

**UNITED STATES OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE
CERTIFICATION REVIEW GROUP**



**Certification Renewal Recommendation Report for
USA Baseball
December 16, 2021**



**UNITED STATES
OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC
COMMITTEE**



USA Baseball Certification Renewal Executive Summary

In January 2021, the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) Certification Review Group (CRG; formerly the Certification Verification Group), in accordance with the USOPC's NGB Certification Policy, began a certification renewal review of USA Baseball.¹ The CRG evaluated USA Baseball and based on input from CRG members as well as the results of NGB Audit's Consultative Review² recommends a certification status of Renewal in Good Standing.

The CRG's review of USA Baseball found that the organization is meeting the USOPC's NGB Compliance Standards in the five core areas of evaluation for certification: Governance and Compliance, Financial Standards and Reporting Practices, Athlete Protections and Rights, Sport Performance, and Operational Performance. Initially, the Consultative Review conducted by the USOPC's NGB Audit team in late 2020 and early 2021 found that USA Baseball's bylaws and some of its policies needed revisions to meet the NGB Compliance Standards, but USA Baseball took action to resolve the findings and achieved full compliance with the NGB Compliance Standards by the time of the CRG's certification recommendation.

In its discussions of USA Baseball's interactions with the USOPC, the CRG did not identify any operational concerns or cultural issues that raised concerns or would prevent the organization's continued certification. Overall, in the areas in which CRG members had interacted with USA Baseball, the CRG had a favorable view of its operations.

As a result of this review, the CRG recommends that USA Baseball be granted a certification status of Renewal in Good Standing for a four-year certification term ending in 2025.

¹ See Appendix for more information about the certification process, including a link to the NGB Certification Policy.

² See Appendix for additional information about NGB Audit's Consultative Review and how it differed from a full audit.

Organizational Overview

The United States Baseball Federation, Inc., commonly known as USA Baseball, is the USOPC-certified NGB for amateur baseball in the United States and the United States' member of the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC), the international federation for the sport of baseball. Through its National Member Organizations, USA Baseball governs over 15.6 million amateur players in the United States. As “the commissioner’s office for amateur baseball,” USA Baseball works toward the promotion and development of baseball on the grassroots level in the United States and around the world.³ USA Baseball fields multiple national teams to represent the United States at international competitions, including the Professional Team, Collegiate National Team, 18U National Team, 15U National Team, 12U National Team, and the Women’s National Team.

Certification History

USA Baseball was originally certified in January 2021.⁴ The CRG’s certification review was initiated based on USA Baseball’s scheduled quadrennial certification review. USA Baseball’s certification status has not been referred for review outside of the standard NGB certification review schedule.

Certification Exceptions⁵

USA Baseball did not request any exceptions from the NGB Compliance Standards during its certification review.

Athlete Representation Approval and Exceptions⁶

USA Baseball requested that the Athlete Representation Review Working Group (ARRWG) approve six of its committees as Designated Committees. These committees were:

- Compensation
- Ethics
- Finance and Audit
- Medical/Safety Advisory
- Membership
- Nominating

The Athlete Representation Review Working Group approved USA Baseball’s Designated Committees as presented.

USA Baseball also requested approval of four international competitions as qualifying events to expand the pool of 10 Year Athletes eligible to serve as athlete representatives. The requested events included the WBSC Qualification Tournaments, the World Baseball Classic, the WBSC Premier 12, and the WBSC Women’s World Cup and Qualifiers. The ARRWG approved USA Baseball’s requests to include these as additional qualifying events for 10 Year Athlete eligibility.

Certification Review⁷

Governance and Compliance

³ [About USA Baseball](#)

⁴ Refer to the Appendix for additional details on the initial certification.

⁵ Refer to the Appendix for additional details on exception requests to the NGB Compliance Standards.

⁶ Refer to the Appendix for additional details on athlete representation exception requests.

⁷ Refer to the Appendix for additional details on the review standards and process for information related to NGB Audit’s Consultative Review of USA Baseball.

The CRG determined that USA Baseball is fulfilling the Governance and Compliance-related responsibilities of an NGB. USA Baseball has adopted and enforces all required policies; has made these policies publicly available on its website; and has defined procedures to address violations of these policies. In addition, USA Baseball has not been the subject of any compliance-related complaints filed with the USOPC's Compliance team or Dispute Resolution Unit in the last four years.

