



This strategic plan provides the overall direction and the general framework for the Maryland State Youth Soccer Association (MSYSA) over the next five (5) years. This plan does not provide the answers to every question or choice that will emerge over the coming years, but it does provide guidance and a foundation from which to aid in the decision-making process to ensure that decisions are being made in line with the direction of the Association.

MSYSA

501(c)(3) non-profit educational organization
Member of the US Soccer Federation & US Youth Soccer



Membership organization with more than:

- 145 member clubs and leagues
- 63,000 players
- 10,000 coaches, administrators, and volunteers

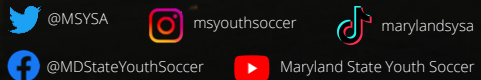
Mission:
Grow the game of soccer by educating, promoting, supporting, and providing

Vision:
Provide an opportunity for everyone to participate in the game of soccer

Why:
We transform lives!



Follow us on:



The Maryland State Youth Soccer Association is the primary advocate for youth soccer in the State of Maryland and the District of Columbia. Our mission is to grow the game of soccer as we educate, promote, support, and provide for our Affiliate members and all who participate in the game of soccer. Everyone is strongly encouraged to follow MSYSA on our various social channels and to engage frequently and consistently.

Summary

This strategic plan offers guidance, support, direction, and vision to the soccer community within Maryland and the District of Columbia. The Maryland State Youth Soccer Association leans on our pillars of educating, supporting, promoting, and providing, and our mission of growing the game to guide our numerous progressive initiatives designed to best serve our soccer community.

Our vision is to use the beautiful game of soccer to positively impact the lives of children, to create opportunities, and to strengthen communities. We have created this roadmap to help us navigate to our common destination while providing confidence that we can move soccer forward and help to shape the future of the game we love for generations. We look forward to continuing to work together to achieve these important goals.

Sincerely,

Mark Cantor
MSYSA President

Greg Smith, Ph.D.
MSYSA Executive Director

Photo: MSYSA Presidents Cup, 2021- BYSA '05 Elite Girls



MARYLAND STATE
YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION



Photo: MSYSA Let's Play! program, SW Baltimore Charter School, Fall '21



These definitions are provided to ensure that readers of this strategic plan know what is meant by each. Readers who may have additional questions are encouraged to contact the MSYSA state office (410-768-5401).



MSYSA has numerous constituents ranging from players, to schools, and to elected officials. Each constituent group has unique desires, interests, needs, and communication styles.

MSYSA serves each constituent group in various ways based on their characteristics and their specific needs. For example, the way that we serve players is different from the way that we serve partners and sponsors. Players are served by providing programmatic opportunities, access to gear and equipment, and exposure via our marketing and social media, while partners and sponsors are served by providing exposure and brand awareness in exchange for value-in-kind (VIK) and/or financial contributions. Understanding the intrinsic variations and meeting our constituents where they are is fundamentally important to achieving our goals.

Accomplishing some of the goals identified within this strategic plan will require partnering and collaborating with a number of these constituent groups in addition to other entities within the local community. Our ability to successfully collaborate will directly impact our ability to achieve our goals.



MSYSA aspires to improve the lives of children while creating opportunities for personal growth and development. Doing this successfully will positively contribute to strengthening communities. These aspirations will be accomplished by implementing the items contained within this strategic plan.



events. This should continue to be addressed as MSYSA is missing out on valuable opportunities to increase brand awareness and the potential to encourage people to register to play soccer!

Opportunities include enhanced programming within the futsal (i.e., small-sided soccer on a hard surface) space, continuing to grow and leverage our social media presence to engage and increase excitement for the sport. Additional opportunities include collaborations with scholastic institutions to bring programming and expose more children to the beautiful game, and the fact that USA is hosting the 2026 FIFA World Cup as excitement for and around the game will be at an elevated level as we get closer to this major event.

Threats include Federal laws (e.g., SafeSport Act) that we must comply with and that have a direct and significant impact on our operations; landscape shifts to include what recently happened with the USSF Development Academy dissolving and MLS Next coming online in addition to the creation of the Girls Academy (GA) League; pay-to-play as it continues to be one of the largest hurdles hindering the growth of the game of soccer, and the relative scarcity of facilities within our jurisdiction. It is one thing to want to engage and serve more children, but if we do not collectively have the capacity to accommodate, then our efforts may be in vain.



