

ATHLETE FUNDING

DIRECT ATHLETE SUPPORT FUNDING CRITERIA FOR JULY 1, 2026, THROUGH MARCH 31, 2027:

Direct Athlete Support (DAS) is financial support for elite athletes in the form of monthly stipends to specifically assist athletes in reaching the podium at the next Olympic Games. The funding requires international success, an approved training plan with set goals, performance reviews, team event(s) or training participation, and a commitment to the training level required to reach the 2030 Winter Olympic Games podium as determined by US Speedskating (USS).

The following criteria was produced through a collaborative process between USS, USS Athlete Representatives, and the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) Sport Performance team. Within DAS three factors determine the type or level of athlete support:

1. Results at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games.
2. Results or rankings from ISU qualification events as described in funding tiers.
3. Potential NTP Invitation/participation.

Identified tiers are predominantly determined by an athlete meeting the primary criteria results at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games; however, an athlete can satisfy certain secondary criteria based on performances from the 2024-2025 World Championships and/or ISU qualification events in the 2025-2026 season. Secondary criteria are in place to protect athletes that were unable to achieve primary criteria. Secondary criteria allow them an alternate method to qualify for DAS. Additionally, in cases of clearly documented injuries, USS may use its discretion to apply injury consideration funding.

GENERAL ELIGIBILITY FOR ATHLETE DAS SUPPORT:

- Athlete must be eligible and intend to compete for Team USA at the 2030 Olympic Games.
- Athlete must qualify for the funding criteria as outlined below in Tiers 1-3, as an Emerging Elite athlete, or through injury consideration.
- Athletes identified as a DAS recipient must submit their annual performance plan to the Program Director and Chief of Sport Performance for approval by June 1, 2026. The plan will receive approval based on the rationale behind how the athlete will achieve their goals for the 2026-2027 season, and how the annual plan contributes to achieving the athlete's goals in 2030. If an athlete earns DAS through a team event, their 2026-2027 training plan must include a commitment to train for that team event. If their plan does not include the team event, then the athlete's DAS amount will be revisited and be based on their best individual distance or Mass Start result(s).
- Athletes identified as Emerging Elite must accept their full-time National Team Program (NTP) invitation or be in an approved training program approved by the Program Director and Chief of Sport Performance.
- DAS recipient athletes must participate in quarterly meetings with the High Performance staff (such as Program Director, NTP Head Coach and Chief of Sport Performance) to review their season goals and progress towards achievement of set goals. These meetings will aid USS in reporting on the progress of the athlete's pathway towards success in 2030.

- Athlete must sign and abide by US Speedskating's Code of Conduct and be a member of US Speedskating in good standing by July 1st of each season.

NOTIFICATION:

At the conclusion of the 2025-2026 season, athletes will be notified of the DAS tier they have qualified for by March 23, 2026. If an athlete feels they have been allocated an incorrect tier for the 2026-2027 season or haven't received a notification of DAS qualification, they will need to express in writing by March 29, 2026, to the USS Chief of Sport Performance and the respective Program Director, their concerns and rationale so that the decision can be reviewed.

DEFINITION OF FUNDING TIERS 1-3, EMERGING ELITE, AND INJURY FUNDING CONSIDERATION:

LONG TRACK

'Event' refers to one of either of the Individual Distances, the Mass Start or the Team Pursuit.

'Individual Distances' refers to one of the 500m, 1000m, 1500m, 3000m (women), 5000m & the 10000m (men). Criteria must be achieved in the same individual distance.

Mass Start – For DAS results, placement will be judged strictly on a finish time ranking in the Final and will not be based on any intermediate points earned or final placement.

Team Pursuit – For the purpose of this criteria, a "Team Member" in reference to an athlete's involvement with the Long Track Team Pursuit, is defined as an athlete who actively competes on the ice, in the event that the result is achieved. A substitute/reserve for the Team Pursuit will not be considered a Team Member as it pertains to this document. Note for World Cup standings an athlete must have been a Team Member in at least two of the World Cup events that earned the overall World Cup Standings.

