

Para Nordic Athlete Assistance Program

Selection Criteria

2025-26



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1.0 General Information

1. This document establishes the criteria that will be used by Nordiq Canada for nominating Para Nordic (PN) athletes to Sport Canada's Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) for the 2025-2026 carding year.
2. The Sport Canada policy and procedures that govern the AAP and the establishment and application of criteria can be found on the Sport Canada website: [Sport Canada Athlete Assistance Program](#).
3. This document is created following Nordiq Canada's *NST Selection, Nomination, and Announcement Policy*.
4. Nordiq Canada's High Performance Director (HPD) makes the final nomination recommendations to Sport Canada based on Nordiq Canada's carding criteria.
5. Sport Canada is responsible for approving nominations in accordance with their AAP policies and the published Nordiq Canada *Para Nordic Athlete Assistance Program* selection criteria.
6. Appeals of Nordiq Canada's AAP nomination/re-nomination decision or recommendation to withdraw carding, may be pursued through the Nordiq Canada's *Dispute Resolution and Appeal* policy. Appeals of the Sport Canada AAP decision made under Sport Canada's *AAP Policies and Procedures* (Section 6 or 11) may be pursued through Section 13.
7. The Nordiq Canada HPD, or the NSO assigned designate¹, has the authority, and reserves the right to amend this document prior to the selection date under the following circumstances:
 - a. In the event of unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of Nordiq Canada that prevents the HPD from fairly and objectively implementing these selection procedures.
 - b. When additional (or altered) information deemed relevant by Nordiq

¹ In the event the HPD-PARA is unavailable, a designate will be appointed within Nordiq Canada to be the decision-making authority.

Canada to the criteria is provided by external parties, such as (but not limited to) an event organizing committee, Sport Canada, The Canadian Paralympic Committee, FIS/IBU, or any other relevant organization.

- c. To correct, clarify or amend any inconsistencies, errors, or omissions in the criteria.
- d. Occurrences pertaining to, but not limited to: race cancellations or rescheduling, any country border limitations, travel restrictions, travel limitations, inability to maintain safety of athletes, etc.

Changes to this document will be communicated as per the Nordiq Canada *NST Selection, Nomination and Announcement* policy. Nordiq Canada is not responsible or liable in any way to anyone as a result of any amendments.

- 8. Athletes and coaches are responsible for reading and understanding the contents of this and supporting documents and policies. For clarification contact the HPD cjeffries@nordiqcanada.ca.
- 9. The qualification period is November 1, 2024, to March 26, 2025. The twelve-month carding cycle will run from June 1, 2025, to May 31, 2026. Athletes will be eligible to accumulate carding points (international and domestic) from November 1, 2024, until the end of March 2025.
- 10. This policy does not require Nordiq Canada to select any or all athletes to the maximum number of allotted cards.
- 11. Athletes will only be nominated when eligibility requirements have been verified by Nordiq Canada and Sport Canada.
- 12. Athletes who meet criteria but are ranked lower than allocated cards will not be selected.

2.0 Eligibility

- 1. To qualify for AAP carding, an athlete or guide must meet the following criteria set by Sport Canada and Nordiq Canada:
 - a. The athlete must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada at the beginning of the carding cycle the athlete is being nominated.
 - b. Permanent residents must live in Canada for the full year preceding the carding cycle for which the athlete is being considered for AAP

support. All athletes are expected to have participated in National Sport Organization (NSO) sanctioned programs during that time.

- c. The athlete must be available to represent Canada in major international competitions, including FIS Para Cross Country (FIS PCC) World Championships and Paralympic Winter Games and/or IBU Para Biathlon (IBU PB) World Championships and Paralympic Winter Games. Further, under the eligibility requirements of the sport's International Federation (IF) as it pertains to citizenship or residency status.
- d. The athlete must be available to represent Canada in major international competitions, including FIS PCC World Championships and Paralympic Winter Games and/or IBU PB World Championships and Paralympic Winter Games. Further, under the eligibility requirements of the sport's IF as it pertains to classification requirements.
- e. The athlete must be eligible to represent Canada at major international competitions, including FIS PCC and IBU PB World Championships, at the beginning of the carding cycle for which the athlete is being nominated.
- f. For athletes who have been permanent residents of Canada for three (3) years or more, continued eligibility to receive AAP support is contingent on the athlete becoming eligible to represent Canada at the Paralympic Winter Games.
- g. The athlete must meet the published NSO approved, AAP compliant sport specific carding criteria.
- h. The athlete must be a member of the Para Nordic World Cup Team, PN NextGen Team, PN Development, or PN Prospects Team.
- i. A member in good standing² of a Nordiq Canada club and follow an annual periodized program consistent with Nordiq Canada's Long-Term Athlete Development model. This program will be approved and monitored by Nordiq Canada's HPD or designate.

