



# **Candidate Selection Policy for National Invitational Tournaments and USA Games**

## **Special Olympics Maryland – Montgomery County (SOMO)**

### **1. Purpose**

This policy describes the criteria and procedures that SOMO uses to select athletes and/or coaches to propose as candidates to participate in National Invitation Tournaments or USA Games (Collectively referred to as “NIT” Games in this document).

### **2. Scope**

This policy applies to any opportunity for SOMO athletes to participate in a competition other than normal qualifiers and State Games. At present, such opportunities are regularly available for the following competitions:

**USA Games:** all sports

**NIT Sports:**

- Softball
- Golf
- Tennis
- Cheerleading
- Bowling (Future)

### **3. SOMO NIT Committee**

SOMO’s NIT Committee is responsible for all NIT-related decisions regarding SOMO athletes, coaches and chaperones. Typical decisions regard whether to apply to participate in an NIT and who to submit as candidates for participation.

#### **3.1. Decision-Making**

The NIT Committee aims to operate by consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, the Area Director has the final responsibility for the Committee’s decision.

#### **3.2. Membership**

- SOMO Area Director - Chair
- SOMO Assistant Director
- SOMO Treasurer

### **4. Financing NIT and USA Games Participation Expenses**

NIT participation typically involves substantial costs for travel and lodging. Costs for SOMO athletes and coaches participating in these games are normally a SOMO responsibility. SOMO considers the affordability of these costs when deciding whether to propose candidates for participation in these games. Affordability decisions are influenced by the following factors:

#### **4.1. Each NIT sport raises its own funds to support its NIT expenses**

- 4.1.1.** Goal is that each team/participant raise funds to cover 100% of NIT expenses
- 4.1.2.** In the case of team sports, it is the collective responsibility of all NIT team members to raise enough for the entire team, recognizing that some team members may not be able to raise 100% of their own costs while others can raise much more.

# **SOMO Candidate Selection Policy for National Invitational Tournaments and USA Games**

## **4.2. SOMO's budget backstops each team's fundraising**

- 4.2.1. SOMO must accept NIT invitation and commit to attend before fundraising results are known. If NIT fundraising does not meet its target, SOMO operational funds are tapped to ensure SOMO fulfills its commitment. Note: a sport's fundraising track record is considered when determining whether to accept future NIT invitations for that sport.
- 4.2.2. All NIT fundraising and expense reimbursement must run through SOMO accounts.

## **5. NIT Committee Decision Guidelines**

SOMO's NIT committee will consider the following guidelines in determining whether SOMO will accept an NIT invitation and determining which athletes will be invited as SOMO representatives.

### **5.1. Affordability of Projected NIT Expense**

- 5.1.1. **Recognized Expense:** A sport's potential NIT/Games costs are recognized in the SOMO budget prepared in the preceding August
- 5.1.2. **Affordable Expense:** SOMO budget adequate to fund potential fundraising shortfalls, if any, considering: -
  - Potential expense amount given proposed NIT destination and team size
  - Degree of fundraising risk. Past fundraising success by team/candidate reduces risk.
  - SOMO budget available for all NIT team backstops.
  - SOMO's own fundraising success to date in that year

### **5.2. SOMO Head Coach Recommendation**

Any NIT candidate, whether athlete, coach or chaperone, must have the support of the SOMO Head Coach for that sport.

### **5.3. Only one invitational tournament per year per team/candidate/sport**

- SOMO will generally not support a second NIT or other out-of-state event in the same year for an affected team or athlete.
- Athletes will generally be limited to one NIT event per year.
- Travel to other states to participate in State Games in place of Maryland State games, where Maryland does not offer State Games in that sport, do not count against these restrictions. (e.g., Cross-Country Skiing's annual participation in Special Olympics Pennsylvania Winter Games).

### **5.4. The athlete must be at least 15 years of age prior to the Opening Ceremonies, be currently rostered to participate in the sport and have a valid medical through the end of the event.**

### **5.5. Candidates with less NIT experience receive priority over candidates with more NIT experience.**

- Goal is to provide NIT experience to as many SOMO athletes as possible
- Policy only applies to the extent that SOMO can influence athlete selection for a given NIT and to the extent that the performance level of the team is appropriate for the NIT in question.
- Athletes who have accepted NIT invitations and then not attended for non-emergency reasons are banned from future NIT consideration.