NGB Audit identified areas for improvement related to USA Baseball's bylaws, finding that the bylaws were missing some required language, including that athlete representatives to board committees must be appointed by a group of eligible athletes; and the inclusion of term limit requirements for board members. USA Baseball revised its bylaws to address these issues, and the USA Baseball Board of Directors approved the changes on February 10, 2021. With the updates to its bylaws, USA Baseball addressed all of its open issues related to Governance and Compliance.

USA Baseball completed a diversity and inclusion scorecard to provide a snapshot of the diversity of its board of directors, standing committees, staff, membership, national team coaches and athletes, and developmental team coaches and athletes.⁸ The scorecard is intended to provide a way to identify opportunities for USA Baseball to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) in amateur baseball and to assist in creating action plans that best deploy its resources for DE&I success. In 2019, USA Baseball performed well against its own benchmarks for athletes of color on its national teams and developmental national teams as well as female representation on its standing committees and as part-time employees and interns, meeting at least 85% of its benchmark targets in these areas. USA Baseball performed moderately well against its own benchmarks for persons of color on its standing committees and working as coaches and non-athlete staff on its national teams, meeting between 69% and 84% of its benchmark targets in these areas. In all other areas against which USA Baseball was measured its own benchmarks, including all categories evaluating the representation of persons with disabilities and military veterans, USA Baseball had significant room for improvement, meeting 68% or less of its benchmark targets. USA Baseball will have the opportunity to address these and other areas of improvement in a DE&I action plan for the 2021-2024 quadrennium.

Financial Standards and Reporting Practices

The CRG also concluded that USA Baseball is fulfilling its obligations related to its Financial Standards and Reporting Practices.⁹ USA Baseball demonstrates the financial capability to administer the sport of baseball; is financially transparent; maintains audited accounting records; and makes its tax documentation and financial statements publicly available on its website.

NGB Audit found that USA Baseball's documentation for internal financial policies and procedures required updates to include sufficient written policies for overall internal controls, financial reporting, cash management and banking, contract requirements, expense advances and reimbursements, and the budgetary process. USA Baseball revised its financial policies and procedures to include this missing content during the first quarter of 2021.

Athlete Protections and Rights

USA Baseball has complied with all applicable athlete safety and U.S. Center for SafeSport (the Center) requirements and maintained athlete safety and anti-doping policies. The USOPC is not aware of any cases it has received in the past four years concerning USA Baseball that should have been reported to the Center but were not reported in accordance with the Center's reporting requirements. For its part, the USOPC has reported all matters to the Center relating to USA Baseball that the USOPC was required to report. Additionally, NGB Audit verified that USA Baseball received a rating of "Fully Implemented" for all elements of its program with no corrective actions required in its most recent audit by the Center in 2019.

⁸ [USA Baseball 2019 Diversity and Inclusion Scorecard](#)

⁹ As noted in the Appendix, the NGB Audit team did not test USA Baseball's financial controls or procedures as part of the Consultative Review process.

NGB Audit found that USA Baseball's background check policy required updates to include language explicitly identifying which categories of affiliated individuals require background screening and that USA Baseball's Participation and General Liability Form did not include anti-doping language required by the NGB Compliance Standards. USA Baseball revised both its background check policy and the Participation and General Liability Form to resolve these findings.

Sport Performance

USA Baseball is fulfilling its obligations in Sport Performance. The organization maintains and executes on a strategic plan that is capable of supporting athletes in achieving sustained competitive excellence and growing the sport and has historically conducted successful trials to fulfill its selection procedures, although both of its planned Olympic qualifiers during 2020 were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to representatives from the USOPC's Sport Performance team, USA Baseball did not establish clear selection procedures in a timely manner before the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. USA Baseball had not yet finalized selection procedures in March 2020, which would have given its athletes, their professional team managers, and Games staff candidates three months' notice before the Games, had they not been postponed. Despite the delay, USA Baseball still did not submit selection procedures until September 2020 after Sport Performance drafted the first version of selection procedures to start the process. Following this draft, the selection procedures were not finalized until March 2021, a delay that Sport Performance attributed to USA Baseball's initial lack of response to Sport Performance's requests.

Additionally, USA Baseball submitted its long list of athletes who might be selected for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic team after the deadline specified by the USOPC, and the organization's late registration of athletes could have jeopardized their opportunity to be named to the Olympic team. In mitigation, USA Baseball explained that a variety of factors contributed to the delayed registration, including having no firm events planned for qualification at the time USA Baseball submitted its long list. Despite the delayed submission, the USOPC's Sport Performance team worked with USA Baseball to ensure all athletes were entered into the USOPC's games registration system.