Long Track Time Chart – Shall be used to determine whether an athlete may meet one of the secondary DAS criteria sub-points based on the proximity of their performances in 2025-2026 relative to the fastest finishing times skated during the 2025-2026 season. The Time Chart included below will be populated after the 2026 ISU World Sprint and 2026 ISU World Allround Championships. Only finishing times at 2025-2026 ISU events or the 2026 Olympic Games will be considered for achieving Time Chart criteria.

ISU Qualification Events – Events that are considered ISU qualification events are the ISU World Cups, ISU Junior World Cups, Junior World Championships, 4 Continents Championships, World Sprint & Allrounds Championships, World Single Distance Championships and the Olympic Winter Games are included.

TIER 1 QUALIFICATION CRITERIA– LONG TRACK

Primary Criteria – Athletes achieve Tier 1 status through one (1) of the following criteria at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games.

- Individual Distance - Podium (Top 3) finish.
- Mass Start – Podium (Top 3) finish on finish time.
- Team Pursuit - Member of a Podium (Top 3) Team.

Should an athlete not achieve Tier 1 through the primary criteria, they can achieve Tier 1 status through any two (2) of the following secondary criteria sub-points in the same event/distance below:

- Individual Distance:
 - Top 5 finish at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games.
 - Podium (Top 3) finish at the 2024-2025 WSD.
 - Two (2) Podium (Top 3) finishes at 2025-2026 World Cup events in the same distance.
 - Achieve a Tier 1 time of the Time Chart in a 2025-2026 individual ISU qualification event in the same distance.
 - A recognized ISU World Record skated in 2025-2026.
- Mass Start:
 - Top 5 finish on finish time at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games.
 - Podium (Top 3) finish at the 2024-2025 WSD.
 - Two (2) Podium (Top 3) finishes at 2025-2026 ISU World Cup events.
- Team Pursuit:
 - Top 4 finish at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games.
 - Top 3 finish at the 2024-2025 WSD.
 - Two (2) Podium (Top 3) finishes at 2025-2026 World Cup events.
 - Member of a 2025-2026 team with a finishing time within Tier 1 of the Time Chart in an ISU qualification event.
 - Member of a recognized World Record time skated in 2025-2026.

TIER 2 QUALIFICATION CRITERIA– LONG TRACK

Primary Criteria - Athletes achieve Tier 2 status through one (1) of the following criteria at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games:

- Individual Distance - Top 8 finish.
- Mass Start - Top 8 finish on finish time.
- Team Pursuit - Member of a Top 4 finishing team.

Should an athlete not achieve Tier 2 through the primary criteria, they can achieve Tier 2 status through any two (2) of the following secondary criteria sub-points in the same event/distance below:

- Individual Distance:
 - Top 10 finish at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games.
 - Top 8 finish at the 2024-2025 WSD.
 - Two (2) Top 8 finishes 2025-2026 World Cup events in the same distance.

- Achieve a Tier 2 time of the Time Chart in a 2025-2026 individual ISU qualification event in the same distance.
- Mass Start:
 - Top 10 finish on finish time at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games.
 - Top 8 finish on finish time at the 2024-2025 WSD.
 - Two (2) Top 8 finishes on finish time at 2025-2026 World Cup events.
- Team Pursuit:
 - Top 5 finish at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games.
 - Top 4 finish at the 2024-2025 WSD.
 - Two (2) Top 4 finishes at 2025-2026 ISU World Cup events.
 - Member of a 2025-2026 team with a finishing time within Tier 2 of the Time Chart in an ISU qualification event.

TIER 3 QUALIFICATION CRITERIA – LONG TRACK

Primary Criteria– Athletes achieve Tier 3 status through one (1) of the following criteria at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games:

- Individual Distance
 - Top 16 in the 500m, 1000m, 1500m, 3000m (women), or 5000m (men).
 - Top 12 in the 5000m (women) or 10000 (men) -Top 12 Qualifier to the WSD does not include reserve skaters).
- Mass Start - Top 10 finish on finish time.
- Team Pursuit - Member of a Top 6 finishing team within 103% of the winning time at the event.

