



Athletes' Council Standards

Athletes' Councils are one of the most effective mechanism by which athletes can influence change and champion athlete rights in high performance sport at the national team level.

By providing information to the board of directors, coaches and the leadership team of an National Sport Organization, Athletes' Councils ensure that the voices of athletes at all levels and disciplines are represented in a collaborative, professional and effective manner.

Benefits of an Athletes' Council

- Gathering feedback from the athletes
- Establishing a recognized and valued voice by coaches and board members
- Developing leadership skills among the athletes
- Presenting a responsible voice at the table
- Ability to represent the diverse interests of multi-disciplined sports
- Avoiding conflict of interest

Key Deliverables of an Athletes' Council

- Provide an athletes' report to the board of directors
- Represent a vote for board member elections on behalf of the athletes
- Being present at the AGM of your NSO
- Build leadership succession and leadership within the athlete community
- Approve Athlete Agreements

Key Considerations on Structure

- Is your sport centralized or regionally structured?
- What groups within your sport should be represented on the council?
- Are they Junior, Senior, discipline specific groups?
- Do you engage active, retired, or both?

Building an Athletes' Council

There are a number of steps to take to ensure that the creation of an Athletes' Council is transparent and representative of your athlete community. AthletesCAN recommends the following procedure when creating an Athletes' Council:

- Notice - should be sent to the athlete community of the intention to form an Athletes' Council, including the steps that will be taking to create the council and an invitation to participate in the process.
- Diversity - a cross section of athletes representing all aspects of the sport should collaborate and create a draft of a mission statement, vision and roles and responsibilities for the Athletes' Council.
- Setting Expectations - expectations of Athletes' Council members must be created and explained in an Athletes' Council Terms of Reference. For example: expectations of attending meetings, communicating to other athletes etc.



- Governance - an election process, term limits and eligibility for the council must be formally drafted.
- Structure - the proposed Athletes' Council structure should be circulated to the broader athlete community and NSO for feedback. A revised Athletes' Council structure can be created based on this feedback.
- Decision Making - the revised Athletes' Council structure, election process and vision should be voted on at an athlete meeting with a majority of athletes from all of the sport's disciplines represented. This can be done via conference call if a physical meeting is logistically prohibitive.

Important Considerations of forming an Athletes' Council

Although the shape and distribution of responsibilities of Athletes' Councils will vary from sport to sport, AthletesCAN strongly recommends that the following areas be formally addressed when establishing an Athletes' Council:

- Inclusivity - ensure that all athletes in your sport are well represented on the Athletes' Council including senior national, junior and development teams, women, men, able bodied and disabled, and the different disciplines your NSO governs.
- Accountability - the Council should be formally recognized by the NSO and included in the bylaws or policy of the organization. Being established in bylaws and policies ensures that the Athletes' Council's voice must be considered in applicable NSO decision-making processes.
- Budget - establish a defined budget to ensure the Athletes' Council is able to follow through on its objectives. This could include communicating to the athlete membership or travelling to NSO meetings. Ideally the budget comes from the NSO.
- Responsible Voice - the goal of an Athletes' Council should be to work with the NSO to find solutions to obstacles facing athletes in their sport. An Athletes' Council should not be adversarial to NSOs, but rather should endeavour to be solution orientated and work together with NSOs to help athletes succeed.
- Fair and Ethical - an Athletes' Council should hold elections and create a Terms of Reference for its members and stakeholders to provide transparency and deliver a democratic representational voice to constituents.
- Representation - members of the Athletes' Council should ensure at least one representative of the Council is available to attend your sport's AGM and all applicable committee and board meetings to help shape and build the NSO. Ultimately this broad based representation will foster an athlete-centered environment that fuels performance both on and off the field of play.

Additional Resources

In an effort to help athletes build effective Athletes' Councils, please find additional resources below to guide you and your fellow athletes through the process.

Links to additional AthletesCAN resources:

- [Athlete Report Overview](#)
- [How to Build an Athlete Report](#)

Sport Example:

AthletesCAN Athletes Council Standards



- [Canadian Divers Terms of Reference](#)

HELP! What if I have questions along the way?

AthletesCAN is here to support you in this process – please contact us should you have any questions along the way!

Email info@athletescan.com | Call 1-888-832-4222