



Guide to Club Excellence

A practical guide to leading a ski and snowboard club using proven best practices.

Letter to Club Leaders

Dear U.S. Ski & Snowboard Club Leaders,

Thank you to all our Club Leaders for the critical role you play in developing U.S. athletes. Your clubs are the foundation of our sports, providing young athletes with their first exposure to skiing and snowboarding and guiding them along the pathway to excellence.

At U.S. Ski & Snowboard, our Best in the World vision starts with you. From athlete development to strong business practices, your leadership supports not only elite success on the world stage but also a thriving, healthy snowsport community nationwide.

Through Club Development, we offer tools to help your club grow and succeed, including:

- **Certification:** A comprehensive assessment process based on best practices for clubs ready to strengthen their structure and impact.
- **Education:** Shared standards and training resources that promote consistency and long-term athlete development.
- **Recognition:** Acknowledging clubs for excellence in both operations and athlete success.

We encourage all clubs—regardless of size or stage—to engage with these resources. Together, we can build stronger organizations, support more athletes, and elevate U.S. skiing and snowboarding at every level.

We are grateful for your valued membership and contributions to our community of sport!

Sincerely,

Sophie Goldschmidt

President and CEO

U.S. Ski & Snowboard

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter to Club Leaders.....	1
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	2
CHAPTER 1: DESCRIPTION OF PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES MODEL.....	8
What is the best principle and practice model?.....	8
Best Practice Review.....	8
Focus on Educational and 501(c)(3) Organizations.....	8
CHAPTER 2: THE U.S. SKI & SNOWBOARD CLUB DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.....	9
The Learning Organization and the Learning Club Leader.....	9
Further Identify and Develop Best Principles and Practices.....	9
Benefits of Club Development to the Club.....	10
CHAPTER 3: U.S. SKI & SNOWBOARD PODIUM CLUB CERTIFICATION.....	11
What is U.S. Ski & Snowboard Podium Club Certification?.....	11
What will a club gain through Club Certification?.....	11
What is the process for Podium Club Certification?.....	11
What are the Podium Certification levels?.....	11
Is elite athletic performance (i.e. national team athletes) necessary to attain Podium Level Certification?.....	12
Benefits for a Certified Club include:.....	12
What are Certification steps?.....	12
What materials are required for submission?.....	13
Who is involved in the Certification process?.....	14
What is the purpose of the club visit / review meeting?.....	14
U.S. Ski & Snowboard Club Certification Committee.....	14
Club Certification Team.....	15
Sample Club Visit Agenda (Silver/Gold Candidates).....	15
What is the follow up to the club visit / review?.....	16
Certification Timeline	16
Guidelines for U.S. Ski & Snowboard Podium Club Recertification or Advancement to the next Level.....	16
CHAPTER 4: BUSINESS ENTITY, ORGANIZATIONAL DOCUMENTS AND INSURANCE.....	18
Club Structures.....	18
Organizing Documents and Filings.....	19
Club Insurance.....	20
Insurance and Individual U.S. Ski & Snowboard Membership.....	21
U.S. Ski & Snowboard CLIP Insurance Program.....	21
Other U.S. Ski & Snowboard Risk Management Resources / Items for Consideration.....	21
CHAPTER 5: LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE.....	23

Establishing Mission, Vision, Goals and Values.....	23
Planning – Where are we?.....	23
Planning and Goal Setting – Where are we going?.....	24
Strategic Planning – How to get there?.....	24
Long term planning (five-year strategic plan).....	24
Control and accountability: strategic planning and implementation summary for Clubs.....	25
Annual Strategic Planning Roadmap.....	25
Governance.....	26
CHAPTER 6: FINANCE AND FUNDING.....	37
Resource management.....	37
Financial Literacy.....	37
Building a Financial Plan: Develop a Budget and Resource Development Plan.....	37
Separate Earned Income from Development/Fundraising Income.....	37
Establish a Recordkeeping System for the Organization’s Official Records.....	38
Establish an Accounting System.....	38
Track In-Kind Resources.....	38
File for an Internal Revenue Service Determination of Federal Tax-Exempt Status.....	38
File for State and Local Tax Exemptions.....	38
Know your Numbers.....	38
Other Steps.....	39
Financial Aid.....	39
Accounting System.....	39
Financial Oversight.....	39
Financial Operations.....	39
Operating and Capital Budgets.....	40
Cash Flow Budgeting.....	40
Financial Reporting.....	40
Financial Management Summary.....	40
Development and Fundraising: The Big Picture.....	40
Fundraising.....	41
Development.....	41
Development Practices.....	42
CHAPTER 7: FOSTERING CLUB CULTURE.....	46
Character Development.....	46
Values and Life Lessons – Lester Keller, PhD.....	47
Club Responsibilities.....	47
Club Rights.....	48
Club Culture Tools.....	48

Recruiting.....	50
Multi-Sport Clubs.....	50
CHAPTER 8: PUBLIC RELATIONS, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS.....	51
Marketing the Club.....	51
Engaging Local Media.....	51
Media & Public Relations.....	51
Marketing & Membership Growth.....	52
Data Management.....	53
CHAPTER 9: HUMAN RESOURCES.....	54
Coaching and Administrative Staff.....	54
Staff and Organizational Structure – Key Positions.....	54
Club Staff Roles and Responsibilities.....	55
Key Administrative & Technical Staff Positions.....	55
Position Descriptions: Best Practices.....	56
Staff and Professional Development.....	57
CHAPTER 10: ATHLETE SAFETY.....	64
SafeSport Compliance.....	64
Training & Competition Safety.....	64
Club-Level Safety Policies.....	66
Concussion Policy.....	66
Emergency Action Protocol (EAP).....	67
Return From Injury.....	67
Travel: Club Vehicles and Transportation Policies.....	68
CHAPTER 11: CLUB PROGRAMMING.....	69
Training Systems: A Unified Development Model.....	69
Using the Training Systems in Your Club.....	69
Program Areas of Emphasis.....	70
Anti-Doping Policy.....	75
Education.....	75
CHAPTER 12: CLUB LOGISTICS.....	77
Resort Relations.....	77
Strategic Alignment with Resort Partners.....	78
Emergency Action Plan (EAP).....	81
Venues & Risk Management.....	81
Competitions.....	82
Facilities & Equipment.....	82
CHAPTER 13: ASSESSING OUTCOMES & MEASURING RESULTS.....	84
Key Assessment Areas.....	84

Organizational Performance: Key Indicators.....	84
Athletic Performance: Key Indicators.....	84
Student-Athlete Career & Life Outcomes.....	85
Parent, Family & Volunteer Engagement.....	85
Community Impact.....	85
U.S. SKI & SNOWBOARD MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION.....	86
Membership Tools.....	86
U.S. Ski & Snowboard Competition Guides by Sport.....	87

BEST IN THE WORLD FOR U.S. SKI & SNOWBOARD CLUBS

While "Best in the World" reflects success on the global stage, that success is built on the daily efforts of all clubs. Whether or not they focus on high performance, every club plays a vital role in achieving this vision.

Here is what "Best in the World" means to various clubs:

Yuriy Gusev - Central Cross Country Ski Association (CXC), Executive & Athletic Director

"The Best in the World means doing our best in everything, from planning a season to every single training session and from fundraising events to promotion of the sport in the community. It's just like for the athletes, we focus to do the best we can during the whole process and that is what we can control. The outcome will translate into the development of the best athletes in the world."

Pete Leonard - Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks, Head Coach and Director of Skier Development

"Best in the World for our club means growing our base of skiers in the local community through great introductory and development programs for youth and adults - opening the sport to broader demographics, and doing a better job of teaching them the joy of gliding on snow. It means providing vertically-integrated skier development opportunities for skiers as they develop and improve, hosting a competition calendar that includes both races and events that are top caliber as well as lower-key races aimed at masters and citizen racers, and creative and fun youth events that help set the hook for lifelong involvement in the sport. It means providing and developing partnerships to provide the facility, trail and grooming support necessary for all of it to happen. In essence it means providing the programming to support a large and diverse ski club while continuing to work to grow the size, strength and reach of that club."

Tony Lodico - Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club, Freeskiing Head Coach

"Best in the world means a dedication to the foundation. This is creating an army of young people who love snow, fostering creativity and joy, along with sportsmanship and perspective. Success at the grassroots level means generations of up and comers who love getting to the hill, and want everyone to know they shred. To me, at the club level, "best in the world" means love of the sport."

Jamie Doucett - Cambridge Sports Union, Coach

"Best in the World for CSU means providing and fostering a team atmosphere that provides a safe, fun, competitive and supportive training environment for a wide spectrum of dedicated athletes, from those who are winter-only skiers to those hoping to race in college to those shooting to get into the National Development Pipeline. Even though CSU is a volunteer organization, Best in the World means providing our athletes with professional level support through a crack and diverse coaching staff, access to the best skis and ski care in the country, high level waxing support at races, the best

food table and the most fun team and parent volunteers. And, we make sure the kids do their homework.....

Tori Koski - SSWSC Snowboard Team, Snowboard Program Director

“Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club Snowboard Team provides an opportunity for young athletes to become successful individuals and achieve their personal goals through participation in snowboarding. “Best in the World” to me means striving to do your personal best, giving 100% to the pursuit of goals.”

Steve Utter - Green Mountain Valley School, Alpine Program Director

“GMVS’s goal is to create a process based (not results driven) environment in which our athletes value discipline, responsibility, respect, independent initiative, and total commitment and effort.”

CHAPTER 1: DESCRIPTION OF PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES MODEL

What is the best principle and practice model?

Best principles and practices are widely accepted, peer-reviewed guidelines combining big-picture philosophy (principles) with actionable strategies and structures (practices) tailored to specific sectors or industries.

U.S. Ski & Snowboard affirms that the principles outlined in this *Guide to Club Excellence* apply to all organizations involved in ski and snowboard training and competition. These principles remain consistent across various and different types, sizes, and levels of organizations. While practices may vary based on factors like size, budget, and goals, this guide identifies core best practices all clubs can adopt and adapt to achieve success.

Best Practice Review

U.S. Ski & Snowboard has conducted a review of the best practices of the most successful athletic organizations in the world. This research has led to the U.S. Ski & Snowboard Club Development Program, whose primary mission is to enhance efforts of clubs to lead, envision, plan and implement a Best in the World organization.

Best practice research includes:

- ☐ International Sports Federations: Norwegian Ski Federation, Swedish Ski Federation, Austrian Ski Federation, Australian Sports Federation, Swiss Ski Federation
- ☐ U.S. National Governing Bodies: USA Swimming, USA Hockey, U.S. Figure Skating, U.S. Tennis, U.S. Soccer, USA Volleyball
- ☐ Sports Industries America, National Ski Areas Association, Professional Ski Instructors of America (PSIA), American Association of Snowboard Instructors (AASI), NASTAR, National Collegiate Athlete Association, United States Collegiate Ski Association
- ☐ U.S. Ski & Snowboard: Club leadership, sport leadership, alumni athletes
- ☐ Other: Professional non-profit resources, Westminster College, Best Principles and Practices for Nonprofit Excellence publications

Focus on Educational and 501(c)(3) Organizations

U.S. Ski & Snowboard clubs vary legally but are all educational, mission-driven organizations focused on ski and snowboard training and competition. This guide emphasizes best practices for such organizations, regardless of structure. Resorts and other clubs are encouraged to adopt these principles alongside their legal and financial duties. Most clubs are 501(c)(3) nonprofits.

CHAPTER 2: THE U.S. SKI & SNOWBOARD CLUB DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

U.S. Ski & Snowboard recognizes that well-managed clubs are essential to member success. As coaching has grown more complex, so too has club management, requiring broader skills and deeper community engagement. Clubs—whether part of a school, resort, nonprofit, or corporation—must address challenges like staffing, SafeSport compliance, risk management, fundraising, and shifting sport cultures through strategic planning. Clubs are the foundation of athlete development, responsible for recruiting, training, and supporting athletes from entry to elite levels. U.S. Ski & Snowboard supports clubs through its Club Development and Certification programs to help them thrive in today's demanding environment.

The Learning Organization and the Learning Club Leader

Effective assessment and improvement require club leaders who are open to learning, adapting, and aligning with new models and higher standards. The mindset of “we’ve always done it this way” is no longer sufficient. Leaders must ask critical questions and ensure all actions are intentional, mission-driven, and aligned with best practices—starting with an honest evaluation of their own strengths and challenges.

The U.S. Ski & Snowboard Club Development Program is rooted in the idea that every club should be a learning organization (see Peter Senge’s *The Fifth Discipline*). Perfection isn’t expected, but awareness of standards and commitment to continuous improvement are essential. The program also supports the ongoing professional growth of club leaders.

Further Identify and Develop Best Principles and Practices

Another purpose of the Club Development Program is to further identify and develop the elements that lead to organizational and athletic success among U.S. Ski & Snowboard clubs. U.S. Ski & Snowboard will work to facilitate this effort, provide opportunities to exchange valuable information and develop opportunities for more club-to-club interaction and education.

Value of club development to club communities: Great ski and snowboard clubs were identified in the past by having three essential ingredients - great coaches, great facilities and peer group pace. Although this used to be sufficient, clubs are now expected to provide a more full service and more professional athletic organization.

Create a safe and healthy environment: The club understands and demonstrates best principles and practices in athlete protection and safety, in compliance with US Center for SafeSport and U.S. Ski & Snowboard standards.

Develop a club philosophy that includes: Athletic excellence, skill development, character development, academics and an attitude of sport for life.

Guide athlete programming: Coaches are trained to the principles of the U.S. Ski & Snowboard Training. The club provides age-appropriate content, balanced training-to-competition ratios, and skill development supported by positive coaching and manageable coach-to-athlete ratios. Regular coach-athlete-parent check-ins are held.

Key program strengths include fair pricing, sound management practices, a strong reputation, and a track record of helping athletes achieve personal goals and reach their desired performance levels, from recreational to collegiate to elite. The club also delivers high-quality events with a marketing strategy supporting the organization and athletes.

Benefits of Club Development to the Club

Clubs engaged as learning organizations in U.S. Ski & Snowboard Club Development will succeed in:

- ☐ Creating vision and inspiring leadership
- ☐ Increasing funding and sustainability
- ☐ Motivating, attracting and retaining quality staff
- ☐ Attracting and retaining athletes
- ☐ Enhancing the athletic experience
- ☐ Realizing improved athletic performance
- ☐ Managing better operations
- ☐ Stimulating advocacy among the parents
- ☐ Reinforcing identity, culture, reputation and credibility

CHAPTER 3: U.S. SKI & SNOWBOARD PODIUM CLUB CERTIFICATION

What is U.S. Ski & Snowboard Podium Club Certification?

Club Certification is a rigorous process designed for clubs that want to perform a comprehensive organizational assessment and verify and demonstrate their understanding of the best principles and implementation of best practices of their club. *Note: A Podium Candidate must have a current U.S. Ski & Snowboard Club membership.* Clubs not yet ready to engage in the certification application process or unsure if they have the capacity to start, can still benefit greatly from reviewing and discussing the materials and exercises related to the process. It will give them the tools to understand best principles and practices and how they can improve as a club, as well as give them a realistic idea if they have the structure and resources in place to initiate the certification process.

What will a club gain through Club Certification?

U.S. Ski & Snowboard club certification validates the organization for athletes, families, resorts, and the community. It supports focused, effective programming that attracts and retains athletes while promoting long-term engagement. Certified clubs gain tools for assessment, planning, and operational improvement, with support from regional experts and U.S. Ski & Snowboard staff.

At any certification level, clubs are recognized as professional, athlete-centered organizations committed to excellence and sustainability. Certification opens the door to significant benefits across key areas of club performance and development

What is the process for Podium Club Certification?

Club certification is a collaborative process of self-assessment, evaluation, and improvement, supported by ongoing resources from U.S. Ski & Snowboard. It's not a test, but a partnership aimed at strengthening leadership, operations, and athletic performance.

The process identifies areas for growth and provides targeted support through resources and training at the club, regional, and national levels. Feedback is constructive and designed to help clubs improve and succeed.

What are the Podium Certification levels?

Bronze Certification: Bronze is designed for established clubs with full programming ready to complete a comprehensive self-assessment and interview process. Clubs must form a certification team with staff, board, and community representation. While less intensive than Silver or Gold, Bronze verifies core elements for organizational and athletic success and sets clubs on a path of continuous improvement.

Silver Certification: Silver is for highly functioning clubs with strong athletic and organizational performance, financial sustainability, and a track record of success. Clubs must designate a certification coordinator and board host for a required visitation. This level not only verifies standards but also helps U.S. Ski & Snowboard learn from top-performing clubs to improve resources and support.

Gold Certification: Gold certification recognizes clubs that exemplify "Best in the World" standards both athletically and organizationally. These clubs demonstrate strong financial sustainability and a long-standing record of success, serving as models and resources for U.S. Ski & Snowboard and peer clubs. The process includes designating a certification coordinator, hosting a board-level visitation, and sharing insights to help shape future resources and support.

Can clubs without elite athletic performance (i.e. national team athletes) attain Podium Level Certification?

Yes. Certification evaluates both athletic and organizational success based on a club's stated goals. A club aiming to develop National Team athletes is assessed differently than one focused on being the best developmental program—***success is measured by clubs meeting their own objectives.***

Bronze, Silver, and Gold levels all signify podium clubs within the Olympic pipeline. Bronze is not a baseline—it reflects a high standard of excellence. Silver and Gold are reserved for clubs that consistently exceed expectations across all areas, including leadership, operations, community engagement, and athletic results.

Benefits for a Certified Club include:

- ☐ Connection to the U.S. Ski & Snowboard Vision, Mission and resources
- ☐ Marketing appeal to parents and athletes
- ☐ Credibility for funders and donors
- ☐ Rewarding and professional workplaces
- ☐ Focused on improvement and success in all areas: organizationally, athletically and culturally

What are Certification steps?

- ☐ Review the process and materials through the Sport Education Academy (Bronze level intake). Contact the U.S. Ski & Snowboard Club Development Manager to register your club as a candidate for podium certification and designate your club certification team consisting of:
 - (1) Staff Leader Representative
 - (1) Board/Ownership Leader Representative
 - (1) Club Community Representative.

U.S. Ski & Snowboard will send you a Club Certification Agreement. Have all three members of your team sign and return the U.S. Ski & Snowboard Club Certification Agreement. ***Note: Club must hold a current U.S. Ski & Snowboard Membership***

- ☐ Gather and compile required submittals and complete worksheets
- ☐ Coordinate and begin your club self-assessment using the "Certification Self-Assessment Standards Workbook"
- ☐ Schedule club interview (Bronze), or site visit (Silver/Gold)
- ☐ Write "Executive Summary" (Silver/Gold application only) and submit entire packet to U.S. Ski & Snowboard

What materials are required for submission?

