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EXECUTIVE MASTERS IN SPORTS ORGANISATION MANAGEMENT



**MEMOS XXIV
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**“The National Olympic Committee’s Role in an Athlete Engagement Compensation
Framework”**

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INTRODUCTION

Key issues and background

Sport can empower communities, build healthier nations, and more importantly, inspire and educate youth for generations. The impact of sport performances during the Olympic Games can be significant enough to inspire and motivate individuals nationwide to dream and believe in greatness. Joannie Rochette's triumph at the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Winter Games is a great example¹ of an athlete's performance inspiring a nation, as she won a bronze medal just a few days after the loss of her mother.

206 National Olympic Committees (NOCs) around the world are coming from different contexts (funding and responsibilities for examples to consider) and contribute to Olympic Movement by supporting its respective athletes through various initiatives, but all are a constitute of the Olympic Movement under the leadership of the International Olympic Committee (IOC)². "The IOC's priority is the protection of the clean athletes and to support them on and off the field of play"³. The Canadian Olympic Committee (COC) states in its vision that athletes and their stories are "at the heart of the Olympic Movement"⁴.

Canadian athletes are mostly proud to represent their country and leave a long-lasting legacy with their performance and work on and off the field of play, but unfortunately, the cost of these long Olympic journeys is quite heavy to carry for many athletes in most countries⁵. During their years of training and competing, it's years of putting a side exploring careers beyond sport or gaining other professional experiences can be challenging for many. Devoting your life to sport in 2022, Olympic athletes are still struggling financially⁶. This has an impact on their performances as they are devoting countless hours to building their personal brand with the hope to gain monetary (commercial) engagement opportunities in a

¹ Robertson, G. (2014). Joannie Rochette's legacy can be seen everywhere in Sochi. *The Globe and Mail*, February 17 2014. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/sports/olympics/joannie-rochettes-legacy-can-be-seen-everywhere-in-sochi/article16920494/>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

² IOC (2021). National Olympic committees. <https://olympics.com/ioc/national-olympic-committees>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

³ IOC (2021). Athletes. <https://olympics.com/ioc/athletes>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

⁴ Canadian Olympic School Program (2022). Join the Olympic movement. <https://sport.olympic.ca/oly/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Join-the-Olympic-Movement-1.pdf>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

⁵ Associated Press (2020). Survey finds Olympic, elite athletes struggling financially. *Sportsnet*, February 24, 2020. <https://www.sportsnet.ca/olympics/survey-finds-olympic-elite-athletes-struggling-financially/>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

⁶ Narishkin, A., Tejapaibul, M., Barranco, V. (2021). Why so many Olympians are broke. https://www.insider.com/why-olympic-athletes-broke-how-they-make-money-tokyo-2020-2021-7?utm_source=copy-link&utm_medium=referral&utm_content=topbar. *Insider Podcast*. Aug 4, 2021: 4:16 PM. Accessed July 7, 2022.

short Games window. Creating bridges between corporate partners and athletes could potentially have an impact on athletes' journeys.

Olympians being viewed as brand ambassadors or role models of Olympism is not a new concept. The Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) Olympians Ambassador program is a good example of brand building through invested long-term relationships. For over 20 years, RBC has worked with many Canadian Olympians who have become their brand ambassadors to engage with various communities⁷. Alternatively, having an Olympian as a keynote speaker at an event is a good example of NOCs or Olympic brands creating one-off or short-term engagement opportunities⁸.

At the International level, the World Olympians Association (WOA) believes that Olympians have a special capacity to use the power of neutrality of sport for the good of society⁹. The O.L.Y program¹⁰ created by WOA, which gives Olympians public recognition of years of hard work, could be a starting point in professionalizing Olympic athletes and recognizing the importance of ensuring fair compensation when engaging with them, including the use of their image and stories being protected and valued.

The athlete marketing (AM) industry is evolving quickly, and it is a critical moment to ensure best practices are implemented. Are NOCs currently asking themselves when engaging with athletes, do we have a clear process in place? In Canada, for example, the current compensation approach applied for all athlete engagements is often based on previous years and has not yet gone through a rigorous review process to consider the new ways commercial partners are engaging with athletes. For social activations, such as posting athletes in action while adding Olympic Partners, NOCs might not seek athletes' approval to be associated with the added brand programs and/or offer a small honorarium. Should this be the case? Reviewing ANOC's Social Media Handbook offers many guidelines on how to create content, and athletes' performances and stories are at the top; unfortunately, there are no findings on best practices around this topic¹¹. How can athletes' stories and images be shared while remaining beneficial for all stakeholders involved (a win-win)?

⁷ COC (2022). Website. RBC Olympians. <https://olympic.ca/partners/rbc-4/rbc-olympians/>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

⁸ COC (2021). Five Olympic champions share personal challenges in panel presented by StorageVault Canada Inc. February 11, 2021. <https://olympic.ca/2021/02/11/five-olympic-champions-share-personal-challenges-in-panel-presented-by-storagevault-canada-inc/>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

⁹ World Olympians Association (2022), Introduction. <https://olympians.org/woa/about/introduction/>. Accessed July 7, 2022

¹⁰ World Olympians Association (2022). Olympians: register for Oly. <https://olympians.org/olympians/oly/>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

¹¹ Association of National Olympic Committees (2022). Handbook. *ANOC Social Media*, 62 p. <https://www.anocolympic.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/AnocHandbookEN.pdf>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

The study's aim is to document how NOCs can play an important part in growing athlete empowerment by building their personal brand and directly supporting them with compensation, which would impact their overall Olympic journey and legacy. This project will clarify the role that NOCs can play in this regard and provide insights on the current landscape of AM initiatives by identifying the gaps and best practices for engaging with athletes. This project's background and key issues come mostly from the NOC in Canada and hopefully, may apply to many NOCs that engage with athletes. The research will help understand their role and processes vis-à-vis athletes' engagement with the Olympic Brand and Olympic Partners.

Research aims

Therefore, the purpose is to recommend clear guidelines/road map for NOCs or any Olympic organizations to create an athlete engagement compensation framework (AECF) that outlines best practices, be relevant to implement the current context, and be beneficial for all stakeholders involved.

Research questions addressed

To address this purpose, the following research questions will be answered:

1. What is the current situation and the expectation/role of diverse Olympic stakeholders when involving athletes in their engagements?
2. What would be the best practices and phases for an NOC to follow to ensure a fair athlete compensation when engaging in these opportunities?

REVIEW OF EXISTING KNOWLEDGE

An inventory of existing knowledge was produced by reviewing annual reports and other structuring and administrative documents from various Olympic organizations. To guide the content of information to be collected to complete existing knowledge, a literature analysis was carried out in three relevant areas:

1. Definitions of key terms
2. Outlining the role of NOCs and the Olympic Community vis-à-vis athletes beyond field of play performance in growing meaningful collaborations that are beneficial to both Olympic Brand and athletes
3. Various types of Olympic brand engagement with athletes and their image use

Multiple well-known Olympic national and international sport brands were targeted in this literature review:

- COC
- United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC)
- Australian Olympic Committee (AOC)
- British Olympic Association (BOA)
- International Olympic Committee (IOC)
- International Olympic Academy (IOA)
- COC Athlete commission (AC)
- Sobeys
- Airbnb

Also, because of the lack of literature around athlete engagement and AM in the Olympic Community, literature on non-Olympic sport organizations/associations such as the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) was considered.

The objective of this literature review is to understand and highlight what information we already have access to in order to identify the gaps that will need to be addressed and direct the data collection strategies for this project.

Definitions of key terms

Athletes Branding/Marketing

Arai *et al.*¹² provide a first comprehensive conceptual framework of Athletes Branding/Marketing. This “Conceptual model of athlete brand image (MABI)” revolves around three key dimensions:

1. athletic performance
2. attractive appearance
3. marketable lifestyle

In their study, the authors define the athlete brand: it is not only about the performance of an athlete, but also about the projected image of the victory or the defeat that the athlete will make of it. From then on, the athlete will be considered “a public figure who has established their own symbolic meaning and value by using their name, face or other branding elements in the market”¹². Thus, this conceptual model helps to better understand the factors that will allow sports marketers to build and manage a strong brand image of athletes on an individual level.

Personal Brand

On the Athlete365 Finance webpage, one of the topics addressed is “personal branding” for athletes, which is very relevant for modern athletes in creating and developing their own personal brand. The definition shared is: “Your personal brand is how you market yourself. Your self-portrayal in the public eye and conduct in front of the cameras is all part of building it”¹³. An athlete’s personal brand is unique to the athlete itself. Examples of ways athletes are in control of their personal brand are interviews, social media presence, and sponsorship deals.

Editorial versus Commercial content

In a fast-paced, social media world, any sport stakeholder can create content. The definitions of these two concepts, editorial or commercial content, can be useful when building an AECF. One definition that resonates with this project is from Clickworker, a

¹² Arai, A., Ko, Y. J., & Ross, S. (2014). Branding athletes: Exploration and conceptualization of athlete brand image, *Sport Management Review*, 17(2): 97-106, p. 98. DOI: [10.1016/j.smr.2013.04.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2013.04.003). Accessed July 7, 2022.

¹³ IOC (2022). Athlete 365. Finance Website. <https://olympics.com/athlete365/maximise-your-personal-brand/>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

company that has been certified ISO 27001 for their “Information Security Management System” (ISMS). They have worked on multiple case studies, one being an online sport video provider¹⁴. Their proposed definition of editorial content is:

Anything published in print or on the Internet that is designed to inform, educate or entertain and is not created to attempt to sell something, which is the opposite of commercial content or advertising copy. However, the distinction between the two types of content isn't always quite so clear-cut¹⁵.

The grey zone in sport is when the content is created as editorial content (e.g., athlete in training) but then is published with a selling push (e.g., a day in the athlete's life provided by X brand). Defining the outcome of the content can dictate the process to secure these engagements, as well as whether the brand should include a compensation.

Fair athlete engagement compensation

There is not a lot of literature outlining what fair compensation means to support the Olympic Movement when it comes to athlete engagement. To identify what a fair and just compensation concept could be, documentation from the fields of human resources (HR) and law were examined.

Various HR program materials discussed what it means for employees to feel fairly compensated, which creates motivation for their work. Rynes *et al.* theory on fair compensation for employees mentions:

Equity theory (Adams, 1963) posits that individuals assess the fairness of their pay by comparing their own ratio of inputs (e.g., effort and skill) and outcomes (pay, recognition) to the input-outcome ratios of important “comparison others” such as close co-workers, workers in other companies, or the employee's past work history¹⁶.

¹⁴ Clickworker (2022). Case Study. [Categorization for the online sport video provider swink.tv](#). Accessed July 7, 2022.

¹⁵ Clickworker (2022). Editorial Content. <https://www.clickworker.com/content-marketing-glossary/editorial-content/>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

¹⁶ Rynes, S.L., Gerhart, B., Minette, K.A. (2004). The Importance of Pay in Employee Motivation: Discrepancies Between What People Say and What They Do. *Human Resource Management*, 43(4): 381–394, p. 385. <https://www.utm.edu/staff/mikem/documents/Payasamotivator.pdf>. . Accessed July 7, 2022.

On the legal side¹⁷, the construction of a fair and just remuneration and compensation framework must be the following:

1. Be set at a level that is both just and liveable
2. Offer equal pay for equal work
3. Rely on an overall remuneration framework that describes how each activity should be remunerated and is transparent about the various elements of this remuneration

If we make the connection with the athletes, the importance of establishing a fair compensation framework can have a real impact on building strong relationships with athletes and increasing their motivation to engage in the Olympic Movement.

Collective use policy

In any sport organization, it might be relevant to have athletes consent to how they can use their personal image and define how collective images can be used by them and their sponsors. For this project, as one example, the COC defines collective use as “image use/group creative depicting Team Canada as a collective, where a minimum of 15 Team members from 5 different sports are depicted (the parameters for Collective Use policy are available in Appendix I)”.

Athlete-centred model

It was found that this model is defined by “the philosophy that developmentally appropriate sport can be used as a vehicle for enhancing overall well-being and the acquisition of lifelong skills. Performance excellence, therefore, co-exists in the same environment as personal excellence”¹⁸.

¹⁷ Law insider, fair compensation definition, <https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/fair-compensation#:~:text=fair%20compensation%20means%20ensuring%20the,of%20any%20contract%20with%20employees>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

¹⁸ Miller, P.S. & Kerr, G.A. (2002). Conceptualizing Excellence: Past, Present, and Future, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 14(3): 140-153, p. 140. DOI: [10.1080/10413200290103464](https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200290103464). Accessed July 7, 2022.

