

Guide to developing an effective Athletes' Commission

IOC Athletes' Commission

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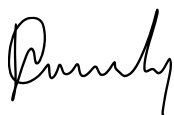
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Welcome

“ The IOC Athletes’ Commission mission is to represent athletes within the Olympic Movement and support them to succeed in their sporting and non-sporting careers. It is our responsibility to empower athlete participation in Olympic Movement decision-making.

In doing this, it is our goal to ensure all athlete representatives are empowered through a network of effective Athletes’ Commissions.

Through constant collaboration and communication between Athletes’ Commissions, we can ensure that athletes remain at the heart of the Olympic Movement and that their important voices are heard. This guide has been designed to support you to become as effective as possible through practical advice and case studies. We also have a dedicated area on the Athlete365 website where you can access a wide range of resources. If you feel something is missing or if you have any questions, please get in contact with us (athlete365@olympic.org). We are here to support you! ”



Kirsty Coventry

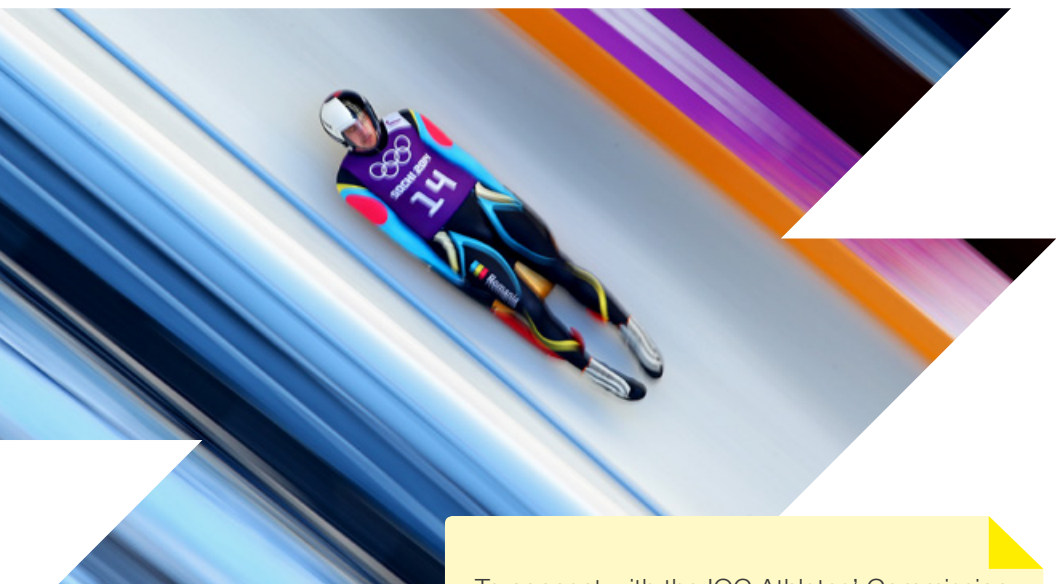
Chair, IOC Athletes’ Commission



IOC Athletes' Commission Strategy

The IOC Athletes' Commission Strategy was launched in September 2017 and it aims to complement Olympic Agenda 2020 recommendations which further support and protect clean sport. The IOC Athletes' Commission serves as a link between the athletes and the IOC, and in order to achieve this, the IOC Athletes' Commission has a leading role with athletes and the Olympic Movement.

The full IOC Athletes' Commission Strategy can be viewed on olympic.org/athlete365.



To connect with the IOC Athletes' Commission and other Athletes' Commissions worldwide

