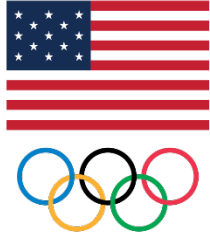


**United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee
Certification Review Group**



USRowing

**Certification Renewal Recommendation Report for USRowing
December 7, 2023**



**UNITED STATES
OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC
COMMITTEE**

USRowing Certification Renewal Executive Summary

In April 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 the United States Rowing Association (USRowing).¹ The CRG evaluated USRowing 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 USRowing 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 USRowing is meeting the requirements and expectations for an NGB. In its discussions of USRowing'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 USRowing, the CRG had a favorable view of USRowing's operations.

As a result of this review, the CRG recommends that USRowing 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

USRowing is the USOPC-certified NGB for the sport of rowing and para rowing and is the US member to World Rowing (FISA), the international federation that oversees Olympic and Paralympic rowing disciplines. USRowing’s vision is to foster community, cultivate excellence and develop Olympic and Paralympic Champions.³ USRowing’s community consists of 1300 organizations and over 75,000 individuals⁴ and is headquartered in Princeton, New Jersey.⁵

Certification History

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

Certification Exceptions⁷

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

Athlete Representation Approval and Exceptions⁸

USRowing did not request any exceptions from the athlete representative requirements during its certification review.

Certification Review⁹

Governance and Compliance

The CRG determined that USRowing is fulfilling 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. Additionally, USRowing has not been the subject of any formal complaints filed with the Dispute Resolution Unit within the last four years.

As a result of the 2022 Compliance Audit, USRowing updated its bylaws and several governance policies to meet requirements. In addition, USRowing implemented processes to ensure forms are fully completed by all required individuals, properly reviewed, and that individuals are provided with management direction. NGB Audit will validate that the updated process is effective in early 2024. Although audit findings remained open as of the issuance of this report, the CRG determined that USRowing demonstrated sufficient governance and compliance practices to meet a good standing rating.

Financial Standards and Reporting Practices

³ [About](#), USRowing 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.

The CRG determined that USRowing demonstrates financial operational capability to administer its sport and is financially and operationally transparent, maintaining accountability to its members and to the USOPC. Although an audit finding remained open as of the issuance of this report, the CRG determined that USRowing demonstrated sufficient financial operational capability to meet a good standing rating.

Athlete Protection and Rights

USRowing 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). It also maintains an anti-doping program consistent with the requirements of the USOPC and the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency.

The USOPC is not aware of any cases it has received in the past four years concerning USRowing 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 USRowing that the USOPC was required to report.

In 2022, the Center conducted its most recent Administrative Audit¹⁰ of USRowing's implementation of policies required by the SafeSport Code and the Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies, which resulted in a status of fully implemented with no required corrective actions. On June 7-8, 2023, the Center conducted its most recent Event Audit¹¹ of the USRowing Youth National Championships at Nathan Benderson Park, which resulted in four findings that required corrective actions.^{12,13}

In response to the 2022 Compliance Audit, USRowing updated its bylaws, several policies, and documents to meet the requirements of the NGB Compliance Standards. In addition, USRowing implemented improvements to the background check process to ensure compliance with the USOPC's Responsible Sport Organization Background Check Policy. Further, USRowing is implementing automatic controls to ensure its continued compliance once contract and system limitations are resolved. NGB Audit will validate that the controls are effective at the end of Q1 2025. Given that NGB Audit identified only a single instance of an individual's non-compliance during its review, and that USRowing strengthened its controls, the CRG determined that USRowing demonstrated sufficient athlete protection and rights practices to meet a good standing rating.

Sport Performance

USRowing 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. USRowing established selection procedures and executed them effectively to name and train Team USA athletes for Delegation Events.

In response to the 2022 Compliance Audit, USRowing updated its website to include National Classification policies and procedures to meet the NGB Compliance Standards.

¹⁰ [US Center for SafeSport Administrative Audit](#), - USRowing, October 3, 2022.

¹¹ [US Center for SafeSport Event Audit](#), - USRowing, June 28, 2023.

¹² [US Center for SafeSport Corrective Actions Update](#), November 7, 2023.

¹³ While USRowing has outstanding corrective actions as a result of its 2023 Event Audit, USRowing is within its agreed-upon remediation timeline, has made progress toward resolving all issues, and is not in the Center's penalty flow as of the date of this report.

Operational Performance

The CRG determined that USRowing 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.

In 2021, the USOPC retained outside counsel to conduct an investigation, with USRowing's support, which resulted in USOPC Compliance requiring the organization to improve its high-performance program and promote and maintain a culture of athlete health, trust, and wellbeing.¹⁴ Throughout 2022 and 2023, USRowing provided USOPC Compliance and NGB Audit with sufficient evidence to satisfy those requirements. The CRG commends USRowing's actions in addressing these concerns and for sharing the outcome of the investigation with its membership.

Prior to the 2022 Compliance Audit, USRowing began working with outside consultants to create and approve a multi-year strategic plan that was implemented in 2023. In addition, USRowing updated the grievance procedures and whistleblower and anti-retaliation policy to meet the requirements of the NGB Compliance Standards.

USRowing developed a 2021-2024 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) Action Plan with the vision "that every boathouse reflects the rich diversity of the United States, and that all rowers can come together as one in the boat and celebrate differences from the dock". USRowing submitted its action plan to the USOPC with sufficient detail to meet the NGB Compliance Standards. The action plan includes twelve objectives with details relating to specific initiatives, target groups, timelines, and success measures. Objectives include but are not limited to, building a secure online community; increasing diversity across all levels of USRowing; creating an adaptive coaching certification; and creating roundtables for learning, networking, and community building.

Conclusion

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

¹⁴[A Letter from CEO Amanda Kraus on USRowing High Performance.](#)

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.