



## **OVERVIEW**

### **Mission/Vision**

The mission of USRowing's America Rows program is to support inclusion and diversity in the sport of rowing. Inclusion in sport means that individual differences are embraced and respected. USRowing is passionate about recruiting and retaining the most skilled professionals and athletes, and it recognizes that diversity will strengthen the sport of rowing by changing the lives of all participants.

America Rows also aims to increase awareness of rowing and create a national appreciation for the sport, in particular, highlighting its advantages for underrepresented youth, people with disabilities and people of all ages, socioeconomic circumstances and fitness levels.

The America Rows program is breaking down the barriers that have limited widespread public participation in rowing. In the world that we envision, when people think of rowing, they think of their local rowing center, community center, middle school, high school, college or university, where people of all ages, economic, cultural, ethnic and demographic backgrounds participate. They recognize that rowing is a way to bring people with disabilities into the heart of their communities, to experience freedom on the water and to attain physical and mental fitness. They look forward to getting together with other rowers in their communities to erg, scull and sweep, to support rowing scholarships for deserving athletes and to cheer on local and national champions, as they race all across the nation and globe.

### **History**

Launched in 2010, America Rows is USRowing's fastest growing, nationwide initiative. USRowing first broke major barriers in the 1970s following the passage of Title IX. After competitive rowing ceased to be dominated by eastern schools, it was still male-dominated. It wasn't until 1972 with the passage of Title IX, which requires gender equity in every educational program receiving federal funding, that collegiate rowing programs for women surged. At the 1976 Olympics, women rowers were allowed to participate for the first time. The U.S. team, captained by Anita DeFrantz – the first African-American woman medalist in the sport, returned from Montreal with a bronze medal in the women's eight event.

Nevertheless, it wasn't until 1997 that the NCAA established women's rowing as its 22<sup>nd</sup> championship sport.

That recognition opened a wellspring of college scholarships for women. Today, more than 7,750 women row their way to graduation, with the vast majority awarded scholarships to do so. U.S. women have become a powerhouse in international rowing competitions and the Olympics.

Building on the success with the inclusion of women, in 2006, USRowing formed the USRowing Taskforce on Accessibility, Affordability and Diversity. The taskforce included representatives from all over the United States, as well as USRowing Board Members and staff, university and high school rowing coaches, stand-alone community outreach rowing programs and world-class male and female rowers.

The role of the taskforce was to:

1. Provide internal and external guidance and assessment to the organization and membership.
2. Evangelize diversity and inclusion throughout USRowing's membership and organization.
3. Address the challenges, barriers and opportunities, and implement nationwide strategic inclusion initiatives.

The taskforce held several nationwide diversity workshops. What became evident from the sessions was that there was a social class perception that many believed rowing was a sport only for wealthy whites. This perception created a barrier to entry for most Americans and even more so for the underserved urban youth. Also notable was the lack of underserved and economically disadvantaged youth at all levels of rowing. Additionally, there was the need to develop and expand programming for our diverse population with disabilities. To become more inclusive and increase the participation and awareness of rowing to America's underserved youth and people with disabilities, USRowing created America Rows.

America Rows is a nationwide diversity and inclusion initiative aimed at increasing awareness of rowing and introducing the sport of rowing to a diverse group of Americans – specifically, the underserved urban – as well as rural – youth who otherwise may not have the opportunity to participate in rowing, as well as persons with physical and/or intellectual disabilities. America Rows programs provide rowing opportunities, personal development and a platform to help underrepresented youth and persons with disabilities.

**Core Goals of America Rows are to:**

1. Increase participation of underrepresented, economically disadvantaged youth and persons with disabilities.
2. Partner with other organizations and agencies to achieve our mission.
3. Educate and increase awareness of our diversity and inclusion mission.
4. Provide the resources that are necessary to create and support community outreach programs, as well as provide diversity programming.

5. Ensure that sustainable systems and structures are in place within the organization that foster inclusion throughout our rowing community.
6. Establish a fund to support the diversity and inclusion initiatives.
7. Recruit, train and mentor racial and ethnic minority men and women to become rowing coaches.

