



INTRODUCTION

Dear Athlete Representative,

This guide has been created to help you start an Athlete Leadership Team (ALT) in your local program. If your local program already has one, then this guide will help you to improve your ALT. An ALT is comprised of athletes in your local program who want to provide input to the Management Team. As an Athlete Representative, it's important to provide your Management Team with feedback from not just yourself, but from all athletes in your program.

Not only is an ALT an opportunity for athletes to provide input on the sports side of their local program, it is also an opportunity for them hear the voices of their fellow athletes and provide input to the program's future as well as to be a part of events run by the local program outside of competition and within the community.

When you were trained as an Athlete Representative, you learned many important aspects of governance. This guide will help you put what you learned into use such as recruiting members, planning meetings, recording meeting minutes, and much more.

Keep in mind that this is only a guide to help you understand what SOPA expects from an ALT. There are 56 local programs in Pennsylvania and what might work for one program, might not work for another. I encourage you and members of your ALT to contact me at jschubert@specialolympicspa.org or 610-630-9450 ext. 236 for any questions and/or concerns you might have.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jordan C Schubert', with a long, sweeping underline.

Jordan C Schubert

Athlete Leadership Coordinator
Special Olympics Pennsylvania

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP TEAM

POSITION DESCRIPTIONS OVERVIEW

Management Team (MT):

Following an ALT meeting, ALT Chair presents athlete input during a MT meeting.

ALT Chair: A trained Athlete Representative who holds a position on the MT, facilitates ALT meetings and presents athlete input at MT meetings.

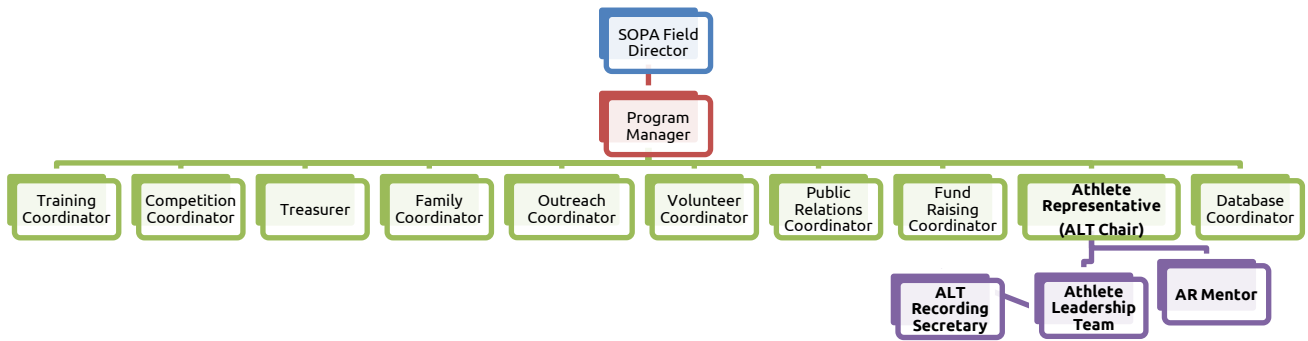
Mentor: Mentor to the ALT Chair, provides necessary assistance in preparation for meetings. Must have taken Athlete Representative I Training with the ALT Chair.

ALT Members: Athletes who are active in a local program and want to provide input to improve their program inside and outside of competition.

Recording Secretary: An ALT member who records "Meeting Minutes" from each meeting for the ALT Chair to share with the MT and ALPs Coordinator.

MANAGEMENT TEAM/ATHLETE LEADERSHIP TEAM

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



ATHLETE LEADERSHIP TEAM GUIDELINES*

- Interested members must complete an application
 - Must be signed off by ALT Chair & Mentor.
 - Questionable applications are taken to the Local Program Manager for review and final decision.
- Member must be at least 16 years old.
- Member should not have a history of misbehavior.
- Member must have a valid medical on file.
- Member must be active in at least one sport per year.
 - Applications must be signed off by coach to acknowledge active participation in sports.
- Three active ALT members are required.
- Chair must be a trained Athlete Representative on the Management Team with a mentor who has also taken the training.
- There should be at least one meeting per each sports season (i.e. Winter, Summer, and Fall) to allow athletes to provide input on their sport either during or immediately following the season of the sport they are participating in.
- Meetings should take place at a time and location that is convenient to all members.
- Additional projects may take place outside of meeting time and/or dates.
- Term lengths will be voted on as part of the ALT's processes for each individual program.*
- Meeting minutes are recorded by a recording secretary.
 - Chair shares meeting minutes with Management Team.
 - Meeting minutes should also be shared with SOPA's ALPs Coordinator to provide updates to the state office.

