



**U.S. Biathlon Working Group
Discussions and Recommendations
July 2026**

Executive Summary

Background

Following community town halls and extensive stakeholder feedback regarding the proposed strategic alliance between U.S. Biathlon and U.S. Ski & Snowboard, it became clear that while many members recognized the potential opportunities, they also wanted more detail and to have a greater voice in shaping how an alliance could be successful. In response, U.S. Biathlon and U.S. Ski & Snowboard established three joint working groups focused on the issues most important to the community:

- Governance and Biathlon Voice
- Sports Development
- High Performance & Athlete Success

The purpose of these groups was not to determine whether an alliance should proceed. Rather, they were asked to explore what success would require if an alliance were implemented, identify opportunities, surface concerns, and develop recommendations that could inform future planning. Twenty-eight participants representing athletes, coaches, clubs, volunteers, board members and staff from both organizations participated, with additional input provided by community members unable to attend.

Overall Findings

Across all three working groups there was broad agreement that meaningful opportunities exist to strengthen biathlon through closer collaboration with the broader Nordic community. Participants identified numerous practical recommendations that could improve athlete development, coach education, event coordination, and high-performance support while preserving Biathlon's identity and athlete-centric culture.

While many of the individual ideas discussed were not new, participants consistently noted that bringing leaders and stakeholders from both organizations together in a structured, collaborative setting created conversations that had rarely occurred previously. The process itself was widely viewed as valuable, helping build understanding between communities and generating momentum around shared opportunities.

Several participants observed that many of these initiatives could theoretically be pursued without a formal alliance. At the same time, discussions across the working groups repeatedly emphasized that sustained progress requires more than good ideas alone. Participants highlighted the importance of clear organizational commitment, defined responsibilities, measurable objectives, and accountability for implementation if these opportunities are to move beyond discussion and become lasting improvements. This theme emerged repeatedly across multiple groups, regardless of the specific recommendations being discussed.

Summary of Working Group Recommendations

Biathlon Sport Committee & Voice

The Governance working group focused on ensuring Biathlon maintains a strong, independent voice within the alliance while creating greater opportunities for community engagement. Recommendations centered on establishing an active Biathlon Sport Committee supported by focused subcommittees for sport development, coach and officials education and engagement, and events and calendaring, as well as the importance of retaining the International Competition Committee. Participants also recommended intentional collaboration with Cross Country through committee liaisons, transparent volunteer engagement, and clear measures of success centered on participation growth, athlete representation, and maintaining Biathlon's unique identity.

Sports Development

The Sports Development group identified significant opportunities to expand the athlete pipeline by integrating coach education, youth programming, and club development across Biathlon and Cross Country. Recommendations included creating shared coach education, coordinated regional programming, complementary competition calendars, increased youth exposure to biathlon, and stronger pathways allowing athletes to participate in both sports throughout their development. Success was defined not simply by increased participation, but by creating an integrated development system that benefits both sports.

High Performance & Athlete Success

The High-Performance group concluded that an alliance offers opportunities to strengthen athlete support through shared expertise, sports science, coaching resources, ski service collaboration, fundraising, and regional development. Equally important, participants emphasized that certain elements must remain protected, including athlete-centered decision making, the centralized National Team model, dedicated biathlon funding, organizational culture, and sport-specific decision-making authority. The group envisioned success as simultaneously strengthening the development pipeline while improving World Cup performance and positioning the United States to compete consistently for Olympic medals.

Common Themes Across All Three Working Groups

Although each group addressed different topics, several consistent themes emerged:

- Protect Biathlon's identity while leveraging broader organizational resources.
 - Increase collaboration with Cross Country where it creates value, while preserving sport-specific expertise and decision-making.
 - Build stronger athlete and coach development pathways from youth through elite competition.
 - Expand opportunities for volunteers and community members to contribute through meaningful governance and program leadership.
 - Establish clear goals, accountability, and measurable outcomes so recommendations translate into action.
 - Maintain a relentless focus on athlete success while growing participation and strengthening the long-term health of the sport.
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Conclusion

The working groups demonstrated that the biathlon and Nordic communities share far more common aspirations than differences. Participants identified numerous opportunities to strengthen governance, expand participation, enhance athlete development, and improve high-performance outcomes through closer collaboration.

Just as importantly, the process itself reinforced the value of bringing diverse perspectives together in a structured, solution-oriented environment. The recommendations contained in this report provide a strong foundation for future planning. While additional work will be required to evaluate, prioritize, and implement these ideas, the working groups established a thoughtful roadmap for how an alliance could create lasting value for athletes, clubs, coaches, volunteers, and the broader U.S. biathlon community.

Community Engagement Sessions

Background

Following stakeholder town hall meetings and thoughtful feedback from the biathlon community, U.S. Biathlon, in conjunction with U.S. Ski & Snowboard, assembled three working groups for input on the strategic alliance proposal. It was an opportunity to hear the voices of a range of stakeholders within the two communities and to gather input into what a successful alliance would look like and is needed to deliver benefits. The three working groups focused on the areas that have been consistently on top of people's minds.

The three areas

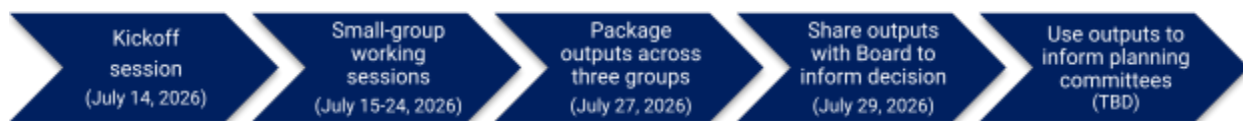
- **Biathlon Sports Committee and Voice**– ensuring Biathlon has a voice and presence within the broader USSS organization.
- **Sports Development** – using this as an opportunity to grow the sport of Biathlon in the US, develop more athletes in the Biathlon pipeline, and positively impact XC participation.
- **High Performance & Athlete Success** – using this opportunity to help our athletes reach Olympic podium and establish sustained competitive excellence.

Participants

Community members were invited to participate based on their knowledge and experience in the sport, and their interest in contributing to the discussion. Senior staff and leadership from both organizations also participated to provide organizational and programmatic knowledge. Finally, the working groups also accepted requests to participate from the general membership.

Twenty-nine people were involved in the groups. Additionally, 6-8 community members who were unable to participate in the groups themselves provided their input via email to the group leaders.

