



**A guide to increase
player participation...**





Introduction

To our valued association and club leaders:

Washington Youth Soccer is dedicated to providing association and club leadership with resources and tools for effective player recruitment. Washington Youth Soccer has developed a toolkit to assist with your player recruitment efforts. Included is a template presentation designed to be customized by your association or club along with a toolkit of resources to support your player recruitment and retention efforts.

Thank you for all you do!

What resources are in the toolkit?

- Presentation Template
(to be customized for your association or club and presented to help mobilize and guide your recruitment team)
- Background information and benefits of playing with Washington Youth Soccer
- Tips for preparing for your player recruitment campaign
- Tips and tools for developing your marketing plan
 - Website optimization
 - Marketing through email & social media (templates)
 - External Advertising through print & media (templates)
 - Engaging your existing community
 - Outreach through schools & other community organizations
- Tips for executing your plan
- Resource list of recruitment strategy experts
- Links to Washington Youth Soccer photos and videos

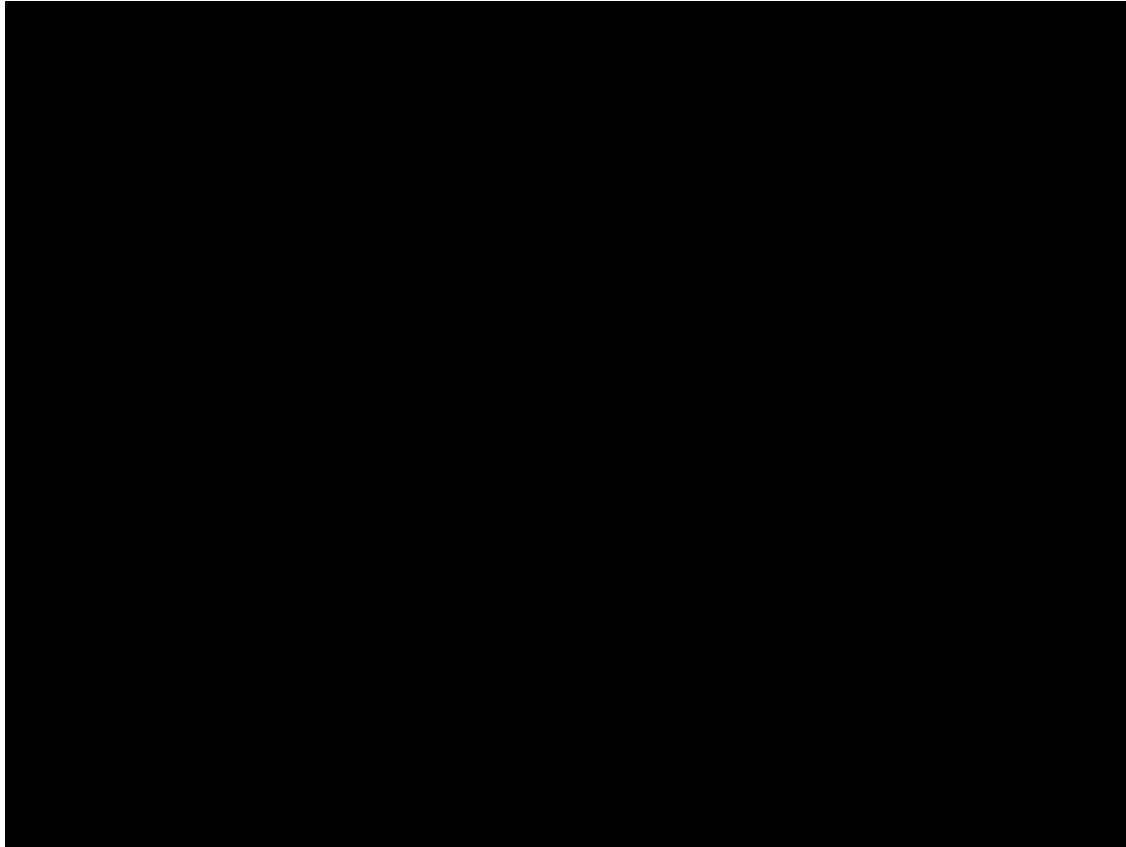


Washington Youth Soccer & Insert your association or club *Player Recruitment Guide*





