

**PARA ATHLETE
PROFESSIONALS
GUIDELINES 2026**

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1 INTRODUCTION

From 2025 to 2028, the IPC will deliver a wide range of transformational sport development initiatives to its members as part of the Sport for Mobility (SfM) project. The primary aim of the SfM project is to support IPC members in advancing three priority areas:

Athletes

We work with our member organisations to develop athletes and strengthen the entire sport ecosystem - from high performance competition and coaching to mentorship and classification.

Leaders

We equip changemakers to lead within the Paralympic Movement, fostering growth, inclusion, and transformative impact through Para sport.

Participation

We create inclusive opportunities for persons with disabilities to experience the power of sport by removing barriers and expanding grassroots access.

As part of the SfM project, the IPC has introduced the Para Athlete Professionals course, designed to offer select retiring Paralympians the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge to become leaders, innovators, and change-makers within the Paralympic Movement and beyond.

Each year, the IPC will support a cohort of retiring Paralympians selected through a competitive process in a combination of in-person and online training sessions. The Para Athlete Professionals course aims to empower a new generation of Para athletes to become active agents of change within the Paralympic Movement and their communities. To learn more about the 2025 Cohort, please visit the [Para Athletes Professionals webpage](#).

In 2026, the call for applications for the Para Athlete Professionals will be disseminated through NPCs, IFs, ROs, and athlete representatives, as well as via IPC press releases and social media channels. The Para Athlete Professionals application process is explained in further detail in this Guidelines document. This Guidelines document may be updated prior to each competitive process.

For the avoidance of doubt, the decision to select candidates for participation in the Para Athlete Professionals is at the IPC's discretion i.e., there is no right to participate in the training scheme.

2 OVERVIEW

The Para Athlete Professionals course is a structured, multi-phase initiative designed to support retiring Paralympians in their transition from elite sport to impactful professional careers. The training aims to empower participants with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to become leaders, advocates, and changemakers within and beyond the Paralympic Movement.

Each year, a cohort of up to 20 retiring Paralympians will be selected through a competitive process. Between 2025 and 2028, four cohorts will be supported, with a strong commitment to inclusion considering gender balance, regional diversity, and disability representation.

2.1 COURSE PURPOSE AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The Para Athlete Professional course is designed to empower retired Paralympians with the transformational and technical skills necessary for a successful transition from competitive sport to meaningful professional careers within and beyond the Paralympic Movement. This program directly addresses the unique challenges Paralympians face during this critical period while unlocking their potential as leaders, innovators, and changemakers.

The Para Athlete Professionals course is built around six core learning outcomes:

1. Leadership & self-awareness

Contribute to the development of skills in leadership, emotional intelligence, and ethical decision-making.

2. Career readiness

Provide training in job applications, networking, and professional development to support career transitions.

3. Digital, financial & business literacy

Develop skills in digital tools, financial management, and business operations.

4. Public speaking & advocacy

Strengthen communication and advocacy skills to enable participants to contribute to the Paralympic Movement.

5. Industry awareness & networking

Introduce participants to professional pathways and networks within the Paralympic ecosystem.

6. Legacy & long-term impact

Empower participants to leverage their experience to drive inclusion and innovation in society.

2.2 TRAINING METHODOLOGY

The Para Athlete Professionals course is delivered through a mixed learning model that combines immersive in-person experiences with sustained virtual engagement. This approach ensures a dynamic and impactful learning journey. The training is divided into **three phases**:

- 1) **Kick-off intensive week (5 days, 17-21 November 2026, in-person – Bonn, Germany)**
A foundational in-person experience hosted at the IPC Campus. Participants will engage in interactive workshops, strategic planning exercises, and networking sessions with IPC leaders and retired Paralympians.
- 2) **Ongoing development (17 hours from December 2026–May 2027, virtual)**
Ten bi-monthly virtual modules will deepen participants' professional expertise. These sessions will feature guest speakers from various sectors such as business, media, academia, and the Paralympic Movement, offering diverse insights and practical knowledge.
- 3) **Closing week and Graduation Ceremony (5 days, May 2027, in-person – Bonn, Germany)**
A final in-person intensive week where participants will consolidate their learning and present their **Athlete Transition Action Plan**, a personalised strategy for career advancement and long-term impact.

