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Date: June 17, 2026

Version: 1.0

## Phase 1 Public Record

# Fencing Governance, Revenue Structure, and the **Universal Federated Organization** Proposal

A study of Form, Structure, and Motive

for the development of **Agency, Standing, and Governance**

This document is a public record for critique.

It is not a business launch, a request for money, an accusation of personal corruption, or a claim to represent USA Fencing, the FIE, the IOC, any club, vendor, manufacturer, athlete, or federation.

This is a structural proposal.

The purpose of **Phase 1** is to publish the proposal, engage the community, invite criticism, and **determine whether a basis for consensus exists.**

## 1. Vice, Distortion, and Corruption

Vice is **action** governed by appetite. Distortion is the product of competing **obligations**. Corruption is vice **organized** to a degree that destabilizes otherwise functional structures.

When one institutional appliance is made to serve competing functions, the structure begins to distort the motives it is meant to express.

**In fencing equipment certification**, the concern is not that certification fees, authenticity signaling, anti-counterfeit enforcement, institutional revenue, safety verification, or market access are corrupt applications in themselves. Each may serve a legitimate purpose. The concern is that the proposed certification-fee model appears to resolve multiple functions through one institutional appliance: **a label**.

That **does not prove personal corruption**. It does not even prove that the proposed model is irrational. It does, however, make structural distortion more visible. When the same institutional appliance recognizes equipment, sets fees, grants access, signals authenticity, discloses cost, and receives revenue, the community cannot clearly distinguish whether a decision is being made for safety, solvency, authority, or institutional vice.

That ambiguity is the structural problem. It does not prove vice, but it prevents vice from being coherently ruled out.

This proposal suggests that structure can be designed so that each legitimate function becomes observable, each revenue stream becomes productive, and each party can be treated with the dignity proper to its role.

## 2. The Basic Problem

Fencing gear is safety equipment. Nobody wants unsafe gear. Certification matters. Durability is non-negotiable. The issue is that **certification, market access, revenue collection, authenticity, and cost pressure** appear to be coupled too tightly into **the same mechanism**.

When certification fees and label requirements increase, manufacturers either absorb or pass those costs forward. Vendors then face higher wholesale costs. Fencers and parents face higher retail prices. Prices rise, participation becomes more expensive, smaller legitimate suppliers are pressured, vendor margin tightens, counterfeit incentives increase, and distrust grows.

That creates a negative feedback loop.

Higher certification burden increases gear cost.

Higher gear cost reduces participation and legitimate channel volume.

Lower participation and weaker volume increase institutional pressure for revenue.

That pressure can create more reliance on certification and label fees.

The loop reinforces itself.

This proposal suggests that loop can be exited.

### **3. The Deeper Issue: Distortion**

The problem is not simply that a fee exists. The problem is that too many competing demands are routed through certification.

Certification is being asked to carry:

- safety verification,
- authenticity signaling,
- anti-counterfeit enforcement,
- market access,
- fee-setting,
- cost disclosure,
- and institutional revenue.

The proposal is to un-tether those functions and direct them productively through the operating structure:

Certification should certify safety exclusively.

Records and labels should verify supply chain integrity.

Operations should be funded by accession.

Revenue should be generated through function.

Surplus should develop capacity.

Certification cost should not function as a toll imposed through the price of gear.

# I. Agency

## **4. The Participation Model**

The proposed model (appliance) works like this.

A customer pays a subscription to access a continuity platform. When a new piece of gear is purchased through the platform (from a vendor), a contract may also be purchased for that same item (through the platform).

The member pays into that contract over time. When the gear is outgrown, reaches a contract maturity event, suffers a major failure, or otherwise qualifies under the contract, the contract value is routed through the participating vendor/manufacturer supply chain to replace the gear according to the contract. Once a full replacement occurs, the contract is complete. The replacement item requires a new contract.

The benefit is not that gear becomes free. The benefit is that legitimate gear becomes less expensive, less financially volatile, and more efficiently routed through verified supply channels.

## **5. What It Is, What It Isn't**

This is a platform that would handle defined contract events that materially affect participation cost: outgrowth, major failure, repeated failure, maturity replacement, manufacturer defect, or other events clearly stated in the contract.

This is not a general repair desk. Routine maintenance remains local unless a specific higher-tier contract states otherwise.

## **6. Revenue Separation**

The model depends on separating revenue streams.

Subscription revenue funds operations: staff, administration, accounting, records, platform maintenance, vendor coordination, manufacturer coordination, and overhead.

