



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- **3** Welcome Letter
- 4 Soccer is a Simple Game
- 5 Our Vision & Mission
- **6** Core Values
- 7 Our Constituents
- **8** Our Process
- 9 Our Principles & Priorities
- 10 Core Disciplines
- **12** Goals & Strategies
- 16 Extra Time



WELCOME LETTER

In 2020, the US Youth Soccer Association (USYS) unveiled the first Strategic Plan in its history. With the pandemic behind us, we took time with input from 54 State Associations to revise the plan. As we celebrate our 50th Anniversary this fall (2023), USYS is poised to continue to work towards its vision of bringing communities together through the power of soccer making lifelong fans of the game.

USYS 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 revised 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 and retention for the entire sport. Our ability to create lifelong soccer fans 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, 54 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 revised 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.

Our strategy will provide confidence to every soccer club in the US 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.

Dr. Pete ZopfiUS Youth Soccer Chair

Skip GilbertUS Youth Soccer CEO



SOCCER IS A SIMPLE GAME

By Dan Woog

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/guardians 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/guardians 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 everyounger 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

INNOVATION*

USYS innovation refers to our intentional fostering of out-of-the-box thinking and problem solving within the youth sport landscape.

INTEGRITY*

USYS aspires for honesty, transparency and alignment along strong moral principles. We do the right thing in a reliable way with responsibility and respect.

RESPECT*

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.

COURAGE

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.

CONSISTENCY

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.

DEPENDABILITY

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.

INCLUSIVITY

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.

PASSION

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.

RELATIONSHIPS

USYS demands that all staff cultivate positive and productive relationships with colleagues or constituents; building strategic relationships that extend the horizon of our business.

TEAMWORK

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.

TRADITION

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.

S PECIFIC
M EASURABLE
A TTAINABLE
R ESULTS-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

The USYS National Staff is charged with developing and activating programs and services around these core business disciplines:

BUSINESS AFFAIRS & FINANCE

COMMERCIAL

DATA ANALYTICS/RESEARCH

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & BELONGING

EDUCATION

EVENT OPERATIONS

GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

SPORT DEVELOPMENT & TALENT ID

STATE ASSOCIATION & MEMBER SERVICES

USYS COMPETITIONS



CORE DISCIPLINES

The core disciplines of the USYS National Office are divided into four strategic groupings by which the 2023 Strategic Plan is structured to best position USYS to deliver against its Mission and Vision. To keep Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging at the forefront of USYS efforts, DEI&B principles are embedded throughout each strategic grouping.

BUSINESS OPERATIONS

- Business Affairs & Finance
- Commercial
- Data Analytics/Research
- Marketing & Communications

DEVELOPMENT

- Education
- Grassroots Development
- Sport Development & Talent ID

RELATIONSHIPS

- People Management
- State Association Services

THE GAME

- Event Operations
- USYS Competitions



BUSINESS OPERATIONS

Goals

- Be perceived and respected as the leader in the youth soccer and overall youth sport space.
- Develop nimble and sound business strategies.
- Increased investment from commercial partners that grows participation, drives down participant cost, improves event activation/experience and provides direct member benefits.
- Leverage sound data collection and analytics capabilities to grow/retain participation, expand commercial partnerships, unlock operational strategies, DEIB insights, etc.

Objectives

- Capture all relevant constituent data for planning, analytical and business decisions utilizing a user-friendly player registration experience and ecosystem.
- Develop and utilize progressive research to understand why players play, why coaches coach, why referees officiate and why others volunteer in the sport. Using similar methodology, learn why each group, along with teams, clubs and leagues, leaves the sport while trying to gauge what might bring them back.
- Drive greater commercial revenue while building an inclusive USYS brand.
- Establish best practices across all business disciplines.
- Improve overall USYS brand to be the industry leader that drives value for USYS constituent groups.
- Influence positive change in governance models.