This delivery model ensures that participants receive both the depth of in-person engagement and the flexibility of virtual learning, supported by expert facilitation and real-world application.

3 ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for the Para Athlete Professionals, applicants must meet all of the following criteria:

- Be a **Paralympian** who has competed in at least one edition of the Paralympic Games;
- Be **recently retired from competition** or in the process of retiring, with retirement planned before the Los Angeles 2028 Paralympic Games;
- Demonstrate **proficiency in English**;
- Hold at least a **high school diploma** (a bachelor's degree is an asset).

Applicants will be required to **provide evidence supporting each of the above criteria** as part of their application.

This criterion ensures that selected athletes are at a transitional stage in their careers, moving from elite competition toward post-sport professional development.

For the avoidance of doubt, the following individuals are not eligible to apply for the Para Athlete Professionals course:

- Para athletes who have **not competed in any edition of the Paralympic Games**
- Athlete competition partners, **regardless of their participation in the Paralympic Games**

4 TIMELINE

Participants should take note of the timeline below when applying for the Para Athlete Professionals.

Activity	Date
Announcement and call for applications	25 June 2026
Application deadline	24 July 2026
Communication of results	Before end August 2026
<i>Para Athlete Professionals course</i> <i>Kick-off week</i> Online preparation Duration: 3 hours	October-November 2026
<i>Para Athlete Professionals course</i> <i>Online sessions</i> In-person: Bonn, Germany Duration: 40 hours	17-21 November 2026 (arrivals 16 November 2026, departures 21 & 22 November 2026)
<i>Para Athlete Professionals course</i> Virtual training modules Duration: 17 hours	From December 2026 to May 2027
<i>Para Athlete Professionals course</i> <i>Closing week</i> In-person, Bonn, Germany Final action plan presentation week 40 hours	May 2027 (official dates TBC)

5 PARTICIPANT ALLOCATIONS

Please note that this is a competitive selection process, and submission of an application does not guarantee selection.

To ensure a fair, inclusive, and representative process, the IPC will prioritise candidates based on the following criteria:

- Fulfilment of all eligibility requirements.
- Submission of a fully completed application by the stated deadline.
- Regional representation across IPC membership.
- Gender balance.
- Representation of a diversity of impairment types.
- Clear motivation to pursue a professional and/or leadership pathway
- Demonstrated interest in becoming a changemaker or advocate for disability inclusion, Para sport, or social development.
- Ability to inspire and mobilise others, especially within Para sport and for underrepresented communities.

6 SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

All candidates interested in applying must complete their applications by **24 July 2026**. This opportunity has been communicated through IPC social media channels, the IPC website, and across IPC membership to ensure that interested eligible individuals may apply independently.

To be considered for participation in the Para Athlete Professionals course, applicants must complete the online application form using the link below:

[Para Athlete Professionals 2026 - Application Form](#)

6.1 ONLINE APPLICATION FORM

All applicants must complete and submit the online application form by the stated deadline. It is strongly recommended to gather all required information in advance to ensure a smooth and complete submission process.

As part of the application, you will be asked to provide the following information:

- Personal information (name as per passport, gender, date of birth, contact details, place of residence)
- Sport event(s) in which you competed
- Sport class

- Most recent Paralympic Games participation
- Nationality
- Curriculum Vitae
- English language proficiency
- Letter of endorsement from IPC member organisation (NPC, RO, IF or IOSD)
- Video introduction and motivation

6.2 VIDEO INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION

As part of your application to the Para Athlete Professionals course, you are required to submit a short video, in English, introducing yourself and sharing your motivation for applying.

Content Guidelines

- Your video should briefly include:
- Your full name
- Your experience as a Paralympian and current status (e.g., transitioning into retirement)
- Why you are interested in the Para Athlete Professionals course
- What you hope to contribute and gain from the course experience
- What motivates you to contribute to the Paralympic Movement (whether in a professional or volunteer capacity)

Duration

- 5 minutes maximum
- Keep it concise, authentic, and focused

Technical Requirements

- Use a smartphone or similar device
- Record in landscape (horizontal) orientation
- Use a plain white or neutral background
- Ensure good lighting and that your face is clearly visible
- Record in a quiet environment without background noise
- Minimum resolution of 720p (HD)

Submission Instructions

- Upload your video to a cloud platform (e.g., Google Drive, Dropbox, OneDrive)
- Ensure the sharing settings allow access to **“anyone with the link can view”**
- Include the **link to the video** in your application form
- Keep the video file under 100 MB if possible

6.3 LETTER OF ENDORSEMENT

Applicants are required to submit a **letter of endorsement** from an IPC member organisation, such as [National Paralympic Committees \(NPCs\)](#), [Regional Organisations \(ROs\)](#), [International Organisation of Sport for the Disabled \(IOSDs\)](#), or [International Federations \(IFs\)](#), in support of their application. The names of these organisation categories include links to the relevant sections of the IPC website for verification purposes.