Role of NOCs and the Olympic Community vis-à-vis athlete's brand and commercial engagements within the Olympic Movement

After researching which NOC/IOC has Athlete Marketing (AM) embedded in their organization, only three were found:

- IOC- Athlete' department¹⁹
- USOPC - Athlete Relations & Marketing department²⁰
- COC - Athlete Marketing and Olympian Legacy department²¹

The IOC's Olympic Charter²² indicates the mission of the NOC is to develop, promote and protect the Olympic Movement in their respective countries, in accordance with the Olympic Charter. This mission is then broken down into specific roles for NOCs. It would be interesting to seek an IOC perspective on where the athletes' engagement off the field of play would fit role-wise.

In 2017, the IOC's Athlete Commission (AC) created an athlete declaration which included rights and responsibilities. On the athlete rights side, 12 specific statements were identified, one of which is the right to "leverage opportunities to generate income in relation to their sporting career, name and likeness, while recognising the intellectual property or other rights, rules of the event and of sports organisations as well as the Olympic Charter"²³. Each NOC's AC should align their activities on these aspirational rights and responsibilities led by the IOC AC. For example, the COC AC has included an athlete rights section in their strategic plan which includes marketing and partnership elements²⁴.

The International Olympic Academy (IOA)²⁵ offers important reflections around all Olympic topics such as the evolution of the role of NOCs and one literature was found on that topic. According to Papadogiannakis²⁶, the first obligation of an NOC is to propagate the

¹⁹ IOC (2022). Athlete 365. Athlete Townhall 2022. <https://olympics.com/athlete365/>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

²⁰ USOPC (2022). Athlete marketing platform. <https://www.teamusa.org/Team-USA-Athlete-Services/Athlete-Marketing-Platform>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

²¹ COC (2013). Job posting for manager, athlete marketing. <https://olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/manager-athlete-marketing7.pdf>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

²² IOC (2021). Olympic Charter, https://stillmed.olympics.com/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/General/EN-Olympic-Charter.pdf?_ga=2.37018790.709152334.1645555811-amp-mxw2i4dRblamuAF1N8LZIQ. Accessed July 7, 2022

²³ IOC (2022) Athlete 365. Athletes' declaration. <https://olympics.com/athlete365/who-we-are/athletes-declaration/>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

²⁴ IOC (2022). Strategic plan. https://develop.olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/strategic-plan_landscape-ml-update.jpg?quality=100. Accessed July 7, 2022.

²⁵ IOA (2022). Website. <https://ioa.org.gr/>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

²⁶ Papadogiannakis, G. (2010). The National Olympic Committee: Its Role and Position at the Dawn of the 21st Century. *The Sport Journal*, Vol. 24, 10 p., p3. <https://thesportjournal.org/article/the-national-olympic-committee-its-role-and-position-at-the-dawn-of-the-21st-century/>. Accessed July 7, 2022

fundamental principles of Olympism and the promotion of the values through education, but Papadogiannakis is outlining the fact that the definition of Olympisms cannot be found, not even in the Olympic Charter. He was able to provide his perspective on which areas of activities NOCs should focus on and how athletes can play a key role:

Through the athletes who have competed or won at the Olympic Games. Great athletes fascinate people with their fame and glory, and they may become role models for youth. The popularity and prestige which athletes enjoy at national and international level should be built on as they represent Olympism's best ambassadors.

Under the IOC's Olympic Partners programme (TOP), each NOC manages their own local sponsorship programs in non-competing categories to the TOP²⁷. In this literature review, Olympic marketing programs managed by specific NOCs related to athletes will be outlined. Over the last 37 years, the TOP program attracted some of the best-known multinational companies in the world. "Through their support, Olympic partners provide the foundation for the staging of the Olympic Games and help athletes from over 200 nations participate on the world's biggest sporting stage"²⁸. It will be interesting to collect data around how the IOC TOP can engage and are currently engaging with athletes and their image.

Airbnb experience one of the IOC Top Partners, is an example of how Olympic partners have the power or opportunity of empowering athletes to become ambassadors of the Olympic Movement and help athletes build their personal brand²⁸. Simon Whitfield, one of the Olympian hosts of the program, has been quoted in the main promotion page "It's been a very positive experience, you meet terrific people, it's challenging, and you feel alive"²⁹.

To identify the NOCs' vision, mission, objectives and outline their various AM programs, we reviewed NOCs websites to identify and compare their role definition, mission/vision and to find various athletes marketing programs.

²⁷ IOC (2022). The Olympic Partners (TOP) programs. <https://olympics.com/ioc/partners>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

²⁸ IOC (2022). Athlete 365. Sign-up to Athlete365 and host an Airbnb Experience. <https://olympics.com/athlete365/airbnb-experiences/>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

²⁹ IOC (2022). Athlete 365. Sign-up to Athlete365 and host an Airbnb Experience. <https://olympics.com/athlete365/airbnb-experiences/>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC)

The USOPC, created an **athletes-first culture** in their organization by defining a set of core values that would drive the organization³⁰. These values are to pursue excellence, lead courageously, serve others and foster belonging. According to the USOPC Allocation budget for athletes for 2017-2020, \$118.3m USD (12%) of the USOPC budget went to athletes and National Governance Bodies (NGB) programs³¹. At the peak of Olympic marketing and advertising cycle just before Tokyo 2020, they launched an AM platform to maximize athletes to be featured in more campaigns³². NOC's webpage mentioned that "Since the pilot launched in the spring of 2021, more than 800 Team USA athletes have enrolled and earned, on average, over \$3,000, with \$2.6 million in deals going through the platform"³³.

The entire program is voluntary. Athletes have multiple options by signing up and building a profile on an online platform that sponsors and licensees can access. Athletes can earn royalties on licensed merchandise with their name on said merchandise and/or sign separate endorsement deals with USOPC sponsors.

Also, Bridgestone America announced a new program designed to support and empower athletes named Chase you dream program³⁴. They created two athlete-focused donation and ambassador programs.

Canadian Olympic Committee (COC)

If we look at the COC's mission, it has two core directions: (i) leads the achievement of Team Canada's podium success and (ii) advances Olympic values across Canada. Looking closer at the second mission, we can find interesting links to how they engage with athletes: "By sharing our athletes' stories, we inspire all Canadians through the power of sport – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year"³⁵. Unlike the USOPC's mission, the COC doesn't indicate a public athlete-centered culture statement at corporate mission level. According to the COC's (2019) annual report, they have implemented multiple off the field of play athlete-

³⁰ USOPC (2022). Website. <https://www.teamusa.org/about-the-usopc>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

³¹ USOPC (2022). Allocation Resources Webpage <https://www.teamusa.org/About-the-USOPC/Allocation-of-Resources>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

³² USOPC (2022). Athlete marketing platform. <https://www.teamusa.org/Team-USA-Athlete-Services/Athlete-Marketing-Platform>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

³³ USOPC (2022). Athlete marketing platform, Athlete Services. <https://www.teamusa.org/Team-USA-Athlete-Services/Athlete-Marketing-Platform>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

³⁴ Bridgestone America Inc. (2021). Bridgestone Continues to Support and Empower Adaptive Athletes Through New "Chase Your Dream" Program. *Bridgestone America Press Center*. August 19, 2021. <https://www.bridgestoneamericas.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2021/bridgestone-chase-your-dream-program>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

³⁵ COC (2022). Website. <https://olympic.ca/canadian-olympic-committee/>, p.2. Accessed July 7, 2022.

focused programs led by various departments: Athlete Marketing & OLY Canada department, Social Impact and Game Plan teams³⁶.

The COC created an AM department in 2013 to provide leadership and day-to-day management to the COC's various programs and integration with Olympians. The department connects with 27 Olympic marketing partners (COC, 2019); the marketing partners are those who fuel COC investment in Canada's sport system and offer value-added programming to athletes and NSOs. Table 1 offers a list of the top COC AM programs.

Table 1. COC ATHLETE MARKETING PARTNERS PROGRAMS

Storage Vault	SVI discount program ³⁷
Sobeys	Feed the dream Program ³⁸
Petro-Canada	Fuelling Athlete and Coaching Excellence (FACE) Program ³⁹
Petro-Canada	Canadian Athlete Family Program ⁴⁰
Lululemon	Team Kit ⁴¹
Bell	Bell Athletes Connect ⁴²
Smith	Smith School of Business ⁴³
RBC	RBC Olympians ⁴⁴
Deloitte	Game Plan ⁴⁵

³⁶ COC (2019). Annual report. <https://olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/2019-Annual-Report.pdf>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

³⁷ StorageVault (2022). Website. Supporting Team Canada. <https://www.storagevaultcanada.com/en/supporting-team-canada>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

³⁸ Feed the dream (2022). Website. About our athletes. <https://feedthedream.ca/>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

³⁹ Petro-Canada (2022). Website. Face program. <https://www.petro-canada.ca/en/about-petro-canada/olympic-and-paralympic-sponsorship/face-program>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

⁴⁰ COC (2022). Canadian athlete family program. <https://olympic.ca/partners/petro-canada/petro-canada-canadian-athlete-family-program/>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

⁴¹ COC, 2022. lululemon Partners with COC and CPC as Official Outfitter of Team Canada through 2028. <https://olympic.ca/press/lululemon-partners-with-coc-and-cpc-as-official-outfitter-of-team-canada-through-2028/>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

⁴² Bell, 2022. Website. Athletes connect. <https://www.bell.ca/Bell-Athletes-Connect-Program>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

⁴³ Smith School of Business (2020). Smith School of Business and Canadian Olympic Committee announce Team Canada class of 2020-2022. https://smith.queensu.ca/news_blog/2020/2020_COC_Athletes.php. Accessed July 7, 2022.

⁴⁴ COC (2022). Website. RBC Olympians. <https://olympic.ca/partners/rbc-4/rbc-olympians/>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

⁴⁵ Game Plan (2022). Game Plan Webpage. <https://www.mygameplan.ca/>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

Australian Olympic Committee (AOC)

On the Oceania side, the AOC role is similar to the COC. Its purposes are to:

1. provide athletes the opportunity to excel at the Olympic Games
2. promote the values of Olympism and benefits of participation in sport to all Australians⁴⁶

The AOC also create opportunities for athletes to engage with youth and various communities. A few examples are included in its 2020 annual report such as “The Olympic Change Maker program” which involved Olympians engaging with 830 students last year⁴⁷.

British Olympic Association (BOA)

When reviewing the BOA website, two principal roles are indicated: “Firstly, to prepare and lead our nation’s finest competitors at the summer, winter and youth Olympic Games.

Working with the NGBs, the BOA selects 'Team GB' from the best athletes who will go on to compete in the 33 summer and seven winter Olympic sports at the greatest sporting competition in the world. Secondly, the BOA seeks to develop, promote and protect the Olympic Movement within the UK in accordance with the Olympic Charter and the Olympic Values of friendship, excellence and respect”⁴⁸.

Evolution of Athlete Marketing/Engagement

Self-branding practices for athletes has been evolving over the past 10 years with the use of social media and even more with the latest pandemic⁴⁹. During the COVID-19 lockdowns, athletes and Olympic brands needed to use other ways than the typical in person activation to engage. Su *et al.*⁵¹ investigated athletes engaging in social media activities during the past two years; it was shared that the number of Athletes posting on Tik Tok, a short-form video-sharing platform has increased. Their findings reveal that “athletes-generated Tik Tok videos

⁴⁶ AOC (2022). Website. <https://www.olympics.com.au/the-aoc/>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

⁴⁷ AOC (2020). Annual report. <https://content.olympics.com.au/public/2021-04/2020%20AOC%20Annual%20Report%20and%20Financial%20Statements.pdf>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

⁴⁸ BOA (2022), About section. <https://www.teamgb.com/about-us/9HsI58MhzO0UWwouZWqdl/>, p. 3. Accessed July 7, 2022

⁴⁹ Su, Y., Baker, B.J., Doyle, J.P., Yan, M. (2020). Fan Engagement in 15 Seconds: Athletes Relationship Marketing During a Pandemic via TikTok. *International Journal of Sport Communication*. 13(3): 436–446, p. 436.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsc.2020-0238>.

are characterized as playful and authentic.” We can also observe during Tokyo and Beijing Games that this emerging app is now integrated in athletes branding strategy⁵⁰.

Another platform that has experienced growth in the past years and had an impact on AM and sport marketing is Twitter. Hambrick and Mahoney⁵¹ explored the role played by athletes as marketers on social media. Their study focused on professional athletes who shared a Twitter message endorsing commercial brands such as Nike and Gatorade. Social media is a platform with real opportunity for sport marketing brands and athletes to create short- or long-term partnerships to promote products.