## **SOMO Candidate Selection Policy for National Invitational Tournaments and USA Games**

### **5.6. Athlete Candidate can handle demands of NIT travel and competition with the 4 to 1 coach/chaperone level of assistance.**

- Any chronic medical conditions must be well controlled
- Athletes must adhere to the Special Olympics Maryland Code of Conduct
- Athletes must be able to be assigned to a Special Olympics Maryland or Special Olympics U.S.A. Coach (1 coach per 4 Athlete/Unified® Partners) for the duration of their travel to/from NIT, during the events, including in the housing site and competition venues. Due to a ratio of 1 coach per 4 athletes placed on the Delegation by the NIT Organizing Committee, SOMO is not able to assign 1 coach to 1 athlete
- Athletes must be able to **independently or with limited assistance** manage the activities and skills of daily living, ie. toileting, showering, personal hygiene, etc.
- Athletes must be able to take care of themselves during the course of the event with minimal contact from family members
- Athletes, once selected to the Delegation, may be removed from the Delegation, at any time, for failure to adhere to the principles or fulfill the responsibilities of the criteria as set forth by SOMO, SOMD or Sport Organizing Committee. The athlete may also be removed from the Delegation for health and safety issues

### **5.7. NIT Athlete Candidate's Track Record of Active Support for SOMO Events**

SOMO critically depends on community partner support for facilities and funds. Often, our community partners request SOMO athlete participation in their events. Athlete/Sport participation in such SOMO events is an important factor when considering NIT attendance requests.

#### **Sample SOMO Events Where Athlete Support is Requested**

- Bullis Gives Back
- Landon Azalea Festival
- Inspiration Walk
- SOMO Spring Games
- Over the Edge
- Our Lady of Mercy Basketball Game
- Knights of Columbus Christmas Party
- Knights of Columbus Halloween Party
- Blessed Sacrament Valentine's Day Dance
- Knights of Columbus Summer Pep Rally
- Big Train Baseball Game
- Transition Fair

## **6. NIT Fundraising Opportunities and Ideas**

Creativity for fundraising is welcome and desirable. NIT Teams can support SOMO or Special Olympics Maryland (SOMD) fundraising events as part of their NIT fundraising efforts. NIT Teams can also organize their own fundraising efforts, so long as those fundraising efforts do not compete with regular SOMO fundraising.

## **SOMO Candidate Selection Policy for National Invitational Tournaments and USA Games**

### **6.1. Opportunities at SOMO/SOMD Fundraising Events**

NIT Sports can choose to raise funds proactively in advance of NIT selection. SOMO will credit NIT Sports with 70% of funds they raise for SOMO/SOMD events. The remaining 30% approximates SOMO/SOMD costs for running the event.

#### **6.1.1. Example SOMO Fundraising Events**

- **Montgomery Masters Golf Tournament and Raffle (July)**  
Athlete/family member participate in tournament and/or sell raffle tickets
- **Inspiration Walk (October)** NIT Team commits to walk (1K) or run (5K) and seeks donations to support their run/walk.

#### **6.1.2. Example SOMD Fundraising Events**

- **Over-The-Edge (October/November)** NIT Team member(s) commits to go Over-The-Edge and seeks donations to support their descent. SOMD must recognize Over-The-Edge team as a SOMO team.
- **Polar Bear Plunge (February)** NIT Team commits to plunge and seeks donations to support their plunge. This only applies to new Plunge teams that SOMD recognizes as a SOMO team. Legacy plungers are considered SOMD teams and all funds raised go to the state.

### **6.2. Team/Individual Fundraising Ideas**

- Direct donation to SOMO
- Recruit area businesses to sponsor the team
- Community-sponsored softball tournament
- Bowl-a-thon (Must be separate from existing bowl-a-thon that funds SOMO's Spring recreational league)
- Meet-the-Athletes Fundraiser
- Restaurant Nights  
Many restaurants will share a small portion of proceeds with nonprofits that bring large groups.