



Athlete Leadership Academy

Terms of Reference

June 2022



**ATHLETE
LEADERSHIP**

What is Athlete Leadership?

If we want a more inclusive organization and accepting world, Special Olympics athletes must be allowed and encouraged to contribute in ways beyond the sports field. One of the most powerful ways we do this is through Athlete Leadership, which creates opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to develop and demonstrate their abilities in leadership roles both inside and outside the organization.

Athlete Leadership programs partner with people with IDD (Special Olympics athlete leaders) to provide opportunities for success in meaningful leadership roles. This is done by training providing knowledge and skills, practical experience in roles of responsibility, and working with leaders without IDD to develop inclusive environments.

Guiding Principles

There are three guiding principles for Athlete Leadership. These principles provide strategic direction and outline what components are necessary to ensure athletes are **leading the way**

“Athlete Leadership is life-changing. It can change the way you see things and how you communicate with others -- to have the courage to stand for others and be on the front lines. It creates leaders.”
– Nyasha Derera, Chair, Global Athlete Congress



Purpose

This document describes the Athlete Leadership Academy background, goals, criteria, course descriptions, application, selection, and anticipated outcomes. The purpose of the Terms of Reference is to create a common understanding of the Athlete Leadership Academy, clarify the roles and responsibilities, identify the programs and initiatives within Athlete Leadership, and establish the expectations for how people get involved and what they report on.

What can Athlete Leadership do for you?

Build Confidence

Self Respect
Self-Worth
Facing Fears

Provide Knowledge

Public Speaking
Technology
Community Advocate

Develop Social Skills

Teamwork
Communication
Friendship/Networking

Share Transferable Skills

Goal Setting
Role Model
Writing

Our Vision

The Special Olympics Canada vision is that sport will open hearts and minds towards people with an intellectual disability and create inclusive communities across Canada.

Our Mission

Special Olympics PEI is dedicated to enriching the lives of Islanders with an intellectual disability through sport.

Our Values

INCLUSION - We foster inclusive communities.

DIVERSITY - We honour what is unique in each individual.

EMPOWERMENT - We create opportunities to pursue full potential.

RESPECT - We operate in an environment of cooperation, collaboration and dignity.

EXCELLENCE - We elevate standards and performance.

Introduction and Goals

The Special Olympics PEI Athlete Leadership Academy is an opportunity for Island athletes, beyond sports training and competition, to gain knowledge and experience in a number of workshops and electives. As athletes explore and complete these opportunities, it is our goal that it will build community and empower members to reach their full potential. Athlete Leadership also provides another way for athletes to showcase and utilize their talents, interests, and expertise.

Athlete Leadership started in Canada as a National Ambassador Program (Speakers Workshop) in 2010. Since this time many chapters, including PEI, have offered a wide range of courses/modules and are continually finding new opportunities to empower athletes in the organization and their communities.

The Athlete Leadership Academy will equip athletes with the tools to undertake positions of leadership within their community and the broader movement. There will be workshops and electives offered to any interested member and their leadership mentor.

Athletes and Mentors who complete electives will receive certificates for their training and gain valuable skills they can apply to their leadership journey.

Athletes and Mentors may choose to complete a workshop in a focus area that will be meaningful for the athlete, Special Olympics PEI, and their community. Following the workshop, they have the opportunity to sign an Academy Commitment form and become members of the Leadership Academy for a set term in one of the following roles: Public Speaking, Health Messenger, Athlete Input Council, or a Peer Mentor. A description of these potential roles are listed in more detail later in these terms. These roles give athletes a voice in shaping the Special Olympics movement, and a chance to spread the word about the transformations Special Olympics can bring to individuals and families.

A volunteer mentor will support each athlete during the workshop and work in partnership with them to practice their new skills, report progress and maintain minimum expectations to receive recognition and certification.

Athletes who are enrolled in a workshop, and are actively engaged in their communities, will be the primary candidates when requests are made for an athlete representative within Special Olympics PEI or our partner organizations.

WORKSHOPS and ACADEMY ROLES

Speaker Workshop

Provides an opportunity for Special Olympics Athletes to develop public speaking and speech writing skills. This course will give tools to enhance an athlete's poise and self-confidence while standing at a microphone or podium. This course is ideal for athletes who have an interest in educating others about the Special Olympics movement, as well as their own personal story, in a public setting. It is ok if you are not comfortable speaking to crowds, so long as there is a desire to learn and practice the skills you will learn.

Health Messenger

Empowers Special Olympics Athletes to develop healthy lifestyles, influence other athletes to lead healthier lives, advocate within their communities for inclusion around health and wellness services, education and resources, and advocate for the health needs of people with IDD. Health Messengers choose a focus area and serve as health and wellness leaders, educators, advocates, and role models.

