



**EQUESTRIAN
CANADA
ÉQUESTRE**

**SPORT CANADA ATHLETE ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM CARDING NOMINATION CRITERIA
2026 CARDING CYCLE**

Equestrian Dressage & Para Dressage

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this document is to describe the criteria that applies to the four Olympic / Paralympic disciplines that Equestrian Canada (EC) will use for nominating athletes to Sport Canada's Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) for the 2026 carding cycle.
- 1.2. The purpose of the AAP is to identify and support Canadian athletes performing at or having the greatest potential to achieve top 8 results at Olympic/Paralympic Games and Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI) World Championships.
- 1.3. The nomination of athletes to the AAP is the responsibility of EC. Sport Canada is responsible for the final approval of nominations to the AAP.
- 1.4. Sport Canada's general policies and procedures governing AAP can be found on the Sport Canada website at <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance.html>. This includes all information pertaining to the establishment and application of criteria used by EC on the recommendations for the AAP.

2. General Information

- 2.1. Support under the AAP is only available to athletes who are members of the EC National Team Program (NTP), who have executed a current EC Athlete Agreement and who meet the criteria set out below.
- 2.2. There are several grounds for the withdrawal of funding from a Carded athlete. These include voluntary withdrawal, withdrawal due to lack of participation and withdrawal for violation of agreement. Detailed information concerning grounds for withdrawal of funding is contained in the Sport Canada AAP Policy and Procedures document at <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance.html>.
- 2.3. In addition to the regular stipend, other forms of financial assistance may be available through the AAP to both current and retired Carded athletes. These include tuition and deferred tuition support, excellence living and training allowance, child dependent allowance, training and competition allowance for paralympic athletes with high support needs, relocation assistance and retirement assistance. Athletes should refer to Section 8 of the Sport Canada AAP Policy and Procedures document for further information <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html#a10>
- 2.4. The 2026 carding cycle for EC is from January 1st to December 31st, 2026.
- 2.5. Once approved, athletes must sign and return the annual EC Athlete Agreement, AAP Application form, and competitive program plan to the EC office and complete the required CCES online training courses, for Sport Canada to release any funds.



3. Number and Types of Cards

- 3.1. There are three general types of Cards: International Senior Cards; National Senior Cards; and Development Cards. Value of Cards:
- SR1: Year one of a two year International Senior Card (\$2,175 per month)
 - SR2: Year two of a two year International Senior Card (\$2,175 per month)
 - SR: National Senior Card level (\$2,175 per month)
 - D: Development Card level (\$1,305 per month)

Athletes that qualify for carding under the International Senior Card criteria are usually eligible for two years of AAP support, with the card for the first year referred to as an SR1 Card and the card for the second year referred to as an SR2 Card. In the equestrian program, the second year is subject to the athlete meeting the EC NTP criteria to be re-nominated in year 2 (SR2).

- 3.2 The current AAP funding quotas are outlined below:
- 3.2.1 Dressage funding allocation for the 2026 carding cycle equals at total of \$104,4000, Sport Canada regularly reviews its carding allocation; therefore, this amount is subject to change. Athletes will be nominated for AAP funding based on the annual December 1st, EC NTP Dressage Ranking. For an athlete to be considered for a partial card there must be a minimum of four (4) months of funding available for that partial card.
- 3.2.2 Para Dressage funding allocation for the 2026 carding cycle equals at total of \$104,400. Sport Canada regularly reviews its carding allocation; therefore, this amount is subject to change. Athletes will be nominated for AAP funding based on the annual December 1st, EC NTP Para Dressage Ranking. For an athlete to be considered for a partial card there must be a minimum of four (4) months of funding available for that partial card.

3.3 Reallocation of Funding Within Discipline

- 3.3.1 Notwithstanding the number of cards indicated in section 3.2, should a discipline have funding available that equals the equivalent of four (4) or more months in carding funds, those funds will be reallocated within the same discipline to the next ranked eligible athlete(s) nominated for carding. This funding will be reallocated in the form of a partial card.

Other Disciplines

- 3.3.2 Should a discipline be unable to allocate the full financial value of its AAP Carding, those funds will be combined with funds from other disciplines that are also unable to allocate the full financial value of their AAP Carding for reallocation as outlined in this section.
- 3.3.3 Reallocated funds for the 2026 calendar year will be awarded to the discipline that had the best team performance score at the 2024 Olympic / Paralympic Games. The team performance score is calculated by taking the discipline's final team placing divided by the number of entries at the Olympic / Paralympic Games. The scores are compared



across a common denominator. The discipline with the lowest score after applying this formula earns the reallocated funds.