Should an athlete not achieve Tier 3 through the primary criteria, they can achieve Tier 3 status through any two (2) of the following secondary criteria sub-points in the same event/distance below:

- Individual Distance:
 - Achieve the following finishing places in an individual distance at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games.
 - Top 18 in the 500m, 1000m, 1500m, 3000m (women), or 5000m (men).
 - Top 12 in the 5000m (women) or 10000 (men) -Including reserve skaters.
 - Achieve the following finishing places in an individual distance at the 2024-2025 WSD.
 - Top 16 in the 500m, 1000m, 1500m, 3000m (women), or 5000m (men).
 - Top 12 in the 5000m (women) or 10000 (men) -Top 12 Qualifier to the WSD (does not include reserve skaters).
 - Two (2) Top 16 individual distance finishes at 2025-2026 World Cup events in the same distance (500m, 1000, 1500m or 3000m women / 5000m men).
 - For the 5000m (women) or 10000 (men) this would need to be one (1) top 12 finish in the same distance.
 - Achieve a Tier 3 time of the Time Chart in a 2025-2026 individual ISU qualification event in the same distance.
- Mass Start
 - Top 12 finish on finish time at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games.
 - Top 10 finish on finish time at the 2024-2025 WSD.
 - Two (2) Top 10 finishes on finish time at 2025-2026 World Cup events.

- Team Pursuit:
 - Top 7 finish at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games within 103% of the winning time at the event.
 - Top 6 finish at the 2024-2025 WSD within 103% of the winning time at the event.
 - Two (2) top 5 finishes at 2025-2026 World Cup events.
 - Member of a 2025-2026 Team Pursuit Team with a finishing time within Tier 3 of the Time Chart in an ISU qualification event.

LONG TRACK TIME CHART

Long Track Time Chart - Shall be used to determine whether an athlete may meet one of the secondary DAS criteria sub-points based on the proximity of their performances in 2025-2026 relative to the fastest finishing times skated during the 2025-2026 season. The Time Chart included below will be populated after the 2026 ISU World Sprint and 2026 ISU World Allround Championships. Only finishing times at 2025-2026 ISU events or the 2026 Olympic Games will be considered for achieving Time Chart criteria.

Women's Tier												
	<u>500m SLC or Calgary</u>	<u>500m Other Tracks</u>	<u>1000m SLC or Calgary</u>	<u>1000m Other Tracks</u>	<u>1500m SLC or Calgary</u>	<u>1500m Others Tracks</u>	<u>3000m SLC or Calgary</u>	<u>3000m Other Tracks</u>	<u>5000m SLC or Calgary</u>	<u>5000m Other Tracks</u>	<u>TP SLC or Calgary</u>	<u>TP Other Tracks</u>
Tier 1 (Top 3)	36.88	37.22	1:12.77	1:13.43	1:51.68	1:53.43	3:56.45	3:56.93	6:46.34	6:46.34	2:52.52	2:57.29
Tier 2 (Top 8) (TP Top 5)	37.14	37.53	1:13.52	1:14.92	1:52.31	1:54.05	3:58.03	4:00.19	6:51.83	6:51.83	2:54.38	2:58.50
Tier 3 (Top 16) (5k Top 10) (TP Top 6)	37.41	37.82	1:13.98	1:15.47	1:53.34	1:55.17	3:59.88	4:03.91	6:53.46	6:53.46	2:56.38	2:59.90
Men's Tier												
	<u>500m SLC or Calgary</u>	<u>500m Other Tracks</u>	<u>1000m SLC or Calgary</u>	<u>1000m Other Tracks</u>	<u>1500m SLC or Calgary</u>	<u>1500m Other Tracks</u>	<u>5000m SLC or Calgary</u>	<u>5000m Other Tracks</u>	<u>10000m SLC or Calgary</u>	<u>1000m Other Tracks</u>	<u>TP SLC or Calgary</u>	<u>TP Other Tracks</u>
Tier 1 (Top 3)	33.78	34.06	1:06.11	1:07.20	1:41.33	1:42.82	6:01.86	6:03.65	12:33.37	12:33.37	3:36.65	3:40.28
Tier 2 (Top 8) (TP Top 5)	33.94	34.34	1:06.64	1:07.60	1:42.36	1:44.05	6:05.79	6:10.53	12:45.75	12:45.75	2:37.97	3:41.47
Tier 3 (Top 16) (10k Top 10) (TP Top 6)	34.11	34.47	1:07.36	1:08.21	1:43.08	1:45.13	6:08.57	6:14.33	12:48.42	12:48.42	3:38.65	3:42.49

