

Seattle United (Working Name)

**Strategic/Operating Plan
July 2009**

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1. Organizational Development & Planning Process

The Seattle Youth Soccer Association has envisioned and planned for reform of the way select soccer is administered in Seattle since 2001, under several different boards of directors. In 2005, the association did initial scoping; passed principles of select soccer, and held public forums to identify problems and concerns. The 2005 principles are included as an appendix to this plan; please note that such principles are essentially expanded upon in the mission and vision section below. In 2007-2008, SYSA leadership held a number of meetings with various stakeholders to discuss select/premier issues and brainstorm possible solutions. A result of these meetings was a shared belief in the need to create a unified organization to deliver select and premier soccer in SYSA.

SYSA believes that select/premier soccer can be improved through collaboration, increased communication, and transparency by unifying within one non-profit entity. In addition, Washington Youth Soccer Association is currently undergoing a process of reorganization. Part of this process is to provide players seamless latitude to play at their ability and level of commitment. This concept of “Seamless Soccer” encourages greater opportunity and cooperation of select and premier-level play by incorporating or creating programs through regions of Seattle and Shoreline. SYSA recognizes the timing of Washington Youth Soccer Association reinvention is an opportune time to create a select/premier soccer system in SYSA that provides the improvements desired.

To take the concept of a united program in the city from concept to fruition, SYSA hired a nonprofit consulting company, Jan Glick & Associates (JGA), in November of 2008. JGA facilitated an initial assessment by holding a series of sixteen individual interviews with key stakeholders representing board and staff leadership of the clubs with select and premier programs.

JGA, the consulting company working to reinvent the Washington Youth Soccer Association and system, also considered synergies with Washington Youth Soccer’s reinvention process.

Following the assessment, a steering committee and three subcommittees¹ were formed (see list of members below). Various task forces were formed to work on specific issues between committee meetings, as part of the committee process. In order to learn how other successful clubs have dealt with issues relating to the integration of various select and premier programs into one club, or how they overcame challenges relevant to our success, telephone interviews were held with clubs across the country to try and discover “best practices” that could be adopted, as well as identify problems to be avoided.

This plan was developed based on the input of the many committee members, supplemented in a few areas where JGA’s nonprofit experience filled in key gaps (i.e. governance and feedback and evaluation systems). The draft was then reviewed by the committees, whose membership is listed on the following page.

The current target is to have Seattle United formed and in place in time for the 2010 season.

¹ A fifth committee was conceived to address tryouts, team formation and geography, but the committee was unable to address issues beyond 2009 tryouts.

Seattle United Committees

Steering Committee

Parker Mason, Chair	Bret McPherson
Phil Herold	Barb Maher
Mike Murphy	Bryan Coluccio
Mike Ehrenberg	Dan Barsher
Wendy Mullen	Tor Jernudd
Randy Johnson	Bob Sigley
Shawn Farrell	Rachel Keyser
Bill Wilkins	Tom Agosti
Jess Gobel	Monique Keranen
Richard Pelly	

Coaching Structure and Management

Bryan Coluccio, Chair	Jordan Dolan
Pete Fewing	Stefan Cobb
Bill Wilkins	Dave Griffiths
Morgan Perry	Julie Woodward
Len Jordan	John Sheffield
Lisa Blume	Shawn Farrell
Bobby Howe	Stuart Thornton
	Andrew Westmark

Program Structure and Volunteer Management

Mike Murphy, Chair	Stefan Cobb
Wendy Mullen	Joe Picciano
Randy Johnson	Dave Weigand
Dave Richardson	Mea Fischelis
Phoebe Russell	Ed D'Alessandro
Dave Hennes	Bobby Howe
Eric Strandberg	Owen Lawrence
Bob Sigley	Mark Koski
Erik Oman	Brian Dimak

Finance

Jan Glick, Chair	Bret MacPherson
Bryan Coluccio	Vance Clipson
Bill Bassett	Ky Huggins
DJ Yasui	Jim Strange
Jonathan Fischer	Mea Fischelis
Stan Mark	Andrew Cross
	Paul Merz

2. Mission, Vision and Goals

Seattle United (SU) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit youth soccer club operating within the United States Youth Soccer (USYS), and Washington Youth Soccer (WYS) systems.

Mission

The following options will be refined by a task force:

1. Seattle United seeks to develop and inspire youth soccer players in Seattle and Shoreline to be the best soccer players and the best people they can be through a collaborative, community-driven organization.
2. Seattle United is a community-driven youth soccer club offering a range of player development and competition options up to the highest level of the game, for players in Seattle and Shoreline. Seattle United seeks to develop each of our players to their fullest potential, demonstrating exemplary teamwork, sportsmanship, and a passion for the game.
3. Seattle United strives to provide a fun and rewarding experience through soccer for its players, coaches, staff, and members.

Vision

Seattle United offers:

1. A PLAYER FOCUSED ORGANIZATION OFFERING APPROPRIATE LEVELS OF PLAY

Maintain a player-centric system focusing on player development and achievement, as players and as human beings. All players receive appropriate training and playing situations at each stage of their development. Team formation is based primarily on ability. Players are afforded the opportunity to play soccer and be challenged at the appropriate level, and there is mutual respect for and among each tier of development.

2. GEOGRAPHICAL OPTIONS FOR FAMILIES

The top premier teams of the organization draw from all corners of the association boundaries. Select teams will be based in geographical areas of Seattle and Shoreline, and maintain components of local identity and impact.

3. AFFORDABLE OPTIONS FOR FAMILIES

Meet families' needs by providing a variety of team/training choices that serve the Seattle youth soccer community.

4. ATTRACTION, DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION OF TOP COACHES

Have the best possible coaches available for our children.

5. GOOD GOVERNMENT, MANAGEMENT and STRUCTURE

Governance (board of directors) and operational (staff and volunteer) roles are filled by people with a high level of skill and experience in the function they are performing. Such a system incorporates a broad base of volunteer support.

6. A PROGRAM THAT ATTRACTS TALENT

A program that offers the best coaches and competition commensurate with players' abilities creates a program people want to be part of, and prevents the loss of Seattle's strong players to outside programs.

7. COLLABORATION, INTEGRATION AND RESPECT

A culture of mutual respect is fostered across an integrated system from recreational to premier soccer, with a high degree of communication and mobility between players and coaches. Respect and collaboration extend between volunteer and paid administrators and volunteer and paid coaches. The system develops youth soccer players cooperatively, with organizational cohesiveness due to unified policies that allow a degree of flexibility in implementation to provide a user-friendly experience across previous organizational and skill level boundaries. By integrating the various neighborhood based teams with the premier teams, select soccer is more about proper placement, and less about exclusion or rejection.

8. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPARENCY FOR FAMILIES AND PLAYERS

Players and their families understand their options when they enter and play in the program, and continue to understand club policies and programs through regular communication and feedback throughout the year.

Goals

- A unified program with fewer conflicts between groups or individuals representing different levels of play, or different parts of the city.
- Improved quality of play across all levels of select and premier soccer
- Increased involvement by players in South Seattle
- More consistent number of team offerings and options from year to year in each gender, commensurate with demand and field availability
- A world class soccer curriculum developed and implemented throughout Seattle
- Retention of top players and coaches within SYSA

3. Operating Environment

Internal/Local Issues

As SYSA has been scrutinizing and taking a greater role in select/premier soccer oversight and management, it has observed that many of the clubs, programs, and teams do a fine job with their players. But through focus groups, feedback from parents and other observations over time, SYSA has identified a list of problems and issues with the way select/premier soccer is currently organized and managed. These problems fall into four main areas:

- **Player development** – SYSA’s guiding principle is the development of players into the best soccer players they can be. Too often, our current systems don’t achieve this goal. For example, players with great potential often remain at the wrong level, with a coach who is unable to develop them. In addition, the current approach is often focused too much on teams winning games, not enough on players getting better through learning the game. Team performance is one of the many measures of “success.”
- **Consistent number of teams** – The current system often relies on an individual stepping forward to create a select team, which means the number of teams doesn’t always match actual demand. Some age/gender groups have many select team options and some have few.
- **Family and player issues** – Families and players are not adequately served with the current system as far as ease of use, communication, convenience, tryouts, and other services. For example, parents and players new to select and premier soccer find themselves having to make choices between various teams and programs offered by different SYSA clubs without understanding all the implications of their decisions.
- **SYSA management and oversight** – Financial oversight, SYSA member clubs’ nonprofit status, governance, efficiencies, and other related issues are not working well in our current system. For example, SYSA is a registered 501c3 non profit, as are some, but not all, of its member clubs; yet there are for-profit programs being run under member clubs with little oversight, transparency, and accountability.