According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are 1,056,632 persons age 5-18 who live within the state of Maryland and the District of Columbia (i.e., our jurisdiction).

The Aspen Institute’s Project Play (<https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/youth-sports-facts/participation-rates>) reports that an average of 17.1% of children ages 6 to 12 engage in no sport activity during the year (2018). This is 33.4% for households with an income under \$25k and 24.5% for households with an income between \$25k and \$49.9k.

Even if one could say that only 40% of children ages 5-18 play sport, there remains a tremendous opportunity for growth as MSYSA, through our Affiliate clubs and leagues, currently, collectively serves roughly 63k players (the blue dot). This is a very small number in comparison with the total number of children who are believed to be playing sport within our jurisdiction and an infinitesimal number when compared with the entire pie (i.e., the entire population of persons age 5-18 within our jurisdiction (1.06M)).



This map shows the spatial distribution of MSYSA registered players for the 2020-21 seasonal year. The top five (5) counties based on number of registered players are: Montgomery (13,680), Anne Arundel (5,943), Howard (4,972), DC (3,758), and Baltimore (2,458). The bottom five (5) counties are: Somerset (22), Dorchester (29), Garrett (38), Worcester (76), and Kent (94).

While we know that roughly 100k children live in Baltimore City, our records indicate that there are only 374 MSYSA registered players from this area.



These maps show the racial composition of the individuals who reside within the MSYSA jurisdiction. Asian and Latino individuals appear to be a very small number when compared with White individuals. Additionally, according to the map, there appear to be three primary areas where Black individuals reside (Prince Georges County, Baltimore City & SW Baltimore County, and NE Somerset County). These three areas also have some of the fewest MSYSA registered players and some of the lowest reported median household incomes (see next slide).



This map shows the median household income across our jurisdiction. Having this data helps to inform decision making as it pertains to resource allocation and program creation and implementation. This information may also be helpful when looking to solicit and secure donations.



Photo: MSYSA Coach for Community



The principles and tactics being employed to guide this strategic plan include service leadership, performance excellence, and collaborative partnerships.

At the center of everything we do must be **service leadership**. Doing so will help to keep us grounded as we strive to offer best-in-class resources while achieving our stated goals. **Performance excellence** is a nod to the fact that we must strive everyday to provide the best solutions while inspiring others to do the same. And lastly, **collaboration** is king, and it will be essential for MSYSA to establish and maintain great partnerships locally and nationally to best accomplish the goals that have been established within this strategic plan. Doing so will serve to maximize our resources while increasing synergy and promoting goodwill.



While our principles and tactics are at the core of everything we do, our strategic priorities create the parameters within which our goals exist to maintain a laser focus. Our strategic priorities are engagement, inspirational brand, and participation growth.

- **Engagement** is necessary to build relationships, increase understanding, and to truly serve. It is through engagement that MSYSA will have the desired positive impact on the lives of participants and this impact will help to keep them in the game.
- An **inspirational brand** is an outcome, or an effect of the work being done, and the decisions being made. One does not simply decide that a brand is now inspirational, but rather it is built over time. MSYSA must work everyday to establish and then maintain that it is an inspirational brand with value and stature.
- The mission of MSYSA is to grow the game. This ultimately means that we want **more people participating**. This will happen in many ways to include through strategic partnerships and outreach.



Our strategic priorities (engagement, brand, and growth), centered by our principles and tactics (service leadership, performance excellence, collaborative partnerships), are executed through our core business lanes of **development, education, programs, registration, and service**. It is no coincidence that our core business lanes align so perfectly with our fundamental pillars of educate, promote, support, and provide. This is how we deliver and execute against who we are.

The specific goals and strategies pertaining to each of these core business lanes will be further articulated over the next few slides.



Goals & Strategies

• Development:

• Goals

- Develop opportunities to improve participation in underserved and under resourced communities.
- Provide a continuum of support that fosters an inclusive environment (DEI).
- Maintain the ODP development pathway.

• Strategies

- Promote an in-school physical education program.
- Introduce futsal programming.
- Offer community-based soccer festivals.
- Maintain grant funding for grassroots programming.
- Facilitate TOPSoccer coaching education.
- Provide opportunities for high potential players.

Development is the impact that MSYSA has on participants over time.

Our development-related goals will be achieved by pursuing the strategies noted. While some of these strategies will be implemented immediately and with relative ease (e.g., maintaining grant funding for grassroots programming), others will require a multi-step approach and a significant amount of planning (e.g., in-school physical education program, or community-based soccer festivals).