There are various ways Olympic brands can engage with Olympians and below are types that could be found by webpages search.

- 1- One-off activation / short-term engagements would be when a brand wants to secure athlete to be part of one-time appearance. A good example would be Olympic medallist speaking at one of COC partner event.⁵²
- 2- Mid-term and long-terms engagement would be when a brand secure athlete to be part of their Olympic Brand campaign. A good example of a mid-term engagement would be the #ThatsGold Coco-Cola Rio 2016 Olympic Games featuring athletes.⁵³ Usually, long-term endorsements are signed by Star athletes. “Exceptional athletes often garner the greatest attention as the company will want to use popular athletes with great reputations to promote their services”⁵⁴.

⁵⁰ Tik Tok video (2022) Abi Strate Tik Tok account. [@abi.strate/video/7064732926226828549?is_copy_url=1&is_from_webapp=v1&lang=en&q=Team%20Canada%20athletes&t=1647444301912](https://www.tiktok.com/@abi.strate/video/7064732926226828549?is_copy_url=1&is_from_webapp=v1&lang=en&q=Team%20Canada%20athletes&t=1647444301912). Accessed July 7, 2022.

⁵¹ Hambrick, M.E., Mahoney, T.Q. (2011). It's incredible - Trust me: exploring the role of celebrity athletes as marketers in online social networks. *Int. J. Sport Management and Marketing*. 10(3-4):161-179. DOI: [10.1504/IJSM.2011.044794](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJSM.2011.044794).

⁵² WISE (2021), Power Play Up Close With: The Women of Team Canada. WISE Toronto. <https://toronto.wiseworks.org/blogs/wise-toronto-site-admin1/2021/03/15/power-play-2021>

⁵³ Daily Mail (2016). Coca-Cola Goes for Gold in Rio 2016 Olympic Games with Global #ThatsGold Campaign. *The Coca Cola Company*, published 07/13/2016. <https://www.coca-colacompany.com/press-releases/coke-thats-gold-campaign#:~:text=During%20the%20Olympic%20Games%2C%20Coca,Now%20%23ThatsGold>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

⁵⁴ Doan Sport Management (2022). Endorsements for Athletes. <https://doansportsmanagement.com/services/endorsements/>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

Best practice when engaging with athletes and ensuring fair compensation

The COC counts 27+ Olympic marketing partners⁵⁵. The marketing partners are those “who fuel COC’s investment in Canada’s sport system and offer immense value-added programming to athletes and National Sport Organizations (NSO)”⁵⁶. In addition to these programs, our partners engage with athletes all year long in various types of engagements. These engagements are managed by the AM team who have created an Athlete Engagement Protocol (AEP). Many best practices are shared in this document. Types of engagement with clear definition can be found in Appendix II⁵⁷. Role, objectives, type of engagement definitions and processes were built through a strong consultation phase with relevant stakeholders. Also, a section where many other elements to consider such as including content or image authorization documents was added to 2021 AEP⁵⁸.

That brings us to the image used by the athletes. Not much international literature on that topic when searching through NOCs content, but in 2019, the COC reviewed their Athletes Agreement (Games Participation) to add a Collective use segment with the intention to position the athlete at the centre of the organization. The collective use was created in collaboration with the COC AC members. This collaboration supported COC AC 2017-2020 Strategic Plan that included an AM component and objective⁵⁹.

The objective of reviewing existing literature on athlete engagement compensation is to propose guidelines on how to build an AECF. Unfortunately, literature found on fair compensation for athletes engagement is low in the Olympic Movement literature.

The concept of fair compensation for student-athletes is interesting to research and outline in this project as “more than 1,000 current and former NCAA student-athletes have participated at the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo.” There are more than 100 countries with NCAA representation. Also, they face common questions and concerns around athlete compensation and image use of athletes with partners. In 2020, “The NCAA’s highest governing body has taken unprecedented steps to allow college athletes to be compensated

⁵⁵ COC (2022). COC Partners. <https://olympic.ca/partners/>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

⁵⁶ COC (2019). Annual report. <https://olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/2019-Annual-Report.pdf>, p.4. Accessed July 7, 2022.

⁵⁷ COC (2021). 2021 Athlete engagement protocol. <https://sport.olympic.ca/oly/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/2021-Athlete-Engagement-Protocol-FINAL.pdf>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

⁵⁸ COC (2021). 2021 Athlete engagement protocol page 26 <https://sport.olympic.ca/oly/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/2021-Athlete-Engagement-Protocol-FINAL.pdf>. Accessed July 7, 2022.

⁵⁹ COC (2017). COC athlete’s commission: Strategic plan overview 2017-2020. https://olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/coc-strat-plan-website-version_2019-update.pdf. Accessed July 7, 2022.

for their name, image and likeness ("NIL")"⁶⁰. An important step was made when the decision was supported by the Federal and State legislation working group.

In conclusion, to have the ability to complete the research and aim to answer this project's questions, it is clear there is a real need for a strong data collection strategy. It's important to keep in mind that NOCs do engage with athletes through various programs, but not much literature exists on the topic. Notwithstanding, we can observe a shift in how the Olympic brands can and are engaging with athletes: athletes personally brand themselves more easily and partners use social media and/or with virtual activations to engage with athletes. By deepening this research with the data, we might have a better chance to answer the second question of this project and recommend best practices and steps for NOCs when engaging with athletes off the field of play.

METHODS & DATA COLLECTION

The methodology chosen focused on both quantitative and qualitative data sources to support and verify results through various sources, namely surveys and semi-structured interviews. Data collection instruments are first presented, followed by details of survey and interview participants.

Athlete Surveys

The surveys (see Table 2) were designed to speak to different demographics to capture an overview of the understanding of what role NOCs are playing or should play regarding an AECF. The objective of this quantitative method is to collect data on the perception, opinions, and ideas from a large pool of individuals, while maintaining consistency of information; the survey offers the ability to conduct a statistic analysis once data is collected⁶¹. The surveys targeting athletes (Olympians) helped establish a baseline of knowledge among the athlete community and capture their feedback on current processes in place, types of engagement within the Olympic Movement, and provide an opportunity to share best practices that would help build their personal brand.

⁶⁰ National Collegiate Athletic Association (2020). Board of Governors moves toward allowing student-athlete compensation for endorsements and promotions. <https://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/media-center/news/board-governors-moves-toward-allowing-student-athlete-compensation-endorsements-and-promotions>, p. 1 et 2. Accessed July 7, 2022.

⁶¹ Leigh Robinson (2022), uOttawa Brightspace MEMOS Data collection techniques resource.

Table 2. - Athlete Survey Questions Overview (see question details Appendix III)

Athlete Survey Questions: Profile/Background of survey participant
Country, Sport(s), Game year(s) competed
Theme 1 - Current context of Athlete Marketing (AM) program within your NOC
1. Does your National Olympic Committee (NOC) have an AM department or an AM program? Yes/NO
Theme 2 - Capture NOC AM department/programs key purpose
1. What is be the key purpose of this team/program? 2. If no AM department or program - Would you find it useful for your NOC to have an AM department or program? Yes/No – Why
Theme 3 - Types of engagements
1. As an Olympic athlete, have you personally engaged in any off the field of play activations with your NOC in the past? Yes/No - Comments 2. If yes, what types of engagement? 3. As an Olympic athlete, have you personally engaged in any off the field of play activations with an NOC Olympic partner in the past? Yes/No – Comments 4. If yes, what types of engagement?
Theme 4 - Process
1. Who mostly led the communication and shared the engagement opportunities with you? 2. Overall, did you have a positive experience when engaging with your NOC? Yes/No - Comments
Theme 5 - Best practices
1. Are your aware if the NOC has a collective use policy for partners that are including athletes' image in their brand campaign? Yes/No – Comments. 2. If yes, are you comfortable with the policy? Yes/No – Comments. 3. Is building your personal brand important for you? Yes/No 4. Where do you activate mostly? Options: Facebook, Instagram, etc. 5. In your opinion, what are key role/expectations/best practices for your NOC in supporting to growth of your personal Brand as an Ambassador of the Olympic Movement? 6. What should be considered when building a fair engagement compensation framework?
Theme 6 - Final thoughts
1. Do you have anything else you would like to add regarding your NOC vis-à-vis AM and engaging within the Olympic Movement?

NOC short questionnaire

The short questionnaire was designed to compile NOCs' and their partners' thoughts from different part of the world engagement regarding athletes' status and compensation processes (see Table 3).

Table 3. - NOC short questionnaire

1.	Name of your NOC
2.	*YES or NO* - Is your NOC and your corporate partner engage with athletes off field of play (e.g., Olympic Day, sport demo, panel on mental health)?
3.	*Yes and NO* - When the engagement includes a corporate partner does your NOC has an athlete compensation (\$) system in place?
4.	If yes, which department from you NOC is in charge of that process (e.g., Marketing, Partnership, Athlete Marketing)?

Interviews

The semi-structured interviews were built with the same theme structure as the athlete survey. The objective of this data collection method was to capture in-depth information on the subject to fill literature gaps. Interview questions are found in Table 4.

Table 4. - Interview Guide Overview

Topics	Objective
Introduction	For this project's internal use only
Role of NOCs and the Olympic community vis-à-vis athletes beyond field-of-play performance in growing meaningful collaborations that are beneficial to both the Olympic brand and the athletes	<p>To understand the opinion and knowledge of the interviewee towards Athlete Marketing and capture their perspective on what the role of the NOC/IOC is beyond the field-of-play toward athletes</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In your opinion, what is the role of the NOC regarding Athlete engagement off the field-of-play? 2. In your opinion, is growing direct-to-athlete funding opportunities part of an NOC's role?
Current State around Athlete Engagement with Olympic Stakeholders	<p>To capture extensive content to create an Athlete Marketing map of Olympic Organizations current state.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you have a clear corporate objective and specific KPIs around the athlete? 2. How are your Olympic brand and your partners engaging with athletes and their images?
Athlete engagement best practices for NOCs	<p>To understand the opinion and knowledge of the interviewee towards Athlete engagement best practice for NOCs that will support project final recommendations.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In your opinion, is it important for the NOC or any organization to build a Compensation Framework that includes all types of engagements for athletes? 2. In your opinion, is it important to define what commercial versus editorial content is?
How NOCs and the IOC are adjusting to the evolution of self-branding on social media	<p>To build a project Olympic Athlete Branding Evolution statement on Social Media.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. During the past four years, can you share key observation on how athletes' self-branding evolution on social media?
Closing	To provide final thoughts on how IOC/NOCs can ensure Athletes and the Olympic brand can benefit from building a strong Athlete engagement framework.

Data Collection Participant Details

To capture the current state regarding AM in the Olympic Movement and share best practices when building an AECF, four important points of views were questioned: The NOCs, Olympic athletes community, the international Olympic community, and the stakeholders. Four **NOCs'** (in bold below) perspectives were captured mostly by conducting 30-minute to 1-hour interviews from May to June 2022, and a short questionnaire with 10 NOCs from four different continents was conducted. 156 athletes' perspective regarding this theme were captured in a survey plus one interview with the **COC AC** (in bold below) in May 2022. Three main Olympic stakeholders involved when NOCs engage with athletes were interviewed during May and June 2022. The **Olympic Commercial Partners, National Sport Organization (NSO)** and **athlete representatives** (in bold below) perspectives were all captured in 30-minute to 1-hour interviews.

Group A. The NOCs participated in two methods.