Committees and Councils

Provides Special Olympics Athletes with the tools on how to effectively receive and give feedback on issues that come up in their local program; serve on the local management team or be a part of a committee or subcommittee in or outside of Special Olympics. This workshop will prepare athletes about governance structures and how to participate in Special Olympics programming and policy conversations by forming and sharing opinions and group discussion. Equally important is the enhancement of awareness and listening skills of volunteers, staff and family members as they interact with athletes during this training.

Peer Mentor

Provides Special Olympics Athletes training to take on leadership opportunities, in the sport they were once active in, as a mentor to other Special Olympics Athletes in that sport. The term "Peer Mentor" refers to an athlete who actively assists the head coach and the assistant coaches at weekly practice, training, and/or competitions and helps mentor other athletes to reach their goals. A Peer Mentor provides the sport program additional quality expertise to enhance athlete performance. These positions require great communication with other athletes so that they understand what you are explaining and cooperation with coaches in their sport program.

ACADEMY ELECTIVES

Intro to Athlete Leadership

Provides an overview of Special Olympics and Athlete Leadership opportunities and is a prerequisite for enrolling in an Academy Workshop.

Social Media

Provides knowledge and skills on general usage, safety, best practices, and appropriate and effective use of social media platforms (i.e. – Facebook and Twitter) for Special Olympics Athletes. Athletes will also learn how to capture, share and promote their story, as well as connect to Special Olympics, through these various social media platforms.

Anti-Cyber Bullying

Bullying hurts everyone. This free workshop is ideal for helping athletes and coaches keep our practice and competitive environments safe, respectful, encouraging, and fun for all!

Healthy Relationships

During this program, participants will explore the many questions related to romantic relationships, family, friends, and those in our community. This program will explore topics such as signs of unhealthy relationships, independence and identity, and sexuality. Participants are encouraged to ask questions and share their own experiences and stories with their peers. There are sessions that have content and language for 8-13 year old athletes and another for 14+ year old athletes.

Other development opportunities and partnerships that align with the athlete leadership values and goals will be promoted and made available as they are developed.

Selection Criteria and Process

Special Olympics PEI members have the opportunity to apply to the Athlete Leadership Academy (ALA) by submitting an ALA application form outlining their desired focus area and support information in detail.

Applications can be submitted at any time, intake closes every 3 months and will be reviewed by the Athlete Leadership Academy Management Team. Courses/Modules will be offered when there is sufficient interest in the desired focus area to run the workshop.

To be considered for selection, Athletes and Mentors must:

- Be registered with Special Olympics PEI and be a member in good standing
 - Mentors will be considered Class A volunteers and be subject to all requirements for Class A volunteers, including criminal record checks, as described in the Special Olympics PEI Volunteer Screening Guidelines (Policy 5000-15)
- Complete an application and submit all information before the deadline
- Be at a point in their individual development that ensures a quality experience and promotes a positive learning environment. Recommended minimum ages are 12 years of age (athlete) and 18 years of age (mentor). Considerations will be given on a case by case basis in consultation with the Athlete, Mentor, Family, and Staff
- Mentors must be committed to ongoing support, as required, to the athlete(s) that will develop and empower them to succeed in Special Olympics and their communities

[Athlete Leadership Academy Application](#)
[ALA Application Form](#)

Responsibilities and Oversight

The role of the Athlete Leadership Academy Team will be to establish the scope of the Athlete Leadership Academy, engage additional resources where appropriate, implement programs, provide options for meaningful roles to trained athletes, manage ongoing reporting, provide Academy oversight, as well as guidance and support to the participants through their journey in the Athlete Leadership Academy.

The Academy Team is accountable to the Executive Director and Special Olympics PEI Board of Directors.

Athlete Leadership Academy - Management Team and Roles

Special Olympics PEI Staff:

- Supervision
- Fiscal Accountability
- Partnership Development
- Sustainability
- Program Planning, Development, Evaluation, and Reporting
- Event Planning and Implementation
- Volunteer Recruitment support
- Selection
- Communications
- Ensure athlete engagement and empowerment throughout Special Olympics PEI initiatives
- Develop and Deliver Workshops

Special Olympics PEI Board of Directors Athlete Representative:

- Support to Program Planning, Development, and Evaluation
- Reporting
- Volunteer Recruitment support
- Selection
- Support to Develop and Review of Workshop materials

Canadian Athlete Leadership Committee – Special Olympics PEI Representative:

- Support to Program Planning, Development, and Evaluation
- Reporting
- Volunteer Recruitment support
- Selection
- Support to Develop and Review of Workshop materials

Special Olympics PEI Athlete Input Council:

- Support to Program Planning, Development, and Evaluation
- Volunteer Recruitment support
- Support to Develop and Review of Workshop materials

Meetings and the Decision-Making Process

The Athlete Leadership Academy Management Team will meet, as required, on a quarterly (every 3 months) basis following the application intake period. Decisions related to the scope project will be reached by consensus.

