



**US YOUTH SOCCER™**

# 2020 - 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

**DREAM BIG  
THINK  
BIGGER**



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS



<b>3</b>	<b>Welcome Letter</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Soccer is a Simple Game</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Our Vision &amp; Mission</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Core Values</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Our Constituents</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Our Process - SMART Goals</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Our Aspirations</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Guiding Principles and Tactics</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Strategic Priorities</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Core Disciplines</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Goals &amp; Strategies</b>
<b>23</b>	<b>Extra Time</b>

# WELCOME LETTER

The US Youth Soccer Association (USYS) has taken a strong leadership position in 2020 by creating an all-new, comprehensive and aggressive Strategic Plan. This plan offers guidance, support, direction and vision to maximize the committed passion and dedication of our National Staff and 55 State Associations to the entire youth soccer community. As we work to implement this plan, we must continue to recognize the true value and role of ALL soccer constituents across the country, not just those specifically aligned with the USYS Family. The soccer community looks to USYS for leadership in the governance of our sport and this Strategic Plan will help us remain focused on those actions that will enable us to reach those high expectations. Our Strategic Plan will remind everyone of our core values and how we utilize those characteristics to develop progressive initiatives that will best serve the entire soccer community for years to come.

In 2026 the FIFA World Cup hosted by United States, Canada and Mexico will be followed by the Games of the XXXIV Olympiad in Los Angeles in 2028. Both global events present huge opportunities for USYS to engage local communities to help drive growth for the entire sport. Our vision is to create lifelong soccer fans, and our ability to do this successfully is contingent upon achieving three aspirations: 1) Build the Base, 2) Promote the Sport and 3) Achieve Sustained Competitive Success. These aspirations will be supported by a wide set of objectives, strategic priorities and specific actions to be taken by the USYS National Office, in coordination and cooperation with our USYS Board of Directors, 55 State Associations and other sport stakeholders. As the largest youth sport organization in America, we are integral to the creation of a strong foundation for soccer, and our leadership can serve as a beacon for other sports looking to grow and succeed.

The **2020 USYS Strategic Plan: Dream Big – Think Bigger** is a living, breathing document that takes inspiration from the entirety of the youth sport community. We have created this collaborative roadmap to help us navigate to our common destination, but also made it flexible enough to allow for various modes and speeds of travel. The USYS strategy is meant to provide confidence to every soccer club in the United States that together we can move soccer forward and shape the future of the game we love for generations. We thank everyone who contributed to this plan and look forward to continuing to work together in order to achieve these important goals.

Gratefully yours,

**Dr. Pete Zopfi**

US Youth Soccer Chair

**Skip Gilbert**

US Youth Soccer CEO

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# SOCCER IS A SIMPLE GAME

By Dan Woog

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Soccer is a simple game. Deciphering the youth soccer landscape is not.

Once upon a time – say, the early 2000s – the view was clear. US Youth Soccer was the biggest and oldest game in town. Largely town-based, it offered players a straightforward path, from recreational soccer on to travel teams and elite clubs. State, regional and national tournaments beckoned; so did the chance to advance all the way to the national team pool, through the Olympic Development Program.

Today that path forks in many directions. Even with a map, it's easy to get lost.

An alphabet soup of options forces players and parents to make difficult decisions. An “academy” program, run originally by US Soccer and now driven by MLS clubs? A team affiliated with US Club Soccer? If so, which of many regional or national leagues? And what about that old standby, AYSO?

Players and parents feel pulled in many directions. They may believe the turf is greener with another club or league. They wonder which coach, philosophy or program is “best” (whatever that means). They must make choices at ever-younger ages, with ever-more organizations fighting for their ever-increasing registration dollars.

Is it any wonder the dropout rate is so high, once players hit their teens? Or that it's so hard to find a group of kids just kicking around with their friends, in this over-developed, badly fractured, nearly impossible-to-decipher soccer world?

Soccer is a simple game. If only the youth soccer landscape was too.

# OUR VISION

To bring communities together through the power of soccer, making lifelong fans of the sport.



