

# NGB Athlete Representation Training

*THE REPRESENTATIVE GROUP AND VOICE OF TEAM USA ATHLETES*



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Collaboration



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# Definitions

# USOPC 10 YEAR ATHLETES

*“USOPC 10 Year Athlete” means an athlete who has been **selected** by their NGB to represent the United States in a Delegation Event or other International Qualifying Competition within the previous 10 years”*

## DELEGATION EVENT

- Pan American Games
- Para Pan American Games
- Olympics
- Paralympics

## INTERNATIONAL QUALIFYING EVENT

Any international sport competition where

- athletes represent the United States against athletes representing other nations,
- the NGB officially designates entrants, as required by the competition organizers, and
- athlete *results or performance are included* in the published criteria (i.e., International Federation qualification system or NGB selection criteria) to qualify, or be selected, to represent the United States in a Delegation Event;



# USOPC 10 YEAR ATHLETE STATUS

## ATHLETE JOURNEY

**JULY 1  
2024**

**JANUARY 1  
2025**

**DECEMBER 31  
2034**

**DATE OF  
QUALIFYING  
COMPETITION**

### KEY TAKEAWAY

**Must have 10-year status at first day of service, but retain that status through elected term and any subsequent terms in the same role**



# Athlete Definitions

## NGB Athlete

Competed in event as approved by the NGB AAC and the Athlete Representation Review Working Group

## USOPC Athlete

Athletes who have competed in an International Qualifying Competition or Delegation Event in Discipline on the Delegation Event Program

### 10 Year Athlete

### 10 Year+ Athlete

Same as above, but more than 10 years have passed

Same as above, but more than 10 years have passed

### Actively Engaged

Competed in last 24 months in an NGB approved competition (approved by Working Group)

N/A

OR

IPC Defined Athlete Competition Partner in an event outlined above



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# DESIGNATED COMMITTEES

As defined by the USOPC Bylaws, any NGB committee that makes recommendations or decisions directly impacting its elite athletes, including at least the following (by name or by function):

- Allocation of USOPC- and/or NGB-provided resources
- Audit
- Budget/Finance
- Compensation
- Ethics
- Judicial, grievance, and any other hearing panel affecting any individual's participation in Protected Competition
- Nominating and Governance, including Bylaws amendments
- Selection of athletes, coaches, and/or staff for Protected Competition, including development, approval, and implementation of selection criteria



# NGB ATHLETE REPRESENTATION REVIEW WORKING GROUP (ARWG)

Section 8.5.1 of the USOPC Bylaws grants the NGB ARWG the authority to review and approve any deviations from the requirements of Athlete Representation on NGB Boards, Designated Committees, and application of the NGB 10 Year and 10 Year+ Athlete Definitions. Approvals are granted by a majority vote out of three panel members comprised of representatives from Team USA AC leadership, NGBC leadership, and the NGB's Team USA AC representative, and administratively supported by USOPC NGB Services and Team USA AC staff. Unless otherwise noted, exceptions are valid through the end of the current quadrennium.

## WHAT

- Review of Board and Designated Committee Composition
- Review of Designated Committee Status
- Review of "Other" Committee Composition
- Approval of Competition Status for International Qualifying, NGB Qualifying or Actively Engaged Competitions

## HOW

- Can review via a documentary review
  - Hearing with NGB and athlete representatives required if requested by any member of the panel

## WHY

- Your athlete pool is very small in relation to the number of athlete representative seats you have to fill



# ARWG: FACTORS TO CONSIDER



## The Size of The Athlete Pool

- Know the current number of eligible athletes using the existing criteria.
- Have an estimate showing how the athlete pool would change with the inclusion of additional competitions.



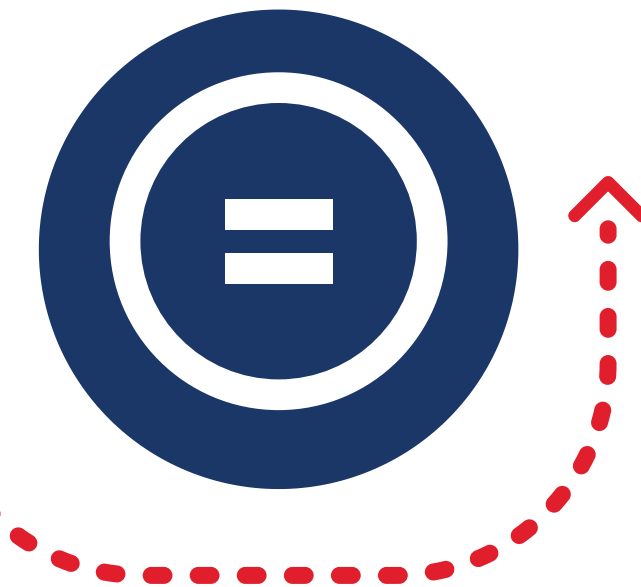
## Age Restricted Competitions

Should not be considered when seeking approval for additional qualifying events to meet NGB 10-Year Athlete status



