



**FOOTBALL CANADA
SENIOR NATIONAL WOMEN'S
FLAG FOOTBALL PROGRAM**

2026-2027

ATHLETE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
PROCESS, ELIGIBILITY & CRITERIA FOR NOMINATION



Contents

1.	PURPOSE	2
2.	GOAL.....	2
3.	PROGRAM DESCRIPTION.....	2
	Financial Benefits Available Through AAP	2
4.	QUOTA.....	3
5.	TYPES OF CARDING	4
6.	ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS	4
7.	DECISION MAKING PROCESS.....	5
8.	CARDING CATEGORIES & DEFINITIONS OVERVIEW	5
9.	NOMINATION PROCESS	9
10.	FOOTBALL CANADA DEPTH CHART DEVELOPMENT	9
11.	CARDING MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS	10
12.	APPEAL PROCESS	10
13.	DEFINITIONS.....	11
	APPENDIX A.....	12

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to describe the process and criteria that will be used by Football Canada (FC) to nominate athletes for Sport Canada's Athlete Assistance Program (AAP).

2. GOAL

The goal of the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) is to provide financial support to athletes to train and compete successfully for Canada at Olympic Games and World Championships.

3. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Athlete Assistance Program (AAP), funded by Sport Canada, ensures identified high-performance athletes are afforded the necessary resources to achieve international success. The program contributes to improving Canadian performances at major international sporting events such as the Olympic Games and World Championships.

Athletes who are nominated for funding, and who are approved by Sport Canada for AAP financial support are referred to as 'carded' athletes, and AAP funding is referred to as 'carding'.

Financial assistance provided through the Sport Canada Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) is intended to help identified Canadian athletes meet the demands of high-performance sport, including training, competition, and career development. Athletes may be eligible to receive a monthly Excellence Living and Training Allowance and, where applicable, post-secondary tuition support. In addition, pursuant to Section 8.4 of the AAP Policies and Procedures, carded athletes may be eligible to apply for supplementary AAP benefits, including the Child Dependent Allowance, Relocation Assistance, Support for New Parents, and Retirement Assistance, subject to the eligibility requirements and approval processes established by Sport Canada. These benefits are designed to reduce financial barriers, support athlete well-being, and enable athletes to fully commit to their high-performance development and international competition objectives. All approved financial assistance is provided directly to the athlete.

Financial Benefits Available Through AAP

Athletes nominated for and approved under the Sport Canada Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) may be eligible to receive the following forms of financial support:

- Excellence Living and Training Allowance;
- Post-Secondary Tuition Support (where applicable);

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- Child Dependent Allowance;
 - Relocation Assistance;
 - Support for New Parents; and
 - Retirement Assistance.

Eligibility for these benefits is governed by the Sport Canada Athlete Assistance Program Policies and Procedures and may be subject to additional application, documentation, and approval requirements.

An athlete's carding status is subject to the obligations and commitments as detailed in Football Canada's Athlete Agreement and Sport Canada Policies and Procedures which govern the AAP and the establishment and application of criteria.

4. QUOTA

As 2026–2027 represents the inaugural year of Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) carding for Football Canada's Senior Women's National Flag Team, these criteria have been developed to reflect the current state of the program while establishing a transparent and objective framework for athlete nominations. Football Canada recognizes that both the program and the international competitive landscape will continue to evolve as we progress toward the LA 2028 Olympic Games. As a result, these criteria, processes, and performance benchmarks will be reviewed and refined annually to ensure they remain aligned with Sport Canada policies, program objectives, and the evolving needs of the national team.

For the 2026–2027 cycle, Football Canada is eligible to receive the equivalent of eight (10) Senior Cards, representing approximately \$261,000 in Athlete Assistance Program funding, subject to review and approval by Sport Canada. This allocation may be distributed between Senior and Development Cards in accordance with these criteria and Sport Canada policy. The number and value of cards allocated by Sport Canada may change, requiring adjustments to the final distribution of cards.

As an exception for this inaugural year, the 2026–2027 carding cycle will be shorter than a standard AAP cycle and will run from October 1, 2026, to April 30, 2027, representing \$152,250. Accordingly, the maximum period for which an athlete may be nominated during this cycle is seven (7) months. Beginning with the 2027–2028 carding cycle, Football Canada anticipates returning to the standard annual carding cycle and further refining these criteria based on lessons learned during this first year of implementation.

