

2024

PARIS GAMES REPORT

Team USA Athletes' Commission



Paris Games Report



Summary: This report captures Team USA Athletes’ Commission (Team USA AC) experience at the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Trials, 2024 United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) Media Summit, Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and the subsequent Team USA D.C. Celebration.

This comprehensive account highlights areas of success and collaboration as well as key areas of interest and identifies opportunities for improvement in staffing, collaboration, and overall athlete experience at future events.

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PRE-GAMES

This was the first games experience for Team USA AC with dedicated staff in a non-COVID environment. Thus, it marked the first time staff could attend Trials and selection camps providing on-the-ground support to athletes in advance of the Games.

This experience was invaluable for our team, allowing us to better understand athletes' needs at these events and identify optimal methods for delivering support and education. It also offered an opportunity to establish connections with athletes and other stakeholders prior to Paris, ensuring they were aware of Team USA AC's role in supporting athletes

TRIALS & CAMPS

Olympics	Paralympics
• Archery Trials • Gymnastics Trials • Track and Field Trials • Men's and Women's Basketball Pre-Games meetings in London • Volleyball Selection Camp • Fencing Foil Team Camp • Rowing Trials • Shooting Team Trials • Weightlifting Training Camp • Wrestling Trials • Gymnastics National Championships	• Para Archery Trials • Para Track and Field Trials • Para Swimming Trials and Training Camp • Para Rowing Trials • Sitting Volleyball Team Camp • Wheelchair Basketball Selection Camp • Para Shooting Team Trials

ACCESS TO ATHLETES

When collaborating with National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and Internally Managed Sports (IMs) on providing Team USA AC access to engage directly with athletes, we were met with varied outcomes. Certain NGBs were exceptionally accommodating, allowing us opportunities to explain the role of Team USA AC, outline our services, and discuss how we support athletes. For example, USA Track & Field provided Team USA AC with a table at their Team Processing, while USA Archery, Gymnastics, and others allocated time for brief 20-minute sessions with athletes.

We coordinated closely with individual sports to tailor our approach according to event types, competition schedules, and logistical considerations. For instance, during Para Swimming Trials, our staff was present on the swim deck to assist athletes with any issues that arose; however, since a camp was scheduled immediately after the Trials at the Colorado Springs Olympic and Paralympic Training Center (CSOPTC), Team USA AC held its athlete session during the camp.

Unfortunately, some NGBs were less accommodating. In some cases, only a brief five-minute window was provided immediately after competitions, allowing for minimal interaction with athletes on the competition floor. This was neither ideal nor an appropriate time or place to engage with athletes, but it was the only opportunity provided by the NGB. Other NGBs restricted athlete access entirely, citing the need for athletes to focus on medal performance and suggesting that engagement with their athletes would be a distraction.



For instance, prior to and during the USA Swimming Trials, Team USA AC undertook extensive advocacy efforts in response to the Chinese swimming scandal, including public statements, urging for reform at WADA and collaboration with key stakeholders at the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA). Despite the significance of these efforts, the NGB declined to provide Team USA AC with access to athletes. In conversations with NGB staff, athletes were referred to by staff as “my athletes” and that “I’m very protective of them.” Team USA AC was told we could meet with athletes seven months later in January 2025.

ACCESS TO ATHLETES CONTINUED

Team USA AC rarely has the opportunity to meet directly with athletes in person. As the representative voice for Team USA athletes, it is essential for the USOPC and NGBs to ensure our presence at all mandatory athlete programs, including trials, selections camps, and national team camps associated with Games team selection.

Team USA AC also advocates for the right to maintain a jointly agreed to designated space in public areas at such events, to be staffed by Team USA AC staff or representatives, to offer information and support as requested by athletes during their free time. Denying access to the very groups that represent athletes is an unacceptable practice. With planned discussions between USOPC and Team USA AC leadership regarding Team USA AC's autonomy, establishing clear guidelines on access to athlete engagement opportunities is a top priority.

ATHLETE SUPPORT

From the trials experience, we also learned about a gap in our own understanding of athletes' needs regarding trials and selection. Athletes need more support and guidance as it relates to their rights, including: selection, protests, how to file a discretionary application, anti-doping, IOC Rule 50, IOC Rule 40, and more. Moving forward, there should be a collaborate effort among the USOPC and NGBs for Team USA AC to provide support to fill those gaps. One solution is to have a Team USA AC Rep or staff participate in pre-trials meetings to ensure athletes are aware that we can help them navigate the aforementioned topics and highlight Team USA AC staff presence at trials if issues arise. The goal of this collaboration would be to help mitigate problems for all.



Furthermore, once the team is named, Team USA AC and the USOPC should jointly educate athletes on the delegation rules, Rule 40/50, commercial guidelines etc. Right now, the USOPC and NGBs have good intentions providing education on such topics, but the groups providing education to athletes cannot be the same organizations that potentially enforce punishment if the rules they are educating them on are broken.

MEDIA SUMMIT

Between April 15-17, 2024, the USOPC Media Summit was held in New York City. As stated on the USOPC website,

“Returning to an in-person event for the first time since 2017, the summit will feature approximately 100 athletes representing the summer Olympic and Paralympic National Governing Bodies, as well as USOPC leadership, expert Team USA service providers, and more. The three-day event will kick off with a media welcome reception at the Central Park Boathouse on the evening of Sunday, April 14. The event will conclude on April 17 and also feature iconic New York media opportunities on that day to celebrate the 100-day-out milestone to the start of Paris 2024.”

This was the first in-person Media Summit to occur since Team USA AC had dedicated staff. The Executive Director (ED) was granted access to the event but was not provided with an opportunity to be involved in any of the panels. In the future, it would be great if Team USA AC were provided with the same platform as USOPC Athlete Services staff to share how they are working to provide services to athletes and showcase our work in the athlete representation space.

Additionally, we have received questions from athletes on who selects the athletes that attend and participate in the summit. It is our understanding, the USOPC has an idea of athletes that they would like to attend but the NGBs are primarily selecting the athletes.

Since the Media Summit provides athletes with valuable exposure to the media, potentially increasing their earning opportunities, we believe the selection process should be transparent and jointly determined by Team USA AC, NGBs, and USOPC.



