



## **CHAPTER 1 • THE ASSOCIATION**

### **1.1 – BACKGROUND**

USA Track & Field, Inc. (USATF) is the National Governing Body for track and field, long distance running and race walking in the United States.

USATF is a volunteer-driven, not-for-profit organization with a staff of professional program administrators located at the National Headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana. Our programs appeal and extend to all levels of the sport, from children through adults, from newcomers to the sport to Olympic champions.

Our mission statement reflects this philosophy: USA Track & Field drives competitive excellence and popular engagement in our sport.

### **1.2 – USATF ASSOCIATIONS**

The basic constituency of USATF shall be Associations. USATF is divided into 57 local Associations. All Associations shall be separately incorporated entities, in good corporate standing, and must be recognized by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as 501(c)(3) non-profit entities that are not private foundations.

The primary objective of an Association is to assist in the development and growth of the sport of track & field, long distance running, and race walking in the designated Association within its geographic jurisdiction. The Associations are responsible for the local “grass roots” level of the sport, including, but not limited to, individual memberships, organizational memberships (local clubs), event sanctioning, scheduling and coordination of Association championships, and marketing.

Requirements for forming an Association and maintaining minimum Association standards are described in Article 6 and Regulation 7 of the USATF Bylaws and Operating Regulations. USATF also provides informational resources for the Associations.

### **1.3 – ASSOCIATION LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE**

#### *Officers*

Each Association must elect officers, who are typically a president, a vice president, a treasurer and a secretary.

The process for the election and the responsibilities of each officer should be set forth in your bylaws. Officers should serve on the Association’s board of directors. They are the ones responsible for the day-to-day administrative aspects of the Association.

## *Board of Directors*

The board of directors should consist of the officers and the chairs for each of the committees established by the Association. Committee chairs may be elected or appointed, depending on the Association's bylaws. There are certain circumstances where sport committee chairs must be elected. (See "Job Responsibilities" section below.)

### **1.4 – COMMITTEES AND ATHLETICS DISCIPLINES**

Each Association may structure itself on the same order as the national organization with appropriate variations to meet its own needs. See the USATF Governance Handbook, which sets forth how the national organization is set up.

The eight (8) national sport committees are:

- Men's Track & Field • Women's Track & Field
- Race Walking • Men's Long Distance Running\*
- Women's Long Distance Running\* • Masters Long Distance Running\*
- Masters Track & Field • Youth Athletics

*\*Cross Country and Mountain/Ultra/Trail (MUT) each have a Council and fall under LDR in this structure.*

Delegates from clubs and member organizations make up these committees, with a chair elected from and by each committee or appointed by the Association president, depending on your bylaws [see USATF Regulation 7(G)(8)(b)].

In addition, the national organization has established several administrative committees. The national administrative committees are:

- Athletes Advisory • Law & Legislation
- Athletics for the Disabled • Officials
- Budget & Finance • Organizational Services
- Coaches Advisory • Records
- Diversity & Leadership • Rules
- Ethics

All but the Rules Committee can be effective committees at the local level (rules is not a local function). For smaller Associations, some committees may be combined.

Suggestions for the make-up of these committees follow:

- **Finance:** A small group chaired by the Association treasurer to draw up budgets and oversee the Association financial records.
- **Records:** Each sport committee may appoint a representative to this committee responsible for keeping records of achievements in their respective events.
- **Officials:** A large committee made up of all certified officials in the Association with the chair elected from the committee. An executive committee of 5-8 individuals should be selected to lead this committee.
- **Organizational Services:** A small group, appointed by the board, to oversee that membership applications, club/organizations applications and sanction applications are being processed and handled in a timely manner and to solve local problems that come under its jurisdiction. This committee should also develop and implement a marketing plan that includes coordinating a renewal mailing to individual and organizational members. The marketing plan should also address ways to increase membership.

The committee should develop a plan for sending out sanction applications to previously sanctioned events and those events that have not obtained a USATF sanction in the past.

The above committees, including their make-up and function, are presented for example purposes. Your Association bylaws will determine the exact make-up and function of the committees in your Association.

### **1.5 – JOB RESPONSIBILITIES / DUTIES**

The success of your Association will be dependent on the level of involvement that each of your leaders (board and committee members) takes in organizing and implementing the various activities, events, and programs. It is vital that an established set of job responsibilities/duties for each leadership position is included in your Bylaws or operating procedures.