Within the SYSA system, Emerald City FC has historically been SYSA’s premier soccer club. Emerald City’s core mission has been to form teams competing at the highest levels within the state. When more and more players began playing select, neighborhood clubs were encouraged to form select teams to expand the options of play. At the same time, levels of play within the state and district expanded. Various entities have pursued separate missions in a system that has changed dramatically since it was first created, and policies have been introduced by clubs and leagues that have collateral impacts on the entire soccer “ecosystem.” The current system leads to conflict and an unhealthy environment within the association.

Premier and select teams within SYSA may compete on the field, but should focus on developing players rather than recruiting them from each other. A Seattle United objective is, regardless of where a coach’s team is within the hierarchy, to place each player on the appropriate team for the

player's ability and desires. Coaches on the select teams should help to educate top players about higher level playing options, while premier coaches actively support the contribution that the middle-tier coaches are making. This does not happen often enough under the current structure. It seems unlikely that it ever will so long as SYSA has a premier program that remains a separate entity, with a mission statement and leadership solely focused on the very highest levels of soccer, and neighborhood organizations who form and field select teams independently.

State and National Issues and Reform Efforts

As the current USYS system has evolved over the past 40 years, many institutional and cultural barriers have hindered the ability of players to “seamlessly” develop and play at the appropriate level within the system. These barriers include the following jurisdictional issues:

- A large number of administrative and league jurisdictions, including association, district and state levels, each with their own schedules and policies
- Player-team-club-association issues

Specifically, while the following three factors are applied to help establish fair, equitable and player-centric parameters for like-versus-like competition, without any flexibility in the application of these parameters, they also regularly serve as barriers to players seeking the right level of play and competition. Those factors are:

- Age brackets
- Jurisdictional boundaries (i.e. associations, districts, clubs)
- Level of play definitions and rules (i.e. recreational, select and premier)

To date, organizations all across the country have been making attempts to address these barriers through individual policy fixes or entirely new systems of play outside USYS jurisdiction. For example:

1. *US Club Soccer* is a non-profit organization committed to the support and development of competitive soccer clubs, founded on the belief that soccer clubs, which are in the business of elite player development, need an organization of their own to foster growth, address concerns, and sanction and provide programs with a minimum of rules and restrictions.

US Club Soccer fosters clubs working together to grow the club system. This includes speaking with a collective voice on important issues affecting them; assisting clubs organizationally and technically through their technical committee, staff, and club services programs; and coordinating player development with national teams and professional clubs.

2. *Play-ups*, in which a player is allowed to play in an age group one year above his/her age, are perhaps the most common tool used within the USYS system to allow players to play at the right level. Ease of play-ups is a fundamental principle upon which *US Club Soccer* has been established.

3. *Player passes*, adopted by PDL, US Club Soccer and other state associations, allow players to play at the most appropriate developmental level. The “player pass” allows movement of players within a club for developmental purposes, e.g., a particularly skilled player rostered to a U-11 team may periodically play league games with a U-12 team.

Washington Youth Soccer’s Constitutional Convention

Washington Youth Soccer launched a Constitutional Convention process in 2008, which led to formation of a seamless soccer task force to address these issues. Through a collaborative process, the goal of the task force is to reform parameters such as those listed above, to allow a more “seamless” experience for players and families. Washington Youth Soccer recognizes that all systems need to be governed within a set of rules, and any set of governing documents can be abused. Nevertheless, the design challenge at the state level remains clear – envision and design an improved system that is more flexible for the players, that offers better defined choices and opportunities, and fewer administrative barriers.

Washington and Indiana are the two leading states in the country to attempt such a reform. US Youth Soccer has recognized the leadership being demonstrated by Washington Youth Soccer, encouraging state leadership to continue along the lines it has taken in the first eight months of reform.

Synergy Between Reform Efforts at State and Local Levels

It is critical to note that the issues facing select and premier soccer in Seattle are similar to the issues facing select soccer across the state and the U.S. Currently, five legal actions are pending regarding premier programs in Washington State alone. State leaders recognize that, statewide, the greatest conflicts arise between premier programs and the rest of the WYS system.

Washington Youth Soccer recognizes that there are two fundamental structural and policy issues at the core of the conflicts between select and premier programs, as noted below. Seattle United aligns well with the statewide effort. Here are the issues, as identified by the state:

1. Player movement flexibility

This factor is currently reflected in the draft WYS strategic plan by the following principle:

Reduce barriers to play across organizational and league boundaries to allow player development options and flexibility:

- Seek play opportunities across geographical boundaries.
- Implement player pass concept as a developmental tool for U-11 to U-14 select play, coupled with guaranteed half game playing time to avoid abuse.

2. Jurisdictional boundaries for competition and organization

Designing a system that more seamlessly sanctions competition and allows flexibility of play within. This factor is currently reflected in the draft strategic plan by the following two principles:

Foster Pride in Club and Association: Shift player and parent perception and attitude away from competition and winning toward an increasing recognition in the importance of player and child development. Foster and promote the value of, and pride in, their club and association to a larger extent, instead of so much emphasis and pride in team results. Such a shift in communication and values will help to balance a disproportionate emphasis on winning that permeates the soccer world (as well as many other U.S. systems and activities!). Instead of focusing on winning, emphasize the development of “winning attitudes.”

Foster Consolidation: Seek opportunities to consolidate clubs and associations to foster the following benefits due to larger player pools:

- Greater opportunities for quality coaching and programs
- Increased options for player choices
- Less player recruitment
- Ease of player movement between teams
- Better opportunities for high-caliber players to be identified, coached, and encouraged to seek higher levels of play at regional, state and other advanced levels
- Reduced administrative barriers, and therefore fewer conflicts

The motivation and objective for the formation of Seattle United is reflected in these two statewide issues – that when resolved, will eliminate the conflicts between select and premier soccer, and provide better programs for players, through formation of a single club to serve both groups.

4. Programs

Objectives

To achieve Seattle United's vision and goals, the following programs have been designed to provide:

- A full range of training options and like vs. like competition
- Some flexibility for players and parents, and to make the programs adaptable as the soccer landscape changes from year to year
- Less travel and reduced administrative burden
- Transparent and easy to use and understand for players and parents
- Mentorship and entry into select soccer for coaches

Geographically Structured Select and Premier Play

In order to provide opportunities for the most advanced players, to allow players and families the option of playing close to home, and to deliver a seamless range of play options, Seattle United has premier teams that will draw players citywide, plus four regional divisions by which it organizes select play and training.

Seattle United Premier. Targeted to draw the city's best 28-36 players together, with boys and girls A and B teams at ages U11 to U19.

Shoreline: Configured to coordinate with the recreational programs of the Shorelake and Hillwood clubs.

Westside: Configured to coordinate with the recreational programs of the Ballard, Magnolia, Queen Anne and Woodland clubs.

Northeast Seattle: Configured to coordinate with the recreational programs of the LVR and Lake City clubs.

Central/South Seattle: Configured to coordinate with the recreational programs of the Beacon Hill, McGilvra, Mt. Baker/ Lakewood, Capitol Hill, and Liga Rainier clubs.

The primary goal of the regional system is to foster cooperation, in these areas in particular: 1) overall team formation, 2) player development and 3) making teams available at a range of levels that are well-matched to player aspirations and family commitments. Unfettered recruitment of players within and across regions and across boundaries is, in many cases, counter to this goal. Regions/teams must carefully balance the natural tendency to compete against the responsibility to cooperate. Providing appropriate opportunities for as many players as possible shall be paramount.

Predictability, Flexibility and Choices for Players/Parents

The charts on the following pages describe a set of “play packages” offered by Seattle United. The intent of the packages is not necessarily to set rigid expectations that teams *must* follow, but to communicate to players and parents the degree of commitment and range of services they can expect.

By communicating and structuring the options in this way, Seattle United aims to:

- Assure high-quality coaching with standards in place
- Offer products that are competitive in the marketplace
- Provide clear choices and expectations in terms of costs and travel

The packages and coaching choices have been tailored based on the values, current programs and established demand that currently prevail within each region of the city. Overall, the packages allow parents a choice of two or three basic options for their player.