# OUR MISSION

To provide world-class support, resources and leadership, helping every member fulfill their goals on and off the field of play.

# CORE VALUES

<b>INNOVATION*</b>	USYS innovation refers to our intentional fostering of out-of-the-box thinking and problem solving within the youth sport landscape.
<b>INTEGRITY*</b>	USYS aspires for honesty, transparency and alignment along strong moral principles. We do the right thing in a reliable way with responsibility and respect.
<b>RESPECT*</b>	Respect is a cornerstone trait within our sport and organization. It defines how you regard your teammates and opponents, recognize their qualities and traits, while treating them with appreciation and dignity.
<b>COURAGE</b>	Soccer fields may be an incubator for success in life. Survive, and you're likely agile, decisive, quick thinking and absolutely, courageous. We strive for those characteristics in our staff.
<b>CONSISTENCY</b>	Consistency is the difference between failure and success. The best teams are consistent across all skill disciplines. Even the best business plans will fail without a dedication to consistency.
<b>DEPENDABILITY</b>	Being dependable means showing up on time every day while producing consistent work and applying USYS policies and business strategies evenly to each task and assignment.
<b>INCLUSIVITY</b>	We are committed to players of all levels: competitive, recreational, special needs, and from all backgrounds. We are the only youth soccer organization that is inclusive in this way.
<b>PASSION</b>	A strong attribute of great players is the passion they have for the game. Our staff and volunteers bring that compelling dedication, emotion and commitment to USYS every day.
<b>RELATIONSHIPS</b>	USYS demands that all staff cultivate positive and productive relationships with colleagues or constituents; building strategic relationships that extend the horizon of our business.
<b>TEAMWORK</b>	The process of working collaboratively with a group of people in order to achieve a common purpose or goal. Having teamwork skills is dependent on your ability to communicate well, actively listen and be responsible and honest.
<b>TRADITION</b>	As forward thinking as we aspire to be at USYS, we must have the utmost respect for the past and the people, policies and traditions that put this organization where it is today.

\* indicates our Most Valuable Values

# OUR CONSTITUENTS



# OUR PROCESS - SMART GOALS

USYS will employ the use of SMART Goals to help us push further, giving us a sense of direction while helping us organize and reach our specific goals.

**SPECIFIC**  
**MEASURABLE**  
**ATTAINABLE**  
**RESULTS-ORIENTED**  
**TIME-DETERMINED**



# OUR ASPIRATIONS

**BUILD THE BASE**

**PROMOTE THE SPORT**

**ACHIEVE SUSTAINED COMPETITIVE SUCCESS**



# GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND TACTICS

- ⚽ **Service Leadership** - We operate in a spirit of service and accessibility, offering best in class resources to help our USYS Family achieve their goals. We strive to be a high-performance, inclusive organization, lead the industry with innovative solutions, and cultivate an environment that inspires our USYS Family to achieve personal and professional bests every day.
- ⚽ **Collaborative Partnerships** - We maximize reach and resources by fostering collaborative partnerships. We work as a team to build relationships, share information and promote goodwill.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- ⚽ **Constituent Engagement** - Deliver value and enhance experiences for State Associations and key constituents.
- ⚽ **Marketing & Brand That Inspires** - Strengthen brand recognition and stature, improve value perception, inspire members and non-members and generate resources to support the USYS mission and strategic priorities.
- ⚽ **Participation Growth & Lifelong Fans** - Increase participation through strategic partnerships and efforts to reach and engage target populations, while maintaining a focus on constituent retention.
- ⚽ **Culture of Excellence** - Demonstrate organizational excellence across all aspects of business and sport competition.
- ⚽ **Financial Strength** - Engage in fiscal best practices to maintain financial health of the organization and invest organizational revenue back into the sport.

# CORE DISCIPLINES

- 1** Business Affairs & Finance
- 2** Commercial
- 3** Data Analytics/Research
- 4** Diversity & Inclusion
- 5** Education
- 6** Event Operations
- 7** Grassroots Development
- 8** Member Services
- 9** Player Development
- 10** USYS Competitions



# GOALS & STRATEGIES

## 1 BUSINESS AFFAIRS & FINANCE

### Goals

Direct, control and supervise the support services within USYS to facilitate our organizational success.