Providing a continuum of support that fosters an inclusive environment will be anchored by a purposeful, concerted effort to invest in **diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)** training for the Board and staff as a first step. From there, armed with more of the knowledge, tools, and understanding, any necessary steps within our own programming can be taken before then building out into our community.

As noted on slide #1, this strategic plan does not provide the answers to every question or choice that will emerge over the coming years, but it does provide guidance and a foundation from which to aid in the decision-making process to ensure that every day, every decision is being made in line with the direction of the Association.



Goals & Strategies

- **Education:**

- Goals
 - Maintain a robust resource center on MSYSA website.
 - Publish specific content for benefit of affiliates and all who participate.
 - Train coaches and administrators on leading approaches.
- Strategies
 - Provide age level appropriate soccer education for coaches, administrators, parents, and players.
 - Partner with content providers when appropriate.

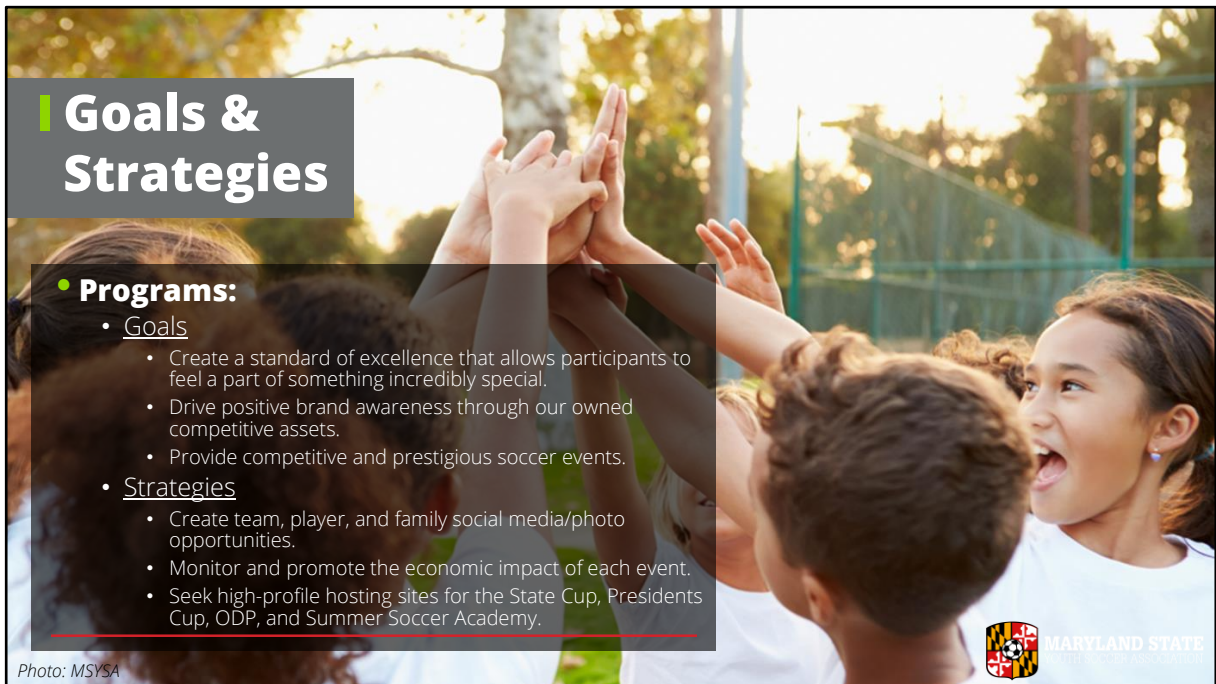
Photo: MSYSA



Education may as well be synonymous with MSYSA. It is part of our non-profit classification (501(c)(3)) and it is one of our foundational pillars.

Education is part of our identity. MSYSA educates through publications - to include our resource center and articles, classes – to include coaching education and registration system assistance, webinars – to include guest speakers on the topics of insurance, COVID, etc., and coaching education licenses, just to name a few.

MSYSA will remain committed to educating those within our jurisdiction. This will only serve to strengthen our place within the landscape and will result in more positive outcomes for participants and our community.