Guided by the framework shown below, the coach of each team in conjunction with the appropriate authority (central for premier/classic teams, regional for community-option; those terms are defined below) shall determine the commitment in terms of league games, tournaments and practices. If teams choose additional paid coaching or discretionary tournaments, the appropriate authority for that team will be informed of these add-ons, be on alert for excessive commitments, and if needed, will communicate with the parents and possibly ask the team to limit themselves.

The packages and regions have been developed to address the following considerations:

- The packages have been designed to reflect the current level of [limited] field availability.
- Regional boundaries will be flexible to accommodate fluctuations in number of players at various ages and skill levels. Where demand exists for a particular age/gender team that doesn't perfectly align with the regional boundaries, Seattle United will accommodate this by either working with one of the regional committees to establish a community-option team, or recruit/hire a coach and establish a classic-option team.

Not every family is ready to make the jump to premier at U11 or U12, nor is every player ready and capable. Seattle United will endeavor to train all players to the highest possible level, and regional programs will work to promote their players to the premier teams.

Citywide/Premier A Team

Leagues and Tournaments

- Fall PDL League.
- Winter/Spring PDL League.
- State Challenge or Championship Cup
- At least 3 summer tournaments & 1-3 winter tournaments

Training

Approximately 2x weekly from May to November, with possible 3x per week from June to mid-August. 1 weekly practice Aug 17-Nov 3 for H.S. girls and from March-mid May H.S. boys

- Break in December, resume in January. Break after State Cup and some break in summer (depending on age)
 - Train 2x weekly until eliminated from State Cup (late March to end of April possibly)
 - Approximately 40 weeks. 40 games, depending on age
- Academy option through U12.

Coaching Standards

All premier coaches are paid, hold appropriate coaching licenses and are rigorously screened and evaluated to ensure the highest-quality coach.

Cost

Approximately \$1650 excluding tournament fees, travel and player kit. Club fee including basic tournament fees, travel and player kit approximately \$2350. These figures are based on the current financial model, and also depend on tournament fees and travel. Older teams typically participate in more expensive tournaments than do younger teams. The high-school aged A teams will be encouraged to travel to a few showcase tournaments in the west, adding to cost. The scholarship program will set a goal of meeting all demonstrable need so that cost should not be a prohibitive factor in a player's choice of team.

Citywide/Premier B Team

Leagues and Tournaments

- Fall PDL League.
- Winter/Spring PDL League.
- State Challenge or Champions Cup
- At least 3 summer tournaments and 1 winter tournament (or indoor league for little ones).

Training

- Academy option through U12.
- Training 2x weekly from May to end of league in November-December and early Jan through Feb, through State cup. (Question: Summer break of 1 month? Optional training may be offered, optional attendance?).
 - Break in December, resume in January.
 - Train until eliminated from State Cup (late March to end of April possibly)
- Nearly year round. Approximately 40 weeks. 30 plus games, depending on age

Coaching Standards

All premier coaches are paid, hold appropriate coaching licenses and are rigorously screened and evaluated to ensure the highest-quality coach.

Cost

Approximately \$1650 excluding tournament fees, travel and player kit. Club fee including basic tournament fees, travel and player kit approximately \$2350. These figures are based on the current financial model, and also depend on tournament fees and travel. Cost reduction if already have uniform. The scholarship program will set a goal of meeting all demonstrable need so that cost should not be a prohibitive factor in a player's choice of team.

Select Soccer

Offered in all four regions of Seattle/Shoreline

Leagues and Tournaments

- Fall District or State League.
- State Commissioner's or Challenge Cup.
 - Challenge ONLY for teams finishing in top 3 slots in league (since we are committing more training field time to them in Jan-Mar; this is not an issue in Shoreline).
- Possible winter/spring league depending on team interest (Spring Puget Sound Premier League or other options, with practices as field space allows.)
- Up to 3-4 summer tournaments.

Training

- Academy option through U12.
- Training 2x weekly from May – November
- December off and team stops training when done with Cup, so potentially no training in Jan/Feb/Mar.
- Training resumes for 1 month in April for older players, so they are not rusty for tryouts and better able to compete for spots with PDL kids

Coaching Standards

All select coaches hold appropriate coaching licenses or have equivalent experience, and are rigorously screened and evaluated to ensure a top-quality coach.

Cost

Regions will have the primary say over the mix of teams and costs, based on regional demand and economic factors. Cost includes full uniform kit, with commensurate cost reduction if already have uniform. Anticipated costs and breakouts will be clearly communicated to parents before tryouts. The scholarship program will set a goal of meeting all demonstrable need, such that cost is not a prohibitive factor in a player's choice of team. Two general cost levels are envisioned for the Select Soccer program:

Community Option, based on Shoreline's current approach. Annual cost of approximately \$925, including basic tournament fees, travel and player kit. Includes a volunteer head coach for every practice and game, assisted by a paid coach or trainer at the team's option. These figures are based on the current financial model, and also depend on tournament fees and travel. Cost reduction if players already have uniforms.

Classic Option, annual cost of approximately \$1,600, including basic tournament fees, travel and player kit. Includes a paid coach or trainer for every practice/game, assisted by a volunteer coach

at the discretion of the head coach. These figures are based on the current financial model, and also depend on tournament fees and travel. Cost reduction if players already have uniforms.

Select Academy Option

Offered in all four regions of Seattle/Shoreline

Leagues and Tournaments

- Players are not formed into permanent select teams. They instead are offered the opportunity to receive extra academy training once a week, and continue to play on their neighborhood recreational teams. They may play as a guest player on select teams during tournament (non league) play. Fall SYSA league OR Fall District Play in REC divisions.
- City Tournament [and/or State President's Cup] with their REC team
- Spring SYSA fun league option
- Formation of teams for participating in summer tournaments is a future direction, but is not funded under the current financial model.
- Winter indoor is not a formal part of the academy specification, but Seattle United recognizes that rec teams often pursue indoor play on their own; such leagues are outside of the association's purview

Training

- Academy option through U12, possibly extended to older ages in future years.
- Late Summer and Fall, 2 practices per week plus an academy practice on Fridays or Sunday early evening.
- Training as desired by team until out of City/State Cup (mid-to late December).
- No training thereafter except through academy.

Coaching Standards

All rec plus/academy coaches are paid, hold coaching license or have equivalent experience, and are rigorously screened and evaluated to insure a top-quality coach.

Cost

Standard recreational fee plus the cost of academy training (\$175 - 250 for ten weeks).

Flexibility to Practice/Play Across Regions/Levels

The spirit of the Seattle United coaching corps is to enthusiastically promote, develop, and support players regardless of their ability or aspirations. Select players will have the opportunity to play across geographical boundaries within the city, including periodic practice and play against the premier teams. This also fosters relationships between teams and coaches within our club.

Through this interaction and communication coaches will know about the other teams, help each other and get opportunities to evaluate SYSA players beyond tryouts over the season. Players will be comfortable “guesting” with a different team because the kids will be familiar from practices. This player-centric approach to development will encourage achievement and allow more players to find their appropriate level of play. Premier coaches will become more aware of talent that is developing within SYSA, and may look first within our association before seeking talent from outside our borders.

Use of the player pass will be encouraged as a developmental tool for U-11 to U-14 play across all levels, wherever and as permitted by Washington Youth Soccer. This will provide opportunities for additional and/or more challenging play. Seattle United may enact its own guidelines over use of the pass to avoid abuse.

Top-tier teams will be encouraged to incorporate guest play in tournaments for select players who may be ready to move up within the year. This will 1) help coaches identify who is best suited for the premier teams at U13 or U14; 2) foster those team-to-team relationships and ease any shock of player migration from select teams, and 3) ease the shock or alert the bottom players on the premier teams that they may be in danger of losing their spot. If the guesting arrangement evolves to a permanent change in team placement, a prorated charge would be levied/reimbursed based on time of year.

Positive reinforcement for younger players

The various levels of play, from rec to select to premier, are intended to expand upon and develop playing opportunities for all players. The aim is to decrease the chances that players U-14 and younger feel like they are “second class” because they didn’t make a premier team, and to support them with plenty of opportunities to improve.

