

*Updated February 20, 2023

NATIONAL QUALIFYING SEASON SERIES LOCAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEE (LOC) HANDBOOK & REQUIREMENTS TO HOST

QUALIFYING SEASON TIMELINE

Feb. 6 → EMS Series Application Deadline
Feb. 7 - ~~14~~24 → Application Review Period
~~Feb. 15~~ → ~~Inform LOCs of Application Status~~
Early March → Inform LOCs of Application Status
March 15 – Post Approved Competitions & Athlete Handbook
May 1 → NQS Skater Application Opens via EMS
Late-July – First Week of Oct. → Approved Series Competitions
Mid-Oct. → Qualifying Advancement
Oct. 31 - Nov. 19 → NQS Finals
January 2024 → U.S. Championships & National Dev. Camp

CONTACT

U.S. Figure Skating's Events Department
events@usfigureskating.org

WHAT DO YOU NEED FOR THE [EMS LOC APPLICATION?](#)

- Competition Dates (2023 and/or 2024)
 - o Clubs interested in applying for BOTH seasons will need to submit separate applications.
 - *If interested in 2024 (and not 2023), LOCs are encouraged to apply as there are no plans to open for next season beyond this window (deadline: February 6).*
- Previous Competition Announcement
- Previous Officials List
- Key Competition Contacts

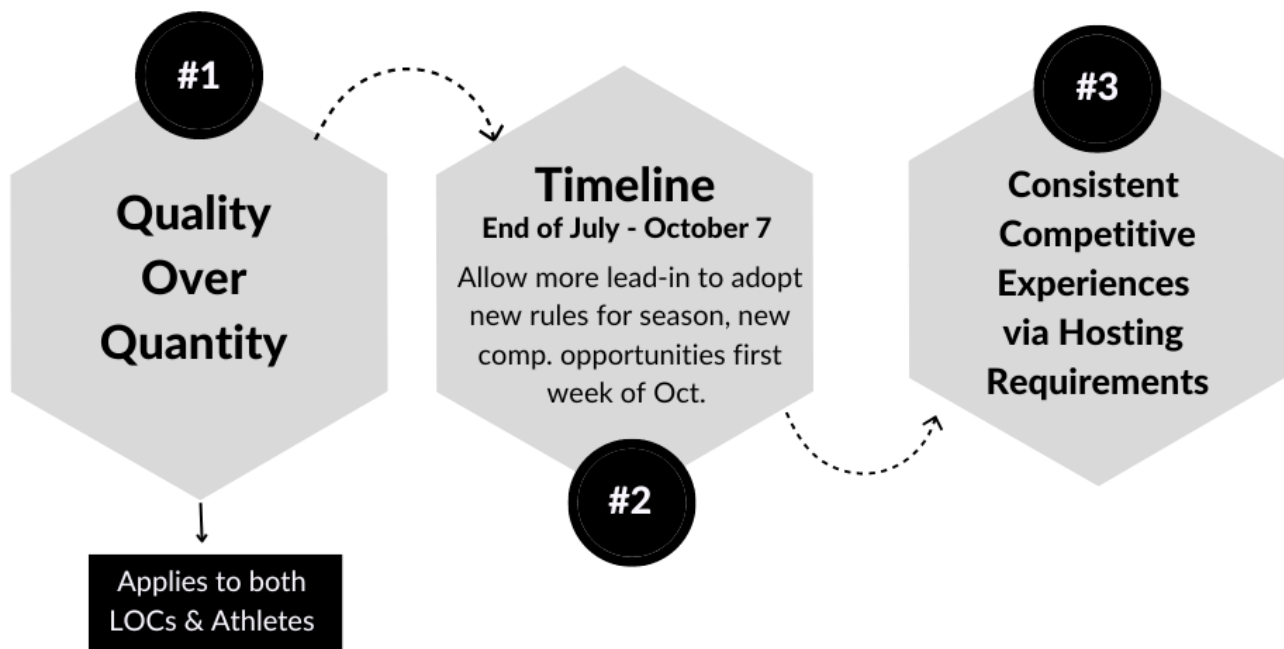
If approved, in addition to the Series Agreement, LOCs will be required to provide a tentative schedule for NQS events outlining ice needs and maximum entries the event can support.