5. TYPES OF CARDING

Athletes approved by Sport Canada for the AAP may be eligible for a living and training allowance, tuition support (in a Sport Canada approved University, College program or other post-secondary institution) and deferred tuition support. This allowance is usually paid in advance every two months. Athletes funded through the AAP receive a monthly financial stipend as follows:

Carding Level	Monthly Allowance
Senior Card (SR1, SR2, SR)	\$2,175
Senior Card Health Related Circumstances (SRH)	\$2,175
Development Card (D, DH)	\$1,305

Notes:

- A) Approved athletes must be nominated for a minimum of 4 months, and up to a maximum of 12 months

6. ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS

To be eligible to be considered for support through the AAP, an athlete must:

- The athlete must be a **Canadian citizen** or **permanent resident of Canada** at the beginning of the carding cycle for which the athlete is being nominated. Permanent residents must live in Canada for the full year preceding the carding cycle for which the athlete is being considered for AAP support;
- Under the eligibility requirements of the sport's International Federation (IF) as it pertains to citizenship or residency status, the athlete must be eligible to represent Canada at major international competitions at the beginning of the carding cycle for which the athlete is being nominated;
- The athlete must participate in national team preparatory and annual training programs during the time period in which they are qualifying for AAP support;
- The athlete must be available to represent Canada in major international competitions, including World Championships and Olympic Games;
- For athletes in Olympic sports who have been permanent residents of Canada for three years or more, continued eligibility to receive AAP support is contingent on the athlete becoming eligible to represent Canada at the Olympic Games;
- The athlete must meet the published Football Canada-approved, AAP-compliant sport-specific carding criteria;
- The athlete must, at all times during the carding nomination and carding

period, be a registered and active member in good standing with both their recognized Provincial Sport Organization (PSO) and Football Canada, and must maintain all membership requirements as prescribed by each organization.

Note: Athletes are normally required to reside and train in Canada. Notwithstanding this requirement, athletes residing, training, studying, or competing outside Canada may be considered for nomination to the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP), provided Football Canada can demonstrate that the athlete remains an active member of the national team and high-performance program, adheres to an individualized annual training and competition program based on year-round training principles, and is subject to formal monitoring and evaluation by Football Canada through a National Team Coach or High Performance Director. Eligibility may include athletes participating in professional leagues where such participation supports their long-term high-performance development and national team objectives.

7. DECISION MAKING PROCESS

- Football Canada's senior national women's flag football program head coach will recommend nominations for the Sport Canada Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) to Football Canada's AAP carding selection committee.
- The Football Canada AAP carding selection committee will have final approval for nominations of the Athletes.
 - The Football Canada AAP carding selection committee will consist of:
 - High Performance Director, National Programs (the "HPD");
 - Head Coach
 - Assistant Coaches (2)
 - Independent Football Expert
 - Football Canada Athlete Representative
- Sport Canada reviews all nominations put forward by Football Canada and approves them in accordance with the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) Policies and Procedures and Football Canada approved carding criteria.

8. CARDING CATEGORIES & DEFINITIONS OVERVIEW

- A. Senior International carding criteria (SR1/SR2):
In team sports, athletes must be on the roster of the team that finishes in the top 8 and top half of the field at the most recent World Championships / Olympic Games. Athletes who meet the International Criteria are eligible to be nominated by Football Canada for two consecutive years; the first-year card is referred to as SR1; the second, SR2.
- Athletes currently carded at SR1 and who meet the criteria in the current

season may maintain their SR1 Card.

- Eligibility for an SR2 card is contingent on the athlete maintaining a training and competitive program outlined in Section 10 Football Canada Carded Athlete Requirements as approved by Football Canada (FC), on being re-nominated by FC, on signing an Athlete/FC Agreement and completing an AAP Application Form for that year.

* In Olympic years, nominations for carding at the SR1 level will only be based on results in the Olympic Summer Games.

- B. Senior National carding criteria (SR): being named to the National Team Pool prioritized by the depth chart. SR carded athletes are eligible for up to one year of AAP support. Senior National Carding Criteria (SR): Football Canada will maintain an 24-athlete Senior Women's National Flag Team roster; however, SR carding priority will be focused on athletes occupying the top 12 positions on the national team depth chart, reflecting those athletes most likely to contribute to international competition performance. Carding nominations will be based on depth chart ranking, positional requirements, card availability, and Sport Canada policies. Athletes approved for SR carding during the 2026–2027 introductory carding cycle may receive up to seven (7) months of AAP support.

C. Health-Related Circumstances

The nomination of athletes for carding due to injury, illness, pregnancy, or other health-related circumstances shall be administered in accordance with Section 9 of the Sport Canada Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) Policies and Procedures. Football Canada may nominate an athlete for a Health Card (SRH or DH), provided all applicable AAP requirements are met, and sufficient evidence is provided to support the nomination.