USA Baseball's medal share for events where its national teams competed was 100%, signifying that its sport performance plan supports its athletes' pursuit of competitive excellence. A representative from USOPC's Sport Performance team noted that USA Baseball is generally self-sufficient on sport performance matters and the USOPC has minimal interactions with USA Baseball, typically only becoming involved during the Olympic Games, the Pan-Am Games, and national team selection.

Operational Performance

USA Baseball has demonstrated the managerial capacity to administer the sport, maintained adequate insurance to manage its risk, and maintained financial sustainability, thereby fulfilling its Operational Performance obligations.

USA Baseball has adopted grievance, whistleblower, and anti-retaliation policies which meet the NGB Compliance Standards. NGB Audit initially found that USA Baseball's grievance procedure was missing elements required by the NGB Compliance Standards, but USA Baseball updated the grievance procedure section of its bylaws during the first quarter of 2021 to include the previously missing elements.

Conclusion

The CRG has concluded that USA Baseball is performing satisfactorily overall based on input from CRG members and the results of the NGB Audit team's Consultative Review completed in January 2021. USA Baseball fully addressed all deficiencies identified in the Consultative Review and there are no outstanding areas of concern affecting its certification status. Accordingly, the CRG recommends that USA Baseball's certification as a member organization of the USOPC be renewed with a certification status of Renewal in Good Standing.

Appendix

Certification Renewal Process

The USOPC believes in a culture of strong governance, ethics, and compliance among the NGBs that, as member organizations of the USOPC, make up the Olympic and Paralympic movement. Recent amendments to the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act, which became law in late 2020, require the USOPC to certify NGBs¹⁰. The USOPC determined that as of January 1, 2021, all member organizations would be certified and their certifications would be reviewed for renewal on a rolling basis every four years.¹¹

Governed by the USOPC's [NGB Certification Policy](#), the NGB certification review process is supported by a cross-functional body of professionals at the USOPC, the Certification Review Group (CRG), who interact with NGBs in their day-to-day work. These professionals evaluate an NGB's operations across multiple functional areas to provide a holistic review of an NGB's performance and culture.¹² In addition to enumerated standards for NGB performance described in the Act, the Bylaws, and the USOPC's [NGB Compliance Standards](#), the CRG considers departmental observations about an NGB's operations that may not be identified in a formal audit scenario but are relevant to consider when evaluating an NGB's overall performance.

Certification Standards, Exceptions, and Review Components

As described in Section 8.4.1 of the [USOPC Bylaws](#), NGBs must satisfy certification requirements in five core areas: Governance and Compliance, Financial Standards and Reporting Practices, Athlete Protections and Rights, Sport Performance, and Operational Performance. The USOPC Implementation Guide for NGB Compliance Standards provides NGBs with specific guidance for how they will be evaluated in each of these core areas.

Section 8.4.2 of the USOPC Bylaws permits an NGB to submit a request for limited exceptions to any of the NGB Compliance Standards which, as a result of its overall structure or other extenuating circumstances, cannot or need not be reasonably met. The CRG evaluates all requests received and grants or denies such limited exceptions.

In addition to outlining the requirement that all NGBs receive approval for committees that are considered Designated Committees, various provisions of Section 8.5 of the USOPC Bylaws permit NGBs to seek exceptions related to minimum athlete representation requirements on boards and committees. The Athlete Representation Review Working Group evaluates and approves or denies all requests made under Section 8.5.

Consultative Reviews

The [NGB Compliance Standards](#) were published in 2020. NGBs are not required to fully comply with the NGB Compliance Standards until January 1, 2022.

To provide time for NGBs scheduled for certification renewal in 2021 to fully comply with the NGB Compliance Standards, the NGB Audit team conducted Consultative Reviews for those NGBs rather than a full audit, which typically includes testing and more detailed reviews of financial controls and use of USOPC grant money. The Consultative Reviews assessed the NGBs' policies and procedures to assist them in focusing on areas reviewed under the NGB Compliance Standards in preparation for the certification renewal process.

¹⁰ See §220521(a) of the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act.

¹¹ [NGB Certification Policy](#), Section 1.

¹² The CRG uses a four-year lookback period during its review process.



NGB Audit completed a Consultative Review of USA Baseball in January 2021. All references to NGB Audit's assessment of USA Baseball's performance are derived from this Consultative Review.