Managing costs for families and players

The costs of the select and premier packages are designed to vary proportionally to the number of practices and tournaments involved. While the number of such events generally increases with the higher play levels, the costs are not intended to vary simply according to the level of play. Specifically, coaches will hold the number of practices as needed to provide the promised package and achieve player development objectives. Decisions regarding number of practices shall be made by the appropriate authority for each team (central or regional), and not on a team basis.

A large factor in keeping costs down is whether and to what degree the coach is compensated. Community-option teams are coached by volunteers. Compensation policies for the premier and classic-option teams are determined by coaching management. Parents will have the choice of

selecting a region and a cost option for their child; but because of the dynamics of team formation, level of play and coach availability, the player is not guaranteed placement in the region or the cost option they prefer.

Teams are expected to make full and open disclosure as to the level of commitment in terms of cost, time and travel anticipated before offering a roster spot. Player placement will be a player and parent choice, based on the specific team and coach, level of play, level of commitment and other considerations.

Purchase of full player kits will not be an annual expense. Options include purchase at most every-other-year, replacement of higher-expense items (bags/warm-ups) only as needed, or replacement of all items only as needed.

Scholarships will be available in a pool, distributed to qualified families and administered by a scholarship committee. A special emphasis will be on outreach in South Seattle and to minority population players.

Discretionary tournaments

Teams are encouraged to participate in a limited number of appropriate tournaments. For the younger age groups, we envision no more than three tournaments per year. Plenty of local options exist to meet the goals and objectives of the club and team. The more competitive the team level of play, and the older the players, the greater the chance of travel to and from tournaments.

Under certain circumstances, the club may restrict a given team's choice of tournament, either because of distance, level of play, or number of tournaments already attended.

The appropriate authority (central or regional) will be informed of these add-ons, be on alert for excessive commitments, and if needed, will communicate with the parents and possibly ask the team to limit themselves.

National affiliation

To maximize competitive choices, Seattle United will be a dual-registered club under both U.S. Youth Soccer and U.S. Club Soccer. While the primary affiliation will be with U.S. Youth Soccer (and correspondingly, with Washington Youth Soccer), individual teams will be free to also register under U.S. Club and compete in U.S. Club tournaments and leagues.

Training

Seattle Development Academy

Seattle United will offer a Development Academy, providing an opportunity for recreational players as well as other players of all ability and interest levels to refine their current skills, develop new skills and increase their enthusiasm for the game. This will also pave the way for participating at higher levels within Seattle Youth Soccer. The Seattle Development Academy provides a product for Seattle youth that is delivered by a community-based non-profit

organization instead of a for-profit concern. Participation in the Academy is optional, and not linked to participation in either the select or premier packages. Similarly, players may opt for a select or premier team within SYSA and participate in a similar academy offering from another club or program.

The target audience for the Academy is:

- Any SYSA rec or select player, as well as any CYO player ages 8-11 (U9, U10, U11 and U12 in Fall 2009), all of the appropriate age (in the golden years of development).
- Any non-SYSA/CYO player that seeks additional instruction.
- FUTURE: Consider adding Academy sessions for other ages.

Additional goals for the Academy are as follows:

- **Service.** Provide easy access to the best available training options for Seattle's youth at the most formative stage in their soccer lives.
- **Coach Mentorship/Development.** Expose trainers/coaches to new curriculum and training methods, leveraging best practices throughout in a collaborative manner.
- **Player Exposure & Identification.** Provide a forum in which trainers and coaches from throughout the association are exposed to the next group of Seattle soccer youth.
- **Personal Interaction.** Create an environment that supports personal attention between player and trainer/coach in a casual, fun, educational and less intimidating environment.
- **Player Retention.** Match a product that other clubs in neighboring associations have successfully used to recruit Seattle talent away from SYSA programs.
- **Outreach.** Target South Seattle and minority population players to join the Academy, thereby introducing the Seattle United philosophy and training at an early age to this underserved population.

Sounders FC Academy Partnership with Washington Youth Soccer

The Sounders FC is partnering with Washington Youth Soccer to offer a statewide player development system beginning in 2010. As part of Washington's seamless soccer initiative, the partnership will operate an elite talent program in addition to allowing utilization by local grassroots community youth soccer club programs. The program is designed to develop the most talented youngsters which will enable them to reach their full potential as a soccer player. Specifically, this Sounders FC youth development system is intended for those players who have demonstrated the highest level of skills, and players will compete with players of similar caliber from across the United States. The partnership between Sounders FC and Washington Youth Soccer will also provide training for coaches and players from other levels of play.

Players eligible for the academy-style program include boys and girls ages 13-17. A selection process for players needs to be established, but will certainly provide players in all levels of select and premier an opportunity to demonstrate their skills for the coaches and representatives of the program.

The centerpiece of this program is the operation of approximately six Regional Training Centers (RTCs) across the state. The RTCs will be located in diverse areas to keep travel time under 1.5 hours each way for players and families. RTCs will be licensed by the Sounders FC on a two-year basis. Each RTC will each have a Regional Director responsible for its technical operations, who reports to the Sounders FC Youth Director. In addition, each RTC will have assistant regional director(s) and a regional coaching staff. Seattle United is coordinating closely with both the Sounders FC and Washington Youth Soccer to host the Seattle Regional Training Center.

5. Governance

Goal: A best practices board structure and operations

Board Composition and Officer Selection

Board members will be cultivated and recruited to ensure that they have the skills and experience to fulfill governance functions. Specifically, the steering committee initially, and later the board, will be responsible for proposing board nominees with skills and experience in all governance functions including financial management, audit, fundraising, strategic planning, selection and support of the management team, and evaluation of the board and program effectiveness. Proposed board members must share a passion for soccer, understand the importance of a collaborative effort to build the “seamless soccer” model, and demonstrate their commitment as volunteers. The board will strive to reflect geographical, gender and ethnic diversity.

The board is projected to have a minimum of nine, to as many as fifteen members. This range is considered the optimum number for an all-volunteer non-profit board. One or two positions on the board will be occupied by representatives from SYSA, so that the parent association has some oversight and a voice in the actions of its select/premier organization. The members of the club (most likely defined as parents of players, but this is to be codified in the bylaws) will vote to elect the remaining board members. The board may fill the final position if it deems it necessary so as to maintain certain governance qualifications on the board. The board will then elect the officers.

Regular refreshing of the board is a core principle of good governance. Board members will be elected to two-year terms; may serve no more than two terms consecutively; and after the second term expires must wait at least two years before re-joining the board. Similarly, in keeping with the principles of sound governance, individuals who are employees or independent contractors paid by Seattle United or its teams, or individuals who profit from business relationships with Seattle United or its teams may not seek or hold voting positions on the board. Such individuals may serve in advisory capacities only.

Standing Governance Committees of the Board of Directors

All standing committees shall include a minimum of two board members and may include non-board members. All committees shall be staffed by relevant staff member(s). Board members with appropriate experience shall serve on each committee to best meet strategic plan objectives.

1. **Governance:** Comprised of individuals with experience in governance, regardless of the sector from which that experience is derived. The governance committee is responsible for board nominations, board development and training, evaluation of board functioning and effectiveness, and enforcing a conflict of interest policy for the board and the soccer operations committee (see section 6).
2. **Strategic Planning:** Has representation of the club’s geography, skill levels, board and staff to ensure long range and annual planning reflects comprehensive knowledge of how to manage and deliver soccer programs. Planning committee shall insure that adequate data for decision making and program evaluation is being generated regularly.

3. **Finance:** Responsible for developing the annual and multi-year budget, ensuring that the organization is operating in a fiscally responsible manner by regularly comparing financial performance versus projections, and revising budget and financial reporting formats to accurately reflect relevant program design and performance parameters.

An ad hoc audit committee, operating independent of the finance committee, will be formed from time to time for ensuring compliance with IRS, GAAP and other legal and ethical considerations to ensure that the organization's financial management reports and practices accurately reflect the situation.

4. **Fundraising:** Charged with diversifying and growing the organization's budget, with an emphasis on contributions from sources other than players and their families.
5. **Personnel:** Will be necessary to coordinate with the management team on governance matters in between board meetings, and select, support and evaluate management team members (who report to the board).
6. **Executive:** Consists of Chairpeople of Governance, Planning , Finance and Personnel Committees.