US Youth Soccer & Washington Youth Soccer



Insert your website here

www.WashingtonYouthSoccer.org

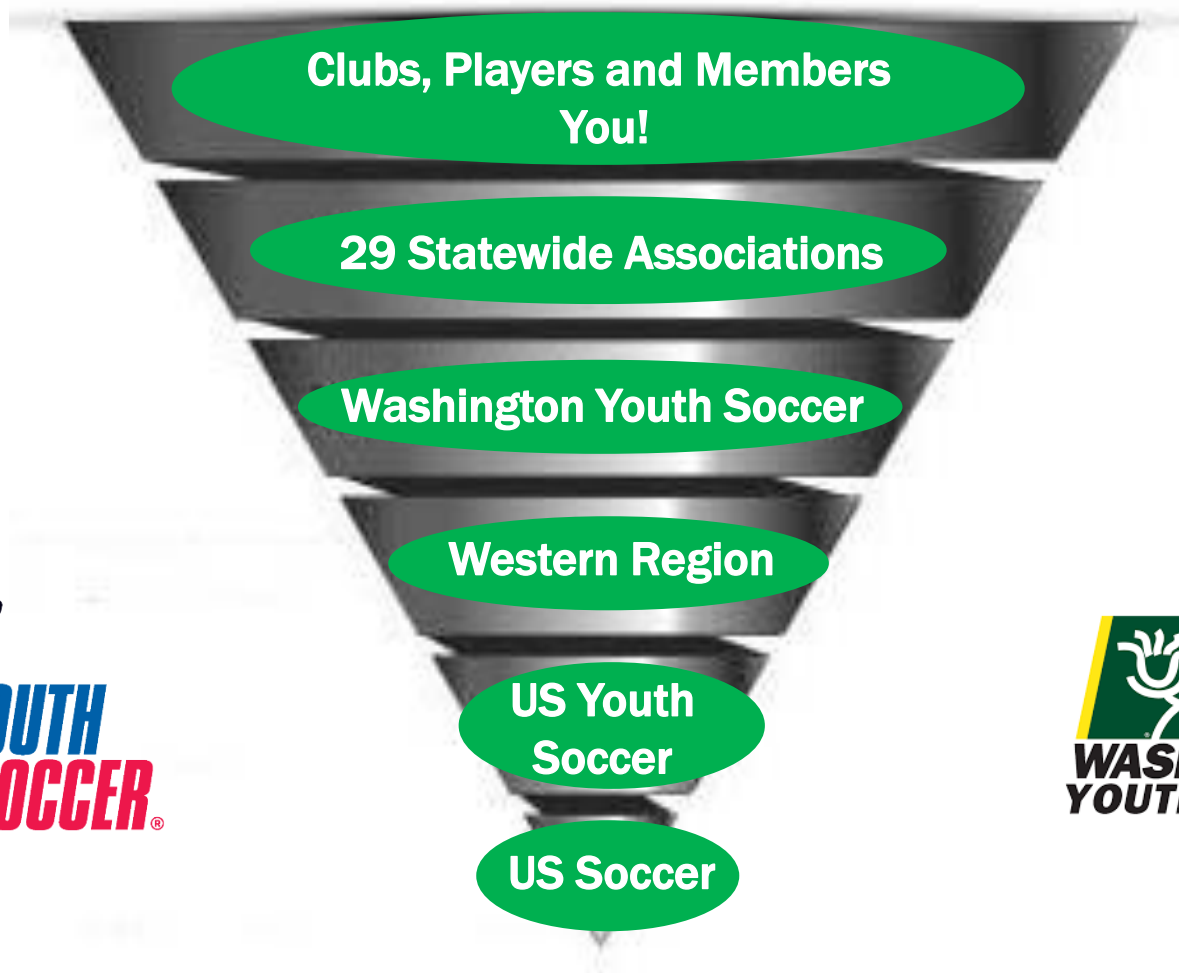
Why youth soccer?