Provide timely and accurate financial information, while ensuring the department is operating in the most efficient manner.

Establish best practices in the areas of Information Technology, Insurance, Human Resources, and Financial Policies & Procedures.

### Strategies

Ensure the free flow of communication and efficient use of resources.

Be open and clear about policies and procedures.

Handle information properly and appropriately.

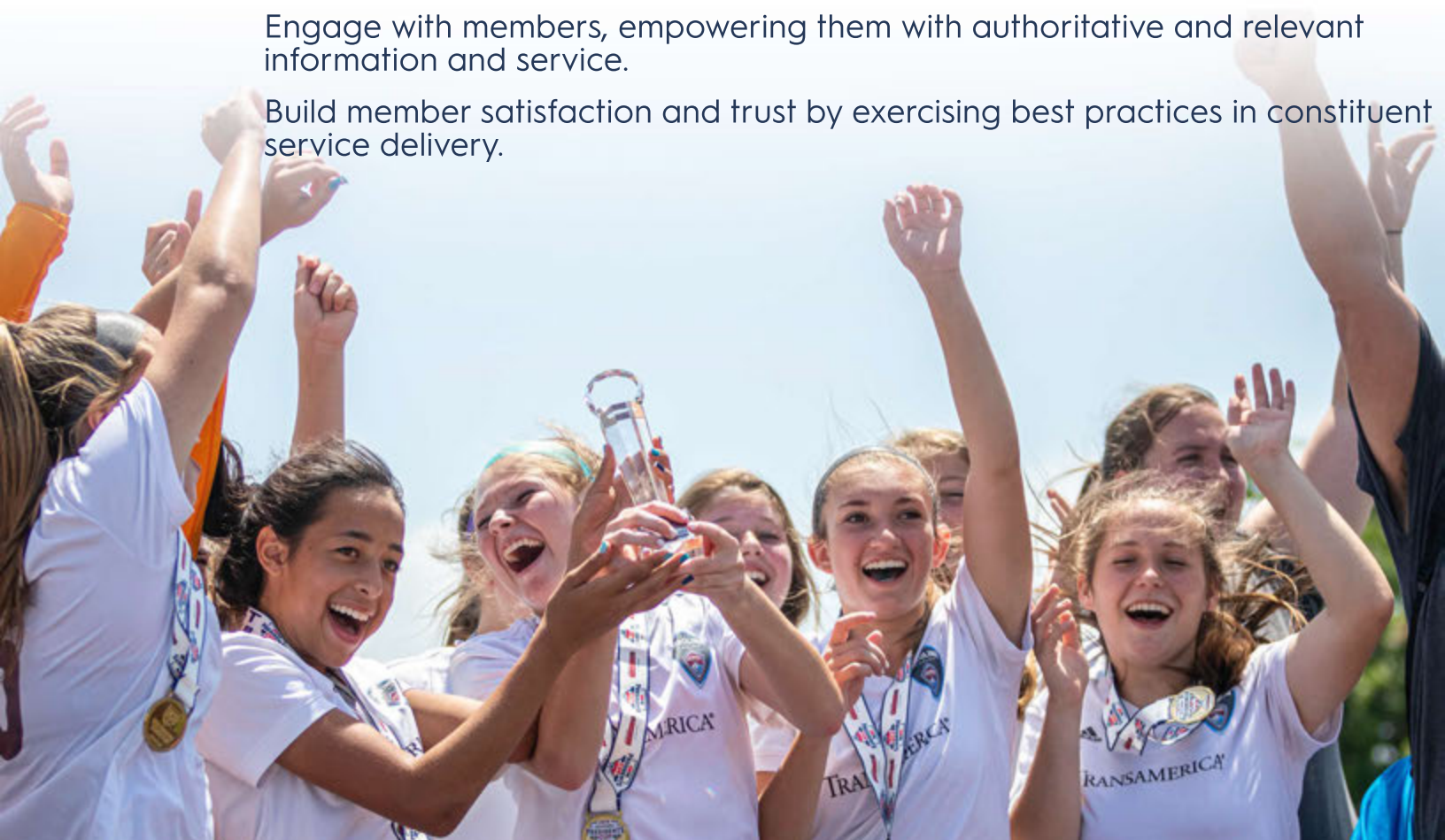
Maintain proper and appropriate records.

