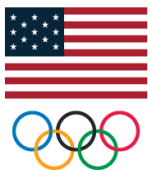


**UNITED STATES OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE  
CERTIFICATION REVIEW GROUP**



**Certification Renewal Recommendation Report for the  
US Soccer Federation**

December 7, 2022



**UNITED STATES  
OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC  
COMMITTEE**



## US Soccer Federation Certification Renewal Executive Summary

In June 2022, the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) Certification Review Group (CRG), in accordance with the USOPC's NGB Certification Policy, began a certification renewal review of the US Soccer Federation (USSF).<sup>1</sup> The CRG evaluated the USSF and, based on input from CRG members and the results of NGB Audit's 2021 Compliance Audit<sup>2</sup>, recommends a current rating of Renewal in Good Standing.

The CRG's review of the USSF found that the organization is meeting the majority of 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. NGB Audit's 2021 Compliance Audit identified areas where the USSF was not yet fully meeting the USOPC's NGB Compliance Standards, and the USSF resolved most of the areas of concern by the time of the CRG review. Two audit findings remain open beyond the CRG's deadline to resolve issues within its review period, but the CRG agreed that these audit findings were marginal deficiencies that would not affect the NGB's certification status.

CRG members agreed that the USSF is presently meeting the requirements for an NGB. In its discussions of the USSF's interactions with the USOPC, the CRG did not identify any significant operational concerns that would prevent the organization's continued certification.<sup>3</sup> Overall, in areas where CRG members had interacted with the USSF, they were generally satisfied with the USSF's operations.

As a result of this review, the CRG recommends that the USSF be granted a certification status of Renewal in Good Standing for a four-year certification term ending in 2026.

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

<sup>2</sup> [NGB Audit Report](#) and [NGB Audit Addendum Report](#).

<sup>3</sup> The USOPC has reviewed King & Spaulding's October 3, 2022, Report of the Independent Investigation to the U.S. Soccer Federation Concerning Allegations of Abusive Behavior and Sexual Misconduct in Women's Professional Soccer, has spoken with the USSF about the report, and has reviewed USSF's statement concerning the report. While the findings in the report are very serious, individuals in leadership positions at the NWSL and at the USSF who were cited in the report are no longer with either organization, and the USOPC believes that the USSF is committed to implementing the reforms recommended in the report and has already taken steps to do so.



## Organizational Overview

The USSF is the USOPC-certified NGB for soccer and the U.S. representative to the international federation, Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA). The USSF's mission is "to make soccer the preeminent sport in the United States."<sup>4</sup> Headquartered in Chicago, Illinois, the USSF is staffed by over 100 employees who serve 113 Organization Members and five Professional Leagues, among other affiliates and associations.<sup>5</sup>

## Certification History

The USSF was originally certified in January 2021.<sup>6</sup> The CRG's certification review was initiated based on the USSF's scheduled quadrennial certification review. The USSF's certification status has not been referred for review outside of the standard NGB certification review schedule.

## Certification Exceptions<sup>7</sup>

The USSF did not request any exceptions from the NGB Compliance Standards during its certification review.

## Athlete Representation Approval and Exceptions<sup>8</sup>

The USSF requested that the Athlete Representation Review Working Group (ARRWG) approve additional competitions as qualifying events for 10-Year and 10-Year+ status to expand the pool of athletes eligible to serve as athlete representatives. These competitions are:

- FIFA World Cups (all FIFA World Cup Disciplines)
- FIFA World Cup Qualification Tournaments and Matches
- CONCACAF Gold Cup
- CONCACAF Olympic Qualification Tournament
- ANOC World Beach Games
- FIFA U17/U20 World Cups
- IFPCP World Cup
- FIPFA Power Chair World Cup
- Deaf World Cup
- Deaflympics

The ARRWG approved the FIPFA Power Chair World Cup competitions from 2021 onwards since the event evolved to include Team USA sponsorship from that year forward. Similarly, the Deaf World Cup and the Deaflympics will qualify if the USSF sponsors a team delegation. The ARRWG approved the remaining competitions as presented.

The USSF also requested approval of the following committees as Designated:

- Appeals
- Rules
- Independent Ethics
- Risk Audit and Compliance
- Nominating and Governance
- Investment
- Budget and Finance
- Technical Development
- Commercial Development
- National Council

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<sup>4</sup> [About US Soccer.](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Organization Members, US Soccer Website.](#)

<sup>6</sup> Refer to the Appendix for details on the initial certification.