Bronze required document submittals checklist. (Templates provided on the Sport Education Academy portal)

- ☐ Club Business Entity, History and Organizational Structure - Include Mission, Vision, Values
- ☐ Staffing Worksheet
- ☐ Facilities Worksheet
- ☐ Athletic Performance Worksheets
- ☐ Training Phases Worksheet
- ☐ Volunteer Statistics Worksheet
- ☐ Self-Assessment Standards Workbook
- ☐ Current S.W.O.T. Analysis and Summary

Provide original club documents for the following:

- ☐ Annual Budget and current Budget Report
- ☐ Examples of Primary Job Descriptions

Silver/Gold required submittals checklist (assumes Bronze application documents are current):

- ☐ Bylaws
- ☐ Organizational Chart
- ☐ Board Matrix
- ☐ Board Handbook
- ☐ Strategic Plan (Most Recent)
- ☐ Annual Budget (Most Recent)
- ☐ Primary Budget Reports (Most Recent)
- ☐ Annual report
- ☐ Resource Development Plan
- ☐ Code of Conduct
- ☐ Staff Handbook/Manual
- ☐ Professional Development Plan
- ☐ Description of Feedback Practices (Board, Staff, Athletes)
- ☐ Program Curriculum Description
- ☐ Program Plan (example)
- ☐ Parent Engagement and Education Plan
- ☐ Athlete Career and Education Information
- ☐ Development and Fundraising Materials
- ☐ Marketing and Communications Plan
- ☐ Awards and Recognition
- ☐ Emergency Action Plan
- ☐ Written Agreements with Partners/Resort

The certification process and materials provide a summary and evaluation of these important areas of operation:

- ☐ Leadership & Governance
- ☐ Finance & Funding
- ☐ Club Culture
- ☐ PR, Marketing & Communications
- ☐ Human Resources
- ☐ Athlete Safety & Wellness
- ☐ Club Programming

All certification applications will be processed on a first-come, first-serve basis. Only complete applications will be considered for final review.

Who is involved in the Certification process?

Engagement of board members, staff, athletes, parents, and the community is essential to the certification process. This shares the workload and increases engagement and transparency. A lead staff member and designated board representative are required for interviews and visitations.

Broad participation, including community input, visibility, and PR opportunities, ensures the club maximizes the benefits of certification. Active involvement turns certification into a meaningful growth process—not just an administrative task.

What is the purpose of the club visit / review meeting?

The purpose of the club visit or review:

- ☐ Assess the accuracy of the Certification Application and materials
- ☐ Provide an internal and external peer review
- ☐ Engage club leaders (staff and board) in an organizational assessment
- ☐ Identify and discuss club strengths and weaknesses / opportunities and threats
- ☐ Determine what additional resources the club needs to continue Club Development and improve performance
- ☐ Help determine appropriate level of certification

To represent the partnership between the club and U.S. Ski & Snowboard, the Club Certification Team is comprised of:

U.S. Ski & Snowboard Club Certification Committee

1. Club Expert Consultant - as local to the region as possible
2. U.S. Ski & Snowboard employee(s) - Club Development Manager, Regional Manager, Sport Education Director or other.
3. Optional – Peer Reviewer

Of the above visiting team members, one may focus on organizational performance and one/others may focus on programming and athletic performance.

Club Certification Team

1. Club Executive Staff Leader - Executive Director, Head of School, Program Director, etc.
2. Current or honorary club board member
3. Club Community Member - Delegated by the club/unbiased/someone with a broad perspective and the best interest of the club in the forefront

Sample Club Visit Agenda (Silver/Gold Candidates)

This sample agenda may be modified as needed to accommodate club needs, the visiting team and programming considerations. This may include multiple visits.

Day 1	
12:30pm	Visiting team arrives. Lunch with the visiting team (hosted by the club) – U.S. Ski & Snowboard team gives overview of certification process and visitation objective and will address questions regarding the same.
2:00pm - 5:00pm	Review of organizational performance.
5:30pm - 7:30pm	Dinner with parents, community members, other board members and other constituents as arranged by the club (hosted by club). Informal discussion facilitated about club culture, parent involvement, student-athlete life and career performance and volunteer performance. Student-athlete and parent or community presentations (informal and brief) welcomed.
Day 2	
8:00am - 11:00am	Visiting team observes the program in action. Team should gain exposure to as many program elements as possible.
12:00pm	Lunch with coaches and athletes.
1:30pm - 3:30pm	Review of programmatic performance. Should include key coaching staff
4:00pm - 4:30pm	Visiting team wrap-up. Discuss next steps, delegate roles and responsibilities, and map out tasks and timeline to complete the certification process.
5:00pm	Visiting team departs.

A club interview (for Bronze level) will follow a similar but significantly amended structure. Club interviews will typically take 2 to 4 hours over two days.

What is the follow up to the club visit / review?

The U.S. Ski & Snowboard Club Certification team will conduct a final review of all materials; in the case of Gold/Silver, the team will add observations and recommendations to the final report.

Final recommendations for Bronze, Silver and Gold levels of certification will be based on:

Bronze

- ☐ Quality of application
- ☐ Data in submitted worksheets
- ☐ Completion and verification of the scores and comments in the Certification Standards Workbook
- ☐ Interview report and assessment

Silver/Gold

- ☐ Quality of application
- ☐ Data in submitted worksheets
- ☐ Completion and verification of the scores and comments in the Certification Standards Workbook
- ☐ Visiting team report and assessment
- ☐ Assessment of athletic performance

Certification Timeline

Application timing depends on the club's resources and engagement. Our goal is to schedule interviews and site visits in an expeditious manner that fits both parties' calendars. where clubs receive recognition, marketing tools, and resources to support recruitment and growth.

Guidelines for U.S. Ski & Snowboard Podium Club Recertification or Advancement

Recertification (Every 4 years):

The U.S. Ski & Snowboard Club Podium Certification Program is designed to be a dynamic process. The basis of the initial application is a team driven, in depth self-assessment conducted by the U.S. Ski & Snowboard Club, including submittals, worksheets, a standards scoring sheet and a self-assessment final report, followed by a U.S. Ski & Snowboard interview (Bronze) or site visit (Silver/Gold). The assessment is a holistic look at the organization, and addresses an extensive set of standards within the following eight (8) key domains:

1. Leadership and Governance
2. Finance and Funding
3. Fostering Club Culture
4. PR, Communications and Marketing
5. Human Resources
6. Child/Athlete Protection

7. Club Programming
8. Club Logistics

The initial certification process gives both the club and U.S. Ski & Snowboard a clear picture of the club's strengths, challenges, and opportunities, helping inform strategic planning.

Podium Certified Clubs apply for recertification every four years. Clubs can maintain their current level (Bronze, Silver, or Gold) or seek advancement. The process, similar to initial certification, requires updates on major changes, continued alignment with best practices, a detailed program review, a final report, and one or two staff site visits.

Progressing to Club Certification Levels

Clubs with Podium Level Certification may apply to advance from Bronze to Silver or Silver to Gold by submitting a written request to the Club Development Manager. The Certification Committee will review the club's progress and plans for sustained improvement. After submitting all required documents, a site visit or call will be scheduled, and a final report issued within three months.

Executive Summary

When applying for certification renewal (every 4 years), or advancement, the executive summary is the last step for the club. This report will include the following:

- ☐ Summary of the self-study and assessment findings
- ☐ Description and demonstration of the steps taken in specific areas identified as needing improvement during the previous certification process
- ☐ A basic plan/statement for how organizational and athletic performance will be measured moving forward and major benchmarks for the next 4-year review
- ☐ Recommendation and justification for new certification level

This report, along with required submittals, worksheets and standards scoresheets, will be reviewed by the U.S. Ski & Snowboard certification team and the club will be provided with written observations, recommendations and the outcome of the application.

CHAPTER 4: ORGANIZATIONAL ENTITY, DOCUMENTS AND INSURANCE

The first step in Club Development is recognizing what type of legal business entity the organization is. That will determine the corresponding structures of leadership and governance, finances and taxes and insurance needs. The principles of this section for all U.S. Ski & Snowboard clubs are:

- ☐ Understand the type of club and legal entity
- ☐ Understand the organization's general legal requirements
- ☐ Have appropriate organizing documents updated and in place
- ☐ Comply with all requirements for current U.S. Ski & Snowboard memberships

Club Structures

It's important to establish what kind of club you are operating (or want to operate) and the structures necessary to efficiently run that type of club. U.S. Ski & Snowboard clubs have different models and unique features, yet all U.S. Ski & Snowboard clubs are charged with providing responsible athletic programs for aspiring skiers and riders to develop skills while pursuing aspirations of excellence.

The four most common types of clubs in U.S. Ski & Snowboard are a combination, hybrid or collaboration of these common organizational structures:

1. **Non-profit:** Organizations that are formally designated 501(c)(3) organizations by the IRS. It is important to note the nature of that status as defined by the Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(3) at [irs.gov](https://www.irs.gov). Approximately 80% of U.S. Ski & Snowboard clubs are 501(c)(3) charities.
2. **Resort Competition Department:** There are many models of resort affiliated competition departments.
 - a. The resort's competition center may be designated by the resort and U.S. Ski & Snowboard as the organizing committee for U.S. Ski & Snowboard events.
 - b. The resort competition center may also provide training and coaching. Often this model will have a very close partnership with the resort's ski and snowboard school.
 - c. There may often be a 501(c)(3) in the scene with this type of model, such as a Sports Education Foundation or Booster Club (see OMARA, Crested Butte Snowsports Foundation, Mammoth Mountain Community Foundation)
 - d. As private organizations, resort-based programs are governed by resort management and ownership.
3. **Academy:** The academy structure endeavors to provide a complete athletic, academic and community environment for student athletes. Student athletes may participate as full-time residents at the academy or may be day students. These organizations are often accredited independent schools and maintain 501(c)(3) nonprofit status. These may include Winter Term Programs.
4. **College and University:** College and university programs affiliate with one of two organizations that provide athletic opportunities for student athletes:
 - a. NCAA universities - the NCAA affiliated colleges and universities field competitive teams of men and women in alpine and cross country sports. NCAA schools compete within

either the Eastern Intercollegiate Ski Association or the Rocky Mountain Intercollegiate Ski Association.

- b. The United States Collegiate Ski Association (USCSA) program offers programming in alpine, snowboarding, freeskiing and nordic sports and operates through regional conferences.
- c. Along with being U.S. Ski & Snowboard clubs, these programs are also governed by their academic institution and all NCAA rules and regulations.

Organizing Documents and Filings

All legal entities (nonprofit or for profit) are defined by their original *Articles of Incorporation*.

According to the legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Articles+of+Incorporation these are:

The document that must be filed with an appropriate government agency, commonly the office of the Secretary of State, if the owner of an organization wants legal recognition as a corporation.

Articles of incorporation, sometimes called a certificate of incorporation, must set forth certain information as mandated by statute. Although laws vary from state to state, the purposes of the corporation and the rights and liabilities of shareholders and directors are typical provisions required in the document. Official forms are prescribed in many states.

Once the articles of incorporation are filed with the secretary of state, corporate existence begins. In some jurisdictions, a formal certificate of incorporation attached to a duplicate of the articles must be issued to the applicant before the organization will be given legal status as a corporation.

In the case of the nonprofit corporation there are no owners. Essentially, the community the organization serves under the mission and purpose stated in the Articles is the owner, and the Board of Directors (or Trustees) is entrusted with ensuring that mission and purpose. Therefore, the Articles of a nonprofit organization must contain a dissolution clause, which states (an example from irs.gov/publications/p557/ar02.html):

Upon the dissolution of the corporation, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by a Court of Competent Jurisdiction of the county in which the principal office of the corporation is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

In addition to the Articles of Incorporation, organizations must adopt bylaws as defined by the legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/bylaws:

Bylaws are the written rules for conduct of a corporation, association, partnership or any organization. They should not be confused with the Articles of Corporation which only state the basic outline of the company, including stock structure. Bylaws generally provide for meetings, elections of a board of directors and officers, filling vacancies, notices, types and duties of officers, committees, assessments and other routine conduct. Bylaws are in effect a contract among members, and must be formally adopted and/or amended.

It is especially important that nonprofit organizations (due to the nature of volunteer board leadership) review, understand and formally adopt their bylaws on an annual basis. This will be covered more in the Leadership and Governance chapter below.

While the annual filings of resorts and corporations follow regular base operational practices, nonprofit organizations have unique annual filing requirements which vary from state to state. For more information on what nonprofits are required to file on an annual basis see:

councilofnonprofits.org/annual-filings

If you are starting a new nonprofit organization or you want to be sure you have everything in place see: councilofnonprofits.org/resources/how-start-nonprofit

Club Insurance

Clubs must take great care in researching and securing policies to protect their organization and their directors/owners. The following are samples of insurance coverage a club can secure:

- General liability: provides protection from bodily injury, property damage, and personal injury claims.
- Excess liability: provides liability protection in excess of the general liability limit.
- Excess accident medical: coverage for medical bills for accidental injuries. It is excess over any other available insurance.
- Accidental death and dismemberment: a benefit paid in the event of death or dismemberment resulting from an accidental injury.
- Directors and officers insurance: provides coverage for suits and other legal proceedings brought against a member club's board of directors, officers or the member club itself for allegations of wrongful acts, errors and omissions.
- Automobile insurance: coverage for losses of an owned or non-owned automobile.
- Property coverage: coverage for damage to property owned, rented or borrowed by a club such as buildings, furniture, computers, gates, timing equipment, etc.
- Child molestation coverage
- Specialty event/high risk activities coverage: snowsports, rock climbing, skate facilities, rafting, paintball, etc. It is important that your insurance provider understand all the activities you do with the athletes, to coordinate proper coverage.
- Travel insurance: assistance with travel common travel mishaps, especially for foreign travel.

Disclaimer: This summary provides a general overview of insurance coverage of U.S. Ski & Snowboard members. It is not a complete explanation of all policy provisions or specifics of the policy benefits. No coverage is extended, and no representations are made, other than what is stated in the actual insurance policies.

For U.S. Ski & Snowboard insurance information please refer to

<https://buckner.com/us-ski-and-snowboard/> for the most current information on the coverage U.S. Ski & Snowboard offers clubs. To compare your coverage to the recommended standard, see the **U.S. Ski & Snowboard Insurance Program Checklist** in the Appendix.

Insurance and Individual U.S. Ski & Snowboard Membership

U.S. Ski & Snowboard membership provides some additional insurance coverage to its individual members. All clubs are encouraged to register all participants with U.S. Ski & Snowboard.

U.S. Ski & Snowboard requires members to have valid and sufficient primary medical/accident insurance coverage and to accept full responsibility for understanding the provisions of such coverage as a condition of becoming a U.S. Ski & Snowboard member and participating in official USSA training and competition. Such primary coverage must be in effect for the entire term of the membership year in order for the member to have coverage under the U.S. Ski & Snowboard excess accident medical policy. Members must carry proof of primary insurance and such proof must be available at each event so that prompt medical/hospital care can be authorized, if needed.

For more information regarding the coverage associated with your individual U.S. Ski & Snowboard membership please refer to <https://buckner.com/us-ski-and-snowboard/>

U.S. Ski & Snowboard CLIP Insurance Program

While many different clubs may arrange for their own insurance needs, U.S. Ski & Snowboard offers a review of insurance for member clubs to help ensure they are adequately and appropriately covered. However, U.S. Ski & Snowboard is not an insurance provider. As a service to certified member clubs, U.S. Ski & Snowboard offers a Club Liability Insurance Program (CLIP) through a partnership with Buckner Insurance. Clubs must meet Club Minimum Requirements to be eligible for this service, and additional fees apply.

More information on this program can be found at <https://buckner.com/us-ski-and-snowboard/>

Other U.S. Ski & Snowboard Risk Management Resources / Items for Consideration

Risk Management Contacts

U.S. Ski & Snowboard has partnered with the Buckner Company to assist U.S. Ski & Snowboard with its risk management needs. Members of U.S. Ski & Snowboard may contact Sheryl Barnes, U.S. Ski & Snowboard Member Services, at 435 647 2013.

Coach Education

All coaches that attend U.S. Ski & Snowboard sanctioned competitions *are required* to earn at least a Level 100 Coach Certification. Annual continuing education is required to maintain certification. Coaches and volunteers who are *not* registering for sanctioned competitions can also benefit from the learning materials available through the Sport Education Academy.

Contracts

Your club may be required to execute an agreement with another entity (for example, to use a facility for ski practice) and it is important that you fully understand the terms and conditions of the proposed agreement. Most agreements include hold harmless and indemnification language, and we encourage you to take the following best practices into consideration when reviewing the indemnity and hold harmless provisions of any agreement.

- ☐ Ideal Wording – One-sided indemnification in U.S. Ski & Snowboard club's favor. The other party indemnifies and holds U.S. Ski & Snowboard CLIP affiliate club harmless for losses; and U.S. Ski & Snowboard club does not indemnify or hold the other party harmless.
- ☐ Acceptable Wording – Mutual indemnification and hold harmless. Each party is responsible for its own negligent acts.
- ☐ Acceptable Wording, but not as good as above – One sided, but only for U.S. Ski & Snowboard club's own negligence. U.S. Ski & Snowboard club indemnifies and holds the other party harmless, but only for losses arising out of the U.S. Ski & Snowboard club's sole or gross negligence.
- ☐ Worst Case Scenario – One-sided indemnification in the other party's favor. U.S. Ski & Snowboard club indemnifies the other party and holds them harmless for losses, and the other party does not indemnify or hold U.S. Ski & Snowboard club harmless.
- ☐ Not Acceptable – One sided in the other party's favor and/or assuming responsibility for the negligent acts of the other party.

CHAPTER 5: LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The Principles of U.S. Ski & Snowboard Club Leadership and Governance:

- ☐ The Mission, Vision, Values and Goals/Objectives of the organization are clearly understood by all both internally and externally.
- ☐ The culture of the organization is purposefully created and not left to chance.
- ☐ The staff leadership of the organization is carefully hired, supported and regularly evaluated.
- ☐ The organization has clear short and long-term strategic plans.
- ☐ The organization has appropriate financial and human resources to fulfill the mission.
- ☐ Leadership evaluates its own, and the organization's performance.
- ☐ The organization operates according to clear policies and procedures.

Establishing Mission, Vision, Goals and Values

A good mission statement explains:

1. Why the organization exists — its overall purpose
2. Who the organization serves
3. How it serves them
4. What is/are the most important desired outcome(s)

A mission statement should be 1–4 sentences, broad enough to cover all the club does but focused enough to guide daily work and goals. The vision statement describes the future the club aspires to and motivates progress toward that future. While the mission is stable, the vision may evolve as goals are met.

Values define how the mission and vision are lived out, shaping expectations and reinforcing the club's identity. U.S. Ski & Snowboard's core values include Integrity, Passion, Fun, Team, Community, Excellence, and Grit.

Culture is created through how staff and volunteers embody the mission, vision, and values.

Leadership is essential to long-term success. Leaders shape culture through their actions, communication, and consistency with values. Whether staff or volunteer, strong leadership is key to a professional, effective club. "Excellence is not an accomplishment. It is a spirit, a never-ending process." - Lawrence M. Miller, *American Spirit: Visions of a New Corporate Culture*

Planning – Where are we?