Utilize current strategies inclusive of budgeting, forecasting, cost containment, cash flow management, internal controls, and accurate record keeping.

Explore opportunities for more automation (i.e., shared folders, data upload sites, ACH transactions, etc.).

Engage with members, empowering them with authoritative and relevant information and service.

Build member satisfaction and trust by exercising best practices in constituent service delivery.



# GOALS & STRATEGIES

## 2 COMMERCIAL

### Goals

Improve and support State Association Marketing & Communications execution and access to services.

Improve and support Commercial Partnership delivery and activation between USYS and our State Associations.

Drive greater commercial revenue while building the USYS brand.

### Strategies

Identify, solicit and deliver Marketing & Communications services that State Associations want and need.

Identify and execute State/USYS process for knowledge sharing.

Improve and augment communications across USYS.

Improve Marketing & Communications best practice sharing across USYS.

Improve understanding of State Marketing & Communications needs and capabilities.

Develop a unified sales strategy utilizing USYS and State Association assets.

Improve Partnership best practice sharing across USYS.

Align with an external sales organization to secure new partnerships.

Explore digital/broadcast opportunities for USYS-specific content.



# GOALS & STRATEGIES

## 3 DATA ANALYTICS/RESEARCH

### Goals

Develop a comprehensive organizational data and analytics strategy outlining what USYS wants to achieve and how data will help us get there.

To learn and recognize patterns and trends USYS and individual State Associations are currently on, develop strategy to improve patterns, and make educated growth goals based off strategy developed from data.

### Strategies

Establish a diverse thinking working group to research similar sport organizations and identify what the most successful data analytic programs have been and what projects have left them asking more questions. Once list can be established, develop a data analytics plan of action for USYS.

Identify an online database to house a national membership library. Once identified, establish process for quarterly data collections from State Associations. Utilize an outside vendor, internal staff, or both to analyze and research data trends. Develop standardized Monthly, Quarterly and Annual reports that can be shared with each State Association and as needed help explain the data.

Utilize a national player database to provide stakeholders with data-driven insights concerning player distributions by age, competition level, and geographic location.

Perform longitudinal analysis of national player database to identify trends (eg. Changes in registration by age, spatial location, etc.) and evaluate program/policy efficacy.

Deploy spatial analytics to uncover barriers to play, including: income barriers, underserved communities, and distance to play barriers. Use spatial analytics to predict future growth spaces in order to help stakeholders increase local participation.

Use spatial mapping techniques to identify 'soccer deserts' – areas with few registered players, little access to soccer facilities, or inadequate referee coverage.

Create interactive data-driven tools to facilitate various organizational functions (see, for example, the ODP Scouting Network Tool: <https://bit.ly/2WhH3gj>).

Generate program/department-specific analysis and reports to increase data-driven decision making.

# GOALS & STRATEGIES

## 4 DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

### Goals

Increase the level of diversity across all aspects of the organization.

Create a dynamic toolkit that guides all clubs and teams to recruit and retain a diverse pool of coaching candidates.

Offset the loss of referees by developing a program to attract a diverse group of candidates.

### Strategies

Develop and publish the USYS Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Policy.

Make use of marketing materials with cultural influences and produce ads that market diverse subjects as referees and coaches to show successful careers in soccer.

Conduct after-school programs – partner with the US Soccer Foundation who has produced quality after-school curricula.

Provide an opportunity for underprivileged teams (such as US Soccer Foundation Soccer for Success teams) to interact with ODP team players.

Highlight and market diverse coaches across various sports and demographics.

Provide low cost/affordable clinics in targeted communities.

Develop family friendly policies for the parent Coach.