<sup>7</sup> Refer to the Appendix for details on exception requests to the NGB Compliance Standards.

<sup>8</sup> Refer to the Appendix for details on athlete representation exception requests.



The ARRWG approved the committees as presented. As the National Council includes a broad base of membership with the ability to modify the USSF's bylaws, the NGB ensured a 33 1/3% threshold of weighted-voting for athletes to meet the NGB Compliance Standards for 10-Year and 10-Year+ athlete representation.

The following committees were approved as Other Committees, as they do not deal with core issues affecting elite athletes to qualify for Designated Committees, but do otherwise require athlete representation:

- Credentials
- Referee
- Disability Soccer

### **Certification Review<sup>9</sup>**

#### ***Governance and Compliance***

The CRG determined that the USSF is fulfilling many of the governance and compliance-related responsibilities of an NGB. The USSF has adopted a code of conduct, conflict of interest, and gifts and entertainment policies, has made these policies publicly available on its website, and has defined procedures to address violations of these policies.

Initially, NGB Audit found that the USSF required revisions of its bylaws, code of conduct, and conflict of interest policies to meet the NGB Compliance Standards. The USSF took corrective action to update relevant documents to include missing bylaw elements relating to conflicts of interest, board responsibilities, board election and selection procedures, and committee requirements, which NGB Audit verified as fully compliant. Furthermore, the USSF updated its code of conduct to clarify organizational expectations, reporting, resolution, and resources to meet the NGB Compliance Standards.

The USSF revised its conflict of interest policy, disclosure submission process, and requires all employees and committee members—in addition to board members, committee chairs, and key employees—to submit disclosures. However, while an annual disclosure process was implemented to require all employees and committee members to submit disclosures, it was not fully executed at the time of NGB Audit's review. The USSF provided evidence of completed and reviewed disclosures for board members and committee chairs and will provide evidence of review for employees and other committee members once available to allow NGB Audit to assess the status of this finding. The CRG determined the open finding does not affect the USSF's certification status.

Within the CRG's review period, the USSF was the subject of a Section 10 complaint filed in January of 2018 and amended in October of 2019. The complaint alleged that USSF was not fulfilling its responsibilities as an NGB particularly with regard to its grievance procedures. This issue has since been resolved by both parties through settlement and the complaint was dismissed in July 2021.

The CRG received positive athlete feedback regarding the USSF's governance practices, noting that "the organization was headed in the right direction." The athlete shared that the USSF has done a significant amount of work on governance and that the organization wants athletes to be heard, which has been reflected in the organization's [recent] actions. The athlete also mentioned that the inclusion of more athlete voices in governance has been "incredible," and that the federation as a whole has improved with stronger leadership.

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<sup>9</sup> Refer to the Appendix for additional details on the review standards and process for information related to NGB Audit's Report on the USSF.



### ***Financial Standards and Reporting Practices***

The CRG determined that the USSF is fulfilling its obligations related to Financial Standards and Reporting Practices. The USSF demonstrates financial operational capability to administer its sport and is financially and operationally transparent, maintaining accountability to its members and to the USOPC.

### ***Athlete Protection and Rights***

The USOPC is not aware of any non-compliance issues with its anti-doping rules and requirements and those of the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency. The CRG also found that the USSF currently maintains an athlete safety program consistent with the requirements of relevant federal law, as well as with the policies and standards of the USOPC and the U.S. Center for SafeSport (the Center). The USOPC is not aware of any cases it has received in the past four years concerning the USSF 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 the USSF that the USOPC was required to report.

In 2019, the Center conducted its most recent Administrative Audit<sup>10</sup> of the USSF's implementation of policies required by the Center's SafeSport Code and Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies that resulted in no findings or directions for corrective actions. The Center conducted its most recent Event Audit<sup>11</sup> on November 1, 2021 at the U-17 Men's National Team Camp, which also resulted in no findings or directions for corrective actions.

### ***Sport Performance***

The CRG found that the USSF is fulfilling most of its obligations in Sport Performance. The organization maintains and executes a strategic plan that supports athletes in achieving sustained competitive excellence and grows the sport. The USSF established and executed clear selection procedures for international competition within the past four years, although timeliness in submission remains an area to improve upon.

During the 2021 Compliance Audit, the NGB Audit team found that the USSF required minor reforms to its policies and procedures to meet the NGB Compliance Standards in event sanctioning, selection procedures and high-performance plan submission. While the USSF's Policy Manual outlined event sanctioning requirements, the standalone sanctioning documents did not contain or reference the information. To remediate this finding, the USSF updated its website to include a reference to the policy which outlines its event sanctioning requirements. NGB Audit validated this corrective action and considers this finding fully remediated.

