

**Inclusive Policies & Procedures for
The United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee**

Case Study Team 7

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STHM 2114: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Experience Industries

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Overview of the Organization

The United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) is one of the most influential sports organizations in the United States, dedicated to supporting and advocating for athletes competing on both Olympic and Paralympic stages. Established in 1894, the organization has evolved in many ways to meet the changing needs of the sporting world, especially in areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The mission of the USOPC is to empower team USA athletes to achieve sustained competitive excellence while also ensuring that the Olympic and Paralympic Games provide positive experiences for athletes, spectators and global communities (About the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee, 2024). The USOPC aims to inspire Americans and foster national pride while upholding the highest standards of integrity, ethics, and inclusion. This mission guides the organization's decisions and policies, focusing not only on winning medals but also on nurturing the personal growth and well being of athletes across diverse backgrounds.

The USOPC's vision is to be the best sports organization, which includes fostering a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion that supports athletes regardless of their race, gender, ability, or background. Through this vision, the USOPC recognizes the value of a diverse and inclusive community that brings unique perspectives, experiences, and talents, which makes Team USA stronger and more unified.

To advance its mission of inclusion, the USOPC has implemented several DEI strategies, primarily overseen by its DEI Advisory Council and supported by Community Resource Groups.

The DEI Advisory Council plays a central role in advising USOPC leadership on DEI related policies, practices, and strategic initiatives. The council comprises a diverse group of individuals, including former athletes, coaches, staff members, and external DEI experts. This

Council provides a space for open dialogue and strategic planning around issues like race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability, which are critical for the organization's mission (Diversity, equity & inclusion advisory council, 2024). By advising on DEI issues, the council helps shape policies that affect athletes, staff, and supporters alike, ensuring that inclusion is integral to the organizational structure and culture.

The USOPC also fosters diversity and inclusion through its Community Resource Groups (CRGs). These groups are designed to support underrepresented groups within the organization by providing networking, mentorship, and advocacy opportunities. Examples include groups for Black, LGBTQ+, women, disabled employees, and athletes. The CRGs not only serve as support networks, but also allow members to bring forth issues affecting their communities, ensuring their voices are heard in organizational decision-making.

The USOPC's DEI initiatives are supported by a comprehensive leadership structure that integrates the Olympic and Paralympic movements and aligns with international organizations such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the International Paralympic Committee (IPC).

The IOC emphasizes inclusion in the Olympic Charter and has a framework to address gender equality, race, and access in sports. By adhering to these global guidelines, the USOPC ensures that its DEI policies reflect broader international standards (Olympic and Paralympic organization structure, 2024). This alignment also allows the USOPC to support the exchange of ideas and best practices with other National Olympic committees (NOC's), reinforcing a unified approach to DEI across the global Olympic community.

The USOPC also collaborates closely with the International Paralympic movement to promote the inclusion of athletes with disabilities and foster greater accessibility in sports.

(Olympic and Paralympic organization structure, 2024). Through its DEI leadership structure, the USOPC has championed initiatives that focus on improving access to resources, training, and competitive opportunities for Paralympic athletes. This includes advocating for better funding, infrastructure, and support for adaptive sports, both domestically and internationally.

DEI Management & Section Strategy

Team USA has developed a range of DEI (Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion) strategies aimed at making sports more inclusive, safe, and welcoming for all athletes, staff, and fans. Their primary DEI policies include strong anti-discrimination and anti-harassment measures, which are set up to protect everyone involved from issues like racism, sexism, and other forms of unfair treatment. These policies are designed to ensure that athletes and staff feel safe and respected, encouraging a healthy environment for everyone. Team USA, through the U.S Olympic Paralympic Committee, requires DEI training for both staff and athletes. This training teaches cultural competence and emphasizes the importance of equity, or fairness, in sports. By learning about different backgrounds and experiences, Team USA's athletes and staff are better equipped to work together and treat each other with respect, helping to reduce bias and foster an inclusive atmosphere. Within Team USA, these DEI policies create a positive environment for athletes and staff. Internally, the organization's benefits by promoting diversity in hiring, providing educational resources, and encouraging open communication about issues of social justice.

These policies also make sure everyone understands their role in creating an inclusive culture, so people feel comfortable and valued within the organization. Externally, Team USA's DEI efforts send a powerful message to the wider sports community. By publicly committing to diversity and inclusion, Team USA sets an example for other sports organizations to follow. This can encourage a culture of inclusion and respect throughout the sports world, helping fans,

players, and sports professionals to feel a sense of belonging. USA Triathlon and USA Hockey, for example, have taken similar approaches by implementing their own DEI programs; which include strategies to make their sports more accessible and safe for everyone. By drawing from Team USA's broader DEI approach, they show how individual organizations can impact the sports community as a whole. The strengths of Team USA's DEI strategy lies in its comprehensive approach, which includes anti-discrimination policies, DEI training, and initiatives that promote inclusivity. By making DEI training a requirement, Team USA helps athletes and staff become more aware of their own biases and better equipped to address issues respectfully. This helps build trust, loyalty, and morale, making everyone feel valued and appreciated, which in turn supports better teamwork and performance.