Create a Coach of the Year Award celebrating diversity.

Find out why some referees have not re-registered by working with the State Referee Committee to contact referees.

Provide small group mentoring.

Create a short video or commercial on female referees that makes refereeing look fun and inviting. Distribute the video using social media and showing at USYS events.

Have elite diverse officials provide referees with presentations and training at USYS events.



# GOALS & STRATEGIES

## 5 EDUCATION

### Goals

Develop and deliver an interactive resource center for accessible and consumable educational content with USYS University being the flagship library within the youth soccer landscape to complement and enhance our constituent's involvement with the sport and strengthen the value of the USYS brand.

Enhance the soccer consumer experience by providing specific resources that focus on developing and retaining our core constituents.

### Strategies

Partner with existing content providers to allow access to timelier and better depth of material across all sport disciplines.

Develop a platform to allow companies with mobile app training solutions to provide timely and relevant material while showcasing their technology.

Develop education resources that strengthen the structures of USYS and its State Associations.

Develop a national athlete curriculum that includes physical and cognitive development strategies and promotes a positive playing experience based on best practices and standards.

Deliver timely and relevant age level appropriate soccer education to all coaches, officials and parents through USYS programs and services.

Develop a Club Development curriculum that provides dynamic business and governance resources for clubs of any size.

Create a Mental Health and Health & Wellness Suite for all members of the USYS Family to find resources that help them cope through all soccer-related issues, successes and disappointments.



# GOALS & STRATEGIES

## 6 EVENT OPERATIONS

### Goals

To create a standard of excellence around all USYS events that allows every participant to feel that they are a part of something incredibly special.

Drive positive USYS brand awareness through each of our owned competitive assets.

Develop additional assets around our core event offerings to allow increased commercial revenue opportunities.

### Strategies

Establish an operation standardization plan to provide consistent team, player and family experiences at USYS events.

Create and provide team, player and family social media/photo opportunities.

Create additional team, player and family experiences and atmosphere at each event (USYS Soccer Experience/Village).

Event sites or venues should be selected and developed with a keen eye for location, layout, and area attractions.

Ensure USYS Events pass the standard PAPER test, meaning excellence in Promotion, Audience, Partnerships, Environment and Revenue.

Drive positive PR throughout the industry by monitoring and promoting the economic impact of each event.





# GOALS & STRATEGIES

## 7 GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT

### Goals

Develop a robust national grassroots soccer program focused on creating an opportunity for recreational players to support long term participation and cultivate lifelong soccer fans.

Establish systems to address the financial barriers that tend to exist in underserved communities and develop opportunities to improve participation and accessibility in those communities.

Provide all participants with a continuum of support that will foster an environment that is inclusive and affect positive change at the base of the pyramid.

Work with other youth sport organizations to develop a national multi-sport pathway for kids under 10.

### Strategies

Promote an in-school physical activity program for PE teachers and recess facilitators, particularly for under resourced schools.

Consult with US Soccer and State Associations to promote grassroots events at local levels.

Create a plan and implementation to grow the game of futsal and beach soccer through specific programs and services.

Re-imagine the USYS Foundation to advance our mission and provide opportunities for all children to play soccer.

Create a platform representing a cross-section of youth sports to promote healthy play and diversity.

Develop grant funding for USYS grassroots programming.

Continue to facilitate TOPSoccer coaching education and doubling TOPSoccer player involvement in the next 5 years.

Develop, activate and expand the League America concept to drive significant value and prestige to the grassroots soccer platform.



# GOALS & STRATEGIES

## 8 MEMBER SERVICES

### Goals

To be respected by our State Associations for providing significant value-added support and services in helping each reach their overall goals.

Utilize the collective power of all State Associations to create national programs with vendors and service providers offering cost savings for their products and services.

With the wide variety in staff size of each State Association, provide business discipline support to those in need.

### Strategies

Create a regular contact schedule to reach out to State Association Presidents, CEO/Executive Directors and other senior leadership staff.

Strive to have contact with each State Association 12X per year at minimum.