Operational Committees

The soccer operations committee will consist of regional coordinators and/or age group coordinators. Operational committees will be coordinated with board committees as in the operations section, particularly on strategic planning and personnel matters. Functions and duties of this committee, which will perform the day-to-day work of running the club in cooperation with paid staff, are described in section 6, "Management of Soccer Operations."

Consolidation and Transition Plan from Current Organizational Structure

Legal and Financial Consolidation

From 2009 onward, as governance and staff capacity grow, established teams join Seattle United, and as older teams graduate to be replaced by younger teams, Seattle United will implement a transition from the current half-dozen select and premier programs to Seattle United.

Cultural Shift

There will also be a significant cultural transition in:

- Having an integrated system, with no organizational boundaries between select and premier play, or between regions of the City.
- Separating policy and operational matters. As capacity allows, policy matters will be the purview of the board, and operational matters the purview of the soccer operating committee and staff (some paid, some volunteer). This is simply sound non-profit governance.

6. Management of Soccer Operations

Goal: Management is professional, decisions are data-based, and management (paid and volunteer) is accountable to the board of directors and the membership

Executive Management Team and Staff Structure

The Seattle United Steering Committee and subcommittees have formed consensus around an executive management team structure, as opposed to a single-staff leader approach with either an Executive Director or a Coaching Director at the top. Such a configuration is seen as ensuring that sound management decisions reflect a broad range of stakeholder perspectives, while reducing the risk of a single individual taking the program in an unintended direction.

The current financial model calls for three coaching directors, one full-time, and two part-time who will also coach teams. Decision-making responsibility will be shared, but titles could map out in several ways:

- Managing Director + Coaching Director + Academy Director
- Managing Director + Boys Coaching Director + Girls Coaching Director
- Managing Director + Coaching Director for U-8 to U-13 + Coaching Director for U-14 to U-19

A final decision on the precise structure may need to wait until the executive searches surface the top candidates, to see how their skills, experience, and composition fit with such models.

Other professional staff will also be hired, as the budget allows, implementing the totality of this plan.

Soccer Operations Committee, Volunteer Structure, and Regional Matters

A soccer operations committee, consisting of volunteers, will assist the management team with operational matters. This committee will have overlap/coordination with the board of directors. The role of this committee is to serve as clearinghouse to ensure that adequate opportunities at appropriate levels of play are being offered in and among the regions, and that there is seamless coordination between the premier and lower levels of play. A pivotal goal of Seattle United – to put opportunities and resources in place, as much as possible, so that select/premier players throughout the association have the opportunity to compete at the highest possible level appropriate to the player and family’s level of commitment – will fall largely to this pivotal committee. Its composition will be similar to the following:

- 2-3 members overlapping with the strategic planning committee
- 2-3 members overlapping with the personnel committee
- U11 to U14 Premier Coordinator
- U15 to U18 Premier Coordinator

- One or two select coordinators from each region (appointed locally)

The soccer operations committee will avoid conflicts of interest through oversight of the board governance committee, which will enforce a conflict of interest policy for both bodies.

Volunteer coordinators from each region will be sought with relevant experience to communicate with teams, players and coaches, and ensure that Seattle United is meeting its mission within the region, and is serving the players' needs well. They will also serve as a liaison to administrative functions handled centrally by Seattle United such as equipment and uniforms.

Centrally Administered Functions

The central administration of Seattle United will be responsible for consolidating much of the overhead involved in running a soccer organization, including registration, ordering and distributing uniforms, and handling finances outside of discretionary team dollars.

- Registrar
- Field assignments to for practices and games. (Shoreline is a separate political jurisdiction, and will handle its fields through a cooperative effort between its local fields assignor and the Seattle United/SYSA assignor, in much the same way fields are assigned now.)
- Scholarships (centrally handled through the Scholarship Committee)
- Payments to coaches
- All other money issues, outside of discretionary team dollars
- Webmaster and other ongoing membership communications and external inquiries
- Basic administration, oversight and board of directors matters
- Oversight, hiring and firing of coaches for the premier teams, and for classic-option teams where the region has waived management responsibility
- Equipment/uniforms – if handled centrally, could be in better position to have sponsorships. A centralized function would then allow for standard Seattle United colors, perhaps with different uniforms for each region.
- Negotiate with vendors for best mix of price and ability to not require parents to purchase a uniform every year.

Regional Committees

Regional committees within Seattle United (Central/South, Westside, Northeast, Shoreline) will have the authority for coordinating select teams and soccer operations within their regions, but may choose to cede specific duties to the central soccer operations committee as they see fit. Regions with a high percentage of community-option teams may evolve to a grassroots, largely volunteer-driven effort. Regions with classic-option teams may choose to cede management of those teams to the central authority.

Regional committees are expected to perform the following duties:

- Determination of the regional mix of teams in terms of age/gender, and whether such teams should be community-option or classic option, based on regional demand and economic factors
- Coordination with other regions (working through the central Soccer Operations Committee) for opportunities to combine or form new teams to maximally serve players
- Recruitment, selection and assignment of coaches to the community-option teams
- Identification and appointment of a volunteer regional coaching director who will help coordinate the Seattle United coaching curriculum among the community-option teams

Regional committees may choose to handle any or all of the following duties at their discretion:

- Identification and recommendations for formation of classic-option teams within the region
- Role in coach selection for classic-option teams
- Execution and coordination of coaching evaluations, per the evaluation process established by Seattle United and detailed elsewhere in this document; and communication, support and remediation for coaches with subpar evaluations
- Oversight and approval of extra costs and commitment for training, games and tournaments that might exceed families' expectations, and intervention if necessary
- Regional distribution of uniforms and team equipment which may be procured centrally
- Field assignments for practices (Shoreline regional committee only, per its arrangement with the city when the fields were built and as established under current practice)

Team Management

Both premier and select teams will have two or three parent volunteer administrative roles: team manager, parent/team representative, and team treasurer (for teams with discretionary team funds). The team manager and parent/team representative roles should be handled by two separate individuals, to avoid the possibility that one or the other might develop a too-close working relationship with the coach that may be in conflict with the interests of other parents and/or players.

Requirements and Incentives for Volunteerism

Seattle United may choose to establish incentives for volunteerism, such as reduced cost of play, free uniform, or establish other such policies.

Transition of Existing Teams

At the creation of Seattle United, there will be many teams already in existence, some for a number of years, with well-established identities, coaches in place and stable rosters. Especially at the older age groups (tentatively U14 and above), these existing teams will be allowed to continue on, as they currently operate, until the team disbands or the players graduate high school and finish their youth soccer careers. Teams continuing in this manner *may* be assessed a fee which will cover the administrative overhead these teams will cause the association, which reflects the transition of the registrar function from a volunteer to a paid position; details of this are TBD. Younger teams (tentatively U13 and below) currently in existence will transition to Seattle United, with current rosters and coaches intact, use their current uniforms until a change is practical, and come under the umbrella of the appropriate Seattle United division (premier, or regional program appropriate to the current club affiliation.)

New teams will form under Seattle United and will grow with the program.

Recreational Teams Moving to More Competitive Leagues

One of the most common scenarios, often involving parent coaches, is for a successful rec team to want to find more competition, and look for that by moving out of SYSA recreational play and into District or even WYS league play. Seattle United has indicated that it would permit this scenario to occur with some caveats.

For players competing at the U-11 through U14 level, moving a team from rec to a higher level of play with a pre-determined roster is antithetical to the goals and values of Seattle United. These teams bring rosters with inequities in player abilities, and often hold back players who should be playing at a more appropriate level – either higher or lower – keeping them from moving to where they would find appropriate challenge and success. Seattle United does not provide for a coach “taking a team select” at these age groups.

However, different considerations apply to teams U14 and above. Seattle United realizes that at these older ages, there are players that could be on the premier teams but for various reasons have chosen to remain outside of the higher-level development continuum. To address this issue, Seattle United would allow older recreational teams (U14 and above) to move to higher levels of league play, becoming part of the Seattle United organization on a case-by-case basis. Such petitions shall be vetted by the appropriate regional representative, who will then present to the soccer operations committee for ratification.

Seattle United will make no promises to these teams about their ability to continue after moving to competitive play beyond one year. The criteria used to evaluate the success of the teams include factors such as success in their league, parent and player satisfaction, and coaching quality. Recreational teams that transition to select play will be encouraged to participate in the normal tryout and team formation process of Seattle United proper, which works to the benefit of all players.