*These guidelines are the minimum requirements by SOPA that an ALT needs to follow.

* Processes are additional guidelines that ALT members vote on. Along with term lengths and limits, other processes can include the number of meetings a member can miss, amount of time to respond to a communication, voting procedures and much more.

INVITATION LETTER/APPLICATION

As the Chair of your Athlete Leadership Team and Athlete Representative on the Management Team, you should be the one reaching out to athletes you think would be a good fit on the Athlete Leadership Team. Every athlete in your program who has a current medical, actively participates in at least one sport each year, and is at least 16 years old is eligible to join your program's Athlete Leadership Team.

You want to have as much diversity as possible. While it's not required, it's highly recommended to have at least one athlete from each sport your program offers, equal number of male and female athletes, and a variety of age ranges. The reason why it's highly recommended is because when you share meeting minutes with your Management Team, you want to share with them feedback from a variety of perspectives. The reason why this is not required is because county/area size and number of athletes/sports is always the largest factor in recruiting members.

When e-mailing the ALT invitation letter, make sure to attach the application and say in the letter and on the application to send it back to you and your mentor to sign off on. Any questionable applications will be taken to the Local Program Manager.

The application to join the ALT should include the following:

- Name
- Date of Birth
- Shirt Size
- E-mail address
- Phone number
- How long have you participated in Special Olympics?
- What sport(s) are you currently active in?
- Why do you want to be part of the Athlete Leadership Team?
- Coach's signature
 - If athlete participates in multiple sports, get signature of current or most recent coach.
- ALT Chair and Mentor's e-mail address
 - To acknowledge receiving the completed application.

SAMPLE INVITATION LETTER

Dear Fellow Athlete,

My name is _____ and I am the chair of the Special Olympics _____ County's Athlete Leadership Team. Your name has been brought up as a potential candidate and I would like to give you the opportunity to join our team. If you're not familiar with our Athlete Leadership Team, allow me to explain.

My job as the Athlete Representative on the Management Team is to speak on behalf of athletes like you and provide a voice on how to better our program. In order for me to speak on behalf of the athletes, I want to hear what they have to say. That is why we have an Athlete Leadership team which is an open forum for all athletes to provide input on how to better our program.

Our meetings take place at _____ on _____ at _____ AM/PM. Our next scheduled meeting is for _____. Along with our meetings, we also may take part in some additional projects either with our Special Olympics program or within the community. Being on our Athlete Leadership Team requires a commitment, but I can assure you it can be a very rewarding experience.

Attached is an application for you to fill out. Please "reply all" so my mentor, _____ (copied) is included by _____. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and I hope you consider joining our team.

Copied – ALT Mentor

Sincerely,

Your Name

Special Olympics _____ County Athlete Representative

Athlete Leadership Chair

SAMPLE APPLICATION



Athlete Leadership Team Application

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Shirt Size: _____

E-mail address: _____

Phone Number: _____

How long have you participated in Special Olympics: _____

What sport(s) are you currently active in: _____

Why do you want to join the Athlete Leadership Team?

Coach's Signature* (current or most recent): _____

*By signing this ALT application, I as coach for the applicant endorse his/her as an ALT member and believe he/she will be an asset to this team. Furthermore, I know of no reason why he/she should not be considered for this Athlete Leadership role.

**Please return this application to _____ ALT Chair and
ALT Mentor at _____ by _____.**

AGENDAS

Part of being an effective Chair of your Athlete Leadership Team is making sure that you are organized and have laid out what you want to happen at each meeting. It's important to have an agenda not only for you but also for other members to know what's happening throughout the course of the meeting.

In order to make sure everything on your agenda is accomplished, you should properly divide up the time you spend on each topic. As we know, some topics might require more time than others. While the time limit of your meetings is totally up to your discretion, I'd suggest that they do not last more than an hour unless you're working on a project. Members of your team are taking time out of their day to attend these meetings. You want to make sure you get the most out of each of your team members without taking too much of their time.

Looking at an agenda allows members to develop their thoughts on each subject. Also if any guests come to your meetings, it allows them to know what is going on as well.

