
United States Olympians & Paralympians Association

Operational Review – Executive Summary

May 4, 2023

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Study Objectives

CMAC was engaged by the USOPC in December 2022 to provide consulting services working with USOPA on both short and long term operational and strategic planning. The scope of the project included delivering observations and recommendations around the following:

- Role of USOPA
- Staffing Organizational Structure
- Volunteer Role and Structure
- Required Resources
- Programming Priorities

Study Methodology

- **Interviews** – CMAC conducted 39 virtual and in-person one-on-one interviews with various stakeholders identified by the USOPC and USOPA.
- **Review Materials and Data** – A full review of historical documents, past planning materials, and relevant data was conducted.
- **USOPA Executive Committee** – Participated in monthly USOPA Board Executive Committee meetings from December 2022 through April 2023.

Observations

1. **History** – The history of what is today known as the United States Olympians and Paralympians Association (USOPA) dates back to 1946.
2. **Brand and Reputation** – Currently, USOPA is not viewed in a positive light by many interviewees.
3. **Role/Mission** – Over the past 77 years, the role of USOPA has changed. Originally the focus was on regional, mostly social, and occasional fundraising activity. Since the mid-1990s, however, the role of USOPA has shifted over time and has been mostly dependent upon who served as its President.
4. **Alumni Definition** – The definition of alumni differs between the USOPC and the USOPA.
5. **Data Management** – Data management at the USOPC remains a challenge. Current database records include 4,786 Olympians and 612 Paralympians for a total of 5,398 individuals as part of the USOPA.
6. **Alumni Survey** – The most recent comprehensive Olympic and Paralympic alumni attitudinal survey was conducted in 2019.
7. **Staffing** – The current staffing levels within the USOPC includes a total of 2.0 FTEs focused entirely on USOPA.
8. **Partnerships** – For any contemporary alumni engagement program to function at the highest level, internal collaborations are needed between key partners within the organization. These key partners include: communications, information technology, event management, and fundraising. Relationships between USOPA (staff) and their colleagues in these areas were described as, “*strained*”, “*non-existent*”, and “*under-leveraged*.”

9. **Programming** – Most of the programming through USOPA has been part of the regional chapter model that was established 75 years ago. Independent of USOPA, some of the NGBs do offer programming based on a sport specific interest and affinity. Additionally, Olympic and Paralympic year programming has also been conducted in the past by individual volunteer leaders (1968 Mexico City Olympic Team Reunion).
10. **Governance** – Some USOPA board members believe that they are part of the USOPC governance structure. Most USOPA board members want no part of a governance role. The only place in the USOPC bylaws where USOPA has a specifically defined official governance role is the Joint Nominating Committee for selecting the slate for the at-large USOPC Board of Director seats.

Recommendations

1. **Brand and Reputation** – Simply put, the USOPA brand and reputation needs to improve. A change in culture is needed.
 - The USOPC must clearly communicate that USOPA is recognized as the definitive organization to drive alumni engagement activity and communications on behalf of the USOPC.
2. **Role/Mission** – The role or mission of USOPA must be succinctly defined and clearly articulated to all stakeholders.
 - The role of USOPA should be fully aligned with the USOPC and in support of USOPC priorities.
 - Whenever possible, USOPA should be about supporting USOPA alumni and the current Team USA athletes.
 - USOPA should not create new projects that are out of alignment with the USOPC priorities. USOPA should promote and support what the USOPC has already created and has deemed a priority.
3. **Alumni Definition** – Clarify the definition of alumni and communicate how the USOPC will provide service to all alumni.
 - USOPA should remain an alumni association designated for individuals who have fulfilled the ultimate achievement in sport: Olympian and Paralympian.
 - The USOPC should continue to provide benefits and services to Team USA athletes who did not compete in the Olympics/Paralympics (World Championships and Pan-Am sports).
4. **Data Management** – This is a fundamental and critical area that needs attention.
 - Establish a protocol for routinely capturing contact information and expertise. Get these updates added to the Salesforce database.
 - Re-evaluate data sharing policies to allow for more flexibility in sharing confidential contact information with volunteers in leadership roles.
5. **Alumni Survey** – Conduct an Olympic/Paralympic and Team USA alumni attitudinal and demographic survey in summer 2023.
 - The survey must be professionally managed. It should be conducted by an experienced third-party vendor with expertise in survey design, data analytics, and data management.

