

iM Global Partner deputy CEO says wealth management acquisition inbound

Multi-boutique plans more product dev
with asset allocation ETF collab

By Randy Plavajka, 9 NOV 2021

iM Global Partner is bolstering its affiliate manager expansion with new product development efforts and has plans to grow its presence in the wealth management space in the near future.

The \$37bn Paris-based multi-boutique firm will be launching its newest US-g geared product, the iM RBA Responsible Global Allocation ETF, early next year as part of its product roadmap. The new ETF will be subadvised by Richard Bernstein Advisors, who were brought into iMGP's asset management network in July this year.

Jeff Seeley, deputy CEO and US COO at iMGP, told *TFI* that the firm is also working intensively on its wealth management growth strategy and will be announcing another acquisition plan in the segment to stack atop the Litman Gregory' deal iMGP signed in June 2021.

Seeley said iMGP's broader M&A search is ongoing and the firm continues to have strong dialogues with many asset managers across a range of asset classes.

"We are looking at many asset classes from emerging markets to various alternatives segments," he said, noting that the firm focuses on asset classes and areas that its current partners do not possess capabilities in. As of September, iMGP had its sights on more inorganic opportunities for investment boutique stakes in the credit space and emerging markets in Asia alongside other regions outside the US.

iMGP's current partner roster :

Asset classes, headquarters, partnership tenure

Firm Name	Headquarters	Investment Category Focus	Partnered Since
Polen Capital	Boca Raton, Florida	US and global growth equities	2015
Dolan McEniry	Chicago, Illinois	US credit	2016
Sirios	Boston, Massachusetts	US long/short equities, US credit	2018
Dynamic Beta Investments	New York, New York	Liquid alternatives	2018
Scharf Investments	Los Gatos, California	US value equities	2019
Zadig Asset Management	London, England	European equities	2020
Richard Bernstein Advisors	New York, New York	Global asset allocation	July 28, 2021
Asset Preservation Advisors	Atlanta, Georgia	Tax-exempt, taxable muni bonds	Sept. 15, 2021

Source: TFI

iMGP does not have specific parameters that it is looking for at present as it bolsters its asset management network. Seeley said the firm is continuing its focus on US and non-US distribution capabilities that can enhance the growth of iMGP's partners and platform.

For the new RBA-subadvised ETF, Seeley said the duo will be targeting the financial advisory community, institutions, and family offices for initial uptake once the strategy goes live near mid-January 2022.

To compete with other global asset allocation ETFs - such as the \$298m SPDR SSGA Global Allocation ETF (GAL) and \$53m Cambria Global Asset Allocation ETF (GAA) - iMGP will be using RBA's capabilities in capital market assumptions and sustainable investing as points of differentiation.

The new active ETF will take a fund-of-funds approach with its design and invest the majority of its assets in affiliated and unaffiliated ETFs and other exchange-traded products that meet RBA's ESG criteria, according to a Nov. 5 SEC disclosure. Litman Gregory is providing the fund trust for the new iMGP and RBA ETF.

RBA's ESG process is general in that it does not reference the United Nations' Principles for Responsible Investment akin to other recent ESG fund launches. RBA relies on its own research, analytics and data from third-party providers including Bloomberg and FactSet to inform ETF and ETP selection decisions.

The subadviser selects underlying vehicles that use ESG data and rating providers such as MSCI and Sustainalytics or that have their own rigorous ESG screening process to identify potential investments, according to the ETF's prospectus.

RBA CEO and CIO Richard Bernstein is working as a portfolio manager on the ETF alongside the deputy CIO Dan Suzuki, RBA's director of investments Matthew Griswold and director of ETFs Henry Timmons. Ticker and expense ratio details for the new fund have not been listed yet.

RBA was originally acquired by iMGP in July 2021 for its global tactical allocation capabilities and its existing ETF and model inflow momentum. Morningstar Direct data shows the New York-based iMGP affiliate has pulled in \$1.6bn in YTD net flows across its models and exchange-traded strategies.

iMGP has also spent recent months working on product development efforts at other partners in its network. Alongside Asset Preservation Advisors, the firm recently filed to launch the iM APA Municipal Enhanced Yield Mutual Fund to bolster the mutual fund and ETF set it is serving to advisers, RIAs, and family offices from select partners that previously have not offered their strategies in the wrappers.