Interview:

1. **NOC 1** - COC - **NOC 1a**, **NOC 1b** and **NOC 1c**
2. **NOC 2** - BOA
3. **NOC 3** - USOPC
4. **NOC 4** - Finland Olympic Committee (FOC)

Short questionnaire:

5. Syrian Olympic Committee
6. Malaysia Olympic Committee
7. Albania Olympic Committee
8. Bahrain Olympic Committee
9. Czech Olympic Committee
10. Fiji Olympic Committee
11. Deutscher Olympischer Sportbund
12. Mexican Olympic Committee
13. Malta Olympic Committee
14. Dominica Olympic Committee

Group B. Olympic Athlete's community

1. **Athlete AC** – COC AC member

2. **Olympic Athletes**

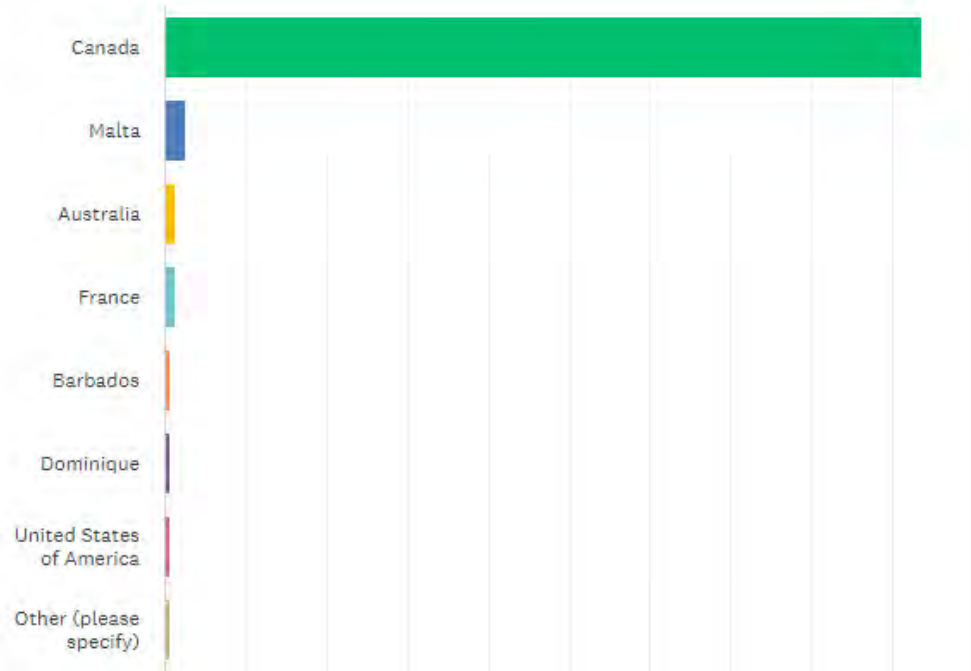
- Canada
- Malta
- Australia
- France
- Barbados
- Dominique
- USA

The Athlete Survey collected 156 answers from Olympians from seven different countries. Mostly answered by Canadian Olympians from 1960 (Squaw Valley, USA) to 2022 (Beijing, China) Winter and Summer Olympic Games (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. - ATHLETE SURVEY/NOCs & GAMES PARTICIPATIONS

Which National Olympic Committee(s) did you compete under?

Answered: 156 Skipped: 0



Group C. International Olympic organizations

1. **International Organization 1** - IOC, Athlete Department
2. **International Organization 2** - LA2028 Organization committee

Group D. Stakeholders

1. **Stakeholder 1** - Canadian Olympic Corporate Partner
2. **Stakeholder 2** - Canadian National sport organization (NSO)
3. **Stakeholder 3** – Agent community

Limitations of the respondents

It is important to note that results might be affected by respondents' personal understandings of the concepts used in the survey. Also, the Athletes survey was shared via the Canadian Olympic Committee's Mailchimp account with 2,641 Olympians, which usually has an average opening rate of 55% (1,453 Olympians). One COC staff member stated "receiving 156 completed surveys shows the importance for Canadian athletes to speak and share their perspectives... Our typical click rate is...3%, but for the *MEMOS Survey* it was doubled (6+%) which is a great result, as we usually receive a maximum of 20 answers with our NOC OLY Canada surveys over the past three years."

RESULTS & ANALYSES

The data were analysed based on three main themes driven by specific objectives. The findings for each theme have been collected by all four groups (A-D).

Theme 1. Context of current state on NOCs engaging with athlete off the field of play

Theme 2. Identification of the role, objectives, expectation, process, gaps of NOCs regarding an AECE

Theme 3. When engaging with athletes, identify best practices captured when building AECE

Theme 1. Current state NOCs engaging with athletes off the field of play

This theme captured content regarding AM from different perspectives and helped answer the following questions:

- What is the current state of various NOCs regarding an AM Program?
- What are the types of engagement Olympic brands/stakeholders have with athletes?
- Is there any existence of AECF and processes in various NOCs?

Of 14 NOCs researched, 11 confirmed engaging with athletes off the field of play. Three of the 11 Olympic Committees currently have an AM Department or have specific staff leading AM programs (*NOC 1, NOC 2, NOC 3*). The same NOCs have specific objectives around engaging with athletes and maximizing commercial opportunities for athletes. *NOC 3* stated having specific AM Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) “*increasing number of athletes receiving commercial deals, and increased number of commercial deals per athletes*”. *Stakeholder 3* shared his role in work with their NOC in building the AM department:

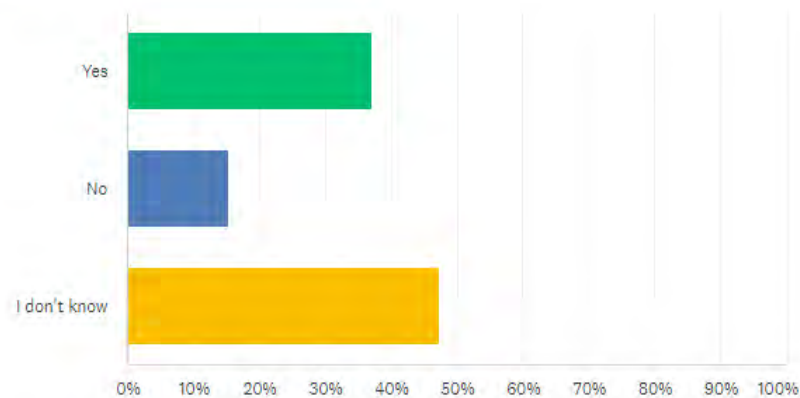
We wanted to create a better way of communicating with marketing people instead of people who were just representing the brand as a project leader, project manager, which led to the independent group of Athlete Marketing as they're called today and that I think was pretty fundamental.

Analyses of the *Athlete Survey* demonstrate gaps between NOC AM programs in place and athlete awareness. Out of the 156 Olympians that answered the survey 47% answered that they didn't know if their NOC had AM department or AM programs in place (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. ATHLETE SURVEY/ATHLETE MARKETING DEPARTMENT

Does your National Olympic Committee (NOC) have an Athlete Marketing department or an Athlete Marketing Program?

Answered: 156 Skipped: 0



When researching types of engagements, the overall results identified by all groups when athletes engaging with Olympic brands range from, and are not limited to, sport demonstrations, mental health panel participation correlated to a corporate partner to meet-and-greet events, keynote speaker, digital content creation event, Olympic brand campaigns and/or long-term endorsement. *NOC 1c* shared details of their new Athlete Engagement Protocol (AEP) that includes categorical types of athletes' requests and how they have built the process.

To demonstrate an example of a commercial content type of activation, *NOC 4* created a 2020 social media strategy with NOC branded face masks. All team athletes were using the branded masks, but the NOC targeted one athlete that had an authentic and relevant reason to promote the product since the athlete had breathing issues. Cooperation between the athlete and the brand was easy, and managed to create social media content and news updates. The NOC defined this activation as commercial, and the athlete received free products and monetary compensation. 65 out of all the *survey* participants provided examples of these types of activation with NOCs in (see Figure 3). More than 66% of respondents have participated in either Olympic Day or community activations. Almost half of the surveyed athletes confirmed that they have activated with a corporate Olympic Partner in the past (see Figure 4) and the highest types of athlete engagement activation collected is Meet & Greet and the lowest is the Long-Term endorsement (see Figure 5).

Figure 3. ATHLETE SURVEY/NOC TYPE OF ACTIVATIONS

What was the activation? (You may select more than one option):

Answered: 65 Skipped: 91

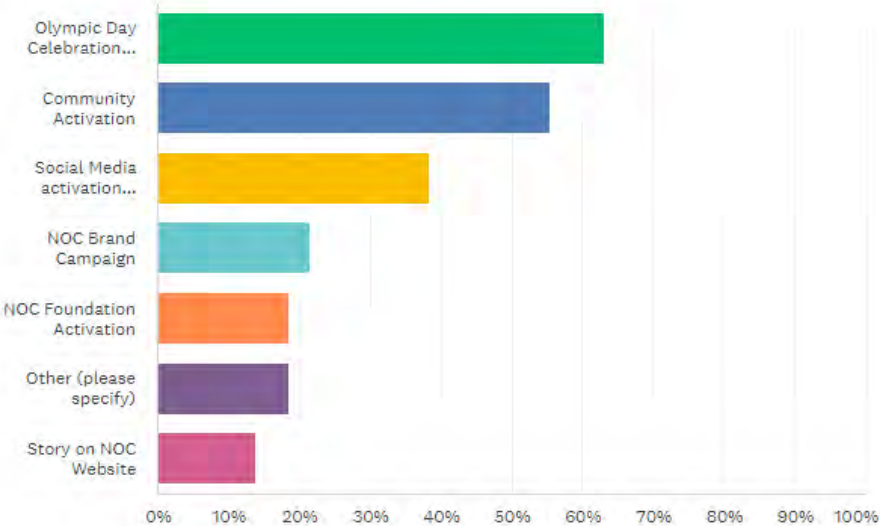


Figure 4. ATHLETE SURVEY/NOC CORPORATE PARTNER ENGAGEMENT OFF FIELD OF PLAY

As an Olympic athlete, have you personally engaged in any off the field of play activations with your NOC Olympic Partners in the past?

Answered: 123 Skipped: 33

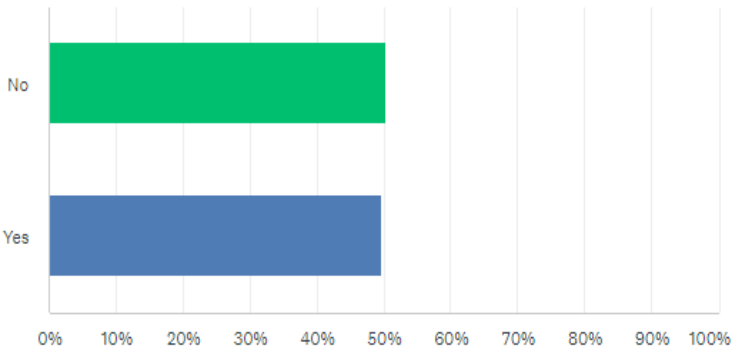
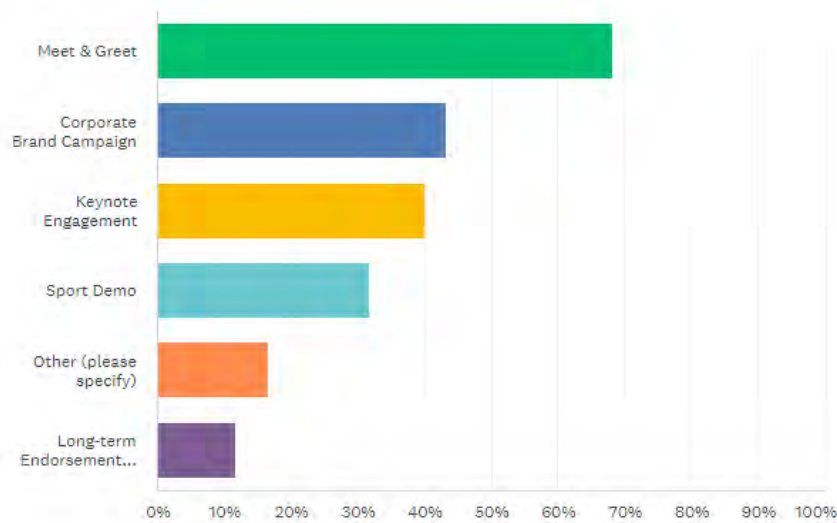


Figure 5. ATHLETE SURVEY/OLYMPIC PARTNERS TYPE OF ACTIVATIONS

What were the activations (you may select more than one option):

Answered: 60 Skipped: 96



NOC 1c shares that it was important when building the AECF to collaborate with all stakeholders involved in the process such as the NOC AC, NSOs and corporate Partners. NOC 1c shared: “One of the inputs caught from AC and athletes’ representative consultation phase was to NOCs role of empowering athletes to negotiate more directly with Partners.”

Social media is evolving at a fast-pace and NOCs who took part of this research project presented varying engagement opportunities with their athletes. The research identified the importance for athletes to build their personal-brand and confirmed that Instagram is the platform mostly used by the athlete’s community. 122 respondents out of the 156 responded (78%) to the importance of build their personal brand question. 60% shared that it was important for them (see Figure 6). The survey also helps us understand where athletes currently build most of their self-brand on social media. 79% of 80 athletes engaged mostly on Instagram. Interestingly, only 4.65% are active on TikTok (see Figure 7). Olympians that haven’t engaged with their NOC or Partners have shared insights on why they would want to activate (see Appendix IV for more examples):

- *To create opportunities for my career during and after sport*
- *To generate more sponsorships*
- *Help build my brand allow me to optimize my athletic experience*

Figure 6. - ATHLETE SURVEY/ATHLETE SELF BRANDING

Is building your personal brand important to you?