Process overview



Work with the groups began with a 1-hour kick-off meeting on July 14, 2026. The purpose was to create a shared understanding of the big-picture purpose and objectives of the initiative and to prepare for engaging effectively in the small-group working sessions. During the meeting, Jack Gierhart and Sophie Goldschmidt:

- Shared the big picture for why we are here
- Level set on the USBA/USSS alliance opportunity
- Examined the overall process for gathering input
- Confirmed the small-group topics to be addressed

- Provided team leaders an opportunity to orient their working groups

Group members were encouraged to think about both practical and big ideas, to be creative, and to be open-minded. What does success look like?

Team leaders met with their groups to answer questions, schedule meetings, and assign the first individual preparation activity.

The small groups held 3 to 4 virtual meetings over two weeks. The work included individual preparation and follow-up activities to help ensure they made the most of their time together.

The outcomes were then collected to produce this document for sharing with the U.S. Biathlon Board to help inform decisions regarding the alliance.

Executive Summaries

This section provides executive summaries of the topics addressed and recommendations produced for the three working groups. Following this section are the detailed notes produced by each small group. The working topics and complete set of recommendations are included.

Biathlon Sport Committee and Voice Group Outcomes and Recommendations

Executive Summary

The purpose of the Biathlon Sport Committee and Voice Working Group was to explore ways of ensuring Biathlon has a clear voice and presence within USSS, addressing five key questions and flagging broader issues for later; it did not focus on the structure or role of the committee. One noted distinction between the Biathlon Sport Committee and other USSS sport committees is the make of the committee itself. The Biathlon Sport Committee will be composed of 6-8 designees from the USBA board; other sport committees are comprised of volunteers and stakeholders from their respective communities; subcommittees within the Biathlon Sport Committee will be critical and valuable to the committee and USBA board. Discussion took place around five key topics. Recommendations were developed for how to approach each topic.

Topics and Synthesis of Recommendations

1. Subcommittee structure for the Biathlon Sport Committee: Three subcommittees recommended — *Coach & Officials Education* (training, recruitment, officiating), *Events & Calendaring* (strategic scheduling with XC/Canada, domestic circuit), and *Sport Development* (athlete/club growth, pathways, coordination with para/Nordic Combined). Keep the existing International Competition Committee; add expert advisory support only as specific needs arise rather than a standing executive group.

2. Overlap between XC and Biathlon committees: One non-voting liaison each way between the two sport committees for visibility and coordination. Subcommittee-level overlap should evolve organically — light at first, growing over time, with some biathlon and XC subcommittees joining in the future.

3. Selecting subcommittee members: Prioritize (1) active, engaged volunteers with real time to commit, (2) broad representation — geography, roles, and possibly regional selection like XC — and (3) topic expertise, filled via staff recommendations, community nominations, and open applications.

4. Making subcommittee participation appealing: Clear roles, responsibilities, and terms of reference, well-run meetings, and dedicated staff support. Critically, members must see their recommendations actually implemented or engagement will fade.

5. Defining what success looks like: Strong collaboration with XC subcommittees; ~10% annual participation growth (final target TBD) and better XC athlete retention via defined pathways; a stable, integrated domestic event circuit; 2–3 new venues by 2030; biathlon feeling valued while keeping its own identity; athlete/donor engagement; strong volunteer governance participation; and sufficient incentives to expand biathlon in the XC community.

Key Themes from Parking Lot Items

Broader organizational structure details; an "escape path" if integration fails; Ted Stevens Act compliance; USBA CEO tenure; club development funding; Sport Committee autonomy over USSS operations; regional/divisional governance; para-Nordic/Nordic Combined fit; overlap/redundancy assessment between XC and biathlon subcommittees; and a replacement for the AAC to preserve biathlete input.

Key Themes from Learnings and Takeaways

Good ideas have existed but lacked structure to execute — this alliance provides that catalyst. Cross-sport dialogue improved mutual understanding and revealed opportunities for shared calendaring and budgeting. Informal past collaboration failed from lack of commitment, reinforcing the need for a formal approach with clear metrics and accountability. Overall, the process was a valuable opportunity to rethink structures and surfaced real potential for meaningful collaboration.

Sports Development Group

Outcomes and Recommendations

Executive Summary

The purpose of the Sports Development Working Group was to explore how to use the current moment as an opportunity to grow biathlon and positively impact XC participation in the United States by more deliberately integrating it with the existing cross-country (XC) skiing pipeline. Recommendations were developed for how to approach each topic.

Topics and Synthesis of Recommendations

1. Making sports programming more attractive and accessible to athletes (XC and Biathlon)

The group's recommendations center on merging coach development and club infrastructure across the two sports rather than treating them as separate tracks. Key ideas include creating regional "coaches camps" so XC coaches gain hands-on/shadow exposure to biathlon, folding basic biathlon shooting instruction into standard Nordic coach development, and building shared development-pathway philosophies and best practices. The group also called for structuring coach education and athlete pipelines with maximum crossover, offering both in-person and seamless online biathlon education for XC coaches, establishing cohesive regional junior biathlon race circuits (including coordinated camp scheduling), and integrating biathlon as an option into existing high-performance Nordic clubs — starting with laser biathlon at the youth (Bill Koch League) level and biathlon try-its/shootouts at Jr. Nationals (U16 focus).

2. Better developing youth biathlon talent

Recommendations here focus on creating structural touchpoints between the two athlete populations early and often: building partnerships and shared training schedules between XC and biathlon programs so kids can participate in both year-round; increasing interaction between identified youth talent in each sport (citing REG/NEG camps as a model); scheduling Elite Development biathlon camps directly before or after U16/NTG camps; and finding creative ways to incorporate biathlon results into Junior Nationals qualification.

3. Defining what success looks like

The group's markers of success are framed as evidence of genuine integration over time: a shared strategic development plan spanning both biathlon and XC; complementary (non-conflicting) event calendars that allow athletes to compete in both circuits; a meaningful increase in Youth & Junior Nationals participation numbers within four years; visible cross-sport success stories, particularly at the youth and early-senior level; and a measurable increase in the number of XC athletes trying biathlon.

Learnings and takeaways from the working group

While much of what the group discussed were not new ideas, that they were discussing them with the Nordic community was. Bringing the communities together as opposed to the individual conversations of the past was meaningful. Some expressed confident progress could be made without an alliance. It is not accountability that will move this from conversation to action. It is the passion of the people involved in both sports.

High Performance & Athlete Success Group

Output and Recommendations

Executive Summary

The purpose of the High Performance & Athlete Success Working Group was to explore how U.S. Biathlon can use new resources and potential USSS alliance to help athletes reach the Olympic podium and sustain competitive excellence. Discussion was organized around four topics. Recommendations were developed for how to approach each topic.