OVERVIEW

The U.S. Figure Skating **National Qualifying Series (NQS)** was approved by the 2018 Governing Council and implemented in the summer of 2019. The NQS is a series of competitions hosted individually by member clubs nationwide, during the summer months, in which athletes enter and earn a score. They will earn a placement in the individual competition they enter, and an overall national ranking in their level, in addition to a regional and sectional ranking.

On Thursday, January 12 (8:00 pm ET), U.S. Figure Skating hosted a discussion with clubs to review the hosting requirements for NQS, the recording can be found [HERE](#).

KEY AREAS OF NQS REFINEMENT



The series competitions will consist of existing non-qualifying competitions that agree to a set of standards and requirements relating to registration process, scoring system, conduct of competition and officials for qualifying levels (Juvenile - Senior) from late-July through the first week of October. Any U.S. Figure Skating member club that is hosting a non-qualifying competition during this timeline may apply to be part of the series. These requirements ensure a standard, consistent and fair experience for participation athletes.

Athletes at the qualifying levels (Juvenile – Senior) will register directly with U.S. Figure Skating for the qualifying season through the EMS Series Application (*timeline to be determined*) and then **select the series events they wish to participate in via registration phases as outlined in this handbook.**

Additionally, LOCs may submit applications for both the 2023-24 AND 2024-25 National Qualifying Series (NQS). LOCs are encouraged to submit applications for BOTH seasons to increase chances of approval.

REGISTRATION CHANGES FOR FUTURE NQS SEASONS

Moving forward, a limit will be set on the number of NQS competitions singles athletes may register for. Like the Championship Series (2021-22 season), there will be three phases of registration and singles athletes may only register for one NQS competition during each phase.

For this to be successful, each approved NQS competition must agree to the registration window structure as outlined below. If competitions are unable to agree to the new registration structure, NQS designation will be removed.

Due to existing limitations with competitive opportunities, pairs and ice dance teams will NOT be subject to the registration limits however like singles athletes, they will be encouraged to register for their desired competitions early with the understanding entries may close earlier than expected if limits are met.

NQS Skater Application via EMS | On/Around May 1 , \$45/entry

- Requirement for ALL athletes/teams to participate in NQS and post a score for advancement.

Phase 1 | May 15 at 12:00 p.m. ET - June 1 at 11:59 p.m. ET

- **Registration closes from June 2 - 4 and assess entry availability.**

Phase 2 | June 5 at 12:00 p.m. ET - June 20 at 11:59 p.m. ET

- **Registration closes from June 21 - 25 and assess entry availability.**

Phase 3 | June 26 at 12:00 p.m. ET - July 7 at 11:59 p.m. ET

- **Approved NQS competitions with entry availability for Juvenile - Senior may remain open beyond this date.**

All LOCs will be required to participate in Phase 1 beginning May 15. Each LOC may reserve the right to close registration at any time if maximum entry limits have been met prior to the phase deadline.

Like the Championship Series, athletes/coaches will be encouraged to review their preferences for the season and register early. U.S. Figure Skating will host webinars for these user groups, in addition to e-blasts to ensure everyone is aware of the updates prior to the first phase of registration opening.

U.S. Figure Skating Event's Department, in conjunction with Product Support, will monitor the registration phases and enforce policies to support the needs of the Series and the LOCs.

To support phased qualifying registration, each approved NQS competition will have two separate sanctions. The first will cover the approved NQS disciplines/levels and the second will cover all non-qualifying events. The LOC will have full discretion on the registration timeline for these events.

There will be a separate series for Singles, Pairs and Ice Dance. The host club may designate which discipline (Singles, Pairs, Ice Dance) they would like to host within their [EMS Series Application](#) and are responsible for meeting the standards in each approved discipline. They may apply for one, two or all three disciplines.

Please note, detailed athlete information for the 2023-24 National Qualifying Season will be available in early March.

REQUIREMENTS TO HOST

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 to host. 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.

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”)

- Strictly complying with the rules and policies within the U.S. Figure Skating's [SkateSafe Handbook](#) regarding athlete protection in accordance with the U.S. Center for SafeSport and U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC)
- Reviewing and complying with the [Procedures for Event Organizers](#)

EVENT MEDICAL COVERAGE

Approved event medical coverage is required for ALL competitive events at approved NQS events (not just Juvenile – Senior). There must be a minimum of ONE medical professional (paid or volunteer) rink side for each competition surface.