- 3.3.4 A discipline without a team does not earn a score.
- 3.3.5 In the event of a tie in team performance scores, the discipline with the highest average individual placing will earn the reallocated funds.
- 3.3.6 If no discipline earns a team performance score, the discipline with the highest average individual placing will earn the reallocated funds.
- 3.3.7 Should the discipline to which the reallocated funds are awarded be without an athlete qualified as per their individual criteria to receive the reallocated funds, the discipline with the 2nd best team performance score at the Olympic / Paralympic Games will be substituted followed by the discipline with the 3rd best team performance score and followed by the discipline with the 4th best team performance score.

4. Priority of Nominations

- 4.1 The annual funding allocations are prioritized as per the criteria below until funding is exhausted. There needs to be a minimum of four months of funding for allocation of a partial card.
 - Priority 1: Athletes who meet the International Senior (SR1/SR2) Card criteria
 - Priority 2: Athletes who meet the National Senior (SR) Card, or
 - Priority 3: Development (D) Card criteria
 - Priority 4: Athlete who were carded in the prior funding year, but fail to meet renewal criteria for health-related reasons.

5. Maximum Number of Years of AAP Support

4.2 National Senior Cards

- 4.2.1 An athlete at the National Senior (SR) Card level is expected to make progress in their results to maintain National Senior Card status.
- 4.2.2 An athlete will only receive a National Senior (SR) Card for a maximum of 10 carding cycles unless they achieve the criteria described in Section 5.1.3.
- 4.2.3 Athletes who meet the International Senior (SR1/SR2) Card criteria within 10 years of receiving SR cards, may be eligible for additional years beyond the maximum of 10 years outlined in section 5.1.2. Athletes are not guaranteed more than 10 years at the SR level and will only be nominated if EC is satisfied that the athlete is still demonstrating the ability to meet SR1/SR2 card standards. This must be demonstrated through objective measures and fulfillment of benchmark criteria established by EC in consultation with Sport Canada, in addition to the SR criteria.



4.2.4 Athletes who meet the International Senior (SR1/SR2) Card criteria and maintain the International Senior Eligibility requirements outlined in section 3.1, will maintain their International Senior (SR1/SR2) card regardless of the number of years carded.

4.3 Development Cards

4.3.1 An athlete is eligible to be carded for a maximum of five (5) cumulative years at the Development (D) Card level.

4.3.2 Development (D) Cards cannot be allocated to an athlete previously carded at the International or National Senior Card (C1, SR, SR1, SR2) level for more than two (2) years.

6. Health Related Circumstances and AAP

4.4 Curtailment of Training Short Term and Long Term

An AAP funded athlete who needs to modify or discontinue training and competition due to injury, illness or pregnancy during the carding year, may continue to receive funding based on the following:

6.1.1 Short-term Curtailment of Training and Competition for Health-Related Reasons

Carded athletes so affected will continue to receive AAP financial support, provided that the health-related circumstances that limit a carded athlete's training and competition are four months or fewer and the information and recovery plan have been submitted to EC.

6.1.2 Long-term Curtailment of Training and Competition for Health-Related Reasons

Carded athletes who are unable to maintain full training and competition commitments for longer than four months because of injury, illness or pregnancy will continue to receive 100 percent of the AAP financial support to which they would otherwise be entitled, provided the following conditions are met:

- The carded athlete undertakes in writing, to train or rehabilitate, or both, under the supervision of EC, or its designate, for the period of time for which the athlete is unable to fulfil the training and competition commitments included in the Elite Athlete Agreement, and at a level that minimizes risk to the athlete's personal health and ensures optimal return to full training and competition at the earliest possible date;
- The carded athlete signifies in writing, their intention to return to full high-performance training and competition at the earliest date possible following the illness, injury, pregnancy or other health-related circumstance.
- The affected athlete provides a positive prognosis from the EC team physician or equivalent for their return to training and competition at the carded-athlete level in their sport normally within 8 to 12 months.