MEDIA SUMMIT CONTINUED

We were also informed that athletes were advised to avoid “controversial” topics and to maintain a positive tone, though it was unclear who issued this directive. While we recognize that the purpose of the Media Summit is to generate excitement for the Games and support athletes, athletes should not be discouraged from using their voices to express their full range of opinions.

Overall, the Media Summit appeared to be a great success, with the USOPC communications staff providing a welcoming environment for the ED. The athletes the ED spoke with had a positive experience. We believe the Media Summit presents a valuable opportunity for the USOPC and Team USA AC to collaborate in making it the best possible event for athletes.



THE GAMES

ATHLETE ENGAGEMENT

As the representative voice and group of Team USA Athletes, Team USA AC serves as a resource for on the ground support for athletes throughout the Olympic and Paralympics Games. With an office located in the Athlete Resource Center (ARC) and attendance at events, Team USA AC is able to engage with and support athletes through various avenues.

ATHLETE RESOURCE CENTER (ARC)

The ARC provided Team USA AC staff with a place to build relationships with athletes and spread awareness of the work of Team USA AC. The space serves as a social and informational hub for athletes living in the Village and because of this it is important that our staff have a consistent presence to ensure we can assist athletes.

Currently, USOPC Athlete Services, with the assistance of an Athlete Service Coordinator (ASC), take staff shifts in the ARC to ensure the space is always manned. ASCs are athletes elected to their positions by Team USA AC, however once selected they act as USOPC support staff and are a member of the Athlete Services team.

Team USA AC only has one staff member on site for the Olympics and the overwhelming majority of the Paralympics. This led to gaps in coverage at the ARC. Team USA AC staff were often attending events or meetings outside the Village when athletes in the Village reached out for support, leaving no staff available on-site to assist them.

To effectively engage with athletes in the ARC, attend competitions, and meet with stakeholders, it is necessary for Team USA AC to add additional staff support during the Games. The ED attended the Paralympics for five days and periodically visited the ARC. During this short time, it became evident that having two staff members on-site significantly enhanced support for athletes while also helping to prevent staff burnout.

ATHLETE RESOURCE CENTER (ARC) CONTINUED

Additionally, both USOPC and Team USA AC staff observed a significant presence of USOPC personnel (outside of athlete services staff) in the ARC, despite the space being designated exclusively for athletes. During the Olympics, the marketing staff was not based in the ARC but maintained a strong presence. However, for the Paralympics, athlete marketing staff operated directly from the ARC. As outlined later in this report, Team USA AC firmly believes that USOPC athlete marketing should be removed from the ARC in all future Games.

Overall, USOPC and Team USA AC staff worked well together in the ARC, fostering strong collaboration with Athlete Services team members. Moving forward, we believe there is an opportunity for Team USA AC and the USOPC to co-manage the space, branding it as a shared initiative between both organizations to further enhance its impact and visibility.

Team USA AC staff participated in the Village briefings organized by the USOPC when available, which took place as each sport entered the Village. During those meetings, staff covered a variety of topics including, but not limited to, the role of Team USA AC, athlete support on the ground, the flag bearer process, and the IOC/IPC elections. We appreciate the opportunity to share this information and value the allotted time to us during these briefings.



DELEGATION APP

Team USA AC provided an informational video and flyer for athletes, accessible anytime through the Delegation App. Our materials were available in the 'Resources' folder along with other crucial resources, such as athlete safety, mental health, and medical services. However, it is evident from interacting with athletes, that many still do not actively use the Delegation App. Moving forward, Team USA AC will reassess the most effective ways to communicate important information to athletes during the Games.



GAMES READINESS COURSE

The USOPC hosts a Games readiness course for all athletes ahead of the Games, and Team USA AC contributed by providing information on Flag Bearer Elections, and basic information on key issues the Team USA AC can assist athletes with at the Games.

However, as noted earlier, Team USA AC sees athlete education as an area for greater collaboration with the USOPC. More specifically, we believe Team USA AC should work jointly with the USOPC to educate athletes on delegation rules, Rule 40/50, commercial guidelines, and other relevant policies to ensure athletes are well-informed and prepared.

EVENT ATTENDANCE

Team USA AC prioritizes attending events at the Games to support all competing athletes, not just those in athlete representative positions.

We have received positive feedback from athletes who appreciate our efforts to be present and offer support. Below is a list of the events attended:



COMPETITIONS

Olympics	Paralympics
• Men's 3x3 Basketball • Women's 3x3 Basketball • Women's Indoor Volleyball • Men's Skateboarding • Women's BMX • Men's Beach Volleyball • Men's Gymnastics • Women's Water polo • Track and Field • Swimming • Tennis • Table Tennis • Fencing	• Badminton • Goalball • Powerlifting • Sitting Volleyball • Table Tennis • Track and Field • Wheelchair basketball • Wheelchair rugby • Wheelchair tennis

CREDENTIALING

Team USA AC recognizes that credentialing at the Olympics and Paralympics is highly restricted. The presence of Team USA AC staff at the Games is still relatively new, and adding staff typically requires reallocating credentials from other individuals.

The 2020 Tokyo and 2022 Beijing Games took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, making the current staff's attendance at the Games in a "normal" environment their first opportunity to fully participate. For the Olympics, only one credential was used by Team USA AC staff, with the ED serving as the sole representative.

For the Paralympics, although the ED had completed all required paperwork, booked flights, and prepared for attendance, many were unaware of her participation until just days before her departure. At that time, it was discovered she did not have a credential granting access to the Village. After working with Athlete Services and Game Operations staff to find a solution, she was issued a credential for venue access, but it did not permit Village entry. To access the Village, the ED had to use a separate entrance located farther from the hotel, wait in a variable-length line, surrender her passport, and arrange an escort, as one was required beyond a certain point.

Additionally, the guest pass only allowed access between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. Due to these challenges, the ED requested to swap credentials with a USOPC staff member whose role did not require event access and Village entry. However, despite the availability of such staff, the request was denied.