Event medical teams may consist of athletic trainers (ATC), licensed physicians (MD/DO), physician assistants (PA-C), nurse practitioners (NP), nurses (RN), chiropractors (DC), physical therapists (PT), and emergency medical technicians (EMT). Refer to the [U.S. Figure Skating Medical and Compliance Memo](#) for additional information.

All approved season competitions will be required to submit an athlete safety and event medical plan no less than 30 days prior to the start of their competition to outline locker room/ready room plans, access points, event medical coverage, emergency action plans and if applicable, COVID-19 protocols. *A sample plan will be provided in the Agreement to Host document after Series approval.*

CALENDAR/SCHEDULE

Approved NQS competitions must begin late-July and conclude the first week of October.

Prior to submitting your Series Application via [EMS](#), you must verify your competition dates with your Regional Vice Chair (RVC) on the Competitions Committee. To find contact information, click [here](#).

There are no restrictions regarding the actual competition scheduling during the event. The Chief Referee will determine the competition schedule within the scope of the overall NQS requirements as listed within.

JUDGING SYSTEM

As stated in the [U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook](#), rule 1232, the official calculation software with the latest related version of the software and the official judging system hardware must be used. Hardware can be supplied by U.S. Figure Skating (reservation form [here](#)) or an approved third party system, full list [here](#) (see “List of Private Owners). This ensures consistency across all competitions and a timely and accurate publication of current standings via [EMS](#).

OFFICIALS | REQUIREMENTS & STAFFING MODEL

The host competition will select their panel of officials, in cooperation with U.S. Figure Skating's Domestic Selections Committee. For the official series events, the following is required:

Referee → Chief Referee must be at the Regional level or higher.

- If Ice Dance or Pairs, the Event Referee must be at the Sectional level or higher.

Technical Panel → technical controller and technical specialists must be at the Regional level or higher for singles and Sectional level or higher for dance and pairs. Data operator must be at a Qualifying level or higher.

Judges → the panel of each event segment must consist of 5-7 judges. All judges must be at least the Regional level or higher for singles, Sectional level or higher for pairs events and Novice Sectional or higher for dance events.

Accountants → Chief Accountant must be at the Sectional level or higher. The Chief Technical Accountant must be Level 2 or higher. Assistant accountants/TA's may be Regional/Level 1 or higher.

Beginning with the 2023-24 season, LOCs must also meet the staffing model as outlined [here](#) (contingent on the number of competitive surfaces and judging system utilized).

When submitting the application to host, competitions must submit the name of their **CONFIRMED** Chief Referee, Technical Controller and Chief Accountant, in addition to the anticipated pool of officials that will be invited/have accepted an invitation to the competition and are expected to serve on the panels for the Juvenile – Senior events.

U.S. Figure Skating will not be involved in any officials' panels that are not included in the official NQS portion of the competition. It is required that the competition will submit revised panels to U.S. Figure Skating if any changes are made after initial approval.

Approximately 30 days prior to the start of competition, the LOC, in conjunction with the Chief Referee must provide U.S. Figure Skating with a list of officials through EMS Official's Management. This requires LOCs to enter all NQS officials and the roles they will be serving at their event. The list will be approved by U.S. Figure Skating Staff, in conjunction with the Domestic Selections and Competitions Committee. Note: the 104 does NOT require approval.

If the official's requirements are not met, the National Qualifying Season designation will be removed from the competition for the season (i.e. registered skaters will NOT post a score from the competition) AND the LOC may not participate in future National Qualifying Season competitions.

FIELD OF PLAY & CONDUCT OF EVENTS

To ensure there is a consistent skater experience across the country with this series, we're requiring all LOCs to collaborate with their Chief Referees and determine the maximum number of entries they can support from Juvenile - Senior for desired NQS disciplines. This is not a requirement at the time of application, but all tentatively approved competitions will be required to provide this information for final approval by U.S. Figure Skating. For reference, review the data found [here](#) (tab: Timing Estimates).

SINGLES

All series competitions for singles must offer the following events:

- Juvenile Girls (FS only), Intermediate Ladies, Novice Ladies, Junior Ladies, Senior Ladies
- Juvenile Boys (FS only), Intermediate Men, Novice Men, Junior Men, Senior Men

When there are more than 24 entries, competitors will be divided into seeded groups per the U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook. Based on final entries, Chief Referees may request group consolidation through the Chair of the Competitions Committee, Kathleen Krieger (kriegerrph@msn.com).