## Gender Equality

When adding new competitions to the list of qualifying events for NGB 10-Year Athlete status, it is essential to ensure that these events provide equal gender inclusio



## Oly and Para Equality

It is crucial to ensure equal inclusion when adding new competitions to the list of qualifying events for NGB 10-Year Athlete status.



# AWRG: PROCEED WITH CAUTION

## EXEMPTIONS TO ATHLETE REPRESENTATION



- These exemptions should be requested and granted in a very limited number of cases where the elite athlete voice is not essential to the committee's work.
- For example, age group committees or referee committees may be a place where an exception from the 33% athlete representation requirement makes sense. Committees where no such exception should be granted is a Rules Committee or Team Selection Committee. Maintaining athlete representation—particularly in key decision-making committees—is essential for fairness, accountability, and athlete-centered governance

## WEIGHED VOTING



- While it can be an effective tool to ensure athletes hold 33% of the vote, it is essential to ensure that no single athlete representative controls the entire 33% share.

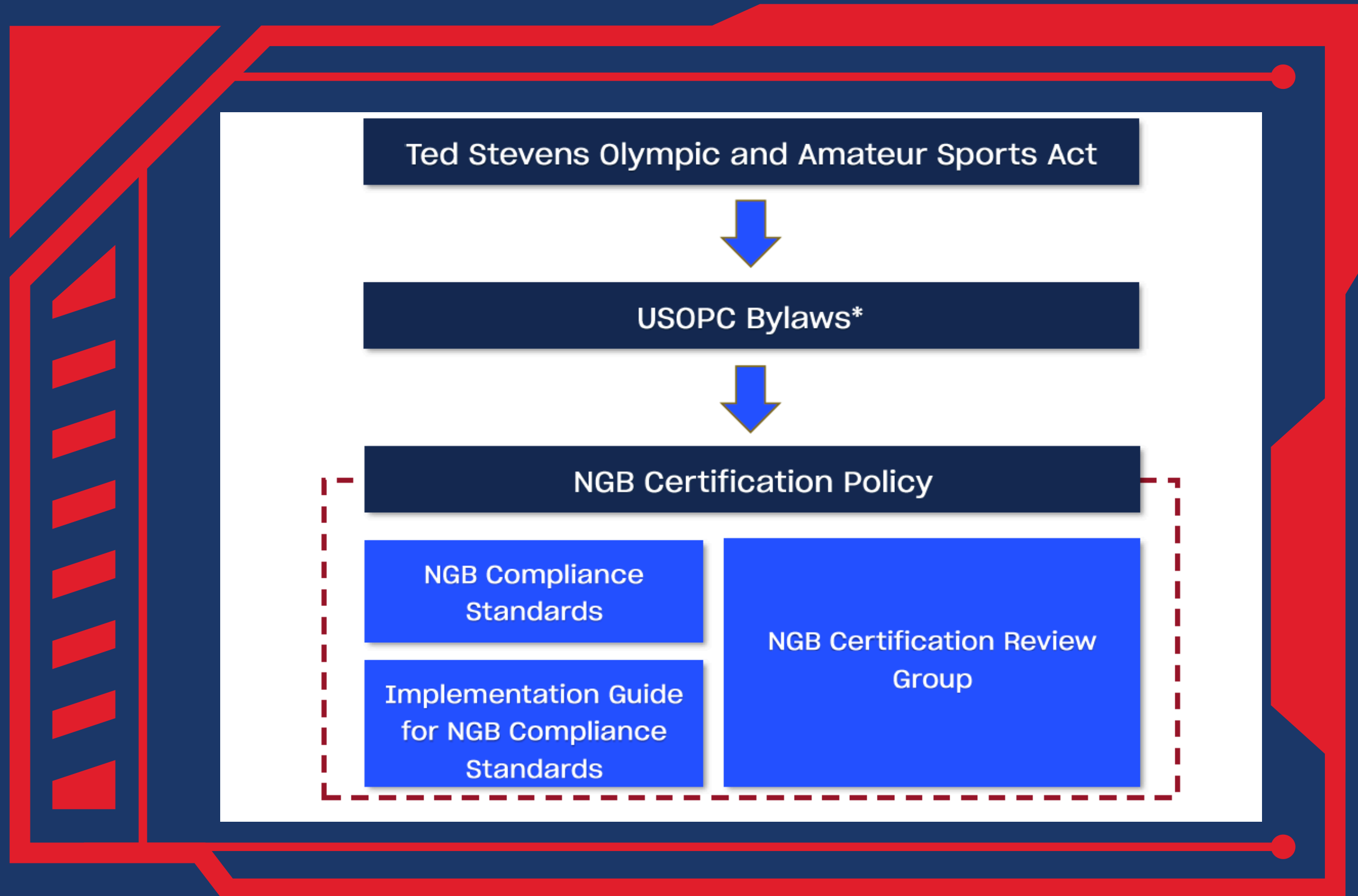


# USOPPC Bylaws & Implementation Guide for NGB Compliance Standards

The purpose of the Implementation Guide is to assist NGBs with implementing the NGB Compliance Standards (the Standards) by providing in-depth explanations and interpretations of the Standards and explanations of factors the USOPC's Compliance and NGB Audit teams may use in evaluating NGBs' compliance with the Standards.



# Compliance Documents



# A.1 A & B- ATHLETE REPRESENTATION

a. NGB must have at least **33.3%** athlete representation on its **board of directors** as required by §220522(13) of the Act and further defined by the **USOPC Bylaws, Section 8.5.3.**

b. NGB must have at least **33.3%** athlete representation on **all Designated and Other Committees** as required and defined by the **USOPC Bylaws, Section 8.5.4 and 8.5.5.**



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## COMPOSITIONS & ELIGIBILITY



Athlete representatives must equal at least **33.3%** of all NGB boards of directors, executive boards, and other governing boards.

- At least 20% of voting board members must be NGB 10 Year Athlete representatives. The remaining athlete representatives that bring total athlete representation to 33.3% must be either NGB 10 Year or NGB 10 Year+ Athlete representatives.
- At least half of these athlete representatives will have obtained NGB 10 Year or NGB 10 Year+ Athlete representative eligibility through having been selected to compete at an event that, at the time of election/selection, is on a Delegation Event program.