Topics and Synthesis of Recommendations

1. Capitalizing on access to increased support and resources

The group recommends growing regional clubs, facilities, and coaching capacity while strengthening XC-biathlon collaboration on ski service, equipment R&D, and sports medicine. Recommendations also center around funding dedicated regional recruiting and development coaches, expanding fundraising and fan engagement, and prioritizing domestic coaching diversity.

2. What must be protected

Recommendations center around preserving the centralized biathlon National Team model — stipends, need-based aid, the X Team pathway, world-class ski service, integrated team lodging and nutrition, and year-round training housing. The group also emphasizes protecting athlete-centered decision-making, organizational culture, and key science partnerships (e.g., Montana State University).

3. The main challenges to reaching the podium

The group recommends balancing regional growth with centralized programming rather than favoring one over the other. Recommendations also focus on managing perception gaps between XC and biathlon support models to avoid tension, protecting biathlon-specific revenue (e.g., IBU funding), ensuring staffing keeps pace with growth, and maintaining autonomous, biathlon-specific decision-making authority.

4. Defining what success looks like

The group's recommendations center around tracking conversion rates through the development pipeline; growing World Cup performance without trading off against XC; targeting 2 Olympic medals in 2030 with supporting World Cup/Championship results; strengthening Youth/Junior performance and retention into World Cup careers; and growing athlete and coach membership.

Key Themes from Parking Lot Items

The group flagged alliance uncertainty as a priority for further discussion — unclear governance and decision-making authority, questions about whether partnership alone could achieve strategic alliance-level benefits, concerns over preserving USBA's budget flexibility and a dedicated funding vehicle, and the need for a more intentional cross-country-to-biathlon talent pipeline alongside domestic coach development.

Details Section

This section contains detailed notes produced by each working group. Included is information about participants in the group, a Task Summary that provides key background information used to set the stage, the specific topics they addressed, and the recommendations they produced. If the group raised topics that were outside the group's scope, they were captured and recorded in a parking lot for later consideration. Finally, group members' comments about the process of engaging the community in small-group working sessions are included.

Focus: Biathlon Sport Committee and Voice

The following section provides background on the working group, the basis for discussion, and the tasks the group undertook.

Working sessions

July 13 - 24, 2026

Group members

- Sara Studebaker-Hall, U.S. Biathlon Dir. of Operations (group leader)
- Carl Theriault, Fort Kent Outdoor Center
- Marc Sheppard, U.S. Biathlon Member
- Kelsey Dickinson, U.S. Biathlon Board Athlete Rep.
- Drew Gelinias, VT National Guard
- Jack Gierhart, U.S. Biathlon President & CEO
- Steve Strandberg, USSS Board
- Bryan Fish, USSS Staff
- Brooke McAfee, USSS Staff

Task Summary

The following information provides key background about the topic, the working group deliverables and specific topics to be addressed.

Task statement:

- We need to ensure Biathlon has a voice and presence within the broader USSS organization.

Key background:

- **USBA remains a separate legal entity.** It retains its own corporate existence, financials, and independent audit. U.S. Ski & Snowboard will manage the entity's operations.
 - USBA's financial performance will continue to be reported separately
- **USBA retains its NGB recognition.** USBA continues to be the USOPC-recognized National Governing Body for biathlon under the Ted Stevens Act (the Act) and maintains its membership with the IBU as the National Federation for biathlon in the United States.

- The USBA Board will continue to have control and authority over all governance issues and the alliance will ensure USBA maintains compliance with the Act.
- **U.S. Ski & Snowboard will support day-to-day operations of biathlon.** Under a services agreement, U.S. Ski & Snowboard will be responsible for supporting operations, programs, events, and administration for biathlon. USBA Staff will remain responsible for management of the sport and programs, as well as developing strategic direction in conjunction with the Biathlon Sports Committee, USSS Chief of Sport and staff, and USBA.
 - Biathlon will have the full range and benefit of U.S. Ski & Snowboard's organizational resources and expertise, including but not limited to the CEO, Chief of Sport, Chief Marketing Officer, Chief Revenue and Philanthropy Officer, Chief Administrative and Financial Officer, GC, HR Director, Compliance Manager, SVP of High Performance, Medical, Sport support, technology support.
- **A new Biathlon Sport Committee will be established within U.S. Ski & Snowboard.** The Biathlon Sports Committee, in line with other Sport Committees within USSS, will provide sports expertise and a framework for engaging the biathlon and XC community in leading the development and growth of the sport. The Biathlon Sport Committee will include a number of members of the governing board of directors of USBA and will continue to maintain 33% athlete representation per USOPC bylaws. The chair of the Biathlon Sports Committee and one of the athlete representatives will be members of the U.S. Ski & Snowboard Governance Board, giving biathlon a direct voice within U.S. Ski & Snowboard's governance structure. Biathlon Sport Committee functions will include high-level sport-specific review, development strategies, collaboration with the XC community, planning and budget review, and other sport-related functions.
 - **Subcommittee Discussion:** The roles and focus of potential subcommittees (e.g., the purpose and scope of activities, such as calendaring domestic events).

Working statements:

- What we see ourselves doing is creating a framework for subcommittee participation to deepen engagement in the grassroots of the biathlon community to grow the sport.
 1. What are potential Biathlon Sport Committee subcommittees? Sample ideas:
 - development programs
 - competition development to broaden domestic competition
 - officials
 2. What is the desired level of overlap potential between XC and biathlon committees?
 3. How might we choose who should be involved in the subcommittees?
 - Key elements to ensure biathlon community representation include the formation of the Biathlon Sport Committee and related subcommittees
 4. How might we make it enticing for them to engage?
 5. What does success look like for the Biathlon Sports Committee?

We know the Biathlon Sports Committee/subcommittees are working successfully when.... Sample ideas:

 - Biathlon participation and engagement with the XC community is growing.
 - Biathlon athlete support is sustained or growing.

- The integration delivers operating efficiencies to the benefit of Biathlon athletes.
- The Biathlon community is effectively represented in U.S. Ski & Snowboard's governance and operations.
- The Biathlon Sports Committee is operating with transparency, so the biathlon community feels they have a voice within the larger organization.

Topics and Recommendations

Working statement 1: *What are potential subcommittees for the Biathlon Sport Committee?*

Recommendations:

- **Coach and Officials Education and Engagement**
 - Purpose (role): Develop and oversee education of coaches and officials, recruit coaches from XC.
 - Scope of activities: Education development & refinement, recruitment, oversee Officials working group (officials assignment).
- **Events & Calendaring**
 - Purpose (role): Work to grow the sport through strategic calendaring, while providing more domestic competition opportunities for US Biathletes.
 - Scope of activities: Coordination of calendaring with XC and Canada, build domestic event circuit, assign National-level events.
- **Sport Development**
 - Purpose (role): Long-term strategic planning around athlete, club and general sport development. Focus is on sport growth and retention. Likely has a good number of working groups.
 - Scope of activities: Athlete development, club development, define athlete pathway structure and delivery mechanisms, recruitment, collaboration with XC, para, Nordic Combined development.

