

Team USA Council on Racial and Social Justice Recommendations for Institutional Awareness and Cultural Change

In October 2020, the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC) commissioned the Team USA Council on Racial and Social Justice (the Council). The Council was charged with focusing on four areas: right to protest and demonstrations; athlete voice and advocacy; institutional awareness and cultural change; and acts of racism and prejudice. The Council published recommendations on IOC Rule 50/IPC Section 2.2 on December 10, 2020, calling on the International Olympic Committee (IOC)/International Paralympic Committee (IPC), USOPC, and National Governing Bodies (NGBs) to no longer sanction athletes demonstrating for racial and social justice as well as to provide institutional support for athletes' leadership in driving positive social change. On May 19, 2021, the Council released an additional set of recommendations "centering athlete expression in all decision-making, support services, procedures, practices, and policies of the organizations that help govern the athlete experience." We celebrate the success of our united efforts and thank the USOPC and NGBs for their work thus far. While our previous recommendations included elements of institutional change, the Council is proud to release its third set of recommendations aimed at: increasing institutional awareness about racial and social injustice; promoting cultural change; and creating more opportunities for athletes to advocate for and work toward implementing impactful change across the movements.

We define *institutional awareness* as the recognition of an organization's culture (of *what is going on* within that organization) – the ways in which our governing structures, institutional cultures, and grassroots efforts have historically created barriers to access, diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice within the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic movements. We use *cultural change* to describe changes in the way an organization and its people operate to meet their goals and objectives – changes in policies, practices, and procedures that address and eliminate systemic inequities, particularly experienced by those from historically underrepresented, marginalized, oppressed, and minoritized groups.

Why do we need institutional awareness and cultural change? A recent survey conducted by the Council showed that the majority of the 269 Team USA athlete and alumni respondents felt unsupported when reporting incidents of racism and other forms of discrimination to the institutions governing their sport. To increase the protection of current and former Team USA athletes, access, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI) must be centered and guide institutional practices and procedures.

After consulting with Team USA athletes and alumni, as well as representatives from NGBs, the Council provides the following recommendations for increasing institutional awareness and promoting cultural change in the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic movements:

1. **Structural Support for ADEI Efforts:** Equip the office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion with a full staff and the explicit executive-level support to develop and enforce policies and practices for all USOPC employees.
 - a. **Strategic Planning:** Institutionalize strategic planning at the NGB and USOPC level by regularly creating and updating short- (e.g., one year) and long-term (e.g., four years/every quad) access, diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic plans. In addition to an overarching strategic plan, each department within the organization should regularly (e.g., annually) submit action items the department will take to meet benchmarks.
 - b. **Audits:** Conduct regular audits of access, diversity, equity, and inclusion focused on current practices, procedures, and policies within the organization at all levels. (One audit every four years/quad should be conducted by an external entity).
 - i. Extensive audits of all existing policies should: (a) identify policies that inhibit access, diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, (b) outline policies needed to support access, diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, and (c) eliminate any language that is non-inclusive, reinforces racial and social injustice (e.g., language that is not gender inclusive), or unnecessarily distinguishes between the Olympic and Paralympic community (e.g., using “USOC” rather than “USOPC”).
 - ii. The audits should also look at external engagements – such as with sponsors or donors – as well as consider matters of access, diversity, equity, and inclusion when selecting host sites for events and programming.
 - c. **Athlete Input:** Survey athletes and provide them with opportunities to give input on new and existing policies that impact their experience.
 - d. **Metrics:** Establish metrics to drive access, diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. Structures must be in place to collect and utilize institutional data and metrics to measure progress. Action items for this recommendation recognize that racial and social justice strategy needs to be data-driven and shall include:
 - i. Revise the existing access, diversity, equity, and inclusion score cards to include data on (1) retention of historically underrepresented, marginalized, oppressed, or minoritized groups specifically, (2) demographic make-up of executive leadership and board of directors, (3) sense of belonging across identity categories, with a particular focus on historically underrepresented, marginalized, oppressed, or minoritized groups, (4) completion of access, diversity, equity, and inclusion training, and (5) other inclusive practices taken by the organization (i.e., USOPC and NGBs).
 - ii. Conduct exit interviews that include specific questions related to access, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Use the data to glean crucial insights into barriers that counteract institutional awareness and cultural change.