Goals & Strategies

- **Programs:**

- Goals

- Create a standard of excellence that allows participants to feel a part of something incredibly special.
 - Drive positive brand awareness through our owned competitive assets.
 - Provide competitive and prestigious soccer events.

- Strategies

- Create team, player, and family social media/photo opportunities.
 - Monitor and promote the economic impact of each event.
 - Seek high-profile hosting sites for the State Cup, Presidents Cup, ODP, and Summer Soccer Academy.

Photo: MSYSA

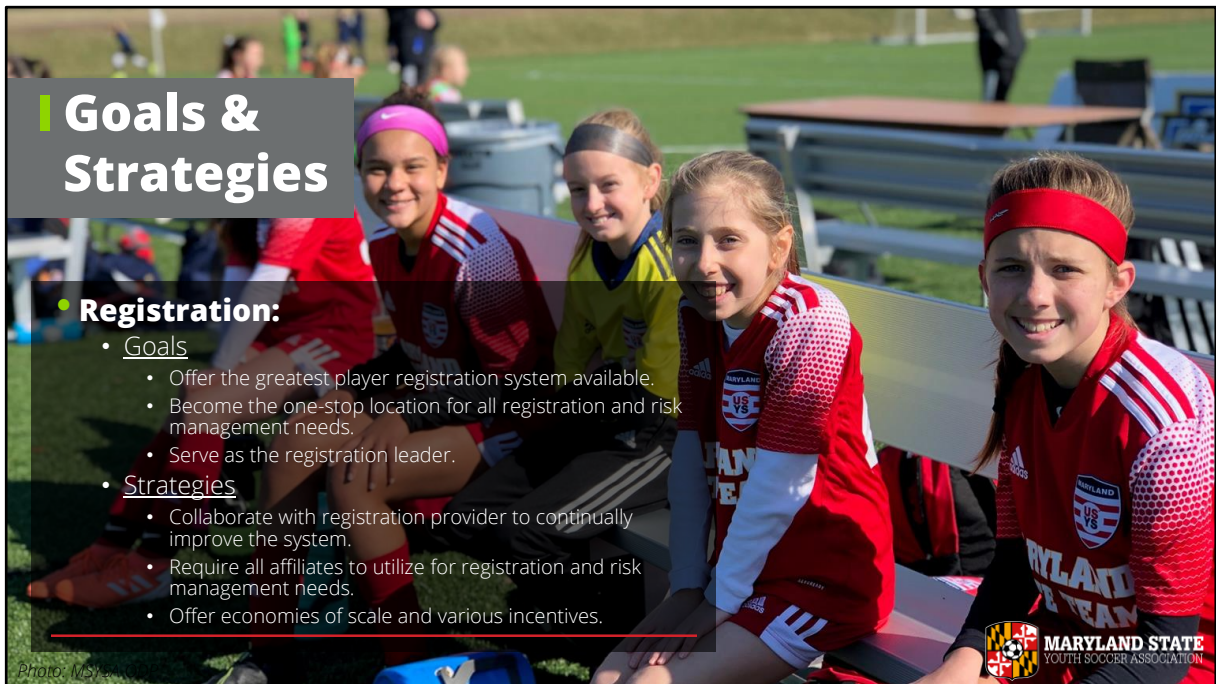


The **programs** offered, provided, and administered by MSYSA are of great importance and significance. Our programs fund our operations and are one of the primary ways through which MSYSA engages the community.

Affiliate clubs depend on MSYSA to offer certain jurisdiction-wide programmatic opportunities like ODP, Coaching Education, and our Cups. We must continue building and maintaining a standard of excellence within our programs that will help to drive positive brand awareness and will contribute to each program's prestige.

This will be accomplished in many ways including, but not limited to:

- making it easy for participants to connect our programs/events back to their personal lives by showcasing their excitement and joy in participating (e.g., photo opportunities, hashtags).
- tracking and publishing the collective economic impact of our programs to further highlight and underscore their importance and significance within the local community.
- placing our programs at the best facilities possible.



Goals & Strategies

- **Registration:**

- Goals

- Offer the greatest player registration system available.
- Become the one-stop location for all registration and risk management needs.
- Serve as the registration leader.

- Strategies

- Collaborate with registration provider to continually improve the system.
- Require all affiliates to utilize for registration and risk management needs.
- Offer economies of scale and various incentives.