Before starting the planning process it is important your club and its leadership understand your current situation. Understanding a club's status means the organization will help to ensure its mission and vision is appropriate and relevant, and will also help with mapping out next steps, goals and objectives for organizational improvement.

Resources that will help with this:

1. Assessing your organizational life cycle
managementhelp.org/organizations/life-cycles.htm#anchor2002792

2. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis

The true value of planning lies in annual evaluation. Each year, clubs should conduct a SWOT analysis to assess strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, then respond proactively. A template is available in the *Guide to Club Excellence* appendix.

Planning and Goal Setting – Where are we going?

Use the SWOT analysis to identify key success factors and barriers, then set a few SMART goals—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-focused, and Time-bound. Focus on turning opportunities into programs and using strengths to overcome weaknesses.

Choose strategies that align with club values, staff, and budget, and define tactics and ways to measure progress. Be flexible, revisit goals regularly, and apply the same approach when helping athletes set personal goals.

Strategic Planning – How to get there?

Annual operational plans help clubs allocate resources, forecast finances, and measure progress toward goals. Planning should include two key components:

- ☐ **Core Budget:** Covers essential operations and ongoing activities needed to sustain the club.
- ☐ **Initiatives:** New projects, staff, or equipment requiring additional funding to improve club performance.

Club activities should directly support stated goals and be achievable within current resources. Examples include hiring staff, improving marketing, or refining the athletic pipeline. Avoid activities that don't align with goals, even if they're low-cost.

Initiatives that fall outside current funding—like facility upgrades or new programs—should be clearly defined and prioritized. Each initiative should outline its cost, how it supports club goals, and the steps needed to implement it.

Long term planning (five-year strategic plan)

Strategic planning maps out how a club will achieve its long-term goals, typically through a five-year plan that guides financial decisions and capital investments. This living document should be updated regularly based on performance and resource projections.

Clubs aim to improve athletic performance, grow membership, raise funds, engage volunteers, develop staff, and maintain strong operations.

Implementation involves turning broad strategies into action by defining:

- ☐ What is the objective
- ☐ Who is responsible
- ☐ How it will be executed
- ☐ When benchmarks will be met

- ☐ How much it will cost in resources

Control and accountability: strategic planning and implementation summary for Clubs

Effective strategic planning requires not only setting goals, but also measuring progress and adapting along the way. Clubs should use a structured monitoring system (what, who, how, when, how much) to track key performance indicators and adjust as needed.

Annual Strategic Planning Roadmap

May–June: Leadership Retreat & Analysis

- ☐ Host a retreat or planning workshop
- ☐ Review organizational life cycle and prior season results
- ☐ Perform a SWOT analysis
- ☐ Gather input from athletes, parents, and community

July: Draft Strategic Objectives

- ☐ Brainstorm potential initiatives with input from stakeholders
- ☐ Categorize objectives (e.g., staffing, programming, facilities)

August: Finalize & Prioritize

- ☐ Review and refine objectives
- ☐ Evaluate each using key factors: political, capacity, financial
- ☐ Organize by timeline (1-year, 3-year, 5+ years)
- ☐ Ensure objectives are SMART
- ☐ Gain formal board approval

September: Community Feedback & Delegation

- ☐ Share draft objectives with key partners and stakeholders
- ☐ Gather feedback and identify additional resources and collaborations
- ☐ Adjust objectives based on input
- ☐ Assign leadership and accountability roles
- ☐ Begin budgeting for each objective

October: Plan Assembly

- ☐ Consolidate objectives, timelines, strategies, and budgets
- ☐ Determine formats for internal and public sharing

Early November: Finalize & Distribute

- Finalize plan and distribute to internal team and community stakeholders

Late November–April: **Execute & Monitor**

- ☐ Implement plan and track progress
- ☐ Maintain accountability and adjust as needed
- ☐ Continue collecting feedback to guide updates

This cycle ensures a club remains mission-driven, responsive, and aligned with long-term success.

Governance

The leadership principles and practices will not be achieved without a strong, active model and appropriate structures of governance. The most important practices to ensure sound governance will be covered in this section.

Bylaws

Bylaws are the legally binding rules that determine how an organization is to be operated and also how the organization's board will operate. Bylaws are a guide and reference on how a club is structured, what rights the members have and the procedures by which those rights can be put into effect. Your club's bylaws should include information such as, and (as discussed above) the bylaws should be reviewed, updated as needed and formally approved by the Board of Directors each year:

- ☐ Official name of the organization
- ☐ Organization's statement of purpose
- ☐ Fiscal year dates
- ☐ Qualifications and number of board members and officers
- ☐ Duties of board members and officers
- ☐ Board elections
- ☐ Voting requirements and procedures
- ☐ Term and term limits of board members
- ☐ Removal and vacancies of board members
- ☐ Circumstances under which members may be expelled
- ☐ What constitutes a quorum
- ☐ Description of standing committees
- ☐ Frequency of meetings
- ☐ Notice of meetings
- ☐ Meeting procedures (such as action without meeting and meeting by telephone)
- ☐ Bylaw amendment procedure
- ☐ Procedure for dissolving the organization and disposition of assets
- ☐ Conflict of interest statement
- ☐ Conflict resolution procedure

Clubs should create their own set of the bylaws to assist in governing their organization. In the appendix there is a sample bylaws template. U.S. Ski & Snowboard's bylaws can be viewed here:

usskiandsnowboard.org/search?keys=bylaws

Because bylaws are legally binding and need to comply with national and state law, it is advised to have a lawyer with nonprofit legal expertise review club bylaws no less than every three years for accuracy and compliance.

Board Manual

The bylaws of an organization may not be user friendly. It may be helpful to compile a more user friendly Board Manual. This can be used to orient new board members, guide the board in its ongoing operations and leadership roles, and be a place to house all important organizational documentation.

The Board Manual should contain:

1. History
2. Mission, Vision, Values
3. Programs
4. Synopsis of most important and operational bylaws
5. Composition of board of directors
6. Election to the board of directors and succession planning
7. Governance model, roles of the board members and officers
8. Organizational structure and committees
9. Evaluation of organization, director, board and board members
10. Financial policies
11. Development and fundraising policies ("Give and/or Get policy")
12. Non-discrimination policy
13. Conflict resolution policy
14. Other key policies
15. Description of primary strategic alliances and relations with other entities

You may also use the Manual as a place to hold other current and up-to-date hard (or electronic) copies of important documents. Examples may include:

- ☐ Attachment #1: Articles of Incorporation
- ☐ Attachment #2: Current By-Laws
- ☐ Attachment #3: Need Scholarship Guidelines and Application
- ☐ Attachment #4: Merit Scholarship Guidelines and Application
- ☐ Attachment #5: Scholarship Review Criteria
- ☐ Attachment #6: Local Program and Program Grant Guidelines and Application

Carver Policy Governance Model

It is important that board members understand the nature of governance in general as well as the particular expectations. One helpful and widely accepted resource is the Policy Governance Model developed by Dr. John Carver. This model is used by businesses, governments and nonprofits. A simple summary consists of the following points:

- The Board of Directors (BOD) will focus on larger issues, delegate with clarity, define the staff and volunteer jobs without meddling, rigorously evaluate the accomplishment of the organization and truly lead the organization.

- The BOD will separate issues of organizational purpose (ends) from all other organizational issues (means), placing primary importance on those ends. Policy governance boards demand accomplishment of purpose (mission and values), and only limit the staff's/volunteer's available means to those which do not violate the board's pre-stated standards of prudence, financial accountability and ethics.
- The BOD will delegate with care, eliminating any confusion about who is responsible to the board or for what board expectations they are responsible.
- The BOD will hold the staff accountable for properly utilizing all available means to accomplish established ends.
- The BOD will annually evaluate itself, the organization, and staff/volunteers with an analysis of whether expectations (established and stated have been met.

For a full description of the Carver Policy Governance model and other resources see:

carvergovernance.com/model.htm

Board Roles and Responsibilities

The Board Manual is also a great place to lay out clear and simple expectations of board members, committee chairs and officers. An example of these types of expectations may include:

All board members are required to attend all regular monthly board meetings and review the agenda and information distributed before each meeting. Further, all board members are expected to be on at least one standing committee, such as: Governance, Finance, Development, Programs, Facilities and PR/Marketing. General monthly expectations for board members include, but are not limited to:

- ☐ Attending regular board meetings (1.5 hours usually)
- ☐ Preparing for monthly meeting, reviewing information, providing feedback (1-2 hours)
- ☐ Performing general board member duties (2-3 hours)
- ☐ Attending committee meeting (1-2 hours)
- ☐ Performing committee tasks (2-3 hours)
- ☐ Supporting event, development and fundraising (varies)

According to these estimates, board members should plan on devoting no less than 10 hours of work to the organization monthly. This expectation can increase dramatically with events or major task initiatives.

Board members are required to sign the following policies as currently approved by the Board:

- ☐ Duty of Care, Duty of Loyalty and Board expectations
- ☐ Development and Fundraising Policy

Board Composition & Structure

A club's board should include a mix of team parents and independent, diverse members—avoiding a board composed entirely of current parents. The board sets strategic direction, upholds ethical

standards, and makes collective decisions on behalf of the organization. Individual members cannot act independently without board authorization.

As fiduciaries, board members must make informed, mission-focused decisions and consider potential risks and opportunities. A board with varied skills and perspectives is better equipped to fulfill this role. While core responsibilities can't be delegated, tasks may be assigned to committees or individuals under board oversight.

Using a Board Matrix helps identify skill gaps and recruit diverse, strategic candidates aligned with the club's mission. (See the *Guide to Club Excellence* Appendix for an example.)

How to Handle Board Elections

This process is an **example** only; it can be simplified or modified as needed.

1. In advance of openings on the board the Governance Committee uses the Board Matrix to perform a gap analysis to identify what the current board needs by way of representation or expertise.
2. Current Board Members identify potential board members that will meet those needs.
3. New Candidates are proposed by the Board according to their ability to fill identified gaps.
4. Board discusses candidates and takes an official vote to determine if the next steps will be taken.
5. Board moves to appoint a sponsor to contact the candidate directly.
6. The initial contact should be informal to determine if the person is interested in moving ahead with possible board service. If they show interest in moving forward with the process, they should be given the Board Manual and a Board Candidate Information Sheet.
7. The candidate is asked to provide the Board with a brief statement of why they would like to join the Board and the Board Candidate Information Sheet.
8. Upon receiving the statement and candidate information the sponsor will set up a more formal meeting. The meeting should include:
 - a. No less than two other board members and the sponsor.
 - b. At least one board member who does not know the potential member.
 - c. At least one member of the Governance committee.
9. Prior to this meeting the candidate is invited to attend a board meeting. The meeting with the candidate should be designed for all parties to get to know each other better and also to assess the potential member's ability to serve the club. The following questions should be sent to the potential member ahead of time, and discussed at the meeting.
 - a. What inspires you about the work or mission of the club?
 - b. Can you fulfill the board's fiduciary and legal responsibilities?
 - c. Have you worked with organizations like this club or other nonprofits?
 - d. Do you have sufficient time and availability to meet the requirements of the Board as described in the Board Manual?

- e. Are you aware of and able to commit to the club's policies, including involvement in fundraising?
- f. What do you see as the main contributions, expertise, ideas, energy or contacts you can bring to the board and the club?

10. The full board will vote on candidates either at a regular board meeting or via an email vote. The new board member will begin serving at the next board meeting, or at a predetermined time (e.g. if they have an obligation and can't start for a month).

11. Within 30 days, the new member will receive an orientation.

Board Officers, Executive and Executive Committee

State laws stipulate which officer positions a nonprofit corporation must have, with the most common and necessary being the chair/president, vice chair/president, treasurer, and secretary. While these laws usually define the main functions for the officer positions, there is quite a bit of flexibility within the board to clarify the duties and tasks that each officer must carry out. During the first official board meeting the board assigns certain authorities to each officer.

Board Chair

The Board Chair has a special role as the leader of the board. As expected for any leader who must ensure that a team remains cohesive and delivers on expectations, the Board Chair is constantly making decisions, and driving the board to come to decisions in the best interest of the organization. Some of these decisions include the appointment of committee chairs, the decision to call a vote once it is determined an issue has been fully discussed and the management of a peer who has stepped out of line. When voting takes place in meetings, the Board Chair has the same right to vote as other board members or the Board Chair has the option to not vote, or to vote only to break or avoid a tie. The voting rights of the Board Chair should be clearly defined in the bylaws or board manual. Outside of meetings the Board Chair may act as the delegate and representative for the board but always within clearly defined boundaries. Duties include but are not limited to:

- ☐ Provides leadership to the board, who set policy.
- ☐ Appoints the chairpersons of committees, in consultation with other board members.
- ☐ Provides oversight to the organization, board and Board Committees.
- ☐ Helps guide and mediate board actions with respect to organizational priorities and governance concerns.
- ☐ Brings up issues confronting the organization and of concern to the board.
- ☐ Monitors financial planning and financial reports.
- ☐ Plays a leading role in financial development activities.
- ☐ Evaluates annually the performance of the organization in achieving its mission.
- ☐ Evaluates effectiveness of board members, provides counseling and assistance as necessary.

Vice-Chair

- ☐ Performs Board Chair responsibilities when the Board Chair cannot be available.
- ☐ Works closely with the Board Chair to develop and initiate officer transition plans and board member transition/replacement plans.

Secretary

- ☐ Maintains board records and ensures effective management of the organization's records.
- ☐ Manages minutes of board meetings.
- ☐ Ensures minutes are distributed to members shortly after each meeting.
- ☐ Is sufficiently familiar with legal documents (articles, bylaws, IRS letters, etc.) to note applicability during meetings.

Treasurer

- ☐ Oversees and manages finances of the organization.
- ☐ Administers fiscal matters of the organization.
- ☐ Provides regular budget reports and annual budget to the board for members' approval.
- ☐ Ensures development and board review of financial policies and procedures.

Executive Director

The most important decision that a board makes is to hire a chief executive, usually an Executive Director, to run the organization's programs and to manage its everyday operations. Delegating the management and administration frees the board to devote time to its main function — governance. For the board, hiring a chief staff person means letting go of daily decisions while working in constructive partnership with the new manager. Although there is a division of labor, the board and the Executive Director remain allies, working closely together in information sharing and support. For the division of labor to succeed, the board must have a clear job description for the Executive Director and conduct regular performance assessments based on mutually agreed-upon goals. The board needs to refrain from micromanagement and accept the transfer of decision-making power. It has to be able to trust that the Executive Director can choose the right tactics to reach the overall targets.

Board	Executive Staff
Develop Policy	Implement Policy
Ends	Means
What	How
Discern	Act
Think	Do
Head	Hands

Executive Committee

Many boards do not need an Executive Committee. If a board does form one, however, the Executive Committee's traditional charter is to act on behalf of the board when the full board cannot or does not need to meet, or to take on special assignments. These situations might include handling urgent matters, approval of standard and repetitive documents and administering the chief executive performance evaluation.

The Executive Committee may be called upon to review and determine consequences for code of conduct violations and other grievances within the organization.

The bylaws should define the limits to the Executive Committee's authority level. The most common challenge for Executive Committees is their tendency to replace the full board when the situation does not warrant it. To stay on top of all activities, the full board needs to confirm all Executive Committee decisions during the next board meeting.

Board Committees

A committee within a board is a standing group of board members (and potentially volunteers) who perform ongoing board functions and work under a well-defined scope. Reports from committees (committee reports) become the main content of full board meetings. Committees help define the regular working structure of the board. With a good committee structure in place, committees perform a majority of the work between full board meetings, and there is a higher level of accountability for tasks being completed in certain areas.

The role of committees is to facilitate the board's work. The board delegates specific roles to standing committees. The board does not, however, delegate its stamp of approval with these assignments; it retains its own authority to accept, modify, or reject a committee's recommendations. Naturally, committees can make their own internal decisions concerning their processes and structures as separate work groups, but the results of their work will be judged by the full board.

Committee Chairs

Committee Chairs are expected to hold regular monthly meetings, provide monthly progress reports at the general board meeting, and use the committee structure as an active way to accomplish necessary tasks or strategies for the benefit of the Foundation.

Examples of Committees:

Governance Committee

The Governance Committee will work on defining, compiling and implementing the best principles and practices specific to the club's Board of Directors. This committee also looks for professional development and educational opportunities for the Board of Directors and leadership of the organization. This committee's focus includes but is not limited to:

- ☐ Maintaining and updating board manual and policies
- ☐ Composition of and election to the board of directors
- ☐ Roles and responsibilities of board, board members, officers and director
- ☐ Governance model, organizational structure and committees – board/director relationship

- ☐ Evaluation of the board, board members and director
- ☐ Board policies (Giving / Conflict of interest / Discrimination and Inclusion / etc.)
- ☐ Official grant/scholarship guidelines and other policies
- ☐ Board education, orientation and professional development

Development Committee

The Development Committee is responsible for organizing and planning for the development of financial resources, which support the organization's mission and objectives.

Create a resource development plan

- ☐ Work directly with the donor database to build up contacts and data
- ☐ Structure donor categories, groups, and campaigns
- ☐ Draft initial communications, scripts and talking points for development efforts
- ☐ Help draft case statement
- ☐ Research potential grants and donors

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee will work to help manage the club's finances and assets in a responsible and accountable way by defining and compiling:

- ☐ Financial policies and procedures
- ☐ Help draft and propose annual budgets and/or program or project budgets
- ☐ Reviews regular financial reports and statements
- ☐ Research investment strategies

Athlete Safety Committee

The Athlete Safety Committee should consist of three members from administration, staff and board. This committee will coordinate and oversee all athlete safety policies, procedures, and education, ensuring a consistent, professional, systematic, and mission-based approach to safeguarding athlete well-being and compliance with national standards.

- ☐ Codes of Conduct and Athlete/Parent Agreements
- ☐ SafeSport compliance and training
- ☐ Education for athletes, parents, and coaches (e.g., orientation, workshops)
- ☐ Review of incident response and reporting protocols
- ☐ Risk management at practices, travel, and events
- ☐ Presence at community events to promote athlete safety awareness
- ☐ Help maintain positive relations with key partners and governing bodies
- ☐

PR and Marketing Committee

The PR/Marketing Committee will coordinate and approve all outgoing messaging, advertising, and public relations ensuring a consistent, professional, systematic and mission-based approach to all aspects of marketing and PR efforts.

- ☐ Website

- ☐ Print publications and materials
- ☐ Branding
- ☐ Review annual event plan
- ☐ Presence at community events year-round
- ☐ Help maintain positive relations with strategic allies

Program and Facilities Committee

The Programs and Facilities Committee ensures programs align with the organization's mission and liaises with the resort to secure necessary facilities, while also managing equipment planning and maintenance.

Parents, Volunteers and Events Committee

The Parents, Volunteers, and Events Committee manages volunteers and plans community events to engage parents and support the organization's mission.

Ad Hoc Committees or Task Forces

Ad hoc committees and task forces handle specific, short-term projects or tasks assigned by the board. Unlike standing committees, they have a narrow focus and a set completion date.