Other discussion items

The group also discussed the following topics.

- Existing International Competition Committee: This should remain, at least for this season. The task force is in favor of continuing work on updating make-up of this group and allowing it to continue with its scope of work.
- Executive Committee: The task force discussed the potential value of an executive group or advisory group to provide subject matter expertise to the BSC. The group acknowledged the BSC, comprised of USBA board members, may not have the subject matter expertise and would benefit from an expert voice when making decisions. However, with the subcommittees comprised of knowledgeable sports professional and volunteers, expertise would be available. The group concluded that the BSC and subcommittees could identify the need and develop a solution when necessary.

Working statement 2: *What is the desired level of overlap potential between XC and biathlon committees?*

Recommendations:

- **One Cross Country Sport Committee representative on the Biathlon Sport Committee, one Biathlon Sport Committee representative on the Cross Country Sport Committee.** Likely this is not a voting member, but someone who can keep tabs on the activities of each committee and facilitate collaboration.
- **Subcommittee overlap should be left to each subcommittee to decide.** It is likely that at the beginning, there will be less overlap as the biathlon subcommittees get up and running and figure out the scope of work. However, we anticipate possibly a great deal of overlap and collaboration on some subcommittees, with the possibility of merging certain subcommittees in the future.

Working statement 3: *How might we choose who should be involved in the subcommittees? (Key elements to ensure biathlon community representation)*

Recommendations:

- **We want people who are active and engaged leaders and volunteers.**
 - Ensuring people are ready and willing to devote the needed time to subcommittees is key to their success. People who are already actively engaged in our biathlon community are great candidates to start with.
- **We want people who are a broad representation of the sport.**
 - This includes ensuring a broad geographical representation, as well as representation across sport areas (coaches, club leaders, officials, volunteers, athletes/former athletes, etc). It was also noted that representatives from biathlon venues would be an important voice.
 - Possibly following cross country's lead in allowing regions to select representatives to specific committees can help engagement and ensure each region is equally and fairly represented.
- **We want people who have topic-specific experience and/or expertise.**
 - The task force feels this is especially important given that our Biathlon Sport Committee will not be made up only of biathlon experts. The task force recommends that the Sport Committee make use of an executive group as well as lean on staff to help recommend people with expertise to fill subcommittee positions.

As for selection, the working group acknowledged that staff would be in a strong position to make recommendations for subcommittee participants, and that recommendations from the community, as well as direct applications to join a subcommittee from interested parties, would be appropriate.

Working statement 4: *How might we make it enticing for people to engage in subcommittees?*

Recommendations:

- **Provide clear roles and responsibilities, and terms of reference for the subcommittees.**

- This clarity, along with well-run meetings will help subcommittees be most efficient and not waste the time of the volunteer members. As part of a new structure, the task force also felt that clear direction from the Biathlon Sport Committee with flexibility to adjust as work develops, is important.
- **Provide staff support.**
 - The task force felt this was especially important to allow for maximum effectiveness of these subcommittees. Given that USBA has in the past only used staff for most of this type of work, engaging with the community as part of a subcommittee will only be successful if staff can fully support the work and help provide background information for where the organization is currently and prior ways of doing things.

Other discussion items

The group also discussed the following topic.

- One of the most important items that came up for the task force was ensuring that subcommittees can easily see their output and recommendations being put to action. Unless members can see that subcommittee work is being implemented, they will not be inclined to continue meaningful engagement.

Working statement 5: *How might we know what success looks like?*

Recommendations:

- There is positive and productive interaction and engagement with XC Sports committee; some subcommittees might merge.
- Participation in biathlon grows approx.10% (final metrics developed by sport director and sport development subcommittee) annually and retention of XC athletes increases, driven by defined development pathway structures.
- A stable domestic circuit of biathlon events has been established with integrated biathlon and XC events, including SuperTour, when strategically appropriate. Consideration is given at the divisional, regional and national level, and events are strategically integral to the development pathway structure. Participants find it easier to access a great number of high-quality events.
- 2-3 new biathlon venues have been established in strategic geographic locations by 2030.
- The biathlon community feels like a valued part of the USSS organization and community and has maintained a respected individual identity.
- We have athletes attending USSS Foundation meetings and interacting with the broader donor community
- The biathlon community and volunteers are engagement in governance process
- Incentives to facilitate and enable collaboration in sport development and expand biathlon into the broader XC ecosystem are available and sufficient to provide material support that will drive success.

Parking Lot items

The following topics were added to the parking lot. These are topics that were outside the scope of the group's work but were thought to be important to identify.

- Organizational setup as a whole - more detail needed
- "escape path" if integration is unsuccessful
- Ted Stevens Act compliance
- USBA CEO - should he stay for 1 yr rather than 6 months?
- Club development funding?
- What autonomy does Sport Committee have to direct USSS operations?
- Working groups to support current topics
- Regional/divisional governance should also exist
- How does para Nordic and Nordic Combined fit into sport committee structure
- Sport development: Growth, retention, performance
- Sport opportunities: programming, venues, events
- An assessment should be done to look for overlap in XC and biathlon subcommittees. Where are there redundancies that could possibly lead to collaboration?
- Need to consider a replacement or revision to the AAC to provide for the same type of biathlete input within the larger organization.

Learnings and takeaways from the working group

The following were observations, insights or take-ways identified by the group related to the process of gathering community input.

- Many members acknowledged that what is being discussed has been considered, but there has not been the incentive or support to begin to execute these ideas. This project has provided the realization that these activities can be truly effective, and we need to act on them. This alliance will help facilitate that.
- The different viewpoints and discussions have been very helpful in expanding our understanding of the other sports and can be instrumental in developing better systems for our sports to drive sustainable success. Better communication and connections will help improve our ability to work better across sports. Collaborative calendaring is helpful to all and will provide for more effective budgeting.
- Previous attempts to work together informally have not been overly successful, as there has been a lack of commitment. The Alliance, with a formal, defined approach with metrics and clear responsibilities and accountability, will drive progress and achievements. Will not happen without this.
- This has been a good opportunity to rethink things.
- This has opened our eyes to structural change that can improve things and collaborate. We have learned of the benefits, understood the potential bumps, and see the potential this collaboration can bring.

Focus: Sports Development

The following section provides background on the working group, the basis for discussion, and the tasks the group undertook.

