



Athlete
365

AC GUIDE: DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE ATHLETES' COMMISSION

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Athletes' Commissions (ACs) serve as the voice of the athletes, ensuring their concerns are heard and addressed at all levels of decision-making in their organisation.

ACs not only represent their athletes, but also contribute to the support provided to athletes, on and off the field of play. The importance of having an effective and active AC cannot be overstated.

This guide aims to provide you with the tools, advice and insights needed to develop and maintain an AC that truly makes a difference.

Whether you are an AC member, Chair or sports administrator, this guide will help you understand the key elements of an effective commission and how to implement them successfully.

EMMA TERHO
CHAIR, IOC ATHLETES' COMMISSION

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WHAT IS AN ATHLETES' COMMISSION?

What is an athletes' commission?

An athletes' commission (AC) is a group of athletes whose mission is to:

- **REPRESENT**
athletes in an organisation's decision-making
- **SUPPORT**
athletes in their sporting and non-sporting careers

The various ACs from across the Olympic Movement form the global network of athlete representatives.

The IOC AC facilitates engagement within the network, and one of its key goals is to strengthen and increase the capacity of the ACs.



THE IOC AC - HERE TO HELP YOU!

Learn more about the work of the IOC AC on Athlete365

Contact the IOC AC today:
athlete365@olympic.org



Who has an AC?

- International Olympic Committee (IOC)
- International Sports Federations (IFs)
- National Olympic Committees (NOCs)
- National Federations (NFs)
- World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)
- Organising Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOGs)
- International Paralympic Committee (IPC)



WHY HAVE AN ATHLETES' COMMISSION?



Advantages for athletes

- **Voice and representation:**
the AC advocates for athletes' rights, interests and support systems that directly impact their careers and well-being
- **Support:**
athletes can access additional support and resources, such as mental health sessions, career development programmes and educational opportunities, through the commission's activities
- **Improved relationship with organisation:**
the AC serves as a crucial bridge between athletes and the organisation, ensuring that athletes' needs and interests are prioritised and addressed effectively

Advantages for your organisation

- **Improved decision-making processes:**
more informed and considered athlete-related decisions can be made with input from the AC
- **Increased trust:**
athletes feel that their voices are being heard and their concerns are being taken seriously by the presence of an AC
- **Compliance with the IOC Guidelines and the Olympic Charter:**
having an AC and elected athlete representation in the organisation is mandatory

Advantages for you – the AC members

- **Influence and impact:**
members have the opportunity to directly influence policies and initiatives that affect their peers, having a meaningful impact on their fellow athletes and advocating positive change
- **Personal growth:**
serving on the commission fosters personal growth, as members can develop a deeper understanding of governance, advocacy and the broader sports landscape
- **Career opportunities:**
the experience and connections gained through AC work can open up new career opportunities within and beyond the sports industry

AC WHEEL OF BALANCE

Whether you're a new or developed AC, your main activities will be shown in the eight segments of the AC wheel of balance.

It is important for ACs to ensure that attention is given to each section of the wheel of balance.

This guide will touch on each of the eight segments and show what “best practice” looks like in each area.



TOP TIP

Discuss with your AC members how your AC is performing in each of these areas, and what your key focuses should be.



1 AC TERMS OF REFERENCE

ALSO KNOWN AS STATUTES,
REGULATIONS, CONSTITUTION,
GUIDELINES

What are terms of reference?

A document which formalises the AC with its organisation and sets out the AC's scope and operating policies and the requirements for AC members.

AN AC'S TERMS OF REFERENCE CAN BE EITHER:

- A separate document dedicated to the AC
- An AC-dedicated section within the organisation's own statutes

BUT IN BOTH CASES, THE CONTENT MUST:

- Be compliant with the IOC Guidelines
- Be approved by the organisation's Executive Board



It is important that your terms of reference include all the compliance information in the IOC Guidelines, which will help ensure that your AC is able to properly represent its athletes and organisation.

- ➔ Does your AC have a terms of reference document?
- ➔ Has your AC's organisation approved this document?
- ➔ Does the document comply with the information in the IOC Guidelines?