Expert Opinions

Boards should rarely delegate decision-making to outside experts, except in cases like audits, investment management, or executive compensation. If the board exercises due diligence in selecting and overseeing the expert, liability may shift from the board to the advisor.

Code of Ethics

A clear code of ethics is essential for any nonprofit. Public trust is key to success, as nonprofits rely on support from donors, volunteers, government, and the public. Ethical standards help maintain credibility and accountability.

Annual Club Calendar

Clubs often lack effective communication with families. Maintaining a clear, accessible, and regularly updated organizational calendar is key to keeping families and partners informed. This simple, mission-critical tool supports professional communication and helps staff and board plan efficiently, showing leadership is organized and prepared.

Board meetings

Schedule board meetings a year in advance and send board packets 1–2 weeks prior per bylaws. Note committee meetings in the calendar for preparation, but remain flexible as schedules may change due to unforeseen issues.

Board Education

Board member education is another issue that tends not to happen unless it is scheduled. Assign special governance topics to each board meeting to involve the board in discussions of its own practices and how to improve them.

Annual meeting

In the legally required annual meeting, the board elects new members and officers, and there is the changing of the guard. This date is a practical tool when calculating boundaries for terms.

Board Orientation

Learning how your board functions is a necessary process. An annual orientation session sets the right tone for the new arrivals and allows old and new members to mingle and get to know each other before the hard work starts.

Annual awards banquet

This important annual event is normally scheduled in the spring, and may also fulfill one of the club obligations to host an annual meeting and election.

Annual fundraising activities

Important annual club fundraising activities might include a Ski and Snowboard Swap or a Ski and Snowboard Ball.

Annual parent orientation sessions

These are scheduled in the fall. The board and the staff take the opportunity to communicate philosophy, policy, procedures, and expectations and to answer questions.

Annual retreat

The board should set aside time outside of its regular board meetings to address important issues. Topics can vary from a refresher course on basic board responsibilities to brainstorming factors affecting the organization in the coming years.

Evaluation

Club Leadership is responsible for creating a culture of evaluation, learning and constant improvement. This involves implementing evaluative practices from top to bottom. Below are examples of evaluation processes that can be applied to the executive staff leadership, the board, board members and the officers of the board.

Evaluation of the Director, Board and Officers

1. Director Statement of Desired Outcomes: The Director provides the Board with a Statement of Desired Outcomes that outlines the Director's personal, professional and organizational goals for the coming year. This is to be drafted for the August meeting. Board feedback is provided. An approved statement is proposed at the September meeting.
2. The Board of Directors provides the Director with an evaluation of performance (both in writing and verbally) based on the Statement of Desired Outcomes and other performance objectives as determined by the Board. This evaluation takes place in the first week of April before the regular April Board meeting.
3. The Governance Committee facilitates an annual evaluation with the Board as a whole and each individual Board Member. This evaluation takes place in the summer and the results are reviewed at the August or September Board meeting. Board and Board Member Self-Evaluations are below to be used for this evaluation process – or the Governance committee may use other tools or processes at their discretion. For a Board Self Evaluation Template, see Appendix.
4. The Governance Committee facilitates an annual evaluation of the committees, committee chairs and officers. The descriptions of responsibility for each committee, committee chair and

officers (see descriptions above) can be used as a basis for this evaluation. The committee chair and officers should do a self-evaluation based on these criteria to be discussed with the Governance committee and full board as appropriate. A Statement of Desired Outcomes and review of that statement can be an easy and helpful model.

CHAPTER 6: FINANCE AND FUNDING

The Principles of U.S. Ski & Snowboard Club Finance and Funding:

- ☐ Financial priorities and funding initiatives match the organization's stated mission and vision.
- ☐ All resources are properly managed and accounted for.
- ☐ Finances and funding are transparent to all appropriate constituents.
- ☐ A case for supporting your organization is developed and communicated.
- ☐ Resources are developed and available to adequately support the mission and vision.

Resource management

Sport and recreation organizations achieve their strategic goals and deliver their programs and services through the efficient and effective application of the following resources:

- ☐ Human (volunteers and staff)
- ☐ Physical (facilities and equipment)
- ☐ Financial resources

Responsible management of all resources is perhaps the most important factor that separates organizations that are successful from those that are either less successful, or those that no longer exist; and, it is most important to understand the accounting and managing of financial resources, as this will often dictate a club's capacity to manage human, physical and other resources.

Financial Literacy

All staff and board members should understand these key financial reports: Annual Budget (operating), Profit and Loss (YTD and Budget-to-Actual), and Balance Sheet. If unclear, have a treasurer or a CPA provide a brief overview. Regular presentations by the finance committee or treasurer help build ongoing understanding.

For more, see *Financial Management for Nonprofit Organizations* by Zeitlow, Hankin, and Seidner.

Building a Financial Plan: Develop a Budget and Resource Development Plan

Financial oversight and resource development (e.g. fundraising, earned income and membership) are critical board responsibilities. The resources needed to carry out the strategic plan must be described in a budget and financial plan.

Separate Earned Income from Development/Fundraising Income

Understanding your budget starts with recognizing two income types: earned income (program fees and service payments), managed by staff and driven by marketing, and development income (donors, sponsors, grants), managed by the board. Note that sponsorships can act like earned income if marketing-driven, while corporate or private donations function as fundraising support.

Establish a Recordkeeping System for the Organization's Official Records

Corporate documents, board meeting minutes, financial reports and other official records must be preserved for the life of the organization. Use your Secretary of State or State Attorney General's office as a resource.

Establish an Accounting System

Responsible stewardship of the organization's finances requires the establishment of an accounting system that meets both current and anticipated needs. A certified public accountant experienced in nonprofit accounting can be a useful resource.

Track In-Kind Resources

Track and account for all in-kind resources that may include: volunteer time (including board), reduction of fees (such as for hall space), pro bono professional services, pro bono construction or labor, etc. These are real resources that help your organization meet its goals, and would have financial ramifications if lost.

File for an Internal Revenue Service Determination of Federal Tax-Exempt Status

Nonprofits with charitable, educational, scientific, religious, or cultural purposes qualify for tax-exempt status under IRS sections 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4). Apply using IRS Form 1023 and Publication 557 at www.irs.gov. Since the application is a legal document, seek help from an experienced consultant, attorney, or local IRS office.

File for State and Local Tax Exemptions

Apply for income, sales, and property tax exemptions per local laws using state or municipal revenue offices. Comply with charitable solicitation laws by obtaining required permits/licenses and filing annual reports, typically through the Attorney General, Commerce Department, or local clerk's office.

Know your Numbers

To manage club finances effectively, leaders must understand revenue, expenses, and profit. This fluency helps make informed decisions and improves financial presentations to donors or grantors.

Key tips:

- ☐ Align budgets with chart of accounts
- ☐ Match income with related expenses
- ☐ View expenses as funding opportunities
- ☐ Separate earned income from fundraising revenue
- ☐ Control expenses and payroll
- ☐ Track profit contribution
- ☐ Analyze profitability and financial ratios, including:
 - ☐ Cash and Reserve Ratios
 - ☐ Current and Asset Ratios

- ☐ Debt and Return Ratios
- ☐ Net Surplus and Operation Ratios
- ☐ Program Expense Ratio (maximize mission-related costs)
- ☐ General Operating Expense Ratio (minimize non-program costs)

Other Steps

- ☐ Obtain an employer identification number (EIN) from the IRS.
- ☐ Register with the state unemployment insurance bureau.
- ☐ Apply for a nonprofit mailing permit from the U.S. Postal Service.
- ☐ Obtain directors' and officers' liability insurance.

Financial Aid

Some athletes and families can't afford U.S. Ski & Snowboard club programs, so clubs should have a financial aid strategy to support those who both need and deserve it. A dedicated committee should manage fundraising, applications, and awards. Aid is typically partial to encourage athlete commitment. Financial aid should be included in the club's budget and fundraising plans.

Scholarships support both athletes and club goals like diversity and enrollment. Structure your program to balance individual support with organizational objectives, making it attractive to donors and sponsors.

Accounting System

For a comprehensive guide see: *Financial Management for Nonprofit Organizations: Policies and Practices* by John Zeitlow, Jo Ann Hankin and Alan G. Seidner.

The basic principles of ski and snowboard club financial and accounting practices are summarized below.

Financial Oversight

The club treasurer must understand their duties and how they'll be evaluated. They track all financial transactions and advise leadership on major financial decisions like investing or borrowing. The treasurer reports on past finances clearly and manages funds strategically for the club's best use. Transparency in both accounting and financial planning is essential to reflect the club's priorities and health.

Financial Operations

Most ski and snowboard clubs assign a staff administrator to assist the treasurer with daily accounting tasks, ensuring financial viability and legal compliance. Together, they establish procedures to track all financial transactions and produce regular reports for leadership. Smaller clubs may hire an accounting firm to manage finances, but staff and treasurer must maintain strong oversight and controls.

Operating and Capital Budgets

The treasurer usually leads the budgeting process with the executive director and committee. Budgets support financial planning, reflecting the club's strategic plan. Operating budgets cover one year; capital budgets cover major expenses over about five years and are reviewed annually. Larger clubs may further break down operating budgets into cost centers like marketing, programs, and administration.

Cash Flow Budgeting

A ski and snowboard club must maintain enough cash to pay bills on time. Many clubs face cash flow issues due to small reserves and poor timing of receipts and payments. After budgeting, the treasurer and executive committee should forecast monthly cash flow to identify shortages or surpluses.

Good treasurers anticipate cash flow issues and manage them by advancing income, delaying large expenses, or borrowing (though borrowing carries risks and costs). During surplus months, the treasurer can recommend short-term investments to boost income.

Financial Reporting

The treasurer manages daily finances, coordinates budgeting, and regularly reports the club's actual financial performance to the executive committee, comparing it to the budget. They advise on managing any unexpected variances.

Unlike budgets or projections, financial reports track every dollar. Key reports to review monthly or quarterly include:

- ☐ Annual Operating Budget
- ☐ Profit & Loss (YTD and Budget-to-Actual)
- ☐ Balance Sheet

Financial Management Summary

The application of financial resources has a significant bearing on the success of ski and snowboard clubs. Clubs need to be able to account for their financial resources, but also need to look at ways to effectively use their financial resources. The treasurer, in consultation with the executive director, has a key role to play in the effective management of financial resources, but it is the executive committee or board that has ultimate accountability for how funds are used by clubs.

Development and Fundraising: The Big Picture

With clear financial goals and systems in place, it's time to shift from simple fundraising to a strategic development model. This approach isn't about size but mindset. Fundraising is vital, but it must be ethical, aligned with your mission, fit your capacity, and respect donors. Adopting a strategic development model fosters responsible stewardship and donor engagement. This shift transforms all efforts, from major campaigns to small events.

Fundraising

- ☐ Often based on short-term goals (ie. making this year's budget)
- ☐ Ad-hoc and not connected to an overarching strategic plan
- ☐ Event and logistics based – many things are done to keep people from having to directly ask for resources
- ☐ Tons of work that does not build upon itself – tend to start from scratch over and over again (ie. no database or concentration on building contacts)
- ☐ Too much emphasis on transactions rather than relations
- ☐ Desperately asking for funds, making donors uneasy and disconnected – Distress

Development

- ☐ Based on long-term goals with short-term and long-term strategies
- ☐ Nothing is done without being able to connect it to identified goals and a systematic strategy
- ☐ Based on long-term relationship building such that the ask is relational not transactional
- ☐ All efforts build upon previous efforts, ultimately becoming easier and easier (or at least more and more effective with the same amount of inputs) – (i.e. database)
- ☐ Giving the donors that sense of mutual confidence and an opportunity to participate in a well-planned-out and successful project/campaign/organization – Success

It's important to remember that when your club is engaged in true development you are not asking donors to give, you are providing them an opportunity to help you serve!

“Development Truths” for \$500 + gifts:

1. People give to people
2. You have to ask for a gift or donation
3. Success comes from meeting the needs of your donors
4. Organizations don't have needs – they serve needs
5. Relations are more important than transactions
6. Donors give out of self-interest
7. Donors like to see a direct connection with regards to their gift
8. Donors exist across the social and political spectrum

Don't Assume – Ask and Research!

When approaching donors, consider:

- ☐ This is a process, not an event – build a relationship.
- ☐ Determine what the donor needs – what is important to them?
- ☐ Present clear and concise information tailored to the donor via a Case Statement
- ☐ Set clear goals for each interaction

"Bleeding Heart"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just want to help • Focus on human impacts, stories, old capabilities vs. new capabilities with gift • Tend to think "blue sky" and very positively
"All Business"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on budget, financial responsibility, business plan, feasibility of fundraising plan and project • Project/donation diversifies funding - less government support - more self-sufficient • "Conservative" at least fiscally
"Services and Operations"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want more "hands-on" knowledge of operations - details • May have experience with a service or ski/snowboard organization(s) • Is the organization efficient and effective?
"Socialite or Politician"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to be connected and <i>seen</i> - recognized • not always large donors, but can access and influence • Want to "connect" to the broader social and political statement • Need constant affirmation
"Really Wealthy"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard read - may present as any of the above? • Everyone is after their money - hold cards close to chest • Need high degree of trust • Want specific results - typically not concerned with recognition
"Other"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can be very helpful to think through "other types" of donors you will be approaching • Think through a particular strategy for every donor • What does <i>each</i> donor <i>need</i> from this relationship?

Development Practices

Resource Development Plan

Start with mapping out a resource development plan. This plan should include:

1. Identifying your sources of revenue: What are your primary 3-5 donor categories? Use at least the three below.
 - ☐ Individual/household
 - ☐ Corporate/Business
 - ☐ Grantor (separate public and private?)

2. Determining what strategic donor groups (breaking the categories above into more specific groups) you want to track.
3. Identify the strategies by which you will solicit funding from each category and group.
 - ☐ Direct person-to-person solicitation
 - ☐ Campaigns
 - ☐ Appeals
 - ☐ Events
 - ☐ Grant writing
 - ☐ In-Kind (must be tracked, valued and recognized)

To be effective, set clear development goals for each donor group and assign responsibilities. For example, the board's development committee targets raising \$10,000 from top individual donors, while staff pursue \$5,000 from new sponsors. This approach clarifies funding sources, solicitation methods, and responsible parties, reducing uncertainty and promoting strategic development. It may also require advanced donor management tools or software.

Case Statement

Developing a case statement for the club organization can be a powerful exercise and will help create a foundation for organizational rhetoric. A case statement is a one to three page case for why you would support the organization. This also helps clarify and guide all other publications and communications.

The elements of a case statement include:

1. History
2. Mission, Vision, Values statement
3. Goals and objectives
4. What is the need?
5. Evidence of need
6. How club is uniquely qualified to serve need
7. Track record in serving that need (results)
8. Organizational structure
9. Benefits of supporting the program
10. Budget and fundraising plan
11. The Ask
12. Summary

A case statement should be carefully crafted and involve both board and staff. Aside from being a useful document for multiple purposes, it can help solidify and unify the vision and story of the organization.

See *Fundraising for Social Change* by Kim Klein for more information on writing a case statement.

Ethical fundraising activities

Fundraising costs should be reasonable but adequately funded. Investing in development is acceptable and often valued by sophisticated donors and grantors as a sign of professionalism.

General benchmarks

Nonprofits should spend no more than 40% of their budget on fundraising and administration—considered satisfactory. Efficient nonprofits often keep this under 20%, which is excellent. For capital campaigns, fundraising costs can be up to 10% of the total goal, in addition to regular administrative expenses. Clubs should allocate as much as possible to program expenses and minimize administrative costs.

Materials

Solicitation, promotional, and reporting materials must be truthful, clearly identify the organization, its mission, fund use, and fundraising results. Fundraising expenses should be transparent. Tailor materials for different donor groups rather than using a one-size-fits-all approach. Always honor donor intentions and promises made in appeals.

For ethical fundraising guidelines, see The Association of Fundraising Professionals:

<http://www.afpnet.org>

Connecting with Community Foundations

Connecting with a local community foundation offers free or low-cost professional support and access to local funding. These foundations vary from grassroots-focused to asset-management oriented but all serve as hubs of local philanthropy and connect nonprofits, corporations, and government. Many have grant cycles and funds supporting recreation, athletics, and education—ideal for U.S. Ski & Snowboard clubs. Find local foundations by involving your executive and board leadership - working with them can greatly benefit your club.

Donor Relationships and Privacy

Clubs must respect donor privacy and keep donor information confidential. Donors should be able to remain anonymous, keep gift details private, and opt out of mailing lists or repeated solicitations. Solicitations should be respectful, pressure-free, and tailored to donor preferences. Successful fundraising focuses on relationships, not just transactions, and respects donor needs and privacy.

Acceptance of Gifts

An organization should have clear policies for accepting and managing charitable gifts, including limits on donors, acceptable donation purposes and types, and procedures for unusual gifts, aligned with IRS rules. Common don'ts in snowsports include accepting gifts for unbudgeted expenses, donations tied to scholarships or fee reductions, gifts supporting individual athletes without clear guidelines, or gifts exchanged for private coaching or staffing.

Other Development Strategies

Capital Campaigns: A capital campaign is a time-limited effort by a nonprofit organization to raise a significant amount of money for a specific project or set of projects. Generally, a capital campaign is intended to raise money to fund the construction, acquisition or renovation of a building, an expensive piece of equipment, venue enhancement or an endowment to fund

scholarships. Capital campaigns have time frames, and may span several years or roll one into another.

Grant Writing: Successful grant writing requires careful planning, time, and follow-up to build relationships with funders. Since many proposals compete for limited awards, yours must stand out. If no grant writing expertise exists in-house, consider hiring a professional consultant—interview several and maintain staff control over accuracy and tone. Clear, concise, and engaging language aligned with the grantmaker’s goals is essential. Request reasonable funding and tailor your proposal to match the funder’s priorities.

Donor Data and Donor Management Software: Successful development requires more than informal notes and spreadsheets. A professional, systematic approach often needs donor management software, which can also handle volunteers, events, social media, and financial integration.

Several examples of current available products include:

- [eTapestry](#)
- [Telosa](#)
- [PledgeMaker](#)
- [Raiser’s Edge](#)
- [Sage](#)
- [SalesForce](#)
- [FundRaiser](#)
- [Donor Perfect](#)
- [Basicfunder](#)

Other Development Resources

- [TechSoup](#)
- [Best Non-Profit Software - 2025 Reviews & Pricing](#)
- [Candid](#)

CHAPTER 7: FOSTERING CLUB CULTURE

Culture is the shared values and practices driving a common goal. It's defined by actions, not words. U.S. Ski & Snowboard partners with clubs to ensure the best athlete development, guided by these principles:

- ☐ Clear, consistent long-term athlete development
- ☐ Optimal coaching at all levels
- ☐ Club performance measured by consistent standards
- ☐ Fun, safe, and fulfilling development with full potential
- ☐ Balanced focus on character and athletic performance
- ☐ Shared culture across all U.S. Ski & Snowboard clubs

A strong club culture unites its community of athletes, coaches, volunteers, parents, communities, regions, U.S. Ski & Snowboard, and clubs by defining expectations, success, and focus at all levels.

