



# **ATHLETE SUPPORT GUIDELINES (2005-2008)**

# General Guidelines

## **Mission – Direct Athlete Support Programs**

*Provide financial support and health insurance to Olympic caliber athletes to enable the U.S. to maximize medals in the Olympic Games.*

*The priorities in direct athlete support are:*

- 1. Olympic Performance*
- 2. Olympic Participation*
- 3. World Championship Performance*
- 4. World Championship Participation*

*The Direct Athlete Support Guiding Principles:*

- Customization*
- Flexibility*
- Continue to provide support for achievement of performance measurements. Financially support athletes that achieve international results.*
- Financially support athletes who achieve high performances at the highest, most competitive international level.*
- Athlete Support programs must have impact.*

*The purpose of direct athlete support:*

- Offset living expenses so athletes can train and compete*
- Meet the demands of trying to make an Olympic team*
- Recognize performance*
- Recognize pursuit of athletic excellence as a “career”*

## **General Eligibility**

Participation in Athlete Support Programs is available only to athletes who are eligible to represent the United States and intend to compete, if selected, in the Olympic or Pan American Games. First priority will be given to athletes who intend to compete in the next, respective Winter or Summer Olympic Games.

Only athletes with U.S. citizenship are eligible for USOC athlete support.

There may be cause for an exception to the Athlete Support Guidelines because of an extenuating circumstance where the deviation from the Athlete Support Guidelines best meets the needs of the athletes and the NGB. These deviations from the Athlete Support Guidelines will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Any deviations from the Athlete Support Guidelines will be included as part of the annual Resource Allocation Report to the USOC Board of Directors and Athletes' Advisory Council.

### **NGB Endorsement**

The USOC relies on the NGB endorser to be familiar with the Athlete Support Guidelines, thoroughly screen applications and ensure that all guidelines and program eligibility requirements are met. The respective Sport Partnership Team will work closely with the NGB to ensure athletes, coaches and administrators are familiar with the Athlete Support Guidelines. The USOC will periodically audit some or all of the grant recipients for satisfaction of these requirements.

### **School or College Eligibility**

Athletes should be advised that if they have or anticipate having school or college athletics eligibility, they should be aware that receipt of USOC grants may jeopardize that eligibility, and they are advised to check with their school or college athletics personnel or the appropriate school or college governing association if they have questions.

### **Grant Year**

The funding cycle for summer sports is January 1-December 31; the funding cycle for winter sports is July 1-June 30.

### **Disbursement of Funds**

Grants awarded to athletes by the USOC shall be paid directly to athletes, with the exception of Tuition Grants that may be paid directly to the athlete's educational institution. NGBs have the option of submitting their own award letter in the envelope accompanying the USOC athlete support check.

### **Terms and Conditions**

The USOC requires an athlete to sign an Athlete Support Designee Form that includes certain terms and conditions (**Attachment A**) in order to receive athlete support that may include performance standards and commitment to training goals and doping free sport participation. If an athlete has questions concerning the Athlete Terms and Conditions that are not answered by the USOC Sport Partnership Team, then it is recommended to contact the USOC Athlete Ombudsman at 1-888-ATHLETE. If an athlete fails to meet any of the terms and conditions of the program, the grant may be terminated and any unexpended funds must be returned to the USOC. Any monies awarded but not

disbursed by the end of the grant year (December 31 for summer sports, June 30 for winter sports) are deemed forfeited.

The Athlete Terms and Conditions will be reviewed periodically (but at a minimum once a quad) by the Athletes Advisory Council, USOC staff and Board of Directors.

### **Anti-Doping**

Refer to USOC Suspension of Benefits Policy (**Attachment B**).

### **Tax Matters**

With the exception of Tuition Grants, all USOC grant funds and the Elite Athlete Health Insurance will be reported to the IRS and generally are subject to federal and state income tax. Since no taxes are withheld by the USOC, athletes may have a tax liability at the time they file their tax returns, and if they anticipate such liability, they should consider setting aside some funds for this purpose. The USOC is not, by this document, providing tax advice and the reader is advised to retain their own tax professional to advise them about the tax treatment of the receipt of USOC funding and benefits.

### **Documentation**

The USOC reserves the right to request additional documentation (e.g., tax returns, proof of citizenship, NOC release, etc) of any grantee.

# Elite Athlete Health Insurance

## Purpose

The USOC Elite Athlete Health Insurance Program (EAHI) provides a level of base support by offering a program of health and major medical insurance for designated elite athletes in order to minimize the out-of-pocket expenses incurred by insured athletes for costs of medical care.

## Allocations

A quota of athlete allocations for each NGB will be established by Sport Partnerships. NGBs are awarded slots based on their Olympic or Pan Am (for Pan Am-only sports) team size. NGBs can request and may be awarded additional allocations from the "extended" pool (pending budget approval).