Gear-continuity contract revenue funds the replacement and service obligations attached to eligible equipment.

Contract revenue is not operating revenue. It first satisfies contract obligations, required reserves, restricted member balances, and pass-through requirements.

Only after those contract-side requirements are satisfied does contract surplus exist.

The first mandatory use of contract surplus is certification-cost clearing. **This is not optional. If surplus does not clear certification cost, the structure fails its purpose and risks becoming another toll layer.**

Where material testing or certification capacity is required to achieve clearing, that capacity is part of the certification operation. Labs, testing records, standards administration, and recognition processes are not discretionary projects. They are operating infrastructure of the clearinghouse.

Surplus is not free profit. It is assigned capacity, and its first assignment is certification-cost clearing.

## **7. The Counterfeit Issue**

The anti-counterfeit mechanism is not merely a registry. It is the structure. A counterfeit item can exist outside the circuit, but it cannot easily receive benefits inside the circuit because it cannot reconcile across the member record, vendor sale record, and manufacturer allocation record.

It cannot receive replacement credit, participate in certification-cost clearing or benefit from the charter. The system does not need to police every fake item in the world. It needs to define what is eligible inside the circuit.

## **8. The Financial Test**

This model must pass a cash test.

If fencers pay subscription and contract fees but receive the same gear at the same effective price as the alternative proposal then, the model fails.

At minimum, the combined cost of subscription and gear-continuity contracts must be lower than the certification-cost burden imposed by the alternative model.

Otherwise, the program merely replaces one toll with another.

Any certification-cost reduction achieved through the charter must pass through to the fencer as lower gear price, lower replacement price, direct credit, or contract-applied replacement value.

It cannot be captured as hidden margin by the platform, vendor, manufacturer, federation, or certifying authority.

Intrinsic value may emerge from trust, transparency, continuity, and better governance, but that value cannot be used to prove the financial claim.

## **9. Fair labor and procedure before automation**

### **The model must pay competent people fairly from the beginning.**

It cannot depend on unpaid enthusiasm, underpaid administrators, volunteer complexity, hidden founder labor, or unpriced work extracted from clubs, armorers, vendors, manufacturers, federations, or regional bodies.

### **This requirement is not only ethical. It is structural.**

A model that depends on hidden labor is already mispricing itself. If labor is necessary to make the structure work, then that labor is part of the cost of the structure. It cannot be treated as informal surplus, founder sacrifice, club goodwill, or volunteer obligation.

### **Unpriced labor distorts integrity.**

If labor is necessary but not accounted for, the model produces false surplus by transferring cost onto people while presenting that transfer as efficiency, goodwill, or commitment. If the model cannot pay the labor required to operate it, then the model has not yet demonstrated its own solvency.

### **The same principle applies to procedure.**

Before the model can be automated, it must be understandable on paper. The charter must define how subscriptions fund operations, how gear-continuity contracts function, how reserves are maintained, how eligibility is determined, how replacement events are verified, how member balances are protected, how surplus is assigned, how conflicts are controlled, and how decisions can be audited.

### **The procedure must be resolved before it is automated.**

A person should be able to read the charter and understand what the structure is allowed to do, what it is not allowed to do, what funds are restricted, what events trigger obligations, who has authority to decide, and how errors are corrected.

### **Software may automate declared procedure. It may not invent policy after the fact.**

If a platform changes the practical terms of the charter, that is not merely a software update. It is a charter amendment.

**If the structure cannot pay capable personnel fairly, declare procedure clearly, and remain legible before automation, it should not form.**

## **10. Charter before Capital**

The ordinary startup sequence is usually: raise money, build something, search for revenue, adjust terms, and eventually discover what the business is willing to become in order to keep producing return.

This proposal works in the opposite order.

**The motive of this structure is not value extraction. The motive is capacity development:**

reducing barriers to entry and continuation, growing participation, and reliably funding the infrastructure required to keep the sport safe, fair, and reviewable.

**The charter comes before capital.**

First, publish the charter and invite public criticism.

Second, determine whether there is enough interest from the actual parties in the circuit: fencers, parents, clubs, vendors, manufacturers, domestic federations, regional bodies, the international certifying authority, and the IOC.

Third, if there is sufficient interest, launch a conditional accession campaign with a minimum threshold.

**The campaign is not an open-ended fundraiser. It is a threshold test under declared terms.** If the threshold is not met, no structure forms and no funds are retained. If funds are collected during the threshold period, they must be held under clear refund or escrow terms defined before the campaign begins. If the threshold is met, the operating structure forms under the charter. If the charter must materially change, the process returns to public critique before accession.