² Please refer to the Nordiq Canada bylaws or a full description of member in good standing.

2. Nordiq Canada has established that Guides of visually impaired athletes will be eligible for Sport Canada AAP support under the following conditions:
 - a. The guide will be considered for AAP support based upon the results and awarding of AAP support for the visually impaired athlete they are guiding;
 - b. In the case that an athlete will have a new guide for the 2025-26 season, the HPD in consultation with the Nordiq Canada PN staff must approve the new guide and their ability to meet the performance needs of the athlete in order for the guide to receive AAP support.
 - c. More than one guide may be nominated for Sport Canada AAP support. Each guide must have a full training and competition schedule and be fully integrated with the visually impaired athlete's program. Sport Canada must approve additional guides for AAP support.

3.0 Failure to Meet Renewal Criteria for Health-Related Reasons

1. Nordiq Canada will consider nominating athletes for an injury card in accordance with section 9.1.3 of the Sport Canada AAP policy. The basic philosophy for selecting an athlete by granting an illness, injury, pregnancy, or other health-related reason request is that all things being equal, the athlete nominated has clearly demonstrated superior performances in previous competition to other athletes being considered for an SR1, SR2, SR or D nomination. An illness, injury, pregnancy, or other health-related reason request is considered as the last means by which an athlete can earn selection and is intended to provide for exceptional circumstances outside the normal selection criteria rather than being part of the normal means by which an athlete can earn selection. This provision only applies when an athlete's performance is compromised because they have not been able to train or compete for an extended period and has a positive prognosis within 8 to 12 months.
2. A SR1/SR2/SR or D carded athlete who met 2025-26 PNST objective criteria based on results from 2024-25, who at the end of the carding cycle, has not

achieved the standard required for the renewal of carding status strictly because of health-related reasons, may be considered for nomination for the upcoming year provided the following conditions are met:

- a. An athlete must, within seven (7) days following the incident or occurrence, submit to the HPD:
 - i. certificate of diagnosis;
 - ii. consistent communication of the athlete's health and performance status to the HPD-Para or designated Nordiq Canada coaching or IST staff during the time the athlete is unable to train or compete;
 - iii. documentation confirming diagnosis by a licensed, relevant, and medical practitioner;
 - iv. a return to training and competition plan for the current and upcoming season;
 - v. supporting documentation of the athlete's treatment by an accredited professional (e.g., physiotherapist/ massage) that supports a return to training and competition plan.
 - b. In the case of injury or illness, no carding nominations will be made for injuries that are determined by the HPD in consultation with medical professionals to be career-ending.
 - c. If an athlete competes in a qualifying event, they may not invoke section 3 in respect to the qualifying event in which he or she competed. The intention of this provision is to ensure that athletes who are injured, suffering from an illness, or medical condition do not compete, which could cause further ill health, or harm. If an athlete does compete, they must accept the race result they have achieved.
3. The athlete may be nominated for a SR or D card on the grounds of injury, a medical condition (including pregnancy), illness or other health-related reason at the sole discretion of the HPD based on the following factors:
- a. the number of cards available;
 - b. the nature and details of the diagnosis and prognosis;
 - c. assessment and training data provided by the athlete that is verifiable by the discipline coach and Integrated Support Team (IST);
 - d. evidence of the athlete's level of performance prior to injury;

- e. the strength of the athlete's rehabilitation and training plan as evaluated by the HPD-Para;
- f. the advice of medical experts provided to the HPD; and
- g. the realistic expectation that the athlete can return to competition ready performance and continue to demonstrate the potential to perform at the top 8 level and progress toward the podium.
- h. Documentation must be submitted to the HPD-Para by **March 26, 2025, 11:59 PM** in the time zone of the athlete's current residence.