## Athlete Eligibility and Enrollment

1. The USOC requires each NGB, with input from their athletes, USOC AAC representatives and working with their Sport Partnership Team to establish criteria to be used in selecting elite athletes for participation in the EAHI program.
2. EAHI recipients are required to maintain current membership with their NGB.
3. Athletes will be enrolled during "open enrollment" periods each year, as defined by their respective NGB and Sport Partnership Team.
4. Once the elite athletes are selected, the NGB is required to provide a roster of eligible athletes (with current addresses) to the Sport Partnership Team. Upon notification of eligibility by the NGB, the USOC EAHI Specialist will forward a packet describing benefits of the program and enrollment materials to eligible athletes. Coverage will become effective on the first day of the month after the athlete's completed enrollment form is received by the USOC EAHI Specialist.
5. Athletes who are offered EAHI may decline coverage in EAHI; however, this must be done in writing and copied to the USOC EAHI Specialist.
6. Enrolled athletes may also secure coverage for their eligible dependents. A monthly premium must be paid by athletes to the USOC for their eligible enrolled dependents. **Payment of the premium for the first quarter of dependent coverage must accompany the enrollment form when returned by the athlete.** Thereafter,

athletes will receive an invoice for premium on a quarterly basis. The dependent premium invoices will be sent to the athletes during the second month of the quarter.

Dependent premium will be considered past due at the end of the quarter for which it was billed. When a dependent premium becomes overdue, the USOC will withhold the past due amount from the athlete support grant or other payments which might be made from the USOC to the athlete. If this occurs more than once during an athlete's enrollment, all future dependent premiums will be invoiced and considered payable in advance of the quarter for which coverage will be in effect. If payment is then not made, dependent coverage will be terminated retroactively to the beginning of the period for which the invoice applies.

7. NGBs that designate athletes for termination from this program must notify the athlete of the termination in writing at least 30 days prior to the termination date and provide a copy of the notification letter to the USOC EAH Specialist. Termination will be effective on the last day of the month following the month in which NGB notification of the termination is made (e.g., June 30 for termination letters sent any time in May). An athlete will have an option to elect a conversion policy at his/her own expense within 30 days of the termination date. The conversion policy is not a continuation of the EAH plan but a separate and independent insurance plan.

### **Anti-Doping**

Refer to USOC Suspension of Benefits Policy (**Attachment B**).

### **Tax Matters**

Premiums paid by the USOC on behalf of enrolled athletes are generally considered income and subject to reporting and state and federal taxation. The cash equivalent of this policy will be communicated annually to the recipient by the USOC. Information regarding premiums paid on behalf of individual athletes may be secured from the USOC EAH Specialist. The USOC is not, by this document, providing tax advice and the reader is advised to retain their own tax professional to advise them about the tax treatment of the receipt of USOC funding and benefits.

# Athlete Support Performance Pool

The USOC requires each NGB, with input from their athletes, USOC AAC representatives and working with their Sport Partnerships Team, to establish criteria for their proposed NGB Athlete Support Program (Performance Pool).

The following guiding principles apply to the Athlete Support Performance Pool:

1. Athlete Support programs must have an impact. Most importantly, athlete support is to help athletes win Olympic medals and make Olympic Teams. In addition, athlete support is to help athletes qualify for world championship teams and improve performances at world championships, leading up to the Olympic Games.
2. Athlete Support programs will be tailored to meet the needs of each sport. Flexibility and customization are key.
3. Criteria should be objective in nature, although the USOC recognizes that discretionary evaluation is sometimes necessary and permitted to attain optimal performance. Athletes will be notified of the criteria for athlete support funding as soon as they are approved by the USOC. Methods of distribution include the NGBs website, official NGB magazine or national team publication (if any). Sport Partnerships will verify the appropriate athlete notification. In addition, Sport Partnerships will communicate to athletes through the various means available to the USOC (i.e. website, individual correspondence, publications, etc).
4. The goal of each NGB and the Sport Partnership Team is to establish program criteria that will lead to rewarding only high performances at the most competitive international level. NGBs are encouraged to develop complementary programs that will enable athletes to reach international performance levels appropriate to merit athlete support funding.
5. Athlete support programs may include programs where financial need is a factor, however, performance must always be the most important criterion.

## Anti-Doping

Refer to USOC Suspension of Benefits Policy (**Attachment B**).

## **Tax Matters**

With the exception of Tuition Grants, all USOC grant funds and the Elite Athlete Health Insurance will be reported to the IRS and generally are subject to federal and state income tax. Since no taxes are withheld by the USOC, athletes may have a tax liability at the time they file their tax returns, and if they anticipate such liability, they should consider setting aside some funds for this purpose. The USOC is not, by this document, providing tax advice and the reader is advised to retain their own tax professional to advise them about the tax treatment of the receipt of USOC funding and benefits.

