

Headline 2.5 Career support for athletes

1. Definition

Career support refers to the mechanisms put in place by an organisation to offer guidance and opportunities for skill development. Specifically, career support programmes for athletes aim to assist them in transitioning from their sports careers to other job opportunities and or following a dual career pathway, whether within or outside the sports sector, by providing information, advice, training, financial assistance, or other forms of support. These programs should be organised or coordinated at the organisational level and should extend support to member organisations.

Finding a balance between sports and education/professional careers can offer benefits for individual athletes. It teaches them valuable skills in time management and prioritisation, enabling them to excel in both areas. Pursuing education/a professional career alongside sports provides athletes with a healthy distraction and a different focus and helps broaden the athletes' identity beyond their athletic career, reducing the risk of an identity crisis when their sports career ends. Furthermore, engaging in education or skill development opportunities allows athletes to enhance their existing skill set, develop important life skills, and become more well-rounded individuals. It also expands their social network beyond the confines of sports and enhances their employment prospects by providing them with transferable skills.

2. Ideal Scenario

The organisation understands the importance of athlete career support and is addressing it both within the board and the Athletes Commission. A comprehensive strategy is developed to provide support to the athletes throughout all stages of their careers, including the transition from the sports career to future employment possibilities. To facilitate this transition, the organisation does not only work with the athletes but also has developed cooperations with secondary/tertiary education institutions, companies, the government and stakeholders (e.g. sponsors) offering career opportunities or further education. Career transition is an open topic in the organisation with regular information about possibilities offered by the organisation and beyond to be a constant support and evolves based on athlete feedback and needs.

3. Risks

- Absence of support towards athletes could lead them to misconduct or difficult life situations (e.g. due to a long period of unemployment after a sports career).
- Drop out due to decision between sporting career and academic/professional career paired with lack of knowledge about transition opportunities.
- Unprepared athletes may face distractions and decreased performance due to unresolved career concerns, affecting their competitive edge.
- Athletes remain unsuccessful or overburdened as their sporting careers and professional careers cannot be aligned and combined.

- Sports organisations risk reputational damage if they are perceived as neglecting athletes' holistic development and well-being.

4. Instruments and key elements

<i>Instruments</i>	<i>Key elements</i>
Athletes' career programme:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a plan during the career and for the reconversion. • Collaboration with the Athletes' Commission to continuously match the career programme to the current needs. • Existence of post-career planning (e.g. with sponsors, education institutions, government), and e-learning possibilities within and outside the organisation. • Financial and scholarship support to facilitate athletes' education and increase employment and dual career opportunities. • Ensure that athletes are aware of all existing possibilities as well as the risks of not planning reconversion or life after career. • Existence of an officer/ombudsman/commission for liaison with athletes and former athletes. • Assign a person responsible for dual careers, a career counsellor for athletes, reference for applications of athletes.

5. Good practice examples

Example "Athlete Career Programme"

Organisation: French Olympic Committee (CNOSF)

Description: Launched in 2013 by the French Committee for International Sport and subsequently managed by the CNOSF's International Relations Department from May 2015, the Parcours Ambition Internationale (PAI) annually prepares around twenty French sports personalities for international roles. The program includes four two-day seminars, held both in France and abroad, covering various topics essential for navigating the international sports landscape, such as intercultural communication, economic and strategic analysis, sports geopolitics, lobbying and negotiation, and European sports policies. These seminars feature talks by esteemed specialists, experts, and leaders from the global sports and political arenas. Participants, including elected officials, executives from French federations, and athletes, benefit from personalized English training, crucial for international engagement. The PAI fosters a collaborative environment, encouraging exchanges among participants and speakers. Since its inception, nearly 250 individuals have completed the program, with many advancing to significant international positions. Each year, French federations and the CNOSF's High-Level Athletes' Commission receive a call for applications, with the program's seminars scheduled to take place in March, June, September, and December.

Further information: [The International Ambition Pathway | CNOSF \(franceolympique.com\)](https://franceolympique.com)

Example “Athletes Career Programme”

Organisation: International Hockey Federation (FIH)

Description: The FIH has developed an FIH Hockey Academy which is an education, training and resource centre for all actors involved in Hockey. The aim is to create an educated and professional global hockey workforce by proposing a range of programmes, resources and tools designed to help support organisations and individuals at all levels. The academy has been developed in cooperation with external stakeholders with the relevant expertise, Coach Logic and NottsSports.

The Athlete Education Framework has three stages, based on the athlete participation journey from initiation to post-career and life-long learning. It provides online e-learning, but also workshops and courses both online and face-to-face.

Further information: [Athlete \(fih.hockey\)](https://www.fih.hockey)

Example “Athletes Career Programme”

Organisation: International Olympic Committee (IOC)

Description: The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has established a comprehensive strategy to support athletes' education and career development both during and beyond their athletic careers. Central to this strategy is the Athlete 365 community, a platform that aggregates all IOC activities and resources for athletes and their entourages. Two key initiatives within this strategy focus on aiding athletes in career transitions. First, in 2015, the IOC introduced the "Athlete Learning" platform, which offers academic lectures, video insights, online live events, and a discussion forum tailored for athletes, especially those frequently travelling. This platform provides various courses, including those on career transition, sports event management, and professional sports management, as well as a business accelerator hub to help athletes explore career options and develop practical skills. Second, the Athlete 365 Career+ programme, developed in partnership with the global human resources company Adecco, aims to assist athletes in preparing for and achieving successful career transitions. The program is structured in five steps: Prepare, Discover, Research, Plan, and Implement, guiding athletes through understanding their career development process, investigating their strengths, planning for success, and acquiring the necessary skills. This program is actively implemented at both national and international levels, ensuring comprehensive support for athletes in maximizing their education and employment opportunities.