On the next page you can see how you can organize and structure an agenda for your meetings.

SAMPLE AGENDA OUTLINE



Athlete Leadership Team Meeting Agenda (Date)

- Introductions
 - 6:00 – 6:10 PM
 - Have chair welcome everybody.
 - Roll Call.
 - If there are new members, have Chair recognize them.
 - New members introduce themselves.
 - If there are any guests, have Chair recognize them.
 - Guests introduce themselves.

- Old News
 - 6:10 – 6:20 PM
 - Recap of previous meeting and share what follow up is happening.

- New News
 - 6:20 -6:30 PM
 - This is an opportunity to for the Chair to discuss with the rest of the members what the Management Team has been working on. This can range from program policies, volunteer recruitment, competition, special events, and much more. The Chair then opens it up to the rest of the members to get their feedback and hold votes if necessary.
 - The main purpose of this discussion is giving athletes a say about these things and for the Chair to take to the Management Team at their next meeting.
 - If time permits or there aren't any topics from the Management Team to discuss, have members share any questions or concerns that they or their fellow athletes have about their local program.

- **Guests**
 - 6:30 – 6:45 PM
 - If you have guests at your meeting, such as a SOPA staff member or community leader, give them an opportunity to speak.

- **Announcements**
 - 6:45 – 7:00 PM
 - Announce when the next meeting is and share upcoming events in your program.

- **Adjourn**
 - 7:00 PM

MEETING MINUTES

Lots of things happen and are said throughout the course of a meeting. It can be very easy to forget those things. In order to keep track of everything that occurred in a meeting, a recording secretary records "Meeting Minutes". It doesn't mean that they write down everything that happened minute by minute, word by word. But rather who was in the meeting, when the meeting started, recap from previous meeting, key things that were said, numbers for votes, announcements, and when the meeting ended.

The Recording Secretary then shares the minutes with the ALT Chair for them to share with the Management Team at their next meeting. Minutes from previous meeting will also be distributed with the agenda prior to upcoming meeting.

It's also important to share the minutes with SOPA's ALPs Coordinator. The ALPs Coordinator oversees countless athlete leaders in all 56 SOPA programs. The ALPs Coordinator wants to know what athletes are doing in each program to not only have them on file, but also share what your program is doing with other programs who want to grow their Athlete Leadership Team.

See the next page on how meeting minutes should be taken.

SAMPLE MEETING MINUTES OUTLINE



Athlete Leadership Team Meeting Minutes (Date)

- **Meeting Commenced at 6:00 PM**

- **In Attendance**
 - Two new members joined the team.

- **Not In Attendance**

- **Guests**
 - ALPs Coordinator Jordan Schubert was in attendance.

- **Old News**
 - At the last meeting...
 - Review minutes from previous meeting and any follow up that has occurred.

- **New News**
 - The Management Team is looking to...
 - One person suggested...
 - Another person suggested...
 - Chair explained that the Management Team thought about it, but it didn't fit the budget
 - Someone then recommended...
 - Someone else thought it was a good idea and also added in...
 - The Chair called for a vote.
 - The vote was unanimous.

- **Special Guest**

- ALPs Coordinator, Jordan Schubert, was in attendance. The Chair invited him to help review and give feedback on the updated processes.

- **Announcements**

- The Chair asked if the same time and place worked for the next meeting.
 - Everyone agreed
- The annual Veterans Breakfast will be taking place next Sunday.
 - Everyone should arrive by 8 am to help set up.

- **Meeting Adjourned at 7:00 PM**

ATHLETE CONGRESS

As a trained Athlete Representative, you and your mentor have an opportunity to attend Athlete Congress which takes place every two years in conjunction with SOPA's annual Leadership Conference. The reason why Athlete Congress was created is to allow Athlete Representatives from each local program across the state a chance to let their voice be heard and vote on topics to be brought to the Board of Directors.

During the year in-between Athlete Congress sessions, at SOPA's annual Leadership Conference will be an ALPs Celebration of Achievement session, which is open to all athletes in attendance. This is an opportunity for athletes all over the state to meet the Regional Input Council, and suggest topics for the following year's Athlete Congress.