Team USA's focus on developing both individual and organizational awareness around DEI contributes to a more unified, respectful environment. However, a key weakness of their approach is the challenge of keeping these policies and programs consistent across all levels of the organization. For DEI to have a lasting impact, it's essential that policies aren't just put in place but are actively practiced and reinforced over time. If DEI efforts are not regularly evaluated and updated, they risk becoming symbolic gestures rather than meaningful, impactful changes. When we compare Team USA's DEI approach to other sports organizations, we can see that they share similar values, but each organization adapts DEI strategies to suit its own needs. USA Swimming, for instance, recently released an "Athlete Inclusion, Competitive Equity, and Eligibility Policy," which focuses on making competitive swimming fairer and more inclusive. Like Team USA, USA Swimming's policy emphasizes creating safe spaces and equal opportunities for athletes. Somewhat similar to the USA Hockey Team, they have established its own DEI initiatives, concentrating on creating a welcoming environment and addressing

discrimination within the sport. Beyond these specific organizations, other major entities in sports and entertainment, like the NBA, NFL, and MLB, are also increasingly adopting DEI measures to improve inclusivity and ensure fair treatment. While all of these organizations strive to promote diversity, each faces unique challenges. Team USA, for example, must coordinate DEI efforts across a range of different sports, while USA Swimming focuses on achieving fairness and inclusivity within a single, specialized field. These comparisons highlight how organizations can adapt DEI principles to their specific circumstances while still working towards the common goal of inclusivity.

In summary, Team USA's DEI strategy aims to build an inclusive sports environment by implementing strong anti-discrimination policies and providing DEI training. These initiatives are beneficial for both internal stakeholders, such as athletes and employees, and the larger sports community. Team USA's efforts help set a positive example that other organizations, like USA Swimming, USA Hockey, the NBA, NFL, and MLB, can follow to create more inclusive cultures. However, Team USA's DEI approach is not without its challenges. Keeping DEI efforts consistent and meaningful requires regular evaluation, feedback, and transparency to ensure they continue to be effective and relevant as the organization grows. Comparing Team USA's efforts to those of other organizations shows that while the specific approaches may vary, DEI strategies can be adapted across different sports and entertainment settings. Overall, Team USA's DEI policies provide a strong foundation for promoting inclusion and respect, paving the way for a more welcoming sports community.

Discussion and Rationale

Based on the substantial research that was concentrated within the case study for the U.S.

Olympic and Paralympic Committee, we discovered that maintaining inclusive policies and procedures enables those participating in sports to feel involved and inspired within their chosen sporting event. This must be addressed to the organization due to demonstrating to their clients that their concerns are being met; which enables them to focus on spreading their talent without analyzing the worst outcome from their initial experience. In this society, it is crucial to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to explore themselves without being disregarded for their race, ethnicity, gender, social status, economic status, etc. However, by not staying current on the latest policies and procedures that are practicable within your industry, this will cause division between your employees and clients due to the misunderstanding that was not clearly informed to them on the proper guidelines that is honored in the organization. Through the detailed suggestions in the sporting industry, the anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies must be improved to ensure that they can concentrate on their event, while the leaders in the sporting industry can concentrate on maintaining best practice through diversity, equity, and inclusion; which will encourage their competitors to make contributions maintain proper structure in their organization.

For instance, the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee regarding the anti-discrimination policy, “which involves the unjust or prejudicial treatment of individuals based on certain traits (Halpin, n.d.).” When discrimination is impacted within the sport community, this forces them to doubt their expertise and prohibits them from fulfilling their passion. Even though this organization is dedicated to the expansion of athletes’ safety and self-expression with social justice issues, “an athlete-led advocacy group told the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee that U.S. Olympic athletes do not feel supported by the organization in their efforts to advance social justice (Kilgore, 2021).” Due to these limiting

factors, this supports the Team USA Council of Racial and Social Justice, which establishes the USPOC, Athlete's Advisory Council, National Governing Bodies, and the U.S. Olympians and Paralympians Association. Furthermore, this rationale serves as an opportunity for the organizations in this level of leadership to expand on effective strategies based on their understanding of discrimination that affects opportunities within sports. For example, by communicating and encouraging the importance of inclusion within your organization and teams, this ensures focus on building retention within the team and consistency through their success with feasible efforts. The benefits of the expansion through their sporting experience of the diverse community are to learn more about their impacts that celebrate their unique qualities, while inspiring future generations to accomplish their dreams from their passion.

This could be done as a shoutout to teams before the game or connecting with the younger generation to focus on their aspirations, which supports effective correspondence and inclusion in what the organization has to offer. Also, this maintains their goal through achieving diversity, equity, and inclusion through a method that works best for them. On the contrary, the disadvantages of not encouraging and communicating about inclusion hinders the action that was meant for others to feel empowered to enjoy themselves at the game. Moving forward, “disability barriers often extend beyond the parameters of active participation, presenting unique challenges that also apply to fans, spectators, and supporters; such as sport venues without ramps or accessible seating or sports dependent on equipment that cannot be modified, so athletes with disabilities can compete effectively (Halpin, n.d.).” The solutions that are advised in overcoming discrimination within the sport industry is through “apply universal design principles to make sporting venues and facilities physically accessible, promote adaptive sports at grassroots and professional levels, and ensure online infrastructure is accessible to everyone (Halpin, n.d.).”