This led to a broader discussion with USOPC staff regarding the appropriate level of access Team USA AC should have at the Games and the number of credentials required. Team USA AC emphasizes that having only one credentialed staff member per Games is insufficient for Team USA AC to effectively fulfill its responsibilities and is not in the best interest of the athletes.

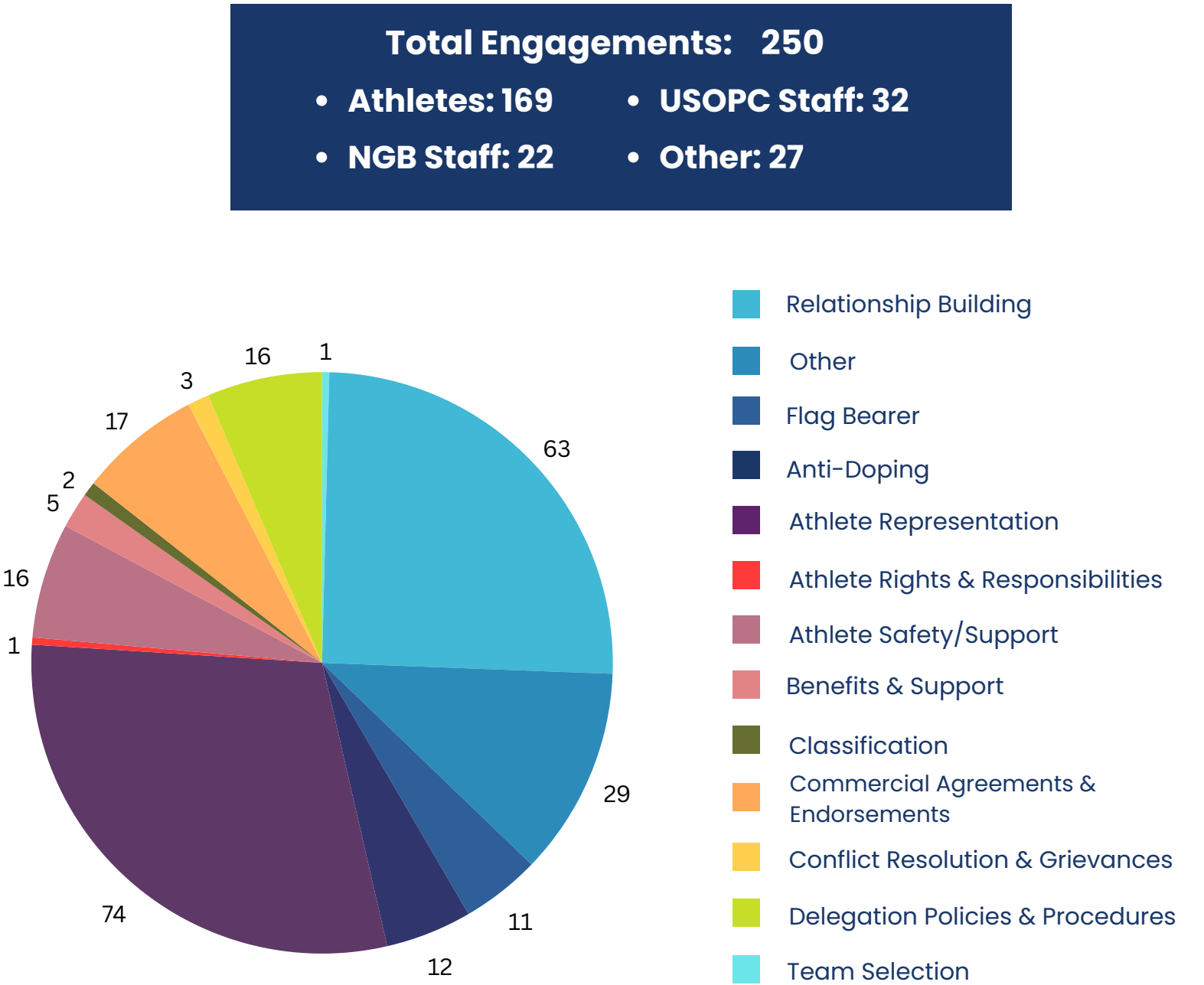
TEAM USA AC AWARENESS

Through our interactions with athletes, it is evident many still do not fully understand who Team USA AC is or what we do. However, we have seen an uptick in awareness compared to our last Games experience. Team USA AC attributes this progress to more in-person engagements, attending events and trials, digital outreach via social media and the distribution of our monthly newsletter. As outlined in our 2025-2028 Team USA AC Strategic Plan, increasing awareness will remain a top priority throughout the quad.

ATHLETE SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY

For the first time, Team USA AC tracked the support provided to athletes and stakeholders using an intake form designed to collect data efficiently. The form allowed us to capture detailed information and store it in Salesforce, providing immediate access to insights.

By implementing this approach, we gained a deeper understanding of the types of support offered and how resources were allocated. The pie chart below illustrates the distribution of support, breaking it down by the specific groups or individuals who received assistance. This data not only helps us evaluate the effectiveness of our support strategies but also enables us to refine and tailor our efforts to better meet the needs of athletes and stakeholders moving forward.



ATHLETE FEEDBACK

Another key responsibility of Team USA AC at the Games is to collect athlete feedback to ensure that their needs are addressed by the appropriate stakeholders. While we recognize that many of the issues outlined below fall outside the direct control of the NGBs and USOPC, we believe it is important for transparency to include them in this report.

THE VILLAGE

- **Transportation:** During the Olympics, there were multiple instances where drivers were delayed or lost while transporting athletes to training or to competition. Additionally, athletes reported issues with air conditioning on buses, which worsened during extended delays.
- **Food quality and availability:** Athletes reported that the protein options in the dining hall were often undercooked and limited in variety.
- **Sleeping accommodations:** Many athletes shared negative feedback around the cardboard beds and the comfort of the mattresses provided by Paris 2024.
- **Access to beverages:** Athletes reported that without reusable water bottles, it is difficult to find beverages outside of the main dining hall. While the USOPC provided bottled drinks in the ARC, access was limited elsewhere.
- **Guest Passes:** Team USA athletes were not given the opportunity to receive guest passes for family and friends, a decision made by the USOPC due to the limited number of passes available. It was determined that guest passes would be allocated to individuals associated with athlete performance. This policy caused confusion and frustration among athletes, particularly since many of their international counterparts received guest passes from their NOCs/NPCs. Additionally, some athletes noted that family members who also served as coaches were granted guest passes, further contributing to dissatisfaction within the athlete community.