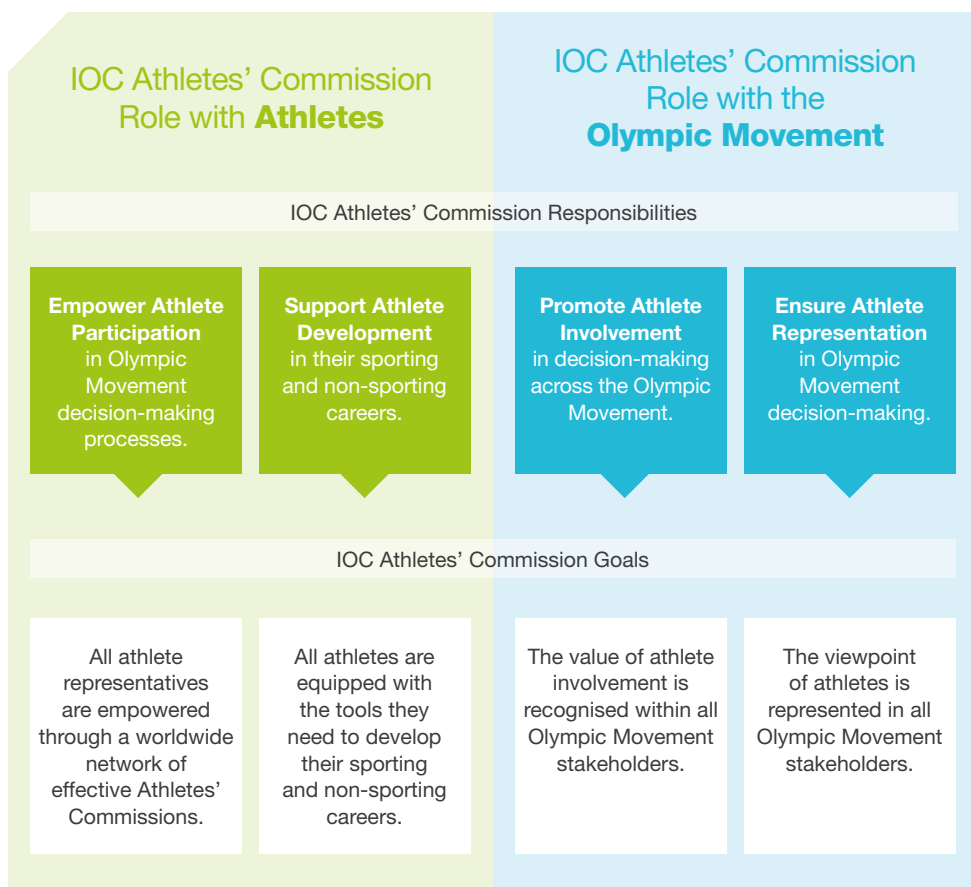
Contact

[**athlete365@olympic.org**](mailto:athlete365@olympic.org)

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The IOC Athletes' Commission mission is to represent athletes within the Olympic Movement and support them to succeed in their sporting and non-sporting careers.



What is an Athletes' Commission?

An Athletes' Commission is a group of athletes, whose mission is to:



Represent
the athletes'
viewpoint in
decision-making.



Support
athletes to succeed
in their sporting and
non-sporting career.



*IOC Athletes' Commission,
February 2018, PyeongChang*



Why have an Athletes' Commission?

The IOC's mission is to place athletes at the heart of the Olympic Movement.

Athlete involvement in decision-making is a core component of good governance within sports organisations.

An Athletes' Commission enables athletes' voices to be heard and experiences used for the improvement of sport.

As the athlete representatives, an Athletes' Commission can inform an organisation's decision-making process, strengthen good governance, and help safeguard the credibility of sport and the Olympic Movement.

“ The Olympic Movement is about the clean athletes. They are our best ambassadors, they are our role models, they are our treasure. ”

Thomas Bach
IOC President

Who has an Athletes' Commission?

Athletes' Commissions are a model of athlete involvement that is replicated across a wide variety of Olympic Movement stakeholders. The remit of an Athletes' Commission varies depending on the athletes they represent and their mandate within their organisation. These Athletes' Commissions form the worldwide network, which includes Athletes' Commissions from:

International Sports Federations (IFs)

Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC)

National Olympic Committees (NOCs)

World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)

Organising Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOGs)

International Paralympic Committee (IPC)

This worldwide network of Athletes' Commissions communicates on a regular basis and the IOC Athletes' Commission brings this network together, and engages with them through events such as the IOC International Athletes' Forum, regular video conferences and online discussion forums. Regular communication ensures the IOC Athletes' Commission is discussing the most relevant athlete issues directly with athletes and it provides an opportunity for all Athletes' Commissions to support and learn from each other.



