

USMS 2.0 Task Force

Final Report

I. Introduction

The USMS 2.0 Task Force was selected and first convened by US Masters Swimming President Nadine Day during the fall of 2012. Initially selected to comprise the Task Force were Hill Carrow, Chairman; Kim Lloyd, Nancy Ridout, Sandi Rousseau, and Chris Stevenson. Hugh Moore later joined the Task Force as described below.

The first conference call held December 4, 2012 was an "Introduction and Welcome" call with Nadine explaining her reasons for creating the Task Force and what she hoped the Task Force would accomplish. She also explained the rationale behind selecting the Task Force members, where she was seeking a mix of long-time USMS experience and proven problem solving, combined with new leadership and new ideas.

The Task Force members agreed on a general schedule of a conference call at least once a month, with the goal of concluding the work of the Task Force (as requested by Nadine) by June or July of 2013.

The Task Force meetings consisted of 10 conference calls as follows:

December 4, 2012
January 9, 2013
February 13, 2013
March 13, 2013
March 27, 2013
April 10, 2013
May 15, 2013
May 29, 2013
June 20, 2013

II. Mission Statement

Early on, the Task Force was given a broad mandate by Nadine. Prior to the end of January, Task Force members had agreed that the Task Force would focus on the following study areas:

1. USMS Strategic Plan & industry trends
2. USMS Staff structure & responsibilities
3. USMS Board: composition & responsibilities
4. USMS Committee structure, membership & responsibilities
5. Governance of other ACES member organizations and best practices
6. Identification of potential benchmark organizations

The planned study areas and related information were set out in an Interim Report, submitted to Nadine on February 1, enabling her to use the report to update the USMS Board of Directors at its February meeting.

The Board of Directors preferred that the scope of the Task Force work not be as broad as described, and instead the Board asked that the Task Force concentrate primarily on items 5 and 6 above. The Board requested that the Task Force Final Report be submitted to the USMS Governance Committee and Hugh Moore, Chair of that Committee, was asked to join the Task Force at that time.

Because of this shift in direction, it took the Task Force additional time to settle on an appropriate Mission Statement, but by the fourth meeting (March 2013) the Task Force members agreed on and finalized a Mission Statement as follows:

The mission of the USMS 2.0 Task Force is to conduct research and gather information from similar organizations that will help USMS evaluate its current governance structure by increasing its awareness of other successful governance structures. From this research, the Task Force will submit a report to the USMS BOD Governance Committee.

III. Sport Governing Bodies

A. NGB Comps

Given USMS' membership in ACES, the Association of Chief Executives of Sport, and the composition of that organization which consists of 57 primarily non-profit Olympic and amateur sport governing bodies (generally similar to US Masters Swimming), the Task Force decided to focus on ACES members as the most likely source of comparable ("comps") or benchmark sport governing bodies.

Hill Carrow, Task Force Chair, contacted Steve Ducoff, Executive Director of ACES, to get his recommendations on the ACES members he thought might be best for the Task Force to study.

Steve's suggestions covered 10 leading sport governing groups that he felt could be considered in the top tier of organizational management. Those 10 NGB's were:

- USA Cycling
- USA Swimming
- USA Volleyball
- USA Water Polo
- USA Wrestling
- US Equestrian
- US Figure Skating
- US Lacrosse
- US Sailing
- US Ski & Snowboard

Task Force members divided up the NGB's and then researched key information about the organizations that could be useful in comparative analysis.

B. Points of Comparison

Task Force members decided initially on 12 major points of comparison (first 12 below) which later, based on information gathered, grew to 15 points of comparison:

1. NGB founding or establishment year
2. Membership numbers
3. Membership growth
4. Membership retention
5. National office, including founding/establishment year
6. National staff
7. Board of directors
8. Committees
9. Other key positions
10. Annual meetings
11. Organizational changes
12. Local governance
13. Mission
14. Vision
15. Other aspects/info

A master spreadsheet was created with the comparative data. A copy of the spreadsheet is attached as Exhibit 1.

C. Final Five

Upon reviewing and discussing the extensive amount of information gathered and dissected in the first wave of NGB research, the Task Force decided that it would be most productive, and benefit USMS the greatest, to hone in on no more than half of the ten NGB's under study--those that appeared to be the best organized and managed, with standout ideas, and the most to offer to the governance of US Masters Swimming.