# Tuition Grants

## Purpose

Tuition Grants are intended to encourage athletes to further their formal education in preparation for lifelong career goals and to defray a portion of the athletes' tuition costs.

## Award Amount

The total dollars available for tuition grants is limited and the reward process is highly competitive. Along with an athlete's performance standards, financial need is also considered when determining an award. Traditionally, the highest priority for awards is given to those applicants who have a current top-10 World Championships placement or world ranking. However, compelling cases will be reviewed and given consideration.

Generally (based on budget availability) the following payment schedule will be applied:

<u>International Rank/Placement</u>	<u>Tuition Award Range</u>
1 <sup>st</sup> – 3 <sup>rd</sup>	\$2,001 - \$3,000
4 <sup>th</sup> – 6 <sup>th</sup>	\$1,001 - \$2,000
7 <sup>th</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup>	\$501 - \$1,000
9 <sup>th</sup> – 10 <sup>th</sup>	\$500 or less

Retired Olympic or Pan American team members may apply for one-time only tuition assistance, within five-years of their last Olympic or Pan American Games competition. Retired athletes applying for these funds must be endorsed by their NGB. Grant amounts will consist of up to \$2,000 for undergraduate study and up to \$1,000 for graduate study.

Tuition monies are restricted to tuition and mandatory fees only. Books, parking fees and room-and-board charges are not covered.

Any grant money awarded but not disbursed by the end of the grant year (December 31 for summer sports, June 30 for winter sports) are deemed forfeited.

## Eligibility

The following athletes may apply for a USOC Tuition Grant:

- Elite level athletes identified by the NGB that receive USOC Direct Athlete Support and/or Elite Athlete Health Insurance (EAHI); or
- Retired Olympians (must have competed in an Olympic Games within 5 years of date of Tuition Grant application); or
- Retired Pan American athletes (must have competed in a Pan American Games within 5 years of date of Tuition Grant application); or

- Resident athletes must apply for the “ B.J Stupak Olympic Scholarship” before applying for a Tuition Grant. Current resident athletes include any of the U.S. Olympic Training Centers (Colorado Springs, San Diego, Lake Placid) or any U.S. Olympic Education Center (Northern Michigan University). Athletes can request forms from the Olympic Training Centers.

Applicants must be endorsed by their NGB and must be enrolled in an accredited degree- or certificate-granting program. Qualified applicants must be in good academic standing, as defined by their educational institution.

Athletes may only receive one Tuition award in a grant year.

### **Application**

Athletes who meet the eligibility criteria may obtain applications from their NGB or their USOC Sport Partnerships Team. Applications will be reviewed quarterly. Applications must be received by the USOC Sport Partnership Team on or before the submission deadlines below:

February 1  
May 1  
August 1  
November 1

Applicants will be notified no later than one month after the submission deadline. Incomplete or late applications will be returned to the NGB and the athlete will be notified he/she is ineligible for the current quarterly review.

### **Reconsideration Request**

An athlete may request reconsideration of a grant award decision if new and/or compelling circumstances have arisen since the time of the prior submission. Athletes should contact a member of their Sport Partnerships Team to request reconsideration.

### **Anti-Doping**

Refer to USOC Suspension of Benefits Policy (**Attachment B**).

# Operation Gold

## **Operation Gold**

Operation Gold Awards are designed to reward athletes for top-place finishes in a sport's most competitive senior international competition of the year. The Operation Gold qualifying criteria/competition will be included in the NGB's Performance Partnership Agreement.

The amount of the award varies depending on an athlete's place/finish at the Operation Gold qualifying competition, and whether the athlete competes in a sport/discipline /event on the program of the next Olympic Games or Pan American Games.

In the Olympic year, multiple Operation Gold Awards will be paid to qualifying athletes. In non-Olympic years, Operation Gold Awards are limited to one award per athlete in a program year. In non-Olympic years, athletes who qualify in multiple events will only qualify for the highest award.

## **Qualifying Competitions**

For Olympic sports, the Operation Gold qualifying competition is the Olympic Games in an Olympic year, and the World Championships in non-Olympic years. If there is no World Championship in the non-Olympic years, an alternative single-event competition may be proposed and if approved then included as part of the Performance Partnership Agreement. There is no guarantee NGBs will have an approved Operation Gold qualifying event in non-Olympic/World Championship years.

For Pan American-only sports, the Operation Gold qualifying competition is the Pan American Games in the Pan American year, and the World Championships in non-Pan American years. If there is no World Championship in the non-Pan American year, an alternative single-event competition may be proposed and if approved then included as part of the Performance Partnership Agreement. There is no guarantee Pan American-only NGBs will have an approved Operation Gold qualifying event in non-Pan American Games/World Championship years.

