions reduction targets for scope 1 and 2 emissions, science-based where possible. The team welcomes disclosure of targets or indicative goals, where companies have set them, for scope 3 emissions reductions. Scope 3

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13 Given data and measurement limitations, companies may need to provide estimated GHG emissions where reporting methodologies are nascent. In addition, certain disclosures related to a company's plans for adapting their business models through the low-carbon transition may require forward-looking statements.

14 The ISSB is an independent standard-setting body within the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) Foundation. The standards build on the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) framework and the standards and metrics developed by the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB), which have both converged under the ISSB. Please refer to the IFRS website to learn more about the framework and standards S1 "General Requirements for Disclosure of Sustainability-related Financial Information" and S2 "Climate-related Disclosures." Websites accessed in December 2025.

15 A number of jurisdictions are consulting on adopting the standards issued to date or have already committed to doing so. BIS does not mandate any specific disclosure framework companies should use, and recognize that some companies may report using different standards, some of which may be required by regulation. In such cases, we ask that companies highlight the metrics that are industry- or company-specific. We also recognize that companies may be phasing in reporting over several years. We do not prescribe timelines regarding when companies should make sustainability-related disclosures but appreciate it when companies produce them sufficiently in advance of their shareholder meeting, to the best of their abilities, to provide investors with time to assess the data and make informed voting decisions.

16 FTSE Russell address the materiality of different categories of scope 3 GHG emissions by sector in a January 2024 paper: FTSE Russel, "Scope for improvement: Solving the Scope 3 conundrum," January 2024, accessed in December 2025.

17 Under this policy, the dedicated team looks for GHG emissions disclosures to be aligned with the Greenhouse Gas Protocol (GHG Protocol). The Protocol Standards and Guidance are currently being updated to ensure they continue to provide "a rigorous and credible accounting foundation for businesses to measure, plan and track progress toward science-based and net-zero targets in line with the global 1.5°C goal." Websites accessed in December 2025.

information, including how a company is working with its value chain to accelerate reductions in GHG intensity, provides useful insight to investors focused on investing in the low-carbon transition and understanding the impact of their investments on their decarbonization goals.[18] However, the team recognizes that companies have varying ability to influence the emissions across the different parts of their value chain and, therefore, it is helpful when disclosures explain the implications for the achievement of their decarbonization targets. For some companies that play an important role in the low-carbon transition, scope 3 may represent their only significant source of GHG emissions in the value chain. While we do not believe companies should be required to enforce emissions reduction targets outside of their control, where relevant, we look for disclosures on how the company approaches the low-carbon transition in these cases. This may include plans and targets to grow businesses that contribute to real world decarbonization, forward-looking capital or procurement allocation plans to net-zero aligned activities or suppliers, and strategies to mitigate material transition risks.

(4) where relevant, disclosures that describe the company's exposure to climate-related physical risks – such as acute risks from extreme weather events or chronic risks from long-term shifts in climate patterns – and how these risks could reasonably be expected to affect the company's operations, assets, or supply chains.

Transition plans

Some companies have published transition plans outlining how they intend to implement their low-carbon transition strategies. As defined by the ISSB, a transition plan "lays out the entity's targets, actions or resources for its transition towards a lower-carbon economy, including actions such as reducing its greenhouse gas emissions" (see Appendix 1).[19]

Work is also underway in a number of jurisdictions on establishing a common approach in a market to corporate transition plans.[20] Recent guidance from the ISSB on disclosures about transition plans highlights the convergence of reporting approaches.

While the preparation of a transition plan, or lack thereof, is not, in itself, a voting issue, these disclosures typically provide valuable insights that inform the dedicated team's approach to engaging and voting on matters related to climate and transition risks on behalf of in-scope funds and accounts.

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18 The dedicated team does not believe the purpose of scope 3 disclosure requirements should be to push publicly traded companies into the role of enforcing emission reduction targets outside of their control. Given methodological complexity for scope 3 emissions and the lack of direct control by companies over the requisite data, we find it most useful when companies focus their disclosures on those of the fifteen scope 3 GHG Protocol categories that are material to their business models.

19 International Financial Reporting Standards, "IFRS S2: Climate-related Disclosures," June 2023, accessed in December 2025.

20 More companies are developing such plans, and public policymakers in certain markets are signaling their intentions to require them or already have requirements in place, such as Australia, Brazil, and the European Union (please see the International Transition Plan Network for information). BlackRock views transition plans as a method for a company to both internally assess and externally communicate its long-term strategy, ambition, objectives, and actions to create financial value through the global transition towards a low-carbon economy. Across the landscape there remains divergence on the objectives of such plans and the details they should contain. Website accessed in December 2025.