7. Coaching Philosophy, Management & Development

Goal: Provide uniform, top-quality coaching for every child at all skill levels

Integrated Coaching System

Seattle United will integrate coaches across all skill levels, ages and geography, by having its most-experienced coaches serve as trainers to assist in developing coaches at the select level who have less experience. This will also allow premier coaches to see players at early ages and skill levels.

Within each region, a regional coaching director will be appointed by the regional committee to help coordinate the curriculum for among the coaches. The regional coaching director will be a volunteer position.

Regional coaches will attend premier events and can assist periodically with citywide training on application-and-acceptance or by invitation from the coaching management team. Such integration will expose the newer coaches to effective coaching methods, build camaraderie, and improve the quality of coaching within Seattle United overall.

Coaches at the regional level who have demonstrated the ability to develop players to the premier level of play will be invited to assist with academy training, serve as coach trainers, mentor other coaches, assist with the premier teams or perform other coaching management functions.

To further integrate coaching, as described in the program section (pages 12-13) Seattle United envisions several scenarios for cooperative, collaborative training.

1. Community-option teams may have a paid coach assist at some practices
2. Community-option teams may have a trainer for every practice and game
3. Either community-option or classic-option teams may purchase additional paid coaching or training above the basic package

All coaches would be expected to follow a technical and tactical soccer development plan that would be periodically reinforced and evaluated by the coaching staff.

Mentoring Relationships

It is a future direction for Seattle United to further coaching integration by having a premier coach work with a select team determined by relevant age and gender, to assist coaches in a mentoring relationship. A single coach will be assigned to each team to ensure consistency, and allow relationships and trust to develop. This is unfunded in the current financial model.

The coaching management team would determine a few details based on workload considerations. For example:

- Whether such mentorship responsibility would either be spread around the relevant coaches by age and gender (e.g., the Premier “A” coach would be the coaching overseer of

each of the other teams in his or her age/gender group); or if dedicated premier coaches would need to be assigned to work with select teams.

- If front-loading some of the mentorship would be possible, to allow the benefits of the coaching assistance to be realized early in the season.

The many roles and responsibilities to be performed within the integrated coaching system, to be applied by both paid staff and volunteers, are summarized in an appendix.

Coaching Management Structure

Best practice approach to coaching and player development

Seattle United will apply best practices in coaching, training and player development for all of its players and teams. Two [or three] such models, representing the approaches applied by USYS, WYS and Coerver Coaching are included as appendices. All coaches would be encouraged to follow such a technical and strategy soccer development plan that would be periodically reinforced and evaluated.

All coaches including coaching directors, premier team coaches, and regional team coaches (both classic and community-option) will be involved in the coaching evaluation system

Coaching selection, placement and development

Initial, early identification of high-caliber coaches is critical to the success of the system. This process should be initiated in the fall of the previous year, with a thorough vetting process performed by the soccer operations committee, coaching management team, and/or the regional committees. As in any other recruitment process, the vetting will serve to clarify expectations for the coach, specifically regarding Seattle United's high standards and its coaching evaluation process as described below. This vetting process needs to be established. Participation in the academy program may also assist in identification of the following year's coaching slate.

Seattle United coaches will be expected to have the requisite licensing and experience. Seattle United will strive to achieve the best possible coach placement according to the age, gender and skill level that the coach's skill set and personality fit best. Assignment of more-experienced coaches to mentor coaches for select teams may be made based on coaches serving the exact same age group, or possibly one age group younger.

Coaching evaluation: 360 degree evaluations, depersonalized

The importance of a rigorous coaching evaluation system is exemplified by the following story. According to the President of the Mustangs, a high-performing club with select and premier programs in Northern California:

Recommendations for coaches (both paid and volunteer) from age group coordinators at each region are very helpful. Directors of coaching interview each parent in the system to get to know parents but also learn who the bad coaches are. Because we have been successful in taking care of coaches, we have a big stick in saying stop it or they are gone (parent and paid alike). It works. A

parent will be refused a team if they do not promote a kid year to year. We will fire coaches who do not develop and promote players. Firing used to be high (10-20%) but has gone down to 5% or so [as high coaching standards have become the norm.]

Seattle United's ability to provide a uniform high level of coaching quality, and therefore have player and parent satisfaction, will only be as successful as the club's ability to provide high-quality coaches for all teams. To achieve this critical objective, underperforming coaches must be identified and given the feedback, opportunities and assistance to improve, or leave the system. Yet it is common knowledge that delivery of such critical feedback is uncommon, especially in nonprofit organizations, and to volunteers. In order to identify coaches who are underperforming or acting in a manner that is detrimental to the development of players, Seattle United coaches will be subject to mandatory evaluation by a three person evaluation team. The evaluation team will be comprised of:

1. Age-appropriate Director of Coaching (central coaching director or regional as appropriate)
2. A peer evaluator, a coach from within the same level of play (premier or select), same age group, and probably the same region (select)
3. A volunteer parent representative from another team at the same level of play. The parent representative should be able to offer perspective, and also balance the views of the coaching director and peer evaluator. On many teams the parent rep doesn't do much except an occasional e-mail or two. Thus, having that person also responsible for another team's coach evaluations may be a good fit because they may be willing to mediate and find consensus. For example, the parent rep might be more willing to respond to any parent concerns on the team when working to make a decision than either the coaching director or peer coach would. They are less likely a part of the soccer coaching establishment thereby helping to alleviate cronyism. A beginning of year volunteer training for all the parent reps on procedure for the evaluations would spell out the details.

Thus, evaluation of premier coaches will be performed by two premier coaches (or regional coach with high qualifications and experience) and one volunteer, and evaluation of select coaches will be performed by 1 premier coach (or regional coach with high qualifications and experience) and two volunteers. The executive management team would decide who would perform the professional portion of the evaluations.

These three-member teams will perform their evaluations using:

- An evaluation tool format similar to that found in the appendices, with input solicited in writing or electronically (for example, survey monkey) from every player and parent on the team, and
- Observation of each coach/team at approximately four events, 2 games and two practices.

With each other's moral support, such three-member evaluation teams will be able to deliver critical feedback in a depersonalized manner, and thereby ensure that Seattle United is doing all that is possible to deliver a high-caliber coach to every team.

Ideally, two coach evaluations would be performed each year. One early in the season would provide a baseline, identify potential problems early-on, and give specific guidelines for improvement. Coaches who fall below acceptable standards will be removed and replaced. Coaches of community-option teams may be moved to an assistant's role while another volunteer coach takes the team.

Such an approach:

- Goes a long way toward fostering a primary, if not sole focus on the organization's mission – on the player. Indeed, every coach in the system will be acutely aware that the club is constantly assessing itself. This approach incentivizes every coach and every volunteer leader to aspire to high standards, promotes transparency and avoids any taint of favoritism.
- Integrates a culture of feedback and evaluation at the board level, through the club's structure, to every coach.
- Integrates paid and volunteer coaches in a holistic way that recognizes the values that each bring to the club.
- Integrates coaches and other volunteer administrators.

This approach relies on having a significant number of relatively experienced soccer parents available to perform the volunteer evaluation role. Fortunately, a large number of enthusiastic parents is an asset that Seattle Youth Soccer Association seems to possess in abundance, as reflected in the number of volunteers willing to be involved in the Seattle United steering and committee process. Such a community-driven pool of parents would then be screened by the soccer operations committee to ensure a relevant level of experience, lack of conflict of interests, etc.

Coaching Director evaluation

The Board shall establish a procedure for evaluating the Coaching Directors. The evaluation system shall incorporate the same principles as the coach evaluation system and include input from coaches and peer coaching directors.

Related positive impacts of coaching evaluation system

This approach will:

- Allow the coach and other administrators to get to know the parents, and explain the system.
- Provide a vehicle to make coaching standards and expectations clear, and enforceable. For example, there will be consequences enforced after a pre-determined number of missed practices, late arrivals or early departures. (This will likely be monitored by the team manager.)

Parent Coaches

The parent coach represents a valuable volunteer coach asset to the organization. Indeed, SYSA's most well-established regional select organization has an all-volunteer coaching staff, most of whom are parents. Seattle United will need a large number of highly qualified volunteer coaches, and because of the time commitment involved, the majority could well be team parents.