We acknowledge that, given the size of the Team USA delegation, a clear policy regarding guest pass distribution is necessary. In the future, incorporating 33 percent athlete representation in the policy development process and to communicating the decision as early as possible may help mitigate frustration and ensure transparency.

TEAM PROCESSING/APPAREL KIT ISSUES

During Team Processing, each athlete is provided with an apparel kit that includes Opening and Closing Ceremony outfits and Village wear. Athletes provided positive feedback on the quantity of clothing, items they received, and the time taken to make the process memorable. However, we did observe and receive feedback on certain issues that arose and identified areas for improvement. The following outlines specific issues at both Games:

Olympics: Several track and field athletes who were measured for their kits after the completion of their Trials in Eugene, Oregon, reported receiving improperly fitting Opening Ceremony kits or, in some cases, did not receive a kit at all. Additionally, athletes shared concerns that the available sizing did not accommodate the full range of athlete body types. For example, larger sports bras sizes and tall sizes were unavailable, and some female athletes who requested men's kits were instead given women's kits. Athletes from various sports also reported discrepancies in the sizes they had selected prior to the Games and the sizes they ultimately received. On the ground, many athletes were unsure what actions were being taken to resolve these issues.

Further feedback indicated that the Opening and Closing Ceremony shoes were very uncomfortable, leading to some athletes opting to wear the Nike-issued shoes instead to avoid potential injury. Lastly, female athletes expressed discomfort and stress regarding wearing the white pants provided for the Ceremonies, particularly due to limited bathroom access during menstruation.

Paralympics: On the Paralympic side, some athletes did not receive podium shoes or Opening/Closing Ceremony shoes. There were also issues with tailoring, for example, an athlete with a shorter limb was given a blazer with two cropped sleeves, and some wheelchair athletes reported that their pants were hemmed in a way that placed the seam at the back of the leg, causing significant discomfort. Additionally, several kits were missing items, ranging from shoes to Ralph Lauren perfume. On the ground, it was unclear what the process, if any, was to ensure that athletes received missing kit items after the Games.

TEAM PROCESSING/APPAREL KIT ISSUES CONTINUED

Athlete Feedback Solution: As with any large event, it is acknowledged that issues may arise and need to be addressed promptly. We remain committed to being available both to help prevent challenges and to assist when they occur. However, the lack of a unified message communicated to athletes regarding when and how the kit issues would be resolved created unnecessary distractions. While unforeseen challenges are inevitable, our observations and athlete feedback suggested that clear, direct communication- acknowledging mistakes and outlining solutions- is the most effective approach. Additionally, we believe that the comfort of the Opening and Closing Ceremony kits must be given greater consideration, as these kits have performance-related implications.

As the representative body for Team USA athletes, Team USA AC believes it should play a direct role in providing feedback to the USOPC and apparel partners regarding kitting. The Team USA AC ED has attempted to engage with U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Properties (USOPP) to offer input directly to Nike and Ralph Lauren about the process but has not yet been included in these discussions. Athlete feedback is integral, and, as with any athlete representative group, Team USA AC should be involved in the selection of athletes for such feedback. During the Olympic Games, Team USA AC was able to connect directly with Nike representatives, who expressed interest in receiving more athlete feedback.

In summary, we hope to collaborate with the USOPC, USOPP, and NGBs where appropriate—ranging from the feedback process or assisting with on-the-ground support—to best serve Team USA athletes.



HIGH PERFORMANCE CENTER (HPC)

Athletes provided overwhelming positive feedback on the HPC and the significant value it added to Team USA. The food offerings were a major highlight and greatly appreciated by athletes. The HPC's contributions to both performance and overall well-being are truly invaluable.

TEAM USA HOUSE

Athletes shared positive feedback regarding Team USA House, particularly noting it was available for both the Olympics and Paralympics for the first time. Athletes appreciated the space as a place to capture social media content post-competition, connect with family and friends, and enjoy the overall experience. However, athlete feedback also highlighted some oversights regarding their needs.

One issue was a lapse in athlete transportation to the House before the Games. Team USA AC advocated for transportation from the Village, and the USOPC ultimately allocated funding to address this. Special vans and transportation were provided for managing victory tours; however, on the Paralympic side, athletes were required to walk across the entire Village and down a hill to reach their transportation. This posed a challenge for some athletes who were physically unable to make such a trek. Additionally, athletes encountered difficulties securing access for their agents for their managing victory tours. Given the importance of media engagements, athletes with representation should be able to have their agent accompany them at Team USA House for all media encounters.

A common theme in conversations with athletes was a perception that the USOPC prioritized appeasing the media, sponsors, and the public over meeting the needs of the athletes. Many athletes questioned the cost of Team USA House and its return on investment, particularly in relation to direct athlete support. While Team USA House may appear impressive on TV, some athletes pointed out that many struggle to afford basic needs, with one athlete noting it was "a bit flashy" given that direct athlete support has not increased in years. Additionally, athletes expressed frustration over the high cost of tickets for family and friends, with many unable to afford them.

As diligent stewards of athlete advocacy and in alignment with Team USA AC's mission, we respectfully request a full financial breakdown from the USOPC regarding Team USA House. This should include total costs, partner/sponsorship asset value activated, foundation cost per dollar raised, and other return-on-investment financials related to the House.

TEAM USA CONTENT CAPTURE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

At these Games, The USOPC placed a new emphasis on content capture, which at times appeared to take priority over the needs of the athletes.

Athlete Marketing and the ARC: USOPC Athlete Marketing had a presence in the ARC, focusing on liaising with athletes for interviews and managing victory tours. However, the ARC is intended to be a space where athletes can relax and decompress from the stress of the Games rather than navigate the external stresses of media and marketing. At one point, it was suggested by the marketing staff that polaroid pictures athletes had taken in the ARC and hung in the ARC be used on USOPC platforms.

