T.RowePrice

Global Impact Credit

Strategy Focus
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Global Impact Credit Strategy

Strategy summary

- The Global Impact Credit Strategy simultaneously seeks benchmark outperformance and positive environmental and social impact by seeking to invest in durable, growing businesses with measurable impact criteria.
- Our investment philosophy is centered around creating a material and measurable impact through our investments, while also promoting impact through our scale and resources and through collaborating with clients to achieve desired, long-term outcomes.
- Our fundamental research platform and dedicated responsible investing (RI) team—which is focused on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues—provide the breadth of resources and global perspective necessary in building a positive impact portfolio.
- Collaboration across our fixed income, equity, responsible investing, and quantitative research teams yields opportunities to exploit inefficiencies across credit markets.
- Security selection begins with issuers that have a clearly identified positive impact thesis aligned with at least one of our impact pillars—Climate and Resource Impact, Social Equity and Quality of Life, and Sustainable Innovation and Productivity. These pillars are aligned to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).
- We quantify impact outcomes individually and collectively as we translate intentionality into a defined impact measurement framework.
- Our investment process is not limited to ESG-labeled debt. We look to a broad opportunity set, spanning across the corporate and credit universe to identify the highest impact-aligned issuers.
- Engagement is a crucial tool to enhance our impact analysis of a company. We typically seek to understand how an issuer is progressing on its impact journey as well as partner with them to accelerate that journey and achieve desired outcomes.

Features

Our impact charter

The core tenets of the portfolio's investment philosophy include:

1. Materiality

All our investments start with a security-by-security assessment of impact materiality. Our RI team defines our impact universe through careful screening; a deep understanding of ESG factors; industry-specific, forward-looking impact inclusion criteria; and an evaluation of the credibility of the ESG-labeled bonds through our proprietary framework.

2. Measurability

Given our mandate's dual nature, impact measurement is integral to the investment process. We quantify the alignment of every security with our three impact pillars and the UN SDGs. Additionally, each investment thesis embeds security-specific key

performance indicators (KPIs) as our analysts collaborate with the portfolio management team to define our investment thesis.

3. Additionality

We truly believe impact is achieved within an investment portfolio in more ways than simply investing in a company and capturing the economics and activities. Our approach involves directing fresh capital toward desired impact outcomes alongside impact-oriented company engagements and the associated influence feedback loop.

Done well and in partnership with our fundamental and responsible research analysts and governance team, we believe this will potentially create benefits not only for our Global Impact Credit Strategy clients, but also for other impact investors and asset managers.

4. Resiliency

Given the complexity and nonlinear nature of delivering impact and the patience it necessitates, adopting a long-term and holistic view when investing to solve sustainability challenges is necessary. We integrate our security perspectives to identify, in our view, underappreciated impact and mispriced economic return improvement on a truly global, security-by-security basis.

Portfolio management

Matt Lawton is the portfolio manager for the Global Impact Credit Strategy and has ultimate responsibility for all decisions regarding investment strategy, portfolio construction, and security selection. He has 17 years of investment experience and also manages the Global Impact Short Duration Bond Strategy. Matt is also a member of TRPA's Fixed Income Steering and ESG Investing Committees.

Understanding the investment universe

Areas of the global economy that we do not believe can generate a positive impact are excluded from the outset. These include adult entertainment, alcohol, fossil fuels, gambling, tobacco, for-profit prisons, weapons, and companies that screen individually on conduct-based metrics.

Our impact universe comprises issuers meeting at least one of two criteria for inclusion in the portfolio:

- Majority of current revenues tied to at least one impact sub-pillar
- Use of proceeds allocated to projects tied to at least one impact sub-pillar

We assess business activities and how they align to our three impact pillars and eight sub-pillars aligned to the 17 UN SDGs:

- Climate and Resource Impact (Reducing Greenhouse Gases, Promoting Healthy Ecosystems, Nurturing Circular Economies)
- Social Equity and Quality of Life (Enabling Social Equity, Improving Health, Enhancing Quality of Life)
- Sustainable Innovation and Productivity (Sustainable Technology, Building Sustainable Industry and Infrastructure)

Portfolio construction

In constructing the portfolio, Matt leverages the impact and fundamental analysis undertaken by the global credit and RI research teams and combines this with top-down considerations, such as the macroeconomic outlook and relative value across credit sectors. Matt applies his judgment to construct a global portfolio of around 75 to 150 holdings, while managing risk exposure at both the individual issuer and portfolio level.

