International Olympic Committee

FACTSHEET

Roles and responsibilities during the Olympic Games

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The Olympic Charter highlights the three main constituent groups of the Olympic Movement and their different roles and responsibilities with regard to the Olympic Games. They are the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and the International Sports Federations (IFs). In addition to these three, the Organising Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOGs) can be added. They are responsible for the preparation and hosting of a particular edition of the Games.

"*The Olympic Games are competitions between athletes in individual or team events and not between countries. They bring together the athletes selected by their respective NOCs, whose entries have been accepted by the IOC. They compete under the technical direction of the IFs concerned.*" (Olympic Charter, Chapter 1, Rule 6).

The Games of the Olympiad are celebrated during the first year of an Olympiad, and the Olympic Winter Games during its third year. However, the preparation process for each edition of the Games lasts from the start of the dialogue between the potential host and the IOC to the closing ceremony and beyond.

This factsheet will enable you to gain a clearer understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the key bodies within the Olympic Movement, which help to make the Olympic Games a success.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC)

The IOC is the guardian of the Olympic Games and the ultimate authority on any matter relating to the Games. It entrusts the honour and responsibility of hosting the Games to one or more cities, regions or countries, elected at the IOC Session. Part of the IOC's mission is "*to ensure the regular celebration of the Olympic Games.*" (Olympic Charter, Chapter 1, Rule 2).

The IOC Session

Olympic hosts are elected by the IOC members at the IOC Session. Projects by potential hosts are first reviewed and analysed by the relevant IOC Future Host Commission, which makes a recommendation to the IOC Executive Board (EB) about which projects are ready to be put forward for a vote.

The IOC evolved its approach to all aspects of hosting and organising the Olympic Games and the Youth Olympic Games following the election of Thomas Bach as IOC President in 2013. The reforms began in 2014 with the unanimous approval of Olympic Agenda 2020 by the IOC Session.

One of the key reforms was a new approach to electing Olympic hosts, which invited potential hosts to present projects that best fit their sporting, economic, social and environmental-planning needs rather than trying to fit the local context to the Games. This has resulted in significant cost savings for potential hosts, as well as more sustainable projects. The reforms ensure the IOC remains in step with a rapidly changing world, to deliver Games that are better aligned with future hosts' long-term development plans, while maintaining the inherent magic of the Games and providing the best possible experience for athletes. For more information, see the IOC factsheet Electing Olympic Hosts.

Building on the success of these initiatives, 2018 saw the adoption of the New Norm, additional reforms that provided Olympic hosts with even more flexibility in designing the Games to meet their long-term development goals. The IOC also increased the assistance and expertise it and the wider Olympic Movement provided.

Olympic Agenda 2020+5 is the new strategic roadmap that determines the direction of the IOC and the Olympic Movement until 2025. It was unanimously approved at the 137th IOC Session in March 2021. Consisting of 15 recommendations, it builds on the results of Olympic Agenda 2020.

The IOC is committed to controlling the cost of the Games and ensuring that their legacy will benefit the host nation for many years after the Closing Ceremony. The IOC helps to fund the Olympic Games by providing a significant contribution to the OCOG in cash, services and value-in-kind.

The effective transfer of knowledge and careful risk management are two further ways in which the IOC contributes to the Games' organisation. The IOC transfer of knowledge programmes, implemented by the IOC's Olympic Games Department, help organising committees to learn lessons from the past and to emulate best practices.

Olympic programme
The IOC Session decides the sports programme for each edition of the Olympic Games. Following a recommendation by the Olympic Programme Commission, the EB submits a proposal for the initial sports programme to the IOC Session, in principle seven years before the Games in question, or at the Session when the host of that Games is elected, whichever is later (Olympic Charter, Chapter 5, Bye-law to Rule 45, section 1.1).