- iii. For the USOPC specifically, consider increasing the hiring of leadership and staff from historically underrepresented, marginalized, oppressed, or minoritized groups by 15% and 20%, respectively, by 2025.
 - e. **Culture of Accountability:** Provide access to training focused on access, diversity, equity, and inclusion (including but not limited to training materials on bias and microaggressions) for all USOPC and NGB staff. Such training should be mandatory for organizational leadership and strongly encouraged for all other members of the organization. In addition, key stakeholders in the Olympic and Paralympic community, including the media, should be educated on matters of access, diversity, equity, and inclusion.
 - i. Trainings/resources should be made available (e.g., an inclusive language guide) for NGBs, especially as part of the onboarding processes for new members of the organization (including new members of the Athletes' Advisory Council) or as part of the media summit (for training specific to media professionals engaging with the Olympic and Paralympic community).
 - ii. Establish a culture of accountability handling issues of access, diversity, equity, and inclusion (e.g., via a restorative justice philosophy), which holds members of the organization accountable for use of language and practices that exclude and harm (e.g., hate speech).
- 2. **Additional Support for NGB ADEI Strategic Planning:** The USOPC shall provide more consistent guidance on the creation of performance plans, which can include providing a universal plan template that features specific sections speaking to access, diversity, equity, and inclusion specifically (e.g., initiatives to diversify the grassroots level and sport pipeline, reflections on barriers to access, diversity, equity, and inclusion in organizational structure, development goals).
 - a. **ADEI Benchmarks:** NGBs should identify their own access, diversity, equity, and inclusion benchmarks with a focus on hiring and retention at all levels. These benchmarks should be based on (a) the demographics of the athlete populations within the sport and (b) the demographics of the U.S. population.
 - b. **NGB Demographics Make-Up:** The strategic plan(s) should be part of the high-performance plan and must clearly identify which populations are underrepresented, marginalized, oppressed, or minoritized within the context of the sport.
 - c. **Recurring & Athlete-Centered Strategic Planning:** The strategic plan(s) should be submitted each quad and include benchmarks with time frame, resources, and name of the lead person. Further, the strategic plan must include input from athletes (e.g., receiving approval from the AAC representative).

- d. **ADEI as KPI:** Performance reviews should include progress toward access, diversity, equity, and inclusion benchmarks/goals as a key performance indicator (KPI) at all levels (e.g., staff, coaches, organizational leadership).
 - e. **Funding & Certification Decisions:** To increase accountability for racial and social justice action, tie funding and/or certification decisions to access, diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives (and outcomes of such initiatives). For example, applications for (re)certification could require proof of progress made toward the strategic goals outlined in the plan and explain discrepancies should they exist. When it comes to funding, a monetary bonus could be awarded based on exemplary access, diversity, equity, and inclusion performance.
 - f. **Communication:** Communicate metrics to all stakeholders.
3. **Education & Awareness:** Create an educational tool that acknowledges the history and role of Team USA athletes in racial and social justice. Such an educational tool should raise awareness of athlete efforts towards racial and social justice and recognize the courage of athletes, both of which can help dispel the myth of athlete action as disruptive, unpatriotic, and in conflict with athletic excellence. An example of this is a living exhibit in the form of a museum or digital space.
4. **Equity for the Paralympic Movement:** Address the inequities faced by the Paralympic Movement.
 - a. **Oversight of Paralympic Sports:** Create and implement a plan for moving oversight of Paralympic sports currently managed by the USOPC exclusively to their respective NGBs.
 - b. **Financial Support:** Provide financial incentives and/or support to NGBs needing assistance in transitioning Paralympic sports into their organization (e.g., via a staggered model that provides decreasing financial support over a five-year period).
 - c. **Adapted Sports:** Create an adapted sports pipeline to provide an entry point for athletes with disabilities into the sport(s) governed by the NGB.
 - d. **Grassroots Efforts:** Include grassroots efforts for adapted sports in any strategic plan(s) created by the organization (see Recommendations 1 and 2).
5. **Financial Support for ADEI Efforts:** Identify or establish a permanent means to provide financial resources to sustainably address systemic barriers to access, diversity, equity, and inclusion. This could include identifying potential donors, grants, and other financial support programs committed to driving access, diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. This funding should be used towards, but not limited to, the following:
 - a. **Incentives:** Give incentives (e.g., monetarily or via resource allocation) for meeting access, diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging goals, such as in the recruitment, hiring, and retention of individuals and business vendors (e.g., law

firms, financial firms, marketing firms, real estate firms, etc.) who are owned by BIPOC, Women, LGBTQ+, and Individuals with Disabilities.