According to a 2020 survey of almost 800 coaches, club leaders and administrators, the current priorities of U.S. Ski & Snowboard clubs are to:

1. Provide a positive experience (fun, friendships, learning, lifelong enjoyment of sport)
2. Help kids develop strong values and self confidence while also acquiring specific skills
3. Deliver high-quality coaching

Further, this survey indicated that most clubs are aligned with U.S. Ski & Snowboard vision and shared culture even though relatively few clubs focus solely on developing elite athletes. Parents surveyed indicate these priorities for offerings from clubs:

1. A healthy lifestyle for their children
2. Development of mental aspects of performance
3. Fundamental skill development
4. Long-term athlete development

These priorities highlight that U.S. Ski & Snowboard clubs are expected to provide a balanced approach to character development and athletic performance. To create a positive sporting experience, clubs, coaches, parents and athletes all have specific roles and responsibilities.

Character Development

Character development should be the core of every club. Families invest educationally, athletically, and financially, expecting a safe, healthy environment that teaches life skills alongside sport. Clubs must adopt a character development philosophy emphasizing sportsmanship, values, leadership, academics, citizenship, and professionalism.

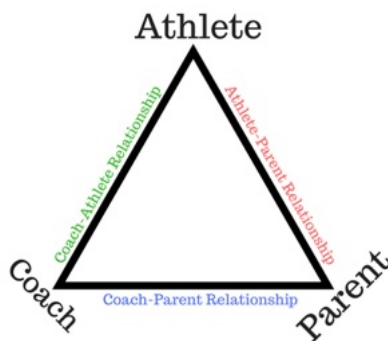
Values and Life Lessons – Lester Keller, PhD

Lester Keller, former National Alpine Development and Sport Psychology Director, studied why families commit their children to sports, focusing on alpine skiing but with insights applicable to all sports.

Key findings:

1. Parents believe sports build moral character, teaching sportsmanship, teamwork, and work ethic, which transfer to life and citizenship.
2. Sports foster traits like passion, accountability, self-discipline, and courage, motivating parents to support their children's participation.
3. Sports mirror life's challenges and lessons, especially skiing, which teaches resilience through its demands and tough environment.
4. Sports promote life skills such as goal-setting, personal responsibility, striving for excellence, and handling both success and failure.
5. Sports offer a positive alternative to poor choices, helping youth avoid trouble and drugs, while providing a healthy peer group.

Fostering Culture: Roles and Responsibilities



Two key adult influences—parents and coaches—join with the child to form the athletic triangle. It is the club's responsibility to guide and support this relationship for the benefit of the athlete. The quality of interaction among all three points of the triangle significantly shapes the athlete's experience. Each role in the triangle carries both rights and responsibilities.

Club Responsibilities

To foster the desired culture, clubs must:

- ☐ Clearly define and communicate mission, vision, and values
- ☐ Ensure a safe, professional environment with sufficient resources
- ☐ Enforce codes of conduct for athletes, coaches, and parents
- ☐ Consistently share club structure, goals, coaching credentials, and philosophies
- ☐ Educate members on roles, responsibilities, and policies
- ☐ Foster a fun, inclusive, and respectful club community

Club Rights

The ability for the club to achieve its desired culture depends on:

- ☐ Working with athletes and families who understand and support the mission, vision and values of the organization best represented by athletes committed to reaching their personal goals
- ☐ Athletes and families being ambassadors and supporters of the club, programs and staff
- ☐ Athletes and families abiding by and supporting the club's codes of conduct
- ☐ Athletes, families and coaches discussing, understanding and supporting the club's structure, pipeline, program structure and goals, coaches' credentials and expectations and club philosophies
- ☐ All constituents of the club understand and fulfill their respective roles and responsibilities.
- ☐ A club community focused on fun, involvement and support of all athletes

Club Culture Tools

Parent & Athlete Orientation: A Foundational Investment

Parent engagement is essential. Each club should host a season-start orientation and schedule additional tailored meetings throughout the year—for new vs. returning families, different age groups, and volunteers. A sample agenda is provided in the Appendix.

Leadership & Communication

Clearly define and communicate the club's leadership structure, decision-making process, vision, and goals. Involving a representative board and active committees builds trust and cohesion.

Codes of Conduct

Develop a values-based Code of Conduct that mirrors the U.S. Ski & Snowboard model, emphasizing positive expectations over punitive rules. Include signed commitments from athletes, coaches, and program directors that reinforce shared accountability.

Conflict Resolution

Clubs should focus on behavior change, not just discipline. Key practices include:

- ☐ Conducting fair, thorough investigations
- ☐ Providing due process and impartial hearings
- ☐ Involving legal or third-party mediators when needed
- ☐ Regular coach-parent conferences prevent issues and build trust.
- ☐ Mediation services can reduce internal strain and ensure professional handling of disputes.

Self-Referral Policy

Include a policy that encourages athletes to voluntarily report issues (e.g., substance use, bullying) without automatic disciplinary consequences. Offer support resources and clarify the limits of this policy, particularly when legal matters are involved. Legal review is advised.

Nondiscrimination Policy

Adopt and publicize a nondiscrimination policy to reinforce an inclusive club environment. A sample is included in the Appendix.

Academic & Athletic Balance

To support student athlete development:

- ☐ Assign a staff liaison for academic support
- ☐ Build relationships with schools
- ☐ Monitor academic progress and coordinating tutoring/study support
- ☐ Communicate with college coaches for high-achieving athletes

Awards & Recognition

Clubs should honor not only athletic performance but also character, academic effort, and volunteer contributions. Align awards with club values and seek input from coaches and staff.

Business Operations

Treat parents and athletes like valued clients. Communicate clearly and early on:

- ☐ Membership/program fees and deadlines
- ☐ Travel, training, and camp costs
- ☐ Event and competition schedules
- ☐ Uniforms and equipment policies
- ☐ Professional operations and transparent communication build strong club culture.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents

Parents play a critical role and must understand their responsibilities to support their child's growth in sport. A summary of best practices:

DO:

- ☐ Offer unconditional support
- ☐ Encourage accountability and hard work
- ☐ Stay emotionally controlled at events
- ☐ Provide logistical support
- ☐ Respect coaches and team boundaries

DON'T:

- ☐ Criticize performance or pressure to win
- ☐ Dominate decisions or overstep coaching
- ☐ Let sport overshadow life balance
- ☐ Use alcohol or aggressive behavior at events

Parents also have rights to transparency, safety assurances, and respectful, open communication from the club.

Athletes

Clubs should clearly define and consistently communicate behavioral expectations to athletes.

Core athlete responsibilities include:

- ☐ Attending and participating fully

- ☐ Respecting team rules and others
- ☐ Being coachable and resilient
- ☐ Balancing academics and sport
- ☐ Caring for physical and mental well-being

Athletes also have rights, including access to safe environments, qualified coaching, fair treatment, and the opportunity to enjoy sport as kids.

Coaches

Coaches are professionals and should be treated as such. Responsibilities include:

- ☐ Upholding club vision and managing programs
- ☐ Coaching athletes and mentoring staff
- ☐ Leading parent education
- ☐ Planning training, competitions, and logistics
- ☐ Contributing to athlete development and club leadership

Coaches have the right to professional respect, trust in their decisions, open and appropriate communication, and space to challenge and grow athletes.

Recruiting

Recruiting reflects a club's values and impacts national development. Ethical recruiting means prioritizing the athlete's best interests and timing solicitations respectfully.

Recommended practices:

- Share info via websites, brochures, and events
- Coordinate with current coaches before outreach
- Host informational sessions for families

Discouraged practices:

- Approaching athletes during competition
- Leveraging peer pressure
- Undermining current coaches or programs
- Using national/regional camps as recruiting tools

Multi-Sport Clubs

For clubs offering multiple sports, create a unified culture by:

- ☐ Ensuring equitable funding and recognition
- ☐ Applying consistent expectations and long-term athlete development models
- ☐ Hosting cross-sport events and education sessions for parents

CHAPTER 8: PUBLIC RELATIONS, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Public Relations and Communications Principles:

- ☐ All PR, marketing and communications efforts are guided by a consistent message reflective of your mission, vision, values and goals.
- ☐ PR, marketing and communications are guided by a strategic plan.
- ☐ All available communications outlets are properly utilized.
- ☐ Marketing does not replace development or fundraising.
- ☐ Marketing is targeted and employs social marketing techniques.
- ☐ Materials are driven by the principles above and are cost effective.

Marketing the Club

Marketing extends beyond flyers—it includes events, public image, customer service, and community involvement. Effective marketing requires thoughtful planning and organization to reach target audiences within budget.

An annual marketing plan should outline strategies, timelines, costs, and evaluation methods. A SWOT analysis can help define goals. Prioritize low-cost tools such as earned media, social platforms, and networks within the parent and athlete community. Begin targeted marketing efforts at least six weeks before registration deadlines.

A well-maintained website is essential. It can streamline registration, answer common questions, and project a professional image. The site should include the club's mission, vision, history, goals, and partnerships, along with information relevant to prospective families, sponsors, donors, and volunteers.

Word of mouth is often the most effective and affordable marketing method. Staff should be trained in customer service to help maintain a welcoming, supportive environment. Satisfied families can help promote the club through personal and professional networks.

Community partnerships expand visibility and credibility. Collaborating with local organizations creates new opportunities for athletes while increasing the club's value and impact in the broader community.

Engaging Local Media

Building strong relationships with local media is essential. Reach out regularly to newspapers, TV, and radio stations with fresh, compelling angles—such as standout athletes, coaches, sponsors, or resort updates. Offer assistance in telling the club's story or provide ready-to-publish content, giving media outlets appropriate credit.

Media & Public Relations

Media coordination should be handled by a designated staff member, coach, or club director. After competitions, send results, photos, and short articles to local media outlets and contacts on the club's

media list. Develop a team media guide that includes program details, athlete highlights, club history, facilities, and future prospects. Distribute the guide to potential sponsors, event attendees, and key community stakeholders. Tailor content to specific audiences.

Club newsletters should reach beyond current members to include alumni, community partners, and supporters. Use newsletters to maintain engagement and extend invitations to events.

Parents should be included in clinics and orientation sessions where expectations, roles, and program guidelines are explained. Encourage volunteer involvement and communicate important dates for training, coaching clinics, and recognition efforts.

Marketing & Membership Growth

Marketing efforts should highlight the positive impacts of sport participation—such as values, life skills, and friendships—to attract new members and supporters. Effective marketing includes consistent messaging about club benefits, not just logos or flyers.

Marketing supports:

- ☐ Recruitment of new members
- ☐ Retention of existing members
- ☐ Increased visibility for sponsors and partners
- ☐ Strengthened community relationships

Marketing is distinct from fundraising. While increased visibility may lead to donor interest, fundraising requires targeted development strategies, addressed separately in the Finance and Funding chapter.

Recruitment & Retention

Club growth depends on both recruiting new members and retaining existing ones. Many outreach materials and strategies can serve both purposes. Successful clubs maintain balance between attracting new families and fostering long-term engagement with current members.

Defining Club Identity

Effective marketing begins with a clear understanding of club identity. Identify three to four core values or benefits that define the club—these may already be reflected in the mission or vision statement. Ensure all staff and stakeholders are aligned around this message. A strong case statement can support both marketing and development efforts.

Social Marketing

Marketing a sport club is more than promoting a product—it involves promoting values, health, behavior change, and community. This falls under **social marketing**, which applies marketing principles to influence behaviors that benefit individuals and society. For a comprehensive overview, see *Social Marketing: Influencing Behaviors for Good* by Philip Kotler and Nancy R. Lee.

Social marketing definitions emphasize:

- ☐ Influencing voluntary behavior for social good
- ☐ Delivering value in exchange for behavior change
- ☐ Applying marketing strategies to improve individual and community well-being

The “Chairlift Pitch”

Every club representative should be able to deliver a 30-second summary that clearly conveys the club’s value. This "chairlift pitch" should highlight how the club meets athlete, family, and community needs and emphasize its unique strengths and purpose.

Understanding the Audience

Understanding the decision-maker—whether athlete, parent, sponsor, or community partner—is critical. Tailor messages to align with their goals, whether competition, skill development, fitness, or community involvement. Marketing should focus on the life-enhancing experiences the club provides.

Developing Materials

With clear values and audience needs identified, creating effective marketing materials becomes straightforward. Align messaging with mission, values, and goals. Leverage internal resources—such as parents or staff with design skills—and focus on quality over quantity.

Strategic, low-cost approaches often outperform mass-distributed print materials. Word of mouth remains the most powerful and cost-effective marketing tool.

Data Management

Effective data management is essential for club operations. It involves acquiring, validating, processing, and storing data to treat it as a valuable asset.

Clubs manage data from multiple sources—memberships, finances, donors, sponsors, events, resort contacts, and U.S. Ski & Snowboard networks. A clear process for collecting and organizing this information is a key part of the club’s communications plan.

Data can be managed using platforms like Microsoft Excel, Google Sheets, Split Second Software, and QuickBooks. Regardless of the tools used, consistent policies for compiling, organizing, and accessing data are critical. Strong data practices improve efficiency and enhance relationships with stakeholders.

CHAPTER 9: HUMAN RESOURCES

The Principles of Human Resource management:

- Good, strong clubs are a collection of good, strong people
- Everyone involved understands their roles and responsibilities
- Teams are built by identifying and coordinating individual strengths and weaknesses
- Expectations are clear and performance is evaluated
- All staff and volunteer policies are clearly defined and communicated
- Professional development and certification is encouraged and rewarded at all levels

Coaching and Administrative Staff

The coaching and administrative staff form the foundation of a successful club. Their professionalism, communication, and leadership directly influence the quality of the athlete experience—and play a key role in athlete retention. Staff are also a vital source of feedback, offering insight into the day-to-day operations and overall health of the program. Recruiting thoughtfully and supporting staff effectively are essential to long-term success.

Technical skill alone does not make a great coach. Coaching requires strong teaching ability, communication, leadership, teamwork, and a commitment to athlete development. The most effective staff members demonstrate the following qualities:

- ☐ Enthusiasm and positivity
- ☐ Team-oriented mindset
- ☐ Accessibility to parents and athletes
- ☐ Strong training and credentials
- ☐ A focus on safety and well-being
- ☐ Integrity and professionalism
- ☐ Commitment to club values and goals
- ☐ Reliability and accountability
- ☐ Clear, effective communication
- ☐ Dedication to being positive role models

By investing in staff who embody these traits, clubs build a culture that supports athletes, families, and long-term excellence.

Staff and Organizational Structure – Key Positions

The structure of a club staff often includes the following groups in a tiered system:



Club Staff Roles and Responsibilities

A club's success depends on a strong foundation of qualified, engaged staff. While some individuals may serve in multiple roles—particularly in smaller organizations—clear role definitions and expectations are essential. Roles may be filled by paid staff, volunteers, or board members. A formal structure need not be overly hierarchical, but accountability and clarity at each level are critical.

Unfortunately, many clubs lack formal job descriptions for coaches and staff. Even when they exist, they are often underutilized. U.S. Ski & Snowboard strongly recommends written, accessible position descriptions to clarify roles, support performance, and foster a professional, team-oriented culture.

Key Administrative & Technical Staff Positions

Executive Director

Leads organizational strategy and operations. Responsibilities include financial oversight, staffing, fundraising, marketing, and program execution. See the Leadership section for additional detail.

Executive Administrative Assistant

Provides high-level administrative support: correspondence, scheduling, financial tracking, reporting, and visitor coordination. May supervise other administrative staff.

Additional Administrative Roles

Clubs may also designate staff for management, communications, marketing, and development, depending on size and scope.

Head Coach / Program Director

Provides leadership and vision for the athletic program. Requires relevant U.S. Ski & Snowboard certification (typically Level 300 or 200) and strong experience in coaching and program management. Key duties include:

- ☐ Designing and evaluating training and competition programs
- ☐ Supervising, mentoring, and evaluating staff
- ☐ Managing athlete development plans

- ☐ Ensuring alignment with club goals and coaching philosophy

Assistant Coach

Supports daily training execution and athlete development. Attends races, assists with race preparation, and may contribute expertise in specialized areas (e.g., tuning, conditioning, video analysis).

Ski, Board & Boot Service Technician

Maintains and tunes equipment. Responsibilities may include boot fitting, canting, and safety checks. Often filled by a coach with specialized skills.

Athletic Trainer

Supports athlete health and performance through monitoring, injury prevention, and recovery. Preferred qualifications include CSCS or USA Weightlifting certification. University partnerships may supplement staffing.

Medical Coordinator

Often a volunteer healthcare professional, this role oversees athlete medical care, concussion protocols, and return-to-play processes.

Sports Psychologist / Mental Performance Consultant

Engaged when specific needs arise (e.g., stress management, focus, performance blocks). Focus should complement coaching, with emphasis on positive psychology and long-term development. Consultation with U.S. Ski & Snowboard High Performance staff or AASP is recommended.

Academic Coordinator

Acts as a liaison with schools to support academic success. Responsibilities include grade monitoring, coordinating tutoring, scheduling academic absences, and supporting college applications. Clubs should have a written academic participation policy signed by athletes and parents.

Media Coordinator

Manages the club's brand and promotional efforts, including social media, publications, video/photo libraries, and media relations. Supports event promotion and storytelling that reflects club values.

Position Descriptions: Best Practices

Comprehensive position descriptions should include more than duties. Each should reflect the club's mission and clarify the position's contribution to organizational goals. Elements to include:

- ☐ Summary and reporting structure
- ☐ Key areas of responsibility (programmatic, financial, HR, etc.)
- ☐ Criteria for performance evaluation
- ☐ Qualifications and requirements (certifications, experience, physical demands)
- ☐ Work schedule expectations
- ☐ Compensation and benefits

Even hourly positions benefit from well-written descriptions that reinforce professionalism and the collective mission. They support accountability, clarity, and alignment—essential to any successful sport organization.

Staff and Professional Development

Investing in staff development is essential to building a high-performing, committed team. Ongoing education reinforces professional standards, improves program quality, and supports staff retention. Clubs should integrate professional development into their culture through required training, clear expectations, and recognition of growth.

Key benefits include:

1. **Team Cohesion:** Group training sessions enhance communication, collaboration, and problem-solving. Scenario-based learning builds alignment across staff and improves responsiveness.
2. **Professionalism:** Providing development opportunities affirms the value of coaching as a profession, whether staff are part-time or career coaches. It fosters pride, accountability, and commitment.
3. **Clarity and Compliance:** Reviewing policies, codes of conduct, and handbooks ensures shared understanding. Establish expectations for certification and ongoing learning, and provide a forum for questions and feedback. All staff should acknowledge these expectations in writing.

Coach Certification

The pursuit of coach certification is strongly recommended to uphold quality, safety, and program standards, and a minimum Level 100 is required to register for U.S. Ski & Snowboard sanctioned competitions as a coach.