Answered: 122 Skipped: 34

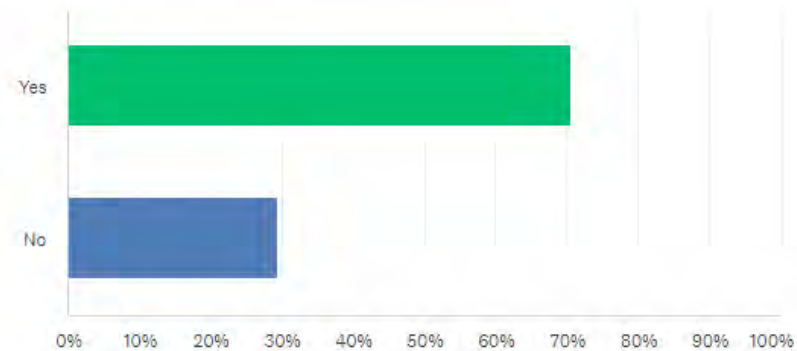
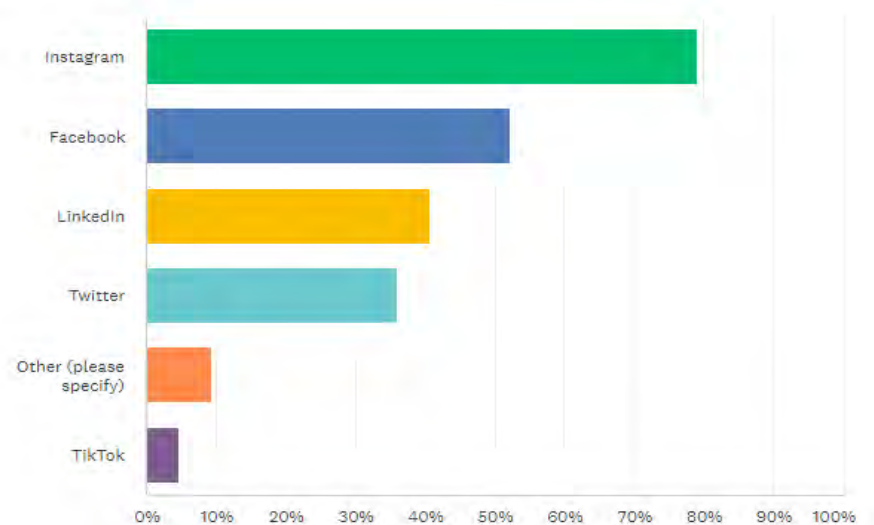


Figure 7. - ATHLETE SURVEY/SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVATIONS

Can you share where you activate mostly (you may select more than one option):

Answered: 86 Skipped: 70



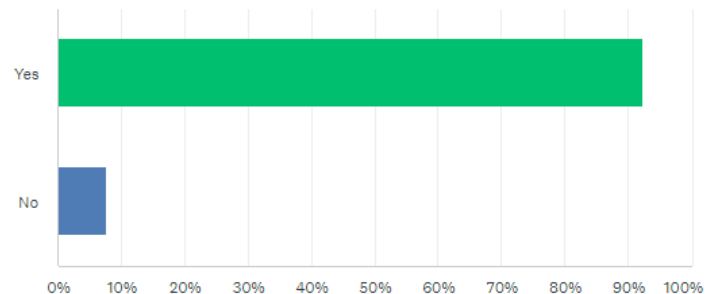
Over 90% of the athlete surveyed in Figure 8 confirmed having a positive experience when engaging with their NOC off the field of play. Over 40 Olympians' comments were collected and analysed from the survey. While mostly positive affirmation, the comments displayed a common theme not being compensated fairly (see Appendix IV for more examples):

- Any NOC commercial engagement, while limited, was usually with an NOC sponsor and was at minimal compensation.
- Yes, but... Not sufficient pay and wasn't equipped with current Olympic gear (multiple options depending on event).

Figure 8. - ATHLETE SURVEY/NOC ACTIVATIONS OVERALL EXPERIENCE

Overall, did you have a positive experience when engaging with your NOC?

Answered: 65 Skipped: 91



Both international Olympic organization interviews revealed they have specific AM programming. Managing athlete engagement and maximizing corporate opportunities for athletes as ambassadors seems to be growing at the IOC; the Athlete' department was created a few years ago and is evolving rapidly:

Our roles are so new in terms of the work with the partners, it's something that we're looking to build out in the engagement strategy with the partners, something we are building at the moment. (International Organization 1)

International Organisation 2 seems to follow the USOPC's AM platform and wants to innovate how athletes can benefit from their partners. All three stakeholders have good knowledge of the Athlete Engagement Process led by the AM department in Canada, but each has their own perspective regarding the NOC role and creating commercial opportunities for athletes to engage with the Olympic Brand. This leads into the results of Theme 2.

Theme 2. Identification of the role & expectation, objectives, process, gaps of NOCs regarding an AECF

NOCs - Role & Expectation and Objective

When analysing NOCs' role in building such framework, two commonly shared points among NOCs of highly engaging with athletes were identified. First, the importance of an athlete-centered approach. All NOCs that currently have an AM department shared in the interviews that their role in supporting athletes off the field of play was clearly established. *NOC 3* noted they had multiple athlete-specific objectives at the corporate level:

We believe in holistic athlete support in order to support their well-being and performance. This includes athlete earnings and marketing by connecting Team USA partners with athletes for marketing/commercial opportunities and the NOC partnering with athletes for storytelling.

Secondly, is they all have a strong Olympic Brand and have the power to attract important corporate partners: *NOC 1b* state:

It's our duty to obviously make sure that the athletes benefit from the NOC's ability to attract partners... It's an essential role of the NOCs... It's an opportunity to make a huge difference to some athletes who don't get any kind of support. If the Framework is well designed, it's fair.

NOC 1b outlined the importance corporate partners can bring to athlete-centered sponsorship experiences, not only for the athletes, but to the sport community at large. This is also exemplified by *NOC 4* who shared the following:

Our role is to try and give athletes as much opportunity to work with our commercial partners, for example, and as part of that, you know there's obviously a financial benefit to them, but in some instances, we try to work with them off the field of play... Partners find the athlete ambassador to endorse or speak authentically about partner products is often more powerful than having other types of people sharing the message.

NOC 4 provided further details on why athletes are a key component to partner activations and the authenticity athletes bring when delivering key messages that are current to social issues in society or simply represent that athlete's personal brand.

Overall, the results from the stakeholders' interviews regarding the NOCs' role and expectations shows that each has a different view on how NOCs should handle athlete engagement, however all agree on the importance of putting athletes first. For instance, *Stakeholder 2* shared that the main role of an NOC is to put the athlete first. *Stakeholder 3's* advises that "the NOCs role should start at the center of the human first... be human level athlete-centered marketing driven." The different views on the process include partners looking for a more direct line of communication with athletes to shorten the process, NSO's looking for trust and transparency, and athlete representatives looking for partners education and athlete empowerment. *Stakeholder 3* observed a shift in the NOCs' role by building bridges between Olympic partners and athletes, stating: "I think NOCs can play an advocacy role... put a friendly pressure on your partners; NOCs should educate partners to treat athletes fairly and to set aside a budget." *Stakeholder 2* wants more trust and collaboration with the NOC when Olympic partners engage with athletes and continued to state, "I believe partners work best together when they trust each other, when they share information and when they communicate a lot." This evidence provides a clear importance on the relationship building with partners and the benefits of providing clear communication through a framework that identifies criteria which satisfies both parties involved.

Processes, Challenges & Gaps

The *short NOC questionnaire* seen in Table 3 highlights the status and processes of four continents' NOCs when engaging with athletes off the field of play. For instance, the Bahrain Olympic Committee and Fiji Olympic Committee are not currently engaging with athletes; but if they were, the Marketing department would be managing the process. In contrast and by way of example, the Syrian, Albanian, and Mexican NOCs engage with their athletes during national days, sport days and charity events, but they do not have any corporate activation or sponsors.

The USOPC is the only NOC offering an innovative platform to engage and maximize the number of activations with their athletes. Canada and Team GB have robust AM programs with staff leading the programs. The Finnish, Malaysian, Czech, and German Olympic Committees seem to be involved when their Olympic Partners engage with athletes but do not have specific mechanisms.

Three NOCs out of the four interviewed mentioned having some kind of AECF which include an athlete engagement rate card and various types of engagement. As *NOC 3* mentioned, “We do have a framework now that's trying to make sense of a very complicated area and I think it's a really great foundation for us to work out of.” All three NOCs noted the rate card was for internal use only. The USOPC created an innovative AM Platform in 2020 that allows athletes to set their own market rate. *NOC 3 stated*, “We have a compensation framework for ourselves, but not with our partners.” On the other hand, *NOC 4* said, “We had some kind of guidelines and things about how we are doing but there wasn't any official guidebook.” For *NOC 3*, the primary gap identified was the absence of coherence in the educational resources: “There is a lot of information for athletes, so we are looking at ways to improve and expand this.”

One observation from the *AC interview* is that AM has shifted in how Olympic partners support athletes financially. The change is mostly related to the length of the engagement: it is more short-term contract and volatile. As the interviewee stated:

One of the roles NOCs can play is to make sure athletes are not valued solely for their physical capability or their physical capital, and that value doesn't cut off immediately like when they get home from the Olympics.

Looking at how NOCs can support athletes off the field of play, the athlete survey showed that creating educational marketing tools and sessions is the primary focus for role/expectation of the NOCs. By conducting education sessions, a positive impact should be noticed within the athlete's knowledge of existing AM programs (cf. Figure 2). Maximizing editorial and commercial opportunities is not far behind as secondary role and best practices from NOCs in the athlete perspective. Lastly, providing support to partners to ensure fair compensation by creating a clear engagement framework is another primary focus for NOCs to consider (see Table 5).

Table 5. - ATHLETE SURVEY/NOC ROLE, EXPECTATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES REGARDING PERSONAL BRANDING

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Create and hold Athlete Marketing Education tools and session for athletes	64.41%	76
▼ Maximize editorial and commercial opportunity to share your story/journey	62.71%	74
▼ Provide support to Olympic Partners to ensure fair and consistent engagement compensation	54.24%	64
▼ Provide a clear Athlete Engagement Framework	52.54%	62
▼ Protect performance by collaborating with athlete National Federation	31.36%	37
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 12.71%	15
Total Respondents: 118		

Table 6 demonstrates that 92% of athletes believe NOCs should have an AM Department or program. In athletes' opinions, NOCs should have a specific AM department to: 1) communicate all opportunities to athletes; 2) build an updated, consistent and transparent process when athletes engage within the Olympic Movement; and 3) maximize the commercial opportunities and develop educational tools and resources. The lowest proposed option is to provide a DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) perspective when engaging within the Movement (see Table 7). Out of the 123 athletes who have engaged with their NOC or Olympic Partners, nearly 70% of them had the NOC staff manage and communicate the opportunity to the athlete (see Figure 9). From the AC perspective, the athlete engagement with the NOC and Partner is also managed by the NOC staff. 66% of 122 answers are not aware of any NOC Collective Use Policy (see Figure 10) and out of the 39 respondents that are aware, over 60% are comfortable with their NOC policy in place (see Figure 11).

Table 6. - ATHLETE SURVEY/ATHLETE MARKETING DEPARTMENT RELEVANCE

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Yes	94.85%	92
▼ No	5.15%	5
TOTAL		97

Table 7. - ATHLETE SURVEY/ATHLETE MARKETING NOC TEAM KEY PURPOSE

ANSWER CHOICES ▼	RESPONSES ▼	
▼ To build and implement an updated, transparent and consistent process for all athletes engaging within the Olympic Movement	50.00%	26
▼ To provide a diversity, equity and inclusivity perspective when engaging with NOC and Olympic Partners	38.46%	20
▼ To ensure a fair compensation for engaging within the Olympic Movement	46.15%	24
▼ To ensure performance is a priority for the athletes when engaging with Olympic Partners	40.38%	21
▼ To maximize corporate opportunities for athletes	50.00%	26
▼ To communicate potential opportunities with Olympians to engage within the Olympic Movement	69.23%	36
▼ To build Athlete Marketing Education resources to help empower athletes to be the best Olympic Movement Ambassador	50.00%	26
▼ Other (please specify) Responses	13.46%	7
Total Respondents: 52		

Figure 9. - ATHLETE SURVEY/ATHLETE ENGAGEMENT COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Who mostly led the communication and shared the opportunities with you?