Collaboration between our Global Impact Credit Strategy and Global and US Impact Equity Strategy teams is also key when finding true impact investments. Matt regularly meets with Hari Balkrishna, the portfolio manager for the Global Impact Equity Strategy, David Rowlett, the portfolio manager for the US Impact Equity Strategy and the equity impact analysts to discuss new ideas. Through these meetings, Matt is able to analyze and enrich impact ideas while maintaining full discretion over the portfolio's investment decisions and overall construction.

ESG integration

In our view, ESG factors cannot be separate or tangential parts of a traditional investment thesis. Company fundamentals, including its consideration of ESG factors, play a critical role in the security selection process.

The process of ESG integration takes place on three levels:

- With our fundamental and Responsible Investing Indicator Model (RIIM) research analysts incorporating ESG factors into their analysis
- Using the firm's proprietary RIIM analysis at regular intervals to help us understand the ESG characteristics of securities and the portfolio
- With the portfolio manager integrating ESG considerations within the investment thesis and portfolio construction process itself

Our investments are aligned to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

We assess how business activities align with our three impact pillars, all underpinned by UN objectives

As of September 30, 2024.
T. Rowe Price uses a proprietary custom structure for impact pillar and sub-pillar classification.
The UN SDGs encompass 17 goals. For further information, please visit un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/

Evaluating ESG-labeled bonds

We leverage our proprietary ESG bond framework to assess the credibility of ESG-labeled bonds to enhance our research and promote better decision-making. The mechanism takes place over four stages. First, our fundamental and RI analysts evaluate the issuer's ESG profile based on our proprietary RIIM score, together with an assessment of the issuer's environmental and/or social targets and commitments.

Then, we verify alignment with standards put forth by the International Capital Market Association, second-party option solicitation, and an assessment of the government structure supporting the sustainable finance framework.

We further evaluate the use of proceeds and credibility of financed projects. Performing such analysis helps filter out greenwashed bonds and ultimately identify high-impact projects. The final step of our evaluation then involves post-issuance reporting to help ensure impact is delivered as intended.

Adding through engagement

Engagement is a crucial tool for impact managers to track a company's progress toward its impact goals and to provide guidance on sustainability best practices when needed. We identify specific factors through our research that could be potential impediments to a security's performance. We may at times suggest to a company that they make a specific change, or we may seek to gain more information on an ESG issue to ensure our investment decisions are well informed. We believe this company-specific approach results in the highest impact because it is aligned with our firm's core investment proposition: active management rooted in fundamental investment analysis.

We measure the success of our engagement through maintaining a regular dialogue with the management teams of companies represented across our portfolios. Our investment-driven program frequently identifies targets through our proprietary RIIM analysis, governance screening, and analysts' fundamental research. The objective is to use our voice to increase the probability that a company will potentially outperform its peers, helping to enable our clients to achieve their investment goals. We do this using various stewardship activities, including:

- Regular ongoing investment diligence
- Engagement with management on ESG issues
- Meetings with senior management, including offering candid feedback
- Decisions to increase or decrease the weight of an investment in a portfolio or to initiate/eliminate an investment

Four factors underlining our approach to impact measurement

Evaluating investments throughout the process can help create a holistic view of a company's impact

Factor	Description
Alignment	**Quantify alignment with our three impact pillars and eight sub-pillars** To create a robust and measurable impact universe
Outcomes	**Measure outcomes and impact** Using the theory of change, quantifying wherever possible, using external data
Fundamentals	**Assess fundamentals through an impact lens** Using the Impact Management Project's five dimensions of impact to gain a deeper understanding of a business' impact footprint
Risk	**Understand impact risk** Qualify risks and track evolution and impairment of the impact thesis

The Impact Management Project, a project by Bridges Fund Management Ltd. (company number 10401079).