JUVENILE → each skater will compete in a Free Skate program only; in whichever group they have been assigned to. The score earned in that free skate is considered their Final, Total Score (TS), which counts as their official score for the National Qualifying Season standings.

INTERMEDIATE - SENIOR → all skaters in all groups will skate a combined Short Program + Free Skate = Total Score (TS). The TS earned in whichever group the skater is assigned to is considered their official score for their season ranking.

FINAL ROUNDS, BONUS/CONSOLATION ROUNDS OR SEGMENT ONLY EVENTS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO BE HELD AT APPROVED SERIES COMPETITIONS. NO EXCEPTIONS!

FINAL ROUNDS are NOT held as part of the NQS, nor will there be overall final round medalists as part of NQS. The ONLY score that counts towards NQS ranking is the Total Score earned in the combined SP + FS initial competition, regardless of how many groups for the respective level.

ICE DANCE

All series competitions for ice dance must offer the following events:

- Juvenile Dance, Intermediate Dance, Novice Dance, Junior Dance, Senior Dance

All NQS Dance events will be held in accordance with Rule 8050 / Composition of Ice Dance Events. The event will consist of a rhythm dance and free dance, with a combined result for junior and senior, and a pattern dance and free dance with a combined result for juvenile, intermediate and novice.

PAIRS

All series competitions for pairs must offer the following events:

- Juvenile Pairs (Free Skate only), Intermediate Pairs (Free Skate only), Novice Pairs, Junior Pairs, Senior Pairs

All NQS Pairs events will be held in accordance with Rule 7060 / Composition of Pair Events. The event will consist of a short program and free skate, with a combined result for novice, junior and senior, and a free skate for juvenile and intermediate.

CRITIQUES

Critiques are NOT permitted at approved competitions, for any levels however feedback may be provided to athletes/coaches at the discretion of the official's panels.

EVENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (EMS)

All NQS competitions must use [EMS](#) for registration and event management (free of charge).

Athletes first register to participate in the National Qualifying Season via [EMS](#), and pay a series fee of \$45.00, which will be used to administer and support NQS.

Athletes must then register separately and directly for each competition they wish to enter, via [EMS](#) (competitions are flagged if they are approved for the series) during the proposed phases.

Host clubs set and receive all entry fees and practice ice fees for their competition; these fees are established by the competition and are not subject to approval by U.S. Figure Skating.

In addition to the entry and results transmittal, [EMS](#) provides host competitions with the following tools to manage their event, ensuring all U.S. Figure Skating rules and policies are met:

EMS Digital Leaderboard: the host club, and their Chief Accountant/Technical Accountant are responsible for uploading the competition (IJS) results to EMS at the conclusion of the competition. EMS (via Series Information) will host and maintain the NQS digital leaderboard for the length of the series.

System Compliance: connectivity to the U.S. Figure Skating database allowing the LOC to monitor and enforce requirements automatically for LOC leadership, coaches, officials, mandatory athletes, and volunteers automatically, pre-event and onsite via the [Onsite Check-In](#) tools.

Officials' Management: automatically verifies officials' eligibility through database search function, invites them to your competition and allows you to track and communicate with the group. Note: all LOCs are required to load an "accepted" official's list no later than 30 days prior to the start of competition to ensure NQS requirements are met.

[Financial](#): budget module and reports support the LOC in planning, tracking and settlement of finances. All entry fees and practice ice fees are processed by U.S. Figure Skating and remitted to the LOC on a weekly basis via ACH deposit.

[Credentials](#): a credential print portal, attached to the member database, allows LOCs to print credentials quickly for everyone associated with the competition, with a standard look and feel providing a consistent experience for all.

[Schedule & Practice Ice](#): creation and publication of full competition schedule, sale of practice ice through customizable pathways (pre-purchase, open and onsite sales) with emphasis on mobile experience for athlete and coach.

APPLICATION TO HOST | [EVENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM](#)

The application is available to club presidents, vice presidents, secretaries, treasurers, sanction chairs OR competition chairs. Clubs will be asked to choose which discipline(s) they are applying for and agree to all the details throughout this handbook:

- Conduct of events for chosen disciplines and registration phases (i.e. windows)
 - NO: final rounds, segment only singles events (i.e. Intermediate SP) or critiques
- Staffing approved events with eligible officials for the designated disciplines
- Use of [EMS](#) for registration, competition management and results upload/series standings
- Compliance with all SkateSafe policies and requirements
- [Staffing](#) competition with required compliant volunteers and event medical staff
- Willingness to partner with U.S. Figure Skating in preparation for the competition and skater experience (including but not limited to providing a kiss & cry and purchasing NQS medals, est. \$4/medal).