Coordination Commissions
Following the election of the host and the adoption of the sports programme, the IOC's role is to provide support to the OCOG in areas such as operations, finance, governance, legacy and sustainability. This work is directed through the IOC Coordination Commission (CoCom) created for the relevant edition of the Games. The Commission's role is defined in the Olympic Charter: "*In order to improve the organisation of the Olympic Games and cooperation amongst the IOC, the OCOG, the IFs and the NOCs, the [IOC] President shall establish an Olympic Games Coordination Commission ("Coordination Commission"). The Coordination Commission shall include representatives of the IOC, the IFs, the NOCs and the athletes. The Chair of the Coordination Commission manages and implements the working relationship between such parties.*" (Olympic Charter, Chapter 5, Rule 37).

Olympic Solidarity
The IOC is responsible for ensuring the global participation of NOCs, to maintain the position of the Olympic Games as the world's largest sporting celebration. The IOC does not only physically invite the NOCs to the Games. Through Olympic Solidarity, it is involved in helping athletes from developing nations access the resources they need to participate, thus securing the continued universality of the Olympic Games.

Olympic Broadcasting Services
The IOC established OBS in 2001 to serve as the permanent host broadcaster for the Games, eliminating the need to continually rebuild the broadcast operation for each edition, and as a result creating a more efficient, streamlined operation. This continuity maintains the highest Olympic broadcast standards from Games to Games.

OBS produces live television, radio and digital coverage for the Media Rights-Holders (MRHs), allowing billions of viewers worldwide to enjoy the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Its coverage is neutral, favouring no particular country or athlete, and includes sports competitions as well as the opening and closing ceremonies.

The National Olympic Committees (NOCs)

The IOC currently recognises 206 NOCs. The NOCs are the bodies that represent and promote the Olympic Movement within their respective countries and territories. The full mission and role of an NOC is described in Rule 27 of the Olympic Charter. Their principal mission is to "*develop, promote and protect the Olympic Movement in their respective countries, in accordance with the Olympic Charter.*" (Olympic Charter, Chapter 4, Rule 27).

The NOC is also a key player in the preparation of the Games; it is the role of the NOC to propose one or more cities or regions to the IOC as potential future hosts. The NOC is responsible for overseeing the

development of the project and bringing all stakeholders together.

When the Games are awarded, it is the NOC of the host, as well as the host itself, that are entrusted with the organisation of the Games, and it is the NOC that is responsible for the establishment of an OCOG. The NOC is held jointly and severally liable, together with the OCOG and host, for all commitments concerning the Games, excluding the financial responsibility for the organisation and staging of the Games.

When an NOC is not hosting the Games, its most important task is to form, organise and lead its team. The NOC decides upon the entry of athletes proposed by their respective national federations. The selection of the athletes is not based solely upon the athletes' performance, but their ability to serve as role models for the sporting youth of their country. It is also the NOC that is responsible for selecting the media to be accredited by the IOC for the Olympic Games.

During the Games, each NOC must appoint a Chef de Mission, who is the NOC's main liaison with the IOC, the IFs and the OCOG, among other duties assigned by the NOC. The Chef de Mission is responsible for all the competitors, officials and other NOC team staff. It is also the role of the NOC to invite their own dignitaries to the Games.

The International Sports Federations (IFs)

The IFs are essential to the success of the Olympic Games to run their respective sports during the Games. It is the IFs that set the rules for their sports, and which are responsible for their technical control and direction.

They are also responsible for setting the eligibility criteria for the competitions at the Olympic Games and submitting the qualification systems to the IOC. The IFs organise qualifying events in order to select the competitors or teams participating in the Games.

In the lead-up to a host election, the IFs play an essential role in analysing and providing feedback to the IOC and the potential hosts on the technical aspects of the proposed venues of their respective sports. This work continues even after the Games have been awarded, as the OCOG, the IOC, OBS and the IFs work in close collaboration on the sport and the characteristics of the technical facilities to be used during the Olympic Games.

The IFs validate the competition schedule for their respective events taking place during the Games and they appoint the referees, judges and other technical officials. They establish the final results and ranking of each event, and it is on the basis of these results that the IOC awards the medals to the athletes.