### **Why commit to becoming an America Rows Affiliate?**

America Rows is a public commitment by individuals and rowing organizations to take measurable steps to improve diversity and inclusion within the sport of rowing. Each organization will be able to set its own agenda, i.e. create a rowing community that reflects the diversity of their community. The America Rows affiliation will be renewed each year based on the organization supplying progress information that was established the previous year by that organization. All participating organizations will be permitted to use the America Rows logo on their website and printed materials. Organizations that apply also will be listed on USRowing's website as organizations that promote and support diversity in rowing.

## **America Rows Affiliate Program - FAQs**

### **What is America Rows?**

America Rows, created in 2010, is a nationwide diversity and inclusion initiative aimed at increasing awareness of rowing and introducing the sport of rowing to a diverse group of Americans. Specifically, the program focuses on underserved urban and rural youth who otherwise may not have the opportunity to participate in rowing and persons with physical and intellectual disabilities. America Rows programs will provide rowing opportunities, personal development and a platform to help underrepresented youth and persons with disabilities.

### **Opportunity to inspire cultural change within the sport of rowing**

In order to reach as many potential rowers as possible and to spread the word and mission about America Rows, USRowing will partner with USRowing member organizations. The partners will be known as America Rows Affiliates, with the goal of 100% participation throughout USRowing's organizational membership.

### **The Plan**

Create a nationwide network of rowing programs that are committed to providing rowing opportunities to America's underserved youth and people with disabilities.

### **Who can become an America Rows Affiliate?**

Any small or large for profit and nonprofit rowing organization, school districts, universities, youth development agencies, parks and recreation departments and summer league programs and medical and rehabilitative outpatient centers.

### **Does our organization need to be a USRowing member organization?**

No matter what type of organization you are, in order to become an America Rows Affiliate, you must first become a USRowing organizational member.

**What if our program is a startup and we don't have the budget for a USRowing membership?**

We want our sport to be accessible to people of all economic backgrounds, so upon request, we will vet your organization to see if you qualify for an USRowing outreach membership.

**How do we sign up for an organizational membership?**

Click on this link <http://www.usrowing.org/About/MembershipBenefits.aspx> or email [members@usrowing.org](mailto:members@usrowing.org).

**Why should I become an America Rows Affiliate?**

As an affiliate, your organization can make a difference within your local community and the rowing community.

**What are the benefits of partnering with USRowing?**

Your organization will:

- Become part of a national diversity and inclusion movement to offer rowing to all.
- Gain increased public awareness and teach your community about rowing.
- Help persons with mobility impairments, intellectual disabilities, and urban and rural youth become more fit and combat the national obesity crisis.
- Gain support and diversity consultation from USRowing (to existing and emerging community outreach programs.)
- Increase the ability to solicit funding in your community and provide rowing for youth who are economically disadvantaged and persons with disabilities.
- Be mentioned in America Rows and USRowing's ongoing public relations and marketing campaign.
- Be able to participate in invitation-only diversity and inclusion and community outreach programs and events.
- Become part of a growing network of hundreds of other rowing programs that have made a commitment to change lives through rowing

**May my organization use the name America Rows?**

Yes, you can use the America Rows name and logo once your completed application is verified or if you host an America Rows event. Some programs call themselves America Rows Saginaw, Austin, Cleveland etc.

**May I use sponsors for funding my local America Rows program?**

Yes, America Rows Affiliates can solicit for sponsorship, grants and foundation money.

**Will an America Rows Affiliate be able to solicit funding from USRowing?**

USRowing is not directly funding individual programs yet, but by participating in the first phase of America Rows, you will be eligible to apply for future grants and sponsorship when funding becomes available from the America Rows Fund.

### **How can I get access to more information about America Rows?**

There are several ways to receive information about America Rows. Go to [www.usrowing.org](http://www.usrowing.org) and click Domestic Rowing.

Also contact:

Adaptive Rowing Program Development Specialist Deb Arenberg, [deb@usrowing.org](mailto:deb@usrowing.org).

Corporate Sponsorships and America Rows Fund: Beth Kohl, [beth@usrowing.org](mailto:beth@usrowing.org)

### **LINKS:**

- **Website - USRowing.org/America Rows**  
<http://www.usrowing.org/DomesticRowing/AmericaRows.aspx>
- **Website - USRowing.org/Adaptive**  
<http://www.usrowing.org/DomesticRowing/AdaptiveRowing.aspx>
- **Facebook - USRowing**
- **Facebook - USRowing Para Rowing**
- **Twitter - @Americarows**
- **Twitter - @USRowing**