



INTRODUCTION

Dear Athlete Representative,

This guide has been created to help you start an Athlete Leadership Team (ALT) in your local team. 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 team that works with both the local leadership team and regional staff. As an Athlete Representative, it's important to provide your local team and region Team with feedback from not just yourself, but from as many athletes as possible!

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 your team's future as well as help lead local and regional competitive and non-competitive events!

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 54 local team in Pennsylvania across 9 regions. What might work for one 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'.

Jordan C Schubert

Manager of Athlete Leadership & Young Athletes
Special Olympics Pennsylvania

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP TEAM

POSITION DESCRIPTIONS OVERVIEW

Regional Executive Director:
The SOPA Staff Member responsible for overseeing all activity within a region.

Local Leadership Team:
Following an ALT meeting, ALT Chair presents athlete input during their meeting

ALT Chair: A trained Athlete Representative who holds a position on the MT facilitates ALT meetings and presents athlete input at Local Leadership Team and Regional Athlete Leadership Council meetings.

Mentor: Mentor to the ALT Chair, provides necessary assistance in preparation for meetings. Should be previously acquainted with ALT Chair prior to attending training.

ALT Members: Athletes who are active in a local program and want to provide input and support other local/regional/state initiatives that are athlete led and athlete centered.

Recording Secretary: An ALT member/volunteer who records "Meeting Minutes" from each meeting for the ALT Chair to share with the Local Leadership Team and others when requested.

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP TEAM GUIDELINES*

- Interested members must complete an application
 - Must be signed off by ALT Chair & Mentor.
 - Questionable applications are taken to the Team Leader/Regional Executive Director for review and final decision.
- Member must be at least 16 years old.
- Member should not have any recent history of misbehavior.
- Member must have a valid medical on file.
 - All ALT members are required to follow the General Guidelines and Athlete/Unified Partner Guidelines in the SOPA [Code of Conduct](#).
- Member must be active in at least one sport per year.
 - This is inclusive of community and school sports programming.
 - Applications must be signed off by coach to acknowledge active participation in sports.
 - Athletes as Coaches may also be part of ALT, under the condition that they participate in at least one sport outside the season they are coaching.
 - If an ALT member decides to fully transition into a volunteer role, they are asked to transition off the ALT within a year to provide other athletes an opportunity to serve.
- Three active ALT members are required.
 - Chair
 - Member
 - Recording Secretary
- Chair must be a trained Athlete Representative that regularly reports to the local leadership team.
 - Each Athlete Leadership Team Chair, their Mentor and Team Leader (with potential support from the ALT and other athletes/volunteers) must identify at least one of the following priorities to focus on each year:
 - **Improving the Athlete Leadership Team**
 - **Identifying more Athlete Leaders and utilizing them to the best of their abilities.**
 - **Athletes hosting events to recruit athletes and volunteers.**
 - **Athletes leading fundraising efforts with limited support from volunteers/staff.**
 - **Athletes identifying opportunities to recognize athletes and volunteers for outstanding achievements.**
 - Teams without an Athlete Representative may still have an Athlete Leadership Team, however the Chair must be an athlete committed to becoming an Athlete Representative with a committed Mentor.
- There should be at least one meeting per quarter (1st: January-March, 2nd: April-June, 3rd: July-September, 4th: October-December).

- Meetings should take place at a time and location that is convenient to all members.
 - This can also mean meetings can take place virtually if/when appropriate.
- 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 Local Leadership Team

*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 local leadership 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 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 team offers, equal number of male and female athletes, and a variety of age ranges. The reason why it's highly recommended is because it shows your team isn't dominated by one particular demographic. 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 distributing the ALT invitation letter (via mail or e-mail), make sure to include 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 Team Leader:

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 for Team _____ is to speak on behalf of athletes like you and provide a voice on how to better our experience. 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 experience and help our local team.

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

Team _____ 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, it's suggested that they do not last more than an hour. 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 where things stand with the current priority(ies) identified at the start of the year.
 - The main purpose of this discussion is giving athletes a say about how they can best support and suggestions on how to overcome any obstacles.
 - If time permits or there aren't any topics from the local team leadership to discuss, have members share any questions or concerns that they or their fellow athletes have about their local team.

- 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 local leadership 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 your region's Regional Athlete Leadership Council Chair. This will provide high level updates as it relates to the local priority that will be referenced later on and any other questions/concerns that should be shared with the State Athlete Leadership Council.

