



United States Soaring Team Task Force

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Topic – 5 Team Funding

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This document is for discussion purposes only and should not be considered the policy of U.S. Soaring Teams. Instead, this document provides a starting place from which to develop more accountable, transparent, competitive and sustainable United States Soaring Teams. You can help shape the future of U.S. Soaring Teams by making your comments to John Seaborn (planned@boulder.net) or Ken Sorenson (kgsoren@earthlink.net).

Taskforce web page http://www.ssa.org/UsTeam/ust_taskforce.htm

U.S. Soaring Team Funding

Purpose & Goal

The purpose of the Team Funding Policy is to provide a written policy that establishes procedures for determining the amount of SSA funding that will be available for World Gliding Championships (WGC) and how those funds should be allocated between the various team pilots, classes, and venues.

Philosophy & Discussion

The number of WGCs has recently grown from one competition at a single venue (FAI Open, 15M and Standard classes) to multiple venues including three new competition classes (18 Meter, Club Class, and World Class). In addition, the Junior and Feminine WGCs have been incorporated into the overall US Team organization, a change from the more independent status they had previously. Financial management of the US Teams is currently very difficult. The US Team management has the nearly impossible task of using an **unknown** amount of allocated money to cover an **ill-defined** set of costs. This makes planning difficult to say the least.

Given the recent increase in the number of FAI classes, and the resulting increased demand on US Team funding, it is expected that for the foreseeable future the total US Team expenses will exceed the funds available from the SSA. This “new reality” must be addressed in the US Team Funding policy.

Factors in Establishing a Fair Funding Allocation Policy

A key goal of the funding policy is “fair” distribution of the limited resources among the various team pilots, classes, and venues. There are a number of complicating factors in establishing what constitutes a fair distribution of funds:

- The “older” established FAI classes (Open, 15 Meter, and Standard) vs. the newly established classes (18 Meter, Club Class, and World Class). Some individuals have expressed the opinion that the traditional FAI classes should have priority.

- Widely varying class participation. For example, the recently over-subscribed 15 Meter National contests vs. limited participation in World Class Nationals. Junior and Feminine class participation is also very limited.
- Differing goals for the various classes. For example, the SSA Board of Directors has determined that the US Team selection procedures for the Club Class will emphasize the development of “new talent” over the strict performance-based selection procedure used for the other classes. The World Class, Junior, and Feminine classes are also generally regarded as “development” classes.
- Different WGC locations can have a large effect on the funds necessary to participate in that event. It will be much less expensive per pilot to send a Club Class team to Musbach, Germany in 2002 than it was to send the multi-class teams (Open, 15 Meter, and Standard) to Mafikeng, South Africa in 2001.
- Some team classes seem to be more effective at class- or venue-specific fundraising than other classes. For example, the Club Class team was very successful at raising the funds for their WGC in Gawler, Australia.

Other US Team Funding Issues

Other important US Team issues are related to funding policies:

- Team size. Sending more pilots costs more money, and increases our chances of a win by fielding more top-quality competitors. Sending fewer pilots would allow each pilot to be better funded. Is a better-funded pilot significantly more likely to perform well? The team funding policy must address the size of the teams.
- Changes to team size. It is common for WGC organizers to increase the number of pilots allowed per country as the contest date approaches. Should we allow the US team size to expand if allowed by the organizers, even if this change comes late in the preparation phase?
- Self-funding. WGC organizers may allow more pilots to attend than the SSA can afford to send. Should a qualified pilot be allowed to attend entirely at his/her own expense? How would such a self-funded pilot be integrated into the team structure?
- No-funding. Perhaps the SSA should not fund a US Team to all WGC events.
- Pre-world WGC attendance. Is attendance at the pre-world events of sufficient benefit to justify the expenditure? How many pilots should be sent? Should this be done for all classes?
- What level of team support at the WGC is necessary? Team captain, coach, local knowledge expert, psychologist, doctor, etc.?
- Should the SSA cover team expenses directly, or should team members be required to pay their all their own expenses and then apply for reimbursement from the SSA?

Current US Team Funding Policy

The key elements of the current policy as reflected in the “SSA US Team Funding and Selection Policies” are as follows:

1. Each pilot will be expected to contribute an amount equal to what they would spend attending a US Nationals. The amount a pilot must contribute will be determined by the US Team Committee and included in the Notification of Selection.

