



2026 – 27
LOC HANDBOOK

CONTACT

events@usfigureskating.org

OVERVIEW

The National Qualifying Series (NQS) is comprised of nonqualifying competitions that take place from mid-July to early October. Competitions included in the series are required to meet certain criteria set forth by U.S. Figure Skating to assure a standard, consistent and fair experience for skaters. However, any U.S. Figure Skating member club that is hosting a nonqualifying competition during the series time frame is eligible to apply. Competitions may apply to be included for one or more of the included disciplines listed in subsequent sections of this document.

Skaters may compete to earn a score at these competitions which will be included in the Series Standings. Skaters are eligible to advance to the NQS Finals based on their placement within the Series Standings. Skaters are required to both register for their chosen competitions as well as complete a series application in order to have their score count within the Series Standings.

HOSTING REQUIREMENTS

U.S. Figure Skating is the national governing body (NGB) for the sport of figure skating, as recognized by the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC). To maintain our certification as an NGB, U.S. Figure Skating is required to comply with the USOPC certification program. Part of the NGB Compliance Standards include U.S. Figure Skating's oversight of event sanctioning, and specifically that competitions must follow the appropriate NGB's standards for qualified officials, the provision of recording of appropriate records, have proper medical supervision for all participating athletes and that all policies, and requirements of the U.S. Center for SafeSport are followed. All these standards are outlined in this document.

Agreement to Host

LOCs will be required to manage all aspects of their competition with oversight from U.S. Figure Skating to assure all host requirements are being met. Final hosting requirements will be agreed to by the LOC in the form of an Agreement to Host. LOCs are responsible for all financial aspects of running and organizing the competition unless otherwise explicitly stated in the Agreement.

Competition Dates

All approved NQS competitions must begin in mid-July or early October. Prior to submitting a series application, LOCs must verify their dates with their Regional Vice Chair (RVC) on the Competitions Committee.

Officials Requirements

The LOC will be responsible for selecting their panel of officials in accordance with the most current version of the U.S Figure Skating Rulebook (located under Rule 2100).

LOCs will be required to submit the name of their confirmed Chief Referee, Technical Controller, Chief Technical Accountant and Chief Accountant. U.S. Figure Skating reserves the right to contact the persons named in your application to confirm they are aware their name is being used within your application. LOCs will also be asked to submit a list of anticipated officials that will be invited or have already confirmed attendance at your competition for only the NQS events. U.S. Figure

Skating reserves the right to verify that listed officials have agreed to serve in these roles for your competition.

For the purposes of supporting officials' activity and advancement, the Domestic Selections Committee may request up to three officials to be invited to each NQS competition. These requests will be provided to LOCs no less than 4 months prior to the start date of the competition.

LOCs will be required to submit their 104 to events@usfigureskating.org no less than 20 days prior to the start date of their competition. All panels will be reviewed by members of the Competitions Committee to ensure all rules are being followed including, but not limited to, meeting level requirements, conflict of interest, etc.

If the officials requirements are not met, NQS designation will be removed from the competition (meaning that competing skaters will NOT be able to post a score to the series standings) and the LOC may be prevented from participating in future NQS.

The LOC is responsible for all costs affiliated with officials travel to/from their competition as outlined in the U.S. Figure Skating Travel Policy.

Event Management System (EMS)

All NQS competitions, including any non-NQS portions of their competition, are required to use EMS for registration and event management. This requirement is in place to allow the connectivity of competition entry and result information to the Series Standings. There is no charge to LOCs for the use of this software. LOCs will be required to connect a Stripe account to EMS for their competition for the transfer of fees collected.

All competitions will be required to obtain their own sanction through EMS and work with the U.S. Figure Skating Member Services team to set up their competition prior to the open date of their respective competition registration timeline.