Visit <https://www.usatf.org/Mgmt/Assoc/Forms/Essentials-for-Officers/Association-Sample-Job-Descriptions.aspx> for sample job descriptions for some of the Association positions and committees.

### **1.6 – MEETINGS**

Meetings are a key vehicle for communication within the Association. Timely notice of meetings is critical for attendance and involvement. Notice of meeting times and locations should be printed in your newsletter or magazine, or included in your e-mail blasts, and posted on your website. It is recommended that you give at least thirty (30) days' notice of all meetings. Minutes of all Association meetings should be maintained. Accurate minutes are vital, as they constitute the permanent record of finances, proposals, decisions, and reports.

#### *Board Meetings*

It is best to schedule Board meetings on a regular basis at a consistent time and place as often as required to conduct the business of the Association. This information should be made known to all members in a timely manner so they may be involved and/or observe.

#### *Committee Meeting*

Each sport has its own season and will meet when necessary to discuss scheduling, financial support for athletes, local championship events, etc. Administrative committees will also set up their own meeting schedule as necessary to fulfill their assigned responsibilities.

#### *General Meeting*

General meetings of the entire membership of the Association may be held to discuss matters relating to all facets of Association authority and responsibility. The general membership of the Association consists of all of its members, including the Board of Directors, who must all be individual members of USATF, delegates from member organizations/clubs and unattached athletes or others as defined in the Association Bylaws. The Association may hold as many general meetings as it feels appropriate during the year.

#### *Annual Meeting*

An Association Annual Meeting is for the general membership and should be held no later than September to elect new officers, committee chairs and finalize national USATF Annual Meeting plans, so that annual reports can be forwarded to the National Office in a timely manner.

#### *Special Meetings*

Special meetings of the general membership or Board may be called when circumstances arise which require immediate attention. The requirements for such meetings are determined by each Association's Bylaws.

## **1.7 – ASSOCIATION REQUIRED DOCUMENTS**

Each Association is required, by either the USATF Bylaws or by the Associations Committee Operating Procedures, to maintain or have on file certain documents and records. These documents and records include articles of incorporation or charter, Association bylaws, 501(c)(3) status, a copy of the minutes from the Association's annual meetings, and yearly financial records (990's). Failure to submit such documents to the National Office may result in the decertification of your Association, your Association not receiving delegate credentials at the Annual Meeting, and/or not being able to vote in Association Committee meetings or elections.

### *Incorporation - Articles of Incorporation*

USATF Bylaws require each Association to be a separately incorporated 501(c)(3) non-profit entity in good corporate standing. Each Association must be legally recognized in the state where its main office is located. This requires the filing of Articles of Incorporation with your Secretary of State office.

In many states the filing of your articles of incorporation or charter is as simple as completing a two-page application. Most states have these applications available on their websites. An Association is required by USATF Regulation 7(A) to have a copy of its articles of incorporation, charter and/or constitution on file with the National Office.

### *Bylaws*

Most state laws require corporations to have bylaws, and have state-specific laws regarding what must be and cannot be in them. Bylaws set forth the day-to-day operation of the corporation, summarize the various officers and their responsibilities, and summarize the make-up of the board of directors and any committees the corporation feels will be important for the carrying out of its activities. Under the authority granted USATF by the Ted Stevens Olympic & Amateur Sports Act of 1998, an Association's bylaws must be consistent with the Act, and also include the provisions of Regulation 7(G). These provisions include specific requirements for election notices, conduct of elections, removal of officers and committee chairs, and grievance proceedings. Associations may also adopt operating regulations, which generally address matters not found in bylaws. Such operating regulations describe in further detail the policies and procedures for the conduct of the activities of the Association. An Association is required by Regulation 7 to have a current copy of its bylaws on file with the National Office. You should forward updated copies of your bylaws to the National Office as revisions are made.

### *501(c)(3) Tax Status*

USATF is a 501(c)(3) organization, meaning it is exempt from federal income tax. Each local Association is also eligible for 501(c)(3) designation from the Internal Revenue Service. In addition, approval by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) organization means that individuals or corporations who donate money to your Association may be eligible for a charitable contribution tax deduction.