- Build member satisfaction and trust by researching and exercising best practices in constituent service delivery.
- Develop a diverse marketing strategy to help recruit new clubs to USYS.
- Develop a unified sales strategy utilizing USYS and participating State Association's assets.
- Deliver compelling story-telling content, written and video, to all USYS constituents that address on and off-field activities and interests.
- Develop strategies to work with research organizations to solicit feedback from all USYS constituents.
- Establish the USYS brand tone and personality to best connect with each of the USYS constituencies.
- Generate program/department-specific reports and analysis to increase data-driven decision making.
- Implement digital/broadcast opportunities for USYS-specific content.
- Provide video capture that is easily sharable and may be utilized by the player to aid recruitment and the overall family experience.
- Use the USYS University concept to create fan experience activations at our owned events.
- Utilize data to develop a marketing and communication strategy to drive community awareness of USYS events to attract business and fan support.



DEVELOPMENT

Goals

- Foster an environment that is inclusive and affects positive change at the base of the pyramid.
- Maximize opportunities and exposure for high potential players on their chosen pathway.
- To strengthen the experience and cultivate nurturing opportunities for players, coaches, guardians, referees, and all other constituent groups who embrace the sport of soccer.
- USYS builds communities, creates sustainable programs, and fosters an environment of inclusion so that all participants can develop a passion for the game and become fans for life.

Objectives

- Develop opportunities to improve participation and accessibility in under-resourced communities while establishing systems to reduce or remove barriers that tend to exist in these communities.
- Strengthen USYS University into the flagship library within the youth soccer landscape to complement and enhance all our constituent's involvement with the sport while strengthening the value of the USYS brand.
- The USYS ODP platform is the premier and preferred identification and development pathway for high potential soccer players in the United States.

- Create a nationwide scouting network that will identify and provide opportunities for high potential players through the USYS State Association ODP programs.
- Deliver timely and relevant developmentally appropriate soccer education to all players, coaches, referees and guardians, through USYS programs and services.
- Drive the acceptance of League America and TOPSoccer across all State Associations and develop an international relations strategy to introduce both to military installations worldwide.
- Create and implement a plan to increase and sustain participation via alternative programming.





RELATIONSHIPS

Goals

- Become the technology-leader within the youth sport ecosystem allowing participating State Associations to increase relevancy.
- Provide resources and other business support to State Associations.

Objectives

- Cultivate an environment of trust that creates a collaborative network.
- Develop vendor partnerships to create cost savings across the USYS Family.
- Provide resources and services to member State Associations to support their operations.



- Add value and accreditation to the existing Leadership Summit by developing Executive CEU programs.
- Develop a user-friendly process to survey and identify alignment opportunities across the USYS Family.
- Develop an onboarding process for State Association leaders.
- Develop and activate a customer service survey for all State Associations to complete at the AGM and the Leadership Workshops and define a process to socialize the results across the association.
- Enhance the State Update Call agenda to provide current and relevant information.
- Ensure and help guide USYS and all state associations to use governance Best Practices by developing educational resources that strengthen the structures, bylaws, and policies of USYS and the State Associations.
- Identify an online State Association resource center.
- National Staff shall have regular contact with each State Association.
- Provide accounting, communications, marketing, risk management and technology services and support across all State Associations.

THE GAME

Goals

- Be the preeminent platform for youth soccer in the United States.
- Elevate the participant experience and status of USYS competitions.

Objectives

- Adjust to the ever-changing climate in youth soccer to continue to grow and position USYS competitions as the preeminent pathway in the country.
- Create a standard of excellence around all USYS events that allows every participant to feel that they are a part of something incredibly special.
- Develop a standard RFP package that is easily understood and financially viable, to meet the needs of host State Associations in seeking high-profile sites for USYS events.
- Increase attendance of college and professional scouts to USYS events.
- Provide a safe game day environment for every level of player, coach and referee.

- Create a college concierge service.
- Create standardized field signage to enhance each event.
- Develop a comprehensive alternative programming toolkit to support long-term State Association success in driving growth.
- Drive innovation and improve the customer experience by surveying all USYS constituent groups immediately following select events.
- Select event sites with a significant priority to location, facility layout, facility amenities, hotels, logistics and area attractions.
- Strengthen the pathways for the USYS National Championships & Presidents Cup.





EXTRA TIME

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

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



SOCCER