The NGB's representative on the **Team USA Athletes' Commission** must be a voting member of the NGB board.

- This individual is included toward the 20% NGB 10 Year Athlete representation of the board's voting members.
- **The NGB's alternate representative** on the Team USA Athletes' Commission will be at least a non-voting member of the NGB board. The alternate representative may be included as a voting member of the board, and, if so, they are included as part of the 20% NGB 10 Year Athlete representation of the board's voting members.



In addition to the NGB 10 Year Athlete and NGB 10 Year+ Athlete requirements, NGBs are responsible for ensuring that candidates meet **all applicable eligibility requirements**, including assessing any disqualifying conflicts or periods of ineligibility from the Center or USADA.



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## ELECTION



All athlete representatives (NGB 10 Year and NGB 10 Year+) to the NGB's board must be **directly elected by the pool of athletes who meet the requirements** as NGB 10 Year Athletes.

- This election process is defined by the NGB and is different than that of the athlete representative seats reserved for Team USA Athletes' Commission **Representatives and Alternates ex officio**



The NGB AAC and the NGB's nominating and governance committee must develop a **process to jointly identify** and vet candidates to serve as the NGB 10 Year and NGB 10 Year+ Athlete representatives.



**Team USA Athletes' Commission Representatives** and Alternates must be elected **consistent with the Team USA Athletes' Commission Bylaws** and any applicable **procedures** published by the Team USA Athletes' Commission.

- NGB Bylaws must ensure that it is clear that the athlete representative seats reserved for the Team USA Athletes' Commission Representative and Alternate are **ex officio** as a result of the individuals' election as the Team USA Athletes' Commission Representative and Alternate. This avoids a situation where an individual resigns from their Athletes' Commission role but could remain an elected member of the NGB board.



# DESIGNATED COMMITTEES

## COMPOSITIONS & ELIGABILITY

Athlete representatives must equal at least **33.3%** of all NGB Designated Committees.

- At least half of the athlete representatives must be NGB 10 Year Athlete representatives. The remainder must be either NGB 10 Year or NGB 10 Year+ Athlete representatives.
- For Designated Committees which oversee the selection of athletes, coaches, and/or staff for Para sport Protected Competitions, at least half of the athlete representatives must have gained eligibility through Para sport event.