REGIONAL INPUT COUNCIL

Purpose:

1. Provide ongoing communication between the local program athletes, RIC, and the Athlete Representative elected to the Board of Directors.
2. Provide the Board of Directors with direct input to issues that are important to the local athlete.
3. Remove the barriers that preempt information from reaching the local athlete.
4. Provide for timely response and action of questions and/or ideas.
5. Provide opportunities for Athlete Representatives to make recommendations that will be presented to the Board of Directors.
6. Address all unfinished business from Athlete Congress.

The Athlete Representative serving on the Board of Directors will chair the RIC. The chair's term limit is three (3) years. Elections will take place at the Athlete Congress. During a transition year, the chair will train and mentor the newly elected.

Responsibilities of the Chair:

Mentors will be present to assist their athlete when needed but are not to be active participants in meetings.

1. Consult with RIC members on a pre-scheduled regular basis.
2. Schedule and lead RIC appointments and meetings.

- Prepare the agenda for the RIC meetings.
 - Assign a Recorder for RIC all meetings.
 - Ensure all RIC meeting minutes are sent to all members and any follow-up required is noted with details of “who, what, when” etc.
 - Working with SOPA staff, prepare Board Report resulting from RIC meetings in a timely manner.
3. Attend all scheduled Board of Directors meetings and RIC meetings as appropriate.
 4. Train the newly elected chair.

Qualifications of the Chair:

1. Active participation as a SOPA athlete.
2. SOPA volunteer with a valid Criminal Record Check.
3. Meet qualifications of AR and/or GM. (Available through Athlete Leadership Coordinator)
4. ALPs University certified (trained) AR.
5. AR has an ALPs University certified Mentor with a valid Criminal Record Check, General Orientation, and Protective Behaviors training.
6. Voted into the position by popular vote at Athlete Congress.
7. Sign the SOPA Board of Director’s Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement.

There will be a total of six Athlete Representatives and one governing chair on the RIC. Two Sectional Athlete Representatives from the three regions representing the North and the South. Six RIC Representatives will each have one vote. The chair will have a vote. The chair of the Athlete Congress Steering Committee will serve as an Ex-Officio member who does not get a vote.

1. During a transition year, the newly elected Athlete Representative chair (Athlete Elected Board of Directors member) will be in training.
2. The term limit is (1, 2, or 3) years with staggering start years.
3. Athlete Representatives term limits will stagger. There will always be a representative with one year experience per region.
4. Elections will take place at the biennial, as needed, Athlete Congress.

Responsibilities of the Regional Athlete Representative:

Mentors will be present to assist their athlete when needed but are not to be active participants in meetings.

1. Consult with program Athletes Representatives within respective Region.
2. Consult with other Regional Representatives on the RIC.
3. Report issues and ideas to the other RIC members in a timely manner.

4. Attend all necessary appointments and RIC meetings.
5. Lead an Athlete Input Council in the absence of the Athlete Leadership Coordinator and/or Projects Coordinator.

Frequency of Contact:

Mentors will be present to assist their athlete when needed but are not to be active participants in meetings.

1. Two Sectional Regional Representatives will be encouraged to communicate monthly.
2. Six Regional Athlete Representatives will share their discussions with the Athlete Board of Directors member for him/her to present to the Board of Directors next quarterly meeting.
3. One month prior to the quarterly Board of Directors meeting, there will be a scheduled conference call where the Regional Athlete Representatives share issues and ideas and determine final issues (with proposed solutions) to be presented to the Board for approval or other appropriate steps.
4. Athlete Board of Directors member will share the issues and ideas to the Board of Directors.
5. Minutes will be taken at all meetings, and electronically distributed within one week of the meeting to all participants; the Athlete Leadership Coordinator and Projects Coordinator.

Election to the Regional Input Council:

1. Athlete Representatives wanting to run for RIC must submit their nomination form for Local Program Manager/Director approval.
2. During the biennial Athlete Congress, those athletes seeking election are required to give a one minute speech stating why they should be elected to the position.
3. If only one Athlete Representative from a region is at Athlete Congress, they will be automatically appointed running unopposed.

