

# **ATRS Board Policy 4**

## **STATEMENT OF INVESTMENT POLICY**

A.C.A. § 24-7-305

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### **I. Board - Investment Policies and Procedures**

#### **A. Statement of Investment Policy**

1. This Investment Policy has been prepared within the context of applicable Arkansas laws and is intended to allow for sufficient flexibility in the investment process to capture opportunities, yet ensure that both prudence and care are maintained in the execution of the investment program. While safety of principal is given primary consideration, the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System Board of Trustees ("Board") may take appropriate levels of risk to earn higher levels of investment return.
2. The Board has arrived at this policy through careful study of the rates of return and risks associated with various investment strategies in relation to the current and projected liabilities of the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System ("the System"). This policy has been chosen as the most appropriate for achieving the financial objectives of the System. The policy will be reviewed periodically as circumstances dictate.
3. The Board has adopted a long-term investment horizon so that the chances and duration of investment losses are carefully weighed against the long-term potential for appreciation of assets. The assets of the System will be invested in a manner that provides the safeguards and diversity to which a prudent investor would adhere. All transactions undertaken on behalf of the System will be in the sole interest of the System's plan beneficiaries.
4. To achieve the overall investment goal of the System, one or more investment consultants may be retained by the Board as investment advisors. The scope of duties, together with the terms and conditions of engagement, of any investment consultant will be set forth in a contract approved by the Board. Throughout this document, investment advisors are referred to as investment consultants.
5. The System shall manage those assets not specifically allocated to investment managers. No investment shall be made without an investment consultant's written advice or written recommendation. The System shall not approve any material changes in any direct investment without first receiving written advice or a written recommendation from a third-party investment consultant and, if

needed, outside legal counsel, and, without thereafter receiving written approval by the Investment Committee and Board.

B. Divestment of Direct Holdings Held with Certain Financial Services Providers

1. The System shall divest from all direct holdings that it has with a financial services provider included on the list published on the Treasurer of State's website under § 25-1-1002. Divestment shall occur as soon as practicable, but no later than three hundred sixty-five (365) calendar days after the financial services provider's inclusion on the list published on the Treasurer of State's website.
2. However, in order to prevent financial harm to the System and to ensure that the System's fiduciary duty is met, the System shall not divest from an investment that it has with a financial services provider included on the list published on the Treasurer of State's website under § 25-1-1002 if the investment is locked into a maturity date and an early divestment would result in a financial penalty and cause a negative financial impact to the System.

C. Investments in Countries of Concern

1. In order to comply with Arkansas Code § 25-1-1201 and Act 937 of 2025 et seq. and also to ensure that System funds are not invested in the development of technologies and products that may threaten the national security of the United States, the System shall not directly hold any equity interest or debt financing interest in any entity that is:
  - a. Owned in whole or with a majority ownership by the government of the People's Republic of China; or
  - b. Subject to any investment restrictions imposed by the United States Department of the Treasury because the entity is located in a country of concern and is engaged in activities that may contribute to a threat to the national security of the United States.
2. For any prohibited investment held by the System as of the adoption of this section, the Executive Director, in cooperation with the investment consultant and other necessary parties, shall divest the System of any excluded holdings as soon as divestment is practicable and would not result in a financial penalty or cause a material negative impact to the System.