A previously carded athlete who has not met the standards required for renewal of carded status due solely to a health-related circumstance may be considered for re-nomination provided that:

- The athlete was carded during the carding cycle immediately preceding the cycle under consideration.
- Football Canada's carding criteria and depth chart process provide a mechanism to rank and prioritize athletes who are injured, ill, pregnant, or affected by other health-related circumstances.
- In the opinion of Football Canada, the athlete's inability to achieve the applicable renewal standards is directly attributable to an injury, illness, pregnancy, or another health-related circumstance.
- The athlete notifies Football Canada in a timely manner and provides appropriate supporting documentation, including medical confirmation identifying the date on which they were advised to reduce or cease training and/or competition activities.

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- Athletes affected by pregnancy will be prioritized in accordance with Football Canada's carding priority rankings and applicable AAP policies relating to pregnancy support.
 - The athlete commits to regular communication with Football Canada and fulfills all reasonable training, rehabilitation, recovery, or return-to-performance requirements established by Football Canada and its Integrated Support Team, or continues to follow a rehabilitation program approved by Football Canada.
 - Football Canada, based on the technical judgment of the Team Physician, High Performance Director and National Team coaching staff, reasonably expects that the athlete will be capable of achieving the minimum performance standards required for carding during the subsequent carding period.
 - The athlete has demonstrated and continues to demonstrate a long-term commitment to high-performance sport and confirms their intention to return to full high-performance training and competition at the earliest appropriate opportunity.
 - Football Canada provides the evidence required by Sport Canada to demonstrate that all applicable AAP criteria for health-related nominations have been satisfied.

Where approved, a Health Card nomination will be made at the same carding level held by the athlete during the previous carding cycle

D. Health Cards Related to Pregnancy

The AAP will, on a case-by-case basis, support those NSO sport disciplines with an assigned AAP quota (this does not apply to athletes being carded under section 2.5.5 in sports who do not meet the AAP eligibility requirements for NSOs and whose NSO does not have a sport specific AAP criteria) who recommend an athlete for a health card specifically related to pregnancy at the Senior (SR) level, and which have a priority for health-related circumstances in their sport specific criteria for SR level athletes, but who do not have the quota space to be able to card that athlete in their priority order for the upcoming carding cycle.

The AAP will support a NSO with a health card related to pregnancy at the SR level over and above the NSO's quota of cards if an athlete meets the conditions as outlined above in section 9.1.3 and is nominated by their NSO.

The AAP may consider allocating a second cycle of a health card related to pregnancy under this section should the achievement of a nomination under the sport-specific AAP criteria not be met due to ongoing health circumstances related to the pregnancy and/or birth of the child, and the NSO nominates the athlete based on the principles and conditions as outlined in section 9.1.3 above.

If after two cycles of a health-related card due to pregnancy the athlete is not able to

meet the sport-specific AAP criteria, the athlete will be decarded and will be required to meet the sport specific standards for the following cycle.

Other considerations:

- A health card that is designated for pregnancy will not count against sport specific policies around restrictions to the number of years carded for health-related circumstances at SRH or the number of consecutive years carded for health-related circumstances at SRH;
- An athlete who is supported under 9.1.4 and who has most recently been carded at the SR1 level, may be carded at the SRH level rather than the SR2 level for that cycle;
- It must be clear for a nomination for a health card related to pregnancy that the athlete was tracking towards meeting the criteria and the program commitments but was unable to due directly to their pregnancy;
- The nomination for a health card related to pregnancy through the AAP supported quota per section 9.1.4 must come from and be supported by the NSO like all other nominations and be monitored in compliance with Section 9 of this policy.

E. Non-Carded Athletes Named to an Olympic Team

Athletes who are not carded but who are named to the Canadian Olympic team by the Canadian Olympic Committee (COC) will be carded by Sport Canada at the senior national level (referred to as OLY) for a period of four months prior to the beginning of and including the Olympic Games. For summer Games, this support will be provided during May, June, July, and August. This applies to athletes who may not be carded for reasons such as living and training outside of Canada, or those unable to commit to the national team program under the regular NSO carding criteria.

Such athlete funding may be approved before the COC names its Olympic Team if the following requirements are met:

- The NSO demonstrates that the athlete has met all the requirements for participation in the upcoming Olympic/Paralympic Games including the:
 - International Federation (IF) eligibility criteria;
 - COC/CPC eligibility criteria; and
 - NSO team selection criteria.
- The NSO confirms in writing that the athlete will be nominated for Olympic/Paralympic Team selection; and
- The COC/CPC confirms in writing that, if nominated, the athlete meets all criteria for team selection and would, barring unforeseen circumstances, be named to the Olympic/Paralympic Team.