Time Chart Calculation Process-

1. Event Inclusion

All finishing times from 2025–2026 ISU competitions (World Cups, World Championships, and the Olympic Games) will be collected.

 - Results from Salt Lake City (SLC) and Calgary will be treated separately due to the performance advantages associated with altitude.

- All other ISU venues (“Other Tracks”) will be grouped together for independent comparison.
2. Eligible Results
 - Both Group A and Group B results will be included.
 - For Team Pursuit (TP), all completed rounds will be considered.
 3. Fastest Time Selection

Each athlete or team will be represented by their fastest single finishing time of the 2025–2026 season per distance and track category (Altitude or Other). All additional times from the same event and category will be excluded.
 4. Ranking and Tier Assignment

After filtering, all qualifying times will be sorted from fastest to slowest and assigned to tiers as follows:

 - Tier 1: Top 3 times
 - Tier 2: Top 8 times (Top 5 for Team Pursuit)
 - Tier 3: Top 16 times (Top 10 for Women’s 5000m and Men’s 10000m; Top 6 for Team Pursuit)
 5. Separate Charts

Separate Time Charts will be produced for:

 - Salt Lake City / Calgary (Altitude Tracks)
 - All Other Tracks

Purpose

The completed Time Chart will reflect the fastest verified finishing times from the 2025–2026 ISU season, organized by event, gender, and venue category. These benchmarks will serve as the reference for evaluating athlete or team proximity under the Direct Athlete Support (DAS) framework.

SHORT TRACK

'Event' refers to either one of the Individual Distances or a Team Relay (Gender specific or Mixed team).

'Individual Distances' refers to one of the 500m, 1000m & 1500m events.

For a Relay event, a team member is an athlete who helps achieve the result by competing in the semi-final or the final of a relay event that the result was achieved.

Specific to the overall classification in the World Tour Rankings in a Gender Relay Team or Mixed Team Relay, an athlete must have:

- Been a team member in two (2) Gender Relay events on the ISU World Tour.
- Been a team member in two (2) Mixed Team Relay events on the ISU World Tour.

TIER 1 QUALIFICATION CRITERIA– SHORT TRACK

Primary Criteria - Athletes achieve Tier 1 status through one (1) of the following criteria at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games:

- Individual Distance - Podium (Top 3) finish.
- Relay (Gender or Mixed Team) - Member of podium (Top 3) team.

Should an athlete not achieve Tier 1 through the primary criteria, they can achieve Tier 1 status through any two (2) of the following secondary criteria sub-points within Individual Distances or Relay events (both criteria need to be met in either Individual distance or Relay events).

- Individual Distance:
 - Top 5 finish at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games.
 - Podium (Top 3) finish at the 2024-2025 World Championships.
 - Two (2) Podium (Top 3) finishes at 2025-2026 World Tour events.
 - Top 3 in the 2025-2026 World Tour Classification in an individual distance.
 - Top 5 finish in the 2025-2026 ISU Overall World Classification (Crystal Globe).
- Relay:
 - Team Member of a Top 4 finish at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games in a Gender Relay Team or Mixed Team Relay.
 - Team Member of a Top 3 finish at the 2024-2025 World Championships in a Gender Relay Team or Mixed Team Relay.
 - Team Member that is Top 3 in the 2025-2026 World Tour Classification in a Gender Relay Team or Mixed Team Relay.
 - Team Member of a podium (top 3) winning Gender Relay Team at two (2) 2025-2026 World Tour events.
 - Team Member of a podium (top 3) winning Mixed Team Relay at two (2) 2025-2026 World Tour events.