Develop a 'National Leadership Orientation Guide' for new State Association leaders (Chair/President, CEO/ED & Technical/DOC) that can be both delivered and presented to new leadership.

Within 90 days of a new State President election or CEO/ED or Technical Director hire, a USYS staff or board member will meet with the new leader for a day of orientation and answering questions.

Take the existing leadership summit and add more value and accreditation to it by developing an Executive CEU program.

Identify an online database to house a national membership library.

Survey members on possible cost saving initiatives using bulk buying i.e. equipment, background checks, AED's, etc. Programs can be for all or just a few, however the more buying power the more savings.

Survey the State Associations to gauge where each has strengths and weaknesses across multiple business disciplines.



# GOALS & STRATEGIES

## 9 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

### Goals

Reimagine our nationally-recognized youth identification and development pathway making the USYS ODP platform again, the premiere and preferred, identification and development pathway for US soccer players.

Create a nationwide scouting network that will identify and provide opportunities for high potential players through the USYS State Association ODP programs.

### Strategies

Identify and provide opportunities for high potential players, facilitate their development, and expose them to the next level of their chosen pathway.

Expand and improve the USYS scouting network through accessible and holistic education, age appropriate identification, and club outreach.

Work with US Soccer, MLS, NWSL, USL and others to strengthen the scouting network collectively without silos.

Develop ID Showcase events across all State Associations.

Create a blueprint that is in alignment with all State Associations to meet the context specific demands/needs for each state in three core areas: Education, Player Development, Grassroots Development.

Build relationships within the K-12 education system to educate and introduce the game to further increase participation and possibly identify potential talent.

Collaborate with the colleges and universities across the country to better understand their needs and improve the collegiate pathway.

Design and activate a top-level ID process at minimal to no cost to the players.

Reimagine our National and Regional Events to help enhance state programs and grow participation.



# GOALS & STRATEGIES

## 10 USYS COMPETITIONS

### Overall Goal

To provide the most competitive and prestigious collection of soccer events for the elite player.

### CUPS

#### Goals

Enhance the prestige of both the NCS and Presidents Cup competitions at the State level.

Reimagine the pathways to the National Championships to take advantage of the League competitions for the cross benefit of both programs.

Reimagine the Presidents Cup competitions to encourage participation from State Associations that historically have not been involved.

Raise the profile of both the National Championship Series and Presidents Cup competitions to enhance visibility nationwide.

#### Strategies

Deliver a tool kit that can be used to increase partnerships for on-site opportunities. Identify fields to create visibility for more sponsorship revenue. Find partners for the naming rights of the Cups for every age group and gender to increase revenue.

Announce teams attending Cup competitions via social media platforms with sizzle videos and capture the activity reports for each announcement. Analyzation of the data would include the number of impressions, media views and YouTube engagements of every post. Use findings to strategize how to increase the amount of followers on each social media platform. Add interactive events, such as live video streams of bracket draws ahead of the national events.

Create pathways to both the National Championship series and Presidents Cup competitions that increase the importance of the State Cup competitions.

Increase the size of the National Championships to allow for additional National League and Conference direct pathways to enrich the event competition level, as well as to raise National League Conference participation rewards.

Increase the size of the National Presidents Cup competition to account for increased participation from State Associations.

Seek high-profile hosting sites for both the National Championships and National Presidents Cup competitions.

# GOALS & STRATEGIES

## NATIONAL LEAGUE SHOWCASE SERIES AND NATIONAL LEAGUE PLAYOFFS

### Goals

Optimize scouting opportunities at showcases and playoffs for both the players and the scouts.

Strengthen overall USYS programming by providing an ODP Scouting network within the National League's showcase and playoff platform.

Improve the geographical locations for the National League Showcase Series.

Reduce travel and costs for teams participating in the National League Playoffs.

### Strategies

Develop a travel experience to help attract college coaches to attend the showcases and playoffs. Streamline the scouting and info-gathering process and deliver scouting tools through an intuitive online scouting hub, mobile application, and access to sharable game film.

With ODP, set a budget that will enable ODP coaches to attend the National League Showcase Series and National League Playoffs throughout the year.