- Have fun
- Great exercise and fitness
- Gain life skills
- Gain self-confidence
- Build community
- Player & skill development
- Elite competition
- Make friends & mentors for life
- Serve your community
- Programs for all ages and skill levels





US Youth Soccer Pyramid





About Washington Youth Soccer

- Washington Youth Soccer is made up of 29 Member Associations and over 180 clubs that facilitate recreational, competitive and regional programs as well as TOPSoccer (soccer programming for players with disabilities).
- Washington Youth Soccer runs State Cup Tournaments, state level leagues, an Elite Player Development program, and several soccer outreach programs.
- Now in its 50th year, Washington Youth Soccer, the state's largest youth organization, is a passionate and dedicated team that has developed youth-oriented programs in every corner of Washington State and serves over 100,000 kids each year, including thousands who are in the greatest of need.





Washington Youth Soccer Mission

Our Mission

It is the mission of Washington Youth Soccer to foster the physical, mental and emotional growth and development of the State of Washington's youth through the sport of soccer at all levels of age and competition.

Stance on Social Equity

Washington Youth Soccer supports and pursues social diversity throughout our programs. We are committed to providing equal access to our programs for all of the youth of our state without bias towards race, color, religion, age, sex, income level, social status or national origin. In order to fulfill this commitment, Washington Youth Soccer expects all of our Member Associations, clubs and teams to provide equal access to all programs, facilities and resources to all of the youth within their geographic boundaries. Washington Youth Soccer believes that soccer is the game for all kids and that by striving to reach, develop and serve all of the diverse communities throughout our state we work to ensure that our belief becomes a reality.



Why Washington Youth Soccer?

Washington Youth Soccer is the largest youth sports organization in the state and provides all these valuable benefits and more...

- Membership to US Soccer
- Membership to US Youth Soccer
- Secondary Player insurance coverage
- Risk management integrated program
- Concussion and Sudden cardiac education programs
- Referee Retention and Referee Recruitment programs
- Coach and Parent Education
- Fully integrated RESPECT program
- Structured Discipline Review and Enforcement program
- Age and Ability levels of play from RCL to Recreational and Regional/National Leagues
- Comprehensive State/Regional and National Cup competitions
- Elite Player (Olympic Development) programs
- Top Soccer program
- Comprehensive Insurance Coverage for Sanctioned activities
- Communication network across all platforms
- Commercial partners connected to the Community
- Governance Oversight and Assistance
- Highly motivated Staff to serve the Members
- Nationally relevant State Association
- 50+years of accumulated experience as a Youth Organization



Washington Youth Soccer Community Impact

- Enriched the lives of 3,500,000 players
- Educated 200,000 coaches, 50,000 referees, and 700,000 volunteers.
- Provided over \$1,100,000 to build soccer fields.
- Provided over \$1,000,000 in scholarship opportunities for players in underserved communities.
- **First** State Soccer Association to form **all girls team**.
- Led a Nationwide discussion on **concussion education** leading to legislated return-to-play policies in all 50 states.
- Created the first **Youth Advisory Board**.
- Helped to establish the Pacific NW as the **soccer capital of the US**.
- Developed and implemented a **Top-Class education** curriculum.

Why (insert name of your association or club)?

- Brainstorm with your leadership group why do your families and players choose to participate. What needs are you filling? Why would others join? What is special about your club? Talk to coaches, players, parents.
- Enter 5 – 10 key stats and benefits of participating in your particular association or club.
- Create a short paragraph and a team tagline that explains why your association or club is so great, if you don't have one already!



How to sign up?

- Make sure your leadership and your recruitment team fully understand your registration process.
- The goal is to have registration open 365 days a year 24/7. No kid should be turned away! Is there anything you can do to make it clearer or easier? Discuss and answer any questions.
- Enter your details on basics of how to register – website/contact information, fees, process, etc.