Answered: 65 Skipped: 91

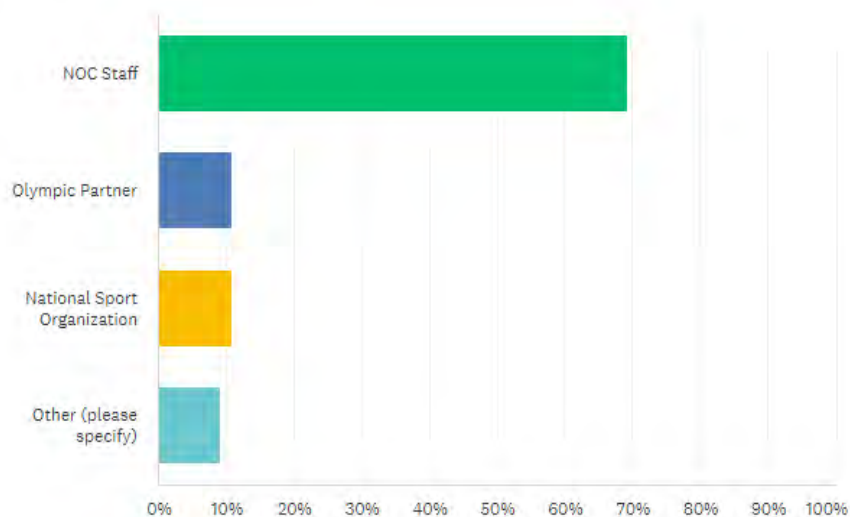
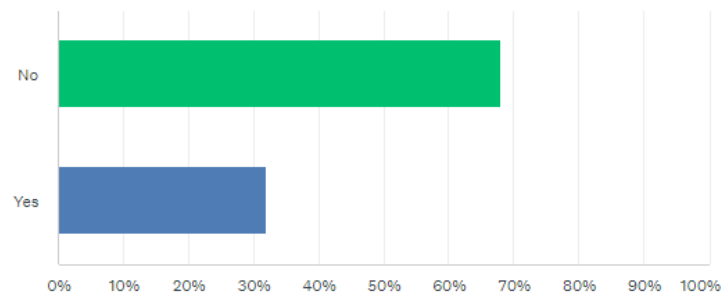


Figure 10. - ATHLETE SURVEY/COLLECTIVE USE AWARENESS

Are you aware if your NOC has a collective use policy for partners that are including athlete's images in their brand campaign?

Answered: 122 Skipped: 34

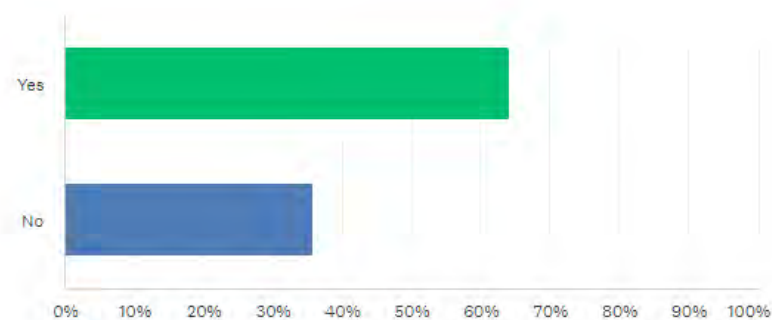


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No	68.03%	83
Yes	31.97%	39
TOTAL		122

Figure 11. - ATHLETE SURVEY/COLLECTIVE USE POLICY ALIGNMENT

Are you comfortable with the policy?

Answered: 39 Skipped: 117



The evolution of social media and how athletes self-brand themselves is one of the top challenges. NOC 1c shared:

We are responsible for making sure that we are building our rule forwarding that aligns with the IOC, but then it has to speak to our own country and in this ever-changing area as well... The first challenging factors is the evolution of digital and social media and how athletes can communicate and promote themselves now and then the second factor is the rise of the athletes' rights movement and athletes becoming more involved.

Overall, current gaps found within the results comprise the non-inclusive engagement process, shared lack of opportunities for Olympians, and unfair compensation when engaging with an Olympic brand. Many athletes' comments discussed the importance of fair compensation. One stated: "Developing athletes need financial support often more than the top athletes." NSO inclusion in the athlete engagement process is the main limitation identified in the process. *NOC 1c* stated:

Tokyo and Beijing Games, what is probably the biggest gap that I didn't really expect and that's I guess that's why it's a gap is the role of the NSOs and in that engagement process... Integrate the NSO into the approvals process... NSO want to be more involved in the loop from an athlete management perspective.

Stakeholder 1 mentioned it was the biggest challenge for NOCs to be inclusive and please all expectations from each party when building an athlete engagement framework.

Theme 3. When engaging with athletes, identify best practices captured when building AECF

There were multiple best practices found regarding NOCs looking to develop and implement an AECF. This includes ensuring NOCs consider an athlete-centred approach to build efficient connexions between athletes and their NOC's sponsors and what aspects to consider when building their internal rate card. Implementing a meaningful consultation approach was seen as important when building the AECF to seek alignment. Other key best practices were mentioned a few times by many participants, for instance, educating athlete on the topic to empower them to build their personal brand and a specific "At-Games Athlete Engagement" process. These best practices would be beneficial to help athlete management, prioritize performance and protect athletes' rights and their images. Lastly, social media engagement and ways athletes use their personal brand is evolving quickly; thus, key best practices were also proposed when building NOC athlete social media strategies. These are described below.

All four NOCs perspectives touched mainly on the process and guidelines when NOC and Olympic brands engage with athletes. *NOC 1c* noted:

A meaningful consultative approach is key for building a successful engagement framework: to have a dialogue with all of the different stakeholder groups. I think it's always gonna be difficult to please everyone... But it's so important to meaningfully

engage people, to not only gain their perspective, but so that they feel like their perspective is being heard.

One athlete's comments influenced this feedback to not only seek perspective but to ensure it is beneficial for them and all stakeholders involved:

For me, the role of the NOC is to balance the forces of the NSO and the athletes. To find a way to support and equip each of these stakeholders to grow, ALL THE sports and ALL THE athletes together.

NOC 3 shared the need for tighter definition and understanding of what is considered commercial versus editorial content because it is currently a critical and increasingly grey area. Empowering athletes to set their value when it comes to price was seen as essential for NOC 1, 2 and 3; and one of these NOCs is using an external company to help athletes to understand their marketplace value. *International organization 1* shared that, "from an international angle it would be important that there is that opportunity for all as best as possible." NOC 1c works with the AC, NSOs, and agents in the community to strike a balance to allow partners to really tell the authentic and collectively broad team story. As NOC 1c stated, "It protects athletes and sports, and encourages partners to seek out individual athlete endorsements or sport endorsements where they wanna tell specific athletes or a specific sports story." Stakeholder 2 also had a similar reflection: "I think athlete are most successful when they align with brands that are authentic for them and that, you know, align with who they are and what they say and do."

The new COC AEP is quality work from Stakeholder 3's perspective:

It's inclusive. I think it tackled some of the major challenges. I think it re-established the central concept of fair market value... I think it helped everyone get on the same script where we were when we say certain things that might not be what people interpret the mass... All that process and the outcome, the document I think should be shared widely. There are a lot of other NOCs that would benefit greatly from that.

NOC 3 has a collective use policy, which is optional for athletes to participate in. NOC 3 also suggested: "NOC should be a clear distinction between collective and individual athletes' image use. Within the sport federations too (i.e., what's a single sport team vs. a country sport team)." *International organizations 2's* observation of best practices was the USOPC innovative marketing platform that creates bridges between athletes and Olympic brands.

“With more than 1000 athletes there was no connection happening because those guys didn't have agents. They didn't know how to connect. The brands didn't know their stories... and so now USOPC has technology that allows this.”

The importance of having NOC Games-specific athletes' engagement and image use strategy during this period was shared in *NOC 1 through 3* interviews. One rationale shared by *NOC 3* was the Protection of Team USA and Olympic IP, and advocacy for athletes who have infringement issues with brands which do not have usage permission when we see it. *NOC 3* stated:

This is the biggest moment in their life and marketing is only one piece of it. If we want to empower athletes to extend the Olympic brand, it has to be easier to activate, understand the rules, and less penal when they do.

For *NOC 1c*, as mentioned in the *Theme 2 gaps* section, reviewing and adjusting the NOC at Games Athlete Engagement Framework is a key learning from the past Games and will be a priority to ensure NSO consultation process is included.

Providing educational tools for athletes on their AM value, how to negotiate agreements, and how to attract sponsors are a few examples mentioned in the interviews. The AC interviewee mentioned that *“providing education...empowers the athletes to earn financial remuneration and could diminish financial pressure.”* The *NOC 4* shared that, by educating athletes from the very beginning of their athlete paths could be a very good way to keep them, give them the knowledge on business and finance. *“Young people understand social media so much better already. They know their post is going to stay there forever and they kind of understand that they can't make any statements they want without consequences.”*

Having an athlete-centred approach as a best practice was shared many times during the stakeholders' interviews. As stakeholder 2 stated:

Our whole organization would not exist without the athletes. We make every effort to put the athletes first, to present them in a positive light and the best way to do that, I think, it's just to develop relationships with them. Listen to them.

When asking the Olympians and stakeholder communities regarding this theme, perspectives were shared on image protection and athlete engagement rate cards. Almost 90% agreed with the statement of NOC best practice when athletes engage within the

Olympic Movement is to protect their image (see Figure 12). Also, when building or reviewing NOCs’ engagement rate cards, the data highlighted three elements that should influence the baseline approach to engage, which includes the level of the athletes, speaking experience, and type of the activation (see Figure 13). Transparency is best for *Stakeholder 1* when NOCs are building an engagement compensation framework to make things equitable as well as to understand the need to create a baseline. As *stakeholder 1* stated:

I think transparency is best. A rate card designed by the NOC would make things more equitable amongst athletes. And I think if a company understands what they will have to pay they are more likely to budget for that rather than just taking a stab in the dark on what this might cost.

Figure 12. - ATHLETE SURVEY/IMAGE RIGHTS

Do you think it would be useful to ensure protection of individual image rights of athletes?

Answered: 83 Skipped: 73

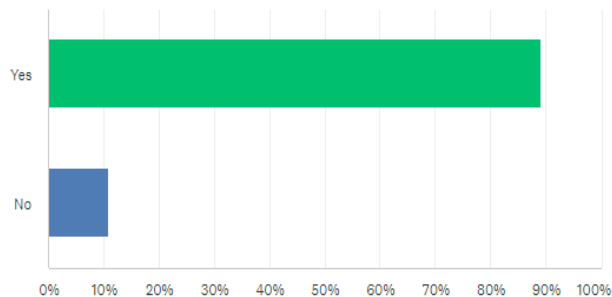
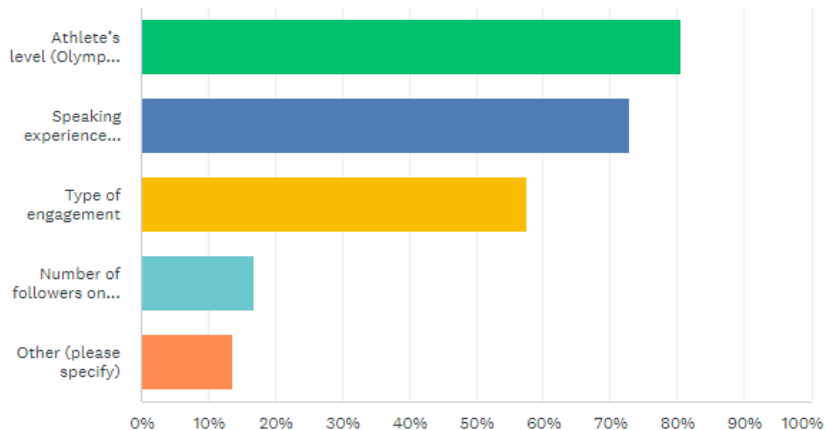


Figure 13. - ATHLETE SURVEY/COMPENSATION FRAMEWORK CONSIDERATION

In your opinion, what should be considered when building a fair engagement compensation framework? (you may select more than one option)

Answered: 118 Skipped: 38



NOCs supported the positive impact on their brand growth and engagement on social media the past two years. NOC 2 mentioned the importance of having a Games-specific athlete engagement strategy:

We did a lot more of Instagram live. They took over our account. Also, we did a lot of digital content series that we then packaged up and branded and sold over to partners, etc. So, we did a lot more and athletes get paid for any brand ambassador activations. Specific Olympic Brands scored hundreds of millions of engagements and views... With specific demographic.