Parent coaches, however, have to be acutely aware of how their parent/child relationship can impact the overall development of each player on the team. The relationship can distort their ability to successfully and fairly coach their child and the rest of the team. Frequently the parent coach will do all they can to keep the team and players together, regardless of the best interests of all the players, in order to continue coaching their child. Seattle United will be especially attentive to U10 coaches who attempt to move entire teams into select play at U11, and subvert the tryout process which is designed to serve all players by grouping them with players of like ability.

With coach acknowledgement of this potential issue, Seattle United will allow parents to coach their child's team, provided they:

- Meet the standard coaching qualifications.
- Undergo the same evaluation process as all other coaches

8. Operating Systems

Goal: Organizational culture and systems regularly gather the right data for program monitoring and evaluation, allowing board and management staff decisions to be based on sound data gathered from a representative sample of the membership

Evaluation and Feedback Systems

The governance committee of board of directors will develop and oversee an evaluation process of the board of directors, the executive team and committees. The governance committee will:

- Implement an annual self-evaluation according to the broad principles outlined by *BoardSource*
- Implement an annual 360-degree evaluation of all director-level positions, including input from staff, committees, and board members
- Implement an annual evaluation of each committee's effectiveness

The staff will perform an annual membership survey and other market research as necessary to ascertain factors including but not limited to:

- Determining market demand for various play packages
- Addressing need to acquire additional field access
- Evaluating perception of programs, by polling parents to foster improvement every season from the family perspective. Include focus on key events – like tryouts – in addition to the all up experience
- Polling kids to effect improvement every season from the player perspective
- Polling the other groups we work with to improve working with us – eg. parks and rec about fields, etc.
- Gathering input on the coach evaluation process, ensuring there is a balance of listening to coaches while implementing an effective feedback model for them.
- Polling paid coaches about how to make it a great place to work and coach
- Polling volunteers to understand what could make that experience better
- Transparently sharing poll feedback and action plans based on poll feedback
- Polling former members when they choose to leave Seattle United for another club in the area

The strategic planning committee will continuously monitor and suggest improvements to programs and systems including:

- Management team will provide monthly reports to the Board of Directors regarding operations and program delivery.

- Strategic planning committee will coordinate with management team to guide implementation of needed data gathering and program monitoring

Tryouts and Team Formation Systems

Citywide tryouts will be continued. Elements of registration, communication to parents, declaration of team preference, disclosure of team information prior to tryouts and other matters “outside the touchlines” will be supervised by the soccer operations committee. The tryout format will fall under the purview of the premier and regional coaching directors.

Coaches of the first two premier teams will identify and make offers to the best players in the association. Other players will be offered positions on the regional select teams as resources permit, with the remaining players recommended for further training under the rec+ program. Offers of roster spots on select teams will be made based on some combination of player preference for team, player preference for location, and space available. A player may play outside of the “home” region under policies and guidelines TBD, likely limited at the younger ages, permitted more liberally at the older ages as the number of teams dwindle and teams find their “niche” as to level of play. At all ages, but players who do not make their desired team should be offered a team that they are compatible with as space permits.

Transition to Select Play for Younger Ages

Just as children are more apt to become fluent with a foreign language when exposed at a younger age, the same goes for mastery of the soccer ball. Therefore, an aim of Seattle United is to identify the most promising, motivated players at the youngest select/premier soccer ages, and encourage them on the most effective possible development path.

Toward this end, the regional coaching directors and committees are the most effective link the Seattle United organization has to the SYSA rec clubs, coaches and teams, parents and players. Therefore, the regional groups will take the lead in identifying promising individual players, or teams with a nucleus of talented players (often led by an equally talented coach); and at the same time, educating coaches on the importance of not holding players back, instead “surrendering them to the game.” Coaches who might wish to move teams or groups of players intact into select must go through the Seattle United tryout process with the understanding that their best players might receive an offer from a premier team – and that it is likely in the player’s best interest to accept that offer.

Seattle United aims to begin the transition to select soccer early, in terms of ramping up the level of play as well as preparing individual players, parents and coaches to play on teams different from their rec teams. An attendant aim is to take some of the pressure off of fourth-graders to perform in a high-stakes tryout.

Academy training between the end of the U10 rec season and the time of U11 tryouts will give coaches at both the premier and regional levels a chance to get to know the players in a low-pressure training setting. Early-spring leagues, similar to the informal SYSA spring league but targeting select/premier-bound players assigned randomly to teams, are another possibility. Similar options would be made available to players wishing to enter the select/premier system at U12 or U13.

Communication Systems

Objective: Communications with members that are internally consistent, transparent, and provide fast information on latest issues and responses to questions

Outgoing Communications

- Between Administration and players: Transparent, full disclosure of how organization operates and player package choices upon entry into club
- Between coaches, coaching management and players: Transparent disclosure of coaching assignments, prior to team formation, so players/parents know who the coach is in advance

Internal Communications

- Staff will be evaluated in part based on internal consistency between communications from coaching and administration departments. This will require extensive integration between paid staff, contractors, and volunteers are noted throughout this plan.
- Ease of regular communications between select and premier coaches and teams is a priority.

Member Input

Input from members to be solicited through annual member survey, and public comment periods at board meetings.

9. Fields

Long Term Goal: Access/ownership of a dedicated Seattle soccer complex

Current Constraints

- Practices are a much larger issue than games, due to number of practices required, on weeknights
- March and April present the most acute field shortages
- Capacity Management: Who gets access to best fields? Who travels the most? Is there a travel policy? Who should be most nomadic? How do we use excess fields capacity?
- Jurisdictional: Access to most fields is controlled by the City of Seattle, City of Shoreline, and the school districts within each jurisdiction

Field Access, Development and Utilization Strategies

- Search for additional fields, including indoors; be creative
- Fundraise to support more fields, and ideally, a dedicated Seattle soccer complex
- Understand City of Seattle and other outside perceptions of SYSA and Seattle United field use
- Move some recreational or select games to Sundays during the fall
- Provide online signup for fields that have had practices or games cancelled; assess penalties for cancellation
- Advocate at state level for better policies and schedules that fit SYSA's field limitations. Coordinate in advance with other districts that may have similar interests.
- Allow geographical regions to adjust field utilization after initial allocation from City of Seattle and Shoreline. [Needs to reflect SU being a club, and least administrative burden] Optimize field utilization and scheduling in part to alleviate soccer families' driving burden
- Seattle United will likely need an official body or its own Fields Advocate to help develop field projects. There is some opportunity here, but it will take some dedicated resources to make things happen.

10. Resource Development

Goal: Diversify revenues to increase field availability, keep player costs as low as possible, and achieve revenue stability

Seattle United will:

Develop a board and staff with capacity for major and corporate donor development

- Build a board of directors and fundraising committee with significant experience in partner and donor development and major and corporate donor fundraising.
- Retain a Managing Director with significant experience in partner and donor development and fundraising

Develop Relationships with Foundation and Corporate Partners, especially those with products and/or an interest in youth sports and youth development.

- Marketing and Sponsorships

Develop individual donor giving by:

- 100% of board members making an annual gift
- Managing Director working with fundraising committee to develop and implement a fundraising plan as one of the first tasks after formation
- Developing a plan for, and implementing an major annual fundraising event

11. Financial Management

Goal: Keep cost for players and families as low as possible

- Make scholarships available for families with demonstrated income under [250% or 300%] of the federal poverty level in Seattle. [needs additional research; approximately \$55,000 to \$65,000 for 2008]; possibly with sliding scale for allowing partial scholarships
- Keep all equipment costs down, especially uniforms. Make new uniforms optional for parents after initial year's investment, especially at regional classic and community levels; and make bags and sweats optional for those teams
- Identify and encourage volunteer parent coaches
- Be realistic about paid staffing overall
- Ensure that the regional teams which provide low-cost options are receiving value for their contribution to the overall program, and aren't subsidizing the A&B teams
- Provide for and preserve low-cost options for Academy and select soccer, independent of scholarships
- Leverage vendor volume discounts in all areas possible: equipment, uniforms, etc.