The IOC Guidelines list all the “baseline” requirements for NOC and IF ACs. If your AC – and NOC/IF – wish to do more and go beyond these minimum requirements, that's great!

Key compliance requirements listed in the IOC Guidelines:

- ➔ majority of athletes to be participating at international level, or to have done so within the **previous four years** (for IF ACs) or **previous eight years** (for NOC ACs)
- ➔ majority of the members of the AC must be **elected** by their peers
- ➔ AC members should **elect their Chair** from among those members who have been elected to the AC by their peers (four-year term, renewable)
- ➔ representation on the Executive Board by at **least one AC member, with full voting rights**

CLICK
HERE

KEY REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

[IOC Guidelines for
NOC Athletes' Commissions](#)

[IOC Guidelines for IF Athletes'
Commissions](#)



CASE STUDY – BEST PRACTICE SWISS NOC AC

The Swiss NOC AC goes beyond the requirements listed in the IOC Guidelines, with **two AC members represented on the NOC Executive Board** – one male and one female representative. Therefore, the athlete voice has even more weight when it comes to decision-making within the NOC.



CASE STUDY – BEST PRACTICE BRAZIL NOC AC

The Brazil NOC AC has grown considerably over the years, from a mostly advisory group to a powerful voice in the NOC.

The AC now has two athlete representatives (the Chair and Vice-Chair) on the NOC Executive Board, which consists of 11 members.

The commission also has a massive 19 of its members in the NOC General Assembly, all with voting rights. This represents approximately one third of the total votes in the General Assembly, meaning athletes in Brazil have an incredibly strong voice in all important decisions.



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KEY REFERENCE DOCUMENTS



Read more about
the [Brazil NOC AC](#)

2 MEET REGULARLY AS A COMMISSION

All ACs should meet at the very least once a year, but, to be an active and effective AC, regular meetings should take place to ensure your AC is discussing the key topics affecting athletes in your country or sport.

What to discuss in your AC meeting

- ➔ Updates on the work of your AC
- ➔ The current challenges facing athletes
- ➔ Activities your AC can deliver for athletes
- ➔ Athlete welfare
- ➔ AC elections
- ➔ Sports rules, regulations and governance
- ➔ Events, disciplines and qualification pathways
- ➔ Anti-doping
- ➔ Gender equality
- ➔ Other – this is not an exhaustive list!

NEED SUPPORT ON MEETING DOCUMENTS?

The Association of NOCs (ANOC) developed a toolkit for ACs, including agendas, minutes, and budget templates.

Best practice tips:

- ➔ Set regular meetings well in advance
- ➔ Communicate the date, time and meeting link (if online) to all participants
- ➔ Set an agenda and the focus areas of the meeting
- ➔ Have one person take minutes – rotate the responsibility to share the work!
- ➔ Communicate the outcomes of your meetings – to your NOC/IF and your athletes
- ➔ Hold your AC and members accountable for any actions



DID YOU KNOW?

The IOC AC meets remotely every month to discuss its work and the latest issues. This is in addition to its annual in-person meeting and other in-person meetings held at events such as the Olympic Games.



3 CREATE AN AC STRATEGY

What is an AC strategy?

A mid-to long-term plan for achieving your AC's objectives and goals. An AC strategy involves setting the priorities and key focus areas for your Commission, and then listing the actions, activities and resources involved in seeking to achieve these goals.

Why is a strategy important?

A strategy can provide your AC – and your athletes – with direction and a constant reference point for the goals and work of your Commission. It should be something your AC is proud of, and can be shared publicly.



TOP TIP

For more information on creating a strategy and to see case studies from other ACs, check out:

[AC Guide: Creating an AC Strategy](#)



Aligning with your organisation:

An AC strategy should also fit in with the objectives of your organisation, ensuring that there is as much collaboration and as many shared goals as possible when it comes to representing and supporting the athletes.

WHAT SHOULD YOUR AC STRATEGY INCLUDE?

Vision or mission statement

Where does your AC want to get to?

Values

How will your AC behave on the journey?

Objectives

What does your AC want to achieve?

Projects

How will your AC achieve its objectives?

KPIs

How will your AC measure success?



DID YOU KNOW?

