

# In the Arena

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What is In the Arena's mission?**

In the Arena's mission is to change the trajectories of the lives of American youths by deploying in their communities today's elite athletes who teach them how to make habits of self-inquiry, accountability, leadership and achievement.

### **What is In the Arena's vision?**

In the Arena's vision is to leverage the uplifting power of sport to effect lasting and meaningful change in today's youth, with the aim of giving all young Americans equal access to the highest-caliber role models and the best chance at success in the long term.

### **Why athletes?**

Constant coverage by mass media and the emergence of paradigm-shifting superstars such as Michael Jordan, Mia Hamm and Tiger Woods have made athletics a preoccupation for many Americans. They have also made athletes the dominant role models for American youth. This phenomenon serves society well when the conduct modeled is rooted in virtues that athletic excellence presupposes: discipline, tenacity and an overarching if not unending desire for self-improvement.

It is this last trait, the ability to assess oneself independently and in relation to others, that lies at the foundation of all successful athletic careers. The extent to which an athlete thinks to ask and answer the all-important questions, "What are my strengths?", "Where do I stand to I improve?" and "How can I effect that change?", will determine the heights to which he is capable of aspiring. Without flexing the muscle of rigorous and honest self-examination, an elite athlete will have truncated his ability to reach his highest potential.

The same holds true across myriad professions and thus the earlier in a child's development one can instill in her a taste for self-improvement, the better chance she stands to effect that positive change. Who better to inculcate in America's youth the skills of self-examination than the current corps of elite athletes whose courage, skill and overt determination daily capture adolescents' attention?

### **When did In the Arena's programming begin?**

In the Arena has been operating programs since September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006 and has continued to grow the breadth of its programming to this day. This has happened by meticulously adding to the roster qualified athletes who have created meaningful and effective projects that serve area youth.

### **When did In the Arena incorporate?**

In the Arena incorporated in November of 2006.

### **Is In the Arena a 501(c)(3) organization and are donations tax-deductible?**

Yes, In the Arena received its letter of determination from the IRS in the spring of 2007. We are considered a public charity as defined by section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

### **When do you expect to post your 990 and publish your annual report?**

In the Arena's fiscal year end is September 30th. We expect to have our 990 filed and posted on our website and on our Guidestar profile and an annual report produced within 90 days of that date.

### **Is In the Arena a national or an international organization?**

In the Arena's programs run in the U.S. only.

### **How is In the Arena's staff's time allocated?**

In the Arena's staff is dedicated to this one simple goal: to bring about positive change in American youth by inculcating in them those skills that presuppose a successful elite athletic career. 100% of the organization's time is dedicated to the realization and growth of that goal. Primary responsibilities for the staff are: vetting candidates for the roster; refining and polishing community service projects; overseeing the efficacy of those community service projects; tracking results of the programming; and, of course, fundraising.

### **From where does the funding for In the Arena come?**

In the Arena's fundraising strategy is to appeal to private sources for funds during the early stages of fundraising. As the organization grows to scale and develops a track record of verifiable results, In the Arena will seek to broaden revenue streams to include support from private and family foundations. When In the Arena has fully scaled, it will begin a campaign to create an endowment in order to guarantee the work of the organization in perpetuity. As In the Arena grows, we will work to ensure that it isn't overly dependent on any one funding source.

### **Where do In the Arena programs take place?**

In the Arena programs take place in the towns where Arena Athletes live and train. In other words, these community service projects are implemented nationwide. We like to think of our programs as a living, breathing example of George H.W. Bush's volunteerism vision of "a thousand points of light." Part of the appeal of launching the organization on a nationwide scale rather than a regional one is that In the Arena can penetrate the most far-flung corners of the country, even those that don't have a robust tradition of philanthropy.

### **How does In the Arena source qualified student-athletes?**

A simple fact of the pursuit of an U.S. Olympic Team bid is that there are more athletes in need of financial support than there are resources available. Because of its myriad responsibilities, the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) is able to channel only an average of seven percent of its operating budget to direct athlete support, leaving many talented athletes under-funded. Because the dollars in each sport are allocated according to the marketability of the sport or the individual athlete, many athletes at the top of their sports continue to live hand-to-mouth. Admittedly, while there are a wealth of athletes who can demonstrate financial need, not all would make strong role models. But it is In the Arena's responsibility both to leverage the capillary action of financial need to magnetize the best, brightest, most talented individuals to the organization's roster *and* to sort the truly extraordinary role models from the group of extraordinary athletes.

That said, In the Arena looks to a number of different sources for qualified athletes to place on the roster. These sources include the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of Olympic sports, the USOC's Athlete Advisory Committee (AAC), the most successful NCAA programs in traditionally under-funded sports (track and field, swimming and diving, water polo, cycling, fencing, Nordic skiing and crew, for example) and grass roots channels of press releases, the internet and word of mouth.

It is the hope of the organization that within a relatively short period of time, graduating student-athletes who want to continue their athletic careers and who have proven themselves to be superlative role models and citizens, will view a spot on the Arena Roster as an equally appealing alternative to a Rhodes Scholarship. In the Arena is eager to appoint to the roster the highest caliber student-athlete role models and to select those individuals from as broad a class of applicants as is possible.

