

Abakkus Asset Manager LLP

Stewardship Code

Document Control	
Title	Stewardship Code
Policy Owner	Abakkus Compliance & Risk Team
Approved by	Designated Partners dated 1st July 2020
Version number and effective date	Version no. 2 dated 31 st March 2023

Version / Annual Review details

S. No.	Details of Change	Date of creation / change	Author	Version no.	Approved by
1	1 st Policy	1st July 2020	Compliance & Risk Team	V.1	Designated Partners
2	To widen the scope of the policy to make it applicable to all categories of AIF Funds	31 st March 2023	Compliance & Risk Team	V.2	Designated Partners

Introduction

This document on Stewardship Code ('Code') sets out the framework and guidelines on discharge of the stewardship responsibilities of Abakkus Asset Manager LLP (hereinafter referred to as 'LLP'), being the Investment Manager to India - Ahead Venture Trust, a SEBI registered Category I Alternative Investment Fund, India – Ahead Private Equity Trust, a SEBI registered Category II Alternative Investment Fund and Abakkus Growth Fund, a SEBI registered Category III Alternative Investment Fund in relation to their investment in listed equities. The Code has been framed in accordance with Guidelines on Stewardship Code for Alternative Investment Funds issued by SEBI vide circular no CIR/CFD/CMD1/ 168 /2019 on December 24, 2019 and adopted pursuant to the approval of the Designated Partners of the LLP.

Purpose

The Code enumerates the processes that the LLP intends to follow in order to safeguard the interests of the investors of the fund while managing the investments in listed equities under various schemes of AIF. The purpose of the Code is to enhance the quality of engagement between institutional investors and the investee companies as a step towards improved Corporate Governance practices with a view to enhance long term returns to investors and the governance responsibilities.

Principle 1 Institutional Investors should formulate a comprehensive policy on the discharge of their stewardship responsibilities, publicly disclose it, review and update it periodically.

The LLP manages various asset classes and has various investment capabilities. As sustainability is an important part of the investment philosophy of the LLP, the following **primary stewardship responsibilities** taken into account throughout these capabilities and asset classes.

- take into account the corporate governance practices of investee companies, when undertaking buy and sell decisions;
- take into consideration, in the investment process, investee companies' policies and practices on environmental, social and governance matters;
- enhance investor value through productive engagement with investee companies;
- vote and engage with investee companies in a manner consistent with the best interests of its investors;
- be accountable to investors within the parameters of professional confidentiality and regulatory regime; and
- maintain transparency in reporting its voting decisions and other forms of engagement with investee companies

Discharging Stewardship Responsibilities:

The LLP shall discharge its stewardship responsibilities through:

- voting on shareholders' resolutions, with a view to enhance value creation for the investors and the investee companies;
- advocating for responsible corporate governance practices, as a driver of value creation; and
- Intervening on environmental, social and governance opportunities or risks in the investee companies.

Responsibility for oversight of the stewardship activities:

- The Designated Partners of the LLP shall ensure that there is an effective oversight of the LLP's stewardship activities.

- The LLP, if required may avail the services of external agencies (institutional advisors) in discharging its Stewardship responsibilities. The said cost may be apportioned to the fund.
- Notwithstanding the above, the ultimate stewardship responsibilities shall be discharged by the LLP.

Disclosure of Code

This Code and any amendment thereto, shall be disclosed on the website of the LLP

Training

The LLP may provide training at regular intervals to the employees involved in implementation of the principles laid in the Code.

Principle 2: Institutional investors should have a clear policy on how they manage conflicts of interest in fulfilling their stewardship responsibilities and publicly disclose it.

The term “conflict of interest” refers to instances where personal or financial considerations may compromise or have the potential to compromise the judgment of professional activities. The LLP shall abide by high level principles on avoidance of conflicts of interest while managing investments of the Fund. The detailed process of identifying and managing conflict of interest is as follows:

Identifying conflict of interest: While dealing with investee companies, the Investment Manager may be faced with a conflict of interest, inter alia, in the following non-exhaustive instances, where:

- The investee company is a client of the LLP for its other business activity;
- Investee company is directly or indirectly linked to another investee company of Fund;
- The investee company holds an interest, in the overall business or is a distributor for the LLP;
- The LLP is a supplier of the investee company;
- A nominee of the LLP has been appointed as a director or a key managerial person of the investee company;
- A partner or a key managerial person of the LLP has a personal interest in the investee company;
- The more of assets in the AIF fund, the more money LLP will earn,

Manner of managing conflict of interest:

- Implementation of a fair investment policy and appropriate disclosures made to the investors of the AIF fund if any.
- The transaction is in compliance with the applicable regulations and is at arm’s-length.
- The conflict is disclosed to the management before entering into transaction
- The voting decision is in the best interest of the stakeholders keeping the interest of fund holders first.
- Documentation of the process of resolving any identified material conflict of interest.