Working sessions

July 13 - 24, 2026

Group members:

- Tim Burke, U.S. Biathlon Dir. of Athlete Development (Team Leader)
- Sydney Michalak, U.S. Biathlon Member
- Leif Nordgren, U.S. Biathlon Board Athlete Rep.
- Will Wicherski, Jackson Hole
- John Madigan, Ethan Allen Biathlon
- Maddie Phaneuf, NYSEF
- Adam St. Pierre, USSS XC
- Brian Fish, USSS Staff
- Anouk Patty, USSS Staff
- John Farra, USSS Staff

Task Summary

The following information provides key background about the topic, the working group deliverables, and specific topics to be addressed.

Task Statement

- We want to grow the sport of Biathlon in the US and develop more athletes in the Biathlon pipeline and positively impact XC participation.

Key background:

- We need to accelerate progress in developing and expanding Biathlon clubs and athletes. USSS has access to a larger community of XC clubs, volunteers, and stakeholders, including potential athletes.
- U.S. Biathlon has been strengthening relationships across the community - focused on grassroots growth and building close relationships and engagement with clubs, including Nordic clubs.
- The challenge now is that we are siloed, with duplicated infrastructures (e.g., systems, schedules, environments, etc.) for Biathlon and XC.
- Listening to clubs, their communication mentions the difficulties of trying to do both (e.g., needing two memberships, calendars don't align, etc.).
- It needs to be simpler to participate in both Biathlon and XC (for athletes, volunteers, clubs, etc.)
- We have the opportunity to integrate and streamline to better utilize limited resources.
- We need to think collectively for the strength and growth of both sports. For example, better synergy across sports will provide more opportunities for athletes who stay involved longer.
- We want to get people in and have them stay

Session outcomes:

There are two desired outcomes:

- a) A list of priority ideas for how to grow the number of athletes competing in Biathlon
- b) A list of priority ideas for how to better develop youth biathlon talent

Working statements:

1. How to make sports programming more attractive and accessible to athletes? (XC and Biathlon) Sample ideas:

- Provide additional international race experience opportunities
- Introduce laser rifles to Nordic Programming
- Create the social interactions that keep kids engaged
- Incorporate Biathlon programming within the Nordic Clubs
- Provide a menu of things to do beyond ski and biathlon
- Identify the different challenges different places have for attracting kids

2. How to better develop youth biathlon talent?

3. How might we know what success looks like? Samples ideas:

- We will have an increased retention of athletes
- We will have an increased pool of athletes
- Coaches seeing the bigger picture and are bought into both sports interacting
- Parents are having a better experience with the interface between the two sports
- The pipeline is producing athletes and bringing talent forward
- More kids are progressing up the pipeline at the desired competitive levels

Topics and Recommendations

Working statement 1: *How to make sports programming more attractive and accessible to athletes? (XC and Biathlon)*

Recommendations:

- **Sport Education integration. For example:**
 - Create regional "coaches camps" for XC coaches to get hands-on / shadow opportunities
 - Incorporate basic biathlon shooting coaching into Nordic coach development. Develop our coaches together
 - Share Development Pathway Philosophies & outline best practices
 - Structure coach education and athlete pipelines with as much crossover as possible
 - Provide in-person coaches educational opportunities for XC coaches to learn about biathlon
 - Develop online coaching education to be seamless and accessible between both sports
- **Create cohesive regional biathlon junior race circuits for consistent competition opportunities.** This should include not only race scheduling but camp scheduling as well.
- **Integrate and support biathlon programming, as an option, into more existing high performance Nordic clubs.**
 - Introduce laser rifles to Nordic Programming

- Package compact, affordable, biathlon target systems (3 to 5) and rifles that will seed Nordic programs with the capability to offer this programming.
- Biathlon Laser rifle loaner program expansion - offer to entice new clubs
- Biathlon Laser rifle try-its & shootout competitions integrated into Jr Nationals (U16 focused)
- Integrate laser biathlon in existing XC clubs starting at the Youth (Bill Koch League) level
- Biathlon Laser rifle try-its & shootout competitions integrated into Jr Nationals (U16 focused)

Working statement 2: *How to better develop youth biathlon talent?*

Recommendations:

- Create partnerships between XC ski programs and Biathlon programs and build collaborative training schedules, allowing kids to partake in both, year-round.
- Enable the identified youth talent in biathlon to interact more frequently with identified youth talent in cross country. Like REG and NEG camps.
- Dovetail Elite Devo biathlon camps after or before U16/NTG Camps.
- Find creative way to incorporate specific biathlon races/results into JN's qualification. Look at from both directions.

Working statement 3: *How might we know what success looks like?*

Recommendations:

- Strategic development with both biathlon and xc in the future.
- Cross country and Biathlon calendars are complementing each other, and we're seeing athlete participation in both circuits.
- We see a meaningful increase in participation numbers at our Youth & Junior Nationals in 4 years.
- We're seeing evidence of some athletes having success in both sports, especially at the youth and early senior level.
- Number of xc athletes trying biathlon/exposure.

Learnings and takeaways from the working group

The following were observations, insights or take-ways identified by the group related to the process of gathering community input.

While much of what we discussed were ideas that are not new, the fact that we were discussing it with the Nordic community was new. Bringing them into the conversation as a group as opposed to the individual conversations of the past was meaningful. I am also confident we can build on that even without a merger. It is not accountability that will move this from conversation to action. It is the passion of the people involved in both sports.

Focus: High Performance & Athlete Success

The following section provides background on the working group, the basis for discussion, and the tasks the group undertook.

Working sessions:

July 13 - 24, 2026

Group members:

- Lowell Bailey, U.S. Biathlon Dir. of High Performance (Group Leader)
- Chloe Levins, National Team & U.S. Biathlon Board Athlete Rep.
- Jake Brown, U.S. Biathlon Board Athlete Rep.
- Campbell Wright, National Team
- Will Koch, Project X Athlete
- Mike Gibson, Women's National Team Head Coach
- Anouk Patty, USSS Staff
- Jason Cork, USSS Staff
- Chris Grover, USSS Staff

Task Summary

The following information provides key background about the topic, the working group deliverables and specific topics to be addressed.

Task statement:

- We need to help our athletes reach the Olympic podium and establish sustained competitive excellence.

