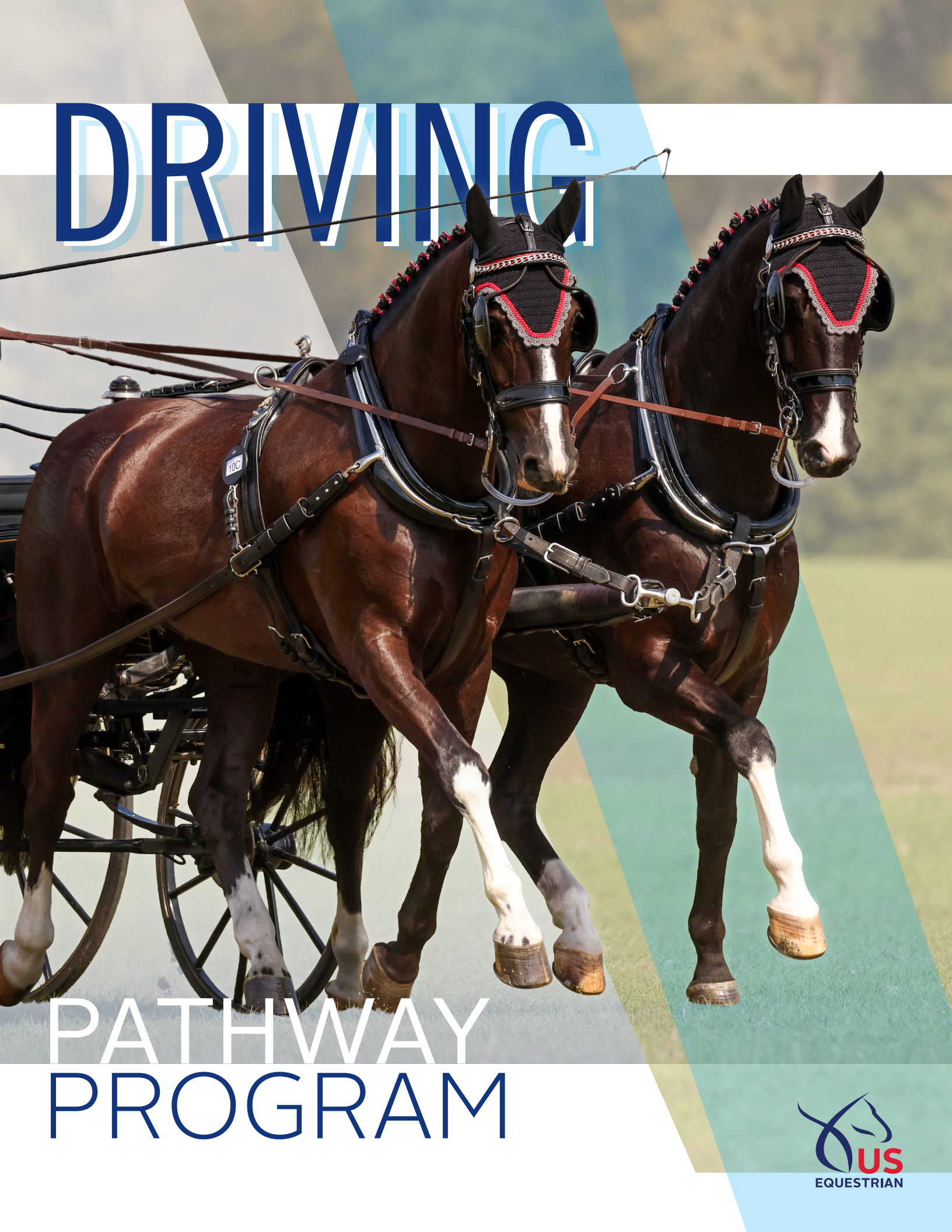
DRIVING

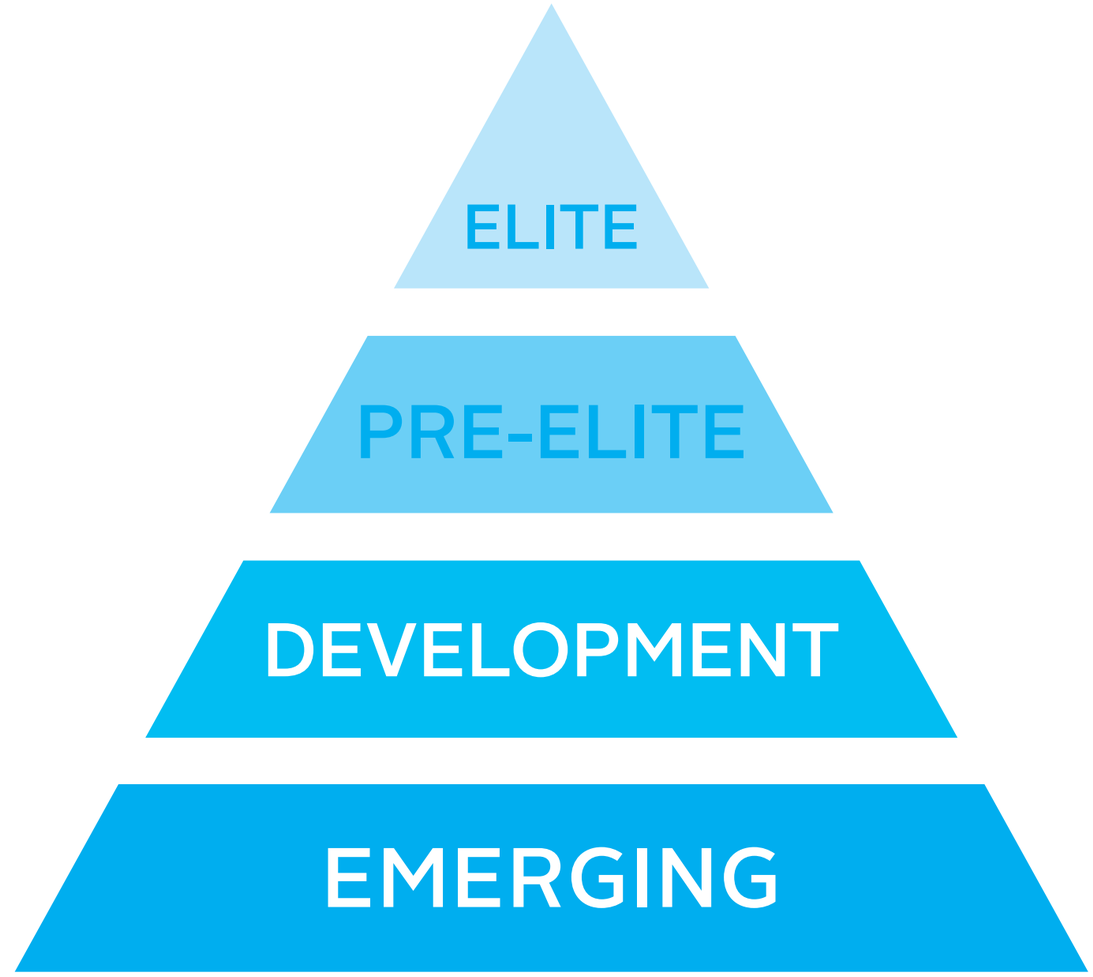


PATHWAY PROGRAM

US EQUESTRIAN

Cover: Avery Wallace/US Equestrian

DRIVING PATHWAY PROGRAM



To learn more about the Driving Pathway Programs, visit the USEF Driving webpage. In addition to the information included within this booklet, program membership lists, retention criteria, program benefits, and more can be found on the website.

DRIVING PATHWAY INFORMATION

The U.S. Combined Driving Team has seen success over the last decade. With an Individual Silver and Team Gold in 2018 at the World Equestrian Games, an Individual Silver in the Young Horse World Championship in 2022, and individual bronze in the Four-In-Hand World Championships in 2024. Para-Driving thrived with Individual Gold in 2018, Individual Gold and Team Silver in 2023, and Individual Silver in 2025. USEF Combined Driving programs continue to grow with the addition of new championships, like the 2026 USEF Combined Driving Youth National Championship, showcasing rising talent.

Overview

The vision for the USEF Combined Driving Pathway Program is to grow and develop US Driving athletes and equines at all levels of their career. It is designed as a route to prepare athletes for international success; the Program is created to increase the quality of Driving talent in the United States as well as prepare those same athletes to set their sights on Elite Driving and joining the U.S. team on the World Championship stage.



EMERGING DRIVING PROGRAM

Overview

The purpose of the USEF Emerging Driver Program is to provide guidelines and support for introductory education within the sport. The program invites instructors to host introductory clinics where curriculum is used to teach the basics of driving for singles up to multiples. USEF financially supports targeted clinics.

DEVELOPING ATHLETE PROGRAM

Overview