Athletes receiving this 4-month SR card will be eligible for the following AAP financial benefits during the months in which they are carded:

- Tuition (which may be deferred)
- Child Dependent Allowance

Note: Non-Carded Athletes Named to an Olympic Team are funded by Sport Canada and do not affect the Senior National Women's Flag Football Program Quota.

9. NOMINATION PROCESS

For the 2026–2027 introductory carding cycle, carding priority will be given to the top 12 athletes on the Senior Women's National Flag Team roster. All nominated athletes will receive the same level of carding support, subject to Sport Canada's card allocation and approval process. As this is the first year of the program, Football Canada expects its carding criteria to evolve in future cycles as the national team program matures.

Nominations will be provided to Sport Canada in the following Priority Rankings order:

RANKING	CRITERIA
PRIORITY 1	Athletes meeting the SR1 Criteria
PRIORITY 2	Athletes meeting SR Criteria

10. FOOTBALL CANADA DEPTH CHART DEVELOPMENT

Football Canada will establish an annual National Senior Women's Flag Football Program Depth Chart. The annual season will be from May 1 – April 30 of the following year. The Depth Chart will be determined by the National Senior Women's Flag Program Head Coach and Football Canada's High-Performance Director (or equivalent).

The Senior National Women's Flag Football Program Evaluation Criteria outlined below along with Appendix A will form the basis of building the National Senior Women's Flag Football Depth Chart. Athletes to be included on the depth chart will be as follows:

- Athlete selections will be made using Football Canada's published National Team Selection Criteria to ensure a fair, transparent, and objective evaluation process.
- All athletes who participated in the most recent annual season of the National Senior Women's Flag Football High Performance Program
- Position specific requirements to establish a competitive National Senior Women's Flag Football roster.
- Athletes occupying the top 12 positions on the Senior Women's National Flag Football High Performance Program depth chart will be prioritized for Athlete Assistance Program nominations. The depth chart rankings will be determined using the following evaluation criteria:
 1. Athletes selected to Team Canada's roster for the 2026 IFAF World Championships
 2. Athletes who participated in official Team Canada training camps and international friendly matches in the previous annual season.

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3. The National Senior Women's Flag Program Head Coach athlete evaluations
 4. Roster Design considerations based on position specific depth requirements to optimize team success at major international competitions.

11. CARDING MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for full support - 12 months of Living and Training Allowance and Tuition if applicable - an athlete in a team sport should meet the following minimum standards:

- Participate for at least 60 days of formal training and/or competition as specified in the National Team program;
- Each day with the National Team program should consist of any of the following: technical, tactical, physical or mental training with a duration and intensity appropriate to the timing of the camp or competition in the yearly training plan.
- Participate as a member of the National Team program in a minimum of one international tournament or competition during the carding cycle or following the 60-day training period.

Reduced support may be provided to athletes who participate in the National Team program for a minimum of 30 days and meet the requirements regarding an individualized annual training program and formal monitoring. This provision would normally be applied to athletes training and competing outside Canada. The level and duration of the support will be considered by Sport Canada on a case-by-case basis but will start at four months, which is the minimum length of time that a card would be considered.

12. APPEAL PROCESS

Appeals of Football Canada AAP nomination/re-nomination decision or of a Football Canada's recommendation to withdraw carding may be pursued only through the Football Canada's review process, which includes an application to the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC). Appeals of AAP Decision made under Section 6 (Application for and Approval of Cards) or Section 11 (Withdrawal of Carding Status) may be pursued through Section 13 of the AAP Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html#a15>

13. DEFINITIONS

High Performance Leadership Group (HPLG): The Football Canada High Performance Leadership Group is responsible for providing oversight and making decisions related to athlete eligibility, participation requirements, program exceptions, and other high-performance matters as outlined in this policy. The Group consists of the High Performance Director (Chair), National Team Head Coach, Integrated Support Team (IST) Lead, and Athlete Representative. Football Canada may appoint additional non-voting advisors or independent subject matter experts as required.

APPENDIX A

FOOTBALL CANADA SENIOR WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM FLAG FOOTBALL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Be identified as one of the twelve (12) athletes prioritized for nomination through the Senior Women's National Flag Football Team depth chart. For the 2026–2027 introductory carding cycle, all nominated athletes will receive an equal share of the AAP allocation available to Football Canada, subject to Sport Canada approval.

For the purposes of carding nominations, the National Team depth chart shall be based on Football Canada's athlete evaluation process as outlined in Section 10.