SkateSafe® Compliance

In accordance with federal law, specifically S.534 – Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and SafeSport Authorization Act of 2017, U.S. Figure Skating, as a National Governing Body, and all member figure skating clubs, as Local Affiliated Organizations, are under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Center for SafeSport. All sanctioned events must comply with U.S. Figure Skating's SkateSafe policies. This includes:

- Identifying a Compliance Chair that has passed a U.S. Figure Skating background check and completed the SafeSport™ Training ("compliant") and strictly complying with U.S. Figure Skating's SkateSafe Policies and Compliance Requirements
- Enforcing Participant Compliance
 - Mandatory Athletes, Coaches, Officials, Volunteers, Event Medical and LOC Leadership
 - Required volunteer positions include locker room monitors and event medical staff

U.S. Figure Skating's [SkateSafe Handbook](#) outlines all rules and policies regarding athlete protection that are in accordance with the U.S. Center for SafeSport and the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC).

U.S. Figure Skating and the U.S. Center for SafeSport reserves the right to audit any competition within the National Qualifying Season for their compliance with these standards. LOCs that fail to implement one or more of these standards may lose their privilege of hosting a sanctioned event.

Medical Coverage

Approved event medical coverage is required for ALL competitive events (including official practice, if offered, and events that do not fall under the NQS events/disciplines).

Currently (and subject to change), the medical requirement is one medical personnel per competitive surface plus one additional medical personnel available within the facility. Medical coverage and staffing must be offered in accordance with the most recent edition of the [U.S. Figure Skating Medical Requirements and Recommendations](#).

LOCs will be required to submit an event medical plan no less than 30 days prior to the start date of their competition to outline event medical coverage. A sample plan can be provided upon request.

Event Branding

The NQS series logo, including the competition specific version of the NQS logo, is owned by U.S. Figure Skating. With permission, U.S. Figure Skating may grant the LOC with the rights to use the logo.

U.S. Figure Skating requires the use of several items to enhance the overall branding of NQS. The cost of some of these items is the responsibility of the LOC and is outlined below:

- Backdrop – one NQS branded backdrop will be provided for your competition. The cost of the inbound shipping to your competition will be the financial responsibility of the LOC.
- Medals – NQS branded medals will be required to be issued to 1st through 4th place for all NQS events. Medals cost \$4/medal and the cost of the medals plus shipping is the responsibility of the LOC.
- Rinkboard – one rinkboard must be displayed in the primary competition rink. The cost of production and shipping of this rinkboard is the responsibility of the LOC. Additional rinkboards may be requested and any affiliated costs will be the responsibility of the LOC.
- Additional items – U.S. Figure Skating may choose to send additional branded items to your competition (ex. NQS logoed stickers for skater giveaways). The costs affiliated with the production of these items is the responsibility of U.S. Figure Skating. If the LOC requests any additional branded items to be produced and/or shipped by U.S. Figure Skating, any costs affiliated with these items, including production or shipping, will be the responsibility of the LOC.

CONDUCT OF EVENTS

Events and Disciplines

Competitions may apply to have their competition included in the series for one or more of the disciplines listed below. Competitions may not be approved for all of the disciplines they applied to be a part of. Competitions are required to include the event types listed below for their approved disciplines and all must be offered with IJS judging.

- Singles (preliminary - juvenile free skate; intermediate – senior combined)
- Pairs (juvenile - intermediate free skate; novice – senior combined)
- Ice Dance (juvenile – senior combined)

Skate Up and Test Credit

All approved competitions are required to allow skaters the ability to “skate up” one level from what is allowed by their highest test level.

As skaters are required to meet the minimum requirement for their competitive level by the end of the series, approved NQS competitions must offer test credit opportunities for skaters.

Feedback

All approved competitions are required to provide feedback for skaters after their final segment. For pairs/ice dance teams, feedback must be given individually. For singles, feedback may be given either individually or in a group. If your competition is applying for singles events, please indicate if your competition intends to offer individual or group feedback.

Additional Details

All competitive events must be run in accordance with the most current edition of the U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook.

If necessary, based on entry numbers, events may be broken into multiple groups. However, no qualifying/final rounds may be held for NQS events. All events must be offered as a “Championship Round”.