In the fight against doping, the IFs are also key players. Other forums for cooperation exist, and the IFs also form part of the tripartite commission, made up of the IOC, NOCs and the IFs, which meets to discuss tripartite invitations.

The International Testing Agency (ITA)

In October 2015, following recommendation 15 of Olympic Agenda 2020, the IOC proposed an independent anti-doping testing and sanctioning system. The establishment of the ITA in 2017 was one of the IOC's 12 principles for a more robust and independent global anti-doping system to protect clean athletes. The mission of the ITA is to manage anti-doping programmes, independent from sporting or political powers, for IFs, Major Event Organisers (MEOs), and all other anti-doping organisations requesting support.

The Agency has been running the anti-doping programmes for the Olympic Games on the IOC's behalf since 2018. Moreover, since 18 April 2024, the ITA can directly implement doping controls on athletes from any sport on the programme in Paris within the framework of the extended testing authority of the IOC, a move which will support the efforts of National Anti-Doping Agencies (NADOs) and IFs. To ensure the credibility of the Olympic Games and reinforce the trust that the athlete community places in the global anti-doping system, the ITA continuously integrates the latest intelligence available to further reinforce independent and targeted testing activities on all high-risk athletes and sports.

The Anti-Doping Division of the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS ADD)

The IOC decided in March 2016 to delegate the decisions on alleged anti-doping rule violations during the Olympic Games to an independent body, namely a new Anti-Doping Division of the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS ADD). The CAS ADD has been established to hear and decide anti-doping cases as a first-instance authority pursuant to a delegation of powers from the IOC, Olympic IFs, and any other signatories of the World Anti-Doping Code (WADC). These WADC signatories have delegated their powers to the CAS ADD to decide whether or not there has been a violation of their anti-doping rules, as well as to decide any sanction, if applicable, in accordance with the WADC. The CAS ADD and its procedural rules have been established in conjunction with the applicable anti-doping rules of the WADC signatories concerned.

The Organising Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOG)

The Olympic Charter states that "*The host of the Olympic Games shall be responsible for the establishment of an Organising Committee ("OCOG"), for the purpose of the organisation of the Games and in accordance with the provisions of the Olympic Host Contract referred to in Rule 36.*" (Olympic Charter, Chapter 5, Rule 35).

The executive body of the OCOG will include the IOC members of the host country, the president and secretary general of the NOC, and at least one member representing, and designated by, the host region(s). The executive body may also include representatives of public authorities and other leading figures.

The OCOG's work is largely guided by the Host Contract – Principles (which the NOC and the host enter into with the IOC upon being awarded the Games), as well as the Host Contract – Operational Requirements, and by the written submissions file and guarantees the Preferred Host provided in the lead-up to the election. This means that the OCOG is responsible for establishing functions and services for all aspects of the Games, such as sport, venues, finance, technology, accommodation, catering and media services, as well as running the related operations during the Games. The OCOG is advised in this considerable challenge by the CoCom, which oversees the work of the OCOG and reports back to the IOC EB on the organising committee's progress.

The OCOG has a close relationship not only with the IOC, but also with the NOCs and IFs. The OCOG deals with the NOCs on a wide range of subjects, including athlete entries and the Olympic Village. With the IFs, the OCOG works on subjects like venue technical requirements, sports results and competition schedules, as it is the IFs that are responsible for the technical aspects of their sports.

As well as working with the IOC, IFs and NOCs, the OCOG interacts with myriad partners and local stakeholders to deliver and host the Games, while leaving a lasting legacy. This can range from local authorities to Worldwide Olympic Partners to the highest levels of government in the host country, all of which have a key role to play.

As part of its work, the OCOG organises the Olympic Torch Relay, which sees the Olympic flame travel from Ancient Olympia in Greece to the Olympic cauldron in the main host region. Other activities that the OCOG is responsible for during its life cycle can include ensuring that all Olympic marks are protected, organising the Cultural Olympiad, and preparing the Official Report of the Games upon their completion.

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