6.2 A carded athlete who, at the end of the carding cycle has not achieved the standard required for the renewal of carding status because of strictly health-related reasons, may be considered for re-nomination for the upcoming year provided the following conditions are met:

- There are sufficient dollars available when following the priority of nominations as per section 4
- The carded athlete has fulfilled all reasonable training and rehabilitation requirements aimed at a speedy return to full high-performance training and competition during the period of their



- injury, illness, pregnancy or other health-related circumstance, or is continuing a rehabilitation program approved by EC.
- In the view of EC, the carded athlete's failure to attain the applicable carding standards is strictly related to the injury, illness, pregnancy or other health-related circumstance.
 - EC, based on its technical judgement and that of an EC team physician or equivalent, indicates in writing the expectation that the carded athlete will achieve at least the minimum standards required for carding during the upcoming carding period.
 - The carded athlete has demonstrated and continues to demonstrate their long-term commitment to high-performance training and competition goals, as well as their intention to pursue full high-performance training and competition throughout the carding period for which they wish to be renewed despite not having met the carding criteria.
 - **Priority for the allocation of Health related circumstances**, Athletes will be ranked under this priority in the order in which they were nominated for carding in the previous carding cycle and may be funded until all funds are exhausted.

See <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html> Section 9.

7. Athlete/Horse Separation

- 4.5 A carded athlete who loses the ride on an international level horse for whatever reason will have 90 days to present a new competitive partnership plan which meets the performance benchmarks approved by EC. If a competitive partnership has not been established after 90 days EC may recommend the withdrawal of the athlete's carded status to Sport Canada since the athlete is unable to continue to train and follow a training program outlined in section 8.2, approved by EC with other international horses at the equivalent level.
- 4.6 An athlete who meets the criteria but does not have an international level horse at the time of nomination for the next carding cycle may be eligible to receive a card based on their previous performances and benchmarks. However, if awarded a card, they must present a competitive partnership within 90 days following the beginning of the new carding cycle with an international level horse based on performance benchmarks approved by EC. If a new partnership is not achieved within 90 days and/or the partnership does not meet the performance benchmarks specified at the beginning of the carding cycle, the card may be revoked and redistributed.
- 4.7 It is the responsibility of EC to take the appropriate action with the athlete and inform Sport Canada in a timely manner if a competitive partnership cannot be achieved. In these cases, Sport Canada Policies and Procedures would apply regarding the nomination of the athlete for "Replacement" carding.

8. Carding Maintenance Eligibility

- 4.8 The following is the minimum eligibility requirements for AAP support:
- 4.8.1 An Athlete must hold a valid Canadian Passport, be a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident of Canada and be eligible to represent Canada at major international competitions.



- 4.8.2 A nominated athlete must form a combination of athlete and international level horse during the carding cycle and be actively competing at the international level and participating in the EC NTP.
- 4.8.3 If the carding status of an athlete is withdrawn during the carding cycle, the remaining card may be offered to the next eligible athlete, as per section 3.3 Reallocation of Funding.
- 4.9 To maintain eligibility for AAP support a carded athlete must:
- 4.9.1 Attend and participate in all scheduled activities according to the EC NTP, unless excused by EC (e.g. once invited an athlete must attend a camp, event or training session and participate in all performance analysis monitoring programs).
- 4.9.2 International and National Senior (SR1/SR2/SR) Card athletes - must have an international level horse, have indicated a commitment to work within the EC NTP under the supervision of the Discipline Technical Advisor, Discipline Manager and, or Discipline High Performance Advisory Group, be actively competing at the international (FEI) competitions during the carding cycle and be available to participate in Major Games/Championships, if selected.
- 4.9.3 Development (D) Card athletes – must have an international level horse, have indicated a commitment to work within the EC NTP under the supervision of the Discipline Technical Advisor, Discipline Manager and, or Discipline High Performance Advisory Group, and must be actively competing at the international competitions during the carding cycle.
- 4.9.4 If a carded athlete is unable to enter or maintain the terms of the EC Athlete Agreement, then EC can recommend to Sport Canada to initiate the process to de-card the athlete for the remainder of the carding cycle.

9. Appeals

- 4.10 Appeals of EC's AAP nomination/re-nomination decision or of EC's recommendation to withdraw carding may be pursued only through the EC's review process, which includes an application to the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC). Appeals of AAP Decision made under Sport Canada's Athlete Assistance Program Policies and Procedures 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.html>



APPENDIX 1

EQUESTRIAN – DRESSAGE SPECIFIC CARDING CRITERIA

1. International Senior Cards (SR1/SR2)

1.1. Priority #1: Athletes who meet the Sport Canada International Senior Carding Criteria described below will be eligible to be nominated for a SR1/SR2 card.