Boards and directors

An effective and well-functioning board that has appropriate governance structures to facilitate oversight of a company's management and strategic initiatives is critical to the company's ability to deliver on its low-carbon transition strategy. In assessing the role and effectiveness of the board in this regard, the dedicated team seeks to understand whether:

- The board has clear oversight responsibilities for climate and low-carbon transition-related risks and opportunities in the company's business model. The Guidelines consider the whole board to have responsibility for oversight of the company's long-term strategy, including those aspects related to the transition to a low-carbon economy.
- Management has established a robust low-carbon transition framework and long-term strategy, with clear accountability for delivery by senior executives.
- The capital management strategy explains how the company allocates investments to (traditional and next generation) business lines and innovation, and returns cash to shareholders, consistent with the company's stated low-carbon transition strategy.
- The climate and low-carbon transition risks most likely to significantly impact the business are integrated into the company's enterprise risk management processes and reporting.
- The company has set scope 1 and 2 GHG emissions reduction targets, science-based and independently verified where possible, against a baseline, that are consistent with the ambition to limit average global temperature rise to no more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.
- There is a clear link between the company's scope 1 and 2 GHG emissions reduction targets over time and its long-term low-carbon transition strategy.
- The company is monitoring its most significant scope 3 emissions and disclosing these where it is confident in the data. Given forthcoming regulatory requirements in certain jurisdictions, some companies are voluntarily disclosing scope 3 emissions reductions targets and plans, setting out how they are working on decarbonization with the different constituents in their value chain. [21]
- The company's governance and oversight processes for managing material risks associated with corporate political activities including applicable policies and procedures where relevant.[22] The dedicated team looks for public policy engagement to be consistent with a company's stated strategic policy objectives, including those related to the low-carbon transition.

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21 FTSE Russell address the materiality of different categories of scope 3 GHG emissions by sector in a January 2024 paper "Scope for improvement: Solving the Scope 3 conundrum." Their research indicates that there are 2-3 material scope 3 GHG emissions categories by sector. The research uses a definition of materiality from the GHG Protocol, which "encourages companies to maintain a representative inventory of the "most significant GHG emissions, [that] offer the most significant GHG reduction opportunities and are most relevant to the company's business goals." Website accessed in December 2025.

22 Corporate political activities may include lobbying as defined by local regulations, policy engagement (including trade association memberships), and corporate political contributions.

Voting against directors over concerns about climate risk

In implementing these Guidelines, the dedicated team generally supports non-executive directors standing for election where, in its assessment based on company disclosures and engagement, a company is executing on its commitment to align with the transition to a low-carbon economy, as defined above. Where the dedicated team determines this is not the case, it may vote against the election of one or more directors who the team identifies as having the most responsibility for the issue. The directors most likely to be in focus are the chair of the board committee with low-carbon transition, climate or sustainability risk oversight responsibilities, other members of the relevant committee, the lead independent director or the non-executive chair of the board. In certain markets, the team may withhold support for the discharge of the supervisory board or equivalent and/or board reports.[23]

Where the dedicated team has not supported director elections over climate concerns in a prior year, and the company has not subsequently made progress towards aligning with the transition to a low-carbon economy, the team may escalate by not supporting the re-election of additional responsible directors.[24]

Management proposals to approve a climate strategy or progress report

In certain markets, company management may submit proposals – commonly referred to as "Say on Climate" – seeking shareholder approval of their climate action plans or progress reports. The Guidelines consider these proposals as a valuable governance mechanism that can enhance transparency, accountability, and investors' understanding of a company's climate strategy. The dedicated team generally supports management's climate strategy proposal if, in the team's assessment based on these Guidelines, the strategy is aligned with the low-carbon transition. Similarly, the dedicated team generally supports management's proposal on a progress report if the company has clearly explained its progress against, and any deviations from or changes to, its stated low-carbon transition plan and targets.

Shareholder proposals on climate and low-carbon transition matters

In most markets, shareholders can submit proposals to be voted on at a company's shareholder meeting, as long as certain requirements are met. Shareholder proposals span a wide range of topics and have varying degrees of relevance for companies across sectors, locations, and business models.

Each shareholder proposal is evaluated on a case-by-case basis, focusing on its merit while considering the company's individual circumstances. When the dedicated team votes in support of a proposal, it is not necessarily endorsing every element of the proposal or the reasoning, objectives, or supporting statement of the proponent.

In addition to financial materiality, the Guidelines consider the proposal's relevance to the company's low-carbon transition strategy and targets. The dedicated team assesses the implications for, and the

[23] Board report votes are generally advisory and relate to reports issued by the board of directors that may contain information on a company's sustainability efforts, operational resilience, or financial condition, among others.

