i-watch
INVESTMENT WATCH

by The Manufacturers Life Insurance Company

Alert

i-Watch Rating System:

- No concern(s)
- Moderate concern(s) requiring frequent and close monitoring
- Serious concern(s) that require a full review and may lead to removal from the fund platform

Date	July 15, 2026
Fund Manager	Epoch Investment Partners, Inc
i-Watch Status	**Increased Scrutiny**

Product(s) Impacted:

Manulife EPOCH Global Shareholder Yield
Manulife EPOCH US Shareholder Yield

Summary

- Epoch Investment Partners is reorganizing the research analyst team, incorporating the strategy-dedicated Shareholder Yield research boutique into a firmwide central research pool responsible for sourcing ideas for all of Epoch's investment strategies.
- The change is significant as the model is still evolving, it impacts analyst coverage capacity, and may lead to increased research analyst turnover as the analysts adapt to the new model.
- The Manulife EPOCH Global Shareholder Yield Fund and Manulife EPOCH US Shareholder Yield Fund (collectively "the Funds") status has been downgraded from In Good Standing to Increased Scrutiny.

Commentary

In March 2026 Epoch announced a restructuring of its historically franchise-embedded research model into a unified research pool under Jeff Cino, who has been promoted from Director of Research to Head of Research. This shifts what was previously a boutique research structure for the Shareholder Yield strategy—with dedicated analysts compensated specifically for the product—into a firmwide model intended to broaden coverage, improve idea sharing, and drive efficiencies. As part of this transition, two analysts and one portfolio manager were terminated, with no additional hires planned, and the research compensation framework is being redesigned to remove direct product-specific incentives.

Epoch believes the changes will ultimately reduce workload pressure on Shareholder Yield analysts while expanding responsibilities for analysts supporting other strategies, and may improve career mobility and promotion pathways across the platform. That said, the transition represents a meaningful evolution away from the dedicated "boutique within a firm" model that historically defined the Shareholder Yield strategy. While leadership expresses confidence that this alignment with Epoch's broader free cash flow philosophy will strengthen long-term outcomes, the cumulative pace of change continues to warrant monitoring as the centralized structure is implemented through the expected September 2026 completion timeline.

Impact

The Funds dedicated boutique research team will be absorbed by a central research pool responsible for sourcing investment ideas for all of Epoch's investment products. The Funds will have access to idea generation from a broader group of analysts, but each analyst will be responsible for multiple funds. This could impact the quality of investment idea generation for the Shareholder Yield strategies.

Closing Remarks

In principle, Manulife Global Manager Research is comfortable with a central research pool, recognizing it as a common research model employed successfully at some of the largest asset managers. The risk we are monitoring is in the transition from one research structure to another, as it represents changing roles and reporting lines and could impact morale leading to increased analyst pool turnover. We feel it is prudent to change the rating while we review how well Epoch manages this change and to see how effective the central research model is at sourcing investable ideas for the Shareholder Yield strategies going forward.