Photo: MSYSA



The **registration** of players and adults is another one of the most fundamental and central aspects of MSYSA and is a requirement of membership according to US Soccer and USYS bylaws and policies. When the process for registering is simple, straightforward, and quick, it greatly increases the likelihood of more participation and helps to minimize the frustrations of our amazing Affiliates!

Leveraging our registration system to assist with and manage the necessary risk management items will continue to be a great help and will further permit MSYSA to be the leader in this space while leveraging economies of scale to offer free or greatly reduced access to the registration solution for all Affiliates. This then becomes one additional value-add that, when added to the long list of benefits of membership, makes the decision to join or remain with MSYSA an easy one.



Goals & Strategies

- **Service:**

- Goals

- Be respected by our Affiliates by providing value-added support and services.
- Utilize collective power of all Affiliates to leverage economies of scale where appropriate.
- Provide business discipline support to those in need.

- Strategies

- Create and maintain a regular contact schedule for elected, administrative, and technical leaders.
- Provide welcome/onboarding training to newly elected and hired leaders within Affiliate organizations.

Service is easy to say but is a bit more difficult to fully define and provide. One definition of service is the action of helping or doing work for someone, but it goes much deeper than that within our context. Within MSYSA, service means responding to people in a timely manner, it means taking the time to talk with someone to explain a situation, rule, or policy, it means going out of our way to make someone feel welcome or appreciated, and the list goes on.

MSYSA must always strive to serve our Affiliates and all who participate to the best of our collective abilities by anticipating their needs and by providing solutions to problems they may not even yet know exist.

As it has been said that change is the only consistent thing in life, maintaining regular contact with the various constituents within our jurisdiction will help to keep MSYSA on the leading edge of change. This will also create the perfect opportunity for growing and maintaining relationships while also articulating just how much we care and that we are here for them. Our service must show our commitment and dedication every day.



Photo: MSYSA State Cup, 2021

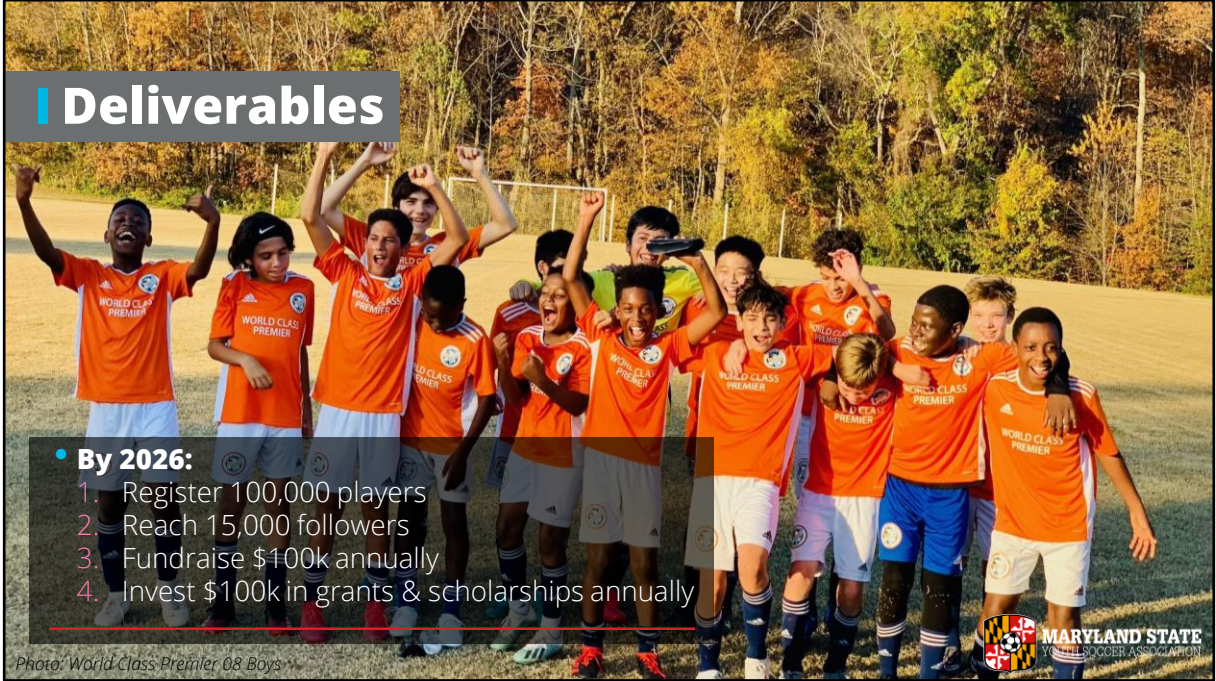


SMART Goals

- MSYSA uses SMART Goals to provide a sense of direction while helping to organize and reach our goals:
 - **S**pecific
 - **M**easurable
 - **A**ttainable
 - **R**esults-oriented
 - **T**ime-determined