The endorsement letter must:

- Include the applicant's full name as it appears on their passport; and
- Be signed by an authorised representative of the endorsing organisation (e.g., President or Secretary General).

The letter must be uploaded as part of the online application form, together with all other required documentation.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that their endorsement letter is issued by an eligible IPC member organisation. Please use the links provided to verify eligibility on the IPC website.

Please note that National Federations (NF) are not IPC member organisations. As a result, endorsement letters issued solely by a National Federation are not eligible for this application.

7 SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE IPC

Selected participants will be supported by the IPC with the following:

Travel tickets

- The IPC will provide flight tickets for all participants, unless otherwise agreed, to the in-person course location (Bonn, Germany) and back. Travel to Bonn for the two face-to-face sessions is mandatory.
- If participants miss the flight due to their own fault, such as late arrival to the airport, the IPC will not provide new flight tickets and will issue a reimbursement invoice to the participant.

Visa (if applicable)

- The IPC will cover visa-related costs, including visa and transit visa fees. These costs will be reimbursed in accordance with IPC policies.
- An official invitation letter will be provided by the IPC to support the visa application process.

Accommodation (shared rooms)

- All participants will be accommodated in shared rooms by gender.
- Rooms may be double or triple occupancy, depending on hotel availability. All participants must acknowledge and agree to this shared room arrangement when submitting their application.

Meals

- The IPC will provide meals for all participants during the in-person sessions.
- If selected for the course, participants must indicate any special dietary requirements (e.g. vegan, vegetarian, halal) through the travel form.

Travel health insurance

- The IPC will provide travel health insurance for all participants.

Local transport

- The IPC will arrange transportation for:
 - Airport of arrival to accommodation and accommodation to the airport of departure
 - Accommodation to the course venue(s) and back for the days of the in-person training sessions
- IPC will provide pick-up and drop-off for all participants, considering their arrival and departure times. If the participant is not planning to use the transportation provided by the IPC for any reason, this should be communicated in advance.
- Participants must notify the IPC contact person of any flight delays or changes in a timely manner so that adjustments to local transport can be made.

8 PARTICIPANT RESPONSIBILITIES

Once selected, participants will be responsible for the following:

Laptop access:

- Participants must have access to a laptop for the full duration of the course, including both in-person and virtual sessions. The IPC will not provide laptops to participants.

Visa arrangements (if applicable):

- Participants are responsible for managing their visa application process, including checking visa requirements, scheduling appointments, submitting documents, and following up with the consulate.
- Participant must keep IPC staff updated on the visa approval status.

- Passports must be up to date and valid at least until 28 February 2027.

Travel information:

- Participants must complete the travel form with accurate personal details (as per passport), departure city, dietary requirements, and any additional assistance required for travel.

Flight confirmation:

- Participants must review and confirm the proposed travel itineraries provided by the IPC. By confirming, the participant accepts the itinerary as correct, complete, and final. Any errors discovered afterwards will be the participant's responsibility to resolve, including associated costs.
 - Please always double-check:
 - Full names as per passports
 - Gender
 - Departure/arrival airport
 - Transit airports
 - Dates
- If participants miss their flight due to any reason other than the airport or airline's fault, this will have to be resolved by the participant, and IPC will not provide new flight tickets.
- It is the participant's responsibility to keep the IPC contact person informed should there be any delays or changes in the flight itinerary.

9 BENEFICIARY AGREEMENT

Once the candidates have been approved, the participant and the IPC will sign a Beneficiary Agreement that contains the terms of support. The participant will receive the agreement for review and signature after IPC confirms participation.

10 CONTACT INFORMATION

In case of difficulties completing the application form or if you have any questions regarding the Para Athlete Professionals, please contact us at Paraathleteprofessionals@paralympic.org before the submission deadline.