TIER 2 QUALIFICATION CRITERIA– SHORT TRACK

Primary criteria - Athletes achieve Tier 2 status through one (1) of the following criteria at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games:

- Individual Distance – Top 8 finish.
- Relay (Gender or Mixed Team) - Member of Top 4 finishing team.

Should an athlete not achieve Tier 2 through the primary criteria, they can achieve Tier 2 status through any two (2) of the following secondary criteria sub-points within Individual Distances or Relay events (both criteria need to be met in either Individual Distance or Relay events).

- Individual Distance:
 - Top 12 finish at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games.
 - Top 8 finish at the 2024-2025 World Championships.
 - Two (2) Top 8 finishes at 2025-2026 World Tour events.
 - Top 8 in the 2025-2026 World Tour Classification in a distance.
- Relay:
 - Team Member of a Top 5 finish at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games in a Gender Relay Team or Mixed Team Relay.
 - Team Member of a Top 4 finish at the 2024-2025 World Championships in a Gender Relay Team or Mixed Team Relay.
 - Team Member of a Top 4 Gender Relay Team or Mixed Team Relay in the 2025-2026 World Tour Classification.
 - Team Member of a Top 4 Gender Relay Team at two (2) 2025-2026 World Tour events.
 - Team Member of a Top 4 Mixed Team Relay at two (2) 2025-2026 World Tour events.

TIER 3 QUALIFICATION CRITERIA– SHORT TRACK

Primary criteria - Athletes achieve Tier 3 status through one (1) of the following criteria at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games:

- Individual Distance - Top 16 finish.
- Relay (Gender or Mixed Team) - Member of Top 6 finishing team.

Should an athlete not achieve Tier 3 through the primary criteria, they can achieve Tier 3 status through any two (2) of the following secondary criteria sub-points within Individual Distances or Relay events (both criteria need to be met in either Individual Distance or relay events)

- Individual Distance:
 - Top 20 finish at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games.
 - Top 16 finish at the 2024-2025 World Championships.
 - Two (2) Top 12 finishes at 2025-2026 World Tour events.
 - Top 16 in the 2025-2026 World Tour Classification in an individual distance.
- Relay:
 - Team Member of a Top 8 finish at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games in a Gender Relay Team or Mixed Team Relay (must have qualified for the semi-finals).
 - Team Member of a Top 6 finish at the 2024-2025 World Championships in a Gender Relay Team or Mixed Team Relay.
 - Team Member that is Top 6 in the 2025-2026 World Tour Classification in a Gender Relay Team or Mixed Team Relay.
 - Team Member of a Gender or Mixed Team Relay that achieves a time standard of 103% of the 2025-2026 world best time.
 - Team Member of a Top 5 Gender Relay team at two (2) 2025-2026 World Tour events.
 - Team Member of a Top 5 Mixed Team Relay at two (2) 2025-2026 World Tour events.

EMERGING ELITE FUNDING:

There will be funding consideration for emerging athletes that accept their full-time NTP invite and relocate to Salt Lake City, Utah to train with the NTP or train in an approved program as per the Program Director and Chief of Sport Performance. These athletes typically:

- Must be qualified and invited to train with the NTP for the 2026-2027 season and accept their full-time invitation to train in SLC.
- Traditionally be one of the following:
 - ISU Junior aged athletes that had Junior World success and/or are beginning a pathway with an elite performance trajectory. Trajectory will be evaluated by the Short Track Level System or the Long Track USOPC Funnel System.
 - ISU Neo-Senior athletes that are identified as having an elite trajectory through objective data in the Short Track Level System or the Long Track USOPC Funnel System.
 - Transition athletes that have shown through objective data that show positive trajectory with international progression. This is evaluated by the Short Track Level System or the Long Track USOPC Funnel System.