Athlete Leadership Academy Membership

To be considered an Athlete or Mentor member of the Athlete Leadership Academy:

- Individuals must meet all the selection criteria of the Athlete Leadership Academy
- Individuals must attend at least one of the available training workshops
- Individuals must sign an Athlete Leadership Academy Membership Commitment Form
- Individuals can opt-out of membership at any time during the process but will be required to restart the Athlete Leadership Academy Process with a new application

Athlete Role and Commitment

- Know your mentor and take the time to build some knowledge of Special Olympics
- Be a good listener – this includes during workshops but also during sessions with the person who is mentoring you
- Commit to the Athlete Leadership Academy and the person who is mentoring you for at least 2 years to make the entire Athlete Leadership Academy experience as meaningful and educational as possible.
- Be an advocate for other athletes and encourage others
- Engage in a minimum of 2 leadership opportunities related to your workshop training every 12 months, for a period of at least 2 years, after the workshop
- Respect the support and guidance from the person mentoring you and the Athlete Leadership Academy Management Team
- Complete a quarterly report (every 3 months) of your activities
- Represent Special Olympics professionally and follow the Pan-Canadian Code of Conduct and Ethics at all times

Mentor Role and Commitment

- Know the athlete you are mentoring and take the time to build some knowledge of Special Olympics
- Act as a leadership “coach” and help athletes stay on task. This involves working in a one-on-one relationship with the athlete you are mentoring and participating during the workshop as well as the practical experience
- Allow the athlete to express themselves– give help only when needed.
- Seek out opportunities for the athlete you are mentoring to gain practical experience in a minimum of 2 leadership opportunities related to their workshop training every 12 months, for a period of at least 2 years, after the completion of the workshop
- Commit to the Athlete Leadership Academy and the athlete you are mentoring for at least 2 years to make the entire Athlete Leadership Academy experience as meaningful and educational as possible
- Be an advocate for Special Olympics Athletes
- Respect the athlete you are mentoring and the guidance from Athlete Leadership Academy Management Team
- Represent Special Olympics professionally and follow the Pan-Canadian Code of Conduct and Ethics at all times
- Assist the athlete you are mentoring with quarterly (every 3 months) reporting

[Athlete Leadership Academy Membership Commitment Form](#)

[ALA Membership Commitment Form](#)

Member Reporting Schedule

The Athlete Leadership Academy members, at minimum, will be expected to submit a quarterly (every 3 months) report on their activities or preparations/needs to Special Olympics PEI.

This report will provide an opportunity for Athlete Leadership Academy members to share information about their engagement opportunities, steps in their planning process, any areas they require additional support, and the fantastic work being done so those stories can be told to encourage/empower others. The Athlete Leadership Academy management team will review the full reports, share specific information to academy members, and follow-up by sharing key information with sponsors/supporters or identifying needs required by the active athlete.

The idea would be to celebrate the successes and ensure a successful transition of the acquired skills into the engagement opportunities.

There will also be an opportunity to share photos/videos and other materials so we can build up our archive of Athlete Leadership resources and share these with sponsors and supporters.

If Athlete Leadership Academy members are not reporting on time and a description of valid efforts are not made to ensure additional support or engagement opportunities in the span of 1 year, the member(s) will become inactive and be asked to re-apply with a new application to the Athlete Leadership Academy.

[Athlete Leadership Academy Reporting Tool](#)
[Quarterly ALA reporting link](#)

Certification Process

The Athlete Leadership Academy members (Athletes and Mentors) who complete workshop training will receive an official certificate for the completed training and will have the option to remain active in the Athlete Leadership Academy for a period of at least 2 years following the workshop.

Athletes who sign an ALA commitment form, will be given an Athlete Leadership program branded shirt. Athletes are encouraged to wear this clothing during any opportunities throughout their practical experiences.

After serving a minimum of 2 years as a member of the Athlete Leadership Academy, members will be publically recognized at the SOPEI Annual Awards and AGM and officially graduate from the Athlete Leadership Academy. Members who receive this recognition are encouraged to continue Athlete Leadership activities, apply for additional workshop training, and/or become peer mentors for future Athlete Leadership Academy members.

Special Olympics PEI will ensure priority is given to the active Athlete Leadership Academy Members when opportunities are available and be sure to inform the appropriate members of these engagement opportunities.