

United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee Procedure



Procedure Name: NGB Initial Certification Procedure

Governing USOPC Policy: NGB Certification Policy

Date of Issuance: 6/30/2026

Owner: Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer

Applies to: USOPC Certification Review Group, NGB Oversight and Compliance Committee, USOPC Board of Directors

Purpose:

To outline the procedures for carrying out the NGB Certification Policy (the Policy) for amateur sport organizations applying for initial NGB certification.

Procedure Statement:

The Certification Review Group (CRG) is tasked with reviewing the amateur sports organizations that apply to become NGBs and making a recommendation on the organizations' NGB certification. Through the CRG's process outlined in this procedure—which includes the application, public hearings, and the certification audit conducted by the Audit team—the CRG does the necessary due diligence to ensure that organizations certified as an NGB comply with the requirements of an NGB, including those included in the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act (the Act), the USOPC Bylaws, and the NGB Compliance Standards, as well as operate effectively as an NGB, both at the time of the initial certification and sustainably moving forward.

NGB certification is open to organizations that meet the requirements to become an NGB, including existing NGBs which are already certified as the NGB for another sport. In the event that a Paralympic sport program managed by an entity that is not the Olympic NGB is going to be merged into the certified Olympic NGB's operations, the USOPC will not conduct an open application process and a transfer agreement will be negotiated instead. Disciplines added to a Delegation Event program that are overseen by an international federation that already has an affiliated certified NGB do not require certification reviews; those disciplines may be automatically assumed or otherwise transferred to that certified NGB if that NGB is Certified in Good Standing.

1. Initiation of Certification Reviews

A. Call for Applicants

When the USOPC identifies a need for a new NGB, such as when a new sport is added to a Delegation Event program, a public "call for applicants" will be issued and posted on usopc.org. The USOPC will open application periods at its own discretion, and it accepts applications for NGB certification only when there is an open application period for a particular sport.

The call for applicants will announce that the USOPC is seeking applicants for an organization to serve as the NGB for a particular sport. Interested applicants will have until close of business 30 days from the date of posting to submit an application.¹

B. The Application Process

¹ If the date 30 days following the public notice calling for applicants is a non-business day, then the application period shall be extended to the next business day following that date.

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Interested applicants will contact the USOPC's Compliance team for additional information about applying for NGB consideration. The public notice will include the contact person(s) for this portion of the process.

Prospective applicants will be asked to submit an initial interest notice to establish that the organization meets the baseline requirements of the Act to become an NGB and collect contact information relevant to the application. The following information will be collected:

- i. Contact information for the person responsible for the application, the organization's CEO/Executive Director, and the organization's legal counsel, as applicable
- ii. The organization's most recent Certificate of Good Standing from its state of incorporation
- iii. The organization's tax-exempt status letter from the IRS

If an interested applicant is confirmed to be a tax-exempt non-profit in good standing, Compliance will grant the organization's designated contact access to the online application portal. The application portal will close to all applicants on the date listed in the public call for applicants.

The application will capture information relevant to the CRG's initial evaluation of an amateur sports organization. The CRG may amend application questions at its discretion to ensure that it is adequately capturing the necessary information for the CRG to evaluate the applicant. For example, the application for an existing NGB that is applying for NGB certification in an additional sport will have fewer questions related to the NGB's general operations since those have already been documented in the NGB's previous audits and certification renewals. Instead, the application will focus on matters specific to the incorporation of the additional sport. Additionally, the CRG may tailor the application to inquire about specific topics relevant to a particular certification review based on the USOPC's organizational goals for an NGB in a sport.

2. Initial CRG Review

Following the close of the application period, Compliance will aggregate the submitted applications and all attached documentation and distribute them to the CRG. Each CRG member will review the completed applications and the CRG will come together and discuss the content of each applicant's application. During this discussion, the CRG will note areas where an applicant appears to be a strong candidate for NGB certification as well as areas where an applicant may struggle to be a successful NGB.