- b. **Database of Minority-Owned Businesses:** Create an internal database collecting information of businesses fulfilling these criteria to make it easier for both units in the USOPC and NGBs to identify, support, and elevate minority-owned businesses.
 - c. **Professional Programs:** Develop internship programs dedicated to training and recruiting employees of color and/or employees with disabilities. For example, NGBs can establish a program similar to the Finding Leaders Among Minorities Everywhere (FLAME) Program that is tailored specifically to their unique institutional context. The USOPC and NGBs could also collaborate on creating longer-term, paid internship opportunities for members of historically underrepresented, marginalized, oppressed, or minoritized groups to get work experience within the USOPC/NGBs.
 - d. **Recruitment at Minority-Serving Institutions:** Host and attend recruitment events at Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs) and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs).
6. **Resources: & Collaboration:** Utilize current and future resources to advance and maintain access, diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Existing resources include regular USOPC-led access, diversity, equity, and inclusion calls with NGB staff, community ambassador meetings, and community resource groups for historically underrepresented, marginalized, or minoritized groups.
- a. **Recognition Efforts:** Create or increase recognition efforts, specifically those that address racial and social injustice. For example, this recognition could be an annual award with monetary incentives given to NGBs or departments across the USOPC modeling inclusive excellence. Conduct a comprehensive review of the existing award selection process, with special attention on the grassroots level.
 - b. **Programming:** Host programs and events, such as an annual educational conference/summit for USOPC/NGB staff, coaches, and athletes focused on high-impact access, diversity, equity, and inclusion practices.
 - c. **Grants:** Establish an annual grant program, in collaboration with the Affiliate Organization Council and NGBs, to fund promising ADEI research in the Olympic and Paralympic community. Particular consideration should be given to research focused on the grassroots level and conducted in partnership with an organization in the Affiliate Organization Council or other community organizations relevant to driving diversity, access, equity, and inclusion in U.S. sport.
7. **ADEI Advisory Council:** Establish an ongoing access, diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging Advisory Council charged specifically with identifying barriers to racial and social justice in their respective sporting context, with a particular focus on barriers at the

grassroots level that prevent certain social groups from participating in the sport. We suggest that the Athletes' Advisory Council (AAC) and Athlete and NGB Services Committee (ANSC) share mutual oversight and ensure that the Advisory Council has diverse athlete representation. For maximum results, we suggest the USOPC do the following:

- a. **Charter/Charge:** Begin the Advisory Council with a specific charter/charge that includes reviewing the progress of the USOPC and NGBs, making additional recommendations, and helping the USOPC and NGBs to develop strategies for progress towards access, diversity, equity, and inclusion benchmarks/goals.
- b. **Reporting Line:** Give the Advisory Council a direct reporting line to the AAC and ANAC.
- c. **Institutional Support:** Provide institutional support for the Advisory Council and (if applicable) assign space – both physical and virtual – for the Advisory Council to meet on a regular basis.
- d. **Meetings with Leadership:** Empower the Advisory Council to facilitate regular meetings with USOPC and NGB leadership, if requested.
- e. **Ad-Hoc Committees:** Allow for steering committees to be convened and overseen by members of the Advisory Council, as needed. For instance, if one of the priorities of the Advisory Council is to drive strategic action at the grassroots level, the Advisory Council may appoint a steering committee to operate and be overseen by the Advisory Council.

To close, this document represents a third set of recommendations developed by Team USA Council on Racial & Social Justice to remove systemic barriers to racial and social justice, empower athletes in driving societal change, and anchor a commitment to access, diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in our organizational policies, practices, and procedures. A final recommendation, focused on addressing systemic oppression and preventing acts of discrimination, will outline specific strategies for action needed for the USOPC and NGBs to continue to serve as strong advocates for systemic change and progress within the Olympic and Paralympic movements.