Also, bias and prejudicial treatment can be focused on race or ethnicity, which could be revealed or hidden from others, which can result in decreased opportunities and well-being. This can include “racial slurs and derogatory comments made against players during competitions, underrepresentation of individuals from diverse racial backgrounds in coaching, administrative, and leadership positions, and sport marketing and promotions without diverse representation in images, videos, and articles (Halpin, n.d.).” The solutions that were necessary were focusing on the zero-tolerance policy that does not tolerate racism, establishing training programs to improve understanding racial diversity through effective discussion making, and highlighting others from various backgrounds through social media, websites, and their apps. Therefore, these disadvantages within discrimination can enable the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee to ensure that their members are obtaining the best opportunities in the sporting industry without compromising those differences to become a part of the team.

Another policy that supports the improvement within this organization is through anti-harassment, which is concentrated through their “Speak Up Policy.” This policy maintains ethical standing through encouragement, value, and protection of good faith reporting through the members and athletes within this organization. Also, this encourages them to address their concerns in an appropriate manner and enables the organization to grow stronger within the process by following the principles to make the best decisions. Although in some situations, this policy might be complicated for others to receive the support that they need. Furthermore, the USPOC does not tolerate retaliation against those that discriminate, harass, or take any negative employment or related action, which is later reviewed and conducted through the interest and governance issues. Within this organization, this is crucial to their level of growth because it enables them to not be afraid to reach out to help them feel supported. Furthermore, this supports

the rationale of the provisions of mental health services due to ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to receive these opportunities that help them relieve their stress and to focus on representing their country as an athlete.

Team USA athletes have access to a 24/7 health provider worldwide, which enables them to focus on overcoming their mental health crisis at their own pace. Also, through the eHome Counseling Group, Headspace Plus App, WellTrack, and USOPC Psychological Team Members, this enables them to cope with their struggles that they encountered and enables them to take care of themselves. Yes, mental health can be argued as not efficient as a policy through the concentration of harassment towards maintaining their regulations to protect their clients. Thus, this enables them to seek help instead of avoiding the situation, which will encourage them to work towards their recovery and to demonstrate the organization's initiative to rectify the problem that is currently affecting them. The mental health services will benefit them with the initial problem because it can encourage them to connect with therapists to focus on ways to deal with their trauma. Sometimes, the problem can take a while to recover from, which is beneficial for them to be able to focus on opening themselves up to others and moving on with their lives. On the other hand, this serves as a disadvantage because those who are in the position of helping others in their lowest point might not understand that their situation is affecting them on a personal level, which can cause them to shut down and not express their concerns. As future leaders within our industry, we must be willing to empathize with others and their situation because this brings them closure towards releasing the pain. Even though it may sometimes be difficult, we must understand that no one knows the fate until it is revealed to them and as they feel that their concerns are being addressed. The key solutions that must be resolved in the

organization are combining mental health services with their given needs, which can help them to de-stress and to focus on doing what they love.

“The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic community exemplifies its strength through the intersectionality of its athlete population, which displays a total diversity of human characteristics and perspectives (*Finance*, n.d.). Through the focus of their efforts leading to their success within the sports industry, this inspired the team to create initiatives that establish opportunities to provide new opportunities to promote inclusion and belonging in the communities. Furthermore, the USOPC focused on the revisions for the Community Resource Groups, which encouraged others to become more involved through the practice of connecting others together through their varied differences from their backgrounds. As they moved forward through their expansion of their organization through inviting others, they also concentrated on the Pronoun Project to promote gender inclusivity, which signified the awareness of gender pronouns and addressing personal pronouns in the depth of their communication. Furthermore, the USOPC established the Educate, Enact, and Engage conversation series, which highlighted five sessions through psychological safety, unconscious bias, representation, intersectionality, and disability inclusion. Because of the success from the Educate, Enact, Engage, the continuation of series will focus on the inclusion of the CRGs, NGBs, and other internal groups that leads towards a tremendous impact within the focus of diversity management for athletes and employees in the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee. Based on the ethical inspiration that was demonstrated in this course on a managerial perspective, it is our responsibility as future managers within the hospitality, tourism, sport, and recreation industries to understand policies and procedures not just as they are; but also towards the expansion of the

improvement of what it could be for your future employees and clients with their differentiated needs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committees policies and procedures are critical in encouraging the greatest levels of quality, integrity, and safety across its different athletic programs. These criteria ensure that athletes, coaches, and staff follow ideals of fair play, inclusivity, and respect both in competition and in the greater community. By enforcing thorough rules for athlete health, anti-doping, and safe sports practices, Team USA not only provides a supportive and ethical atmosphere but also protects the United States' reputation in the worldwide athletic arena. Finally, these policies enable Team USA to prepare athletes for success while representing ideals that inspire pride and solidarity among Americans and admirers around the world.

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