Certified coaches demonstrate knowledge of current training methods, long-term athlete development, and risk management. Certification enhances credibility with athletes, parents, and leadership, and fosters a safer, more effective training environment.

Certified coaches are also better positioned for career advancement, leadership roles, and involvement in higher-level competition. For clubs, employing certified coaches strengthens the program's reputation, supports alignment with national standards, and contributes to long-term success. Every coach should receive formal training to ensure readiness and competence in their role.

As stated above, U.S. Ski & Snowboard requires all member coaches to earn a Level 100 Coach Certification during their first two years of membership. In other words, once a coach is beginning their third year of membership, they must have completed at least a Level 100 Coach Certification to be permitted to register as a coach for sanctioned competitions.

Regardless of their sport, the first course a coach completes towards Certification is a basic training course for ski and snowboard coaching called “Coaching Fundamentals.” This “Coaching Fundamentals” is a 3-module online course that introduces the essential concepts of coaching, long-term athlete development, child protection and safety, teaching skills, competition coaching and communication. Completion of this course, along with annual Safety Requirements, will bring a coach to an “In Progress Active” status, allowing them to register for sanctioned competitions for their first two seasons. Requiring this course of new coaches helps clubs ensure their staff has requisite basic knowledge.

U.S. Ski & Snowboard’s Sport Education department offers coach certification programs specific to each U.S. Ski & Snowboard sport discipline. All coach certification programs include an online learning component and an in-person certification assessment facilitated by a member of the National Faculty. The certification track is designed for all coaches, from volunteer to full-time, youth to elite team levels.

The certification levels start at Level 100 and may go up to Level 300, depending on sport. For those sports without higher levels of certification currently available, development is underway and new certification courses will be released in the coming years.

Level 100 training is required for all coaches, including volunteer coaches, within the first two years of coaching. Part-time coaches are encouraged to complete at least Level 200 within their first few years of coaching, ensuring they have a fundamental basis for coaching at training and competition. Full-time and Head Coaches should pursue Level 300 certification, if available.

U.S. Ski & Snowboard Sport Education works with our National Faculty and leaders in our local sport communities to schedule coaches’ assessments across the country. Due to our large geography, however, assessments are not always scheduled in locations or on dates that work for all to attend. U.S. Ski & Snowboard Sport Education will work with clubs on clinic scheduling if the existing schedule does not meet local needs, though minimum clinic sizes must be met. For more information, contact U.S. Ski & Snowboard Sport Education at 435.647.2050, 435.602.0598, or email sporteducation@usskiandsnowboard.org.

Incentives for Certification and Advanced Degrees

U.S. Ski & Snowboard clubs are encouraged to implement incentive systems to support continuing coach education, such as funding for courses or bonuses for achieving advanced certifications and related degrees. Coaches—whether part-time, volunteer, or full-time professionals—are the foundation of every club and have a profound impact on athlete development. Coach-to-coach mentoring is also highly recommended to foster knowledge sharing, collaboration, and professional growth.

Certified and well-trained coaches are among a program’s greatest assets. Structured orientation and ongoing training enhance expertise and strengthen team cohesion. Development opportunities may include pre-season workshops, in-house staff meetings, in-season reviews, shadowing, U.S. Ski & Snowboard seminars, and other educational programs or certifications.

Certification and professional development expectations should be clearly communicated, forming an

integral part of club culture. These initiatives should be viewed not only as requirements but as valuable investments in the quality and sustainability of the organization.

Strategies for Building and Training a Professional Staff

Establish a Professional Culture

Trust, clear communication, and mutual respect are the foundation of a strong staff culture. Directors must lead by example, set clear expectations, and respond promptly and professionally to policy breaches. A culture rooted in integrity and consistency helps staff feel valued and committed to the club's mission.

Uniforms and Identification

Staff should wear clearly identifiable uniforms with the club name or logo to ensure visibility and approachability. U.S. Ski & Snowboard recommends that all non-Nordic staff, including coaches, officials, and volunteers, wear properly fitted helmets when on the hill.

Diversify Training Approaches

Recognize and incorporate different learning styles—visual, auditory, and kinesthetic—into staff training. Use guest speakers, handbooks, on-hill simulations, and small-group lesson planning exercises. Hands-on, experiential learning encourages collaboration and helps bridge the gap between novice and veteran coaches.

Empower Your Team

Identify staff with strengths in adult education or group facilitation and encourage them to lead sessions. This promotes shared ownership, fosters unity, and reinforces that leadership is a collective responsibility.

Formal Mentorship

Consider implementing structured mentorship and observation programs to support staff development and knowledge transfer.

Include Athlete Feedback

Solicit athlete input to better understand how different teaching methods are received. Athletes can offer valuable insight into coaching effectiveness, helping staff refine their approach.

Foster Innovation and Buy-In

While staff need not weigh in on every decision, involving them in strategic discussions or policy brainstorming builds loyalty, surfaces strong ideas, and creates buy-in across the team.

Maintaining a Positive and Productive Work Environment

- ☐ Set high expectations and provide the support and mentorship to meet them
- ☐ Communicate clear goals and performance standards
- ☐ Recognize and reward progress and excellence
- ☐ Include a coach liaison on the board of directors
- ☐ Lead professionally—supportive but not overly familiar
- ☐ Cultivate self-awareness and model leadership growth

- ☐ Seek feedback through formal reviews and informal discussions
- ☐ Follow through on commitments and policies

Employee Handbook & Benefits

A clear, consistent employee handbook ensures all staff understand their rights, responsibilities, and available support. It should include:

- ☐ **Introduction:** Overview of the club's mission, history, and culture
- ☐ **Compensation:** How pay is determined (certifications, experience), and incentives such as funding for continued U.S. Ski & Snowboard coach certification
- ☐ **Professional Development:** Expectations and available support for ongoing training
- ☐ **Policies:** Including the Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies (MAAPP) via U.S. Ski & Snowboard Club Manual
- ☐ **Performance Reviews:** Frequency and structure of evaluations
- ☐ **Benefits:** Detailed overview of what the club offers
- ☐ **Substance Use:** Clear stance on drug and alcohol use; ensure compliance with state law
- ☐ **Disciplinary Procedures:** Transparent process for addressing policy violations
- ☐ **Employee Safety:** Commitment to a safe and respectful workplace
- ☐ **Complaint Procedures:** Clear channels for reporting and resolving grievances

A well-maintained handbook reinforces professionalism, supports staff success, and strengthens your club's overall culture.

Staffing Practices

Hiring

Your staff is your most visible and valuable asset. Invest in your club's future by hiring well, providing clear expectations, offering meaningful training, and conducting regular evaluations to foster professional growth and performance.

Begin with a clear, concise job description outlining key responsibilities and required skills. Applications should include written responses addressing relevant coaching experience, educational background, work eligibility, coaching philosophy, and other program-specific criteria. Require a resume and at least two non-familial references.

Interview Process

Develop a consistent set of interview questions to follow the written application. Recommended topics include:

- ☐ Motivation for applying and potential contributions
- ☐ Strengths and areas for growth
- ☐ U.S. Ski & Snowboard certification status
- ☐ Educational background and honors
- ☐ Coaching experience, training, and athlete outcomes
- ☐ Employment history
- ☐ Approach to working with youth, parents, and staff

- ☐ Communication and leadership skills
- ☐ Professionalism and alignment with club values

Behavioral Interviewing

Use behavioral interview questions to assess real-world judgment and problem-solving. Ask candidates to describe how they handled—or would handle—specific scenarios, ranging from routine to challenging. Written responses can also help gauge critical thinking and alignment with your program's approach.

Organizational Fit

Assess each candidate's understanding of your club's broader mission—not just the specific role. Candidates who show curiosity about your structure, values, and goals are more likely to contribute meaningfully to the team.

Balanced Perspective

Beware of candidates who claim to “do it all.” Seek individuals who are honest about their strengths and growth areas—this signals self-awareness and potential for collaboration. Building a team is more important than hiring a one-person solution.

Attitude Over Credentials

Prioritize attitude, enthusiasm, and cultural fit. While technical skills can be trained, professionalism, positivity, and a team-first mindset are harder to teach. Ask yourself: Will this person elevate the organization? Are they coachable and aligned with our values? Do they bring a history of collaboration and adaptability?

SafeSport Training

U.S. Ski & Snowboard is committed to fostering a safe and respectful sport environment free from emotional, physical, and sexual misconduct, in accordance with best practices and U.S. Center for SafeSport policies. All club staff, administrators, and board members must register with U.S. Ski & Snowboard as coaches, officials, or club volunteers. Additionally, any adult (18+) who has regular contact with or authority over minor athletes—including volunteers and event staff—must hold an appropriate U.S. Ski & Snowboard membership.

These membership categories require successful completion of U.S. Center for SafeSport training and periodic criminal background screening. For complete policies and procedures, refer to the *U.S. Ski & Snowboard Club Manual – Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies (MAAPP)* on the U.S. Ski & Snowboard website.

Background Screening

To uphold the highest standards of athlete safety, U.S. Ski & Snowboard enforces a strict policy against abuse, molestation, and harassment. All club personnel—including coaches, officials, board members, and volunteers with regular access to minors—must undergo periodic background screening. Screenings cover convictions related to sexual misconduct, violent crimes, DUI, and other drug-related offenses.

The purchase of a coach, official, or club volunteer membership automatically initiates a background check. Once all requirements are fulfilled, including a "green light" clearance from the screening

partner, the membership is finalized and a U.S. Ski & Snowboard membership card is activated.

Staff Evaluation

Each coach should be observed at least once per season by the head coach or program director, with timely feedback provided. Clubs should conduct annual performance reviews aligned with individual job descriptions and goals. Parent feedback should be collected and incorporated into evaluations. Reviews should be documented in writing, discussed in person, signed, and filed in the employee's record.

Staff should also submit a beginning-of-season goals statement outlining professional, programmatic, and personal objectives. This should be followed by a self-evaluation at the end of the season (and optionally, a mid-season check-in). This process promotes accountability, reflection, and professionalism. Supervisors are encouraged to model this practice by sharing their own goals and self-evaluations.

Termination

Termination should be handled professionally and in accordance with established club policies. Staff should be made aware of performance concerns in advance, and clubs must clearly define grounds for dismissal—including zero-tolerance behaviors or thresholds for repeated issues. The evaluation process also serves as documentation of unmet expectations. Maintain detailed written records of incidents, grievances, warnings, and the termination process. When necessary, consult legal counsel prior to dismissal.

Volunteers

Volunteers are an essential extension of your staff and should be managed with similar standards. Best practices include:

- ☐ Providing clear position descriptions
- ☐ Outlining responsibilities and reporting structures
- ☐ Communicating major policies (e.g., safety, substance use)
- ☐ Offering training and certification where appropriate
- ☐ Recognizing contributions and offering any applicable benefits
- ☐ Conducting evaluations and providing feedback
- ☐ Reinforcing alignment with the club's mission and values

Treating volunteers as valued members of the team fosters long-term commitment, enhances club culture, and mitigates legal risk. Clubs that take a professional approach to volunteer management often attract more—and more qualified—volunteers.

Volunteer Retention

Retaining volunteers reduces training demands and improves organizational efficiency. To keep volunteers engaged:

- ☐ Match assignments with their skills and interests
- ☐ Clearly define expectations, time commitments, and required resources
- ☐ Communicate frequently and keep volunteers informed and appreciated
- ☐ Avoid overburdening individuals—distribute work evenly

- ☐ Encourage active volunteers to help recruit others

Successful volunteer management requires thoughtful delegation, clarity, and consistent recognition.

Officials and Judges

Officials—many of whom are volunteers—play a critical role in delivering fair, safe, and high-quality competition experiences. U.S. Ski & Snowboard sanctions over 4,000 competitions annually and supports more than 5,600 officials through its education and certification system.

Officials are responsible for:

- ☐ Enforcing competition rules
- ☐ Ensuring event safety and fairness
- ☐ Managing timing, scoring, and judging
- ☐ Upholding the integrity and spirit of the sport

Divisional committees offer low-cost, in-person training clinics each fall. No prior experience is required. An active U.S. Ski & Snowboard official membership is mandatory. Visit usskiandsnowboard.org for details.

Parents often make excellent officials. Officiating keeps them engaged, deepens their understanding of the sport, and helps fill essential roles. Encourage new parents to train before experienced parents leave. A strong network of well-trained, certified officials is essential to club and event success.

CHAPTER 10: ATHLETE SAFETY

Guiding Principle

U.S. Ski & Snowboard clubs are committed to providing the safest possible environment for athletes, families, and members.

SafeSport Compliance

U.S. Ski & Snowboard supports a sport community free from emotional, physical, and sexual misconduct. All clubs must comply with the *U.S. Center for SafeSport* policies and the *Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017*, which makes failure to report suspected child abuse a federal offense.

For training and policy requirements, refer to the *Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies (MAAPP)* in the U.S. Ski & Snowboard website.

Training & Competition Safety

Clubs must follow all safety guidelines related to coach certification, course setting, and training/competition venues. These standards are detailed at usskiandsnowboard.org and by other relevant sport governing bodies.

A safe venue includes current, appropriate safety equipment and adherence to best practices in its installation and use.

Essential Safety Equipment

☐ Netting/Fencing

- ☐ *A-Net*: Fixed netting (4–6m high) used in high-risk zones (speed venues).
- ☐ *B-Net*: Removable netting designed to absorb impact, placed 4m+ from hazards. Multiple-row setups require 2m between rows, 1m overlap at joins, and regular inspection to prevent freezing.
 - ☐ *Installation video (SPM-specific)*:
[SPM Netting Installation 1](#)
[SPM Netting Installation 2](#)
- ☐ *C-Net*: Used for crowd control (e.g., start corral); not designed for impact protection.

☐ Padding

- ☐ *Tower Pads*: Placed uphill on lift towers alongside B-net or Willy Bags.
- ☐ *Air Pads*: Inflatable barriers for large fixed objects.
- ☐ *Willy Bags*: Filled with foam or peanuts for temporary tower protection.

Training Safety Protocols

Proper safety equipment must be matched with appropriate deployment. Safety planning should be based on venue, snow/weather conditions, proximity to hazards, and expected athlete speeds.

Daily Alpine Safety Checklist

PLAN

- ☐ Create a session plan and prepare materials (gates, pads, nets, signage).
- ☐ Discuss the plan with coaches and athletes.
- ☐ Be ready to adapt based on conditions.

INSPECT

- ☐ Evaluate surface conditions (depth, density, consistency).
- ☐ Assess visibility and weather.

IMPLEMENT

- ☐ Set appropriate courses based on snow and terrain.
- ☐ Consider manmade/natural obstacles.
- ☐ Conduct athlete/coach inspection.
- ☐ Maintain the environment with regular intervals for course holds or slipping.

OBSERVE

- ☐ Monitor ongoing changes in snow or visibility.
- ☐ Stop and reassess if conditions change.
- ☐ Modify the course or plan as needed.

Emergency Preparedness & Injury Response

All coaches and staff should be trained in basic first aid and CPR. Clubs must have Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) in place, including:

- ☐ Coordinated response with ski patrol and mountain ops
- ☐ Clear communication protocols
- ☐ Start-stop procedures when an athlete is down
- ☐ Athlete Injury Action Plan:
 - ☐ Call patrol
 - ☐ Stay with the athlete
 - ☐ Inform club leadership once help arrives
 - ☐ Accompany athlete until parents arrive
 - ☐ Submit an incident report

Freestyle Awareness

Coaches must remind athletes that freestyle requires awareness. Outside of structured training, athletes must respect mountain rules, be aware of uncontrolled terrain, and remain mindful of others on the slope.

Avalanche Awareness

Clubs should always encourage athletes and coaches to learn about and stay current with avalanche awareness and safety policies. Bryce and Ronnie Athlete Snow Safety (BRASS) Foundation is an excellent resource for current avalanche safety best practices. BRASS offers a free course.

Club-Level Safety Policies

Clubs should formalize additional policies beyond venue- and coach-specific guidelines, including:

- ☐ Training area closures and restricted zones
- ☐ In-bounds/out-of-bounds expectations
- ☐ Terrain selection appropriate to age and ability
- ☐ Required safety equipment
- ☐ Protocols for lost or late skiers/riders
- ☐ Injury response
- ☐ Venue/course inspection procedures
- ☐ Drop-off/pick-up times and supervision requirements

Concussion Policy

Commitment to Athlete Wellbeing

U.S. Ski & Snowboard prioritizes the health and safety of its athletes. Concussion management—particularly for minors—is a shared responsibility among clubs, coaches, officials, and parents. Athletes suspected of sustaining a concussion or traumatic brain injury (TBI) must be immediately removed from participation and cleared by a qualified healthcare provider before returning to sport.

Legal Considerations

In compliance with the *Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017*, failure to report suspected child abuse—including concussion-related concerns—may constitute a federal offense. U.S. Ski & Snowboard members must follow a formal concussion management protocol, and clubs must also adhere to relevant state laws, which may vary.

Concussion Protocol & Return-to-Play Requirements

- ☐ **Training Requirements:** All U.S. Ski & Snowboard certified coaches must complete the CDC Heads Up Concussion Training (or equivalent).
- ☐ **Policy Acknowledgement:** All athlete members and parents/guardians (for minors) must review and acknowledge the U.S. Ski & Snowboard Concussion Policy annually.

- ☐ **Immediate Removal:** Athletes suspected of a concussion must be removed from all sanctioned activities (training, competition, camps, tryouts) by a certified coach or Technical Delegate (TD).
- ☐ **Medical Clearance:** Return to participation is only permitted upon written clearance by a licensed healthcare provider trained in concussion evaluation and management. The provider must confirm completion of a concussion-specific continuing education course within the past three years.
- ☐ **Notification:** The coach or TD must report the incident to U.S. Ski & Snowboard Competition Services. Clearance documentation must also be submitted before the athlete may resume participation.

Definition & Risks

A **concussion** is a mild traumatic brain injury caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head—or any force causing the brain to move rapidly within the skull. Though often labeled “mild,” concussions can have serious and lasting effects.

Repeat concussions, especially before full recovery from a previous injury, may lead to prolonged symptoms, brain swelling (edema), permanent damage, or—in rare cases—death.

Resources & Club Responsibilities

- ☐ Refer to the CDC’s [Heads Up](#) training and concussion resources
- ☐ Each club must establish and publish its own concussion policy, including protocols for:
 - ☐ Identification and management of suspected concussions
 - ☐ Communication with families and healthcare providers
 - ☐ Tracking and documentation
 - ☐ Return-to-play procedures
- ☐ Clubs must ensure that all coaches and parents review and understand these policies.

Emergency Action Protocol (EAP)

In the event of an injury, staff must remain calm, stabilize the situation, and communicate clearly with all relevant parties—athletes, parents (if minors), ski patrol, medical personnel, and U.S. Ski & Snowboard officials. The U.S. Ski & Snowboard’s Medical Department provides team and venue-specific EAPs. Staff must:

- ☐ Review EAPs before training and competition
- ☐ Conduct a daily *medical timeout* to clarify emergency roles and procedures
- ☐ Be prepared to implement the plan immediately if an injury occurs

Return to Snow From Injury

All injuries should be managed under the guidance of a qualified healthcare provider. Clubs should have a policy (such as *Return from Injury Policy*) written and in place that includes:

- ☐ Clear communication and documentation processes
- ☐ Defined criteria for return-to-play
- ☐ Additional safeguards for concussion-related injuries
- ☐ Required review by coaches and parents

A cautious, structured approach to injury recovery protects both athlete health and long-term development.