Principle 3: Institutional investors should monitor their investee companies

- The Investment team shall be responsible for the monitoring of the investee companies’ performance. The investment team may consider the investee companies’ leadership effectiveness, succession planning, corporate governance, reporting and other parameters they consider important while making investment decisions.
- The Investment team shall engage with investee companies as part of the research process that leads to an investment in an investee company, which might include meetings with management.

- Once an investment is made, the Investment team shall continue to monitor each investee company. As a part of this process, the fund manager/ analysts shall, where feasible, attend meetings/Conference calls conducted by the management of the investee company. Fund Manager/ analysts may also use publicly available information, sell side research and industry information and shall engage with the investee companies at least once a year, through any means detailed above.
- While dealing with the investee company, the LLP shall ensure compliance with the SEBI (Prohibition on Insider Trading) Regulations, 2015.
- The Audit and Risk Committee of the LLP shall review the monitoring and engagement activities being carried out by the Investment team on an annual basis.

Principle 4: Institutional investors should have a clear policy on intervention in their investee companies. Institutional investors should also have a clear policy for collaboration with other institutional investors where required, to preserve the interests of the ultimate investors, which should be disclosed.

The LLP's engagement is integral to its investment processes as it firmly believes that this is an important way to preserve value for Fund investors.

- **Applicability**
 - The LLP shall intervene in the acts/omissions of an investee company, in which the fund has:
 - invested Rs. [100 crore] or
 - holds at least [5] % of the share capital of the investee company or
 - The LLP shall intervene if, in its opinion, any act/omission of the investee company is considered material on a case to case basis, including but not limited to insufficient disclosures, inequitable treatment of shareholders, non-compliance with regulations, performance parameters, governance issues, related party transactions, corporate plans/ strategy, poor financial performance of the investee company, Environmental Social and Governance risk, litigation or any other related matters
- **Intervention by the LLP:** The decision for intervention shall be decided based on the following broad parameters:
 - The LLP shall not generally intervene if the threshold is below the prescribed level or investment is already earmarked for divestment.
 - The LLP may consider intervening in matters below the thresholds, if in the reasonable opinion of the LLP, the issue involved may adversely impact the overall corporate governance atmosphere or the Fund's investment.

The mechanisms for intervention are:

The LLP engages with investee companies through both formal and informal channels including private meetings and attendance at company meetings as well as telephone and electronic methods.

- **Communication:** If concerns regarding an investee company's approach or decisions arise, initial discussions would, if appropriate, take place on a confidential basis and where possible as part of the fund manager's ongoing discussion.
- **Engagement:** In the event the above fails to undertake constructive steps to resolve the concerns raised by fund manager within a reasonable timeframe, the LLP shall take all reasonable steps to engage with the management of the investee company to resolve such concerns by the LLP.
- **Re-engagement:** In the event the management of the investee company fails to undertake constructive steps to resolve the concerns raised by the LLP within a reasonable timeframe, the LLP shall take all reasonable steps to re-engage with the management to resolve the LLP's concerns.
- **Escalation** Where the LLP's concerns have not been managed through the usual channels of communication, then the Fund Manager may seek to escalate the concerns. The LLP shall engage with the board of the investee company (through a formal written communication) and elaborate on the concerns. The LLP may also consider discussing the issues at the general meeting of the investee company.
- **Reporting to the Regulators:** If there is no response or action taken by the investee company despite the first four steps, the LLP may approach the relevant authorities.

In case the LLP's intervention is not successful (either fully or partially), it will not automatically result in the requirement to exit the Fund's investment in the investee company. The decision to purchase more equity or sell all or part of the Fund's investment in the investee company shall be made by the Partners, which may consider the outcome of the intervention as an input in its decision-making process.

Collaboration: The LLP shall consider collective engagement with other institutional investors, professional associations, regulators, advisors and any other entities where it deems necessary on a general basis and in particular, when it believes a collective engagement will lead to a higher quality and/or a better response from the investee company. The LLP may approach, or may be approached by, other Investment Manager/Asset Managers/Insurers/Mutual Funds etc. to provide a joint representation to the investee companies to address specific concerns. The LLP shall determine individually its position on any issue requiring collaborative engagement and shall not act or be construed as acting as a 'person acting in concert' with other investors.

Principle 5: Institutional investors should have a clear policy on voting and disclosure of voting activity.

- The LLP shall exercise their voting rights and vote on shareholder resolutions of investee companies in accordance with the voting policy.
- The LLP shall disclose all voting activity to its investors on an annual basis. The LLP shall also disclose if it has relied (either partly or fully) on the voting recommendations provided by any proxy advisory firm.
- **Attendance at General Meetings:** The LLP shall strive to attend general meetings of the investee companies (annual as well as any extra ordinary shareholders' meetings) where

appropriate, and to the extent possible, actively speak and respond to the matters being discussed at such meetings if required.

- Mechanism: The LLP may vote whether by means of e-voting, physically attending meeting, voting through proxy or otherwise.

Principle 6: Institutional investors should report periodically on their stewardship activities

The LLP shall provide a report of the discharge of its Stewardship Responsibilities annually as a part of the public disclosures on its website, for the benefit of its ultimate beneficiaries (investors).