As a result, there is a real benefit in building an At-Games Digital strategy with Olympic Partners and athletes.

CONCLUSIONS

Considering this research's findings, for athletes, the relationship between performance, personal excellence, and growth is strongly connected and can impact each other. The role of NOCs to strengthen their Athletes Marketing programs & education strategy by integrating an athlete-centred culture could potentially impact athletes' podium success performance and elevate brand recognition. The research showed the ways Olympic brands have been engaging with athletes has evolved in the past years: through education and consultation with key stakeholders, building an engagement compensation framework is important if NOCs aim to protect athletes' performances and their image, while maximising commercial opportunities at the same time.

Each of the 206 NOCs has its own background and various level of engagements; hopefully, they can implement relevant proposed recommendations to their own context and revisit their organizational culture and programs to elevate their relationship with their athletes, provide a platform to highlight their stories, celebrate their legacy in an authentic way, and empower them to be the best Olympic Movement role model.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	RECOMMENDATION PRIORITY 1				
	NOC define & implement an athlete-centred culture to strengthen relationships with both active athletes and Legacy Olympians				
	Action	Lead	Resources	Timescales	Critical success factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consult and collaborate with NOC AC, NOC internal departments that already align with an athlete- centred approach.• Consult NSOs for alignment and define NOCs’ role vis-à-vis Athletes.• Consult National Olympian Associations (e.g., COC OLY Canada Commission) to seek Legacy Olympian’s perspective.• Define an overall corporate Athlete-Centred objective which would impact organizational priorities and key activities.• Present to board and get endorsement.	Senior Leadership Team	Time Travel expenses	Dec-22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commitment of board and members• Commitment of Senior Leadership Team for Integration into NOC 2023 Strategic House	

RECOMMENDATION PRIORITY 2

Define a strategy to create connections and bridges between NOC's partners and athletes

Action	Lead	Resources	Timescales	Critical success factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate Athletes' perspectives in Marketing strategy around relevant future/existing partnerships where NOC/partners can identify a desire to create direct support to Athletes through dedicated programs/initiatives. • Create opportunities to grow athlete empowerment and self-branding within the Olympic Movement. • Build and implement an Athlete Engagement Compensation Framework that is fair and inclusive to maximize the connection between the athletes and Partners. • Utilize innovating technologies in place or new to grow capacity and efficiency. • Conducting external consultation to update internal Rate Card. • Regroup specific NOCs to share best practices. • Build a specific Games Process Strategy in collaboration with stakeholders involved. • Collaborate with Digital team to create a specific social media engagement strategy. 	Marketing and Brand and Digital departments	Platform cost Time Expertise Travel	Dec-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment and approbation of (e.g., at COC, it would be brand and commercial and finance leadership team) • Board approval

3

RECOMMENDATION PRIORITY 3**Build an Athlete Marketing (AM) Education strategy for all stakeholders involved in the process and can benefit from the program**

Action	Lead	Resources	Timescales	Critical success factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define clearly all-important AM definitions. E.g., Commercial vs. Editorial Collective use vs. Individual use. • NOC to work in collaboration with potential Sport and Commercial Partners to create content or delivery of the Education Strategy. At COC, we could explore for example collaboration with Game Plan team and their Partners to create strategy and content, e.g., Smith school. • Collaborate with Legacy Olympians (retired from competition) when hosting or creating education sessions/content for authentic delivery. 	Marketing / Communication Departments	Expertise Time Travel Platform cost	Dec-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment and approbation from Senior Leadership Team

4

RECOMMENDATION PRIORITY 4**Identify what role the NOC is playing around athletes' image protection when NOC partners are involved**

Action	Lead	Resources	Timescales	Critical success factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a clear and fair or update NOC Collective Use Policy in collaboration with NOC AC, AM and Legal Teams. • Define approval and compensation process in the policy. • Educate NOC, partners, athletes and NSOs around the benefits and the risks of the policy. 	Marketing and Legal department	Time Travel	Dec-22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment and approbation of Senior Leadership Team • Board approval

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project is to recommend clear guidelines and road map for National Olympic Committees (NOCs) or any Olympic organizations creating an athlete engagement compensation framework (AECF). After completing a literature review the methodology focused on both quantitative and qualitative data sources to support and verify results through various sources, mainly surveys and semi-structured interviews. Four groups of participants were targeted: 14 NOCs, 157 Athletes, two international Olympic organizations (IOC and LA2028) and three Olympic stakeholders (NSO, partners, agents). The results compiled data in three themes. The research demonstrates extensive data on current NOCs' state around athlete engagement within the Olympic Movement and athlete engagement compensation framework. Sharing NOCs' role, objectives, challenges and gaps when engaging athletes with Olympic brands from all four perspectives. Finally, the results outline best practices when building an athlete engagement compensation framework which support the four project overall recommendations.

RÉSUMÉ

L'objectif de ce projet est de recommander des lignes directrices/feuilles de route claires aux Comités Nationaux Olympiques (CNO) ou à toutes organisations olympiques afin de créer un cadre de rémunération de l'engagement des athlètes. Suite à une revue de la littérature, la méthodologie s'est basée sur des questionnaires et des entrevues semi-dirigées. Quatre groupes de participants ont été ciblés : 14 CNO, 157 athlètes olympiques, deux organisations internationales (CIO, et LA2028) et trois acteurs sportifs (Organisations nationales sportives (ONS), partenaires commerciaux et agents d'athlètes). Les résultats ont été compilés sous trois thèmes. Les résultats présentent des données sur l'état actuel des CNO quant à l'engagement des athlètes dans le cadre du Mouvement olympique et des cadres de rémunération de l'engagement des athlètes. Le rôle, les objectifs, les défis et les lacunes des CNO des quatre groupes ciblés lorsque les acteurs olympiques créés des opportunités d'engagements commerciaux ou éditoriaux pour l'athlète est analysé. En conclusion, les résultats étayent les meilleures pratiques lors de l'élaboration d'un cadre de rémunération de l'engagement des athlètes qui appuient les quatre recommandations générales du projet.

APPENDIX I

COC Collective Use Policy

Collective Use

Spirit & Intent

1. The COC is positioned as an athlete centered organization
2. The COC & athletes are partners
3. Create mutually beneficial relationship between the COC, athletes and COC partners.
4. Enable COC to extend values to partners while protecting athletes' rights and ability to build value

Collective Use

Collective image use/group creative refers only to Team Canada as a collective - to be defined as imagery where a minimum of 15 athletes from 5 sports are depicted ("Collective Image").

	PARAMETERS FOR COLLECTIVE USE ACTIVATIONS	
TYPE OF COLLECTIVE IMAGE	Team images E.g. Opening and Closing Ceremony imagery, other 'Team' imagery from COC events (Team Canada Celebration, Team Send-Off, etc.)	Creative where Team Canada depicted as a collective
SCOPE	Minimum of 15 athletes from 5 sports depicted No undue focus on any particular athlete or sport (with the exception of flag bearer in Opening/Closing Ceremony imagery)	
COMMUNICATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Athletes informed of proposed image use
OPT-OUT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Opportunity to opt-out within 5 days of being informed of image use if sponsor conflict exists
PERIOD OF IMAGE USE	3 Olympic Games Cycles (12 years)	3 Olympic Games Cycles (12 years)

*Note - Any use of athlete likeness, outside of Collective Image use, by a COC partner to be negotiated directly between COC partner and the athlete and/or the athlete's representative, at then-current market rates.

APPENDIX II

COC ATHLETE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS/TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT REQUESTS

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT REQUESTS



HOW TO USE

Athlete Engagement Requests managed by the COC are categorized in 4 Types, which determine the applicable step-by-step process, the role of parties involved and the information they each may receive as part of the request process. The COC is responsible to determine, in its reasonable discretion, the applicable request Type based on the present categorization.

TYPE	TYPE 1	TYPE 2	TYPE 3	TYPE 4
DESCRIPTION	General COC/COF Requests (no COC Partner involvement)	Corporate COC/COF Requests (no COC Partner involvement)	COC Partner Request with primary purpose related to Team Canada program	COC Partner Request (all other types)
SUB DESCRIPTION	Digital/Editorial/Diversity, Equity & Inclusion/other requests from COC/COF promoting general COC operations	Promotion of specific COC/COF corporate or marketing message	3A: Initiative is a joint program of COC and COC Partner OR 3B: Initiative promotes Team Canada partnership AND is a one-off as strictly defined: - Duration: < 1 day - Image Use: athlete image use for purposes of promoting event only, restricted to week of event. - Social Media: athlete social requirements for purposes of promoting event only, restricted to week of event. - Other requirements: 1-2 hours of preparatory work before/after event	COC may play a role of consultant for any type 4 requests and will help introduction if athlete is not represented
EXAMPLES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Post on COC social platform promoting 1-year to Games milestone - Team Canada Media Summit appearance - Olympic Day school visit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participation in COC/COF brand campaign - Participation in "We Are All Team Canada" marketing campaign - Advocacy for Core Funding - Advocacy for Bidding - Team Canada Champion Chats 'Champion' 	3A Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team Kit launch - Bursary programs - Team Send-Off / Celebration <i>*This listing could be exhaustive with understanding that additional programs can be added on consultation with stakeholders.</i> 3B Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In person or virtual Partner panel promoting Team Canada partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Athlete endorsement - Partner campaign featuring athletes

APPENDIX III

Athlete Survey Questions: Profile/Background of survey participant
Country, Sport(s), Game year(s) competed
Theme 1 - Current context of Athlete Marketing (AM) program within your NOC
1. Does your National Olympic Committee (NOC) has an Athlete Marketing department or has an Athlete Marketing Program? Yes/NO
Theme 2 - Capture NOC Athlete Marketing Department/programs key purpose
1. What is be the key purpose of this team/program? Options:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To build and implement an updated, transparent and consistent process for all athletes engaging within the Olympic Movement • To Provide a diverse, equity and inclusive perspective when engaging with NOC and Olympic Partners • To ensure a fair compensation for engaging within the Olympic Movement • To ensure Performance is a priority for the athlete when engaging with Olympic Partners • To maximize corporate opportunities for athletes • To communicate with Olympians potential opportunities to engage within the Olympic Movement • To build Athlete Marketing Education resources to help Empower athletes to be best Olympic Movement Ambassador • Other
2. If no AM department or program - Would you find it useful for your NOC to have an Athlete Marketing Department or program? Yes/No – Why
Theme 3 - Types of engagements
1. As an Olympic athlete, have you personally engaged in any off the field of play activations with your NOC in the past and share types of engagement? Yes/No - Why
<p>If yes, options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Olympic Day Celebration event • Community engagement • Social Media activation (e.g. Social post or IG takeover) • Story on NOC website • NOC Brand Campaign • NOC Foundation activation • Other
2. As an Olympic athlete, have you personally engaged in any off the field of play activations with your NOC Olympic Partner in the past and share types of engagement? Yes/No - Comments
<p>If yes, options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet and greet • Sport demo • Keynote engagement • Corporate brand campaign • Long-Term contract • Other

Theme 4 - Process
1. Who mostly lead the communication and shared the engagement opportunities with you? Share types of engagement? Options:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NOC staff • Olympic Partner • NSO • Other (specify)
2. Was it a good experience when engaging with your NOC/Partner? Yes/No - Comments
Theme 5 - Best practices
1. Are you aware if the NOC has a collective use policy for partners that are including athletes' image in their brand campaign? Yes/No – Comments.
2. If yes, are you comfortable with the policy? Yes/No – Comments.
3. Is building your personal brand is important for you? Yes/No
4. Where you activate mostly? Options:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instagram • Facebook • TikTok • Twitter • LinkedIn • Other
5. In your opinion, what are key role/expectations/best practices for your NOC in supporting to growth of your personal Brand as an Ambassador of the Olympic Movement? Options:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a clear Athlete Engagement Framework • Maximize editorial and commercial opportunity to share your story/journey • Provide support to Olympic Partners to ensure Fair and consistent engagement compensation • Protect performance by collaborating with athlete National Federation • Create and hold Athlete Marketing Education tools and session for athletes
6. Considerations when building a fair engagement compensation framework? Options:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athlete's level (Olympic Champion, Olympic Medallist, Olympian, Olympic Hopeful) • Speaking experience (number of speaking engagements and feedback collected) • Number of followers on social media • Type of the engagement • Other
Theme 6 - Final thoughts
1. Do you have anything else you would like to add regarding your NOC vis-à-vis Athlete Marketing and engaging within the Olympic Movement?