## ***Higher Standards, Additions, Restrictions, or Exceptions:***

*Any higher standard, addition, restriction, or exception to the requirements of Section 8.5.4 of the USOPC Bylaws must be approved by the NGB AAC and submitted to the NGB Athlete Representation Review Working Group for review and approval.*



# DESIGNATED COMMITTEES

## SELECTION

- The NGB AAC and the NGB's nominating and governance committee must **jointly develop a process to identify and vet candidates** to serve as the NGB 10 Year and NGB 10 Year+ Athlete representatives.
- Following the vetting process, the athlete representatives (**inclusive of both NGB 10 Year and NGB 10 Year+ Athlete representatives**) to the NGB's Designated Committees must be **selected by the NGB AAC from the vetted candidates**.
  - For any Designated Committees which are required to be populated by board members, the board chair or board, rather than the NGB AAC, may select from the athlete representatives seated on the board.

## IMPORTANT NOTE

SECTION 8.5.4 OF THE USOPC BYLAWS STATES THAT THE NGB AAC AND THE NGB NOMINATIONS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE JOINTLY DEVELOP A PROCESS TO IDENTIFY AND VET 10-YEAR+ ATHLETE REPRESENTATIVES. HOWEVER, THE BYLAWS DO NOT REQUIRE THE NOMINATIONS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE TO BE INVOLVED IN SELECTING 10-YEAR ATHLETE REPRESENTATIVES. THE IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE HAS AN ADDED REQUIREMENT

# OTHER COMMITTEES

## COMPOSITIONS & ELIGABILITY

- NGB Actively Engaged Athlete representatives must equal at least 33.3% of all Other NGB committees.

## SELECTION

- The NGB AAC and the NGB's nominating and governance committee must **jointly develop a process to identify and vet candidates** to serve as NGB Actively Engaged Athlete representatives.

### ***Higher Standards, Additions, Restrictions, or Exceptions:***

*Any higher standard, addition, restriction, or exception to the requirements of Section 8.5.4 of the USOPC*

*Bylaws must be approved by the NGB AAC and submitted to the NGB Athlete Representation Review*

*Working Group for review and approval.*



# Athlete Voice

|                       | USOPC BOARD                    | TEAM USA AC              | NGB BOARD    | NGB AAC      | NGB DESIGNATED COMMITTEES                  | NGB OTHER COMMITTEES |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------|--|----------------------|
| USOPC 10 YEAR ATHLETE | 3 Athlete Representative Seats | All Members & Leadership | At Least 20% | At Least 80% | At Least Half of Athletes (1/2 of the 33%) | Eligible             |
| NGB 10 YEAR           | NOT ELIGIBLE                   |                          |              |              |  |                      |
| NGB 10+               | NOT ELIGIBLE                   |                          | Up to 13%    | Up to 20%    | Up To Half of Athletes (1/2 of the 33%)    |                      |
| ACTIVELY ENGAGED      | NOT ELIGIBLE                   |                          |              |              |  |                      |

**THERE ARE NO COMMITTEES THAT DO NOT NEED 33% ATHLETE REPRESENTATION**



# A.3 A – ATHLETE ADVISORY COUNCIL

a. NGB **must have an Athletes' Advisory Council** that meets the minimum standards set forth by the USOPC.

**The purpose of an NGB AAC:** is to provide athletes with a voice in the governance structure of the NGB in a way that athletes find appropriate. For that reason, athletes and the elected athlete representatives of the NGB AAC should be the primary decision-makers about the operations of the NGB AAC. While the USOPC will evaluate NGBs based on the incorporation of their AACs into their governance structures in a meaningful way and the requirements listed here, other operational decisions made by the NGB AAC itself will not be evaluated.

To empower NGB AACs, Team USA AC is advocating for this low bar to be increased and for NGBs to be required to consult with their AACs on athlete policies & issues



# COMPOSITIONS & ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

01

## Athletes' Commission Representation

Both the NGB's Team USA Athletes' Commission primary representative and alternate must automatically be members of the NGB AAC. This must be included in the relevant organizing document for the NGB AAC

02

## Athlete Eligibility

At least 80% of the NGB AAC membership are NGB 10 Year Athletes and the remainder are NGB 10 Year or 10 Year+ Athletes as required by Section 8.4.1(a)(iii) of the USOPC Bylaws

03

## Olympic and Paralympic Representation

If the NGB governs both Olympic and Paralympic disciplines, at least two of the seats on the internal AAC must be designated for Paralympic representation. This must be included in the bylaws or relevant organizing document

04

## Conflict of Interest

Athlete representatives are subject to the NGB's conflicts of interest policy and nominated individuals must follow their NGB's conflict of interest disclosure process before appearing on a ballot as a candidate

