

**United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee
Certification Review Group**



**Certification Renewal Recommendation Report for USA Wrestling
December 7, 2023**



**UNITED STATES
OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC
COMMITTEE**

USA Wrestling Certification Renewal Executive Summary

In March 2023, the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) Certification Review Group (CRG), in accordance with the USOPC's NGB Certification Policy, began a certification renewal review of USA Wrestling.¹ The CRG evaluated USA Wrestling and, based on input from CRG members and the results of NGB Audit's 2022 Compliance Audit², recommends a certification status of Renewal in Good Standing.

The CRG's review of USA Wrestling found that the organization is meeting the USOPC's NGB Compliance Standards in the five core areas of evaluation for certification: Governance and Compliance, Financial Standards and Reporting Practices, Athlete Protections and Rights, Sport Performance, and Operational Performance.

CRG members agreed that USA Wrestling is meeting the requirements and expectations for an NGB. In its discussions of USA Wrestling's interactions with the USOPC, the CRG did not identify any operational concerns or cultural issues that would prevent the organization's continued certification. Overall, in the areas in which CRG members had interacted with USA Wrestling, the CRG had a favorable view of USA Wrestling's operations.

As a result of this review, the CRG recommends that USA Wrestling be granted a certification status of Renewal in Good Standing for a four-year certification term ending in 2027.

¹ See Appendix for more information about the certification process, including a link to the NGB Certification Policy.

² [NGB Audit Report](#) and [NGB Audit Addendum Report](#).

Organizational Overview

USA Wrestling is the USOPC-certified NGB for the sport of wrestling and is the authorized U.S. representative to United World Wrestling, the international federation of wrestling. USA Wrestling’s mission is “guided by the Olympic Spirit [and] provides quality opportunities for its members to achieve their full human and athletic potential.”³ USA Wrestling charters over 4,500 wrestling clubs and sanctions over 2,100 local, state, regional, and national competitions.⁴ The NGB serves over 255,000 members and is headquartered in Colorado Springs, Colorado.⁵

Certification History

USA Wrestling was originally certified in January 2021.⁶ This is the first time USA Wrestling has gone through the certification review process.

Certification Exceptions⁷

USA Wrestling did not request any exceptions from the NGB Compliance Standards during its certification review.

Athlete Representation Approval and Exceptions⁸

USA Wrestling requested that the Athlete Representation Review Working Group (ARRWG) approve its designation of “Team USA” status as qualifying criteria for 10 Year and 10 Year+ status to expand the pool of athletes eligible to serve as athlete representatives. USA Wrestling informed the ARRWG that “Team USA” status is achieved through qualification events sanctioned by the NGB and formalized through an athlete agreement between the NGB and the athlete, otherwise known as national team status. The ARRWG approved the request with the restriction to Team USA Senior National Team members starting in the year 2000 to ensure equal eligibility opportunity across men and women.

In addition, USA Wrestling athletes requested that up to 50% of athlete representatives on the board of directors be 10 Year+ athletes. While this expansion allows for more 10 Year+ athlete representatives to be eligible to run for election, the candidates will continue to be elected by 10 Year athletes. The ARRWG approved the request as presented.

Certification Review⁹

Governance and Compliance

The CRG determined that USA Wrestling is fulfilling the Governance and Compliance-related responsibilities of an NGB, including adopting, and enforcing key ethics and compliance-related policies, making them publicly available on its website; and defining procedures to address violations of these policies. In 2021, an athlete filed a Section 9 complaint with the USOPC’s

³ [Our Mission](#), USA Wrestling Website.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Refer to the Appendix for details on the initial certification.

⁷ Refer to the Appendix for details on exception requests to the NGB Compliance Standards.

⁸ Refer to the Appendix for details on athlete representation exception requests.

⁹ Refer to the Appendix for details on the review standards and process for information related to the Compliance Audit.

Dispute Resolution Unit against USA Wrestling. Ultimately, the arbitrator ruled in favor of the NGB.¹⁰

To address 2022 Compliance Audit findings, USA Wrestling updated its bylaws, standardized its board's practices and athlete representation processes, and documented critical communications.

The CRG received positive athlete feedback regarding USA Wrestling's governance practices. Athletes noted the internal AAC is active and engaged and expressed pride in the group's organization and innovation. Athletes were generally satisfied with their communication with USA Wrestling and only noted room for improvement with regard to streamlining communication.

Financial Standards and Reporting Practices

The CRG determined that USA Wrestling demonstrates financial operational capability to administer its sport and is financially and operationally transparent, maintaining accountability to its members and to the USOPC.

As a result of the 2022 Compliance Audit, USA Wrestling made minor updates to its financial policies and procedures and to its USOPC grant reporting process to meet the NGB Compliance Standards.

Athlete Protection and Rights

USA Wrestling maintains and enforces an athlete safety program consistent with the requirements of relevant federal law, as well as with the policies and standards of the USOPC and the U.S. Center for SafeSport (the Center). The NGB also maintains an anti-doping program consistent with the requirements of the USOPC and the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency. As a result of the 2022 Compliance Audit, USA Wrestling implemented a policy that includes the process to report to the USOPC Office of Athlete Safety when required.