Going beyond green bonds

At T. Rowe Price, we feel impact investing in fixed income is not confined to the ESG-labeled bond market. Impact can be captured through directing capital to issuers providing positive environmental or social impact through their everyday activities. Our investment process is therefore not limited to green bonds as we look to a broad opportunity set, spanning across the corporate and credit universe to identify the highest impact-aligned issuers. By engaging and investing in companies outside the ESG-labeled debt market, we can deploy our scale and resources to help progress an issuer's impact agenda.

Examples include a not-for-profit children's hospital or a development bank that inherently carries a social mission through its investment and lending activities.

Measuring impact

Given the complexity of impact investing in fixed income, part of our due diligence is formulating and defining KPIs for investments. Our aim is to report the company's progress toward its impact goals to our investors annually by tracking the evolution of these KPIs.

We utilize the five dimensions of impact framework to assist in the impact due diligence of a given security. This framework leads to assessing a company's ability to deliver impact on a holistic basis, including the risks that may affect its ability to deliver the targeted impact.

The five dimensions are:

1. What outcome is occurring in the period?
2. Who experiences the outcome?
3. How much of the outcome is occurring?
4. Contribution—Would this change likely have happened anyway?
5. Risk—What is the risk to people and the planet if the impact does not occur as expected?

Disciplined approach to risk

The strategy is focused on efficient portfolio construction combined with disciplined risk management oversight. We monitor relative volatilities and correlations across duration, curve, and sectors, while considering the constraints of a targeted risk budget. Ongoing monitoring includes daily risk reporting and oversight to assess any potential changes in our investment thesis from both impact and fundamental standpoints.

Risks—the following risks are materially relevant to the fund

ABS and MBS risk—Asset-Backed Securities (ABS) and Mortgage-Backed Securities (MBS) may be subject to greater liquidity, credit, default and interest rate risk compared to other bonds. They are often exposed to extension and prepayment risk.

Contingent convertible Bonds risk—Contingent Convertible Bonds may be subject to additional risks linked to capital structure inversion, trigger levels, coupon cancellations, call extensions, yield/valuation, conversions, write downs, industry concentration and liquidity, among others.

Credit risk—Credit risk arises when an issuer's financial health deteriorates and/or it fails to fulfill its financial obligations to the portfolio.

Default risk—Default risk may occur if the issuers of certain bonds become unable or unwilling to make payments on their bonds.

Derivative risk—Derivatives may be used to create leverage which could expose the portfolio to higher volatility and/or losses that are significantly greater than the cost of the derivative.

Distressed or defaulted debt risk—Distressed or defaulted debt securities may bear substantially higher degree of risks linked to recovery, liquidity and valuation.

Emerging markets risk—Emerging markets are less established than developed markets and therefore involve higher risks.

Interest rate risk—Interest rate risk is the potential for losses in fixed-income investments as a result of unexpected changes in interest rates.

Liquidity risk—Liquidity risk may result in securities becoming hard to value or trade within a desired timeframe at a fair price.

High yield bond risk—High yield debt securities are generally subject to greater risk of issuer debt restructuring or default, higher liquidity risk and greater sensitivity to market conditions.

General Fund Risks

Counterparty risk—Counterparty risk may materialize if an entity with which the fund does business becomes unwilling or unable to meet its obligations to the fund.

ESG and Sustainability risk—ESG and Sustainability risk may result in a material negative impact on the value of an investment and performance of the fund.

Geographic concentration risk—Geographic concentration risk may result in performance being more strongly affected by any social, political, economic, environmental or market conditions affecting those countries or regions in which the fund's assets are concentrated.

Hedging risk—Hedging measures involve costs and may work imperfectly, may not be feasible at times, or may fail completely.

Investment fund risk—investing in funds involves certain risks an investor would not face if investing in markets directly.

Management risk—Management risk may result in potential conflicts of interest relating to the obligations of the investment manager.

Market risk—Market risk may subject the fund to experience losses caused by unexpected changes in a wide variety of factors.

Operational risk—operational failures could lead to disruptions of portfolio operations or financial losses.

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