#### D. Standard of Care

1. When investing and reinvesting trust assets and in acquiring, retaining, managing and disposing of investments of the trust assets, there shall be exercised the reasonable care, skill, and caution that a prudent investor would use after considering the purposes, terms, distribution requirements, and other circumstances of the trust. Investment and management decisions respecting individual assets shall be evaluated not in isolation, but in the context of the trust portfolio as a whole and as a part of an overall investment strategy having risk and return objectives reasonably suited to the trust. The investments of the trust shall be diversified unless the Board reasonably determines that, because of special circumstances, the purposes of the trust are better served without diversifying. The trust assets shall be invested and managed solely in the interest of the members and benefit recipients of the trust. The trust assets shall be invested in a manner to only incur costs that are appropriate and reasonable in relation to the assets and purposes of the investment. Compliance with the standard of care is determined in light of facts and circumstances at the time of action, not in hindsight.
2. Investment and management functions may be delegated to an investment agent that a prudent trustee of comparable skills could properly delegate under the circumstances. When making such delegation, the Board shall establish the scope and terms of the delegation, consistent with the purposes and terms of the trust, and shall monitor the investment agent performance and compliance with the terms of the delegation. In performing a delegated function, an investment agent owes a duty to the System and the trust to exercise reasonable care to comply with the terms of the delegation. The assets of the System allocated to the investment managers shall be diligently managed, which may include selling investments and realizing losses, if such action is considered advantageous to longer-term return maximization. In addition, the Executive Director may delegate certain duties to the System's investment staff without relieving the Executive Director from the ultimate responsibility.
3. Each party serving in a fiduciary capacity for the trust shall discharge his or her duties solely in the pecuniary interest of the participants and beneficiaries and in compliance with Arkansas Code § 24-2-801 et seq. A fiduciary's evaluation of an investment, or evaluation or exercise of any right appurtenant to an investment, shall take into account only pecuniary factors.
4. Each party serving in a fiduciary capacity for the trust shall apply the standard of care set forth herein.

## E. Asset Allocation

1. The Board is responsible for the prudent investment of funds and to maintain a proper allocation of the System's investment assets. The Board, in conjunction with its investment consultants, shall set and adjust the System's asset allocation ranges as necessary to provide an optimal allocation to obtain its target returns. The general investment consultant shall notify the Executive Director and the Board when an asset liability modeling study should be undertaken. It shall be the goal of the System to maintain the following asset allocation targets and ranges:

<b>Asset Category</b>	<b>Minimum*</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Maximum*</b>
Total Equity	41.0%	46.0%	51.0%**
Fixed Income	15.0%	18.0%	21.0%
Opportunistic/Alternatives	N/A	5.0%	N/A
Real Assets***	N/A	14.0%	N/A
Private Credit	N/A	5.0%	N/A
Private Equity	N/A	12.0%	N/A
Cash Equivalents	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%

\* Due to the illiquid nature of opportunistic/alternatives, real assets, private credit, and private equity, it is not prudent to set rebalancing ranges for these asset classes.

\*\*Additional allocations to total equity may be made beyond the maximum range to serve as a placeholder for unfunded and uncommitted opportunistic/alternatives, real assets, private credit, and private equity.

\*\*\*Real assets includes real estate, timber, agriculture, and infrastructure.

## F. Rebalancing

1. The asset allocation ranges established by the Board represent the Board's judgment of a portfolio mix that provides the greatest risk/return value. Allowing the portfolio to exceed the Board limits strays from the financial discipline, which the Board believes will - over time - provide the appropriate risk-adjusted return to the System.
2. The Executive Director is responsible for rebalancing the allowable asset classes and the individual portfolios if any of the asset classes falls outside of the designated range. The general investment consultant shall provide guidance and advice to the Executive Director to best achieve the rebalancing.

3. Rebalancing among individual investment manager portfolios within asset classes may also be necessary to ensure the appropriate level of diversification is achieved by investment style, market capitalization or risk levels (see total asset class guidelines) and/or to take advantage of market conditions, fund manager expertise, opportunities, or other circumstances that could be beneficial to ATRS.
4. The Executive Director may rebalance across all equity managers, all equity holdings, all fixed income managers, and all fixed income holdings. A Board approved transition manager may be used for rebalancing. Rebalancing including the use of a Board approved transition manager, as needed, may be initiated by the Executive Director after recommendation from the appropriate investment consultant and positive notice to the Board Chair. The Executive Director and general investment consultant will monitor the asset values by classification for each asset manager on a monthly basis, based on month-end data provided by the custodial bank. The Executive Director and general investment consultant shall regularly inform the Board on the rebalancing pacing and strategy.
5. Whenever the minimum or maximum range of total equity or fixed income has been exceeded, a transfer of funds or other appropriate action will occur to bring the actual allocation within the prescribed range within a time frame determined to be prudent by the Executive Director in consultation with the general investment consultant.
6. Normal plan cash flows should be used to the extent possible to rebalance. Interest, dividends, and plan contributions should be used to the extent possible to fund asset classes that are below their target. Withdrawals should be made from asset classes that are above their target.