Key background:

- Our goal is to have this alliance drive increased performance and success of our athletes.
- We want to move our programs closer to international and, specifically, Olympic medals as a result of the alliance.
- We need to optimize the alliance in ways that we otherwise could not as an independent entity. There are significant financial implications to joining USSS. Biathlon would receive a ~\$600k increase from current FY27 revenue projections. USSS has guaranteed to increase from this year-one level through year 4.
- The integration with USSS will provide Biathlon access to new tools and resources for developing athletes that we want to capitalize on.
- We want to raise athlete success by enhancing what we have while also protecting what we know is important to the athletes.
- We want to ensure that the unique approaches Biathlon and USSS use for athlete development are respected such that athletes continue to benefit from their existing approaches.
 - Biathlon and USSS have different approaches to athlete development - Biathlon features a primarily centralized development model while USSS relies heavily on its independent XC clubs to develop athletes, even through their peak performance phase.
 - Biathlon incorporates a more holistic approach to performance - one which values participation as a foundational driver of future athlete commitment, retention, and future international success. USSS relies on their independent clubs to perform the introductory, or participatory, function of the development pipeline, leaving USSS strategies largely focused on high performance.

- It is important that athletes feel comfortable with the program and know they have what they need to perform at their best.
- We need to know what success looks like to ensure that Biathlon and USSS athletes all benefit from the alliance.

Session outcomes:

- Identify what elements of our current high performance program need to be protected and continue, and what potential new elements made possible by the integration could improve athlete outcomes and competitive depth.

Working statements:

1. How might we capitalize on access to increased support and resources. What will we do with more funds?

Samples ideas:

- Enhanced ski service - waxing and grinding
- Enhance X Team pipeline programming

2. What are the critical success factors?

Samples ideas:

- Current Athlete support objectives remains intact
- The structural components of the HP program remain intact

3. What success of the merger looks like?

We know the approach to HP and Athlete Development is working when:

Samples ideas:

- We are winning Olympic medals, consistently, with a robust development pipeline that constantly feeds the top of the pipeline with future medal winners.

Topics and Recommendations

Working statement 1: *How might we capitalize on access to increased support and resources. What will we do with more funds?*

Recommendations

- **Leverage existing XC development pathways for recruitment.** Integrate biathlon talent identification into XC development opportunities where appropriate.
- **Strengthen collaboration between XC and biathlon ski service.** Expand joint investment in ski service, venue-specific grinds, wax testing, technical R&D, and knowledge sharing, develop shared equipment testing and knowledge systems.
- **Expand regional biathlon club development nationwide.** Increase the number and quality of clubs, facilities (e.g. new ranges), and year-round training opportunities across the country.
- **Increase financial support through shared organizational resources.** Utilize broader sponsorship, fundraising, and donor engagement.
- **Expand marketing, communications, and fan engagement.** Grow awareness of biathlon through coordinated media and storytelling.

- **Fund regional recruiting and development coach positions.** Establish dedicated regional staff to recruit athletes, support clubs, and strengthen local biathlon communities.
- **Expand collaboration in sports medicine and athlete health.** Coordinate medical resources, nutrition, sport psychology, and wellness programs, PT, medical care.
- **Increase the scale of National Team engagement with regional programs.** Utilize National Team coaches and staff to mentor regional coaches and strengthen athlete pathways.
- **Prioritize coaching diversity and domestic coach development.** Build a diverse coaching workforce while investing in American coaches.

Working statement 2: *What elements of our current high performance program must be protected and continue regardless of future organizational changes?*

Recommendations

- **Centralized National Team support model.** Enables athlete retention while club infrastructure continues to mature.
- **Athlete stipends, Direct Athlete Support, and Need-Based Aid.** Critical for retaining elite athletes in a centralized development model.
- **Athlete-centric decision making.** Keeps athlete development and performance at the center of organizational priorities.
- **X Team athlete development model.** Provides a structured pathway for recruiting and transitioning elite endurance athletes (cross country) into biathlon.
- **World-class ski service program.** One of the highest-return investments for international performance. It is imperative that our athletes have world-class skis in order to compete against the rest of the international field.
- **Team chef and integrated lodging model.** Improves nutrition, recovery, illness prevention, and team cohesion.
- **Strong organizational culture and trust.** Essential for retaining athletes, coaches, and staff.
- **Year-round National Team housing and training group.** Beds, training sites, and coaching available to a critical mass of athletes to maintain a robust centralized training group
- **World leading sports science and performance analytics through maintaining key strategic partnerships (e.g. Montana State University sport physiology partnership).** Provides world-class testing and individualized performance optimization and drives evidence-based athlete development and coaching decisions.

Additional Working Statement: *What are the main challenges we foresee that would hinder us from accomplishing the main goal - reaching the Olympic podium and maintaining sustained competitive excellence thereafter?* The group added this topic for discussion.

Recommendations:

- **Balance regional growth with centralized programming. Centralization is the right model for a program as small as USBA, but increasing numbers require**

- decentralization or hybrid modeling.** Avoid overemphasizing centralized programs at the expense of local athlete and club development.
- **Manage the perceptions between the XC and biathlon communities on these differences in athlete support models.** Differences in stipends, housing, and athlete funding philosophies will be inequities across sports. The reasoning behind this must be explained well, or there is high risk of tension between sports. This comparison could also trigger better support for other sports.
 - **Preserve athlete support needed for athlete retention to peak performance age.** Athlete stipends, travel support, and financial assistance (NBA support) remain critical until club-based funding can sustain elite athlete development.
 - **Preserve unique biathlon revenue sources.** Biathlon currently receives substantial annual support through the IBU that has no direct counterpart in the cross-country funding model.
 - **Provide sufficient staffing and facilities.** Expansion may require additional personnel, workspace, and training infrastructure.
 - **Build club support for integrated athlete development.** Many XC clubs may resist biathlon integration or athlete crossover, limiting talent transfer opportunities. Example: Biathlon coaches assisting with SuperTour racing, having biathletes racing SuperTour, showing that biathlon-style training and club-level integration can enhance domestic Nordic competition levels and Nordic skier development.
 - **Create INTENTIONAL time and structure for meaningful collaboration of staff/programs.** Coaches and staff need dedicated opportunities to collaborate without compromising existing responsibilities.
 - **Maintain autonomous and agile decision-making authority over high-performance strategy.** Larger organizational structures can slow operational decisions and reduce the ability to respond quickly and accurately to athlete and competition needs. It is imperative to clearly define biathlon accountability and decision-making responsibilities to ensure the high-performance program remains focused on long-term competitive success. Biathlon-specific decision-making authority rests with a person or group of people who are waking up each day singularly focused on how to improve biathlon development and performance.

Working statement 3: *How might we know what success looks like?*

Recommendations

- **We have a robust development pipeline that constantly feeds the top of the pipeline with future medal winners.** KPI's would center around the "conversion rate" of athletes progressing from one level to the next. We should see this rate increase over time if the programs are succeeding.
- **Biathlon improves performance on World Cup while XC also maintains/improves their World Cup performance standards.** Holistic measure of level of team performance; we're not "robbing Peter to pay Paul." KPI categories would include individual WC podiums/top-10s; and Nation's Cup Rank.