Emerging elite athletes may be added to the Athlete Stipend program during the season as determined by USS HP staff and the USOPC.

INJURY/ILLNESS CONSIDERATION FUNDING:

Injury/Illness Funding is reserved for athletes prevented from qualifying through the Primary Criteria for Tiers 1-3 due to a documented injury/illness or mental health issue. Upon review of performances from the 2024-2025 & 2025-2026 seasons, athletes in position to qualify for Tier 1-3 funding for the 2026-2027 season will be considered for the appropriate funding level (determined by USS) if the injury, illness or mental health issue clearly prevented them from competing and qualifying for DAS via the Primary Criteria. To be eligible for this type of funding, athletes are required to submit an Injury/Illness Consideration Petition Form to USS by ~~March 15~~ **March 29**, 2026. The Injury/Illness Consideration Petition form will be evaluated, and the athlete's funding will be determined as follows:

- USS Approved Physician and/or Licensed Mental Health Provider will review the petition form and verify there was an injury/illness/mental health issue that prevented the athlete from competing.
 - During the review period, USS Approved Physician and/or Licensed Mental Health Provider may consult with other providers including:
 - Psychiatrists
 - Non-treating Licensed Mental Health Provider(s)
 - Athletic Trainers
 - Registered Dietitians
- Following the verification of the health issue outlined in the Injury/Illness Consideration Petition Form, the following will determine the athlete's funding:
 - Review of the athlete's current performance level, along with primary and/or secondary criteria previously achieved.
 - Injury/Illness Consideration Funding amount will be determined by USS Chief of Sport Performance and the Program Director based on previously qualified funding and/or recent performance level.

- A return to competition/training plan developed and agreed upon by the athlete and medical team. Injury/Illness funding cases are not guaranteed for the full season.
- DAS will be dependent on a monthly evaluation of the athlete's execution of the agreed plan.

CONDITIONS OF FUNDING:

To encourage advancement and to receive continued support throughout the quad (focused four-year cycle between Olympic Games), athletes will need to demonstrate progression through the Tier system.

- An athlete may only receive DAS from their highest qualifying tier.
- An athlete may receive Tier 1 or 2 DAS indefinitely upon annual qualification of criteria.
- An athlete may only be carried as an individual or by means of a Team Member in Tier 3 for a maximum of four (4) years. After 4 years they must show a positive trajectory which is evaluated by the Short Track Level System or the Long Track USOPC Funnel System.
- An athlete who achieves Tier 1 or 2 status through a Team Event is awarded Tier 1 or 2 status accordingly. If the following season they do not achieve Tier 1 or 2 in a Team Event, they revert to their highest individual standing. Thus, qualification to Tier 1 or 2 in a Team Event does not impact their qualification as an individual.
- For Emerging Elite funding:
 - Athletes may be eligible up to their last year neo-senior or a maximum of 4 -years, provided they remain showing a positive trajectory.
 - Talent cross-over, or mature athletes that join the sport post-ISU Junior age may be eligible for a maximum of 4-years provided they are showing a positive trajectory.

TABLE OF ATHLETE STIPEND BASE SUPPORT:

Level	Distribution	2025-26 Actual	2026-27 (proposed)
Tier 1	9 months	\$2765/m = \$24,885/a	tbc
Tier 2	9 months	\$1750/m = \$15,750/a	tbc
Tier 3	9 months	\$1090/m = \$9,810/a	tbc
Emerging Elite	9 months	\$500/m = \$4500/a	tbc
Injury Funding	9 months	varies	tbc

While the intent is to maintain the funding levels in the above table, the actual funding amount per level is subject to USOPC/USS annual support funding approval which should be confirmed by June 15th each year.

DISTRIBUTION TO ATHLETE:

DAS is combined into a single monthly payment paid over a nine-month period from July 1st through March 1st of the season upon annual qualification. Payments should be received by the athlete by the 5th of every month.