Photo: MSYSA ODP





Deliverables

- **By 2026:**
 1. Register 100,000 players
 2. Reach 15,000 followers
 3. Fundraise \$100k annually
 4. Invest \$100k in grants & scholarships annually

Photo: World Class Premier 08 Boys

Each of these deliverables are SMART in that they are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented, and Time-determined. Each will be articulated more fully over the next few slides.



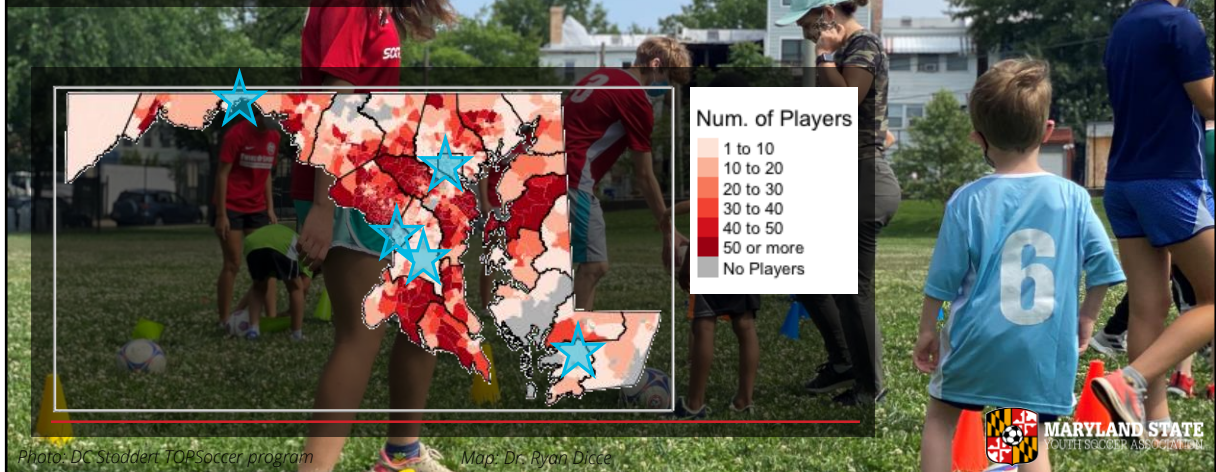
The greatest opportunity for growth exists at the grassroots level with children ages 5 to 12. Finding ways to collaborate with the various independent groups (i.e., not affiliated with US Soccer) who already offer soccer programming within our jurisdiction may represent low hanging fruit. Additionally, working with elementary schools and middle schools primarily within underserved and under-resourced communities (e.g., Title 1) should be a focus going forward.



Based on the known population and the estimated percentage of kids who play sports, there is tremendous opportunity for growth. It should not be difficult to grow to serve 100k children by 2026. We simply need to be purposeful and persistent in our approach. The MSYSA IGNITE Hubs being strategically placed around the jurisdiction will aid in achieving this deliverable.

Deliverables

1. Register 100k players:



These stars represent where MSYSA IGNITE Hub locations are being implemented moving forward. They are being placed in locations where we know children ages 5-18 live and that currently have a low number of registered players.



Deliverables

2. Reach 15k followers:

Overview:

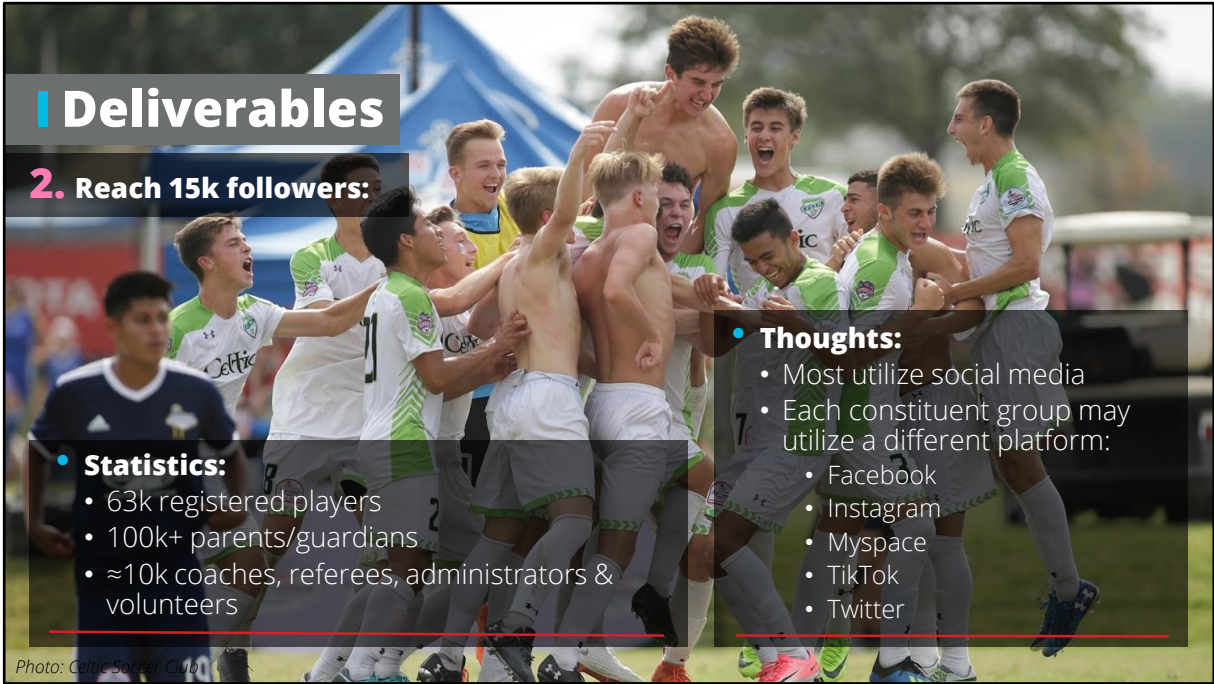
- Offer relevant content of interest
- Ask people to follow
- Offer awards and prizes
- Leverage partners & brand halo's

Photo: Bethesda Soccer Club



Social media is an important tool for staying connected, educating, increasing awareness, and engaging with our current and future participants. With the goal of serving 100k players by 2026, it is reasonable to expect that 15% would choose to follow and engage with MSYSA via our various social channels. We simply need to ensure that our content is relevant and interesting. Offering increased incentives through awards and prizes may also help to encourage people to follow and engage.

Sponsors and partners can bring value to MSYSA in the social media space via the halo effect (the tendency for an impression created in one area to influence opinion in another area). This is an added benefit to working collaboratively with established brands with a positive perception in the community.



Deliverables

2. Reach 15k followers:

- **Statistics:**
 - 63k registered players
 - 100k+ parents/guardians
 - ≈10k coaches, referees, administrators & volunteers
- **Thoughts:**
 - Most utilize social media
 - Each constituent group may utilize a different platform:
 - Facebook
 - Instagram
 - Myspace
 - TikTok
 - Twitter

Photo: Celtic Soccer Club

Based on the known population and the belief that most, if not all, utilize social media in some way, it should not be difficult to reach 15k followers by 2026. We simply need to be purposeful and persistent in our approach.



As MSYSA’s current operating model is almost entirely fee-for-service, every dollar raised each year is one less dollar that needs to be paid by a player in order to register and participate in our various programs.

Donations may come from multiple sources to include local businesses, grants, sponsorships, partnerships, or via foundations and individuals. Establishing and promoting a compelling argument for why monies should be donated is a vitally important deliverable. Our operating model is noted as a weakness and our pay-to-play model is listed as a threat on our SWOT for a reason. Raising funds through donations will significantly reduce this exposure.



Deliverables

3. Raise \$100k annually:

- **Statistics:**

- 6.7M residents in MD & DC
- DC & MD ranked #1 & 2 respectively for highest median household income
- 11 Fortune 500 companies headquartered in DC & 3 in MD

- **Thoughts:**

- Many affluent communities
- People like to support a good cause
- People want to make a positive difference in the lives of others
- Create awareness (ask), and make it easy to donate

Photo: La Plata Youth Soccer Association

Based on what we know to be true about median household income and fortune 500 companies headquartered within our jurisdiction, there is tremendous opportunity to raise significant funds each year. It should be realistic to raise \$100k annually by 2026. People love to help and support a good cause and they love to make a positive impact in the lives of others, especially within their own community!