05

## Other Disclosures

Before appearing on a ballot as a candidate, individuals nominated for a position must disclose any felony convictions, or any other period of ineligibility served in sport such as violations of antidoping codes, the Athlete Classification Code (Paralympic only), or SafeSport violations

***NGBs must also provide staff support to internal AACs for administrative functions, including in facilitating AAC elections.***





# Best Practices

Getty Images



# COMPOSITION: RECOMMENDATIONS

## Eligibility

It is recommended that all members must be a 10-year athlete, as defined in the USOPC bylaws. But NGBs have the discretion to expand the eligibility. No more than 20% can be 10+ athletes

## Gender

NGBs make an effort to ensure ensuring equal representation of gender. There may be instances where single-gender disciplines that shift the gender of the athlete makeup

## Size

Recommended minimum of 7 athletes and a maximum of 12, depending on the size of the NGB  
Recommend an Odd number for voting

## Discipline

A diverse number of disciplines should be represented to ensure all major groups are included

## Chair

Selected from among the elected AAC/AAG candidates whose job will be to establish clear roles and responsibilities for athlete director roles

## 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

## Term

Recommended staggered elections to ensure continuous transfer of knowledge between members

## Additional Considerations

*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*

*If applicable, Team USA AC leadership: will remain on the AAC/AAG*



# Duties of the AAC

"The AAC shall perform the duties outlined below:

- Selection of athletes to committees when vacancies to those committees exist. The AAC should consider the needs on that committee as outlined by the NGC.
- Soliciting, synthesizing and sharing feedback from elite athletes to committees, staff and the Board.
- Advocating for the welfare, safety and fair treatment of elite athletes within [NGB].
- Liaise and work with other committees, USOPC committees, Team USA AC, [IF] Athletes Commission and other bodies as required by those bodies and/or the Board;
- Review and provide feedback on policies, procedures and/or issues as requested by other committees, staff and the Board."

Charter Template Language

Team USA AC  
Advocating For  
this to be codified  
in the  
implementation  
guide

## Example Policies & Procedures:



- EAHl Allocation
- High-Performance Plans
- Development Pipelines
- NGB Operational Strategy
- Athlete Stipend Allocation
- Selection Criteria
- Other policy decisions directly impacting Athletes

# Regular Cadence of Updates From NGB

- 
- NGB CEO
  - Board Chair
  - Financial reporting
  - High Performance
  - Board Committees

# 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*

- **Communication methods:**

- Face-to-face interactions with athletes during events such as national/international championships, athletes' forums, athletes' workshops
- Communication using different media, for example, newsletters, social media, group emails, phone calls, 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

- **Best Practices:**

- Two-way communication between an Athletes' Council and its athletes is key to ensuring that athletes' views are understood, captured and communicated effectively.
- Direct athlete communication
- Dedication email addresses for council members

## **PUBLIC STATEMENTS**

- Establish a policy with your NGB/IMS about how statements should be done before a crisis
- Utilize and consult the Team USA AC for resources and a media consultant to assist in strategy and statement drafting



# Important Considerations

## Conflicts

Council members should make a declaration of any Conflict of Interests based on agenda ideas to be discussed and will identify themselves and will be excused for that section

## Responsible Voice

The goal of an AAC/AAG should be to work with the NGB to find solutions to obstacles facing athletes. An AAC/AAG should not be adversarial to NGB, but rather should be collaborative, proactive and respectful while working together to help both the organization and athletes

## Inclusivity

Ensure that all athletes in your sport are well represented on the AC including gender, able-bodied and para, and the different disciplines

## Budget

Establish a defined budget to ensure the AAC/AAG is able to follow through on its objectives. This could include communicating to the athlete membership or travelling to NGB meetings. This budget should come from the NSO/IMS