Clubs interested in applying for BOTH seasons will need to submit [separate](#) applications via EMS.

Series Application

Choose the series you would like to begin an application for. Only one series application can be started at a time.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 2023 - 2024 National Qualifying Series <p>Applications Due: 2/6/2023 11:59:00 PM ET Competitions Notified: 1/15/2023 Competitions Announced: 1/15/2023</p> <p>Website Series Handbook</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 2024 - 2025 National Qualifying Series <p>Applications Due: 2/6/2023 11:59:00 PM ET Competitions Notified: 1/15/2023 Competitions Announced: 1/15/2023</p> <p>Website Series Handbook</p>
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Review the Series Application instruction sheet [HERE](#). If you need assistance with [EMS](#), email productsupport@usfigureskating.org.

SELECTION OF COMPETITIONS

The 2023-24 & 2024-25 competition applications will be reviewed by the Competitions Committee in conjunction with select U.S. Figure Skating staff. Please note, at this time, there is not a maximum number of competitions that will be approved but the goal is no more than 15 singles for each season. Competitions will be informed of their acceptance no later than February 15, 2023.

QUESTIONS | EMAIL EVENTS@USFIGURESKATING.ORG

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How involved will U.S. Figure Skating be in the running of our competition?

U.S. Figure Skating requires that approved competitions follow a set of standards to provide a consistent, high quality and safe competition for competitors. This includes using the Event Management System (EMS) for efficient results tracking, the approved standard of event conduct, the newest IJS software, approved level of officials in addition to SkateSafe and event medical requirements.

U.S. Figure Skating only oversees the conduct of the qualifying events within the competition (Juvenile- Senior), and will not have any authority over the schedule, entry fees, practice ice, deadlines, etc. In addition, U.S. Figure Skating will have no authority over specialty or other events such as Excel, levels below juvenile, specialty events, etc.

U.S. Figure Skating expects a supportive partnership with the competition host, leading up to the competition to ensure the best and most fair experience for participating athletes.

How will awards work?

Competitions will post results and give out medals, ribbons, etc., for their own events, as they always have. Total Score from the combined initial events carry over to the NQS standings, not their placement. Beginning with the 2023-24 season, LOCs will be required to purchase 1st - 4th medals for all NQS events (est. \$4/medal). U.S. Figure Skating will work with each LOC on order timelines.

Can skaters that did not enter NQS with U.S. Figure Skating compete at our competition in the qualifying levels?

Yes. There are no restrictions on who may enter your event. If an athlete has officially entered the NQS, their Total Score will be extracted from the competition results and carried over to the NQS standings. If they have not, their score / result will simply be ignored in the NQS standings. Additionally, foreign athletes are permitted to compete at NQS designated competitions and their scores will not count.

Does our competition need to worry about which region or section participating skaters live in / represent?

No. Skaters enter the NQS with U.S. Figure Skating, and for rankings and qualifying advancement, they are assigned to the region and section their home club is located. However, skaters may enter any competition, in any section they wish. When their Total Scores are extracted from the competition results, they are simply sorted into the appropriate region and section for the NQS.

Can athletes enter more than one level?

Athletes may only register for ONE level in the NQS.

What about Final Rounds?

Final Rounds are NOT part of the NQS (nor are bonus/consolation rounds) and may NOT be offered by approved competitions.

Can we offer segment only events (i.e. Intermediate Free Skate)?

Approved competitions may not offer segment only events for Intermediate – Senior SINGLES events. Pairs and Ice Dance may offer segment only events that will NOT be eligible for NQS standings.

Can we offer critiques?

As qualifying advancement is intimately connected to the NQS, critiques may not be offered at approved competitions (for any levels) however feedback may be provided to athletes/coaches at the discretion of the official's panel.

Do we invite our own officials?

Clubs are responsible for inviting qualified officials that meet the series requirements and outlined [staffing models](#). Unlike qualifying competitions, U.S. Figure Skating will not assign officials but will collaborate with Domestic Selections on panel approval and provide recommendations.