## **11. Conditions of Formation**

The charter must define its terms before anyone is asked to contribute money, labor, institutional support, or trust. **This is a condition of formation.** The charter must define not only what the structure does, but which part of the structure is authorized to do it.

**The charter must define:**

what the structure is allowed to do,  
what the structure is not allowed to do,  
which office or entity performs the operating function,  
which office or entity preserves the public terms of the charter,  
which office or entity holds restricted balances, reserves, credits, or clearing funds,  
how revenue is collected,  
how subscriptions fund operations,  
how gear-continuity contracts function,  
how contract revenue is restricted,  
how reserves are maintained,  
how member balances are protected,  
how certification cost is cleared,  
how certification capacity is reviewed,  
how vendors and manufacturers participate,  
how gear eligibility is determined,  
how contract events are verified and handled,  
how surplus is defined,  
how surplus is allocated,  
how certification-cost clearing is distinguished from operating revenue,  
how conflicts of interest are controlled,  
how the operator is reviewed,  
how the steward is constrained,  
how the custody function is protected from policy control,  
how the structure can be audited,  
how the charter can be amended,  
how material changes return to public critique,  
how fair compensation is approved,  
how participating parties can raise objections,  
and how the structure is dissolved if it violates its purpose.

**The operating body should not be the sole interpreter of the charter.**

**The stewardship body should not freely spend restricted balances.**

**The custody body should not set policy.**

These separations may require distinct legal entities, or distinct offices within a legally reviewed structure. The final legal form must be reviewed before accession. But the functional separation must be declared before formation. **If these terms cannot be declared, criticized, and accepted before formation, the model should not launch.**

## **II. Standing**

## 12. The Institutional Condition

The authority of governance is not merely the status to recognize equipment. It is the capacity to administer certification procedure under review. A region, federation, or governing ring becomes competent not by claiming status, but by demonstrating the procedural capacity to test, document, verify, reconcile, and submit its certification function to observation.

Sovereign certification capacity therefore matters. Without the capacity to administer certification procedure, a region remains dependent on an external appliance. Without review, that appliance remains opaque.

More importantly, if the source of strain on the institution's motive cannot be identified and assigned to the function producing it, then coherent refutation of corruption becomes difficult. The institution may be acting from legitimate safety, solvency, or administrative concerns, but if those concerns are carried through the same appliance, the structure prevents the parties from seeing which motive is actually governing the decision.

That is why observability matters. A structure capable of distinguishing safety cost, institutional revenue, market access, authenticity, and participation burden gives each party a way to answer criticism without collapsing into accusation. Without that distinction, even good-faith action can appear corrupt because the source of the strain cannot be located.

A certifying authority participating in this model must distinguish certification operation from general institutional revenue. Testing, lab capacity, standards administration, quality control, traceability, and recognition processes must be separately accounted for, reviewable, and tied to a declared cost schedule.

A gear-continuity platform can help fencers, parents, clubs, vendors, and manufacturers. It can organize participation, contracts, records, replacement value, vendor/manufacturer routing, and cost-clearing procedure.

But a gear-continuity platform cannot itself govern certification.

Certification depends on authority: the power to recognize standards, administer testing, validate records, accept reciprocal review, and determine what counts as legitimate equipment. That authority belongs to the governance layer, not to the operating appliance.

For that reason, the platform can demonstrate the need for certification-cost clearing, but it cannot complete that clearing while the certification function remains outside review. At most, it would be a gear-continuity service operating under the existing regime.

**Certification-cost clearing requires the certification function itself to become observable.**

If the existing certification authority remains the sole price-setter, sole reviewer, sole recipient, and sole interpreter of certification cost, then a new contribution to certification can become tribute by another name.

That would not be cost clearing. It would be the old regime wearing new language. For that reason, certification review must be foundational to governance.

### **13. Why Olympic-Cycle Support Matters**

The FIE's reported revenue structure suggests a deeper sustainability issue, but the problem is not limited to the finances of one federation.

The strategic question is how Olympic-cycle support is converted into durable sport capacity.

The IOC is not being asked to administer fencing equipment. Nor is the proposal asking the IOC to choose between certification and participation as competing businesses. Certification is the material foundation of legitimate sport. Safety standards, testing, homologation, equipment control, lab capacity, and technical review make international competition possible.

The participation model is different. It is a revenue appliance inside a structured ecosystem built on material safety certification.

The question is whether Olympic-cycle support should help build the governance interface through which certification, participation revenue, regional development, vendor/manufacturer integrity, and institutional accountability reinforce one another.