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**
 - Manager of Athlete Leadership & Young Athletes, 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 local leadership 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**

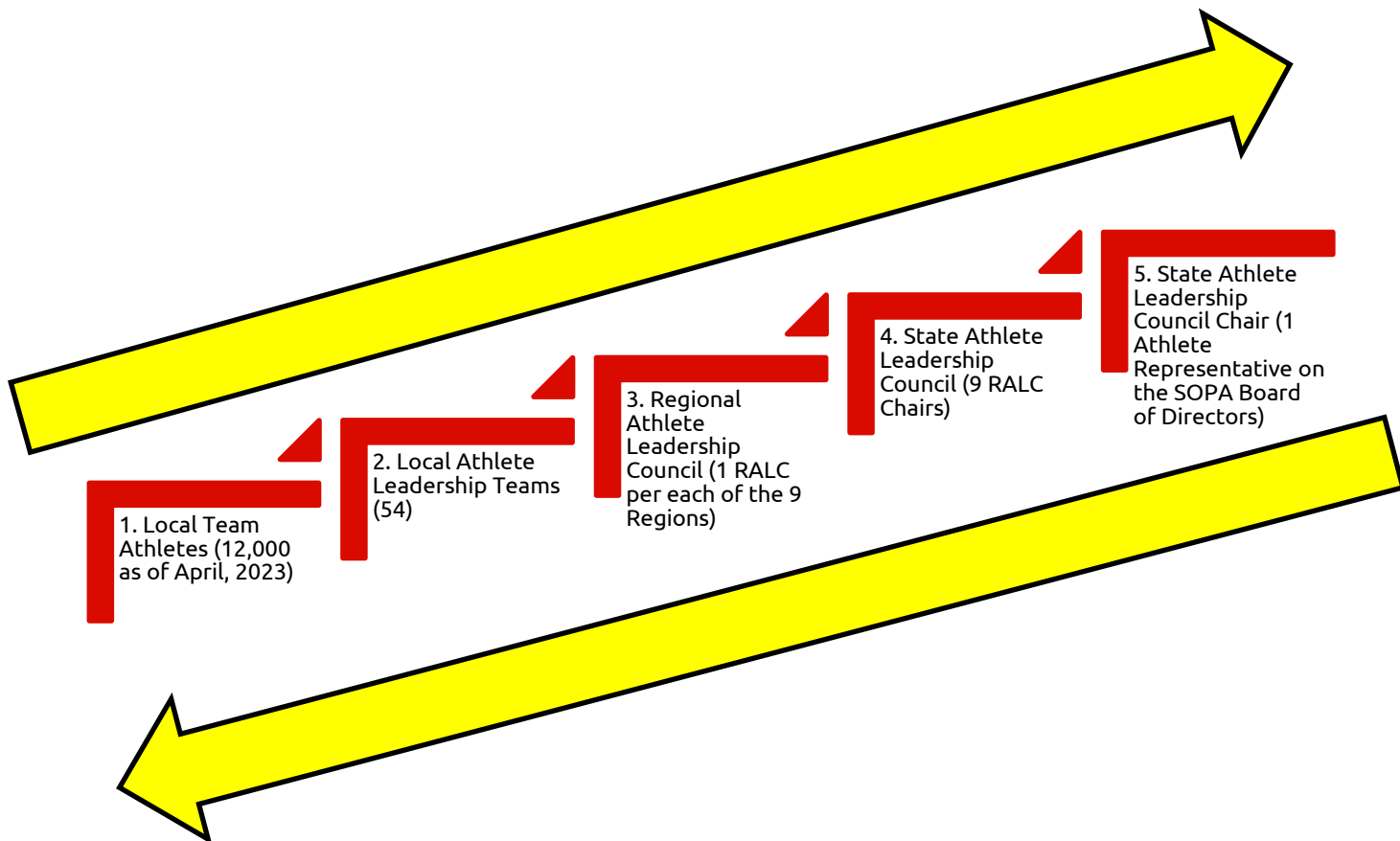
- Manager of Athlete Leadership & Young Athletes, Jordan Schubert, was in attendance. The Chair invited him to help review and give feedback on the updated processes.

- **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**

REGIONAL AND STATE ATHLETE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL



Each ALT Chair is also a member of their region's Regional Athlete Leadership Council (RALC). As a part of the RALC, each member, their Mentor and Team Leader are required to pick a priority that both athletes and volunteers can equally support. Once a quarter, each RALC member meets with their State Athlete Leadership Council (SALC) Representative, also the RALC Chair.

Priorities rotate on an annual basis based on the current needs across each region collectively.

The purpose of these meetings is to not only share progress, but also how neighboring teams and regional staff can help each other out if anyone is struggling with their priority.

Each RALC Chair is responsible for tracking the success and struggles of each team. Any significant questions, comments or concerns brought up by multiple RALC members in each region as it relates to their priority may be discussed further by the SALC to identify:

1. How each local team and region should address the matter(s) internally?
2. How SOPA Headquarters (staff and board) should address the matter(s) on a broader scale?