

ANADO Legal Note 14

How to Improve the Impact of WADA Independent Observer Teams

The WADA Independent Observer (IO) program has been one of WADA's most useful and successful. Born from the need to provide independent oversight and confirmation of the integrity and effectiveness of anti-doping at the Olympic Games, the program has evolved to provide "audit-style" missions which give on-the-spot feedback and recommendations. The IO program will continue to have important political significance within sport to enhance the profile of clean sport and to reassure participants, spectators and the media. IO teams will continue to be sent to certain major games even if not technically required (because of the competency of the organizing committee and the experience of its anti-doping personnel, for example). But to me, the potential for lasting operational improvement to the efficacy and efficiency of games-time anti-doping programs is the real promise of the program.

So how to improve the impact of IO missions and their reports? I have been the subject of IO mission oversight and I have been a member of IO teams. Here are modest suggestions for enhancing the impact of IO missions and the reports they prepare:

- IO observation checklists, used to guide IO team members in their observations, should be given to the major games organizing committee and the games franchise holder as far in advance of the games as possible. Those checklists could provide a valuable final review to ensure that all necessary elements of the anti-doping program are in place and well-tested before the event begins.
- By the same token, the cumulative recommendations of previous IO reports should be catalogued and organized and made available to games franchise holders and their organizing committees so that planning can address all the real, games-time issues those reports describe and comment on. Such a list existed in the early 2000s and could be updated and made available through the WADA website.
- IO reports should be sent directly to the organizing committee of the next games, especially to the chief medical officer, and to the NADO of the host country, so that work on improvements begins as soon as possible. All previous reports from those same games ought to be provided.
- If this is not already done, the IO report should be formally part of the knowledge transfer from one organizing committee to the next.
- Bidders for games should review and address past IO reports as part of their bids and in the course of their preparations in meetings with the games franchise holders.
- WADA should do follow-up on IO reports asking the games franchise holder and the organizing committee a year before the next games what steps have been taken with the previous IO report in mind.

Joseph de Pencier, Ottawa, Canada