

USAS = USA-S + USD + USWP + USSS + USMS, or What is USAS?

The rules of Federation Internationale de Natation (FINA), the international federation responsible for the sports of swimming, diving, synchronized swimming, and water polo, require there to be only one recognized FINA member organization representing each country throughout the world. USAS (United States Aquatic Sports, Inc.) was formed to serve as the United States member of FINA in 1980, when the U.S. Amateur Sports Act took effect and required restructuring of many United States sports organizations.

USAS deliberately attempts to play a minimal role within the United States, leaving primary responsibility for governing each of the aquatic sports to its members, the national governing bodies (NGBs). These include USA-S (USA Swimming, Inc.), USD (United States Diving, Inc.), USSS (United States Synchronized Swimming, Inc.), USWP (United States Water Polo, Inc.), and USMS (United States Masters Swimming, Inc.). (Masters Swimming was first mentioned in the 1976 FINA Handbook, but it wasn't until the 1998 USAS convention that USMS was added to the USAS Articles of Incorporation.) A Board of Trustees, consisting of the Boards of Directors of the five NGBs, elects the USAS president, secretary, and treasurer. The function of USAS is carried out by its Aquatics Coordinating Board, which implements the policies enacted by the USAS Board of Trustees.

USAS, by law, represents the five NGBs internationally. The NGBs have also delegated to USAS the responsibility of conducting an annual national convention. This convention allows for economies of scale and permits the leadership and membership of the NGBs to meet separately and together to discuss common problems and concerns. Whenever convention revenues exceed expenses, the surplus is dedicated to sending the U.S. teams to the World Swimming Championships.

USMS Convention

The USMS convention, held annually, usually in late September, in conjunction with the USAS convention, is where much of the business of Masters swimming takes place. Delegates come from all across the nation and from many backgrounds, and include swim coaches, aquatic administrators, and swimmers of all ages, abilities, and vocations.

Each LMSC is entitled to send one delegate. LMSCs having more than 300 members can send a second delegate and are entitled to an additional delegate for each additional 500 registered members. The number of members from either the current or immediately previous year, whichever is larger, is used to determine this delegate allotment. In addition, members of the USMS Executive Committee receive automatic delegate status, as do the chairs of each USMS standing committee, all past presidents, all zone representatives, and all members of selected standing committees.

Approximately 200 Masters swimmers from throughout the country are given official delegate status, collectively forming the House of Delegates. The House of Delegates is charged with maintaining the competition rules and the bylaws, electing the Executive Committee, and adopting the annual budget. Delegates assist the Executive Committee in carrying out the work of USMS, both during convention and throughout the year, through their service in the various standing and ad hoc committees.

Convention Delegates: Selection, Term, and Reimbursement

Selecting delegates to attend convention is the responsibility of each LMSC. Selection procedures vary, perhaps done by the general membership or by an executive board, at a specially convened meeting or at a regular meeting. Specific guidelines may be incorporated into LMSC policies, or candidates may be selected by affirmative response to a simple motion. Sometimes, assembling a qualified delegation is challenging because of LMSC size and available funding (LMSC and personal). More often, however, the challenge is in narrowing the field from many qualified volunteers. In this case, one technique is to draft an application form on which candidates itemize their service to the LMSC, service to USMS, and reasons for wanting to attend the convention. The electorate can then use these forms as a guide in choosing the best-qualified delegates.

A delegate serves no set term. Some delegates attend one convention and others serve for years. Committee memberships coincide with the Executive Committee's biennial term of office (which begins in every odd-numbered year). Delegates indicate to the USMS president which committees they are interested in joining, and the president appoints committee chairs and works with them to make committee assignments. Determining factors include members' interests and strengths, number of committees one could actively serve, geographic dispersion, and any limitations imposed by code requirements. LMSCs typically ask their delegates who have no committee memberships to observe those committee meetings not otherwise attended by delegates who do have committee responsibilities.

U.S. Masters Swimming

Convention expenses include registration (typically \$150), transportation, housing, and meals. Personal ground transport during convention is seldom needed, as the business at hand fairly well consumes the available time (hence the convenience of a hotel with convention facilities). Discounted bus or taxi connections are usually available for arrival and departure, and often the host LMSC will arrange transportation as needed for social events that are “off campus.” Buses are typically provided for the early morning workouts! Pre- and post-convention side trips are the responsibility of those delegates who choose to take them.

Delegates who receive automatic delegate status by virtue of serving in USMS leadership positions get a portion of their expenses reimbursed by USMS (per the *Financial Operating Guidelines*, these are the Executive Committee members, the controller, the national sponsor liaison, the Board of Directors, chairs of standing and ad hoc committees, the webmaster, the *SWIMMER Magazine* editor, the internal auditor, and zone chairs). LMSCs typically subsidize the convention costs for their remaining delegates. Again, standing policy may dictate the exact process and proportion, or the LMSC board may determine specifics each year by motion. Smaller LMSCs may be subsidized by their zone to promote better representation among all 52 LMSCs. Out-of-pocket expenses not reimbursed may be tax deductible since USMS and the LMSC are registered as non-profit organizations (but consult IRS Publication 526 and your tax advisor).