### **What criteria do you use to evaluate potential Arena Athletes?**

Applications for acceptance to the Arena Roster are evaluated by an Athlete Review Committee and are based on the following criteria: viability of community service proposal; demonstration of character and leadership traits; potential to make the U.S. Olympic Team; status of collegiate scholarship record and proof of financial need (if seeking a stipend).

### **Do you have to have made an Olympic team before being named to In the Arena's Roster?**

No, you don't have to have competed in the Olympics to qualify for the roster, but you do have to be actively pursuing a bid for the U.S. Olympic Team with a credible chance at being named to the team for the upcoming Games.

**How does In the Arena decide how much financial support, if any, to give to each athlete on the roster?**

The onus is on the organization to establish the relative financial need of each applicant, which includes setting a ceiling for support at a three-year moving average of \$45,000 gross. The In the Arena Application asks for detailed fiscal information (including most recent tax forms, student loan statements and a projected budget for the upcoming year) and, further, asks every applicant for complete honesty and transparency in all matters and most especially where their financial need is concerned. In the Arena takes into account the financial need of each athlete, and the breadth, depth, quality and content of their community service projects. After examining all relevant financial information, In the Arena initiates an open dialogue with the Arena Athlete to settle on the appropriate amount of the annual stipend.

**What's the average stipend? And the range?**

Currently, the average Arena Athlete stipend is \$12,600/year. The range is from \$0 to \$20,000.

**Does every athlete receive funding?**

No, some volunteer.

**What's the average number of annual hours in an Arena Athlete program? And the range?**

The average number of annual hours in an Arena Athlete program is 325. The range is from 100 hours at the minimum end up to 700 hours at the top end. But we have no ceiling on the number of hours our athletes can invest in their communities and, more often than not, we've found that Arena Athletes tend to outperform their proposed hours by as much as 50%. Apparently serving our country's youth is an addictive habit.

**How long do athletes spend on the Arena Roster?**

The length of time each athlete spends on the roster varies according to where in the athlete's Olympic cycle he enters the organization's orbit. Research on average length of post-collegiate athletic careers points to an average stay on the Arena Roster of roughly two to three years. All Arena Athletes will be required to produce year-end analyses of their community service projects and to submit new community service project proposals for additional years on the roster.

**How many athletes would In the Arena like to have on the roster?**

According to our research, there are roughly 1,500 eligible American athletes who could apply for acceptance on to the Arena Roster. Over the course of the Athens 2004/Torino 2006 Olympiad, the U.S. sent 750 athletes to the Games. Of those 750, roughly one-third were able to achieve financial solvency from their athletic careers (these would be basketball players, some sprinters, some soccer players, men's hockey players, etc.). Of the 500 who carried a burden of debt to finance their Olympic goals, In the Arena estimates that for every one athlete who made the team, there were at least two who legitimately vied for that spot (and whose financial profiles were similar). Hence the above-stated number of 1,500 eligible athletes.

Yet, as is written in the response to the above question "How will In the Arena source qualified student-athletes?" not every athlete makes a strong role model. In the Arena seeks to appoint to the roster fewer than 10% of those 1,500 eligible athletes. Keeping the size of the roster small in the early stages of the organization's development protects the integrity of the In the Arena community and the quality of its programming.

Given the above, In the Arena's first goal is to build a roster of 150 athletes, some of whom receive stipends from the organization based on their financial need and some of whom volunteer and simply avail themselves of our organizational infrastructure. Unpaid athletes on the Arena Roster will be valuable members of the In the Arena community and will be held to the same standards as their more financially-needy colleagues.

**How might In the Arena continue to pursue its mission after scaling to 150 athletes?**

This is a fun question to consider and an important one to keep in mind. Celebrated American writer John Irving crafts the last sentence of a novel before he writes the first; he builds the story back to front. We've used a similar logic model to construct In the Arena. We founded In the Arena with an endgame in mind (namely: arming American youth with useful skills to improve their lives' trajectories) and then worked backwards to divine the best way to effect that change given the skills and resources we had at our disposal. One of the most attractive features

of In the Arena's model is its simplicity, and thus, its scalability. With the proper foundation and organizational infrastructure in place, a feat that can be completed well within the first year, In the Arena is set up to grow at a meteoric rate assuming a commensurate influx of funding.

So what happens when we reach 150? The simple answer is: we keep growing. But given our endgame of providing American youth equal access to the highest-caliber role models, there may be, in the not-too-distant future, a logical product line extension of specifically-located retreats, conferences, and even overnight programs and summer camps for targeted youth populations.

**What sort of balance, if any, are you hoping to achieve on the Arena Roster in terms of gender, race, geography, Winter/Summer Game athletes, etc.?**

As much as possible, In the Arena will try to balance the roster in terms of race, gender and geography. While intra-organizational diversity is important to us, it's most important when considering Bandura's central tenet of social learning theory: that children identify most strongly with those role models who resemble them or whose experiences are relevant to their own. Given that In the Arena is committed to impacting the lives of as broad and diverse a class of American youth as possible, our roster must be similarly varied. As for the balance of Summer and Winter athletes, In the Arena will strive to maintain roughly the same ratio of Summer to Winter athletes as the Games themselves feature: 3:1.

**What are In the Arena's long-term goals?**

In the Arena's medium and long-term goals are to touch the lives of 10,000 American children by the time the Olympics kick off in Beijing in 2008, to triple that number by the start of Vancouver's 2010 Games and to have reached 100,000 children by the time London hosts the 2012 Olympics.