In FEI World Championships (WC) and Olympic Games years (SR1/SR2)	
In the team event	Top 8 and top ½ of field at the World Championships or Olympic Games
In the individual event (Freestyle Test)	Top 8 and top ½ of field at the World Championships or Olympic Games. Counting a maximum of 3 entries/country.

1.2. Athletes that qualify for carding under the International Senior Card Criteria are usually eligible for two years of AAP support, with the card for the first year referred to as an SR1 Card and the card for the second year referred to as an SR2 Card. In all EC programs, the second year is subject to the athlete meeting the NTP criteria to be re-nominated in year 2 (SR2).

1.3. If there are fewer cards than athletes meeting the international Senior (SR1/SR2) card criteria, the athletes with the highest placing at the World Championships (WC) or Olympic Games (OG) will rank higher.

2. National Senior Cards (Sr)

2.1 Priority #2: Eligible athletes will be nominated for a Senior (SR) Card in descending order based on the EC National Team Program – A and B Squad Criteria - December 1st ranking.

2.2 Senior Cards support athletes showing potential to reach International Senior Card status.

2.3 Following the maximum number of years, Athletes are expected to make progress in their results in order to maintain Senior (SR) Card status, as outlined in Section 5.

2.4 Senior (SR) Cards are awarded for one carding cycle (one year).

3. National Development Cards (D)

3.1 Priority #3: Eligible athletes will be nominated for a Development (D) Card in descending order based on the EC National Team Program – A and B Squad Criteria - December 1st ranking.

3.2 Development (D) Cards are awarded to Athletes on the basis of International results.



3.3 Development (D) Cards are intended to support the developmental needs of athletes who clearly demonstrate the potential to achieve the International Senior (SR1/SR2) Card criteria but are not yet able to meet the Senior (SR) Card criteria.

3.4 Development (D) Cards are awarded for one carding cycle (one year)

3.5 Subject to any remaining funds following priorities #1, 2. And 3, the value of these funds will be redistributed based on the criteria outlined in Section 3.3 Reallocation of Funding.



APPENDIX 2

EQUESTRIAN – PARA DRESSAGE SPECIFIC CARDING CRITERIA

1. International Senior Cards (SR1/SR2)

1.1. Priority #1: Athletes who meet the Sport Canada International Senior Carding Criteria described below will be eligible to be nominated for a SR1/SR2 card.

In FEI World Championships (WC) and Paralympic Games years (SR1/SR2)	
In the team event	Top 8 and top ½ of field at the World Championships or Paralympic Games
In the individual event (Freestyle Test)	Top 8 and top ½ of field at the World Championships or Paralympic Games. Counting a maximum of 3 entries/country.

1.2. Athletes that qualify for carding under the International Senior Card criteria are usually eligible for two years of AAP support, with the card for the first year referred to as an SR1 card and the card for the second year referred to as an SR2 card. In all EC programs, the second year is subject to the athlete meeting the NTP criteria to be re-nominated in year 2 (SR2).

1.3. If there are fewer cards than athletes meeting the International Senior (SR1/SR2) Card criteria, the athletes with the highest placing at the World Championships (WC) or Paralympic Games (OG) will rank higher.

2. National Senior Cards (Sr)

2.1 Priority #2: Eligible athletes will be nominated for a Senior (SR) Card in descending order based on the EC National Team Program – A and B Squad Criteria - December 1st ranking.

2.2 Senior Cards support athletes showing potential to reach International Senior Card status.

2.3 Following the maximum number of years, Athletes are expected to make progress in their results in order to maintain Senior (SR) Card status, as outlined in Section 5.

2.4 Senior (SR) Cards are awarded for one carding cycle (one year).

3. National Development Cards (D)

3.1 Priority #3: Eligible athletes will be nominated for a Development (D) Card in descending order based on the EC National Team Program – A, B and Talent ID Squad Criteria - December 1st ranking.

3.2 Development (D) Cards are awarded to Athletes on the basis of International results.



3.3 Development (D) Cards are intended to support the developmental needs of athletes who clearly demonstrate the potential to achieve the International Senior (SR1/SR2) Card criteria but are not yet able to meet the Senior (SR) Card criteria.

3.4 Development (D) Cards are awarded for one carding cycle (one year)

3.5 subject to any remaining funds following priorities #1, 2. And 3, the value of these funds will be redistributed based on the criteria outlined in Section 3.3 Reallocation of Funding.



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