Survey youth and college participants to gather relevant data. Identify potential new hosting locations that meet a market need.

Rotate the regions of the country where the playoffs are going to be held for each team throughout its run in youth soccer. Allow teams to travel locally at least once or twice in their cycle.



# GOALS & STRATEGIES

## NATIONAL LEAGUE CONFERENCES

### Goals

Enhance Conference operations and league structures to improve the experience for teams and attract new players.

Continue to find player pathways from state to national levels of competition.

Optimize communication and collaboration between each Conference manager with clubs and State Associations.

Develop consistent and nationally applicable operational standards for every Conference.

Adjust to the ever-changing climate in youth soccer to continue to grow and position the National League as the preeminent league competition in the country.

### Strategies

Improve, analyze and enhance Conference Operating Procedures (COP) after each seasonal year. Use data analytics to explore and put guidelines in place to reduce travel. Utilize league software to improve league management processes and interactions with teams, clubs and State Associations. Strive for increased ease of use and team management to increase participation and acquire more participant data for use in marketing the conferences.

Develop Club-based leagues in more Conferences and further expand on the Academy Division in collaboration with Major League Soccer. Seek more ways to integrate MLS Academy Clubs into the Conferences and add to participation in the National League Showcase Series.

Outline the oversight of the league structure. The conference managers will use the group, as outlined in COP, to drive the growth of the league.

Improve the framework for the club vs. club standards by implementing a robust club development platform within USYS University. Utilize the technical staff to help with these areas to deliver the best in class for club standards.

Be flexible. Ensure conference managers are keeping up communication and productive talks with constituents within their Conference.



# GOALS & STRATEGIES

## FUTSAL

### Goals

Enhance the State Association Futsal program.  
Host a National Futsal Championship.

### Strategies

Deliver a Futsal tool kit that gives the states the opportunity to host a Cup competition, a small event or potentially a futsal league platform. Focus on the development of four core areas: Grassroots Futsal, Coaching Education, Referee Training, and Marketing/Education.

Timing example: Identify a date and location, analyze cost of the event, Develop marketing to support the event and application process.

## BEACH SOCCER

### Goals

Establish charter for beach soccer.

### Strategies

Research, collaborate, survey and develop a new program. When researching, identify groups inside and outside of the United States to find the best-in-class methods and practices to bring back into the US Youth Soccer ecosystem.



# EXTRA TIME

To summarize, USYS will develop, activate and support the elements found within this Strategic Plan in order for our organization to:

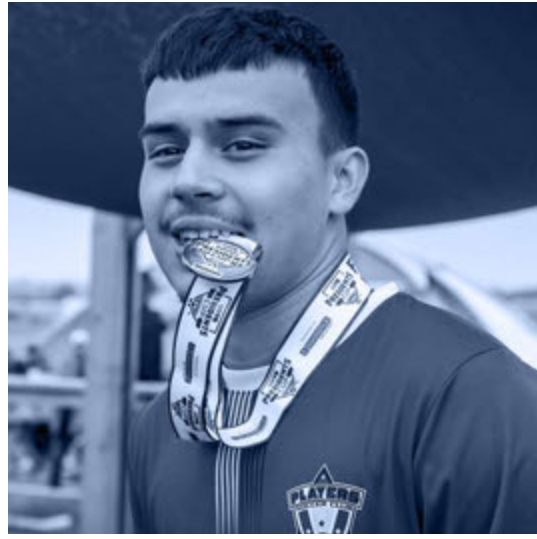
- 1** Be more inclusive on and off the field of play.
- 2** Re-imagine good governance providing for consistency of bylaws, rules, guidelines and policies across our entire organization.
- 3** Develop and activate organizational assets to drive significant advances in revenue generation.
- 4** Maintain a strong and vital customer service-centric approach to support our constituents' success in reaching their goals.
- 5** Build our strength leading into the 2026 World Cup and 2028 Olympic Games to be able to capitalize on the heightened excitement for soccer.







# US YOUTH SOCCER



# WE ARE YOUTH SOCCER