Based on these discussions, the CRG will vote to move forward with or decline an organization's application for NGB certification. The CRG may also choose to decline all applicants during this initial review stage if, in the CRG's judgement, none of the applicants can meet the standards it is seeking of a certified NGB for the sport.

An applicant advanced by the CRG becomes an NGB candidate and moves on to public hearings and a certification audit / review. Applicants declined by the CRG following the initial review will receive a letter outlining the reasons the CRG declined their application. Those reasons may include, but are not limited to:

- i. Lack of sufficient resourcing to successfully operate an NGB, including adequately supporting elite athletes
- ii. Failure by applicant to demonstrate why it should be the NGB (e.g., organization does not have broad athlete/community support, organization does not have experience in relevant sport disciplines);
- iii. Demonstrated history of poor governance practices;
- iv. Severe deficiencies in the organization's policies or execution in high risk areas, such as athlete safety or conflicts of interest; and/or

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- v. Lack of alignment with the USOPC's strategic plans.

The CRG will consider all applications and communicate its decision to applicants within a reasonable time following the end of the application period. The CRG's response time may depend on the number of applicants to be reviewed and the CRG's ongoing review of NGB certification renewals.

3. Public Hearings and the Certification Audit

Following communication of the decisions, the CRG will determine a time and place for a public hearing for the NGB candidate. This first public hearing will be scheduled for at least 30 days following the CRG's communication to the NGB candidate that it advanced in the application process. During the first public hearing, the NGB candidate will have the opportunity to provide an overview of its organization, its future plans, and take questions from attendees, including members of the CRG. No later than 30 days prior to the public hearing, the CRG will send a written notice, including a copy of the NGB candidate's application, to known amateur sports organizations for the sport. The CRG may engage in public domain internet searches to aid in identifying additional amateur sports organizations.

Following the first public hearing, the Audit team will conduct its certification audit for NGB candidates that are not already certified NGBs. The certification audit will take between three and five months for the Audit team to complete and issue its final audit report. For NGB candidates that are already certified in another sport, the CRG will rely on the NGB's most recent compliance audit and perform a more narrowly scoped review of the NGB candidate against the NGB Compliance Standards that are directly related to the incorporation of the additional sport.

Once the audit report is issued or the CRG's review is completed, the CRG will schedule the second public hearing to be held at least 30 days later. During the second public hearing, the NGB candidate will present management action plans for issues identified by the Audit team and take questions from the attendees, again including members of the CRG. No later than 30 days prior to the public hearing, the CRG will again send a written notice, including a copy of the NGB candidate's application, to the previously identified amateur sports organizations for the sport.

Following the second public hearing, the CRG will begin its final review process.

4. Review Criteria and Recommendations

A. CRG Review Criteria and Examples

The CRG review of an NGB candidate will consist of the following review criteria:

- i. The NGB candidate's audit results.
 - a) The CRG will note any developments with the NGB candidate since the conclusion of its certification audit (or most recent compliance audit), and the significance of those developments in evaluating whether the NGB candidate is capable of meeting, and continuing to meet, the obligations of an NGB as contemplated in the Act, the USOPC Bylaws, and NGB Compliance Standards.
- ii. The deeper knowledge that each CRG member brings, in their reasonable judgment, regarding how an NGB candidate is performing in their area against procedures or specific metrics not already covered in the certification audit. Examples of feedback or metrics specific to each department are outlined below.