- **2 OWG medals in 2030; and corresponding World Cup and World Championship medals.** Correlative progression of performance increase YOY leading to high statistical probability of medals in 2030.
- **Biathlon seeing improvements in Youth and Junior World Championships as more young athletes are exposed to world-class biathlon programming earlier in their careers.** KPI categories would be the same as item #2, but applied to the junior level.
- **Biathlon successfully transitioning athletes from success at Youth and Junior championships to success on the World Cup.** Athletes stay in the sport through their college years. Biathlon athletes are able to continue to progress and not defer to XC NCAA programs as their only support system.
- **USBA athlete membership numbers grow.** See increases in # of youth and junior competitors (per region and nationally) as well as overall membership growth.
- **Track coach membership growth: # of competent, well-educated coaches.**

Parking Lot items

The following topics were added to the parking lot. These are topics that were outside the scope of the group's work but were thought to be important to identify.

- **Communication & Coordination:** Define a clear communication structure between USBA and USSS coaches and leadership. Who is responsible for cross-sport coordination and decision-making?
- **Existing Collaboration:** Identify and highlight the collaborative initiatives that already exist between USBA and USSS. Which proposed benefits truly require an alliance, and which can already be achieved through partnership?
- **Mutual Growth Opportunity:** If USBA and USSS collaborate effectively while both organizations continue to grow independently, can we achieve the same or greater benefits while strengthening both sports in the U.S.?
- **Leadership & Decision Pathways:** What is the operational structure between the organizations? Does everything flow through the USSS HPD (Anouk) or is there a designated sport director-level liaison responsible for bridging the two programs?
- **Budget Flexibility:** How will a merged organization preserve the budgetary flexibility and adaptability that USBA currently relies on to respond quickly to opportunities and challenges?
- **Funding Model:** If an alliance occurs, can an equivalent to the National Nordic Foundation (NNF) be established for biathlon to ensure dedicated fundraising and investment in the sport?
- **Talent Transfer & Athlete Awareness:** Develop a systematic process to expose cross-country athletes to USBA and X Team opportunities, making talent transfer a more intentional pathway.
- **Coaching Philosophy & Workforce:** Be mindful of over-reliance on European coaches and strive for greater coaching diversity. While European coaches often bring valuable expertise in maximizing elite performance and Olympic results, long-term success also requires investment in developing the domestic coaching pipeline and expanding participation. A balanced coaching strategy should support both podium performance and sustainable growth of the sport in the United States.

Appendix

The following are the ideas and thoughts that were generated during the small-group working sessions but not selected for inclusion within the recommendations. They are captured here as potential input for planning should the opportunity arise.

Biathlon Committee & Voice Group

Working statement 1: *What are potential subcommittees for the Biathlon Sport Committee?*

Ideas on the menu but not selected:

- Clubs / Club development (3)
- XC Collaboration/Integration (2)
- Athletes Advisory Council
- Membership - growth & retention
- Finance/Foundation
- Competition Venue Development

Working statement 2: *What is the desired level of overlap potential between XC and biathlon committees?*

Ideas on the menu but not selected:

- Subcommittee Collaboration
- Generous overlap
- Sharing of minutes/info between committees and subcommittees
- Certain subcommittees might be in synch/collaborative

Working statement 3: *How might we choose who should be involved in the subcommittees? (Key elements to ensure biathlon community representation)*

Ideas on the menu but not selected:

- Are current working group participants
- (Application and vetting process)
- Are engaged parents
- Are strong leaders
- Include staff involvement from XC and Biathlon to select active members with expertise
- Have overall biathlon expertise
- Are excited to serve and be engaged

Working statement 4: *How might we make it enticing for people to engage in subcommittees?*

Ideas on the menu but not selected:

- Provide systems and tools for efficiency
- Be mindful of time - clear schedule and time commitment

- Ensure committees have a voice and impact, pathway for implementation
- Ensure strong subcommittee leadership
- Provide recognition and gratitude. Swag
- Well-run and structured meetings
- Provide Membership discounts

Working statement 5: *How might we know what success looks like?*

Ideas on the menu but not selected:

- Subcommittees are well populated with waiting lists to join
- On ramps and pathways to biathlon are clear and accessible across winter sports ecosystem
- The broader USSS community has embraced and follows the US Biathlon team religiously.
- The broader USSS community has embraced and follows the US Biathlon team religiously.
- We have an athlete Trustee that would attend Foundation meetings. discussed as important to pursue
- The number of clubs offering biathlon is increasing
- Athletes are surveyed annually to identify issues.
- Biathlon operations cost are reduced
- There is an increase in domestic sponsorship for both XC and Biathlon.
- There is a clearly defined plan with each party's commitments specified, and 100% compliance with that plan.
- There is greater financial growth and stability for biathlon, without limits.
- Administrative benefits are realized on all levels for biathlon (National Team, Development, Clubs, Coaches & Officials, Volunteers, general membership, etc.)
- Incentives are provided for XC leadership to work with biathlon
- Biathlon wins WC and Olympic Medals
- The Sport Committee and subcommittees are well run, with strong engagement and clear scheduling.
- The Biathlon calendar and selection criteria are posted no later than 7 months prior to first project.
- There is meaningful biathlon representation within USSS, including metrics.
- There is community support for biathlon and within USSS
- Strong athlete voice

Sports Development Group

Working statement 1: *How to make sports programming more attractive and accessible to athletes? (XC and Biathlon)*

Please note: Some of the information contained in this document was generated during meetings in which judgment was not applied. The recommendations identified do not represent the decisions or strategies of the US Biathlon organization. Additional work is necessary before decisions can be made about how best to move forward.

Ideas on the menu but not selected:

- Integrate USSS and USBA memberships
- Combine USBA member center resources with USSS educational content and keep access free or low cost
- Develop a points system that recognizes both ski and biathlon races and encourages participation in both (mitigate overtraining and stretching too thin)
- Share local community coaching resources between skiing and biathlon groups
- NORDIC Communication integration - include key NC, Biathlon, XC upcoming projects with each sport's respective monthly email updates
- Implement a joint team naming structure(i.e. - each REG has both a XC and biathlon team named in concert)
- Develop opportunities for joint training camps with crossover training (i.e.- AM training together, biathletes split off for PM biathlon session)
- Biathlon athlete imagery & promotion included in membership newsletters
- Biathlon athlete WC & WCH success promoted on social media & on the cover of the comp guide
- Biathlon activity included in all U16 & U18 summer camps
- Biathlon activity/programming required to achieve certain Club certification levels within a few years
- Disseminate information to XC coaches about constructing ranges, hosting races, and other biathlon-specific topics
- Implement a collaborative race calendar on the super tour and junior skiing level whenever venues allow

Working statement 2: How to better develop youth biathlon talent?