Because the athletes had not taken the pictures with the understanding they would be used for any other purposes than for fun and hung in the ARC, the ED stepped in and stated that the Polaroids should not be shared on USOPC social media platforms. The USOPC Athletes Services staff member agreed. Team USA AC believes that athlete marketing should not have any footprint in the ARC. Additionally, we are concerned about the decision-making process, as Team USA AC was not included in discussions regarding placement of marketing staff in the ARC.

Team USA Creators: The USOPC launched Team USA Creators, a project that brings together athlete influencers to provide behind-the-scenes content from the Games. Team USA AC understands that the program aims to engage fans, elevate athletes' profiles, and raise awareness of adaptive sports. While the program achieved positive outcomes and successfully drove fan engagement, there is significant room for improvement in terms of prioritization. For example, athletes reported that content capture during practices became a distraction. Additionally, some felt it was unfair that influencers were granted access to the HPC, while there was no designated athlete-family area for athletes to meet with their young children or relatives, especially given the USOPC's decision not to grant Village guest passes. This led to some athletes feeling that the USOPC prioritized social media engagement over their needs and well-being.

Further concerns were the disparity in access between creators and competing athletes. While athletes were limited to securing tickets for only one additional non-sporting event per day, creators were granted broader access to events and venues. The issue was particularly frustrating for athletes, as they were the ones competing. The concern was notably voiced regarding creators who were also part of the Paris athlete delegation, with some athletes feeling that the situation created a division, effectively creating two classes of athletes within Team USA.

TICKETING

Ticketing was a significant point of frustration for athletes. Many expressed dissatisfactions with the process of obtaining tickets for the Paris 2024 events. The website and app were not user-friendly, and athletes only gained access to tickets shortly before their competitions. Additionally, unlike in previous Games, tickets for friends and family were not grouped together, creating logistical challenges. Athletes reported added stress from their families, who relied on them to secure tickets, an added burden that ultimately impacted their preparation. Team USA AC believes there is considerable room for improvement in the ticketing process, particularly with regard to OCOGs.

Furthermore, the process by which the USOPC allocates tickets to NGBs for distribution to athletes' families and friends could also be streamlined. Some athletes expressed frustration with their NGBs, noting the distribution process was neither seamless nor efficient, contributing to unnecessary stress.

ATHLETE SERVICE COORINDATORS (ASC)

Team USA AC leadership and staff believe the ASC program should be reviewed and potentially revised for future Games. Initial discussions have already taken place with USOPC Chief of Security and Athlete Services, Nicole Deal, as changes to the ASC program directly impact USOPC Games staffing plans. Additionally, Team USA AC staff conducted post-Games debrief calls with both Paris ASCs to gather feedback on their experiences and assess the effectiveness of the role.

One challenge ASCs expressed is that while they are expected to fulfill a USOPC staff role, they are not official employees, leading to gaps in knowledge and support. The ASC program was originally developed before Team USA AC had dedicated staff to provide on-the-ground support during the Games. Now that Team USA AC staff serve as direct resources for athletes, the necessity of the ASC role in its current form is under review.

Currently, Team USA AC selects athletes to serve in the ASC role, but once appointed, they function as unofficial USOPC staff without a formal position within Team USA AC. Given Team USA AC's need for additional support at the Games, the ASC role may need to evolve to better align with the organization's needs and ensure the most effective support for athletes.



ANTI-DOPING ADVOCACY

Prior to the Olympic Games, a New York Times article reported that several Chinese swimmers had tested positive for a banned substance in 2022 but were named to the Paris Olympic team. Additional articles on the issue continued to be published during the Olympics; however, when discussing the articles with U.S. swimmers, some were unaware of the news, while others were unsurprised and remained focused on their performance. Ahead of the Games, Team USA AC attempted to connect with swimmers during the trials in Indianapolis, Indiana, in June 2024.

However, as noted earlier, we faced pushback from USA Swimming and were not permitted to interact with the athletes. Because the ED knew many athletes were concentrating on their performance, she was mindful of having conversations directly with athletes about the Chinese Swimming matter prior to any competition. It was clear that some athletes were very comfortable discussing the investigation's impact on them and some wanted to focus solely on their performance, which was completely understandable.

During the Paralympic Games, Team USA AC leadership and staff met with the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to discuss anti-doping concerns prior to their attendance at the WADA Executive Committee meeting in Turkey in late September. Because this meeting occurred during the Games, it provided an opportunity for Team USA AC to gather feedback from actively competing athletes and the AC body.



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

USOPC STAFF

The Games environment presents a valuable opportunity for Team USA AC to engage with and meet a significant number of USOPC staff in person. During the Games, Team USA AC staff worked with the USOPC to address various issues that arose and appreciated being included on the daily coordination and Village briefing calls. Additionally, Team USA AC staff collaborated with USOPC communications team regarding flag bearer announcements.

To improve efficiency and role clarity on the ground, the USOPC developed a RACI document, which Team USA AC staff updated in Paris to reflect areas where Team USA AC should be consulted. However, there were instances where the Team USA AC staff were not informed of athlete-related issues and only learned of them later through various conversations or social media. In some cases, USOPC staff assumed that Team USA AC could not assist the athlete, and as a result did not bring the issue to our attention. As noted in other sections of this report, there is significant room for improvement in communication regarding athlete issues.

NGB STAFF

Team USA AC relies on NGB staff to serve as the conduit between Team USA AC and each sport's athletes during the flag bearer election process. Therefore, clear communication with team leaders is paramount.



To improve transparency, Team USA AC developed a Flag Bearer Election Policy and hosted a webinar to assist in communication. As noted above, we continue to face challenges receiving responses from some NGBs.

Moving Forward, Team USA AC will continue to work with NGBs to ensure the policies are clear and properly followed. Additionally, we want to ensure that NGBs are communicating to their athletes that the Team USA AC staff on the ground is a key resource for them to use for any issues they face.