Further information:

[Learning \(olympics.com\)](https://olympics.com)

[Athlete Career Portal \(olympics.com\)](https://olympics.com)

Example “Athletes Career Programme”

Organisation: Polish Olympic Committee

Description: “Olympic Committees for Dual Careers” (OCDC) was an Erasmus+ funded project dedicated to promoting dual careers among elite athletes, emphasizing the importance and opportunities that dual careers provide. The project aims to develop support mechanisms that help elite athletes balance their

sporting careers with their educational pursuits, and it offers avenues for athletes to discover their passions and vocations beyond sports. The initiative equips athletes with essential skills to seamlessly transition into the employment market after their sports careers. The OCDC online course for junior athletes offers guidance on managing schedules between education and sports, coping with the pressures of elite performance alongside academic responsibilities, creating a personal brand, finding dual career support, and planning for the future. For senior athletes, the course focuses on raising awareness about the importance of preparing for life after sports. It provides strategies for balancing elite sports with education or employment, identifies adult education opportunities compatible with athletes' schedules, and emphasizes the importance of building a support network. Additionally, it educates athletes on institutional support programs and brand management, crucial for navigating their post-athletic careers.

Further information:

[Olympic Committees for Dual Career – Polski Komitet Olimpijski](#)

[OCDC – Junior Athletes – SportAcademy](#)

[OCDC – Senior Athletes – SportAcademy](#)

Example “Athletes Career Programme”

Organisation: National Olympic Committee of Canada (COC)

Description: In association with Deloitte, the Canadian Olympic Committee (COC) launched the Game Plan, a high-performance athlete wellness and transition program. The Game Plan is designed to equip Canadian athletes with tools to pursue excellence during and beyond their sporting careers, offering a range of mental health services. Supported by the Canadian Paralympic Committee (CPC) and the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute Network (COPSI Network), the program aims to mitigate common stressors and distractions, enabling athletes and coaches to focus on peak performance. Game Plan advisors are integrated into support teams, working alongside sport scientists and performance experts. The program is structured around five key elements: Career Management, which includes a job board with flexible work opportunities for athletes; Network, a mentoring initiative linking former athletes with the next generation; Education, offering specialized training opportunities and flexible class schedules; Skill Development, providing conferences on personal and corporate brand management, public speaking, and financial planning; and Health, ensuring access to 24/7 mental health support and mental health awareness training.

Further information: [Game Plan, Canada's Total Athlete Wellness Program \(mygameplan.ca\)](#)

6. Steps to the next level

To level 2 ★★ “Emerging”	To level 3 ★★★ “Developing”	To level 4 ★★★★ “Established”	To level 5 ★★★★★ “Embedded”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss, during a meeting of the Board, the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify an expert who could be in liaison with athletes if 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt an athlete’s programme to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refine the athlete’s programme in

<p>potential actions that your organisation could set up to support athletes' career transition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce basic informational resources and occasional guidance sessions to help athletes understand the importance of balancing sports and other career pursuits. 	<p>they ask for support for their career transition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a strategy to provide support to an athlete who would like to follow a training or an education programme. • Consider flexible training schedules (where applicable) and provide initial resources such as academic counselling in collaboration with educational institutions in the area to assist athletes in managing both sports and academics/education. • Consider the opportunity to develop tools, workshops, and seminars to facilitate the development of athletes' transition during their careers. This could cover self-discovery, career exploration, resume writing, job search strategies, interview preparation, and networking. • Actively collaborate with the Athletes' Commission to develop an athlete's career program tailored to their 	<p>support their post-career activities including training sessions and education opportunities and to raise their awareness about the subject both during and after the athlete's sporting career.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage the Athletes' Commission to enhance and promote the athlete's career programme, with Commission members also serving as mentors to competing athletes. • Provide training to members of the Athletes' Commission to support them in guiding/advising athletes on the topic. • Develop and implement comprehensive dual career programs by cooperating with secondary and tertiary education providers (e.g., schools and universities) to support the 	<p>order to support them during their whole career, including by putting them in direct connection with sponsors and companies (directly, or through organised events, e.g. Networking fairs) as well as creating tools to facilitate their development (e.g. e-learning).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish strong partnerships with schools, universities, and employers, offering tailored plans for athletes that include mentorship, scholarships, and internships, and continuously improving programs based on athlete feedback and evolving needs. • Career management programmes are available and accessible for athletes, to maximise their education and employment opportunities during and/or
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	<p>needs, expectations, and experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and distribute existing resources available of the NOC, National Federation, Continental Association, IOC, etc. 	<p>combination of athletic training and educational pursuits. This includes offering academic tutoring, career counselling, and time management training, as well as forming partnerships with educational institutions and employers to ensure flexible learning and working arrangements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively look for new personnel development opportunities. Assign a staff member or other representative of your organisation with the task of following dual career opportunities for athletes and liaising directly with athletes. Provide networking opportunities for athletes with for instance stakeholders or educational institutions to get them in contact 	<p>after their sports career.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore other possibilities for dual career support (e.g. financial support) at the governmental level or the level of European or international federations. Cooperate with governmental employers of athletes (e.g. military, police, customs) to facilitate optimal training/working conditions during the athletes' active careers and to facilitate the transition to post-career employment.
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