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Contact

athlete365@olympic.org

or visit olympic.org/athlete365

The benefits of an Athletes' Commission

Having an Athletes' Commission is a clear demonstration of an organisation's commitment to good governance, benefiting both the athletes and the organisation.

An Athletes' Commission can strengthen the decision-making process by:

Ensuring that all decisions across the organisation consider the impact on the athletes

Providing a platform and resource for discussion and research related to new ideas and issues

Providing advice and a perspective straight from the field of play

Consulting with athletes and providing early feedback on potential decisions that will affect them, e.g. rule changes

Strengthening links with athletes through peer-to-peer communication

An Athletes' Commission can also benefit the organisation by:

Updating athletes about the organisation's activities from an informed position

Becoming ambassadors and supporting the organisation in its mission to develop and promote the sport

Being a point of contact for their athlete community to support both the athletes and the organisation's communications



Need help? Contact
athlete365@olympic.org

Where do you start?

The IOC has developed guidelines for IFs and NOCs to follow when establishing an Athletes' Commission. See Appendices 1 and 2.

These guidelines can be adapted by various organisations throughout the Olympic Movement, and an Athletes' Commission can be established by following these steps:

1 Advocacy → 2 Develop → 3 Define →

Build support throughout your organisation for an Athletes' Commission, including from high-level leadership to the athlete community and administration

Role of your Athletes' Commission within the constitution of your organisation

Terms of reference

Communication plan

Election plan

Mission and strategy

Resources required such as administrative support and IT requirements

Budgets for Commission activities



View a full range of resources to support you in your development of an Athletes' Commission on the Athlete365 website.

This includes:

- Meeting templates
- Roles and responsibilities agreement
- Budget templates
- Minutes templates

4 Identify → 5 Gain approval → 6 Finalise members

Potential chairs and members to appoint

A calendar of activities and events for the Athletes' Commission to facilitate and attend

From Executive Board

Through appointment and/or election

Athletes' Commission: Structure for success

In order to be successful, an Athletes' Commission needs to be seen as a credible part of the decision-making process. It must be fully supported by the top leadership of your organisation and supported by the administration.

To ensure a credible, balanced and effective Athletes' Commission, the IOC recommends the following structure:

Balanced composition

- Male and female athletes
- Sports and/or disciplines
- Regions or countries
- Active and recently retired athletes

Size

- Minimum of five members
- Majority of elected members

Term

- Minimum of four-year terms for members
- Staggered elections to ensure continuous transfer of knowledge between members

Vote

- The Athletes' Commission Chair has a vote within the organisation's highest decision-making body, such as the Executive Board or Council



Top Tip

Hold an Athletes' Commission election at an event such as an Athletes' Forum or world championships as a great way to engage athletes

Support

- From the top leadership
- From administration to support with day-to-day activities

Resources

- Sufficient resources, admin support and budget for regular meetings, communication and for members to attend major events
- Dedicated space on organisation's website or intranet to communicate to athletes and provide updates on activities

What could your Athletes' Commission discuss?

- Sport rules and regulations
- Events, disciplines, qualifying and the programme of championships
- Anti-doping
- Gender equality
- Athlete support
- Athlete welfare
- Athletes' Commission elections
- Professional leagues
- Athlete image rights

Communicating for success

To effectively represent the athletes, the members of an Athletes' Commission need to understand the views of all athletes, and not just depend on their own. It needs to be in communication with and available to the athletes it is representing.

To ensure this happens, the Athletes' Commission should:

- Communicate through appropriate media to effectively capture athletes' viewpoints – social media, websites, newsletters, etc.;
- Be accessible and visible at major events and youth events;
- Develop promotional material – either written or video; and
- Establish an effective digital system for collecting athlete feedback (e.g. surveys and forums).

An essential element is for the Commission to inform and educate athletes about why they should share their views and experiences with the Commission or volunteer their time to be on the Commission.





“ Due to the distances between our members, the Commission could only physically meet once a year, so we kept in close contact via email and a closed Facebook group.