## Incumbency Bias

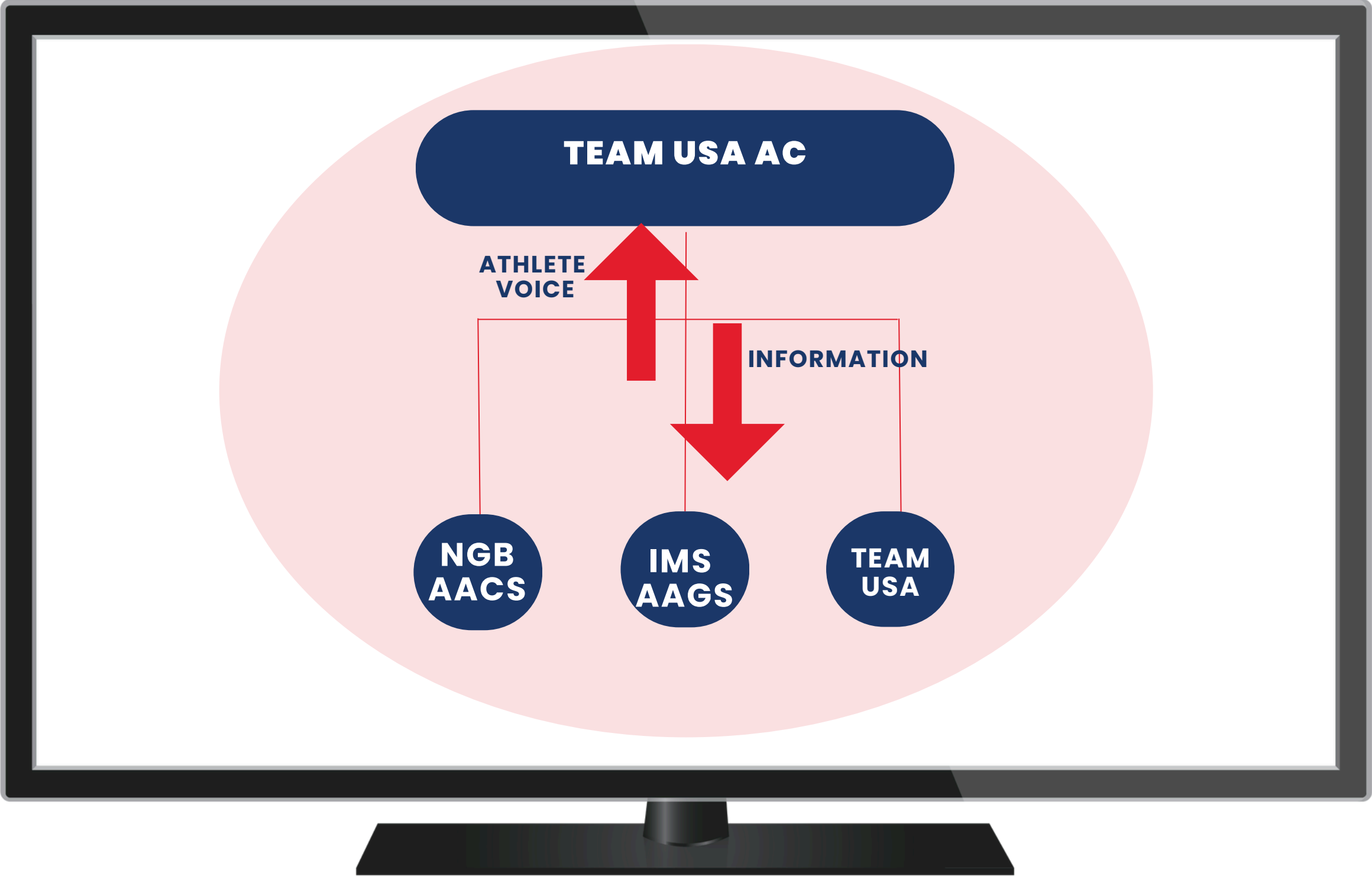
AACs/AAGs are set up to care about the needs to 10 year athletes but they also need to protect and consider future athletes as well