The mission of the USEF Developing Athlete Program is to provide guidance and educational resources to assist selected athlete/equine combinations who display the potential to improve the national standard of the sport and eventually add to the U.S. Team score at Driving World Championships.

Minimum Requirements for Eligibility

- Within the last two years from the date of application, athlete/equine combinations must have completed at least three USEF Competitions (not including Combined

Photo: M. Guillamont

Tests), with a maximum of one competition being a Short Format, at the USEF Preliminary level or above with the following minimum score requirements:
  - » Dressage: 60 penalties or less
  - » Marathon: Penalties must be within 5 points of the winner of the class phase. Discretionary decisions will be made for divisions with only one entry.
  - » Cones: 6 penalties or less. Exceptions to these score requirements will be made on a case-by-case basis.
- Athletes based more than 1,000 miles from the closest USEF licensed CDE may apply for an exception to the competition requirements above. For more information or to apply for an exception, *Please contact Molly Andrews (mandrews@usef.org) for further questions*.

The following factors are considered for admission to the Developing Athlete Program:

- Athlete/equine competition results and the trajectory of results over the last two years, including a complete class comparison.
- The athlete's previous commitment to the sport of driving, including advancement through competition schedules and various participation opportunities.
- Athlete/equine combinations committed to seeking out additional training opportunities.
- Athlete/equine combinations showing consistency in performance, reviewed via video submission.
- Behavior of the athlete and team associated with the athlete; including, but not limited to equine owners, coaches, grooms, and partners, that may have an impact on creating a positive group environment.