We initiated a post-Games questionnaire to all athletes, enabling the Commission to have the direct feedback from the athletes in order to ensure their work is in line with the voices of the athletes themselves across the region. ”

Barbara Kendall

Chair, ANOC Athletes' Commission

Case study



triathlon

**Jess Harrison: Chair,
ITU Athletes' Committee**

QUICK FACTS:

7

Members



4

Men



3

Women



3

Active



4

Retired

Information correct as of June 2016



In memory of Laurent Vidal, a member of the ITU Athletes' Committee who tragically died from a heart attack at the age of 31 in 2015, ITU President Marisol Casado instigated an additional 'Open Seat' for athletes to attend Executive Board meetings.

The 'Open Seat' is a non-voting role and allows any triathlete, who doesn't need to be a member of the Athletes' Committee, to take part in all or part of the EB discussions.

"It shows the ITU's commitment to athletes and open and transparent governance," says current ITU Athlete Committee Chair Jess Harrison.

The 'Open Seat' is also a way of developing athletes who have an interest in the running of their sport and in standing for the Athletes' Committee. "Mentoring athletes in this way is important and mutually beneficial for the AC and IF as the athletes of today will be the administrators of tomorrow."

Case study



**Kady Kanouté: Chair,
Mali NOC Athletes' Commission**

QUICK FACTS:

24

Members



12
Men



12
Women



17
Active



7
Retired

Information correct as of June 2016



“The Commission was only established in 2016, so we have had to start from scratch, setting out our mission to empower, educate and inspire African athletes to become members. Ideally we would have voted members to the Commission, but the whole concept of an Athletes' Commission is new for Mali, so appointing members enabled us to get going quickly, have an equal balance of men and women and ensure that a range of Sports Federations were represented.

As the first Chair of the Commission and as a volunteer, it was a little daunting, but the IOC Athletes' Commission has been very helpful in getting us up and running and being an effective Commission from the beginning.

We have closely followed their guidelines, which are an invaluable resource for planning, running and reporting on our meetings. We have also received a lot of support from other Athletes' Commissions, who have been very willing to share their experience and documentation; and the IOC International Athletes' Forum was also a great opportunity to learn from shared best practice.

Personally, I have also had great support from the President of the Mali NOC, and because of this support we've seen the Commission have an immediate impact on decision-making. We have made good progress in a short amount of time but there is still a lot to do.”

Appendix 1

IOC Guidelines related to the creation of an IF Athletes' Commission

Pursuant to the recommendation of the IOC 2000 Reform Commission that *“athletes should be well represented at all levels of the sports movement: IOC, IFs, NOCs and NFs”*, the IOC encourages IFs and NFs to form their own Athletes' Commissions.

Further to Recommendation 40 of Olympic Agenda 2020, the Guidelines below form the framework for International Federations when forming such commissions.

In line with these Guidelines, each IF can establish the terms of reference and powers of its own Athletes' Commission.



1. Mission

The mission of an IF Athletes' Commission (hereinafter "Commission") is to:

- a.** Represent the views and opinions of the athletes and ensure their voice is heard within the IF;
- b.** Inform athletes about the IF's activities (i.e. educational tools, rules and regulations); and
- c.** Work with and support the IF in its mission to develop and promote the sport.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the Commission are to:

- a.** Consider issues related to athletes and provide advice to the IF;
- b.** Engage actively with initiatives and projects that protect and support clean athletes on and off the field of play;
- c.** Represent the rights and interests of athletes and make related recommendations (for example the appointment of arbitrators by the International Council of Arbitration for Sport (ICAS));
- d.** Consult with athletes in the evaluation of the rules and regulations of their respective sport and subsequently provide feedback to the IF; and
- e.** Maintain contact with the IOC Athletes' Commission.

Appendix 1 Contd

3. Composition of the Commission

- a.** The Commission should have a minimum of five members. They should be at least 18 years of age, and must be older than 16 years of age.
- b.** Commission members must never have received any sanction in relation to the World Anti-Doping Code.
- c.** The Commission should be composed of a majority of athletes who, at the time of their election/nomination, are participating at international level or have done so within the previous four years. The composition should reflect the disciplines of the IF.
- d.** Both sexes should be represented within the Commission.
- e.** The majority of the members of the Commission should be elected by their peers.
- f.** The Commission should elect its Chair from among those members who have been elected to the Commission by their peers and the Chair may serve in this role for up to four years.
- g.** The term of office of Commission members can be for two or four years, or less in the case of filling a casual vacancy. The members may be re-elected/renewed if they meet the conditions in 3b above.
- h.** The timing of the Commission member and Chair elections is suggested to be aligned with the election of the IF Executive Board (or equivalent highest decision-making body based on the IF's structure).