[24] While the dedicated team may escalate voting by not supporting additional management proposals, principally director elections, the team does not consider filing shareholder proposals, preannouncing voting intentions or using the media to amplify concerns as appropriate courses of action. The dedicated team will continue to take a constructive, long-term focused approach, to engagement and voting on behalf of clients under these Guidelines.

relevance to, the company's stated low-carbon transition strategy and targets. Under the Guidelines, the team may support shareholder proposals that, for example, ask a company to:

- Publish a business plan, and related disclosures, consistent with the ambition to limit average global temperature rise to no more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels
- Align scope 1 and 2 GHG emissions reduction targets to, and/or discuss how their targets align with, a long-term goal of the company achieving net zero GHG emissions by 2050
- Disclose the categories of scope 3 GHG emissions most significant to a company's business model
- Improve voluntary disclosures on the alignment of a company's climate-related corporate political activities with its strategic policy positions, where existing disclosure is insufficient[25]

The dedicated team does not support shareholder proposals that seek to constrain board or management decision-making or direct specific business or strategic decisions.

Related matters

There are other business items not covered above that may be put to a shareholder vote that could address matters relevant to the transition to a low-carbon economy. Under these Guidelines, the dedicated team engages, where appropriate, to enhance its understanding of a company's approach. Generally, voting on these matters would be covered by BIS' Benchmark Policies.

Executive compensation

The dedicated team looks to company boards to put in place a compensation structure that incentivizes and rewards executives appropriately. Some companies, in light of their long-term strategy, may decide to include relevant GHG emissions reduction targets or low-carbon transition-related metrics in their incentive plans. In such cases, the dedicated team would engage to understand the alignment between those metrics and the company's stated climate strategy. Clear disclosure also helps investors assess whether pay structures are consistent with long-term climate strategy and risk management.

Auditors and audit-related issues

For companies with material climate or transition risks or opportunities in their business models, the dedicated team is interested in understanding whether the company considers and, if relevant, quantifies, and accounts for material climate-related risks in its financial statements, including if the company explains such risks within the context of its audit report. The team notes that assurance of corporate disclosures related to climate risk and the transition to a low-carbon economy is still nascent.

Mergers, acquisitions, asset sales, and other special situations

Special situations will be considered on their financial merits, but the dedicated team may engage on climate-related factors under these Guidelines where a transaction may significantly alter a company's climate strategy or a shareholder activist has proposed governance, strategic or operational changes that may impact its climate strategy. The dedicated team does not promote changes in corporate control or engage in shareholder activism.

[25] Corporate political activities may include lobbying as defined by local regulations, policy engagement (including trade association memberships), and corporate political contributions.

Other business relevant sustainability-related risks and opportunities

Climate risk and the transition to a low-carbon economy are interconnected with a number of other material sustainability-related risks and opportunities that may be relevant to a company's business model and long-term financial performance. These include a company's impacts or dependencies on natural capital and key stakeholders.[26] In the context of these Guidelines, the dedicated team may engage companies to better understand how they are managing the impact on people (e.g., employees, suppliers, customers and communities) of any strategic or operational changes they are making in relation to their transition to a low-carbon economy. Similarly, the team may engage companies that face risks and opportunities related to land use and deforestation, access to fresh water, or the ability to secure scarce resources critical to the transition to a low-carbon economy.

[26] Engagement with companies on these issues is informed by BIS' commentaries on natural capital, human capital management, and corporate human rights risks, December 2025.

Appendix 1

Terminology

We understand the key concepts referred to within these Guidelines as follows:

Climate risk: Includes physical risk, the increased risk to companies' assets and activities caused by the direct impact of changing weather patterns and natural catastrophes, and transition risk, the impact of the transition to a low-carbon economy on a company's long-term profitability.

Transition to a low-carbon economy ("low-carbon transition"): The global economic shift toward lower emissions across many sectors and business models. The economic transformation is being driven by changes in government policy, technology, and consumer and investor preferences, as well as the physical effects of climate change (e.g., extreme weather), and can potentially have a material impact on clients' investments and portfolios.

Decarbonization: the process of reducing or eliminating emissions of carbon dioxide (CO_2) from human activity and removing carbon currently in the atmosphere. This can be carried out by countries, companies and even individual consumers. Sometimes the concept is understood to include the reduction and elimination of other GHG, e.g., methane.

Climate-related risks and opportunities: The investment opportunities and risks associated with the transition to a low-carbon economy, including transition risks and opportunities and physical risks and opportunities in adapting to physical climate change.