Program Benefits

The program offers competition planning and goal setting with Clinicians for both short term and long-term goals for the athlete and equine combination. In addition, training sessions with a variety of appointed clinicians are provided. While the athlete's personal trainers are encouraged to attend and audit Training sessions as well. Lastly, there is access to virtual educational opportunities which will enhance the athlete's competition performance.





Photos: Sharon Packer, Shannon Brinkman Photo





DEVELOPING EQUINE PROGRAM

Overview

The purpose of the USEF Developing Driving Equine Program is to allow current or previous Elite Athletes as well as athletes who have been selected for FEI Driving World Championships to receive support in expanding new equine's talents. The Developing Equine Program is part of the Driving Athlete Pathway which seeks to assist athletes wishing to advance their evolving new Driving equines to the next level of competition and performance.

Minimum Requirements for Eligibility

- Athlete/equine combinations must have only competed for two years or less prior to application.
- Athletes must have, at one point in time, been named to or competed in at least one of the following:
  - USEF Elite Athlete Program
  - FEI Driving World Championship for Single Horses
  - FEI Driving World Championship for Pair Horses
  - FEI Driving World Championship for Four-in-Hand Horses
  - FEI Driving World Championship for Combined Ponies
  - FEI Driving World Championship for Young Horses
  - FEI Para Driving World Championship for Singles

Program Benefits

When availability permits, athletes may attend developing athlete training sessions with their developing equine. The program offers competition planning and goal setting with Clinicians for short term and long-term goals for the equine. Lastly, when available, optional access to educational opportunities is extended in the developing athlete program.

PRE-ELITE PROGRAM

Overview

The USEF Pre-Elite Program is designed to help athletes, and their horses/ponies begin to build themselves on the international competition stage. Admissions to the Pre-Elite Program is a score-based system determined by the top 30% of each competition phase and overall result at the last 2 World Championships. Score criteria will be updated December 1st of each USEF year.

Minimum Requirements for Qualification

Able-bodied Athlete and equine combinations must obtain the following results at the USEF Novice/Open Advanced (not including short formats) or FEI CAI 2*, 3*, or above competitions within the qualification period to be named to the Pre-Elite Athlete program list. Para-Driving Athletes and equine combinations must obtain the following results at the USEF Intermediate (not including short formats), or CPEAI 2* or above competitions within the qualification period to be named to the Pre-Elite Athlete program list:

- (4) Four competition phase results met at no more than (2) two competitions; or
- (2) Two overall results met at (2) competition; or
- (2) Two competition phase results met at no more than (1) one competition AND (1) one overall result met at (1) one different competition.

Program Benefits

The program extends to athletes Developing Athlete training sessions, when available. Athletes have the possibility to receive an annual grant that is to be used toward training and future competitions.

Photos: M. Guillamont

ELITE ATHLETE PROGRAM

Overview

The USEF Elite Athlete Program is primarily a score-based system with admission also based on Individual podium finishes at World Championships. Score-based entry is determined by the top 15% of each competition phase and overall result at the last two World Championships. Score criteria will be updated annually for each USEF year. By making the Elite list, Athletes gain grant support to remain continuously competitive at the top level.

Minimum Requirements for Qualification:

Athletes that earn an individual medal at the following events will earn a qualification to the Elite Athlete list for two years following the championship.

Athletes with podium qualifications will earn a qualification to the Elite Athlete List the year following their podium qualification if the Athlete successfully completes during that year in either USEF Open Advanced or CAI 3*. Para-Driving Athletes admittance is based on USEF Intermediate, where the CPEAI Dressage Test is being used, or CPEAI2* or above competitions.

Score-based qualifications: Athlete/equine combinations must obtain the following results at the USEF Open Advanced (not including short formats) or FEI CAI 3*, or above competitions within the qualification period to be named to the Elite Athlete program list. Para-Driving Athlete/equine combinations must obtain the following results at the USEF Intermediate (not including short formats) or equivalent Foreign National Competition, where the CPEAI Dressage Test is being used, or CPEAI 2* or above competitions:

- (4) Four competition phase results met at no more than (2) two competitions; or
- (2) Two overall results met at (2) competition; or
- (2) Two competition phase results met at no more than (1) one competition AND (1) one overall result met at (1) one different competition

Program Benefits

The program extends to athletes Developing Athlete training sessions, when available. Athletes have the possibility to receive an annual grant that is to be used toward training and future competitions.

YOUTH NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

To further strengthen the development in Combined Driving, USEF will launch Youth National Championships for Combined Driving beginning in 2026. The new championship is designed to create an opening for emerging youth athletes, offering high-level competition, increased visibility, and a structured bridge between beginning programs and future national and international participation.

Please contact Molly Andrews at mandrews@usef.org with any questions.



Photos: FEI/Martin Dokoupil


US
EQUESTRIAN