2. All pilots attending a single WGC will be funded equally.
3. At the time Notification of Selection is sent, the US Team Committee will announce the minimum per pilot funding for the event. The minimum designated funding for a WGC will be made available to the event Team manager for deposits and pre-paid expenses.
4. At the conclusion of the last competition in a year, the US Team Committee Chairman will examine the yearly team expenses and income to reimburse properly accounted for and reasonable team related expenses. Any shortage will be equally spread across all team members attending WGC events.
5. Funding for pre-worlds events will only be considered if the US Team budget indicates that all planned WGC events will easily be fully funded. Partial funding of pre-worlds events will be determined on an ad-hoc basis by the US Team Committee.

Problems with the current US Team Funding Policy

The basic difficulty with the current system is related to policy number 4 above. There are also many aspects of funding policy that are not addressed in the current policy.

The basic “spread the shortfall” philosophy reflected in policy number 4 above is very difficult to implement. According to the present policy, each pilot on the US team, regardless of class or venue, is either made whole for all of their documented expenses, or the out-of-pocket amount for each pilot is made equal. This equalization is done at the end of the year after all WGC expenses and income are reported. From a practical standpoint, it is not possible to assess the Junior team members at the end of the year, who may have stayed in dormitories at their WGC in June in order to conserve limited funds, to cover a shortfall generated by the multi-class team that incurred huge expenses shipping gliders to South Africa in December. In actuality, there has not been any attempt in recent years to go back to the team pilots well after the contests to collect any shortfall. Because of its impracticality, the present system has simply not been followed.

Another problem with this “spread the shortfall” approach is that there is little incentive for individual pilots to economize. Any savings made by a team member is effectively distributed over all the rest of the team. Likewise, any expense is distributed over all the team members.

An alternative system is to provide a fixed amount of money to each pilot, with that amount defined prior to the contest.

For the near future, the available SSA funds per pilot almost certainly be less than the actual expenses. Knowing that this will likely to be the case, each pilot would have a strong incentive to economize since any expenses beyond the fixed amount would be “self-funded”.

Key Elements of the new US Team Funding Policy

1. The current “blank check” approach to US Team funding will be replaced with a “defined benefit” approach. SSA’s expenses will be limited to an amount that will be specified before the WGC event. Pilots and/or class/venue teams will be responsible for funding the difference between the amount provided by the SSA and the actual expenses. Any over-budget exposure would be the responsibility of the pilots rather than the SSA.

2. A newly “chartered” US Team Committee will be responsible for the selection and overall management of the US Teams. This will include apportioning the SSA funding between the various classes/venues and ensuring proper US Team financial planning and reporting. This responsibility and authority will, of course, be subject to SSA Board oversight. The intent is for the relationship between the SSA Board and the US Team Committee to develop into the same relationship that exists between the Board and the Rules Committee. The committee will be comprised of the Contest Committee Chairman, the US Team Chairman, the SSA president, and three members elected by the competition pilots. (see Task Force Topic 3 – Organization for more information).
3. All FAI WGC classes are eligible to receive SSA funding.
4. The funding level per pilot for each class need not be the same.
5. SSA funding will be planned and allocated on the same cycle as the multi-class WGC. This will typically be a two year cycle. The first year is the year of the multi-class pre-worlds. The second year is the year of the multi-class WGC. The amount of SSA funding that will be available to the US Teams will be set by the SSA Board based upon a written proposal from the US Team Committee. The US Team Committee will establish a clearly defined schedule of milestones which key upon the multi-class WGC for overall funding issues and key upon the individual class WGC for class-specific deadlines.
6. Team Captains will be responsible for estimating, budgeting, and reporting team expenses. The US Team Chairman will have oversight responsibility and will provide the communication link between the Team Captains and the US Team Committee. The Contest Committee Chairman will provide the communication link between the US Team Committee and the SSA Board of Directors.
7. Funding will be available for the pre-worlds. The amount available for each class/venue will be drawn from the total funds allocated to a that class/venue for that funding cycle. It is anticipated that pre-worlds funding will be quite limited.
8. Class/Venue-specific fund raising is encouraged. Should such funding result in any surplus (funds raised beyond those needed to cover the costs of that specific WGC class/venue event), those surplus funds will be set aside and made available for that class on the next funding cycle
9. The normal SSA-funded team size will be two pilots per class if the WGC organizers allow two or more. If they only allow one pilot per class, we would send one. Any waivers from this policy would be handled by the US Team Committee following an application from the team captain. It may be necessary to limit the number of pilots at certain WGC locations (e.g. New Zealand, South Africa) due to budget constraints. This would be a decision made by the US Team Committee.
10. All team pilots at the same venue will be funded equally. The funding for the various classes at the venue will be combined and then distributed equally to the pilots. An exception to this will be one additional pilot per class who is fully self-funded – see below.
11. Each pilot will be expected to contribute an amount equal to what they would spend attending a US Nationals, regardless of available funds. This minimum amount a pilot must contribute will be determined by the US Team Committee and included in the Notification of Selection. The pilots will provide their contributions to the US Team Treasurer as a check to the US Team due six months in advance of the WGC such that those funds are available to cover some of the early contest-related expenses.