IOC ATHLETES' COMMISSION

During the Games, the ED engaged with the International Olympic Committee Athletes' Commission (IOC AC) and their assigned staff on the following items:

IOC AC Election: Before arriving in Paris, we confirmed with the IOC AC what activities Allyson Felix, then an IOC AC candidate, was permitted to engage in on the ground. On several occasions, USOPC staff suggested activities for Felix that conflicted with the rules, prompting us to consult with the IOC to ensure compliance. Additionally, we visited the IOC Athlete 365 booth to check whether Team USA athletes were stopping by to vote.

After Felix's election, we coordinated with USOPC International Relations staff and the IOC to ensure the ED had access to the IOC AC election press conference.

Athlete Experience Improvement: During the Olympics, several issues (e.g., bus air conditioning, village cafeteria feedback) affected not only Team USA athletes but all athletes on the ground. In these instances, the ED directly emailed the IOC AC, enabling them to escalate the concerns to the OCOG as official athlete feedback.

IPC ATHLETES' COMMISSION

Team USA AC staff communicated with IPC AC staff regarding the IPC AC election. When athletes reported that nominees were campaigning outside of the delegated area, we promptly alerted IPC AC staff who worked with us to resolve the problem.



ATHLETE OMBUDSMAN

Following the release of the Commission on the State of Olympics and Paralympics report in March of 2024, tension arose between the Office of Ombudsman and Team USA AC. The report mentioned the removal of the Ombuds once the Team USA AC becomes an independent entity, which we believe has contributed to decreased communication between our offices.

The lack of communication is a disservice to athletes. We look forward to collaborating ahead of the upcoming Games to strengthen our working relationship, ensuring we can better support Team USA.

TEAM USA AC SOCIAL MEDIA

INSTAGRAM DATA

July 15 – September 15th

- Follower count:
 - July 15, 2024: 2,921
 - September 15, 2024: 3,995
- Profile Views: 163,798
- Accounts reach 77,234 – +150%
- Most viral posts: flag bearer related posts



SOCIAL MEDIA SUSPENSION

During the Olympic Games, Team USA AC Instagram account was suspended from July 30th – August 4th, preventing us from posting any content. The post featured a 30 second Reel of a Team USA Skateboarder in competition, which was flagged for copyright infringement by an unknown source.

Despite multiple attempts to contact Instagram support, we were unable to dispute the claim or have the suspension lifted. To prevent similar issues in the future, Team USA AC will pursue account verification, which provides access to a dedicated representative who can assist in resolving situations of this nature.

FLAG BEARER ELECTIONS

Team USA AC holds the distinct honor of running the flag bear elections for the Games. Carrying our nation's flag into the Opening or Closing Ceremony is an honor bestowed upon only a few athletes. We are unique as a delegation in that our athletes drive the election process and elect the athletes, they believe best represent Team USA.

Following the 2023 Pan American and Parapan American Games, Team USA AC codified and voted to implement a Flag Bearer Policy. The procedures were developed by Team USA AC with the principles of ensuring a fair athlete-driven process, inclusivity, and collaboration with NGBs/IMSSs. The goal of the policy was to simplify the process for NGBs/IMSSs and to improve transparency. Prior to the Games, the policy was provided to NGB/IMS staff, and Team USA AC hosted a webinar to walk through the process in detail. A recording of the webinar was also made available on the Team USA AC website for those unable to attend.

It is important to note that the Organizing Committee (OCOG) determines the timelines and deadlines for submitting the names of our flag bearers, as well as the number of flag bearers. Therefore, the policy does not specify exact timelines, but Team USA AC communicates this information to NGB/IMS staff as soon as it becomes available.



OPENING CEREMONY

During the nominee process for the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games, Team USA AC staff received pushback from at least two NGBs. Staff members from these NGBs responded to multiple inquiries for nominees with condescension and lack of interest, stating that they were busy focusing on other aspects of the Games. While we recognize that this is a busy time for all involved, it is important to remember that many athletes treasure the opportunity to even be nominated for this once-in-a-lifetime honor.

Additionally, despite the Flag Bearer Policy clearly outlining that timelines and deadlines are set by the Organizing Committee, Team USA AC staff received feedback expressing anger and frustration over requests for changes to the established schedule. These issues did not occur during the Opening Ceremony Process for the Paralympics.

Elected Opening Ceremony Flag Bearers:

- Olympic Games: LeBron James (Basketball) and Coco Gauff (Tennis)
- Paralympic Games: Steve Serio (Wheelchair Basketball) and Nicky Nieves (Sitting Volleyball)



CLOSING CEREMONY

During the closing ceremony submission process, NGBs/IMSS receive up to four notifications requesting the names of their nominees. Team USA AC recognizes that everyone is overwhelmed and overworked during the Games. However, it is concerning that some NGB/IMS staff chose to deprioritize the flag bearer election process. This is particularly notable given that, once on the ground at the Games, a brief in-person team meeting is sufficient to finalize the nominees. Below is a list of the NGBs/IMSS that showed a lack of responsiveness throughout the process:

- **Olympic Games:** Canoe/Kayak, Field Hockey, Table Tennis, Judo, Surfing, Artistic Swimming, Soccer, Cycling
- **Paralympic Games:** Rowing, Judo, Badminton

Elected Closing Ceremony Flag Bearers:

- Olympic Games: Katie Ledecky (Swimming) and Nicholas Mead (Rowing)
- Paralympic Games: Paul Shulte (Wheelchair Basketball) and Elizabeth Marks (Para Swimming)



ATHLETE ISSUES

At the Olympics there was confusion among USA Swimming, the USOPC and Team USA AC regarding the logistics around ensuring elected Flag Bearer Katie Ledecky's transportation to the Village for Closing Ceremony. To clarify responsibilities moving forward, Team USA AC will amend its policy to state that if the elected flag bearer is staying outside of the Village in a personal hotel, it will be the responsibility of the NGB/IMS to ensure that the athlete has transportation to and from the village to fulfill their duty as flag bearer. Neither the USOPC nor Team USA AC will provide transportation if the athlete/NGB has chosen accommodations outside of the Village.

Additionally, on August 8, 2024, the USOPC Ethics and Compliance Team alerted Team USA AC staff that they received an athlete concern via the Integrity Portal. Per Section 5 of the Team USA AC Delegation Event Flag Bearer Election Policy, "Any disputes regarding flag bearer elections will be resolved by Team USA AC Leadership." After evaluating the facts presented, Team USA AC Leadership determined that no action was taken contrary to any policy or procedure. As such no further action was deemed necessary.