Recruitment campaign preparation

- Always remember—the goal is to have registration open 365 days a year 24/7. No kid should be turned away!
- However, a campaign with specific targets, well thought-out strategies and proper preparation for each season is essential.
- Set your player participation goals
 - What is your current # of players?
 - Set a target for # of new players, set a target for # of returning players, set a total % increase target
 - What are your target demographics (age, geography, etc.)?
- Set your season schedule: determine dates, times, locations for games and practices. Involve key team members (coaches, volunteers, and players) to promote ownership and engagement.



Marketing plan development

- What have you done in the past? What was effective? What was not effective? What new strategies can you employ? What is your budget?
- Who is your target audience?
- Suggested strategies to consider...
 - Optimize your website
 - Marketing through email & social media
 - Content marketing
 - External advertising through print & media
 - Engaging your existing community
 - Outreach through schools & other community organizations



Effective content

- **Make it visual and use high quality images** - Include photos of your players in action or celebrating. Pixelated images look unprofessional. Invest the time in finding high quality photos. We have included a link to a folder with many high quality youth soccer images.
- **Less is more** - Keep it concise and include only the most important details. You can always link to your website for more info.
- **Double-check your work** - Errors can leave a lasting negative impression. Run a spell-check and scan for mistakes before saving your campaign creative. Have a team to proofread.
- **Send a compelling message** - What sets you apart from the competition and why should parents care about your services? How will it help their child?
- **Clear call to action** - If parents don't know what you're asking them to do, they most likely won't do it. Include a clear call-to-action button that stands out.
- **Easy to navigate links** - How frustrating is it when you can't find what you're looking for? Send parents to a page that's simple, clean, and easy to navigate to prevent a frustrating user experience. Offer online registration for a seamless user experience.

Review your website with the following in mind...

- Is it clear, simple, nice images, easy to use, easy to find the important information? It should be as easy as possible to sign up.
- Create coach profiles with bios, photos, contact info and certifications.
- Are you telling your story effectively? Is it visual? Do you have high quality photos and videos, effective logo and mission statement, passionate testimonials? Make sure to include your messaging and tagline on why your club/association is the greatest!
- Do you have an FAQ page for new parents and players?
- Is your calendar/schedule easily accessible?
- Involve your key stakeholders in reviewing your website. Ask an outsider to review your website to get a new perspective.



Email Campaigns

- **Content:** Develop a clear, concise, visually appealing email with a call to action and easy to use links. However, if you are not using an EMS (see below) keep the format simple, formatting frequently does not translate the same on different platforms and on mobile.
- **Distribution:** List the networks, email distribution lists you have access to. Who can you ask to send out emails to their networks? Keep your target audience in mind.
- **Frequency:** How often will you send emails? Do you have fresh content to share? Somewhere between weekly and monthly is suggested during key registration periods.
- **EMS:** Consider using an EMS (Email Marketing Software) like mailchimp or hubspot which both offer free plans. These services provide easy to use, visually appealing templates and will allow you to monitor your open rates.



Social Media

- There is vast potential to reach new families through social networks. Choose the channels that work best for your community.
- **Facebook, Instagram, & more:** Setting up association or club social media accounts is simple and free and a great way to engage with your community. [Facebook](#) continues to be the most widely used social media platform, with 79% of American internet users. [Instagram](#) is second with 32% of users, [Pinterest](#) coming in a close third with 31%, and [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#) at 29% and 24% respectively. [Link to more 2017 social media stats.](#)
- Post everyday! Simplify the posting process by linking accounts, and using a tool like [Hootsuite](#) or [Buffer](#) to schedule and manage simultaneous posts across multiple platforms.
- **Hashtags and Tagging:** Get the best from your social media use by tagging people in tweets and posts, and using hashtags to allow your tweets and posts to be discovered by others. Look at the hashtags that are used by other similar clubs or by members of your community to find those that are relevant to you. [#WAYouthSoccer](#)



Social Media & Content Marketing

- Utilize content marketing: competitive 10-15 great, recent sports articles that are worthy of sharing with parents and players. Use these throughout your campaign to create online conversations. Ensure they represent the ethos of the club or team appropriately. Sharing great content with your community is a great way to start a conversation, engage, and inspire.
- Check-out Washington Youth Soccer's website and social media sites for ideas and content to share.