The current IOC AC Strategy, published in 2023, is an updated version of its original strategy, published in 2017.

[IOC AC Strategy](#)



If your AC has created a new strategy, please share it with the IOC Athletes' Commission and IOC Athletes' Department by emailing athlete365@olympic.org



4

APPLY FOR (AND USE) AVAILABLE FUNDING

It is important that your AC understands what funding is available to it, and how to access it. Regularly applying for – and using – funding to deliver activities for the AC and the athletes is an important step in being an active and effective AC.

NOC ACs

OLYMPIC SOLIDARITY NOC AC ACTIVITY GRANT

- There is USD 10,000 available to NOC ACs every year. Has your NOC AC applied for the grant this year?
- Visit Athlete365 for all the information on how to apply.
- Contact Athlete365 or the IOC Athletes' Department if you have any questions or need support for your activities.

APPLICATIONS SHOULD INCLUDE:

- Details of the activity (dates, participants, venue)
- Description of the activity (objectives, format, other information)
- Estimated budget of the key costs

Email Athlete365@olympic.org if you need support in the application process

Other ACs

REQUEST FUNDING FROM YOUR ORGANISATION

- Does your AC have an activity or project in mind? Request funding from your organisation!
- Put together a proposal, complete with the objectives, a description of the activity and the proposed budget.
- Contact Athlete365 or the IOC Athletes' Department if you have any questions or need support for your activities.

Examples of activities your AC could deliver:

- Athletes' forum, promoting your AC and covering many important topics
- Athlete workshops on a specific topic (e.g. safe sport or anti-doping)
- Language courses for athletes and AC members
- Athlete engagement activities at local competitions
- Training for the AC members, e.g. on communication/leadership
- Preparation workshop for athletes attending a major competition
- Something else! Be creative to address the needs of your athletes

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HERE

KEY REFERENCE DOCUMENTS



For more inspiration, examples and case studies of what your AC could use the funding for, check out this guide:

[AC Guide: Project and Activities](#)



TOP TIP

NOC ACs – does your Continental Association have additional funding for your AC?

Ask your NOC to find out!

CASE STUDY – BEST PRACTICE

URUGUAY NOC AC

The Uruguayan NOC AC applies for the Olympic Solidarity NOC AC Activity Grant every year and uses the funds to deliver its annual athletes' forum. Each year's edition has a different focus and audience, for example youth athletes and the importance of thinking about career transition early on.



FIND OUT MORE

Learn more about how different ACs around the world used the funding - [NOC AC Activity Grant](#) makes global impact in 2024.



5 PROVIDE SUPPORT TO YOUR ATHLETES

Support can mean a number of different things. Think how your AC can add value and make a difference. Here are a few examples:

Athlete well-being

This can include both physical and mental well-being. ACs could help to organise sessions to provide athletes with important information on topics such as safeguarding, harassment and abuse, managing stress and anxiety, and other mental health issues.

Athlete workshops

There is an endless list of topics on which ACs could deliver workshops for athletes. Popular topics include: anti-doping, sports nutrition, prevention of competition manipulation, managing finances, sports psychology and many more!



Dealing with the media

ACs can provide support on interview skills, managing social media and how to maximise an athlete's exposure – this can be particularly useful in the lead-up to a major competition where the spotlight is on.

Mentorship

Athletes, especially younger ones, can really benefit from the support and guidance of experienced athletes such as AC members. Perhaps the AC could put together a mentorship programme which pairs athletes with experienced athletes or other professionals to help them achieve their goals.

Career transition

Athlete365 has a number of resources that provide career transition-related information and advice, and offers opportunities to hold an Athlete365 Career+ workshop. It is important to get athletes thinking early in their journey about the importance of a dual career and life after sport, and the AC can play an important role in this respect.

Other!

Be creative as an AC and look to deliver activities that address the needs of your athletes!



TOP TIP

If your AC needs help finding an expert to deliver workshops for your athletes, contact athlete365@olympic.org

CASE STUDY – BEST PRACTICE

UGANDA NOC AC

Former Malian NOC AC Chair Kady Kanouté and Ugandan NOC AC Chair Ganzi Mugula both undertook the Athlete365 Career+ educator training to become certified educators.