4.0 Types of Cards and Funding Allocation

1. Nordiq Canada Para is awarded 11 Senior Cards or the equivalent to \$232,980 in AAP funding for the June 1, 2025, to May 31, 2026, carding cycle. Sport Canada reviews its carding allocations regularly therefore this amount is subject to change.
2. Nordiq Canada will distribute the funding as per the criteria in 5.0 in priority order until all funds are utilized or there are no more eligible athletes.
3. A minimum of four (4) months of carding support must be available to nominate an athlete to the AAP.
4. Senior cards are \$26,100 (\$2,175 /month x 12), Development cards are \$15,660 (\$1,305 /month x 12).
5. There are two types of cards: Senior (International or National) and Development (D).

SENIOR CARDS

6. **Senior Cards** are awarded on two sets of criteria:
 - a. International Criteria (SR1/SR2): Sport Canada sets these criteria.
 - i. Senior cards based on international criteria are awarded to recognize outstanding performance at the Para World Ski Championships or Paralympic Winter Games.
 - ii. Athletes achieving the criteria are eligible for two (2) years of AAP support. The first carding year is a SR1 card and second is a SR2 card. The second year is subject to the athlete meeting requirements in 2.0 Eligibility, completing the online anti-doping courses, signing an Athlete NSO agreement, selection to the

National Team and adhering to an HPD approved training.

- iii. Following a season where there are no PWG, WCH, or World Para Biathlon Championships, there will be no nominations for SR1 cards.

b. National Criteria (SR):

- i. Senior cards awarded based on national criteria are to support athletes with the potential to reach international criteria.
- ii. Senior cards based on national criteria are awarded for one year.

7. **Progression Criteria:** Athletes are expected to make progress in their results in order to maintain SR card status. Normally eight (8) years is the maximum that an athlete will be carded at the senior level based on national criteria after which time, Sport Canada will require a comprehensive thoroughly documented review of the athlete's performance over the past eight (8) years in order to demonstrate progress toward meeting the senior international criteria which then warrants nomination of "Senior National" card status for an additional year. This process must be followed for all subsequent years that the athlete is nominated at this level.

8. **Eligibility** for Senior cards:

- a. Only athletes on the PN World Cup or NextGen Teams are eligible for SR cards.
- b. The HPD will confirm the PNST team selections using the posted *PNST 2025-26 Team Selection Criteria*. Therefore, the performance standards and ranking mechanisms contained in the *PNST 2025-26 Team Selection Criteria* also function as the entry standard for AAP Carding.
- c. The *2025-26 PNST Team Selection Criteria* can be found on the Nordiq Canada website.

DEVELOPMENT CARDS

9. **Development Cards** are to meet the development needs of athletes who clearly demonstrate the potential to achieve the Senior card international criteria.
- a. Development cards are awarded for one year and are referred to as D cards.

- b. An athlete who has qualified for a development card as well as for a SR card has the choice to accept either the D card or the SR card.

10. **Progression Criteria:** Athletes are expected to make progress in their results in order to progress to SR card status. Three years (3) is the maximum that an athlete will be carded at the development level. After which time, Sport Canada will require a comprehensive thoroughly documented review of the athlete's performance over the past five (5) years in order to demonstrate progress toward a performance equivalent to Top-16 and top half at the FIS and/or IBU WCH or PWG, which then warrants nomination of D card status for an additional year. This process must be followed for all subsequent years that the athlete is nominated at this level. Athletes who have previously been carded for two (2) years or more at the Senior Card level (SR1, SR2, SR) are not normally eligible to be nominated for D cards.

11. **Eligibility** for Development cards:

- a. Only athletes on the PN Development Team or Prospects Team will be eligible for D cards.
- b. The HPD will confirm the team selections using the *posted 2025-26 Para Nordic National Ski Team Selection Criteria*. Therefore, the performance standards and ranking mechanisms contained in the *2025-26 Para Nordic National Ski Team Selection Criteria* also functions as the entry standard for AAP Carding.
- c. The *2025-26 Para Nordic National Ski Team Selection Criteria* can be found on the Nordiq Canada website.