APPENDIX IV

Athlete Survey Comments

Experiences in engaging with their NOC

- “Supportive Environment filled with Energy and Excitement.”
- “I found my NOC staff to be understanding of my training requirements and their communication is EXCELLENT.”
- “Not timely enough.... usually a last-minute invite.”
- “Nice people, and very casual approach for communication.”
- “I enjoyed connecting with the general sport community as well as young athletes specific to the sport of badminton.”
- “Organized, professional, made things easily accessible.”
- “Professional and organized staff. Paying event!”
- “Well organized - as an athlete, I just had to show up and tell my story!”
- “It was easy to do and well organize.”
- “Always a professional experience, made me feel good every time! :)”
- “While mostly positive, in general the engagement was without compensation. Any NOC commercial engagement, while limited, was usually with an NOC sponsor and was at minimal rates or compensation.”
- “The people helped make me feel valued and they were helpful.”
- “Positive, but limited. National Sport Office doesn’t engage at all with retired members, so I’ve engaged in local events or parades over the years, however opportunities are limited.”
- “It was 15 years ago; the number of athletes was much smaller and was more of community. But the longer one is retired and moved on to other things in one's life the more this connection fades. There is a missed opportunity for NOC's and IOC to keep the alumni engaged... not just for donation opportunities, but for participation opportunities and mentorship opportunities.”
- “They frequently have one or two high profile athletes in our sport to do all engagements. You basically have to beg to get some acknowledgement and they have your success in mind.”
- “Available resources to me.”
- “In my day the NOC wasn’t too involved in our community. I’m a life member of the “Y” which had a couple of Olympic coaches. The NOC has become more active as have our athletes. At 90 I can’t help anymore!”
- “Professional group of people.”
- “Yes, but... Not sufficient pay and wasn't equipped with current Olympic gear (multiple options depending on event) .”
- “I have had positive experiences mostly but don’t understand why I’m not selected for activations when other athletes are.”
- “It's nice when things are done, even though it may not be much. Effort goes a long way.”
- “Easy.”
- “When we communicate it was always positive.”
- “I felt that my wellbeing was important and that I was considered not only as an athlete but also for the person that I am.”
- “It was fun and I felt like I was a part of something ‘bigger’ than just competing in my sport.”

- “Great communication, we also get paid for our time and brand usage.”
- “
- “From what I remember, my experiences with my NOC have always been positive. The requests were clear and the communication was ongoing from the start to the end of the engagements.”
- “Neither positive nor negative. it was fun.”
- “I didn't have a bad experience, but looking back, the opportunities I participated in only benefited the NOC.”
- “Clear communication, fun activities and wonderful opportunities.”
- “Staff is great.”
- “There was a straightforward process to follow and the objectives of these opportunities were clearly communicated with the athlete.”

Do you want to activate with your NOC?

- “I feel my experience was too long ago to be relevant to current athletes and coaches.”
- “Because I want to feel like I'm part of the team too, and I want the chance to meet my teammates and those who wish to invest in sport or my career/future as well. Also, it seems arbitrary who gets invited to things; sometimes it's medallists, but as a medallist, I have not been even.”
- “Simply get to know it.”
- “I like working with the staff of my NOC. I find them to be creative, energetic and passionate individuals who focus on lifting up the movement in Canada.”
- “To continue to support the great benefits athletes can access through engagement.”
- “Because I think it's very important for athletes.”
- “Logistics - currently living in another country.”
- “I am a member of my NOC and often engage in some discussions about such programs.”
- “What is their platform????”
- “Too late (competed in 1976)
- “To create opportunity for my career during and after sport.”
- “Learn about opportunities.”
- “Pass along experiences.”
- “Retired.”
- “In many ways I have lost contact with the Olympic Movement as there are more pressing issues facing humanity. How does the Olympic Movement become relevant in a world where the motto 'higher, faster, farther' has become one of the sources of much environmental and societal distress and destruction.”
- “I'm happy to be involved in events and activations whenever possible to stay connected to the sport community and pass on the inspiration to the next generation.”
- “For financial compensation.”
- “I am 74 and save my energy for personal and family matters.”
- “Too busy.”
- “Love everyone at COC.”
- “Parce que ça fait partie intégrante de la vie d'athlète. Pour ma part c'est ce à quoi j'aspirais depuis toute petite.”
- “Education.”
- “Generate more sponsorships.”
- “I am proud to be part of our great NOC in Canada.”
- “Important to give back to the Olympic movement.”

- “May open up more opportunities as long as doesn’t conflict with performance.”
- “Not sure what the question is looking for.”
- “To stay active and involved in sports cause it's my passion and I like to share with others.”
- “Our NOC is far too focused on Olympic activation and appears to deliberately NOT engage with NSO's or activity outside of the Olympic sphere. Far too narrow. Sport is far more than two weeks every four years - and for athletes to meaningfully engage in high performance, our NOC needs to re-think this focus on Games. Primarily, the NOC should engage with NSO's, to partner sponsors (encourage Olympic sponsors to also engage with multiple NSO's in each quad) and by extension for effective activation, engage with athletes. In the period leading up to Vancouver 2010 our NOC was quite effective, but post-2010 this approach appeared to be discontinued, which reduced the profile of sport in Canada (through commercial activation) and the sponsor impact to each NSO which is the organization primarily responsible for athlete development and high performance.”
- “If it’s possible, of course.”
- “I feel I have knowledge and experience to offer.”
- “Not sure.”
- “I had hoped to stay involved in the sport/Olympic movement and had always thought there would have been more. 20 years out of sport, it feels as though that opportunity has passed.”
- “I don't know what a NOC is.”
- “To support current athletes with mentorship and support their current sport experience, help them with the transition process out of active sport and be a positive role model of how to being an engaged member of the Olympian alumni community.”
- “To provide advice to athletes and coaches and administrators from my lifelong experience in the sport of rowing.”
- “I like being useful.”
- “There are great opportunities.”
- “I don’t think they align with my view in sports. They are far too dependent on financial supports from government funding based on inclusion rather than performance.”
- “As an alumni, as well as being retired from the workforce, I would have the desire to assist current and upcoming athletes strive to reach their potential.”
- “Because I don't feel like I can do much of a difference.”
- “What is an "activation"?”
- “My Olympic years were a very memorable experience.”
- “Help build my brand allow me to optimize my athletic experience.”
- “Because there is no definition for the term 'field of play activations'.”
- “Well they were building up our Olympic movement much more regularly and seeing it was nationally responsive. At 90 all I have to give these days is a cheque.”
- “I’m trying to retire, age 79.”
- “I am a member of the United States Luge Association due to proximity of Lake Placid. However, the President of the Ontario Luge Association keeps me up to date re Calgary and Whistler.”
- “Support.”
- “More exposure as an athlete = greater ability to financially support myself in non-Olympic years.”

Comments on Collective use

- “I feel the Athletes should have the rights over their own images to be able to promote themselves and obtain sponsorships.”
- “It has not been incredibly beneficial to many athletes; same athletes are often used, whether they are high profile, or maybe it is their agents that have better relationships/ins to be selected as the face of these types of things?”
- “Because it doesn't pay the athletes what they deserve. It is fine if it's a simple picture of the OC/CC, but I have seen too many companies manipulate this rule and it truly is disheartening.”
- “I'm not familiar with the policy as it is written. I'm not particularly uncomfortable with it, but I've not reviewed it.”
- “It seems normal for me. But I don't have any knowledge in that area. I'm in the “community services, not business so my judgement is not accurate.”
- “My understanding is that targeted individual images can be collected and edited into a group collage without fair compensation/consent... I don't think this is fair.”
- “In the past, this has caused enormous conflict, as Olympic sponsors believe they have “bought” all aspects - including athlete images. With each new sponsor or commercial engagement, it takes time to educate - which usually results in bruised egos. The NOC needs to be completely transparent with commercial partners - that their rights are for the rings and higher-level images - and NOT individual athletes. This is easily managed if transparent and the NOC takes a cooperative approach to encourage commercial partners to also take a position with NSO's to buy the rights to access athlete images and the sport on a day-to-day basis. It can (and should be) a cooperative and positive relationship - but historically it has been very proprietary with negative outcomes.”
- “The NOC does not have my best interest in mind. They create the narrative in a direction athlete often do not want.”
- “It's unfair and only benefits our sport's governing body. Unsure about the COC on this. We are often forced to wear competing brands to our sponsors in order to compete in curling Canada events.”
- “I don't think it was compensated fairly.”
- “Because it's already very hard to find sponsorship.”
- “Paid appropriate.”
- “I don't mind my image being used.”
- “It's fair.”
- “Somewhat know of it. Need to read more detail but for what I have read it does full in favour of the Olympian.”
- “Not really sure if the specifics of the policy.”
- “I believe I am comfortable with the policy but I have not seen it in many years.”
- “Free use of the image of their most important assets, as well as harming their own sponsorship search.”
- “Not totally as it is I believe extremely restrictive for the athlete.”
- “Had some voice or at least transparency in the creation of it. I'm also not a high-profile athlete - so it affects me less perhaps.”

Additional comments on building an AECF

- “Our NOC must work more with the athletes on the subject of marketing.”
- “More NOC's should see the importance of developing such a program.”
- “To be able to communicate in my first language with NOC staff (French).”
- “Please remain relevant to the times - not branding but human to human interaction amongst athletes and kids who also want to participate. Highlight the names, abilities, stories of athletes, families, coaches not the names of sponsoring corporations. In all humility, the names of these sponsors should not be visible at any event. The Olympics is not about corporations, it's about athletes, coaches and their families' challenges and victories. If not as much money comes in from corporations, then scale everything down to more modest levels.”
- “In my eyes it seems like the way of doing is "building" from scratch, but some of us are professional in other area (teacher, doctors, nurse) and building a brand is a lot of energy. Being an athlete + helping the community we have nothing left to invest in ourselves and when I searched for help/support, it was only class or information on how to do it. It's not the notions we lack.... it's the time and energy :) This is the type of resources we need, even if we have to pay.”
- “Create a mutually supportive Framework!”
- “Great work! :)”
- “As a retired athlete I have been involved as a staff member for 5 years and have volunteered for 23 years for a total of 28 years with Kid Sport - a charity that provides financial support for kids to participate in sport. I give back to the community with my time without the expectation of compensation or recognition. There are many like me out there - former Olympians who are community leaders and volunteers. It's more than endorsement and sponsorship... marketing...”
- “Developing athletes need financial support often more than the top athletes.”
- “NOC don't necessarily have the best people in place for this position. Relinquish the power for the Olympic movement from them. Until a proper Marketing team is in place.”
- “As a former and now father of a two-time Olympic athlete, I know how hard it is for them to survive without financial assistance. Luckily, we could help, but we're sure others are not so lucky. So, providing opportunities to learn how and then assist athletes to find sponsors would help immensely.”
- “Hopefully they don't become an overpowering corporate entity but a helpful help to aspiring athletes!”
- “It would be good to train Olympians at the earliest opportunity, i.e. before they become ‘famous’ and also to counsel them on choosing an agent. They will all be different and have different opportunities, one size will not fit all.”
- “Athlete success (not just medallists) is built upon many hours of volunteer uncompensated effort. Also, other than for medalists in high profile sports, most Olympian efforts go largely unrecognised. It is not appropriate or consistent with the Olympic movement for the NOC to be involved in marketing, compensation or creating paid opportunities for Olympic athletes. These should be pursued through other venues by those interested athletes.”
- “Fair and equitable compensation and not just highlighting Olympic Gold medalists or big \$\$\$ potential platforms as they don't often give back / volunteer / engage.”
- “I believe it's best to contact the athletes directly— or at least have them cc-ed on emails for opportunities. I believe I've been excluded from things because my NSO said I was busy when I wasn't.”

- “This all must be done with athletes, not for athletes. It should be even-handed, fair, transparent and open to all who qualify.”
- “There are little or few opportunities for non medalists.”
- “Opportunities to share and send business opportunities to others Olympians.”
- “I wish there could be something that sets up a sustainable income after doing something that we are told matter to our country.”
- “No comment.”
- “I think tools and opportunities available are targeted mostly at active athletes and Olympians who have recently retired from sport. It would be interesting to see more opportunities solely dedicated to a specific category of alumni.”
- “For me the role of the NOC is to balance the forces of the NSO and the athletes. To find a way to support and equip each of these stakeholders to grow, ALL THE sports and ALL THE athletes together.”
- “Plus d’opportunit  s en fran  ais et pour les sports moins connus.”
- “A bit note should eventually be possible for the athlete for usage of its own Olympic image I believe.”