In August 2024, Kady and Ganzi teamed up to deliver a Career+ workshop for Ugandan athletes, which featured sessions on self-discovery, to help athletes grow and develop an understanding of themselves, and a workshop on how to create a winning CV/resumé.



Athlete365 Career+ Workshops

If your AC or organisation is interested to hold an Athlete365 Career+ Workshop for your athletes, read more on Athlete365 and follow the steps to [apply here](#).



6 ENGAGE WITH YOUR ATHLETE NETWORK AND OTHER ATHLETE REPRESENTATIVES



ATHLETE ENGAGEMENT

It is important for your AC to have ways to engage with the athletes it represents, promote its work and understand the challenges facing athletes.

What	How?
1	IN PERSON <p>Meeting athletes at training camps, competitions or other places is a great way to promote the work of your AC and explain how it can help the athletes.</p> <p>Tip: think about setting up an activation booth for your AC at a competition.</p>
2	EMAILS <p>Emails are good when you need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ provide detailed information such as a report, a newsletter or an update. ➔ seek formal feedback from athletes, for example in a survey.
3	SOCIAL MEDIA <p>Great platforms for your AC and athletes to communicate directly.</p> <p>For a more private channel, you can promote direct messaging.</p>
4	OTHER <p>Be creative! Find out how best to reach your athletes in your country/sport.</p>

GATHERING FEEDBACK

Meeting with other athlete representatives – whether locally or internationally – can also help your AC understand what athletes are thinking and how it could address the issues.

What	How?
1	SURVEY AND QUESTIONNAIRES Ask athletes the questions your AC wants answers to. Think about the length and how you will use the information after. Tip: surveys can be distributed online or completed in person.
2	SOCIAL MEDIA There are many ways to get feedback – such as polls, a quiz, or by providing the chance for athletes to submit written feedback.
3	WHATSAPP (OR OTHER APPS) WhatsApp groups are useful for informal discussions, or asking a quick question.
4	IN PERSON Talking to athletes one to one or in small groups is a great way to get in-depth feedback and also have a discussion about a particular topic.



7 SHARE ATHLETE FEEDBACK IN MEETINGS

Represent your athletes!

After your AC has received feedback from athletes and other athlete representatives, it is important that it shares their feedback in the relevant meetings.



What	How?
1	COLLECTING FEEDBACK DIRECTLY FROM ATHLETES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ In person: Talk to your athletes at different sporting events. ➔ Survey: Get athletes to complete your surveys. ➔ Digital: Email your athletes or engage with them on social media.
2	PROCESS THE ATHLETES' FEEDBACK AND DISCUSS IT WITHIN YOUR AC <p>Understand what your athletes are saying by separating their feedback into different themes or topics. Discuss the key points with your fellow AC members to help your AC come to a position.</p>
3	IDENTIFY THE BEST WAY TO SHARE ATHLETE FEEDBACK WITH YOUR ORGANISATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Meetings: Your AC can share the athletes' views at Executive Board meetings. ➔ Report: Your AC can present athlete feedback in a written report.
4	TIME TO SHARE! <p>Preparation is key if you are wanting to present your AC's work in a professional and structured way.</p> <p>Present the athletes' feedback in a calm, non-confrontational way, showing the methods your AC has gone through to get this feedback. Pause for questions, take notes and offer solutions.</p>
5	COMMUNICATE THE OUTCOME TO YOUR ATHLETES <p>Don't forget to inform your athletes about how your AC shared their feedback with your organisation, and any outcomes that come from this.</p>

CASE STUDY – BEST PRACTICE

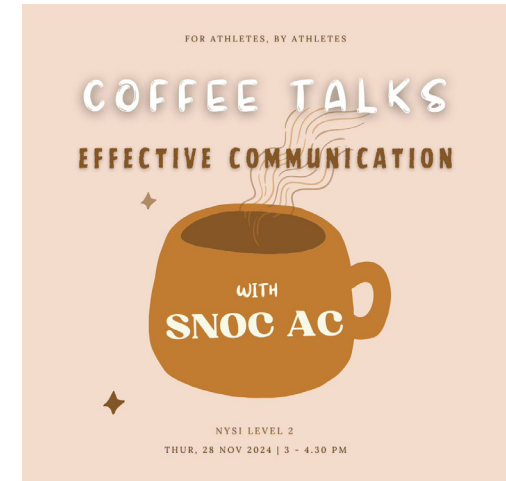
SINGAPORE NOC AC

The Singaporean NOC AC holds regular “coffee talks” to engage with its athletes on a more personal level, to understand their needs and concerns. It then gathers the athletes’ feedback, discusses it within the AC, and shares it with the NOC in meetings.