#### G. Investment Manager Selection

1. The System may hire and retain individual investment managers to implement the System's investment strategy.
2. Arkansas Code § 24-2-610 et seq. requires ATRS to always operate under the prudent investor rule. The prudent investor rule requires all investment decisions to be made based on the experience of management, rates of return, appropriate risk, reasonable cost, and all other relevant factors that should be used by prudent investors.
3. It is the policy of the Board to include, whenever appropriate, qualified minority-owned and women-owned business enterprises in the System's investment manager selection process and to objectively evaluate all qualified investment manager candidates regardless of race, gender or disability.

4. The Board will evaluate all qualified investment manager candidates with emphasis on demonstrated professional performance, organizational depth, institutional investment management capability, and reasonableness of fee structure regardless of the amount of investment assets under management or the age of the investment management firm.
5. The Board shall only hire and retain professional consultants that do not use discriminatory practices in the creation and maintenance of their investment manager databases and will require the investment consultants to affirm their use of non-discriminatory practices when recommending investment manager candidates to the Board.
6. The Board shall only hire and retain investment managers and professional consultants that agree to provide services to the System in a manner that complies with Arkansas Code § 24-2-601 et seq., 24-2-801 et seq., 25-1-1001 et seq., and 25-1-1201 et seq.

#### H. Goals

1. Recognizing the purpose of the System is to remain actuarially sound and pay member benefits, the overall investment goal is to achieve, over a period of years, the greatest rate of return for the System with due consideration given to preserving capital and its purchasing power, and to maintain an appropriate level of risk consistent with the obligations of a prudent investor. The return of the System should exceed, net of fees, a policy benchmark comprised of the respective asset class benchmarks weighted by the asset class policy targets over a full market cycle (approximately five years). During periods of transition to and from nonmarketable and illiquid asset classes such as private equity and real assets, actual allocations may be used over extended periods to reflect these changes in the policy targets. Periodic performance reports will provide a detailed description of the policy benchmark composition over time.
2. The System's actuary sets an expected return based on the Board's policy decisions. Market cycles may result in the System earning a return materially above or below the actuarial rate of return for extended periods of time. Therefore, the actuarial rate of return will not be used for performance comparison purposes.

#### I. Total Equity

1. The total equity exposure of the portfolio shall be well diversified with broad exposures to small, mid, and large capitalization companies and growth and value style sectors across U.S. and non-U.S. markets.

2. The goal for total equity shall be to achieve a total rate of return that will exceed, net of all fees and costs, the return of the aggregate global equity market, excluding prohibited securities per Arkansas Code, as measured by the Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI) All Country World Index (ACWI) Investable Market Index (IMI) ex China ex Hong Kong Index over a full market cycle (approximately five years). Because the total equity portfolio was previously segregated into domestic and global equity components, the total equity portfolio has a bias to domestic equity relative to the MSCI ACWI IMI ex China ex Hong Kong Index. Therefore, to ensure appropriate performance measurement, the benchmark for total equity will be appropriately weighted between the Dow Jones U.S. Total Stock Market Index and the MSCI ACWI IMI ex China ex Hong Kong Index to reflect the current domestic / global asset mix until the domestic allocation is in line with the global opportunity set as defined by the MSCI ACWI IMI ex China ex Hong Kong Index. The manager structure of the total equity portfolio should resemble the weighted average of their respective benchmarks and avoid any material biases due to a concentration of managers or management styles. To achieve this goal, the Board may employ various actively managed and passive mandates. The structure of the equity component will be analyzed annually to ensure proper diversification is achieved.

#### J. Fixed Income

1. The manager structure of the aggregate fixed income portfolio's risk exposure should resemble the aggregate domestic fixed income market as measured by the Barclays U.S. Universal Bond Index. To help achieve this goal, the Board will employ investment managers that invest assets in a broad array of sectors (government, mortgage backed, credits, asset backed, and commercial mortgage backed bonds), maturities, and credit qualities so that the overall portfolio structure is not materially different from that of the domestic and global fixed income markets. To provide a broad base of low-cost diversification and readily available liquidity, the Board may allocate a portion of the fixed income assets to a passive investment portfolio that approximates the return of the broad fixed income market.
2. The goal for fixed income investments shall be to achieve a total rate of return that will exceed, net of all costs and fees, the return of the Barclays U.S. Universal Bond Index over a full market cycle (approximately five years).

