

|| NGB ATHLETES' ADVISORY COUNCIL

Guide to establishing and maintaining an effective Athletes' Council

INTRODUCTION

Part of the Team USA Athletes' Commission's (Team USA AC) strategic plan is to actively work to increase collaborative opportunities between NGBs and their athletes to establish a strong and effective athlete voice in the decision-making process and governance of the Team USA athlete community.

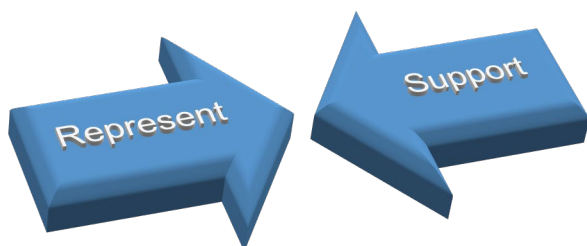
This document compiles guidelines for NGBs for their internal AAC structure and is a tool to assist and educate current and future athlete representatives in creating a framework to support the development of an effective athlete voice within their organizations.

WHAT IS AN ATHLETES' COUNCIL?

An Athletes' Council is a group of athletes whose purpose is to represent fellow athletes in decision-making. An Athletes' Council ensures that the voices of athletes are represented in a collaborative, professional and effective manner and that their viewpoint remains at the center of their respective NGBs as well as the larger U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement. An athlete-centric approach focuses on involving athletes in decision-making within sports organizations.

An NGB Athletes' Council plays a critical role by:

- Being a conduit between NGB leadership and athletes
- Assuming an advisory role within each NGB guiding the organization on behalf of the athletes
- Advocating for the athletes' voice
- Providing an avenue for athletes' voices to be heard and experiences used for the improvement of sport and promotion of good governance.



Represent the athletes' viewpoints in decision-making

Support athletes to succeed in their sporting and non-sporting career

The Benefits of an Athletes' Council?

While NGBs are required to have Athletes' Councils, having an Athletes' Council is a clear demonstration of an organization's commitment to good governance, benefiting both the athletes and the organization.

<p>STRENGTHEN the Decision-Making Process By:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Providing a platform and resource for discussion and research related to new ideas and issues 2. Providing advice and a perspective straight from the elite athlete perspective 3. Consulting with athletes and providing early feedback on a potential decision that will impact them 4. Strengthening links within the athlete community through peer-to-peer communication 	<p>What does an Athletes' Council Discuss:</p>
<p>BENEFIT the Organization By:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Being a point of contact for the athlete community to support both the athletes and the organization's communications 2. Updating athletes about the organization's activities from an informed position 3. Becoming ambassador and supporting the organization in its mission to develop and promote the sport 	

NGB ATHLETES' COUNCILS REQUIREMENTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to be successful, an Athletes' Council needs to be seen as a credible part of the decision-making process. It must be fully supported by the top leadership of your organization and supported by the administration.

Composition & Eligibility Requirements:

1. **Para vs. Oly:** If the NGB governs a Paralympic sport, at least 2 of the positions should be designated for Paralympic representation with gender equity included.

2. Both the NGB Team USA AC primary representative and alternate will automatically be members of the NGB AAC with voice and vote and must make up two of the allocated positions on the NGB AAC. Must be included in the bylaws or relevant documents.
3. **Conflicts of interest:** Athlete representatives must complete their NGB's conflict of interest disclosure forms and provide the forms to the NGB's Ethics Committee or follow the process outlined in the NGB's Conflict of Interest policy if the policy outlines a different process for reviewing and resolving conflict of interest disclosures.
4. **Other disclosures:** Prior to the election, athletes must disclose any felony convictions, or any other period of ineligibility served in sport such as violations of anti-doping codes, or SafeSport violations.

Composition Recommendations:

1. **Eligibility:** It is recommended that all members must be a 10-year athlete, as defined in the USOPC bylaws. Per the USOPC Bylaws At least 20% will be NGB 10 Year Athlete representatives and the remaining can be either NGB 10 Year or NGB 10 Year+ Athlete representatives.
2. **Gender:** NGBs make an effort to ensure equal representation of gender. There may be instances where single-gender disciplines shift the gender of the athlete makeup
3. **Size:** Recommended minimum of 6 athletes and a maximum of 12, depending on the size of the NGB
4. **Discipline:** A diverse number of disciplines should be represented to ensure all major groups are included.
5. **If applicable, Team USA AC leadership:** will remain on the Internal AAC.
6. **Chair:** Selected from among the elected internal AAC candidates whose job will be to establish clear roles and responsibilities for athlete director roles.
7. **Vice-Chair:** If possible, a retired athlete with the role of primarily supporting the chair in duties and speaking on behalf of the council in situations that might put current competing athletes at odds with their respective NGB. If no such athlete meets this requirement among the elected leadership, the council may appoint another member of the AAC who was elected by athletes.
8. **Term:** Recommended staggered elections to ensure continuous transfer of knowledge between members.
9. Consider if any other athletes that may be elected into governance roles, such as athletes directly elected to the National Team Committee, should automatically become a member of your AAC, and if so, if they should have a voting or observer role.

COMMUNICATION:

To effectively represent the athletes, the members of an Athletes' Council need to understand the views of all athletes, and not just depend on their own. Therefore, the Athletes' Council needs to be in communication with and available to the athletes it is representing and needs a structure in place

for communication and information sharing. The structure allows for communication in a supportive and healthy environment. Two-way communication between an Athletes' Council and its athletes is key to ensuring that athletes' views are understood, captured and communicated effectively. The NGB should give the council the contact information for their athletes.

An Athletes' Council has different options for communication with its athletes to ensure their views are shared. These can include the following methods:

- Face-to-face interactions with athletes during events such as national/international championships, athletes' forums, and athletes' workshops.
- Communication using different media, for example, newsletters, social media, group emails, phone calls, and websites, some of which may require your NGB to share athlete contact information
- Develop promotional materials to share with athletes, for example, flyers, banners, pamphlets etc.
- Surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, interviews etc.
- A dedicated Athletes' Council space on your NGB website

RESOURCES:

<p>The Team USA AC</p>	<p>The Team USA AC is an advisory council with the primary responsibility of communicating athletes' concerns and issues to the USOPC family, as well as communicating information from the USOPC family directly from elite athletes. The Team USA AC serves as a source of athlete opinion and advice to the Board with regard to both current and contemplated policies of the USOPC, and to help ensure a strong and effective athlete voice in governance.</p> <p>The Team USA AC consists of at least one athlete from each NGB in which the US is represented at the Olympic, Paralympic, Pan American Games, Para Pan American Games, and six athletes elected by the AAC to serve as Leadership, including a chair and two vice chairs.</p> <p>This group is here to be a resource to each NGB Athletes' Council and be a conduit to the USOPC.</p>
<p>Other NGB Athletes' Councils</p>	<p>Some Athletes' Councils are more developed and at more of an advanced stage than others. A prospective Athletes' Council can reach out to other NGBs with established Athletes' Councils to learn from their experiences.</p>