Their goals are to:

- ➔ Raise awareness of AC's presence amongst athletes in Singapore
- ➔ Connect athletes across various sports
- ➔ Educate athletes on different topics (antidoping, safesport etc.)
- ➔ Create a community and safe space for athletes to raise their concerns and for the AC to understand their needs

The approach enables the athletes to liaise with the AC on an informal level and share their thoughts in a comfortable setting. The athletes trust the AC to raise their concerns to the NOC (if appropriate), and the AC can report back to athletes on the outcomes.



8 ENGAGE WITH YOUR ORGANISATION'S LEADERSHIP

It is important for ACs to maintain a good relationship with their organisation's leadership. This can lead to greater trust and collaboration between the two bodies:

- ➔ **Enhanced communication:**
Open, regular and effective communication can help the AC to share athletes' concerns, suggestions and feedback so that this is heard and addressed by the organisation.
- ➔ **Trust and transparency:**
Building trust through a good relationship can help promote transparency, reduce misunderstandings and create a positive environment in which the organisation trusts the work of the AC.
- ➔ **Collaborative long-term planning:**
A strong relationship allows for better long-term planning where the organisation and AC's strategic goals can be aligned and achieved together.



HOW CAN YOUR AC IMPROVE ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS ORGANISATION?

Regular contact:

Schedule meetings with organisational leaders and/or administration staff to discuss ongoing work, updates and future plans. This ensures continuous communication and keeps both parties aligned.

Communication channels:

Identify the best and most efficient channels for your AC to engage with the organisation. This could be via face-to-face meetings, emails, phone calls or text messaging.

Contact points:

Establish which person/people in the organisation the AC should contact – is there a main contact person responsible for liaising with the AC?

Transparency and follow-ups:

Promote transparency by sharing meeting minutes, decisions and progress reports on action taken. This builds trust and keeps everyone informed.

Joint initiatives:

Collaborate on projects and initiatives that benefit both the athletes and the organisation. This can include community outreach programmes, training camps or wellness workshops.

Education and training:

Look into capacity-building initiatives and other training opportunities for AC members on topics such as effective communication, conflict resolution and leadership skills.

Celebrate successes:

Acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of the AC and the support provided from the organisation.

Long-term vision:

Work together with the organisation to create an AC strategy that aligns with the goals of the organisation.



CASE STUDY – BEST PRACTICE

PANAM AQUATICS

PanAm Aquatics and its AC enjoy a very successful working relationship, with the AC receiving a great level of support from the organisation in all of its activities.

The PanAm Aquatics President has implemented a very “athlete-centred” approach, and the AC plays a key role in helping PanAm Aquatics achieve its goals in this area.

Athletes' mental and physical health form the foundation of the PanAm AC's efforts, and their activities are designed with a strong emphasis on education and their holistic athlete development.

The AC benefits from its organisation's support in a number of ways, including:

- ➔ Regular communication between the PanAm Aquatics leadership and AC Chair
- ➔ Administrative support from various functions within PanAm Aquatics
- ➔ Access to the PanAm Aquatics social media accounts and network to promote its activities





RESOURCES



AC Guide: Projects & Activities



Guide to Creating an AC Strategy



Learning course for ACs: The Athletes' Voice



Guide to Holding an Athletes' Commission Election



Athletes' Rights and Responsibilities Declaration



AC Support & Resources page on Athlete365



IOC Guidelines on Creating a Compliant NOC AC



IOC Guidelines on Creating a Compliant IF AC



AC stationery templates

For more information please visit olympics.com/athlete365
or contact us at athlete365@olympic.org.