## K. Opportunistic/Alternative Investments

1. The Opportunistic/Alternatives asset class may include investments in direct hedge funds, hedge fund of funds, commodities, currency mandates, and other alternative strategies that are not closely correlated or related to the traditional asset classes (fixed income, equities, private equity, private credit and real assets). Unique investments that do not fit within the other asset class categories may also be included in the Opportunistic/Alternative category at the Board's discretion. Because this category may include illiquid investments made through closed end investment partnerships, it may take a period of time to reach and maintain the target allocation of 5%. Assets will be invested in the total equity asset class when the opportunity/alternative allocation is below its long-term target of 5%. The benchmark for the category will be a weighted average of the benchmarks of the underlying strategies.
2. The goal of the credit, global macro, and other liquid alternative investments shall be to achieve a total rate of return that will exceed, net of all fees and costs, the return of the appropriate institutional quality hedge fund index over a full market cycle (approximately five years). Appropriate benchmarks will be determined as investments are added to the portfolio.

## L. Real Assets

1. The Real Asset category may include real estate, timber, agriculture, and infrastructure. While no fixed targets are set, the following general parameters have been identified:
  - 7% Real Estate
  - 2% Timber
  - 1% Agriculture
  - 4% Infrastructure

The total target of the asset class will be 14%. Because this category may include illiquid investments made through closed end investment partnerships, it will take a period of time to reach these targets. Assets will be invested in the total equity asset class until the total target is attained.

The System may initiate investments in real estate as governed by the Real Asset Statement of Investment Policy. The System's goal for real estate is to not materially exceed the System's approved target asset allocation for total real estate investments as determined by the Board at the beginning of each fiscal year. Should the real estate target asset



allocation be exceeded, the Executive Director, working with the Real Estate Consultant, shall develop a pacing and strategy plan to address the over allocation.

ATRS' Real Estate portfolio is benchmarked on a net of fee basis against the NCREIF Fund Index Open-end Diversified Core Equity Index ("NFIODCE"). Once ATRS' Real Estate portfolio reaches its full target allocation for a five-year period, it is expected to meet or exceed the NFIODCE over rolling five-year periods.

The System may initiate direct ownership in timberland or indirect investments in fund of funds, partnerships, corporations, or real estate investment trusts ("REITs") investing in investment grade properties of like kind.

2. The goal of the timberland investments shall be to achieve a total rate of return that will exceed, net of all fees and costs, the return of the NCREIF Timberland Property Index ("NTPI") over a five-year rolling period. The Consumer Price Index plus 300 basis points will be used as a secondary measurement to gauge the timber portfolio's performance compared to the opportunity cost of investing in timber.

The goal of the agriculture investments shall be to achieve a total rate of return that will exceed, net of all fees and costs, the return of the NCREIF Farmland Index ("NFI") over a five-year rolling period. The Consumer Price Index plus 300 basis points will be used as a secondary measurement to gauge the agriculture portfolio's performance compared to the opportunity cost of investing in agriculture.

The goal of the infrastructure investments shall be to achieve a total rate of return that will exceed, net of all fees and costs, the return of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 5 percentage points over a full market cycle (approximately ten years). The Consumer Price Index plus 5 percentage points will be used as the benchmark to reflect the opportunity cost of investing in infrastructure. Similar infrastructure programs of institutional investors will also be used as a secondary benchmark to the extent such data is made available.

The ATRS Total Real Asset Benchmark is weighted by the allocations based on Net Asset Values across the various sub-categories, and thus defined as Real Estate benchmark, Timber benchmark, Agriculture benchmark and Infrastructure benchmark. The net of fee return for ATRS' Total Real Asset Portfolio is expected to meet or exceed the Total Real Asset Benchmark over rolling five year periods.