The USOPC is not aware of any cases it has received in the past four years concerning USA Wrestling that should have been reported to the Center but were not reported in accordance with the Center's reporting requirements. For its part, the USOPC has reported all matters to the Center relating to USA Wrestling that the USOPC was required to report.

In 2022, the Center conducted its most recent Administrative Audit¹¹ of USA Wrestling's implementation of policies required by the SafeSport Code and the Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies, which resulted in findings and direction for corrective actions relating to policy language. The Center deemed USA Wrestling's corrective actions as complete and compliant on May 28, 2023.¹² On June 13, 2023, the Center conducted its most recent Event Audit¹³ of USA Wrestling at the 2023 Junior National Duals and 14U Nationals, which resulted in partially implemented ratings of the Center's Education and Training standard. USA Wrestling took corrective action to resolve these findings, and the Center confirmed USA Wrestling's compliance on October 4, 2023.¹⁴

¹⁰ [Section 9 Rau v. USA Wrestling](#), May 5, 2021.

¹¹ [US Center for SafeSport Administrative Audit Report – USA Wrestling](#), February 23, 2022.

¹² [US Center for SafeSport Corrective Actions Update](#), May 28, 2022.

¹³ [US Center for SafeSport Event Audit Report](#), June 13, 2023.

¹⁴ [US Center for SafeSport Corrective Actions Update](#), October 4, 2023.

Sport Performance

USA Wrestling is fulfilling its obligations in Sport Performance. The organization maintains and executes a strategic plan that supports athletes in achieving sustained competitive excellence and grows the sport. USA Wrestling established selection procedures and executed them effectively to name and train Team USA athletes for Delegation Events.

As a result of the 2022 Compliance Audit, USA Wrestling implemented an International Event Policy to prohibit any individual from participating at international events if they are not pre-approved and to require individuals to report if they become aware of such an occurrence.

Operational Performance

The CRG determined that USA Wrestling is meeting all the Operational Performance standards. The organization demonstrates managerial capability to administer its sport, keeps current insurance policies, demonstrates financial sustainability, maintains grievance procedures, and enforces a whistleblower and anti-retaliation policy. As a result of the 2022 Compliance Audit, USA Wrestling updated its website to include the required criteria for athletes to receive services and support to meet the NGB Compliance Standards.

USA Wrestling developed a 2021-2024 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) Action Plan with aims to create fair access, opportunity, and advancement for the sport of wrestling. USA Wrestling submitted its action plan to the USOPC with sufficient detail to meet the NGB Compliance Standards. The action plan includes two objectives with details relating to specific initiatives, target groups, timelines, and success measures. Objectives include increasing women's participation in wrestling and increasing the visibility and participation of diverse populations in the sport to include athletes, coaches, referees, and state leaders.

Conclusion

The CRG concluded that USA Wrestling is performing satisfactorily based on input from the CRG members and the results of NGB Audit's 2022 Compliance Audit, and there are no outstanding areas of concern affecting its certification status at this time. Accordingly, the CRG recommends that USA Wrestling's certification as a member organization of the USOPC be renewed with a rating of Renewal in Good Standing.

Appendix

Certification Renewal Process

The USOPC believes in a culture of strong governance, ethics, and compliance among the NGBs that, as member organizations of the USOPC, make up the Olympic and Paralympic movement. Recent amendments to the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act, which became effective in late 2020, require the USOPC to certify NGBs.¹⁵ The USOPC determined that as of January 1, 2021, all member organizations would be certified, and their certifications would be reviewed for renewal on a rolling basis every four years.¹⁶

Governed by the USOPC's [NGB Certification Policy](#), the NGB certification review process is supported by a cross-functional body of professionals at the USOPC, the Certification Review Group (CRG), who interact with NGBs in their day-to-day work. These professionals evaluate an NGB's operations across multiple functional areas to provide a holistic review of an NGB's performance and culture.¹⁷ In addition to enumerated standards for NGB performance described in the Act, the Bylaws, and the USOPC's [NGB Compliance Standards](#), the CRG considers departmental observations about an NGB's operations that may not be identified in a formal audit scenario but are relevant to consider when evaluating an NGB's overall performance.

Certification Standards, Exceptions, and Review Components

As described in Section 8.4.1 of the [USOPC Bylaws](#), NGBs must satisfy certification requirements in five core areas: Governance and Compliance, Financial Standards and Reporting Practices, Athlete Safety, Sport Performance, and Operational Performance. The USOPC Implementation Guide for NGB Compliance Standards provides NGBs with specific guidance for how they will be evaluated in each of these core areas.

Section 8.4.2 of the USOPC Bylaws permits an NGB to submit a request for limited exceptions to any of the NGB Compliance Standards which, as a result of its overall structure or other extenuating circumstances, cannot or need not be reasonably met. The CRG evaluates all requests received and grants or denies such limited exceptions.

Various provisions of Section 8.5 of the USOPC Bylaws permit NGBs to seek exceptions related to minimum athlete representation requirements on boards and designated committees as well as exceptions or additions to which of its committees are considered designated committees. The Athlete Representation Review Working Group evaluates and approves or denies all requests made under Section 8.5.

¹⁵ See §220521(a) of the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act.

¹⁶ NGB Certification Policy, Section 1.

¹⁷ The CRG uses a four-year lookback period during this review process.