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- a) Audit – NGB candidate’s cooperation with and responsiveness during its certification audit.
 - b) Compliance – patterns of similar or repeated compliance issues arising; patterns of similar or repeated concerns expressed by NGB candidate’s members and community members; compliance concerns raised during the public hearings for an NGB candidate that were not sufficiently addressed.
 - c) NGB Services and Sport Operations – Evaluation of the NGB candidate’s focus on its mission and support of athletes; view of the organization’s overall governance effectiveness; financial, operational and administrative capabilities necessary to effectively run the organization; patterns of similar or repeated concerns expressed by members and others.
 - d) Athlete Services – NGB candidate’s commitment to medical and athlete wellness issues; views on an NGB candidate’s relationships and interactions with athletes; management and implementation of its athlete support programs; input from the NGB candidate’s AAC and the sport’s Team USA Athletes’ Commission representative, if applicable.
 - e) Sport Performance – NGB candidate’s leadership in its sport at developmental and grassroots levels; effectiveness in high performance strategy and planning; implementation of Paralympic classification policies and procedures; meaningful integration of Paralympic sport considerations.
 - f) Athlete Safety – Views on an NGB candidate from its interactions with the U.S. Center for SafeSport in its onboarding process; sufficiency of athlete safety programs that demonstrate a strong, existing commitment to athlete safety; concerns raised by athletes or others related to athlete safety.
- iii. Other more subjective and qualitative criteria not subject to audit but nonetheless important to an NGB’s performance as part of the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement as may be defined in the reasonable judgment of the CRG. This may, in the CRG’s discretion, include criteria that exceed the NGB Compliance Standards’ requirements for NGBs if the CRG determines that there are additional areas not specifically contemplated by the NGB Compliance Standards that nevertheless would impact the ability of the NGB candidate to successfully transition to a stable, sustainable NGB. This may include, but is not limited to, the ability of the CRG to impose targeted conditions designed to mitigate the risk of repeated issues for a previously decertified organization or to ensure financial sustainability.

Such criteria should be documented and explained as part of the CRG’s review and recommendation process. In each case, the CRG’s review should include whether an NGB candidate is actively promoting a culture of integrity, which includes honesty, safety, openness, respect, transparency, and the avoidance of conflicts of interest or self-dealing.

B. Exceptions

The CRG may, in its reasonable judgment, allow limited exceptions for NGB candidates from meeting one or more of the NGB Compliance Standards in accordance with Section 8.4.2 of the USOPC Bylaws and the Policy.²

² All exception requests related to athlete representation requirements must be submitted to the Athlete Representation Review Working Group (ARRWG). The CRG will collaborate with the ARRWG to ensure its decisions are reflected in the certification process.

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An NGB candidate may request an exception by submitting such a request, in writing, to the Compliance Operations team during the certification process. NGB candidates may submit a request until the NGB candidate's submission of the management action plan for its certification audit.

The CRG will evaluate the merits of exception requests and approve or reject them, providing feedback in the event of an exception request rejection. All exceptions granted to an NGB will be noted in its final certification report.

C. CRG Certification Recommendations

The CRG will work as a group to develop an overall certification recommendation for the NGB candidate.

The CRG will evaluate NGB candidates based on their public hearings, application, certification audit results, and any other information deemed appropriate by the CRG. The CRG will also consider the USOPC's organizational strategic plans and any implications it may have on a certification decision and any attached conditions.

i. Certified in Good Standing

If the CRG votes in favor of certification of an NGB candidate, and there are no outstanding significant deficiencies left to be resolved for an NGB candidate, the CRG recommendation will be Certified in Good Standing.

ii. Certified with Conditions

If the CRG votes in favor of certification for an NGB candidate, but there are outstanding significant deficiencies left to be resolved, the CRG recommendation will be Certified with Conditions.

NGBs receiving a conditional recommendation will be required to satisfactorily resolve the outstanding issues leading to the conditional recommendation within the time specified in the recommendation report approved by the Board of Directors. The CRG will track remediation efforts and determine, in its reasonable judgment, whether the deficiencies identified have been satisfactorily resolved within the specified period. The CRG department(s) that identified the issues will be primarily responsible for confirming that the identified deficiencies have been effectively remediated. A conditional recommendation may be resolved in two ways:

- a) If the CRG determines that the NGB's remediation is satisfactory, then the CRG will recommend that the NGB's certification status be updated to Certified in Good Standing and submit an addendum report to the NGBOC Committee and Board of Directors.
- b) If the CRG determines that the NGB's remediation is not satisfactory or the NGB does not complete the remediation within the specified period, then the CRG may impose additional accountability measures.

5. CRG Review and Certification Recommendation Reports

A. Preparation of the Certification Recommendation Report

The CRG will engage in these steps during the certification recommendation drafting process.