6. **Staffing** – 2.5 FTEs are needed to run a contemporary alumni engagement program for USOPC and to represent USOPA in all matters.
 - 1.0 FTE – A senior level leader (ex: Senior Director or Director) with 10+ years of experience and a skill set that includes communications, volunteer management, event planning, and building collaborative partnerships.
 - 1.0 FTE – Alumni Engagement Manager who would run the day-to-day operations.
 - 0.5 FTE – Alumni Engagement Coordinator to manage all administrative duties. Consider sharing this FTE with the Team USA Athletes Commission to create a full 1.0 FTE role.
7. **Partnerships** – Alumni Engagement staff should establish close, trusting, and collaborative relationships with key partners in the USOPC and with relevant outside organizations.
 - USOPA and USOPF should set a joint goal for a grass roots fundraising effort. The goal would be to get one million Americans to make relatively small gifts (\$100 range) to support Team USA in LA28. USOPA members play a promotional and ambassadorial role to support this effort. USOPF provides the infrastructure to support the effort. The potential impact of this type of initiative would be profound.
 - USOPA members can play an important role and assist in delivering USOP Museum messages to classrooms all across the country via the Becoming Your Personal Best (BYPB) program.
8. **Strategic Plan** – Conduct a “lite” strategic planning process in fall 2023.
 - USOPA should create a plan that is fully integrated with the USOPC strategic plan.
 - The USOPA plan should also be aligned with the work of other organizations that support the movement.
9. **Priorities** – Consider establishing four clear priorities that are based on alumni engagement industry standards.
 - Communication – get alumni informed
 - Experiential – get alumni involved
 - Volunteerism – get alumni to help
 - Philanthropy – get alumni to support giving
10. **Programming** – The focus of future programming should be on socializing, networking, team camaraderie, community building, and plain old fun!
 - Chapter (geographic-based) programming should continue to support much of this activity.
 - Explore partnerships with NGBs on sport-specific gatherings around Olympic Trial events in 2024, 2026, and 2028.
 - Explore Olympic/Paralympic year-based programming around key anniversary years (20th, 25th, 40th, and 50th).
11. **Momentum for LA28** – Use the next five years to build momentum for towards LA28.
 - Use Paris 2024 Summer Olympic and Paralympics Games to build excitement.
 - Use Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games to build excitement.
 - Use LA 2028 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games as the final or ultimate rallying point for all alumni.

- 12. Six Questions** – To assist with maintaining a focus on the key priorities, a protocol should be established when any new initiative is being considered. All volunteer activity, communications, and events should be evaluated in advance with these six questions in mind:
- Does it align with the USOPC and USOPA strategic plans?
 - Who is the target audience?
 - What is the desired outcome?
 - How will we measure success?
 - Who else in USOPC needs to know?
 - What is the follow-up plan?
- 13. Volunteerism** – This should be the priority that is focused on in 2023-2024.
- Identify 3-5 micro-volunteering opportunities for USOPA members to support. These would be through already identified USOPC initiatives. They would also strengthen the USOPA brand and advance the USOPC's mission.
- 14. Best Practices** – Keep basic Alumni Engagement industry best practices front of mind.
- Assemble accurate data in a reliable database.
 - Deliver regular communications.
 - Segment and target communications based on interests and behaviors.
 - Focus on early engagement and awareness of USOPA. Provide early education on how all the USOPC pieces fit together.
 - Provide value-added programming around professional development and transition to life after sport.
- 15. Major Events** – Establish basic procedures and protocols for all major events.
- 16. Governance** – Recognize that USOPA does not play a governance role for the USOPC. Emphasize this reality on a regular basis.
- The USOPA role in governance is really only about recruiting a handful of people to serve as volunteers on committees (as specified in the USOPC Bylaws).
 - The only official governance role USOPA has is to work with the Team USA Athletes Commission to nominate individuals to serve on the JNC to select candidates who would appear on the electoral slate for the USOPC Board at-large representatives.
 - The lingering, unresolved issue regarding the election process for at-large USOPC Board positions needs to be worked out. USOPA and the Athletes Commission must find an amicable resolution. If not, the USOPC Board will figure it out for you!
 - Ensure that the USOPA Board reflects the full diversity of alumni including, but not limited to: Olympians, Paralympians, sports, competition years, geography, gender, race, and profession.
 - Deformalize the running of USOPA.
 - Eliminate burdensome bylaws and move to a simple set of operating guidelines.
 - Cease the formality of Executive Committee meetings.
 - Eliminate the election process for USOPA officers and leadership roles. In its place, move to a nominating committee where potential candidates are identified, reviewed and vetted, and then asked to serve in a volunteer leadership role.