#### M. Private Credit

1. The strategic role of Private Credit is to diversify equity beta, provide a meaningful level of absolute return to the portfolio, and offer a level of return stability via contractual income. Types of strategies may include, but are not limited to, direct corporate lending, asset-based lending, distressed, opportunistic, real asset and other niche debt strategies. This portfolio will be primarily illiquid in nature with typical lock-ups of 5-10 years. Due to the illiquid nature of the investments, it may take time to reach and maintain the target allocation of 5%.
2. To support appropriate diversification, the Private Credit portfolio will generally follow the strategy guidelines below:
  - i 30-50% Corporate direct lending
  - ii 30-50% Asset-based lending
  - iii 20-30% Opportunistic Debt
3. The System's goal for private credit investments is to achieve a total rate of return that will exceed, net of all costs and fees, the return of the public leverage loan market, as measured by the Morningstar LSTA Leveraged Loan Index, plus a liquidity premium of 2 percentage points per year over a full market cycle for private credit (approximately 5-7 years).

#### N. Private Equity

1. The System may initiate investments in private equity as governed by the Private Equity Statement of Investment Policy. Private equity investments may include domestic and foreign private equity partnerships, venture capital, and mezzanine financing partnerships that are intended to diversify the assets and reduce the likelihood of material losses in any individual investment classification. The investment consultant responsible for private equity shall advise the Executive Director and Board on the Private Equity Statement of Investment Policy and the structure of private equity investments best suited for the System.
2. The System's goal for private equity investments is to achieve a total rate of return that will exceed, net of all costs and fees, the return of the public equity markets, as measured by the Dow Jones U.S. Total Stock Market Index, plus a liquidity premium of 2 percentage points per year over a full market cycle for private equity (approximately ten years).

O. Cash Equivalents

1. The System may hold direct ownership in short-term investments or may permit or require managers to hold cash or cash equivalents to meet liquidity needs of the investment manager or of the System.
2. The System's cash management goal shall be to preserve capital and maintain liquidity.

P. Arkansas-Related Investments

1. The System may initiate Arkansas-related mortgage loans, promissory notes, direct real estate investments, or purchase insured certificates of deposit or short-term securities of Arkansas financial institutions to meet the goals of the mandated requirements. Arkansas-related investments are categorized according to the appropriate asset class for each investment. In addition, Arkansas related investments include, but are not limited to, investments managed by an Arkansas related manager, Arkansas related investments held by other fund managers, Arkansas timberland, partnerships based in Arkansas, and partnerships holding Arkansas properties.

Q. Commingled or Mutual Funds

1. If a commingled fund or mutual fund is utilized, the portfolio will be governed by the prospectus or similar document for the fund. In those cases, the System will utilize the prudent investor rule and advice of the investment consultant in selecting and evaluating funds initially and in monitoring them on an on-going basis.

R. Derivatives

1. Derivatives may be used to reduce the risk in a portfolio and provide desired market and security level positions as an alternative to purchasing cash securities. Excessive leverage shall not be created through the use of derivatives in a manner that substantially increases the System's portfolio risk. Each investment manager's derivative usage shall be specified in the investment management agreement or specific guidelines.
2. The use of futures and options shall be matched by cash or cash equivalent securities, and all short futures positions shall be matched by equivalent long security positions, unless otherwise stated in the investment manager guidelines or authorizing fund documents.

S. Loaning of Securities

1. The lending agent will evaluate the credit-worthiness of potential borrowers of securities, and will loan securities only to financially sound borrowers. The lending agent will maintain a diversified list of

such borrowers in order to mitigate the counterparty risk that is inherent in securities lending.

2. Collateral levels should be based on the nature of the loaned security and will generally be between 102% and 105% of the market value of the borrowed security. Marking to market will be performed every business day subject to de minimis rules of change in value, and borrowers will be required to deliver additional assets as necessary to maintain overcollateralization of securities loans.