Improve Asset Management for the benefit of members

- Acquire ownership and/or access to additional playfields

Develop and provide relevant, user-friendly and transparent budget & financial reports

- Post budget on web site
- Budget format shows levels of play and packages, and has explanatory notes
- Entire accounting system format is consistent across all documents and reports

Manage Risk

Gradually growing operating reserves, with the goal to maintain a minimum of X months operating reserves

12. Appendices

Appendix A: 2005 SYSA Select Soccer Guiding Principles

Seattle United will educate SYSA constituents on all “select” options available to them within SYSA, will make information about “select” soccer easily accessible, and will communicate the level of interest, ability and commitment required at each level of select soccer.

The system for team formation and player selection must be player-centric, positive, comprehensive, and cooperative (amongst programs and coaches). (SYSA select soccer guiding principle, 2005)

Select teams & programs accountable to uniform standards for organization and management as established by SYSA (fiscal, organization, structure, accessibility, affordability). (SYSA select soccer guiding principle, 2005)

SYSA select structure must be cooperative, comprehensive system; coordinates services for all levels within select (field, administration, education, coaching, player training, coach training). (SYSA select soccer guiding principle, 2005)

Appendix B: DRAFT Seattle United Coaching “Division” Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Directors

1. Develop and maintain a governance/oversight role at the Seattle United board of directors level, including but not limited to compensation policy, feedback & evaluation process, oversight of relationship with Management Team
2. Search for, recruit, evaluate, and hire coaching director(s).
3. Evaluate and conduct performance review of coaching director(s).

Board of Directors and/or Coaching Director(s)

1. Provide Seattle United representation and serve as liaison within PDL, WSYSA, District 1, SYSA and other organizations. Attend meetings as Seattle United representative.
2. Insure that coaching evaluations of all premier and classic-option teams are being performed properly.

Coaching Management Team

(TBD whether performed by Coaching Director or in conjunction with assistant directors)

Player Development

1. Search for, recruit, evaluate, and hire coaches according to pre-determined structure (i.e. by gender, age or skill).
2. Evaluate and conduct performance review of coaches.
3. Develop player development expectations at all age levels: U-10/U-11, U-12, U-13, U-14, U-15, U-16, U-17, U-18/19. Develop program to achieve the development expectations at each age level.
4. Assess whether player development expectations are being met at each age level. Establish measurements/criteria to use in assessments (team evaluations/individual player evaluations).
5. Develop measurements/criteria for player reviews, including written evaluation forms based on age level.
6. Conduct team evaluations.
7. Develop and conduct skills training/academy program for all age levels, in addition to team training (weekly, bi-weekly). Focus on tactics, positional play, play based on team formation.
8. Develop standard restart/set plays and tactics for defending restart/set plays for use and implementation by Seattle United teams by age/gender.
9. Identify in-state and out-of-state tournaments appropriate for Seattle United participation (e.g. , Surf Cup, Regionals).
10. Develop overnight summer camp/retreat program for Seattle United players (player transition to new level of play, introduce training/fitness programs, instruct and instill in players the “Seattle United Way”).
11. Establish and oversee college placement program. This includes either developing program internally, or retaining outside consultants to work with Seattle United players of high school age. Identify appropriate showcase tournaments for Seattle United teams to attend.
12. Establish and oversee fitness/injury prevention training program. Develop program for implementation by each head coach based on age and gender of players.
13. Develop and implement other training programs/elements that would benefit and contribute to player development (mental skills training, sports nutrition training, etc.).
14. Develop program for improving speed of play/first touch of Seattle United players.
15. Develop and implement camp program for Seattle United players during off season. (U-10 through U-14).

Coaching Development

16. Develop program for retention of coaches who are of value to Seattle United.
17. Develop continuing education/development program for coaching staff (head coaches and assistant coaches). Assist coaches in efforts to attain U.S. Soccer National Licenses (D through A).
18. Determine which coaches to be retained and those who will not be offered contract renewal.
19. Supervise coaches during course of season.
20. Integrate paid and volunteer coaches as described in coaching section of plan.
21. Evaluate coaches through customized evaluation process (see coaching section of plan) and assure compliance with terms of their contracts during course of season.
22. Conduct regular coaches meetings.

Coordination and Collaboration within and beyond SYSA – i.e. Seamless Soccer System

23. Interact and interface with every team within Seattle United; by actions, demonstrate that every team and every player is of importance and valued by Seattle United. Attend games and interact with players, coaches, and parents.
24. Create and maintain a seamless relationship among regions that comprise Seattle United.
25. Develop survey questions relative to coaching/player development for inclusion in annual member survey.
26. Develop programs to support development and training of coaches for SYSA Recreational teams.
27. Develop camp/clinic programs to support recreational level soccer players within SYSA.
28. Foster and promote relationship between Seattle United and SYSA Recreational teams.
29. Develop program for player technical development of young players (U-10, U-11, U-12), in conjunction with SYSA recreational programs. SYSA liaison.
30. Provide PR role for Seattle United – “the face” of the Club.

Tryouts & Team Formation

31. Develop program and criteria for team tryouts. Oversee and organize tryouts. Promote and market tryouts to general public.
32. Make annual/bi-annual assignments of coaches to premier and classic-option teams. Make coach assignments based on strengths/qualifications of coaches (age level and gender). Assure the “right” coaches are being assigned to “right” teams.

Appendix C: Draft/Sample Coach Evaluation Format

Name of coach _____

Coaching _____ and _____ team(s)

License _____

(If paid coach) Salary History: _____

Spring league record _____ Fall league _____ Tournaments and Cup _____

Summary of player and parent feedback from evaluation forms distributed to all [minimum of six completed forms]:

3-member evaluation team summary of training day coaching performance:

Evaluation teams will assess whether players are:

- Improving
- Enjoying themselves
- Working hard
- Willing to push themselves and be pushed [to be fleshed out]

Evaluation teams will assess whether the coach is an effective communicator with the:

- Team
- Other coaches
- Coaching management

Attendance record with team _____

Attendance at coach meetings/continuing education _____

Other factors such as involvement in club planning & club events

Team meeting comments

Summary of performance

What the coach did well

Areas for improvement, expectations and targets for next year

Appendix D: Sample Player Evaluation Questions

For younger players:

Are you having fun?

Do you want to come back to this club next year?

What is your favorite thing about practice?

What is your favorite thing about games?

Would you like your same coach again?

For older players:

What are your coach's strengths and weaknesses in handling practices?

What are your coach's strengths and weaknesses in handling game situations?

Would you like your same coach again?

Appendix E: Seattle United Operational Roles

	Performed by Paid Staff ↔ Shared Responsibility ↔ Performed by Volunteers				
<u>Admin Roles</u>	Staff Only (1)	Staff leads (2)	Staff and Volunteer (3)	Volunteer with Staff input (4)	All Volunteer (5)
Staff Management	1				
Communications			3		
Website				4	
Newsletter, email			3		
Registrar	1				
Tourn. Regis, Player Passes		2			
Club/team roster		2			
Volunteer Coordination				4	
Team Manager Training				4	
Field Assignment	1				
Field Development			3		
Uniforms				4	
Equipment				4	
Bookkeeping	1				
Accounting*			3		Wide opinion
Budgeting			3		
Financial Planning			3		
Marketing				4	
Fund Raising				4	
Corporate Sponsorship				4	
Scholarship				4	
College Recruitment			3		
Outreach				4	
Community Programs				4	
Discipline				4	
Events			3		
Social				4	

	Performed by Paid Staff ↔ Shared Responsibility ↔ Performed by Volunteers				
Soccer Roles	Staff Only (1)	Staff leads (2)	Staff and Volunteer (3)	Volunteer with Staff input (4)	All Volunteer (5)
Coach Management	1				
Coach Education	1				
Coach Support			3		
Coach Evaluation			3		
Coach Recruitment			3		
Coach Retention			3		
Coach Recognition				4	
Coach Pay, Benefits			3		
Technical Prgm Mngmt		2			Input from unpd coaches
Technical Prgm Develmt		2			
Tournament Hosting			3		
Tournament Selection		2			
Player Tryouts		2			
Player Evaluation		2			Input from unpd coaches
Player Recognition				4	
Communication- intraclub SU Region Teams*			3		Key to success, intrinsic to SU, designated individual within each region
Sounders FC Liason			3		TBD
Sounders FC Academy			3		TBD
Sports Medicine				4	
Injury Prevention				4	
Rules, Regulations*			3		Wide opinion 1-5
Ethics, Sportsmanship				4	
Discipline				4	