

# 2025 SFIA Excelerator ASSOCIATE Program

**Eligibility, Application Process and Form**

As of January 16, 2025

**PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

SFIA and its members are committed to diversity, inclusion, and belonging. While there has been progress in advancing traditionally underrepresented talent among the leadership ranks of our industry, there is more to be done. SFIA is committed to promoting professional development in our industry. We’re focusing on high-performing, early-career professionals (“Associates”) and the next generation of leaders.

SFIA’s **Excelerator** Program started in 2023 and represents SFIA’s (and the industry's) commitment to accelerating the careers of exceptional early-career professionals from diverse communities in the sports industry and empowering them to become the next generation of leaders.

It is a five-to-six-month cohort experience starting in the spring. It features a robust and impactful curriculum drawing on the knowledge and expertise of the industry’s best leaders. Participants can expect to build and expand their network within and outside the sports and fitness industry, grow their professional toolkit, and gain visibility into the opportunities available across the industry.

The 2025 cohort class will be limited to 10–12 individuals. It is an intentionally selected group from **Excelerator** sponsors and SFIA membership. SFIA’s People & Culture Committee will continuously review and monitor the program and report to SFIA staff, Board, and members) on developments throughout the year.

Year III **Excelerator** Sponsors:

* Adidas
* Brooks Sports
* BSN
* Franklin Sports
* National Football League
* National Hockey League
* New Balance
* Puma
* Rawlings
* Riddell Sports

**Application Process**

The 2025 program cohort will be resourced through **Excelerator** sponsors and SFIA membership. There are two pathways to apply:

1. **Employees of Excelerator Sponsors**

If you are an employee (with eight years or less of work experience) of an Excelerator sponsor (listed above):

* A designated senior-level executive (vice president-level or above) will lead an organization-specific internal application process
* Contact your HR department to learn more about their process
* All Excelerator sponsors may select one (1) candidate in the program
* Submit a completed application form to Glenn Horine ([ghorine@sfia.org](mailto:ghorine@sfia.org)) by February 14, 2025

1. **Employees of Non-Sponsor SFIA Members**

If you are an employee (with eight years or less of work experience) at an SFIA member organization that is not an Excelerator sponsor:

* Complete and submit the application form to Glenn Horine ([ghorine@sfia.org](mailto:ghorine@sfia.org)) by February 14, 2025
* SFIA may offer up to two (2) Associate "scholarships" to qualified candidates

The 2025 application process will be open between January 20 – February 14, 2024

**Associate Eligibility**

Candidates must meet the following criteria:

* Any employee with fewer than eight (8) total years of cumulative work experience
* Currently employed at an SFIA member organization
* Recommended by a senior-level executive (vice president level or higher)
* Demonstrated personal and team leadership skills
* Sustained level of high employee performance
* Interest in professional development for purposes of career growth
* Passion for building a long-term career within the sports & fitness industry

**Governance**

The SFIA **Excelerator** Program will be administered and coordinated by SFIA with oversight from:

* People & Culture Committee
* SFIA COO Glenn Horine
* Julie Hammer, Facilitator

**Selection Process**

**Timeline**

1. Application announcement: Week of January 20, 2025
2. Application deadline: February 14, 2025
3. Follow-up with candidates: Week of February 27
4. Notification of selection: Weeks of March 3 and 10
5. Confirmed program details: Weeks of March 17 and 24

**Selection Criteria**

Associates will be selected based on:

* Employment experience at the current member organization
* Strength of the nominator’s recommendation
* Interest level in developing a leadership role
* Contribution to cohort diversity

**PROGRAMMING**

The program includes:

* Professional Development Workshops
* SFIA Industry Events
* “Brunch ‘N Learn” Series with Industry Executives
* Career Counseling Sessions
* Mentorship Program
* Monthly Check-in with SFIA Leadership and the Program Facilitator
* Meeting Excelerator Alumni

**Benefits For SFIA Associates:**

Participants will receive:

* Access to SFIA’s industry events and networking with industry leaders from professional sports leagues, national governing bodies, and SFIA members
* Engagement with industry leaders through thought leadership, networking, professional development, and mentorship (1:1 and small group) opportunities
* Understanding of SFIA’s industry role in research, public policy, thought leadership, and member engagement
* Networking with **Excelerator** program alumni
* Recognition as an emerging leader

**Reimbursement & Costs**

SFIA covers:

* “Opening” and “closing” night dinners
* Professional workshop facilitation and hospitality
* Career counseling
* Mentorship program and “Brunch ‘N Learn” series
* Registration fees for SFIA events, including webinars throughout the year
* Travel expenses (if needed) for in-person sessions