Travel: Club Vehicles and Transportation Policies

While coach training often focuses on on-slope risk management, it is equally important to address responsibilities related to transporting athletes to competitions, camps, and training sessions. Clubs must establish clear policies to ensure the safe and appropriate use of club-owned, leased, or rented vehicles.

For travel-related athlete safety guidelines, refer to the *Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies* (MAAPP).

Vehicle Use Authorization

- ☐ Only staff specifically authorized by the club may operate club vehicles.
- ☐ Drivers must be 21 years of age or older - but clubs can follow their insurance carrier rules.
- ☐ A valid driver's license must be submitted to club administration prior to vehicle use.
- ☐ Club vehicles may only be used for official club events and initiatives

Vehicle Care & Responsibility

Club vehicles represent a significant investment. All drivers are expected to operate them with care, professionalism, and respect for club property.

Driver Conduct Requirements

All authorized drivers must:

- ☐ Possess a valid operator's license at all times
- ☐ Never drive under the influence of alcohol, drugs, medications, illness, fatigue, or injury
- ☐ Require the proper use of seat belts and child safety restraints for all occupants
- ☐ Comply with all traffic laws and regulations
- ☐ Drive defensively, anticipating potential hazards
- ☐ Avoid the use of radar or laser detection devices
- ☐ Select the safest routes, allow ample travel time, and adjust for weather and road conditions
- ☐ Refrain from using cell phones or other handheld devices while driving any club or rental vehicle

Clubs are strongly encouraged to provide regular training and reminders regarding transportation responsibilities to ensure the safety of all athletes, staff, and assets.

CHAPTER 11: CLUB PROGRAMMING

Core Principles of U.S. Ski & Snowboard Club Programming

Effective programs are built on the following best practices:

- ☐ Align with the Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model
- ☐ Provide age- and developmentally appropriate training and competition
- ☐ Integrate all elements of the sport: conditioning, technique, tactics, equipment, sport psychology, terrain, and talent
- ☐ Recognize and support individual athlete goals
- ☐ Balance fun with performance
- ☐ Prioritize athlete safety
- ☐ Promote teamwork, integrity, and sportsmanship
- ☐ Maintain clear boundaries between club leadership, parent roles, and coaching responsibilities

While programming is primarily the responsibility of the coaching staff, club leadership, parents, and the broader community must understand and support these principles. Ongoing coach education and certification are essential to upholding these standards.

Training Systems: A Unified Development Model

U.S. Ski & Snowboard's Training Systems serve as the foundation for age-appropriate athlete development. Clubs are encouraged to implement the following three sport-specific resources:

- ☐ Training System
- ☐ Athlete Development Pipeline
- ☐ SkillsQuest Fitness

These tools guide programming from entry-level participation to competition and are continuously updated to reflect best practices. Clubs must support continued coach education.

Training Systems are based on *biological* and *training age*, not just chronological age. Grouping athletes solely by age can hinder development; clubs should accommodate variations in maturity and experience.

More information:  [Training Systems Overview](#)

Using the Training Systems in Your Club

The Training Systems provide guidance for coaches, parents, and athletes. Key features include:

- ☐ Age-appropriate training and competition guidelines
- ☐ Phase-specific emphasis areas
- ☐ One-page sport-specific matrices to support consistent progression
- ☐ Integration into coach certification

Clubs should regularly share these resources with staff and families to foster alignment and long-term athlete development.

Program Areas of Emphasis

Clubs should ensure balanced attention across the core areas required for athlete success:

- ☐ Conditioning
- ☐ Technique & Tactics
- ☐ Equipment
- ☐ Sport Psychology
- ☐ Training & Competition Management
- ☐ Terrain Utilization
- ☐ Talent Identification & Development

Each developmental phase outlines specific guidelines in these areas, allowing clubs to deliver structured, nationally aligned programming tailored to every athlete's needs.

Training & Conditioning

Physical conditioning is foundational to athletic development. Programs should build general motor skills—strength, endurance, speed, agility, balance, coordination, and flexibility—through a progressive, age-appropriate approach that fosters long-term development and athlete autonomy.

Best Practices:

- ☐ Emphasize fun and play, especially for ages 6–12
- ☐ Focus on body awareness, movement competency, and core strength (USTART)
- ☐ Integrate aerobic, strength, and power training with proper recovery
- ☐ Use periodization to plan training phases and manage workloads
- ☐ Educate athletes on training principles and encourage multi-sport participation
- ☐ Cross-train within snow sport disciplines
- ☐ Conduct periodic fitness assessments and develop individualized plans

Technical & Tactical Skill Development

Technical and tactical development spans foundational stance and balance through event-specific skills and terrain adaptation. It includes decision-making under varied snow and course conditions.

Best Practices:

- ☐ Integrate structured play and free skiing/riding into training
- ☐ Use SkillsQuest to assess and guide development (especially U10–U12)
- ☐ Group athletes by biological/training age when appropriate
- ☐ Focus on fundamentals before introducing specialized event techniques
- ☐ Teach inspection routines, competition tactics, and course elements
- ☐ Prioritize quality repetitions and provide a clear objective for every drill
- ☐ Develop skills in both technical and speed events, refining movements over time

- ☐ Adjust training based on growth, strength, and power
- ☐ Encourage innovation tailored to each athlete's style

Equipment Selection & Preparation

Proper equipment selection and maintenance are critical to safety and performance. Athletes must be educated in tuning, fitting, and compliance with U.S. Ski & Snowboard standards.

Best Practices:

- ☐ Ensure proper fit and compliance for all equipment (helmets, skis, boards, boots)
- ☐ Involve certified boot fitters and binding technicians
- ☐ Teach waxing, tuning, and basic maintenance at age-appropriate levels
- ☐ Provide club access to tuning tools and instruction
- ☐ Incorporate equipment testing and performance feedback
- ☐ Ensure protective equipment is used correctly and consistently

Equipment Policy Recommendations:

- ☐ Create a written policy for equipment sponsorships—communication with vendors should be handled by coaches only
- ☐ Define eligibility criteria for loaner equipment (conditioning standards, equipment care, role modeling)
- ☐ Establish a pool of team gear for disciplines like DH or SG
- ☐ Designate a certified technician or trusted local shop for tuning clinics and race prep support
Offer pro-forms to club members only, and communicate policies clearly to local retailers

Athlete Equipment Flex Sessions & Fit Nights

To support proper equipment selection while maintaining strong relationships with local shops, clubs should host an **early-season equipment day** (e.g., Flex Session or Fit Night). This can take place at a local shop or ski area and should involve both shop staff and manufacturer reps. Athletes are fitted for appropriate gear, and orders are placed before the season begins. Clubs must be mindful to balance manufacturer partnerships with loyalty to local specialty retailers.

Athlete Ski & Snowboard Swaps

Club-run gear swaps serve three key purposes:

1. Help athletes upgrade equipment affordably
2. Raise funds for the club
3. Serve the broader club and local community

Coaching staff should be trained to present at swaps to assist with proper equipment selection and fit.

Sport Psychology & Sociological Development

Athlete success is shaped by physical skills, psychological readiness and strong social environments. Mental performance plays a critical role as competition levels rise and can be trained as a skill.

Whether by coaches or sport psychologists, clubs should integrate mental skills into regular training.

Key Areas to Emphasize:

- ☐ Goal setting, focus, and self-regulation
- ☐ Relaxation and arousal management
- ☐ Positive self-talk, visualization, and imagery
- ☐ Confidence-building and resilience
- ☐ Performance planning and journaling
- ☐ Citizenship, teamwork, and sportsmanship
- ☐ Individual learning styles and life skills development

Best Practices:

- ☐ Encourage positivity, effort, and enjoyment
- ☐ Foster a culture of perseverance and balanced living
- ☐ Get families involved in club activities and social engagement
- ☐ Integrate mental training into daily routines across all age groups

Supporting athletes holistically—mentally, physically, and socially—enhances both performance and long-term participation in sport.

Training & Competition

Training and competition should be strategically planned and periodized to balance workload and optimize athlete development. Competition should reinforce training goals and support skill acquisition, with a focus on long-term progression rather than short-term outcomes.

Best Practices:

- ☐ Align training loads with key competition periods
- ☐ Use race simulations and purposeful training blocks
- ☐ Manage athlete schedules to balance rest, training, and competition
- ☐ Emphasize local and interclub events that build skills and enjoyment
- ☐ Use competition as a tool to validate training effectiveness

An athlete planning matrix can help coaches integrate training, conditioning, and competition in alignment with the U.S. Ski & Snowboard Training Systems.

Terrain Utilization

Access to varied terrain is essential for athlete development. Regardless of available resources, clubs must expose athletes to a range of conditions to prepare them for the challenges of higher-level competition.

Best Practices:

- ☐ Partner with resorts to create terrain features (bumps, jumps, pitches, starts)
- ☐ Train in a range of conditions, including poor snow and weather
- ☐ Use challenging course sets and terrain to build resilience

- ☐ Create progressions that vary pitch, course set, and terrain difficulty
- ☐ Avoid introducing multiple high-difficulty elements at once—use controlled progression
- ☐ Practice start and finish scenarios in imperfect environments
- ☐ Continue training on rutted and deteriorated courses to simulate real race conditions

Programs should ensure that coaches are supported with appropriate access and resources to apply these strategies safely and effectively.

Talent Assessment & Establishing Pace

Clubs must recognize and plan around the range of talent within their programs. Honest conversations about individual goals and abilities support appropriate pacing, reduce unhealthy comparisons, and foster growth.

Best Practices:

- ☐ Discuss athlete goals openly and individually
- ☐ Group athletes by ability, not just age or gender
- ☐ Promote co-ed and mixed-ability training when beneficial
- ☐ Use timing and data for feedback, not pressure
- ☐ Invite high-performing athletes (alumni or peers) to inspire others
- ☐ Encourage mentorship between age groups to strengthen program culture
- ☐ Educate athletes on the difference between talent and skill development
- ☐ Identify athletes whose needs exceed club capacity and explore solutions

Leadership should ensure program structures allow coaches to address athlete needs at all levels and support personalized development pathways.

Facilities & Infrastructure

To effectively deliver high-quality programming, clubs should assess their facilities and infrastructure. U.S. Ski & Snowboard provides a *Club Facilities Worksheet* to help evaluate readiness and identify gaps. (See Appendix: Templates and Examples)

Competition Management & Planning

Effective competition planning incorporates three key elements:

- ☐ Periodization
- ☐ Competition System & Calendar
- ☐ Athlete Management

Given the travel demands of U.S. Ski & Snowboard competition, thoughtful scheduling is essential to support skill development and ensure competitions remain purposeful.

Periodization

Periodization segments the year into phases of preparation, competition, and recovery to align with athlete development stages. Each annual plan should reflect the athlete's maturity, goals, and progression needs.

Best Practices:

- ☐ Use a May–April cycle: summer/fall (preparation), winter/spring (competition)
- ☐ Include general and specific preparation, pre-competition, peak competition, and recovery periods
- ☐ Align peak performance expectations with age group:
 - ☐ *U14 and younger*: One annual peak (typically March)
 - ☐ *Ages 15–19*: Two peaks, spaced at least three weeks apart
 - ☐ *Senior athletes*: Three to five peak performance periods per season

Competition System & Scheduling

Strategic calendar design ensures a balance between training and racing to promote long-term athlete development.

Best Practices:

- ☐ Prioritize skill development in early stages; competition becomes a greater focus later
- ☐ Regularly align club calendars with U.S. Ski & Snowboard and FIS schedules
- ☐ Maintain appropriate training-to-competition ratios across all ages and stages
- ☐ Avoid over-competition; design schedules that support recovery and progression

Athlete Management

Athlete progress and performance requires long-term commitment and structured planning. Clubs must align training, competition, and recovery around each athlete's biological age and development stage.

Age-Appropriate Training & Competition

The U.S. Ski & Snowboard Training System emphasizes developmentally appropriate programming. Competition volume and intensity should reflect an athlete's maturity and long-term goals, not just chronological age.

Athlete Development Pipeline

The U.S. Ski & Snowboard Athlete Development Pipeline outlines progression from grassroots to national teams. It clarifies who is responsible for athlete development at each stage—clubs, divisions, or U.S. Ski & Snowboard—and serves as a roadmap for program design and communication with parents and athletes.

SkillsQuest Fitness

The physical demands of ski and snowboard competition require amazing strength, power, agility, endurance, and balance. Technical skill is supported by and developed on the foundations of great athleticism. Well-developed physical capacities will contribute directly to long-term sporting success. An athlete's fitness level can either support or inhibit their technical skill development by directly influencing their ability to tolerate the technical and tactical training volumes that are required for skill development. The SkillsQuest-Fitness Assessment, co-developed by U.S. Ski & Snowboard and our partner High Performance Center (HPC) clubs, is a valuable tool in identifying an athlete's current capacities across multiple physical fitness domains and developmental phases. Developing

proficiency in these foundational fitness qualities will be a crucial factor in promoting effectiveness of the sport-specific (technical and tactical training) and high-performance training (physical and mental preparation) strategies to come, which will subsequently support and enhance performance throughout an athlete's career.

SkillsQuest Fitness provides measurable, age-appropriate training to support long-term athlete development. It helps coaches prioritize fundamental development over early competition results. By tracking progress and rewarding growth, it fosters a culture of continuous improvement and athletic competence. This program reinforces that great competitors, skiers and riders, start as great athletes.

Sports Medicine & Injury Management

Injury is common in snowsports. Clubs should implement structured protocols for:

- ☐ Annual medical exams (per FIS guidelines)
- ☐ First Aid & CPR certification for all coaches (required for U.S. Ski & Snowboard certification)
- ☐ Injury tracking, treatment referrals, and return-to-sport plans
- ☐ Patience and adherence to rehabilitation timelines

Best Practice: Establish a medical coordinator (professional or volunteer) to manage care coordination, provider referrals, and return-to-snow protocols. If a dedicated role is not feasible, clearly documented policies can guide expectations and ensure consistent support.

Anti-Doping Policy

As the National Governing Body for Olympic skiing and snowboarding, U.S. Ski & Snowboard is required to comply with the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Code, as mandated by the IOC, USOPC, and FIS. Anti-doping compliance is mandatory for participation in Olympic sports.

All U.S. Ski & Snowboard athletes may be tested for prohibited substances at any competition. Olympic hopefuls may also be included in the USADA Out-of-Competition (OOC) testing pool and must submit their whereabouts via the Athlete Location Form (ALF) for unannounced testing.

Coach Responsibilities:

- ☐ Promote a culture of clean sport
- ☐ Avoid placing performance pressure that may lead to doping temptation
- ☐ Provide athlete education on anti-doping rules and health risks
- ☐ Establish and enforce a clear club anti-doping policy

For more information, visit www.usada.org.

Education

U.S. Ski & Snowboard member clubs share a responsibility with athletes, parents, and coaches to foster excellent athlete development, performance and progression, and a positive sport culture. These athletes serve as representatives of our sports, our industry, and our nation.

U.S. Ski & Snowboard Sport Education is devoted to developing materials and services to support the clubs as they strive to educate their members for both organizational and athletic success. Educational resources may include governance, leadership, finance, fundraising, fostering culture, athlete safety, programming in all disciplines, sport skills, fitness, psychology, logistics, nutrition and sports medicine. Many videos are available to our membership at no charge via the Sport Education Academy platform.

Additionally, U.S. Ski & Snowboard Sport Education is responsible for the certification and education of skiing and snowboarding coaches. The certification curriculum has been designed with consultation and expertise from the U.S. Ski & Snowboard National Team coaches and sport science staff and top coaches around the country.

The highest levels of coach education are offered through the U.S. Ski & Snowboard. At these events, the U.S. Ski & Snowboard Team coaches, U.S. Ski & Snowboard High Performance staff and national and international sport experts lead training and discussion among other top coaches from around the country. These events are offered in the spring and/or fall depending on the sport. It is recommended that each club send at least one coach to these events to bring back the information to share with the club. Details are on the coaches pages for each sport on the website.

An important aspect of U.S. Ski & Snowboard coaching certification and professionalism is the commitment to remain current through continuing education (CE). U.S. Ski & Snowboard requires certified coaches to complete continuing education activities to keep their certification active. Coaches who do not submit continuing education credit will show as having an expired certification.

Club directors and leadership may request a roster of their club's member coaches and their certification levels by contacting U.S. Ski & Snowboard Sport Education.

CHAPTER 12: CLUB LOGISTICS

Principles of program logistics for U.S. Ski & Snowboard member clubs:

- ☐ Establish strong relations with their local resort ownership and management.
- ☐ Plan for worse case scenarios and have an emergency action plan.
- ☐ Establish and maintain venues and equipment appropriate to support their mission and vision.
- ☐ Attract, retain and help manage high-quality snowsport competitions.

Resort Relations

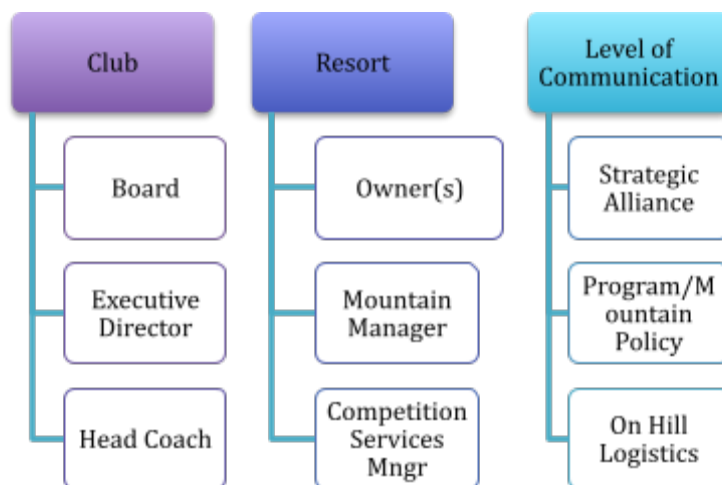
Resort operators today are often focused on bottom-line impacts. While competitive programs generate revenue through pass and equipment sales, they can also present challenges—such as overcrowded facilities, reduced terrain access for paying guests, and the use of discounted or volunteer vouchers.

Strong, strategic partnerships between clubs and resorts are essential. Clubs must recognize resort constraints—operational, spatial, and financial—while resorts must understand the value clubs bring, both tangible and intangible. Clear, respectful communication and mutual understanding are key to long-term success.

Best Practices:

- ☐ Build peer-to-peer relationships with resort leadership
- ☐ Identify and articulate the value your club brings (e.g., future customers, brand alignment, off-peak usage)
- ☐ Understand resort operations and adjust expectations accordingly
- ☐ Address conflicts by clearly defining issues, setting goals, and identifying actionable solutions
- ☐ Maintain regular, transparent communication channels

As most resorts are now part of larger corporations, clubs should align messaging to demonstrate how they contribute to resort priorities. Effective relationships are built on mutual benefit, shared vision, and proactive problem-solving.