**NGB AAC Role  
&  
Team USA AC  
Collaboration**

# US ATHLETE REPRESENTATION ECOSYSTEM



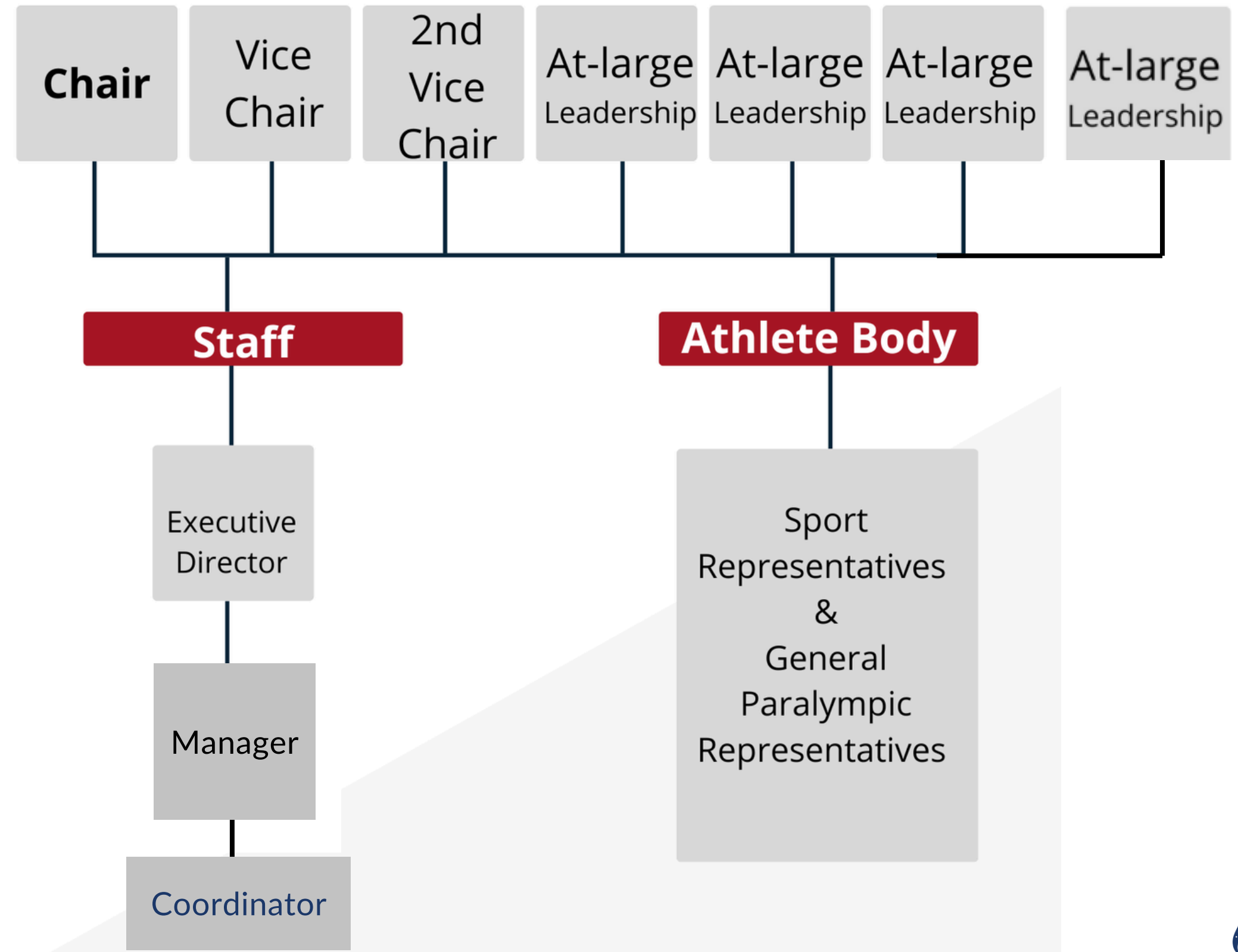
# TEAM USA AC

## Leadership: 7

- **One Chair**
- **Two Vice Chairs**
- **Three At-Large Representatives**

## General Body:

- **At least one athlete and one alternate from each NGB**
- **Six General Paralympic athletes**
- **Ex-Officio Member: IOC Athletes' Commission Member**



# WHAT IS THE TEAM USA AC?

- Serves as the representative group and voice of Team USA athletes
- Responsible for broadening communication between the USOPC and active athletes and serves as a source of input and advice to the USOPC board of directors



**Mission:** To serve as the representative voice of all Team USA Athletes.

**Vision:** To protect, empower and advocate for, and on behalf of, Team USA athletes and serve as a catalyst for positive change for the Movement.

**Core Values:** Integrity, Community, Excellence, Teamwork

## **Strategic Priorities:**

- Transform into an Independent Organization
- Organizational Clarity & Leadership
- Athlete Advocacy
- Strengthen Partnerships with Stakeholders
- Share the Team USA AC Story & Enhance the Brand



# ROLE OF TEAM USA AC

- Appoint athletes to USOPC committees, working groups, task forces
- Election IOC/IPC AC U.S. Nominees
- Communicate athlete voice on USOPC policy decisions and governance decisions
- Advocate on Athlete Issues events all of Team USA: Stipends, Health Insurance, Mental Health, OPTC facilities, USOPC services & resources



# ROLE OF AN AAC/AAG

- **Athlete Complaints: funnel versus a filter (not your job to determine truth)**
- **Appoint athletes to NGB committees, working groups, task forces (Athletes MUST select Athletes)**
- **Providing an avenue for athletes' voices to be heard and experiences used for the improvement of sport and promotion of good governance**

- **Assuming an advisory role within each NGB guiding the organization on behalf of the athletes**
- **Advocating for the athletes' voice**
- **Sport Specific Issues:**
  - **Team Selection**
  - **Sport rules and regulation**
  - **Events, disciplines and qualification**
  - **High performance plan NGB Stipends**