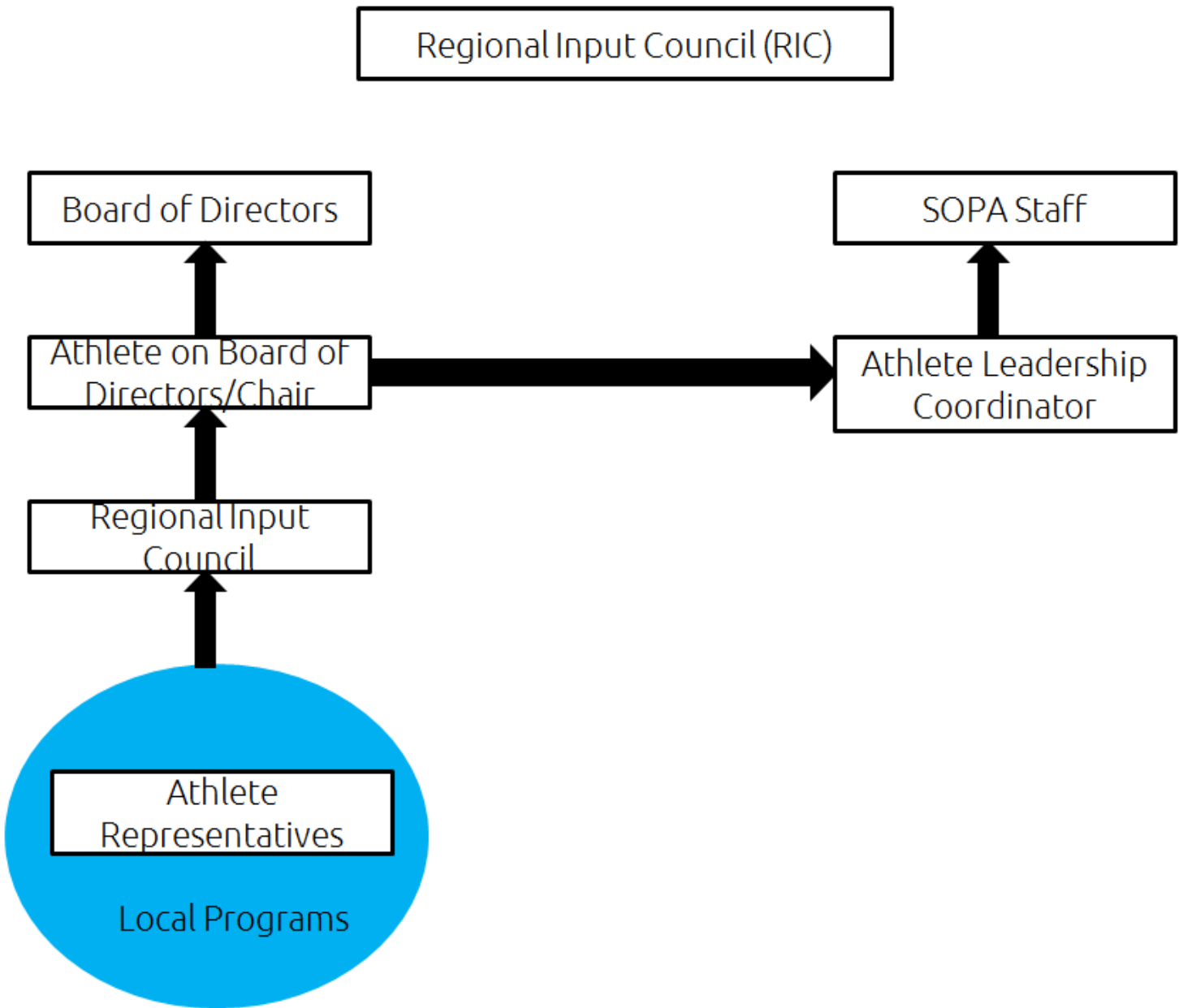
Term Length:

1. Athlete Representatives will serve a one (1), two (2), or three (3) year term.
2. The term lengths will be assigned on an as need basis for the RIC.
3. The last year of the term will be mentoring their successor.

Responsibility of ALPs Coordinator:

1. Maintain ongoing communication with all members of the RIC.
2. Serve as a support.
3. Provide the necessary resources.
4. Act as a liaison to keep all information and communication flowing smoothly.

REGIONAL INPUT COUNCIL COMMUNICATION CHART



SOPA STAFF CONTACTS

As you use this guidebook to grow and develop your Athlete Leadership Team, SOPA's ALPs Coordinator, Jordan Schubert and Programming Projects Coordinator, Chelsea Drob are also here to help you.

Jordan's Contact Information:

E-mail: jschubert@specialolympicspa.org

Phone: 610-630-9450 ext. 236

Chelsea's Contact Information:

E-mail: cdrob@specialolympicspa.org

Phone: 610-630-9450 ext. 233