Strategic Alignment with Resort Partners

Tiered Communication Structure

Effective club–resort partnerships require communication at appropriate organizational levels:

- ☐ Club Board & Resort Ownership: Discuss strategic alignment. Club boards—often composed of local business and community leaders—are best positioned to articulate the club’s economic and community value. Shared objectives around resort positioning, marketing, and economic impact should guide long-term partnership planning.
- ☐ Executive Director & Mountain Manager: Coordinate policies and logistics. These roles address operational concerns such as risk management, crowding, image, and program integrity. Alignment here ensures efficient day-to-day operations that benefit both entities.
- ☐ Head Coach & Competition Services Manager: Oversee on-hill execution. Responsibilities include training schedules, competition logistics, run closures, integration with patrol, grooming, and coordination with other resort departments.

Clear expectations and policies at higher levels enable productive collaboration on the ground.

Ongoing Communication

Strong resort relationships depend on open, consistent communication:

- ☐ Maintain a professional, courteous presence on the hill
- ☐ Share newsletters and updates with resort management
- ☐ Schedule race and training needs well in advance
- ☐ Address past and future concerns constructively
- ☐ Align on protocols for injuries and disciplinary actions
- ☐ Invite resort personnel to club functions
- ☐ Ensure athletes, coaches, and volunteers demonstrate professionalism with all resort staff

Planning & Utilization

Start early. Proactively communicate needs for training access, staff passes, competition dates, volunteer roles, and rewards programs. Clear, early engagement avoids conflict and improves collaboration.

Venue Development

Clubs should actively support resort venue improvements such as snowmaking, lighting, and trail widening. Contribute expertise, labor, and funding where appropriate. Avoid being viewed as a resource drain; instead, position the club as a strategic partner in enhancing resort infrastructure.

Club Advocacy & Culture

Athletes and families are ambassadors. Teach and reinforce resort codes of conduct and club values. Promote sportsmanship, respect, and positive community engagement—on and off the hill. Strong athlete behavior reinforces the club’s image and strengthens resort relations.

Formal Agreements

All club–resort commitments should be documented in writing to ensure clarity, accountability, and consistency. Annual reviews of agreements support long-term alignment and partnership success.

Define Club Programs and Activities

- ☐ Clubs must ensure that their host ski resort or facility owner/management clearly understand the activities and programs the club offers - Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is recommended.
- ☐ Include days/hours of operation, expected specific facilities to be used and activities for such facilities. This includes terrain parks, half and quarter pipes, rails and dedicated aerial sites as well as the activities that will occur at these sites.
- ☐ Involve ski resort or facility owners in an early discussion regarding season plans, expectations and wishes.
- ☐ Understand ski resort needs, concerns, rules and regulations for their facility. Put agreement in the context of this language.
- ☐ Do not execute agreements with host resorts that extend U.S. Ski & Snowboard's insurance portfolio to resorts in any way without having U.S. Ski & Snowboard's legal counsel review.
- ☐ Ensure all club members understand resort rules and regulations.

Club Activity Schedule and Locations

- ☐ Ideally, U.S. Ski & Snowboard event calendaring should be completed by July preceding the coming season.
- ☐ Ski resorts should (under U.S. Ski & Snowboard rules) sign-off and approve competition schedules.
- ☐ Ski resorts have their own activities and events to schedule so it is prudent to have early discussions.
- ☐ An activity calendar should be prepared and agreed to in principle. This activity schedule can form an overall U.S. Ski & Snowboard -sanctioned agreement plan.

Club Event Requirements, Roles and Responsibilities

- ☐ Major events such as FIS and U.S. Ski & Snowboard events require early planning and agreements with ski resort or facility owners.
- ☐ Procure written agreements from your resort.
- ☐ Be aware of resort association recommended competition guidelines.
- ☐ Specifically record:
 - ☐ Grooming/trail preparation/aerial construction needs
 - ☐ Fencing installation and requirements
 - ☐ Hill/trail/slope closures
 - ☐ Use of ski area equipment
- ☐ Ensure clear understanding as to who will do what.

Supporting Resort Activities

- ☐ Help with resort-hosted events that are most important to the mountain.
- ☐ Participate in resort-hosted competitions, weekly and end-of-season events.
- ☐ Try to be independent on everything else, other than the needs for grooming and patrol.
- ☐ Events should be organized and efficient.
- ☐ Draw in resort staff that want to help.
- ☐ Competitions bring revenue to the resort. It's important to understand and promote the positive economic impact that events stimulate including lodging and meals at the resort.

Club Representative – Resort Liaison

Designate specific club personnel/executive or coach to be the club communication interface with a specifically designated ski resort representative. Ideally this is established at multiple levels as discussed above, depending on the level of concern.

Other Strategic Agreements

Your club may form strategic partnerships beyond the resort—with schools, community organizations, government, venues, or event partners. All partnerships should follow the same guidelines outlined above. To ensure clarity and alignment, agreements should be put in writing, defining roles, responsibilities, and shared goals. As relationships develop, partnerships may progress from informal to formal agreements, depending on their strength and nature.

Types of agreements from informal to formal:

Verbal – the hand shake	Hard to review, relies solely on a person-to-person relationship, not binding in any way. Often leads to confusion with regards to roles and responsibilities – especially with those not involved with the verbal agreement.
Letter of Intent	Provided from one party to the other to communicate that parties intentions, plans and their statement of understanding roles and responsibilities. Signed by one party, not legally binding. Able to review – intentions and plans are in writing.
Letter of Understanding	Provided from one party to the other to communicate that parties intentions, plans and a mutually discussed and agreed upon statement of understanding roles and responsibilities. Signed by one party, but confirmed by both parties - not legally binding. Able to review – intentions and plans are in writing and informally agreed upon.
Memorandum of Understanding	Legally structured letter of understanding signed by both parties typically reviewed by legal council. Much more formal, but not legally binding.
Contract	Legally binding agreement, reviewed by legal council and signed by both parties.

Emergency Action Plan (EAP)

An Emergency Action Plan (EAP) is a critical protocol that ensures a coordinated, effective response during emergencies. It should be a standard operating procedure at all club training and competition venues.

For clubs operating at a primary resort, collaborate closely with resort risk management and ski patrol to develop and rehearse a plan that addresses serious injuries, medical response, evacuation procedures, lift incidents, and severe weather scenarios. The EAP should prioritize athlete safety and include:

- ☐ Pre-established emergency contacts and communication protocols
- ☐ Coordination with medical personnel and transport services
- ☐ Procedures for incident investigation and media management

All staff must be trained on the EAP and prepared to implement it without delay. The plan should mirror the medical protocols used at U.S. Ski & Snowboard and FIS-sanctioned events.

For additional guidance, visit: [OSHA Emergency Action Plans](#)

Venues & Risk Management

Risk management involves identifying, assessing, and mitigating potential hazards to minimize the chance of injury or incident. Clubs have a legal and ethical duty of care to ensure safe environments for athletes, especially in inherently risky sports like skiing and snowboarding.

A formal risk management program supports athlete safety, reduces liability, and reinforces professionalism in club operations.

Why Risk Management Matters

- ☐ Skiing and snowboarding carry inherent risk
- ☐ Coaches have a legal duty of care
- ☐ Litigation is costly and damaging to club reputation
- ☐ Proactive safety measures protect athletes and programs

Venue Management Checklist

- ☐ On-Hill Training
 - ☐ Club directors and head coaches are responsible for designing and maintaining safe, effective training environments. Well-prepared terrain enhances skill acquisition and supports technical development.
- ☐ Competition Venues
 - ☐ U.S. Ski & Snowboard and FIS provide mandatory course design standards for sanctioned events. These must be strictly followed.
- ☐ Training Venues

- ☐ Though formal approval isn't required, training venues must be prepared with professional judgment and consistent safety oversight.
- ☐ Risk Assessment
 - ☐ Shared spaces, varying skill levels, and dynamic conditions increase risk. Coaches and staff must monitor closely, communicate proactively, and take immediate action when hazards arise.
- ☐ Course Inspection
 - ☐ Athletes must inspect all courses—including minor adjustments—to anticipate terrain changes, identify hazards, and enhance situational awareness.
- ☐ Course Control
 - ☐ Venues must be clearly closed, supervised, and monitored. Entry and exit points should be visible, and athletes must follow timed intervals to avoid collisions or interference.
- ☐ Course Maintenance
 - ☐ Training surfaces must be regularly checked and maintained. If conditions deteriorate to the point of risk, training must pause for course repair or reset.
- ☐ Course Communication
 - ☐ Dedicated radio channels and disciplined communication protocols are critical for course control and emergency response. Radios should be monitored by trained staff with clearly defined responsibilities.

Competitions

Whether hosting, co-organizing, or participating, competitions are a key opportunity for a club to demonstrate excellence. Clubs should contribute planning, expertise, volunteers, and resources to ensure high-quality events.

Key Responsibilities:

- ☐ Course Compliance: Alpine competitions must be held on FIS-homologated courses unless otherwise approved in writing by FIS and U.S. Ski & Snowboard. Organizers are responsible for all compliance costs.
- ☐ Venue Readiness: Competition venues must be fully prepared the afternoon prior to training, including snow preparation, grooming, safety measures, and required tools and equipment.
- ☐ Role Clarity: Club and resort roles should be defined at least six months in advance.
- ☐ Event Guidelines: Refer to the U.S. Ski & Snowboard Event Organizer Handbook for detailed responsibilities and best practices.

Facilities & Equipment

Well-maintained facilities and equipment are critical to safe, effective programming. Clubs should regularly assess needs, track inventory, and implement a maintenance schedule with clear oversight.

Best Practices:

- ☐ Conduct routine facility and equipment assessments
- ☐ Assign responsibility for maintenance and repairs

- ☐ Ensure compliance with FIS and U.S. Ski & Snowboard regulations
- ☐ Use written agreements to outline maintenance responsibilities for leased or shared spaces
- ☐ Document and address any facility-related concerns

Training Environment:

A well-developed training environment supports athlete progression. Clubs may use a combination of ski areas, gyms, and specialized facilities (e.g., gymnastics or strength training centers), depending on location and resources.

For more information about venue safety training and practices refer to Chapter 10 on Athlete Safety.

CHAPTER 13: ASSESSING OUTCOMES & MEASURING RESULTS

Effective measurement drives improvement. A club's ability to assess outcomes and track progress:

- ☐ Clarifies vision and strategic goals
- ☐ Enhances leadership and credibility
- ☐ Increases funding and sustainability
- ☐ Attracts and retains quality staff and athletes
- ☐ Improves athletic and organizational performance
- ☐ Strengthens parent engagement and community support

Key Assessment Areas

U.S. Ski & Snowboard clubs are encouraged to evaluate performance in the following areas:

- ☐ Organizational Performance
- ☐ Athletic Development & Results
- ☐ Student-Athlete Life Outcomes
- ☐ Parent, Family & Volunteer Engagement
- ☐ Community Impact

Organizational Performance: Key Indicators

- ☐ Mission and vision alignment
- ☐ Active, engaged board and leadership
- ☐ Regular performance reviews (organization, board, staff)
- ☐ Strong organizational operations and financial growth
- ☐ Increased financial aid and revenue diversity
- ☐ Positive, measurable cultural shifts
- ☐ Growth in qualified staff, certifications, and professional development
- ☐ Expansion of volunteer, judge, and official support

Resources: *Diagnosing Organizations* – Michael I. Harrison and *Measuring Program Outcomes* – United Way www.products.com

Athletic Performance: Key Indicators

- ☐ National and international athlete placements
- ☐ Regional team selections and podiums
- ☐ Measurable improvements in athlete performance and participation across all levels
- ☐ Clear benchmarks for progress in development programs

Student-Athlete Career & Life Outcomes

- ☐ Improved athlete retention and enrollment
- ☐ Clear and consistently implemented support policies (e.g., SafeSport, academics, travel)
- ☐ Reduction in conduct issues; increased awareness of expectations
- ☐ Measured inclusivity and diverse athlete engagement
- ☐ Success tracking in academics, other sports, and post-program outcomes
- ☐ Alumni engagement and communication

Parent, Family & Volunteer Engagement

- ☐ Increased parent involvement and education
- ☐ Growth in volunteer participation and retention
- ☐ Broader family engagement in club activities
- ☐ Parent contributions to marketing, fundraising, and community outreach

Community Impact

- ☐ Strengthened partnerships with local ski areas and community organizations
- ☐ Improved access to community resources and infrastructure
- ☐ Enhanced club visibility and reputation within the community

U.S. SKI & SNOWBOARD MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Membership Tools

Membership tools are designed to support athletes and their families on their pathway to success. The most up-to-date resources are available on the U.S. Ski & Snowboard website. Some resources are publicly accessible, while others are reserved for members. To access member-only tools, individuals must log in or create an account. Upon login, members can access the following resources:

Private Tools

Linked Members

Primary

Current

X

Current

+

Link Member

Renew Membership

Athlete Event Registration

Add FIS Registration

Membership Card

Video Library

Member Discounts

U.S. SKI & SNOWBOARD

2024/2025

Name: [REDACTED]

Member #: [REDACTED]

Gender: [REDACTED]

Birth Year: [REDACTED]

Division: Intermountain

State: Utah

✓ **Current**

✓ **Background Check**
Completed 05/07/2024

✓ **Safe Sport**
Completed 05/08/2024

Staff Membership

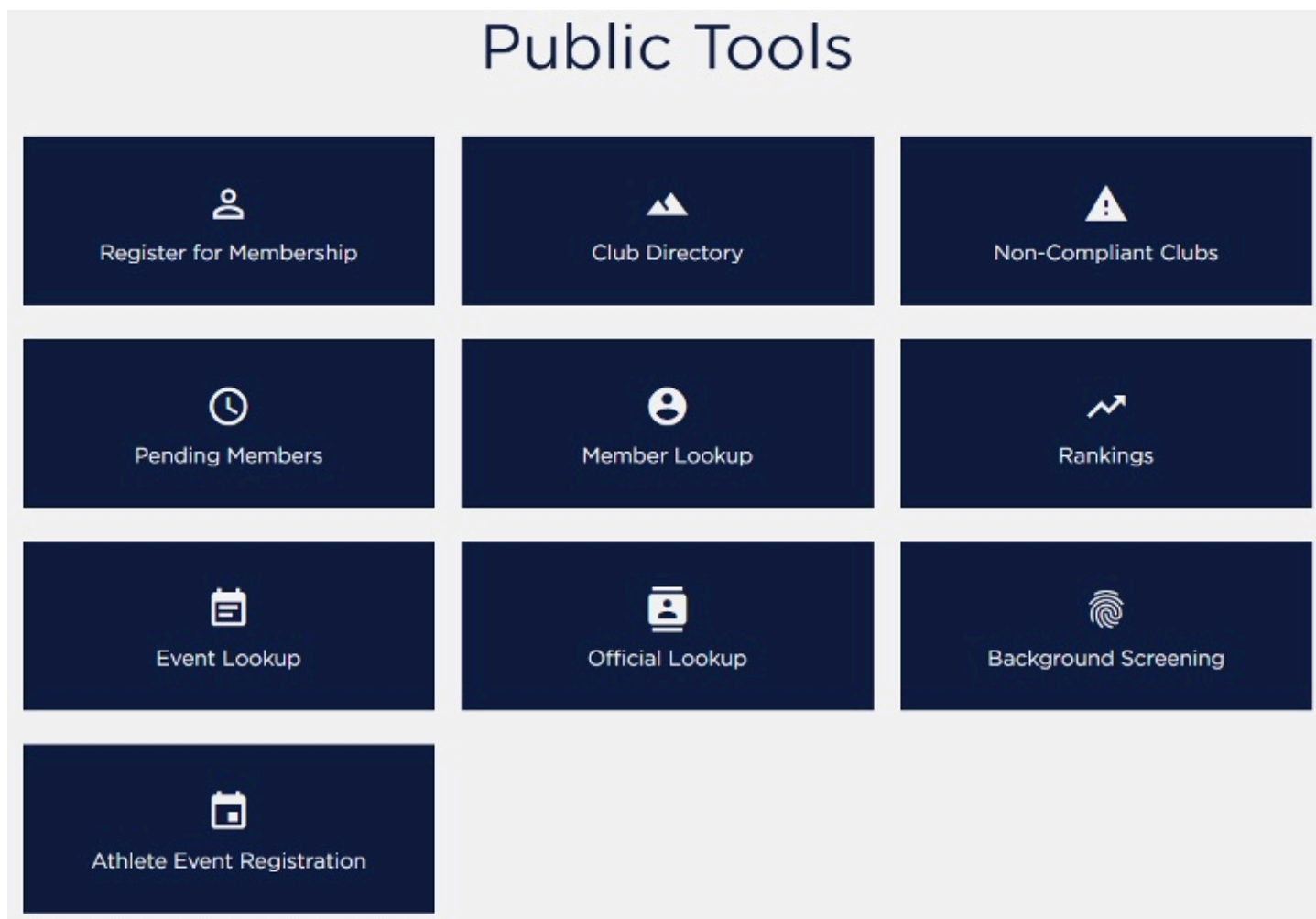
VALID THROUGH 6.30.25

[More Details](#)

Public Tools

86

As noted, U.S. Ski & Snowboard Public Tools are available to the public, and do not require a login.



There are a host of membership resources available on the same Public Tools page to the right. Some of those resources include access to the U.S. Ski & Snowboard Knowledge Base of frequently asked questions, Member Descriptions which include Categories, Benefits and Pricing By Sport, Age Classifications by sport, and much more.

U.S. Ski & Snowboard Competition Guides by Sport

Available with your membership, sport specific rulebooks provide a guide to U.S. Ski & Snowboard programs for athletes, parents, coaches, and officials. Here you can find information on rules and rankings for your sport as well. There is a contact person within each region, division and state for your sport that can help you answer questions. Your divisional contact appears in the front of the sport specific competition guide and may also be found at Regions and Divisions.

Every U.S. Ski & Snowboard sport has full-time staff in the national office in Park City, UT. You may contact the U.S. Ski & Snowboard's office at 435.649.9090 to find a department directory.

Conclusion

This U.S. Ski & Snowboard Guide to Club Excellence is designed to be both a roadmap and a resource—supporting clubs as they grow, strengthen, and thrive. Excellence is not a single destination, but an ongoing commitment to culture, leadership, and community. By putting these principles into practice, your club will not only elevate performance but also foster environments where athletes, coaches, and families flourish and excel. The journey of club excellence is continuous—may this guide serve as both compass and catalyst along the way.

In partnership with our U.S. Ski & Snowboard clubs!

In gratitude to the many contributors to the Guide to Club Excellence, especially to Walt Evans, Ellen Hall Adams, and Brian Krill for their vision, expertise, passion and commitment to excellence.

The Sport Education Team, U.S. Ski & Snowboard