12. One additional fully-self-funded pilot per class will be allowed at the discretion of the US Team Committee. The self-funded pilot must provide his/her complete funding for the event to the SSA and would agree to attend the WGC subject to management of the US team in the same manner as the SSA funded pilots. The intent is to provide an opportunity to one additional pilot per class to attend the event with no additional drain on team finances. These self-funded positions on the team can be viewed as “developmental” positions, or as positions for an exceptionally motivated contestant who may have “missed the cut”, but has the financial resources to attend without SSA funding support. The additional pilot must be ranked in the top 5 according to the normal selection formula. The opportunity to join the team as a self-funded member would be offered to each pilot in the selection “que” in sequence.
13. Last-minute changes to team size will not be allowed. The team size will be set no later than three months before the WGC and will not be increased after that, even if the organizers allow an increase.
14. The team member selection sequence will be determined and the top 5 pilots notified within two weeks of the completion of the last contest that affects the pilot selection.

New Funding Allocation Philosophy

One option regarding the distribution of limited funds is to develop a strict formula that would be used to allocate the limited SSA funds among the various WGC classes. Application of such a formula would work like current US Team pilot selection formula to remove any subjective decision making regarding how much money one class would receive relative to another.

Unfortunately, the funding allocation decision is affected by too many difficult-to-define parameters to make a rigid formula-based system workable. In addition, some subjective decision making is required and is appropriate. A practical funding allocation system must allow considerable latitude on the part of US Team management to allocate funds to the various classes.

It is clear that the relative distribution of funds between the various classes must take into consideration US class participation, competitiveness, WGC goals for the class, WGC location, class-specific fundraising capabilities, and traditional funding priorities for the various classes.

Given the difficulty of integrating all these factors, some of which are quite subjective, the best approach is to allow the newly-formed US Team Committee to decide the relative distribution of funds among the competition classes. The funding allocation decision would be based upon the available funds, budgets supplied in advance by the team captains, and would be guided by a funding allocation formula such as discussed below.

Funding Allocation Formula

Total Funding Per Pilot =

Base Funding * Participation Factor * Competitiveness Factor * Continent Factor + Self Funding

Participation Factor: This would be a relative factor based upon the average annual participation in each class for the years “feeding” the team selection formula. Only those pilots who competed on a majority of the flying days would be counted. (Note that a policy similar to this was adopted temporarily by the SSA Board in 1998.

Competitiveness Factor: The level of competitiveness in some classes is clearly higher than in others. There should be some recognition of this in funding allocation. One approach might be to consider the percentage pilots at the US nationals that have achieved a particular performance ranking, such as Category 1.

Continent Factor: The cost requirements per pilot to send a team to Uvalde would be expected to be a small fraction of the requirements to send a team to South Africa. This factor would recognize this important consideration in allocating funds.

Base Funding: If the Participation Factor, Competitiveness Factor and Continent Factors are all selected to have minimum values of 1.0, the Base Funding would represent the minimum funding that SSA would provide to any team pilot.

Self-funding: This is simply the difference between the actual expenses and what the SSA can provide. The pilot would be personally responsible for this amount.

The setting of specific values for these factors will be the responsibility of the US Team Committee and will take into consideration feedback from the recently conducted US Team Poll.

It is anticipated that the overall funding allocation process would involve the following steps:

Step 1: The US Team Committee estimates the available funds for the (typical) two year funding period.

Step 2: Team Captains submit budgets.

Step 3: The allocation formula is applied and the base amount is adjusted to bring the total funds allocated to all the classes for the entire two year period into alignment with the available funds from step 1.

Step 4: Pilots are told of the difference between the budget estimate and the available funds for their contest. They must understand that the difference is just an estimated amount and could be more or less depending on how they keep expenses down. In the end, they will be responsible for any cost beyond the SSA commitment.

Step 5: If significantly more money comes in during the 2-year cycle than was expected the US Team Committee could distribute some extra funds according to the original allocation formula. This would reduce (after the fact) the pilot contributions. It is expected that the pilots would be required to contribute an amount equivalent to a US Nats regardless of how much is available.