DELEGATION APP

The Paris Games were the first time Team USA AC had full access to the Delegation App to run flag bearer elections. Staff were able to add resources such as nominee statements and videos, create/edit the election ballot, download and analyze data, and send out notifications to all Team USA Athletes as needed. As a result, the flag bearer election process was more efficient, and necessary edits could be made in a timely manner. Additionally, by granting Team USA AC full access to the Delegation App, the USOPC streamlined the process and shifted responsibilities that previously fell to a USOPC staff member to a Team USA AC staff member, improving overall efficiency.

USOPC SOCIAL MEDIA COLLABORATION

After the election of each flag bearer, Team USA AC promptly communicated the winners to NGB/IMS CEOs, team leads, and USOPC communications and digital teams. This is required to announce the winners in collaboration with USOPC partners at NBC.

A key component of the announcement includes posts on social media. As the hosts of the election, Team USA AC requested to be included as a collaborator on Instagram to help raise awareness of our role in the process.

USOPC SOCIAL MEDIA COLLABORATION CONTINUED

Initially, we faced pushback from the USOPC digital team, who stated that they were only interested in promoting “fan facing content.” However, after further discussion, Team USA AC was included in the announcements for the Olympic Opening and Closing Ceremonies as well as the Paralympic Opening Ceremony. Moving forward, we hope that all flag bearer content can be done collaboratively.

Unfortunately, Team USA AC was not included in the announcement for the Paralympic Closing Ceremony for an unknown reason. Additionally, for this ceremony, the USOPC communications team opted not to conduct a full content capture of the moment athletes found out they were elected.

Team USA AC believes that by this point in the Games, many individuals were overworked and fatigued, and the lack of content capture was likely an oversight rather than an intentional omission. However, Closing Ceremony flag bearers should receive the same recognition and treatment as their Opening Ceremony counterparts, ensuring their achievement is properly celebrated.



ATHLETE ELECTIONS

The Games serve as a critical moment for athlete representation as it is when athlete representatives are elected to the IOC and IPC Athletes' Commission. Team USA AC is responsible for overseeing the process for selecting the U.S. athlete nominees for both commissions. Having a seat at the table at these international ACs and elevating the U.S. athlete voice on the global stage is a key priority for Team USA AC. Beyond their international responsibilities, if a U.S. athlete is elected to the IOC AC or IPC AC, they also become a voting member of both Team USA AC and the USOPC Board of Directors, further strengthening athlete representation within Team USA.

IOC AC ELECTION

After an extensive interview process conducted by the Team USA AC Nominations and Governance Committee—followed by a vote by the AC body—five-time Olympian Allyson Felix was selected as the U.S. candidate for the IOC Athletes' Commission election. At the Games in Paris, Allyson was elected by her fellow international athletes to serve an eight-year term.

Due to strict election procedures set by the IOC, countries are not allowed to formally endorse candidates but may encourage participation in the election. Throughout the Games, Team USA AC and other ARC staff informed athletes about where they could cast their votes. Multiple notifications were also sent to all Team USA athletes via the Delegation App.

This election highlighted issues surrounding role clarity in international athlete elections. The USOPC had increased involvement in this election, likely due to the positive impact it would have in the U.S. gaining a potential seat at the IOC.

However, Team USA AC firmly believes that all athlete elections should fall under its purview, with AC leadership driving strategy, communication, and execution.



IOC AC ELECTION CONTINUED

The Team USA AC ED was excluded from some election efforts and encountered instances where USOPC staff unknowingly suggested engaging in activities that conflicted with IOC election rules—violations that could have resulted in Felix’s disqualification. Additionally, without consulting with Team USA AC staff, USOPC Marketing staff suggested that a staff member who is also an influencer walk around the Village with Felix to drum up votes. Once the ED was made aware of such a plan, she quickly contacted USOPC staff to ensure this did not happen and that it was not appropriate.

We understand and appreciate that stakeholders involved want to support the U.S. candidate but it must be done in a manner to ensure all rules are followed. Moving forward, clear roles and responsibilities must be established to determine who should be involved in the process, who should accompany the elected candidate, and how election results should be announced.

IPC AC ELECTION

To elect a U.S. nominee for the IPC Athletes’ Commission, Team USA AC followed the same process as for the IOC AC: a call for nominations, athlete interviews conducted by the Team USA AC Nominations and Governance Committee, and a final vote by the AC body. However, there was less athlete interest on the Para side compared to the Olympic side. One athlete withdrew at the last minute due to personal reasons, and Team USA AC nominated an individual it was confident would have made a strong contribution to the IPC AC if elected. Unfortunately, the athlete did not qualify for the Games.

After debriefing with several Para Team USA AC representatives and other Paralympic athletes, Team USA AC concluded that the lack of interest in the IPC AC role is largely due to the significant time commitment required, particularly given the limited influence the IPC AC has on policy and decision-making within the IPC. Team USA AC staff has provided this feedback to IPC AC staff. Looking ahead to the Milan-Cortina Paralympic Games, Team USA AC hopes to identify and support a qualified and interested U.S. athlete who can successfully secure a seat on the IPC AC.

POST GAMES

TEAM USA D.C. WEEK CELEBRATION

We believe D.C. Week and the Athlete Summit was a missed opportunity to collaborate with the USOPC. The lack of collaboration and inclusion between the USOPC and Team USA AC regarding the D.C. Week Team USA celebration is both a concern and an opportunity for improvement. This event presents the rare opportunity outside of the Games to engage with all athletes who participated, making it a unique chance for meaningful interaction.

In early May, while D.C. Week and the Athlete Summit were still in the planning stages, Team USA AC staff requested the opportunity to host a joint athlete feedback session. However, we were informed that no such session would be included in the programming. Instead, a formal question-and-answer session with the CEO was scheduled. Based on athlete conversations, many expressed a strong preference for an open forum where they could provide direct feedback. Given the limited in-person opportunities for athletes to engage with the USOPC, NGBs, and Team USA AC, we believe this is an area that warrants reconsideration moving forward.