If support enters a structure whose revenue interface is mismatched to the function being developed, that support can reproduce dependency. It can preserve the appearance of administration while leaving the underlying participation economy strained.

The proposal therefore treats fencing as a demonstration case.

The claim is not that a participation model is "better than certification." Certification remains the material foundation of legitimate sport. **The claim is that a participation model built upon reviewable safety certification is a more productive use of Olympic-cycle support than general reform pressure, institutional maintenance, or unstructured incentives that do not define the governance interface through which reform is supposed to occur.**

Structuring support in this way would do several things at once:

- Reinforce participation capacity.
- Support the legitimate equipment circuit.
- Align participation growth with the broadcast and media value that funds the Olympic system, while reducing the concentration of that value in already-developed geographies.
- Encourage regions to become capable contributors rather than dependent recipients.
- Foster constructive international dialogue through shared standards, reciprocal review, and co-operative competition rather than through institutional pressure alone.
- Reduce strain on the overall Olympic system by distributing capacity more equitably.

Where the commercial burden of Olympic sport is concentrated in high-contributing markets, support should be converted into productive regional capacity rather than dependency upon those same markets.

In this sense, the proposal is not merely a fencing equipment proposal, it is a question about Olympic development form.

If the Olympic movement supports sport through federations, then both structures matter: **the structure of the federation receiving support is just as important as the structure of the institution providing it.** Support does not move neutrally. It is shaped by the institutional interface through which it is collected, assigned, distributed, and reviewed.

A supporting institution that depends heavily on value produced in already-developed markets must be careful not to reproduce that same dependency through the structures it funds. If Olympic-cycle support merely maintains federations without developing regional capacity, it can preserve the symptoms of dependency rather than remedy them.

For that reason, the proposal treats participation infrastructure as a governance question, not merely a business opportunity. The structure providing support must be capable of converting concentrated revenue into distributed capacity: regional certification development, participation access, legitimate equipment channels, reciprocal review, and sovereign contribution from regions that would otherwise remain dependent recipients.

The participation structure then becomes the appliance by which the sport develops revenue, engagement, and continuity without forcing the equipment-price bottleneck to carry institutional imbalance.

# III. Governance

## **14. Regional Certification Capacity**

**Regional certification capacity cannot be created merely by operating the contract function.**

The contract function is an accredited participation appliance. It may be approved by the governing structure to administer subscriptions, contracts, records, replacement value, vendor routing, and member reconciliation inside a region. But accreditation of the contract function does not certify equipment, create material safety authority, or establish governance sovereignty.

**Authority is a function of capacity.**

A region's relation to the larger circuit should therefore be determined by what it is capable of doing. If a region only purchases eligible equipment from outside producers, it functions primarily as an aggregate purchaser or vendor channel. If it maintains records, verifies eligibility, manages replacement events, and reconciles vendor and member data, it has operational capacity. If it develops manufacturing relationships or produces eligible material, it begins to acquire productive authority over its supply. If it can test, document, verify, and submit certification procedure to reciprocal review, it develops certification capacity.

**The purpose of regional surplus is to move a geography upward through those capacities.**

An accredited regional contract function therefore maintains a surplus obligation to develop the region's own productive and certification capacity. That surplus should not be treated as discretionary profit or extracted from the geography without regard to the capacity of the region that generated it. It should be assigned toward declared development: vendor networks, repair competence, coaching and gateway gear, manufacturing relationships, testing partnerships, standards administration, equipment lifecycle records, certification procedure, audit capacity, and governance competence.

The goal is not for every region to invent its own standard. The goal is for each region to develop the capacity to participate in a common standard without remaining permanently dependent on an external valve.

A geography that generates participation should have a path to produce, verify, certify, or govern on its own behalf under reciprocal review. Until it develops that capacity, it participates in the circuit according to the capacity it actually maintains.

**This is how participation becomes sovereignty.**

## 15. The UFO

The larger proposal is a new governance form: the **Universal Federated Organization**. In the fencing case study, that institution would be the **Universal Fencing Organization** or an existing fencing authority restructured to meet the designated form. The name is less important than the structure.

The purpose of the governance ring is not to replace one institutional label with another. Its purpose is to preserve distinction between the functions that the current structure appears to collapse: safety certification, market access, institutional revenue, participation development, custody, regional capacity, and public recourse.

The international governing ring could retain an existing name if it adopts the required form. What matters is not the label. What matters is whether the institution adheres to the structure, form, and motive required by the charter.