If an Olympic NGB also has Pan American discipline(s) or event(s) (that are not on the Olympic program) contested at its World Championships or other designated Operation Gold event, the athletes competing in the Pan American discipline or events are ineligible for Operation Gold. However, if an athlete is eligible to compete only at the Pan American Games, and is not eligible to qualify for the Olympic Games (e.g., Men's Softball), that athlete is eligible to receive Pan American-only Operation Gold.

If the Operation Gold qualifying competition is something other than the Olympic Games, Pan American Games (for Pan American-only sports/events) or World

Championships, the world's top 10 countries (according to international federation rankings/ratings) must be in the competition pool. If less than the world's top 10 countries are present, eligibility for Operation Gold Awards is conditional. If approved the following payment scheduled will be used:

**Olympic NGBs**

# of Countries	Payment
Top 7 to 9 ranked countries in the world present	Pay at Olympic rate to top 5
Top 4 to 6 ranked countries in the world present	Pay at Olympic rate to top 3

**Pan American-Only NGBs**

# of Countries	Payment
Top 4 to 9 ranked countries in the world present	Pay at Pan Am rate to top 3

The modified Operation Gold payment schedule will be delineated as part of the NGB Performance Partnership Agreement.

If an NGB does not meet the standard to qualify for Operation Gold, the NGB may apply for an Operation Gold-type program from the Performance Pool if it is a priority for the organization.

**Qualification Criteria**

Operation Gold Awards are available to those athletes who compete in sports/disciplines/events on the program of the next Olympic or Pan American Games.

For Olympic sports in the year of the Olympic Games, teams and individuals must finish in one of the top three places to qualify for Operation Gold Awards. For Olympic sports in non-Olympic years, individuals must finish in one of the top eight places and teams must finish in one of the top six places in order to qualify for Operation Gold Awards (with the exception if the top 10 countries are not present and then the modified payment schedule is used). For purposes of this section, a team is defined as three or more athletes (pairs are considered individuals).

For Pan American-only sports/disciplines/events in the year of the Pan American Games, teams and individuals must finish in one of the top three places to qualify for Operation Gold Awards. For Pan American-only sports/disciplines/events in non-Pan American years, teams and individuals must finish in one of the top four places to qualify for Operation Gold Awards. For purposes of this section, a team is defined as three or more athletes (pairs are considered individuals).

In non-Olympic years, sports where the world championship team size is greater than the Olympic team size, the USOC will pay Operation Gold for the world championship team or up to the number of world championship team members qualifying per event.

In sports where there are no definitive fifth through eighth place finishers (e.g. combative sports), Operation Gold will be paid, at the eighth place payment rate, to those athletes who advance to the quarterfinals (with the exception if the top 10 countries are not present and then the modified payment schedule is used).

### **Anti-Doping**

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### **Tax Matters**

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## Operation Gold Payment Schedule

<b>SUMMER Payment Schedule</b>				
<b>Place</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008*</b>
1 <sup>st</sup>	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$6,000	\$25,000
2 <sup>nd</sup>	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$5,000	\$15,000
3 <sup>rd</sup>	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$4,000	\$10,000
4 <sup>th</sup>	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,500	
5 <sup>th</sup>	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$3,000	
6 <sup>th</sup>	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$3,000	
7 <sup>th</sup>	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	
8 <sup>th</sup>	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	

\* = In the Olympic year athletes are eligible for multiple medals won.

<b>WINTER Payment Schedule</b>					
<b>Place</b>	<b>2005/06*</b>	<b>2006/07</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2009/10*</b>
1 <sup>st</sup>	\$25,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$6,000	\$25,000
2 <sup>nd</sup>	\$15,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$5,000	\$15,000
3 <sup>rd</sup>	\$10,000	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$4,000	\$10,000
4 <sup>th</sup>		\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,500	
5 <sup>th</sup>		\$2,500	\$2,500	\$3,000	
6 <sup>th</sup>		\$2,500	\$2,500	\$3,000	
7 <sup>th</sup>		\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	
8 <sup>th</sup>		\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	

\* = In the Olympic year athletes are eligible for multiple medals won.

<b>PAN AMERICAN-ONLY NGB Payment Schedule</b>				
<b>Place</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
1 <sup>st</sup>	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,850	\$2,500
2 <sup>nd</sup>	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,350	\$2,000
3 <sup>rd</sup>	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,800	\$1,500
4 <sup>th</sup>	\$1,000	\$1,000		\$1,000

# **Attachment A**

## **Athlete Terms and Conditions**

# **Attachment B**

## **USOC Suspension of Benefits Policy**