Additionally, the USSF submitted its high performance plan and selection procedures as required and committed to adhering to future USOPC deadlines. The USSF high performance staff and USOPC Sport Performance are in active communication, and CRG members from Sport Performance noted an increase in collaboration and communication, with particular emphasis on the women's program.

### ***Operational Performance***

The CRG determined that the USSF is meeting most of the Operational Performance standards. The organization is improving managerial capability to administer its sport, keeps current insurance policies, maintains grievance procedures, and a whistleblower and anti-retaliation policy.

During the 2021 Compliance Audit, NGB Audit found that the USSF did not provide a current certificate of insurance to the USOPC as required by the NGB Compliance Standards. Upon issuance of the audit report,

<sup>10</sup> US Center for SafeSport Administrative Audit Report – U.S. Soccer Federation, October 24, 2019.

<sup>11</sup> [US Center for SafeSport Event Audit Report – U17 Men's National Team Camp](#), November 1, 2021.

USSF submitted its insurance certificate, which NGB Audit verified as compliant. NGB Audit also found that USSF's grievance procedures and whistleblower and anti-retaliation policy were missing elements required to meet the NGB Compliance Standards. To remediate these findings, the USSF updated its policies and procedures to include all missing elements, and NGB Audit verified that all were compliant. As noted in the Governance and Compliance evaluation, USSF was the subject of a Section 10 complaint related to its grievance procedures, which resulted in a settlement agreement where both parties seemed satisfied with the outcome.

NGB Audit did not evaluate the NGB Compliance Standard for gender equity for the USSF during its 2021 Compliance Audit because the NGB was still involved in an appeal related to an equal pay dispute, but NGB Audit did assess the standard upon settlement of the case. As noted in a May 2022 press release, "the USSF, the US Women's National Team Players Association (USWNTPA) and the US National Soccer Team Players Association (USNSTPA) have agreed to terms of historic...collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) that achieve equal pay. These economic terms include identical compensation for all competitions, including the FIFA World Cup, and the introduction of the same commercial revenue sharing mechanism for both teams."<sup>12</sup> The CBAs provide that USWNT players will no longer receive guaranteed salaries, and those who play in the NWSL will no longer have their NWSL salaries paid by the USSF. Accordingly, the USSF was found to be compliant with the NGB Compliance Standards.

While the USSF's 2018 strategic plan was discussed by the USSF board of directors, as confirmed by meeting minutes, NGB Audit found that the board did not have a record of formal approval as required by the NGB Compliance Standards. This finding will remain open until March 2023, as USSF is currently within a new strategic planning phase. Once the new strategic plan is finalized and approved by the board, NGB Audit will close the finding. The CRG determined that this open audit finding is a marginal deficiency that does not impact the USSF's certification status.

The USSF developed a 2021-2024 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) Action Plan to serve its internal employee base. The USSF submitted its action plan to the USOPC with sufficient detail to meet the NGB Compliance Standards. The action plan includes four objectives with details relating to specific tactics and success measures. Objectives include championing DE&I and increasing representation of diverse groups within the organization; committing to prioritizing work-life balance across the organization; supporting all employees and celebrating difference to win together; and empowering employees to grow, contribute and aim high.

## **Conclusion**

The CRG has concluded that the USSF is performing satisfactorily overall based on input from the CRG members and the results of the NGB Audit's 2021 Compliance Audit. The USSF is actively working to address remaining open audit findings, and the CRG determined there are no outstanding areas of significant concern affecting its certification status. Accordingly, the CRG recommends that the USSF's certification as a member organization of the USOPC be renewed with a status of Renewal in Good Standing.

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<sup>12</sup> [Press Release, US Soccer Website.](#)



## 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 effective in late 2020, require the USOPC to certify NGBs.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup>

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.<sup>15</sup> 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 Safety, 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.

Various provisions of Section 8.5 of the USOPC Bylaws permit NGBs to seek exceptions related to minimum athlete representation requirements on boards and designated committees as well as exceptions or additions to which of its committees are considered designated committees. The Athlete Representation Review Working Group evaluates and approves or denies all requests made under Section 8.5.

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<sup>13</sup> See §220521(a) of the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act.

<sup>14</sup> NGB Certification Policy, Section 1.

<sup>15</sup> The CRG uses a four-year lookback period during this review process.