Website: <http://www.washingtonyouthsoccer.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WashingtonYouthSoccer>

Instagram: <http://instagram.com/wayouthsoccer>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/WAYouthSoccer>

External Advertising

- **Virtual Listings:** Take advantage of any free listing sites that operate in your local area. Check out whether local community centers' websites include virtual 'notice boards' where you can list club details and add a link to your website. Advertise on municipality websites and online sports club directories, which often allow free classified ads for local organizations. Consider Craigslist and other sites for local activities for families.
- **Physical Advertising**
 - Flyers, posters, sandwich boards, signs, banners, etc.
 - Ask volunteers, coaches and current players to display flyers and posters in their car, business or home windows.
- **Media:** Contact your local papers and radio stations to find out how to send them your announcements.
- **Facebook Ads:** Consider a [boosted Facebook post](#), small cost for a wider targeted audience.



Outreach through Schools & Community Orgs

- Use the emails, digital flyers, and print flyers you've developed to do outreach at schools and community organizations.
- PeachJar: 27 districts and 547 schools in Washington State use peachjar to manage communications to parents. [Check which schools in your target area use peachjar.](#)
- Reach out in person, via email, or online to parent groups, church groups, places of worship, community and recreation centers, local places that kids and parents frequent. Check out opportunities to be listed in their weekly bulletins, e-mails, or newsletters.
- Develop relationships with rec and community center leaders, school coaches, and PE instructors so they will help spread the word.
- Reach out to other sports organizations and teams who have seasons that don't overlap with yours and arrange to cross-promote.
- Promote at local community events.



Engaging existing community

- Last but most importantly, reach out to your previous players and families
- Engage them through social media: Ask your club community to send or share their favorite or funniest images, wins and memories from last season. 'Like, share and comment on their responses. Offer a prize to members who 'like', share or retweet messages announcing the opening of registration.
- Send them targeted emails with deadlines, special promos and incentives for return registrations.
- Ask them to spread the word to their networks: Your former and returning players are your most effective ambassadors. People trust recommendations from friends when they are considering a purchase or choosing a brand. These positive personal stories are also what will draw people to your association or club.
- Give out apparel with the logo and the website address to promote registration.
- Incentivize recruitment: Make it even more effective by offering an incentive for the squad member who introduces the most new joiners like free merchandise or a discount on fees.



Recruitment Plan Execution

Review the steps to develop the plan and discuss the steps for execution...

- 1 – Set your goals.
- 2 – Set your schedule.
- 3 – Develop your content (messaging, photos, videos).
- 4 – Select your marketing strategies.
- 5 - Create your timeline with frequency and date of promotions, include benchmarks to reach goals (i.e. 50% to player target by) as well as the key events and deadlines of your registration campaign.
- 6 – Assign a lead to be responsible for each activity, make sure they are clear of what is expected and that they have the resources and support they need to be successful.
- 7 – Make sure every member in your leadership team is engaged and has a way to help. Everyone can like and repost on social media, forward emails and digital fliers to their networks, and actively spread the word.
- 8 – Make sure to leverage your existing relationships and resources. Do you have connections to local media, writers, photographers, web designers, graphic designers, videographers, etc.?
- 9 – Celebrate successes and appreciate your team!

Need further guidance...

- Link to shared folder with [samples, editable templates and contact list of recruitment experts](#) you can reach out to for further assistance
- Link to [photo bank](#)
- Link to [Washington Youth Soccer videos](#)
- Link to Washington Youth Soccer [recruitment survey summary and responses](#)
- Link to [Washington Youth Soccer resources](#)
- Link to [US Soccer resources](#)
- Link to [USYSA resources](#), link to [USYSA Media toolkit](#)