5.0 Senior and Development Carding Criteria

1. Athletes will be nominated for the AAP in the following priority order until no further funding remains in the quota:
 - a. Athletes eligible under the SR1 card criteria;
 - b. Athletes eligible under the SR2 card criteria;
 - c. Athletes eligible under the SR card criteria;
 - d. Athletes eligible under the D card criteria
2. International Criteria (SR1/SR2) - International criteria recognizes Canadian athletes for outstanding performance at World Championships or the Olympic/Paralympic Winter Games. In Olympic and Paralympic sports, only

results from events that are on the program of the upcoming Olympic/Paralympic Winter Games will be considered for carding under the international criteria. The following are the current standards for international criteria:

- a. For the 2025-26 carding year, SR1 cards will be awarded for international criteria to athletes achieving a top eight (8); **AND** top half of the field at the FIS PCC or IBU PB World Championships in a Paralympic event. Athletes will be ranked in accordance with their ~~single~~ best individual placing. If there is still a tie it will move to 2nd, 3rd, etc. best result in eligible races until the tie is broken. In a year where no FIS PCC World Championships or Paralympic Winter Games are held, there will only be SR1 cards awarded for PB.
 - b. Athletes with a SR1 card during the preceding carding cycle are eligible to be nominated for a SR2 card provided they meet the eligibility requirements outlined in Section 2 and have shown compliance to an HPD approved training plan.
 - c. Athletes with a SR1/SR2 card during the preceding carding cycle who fall under section 3.0 are eligible to be nominated for a SR2 card provided they:
 - i. meet the eligibility requirements outlined in Section 2, **AND**
 - ii. have documented their injury as per the requirements outlined in Section 3.0, **AND** are following an NSO approved return to competition plan.
3. National Criteria (SR) – Nomination of athletes for SR cards will be made in the following priority order:
- a. Athletes who qualified for the PN World Cup Team on point 4.1 of the 2025-26 PN National Ski Team Criteria in order of NST qualification.
 - b. Athletes who qualified for the PN NextGen Team on point 4.2 of the 2025-26 PN National Ski Team Criteria in order of NST qualification.

- c. 2024-25 SR carded athletes with an accepted health-related reason as defined in section 3.
- 4. Development Criteria (D)
 - a. Athletes who qualified for the PN Development Team on point 4.3 of the 2025-26 PN National Ski Team Criteria in order of qualification.
 - b. 2024-25 D carded athletes with an accepted health-related reason as defined in section 3.

6.0 Withdrawal of AAP Funding

- 1. The HPD may recommend the withdrawal of an athlete's carded status to Sport Canada, under one of the following conditions:

- a. If the athlete has not fulfilled responsibilities with respect to mandatory training camps, testing, and competitions;
- b. If the athlete has not fulfilled responsibilities as identified in the NC Athlete Agreement;
- c. If the athlete has not fulfilled responsibilities as identified in the NC Code of Conduct or NC Discipline Policy;
- d. If the athlete has demonstrated toxic behavior eroding the NC Culture of Excellence, as outlined in the NC Code of Conduct and Ethics Policy;
- e. If the athlete has not adhered to responsibilities as they pertain to WADA, and CCES antidoping protocols;
- f. Fraudulent misrepresentation of the AAP program; or,
- g. Gross breach of discipline.

- 2. The procedure for the withdrawal of carding by Nordiq Canada are:
 - a. Provide a verbal warning to the athlete, including the steps and timelines to remedy the situation and the consequences of a failure to heed the warning.
 - b. Provide a written warning to the athlete, if the verbal warning is not heeded.
 - c. If the above steps are not successful in resolving the matter and NC still wishes to recommend withdrawal of carded status, NC must send a letter to the Sport Canada Program Officer and the AAP Manager with a copy of the athlete's carded status. This letter must indicate:

- i. The grounds on which the recommendation is being made;
 - ii. The steps already taken to address the issue (verbal warning followed by a formal letter of warning);
 - iii. Provide notice to the athlete of the athlete's right to contest the NC recommendation to withdraw carded status through NC's internal appeal process within the prescribed time.
3. During the carding cycle, the NSO may recommend withdrawal of the carding support of a Guide for health-related reasons or if the Guide is no longer a member of the National Team. The remaining months of carding may be allocated to a new Guide as long as the National Team Coach recommends them.

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