**FIE in name is acceptable.**

**FIE in unchanged structure is not.**

The proposed governance ring would not merely control access from the center. It would define the conditions under which regions, federations, manufacturers, vendors, contract operators, certification bodies, and custody offices may participate in the circuit.

Its task is to make authority a function of capacity.

A region should not receive authority merely because it claims status. A region should receive authority according to the capacity it can demonstrate: operational capacity, productive capacity, certification capacity, audit capacity, and governance competence under reciprocal review.

**The proposed governance ring therefore requires:**

distributed certification capacity,  
regional certification development,  
regional surplus assignment toward productive capacity,  
reciprocal review,  
transparent certification accounting,  
declared certification-cost schedules,  
separation of safety authority from revenue extraction,  
separation of operation, stewardship, and custody,  
regional participation regimes which distinguish accreditation and authority,  
pass-through of cleared certification cost to participants,  
public recourse if the structure violates its purpose,  
and a procedure for amendment, correction, or dissolution if one function begins to absorb the others.

The point is not to abolish international standards. The point is to preserve standards by separating them from the revenue rail that currently makes the structure appear distorted.

A common standard can remain international while capacity becomes regionally developed. A region may begin as an aggregate purchaser or vendor channel, develop operational capacity through records and reconciliation, acquire productive authority through manufacturing or supply relationships, and eventually develop certification capacity through testing, documentation, and reciprocal review.

The Universal Fencing Organization is therefore not merely a proposed successor body. It is the name given to a governance form in which safety, participation, certification, revenue, custody, and regional authority can be distinguished before they are allowed to operate together.

## 16. Discussion

**Phase 1** asks for criticism, correction, and referral. Not money. Not endorsement. Consider the structure being proposed and to identify where it is accurate, incomplete, impractical, or wrong:

What is certification being asked to do?

What should certification be allowed to do?

Where does the cost of safety become a barrier to participation?

Where does legitimate safety cost end and institutional toll begin?

Who should be able to review certification cost?

How should labels be used?

What revenue streams currently support the sport, and what behaviors do they reward?

When revenue is collected through equipment access, who ultimately bears the burden?

If a different revenue model were introduced, what governance interface would it require?

What should Olympic-cycle support develop?

How should concentrated commercial value be converted into distributed sport capacity?

What makes a region a capable contributor rather than a dependent recipient?

How can a global sport encourage regional sovereignty without fragmenting standards?

What should remain centralized?

What should become regionally distributed?

What should remain informal, local, and outside the platform entirely?

What would make a continuity model useful to fencers and families?

What would make it feel like another fee layer?

What would make vendors or manufacturers willing to participate?

What would make clubs trust or reject the structure?

What would make the model fail?

If the existing structure is adequate, by what measure?

If the proposed structure is inadequate, by what measure?

Can a business model change anything meaningful if the adjacent governance model remains unchanged?

**The purpose of these questions is to make the true domain of disagreement visible.**

## 17. Closing statement

The problem described in this record begins with certification cost, but it does not end there.

Price is the visible symptom of a deeper loss of distinction. When safety, market access, authenticity, institutional revenue, participation cost, and governance authority are carried through the same appliance, the institution loses the ability to identify the governing motive of a decision. A rule may be justified as safety, experienced as access control, priced as institutional revenue, and defended as legitimacy. Under those conditions, even good-faith administration becomes difficult to distinguish from structural corruption.

### **The proposed structure is intended to develop integrity by creating distinction.**

Certification, participation revenue, custody, governance, and Olympic-cycle support should not collapse into one another. Each function should be able to operate, be reviewed, and be corrected without absorbing the others.

Certification should remain materially authoritative because safety is the foundation of legitimate competition. Participation revenue should develop the field rather than consume it. Governance should preserve enough distance between certification, revenue, market access, custody, and accountability that each function can be reviewed without absorbing the others. Olympic-cycle support should convert concentrated value into distributed regional capacity rather than reproduce dependency through the structures it funds.

Therefore, the Universal Fencing Organization proposal is not merely an argument about price, practice, or lineage. It is a claim about dignity.

An institution preserves dignity when its necessary functions can face one another without disguise. A structure that cannot distinguish safety from revenue, participation from access control, custody from operation, or governance from institutional self-preservation cannot preserve the dignity of the parties who must pass through it.

If an existing institution can adopt the required form, continuity under the existing name remains possible. If it cannot, then a new governance ring is not a rival brand but a structural necessity: a form capable of preserving distinction before authority, revenue, certification, custody, and participation are allowed to operate together.

**Good faith requires structure.**