# 2025 SFIA Excelerator Associate Program Application\*

**Personal Information**

Full name: Date: \_\_\_\_ SFIA Member Company: Title: \_\_\_\_

2025 Excelerator Sponsor Status (please check one):

Yes No No, but interested

**Contact Information**

Company Address: City: State: Zip: Phone (Work):( ) Email (Work): @

## Demographic Information (select check one):

African American/Black American Indian/Alaskan Native Asian/Pacific Islander

Latino/Hispanic White Other (please specify)

**Gender Identity (select check one):** Male Female Non-Binary Other (please specify)

**Pronouns (check one):** He/Him She/Her They/Them Ze/Hir

Not Listed (please specify)

**Accessibility Requirements:**

Do you have accessibility needsyou would like SFIA to be aware of? Yes No

If yes, please describe those requirements briefly (optional) -

## Professional Background

LinkedIn URL - \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Please attach a current resume and/or bio (100 words or less).*

**Short Answer Questions**

Please provide detailed responses to the following questions. You may attach additional pages if needed.

1. What have you enjoyed the most about working in the sports industry?
2. What one sports or fitness industry development has intrigued you the most this past year and why?
3. What work experience and results at your current employer (SFIA member) best highlight your performance capabilities?
4. What opportunity should the Sports & Fitness Industry Association lead/pursue in the next year that can make a difference in our country's overall health and fitness?
5. What about the potential of being an SFIA Associate intrigues you most?

# 2025 SFIA Excelerator Associate Member Recommendation\*

**Nominator Information**

Name: Date:

Company: Title:

**Candidate Evaluation**

1. How long have you known the applicant?
2. In what capacity have you worked with the applicant?
3. What results and characteristics best represent this candidate as a high-performing team member at your company and a candidate for the Excelerator program?

**Recommendation Rating**

Please rate your recommendation of the candidate for the SFIA Excelerator program:

Rating Scale: 5 (strongest recommendation) and 1 (mildest recommendation)

Overall Rating: \_\_\_

Authorization

I confirm that I am a senior-level executive (vice president level or above) at the candidate’s organization and recommend this candidate for the SFIA Excelerator program.

Date Signed

# Frequently Asked Questions

## What is an SFIA Associate?

*An SFIA Associate is an early-career employee of a Sports & Fitness Industry Association member organization seeking access to and opportunities for professional development within the sports industry.*

## Who’s eligible to be an SFIA Associate?

*An early-career employee (less than eight years of aggregate career employment) recommended by a senior-level executive (vice president level or above) from an SFIA member organization who completes the* ***Excelerator*** *application by the stated deadline.*

## How are SFIA Associates selected?

* ***For Excelerator*** *sponsors: A qualified employee can be placed into the program**with a completed application form, including appropriate recommendations and background information. Candidates should review the application process internally with their Human Resources/People & Culture department.*
* ***For non-sponsored SFIA members:*** *Qualified candidates interested in a potential “scholarship” opening must submit the required application form, recommendations, and background information. The People & Culture Committee will meet to review eligible candidates and make a timely decision on possible Associate scholarship opportunities. The committee will convene immediately after the submissions are due to make selections.*

## What is the desired outcome of the SFIA Excelerator program?

*The* ***Excelerator*** *program aims to:*

* *Unite the sports and fitness industry*
* *Present an “all are welcome” message from SFIA members*
* *Make a meaningful difference in the professional development of early-career employees through*
  + *Access to SFIA member events*
  + *Thought leadership from SFIA member executives*
  + *Coordinated SFIA networking and mentorship activities.*

## What is the duration of the SFIA Excelerator program?

*The 2025* ***Excelerator*** *program runs for five to six months, beginning in the spring and concluding mid-Fall. It includes:*

* *Initial discovery meetings*
* *Welcoming and closing dinners*
* *Professional development sessions*
* *Virtual networking events*
* *Career counseling*
* *Mentorship program*

## How large is the SFIA Associate class?

*SFIA will intentionally keep the Associate cohort small, with an anticipated group of 10-12 individuals. Future cohorts may increase in size based on SFIA membership support.*

## Who is administering the program?

*The management of the SFIA* ***Excelerator*** *program will be overseen by SFIA’s Chief Operating Officer and the People & Culture Committee.*

## How can SFIA members support the SFIA Excelerator program?

*Membership can be through i) Candidate nomination, ii) Sponsorship, iii) Mentoring, iv) Networking, and v) Professional Development Curriculum and Seminars*