



USA SWIMMING: ANNUAL SUMMIT & HOUSE OF DELEGATES MEETING, DENVER, CO – Report by Cindy Rowland

I traveled with several members of Pacific Swimming Board of Directors to attend the USA Swimming (USAS) Annual Summit from September 23-26, 2026, in Denver, Colorado. The general focus of this conference was membership retention, recruiting volunteers, and understanding how to leverage SWIMS data from the new Data Hub. Many of the presentations leaned into exploring LSC best practices and several LSC leaders were asked to participate in the sessions in a formal way, including our own General Chair Lehla Irwin, who presented details about Pacific Swimming's grant programming at **Aligning for Impact: LSC Resources and USA Swimming Priorities** and our Officials Chair Phil Grant, who presented information on training opportunities within our LSC at the **Training Enrichment Within the Officiating Certification Standards for LSC Officials Chairs** session.

- Sessions and events I attended included:

- **Your Voice, Our Future: The LSC Task Force Town Hall** – This presentation was all the findings from the LSC Task Force over the last year. This data was presented to the Board of Directors to help determine the path forward for the USA Swimming and the LSCs. I have asked for a copy of the slide deck, but that request is still pending. It was very interesting how they illustrated the variability in LSCs from membership, finances, member cost, and geographical size, but no one has replied to that request. The Task Force found this feedback consistently across the country:
 - LSCs find value in interacting with USA Swimming staff directly and/or in person.
 - Creative solutions will need to be implemented to address a changing volunteer base.
 - Competition is a fundamental part of the sport and incredibly important to our athletes' success.
 - Local leadership is important, valued and essential for nationwide success.
 - Stacking USAS and LSC rules can cause confusion and a sometimes-unnecessary operational burden.
 - Reduced administrative burden on clubs/LSCs allows effort to be spent on specific sports strategy.
 - Clubs are best positioned to impact athletes and should be viewed as USAS's primary customer.
 - In many ways we're doing well; we should always strive to be better.

We were told that "change is coming", but the Task force could not specify when, or quantify what, that change would be. In previously published board minutes, the task force stated their focus is on aligning LSC structures and services with the USAS Board approved strategic pillars, emphasizing membership growth, retention, professionalism, and improved competition access, so any changes coming will support those goals.

- **The Flywheel Effect: Aligning Leaders for Greater Impact** – The primary purpose of this session was to provide examples of the LSC actions that support the Pillars of the Sport, which is defined in the USA Swimming Flywheel ([a concept based upon Jim Collins' work From Good to Great](#)).

These pillars define the key objectives of the organization to build the momentum to achieve the desired results: these are Grow the Sport, Strengthen the Organization, Elevate Performance, Inspire Members and

Fans. There were 4 LSC presentations that represented each pillar, then we split into groups to discuss one of the pillars and considered ideas that would support that pillar's goal. We were with many of the Sierra Nevada (SN) LSC members and we discussed an item that was action at the time, working to add SN to our Pacific Coast All-Star meet in 2027 and to explore other competitive opportunities between our LSCs.



- **State of the Sport, Kevin Ring** – Unfortunately there isn't a transcript or video of this State of the Sport address, but the speech was well received, and the

overall reaction was approval and appreciation for the work done so far and the plans for the coming years.

- **The Documents That Shape Our Work** – This session shifted as the presenter had to depart early to avoid a weather system. This became Q&A for Eric Stimson, Ty Gibbs, and other staff members as we discussed membership/SWIMS challenges this season and some of the issues that lead to those challenges. I did learn that USAS staff member Julie Ferrara is bilingual and can help if you have a Spanish-speaking member that needs assistance with translation services. There is also a number of reports being developed to help with camp and team selection by times etc.
- **Western Zone Meeting** – Announced 2027 WZAG hosted by DART at North Natomas Aquatic Center, August 4-7, 2027, with plans for 2028 at Elk Grove and 2029 at Mt. Hood, Oregon. Monica Warren (PC-WCAB) was announced as WZ athlete junior representative. Scott Shea and Lisa Vetterlein were re-elected after running unopposed.
- **Aligning for Impact: LSC Resources and USA Swimming Priorities** – This session featured four LSC leaders that explained how they use LSC resources to help achieve shared LSC and USAS goals. I am including the very detailed information Lehlá Irwin wrote in her report below (italicized text):
 - *Tony Young (IN): grants and Club Recognition are used to support stronger team organizations; Indiana's strongest reported improvement was partnerships. Examples included the Natatorium, high school/club overlap, collegiate programs, camps, coach education, and athlete education.*
 - *Indiana reported that meet fees are a major driver of its LSC budget and support staff and member services.*
 - *Collegiate partnerships with Indiana University, Purdue, and Ball State support coach education, athlete education, camps, and broader LSC development.*
 - *Paige Sikkema (GU): Gulf's Board is largely coach-led; staff and the Finance Committee have focused on growing finances and directing resources to member support.*
 - *Gulf created a subsidized coach clinic (discounted hotel), provided meals/snacks and guest speakers at a low daily registration cost, and pairs an officials' clinic with coach education to create both an educational and social event.*
 - *Created a Coach Assistance Fund after a coach experienced a health crisis.*
 - *Gulf staff discussed using the LSC SWIMS Dashboard and using/feeding meet statistics into AI/analytics to better understand meet finances and margins.*
 - *San Diego is using financial incentives: year-end recognition for officials with the most sessions worked and recognition for teams with strong retention.* They also indicated they used 5% annually of their investment portfolio valued at just over \$5M to support their LSC programs.
 - *Pacific presented Club Grant Program, DDEI Grants, Firestorm/Covid Emergency Grants, Travel Support, and MEFAP.* We also discussed our Investment Portfolio, how much of it was used on an annual basis and the various ways we have used it over time, including support of Olympic Trials, Club Grants, Emergency Grants. One consistent factor in these large LSCs was each had 2 or more paid staff members to help support the LSC.
- **LSC Development Committee Meeting** – During its regular meeting, the committee reviewed the status of the LSC Evaluation and Achievement Program (LEAP) and updates to the LEAP Resource Library. It also announced openings for a new athlete representative and two additional members to replace those whose terms end in 2026.
- **Annual House of Delegates** – There are now only 57 LSCs as Lake Erie and Ohio merged and so did Maine and New England. Tom Dolan and Tom Ugast were elected to the USAS Board as At-Large Members. The legislation proposed was not controversial and was turned back for committee review or amended and passed as amended.
- **Virtuent Wealth Management Presentation on Digital Assets** - I attended this presentation of an institutional overview of the digital asset landscape. Featuring Matt Hougán, CIO at Bitwise Asset Management and CFA Institute author, this session traced the technological evolution of blockchain, unpacked key architectural shifts, and examined today's rapidly changing ecosystem. There was basic explanations of the primary types of cryptocurrencies, an explanation of how and why they developed, and why the presenter believes they are positioned to be an investment with great return potential over the next 10-20 years.