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

There are several “add-on” opportunities available to NQS competitions. These are not requirements for your competition to participate in NQS. However, if your competition is selected to be a part of the series and you are willing and able, one of these opportunities may be added on to your NQS competition. Additional expenses and facility requirements may apply.

If you are interested in hosting any one of these add-on opportunities, please email events@usfigureskating.org after you have completed your NQS LOC Application.

Trial Judges

One of the ways competitions look to U.S. Figure Skating for support is in having enough qualified officials available to host the events taking place each week, but U.S. Figure Skating cannot maintain a sufficient number of judges without the support of competitions willing to host trial judge opportunities.

If you host trial judges, the requirements are as follows:

1. Arrange for a volunteer trial judge chair to serve at the competition in person for all trial judge events. (This role cannot be filled by the accountants or the Judge Education Trainer (JET)).
2. Arrange for a courtesy hotel room block (approx. 10 rooms) to be made available for the assigned JET and trial judges.
3. If ground transportation is being provided for officials, please include JET, if possible.
4. Work with the headquarters to send a welcome letter to all trial judges and JET as outlined in the [Competition Trial Judge Management Kit](#).
5. Include any assigned JET and trial judges in any hospitality being provided to officials.
 - a. Trial judges may be charged a reasonable fee to cover meals. The fee cannot exceed the cost of meals, and trial judges must be given the option to decline the meals, not pay the fee and eat elsewhere during the competition.
 - b. LOCs may also charge a fee of up to \$30 per trial judge to help cover administrative costs.
 - c. The meal fee and administrative fee must be charged separately because of the requirement to allow trial judges to forgo the meals.
 - d. See Rules 2160-2163 for additional details.
6. Provide supplies and meeting space as well as prepare and manage all paperwork as outlined in the Competition Trial Judge Management Kit. Any postage costs are the responsibility of the LOC. Papers may be sent electronically.

Coach I.C.E. Cheers and Chats

Cheers and Chats are networking events through the U.S. Figure Skating Coach I.C.E. program. Requirements of hosting a Cheers and Chats event at an NQS competition include:

1. Providing complimentary access for Coach I.C.E. members to your competition. This will include coaches not listed as participating with skaters registered for your competition.
2. Sectioning off an area of seating for Coaches to watch competition together.

Half-Day National Development Team Camp or Coach Workshop

Host a half-day camp at the beginning or conclusion of your competition. As this is a new feature U.S. Figure Skating is looking to offer starting in the 2026-27 season, the format of these events is still being determined, but will require, at minimum:

- Four (4) hours of ice time, ideally immediately following or preceding your competition.
- Access to at least one space large enough for off-ice classes of approximately 20 skaters

APPLICATION PROCESS

The NQS Series LOC Application is available in EMS under Clubs: Sanctions, Applications, and Bids on the Series tab during the application timeline outlined below. The application is available in EMS to club presidents, vice presidents, secretaries, treasurers, sanction chairs, and competition chairs.

LOCs will be required to provide the following in their application:

- Acknowledge the hosting requirements of the series as outlined in this handbook.
- Provide the competition name, dates, and host facility.
- Identify what disciplines they want to be included in the series
- Identify their confirmed Chief Referee, Technical Controller, Chief Technical Accountant and Chief Accountant. Identify primary contacts for the LOC including the Competition Chair and SafeSport Compliance Monitor.
- Share information about past competition hosting experience.

Criteria that will be used for choosing NQS locations includes but is not limited to:

- Dates: dates of the competition as they fit into the overall calendar of events
- Officials: balance and strength of the submitted officials list
- LOC: club history of holding successful events including past NQS competitions
- Facility: number of surfaces, support of facility management, physical environment, volunteer base
- Location: balance of locations across the country to assure opportunities for all athletes

Timeline

July 2025 – Applications Open

Oct. 1, 2025 – Application Deadline

Dec. 1, 2025 – Notification to selected hosts, provisional agreement

TBD – Public notification of selected hosts

Questions

NQS - events@usfigureskating.org

EMS - memberservices@usfigureskating.org