Additionally, Team USA AC requested dedicated time to address the entire athlete group. After several discussions, we were informed that we would be given five minutes to speak at the start of the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Alumni (USOPA) dinner.

However, we expressed concerns that speaking at a USOPA-sponsored event could create confusion regarding the distinct roles of USOPA and Team USA AC. Unfortunately, no alternative options were offered, and it remains unclear why time could not have been allocated during the keynote morning session of the program.



TEAM USA D.C. WEEK CELEBRATION

Team USA AC requested a breakout session, but we were informed that these sessions were reserved for professional development, while all athlete-focused programming was categorized as mini sessions. We explained that the mini session at the 2022 D.C. Week did not provide sufficient time to meaningfully discuss athlete representation and the benefits of involvement. Despite this, we were again assigned a mini session rather than a full session. Team USA AC does not view itself as just another resource or opportunity for athletes, comparable to the other mini sessions.

Additionally, the mini sessions, including those hosted by Team USA AC, had low attendance. These sessions were scheduled at the end of a long day, coinciding with simultaneous programming at the athlete expo, where Team USA AC had a table. Some athletes provided feedback indicating they appreciated the programming but were exhausted by the time the mini sessions began and wished for a break before attending.

The combination of a mini session and five minutes at the USOPA dinner was insufficient. Despite our early efforts to engage and collaborate with the USOPC, we encountered limited cooperation and a lack of clear rationale for the decisions made.

There appears to be a philosophical difference regarding the role of Team USA AC in athlete programming and education. As previously noted in this report regarding Games education, Team USA AC believes that all athlete education or programming designated by the USOPC should be jointly created and administered by both the USOPC and Team USA AC, including the Athlete Summit and D.C. Week programming.



TEAM USA D.C. WEEK CELEBRATION CONTINUED

There are very few opportunities for Team USA AC to address a large group of athletes in one sitting so when those opportunities come around and aren't utilized, an amazing opportunity is wasted. We are asking for the same inclusion we provide to the USOPC and other stakeholders when they present to our athlete representatives. Even though we get very little in-person meeting time with our athlete representatives, we understand that providing time to our stakeholders is important and is an efficient use of their time. We hope to work together to develop a policy that addresses these concerns moving forward.

NECESSARY IMPROVEMENTS

LACK OF TEAM USA AC INCLUSION ON ATHLETE ISSUES

Inclusion and collaboration on athletes' issues remain areas in need of significant improvement between the USOPC and Team USA AC. Team USA AC cannot effectively support and advocate for athletes when it is excluded from conversations or problem-solving strategy sessions. A lack of information and inclusion severely limits our ability to fulfill our mission and meet the needs of Team USA athletes.

This concern was raised with the USOPC before the Games, and Team USA AC took steps to address it. As mentioned earlier, the USOPC staff developed a RACI document for use on the ground in Paris to ensure the appropriate stakeholders were consulted when issues arose. This was a positive step toward fostering collaboration among all involved staff and stakeholders. On July 12, the ED reached out to USOPC People and Culture after the document was mentioned on a Games Operations call. Having missed some previous calls due to travel, the ED wanted to ensure Team USA AC met the deadline for providing feedback. After multiple emails requesting a copy of the document, the ED reviewed it and submitted feedback on July 24, specifically denoting when Team USA AC should be consulted.

Despite these efforts, there were multiple instances during the Games where Team USA AC first learned about athlete-related issues through media reports—articles in which the USOPC had been asked for a quote, indicating they were already tracking the situation. For example, Team USA AC was not informed about the Jordan Chiles medal reallocation issue during the Olympics. Team USA AC firmly believes that any issue involving athletes—ranging from a positive anti-doping test to athlete safety concerns, such as bullying allegations—should trigger a notification from the USOPC to Team USA AC. Communication and transparency between both parties are paramount to ensuring that we are acting in the best interest of athletes.

LACK OF TEAM USA AC INCLUSION ON ATHLETE ISSUES

At the Paralympics, Team USA AC staff learned through a USOPC Game Operations staff member that an athlete had tested positive for a banned substance and was moved out of the Village just days prior to this conversation. Team USA AC, like the Athlete Ombuds, should be promptly notified when anti-doping rule violations occur. While the Athlete Ombudsman has a defined role in supporting athletes in such matters, Team USA AC serves a distinct advocacy function. This situation further highlights the need for mandatory notification to Team USA AC in such instances. Looking ahead to future Games, we believe it is essential for the USOPC and Team USA AC to collaborate on defining the areas of notification and inclusion regarding athlete issues to ensure Team USA AC is effectively involved in advocating for Team USA athletes.

ACCESS TO ATHLETES

As detailed in previous sections, Team USA AC firmly believes that direct engagement with athletes is essential and that the USOPC and NGBs should be required to help facilitate these interactions. To ensure that the gaps in involvement experienced during this past quad are addressed, Team USA AC believes a joint policy should be drafted outlining our role at key events, including Trials, camps, nationals, delegation events, D.C. Week, and the Media Summit. Establishing clear expectations will help ensure more consistent collaboration and athlete engagement moving forward.



NEXT STEPS

JOINTLY AGREED UPON DECISIONS

Team USA AC remains firmly committed to the belief that a jointly agreed-upon policy between Team USA AC and the USOPC, clearly defining the roles, duties, and powers of Team USA AC, would address several of the challenges experienced during this Games period. These challenges include access to athletes and events, collaboration on education and programming, leadership in athlete elections, and timely notification of athlete-related issues. A mutually agreed-upon policy would serve as a clear roadmap for both the USOPC and Team USA AC, ensuring effective coordination, transparency, and alignment in these critical areas.

FLAG BEARER ELECTION

Team USA AC will make the necessary amendments to its Flag Bearer Election Policy to address the issues that arose during these Games.

REEVALUATING THE ASC ROLE AND TEAM USA AC STAFFING

Team USA AC will work closely with the USOPC to evolve the role of the ASC and ensure both parties are aligned on the new iteration. Additionally, this collaboration will help ensure that the staffing needs of both organizations are met at future Games.