#### T. Securities Lending Reinvestment Guidelines

1. The cash collateral portfolio will be managed on an amortized cost basis (maintain a \$1 net asset value) and have investment guidelines that are 2a-7-like in nature (money market fund guidelines) to ensure that only a moderate amount of risk is taken on the reinvestment of the cash collateral. This will control the amount of credit and duration risk that can be taken by the short duration fixed income manager, which will help to mitigate losses due to insufficient collateral relative to the amount on loan. In addition, guidelines for the cash collateral portfolio will be created in conjunction with the lending strategy and with input from the securities lending agent.
2. The collateral pool should also maintain a reasonable level of overnight liquidity in order to allow for the smooth recall of securities over time.

#### U. Investment Manager Reporting

1. The System will require all investment managers, managing partners, and general partners to provide on at least a quarterly and an annual basis, reporting appropriate for the investment.

#### V. Roles

1. The Executive Director and investment consultant are jointly responsible for the initial selection of investment managers and any increase or decrease in an investment manager's funding. The Executive Director and investment consultant are jointly responsible for monitoring existing investment managers on performance, stability, and compliance. The Executive Director and investment consultant may also recommend termination of an investment manager when circumstances justify termination. Reasons for termination include, but are not limited to, relative performance, relative stability, costs, strategic allocation of assets, or other relevant factors that a prudent investor would use.

## W. Proxies

1. All shares held directly or indirectly by or on behalf of the System shall be voted on solely in the pecuniary interest of the System's plan beneficiaries, in compliance with Arkansas Code § 24-2-801 et seq.
2. Unless an economically practicable alternative is unavailable, the System shall not: (A) Follow the recommendations of a proxy advisory firm or other service provider unless the firm or service provider has a practice of and provides a written commitment to adhere to the practice of following proxy voting guidelines that are consistent with the System's obligation to act based only on pecuniary factors, or (B) Entrust the System's plan assets to a fiduciary unless the fiduciary has a practice of and provides a written commitment to adhere to the practice of following guideline when engaging with portfolio companies and voting shares or proxies that match the obligation of the System's obligation to act based only on pecuniary factors.
3. The Executive Director is authorized to vote all proxies related to stocks owned by the System and to provide binding voting instructions to the System's investment managers regarding proxies related to stocks in which they invest the System's assets. The Executive Director shall exercise this authority in compliance with Arkansas Code § 24-2-801 et seq. The Executive Director shall cast votes solely in the best interest of plan beneficiaries. Any vote, instruction, or recommendation made by the Executive Director must be consistent with the fiduciary obligation to act based only upon pecuniary factors, and the Executive Director must make a written commitment to do so in compliance with Arkansas Code § 24-2-805(b)(2).
4. The Executive Director may retain an independent proxy vote management service to analyze proxy issues, make voting recommendations, vote proxies as the System's agent, and provide voting instructions to the System's investment managers. The System requires the proxy vote management service to act in a manner that complies with Arkansas Code § 24-2-801 et seq. Any vote, instruction, or recommendation made by the proxy vote management service must be consistent with the fiduciary obligation to act based only upon pecuniary factors, and the proxy vote management service must make a written commitment to do so in compliance with Arkansas Code § 24-2-805(b)(2).
5. The Executive Director may delegate voting authority to an investment manager to vote proxies related to stocks in which it invests the System's assets. The System requires the investment manager to vote

all proxies in a manner that complies with Arkansas Code § 24-2-801 et seq. The System requires the investment manager to cast votes solely in the best interest of plan beneficiaries. Any vote, instruction, or recommendation made by an investment manager pursuant to a delegation must be consistent with the fiduciary obligation to act based only upon pecuniary factors, and the investment manager must make a written commitment to do so in compliance with Arkansas Code § 24-2-805(b)(2).

#### X. Soft Dollars

1. Commissions paid by investment managers for the purchase of equity securities are System assets and must be used for the sole benefit of the System members. Whenever possible, investment managers should seek to execute trades at the lowest possible commission rate but not to the detriment of best execution, which can result in a higher cost to the System. So that the Board may fulfill its obligation to ensure that System assets are being used appropriately, relevant equity investment managers shall provide periodic reports to the general investment consultant on brokerage activity, commissions, services, and such other information as may be requested by the investment consultant or Board. The investment consultant shall provide a periodic report to the Board summarizing such equity investment managers' reports and highlighting any questionable or problem areas.

#### **HISTORY**

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