***REPRESENT* THE  
ATHLETES'  
VIEWPOINTS IN  
DECISION-  
MAKING**

***SUPPORT*  
ATHLETES TO  
SUCCEED IN  
THEIR SPORTING  
AND NON-  
SPORTING  
CAREER**



# ATHLETE REPRESENTATIVE'S ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES



Be familiar with your NGB's bylaws, the USOPC bylaws, the Team USA AC bylaws the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sport Act, and various other polices affecting athletes' rights

Understand the athlete pool you represent and work to engage the athletes represented

Actively attend meetings and relay information to the identified athlete pool

Proactively reach out to your constituents enabling athletes to freely comment on polices/procedures

Consistently communicate with your NGB CEO/ED and other key stakeholders on matters impacting athletes

Synthesize athletes' feedback on policies and procedures and provide input to the relevant party

Provide an avenue for athletes to voice their concerns

Review, gather and provide athlete input, and sign off on selection procedure



# USOPC Resources

## **SPORT BENEFIT STATEMENTS**

<https://www.usopc.org/sport-benefits-statements>



## **ATHLETE OMBUDSMAN**

<https://www.usopc.org/athlete-ombuds>



## **INTEGRITY PORTAL**

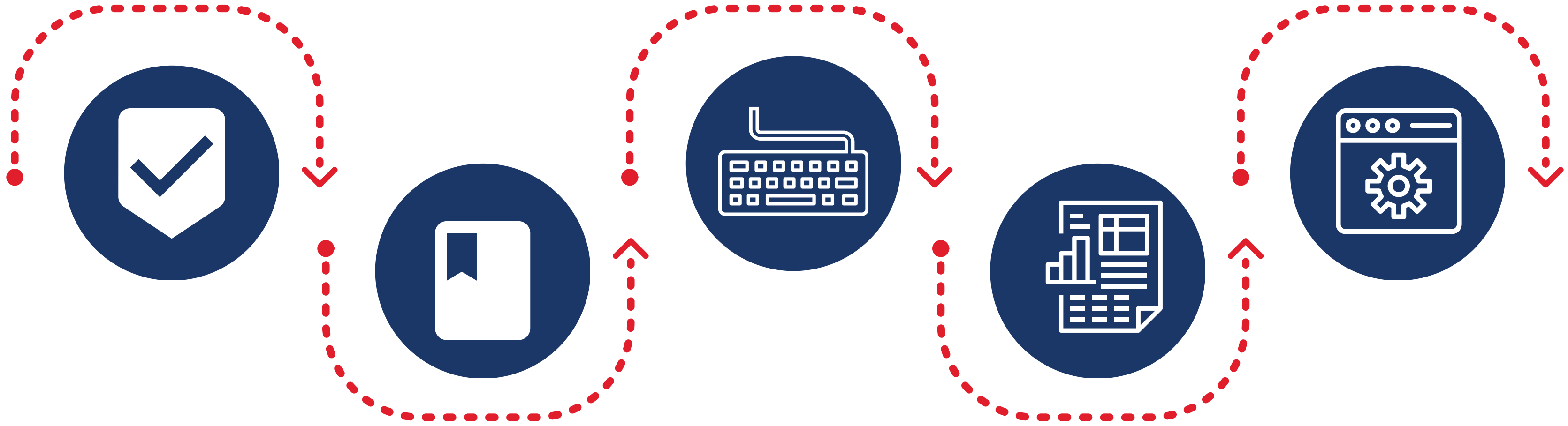
<https://usopc.i-sight.com/portal>

## **AUDIT & COMPLIANCE**

<https://www.usopc.org/ngb-audit>



# TEAM USA AC RESOURCES



**NGB AAC + IMS  
AAG Guide**

**AAC Charter  
Template**

**Meeting Minutes  
Resource**

**Guide to Athlete  
Reports**

**Templates:  
Agenda and Job  
Discription**



# HOW TEAM USA AC CAN HELP

- Delegation Policies & Procedures
- Athlete Rights & Responsibilities
- Athlete Agreements & Endorsements
- Anti-doping
- Conflict Resolution & Grievances
- General Athlete Support

## CONNECT US WITH ATHLETES IF:

- They questions about athlete rights
- They feel like their voice and the athlete voice is not being heard in governance
- They are interested in athlete representation and serving on different working groups, committees or taskforces

**EMAIL US:**

[Teamusa.ac@teamusa-ac.org](mailto:Teamusa.ac@teamusa-ac.org)

