Outlook

Is NAPFA Still Committed to Comprehensive, Fee-Only Financial Planning?

From David Bromelkamp <dbromelkamp@allodium.com>
Date Thu 8/13/2026 1:09 PM
To Kathryn Dattomo <dattomok@napfa.org>
Cc Natalie Pine <npine@briaud.com>; michaelg@moderawealth.com <michaelg@moderawealth.com>
Bcc david@advisorsmart.com <david@advisorsmart.com>; David Bromelkamp <dbromelkamp@allodium.com>

Kathryn, Natalie, and Michael,

I am writing to ask for clarification regarding the language NAPFA is using to communicate its commitment to comprehensive, fee-only financial planning to members and prospective members.

Language is important, particularly when an organization is communicating the principles that distinguish it from other professional associations.

On Tuesday, August 11, 2026, I received an email from NAPFA Events promoting the Fall 2026 National Conference. The email stated:

“From October 14–17, financial advisors from across the country will gather to earn CE, discover strategies they can put to work in their practices, and connect with colleagues who understand the work and share their commitment Fee-Only planning.”

I noticed that this statement refers to a commitment to **“Fee-Only planning.”**

By comparison, Article II of NAPFA’s January 16, 1984, Articles of Incorporation identifies NAPFA’s first corporate purpose as:

“To foster the practice of comprehensive, fee-only financial planning.”

The distinction may appear small, but I believe it is important.

The NAPFA conference email omitted two significant words from the language contained in NAPFA’s original corporate purpose:

Comprehensive
Financial

Instead of communicating a commitment to **“comprehensive, fee-only financial planning,”** NAPFA communicated simply a commitment to **“Fee-Only planning.”**

I would like to understand whether this was merely an imprecise marketing communication or whether it reflects an intentional change in the terminology NAPFA leadership now prefers to use when describing the organization and its members.

As you know, some NAPFA members have expressed concern that the organization may be drifting from the purposes established in its Articles of Incorporation. For that reason, I believe seemingly small changes in terminology deserve clarification.

Would you please help me understand the following?

1. Was the phrase **“commitment Fee-Only planning”** intentionally selected for this communication, or was the omission of the words **“comprehensive”** and **“financial”** inadvertent?
2. Who within NAPFA was responsible for drafting and approving this communication?
3. Does NAPFA leadership continue to believe that **“comprehensive, fee-only financial planning”** accurately describes the practice that NAPFA exists to foster?
4. Does the Board of Directors support using the complete phrase **“comprehensive, fee-only financial planning”** when NAPFA communicates its organizational purpose and distinguishing commitment to members, prospective members, and the public?
5. What individual or group has primary responsibility for NAPFA’s marketing and organizational communications?
6. Does NAPFA currently have:
    - a staff member responsible for marketing leadership;
    - a Board or volunteer marketing or communications committee;
    - an outside marketing or communications consultant;
    - a written marketing plan;
    - a written marketing or communications strategy; and
    - messaging standards or brand guidelines governing communications to members, prospective members, and the public?
7. If NAPFA has outside marketing or communications consultants, are they provided with NAPFA’s Articles of Incorporation and educated regarding the four corporate purposes contained in Article II?
8. Are NAPFA employees responsible for communications and marketing specifically educated regarding the four purposes contained in the Articles of Incorporation?
9. Does NAPFA have a committee, task force, policy, or other formal process for defining what constitutes **“comprehensive financial planning”** for purposes of membership, professional standards, and public communications?
10. More broadly, what process does NAPFA use to ensure that its marketing strategy and organizational messaging remain aligned with the purposes established in its Articles of Incorporation?

I recognize that a single sentence in a conference marketing email could simply be an example of abbreviated or imprecise copy. If that is the explanation, I would appreciate knowing that.

However, if NAPFA has made a deliberate decision to move away from describing its commitment as **“comprehensive, fee-only financial planning,”** I believe NAPFA members should understand that decision, who made it, and the reasoning behind it.

I would appreciate a written response addressing these questions.

Thank you. DB



Get to know Dave

David J. Bromelkamp

Founder

Phone: 612-230-3702

Fax: 612-230-3714

Email: dbromelkamp@allodium.com

Allodium Investment Consultants

500 Washington Avenue South, Suite 4400

Minneapolis, MN 55415

Web: www.allodium.com

Secure Upload Link: Filebox

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INVESTMENT CONSULTANTS
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