4. Representation of the Commission within the IF

The Commission should be represented within the IF's Executive Body (or equivalent highest decision-making body based on the IF's structure) by its Chair or at least one other member who is also an athlete who meets the conditions in 3b. They must be elected by the Commission and should have the right to vote within the Executive Body.

5. Meetings of the Commission

- a.** The Commission should meet at least once a year.
- b.** The IF administration should be responsible for ensuring, within the means of the IF, that the Commission is able to meet.

6. Transitional Provisions

In order for NOCs to put forward a candidate for election to the IOC Athletes' Commission, the IF of the proposed candidate should have an Athletes' Commission that meets the minimum conditions set out in these Guidelines.

In the event that an IF does not have a Commission that meets these Guidelines, this criterion may be waived, provided that the IF sends written confirmation to the IOC that it:

- a.** Agrees to create a Commission by 30 June 2017, which satisfies the requirements of these Guidelines; and
- b.** Commits to working with the IOC on an implementation plan for creating a Commission.

Appendix 2

IOC Guidelines related to the creation of an NOC Athletes' Commission

Pursuant to the recommendation of the IOC 2000 Reform Commission that *“athletes should be well represented at all levels of the sports movement: IOC, IFs, NOCs and NFs”*, the IOC encourages NOCs to form their own Athletes' Commissions.

Further to the Recommendation 40 of Olympic Agenda 2020, the Guidelines below must be followed by the NOCs when forming their commissions.

In line with these Guidelines, each NOC can establish the terms of reference and powers of its own Athletes' Commission.



1. Mission

The mission of an NOC Athletes' Commission (hereinafter "Commission") is to represent the views of the athletes and make their voice heard within the NOC.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the Commission are to:

- a.** Consider issues related to athletes and to provide advice to the NOC;
- b.** Engage actively with initiatives and projects that protect and support clean athletes on and off the field of play;
- c.** Represent the rights and interests of athletes and make related recommendations, including the appointment of arbitrators to the International Council of Arbitration for Sport (ICAS); and
- d.** Maintain contact with the IOC Athletes' Commission.

Appendix 2 Contd

3. Composition of the Commission

- a.** The Commission has a minimum of five members who are nationals of the country of the NOC in question. They must be at least 16 years of age, and have never received any sanction in relation to the World Anti-Doping Code.
- b.** The Commission is composed of a majority of athletes who, at the time of their election/nomination, are participating at a national level (at least) in a sport on the Olympic programme, or have done so within the previous four years.
- c.** Both sexes must be represented within the Commission, and, when applicable, there should be a reasonable balance between summer and winter sports practised in the country.
- d.** The majority of the members of the Commission are elected by their peers.
- e.** The Chair of the Commission must be a member who has been elected to the Commission by his or her peers.
- f.** The length of the term of office is four years. It may be renewable.
- g.** The following are ex-officio members of the Commission in their respective countries and have the right to vote at the meetings of the Commission:
 - The members of the IOC Athletes' Commission; and
 - The members of the Athletes' Commissions of the NOC Continental Associations.



4. Representation of the Commission within the NOC

The Commission is represented at the NOC General Assembly by at least two of its members, elected by the Commission, who will have the right to vote within this Assembly. The Commission is represented within the NOC's Executive Body by at least one member, elected by the Commission and approved by the NOC General Assembly, who will have the right to vote within this Executive Body. This person must be a member of the Commission who has been elected to the Commission by his or her peers.

5. Meetings of the Commission

- a.** The Commission meets at least once a year.
- b.** The NOC is responsible for ensuring, within its means, that the Commission is able to meet.

Find out more

For more information on the IOC Athletes' Commission or any of the case studies featured in this Guide, please contact

athlete365@olympic.org

If you would like to share the experience of your Athletes' Commission, please send your story to:

athlete365@olympic.org

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