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i. Initial Vote

- a) The CRG will meet and determine its overall recommendation whether to certify the NGB candidate based on each CRG member's assessment. If the CRG determines that it will recommend that the NGB candidate be certified, it will discuss any potential conditions of the certification.
- b) The CRG will make every effort to complete these steps within 14 days of the second public hearing.

ii. Draft Certification Recommendation Report

- a) Following the determination of the CRG on whether to certify and the overall status of the recommendation, Compliance will develop the CRG's draft certification recommendation report. This draft report will include details about actions that the NGB candidate has taken or has agreed to take in response to previously identified deficiencies affecting its certification status.
- b) The CRG and Compliance team will make every effort to complete these steps within 45 days of the second public hearing.

iii. Final Recommendation Report

- a) Following the drafting period, Compliance will revise the draft report and present a final draft to the CRG. The CRG will review, provide any final comments, and the CRG's recommendation will be finalized. When the CRG's recommendation report is finalized, the report will be shared the USOPC CEO and General Counsel for review and approval. Once the CRG submits its final report to the USOPC CEO and General Counsel, the CRG's recommendation is final.
- b) The CRG will make every effort to complete these steps within 60 days of the second public hearing.

6. Certification Ratification

Following approval by the CEO, the Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer will present the CRG's final certification recommendation report to the NGBOC Committee for review and approval.

Upon approval of the NGBOC Committee, the NGBOC Chair will present the final NGB certification report to the Board of Directors for ratification.

The CRG's recommendation report is always to be considered a recommendation. Both the NGBOC Committee and the Board of Directors retain authority to object to, in whole or in part, the CRG's recommendation for an NGB candidate for any reason. Either body may request alterations to the certification status and/or the recommended conditions prior to certification or remand to the CRG with directions for further assessment before it acts on the recommendation.

7. Publication

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After the Board of Directors' ratification, an NGB candidate officially becomes the certified NGB for their sport.³ The CRG will share the final certification report with the NGB before the report is made public. The USOPC will publish the NGB's certification report online 14 days later, along with the following information:

- Certification term
- Certification status at the time of initial certification decision by the USOPC Board
- Current certification status

An NGB's current status will not cause the certification status at the time of initial certification to be deleted (e.g., an NGB which fulfills its obligations to move from "Certified with Conditions" to "Certified in Good Standing" will not have the initial "Certified with Conditions" status removed from the USOPC webpage). For transparency purposes, that information will remain online, along with the current status, until the time of the NGB's next scheduled certification renewal review.

For NGB candidates that become certified NGBs, the certification audit will be published on the USOPC's website as its most recent audit report, consistent with the practice for all certified NGBs' compliance audits.

³ Certification may not necessarily take effect immediately. The Board's ratification of the recommendation may be noted as becoming effective on a particular date, in which case the certification report will be published on that effective date.

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Revision History

Publication Type	Procedure Approver	Publication Date	Summary of Changes
Initial Publication	Board of Directors	June 22, 2020	N/A – initial publication
Procedure Revision	Board of Directors	March 10, 2021	Revised to include additional details about the exception process, updated section relating to internally managed Paralympic sports, removed references to NGB Audit and Organizational Advancement, and removed language also included in Policy
Procedure Revision	Board of Directors	September 23, 2021	Re-named NGB Certification Procedure to match new content, added NGB certification application process, updated procedures consistent with changes to the NGB Certification Policy
Procedure Revision	Chief Ethics & Compliance Officer	March 14, 2024	Revised for consistency with revised NGB Certification Policy, including the change to the conditional certification time period.
Procedure Revision	Chief Ethics & Compliance Officer	September 25, 2025	Created a standalone NGB Initial Certification Procedure to more finely focus on the CRG's process for new certifications instead of keeping combined with the certification renewal process.
Procedure Revision	Chief Ethics & Compliance Officer	June 30, 2026	Revised procedures for consistency with the updated NGB Certification Policy, including revising the recipients and sequence of sharing the CRG's recommendation and clarifying that conditions that exceed the NGB Compliance Standards are permitted.

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Appendix A: Initial Certification Timeline