Your 501(c)(3) designation may be obtained in either of two ways. The first is for the Association to complete a 501(c)(3) application (Form 1023) and file it with the IRS. The second is called a group exemption. Under the group exemption local Associations elect to fall under the USATF national umbrella and do not have to file separate applications for the IRS exemption. To qualify for the national USATF group 501(c)(3) exemption, you must have your organic documents on file with the National Office and complete the National Office annual request for information. Regardless, each Association is its own separate 501(c)(3) corporate entity.

If your Association does not (a) apply for its own 501(c)(3) designation, or (b) comply with the requirements for the USATF group exemption, the Association would not meet the requirements for

an Association as set forth by USATF, would be subject to income tax, and the contributions to your Association would not be deductible by the people who make them. See <https://www.usatf.org/Mgmt/Assoc/Forms/Essentials-for-Officers/Group-Exemption-FAQs.aspx> for more details on the USATF group exemption.

### *Annual Meeting Minutes*

Each Association is required to submit prior to the start of the USATF Annual Meeting a copy of the minutes from the Association's annual meeting for that year. The minutes should be detailed and thorough for a historical account of the finances, proposals, decisions, and reports.

### *Financial Records*

Each Association is also required to file financial records with the National Office each year. For those Associations that are required to file IRS Form 990 OR Form 990-EZ, a copy of the filed form meets this requirement.

For Associations that file Form 990-N (e-postcard), the financial filing requirement is to complete Part 1 of IRS Form 990EZ and either have it signed by a certified public accountant or at least two officers or members of the Association's finance committee.

## **1.8 – STRATEGIC PLANNING**

Each Association is expected to develop and implement a strategic plan specific to their needs. Having a strategic plan will provide your current board and future boards a blueprint for obtaining your Association's goals and objectives.

Elements of the Association strategic plan should include, but not be limited to:

- Acquire outside funding through sponsorship and grant programs
- Grow membership – individual and clubs
- Service your members
- Enhance communication to your constituents, either by regular mail, email, newsletter or website
- Implement or improve budgetary procedures that foster both responsibility and accountability
- Promote and market USATF's sanction program
- Develop grass roots programs
- Functioning sport committees

Visit <https://www.usatf.org/Mgmt/Assoc/Forms/Essentials-for-Officers/Developing-the-Association-Strategic-Plan.aspx> for the steps in developing a strategic plan.

## **1.9 – DIVERSITY**

### *Introduction*

Diversity is an important issue for all Associations. Part of the Association's "mission" as the local voice and face for USATF is to ensure that our sport is available to all individuals equally, and that there is equal opportunity for all individuals to participate at all levels and in all roles – whether as officials, athletes, or Association officers, or in any other manner or position.

## **1.10 – INSURANCE COVERAGE**

### *Association Coverage*

Associations are automatically covered for incidents covered under the USATF Commercial General Liability policy. This includes meetings, camps, clinics, offices, etc. Association owned camps and clinics must be registered with the National Office using the appropriate form (See Chapter 12.3 of this Manual).

### *What's covered?*

This is general liability coverage. That means it covers claims based on negligent acts on the part of the Association. This policy protects from lawsuits that may be brought by third parties. For example, if someone slips and falls at an Association meeting and sues the Association, the claim would be covered under the policy.

### *What's not covered?*

**Theft:** Theft and related damage to personal property is not covered. If you have substantial office or other personal property, you should obtain property insurance to cover its loss. It does not cover any loss due to employee theft. To protect against this, it is a good idea for all employees or volunteers who have access to cash or cash equivalents to be bonded.

**Directors & Officers:** In addition, while the liability coverage is effective for negligent acts of directors, officers, employees and volunteers resulting in personal injury, it does not cover directors and officers from injury, damage, or other loss resulting from the policy decisions they make. This type of coverage is known as Directors and Officers (D&O) insurance is available to all Associations in which their Articles of Incorporation are current with their Secretary of State filings and is purchased by USATF.

**Workers Compensation:** Injury to paid employees while on the job is also not covered. Workers Compensation is a separate type of insurance. If an Association has paid employees, it should investigate its state regulations regarding Workers Compensation insurance.

**Automobile:** If your Association owns a vehicle, you should purchase separate automobile insurance on that vehicle. The vehicle is not covered under the general liability policy.

Associations must notify USATF of any and all claims arising out of their Association. Please contact the Sanctions Administrator in the National Office to submit information on any such claims.