Ideas on the menu but not selected:

- Develop opportunities for joint training camps with crossover training (i.e.- AM training together, biathletes split off for PM biathlon session)
- Make biathlon as accessible as xc skiing (in our top priority regions, to start)
- Create an xc/biathlon race schedule that works cohesively so there are fewer weekends or races where you have to choose one over the other
- More opportunities for high-level and beginner camps, maybe coinciding with XC camps
- Provide additional international trip support/camp opportunities to biathletes earning a certain threshold of USSS/FIS points.
- Expose high-level Nordic racers to National Team biathletes through joint camps and guest visits to biathlon camps for Nordic skiers.
- Develop Youth XC skiers that understand that biathlon is an option, the international racing opportunities available to young biathletes, and what it means to be a biathlete at the World Cup level.
- Work together with Cross country development staff to build a sub-World Cup biathlon race circuit support that dovetails with a sub-WC cross country circuit, so that athletes could be supported to compete across both circuits.

- Create partnerships between XC ski programs and Biathlon programs and build collaborative training schedules, allowing kids to partake in both year round

Working statement 3: How might we know what success looks like?

Ideas on the menu but not selected:

- We have an increased retention of athletes
- We have an increased pool of athletes
- Coaches see the bigger picture and are bought into both sports interacting
- Parents are having a better experience with the interface between the two sports
- The pipeline is producing athletes and bringing talent forward
- More kids are progressing up the pipeline at the desired competitive levels
- We're seeing evidence of some athletes having success in both sports, especially at the youth and early senior level.
- Coaching knowledge is going back and forth more freely between sports, and there is regular communication and strategic planning time happening nationally and regionally.
- We double the size of our X-Team in 4 years.
- We see biathlon and xc coaches prioritizing athlete development over sport affiliation.
- Significantly more Nordic clubs have found ways to include some exposure to biathlon in their programming.
- An increase in biathlon range access in Nordic communities through financial support of USSS.
- Encouraged and facilitated access to top-tier Nordic athletes by Nordic coaches and clubs.
- Increased racing fields at trials events
- We have cohesive regional race circuits for junior biathletes

High Performance and Athlete Development Group

Working statement 1: How might we capitalize on access to increased support and resources? What will we do with more funds?

Ideas on the menu but not selected:

- Invest in advanced performance technology and analytics. Improve athlete development through physiology, biomechanics, testing technologies, and analytics.
- Establish shared European training/storage/lodging/home base for athletes, staff, European networking (Jake Brown add)
- Host targeted talent identification biathlon camps. Provide introductory camps that expose high-potential endurance athletes to biathlon.
- Providing a framework for regional coaches to collaborate through events and education
- Increase investment in athlete support services. Expand access to ski service, tuition support, and other performance support.
- Strengthen organizational culture, reputation, and athlete trust. Foster professionalism, transparency, athlete safety, and organizational credibility.
- Integrate existing biathlon coaches education into existing USSS coaches education platform
- Expand national network for regional coach collaboration. Connect regional coaches to share best practices and athlete development strategies.
- Strengthen operational collaboration between programs. Improve planning, logistics, procurement, and administrative coordination.
- Expand altitude training and venue-specific preparation. Utilize shared facilities and altitude venues to improve Olympic and World Cup preparation.
- Leverage shared high-performance expertise. Increase collaboration among coaches and performance specialists.

Working statement 2: *What elements of our current high performance program must be protected and continue regardless of future organizational changes?*

Ideas on the menu but not selected:

- Venue-specific grind program (See MG's point about combining with "World-class ski service program..." point). Competitive advantage through continuous ski preparation R&D.
- Summer ski and wax testing program (See MG's point about combining with "World-class ski service program..." point). Builds the technical database that improves winter performance.
- Athlete health and illness prevention program. Reduces lost training and competition days while improving consistency.
- Culture of innovation. Encourages continual performance improvements through experimentation and learning.

Additional Working statement: *What are the main challenges we foresee that would hinder us from accomplishing the main goal - reaching the Olympic podium and maintaining sustained competitive excellence thereafter?* The group added this topic for discussion.

Ideas on the menu but not selected:

- Inclusion of an exit clause if partnership expectations are not met on either side.

- Address cross-country concerns about talent transfer. Develop approaches that respect XC's investment in athlete development while creating mutually beneficial pathways.
- Ensure long-term funding commitments remain reliable. Multi-year planning requires confidence that promised funding and resources will remain ring-fenced.
- Prevent shared organizational resources from becoming overstretched. Marketing, fundraising, medical, and support departments must have sufficient capacity to effectively serve both programs.
- Protect organizational reputation and athlete confidence. Strong governance, athlete safety, transparency, and trust are essential for long-term success.
- Ensure the funding model supports biathlon's centralized athlete development system. Biathlon currently depends on centralized funding to retain and develop athletes, unlike the decentralized XC club model.
- Align funding priorities with athlete development philosophy. Ensure increased investment supports long-term athlete development rather than only short-term medal potential.
- Remain Centralized (Matt Add). Centralization is the right model for a program as small as USBA, but increasing numbers require decentralization or hybrid modeling.
- Hiring too many European coaches, and too many men (Matt Add). Europeans coaches are tasked with winning Olympic medals rather than building the base. A focus on the top will stall the development of the base and will continue to yield erratic top results.
- Protect existing cross-country development systems. Ensure collaboration strengthens rather than weakens established XC athlete development programs.
- Build trust between technical service programs. Differences in equipment, testing methods, and working philosophies may limit meaningful collaboration.
- Recognize philosophical differences between programs. Different coaching models and organizational priorities may require careful alignment.
- Maintain flexibility in budget allocation. High-performance programs require the ability to rapidly adjust funding priorities throughout the season.

Working statement 3: How might we know what success looks like?

Ideas on the menu but not selected:

- IBU Cup athletes are making their way to the World Cup. *If athletes AREN'T going to the WC and just getting to IBU Cup, that's a sign the development is not working well.
- More domestic coaches throughout our programming. Successful coaches are homegrown, rather than "imported" from more established countries. Parity in staff salaries between biathlon/XC.
- Robust, meaningful collaboration between XC and biathlon on grind development, waxing data sharing

- Regional targets for domestic comps. What does this mean? ANSWER from LB: track # of competitors for domestic comps
- Nation's Cup ranking for both biathlon and cross-country (CAPTURED ABOVE). List measure of level of team performance
- X team athletes are progressing to IBU Cup, then World Cup.