As a charitable, non-profit organization, offering and awarding grants and scholarships each year to grow the game while transforming lives is central to our mission.

Furthermore, it is believed that by utilizing financial resources to make more spaces and surfaces available for soccer to be played, a distinct cyclical impact on our operations and our mission will be realized (e.g., more facilities means more opportunities for people to play, means more people to give back, means the need and ability for more facilities to be built increases, etc.).

Deliverables

4. Invest \$100k annually:

- **Statistics:**

- 6.7M residents in MD & DC
- 9.9% of people in MD live below poverty line
- 16.8% of people in DC live below poverty line

- **Thoughts:**

- Underserved and under resourced communities exist
- Soccer improves lives
- Participation may improve local communities and society as a whole
- This is intertwined with our mission

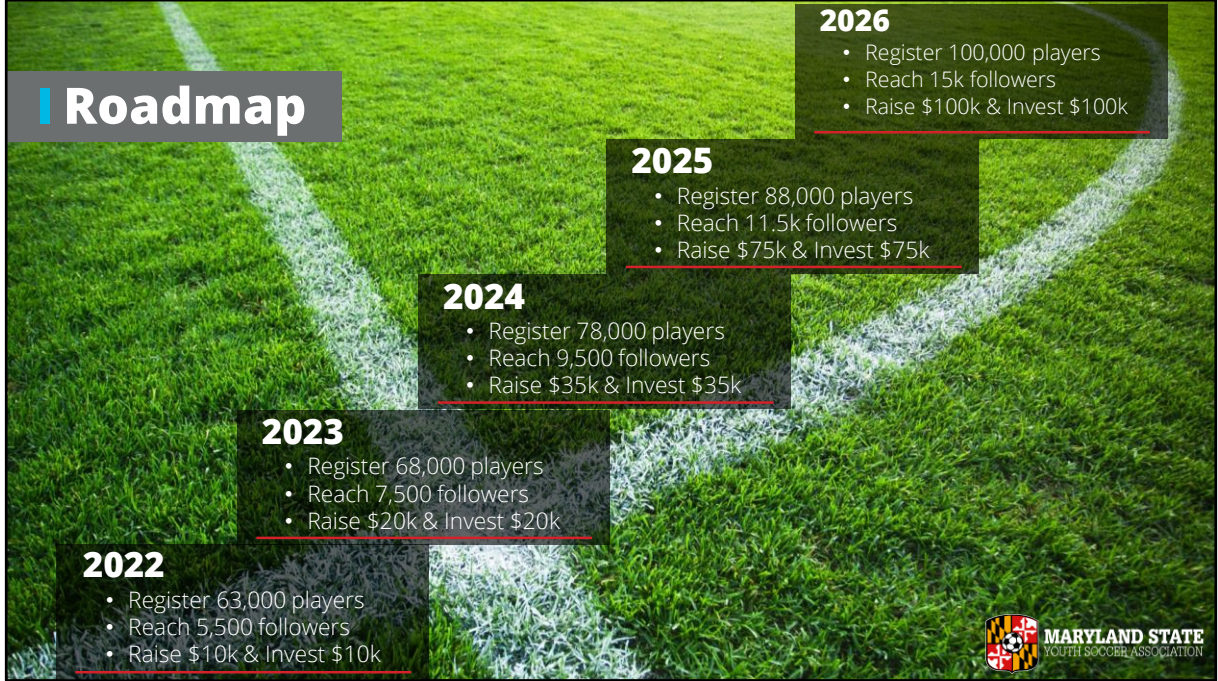
Photo: La Plata Youth Soccer Association TOPSoccer program

Based on what we know to be true about the percentage of people within our jurisdiction who live below the poverty line, there is tremendous need to invest at least \$100k each year by 2026.



Photo: MSYSA State Cup, 2021





This roadmap provides the target goals for each year leading up to the 2026 FIFA World Cup. While the various targets might not be reached precisely according to this path, every reasonable effort will be made to meet or beat these targets each year so that by 2026 we are in a much-improved place than where we are today. This roadmap provides the yearly benchmarks and serves as the metrics by which success will be measured.



The sun is still rising on MSYSA, and our future is truly bright!