Climate-related transition plan: "An aspect of an entity's overall strategy that lays out the entity's targets, actions or resources for its transition towards a lower-carbon economy, including actions such as reducing its greenhouse gas emissions."[27]

Science-based GHG emissions reduction targets: Targets that "…are in line with what the latest climate science deems necessary to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement — limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Science-based targets give companies a clearly defined path to reduce GHG emissions in line with limiting global warming to 1.5°C. They define how much and how quickly a business must reduce its emissions to be in line with the Paris Agreement goals."[28]

Scope 1: Direct GHG emissions. Direct GHG emissions occur from sources that are owned or controlled by the company, for example, emissions from combustion in owned or controlled boilers, furnaces, vehicles, etc.; emissions from chemical production in owned or controlled process equipment.[29]

Scope 2: Electricity indirect GHG emissions Scope 2 accounts for GHG emissions from the generation of purchased electricity [steam, and heating/cooling] consumed by the company. [It] is defined as electricity [steam, and heating/cooling] that is purchased or otherwise brought into the organizational boundary of the company.[30]

Scope 3: Other indirect GHG emissions. Scope 3 is an optional reporting category that allows for the treatment of all other indirect emissions. Scope 3 emissions are a consequence of the activities of the company, but occur from sources not owned or controlled by the company. [31]

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27 As defined by the International Financial Reporting Standards, "IFRS S2: Climate-related Disclosures," June 2023.. Several jurisdictions are basing their own transition plan disclosure frameworks on the IFRS S2 definition. We anticipate transition plan disclosure becoming mandatory in an increasing number of jurisdictions over the near term.

28 As defined by the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi). SBTi "is a corporate climate action organization that enables companies and financial institutions worldwide to play their part in combating the climate crisis. We develop standards, tools and guidance which allow companies to set greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions targets in line with what is needed to keep global heating below catastrophic levels and reach net-zero by 2050 at latest." Source: Science Based Targets initiative, "About Us." Websites accessed in December 2025.

29 Greenhouse Gas Protocol, "A Corporate Accounting and Reporting Standard," Revised Edition.

30 Greenhouse Gas Protocol, "A Corporate Accounting and Reporting Standard," Revised Edition.

31 Greenhouse Gas Protocol, "A Corporate Accounting and Reporting Standard," Revised Edition.

Appendix 2

Comparison of key differences between how the BIS' Benchmark Policies considers climate-related risks, where appropriate, and these Guidelines:[32]

	BIS Benchmark Policies[33]	Decarbonization Guidelines
Key concepts	Focuses on financial performance and engages companies on climate and transition topics when material to their business Prioritizes the disclosure of how a company is managing material climate and transition-related risks and opportunities	Considers both financial performance and decarbonization objectives consistent with funds' and clients' investment objectives Assesses the alignment of a company's business model with the ambition to limit global average temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels
Prioritized companies for climate-related engagement	Largest Scope 1 and 2 GHG emitters	Largest total value chain GHG emitters (Scope 1, 2, and 3)
Emissions reporting	Seeks reporting of Scope 1 and 2	Seeks reporting of Scope 1, 2 and significant 3
Emissions targets & decarbonization efforts	Seeks the disclosure of Scope 1 and 2 targets	Seeks Scope 1 and 2 targets and assesses decarbonization efforts
Temperature & scenario alignment/ pathways	Seeks disclosure from companies that identifies and discusses the most plausible decarbonization pathway	Assesses temperature and scenario alignment/ pathways to 1.5°C degrees
Science-based targets commitments & verifications	Disclosure topic but not vote escalation criteria	Seeks science-based targets and verifications where possible; may take voting action where absent
Company's role in the transition	Disclosure topic but not vote escalation criteria	Assesses activities benefitting from and/or contributing to the transition to a low-carbon economy
Shareholder proposals	Case-by-case approach with focus on implications for long-term financial value creation No support for shareholder proposals that seek to direct management strategy	Case-by-case approach with further consideration given to decarbonization objectives in addition to financial performance No support for shareholder proposals that seek to direct management strategy

[32] There may be some regional variations in voting under these Guidelines in light of company circumstances, policy requirements in a particular market or a country's Nationally Defined Contributions, amongst other things.

[33] The BIS Global Principles, regional voting guidelines, and Engagement Priorities (collectively, the BIS Benchmark Policies) set out the core elements of corporate governance that guide our investment stewardship program. The Benchmark Policies apply to clients' assets invested through index equity strategies, take a financial materiality-based approach, and are focused solely on advancing clients' long-term financial interests.

Want to know more?

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