The Task Force referred to these NGB's as the Final Five. They are:

1. USA Swimming
2. USA Volleyball
3. US Figure Skating
4. US Lacrosse

5. US Sailing

For the Final Five, the following points of comparison were agreed upon for more in-depth research, which included calls to the corporate headquarters, state leadership, or other appropriate information sources:

1. Budget
2. Membership Numbers
3. Membership Types
4. Membership Dues or Fees
5. Sponsorship Levels or Types
6. Sponsorship Fees
7. Number of Sponsors
8. Staff Members
9. Staff-to-Member Ratio
10. Staff-to-Budget Ratio
11. Board of Directors Size
12. Management Structure

Once the Task Force members completed this more in-depth research, the information gathered was once again placed into a spreadsheet which facilitated comparisons of the five finalist organizations and their respective characteristics. This spreadsheet is included as Attachment 2.

IV. Findings & Recommendations

A. Findings

Based on comparative analysis across all five of the Final Five NGB's, the Task Force found that USMS appears to be "on target" with other sport governing bodies in the following areas:

1. Membership Dues: these seem to be set at the right level
2. Size of the Board of Directors
 - a. FF NGB's ranged from 8 to 26, with a median and typical board size of 16-17
3. Ratio of National Office Staff to Membership
 - a. FF NGB's ranged from 1:955 to 1:5800 with all but Sailing at 1:4280 or higher. (USMS is 1:4600)
4. Thirty day tryout period: this was seen as an excellent introductory offering that benefits recruitment
5. Fitness Events/Goals: much is being done in this area to motivate USMS swimmers
6. Sponsor Revenues
 - a. Sponsorships at USA Volleyball constitute 12% of their revenue budget while at US Sailing it is 17%. (USMS is 17%)
7. Membership Retention: USMS at 69 to 70% is ahead of most of the FF NGB's

B. Recommendations

Based on FF NGB practices, ideas, and successes, the Task Force has five key recommendations for USMS:

1. Create Friends of Masters Swimming (FOMS): a stand-alone category of membership offered to both current members and non-members
 - a. A Friends category should be used to expand membership, increase income, help keep current member dues stable and affordable, and attract persons to USMS who are on the “periphery of swimming”
 - b. Idea: FOMS contributors can specify where their membership contribution is to be used: e.g. USMS operations, their LMSC, a USMS special project, etc.
 - c. Model: US Figure Skating has a good model for review at <http://www.usfsa.org/content/2012%20fofs%20brochure%20layers2c.jpg>
2. Achieve a Greater USMS Foundation Presence and Impact
 - a. More pronounced marketing of the Foundation, with a stronger focus on what the Foundation supports, should take place to 1) gain more USMS member awareness, and 2) greater contributions
3. Consider Expanding Memberships: add two new categories as follows:
 - a. Lifetime Member—brings in more revenue up front
 - b. 18-24 Membership-- lower priced to attract younger members
4. Develop USMS Enhancements:
 - a. Fitness Activities—More emphasis needs to be placed on this area to help further involve and engage the majority of USMS members who only have fitness as a focus
 - b. Webinars—These should be offered on a wide variety of subjects that would benefit organizational management, coaching, and participation (examples include club development, recruitment, coaching tips, injury prevention, coaching technique, safety, etc.)
 - 1) USA Volleyball has a popular series of these at <http://www.teamusa.org/USA-Volleyball/Grassroots/Free-Webinars.aspx>
 - c. Volunteer Handbook
 - 1) US Sailing has a great Volunteer Handbook that focuses on the important role volunteers play, what they need to know, etc.
5. Make USMS Sponsorship Information More Widely Available
 - a. Many of the NGB’s have their sponsorship levels and sponsorship opportunities available on their websites
 - b. On its website, US Sailing has talking points about selling sponsorships designed to assist local groups

V. Conclusion

I would like to thank USMS President Nadine Day for the foresight and perseverance to assemble the USMS 2.0 Task Force and for constituting a group that worked very hard and very well together. Our

team members had great knowledge of USMS that they coupled with new insights from digging deep into comparable or benchmark sport governing bodies. The Task Force came out with a very reasonable and manageable number of recommendations that they believe, if implemented, will truly benefit United States Masters Swimming, the organization and its membership.

Most importantly, I could not have asked for a better group to work with. All were diligent and timely in their work; all contributed a great deal to the process; they deliberated and discussed professionally and collegially; and they all maintained the greater good of USMS as the end goal throughout the entirety of their respective Task Force assignments.

Every one of the USMS 2.0 Task Force members could have ably led the Task Force and each positively reflects his or her current and long-standing leadership contributions to USMS. If there is ever another opportunity to continue the work of the Task Force, or to gather this team again for another challenging assignment, please sign me up!

Hill Carrow
Chairman
July 12, 2013